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|--|--|---|---|---|
| on him | in Boston | release | background | distance |
| 99 winter night with a wolf pack in the snow and a white wolf howling at the moon | 76 freestanding columns at the Great Temple of Amun, Karnak | 3 combine these 3 photos so I can prove my innocence | 170 holy sights in Jerusalem | 71 several photos of the Flatbush Junction area Brooklyn |
| 195 creation of Adam by Michelangelo |  | 149 apple tree with squirrel, rainbow, and blue sky | 198 the African sunrise with orange horizon and tree silhouettes like the "Lion King" introduction | 40 the Stone Archway in the Back of the Yards neighborhood, last remaining thing from Union Stockyards |
| 193 the Statue of Liberty with broken handcuffs | 102 old and new New York, with the Twin Towers, subway trains, 42nd Street, and the Statue of Liberty | 143 motion to contrast with the 'still-life' I am living | 186 Almighty God standing over ancient sites destroyed by Isis in Syria | 177 coal-black man with exaggerated facial features and an ancient slave chain in map of N |
| 50 Masonic temple in Washington, DC | 23 my auntie's house and the whole block of 63rd and Marshfield facing west between 2:00-4:00pm | 187 full Wisconsin Badger team logo with W on his chest | 158 male lion and his four cubs, representing my children and me | 218 Tokyo Drift on the beach from her Instagram |
| 94 anything but the Devil | 210 beautiful women laughing and playing volley ball on the beach in "free Raul" t-shirts | CONFINEMENT Politics of Space and Bodies | | 64 red sky at sunset off the coast of Southern California |
| 50 Masonic temple in Washington, DC | 23 my auntie's house and the whole block of 63rd and Marshfield facing west between 2:00-4:00pm | 187 full Wisconsin Badger team logo with W on his chest | 158 male lion and his four cubs, representing my children and me | 218 Tokyo Drift on the beach from her Instagram |
| 94 anything but the Devil | 210 beautiful women laughing and playing volley ball on | 125 ordinary woman, full of love and compassion, | 74 sunset in the middle of the Pacific Ocean with | 64 red sky at sunset off the coast of Southern |



THE IDEA OF A BORDERLESS WORLD

by Achille Mbembe

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The capacity to decide who can move, who can settle, where and under what conditions is increasingly becoming the core of political struggles.

As the 21st century unfolds, a global renewed desire from both citizens and their respective states for a tighter control of mobility is evident. Wherever we look, the drive is towards enclosure, or in any case an intensification of the dialects of territorialisation and deterritorialisation, a dialectics of opening and closure. The belief that the world would be safer, if only risks, ambiguity and uncertainty could be controlled and if only identities could be fixed once and for all, is gaining momentum. Risk management techniques are increasingly becoming a means to govern mobilities. In particular the extent to which the biometric border is extending into multiple realms, not only of social life, but also of the body, the body that is not mine.

I would like to pursue this line of argument concerning the redistribution of the earth. Not only through the control of bodies but the control of movement itself and its corollary, speed, which is indeed what migration control policies are all about: controlling bodies, but also movement. More specifically I would like to see

whether and under what conditions we could re-engineer the utopia of a borderless world, and by extension, a borderless Africa, since, as far as I know, Africa is part of the world. And the world is part of Africa.

It is important to attend once again to what is obviously a utopian intent, the question of a borderless world. From its inception “movement” or more precisely “borderlessness” has been central to various utopian traditions. The very concept of utopia, refers to that which has no borders, beginning with the imagination itself. The power of utopianism lies in its ability to instantiate the tension between borderlessness, movement and place, a tension—if we look carefully—that has marked social transformations in the modern era. This tension continues in contemporary discussions of movement-based social processes, particularly international migration, open borders, transnationalism and even cosmopolitanism. In this context, the idea of a borderless world can be a powerful albeit problematic resource for social, political and even aesthetic imagination. Because of the current atrophy of an utopian imagination, apocalyptic imaginaries and narratives of cataclysmic disasters and unknown futures have colonised the spirit of our time. But what politics do visions of apocalypse and catastrophe engender, if not a politics of separation, rather than a politics of the humanity, as species coming into being? Because we inherit a history in which the consistent sacrifice of some lives for the betterment of others is the norm, and because these are times of deep-seated anxieties, including anxieties of racialised others taking over the planet; because of all of that, racial violence is increasingly encoded in the language of the border and of security. As a result, contemporary borders are in danger of becoming sites of reinforcement, reproduction and intensification of vulnerability for stigmatised and dishonoured groups, for the most racially marked, the ever more disposable, those that in the era of neoliberal abandonment have been paying the heaviest price for the most expansive period of prison construction in human history. I refer to the prison here, the carceral landscapes of our world, precisely as the antithesis of movement, of freedom of movement. There is not a more dramatic opposition to the idea of movement than the prison. And the prison is a key feature of the landscape of our times.

In proposing to re-examine the question of a borderless Africa and a borderless world, I would like to stay away

from dominant ways with which this issue has been dealt. That is under the sign of Kant and his promise of unbounded cosmopolitanism, and under the sign of liberal individualism understood as an antidote or to the deeply ingrained fascist impulses of European governance and bureaucracies. Although they seem to be worlds apart, both of these approaches are articulated around the concept of the fourth freedom.

In classical liberal thought there are three core freedoms: First of all, freedom of movement. Within freedom of movement, there is freedom of movement of capital, priority number one. But, since there is no capital without goods, there is freedom of movement of goods. Number three is services, and especially in these times of ours, the freedom of movement of those who can provide services. Those are the three core freedoms. So the concept of the fourth freedom has to do with freedom of movement of persons. Traditional engagements with the idea of a borderless world aimed at precipitating the advent of that fourth freedom. Within that configuration a borderless world would be a world of free movement of: capital, goods, services and persons. Such movement, such freedom of movement would not be restricted to the core economically rich countries or states, which is the case as we speak. The Schengen system, for instance, is limited to the core European countries. In fact, if you have an American passport you can basically go wherever you want. The world belongs to you. But this is not the case for every inhabitant of our planet. So in the configuration I have just referred to, the fourth freedom, the ability to move around the planet would no longer be limited to Europeans and Americans. It would be a radical right that would belong to everybody by virtue of each and every individual being a human being. It is a right that would be extended to poor members of the earth. So we keep going back to the question of the earth. There would be no visas, in some instantiations of the fourth freedom of movement there would be no quotas, and no bizarre category to fill in, because you would not even have to apply for a visa. One could just get on a plane, a train, a boat, on the road, or on a bike. Rights of non-discrimination would be extended to all. I will give you one little example. In Cameroon, until the beginning of the 1980s, it was possible to travel to France with one's national identity card. Most people went to France and came back. They did not go because they wanted to settle there. Most

people want to live where they “belong”. But they want to be able to come and go. And they are more likely to come and go when the borders are not hermetically closed. So, a borderless world imagined by the fourth freedom of movement is premised, therefore on this right of non-discrimination and on this circulatory and pendular set of migrations.

To elucidate or pose differently the question of a borderless world, is to contrast two paradigms. On the one hand, examine the liberal idea of a borderless world through the free movement concept and contrast it with African precolonial understandings of movement in space. Contrasting these two paradigms will hopefully give us conceptual resources to expand on this utopian project of a borderless world.

When I say liberal classical thought, of course it is extremely complicated, we understand that. I am giving you an archetype, which itself needs to be properly deconstructed. And here I will rely in particular on a recently published work called *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom* published by Hagar Kotef, an Israeli scholar who teaches at School of Oriental and African Studies in London. You might let your imagination work and understand why it is an Israeli who is interested in this. What Kotef shows in that work is the extent to which liberal political thought has in fact always been saddled with a contradiction when it comes to imagining the possibility of a borderless world. Her argument is that this contradiction stems from its conception of movement. She shows that, in fact, two dominant configurations of movement constantly come into conflict with one another, cancelling each other at times within classical liberal thought. Movement here is seen both as a manifestation of freedom and as an interruption, as a threat to order. One of the functions of the state is, therefore, to craft a concept of order, stability and security that is reconcilable with its concept of freedom and its concept of movement. That is the contradiction. Kotef argues, the liberal classical state is the enemy of people who restlessly move around. Such people are configured as an unassimilable other. You cannot assimilate them. They are constantly on the move. There are colonial repercussions to all of this. The biggest problem of the colonial state in the continent of Africa from the 19th century onwards was to make sure people stayed in the same place. It had a hard time achieving this. They were constantly on the move. They were “uncaptured”.

So, the business of the state is how to capture them. Without capturing them, sovereignty does not mean anything. Sovereignty means you capture a people, you capture a territory, you delimit borders and this allows you, in turn, to exercise the monopoly of territory, of course, monopoly over the people and in terms of the use of legitimate force and, very importantly—because everything else depends on that—monopoly over taxation. You cannot tax people who have no address. The state sees such people as enemies, both of freedom, because they do not exercise it with restraint, and of security and order. You cannot build an order on the basis of that which is unstable.

The same state is a friend of self-regulated movement. Why? Because freedom here is understood as being about moderation, about self-regulation. It's not about excess—excessive movement immediately conjures problems of security. So, as Kotef argues, movement not only has to be restrained via an array of disciplinary mechanisms, it has to be reconciled with freedom and to some extent self-restraint, but the ability to restrain or regulate oneself is not assumed to be the share of all subjects. Not everybody is able to restrain him- or herself. Some movements were therefore configured as freedom, and others were deemed improper and were conceived as a threat. That is the bifurcation we have in classical liberal thought. It is the spectre that haunts classical liberal states, from those years up to now. We have not gotten rid of that spectre.

The way in which classical liberal states have tried to resolve this contradiction has been by managed mobility, which is back on the agenda right now as I speak, in Europe and even in South Africa where I have been doing some work with the Department of Home Affairs on recalibrating inter-African migrations. The key concept is “managed mobility”. So, within the framework of managed mobility, certain categories of the population are constantly seen as posing a threat, not only to themselves and to their own security, but also to others' security. Such a threat, it is thought, can be diminished if their movements are confined and if they are domesticated and subject to some type of reform.

In the classical liberal model security and freedom came to be defined as a right of exclusion. Order within that model is about securing the unequal ordering of proper-

ty relations. Asserting the boundaries of the nation goes hand in hand in that model with the assertion of the boundaries of race. Now, defining the boundaries of race within that model requires a proper definition of the boundaries of the body; the centrality of the body in the calculus of both freedom and security.

First of all, let me say that pre-colonial Africa might not have been a borderless world, at least in the sense in which we have been defining borders, but where the existing borders were always porous and permeable. The business of a border is, in fact, to be crossed. That is what borders are for. There is no conceivable border outside of that principle, the law of permeability. As evidenced by traditions of long-distance trade, circulation was fundamental. It was fundamental in the production of cultural forms, of political forms, of economic and social and religious forms. The most important vehicle for transformation and change was mobility. It was not class struggles in the sense that we understand it. Mobility was the motor of any kind of social or economic or political transformation. In fact, it was the driving principle behind the delimitation and organisation of space and territories. So the primordial principle of spatial organisation was continuous movement. And this is also still part of present day culture. To stop is to run risks. You have to be on the move constantly. More and more, especially in conditions of crisis, being on the move is the very condition of your survival. If you are not on the move, the chances of survival are diminished. So dominance over sovereignty was not exclusively expressed through the control of a territory, physically marked with borders. It was not. How was it then? If you do not control a territory, how can you exercise sovereignty? How can you extract anything, since as far as we know, power

expresses itself also, if not primarily, through one or the other form of extraction.

All of that was expressed through networks. Networks and crossroads. The importance of roads and crossroads in African literature is astounding. Read Soyinka, read Achebe, read Tutuola. Roads and crossroads are everywhere in their literature. So crossroads, flows of people and flows of nature, both in dialectical relationships because in those cosmogonies people are unthinkable without what we call nature. So while the Anthropocene's turn seems to be a novelty in parts of our world today, we have always lived in that. It is not new. Because you cannot think of people, without thinking of nonhumans. Read Tutuola, it is a world of humans and non-humans, interacting, acting with others. I do not want to exaggerate this. Fixed geographical spaces, such as towns and villages did exist. People and things could be concentrated in a particular location. Such places could even become the origin of movement and there were links between places, such as roads and flight paths, but places were not described by points or lines. What mattered the most was the distribution of movement between places. Movement was the driving force of the production of space and movement itself, if we are to believe some of those cosmogonies. Here I have in mind the Dogon cosmogonies that were particularly studied by Marcel Griaule, or other cosmogonies in Equatorial Africa dealt with by anthropologists and historians like Jan Vansina, John M. Janzen and others. Movement itself was not necessarily akin to displacement. What mattered the most was the extent to which flows and their intensities intersected and interacted with other flows, the new forms they could take when they intensified. Movement, especially among the

Dogon, could lead to diversions, conversions and intersections. These were more important than points, lines and surfaces, which are, as we know cardinal references in western geometrics. So, what we have here is a different kind of geometry out of which concepts of borders, power, relations and separation derive.

If we want to harness alternative resources, the conceptual vocabulary type, to imagine a borderless world, here is an archive. It is not the only one. But what we harness are the archives of the world at large, and not only the western archive. In fact, the western archive does not help us to develop an idea of borderlessness. The western archive is premised on the crystallisation of the idea of a border.

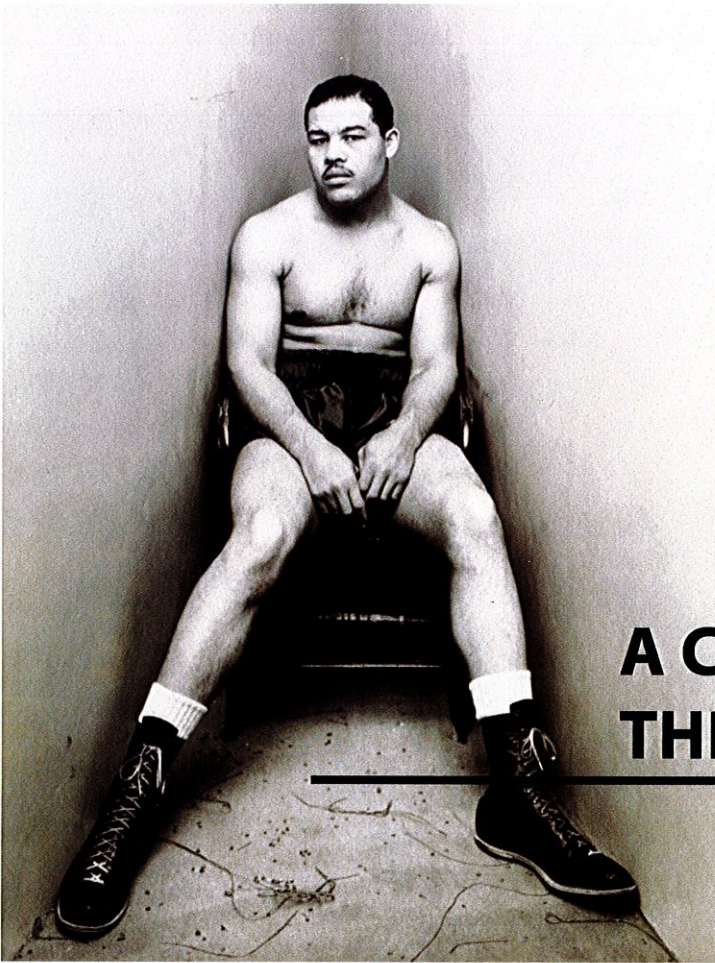
In this configuration, wealth and power, or lets say wealth in people, always trumped wealth in things. There are two forms of wealth. You could be wealthy in terms of your capacity to agglomerate around your clients, family members, and so on. Or, you could be wealthy just by virtue of having accumulated a huge amount or quantity of things. So you see here a dialectics of quantities and qualities. And multiple forms of membership were always available. How is it that one belonged? Through what window is it that you can enter the house? There were multiple forms of membership, not rigid classifications where you are either a citizen or a foreigner. In between being a citizen and being a foreigner there was a whole repertoire of alternative forms of membership—building alliances through trade, marriage or religion, incorporating new commerce, refugees, asylum seekers into existing polities—that was the norm. You dominated by integrating foreigners. All kinds of foreigners. And peoplehood—not nationhood—included not only the living, but also the dead, the unborn, humans and non-humans. Community was unthinkable without some kind of foundational debt, two principal forms of debt. There is a kind of debt that is expropriatory. Some of us are indebted to banks. But in these constellations, there is a different kind of debt that is constitutive of the very basis of the relation. And it is a kind of debt that encompasses not only the living, the now, but also those who came before and those who will come after us that we have obligations to—the chain of beings that includes, once again, not only humans but animals and what we call nature.

I would like to end by putting forward a notion that I take from the Ghanaian constitution. The constitution of

Ghana has developed a concept that I have not found anywhere else. It is the concept, a new right they call the right of abode as a fundamental right that they want to add to the list of traditional human rights. It seems to me that this idea of the right of abode is a cornerstone for any re-imagination of Africa as a borderless space. At a deep historical level, African and diasporic struggles for freedom and self-determination have always been intertwined with the aspiration to move unchained. Whether under conditions of slavery or under colonial rule, the loss of our sovereignty automatically resulted in the loss of our right to free movement. This is the reason why the dream of a free redeemed and mighty African nation has been inextricably linked to the recovery of the right to come and go without let or hindrance across our colossal continent. In fact our history in modernity has, to a large extent, been one of constant displacement and confinement, forced migrations and coerced labour. Think of the plantation system in the Americas and the Caribbean. Think of the Black Codes, the Pig Laws or the vagrancy status after the failure of the reconstruction in the United States in 1887. Think of the chain gangs, labouring at tasks such as road construction, ditch digging, tearing and deforestation. Think of the Code de l'indigénat, think of the Bantustans and labour reserves in Southern Africa and of the carceral industrial complex in today's United States of America. In each instance, to be African and to be black has meant to be consigned to one or the other of the many spaces of confinement modernity has invented.

The scramble for Africa in the 19th century, and the carving of its boundaries along colonial lines, turned the continent into a massive carceral space and each one of us into a potential illegal migrant, unable to move except under increasingly punitive conditions. As a matter of fact, entrapment became the precondition for the exploitation of our labour, which is why the struggles for emancipation and racial upliftment were so intertwined with the struggles for the right to move freely. If we want to conclude the work of decolonisation, we have to bring down colonial boundaries in our continent and turn Africa into a vast space of circulation for itself, for its descendants and for everyone who wants to tie his or her fate with our continent. ♦





A CELL AND THREE PILLARS

by Valentine Umansky

Curator of *Confinement:
Politics of Space and Bodies*

In playwright Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* (1961), the central character, Winnie, is presented to us buried up to her neck in a mound of white sand, while she repeatedly takes out and puts back her belongings into and from a black bag. As the play develops, readers become increasingly concerned about Winnie's eventual consumption, the sand slowly creeping up her body. A tribute to Winnie, *Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies* evokes both the protection of the cocoon and the constriction of the enclosed place.

At a time when expanded rights and increased liberties of movement should prevail, one cannot help but notice that a new regime of thought and mobility belies long negotiated freedoms. The idea of confinement, which unfolds in the physical realm as often as it does in the mental, is approached in this exhibition by a variety of artists, who all negotiate the ability for art to act as a safe place and yet remain concerned with institutional structures of compliance.

I. CELL

Confinement revolves around a central work: a choreography performed by three dancers who are barely audible behind a set of high, opaque, white walls. A reflection on time and the working conditions in museum contexts, *Géographie-Cincinnati* is one in a series of performative practices developed by the duo of choreographers Annie Vigier & Franck Apertet (les gens d'Uterpan). Meant to take place within the spatial limitations of a gallery and involve local dancers, the installation populates Zaha Hadid's imposing blocks of concrete. The walls, which confine the dancers, are determined by the choreography developed in the space. This structure, which must occupy over fifty percent of the gallery space, is activated by the presence and absence of performers, whose schedule follows an undisclosed timeframe. Only perceptible through the vibrations and sounds they cause, *Géographie* is experienced despite the barriers of its walls. An evocation of self-imposed confinement, the piece also reflects on traditional modes of representation, production and interpretation of dance or performance within museums.

Les gens d'Uterpan have previously questioned institutional limitations in their work. With *You are a Dancer* (2011-12), for example, they chose radio channels as an exhibition site. They broadcasted demands and shared scores, raising questions about authority and power over dancers' bodies, while simultaneously calling into question the processes of mass media. In [*piece that bears the name and address of the space in which it is produced*] (2009), visitors, who had bought tickets for the performance, were escorted to a nightclub, where their seats faced the dancefloor. For sixty minutes, they were invited to watch clubbers dance, certain that they were witnessing a piece of art—and, despite and thanks to this process of usurpation, they were.

With *Géographie*, questions of appearance and visibility crystallize, the visual element of the performance relegated to the background. The piece meditates on its inner workings: What does it mean for dancers to per-

form without being seen? What relationships develop within a group—or community—when movements are restricted? What hierarchies and responsibilities are reshuffled with dancers' behaviors hidden from viewers' sight? In *Cincinnati*, during the very last weekend of the show, the walls of *Géographie* will open for an exchange with the dancers. Visitors will discover the traces left on inside walls; the marks of bodies in space. Stepping into the cell that will have seen the confinement of the past nine weeks, one may be reminded of visiting custodial institutions. Reminded, perhaps, of the claustrophobia felt in Freedom Park, Lagos, where the former house of the city's prison has been turned into a commemorative place of "freedom." The shock of witnessing inmates' cells at Robben Island, South Africa, where Nelson Mandela spent eighteen years with over 3,000 political prisoners fighting to end Apartheid. Or, the disbelief experienced inside the Eastern State Penitentiary, which remains a worldwide model for prisons for its "hub-and-spoke plan," a complex of cell wings radiating in circle from a central tower whence the prison could be kept under constant surveillance.

In the Middle Ages, executions were often public, at times even displayed on stage, but modernity—the disciplinary society—rendered this spectacle unnecessary, turning sanctions into a more insidious experience of control over bodies through time-tables, regimented sleep, eat and study schedules, and seclusion from sight. Similarly, *Géographie* offers viewers a managed experience, placing dancers in a condition of physical confinement, and viewers in one of sensorial limitation, blocking the view of both. Redefining the gallery's architecture by enhancing acute angles and narrow corners, the piece discusses art institutions' limits and allows us to ponder on the modern and contemporary variants of the disciplinary society.

II. HISTORICAL PRECEDENTS IN THE STUDIO

“It is from the body, not the mind, that questions arise and are explored,” wrote Argentine semiotician Walter Mignolo in his book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* in 2011. One of the founders of the group *Modernidad/colonialidad*, Mignolo rejected the univocal Western-centric definition of modernity, and condemned the power dynamics dictated by European settlers upon arrival to the American continent, positing the institution of race as one of the founding principles on which the capitalist economy, and the Western definition of modernity, ultimately lies. Anticipating Mignolo’s concerns, in the aftermath of the second World War, a large number of artists started using bodies to posit questions—most often their own—subjecting them to various repetitive processes of restraint. For many who embraced the aesthetics of entrapment, the studio setting constituted the perfect microcosm to reflect on personal and societal concerns about production and productivity, capitalism, globalized conflicts and technocratic surveillance, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

The first section of the exhibition highlights a set of artworks that display artists’ unique experimentations inside the studio, a space to negotiate and push back against. In his 1975 *Discipline and Punish*, theorist Michel Foucault fiercely challenged modern society and its disciplinary system: “Exercises, not signs: time-tables, compulsory movements, regular activities, solitary meditation, work in common, silence, application, respect, good habits. And, ultimately, what one is trying to restore in this technique of correction is not so much the juridical subject... but the obedient subject, the individual subjected to habits, rules, orders, an authority that is exercised continually around him and upon him.” Foucault termed it the ‘docile body,’ and in many ways, it is this very body that artists conjured and dismissed within the studio space.

These works demonstrate artists’ desire to narrow the field of possibility of viewers, participants or models by carefully managing their encounters with the work/ themselves. Penn constructed a 22° angle corner in which to take portraits, while Nauman forced viewers to watch surveillance footage, turning the art into a by-product of a society of surveillance, straying away from a world of aesthetics to the functional. Nancy Brooks Brody embraced minimal patterns and repetition to question the impressions a body leaves behind, when Tehching Hsieh voluntarily confined himself to a cage for an entire year, and Graciela Iturbide entered the very personal space of Frida Kahlo that had, per her and her husband Diego Rivera’s wishes, remained closed off for fifty years. Together, their works resonate with, and cast doubt on, the experience of the modern subject—bound, tracked, and tested—that which writer Achille Mbembe has so aptly highlighted.



III. SEEKING SHELTER: WHICH BODY(S)/WHICH REFUGE?

It may very well be that our postmodern society has reached a place of bifurcation. When in our recent past, all bodies were considered as containing life, in our current time, one of planetary entanglement, that sees the circulation of goods and bodies as central, there is a clear drive towards contraction and enclosure. One which translates into a renewed infatuation with borders, and a clear hierarchy between bodies—where some contain life—the productive bodies—, others are seen as lump masses of flesh. *Shakespearean pounds of flesh*.

When thinking about the notion of confinement, we are meant to ponder its various avatars, as the obvious physical constriction, if felt in the bones, is only enhanced by a second variation, that affects our mental space. Foucault had also written about this, in his earlier essay “Madness and Civilization” (1961). In his view, the modern experience began, at the end of the eighteenth century, with the creation of places devoted to the confinement of the mad, and to them only.

In response to Foucault, this section of the exhibition is organized as a meditation around the notion of refuge, prompting us to reflect on the forms of protection offered by art practice and experience, but also, on the stories of resistance against these structures of compliance that specific bodies develop. Or, as author Ta-Nehisi Coates and art critic Litia Perta propose, on the “kind of compliance available for brown bodies, queer bodies, ill bodies, riotous, irreverent, gender-non-compliant bodies, poor bodies, trans bodies, feminist anti-capitalist bodies?”.

In an exhibition titled *A Silent Line, Lives Here* presented at the Palais de Tokyo in 2018, South African sculptor Bronwyn Katz made use of found material as the departure point of her works. Worn mattresses, foam and bedsprings, turned into “ghost forms,” drew attention to the social constructions and boundaries that continue to define our shared spaces. One of her works, *Here, a Line is Drawn*, reminded me of an old text I had written in April 2015. It read: “It all started on a hyphen. Not even the decency of a line. An elongated dot, that delimitates, discriminates. A limit, an indelible trace, carved on solid ground, a beginning and an exit, an endless horizon that yet ends.” To me, Katz’s works have a unique ability of condensing into abstraction and formal qualities the political context of their making. They tell one where one stands and where they fit. They draw the line. So does this section of *Confinement*.

In retrospect, the proportion of works by women of color contained in this section is absolutely logical. Considering that South African artist Berni Searle’s most important works is titled *Seeking Refuge* or that Chiharu Shiota’s body of works include several room-spanning webs of threads or hoses, that *Confinement* includes Bea Camacho’s knit yarned cocoon (*Enclose*), Krista Franklin’s reference to the story of Lauren Oya Olamina (in Octavia Butler’s *Parable of the Sower*), whose community safety is compromised, Myriam Mihindou’s strangulated hands and Catherine Poncin’s box laden with tears, should come as no surprise. Together, the exhibited artists express the physical and mental burdens placed on their specific bodies, and explain what happens when people are raised in environments built to contain, police or restrict them.

IV. ON THE (IM) POSSIBILITY OF MAPPING OUT CONFINEMENT

Art historian Benjamin Buchloh often discussed the “aesthetic of administration” omnipresent in conceptual art, while Rosalind Krauss highlighted the interaction between artwork and architectures as key to the post-war moment. Exhibiting *Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies* in Zaha Hadid’s building makes these points clear. The last section of the exhibition develops the relationship that exists between constrictive institutional strategies and the advent of modernity as a philosophical and socio-cultural construct through the prism of architecture and design.

Grounded on an analysis of philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon figure as the epitome of surveillance society (used in prisons, hospitals, asylums, workhouses and schools alike), the works included here discuss panopticism as a modernist construct that rendered mapping out one’s position impossible, and institutionalized confinement. Whether it be redlining strategies in the United States, the rise of the kitchenette, construction of modern, ergonomic design as a way to bring kitchens closer to women or modernist urban developers’ ideals, these strategies imposed architecture on bodies.

The last section of the exhibition highlights the institutional tools behind these modernist developments, which are prevalent in our contemporary societies. In it, John Outterbridge’s *Containment* bondage implicit works, which comment on “the restrictions that have historically been placed on African-Americans” meet James Rosenquist’s *Doorstop*, which ironically discusses the most common tool to maintain doors open by turning it into a place of confinement. Stephen Foster creates an analogy between the concentric circles of

the panopticon and the waves durags leave on Afro hair, while Nicolas Daubanes questions the durability of modernist materials, turning steel into powder or breakable enamel. Mathieu Pernot and Samir Ramdani both investigate the absence of human presence within the modernist confines of large-scale housing projects, be it in the surroundings of Paris or those of the urban megalopolis of Los Angeles, and Till Roeskens discusses the impossibility of mapping out the Aida camp in Palestine.

Returning to Achille Mbembe, in those last days of 2019, one could wonder if confinement has not found its new avatar in passports, and if passports have not in fact, for artists and art workers alike, become the 21st century currency. In a globalized world, when one of the exhibited artists of *Confinement* is stopped at the Cincinnati airport, like so many others before him, and when the country prepares for its upcoming electoral year, the exhibition is a reminder that strategies of confinement are polymorphous. Like cancer cells, they have the ability to change shape, migrate and, to this day, pervade, which leaves artists with the great task of revealing those to our light.

¹ From Shakespeare’s play, *Merchant of Venice*, 1596, in which the character of Shylock insists that he shall be repaid for the money he lent with Antonio’s flesh.

² Richard Wright described kitchenettes as a coercive urban planning and architectural tool constructed to force Black migrants, specifically in Chicago’s South Side, to live indoors, propagating carceral structures within Black homes

³ Examples of this may be observed in the U.S. with Pruitt-Igoe in St Louis, observing the urban sprawls of L.A., or in Europe when looking at the “banlieue” projects in France



A SET OF ROUNDS AND SQUARES

Our cover pays homage to Photo Requests from Solitary (PRFS), a project that invites men and women held in long-term solitary confinement to request a photograph of something, real or imagined from an artist. While its main goal is to provide direct contact to people living in sensory deprivation, PRFS also gives participants the opportunity to learn about the common and extremely damaging practice of putting people in long-term isolation in U.S. jails and prisons. The resulting photos have been used in public events and programming to engage viewers in local advocacy campaigns to close supermax prisons and end the use of solitary confinement in our country.

The interactive website (www.photorequestsfrom-solitary.org), which encourages the public to review requests and create images for people in solitary, was designed by the Chicago-based graphic design studio Platform, as was the cover of this brochure.

We thank the graphic designers for their support of *Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies*, and PRFS for continuously striving towards the betterment of our society.





Confinement

Politics of Space and Bodies

November 22, 2019 through March 01, 2020

Curated by Valentine Umansky,

CAC Curator of Lens-Based Arts

Confinement: Politics of Space and Bodies is presented at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati from November 22, 2019 through March 1, 2020, and supported by Gale and Dave Beckett, Jim Cheng, James and Leslie Fitzgerald as well as the FACE Foundation / Etant Donnés, the ADAGP and the CAC Exhibition Fund.

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