

BLUEPRINT

When there is
Nowhere to go,
Where is Home?



CATCOLOGNE
COMMUNITY ART TEAM



CONTENTS

04	Contributors
06	Introducing BLUEPRINT
08	Curator's Note (Khanyisile Mbongwa)
18	Zwoisy Mears-Clarke
24	Public Interventions
28	Reut Shemesh
32	Zwoisy Mears-Clarke
36	Hermes Villena
43	Reflections

Contributors



Khanyisile Mbongwa (b. South Africa) is a Cape Town-based curator. Focusing on performance-based practice, her work engages with the re-imagining of psychological and physical spaces – using photomontage, sound and video. She just completed her Masters degree in Interdisciplinary Art, public art and public sphere at the Institute of Creative Art/University of Cape Town (UCT) and researches on iRhanga (township alleyways) as public spaces that provide another entry or exit point for thinking about blackness and self. Mbongwa has a strong passion for youth development, which has formed a focus in her work.

Photo by Tatyana Levana



Zwoisy Mears-Clarke (b. Jamaica) achieved a BA in Engineering and Dance from Oberlin College, USA, as well as a BS in Biomedical Engineering from Columbia University, USA. He is a choreographer and Live Art artist.



Reut Shemesh (b. Israel) studied dance and choreography at the ArtEZ Institute of the Arts in Arnhem and completed a Masters degree at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne. Alongside her artistic work, she teaches choreography in several institutes such as the Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf and the University of Cologne. Shemesh's artistic spectrum ranges from contemporary dance and choreography through experimental film to poetry. Her works were presented at national and international festivals and have been nominated for numerous awards. For her latest work LEVIAH, Shemesh received the Cologne Dance and Theater Prize 2016. The film LEVIAH was presented in 2017, among others, at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival and Art Cologne. From August 2018 Shemesh is invited to be the next season's choreographer in residence at K3/Tanzplan Hamburg.



Hermes Villena (b. Bolivia) works and lives in Cologne, Germany. Where he studies Art at the Academy of Media Arts. His works mainly deal with the complex connections of identity, the visual representation of politics in a pop cultural context and the links between nature and industrialism. Since 2014 Villena has been curating the space UNG 5 together with Vincent Schneider. Since 2016 he has been releasing artists under his Tape Label "Propositions". Once a month he runs the radio show "Arbitrary Orbit Club" on the radio streaming platform Dublab.de.

Introducing BLUEPRINT

When there is
Nowhere to go,
Where is Home?

BLUEPRINT is conceptualized as a curatorial research project that engages with historical legacies and future possibilities of public space, asking questions: What is public space? Who is the public? How do we create public space?

Place/Space making is about identity formation, and as Robert Parks elaborates “man’s most consistent and on the whole, his most successful attempt is to remake the world he lives in more after his heart’s desire. As such, in making the city man has remade himself.” In this sense, to speak about space (place) is to speak about history making. And as Karl Marx would articulate “men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.”

The aim of BLUEPRINT, is to draw intersecting lines across continents as we study human flow both as a historic and contemporary happening in how public space can be imagined and created

We use music and performance art as public interventions to engage with public space as an archive of memory,

sound and movement. Through these mediums, we examine and explore the emotional response of the physical body as it navigates complex and nuanced ideas of Self and Other, immigrant and nationhood, colonial and decolonial.

We draw on love as a strategy and as a political space to foster new imaginaries, global identities and diasporic identities that exist in contested and precarious bodies that have sailed through the ocean either as slaves or immigrants. We thus return to our questions: What is public space? Who is the public? How do we create public space?

During the course of the project we will explore African sounds and music, and its influences on the contemporary rhythms of the everyday. BLUEPRINT draws from the archive of the International Library of African Music at Rhodes University, but is shaped by local artists and the specifics of the sites and public places with which they engage.

The project is interrelated with Khanyisile Mbongwa’s curatorial residency (May-June, 2018) and Zwoisy Mears-Clarke’s residency (February-April, 2018).



Curator's Note

Without a doubt, there is a colonial persistence in post-colonial discourse. The colonizer has not left, but has transformed into what the current conditions in the world require. Because we now understand that colonization has always been about power relations, this question about Home plagued my psyche.

Intention

My intention with BLUEPRINT was to search for navigation strategies for borders that are increasingly tightening. I was interested in how public space¹ can facilitate place-making, emerging identities² in Europe, and the question

of home. As the West tightens its borders and describe this moment as a migration crisis, alternative routes of entry are formulated which can lead to black bodies and P.O.C. bodies floating in the Mediterranean. So, what kind of BLUEPRINT's do we need to formulate for navigating mobility hierarchies and their new border legislations? And what does it mean to be a transnational body, an immigrant, or to be framed as an illegality?

Through BLUEPRINT I am trying to understand the global and transnational context, dynamics, complexities and nuances of public space and place-making.



Public space and Ebertplatz

The relationship between public space and immigrants is imaginary yet tactile because it is part of the social imagination that either opens up or closes down when there are new arrivals. Just like there is a sense of 'arrival'³ in the possible life in a new location, there is also a sense of 'arrival' one searches for in public space. This 'arrival' happens through integration and acceptance in public space which gives an immigrant without citizenship a sense of home between their reality and their lived imagination as they reach out for the possible life. In this way, public space forms part of image practice through a transitional aesthetic. In a conversation with André Sauer he described Ebertplatz⁴ as a "classic off-space that needs to be made more welcoming

because the Brutalist architecture⁵ presents aesthetic limitation. This place can be a multicultural, inter-generational and intersection meeting point because here you already have people who want something to happen. What we already have here with the project spaces/ galleries, bars, non-functional water fountain is a unique space where culture makes a transfer of space but we could imagine it anew for festivals, picnics, etc and make it a place to stay, a place where people want to come to". This conversation was on 4 June 2018, while we stood at Ebertplatz and witnessed street drug dealers going about their business, reaching for their stash and serving their customers as if we were two invisible yet echoing voices.



Recapping on my thoughts

Whenever I thought of home while in Köln, Arjun Appadurai's concept of ethnoscap⁷ would dance in my head like lost lovers:

"As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic "projects", the "ethno" in ethnography takes on a slippery, nonlocalized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscap^{es} – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous"

The lived imagination of the immigrant creates a new or shifting identity for public space and place-making. As the world is shifting, be it through the economy, technology, migration laws – the moving groups continue to imagine. It is a lived imagination of possibilities – the possibility and potentiality of a life beyond one's birthplace.



When people travel – as tourist, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, etc. they are seeking the possible life they have seen in a post card, an old film, a magazine, an Instagram or Facebook post because somebody somewhere told them there is another life they could live. But Appadurai is quick to warn us that,

"what [this] implies is that even the meanest and most hopeless of lives, the most brutal and dehumanizing of circumstances, the harshest of lived inequalities is now open to the law of imagination. Prisoners of conscience, child laborers, womxn who toil in the fields and factories of the world, and now others whose lot is harsh no longer see their lives as mere outcomes of givenness of things, but often as the ironic compromise between what they could imagine and what social life will permit"

So how indeed do we imagine new geographies of collaboration? How do we draw intersecting lines across continents and study the human flow?



What kind of new politics, collectives and expressions do we then encounter in our search for public space? Or do we ultimately encounter these migrations as small displacements? What does the public space give us?

What I always seem to get in a public space is that we are all putting our lives together, fabricating our own characters in our lived imagination, using the social materials at our disposal to create home. And home, is complex and nuanced but we retain some form of agency for living out our possible lives where we negotiate our dreams of wealth, love, respectability, material, autonomy.

The production of borders interject our ethnoscap^{es}, their laws choke our imagination and thus forces us to constantly imagine anew. But this imagination does not happen under self-selected circumstances as Karl Marx warns us, but under existing circumstances, given and transmitted

from the past. But Marx forgets that our dreams are often bigger than our circumstance, and through vitalizing our imagination we counter the existing circumstances. Gloria Anzaldía reminds us that, *"nothing happens in the real world unless it happens in the image of our heads"*. But it has to be very clear that the imagined community of the immigrant and the imagined community of Europe is different, it is always marked by a specific kind of nationalism – a nationalism built on colonial conquest. And until there's a complete undoing of this type of violence our imagined communities will remain distinguished by the colonial mark that thrives in the post-colonial reality. And if we take into account Anibal Quijano's understanding of colonialism as an

"Articulation of race and labor in the colonial period that is condensed into a power structure, continues in modern and contemporary times, and operates

through control: of the economy (through land appropriation, exploitation of labor, control of natural resources); of authority and institutions; of gender and sexuality; and of knowledge, epistemology, education, and the formation of subjectivity”.

And so I find it quite interesting that this current migration climate is defined by Europe as a migration crisis. That the aftermath of colonialism dictates who can and cannot move across the borders, expose that fundamentally we have different rights as political beings and bodies – “as a differentiated class; as lives pushed toward illegality without the right to move or to work, of being imprisoned without having committed a crime or who can expect to join the long list of dead migrants at the internal, external and outsourced borders of the European Union” (Caceres). It is the liberal paradox of our time, where Europe opens its borders to African resources but closes it, to its people. When borders close, what does it mean for the institution of family?

Europe is indebted to the world – in fact to Africa, for its wealth and prosperity came through its violent expansion of exploration, conquest and colonization – the ever so beautiful story of globalization. We can no longer speak of Europe as if its story is not linked to the violent exploitation of Africa and other parts of the world. As Stuart Hall reminds us,

“That this tells us more about how cultural identities are constructed, as imagined communities through the marking of difference with others – than it does about the actual relations of unequal exchange and uneven development through which a common European identity was forged. Now that a new Europe is taking shape, the same contradictory process of marking symbolic boundaries and constructing symbolic frontiers between inside and outside, interior

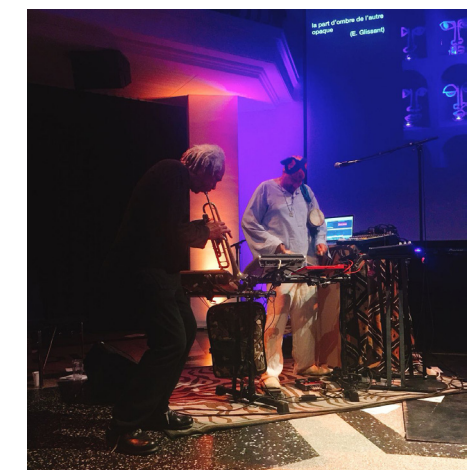
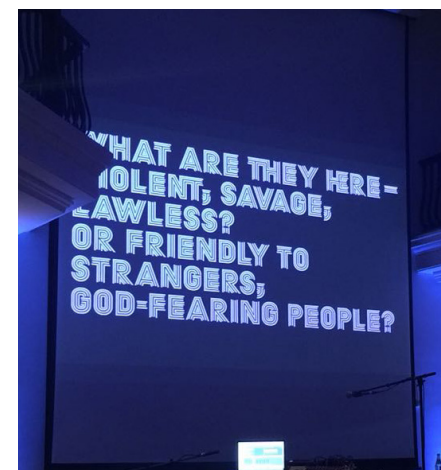
and exterior, belonging and otherness, is providing a silent accompaniment”

Which reminds me of a music intervention I attended at SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin June 2018, HOSTIPITALITY SUITE by Jacques Coursil and Marque Gilmore. The text/ statements they projected (written in French and English) were provocations that examined the notion of the other;

"WHAT ARE THEY HERE – VIOLENT, SAVAGES, LAWLESS? OR FRIENDLY TO STRANGERS, GOD-FEARING PEOPLE? / I only have one language, it is not mine / The Foreigner looks like someone who does not speak like everyone, who speaks an odd language. He has to ask for hospitality in a language that is not his own /The foreigner ill-equipped to speak the language, always risks being defenseless before the law of

the country that welcomes him or expels him / The Foreigner, whose name we ignore, whose is coming from somewhere we do not know, is going to contest the authority of hospitality's power. Power to no longer send back to nothingness, power to open the gender of the other, power of the difference / the question could only be asked from another place, a margin, a periphery."

This moment pushed my understanding of public space for critical artistic practices and for the everyday. In the sense Chantal Mouffee speaks of public art not as art in a public space but rather an art that institutes a public space, a space of common action among people. I had traveled to Germany many times before, but this was the first time I felt a sense of arrival – I had finally arrived in Germany, because here I had found my community – my tribe!



Conversations with Aurora Rodonò

I spoke to Aurora Rodonò at length about the migration of Eastern Europeans into Germany who were invited as Guest Workers in the 1960s as I was wondering what kind of strategies did they use for place-making and ultimately carving out parts of Germany as places they can call home. When did they know that they had arrived in Germany?

"If the migrants, the so-called guest workers who came to Germany in the 1960s are still here, it is because they organized themselves and supported each other and not because the German government made them feel at home. The labor migration system related to the recruitment agreements with Italy (1955), Spain, Greece (1960), Turkey (1961), Morocco (1963), Portugal (1964), Tunisia (1965) and Yugoslavia (1968) was following the rotation principle, which means that the migrants were supposed to stay in Germany only for a couple of years. Actually a lot of migrants went back home because of the bad working and living conditions.

On the other hand it is also true that from the beginning, there was friendship and solidarity between the migrants and the so called dominant German society. It seems to me that the media discourse and a racist rhetoric are producing segregation where there is encounter - which for sure does not mean that there is no real racism, but there is also a common history of democratization. Crucial moments are the labor disputes and strikes in the 1970s, when migrants, German workers and students were struggling and striking together, for example at Ford, Pierburg (Neuss) and other factories. If the migrants didn't come, the public spaces and the centers in our cities would not be so vibrant; the migrants are the ones who have contributed to the inner city development, for example by opening up stores, shops and restaurants since the 1970s, while the dominant society was moving to the periphery. In essence I think home is where you have the right to have rights, the right to work, to study, to create a family. For the

marginalized subject there is no coming home, no arrival into the dominant society; you need to have a community, which for sure is not a homogeneous community. The train station has always been a place of gathering, a place where you could meet other migrants living the same situation, a place of yearning where you could buy a newspaper in your mother tongue."

There is a relational distance in public space, which creates boundaries between public and transitional space. The Guest Workers that went to Germany as early as 1955 - brought traditions from home; such as kiosk, ice café and standing on a street - which demonstrates how migrants engaged in place-making mechanism by occupying space to (re) create a sense of home.



June 16: Remembrance, Commemoration, Mourning South Africa 1976

In 1976 the South African Government declared a State of Emergency and for the next 13 years black school children adopted a campaign of resistance against Bantu Education⁶. Over 750 were killed, over 10,000 arrested, and many more tortured and assaulted.

The story of June 16, 1976 is a story about love and freedom, and the consequence and backlash that follows when black kids stood firm for their basic right for humanity – placing their lives on the line for 13 years thereafter. We must remember that June 16, 1976 is not a single story of violent oppression but forms part of the multilateral and intergenerational story about racist violence in South Africa.

My mother is the youth of 1976...



The first boy to die during the peaceful demonstration in Soweto, was a 13 year old boy called Hector Peterson whose violent death at the hands of the Apartheid regime became the symbol of resilience, sacrifice and self-love.

It's June 16, 2018 and I am in Köln. I decide to screen SARAFINA, a South African feature film that came out in 1992, just 2 years before our first democratic elections. The film is based on the 1976 Soweto Uprising where black kids fight back against the introduction of Afrikaans as the language of instruction. The film showcases the complexities and nuances of negotiating Apartheid regime and its structural violence. Before screening the film I give a brief talk to contextualize it.

June 16, 1976 was triggered amongst other things by the introduction of the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which was designed to train and fit black people for their role in the newly (1948) evolving Apartheid society. These roles were laborer, worker and servant only. H.F. Verwoed, the architect of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 declared:

"There is no place for the African in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor. It is of no avail for him to receive a training, which has at its aim absorption in the European community."

So today, I want to touch on Freedom & Love, not as a concept or theory – but as my quest for relevance. Because for as long as I can remember, I have been fighting for my freedom, fighting TO BE FREE!



It is only the oppressed who seek freedom, who seek love, for where there is no freedom, there is no love. There can be no justice without love, for violence is a dehumanizing act. You know, bell hooks says "a love ethic presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well. In The Art of Loving Erich Fromm affirms that "important and radical change and necessary, if love is to become a social and not a highly individualistic, marginal phenomenon". The Fight for Freedom in South Africa, and anywhere for that matter is the process of affirming our self worth, within a system that denies us that right. Love is important to me because colonization, slavery, Apartheid denied black and P.O.C. love. When you are enslaved, the master not only owns your labor but owns all that comes with your body.



Zwoisy Mears-Clarke BLUEPRINT I



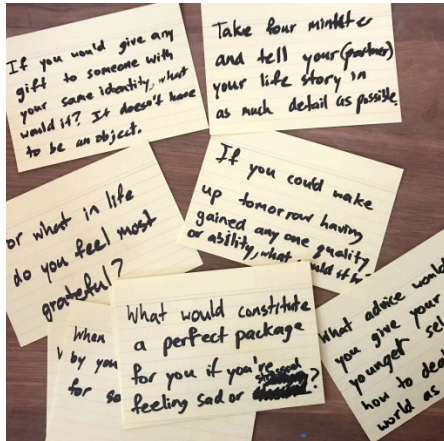
How do we form community, a new sense of one when the old one has been lost?

At the start of each work, Zwoisy Mears-Clarke remains in wonder and thereby tied to the question of how ‘community’ is formed, always attempting to go at this question from a new and embodied/physical angle. In the course of his project in Cologne, he looked at the manifestation of ‘nationhood’ culminating in the creation of a new performance. Central to this performance is the people of Germany.

When you are in room with your community, “What is there to talk about with one another?” Through guided discussions over brunch, Zwoisy

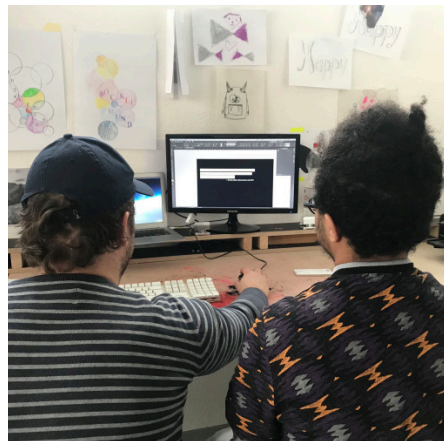
Mears-Clarke invite Cologne residents to discover and share what troubles them or they are concerned about when it comes to living in Cologne. The final task was then to translate their answers into slogans of wit, irony, empowerment, love and laughter. Cologne residents were again invited to discuss over dinner which 3 slogans they would want to be visible in the public space. With the help of Bocklemünd-based Mode Kollektiv, T-shirts with the 3 most-voted slogans were designed and made. These T-shirts were later handed out by Zwoisy and the CAT Cologne Team for free to the people of Cologne.





Red Cologne Bridges: A Performative Expedition

As the culmination to Zwoisy Mears-Clarke's residency at CAT Cologne, he presented the work-in-progress "RED COLOGNE BRIDGES: A Performative Expedition" on April 14, 2018. It was an interactive, performative, collective procession activating significant colonial sites throughout Cologne, specifically Kölner Zoo and Flora Köln.



In the face of the current class-action lawsuit against Germany launched by the Ovaherero and Nama people, indigenous groups from Namibia who were the victims of genocide, forced expulsion, and concentration camp imprisonment while under German colonial rule—this system of extermination continued to be developed by the German government and was reused roughly 30 years later to exterminate the Nazi-classified 'unwanted'—, "RED COLOGNE BRIDGES: A Performative Expedition" is wholly dedicated to the Ovaherero



and Nama people and Otjiserandu*. By their example and with love as a strategy, the members of the procession creatively engage each of their ability to give support, resist, and empower and ultimately celebrate those abilities together as they explore their own city and its colonial past.

In the development of this piece, one of the questions posed was “What does it mean to be standing on German land, especially when considering both the Ovaherero and Nama genocide and the German government’s present-day response to the lawsuit?” It is from this question that the decision to create a site-specific piece was formed. Central to choosing the sites was the book by Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Anne-Kathrin Horstmann titled “Köln und der deutsche Kolonialismus: Eine Spurensuche.” Eventually, the previous question became “What can be said by a group of German, Cologne residents at these sites?” Facilitated by Zwoisy, the language that was chosen to answer this question was a Karneval-like parade and smartphones, two instruments central to the contemporary Cologne culture.



To be more specific, storytelling, eggs, a red (the color of the Herero) cloth, dance, Tombola, balloons, and social media were the elements that were a part of the journey.

Like any parade, we attracted attention from passersby who wanted to ask what’s the occasion or where are we going. We each made posts on the social media pages of Kölner Zoo and Flora Köln around how they hide and thereby attempt to erase their colonial past. For example, despite having a page detailing its history, Kölner Zoo makes no remark as to the extensive number of years it was hosting not only animals native to various parts of the African continent, but also humans. We also lost an egg—representing the wisdom from the past, each of us were caring one throughout the entire procession. We lost a balloon on the way making what first spelled #Herero turn into #H. These were the moments that gave our parade character, and a great one at that.

*Otjiserandu (also known as Red Flag day) is a gathering of the Herero people to commemorate their deceased chieftains, including Chief Samuel Maharero who was a Paramount Chief of the Herero people during their rebellions against German colonial rule and in connection with the events surrounding the Herero genocide.



Watch the entire performance at <http://bit.ly/redcolognebridges>

BLUEPRINT — Public Interventions curated by Khanyisile Mbongwa



Watch the entire performance at:
<http://bit.ly/blueprintperformance>



Photo by Hermes Villena

Photo by Hermes Villena

Reut Shemesh & Team — GOLA first movement at BLUEPRINT



Dance and Creation - Kelvin Kilonzo, Petr Hastik, Elia Kraus
Flags Illustration - Shany Shemesh
Costume - Andres Santiago Alvarez Rodriguez

During the 15 minute performance, of "GOLA first movement" massive flags were used as a musical instrument, a weapon, a symbol for home and belonging, intervening and dominating the public space in Ebertplatz. The use of the flags created a low sound and a potential risk, cause of the possibility to come too close. The sound and noise that was created by the flags and the body in effort intervened, merged and dominated the sound of everyday life in Ebertplatz. The result of it felt powerful.

The format (performing in public space) allow a certain elasticity: one cannot choreograph or control the fluidity that naturally exist in a public space. As a result of the intervention, unexpected relations came about. Such as the birds reacting to the massive sound of the flags, and the sun appearing behind the flags right at the end of the performance.

The pedestrians walking around Ebertplatz at the same time as the performance took place 'joined' the choreography just by the nature of sharing space. An ecology of performers, audience, local pedestrians and our environment was created and affected one another. The tension between the audience, performers, and the pedestrians laid to power position during the 15 minute performance and raised questions such as who has the control over the public space, and whose BLUEPRINT is being performed.

Exposing the work in an outdoor-non artistic-defined space gave us the chance to distribute the work outside of the safe theatre box and by doing so allow a meeting of different people from different backgrounds to get to know our artistic interest and concerns.

While working with the archive we where experimenting with how a few singular tracks can be embodied and translated into body percussion or as music which actions can take place at the same time and affect one another. The rhythmic of the music we worked with were not equal or regular, as I expected it to be. We found out how challenging and unpredictable the rhythms are. That would be interesting to further research and work with; the translation of rhythmical patterns from the archive to movement vocabulary. The aesthetic relation of the music sets and the flags corresponded with the choreography formed another meaning which was obviously related to the origin of the music. The main instrument, the drum contributed to the narration and associated the work with ceremonies, importance and the relation of drums to the body in effort.

The ecology created by the use of the flags, intervention in public space, a diverse cast of dancers from different background nationalities and age, the use of music from the ILAM Audio archive were telling a story that was created while performing it. Each dancer raises a flag is telling something about his/her past, and the relationship to his/her present moment.

—Reut Shemesh

Reflections: GOLA first movement

There was a power struggle between those who frequently occupy the space and ourselves the temporal interveners: what Reut called positive tension between us and them. The fascinating aspect for me about working in public space has to do with time and space, where you cannot locate the start point and end point of the piece and how the intervention continues in a literal way. For instance we invited those present to share Nigerian Jollof with us at African Drum while Hermes played tunes. The space between performative and the real started negotiating space through the intervention. The formalities of the work as art or performance shift into choreographed action or happenings that serve as an intervention into space and time where it is cognizant about the surroundings as the work envelopes itself into the site. It is also how the intervention itself showing how co-existence can work in practice as a negotiation of power without having to adopt the culture of erasure or dominance.

— Khanyisile Mbongwa

To be honest I enjoyed it, some really nice magical moments. And of cause we cannot choreograph that - what does on its own for instance when we made the first sound and all the birds flew towards the sky and suddenly the sun appeared behind the clouds...I felt that they appreciated the work, that somehow this expression - the way they were talking endlessly while we were doing the work was for me a sign of appreciation, I don't know that's how I read it. And the ambiguity somehow of where is the space and where is the performance space and how the audience melted into the space. We expect different things when we set the work in a theater or gallery, then when we set it outside. And actually I was afraid that outside the sound would disappear; the music, the flags, the stomping or the kids speech.

— Reut Shemesh

**Zwoisy Mears-Clarke —
RED COLOGNE BRIDGES at
BLUEPRINT**



As part of the public intervention that was titled BLUEPRINT, I presented the performance RED COLOGNE BRIDGES.

This performance is a development of RED COLOGNE BRIDGES: A PERFORMATIVE EXHIBITION, a development which was guided by the curator of BLUEPRINT, Khanyisile Mbongwa. AT the beginning of the collaboration, Khanyisile invited me to engage with the archive of the International Library of African Music (ILAM) at Rhodes University. I was excited by this offer, up until I saw the archive. Having previously researched for the performance Herero folk dance and songs, I was hoping when I clicked on the category of 'Namibia' to find recordings of them, because up until then I had only heard excerpts. What I did find was recordings with numbered titles, without any information of who was singing, what cultural context these songs are associated with, what language they are singing in, etc. There was no information that would aid me provided by the archivists to engage with their preserved material in an knowledgeable and appropriative way.

Choosing songs based purely on their rhythmic texture invited a great sense of discomfort since as a result of what I would consider a severely incomplete archive, I wasn't able to give any information about the music, use the music within the conceptual framework of the piece and simply not even credit

the makers and performers of the music. It was funny (not in the haha sense but the awkward one) to reproduce the mechanism of appropriation within a context (art) and culture (German) that has practiced and continues in part to practice that mechanism. It was a problematic that entered my bones even as I performed a piece interested in giving acknowledgment to German colonialism and the Herero resistance and honoring the Herero in the space of Cologne on German soil on German time.

It was beautiful to be in Germany and tell the story of the Herero genocide and call out the tribe's name verbally and in writing. This bridge back to land was felt for me in the first moment of the piece where I take off my sandals to become barefoot. The space felt very expansive as I was on Ebertplatz but talking about and thinking about a place and people 12,000 km away from me. To have their stories find a granted, temporary place in Cologne (and I refer here both to my body, the red cloth, and Ebertplatz itself) was something I felt to be quite satisfying. Working with the idea of an oracle in the piece, it felt as if I was a medium exploring how to have these three particular stories of the Herero (the genocide, the lawsuit, and their strength that led them from one to the other), find residence in Cologne because for me these stories belong just as much in Namibia as they do on German soil.

— Zwoisy Mears-Clarke

Reflections: RED COLOGNE BRIDGES

It was very interesting that Zwoisy brought up generic Africa, appropriation, ally-ship and respect when reflecting on the ILAM archive. My general discomfort with archives at home are always around erasure, that the perspective of the archive demonstrate racial power dynamics and the culture of erasure. How does one work with an archive of erasure? And highly problematic and troublesome is how erasure continues through appropriation, and how due to lack of institutional respect there's a consistent displacement that reproduces generic African sounds.

— Khanyisile Mbongwa

So generic Africa still lives, the music of generic Africa is archived and this helps no one out to say that's completely okay. The archive doesn't give you details about the recorded sounds. There is no interruption from the archive to resist the perspective of generic Africa or appropriation of African sound. For instance information about who the people were, the context which the music is played, the region they are from – just the basic information. You could choose something from Nigeria and its just generic Nigeria played in whatever context you want. That's not ally-ship, respecting each others efforts.

— Zwoisy Mears-Clarke

Zwoisy's attempt to carve out space for the Herero Genocide on German land as an act of claiming space for the historic and contemporary narrative in the native land of those who enacted the genocide. An act of place-making for this narrative for public engagement. He had to negotiate physical space and space in time, to demonstrate the German colonial violence and its upkeep in a contemporary context. In our discussion with Zwoisy we spoke about how his piece also allowed him to negotiate space and search within the audience his tribe, for his arrival.

— Khanyisile Mbongwa

And so for the intervention, I thought a lot about how placing the work in Ebertplatz is disassociating from the actual sites, then I thought about what if I want to carve out space for this story on German land. And so, that was my entrance into public space, that public space is up for grabs and I am going to take some, I'm going to activate that space and the whole point is that for that amount of time to keep my territory – the drunk people are still drunk and as long as they are aggressive they will claim a certain radius of space and so my job is to do something similar, I'm going to claim my space, set up my territory and for a lack of a better term – guard it! And what was fascinating every time I did the piece, I was able to expand my territory which was really lovely that I got to stretch it out.

— Zwoisy Mears-Clarke

Hermes Villena —
A Gazelle Once Told Me at
BLUEPRINT



There will always be some questions when it comes to any form of documentation or archival work. What purpose does it serve, under which circumstances was it archived, the politics of the time and if the material is represented in context, to name a few. When we were given the chance to create a composition using material from the ILTA archive of Hugh Tracey, we were faced with an exorbitant amount of field recorded music from all corners of western Africa, mostly recorded by Tracey himself. Though we were really enthusiastic while listening, again and again there were some moments with bad connotations. Mainly while listening to Christian recordings, no matter how deeply beautiful they were. From all the forms of colonization, we agreed that the spiritual Colonization is a self perpetuating system that attempts to maintain the exploitation. Wrapped up in white supremacy, colorism, and overall racism, arguably the most lethal of all weapons to subjugate has been Christianity because of the unquestionability of religion, instrumentalized to replace cultural and spiritual identity of the autochthones. So the first decision while confronting the archive was to exclude songs with Christian context (as far as we could tell). The second was to dig for songs that had some kind of primordial approach, avoiding guitars and songs in a Jazz context. And then, while looking for the “primordial” we discovered that most of the pieces sounded very contemporary and had a timeless quality. For this track we decided to deal with the source material in a sample and loop-based way mixing recordings from all corners of western Africa, melting and mixing as

probably a DJ would, to create something that corresponds and communicates universally – forwards and backwards.

If there is no where to go, where is home?

Some thoughts on the performance and happening that took place at the Ebertplatz on the 23rd of June, 2018.

It took me a while to write about how I experienced the whole Happening at the Ebertplatz. Mainly it took me so long because I was way too busy with my freshly backed small collective and learning how to balance with it between working on different projects, money struggles and sharing daily tasks concerning our baby. Now while I’m on vacation, camping with a bus on the Atlantic in the south of France somewhere near the Spanish boarder I find the right time to concretize my thoughts on the Happening and on the question raised by Khanyisile which was the base for the whole project.

First some thoughts on the concept of home: Due to my personal history, home and therefore also some part of my idea of identity has been in constant change. Until now home took place in different places and in the form of different constellations. Surely home was for me, since I never lived alone, always a place to learn how to coexist in different habitats and along different beliefs and positions towards life. The variety is not only due to the fact that I lived in many countries and on different continents or with all kinds of relatives. I also see in some of my partnerships along the years the attempt to build a certain type of collective, to build a micro habitat,

a place to call home. In all these kinds of homes, the aim was always to find through communication a good way to coexist with one another. So taking in count that home can be defined as a place like the house of my grandmother where different people lived, a relationship or a public space like a plaza where I used to skate with my friends for years, I realized that the formula for the concept behind home is quite simple: no coexistence, no home.

From this point of view, I see the happening at the Ebertplatz as a success. And I call it happening since I count the whole process, from the moment we arrived at the place with our equipment till the moment we ended it with a dinner at the African Drum. While I was playing I had different people coming to me. Some asking me for uplifting music others asking for the track ID. Though I think for the majority of pedestrians our purpose was not clear and our appearance with the flags were certainly a spectacle, that maybe for some of the people lurking around, couldn’t quite grasp but nevertheless there was a form of coexistence alive.

— Hermes Villena

Reflections: A Gazelle Once Told Me

The idea of spiritual colonization which Hermes referred to a lot in our conversations, had me thinking about how public space in Europe (specifically Köln) critically engage or not with public art collections and how that reflects how they engage with the everyday reality and trauma of tightening borders. I suppose placing the African music archive in a public space in Europe, one had to be cognizant of the colonial complexity, marked by colonial violence and what it brings to surface about public space and borders. The music archive highlights the stretching of time and its non-linearity as it fragments that belong to a historic tradition, yet has a texture that’s so contemporary and futuristic. And so at Ebertplatz it was intervening across time, the past, present and future were in critical dialogue with one another – and this is the African perspective of time and space. What Hermes speak of in essence is how the music from this archive is contemporaneous. So think of Sun Ra and how their music negated the European gaze (science, religion, knowledge) and they negotiated and determined space and time as a dimension outside spiritual colonization.

— Khanyisile Mbongwa

There was something quite disturbing about the men who recorded the music archive, I watched a video online where takes someone in front of the camera to show the difference between Africans and Europeans – those whole attitude. I also find the archive sad, when I listen to this

Christian music - spiritual colonization. Which is the worst kind of colonization, and there's a lot of Christian music in this archive. As soon as you have implemented the concept of a Western God, people cannot to say you wrong because all of a sudden they believe in this God too. This idea of a Western god is completely dominant. On the one hand I'm happy this archive exist but I'm cognizant of its colonizing context. But it's good that it's there and for me it was a luxury to have access to such an archive. And it's also about the conversation we been having about Time, how African time is parallel and never linear. When you play contemporary music or minimal music with the music from the archive, there comes a point where you couldn't really tell what is what - it just fitted super good. So the African music archive keeps contemporary, not primitive at all which is how European would normally describe any archival sound from Africa. I think Midori Takada speaks so beautifully about how music relates to the politics of the time when she talks about her shift in direction and says: Don't you think that classical music epitomizes an era of the struggle for overseas supremacy? It uses its energy and spirit towards in - and a course of domination, not a self. In the late 1970s, as I become more seriously involved in African and Asian music, I discovered that these forms of music were directed inward. As a performer, this music asked you to personally examine your own physical transformation and to confirm and share this transformation with your counterpart, group or tribe. The music stops short of imposing sovereignty or nationality. When you listen to African music, even with just one drum, several

universes can be evoked. Once, when I performed with Kakraba Lobi, a kogiti player from Ghana, he said to me - "why do Westerners need to have so many instruments? I can play so much music with just this drum". Musicians who are focused inward understand this very clearly. But if one continues to play with one's energy focused outward, one will sooner or later feel a sense of deprivation. This made clear the spiritual colonization I spoke of earlier

— Hermes Villena

Last Thoughts

I really like Stuart Hall's notion of a globalization where everyone is discovering their ethnicity:

"Not as the purity of their origins where in a migrating world its impossible to discover but rather a simple fact that we come from particular places, with particular languages, that we inhabit distinctive cultural traditions, we belong to particular landscapes and we share with many others who are not the same as us, particular histories. Living with, rather than simply forgetting, 'difference'. This is preferable to the endless forgetting - the historical amnesia - coupled with a vapid postmodern nostalgia, which is globalization's stock-in-trade."

Our identities are always in a state of becoming, always under construction! To undertake Hall's notion of globalization as discovering our ethnicity, doesn't mean we negate the violent colonial and racist history of oppression that formulate itself within our contemporary through forms of control.

"Colonialism (and racism) as an articulation of race and labour in the colonial period that is condensed into a power structure, continues in modern and contemporary times, and operates through control: of the economy (through land appropriation, exploitation of labour, control of natural resources); of authority

and institutions; of gender and sexuality; and of knowledge, epistemology, education, and the formation of subjectivity"

— Anibal Quijano

Hall's notion made me think critically about Emerging Identities as a concept. I wondered about the ethics of the term in its attempt to read the people negotiating the closing of the Western borders from within. And whether the term gives room for construction of identities outside terms such as immigrant, illegal migrant, asylum seeker, exiled, guest worker? And whether the term is sensitive to hold space while wait for our true 'arrival' in the new space. And as I noted earlier with Rodonó:

"For the marginalized subject there is no coming home, no arrival into the dominant society; you need to have a community, which for sure is not a homogeneous community. The train station has always been a place of gathering, a place where you could meet other migrants living the same situation, a place of yearning where you could buy a newspaper in your mother tongue. "

But I do think the concept of Emerging Identities is not concerned with the 'correct' identity but rather to think of itself as collages and patchwork of images in the similar way Lucy R. Lippard thinks about the history of Galisteo, New Mexico - as an overlay of different

world views, without subjecting them to dominant cultural overview which amounts for forcible assimilation.

As identities emerge while the West tightens its borders, we see a clear relationship between the border and public space. Public institutions as decolonial strategies mean that they can use their power of cultural currency to take a stand against colonial legacies. For instance, museums can do much more than rethink their colonial collections, if they truly want to engage in decolonial strategies it will have to be in practice beyond rehanging work. They ought to use their cultural and social currency to mobilize by calling for public press conferences and announce their stand against the militarization of migratory systems. In similar ways a lecturer from Wabash College, Professor Agata Szczeszak-Brewer organized a letter-writing party, where they would be writing to the U.S. government about the government abduction of children from their parents at the U.S. – Mexican border and the policies leading to what they now call ‘Deleted Family Units’. While Professor Szczeszak-Brewer also indicated that the turn-up would also collect money to donate to the American Civil Liberties Union, which has been fighting a tireless legal battle to reunite the families.

Since we are now aware of the hierarchies of mobility, we have to be mindful as to whom we are referring to when we speak of ‘the public’ – asking ourselves critically whether this term refers to the homogeneous nationalized identities or acknowledges everyone as citizen. And furthermore take a step

back to talk about the global citizen, who do we imagine as the ‘public’ of the geographical locations that make up the global village. Because asking ourselves these kind of questions will help us understand and act on the urgency and agency of having to dismantle the colonial thinking and power that continues to guide how borders determine who may cross and who will die trying.

Because we have learned that our continued present is very much tied to our past and future, and it is this understanding that those who choose to leave, cross the border.

— Khanyisile Mbongwa

Endnotes

- 1 Public space: referring to public institutions and outdoor open space created for communal sharing.
- 2 Emerging identities: a term I coined to refer to peoples considered first generation, as they negotiate an intercultural identity of their parents birthplace and where they have migrated to.
- 3 To have found your community, is when you have arrived.
- 4 Ebertplatz is a major underground station on the Cologne Stadtbahn lines 12, 15, 16 and 18, located in Cologne. The station lines at Ebertplatz on the Cologne Ring in the district of Innenstadt.
- 5 Brutalist architecture: It flourished from 1951 to 1975, having descended from the modernist architectural movement of the early 20th century. The name comes from the French word *béton brut* (raw concrete), used by Le Corbusier to describe his choice of material, adapted by British architectural critic Reyner Banham into “Brutalism” to identify the emerging style.
- 6 The Bantu Education Act, 1953 (Act No. 47 of 1953) was a South African segregation law that legalized several aspects of the apartheid system, which enforced racially separated education and educational facilities. And insisted on Afrikaans as a mandatory instruction language. Blacks were not to aspire to certain positions in society and so education for such positions was not deemed necessary.
- 7 By ethnoscaping Appadurai means the “landscapes of persons who make up the shifting world in which we live: tourist, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups or persons constitute an essential feature of the world and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree”

Reflections

BLUEPRINT holds a special significance as it marks central features of process-based and collaborative practices that are at the core of CAT’s program. Conversations and reflections on the concept with Khanyisile have been starting as early as January 2017 and will go on after this project is finished. What has been produced and became visible during her residency is clearly informed by her encounters and the local context. Imagining the project in a different setting would allow for a quite different shape and demonstrates the interdependence of artistic practices in direct relation to public discourse. In this context, the meaning of public space, with its potential for random encounters becomes apparent. Encounters which are risky endeavors because they are real, both mentally and physically. Ideally public space is where there are no fake news, no selected truth and where all participants have developed their own strategies to navigate through. These range from indifference to engagement, from rejective attitudes over self-protection to politeness. The more diverse our physical context becomes, the more important it will be for us to define our strategy on how to move through and contribute to this public sphere. Given the challenges of migration and transformation of our population, public space at the same time becomes a sphere of hope and opportunity. Depending on what role we have been given or define for ourselves, it is a place that we can make, take, share or defend – but it will no longer be a neutral sphere of transition.

— Julia Haarmann

Staging a public intervention is an experiment. It was captivating to see the code-switching and reactions to a powerful, robust performance like Reut’s, an intimate and reflective action like Zwoisy’s, and an engaging, interactive DJ set like Hermes’. Questions of visitorship and audience kept cropping up as the evening went on, disrupting the mundane timeline of a city. What happens when art enters the public sphere and gallery walls fall away? How does the unexpected affect the precise measures of something like choreography? How do people react based on context? In a recap with an audience member afterwards, we talked about migration, movement, and community, themes that the works certainly describe, and the idea of interaction came up. They asked why Khanyisile chose a public plaza instead of a closed performance space. We talked about how the plaza lends itself to being a stage not only for performers but for everyday people that shuttle through Ebertplatz, and the unexpectedness of true intervening in such a transitional space. We didn’t think we’d have an artist performing under garlands of oranges or have a simultaneous concert by a South African opera singer, but neither could have happened in a closed performance space. There’s a stimulus that happens when we enter the public space and bring the community into the work through the cross-pollination of diverse ideas. It’s a theme of CAT’s work and microcosm that reminds us to carry the idea with us through today’s political and social climate.

— Pema Domingo-Barker

As an intern during the stay of curator, Khanyisile Mbongwa, during BLUEPRINT, I had the privilege to be in conversations about race, gender, public space, neocolonialism, capitalism, love and time. These chats often occurred on the move, walking through Cologne—observing park-goers, discovering a flea market, discussing a museum exhibition, considering intentions and histories of spaces, questioning inclusiveness or exclusiveness of areas and connecting these topics to race and movement of migrants. I felt Khanyisile’s energy as she commented on space in Cologne, recalled how space functions in her home country, South Africa, and pushed the limits of my and her own thought processes. This energy influenced me as I started moving through spaces with more awareness.

When I think about BLUEPRINT, my mind lingers on Khanyisile’s curated event, “Public Interventions”, largely because of its accessibility. “Public Interventions” occurred in Ebertplatz, which hugs and feeds into the underground transit, making it a pedestrian-heavy zone. Ebertplatz, surrounded by galleries, a print shop, and a restaurant/bar blends the lines of being inside and outside, as one can stand in the shadow under a thick concrete ceiling but reach an arm into sunlight without stepping through a door. The performances of “Public Interventions”, visible to both planned attendees and spontaneous viewers, invited unpredictable movements and reactions from the crowd. To me, this created, even if only temporarily, a new public space within a preexisting one and spread a mix of intense emotions

through Ebertplatz. In all, BLUEPRINT quite literally moved me into new spaces of Cologne and moved me emotionally—planting different templates of thought and appreciation for cross-cultural perspectives.

— Nicole Huizinga

Credits

CAT Cologne Main Partner:

Bayer/Kultur



CAT Cologne is supported by:

**RheinEnergie
Stiftung | Kultur**



**Die Oberbürgermeisterin
Kulturamt**

BLUEPRINT is supported by:

**Ministerium für Familie, Kinder,
Jugend, Kultur und Sport
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen**



Thank You

Our special thanks goes first of all to the curator and the artists involved in the project, Khanyisile Mbongwa, Zwoisy Mears-Clarke, Reut Shemesh & Team (Kelvin Kilonzo, Petr Hastik and Elia Kraus, Shany Shemesh for the flags illustration and Andres Santiago Alvarez Rodriguez for the costumes), Hermes Villena and Sascha Hohn.

We would also like to thank the people who engaged with the resident artists and contributed important insights to the projects, especially Timm Therre, André Sauer, Aurora Rodonò, Aneta Rostkowska and Regina Barunke for organizing a Curatorial Breakfast with Khanyisile Mbongwa and Mode Kollektiv/Dominik Siebel. As hosting institutions we would like to thank Sankt Gertrud for opening their doors for the commemoration of Youth Day and the initiative Unser

Ebertplatz, African Drum as well as Tiefgarage/Maria Wildeis for supporting the final performance. Thank you to the artists Fernanda Rueda and Conrad Müller and Bruch & Dallas gallery.

Thanks for having their hands on and the great team-work throughout the project to Pema Domingo-Barker for organizing the whole communication and editing materials, Nicole Huizinga for volunteering and Ralf Tietz for documenting the project events.

Last but not least, the project would not have been possible without the financial support of CAT Cologne's main sponsor Bayer Arts & Culture, the City of Cologne, RheinEnergie Stiftung Kultur and the Ministry for Families, Children, Youth, Culture and Sports of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia - thank you.

CAT Cologne

CAT is a shortcut for 'Community Art Team'. The artist residency CAT Cologne was founded in 2010 as a non-profit organization.

CAT Cologne supports international emerging artists working in the field of social practice and community engaged work. During a working grant to spend 1-3 months in Cologne, artists are invited to realize a process-oriented project that picks up issues that are specific to context and engages with local communities. Each project closes with a small publication and a final presentation. A number of social events such as Dinner Parties and Brunches are part of the framing program.

The project's task is to support the dialogue between diverse communities and engage them to their own constructive actionism by providing clever and creative ways of participation.

CAT Cologne e.V.
Weißenburgstraße 35
D - 50670 Köln

mail: info@catcologne.org
phone: +49-172-826-6658
web: catcologne.org



@catcologne



@cat.cologne



@catcologne



CATCOLOGNE
COMMUNITY ART TEAM