

*"...hence we are tired. And angry. And perhaps also not particularly eager to mobilize even more."*

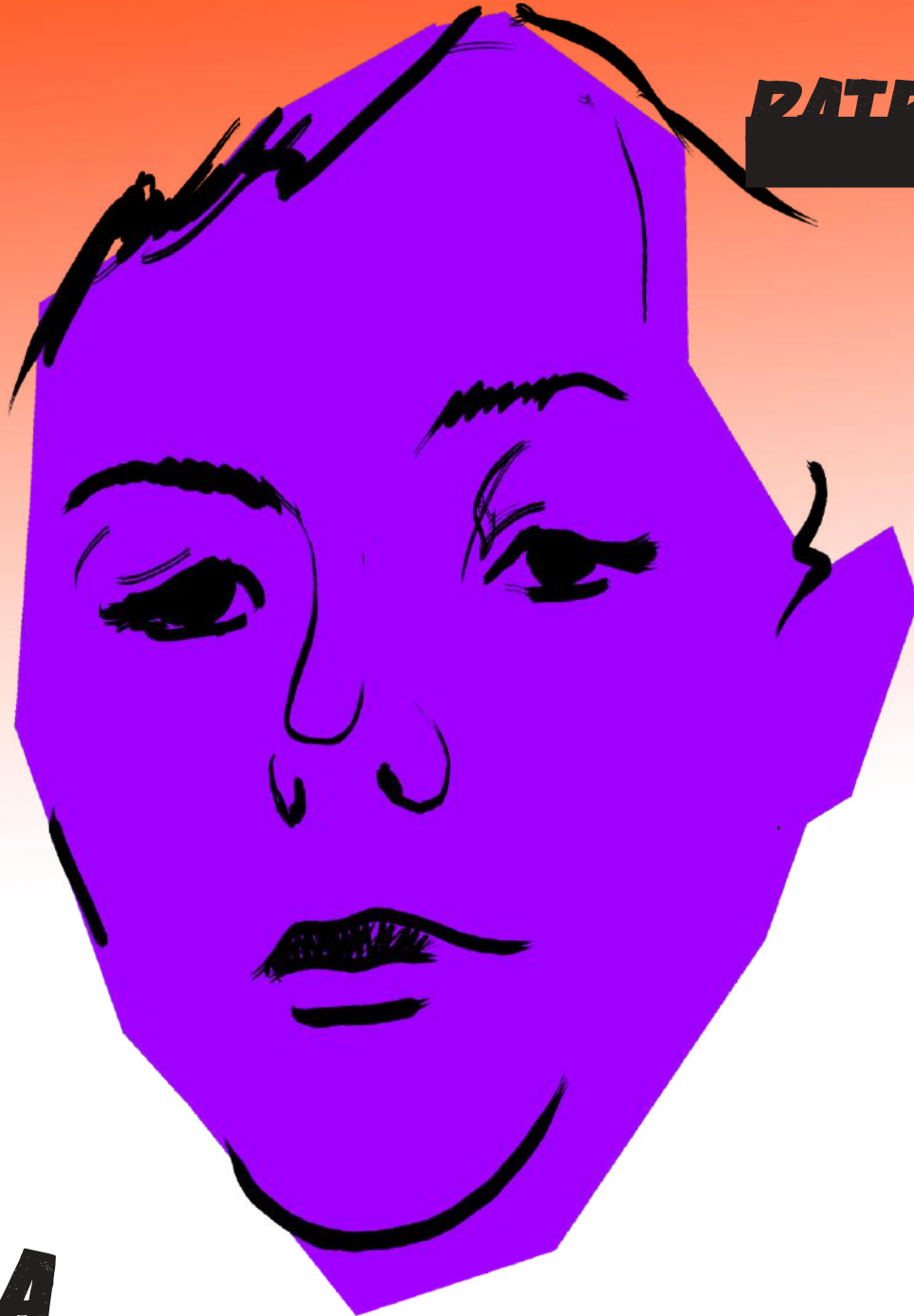
# VOICE OVER

MAGAZINE FOR ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSE

N°4

**PATRIARCHY**

MAR. 2021



WITH  
**EWA  
MAJEWSKA**

VOICE OVER CULTURE\_VOICE OVER BAD AI\_VOICE OVER PATRIARCHY\_VOICE OVER INSTITUTION

MAR. 2021

I am also mad at people who c

\_VOICE OVER BORDERS\_VOICE OVER LANGUAGE\_VOICE OVER CONFLICT\_VOICE OVER LIFE\_V

completely don't understand it.

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**EWA MAJEWSKA - DAVID LIWER**

Warsaw - Strasbourg

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**Director and editor in chief** - David Liver

**Deputy Director** - François Combin

**Artistic Director** - Frédéric X. Liwer

**Editorial Staff**

**Authors** - David Liver, Ewa Majewska, Lyra Pramuk, Gabriel Fontana, Fabien Pinaroli, Florent Delval, and François Combin

**Editors** - David Liver, Dagmara Stephan  
Florent Delval, and Frédéric X. Liwer

**Illustrations** - Frédéric X. Liwer

**Translation** - Dagmara Stephan and David Liver

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Urubu Films  
38 rue d'Enghien  
75010 Paris

7 rue Thiergarten  
67000 Strasbourg

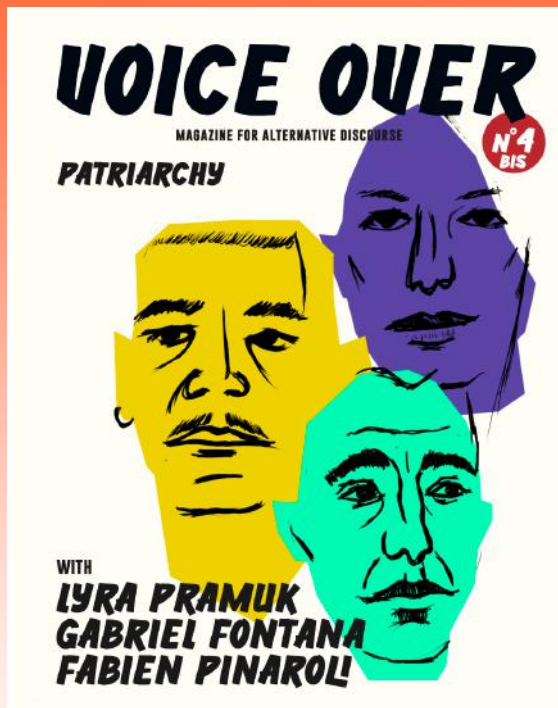
[www.urubufilms.net](http://www.urubufilms.net)  
[voiceover@urubufilms.net](mailto:voiceover@urubufilms.net)

urubu





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Paris

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**«I think all these theories can be employed to create a background for the emergence of the weak avant-garde, which challenges the militant and heroic/victorious avant-gardes of the past as well as allowing one to reject the false distinction of melancholic feminist art and resistant art...»**

# EDITORIAL

[REDACTED]

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The use of a subtractive graphic act is here a deliberate act, emerging from the content on its own textual surface, and called to produce all the possibilities and the developments it might contain. In doing so, the text claims its authority over its own «skin», understood as the main place of interpretation. The content is turned into surface, a space commonly regarded as opposite to the truth, the space of the decorative, historically and abusively associated with the feminine as well as with all the peripheries of the patriarchal system — such as the subaltern social groups, the so-called primitive, and esotericism. It is understandable how the non-essential value attributed to the decorative reflects the marginality of all these very same groups, considered as at least incompetent and profoundly dependent on the authority allowing them an existence on its margins. As decorative as it may seem, this visual solution wants to be an act of autonomy of the discourse over the authority of language. It aims to reflect the struggles that are played out in the systematic dichotomy between the authority and subordinate, between the rational and the sensible, between the masculine and the feminine, all of which serve to legitimize patriarchy.



# EWA MAJEWSKA

## #wypierdalać! A XXI century Manifesto of the Angry Tired Housewives

*“My problem is a problem of a woman”*

Ewa Partum



Here in Poland we have perhaps never been modern. Yet sometimes we are forced to be so much more modern, than anyone else.

If modernity consists of combining critical self reflection with the audacity to use reason for the purpose of building the future, sometimes it really happens here, and to a great extent. Now, in October and November 2020 for example, women and our allies protest against the anti-abortion measures introduced on October 22nd by the Polish Constitutional Court. While some focus on the introduction of words such, as #wypierdalać, to the official discourse of the current feminist protest, some just say that thousands of

Polish women are practicing Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* on the streets. In terms introduced by Jacques Ranciere we could probably explain that a new “partition of the sensible” (*partage du sensible*) is currently taking place in Poland. We can also say, referencing Rosalyn Deutsche, that we are practicing public art, as it is not merely outside or decorative, but also critically addressing the public/private divide.

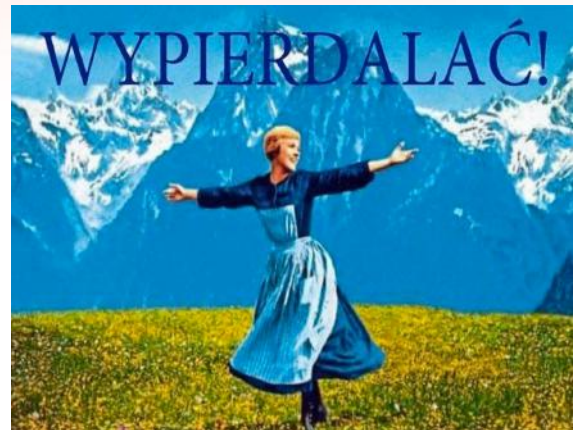
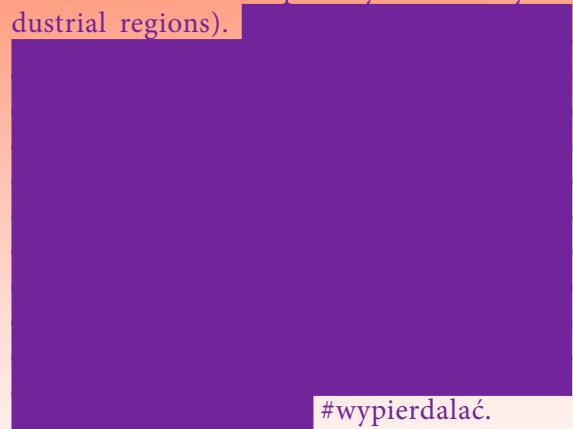
We riot, strike, block the streets and impolitely explain that the time of being nice is now over. We have already been polite.

Since 1997, when abortion was banned in Poland, we have been politely begging for mercy, for the acknowledgement of the simple fact that our reproductive rights are a standard element of medical care; that denying us access to abortion, contraceptives and pre-natal care constitutes a violation of women's rights, of equal rights and is an unconstitutional reduction of our right to medical care. This year the conservative government went too far. Enough is enough. The answer is as often today: #wypierdalać.

The linguists are still discussing whether the introduction of explicit language on the forefront of the current women's protests is ok. Professor Jan Miodek, the beloved media expert of the correct use of the Polish language, is totally in favour of such an experiment. For him, the situation of women requires a radical linguistic take so that the correspondence between language and experienced reality is kept. My own father, a veteran of the "Solidarność" movement, takes a less Aristotelian perspective and simply claims that users have already embraced this new political word, thus those "offended" can #wypierdalać.

The tired housewife in Poland needs no mobilization. We are already so mobilized that when we hear about "the need to mobilize", we vomit or scream. We have to persist, resist and survive the pandemic situation in which the usual expectations of us doing the affective and reproductive labour, not just for free, but also automatically, and sometimes naked, makes us not only tired, but also angry. We live in Poland, a country which for the last 30 years, has tried to catch up with everything — with the West, with democracy, with European Standards, with NATO, USA, EU, and all the neoliberal lure into the possibility of having it all, because it is just around the corner. For 30 years now everything has been just around the corner, thus "one more effort, Poles, and it will be yours". Well, much

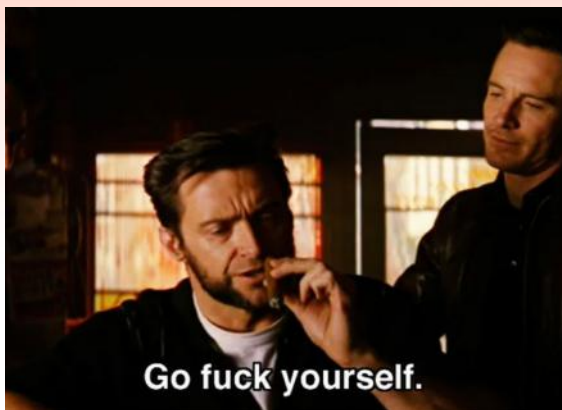
of this never happened and instead we ended up with an unemployment rate as high as 25% in 2005 (officially, unofficially it would be sometimes even 60%, especially in formerly industrial regions).



We have thus never been modern, but at the same time, we were expected to be turbomodern. A new vocabulary, unknown to Bruno Latour, needs to be crafted on the remnants of the Polish democratic state we inhabit today. Turbomodern as a form of acceleration, which in fact pushed us backwards — hence we are tired. And angry. And perhaps also not particularly eager to mobilize even more. Thus responding with #wypierdalać!, even to those kind people, who observe our suffering, and in a futile effort to help us end it, unwillingly propose a poison not a cure.

## #WYPIERDALĄC! A XXI CENTURY MANIFESTO OF THE ANGRY TIRED HOUSEWIVES - EWA MAJEWSKA

As for the meaning of #wypierdalać, it is perhaps best illustrated by a scene in one of the X-men movies, when Wolverine says “go fuck yourselves” to the Professor and Magneto, who find him one day, using Cerebro, and discover with astonishment, that they came across a mutant, who really does not want to join them. #wypierdalać literally means “go fuck yourselves”, however the “we will not cooperate” should also be emphasized.



Ono's performance Cut Piece, first staged in 1964, in which the viewers are invited to take a piece of the artist's clothes, which they first cut out of her outfit, in the intention to commemorate the time women gave us for free so that we can grow. I love that piece.

It helps understanding, where fatigue and anger come from in the life of a tired, angry housewife.



You might be surprised at this choice of illustration for a feminist slogan, as there is nothing feminine in the image I chose, and nothing ladylike. Well, the first answer I have to that you can probably already guess, yet there is something deeper and worth investigating in the unknown and only rarely analyzed figure of an angry, tired housewife, that we should go through. I also like the glitch the image provides. It immediately connects us with the recently published Glitch Feminism Manifesto by Legacy Russell, who claims, that error, mistake, inconsistency and even ghosting are the emblematic elements of the new feminist identity. I couldn't agree more. So — if you only see a man in the middle of the image above, think twice. Think of his caring attitudes, of compassion and sacrifices, of how he got that way. Then — think of Yoko

Look below, at the picture taken in 1985 by Hans Runesson, depicting Danuta Danielsson, a Polish-Jewish immigrant to Sweden, using her handbag to show a neonazi guy what she detests in fascism.



This brings us to the first characteristics of the angry tired housewife:

# #wypierdalać! A XXI century Manifesto the Angry Tired Housewives

## 1. The angry tired housewives are (often) antifascist

What could that possibly mean? Are they fighters? Activists? Do they join RAF or antifascist *militias*? Well, they might, yes. Some of them do. But most often, they just resist the patriarchal, often also racist expectations and demands, on a daily basis. They have more experience in surviving sexism, than many young feminist activists. Their anger is one coming from care — they are not only worried about the state of the world (be it that just around them or more broadly), they actually act to change it. On a daily basis. They are angry and caring at once.

## 2. The tired angry housewives are survivors

Of sexual and/or domestic violence, of date and marital rape, of psychological violence, manipulation, sometimes also economic threats. They had to go through all this at home, sometimes at work or school, sometimes in all these places.

## 3. The tired angry housewives are not welcomed in the public sphere

(hold on – I need to stir my risotto. Yes, I sometimes cook. Being a part-time housewife makes me. Yes, I can't always afford eating outside. But it also relaxes me. In the cookbook I learned the risotto recipe from this dish was depicted as the “typical working Italian housewife's recipe. She could cook and take care of the kids at the same time”. I believe the (obviously male) author of this book never succeeded in such multitasking.

In the project *Ophelias. Iconography of Madness* the artist Zorka Wollny takes the case of the crazy woman, one perturbed by rejection, in love and pain at once. This contradicted story is one of the background threads in *Hamlet*, however in Zorka Wollny's project, 11 actresses of different ages (25-80) and different Polish theaters, stage very different Ophelias, one after another, in a 2 hours performative

# o of wives

experiment, sometimes keeping it very quiet and isolated, sometimes — merging with the audience. In this intensified and repeated performance of women's madness, installed as the central plot of a public performance, we experience not only a recollection of our feelings after a heartbreak (many of us have those memories, I am sure). We also are at first repelled by this sudden invasion of hysterics into the public, however by the time the third or fourth Ophelia presents herself on stage, we are already either gone or rethinking why and how this kind of feminine affect never becomes central in theatre and is never welcomed in public. How about affect in public sphere? #wypierdalać is perhaps also a feminist answer to this version of public sphere, where only the cold *sophoi*, as Karl Marx would call them, alienated from their own feelings, have had access, since centuries.

If you watch Wollny's piece, you also take this case. The case of women gone mad because society allows it, because patriarchy needs its excluded others, whose affect and care labour it mercilessly appropriates and excludes from decision making, public debate and institutional power. Women who are lost. But also women who merely express affect in public.

The madness of showing affect in public and the reciprocal madness of excluding emotions from the public sphere are the two sides of the public sphere. The subject welcomed in the public sphere — the ice-cold *sophos* — as Karl Marx would ironically depict him in his letter to Ludwig Feuerbach from August 11<sup>th</sup> 1844, is just as unsuited for politics as is the crazy, rejected Ophelia. We are all embodied, interconnected, vulnerable and capable of rational decisions, making the public sphere immune to emotions equals forgetting, that — as Wilhelm Reich rightly argued, masses “desire fascism”. Fascism is not merely chosen, nothing is. In Zorka Wollny's work we see the possible emergence of the affective political sphere. And here we find ourselves now, with the angry housewives, in the middle of a feminist, enraged, exhausted, but also resisting, demanding and protesting crowd.





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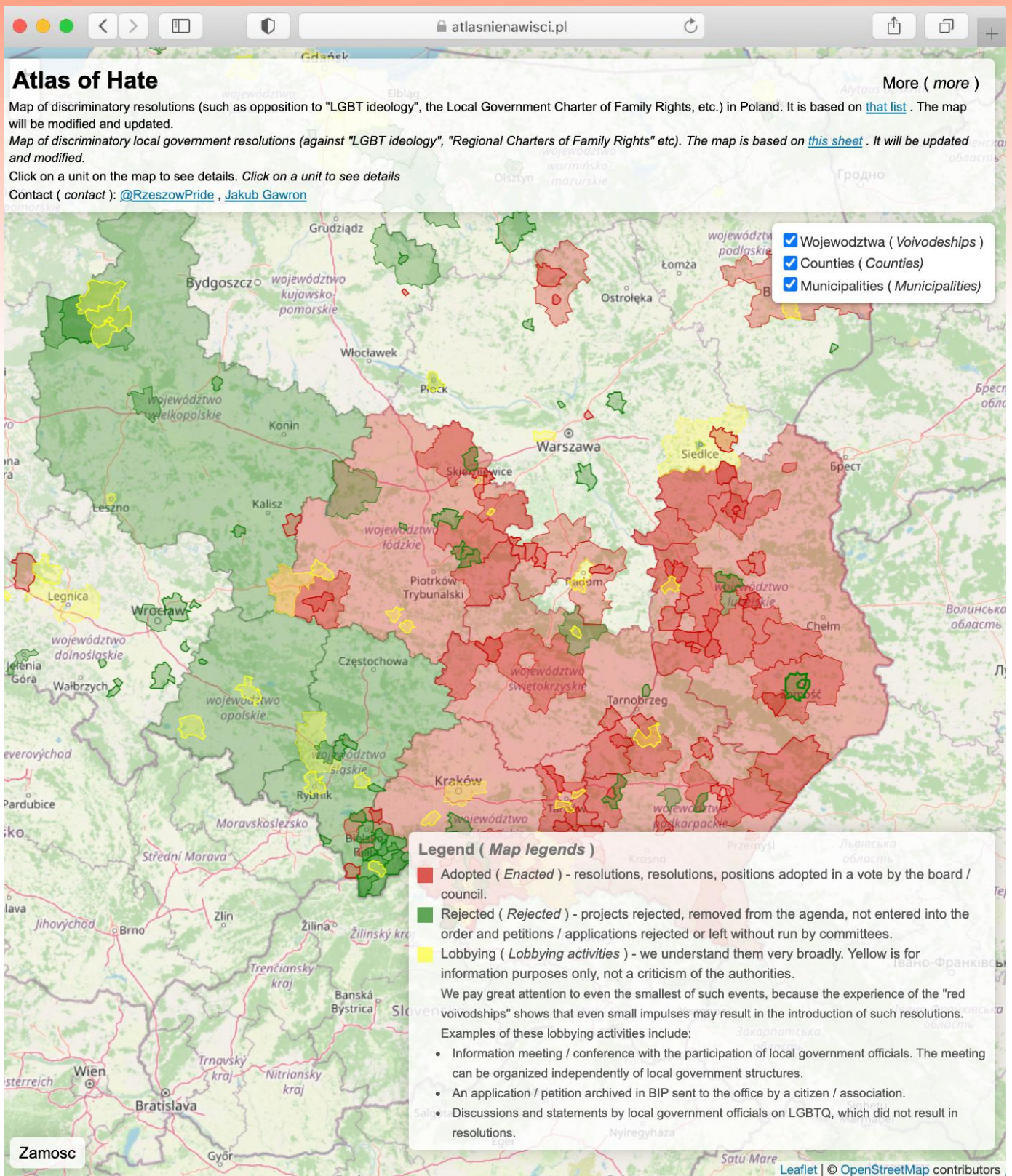
#### 4. The Angry Tired Housewives stand up against the affective state of exception

In the last months, approximately 1/3 of the territory [redacted] has been covered by the so-called “LGBT - free zones”. [redacted]

[redacted] Against this community born of hatred and violence, we want one build on cooperation, care and debate. However, the conditions of such debate demand change, because in contemporary the liberalo-conservative model ancient exclusions are maintained. Thus:



# #WYPIERDALAC! A XXI CENTURY MANIFESTO OF THE ANGRY TIRED HOUSEWIVES - EWA MAJEWSKA



## 5. The Angry Tired Housewives create feminist counterpublics

In the classical models of the public sphere, built on Aristotelian model, almost everyone is excluded. Women, people who need to take care of their basic needs through work, immigrants, refugees, ethnic minorities, the poor — all those groups are excluded. Technically — most of today’s constitutions allow every citizen to participate in political debate. In fact those not socialized as white, privileged men have tremendous problems either in getting there or speaking.

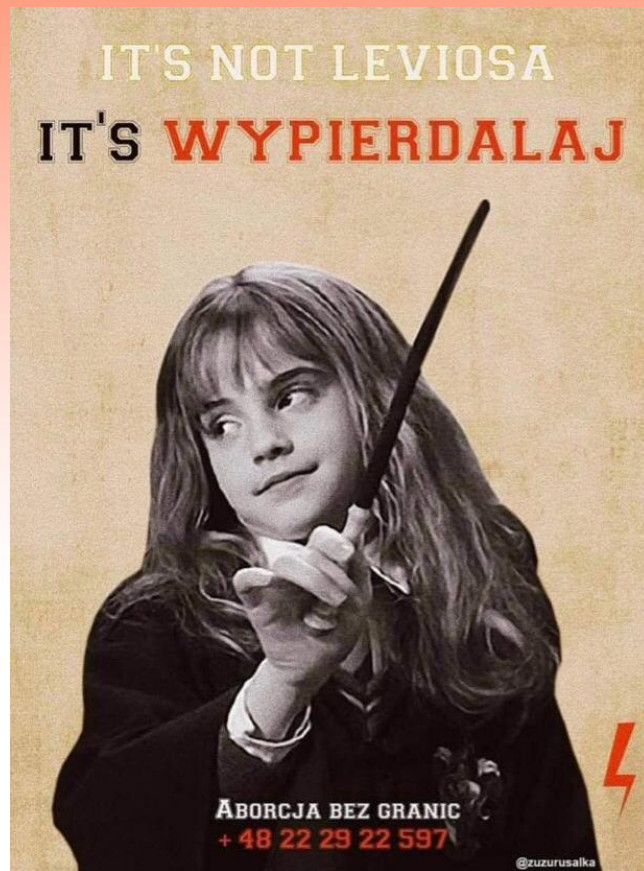
The Angry, Tired Housewives organize counterpublics. In media, meetings, organizations, squats, theaters, students groups and other forms, we unite to offer our critique and alternatives to the abusive, patriarchal rule. We transform the public sphere with our protests, our critique, our art and our resistance. In our diversity, we often seem like a hybrid. Yet — here we are united in the radical demand to acknowledge, that women, refugees and the LGBTQI+ persons are human, and thus deserve all rights, not just a part of what the privileged men dispose of. As solidarity is our weapon, we often strike.

## 6. The Angry Tired Housewives go on Strike

We know what it means to work. We know, what it is to care and to be together, we were socialized this way, but for many of us it was the only way to survive: in poor, migrant, working class, marginalized or peripheral regions together is how we persist. “You will never walk alone” — the slogan first used after the vicious attacks on LGBTQI+ people, is now one of the most popular in the Women’s Strike of October and November 2020. We also like to play with those homophobic misogynists in the government with words they might not know, as they never took care of kids.

Some of our slogans must have been completely incomprehensible for them, as in: “May you, asshole, step on a piece of Lego with your bare foot” or “It’s not *Leviosa*, it is #wypierdalaj” (with an image of Hermione Granger explaining how to pronounce a spell and her wand in her hand).





## 7. The Angry Tired Housewives have nothing to lose

In the situations of attack — on our rights, our dignity, health, lives, housewives unite. I say “we”, because a Housewife in this narrative is someone who takes the serious job of the housewife and does it part-time, full time or occasionally. The term should be taken lightly — to cover more or less all activities of housework, care and affective labor, reproduction, but not necessarily depicting someone who only does these forms of work. Thus — a manifesto of Angry, Tired Housewives is possibly covering for the majority of those of us socialized as women and also some who were not, but still perform this kind of tasks.

Now — in fall 2020 — we pretty much have nothing to lose. Abortion rights, basic dignity, freedom of speech and gathering, the right to neutral court, the right to be an LGBTQI+ person, when all this is denied or contested. We really have not much, perhaps even nothing, to lose. This situation — of the oppressed having nothing to lose, but their chains, has already been discussed, notably in perhaps the most powerful political pamphlet ever written — *the Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

[REDACTED] we experience the scarcity of resources to fund critical, independent media with some ambition to actually discuss the public matters. Thus — we discuss in the streets, in strikes, in workplaces, at homes and online, as the lockdown does not allow for public gatherings outside of the internet. But sometimes debate is not enough — thus we say #wypierdalać.

## 8. The Angry Tired Housewives will not be televised

Although heavily mediatized, the Angry Tired Housewives revolution will not take place in television, radio or online. We know intersubjectivity is mediated, yet — it is not merely composed of communication tools, humans still are involved. Those, whom we gave birth to, raised, those who will be born, those, whom we educate, care for and sustain. Those, whom we love. Although we might think otherwise, affect, solidarity, debate and social change require more, than gigabytes. It takes bodies, the work they engage in, their desires and dreams. All these are interconnected with the commons — as in the air we breath, with sudden difficulty since the smog levels in Poland have reached poisonous levels, and since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are here to care, yet our anger and fatigue are together with us. They inform our demands, strategies and claims, they move us further, as annoyingly for the patriarchal regime as we need them to act.

[REDACTED] We are everywhere. With our weapons of the weak, we shall overcome. #

DR EWA MAJEWSKA – is a feminist philosopher and activist, living in Warsaw. She lectures at the Art Academy in Szczecin, she taught at the University of Warsaw and the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, she was also a visiting fellow at the University of California, Berkeley; ICI Berlin and IWM in Vienna. She published four books and some 50 articles and essays, in journals, magazines and collected volumes, including: *e-flux*, *Signs*, *Third Text*, *Journal of Utopian Studies* or *Jacobin*. Her current research is in Hegel's philosophy, focusing on the dialectics and the weak; feminist critical theory and antifascist cultures.

Her next book, *Feminist Antifascism. Counterpublics of the Common*, will be published in 2021.

# A DEEP EXERCISE IN FAILURE

## DAVID LIVER IN CONVERSATION WITH EWA MAJEWSKA

This interview came to life as an unexpected effect of a conversation we had about the origins of the *Voice Over* project. When I heard that David just approached the Council of Europe and interpellated them as an institution, I felt there is something deeply transformative in such an approach, performative, but also political. Many of us think of institutions, and particularly the distant and monumental ones, in a way shaped by Franz Kafka and his Process – as entities stabilizing us in positions of passive recipients of state or international authorities. So here we see what can happen when such a position of resignation is given a performative twist.

EM - Feminism is today's antifascism for me. It challenges all the fascist presumptions. Would you agree? What do you think of such a perspective?

DL - Absolutely. I have to admit here that I understood the radical importance of feminism pretty gradually and very late. Despite my interest in resistance and critical discourses, for many years feminisms did not find the right place in the way my mind was structuring connections between things. Even if of course I always found it legit, somehow I never felt concerned. That was the fascist on me. There's always a little fascist hiding somewhere in one's mind that says «well, ok who actually cares?» Fascism frequently employs a certain Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* (usually translated as «effect of estrangement or alienation»), but in the opposite sense to Brecht. The German playwright aimed to challenge everyday social reality, to make us awkward and critical with what we usually consider natural and given. By contrast, the same distancing employed by fascism towards social reality and itself, aims to make us comfortable, complacent and uncritical about our present or our history: comfortable in regarding humans as accessories and commodities of its immovable institution. It just works on the basis of laziness. I feel like any kind of ongoing and complex struggle undermining the lazy status of things is antifascism.

EM - Feminist antifascism is really very much about contradicting militarized masculinity. Do you think masculinity – in its culturally hegemonic version - is problematic?

DL - The problem for me is not masculinity itself but its univocity. How it is understood, metabolized and then acted (again I use a performing word). In fact I don't see masculinity as a thing, rather as a transitive trait. A coercive masculinity is the problem like a coercive femininity would be. When you say militarized I hear coercive.

EM - How did you start your magazine? What are the origins of the *Voice Over*?

DL - *Voice Over* started out really as a performance, or more precisely with a performative attitude or intention. I mean, the very first drive was the mental picture of a stranded artist buzzing at the door of such a monumental and historical institution, determined to push it to accept to publish whatever artistic discourses only because of its determinant role on freedom of speech' normative. It was literally that naive, simple, and provocative by me. Let's say intuitive. It turned out as usual that provocation is pointed toward oneself, and once they accepted my project, the drive quickly changed into questioning how political our artistic discourse could really be. I also discovered that I was trying to recreate a certain ideal representation of some kind of family - probably out of the feeling of being lost and estranged in Strasbourg. I needed to gather some key figures around me and just talk with each of them in order to recover some sense of belonging. Of course I became the host of this little tribune that I managed to set up at the Council of Europe, and here we are. The first idea immediately changed as soon as the review found a shape, but the first intention was and is still here with me. Anyway, as Orson Welles once said : «there's a trick in being a host, and I'll catch on doing it before we are done.»



## A DEEP EXERCISE IN FAILURE - DAVID LIVER IN CONVERSATION WITH EWA MAJEWSKA

EM - What is critique for you? And beware - a good answer might establish you as the new Immanuel Kant or Michel Foucault, who also answered this question in their texts...

DL - This will be the first and unique time my name will be lay beside those of Kant and Foucault, so, I'll take it. I would say that critique is an interruption in the order of things, or in the flow of knowledge. Some sort of dent or scratch. I think that our incomplete knowledge of a subject becomes a positive feature of the very same subject, which therefore becomes contradictory to itself.

EM - What kind of artist are you?

DL - I'm a fairly angry artist in contradiction with myself. I decided very soon not to produce art, I mean artworks. I'm in fact motivated in developing complex multilayered and often contradictory situations throughout what I consider a general storytelling filled with obscure connections. I think of it as an exploratory mode of engagement with reality - a form of self-provocation. As I said there is pretty much no artwork produced out of it, but at the same time there are no boundaries between disciplines. Action and intentions are all there is. Sometimes I cheat on myself and produce something that I would later regret. But hey, self contradiction is part of it. I can't really stick. I'm weak. *Voice Over* is also an episode within the general plot of my own practice. Even though it is a beautiful achievement (especially if I think of it as the realization of the imagined dialogue with the Council of Europe), somehow I consider it as a failure. I feel like it did not produce enough of effective political discourse. Let's say that there's no subversion of the inherent patriarchy of the institutional political discourse. But that's ok, all of my actions are some sort of exercises on failure and on the incapacity of handling a practice, of doing what is needed to, to react properly and constructively, to stick to a language or a subject, or to be creative. I like limits, they are an actual outline of who people are, and at the same time, once revealed as a work of art these limits automatically become fiction. I think I'm old, I'm still stuck in old mythologies.

## VOICE OVER

EM - What weakness means to you?

DL - A fluid definition of oneself. A fluid definition of an optimistic dissent.

EM - Is the *Voice Over* an ongoing, participatory performance?

DL - It is probably more of an ongoing archive of the initial performance. And the performative act was actually just an intention of a performance. But seriously, where does a performance begin? Do you feel like taking part in a participatory performance?

EM - Let's reconstruct the previous issues of *Voice Over*. Who is Jimmy Durham for you?

DL - Jimmie Durham is someone who sends me over-punctuated messages like: «american jews:::;;:,,» all of my life I have loved jack tea garden, the strong trombone player of the 20s and 30s. he was cherokee. played with louis armstrong and had his own band for awhile. this morning I learned that he was really jewish.... from new orleans. it was difficult to be black or jewish in those days but east of the Mississippi to be indian was ok, since we had no land left, nor anything else except the romanticism of hollywood...»

Jimmie is the artist that encourages me, this is how I perceive my relationship to him. He has this authority on me that allows me to continue doing whatever I do. Don't ask me why, I don't know. He doesn't know of course.

By starting *Voice Over* quoting Jimmie's «I don't want to be reconciled» I tried to make it my project's general statement, and also narratively to put some spoken words on the picture of the performance I imagined *Voice Over* to be: the artist knocking at the council of Europe's door.

## A DEEP EXERCISE IN FAILURE - DAVID LIVER IN CONVERSATION WITH EWA MAJEWSKA

EM - Why would you ask a poet about artificial intelligence? What was Kenneth Goldsmith's role for you?

DL - Because a poet is definitely a translator. I thought that a poet might be someone seeing something that we might miss when looking at artificial intelligence, which is an attempt of translation. Especially Kenneth Goldsmith who made data the primary source of his poetry, and who created this kind of distanced literature, that could be seen, again as a Brechtian *Aparte* of reality, breaking into the translation of reality. I know you want to know what figure he represents for me. I would say he has the role of the big brother. The one who is better than you are in doing what you try to do. See how subtle the verticality can be, insinuating itself in one's mind? Anyway there's a way out, the same that a younger brother eventually finds to make it, and perhaps drift away from the initial model.

EM - What it means to build a family? Who is Maria Thereza Alves?

DL - There are so many things to consider here. What is a family? How does it work? What are the roles there? Why keep such roles? Why keep a family together? Why couldn't it be more fluid? Perhaps the who is who of a family should be inconsistent. I have no clue. But I feel like what you surprisingly (or provocatively) express as «building a family» is an acknowledgement of weakness. The expression of a need. Maria Thereza Alves is a very witty and serious person. I found in her a stunning ability in controlling her knowledge and her experiences, something I'll never be able to do. I had an aunt like her, quietly influential and always over the scrum.

EM - How do you think feminism matters? What is your (family)relation to me?

DL - Feminism matters because we still fail at it. It's still hard to assimilate even though one really tries to. I feel like there's always some sort of interruption in the process. It is a constant failure. I speak for myself here, and I shouldn't even have the chance to say something on the subject I guess. Not just because I'm not an expert but because this is probably no space for men's assertion. We assert everywhere else already. That having been said, and continuing the exercise of creating a family, I guess that my relation to you is that you take up the role of being me. I'm very comfortable with the idea of finishing *Voice Over* with you as a representation of myself within the picture of this ideal family. I really like this. Especially because I can express my learning through you, on a subject where there's no rightful place for myself and my white cis masculine incompetence. But there's a place to make for resetting and reprogramming.

EM - What would you like to do in the future? Would you like to continue the magazine in some version?

DL - My personal future activity is not of *Voice Over's* concern, and even less here in this feminist issue. *Voice Over's* future is uncertain, this might be its very last issue or the beginning of a completely new dimension. I'm trying to figure it out. You know, this is much closer to an independent DIY artsy piece of publishing fooling around with a big institution than a proper magazine. It could die today or follow new paths transforming itself — even under a new lead — and take off. Either ways are perfectly fine to me.

EM - Do you think there is a future for Europe? what should it do to have one?

DL -

I don't know why this comes up to my mind, I would have preferred to finish this interview by quoting Andy Kaufman (the first world intergender wrestling champion), but still, let's finish with this one by Frantz Fanon : «Now, comrades, now is the time to decide to change sides.»

Thank you for this conversation! #

# VOICE OVER

MAGAZINE FOR ALTERNATIVE DISCOURSE

N°4  
BIS

**PATRIARCHY**



WITH

**LYRA PRAMUK  
GABRIEL FONTANA  
FABIEN PINAROLI**

# VOICE

MAR. 2021





# OVER

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MAR. 2021



# **LYRA PRAMUK**

## The song of the whale and the sound of the sledge

In spring 2020, Lyra Pramuk releases a highly acclaimed debut album where each track is a tapestry of sound whose sole source is her own voice. Techniques of superimposition, digital transpositions and numerous manipulations make her voice fluid and constantly changing, all the more elusive as it is systematically devoid of words. Rarely in pop music have we seen such a balance between a thought, a body and an artistic expression. Indeed, as a trans woman, Lyra Pramuk's voice is not an organ like any other: at once an indelible marker of gender, it is nevertheless plastic and even more malleable since Lyra had a practice of lyrical singing at a very early age. Just by simply describing the basis of her music, one immediately sees two superimposed layers: the very human search for the control and sublimation of nature, through academic training, and the construction of an extended body, through computer technology. But many other aspects constitute the artist's research. As a reader of Rosi Braidotti, Lyra Pramuk is perfectly aware that we are by essence multiple, as much by what has constituted us as such as by the infinite spectrum of our becoming.

1) I would like to start with a (personal) translation taken from a Paul B. Preciado's essay, dealing with the experience of his voice as a trans person.

"Yet, for now, inside our capital-oil-linguistic épistémè, my trans identity has to be built in a low-tech DIY way. If we have spent as much energy to find a way to communicate with the trees as we have spent extracting and transforming oil, maybe we would now be able to illuminate cities thanks the photosynthesis, or we would feel plant sap running in our veins, but our western civilization focused on Capital and domination, in taxonomy and identification, and not cooperation and mutation. In another épistémè, my new voice would be a whale's voice or the sound of a sleigh ; now it's simply a male voice." Can you relate to this excerpt? What would be your personal definition of "mutation"?

**Wow, I love this quote. This is really powerful. How much pain and anxiety come from this extraction, this domination, this blinding transparency within which we are all forced to exist in the Western world. Our insistence on being able to see and name and label everything is a means of control, that I believe is ultimately rooted in fear. Fear of growing old, fear of being inferior, fear of death, fear of "The Other," maybe all of these at different times and for different spells.**

**I relate very much to this idea expressed by Preciado, that our identities are very much limited to the constraints within which this epoch casts us. At least that's how I've understood him. We are mutating creatures by nature. While it's true that we have developed customs and regularities and traditions, and that much of our culture has ossified through colonialism and capitalism, our species has always simultaneously been queer, we have played with our identities, we have made relationality fun, we have realized our place within the universe of things.**

**By one view I am a woman, by another, a trans person, by another, a spirit, a fleshy primate, or a cyborg. Among my nearest and closest, I hope to be seen as a cute animal. I find it both fun and very useful to deploy different strengths and selves in different contexts as needed. Layers and shells and potential selves.**

2) Thanks to a legal progress and change of mentality, trans identity is now even more fluid than it used to be. Trans identity appears like a spectrum, and a perpetual reinvention of gender and identity. Can it be a model to think of art and music in another way?

**What if this progress, this perceived newness around the spectrum of trans identity, were not a progression but a return? If we zoom out and look at trans identity and trans rights more historically, there have always been trans people on nearly every continent. The erasure of trans people coincided with colonialism, racism, conquests of European superiority, “reeducation,” forced land acquisition, slavery, rape, genocide, the levelling and dismantling of entire peoples and cultures. What if the spectrum of trans identity, which so many today perceive as new, were just a first gasp of healing the deep wounds and erasure of trans people wrought by colonial domination for centuries?**

**I am not prepared today to discuss trans identity in aesthetic terms and in relation to art. I think that human rights and freedoms must be seen as equally if not even more important than aesthetics of art and music, no matter how much art and music do feed me and make my life. Perhaps we as a global society could continually reinvent ourselves according to new needs and new collective ethics that would empower and free more of us. Maybe some of those newly empowered and freed individuals would come up with some pretty amazing artistic processes?**

According to my understanding of Rosi Braidotti’s work, post-human means expanding beyond human supremacy, beyond the enshrinement of all of life and experience as of or related to humanity.



## VOICE OVER

3) Voice is an important code that defines gender. Is it one of the main reasons why you chose to base your music on your voice? What led you to this aesthetic?

**My voice is and was always the main instrument that I had, before I even began to unravel questions of gender in myself. Perhaps being a proto-trans queer kid in rural Pennsylvania subconsciously encouraged me to find a voice I felt I didn't have, but that would only be speculation. As a sensual animal my voice is and has always been one of the main ways that I communicate. It is through the voice that each of us is able to connect, inquire, express love and desire and curiosity, guilt and sorrow, and sentiments that cannot even be expressed in words. I have always been interested in the voice for its expressive and communicative potential. This was solidified for me when I studied voice quite intensively at Eastman School of Music for my Bachelors Degree. For me it is most natural to work with my voice as instrument and material.**

4) Has voice a different status in trans identity? How could we reflect on transgender voice training apps through the lens of the cyborg concept?

**Wow! So I just found out that there were transgender voice training apps from this interview. I had no idea. But of course it makes sense that these tools exist.**

**There is immense pressure on transgender people for our voices to match our gender presentation, especially for those of us who slide hard to one side of that spectrum. I mean, I am a woman, and while I initially felt immense pressure to speak a certain way, my speaking voice has just changed slowly over time as I have come more into myself.**

**The expectations that our society places on trans bodies can be intense, unrealistic, and traumatic. I am not so interested in fantasising about some notion that trans people are more "themselves" from using voice apps or having surgeries or certain external**

The expectations that our society places on trans bodies can be intense, unrealistic, and traumatic.

**markers of gender. Yes, technologies help us trans people align with ourselves and feel good about who we are. Yes, it's a process to realize who we are as humans (not just for trans people). Do I think trans people should have to utilise as many cyborg technologies as possible to speak or be seen as real? Absolutely not. These technologies can be life-affirming and even life-saving, but I think trans people's rights to freedom and autonomy and self-definition are absolutely essential. It's fun and important to be able to relate transness to cyborg and post human thinking, and I think more trans people who do so if society would even let trans people catch a breath.**

5) One of the characteristics of your music also that you don't use lyrics (only one old track includes lyrics). Is it a way to create a fictional secret / specific language? Or to symbolize a universal means of communication?

This ambivalence could also find a resonance in your interest in poetry and spirituality, to realities that are as much secret yet universal languages. How are all these realities connected?

**So I don't know. Words can actually destroy a lot. I cannot speak logically of my music in some way, like I have a master plan. I think that there are simply some feelings, some truths, some things that exist in this universe that do not need to be unraveled, explained, quantified, or made fully transparent. There are things that do not need to make sense to everyone on earth immediately. This is just how I feel to best express what is inside of me at this time of my life. Maybe I don't have the words.**

6) Is your position as an artist connected to technology as much as to poetry, spirituality, traditions and identity allows you to envisage a different future?

**Yes! To envision a future, to remember a past, to release a body.**

### 7) Does post-human mean post-gender too?

There are many definitions and schools of thought about what post-human means, and I am not so well-read. According to my understanding of Rosi Braidotti's work, post-human means expanding beyond human supremacy, beyond the enshrinement of all of life and experience as of or related to humanity. This encompasses viewing humanity as one small part of a complex network of biological life, natural matter, and technology. She promotes the idea that other forms of life, and even non-biological matter and technology, can be viewed as knowledge producers, subjects within an expanded frame of life and community. So in this sense, the human or even biological constraints of gender would lose some supremacy according to Braidotti's stirring manifesto (which I quite like).

Perhaps the post-human is not being "over" gender, but opening gender and identity to new forms. In the Xenofeminist Manifesto by Laboria Cuboniks, Helen Hester promotes a "gender-abolitionism" that would "fight against those limitations imposed by gender." She goes on: "Instead of eliminating differences between genders, we want them to proliferate. Let a hundred sexes bloom!" This idea resonates with me as one that offers freedom and acknowledges difference of experience and identification. #

Interview by Florent Delval

LYRA PRAMUK fuses classical vocalism, pop sensibilities, performance practices and contemporary club culture in what can best be described as futurist folk music. Citing musical collaborators such as Holly Herndon and Colin Self, collaborations with the visual artist Donna Huanca, freelance writing projects, and an ongoing international performance schedule, there are a variety of creative nodes that come to feed back into Lyra's practice.

Where the voice is deployed most ima-

ginatively and seductively for Pramuk is just where the orbit of electronic music is conceived as a modular spectrum. Seizing on recorded work as well as performance to be a process of sampling and synthesis, genres are cross-pollinated and extended, returning all the while back to her formative impulse that storytelling is song, and song is a means of short-circuiting the structures we are sold as a real difference in this world.

Lyra is based in Berlin, Germany.





Lyra Pramuk, Fountain. (Bedroom Community, 2020)





FABIEN PINAROLI

# COUNSELING FOR FIGHTING AGAINST PATRIARCHY

the feminicide curve is reaching new heights and there is a strong temptation to respond to it by separating the oppressed from the oppressors, of which — being male, white, and western — i am inevitably a part in the eyes of some feminists. strange as it may seem, the binarity and division of humanity into two opposite and mutually exclusive categories is not the ideal precondition for fighting against domination. this is true for patriarchy, but also for any violence exercised by one group of humanity against the other.

absolute binary categories exist only on the side of classifications produced by human beings, the only reason for a dividing line concerns the dominant order: this is the only way to organise privilege and supremacy, the woman, the non-european, the black, the old, the transsexual or the artist finding themselves on the other side. the more so as normativity is beginning to take hold at all levels of the response, whether militant, academic or institutional, normativity, turned against the aggressor, means that members of a culture seen as «dominant» are not considered suitable to speak out or to take action; belonging to a group, de facto, constitutes a form of oppression and spoliation. why would the *or* not give way to the *and*? this is the object of my positioning as an artist, to give particular importance to and in cooperations. this positioning is echoed in recently published feminist texts, which encouraged me to speak here. my struggle runs parallel to those of the feminists. i am a male, white, western, artist, feminist. as i fight against normativity, against binarism, against violence and injustices, i want to share my experience here by formulating a piece of advice for anyone who speaks out against the injustices suffered by women and, more broadly, against all forms of violence against minorities, whether cultural, gendered, racialized, etc.

### *and vs or (queer becoming)*

the patriarchal system is not only a system of oppression against women but today it is a specific logic of global capitalism. one of the root causes of women's condition in the world has been approached from a materialist feminist perspective by silvia federici in *caliban and the witch: women, bodies and primitive accumulation*. enclosures in western europe and the exploitation of forced and free labour in the colonies contributed, among other things, to the transformation of men's bodies into machine tools and to the submission of women's bodies to the reproduction of labour force. over and above everything else necessary was the destruction of women's power. the extermination of the witches took care of it. the violence which presided over this primitive accumulation was therefore not only a vector of a concentration of capital and workers exploitable at mercy, class domination also needed another accumulation, namely that of «differences and divisions within the working class itself, where hierarchies based on gender, «race» and age, became part of class domination and the constitution of the modern proletariat<sup>1</sup>. »

sayak valencia, in *transfeminism is not a binarism of gender*<sup>2</sup> speaks of western rationality as «a phallogocratic mode of production of subjectivity». she identifies two pillars, bloody capitalism and masculinity. today, the latter is based on a white, heterosexual normativity that must be fought because it is as violent as neoliberalism is. what can be done about what is foreign to this paradigm? a queer becoming turns into a means of struggle to break down normativity and its corollary, hierarchy. what is in the norm is superior, what is not is inferior. the term queer is understood here as more extensive than a new category that would be situated between the two classical identities of masculine and feminine, it is an opposition to all normativity, a celebration of the fluidities between borders and categories, a queer attitude is a dissidence from the dominant society on all fronts.

supporting the struggles of oppressed people is essential: gendered and sexual oppression, but also geographical, economic, generational, mental, militant, artistic, etc. becoming queer could be the step to take for any person, individual or moral, who intends to act while not being clearly identified as part of an oppressed minority. queer becoming would be as many experiences of *and*.

<sup>1</sup>— *caliban et la sorcière : femmes, corps et accumulation primitive*, chapter « accumuler le travail et avilir les femmes », paris, entremonde, 2014, p. 102

<sup>2</sup> — <https://friction-magazine.fr/le-transfeminisme-nest-pas-un-binarisme-de-genre-de-sayak-valencia/>

### an experience which founds the counsel

twenty years ago, i made a performance: two years and a bit of torching dust, cleaning, cooking. i was experimenting with «becoming a housewife», a reversal of roles in the stereotypes of the bourgeois family. i tried to thwart the construction of gender in my daughters, i made disguises of grandfather clocks in painted cardboard instead of buying beautiful pink princess dresses, white tulle and plastic diadems, i read in the evenings *sleeping handsome* and *pussy in boots*... today, i realise that i have finally reproduced the conditioned reflexes of a woman raising her children at home. i became an actor in my own confinement, since our constituting constructions were impossible to dismantle with the means i had given myself. the reversal of roles revealed its limits and since then, i have shifted the field of resistance over multiple territories. i lead it in a decentralized way, often alongside women on quite diverse levels, intertwining private life, artistic and curatorial practices, writing, etc. the enemy, patriarchy, is reinforced by reinforcing the gender polarization in separate and exclusive essences, reversing domestic roles was no longer enough, it was necessary to go beyond gendered polarities. a man on all fours under another man who takes him is indecent, he is weak and vulnerable, he puts all men to shame, he becomes unbearable in the phallus reign. a man under a woman is worse. and yet... i am indifferent to the boundaries imposed by neo-liberal and heteronormed morality. i find myself under other men sometimes, under other women too, and there is real happiness in being penetrated, from a physical and mental point of view, since these two planes make one. i share my daily life with a woman who is also a man. she feels her masculinity as coming from a previous life, her body, her attitudes, her ideas bear witness to this; when we are in bed, above/below, active/passive, dominant/dominated are no longer binary categories but elements of the great game of reversibilities we indulge in. we are in line with the contra-sexual contract suggested by paul b. preciado. the anus and the dildo often replacing the cock and the pussy. if, according to donna haraway, «the body is politics by other means», anything that blurs the boundaries, anything foreign to duality can become a threat against the patriarchal system and global capitalism, the two ideologies embedded in each other.

## VOICE OVER

### the artist is part of a minority

over time, my struggle has therefore moved over erogenous zones, but also in heterogeneous fields. in that of art, what best defines me is a fluidity that works in concert with the fluidity established in my sexual practices. i am indefinable in terms of artistic categories, neither fully an artist nor a conventional curator, teacher to keep in touch with young people, sometimes a critic, often a mediator and a social worker in the spirit of certain institutions that finance my cooperative projects. on Saturdays: car park attendant, i stay connected to people who do not attend the ecosystems of culture. the fluidity of competences and roles allows me not to wait for the exhibition or the collectors who will make me live. this fluidity is a weapon against the pressure and oppression that the art market organises towards the artist — an interchangeable part of the system since he is the market value and not its actor. kept at the bottom of the ladder, the artist needs the exhibition, the gallery owner, the collector and the museum. the art system reproduces the capitalistic system, reproducing its hierarchical and patriarchal organisation where the artist is both the working class and the moral guarantor (the one in need) allowing the perpetuation of the system itself. against this functioning of the art market, i oppose a conception of art close to that of politics: as the production of an analysis of what is suspended (and not yet formulated) in society and the formulation of a form: aesthetic on the one hand, legislative on the other.

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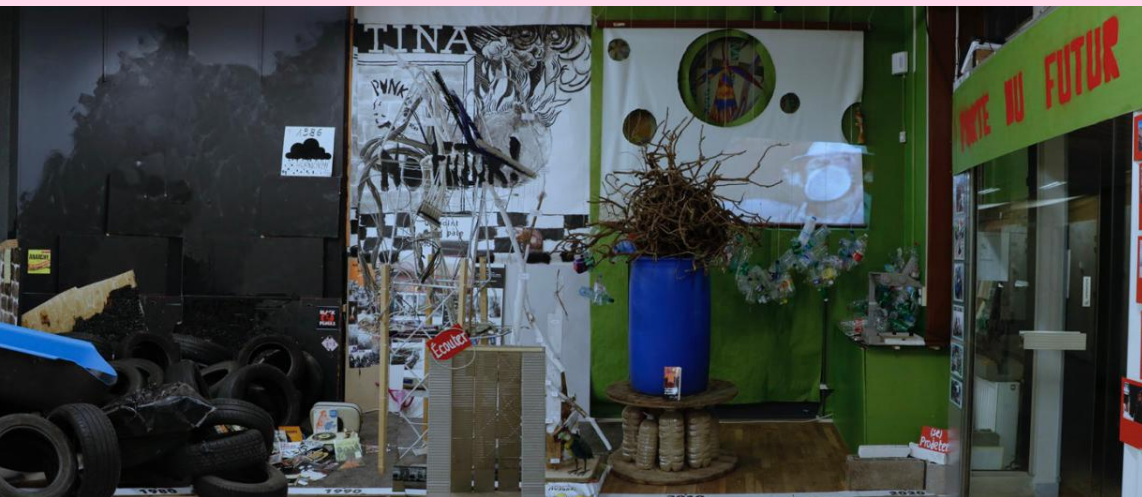


i have not integrated myself into any of the elements that play the game of the art market. i simply refute it. it has no consistency for me. denying it is part of my strategy. often i carry out my artistic activity simultaneously in an art venue and in the civil society.



## COUNSELING FOR FIGHTING AGAINST PATRIARCHY - FABIEN PINAROLI

my strategy consists in addressing a group of people (about ten women and men, of very different ages, cultures and social positions). we work on an artistic project and according to a cooperative relationship mode. the subject matter is studied in depth for a period of time ranging from four months to two years and if possible we conduct our relationships, exchanges and achievements in a non-confrontational and non-competitive way. we seek appropriate means to analyze the project in a shared way, the situations we invent to move the project forward and the conflicts that may arise within the group. finally, we work together in the same spirit to reach a common end acceptable to all. the dynamics can be described by this metaphor: the participants and I are spread out on either side of the banks of a river, in different universes and with different cultures. the river symbolises the context that we do not master at the beginning. within the group, we all have a different point of view and each piece of knowledge is partial, incomplete. no one has a solution to the problem, but each one brings elements to the construction, all the work lies in the realization of a common work comparable to a bridge that has moved each one of the protagonists to take him/her to the others. once the group is over the river, we can look and appreciate the problem as well as the answer given, the point of view is different because each one of us has contributed to its construction and to the change of the group's situation. at this stage, the work is not finished, it is transforming as we are transforming; we can, along



*timeline « au nord du futur »*

curated by fabien pinaroli and david wolle. presented in october 2020 in its final version at the CCO La Rayonne (villeurbanne-lyon france). with: halim brahmi, christian couzinou, marie-christine duvivier, lilie fréchure, omar haimer and his two sons, hadj & abdelmalek, mourad hamouda, farida hasnaoui, zoé martin. with the contribution of florence leray. <https://vimeo.com/499234579>

the way, conceive another project within the project and embark on it for three months; or we can be offered a suite in another place. the work is transformed (bridge, boat, submarine, hot-air balloon...) and makes us travel.



## VOICE OVER

in these cooperative projects nobody knows what art is. as an artist, i do not allow myself to give criteria, standards or definitions, it is impossible and unproductive in such a framework. on the contrary, i take on the role of gatherer and then follower rather than leader, i abandon the privileged position of the artist, i allow myself to be penetrated by the culture, knowledge and ideas of others; we build a common knowledge, we elaborate common structures without totally solving a problem, we cooperate: we «work together», this act of building a common work moves us and our cooperation changes us.

these projects are hybrid. they never totally fit into an easily identifiable, artistic, militant, socio-cultural category... they are foreign to the canons in place and even in the field of art, very plastic and accepting extreme deformations, certain ingredients give them a strange character. one could say they are queer.

one of these projects is called timeline - north of the future. it is a historical account of events related to the silk district in villeurbanne (lyon, france). the installation was worked on collectively and in a situated way by a group of inhabitants, it was conceived and initiated by david wolle and i accompanied the creative process. the principle is to construct the narrative in three dimensions. the audience can therefore walk through it, see it from afar, touch it up close, feel it, etc. it can go through events, climb on a character, stretch out over a period. it is a model of a piece of our history where pain, revolts, imagination and poetry are inscribed. the twelve people gathered around this project in january 2018 worked for two years on the basis of their memories, encounters, the traces that history has left in the neighbourhood, followed by in-depth research at times, but also the aesthetic issues that arise when building an artistic installation. in the effervescence of discussions and fabrication, personal stories have intertwined with those of the neighbourhood and, of course, with the «big» history. the period 1800-2052 was the object of the investigation. the events, periods and key figures are represented in the form of objects, volumes and sculptures. an installation to be experienced by entering this twenty-metre strip full of multiple surprises and a few pitfalls. this frieze constitutes a rewriting of history, a new, collective, situated and sensitive version. It contains alternative narratives to the official history which, too often, has been written by the victorious ones.

**mutation and *possessão***

in a feminist theory of violence, françoise vergès makes a virulent focus on watered-down, white and bourgeois feminism, playing the game of patriarchy and neo-liberalism.

civility and respectability do not provide the energy to combat domination and oppression.

instead, it contributes to the perpetuation of violence and imposes itself today at the expense of other feminisms, she quotes mona eltahawy who looks the patriarchy straight in the eye and says: «i'm going to fuck you». it addresses patriarchy and a feminism which

victimises women and would like them to remain polite in their demands, to remain civilised. fuck you ! even if it is not directly addressed to me — i am neither a rapist nor powerful — i still take it for

myself, male, white, western, but I accept that to

get fucked. as a matter of fact i accept that a woman climbs on me and i even anticipate, i get down on all fours. i am able to mutate, i make the first of the queer militant actions, rearing up while françoise vergès climbs on me, she rides me,

she's taking the reins and again, i agree to be penetrated.

in yoruba culture, in brazil, in candomblé ceremonies the deities «straddle» the disciples orishas reincarnate in their descendants the voodoo initiates go into a trance

they are possessed

who intends to fight against sexism without being a woman must agree to open up to let other, possibly distant people enter him that straddle him rethinking the bridge built over a river a cooperative platform working together the queer approach reconfigure programs and lines of work this bridge allows these distant people to gather the river inaccessible : human rights no one is ever clean enough to go bathing in it from both shores an ideal build on a case-by-case basis non-hierarchically

horizontal after every scandalous event

in every situation of oppression the bridge for watching draw inspiration from human rights that flow at our feet nobody gives lessons not to be a leader being a follower a relationship that lives that grows

the outcome is not just the application of norms everyone brings their own know-how their social skills each one is changed a common realization in terms of human rights democracy equality rule of law right to life the result of the action accepted by its peers and not by a supranational body

## VOICE OVER

Artist, critic and curator, FABIEN PINAROLI is interested in the potential of creations not indexed on artistic mythologies. The study and implementation of collective modalities within and outside the artistic field are at the centre of his preoccupations.

He is one of Harald Szeemann's co-authors. *Individual methodology* (JRP | Ringier, 2008).

In 2012, he conceived the *CoB#2* project, the three-step reenactment of a 1976 historical exhibition: *Celebration of the Body* by the N.E. Thing Co (Musée des Moulages, Lyon; CAP-Centre d'arts plastiques, Saint-Fons; UCL and Raven Row in London).

In 2013 he was curator of the exhibition *Jan Baxter&* (Raven Row, London) and in 2014 he edited the collective work *Re: vers une histoire mineure des performances et des expositions* (it:éditions) which was published in English in 2018.

Recently he has proposed *120 cows* (CAP-Centre d'arts plastiques, Saint-Fons, 2019), *Re: Celebration of the body*, (MacKenzie Art Gallery, Regina, SK, Canada, 2018) and *indexmakers* (19 Crac, Montbéliard, 2017).

With David Wolle, he is currently leading the TimeLine project "North of the Future", a cooperative work that consists of writing a collective work with a group of residents in three dimensions of a subjective and situated history of the Silk district (CCO La Rayonne, Villeurbanne, 2018-2020).

8 march 2019 international women's day around the world mc donald has reversed the capital *m* in his logo to make it the *w* of women in lyon we propose within the framework of the exhibition *120 vaches* a discussion «eco-feminist, witches and women's condition in capoeira» with female capoeiristas paradoxical situation ritualized danced

combat origin : anti-colonial liberation struggle

but still gendered oppression  
men capoeiristas

machists

violences

women of the global south  
a rock and a hard place

we are caught between

rock = western racism and misogyny

declares wanting to save women living elsewhere  
indifferent to the patriarchy it conveys all the same.

an elsewhere

neither western nor white

hard place = our communities

want women to keep quiet

by talking, we are harming them

in the name of the fight's priorities we must choose

between 2 patriarchies

between 2 machisms

## COUNSELING FOR FIGHTING AGAINST PATRIARCHY - FABIEN PINAROLI

we black and racialized feminists  
we discussed it at length

are aware of this:

these 2 patriarchies and machisms are not symmetrical in the face  
of white power

racialized men are the targets of white supremacist violence  
and of its western feminist accomplice

we defend a theory and a practice which aims at the  
advent of a patriarchalized, post-racist and post-capitalist society

we will make fear change sides<sup>3</sup>

to be straddled to open up to the means of struggles that are  
being set up against us

the most radical feminism carried by racialized women from  
the globalized south

working to create dissent from conventional norms and  
methods

the causes are deeply rooted in our subjectivities

let us profoundly transform the means of  
action

let's draw inspiration from intersectional struggles  
disruptive reorganisations

it's not the macdonald's *m* that we're going to knock over

becoming queer in tune with the struggles

feminists trans and queer

we will be transformed we will not recognize ourselves

the counsel = start moulting right now #

<sup>3</sup>— françoise vergès, *pour une théorie féministe de la violence, pour une politique antiraciste de la protection*, la fabrique éditions, paris, 84-85



# ***EXIT THE HEMICYCLE***

**GABRIEL FONTANA**

***PLAYING OUT DEMOCRACY: THE  
OF A MALE POWER REGIME.***

***MUCH LIKE A STADIUM, THE PARLIAM  
MONY, A BUILDING WHICH ALLOWS HU  
IN A SEMICIRCLE. THE ADVENT OF THE  
WITHIN THE EARLIEST FORMS OF UR  
HOLD A SPACE FOR A COMMON NARRA  
TENSIONS FIND THEIR WAY ONTO THE***

MAR. 2021

## **THE SPATIALISATION**

**MENT IS A PLACE OF CEREMONY  
HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE TO SIT  
THE CIRCULAR SHAPE SHOWS,  
URBANISATION, THE NEED TO  
A SPACE WHERE GEOPOLITICAL  
THE FIELD OF PLAY.**



## PLAYING OUT DEMOCRACY: THE SPATIALISATION OF A MALE POWER REGIME.

Much like a stadium, the parliament is a place of ceremony, a building which allows hundreds of people to sit in a semicircle. The advent of the circular shape shows, within the earliest forms of urbanisation, the need to hold a space for a common narrative where geopolitical tensions find their way onto the field of play.

Europe adopted the hemicycle hall both in Brussels and in Strasbourg as a homage to the semicircle of the Greek and Roman amphitheatres during the height of Neoclassicist fever. This reference to antiquity was to give the new state's assemblies the aura of gravitas and ancient anchoring <sup>1</sup>. However, if the bedrock of democracy can be found amongst the ruins of Olympia, should we not question whether it is this forum of normative consensus that is still carried within the competition of modern democracy? And can architecture prevent parliamentary politics from reproducing rituals of an old patriarchal and colonial society?

### Games of negotiation

In Ancient Greece, sport was not an activity of leisure, it was used to train virtue and a format used for discourse. The open forum of public assembly that is characteristic of direct democracy evolved from earlier public gatherings at Olympia, where free inquiry and concern for morality were encouraged through physical training, discussion and debate among citizens. Many ancient Greek wrestlers and Olympians were philosophers and political figures who brought their studies and ideas to places designed for physical exercise <sup>2</sup>.

It is pertinent that the Greek word *agôn*, which referred both to an athletic contest and the place where the people would gather to watch it, shares its origins with the word, *agora*, the familiar term for a city's public market place <sup>3</sup>. This converging attention of the many, was always a great political opportunity. At first, the stadium brought sport contest and philosophical debate before a wider audience. Spectators would arrive all believing that the representatives deserve the honour and glory of winning, not to mention the huge competition between city states that indeed fought over vital resources. The stakes of winning the public glory were phenomenal and it was not uncommon for fighting to break out over the selection of the winners. The stadium was therefore not merely a place for watching athletic performance but a site where the fierce rivalry between the city states could be played out without necessarily being expressed through war. As sports were used as a form of rhetorical debate, the ancient athletic games represented a culture of persuasion over the masses. It was this public spectacle within the stadium that opened the door to a shift of authority in decision making towards the many <sup>4</sup>. This was the foundation of the invention of democracy.

<sup>1</sup> Mulder van der Vegt D. & Cohen de Lara M. *Parliament.XML*, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Heather Lynne Reid. *Athletics and Philosophy in the Ancient World: Contests of Virtue*. (New York: Rutledge, 2011)

<sup>3</sup> <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ag%C3%B4n>

<sup>4</sup> Brazeau Vanessa. *Thesis Book Body*. Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 2016.

### A man's competition

In ancient Greece, public gatherings of sport nurtured a democratic spirit at a time when only kings were responsible for decision-making. According to Heather Lynne Reid, “Olympia was first and foremost a religious sanctuary dedicated to a wide variety of gods, and not to any particular city, state, or tribe.”<sup>5</sup> It was in the holy place of Olympia where power and ideological struggles were now settled before the audience of every day men. However even within the harshly governed nation-states of Ancient Greece, it would be naïve to infer this as a power shift to the people as a whole, today: Reid goes on to show us that females, foreigners and slaves were categorised as submissive and therefore excluded from the context and forbidden to set foot in any of its space. In this society that worshipped heroes of the people, champions of physical endurance and power of rhetoric persuasion, attributes that the “everyman” of the day could wield. In Olympia began the spatialisation of a male power regime, where free ancient Greek men set the rules within and outside the stadium.

The architecture of the agôn - the gathering place of the athletic contest- worked as a biopolitical technique that classified and divided bodies, both spatially and socially, into various categories. Built on a hill, the stadium was formed by a natural seating area along the north, while the west short side of the stadium faced the altar of Zeus, to whom the Games were dedicated<sup>6</sup>. As a spatial form, the hill gathered people in a very particular way. Bodies occupied a looped, closed space, a seemingly endless, where attention of the masses was made to fall on a singular event. Athletes entered the arena by a secret tunnel that was hidden by earth and closed with bronze gates. Walking up the hill of the agôn, one could encounter different levels of a social pyramid. Spectators sat on the ground while stoned seats were reserved for the judges, claiming therefore an higher symbolic position toward the crowd. On the top of them, artificial embankments were built to host military commanders who had the privilege to have an overview of the game. Far from the stadium and the political decision making, women were allocated to the temple of Hera, where they were only allowed to practice one game: a race that was one sixth time shorter than the men's one<sup>7</sup>. The architecture of the games distributed bodies in space and defined areas of contact or separation, creating not only frontiers and power positions but areas of public assembly that defined what was understood as male and female; national and foreign; normal and deviant; free and unfree. Architecture appeared there as a collective technique to distribute bodies according to a patriarchal and colonial understanding of sovereignty.

From wrestling, jumping, running, the ancient greek men did not merely train their body to acquire physical and diplomatic skills. They transformed and trained their subjectivity to the logic of competitiveness, an enemy ideology, hyper-masculinity, binary opposition, emotional restraint and domination. Combining wrestling, boxing and screaming, Pankration was consider to be one of the toughest sports, coming from the Greek term παγκράτιον [pankrátion], literally meaning «all of power<sup>8</sup>». The Olympic games gave birth to the ideals of manhood, encouraging men to internalise said virtues into their own personal and political codes. Both on and off the sport field, this formed the basis for masculine scripts of behaviour and consensus decision making. We cannot laud the athletic games as a foundation for the invention of democracy and its future assembly spaces, without acknowledging that they also established a system of hegemonic masculinity<sup>9</sup>, where there are no winners without losers, no dominant voice without voices to be dominated, no control without the controlled.

<sup>5</sup> Heather Lynne Reid. *Athletics and Philosophy in the Ancient World: Contests of Virtue*. (New York: Routledge, 2011)

<sup>6</sup> Swaddling Judith. *The Ancient Olympic Games*. University of Texas Press. 1999.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.olympia-greece.org/stadium1.html>

<sup>8</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pankration>

<sup>9</sup> Raewyn Connell. *Masculinities*. University of California Press. 2005.



**The modern arena**

Even if today the playing field of our assembly spaces have started to slowly open up to a wider range of bodies, players and teams, the architecture of the parliament still reflects the ideology of the ancient Olympic games.

Within the structure of competing teams, to binary oppositions and allocated seats, bodies still perform the movements and gestures that serve to reproduce a muscular democracy. Muscular democracy is a self-coined term that operates as a research-concept to signal where masculine athletic ideology has been used as an organizational principle to arrange bodies, establish rules and systems of power. The term was inspired by the philosophical movement Muscular Christianity that originated from the colonialist doctrine of the English Imperialism in the mid-19th century and characterized by a belief in patriotic duty, discipline, self-sacrifice, manliness, and the moral and physical beauty of athleticism <sup>10</sup>.

The social constructions of democracy are not built by vague ideologies but by very precise technologies governing the body itself: a system of representation, diagrams and plans that allows only certain bodies to occupy certain seats and perspective. In today's parliament, just as in sport spectatorship, fans see the teams they support as representations of themselves, their community, their territory. In the arena, a goal is often made by attaining a better score than one's opponent in order to win. From the flags, to the seats, the microphones, squad numbers and electronic voting equipment, the hemicycle unfolds a complex system of devices that structures the negotiations, beliefs and perceptions within it. Governed by a political regime of binaries thinking the players sit in the debating chamber from left to right, according to their political groups. In making a visual distinction between 'opponent' and 'allies', the spatial organisation of the political parties reinforces a process of othering as a binary ideology of 'us' versus 'them'. This format of one team against another reproduces a culture of competition that seems unchanged since the empire of Ancient Greece. Much like the squad numbers that are usually used in association football to identify and distinguish players that are on the field, each member of the European Parliament is recognisable by an unique number displayed on the front of their allocated desk. The players may only embody and argue a very fixed position and perspective on the game. These fixed categories do not only oversimplify our experience of the world, they also erase any space for nuance, alteration, 'messyness', failure and disorientation. Binaries create systems in which we are not allowed to shift and be shifted.

<sup>10</sup> Nick J. Watson. *The Development of Muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and Beyond*. York St. John's College, University of Leeds 1998.

### Rewriting the rules

Deconstructing the architecture of the parliament highlights the multi-layered interactions between bodies and space, between rules and systems of power, that have emerged through history in assembly spaces. The larger systems of ideologies, conservative values and outmoded ways of seeing and interacting with 'others' carried since Ancient Greece are not only sewn into the social fabric but fundamentally reproduced by the design of the hemicycle itself. Today we encounter the contradiction that Parliament has remained virtually the same, while on the other hand, our society has experienced constant social change, revolution and evolution.

Perhaps it is in times of accelerating polarisation, such echoes of traditional governance provides comfort. This semicircle, this parliamentary amphitheatre is where change itself is legislated; where the safety and rights of human beings can be vouchsafed by our elected representatives. While populations sit at their screens awaiting new regulations, today we find ourselves always present in a kind of amphitheatre, sleeping with the government under our pillows. This architecture in which we meet our governments, must be reimagined to give not just hope in crises, but evolve with the important social, economic and technological evolutions that occur throughout society, regardless of how our social lives are regulated. To answer the challenge of our 21st century, we need to open up the potential of architecture, spaces themselves which can harness the dire need to come together, as the Ancient Greeks founded the Olympics, uniting their own fragmented city-state reality and inspiring later civilisations. Now we must listen to the voices that have been excluded from the stadium of public address and allow anticolonial, antiracist, queer and feminist methods of assembly and politics to share in moulding this format.

The notion of us versus them is taught to us on the football pitch as children, and when we prepare to exercise our right to vote for the first time, but the rules of games can be redesigned to breed new notions of togetherness. Surely this era of connectivities and disconnections has afforded us wisdoms, and modifications to designing this new architecture, but will a government ever accept changing itself as part of this design process? #

GABRIEL FONTANA was born in Paris, France, and is a designer with an established practice in social design. After graduating cum laude from both his Bachelor (2015) and Master degree (2018), Gabriel has established his design studio in Rotterdam to further develop his Multiform project.

Multiform consists of new uniforms, sport games and objects that offer innovation for inclusive teaching and the discussion about diversity in sports.

Gabriel develops Multiform in collaboration with primary and secondary schools in Rotterdam, the Wijkatelier (part of the Afrikaanderwijk Cooperatie, Rotterdam) and researcher Nathan van den Heuvel (Institute for Philosophy, Leiden University).



# **URUBU'S CHRONICLES**

## **MADELEINE WASHING**

**At the end of summer in Paris, children play, couples go for a walk, tourists wander around. But on one Sunday a year, the city's routine changes. An off-season Brazilian carnival takes place between Place de la République and Place de l'Opéra. Dancing and singing songs in Portuguese and Yoruba, people of different nationalities walk together during the Madeleine Washing Festival.**

Born 20 years ago, this folk tradition is part of the UNESCO Slave Route. It is inspired by Brazil's main syncretic festival: the «Lavagem do Senhor do Bonfim» in Bahia, the blackest state in Brazil. Whether in Paris or Bahia, Candomblé practitioners wash the steps of Catholic churches.

According to the European Court of Human Rights, diversity should be perceived «not as a threat but as a richness» in a democratic conception of society. Thus diversity is the totality of people who differ from each other by their geographical, socio-cultural or religious origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, and who constitute the national community to which they belong.

Brazil has often been associated with the notion of diversity. The Brazilian population was born out of the miscegenation between the country's native indigenous peoples, African peoples, colonising Europeans and later Asian settlers after the Second World War. The result is a historically constructed myth of voluntary intermingling and widespread tolerance throughout Brazil. However, Brazil also faces structural racism towards several cultural and religious expressions of African origin. Thus, Candomblé practitioners are particularly victims, especially since the rise in power of Brazilian evangelists and the election of Jair Bolsonaro, the open symbol of misogyny, homophobia and racism.



The Candomblé religion, based on ancestor worship and trance, has long developed a special relationship with its dead and is committed to a duty of remembrance. The African origins of Candomblé and the painful history that accompanies it reinforce these feelings of negritude in the face of a Catholicism of Western origin and an increasingly radical evangelism. The Candomblé religion is very widely practised by women, but men are not left on the sidelines. It is often represented as a feminist religion, because it provides a space of emancipation and freedom for its practitioners. Women have access to the priesthood and positions of religious authority, unlike the major dominant religions. This openness and capacity to emancipate women creates a fertile soil for the fight for their rights. Moreover, the binarity of gender has no meaning within Candomblé. Indeed, practitioners take up the attributes of the *Orixás* deities of the polytheistic pantheon to which they are affiliated. These are changeable, man then woman and vice versa, or indefinable from a gender point of view. *Oxumaré* is, for example, six months male and six months female. Divinity of rivers and forests, *Logun Edé* is *metá-metá*, half man half woman and *Oia*, *Orixá* of winds and storms, is 'female-male'. The original deity *Olorum* does not express any lability of the genre, it remains indeterminable. This is

one of the essential factors that explain the tolerance of the religion of Candomblé towards gender and the orientation of its followers and the predominant place of women priests in the most prestigious houses of worship, which find in this religion a path of emancipation from a world of patriarchal dominance.

*MADELEINES IN PARIS*


Madeleine in Paris is a story told by a Brazilian woman, Liliane Mutti, who, at a time when she no longer recognises herself in her country of origin, finds her own roots in Paris during the Madeleine washing festival. The figure of the Madeleine embodies the symbolism of a struggle resonating in Paris to the rhythm of the drums played by the women, to the joy of resistance, where «the bodies that dance are the same bodies that cry out». The two sides of the *Lavage de la Madeleine*, folkloric and political, are not as opposed as it might seem. The folkloric dimension carries within itself all the syncretism of a country, this typically Brazilian way of mixing religions and cultures where the sacred and the profane meet. At the heart of this off-season Carnival, a festive and exciting resistance against the extreme right of Bolsonaro emerges. Between the lines of this Carnival of Exile, the body and soul of Brazilians melt into the festive and dramatic. #

By François Combin



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*It seems that you are expecting  
and you are disappointed that I*

A woman with dark hair is lying on a patterned couch, looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The text is overlaid in the bottom left corner.

*that I will respond...  
don't.*



**VOICE OVER**



**PATRIARCHY**