

Swiss Psychotropic Gold

Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Obj. 1



Swiss Psychotropic Gold

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Credit Line: Nature Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo

Fig. 2:

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plated, full gilded, single retainer,
<https://www.aliexpress.com/item/32614160499.html>

Fig. 3:

The Molecular Ghost 2 – A ghost never dies.
S/He remains always to come and to come back,
knowbotiq 2017

Obj. 1



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Swiss Psychotropic Gold

knowbotiq &
Nina Bandi (eds)

Christoph Merian Verlag

swisspsygold.knowbotiq.net

cmv



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“Swiss Psychotropic Gold” is a hybrid media publication presenting the results of the artistic research project “Swiss Psychotropic Gold” (2016–17) of the artist duo knowbotiq. Various guest contributions by invited authors and artists accompany the artistic works of knowbotiq and contributions by their collaborators Nina Bandi, Rohit Jain and Anna Frei.

Nina Bandi,
Rohit Jain and
knowbotiq

Swiss
*Psychotropic
Gold – a Critical
Fabulation*

For more than three centuries, Swiss commodity trade has been caught up in colonial, postcolonial and neo-liberal entanglements. Having fueled early modern industrialization, as well as contemporary finance, Swiss trading activities have influenced cultural, affective and moral economies. They have contributed to Swiss wealth, but also to national narratives of independence, safety and white supremacy. Yet, public debate on colonial involvement is almost absent. The Swiss mythology of neutrality transforms the often violent and ‘dirty’ material complexities of mining and trading into an opaque and orderly form of technocracy, discretion and virtual finance.

An artistic and ethnographic project, “Swiss Psychotropic Gold” re-narrates global gold trade—from mining in former colonies to its refining and many diversions in and out of Switzerland—as a series of transformative immediations of primary materials, values and affects.

Currently, more than 50 percent of the global gold is refined in Switzerland; including gold, appropriated during the recent commodity wars in Central Africa. In the 1970s, Switzerland traded and refined 75 percent of South African gold and in doing so saved the apartheid regime from an existential economic crisis. Switzerland was also an important gold trader for Nazi Germany during World War II. These examples mark how, in recent history, Switzerland has fashioned itself as a political and economic hotspot for neutralizing the origin of gold. Gold is quasi-alchemically cleaned of its violent and physical history and transformed into an ephemeral symbol of power, status and purity—into condensed wealth.

Besides the invisible gold, refined in securitized spaces at the Swiss border or stored in underground safes, there is also visible gold: Swiss

involvement in the global commodity and gold trade has been investigated and brought to light by recent NGO reports and historical research. Yet, despite the moral grammar of humanitarianism and justice, the lamented violence is strangely neutralized in these critical public debates. It seems as if the intellectual and activist arguments of responsibility and enlightenment are not able to fully grasp and intervene within the affective, moral, and aesthetic texture of the public politics of postcolonial amnesia.

In this state of postcolonial amnesia, ‘enlightenment’ and ‘rationalism’ do not make the truth automatically visible, nor do better futures open up and redemption arrive, as is suggested in the NGO discourse. What is required here instead, is a process of recovery, both affective and ethical. This refers to the acknowledgement of violence and suffering and requires politics of reparation in the present. There is no ‘here’ and ‘there’. ‘They’ from ‘there’ are ‘here’ now! A new cartography of Switzerland is necessary to re-imagine global geographies of inequality and spaces of solidarity. It is at this intersection of form and content that we would like to intervene with our explorations in “Swiss Psychotropic Gold.” We propose that it is the affective, moral and aesthetic texture of this public that blocks criticism and subversion. Just breathe in the air of this place; experience the smartness, the cleanliness and the wealth. A well-planned, shiny, and opaque surface of neutrality and perfection. What does it take to keep up such a public display of wealth? Which histories and stories are visible, which are made invisible?

We are interested in understanding and opening up a postcolonial public, which transgresses the binaries of ‘visible and invisible,’ ‘righteous versus dubious,’ ‘the clean versus the dirty,’ and ‘the refined versus the raw.’ To that end, we explore strategies of fabulating, un-representing, incorporating, affecting and acting within the powerful but suppressed and overwritten translocal connections between the Swiss public and the metabolism of gold. Is it possible to activate these overlapping publics as conglomerate of histories and to open up other spaces of action and solidarity?

The story of gold that has been researched and worked upon more widely—albeit only in recent years with regard to Switzerland—is the story of bullion-making and storage, as well as of jewelry, both of which are characterized by a specific material visibility. Swiss Psychotropic Gold, however, focuses on the moment when gold loses its stable form, in moments of dissipation and dispersion, when its materiality is transformed into other states that we subsume under its derivative, psychotropic and molecular dimensions.

The derivative line of gold

In order to go beyond ‘gold’ and trace its different materialities, we follow its derivatives. The derivative leaves the river and overflows its shores—this

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is the etymological root of the word: de-river. It is an exceeding of the banks of the river; the water spills over in different directions, in uncontrollable flows and streams. Derivatives contain bodies and bodily processes involved in gold production and usage—from exploitative labor to gold as object of desire and consumption. They also include different ways of movement, transformation and exchange of the commodity and of the bodies that are part of gold production.

What is the spillover from gold that is transported to Switzerland? Gold, which was extracted through exploitative and destructive forces or stems from jewelry deemed unworthy to be owned any longer. Gold, which passes through one of the five refineries on Swiss territory, where it is mixed, melted, and cleaned to the extent that its different origins are not traceable anymore.

What are the transformations this ‘migratory’ gold undergoes? What kind of bodies, affects and powers are involved and produced when different routes of visibility and invisibility, of materiality, and affectability are taken? The derivatives of gold give way to a different sociality. According to Randy Martin, the expansion of the horizon of desires and possibilities beyond what currently exists gives rise to a decolonization of the body and a deterritorialization of space. Consequently, we search for aesthetic configurations that bring these derivative states of gold to the fore. Which begs the question: how does gold in its different states and processes intervene in the “distribution of the sensible” (Jacques Rancière)? How does gold—in violent acts of extraction and dispersion, as well as in its cultural and aesthetic dimensions of cleanliness, moral superiority, and desire—act as a violent, dividing and transformative force of world-making?

...

*Transformations:
matter, molecules, quantum;
or queering gold?*

614 – 630

Swiss refineries molecularize gold and neutralize its origins. Liberated from their histories, molecules of gold transform from violence into virtuality. The molecular implies knotted trajectories and transversal relations, allowing for divisions and aggregations that run counter to political and moral categories of gender, race, hierarchy, and domination. For Karen Barad, it is about queered and queering matter and atoms. To question and counter the physics of gold means questioning established categories of causality, agency, space, time, and matter and how these are tied to moral and political assumptions, by the Swiss myth of humanitarianism and democracy.

Matter and molecules are not political per se. It is not via the contraction and downscaling of systems, hierarchies and totalities to the molecular level that we arrive at its political meaning. Molecules have to be enacted as part of the historical and the social, which persist within power relations.

The techno-libidinous body today has become a molecular body through which substances, desires, and affects enter and disperse. Paul B. Preciado argues that we find ourselves in a new type of governmentality of the living and of subjectivity in which the bio-molecular and the semiotic-technical government of sexual subjectivity coincide.

Gold as a material-discursive metabolism involves bodies, technology, aesthetics, psychotropic substances, hormones, which fuel the affective assemblage that surround and permeate gold. From drugged miners and psychotropic traders to the matrilinear handing-over of crafted gold, to the generalized desire for stability and safety tied to gold. In a somatic-political consciousness, gold becomes an affective state, an investment, a stabilizer and tranquilizer, a security, an energizer, like the golden needle used in acupuncture.

How does the opaque and unacknowledged omnipresence of gold (in Switzerland) affect postcolonial public spaces? Gold is omnipresent, but not visible. It is psychotropically active, but physically, aesthetically, and morally silent. The age-old alchemical promise of eternal youth has transformed into the discrete but hyperactive façade of wealth, righteousness, and smartness.

Taking into account the different discursive materialities laid out here, gold is an aesthetic part-taking, a being affected, and affecting others, that takes place on derivative, psychotropic and molecular levels. “Swiss Psychotropic Gold” affects the postcolonial archives both affectively and ethically. It alludes to the hopeful acknowledgement of violence and and a politics of reparation in the present. Through this project we are looking for a different aesthetics bringing forth a sociality of reciprocal indebtedness dispersed across space and time.

Diffractive Displays

Fig. 4: knowbotiq, The virtualities of the Swiss refineries – Argor-Heraeus (2017), wallpaper (detail).



- Fig. 5 knowbotiq, The virtualities of the Swiss refineries – PAMP (2017), <https://www.pamp.com/>, wallpaper (detail).
- Fig. 6 knowbotiq, The virtualities of the Swiss refineries – Valcambi (2017), <https://www.valcambi.com/>, wallpaper (detail).
- Fig. 7 knowbotiq, The virtualities of the Swiss refineries – Argor-Heraeus (2017), <https://www.argor.com/en>, wallpaper (detail).

Fig. 5



Fig. 7



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On Swissness and Golden Amnesia

Rohit Jain

Gold Is in the Air.

Ethnographic Explorations into Post-colonial Amnesia in Switzerland and Beyond

1 “To walk through the Gold Museum is to become vaguely conscious of how for millennia the mystery of gold has through myth and stories sustained the basis of money worldwide. But one story is missing. The museum is silent as to the fact that for more than three centuries of Spanish occupation what the colony stood for and deepened upon was labor of slaves from Africa in the gold mines. Indeed, this gold, along with the silver from Mexico and Peru, was what primed the pump of the capitalist takeoff in Europe, its primitive accumulation.”

2 “Gold drives man crazy because the desire it stimulates is boundless, reeking of danger that needs to be hemmed in by a firewall of fairy tales and superstition.”

3 “[If only] we could strip these fetishes of their mythology and thus expose the true and real substances themselves, naked and alone in the primal state of natural being. Yet even if we could, we would thereby destroy what animates us, those subtle tricks played on human understanding by substances that appear to speak for themselves. That language I want is just that language that runs along the seam where matter and myth connect and disconnect continuously.”

In My Cocaine Museum, the anthropologist Michael Taussig attempts to find a language, both ethnographic and poetic, to understand and express how contemporary Colombia is haunted by the violent history of gold. He draws on the display in the Gold Museum of Bogotá, adjunct to the Federal Bank of Colombia, to think through the past and present violence, that colonial capitalism has inflicted on Latin America. From rainforests,

the miner's everyday sufferings and dreams, and local mythologies emerges a thick description of how the history of violence and desire haunts the political ecologies of Colombia till today. Gold has always been entangled in a translocal metabolism of mining, trading and desiring. How is gold mythologically, morally, economically and affectively active in a different time and place, and at the other pole of postcolonial hierarchy?

In 2017, 2761 tons of raw gold were imported to Switzerland for refinement. This amounted to 65 percent of the global demand. In the 1970s, Switzerland traded and refined up to 75 percent of South African gold and saved the Apartheid regime from an economic, and therefore political and existential crisis. Further back, Switzerland was the main gold hub during World War II, and bought and traded over 2000 tons of gold for Nazi Germany and their allies.

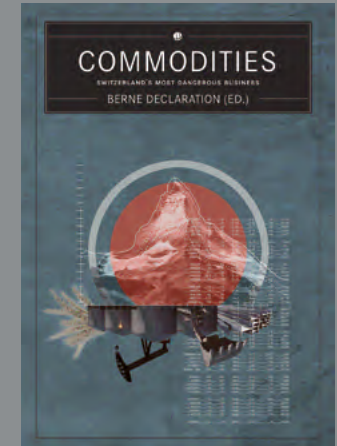
Switzerland, standing upright when the time is right and crouching in times of geopolitical uncertainties, has become a political and economic space for "neutralizing" the origins of gold. This alluring ore has the formidable quality whereby it can be melted down and be given ever-changing forms such as bars, coins, jewelry and medicine. In Switzerland gold is chemically—or rather alchemistically—cleansed of its often violent and physical history and transformed simultaneously into an ephemeral and material agent of power, status and purity—into condensed wealth.

There are two ethnographic and political stakes in exploring how gold is processed in, through and by the Swiss public space:

- I The first is global in scope and points to the political aesthetics of a transit hub, which seems to be fundamental for the global metabolism of gold to work—a transnational network of investing, extracting, transporting, trading, speculating, refining, consuming and recycling. While gold mining and transporting is physical, poisonous, coarse and violent, investment and trading is done in anonymous hotel rooms or offices, in generic urban business districts and via virtual electronic networks. While, gold jewelry can be worn elegantly or opulently, gold bars and reserves are hidden discretely in highly securitized spaces and safes. How are the materials, images, affects, moralities, experiences and social relations transformed and negotiated within this many-faceted global metabolism of gold?
- II The second stake focuses on the production of locality and concerns the workings of the Swiss public and the postcolonial

amnesia, which permeates its air. For centuries, Switzerland has been systematically involved in colonial endeavors and global exploitation, which have fueled the Swiss project of modernity, its wealth and its self-image of supremacy. From mercenary services in early modern times, to financing of slavery, to colonial and postcolonial commodity trading and global finance. In all these cases, Switzerland adopted a position of (postcolonial) complicity and benefitted from it economically, while refusing responsibility—let alone the hopeful path of political reparation. A public amnesia—connected to the Swiss mythology of neutrality, righteousness, cleanliness and economic discipline—seems to reproduce violence over and over again. How is such a powerful mythological machine effected and (re)produced aesthetically, morally and affectively? Fig. 8

Fig. 8: Public Eye / Bern Declaration, *Commodities: Switzerland's most dangerous business* (2012), book cover, www.publiceye.ch/en/publications/detail/commodities.



In the recent decades, Swiss involvement, in global gold trading and its violent underpinnings, has been investigated and denounced by NGOs, scientific historical commissions and political movements. Yet, it seems that all the produced knowledge gets vaporized in public debates. Is it possible, that this knowledge is unable to penetrate the above-mentioned amnesia, because of the affective, moral and aesthetic power of public forgetting? In this case, the postcolonial conundrum we face is not one primarily of ignorance, lack of critical information or of political will. But of how, if at all, one can be *affected* and set into motion politically and ethically by such knowledge?

It is at this juncture, that we want to intervene with our artistic ethnographic explorations by way of "Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refinery." The assumption is that the affective, moral and aesthetic texture of the Swiss public is an important agent of amnesia, violence and suffering. This Swiss public works like a well planned, shiny, clean and opaque surface of

neutrality. Swiss public violence is different from the violence in Mexico City, Mumbai or St Petersburg—or at the Gold Museum of Bogotá. If the citizens of Aldous Huxley's 'Brave New World' are high on Soma, then the Swiss public is high on psychoactive gold, which permeates its air, its spaces and the bodies that live within it.

What does it take to keep up such a public display of wealth, self-righteousness and discretion, while (at least, unconsciously) knowing about and suppressing a history of violence? Which historical entanglements are visible, which are made invisible in this mythopoetic space? Which experiences of violence, suffering or guilt are recognized and mourned, and which are suppressed or ignored? What kind of cultural and psychological makeup enables the overwriting of unwanted 'minor histories'? What will we find if we manage to crack the hermetic surface of amnesia? What post-colonial memories, counter-mythologies and utopias will we find in hitherto undiscovered archives waiting to be unleashed?

... *Invisible gold:
stability, crisis and wealth*

1278 — 1340

Valcambi SA, one of the big gold refineries in Switzerland, is situated at the Swiss-Italian border. Highly patrolled and surveilled, it lies far from public interest between the southern Alpine foothills and lakes. It was founded in 1961, when Swiss banks were just beginning to build good relations with South Africa, the biggest exporter of gold.

South Africa's economic position was directly linked to its racist legal regulations of work, and immobility and physical exploitation of black bodies under the Apartheid regime. Segregated territorial entities were fashioned around diamond and gold mines, in order to accumulate wealth and power for the white elite. In 1968, in an economic coup Switzerland established a gold trade pool in Zurich—based on an exclusive gold deal with South Africa (s. Interview with Jakob Tanner in this volume). In the years to follow, Switzerland traded and refined up to 75 percent of gold annually extracted from there. The Swiss government backed the Apartheid regime in South Africa, by financial support, importing gold, exporting weapons, forging statistics and through proactive diplomatic relations. The collaboration secured Switzerland's infrastructure, regulations, networks as the main gold refining and trading hub of the world. In 1980s, in the wake of the pressure of the global Anti-Apartheid Movement, Swiss activists were finally successful in shedding light on Swiss-South African relations. As a result of this development, Swiss policies came to be openly debated and criticized. And yet, in 2003 when a public research project started a systematic investigation of these relations, the Swiss government suddenly closed the archives when a South African NGO demanded reparations from Switzerland in the US courts. ⁴

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Did these efforts to conceal history come out of the fear of paying reparations, like in the case of the scandal over the unidentifiable fortunes in Swiss Bank accounts, which belonged to Jewish victims of the Shoah? The scandal was triggered in 1994 by a lawsuit in the US courts against Swiss banks, and further stirred up the dubious role of Switzerland as a hub for gold transactions with Nazi Germany during WWII. The *Bergier Commission*, mandated in 1996 by the Swiss government to investigate this history, uncovered that the Swiss Federal Bank had bought 2000 tons of gold that Nazi Germany had stolen from individuals and the banks of the countries it had invaded. ⁵ As well as gold, that was stolen from Jewish and other prisoners killed in death camps. The public anger unleashed in response to these findings resulted in anti-Semitic and anti-intellectual aggression. In 1998, when things reached a fever pitch, Swiss banks agreed to pay an amount of 1.25 billion dollars as restitution. These scandals cracked the surface of amnesia. The so-far-invisible-gold poured out of archives and banks, and into the Swiss public space. Making visible the history of violence and guilt embedded underneath the shiny surface of neutrality, righteousness and innocence.

In 2004 a group of nationalist politicians—many of whom had been involved in maintaining 'good relations' with the Apartheid regime—came up with a political referendum, which would ensure, that a considerable part of the Swiss currency reserve would be held in gold. This was against all economic reason, as the gold standard was abolished in the 1970s. Yet, it seemed that for these circles, gold was still the symbol of independence, stability and wealth. This myth developed alongside Swiss banking secrecy in the 1930s, when Switzerland legally enforced its position as a safe haven for global capital flight and tax evasion. In the context of world economics, Swiss Gold symbolized trust and stability—both externally and internally. The imagery of gold in alpine safes, a fortress that defies geopolitical turbulences, still lives on.

The anachronistic referendum took place and failed. But it made visible the fact that in addition to being an important business (model) for Switzerland, gold also fuels the national mythology of stability and wealth.

... *The visible gold:
the moral grammar of protestant
ethics, enlightenment and guilt*

1342 — 1523

While most of the gold is cleansed and buried in refineries, gold transporters, bank safes and the depots of National Reserve Bank in the country and abroad. There are, at least, some open and proud displays of gold in the stores of Zürich, Luzern and Geneva, which deal in jewelry, high-end Swiss watches and other luxury items. Huguenot migrants brought the craft of watchmaking to Switzerland in the 17th century. Since then, this

industrial sector has been assimilated into the Swiss economy and its mythology of industrialization, and makes up to three percent of the gross national product.

Yet, among the bourgeois and petty bourgeois public, showing off and enjoying luxury is despised and associated with the upper class living of the 'Goldcoast' of Lake Zurich, or the nouveau riche tourists from Russia, China and India. Fig. 9

Fig. 9: Rohit Jain, Jewelry and pawn shop in Zurich's redlight district at Langstrasse (2016).



Gold consumption is also projected onto the racialised "other"—with an attitude of moral supremacy and jealousy. The passive-aggressive attitude imbuing the Swiss imagination of gold, became virulent in the 1980s, when Sri Lankan Tamils arrived as the first significant group of non-white refugees. The media and the public were outraged, that these help-seeking people wore gold jewelry in public. With this display of "luxury," they disturbed the postcolonial order between the rich and benevolent Swiss and the poor and needy refugees. This was especially irritating for many members of the Swiss middle class, as they could not afford this conspicuous consumption of gold, and even if they could, they probably wouldn't because of their deeply internalized protestant ethics.

Although the majority of the Swiss middle classes benefit economically from the postcolonial commodity trade, they cannot get direct gratification from it. Yet, gold as emblem of wealth and stability is psychoactively present in public, in the air. Gold is not shown, it is owned. And, even if one cannot afford it, one can just feel and breathe it in as a member of the Swiss nation, and with it supremacy, innocence and righteousness. Fig. 10

An NGO representative enters the room. Self-confidently, casually and in a hurry, he puts a book on the table. "I don't know how I can help you. Everything is in this book." He is co-author of the book Rohstoff (Raw Material/Commodity), published in 2012 by the NGO Erklärung von Bern



Fig. 10: Rohit Jain, reading a critical reportage on gold trade in a cozy Swiss coffee shop (2016).



Fig. 11: Reportagen #26, popular journalist magazine with the article "UNICEF and Blood Gold. The gold refinery of UNICEF-Germany-Boss Jürgen Herhaus delivers. And we all buy" (2016).

(now: Public Eye), which stirred up a fresh debate on Swiss commodity trading. 6 "Not much is known about a business, which contributes as much to the GDP as mechanical engineering industries [that is to say four percent, R.J.]. The traders in Geneva work in a hidden zone, which is morally highly dubious" (Erklärung von Bern 2012: 19 7).

Commodity trading, the book argues, is not only ecologically and economically disastrous for the populations involved in mining, but also damaging for the Swiss image—and thus, a "ticking bomb." In saying so, the authors allude to the political and economic damage incurred after Swiss bank secrecy was smashed by US tax authorities in 2014 and Switzerland had to surrender after 80 years of economic warfare. Thus, in order to keep its model of growth successful, Switzerland would have to comply with human rights, moral standards, and self-regulate its interest and greed.

This argument, part of an influential, self-critical NGO-discourse rooted in the Third World and Anti-Apartheid Movement, comes with a particular politics of affect and moral grammar. A bill by the campaign of the NGOs Brot für Alle and Fastenopfer against gold mining shows the décolleté of a white woman in a black evening dress, wearing a heavy gold necklace. The magnifying glass allows the viewer to zoom into another world of black people running wildly, seemingly fleeing from caterpillars. The glossy image is anchored in the following text: "Where gold looses its glamour. The hunt for gold displaces people from their homeland. Be aware and act."

The magnifying glass, that is to say, the optical and intellectual intervention of the NGO, shall make people aware of the postcolonial connection of gold production and consumption. It insuates the truth beneath the surface of wealth, neutrality and cleanliness. The dramatic visual and

textual grammar of the campaign scandalizes the causal connection between Swiss wealth and African poverty, and opens up a moral abyss of guilt, hypocrisy, decadence and opportunism. In this public politics of representation, knowledge triumphs over ignorance, enlightenment over darkness and twilight zones. Bad conscience is the affective currency, which goes with this narrative and bridges the geographical, historical, racial and economic gap opened up by the staged postcolonial and racialised tragedy.

NGO activists are aware of ambivalences of playing the “bad conscience” card in their public communication. But for them this is a strategy to raise attention, support and money towards fostering a referendum in 2020 on the responsibility of multinational commodity traders. With the intention of forcing corporations based in Switzerland to comply with human rights and ecological standards.

Besides the NGO debate, there is also visible academic discourse on Swiss gold. We meet a renowned historian and expert on the role of gold in the Swiss economy. He was a member of the *Bergier Commission*, which investigated Swiss relations with Nazi Germany and he also intervened in the debate on Swiss banks engaged in gold trade with South Africa during Apartheid. Sitting in his office, he eloquently and meticulously explains how gold is not just a business model; it is part of Swiss political mythology. Decades of critiquing and investigating Swiss gold, academically and publically, have not tired him out. Isn't it frustrating that academic knowledge and intellectual engagement is not able to transform public amnesia? Isn't the report of the *Bergier Commission*—the most important project attempting to come to terms with Switzerland's post-World War II history—almost forgotten, as if it was never written? He agrees, but stubbornly and impressively maintains trust in the power of knowledge, of shedding light on the invisible, of denouncing Swiss moral failures and of taking responsibility. Fig. 12

Besides the NGO and academic discourses, this ethnographic artistic exploration has yielded another way to link the visibility of gold with taking responsibility. A goldsmith based in a well-to-do neighbor-

Fig. 12: knowbotiq, fair gold shop in a middle urban class area (2016).



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Rohit Jain

Gold is in the air. Ethnographic...

1126 — 1665

hood in Bern has established a certified supply for fairly produced gold to Switzerland, out of which he produces his jewelry. When the goldsmith realized that the precious metal he crafted was involved in the violence of commercial mining and commodity wars, he was shocked and determined to take responsibility. He teamed up with other international goldsmiths, in order to build up a supply chain of fair trade gold to Switzerland—which is ironically refined by the companies mentioned earlier in the essay. By combining his professional acumen with a protestant ethos, the goldsmith found a practical solution to his personal as well as Switzerland's moral dilemma around “dirty gold,” and also established a sound business model. Fair trade gold, thus, allows consumption of gold in a modest and just way.

While NGOs use spectacle and bad conscience as a currency in order for publics to engage against the Swiss business opportunism, the historian incorporates a liberal and intellectual position of enlightenment and critical information. And, the goldsmith incorporates the puritanical ethos of craftsmanship to offer a way out of the moral dilemma for customers. They all want to make the history of violence materialized in the Swiss gold visible and offer more or less practical solutions: to donate to an NGO, to vote for a referendum to enforce human rights and ecological standards on commodity traders, to buy fair gold and to circulate critical knowledge and to speak up. Yet, besides the different strategies they have adopted, there is something astonishingly similar in the affective and moral position of the goldsmith, the activist and the historian. They acknowledge and even despise the colonial complicity of Swiss enterprises, the state and the mainstream public and cannot identify with this national project. They expose themselves and confront public myths, despite the looming risk of being alienated and attacked by conservatives or the mainstream public. And yet, all of them stay sober and rational in their arguments and attitude. Could this be, because they are all not directly affected by the violence and injustice they criticize, because they are socially positioned as white males with a specific class position and professional habitus? Could it be that they are motivated to engage by a desire to compensate for a (white) guilt incurred by an earlier generation? A desire, that is primarily about being Swiss “in a different way,” in a responsible way, compared to the mainstream positions of ignorance, opportunism and denial? And if that is so, would there be any other options of being affected by the presence of gold in this postcolonial public space?

...

*Postcolonial amnesia
and new affective communities*

1526 — 1641

All that being said, there is something disturbing in the idea that a discourse, which critically acknowledges the presence of gold in the Swiss public and develops tactics of political and ethical responsibility could be based

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on the political affect of “white guilt.” To put it bluntly, would it possible for me, a second generation Indian, having grown up in Switzerland, to be affected by the discourse of white guilt and responsibility in order to fight global social injustice? Furthermore would the suggested practical solutions concerning commodity trade be able to change anything within an assemblage of Swiss postcolonial amnesia which not only has been concealing the Swiss involvement in post-/colonial projects abroad, but has also resulted in the ceaseless reproduction of institutional and everyday racism “here?” To put it more generally: What affective, moral or aesthetic resources and identities would a discourse of white guilt and responsibility offer to people of color and/or with migration backgrounds?

Fig. 13



Fig. 13: Rohit Jain, when gold loses its glamour, campaign billboard by Swiss NGOs (2016).

The NGO billboard above, with the woman wearing the gold necklace, when read as an epitome of the discourse of white guilt and responsibility, could provide insights into the contradictions. The juxtaposition of glamour and disaster, of white and black, wealth and poverty, clean and dirty is embedded in postcolonial geography of “us here” and “them there.” But who is the public, the “we,” being addressed by the bill? How are, for example Afro-Swiss people, other People of Color, and immigrants, who live, love and work here addressed in this discourse? Persons who either have family in countries affected by postcolonial commodity trade,

or even had to leave countries, where commodity wars were or are taking place. Their perspectives, their untold biographies, utopias, aspirations and identities are neither present, nor addressed. I argue, this discourse and the affective logic it is driven by, willy-nilly might actually do its part in the reproduction of the racialized segregation of the public space that exists in Switzerland, and, thus, may be paradoxically playing a part in keeping up postcolonial amnesia.

More than one third of the Swiss population is of color or has migration woven into their biographies. Also, 25 percent of the entire population has little political rights because they don’t have Swiss citizenship, as a result of the harsh and racialized naturalization law of Europe. Within the national public space they are on many levels the “other”; they work and pay taxes, without having the right to participate. Their transnational life-worlds, their sufferings and dreams are not debated by the larger national public. They are mocked when they speak up about everyday racism and asked to go back “home.” They feel that they don’t fully belong in this public display of neutrality and innocence. Can they adopt the position of white guilt and responsibility when dealing with global social injustice, without denying some part of themselves? Can social change in the context of postcolonial amnesia start from that position?

Fig. 14

There is no “here” and “there.” They are here now! We are here, now! A new cartography of Switzerland is needed today to engage with global geographies of inequality and to build spaces of solidarity. Liberal or humanitarian discourses calling for universalism and responsibility are often motivated by the legacy of eurocentrism: White guilt being the countercurrent of blunt white supremacy, yet both embedded in the assumption, that values of freedom, equality and social justice were invented in Europe and that they should be applied all over the world—either with the goal of continuing domination or of making up for wrong-doings of

Fig. 14: Who is “we”? National Day celebration on 1 August 2016 in Bern.



the past and present. Both positions are not able to enter a relation of real encounter with the “other” on the equal terms. To come up with a new universalism, which is not burdened by white guilt and its narcissism, it would be necessary to recover the social, ethical and affective relations harmed by the post-/colonial history of violence and the ongoing denial. To do so, memories and utopias slumbering in postmigrant and postcolonial archives have to be activated, be it in life stories, in migrant family albums, in protocols of enterprises, in state documents, in old news footage or literature. They not only yield forgotten histories of violence and suffering, but also of solidarity, friendship and cosmopolitanism. To acknowledge and debate these realities as legitimate and shared ones, would allow society to tackle postcolonial amnesia by rewriting the past in the present and by entering a process of political and moral reparation. Yet, this process requires new affective communities, collectives and spaces, which are willing to refashion the racialised and patriarchal boundaries of “us” and “them,” and to envision images, histories, relations and imaginations of a new “we.” I suggest that, beyond practical legal or technical solutions in global commodity trade, it is only on this moral and affective ground, that we will be really able to pacify the ghosts of the past, which are troubling all of us up to this day, even if not in the same way for everybody.

- 1 Michael Taussig, *My Cocaine Museum* (Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press 2004), x.
- 2 Ibid., 5.
- 3 Ibid., xviii.
- 4 For a more detailed discussion of this history, see the conversation with economic historian Jakob Tanner in this volume as well as his piece “Goldrausch und Kulturrevolution: Pretoria—Zürich Paradeplatz,” in the collection *The Air Will Not Deny You: Zürich im Zeichen einer anderen Globalität*, edited by Franziska Koch, Daniel Kurjaković, and Lea Pfäffli (Zurich: diaphanes 2016).
- 5 *Die Schweiz und die Goldtransaktionen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, edited by Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz—Zweiter Weltkrieg, (Zurich: Chronos 1998).
- 6 *Rohstoff: Das gefährliche Geschäft der Schweiz*, edited by Erklärung von Bern, (Zurich: Salis Verlag 2012).
- 7 Ibid., 19.

Jakob Tanner *Gold Shines in the Conversation with Collective Imagination of Rohit Jain Switzerland*

Jakob Tanner

In Switzerland, political debates time and again crystalize around gold—in the late 1990s, the demagogic recommendation was made to finance old-age pension schemes with “Volksgold” (people’s gold), which had to be sold by the Swiss National Bank (SNB). However, this temporary publicity should not be allowed to hide the fact that the production of gold, all the processing chains, the global transactions with this precious metal, and its importance in the international financial system are largely obscure. In a recent article I described how in spring 1968, in Zurich the gold underground of the banks coexisted with a leftist underground in a contradictory way: ¹ On the occasion of the UNO Human Rights Conference in Teheran in May 1968, Switzerland formally distanced itself from the apartheid regime in South Africa because it went against everything Switzerland stood for—a stance that the leftists and the rapidly spreading protest movement also advocated. Yet at the same moment, the banks on Paradeplatz founded the Zurich Gold Pool in what was reminiscent of a coup, thus outwitting the competition in London. In Great Britain, the growing anti-apartheid movement had successfully exerted pressure on the financial sector, and Pretoria had already long since begun looking for alternatives. South African lobbyists were in Switzerland for the first time in 1963 and returned after the Rhodesia crisis in 1967. When the international gold trade plunged into a crisis in March 1968 and London ca-

Jakob Tanner, Rohit Jain	Gold Shines in the Collective...	1666 — 2160	1711	1756	Jakob Tanner, Rohit Jain	Gold Shines in the Collective...	1666 — 2160
<p>pitulated, the reservations previously expressed by the SNB disappeared into thin air. Well prepared in advance, a Swiss cartel of banks took over the international gold trade. Switzerland became South Africa's most important export partner overnight, so to speak, and in the years that followed supported the apartheid regime, including with a wide range of services and direct investments. These occurrences largely remained below the threshold of perception. This case clearly shows how the maxims of neutrality united with utilitarian considerations and a national disposition of discretion. The public did not really want to learn too much about what kind of transactions were being conducted. The main thing was that they yielded a profit.</p>					<p>pattern? Is "business as usual" not at most a way of not having to face up to political and moral transgressions, which the players were definitely aware of? The Bergier Report describes how crucial players time and again talked their way out of their responsibility.² As a result, however, they enmeshed themselves more and more, especially morally, and then could not get out anymore. Because they would not only have had to admit their original mistakes, but the fact that they covered them up. They may have also sensed that they, measured against their own professional standards, acted wrongly and continued to do so: A banality of evil à la Suisse, so to speak! Could it not be argued that this moral pattern was internalized as part of the formation of a hegemonic cultural identity after World War II, indeed, as a disposition?</p>		
Rohit Jain			1715	1760			
<p>I would like to further expand on how neutrality works: You pointed out Switzerland's role as a gold trade hub since World War II, which was justified with the country's neutrality. This constellation was closely connected to the fact that gold can be melted and its origin therefore obscured. In debates since the 1970s, neutrality has been criticized as opportunism according to which unethical transactions are consciously conducted out of economic interests...</p>			1720	1765	<p>Yes, that is the Switzerland of "Geistige Landesverteidigung" ("Spiritual National Defense") into which gold fit all too well. Thus in much the same way that Gotthard granite represents the country's tectonic safety net, gold represents the country's financial recoverability. During the war, there were banks that actually kept their gold in the reduit national, an Alpine bunker that was built for the event of a German invasion! At the same time, the idea that the yellow metal is first and foremost the material substrate of monetary systems falls too short. Gold shines in the collective imagination; it is an extremely symbolic substance. As such it could be ideally fused with a shining image of Switzerland. The "Spiritual National Defense" put up an umbrella over the Switzerland, namely in the dual sense of projection surface and defense apparatus. It had to do with the representation of national myths and at the same time with shielding the country from anything "un-Swiss." This resulted in a very one-sided self-image, which becomes apparent in the case of gold—to this day. Few people know that Switzerland is the largest bullion dealer in the world, and that Swiss corporations occupy an outstanding position in the processing of gold. There are ultra-high-performance gold refineries in the cantons of Ticino</p>		
Jakob Tanner			1725	1770	Jakob Tanner		
<p>... In the Bergier Commission, which, among other things, investigated the SNB's gold transactions with the German Reichsbank and the whereabouts of the Jewish assets that were transferred to Switzerland during World War II, we called this conduct "business as usual." Switzerland looks back on a long tradition of such normalized transactions and was also always criticized for it—along the lines of the "Point d'argent, point de Suisse."</p>			1730	1775			
Rohit Jain			1735	1780			
<p>So the argument would be that the pattern of carrying on as before stabilized after World War II for the purpose of safeguarding economic interests. However, as a social anthropologist this does not suffice as an explanation. For me, the question is also one of the moral economy: Why does one adhere to this</p>			1740	1785			
			1745	1790			
			1750	1795			
			1755	1800			

and Neuchâtel that can process up to 70 percent of the global production. Switzerland, the global gold hub, continues to be furthered through the bonded warehouses in Zurich and Geneva. There are scarcely any statistics about any of this: in 1981, the federal republic prohibited the gathering of data on gold trading. A few figures have been available since 2014, but the overall picture remains opaque.

At the same time, the Swiss population came to know and love the beauty of gold. Exemplary for this is the “Goldvreneli”—the Helvetia Head—that was minted from 1897 to 1949 and was in circulation as legal tender until 1936. There was an interesting dispute about the image of the woman on the verso of the 20-franc coin. Historian Elisabeth Joris pointed out how the first design was rejected as being too young, too wild, too capricious. In the end, a depiction was agreed on that was in keeping with the image of a respectable Swiss woman. Following the devaluation of the Swiss franc in September 1936, the “Goldvreneli” disappeared from circulation. It became a collector’s object, a store of purchasing power, for many a memento that one received, for example, upon one’s birth. These gold coins are enshrined in the popular culture of Swiss society to this day. They embody stable value, solidity, imperishability, indeed, all but eternity. However, the national harmonious image that is transported via gold does not contain any information about exploitive conditions of production, political oppression, or dirty business dealings.

Rohit Jain

When I listen to you, the Swiss history of gold seems like a long, active process of denial and amnesia. On the one hand on an institutional level, when access to records—as in the case of South Africa—was prevented by the state, or records—as in the case of “nachrichtenlose Vermögen” (“dormant assets”) of the Nazi era—were destroyed by banks. This refusal to supply information is perhaps not the most controversial aspect, but rather a symptom of what is at work more fundamentally in the (collective) subconscious. In every event, much worse might be the fact that individuals and society

incurred guilt and did not take prudent political action. I ask myself: How does the cultural and institutional machinery that is responsible for the concealment of injustices and renders other historiographies invisible work? You mentioned the ideological movement of the Spiritual National Defense from the interwar period. According to the late sociologist Kurt Imhof, it continued to have an effect in the postwar period.

Jakob Tanner

Yes, that is a plausible theory: Initially, in the 1930s, the Spiritual National Defense simply constituted a politically multifaceted platform for those political forces that wanted to take a stand against the National Socialist threat. After World War II, this effort was transformed into one-dimensional anticommunism. Hence old “Frontisten” (“Swiss fascists”) could continue their fight against the left as dogged Cold Warriors and impeccable confederates, thereby suppressing the recent past. During the Cold War, the entanglements with the National Socialist regime—with the exception of a number of debates on refugee policy—were blocked out of the national memory culture. Authorities and the private economy eluded the examination of difficult subjects such as gold transactions and “dormant accounts.” One also reacted with anti-Semitic stereotyping to the demand for the repayment of Jewish assets that were now “dormant” because the account holders had been murdered. It was said, for example, that Jewish circles wanted to appropriate Swiss public property. The Swiss banks that did not adhere to the compliance that they themselves propagated got away with it for years. However, that was over in the mid-1990s. The Bergier Commission, constituted in late 1996, now countered this collective amnesia with its investigative anamnesis.

When the commission had concluded its work in late 2001, however, neither the government nor parliament were particularly interested in a political examination of these research findings (25 studies, a total of 11,000 pages). The political climate in the country had changed with the strengthening of the national right and the rise of the Swiss People’s

Party (SVP) under the leadership of the billionaire Christoph Blocher. The fight against the European Union associated itself with the patriotic slogan: “Right or Wrong—My Country!” Anyone who criticized Switzerland was not Swiss. This political constellation has not been overcome up to this day. Public Switzerland forgets how much European and global influences helped shape its economic development and its political history. It identifies “evil forces” everywhere that threaten it from the outside. Gold goes undetected under this national defensive shield. No one sees it, no one wants to know about it.

Rohit Jain

Political and academic criticism of this special-case myth nevertheless began to develop beginning in the 1970s. The Third World movement argued that Switzerland was involved in imperialist wheeling and dealing, that it was opportunist. This political self-criticism adhered to a new moral grammar that permeates the public sphere to this day. Let us take the fund-raising campaign against the bullion trade (cf. fig. in the Jain article) or the commodity book by the NGO Erklärung von Bern (now Public Eye): ³ The campaign and the book demand: “We” profit(ed), “we” have to assume responsibility. In contrast to the above-mentioned hegemonic strategy of making the history of misconduct and profit invisible, here it is to be made visible. It is like a tug of war. Some gloss things over, others want to throw light on things. But: All the same, both positions remain in a colonial dichotomy of “us here” and “you there.” Against this postcolonial background, does one really make any progress by making things known?

Jakob Tanner

There is definitely a need for information and critical reflection. However, enlisting these cannot distance Switzerland from its colonial past and its entanglement in imperialism; on the contrary, postcolonial and transnational research approaches have meanwhile shifted these realities unmistakably onto the perceptual horizon. If we once again consider gold: this history certainly did not end with the overcome

ing of the apartheid regime, which Switzerland had supported with its gold transactions. Rather, these value chains are still organized in such a way that people are exploited at one end, while profits are generated at the other. This is also the case in various other branches—for instance the cotton and textile industries. It is difficult to get out of these economic interrelations, indeed, hierarchies, which evolved out of colonialism. Some infer a fundamental criticism of free trade from this. Yet in my opinion, the so-called free-trade agreements do not pose a problem because of free trade, but because of the power that corporations can exercise over such agreements. Two notable examples are lawsuits against governments and the protection of intellectual property. Commodity trading is still strongly linked to the problematic practices of corporations, but also to those of state actors with regard to land rights or corruption. The constellations are often complex. Precarized small-scale producers of gold also employ highly toxic substances, which is catastrophic in terms of ecology. But it is ethically questionable to criticize them with a patronizing imperialist gesture because of that. Those who demand that they should stop doing so have to offer them economic alternatives. Since these “ordinary people” do not hurt the environment due to a lack of ecological awareness, but because of severe economic constraints. This is where the responsibility of countries comes into play that have achieved prosperity with the outsourcing of toxic substances and hazardous work processes. The key players in the irreversible destruction of ecosystems continue to be powerful economic interests and major corporations, especially those in Switzerland. The international community, and the United Nations in particular, have to accept their responsibility. A cooperation of democratic nations could succeed in ending this game of short-term benefits at the expense of future catastrophes.

Rohit Jain

This politico-economic argumentation makes sense to me, but in the Swiss responsibility discourse I see a problem with the “we” that is supposed to as-

sume responsibility. I see a communication cycle in which “white” NGO activists, as part of this “we,” approach other “white” Swiss people so that they make donations so that the NGO’s can help the “others down there.” The question is whether the logic of “white guilt” is capable of creating a moral, affective, and narrative basis for overcoming the postcolonial hierarchies in the gold trade chain. In the general Swiss public, an image of Switzerland dominates that continues to be used in a national and white context and does not represent global, politico-economic interrelations. Neither does the associated “we” represent the overall, ethnically and racially multifaceted society. In my view, the question of commodity trade “there” must therefore be linked with that of segregation and racism “here” in order to challenge the postcolonial amnesia in this country.

As the example of gold clearly shows, postcolonial amnesia obscures the century-long global entanglements in which Switzerland’s self-image and prosperity developed. Let us compare this with Great Britain, which for better or worse had to address the contradictions associated with colonialism after World War II and decolonization. Massive antiracist protests occurred in light of the institutional violence against postcolonial immigration. This meant that the lived, multicultural reality in Great Britain had to be acknowledged from the 1990s onward—Brexit or not. A process of coming to terms with colonialism did not take place in Switzerland—one reason being, of course, that Switzerland was less involved than Great Britain, but also because it could successfully “neutralize” its so-called colonial complicity. Until 1900, Switzerland was proud of its colonial role: there were well-attended ethnological expositions, trade in colonial goods, race research, etc. After World War I, the country succeeded in increasingly obliterating its colonial role. The first thing to disappear was its explicit colonial pride, and then its colonial consciousness altogether. For me, in view of the immense cultural formation of amnesia the question is whether information, research, and NGO work

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are enough in order to change economic relations. Besides concrete solutions such as fair gold or legal measures, does it not also require a broad process in order to develop new postcolonial relations within Switzerland as well as transnationally for the purpose of affectively dissolving boundaries and exposing oneself? How can other sets of ethical principles and affective communities be developed that extend beyond the boundary between “us” and “the others”? What narratives do we have to create in order to be able to talk about an unjust past and about new futures? Are there different forms of national representation than those of “we” and “the others”? Can one find a language, imagery, and an imagination that extends beyond national borders? In my opinion, transnational communities have to be created in order to address such postcolonial questions of guilt and reconciliation.

Jakob Tanner

It is true, of course, that the financing of NGOs has meanwhile become integrated into a competitive moral economy. Campaigns against commodity trading also attempt to mobilize political and financial support by engendering a bad conscience. They are sometimes criticized for this. I prefer to emphasize that by doing so they sharpen our awareness of the problems that are caused by the production and the processing of raw materials, above all as far as workplace safety and the air and water quality for large groups of the population are concerned. In the case of gold it is primarily necessary to point out the ambivalence that lies in the fact that for “us” the deceptive glisten of gold and the associated promise of happiness is connected with the miserable working conditions of those “others” that extract this precious metal. And to the extent that such issues concerning the regulation of the commodity trade are being seriously discussed today, it is already happening in a transnational exchange. The nationalization of the debates, as we have increasingly established, serves precisely the resistance to such a transnational awareness of the problems that could then also initiate sustainable global approaches to social justice. What is very problemat-

ic in this context is the nationalist charging of the commemoration of victims in Europe. When an airplane crashes, for instance, the mass media primarily focus on national mourners. The unspectacular death of people from countries whose power and news value are low, are not included in the media coverage. This also results in severe distortions in the perception of the globe as well as in the topography of memory. However, set phrases such as “shared world” or “blue planet” cannot simply put an end to the wealth gap. For the emotional and cognitive asymmetries are embedded in socio-economic differences—and despite several shifts, these have essentially not changed to this day.

Rohit Jain

That is interesting. For me, the question now arises of how, in view of this gap and the power relations, one can meet one another in the sense of postcolonial ethics. This could involve acknowledging that there are social, economic, and political differences and at the same time encountering one another on equal terms and being sensitive to precisely these differences. That would have a great deal to do with how and when one addresses differences and who can codefine these and the way to negotiate these. However, this surely requires new ethical, affective, and imaginative resources. I am time and again fascinated by transnational spaces, when they open up, for the purpose of developing these. For example, there was the project by the Dutch artist Renzo Martens, who founded a kind of research center in the Democratic Republic of Congo in which, among others, local artists as well as Europeans were involved. The project consisted in fashioning small statues and then casting them in chocolate for exhibitions in Europe, where they could then be bought for a high price. That cuts to the chase and makes the transnational postcolonial entanglements, contradictions, and simultaneities palpable that characterize this day and age.

Jakob Tanner

I was not familiar with this project. The way you describe it, it sounds very fascinating. For me and for many others, such projects are in part not visible

because they attract only limited attention. This also has to do with the almost aggressive competition that predominates in today's economy of awareness. Yet art projects could work like cellular robots. That means that each project is a replicant that immediately produces five similar ones in a creative chain reaction, so to speak, with the result that they then spread out and actually make a social impact and trigger their dissemination by the media. The theater director Milo Rau, for example, who generates enormous transnational publicity with his provocative plays, succeeds in doing this.

But even art cannot solve the problem that historiography has with the colonial past. Yet we are presently rediscovering the synergies between art and science and placing them in a new, transdisciplinary relationship with society. Doing so requires a new type of pragmatism, however, that does not see scientific and artistic work as the opposite of campaigning activity.

- 1 Jakob Tanner, “Goldtausch und Kulturrevolution: Pretoria—Zürich Paradeplatz,” in *The Air Will Not Deny You: Zürich im Zeichen einer anderen Globalität*, edited by Franziska Koch, Daniel Kurjaković, and Lea Pfäffli, (Zurich: diaphanes 2016), 204–06.
- 2 *Die Schweiz und die Goldtransaktionen im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, edited by Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz—Zweiter Weltkrieg, (Zurich: Chronos 1998).
- 3 *Rohstoff: Das gefährliche Geschäft der Schweiz*, edited by Erklärung von Bern, (Zurich: Salis Verlag 2012).

Deep Visual Listeners

Field Studies: Valcambi, PAMP, Argor-Heraeus

Fig. 15: knowbotiq, field recording
at Swiss gold refinery Argor-Heraeus, 2016



Fig. 16
Fig. 17, 18, 19, 20
Fig. 21, 22, 23

knowbotiq, *Valcambi gold refinery* (2017), Ticino, Switzerland, research image.
knowbotiq, *PAMP gold refinery* (2017), Ticino, Switzerland, research image.
knowbotiq, *Argor-Heraeus gold refinery* (2017), Ticino, Switzerland, research image.

Fig. 16



Fig. 17



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Fig. 18



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Fig. 19

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Fig. 20



Fig. 21



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Fig. 22

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The Puppets

Argumentative Displays

Fig. 24

knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: The White Image by Ad Reinhardt / Dash-Button enables automated shopping at Amazon / Girl Figure: Eva Winfried Bernard, Kembo, the story of a little black girl in Africa, 1933 / Copper engraving by Theodor de Bry, 1528–1598: "The Indians throw molten gold into the mouths of the Spaniards to saturate their greed" / Max Ernst, Crouching Figure, Bronze (2016).



Fig. 25 knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: Gold-coloured fabrics used by Hélio Oiticica for his practice of parangolé / 3D model of a colonial "Planter's Bed" / gold nugget with the bacterium cupriavidus metallidurans, which is capable of producing metallic gold from an aqueous gold chloride solution. Toxic gold compounds are thus transformed into elemental gold / The smartphone BlackBerry contains about 25 mg gold / The display shows a postcard depicting the Cuban slave plantation of Alfred Escher, the founder of the Schweizerische Kreditanstalt (later: Credit Suisse) / A gene gun that transforms the genetic codes of plants by means of a gold particle bombardment (2016).

Fig. 26 knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: Krugerrand coin with Swiss flag and a gold mask used in wellness culture.



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Fig. 27 knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: stylized open pit, 3D model sketch up / Kanye West dressed according to his "Rosewood Movement" / Golden Moon: Naveen Jain, founder and CEO of the internet company Infospace, founded Moon Express (MoonEx) in 2010 with the goal to win the 30 million Google Lunar X Prize. The company's ultimate goal was to extract the gold, platinum and silver resources of the moon / Photography database entry: "street protest against South Africa politics of the Swiss government, Paradeplatz, 14.02.1987—two men, one wearing a tropical helmet, with the inscription "The Swiss gold sticks to Negro blood. Boycott B[o]tha" in front of the SKA building in Zurich, two police men in coats and caps." (2016).



Fig. 28 knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: Ceramic model of the tree house from the (Canadian TV series, 1974): Swiss Family Robinson (Ebay) / Gold nanoparticles used as markers in histo- and cyto-chemistry / molecular health tracker monitors testosterone, fertility inflammation, vitamin D (2016).



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Fig. 29 knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: "The golden wreath" is the most important award of a Swiss national sport called Schwingen (trouser flap). It is a popular variation of freestyle wrestling, which is performed on sawdust. Dieylani Pouye a famous fighter in the Senegalese wrestling variation, lutte sénégalaise, took part in the "Eidgenössischen Schwing- und Älplerfest" in 2013. / „ForeverSpin"—Hightech spinning top made of titanium as desk object.



Fig. 30

knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: Document of the closing day of the floor trading in the Zurich stock exchange in 1995. Swiss bankers dance on their trading desks / 3D models of the Swiss Alps – some of the 1000 former military bunkers now serve as storages for gold, art works and data. They are called the Swiss Fort Knox / large antenna installations and huge reservoirs for energy production in the Swiss Alps, hidden from touristic views.

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Fig. 31

knowbotiq, The Puppets, argumentative displays: 3D model of a plastic Batea, a traditional tool used in artisanal gold mining / robotic dogs floating in mercury gold amalgam / Graphic tablet with Eleanor Roosevelt and the Declaration of Human Rights in Spanish (1948) / Two Campaign Logos for the 2020 Swiss Responsible Business Initiative which demands from multinational companies to respect human rights and the environment in their activities abroad. <https://corporatejustice.ch>



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Raw Materials: Metabolisms and Geopolitical Flows

Angela Melitopoulos

Dustism

To be on the brink of catastrophe is not an unfamiliar state in the history of modern Greece. For many Greek historians, catastrophe has become a symbol of the nation's history. The catastrophe, as the Japanese anthropologist and photographer Chihiro Minato noted after the meltdown at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, "reveals all the hidden facets as much in space as in time."¹

One of the 20th century Greek "meltdowns" was the so-called 1923 Asia Minor Catastrophe, which brought 1.5 million refugees from Asia Minor to Greece and displaced more than 800000 Turkish residents from Greece to Turkey. The political debate surrounding the historical background of this catastrophe continues to deliver hidden facets that unmask the Western European colonial strategy of "divide and rule" after the Berlin Congress. The Second World War, the Greek Civil War between 1945 and 1949, the totalitarian military junta between 1967 and 1974, and the Cyprus Crisis were each new ruptures within this history of catastrophe. Each new chapter overwrote its predecessor. Overwriting means deletions in memory. To quote Walter Benjamin "What has been forgotten [...] is never something purely individual. Everything forgotten mingles with what has been forgotten of the prehistoric world, forms countless, uncertain, changing compounds, yielding a constant flow of new, strange products."²

Although the catastrophes have slowed down and lengthened since Greece became part of the European Union, the debt negotiations starting with "the Crisis" in late 2009 were embedded in a situation of a perpetuated

crisis. More hidden facets have dramatically revealed themselves since June 2015. It was known that the new Syriza government was out of cash, but the fact that Greece had to import food because the agricultural sector was too weak, explains the emergency nature of the decision to agree to new economic austerity measures.

The fact that the transformation of the agricultural sector through EU regulations and “Cross- Compliance” agreements could lead to difficulties, was already suspected after Greece’s entry into the EU. Who willingly leaves their fields untill? Who saws their own fishing boat in half in order to collect compensation? Who wants to give up political autonomy for an impenetrable political structure where corruption flourishes and political elites construct a factory of debt?

Fig. 32: Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson, *Unearthing Disaster I and II* (2013–2015), video still.

Unearthing Disaster I & II is a video installation by Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson. For years, they have researched the destruction of a mountainous forest region in northeastern Greece by the Canadian mining company Eldorado Gold. Since 2013, Melitopoulos and Anderson have been documenting the ecological, social, economic and psychological damage caused by the open pit gold mine.



New documents released by Wikileaks in February 2016 revealed the ideologically driven negotiation strategies of the IMF and the EU. Leaked transcripts showed how the leaderships of the IMF and the EU were able to create new “events,” which would force the Greek government to submit to even harsher demands by its creditors. The neoliberal alliance between the EU and the IMF acted shamelessly through a policy of debt and crisis, forcing to sell public goods including water and air. Within the tumult of this endless, perilous downward spiral, a true abyss literally opened: the open pit gold mine in the forested Skouries-Kasteli-Kakkavos mountains on the peninsula of Halkidiki in northern Greece.

Skouries is located in the municipality of “Aristotelis,” named after the philosopher who was born there. There is a statue of Aristotle not far from the open pit mine, staring silently at the torn surface of a destroyed landscape. The birthplace of the philosopher has become the arena of a

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Fig. 33: Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson, *Unearthing Disaster I and II* (2013–2015), video still.

dirty political theater, preceding an anthropogenic end and the beginning of totalitarian politics. The knowledge about material and technological forces turned into an environmental threat by extraction companies rich in capital.

In Halkidiki, the Canadian company Eldorado Gold, a new enterprise for chemical ‘low cost’ gold mining, operated this threat and became the third and final owner of mining permits in Skouries. They were able to operate in ‘weak’ states that allowed for legislative exceptions. They belong to a kind of “extra statecraft.” Who could have ever imagined that Aristotle’s philosophy claiming that our subjectivity is formed through matter and substance, would, in fact, inspire a mining drama in contemporary Greek history?

The protest movements against austerity measures in Greece took up the struggle against Eldorado Gold as their symbolic core. The anti-mining struggle became emblematic in of the “crisis.” Syriza’s position at the beginning of its term in government in 2015 was to stop the open-pit mine. And yet, the construction of the mine could not be prevented.

The open-pit of the mine is now 700 meters wide and is planned to be 200 meters deep. Right in the middle of one of the most beautiful forests in northern Greece, over thousands of hectares of ancient woodland have been cleared. Now there is a monstrous Canadian “gold factory” instead, hundreds of meters high, requiring the strictest high security measures for its initial operations. 380 million tons of soil is supposed to be treated with

chemical agents. From one ton of soil, 0.6 grams of gold may be extracted. Every hour, tons of fine dust containing high concentrations of heavy metals will pollute the air, asphyxiating the remaining plants and leading to the desertification of the forest. More than 380 million tons of poisoned soil will then be immediately unloaded as mine refuse in three waste basins adjacent to the open pit. These waste basins are hundreds of meters long and deep, and are constructed in the once-pristine river valleys of these mountains. The clearing of the mountain's folds and forests and the wounding of its river valleys, preparing them to be future deposit sites for contaminated wastes, exhibit the demonic will of this capitalist enterprise.

A time bomb is ticking: the waste basins are located in an area prone to earthquakes. Thus, the storage of poisonous mine refuse can lead to the contamination of the entire northern Greek Mediterranean. While the Greek state is supposed to receive no royalties for gold mining, any damage or environmental disaster is at the expense of its citizens.

Since 2009, the population of northeastern Greece has been fighting Eldorado Gold, the actual and coming contamination of water, air, and earth. Different groups in Halkidiki had to activate all desiring-machines in their social existence in order to be able to afford their acts of resistance. Life forces demanding resistance in order to struggle against the machinery and the materiality of high-tech mining extraction and against the desertification of the forests. The apocalyptic scenarios embodied by the mega-machines in the mountains of Halidiki no longer seemed to be under control.

Aristotle's elemental thinking has inspired theory-fictions of Dooms-day acceleration machines. In Reza Negarestani's theory novel *Cyclonopedia*, Aristotle is the inspiration for the totalitarian desiring-machines of a desert-like religious war based on a demonic alliance. The nature of this alliance is explained by elementary molecular affects in matter. The dust of the desert expresses itself as an absolute power because the arid dryness of dust logically desires to connect in any way possible with the wet and the moist. So the dryness of the desert, yearns for the wet, seeks to absorb it in any and all forms. Even if the water may be contaminated, the dust desires to suck it up. What results from this encounter is a poisonous mix of wetness and other sickening elements and a sort of plague, a molecular agony working on all planes of existence. The disaster in Skouries resembles the real space of this metaphoric theory-fiction.

If operations could begin, it would be necessary to ignite large quantities of dynamite on a daily basis in order to degrade the soil. 945 tons per hour in the first three years and 2162 tons in the following seven years would eventually poison the air of the nearby village of Megali Panagia. Every day the dust, rich in heavy metals, would fall back down onto Halkidiki. The dust would bind with the rain; the rain would penetrate the drinking

water; a toxic wetness would be formed from the union of earth and water. A second problem would be that of water becoming contaminated by air, which is dense with heavy metals, and whenever it rains these pollutants enter the ground and are spread across a large area. The exposed strata from the dug-out pits contains certain metals, which are then oxidized upon contact with air, becoming poisonous. This environmental contamination would be irreversible. The drinking water system of the peninsula is already endangered. At present there are numerous natural drinking springs in the mountains around Skouries that have been poisoned with arsenic. Once these springs were enchanting places in the middle of the forest where people would fill their flasks with good water. Now they are a sad reminder of a political failure.



Fig. 34: Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson, *Unearthing Disaster I and II* (2013–2015), video still.

A study made by a Greek PhD student in 2015, who has been researching water quality in Skouries since 2011, demonstrates that soil and sediment deposits in the rivers and the nearby coast are already poisoned with heavy metals. During the intense struggles against the mine, scientific studies were delivered with a long delay, as older studies necessary for scientists to compare values were lacking. It was necessary to create complex models of elementary movements and geological watercourses within the mountainous region in order to identify the triggers and origins of this environmental pollution. These studies were needed to assume with certainty that the Eldorado gold mine was the cause of the contamination of the water. The researchers were, of course, refused access to the mine site; the

Greek police have 'protected' the headquarters of the company for years and they protected the company from exactly these researchers.

What we encounter is a biological reality resulting from a political disaster. The gold mine in Halkidiki has imposed conditions of total homogenization of subjectivities. It is thus triggering a kind of unconditional resistance that struggles for a different political perspective: one that wants to detach itself from a thinking established by subjectivities emerging from extraction economies. The more the technologies of Eldorado Gold threaten agriculture and tourism in the region, the more environmental destruction occurs as a result of chemical material extraction, the more it is necessary for the local population to analyze these complex machineries and to generate a creative heterogeneity within their spaces of resistant action.

The transformation and reshaping of social relations caused by these events have turned the conservative populace of Halkidiki into an electorate for the Syriza Party. But their hope has rusted now. Since 2016, the mine in Skouries is ready to take the fabrication of this catastrophe to its final stage.

Eldorado Gold, based in Vancouver, is far away from European legislators. It operates its low-cost, high-tech extractions remotely and globally. Secure in its Canadian financial haven, it continues to advertize a modern "gold fever" on its website. This senseless notion is promoted with the propagation of high-tech exploitation methods and technologies that tear elements, matter on a molecular level, out of the bowels of a weak foreign state. In 2016 the project in Halkidiki was promoted on the company's website as a good and firm investment undergoing temporary delay because of protest. They sold mining as a "normal" form of business, promoting education for the workers in a video clip: a man with a helmet carries his son in his arms and a voice from off-camera boasts how the company will sponsor the construction of new schools. Their well-planned exploitation strategies were presented to the EU's pro-mining lobbies as stable investments for the future of Greece. It boasts millions of dollars in gains, believing that hundreds of thousands of individuals should accept the destruction of their livelihoods simply because the mine will generate 1,500 jobs. Even if the mine workers are known to die early of cancer, they perform their sensationally paradoxical hopelessness as a scenario with no alternatives, speaking to the camera crews sent out by a television station owned by a Greek company that partners with Eldorado Gold.

The Greek workers are sad to fell the old trees in their forests, knowing that their families will have to live in a devastated future. They really just need a job, even if it will damage their health and destroy their environment. "First work, then health," they say. The hopelessness of their fate is firmly inscribed in their heads: they regard themselves as victims of history, and they despise anyone who tells them that their economic situation would have more of a future without the gold mine.

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The extraction industries calculate that even negative financial development is only a short-lasting 'dip' in stock prices. Fluctuations in the price of gold as a result of financial crisis only serve to fortify the company's advertising techniques. The continued demand for gold and the fact it has survived so many periods of fluctuation is seen as a confirmation of its safety as investment. Nevertheless, Eldorado Gold's shares have lost much of their value since 2012. Layer by layer, the scandals have made the depths of this enterprise visible.

Despite the peaking protests in Greece and the missed permits, which temporarily threatened the company with loss of the project, Eldorado successfully depicted both as unreasonable propaganda orchestrated by "lefty" environmental activists. In fact, when our films ("Unearthing Disaster I and II" realized in collaboration with Angela Anderson in 2013 and 2015) documenting the struggle in Skouries were presented in Vancouver at Simon Fraser University, Eldorado Gold referred to them as unscientific 'propaganda'. The company Gold Corps, located in a neighboring



Fig. 35: Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson, *Unearthing Disaster I and II* (2013–2015), video still.

skyscraper and sharing its press officer with Eldorado Gold, provided 10 million dollars of funding to the University. Enough money for them to be able to complain to the director of the university about unfriendly criticism. "Academic freedom," the PR of Gold Corps wrote in an e-mail, "is a term one has heard all too often and more than enough by now."

In order to exert pressure, in February 2016, Eldorado Gold threatened to stop the entire operations of the Syriza government. The Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) negotiations, through which national governments are asked to cover the damages incurred when business contracts cannot be enacted for political reasons, became relevant here. The Greek government lashed back with delay tactics. The negotiations were pending. Eldorado Gold continued to make threats, even though the newly elected government started to issue the still missing final

authorizations. Quasi-elemental decisions were at stake: the chemical flush melting process and its environmental impact, the waste basins in the river valleys of the Karatzas and Lotsaniko, and finally the newly discovered archaeological site of an ancient silver mine located in the middle of today's open pit in Skouries.

Eldorado Gold began to dig itself into Greece's history of catastrophe. The average European taxpayer remained in the dark regarding the technical details regulating the coercive fiscal measures put out by the EU and the IMF and the crisis-prone effects of these measures pushing for the gold industry. In order to pay less taxes in Greece, Eldorado Gold managed its EU front in Jeroen Dijsselbloem's Netherlands. Even as Dijsselbloem admonished the Greek government to collect more taxes.

Eldorado Gold was able to overcome bureaucratic administrative procedures in Greece. According to a report by a Dutch NGO, the environmental impact assessment (EIA) of refusing the project, was accompanied by a political scandal. Tina Birbili, the Greek Minister of Environment, Energy, and Climate Change who did not approve the EIA in 2011 was replaced by former Finance Minister George Papaconstantinou. The EIA was approved in July 2011, only 25 days after Birbili's replacement took office. Later Papaconstantinou became a controversial figure. Not only for his support of mining corporations but because he was embroiled in a public scandal: he removed names of his family members from a list of Greek people who were involved in corruption money being transferred to Swiss bank accounts.



Fig. 36, 37: Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson, *Unearthing Disaster I and II* (2013–2015), video still.

We are familiar with the scandals of gold, copper, uranium, and other mines, which point to the colonial period (both its old and new forms) in South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. Everywhere where there have been mining operations, there has been contamination of water. We know that once the environment has been devastated for its local inhabitants, as for example in Brazil and in Romania, there will be no adequate compensa-

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tion or reparations. In distant Canada, no one has ever been sentenced for such a crime. Furthermore, how can one even calculate "compensation" for the destruction of the environment as a basis for existence? For how long? For whom? Who compensates the animals? How can social and cultural forms of 'desertification' and poisoning of environment be calculated for coming generations?

The commissioning and implementation of the gold mine in Skouries has become a symbol of the defeat of the resistance, which had made its presence felt in the countless protests it mobilized in Greece since 2008. It eventually became clear that the Syriza government could no longer defend the will of the people. It seemed to lack the room to maneuver. The legal framework pushed forward by the EU justified a catastrophe that favored capitalist investment.

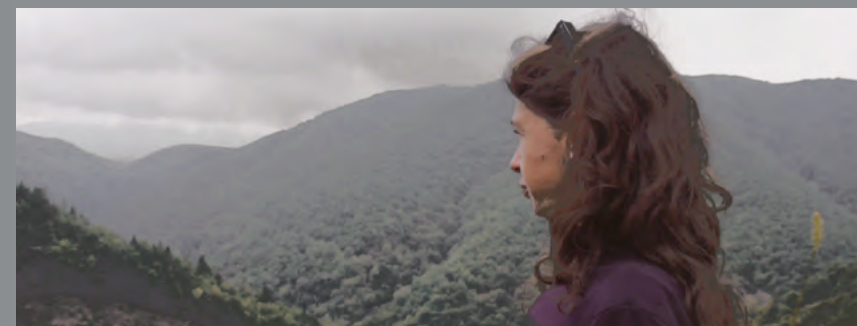


Fig. 37

The statement made by the Greek president Andonis Samaras towards the end of his office in 2012 already indicated a dark direction for the future of Southern Europe. Samaras had said that as the president of Greece, he would make sure this project is realized "by all means," going against the will of the people. "By all means" reminds one of Clausewitz, of war and civil war, states of exception and dictatorship. And indeed, by this time the protestors in Halkidiki had already endured the regular use of tear gas by riot police. Hundreds of martial units swooped down on the small, seaside town of Ierissos to arrest activists by court order, even as older women sang songs of resistance from the Second World War, which fellow protestors recorded on their cameras. A wave of police persecution followed; telephones were tapped, an army of lawyers issued lawsuits to individual activists and groups, and of course the non-stop surveillance of a private corporation's construction site by the police continued. This isn't only about the expense incurred by the taxpayer: it is symbolic of a conflict that reveals how capitalist enterprises have the power to drive governments into a civil war against their own people.^[3]

Whoever lives near Skouries is faced with only two options: slow death by poison, or emigration. There is a third way, a tough option almost too hard to imagine: the invention of a means to resist a totalitarian economy of extraction, whose most damning indictment of its impoverished logic is to suggest that there is no alternative.

▶ Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson,
Unearthing Disaster I (2013–2015), <https://vimeo.com/79184062>

▶ Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson,
Unearthing Disaster II (2013–2015), <https://vimeo.com/145769933>

This text originally dates back to 2016 when Angela Melitopoulos and Angela Anderson collaborated together on research, film installations and radio projects with the activists of Megali Panagia in Skouries. In 2017, the work at the Skouries mine was halted when the Syriza Government withheld necessary permissions. For some time it seemed that the ongoing resistance could be successful. However, with the election in July 2019 and the coming into office of a new rightwing government, in September 2019 Eldorado Gold was given all the necessary permissions to continue developing and fully operating the mine.

For further reading on this subject, see the teaser for Angela Anderson's contribution *We Are Not Activists* on the next page and find the full text on the SD card.

- 1 Angela Melitopoulos and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Chihiro Minato*, Two Maps (2011), Video Installation.
- 2 Walter Benjamin, "Kafka: On the 10th Anniversary of his Death," in: *Illuminations*, ed. and intr. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 131.
- 3 See Éric Alliez and Maurizio Lazzarato, *Wars and Capital*, trans. Ames Hodges, Series Semiotext(e) / Foreign Agents (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2016).

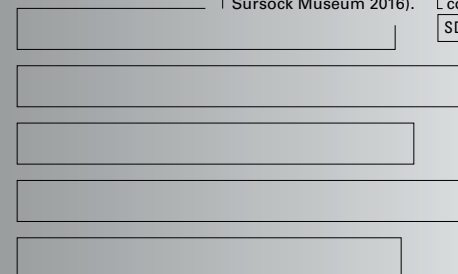
Angela Anderson

We Are Not Activists

Reprint info: "Dustism" by Angela Melitopoulos is revised and "We Are Not Activists" by Angela Anderson is reprinted from Ashkan Sepahvand (ed.), *Elements for a World Series – Water: Waste, Toxicity, Corruption, Contamination* (Beirut, Lebanon: Sursock Museum 2016).

The publication series accompanied the exhibition *Let's Talk About the Weather: Art and Ecology in a Time of Crisis*, curated by Nataša Petrešin-Bachelez and Nora Razian at the Sursock Museum, Beirut, Lebanon. <https://sursock.museum/content/publications>

SD



"Someone needs to explain to me why wanting clean drinking water makes you an activist and why proposing to destroy water with chemical warfare doesn't make a corporation a terrorist."

Winona LaDuke, Anishinaabekwe, founder of the White Earth Land Recovery Project

The earth floats on water (De Caelo, 294a28)
Water is the archê of all things (Metaphysics, 983b18)
All things are full of gods (De Anima, 411a7)

Aristotle, on the philosophy of Thales

It can be said that water is mining's best and worst friend. The physical extraction of mineral-containing rock using conventional mining techniques requires a dry environment. The autonomous flows of water below the surface of the earth present a myriad of hazards and hindrances to this process.

Margarida
Mendes

Mining
Beyond the
Abyss – a
Tactical Shift in Raw Material
Politics

...

The Deep-Sea as
Lawless Land

The seabed has long been depicted as an empty lawless land, a sort of *terra nullius*, barren land of nobody’s interest, ready to be occupied. However, the recent global shift towards the age of blue economy has directed attention towards the ocean’s resources by stressing technological pathways that incite new regimes of extraction. Deep-sea mining plans, spread throughout the mid-Atlantic ridge and Pacific Ocean, stress commercial exploration for metals and minerals, with the objective of feeding the technosphere. Recent speculative dreams of this new gold rush have set their eyes on the deep ocean, despite the fact that we know little about this part of our once flat, alien planet.

This decade has pushed treatises demanding intergovernmental cooperation for ocean literacy and seabed study, with the aim of monitoring climate change, ocean currents, plastic circulation and industrial pollution, but also to reveal seabed resources. This has prompted what can be called a neo-colonial drive, as nation states plan to profit from extractive policies that not only apply to mineral and metal mining, but also to genetic resources prospection.

With technologies still being developed, deep-sea mining is in an experimental pilot phase and yet tests are already taking place in Papua New Guinea, China, and Japan. Over 29 deep-sea mining concessions have been leased by the International Seabed Authority—a United Nations body, which regulates and supervises exploration of the ocean floor in international waters—despite the fact that legislation is still being drafted. These leases cover a total seabed area of approximately two million km² and the main sites targeted for future exploration in international waters are the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and Clarion-Clipperton Zone in the Pacific, as well as national waters of the islands of Fiji, Tonga, New Zealand, and the Portuguese Azores archipelago.

Mining companies aim to extract gold, copper, manganese, nickel, lead, cobalt, lithium, titanium, platinum, zinc and rare earths from the seabed, from a depth of approximately 1,400 to 5,000 meters, where special geological formations are located. The borderless frontiers of the deep ocean, which have long been taken as a lawless territory become the center stage for 21st century geopolitical disputes, while bringing forward the urgency of promoting more integrated forms of ecological resistance, and deep ecology influenced policy-making.

Some of the minerals and metals targeted to be extracted from the seabed are deeply entrenched in our societies. Gold is commonly used in computer circuitry, nickel, manganese, zinc, and cobalt are widely applied in batteries, and copper is essential for wires. In 2017 alone, 20 million tons of copper were mined, with Chile as the leading producer putting out an estimated 5.33 million metric tons of copper. That same year, 3,150t of gold were produced, with China leading by a huge margin at 429.4t, followed by Australia (289t) and Russia (273t). Last year, gold production hit a new record with 3,347 tons, an impressive increase from the 705t extracted just over a century ago in 1912, and 1,480t reported in 1970.

Major gold rushes reconfigured migration of work forces and shifted local geopolitics in 19th century Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Canada, South Africa and the United States, and more recently in Brazil’s Apuí region in Amazonas, where in 2006 the local mines created jobs for 500,000. However, the rush for this metal is unstoppable, as global markets and international policies maintain a high demand for raw materials required for technological development and production of goods. Resource scarcity myths are being propelled and spread through media channels, state programs, and the mining industry promoting growth-led agendas, that perpetuate current lifestyles, suiting the consumer demand for new generation gadgets. Paralleled with State-led initiatives to invest in more reasonable production methods such as conscious recycling, the need for environmentally concerned consumption ethics has never been more urgent.

Longstanding geopolitical conflicts and intense rivalry between grand nation states, go a long way in fueling the scarcity narrative, which is further instigated by mining industry-funded propaganda. A case in point is the rare earths discussion propelled by China’s rare earth policy. Rare earths can be found across the planet—for instance, the United States holds great reserves of the same. However, China’s monopoly over the value chain including control over patents and processing plants that manipulate the extracted raw ore into valuable elements is the destabilizing factor driving the market currently. China’s rare earth export policies control the global market. The US, the EU and other countries have responded with fierce incentives towards raw material production, making available funding for

mining consortiums, and targeting the sea floor as a site for extraction not only of rare earths, but also of copper and gold.

Unknown abyss

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Insufficient research on deep-sea ecosystems means that the large part of our subaquatic planet still lies understudied. Even though bathymetric knowledge—with the aid of geostationary satellites, sonars and submersibles—has undoubtedly advanced, detailed information about deep-sea geomorphology and ecosystems is almost non-existent, due to the difficult and expensive access. Oceans constitute 70 percent of the Earth's surface and yet, according to the scarce bathymetric charts and numbers offered by NASA, until recently we only had knowledge of about 15 percent of the seabed.

Ocean floors play an important role in managing Earth's carbon cycle, as large parts of the circulating carbon sinks to its depths. We know that mutations in abyssal planes are slow, as there is very little movement and exposure, and the geomorphology takes a long time to develop due to seldom changing conditions. Timescales operate differently at the depth of our planet, and the human hand having been kept at bay for as long as it has, has worked in favor of the abyssal planes. And yet assemblages of anthropogenic agents, such as microplastics and chemical compounds, have already been discovered at depths as distant as the Mariana Trench.

The seabed as stock

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Since the days of the supercontinent Pangaea, geological forms have developed as continental plates contract, expand and merge. The silent topographical territories of seamounts, plateaus, ridges and trenches are geological banks and the minerals and metals they hold are speculated on as a form of highly valuable stock. Polymetallic or manganese nodules, spread across the seafloor, are considered to be one such stock in reserve. These hand-sized knobby potato-shaped nodules, made of concentric layers of iron and manganese hydroxides, have been forming for millions of years.

Other geological formations being prospected are the cobalt crusts of seamounts, submarine mountains, on which layers of metal have been slowly deposited over time. Also up for prospection are hydrothermal vents, small underwater volcanoes, where a variety of metals and minerals, have accumulated over millennia. Spread across the globe, these formations are largely located around tectonic joints and since the 1970s, they have been earmarked for extraction by dredging, a process that will undoubtedly destroy these formations and the biodiversity they support.

Corporations and nation states alike are investing in out-of-sight profit landscapes, drawing up extractive plans and policies supported by market forecast. In this process, nature itself becomes quantified by sta-

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tistical eyes, which turn its metabolic potency into financial transactions. Meanwhile, the mining industry puts forward campaigns that promote its so-called technological innovation, feeding its consortiums with European funds for raw material production, while developing technologies for prospecting the deep. The pace of this new gold rush incites technofixers to be driven by market assumptions, based on the scalability of material speculations, operating on a multitemporal landscape that takes futurology as its trade coin. While at the same time obliterating other unknown futures by bringing about ecological devastation of the entangled oceanic and terrestrial ecosystems.

What happens when speculative forms of extraction, put into practice forms of material mediation that can endanger the well-being of our planet? Can we still take preventive action?

Taking precautionary action

3751 – 3818

The cumulative effects of deep-sea mining will affect the benthic layer at the bottom of the sea, and the water column in zones far from the planned extraction sites, exposing them to habitat destruction, plume, excessive light and industrial noise. The ecosystem must be understood as a pool of dynamic, entangled assemblages and not a set of divided agents, dissected by law. The seas are a dynamic interconnected milieu in permanent exchange, shifting locally, but with global consequences. Think for example, of aerosols travelling through the atmosphere and sinking into the ocean, or microorganisms, such as bacteria and viruses navigating fluid cartographies as patented molecules and altering the evolutionary chain. Another localized example is the chemosynthetic life present at hydrothermal vent fields, living out of trades with its surrounding bacterial and chemical landscape, where bacterial agents, microorganisms, carbon deposits, fish, algae, geologic habitats, and other undiscovered life forms are all interwoven in a fluid space where water currents, sedimentation and chemical processes continuously overlap.

Knowing that ecosystems are bound to such metabolic entanglements and that there is constant contamination, not only of microparticles, but also thinking that the different forms of life and non life are at stake and emerge from different geologic scales, having taken thousands or millions of years to form, how can we still operate from an angle of partition, and envision extractive operations?

It is crucial that we consider our intervention in the vulnerable ecosystems of the deep-sea, whose resilience is fairly slow and largely understudied. With this in mind, advocacy groups are fighting against deep-sea mining, raising awareness about the insufficiency of regulation and the lack of transparency in the negotiation of deep-sea mining concessions, while questioning the status of the International Seabed Authority.

As the prospects of extraction go from science fiction to reality, in January 2018, European Parliament's resolution on international ocean governance called for its members to halt with deep-sea mining plans. In addition, the United Nations declared the 2020s to be the Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. At a time when the frameworks of global politics shift towards "blue economy" and multilateral treaties for oceanographic data sharing are being signed, we should take the opportunity to promote ocean literacy, conscientious seabed mapping, and increase the number of grants dedicated to the field of ocean studies. These should further our knowledge about the centrality of biodiversity and the economic wealth that ocean preservation can bring.

In this context, the prospect of deep sea mining is complex as it raises questions about the distinction between life and non-life, and at the same time serves as a mobilizing agent for funding oceanographic research and redefines jurisdiction at sea. It also puts at stake the different roles played by biological and geological bodies in the earth system, while invoking the much needed precautionary principle that demands we treat our common heritage responsibly and not take extractive action before there is scientific consensus.

If we act collectively, we as citizens can push for national policies that take into consideration different economic horizons. In 2018, the rate of gold recycling stabilized, with a turnover of 1,173t in recycled material, equivalent to a third of its annual production. The rate of recycling could increase and the enterprise could be more profitable if urban mining were promoted because the concentration of gold in mobile phones is 80 times higher than the concentration of gold in mines and mining mobile phones certainly requires less investment. This fact should be a motivation for market pragmatists to acknowledge that raw materials are actually around the corner, and are much easier to obtain than one thinks. Rather than promoting investment in a new extraction frontier that will damage our planet, we should focus on a healthy and conscious strategy for mineral and metal recycling by diverting mining investment funds towards the development of hardware recycling strategies. On an individual scale, promoting exchange and circulation of already existing technologies, might prove efficient towards practicing a de-growth led circular economy, and instigate political modes of living that are the basis of nurtured and sensitive commons.

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Yolanda Ariadne Collins

Raw Material: On Myths, Gold and Development in Suriname

3826 – 4230

This essay uses raw material in the form of not-yet-refined Surinamese gold to interrogate the meeting of colonialism, development and global environmental policies aimed at mitigating climate change by conserving forests.

For all its coveted materiality, gold has a certain ethereality. It is a signifier of wealth to which many aspire. For some others, it is a means of attaining such wealth. Unrefined, commodified and mythic; Surinamese gold, when studied in the different stages of its pursuit and production, reveals the social fabric of its creation, one that is often exploitative of specific social groups and inconsiderate of the natural environment.

Gold is produced through certain roughly categorized phases: prospecting, through which its presence in earth, rock or soil is identified; mining, through which its deposits are gathered; extraction, through which gold embedded in deposits is removed; and finally, refinement through which it is formed into a commoditized end product, such as jewelry. Hence, at different stages, gold is both raw material and a developed, refined commodity. It is raw material in the view of it becoming refined, with the continued potential of becoming raw again.

This condition of rawness, however, is not exclusive to any raw material that has been similarly categorized. Many countries whose economies rely primarily on the exportation of raw material share this categorization of rawness. Hence, similarities exist between the process of finding and refining gold; and

the categorization of these countries as developing, as implicitly “en route” to development. Often, formerly colonized countries, classed as developing, are those whose economies rely on the production and exportation of raw materials, but not on their refinement. This reliance on the export of raw materials to developed capital centers leaves these countries in a cycle of dependence on their wealthier counterparts.^[1]

In the sections that follow, I describe how the historical search for mythic golden city of “El Dorado” and the social fabric that unreeled from the arrival of Europeans on the South American coasts set the stage for the natural resources and people classed as “developing” to be relegated to the providers of the necessary input for economic activity in the West. In parallel, these countries continue to be perceived as continuously being molded, shaped and optimized, a process reflected in the social production of gold in Suriname, as I outline next.

... The search for mythic “El Dorado” 3892 — 3938

The search for the city of gold, the mythical “El Dorado,” brought European explorers to the coasts of South America. In the area that became Suriname, European explorers met with indigenous people and developed trading relations with them. The indigenous people provided food and the Europeans novelty items and tools in return.^[2] Over time, as the

Fig. 38: Yolanda Ariadne Collins, the Afobaka hydropower dam in Suriname.

This place forms a meeting point for gold miners who come from the surrounding areas by boat and then travel to the capital city, Paramaribo, from this point (2014), research image.



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Europeans started to develop sugar, coffee and cacao plantations on the fertile coastlands, they turned to the diverse groups of indigenous people they had encountered, including Arawaks, Caribs and other tribes, for sources of labor, enslaving some of them as “red slaves.” As the plantations developed into large-scale endeavors on the coasts of Suriname, the indigenous labor force was subsequently overtaken by the inhumane system of African slavery. In 1863, this system was abolished. The Europeans then turned towards systems of indentureship through which large numbers of East Indians were brought to labor in Suriname under exploitative conditions. Subsequently, smaller numbers of Javanese and Chinese contract workers were brought in to work alongside them.

Throughout the colonial period, a steady stream of indigenous people, known locally in English as Amerindians, as well as enslaved and then freed Africans, joined indigenous communities in seeking refuge and building lives in the forests. Those enslaved Africans who had managed to escape slavery and to set up communities in the forests came to be called Maroons. While the myth of “El Dorado” was never realized because the fabled city of gold was never found, Suriname’s coasts generated vast amounts of wealth for those who colonized it through the relocation and exploitation of people who worked the plantations. The wealth generated from these activities went a long way towards fuelling the rise of capitalism in colonial centers in Europe.^[3]

... Unrefined gold and colony 3940 — 4026

During Dutch colonialism in Suriname, lasting from 1667 until independence in 1975, traditional laws were formalised in peace treaties that were signed between the colonial rulers and the indigenous and maroon communities in the forests. The treaties were signed with the indigenous peoples in the 17th century and with the Maroons in the 18th century. These peace treaties prohibited settlers from molesting the forest communities and forced them to respect customary laws.^[4] Suriname’s independence from the Netherlands obliterated these restrictions. The treaties were not included in independent Suriname’s new legal framework, which designated all land that was not privately owned as the property of the state, effectively stripping away the legally recognized customary land rights of the forest communities. As independent Suriname turned towards extractive activity to fuel economic growth, the absence of community land rights grew all the more pressing.

Gold mining in Suriname started in the late 1800s. The intensity of the production of gold in Suriname varied over time but gold production grew dramatically in the early 1990s as the independent Surinamese government sought to recuperate from civil war. The civil war had sparked around Ronnie Brunswijk, the leader of the Suriname Liberation Army, who



Fig. 39, 40: Yolanda Ariadne Collins, medium scale gold mining site in the Brokopondo area of Suriname (2014), research image.

shared the rewards of illegal activities in which he had engaged with maroon communities in Moengo. This spurred retaliation by the Surinamese army that then went on to carry out violent atrocities against the Maroons who supported Brunswijk. This civil war, combined with the fall of the price of bauxite on the international market, devastated the Surinamese economy. Bauxite had been known as “red gold” during the Second World War and the post-war years since it was much needed to produce aluminium for the conflict. The Surinamese civil war, however, reduced access to education in the maroon areas, so the young male population turned largely to gold mining as a source of income.

During this period, Brazilian small-scale gold miners who lost their land usage rights to big business in nearby Apama, Brazil, moved to Suriname to work, bringing new technologies such as mechanical dredging, to gold mining and forming collaborations with Surinamese maroon gold miners. Small-scale gold miners now generally use hydraulic equipment and mercury with severe consequences to the environment. According to some estimates, small-scale gold mining may account for as much as 60 percent of Suriname’s total gold production. Large-scale, commercial gold mining is also a significant player in gold mining. Commercial production

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in Suriname’s first large open pit mine commenced in 2004 at the Rosebel Mines by the Canadian lamgold company. The U.S. multinational Newmont also started its operations in Suriname in October 2016. A number of smaller, both foreign and domestic, companies have also been active in exploiting gold depositions in Suriname.⁵ These large-scale gold mining operations, however, are not deemed major threats to the forests due to their stationary nature.

Small-scale gold miners are now common in the forested areas of Suriname. This situation around access to land is further complicated by the state government’s grant of large-scale concessions that permit lumber, gold and bauxite mining activities, all affecting the livelihoods of the communities that had established themselves in the forests. The increased interest in extractive activity combined with an absence of legally enforced land rights made the livelihoods of the indigenous and maroon communities residing in the forests vulnerable. These communities are still generally at the mercy of the government discretion and of the multinational companies to whom the government granted the right to pursue extractive activity in land the communities consider their own. Gold mining is now Suriname’s main threat to forest conservation, an increasingly important component of global efforts to mitigate climate change.

Fig. 40



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Racialized Extraction 4045 — 4070

After independence, the Surinamese government had sought to diversify the economy away from a reliance on plantations by increasing the extraction of gold and bauxite. The wider society had become racialized through the colonial experience. Its racialized character continues to be reflected in the population’s spatial distribution and relation to economic

activity, a distribution that came to affect the production of gold. Overall, Creoles in the capital city of Paramaribo started to dominate Surinamese politics. The coastal areas remained the reserve of East Indian, Javanese and Creole populations with a few indigenous communities remaining in the coastal, forested areas. The forests remained inhabited largely by Maroons as well as indigenous people.^[6] The move towards extractive activity in Surinamese forests, centred on gold and bauxite, took place within this framework of the racialized social and spatial relations that had been established by the colonizers.^[7]

During gold's growth in the 1990s, Creoles from the city were the most represented ethnicity in small-scale gold mining. Amerindians and Maroons were not much involved. Over time, Maroons began to use their knowledge of the rivers and forests to provide transport to and from the gold mines. Though some maroon communities continue to subsist on farms and trade with the capital city, others now engage in gold mining as their major income earner, alongside smaller numbers of Brazilians and Creoles. Now, small-scale gold mining is mostly the reserve of maroon communities who have been historically and continually disadvantaged, with many turning to the activity to complement their subsistence practices.^[8]

...

*Development and
the "Golden Handshake"* 4072 — 4145

After independence, Suriname's multiethnic population was left to govern itself and its resources, although with significant guidance in the first years from the Netherlands. Suriname benefitted from a "golden handshake"^[9] in the form of a large foreign aid grant through which the Netherlands retained substantial control of the direction of the Surinamese economy and internal affairs. Although the plan eventually failed because of Suriname's inability to absorb such large amounts of cash and because of disagreements between the Netherlands and Suriname's new government, the "golden handshake" represented the first paternal step of independent Suriname's relationship with its former colonizer. One thing that remained in common between the Netherlands and the independent Surinamese government was their focus on capitalist means of growth and distribution of the country's resources.^[10] Now, Suriname is categorized as "developing," a categorization that alludes to its level of modernization and its income.

Suriname's high level of forest cover qualified it for participation in the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) initiative. REDD+ is a market-based policy sanctioned by the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change that is being pursued in the interest of mitigating climate change in the Global South. Through REDD+, a diverse collection of actors, including international organizations, non-governmental organizations and state/city governments, pay countries that have significant amounts of forest cover, like Suriname, to avoid deforesting

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practices. Developed, piloted and implemented in developing countries with tropical forests around the world, REDD+ is the biggest and most ambitious global plan to incentivize people away from deforesting activities.

However, as REDD+, a market-based tool for managing nature,^[11] is enacted in Suriname, racialized histories and resource use practices around gold hinder its progress.^[12] These dynamics were evident in a maroon community in Brownsweeg, Suriname, in 2014, as the Surinamese government prepared for REDD+ implementation.

13 "In the 1960s, approximately six thousand Maroons, who had settled to form communities in the forests, were forcibly relocated to Brownsweeg by the Dutch colonial government to make way for the Afobaka hydropower dam and its accompanying reservoir that was needed by the then colonial government to provide cheap energy for industry. Almost half of the territory of these groups was flooded and many persons died. The communities were paid miniscule amounts of compensation and were not assigned land rights to the areas to which some of them were relocated. In the new, unfamiliar environment, some Maroons turned to small-scale gold mining to earn an income."

Due to the Surinamese government's participation in REDD+, Maroons were recast as threats to the forest because of their gold mining activities. When maroon gold miners were found to be operating in a nature conservation park in Brownsweeg, park authorities advocated for their expulsion. The government body tasked with managing small-scale gold mining explained that because of previous colonial injustices experienced by the communities of the miners that were relocated to build the Afobaka hydropower dam, they would not be moved. In reference to the proposed expulsion, the representative of the government body explained that:

14 "this, of course, was not going to happen. Why? Because at the other side of this park, you have these villages, 9 villages, and these villages were displaced during the 1960 (Afokaba dam building) floods. I am very sensitive to that so what I said was 'no, it is not going to happen'."

Forest conservation policies are certainly not disentangled from this racialized land use practices and colonial histories. Neither are European countries without direct colonial histories exempt from their effects. For example, Switzerland, despite not having formally possessed colonies, is also not exempt from colonial histories that challenge avoided deforestation programs. Swiss families were active participants and beneficiaries of European colonialism in Suriname.^[15] These histories have continuities in

the present since Switzerland remains one of the top export destinations of gold for Suriname. More than half of Suriname's gold, one of its biggest export earners in 2017, is being exported to Switzerland to the tune of some 1.07 billion USD. ¹⁶



Fig. 41: Yolanda Ariadne Collins, the environmental effects of gold mining in a protected area in the Brownsberg nature park in Suriname (2014), research image.

Conclusion

Suriname's independence and its subsequent categorization as "developing" indicate some shared rawness between gold and the independent state. Raw materials are those substances that are known to have the potential for development and utility embedded in their properties. Raw materials, therefore, share some similarity with the states formed through colonialism with their lands and people often treated as having the potential of becoming something else, something assumed to be an improvement over its current state. As gold moved from the realm of lore to the driver of industry, the consequences of exploiting the rawness of these places in this fashion are increasingly being seen. These consequences are evident in the challenge that this historical reshaping of lands, people and resources pose to global efforts to limit climate change through forest conservation. ¹⁷

Policies that grapple with the modern challenge of climate change, such as REDD+, interact with the historical injustices visible around gold that have left certain groups out of the mainstream development thrust. ¹⁸ Meanwhile, the search for wealth, represented by the mythical city of El

Dorado, continues to hold sway. It is now represented by promises of development pictured as achievable through extractive gold mining practices that deforest lands and provide raw materials for refinement to Europe by other (than colonial) means.

Gold, the imagined wealth that lured European traders-turned-colonizers to the Surinamese coasts, continues to feature in and shape desires and pursuits even after the formal close of colonialism. In so doing, however, it challenges efforts to avoid deforestation and limits global plans to pay for avoided deforestation in postcolonial environments in the interest of addressing climate change.

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- 14 Ibid., 45 (quoting respondent in Suriname).
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Fundación Mareia

Oro

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Video:
2 MIN 19 SEC
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Fundación Mareia
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Danilo Casama,
Yarlin Adriana Quejada
Palacios
Camera:
Paula OG
Editing and Montage:
Two Worlds
Musical Themes:
African Stomp Dance-cc
by attribution
Thanks:
Linda Cachoeira Lopez,
Felipe Tapias
Place and Date
of Production:
Corregimiento la Soledad,
Rio Quito, Chocó, 2019

SD

“Due to the situation of the depressing state of the Atrato River it has become necessary to speak about and defend its rights we say to you that because the River Atrato, its basin, and its tributaries are not in ideal condition the communities and the people who live by the river we who are part of the river who can be found in the brooks and streams of the rivers that we too will not be in the best of situations.” Translation of the Spanish intro text of the video *Oro*.

Fundación *Everything* Mareia – Casa *That Shines* Wontanara^[1] team, Quibdó; Linda Kachoeira López Abuchar and Loretta A.M. Moreno

We^[2] were invited to be part of the Swiss Psychotropic Gold project and we are pleased to do so, after meeting Yvonne and Christian from knowbotiq at the end of May 2019 in the city of Quibdó-Chocó at an event sponsored by the people of Más Arte y Más Acción, entitled Arte más Territorios (“Art plus Territories”).^[3] Our expectation is to continue weaving contents that narrate our territories with our own voices, and to become acquainted with how people from elsewhere share tools of activism^[4] with us.

We have developed two collaborations for this publication. The first is a documentary video we made as the Casa Wontanara Quibdó team together with Adriana Quejada Palacios, who is a guardian of the Atrato River^[5] and member of COCOMACIA.^[6] The video is entitled ORO (“GOLD”). The second is this article, in which we elaborate some ideas about the mining activities in our Department^[7], especially in the Atrato River zone. In accordance with Sentence T622/16^[8], this river is a subject of rights.

“[...] I don’t eat bocachico anymore [...] the woman from two doors down is dying [...] She was cleaning a fish and got pricked by a bone, her finger became infected and she went to the hospital, they had to take her to Medellín to be treated, they say she was poisoned by mercury. The fish was from the Atrato”

This is the conversation Linda had with Señor Ángel, the owner and carpenter of the wooden house where Casa Wontanara exists, on some or another day a few weeks back, because he already had intuited ... that heavy metal.

4321 — 4680

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Fundación Mareia

Everything That Shines

4321 — 4680

The people of Quibdó and many other villages in the region have become familiar with the term mercury not necessarily because it is the name of the planet that is smallest and closest to the sun, or because it is an element in the periodic table (Hg 80), but because for over 30 years this chemical *liquid silver* has been used for the extraction of gold during mining activities. For at least as long as the oldest people can remember and up until recent years, they were practicing artisanal mining, their grandfathers and their grandfathers’ grandfathers. Speaking about the start of these activities in the region with the arrival of the black people, following the expansion/colonization of Europe into Abya Yala^[9] and the mass abduction of African peoples^[10] to perform gold extraction work, the reference date for many historians is 1530, when the Spanish, setting out from the Real de Minas de Monte de Carmelo, started to populate the surrounding regions of the Alto del San Juan.^[11] But the first entries into the Chocó territory took place in 1510 with the establishment of Santa María la Antigua del Darién, a town that still exists today.

It is not gold, it is extractivism, it is not mining, it is looting, the official cases of mercury poisoning reached 2,138 in the country, with 41% of the cases corresponding to the Chocó and Antioquia, according to data from the newspaper El Nuevo Siglo (18 August 2017)^[12]. The Chocó, this place where we live, where we wake up every morning with the sense of a better future in our minds and bodies, these cases of poisoning could be us, our friends, our neighbors. Ten years ago anthropogenic mercury releases of 345,570 kg/year were recorded in the ground, air, and water, and in treatment of waste, derivatives, and other impurities. This was already a warning of the implications for biodiversity, health, and the sociocultural fabric.^[13] The rise of mechanized, multinational mining also led to a surge of armed groups appearing in the region with the scarcity of potable water in the tributary streams, scarce food, forced displacements, and little state presence.^[14]

When this happens, the land wails the songs of the grandmothers, the land weeps the tears of death, the rivers in their riverbeds stripped of clarity deter those they previously drew near, the forests impoverished of their megabiodiversity strain themselves in order to revive, the projects of environmental restoration fall short in relation to the profound injury to the soul of the territory and its Afro-descendent and indigenous communities. Quibdó, the capital of the Chocó, does not have a tertiary hospital, with advanced specialization, nor do the infrastructure, or the personnel, or the funds for this kind of hospital exist in the richest place in Colombia, the place richest in gold. Some of the first companies that entered the Atrato with mechanization were Brazilian, over there in Río Quito where we did the takes for our video^[15], and where it is well known among the people that the color of their waters has changed drastically, color that differs from

the Atrato and appears clearer starting at the Isla del Amor in San Vicente to the south of Quibdó, by boat the distance between the municipalities is five minutes.

The development plan 2010–2014 started boosting the mining-energy sector more forcefully, considering it to be the motor of growth for the economy, which was cast in terms of petroleum and carbon production.^[16] This justified bilateral agreements allowing companies to enter “favorable” (“propicios”) places to conduct resource explorations, which continued to be encouraged over the subsequent five years, including when the Peace agreements between the national government and the FARC-EP, on the issue of access to land and illicit-use crops, touched on the topic of mining as one of the central problems to be solved in order to achieve a stable and enduring Peace, with high impact on the Chocó Department and the entire Pacific region. Today we know the present situation of the agreements, which were broken by the policies of the current government.

The Attorney General of Colombia assured the newspaper *El Espectador* (4 April 2019) that “Whereas a kilo of coca placed in New York is worth 25 thousand dollars, a kilo of gold in the New York market is worth 42 thousand dollars.”^[17] Where there is demand there is supply. Who is buying this illegal gold? In the Chocó Department 527 illegal mining entities have been recorded, open-pit and reliant on mercury alongside other heavy metals such as arsenic and cyanide. Making these activities legal would depend on compliance with environmental biosecurity and public health regulations, which of course are not as profitable due to the proce-



Fig. 42: Paula O.G., Sentence 622/16 One-Year Commemoration. Songs for the River Cultural Tour. Organizations: Tierra Digna, Guardianes del Atrato, and Fundación Mareia. Quibdó (2018).

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dures they require companies to perform, and which can mean activities are denied in the particular sector, so it is better to pay good money to the state environmental authorities, to armed groups that obtain between 5 and 20% of the gold removed, to the owners of the excavators and dredges (approx. 2,500 USD), to the traders another 10%, and one more percent to those who sell gasoline so that the retro excavators and “dragones”^[18] can operate. Thus, 50% of Gold that comes from illegal mining and is washed or laundered in Bogota, produces 2 trillion pesos in Colombia (approx. one thousand million dollars), the path of which has been recorded in detail for the Amazonian region of the country by the magazine *Semana* in summer 2013.^[19]

But how is this possible? As residents and activists in the Chocó, we ask, did the government not find out about these realities? Did the international aid and development organizations not read the multiple investigations of the topic? Is the Chocoan population aware of the irreparable injury that these activities cause in their lands? How long is the distance in kilometers from the banks to the recipients of the Chocoan gold? In South America the most studied records of gold that lead to Switzerland are from countries such as Peru and Ecuador, where there is also a pattern leading to the United States, according to the cases presented by Valencia^[20]. But in our country the destinations are often Italy and the Falkland Islands (south of Argentina), although it is known that mercury is imported from Switzerland.

Colombia is famous for its coffee, emeralds, gold, displacement, and assassinated socio-environmental leaders, who have been part of social, popular, and environmental assemblies, rural/urban organizing processes, indigenous councils, and community advisory committees, which gather and provide information about the circumstances the peoples were in due to the illegal mining activities. The numbers are worrying: 837 persons assassinated between January 2016 and May 2019. Of this number, 702 were social leaders and 135 were excombatants of the FARC, according to the report *Todos los nombres, todos los rostros* (“All the names, all the faces”) by the movement *Marcha Patriótica* and the Institute of Development and Peace Studies (Instituto para el Desarrollo y la Paz—Indepaz). The chain continues, production is only the beginning of a circuit full of accomplices whose ambition flows like mercury flows into the Atrato, according to a story in *El Espectador*^[21].

It is not the gold. The inhabitants of the Chocó have been connected to both mining and timber extraction in their traditional practices, their economies have varied between fishing, hunting, agriculture, and artisanal mining, these traditional practices are accompanied by deep-rooted concepts of territory and collectivity, the territory is not simply a thing to commercialize or make lucrative, “*The territory is the space of daily life, and for this reason*

the sense of the present, the memory of the past, and the intuition of the future are concentrated within it”^[22]. Being our present, we employ the active hope of a better future for those who inhabit this territory, we channel our actions from collectivity in order to awaken more people with the information and experience, and we create spaces where we can discern the paths we have decided to traverse for the defense of our territories.

Once, the people and especially the women were those who practiced the mining, while the men were in agriculture, hunting, woodcutting or fishing; performing the work from Monday to Saturday and supporting the family economy. It revolved around three techniques:

- Going up to the beaches, scraping and filling the pan, and then taking it to the river where it was washed and divided, which took many hours of the day;
- tambar* with a horn, submerging it in the water “*allá hay una mujer tambando una cuelga o tambando un molino*,”^[23] and
- going to the shore during the summer seasons and diving to a depth of two or three meters with the pan, searching for and digging out gold^[24].

Before mercury arrived in the communities, plants were used in the extraction of the precious mineral, such as Zacona, guacimo (bay cedar), Yarumo (snakewood), using their leaves or buds to make a slime with which to separate the gold from the *juaga* (sand), techniques that were time-intensive, later they went on to create other techniques, such as *la toma*, in which the gold was captured with a kind of wooden dam, and *el guache*, a technique using tunnels and retro excavators, which take 10 to 20 hours to reach a depth of 30 meters, whereas before the people would need up to six months, and which was achieved through the construction of highways that would allow these machines access.^[25]

The Pacific region is known for its struggles, for its popular processes, in which the concepts and practices of development challenge the fundamentalist ideas of the West about progress, the communities live in a development created by and for them, beholding nature as a finite source of resources and for this reason, the policies of use are sustainable. When the extraction of gold ceased to remain in the hands of its inhabitants, the disequilibrium and the contamination began. S/he is not ailing who did not grow up with the river that today does not flow due to blockage. The sustainable techniques for artisanal mining and metal amalgamation by means of native plants and ancestral practices are a way that economic growth can be of benefit to the community preserving the territories, living-together in a profound understanding of the natural cycles and the relationship with its inhabitants.

Everything that shines amidst what may be the darkest night is the weavings of solidarity, the recuperation of territories with reforestation, and

the presence of people in these places who assure, from the perspective of food sovereignty, to be present in order to protect—as generations have been doing—life itself, the smiles, and the memories. Collectives like the Guardianes del Atrato (“Guardians of the Atrato”) which convene afro-descendent peoples, indigenous Wounan, Embera Dóbida, Embera

Transcript, ES	Transcript, EN
<p>Yo soy el Atrato río Canción</p> <p>Autora: Yarlin Adriana Quejada Palacios</p>	<p>I am the Atrato River Song</p> <p>Lyricist: Yarlin Adriana Quejada Palacios</p>
<p>Yo soy el Atrato río, lleno de sabiduría yo soy fuente de sustento soy una fuente de vida, nací en el Carmen de Atrato en los farallones del Citara, vengo del Cerro Plateado desemboco en Turbo y esto les quiero contar.</p>	<p>I am the Atrato River, full of wisdom I am the source of sustenance I am a fountain of life, I was born in Carmen de Atrato in the Farallones of Citara, I come from Cerro Plateado I flow out at Turbo and this is what I want to tell you.</p>
<p>Mis aguas eran muy limpias, eran aguas cristalinas, aquí habitaban los peces, se sacaba la comida, al Chocó llegaron retros que hacían la minería, creando grandes empresas, dañaron la tierra mía.</p>	<p>My waters were very clean, they were waters crystalline, here the fish lived, food was gotten, in the Chocó arrived backhoes that mined, making big business, harming my land.</p>
<p>No les importó arrojar sus tóxicos a las orillas, no les importó verter veneno a la sangre mía.</p>	<p>They did not care about throwing their poisons on the shores, they did not care about emptying venom into my blood.</p>
<p>Coro</p> <p>Yo soy, yo soy, yo soy Atrato río de vida Yo soy, yo soy, yo soy fuente viva de alegría Yo soy, yo soy, yo soy, unión fe y esperanza Yo soy el Atrato río lleno de majestuosidad</p>	<p>Chorus</p> <p>I am, I am, I am Atrato River of life I am, I am, I am fountain of happy life I am, I am, I am, union faith and hope I am the Atrato River full of majesty.</p>
<p>Yo soy el Atrato río, lleno de biodiversidad, albergo muchas costumbres cultura muchas etnias en mí se encuentran los pueblos llenos de ancestralidad de donde sale la historia del Chocó y muchos más.</p>	<p>I am the Atrato River, full of biodiversity, I hold many customs culture many ethnicities in me are found the peoples full of ancestry from where the history of the Chocó and many more come.</p>
<p>En mi territorio abundan especies endémicas con todas las propiedades de belleza sin igual</p>	<p>In my territory species abound entrenched with all the characteristics of beauty with no equal</p>
<p>Pero han llegado unos hombres que han querido acabar con todo lo que yo tengo con toda mi hermosura, talando todos los bosques que habitan en mi cuenca</p>	<p>But some men came who have wanted to stop everything I have all of my beauty, cutting down all the forests that lived in my basin.</p>
<p>Coro bis</p> <p>Yo soy el Atrato río lleno de esperanza Yo soy ruta de progreso yo soy conectividad, en mis aguas se transportan vidas y oportunidad, por mí recorren los pueblos por mí llegan hasta el mar</p> <p>Pero con tanta maldad que me vienen a explotar están matando mi suelo mis aguas mi hábitat, por mis venas ahora corren desechos y químicos, tristeza y desolación eso no quiero ser yo.</p>	<p>Chorus encore</p> <p>I am the Atrato River full of hope I am the path of progress I am connectivity, in my waters lives are carried forth and opportunity, through me the peoples travel through me they reach the sea</p> <p>But they come exploit me with so much evil that they are killing my soul my waters my habitat, now through my veins run waste and chemicals, sadness and desolation this is not what I want to be.</p>
<p>Yo soy alegría y amor Yo soy fuente de vida Yo soy esperanza y paz soy riqueza sin igual Yo soy el Atrato río lleno de majestuosidad</p> <p>Coro (bis)</p>	<p>I am happiness and love I am a fountain of life I am hope and peace I am richness with no equal I am the Atrato River full of majesty</p> <p>Chorus (encore).</p>

Fig. 43: Yo soy el Atrato Río (“I am the Atrato River”) song.
Yarlin Adriana Quejada Palacios, 2019. Risa, Sueños y Lamentos del Río. Tierra Digna. Bogotá. Pp. 42–43.

Chamí,^[26] and mestizo peasants to re-exist in the territories and denounce the presence of companies or persons engaged in extractive mining and/or the deforestation of the forests in the name of *development*, promoting the dignity of territory as one of the foremost platforms of Peace and the acquisition of rights, and also recognizing the importance of the spiritual and meeting spaces of the communities, which is not unrelated to us.

From Wontanara we wake up with the Atrato River as our neighbor, its imposing current tells of the histories of its waterfront peoples, reminding and feeding us as Chocoan, Embera, afro-descendent or mestizo/a persons with the spirit of fellowship and connection with the life that grows in alliances within difference and by sustaining spaces where critical thinking that propels positive social questioning and actions is sown. Even though our diet has changed, our skin reveals the changes, and we prefer to bathe in the Tutunendó or Ichó rivers, we appreciate the water that falls from the sky, we become part of environmental activities and working groups, we contemplate, from our ancestrality, the relation we consider most appropriate in order to cease surviving and start living to the greatest potential, furthering pleasure and well-being as constant states, reweaving thread by thread the union between our surroundings and the youth that grows up distant from the situations, in the noise of social paradigms that distract. Here in Wontanara, we invent ways to reunite ourselves with other young people through art, *the potions of sound*, freestyle, science, the environment, reflection about gender roles and structural racism, and with what we fertilize through this coming-together, through walking together, from intersectionality, opportunities for rest for our rivers and forests. We go on re-existing, appreciating that this place exists, and that in it today the attachment to the land, connected with our being, is still present.

- 1 Wontanara means “we are together” of the Susu people in what is today Guinea (Guinea-Conakry), and it is our cultural center, a project of the Mareia Fundación, which supports higher education in the arts and spaces for wellbeing, therapy, cultural programming, solidary economy, workshops and artist and traveller mobility. It is located in the San Vicente-Quibdó neighborhood. Online: fundacion.mareia@gmail.com; Fb: Fundación Mareia (@artecomovehicolodetransformacionsocial, @WontanaraQuibdó), <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCV3cinK32sn4wT30jTVXuqQ>.
- 2 The gender of the first-person plural in the Spanish original is marked dually as female/male (“invitada/os”) and a footnote is added: “From our work in themes of gender relations we have learned to not only include masculinized nouns, but rather to feminize the words.”
- 3 Más Arte y Más Acción (“More Art and More Action”) is a not-for-profit interdisciplinary arts collective in Colombia.
- 4 Artivism is a term for what is known as art action for social processes and asserting human rights struggles and demands.
- 5 This refers to the organization of guardians of the Atrato River, Guardianes del Atrato.
- 6 COCOMACIA is an organization of men and women who fight for the common good of our communities and the future of our children, defending our right to territory, making good use of natural resources to formulate a development model from our vision and culture as a black people.
- 7 Colombia is territorially divided into administrative Departments.
- 8 Sentence T622 of the Colombian Constitutional Court, issued in 2016, acknowledges that there have been serious violations,

- 9 Abya Yala means “land in its full maturity” or “land of vital blood” in the language of the Guna people, also known as Kuna or Tulé, who live near in this part of Colombia, and who have used the term to refer to their territories since before European colonization/expansion.
- 10 The Akan people of southern Ghana, Ivory Coast, and part of Togo have been known as experts in gold extraction, being one of the motives by which they were abducted, justifying the slave trafficking from 1640–1700 in accordance with anthropological records (Arocha et. al. 2007) and taken, together with other Ashanti, Yoruba, Ewe, Fon, Kongo, Mandinka, Carabali, and Ngola peoples, to the mines of Tadó, Juradó-Chocó, Timbiqui-Cauca, Barbacoas and Iscuandé-Nariño (Sánchez 2010).
- 11 Quintero, 2011 in: Negret and Gallego, 2013.
- 12 El Nuevo Siglo, August 18, 2017.
- 13 El Espectador, January 18, 2017.
- 14 Laina and Botero 2015.
- 15 The video is available on the micro sd card in this publication.
- 16 Laina and Botero 2015.
- 17 El Espectador, April 4, 2019.
- 18 Dragones (“dragons”) are barges of up to 200 meters in length that suck gold from the riverbed thereby modifying it and its course.
- 19 Laina and Botero 2015.
- 20 Valencia 2015.
- 21 El Espectador, May 23, 2019.
- 22 Tierra Digna 2018.
- 23 This technique has to do with using a horn to push down sand at the beach's edge, a practice known for its loud and elegant sound. For more information about this technique, see Tierra Digna, 2019.
- 24 Tierra Digna 2019
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 In the Chocó Department the Kuna or Tulé peoples also reside in the direction of the Caribbean, and the Katis in the direction of the mountains of Risaralda and Antioquia. The Atrato River starts in the mountains of Carmen de Atrato and discharges into the Caribbean Sea at Bocas del Atrato in the Gulf of Urabá.

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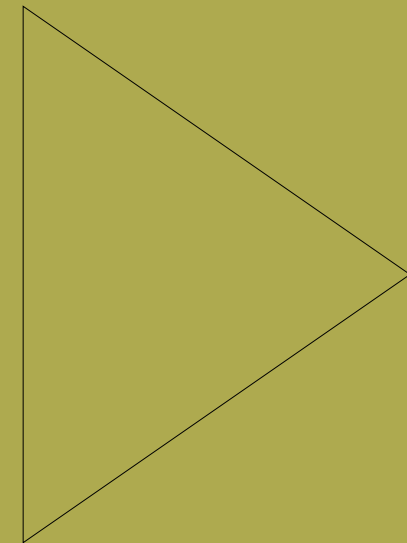
Ayesha
Hameed

4681 — 4770

*A Trans-
atlantic
Periodic Table*

Sound piece:
17 MIN 14 SEC
Courtesy:
Ayesha Hameed
Sound design:
Ayesha Hameed,
William Saunders

SD



Glass, pearl, sugar, iron, bone, and gold—materials of the transatlantic slave trade release traces of their past into the present. Traces of processes of extraction from the soil and from the signifying of life. A factual, corporeal and poetic encounter through stories, museums, archives and the sea itself.

Activating the Sense of Smelling Gold

Fig. 44, 45, 46, 47

knowbotiq, installation views Swiss Psychotropic Gold – delinking commodity trading, Rohstoffwechsel – performative assemblage, 28.7. at Office Building, Zurich West.

Fig. 48

Fig. 49, 50, 51

Fig. 52

knowbotiq, performative acupuncture
knowbotiq, the watered former gold trading office
knowbotiq, Re-assembler, realtime-generated animation

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Fig. 44, 45

Fig. 46



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Fig. 47

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Fig. 48





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Fig. 49, 50, 51, 52

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Molecularizations

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Jordy Rosenberg in *The Social History of the Molecule* with Nina Bandi

5266 — 5715

Nina Bandi

In the text “The Molecularization of Sexuality: On Some Primitivisms of the Present”¹ you make a strong argument against object-oriented ontology (OOO) and new materialisms because they discard the social and the historical. From the perspective of our project *Swiss Psychotropic Gold* the concept of the molecular provides us with the opportunity to bring together different layers of gold in order to situate the current political and economic underpinnings. Layers such as the processes of extraction embedded in colonial, racialized and gendered histories, but also affective elements that transgress gold as “mere” material and include bodies, desire, sexuality, technology, psychotropic substances, hormones, etc. While I agree that it is problematic if the molecular is stripped off of social and historical categories, our focus has not been on these aspects. From your point of view, how is it possible to think the molecular in social and historical terms?

Jordy Rosenberg

For some time now, I have wanted to write the long social history of the molecule, but it hasn’t happened so far. Concerning the article, a lot of the problems it responds to, have to do with what happened, historically, with the translation of the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari into English. In the “continental” context, it’s very clear that Deleuze and Guattari were making an argument in imagining social practices that departed from the Stalinist

bureaucracy, but that context has often been lost on US readers because of the suppression of that history there. Thus, the problem is the taking up of Deleuze and Guattari in the US in a completely de-contextualized way, and particularly the take-up of the molecular as almost a synonym for matter. In my understanding, that is really not what Deleuze and Guattari meant. The molecular, for them, comprises one axis of—for lack of a better word—determination or force that functions in relation to molar strata; and that articulation of the molecular is very passionately invested in thinking about forms of resistance that are not anti-social. However, we could say that the US translation of the concept of the molecular reterritorializes this idea and de-socializes it. The legacy of that problem comes into full fruition with a great deal of the object-oriented ontological approach.

All this is to say: the line of flight that the molecular represents for a lot of American thinkers, is a line of flight away from having to think about political struggle. There is a bizarre contraction of the field of struggle to the molecule itself. When the molecule ends up taking on a kind of political significance in and of itself, that to me is meaningless.

In this context I would like to mention Alexander Weheliye's book *Habeas Viscus*.^[2] It is a work of assemblage and critical race theory. He has a very good articulation of this question which, put colloquially, boils down to: Whatever happened to Gayatri Spivak's critique of Deleuze and Guattari in "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value"^[3]. In particular, what happened to Spivak's concern that to dispense with the question of the subject is to dispense with the question of the international division of labor. To that, I'd add: whatever happened to Stuart Hall's argument that we need to think about reproduction as something that is beyond simply the reproduction of the cell, of the cellular life of the body of the worker. That was a brilliant double intervention against a kind of Stalinist instrumentalization of the body and an intervention against the sexism of some Western forms of communist thought, which at that time

did not understand in full, the fundamental centrality of labor performed at home, largely by women.

So this is a specifically American idea of the molecular as matter—and as a kind of matter that has the capacity to combine with anything else in aleatory formations. One of the points that Weheliye makes in *Habeas Viscus*, that I find so useful, is to cast a critical eye upon the idea of the molecular being in itself emancipatory. There, he argues for a return to Stuart Hall's claims about the Marxian category of "articulation." For Hall, it isn't that just about anything articulates with anything else, but instead you have preferred articulations; you have forms of dominance and hegemony. In this tradition, we could think about scholars who are theorizing and historicizing the racialization of genetics, like Dorothy Robert's *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-first Century*^[4], or Kim TallBear's *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*.^[5] There is quite a lot of work thinking about the racialization of genetics for example; but one gets the impression that there are certain strands within OOO, which do not want to take this up.

We can get to the question of queerness in a minute, but to sum this up, my main issue is that just because something is molecularly small doesn't mean it is a minoritarian discourse. Randy Martin's and Gerald Raunig's work make similar points. Both show very clearly that the molecular and the derivative can be bastions of power, just as easily as they can represent deterritorializations of power. Sure, the molecular can represent an emancipatory horizon in certain contexts, but only if people will consent to think the political in a way that is not like a fever dream. You use the word "psychotropic"; I am not against the psychotropic at all, but I think the almost drugged excitement over the molecular for a lot of white male theorists of object-oriented ontology in the US has to do with a certain thrill of not having to think about identity categories anymore, not having to think about the way, to go back to Spivak, that the current context

of molecularization is stratified by race, and class, and global positioning. There is this absolute embrace of the molecular as if it is some arena of decoded snow—an utter fantasy of an entity without ascription, without history—and it was this kind of thing that got me, I suppose, quite upset, and provoked me to write this essay (see above).

Nina Bandi

In this article, you also make the link to primitive accumulation. Can you elaborate more on that?

Jordy Rosenberg

I was thinking about the British political economist Bob Jessop because I was working on the Marxist category of primitive accumulation. Jessop says, and Neil Smith does too, that primitive accumulation in the present also includes a kind of capitalization of nature, a capitalization of the body. Now of course, as Silvia Federici points out, the body has been capitalized since the onset of capitalism, but what Jessop and Smith are talking about is the transformation of the body from being capitalized as profit-producing capital (or as imbricated within a web of profit-production, even from the point of the “hidden abode” of reproduction) to the body capitalized as interest-bearing capital. This is what we are talking about when it comes to the extraction of molecular material, the patenting of genetics etc. I find this important, although we are still not talking about matter as “matter,” we are talking about a shifting from the coding of the body as capital in one mode to capital in another mode.

I don’t mean to do away with this question of the body in terms of its insertion into labor and profit production but I do think it is important to take note of certain shifts that have been taking place in terms of how the body at the level of the molecular gets capitalized. The question here has to do with what kind of capital the body is being asked to function as, what kind of work of accumulation the body is asked to perform. And although the object-oriented ontologists would be thrilled to simply be able to discuss the body as “just matter,” I find such an approach very fatalistic and brutal, not to mention inaccurate. What is there to “sublate”

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if we make this claim? What contradictions can be levered open if the body is “just matter?” Sure, the body exists as matter, but it exists in multiple registers simultaneously.

Nina Bandi

One possible example of a connection of a political reading of the body and its molecular components could be Paul B. Preciado’s work.

Jordy Rosenberg

Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era^[6] is a brilliant intervention into, for example, European autonomist thought. It is a very important theoretical work. My trouble with this book, however, has to do with some of the political conclusions that are drawn in it. Preciado has done an enormous amount of work detailing the history of exogenous sex hormones and US colonialism in Puerto Rico; I really respect this scholarship. But there are some connections that the book draws that are more aleatory—they have to be, there is no way to make a direct line between the history of reproductive technologies and hormone experimentation in Puerto Rico and transgender experimentation in France, and elsewhere in continental Europe—and from which I do take some distance from. The points I take some distance from are the political conclusions, the apparent claims, for example, about what we are doing when we experiment at an individual level with sex hormones. There are moments in the book in which Preciado seems to be proposing that experimentation with sex hormones is itself, or could itself be an act of resistance. It seems that he wants to say that, at a molecular level, you are mounting some kind of resistance to gender enforcement by taking hormones. That to me is not such an interesting claim, in part because the claim feels removed from the field of social struggle. But again, as with Deleuze and Guattari, that part of the problem is a question of translation, and of an American audience (in which I include myself, of course). *Testo-Junkie’s* most significant intervention, I think, is into a European autonomist debate, and in that sense Preciado is basically saying to them: you can’t

think autonomia without thinking the body, gender, and sexuality; you would like to but you can't. And that intervention is very important. But again, the translation of that to the US is problematic, because the majority of the audience of that book in the US is not familiar with, or does not work with autonomía. Preciado, on the other hand, works in this tradition and is debating a lot of this thought. I really appreciate the way the book makes it impossible to make autonomist conclusions without thinking about gender and sexuality, as well as the history of colonialism. That's very important to me. But because autonomist conclusions themselves can tend toward the kind of individuated acts of resistance or refusal, the conclusions are not so auspicious. But the work itself and the interventions, I understand it to be making in its own context, are very important. I do, however, wish that I had made clearer the interventions Preciado is making within the European context. I was a little hard on the book, but a lot of it had to do with the fact that it had just kind of hit the US and the way people were excited about it really bothered me because it ended up being that people got excited because it meant that they no longer had to do anything. You take a shot of testosterone, and automatically you are "resisting."

Nina Bandi

To take up your point, it still fascinates me, maybe inspired by Preciado, to think about transformation and to put it in relation, or bring it back, to political struggles.

Jordy Rosenberg

There is a lot of work in transgender theory here in the US that intersects with critical prison studies, and that really understands social history. Some of it does intersect with the history of pharmaceuticals (as does Preciado's work). Although in the case of critical prison studies and prison abolition work, the question is not so much the history of corporations but the history of demands for access, for example, to transgender hormone technologies. And some of those demands have to do with the demand for gender self-determination, which is as

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inextricable from demands for access to hormones, as it is from demands about labor conditions; the history of struggles around sex work being a case in point.

What happens when we think about Stonewall, for example, from the perspective of questions about safety in the work place? When we realize that this question is inseparable from questions about realizing yourself and your gender identity? There actually is an entwined history of labor and hormone technologies that is a very powerful location of resistance. Here we are talking about the history of transgender technologies from below—not from the perspective of the pharmaceutical corporations, but from a perspective of demands for safety in the workplace, for demands that weren't only articulated as abstract questions regarding identity. Here I appreciate Raunig's perspective around "dividualism," and I think there might be a way to combine this approach to queer and trans history, which may provide a very important historical resource for thinking about the intersection of a kind of emancipatory molecularism and collective struggle.

The Deleuze-Guattarian history of assemblage theory has two axes or planes, one being the horizontal plane of bodies and passions and the other being the vertical, what they describe as a vertical axis of reterritorialization and deterritorialization. And for whatever reason there is some work around the molecular that seems to imagine, because the molecular is very small, those axes as condensed into a point; obviously I reject this approach. I'm much more interested in where those two axes intersect the molecular. The molecular does not free us from having to think about the way those axes work together. For this line of thought, I'd recommend Eric Stanley's work, or that of Ethan Blue. The latter has done tremendous scholarship on San Quentin in the 1920s and the way the prison "doctor" conducted forms of endocrine experimentation on inmates there. Ultimately, one has to assemble one's own collective of different kinds of analytic approaches

to the molecular, which includes social history, because the molecule in itself does not constitute a history from below.

I don't mean to sound like a stodgy Marxist but there is a lot of extremely forward looking experimental work around these collective social histories, particularly in critical prison studies that allows us to think the molecular as a kind of nodal point. On the one hand, a vector of power, and on the other hand a possible point of departure for an emancipatory politics. However, this emancipatory horizon is not just immediately available through, for example, a testosterone shot, and that's one reason why I wrote this essay. A lot of object-oriented ontology in this country lifts from queer theory—queer theory which is itself still embedded in these questions of social struggle—but kind of abstracts the question of queerness and attributes it as a property of the body itself. To me this can tend toward a kind of false universalization that ends up allowing OOO to separate the question of embodiment from the problematic of history, and that is very aggravating.

Nina Bandi

You brought up the legacy of queer theory. In this project, we have also been inspired by Karen Barad who has been criticized for aligning queerness and matter.

Jordy Rosenberg

This is what I mean. The reason why I don't share an alignment of queerness and matter is that I understand queerness as a social category, and one that often constitutes a vector of oppression. I don't know how to think about queerness outside of a historical and social context of oppression that codes queerness in certain ways. That is not to say that queerness doesn't get de- and reterritorialized. For example, obviously Jasbir Puar's work around homonationalism describes the recapture of queer to a nationalist imperialist project. But the question here has to do with the active de- and reterritorialization of the question of queerness by control societies. To call atoms queer, how does that line up with the issue of homonationalism? Maybe it's just me, but I don't see how to make the link. Ultimate-

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ly, I think I am not the best person to speak to the question of Barad's angle, because maybe I simply don't understand it.

Nina Bandi

Could not the attempts of these molecular ontologies to discard the subject also be seen as a way to get rid of the white heteronormative possessive individualist subject of settler colonialism? In the sense of materialities queering the subject, the body/mind-divide, racial categories, etc.

Jordy Rosenberg

I see where you are getting at. Getting rid of the white heteronormative possessive individualist subject is a laudable and exciting project, but my question has to do with the how. What you're describing represents an impulse to dispense with that subject, yes; but, what—just to do so in thought? I don't think that the recent landscape of global politics suggest that this is a promising avenue for struggle. If you look at Kaushik Sunder Rajan's *Biocapital. The Constitution of Postgenomic Life*,^[7] it is an indispensable book on this question, because he takes a very delicate, subtle and wide-ranging perspective on the rise of biotechnology and genomics. It's like an ethnography of what he calls techno-scientific capitalism and the rooting of a lot of that labor in the global south. He brings together Marxian value theory with bio-politics and wants to think about questions of uneven development with the rise of genomic biotechnology, thereby complicating this question of the sheer "queerness" of the molecule. To me the assignation of queerness to a thing is less interesting than looking at the kind of differential vectors that code a field of practice. Does thinking matter as queer disrupt the international division of labor around biotechnology? I understand that I do, in fact, sound like a stodgy Marxist, but so be it. Here I have to agree with Neil Smith's work on the production of a second nature and the way in which the body gets caught up in new forms of derivatization, also on a molecular level.

It has always been the case that in order to produce capital accumulation you have to move through the phases of capital production, nothing

is just value-bearing in and of itself, not even gold, as you point out. The brilliant critical legal studies theorist, Brenna Bhandar, has a piece on the property rights around genetic material (“Disassembling legal form: ownership and the racial body”).⁸ Bhandar is working on Catherine Malabou and plasticity but she also takes a social view, a critical legal studies view on how it has come to be that property functions as what Marx would call “real abstraction.”

The point here is that property, even genetic property, needs to circuit through the social world so that it can function as property. Nothing is just automatically property, nor is anything just automatically raw material. Things are made into property, and into raw material through being subsumed by the logic and laws of capital. I think of Bhandar here because we returned to this question of the difference between matter qua matter, and matter as it functions within the circuits of capital accumulation. We need language for that and we need language for what that means about the body and what that means about molecular property. But to take flight into matter itself as the reflection of the current state of capital accumulation is really to miss what you’re also getting at, which is the whole field of derivative production, derivatization, and interest bearing; that is something different than just the molecular itself on its little emancipatory journey through space.

- 1 Jordy Rosenberg, “The Molecularization of Sexuality: On Some Primitivisms of the Present,” *Theory & Event*, 17 (2), 2014. Project MUSE muse.jhu.edu/article/546470.
- 2 Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
- 3 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Scattered Speculations on the Questions of Value,” *Diacritics* (Winter 1985), 74–93. (online: <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8VM4B4F> [accessed November 6, 2019]).
- 4 Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-create Race in the Twenty-first Century*, (New York: The New Press 2011).
- 5 Kim TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2013).
- 6 Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie, Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, translated by Bruce Benderson, (New York: The Feminist Press 2013).
- 7 Kaushik Sunder Rajan, *Biocapital: The Constitution of Postgenomic Life* (Durham: Duke University Press 2006).
- 8 Brenna Bhandar, “Disassembling legal form: ownership and the racial body.” In *New Critical Legal Thinking: law and the political*, edited by Matthew Stone, Ilan rua Wall, Costas Douzinas, (London: Birbeck Law Press 2012), 112–127 (online: <https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/19276/1/Disassembling%20Legal%20Form.pdf> [accessed November 6, 2019]).

Gerald Raunig *The Molecular-Feminist Strike. Sublimity and Now-Time in Machinic Capitalism*

1 “‘The ability to make of this moment a total modification of life’ can be the motto, the image, that exemplifies what happened on March 8, 2017, with the global women’s strike. The line of time was suddenly bent, and the linear and progressive chain of events—or, we should say, the regressive chain in this era of barbarism—was broken and in an instant, in that instant, flashed a revolutionary spark. Drawing on all the past struggles and resistances of women, this spark sought its own redemption in the creative imprudence of the present action.”

Marina Montanelli

I In the last few decades, violence against women* has been escalating into a “war on women,” as Rita Laura Segato calls it: all kinds of structural and sexual violence, including feminicide, brutal discursive tendencies of misogyny and transphobia, the devaluation of care and reproduction, and “anti-genderism.”² Since 2017, a movement has spread outwards from Latin America that builds on the 8th of March, the day of women’s struggle, as the turning and boiling point of an intersectional and transversal struggle. “This is the gain of the strike as a political transnational feminist instrument open to a multitude of actors, not only to women*, but also to precarious and migrant workers,” writes Isabell Lorey in her foreword to the German version of the book *8M. Der große feministische Streik*.

What’s enormous is not only the number of participants in the strike—in Spain there were over five million in 2018. The feminist strike is also an example of current struggles beyond measure, of sublimity. Beyond the limits of measurement, below the threshold of measurability, and at the same time above. Smaller and bigger than linear time allows.

II The sublime is the terrain of a temporality that machinically takes us into service, at the same time prompting us to think non-subservience in a new and machinic way. In the Kantian mathematically sublime, magnitude is impelled beyond every form, all the way to the threshold of deformation, formlessness, the dissolution of space and shape. Yet it is the other dimension of the sublime that interests us far more today—time and its measurement, temporal measuring and becoming immeasurable, as this is taken to an extreme in a new way in machinic capitalism. It is not an empty spatial form, an empty measure that is created, filled and disciplined; rather, time is expanded, impelled beyond its boundaries, a wholly new, immeasurable and immeasurably measured time. Far from dissolving the old asymmetries of gender and racialization in its smoothness, machinic sub-elimination drives them into the infinitely small and infinitely big.

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III Machinic capitalism goes hand in hand with a double form of modulation: modulation as measure, measurement, subdivision and standardization, as “modularizing,” but also modulation as immeasurableness, endlessly deforming, “modulating.” Impelling time beyond its boundaries in all directions is the sublime aspect of modulation: increasingly compartmentalized striations of time, measuring smaller and smaller parts, endlessly shrinking measures, but also and especially breaking through the measure all the way to the immeasurable valorization and smoothing of time.

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IV The Benjaminian now-time loads the past, it charges the past, it fulfills the writing of its history, its stories. Yet the sublime is not simply—as Badiou says about the two-hundred-year-old Wagner—the solemn declaration that something has passed and something new, unknown begins, in a clean separation between the

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past and the future, but rather the expansion of the present in the folding of this linear notion of time.^[3]

So this time it is not purely a problem for the history of philosophy—or rather, it was never purely such. It is not only the subsumption of the sublime event into the course of history forced into linearity that must be broken open with tiger’s leaps into the past. It is the measuring/measureless grasp of machinic capitalism, its instrumentalization of measuring endlessly small magnitudes and of immeasurableness into a boundless magnitude that requires a tiger’s leap. Now, however, it is a tiger’s leap in one place. The leap is a rupture of machinic-capitalist time, it establishes the urgency of re-inventing in the machinically expanded present. This new tiger’s leap is intended to remind us about the genealogies of past struggles and to explode the continuum of history, and with it above all the machinic present, in order to newly and repeatedly detonate the “splinters of messianic time.”

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V Exactly the terrain of the immeasurable present is the terrain in which subservience can be transformed into non-subservience with the same machinic weapons. The time of this transformation is now-time, its pure means is the feminist-molecular strike: not a holiday strike that merely modifies the conditions of subjugation and subservience, and also not a strike leading from one nation-state to another, from one legal order to another, from one subjugation to another. A strike that permeates the molecules of machinic sociality and interrupts, overthrows, reverses the immeasurable time of machinic capitalism. No longer acting in such a way, no longer governing oneself in such a way, suspending subservient action, halting subservient deterritorialization, at the same time beginning anew, no longer subservient reterritorialization of smooth time.

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The feminist-molecular strike is a pure means. It is not a means to the end of achieving certain demands, but rather a means beyond any demands, ends, purposes. It addresses neither the agents of economic machines nor the administrators of state apparatuses. It applies no extortive violence, violence as a means to an end, such as the end of only modifying temporal arrangements. As pure means and rampant middle, it does not draw a straight line from a bad past to a promising future, but rather about a completely different chronology, a different way of living in present becoming—in Walter Benjamin’s words in *Critique of Violence*: “an upheaval that this kind of strike not only occasions, but indeed carries out.”^[4] It is not *after* a major event, after a sublime moment, after a unique break that the change of

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working and living conditions comes. This strike already *is* the change, the constituent power, the breach; it *carries out* the break, rather than just occasioning it.

The feminist-molecular strike is not legislative, but is instead, at the same time, destituent, instituent, and constituent. It decomposes the existing order of time, posits manifold beginnings, and creates new monstrous compositions. The social movements of recent decades centered around the *space* of occupation. Now it is about a queer-feminist experimenting with economies of time. This strike is sublime, not because it results in a heroic capture of space, but because when it is being carried out, new experiences of temporality emerge, and when it recurs, it brings about monstrous modes of non-subservience.

VI Molecular is the strike that affects the pores, the molecules of everyday life, as an everyday epiphany, breaking in and breaking with subservience in machinic capitalism, as an immanent-messianic now-time. But at the same time, like Veronica Gago writes in *8M. The big feminist strike*, the strike is not constituted just as an event, but as a process: “This means concretely producing the time of the strike as a time of organization, of conversation, of building a common web, of coordination in assembly, of bringing subjectivations into play that elaborate a new type of radicality.”^[5] The molecular-feminist strike is not a single moment, which is first anticipated and then only documented and reflected—it is the chain of meetings, actions, assemblages of affects, images and texts that escalates into the everyday life of those involved and even those not directly involved. Based on the concept of day of women’s struggle, 8th March, this present expands in all directions. “The strike then disrupts its own temporality as a ‘date’. It began to be imagined—in the imagination to navigate such close walls—in the maquila, it continued in houses, it transpired in assemblies, it was discussed in unions and community soup kitchens, it became a collective breath in the streets, but it had been brewing since times of sabotage folded in ancient memories.”^[6]

Foldings and floodings of time: The molecular-feminist strike is a whirling and disruptive movement, in memory of Rosa Luxemburg’s image of the mass strike as multiply bubbling and re-seeping into the ground, as an ocean wave, which “is divided into an enormous network of narrow streams; now it springs forth from the depths like a fresh spring, now it sinks completely into the earth ... all of this flows chaotically, it disperses, it intersects, it overflows...”^[7]

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This text is available at <https://transversal.at/blog/the-molecular-feminist-strike>. My thanks go to the reading group “8M. la constelación feminista”, February 2019 in Casa Azul, Málaga.

- 1 Marina Montanelli, *The Unforeseen Subject of the Feminist Strike*, *South Atlantic Quarterly* (2018) 117 (3), 699–709.
- 2 Rita Laura Segato, *La guerra contra las mujeres*, Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños 2016, https://www.traficantes.net/sites/default/files/pdfs/map45_segato_web.pdf.
- 3 Walter Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte”, *Gesammelte Schriften* I.2, edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1991), 691–704.
- 4 Walter Benjamin, “Zur Kritik der Gewalt”, *Gesammelte Schriften* II.1, edited by Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1999), 179–202.
- 5 Verónica Gago, *#WeStrike: Notes toward a Political Theory of the Feminist Strike*, *The South Atlantic Quarterly* (2018) 117(3).
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Rosa Luxemburg: “Massenstreik, Partei und Gewerkschaften”, *Politische Schriften*, edited by Ossip K. Flechtheim, (Frankfurt/M.: Athenäum 1986), 135–228.

The Apple Store Was Now Prepared to Host the Ritual

This data sheet refers
to a precipitation,
not an appearance

It functions as a compre-
hensive score of all
voices and language
devices that were applied
to Protekto.x.x. – Dys-
Terb, NeoEuroGado,
PraYttLanth [5.5.5.1] on
July 9th 2016 in the
Apple Store on Kurfürs-
tendamm in Berlin.

For a full and comprehen-
sive score of all voices
and language devices that

were applied to [5.5.5.1]
on July 9th 2016, please
consult the [5.5.5.1 Pre-
cipitation] on the website:
[http://www.johannespaul-
raether.net/wordpress/
rotekto-x-x-5-5-5-1/](http://www.johannespaul-raether.net/wordpress/rotekto-x-x-5-5-5-1/)

It functions as (re) materi-
alisation of the ephemeral
and disturbed utter-
ances, voiced in the store.

For legal reasons the 3
images provided
will be the only indexical
trace of Protekto.x.x.
5.5.5.1 in the Apple Store.

The Apple Store was now
prepared to host the ritual.

At the Genius Bar
the Coporate Specific Toxin,
the Screen Body Corroder,
flowed from one human hand
to the other.

While hundreds of ldevices
we had possessed with my ritualist code,
we had infiltrated with synchronized breathing
and infused with Rare earth lectures,
amplified my preaching,

I melted the Kommunisat.

[...]

the One of them is a ruin,
and the second is a reconstruction
the 3rd is a lucky charm.

[...]

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Johannes Paul Raether

The Apple Store was now prepared to... 5941 — 6210



Fig. 53: *Kommunisat #5.1. Rare / Gallium Paw* (2017), light box, digital print, 200 x 300 cm.

When our ritual was finished
and the Kommunisat was melted,
reality – in form of a squad of cops stormed the store.

What had been a silent affair,
watched over by genius drones with smiling grace,
was transformed into a chaotic scene:
The witch and parts of her machine
were arrested and accused of a chemical terror attack.

[...]

The Police simply reversed the alchemical relation:
They perceived the unreadable material
not as a terror to the
weightlessness of the Screenbodies,
but to the fleshy and greasy humans in Istorage.

I poured the Kommunisat,
a liquid metal lake
from my own carbon based hands
into a medicinal glove
and they confiscated it.

[...]

There is a ruin of an iPhone.
It was given to me by someone in the witch machine.

The Gallium that she carried in her hand
had harmed her own Screenbody
and her fleshy paw left a corroded landscape
on her iPhone's aluminum shell.

[...]

But the ruin of an appearance
can never be an end to my means.
So I reconstructed the Kommunisate,
– the metal lake –
that was stolen by the Police
with all the rare earth metals
that are contained in your phone

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Fig. 54: *Kommunisat #5.3. Rare Earth Silver Lake (2017)*, light box, digital print, 200 × 300 cm.

Fig. 55: *Kommunisat #5.2. LUCKY CHARM*, (2017), light box, digital print, 200 × 300 cm.

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Johannes Paul Raether

The Apple Store was now prepared to... 5941 — 6210

Rare earth metals are the occult substances
constructing capitalotrophic gadget culture.

They make our screenbodies

Faster, stronger, harder, lighter.

They make the Smartphonefetish
a body without organs
and a surface without depth.

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The global capitalist order
the capitalogenic real it creates,
the capitalotrophic beings that we have become;
they as us understand technology
as if it was magically detached from social reality;
They mine unfamiliar materials.
Unreadable.
Unpredictable.

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And thereby generate they generate us:
Fragile identities,
illegible bodies,
unfamiliar materials,
that might or might not be toxic
to other carbon based lifeforms.

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It is the task of a new techno-alchemy
to reflect on these bodies and materials
to research and explore them
in the factories and the mines.
And in their ritual sites,
the cathedrals of pancapitalism.

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The metallurgically transformed Smartphonefetish
is a lucky charm,
a memento for the witch's thinking:

It is the capitalogenic rituals that are toxic to the human,
not Gallium – the Corporate Specific Corroder.

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Gallium corrodes the aluminium shell of the Smartphonefetisch
into a living and beautiful landscape of hope.

Hope for the death of all capitalogenic rituals.

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Psychotropic Refining

The Psychotropic Refinery stimulated the body of the participants at the 7th European African Studies Conference with golden acupuncture, the healing energy of meditations on pure gold and evaporations of Golden Viagra pills. In addition, a visual intervention took place on the façade of the Kollegienhaus of the Basel University.

In Walter Eglin's mosaic (The Mission, 1939–46) Swiss boys are sent by their mothers out of the innocence of the Swiss landscape to the university, in order to receive their philanthropic initiation through knowledge and aesthetics. The intervention affected the canonized "Mission" with the libidinal energy of commodity trading

Fig. 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61 knowbotiq, Swiss Psychotropic Gold – decanonizing the university, 29/30.06.2018; Performance in front of the façade of the main building of the University Basel. It shows the mosaic The Mission by Walter Eglin (1939–46), which is the largest mosaic in Switzerland.

Fig. 56 Vaporization in front of the argumentative banner "psychotropic refinery".
Fig. 57, 58 Argumentative banners in front of the mosaic part "Science and Art".
Fig. 59 Performative meditation (Gabriel Flückiger) in front of the mosaic part "young men" and the argumentative banner "restless legs".

Fig. 60 The argumentative banner "libidinous economies" in front of the mosaic part "mother and child".

Fig. 61 Discursive setting with the visitors of the congress.

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Fig. 57

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Fig. 58

Fig. 58

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Fig. 60



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Fig. 61

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The Libidinal and the Psycho- tropic Gold

Ira Terzol jr. *Pactolus*

Gold began with a stellar collision. The earth took shape as it rotated and incorporated the debris, the dust. A strange starshine continues to glow in the gold deep under the ground. Who would not like to own something from a distant star? Gold makes us hungry. Midas wanted everything that he touched to be turned into gold. Yet the earth offers resistance. Extracting it costs endless effort. Twenty tons of earth are dug up, mixed with poison, and everything in it tainted for a single gold ring. By the end of 2018, 193,472.4 tons of gold had been stolen from the earth.^[1] Some say that was it, there is not much more left.

Gold lies under and in the earth, deep in the dirt. Gold mining means burrowing, wallowing in filth for a few grams until endless stretches of infertile dirt remain. The opposite of filth is purity: gold may be pure, but extracting it is pure filthiness.

Alchemy—one etymology suggests that it derives from *Khemia*, an ancient name for Egypt that means “the land of black earth”—strives for the *opus magnum*, and it is polished, refined, and pure: gold.

Two point five tons of gold^[2] are imported annually via Zurich’s Kloten Airport—in Dutch, “kloten” means testicles, “balls.” The airport becomes the goose that lays golden eggs that, unnoticed, are transported on streets and rails into the enchanted forests and to the gold refineries hidden in the valleys of Ticino. Highly secured and fortified with barbed wire, like fortresses and castles, these refineries are among the largest in the world and make themselves small so that no one learns about them. Gold is

remelted here, refined, pressed into bars; here, where the sky is blue and the air is clean, where the mountains tower majestically and sovereignly, is where Switzerland cleans that which is filthy upon its birth from the black earth. The gold refineries are called Pamp, Valcambi, Argor-Heraeus, Metalor, and Cendres Métaux, names that sound like those of Swiss carnival associations. Valcambi is meanwhile Indian-owned, even though it used to bear the name Credit Swiss in big letters; Argor-Heraeus was always closely associated with the UBS, and Metalor survived the Société de Banque Suisse (SBS) it founded. These national institutions of discrete Mr. Cleans dwell in the east and the west at Switzerland's borders so that gold can be quickly and inconspicuously transported to France and Italy—if it does not land deep in the Swiss Alps in the next depot, often after taking a little detour via major Swiss banks, where it is stashed away so that no one sees, hears, feels, or steals it. Thus gold, even though it has been washed, is basically precisely where it came from: deep under the earth. Why all the effort?

What happens in the gold refineries? In German they are called *Scheideanstalten*, parting works. Good is separated from evil. The correct translation would be *Affinerie*, refinery. "An refinery is a plant in which metals are separated in very pure form by means of removing impurities."³ Affinage means "refinement" or "aging" (who does not feel reminded of Swiss cheese?). However, despite all of the refinement, gold never gets rid of the filth: purifying = putrefied, like two peas in a pod: blood gold, Nazi gold, apartheid gold, war gold, murder gold, conflict gold, slave gold, risk gold, dirty gold, shit gold.

The speculation bubble of the "Hope for the Mississippi" burst in 1720. John Law, the son of a Scottish goldsmith, founded the first national central bank in the world, the French *Banque Royale*, and pledged adherence to the gold standard, a monetary system in which all of the money that is put into circulation is to be covered by gold. By the way, the fact that gold and not silver was used for coverage is the result of a simple miscalculation. The great Sir Isaac Newton was not only a physicist, but also a master of the royal mint. It was in this capacity that in 1717, when, while establishing the parity between gold and silver, he miscalculated it to the disadvantage of silver. The economist, banker, and professional gambler John Law likewise founded the Mississippi Company, which issued shares on the promise of digging for gold in what was then the French colony of Louisiana. The number of speculators multiplied along with the hysterically increasing demand for shares, and many of them became rich—the word millionaire, by the way, developed on this occasion. However, the share capital was not used to dig for gold but squandered in the French treasury. At the same time, more and more shares and paper currency were issued despite the financial prudence of coverage through

gold. The speculation bubble burst, and within a few months French society was shaken to its very foundations. A process that would end sixty-nine years later in the French Revolution.

There was no learning effect. To this day, speculation bubbles continue to be the blow-soap bubbles of stock brokers permeated with testosterone who seek the ultimate kick through high-tech trading in the risk factors of fractions of a second. For example with gold derivatives—purification products by means of terminating ontological fiscal relationships—soap bubbles with an inner value out of nothing but air. The gold-fixing white collars are ravenous, insatiable, constant gamblers; the entire world is no more than a smart gambler paradise to them. Shame is something for ordinary people. No revolution, however small, in sight.

Switzerland has had an affinity for gold since time immemorial: "There was a cotton dealer in the Gurnigel, namely a horribly elegant one. He did not have a moustache but he was heavy with gold, and his watch chimed almost like the clangor of horses, he could dance like the devil, and he could chatter like a magpie." This was written by the Swiss author Jeremias Gotthelf in 1841 in his novel *Uli der Knecht* (Uli the Farmhand). Beneath a blue sky and white cumulus clouds, in the midst of mountains and a secluded valley, affined and refined gold is as pure, clear, and fresh as the alpine air. Switzerland is the cathartic eye of the needle of a conscience cleaning itself. Here, the babbling of the mountain brooks drowns the distant roar when at the birthplaces of gold—in Brazil, Burkina Faso, the Congo, Surinam, the Philippines, or Greece—the dams break, the mountains turn into slides, and the deadly water of the poisonous sludge regurgitates into the poor valleys. The filth in the distance and purity so close. The protagonists of the major robber economy, who have become deaf, have long since lost the ground under their feet, since they live in the tall skyscrapers of the derivative and speculative world of finance. In their appetite for gold, they finance gigantic excavating machines that ravenously grub for the decreasing and low-order gold and send hungry gold diggers into the mines. All of them leave behind craters like mouths from which the earth silently screams, and holes like wide-open eyes with which they stare at their own incredible ugliness. The gold- and money-hungry men and women blindly close their eyes in the face of this ugliness and promise themselves even more beauty from gold.

In their battle not only against blemished skin but against inevitable aging, the guardians of the jars from the cosmetics industry have also chosen gold as their secret recipe. The alchemists have arisen from their graves, promising eternal youth and victory over death. Yet bathing in gold did not even liberate the arriviste Uncle Scrooge from his ugly avarice, and he continues to humiliate his bitter nephew Donald, who is heavily indebted to him, and forces him to perform slave labor. Like Uncle Scrooge, the once wealthiest man in the world was unaware of immorality and

tastelessness: the Indian Datta Phuge. Having gone mad due to his obsession with gold, he had a shirt weighing 3 kilograms forged out of it and decorated with 14,000 little gold flowers and 100,000 pieces of gold glitter, and on which 15 goldsmiths worked 16 hours a day for 2 weeks. According to a report in the British newspaper *The Daily Mail* from June 2017, he wore it while taking a walk through, of all places, the slums and was—no wonder—beaten to death. They say it was the revenge of the humiliated.

The stories about gold from bygone days also deal with greed and miserliness: and they, too, usually end with misfortune and death but are mostly richer in romantic fantasy and subtle undertones. The Brothers Grimm tell of a donkey that at the command of “Briklebrit!”^[4] spews and shits gold. The goose lays golden eggs, yet nothing hatches out of them. People with gold teeth are greedy. Rumpelstiltskin helps the miller’s daughter spin straw into gold, but not for free: he demanded a living child in return. In E.T.A. Hoffmann’s story the golden pot is a chamber pot studded with jewels. Wickram’s golden thread pulses blood though an open wound. Goethe’s magic lamp transforms everything living into gold, and in *Heart of Stone* Hauff writes: “*In Holland I wot, / There’s gold to be got, / Small price for a lot, / Who would have it not?*”^[5] Lucky Hans had a head as big as his gold nugget; no: Hans had a gold nugget as big as his head. He carried it under his arm and was as prudent as the rest of the world. “Must one shudder upon being given gold?” Who says so? Who knows. When gold talks, the world is silent. And yes: Gold opens gates, except for the gates of heaven. Is heaven happy to be rid of gold? Mother Holle causes gold to snow down from the sky to thank little Mary for her dutiful industriousness. Zeus impregnates Danaë in the form of a shower of gold, and in “The Star Money,” when the little girl raises her shirt to collect the, no, not golden but silver pieces of money falling from the sky, it opens one’s heart—and one or the other pair of trousers. And yet golden rain falling from above is a mockery of the fact that gold comes from deep in the earth. Christian dogma countered the chthonic, indeed hedonistic value of the world with gold as the divine symbol of purity. However, it was soon said: Golden churches, wooden hearts! The gold-hungry conquistadors were Catholic and had the “New World” at their feet. The Incas believed the Spaniards to be gods, buffaloes by their own myths. Today’s conquistadors serve other spirits that wager the world, blinded by the old belief that God made rich people—and the likes of us gawk and mindlessly genuflect believe that there is something to this.

Gold confers power and influence, yet Midas had long donkey ears and was in danger of starving to death when his wish was granted that everything that he touched, which also included his food, turned into gold. E 175 may be edible gold, but it did not nourish him, and when in the end

his daughter also became lifeless and rigid by his gentle touch, his hunger for gold was ultimately fatal. Bathing in the Pactolus was the only thing that could heal him, and from then on he wanted nothing to do with gold, money, greed, or wealth.

- 1 <https://www.gold.de/fakten/> [accessed November 5, 2019].
- 2 A Golden Racket: The True Source of Switzerland’s “Togolese” Gold, edited by Berne Declaration Investigation, September 2015 (online: https://www.publiceye.ch/fileadmin/doc/Rohstoffe/2015_PublicEye_A_golden_racket_Report.pdf [accessed November 6, 2019]).
- 3 <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Affinerie>, [accessed November 5, 2019]
- 4 Kinder- und Hausmärchen der Brüder Grimm, edited by Jacob Grimm, Friedrich Panzer, (St. Goar: Reichl Verlag 2008) 155.
- 5 Wilhelm Hauff, *Romane. Märchen. Gedichte*, (Stuttgart: Cotta 1961) 810.

Walking on the ground of London today, a capital formed by finance, one can't help thinking of the vast subterranean space underneath the Bank of England, a huge vault filled with gold and silver ingots, which forms the foundation of capital and state power. It creates fantasies of gold heists, otherworldly fictions, expeditions, colonial depredations, and new desires. These subterranean minerals have been extracted, melted, forged, plated and forced back into subterranean strata, hermetically sealed and locked up. They are the metallic backbones of nation states, and of war machines. These are the subterranean ghosts that are haunting, roaring, and calling us, waiting to be excavated, to one day see the sunlight again.

Metal is embedded in the strata of our geological history and has witnessed the evolution of humankind. The fluid nature of metal, its mutability, its capacity to morph from solid to liquid as it flows through earth, just as it flows through markets and exchanges. All metal exists in a proto-material manifestation of desire—this is its alchemical state. The alchemic desire enables a metallurgic comprehension of the forces and flows of capitalism and power, through which we can understand the ongoing processes on which metal, as the most powerful catalyst in the world, operates. Metal is, in fact, the conductor of all matter. Fig. 62

Prologue: the alchemists 6972 — 7042

Alchemy is a form of chemistry, of speculative philosophy, but is also the proto-science of understanding, deconstructing, and reconstructing matter. It was practised for over 2,500 years in countries around the world

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with the aim of achieving wisdom, immortality and wealth. The practical aspects of alchemy generated the basis of modern inorganic chemistry, including procedures, equipment and the identification and use of matter. Alchemists believed in the magical power of the Philosopher's Stone to cure all ills and to transform any metal into the perfect metal of value: gold.^[2] More than simple materialists, however, they rooted their findings "in a tradition of knowledge which gave access to a deep understanding of nature, visible and invisible."^[3] Its practitioners recognized the aim of alchemy to be the "elevation and exaltation of the human being to his ideal place"—endeavors such as making gold were not simply about the creation of wealth, but were important "simply because it is conceived to be the perfection, the final achievement of the metallic kingdom."^[4]

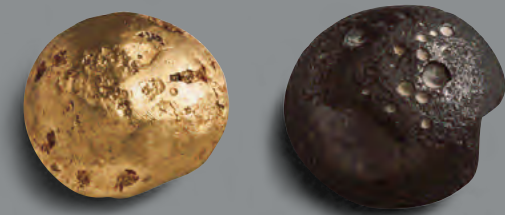


Fig. 62: Johann Friedrich Böttger, Alchemical Gold and Silver Regulus (1713), Staatliche Kunstsammlung, Dresden.

In the world of finance, alchemy has been a steady companion, not only as a concept but also as part of its material expressions and speculative mechanizations. Alchemy lives on not (only) through physical and chemical experiments, but above all through a concept I call "Alchemic Desire." The title of the larger study of which this text is a part of, the "Alchemic Dialogue, on the Most Powerful Catalyst on the Planet," derives from the idea that alchemy is one of the influential concepts in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's "War Machine," specifically, the notion of "panmetallism."^[5] Alchemy is unavoidable if one wishes to think of the *prima materia*, the *urstoff* of matter.^[6] In *The Forge and the Crucible*, Mircea Eliade touches on the legacy of alchemy in the modern world:

7 "On the plane of cultural history, it is therefore permissible to say that the alchemists, in their desire to supersede Time, anticipated what is in fact the essence of the ideology of the modern world. Chemistry has received only insignificant fragments of

the alchemical heritage. The bulk of this heritage is to be found elsewhere—in the literary ideologies of Balzac and Victor Hugo, in the work of the naturalists, in the systems of political economy, whether capitalist, liberal or Marxist, in the secularized theologies of materialism, positivism and infinite progress—everywhere, in short, where there is faith in the limitless possibilities of homo faber; everywhere where the eschatological significance of labor, technology and the scientific exploitation of Nature reveals itself. [...] Alchemy has bequeathed much more to the modern world than a rudimentary chemistry; it has left us its faith in the transmutation of Nature and its ambition to control Time.”

The alchemical psychology described by Eliade prefigures a number of key points: first, the proximity, even the inscription, of alchemic ideologies in modernity; secondly, the centrality of alchemical aims (e.g. the struggle with the concept of time, the production of value by holistic means) to modern capitalism; and, lastly, the way alchemy provides a kind of scaffolding for contemporary thought on the principles, properties and significance of certain metals. Following Deleuze and Guattari, I argue that metal always exists in an alchemical state, in a proto-material manifestation of desire. Metal is, in fact, the conductor of all matter.

Gold. Alchemic desire

7044 — 7117

Chemically, gold (Au) is a noble metal—that is a very dense and stable element that seldom reacts to other elements. Although it is rare, it is not as difficult to find as other noble metals such as platinum, palladium, rhodium and iridium. Unlike its noble sibling, silver (Ag), which tarnishes easily when exposed to air and light, gold is inert and does not corrode. The visual appearance of gold is due to its atomic structure: the atom is heavy, and its electrons move so fast that gold “absorbs a bit of the blue spectrum light, giving the light that is reflected back its distinctive golden color.”^[8]

Gold’s value is arbitrary: owing to its chemical features it is a perfect conductor, but in practical terms it is not necessarily useful. Much of its value in the past was derived from its density and rarity. In alchemical philosophy, of course, gold played a decisive role. It represents a legend of desire: the “archetype of the metallic kingdom in this ideology the (wo) man of gold symbolises the archetype of the human kingdom.”^[9] Consequently, in alchemists’ quest for perfection, all metals must turn into gold, and all humans must become their exalted selves—or even philosophers—with all of the incorruptibility that this implies.^[10]

Metal has long been used for money and trade, and the consistent nature of metal has served as a measure of value in terms of exchange. This entanglement of metals and money is evidenced in language: “precious metals became so closely associated with money that, even today,

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the words for money and for precious metals are often the same in many European languages (for example, *argent* in French).^[11]

As early as 3100 BCE, hints of a “bimetallic” economy were established in Egypt, when a ratio was set for the exchange of gold and silver.^[12] This bimetalism correlates with the alchemists’ preferences for the two most noble metals, gold and silver, which together underpinned the economies of many nations until the early 20th century. We can still find large vaults filled with gold and silver under the Bank of England, and are reminiscent of the vaults of the former World Trade Center, which were filled with metal ingots (sparking conspiracy theories that 9/11 was a gold heist). Gold’s value as a currency, as a form of traded stock in its various manifestations and technological uses, lies in its very particular chemical qualities, for example that it does not oxidize and that it is an excellent conductor. These same qualities of gold also explain its role in alchemy. Karl Marx and Adam Smith both wrote about the properties of precious metals, in particular gold, and its intrinsic value—due to its lightweight, divisibility and beauty.^[13] Though gold is no longer a global financial standard, it saved the economies of countries that held large gold deposits during the credit crunch in 2008, as gold and other metals represent a “real,” i.e. material or corporeal, value and not a speculative one.^[14]

In the “West,” the quest for gold has extended from alchemical experiments and quests to find the Philosopher’s Stone to the conflict-ridden, geo-politically complex practice of mining. Gold can trace a line through the alchemic dreams of human history, from its beginnings to mythology to alchemical practices on physical material (gold ingots), to the alchemy of the capitalist market in which its value becomes a subject of speculation (stock form), to the way gold circulates as part of a visual culture (commodity form). As Deleuze and Guattari note:

15 “[...] [M]etallurgy has the option of melting down and reusing a matter to which it gives an ingot-form: the history of metal is inseparable from this very particular form, which is not to be confused with either a stock or a commodity; monetary value derives from it.”

In their summary of Deleuze and Guattari, Ian Buchanan and Laura Guillaume write:

16 “Society consists of two types of flows: a flow of belief and a flow of desire. Simplifying a great deal, their thesis is that the capitalist age has separated these two flows from each other and caused one to dry up (belief) and allowed the other (desire) free rein. Capitalist society is, they say, unavowable: it offers nothing for us to believe in and no longer requires our belief to function.”

Following this theory, I argue that all metal exists in an alchemical state, in a proto-material manifestation of desire. It is the flow of this “Alchemic Desire” that we are tracing through the excavation of gold at different altitudes. Through this material inquiry, we can begin to understand “metallic” and “metallurgical”—material and immaterial—in the traces of capitalism, conflict and power.



Fig. 63, 64: Studio ft, Füsun Türetken, London Metal Exchange (2017)

Markets

7138 — 7388

London is a city of finance. Its financial district, in fact, is a city of its own. The map of London was designed and divided by institutions of finance—the medieval financial guilds—into two organs, separating the political and financial hearts. The Square Mile, administered as it is by the Corporation of the City of London, exists in uneasy symbiosis with the national capital in Westminster.

The London Metal Exchange (LME) is the material manifestation of this financial system and its ostensibly non-material flows. Here on this trading floor, a predominantly masculine world considered to be based on “reason” and “ratio”—we find that alchemy, in fact, is a contemporary mode of operation; it is *elemental* in our current system of finance. This “finanscape,” as defined by the theoretician Arjun Appadurai—a realm of speculation and speed—has created the conditions for the accelerated valuation of immaterial objects.¹⁷

Alchemical practices attempted to transform something of little or no value into that which was perceived to have the greatest value. To follow this internal logic, the alchemists desired the recipe for multiplica-

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Fig. 64

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tion, the Philosopher’s Stone, the maximization of value with the minimal number of ingredients. This desire to maximize profit is only one of the analogies between alchemy and finance.

Tracing the catalytic nature of metal through the contemporary equivalence and presence of alchemy in the world of finance, through a reading of specific materials, humans, objects and space, and their alchemical intersections linguistically, operationally and psychologically, one could arrive at the simple conclusion that while the trading of metals has a long history, it is in the Capitalocene landscape that we can see its magnification and significance.

The gold standard became an international monetary standard only around 1870, and ended as early as the Great Depression. In his *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System*, Barry Eichengreen describes how countries that used bimetallic standards converted to the gold standard, following Great Britain, which, owing to the Industrial Revolution, was then the leading economic power. The gold standard did not prove to be a flexible and resilient enough system, and it was eventually replaced by fiat money systems. While gold failed to remain the actual basis of currency, it maintains its status as a marker of wealth, and continues to be traded and stored in central bank reserves. The promise of gold has not faded since the times of alchemical experiments; its fetishization persists and its value is deeply ingrained in the collective social imaginary.

John Maynard Keynes, the architect, along with Henry Dexter White, of the post-gold standard economic policy known as the Bretton Woods system, offered an explanation for this attraction to gold:

18 “Dr. Freud relates that there are peculiar reasons deep in our sub-consciousness why gold in particular should satisfy strong instincts and serve as a symbol. The magical properties, with which Egyptian priest craft anciently imbued the yellow metal, it has never altogether lost.”

Gold has worth because it is believed to have worth. This desire is alchemic by nature: desire creates transformations. This dynamic has fed forward into economies based on emotional evocations summoned by metals and using metals, like gold, as vectors for producing those desiring states. This is true of economies as much as it is of individuals. The age of European colonialism is defined by the circulation of value and of metals; in its early phases, the appropriation and theft of precious metals; in its later phases, the circulation of weaponized metal to subdue and destroy resistance. Colonialism and its extreme desire for metals were destructive in the Americas and led in turn to massive inflation and market problems in Europe. In their present manifestation, these earlier tendencies are bound up with a financial system that uses metals to link markets within and outside physical territories in subtler but no less destructive ways.

Key marketplaces are nodes in the entangled network of conflict and capital. From raw material to refined technological devices, metal resembles the DNA of contemporary late capitalism. Metal creates the nodes of a nervous system fed by information; it forms the muscle tissue of empire, fuelling and prolonging conflicts in a relentless effort to reproduce itself. The London Metal Exchange is one such node. It is the spatial manifestation of interconnected global transactions, the material space where decisions are made by the microsecond. The site of such a metal exchange also manifests in the deterritorialization of metal itself, from its material and physical reality to its valuation and hyperliquidity, even as the metals lie in remote warehouses or in mining pits, waiting to be moved in advance of being traded.

Through the spatial and historical analysis of the London Metal Exchange, we can dissect the intertwined nature of conflict, capital and power, and its roots in alchemical beliefs and practices. The trading floor is named the “Ring” and is designed in a circular structure around the traders’ offices. The physical agents stand outside, between the offices and the inner circle called the “Pit”—evoking the mining pit. The dealers are contained inside the trading floor on shiny red-leather benches, shouting their bids across the room during five-minute trading cycles for each metal. Their shouts supplement their active trading language performed via hand signals. This

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practice dates back to the early 19th century when metal merchants moved from the Royal Exchange to the Jerusalem Coffee House in Cornhill, London City. But electronic and telephone trading has long overtaken the practice.¹⁹ Only about ten per cent of the LME’s trading takes place in the Ring, with the rest evenly split between electronic and telephone trading.²⁰

The architecture and visual language of the London Metal Exchange offers clues to its own alchemical history. In particular, the symbols used to denote each of the primary metals—steel, aluminium, copper, lead, nickel, tin, and zinc—correspond to the chemical signs used by the alchemists. These medieval symbols can be found in their digital depictions in the trading floor. LME staff members believe that these signs are inventions of their marketing department. Digging deeper into the semiotics of these symbols, one understands that they are aligned to certain features: gold with the sun, silver with the moon, iron with Mars. Mars itself is red-colored because its crust is rich with iron oxide. Iron and Mars are also associated with swords, weapons and war. Harmony and generosity come with the golden sun and silver moon. In the LME’s literally circular structure we can imagine the echoes of the zodiac and astrological movements that the alchemists studied in order to time their staging processes.

With these lineages in mind, one realizes not only that these material experiments, deriving from medieval laboratories, enable the LME to exist in its current material expression with its digitalized, liquid technologies, but also that these new technologies perform the inherited “old” knowledge of metal minerals. The semiotics, the hermetic and coded language of the alchemists, continues to live on in the contemporary world of finance that maintains its own coded exchange parlance of gestures and

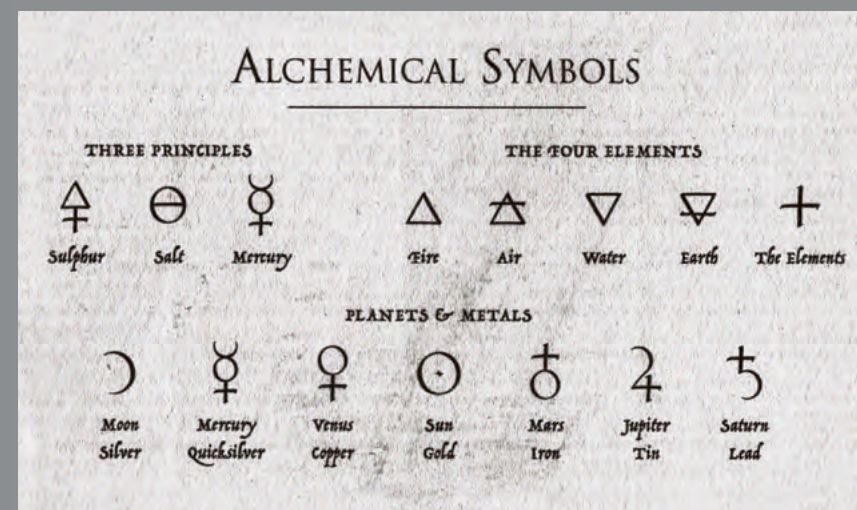


Fig. 65: Alchemical Symbols, found in manuscripts by alchemists dating back to 1400. The same signs can be seen in the London Metal Exchange. Source: <http://theridgewoodblog.net>

signing. The ghosts of both the experiments and the language that sealed the wisdom on the ancient metals come to life on the contemporary trading floor of the LME. The only thing that is absent is the raw matter itself.

Following from capitalism's need of labor, and consequently, the worker, one is inclined to ask: What is the relationship between matter, desire and the (modern) worker? Deleuze and Guattari argue that the limbs of the blacksmith were formed through his physical work with metal. The material broke the limbs of the human: the human was modelled to become capable, then incapable, of work. The existence of matter, in part, forms the worker's body. In other words, a network of desiring relations, the needs of individuals and of markets, led metal to forge the human into the working body needed in (industrial) society. Through metal, the blacksmith's body was trained, and broken—little by little—into a docile body of capitalism.

Desire—whether for gold or for other metallic artefacts and their applications—shapes the imperatives of capitalism, and the smith shapes the metals to be traded; they in turn shape him. The transformation process can be thought of as a loop that grows outward as it feeds back on itself. The body creating value is another vector in the manifestation and generation of desire. The laborer's antagonist is (the long history of) exploitation and the enslavement of other workers, who themselves were traded as commodities. While these crude colonial and material histories often remain invisible to us, the absolute fetishization of the object and its smooth design cannot camouflage the origins of its troubled ingredients.



Fig. 66, 67: Studio ft, Füsün Türetken, London Metal Exchange (2017)



Fig. 67

During the trading sessions a tiny space expands into overlapping time zones and systems. Here, the implications of matter in the financial world and its global interconnectivity manifest themselves in the material world. Again, it is here, that metals are alternately traded over five-minute time frames. A digital bell sound indicates the start and end of each sequence. During the day, the tension in the room rises not only towards the end of each cycle, but especially towards late afternoon and the closing of the stock market. In those cycles the atmosphere of trading is more hectic and heated; the shouts of the traders are higher pitched, the motion in the Pit is elevated and louder. The desiring relations are thus expressed through modulations and changes in the human body as the distant entities being traded are assigned new values, manifesting a contemporary—though far less intensive—form of pressure on the body of the worker, familiar from Deleuze and Guattari's image of the smith. The process is a ritual, an incantation of sorts; the content is never certain but the end, the overriding desire—the increase of value—is. ²¹

In the London Metal Exchange, decisions are made by traders both present and quasi-absent. LME maintains a unique status as the last open-outcry trading floor on European soil. ²² Yet traders are connected via metallic wires, telephones, electronic gadgets, microphones, cameras, connections, liquid digits, blackboards and screens. The trading floor is a depository of electronic devices made of minerals; they form the screens, or hide in wires, they manifest as digits and harden the glass of the cameras

that survey each move a trader makes. Through these digital gateways, different actors from distant spaces and time zones enter the platform of the Ring. In this arena, where the ghosts of the deterritorialized matter move humans like marionettes, as if by an invisible hand—perhaps pulling at those metallic wires—the medieval smith transforms into the trader.

Our desire continues...

- 1 While alchemists contributed to the industries, e.g. ore testing, refining, metalworking, production of gunpowder, ink, dyes, glass, the process of distillation, among many other inventions both in technology and through artisanal work, their influence remains disputed, "Alchemy," (Esoteric Online, <http://www.esotericonline.net/group/alchemy>, [accessed January 19, 2018]).
- 2 According to Hermes Trimegistus' Golden Treatise: "In the cavern of metals there is hidden the stone that is venerable, splendid in color, a mind sublime, and an open sea." Referred to in: Eugène Canseliet, *Alchemy and its Mute Book: Mutus Liber*, translated by T. Bruemmer, (Utrecht: Inner Garden Press 2015), 81.
- 3 Julian Scott, "The Inner Gold of the Alchemists," New Acropolis Library, posted 12 May 2014 (online: <https://library.acropolis.org/the-inner-gold-of-the-alchemists/>, [accessed November 7, 2019]). Following this thought, the alchemist is assumed to be the one with precisely this knowledge of how to speed up the process.
- 4 Joseph Hornor Coates, "The Renaissance of the Alchemists," *North American Review* 183, no. 596 (1906), 82–97.
- 5 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, translated by Brian Massumi, (London: Continuum 2008), 454.
- 6 Levi and Rosenthal, *The Periodic Table*, 32; Georgii Agricola, *De Re Metallica* (Basileae: Froben, 1556). Alchemy is also fundamental if one wishes to study manuscripts on metals—for example, "De re Metallica," published in the year 1556—and their transmutation. The alchemists did not just believe in the power of transformation through the Philosopher's Stone but depicted these transmutations in code languages or figures. The King is the representative of gold, and can be seen with the six metals, after they are transformed, i.e. crowned; together with the King they represent the seven essential metals.
- 7 Mircea Eliade and Stephen Corrin, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*, (London; Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1978), 173–74.
- 8 Justin Rowlett, "Why Do We Value Gold?," BBC, 8 December 2013, (online: <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25255957>, [accessed April 1, 2019]).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Scott, "The Inner Gold of the Alchemists"
- 11 David Singh Grewal, *Network Power: The Social Dynamics of Globalization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 2008), 88.
- 12 Barry Eichengreen, *Globalizing Capital: A History of the International Monetary System* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 90.
- 13 Ibid., 94; Adam Smith, *Lectures in Jurisprudence*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1978).
- 14 While this idea may be disputed, another thought of economists surfaced: the repatriation of offshore income by drug-traffickers and others may have contributed to saving the financial system from complete collapse in 2008. Even this illicit flow of value will be shown to be underwritten by metals and their valuations.
- 15 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 184.
- 16 Ian Buchanan and Laura Guillaume, "The Spectacle of War: Security, Legitimacy and Profit Post-9/11," in Deleuze and Law: *Forensic Futures*, edited by Rosi Braidotti, Claire Colebrook, and Patrick Hanafin (Basingstoke / Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan 2009).
- 17 Arjun Appadurai, *Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Economy* (Philadelphia, PA: The Project, University of Pennsylvania 1990), 298.
- 18 John Maynard Keynes, *A Treatise on Money* (New York: AMS Press 1976), 258.
- 19 In the office booths, electronic exchange takes place simultaneously. The third trading form is online but is limited to registered persons and companies.
- 20 Financial Times, (online: <https://www.ft.com>, [accessed 15 February 2017]). The London Metal Exchange's active trading floor recalls the set of the movie *Trading Places* (1983), directed by John Landis.
- 21 See Michel Foucault, "Des Espace Autres," *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité*, 5 (1984), 46–49; Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 79.
- 22 Other commodity exchanges, e.g. oil, moved to an almost entirely electronic trading market

Gitanjali Dang

Mining the Interwebs for Gold

Of the estimated 63,000 Google searches made every second, 15 per cent have never been searched before. We are always searching for gold, we are. The Age of "Discovery" is unending. At 3.5 billion searches a day, Google, the world's most popular website, accounts for approximately 40 per cent of the internet's carbon footprint. The energy required to "mine" a dollar's worth of Bitcoin is twice the amount of energy required to mine the equivalent value of copper, gold or platinum. The total amount of gold extracted and used by humanity since the beginning of civilisation is about 187,000 tonnes. With about 57,000 tons still to go, a solid cube of the sort would stand as tall as an adult giraffe, give or take a few. Gold is indestructible. A giraffe is not. In 2018, the giraffe slipped into the endangered species list. Over the last century, the giraffe has gone extinct in seven African countries: Malawi, Eritrea, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mauritania, Nigeria and Senegal. Since 1970, humanity has wiped out 60 percent of mammals, fish, birds, and reptiles. The *signares* of Senegal were known for their opulent and intricate gold jewellery. The term *signares* comes from *senhora*, the Portuguese word for lady. During the 18th and 19th centuries, in particular, these mixed-race descendants of European merchants and high-status Senegalese women became businesswomen with power and assets. Most of this wealth came either directly or indirectly through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. These Afro-European women married European men and this allowed them access to property by way of land, slaves, ships and gold. Today, the signares—who sent out their slaves into the mines to bring back gold—are mostly understood through the complicated lens of both oppression and empowerment. Contemporary Senegalese women regard them as icons, women who held their own despite the many odds stacked against them.

Speaking of complicated. Gold Fields, a South African mining company headquartered in Johannesburg, is one of the largest gold mining firms in the world today. It owns the St Ives Gold Mine located near the mining town of Kambalda in Western Australia. Here the company has used

Trimble UX5 drones to survey the area since 2014, and during this time it has lost nine drones to the feisty wedge-tailed eagles. With a wingspan of more than two meters—double that of the Trimble—the protected species has so far been winning its battle for the skies of Western Australia. So far, 50 percent of all gold mined on Earth has come from Witwatersrand Basin, South Africa. In 1884, the discovery of the Basin, the largest known gold reserve in the world, and the subsequent Gold Rush, resulted in the founding of the city of Johannesburg in 1886. Between 1968 and 1990, Switzerland was the center of the global gold market due to the relationship of Swiss bankers with the South African apartheid state. During this time Swiss banks bought or sold up to 80 percent of South Africa's gold. *Colonial Man*, 1976, by Hugh Masekela includes tracks like *Cecil Rhodes* and *Vasco Da Gama*. The refrain on the latter track goes: Vasco Da Gama he was no friend of mine. And the opening lines are like: Vasco Da Gama left Portugal to go India / to look for spices and emeralds, he went via Africa / He had to stop in South Africa / (lyrics unclear) / He invented discovery for colonisation. It has been found that the seminomadic Himba tribe living in the deserts of Namibia, with little exposure to Western cultures tend to be more cognitively flexible. So, the Himba are more likely to embrace new and more efficient strategies to meet their needs, as opposed to Westerners who tend to stick with the familiar.

Following his arrival in Kerala on May 20, 1498, Da Gama failed to impress Manavikrama aka King Zamorin of Calicut, because his line-up of gifts did not include gold. When the partition of India happened they fled their homes overnight. Home was a small town near Rawalpindi, in current day Punjab province of Pakistan. She stitched special underwear with multiple hidden pockets for everyone. The family hid their gold in the underwear and carried it across the border into India. It has almost been 73 years and she still guards her gold close. Sometimes I tease her about her still tucking and hiding the gold in her underwear.

There is a bunch of gold and other precious resources tucked away in asteroids. NASA has researched the giraffe to get inspiration for space suits that allow astronauts to maintain proper blood circulation while in space under conditions of weightlessness, and then again on return to earth's gravity. In the not so distant future, these spacesuits might head out in search of gold. The anthropocene epoch has flung the door open on "asteroid mining." Asteroids, minor planets and other near-earth objects are rich in resources that are limited, and will be exhausted from hereabouts in as soon as 50 years from now. Psyche, an asteroid located in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter, is worth around \$700 quintillion—so that is \$92 billion each for the 7.6 billion people on Earth. In 2022, NASA will launch a mission to probe Psyche's history and composition. According to a well-established theory, all the gold on earth may have come from outer space. Via cosmic collisions between neutron stars—tiny superdense core

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of dead stars—it seems. Humankind comes from stars. "The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff," says Carl Sagan in *Cosmos: A Personal Journey*, 1980, a thirteen-part television series.

Launched in 1977, the Voyager 1 is currently the farthest human-made object from Earth, with Voyager 2, also launched in the same year, being the third farthest. The two probes carry on board The Voyager Golden Records. The two gold-plated copper phonograph records contain "select" sounds and images depicting life on earth. About the records Sagan said, "The spacecraft will be encountered and the record played only if there are advanced space-faring civilizations in interstellar space, but the launching of this 'bottle' into the cosmic 'ocean' says something very hopeful about life on this planet." We are all made of stars. Gold is made of stars. The human body contains about 0.2 milligrams of gold, most of it comes mixed in blood. The sun is a star. Scientists predict that in few billion years the Sun will turn into a cold lump of crystal, about the same size as earth. But humans will be gone long long long before that happens. An optimistic timeline: Sometime between 5,100 and 7.8 million years from now. A not so optimistic timeline: A hundred years from now. In 1990, the Galileo spacecraft did a search for life on Earth during a flyby. It did not find any actual life but it did find evidence "strongly suggestive of life on earth." Galileo was sent out to explore Jupiter, its moons, and other "bodies" in our solar system. Meme spotting: "If you took all your DNA, straightened it out, and put it end-to-end, it would stretch to Jupiter and back 10x over. You are neither small or insignificant, just very well folded." Not the most scientific meme but poetic all the same.

The Galileo affair was a sequence of events, beginning around 1610, culminating with the trial and condemnation of Galileo Galilei by the Roman Catholic Inquisition in 1633 for his support of heliocentrism. In 1633, when Galileo was asked to recant his belief he is said to have said: "E pur si muove" (And yet it moves). Bertolt Brecht wrote the play *Leben des Galilei* (Life of Galileo, 1938) at a time when Hitler and the Nazis were coming into power. The English version of the play was written in the aftermath of the US detonating atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In this later version, Brecht, his resolve in science shook by the recent events, inserted a new dialogue. Following Galileo's recantation his student Andrea tells him, "Unhappy is the land that breeds no hero." Galileo responds, "Unhappy is the land that needs a hero."¹

Does the climate change crisis make you anxious and stressed? There is a word for that: Solastalgia. Going hand in hand with the anthropocene is the neologism Solastalgia (noun): the psychic or existential pain caused by climate change. Solastalgia is already a frontrunner for word of our times but the word of the day goes to the Spanish word: *internauta*,

literally translating to internet astronaut i.e. a person who is “extremely online.” This essay is brought to you by an *internauta* of sort, who has over a few days and nights mined the interwebs (of mind and machine) for gold.

Every online search erodes the planet. On an average a typical search (via Google uses 1000 computers to retrieve an answer in 0.2 seconds) generates a carbon footprint between 1 to 10 grams. Severe pollution, as found in cities like Mumbai, gives sunrises and sunsets that extra special golden glow.

The Nephila spiders, or the golden silk orb-weavers, produce gold silk. In the sunlight, the web shines like gold and traps bees; and in the shade it provides camouflage. Spider silk is a protein. Proteins are produced in the cells, the process happens at body temperature, unlike the manufacturing of gold. The Amazon rainforest is home to approximately 3,600 species of spiders, including the Nephila spiders. Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil’s new far-right president, has announced his intention to clear forest land to make way for agriculture, roads and mines, among other things. Disconnection from nature can be bad for our mental health; “psychoterratica” another recently coined neologism speaks to this disconnection. Psychoterratica (noun): earth (terra) related, mental health (psyche) states or conditions.

In Werner Herzog’s *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, 1972, a clutch of conquistadores travel down the Amazon River in search of El Dorado, the mythical city of gold. The film concludes with Aguirre, leader of the conquistadores, drifting alone on the waters. His crew is dead and monkeys flood his raft, to them he announces his megalomaniacal plan of starting a pure dynasty—by marrying his daughter who, by this time, is dead—which will rule the world.

The Amazon rainforest is home to more than half of the world’s species of plants and animals. It is also home to about a million indigenous people, many of them belonging to uncontacted tribes. In a bid to protect the Amazon an alliance of indigenous people has proposed a “corridor of life and culture.” Cutting across national borders, the corridor would cover an area of 200m hectare making it the largest protected area of its kind.

Shinrin-yoku is the Japanese word for forest bathing or taking in the forest through our senses. The gold, silver and bronze medals at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics will be made from recycled mobile phones and small electrical goods donated by the public.

Our universe could be located inside a wormhole, which could be part of a black hole that lies within a much larger universe.

If all the spiders in the world got together they could eat all the humans on earth in a year’s time.

1 Bertolt Brecht: *Galileo*, translated by Charles Laughton, edited by Eric Bentley, (New York: Grove 1966), 115.

Nina Bandi *Intervening into the Post/colonial Amnesia: a Diffractive Reading of Time, History and Memory* 7606 — 7920

Colonial history has constantly been excluded from the official narrative of Switzerland, and this makes the question about its influence on Swiss society and politics ever more urgent. While intensified historical research in the last two decades has brought to light Swiss involvement in colonialism, the attempts to grasp its effects have been more recent. Following up on this research, my work is focused on the cultural, material and aesthetic ramifications of the country’s colonial past. Through my collaboration with ‘Swiss Psychotropic Gold’, I have tried to further develop some theoretical concepts that attempt to apprehend the complexity of the subject at hand, including the resistance to any intervention into this highly enmeshed cultural, aesthetic, and political landscape.

I Switzerland likes to hold up its humanitarian legacy by citing examples such as those of Henry Dunant, founder of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), while neglecting its economic, cultural, and material participation in violent colonial undertakings—and this is in no way understood as a contradiction. The post-colonial amnesia found in Switzerland is not unique in the context of Europe but to not have any colonies of its own, and yet participate in colonial activities, is a scenario specific to Switzerland. The official narrative says that Switzerland was neutral and did not have an imperial agenda. However, historical data tells a different story and traces very clearly some patterns of Swiss involvement. ¹ First of all, Switzerland was not a federal state—which in the 19th century was a weak political entity quite unlike today—but there were federal entities (e.g. canton/regions) that were directly involved in financing

colonial trade. The canton of Bern, for example, held shares in the East India Company. There were also many industrial firms that were either directly or indirectly participating in the cross Atlantic slave trade. Due to early industrialization of the Swiss textile industry, and consequent shipping of textiles, Switzerland was a node for the trade from Europe to Africa. Moreover, especially in the 19th century, politically and economically relevant Swiss individuals and families were trading slaves and owned plantations based on slave labour. The activities of these 'elites' were interwoven with the economics and politics of the state.

Before founding the Red Cross, Henry Dunant was involved in establishing a colony in Setif in North Africa, today Algeria, on behalf of the canton of Geneva. Alfred Escher, offspring of the important industrial family Escher, is another example of such complicity. Alfred Escher accumulated a plethora of offices and functions in the political and economic life of mid-19th century Switzerland. He was involved in the planning and the construction of the Gotthard Tunnel (the first railway crossing through the Alps), as well as the founding of the polytechnic, today the well-known ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich), and of Schweizer Kreditanstalt, today Credit Suisse, all so-called landmark achievements that are dear to the Swiss identity. While Escher was not an owner of plantations himself, he inherited wealth, which partly stemmed from his family's engagement in slavery. His uncle Friedrich Escher, and later his father Heinrich Escher, owned a slave plantation in Cuba, in the first half of 19th century, which the latter sold shortly before his death. Until today the statue of Alfred Escher stands in front of the main train station in Zurich and looks down on tens of thousands of commuters and travellers who pass there everyday. Its presence brings us back to questions regarding what is included and excluded from official narratives.

Important historical research on these individual and structural intertwinements of Swiss colonial history has already been undertaken. I am specifically interested in how these political and economic activities have ingrained themselves in the cultural, social, and material fabric, which still forms the basis of Switzerland. A country characterised by a relative economic liberalism and paired with a persistent racism, which manifests, for example, in some of the strictest migration and asylum laws in Europe.

Edward Said proposed the idea of the "the cultural archive" in his writings on the relationship between culture and empire. "The great cultural archive," Said argues, "is where the intellectual and aesthetic investments in overseas dominion are made."²

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Working with the novel as the grand cultural product of 19th century Europe, he argues that culture has played a vital part in establishing and perpetuating a Eurocentrism that always thinks and speaks from an imperial perspective. This limited view forestalled the possibility of looking at the resistance against slavery and colonial subjection, within and outside the colonized parts of the world, and what it would have meant to start thinking from there.³ The cultural archive built on colonizer narratives is a deep reservoir of the European discourse. It continues to influence worldviews in former colonies with its "metropolitan" history always narrated as superior and against 'other' histories.

Drawing on Said's cultural archive, and working on and in the context of the Netherlands, Gloria Wekker developed the concept of "white innocence". Her focus is not so much on the question of culpability or innocence, but on the "unacknowledged reservoir of knowledge and feelings based on four hundred years of Dutch imperial rule," and how this "plays a vital but unacknowledged part in dominant meaning-making processes, including the making of the self, taking place in Dutch society."⁴ This white innocence involves a grammar of race that is invisible and at the same time very forcefully at work in Dutch society, where it frames all processes of world-making.

When Wekker describes Dutch society with the term white innocence, as characterized by "a small, but just, ethical nation; color-blind, thus free of racism; as being inherently on the moral and ethical high ground, thus a guiding light to other folks and nations,"⁵ her observation holds more than true for Switzerland too. The concept of "white innocence" is vital in understanding Switzerland's current post-colonial situation because, according to Wekker, it shows how "an imperial racial economy," of which Switzerland was part, "with its gendered, sexualized, and classed intersections, continues to underwrite dominant ways of knowing, interpreting, and feeling."⁶

II Taking up aspects of knowledge and ignorance, I would like to read white innocence in the context of post-colonial amnesia, which is engulfing Swiss society.

Post-colonial amnesia here means "an epistemology of ignorance" (Gloria Wekker) that runs through bodies, technologies and subjectivities and materializes in sensations, thoughts and desires. "Post-colonial amnesia" stems from the work of American-Jamaican philosopher Charles W. Mills⁷, and describes what Gloria Wekker calls a double-edged sword, as "not-knowing, but also not wanting to know"⁸. Thus, the amnesia I am

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invoking is not a forgetting, a passive, unrelated process that happens to somebody, to a society. On the contrary, this amnesia contains, as Mills states (cited by Wekker), “an ignorance militant, aggressive, not to be intimidated, an ignorance that is active, dynamic, that refuses to go quietly—not at all confined to the illiterate and uneducated but propagated at the highest levels of the land, indeed presenting itself unblushingly as knowledge.”⁹ This last element is crucial, in that the position of the ignorant is a position of power, of domination.

Nonetheless, the term amnesia, and especially colonial amnesia is also criticized for being used in the context of current politics of colonial memory. Amnesia, especially if it stands for a forgetting that might lead to an excuse (*entschuldung*) for not knowing, hides the fact that for very long there has been in Europe implicit and explicit referencing of colonialism, in ideas such as ‘civilising mission’, which live on in development policies of today. Ann Laura Stoler proposed the concept of “aphasia” instead of amnesia. Aphasia is the partial loss of the capacity to speak, i.e. to find appropriate words, to make the proper associations. Stoler is not aiming to imply a neurological pathological condition but “to emphasize both loss of access and active dissociation.”¹⁰ This brings us back to two-faced epistemology of ignorance.

Bearing in mind this interplay of active and passive processes, post-colonial amnesia could still be a useful term for tackling the Swiss situation. It is through forced forgetting and not wanting to know that we see this amnesia’s effects unfolding in a socio-material assemblage, encompassing different times, institutions, structures, materialities, affects and aesthetics.

III When thinking of possible interventions into this amnesia, the notion of the ‘assemblage’ helps understand that there is no easy position from where one can act, additionally, it is also unclear who is to be addressed. Following Alexander G. Weheliye, the concept of resistance might not be appropriate when it comes to grasp the specificity of the Swiss situation with its post-colonial amnesia.¹¹ In thinking about possible interventions, however, it is crucial to conceive of postcolonial amnesia not only as an analytic concept, but also imagine the transformative possibilities, such as those opened up by the feminist materialist stance.

Donna Haraway was the first to explicitly think about “diffraction” as a mode of thinking, critique, and knowing. Diffraction, a term from physics to describe the conduct of waves when they encounter an object, is an alternative to reflection or reflexivity which, according to Haraway, “invite [...] the illusion of an es-

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sential, fixed position, while diffraction trains us to more subtle vision”¹². The position from which we see, act, and think is questioned. Questioning the path of the enlightened subject, this departure becomes more important when seen in relation to the post-colonial amnesia. Haraway also says “[d]iffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction.”¹³ Interference maps the effects of difference, as opposed to difference itself. Or, as Karen Barad would say, it is a tracing of “what comes to matter.”

Karen Barad brings diffraction closer to interference. Interfering in the historical implies questioning the very terms of its time. It then becomes not only a question of subjectivity and position but also of history and time. A time that is non-linear, not synchronous, and not disassociated from space and matter. The coming to matter of time. A time that is out of joint. A multiplicity of times unfolding, crossing, and touching at the same time. As Barad says, “[...] there is no moving beyond, no leaving the ‘old’ behind. There is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then. There is nothing that is new; there is nothing that is not new.”¹⁴

Tracing spacetime matters—a neologism introduced by Barad where she proposes space, time and matter as a single onto-epistemological entity—allows us to think through processes of knowing/unknowing together with what has been in the past and what is forming anew. It is more than the Bergsonian duration and multiplicity of time because the unfolding in Barad’s term contains the formation and unformation of knowledge that goes with time.

The question, however, still remains: how does one intervene, how does one act without the ‘I’, which is mostly a white male figure? Instead of reflecting on the past, Karen Barad proposes re-turning, not in the sense of going back to a past, but by “re-turning it over and over again—iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities”¹⁵ or spacetime matters. Barad also brings up the term of responsibility or rather response-ability. Thus, with these concepts of subjectivity and time in mind, how can we think of the term responsibility, in a way such that it is relevant when it comes to think through this amnesia that has taken hold of us? A responsibility that does not presuppose classic liberal contractual relations of obligation and duty, which are themselves part of colonial and postcolonial subjectivity.

For Barad it is a responsibility preceding “the intentionality of consciousness. Responsibility is not a calculation to be

performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world's on-going intra-active becoming and not-becoming."¹⁶ However, this does not mean that there is no work, no reworking of responsibility over and over again, but it is a reworking without the sense of entitlement that foregrounds the "metropolitan perspective" (Said), which forestalls these processes of reworking, or in Gloria Wekker's terms, a reworking that does not perpetuate society's state of being at ease with white innocence.

IV A diffractive interference that combines a form of responsibility/response-ability and re-turning to what has happened and is happening everyday (the ongoing racism of Swiss society and culture) is one way of imagining an intervention in the postcolonial amnesiac and aphasiastic state we find ourselves in. This way of imagination never ends because it is an ongoing process of working through the socio-material assemblage of different times and places.

For the research project 'Swiss Psychotropic Gold', there is a further concept that has been influential in the way we have tried to approach 'gold' as a socio-material entanglement and this is the 'derivative'. To end this text, I would like to return to this concept in an attempt to steer the question of time towards continuation, continuity and persistence in tackling the viscosity of the 'postcolonial amnesia'.

While diffraction is about positionality, different times and places, about finding a line of thought as a line of flight that does not imply reflexivity and preliminary recognition of the self, the derivative bears the possibility of movement, to go somewhere from somewhere without defining the place now and the place there. Is it an escape route? To go back to the metaphor of the river, which is overflowing (*dérivé*) with water, which surpasses its shores in order to multiply, to continue in different streams and textures. The water is independent and of untraceable origins, and still, it is the 'same' water that is spilling over. Where and how is this transformation happening? The derivative of gold is important because it is concerned with the 'migratory' paths that gold as a commodity takes on its way to and from Swiss refineries.

Besides diffraction, the derivative is maybe one of the best ways to think about intervention. Finding space, time, and the possibility to transform, or better still, realizing that it is not necessarily about finding a space as a spatial location, but more as a derivative line that opens up. For Randy Martin, this could be found in what he called a "derivative sociality": "...[T]he intri-

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guing feature of derivative logics is what they leave behind—which turns out to be most of the networked and organized sociality, the precarious materiality crafted and created by the practitioners engaged in these forms. For better and for ill, the derivative flows from decolonization and takes the undoing of what was whole, the unbounding of what was enclosed, the bundling of what was scattered and shred as its conditions of possibility."¹⁷

- 1 See e.g. Hans Fässler, *Reise in Schwarz-Weiss. Schweizer Ortstermine in Sachen Sklaverei*, (Zürich: Rotpunkt 2005); Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi und Francesca Falk, *Postkoloniale Schweiz: Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien*, (Bielefeld: transcript 2012)
- 2 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (New York: Vintage Books 1994), xxi.
- 3 See Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra. Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic*, (Boston: Beacon Press 2000).
- 4 Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence. Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*, (Durham and London: Duke 2016), 3.
- 5 Wekker (2016), 2.
- 6 Wekker (2016), 29.
- 7 Charles W. Mills, "White Ignorance", in: *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, edited by S. Sullivan and N. Tuana, 11–38, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007).
- 8 Wekker (2016), 7.
- 9 Wekker (2016), 18.
- 10 Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France", *Public Culture* 23:1, 2011, 121–156, 125.
- 11 Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus. Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, (Durham and London: Duke 2014), 11.
- 12 Donna Haraway, "The Promises of Monsters: a Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others", in: Donna Haraway, *The Haraway Reader*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 70.
- 13 Haraway 2004, 70.
- 14 Karen Barad (2014), *Diffracting Diffraction: Cutting Together-Apart*, in: *Parallax*, 20:3, 168–187, 168.
- 15 Barad 2014, 168.
- 16 Barad 2014, 183.
- 17 Randy Martin, *Knowledge Ltd: Toward a Social Logic of the Derivative*, (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press 2015), 206.

Transformations

Molecules, Matter, Quants

or Queer/ing the Pharmakon

Fig 68, 69 Installation views Swiss Psychotropic Gold – delinking commodity trading, Rohstoffwechsel – performative assemblage, 28.7. at Office Building, Zurich West. The Psychotropic Foil: 10m transparent digital printed foil
Fig. 71, 72 "The Bellmeresque bodies" Dancer: Teresa Vittuci

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Fig. 68



Fig. 69



Fig. 70



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Fig. 71



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Promises of Pleasure

Ecologies of Bodies

Fig. 72, 73, 74, 76

Installation views Swiss Psychotropic Gold – delinking commodity trading, Rohstoffwechsel – performative assemblage, 28.7. at Office Building, Zurich West.

Fig. 72

“extracted bodies”, digital printed fabrics

Fig. 73

“shinings”, digital printed fabrics

Fig. 74

“lakshmi”, digital printed fabrics

Fig. 75, 77

stills of the video “ecologies of the bodies” 0 MIN 20 SEC



Fig. 72

becomingsoil.com

becomingsoil.com

ENVYEN SEEDS STORE

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Common News

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Fig. 73

What is this „mine“?

ten your golden com. Student Q.



Fig. 74

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Fig. 75



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Fig. 76



Fig. 77

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Me as super-commodity
worn ostensibly on bodies as jewelry desired
rogue identifications, lost socialities
politics of passion, me, libidinous gift, not being separated
me as bodies, female, the thing, precious metal
wires formed into filigree ornament—softness and elasticity
windings serve, take up, divert, store, protect and maintain black energy
me regulator of body temperature caring for conception and menstruation
negotiating ownership on women's bodies
sometimes maternally inherited, creole gold longing for security
bride money or Indian dowry purified at Swiss refineries, neutralized
evaporating violent frequencies—circulations anew

Text by Valentine Umansky
Making culture digestible in 555 words



Fig. 78, 79: Adji Dieye, *Maggic Cube* (2015–), photography.

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Adji Dieye

Maggic Cube

8821 — 9135



Fig. 79



Fig. 80, 81: Adji Dieye, *Maggic Cube* (2015–), photography.



Fig. 81

Fig. 82: Adjie Dieye, *Maggic Cube* (2015–), photography.

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The stock bouillon, as the French would have it, is a cube of about half an inch in size and made from dehydrated vegetables, meat stock, fat, and seasonings. Debatably invented in 18th century England as a dry alternative to meat stock, or in 19th century France by a group of patent-obsessed cooks, it made its way to West African markets and has since become ubiquitous in local recipes, be it Cameroonian ndolè, Ivorian sauce graine, or Senegalese thiéboudiène. This tiny cube's history, however, condenses issues emanating from a much larger, geometrical construct: the Scramble for Africa. There were 14 powers who, in 1884/85, during what history now calls the Berlin Conference, agreed on how to split an entire continent into arbitrary morsels. The conversations would lead to an economic, global treaty, which dictated trade norms and defined the manner in which their products would be sold throughout the African continent.

Adjie Dieye chose the Swiss brand Maggi as her vehicle to explore the power exerted by former colonial powers through the import of goods into West Africa. Her series *Maggic Cube* brings the notion of cultural imposition to the forefront, problematizing it in distinctive ways. Dieye uses the stock cube as a metaphor from which to pull several threads, the most obvious being a very direct critique of capitalism. Her images reveal the impact of global, imperialistic trade on African nations' identities. Slowly abandoning its local products, Senegal, where the images are shot, has been made dependent on foreign manufactured goods, like Maggi, which is currently owned by Nestlé. Image after image, Dieye denounces this logic and aptly exposes an economy, which creates demand where it never previously existed. Thus making African countries heavily reliant on the West, and reinforcing an imbalance under the pretense of providing an easily preserved ingredient. In so doing, the photographer also decries the slow erasure of local traditions; Maggi cubes having replaced more common ingredients such as the soubbala, a traditional equivalent made from fermented seeds.

Another thread she weaves into the series is that of domesticity. *Maggic Cube* addresses the many women who, in Senegal and the world at large, are

targeted by branding strategies that perpetuate stereotypical feminine roles. The brand’s slogans relegating the women to the confines of the kitchen counter, ‘with Maggi, each woman is a star.’ Faceless, masked, hidden from our gaze, Dieye’s subjects escape us. Through deceitful artifacts (masks and collages,) the series deconstructs advertising’s semiotic language and displays it for what it truly is: a pantomime.

Dieye’s series also pays tribute to the art market-acclaimed African tradition of studio portraiture. While many of the images call to mind the squared or striped backgrounds of Seydou Keïta or Malick Sidibé, the photographer casts doubt on a contemporary art market that crafts and constructs African identities as uniform. Its promotion of exotic at best and often neo-primitive visual archetypes are here subverted. Dieye reminds us that appearances are deceiving. The fat card-board check at the Maggi Awards and the red and yellow parades it organizes turn out to be a simple branding strategy. Not unlike the strategies the art market creates for African and diasporic artists. Through simplification, condensation, and replication, the art market continues to try to turn African art into single, easily sold digestible content.

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Caretaker Protecting Souls

Player in:
the Psychotropic Refinery
Agency:
protecting against violent
interventions into
the spirituality of gold

The extraction of gold as an intervention into the female body
ubiquitous Pacha Mama
If the precious metal shall be taken
the guardians, the Cuidanderos
shall be soothed
Do caretakers become legal instruments?

knowbotiq, 2017

Fig. 83 knowbotiq, The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refinery – what is your mission?, Corner College, 10.09.–08.10.2017, Zurich, Caretakers, cnc milled wooden objects, installation view.
Fig. 84 knowbotiq, Michael Taussig’s description of care takers of gold, My Cocaine Museum, (2017), screenshot image research.
Fig. 85 knowbotiq, Christian Dior J’adore Eau De Parfum (2017), screenshot image research.



Fig. 83

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Ergebnis 1 von 2 in diesem Buch für caretaker - LUGO: WIKI - 500.000.000

by music was a noise like a machine or like a wild wind he heard swimming under water with a stone tied to his back at San Vicente. He surfaced and asked if an airplane had passed by. He later figured out the music was the caretaker, the cuidandero, of the gold, with whom you have to strike some sort of deal so as to get at his hoard. What sort of deal? That's the problem. Other times the caretaker appears in the darkness of a subterranean mine as a hen followed by its chicks. First thing you notice is the "pio, pio . . ." of its clucking. Or it comes as a toad. Or as a dog . . . Strange things, said Lilia Zuñiga, who also lives in Santa María, ugly things, cosas marranas. Moving shadows. Accidents. You put down a crowbar, come back, and it has moved.

It seems there are plenty of men who make a deal with the caretaker and are quite prepared to provide him with the souls he demands, which means they use magic or poisons slipped into the food or drink of the victim, until that day when they, too, have to pay with their own lives, like Leopoldo. He was considered a rich man on account of his mine about half a mile downriver with its rocky mouth agape, dark and sweaty, right on the river's edge. It must have been the last of the truly productive mines. You can still see the iron rails for the gondola coming out of it, like a ghost train. I don't think people were all that sur-

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Fig. 84, 85

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Fabulations on Refining and Healing

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knowbotiq

and

Nina Bandi

On the

Psychotropic

Refinery

Interview with

knowbotiq

Nina Bandi

‘Swiss Psychotropic Gold’ entailed intense research, in which you brought together different materials, actors, and forms of knowledge—collective and practical, in particular—and its materializations. Gold as raw material and commodity, but also as metabolism; gold as an entanglement of historical, material, and affective layers. Some of these concepts, e.g. the molecular, diffraction, and fabulation, which deepen our understanding of forms of entanglement, are well-discussed in this volume. However, some core themes of the project and your artistic practice on the whole, have not been addressed at length. Tell us more about those.

knowbotiq

Three issues come to mind immediately. The Psychotropic Refinery as a platform for postcolonial encounters, the critical relationship of our practice to “art as knowledge production,” and finally gold in its transforming and moving materiality. Let’s take up the last first because it was critical to the initiation of the project at hand. When *Draft* ¹ invited us to develop a project on art in the context of current public debates in Switzerland, we started exploring for a subject that was specific to Switzerland, but not necessarily visible. Soon after, our attention was drawn to Switzerland’s close relationship and intertwinement with global finance and commodity trading. Add to that, the current debate over the legal responsibility of international corporations with headquarters in Switzerland,

and commodity trade was suddenly a very compelling option.^[2]

Our initial research revealed that in the colonial and postcolonial contexts of commodity trading only two raw materials have been imported to Switzerland for the purpose of refining, processing and finally exporting. One is cacao and the other gold. In Calvinist Switzerland, both commodities satisfy the desire for luxury. During our research we came across *Stoffe in Bewegung [Matters in Motion]* (2014), an anthology edited by Kijan Espahangizi and Barbara Orland.^[3] The book deals with extraction, circulation, alchemy, flows and transformation of materials.

Gold and cacao are not only shipped across the globe but they also move through bodies and things, thereby introducing the molecular and affective into the discourse via metabolic processes. We call this transformational and affective understanding of materiality “Roh-stoffwechsel,” a concept that is hard to translate into English^[4]. With a bunch of research behind us, we finally decided to work on the “Roh-stoffwechsel/metabolism of gold” and the narratives of violence surrounding this conflictual metal, and to concentrate on the suppression and elimination—amnesia—of the (post) colonial legacy, which is apparent in many public spheres in Switzerland. We have tried to initiate a process in which the violence-ridden journeys of gold begin to “speak” physically, haptically, auditorily, and visually through its molecularizations, dispersals, diffractions, and derivatizations.

This is where the Psychotropic Refinery comes in. The concept allowed us to stretch existing imaginations around gold, and to offer specific forms of relating, encountering and situating around the flows and transformations of this precious metal. This practice of developing and questioning imaginations, and inscribing them into dominant narratives constitutes a key aspect of our research-based and exploratory art practice, it is a practice of speculative doing and thinking. Through collaborative reflection and affection we attempt to comprehend and encounter the violence-laden extraction of the

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commodity, the associated exploitation of the environment and human beings, and the energy-intensive processes of refining and purification. All of which, for instance, feed the absurd luxury of the wedding and wellness industries. As well as the wide range of new bio-technological developments, which incorporate “molecularized gold” i.e. nanoparticles of gold used as markers in histo- and cytochemistry or as micro conductors in mobile phones (see also text by Yvonne Volkart). With the Psychotropic Refinery we attempt to act at the level of the local “affective economies” by addressing responsibility and “indebtedness.” We ‘scratch’, traverse, confront, defy, the smartness, the cleanliness, the wealth, the well-controlled surface of neutrality, technocracy and perfection of Swissness and infect it. Hence the Psychotropic Refinery becomes a fabulating machine with regard to Switzerland’s postcolonial involvement in centuries-old commodity trade.

At the same time, however, as artists we do not ignore our own involvement and complicity with the systems we are engaging with. Through this project, we also examine our own responsibilities and reflect on what it means to inquire into prevailing imaginations, in order to generate accountabilities.

Nina Bandi

Could you explain “psychotropic” more at length?

knowbotiq

Let’s return to “Rohstoff-wechsel.” In his book *My Cocaine Museum*, Michael Taussig brilliantly elaborates on how the above-mentioned, metabolic processes of gold are mostly libidinous by unfolding the close affinity of cocaine and gold. Nervous psychotropic desires and appetites surround the shiny, precious metal—“gold as a drug.” The psychotropic is so important because the psycho-active struggle and greed for gold interacts directly with the imaginary and an irrational production of the real. Gold and its political constitution arises out of collective and social imaginations whose effectiveness cannot be grasped by means of statistics, diagrams, and scientific reports, which in our age

of digitalization, algorithmic access and optimization, often form the basis of the real. The release of endorphins and dopamine induced by greed, spike in testosterone as a result of trading in gold derivatives, spiritual experiences of meditating on bullions, or the libidinousness of patriarchal gold as jewelry, are excessive affective narrations, far beyond the simplistic stories often found around the metal. To quote a currently somewhat over-quoted Donna Haraway: “stretch the imagination and you [can] change the story.”

Nina Bandi

Is this approach also related to your stance on “art as knowledge production?”

knowbotiq

Our practice is not just about the production of knowledge. It is important for us to distance ourselves from the attempted neoliberal and neo-authoritarian appropriation of art as knowledge production, which often implies an academization and depoliticization of artistic practice. As Elke Bippus writes in this volume, we are much more concerned with exploring micro-sensory and micro-political investigations of perception, experience, speech, etc. within the existing western knowledge apparatus. The Psychotropic Refinery is not only a symbolic metaphor but more specifically a machine to open up encounters with ghosts and caretakers (see the visual sequence on the caretakers of gold in this book): a “critical fabulation” loosely borrowed from Saidiya Hartman, which Elke Bippus, with regard to our practice, refers to as “molecular fabulation.”

Nina Bandi

Within the project three exhibitions/presentations took place in Zurich and Basel. To what extent can the Psychotropic Refinery be tracked down in these various formats?

knowbotiq

Well, there’s no straightforward answer to that question. In order to approach the Psychotropic Refinery, we tried to call on the social imaginations fed by a kind of a connective unconscious. That’s why there are visual, acoustic, olfactory, as well as haptic elements in the exhibitions. We worked with mantra-

like videos, with renmai⁵ acupuncture using gold plated needles, we meditated and did awareness exercises on bullions and jewelry, and exposed ourselves to vaporized “Golden Viagra” pills, and minimal doses of henbane essences, a hallucinogen used in witchcraft to address unconscious. These activities were crisscrossed by the very slowly, micro-performing, abstracted body of the dancer Teresa Vittucci. Visitors were invited to move barefoot through a summery exhibition space and, activated by acupuncture, to smell the ubiquitous molecular Swiss gold. In all the exhibitions, it was important for us to facilitate encounters with the postcolonial affections of gold and to encourage visitors to deal physically with the latency of the structural violence of gold. It requires sensitivity, response-ability, and a willingness to confront and critically encounter oneself and the communities we live in. However, self-love, hedonistic life cultures and the moral superiority of the wealthy are strongly present in places like Zurich and Basel where we presented versions of the Psychotropic Refinery. During our research, people had told us that they meditate naked on gold bars in order to charge their bodies with specific frequencies and dissolve their blockages. One could call this and other such suspensions of disbelief the “ghosts of gold.” These ghosts might point the way to the dominant narratives of gold, the victims’ experiences of violence, the ruthlessness of environmental poisoners, the care of activists and to the caretakers actively protecting the metal in the geological strata.

Nina Bandi

How does your concept of “healing” relate to what you just described? How is it enacted in the “healing practices and techniques” in the exhibitions?

knowbotiq

Our concept of healing is not one of “healing from something,” which is not possible anyway, but refers to activation, to setting something in motion in an undetermined direction. This can have sensitizing effects, but can also generate turbulence of all kinds. We were surprised at how many of the, sometimes innocent, visitors to the exhibitions

knowbotiq, Nina Bandi	On the Psychotropic Refinery...	9406 — 9810	9631	9676	knowbotiq, Nina Bandi	On the Psychotropic Refinery...	9406 — 9810
accepted these “treatments” and were willing to temporarily withdraw from the somewhat dominant “retinal” format of exhibitions.					the Atrato recognized as a constitutionally legal subject ^[7] . It can now be represented in court by ten guardians of the river, five women and five men, who are representatives of the different Afro-Colombian and indigenous settlements on the river. However, this additional political agency, implemented as it is, also raises certain questions, because it introduces sophisticated, modernist means in an area that is currently controlled—or rather not controlled—by a very weak state. The guardians of the river expose themselves to enormous personal danger, evident in the high number of murdered environmental activists in this region. On this subject, please see the extensive contribution in this volume (text and video) by the Fundación Mareia from Quibdó, the main city in the Atrato area, where members of the collective reflect and elaborate on these issues in relation to the global gold trade and the Swiss gold refineries.		
We see these engagements with other forms of corporeality in the exhibition space also as a form of criticism. Criticism here is not just about pointing out and exposing, as is done in many documentary practices, but about the possibility of participating in the performativity of the materialities and the stories of the objects, the sounds, the imaginations activated by gold plated needles. As Elke Bippus states in her elaboration on our practice, criticism is not passing judgment but rather a practice of reflecting on the conditions of one’s own perception, and of knowing and “not-being-able-to-know.” And it became particularly interesting in those moments when the physical encounters with ‘Swiss Psychotropic Gold’ became an intense confrontation with inhuman(e) materiality, opening up “non-enlightened” forms of critical experience.			9635	9680	Having worked before on issues of translocality, postcoloniality and migration politics mostly in European contexts, we hesitated when it came to accepting the invitation to Colombia. In the already askew power relations on the Atrato River, one cannot help but ask whether it is possible for privileged European artists, flown in with money acquired from “transcultural” programs, to encounter the people, the environment and the histories of post/colonial violence with care and respect.		
Nina Bandi	You have emphasized the importance of different forms of postcolonial encounter in “deep time.” Do you practice and question it in other projects, independent of the Psychotropic Refinery as understood in the context of Switzerland?				In numerous conversations we had with the various collectives ^[8] at the Atrato River it became strikingly apparent, how local artists, people active in the cultural sector and political activists are scrutinizing and rewriting the existing political and social imaginations with manifold forms of knowledge, care work, and transformative self-organized practices. And it also became clear to us that it can be very important that these independent discourses and representations be shared, listened to and discussed translocally.		
knowbotiq	Yes, although in a less exhibition-oriented way and in a context where we also experienced the limitations of our previous approaches. The institution Más Arte Más Acción in Bogotá invited us to a research trip to the Colombian rainforest for the purpose of reflecting on the “traumatized” Atrato River, in an open exchange with local political and artist collectives. The Atrato River is an important Afro-Colombian biotope that is highly contaminated with mercury ^[6] which is released into the environment because of the massive amounts of illegal gold mining taking place in the area. Its toxicity threatens any form of life in and along the river. In order to protect the river, a group of young female lawyers, part of the Colombian NGO Tierra Digna, worked together with local collectives at having		9640	9685	Imaginations should be stretched translocally. Artists like us might engage within Switzerland/Europe, where numerous representations, visibilities, and articulations of gold are already established		
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and administered as instruments of (national) power—in situations, where the global North continues to maintain the post-/coloniality of the global South by initiating what still can be named white patriarchal and philanthropic “development work.”

We think that translocal forms of publics and solidarities should be developed and struggled for. Rohit Jain addresses this not only in his contribution to this volume but also practices it in Switzerland by being an active part of the Institute New Switzerland (INES)^[9]. In this way, he opens up possibilities for important debates on commitments and multiplicities in contexts of daily racism in a critical, transformative way. Yet, in the wake of our Atrato studies we realized that a greater deal of attention has to be paid to the conditions under which such “projects” take place. Together with Ariane Anderegg and Ted Geier^[10], we formulated annotations regarding translocal constellations; shrinking power gaps turned up here as a key issue. Projects fostering postcolonial encounters are always characterized by a big power imbalance. As a rule, whoever brings in the funds, tacitly determines the framework in which the project is to take place in advance. From the get go, any encounter between different actors should address the privilege gap and integrate it conceptually into the work so as to arrive at the crucial question:

Is translocal solidarity possible
and what can it look like?

Such encounters refuse to make an object of what is being explored, researched^[11]. Which begs the question: Is an encounter without objectification or instrumentalization possible? If so, then is this encounter possible without simultaneously triggering processes of empathy and solidarity? No one can protect oneself from what an encounter can do, nor can one be “uncontaminated” by it. There is no ‘innocent’ way of experimenting and engaging with such unlikely friendships and forms, but the important question here is: How can people render each other capable and response-able?

- 1 <https://www.draftprojects.info/home.html> [accessed December 2, 2019], and see the contribution by Christoph Schenker in this publication.
- 2 <https://corporatejustice.ch/> [accessed December 2, 2019]
- 3 Kijan Malte Espahangizi and Barbara Orland, eds., *Stoffe in Bewegung: Beiträge zu einer Wissensgeschichte der materiellen Welt* (Zurich: Diaphanes 2014).
- 4 “Roh-stoffwechsel” is a combination of “Rohstoff”=raw material and “Stoffwechsel”=metabolism.
- 5 The renmai (ren meridian) acupuncture technique is using drainages and different aspects of liquids and metal, fluidity and strength, as a process of cleaning and restoring.
- 6 Switzerland is co-initiator of the Minamata Convention, ratified in 2017, which aims to reduce mercury reserves on the world market in order to protect the environment and people. At the same time, one of the largest mercury recycling facilities in the world operates in Switzerland: the Batrec in Wimmis in the Bernese Oberland. In 2016 Switzerland was the tenth largest exporter in the world with thirty tonnes of mercury and, according to research, also supplied Colombia until at least 2016.
- 7 <http://tierradigna.org> [accessed December 2, 2019]
- 8 Just to name a few: the people of Corporaloteca, <https://www.corporaloteca.com/>, Motete <https://www.nuestromotete.com/>, Casa Wontanara <https://www.facebook.com/WontanaraQuibdo/> [all accessed December 2, 2019], the women of La Loma Bojaya, the guardians of the river Atrato, Tierra Digna and COCOMASIA (see the text of Fundación Mareia in this publication).
- 9 <https://institutneueschweiz.ch/En> [accessed December 2, 2019]
- 10 Artists and participants with us in the Atrato studies.
- 11 Sobre el Militante Investigador, Colectivo Situaciones, <https://transversal.at/transversal/0406/colectivo-situaciones/en> [accessed December 2, 2019]

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knowbotiq

Swiss Psychotropic Gold, Molecular Refinery

9811 — 9900

Animated
documentary
Video:
knowbotiq 2019
Sound:
Anna Frei /
fred hystère

SD

What can be documented at all and thus classified in the round dance of discourse within the real?

What eludes our very western material construction of reality?

Can scientific systems re-incorporate this rest or do they create surrogates?

Is this what rests circulating across the techno-spheres?

Algorithmic agencies and socialities increasingly determine who is able to speak and to represent. Through fetishization of the digital multiple beings, human and non human, fall into invisibility. Can this involuntary opacity develop fugitivity and withdrawal from behavioristic politics—or just a shadowy existence?

Yvonne
Volkart

Mobilizing and Invoking. knowbotiq's Video Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining as a Gold-Evocation Machine

1 "In an important sense, in a breathtakingly intimate sense, touching, sensing, is what matter does, or rather, what matter is: matter is condensations of response-ability."

"A ghost never dies," a voice whispers from the darkness of the screen, echoed by a second one. "A ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come back,"² the voice and its echo repeat at the end of the video, from the blackness of the screen. Now it can start again from the beginning.

knowbotiq's approximately 17-minute video *Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining*³ (2018) begins and ends with this requote of Jacques Derrida's observation. Hence it does as it says in a whisper: summons the undead and the revenants; updates what has not been taken care of. And in doing so proposes the video as a machine that invokes ghosts and gold. A narrative begins that deals with gold and the obsession with it, with its making and becoming, with its paths and its added value. And Switzerland always plays a role. If we follow the voice's movements, both of them have belonged together for half a century, if not longer: "Today three quarters of all the world's gold in circulation is refined in Switzerland," the voice makes known after several minutes, after we have seen images of digital models of a factory in which a type of metal is processed. And it is, as we suspect, mercury, that toxic heavy metal that even today, as it was centuries ago, is used for the leaching and amalgamation of gold. Mercury, that "base" element out of which alchemists wanted to produce gold.

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Yvonne Volkart

Mobilizing and Invoking. knowbotiq's... 9901 — 10350

Like in a computer game, much too fast to be able to comprehend, the strange, silvery, serpentine-like fluid heads toward us, curls, becomes enormous, washes over us, does not cease, is vitally alive, quicksilver.⁴ The video deals with this insistence of matter; this is the "psychotropics of gold," its material and mind-altering effects, its agency, which mobilizes and affects everything it comes in contact with: gold is alchemy, amalgamation, and transformation. It is gaming, obsession, the craving for more, the voracity for power and subordination. Gold creates hierarchies that transform everything they take hold of into beauty or waste. For gold is not easy to come by. Gold is extractivism, erosion, and the accumulation of mountains of waste.⁵ It has to be arduously withdrawn from the earth's crust and refined. Its legacy are filthy terrains and exploited people. That is why gold is also always shit: it yields a profit and destruction; revaluation and exploitation. Countless are the names and legends that tell of these costs, of the alchemy of re- and devaluation and their insanity: King Midas, who miserably died of starvation, since everything he touched turned into gold. Aguirre/Klaus Kinski, the Spanish conquistador in Werner Herzog's movie who, as the last surviving human, cannot stop romancing about the legendary El Dorado in front of a horde of squirrel monkeys. Or, acutely quoted in the video, Imelda Marcos, whose husband—a gold trader, lawyer for gold mines, and dictator—so deeply loved her because she knew how to exchange his blood gold for beauty: "And then he said to me: because all you buy is beauty."

Gold is economically tolerated madness. It is, as *Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining* demonstrates, not only one of the major material resources that depends on the (expendable) economy of capitalism but also a psychoactive agent that unleashes mind-altering, libidinous powers. Gold is doing: it is digging for gold, making gold, becoming gold. It is becoming element, becoming elementary. Dissolving boundaries. Flooding. Infecting. Gold is never a finished thing. It is the molecular power of transformation. Gold creates relations, hierarchically structured relations, and subjects (*sub-iecta*). Gold is othering.⁶ But it is also mutable. It is virtuality and harbors the potential—the alchemically conceived hope—of the conversion of one thing into another, from the "base" into the "high," from quicksilver into gold (although in reality, the process is more likely to take place in reverse: from fertile soil to toxic slag). "Matter itself," it says in the video, quoting Karen Barad, "is diffracted, dispersed, threaded through with materializing and sedimented effects of iterative reconfigurations of spacetime-matterings." Accordingly, gold is an assemblage of energies and relations. "Assemblage," writes Jasbir Puar, "is actually an awkward translation—the original term in Deleuze and Guattari's work is not the French word assemblage, but actually *agencement*, a term which means design, layout, organization, arrangement, and relations—the focus being not on content but on relations, relations of patterns."⁷

The video sees itself as “a critical fabulation” of such “patterns” of relations and subjectification. It creates a relation, shows the pattern between the colonial and colonizing history of gold and Switzerland. Thus the emergence of an ornamental pattern in that place where “exemplary” Switzerland is evocatively called out, suggests that it may be about a very specific pattern of colonial structures. Officially, Switzerland had neither colonies (with gold mining), nor was it involved in the gold trade prior to the second half of the twentieth century. Until 1968, this was in the hands of the London Gold Pool. When it had to close for two weeks due to American financial speculations, the three major Swiss banks at that time seized the opportunity and established the Zurich Gold Pool. From that point onward, they dominated the international gold trade for a long time.^[8] As the video fabulates, it may be precisely the ostensible “cleanliness” of Switzerland that provides the condition for its continuing post/colonial gold practices. Elements such as neutrality, which is repeatedly represented to the outside world, its basic democratic convictions, as well as the Protestant work ethic suggest a moral superiority that seems to be incontestable. It becomes apparent that both current Swiss gold transactions as well as the innovative forms of gold mining carried out by transnational companies have to be read as a continuation of colonial history.

The video produces this decolonizing knowledge, as I would like to show in the following, less by providing unambiguous information by means of documentary material, and instead by mobilizing relations, making patterns visible, and opening up virtualities—possibilities of aesthetic entanglements that are inherent between the wide range of information and research materials and developed through a kind of assembling, of “agencement.” I read the video as a mobilizing, a summoning of revenants and the undead, who in their disparity edge toward the stage: knowbotiq’s evocation calls in the subjects the gold machine has ejected in the course of its long history of othering. It assembles those voices, times, and places

Fig. 86, 87: knowbotiq, *The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining* (2018), HD video, 17 MIN 7 SEC, video still.



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Yvonne Volkart

Mobilizing and Invoking. knowbotiq's... 9901 — 10350



Fig. 87

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that were “wasted” by the alchemy of gold and that now long for transformation—for becoming gold. What results is an auditory, visual, and textual assembly of voices, muttering and rhythms, of archival and documentary materials, 3-D models, infographics and Google Maps, an assemblage of many that incessantly generates new relations and collectives: the video as a gold-evocation machine that subjectifies and affects us, the public, the world. Hence the video makes what it “tells of” aesthetically palpable. Gold is not a product, but producing; producing hierarchies, “others” that do not “count”—prospectors that stay behind in the mines, or slags that are withdrawn in the gold-parting plants. That is othering.

At the same time, and this likewise corresponds with the paradoxical alchemy of gold and its long (value-added) history, the processes of othering are in many respects entangled, reversible, or even annulable. This is the case when doses change, when others come and re/count, when they see themselves as subjects of the story. The video also demonstrates this with its evocation of the ghosts as the main protagonists in the story, with the lens of the camera directed at an Afro-American rapper who wears a heavy gold chain, or at Creole filigree work from the Surinamese diaspora in the Netherlands. Such examples show that the othering of gold implies a multiply broken process that also contains the potential to suddenly change into its opposite within it and might even transform itself into something healing. As demonstrated using the example of gold acupuncture, gold is also used for healing and purifying purposes. A fact to which the numerous gold spas in Switzerland also testify; apparently, one not only wears gold or employs it but also meditates on, inhales, or eats it. “Everything is a matter of doses, of melting and crystallization point, of the rotary power of the molecule,

of regularity, of milligrams, of the form and mode of administration, of habit, of praxis," it says in the voice-over in the initial sequences. Like the pharmakon, gold is both the one as well as the other: it is poison and medicine, decoration and shit; purifying and polluting; parting as well as joining together and healing. From an aesthetic perspective, it is precisely this contradiction, this radical relationality and incompatibility of the opposite that makes gold open for the decline of singularity: the patterns of relations that gold (re)produces are exchangeable, can suddenly change into their opposite at any time. Gold can also heal: so let us allow those places in El Dorado that were ruined by gold mining to receive wellness treatment! The potential of gold lies in the exchangeability of the positions of the protagonists and the changeability of the doses administered—precisely for its use in the arts as well: The history of gold extractivism and its polluting of the entire world cannot be erased, the whispering of the undead cannot be ignored. However, othering can be aesthetically perverted and momentarily suspended. Therein lies the power of the aesthetic, which works with the alchemical power/hope of gold/waste.

...

*Being stone,
becoming stone*

10100 — 10223

The video, divided into fourteen chapters, plays with the collision and the inversion potential of these opposite meanings. While the first chapter presents the immaterialization of gold in the course of exchange abstraction and capital accumulation (and in doing so suggests initial parallels with the seeming immateriality of digital technologies), the second chapter strikes back with the contrary: gold is not immaterial value, but matter; ancient geological sediment that has been deposited in the form of nuggets, veins, or dust. As one image sequence shows, in many countries, currently in South American rainforest regions in particular, gold quartz is washed out of stone by means of small-scale hydraulic mining. The mantra-like "becoming stone" is apparently also a survival strategy on the part

Fig. 88: knowbotiq,
The Swiss Psychotropic
Gold Refining (2018),
HD video, 17 MIN 7 SEC,
Plovdiv, video still.



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of the causalized protagonists: "In order to withstand the weather, we had to become stone," says the voice off camera, accompanied by the ringing of cowbells. Who is speaking here? Is it a nugget, the destroyed forest, is it gold prospectors or their ghosts?

In the next chapter, everything seems abstract again: symmetrical patterns, a voice droning out a mantra from Switzerland, whose banks not only carried out all of the necessary monetary transactions for the apartheid regime of South Africa (which at the time was the world's biggest gold supplier and therefore still has numerous gold smelters today), and where meanwhile three-quarters of the global circulation of gold is refined and hence cleansed it of its tainted history. At the beginning of the following chapter we see the factories or parting plants, which were initially introduced as virtual images, as "real" ones for the first time: unobtrusive, modern façades; fenced-off, video-monitored areas; trucks that come and go—recorded in a stop-and-go technique whose jerky zoom-in, which repeatedly starts over, does not lead to any "progress." Something halts, insists, is controlled: it is the infrastructures of gold in a hallucinogenically rendered Ticino landscape with a mushroom—reality as (video) game. Ticino is home to three of the most important gold refineries operating worldwide. A first premonition arises: the (gold) objects remain as they were, even though the methods and techniques change.

Gold is stone is digital technology. The image of a rotating, closed white (purified) smartphone brings the contemporary form of a gold fetish into the picture: In many countries, the smartphone has not only replaced the gold Swiss watch as a status symbol, but it is also a receptacle whose interior contains a relatively large amount of gold. Because gold is one of the most stable chemical elements, does not corrode, is gently cushioning, and is well-conducting, it is an important component in high-performance electronics; the contacts (plugs) are therefore normally made of gold. In numbers, this means that one smartphone contains 20–25 milligrams of gold, depending on the model and year of manufacture; today, about 8.75 kilograms of stone are required for its extraction. Three hundred and fifty kilograms of stone are required for the extraction of one gram of gold. However, if one recycles instead, one gram of gold can be obtained from 40–50 smartphones. For a gold ring weighing 10 grams, 3.5 tons of stone have to be mined or, alternatively, 400–500 smartphones recycled. These numbers illustrate that the extraction of raw material is wasting: As we discovered in our research project "Times of Waste," in the case of smartphones the greatest amount of waste, for example, does not originate after but before their use—during the extraction of raw material, first and foremost gold. As attested to by the numbers mentioned, on the one hand due to its pure volume, and on the other hand because during the extraction of raw material, many toxic residues remain—quicksilver, for example, in the case of gold—or because in surface mining groundwater is pumped out and

consequently polluted. This is also one of the reasons why raw material inclusive of gold production was outsourced to countries with fewer environmental regulations and lower living standards: not necessarily because one can extract more, but because it can be extracted more cheaply there. ¹¹

Even though Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining does not deal with recycling gold out of smartphones, I would like to provide several data from our research project, as they fit in with the “patterns” mobilized in the video from a somewhat different perspective. Because smartphones contain numerous precious metals in compact form with relatively little packaging waste, in Switzerland discarded models are ideally not treated as “normal” electronic waste. They go directly to the internationally active Belgian company Umicor. This is one of the few companies worldwide that has specialized in the smelting of precious metals from e-waste. (This is why smartphones do not go to the parting plants in Ticino.) The history of Umicor, which has become a flagship company in recycling matters, has its roots in the colonial period, when raw gold from the Belgian Congo was refined in Europe. In the age of extractivism, because it is cheaper to remove raw materials from mountains of stone under the worst of working and environmental conditions and to re-accumulate them elsewhere instead of recycling e-waste, recycling gold out of e-waste continues to be a small branch of industry; the rate amounts to 15–50 percent, even though gold could be recycled practically without a loss because of its stability. Instead, elements that are not so stable, such as, for instance, rare earths, are degraded in the smelting plants. However, if the rare earth neodymium were recycled, the gold could not be extracted for thermodynamic reasons. Concepts that are not yet fully functional, such as Apple’s recycling robot Liam, withhold this information. However, I do not mean to



Fig. 89, 90: knowbotiq, The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining (2018), HD video, 17 MIN 7 SEC, video still.

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imply that recycling, in particular by those who produce e-waste and take it into their own hands, is not a good thing. On the contrary: If sustainability (and not simply purported sustainability, therefore greenwashing) is to one day become an economic factor, then in view of the global increase in electronic waste along with the simultaneous reduction of gold exploitation by means of mineral ores, urban mining, which is what the recycling of e-waste is also called, would have a bright future.

Fig. 90



... *Endless extractivism* 10237 — 10314

The next stage of innovative gold extraction, as Google Maps and Google Wayfinding suggest in Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining, will presumably run in another direction. The methods are called phytomining and microbial (ore) leaching (bioleaching). They developed through the observation that specific plants and bacteria are capable of withdrawing the metals (including residual molecular gold) from the slag heaps and waters polluted by mining and thus cleansing the areas. If we follow the logic of the video—in zones ruined by surface mining, hills full of mining waste with patches of snow, a menacingly creaking, scratching sound—it quickly becomes apparent that even this gold extraction process, lauded as the “return to nature” in the promotional film imported into the video, does not serve the purpose of healing and revitalizing the run-down mining sites. Instead, it rings in the next step in the millennia-old history of extractivism. At a time in which the earth’s crust no longer yields gold nuggets, as these are already all being carried around by bodies as chains, rings, wristwatches, or smartphones, the dirt and the dust will have to be scratched together by hosts of “slaves.” Exactly what bodies these are recruited from—whether humans, machines, plants, or bacteria—does not matter for now. The main thing is that it sounds green and is profitable. One of the last shots shows printers that—like mouths, bullets, or waterfalls—churn out snow-covered mountains at Lake Lucerne. They stand for the mountains of mineral, animal, or human waste that prosperous societies produce, yet also for the production of the fantasy that Switzerland is clean, neutral, and innocent.

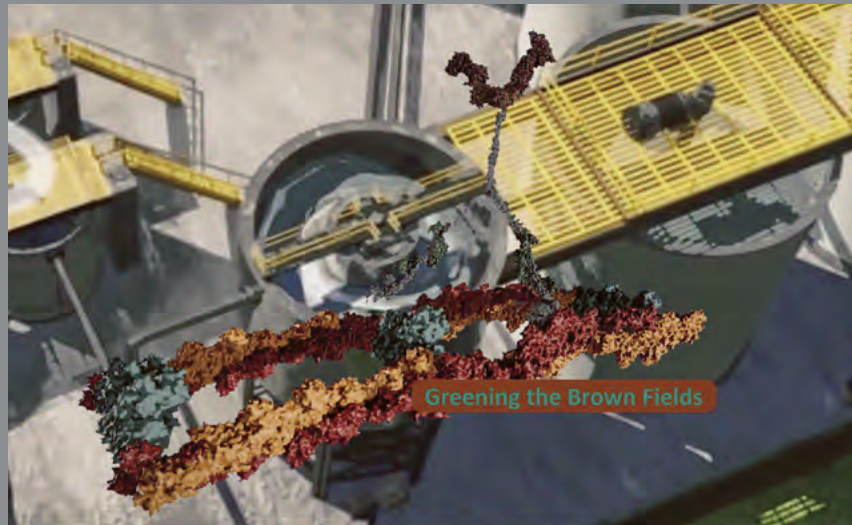


Fig. 91, 92: knowbotiq, The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining (2018), HD video, 17 MIN 7 SEC, video still.

My text shows that knowbotiq work with a remarkably obtrusive and restless aesthetic of mobilization, fragmentation, and enumeration (not narration). Their style comes across as paratactical, like a hard construction, its chapters like stone, of which each one could also stand on its own. The issues the video deals with seem to be structured into chapters as well as abruptly and associatively strung together. Some of these chapters were already integrated into earlier performances and exhibitions as modular short videos. The linear flow of the video is repeatedly interrupted and can also be experienced as a cyclically repeatable as well as monumental condensation of time. This "other" temporality is generated by the artificiality and modular nature of the chapters that have been joined together; the abrupt, rhythmizing speech; the tendency toward repetitive chanting, the gyrations of figures and dancing objects in the images as well as their

Fig. 92



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temporary disappearance and reemergence. "A ghost never dies, it remains always to come and to come back," the voice and its echo repeat at the end. The "ghosts" can only return in a nonlinear temporal structure. Only in those places where variations on narrated history are possible does hope still exist, or where hope still exists are variations narratable. Since there is no reason for optimism, this hope is solely due to the alchemy of gold/waste and its ability to suddenly change into its opposite in an unpredictable way.



Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining, knowbotiq 2018,
<https://vimeo.com/378877756>

- 1 Karen Barad, "On Touching—The Inhuman That Therefore I am (v1.1)", in *The Politics of Materiality*, edited by Suzanne Witzgall and Kerstin Stakemeier (Zurich: Diaphanes 2015), 153–64, esp. 161.
- 2 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge 1994), 123.
- 3 Credits: The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining, HD video, 17 MIN 7 SEC, © knowbotiq 2018; concept, realisation, montage / animation: knowbotiq; script: Nina Bandi (script: "A Molecular Listening Session mit Fred Hystère und Nina Bandi"), knowbotiq; sound: DJ Fred Hystère, knowbotiq; voices: Nina Bandi, Sally Schoenfeldt, Jordy Rosenberg, Romy Rüegger, Paolo Caffoni, Stef Huber, et al., with quotes from: Karen Barad, Jacob Tanner, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Rohit Jain, Audre Lord, Paul B. Preciado, Michael Taussig, Imelda Marcos, Gloria Wecker, Paul Wilmott, Nina Simone, Junglesussy and others; performer: Teresa Vittucci; Thanks to: ifcar, ZHdK Zurich, DRAFT / Christoph Schenker, Gitanjali Dang, Rohit Jain, Anna Frei, and others.
- 4 Quicksilver comes from the "Old English *cwicseolfor*, literally 'living silver', so called for its mobility." <https://www.etymonline.com/word/quicksilver> [accessed September 7, 2019].
- 5 "Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Nielson use the term 'extractivism' to name the relationship between different forms of extractive operations in contemporary capitalism." Quoted in Kate Crawford and Vladan Joler, "Anatomy of an AI System: The Amazon Echo as an Anatomical Map of Human Labor, Data, and Planetary Resources" (2018), (online: <https://ainowinstitute.org> [accessed January 30, 2019]).
- 6 With respect to waste, the environmental historian Marco Armiero speaks of its processuality and relationality. "Waste" is always "wasting" and "othering." In my opinion, one can apply this crucial insight directly to gold, whose flipside is always waste. See Marco Armiero (2018) (online: <https://www.space4235.com/archives/fumogeni-2-marco-armiero> [accessed April 15, 2019]).
- 7 Jasbir Puar, "'I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess': Intersectionality, Assemblage, and Affective Politics", *Transversal* 8 (2011), *Inventions*, (online: <http://eicp.net/transversal/0811/puar/en.html> [accessed September 6, 2019]).
- 8 Bernd-Stefan Grewe, *Gold: Eine Weltgeschichte* (Munich: C. H. Beck 2019).
- 9 On this, see the research we conducted within the scope of our project "Times of Waste", which was on the trail of the waste that a smartphone leaves behind, esp. <https://objektbiografie.times-of-waste.ch/ewaste/#Hoboken> [accessed November 6, 2019].
- 10 See our object biography of a smartphone: <https://objektbiografie.times-of-waste.ch/en/> [accessed November 6, 2019].
- 11 Angela Melitopoulos's video installation *Crossings* (2017), which was presented at documenta14, strikingly demonstrates this using the example of Greece, which is responsible for the fact that, under pressure of the European Union, Canadian companies such as Eldorado Gold now perform surface mining there and are destroying the terrain. On this, see Yvonne Volkart, "Neinsagen-Lernen als ästhetisches Ereignis", *Springer* 4 (2017), 52–55 (online: https://www.academia.edu/36623296/Neinsagen-Lernen_ols_%C3%B6sthetisches_Ereignis [accessed November 6, 2019]).

Elke Bippus *Molecular Fabulation— A Practice of Criticism with Materialities and in Collaborations:*

*The Swiss Psychotropic
Gold Refining
by knowbotiq et al*



Fig. 93, 94: knowbotiq, *The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining* – what is your mission?, Corner College, 10.09.–08.10.2017, Zurich, installation view.

Fig. 1 A bright exhibition space with installative ensembles: A group of information stands presents collaged elements from online databases and image archives concerning Swiss history and culture—graphics, 3-D models, documentary illustrations, and image photos from tourism advertising—that are arranged in exploding displays, so to speak. At the center of the space, Plexiglas cubes with fragrance atomizers, a blue pharmaceutical bottle with a pipet, and terrycloth objects are reminiscent of the atmosphere of a beauty/wellness salon; a platform with meditation cushions as well as a Plexiglas lounge hung vertically in the space are relics from or utensils for

Elke Bippus

Molecular Fabulation—A Practice of... 10351 — 10710

wellness treatments. There are tablets in the space and on the walls presenting videos. **Fig. 2** The wallpapered walls are defined by the repetition of kaleidoscopically arranged elements that were taken from the corporate websites of Swiss refineries, such as gold bars from Argor Heraeus, one of, as its website explains, “Switzerland’s most prominent precious metal refineries” and whose “brand is recognized worldwide.” Placed next to the gold bars is a logo consisting of two snow-covered mountains, a golden hard shell case, mechanical elements, and incantory formulaic scraps of sentences from the refineries’ image campaigns, such as: “Seeking maximum purity,” “Refining / Transformation,” “for a long-term industrial vision,” or “We are the golden link for our customer’s metal.”

The ornamental structure of the wallpaper holds the exhibition together, joins it to become an environment, and at the same time reflects on the assembling technique. This combines various research strategies, with the result that traditional and experimental techniques come to bear, for instance literature and Internet research, conversations, interviews, but also field recordings, closed readings, or self-historization. The research is communicated through objects, materials, and practices that have an affective, sensorial effect and address visitors to the exhibition at an acoustic, visual, and olfactory level.

With the exhibition *The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining*: ‘What is your mission?’ presented in Zurich in 2017, knowbotiq continued its inquiries, begun in 2016, into the translocal commodity trade with gold with a specific focus on the role of Switzerland in this value-added chain in the form of “performative settings and the healing of post/colonial amnesia.” The exhibition, aesthetic articulations of the investigations by the artist duo, is associated with a multiplicity of other performance and time-based

Fig. 94



formats, such as sound collages, videos, performances, lectures, or texts. The events taking place as part of the exhibition and in the scope of the supporting program include a molecular listening session with DJ Fred Hystère and Nina Bandi, a golden acupuncture/charming the ghost points with Martina Buzzi, a meditation on pure gold with Gabriel Flückiger, and finally a conversation between Rohit Jain and knowbotiq: Swiss Psychotropic Gold and latent archives. The artist duo makes these different parts of the project available on its website. The (re)presentation of the various aesthetic updates to the investigations and fictionalizing documentations of gold do not convey a causal narration along a direct line of reasoning; rather, a newly assembled image of a postcolonial Switzerland develops that is invisible and remains fragmentary. The materialities of the (re)presentation molecularize the not immediately perceptible Swiss colonialism without colonies; the colonial enmeshment of Switzerland does not hereby disappear into the imperceptible but becomes palpable in material traces. In the following, I would like to reflect on and theorize over this molecular fabulation in terms of its context.

Molecular fabulation

10460 — 10535

With “fabulation,” knowbotiq affirms a mode of speaking that is discredited and suppressed in the universal structure of reason; however, it is rendered visible by feminist, postcolonial, and queer theories as an epistemologically critical practice. By calling their technique “molecular fabulation,” knowbotiq links the aesthetic technique of narration with critical reflections on and analyses of political occurrences.

The American literary critic and historian Robert Scholes described the concept of fabulation as an experimental literary form that distances itself from realism and in which the poetic discourse and historical facts converge. “Reality is too subtle for realism to catch it. It cannot be transcribed directly. But by invention, by fabulation, we may open toward a reality that will come as close to it as human ingenuity may come.” More recently, Donna Haraway helped draw renewed attention to fabulation. In her book *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, she characterizes the narrative style as “multispecies storytelling” and compares this with games of string figures. Haraway looks for “real stories that are also speculative fabulations and speculative realisms. ... SF is a sign for science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact, and also, string figures. Playing games of string figures is about giving and receiving patterns, dropping threads and failing but sometimes finding something that works, ...”

Molecular as the adjectival modifier of fabulation, on the other hand, brings about a conceptual connection to the considerations of Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik that developed in conversations with social activists, party representatives, or intellectuals during their journey through

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Brazil after two decades of military dictatorship and in a time of incipient micropolitical vitality. The “molecular revolution” is characterized by a resistant process of permanent differentiation/singularization. Whereas Guattari and Rolnik speak of a molecular “revolution,” at the same time Guattari establishes: “[W]e have to stop thinking about the relation between autonomy and large-scale social struggles in terms of a dualist logic... in any case, the political dimension drifts toward a micropolitical and analytic dimension.” For him, the molecular revolution is not a “slogan or a program, it’s something that I feel, that I live, in meetings, in institutions, in affects, and also through some reflections.” For “the enemy is to be found not only in the dominant imperialisms, but also in our own allies, in ourselves, in this insistent re-embodiment of the dominant models not only in the most dearly loved political parties or in the leaders who defend us in the best possible way, but also in our own attitudes, on the most diverse occasions.”

As is known, this reflection on the molecular corresponds with the considerations that Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari differentiated in *A Thousand Plateaus*. According to the authors, “[e]very society, and every individual, are thus plied by both segmentarities simultaneously: one molar, the other molecular.” These segmentarities do not have “the same relations or the same nature or even the same type of multiplicity,” yet they cannot be separated from one another. “[T]hey coexist, cross over into each other” and “are always in presupposition. In short, everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics.”

With these literary-poetic and philosophical-political references, molecular fabulation does not communicate aesthetic as an isolated sphere, but as a practice that traverses numerous fields of knowledge and thus involves “ethico-political implications” and calls for “responsibility of the creative instance with regard to the thing created.” Such responsibility becomes discernible in knowbotiq’s specific methods and forms of presentation, in queer-feminist, postcolonial, as well as micropolitical theory-practice: project realization develops in participative processes of heterogenous media-based assemblages that do not solely incorporate objects, but also artists and people engaged in the cultural sector. The latter do not present themselves as legitimizing voices that embody the media productions of the participants, but instead, like the other material actants, fabulation, like in a string figure game “hand upon hand, digit upon digit, attachment site upon attachment site, ...” This practice of knowledge does not subordinate itself either to the binary distribution/division of art and science or to that of subject and object, but rather develops sensory-micropolitical practices and material-affective structures of thinking and doing in the macropolitically organized apparatus of knowledge.

My reading of aesthetic formulations and verbal observations on the range of topics concerning gold introduced in the following, as well as other contributions in the present publication, take up the threads that are

presented, communicate the aesthetic-epistemic, knowledge-policy-related dimension of molecular fabulation, not for the purpose of revealing a narration that has purportedly been written down or lending the heterogeneous material legible visibility, but instead to generate further attachment sites.

... *The Swiss*

10537 — 10656

Psychotropic Gold Refining

knowbotiq describes its investigations into gold with the words: “The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining fabulates about commodity trading and the refining of gold. Narratives on violence, on access to black bodies, on derivative enrichment, on psychotropic energies, and on reciprocal debts molecularize on the shiny, gently protective metal. Calvinist gold is never shown (publicly). It undergoes continuous cycles of purification and refinement, processes of repeated melting (jewelry)—thus all of this also makes it a suitable means of erasing or anonymizing any traces of violence and holding the ‘healing’ of post/colonial amnesia in abeyance.”

Despite all of knowbotiq’s analytical and historical interest in gold, the installation does not exhaust itself in elucidating gold’s value-added chain in connection with Switzerland, even though this is an important aspect. The projects of The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining draw attention to the participating bodies, to the violence inherent in gold trading, and links the toxic aspects that are inscribed, for instance, in the video The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining with the affecting, libidinous power of gold, which permeates everything, is molecular, and poses questions about desire: “We were increasingly interested in dispersed gold, in the desire and libido for gold, the affect from gold, and gold as a drug.”

Gold communicates itself as a pharmakon, that is, as poison and remedy all at once, in the project’s various forms of articulation by knowbotiq’s methods and forms of presentation themselves becoming pharmaceutical: The affecting power of the fragmented, assembled, ornamental material, which closes in on us in the videos and sound works in particular but likewise in the pattern-like repetitions in dynamic rhythmizations and engage us immersively, interlocks critically distanced evaluation/passing judgement and affirmative-emotional identification. Gold takes effect in its affective, material, sensory, and cultural aspects as we also encounter them in everyday life. Such as when the walls of massage and beauty treatment spaces are painted gold, the golden Lindt rabbit convinces us of its premium and rich cocoa content, Viagra Gold contributes “to the natural reaction of the male body to sexual stimulation,” or the Gold Card promises to be more than just a mere credit card and delights “demanding customers” with numerous “value-added services” and presents those “who want more” with the prospect of “golden days.” Accordingly, the acupuncture treatments and meditation workshops in the exhibition are not designed

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to be ironically distancing, but instead provide space for the longing for healing and purity. The investigations into gold become effective, like the pharmakon, in a dichotomous way. Plato had attempted to master the dichotomy “by asserting its definition into simple, clear-cut oppositions: good and evil, inside and outside, true and false, essence and appearance.” knowbotiq does not follow this resolution of the dichotomous; on the contrary, the exhibition The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining: ‘What is your mission?’ is pervaded by contradictions: the golden acupuncture needle in someone’s arm as the unblocking of the energy flows of traumatic experiences is overlain by the intravenous consumption of heroin and its ability to produce psychotropic effects ^{Fig. 3}. The decorative plastic atomizers with simulated wood grain make reference to the olfactory benefit of essential oils, yet they are filled with minute constituents of henbane, whose neurotoxic effect in higher doses engenders ecstatic projections of stored away experiences. In molecular fabulation, the quasi-alchemistic quest for the “maximum purity” of gold manifests in its pharmaceutical dimension. Fabulation molecularizes body and mine—quotes from theories become suggestive beats in the videos and sound works. “The techno-libidinous body today has become a molecular body through which substances, desires, and affects enter and disperse” writes the author collective Bandi, Jain, and knowbotiq. In Molecular fabulation, gold does not become an “object” that can be examined in an analytical or historicizing way; it proves to be a psychotropic substance. Molecular fabulation is a risky undertaking; it engages in criticism without any guarantee for success. It works with the

Fig. 95: knowbotiq, The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refinery – what is your mission?, Corner College, 10.09.–08.10.2017, Zurich, installation view, wallpaper.



voids in (western European) archives—the missing voices of the nonrepresented and the oppressed and the resulting impossibility to tell their story. The molecular fabulation of *The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining* does not follow the rules of judgmental, accusatory criticism; instead, criticism becomes a practice, a critical fabulation as put forward by Saidiya Hartman. Hartman, who concerns herself with Afro-American literature and history and like Scholes explains the traditional distinction between fiction and history as the separation of the representation of the factual and the representation of the imaginable as untenable, attempts to encounter the limits of archives by means of critical fabulation. Unlike Scholes, she does not assume to be able to actually grasp reality. Rather, by writing a story about two young female slaves who were killed, she attempts to enact the impossibility of restoring the lives of the enslaved.

Taking up Hartman's considerations, knowbotiq sees the technique of fabulation as another way of dealing with institutionalized archives and the history of knowledge: "What is fixed in the archives, according to her [Hartman], is mostly a paternalistic white view on what has happened. We have to affect what's inside the archive, what is not explicit in them but can be found between the lines, if you have another gaze on it, another sensitivity. What is written is mostly written by white male people, but there are other histories, and we have to find them by means of critical fabulation." The molecular fabulation of *The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining* takes place as a practice of criticism in perceiving, experiencing, and thinking with materialities, in collaborations, in relationships, and in responsibilities. This critically fabulating practice does not pass judgement "on" anything from the standpoint of a sovereign subject; rather, it is performative through its work on perception and through materialities. It enables participation that is more than humane, since it is not primarily about the participative share of the recipients, but likewise about the performance of the materialities, the things, the sounds, the rhythms, or the meanings of the media assemblage. As a result, molecular fabulation communicates itself as relational, partial, and pharmaceutical. It speaks of the uncircumventable limitation of any narration, and reflects on the problematic nature of (micropolitical) narration, of producing new (even macropolitically effective) connections and what is nonsayable/nonvisible.

- 1 (Online: <https://www.suissegold.ch/en/product/argor-heraeus-10-gram-multigram-gold-bar> [accessed September 8, 2019]).
- 2 According to Allan Kaprow, visitors in an environment are part of the installation and are invited to "recreate and continue the work's inherent processes." Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings* (New York: Harry N. Abrams 1966), 184.
- 3 Corner College, Zurich, September 10–October 8, 2017. (online: <https://corner-college.com/Kollaborateure/600> [accessed May 3, 2019]).
- 4 Cf. Postkoloniale Schweiz: Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien, edited by Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi, and Francesca Falk (Bielefeld: transcript 2012).
- 5 Marc Siegel, "Gossip ist fabelhaft: Queere Gegenöffentlichkeiten und 'Fabulation,'" *Texte zur Kunst* 61 (2006), Gossip, 68–79.

- 6 Robert Scholes, *Fabulation and Metafiction* (1979) quoted in Richard T. Gray, *Ghostwriting: W. G. Sebald's Poetics of History*, *New Directions in German Studies* 20 (London and New York: Bloomsbury 2017), 242.
- 7 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press 2016), 10.
- 8 In *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, the authors write: "The attempt at social control on a world scale through the production of subjectivity clashes with considerable factors of resistance from processes of permanent differentiation that I would call 'molecular revolution'" Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, translated by arel Clapshow and Brian Holmes, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2007), 61. The book is a kind of travelogue that is based on audio recordings. While some passages include the names of the authors, others do not, which underscores the collective-collaborative thought process.
- 9 Ibid., 428.
- 10 Ibid., 457. Guattari and Rolnik do not have their eye on "the" (political) revolution but on "revolutionary microprocesses." These require specific spaces that are contrary to dominant temporalization and do not correspond with the nature of social spaces. Revolutionary microprocesses become effective physically-sensorially. "[A]n individual's relation with music or painting can stimulate a totally new process of perception and sensibility." Ibid., 64.
- 11 Ibid., 65.
- 12 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum International 1987), 235.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, translated by Paula Bains and Julian Pefanis (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press 1995), 107.
- 15 Haraway 2016 (see note 7), 10.
- 16 knowbotiq (Christian Huebler, Yvonne Wilhelm) (online: <http://knowbotiq.net/psygold/> [accessed April 29, 2019]).
- 17 Besides China, the United States, and Germany, as a result of bullion trading Switzerland is a key player in global trade. Four of the largest refineries in the world are located in Switzerland. Christian Huebler points out that in its pivotal position in the bullion trade, Switzerland does not have to declare the country of origin of the gold to be refined. "[W]hether it is blood gold, from which mines, whether there is child labor involved, whether, at the time, it was South African apartheid gold." Interview with knowbotiq (Yvonne Wilhelm & Christian Huebler) by Dimitrina Sevova and Alan Roth, in the context of their exhibition at Corner College, *The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining – what is your mission?*, September 10–October 8, 2017 (unpublished manuscript), 1–10, esp. 4.
- 18 The extraction of gold is associated with numerous destructive factors. Forests are decimated, a tremendous amount of water consumption is required, highly toxic cyanides are used for leaching that enter hydrological cycles, indigenous peoples are robbed of their living environment, human rights are violated in a large number of mines with the result that inhumane working conditions and child labor belong to the order of the day.
- 19 On this, see Yvonne Volkart's contribution "Mobilizing and Invoking: knowbotiq's Video *Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining* as a Gold-Evocation Machine" in the present volume.
- 20 Huebler, in Interview with knowbotiq 2017 (see note 17), 5.
- 21 <https://365-pharm.com/de/viagra-gold> [accessed May 3, 2019].
- 22 Random quotes from different websites after entering the search string "gold card" on Google.
- 23 Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1981), 103.
- 24 Nina Bandi, Rohit Jain, knowbotiq (Christian Huebler, Yvonne Wilhelm), "Swiss Psychotropic Gold – A Critical Fabulation," *A*Magazine: *Art *Africa *Analysis* (June 2017), 30.
- 25 On this, see Isabell Lorey, "Critique and Category: On the Restriction of Political Practice through Recent Theorems of Intersectionality, Interdependence and Critical Whiteness Studies (October 2008), (online: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/lorey/en.html> [accessed September 15, 2019]).
- 26 Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (2008), 1–14.
- 27 "I longed to write a new story, one unfettered by the constraints of the legal documents and exceeding the restatement and transpositions, which comprised my strategy for disordering and transgressing the protocols of the archive and the authority of its statements and which enabled me to augment and intensify its fictions." Ibid., 9.
- 28 Saidiya Hartman states: "The intention here isn't anything as miraculous as recovering the lives of the enslaved or redeeming the dead, but rather laboring to paint as full a picture of the lives of the captives as possible. This double gesture can be described as straining against the limits of the archive to write a cultural history of the captive, and, at the same time, enacting the impossibility of representing the lives of the captives precisely through the process of narration." Ibid., 11.
- 29 Wilhelm, in Interview with knowbotiq 2017 (see note 17), 8.

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Anna Frei,
Nina Bandi

10711 — 10800

Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining – a Molecular Listening Session

Live-listening performance within the exhibition "The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining – what is your mission?"

by knowbotiq
10.09.2017,

Corner College, Zurich

Live recording:

38 MIN 2 SEC

Texts by:

Nina Bandi

Mixing & editing:

Anna Frei,

fred hystère

Voices:

Sally Schonfeldt,

Emre Sarigöl

With quotes by:

Karen Barad,

Gloria Wekker,

Michael Taussig

and many others

SD

Gold, quantum physics and sweeping the batea. Go and see, look for it, search for it, listen carefully to what you can sense, trace; smell it, taste it, touch it; ... in the public space, in the aesthetic undergrounds, in the materialities, in the dust, the smoke, the shining that surround us.

Christoph Schenker

Draft

When we speak of contemporary public art, we mean art that deals with public issues—or art that turns things into matters of public interest. It initiates or contributes to public debates. The context of contemporary public art is public spheres, i.e. the field of public, antagonistic discourses, of shaping public opinion and criticism. Public debates take place in public media, but also in courtrooms, in neighborhood centres and communities, in expert committees, in the field of art or on the street.

The cultural and political contexts of the global present contain the diverse conditions and characteristics of the public sphere. Moreover, public art has different traditions, forms and functions in these different social and economic contexts. The project *Draft* endeavours to foster intercultural exchange about contemporary public art and to raise awareness of its concepts and local practices. At the conferences in Mumbai in 2015, and in 2016 in Zurich, participants discussed their artistic practices, with their specific ethics and epistemologies, as well as the tactics, roles and effects of art. By doing this, discussions also addressed pressing social issues.

The following interdisciplinary collaboratives and individuals were involved, in most cases the collaboratives were formed specifically for *Draft*: from Mexico City, the artist group Teatro Ojo (Héctor Bourges Valles, Laura Furlan Magaril, Karla Rodríguez Lira and Patricio Villarreal Ávila), art historian Helena Chávez Mac Gregor and curator Cuauhtémoc Medina (MUAC); from Mumbai, the artist group CAMP (Zinnia Ambapardiwala, Shaina Anand, Simpreet Singh and Ashok Sukumaran), urbanists Rupali Gupte and Prasad Shetty, as well as curator and writer Gitanjali Dang (Khanabadosh); from

Christoph Schenk	Draft	10801 — 10944			Christoph Schenk	Draft	10801 — 10944
Saint Petersburg, the artist collective Chto Delat (Tsaplya Olga Egorova, Nikolay Oleynikov and Dmitry Vilensky); from Zurich, the artist team knowbotiq (Christian Hübler and Yvonne Wilhelm), anthropologist and activist Rohit Jain, philosopher Nina Bandi and art theorist Christoph Schenker (IFCAR); from Cape Town, curator Riason Naidoo, political theorist Richard Pithouse, artist Gabrielle Goliath, and choreographer and curator Jay Pather; from Hong Kong, artist Samson Young, musicologist Giorgio Bianco-rosso, as well as curators Cosmin Costinas and Qiny Lim (both Para Site); from Beijing, filmmaker and artist Ju Anqi, gallery owner Xu Peili, media artist Iris Long and curator Li Zhenhua; from Hamburg, artists Alice Peragine and Christoph Schäfer, curator Sophie Goltz (the city of Hamburg curator), and political scientist Abimbola Odugbesan for Silent University Hamburg; and from Cairo, artists Jasmina Metwaly and Philip Rizk, political scientist Alia Mossallam and curators Jens Maier-Rothe and Sarah Rifky (both representing Beirut, an art initiative and exhibition space in Cairo). Gitanjali Dang and Christoph Schenker were responsible for the overall concept of <i>Draft</i> .			10891	10936	installation by knowbotiq under the title <i>delinking commodity trading</i> , which was presented at the second <i>Draft</i> conference on 28 July 2016 in Zurich. In June 2017, on the occasion of the 7th European Conference on African Studies Basel, an adaption of the project was presented as <i>decanonizing the university</i> , a performance on the façade of the main building of the University of Basel. Another manifestation was presented at the Corner College in Zurich in September 2017 under the title <i>Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining – what is your mission?</i>		
			10895	10940			
			10900	10945			
			10905	10950			
At the inaugural conference in Mumbai, all collaborators presented their artistic, curatorial or scientific positions and practices, as well as their contexts. Cultural theorist and poet Ranjit Hoskote from Mumbai and legal scholar Lawrence Liang from Bangalore participated as commentators. Between the first and second conference, each of the interdisciplinary collaboratives conceptualised and realised a project that referred to the local, specific situation. These projects were then presented and discussed at the second conference in Zurich. Commentators included anthropologist Anila Daulatzai from Oakland and Providence, who conducts research in Afghanistan and Pakistan; anthropologist and archaeologist Uzma Z. Rizvi, who works in Brooklyn and Sharjah; media and cultural theorist Nils Röllner from Zurich; and artist and writer Zheng Bo from Hong Kong.			10910	10955			
			10915	10960			
The projects and conferences explored practices and identified aspects of public spheres beyond what we commonly understand by institutional critique, site-specificity, intervention and activism, participatory art, community-based art, socially engaged art, and artistic critique of urbanism. It stood to reason to work in interdisciplinary collaboratives and to conceive individual projects not as specific <i>artistic</i> projects. Importance was attached to rendering visible the specifics of each project and to working out their differences, that is, to preserving complexity, diversity and antagonism.			10920	10965			
			10925	10970			
			10930	10975			
In this context, the Zurich collaborative conceptualised and implemented <i>Swiss Psychotropic Gold</i> , a project now presented in this publication. The project's starting point and background are a critical examination of Switzerland's commodity trade in the global postcolonial context and its latency in the Swiss public sphere. Its first manifestation was a performative			10935	10980			

Contributors

10981	11026	Adji Dieye is an Italo Senegalese artist born in Milan in 1991. She graduated in New Technologies for Art at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera in Milan and is now a Master's degree student in Fine Arts at the ZHDK, Zurich University of the Arts. Adji Dieye's artistic practice pushes the boundaries of the photographic means in an attempt to investigate the archetypes that constitute the West African visual cultures. Her research delves into the relationship between advertisement and photography, between propaganda and the construction of precarious national identities, while presenting the political paradox of images.
10985	11030	
10990	11035	Angela Anderson is an artist and filmmaker working at the intersection of philosophy, ecology, economics, migration, media and feminist & queer theory. Central to her work is an awareness of the intimate connection between media production, memory and apprehension, and the potential of audio-visual media to open up new lines of flight. Her work includes the audio-visual research project Three (or more) Ecologies: A Feminist Articulation of Eco-Intersectionality – Part I: For the World to Live, Patriarchy Must Die (2019), and collaborative works with Angela Melitopoulos from 2013 to 2017, including Unearthing Disaster (2015).
10995	11040	Nina Bandi is a political philosopher who is interested in the overlapping of speculative thought, artistic practices, and the political. Based in Zurich and Vienna, she works on questions of non-/representation and the relation between bodies, technology, and materiality from a feminist and postcolonial perspective. From 2015-2019, she was part of the research project 'What Can Art Do' at Lucerne School of Art and Design. Publications include 'Kunst, Krise, Subversion. Zur Politik der Ästhetik' (transcript 2012) as well as 'What Can Art Do. Zur gesellschaftlichen Relevanz von politisch engagierter Kunst' (forthcoming in Diaphanes 2020).
11000	11045	Dr. Elke Bippus, is Professor of Art Theory and Art History at Zurich University of Arts since 2006. Her research interests include modern and contemporary art, image and representational theory, performativity, artistic production techniques and procedures, art as epistemic practice, politics and aesthetics. Her current research project is Participatory Critique as Transforming and Transversal "With" as part of the DFG/SNF Research Group Media and Participation: Between Demand and Entitlement. Further information: http://people.zhdk.ch/elke.bippus/index.html
11005	11050	Yolanda Ariadne Collins is a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin. She holds a doctorate in Environmental Sciences and Policy from Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. Her research explores climate change governance policies, especially in relation to the historical and cultural uses of forests in the Guianas. Her work is particularly attuned to the legacy of the colonial encounter, often identifying and interrogating connections between this historical experience and market methods for effecting behaviour change around forest use.
11010	11055	Gitanjali Dang is a shape-shifter who every so often takes the shape of a curator and writer. In 2012, she founded Khanabadosh. An itinerant arts lab, Khanabadosh lives off latitude, magic and agnosticism, and is interested in everything. It is particularly interested in constantly rethinking what it—and everything around it—is about. In 2015, Khanabadosh, in collaboration with the Institute for Contemporary Art Research (IFCAR) at ZHdK, co-founded Draft, which explores contemporary art that produces, contributes to or provokes public debate. Gitanjali lives and loves in Mumbai and wherever else this living, and loving might take her.
11015	11060	Anna Frei is a sound artist, sonic community organizer, collaborator, sonic researcher, recordstore co-operator, graphic designer and experimental/essayistic DJ (aka Fred Hystère). For more than 10 years s*he organizes concerts, experimental audio formats and collaborates on listening performances and collective listening settings. S*he works as a freelance graphic designer focusing on sound related projects and art books and gives weekly risography-print-workshops. S*he focuses on queer/feminist, decolonial practices and questions of socio-political and solidary practices of listening. S*he is co-founder of OOR Records/OOR Saloon in Zurich.
11020	11065	
11025	11070	

<p>Ayesha Hameed's moving image, performance and written work explore contemporary borders and migration, and visual cultures of the Black Atlantic. Her projects Black Atlantis and A Rough History (of the destruction of fingerprints) have been performed and exhibited internationally. She is the co-editor of Futures and Fictions (Repeater 2017), which was nominated for a 2018 International Center of Photography's Infinity Award in the Critical Writing and Research category. She is currently the Programme Leader for the MA in Contemporary Art Theory in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University of London.</p>	11071	11116	<p>Gerald Raunig works at the eipcp (European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies) as one of the editors of the multilingual publishing platform transversal texts, and at the Zürcher Hochschule der Künste as professor for philosophy. Recent books in English: A Thousand Machines, 2010; Factories of Knowledge, Industries of Creativity, 2013; DIVIDUUM. Machinic Capitalism and Molecular Revolution, Vol.1, 2016; all translated by Aileen Derieg, published in New York/Los Angeles: Semiotext(e)/MIT Press.</p>
<p>Rohit Jain is a social anthropologist, artistic researcher and anti-racism activist based in Bern. His aim has been to understand how postcolonial public spaces can be affected in order to critically negotiate histories of violence and new beginnings. He has done academic research on the entanglements of racism, anti-political correctness and humor in TV comedy as well as on the transnational politics of representation of second generation Indians in the context of decentralized capitalism. Further, he has been engaged in collaborative artistic projects (Swiss Psychotropic Gold and others) and in activist interventions by Berner Rassismusstamm-tisch and Institute New Switzerland INES.</p>	11075	11120	<p>Jordy Rosenberg is the author of Confessions of the Fox, a New York Times Editor's Choice selection, named one of the best books of 2018 by The New Yorker and many other outlets, a finalist for the Center for Fiction First Novel Prize, a Lambda Literary Award, and a Publishing Triangle Award. Jordy is also the author of Critical Enthusiasm: Capital Accumulation and the Transformation of Religion Passion (Oxford UP: 2011), as well as numerous articles and edited special journal issues. Jordy is a professor of 18th-Century Literature, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Critical Theory at The University of Massachusetts-Amherst.</p>
<p>knowbotiq (Yvonne Wilhelm, Christian Huebler) has been experimenting with forms and medialities of knowledge, political representations and epistemic disobedience. In recent projects they are investigating and enacting political landscapes and inhuman geographies with the focus on algorithmic governmentalities, libidinous and affective economies and postcolonial violence. In various installations, interventions and performative settings knowbotiq explores molecular, psychotrope and derivative aesthetics. knowbotiq is currently doing research on translocal latent knowledges at the Institute for Contemporary Art Research and are professors in the MA in Fine Arts at Zurich University of the Arts. More infos: knowbotiq.net</p>	11080	11125	<p>Christoph Schenker is Professor ZFH of Philosophy of Art and Contemporary Art at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK). Since 2005, he has been head of the newly founded Institute for Contemporary Art Research (IFCAR), part of the university's Department of Fine Arts. His main research fields are artistic research as well as art and the public sphere. Together with Gitanjali Dang he initiated and conducts Draft, a research project on contemporary public art with nine interdisciplinary collaboratives in Beijing, Cairo, Cape Town, Hamburg, Hong Kong, Mexico City, Mumbai, Petersburg and Zurich.</p>
<p>Fundación Mareia / Mareia Foundation is a women collectivity of artists/humanists who work with participative research-action with a focus on ethnic, gender, environmental and sonic-embodiment. It is art as a vehicle of social transformation, for a revitalization of ancestral practices/knowledges through ethnoeducative methodologies, emancipatory and of holistic healing that empower the resilience and dignity of the Colombian Pacific. Email: fundacion.mareia@gmail.com</p>	11085	11130	<p>Jakob Tanner held a full professorship for Contemporary History at the Research Institute for Social- and Economic History at Zurich University from 1997 to 2015. He published widely on the history of Switzerland. His main fields of interest are Social and Economic History of Europe, History of Knowledge, Body history, Social history of nutrition and medicine. Among his latest publications are articles on the history of cybernetics (in relation to psychosomatic medicine), drugs and social movements. Email: jtanner@hist.uzh.ch, Web: https://www.fsw.uzh.ch/de/personenaz/tanner.html</p>
<p>Angela Melitopoulos is an artist based in Berlin who has been making experimental video-essays, installations, documentaries and sound pieces since 1985. She studied at the Art Academy in Düsseldorf with Nam June Paik and holds a Ph.D. in Visual Cultures from Goldsmiths University in London. She is a professor in the Media School of the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen. Melitopoulos' work focuses on mnemopolitics, time, geography and collective memory in relation to electronic/digital media and documentation. Her videos and installations have been shown in many international festivals, exhibitions and museums. Her recent project Crossings was shown at Documenta 14 in Kassel.</p>	11090	11135	<p>Ira Terzol jr. is a biological [know]bot with a fluid identity. Writing, translating, knotting, reading, weaving, knitting, thinking since the eighties, without paying attention to money, success, career, prestige, avoids academic hollow talk and tries the poetic. Loves.</p>
<p>Margarida Mendes's research explores the overlap between cybernetics, ecology and experimental film, investigating the dynamic transformations of the environment and its impact on societal structures and cultural production. She curates across the world and is a consultant of environmental NGOs working on marine policy and deep sea mining. Margarida is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Research Architecture, Goldsmiths University of London with the project "Deep Sea Imaginings" and is a frequent collaborator of the online channel for exploratory video and documentary reporting Inhabitants.</p>	11095	11140	<p>Füsun Türetken is Professor at the HfG, Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung Karlsruhe, (Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design). Füsun applies a teaching methodology across disciplines and scales. She runs Studio ft., a platform that hacks into contemporary conditions of institutions by supporting collaborative work. Her PhD at Goldsmiths titled 'On the Most Powerful Catalyst on the Planet' provided a reading of conflict and capital through matter, more precisely metal. Füsun was a fellow at the Het Nieuwe Instituut (HNI) in 2016/17. She is a part of the extended research network of 'Forensic Architecture'.</p>
<p>Johannes Paul Raether lives and works in Berlin. His constructed identities (Avatars, AlterIdentities, SelfSisters) emerge in public and corporate spaces where they research, teach, and tell stories. As colorful beings, made up from everyday objects, they discuss complex topics such as biotechnology and reproduction industries, globalized tourism or occult substances in contemporary technology. His works and performances have been shown at the 9th Berlin Biennial, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, Friedericianum, Kassel, and Transmediale 2017, Berlin. Raether is Professor at Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nuremberg.</p>	11100	11145	<p>Yvonne Volkart is a lecturer in art and media theory at ZHdK and the Academy of Art and Design FHNW Basel where she led the Swiss National Science Foundation research project Ecodata—Eco-media—Ecoesthetics. The Role and Significance of New Media, Technologies and Technoscientific Methods in the Arts for the Perception and Awareness of the Ecological (2017–20). With Sabine Himmelsbach and Karin Ohlenschläger, she curated the exhibition and book project Eco-Visionaries. Art, Architecture and New Media After the Anthropocene. Completed research projects include: Times of Waste (2015–2018).</p>
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	11110	11155	
	11115	11160	

Exhibitions, Performances, Conferences

11161	11206	Exhibitions, Performances of Swiss Psychotropic Gold	Conference presentations of Swiss Psychotropic Gold
		2020	2020
11165	11210	Swiss Psychotropic Gold in: – une Suisse EXOTIQUE. Une Histoire Globale des Lumières Palais de Rumine, Lausanne September 2020	Architecture and Naturing Affairs ETH Zurich, Jan 2020
		Swiss Psychotropic Gold – molecular fabulations Pax Art Award, HeK Basel, March – May 2020	2018
11170	11215	2019 Swiss Psychotropic Gold – abstract sex and molecular joy Centre Culturel Suisse Paris, December 12, 2019 Performance with Gabriel Flückiger (meditation on pure gold) and a hygienic humidifier	Conference on New Materialisms Utrecht University, June 2018
		2017	2017
11175	11220	The Swiss Psychotropic Gold Refining – what is your mission? different performative settings and healings of post-/colonial amnesia Corner College Zurich, September 10 – October 8, 2017	Translating Pasts into Futures. Dekoloniale Perspektiven auf Dinge in Kunst, Design & Film HFBK Hamburg, May 2017
11180	11225	Curated by: Dimitrina Sevova and Alan Roth knowbotiq with Anna Frei / fred hystère and Nina Bandi (molecular listening session) Martina Buzzi (golden acupuncture/charming the ghost points) Gabriel Flückiger (meditation on pure gold) Workshop: trans-shine with Gabriel Flückiger Talk by: Rohit Jain and knowbotiq on Swiss Psychotropic Gold and latent archives	Swiss Psychotropic Gold Valand Academy Gothenburg, January 2017
11185	11230	Swiss Psychotropic Gold – decanonizing the university performative intervention at the 7th European Conference on African Studies at Kollegienhaus, University of Basel, June 29–30, 2017	2016
11190	11235	Curated by: Kadiatou Diallo as part of: A Piece of Street knowbotiq with Martina Buzzi (golden acupuncture) Gabriel Flückiger (meditation on pure gold) Swiss Psychotropic Gold – delinking commodity trading performative installation Draft, The Zurich conference Office Building, Zurich West, July 28–30, 2016	On the Division of Labour, Work, Knowledge, the Sensible, Spaces and Times Akademie Bildende Kunst, Wien September 2016
11195	11240	A performative installation by: knowbotiq with: Fred Hystère (sound), Tanja Quirici (golden acupuncture), Teresa Vittucci (performance), Alper Yacioglu (viral listening) Support: Nina Bandi and Rohit Jain	
11200	11245		
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Fig. 96 knowbotiq, The Molecular Ghost 2 – A ghost never dies. S/He remains always to come and to come back (2017), transparent foil for windows.

