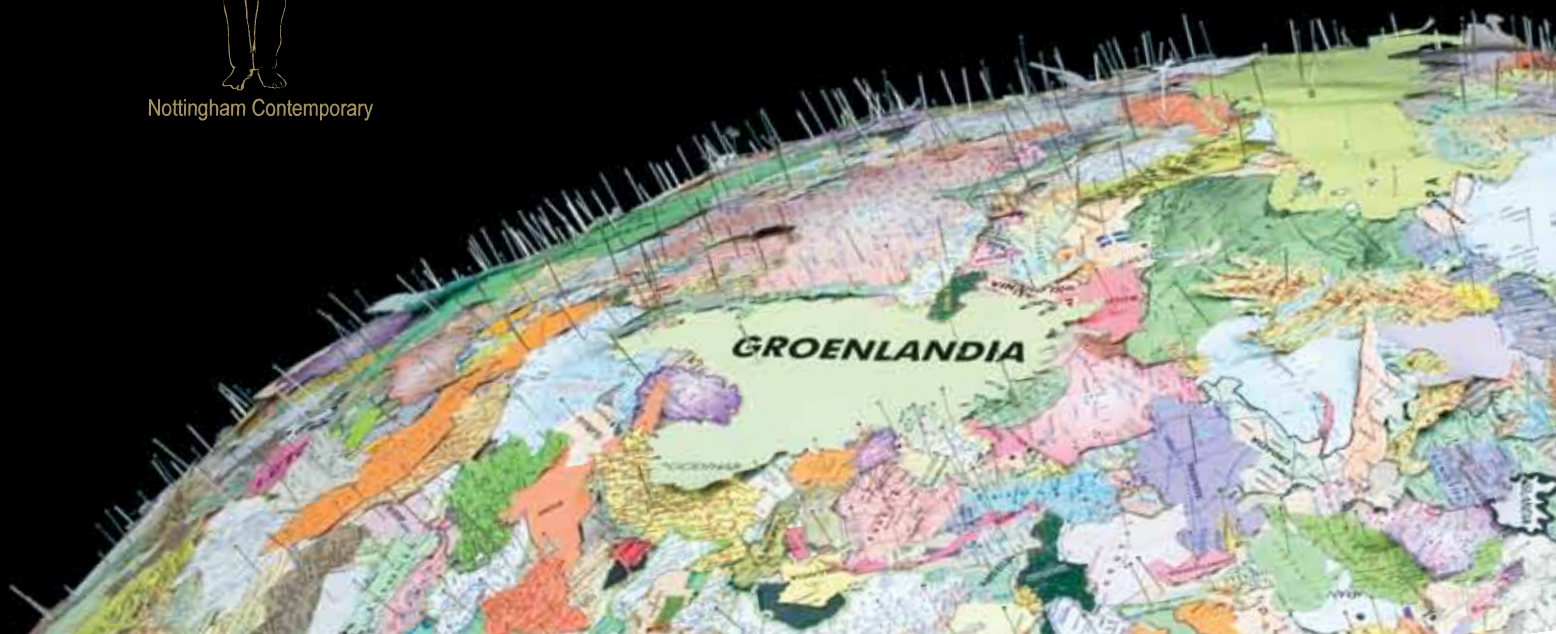


Nottingham
Contemporary

Uneven Geographies



Nottingham Contemporary



Uneven Geographies

Curated by Alex Farquharson
and T.J. Demos

8 May – 4 July 2010

Artists: Eduardo Abaroa
Dario Azzellini and Oliver Ressler
Yto Barrada
Ursula Biemann
Bureau d'Études
Öyvind Fahlström
Goldin+Senneby
Mark Lombardi
Steve McQueen
Cildo Meireles
George Osodi
Bruno Serralongue
Mladen Stilinović
Yang Zhenzhong

Foreword

Uneven Geographies considers ways contemporary art responds to the politics of globalisation through the work of fourteen artists and artist-collectives from twelve countries and five continents. Globalisation is taken to mean the processes by which economic activity around the world becomes increasingly integrated into a single global capitalist market. It is characterised by the increased mobility of money, commodities and people across the frontiers of nation-states. While these movements are as old as human history, what makes globalisation different today is the speed with which these international transactions, distributions and migrations occur. In the past twenty years, globalisation has been accelerated by the integration of the former Soviet bloc and China into the global market; developments in global transportation infrastructures; and the communications and information revolution brought about by the Internet. We see the results of these changes each day in our newspapers, on our computer screens, in many of our work places, and in our shopping baskets.

As the artists in this exhibition reveal, globalisation manifests itself in both unimaginable wealth and unimaginable poverty – the combined wealth of the three richest men in the world equals the combined wealth of the poorest 600 million, an almost *unthinkable* statistic that Mladen Stilinović's devastatingly concise contribution makes more thinkable. The mining of natural resources in brutal conditions by people earning little more than a dollar a day (seen in Steve McQueen's *Gravesend*) is as much a symptom of the globalised economy as the virtual worlds of financial speculation and off-shore tax havens that Goldin+Senneby subversively enact in *Headless*; indeed they are interlinked through networks of suppliers and financiers so elaborate and clandestine that they frustrate comprehension. The centres of power in the new economic world order are multiple and shifting: misery can no longer be ascribed to a single identifiable despot – an imperialist monarch or totalitarian dictator. Instead, it is the anonymous 'headless' market, increasingly beyond the governance of nation-states, which determines people's fate, as the economic meltdown of October 2008 brought home.

The artists in this exhibition work in many media and focus on wide-ranging transnational human, economic and political processes and effects. Some do so on a global level, while others focus on particular geopolitical regions: over half the art works in the exhibition relate either to Latin America (the brutal laboratory of neoliberalism in the 70s and fulcrum of experimental socialist renewal today), or to a vast region of present-day Africa stretching from the Ivory Coast to the shores of the Mediterranean. What the art works have in common is a search for visual and linguistic means to make the obscure and labyrinthine causalities of globalisation more visible and legible, and its human consequences more proximate and affective. This is itself a political endeavour since one of the advantages that economic elites have over their critics is the complexity and opacity of their operations.

Most of the works in the exhibition differ from the ways we are used to seeing world events framed by the news media. In particular, the works in film and photography (Barrada, Biemann, McQueen, Osodi, Serralongue) – media we associate with political journalism – tend to depart from current affairs formats. In doing so they appear to challenge the supposed objectivity of an industry whose focus on spectacular events often causes *dis-identification* with the people represented and occludes the particular and deeper circumstances from which the events in question arise.

In contrast to the news industry, the artists in the exhibition make few claims to objectivity. Typically, they make the language through which they refer to events as evident as the events themselves; this, in turn, brings into visibility the naturalised representational regimes with which the news media constructs its ideologically selective narratives of world events. The techniques

deployed by the artists include experimental cartography, parodic performativity, game-like techniques, and allusions to literary fiction (Joseph Conrad, Federico García Lorca and Sylvia Plath all figure). Through these 'truth games' something of the labyrinth-like nature of capitalist globalisation and its actual human and environmental consequences begins to come into view. Beyond these visualisations of the power relations of global neoliberalism, some of the art works direct our attention to critical alternatives to globalisation-from-above: the swarming digital commons or 'electric democracy' (Bureau d'Etudes); the Zapatistas and the World Social Forum as key movement in the alter-globalisation 'movement of movements' (Serralongue); and Venezuela's Bolivarian Process of worker-run factories and bottom-up systems of urban and rural self-administration (Azzellini and Ressler). Together they begin to suggest that 'another world is possible', to cite the slogan of the WSF.

Uneven Geographies is also the occasion for an ambitious discursive programme of lectures, talks, screenings and a conference, conceived with our Curator of Public Programmes, Rob Blackson, and funded by the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University. Several of the exhibiting artists (Biemann, Osodi, Ressler, Azzellini and Bureau d'Etudes) contributed to the conference, *The Geopolitical Turn: Art and the Contest of Globalisation*, on 8 May 2010. They were joined by Angus Cameron (co-author of *The Imagined Economies of Globalisation*), Sara Motta (School of Politics and International Relations, University of Nottingham), Alfredo Cramerotti (author of *Aesthetic Journalism*), Mark Fisher (author of *Capitalist Realism*) and the curators. The conference was followed by lectures by Saskia Sassen on how new advances in capital are making people landless in the global South; curator and critic Lars Bang Larsen on the visionary work of Öyvind Fahlström; geographer and author of *Global Lives*, Miles Ogborn on 'globalisation before globalisation'; and John Tomlinson, author of *The Culture of Speed* and Professor of Cultural Sociology at NTU, on accelerated life. Biemann and Delhi-based artist Priya Sen will be undertaking residencies in Nottingham, and film screenings include Renzo Martens' *Episode III – Enjoy Poverty* (introduced by the artist), Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis's *The Take*, *The Yes Men Fix the World* and a programme curated by Nottingham collective Annexinema. Much of the public programme will be archived on our website. We regard our exhibitions as the beginning of a public conversation rather than the culmination of a body of research.

Thanks to T.J. Demos, my co-curator, who has contributed a major essay in this digital publication that incisively applies several important theoretical perspectives on globalisation to the artistic positions that comprise this exhibition. Thank you to everyone at Nottingham Contemporary, especially the Exhibitions team, led by Jim Waters, assisted by Fiona Parry, Abi Spinks and Daniella Rose King, who skilfully produced this challenging exhibition and contributed to the writing of the entries on the artists. Finally, our gratitude goes to the artists, of course, together with the lenders (who are thanked elsewhere in this publication) and to Sharon Avery-Fahlström, whose generosity made possible the presentation of major late work by Öyvind Fahlström.

Alex Farquharson
Director

Room 1

Eduardo Abaroa, Yto Barrada, Mark Lombardi,
Goldin + Senneby and Bruno Serralongue



Installation Photography by Andy Keate

Room 2

Ursula Biemann, Eduardo Abaroa, Mladen Stilinović



Installation Photography by Andy Keate

Room 3

Bureau d'Etudes, Yang Zhenzhong, Mark Lombardi
Steve McQueen, George Osodi, Bruno Serralongue



Installation Photography by Andy Keate



Installation Photography by Andy Keate

Room 4

Öyvind Fahlström, Bruno Serralongue, Cildo Meireles, Oliver Ressler
and Dario Azzellini (in the Study)



Installation Photography by Andy Keate



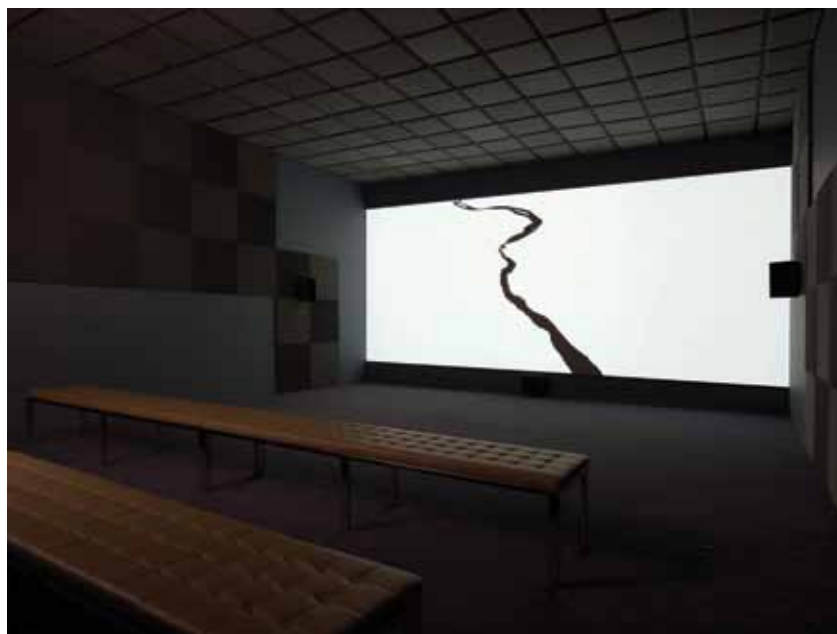
Öyvind Fahlström
Garden - A World Model, 1973
Acrylic and India ink on vinyl, 16 flowerpots, wood dowels and potting soil, dimensions variable
Installation view *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation* at Nottingham Contemporary
Courtesy Sharon Avery-Fahlström, The Öyvind Fahlström Foundation and Archives at Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), ©2010, DACS.
Photo by Andy Keate

Another World, and Another...

Notes on Uneven Geographies

T.J. Demos

What can contemporary art tell us of the geography of capitalism under globalisation? Steve McQueen's *Gravesend*, 2007, which juxtaposes the mining of coltan in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with the scientific processing of the valuable mineral, used in so many computer devices, in Derby, England, offers one striking response. Without explicit commentary, the film's fleeting portrayal of toiling bodies and meditative landscapes not only reveals the disparity between the primitive conditions of manual labour in Africa and the computerised automation of European industry; it also connects the commanding wealth of one part of the world to its dependence on the impoverished environment, mineral resources, and weak state controls in another. Ursula Biemann's *Sahara Chronicle*, 2006-07, and Yto Barrada's *Life Full of Holes—The Strait Project*, 1998-2004, both extend this recognition of economic and social inequality by showing the resulting channels of migration that have proliferated in the deprived areas of sub-Saharan and North Africa. Their photographs and video projects show migrants attempting to escape from underdeveloped regions and areas of political and military conflict, trying against all odds to make their way illegally to Europe via the Spanish enclave of Ceuta or the Canary Islands or across the Strait of Gibraltar. Meanwhile George Osodi's photographic cycle, *Oil Rich Niger Delta*, 2003-07, documents the Nigerian landscape, where the protected infrastructure of a billion-dollar oil industry sits amidst abject poverty, environmental degradation, and lawless militias. As the artist and photojournalist points out, oil accounts for about 95% of the country's export, yet more than 70% of the population lives on less than one dollar a day.¹



Steve McQueen, *Gravesend*, 2007
35 mm film transferred to high definition, 17 minutes 58 seconds
Installation view, *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation* at Nottingham Contemporary.
Courtesy of the Artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London. Photo by Andy Keate

These projects reveal the globalisation of “uneven development,” as capitalism has come to divide the global North from the South, producing and maintaining historically unprecedented relations of social, economic, and political inequality within and between nations worldwide. This reality utterly contradicts the triumphalist version of globalisation that celebrates it as inaugurating a new era of free

¹ Artist's statement, found at: http://www.georgeosodi.co.uk/Artist_statements/Entries/2009/3/11_oil_rich_niger_delta_2003-2007.html (last accessed in November 2009).

markets, social equality, and democratic inclusion—what neo-con journalist Thomas Friedman calls the “flat world” of horizontal, egalitarian consensus². A far more convincing and critical approach to globalisation has emerged in the discourse of geography, with the concept of uneven development first mobilized by scholars such as David Harvey and Neil Smith in the 1980s in relation to the emerging spatial conditions of advanced capitalism. Its relevance and accuracy as an optic of analysis has only increased since then—as demonstrated by many of the works in this exhibition—and we believe the term “uneven geographies” warrants continued use today³, but not without critical consideration and further elaboration.

It was Smith’s text *Uneven Development*, published in 1984, that first systematically analysed the spatial conditions of neoliberal capitalism. Initially conceptualised in Milton Friedman’s Chicago School economics, the resulting policies of deregulated markets, privatisation, and curtailed social spending—the key tenets of neoliberalism—were advanced with devastating results by Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan, Augusto Pinochet, and Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s and 1980s, and subsequently consolidated and expanded worldwide in the 1990s and 2000s⁴. The consequence has been the spread of economic and political inequality across the globe. For Smith, uneven development issues from the dual and contradictory tendencies of capital to simultaneously promote “equalisation” (the harmonisation of levels and conditions of production) and “differentiation” (the accumulation and centralisation of wealth)⁵. Indeed, it is the tension between these two tendencies that has marked neoliberalism, leading to various crises over the course of capitalism’s history, some of the recent outcomes of which are glimpsed in the works by McQueen, Biemann, Barrada, and Osodi.

Of course, this geographical analysis builds on earlier insights of economists and political theorists; as Smith acknowledges, the uneven development of capitalism was first observed in the nineteenth century by Karl Marx, who wrote presciently of the “new and international division of labour”⁶ that “converts one part of the globe into a chiefly agricultural field of production, for supplying the other part which remains a chiefly industrial field,” even while capital “extracts in every sphere of production equality in the conditions of the exploitation of labour.” In other words, Marx saw that expanding and internationalising the division of labour would mean introducing the rule of exploitation worldwide. Such an outcome is clear in the most recent guise of capitalism’s growing divisions between the developed world’s economy of post-industrial services and experiences, and the underdeveloped world’s floundering in cheap labour, environmental degradation, and resource exploitation.

While the circumstances of global economic development are no doubt more complex than this brief account allows, it is clear that “accumulation by dispossession”—to use Harvey’s term, which emphasises the causal and often brutal relations between systems of wealth and poverty⁷—has only intensified as of late. Indeed, one sees its violent manifestations in the military, financial, social, and environmental crises that have become a perverse instrument of what Naomi Klein calls “disaster capitalism”—think of the undemocratic economic reforms initiated during the transitional period of post-Soviet republics in Eastern Europe, or more recently the forced privatisation of Iraq’s oil wealth that was one strategic outcome of Bush’s war. Consider also the property development opportunities exploited in the wake of the tsunami that rocked Thailand, or again, Israel’s burgeoning disaster economy of security technology and services⁸. What each of these diverse contexts shares are the catastrophic conditions that invite emergency measures, making politically viable the introduction of neoliberal economic reforms without democratic accountability and enforced by military repression. As Klein writes, the world is in the grips of a “fundamentalist form of capitalism,” which has “consistently been midwived by the most brutal forms of coercion, inflicted on the collective body politic as well as on countless individual bodies.”⁹

² Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: The Globalized World in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Penguin, 2007).

³ As employed, for instance, by David Harvey in *Spaces of Global Capitalism: Toward a Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006).

⁴ In *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2, David Harvey defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.”

⁵ See Neil Smith, “Toward a Theory of Uneven Development I: The Dialectic of Geographical Differentiation and Equalization,” in *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 132ff.

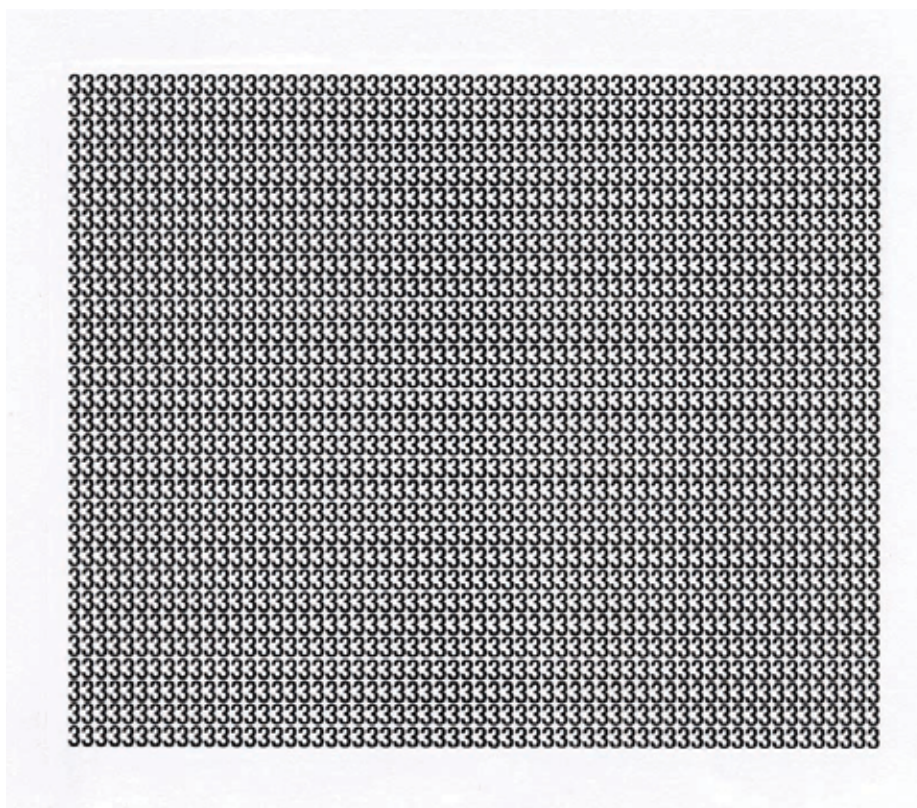
⁶ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (New York, 1955), 13; and Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I (New York, 1967), 451 and 397. Cited in Smith, 150 and 153.

⁷ See David Harvey, “Neo-liberalism and the restoration of class power,” *Spaces of Global Capitalism*, 7-68.

⁸ Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine* (London: Penguin, 2007).

⁹ Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 16.

One contribution that artists in *Uneven Geographies* make to the discourse and politics of uneven development is the recognition of the increasing dominance of *differentiation* over *equalisation* within global capitalism. They variously map the spaces of exception that exist beyond legality; show the dangerous passage of life around the militarised borders between North and South; and portray the impoverished circumstances that persist in the shadow of the energy and mining industries. By doing so, artists like Barrada, Biemann, McQueen, and Osodi give expression to the precarious organisation of life—including mechanisms of survival as well as modes of resistance—amidst fragmented territories divided between legality and lawlessness, security and violence, wealth and poverty. Indeed as Mladen Stilinović's *Nobody Wants to See*, 2009 makes clear with its minimal sculptural materialisation of a horrendous statistic with which we are all more or less familiar yet may not care much to think about, the three richest men in the world now own as much as 600 million of the poorest. With such new extremes of wealth, the early 21st century has come to resemble the empires and dynasties of the nineteenth. Confronting such statistics as these, what recourse do we have in the realm of art?



Mladen Stilinović, *Nobody Wants to See*, 2009
Printed sheets, drawings (detail), dimensions variable
Courtesy of the Artist, Zagreb

One central ambition of *Uneven Geographies* is to assemble artistic practices that re-invent modes of representation that situate us critically and creatively in relation to the uneven developments of globalisation—what Marxist critic Fredric Jameson termed “the whole world system of present-day multinational capitalism.”¹⁰ In the early 1980s, and later in his 1995 book *The Geopolitical Aesthetic*, Jameson observed that the very complexity of advanced capitalism—its global financial landscape, networked communications technologies, transnational legal mechanisms, and spectacularised publicity—had rendered the languages of analysis and description insufficient, that is, inadequate “to think a system so vast that it cannot be encompassed by the natural and historically developed categories of perception with which human beings normally orient themselves.”¹¹ Because global capitalism’s “mechanisms and dynamics are not visible,” and are far from natural or self-evident, they “stand as a fundamental representational problem—indeed, a problem of a historically new and original type.”

¹⁰ Fredric Jameson, “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 37.

¹¹ Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 2 and 4: “It is ultimately always of the social totality itself that it is a question in representation, and never more so than in the present age of a multinational global corporate network.”

To redress this disempowered situation, Jameson called for innovative methods of “cognitive mapping,” which would “enable a situational representation on the part of the subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality, which is the ensemble of society’s structures as a whole.”¹² By doing so, his hope was to regain a conceptual and experiential footing in relation to the *terrain* vague of globalisation, and thereby find critical traction to represent and challenge those systems that exploit their status of economic allusiveness and democratic unaccountability for financial gain and political power.

Answering this call, *Uneven Geographies* gathers an array of models—those that we find most compelling and demanding of critical testing—that variously respond to and creatively intervene in this crisis of representation. One such approach is to perform and materialise the policies and reforms of neoliberalism in order to make them visible and invite their critical consideration, as in Yang Zhenzhong’s *Spring Story*, 2003, a video that depicts factory workers at Siemens Shanghai Mobile Communications Ltd who collectively reconstruct Deng Xiaoping’s famous “Southern Campaign Speech” of the early 1990s. Each of the roughly 1,500 workers is shown reciting a single word or phrase, as the labour force in effect mass produces the historic address that first articulated the communist government’s newfound support for the “special economic zones” and “foreign-funded enterprises,” which became the signal building blocks of what Deng called “socialism with Chinese characteristics.”

In a way, Yang’s contracted-out performance, as well as Stilinovi’s critical materialisation of neoliberal sociological facts, resonate with Cildo Meireles’s *Insertions into Ideological Circuits*, 1970—one of the historical precedents included in the exhibition. Printing the phrase “Yankees Go Home” in white ink on recycled Coca-Cola bottles (so that the message would only appear when the bottles were refilled), and stamping the name of a murdered journalist on paper money between 1970 and 1976 (“Quem matou Herzog?”, or “Who killed [Vladimir] Herzog?”), which he then put back into circulation, the Brazilian artist injected his subversive interventions into the exchange of consumer items and currency during the years of the brutal dictatorship. He did so to protest imperialism and military repression alike, which were part of the early phase of the neoliberal market and political reforms in Latin America of the 1970s.



Cildo Meireles, *Insertions into Ideological Circuits 2: Banknote Project*, 1970

Ink on bank note, dimensions variable

Tate: Presented by the Artist 2006, accessioned 2008

For his part, Yang Zhenzhong draws out a similarly subversive acknowledgement of neoliberal philosophy from the factory floor, as the video’s simultaneous erasure and instrumentalisation of individuality contradict the claims of collective empowerment in Deng’s speech, which pays mere lip service to his communist forbearers: “the essence of socialism is the liberation and development of the productive forces, the elimination of exploitation and polarization, and the ultimate achievement of

¹² Jameson, “The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,” 51.

prosperity for all.”¹³ Yet Deng’s reforms, as historian Hui Wang argues, have worked directly against those socialist principles by leading to rising unemployment and declining social security, and to the cheap labour conditions that have attracted such multinational corporations as Siemens to set up shop in Shenzhen, outside Shanghai.¹⁴ Once a mere village, Shenzhen is now a city of 20 million, and with its cheap and plentiful workforce it has attracted the German manufacturer, which, with a global revenue over 76 billion Euros, employs over 400,000 people in 190 countries.

Another approach that provides a direct response to the imperative to invent a new language to chart the operations of globalisation is the experimental cartographic practice of Bureau d’Etudes. The French collective designs cybernetic flow charts in order to digitally map the workings and inter-connections of world government and global capital, drawing information from diverse sources, such as think tanks, weapon makers, and satellite companies. When included in art exhibitions (one of many sites of exchange for the group’s activities), their diagrams are often enlarged and presented on walls, as well as condensed into freely available take-home posters. For critic and occasional collaborator Brian Holmes, Bureau d’Etudes contributes to the recent movement of autonomous, self-organised knowledge production, building new forms of resistance by mobilising counter-information and imagining a radically different kind of map of the world, one that the artists call “a thinking map, but also a willing map and a feeling map.”¹⁵

As well, *Uneven Geographies* includes Mark Lombardi’s lyrical, hand-drawn diagrams of seldom recognised systems of governmental power, such as the complex connections between the worlds of global finance, corporations, political bodies, and international family dynasties, which the artist assembled from a database of 14,000 index cards of research material. Lombardi’s interest was fuelled by the deregulation policies of Reagan during the 1980s, which allowed savings and loan banks to offer unsecured loans, leading to massive corruption and money laundering in offshore accounts that implicated many in positions of power (including some of those high up in George Bush Snr’s White House). In these graphic models that chart the networks of global capital, Lombardi’s tendency toward geometric, gestural abstraction appears to conflict with the scientific, information-dense paradigm of Bureau d’Etudes. The competing presentations engage the aesthetics of knowledge production and political research in very different ways, yet each contributes to addressing the following question, which still lacks—perhaps necessarily so—a definitive answer: how can cartographic forms merge with affective systems in order to motivate the desire for oppositional political becoming, social justice, and economic right? No doubt there must be many proposals to meet such a challenge.

These models, in their distinct ways, each reaffirm the significance of the cartographic experiments of Öyvind Fahlström, whose work comprises the second of the exhibition’s historical inclusions. The Swedish pop-conceptualist’s playful maps and games visualise a further possible intersection of the geopolitical and the geopoetic—what Brazilian cultural critic and psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik describes as an affective geography, at once ludic, imaginative, and politically informed. One of the exhibition’s central inclusions is Fahlström’s *Garden—A World Model*, 1973, which includes statements decrying American economic imperialism printed upon the leaves of interconnected plant-like sculptures, as the artist joins the merging organic-geographical forms to political-economic processes. Rolnik relates Fahlström’s playful diagrams to Deleuze and Guattari’s call to let desire “circulate through history and geography, to organise formations of worlds and constellations of universes, to make continents drift.”¹⁶ In other words, we cannot be satisfied with the claim that there are no other alternatives to this world; in this regard, these artistic maps open up possible others, revealing other narratives for a potentially positive form of globalisation based on more egalitarian geographies.

It is with a similar hope that we see Fahlström’s cartographic imagination advanced in the work of other artists in the exhibition, as in Eduardo Abaroa’s *Another World, and Another, and Another...*,

¹³ The English subtitles for the piece are available at: <http://www.shanghARTgallery.com/galleryarchive/texts/id/909> (consulted May 2010).

¹⁴ Wang Hui, “The Year 1989 and the Historical Roots of Neoliberalism in China,” *Positions* 12:1 (Spring 2004); see also Hui Wang, *China’s New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹⁵ Brian Holmes, “Cartography of Excess (Bureau d’études, Multiplicity),” *Mute* (February 2003), available at: <http://www.metamute.org/en/node/6243>.

¹⁶ Suely Rolnik, “Öyvind Fahlström’s Changing Maps,” in *Öyvind Fahlström: Another Space for Painting* (Barcelona: MACBA, 2001). She cites Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Ce que les enfants dissident,” in *Critique et Clinique* (Paris: Minuit, 1993), 82 (my translation).

2008. Here, map-making emphasises geography's creative plurality, eliciting the complex morphology of spatial experience via heterogeneous textiles (including workers' garments), textures, and colors. Abaroa advances a non-cognitive aesthetic of multiplicity, as globes emerge from globes, worlds from worlds. His sculpture indicates the very impossibility of fully knowing or resting content with only one. In Abaroa's work we encounter a speculative and pluri-sensory recognition that globalisation is not simply a matter of rationalisation and standardisation; rather it evokes an unpredictable process of creative differentiation in ways that are not merely destructively economic.

Still, despite these cartographic ambitions, zones of exception still persist in the geography of global capital that avoid detection and operate outside the borders of accountability, representation, and regulation. Such a situation allows the further accumulation of wealth by those individuals,



Öyvind Fahlström, *Garden - A World Model*, 1973 (Detail)
Acrylic and India ink on vinyl, 16 flowerpots, wood dowels and potting soil
Courtesy Sharon Fahlström, The Öyvind Fahlström Foundation and Archives at
Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), ©2010, DACS

Eduardo Abaroa, *Another World, and Another, and Another...*, 2008, (detail)
Steel structure, galvanised steel chain, wire, cardboard, plastic globes,
human clothing and string, 100cm x 100cm x 100cm
Courtesy of the Artist and kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City

corporations, and institutions intent on avoiding taxation—one imagines their invisible presence in the blank spaces between the icons, texts, and connective lines in the maps of Bureau d'Etudes and Lombardi. These are the financial bodies that exist beyond the information grid, the world of offshore banking that is the object of Goldin+Senneby's ongoing project, *Headless*. [see image next page] Their focus is the apparently real company called Headless Ltd, registered in the Bahamas, which is one of the leading centres of offshore banking worldwide. Searching for Headless Ltd, the artists act like shadowy CEOs, Goldin+Senneby employ their own specialists—economists, authors, curators—to implement their undeclared artistic designs. Doing so they spin a web of intrigue and fiction, including reference to dissident surrealist Georges Bataille's secret society, Acéphale, or headless, of the late 1930s, which represented an experiment with the anti-fascist possibilities of collectivity.

Rather than attempt to map the offshore—which would be the aim of another politics, and another type of artistic investigation—the Swedish artists instead internalise its structure of exception as a source of fictionalisation, which leads to several outlets. The exhibition also includes the remarkable



Headless. From the Public Record (installation view), Goldin+Senneby, with Angus Cameron (economic geographer), K.D. (fictional author), Kim Einarsson (curator/writer), Anna Heymowska (set designer), Marcus Lindeen (director) and Eva Rexed (actor)
Headless. From the Public Record (installation view), 2009
 Installation (stage set with recorded conversation), dimensions variable Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm
 Photo by Goldin+Senneby. Originally produced for Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation

Fool's Cap, World Map, an engraving from c. 1580, borrowed from Oxford University's Ashmolean Museum, which shows the map of the world in the place of the fool's face, including an early representation of the "terra incognita" as it was imagined geographically in the sixteenth century. One of the earliest images that appears to parody geographical reason and its ambition to know the world, the map becomes the location of deceit and uncertainty as much as knowledge and science. Appropriately, then, a reproduction of the *Fool's Cap* also appears in Goldin+Senneby's powerpoint presentation, which is accompanied by a recorded conversation between economic geographer Angus Cameron and curator Kim Einarsson, adding to the project's other collaborative performances, various sculptural installations, and the production of the ongoing novel, *Looking for Headless*, concerning the search for the offshore company in the Bahamas.

In relation to such zones of lawlessness, Giorgio Agamben has recently proposed the "state of exception" as a paradigm for current geopolitical developments. Referring to the creation of areas of legal exclusion—such as the prison at Guantanamo Bay—Agamben argues that new formations of executive sovereignty manifest themselves by stripping subjects of political rights, which, for Agamben, is becoming the norm worldwide, particularly in reference to the seemingly ubiquitous and spatially limitless "War on Terror."¹⁷ But what falls out of this otherwise compelling analysis—which nonetheless resonates with McQueen's, Biemann's, and Osodi's imagery of those areas of the politically excluded—is the simultaneous construction of financial zones of exception that have facilitated the accumulation of wealth outside of public accountability and national regulation. It is this field of invisibility that Goldin+Senneby track and turn into a source of intrigue in their commissioned texts and lectures by their representatives, the indeterminate status of which—is it fiction or real?—mirrors the uncertain epistemology of the offshore. By mimicking the world of shell companies, economic evasion, and unaccountable institutions in their semi-fictional accounts, the artists blur the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, as if re-appropriating the category of the offshore from the financial elite and redirecting it for shared creative and collaborative purposes. One potential hazard of *Uneven Geographies* is that in focusing on uneven development today we risk simply reaffirming its existence in the realm of representation. It is for this reason that the exhibition's ambition has been to highlight numerous aesthetic approaches—sociological as well as affective, documentary as much as performative. These approaches not only record, map, and explore forms of

¹⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005). For their reference to the "state of exception," see Goldin and Senneby, *Looking for Headless*, 176.

inequality related to neoliberal globalisation, but also reveal the power of oppositional and creative energies that are already directed against its economic-political arrangements, and open up other modes of globalisation. They thereby complicate and challenge the analysis of uneven geographies as an otherwise potentially disempowering fatalism.

Among these inclusions is the documentary commitment to draw attention to the resistance of mass movements of counter- or alter-globalisation. For instance, consider Bruno Serralongue's many photographic projects, including his documentation of the events of the 2004 World Social Forum in Mumbai, [see next page] which convened 2500 conferences, seminars, and workshops—with tribals comprising eighty percent of the participants—under the slogan: “our world is not for sale.” Opposed to the economic elitism of Davos' World Economic Forum, and mirroring many other such movements in the global South, including notably the 1996 “Intergalactical Meeting against Neoliberalism” in Chiapas, which Serralongue has also photographed, these events are translated by the photographer as anti-spectacular images. They reveal the slow processes of political engagement and the collective action of opposition—a veritable “globalisation from below,” which, in contrast to multinational corporate globalisation, has presented a de-centred, transnational “movement of movements” pledged to social justice, economic equality, and ecological sustainability. In bringing such movements into visibility, Serralongue challenges their near erasure in the corporate media, adding to their oppositional energies by extending their appearance, and by implication their political demands, into the artistic sphere.



Bruno Serralongue, *World Social Forum, Mumbai*, 2004
17 Ilfochrome prints on aluminium, each 40 cm x 50 cm
8. World Social Forum 2004, Mumbai. Courtesy the Artist and Air de Paris

Working along similar lines in video, Dario Azzellini and Oliver Ressler's *Venezuela from Below*, 2004, presents a recording of workers and activists speaking about their cooperatives and grassroots organisations in the socialist context of Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela. As an archive of those who speak from neoliberalism's nearly unrecognisable outside, the project gives voice to a multitude of people who attest to the newfound economic, social and political opportunities realised recently—and ever precariously—in oil-rich Venezuela, during a process of reforms that have led to remarkable gains in popular education, healthcare, and public housing, countering the effects of neoliberal privatisation and its destruction of social welfare programs. A woman, for instance,

speaks of her cooperative bank project; farmers talk about their participation in literacy campaigns; and oil workers discuss their refinery's resistance to sabotage operations. The self-expression of these revolutionary subjects represents the critical counter to the regimented factory workers and their instrumentalised collective mimicry of Chinese neoliberal policy in Yang Zhenzhong's *Spring Story*.

Supplementing these documentary engagements, *Uneven Geographies* also includes work that complicates the image as the purported truthful and objective carrier of self-evident meaning, as in Yto Barrada's *Life full of Holes* and McQueen's *Gravesend* and *Unexploded*. These works generate a sense of semiotic multiplicity—consider the shadowy figures in McQueen's film, which makes allusion to Conrad's novella *Heart of Darkness*, 1902 insofar as Marlow told his horrifying tale of journeying up the Congo River from a ship sitting on the Thames estuary in the English Southeast port of Gravesend. McQueen's poetic use of filmic ambiguity and metaphor, allusion and opacity, rescues figures in the Congo from their consignment to what anthropologist James Ferguson calls Africa's "old colonial role as provider of raw materials (especially mineral wealth)," the current situation of which McQueen also makes reference.¹⁸

Adding to this reinvention of documentary possibilities, Barrada's photographs and Biemann's videos also mobilise the indeterminacy of meaning, which opens up ways that desire might circulate beyond the authoritative pedagogy of conventional documentary film, challenging the fixity of representation. They thereby redirect the insecurity of African migration into an empowering potentiality (the discovery of a new life, the power to become something other), that liberates those subjects from their potential second-order oppression in the register of the image (following their victimhood on the ground). Biemann, for instance, seeks to present "an empowered vision of organised migration in which geopolitics is not strictly reserved for powerful nations who wish to dominate a region for its resources, but is instead a strategy that can equally be applied to a large movement of exiles or work migrants who target another territory for economic plenitude."¹⁹ Such work indicates a post-representational politics, where the subject extends beyond a clear identity, the image beyond an instrumentalised political trajectory. These works redirect the possibilities of globalization toward ends other than uneven, and where such images might lead has yet to be determined.

With its diverse inclusions, *Uneven Geographies* charts the current conditions of neoliberal globalisation, revealing its points of crisis and human costs, as well as proposes additional imaginative possibilities for a world—and a more even geography—of social justice, experimental creativity, and political inclusion. In this sense, the current status of globalisation cannot be seen as a natural or inevitable historical outcome of modernity, but rather a set of conflictual narratives with distinct political and economic stakes.²⁰ The exhibition thus aims to defamiliarise and repoliticise the term globalisation by reanimating the relation between aesthetics and politics. Doing so, we hope to focus attention on artistic attempts to reconfigure the terrain of the sensible so as to contest the disparities of uneven development, and to gather powerful proposals for a socially just, egalitarian future.

¹⁸ James Ferguson, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), 8.

For more sustained analysis of works by McQueen and Barrada, see my recent essay "Moving Images of Globalization," *Grey Room* 37 (Autumn 2009), 6-29.

¹⁹ Ursula Biemann, "Agadez Chronicle: Post-Colonial Politics of Space and Mobility in the Sahara," in *The Maghreb Connection: Movements of Life Across North Africa*, ed. Ursula Biemann and Brian Holmes (Barcelona: Actar, 2006), 67.

²⁰ On these narrative conflicts, see Angus Cameron and Ronen Palan, *The Imagined Economies of Globalization* (London: Sage, 2003).



Ursula Biemann, *Sahara Chronicle*, 2006 – 2007
 Installation view, *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation* at Nottingham Contemporary
 Courtesy of the Artist. Photo by Andy Keate

Eduardo Abaroa

Eduardo Abaroa is a Mexican artist who works mainly in sculpture. Usually figurative, his sculptures find playful ways of conveying social critiques. The materials he uses often come from Mexico City's many street vendors. In that way his sculptures carry the imprint of the everyday economic life of this vast and for the most part impoverished city.

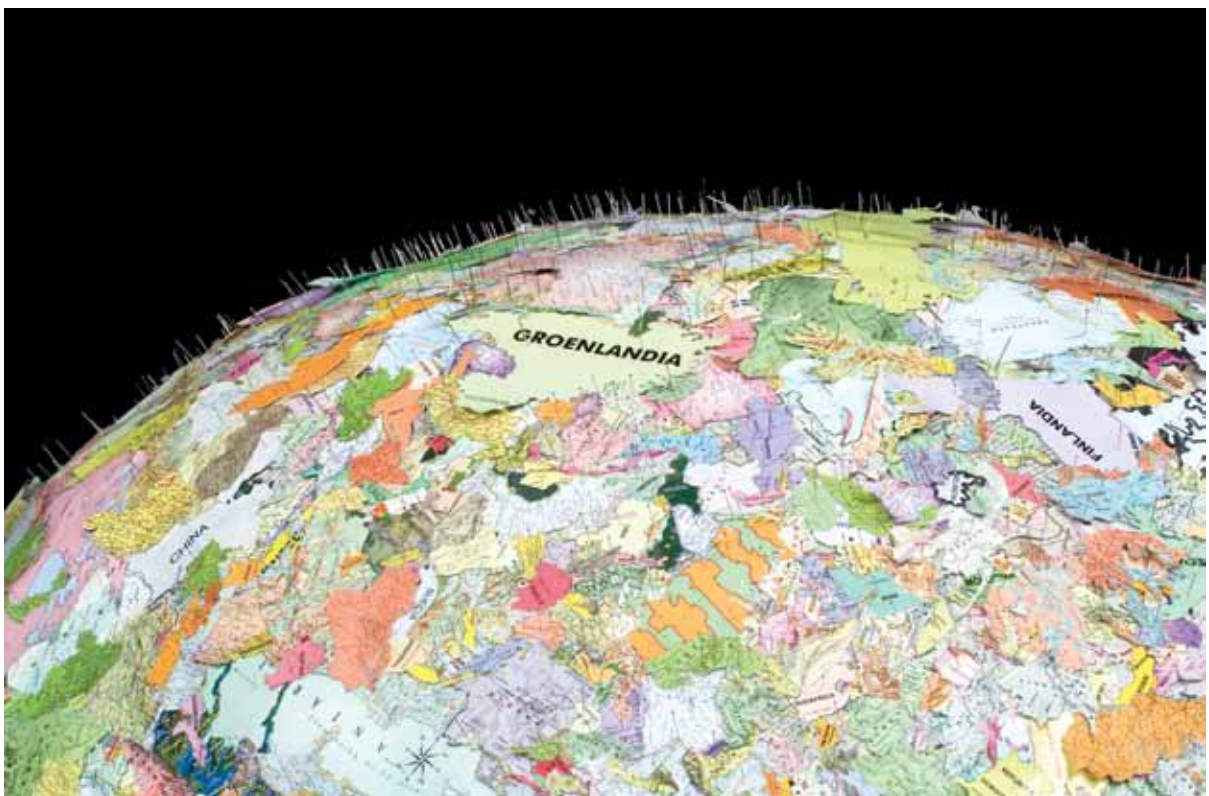
For some time he has been working with the image of the globe – the conventional image of our planet. Two of his three sculptures in the exhibition reflect this interest. *Proposal: We Just Need a Larger World*, 2008 and *Another World, and Another, and Another...*, 2008. The former is a large globe covered in small cut out pieces of Spanish language maps secured with pins (Spanish, in Central America, is the language of European colonisation). The pins suggest that the Earth is undergoing an epic acupuncture session, as if needing healing from many wounds. It's a world that has been drained of its oceans and its surface is congested with nations and words, as if over-populated. The world's population stands at nearly 7 billion, half of whom live on less than two dollars a day. Mexico City itself has a population of over 23 million. In *Another World, and Another, and Another...*, 2008, the central globe has sprouted several smaller ones, again implying poverty, over-population and diminishing natural resources. It is draped with simple workers' garments and suspended from a thick chain – signs of the entrapment of poverty.

Amphibian-Alphabetic Proliferation, 2008 takes the surprising form of an aquarium of African Clawed Frogs. An early version of Latin script appears on the tank. The sculpture is suggestive of how single powerful empires extinguish the plurality of peoples, languages and cultures through the process of colonisation. As the artist explains:

"This work is a small investigation of two phenomena, which are non-related, but which share certain similarities. The first process is the development and globalisation of the Latin alphabet, which is the one we use in many languages and that has steadily substituted other alphabets and systems of writing around the world. We are not talking about the Latin language, but about its alphabet that evolved from different Greek and Phoenician roots until it became the Latin script we now know. The second process is a plague of a specific kind of frog from Africa called *Xenopus* – otherwise known as the African Clawed Frog. These frogs have been extensively used by people: first as a pregnancy detection method, then as a laboratory animal. Due to its extraordinary hardiness and also its peculiarity as a species, this frog has invaded other regions of the world. According to some studies *Xenopus* frogs carry a fungus that is fatal to many other frog species – too many of which are being decimated to a point of extinction. The early form of Latin on the aquarium is called Duenos. It is reproduced on the aquarium as it appeared on an old Roman ceramic vessel known as the Kernos."



Eduardo Abaroa
Amphibian-Alphabetic Proliferation, 2008
 African Clawed Frogs, aquarium tank, water, tank materials, dimensions variable
 Installation view, *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation* at Nottingham Contemporary
 Courtesy of the Artist. Photo by Andy Keate



Eduardo Abaroa
Proposal: We Just Need a Larger World, 2008 (detail)
 Construction wire, papier maché, world map cutouts and steel pins, 130cm x 130cm x 130cm
 Courtesy of the Artist and kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City



Eduardo Abaroa
Another World, and Another, and Another..., 2008
 Steel structure, galvanised steel chain, wire, cardboard, plastic globes, human clothing and string, 100cm x 100cm x 100cm
 Installation view, *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation* at Nottingham Contemporary
 Courtesy of the Artist and kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City. Photo by Andy Keate

Dario Azzellini and Oliver Ressler

Venezuela from Below, 2004 examines the huge political and social changes that have occurred in Venezuela since Hugo Chávez's rise to power in the 1998 elections. The film focuses on ordinary people who are part of the grass roots process of change – the so-called 'Bolivarian process' named after a 19th Century Venezuelan political leader, Simón Bolívar. Bolívar was known as the 'Liberator' for his part in attempting to release Latin America from Spanish colonial oppression, leading several countries to independence from Spain during his lifetime, including Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela. The Bolivarian process seeks to empower the impoverished and the working classes, through anti-poverty initiatives tackling areas such as education, healthcare and housing and by encouraging self-organisation via workers co-operatives and the formation of community councils - assemblies through which people collectively arrive at decisions on issues that affect their communities.

Venezuela is one of the world's largest oil producing nations; there is much actual and potential wealth, although the majority of people live in poverty. Chávez's endeavour to lead his country towards a twenty-first century form of socialism, which might offer an alternative to global capitalism, uses key concepts such as decentralisation, autonomy, justice, nationalism and solidarity.

In their film, *Venezuela from Below*, Azzellini and Ressler interview people involved in various programmes: a women's bank project, farmers who have formed a new co-operative and are participating in literacy campaigns, workers who occupied and now run their factory after the owners bankrupted it, and oil workers who kept their refinery in operation during a sabotage, ensuring future production. By using a documentary style that allows its subjects to speak about their projects in their own voice and with no additional narration, Azzellini and Ressler seek to reflect the Bolivarian process and its approach to participatory democracy in Venezuela through the structure of the film itself.

Dario Azzellini (born 1967) is a social sciences researcher, author and filmmaker based in Berlin and Caracas. He is interested in processes of social transformation, democratic planning, participatory democracy and workers co- and self-management. Oliver Ressler (born 1970) is an artist and activist, based in Vienna, working in film and text on issues of globalisation, economics, forms of resistance and alternative social models.

Two related films made in Venezuela by Azzellini and Ressler are available to view on request in the exhibition. *5 Factories – Worker control in Venezuela*, 2008 (81 minutes, Spanish with English subtitles) visits five large companies operating different forms of government-supported co- or self-management. *Comuna Under Construction*, 2010 (94 minutes, Spanish with English subtitles) is a film about *consejos comunales* (community councils) in Venezuela, which allow people to decide collectively in assemblies what happens in their community. If several community councils join together they can form a *Comuna* (municipality) and various *Comunas* can build a communal town. The film follows developments in such forms of self-governance in poor districts and the countryside in and around Caracas.



Dario Azzellini & Oliver Ressler
 Still from *Venezuela from Below*, 2004
 Video, 67 minutes, Spanish with English subtitles
 Courtesy of the Artists



Dario Azzellini & Oliver Ressler
 Still from *5 Factories - Worker Control in Venezuela*, 2006
 Video, 81 minutes, Spanish with English subtitles
 Courtesy of the Artists

Yto Barrada

Born in Paris in 1971, and raised in Tangier where she now mostly lives, Yto Barrada has commented on the good fortune of her dual French and Moroccan citizenship. It was while studying history and political science at the Sorbonne in Paris that she began to photograph the people and places of Tangier that make up *A Life Full of Holes: the Strait Project*, 1998-2004

Paradoxically, the title does not refer to the city itself, but to the thin stretch of water between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean that separates Morocco and Spain – and Africa and Europe. Barrada portrays a place whose overwhelming mood is a longing to be elsewhere – the better life imagined in Europe. Tangier is a ‘here’ that is imbued with dreams of ‘elsewhere’.

People don’t quite belong to their city in her photographs. They often have their back to us, or appear at the edge of the images, as if seen in the corner of one’s eye. Sometimes they gaze into the distance. In some images objects suggest the ‘elsewhere’ with which the city is preoccupied: a swimming pool stands in for the sea, a model of a galleon carried by a boy down a street suggests the ship that one day might take his family across the Straits of Gibraltar.

Each time *A Life Full of Holes: the Strait Project* is exhibited Barrada makes a new selection. The different versions of the project suggest the endless flux of the city. She doesn’t see it as having a narrative, but sees it “more like a sort of montage or collage”. The series is more like a photographic poem than photographic reportage.



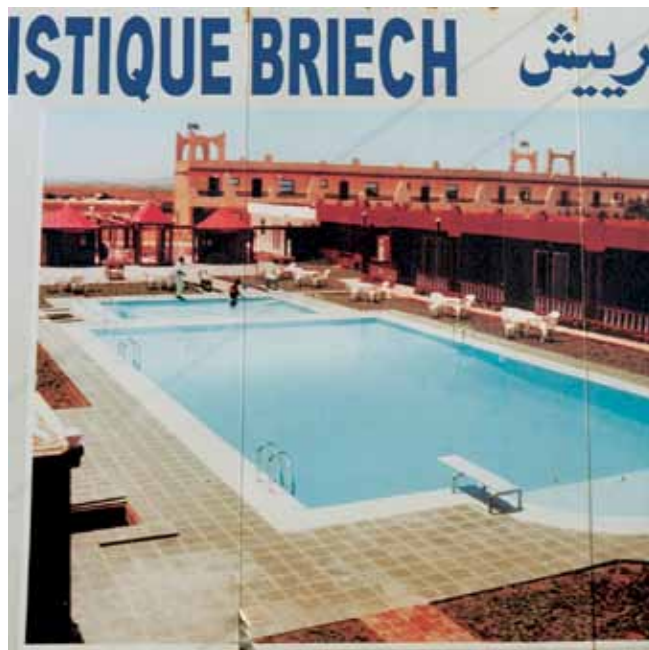
Yto Barrada
Le Detroit (Avenue d'Espagne) – Tangier, 2000
 Photographic print on aluminium, 60cm x 60cm
 1/2
 Courtesy of Galerie Polaris, Paris



Yto Barrada
Factory 1 – Tangier, 1998
 Photographic print on aluminium, 100cm x 100cm
 4/5
 Courtesy of Galerie Polaris, Paris



Yto Barrada
Ceuta Border – Illegally crossing the border into the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, 1999
 Photographic print on aluminium, 80cm x 80cm
 4/5
 Courtesy of Galerie Polaris, Paris



Yto Barrada
Hoarding – Breich, 2002
 Photographic print on aluminium, 80cm x 80cm
 1/5
 Courtesy of Galerie Polaris, Paris

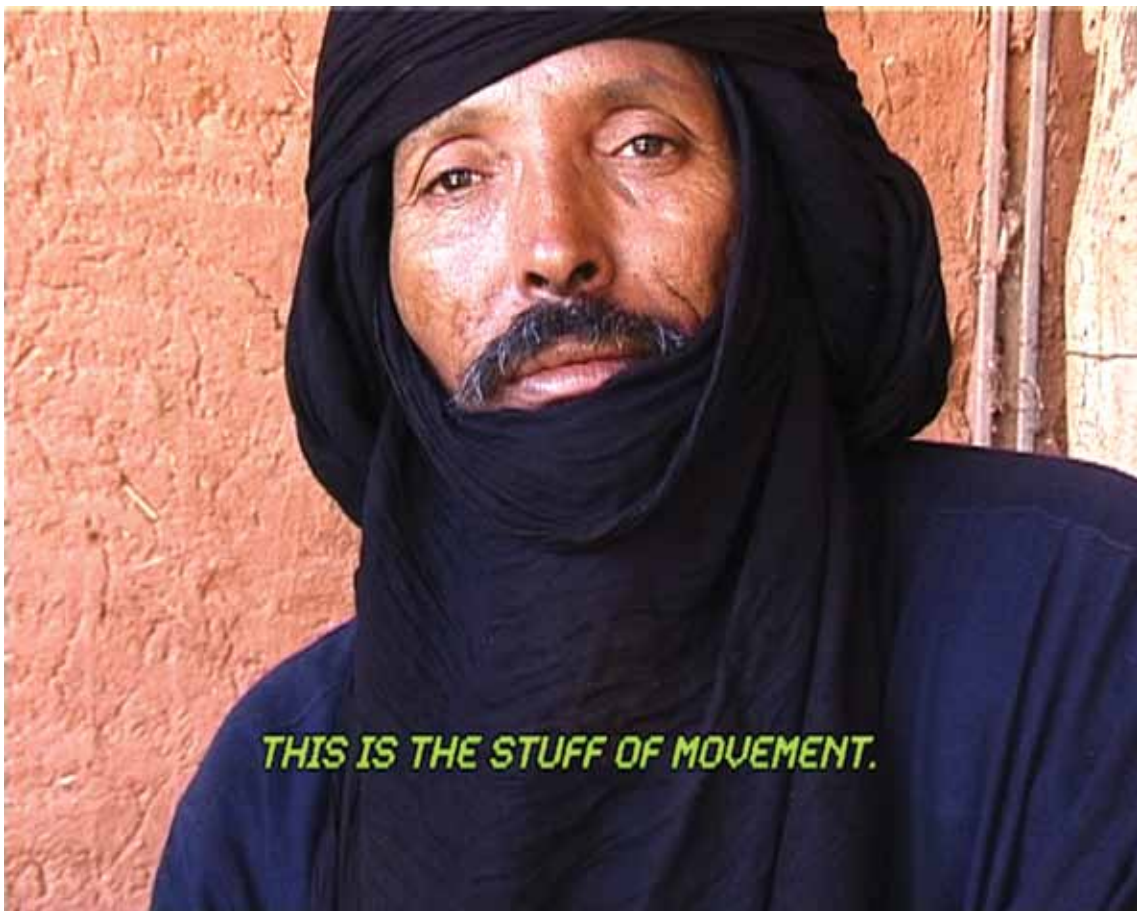
Ursula Biemann

Sahara Chronicle is made up of short videos that examine sub-Saharan migration to North Africa – the ultimate objective being Europe. Freedom of movement within Europe, instigated in the 1990s through the Schengen agreement, has resulted in restriction of movement within Africa and border control of trans-Saharan migration to Europe has increasingly been deferred to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. *Sahara Chronicle* focuses on a number of locations integral to the organisation and containment of trans-Saharan migration. These include: Agadez in Niger, the main gateway to the Saharan basin from West African migration routes; Nouadhibou, the northern Mauritanian port from which migrants travel to the Canary Islands; and the border city Oujda where migrants enter Morocco from the desert. This installation of *Sahara Chronicle* includes a new video, the interview with Coumba, shown here for the first time.

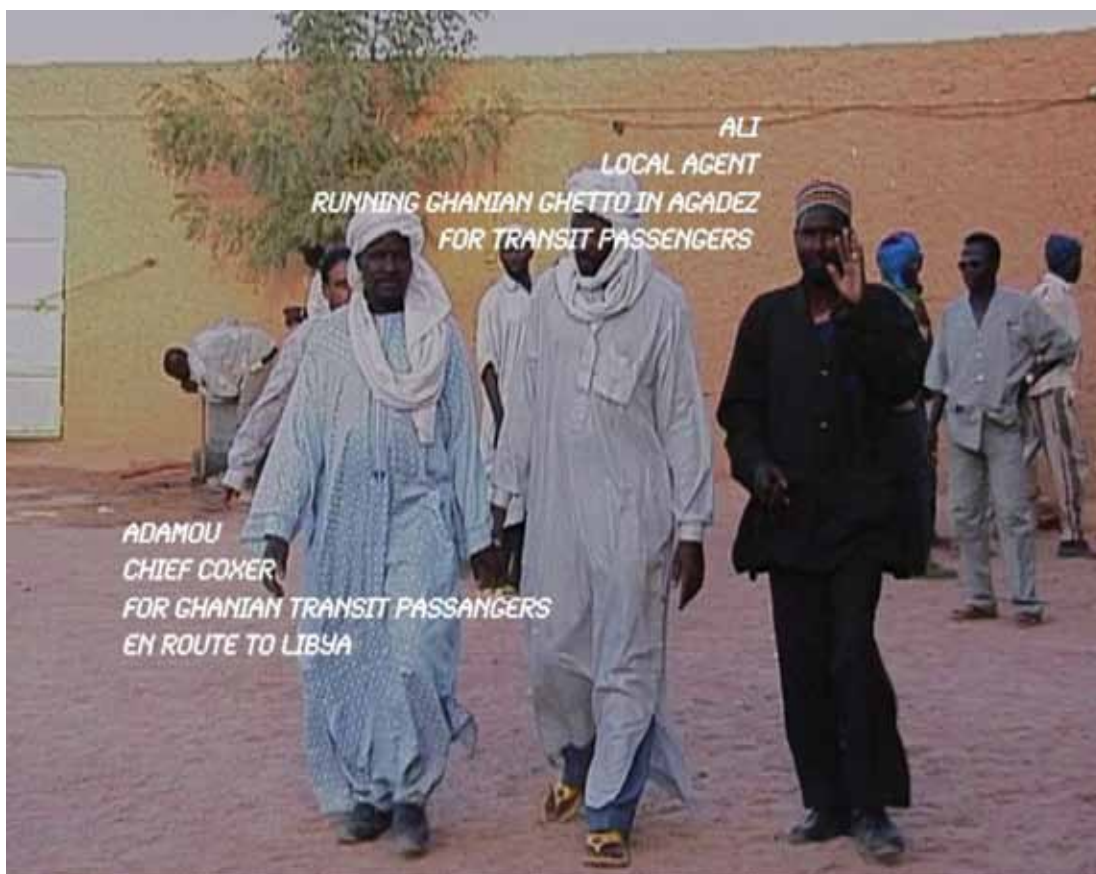
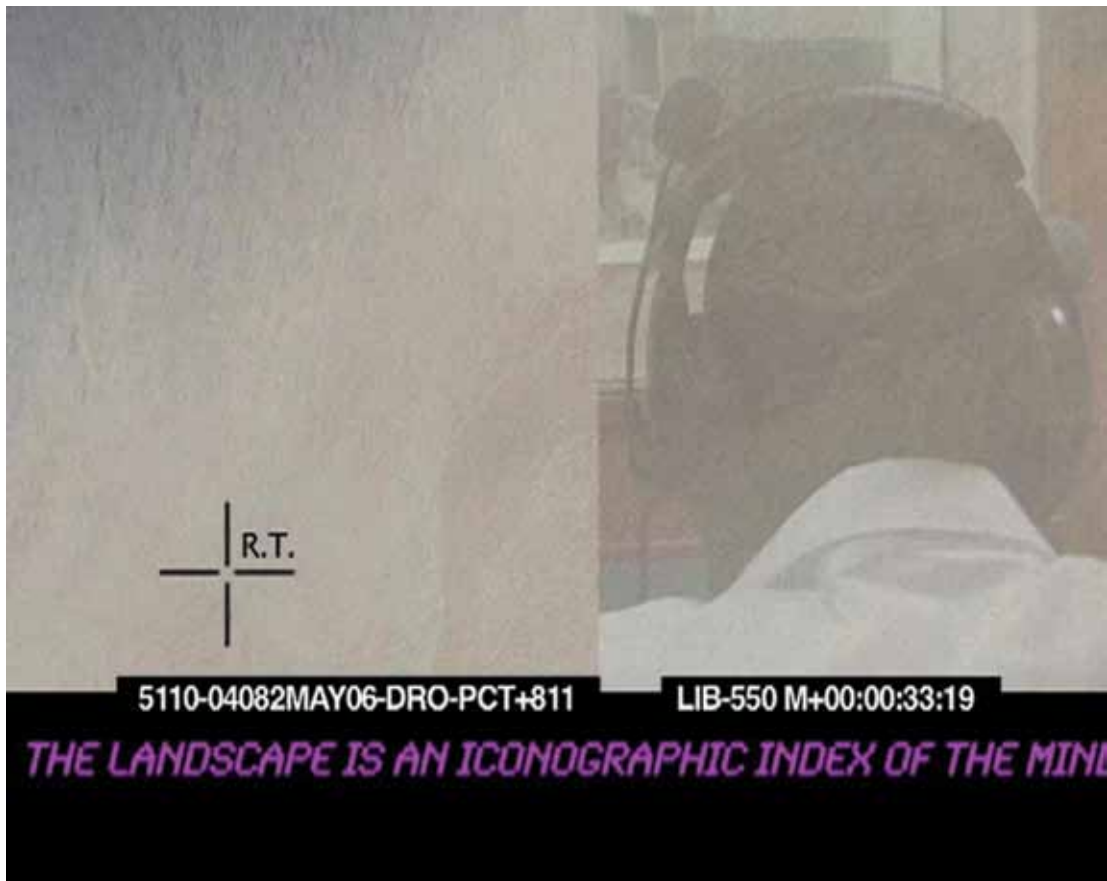
Critical of sensationalist coverage of migration, which often focuses on captured migrants who have failed to reach their destination, Biemann aims to challenge media representations of this issue. Each video offers a different perspective and specific topic, recognising the complexity and dispersed geography of trans-Sahara migration. She interviews migrants and those involved in the highly organised and fluid migrant transportation networks, as well as authorities involved in the containment and management of migration. In one interview the ex-Tuareg rebel leader Adawa explains the historical context of migration in the Sahara as a contest between the mobilised Tuareg people, still without full citizenship, and national borders laid down by colonial powers. Another video – simulating computer-generated imagery captured by unmanned airplanes that scan borders for migrants – reveals how surveillance technologies can visualise the spaces of migration beyond the capabilities of the human eye. Biemann also puts the transparency of her own video footage into question, overlaying it with text and graphics, and highlighting the fact that video documents are highly subjective and mediated views of reality.

In her own words, Biemann seeks to present “an empowered vision of organised migration in which geopolitics is not strictly reserved for powerful nations who wish to dominate a region for its resources, but is instead a strategy that can equally be applied to a large movement of exiles or work migrants who target another territory for economic plenitude.”

Ursula Biemann is an artist, curator, writer and researcher who lives in Zurich. She has developed a significant body of work on migration, mobility, gender and technology in various trans-national regions of the world.



Ursula Biemann
Stills from *Sahara Chronicle*, 2006 – 2007
Mixed media installation, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the Artist



Ursula Biemann
 Stills from *Sahara Chronicle*, 2006 – 2007
 Mixed media installation, dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the Artist

Bureau d'Etudes

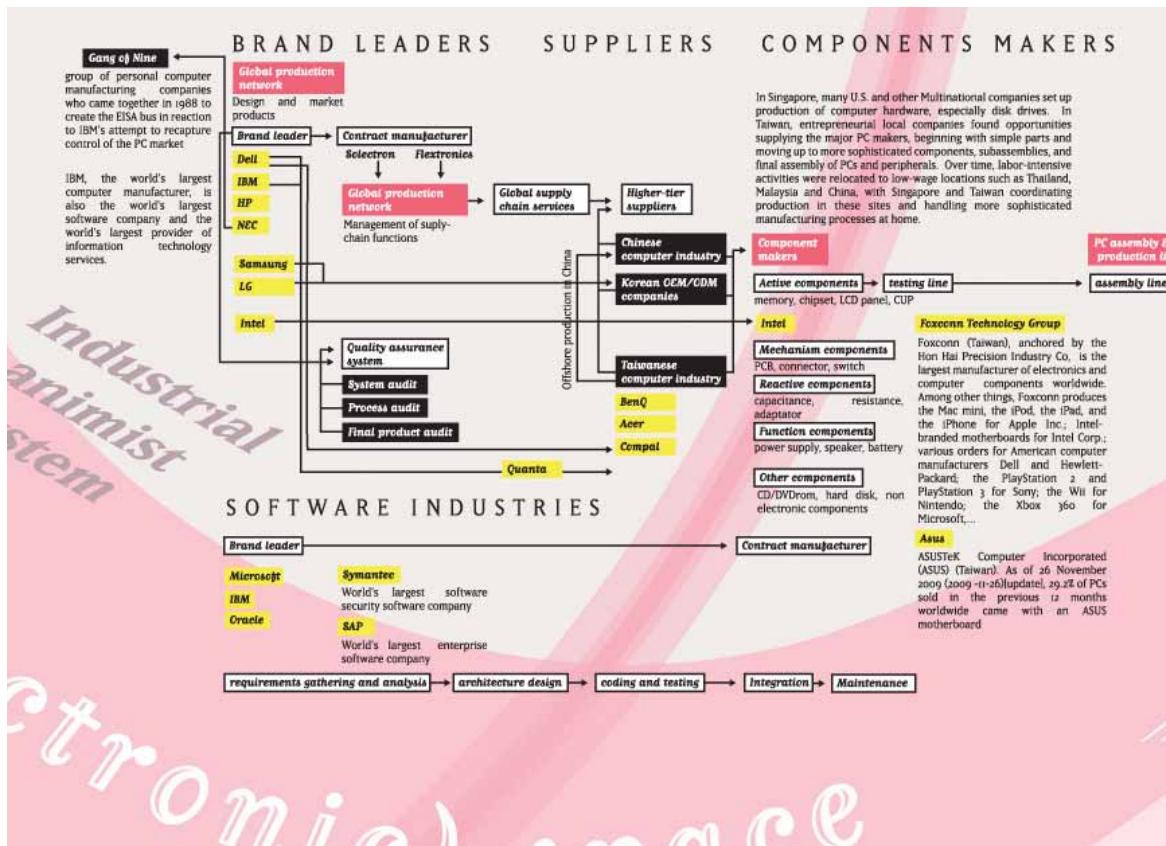
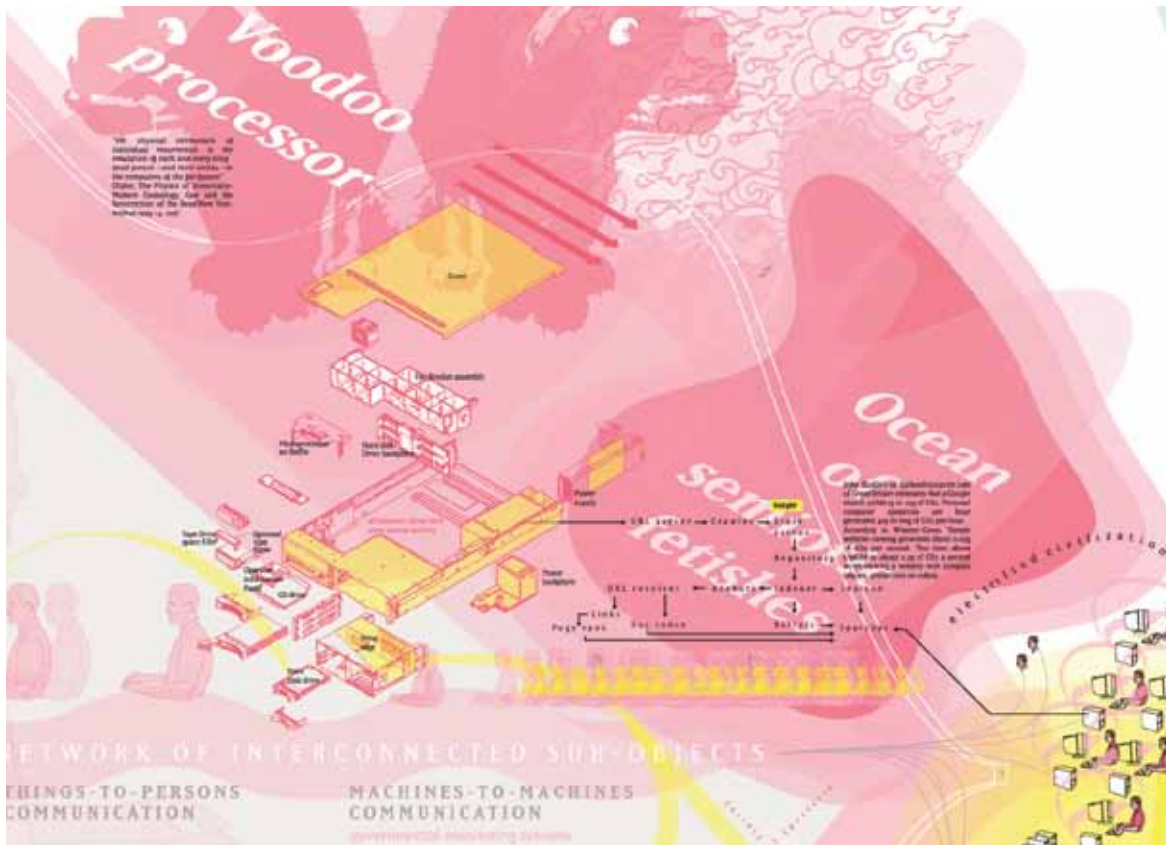
French artists Léonore Bonaccini and Xavier Fournet founded Bureau d'Etudes in 1998. They recently relocated from Paris to rural France. They research and produce intricate maps of the relationships between multinationals and government agencies, as well as dissident organisations, basing each of their projects on a particular political and economic topic or set of circumstances that is somehow reshaping our world, often in ways that are not sufficiently known. Previous projects have mapped the prison complex and surveillance system in Europe, for example. The Californian all male secret society, the Bohemian Club, whose members have included American presidents and the CEOs of vast corporations, was the subject of a project in 2006. Bureau d'Etudes assemble their information from highly specialised sources such as think tanks, regulatory bodies, financial institutions and satellite companies.

Access to knowledge is one of their central concerns. Their work is part of what the theorist, and their collaborator, Brian Holmes describes as 'the great alternative project of the last decade', which he says has been to map 'the transnational space invested primarily by the corporations, and distribute that knowledge for free'. Essential to their work is the collecting of primary research through ongoing collaborations with squats, 'hacklabs' and other autonomous groups working to make restricted knowledge on the workings of power freely available. They sometimes work from a self-organised space, the *Syndicat Potentiel* in Strasbourg, which functions as a 'free economy', in connection with another project for 'autonomous knowledge production' called the *Université Tangente*.

The Eighth Sphere, 2010, considers the present and near future of the information technology industry. It is a heady, frightening mix of technical analysis and sci-fi-like imaginative projection. As Bureau d'Etudes explain it is an analysis of the far-reaching human, ecological, financial and political consequences that simply typing into a computer keyboard sets in motion. Most of the image is a mapping of power, control and destruction, considered from various perspectives; this is contrasted on the far right of the image with the 'electronic democracy' - a swarm of individuals that make up the creative commons and open source movement that escapes from the grip of this global society of control. It looks at the interaction of human and machine, drawing parallels between human and computer viruses and immune systems, and visualises interfaces between virtual and material worlds, identifying for example the carbon footprint of the seemingly virtual action of a Google search and the export of e-waste from the West to developing world countries. Man and machine, the work ultimately suggests, are fusing, and in the process becoming cyborg.

The Eighth Sph





(details shown here and in full previous page)

Bureau d'Etudes
The Eighth Sphere, 2010, (details)
Map printed on wallpaper and A1 handout, dimensions variable
Courtesy of the Artists

Öyvind Fahlström

Öyvind Fahlström is widely recognised as one of the most inventive artists of the post-War era. His visual and literary work took many forms: painting, installation, films, poetry, plays, performances and sound works for radio. He was also one of the first artists to find aesthetic forms to represent the complex geopolitical issues of his day, an era defined by Cold War interventions in Latin America and Indochina, and the emerging neoliberal capitalism we see today. Though his work was global in scope, he was especially interested in the politics of Latin America, much of which was in the grip of brutal, U.S.-backed military dictatorships, which profited from selling national industries and natural resources to First World multinationals.

His is a narrative art that is visually seductive. Poetry and humour characterise his political aesthetic. For example, excerpts from the poetry of Federico García Lorca and Sylvia Plath are used in *Packing the Hard Potatoes (Chile 1)*, 1974 which addresses the administration of Salvador Allende, the first democratically elected socialist president of Chile. Allende was assassinated in 1973 in a coup led by General Augusto Pinochet backed by the CIA and economic advisers from the Chicago School. Under Pinochet, Chile became a laboratory for free-market fundamentalism – or ‘neoliberalism’ – which Margaret Thatcher applied in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA in the 80s. Its legacy was the erosion of once solid social democracies and the collapse of the world’s financial system eighteen months ago.

Fahlström experimented with the structure of comics to make complex relations of economic and political power accessible. Often he fragmented the imagery, dispersing pieces of the painting in three-dimensional space, as we see here in *Garden – A World Model*, 1973. He was interested in the distribution of his work to as many people as possible, and many of his works were published as editions, such as *Section of World Map – A Puzzle*. He was also interested in the interactive and unpredictable structures of games: some of his paintings were reproduced as magnetic puzzles so that they could be taken apart and rearranged by their owners. This suggested the dynamism of the political processes which were his subject, as well as suggesting that people might find ways of actively intervening in them.

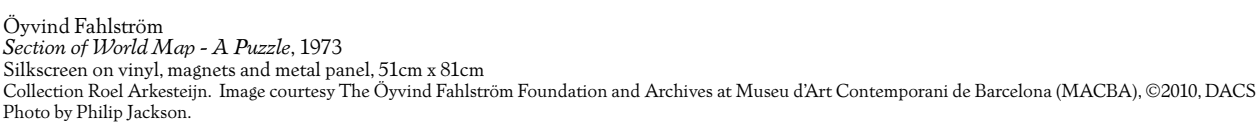
Fahlström was born in Brazil to Scandinavian parents in 1928, and at the age of ten he was sent to live in Stockholm, where he remained until 1961 when he moved to New York. *Garden – A World Model*, made three years before his death in 1976, is located at the end of the exhibition and was his final installation.



Öyvind Fahlström
Garden - A World Model, 1973
 Acrylic and India ink on vinyl, 16 flowerpots, wood dowels and potting soil, dimensions variable
 Installation view *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation* at Nottingham Contemporary
 Courtesy Sharon Avery-Fahlström, The Öyvind Fahlström Foundation and Archives at Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), ©2010, DACS. Photo by Andy Keate



Öyvind Fahlström
Packing the Hard Potatoes (Chile 1: Last Months of Allende Regime. Words by Plath and Lorca), 1974
 Variable painting, elements on springwire rods with magnets, acrylic and India ink on vinyl and shaped metal panel, 112cm x 211cm x 10cm
 Colleccio MACBA. Consorci Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. Diposit Col·leccio Sharon Avery-Fahlström, New York, ©2010, DACS.



Goldin+Senneby

Goldin+Senneby's ongoing project *Headless* is an investigation into offshore finance. Their focus is an apparently real company called Headless Ltd, registered in the Bahamas. Companies registered in tax havens like this benefit from very low or zero taxation and little government regulation or scrutiny. The Bahamas is one of the oldest offshore finance centres and led the way for other tax havens in the Caribbean including the Cayman Islands which has become the fifth largest banking centre in the world. The Cayman Islands has \$1.5 trillion in banking liabilities and more companies registered than people who live there – the population is about 56,000. In economic and legal terms, the Cayman Islands is a vast, virtual space that dwarfs the actual islands themselves.

In their search for Headless Ltd, Goldin+Senneby generate their own web of confusion, concealment and fiction. They act somewhat like CEOs, employing and enlisting various specialists – economists, authors, curators, etc – to carry out aspects of their business and act as their spokes people. This way of working mimics the secretive operations of offshore companies like Headless Ltd. This version of the project, comprises a corporate seminar room in which we can listen to a PowerPoint dialogue between Angus Cameron, an economic geographer at Leicester University and expert on offshore finance, and Kim Einarsson, a Swedish curator. Cameron has acted on several occasions as Goldin+Senneby's 'emissary'.

Elsewhere *Headless* has taken the form of exhibitions, lectures, newspaper interventions, a series of etchings, and an ongoing popular detective novel called *Looking for Headless*. The novel, ghost written by John Barlow, who Goldin+Senneby sent to the Bahamas to investigate the company, is included in the exhibition. We are never quite sure who or what Headless Ltd are, but one line of enquiry suggests that it is a reincarnation of Acéphale, a secret, anti-capitalist society and literary journal founded by Georges Bataille and other leading French Surrealists in the late 1930's, inspired by African secret societies described in ethnographic writing at that time. The name Acéphale is derived from the Greek *a-cephalus* meaning 'headless'. Its adoption by Bataille celebrated the decapitation of the last French king, Louis XVI, and heralded the coming of the 'chiefless crowd.'

Goldin+Senneby is a collaboration established by Stockholm-based artists Simon Goldin and Jakob Senneby in 2004.



Goldin+Senneby,
with Angus Cameron (economic geographer), K.D. (fictional author), Kim Einarsson (curator/writer), Anna Heymowska (set designer),
Marcus Lindeen (director) and Eva Rexed (actor), *Headless. From the Public Record (installation view)*, 2009
Installation (stage set with recorded conversation), dimensions variable
Installation view, Index – The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation, Stockholm
Photo by Goldin+Senneby. Originally produced for Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation



Goldin+Senneby,
Looking for Headless by fictional author K.D., *novel in the making*, 2007 - ongoing
Printed matter
Originally produced for Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation



Goldin+Senneby,
 with Angus Cameron (economic geographer), K.D. (fictional author), Kim Einarsson (curator/writer), Anna Heymowska
 (set designer), Marcus Lindeen (director) and Eva Rexed (actor)
Headless. From the Public Record, 2009
 Installation view, Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation at Nottingham Contemporary.
 Courtesy of the Artists
 Originally produced for Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation. Photo by Andy Keate

Mark Lombardi

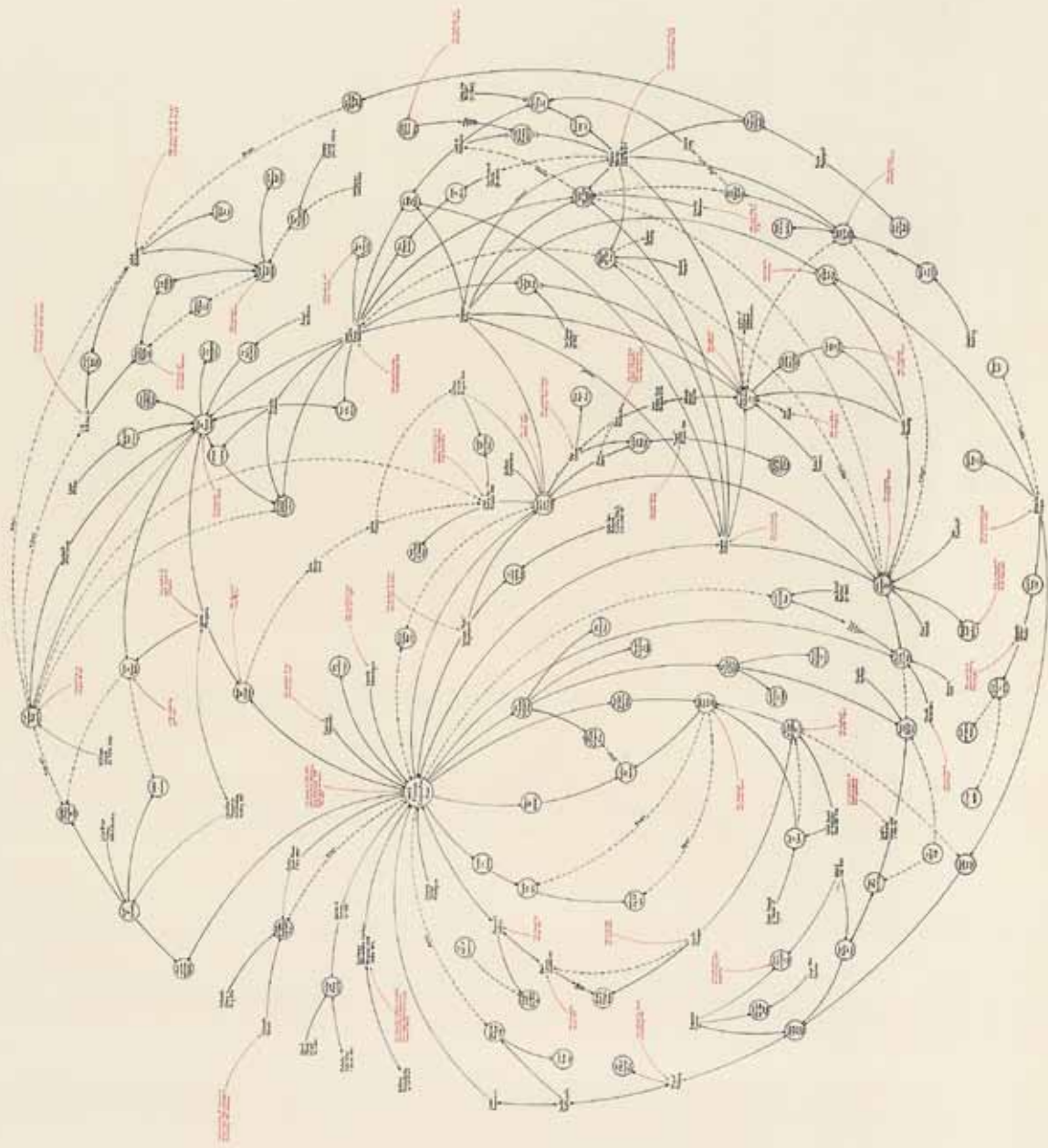
“Bank failures provide a rare and invaluable opportunity to examine how business is all too frequently conducted behind closed doors by people with power or access to political elites.”

Mark Lombardi

Originally trained as a museum archivist, American artist Mark Lombardi gained recognition late in his short life for beautiful drawings that chronicle and map the intricacies of global financial networks. In these ‘narrative structures’, as he called them, complex webs of graphite lines lay bare connections, relationships and exchanges between banks, politicians, industry and organised crime. In particular his interest in money and power relations was fuelled by the neoliberalist policies of President Ronald Reagan – specifically Reagan’s deregulation of banking practices in the early 1980’s. These policies included allowing small savings and loans banks (‘thrifts’) across small town America to provide unsecured and virtually unregulated 100% loans. This led to massive corruption and money laundering. Huge sums from federally protected loans disappeared into offshore accounts eventually leading to the collapse of many of the thrifts – some of whom were connected to George Bush Snr’s Whitehouse.

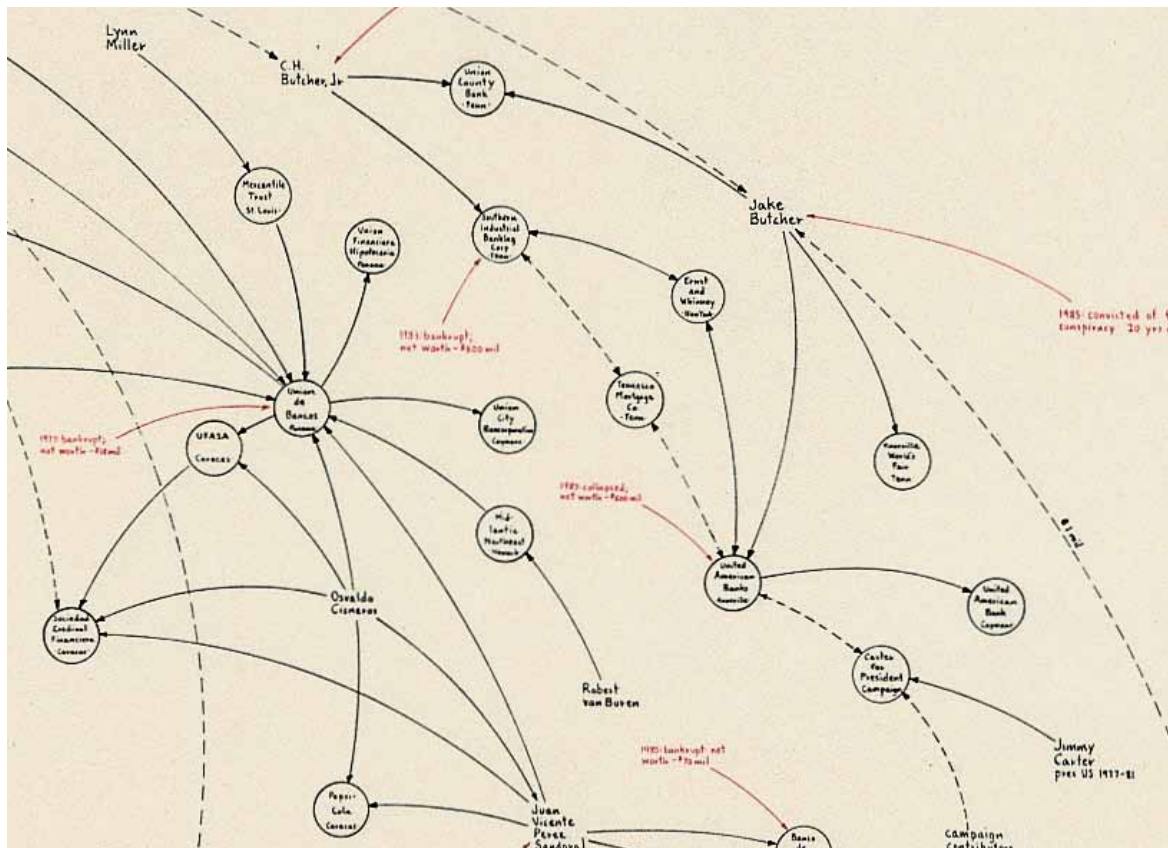
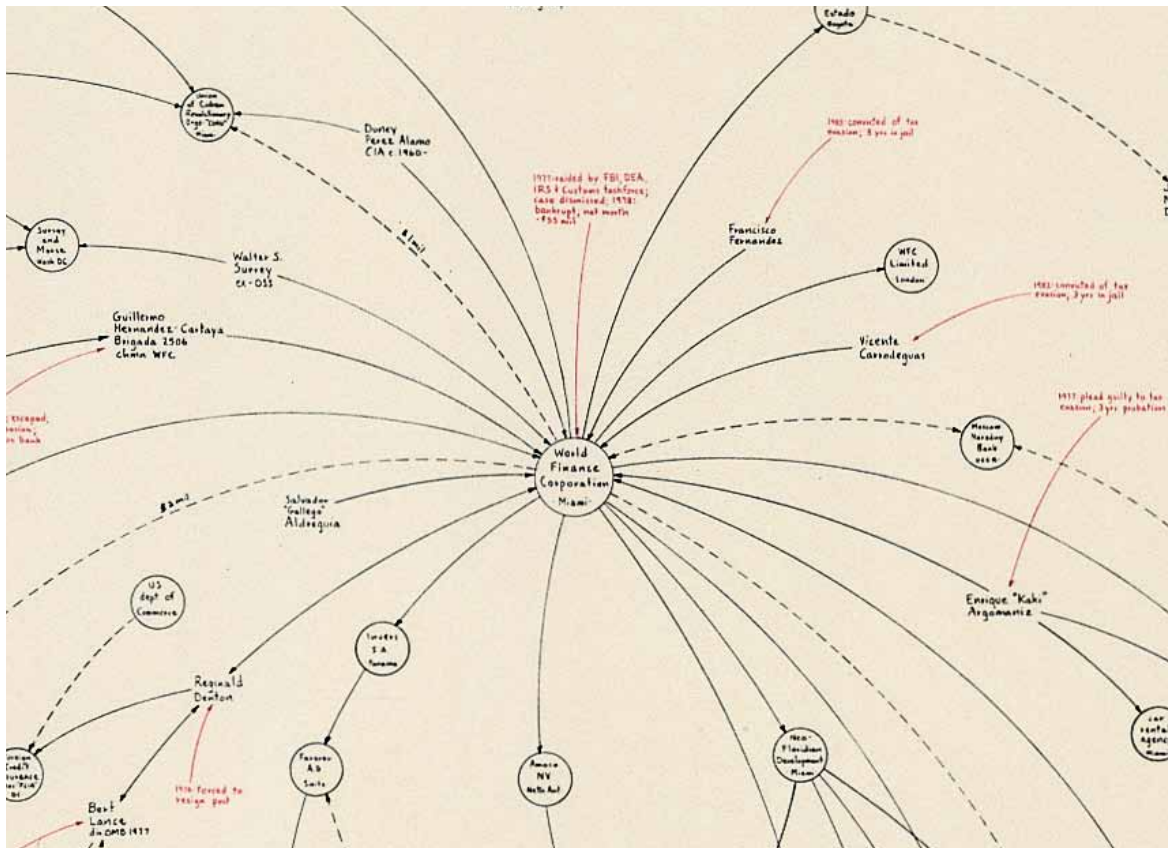
In the making of this quiet ‘poetry of paranoia’ Lombardi amassed more than 14,000 index cards on individuals and organisations gleaned from newspapers, books and public records. His interest was not necessarily to draw moral or political conclusions, but instead to provide a near comprehensive account through his unique art of the ‘uses and abuses of power in the global political economy’. Since 9/11, the FBI and agents from the US Department of Homeland Security have studied his drawings for new ways of understanding evidence. Lombardi’s suicide in 2000 became the subject of conspiracy theories.

Mark Lombardi was born in Syracuse in the state of New York in 1951. He lived and worked in New York City.



World Finance Corporation and Associates, c. 1970 - 83
Miami-Ajman-Bogota-Caracas (7th Version), 1999
Graphite and colour pencil on paper, 152 cm x 200 cm
Private Collection, image courtesy Donald Lombardi and Pierogi Gallery, NY. Photo by John Berens

Mark Lombardi
World Finance Corporation and Associates, c. 1970 - 83 Miami-Ajman-Bogota-Caracas (7th Version), 1999
 Graphite and colour pencil on paper, 152 cm x 200 cm
 Private Collection, image courtesy Donald Lombardi and Pierogi Gallery, NY. Photo by John Berens



Mark Lombardi (details)
World Finance Corporation and Associates, c. 1970 – 83 Miami-Ajman-Bogota-Caracas (7th Version), 1999
 Graphite and colour pencil on paper, 152 cm x 200 cm
 Private Collection, image courtesy Donald Lombardi and Pierogi Gallery, NY. Photo by John Berens

Steve McQueen

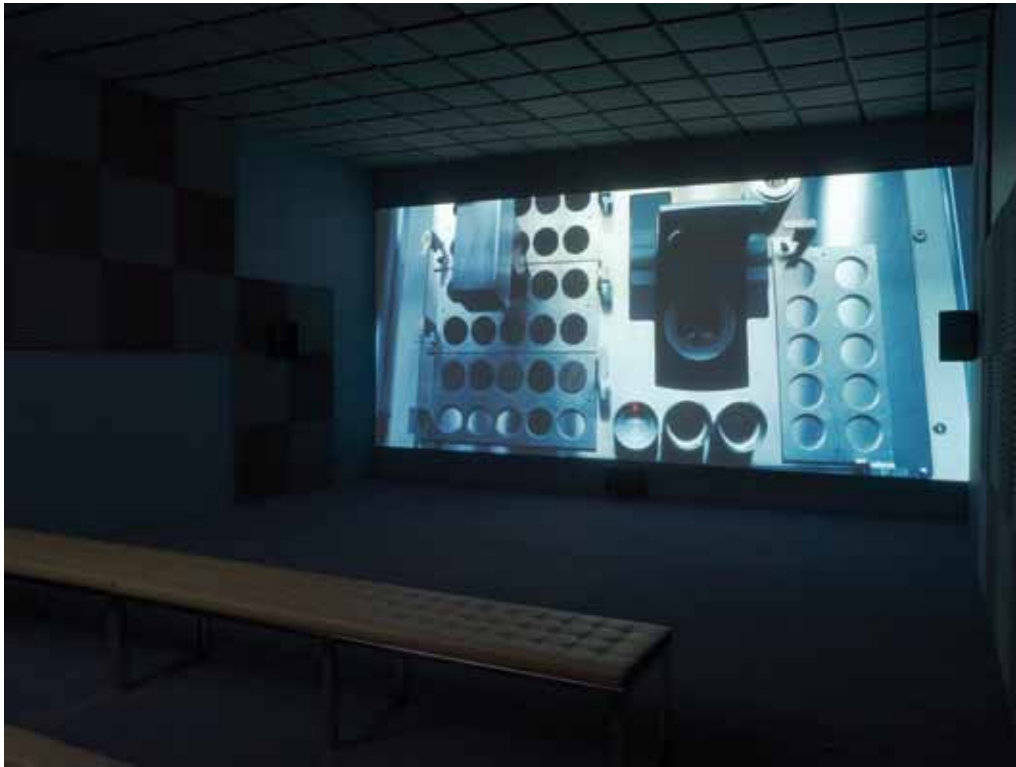
The focus of *Gravesend*, 2007 is coltan (columbite-tantalite), an invaluable yet little known mineral, which in the last decade has sparked a massive mining rush in Central Africa. The mineral's chemical composition makes it an outstanding capacitor for electronic devices and it is used in almost all digital consumer goods today – from mobile phones to laptops. Its mining has come at great human and environmental cost. Miners, many of whom are children, toil long hours in conditions of great danger and hardship for a couple of dollars a day. The mining process pollutes lakes and rivers and is rapidly consuming forests, even National Parks. Part of *Gravesend* was filmed in mines in the war-torn Democratic Republic of Congo, where 80% of coltan reserves lie. There, profits from coltan mining fuel ongoing civil wars – which have claimed 4 million lives in the past decade. But it is the hi-tech multinationals that profit the most.

The film's title is an allusion to the classic anti-colonial novel *Heart of Darkness* (1902) by Joseph Conrad, set in the Congo, which was at that time brutally governed by King Leopold II of Belgium. The novel served as the inspiration for the film *Apocalypse Now* (1979). It begins with its central protagonist, Marlow, setting sail for the Congo from Gravesend, on the Thames Estuary at sunset, with a sense of foreboding – a scene McQueen's sunset sequence over the industrial landscape of modern-day Gravesend directly relates to. The age of European empires may be long gone, but are we living in an age of empire all the same, now that globalisation knows no bounds – a new kind of empire that engulfs the world, whose centres of power are many?

McQueen's powerful, visually economic films avoid conventional narrative and come without political or moral commentary. Instead, we are left to make sense of the situations he reveals, and from that draw our own moral conclusions. *Gravesend* contrasts the dreadful conditions of the miners with the bright, hi-tech processing plant in Derby where the coltan is refined for use in the devices on which our modern lives increasingly depend.

Gravesend is shown in combination with *Unexploded (Handheld)*, 2007, a film of less than one minute of an unexploded bomb dropped on a building in Basra. McQueen made it in 2003, while working in Iraq as the UK's official war artist. The combination underscores the relationship between war and business interests – a connection Naomi Klein explores in depth in her recent book *The Shock Doctrine*, 2007.

Steve McQueen was born in London in 1969 and lives in Amsterdam. He won the Turner Prize in 1999. His first feature film, *Hunger*, 2008 about Bobby Sands, who died of a hunger strike in Maze Prison in 1981, won the Caméra d'Or at Cannes Film Festival.



Steve McQueen
Gravesend, 2007
 35 mm film transferred to high definition, 17 minutes 58 seconds
 Installation view, Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation at Nottingham Contemporary
 Courtesy of the Artist and Thomas Dane Gallery, London. Photo by Andy Keate

Cildo Meireles

On every bank note that Cildo Meireles spent between 1970 and 1976 he stamped on one side a political statement and on the other a short, official-looking description of his project *Insertions into Ideological Circuits*, 1970. Once in circulation these messages would be disseminated randomly as the bank notes passed from hand to hand. He did the same with Coca-Cola bottles. By screen-printing the world-famous bottles with white ink his additions to the Coke branding would go undetected when returned to the factory. The statements only became clearly visible once the bottles had been refilled, by which time they were on their way to the next consumer.

Meireles was born in 1948 in Rio de Janeiro, where he still lives. He is a pioneer of installation art. At the time of making *Insertions into Ideological Circuits*, Brazil – like so many other Latin American countries – was under a brutal military dictatorship that lasted 20 years. Public life was strictly controlled and all forms of media were censored, while the gap between rich and poor became obscene. Many of Meireles' messages came from information that had reached him “about people who had been arrested or who had not been found; at times people I didn't even know”. “Quem matou Herzog?” asks who killed the TV journalist Vladimir Herzog who was tortured and murdered by the military police for his connections to the illegal Brazilian Communist Party.

Statements like “Yankees go home!” voice anger at American intervention in Brazil on behalf the military dictatorship and the interests of American-headquartered corporations profiting from the regime. By altering the Coke bottles and banknotes and putting them back in circulation, Meireles turned powerful symbols of economic and political power against themselves, establishing, in the process, a virtually unlimited audience for his work. Coca-Cola is still one of the most universally recognised symbols of American capitalism. Some people have spoken of Coca Colonization – meaning America's economic dominance of Third World countries, which they saw as a new form of imperialism.

Like many politically-engaged artists of the 60s and 70s, Meireles wanted to integrate his art within life in general. For Meireles the work only exists when in circulation. The bottles and bank notes in the exhibition are not the artwork itself, they are only records or relics of the artwork.



Cildo Meireles
Insertions into Ideological Circuits: Coca-Cola Project, 1970
 Serigraphy, plastic, glass, dimensions variable
 MACBA Collection. Fundació Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona.
 Gift of Corinne Disserens and Pablo Azul Disserens. Photo by Tony Coll

George Osodi

Living in Lagos and London, artist and photojournalist George Osodi was born in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, an area inhabited by 20 million people and where the world's tenth largest oil reserves are found. *Oil Rich Niger Delta*, 2007 is a series of over fifty photographs that chronicle social and environmental degradation in the region. It is a contrasting scene of gas flares, black smoke and oil slicks, of the machinery and infrastructure of the industry, of warlords amid ordinary people, their humble dwellings and snatches of verdant pasture. The dramatic, apocalyptic light in the images sometimes evokes 19th century romantic landscape painting.

Nigeria's oil reserves generate huge wealth for some sections of Nigerian society, and account for 98% of the country's export revenues. The Nigerian National Oil Corporation has a 60% stake in the industry, the rest going to the world's oil giants. Little of this wealth finds its way to the people living in the Delta, 70% of whom, Amnesty International estimate, earn less than a dollar a day. The consequences for the region has been civil war between ethnic militias, the corruption of officialdom, large numbers of undocumented deaths and human rights abuses, the pollution of once fertile land, and the destruction of one of the world's most diverse ecosystems. The people in the Niger Delta have become poorer in the forty years since the reserves of 'black gold' were discovered. Cocoa, rubber, cotton and groundnut cultivation have fallen dramatically in that time.



George Osodi
Oil Rich Niger Delta: Ogoni Boy, 2007
 Photograph, 130cm x 90cm
 Courtesy of the Artist and Z Photographic Ltd



George Osodi
Oil Rich Niger Delta: Gas Flare 3, 2006
 Photograph, 130cm x 90cm
 Courtesy of the Artist and Z Photographic Ltd

Bruno Serralongue

Bruno Serralongue is an artist, based in Paris, whose photography involves travelling to many of the same events and places that are covered by the international news industry. As an artist, however, he is not on assignment, and his work can be seen as a kind of counter-journalism. The way he photographs events differs from the often sensationalised and reduced way we see them in newspapers or on television. In comparison, Serralongue's versions of events look ordinary and slow - the focus isn't on flashpoints, but the flow of events. His work as a whole can be seen as a questioning of the way that the news media frames our understanding of the world – and with it its claims to objectivity.

The human and economic geography of Serralongue's work is extremely wide-ranging. Generally, the events he photographs are all somehow indicative of the forces and counter-forces of globalisation, as can be seen in the three projects shown in this exhibition.

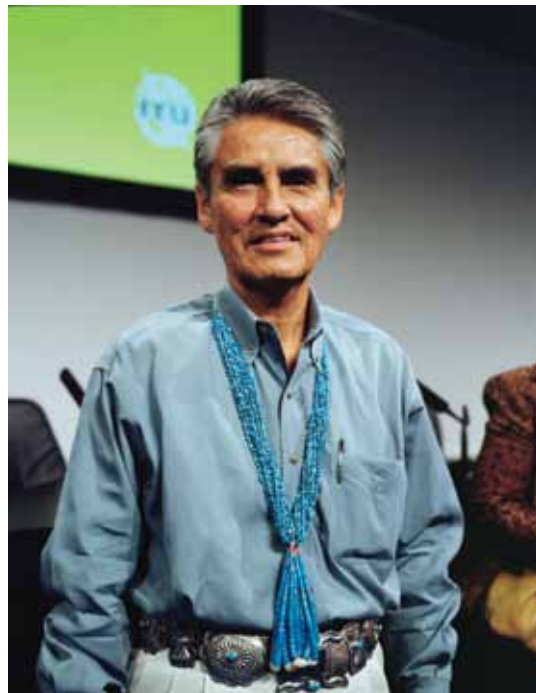
The fourth meeting of the World Social Forum (WSF), held in Mumbai in 2004, is the subject of the *World Social Forum, Mumbai, 2004*. Launched in Porto Alegre in Brazil in 2001, the WSF is a response to the rise of corporate globalisation, which seeks to reshape the political structures of nations according to the interests of global markets. Instead, the WSF aims to mobilise a 'globalisation from below', by acting as a forum for a de-centred, international 'movement of movements' concerned with wide-ranging issues relating to social justice and the environment. It was established in direct opposition to the World Economic Forum, the gathering of the world's economic and political elites, which meets each year in Davos. WSF's well-known slogan is 'another world is possible'.

The series *SMSI Tunisia, 2005* focuses on the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) held in Tunisia 2005, which was attended by representatives of governments, the private sector and civil society. The WSIS is part of a series of UN global summits addressing central questions facing humanity (e.g. the Earth Summit at Rio in 1992, which attracted over 100 heads of state). WSIS was established to set out a common understanding of the information society and work out international ways of governing the internet. Following the summit, governments have adopted the Tunis Commitment, which outlines the agreements made at the WSIS, which includes the 'desire to build a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society'. According to Serralongue a number of delegates and journalists were subjected to intimidation and violence by the Tunisian government's security forces.

In the series *La Otra, 2006* Serralongue follows the 'Other' election campaign of Delegate Zero, otherwise known as Subcomandante Marcos, the charismatic pipe-smoking, ski-mask-wearing leader of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in Mexico. Occurring at the same time as the national election campaign in 2006, though not actually seeking election, this year long event was aimed at increasing

support for the EZLN – a largely peaceful revolutionary movement, named after Zapata, the Mexican revolutionary leader, which declared war on the Mexican state in 1994 when the government signed the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement with the USA – to the detriment of the impoverished, indigenous farmers in the Chiapas region of southern Mexico, where the EZLN is based. The Zapatistas campaign for autonomy for the Chiapas (which they have in part achieved), for radical or participatory democracy in Mexico in general, and they ally themselves with a pluralistic international constellation of ‘alter-globalisation’ causes against neoliberalism. Expert communicators, The New York Times called the Zapatistas “the first postmodern political movement”. Echoing Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s influential idea of the ‘multitudes’, the Subcommandante declared:

“Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, an Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Isidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, a Mayan Indian in the streets of San Cristobal, a gang member in Neza, a rocker in the National University, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in the Defence Ministry, a communist in the post-Cold War era, an artist without gallery or portfolio.... A pacifist in Bosnia, a housewife alone on Saturday night in any neighbourhood in any city in Mexico, a striker in the CTM, a reporter writing filler stories for the back pages, a single woman on the subway at 10pm, a peasant without land, an unemployed worker... an unhappy student, a dissident amid free market economics, a writer without books or readers, and, of course, a Zapatista in the mountains of southeast Mexico. So Marcos is a human being, any human being, in this world. Marcos is all the exploited, marginalized and oppressed minorities, resisting and saying, ‘Enough.’”



1. M Joe Shirley Jr, President of the Navajo nation, Press Conference, Media Centre, Kram Palexpo, Tunisia, 16 November 2005



2. Kofi Annan, General Secretary of the UN, Press Conference, World Summit on the Information Society, Media Centre, Kram Palexpo, Tunisia, 16 November 2005.



3. Connecting People, ICT for All, Business Sector, Kram Palexpo, Tunisia



4. Professor Nicholas Negroponte during the presentation of the new ITU paper 'The Internet of Things', conference hall, Media Centre, Kram Palexpo, Tunisia 17 November 2005.



5. Just before the start of Phase 2 of the World Summit on the Information Society, Plenary hall, Kram Palexpo, Tunisia 16 November 2005.



6. What's Behind the Information Society?, ICT for All, Business Sector, Kram Palexpo, Tunisia.



7. Meeting Hall, World Summit on the Information Society, Kram Palexpo, Tunisia.

(this page and next)

Bruno Serralongue
World Summit on the Information Society, Tunisia, 2005
 13 Ilfochrome prints on aluminium, each 40cm x 51cm
 Collection Frac Franche-Comté



8. Speech by Yoshio Utsumi, Secretary General of the International Union of Telecommunications during the opening ceremony of Phase 2 of the World Summit on the Information Society, Plenary Hall, Kram Palexp, Tunisia 16 November 2005.



9. UNESCO / Egypt, ICT for All, Business Sector, Kram Palexp, Tunisia



10. Avenue Mohammed V during the World Summit on the Information Society, Tunisia, 16 – 18 November 2005.



11. To the Private Sector, Kram Palexp, Tunisia.



12. Security checkpoint during the World Summit on the Information Society, Kram Palexp, Tunisia 16 – 18 November 2005.



13. Aboriginal peoples claim their right to join the Information Society, press room, Media Centre, Kram Palexp, Tunisia 18 November 2005.



1. Welcome Delegates, Main Entrance of the 4th World Social Forum, Nesco Grounds, Goregaon, Mumbai, 15 January 2004.



2. Waiting for the Opening Ceremony of the 4th World Social Forum, Goregaon, Mumbai, 16 January 2004.



3. Another World is Possible, WSF Mumbai 2004.



4. Violence against Women, WSF Mumbai 2004.



5. Opening Evening, speeches by: Ahmed Ben Bella (Algeria), Abdul Amir al Rekaby (Iraq), Arundati Roy (India), Chico Whitaker (Brazil), Jeremy Corbyn (UK), Shirin Ebadi (Iran), Mustafa Barghouti (Palestine), WSF Mumbai 2004.



6. Rainbow Planet: A Dialogue between Various Movements on Sexuality Issues, Hall 2, WSF Mumbai 2004.

(next two pages)

Bruno Serralongue
World Social Forum, Mumbai, 2004
 17 Ilfochrome prints on aluminium, each 40cm x 50cm
 Courtesy the Artist and Air de Paris



7. Land First Mela, Rural Festival on Land Rights, Kandivali, WSF Mumbai 2004.



8. World Social Forum 2004, Mumbai.



9. Help, Help, Help, WSF Mumbai 2004.



10. Judge Not, Support Sexual Preference, WSF Mumbai 2004



11. Workshop: Let's Create Solidarity of Workers confronting Multinationals, WSF Mumbai 19 January 2004.



12. Rally against US imperialism and Iraq Occupation organised by Mumbai Resistance 2004, Kranti Maidan, Mumbai 20 January 2004.



13. Delegates at rally against US imperialism, Kranti Maidan, Mumbai 2004.



14. Condemn World Bank, WSF Mumbai 2004.



15. During the closing ceremony of the 4th World Social Forum, Azad Maidan, Mumbai 21 January 2004.



16. Union Flags, Mobilising Solidarity, Hall 5, WSF Mumbai 2004.

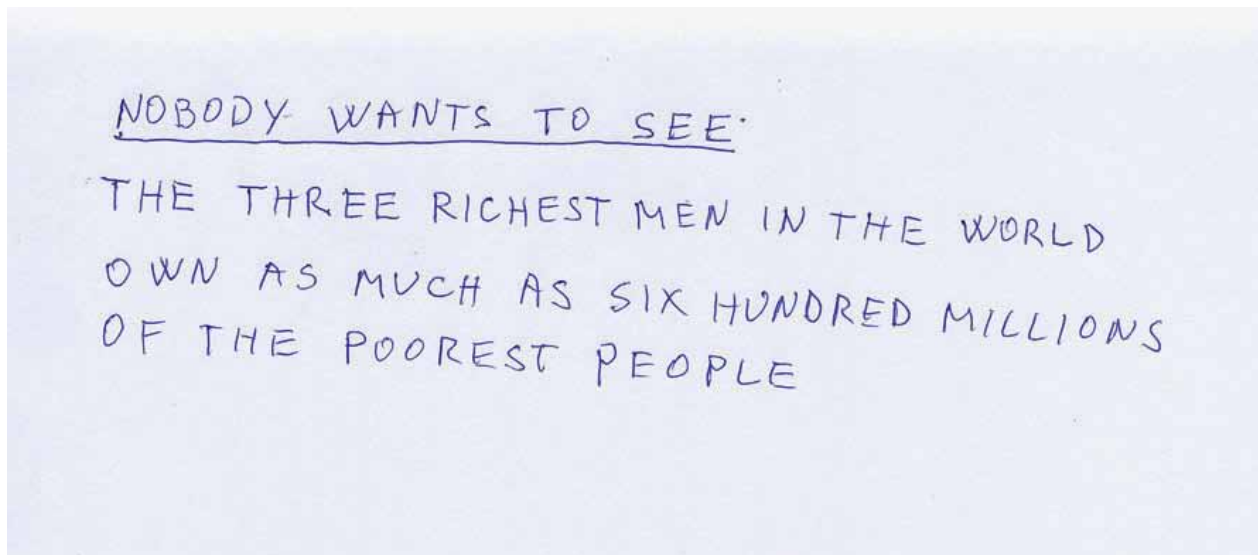


17. Opening of Mumbai Resistance 2004 Forum, Veterinary College, Goregaon, Mumbai 17 January 2004

Mladen Stilinović

Nobody Wants to See, 2009 is a devastatingly simple example of political Conceptual art. It simply features the number 3 printed 600 million times on a large ream of paper, alongside a single piece of paper printed with a single number 3. This symbolises the fact that the wealth of the three richest people in the world today is equal to the wealth of 600 million of the world's poorest. In doing this, Croatian artist Mladen Stilinović offers us a way to visualise what 'nobody wants to see' – i.e. the incredible disparity of wealth and poverty in our globalised times. Conceptual art has been described as 'thought made visible'. Here, Stilinović has made the unthinkable visible, at least in terms of sheer numbers.

Mladen Stilinović's work often involves playing with language, or with other visual and non-visual signs – in this case, numbers. He was involved in the avant-garde art scene in Yugoslavia in the 1970s. Since then, an abiding theme of his work has been the position of the artist under Socialism, on the one hand, and under Capitalism, on the other. Many of his art works play with the symbolic authority of the colour red, for example, which during Communism had powerful, utopian associations which now carry much less weight. The difference between ideology and everyday life, and the legacy of the avant-garde and utopias today, is something his art probes. Poverty is also a recurring theme. His art works offer a social critique that is at once humorous and melancholy. Stilinović has made works in a great many media: performance, collage, film and installation, for example. Many of his works take the form of books (he has made over eighty books). Mladen Stilinović was born in Belgrade (former Yugoslavia) in 1947 and lives in Zagreb, Croatia.



Mladen Stilinović
Nobody Wants to See, 2009
 Printed sheets, drawings (detail), dimensions variable
 Courtesy of the Artist, Zagreb



Mladen Stilinović
Nobody Wants to See, 2009
 Printed sheets, drawings, dimensions variable
 Installation view, *Uneven Geographies: Art and Globalisation* at Nottingham Contemporary
 Courtesy of the Artist, Zagreb. Photo by Andy Keate

Yang Zhenzhong

Yang Zhenzhong worked with 1500 employees at a Siemens factory in Shenzhen, China, to make *Spring Story (Siemens)*. Each individual contributed a single word or short phrase from a famous speech given in 1992 by Deng Xiaoping, called the Southern Campaign Speech, in which the former Leader of the Communist Party of China sought to reconcile China's economic reform along market lines with revolutionary communist theory – so-called, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It was these reforms, and in particular the initiation of Special Economic Zones in the 80s, that paved the way for China's extraordinary economic rise. Yang has organised the participants in *Spring Story* like a production line. Each contributes a small component to the final product.

Shenzhen became China's – and the world's - first Special Economic Zone in 1980. This meant that it operated according to a more liberal economic regime than the rest of China – one designed to attract foreign investment and geared towards production for the export market. The results have been staggering. Since then Shenzhen has developed from a village to a city of 20 million. The Siemens plant in Shenzhen is therefore a symbol of the economic reforms that are re-shaping the world in the 21st century.

Siemens, the engineering giant, is headquartered in Germany. Last year its global revenue was reputedly over 76.5 billion Euros and it employs over 400,000 people in 190 countries. Yang Zhenzhong was born in Hangzhou, China, in 1968 and lives in Shanghai. Using performance, video and photography, his work reflects on life at a time of rapid change.



Yang Zhenzhong
Spring Story (Siemens), 2003
 Single channel video, 12 minutes
 Courtesy of the Artist

Fool's Cap World Map

“This startling and disturbing image is one of the enigmas of cartographic history. The artist, date and place of publication are all unknown, and one can only guess at its purpose. The geography of the map strongly resembles that of the world maps of Ortelius published in the 1580s, giving a tentative date of c. 1590. This is the earliest known use of the world map in a visual joke. Its central visual metaphor is the universality of human folly and various mottos around the map reinforce that theme. The panel on the left says: “Democritus laughed at it [i.e. the world], Heraclitus wept over it, Epichthonius Cosmopolites portrayed it.” Although Epichthonius Cosmopolites appears to be the author’s or artist’s name, it translates roughly as “Everyman,” leaving the mapmaker’s true identity hidden.

A strong legacy of the theme of the Fool exists in literature and popular art from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries. The Fool was licensed to break rules, speak painful truths and mock power and pretension, and the grotesque shape he bore was a kind of living punishment. This frame of reference would have been quite familiar to the audience of this engraving in the 1590s. And people would have recognised in this map a radical visual interpretation of the Fool’s role: it is now the whole world that takes on the Fool’s costume, thus forcing the viewer to confront the possibility that the entire created order is irrational, alien and threatening.”

From Peter Whitfield, *The Image of the World: 20 Centuries of World Maps* (Pomegranate Artbooks, 1995)



Artist unknown
Fool's Cap World Map, c.1580
 Hand coloured engraving on paper, 37 cm x 53 cm
 The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. Bequeathed by Francis Douce, 1834

Credits

Exhibition curated by T.J. Demos and Alex Farquharson

Exhibition produced by Jim Waters (Curator), with Abi Spinks (Assistant Curator), Fiona Parry (Assistant Curator) and Daniella Rose King (Assistant Curator). Installation managed by Steve Barnett, David Thomas and James Brouwer.

Public Programme produced and co-curated by Rob Blackson, Curator of Public Programmes

Publication edited by Alex Farquharson and Jim Waters

Designed by Nick Chaffe

Lenders

Air de Paris

Roel Arkesteijn

The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Sharon Avery-Fahlström and The Öyvind Fahlström Foundation and Archives at Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA)

Centre Pompidou, Paris. Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle

Collection Frac Franche-Comté

Thomas Dane Gallery, London

Susan G. Jacoby

Donald Lombardi and Pierogi, New York

Colleccio MACBA. Fundació Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Galerie Polaris, Paris

kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City

Susan Swenson and Joe Amrhein, New York

Tate

Ziggi Golding, Z Photographic Ltd

Acknowledgements

The Artists; Chiara Agnello, Careof, Milan; Martine d'Anglejan-Chatillon, Thomas Dane and Tom Dingle, Thomas Dane Gallery, London; Roel Arkesteijn; Laurence Auer and Caroline Ferreira, French Embassy, London; Sharon Avery-Fahlström and The Öyvind Fahlström Foundation and Archives at MACBA; Florence Bonnefous and Helene, Air de Paris; Christopher Brown and Christina Chilcott, The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford; Caroline Collier and Nicole Simões da Silva, Tate; Norbert David, Collection Frac Franche-Comté; Alexia Dehaene, ShanghART gallery, Shanghai; Ziggi Golding, Z Photographic Ltd; Index - The Swedish Contemporary Art Foundation; Donald Lombardi and Pierogi, New York; Jose Kuri and Georgina Arozarena Caso, kurimanzutto gallery, Mexico City; Sue MacDiarmid; Bartomeu Mari, Chus Martínez, Samuel Mestre, Antonia Maria Perello, Ariadna Robert, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA); Ewan McNeill, Castle Veterinary Services, Nottingham; Alfred Pacquement and Corinne Picarello, Centre Pompidou, Paris, Musée national d'art moderne / Centre de création industrielle; Ian Robinson; Louise Shelley, CCA Glasgow; Mark Stewart, Marquatics, Nottingham; Susan Swenson and Joe Amrhein; Bernard Utudjan, Galerie Polaris, Paris



The words in the foreword, essay and artist section (except Fool's Cap World Map) are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License

All other text and images copyright the artists, author and photographers

swiss arts council
prohelvetia



iaspis



Supported by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



**Nottingham
Contemporary**

Logo by Vidya Gastaldon