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Abstracts of Papers

KEYNOTE

In the Shadow of Empire: The Changing Sculptural Iconography of Colonial and Postcolonial Calcutta

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This lecture will take up the theme - 'In the Shadow of Empire' - through the persistence and proliferation of the genre of civic public statuary in India and its shifting cast of characters. It will focus on a city that was the seat of the British empire in India until 1911 (when the capital shifted to New Delhi) and witnessed the installation of the largest repertoire of imperial sculpture over the 19th and early 20th century, much of which curiously remained in place in the city for two decades after India's independence in 1947. This paradox will remain a central theme, as I explore various moments in the many travels, dislocations and relocations of Calcutta's imperial statues while charting a small parallel history of Indian statue-making over these transitional decades of the last years of British rule and the coming of Independence.

Imperial Histories and Conditions in the Russian Compound - the new site of Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem

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The construction of the new building of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem is about to be completed. The ultra-modernist building designed by the well-known Japanese architectural firm SANAA is located in the heart of the Russian Compound built in the mid-nineteenth century during the Ottoman Empire. The Academy was established in 1906 by the Jewish artist Boris Schatz. Schatz belonged to an Association that called on Jews who had immigrated from Russia to take on Ottoman citizenship and renounce their Russian identity, thereby improving their chances of integration with Arab inhabitants. It was the product of a particular moment when the Ottoman rulers, fearing Egypt's power, tightened ties with European empires, and allowed them to purchase plots and construct buildings. The Russian Tsar, for example, acquired an area of 70 hectares on which buildings were erected housing about fifteen thousand pilgrims.

Soon, however, the First World War broke out, the Russian pilgrims stopped coming, and the buildings were abandoned. Schatz was expelled by the Ottomans from Jerusalem and the Academy was closed. In 1918 the British Empire took over control from the defeated Ottoman Empire and appropriated the Russian Compound, and the buildings housed governmental offices, courts, and detention centres. After a decade, Bezalel reopened, this time as a modernist school of art and design under British rule. Thirty years later the

governmental institutions of the State of Israel replaced the institutions of the British Empire.

My paper will examine how different imperial conditions (Ottoman, British, and Russian) operate in the Russian Compound and ask how they will affect the integration of the Academy into the area, and to what extent this location evokes imperial motifs hidden in the Bezalel Academy.

Mongolian *Zurag* Painting as Post-Imperial Modernity

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Positioned between Russia and China, and for centuries at the heart of pan-Asian trade and the spiritual practices of Buddhism and Shamanism, present-day Mongolia constitutes a unique cultural crossroads in the history of post-imperial Russian and Soviet borderlands. This paper examines the phenomenon of *zurag* ('painting' in Mongolian), which became a popular approach to artmaking in Mongolia in the 1950s and 1960s. It was initiated by the Mongolian artist Nyam-Osoryn Tsultem (1923-2001), who was sent to Moscow to study European-style oil painting in the 1940s. Tsultem's artistic approach was to mix European realist painting techniques with the conventional bright, flat surfaces, and thick contours used by Buddhist monks to create spiritual images like *thangkas*.

This paper addresses how and why *zurag* became so popular, as well as how it continues to be received and historicized by audiences in post-imperial Mongolia and abroad. I hypothesize in this paper that it was an invented tradition that had global connections from its inception. The making of *zurag* in the twentieth century functioned as a medium through which historic practices of Buddhist artmaking survived and were transformed despite—or perhaps because of—the annihilation of Buddhism and its spiritual by the Soviet regime.

Many art historians have assumed that the Soviet obsession with national rootedness, as well as its rigid ideological programming, left artists oblivious to, and thus logistically and intellectually unable to, engage with developments outside their borders. My analysis shows that this assumption does not align with the historical record. Work by Soviet *zurag* painters, as well as by contemporary students of this school (such Baatarzorig Batjargal), indicates that these artists sought to participate in their worlds as fully as possible, producing art *of their moment* in that it responded to and continues to engage their conditions of production, reception, and distribution.

Uzhhorod Interwar Modernist Architecture: The State vs. Private Developers

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In 1919, a year after the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic, Subcarpathian Rus, previously part of Hungary in the Habsburg Empire, became part of the new state, with Uzhhorod as its regional capital. Architecture became the best and clearest indicator of the course which the new government would take in its approach to ruling the region. Using the example of the state's activity in the field of urban planning and architectural design in Uzhhorod, the paper examines how the government of the young Czechoslovak republic reshaped the urban fabric of the city, endowing it with a stylistically new architecture. The impact of the appearance of new modernist architecture on the provincial town, which had been on the periphery of Austria-Hungary, is emphasized by the scale of implementations. Uzhhorod underwent a process of radical transformation. For the first time in the history of the city, a partial regulatory plan was devised and implemented, with new quarters and colonies of villas appearing. In parallel, the global problems of the city infrastructure, issues of health care and education were addressed, which was directly reflected in the quantity and quality of new buildings. In summary, an entire range of new types of building that had been previously lacking in the capital of the region, appeared precisely at the time of the emergence, formation and development of the newest modernist architecture, its character shaped by Czechoslovak architectural practices.

Against this, however, the architecture of private developers exhibited a continuing orientation towards the former centre of government: Budapest (Uzhhorod had been in the Hungarian half of the Habsburg monarchy). With its attraction to art deco and reminiscences of the baroque, which became highly popular in interwar Hungary, the Budapest footprint and script was clearly visible. Implemented exclusively in projects realised by local architects and engineers of Hungarian origin, this interspersed, that stands in contrast to the laconic architecture of Czechoslovak modernism, to some extent even enlivens the architecture of Uzhhorod, giving it greater diversity.

The Monument of Karel Kopal in Znojmo in the Whirlwind of History

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Karel Kopal (1788-1848) was an officer of the Austrian army; he showed his military skills, especially in the Battle of Vicenza in 1848, which was also fatal for him. Nevertheless, after his death, he became a celebrated hero of the Austrian Empire. Kopal was born in Ctidružice

(Schidrowitz) near Znojmo (Znaim), today a peripheral town in the border region of the Czech Republic, then the third most important town of the Moravian Margraviate, closely connected to municipalities in neighbouring Lower Austria. Kopal's friends in Znojmo decided to erect a monument to him, which gained a place in a prestigious location in the developing urban space. The monument was designed by prominent Viennese artists Dominik Fernkorn and Anton Sprenger and was erected in the form of an obelisk in 1853.

The monument functioned, as intended throughout the rest of the Habsburg monarchy, to celebrate a heroic soldier. After the establishment of Czechoslovakia, however, this work of art, as a product of the previous era, became the target of vandalism and official efforts to alter it and cover up its original meaning. Regardless, Kopal, although an officer of the Imperial Army, came from a Czech-speaking family. The proposed paper addresses questions concerning the transformations in meaning of the monument during the new regimes after 1918, 1938, 1945 and even today. As the CFP for this conference asks: to what extent is it possible in this case to trace a 'sense of loss and nostalgia'? What are the 'lessons to be learned from the failed efforts of the past'? Moreover, how could interpretation of the past reshape the perception of an individual artwork and its symbolic meaning in public and scholarly discourse at particular periods?

Imperial Fugue: Echoes of the Qing Empire at the Chicago World's Fair, 1933

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In 1928, the Chicago millionaire Vincent Bendix decided to bring a work of imperial Chinese architecture to the Chicago World's Fair. Selected for him by the Swedish explorer, Sven Hedin, it was the Wanfaguiyi Hall of Jehol (1767-71), a pagoda from the summer retreat of the emperor Qianlong in Chengde, Hebei province, in northern China. Bendix commissioned a team of Chinese architects and craftsmen to reproduce it faithfully in Chicago.

When the Fair opened in 1933, Hebei had been conquered by the Japanese and incorporated into the puppet state of Manchukuo. This gave the completed 'Bendix Lama Temple' conflicting layers of political meaning. Bendix's commission placed imperial China in Chicago, laying claim to the Qing through an act of architectural mimicry. In contrast, the exhibition of the Japanese government at the Fair framed the state of Manchukuo as the spiritual homeland of the Manchu court culture that was on display within the temple, justifying their claims to this puppet state. Against this, the Republican Chinese government exhibition at the Fair dismissed the temple as a vestige of the overthrown Manchu occupation, irrelevant to the cultural and political scope of the modern Chinese Republic.

I argue that all of these attitudes are echoes of Qianlong's original vision for the site. The Wanfaguiyi Hall stands within Qianlong's reduced-scale reproduction of the Potala Palace, winter palace of the Dalai Lamas of Tibet, an act of architectural mimicry that placed their royal palace squarely within his purview. Moreover, it constructed a Manchu identity that incorporated Tibetan culture, thereby normalizing the annexation of Tibet by the Qing dynasty in 1720. Critically, only Manchu and Tibetan visitors were allowed to visit the original Wanfaguiyi Hall; Qianlong used other methods to justify the annexation of Tibet when addressing a Han Chinese audience. Although the Qing empire fell in 1911, the persistence of the Qing empire thus shaped the construction of the Bendix Lama Temple, the narratives used to contextualize it.

Oil Painting as Imperial Praxis: The Case of Jiang Feng and Chinese Art

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Oil painting has remained the most prestigious medium in China. Large-scale thematic painting in oil, harking back both to the European Grand Manner and to the Soviet *kartina*, has remained at the centre of the vibrant art production supported by the Chinese state patronage. This is despite the party state's frequent purges of colonial residues, which occurred not only in the period of Mao's rule, but also in more recent years.

This paper focuses on Jiang Feng (1910-1982), a leftist-artist-turned party cadre, whose life and career illuminates the curious case of Chinese Communist revolutionaries' fervent embrace of a medium and genre imprinted with imperial and colonial legacy. Jiang's remark, 'now we can paint oil painting,' made on the eve of the Chinese Communist Party's takeover of the capital in 1949, epitomizes a fetish of oil painting widespread among Chinese artists. Examining the art apparatus of Mao's China through the career of a top administrator and art writer like Jiang, this paper demonstrates how a peculiar understanding of the medium of oil painting has consolidated a mythical conflation of reality, order, and autocratic central control. Jiang's generation and legacy is connected with the role history painting in oil plays today in China's overseas overreach as well as with its internal and external colonialism. The illusionistic power of oil painting is instrumentalized to seal claims to truth and to discourage questioning of the validity of the party state. The status of oil painting provides a unique lens to the entanglement of China's postimperial inferiority complex in art and its renewed imperial ambition.

Reviving Art, Renewing Empire: The Russian Church of Holy Maria Magdalena in Darmstadt

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In 1897, Tsar Nicholas II commissioned a Russian Orthodox church to be built on the Mathildenhöhe in Darmstadt, the birthplace of his consort, Alexandra Fedorovna (formerly Princess Alix of Hesse and by Rhine). With designs by Slavic revival artists Leon Benois and Viktor Vasnetsov, mosaics by the Frolov brothers, and inspired by Russian churches of the sixteenth century, the building not only served as a private place of worship for the tsar's family, it also demonstrated how the art and architecture of the Russian 'stil' modern' could serve as a powerful tool for upholding imperial tradition, and as a conduit for neo-nationalism. But the extent of its influence is remarkable. Further periods of renewal and revival followed the October Revolution and collapse of the tsarist empire in 1917, and the building's imperial agency survives to this day.

As a Russian Orthodox site in western Europe with a direct connection to the imperial family, this small but artistically striking church has, arguably, become a shrine—an ark, even. Its ongoing practical function as a spiritual space serving émigrés and Orthodox followers is shared with that of the preservation of its patrons' legacy. Since the canonisation of the imperial family as 'new martyrs' by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in 1981, the church has actively commemorated them, together with their surviving possessions and artefacts such as icons and embroideries. Tracing the history of the building from its art nouveau origins and Arts and Crafts connections to its life in the present day, this paper uses the Russian Church at Darmstadt as a case study to explore how narratives of Russian imperialism, nationalism, and artistic revival have continued to be recycled over the course of the long twentieth century.

'For True Elegance...': The Kingsway Stores at the Ends of Empire in West Africa

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The selection of a gift for Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah to mark Ghanaian independence in 1957 was the source of much debate amongst the management of Kingsway Stores. As the most exclusive department store chain in West Africa, Kingsway had a certain prestige to project. Yet as a retailer associated with the outgoing colonial elite, owned by the expatriate Unilever Group, its position after Ghanaian independence was an ambiguous one. The committee in charge eventually decided upon a 12-piece dinner service in white Staffordshire porcelain with a 'modern, yet elegant' gold design as a 'suitable and practical' present for the new president (Kingsway Papers, Unilever Archive).

This example encapsulates Kingsway's goals after the end of empire in West Africa. The chain sought to prolong its business in the region by marketing its existing range of clothing and homeware to a new African clientele. Building on patterns of colonial intervention in the domestic lives of indigenous peoples, the Kingsway stores instrumentalised didactic marketing campaigns, including exhibitions and ideal home shows, to sell a vision of modern, and modernist, domesticity to the African consumer. At the same time, new modernist department stores were commissioned from expatriate architects on prominent urban sites to link the chain with the urban ambitions of post-colonial West African political regimes. Charting the Kingsway stores' responses to the formal end of British rule in Ghana and Nigeria thus offers an important case study that illuminates the complex entanglements of colonial and neo-colonial profit-seeking with architectural and interior design. In this sense, the paper argues that decolonisation in the region was defined by continuities and ruptures, and Kingsway sought to instrumentalise both in order to continue profitable business in West Africa.

The Ministry of Public Works: Learning Lessons from the Contested Past

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The first half of the twentieth century was a period of intense activity of the Ministries of Public Works in Austria-Hungary and its successor states. It means that the Ministry formed an essential part of both the Habsburg and the Czechoslovak governments, and employing the state budgets shaped the built environment in the particular countries. Shifting the perspective towards the underexplored field of state institutions opens up a new way of evaluating the history of modern architecture and, vice versa, the impact of state-building priorities on society.

In my talk, I will scrutinize initiatives and practices of the Ministries in Austria-Hungary and the first Czechoslovak Republic to get a clearer picture of the quantity, quality, and range of state tasks in the field of architecture. Examining the official building agenda in Czechoslovakia with respect to Austria-Hungary, I will question the policies in heterogeneous political systems and state priorities in times of radical transformations. The ministerial building tasks allow me to gain critical insights by identifying and evaluating differences and similarities in the built environment which will provide a nuanced reading of underlying strategies in Czechoslovakia.

In a nutshell: The guiding hypothesis of my talk is that the dominant narrative is based on emphasizing disparities between the political systems before and after 1918, while Czechoslovakia swiftly introduced numerous methods and policies of its imperial predecessor. Once we take into consideration a major corpus of buildings commissioned by

the state that is as yet largely ignored and uncharted, we can trace the leading principles in Czechoslovak governance reproducing some patterns of colonialism

‘A Presence, an Absence, a Fictitious Territory’: Postmemories of Smyrna in Etel Adnan’s Family Memoirs and Joana Hadjithomas & Khalil Joreige’s *Ismyrna*

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This paper examines the works of Lebanese visual artists Etel Adnan and Joana Hadjithomas, whose families were displaced from Smyrna (modern-day Izmir) after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The first part focuses on Adnan’s writings on exile as well as her artist’s book *Family Memoirs on the End of the Ottoman Empire*, commissioned for the 14th Istanbul Biennial in 2015. Written as an accordion notebook, *Family Memoirs* contains Adnan’s hand-written reflections on the demise of the Empire and its impact on her family.

The second part of my talk analyzes Khalil Joreige and Hadjithomas’s video *Ismyrna* (2016), which focuses on a conversation between Adnan and Hadjithomas on the haunting consequences of the Empire’s collapse for their families. Neither artist had ever been to Izmir as a place signifying loss and trauma. Yet they talk about an imaginary Smyrna based on the memories they inherited from their families. My discussion of Adnan and Hadjithomas’s identities as second- and third-generation immigrants respectively problematizes the generational distance that mediates the memory of the Ottoman Empire. It also articulates the artists’ attachment to the Ottoman past as an instance of postmemory, a term used by Marianne Hirsch to define memories mediated by images or stories of previous generations who witnessed a historical event.¹ Through formal analysis of *Family Memoirs* and *Ismyrna*, this paper argues that the substitution of memory with fantasy becomes a way of compensating for Hadjithomas’s and Adnan’s own lack of memories of historical events, as well as missing visual records of their families’ lives in Smyrna.

International Women Exhibition - 1939 - New York

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An international exhibition of women's artwork was held at the Riverside Museum in New York in 1939. The exhibition featured artists from eleven nations - Australia, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Norway, Switzerland and Sweden. Although the Germans were originally invited, they declined the invitation due to the growing political crisis. The exhibition opened on 15 October 1939, just over a week after

the invasion of Poland was completed. The foreword of the catalogue emphasized the importance of the strengthening of friendships among artists across borders.

In my presentation I wish to examine the extent to which artists from different nations, primarily those from the successor states of the Austria-Hungarian Monarchy, reflected on the period of the Monarchy in their artistic practices. Members of the older generation began their artistic careers at the end of the nineteenth century, when women's rights were much more limited, and studied mainly in women's art schools throughout Europe. Many of them remained still-life painters, their stylistic experiments ending in post-impressionism, their works carrying a nostalgia for the 'happy peacetime'. Members of the generation born after 1900 were looking for modern subjects, influenced by avant-garde trends. Their ambitions were different, they wanted to break out of the stereotypes that stigmatised women, they wanted to be original. The generational divide was, however, overridden by history. In this exhibition, which was organised at yet another turbulent time, there was a palpable, unspoken political divide among the artists. Hungary was a loser of World War I, while the other successor states were winners.

The so-called 'Women's Little Entente' was formed in the early 1920s, the art section of which organised its last major travelling exhibition in 1938. One of the aims of the exhibition was to oppose the Habsburg Restoration. Some members took part in the exhibition in New York as well. Some Hungarian artists, however, were influenced by revisionist politics: for example, Valéria Telkessy exhibited a work entitled *Trianon* at the Riverside Museum. Women artists were nevertheless connected in their struggle for women's rights, but in the new political situation their nations turned against each other. Naively, they all imagined a solution to the situation within the framework of pacifism, of which this joint exhibition was perhaps the last manifestation before 1945.

Alpine Butterwort and Sosnowsky's Hogweed: Negotiating Botanical Imperialism in Contemporary Latvian Art

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My paper addresses the phenomenon of 'botanical imperialism' (Casid 2005, Baber 2016) and the use of colonial ideologies to anchor its power in the natural environment by introducing new species or eliminating 'local' ones. Coloniality not only established new tastes in gardening and decoration but also introduced new plants for agricultural purposes. The Soviet Union followed this logic of botanical imperialism, through the introduction of plants such as blue spruce, corn, hogweed etc., to the Baltic region, while also altering gardening and farming practices. As an example of negotiating the botanical aftermath of the Soviet Union, I refer to the work of Latvian artist Linda Boļšakova. In the performance *Greenhouse Ethics* (2018) Boļšakova explored Sosnowsky's hogweed – a plant brought to

Latvia by Soviet authorities as food for cattle. Today the plant not only threatens native species but is also harmful to people because of its juice that burns the skin. The production of toxic environments and depleted landscapes can be considered as an ongoing colonizing practice by the Soviet Union in the post-socialist era. Botanical imperialism also limits and endangers local ecosystems. This problem is addressed by Bojšakova's performance *Living Memory* (2021), dedicated to Alpine butterwort, a rare carnivorous plant that has lived on the northern side of Staburags cliff in Latvia since the last ice age some 14,000–12,000 years ago. It was this plant's only natural growth. After the cliff was flooded due to the construction of the Hydroelectric Power Plant in 1965, when Latvia was under Soviet occupation, attempts were made to transplant Alpine butterwort to Raunas Staburags, but the plant was extinct in 2008. The vanishing of a plant also suggests the erasure of certain memories, legends, and cultural references, including the Staburags cliff, one of Latvia's landmarks. Taking this into account, the paper argues that Bojšakova's artworks offer tools for postcolonial critique from an environmental perspective in relation to topics such as botanical memory, vegetal agency, embodied experience and affective landscapes. They invite us to rethink the environments we live in and to recognize the heritage of imperial ambitions in relation to the natural world.

Casting Empires: The Dynastic Bronze Urn of Huế in Paris

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In the outskirts of Paris in the middle of the Bois de Vincennes, a lone bronze tripod cauldron stands across from a Vietnamese temple, the Temple du Souvenir Indochinois. It was originally devoted to the colonial dead who served the French in WWI. Alongside other decaying and physical remnants in this 'junkyard' of French the colonial vision from the early twentieth century, the cauldron stands out not only as a direct connection to the Nguyen dynasty in Vietnam. It also speaks to a much deeper historical anxiety about imperial legitimacy in East Asia, now transported and translated into French colonial terms.

Commissioned by the Nguyen emperor Khải Định (1885-1925), the cauldron (in Vietnamese: *đỉnh*) was a replica of one of the 'cao đỉnh,' nine cauldrons cast by the second Nguyen emperor Minh Mạng in 1835 to be placed in front of the ancestral hall in Huế. This was an effort to symbolically reunite the newly founded empire, which included territories from northern and southern Vietnam with recently annexed territories from Cambodia. Here, the Sinophile Nguyen state deliberately emulated a Chinese model, where a collection of nine cauldrons (*ding*) was crucial in the origin myth of the Chinese empire (*zhongguo*) and the symbolic unification of imperial territories (*tianxia*). Each *ding* (cauldron) stands in for a province of the land and the possession of all nine signals the mandate of heaven and therefore the legitimate authority of the ruler. The paper examines how this object of

Chinese imperial authority was appropriated by the Nguyen and then, again, by the French. Much like the flashes of memories from the past, each time the cauldron(s) are cast, they were reinscribed palimpsestically by the latest imperial and colonial power to serve in their own vision of the world.

Restitution Debates Following the Provisions of the Treaty of Riga and the Shaping of Polish and Soviet Memory Institutions (1921–1937)

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In a report summarizing his activities as the first curator of the Old Masters' gallery of the State Hermitage Museum, Alexandre Benois (1870-1960) noticed that he had to deal with two major challenges: the nationalized private art collections and the inheritance of the Polish collections confiscated since the time of the first partition. The latter were at the centre of fiery debates between eminent Russian and Polish scholars, museum, library and archive officials over the enforcement of the provisions of the Peace Treaty of Riga (1921), which, among others, regulated the restitution and repatriation of cultural property. In the following years Benois, along with other personalities of both the old-imperial and new-soviet order, such as Igor Grabar and Sergey Oldenburg, was confronting the restitution claims presented by the emerging scholars and heritage officials of the new Polish state.

In this paper I argue that this debate, fundamental for both the formation of Polish state museums, libraries and archives and for the Soviet transformation of the imperial memory institutions and collections, was grounded in the nineteenth-century understanding of culture and the museum, and it reflected the current cultural ambitions and imperial inheritance of both states. In my analysis I focus on the notion of collections of "universal cultural significance" introduced by the Treaty of Riga. According to its provisions objects were exempted from restitution if they were important for the integrity of universally ranked (recognized) collections, such as the Hermitage. This raised the question: could the Polish nation build universal museums and collections, or were they only a privilege of former Empires? The records of this discussion will be analyzed not only as a fascinating testimony of one of the most successful examples of restitution after the First World War, but also as one of the most important expert discussions over the definition of cultural heritage, its nationality and universality to be held at the time of the dissolution of multinational Empires.

Touching the Wound as an Act of Unmasking

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The paper will consider the controversial process of selection for Portuguese representation at the 2022 Venice Biennale, not only as an object of scrutiny – as it was already subject of numerous national and international critical analysis – but as a moment, an important step for the unmasking of systemic gender and race discrimination.

Curated by Bruno Leitão, Grada Kilomba's project *The Wound* recognised the colonial project as the root of three contemporary crises: climate, human rights, and the militarization of human relations. Although it had the highest score, the arithmetic-average-based evaluation led to the selection of another project. The decision process and the resultant public discussion demonstrated the ongoing denial of structural discrimination based on a non-resolved – however, glorified – colonial legacy, an open wound, expressed in different forms. This denial is not abstract or neutral. The paper will focus on this case study to analyse and explore the luso-tropicalist discourse and the normalization of daily racist behaviours as ornaments that contribute to the ultimate masquerade: the pretending that there is no wound. As expressed by Manuella Bezerra de Melo in *Volta Para a Tua Terra's* preface, "to say may hurt, but wounds don't disappear when we pretend they are not there"¹.

Decolonizing Art History: A South Asian Perspective

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Museology in post-colonial societies is a sensitive issue. While colonialism is an integral component of their history, to display aesthetic objects pertaining to colonialism in post-independence museums can be problematic. For, on the one hand, the 'historicity' of the objects makes them significant objects in the collection. On the other, however, their being representative of the relics of the imperial past quite often raises the question as to what place they should occupy in exhibitions in post-independence times.

This paradox has become of paramount importance in the context of the recent call to decolonize art galleries and museums. India presents specific challenges, for unlike settler colonies such as the US or Australia, is not characterized by the binaries of indigenous vs colonial cultural dichotomies. Rather, its history was marked by hybrid cultures. This paper thus seeks to explore the issues presented by artworks produced during the colonial period, which have a permanent space in museums of national importance in India. Museology, both as practice and as theory, has a huge role in providing historical knowledge to the public. But the cry to decolonise art requires that curators be mindful of the

epistemological origins of the production of the artworks exhibited, without compromising the need to decolonize history itself.

Museums of national importance such as the Rashtrapati Bhawan Museum and the National Museum, both in New Delhi, in addition to private art galleries, have enormous collections of colonial artworks on permanent display. How can they decolonize themselves? Does it involve simply removing artworks associated with the period of colonial rule. Or is it a process wherein the curatorial practice entails a careful engagement with the historical processes, including the milieu in which the movement for decolonizing emerged?

Colonial Entanglements, Decolonial Perspectives: a Case Study of the National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw

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The traces of the colonial past remain largely unnoticed in the museums of central and eastern Europe, because the history of colonial entanglements and involvement is different and less obvious than in western Europe. Although the colonial past of the region was recently a subject of extensive studies in the field of history, it has not been systematically analyzed in relation to museums in countries in central and eastern Europe. Despite significant differences between the European 'multiple colonialisms' (John Oldfield), many problems related to museums and collecting cultures remain common.

First, many of the objects from colonised territories in museums in central and eastern Europe were acquired illegally or in situation of unequal power balance. Questions of provenance, restitution and consciousness-raising that are central to the debates on museums nowadays, have become relevant for many of these institutions, too. No less important is the issue of the display, the way that objects from formerly colonial countries, are presented that narratives about them are constructed in the museum space.

The paper analyzes the example of the African collection in the National Ethnographic Museum in Warsaw. Objects that were brought to the collection by travellers in the 19th century were destroyed during the WWII, but parts of the African collection taken over from post-German institutions, located on the Western Borderlands of Poland, invite discussion about central and eastern European involvement in colonialism. This includes "European internal colonization" (Jürgen Zimmerer), and the role the museums played in these processes. These issues have not yet been fully addressed, even though past colonial entanglements still affect the activities of museums in central and eastern Europe today. They impact on exhibitions, educational programs and publications. At the same time, the paper also reflects on how these museums engage in current decolonial discourses and practices.