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The Wives have consistently challenged dominant historical constructions from a vernacular perspective, interrogating how the broader public opinion comes to be shaped through particular tactics of narration. For another video installation in the following year, *Spiral Betty* (2004), the central question posed was the difference between "good" and "bad" people. In the two-channel installation, a simple dialogue occurs between two blind (i.e. objective), elderly (historicizing) women, one framed on each screen. Their space cursorily overlaps in the footage to suggest continuity, but they are effectively cordoned off from each other via the separate video screens. Their dialogue, moreover, is not truly their own. The script originates from interviews that Henry VIII's Wives conducted with two separate groups of peoples: convicts and church members. The artist collective compiled statements from the "bad" and the "good," respectively, and reorganized their remarks into acting lines for the elderly women. The "good" woman displays a benevolent attitude and generally discusses family, friends, and religion. The other, however, practically her sister in appearance and demeanor, speaks from the perspective of the

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<sup>325</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 152-57.

convicts, punctuating the dialogue with bizarre statements for such a benign older lady: “Yeah, I crave... Every now and again I crave for drugs,” recounting her material, even homicidal, desires.

Whereas the *Halfway* series focuses on disrupting an official account through a minority vernacular, *Spiral Betty* presents a more nuanced problem. Voices are clearly altered and placed out-of-context, but to what end? The women ostensibly speak of faith, morality, and remembrance; their remarks derive from accounts of quite personal experiences and lessons. Yet their “dialogue” offers no real understanding or reflection:

#2: We’ve all been a little bit bad now and then, but evil is really bad, really wrong, really nasty.

#1: Just go with the flow.

#2: Evil is something out of hand, it’s not just evil, it’s mixed up with other things.

#1: Yeah, but... If he was going around and doing these things, then he, he’s an animal, isn’t he?

#2: There’s evil and there’s bad. I mean, is evil the worst kind of bad?

They can offer no thoughtful exchange because their discussion is reduced and filtered from stereotyped categories of “good” and “bad” people. The real experiences that inform those categories are lost – only simulated through edited, mistranscribed, and mediated representation.

In *Spiral Betty* (an homage to Robert Smithson’s *Spiral Jetty*), the women sit in a bland, high-rise office space amidst a New York backdrop of skyscrapers and industrial power plants. Beneath the superficial topic of good, bad, and evil in the world, the elderly women also touch on deeper issues of power, wealth, and equality (“I think some people can manipulate the future... People with power;” “No, I don’t believe that should only be for rich people;” “No, because we’re all equal, aren’t we?”). These themes, however, remain occluded by the uncertainty and discontinuity of their script:

#1: Three o’clock in the morning and he screamed out a proper scary scream... And you say to her, what are those for, babe? She says to keep the ghosts away.

#2: I think you're probably reincarnated from something or someone.

#1: I was going to say something there but, ha, I don't believe that.

#2: I don't know. I think it's just too mystical to understand.

The women literally have no real idea what they are saying, each provided lines by a Wife through an ear piece. In the end, the women each represent a whole category of people, but remain blind to their environment and can only parrot others' mistranscribed statements.

It is no coincidence that Henry VIII's Wives produced *Spiral Betty* in New York, their first show in the U.S., only a few years after 9.11.01 and George W. Bush's State of the Union Address labeling certain countries along an "axis of evil." Bush's sweeping generalizations helped exacerbate an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in the country at a critical moment, pushing toward a war with Iraq based on the false premise of weapons of mass destruction. He easily reduced the U.S. to the role of "good guy" versus Islamic "bad guys," confounding a vast array of contestatory accounts and representations and ultimately reinforcing an imperialistic, American stance. Like the elderly women, he became the parrot of misinformed, edited, filtered, and mediated representations that ultimately foreclosed the possibility of any productive dialogue.

#### **4.1.1 Moving Towards Architecture: Deconstructing an "Originary" Community**

In 2002, Henry VIII's Wives began constructing architectural elements in their installations, including a complete, life-sized model of the Neolithic settlement Skara Brae (ca. 3100-2500 B.C.E.) for their piece, *Light Without Shadow*. Discovered in 1850 on Orkney Island, off the coast of Scotland, Skara Brae is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and considered to be the most perfectly preserved Neolithic settlement in Europe. Along with a workshop, the settlement

could house approximately fifty people in its seven, modest residential quarters, each forty square meters on average and sunk into the ground with a central hearth, stone beds set into the walls, a few shelves, and a roof with a chimney. Pieced together with medium-density fiberboard, Henry VIII's Wives' minimalist yet labyrinthine replica filled the entire space of Glasgow's Tramway Gallery, an old, de-industrialized tram depot.

Within the barren rooms, the Wives included two separate, multi-screen video installations. Each video triptych displays a disjointed conversation among three different actors, with each person again filmed on a different screen, though camera movement indicates that the participants in each group share the same, respective space. Similar to the *Halfway* series and *Spiral Betty*, the actors do not speak their own words. Instead, Henry VIII's Wives conducted interviews with local residents in Glasgow and reconfigured their statements into a script for each group. For the younger actors' lines, Henry VIII's Wives interviewed members of a retirement home and people in a courthouse, and for the elderly set, they visited people at a local hydroponic tomato farm and acting school. Though the Wives only composed from extant transcripts, like ethnographers, they asked leading questions in order to acquire particular types of comments and then scrambled the order of those statements. Like the former inhabitants of Skara Brae, the lives of Glasgow locals inform the installation but remain anonymous and spectral, uttered by strangers. Though their interviews acted as a kind of oral documentation, *Light Without Shadow* does not attempt to represent the present-day community of Glasgow, which is temporally distant from, yet spatially near the Scottish site of Skara Brae. Instead the artwork subtly implicates its voices in a constructed conversation, as it does the bodies of viewers in the fake architectural space. It creates a "public" rather than community.

Whereas *Spiral Betty* focused on themes of morality, belief, and social constructions of “good” versus “bad” people, *Light Without Shadow* hinges on notions of temporality and historicization. The element that binds the video conversations is time, rather than any clear content or narrative: the three younger actors speak in the past tense, whereas the three elderly ones discuss matters in the future. The environments in the two triptychs also change subtly, jarring the temporal continuity of the spaces: the backgrounds shift from dark to light and vice versa. Sunlight in the younger trio’s room oscillates between light and shadow, despite the artwork’s title, and in the older actors’ space, the *Wives* painted different shades/tints of blue on the walls for separate shots. As signaled most evidently by the anachronistic replica of Skara Brae, the concept of time assumes a leading role in *Light Without Shadow*.

The three younger drama actors offer incomplete, disjointed statements about memory and temporality as they move around a dilapidated house. The first actor initiates the conversation, “I remember a sunny day...,” and only much later in the conversation returns to the ellipses: “That was a sunny day and I can remember it and that.” Another man states, “I can’t remember, so yes I am positive,” whereas the one woman suggests, “The man was too far in front of his time.” Though grammatically correct, the assertions are ambiguous and nonsensical in context, suggesting a connection among the people but simultaneously disallowing it. A fuller segment illustrates a general impression of time and memory as the content of the “conversation:”

#3: And in the real world it happens that people aggressively dislike each other (...) This is for some of you, for sure, the first time (...) Are you on fairly close terms?

#2: You are happy enough to pass time together? (...) Do you remember this house at all?

#1: There was a plaque on the wall down there, they stripped it, took it down, there was a wall down there with a plaque on it.



Each statement alludes to temporality, remembering, or markers of time, such as the plaque. The three participants appear to relay comprehensible thoughts to one another, but in the end, their communication breaks down as indeterminate or reiterated unnaturally.

In terms of location, the three young students are also filmed between interior and exterior spaces, and the environment/mood suggests a tension between containment/control and openness/uncontrollability. Pans across a forest scene frame the video installation, but the footage primarily focuses on a modern domestic space, abandoned and derelict, like the quarters of Skara Brae. The three actors describe the interior of a house and its rooms, awkwardly holding props like a ceramic vase, but they also mention uncontrolled spaces, such as a funfair park that was mobbed, “visits of contamination,” and crowds. The filmed room includes a wild horned owl at one point, suddenly appearing and disappearing on a stool, in contrast to two caged magpies. Overall, the actors convey an anxious tone concerning borders, inside and outside spaces, and who or what is contained or knowable within those walls. The three-channel video installation evokes the general unknowability of Skara Brae’s prehistoric community as an object of inquiry. Why did the inhabitants abandon the settlement? How did they live on a day-to-day basis, and why did their community fall apart? The borders of the site dissolved somehow, either from internal or external pressures. The younger actors recollect and recount thoughts, but it cannot mask their own contemporaneous distance and disconnection.

The elderly actors, in contrast, tend to discuss a future time in positive terms of love, beauty, relationships, and fruition, and their remarks, instead of recalling the past, often assume an imperative form, advising action in the present or future. The statements are still paradoxical and vague: “You have to be opposite;” “Be more or less aggressive;” or “Just stop, that’s absolutely right.” Much of the advice also concerns time – at what pace thought or action should

occur: “Give yourself the time to have that thought;” “I’ve no problem with that but we can do it more slowly;” or “Have the thoughts but have them sooner.” Though positive, they offer only inadequate, empty directions.

Despite their future orientation, however, the older actors sit amidst archaeological objects in a bare room. Henry VIII’s Wives borrowed the objects – such as a sword, vase, jewelry, and an Egyptian amulet in the shape of a hand – from a public gallery, an antique shop, and the Ministry of Defense. The camera captures the blind elderly as they physically handle the objects but ignore them in their discussion. Again, Henry VIII’s Wives utilize blind, older subjects in order to suggest historical bearing and a search for the “truth.” According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, analyzing such archaeological objects as markers of a past life involves a type of historical “eye-witnessing.” Similar to ethnographic observation, the process includes a shuttling back-and-forth between the roles of participant and observer, the “eye” being simultaneously engaged and distant.<sup>326</sup> These particular three discussants, however, are blind: the objects are visually inaccessible to them. As the woman remarks, “Why does he say there is something in his eye? Why?” Any question of “witnessing” these objects historically or ethnographically is denied, and the elderly participants remain just as ignorant and alienated from their surroundings as their younger counterparts.

The Wives’ installation, *Light Without Shadow*, refers to Plato’s cave allegory, an originary parable that warns against the domination of reason and thought by images, opinions, and representations. The prisoners of the underground cave can only see their shadows and a distorted, reflected reality. *Light Without Shadow* signals, in turn, a search for the “true” reality of its original, mythical peoples through the objectivizing disciplines of historiography,

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<sup>326</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2000), 239.

ethnography, and archaeology, yet every element is mediated, refracted, reconstructed, and represented. The Wives offer a simulated, plywood architecture of a prehistoric time; include video footage of alienated, generationally-separated subjects unable to connect or communicate with each other; and fill the soundspace with re-scripted words from a proximate yet detached Glaswegian community. The visitor must navigate, in other words, a jarring labyrinth of contemporaneity, with multiple temporalities and imagined life-worlds filling the architectural void. The installation – contrary to its claim on truth or light – is all shadow. It is defined by representations, mediations, and artifice.

Skara Brae, in some sense, symbolizes the “origins” of European peoples and civilization on the continent, as its most perfectly preserved Neolithic settlement. Yet in *Light Without Shadow*, the Wives highlight its story as obscured and inaccessible, de-mythologized and deconstructed, and they call into question the interpretative methods used to discover its past. At a time when numerous political leaders on the continent are offering primordial, essentialized accounts of “the people” in order to shore up borders and scapegoat those outside the “original” community, Henry VIII’s Wives portray the manipulation and construction of such imaginary histories. Viewers are invited not to the architecture of a folkloric, pure community, but into a disjunctive space of contemporaneity and multiplicity and a social-visual field that is, above all, mediated.

#### **4.1.2 Black Box Installation and Fear: *The Returning Officer***

Henry VIII’s Wives most recent three-screen installation, *The Returning Officer* (2007), also offers a multi-generic, uncanny historical narrative, one haunted by simultaneous, seemingly irreconcilable temporalities. Instead of video, however, the Wives created the material for this

piece with 16 mm film footage and installed the projection screens with old-timey musical accompaniment by an organ. Two screens stand back-to-back, and an organ lies visibly underneath and inside the partition wall; the third screen sits perpendicular to this arrangement. Outside of the installation in the entrance hallway, the Wives even offered a “trailer” for the film. A professional editor created a one-minute piece from their footage, which is now available on Youtube. It begins typically, “Coming Soon...,” a “Film in three parts.” The polished clip suggests an exciting, easily consumable drama; melodic operative singing invites the viewer through a climax and denouement of imagery, within a mere sixty seconds.

The three-screen installation, however, offers a much more complex juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated narratives and imagery. There is no scripted conversation in this piece, unlike in *Spiral Betty*, the *Halfway* series, or *Light Without Shadow*. There is no dialogue, in fact, only eerie organ music. Similar to their other works, the piece does feature elderly figures again as historical recount-ers or recollect-ors. They are not blind, but the artist collective solicited their participation from a residential home for those who suffer from dementia. Representing historical time, they lack the necessary mnemonic ability for accurate recollection.

When the Wives shot some of the piece’s film footage in Belgrade, Serbia, local residents recited to them the local legend of an unsolved murder. Apparently, an officer from WWII had returned to his villa (the Legacy House) during the last days of the war and was brutally shot in the back by an illegal squatter. According to one Wife, the group knew nothing of this narrative, yet locals continually repeated it to them on different occasions. The tale kept returning to them in the form of rumor or gossip. *The Returning Officer* “reenacts” this violent shooting. In the film, an elderly man attempts to fix a chandelier in his home, oddly hanging it with no light in an empty room, then walks out to his garden, and mimes being shot. No weapon or assassin is in

sight. Daytime suddenly transforms into night, and dissonant organ pipes play an unsettling soundtrack for the spoof murder. The overall effect is uncanny, creating the sense of a ghost story or horror film.

At the time of the film shooting, the Legacy House was in the process of being handed over to the Museum of Contemporary Art. It had previously served as a casino and brothel during former Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milošević's era. Officially known as the "Legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković," the villa housed a prominent communist party leader who amassed an impressive art collection during the 1930s and bequeathed it to the museum after his death.<sup>327</sup> In the 1980s, the museum lost control of the premises when it was leased to the Montenegro Harvest company and then subleased to A. D. Koleseum, as "a symptom of the Milošević-era transition," and run as a semi-closed restaurant (i.e. casino and brothel). Its operator, Darko Ašanin, coincidentally, was killed in a gunfight in the villa's yard in 1997, and his wife continued to manage the business until the museum successfully reclaimed the site in 2004 through court battles. *The Returning Officer* registers the overall anxiety concerning the Legacy House's tumultuous past, yet does not attempt to reconcile these conflicting stories – local gossip versus a legally-documented account.

*The Returning Officer* illustrates a transnational Europe: the first two screens (back-to-back) portray the Legacy House in Belgrade Serbia and an organ builder's house/workshop outside of Vilnius, Lithuania. The third exhibits the elderly figures in England, as well as an open poppy field in Austria. Each site is also a location where the group has worked together before, threading their own border-crossing collaboration obliquely in the piece's narrative. For the Vilnius footage, for instance, Henry VIII's Wives returned to an organ-maker with whom

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<sup>327</sup> Branislav Dimitrijević, accessed Septerm 6, 2011, <http://www.oktobarskison.org/47/pages/solakov.html>.

they had worked previously. They filmed the quotidian process of fabricating organ pipes, and commissioned a miniature one for the installation. According to the Wives, the organ serves as an open metaphor for Christianity, as a traditional vehicle used for mass psychedelic communication, or a type of propaganda. In a classically Brechtian sense, the Wives showcase this apparatus of mass illusion in their process of production.

The third video segment shifts between the elderly in London and a poppy field in Austria. The older people only sit and observe, as if witnessing the action taking place in the poppy field. In the latter location, a boy suddenly becomes dazed amidst a vast horizon of poppies and either falls asleep or loses consciousness. The dissonant organ music begins at this point, and an armed group of men and women begin running through the field, ostensibly searching for the young child. The narrative is quite disjointed, however, and even switches between two different sets of searching families. Though the rising dissonance and volume of the organ suggests a heightened, fearful drama, the narrative lacks any coherent structure or content.

According to Henry VIII's Wives, they filmed this segment in a fourth-generation-owned poppy field. The poppy flower is a multilayered symbol. It can signal, for instance, the remembrance of soldiers' deaths in WWI and later WWII, made famous by the poem, "Flanders Fields," perhaps evoking the "returning officer" to the Legacy House. Still a charged symbol of military remembrance in Britain, a Muslim man sparked conflict by burning poppies in the UK in 2004.<sup>328</sup> The production of heroin from large opium poppy fields in Afghanistan, however, is also a tremendously charged topic today; it is estimated that 90% of illegal heroin originates

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<sup>328</sup> Lauren Collins, "England, Their England: Immigration and Resurgent Nationalism," *New Yorker*, July 4, 2011, 33.

from Afghanistan's fields.<sup>329</sup> According to one *Wife*, forces such as the CIA are “toying and trying to predict the elections of other countries, and trying to kick off certain developments elsewhere that don't develop the way you thought,” such as a massive, global drug trade. The “returning officer” also refers to an agent responsible for overseeing elections in various parliamentary systems throughout the world. Stabilizing the Afghan government and economy is a pressing international concern. The elderly figures in the film appear to watch over a multiplicity of conflicting stories and symbols, local and transnational, that all occur simultaneously and disjointedly in the spoof horror film.

Rather than any clear narration, the film filters multiple histories through a “rumor”-based lens. Whereas *Spiral Betty* or the *Halfway* series offered clear (if distorted) scripts, *The Returning Officer* only suggests linkages through visually dramatic scenarios and emotive sound. The resulting associations are indeterminate, and a generally alienating and anxious tone results from the bizarre mixture of sound, imagery, and temporal disjunctions. Specific histories transform into vague, fearful scenarios and histrionic, cinematic moments for local peoples (traditional organ builders, fourth-generation farmers): an old veteran is apparently “shot” in his garden or a young child loses consciousness in a field of flowers. The mnemonically-disabled elderly historians, who observe it all from a distance, cannot effectively articulate these stories into a more coherent picture.

Indeed, the disjointed presentation of the film mimics how fear and anxiety may spread through misinformed, abbreviated, decontextualized, and overwrought stories in the mass media – all for the sake of a packaged, dramatic storyline. Even the sixty-second “trailer” is purposefully misrepresentative, including footage not presented in the actual installation. In the

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<sup>329</sup> Rupert Wingfield-Hayes “Russia blames Nato for drug surge,” *BBC News*, February 27, 2010, accessed September 6, 2011, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8540726.stm>, no page numbers.

end, *The Returning Officer* confounds pressing, worldwide concerns (religion, continued warfare, globalization) with popular local tales, situating them in a transnational Europe, in order to expose an irrational, emotive fear that increasingly propagates from a contemporary mass media apparatus. With each mediated version, a chain of signifiers leads further to an uncanny and indeterminate sense of fear.

#### 4.2 **POPULISM AND THE MASS MEDIA**

The speed and pervasiveness of rumor holds particular political value, similar to propaganda as a deliberate narrative strategy. In fact, Homi Bhabha describes the force of rumor as potentially revolutionary.<sup>330</sup> It is because its temporality is iterative and indeterminate that it yields such potential, populist power. *The Returning Officer* points towards this possibility, but an earlier set of pieces by the Wives, created for the exhibition *Populism* (2005), specifically work to showcase the politically-g geared, populist dynamic of rumor-based communication.

As detailed in the Introduction, the pan-European exhibition occurred in multiple venues: at the Contemporary Arts Centre in Vilnius, Lithuania; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo; the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; and the Frankfurter Kunstverein from April until September. Instead of traveling in sequence, the show took place concurrently, with some of the same pieces and some different in each location. Its message, however, was cohesive throughout: to raise and debate themes of populism, and particularly in relation to the rise of populist parties in Europe over the preceding fifteen years, “insofar as they

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<sup>330</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 203.



can be isolated from discussions of a global character.”<sup>331</sup> In the catalog introduction, the curators define populism as “not only rhetorical but also a refusal to accept the complexity of public affairs.”<sup>332</sup> The scope of the exhibition aimed not merely to categorize contemporary populist movements in Europe, but also to explore the potentially complex forms and imaginary spaces of populism as such.<sup>333</sup>

Henry VIII’s *Wives* created three new pieces for the exhibition, including a new three-channel video installation, *Mr. Hysteria*. In preparation for the latter, the artist collective asked friends for personal recollections of situations of mass hysteria. A couple gave accounts of the fall of the Berlin Wall, for example, or their experience at the massive Glastonbury outdoor rock festival. These statements, once more, were reorganized for *Mr. Hysteria*’s script, and the resulting three-screen “conversation” takes place in four different locations, among four different pairs of actors.

These locations are a police station in Vilnius, as well as the inside of the stock exchange, a newspaper archive, and a hospital maternity ward in Berlin. According to the *Wives*, each place is where reality is negotiated; they are all transitional spaces. The police station, for example, represents a site where opposing perspectives encounter each other, where cases are resolved between different versions of a story. One *Wife* has aptly described the police as “detectors of mismatched realities.” The stock exchange negotiates fluctuating monetary values, as both concrete and abstract realities, and the newspaper archive is a site for collected stories, official and unofficial narratives that are negotiated on a daily basis. As inspiration for the piece,

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<sup>331</sup> Lars Bang Larsen, Cristina Ricupero, and Nicolaus Schafhausen, eds., *The Populism Catalogue* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005), 16.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>333</sup> Curator Nicolas Trembley included a documentary in the show of Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Swiss-Swiss Democracy* (2004-5).

Henry VIII's *Wives* also looked to histories of the controversial medical diagnosis of hysteria itself, a discourse that extends from Hippocrates to the present, and which peaked in intensity during the nineteenth century. Notably, the womb was considered the cause of hysteria in the nineteenth century (hence the maternity ward in the video), as a neurosis unequivocally particular to women and gendered as female, which the title *Mr. Hysteria* playfully upends. The locations, however, besides spaces of "negotiated reality," also represent Foucauldian sites of institutionalized power and social control. Bodies are increasingly managed and administered through rationalizing systems that operate evermore pervasively in society. The emotional reverberation of hysteria is here paralleled with the social instrumentalization of bodies. Both operate and propagate via a particular indeterminacy and all-pervasiveness.

Another of Henry VIII's *Wives*' pieces in *Populism*, *The lowest note on an organ = the length of a human fingernail grown since 1730 = 8HZ/subsonic* also suggests this bodily connection. The sculpture, an organ pipe displayed only in Vilnius due to its massive size (made by the workshop filmed in *The Returning Officer*), plays a note so low that it is virtually inaudible to the human ear, supposedly only perceptible after time through vibrations caused in the body. According to the artist collective, such pipes were used during the Middle Ages to "induce the experience of physical hysteria or elation during religious ceremonies" (this piece was installed in a quasi-church-like space with long, stained-glass windows), and apparently the "staff at the museum complained of nausea for the duration of the show." The *Wives* link traditional Christian ideology to a body-based, almost imperceptible populist discourse over historical time – the length of the pipe being equal to "a human fingernail grown since 1730." Hysteria, rumor, social reverberation through populist ideology, religion, or disciplinary

structures – by whatever category here – must always be connected back to physical bodies and subjectivities, despite their apparent imperceptibility or indeterminacy.

As Bhabha insists, if the circulation of populist ideology relies on speed and anonymity, its “intersubjective, communal adhesiveness [nevertheless] lies in its enunciative aspect.”<sup>334</sup> *Mr. Hysteria* mimics this enunciative indeterminacy, in the form of “rumor.” Footage begins in the womb, so-to-speak, displaying a newborn baby at the maternity ward. The nurses, and then a younger man and woman in the police station, repeatedly voice a certain anxiety about crowds and a need for temporal quickness. In the police station, the man and woman stand in front of a cell, speaking casually, yet precisely and slowly in a Brechtian manner, as officers move prisoners in the background:

Polieman: People and people and people.

Police woman: It’s charged, shouting, the noise gets louder and stronger, the sound. And it feels like pressure.

Policeman: Too many people. No way back. Moving forward. This might be it. I’m running. I’ll just make the train.

After the police station scene, the young man’s voice carries over into a new location – the newspaper archive. There his words are picked up by yet another man, who in a moment is revealed to be standing in the space of the archive.

The scene switchover also marks a crossover and an acceleration in the time of the “conversation.” In the newspaper archive, two more voices of a different man and woman begin to overlap and confuse what is being said, or in what sequence. The discussion shifts to one of concrete objects: “You can use it for many, many things;” “It’s a rope;” “It has been knotted tightly;” “Heavy and rough;” but maintains a certain anxiety about it:

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<sup>334</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 200.

Journalist #2: It makes me nervous.

Journalist #1: Is it a real one?

#2: And...what's the word?

#1: Insecure. (pause.) It is dangerous. And it makes me nervous.

#2: It makes me nervous.

#1: ...and that's all.

#2: It feels heavy in my hand.

Following the archive, two locations are then montaged together. On the left- and right-hand screens, the young woman and man from the police stand, respectively, while in the center screen, another young woman and man mimic their positions and dialogue in the stock exchange. The couples act as body doubles, and their voices overlap more and more. The installation ends with shots of the stock exchange, police station, and archive – suddenly vacant of the actors – but still narrated by their voices. A reiterative theme of anxiety and speed (“It’s strong!”) builds to a crescendo with several simultaneous voices asserting at the very end, “It’s like frozen time;” “It’s a flash in time.”

*Mr. Hysteria* represents a chain of communication, a type of contagious rumor that is “born” in one location and time and quickly accelerates through anonymous, everyday voices until it pervades all spheres of activity. The circulated rhetoric of anxiety or fear effectively transforms into an indeterminate social panic or hysteria in a temporal “flash.” This process, moreover, transpires through the mediating apparatus of video screens, suggesting a connection between socially-constructed fears and the mass media.

Harun Farocki’s *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992) offers a compelling parallel in this regard, documenting the populist uprising against Nicolae Ceauçescu and the role or work of the camera during the revolution. Like *Mr. Hysteria*, the film also begins in a hospital, but rather than giving birth, the woman on screen is wounded from gunshots, and calls for revolution

against Ceaușescu's regime. She testifies as a witness to the government crackdown in Timisoara, where popular anti-communist demonstrations soon led to rioting and violence. Several days later, graphic images of mass graves near Timisoara were aired internationally but not domestically.<sup>335</sup> Information about the riots and deaths reached citizens via word-of-mouth and through these external media sources, and speculation about the number of casualties varied greatly. It soon became apparent that the corpses may not have been linked directly to the uprising, but as film historian Benjamin Young highlights, the circulated images and casualty estimates reverberated with a real and imagined terror in Romania, the numbers attesting to "the amplified paranoia and sense of loss that accompanied" the fall of Ceaușescu's one-party rule.<sup>336</sup> As Bhabha would attest, the force of rumor did have a revolutionary impact. Similar to *Videograms*, *Mr. Hysteria* attempts to display the communicative base of this mass collectivizing impulse, this unquantifiable spreading of fear, rumor, panic, and/or information by and for "the people." Yet whereas *Videograms* depicts this communicative chain in a specific historical instance, *Mr. Hysteria* attempts to expose the very underlying structure of such populist rhetoric.

#### 4.2.1 Resignifying an Iconotype: *Tatlin's Tower and the World*

Whereas *Mr. Hysteria* and *The lowest note on an organ* attempt to represent the uneasy, resonant character of populist communication, the collective's third piece included in *Populism*, *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, has set out to employ it. The project is an ongoing campaign to construct the entirety of Vladimir Tatlin's proposed *Monument to the Third International* (1919,

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<sup>335</sup> Benjamin Young, "On Media and Democratic Politics: Videograms of a Revolution," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 245.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

unrealized) in fragments throughout the world, and the *Populism* exhibition debuted the group's proposal with the launch of a website ([www.tatlintowerandtheworld.net](http://www.tatlintowerandtheworld.net)).<sup>337</sup> As of 2011, the Wives have erected one actual piece of the tower in Belgrade, Serbia, and they have participated in several other shows around Europe focusing on the possibility of its construction.

Henry VIII's Wives staged another "tower" campaign earlier in their career. For *Nine Reasons to be an Optimist* (1999), they invited representatives of official religious denominations in Oslo, Norway to congregate at an airport control tower. Nine figures agreed to meet at the air traffic control deck of a recently closed airport, Fornebu. There the religious leaders participated in a photo shoot, creating one final picture – doctored from two – with nine men and women standing in line, gazing out and away from one another in the tower. The ceiling slightly misaligns, and a fragmentary shoulder of a non-present, ghostly tenth body jars the continuity of the image. Though a certain idealism marks the title and image – of nine religious leaders monumentally standing in an elevated space, united and watching over global traffic – the resulting photograph from the experiment fragments, or at least highlights a crack, within the utopian project. The tower and airport, after all, had just been retired from service. In 2011, the shootings in Oslo by Breivik reveal just how precarious this constructed proximity and reconciliation may be.

As evidenced by much of their past work, Henry VIII's Wives are committed to unpacking and recoding iconic images and narratives. *Tatlin's Tower and the World* marks their latest, sustained attempt at such an endeavor, this time geared toward an inspection not only of

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<sup>337</sup> The structure has served as inspiration for many artists, including, for instance, Norbert Kottmann, with his "Baut Tatlin" campaign in 1993 to have the tower constructed on the no-man's-land of Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, as a parliamentary building to house the "United Nations of Eurasia."<sup>337</sup> Henry VIII's Wives, additionally, interviewed members of the "Friends of Tatlin's Tower" group, which was founded by curator Harald Szeeman with the idea to construct the tower at Tempelhof Airport in Berlin.

icons, but also iconotypes. As Terry Smith, who coined the term, elaborates in his book *Architecture of Aftermath*, an iconotype goes beyond an icon: it is “an image that, while it represents a specific artifact, structure, person, or place, is also powerful enough to stand for a category of human experience.”<sup>338</sup> It is an image that is endlessly repeated, reproducing itself innumerable times in a visual economy in a “bewildering variety of forms.”<sup>339</sup> The most powerful example he offers is the World Trade Center in New York. In a nutshell: “Its image was recognized all over the world as the biggest, the most blatant, and the most brutal of the skyscraper clusters that created the bristling skyline of the capital city of Western modernity.”<sup>340</sup> The Twin Towers became an iconotype of corporate American capitalism and arrogance, built for sheer size and height – as well as bland economic efficiency – with minimal aesthetic creativity or consideration for the local people in its surrounding urban environment. As such, for Osama bin Laden among others, it became a prime target: a stripped-down, categorical symbol for, and embodiment of U.S. imperialism and power. The Twin Towers, indeed, more than a fixed icon, came to represent a whole ideology and way of life.

If Tatlin’s *Monument to the Third International* had been built, it might have also transformed into an iconotype during the Cold War, such as the Berlin Wall. The Russian constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953) proposed his *Monument* as the new headquarters for the Third International in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg), following the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Though never constructed, it was also conceived with a modernist ethos, in a similar vein to the WTC: to raise the highest, largest, most technologically advanced structure of its time. In 1917, more specifically, it was intended to outdo its rival (capitalist) icon,

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<sup>338</sup> Terry Smith, *The Architecture of Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006), 27.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 120.

the Eiffel Tower (324 m), as a 400-meter-high steel, glass, and iron double-helix tower. In posters for the *Populism* exhibition, Henry VIII's Wives contrasted the height of the tower to the Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, and the "Gherkin" skyscraper in London. Beyond comparing it to these other architectural icons, the posters showcased this end game for height and phallic dominance in the city skyline.

Besides monumentality, the tower would have become the ultimate template for communist order, totality, hierarchy, and technological prowess. It was intended to rotate kinetically with three segmented levels revolving at different speeds: the cube-shaped base would turn once a year and would house the legislative assembly house; the pyramid-shaped middle would host the politburo, or leadership, rotating once a month; and the top, a cylindrical information center, issuing bulletins and propaganda via radio and telegraph, would circle once a day. Its temporal and spatial organization would have been perfectly synchronized. Like its contemporary cousin, the destroyed Twin Towers, it would have stood for bureaucratic efficiency and control in the end, representing a "colossal indifference to heterogeneity."<sup>341</sup>

Why construct Tatlin's tower now, almost a hundred years after the fact? Henry VIII's Wives will never actually build the tower: the campaign speaks, rather, to a present-day circulation of iconotypes within the visual economy of icons, or "iconomy," another term coined by Smith.<sup>342</sup> It is no coincidence that the Wives have adopted Tatlin's tower as an analogue to the Twin Towers, which has become the most divisive, inflammatory cultural iconotype of the twenty-first century. Similar to cultural stereotypes, or Otto Neurath's modernist project ISOTYPE (as discussed in Chapter 1), iconotypes absorb a tremendous amount of contestatory representations in the visual field. Architectural iconotypes such as the WTC crystallize broad

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 1-2.



social discourses in contained symbols of power and conflict, leading to a starkly reduced world picture seized upon by radicals such as Osama bin Laden or Anders Behring Breivik. These assemblages are disseminated in all mass media, but particularly online through blogs and social accounts, spreading like wildfire with anonymity, indeterminacy, and above all, vast repetition. With the *Monument to the Third International*, Henry VIII's Wives have appropriated a utopian symbol of international, egalitarian leftist ideology at a time when extremist right-wing parties are commanding more and more social influence throughout the continent, influence specifically garnered by exaggerating and distorting fears concerning Muslims and "foreigners." These fears have proliferated tremendously since 9.01.11. Breivik's manifesto, notably, also included a call to vanquish "cultural Marxism" in Europe. Yet how might Henry VIII's Wives offer such a totalizing, hierarchizing image as the *Monument* as an effective counterexample for world-picturing? If successful, would their project not merely reinforce the reductive iconomy that already dominates a contemporary social-visual field?

The Wives ostensibly aim to morph Tatlin's tower into an iconotype itself, but one realistically tempered, subverted, and transformed through productive, collective engagement. As stated before, their campaign began in 2005 with the launch of a website to circulate the *Tower's* image within the iconomy and to expose it to a broader public. The website is ordered by three different basic temporalities/links, mimicking the threefold division of the tower itself: "past," "present," and "future." The "past" page features an assortment of digital, text "clippings" piled haphazardly. Users may browse among them and come across explanatory cut-out messages such as this:

If the ascending spirals of Tatlin's Tower exemplified and contained the processes of resolving conflicts and decisions, so too did its dynamic lean indicate a will to action. Here was a social alembic: the evolution of human history was to be determined here, and corporate will condensed, purified and transformed into

the energy of action. With its committees in session the tower would have comprised the nerve centre of intended world government.

The “past” section, in other words, lays out the provocative history of the tower and its concomitant, utopian aspirations for an “evolution of human history” and the consolidation of a “corporate will.” These quotations, however, are signaled as outdated – collected and archived – and incongruously portrayed as HTML-based text “clippings.”

The “future” and “present” pages map a different type of course for the online-based campaign. The “future” page is quite minimal, depicting only a screen-sized megaphone with the imperative, “Talk to us,” and a link to email the group. According to one member, Henry VIII’s Wives receive emails as frequently as once or twice a day. The “present” page, on the other hand, is more complex, offering many possible directions. It displays a brown cardboard box, stuffed with quotidian objects. Clicking on these items, in turn, navigates the viewer to descriptions of the Wives’ various, subsequent exhibitions and initiatives for *Tatlin’s Tower and the World*. The box acts as a type of “hands-on” map to the larger, projected iconomy of the campaign. This includes not only the exhibitions, but also actual examples of the emails that they have received. An interior designer in London, who probably viewed a poster for Tatlin’s tower in the London Underground in 2005, writes:

I've just been looking at the website and would like to know what stage you are at in the project, what kind of team you have at the moment and what skills you are missing. It's just that tower has always been so incredible to me and I really would like to be a part in its realisation, at any level.

Another woman offers constructive advice for attracting capital and interest:

Surely for such an innovative idea, you could make the site more appealing to artists, people interested in the background of the project, and investors? Overall, this is a good and curious concept that appears to be so badly executed I fear it will fail. You can do better than this. Promote yourselves with clearer information which is well channeled and well designed!

Jono Podmore, a British composer, sound engineer, and Professor of Popular Music at the Cologne University of Music, for example, also wrote to offer his services for the project and then sent Henry VIII's Wives an unsolicited composition, which the Wives have used subsequently as an "anthem" for the campaign. The website effectively launched the *Tower* into the mass social imaginary, recruiting strangers to help "build up" its public image.

Already built "into" its totalizing structure, however, is a degree of iconoclasm. If the *Monument* were to theoretically develop the kind of emotive, iconotypical charge that the Twin Towers and the Berlin Wall encapsulated, it would undoubtedly be targeted for destruction as well. As Smith suggests, after the fall of the Twin Towers and the cultural divisions that it exploded into the public's attention, the demolition of buildings has come to dominate the iconomy perhaps even more so now than their construction. The unyielding ideological models of "progress" that inspired the development of the WTC or the desire for political containment in Berlin, ones that attempted to foreclose difference, would also unquestionably mark *Tatlin's Tower* for violence or erasure.

The one section of the *Monument* that has actually been erected signifies this iconoclastic impulse and creatively dispels it. In 2007 in Belgrade, Serbia, the Wives succeeded in fabricating a small piece from the middle of the original tower, which would also be its most vulnerable to attack (as witnessed with the Twin Towers). The section has substantial presence, however, weighing in at a sizeable eleven tons of steel and concrete, eight meters long and two meter wide. What makes it truly uncanny is its realignment from the original, proper axis of the tower. From an already unrecognizable puzzle piece from its midsection, the Wives tipped the odd block on its side, further dissimulating the tower's iconotypical status. It signals its own piecemeal destruction, but also parodically memorializes its fragmented creation with an official

plaque. Already “destroyed” in its first erection, in other words, the piece becomes a benign public art sculpture, its ideological current diffused.

Sitting on a green square between its host museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the former headquarters of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party (now the Ušće Business Centre), however, the sculpture also pointedly speaks to the specific local environment and history of that area. According to curator Branislav Dimitrijević, former Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milošević and his wife used the latter building in the 1990s as a type of political/informational media headquarters; NATO bombed it heavily in 1999 but failed to destroy it completely.<sup>343</sup> Milošević himself gained power through a 1988-89 “anti-bureaucratic revolution,” a populist, “grassroots” movement that ousted the former Communist Party leadership in Serbia and helped propel his political position as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia soon dissolved into separate, warring states in the early 1990s. Though the Belgrade segment of *Tatlin’s Tower* appears innocuous, tipped on its side and dissociated visually from its larger iconotype, its local siting still evokes the tragic history surrounding the populist rise of Milošević, ultimately indicted for crimes against humanity and ethnic genocide. Rather than an empty, unrecognizable signifier for the *Monument*, it might just as well resemble a piece of concrete debris from the bombed Yugoslav Community Party headquarters.

For another iteration of the campaign at the Bern Kunsthalle in 2006, the group reconceived the “propaganda section” of Tatlin’s tower, or the top third that rotated once a day and continually disseminated communist ideology. The installation included campaign posters and t-shirts hung on the wall; a computer to access the Internet; an answering machine to take messages from viewers calling into the installation’s own private line; search lights to mimic

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<sup>343</sup> Ibid., 16.

those that would have been placed on top of Tatlin's tower; and a radio channel broadcasting "propaganda." The group rented the radio frequency, 106.8 MHz (a playful reference to Henry VIII's six wives), for the duration of the show, which was able to transmit ten kilometers towards the parliament building from an antenna attached to an unused, Kunsthalle flag post.

*Radio Tatlin* combined a paradoxical layering of Jono Podmore's "anthem," or atonal, instrumental music; spoken dialogue with Bern residents on the Bundesplatz concerning the possible construction of a tower segment on the square; and a radio voice (in both German and Swiss dialect) describing Tatlin's unrealized *Monument*, asking listeners to call in with opinions, and repeating the phrase, "Tatlin's Tower: Yes or No." The interview material was collected by asking random passersby on the street to comment on a computer-generated image of a fully constructed tower in front of the Swiss parliament building in Bern. The postcard image is jarring: a monolithic, spiraling piece of metal frame stands squarely on top of the central fountain, with people milling about below. According to the collective, public opinion about the project varied: "it would be nice," "too modern," or the economically-minded, "if the Bern tax payers have to pay, it's a bad idea, but if all Swiss pay for it, it's a good idea." The radio interviews and call-in option ("Tatlin's Tower: Yes or No") parodied the numerous popular referenda that operate in Switzerland's system of direct democracy, as well as the propaganda posters to vote "yes" or "no" to controversial issues such as citizenship or immigration.

Their parody was quite prescient, in terms of a popular referendum that banned the construction of minarets, or Islamic prayer towers, throughout Switzerland in 2009. 57.5% percent of participating voters could not imagine the construction of this type of tower amidst a

“Swiss” architectural horizon.<sup>344</sup> Of course this banning has more to do with growing fears and hostilities towards an Islamic way of life, perceived as counter to “Swiss” tradition, rather than the aesthetics or function of such towers in the urban landscape. When the referendum passed, there were only four minarets even existent in the country, hardly a threat to “Swiss” territory. As Smith insists, there needs to occur a process of Unbuilding such iconotypical perspectives in order to begin creating again after the “explosive event architecture of 9.11.01.” With such negative energies inherent to the iconomy now, with every iconotype already slated for possible attack or ruin, there is an urgent need to reconceptualize their building, or rather, unbuilding. Smith cites Bhabha: “Neither construction or deconstruction, the Unbuilt is the creation of a form whose virtual absence raises the question of what it would mean to start again, in the same place, as if it were elsewhere, adjacent to the site of a historic disaster or a personal trauma.”<sup>345</sup> There needs to be real work done in understanding the trauma of that symbolic rupture; this Unbuilding occurs not only by actors during the concrete aftermath of that event – the fire fighters, medical professionals, police, and so forth – but also must include all in the public who hope to create a more open, humane architecture in the aftermath of 9.11.01.

As part of the Bern installation, Henry VIII’s Wives basically posed this question as the central theme of a conference. Entitled “Machbarkeit” (“Feasibility”), the conference foregrounded the issue of “negative space,” asking what it would mean to construct another segment of the tower on Bern’s central square. Invited speakers included a professor from MIT, Takehiko Nagakura, who leads the project “Unbuilt Monuments” in developing computer graphic visualizations of unrealized early modern architecture (including, of course, the

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<sup>344</sup> Nick Cumming-Bruce and Steven Erlanger, “Swiss Ban Building of Minarets on Mosques,” *New York Times*, November 29, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/30/world/europe/30swiss.html>.

<sup>345</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Reading 9-11-01,” *Artforum* (Nov 2001): 36, as cited in Smith, *The Architecture of Aftermath*, 152.

*Monument for the Third International*); the writer Zoë Strachan, who wrote a fictional novel, *Negative Space*; the architectural blogger Geoff Manaugh, who posts for BLDGBLOG; as well as recorded interviews with members of the “Friends of Tatlin’s Tower” group: gallerist Rudolf Springer, actor Hans Zischler, and photographer Folke Hanfeld.<sup>346</sup> “Feasability” focused not so much on the actual, physical possibility of erecting a piece of the tower on the central plaza, but instead, on the tower as viewers could envision it. What would it mean to the public to begin construction of such an ideologically-vested symbol right at the heart of their city? How could they build it ethically and openly, without alienating whole segments of society, and transform it into something beyond a reductive iconotype? Whereas the Wives’ black-or-white, yes-or-no polling on the streets of Bern solicited simplistic, unengaged reactions, their conference attended to the problem of the Unbuilt with a much more complex, interdisciplinary discursive platform.

In 2008-9, the artist collective explored another piece of the *Monument* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, this time from a ground-up rather than top-down perspective: they constructed the “lobby” of the tower. Rather than create the lobby themselves, however, Henry VIII’s Wives commissioned it. Almost every item in its sleek yet bland, modernist, corporate-looking space was specially ordered, and the layout itself was designed by a professional.<sup>347</sup> Tatlin-themed cocktails were even served at the gallery opening. Gallery attendants operated the “concierge desk,” donning tower-shaped felt hats and posing next to a *Monument*-shaped concierge bell (notably ordered from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the same company that produced the iconic Liberty Bell and Big Ben) as well as a tower-themed bouquet of flowers, arranged by a local florist. The space included two fake elevator doors, and Jono

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<sup>346</sup> Curator Harald Szeeman organized this group with the hope of constructing Tatlin’s *Monument* at Tempelhof Airport in Berlin.

<sup>347</sup> The only non-commissioned item was a framed photograph of a maquette of the Belgrade sculpture, dramatically unveiled by actors at the state theater in Belgrade.

Podmore's "anthem" once again set the tone. In the center of the area, visitors could rest on a Batik-upholstered sofa, which complemented the gallery attendants' Batik-designed uniforms, stitched by a Batik dressmaker in the Spitalfields market around the corner. The specially-commissioned fabric, however, displaying a recurring pattern of the tower's spiraling image juxtaposed next to Tatlin's portrait, was actually produced by a cloth designer in Italy. The artist collective is not unaware of the global trade politics of Batik fabric, spotlighted by artists from Gauguin to Yinka Shonibare, and they purposefully signaled its uneasy, complicated commodity status here.

Henry VIII's Wives also commissioned a tea set for the lobby from a woman in China. Whereas they attempted to fabricate their own set for an earlier exhibition in Berlin, here they requested Zhang Ling Yun to manufacture a new unit. In their specific instructions, the primary aim was to "illustrate the idea of the Tower in pieces," mimicking again the overall aspiration for *Tatlin's Tower and the World*. On the one hand, in a proper Constructivist sense, the tea set represents an object that can be mass produced for everyday, popular use, serving both aesthetically and functionally. Tatlin himself designed ceramics, though never in the shape of the tower. On the other hand, the Wives's "china" set follows a European convention from the eighteenth century on of commissioning made-to-order ceramics from the East Asian country, known today as *Chine de commande*. Artist Ni Haifeng, for instance – in the same *Unpacking Europe* (2001-2) exhibition that featured Shonibare's Batik-parody of Fragonard's *The Swing* – poignantly displayed photographs of his "Chinese" body inscribed with porcelain designs for a Dutch market. His series *Self Portrait as Part of the Porcelain Export History* not only revisits



an earlier history of European imperial exploitation, but also questions the current trade in “foreign” bodies, legal and illegal, in the Netherlands and Amsterdam, where the artist lives.<sup>348</sup>

The point is that beneath the smooth veneer of the professionally-designed, corporate-like lobby installation, one quite near the financial heart of London, the Wives uncannily connected a number of raw, cultural and economic histories regarding past imperial trade routes to present-day processes of globalization. The exhibition occurred as part of Whitechapel’s year-long *Street* series, and the *Lobby* specifically invoked its location on Wentworth Street – with its local market attracting diverse groups of Jewish, African, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi peoples for exchange. In some sense, London’s business world is deeply imbricated not only in the global economy, vis-à-vis its ex-colonies and imperial past, but also in this quite local yet international market, as the Wives’ commission and production of the *Lobby* highlights. How long will it be until redevelopment overtakes the eclectic neighborhood and transforms it with profitable “renewal”? As Smith carefully lays out in his analysis of the WTC, part of its notoriety as an iconotype accrued from its earliest erasures of the local environment in Manhattan.<sup>349</sup> Before the demolition of twelve blocks in the late 1960s for the tower’s foundation, there existed a quite active, internationally-known bazaar in the “Syrian Quarter”; it brought together immigrant communities, for instance, from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine. Also affected by the razing was Radio Row, a lively cluster of blocks dedicated to the manufacture and retail of electronics, textiles, garments, and dry goods.<sup>350</sup> There is a striking parallel here with London’s East End, home to a tremendous diversity of international immigrants and a famous textile industry, but also becoming attractive to commercial investors for its cheaper, waterfront land. This is the type

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<sup>348</sup> Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, eds., *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading* (Rotterdam: NAI, 2001), 332-7.

<sup>349</sup> Smith, *The Architecture of Aftermath*, 99.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid.

of culturally-heterogeneous, “glocal” community that must live and work peacefully together on a day-to-day basis, which the corporate transnationalism of a “World Trade Center” or a Third International *Monument* would threaten to stamp out.

Henry VIII’s Wives had originally proposed to stamp a “footprint” of the full-sized *Monument* in the neighborhood, with the gallery/lobby sited where it would actually fit within the one-to-one scale realization. The artist collective proposed to drill bronze studs into the pavement in order to mark the footprint, but not surprisingly, they were not able to acquire permission from the city planning commission. They also wished to cast manhole sewage covers with images of the tower, but again, the local authorities rejected their request. Their proposals clearly evoke the tremendously difficult and sensitive project of reconceiving “Ground Zero” in Manhattan. For all of the varying ideas for a new building, each design has consecrated the Twin Towers’ exact footprint.<sup>351</sup> As Smith suggests, this threatens to “quarantine” two large sections of the site and arbitrarily foreclose possibilities for more organic urban growth. The footprint of the *Monument* in London, however, marked by bronze studs in the pavement and manhole covers, would not impede such interaction. Rather, it would function similarly to the present-day demarcation of the fallen Berlin Wall, signaled by a double row of cobblestones and bronze plaques inscribed with “Berliner Mauer 1961-1989” in the streets along its past route. If Henry VIII’s Wives had succeeded in stamping the footprint of the tower in the East End, they would have not only “memorialized” the *Monument* before its construction – once again signifying its inherent, ideological charge as an iconotype – but as part of that remembrance, would have also insisted upon its “Unbuilding” as an act of street-level, open human exchange and encounter.

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<sup>351</sup> Ibid., 181.

This is the fundamental social contract that *Tatlin's Tower and the World* espouses. For the past six years, *Tatlin's Tower and the World* has worked to transform a totalizing, iconotypical image/narrative of the *Monument to the Third International* into a collectivizing platform for engaged, self-reflexive discourse among strangers, parodying a populist strategy so prevalent in Europe today and simultaneously recalibrating it – whether via the Internet, as a piece of concrete-and-steel debris, a “propaganda” headquarters, or a corporate lobby. As political theorist Margaret Canovan suggests, populism is defined, above all, by its sheer vagueness and emotional resonance, be it catalyzed vis-à-vis religious faith, economic inequality, or cultural identity. Images in the mass media today have tremendous power as vehicles of populist, affective and affiliative persuasion. *Tatlin's Tower* is a campaign to not only critique an iconotypical visual field exploited by demagogues in order to propagate a “clash of civilizations” mentality and spread fears of immigrants and Muslims: the spectacularized images of the falling Twin Towers, indeed, signaled an explosion of this type of fear-mongering discourse. Rather, the project has also been a campaign to harness such visualized, mass media forms of communication in order to challenge them constructively, to reimagine an iconotype, for example, not as an empty sign of belonging, but as the unifying basis for an ethical, open, creative world-picturing that relates global strangers in a vernacular yet cosmopolitical way.

#### **4.2.2 Conclusion**

Injuries to the mass body, such as 9.11.01 or the train bombings in London and Madrid, threaten to inflame passions and fears and once again yield reductive, sharply-divided ideologies: the mass media has a critical role to play in channeling such discourses. Perhaps most striking in the death of the contemporary “divorced wife,” – the “people’s princess” – was the prominence of

the media during and after the event, not only in relation to the paparazzi's complicity in her car crash, but also with the specific increase in Internet coverage during this time. Because of the sweeping public attention to her death and funeral, for example, BBC News for the first time established a full online news service only a few months later.<sup>352</sup> The UK's criminal investigation of the case did not officially end until ten years later, moreover, partly due to conspiracy theories spread by tabloids such as the *Daily Mirror*. Many people believed the tale that Princess Diana's "accident" was designed by intelligence services because of her new relationship with Egyptian Dodi Fayed, also killed in the crash. This included Fayed's father, Mohamed el-Fayed, who vehemently claimed that "Britain's racist establishment found their relationship utterly unacceptable." Passions concerning royal tradition, "Englishness," and multiculturalism were all inflamed through the media's sensationalized representation of the disaster. What kind of mass-mediated subjectivity arose through the death of the Princess of Wales, the public's embodiment of the "people-as-one"?

Since their formation in 1997, the Wives have consistently attempted to reveal popular narratives, icons, and symbols as complexly mediated and negotiated in the broader social-visual field. As W.J.T Mitchell suggests, the "power of idols over the human mind resides in their silence, their spectacular impassiveness, their dumb insistence on repeating the same message (as in the baleful cliché of 'terrorism')..."<sup>353</sup> Instead, Mitchell advocates a "sounding" of the idols as a way of "playing upon them," retuning and "transforming [the idol's] hollowness into an echo

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<sup>352</sup> Matt Rhodes, "Major events influenced BBC's news online," FreshNetworks blog, June 5, 2008, accessed September 9, 2011, <http://www.freshnetworks.com/blog/2008/06/major-events-influenced-bbcs-news-online/>, no page numbers.

<sup>353</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 26-27.

chamber for human thought.”<sup>354</sup> From their series *Iconic Moments of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* to *Tatlin’s Tower and the World*, Henry VIII’s Wives have attempted to do precisely this – to reconceive how such idols, icons, symbols, and popular narratives may productively shape processes of cultural and political affiliation. *Mr. Hysteria*, on the one hand, displays the worst-case scenario for collective identification – where an accelerating time and homogenizing space across all media creates empty rumor or panic: different actors merge into the same anxiety-driven types, speaking the same vacuous words. *Tatlin’s Tower and the World*, however, restructures the connective strategies of populist communication to allow heterogeneity and fragmentation within a still-unifying model for “the people.” Rather than focus on retrieving an innumerable quantity of lost voices, representations, and histories – a critical though impossible task – the Wives disassemble and restructure the channels that represent and create such hollowed-out idols in the first place, rebuilding them into an “echo chamber” for thoughtful reflection.

Today the issue at hand is the increasing influence of populist right-wing leaders such as Marine Le Pen or Geert Wilders who also attempt to stand in for “the people” vis-à-vis the demonization of immigrants and “foreigners.” They play on fears of the declining welfare state, job insecurity, crime, and cultural differences, which all become hyped in the mass media through distortion, misinformation, editing, and reductive rhetoric. As Daniel Cohn-Bendit, co-president of the Green bloc in the European Parliament, states about Breivik’s most recent manifesto, “2083: A European Declaration of Independence,” disseminated via Twitter and Facebook: “So much of what he wrote could have been said by any right-wing politician.”<sup>355</sup> Many political leaders initially championed Breivik’s actions, such as the National Front

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<sup>354</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>355</sup> Nicholas Kulish, “Shift in Europe Seen in Debate on Immigrants,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2011, accessed September 6, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/world/europe/28europe.html?emc=eta>, 1.

member Jacques Coutela, who called Breivik an “icon” (and later changed his note to denounce him), or Erik Hellsborn, a nationalist Sweden Democrat who wrote in his blog that “in a Norwegian Norway this tragedy would never have happened.”<sup>356</sup> Debates in Europe have sprung up about whether to monitor online chat groups more stringently, but experts believe that this would be nearly impossible.<sup>357</sup> Instead, the mass public must become aware of the role the media plays in repetitiously spreading vague and indeterminate fears. Henry VIII’s Wives attempt to expose the hollowness behind such a reductive visual discourse and popularized, populist communicative methods. On a continent where sharply-ideological, xeno-racist rhetoric and violence has propagated to a dangerous degree, at stake in such a project is the possibility of creating a more positive, pluralistic mass subjectivity.

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<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 2.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION: FROM FEAR TO AFFILIATION, FROM INSECURITY TO COLLECTIVITY**

### **5.1 THE EURO ZONE AND GLOBALIZATION**

In early December 2011, a mail bomb was delivered to another set of twin towers – those of the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, Germany. It was personally addressed to Swiss banker Josef Ackerman, Deutsche Bank’s chief executive and one of the most controversial figures in European banking today. Since 2002, he has been at the helm of the Deutsche Bank, which operates in more than seventy countries, and he also chairs the Institute of International Finance, which is an association of the world’s largest banks, including Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, and Citigroup. In other words, his name has become synonymous with an industry whose credibility has plummeted since 2008 with the financial collapse of Wall Street. The letter bomb, apparently sent by an Italian anarchist group, was a missive launched at a top icon of this banking milieu in Europe, at a time when the European Union threatens to unravel under the pressure of tremendous financial instability and austerity measures.<sup>358</sup>

Indeed, perhaps the most pressing issue for continued European unification at the beginning of 2012, which this dissertation so far has only tangentially addressed, remains

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<sup>358</sup> Nicholas Kulish, “Letter Bomb Sent to German Bank Chief,” *New York Times*, December 8, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/09/world/europe/letter-bomb-sent-to-german-bank-chief.html?\\_r=1&emc=eta1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/09/world/europe/letter-bomb-sent-to-german-bank-chief.html?_r=1&emc=eta1), no page numbers.

economic uncertainty. Josef Ackermann has been an instrumental figure in this regard, advising politicians such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel concerning the debt crisis in Greece, the increasing fiscal gulf separating countries such as Germany and Portugal or Italy, and the possible breakdown or stricter regulation in the seventeen-member euro zone.<sup>359</sup> He was pivotal, for instance, in advocating a type of Greek “Marshall Plan.”<sup>360</sup> Yet Ackermann has also been labeled as “one of the most dangerous bankers in the world” by the former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, Simon Johnson, for his pushing Deutsche Bank to earn a twenty-five percent annual return on equity, before taxes.<sup>361</sup> Johnson maintains that such a goal encourages too much risk-taking and leveraging by its employees, that such substantial returns are only possible for banks “too big to fail,” or ones that would certainly be rescued if such leveraging, instead, led to extreme losses. The Deutsche Bank has been reprimanded and even brought to court for some of its actions during the American mortgage bubble.<sup>362</sup>

The letter bomb to Ackermann, furthermore, eerily recalls an earlier bomb explosion in Frankfurt in 1989, which, also in early December, succeeded in killing the Deutsche Bank’s chief executive, Alfred Herrhausen.<sup>363</sup> It was a car bomb devised by the Red Army Faction, a terrorist organization aimed at crippling West Germany’s military-industrial complex and political system. Though it was a domestic terrorist act, it targeted, again, one of the key figures in Europe’s economic integration and Deutsche Bank’s global expansion. Herrhausen had worked energetically to transform the Deutsche Bank into both a pan-European and international

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<sup>359</sup> Jack Ewing and Liz Alderman, “Deutsche Bank’s Chief Casts Long Shadow in Europe,” *New York Times*, June 11, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/business/12bank.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1323446764-MEFLXrDmxEw+8t+xFYdAZA>, 1.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>361</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>363</sup> Ferdinand Protzman, “Head of Top West German Bank Is Killed in Bombing by Terrorists,” *New York Times*, December 1, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/01/world/head-of-top-west-german-bank-is-killed-in-bombing-by-terrorists.html>.



powerhouse, buying banks in Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and several in Asia.<sup>364</sup> Also a confidant of the German Chancellor at the time, Helmut Kohl, the German media would even refer to him as “Almighty Supreme Being.”<sup>365</sup> Only one month after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Herrhausen was posed to play an even more urgent role in German and European unification.

The link between terrorism and global finance is not a coincidental one, according to social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. They both crystallize as cellular networks arising in conjunction with historical processes of globalization. In *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (2006), Appadurai makes this distinction between cellular and vertebrate models of organization:

...a new world has emerged as we move into the twenty-first century. We still have the vertebrate world, organized through the central spinal system of international balances of power, military treaties, economic alliances, and institutions of cooperation. But alongside this exists the cellular world, whose parts multiply by association and opportunity rather than by legislation or by design. It is also a product of globalization – of the new information technologies, of the speed of finance and the velocity of the news, of the movement of capital and the circulation of refugees.<sup>366</sup>

As is clearly evident with the case of the European Union, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed tremendous structural changes globally. The “vertebrate,” autonomous national economy and polity did not disappear, but it transformed simultaneously with newer cellular organizations of capital.<sup>367</sup> It is precisely this simultaneity, the mixture of both models of organization and attachment, according to Appadurai, that has created such worldwide social uncertainty and political instability, leading for instance to terror not only at the state level, but in everyday

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<sup>364</sup> Steven Greenhouse, “Deutsche Bank’s Bigger Reach,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/07/30/business/deutsche-bank-s-bigger-reach.html?src=pm>, 1.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 129.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid., 21-31.

spheres of life.<sup>368</sup> Terrorism blurs the distinction between the enemies outside and the enemies within, between military and civilian spaces.<sup>369</sup> The nation-state is no longer “natural guarantor and container” of traditional social order.<sup>370</sup>

With this in mind, it is no surprise that the bomb sent to Ackermann came in the old-fashioned form of a letter. It marks a profound tension between, on the one hand, cellular networks of terrorists, the high-speed circulation of information, and ostensibly immaterial financial transactions such as derivatives and credit default swaps; and on the other hand, handheld explosives, traditional figures of national authority, and still-operational older forms of communication. In 2010, a slew of package bombs from Greece were mailed not only to Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, but also to the embassies of Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Chile, Mexico, and Russia – probably in connection to the controversial Greek bailout and imposed austerity measures.<sup>371</sup> A vertebrate system of heads of state and embassies was targeted, and with an arguably outdated form of circulation, but the terrorist action still moved transnationally and through the air. Car bombs such as in the case of Herrhausen’s death have largely been replaced with more spectacular instances of airplanes crashing into skyscrapers, biological agents such as anthrax sent through airmail, and intangible cybernetic warfare. Ironically, in another instance of

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<sup>368</sup> Ibid., 103-104.

<sup>369</sup> Ibid., 92, 109.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>371</sup> Michael Slackman, “German Letter Bomb is Found After Athens Blasts,” *New York Times*, November 2, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/03/world/europe/03greece.html?scp=2&sq=merkel%20letter%20bomb&st=cse>, no page numbers.

increasingly fluid business borders, Deutsche Bank just acquired the national mail carrier Deutsche Postbank in 2010.<sup>372</sup>

## 5.2 A FEAR OF SMALL NUMBERS

This simultaneity of structural models, vertebrate and cellular, and the alarming disjunctures that it often creates, is by now largely acknowledged in political and economic analyses of globalization. What Appadurai's investigation offers here is insight into concomitant social changes spurred on by a "fear of small numbers" – not only the fear of technocratic/wealthy elites or fundamentalist terrorists, but also minorities. Minorities are still classic objects of fear and rage in the twenty-first century: "Why kill, torture, or ghettoize the weak?"<sup>373</sup> According to Appadurai, processes of minoritization are historically tied to modernity, arising side-by-side with the nation-state through the development of statistics, censuses, representational democracy, and territorial classification.<sup>374</sup> Farocki's silent films, *Respite* and *In-Formation*, spotlight such processes of demographic enumeration and ordering in Germany during World War II and after, emphasizing dangerous slippages between the classification and control, or the representation and objectification (or complete de-humanization) of a circumscribed "people." The birth of the United Nations in 1945 was meant to ensure the safeguarding of such human rights against the backdrop of minority denationalization and mass deportations.

So what makes the pathologization of minorities different in a post-1989, hybrid vertebrate-and-cellular world? Appadurai states:

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<sup>372</sup> Jack Ewing and Liz Alderman, "Deutsche Bank's Chief Casts Long Shadow in Europe," 4.

<sup>373</sup> Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*, 49.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

Given the systematic compromise of national economic sovereignty that is built into the logic of globalization, and given the increasing strain this puts on states to behave as trustees of the interests of a territorially defined and confined ‘people,’ minorities are the major site for displacing the anxieties of many states about their own minority or marginality (real or imagined) in a world of a few megastates, of unruly economic flows and compromised sovereignties. Minorities, in a word, are metaphors and reminders of the betrayal of the classical national project.<sup>375</sup>

It is precisely because of the uncertain admixture of vertebrate and cellular global systems that minorities have become objects of heightened fear once again. Paradoxically, they come to stand for the marginality of the nation on the globalized stage – nations which are often coerced or pressured into opening up their markets to foreign capital and neoliberal policies.

How will the increased fear and anger over economic liberalization and transnational capital in Europe play out in individual countries? Right now Greece, for instance, seems to be caught in a “debt trap.”<sup>376</sup> Further austerity measures will only depress the economy, reduce tax revenues, and make it more difficult for the country to repay its debt. If Greece were to exit the euro zone, however, and hyperinflation claimed the drachma as the country attempted to establish order again (as it would be predicted), would minorities escape further scapegoating and violence?<sup>377</sup> Would news coverage shift from embassy letter bombs to mass rioting and hate crimes? The Greek austerity plan recently led to the downfall of the Socialist government, and the new center-right coalition now works with the radical right-wing party, the Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS). Right-wing extremism is already believed to be responsible for a recent wave of

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<sup>375</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>376</sup> Rachel Donadio, “Greek Turmoil Raises Fears of Instability Around Europe,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/17/world/europe/17greece.html?pagewanted=1&sq=greek%20right-wing&st=cse&scp=4>, 2.

<sup>377</sup> Thomas Landon, Jr., “Pondering a Dire Day: Leaving the Euro,” *New York Times*, December 12, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/13/business/global/a-greek-what-if-draws-concern-dropping-the-euro.html?scp=1&sq=greece%20drachma&st=cse>, 1-2.

attacks on immigrants – stabbings and firebombs thrown into a temporary mosque in Athens.<sup>378</sup> Only in the last year, additionally, the Greece-Turkey border has transformed into a major crossing point for immigrants, and Greek officials are unable to handle the influx.<sup>379</sup> Either way, those most marginalized culturally – the “foreigners” in Greece – will probably bear much hostility in the country.

To be sure, state insecurities and civilian uncertainties have become deeply imbricated today. Terrorism is the most spectacular instance of this intertwining, but it also manifests clearly as broader violence against “outsiders.” The pressure to defend a “sense of national boundaries, national sovereignty, and the purity of the national ethnos” threatens to concretize once again around a question of minorities and majorities.<sup>380</sup> Majorities can be led to believe that they will become minor, and minorities major – and globalizing processes intensify such possibilities.<sup>381</sup> The neighborhood of Bijlmer, for example, as discussed in Chapter Two, was “ghettoized” in a broader Dutch public as criminal and dangerous. In 2008, Thomas Hirschhorn worked to create a type of “counterpublic” in this marginalized *banlieue* of Amsterdam in order to debunk the stereotyping minoritization of a tremendously diverse group of residents. Fear of cultural “foreignness” has largely become a fear of fellow national (often ex-colonial) citizens in the Netherlands and throughout Europe, championed by right-wing extremists such as Geert Wilders, because they do not fit a purist national image. This is especially problematic in the heart of traditional Western Europe with its recent histories of imperialism and broad swaths of immigrants and guest workers from the global south.

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<sup>378</sup> Suzanne Daley, “Greece Tries to Shut a Back Door to Europe,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/01/world/europe/01greece.html?scp=5&sq=greek%20right-wing&st=cse>, no page numbers.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*, 65.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

Chapter Three also focused on this intersection between social-cultural uncertainty and political insecurity in Europe. A number of Henry VIII's Wives video installations, for instance, such as *Mr. Hysteria* and *The Returning Officer*, investigate an intentionally-constructed fear of outsiders that spreads repetitively and indeterminately through populist forms of communication. The group's ongoing campaign, *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, in turn, has attempted to harness such forms in order to offer more positive, grassroots ways of living in an increasingly proximate world with strangers. The campaign acts as a response to reductive iconotypes such as the World Trade Center that have been exploited in a symbolic-visual realm by political leaders in order to purposefully scapegoat politically-unwanted groups, such as Muslims. A "fear of small numbers" in this case quickly morphed from a fear of Osama bin Laden and a small network of fundamentalist terrorists to a whole category of people.

### **5.3 CORE CONNECTIONS AMONG THE THREE ARTISTIC CASE STUDIES**

At first glance, the artwork of Harun Farocki, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives may appear dissimilar in form and content, yet this would be an inaccurate gloss of the deep, underlying connections among their oeuvres. Each negotiates the changing fears of minorities and "outsiders" at different historical registrations and nuances of the vertebrate/cellular, or national/global configuration in Europe since World War II. It is precisely this vague and indeterminate nexus of political instability and social uncertainty arising in response to globalizing processes that needs to be carefully disentangled with the greatest variety of examples and most complex forms of association. What is needed most of all in such circumstances is thick – not thin – description. The most pressing obstacles to deepened

unification in Europe today, after all, are symbolized paradoxically by traditional letter bombs to icons of global capital, or Twitter-disseminated, modernist manifestoes of “European” independence based upon the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Vienna. There has not been, and will not be a simple substitution by the European Union for the classical, liberal modern nation-state. Likewise, there will be diverse and multifarious manifestations of a “fear of small numbers” – of the violence against, or stigmatization of minorities – as the status of marginalized peoples changes within such a constellation of political, social, and economic factors. Through the case studies of Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII’s Wives, this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate such web-like connections through the artists’ use of numerous, intermediated forms – video, film, radio, posters, the Internet, and much more – and diverse, symbolic spaces in the public as well as private realms.

Furthermore, though invested in different symbolic forms and spaces, Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII’s Wives have employed a number of similar strategies in their artistic careers. First of all, they each embrace a strategy of repetition with difference. They make the same kind of artworks over and over again, but each time with a slightly varied critical emphasis or different voices. Farocki, for instance, has produced innumerable films and video installations addressing the problematic of information gathering and surveillance. Though *Respite* focuses on a Dutch internment camp during WWII, *In-Formation* on post-WWII German immigration patterns, and *Deep Play* on the 2006 World Cup game, these artworks (like dozens of others by the artist), continually return to concerns of human de-subjectification. How are whole groups of humans documented, categorized, contained, and ultimately controlled like objects? Hirschhorn, in turn, repeatedly creates elaborate, makeshift cultural centers in largely immigrant-populated, economically-depressed neighborhoods on the peripheries of major

European cities. Though each engages with specific local and regional politics, these artworks all focus on problems of publicity and marginalization. What are the constraining social and political circumstances of representation in these *banlieues*? Lastly, Henry VIII's Wives have championed and adapted their multi-media populist campaign, *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, for six years now and plan to continue it. Each iteration of the project adds a new, vernacular dimension to the idea of mass subjectivity, or what a non-exclusivist, cosmopolitical project of the "people-as-one" could be. Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives do not offer totalizing, essentialist visions of what a collectivity should be, but rather, persistent, repeated images that make critical linkages in varying cultural contexts. Theirs is a durational (as opposed to permanent) type of art, insisting on key themes and values through diverse iterations, and marking the urgency of their messages precisely through such repetition with difference.

Second, these three case studies all demonstrate strategies of alienation or the *unheimlich* (uncanny or un-homely). Farocki works with a legacy of Brechtian distancing techniques, most notably the socially-constructed *Gestus* and Epic Theater; Hirschhorn employs the "un-homely" for his massive, dystopian gallery installations such as *Swiss Swiss Democracy*; and Henry VIII's Wives employ tactics of estrangement for their re-scripted video installations, as well as parody and mimicry for manifestations of *Tatlin's Tower and the World*. Such critical tools as alienation, the *unheimlich*, and parody work to break down illusions about the status quo and to offer new and productive, if at first apparently "strange" perspectives. How does the "stranger" fit into the picture? How could a symbolic vision of an "Alien Nation" right at the heart of the European Union upend established prejudices and stereotypes? With these strategies, a fear of difference is restaged as a matter of plurality already within, as with the installation *Swiss Swiss Democracy*. Then a conventional, normativized category of "the people" may allow



for change and different perspectives. Indeed, aesthetic strategies of alienation and the *unheimlich* are not novel, but they are particularly apposite for deconstructing reductive representations of cultural “foreignness.” Moreover, they may become crucial, in Homi Bhabha’s words, for a “global ethic of extending ‘hospitality’ to those who have been unhomed by historical trauma, injustice, genocide and death.”<sup>382</sup> There must be a place extended for those suffering from the most extreme forms of “social death,” or the excluded, marginalized, and dispossessed.<sup>383</sup> A strategy of defamiliarizing the status quo is critical for thinking beyond the current quagmire of social uncertainty and political insecurity, a dangerous configuration that has aggravated hostility towards those in Europe who do not immediately “fit” neatly within the standard picture.

Third and finally, these artists all aim to connect with an audience as large and diverse as possible, and this is where the reconstructive, positive side of their projects comes into play. If at first deconstructive in their use of the “alien,” their artworks also intentionally seek to re-present a positive, non-exclusivist social imaginary. Thus it is the audience – a mass of strangers – that constitutes a crucial factor in their socially-oriented works. In Farocki’s pieces, for example, there has been a shift in emphasis from an “artist-as-producer” pedagogy to more viewer responsibility and interpretation, to implicate the spectator not only as an “expert observer,” but also as an ethnographic “observer-participant.” Such a transition speaks to an overwhelming, data-inundated, contemporary screen culture that operates in terms of repetitive sound bites and manipulated images. For Farocki, there needs to be a collective shift in awareness and interpretation of the objectifying and dehumanizing images that often saturate the mass media

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<sup>382</sup> Homi Bhabha, “Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism: A Postcolonial Perspective,” in *The Urgency of Theory (The State of the World)*, Antonio Pinto Ribeiro, ed. (Manchester, UK: Carcanet Press Ltd, 2008), 18.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

concerning cultural Others in Europe. Hirschhorn also insists that his works attempt to implicate as many different types of viewers as possible. It is a central problem for him: to not only draw the attention of a bourgeois art crowd that has the privilege of travel and leisure, but also those peoples most marginalized in European society, who do not necessarily have such resources or opportunities. The artwork, for him, needs these perspectives and voices: without such “counterpublicity,” the artworks would fail. Finally, Henry VIII’s Wives have initiated a type of populist, online and ground-level campaign to create a vast, motley network of actors in their project, *Tatlin’s Tower*. The group has even attempted to induce audiences to take charge of it. They have repeatedly claimed that they do not wish to lead the campaign indefinitely: they hope that others will become motivated enough to modify and move it in new directions.

#### **5.4 MODELING COLLECTIVITY FOR A NEW EUROPE**

What these artistic case studies illuminate is an engagement with the notion of “collectivity” rather than “community,” or any clearly delimited “people.” Socially-oriented artistic production today, described variously by art historians, curators, and critics as “relational aesthetics,” “relational antagonism,” “dialogical art,” and so forth, has generally shifted toward this cultural framework of collectivity, or some kind of “common world.” The increasing formation of artist collectives over the last thirty years, such as Henry VIII’s Wives, is only another example of this re-characterization. There are numerous possible explanations for this broader transition, but one of them certainly coincides with the fact of increasing technological and informational proximity in an age of globalization, where vertebrate organizations/attachments are being challenged and reworked into more cellular ones. Sociologists and political theorists describe grassroots efforts

such as “transnational activist networks” and NGOs as more positive models of cellularity in opposition to Al Qaeda or the International Monetary Fund, for instance. Yet art production also has a critical role to play in reimagining the symbolic-visual web of such affiliations. Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII’s *Wives* wish to have audiences imagine new, open forms of attachment to each other: bonds and relations built upon a recognition of mutual cultural heterogeneity – not delimited territory, ethnicity, language, race, or so on. Amidst such social uncertainty, nothing could be more crucial to foster human connection (rather than mere connectivity) than the acknowledgment and inclusion of cultural plurality. The “European community,” after all, is only an abstract placeholder for a politically, economically, culturally, and legally-tied mass of over 500 million strangers.

What this dissertation attempts to offer is a set of in-depth analyses of artworks that insightfully deal with specific aspects of this problematic of imagining collectivities as it has evolved over the last half century in Europe. What it does not offer is a clear historical trajectory or definitive answers. Obviously no study could purport to unknot such a labyrinthine subject. In order to begin such an investigation, this dissertation has employed multiple analytical lenses. This includes insights from continental European writers, such as Hannah Arendt, Bertolt Brecht, and Walter Benjamin. And though not directly engaging with theories by Jürgen Habermas, his legacy on the public sphere, as it has been specifically redirected and honed by Michael Warner, has also been central to an idea of envisioning broader publics and mass identification. Furthermore, postcolonial scholarship deeply undergirds much of the analysis in the main chapters. Many of the problems of cultural, political, and economic exclusion in Europe today clearly find their roots in modernist histories of imperialism and the difficulties of post-WWII decolonization.

In a globalized era of letter bombs to the banking industry, the fall of the World Trade Center, and the fiscal crisis in Europe, economic issues are undoubtedly central in the twenty-first century. Hopefully the financial situation in Europe will move towards greater stabilization as the EU members currently negotiate a new treaty for more regulation and oversight of national budgets.<sup>384</sup> Greater economic centralization will again weaken national sovereignty, but the balance between vertebrate and cellular organizations may find more solid ground. Leaders in France and Germany have also advocated a financial transactions tax, or the “Robin Hood tax,” which would levy a tax on the trading of stocks, bonds, and other kinds of securities.<sup>385</sup> It has been proposed in order to at least partially redistribute inordinate profits accrued by powerful, global financial players. The Occupy Wall Street movement, furthermore, now an international phenomenon, signals a decisive, popular shift against an economic inequality that has aggrandized excessively over the last few decades.

Yet such economic insecurity and doubt cut to the core of a much deeper problem, concerning who belongs, and how people identify with one another beyond their established communities. After World War II, many in Europe, such as Hannah Arendt, hoped for a transnational federation, in order to promote peaceful co-existence on the continent and to ensure universal human rights in the aftermath of racial genocide. Norway, for instance, after being occupied by the Nazis from 1940-45, has developed a reputation as a bastion of liberalism – actively promoting values of democracy and equality. Oslo is home to none other than the Nobel Peace Prize. However, with now more than eleven percent of the population born somewhere

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<sup>384</sup> Steven Erlanger and Stephen Castle, “German Vision Prevails as Leaders Agree on Fiscal Pact,” *New York Times*, December 9, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/10/business/global/european-leaders-agree-on-fiscal-treaty.html?scp=2&sq=european%20euro%20treaty&st=cse>, 1-2.

<sup>385</sup> Stephen Castle, “Europeans Planning for Less Unanimity,” *New York Times*, January 2, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/03/world/europe/future-in-mind-europeans-plan-for-less-unanimity.html?scp=1&sq=european%20robin%20hood%20tax&st=cse>, no page numbers.

else – Pakistan, Poland, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, and so forth – serious tensions are erupting as to who belongs and who does not.<sup>386</sup> Many label such foreigners as “welfare scroungers,” but in comparison to the rest of Europe, Norway has fared relatively well in the financial storm, distanced from both the American crisis on Wall Street as well as the euro. Because of its oil wealth, Norway has the possibility to uphold one of the most comprehensive social welfare systems in the world.<sup>387</sup>

Still, backlash against immigrants in the country is rising. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, a cultural anthropologist at the University of Oslo, claims that a “quiet nationalism” exists, where “non-ethnic Norwegians are visible and still seen as out of place.”<sup>388</sup> Also at the University of Oslo, sociologist Grete Brochmann suggests that Norwegians have historically had a “society of conformism,” based upon “Janteloven,” or Jante law – small-town Scandinavian norms that mold group behavior and encourage an exclusivist form of collectivism.<sup>389</sup> Undoubtedly there are a confluence of factors that have led to increased xenophobia in a country otherwise noted as an exemplar of liberal ideals. Nonetheless, its anti-immigrant Progress Party has steadily strengthened since 1997 and has been the second largest party in parliament since 2005. And violent figures such as Anders Behring Breivik have radicalized the debate to a shocking degree.

It is the hope now that people throughout Norway and Europe will collectively reject Breivik’s inflammatory rhetoric and violent xeno-racism. Perhaps moving in this direction, the Progress Party suffered significant setbacks in the September 2011 local elections. After the massacre on Utoya, the Norwegian youth maintain that their belief in participatory politics and

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<sup>386</sup> Steven Erlanger and Michael Schwartz, “In Norway, Consensus Cuts 2 Ways,” *New York Times*, July 28, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/29/world/europe/29norway.html?scp=4&sq=norway%20immigrants%20eritrea&t=cse>, 1.

<sup>387</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

cultural openness has only strengthened, and that they will become even more politically engaged.<sup>390</sup> The youth wing of the social democratic Labor Party that was targeted on Utoya, AUF (Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking, or Workers Youth League), was founded in 1927 and now boasts 10,000 members. It focuses on single issues such as fighting climate change and keeping Norway open to immigrants,<sup>391</sup> and the group was given Utoya island as a gift after World War II in recognition of young socialists' sacrifices in the fight against fascism.<sup>392</sup>

Ultimately, since the mid-twentieth century, the European landscape seems to have shifted broadly from a discourse concerning “purity of race” to one of “cultural security” (or “security culture”), from Nazi ideology to fears of “Muslim” terrorism. As Bhabha elaborates, “In the context of the world disorder in which we are mired, symbolic citizenship is now principally defined by a surveillant culture of ‘security’: how do we tell the good migrant from the bad migrant? Which cultures are safe? Which unsafe?”<sup>393</sup> Yet as this dissertation maintains, a discourse on “cultural security” today still often erupts in blatant declarations of cultural supremacy as well, from Thilo Sarrazin’s book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (*Germany Does Away With Itself*, 2010) to Anders Behring Breivik’s manifesto on “European Independence.” Worst of all, xeno-racist discourse has entered the mainstream symbolic-visual realm, becoming acceptable in the last few decades as social uncertainty and political instability have propagated.

Against this, there must exist a “right to difference in equality,” in Étienne Balibar’s terms, in which groups are not configured according to some original or essentialist identity, and

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<sup>390</sup> Matthew Saltmarsh, “Young Survivors Find Their Faith in Norway’s System Is Even Stronger,” *New York Times*, July 27, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/world/europe/28iht-youth28.html?pagewanted=1&sq=norway%20youth&st=cse&scp=2>, 1.

<sup>391</sup> Ibid.

<sup>392</sup> John Nichols, “Glenn Beck’s ‘Hitler Youth’ Slur on Norway Victims Confuses WWII Sides,” *Nation*, July 26, 2011, <http://www.thenation.com/blog/162287/glenn-beckss-ignorance-socialism-and-history-generates-cruelest-and-cruellest-response-mur>, no page numbers.

<sup>393</sup> Bhabha, “Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism,” 13.

where equality does not mean a neutralization of differences in the name of universal rights.<sup>394</sup> A “right to difference in equality” signals not only conventional aspects of citizenship (political, legal, and social), but also cultural and “symbolic citizenship.”<sup>395</sup> Contemporary art in Europe today, particularly against a vast backdrop of reductive mass media coverage and political propaganda, has the potential to reinvest such a visual language with metaphorical richness, and to offer more ethically-minded models for an intercultural social imaginary. Such a project is crucial throughout the continent, in order to move from fear to affiliation, from insecurity to collectivity.

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<sup>394</sup> Étienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy before and after Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 56, as quoted in Bhabha, “Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism,” 10-11.

<sup>395</sup> Bhabha, “Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism,” 12.

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