

INTERVENTION AS ACT

Int | AR

Interventions

Adaptive Reuse

Vol. 09

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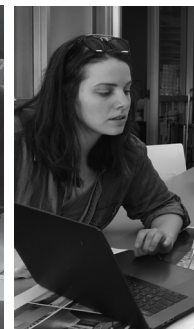
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APPROPRIATING ARCHITECTURE

DIGITAL GRAFFITI AS TEMPORARY SPATIAL INTERVENTION

by DOROTHÉE KING

Introduction

In the classic first essay on the importance of graffiti in the 1970s in New York City, Norman Mailer tells us the joke about the importance of a mediated visual reality. Two Jewish grandmothers are meeting on a street. The first one is pushing a stroller: “Oh,” says the other, “what a beautiful grandchild you have.” “That’s nothing,” says the first, reaching for her pocketbook, “Wait’ll I show you her picture.”¹

We might not fully notice what we directly and sensually perceive in reality – yet we react very strongly to a mediated visual reality. Graffiti artists use this knowledge to display messages they do not want to be unconsciously, but consciously acknowledged. Playing with size, colors, and remarkable calligraphy, graffiti artists publicly apply layers of mediated visual realities with the hope to provoke real change in society. Graffiti developed as a cultural technique, cheap and available to the suppressed, to react to political and social constraints. Until now most graffiti artists use their publically visible imagery to protest against authority, inequality, racism, supremacy, or ignorance. Graffiti is a tool of intervention. It comments on and criticizes existing cultural parameters.

The change-provoking, reality-mediating aspects are also true of digital graffiti.² Yet there are differences, which digital graffiti manifests in its temporality and its material. Digital graffiti is ephemeral in a way which physical graffiti is not. Messages are displayed temporarily. In traditional graffiti, information is scratched, scribbled, painted or sprayed on all kinds of mostly publicly visible surfaces, with the intention that the graffiti would be there for a long duration of time (if not forever). In digital graffiti the protest is no longer permanently applied to architecture. Graffiti in the form of digital

images of writing, calligraphy, drawing, or paintings is temporarily projected onto facades of buildings or other visible parts of constructions. While traditional graffiti might be associated with long-term vandalism and its messages might go out of fashion quickly, digital graffiti has the advantage of being removable and can be updated. Its other notable characteristic is its digital materiality in relation to the digitalization of our environment. Digital media makes us relate differently to space; Pictures, video, and sound are portable information, available at all times, embedded in carry-on every-day-gadgets and mobile phones. As the architect Anastasia Karandinou notes in her research on ephemeral qualities of architecture, “the traditional binary opposition between the sensuous and the digital is being currently reversed.”³ We have come to a point where technology does not only change the way we interact virtually, but also alters the physical architecture surrounding us. This seems to be the next logical step: to picture digital imagery from carry-on gadgets, projecting them in greater size and thus making them publically visible interventions. With digital graffiti, we may mediate our visual environment digitally.

Some examples may serve to demonstrate the potential of digital graffiti as a form of intervention, and

also show cultural differences in community engagement, mediation, and aesthetics within the realm of digital graffiti. First, I shall look at political initiatives that use digital graffiti professionally to formulate broader political statements. These initiatives choose distinct architecture to appropriate, linking the ‘projection screen’ with their messages, and appealing to the viewers to imagine change. Secondly, as an example for a digital graffiti community project, I will discuss ‘Calligrafitti’, which includes Berlin-based refugees from the Arabic world. This community project links to the politics and aesthetics of graffiti that showed up during the Arab spring, and at the same time relates to the Arabic cultural tool to concatenate written words or calligraphy with the facades of public buildings. Thirdly, I will show the work of the Afghani graffiti artist Shamsia Hassani, who uses digital graffiti in the form of photo-shop projects, applying colorful and peaceful elements to heal the broken architecture and communities in her war-ridden home country.

Digital Grafitti

In 2014 the environmentalist group Greenpeace projected the message ‘Listen to the People, Not the Polluters’ on the United Nations building in New York City, shortly



after hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated on the streets to demand climate action. The projection was later translated into different languages and was shared instantly in digital media with communities around the world, who also held marches and protests drawing attention to climate change on the same weekend.⁴ Through using the UN building as projection screen, Greenpeace literally appealed to the nations to unite, addressing global responsibility for climate control. Another example is Greenpeace's 'Planet Earth First' digital graffiti campaign seen 2017 in Hamburg and the Vatican, following the US president's travel to the G20 summit and a meeting with the Pope.

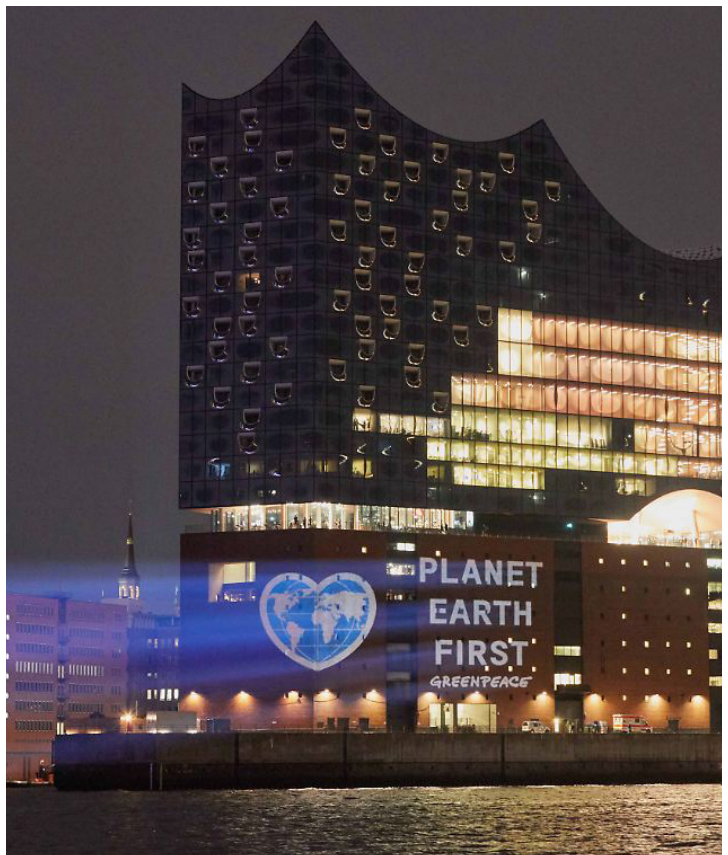
On Women's Day March 8, 2017, the feminist activist group Team Vulvarella projected two huge images of a naked woman with a face mask on the façade of the US Embassy in Berlin. Deliberately choosing time and place, the activists protested against sexual harassment and the US travel ban against citizens of several countries in the Middle East.

In both cases the projection screens are chosen upon the basis of a calculation. The message to be spread is linked to the place which represents its cause. Digital graffiti is addressing the pedestrians walking by, and additionally the larger institutions, whose facades are used for the projections. Also, the graffiti acts digitally in two ways: Firstly, through the technique of digital projection, and secondly, through the massive viral impact on digital media that follows the actual projection event.

Digital Calligraffiti

During the Arab spring graffiti was an often-used tool to formulate visible protest against political oppression. Graffiti was seen in such diverse forms as fast scribbling, slogans, and scenic murals.⁵ Voices that were silenced or whitewashed become louder through recurring graffiti.⁶ One special form of this graffiti is Calligraffiti. Looking back to a 1400-year-old Muslim aniconic culture of emphasizing the depiction of words over the representation of animated beings, it appears to be a logical step to combine traditional calligraphy with graffiti. Another twist is applied by projecting calligraphy as digital graffiti.

In the Summer of 2017, the Berlin based Public Art Lab, a platform for urban art projects, organized a project with migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Senegal, and other countries.⁷ The main idea was to transform the urban environment into projection screens and communication platforms. Subway stations and public building interiors and exteriors served as boards for calligraphic messages. The projection tool was a simple live projector named 'Infl3ctor', developed by the artists Michael Ang and Hamza Abu Ayyash.⁸ The messages spread were written primarily in Arabic and German. Calls were made for love, art, and peace. Yet also more concrete political messages were spread, such as "It's



TOP
Vatican, Greenpeace Planet Earth First Projection, 2017

Copyright: © Greenpeace

BOTTOM
Hamburg, Greenpeace Planet Earth First Projection, 2017

Copyright: © Greenpeace





amazing to take pictures in the street without being stopped by police.”⁹

In this case of digital graffiti, the messages and the aesthetics of the digital graffiti are an important factor in the acknowledgment of the cultural heritage of the new Berliners. Calligraffiti serves as a community builder. Through appropriating public space, one belongs to a community. This is true for digital graffiti in 2017, as it was true for graffiti in 1972, when Hugo Martinez, who organized the first graffiti association, stated that “graffiti writing is a way of gaining status in a society where to own property is a way to have an identity.”¹⁰

Digital Dreaming Graffiti

Shamsia Hassani is a famous graffiti artist in Kabul. Being a professor of Sculpture at Kabul University, she has brought street art to the center of her home town. She uses colorful graffiti to cover up the negative reminders of the war on real architecture and also in the minds of the people. She claims that “image has more effect than words, and it’s a friendly way to fight.”¹¹ Shamsia Hassani also presents her ideas digitally. Her project ‘Dreaming Graffiti’ is a series of photo-shopped images. She paints and decorates war-ruins from Kabul and shares these images online. She imagines a different environment through interacting virtually with the physical architecture surrounding her. Though this sub-category of digital graffiti may not be tangible in the physical space, it has the power to change the way in which the community sees the potential of its environment.

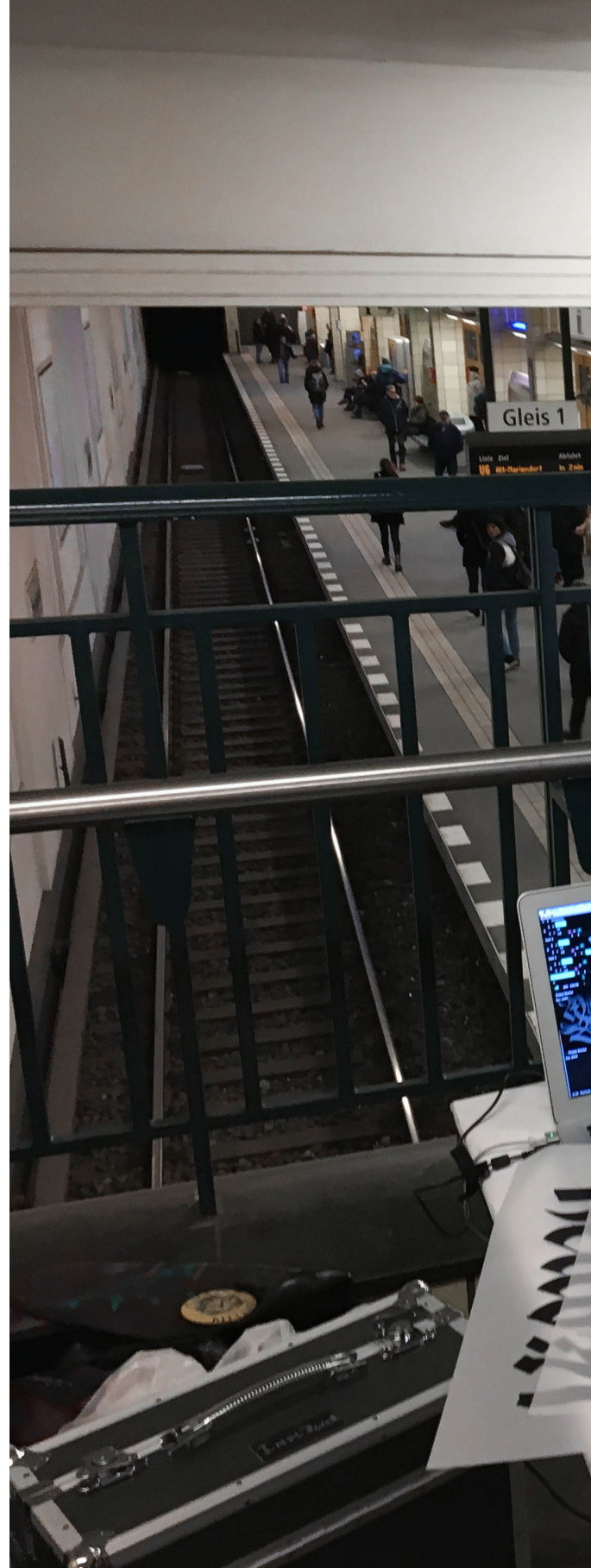
Conclusion

Is digital graffiti the new tool for the generation of digital natives to resist, protest, and engage? With the examples above we see that going digital allows a “displacement and assemblage of space,”¹² and leads to a re-organizing of the aesthetics of architecture with all its symbols and power structures. Digital graffiti is a powerful tool for protest and intervention. And the practical advantages of digital graffiti over traditional graffiti are obvious. One does not have to get close to the architecture onto which one intends to project. Even fenced-in buildings can be turned into a projection screen. One may even choose the building in relation to the message of the graffiti. Also, digital graffiti does not cause damage to property and is therefore not a criminal act.

We return to the joke about the picture in the pocketbook. Now is the time to get our pocketbooks – aka phones and tablets – to show our environment the real truth. This time we are not only showing our mediated reality to our friends. This time our messages are projected, are publically visible, and go viral. All one needs is some courage, maybe a good projector – but usually a flash light does the job.

ENDNOTES:

- 1 Norman Mailer, *The Faith of Graffiti* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1974), ch.1.
- 2 There are non-protest versions of digital graffiti, such as street festivals and commercial advertisement. For this article, I want to focus on digital graffiti as interventions and political acts.
- 3 Anastasia Karandinou, *Theories and Practices of the Ephemeral in Architecture* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), preface.
- 4 Molly Dorozenski, "Greenpeace Delivers People's Message on Eve of Climate Summit," September 23, 2014. <http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/greenpeace-delivers-peoples-message-eve-climate-summit/>
- 5 Pascal Zoghbi and Don Karl aka Stone, *Arabic Graffiti*, (Berlin: From Here to Fame, 2011), 57.
- 6 Rana Jarbou, "The Seeds of a Graffiti Revolution," in *Walls of Freedom - Street Art of the Egyptian Revolution* ed. by Basma Handy, Don Karl (Berlin: From Here to Fame, 2014), 9-12, 9.
- 7 "Digital Calligraffiti," *Public Art Lab*, accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.publicartlab-berlin.de/blog/2017/09/05/digital-calligraffiti-2/>.
- 8 Michael Ang, Infl3ctor, "Michael Ang," accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.michaelang.com/project/infl3ctor>.
- 9 DJ Pangburg, "Activists Are Projecting Digital "Calligraffiti" Onto Walls in Berlin," accessed November 11, 2017, https://creators.vice.com/en_us/article/nz57wz/activists-are-projecting-digital-calligraffiti-onto-walls-in-berlin.
- 10 Norman Mailer, *The Faith of Graffiti* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1974), ch.1
- 11 Shamsia Hassani, interview with auopsiart, accessed November 12, 2017, <http://autopsiart.com/shamsia-hassani/>.
- 12 Karandinou, 201.





PROJECT CREDITS, INFORMATION AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

EDITORIAL

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FARAWAY, SO CLOSE

Name of the project_ FRAC Nord- Pas de Calais; Location_ Dunkirk, France; Name of design firm_ Lacaton & Vassal Architectes; Names of designers involved in project_ Anne Lacaton & Jean Philippe Vassal, Florian de Pous (chief project), Camille Gravellier (construction supervision), Yuko Ohashi; Client_ Communauté Urbaine de Dunkerque; Structural and Mechanical Engineering_ Secotrap; Metal Structure_ CESMA; Year completed_ 2013 – 2015; Cost of construction_ 12M Euros net; Website_ www.lacatonvassal.com; Name of Photographer and Image Credits_ fig. 01-05 by Philippe Ruault; fig. 06 by Florent Michel, © 11h45m.com

TEMPORARY ACTS

Interview conducted by_ Kristina Anilane and Luis Sacristan Murga; Interviewees_ Carolina Caicedo and Xavi Llarch Font; Image Credits_ courtesy of Dosfotos and The Decorators

EVERYBODY'S HOUSE

Name of project_ *The Rosa Parks House Project*; Location_ Detroit, Berlin, Providence; Name of artist_ Ryan Mendoza; Name(s) of key architects involved in project_ João José Santos & Diogo Vale; Website_ www.ryan-mendoza.com; www.whitehousefilm.net; Image Credits_ fig. 01-07, 14-15 by Liliane Wong; fig. 08, 17, 19 by Fabia Mendoza, fig. 09 by Elaine Fredrick, Courtesy of WaterFire; fig. 10-13, 16 by João José Santos & Diogo Vale; fig. 18 by Stefano Corbo; fig. 20 by Erin Cuddigan, Courtesy of WaterFire.

TACTICAL URBANISM WHERE IT MATTERS

Image Credits_ fig. 01. Help Build a Playground, by Public Workshop; fig 02. Story time in the Logan Parklet, by PhilaNOMA; fig. 03. Street games are age-old urban tactics, by Public Workshop; fig. 04. Night guardians, by Public Workshop; fig. 05. Light towers, by Sikora Wells appel/Group Melvin Design; fig. 06. Street games are age-old urban tactics, by Public Workshop; fig. 07. Night guardians, by Public Workshop; fig 08. Roosevelt Plaza Park, by Sikora Wells appel/Group Melvin Design; fig 09. The Grove, by Sikora Wells appel/Group Melvin Design; fig 10. Piano Man, by Sikora Wells appel/Group Melvin Design; fig. 11. Light towers, by Sikora Wells appel/Group Melvin Design; fig. 12. Green towers, by Sikora Wells appel/Group Melvin Design; fig. 13. A community-based process, by PhilaNOMA;

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WE ARE NEVER NOT INSIDE

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KLAN KOSOVA

Name of project_ Klan KOSOVA Television; Location_ Pristina, Kosovo; Name of design firm_ ANARCH; Name(s) of key architects/designers_ Astrit NIXHA; project assistant_ Artan HOXHA; Name of owner_ Klan Kosova; Name of consultants_ Xero A; Name of contractor_ ASHALA; Name of photographer_ Valdrin REXHAJ and Astrit NIXHA; Year completed_ February 2015; Website address of design firm_ www.anarch.biz; Image Credits_ Valdrin REXHAJ and Astrit NIXHA.

THE PAST EMBODIED IN ACTION

Name of project_ Cattedrale di Pozzuoli; Location_ Pozzuoli, Napoli, Italy; Name(s) of key architects/designers_ Marco Dezzi Bardeschi (Capogruppo), Gnosis Architettura (Francesco Buonfantino, Antonio De Martino e Rossella Traversari), Alessandro Castagnaro, Renato De Fusco e Laura Gioeni; Name of owner_ Regione Campania; Name of structural engineer_ Giampiero Martuscelli; Electrical_ Domenico Trisciuglio; HVAC_ Fulvio Capuano; Consultants_ Alessandra Angeloni (geologist), Mario Bencivenni (restoration history and theory), Giovanni Coppola (art historian and archaeologist), Sabino Giovannoni (conservationist), Ugo Grazioso (liturgist), Giorgio Piccinato (town planning), Furio Sacchi (archaeologist), Ferdinando Zaccheo (restoration specialist); Name of contractor_ Rione Terra Pozzuoli Consortium; Year completed_ 2014; Image Credits_ courtesy by Marco Dezzi Bardeschi

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FREE SPEECH COMES HOME

Name of project_ La Casa del Hijo Ahuizote; Location_ Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico; Name(s) of key architects/designers: Giacomo Castagnola (industrial designer); Name of owner_ Centro Documental Flores Magón, A.C.; Name of photographer_ fig. 01_ Roberto Arellano; all other images courtesy by the author; Website address of design firm_ <http://giacomocastagnola.com/>

EMPOWERING ACTIONS

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BEING, ARCHITECTURE AND ACTION

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Le Corbusier: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/27608953@N06/3200164455/in/album-72157605573066252/>; Arquitecto Le Corbusier en su despacho; (CC BY-SA 2.0)

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APPROPRIATING ARCHITECTURE

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US Embassy Berlin, March 8, 2017 *Planet Earth First Projection*, 2017, copyright: Team Vulvarella; fig.06_ *Drury live in the subway*, Berlin, 2017, copyright Michael Ang; fig.07_ Shamsia Hassani, *Dream Graffiti*, 2015, copyright Shamsia Hassani; fig.08_ Shamsia Hassani, *Dream Graffiti*, 2015, copyright Shamsia Hassani.

THE ELEPHANT REFUGE

Name of project_ The Elephant Refuge in Rejmyre; Location_ Rejmyre, Sweden; Name of design firm_ atelier Kristoffer Tejlgaard; Name of key architects/designers_ Kristoffer Tejlgaard; Name of owner_ Daniel Pelz and Kristoffer Tejlgaard; Name of photographer_ Kristoffer Tejlgaard; Year completed_ 2018 (Design Proposal); Website address of design firm_ <https://www.instagram.com/ktejlgaard/>; Image credit_ Kristoffer Tejlgaard.

UNDER THE RADAR

Interview conducted by Elizabeth Debs and Liliane Wong; Interviewee_ Joe Garlick; Image Credits_ fig. 01, 02, 04, 06 by Elizabeth Debs; fig. 03, 05 by Liliane Wong.

SECOND ACT

Name of project_ Mercado de Xabregas; Location_ Lisbon, Portugal; Construction Area_ 2837,18m2; Date_ 2016/2017; Owner_ AR.CO - CENTRO DE ARTE E COMUNICAÇÃO VISUAL; Designer_ SANTA-RITA ARQUITECTOS, João Santa-Rita; Collaborators_ Pedro Guedes Lebre; Artur Simões Dias; Carolina Portugal; João Vidal Sousa; Structures_ Teixeira Trigo, Lda; Eng. João Leite Garcia; Other Engineering and Systems_ GRAUCELCLUS, CONSULTORES DE ENGENHARIA, GESTÃO E PLANEAMENTO, LDA, Eng. Carlos Oliveira; Construction Supervisor_ TEIXEIRA TRIGO, LDA; Eng. João Cordeiro; Contractor_ GUALDIM NUNES DA SILVA, LDA. Eng. Bruno Ribeiro; Photographer_ Inês Guedes Lebre; Image Credits_ fig. 01, fig. 06, fig. 8, fig.10 by Inês Navarro Soeiro Guedes Lebre; fig. 02 -05, fig.07, fig.09 by ar.co, Centro de Arte & Comunicação Cíusal, copyright_ Nuno Martinho.

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pedagogy, then graduated cum laude in both Architecture and Philosophy. She worked as architect, in the field of architectural design and adaptive reuse, and as adjunct professor at the Polytechnic of Milan. In 2017 she received the Italian National Scientific Qualification as associate professor in Architectural Design. Author of various books and essays, she is currently a secondary school teacher, engaged in theoretical research on the philosophy of architecture and in promoting mimodynamic methods in architectural education.

Sally Harrison is a Professor of Architecture and Head of the Master of Architecture Program in the Tyler School of Art of Temple University. Her design and scholarship addresses reemerging postindustrial neighborhoods as sites for social justice, creativity and learning. The work has been widely published in books and academic journals and has been recognized in national, international and regional design awards programs. Professor Harrison is the leader of The Urban Workshop, (<http://tyler.temple.edu/urban-workshop-0>) an interdisciplinary university-based design and research collaborative. Ms. Harrison received her Master of Architecture from MIT.

Heinrich Hermann earned master's degrees from the University of Applied Arts Vienna and Cornell, and his PhD from Harvard. Aside from RISD, he taught at Cornell, Montana State, Virginia Tech, Washington University in St. Louis, Harvard, Roger Williams, and Northeastern Universities, and from 2012-15 implemented SUNY's only BArch program, as chair and professor of architecture at SUNY Alfred State. He practiced in Austria, Germany, and Greater Boston with large and small firms, and through Hermann Design Studio in Concord, MA. With Liliane Wong and Markus Berger he co-founded the Int|AR Journal.

Dorothee King is the head of the Art Education department at the Art and Design Academy in Basel, Switzerland. She was in 2017 lecturer for the Department of Interior Architecture and HAVC at the Rhode Island School of Design. Her scholarship and teaching is invested in contemporary and modern art history, participatory exhibiting, immersive environments, ephemeral materials, and multisensory aesthetic experience. Her research has been published in her first monograph (*KUNST RIECHEN!* Athena-Verlag: Oberhausen 2016), in peer-review journals, and in edited volumes. After studying art, design, and media theory in Denmark, Germany and England, Dorothee King earned her PhD Berlin University of the Arts. She works internationally as a researcher, consultant and curator.

Fabia Mendoza is a Film and Art Director from Berlin Germany. Her first movie 'The White House Documentary', 75min, 2017 won at the 18th Beverly Hills Filmfestival 2018. Over the past 6 years she collaborated on a variety of projects including 'Another Pussy for Putin' - an act of solidarity art performance for the Russian punk band The Pussy Riots, 2012, and 'Amerikkka', a photo project in collaboration with Erica Garner, the daughter of the late Eric Garner. Fabia's photographic and cinematographic work have been featured by *Vogue Italia*, *Interview Magazine*, *ID magazine*, *CNN Style*, *Vanity Fair* among others. Her video and documentary material has been featured by BBC World, Arte, ZDF, CNN, etc.

Ryan Mendoza is an American artist who lives and works in Sicily and Berlin. He is the artist behind *The White House* (2015), the *Invitation* (2016), and the *Rosa Parks House Project* (2017). Primarily a painter, Ryan's artistic projects move between expressionism and realism, engaging Americana and historical reference. Ryan's work often depicts obsessive scenes, illustrating questions of hypocrisy and repression. Ryan has shown with a range of European galleries and museums including White Cube, London, Galerie Lelong, Paris and Museo Madre, Naples. He is the author of *Tutto e mio*, published in Italian (*Everything is Mine*) 2015, Bompiani.

Astrit Nixha graduated at faculty of Architecture, University of Pristina, Kosova. With over 25 years of architectural and managerial experience he runs the architectural office ANARCH, that he founded in 2004. His original experimental architecture, especially in adaptive reuse, presents cutting edge 21st century design principles of reduce, recycle and reuse. He is the recipient of several International project awards.

Clay Odom is Assistant Professor in the Interior Design Program at The University of Texas School of Architecture, a graduate of Texas Tech University's College of Architecture and the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture Planning and Preservation, and a licensed Interior Designer. He is principal of the research-oriented design practice, studio MODO based in Austin, Texas. Clay's active practice in combination with his academic position are the platforms for design-based scholarship which leverages advanced design and fabrication to explore spatial, atmospheric and material effects generation in relation to objects and interiors.

Luis Sacristan Murga is a practicing Architect at Heatherwick Studio in London, where he has been working since 2015 on several international projects, including the new Google campus in California. He received his architectural education from several universities including the Polytechnic School of Madrid in Spain, Lunds Tekniska Högskola in Sweden and Rhode Island School of Design in the USA. He serves as a guest critic at the Architectural Association and he has been a teaching collaborator in Diploma 17 organizing design workshops and reviewing student theses. Through the principles of adaptive reuse and the use of public space, Sacristan Murga works to understand the ways in which architecture can transform consciousness and merge with nature.

João Santa Rita is the founding partner of Santa-Rita Arquitectos. Since 1998, he is Associate Professor at the Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa. In 2005, he was an invited Member of the Akademie für Baukultur and from 2014/2016 the President of the Portuguese Chamber of Architects. His work and his drawings have been extensively exhibited in Europe, South America and the US. He was nominated for the Mies Van der Rohe Prize in 2012.

João José Santos holds a B. Arch and M. Arch from Escola Superior Artística do Porto and he is currently living and working from Berlin. He is specialized in not being specialized as he is moved by arbitrary challenges and mundane curiosity over science and art realms. He independently expresses this himself by exercising, on various mediums, over artifacts

about space and the human condition. Collectively wise he continuously looks for opportunities to rationally and physically assist on consequential projects and interventions.

Enrique Aureng Silva received his Bachelor of Architecture from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), a Master in Critical Conservation at Harvard GSD and has practiced architecture in Mexico and the US. His research focuses on the intervention, transformation and reuse of historic buildings in Latin America, especially in post-disaster scenarios. He is editor of *Oblique*, Open Letters and Platform XI. When not thinking architecture or editing texts, he writes fiction in the form of short stories.

Barbara Stehle is an art and architecture historian, educator, writer, art advisor and curator. She holds a PHD from the Sorbonne and has worked for several museums including the Pompidou Center and The Zurich Kunsthaus. She has written extensively on modern and contemporary arts and architecture. In 2014 she gave a Ted x talk "Architecture as a tool for Human Investigation in the case of the Cambodian Genocide". Stehle has taught at Columbia University, RISD and NYU before founding "Art Intelligentsia", her own heterotopia.

Diogo Vale is deeply interested in breaking the boundaries of the architecture profession, with an intense curiosity in the meaning of preservation in the XXI century, and the studying of architecture as a tool for social intervention. Diogo attained a Bachelor and Master in Architecture at the ESAP (Escola Superior de Arquitectura do Porto) in Porto, Portugal and has worked as a Carpenter/Performer/Artist/Architect. He is currently living in Berlin Germany where he works as an Artist Assistant and Architecture consultant in Studio Mendoza as one of the architects/coordinators of the *Rosa Parks House Project*.