

Conference and Exhibition: “Ecologies of Making Worlds”

November 28 and 29, 2024
Schillerplatz 3, 1010 Wien
Räume M20 und M13a

November 28, Exhibition Opening: “Ecologies of Making Worlds” at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, Vordere Zollamtstrasse 7, 1030 Vienna, Room 306.

The conference looks at projects of world-making and their particular relationality that emerged in the form of extraction, conflict, and destruction, as well as resistance, collective mourning, solidarity, companionship, and alternative forms of kinship in very specific geographies.

As opposed to the uniformity of the world, which John Law calls a one-world world, which operates by constructing the other worlds in their own form, *Ecologies of Making Worlds* is marked by the acknowledgment of heterogeneity. Heterogeneity appears in the ways worlds are made as well as in the modes of their relation. However, the world-making processes and the interrelations of different worlds are not harmonious and peaceful.

The geographies and worlds the conference focuses on are the Upper Tigris region in Southeastern Anatolia, Turkey, which Kurds, Yazidis, and Assyrians inhabit. This region spans many worlds and has been subjected to many one-world world projects, such as extractivism, war, occupation, forced displacement, assimilation, or, in a nutshell, colonization. The region is named in multiple ways, and this implies that the region comprises many worlds that have been subjected to many one-world world projects, like, for example, extractivism, war, occupation, forced displacement, assimilation, or, in a nutshell, colonization.

Arazi is an assembly initiated by researchers with diverse backgrounds: artists, academics, and architects. Despite the meaning of the term *arazi* (territory), which in Turkish refers to an empty space, a space that has lost its status of having significance, the assembly's practice reattributes agency to the particular *arazi(s)* to reveal and inquire about the coloniality inscribed in them. The colonization process in the region and, thus, Arazi's matter of concern, include forced displacement, privatization, extraction, and many forms of war, as well as the consequences of the very process of colonization that range from social and ecological destruction and extinction to forms of world-making practices in the regions. The assembly's research looks at diverse forms of human infrastructures, such as water dams, and abandoned land that make colonial projects possible, as well as alternative ways of world-making, such as collective kitchens, urban gardening, and other forms of infrastructure that are constituted by multiple social relations.

The media Arazi Assembly produces are multiple, as are the tools and methods they use. They are archiving, filming, mapping by conducting interviews, and organizing community meetings; in other words, the assembly aims to reproduce the *arazi(s)* as a space with memories, economies, and socialities that resist the colonial and extractivist one-world world projects.

Nevertheless, the conference's scope extends beyond the specific conflict-ridden world makings in the Kurdish region in Turkey. Departing from the practice of Arazi in a particular region, the conference intends to expand the discussion towards other geographies, artistic methodologies, and ways of engagement with geographies of conflict.

Angela Melitopoulos works in many conflicted geographies, focusing on migration to resistance against extractivist world projects. Her research methodology in approaching the territories is not oriented to documenting reality; Melitopoulos uses video as a means of

research in producing visual memory. In that sense, in her methodology, tools have an agency in making reality and worlds.

Anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli opens up what she calls anthropology of the otherwise, anthropology of alternative worlds of life forms that emerge within dominant worlds. Povinelli develops the term geontopower to explain how dominant settler colonial and liberal capitalism operates by controlling and managing the difference between life forms and even between Life and Nonlife through the figures of the Desert, the Animist, and the Virus.

Oliver Ressler's research, e.g., is centered around social and environmental destruction that extractivist capitalism creates and alternative practices of world-making that flourish amidst environmental destruction in different geographies. He travels to film the materiality of partial but relational social and ecological destruction in different geographies, participates in diverse protests and occupations where alternative worlds emerge, and joins organizing meetings, which he disseminates through various mediums.

Ecologies of Making Worlds also brings together the works of artists and researchers from Arazi Assembly together with Oliver Ressler's work entitled *The Desert Lives*, which will be exhibited at Universität für Angewandte Kunst.

// The conference is organized by Önder Özengi and Ruth Sonderegger and kindly supported by the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. The exhibition is hosted and supported by the University of Applied Arts Vienna - Art and Communicative Practices and Transcultural Studies //

Conference Schedule

THURSDAY, November 28 (room M20, Schillerplatz 3, 1010 Wien)

13:00-13:30 Welcome and Opening by Sofia Bempeza, Nanna Heidenreich, Annette Krauss, Önder Özengi and Ruth Sonderegger.

13:30-14:00

Pelin Tan: "Landscapes as Archives: Tigris Phenomenologies" (Keynote Lecture)

The non-extractivist practices in dispossessed and cohabited landscapes are about "survival-with" and "through" foraging, composting, preserving, landscaping, and burning ingredients, which propose to create together a relational phenomenology. What can artistic experiences reveal about, and how can they embody the voice of apocalyptic landscapes?

14:00-14:30

Discussion of Pelin Tan's Lecture moderated by Önder Özengi

14:30-15:00

Coffee break

15:00-16:00 Short presentations by Mezra Öner and Mazlum Örmek from Arazi Assembly

Mezra Öner: "Conflict Urbanism"

This presentation explains *spaciocide* as a form of systematic erasure of space in neighborhoods that evolved to restricted areas, off-limits to the public, and under military blockade. In this context, researching such fields by trying to adapt to the fast-forward transformation of urban spaces caused by *spaciocide* and becoming a witness through visual archiving can be a methodology.

Mazlum Örmek: "In the Shadow of History: Forced Migration and Lost Memory in Sur, Diyarbakır"

Due to the conflicts in Sur, Diyarbakır, between 2015 and 2016 local residents were forced to migrate. In addition to the destruction of the region's historical and cultural heritage, the displacement of people from their homes created a tremendous social trauma. It caused the loss of memory and identity as Sur's demographic and social structure rapidly changed.

16:00-17:00

Discussion of the presentations by Mezra Öner and Mazlum Örmek moderated by Pelin Tan

Break

18:00h Opening of the Exhibition “Ecologies of Making Worlds” at Universität für Angewandte Kunst, Room 306, Vordere Zollamtstrasse 7, 1030 Vienna.

18:15

Short presentation of Arazi Assembly’s recent publication by Andrew Hebert (editor)

FRIDAY, November 29 (room M20 from 10-15:00, room M13a 15:00-17:45; Schillerplatz 3)

10:00-10:45

Short presentations by Leyla Keskin and Yelta Köm (from Arazi Assembly)

Leyla Keskin: “Ecological-Mourning”

Ecological mourning refers to the emotional and psychological grief that people experience due to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, climate change, and the destruction of ecosystems. Ecological mourning is not only a pain felt at an individual level but also a grief shared across societies and cultures.

Yelta Köm: “Resisting Against Ecocide: Remapping Hasankeyf and Tigris”

How can we invent a decolonized visual representation of the existing maps of the lands that have been dispossessed and the traces left by extractivism? How does a land, surface, landscape, settlement, or dwelling resist ecocide? The presentation will present an alternative map of dispossession.

10:45-11:00 Q&A Session (moderated by Önder Özengi)

11:00-11:15

Film screening: Oliver Ressler, “The Desert Lives”

On September 6, 2021, building machinery was blockaded at Vienna’s Hausfeldstraße metro station in a bid to stop construction of the Lobau freeway and the so-called “Stadtstraße” (city road) planned in conjunction with it. Austrian federal environment minister Gewessler subsequently ordered the cancellation of the Lobau project, but the Vienna city council opted to go ahead with the city road project anyway. In response, wooden structures were erected to ensure that the occupation could continue through the winter.

11:15-11:45

Oliver Ressler: “Resisting Perdition in the Critical Transition”

The time for gentle demands to those in power and the attempt to achieve change through demonstrations seems to be over. As governments globally fail in shutting down climate-destructive operations, millions of people determined to prevent total planetary climate collapse are joining the climate justice movements and collectively take action. There were waves of mass civil disobedience in the past few years, and we will see more of it attempting to shut down coal mines, construction sites for LNG terminals, airports and harbors.

In his films, Oliver Ressler has followed the climate justice movements for years. He shows events of mass civil disobedience and how the movements organize. His work questions the widespread habit of treating “art” and “activism” as distinct categories, when in practice they often overlap and cannot be separated.

11:45-12:15

Panel Discussion with Leyla Keskin, Yelta Köm and Oliver Ressler, moderated by Önder Özengi

12:15-13:15

Lunch break in Mensa

13:15-14:00

Film Screening: “Gilgamesh: She Who Saw the Deep,” by Anton Vidokle and Pelin Tan

The Epic of Gilgamesh is the oldest known literary work in the world. Written in Mesopotamia more than five thousand years ago, it describes the journey of Gilgamesh, the ruler of one of the first historical metropolises, Uruk. Following the death of Gilgamesh’s best friend Enkidu, Gilgamesh embarks on a quest for immortality to avoid the same fate. Part god and part human, Gilgamesh encounters a varied cast of characters, from the Goddess Ishtar and the scorpion people, to Utnapishtim, who, like Noah, saved humanity from the Great Flood by building an arc. Filmed on the banks of the Tigris River near the ancient cities of Mardin, Hasankeyf, and Dara, Anton Vidokle and Pelin Tan’s *Gilgamesh: She Who Saw the Deep* (2022) retells the story of Gilgamesh as a journey through time and space inspired by Sumerian cosmology and the philosophy of Russian cosmism. Featuring an all-woman cast of actors from the Amed Theater in Diyarbakır and accompanied by an original score by Alva Noto, *Gilgamesh* is a meditation on questions of living, death, friendship, love, and immortality.

14:00 -14:30

Q&A with Pelin Tan moderated by Önder Özengi

14:30-15:00

Coffee break, continuation of the conference in room **M13a**

15:00-15:30

Angela Melitopoulos: “Cine(so)matrix” (Keynote Lecture via zoom)

Cine(so)matrix describes Melitopoulos' work as a cinematic matrix of movements and moving bodies. Cartography and non-linear narratives are forming her perception-apparatus, expressing inside-outside, subject-object and divisive relationships through micro-processual image techniques/productions. For Melitopoulos video technology simulates the roles of human memory and its intercerebral communications and brings to light the agency between images, their multiple connections and streams of consciousness.

Her videos and installations explore memory, perception and the forming of collective historical awareness, in addition to mapping and the use of places in time, moving deeper into specific issues such as resistance to the scattering of migrant communities' memory in Europe, territorial struggles against extractivism in Greece and the present of animist thought in technological societies and the insistent forms against forgetting through repression and denial, exile, war and genocide, that are disseminated throughout the world.

15:30- 16:00

Discussion of Angela Melitopoulos’s lecture, moderated by Sofia Bempeza

16:00-16:30

Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower After Late Liberalism (Keynote Lecture via zoom)

This talk discusses the operation of extractive and consumptive capitalism after late liberalism. The talk examines geontopower across two formations of liberalism and capitalism, multicultural liberalism and global capital defining western self-definitions and

practices from the 1970s through the end of the first decade of the 21st century and, whatever this new form of (liberal) capitalism emerging all around us.

16:30 – 17:00

Discussion of Elizabeth Povinelli's lecture (moderated by Pelin Tan)

17:00 – 17:15

Short presentation by Özge Çelikaslan from Arazi Assembly (via zoom)

Özge Çelikaslan: “Archiving Spaciocide: Video—Topographies”

This presentation delves into a micro-level video archive that documents ecological destruction, transformation, and degradation of the landscape caused by regional armed conflicts and extractivism. It explores how experimental video archiving practices can reveal the memory of the land, challenging traditional archival norms. It also examines the potential of video to document and resist ongoing processes of spatial erasure while addressing the broader role of archives of the commons in political struggles.

17:15 – 17:45

General discussion with Elizabeth Povinelli, Angela Melitopoulos and Arazi Assembly, moderated by Önder Özengi and Ruth Sonderegger

BIOs

Ruken Aydoğdu is an architect and urban planner. Living and working in Berlin, Aydoğdu focuses her work and production on areas such as the city, architecture and ecofeminism. In her artistic works, Aydoğdu aims to focus on places where violence is visible, the stories that take shape in these places, archaeological/architectural layers, forms of resistance and the forms that make these visible to us. Aydoğdu, who completed her architecture education at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Mardin Artuklu University, and her master's degree at Dicle University in 2022, worked as a volunteer at the Washington Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2019, and then became a member of the collective Land Assembly, consisting of artists and researchers, and the Board of Directors of the Diyarbakır Chamber of Architects.

Angela Melitopoulos is based in Berlin and Mitilini/Greece and has been making video essays, multi-screen installations, documentaries and music pieces since 1985. Melitopoulos studied at the Nam June Paik Academy of Art in Düsseldorf, at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne with Valie Export. She has a P.hd in Visual Cultures entitled *Machinic Animism and the Revolutionary Practise of Geo-psychiatry*. (Goldsmiths University of London, Center for Research Architecture, 2015).

Her works consist of multi-screen installations [see Research Project Matri Linear B (2020, 2022), Crossings (2017), The Refrain (2015), The Life of Particles (2012), Déconnage (2012) Assemblages (2010)], of video-essays [see Passing Drama (1999), The Language of Things (2008)], of net-based, collective montage projects [(see Corridor X / Timescapes / B-Zone (2006)), activist projects [see Unearthing Disaster I and II 2015)], performative archive presentations in cinema and installations in public space [see Moeglichkeitsraum I-V (2012-2016) and Industries of Denial (2022)]. She collaborates with artists and scholars in Europe, Turkey, Japan, Brazil, Korea, USA.

A retrospective of her work at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia took place in June 2023.

Angela Melitopoulos works on cine(so)matic cartographies in which moving bodies and site traversals create mnemonic milieus. Her interest in the theoretical qualities of time-based media include a constant exploration of duration, memory, geography and subjectivity in relation to non-linear narratives and their technical procedures. Her collaboration with sociologist Maurizio Lazzarato in the 1990s led to the book publication *Videophilosophy* (Edition b_books Berlin, 1997), which spun Henri Bergson's theses further (*Matière et Mémoire*) as technical, aesthetic and social memory with media art. Melitopoulos' works are interested in the mnemonic capacities of our perception of time as a digital trace in archives or in the geology of the landscape. The narratives of subterranean, collective memory transmissions stand for a post-colonial alliance. Against a homogenisation of subjectivity, she understands the auto-poetic logic in media art as an order of thought against the mainstream. She tells of deviant, collective forms of memory of resistant subjectivities and of revisions of history, of imperialist violence, fascism and the experience of migrations in the 20th century.

Leyla Keskin is an artist and painting teacher in mid-school. Her research is focusing on the extracted geographies of Southeast Anatolia. In her practice and artistic research, she deals with spatial production - temporality - memory and belonging. "Ecological Mourning" is the main theme in her practice and research, with her field research centered on Ilisu Waterdam and Tigris Valley. She researches dispossessed lands, cultural heritage, agro-ecological practice as resistances and rights of rivers. She graduated from Dicle University, Faculty of Fine Arts in 2010; Pre-school Teacher Dept., Anadolu University in 2007. Leyla completed her MA on the topic of "Ecological Mourning" and Hasankeyf in the Visual Communication Design program at Mardin Artuklu University in 2022. She conducts pedagogical studies on "Visual Arts and Drama" for children in the age group of seven to sixteen. She has

participated in workshops/talks and exhibitions: "Tofan", "Kayıtta" exhibition (craftsmen and artist collaboration), 13 Metrekare Art Collective, 2021. She was a speaker at the "Repairing the Future" Symposium by Bart_Lab_Art. In 2021 she participated in an exhibition about home and covid conditions.

Yelta Köm is an architect, artist, and researcher who incorporated architecture, artistic and spatial practices to discuss social and political issues. He graduated from Städelschule Architecture Class. His work is mainly influenced by the perception of the environment, neoliberal transformations, the contradiction between nature and technology, and collective movements. Köm's methodology and mediums demonstrate the diversity of each project, and collaboration is a vital part of it. He co-founded Herkes İçin Mimarlık (Architecture for All), an Istanbul-based non-profit that mediates design processes. He was the associate curator of the Vardiya at the Pavilion of Turkey at Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018. He writes articles for academic and popular culture magazines and books. His work has been shown internationally in biennials, galleries and museums. He is a member of the Arazi Collective, which works on different spatial scales focusing on the Southeast region of Turkey. Yelta Köm is currently a researcher at the ERC-granted Topological Atlas project at TU Delft and a guest lecturer at Berlin International University of Applied Sciences.

Mezra Öner is an urban planner who focuses on the geography of trash/waste, Z. Bauman and biopolitics, anthropocene. She completed her master degree about the Politics and the Geography of Trash/Waste at Master Program of Architecture at Mardin Artuklu University under the Supervisor of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pelin Tan. She is a grants manager of the International Medical Corps Turkey which is an international humanitarian aid organization for Refugees in Turkey that provides medical and outreach support to cross-border. She is responsible for conducting projects on the field with coordinating local NGO's. Öner graduated from the department of City and Regional Planning at Middle East Technical University in Ankara. She was the Project Coordinator of the Mardin Waste Water Treatment Plant Project on behalf of Mardin Metropolitan Municipality for two years and has taken the role for institutional capacity building of Municipality. Öner is a member of Chamber of City Planner and Association of Human Rights in Diyarbakır. In addition that, she has participated in multiple workshops and seminars as speaker and participant: "Urban transformation, Border&Migration and urban warfare", The Aesthetics of Affect: conflict, space, action, method, Workshop, Actopolis Project, Goethe Ankara, 2016, "Extrastatecraft – Colonization of Infrastructure", Autonomous Infrastructure Project, Oslo Architecture Triennale 2016: After Belonging 2016", "Understanding Autonomy Practices", Radical Urban Theory with Prof. David Harvey, Mardin Artuklu Architecture Faculty 2015, Summer School-Practices of Commoning: Critical Spatial Ecology in Beirut 2016.

Mazlum Örmek graduated from Dicle University, Dept. of Geography (2015). He completed his master's thesis at Geography Dept., Harran University in 2019 with the subject "Investigation of the Socio-Economic Dimensions of Migration in Sur (Diyarbakır) District Center (2015-2016)". He took Urban Sociology courses from Boğaziçi University Summer School (2017). He provided support as a co-writer/artist with his photographs and articles in the Documentary Photography books *Surdibi Dreams* (2012), *Disappeared in Custody - Saturday Mothers* (2016), and *Gender Inequality and Violence* (2019). He attended the International Diyarbakır: History, Society and Economy Congress (2018) and the Karaburun Science Congress on Fascism (2024). Mazlum's practice is on spatial politics in conflict zones, and minor verbal and visual narratives, particularly on places of lost memory.

Merve Gül Özokçu is an architect, researcher and activist. Her research focus is commons, creative actions, narratives of everyday life and indigenous eco-feminist practices. She is the vice president of the board Herkes İçin Mimarlık (Architecture for All) Association that aims to resolve social problems through architecture while searching for alternative ways of practising architecture. She is a part of Arazi Assembly (2016, Mardin); a research assembly consisting of researchers that are working together in different spatial scales focusing on the

Southeast region of Turkey. Arazi considers collective research as a form of knowledge production of decolonization, care and solidarity. Currently, Merve Gül Özokcu is a grant holder of IASPIS and İstanbul Cultural Art Foundation's Design Resilience Program.

Oliver Ressler is an artist and filmmaker who produces installations, projects in public spaces, and films on issues such as economics, democracy, migration, the climate crisis, forms of resistance, and social alternatives. Ressler has had solo exhibitions at Berkeley Art Museum, USA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Belgrade; Centro Cultural Conde Duque, Madrid; Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum, Egypt; The Cube Project Space, Taipei; Kunsthaus Graz, Graz and comprehensive solo exhibitions at Wyspa Institute of Art, Gdansk; Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporaneo – CAAC, Seville; SALT Galata, Istanbul; MNAC – National Museum of Contemporary Art, Bucharest; Cultural Centre of Belgrade; Belvedere 21, Vienna. Ressler has participated in more than 400 group exhibitions, including Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid; Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven; MASSMoCA, North Adams, USA; Centre Pompidou, Paris; the biennials in Prague (2005), Seville (2006), Moscow (2007), Taipei (2008), Lyon (2009), Gyumri (2012), Venice (2013, 2024), Athens (2013, 2015), Quebec (2014), Helsinki (2014), Jeju (2017), Kyiv (2017), Gothenburg (2019) and Stavanger (2019), and at Documenta 14, Kassel, 2017 (exhibition organized by EMST). Ressler has completed forty-two films that have been screened in thousands of events of social movements, art institutions, and film festivals. A retrospective of his films took place at Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève in 2013. In 2002, Ressler won the first prize at the International Media Art Award of the ZKM in Karlsruhe, and he is the first prize winner of the Prix Thun for Art and Ethics Award in 2016. For the Taipei Biennale 2008, Ressler curated an exhibition on the counter-globalization movement, *A World Where Many Worlds Fit*. A traveling show on the financial crisis, *It's the Political Economy, Stupid*, co-curated with Gregory Sholette, has been presented at nine venues (2011-2016). 2019–2023 Ressler has directed *Barricading the Ice Sheets*, a research project on the climate justice movement funded by the Austrian Science Fund. Configurations of the project were solo exhibitions at Camera Austria, Graz (2021); Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb (2022); Neuer Berliner Kunstverein (n.b.k.), Berlin (2022); Tallinn Art Hall, Tallinn (2022); LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial, Gijón (2023); The Showroom, London (2023).

Pelin Tan is the 6th recipient of Keith Haring of Art&Activism (2019). Turkish art historian and sociologist, currently a professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Batman; based in Mardin/Turkiye. Senior research fellow of the Center for Arts, Design and Social Research. For more than two decades, she has focused on urban&territorial conflict, commons, labor conditions, alternative pedagogies, and methodologies in art&architecture. A Lead author of the Urban Society report by ipsp (Cambridge Univ.Press 2018). She contributed to several publications such as *Climates: Architecture and The Planetary Imaginary* (Columbia Univ., 2017), *Refugee Heritage* (2021), *Radical Pedagogies* (MIT Press, 2022), *Designing Modernity The Arab Architecture* (Jovis, 2021), *From Public to Commons* (Routledge, 2023), *Agonistic Assemblies* (Sternberg Press/MIT Press, 2024), *Urgencies in Architectural Theories* (Columbia Univ.Press, 2015). Her current short documentary "Landscapes as Archives" is about the production of architecture in Palestine supported by the Qattan Foundation, Ramallah (2023). With Vidokle she produced "The Fall of Artists' Republic" in Tripoli/Lebanon (2014). Her last film "Gilgamesh: She, Who Saw the Deep" (2022) supported by the Sharjah Film Platform. Tan was invited to Montreal Biennial (2014), Bergen Assembly (2013), Lisbon Architecture Triennial (2014), Istanbul Biennial (2007, 2015, 2022), Istanbul Design Biennial (2021), Beijing Art Biennial (2023), Oslo Architecture Triennial (2016) and others. Forthcoming book: *Forms of Non-Belonging*, E-flux book/Sternberg Press, 2025. Tan is the editor of *i press*, Cambridge.

Elizabeth A. Povinelli is Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies at Columbia University, where she has also been the Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender and the Co-Director of the Centre for the Study of Law and Culture. She is also Corresponding Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities and a founding

member of the Karrabing Film Collective. Povinelli's academic work has focused on developing a critical theory of settler late liberalism and its aftershocks, elaborated across eight monographs and numerous essays. *Geontologies, A Requiem to Late Liberalism* was the recipient of the 2017 Lionel Trilling Award. She has also explored similar thematics in a series of artworks shown in galleries and museums, including Prometeo Gallery, Milan, ar/ge gallery, Bolzano, the Biennale Gherdëina, and MADRE, Naples. Her film, *The Inheritance*, made with Thomas Bartlett, premiered with Taxispalais, Innsbruck. A series of her drawings reimagining prehistory as a series of colonial sedimentations was part of the reopening of the Museo delle Civiltà, Rome, in 2022. With her Karrabing colleagues, Povinelli has also participated in eight award winning films, prizes of which include the 2015 Visible Award and the 2021 Eye Prize from the Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam.