

TOWARD A *MIGRATORY TURN*

Art History and the Meaning of Flight, Migration and Exile

Beyond a historiographical order

Art history is not only an updating of the history of artistic production and theory in an infinite future but also a continual locating of the present within the past. As Michel de Certeau extensively elaborates in his book *The Writing of History*, history is composed of the conditions of possibility and production of the present (Certeau 1988, 10 f.) and is thus not an objectively existing *res facta*. Walter Benjamin had already pointed to this in his reflections *On the Concept of History*: “History is the object of a construct whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by Now-Time (*Jetztzeit*)” (Benjamin 1970a, 263).¹ History is a reformulation of that which has happened, which always carries with it a certain degree of deviation: the truth of history does not always stay the same (Koselleck 1982, 247; Koselleck 2000, 294). Canonical knowledge and knowledge systems are the results of discourses and as such are also powerful instruments; the ordering of the past is not least of all collected in history-making institutions such as archives (Foucault 2008; see also Martschukat 2002). Historiography is both selective and relational (Pokorny 2011, 21, 65 ff.) as it arises from recipients’ relation to sources or events they have experienced. In this way, the writing of history serves the (ideological) positioning and self-assurance of individuals, groups, and larger entities, and even the legitimization of nations (Langewiesche 2000, 25; Kocka 2001, 83). Historical systems have a stabilizing function, which can even be expressed in objective, distanced language, and a bird’s-eye view of historiographic texts (Enzensberger 2014, 11).

The historiography of art is sometimes resistant to criticism, still gets stuck in old patterns, and rejects extensive self-critical deconstruction. This is evident in, among other things, the numerous new editions of surveys of modern art history, which continue to contribute to a history of isms – from Impressionism to Expressionism, Futurism to Surrealism (see Haftmann 1954/2000; Read 1959/2010; Arnason 1968/2012; Hunter/Jacobus 1976/2000; Schapiro 1978/1988). However, the established understanding in critical historical scholarship that historiography is in fact not absolutely objective but is tied to perspectives (Pokorny 2011, 17; Jussen 2000, 58) has, since the 1980s, been questioned in art history, particularly in feminist, postcolonial, and globally oriented research. Teleological concepts based on what appears to be a developmental logic as well as concepts of temporality, which have led to the acceptance of a “belated” modernism, are being reassessed. In particular, the dominance of a truly Western modernism, which excludes the

1 “Die Geschichte ist Gegenstand einer Konstruktion, deren Ort nicht die homogene und leere Zeit sondern die von Jetztzeit erfüllte bildet.” (Benjamin 1991, 701).

plurality of contemporaneous instances of art production, has been the subject of particular criticism (Hinden 2002; Flood 2007; Watanabe 2013). For the most part, the critical approaches mentioned here all support the expansion of the canon, into which, for example, non-Western and non-Northern art, female artists and their work, as well as new and unorthodox methodologies should be integrated (Salomon 1991; Camille et al. 1996; Pollock 1999; Elkins 2007).² Ruth E. Iskin has suggested the term “pluriversal canon” to describe an alternative art history that is based on “plurality, heterogeneity, postcolonialism and globalization” (Iskin 2017, 23).

Pertinent literature on the connection between art history, migration, and the canon, however, is still lacking, and it would be interesting to observe how such texts would deal with the canon, its inherent organizational categories, and its temporal linearity.³ The question arises of whether transnational mobility⁴ – as a spatial boundary crossing that transcends the concept of artists’ contacts or that of artists’ journeys – inevitably operates outside of this canon. Based on this, the reason why migration, exile, and flight – as events accompanied by confusion and irregularity – have so far received little attention in the historiography of art can be explained. The canon is ultimately an expression of collective identities and values (Locher 2012, 33). Migrations across borders cannot easily be aligned with canonical systems, periodizations, and a logical chronology, since they embody the foreign in relation to the supposedly autochthonous. Migration is a visitation, the appearance of a Ghost of Disorder, and is perceived as a threat to cohesion and regularity. Nikos Papastergiadis points out that, in relational terms, migration is defined as an alternative concept to sedentism:

Human movement was seen as a depletion of energy as well as a threat to the integrity of borders and the stability of social entities. Hence, migration was considered a deviation from the normal conventions of settled life, and migrants (or as Oscar Handlin termed them, the ‘uprooted ones’) were at best seen as victims of external forces or at worst as suspect characters seeking unfair advantage over residents, thus representing a threat to the prevailing social order. (Papastergiadis 2011, 157)

Social structures, concise national history (or histories), language, and the paradigm of a “dominant culture” seem to be the other side of migratory phenomena as an expression of diffusion and contamination. Applied to historiographic parameters, the stasis of timelines, objectifications, categories, and successions stand in opposition to concepts of anachronism, the removal of borders, and plurality.

The problems with the art historical treatment of exile and migration can be seen in many facets of the response: the work of exiled artists is often overlooked, suppressed, and forgotten, or the work done in exile is marginalized and classified as a far cry from the artist’s chief works. An example of this is the work of the sculptor Rudolf Belling, who, in the 1910s and 1920s, was a

2 Anna Brzyski points out that canonical positions over the past 30 years have also done virtually nothing to change the narrative of genius, which features predominantly male protagonists and which continues to be widely perpetuated in universities and museums (Brzyski 2007, 2; see also Lange 2008, 239 f.).

3 One important essay on an art history of migration that implicitly calls for a revision of the canon has been presented by Kobena Mercer (Mercer 2008). For recent work on modernity and exile, see also Demos 2017.

4 The term “mobility” is increasingly being used in migration studies in place of “migration,” and “mobile actors” in place of “migrants,” in an effort to release them from the paradigm of national or ethnic assignment (Welz 2014, 103; see also Walke 2017, 2 f.).

leading proponent of abstraction in sculpture. After arriving in Turkey in 1936, he turned toward a figurative neoclassicism for several years but later returned to an abstract formal language. Yet Belling received hardly any attention in the years following the end of World War II. This was due to a long absence from Germany, and the seizure and destruction of his works during the National Socialist period, but also to his artistic production in Turkey, which critics found suspicious (Dogramaci 2015a, 48–53). In a letter to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, one of the most powerful voices in art criticism in Germany at the time, Will Grohmann, referred to Belling as “passé.”⁵ The sculptor did not receive an official invitation to return to Germany. Even his late work in the 1950s and 1960s was not acknowledged alongside other non-figurative positions from that decade but instead was excluded from the discourse (Dogramaci 2017, 288). Rudolf Belling’s first major retrospective in Germany was not held until 2017 at the Berlin National Gallery (Rudolf Belling 2017). There is, however, an exception to every rule. In this respect, one can name the architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and his popular, now canonical, work in the United States, which has long since become part of American architectural history. In 1947, for example, the exhibition catalogue for a retrospective of the artist’s American work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York makes the following statement: “Mies van der Rohe’s main creative work in America, and the most important of his entire career, is the new campus for Illinois Institute of Technology” (Johnson 1947, 131). With this, the master builder – and this is what differentiates his reception from that of other emigrants – became the “American Mies” (Lambert 2001, 17).

However, dealing with artists remains a complicated and complex issue when, for example, they have passed through several countries of exile before reaching their final destination. Their works are often scattered or destroyed; under dictatorships, such as the National Socialist regime, their chief works are also the target of defamation or destruction. Estates are far-flung and the study of them demands considerable endurance and often knowledge of two or more languages. Along with problems of reception, difficulties also arise in attempting to classify and categorize the works into artistic currents or a national art history. Therefore, the work of emigrated artists is sometimes regarded from the perspective of their places of origin: in exile studies, painters such as Gretchen Wohlwill, who lived in Portugal for many years, or Paul Hamann, who spent decades in England, are treated as artists from Hamburg (Bruhns 2001, 177–179; 422–426). However, these are cases of transnationally created *œuvres* transcending linguistic, cultural, and national boundaries. It becomes even more complex when the parameters of origin or return are unclear. The sculptor Jussuf Abbo was born in the Palestinian city of Safed in Upper Galilee, long a part of the Ottoman Empire. With the collapse of the empire after the end of World War I, he became stateless. Abbo, who first went to Berlin in the 1910s and, after 1933, into exile in England, left behind a heterogeneous body of work. His sculptures, partly expressive, partly objective, and later, imbued with introspectiveness, elude strict categorization or ordering. Abbo left many of his works behind in Berlin or destroyed many of those created during his emigration due to lack of success. With his traces lost in exile in England and disregarded in Germany under National Socialism as well as in the decades after 1945, Abbo was non-existent in art historiography for decades. It was only for a short time in the 1980s and now in recent years that Abbo’s work

5 Will Grohmann to Andrew Ritchie, 9 May 1956, The Museum of Modern Art, Archives, New York, Box 110: Correspondence Institution N, New York/MoMA.



Fig. 2 | Jussuf Abbo, *Else Lasker-Schüler*, 1923, lithography, estate of Jussuf Abbo

has received new attention, initially as a protagonist in an art history of exile (Dogramaci 2015a, 57–62). A bust by Abbo migrated with his former gallerist Herbert von Garvens-Garvensburg to the island of Bornholm, where Garvens-Garvensburg sought refuge from persecution under National Socialism (Vester 1992; Nielsen 1993). As a supporter of modern art, Garvens-Garvensburg has, for some time, also received more recognition.⁶ However, how should the forgotten, such as Jussuf Abbo and Garvens-Garvensburg's gallery, be dealt with? Is it enough to rewrite them into modernism, thereby providing them with delayed justice? Or should the circles and routes, the contacts and networks, the preserved and destroyed works and legacies be the starting point from which to understand art history, more clearly than before, as at once a history of gaps, of circular relations, of processes of attraction and rejection, as progress and reversion?

A study of art history as a study of migration (and vice versa) must pose new questions (see also Boeckl 2016, 429): To what extent were Abbo's multiple displacements and his status as a stateless person in Germany in the 1910s and 1920s the reason he neither had nor cultivated any ties to the Free German Cultural Union in London? What aesthetic and existential experiences are shared by Else Lasker-Schüler and Jussuf Abbo, who inspired each other with their work

6 His works were recognized in the exhibition *revonnaH: Kunst der Avantgarde in Hannover 1912–1933* (23 September 2017–7 January 2018, Hannover, Sprengel-Museum), to give one example.

(Dogramaci 2015b), and who, as exiles, were both confronted with experiences of failure (figs. 1 and 2)? What shape did the project of modernism take on its way into exile on a Danish island (Garvens-Garvensburg) or in London, where the gallerist Alfred Flechtheim lived as an émigré? What misunderstandings – including fruitful ones – faced works that had been brought along, exhibited, or produced abroad? Can the “classical modernism” of the 1920s be understood as a prehistory of an artistic modernism en route, which only took on its “global” form on its way, along its passage, through contacts, when faced with existential crisis?

The history of art as a history of migration and interconnection

Theories or art historical treatises developed along the paths of migration are often not appreciated until many decades after their conception. Thus, the contributions of the emigrants Naum Gabo, László Moholy-Nagy, and Marcel Breuer to the London manifesto *Circle* (Gabo et al. 1937) has yet to be examined and classified within a transnational art history, of which migration is an important driving force. The oeuvre of the art historian Hanna Levy-Deinhard, who researched art sociology, postcolonial art, and the aesthetics of reception during her years in exile in France, Brazil, and the United States after fleeing Germany in 1930, was long overlooked. Her work can be read as part of a (self-)critical art history during a period of awakening and upheaval and provided an important impulse for the renovation of the discipline of art history in Germany beginning in the late 1960s (Below 2016). In this respect, Levy-Deinhard’s work while in Brazil in particular anticipated questions and topics associated with a transcultural study of art. At the same time, Levy-Deinhard’s work might never have been created in this way if she had not been forced to emigrate, as the impressions left by each sojourn were preserved in her texts, and the various experiences of relation, interdependence, and their contradictions are what constitutes the textual corpus in the first place. However, in the case of Levy-Deinhard, the challenge lies in subsequently placing this research, which was not collected and annotated in its entirety until 2016 (Below/Dogramaci 2016), within a dialogic configuration; this means not only incorporating it in a linear history but also placing Levy-Deinhard’s work in relation to that which came before it, to contemporaneously published texts by other authors, as well as to future developments in art historical research. History and histories not only reveal what once was but can also point beyond themselves toward what will be. The rediscovered and republished writings of overlooked scholars such as Hanna Levy-Deinhard can, in this way, be repositioned in relation to contemporary authors, just as they can find their way into the historiography of the field. This opens up the possibility of re-readings and contextualizations, which not only are capable of leading to a rewriting of the art history of the past but can also help shape the future of the discipline.

A democratic, horizontal model, as is found in Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of the rhizome (Deleuze/Guattari 1977) is conducive to an understanding of an art history (or of art histories) of migration. The connecting, multi-perspectival, and anti-linear concept of the art historian Aby Warburg’s *Mnemosyne Atlas* from the early twentieth century (Jussen 2000, 65) could also serve as a starting point, along with Warburg’s anachronistic term “survival” (*Nachleben*). As an antitype of the chronology and order of a timeline, survival constitutes an unordered temporality – far removed from a steady progression – which follows its own temporal and

spatial logic. In Warburg's work, survival (Warburg 1998, 670–673; Warburg 2012, 36) is neither a chronological arrangement of the original and its copy nor death and rebirth. As such, it opposes the idea of an ancient origin or beginning as was established in the canon by the likes of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who operated with concepts of model and copy (Cortjaens 2017, 38). Warburg's reflections offer alternatives to a teleological art history of becoming and passing-away. In Warburg's work, ancient remains or traces are shown in unexpected ways in the visual worlds of subsequent eras, and are reinterpreted, distorted, and mixed; as Georges Didi-Huberman formulated in his treatment of Warburg, there might be a "time for phantoms," considered as a sudden return of images or *Nachleben* (survival) not subject to the model of *Nachahmung* (imitation) (see Didi-Huberman 2010, 29). Didi-Huberman emphasizes that the past can resonate as something unfinished or incomplete. However, in order to understand Warburg's word usage, which expresses an egalitarian and rhizomatic thinking, one can claim that it is the contemporary that first gives contour to the past by remembering, reconstructing and, in doing so, finding and inventing it. The perpetual, continued existence of certain formulas, gestures, and signs leads to questions of why *this*, specifically, as a performance of memory, can be drawn from the past into the present but not *the other*.

At the same time, Warburg operates with terms related to movement, mobility, and migration, such as in his treatment of tapestries, which he refers to as movable image vehicles (*bewegliches Bildervehikel*) or textile vehicles (*textile Fahrzeuge*) (Warburg 1979, 165), or in discussing the printed pictures or block books from the fifteenth century that he calls image vehicles (*Bilderfahrzeuge*) (Warburg 2012, 14). The aspects of movement, mobility, and processes of circulation (*Kreislaufvorgänge*), on which Warburg repeatedly reflected in his studies (Warburg 1906, 60), are related to the figure of the whirlpool (*Strudel*), as a discontinuous time regime (Didi-Huberman 2010, 350), as is also articulated, for example, in Benjamin's understanding of history. The movement conveyed by the image of the whirlpool expresses an anachronistic understanding of time and history, which is to be understood as lying beyond a continuous development. In this respect, Benjamin replaces the image of the riverbed or a river's current, which, from its source to the sea, follows a "natural" movement with a beginning and end, with that of circulating or swirling water. In a journal entry from 1931, Benjamin notes: "In such a whirlpool earlier and later events – the prehistory and posthistory of an event, or, better, of a status – swirl around it" (Benjamin 2005, 502).⁷ Time would thus no longer be a system; in the dangerous movement of a whirlpool, chaos threatens the possibility of gaining an overview. The past, present, and future are swirled together.

Seen in this way, migration not only can be seen as a phenomenon that flanks, inspires, or threatens the organization of art historiography. Rather, the varying characteristics of the migratory, the boundless, the circulating, the caesura, trauma and new beginnings, reinterpretation and rewriting, assimilation and insistence, and visitation and the reconstruction of memories can be understood as alternative historiographic models. The *migratory turn*, however, not only com-

7 "In solchem Strudel kreist das Früher oder Später – die Vor- und Nachgeschichte eines Geschehens oder besser noch eines Status um diesen" (Benjamin 1985, 443). Sigrid Weigel views the whirlpool in the context of a specific understanding of time, as an "image of the interaction of pre- and post-history, of the past and the present, and of eternity and the instant" (Weigel 2015, 426).

prises the way art history is written but points to *other* concepts of, approaches to, and topics related to art production, which, in the following, will be discussed through the example of “mapping.”

Mapping art history – mapping as an artistic practice

Migration necessitates and produces new art histories that demand altered forms of mapping. Migration overcomes and perforates national borders and, in doing so, inevitably turns the focus onto territories, borders, and maps – for instance, in discussion of migration routes, new border walls, or European border policy. In the introduction to her book *Partisan Canons*, “Canons and Art History,” Anna Brzyski questions the validity of canonical art history and suggests complementing the linear narrative of canonical art history with a diachronic, anti-hierarchical (digital) mapping system (Brzyski 2007, 18–22).

Mapping is not to be viewed, however, simply as an approach to understanding artists, objects, and ideas beyond national boxes and to repositioning them in relation to one another on a blank map of art history. In this process, the temporal structure of historical models is joined by a spatial dimension. At the same time, in the context of migration, mapping is also an aesthetic form of artistic production, referring to the polysemantic nature of maps, to borders, but also to subjective mapping. As Rosi Braidotti explains in her reflections on “nomadic subjects”: “Figurations are not figurative ways of thinking, but rather more materialistic mappings of situated, embedded, and embodied positions. [...] A figuration is a living map, a transformative account of the self – it’s no metaphor” (Braidotti 2012, 13 f.).

Lexical entries for the word “map” define it as a “diagrammatic representation of an area of land or sea showing physical features, cities, roads, etc.”⁸ One must distinguish between, among other types, topographical and geological maps; nautical charts, which depict maritime and coastal areas and may include information on currents and tides; natural-historical and ethnographic maps; as well as political maps, which depict national borders:

Cartographers make many different types of maps, which can be divided into two broad categories: general reference maps and thematic maps. General reference maps show general geographic information about an area, including the locations of cities, boundaries, roads, mountains, rivers, and coastlines. [...] Many are topographic maps, meaning that they show changes in elevation. They show all the hills and valleys in an area. [...] Thematic maps display distributions, or patterns, over Earth’s surface. They emphasize one theme, or topic. These themes can include information about people, other organisms, or the land. Examples include production, people’s average income, where different languages are spoken, or average annual rainfall.⁹

What becomes clear from this definition is that the orientation of a map’s content radically changes its message and how it is read, as mountain ranges, rivers, rocks, and plants know no national borders. Perspective – the point of view from which the world is viewed – as well as a map’s scope also make a specific statement. The first photograph to show Earth from the viewpoint of outer space appeared on the cover of the *Whole Earth Catalog* by Stewart Brand in 1968 (fig. 3). Oceans and continents are visible but not national boundaries. When the astronaut Alex-

8 See <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/map>. Accessed 2 March 2018.

9 See <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/map/>. Accessed 6 March 2018.

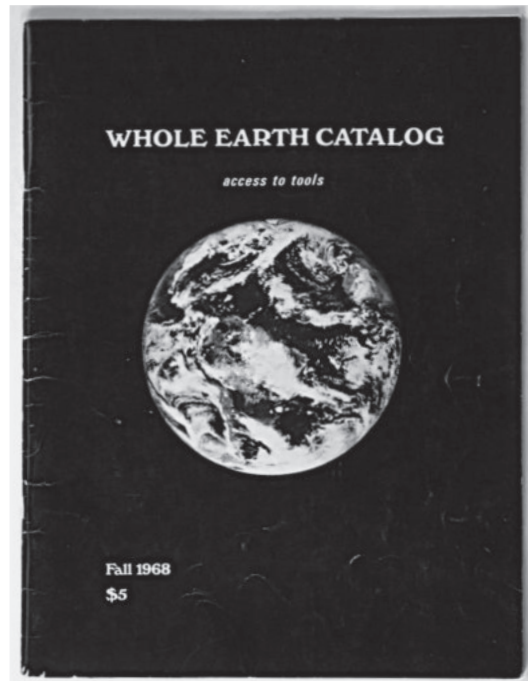
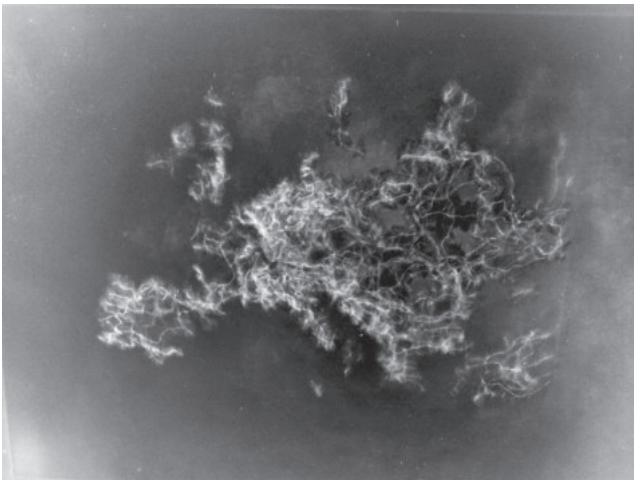
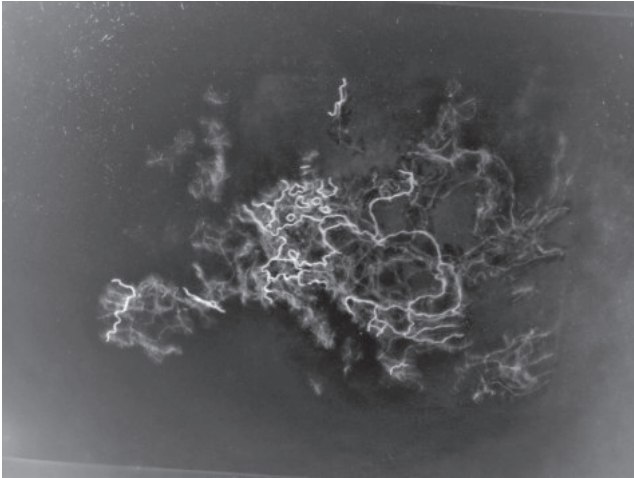
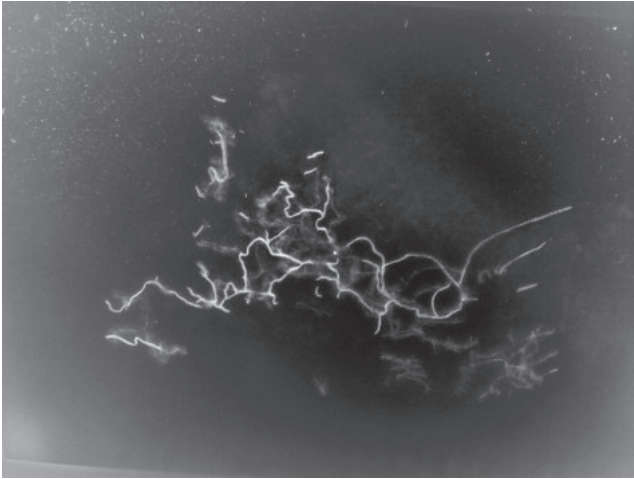


Fig. 3 | Stewart Brand, *Whole Earth Catalog*, 1968, cover

ander Gerst returned to Earth from the International Space Station in 2014, he named the view of the planet as the most impressive of his experiences there: “What you don’t actually see from up there are borders. That’s what’s most impressive up there, because we’re so used to seeing national borders in atlases.”¹⁰

Simona Koch refers to the genesis and variability of the courses of European borders through the medium of film. In her animated pencil drawings *BORDERS/Europe* from 2010 (figs. 4–6), she traces borders on the European continent throughout history. Her sources are historical atlases and maps she found in libraries, on the internet, or at flea markets (see Hug 2015, 194). Her pencil follows the course of the borders dictated there, emphasizing the fact that these are decidedly manmade: just as the pencil, guided by the artist’s hand, manifests as a line on the surface and is erased again and again to make room for new borders, so too have people, through settlement, displacement, armed conflicts, and peace-making or strategic pacts always moved the borders of their territories. Koch technically reflects this historical instability of borders, for one, through the medium of animation, which, with the use of time-lapse, shows the courses of borders endlessly flowing into one another, being erased, and reappearing. Further-

10 “Was man tatsächlich da oben nicht sieht, sind Grenzen. Das ist das, was einen da oben am meisten erstaunt, weil man aus dem Atlas an Ländergrenzen gewöhnt ist.” Alexander Gerst, quoted by Christoph Driessen/dpa, 14 November 2014, <http://www.badische-zeitung.de/nachrichten/panorama/raumfahrer-gerst-hat-noch-nicht-genug-vom-all--94671654.html>. Accessed 17 January 2018. Unless otherwise stated, all quotes have been translated from the German by the translator.



Figs. 4-6 | Simona Koch, *BORDERS/Europe*, 2010, animated pencil drawing, HD film, 4:3, color, mute, 01:40 min/loop

more, a negative image of the drawing is shown. White lines are drawn on a dark background, while disappearing lines leave a light shadow behind, so that, like a palimpsest, the old and new borders – the depiction does not follow any chronology – remain visible.

Like the fading and yet still visible intersecting lines, the historical courses of borders are often only manifested in textual or oral descriptions, publications, or memoirs. The endlessly forming, gossamer threads have an almost ghostly quality.¹¹ As Koch's work plays on a continuous loop, the drawing and erasing of borders repeats without pause, just as history remains a constant system of reference for political movements. As has been demonstrated by current tendencies in Russia and Turkey, a longing for former borders persists.

The topic of changing European borders and the consequences of the Schengen Agreement are the starting point for the multimedia project *Nach der Grenze* (After the Border, 2008/09) by Silke Markefka and Nikolai Vogel. In accordance with the Schengen Agreement from 1985, the borders between participating member-countries of the European Union – including Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Luxembourg, and Germany – have been open since 1995. This international agreement provided that stationary border controls at borders between Schengen countries would be ended. In doing so, borders could be crossed without the need for identifying documents. At former border crossing points in Germany, Markefka and Vogel created an artistic research project that deals with relics and traces. In this project, they interweave their own memories of crossing the border as children and adolescents (both were born in the 1970s) with current experiences at these now meaningless sites, which once represented national sovereignty. As is explained in a text on their project:

Border traffic, border controls, and border crossings are formative impressions from our childhood. Beyond them lay a different country, vacation, often another language or currency. But crossing came with risk: we had to identify ourselves, were inspected, mistrusted. As harmless as it was for West Germans, the border was a childhood adventure, it stimulated the imagination – it was a classic experience. Now, one after the other, they are disappearing, are being reclaimed by nature, or simply left to fall into disrepair – they are becoming ruins. (Markefka/Vogel 2009, 6)

The border crossings were open, but the two wanted to know how these places feel now and what they would find if they visited them today. They often experienced the abandoned borders as strange places with unreal relics from another era as indicators of both liberation and oppression. The artists then created paintings, photographs, and audio recordings along the roads leading across Germany's borders.

Some of Markefka's paintings are medium size, measuring 60 by 80 centimeters or 70 by 50 centimeters, but others are on large-format canvases, 140 by 140 or 200 by 180 centimeters large (fig. 7). Her application of diluted paint is streaky, not pastose; the brushstrokes are clearly visible. The gray color pallet and visible drip marks evoke melancholy weather, bleak views of a boring place where the buildings are arranged around an empty space. Only a stump of the word "Grenze" (border) remains, as if, out of sheer boredom, the "e" had fallen asleep and out of the picture. Arrows, terms, and pictograms still attest to border traffic to be regulated, now nothing

11 In this way, Koch's work evokes associations with Christopher Clark's 2012 book *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (Clark 2012), in which the author traces the way in which the European powers stumbled like sleepwalkers into a disastrous war.



Fig. 7 | Silke Markefka, *Border crossing Nennig on the Moselle river/Remich (Réimech) on the Moselle river, border Germany/Luxembourg*, from the series *Nach der Grenze (After the Border)*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 60 × 80 cm

more than a memory. Buildings appear unused, vacant, and somber; they too seem to have forgotten their meaning. A crooked sign in the woods reads “*Landesgrenze*” (border). Occasionally, the paintings bear national emblems, coats of arms, and eagles, former symbols of the sovereignty of national border demarcation (fig. 8), which now must make way for a European dream of shared external borders.

Photographs show Markefka and Vogel waiting, standing at the border crossing point at Bad Bentheim (on the border between Germany and the Netherlands) and at the border crossing at Neuhaus-Bargen (on the border between Germany and Switzerland). In these photographs (taken with a self-timer) the two seem to appropriate the very existence (but lack of functionality) of the border posts and their furnishing. Vogel approached these border crossings from an acoustic perspective. With analog recording devices (fig. 9), specifically tape recorders, dictation devices, and cassette recorders, he recorded sounds at the former border crossings. The devices Vogel used refer to a time when these crossings were still active, when checks and controls were still being carried out, when people were allowed to pass or were turned away. These recording methods have been rendered old-fashioned by the digital revolution in data storage devices – just like the old border crossings, they have been replaced by new ideas and developments. At one time, however, the devices also had a political function. In the film *The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen)*, 2006), which takes place in former East Germany, one of the main characters, a Stasi informant, spends his time in front of his tape recorder, listening in on the life of an actor couple; much of what he hears on the recordings is quotidian, unspectacular, and often even boring. This connection between control and analog technology is also conjured up by Vogel’s devices and their audio recordings (although Vogel and Markefka did not work at the old border between East and West Germany). Based on this project and the resulting analog recordings, a radio drama was created, in which – as a continuation of the exploration of borders – the voices,

Fig. 8 | Silke Markefka, *Border crossing Nennig on the Moselle river/Remich (Réimech) on the Moselle river, border Germany/Luxembourg*, from the series *Nach der Grenze (After the Border)*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 80 cm



atmospheres, and perceptions of these places were examined; it debuted on Bayern 2 under the title *Nach der Grenze* in 2011.

Along with these and other examinations of maps and borders, possible alternative forms of mapping European or global borders, which have less to do with national demarcation and more with areas of human movement, can be considered. In his *Berlin Chronicle*, Benjamin explores whether life can be translated into the semantic system of a city map: “For a long time – for years, in fact – I have toyed with the idea of representing the space of life – bios [*den Raum des Lebens – Bios*] – graphically through the form of a map”¹² (Benjamin 1970b, 12). In doing so, Benjamin designed a counter-image to a hegemonic, historically impactful charting of spaces. As Karl Schlögel says: “Times of upheaval are times of cartographic revision, of redrawing, are map times in an eminent sense; conversely, historical time in general is time that can be, and is, recorded in maps” (Schlögel 2016, 57). Sabine Folie defines maps as “the ultimate medium of human self-assurance,” as “instruments of domination and exploitation or at least of demonstrating power over territorial claims and of strategies of war” (Folie 1997, 9). But what would maps look like if they did not depict national borders or economic or political conclusions, maps that did not chart any historical changes but, as Benjamin expresses it, are based on an eventful life or on a life in motion?

In her series *Portraits for the Twenty-First Century* (1978–2001), artist Morgan O’Hara created 155 portraits, which can be read as movement records. The drawings trace the stations of people’s lives along their life paths (fig. 10). For her drawings, O’Hara uses the traditional format of the portrait, which is both “the image of a person” and also an “eloquent expression of their current self-image and, to an equal extent, idioms deemed fitting at the time” (Beyer 2002, 15). But in-

12 The translation was taken from Leland de la Durantaye. *Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Introduction*. Stanford University Press, 2009, p. 145.

stead of exploring people's facial landscapes as an expression of their unique personalities, O'Hara follows their paths as traces of life. For this, the artist lays the same paper over global, country, and city maps and traces the routes they have traveled in pencil. The resulting drawings can be read as artistically translated 'ego-documents' that graphically capture movement and rest. While the cosmopolitan Immanuel Kant spent his entire life in Königsberg – in O'Hara's work, this appears as a single dot – other lives are more heavily shaped by changes in location, cuts, and uncertainties, resulting in expressive movement records. As routes, these specific portraits materialize the mobile existence of the present. In the serial perspective of the work, they address changes of location and home as a constant in contemporary social development (Yildiz 2013, 44). Viewed in this way, the world becomes a network of relationships that links different places through the movement of individuals. As Paolo Bianchi describes in his reflections on



Fig.9 | Silke Markefka and Nikolai Vogel, *Nach der Grenze* (After the Border), 2008/09. Above: Sun, 14 Sept, 2008, border crossing Griesen/Ehrwald, border Germany/Austria, painting and recorder. Below: Sat, 27 Dec, 2008, border crossing Bayerisch Eisenstein/Železná Ruda, border Germany/Czech Republic, painting and recorder

artistic cartography, mapping can thus unite “reflections, experiences, and possibilities in a single symbol, without implying congruity and hierarchies” (Bianchi 1997, 19).

O’Hara’s drawn movement records illustrate that mobility is not an exception in a sedentary life but can become a constant. As such, rootedness and a sense of being at home are not inevitably the opposites of a transitory existence. Each place creates its own narrative in connection with the traveling subject and always represents a stop along the way, a transitional place. The artist’s work translates the upheavals and shifts resulting from changes in location and emigration. At the same time, O’Hara thematizes routes and maps. In his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Certeau differentiates between the “map,” which formulates that which is seen, the image of something; and the “tour,” which evokes the action, the act of going, and the movement (Certeau 1984, 118 f.). For O’Hara, however, movement and mapping are interwoven. Seen as a whole, her routes come together to form a map that can be decoded as a semantic system – a materialization of the coordinates of these journeys and wanderings. In the biographies of movement that



Fig. 10 | Morgan O’Hara, *Portrait of Katherine Linda Esmay, Birthplace: Mason City, Iowa, U.S.A., Birthdate: 25 November, Profession: Educator, San Francisco, April 1982, 1982*, conté crayon, graphite, pastel on paper, 152 x 214 cm. Published in the journal *Leonardo*, vol. 16, no. 4, 1983, p. 269.

O’Hara maps, what is important is not deciding on one country or the other as “home,” not the papers that determine a person’s nationality, not territories with national borders, but movements that cross borders and trace a dynamic existence. In this way, in all of the *Portraits for the Twenty-First Century*, mobility is understood as a constant throughout an entire century.

Yet the principle of migration, specifically, has become the test case for the European Union; consensus cannot be reached on the handling of the flight of refugees and border crossings. On the one hand, borders between European countries were torn down with the Schengen Agreement; with it, it seemed as though the great political task of uniting Europe after the end of World War II had been achieved (Becker 199, 132). On the other hand, with the elimination of border controls within Europe, its outer borders became even more permanent; these external borders, intended to act as a defense against illegal immigrants, have undergone even more intense safeguarding and upgrades, leading to the creation of the border protection agency Frontex

(Kasperek 2013). The artistic works dealing with the topic of “mapping” introduced here, to which works such as Bouchra Khalili’s video installation *The Mapping Journey Project* (2008–2011) could be added, illustrate the connection between maps, migration, and artistic production. These works were created against the backdrop of powerful imperial processes of occupying territories and their legitimization through charting and surveying. The works discussed here confront this with fragile borders and subjective modes of mapping.

Time for a turn: looking back and ahead

Flight, migration, and exile are forms of mobility that can manifest themselves beyond national borders and, in doing so, contribute to social as well as political paradigm shifts. Angela Merkel’s statement at her annual summer press conference (*Sommer-Bundespressekonferenz*) on 31 August 2015 – “Germany is a strong country. The motto with which we approach these things has to be: We’ve accomplished so much – we can do it!” – was a commentary on the so-called “refugee crisis.” “*Wir schaffen das*” (we can do it) not only became the motto of a new welcoming culture in Germany, receiving its own Wikipedia entry,¹³ it also polarized Germany and Europe. Some denounced the phrase as an open invitation and a draw for the many people who have come to Germany to escape war, misery, and poverty in Africa, the Arab world, and the Balkans. For others, with this statement, the country – after the devastation of World War II and the Shoah – showed a truly human face.¹⁴ If migration, as a basic human need (Bacci 2012, 8), makes history, and if history is unimaginable without migration, then one can pose the question of how historiography approaches phenomena of migration. Does it understand migration as an outlier or exception, or has it always presupposed it as being inscribed in history or art history (and with it, its writing)? Building on this, this essay explores the question of the mark that changes of location across borders and moving actors, objects, and ideas leave on the historiography of art.

In doing so, this text discusses the potential of a study of art that takes migration, flight, and exile into account, in order to provide impulses for a disciplinary migratory turn.¹⁵ A migratory turn can contribute not least of all to defining a specific migratory art practice and aesthetic and establishing an understanding of its methods. While this was dealt with in more detail in the discussion of “mapping,” future studies can examine other leitmotifs, strategies, methods, and theoretical concepts of migratory art production, which can be outlined only briefly here.

These include practices of togetherness, in other words, cooperative and collaborative art forms, which are repeatedly found throughout the history of art in the context of migration and exile, such as in the collaborations of the Surrealists in exile in the South of France around

13 https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wir_schaffen_das. Accessed 15 January 2018.

14 A chronology of the results of and reactions to the national press conference on 31 August 2015 can be found in Tina Hildebrandt and Bernd Ulrich, *Angela Merkel: Im Auge des Orkans*, 20 September 2015, <http://www.zeit.de/2015/38/angela-merkel-fluechtlinge-krisekanzlerin/komplettansicht>. Accessed 15 January 2018.

15 Permanent relocations can be referred to as expatriation, migration, flight, exile, or emigration, whereby the terminological definition is firmly tied to the circumstances of this. While, from a historical perspective, flight resulting from political upheaval can be referred to as “exile” or “emigration,” for current politically caused relocations, the terms “flight” or “asylum” are used. On flight/refugees, see Bade/Oltmer 2005; Inhveen 2010; Kirsch 2014. On migration, see Bade 2000, pp. 11 f. On the definition of exile/emigration, see Krohn et al. 1998, p. XII.

1939/40. The collective authorship is already present in the history of Surrealism and is manifested, for example, in the *cadaver exquis*. However, this shared and existential experience of waiting during wartime in the South of France specifically led to further productive collaborations, including the tarot game *Jeu de Marseille* (Breton 1996, 233). After many Surrealists successfully fled France across the Atlantic, New York saw a continuation of cooperative art forms. The American artists in the circle of the Surrealist Matta anticipated the idea of automatism – in 1942, Robert Motherwell, William Baziotes, and Jackson Pollock composed automatic poems together. In the tradition of artist collaboration, a painting by Baziotes, Pollock, and Gerome Kamrowski was, in fact, also created (1940/41; Mattison 1986, 71). Collaboration through shared authorship was manifested in group portraits of emigrants by Hermann Landshoff and served to establish creative unity among those who had arrived there as immigrants in a time of crisis. Cooperation was also a form of experimentation that brought together ingredients from different artistic proveniences – often with no predetermined outcome. This increased flexibility of production can be read in the context of an unstable existence.

However, translations, oral tradition, language changes, or strategies of unreliable narration can also be identified as signifiers of migratory art practices.¹⁶ In her work *Family Stories* (2012), the Berlin artist Jeanno Gaussi's approach to dealing with family histories was to commission a professional painter to create paintings based on family photographs and engage him in discussions about the stories of her family members, who – to him – were strangers. In doing so, she passed on her family history, which, due to flight, had only been preserved in a few keepsakes, to someone else. Here, transmission as a constant in a family becomes a questionable and fragile construct. In migrant constellations, inter-generationalities can, however, lead to linguistic misunderstandings and impossibilities of translation, as Zineb Sedira explores in her video *Mother Tongue* (2002) (Fartas 2011).¹⁷

Untranslatability, unreliability, and insecurity can be parameters of an art of migration. At the same time, intermedial forms of expression that expand genres as well as digital strategies of recycling or sampling serve as expressions of the polyphony of a migrant narrative. These processes of reuse, of overwriting, of recombining, which question the hierarchical order of original and copy, must also be discussed for a future historiography of art. Only recently was the possibility of not 'only' defining migration as a permanent relocation but of recognizing it as part of a digital era in motion addressed in a publication (Friesinger/Schneider 2016, 20–25). In the process, digital migration and mobile actors were considered together, and the crisis rhetoric of flight constructively synthesized with the progressive idea of a technologized, digital world. The challenge now lies in constructively adapting this mobility for an art history that is rooted in horizontal integration, in references to the past and the future, in anachronisms, and in polyphony – and, in doing so, contributing to a *migratory turn*.

Translated by Hayley Haupt.

16 An example of this is Bouchra Khalili's video installation *Speeches – Chapter 1: Mother Tongue* (2012), which consists of translating excerpts from cultural-historical or political texts into her mother tongue and reciting them from memory. On this work, see *Freiheit!* 2014, pp.64–71.

17 In some works, such as the video *Silent Sight* (2000) and the photographs in *La maison de ma mère* (My mother's house, 2002), Sedira deals with (her) familial constellations. See *Why Pictures Now*, 2006, p. 161–163.

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