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This year's international exhibition at the 57th Venice Biennale, curated by Christine Macel under the heading *Viva Arte Viva*, was organised as a series of nine themed pavilions, extending from the building now known as the Central Pavilion in the Giardini to the complex of structures and gardens that make up the Arsenale. Macel's thematic framework was often startlingly literal in its conception and execution. So, for example, the 'Pavilion of Artists and Books' seemed to be composed largely of works featuring images of artists (or artists actually present in the exhibition) or made from books. This literalism continued almost unabated to the ends of the Arsenale, where several colourful installations were clustered together in the 'Pavilion of Colours'. Instead of constituting a meaningful curatorial proposition, this year's proliferation of pavilions tended to further muddle the already confused organisational and spatial boundaries between the national representations and international exhibition in the Arsenale.[1] Within the Giardini itself, however, some national representations – notably the Dutch and Swiss – offered much richer responses to the pavilion, understood both as an architectural form and an ideal, offering new ways of understanding relationships between cinema, modernist architecture and ongoing processes of nation formation.

Responding to this intersection of cinema and architecture, my review focuses on works that either involve the moving image or reference media histories and practices in other ways, spanning the international selection, national representations, official collateral programme and parallel exhibitions. Since at least the mid-2000s, artists and curators at the Biennale have drawn upon cinema and the architecture of the movie theatre to explore the formation and articulation of cultural and social identities. Ten years ago, in *Culture and Leisure* (2007) at the Hungarian pavilion, Andreas Fogarasi presented a series of video works documenting spaces of public leisure associated with the socialist era, extending this exploration of architecture through the design of seating and viewing structures. Also in 2007, artist Tobias Putrih and architect Luka Melon collaborated on a wooden cinema, installed amongst a group of trees on Isolo San Servolo as part of the Slovenian representation. Its walls were constructed from hanging wooden blinds, which were opened and closed by the cinema ushers, marking the transition from one screening to the next. In the same year, *It's a Dream* (2007) by Tsai Ming-Liang, devised for the Taipei Museum presentation at the

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[1] Many national (or quasi-national) entities without a physical presence in the Giardini have been temporarily housed within the Arsenale in recent years, generally located toward the back of complex or in the *Sale d'Armi*, a two storey building to the left of the main concourse.

Biennale, was shot in a disused Taiwanese cinema scheduled for demolition and shown in a space fitted with seats rescued from the shooting location. In different ways, all of these projects framed the movie theatre as a privileged space of social gathering and a site for the imagining and investigation of collectivity.

This year, at the 57th Venice Biennale, several national pavilions again housed moving image installations with seating structures, but these sometimes evoked the architecture of the public square as much as the movie theatre. The Spanish pavilion by Jordi Colomer featured an exhibition of architectural models and a multi-channel video installation depicting a fictional journey of protest, *¡Únete! Join Us!* (2017), projected onto screens hung high above rows of stepped seats. As indicated by the title of the video, Colomer's project was framed both as a representation of protest and an exhortation to participate in collective political action against economic inequality, though it did not seem to include any live debates or discussions. Adelita Husni Bey's moving image installation in the Italian Pavilion, *The Reading/La Seduta* (2017), is the outcome of a series of meetings, workshops and theatre exercise exploring race, class, gender and environmental issues, conducted with a group of young people in the USA, selected through an open call. The video consists mainly of an edited round-table discussion and the circular arrangement of the participants is loosely echoed in the architecture of the curved and stepped seating structure. The installation also included illuminated cables and sculptured hands, snaking across the floor as though reaching out to the space occupied by the audience.

If Husni Bey's projected implied an extension of bodies from screen to auditorium, then *ÇIN* (2017) by Cevdet Erek, representing Turkey, proposed a much more ambiguous architecture of assembly without any moving image component. This work consisted of a large-scale stepped architectural construction with bench seating, ramps and a 35 channel audio composition emanating from a sculptural display of speakers. One of the stepped seating areas was enclosed by a padlocked wire mesh fence, framing the project as a response to restrictions on the gathering and movement of bodies. It was also possible, however, to find more direct and familiar references to the social architecture of the movie theatre, most obviously the Dutch pavilion (to which I will return). Elsewhere, velveteen cinema seats were provided for viewers of Samson Young's *We Are the World, as performed by the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions Choir* (2017), at the Hong Kong Pavilion. As indicated by the title of this work, Young differentiates between organised collectivity and the more individualised culture of the contemporary entertainment economy and his exhibition *Songs for Disaster Relief* included a deliberately eclectic mix of private and quasi-public viewing

environments, featuring arrangements of armchairs, lamps, rugs and flatscreen televisions as well as projections.

The Biennale, as in previous years, included numerous moving image works addressing histories and theories of media production and consumption, including *Newsreel 63: The Train of Shadows* by Niki Autor (a member of the collective Newsreel Front), presented at the Slovenian Pavilion in the Arsenale. This film is structured around a fragment of video, captured on a mobile phone by a stowaway – a term that in Slovenian translates as 'blind passenger'– on a train from Belgrade to Ljubljana. Using this fragment as a tool to unravel the interwoven histories of cinema and the railway, Autor both circumvents and foregrounds copyright restrictions by methodically analysing railway- and stowaway-related segments across the breadth of cinema history. She draws together scenes from Lumière films, silent slapstick classics featuring Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and Harold Lloyd 'riding the rails', the Soviet cine-train of the 1930s (with carriages for making and showing films), romantic Hollywood melodramas featuring proto-cinematic railway-themed entertainments and post-war Yugoslav narratives, in which the moving train continually signifies desire and escape. Concluding her film with footage she shot of homeless migrants who burn creosote-soaked wooden railway sleepers in order to stay warm, Autor questions whether a new history of cinema is needed. Noting that some moving images are protected by copyright while others are 'authorised by barbarity', she asks whether the footage filmed by stowaways balanced precariously in the undercarriage of a speeding train now has 'the right to a history'.
Newsreel 63: Train of Shadows was not the only project in the Biennale to feature footage of migrants, or references to their journeys.[2]

Vigil by Tracey Moffatt (representing Australia) is an extremely short (two minute) video work, shown on screens both inside and outside the pavilion, consisting of stills from Hollywood films rapidly intercut with news images of overcrowded boats at sea, accompanied by dramatic music.[3] The stills are all tightly cropped close-ups drawn from various eras and films genres (featuring characters played by Joan Crawford, Elizabeth Taylor, Donald Sutherland Kathleen Turner among others) , wearing expressions of fear and horror as they look out through windows or—in one

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[2] Shezad Dawood's *Leviathan* (2017), one of several projects in Venice supported by the British Council, is also concerned with the sea, and journeys of migrants. In addition to a video installed near the entrance to the Giardini, the project included an intervention within the showroom of the Fortuny Factory, an enterprise established by a Spanish immigrant, which continues to produce printed fabrics.

[3] Vigil can be viewed in full on the *Vive Arte Vive* You Tube channel
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rg0BlMZzVpY [Accessed 31 July 2017]

instance—binoculars, as though observing the approaching boats. Moffatt's exhibition, titled *My Horizon*, is ostensibly focused on the rights of marginalised groups, with visitors during the preview offered tote bags bearing the slogans 'Refugee Rights' and 'Indigenous Rights'. But *Vigil* makes no attempt to contextualise the relationship between Hollywood cinema and news coverage of migrants or refugees, so it does little to illuminate understanding of how media practices contribute to (or counter) processes of social and political exclusion.

Lisa Reihana's work, *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* (2015-17), draws upon more specifically protocinematic forms, such as the diorama and the panorama, to explore the historical representation of encounters between colonising forces and native peoples in Aotearoa New Zealand, including expeditions to assist in measuring the 1769 Transit of Venus. Vast in scale and stunning in its technical execution, Reihana's multi-channel video projection resembles a scrolling tableau and incorporates reworked elements of iconography from the neoclassical, French wallpaper *Les Sauvages de la Mer Pacifique* (1804-5). The viewer is presented with multiple interactions between visitors and natives, mundane or dramatic, peaceful or violent, occupying both foreground and background, all unfolding in isolation, as though contained within separate temporal loops. Reihana, who is of Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Hine and Ngāi Tū descent, seeks to create the conditions in which different vantage points can 'infect' each other, situating her work in relation to a lager project of indigenous film-making. The soundscape of *in Pursuit of Venus [infected]* incorporates material from the live capture of the actor's performances, along with a recording of a clock that accompanied James Cook on one of the voyages referenced, and rare recordings of Māori instruments that he and his crew collected. These disparate sound sources might also be said to 'infect' each other, in theory at least. Yet in the absence of perceptible connections between sound and image sources, it is hard to escape the sense that these interactions are occurring (endlessly) within a self-contained and somewhat game-like, computer-enhanced world.

An equally complex, and perhaps more coherent, exploration of the iconography and material history of colonialism could be found outside the official national representations, in Isaac Julien's *The Leopard (Western Union: small boats)* (2007). This single-screen projection, presented in the Diaspora Pavilion, constitutes the final part of a filmed trilogy exploring various forms of journeying. In this instance, Julien alludes to the experiences of African migrants who die in the seas around Sicily or are imprisoned on Lampedusa in their quest to reach Europe. The film includes choreographed scenes shot in the ballroom of Palazzo Gangi in Sicily. This is where Visconti shot the famous waltz scene from *The Leopard* (1963), in which the Prince (played by the aging Burt

Lancaster) moves with his partner (Claudia Cardinale) across a tiled floor that features a mosaic leopard with a human face. In Julien's film, the same room provides the setting for a different kind of dance. Choreographed movements suggest bodies twisting and turning on a surface that is rendered (through cinematography, editing, and sound) wholly unstable, so that mosaic floor seems somehow to dissolve into water.

Julien's *Western Union: small boats* trilogy seems to prefigure elements of *Passage* (2017), a three channel video installation presented by Mohan Modisakeng, one of two artists representing South Africa. *Passage* also features dramatic scenes of bodies twisting and turning in the water. Modisakeng is concerned with the history of trans-oceanic slavery and his three characters are dressed in what might be nineteenth century clothing, and they are barefoot in a deliberate reference to restrictions imposed on slaves. There is no reference here to the material architecture of aristocratic power and wealth. Instead, these bodies seem to occupy a world that consists only of the boat and the ocean, into which they fall. *Love Story* (2016) by Candice Breitz, the other artist in the South African pavilion, consists of a seven-channel installation, presented in two linked spaces. A large-scale video projection shown in the first space features the actors Alec Baldwin and Julianne Moore, each filmed separately, speaking directly to camera in a green screen studio. It quickly becomes apparent that Baldwin and Moore are speaking the words of asylum seekers and refugees, and engaging in the process of constructing a character. At various points they hesitate in their performances, occasionally asking 'Candice' for direction. Behind this space, a second room features six flat-screen monitors equipped with headphones, displaying interviews with the individuals who are being performed by the actors. Watching *Love Story*, I was reminded of Omer Fast's exploration of the storytelling required by the asylum process in *Nostalgia* (2009), but Breitz is perhaps more interested in exposing (as well as fully exploiting) the power of star performers to command attention at the Venice Biennale. Although these works are very different, it is worth noting that both Modisakeng and Breitz chose to work with settings (the boat, the green screen room) that might be described as transitional or intermediate. The pavilion of South Africa[4] was housed in the relatively neutral architecture of the repurposed *Sale d'Armi*. However, within the Giardini, artists generally need to address – or consciously ignore – the architectural, as well as cultural and political legacy of their assigned national pavilion.

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[4] A more detailed discussion of the South African Pavilion can be found in M. Neelika Jayawardane (2017), 'Venice Biennale: African Pavilions and the Politics of Space', *Mail & Guardian*, 19 May. https://mg.co.za/article/2017-05-19-00-venice-biennale-african-pavilions-and-the-politics-of-space. Accessed 25 July 2017.

Cinema Olanda uses the modernist architecture (and social history) of the Dutch pavilion to explore the construction of Dutch postwar identity, a process that involved marginalising the experiences of migrants and the legacies of colonialism. Realised through a collaboration between artist Wendelien van Oldenborgh and curator Lucy Cotter, the project involved many other collaborators, including those participating in an extensive parallel programme of exhibitions and events in the Netherlands. As Cotter observes in her introduction to the (superb) publication produced as part of the project, the pavilion, designed by Gerrit Rietveld in 1953 and constructed over the foundation of its 1902 neo-classical predecessor, already functions as a 'representation of the Netherlands' and of the nation's postwar 'promise of equality, transparency, and a forward-looking mentality' (Cotter 2017: 11). However, she emphasises, this 'projected image of ordered unity' (Cotter: 11) could only be achieved by ignoring the complexities of Dutch migrant histories. In her contribution to the publication, Beatriz Colomina suggests that this image of unity had other functions, beyond the Dutch context, noting that the arrival of Rietveld's pavilion was welcomed by those seeking to cleanse the Giardini of its colonial history.[5]

Colomina's essay also highlights the multiple historical interconnections between film, design and architecture in the modernist era, noting that many architects designed sets for stage and screen, while Rietveld and his family actually lived for several years in an unauthorised open-plan apartment above a working cinema, which he had helped to renovate (Colomina 2017: 54). In *Cinema Olanda*, as in previous works, van Oldenborgh seeks to mobilise both the formal and cultural properties of specific buildings, as stages for semi-choreographed actions, dialogues and performances, as well as spaces of exhibition. The moving image works presented in the pavilion are *Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat* (2017), a film in two parts, each 17 minutes, projected on either side of the same screen, and *Cinema Olanda*, a 15 minute film projected on a large scale in a more self-consciously 'cinematic' orientation with stepped seating.

Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat was shot in Tripolis, an office building designed by Aldo van Eyck in 1994, and organised around conversations between a diverse and multigenerational group of activists, scholars and artists. Gathering in various parts of this multi-functional structure, they discuss the past and current uses of Tripolis, and also the work of Surinamese Dutch activists who squatted a modernist housing complex in the nearby Bijlmer district during the 1970s. As with many of van Oldenborgh's previous films (and slide installations) *Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat* is discursive in form,

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[5] Colomina notes that, during the war years, Mussolini used the Biennale as a propaganda tool, and even Cinecitta was temporarily headquartered in the Giardini, tasked with making films for the regime (2017: 58).

offering a play of voices and vantage points rather than a linear narrative. *Cinema Olanda* (filmed by the same cinematographer, Smina Bluth) was conceived and realised as a single unedited 'sequence shot', requiring the careful choreography and rehearsal of multiple contributors and performers, many of whom are non-professionals. The camera moves from the exterior to the interior of a modernist church, designed by the Bauhaus-trained architect Lotto Stam-Beese as part of the post-war development of Pendrecht, Rotterdam, which she supervised. Inside the church, in space illuminated by natural light streaming through (abstractly patterned) stained glass windows, the camera observes as various small groups discuss important but overlooked political figures, such as Otto Huiswoud, a Surinam-born activist involved in international civil rights struggles. The camera's journey ends in different part of the building, where a young Indo-rock band (a genre that fuses Indonesian and Dutch music) are performing a song written specifically for the film.

Several contributors to the publication emphasise both the publicness and liveness of the film production process, with Cotter noting that in the 'long uncut image' that makes up *Cinema Olanda* 'the sustained effort of *producing* representation is foregrounded in the unpredictable camerawork, which catches itself in the act of (failing to) represent' (2017: 18). Even though it culminates in a live music performance, *Cinema Olanda* lacks the sense of immediacy and spontaneity that characterizes van Oldenborgh's other film works, including *Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat*. The sequence shot approach inevitably involves the imposition of a single trajectory, which van Oldenborgh acknowledges through the inclusion of *Footnotes to Cinema Olanda # 1 and #3* (2017). These are lenticular prints, composed of images from the film shoot, intended to function as compressed narratives, supplementing the main work.

The struggle to articulate both unity and difference extends into the spatiotemporal organisation of the installation. Cotter specifically seeks to 'crack open the unity' of the social imaginary projected by the pavilion, emphasising that the installations' 'architectonic elements offer viewing angles in conflict with the building's coherent grid based order [...] they physically disturb us at the level of the spatial' (2017: 19). Visitors to the installation who ascended the quasi-cinematic seating structure in order to view *Cinema Olanda* at the wrong moment had to endure a six minute interval between each screening. During my two visits, this generated a palpable sense of impatience among the audience members, some of whom were perhaps already disturbed by the pavilion's spatial organisation.

Representing Switzerland, Teresa Hubbard and Alexander Birchler also responded, albeit less directly, to the architecture of a national pavilion. Their work *Flora* (2017) (described as a 'Synchronized Double-Sided Film Installation with Shared Soundtrack') forms part of an exhibition (also including sculptures by Carol Bove) curated by Philipp Kaiser. It is titled *Women of Venice* after a sculptural group by Alberto Giacometti, exhibited in the French pavilion in 1956. This was the only time that the Swiss-born artist agreed to participate in a national representation; he refused repeated invitations to show his work in the Swiss Pavilion, even though it was designed by his own brother Bruno. During their research, Hubbard and Birchler encountered a photograph of Alberto Giacometti and a US artist, Flora Mayo, reproduced in a biography written by James Lord. The two artists are known to have studied at the same Paris atelier and they were lovers in the early 1930s. The photograph depicts them seated on either side of a bust of Giacometti's head, sculpted by Mayo, and so constitutes a portrait of the artist and her model. In his biography, Lord, wholly ignores Mayo's identity as an artist, treating the photograph solely as evidence of her devotion to Giacometti. Countering this dismissal, while also acknowledging the uncertain provenance of this image, Hubbard and Birchler materialize the scene of artist and model in their work *Bust* (2017), which includes a framed copy of the photograph and a reconstruction of the sculpture.

This work is just one artefact within a larger process of reconstruction, which brought Hubbard and Birchler in contact with Flora Mayo's son David, her only remaining descendant, now in his eighties and living in the USA. Using letters, photographs and other materials in David's possession, they built a replica of Flora's Paris studio and staged scenes from her life, focusing on the everyday labour of making art, while also illuminating the complexity of her relationship with Giacometti. This dramatisation performed by actors and presented largely in black and white, forms one half of *Flora*. It is encountered on the reverse of a large hanging screen (also the audio source), onto which is projected a documentary interview with David, presented in colour. His account of Flora's life communicates a deep sympathy for this intelligent and rebellious woman, who rejected a life of privilege in Denver, divorced her husband and left her young daughter in the USA so she could travel to Paris, motivated by the certainty that she was an artist. Initially receiving some support from her parents, Flora was forced to give up her work as an artist when the family fortune was depleted in the Depression. Aided by a charity, she returned to the USA, supporting herself and (for a time) her son David though a series of menial jobs until her death. David's account, expressing his love for Flora and anger at Lord's dismissal of her worth, is bookended by two sequences focusing on a Giacometti sculpture of Flora. At the opening of the film, art workers are shown carefully making a

bespoke crate for this treasured art object and, in the closing sequence, David visits an exhibition of this work in Zurich, coming face to face with the only material relic of his mother's life in Paris.

If *Cinema Olanda* was intended to evoke the architecture of the movie theatre through its seating, then *Flora* is more self-consciously sculptural in form, while also using a powerful repertoire of cinematic narrative techniques to evoke an imagined world. At the preview, the audience in the Swiss Pavilion overflowed the simple benches facing each projection, seating themselves in rows around the huge screen suspended at the centre of the room. The walls of this space were covered with a dark grey curtain and, within this intimate acoustic environment, the meticulously realised 'shared soundtrack' created an uncanny join in space and time. The studio occupied by *Flora* is no more than a composite, created from the margins of art history, letters and diaries, and the recollections of her son. Yet, even though these mechanisms of reconstruction are made explicit, and Flora's world is clearly coded as a dramatisation, it is a compelling and deeply affecting portrayal of a desire, for artistic and intellectual self-determination as well as love and kinship, that could not be fulfilled.

A concern with the marginalisation of women's history and experience, and with state control of women's bodies, also fuelled Jesse Jones's work in the Irish Pavilion, located in the Arsenale. Combining film, performance and sculptural installation and involving the collaboration of theatre artist Olwen Fouéré and sound artist Susan Stenger, *Tremble Tremble* (2017) takes its title from the chants of Italian women protesters in the 1970s ('Tremble, tremble, the witches are coming') who sought wages for housework. The historical framework of this project, however, extends well beyond the 1970s, encompassing the archaeological remains of a 3.5 million year-old female specimen, 16th century witch trials in Europe and the struggle for women's reproductive and medical rights in present-day Ireland. Responding to these intersecting histories and experiences, Jones imagines a symbolic, gigantic female body as the manifestation of a new legal order, materialised in Olwen Fouéré's onscreen performance. Clothed in earth-coloured rags, with long grey hair that evokes the familiar figure of the 'hag', she occupies a darkened space, hung with vertical projection screens and containing spotlight displays of gigantic bones. Bending down to the height of ordinary humans, she speaks directly to the audience, proclaiming the laws of the new regime, *In Utera Gigantae, w*hich she personifies.

Jones's project forms part of a longstanding engagement with women's rights and histories of cinema, embodied social critique and labour activism. It clearly builds upon the exploration of law

that she conducted with artist Sarah Browne as part of their joint Artangel project *In the Shadow of the State* (2016). The presentation at Venice should also be understood as an extension of her earlier interest in materialising and performing social bodies, through expanded modes of cinema that often involve the synchronised actions of non-professional performers. Significantly, the gigantic hag is not the only manifestation of a collective body in *Tremble Tremble*. The installation also incorporates the ritualised opening and closing of a vast, dark, semi-transparent curtain, which is drawn silently into and through the exhibition space by Jones or another female performer. As the fabric is pulled taught, printed images of two female hands are discernible, appearing to temporarily clasp each other before being pulled apart. These enclosing arms can be read as material extensions of the giant body that dominates the space. But the temporary enclosure created by this swathe of fabric also constitutes, however briefly, another body—that of the gathered audience—collectively contained within the realm where the law of *In Utera Gigantae* holds sway.

While Jones uses a mythic figure to embody new social formations, other artists are interested in authoring or adapting myths of creation for different purposes. *The Aalto Natives* (2017) realised by Nathaniel Mellors and Erkka Nissinen for the Alvar Aalto Pavilion of Finland, one of the smaller structures in the Giardini, is organised around the vantage point of two 'outsider figures', named Geb and Atum, identified as the creators of Finland. These characters are represented within the exhibition space by animatronic puppets, resembling a giant egg and a cardboard box, to which projectors have been attached, displaying a variety of animated and live action vignettes. These videos, supposedly depicting typical Finnish life, myth and history, are framed as part of conversation between the creator-beings Geb and Atum. From time to time, during their dialogue on native habits, the animatronic 'bodies' of Geb and Atum swivel so that the videos are projected onto different walls within the small pavilion, and requiring audience members to reposition themselves for a better view.

Back in the Arsenale, Christine Macel's 'Dionysian Pavilion' includes another creation myth, in the form of Pauline Curnier Jardin's sculptural video installation *Grotta Profunda, Approfondita* (2017). Her video[6] is projected onto the back wall of a cave-like environment, entered through a doorway in a giant hand, and the glittering and uneven floor of this darkened space is intended to evoke the crystalline interior of the *Gouffre d'Esparros* in the Pyrenees region of France. Structured as the journey of a religious visionary, the narrative depicts an ecstatic transformation, during which the

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[6] The thirty minute video presented within this installation is Curnier Jardin's *Grotta Profunda, les humeurs du gouffre, the moody chasm* (2011).

young nun sees the face of Jesus clunkily transposed over a woman's crotch. As she caresses the surface of the grotto's exterior, her hands and then face become marked with a black substance and she is eventually transformed into the pupil of a large 'eye'. This eye looks on as other beings appear including 'the chocolate-vanilla twins', a 'mermaid-monkey', a 'Venus' and a 'spider', which seems closely modelled on an Allen Jones sculpture, all accompanied by a crackly voiceover, suggestive of an antiquated ethnographic film. Curnier Jardin's project shares some common ground with *The Aalto Natives*, in that both involve narratives of origin. However, while Mellors and Nissinen's work derives a certain edge and coherency from the context of the pavilion and Aalto's status as a creator figure, *Grotta Profunda*, *Approfondita* is located within the murkier environs of Christine Macel's 'Pavilion of Shamans'. This pavilion included ill-conceived projects such as Ernesto Neto's *Um Sagrado Lugar (A Sacred Place)*, 2017 a mesh-like structure housing a performance of religious rituals by a group of Amazonian Indians, the Huin Kin, during the preview. This was just one of several contributions to *Viva Arte Viva* in which established artists required less enfranchised 'collaborators' to place themselves on public display.[7]

Macel's exhibition did provide an interesting context in which to engage with moving image works that borrowed from anthropological and documentary traditions. Jeremy Shaw's *Liminals* (2017), for example, is a beautifully realised pastiche of a science documentary set in future world transformed by changes in brain chemistry, while Marie Voignier's *Les Immobiles* (2013) uses photographs of big game hunting to explore colonial legacies.[8] The most complex engagement with documentary media was undoubtedly found elsewhere, in James Richards and Steve Reinke's video *What Weakens the Flesh is the Flesh Itself* (2017) at the Wales in Venice Pavilion. The work draws upon a collection of self-portraits by Albrecht Becker, a German production designer, photographer and actor who was imprisoned by the Nazis because he was homosexual, but survived the war. Dating from the 1960s, '70s and '80s, Becker displays his aging, heavily tattooed and pierced body, sometimes using darkroom techniques to create doubles of himself, clothed and unclothed. These manipulations seem to bind flesh and image together in a complex dynamic of performance, display and documentation. Becker's practice offers a vantage point from which to examine a newer and much

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[7] In the Central Pavilion, Oliafur Eliasson presented a workshop staffed by young refugees. See Evan Moffitt (2017), 'City Report: 57th Venice Biennale – Central Pavilion', Frieze.com, 11 May. https://frieze.com/article/57th-venice-biennale-central-pavilion. Accessed 17 July 2017.

[8] Also within the Arsenale, Kader Attia's *Narrative Vibrations* (2017) used documentary techniques in a more straightforward way, presenting a collection of research materials focusing on the voice in Arab cultures, and the experiences of transgender people and women singers.

more unsettling economy of display, represented by a series of video fragments in which naked or semi-clothed men in anonymous locations perform sexualised activities (eating and smearing food over themselves or pushing their bodies against each other) for the gratification of an unseen viewer, who issues instructions. Operating at a useful distance from the confusions of *Vive Arte Vive*, Richards and Reinke's work provided the Biennale's most compelling exploration of contemporary conditions of image production and consumption.

Finally, outside the domain of the Biennale proper, *The Boat is Leaking. The Captain Lied* at the Prada Foundation situated the movie theatre in relation to multiple (older and newer) architectures of social and quasi-public gathering. Framed as a collaboration between Alexander Kluge, Thomas Demand, stage and costume designer Anna Viebrock and curator Udo Kittelmann, this project involved the construction of scenic environments designed by Viebrock. These environments, suggesting cinemas, courtrooms, churches, offices or theatres, were partly shaped by spaces and settings found in works such as Demand's photograph *Archiv (Archive)* (1995) and Kluge's film *Abschied von Gestern (Yesterday's Girl),* (19665-66). The entire project was also inspired by a series of late nineteenth century paintings by Angelo Morbelli that appear to depict gatherings of old men within institutional spaces but, on closer inspection, present multiple versions of the same individual. The exhibition's title can be read as a reference to one of Demand's rare animations, which uses stop-motion techniques to replicate video imagery of furniture on a ferry being tossed around on a stormy sea. When considered in relation to Kluge's political concerns as broadcaster, film-maker and writer, the leaking boat with the lying captain might well be interpreted as a reference to the current shortcomings of European leadership, but the exhibition also presents a collection of antiquated institutions of assembly, including cinema. It would seem that while the architecture of movie theatre continues to figure prominently within the pavilions and parallel exhibitions of the Venice Biennale , it now often serves as a means through which to materialise processes of exclusion and omission shaping the formation of the public sphere.

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