



An Age of Our Own Making
An exhibition in Holbæk, Roskilde and Copenhagen

“All right then,’ said the savage defiantly, ‘I’m claiming the right to be unhappy. Not to mention the right to grow old and ugly and impotent; the right to have syphilis and cancer; the right to have too little to eat; the right to be lousy; the right to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow; the right to catch typhoid; the right to be tortured by unspeakable pains of every kind.’ There was a long silence. ‘I claim them all,’ said the savage at last.”
– Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1931)

The observation that the world is staggering through dire straits in our current age is hardly an overstatement. Having maneuvered it(self) into stormy waters, the thinking body of today must pause to reflect on its position in the world and deliberate unanthropocentrically on its relation to other beings and things. In other words we humans as beings need to reposition ourselves from the centre of the world to a more equal position amongst other beings and things. This in order to obtain another view on the current problems in this age of our own making.

It is from this vantage point that the research and exhibition project *An Age of Our Own Making* happening in Denmark 2016 as part of the art programme Images 16, takes its cue.

Together with 26 artists, critics and people from all walks of life, *An Age of Our Own Making* ruminates on our actions and their consequences, and how these have crafted our age for better or for worse. The impact of modernity, since its advent in the 16th century, still resonates to this day; of all its known glories including enlightenment, the quest for individual freedom and equality, advancements in science and technology, the modernist project also brought with it coloniality - the darker side of modernism¹ as semiotician Walter Mignolo has written extensively on in his book of the same title. The "coloniality of power"² generated and cultivated both economical, political, racial and ecological power structures, as well as control mechanisms and hegemony systems that reign until today. It manifests itself in global ecological crisis, as much as in the current state of refugeeness. In this regard ideas and artistic acts of decoloniality challenging the western dominance, and acts of demodernity, challenging the rationale of consumption, modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation, can be viewed as the kind of enactments of citizenship, that we with this project are interested in. A kind of civil agency that fend off any victim positioning.

¹ Mignolo, Walter. *Coloniality – The darker side of modernity*

² Quijano, Anibal. “The Coloniality of Power” is a concept that sociologist Anibal Quijano coined to describe the continued European dominance over former colonised countries.

An Age of Our Own Making unfolds in three separate exhibition parts, Reflections I-III, opening one after the other in three different Danish cities. The first reflection *The Life of Materials. On Another Nature and Ecology* interrogates the western notion of ecology, as well as the capitalocene - the ecological and societal defeats due to the practice of capitalist ideology of economic growth - and its logic of circulating and making most goods available globally. Through public sculptures and installations in the city of Holbæk, this exhibition reflects on the effects of consumer actions, ecological colonialism, as well as the life and cycles of materials. An example of ecological colonialism is when the Western European countries and the US sell and relocate polluting activities, factories and trash to Asian, African, Latin American as well as Eastern European territories and thus transport the consequences of the fabrication of goods consumed in the West. "The science of climate change speaks of a new kind of agency on the part of humans: a geological agency. It is collective; planetary in scope; it is not immediately available to human experience though its effects are; it is a by-product of what we have come to regard as civilization"³, professor in history Dipesh Chakrabarty, who is a specialist in decoloniality, states.

The second reflection *The Route that Tempts the Traveler to Test Gravity—Notes on the Paradigm of Immunization* relates to current limitations of human movement and freedom, as well as tendencies of isolation and over-protection, and the physical and mental imprints this leaves on humanity today. It is interesting to observe that while Coltan, bananas, fish, textile or car parts can easily be shipped from A to B, it is rather unlikely for the miner, farmer, fisher, nor factory worker to move from A to B, even in cases of emergency. These limitations in movement are even applicable to those persecuted for religious, political, race, gender or economic reasons. This reflection is a performance programme that will take place at both the Museum of Contemporary Art in Roskilde and the Roskilde Festival portraying the body as a site of politics and border-experiences. The *Paradigm of Immunisation* in the current European context, including Denmark, exemplifies the contradiction between 'social circulation' and 'immunisation' amongst human beings and nations, and also reveals the shortcomings of the nation state, as well as unions like the EU, AU and UNO, eminent in the West and non-West. The tendency to exempt, safeguard and self-protect which is typical to the juridical and medical fields has now spread its tentacles into domains like sports, economics, culture and especially politics, such that our contemporary existence is dominated by this experience of immunity. The latter becomes an even clearer contour seen from a migrant perspective.

Finally, the third reflection *An Age of Our Own Making—On Agency and Enacting Citizenship*, an exhibition at Kunsthall Charlottenborg in Copenhagen, will look at possibilities of creating, claiming or using space as forms of enacting citizenship. Be it real or virtual, the manifestations that make space political or give a lost, deserved or forgotten meaning back to a specific space will play a central role. Of all the many trajectories of enacting citizenship that can be taken, this exhibition will choose to pursue artistic investigations, exercises and expressions of space politics. Making a distinction between *espace perçu*, *espace vécu*, *espace rêvé* (perceived space, inhabited space, imaginary space) Henri Lefebvre in *La production de l'espace*⁴ explains how space is a social and a political product, how it is historically configured as a social formation and a mental construction. The history of the

³ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "Human Agency in the Anthropocene", "Perspectives on History", December 2012

⁴ Lefebvre, Henri. *La production de l'espace*

20th and 21st century - as it still evolves - despite standing for a history of huge leaps in scientific and technological advancements is at the same time characterized by colossal religious, economic, cultural, political and social crises; crises that have materialized in our urban and rural spaces. These crises have mostly led to the alienation of humanity from one another and strained the relationship between individuals and the political entities to which they belong, but also alienated them from the space in which they find themselves. Presented as a group exhibition this reflection will thus be an effort to share how artists use, act and manifest issues of space politics in their practice.

The project *An Age of Our Own Making* invites viewers to reflect on how we want to co-exist in this world, both with the human and non-human species — beyond current tendencies of overprotection and unsustainable privileges.

The project will be accompanied by an exclusive reader featuring essays by a.o. Professor in History, South Asian Languages and Civilizations Dipesh Chakrabarty, Associate Professor at the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, Henrik Vigh and Research Professor at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity AbdouMaliq Simone.

The reader will cover theoretical positions in relation to each of the reflections I-III. The catalogue will be available 14. September for the opening of *An Age of Our Own Making - On Agency and Enacting Citizenship* at Kunsthall Charlottenborg.

Curators: Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung and Solvej Helweg Ovesen.

Participating artists and partners Reflection I-III

Reflection I, Holbæk: The Life of Materials. On Another Nature and Ecology

Georges Adéagbo
Sammy Baloji
Jems Robert Koko Bi
Julie Djikey
Ehsan Ul Haq
Ibrahim Mahama
Misheck Masamvu
Jean Katambayi Mukendi
Hamed Ouattara
Eko Prawoto
Angela Melitopoulos & Angela Anderson

Reflection room display (Holbæk Library): Lorenzo Sandoval

Partners:

Holbæk Kommune, Kultur & Fritid (Holbæk Municipality)
Holbæk Museum

Holbæk Kunsthøjskole (art folk school),
VAK - Vestsjællands Arbejdende Kunstværksteder (production facility and artists in residence)
BGK Midt & Vest (art school for young people),
Holbæk Library
Holbæk Art (visual arts festival in public space)

Exhibition period: 14. May - 15. August 2016.

Reflection II, Roskilde: The Route that Tempts the Traveler to Test Gravity. Notes on Immunisation

Bernard Akoi-Jackson
Ali Al-Fatlawi feat. Wathiq Al-Ameri
Nathalie Bikoro
Michèle Magema
Aman Mojadidi
Mwangi Hutter
Harold Offeh
Athi-Patra Ruga
Amy Lee Sanford
Moe Satt

Partners:
Museum of Contemporary Art, "ACTS" performance festival, Roskilde and
Roskilde Festival 2016

Time: ACTS 25. June - 26. June, Roskilde Festival 26. June - 2. July 2016

Reflection III, Copenhagen: An Age of Our Own Making - On Agency and Enacting Citizenship

Tita Salina & Irwan Ahmett
Kamal Aljafari
Moshekwa Langa
Ibrahim Mahama

Reflection room display: Lorenzo Sandoval

Partner: Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen

Time: 15. September 2016 – 8. January 2017

Images is supported by the Danish Centre for Culture & Development—CKU—a self-governing institution under the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Organisation:

An Age of Our Own Making is realized by Holbæk Municipality, the Department of Culture & Leisure

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