



Anthony Downey  
*Camps (or the Precarious  
 Logic of Late Modernity)*

*To a rock-hewn chamber of endless durance,  
 In a strange cold tomb alone to linger  
 Lost between life and death forever<sup>1</sup>*

In the late 1970s, during a drawn-out house move, my parents sent us to holiday camp. This was no ordinary holiday camp, but the renowned and much-loved Butlin's holiday camp in Mosney, a small town forty-five kilometres north of Dublin. Butlin's holiday camps were the brainchild of one William "Billy" Butlin, an entrepreneur who had set up his camps throughout the British Isles with the expressed wish of providing affordable holidays for all. The motto of Butlin's was "Our True Intent Is All for Your Delight," and that was precisely what our family believed. We spent a halcyon week there unaffected, as we later recalled, by the fact that the camp itself was rather makeshift, the chalets substandard, the facilities inadequate for purpose, and the swimming pool an accident waiting to happen. Moreover, the maritime-themed restaurant was nothing more than a chipboard facade with some plastic seagulls suspended from the ceiling and, bizarrely, an underwater view of the swimming pool complete with the unwholesome sight of submerged, sunless-white legs and torsos.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, all of this would remain largely anecdotal and the stuff of family lore were it not for the fact that, as I recently found out, the Irish government subsequently saw it fit to turn Butlin's Mosney—after a period of decline in its fortunes—into a holding centre for immigrants.<sup>3</sup>

If we were to consider the social and economic development of Ireland in the last decade, a period in which rampant Irish migration (under the conditions of growing prosperity) was incrementally replaced with immigration and a calamitous, credit-induced crash, there is much by way of conceptual mileage to be had in this transformation from holiday to refugee camp. In what

follows, however, I want to examine something less Hibernian and more international in scope: the rise of the camp as an integral and globally significant site for the spatial quartering of social, ethnic, economic, and political relations.<sup>4</sup> In the increasingly decentralized context of modern life, where the impact of globalization, regional conflicts, and mass migration dictate the redistribution of populations on both micro and macro levels, the camp—often seen as a borderline, peripheral site—has arguably become an emblematic feature of an emergent global order.<sup>5</sup> To fully explore this suggestion, I will initially examine the theoretical work of Giorgio Agamben and his extended engagement with the notion of the camp. For Agamben, camps are not just singular, juridico-political structures, nor is their presence to be understood as either exceptional or historical in scope; rather, the camp exposes the "hidden matrix and *nomos* [law] of the political space in which we are still living."<sup>6</sup> Although Agamben's thesis is not without its detractors and, inasmuch as these debates remain ongoing and contingent, I will not necessarily provide a definitive answer here as to whether or not the camp offers a model or *nomos* of modern space; rather, the first section of my discussion will provide a framework within which to understand how Agamben's thought reaches such a conclusion.<sup>7</sup> The second section of my discussion will explore a perhaps more tangible question, which will ideally give us more purchase on the space of actual camps as they exist: If the individual entering the camp, following on Agamben's theories, is denied legal and political representation, then what forms of representation, if any, can be appealed to in order to draw attention to their plight? The question thereafter is relatively straightforward: If the camp has become a paradigm of modern space, then how has aesthetics as a practice (if at all) responded to such developments?

As an immigrant to Ireland, and therefore emphatically not on holiday, being incarcerated in a former holiday camp would no doubt raise an ironic smile—or perhaps not. Mosney refugee camp would have nevertheless offered, initially at least, a place of refuge and relative safety for

those asylum seekers lucky enough to make it to Mosney, amongst whose numbers were to be found victims of torture and ethnic cleansing from, *inter alia*, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kurdistan, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sri Lanka. For those refugees residing there now, despite all the relative safety afforded by that fact, it has come to represent something other than just escape: it has come to signify an irruption in both time and space, a caesura of sorts in the lives of so-called asylum seekers who—without anywhere else to go and denied access to work permits under the laws of asylum—are effectively and forcibly interned.<sup>8</sup> Into this already problematic legacy of displacement, states of limbo, and the aftermath of violence and conflict, we encounter yet another form of hiatus: the space of the camp as an extra-legal no man's land where asylum seekers await the outcome of their applications, some of them for up to five years, whilst others are returned to their country of origin and uncertain fates.

This conception of the camp as an extra-legal no man's land—an extraterritorial space of indefinite internment—is a primary feature of Agamben's thesis in his influential *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998). In albeit abbreviated terms, Agamben's focus in this volume (and elsewhere) is the lives lived and the sites maintained on the margins of social, political, juridical, and biological representation, not for their exceptional qualities, but for the manner in which they are representative of modernity and provide a monitory tone to any emancipatory reading of the modern political subject. A central aspect of Agamben's thesis is concerned with the processes that those who enter the camp undergo, often in advance of their internment, forms of legal and political delegitimization.<sup>9</sup> To enter the camp, forcibly or otherwise, individuals have their appeals and rights to legal and political representation suspended. It is this suspension that Agamben sees at the basis of modernity and its incremental repeal of an individual's rights (*habeas corpus*, for one), as well as the emergence of "states of exception" that enable such rights to be revoked in the first place. Placed beyond political and legal representation, Agamben argues that the subject of modernity increasingly inhabits a "zone of indistinction" within

which his or her claims to justice and equality can be effectively abrogated.

For Agamben, the *nomos* of modernity and the effective spatialization of social, economic, ethnic, and political relations in our time was predicated on and made all too visible in the concentration camp. Understood as that which is beyond the boundaries of humanity, it is in the concentration camp that we find a veritable "zone of indistinction" in which *homo sacer*, the bearer of "bare life," is consigned to *conditio inhumana* whilst awaiting the only possible outcome under such conditions: death. There is a clear provocation underwriting Agamben's reading of the concentration camp and the legacy of such camps on historical consciousness. Long seen as the exception to Western modernity, the breach in its humanist logic, the concentration camp is here understood to be the law (*nomos*) of a sovereign power—an unaccountable form of rule—re-emerging in modernity and made manifest in the architecture of genocide. How, we may wish to inquire at this stage, does Agamben qualify such a statement, which, in all its provocation, would appear to contradict the long-held view of the concentration camp not only as the exception to modernity but the fundamental schism in Western teleological notions of progress? He does this, in part, by examining the very notion of exceptionalism. Stemming from the Latin *ex-capere*, which means "taken outside," the exception is that which is "included through its own exclusion."<sup>10</sup> Agamben writes: *One ought to reflect, on the paradoxical status of the camp as a space of exception: the camp is a piece of territory that is placed outside the normal juridical order; for all that, however, it is not simply an external space. According to the etymological meaning of the term exception (ex-capere), what is being excluded in the camp is captured outside, that is, it is included by virtue of its very exclusion.*<sup>11</sup> It is this state of inclusion through forms of exclusion that underwrites the camp, a space that is included by virtue of its exclusion. This is the political (precarious) logic of modernity that underwrites the presence of camps: the logic of inclusive exclusion.

We may want to allude here, in passing for now, to the conditions that refugees endure today in camps the world over, from Palestine to Chad

(the latter housing refugees from Darfur); from the Sahrawi refugee camps in Algeria to the Palestinian refugee camps in Southern and Northern Lebanon; from the Northern border camps of Iraq to the camps that still exist in Syria, all of which are included—heavily policed and contained—within the perversely inclusive political logic of exclusion: placed, that is, beyond recourse to political and legal representation and yet still subject to reprimand from both. We engage here, broadly speaking, with another central tenet of Giorgio Agamben's work on the subject of modernity: the figure who inhabits the camp and other "zones of indistinction" is that of *homo sacer*, the sacred and thereafter "excepted" individual who is included through his own exclusion; the subject whose "bare life" (life that is lived beyond recourse to legal and political representation) is posited as the originary political element of sovereign power.<sup>12</sup> This figure of modernity, for Agamben, is still inhabiting other more contemporary forms of extra-legal incarceration, including, but not limited to, the *zones d'attentes* in French national airports, the so-called "black sites" involved in "extraordinary" renditions (it is no coincidence that individuals thus rendered are referred to as "ghost detainees"—liminal figures who are neither verifiably alive nor officially dead); the "zones of indistinction" that define sites such as Guantanamo Bay in Cuba; and the state of exception that is modern-day Palestine, where millions languish under economic, social, political, and other restrictions.<sup>13</sup> "The camp intended as a dislocating localization," Agamben warns, "is the hidden matrix of the politics in which we still live."<sup>14</sup>

In *Seaview* (2008), a documentary directed by Nicky Gogan and Paul Rowley about Butlin's Mosney camp and its present-day incarnation, one of the workers employed in the camp who looked after the asylum seekers notes that it has become a "waiting room" for most, a place of refuge for sure, but also a place of uncertainty that can mean a life lived in limbo for many. In the context of such uncertainty and the spectre of lives lived in limbo, an obvious analogy could be drawn between the Mosney refugee centre and other, less hospitable internment camps worldwide. It would

be nevertheless perhaps too easy, if not critically suspect, to draw too many conclusions from the historical transition that took place between the primary recreational function of Butlin's Mosney and its latter-day reincarnation. Nevertheless, the shift (in all its geographic provisionalism and historical conditionality) does signify an increasingly prevalent phenomenon in our neoliberal, late-modern, globalized world order: the emergence of camps as an all too noticeable and far from transient feature of late modernity as opposed to an anomalous makeshift response to the displacement of individuals through war, ethnic cleansing, conflict, and natural disasters. From the holiday camp of yesteryear, we may want to look at the modern-day ubiquity of camp spaces and their functions, if not the basis of their logic in our time and what it tells us about late modernity as a spatial and temporal form of juridico-political containment.

From the infamous Sangatte detention centre in Northern France to its unregulated and makeshift replacement on the Nord-Pas-de-Calais coast, known to locals and inhabitants alike as "la jungle"—the latter being, until its bulldozing in September 2009, home to as many as eight hundred refugees;<sup>15</sup> from the concentration camps introduced by Field Marshall Kitchener during the Boer War (1899–1902) to the *Konzentrationslager* of the Third Reich (1933–45), not to mention the forced labour camps of the Soviet Union (1918–91) and the infamous Omarska and Keraterm camps set up by Serbian forces during the Bosnian war (1992–95);<sup>16</sup> from the Overseas Military Facility camps operating throughout Afghanistan to the UN Relief and Works Agency camps (responsible for food relief and refugee camps in zones of conflict worldwide); from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) sponsored camps that were erected post-Hurricane Katrina in the southern United States to the terrorist training camps of Peshwari and southern Pakistan; from the infamous Abu Ghraib internment facility camp to the cells of Guantanamo (over which the US assumed territorial control under the Cuban-American Treaty of 1903); from the so-called No Border camp (set up to resist human migration control by coordinating international border

camps, demonstrations, direct actions, and anti-deportation campaigns) to the offshore camps set up to de-nationalize the processing and reception of asylum seekers—in all of these instances, we can see the camp as the conditional artifact and contingent fact of modernity, if not, to agree with Agamben, a prerequisite of its political logic: the logic, that is, of inclusive exclusion.

If camps are indeed indicative of a prevalent form of spatialization in modernity's factoring of social, political, ethnic, and economic relations, then strategies of representation must be devised to fully explicate the specificity of these camps if, that is, we are to understand their far from transient presence on the horizons of late modernity. This may be more problematic than it initially sounds if we inquire into what is at stake in the moment of representation and what exactly is happening when news media enter and record life (and death) in, for example, refugee camps. In making visible the conditions within camps and the fact of the camp as a space, we need to ask whether media representations reproduce a regime of visibility wherein everything is not only made visible, but subjected to a relationship of power that encourages spectatorship. If the latter is the case, and it is difficult to argue otherwise in a neoliberal, market-driven economic structure that encourages the circulation of images in the name of a media outlet's market share (and hence advertising revenue), then not only do the truth claims of modern media need to be questioned, but new ways of representing need to evolve. And it is to that space, the space of representation rather than simply the space of the camp *per se*, that I will turn my attention in the latter part and conclusion of this essay.

In all of their variety and ubiquity, camps have become something of a privileged subject in contemporary art practices.<sup>17</sup> The moment of representing the camp is not, however, without potential problems, and these can be summed up in the conundrum of all images that lay claim to being representative of a given situation: the aestheticization of, in this instance, refugee camps, can be also a form of anaestheticization whereby the subjects represented become symbolic (in the moment of their re-presentation) and thereafter

depoliticized. This is to observe two related points: First, the distinction between aesthetics and anaesthetics recalls Ingrid Sischy's perspicacious comments in the *New Yorker* in the early 1990s. The manner, to quote Sischy, in which the "beautification of tragedy results in pictures that ultimately reinforce our passivity toward the experience they reveal. To aestheticize tragedy is the fastest way to anesthetize the feelings of those who are witnessing it. Beauty is a call to admiration, not to action."<sup>18</sup> The process of producing a "good" picture, however harrowing, can be often a less than indirect way of depoliticizing the very circumstances behind the image.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, and linked to this process, if the camp cannot be visualized, explained, and represented in a manner that befits its contingent and all too durable logic, then it cannot be politicized and can only ever remain, in the political schema of inclusive exclusion, symbolic of suffering and displacement. This is the perennial conundrum faced by photography (or indeed any art form) that takes as its subject social, political, economic, or cultural inequality: the documentation of injustice—or the discursively segregated other—can often present an aesthetically overdetermined subject who becomes not only depoliticized but symptomatic of both suffering and otherness. And this is doubly problematic in the context of the refugee camp inasmuch as it is precisely the process of depoliticization—the suspension and denial of justice, rights, and equality—that has been already visited upon the subject who enters the camp.

In Ursula Biemann's *X-Mission* (2008), she notes that the case of Palestinian refugees and the camps they inhabit is representative of the "exception within the exception."<sup>20</sup> Utilizing interviews with a lawyer, a journalist, an architect, an anthropologist, and a historian, the film approaches the camp as a distinct fact and in turn utilizes the formal context and format of video—in a multiple-layer video montage—to understand the production of the camp as an evolving, decentralized site of both physical and mental cohabitation. The use of the formal context of video for interviews, on-location footage, and downloaded images mimics the fact of the camp itself as a complex discursive space with broader deterritorialized

forms of interaction that lie beyond the immediate confined sphere of the camp's location.<sup>21</sup> Video, in sum, does not merely record events, but is used as a "cognitive tool." This layered visual format, moreover, simultaneously relates to the discursive, virtual, and real nature of the Palestinian refugee camps in all of their regional dislocatedness and forms of overlapping, a reality that has come to determine the day-to-day living conditions within and beyond the camps.<sup>22</sup> Biemann writes: *To render this condition I opted for the form of a cultural report that includes local analysis by experts (architect, anthropologist, journalist, historian) while drawing on data and video material from "You Tube," suggesting use of media that connects the camp to the global distribution of cultural power.*<sup>23</sup>

Crucially, Biemann is interested in the "post-national" context of Palestine and in the question of the status of Palestinian claims for a Palestinian nation in a time when the nation-state seems under threat of further dissolution. In the broader context of the camp as the potential *nomos* of modernity, we may want to pause here and ask what *X-Mission* tells us about the fact of the refugee camp today and the potentiality for representing it without reducing it to a symbolic presence or indeed a static, fixed model of incarceration and internment. Which brings us to a series of further questions: What models of belonging lie beyond those offered by the nation-state, and how do we pluralize the fact of the camp—in all its undoubted structural and political unjustness—so that agency and self-determination can be accounted for within its confines?<sup>24</sup>

Recalling the comments made by a refugee camp worker in *Seaview*, one of Biemann's subjects in *X-Mission*, Shaadi Abu Zakqa argues that the camp is "nothing more than a waiting room until [he] gets the right to return."<sup>25</sup> The right to return, Abu Zakqa clarifies, can be equated with the right to choose. There is a volitional context here that further alerts us to Biemann's emphasis on agency within the camps, the ability to act rather than to be continually and irremediably acted upon. Writing in the notes accompanying her film, she argues that the camp is not necessarily the site of "bare life," a life that exists beyond political and cultural distinctions, but is rather "a

highly juridical space of dispossession and re-possession."<sup>26</sup> The distinction is important. "Growing urban dissolution, enclavization and ghettoization on a global scale," Biemann further observes, "assign people different sorts of spaces, mobilities and rights. The refugee camp is but a systemic variety of a condition, emblematic of developments in late capitalism."<sup>27</sup> In her film, Biemann explores the camp as a "variety of a condition" to be found in late capitalism and not just the calamitous and sometimes fatal idiosyncrasy of modern-day nation building. As an emblem of late capitalism, however, the camp is still indicative of a logic within modernity. This logic, like the status of refugees in the camps, might be precarious—in danger, that is, of imploding in on itself—and it might be also ultimately self-defeating; however, it is a logic underwritten by the politics of inclusive exclusion.<sup>28</sup>

To the extent that Biemann's film draws attention to its modes and means of representation, which in turn underwrite its concepts regarding extraterritoriality, it also focuses on the way images are produced by an author and subsequently received by the viewer. There is, in sum, no such thing as a decontextualized viewing experience. We, as viewers and participants, not to mention artists, institutions, and critics, are all involved in the syntax of producing and maintaining forms of cultural production. In *Episode I* (2003), the Dutch-born filmmaker Renzo Martens takes this notion to its vertiginous limit, drawing our attention to the conditions under which images of refugees and camps are produced and for what reasons. For *Episode I*, Martens travelled throughout a war-torn Chechnya during the insurgency that followed the siege and subsequent levelling of Grozny. In a quasi-journalistic attempt to record what was happening there, Martens approached refugees in a UN humanitarian camp and, in an inversion of the reporter-cum-interviewer format, not only asked them what they thought of his presence but other questions less associated with either conflict or indeed the run-of-the-mill truisms we have come to expect in such circumstances. A young girl is quizzed on the meaning of love, an aid worker is questioned on the role of the media in the conflict, and a young Russian soldier is cajoled into giving a few lines on the nature of



his feelings. The resulting film shows various reactions—ranging from amusement to derision to denunciation—to Martens’s occasionally mundane but nevertheless disarming provocations.<sup>29</sup>

Martens’s self-reflexivity in *Episode I*, which consciously borders on narcissism, can at times produce excruciating results. On more than one occasion he asks his various interlocutors why they think cameras have come to film them; what they think about the aid agencies that are there to assist them; and, in a UNHCR briefing on the refugee crisis, what the various NGO workers and UN representatives think of him. His question, at the end of such a sensitive briefing, is met with incredulous laughter, and Martens could be dismissed here as not only self-serving and crass, but blithely unaware of the circumstances that surround him. In one scene, he goes so far as to ask a man whose face has been badly burnt—and who has just spoken of how disfigured he feels when he looks in the mirror—whether or not he finds Martens handsome. This apparent insensitivity, however, tends to mask the extent to which *Episode I* is a critique of its context, setting, and circumstances: it exists as a film to draw attention to the very means of its existence and the extent to which the media thrives on suffering and conflict. The awkwardness of Martens’s questions to the inhabitants of the various camps he visits produces a sense of unease in the viewer—a shamefulness, if you will, on our behalf for what he is doing in our name. And it is “in our name” that these images are produced—by which I mean that the manner in which the news media report on events in conflict zones and the various incarnations of camps is often “in our name” inasmuch as our desire to see (not to be confused here with understanding) is the moving force behind such images and their production. This recalls my earlier point: namely, that the way news media outlets, under the pressure of neoliberal free markets, need to produce images that exploit forms of disengaged spectatorship plays all too nicely into the viewer’s inability to commit to any response beyond the distantiating salve of sympathy. Excruciating as Martens’s film may be, it is in fact an excoriation of both a media-defined regime of (in)visibility—and all of the compromises inherent in that—and our comfortably numbed reactions to such images.

Among the many questions raised by Martens is whether certain narrative and filmic devices can position the viewer—in the face of the often brutal events unfolding onscreen in camps and elsewhere—in the culpable role of accomplice in the events we are watching. Martens not only engages with the extent to which narrative and video implicate the viewer as a protagonist of sorts in the events portrayed, but also, crucially, explores the far from simplistic issue of artistic and audience responsibility vis-à-vis an ethics of engagement: What, in sum, would a responsible, committed approach to representing such conditions amount to and consist of? If we are indeed shocked and surprised by the casual cruelty and disingenuousness displayed in Martens’s film, we may want to ask why we are shocked and surprised: Why do these images, and not the stock media images, bring out such responses? The voyeurism of the film becomes our scopic desire to see more and all the while remain desensitized to the events portrayed—anaestheticized, if you will. But the film denies precisely any easy solace or accommodation of the viewer’s desire to see and yet not be seen or indeed held responsible for what is being viewed. There is no such thing, finally, as an innocent bystander-cum-viewer in *Episode I*.

Whilst Martens occasionally hands over the means of production to his interviewees (at one point he passes his camera to an interviewee and asks her to interview him), the photographer Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh gives over the camera permanently inasmuch as she provides the means for people who live in camps to produce and display images. The most recent incarnation of Eid-Sabbagh’s project is *How Beautiful Is Panama!* (2001–), an exhibition of photographs taken by the residents of the Burj al-Shamali camp in southern Lebanon. In summer 2009, the photographs that were taken—by, among others, Ahmad al-Khalil, Susan al-Khatib, Yasser Ibrahim, Fameh Soleiman, Nisreen Musherfi, and Ali al-Ali—toured other camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.<sup>30</sup> The images in this project were not taken by Eid-Sabbagh, nor were the subjects portrayed chosen by her. The specific locations (other than the fact that they were in a refugee camp), the individual poses, the framing and timing of the photographs—none of these were attributable to Eid-Sabbagh’s role.

This may appear a relatively radical way to engage the idea of the camp and its residents; however, as she notes, there had been workshops in camps that employed similar forms of facilitative participation and we may want to ask here what made Eid-Sabbagh’s intervention any different.

In the first instance, Eid-Sabbagh’s project set out to collect, collate, and store photographs from people in the camps—photographs that preserve the visual memory of a land that many in the camps had never set foot in.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, the emphasis on so-called “participatory photography” engages the question of representing camps in an altogether different register than, say, documentary or press photographs. Finally, the project has an inbuilt degree of sustainability to it, which enables it to continue as a locus for education and research without Eid-Sabbagh’s input.<sup>32</sup> These are all complicated issues that circumnavigate notions such as agency, voice, self-representation, the ethics and politics of participation, and the ideal of sustainability. In essence, however, Eid-Sabbagh is exposing the often rarefied practice of aesthetic production and concomitantly inviting in the very voices that are often excluded from its remit: the dispossessed and the disenfranchised subjects who inhabit refugee camps. All of which brings us to the central question: What is the final outcome of this process? Is it any more political or ethical than other practices, or is it merely a substitute for legal and political representation? It is at this juncture that we get closer to an answer? To suggest that these photographs are political because of what they portray, or to propose that they are any more ethical because of the relationships they nurture, is to miss the point. It is the blurring of the distinction between the aesthetic (the means of representation) and the political (the logic of inclusive exclusion that underwrites the camp) that gives the images produced the means to engage and thereafter negotiate the problematic of self-representation within the camp—the very forms of self-representation that were abrogated and denied the inhabitants of the camps in the first place.

Given the problems that are already associated with the camp as a heavily policed and yet relatively indistinct zone, the aesthetics of representation need to be underwritten by a series of self-reflexive questions: how do you represent, for one,

that which is often considered *beyond* legal and political representation without aestheticizing it to the point of it becoming symbolic? If the abrogation of legal and political representation before the law is a feature of the camp in all its indistinctness and strategically exempted status, then what happens when aesthetic representation is inserted into an already compromised regime of (in)visibility? In an all too amenable substitution that merely reconfirms the apparent absence of both self-representation and self-determination in, say, refugee camps, is it possible that aesthetic representation comes to stand in for other suspended forms of representation and volition? In the moment of self-reflexively re-presenting camps and their inhabitants, contemporary artistic practices, specifically those examined above, can address precisely these paradoxes of representing those who are apparently beyond representation. Finally, without these forms of aesthetic self-reflexivity and commitment on behalf of artists and filmmakers to interrogate the assumptions of their practices, we run the risk of reducing the camp to a symbolic presence—and therefore placing it *beyond* politics—which would in turn mirror the very process that could one day see the law (*nomos*) of the camp, to gloss Agamben, become the very logic of modernity. “We can expect not only new camps,” Agamben adds in a monitory note, “but also new and more delirious normative definitions of the inscription of life in the city.”<sup>33</sup> The camp, to return to our opening comments, could one day appear on our horizon not as the exception but exemplification of modern forms of organizing space precisely because no one contested the very means of representing such spaces and how such representations defined our understanding of and relationship to camps in the first place. And that, finally, should be a concern for all, not just artists.

#### About the Author

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Notes begin on page 110.

*Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences* 358, no. 1435 (July 2003), 1288. 26. Judith Barry, "Dissenting Spaces," in *Thinking About Exhibitions*, 308. 27. Charlotte Klonk, *Spaces of Experience: Art Gallery Interiors from 1800 to 2000* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

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1. Sophocles, *Antigone*.

2. All Butlin's camps were essentially based upon the same model but with certain thematic variations. Butlin's Filey, for example, and for no discernible reason that comes to my mind, had the "Caribbean Coffee Lounge" and the "French Bar," whilst Butlin's Ayr had the "Interior Continental Bar" and "Old Time Ballroom." Butlin's Mosney, for its part, had a ballroom and an indoor heated swimming pool that could be viewed by diners from the "Coffee Lounge." The disconcerting effect of the latter and the mildly hypnotic effect of the colour schemes in these holiday camps can be viewed in *Our True Intent Is All for Your Delight: The John Hinde Butlin's Photographs* (London: Chris Boot, 2002).

3. At its peak, Butlin's holiday camp in Mosney could accommodate 2,800 holidaymakers and an additional four thousand day visitors. In 1983, not long after our one and only holiday there, it was sold as a going concern, and in 2000 the then-owner signed a controversial five-year, £15 million deal with the Irish government that gave over the former holiday camp for use as a detention centre for asylum seekers. The financial deal to use the camp, albeit with a lower capacity, was subsequently renewed in 2010. It is now home to seven hundred refugees from over twenty different countries.

4. For a thorough and insightful overview of camps and their modern day manifestations, see Charlie Hailey, *Camps: A Guide to 21st Century Space* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2009). Hailey helpfully organizes camps in terms of purpose and, to a certain degree, the volition involved in entering one. This involves, for example, camps of autonomy (e.g., a peace camp or

protest camp), camps of control (*zones d'attentes* or immigrant camps), and camps of necessity (a refugee camp or a migrant camp). Needless to say there is often a significant degree of overlap between autonomy, control, and necessity when it comes to camps.

5. The artist and filmmaker Ursula Biemann has referred to the refugee camp as a capsule that indicates the intricate political demands of the present. She suggests that the camp is a *capsule where populations are suspended from the legal order that governs their lives, defined and regulated according to the United Nations' humanitarian conventions and the volatile domain of international politics*. Ursula Biemann, *X-Mission* (December 2009), <http://arteeast.org/pages/artenews/extra-territoriality/249/>, accessed July 22, 2010.

6. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 166. 7. One of the more insightful critiques of Agamben's work to date is Jacques Rancière's "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, no. 2/3 (2004), 297–310. (Republished in *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 62–75.

8. A recent editorial in the *Irish Times*, noted that the system at Mosney refugee camp was designed to be uncomfortable enough to discourage bogus applicants. In that respect, the editorial went on, it "certainly lives up to its purpose, to the point where it is certainly arguable whether some of the most basic human rights of refugees are being honoured. The prolonged, bureaucratic application and appeals process, denying refugees their right to a speedy determination, hostel overcrowding, the puny level of 'direct provision' cash support of €19.10 a week, and the denial of the right to seek work all need urgent review." See "Dispute on asylum seekers," *Irish Times*, July 10, 2010, <http://irishtimes.com/newspaper/opinion/2010/0710/1224274419711.html>, accessed July 28, 2010.

9. It is no coincidence that if the person entering the camp was a Jew he had already been deprived of his rights as a citizen by the Nuremberg laws (the so-called Nürnberg Gesetze of 1935), which, in the moment of deploying a pseudoscientific approach to biological antecedents and dubious classifications

of progeny, effectively denaturalized Jews on the grounds of race. 10. Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 170. It is worth noting here Ursula Biemann's observation about the exempted inclusivity of the camp as a space of modernity. Biemann has suggested that "in the Palestinian case we have to understand the refugee camp above all as a spatial device of containment that deprives people of their mobility and condemns them to a localized life on extremely reduced grounds. Yet at the same time, the refugee camp is a product of supra-national forms of organization (United Nation High Commissioner of Refugees, NGOs) and in that sense, connected systemically to a global context." See Biemann, *X-Mission*.

11. Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 40. There is a degree of correspondence here in Aihwa Ong's discussion of exceptionalism and exclusion in relation to forms of neoliberal governance. "I conceptualize the exception," Ong writes, "as an extraordinary departure in policy that can be deployed to include as well as exclude." See Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.

12. A particularly insidious form of "inclusive exclusion" can be found in the Schutzhaft law that was deployed in Nazi Germany to incarcerate Jews under the guise of protecting them. Effectively referring to a form of so-called "protective custody," the law enabled Jews to be rounded up and detained for their own protection without recourse to either judicial warrant or indeed the prospect of ever seeing a judge. Excluded on the basis of religion and culture, the Jews were nonetheless included in the "protective" gesture of the German extrajudicial system of exceptional laws.

13. In the absence of sovereign state status and with approximately five million Palestinians living as refugees, Palestine has been referred to as a "laboratory of the world" and would appear to be the *sine qua non* "zone of indistinction"—a point not lost on Agamben in his work. See Giorgio Agamben, "Beyond Human Rights," in *Means Without End*, 15–26. A considerable number of books have been written on the anomalous nature of life under occupation in Palestine. I would

direct readers to one of the more recent volumes for a comprehensive overview of these arguments: A. Ophir, Michal Govni, and Sari Hanafi, eds., *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (New York: Zone Books, 2009). 14. Agamben, *Means Without End*, 44. 15. It is perhaps of interest to observe, given the sense of hiatus and limbo associated with camps and detention centres, that the term "sangatte" is of Flemish origin (*Zandgat*) and means a "gap in the sand." It is also perhaps ironic, given its more recent association with detention and stasis, that the first flight across the English Channel was made from the beach at Sangatte by Louis Bleriot in 1909.

16. The Omarska and Keraterm camps were also the site of so-called "rape camps." Much has since been written on the way rape was used as a form of ethnic cleansing. For extended inquiries into this subject, see Mary Valentich, "Rape Revisited: Sexual Violence against Women in the Former Yugoslavia," *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality* 3, no. 1 (1994), 53–64, and Todd A. Salzman, "Rape Camps as a Means of Ethnic Cleansing: Religious, Cultural, and Ethical Responses to Rape Victims in the Former Yugoslavia," *Human Rights Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (May 1998), 348–78.

17. We could note here the distinctions to be had amongst those examining refugee camps (Renzo Martens, Yazan Khalili, Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh, Ursula Biemann, Phil Collins, Dalia Khamissy, Bruno Serralongue, and Jawad Al Malhi), concentration camps (Harun Farocki, Artur Zmijewski, Omer Fast, Santiago Sierra), internment camps (Reza Aramesh, Nada Prlja, Ayreen Anastas, and Rene Gabri), labour camps (Steve McQueen), protest camps (Mark Wallinger), and transit camps (Ursula Biemann and Yto Barrada).

18. See Ingrid Sischy, "Photography: Good Intentions," *New Yorker* (September 9, 1991), 92. Sischy's concern was largely to do with what she termed the "visual rhetoric" employed by the photographer Sebastião Salgado, who produced photographs imbued with a form of "emotional blackmail." Aestheticization, to repeat her argument, produces anaestheticization: an inability to deal with the particularity of the subject portrayed beyond its symbolic and thereafter depoliticized significance.

19. There is, of course, more to it than

that. The very presence of such images can absolve us, in our sympathy for that which is portrayed, of any complicity in the very mechanisms that make such suffering possible. This is to gloss Susan Sontag's insight in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, where she writes: *Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence.... To set aside the sympathy we extend to others beset by war and murderous politics for a reflection on how our privileges are located on the same maps as their suffering, and may—in ways we might prefer not to imagine—be linked to their suffering, as the wealth of some may imply the destitution of others, is a task for which the painful, stirring images supply only an initial spark*. Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 102. 20. Biemann, *X-Mission*.

21. Writing of the processes and practices involved in this and other films, Biemann observed the following: "Besides this historical re-contextualisation, and the non-dialectical approach at unfolding knowledge, there is another aesthetic strategy at work in this video essay. Like most of my other video works, *X-Mission* establishes a direct correspondence between the conceptual structure of the video and the particularities of the place it describes. A video on circuitous border movements calls for a different formal structure than one on clandestine, rhizome-like transit migration, or yet another on the construction of an oil pipeline running through three territories. The question of the geographic characteristics of the camp is crucial for the video montage. See Biemann, *X-Mission*.

22. I would also direct readers to a work by Emily Jacir that, in part, explores this form of Palestinian extraterritoriality. The work in question, *Ramallah/New York* (2000–05), is a two-channel video installation that looks at the lives of Palestinians living in New York and in Ramallah. Eschewing images associated with media depictions of Palestine, Jacir's video is relatively low-key and shows images of travel agencies, hairdressers, and newsagents in both cities, and the people who work there. There is, as in Biemann's film, a concern here with the transcendence involved in understanding space as opposed to its restrictions.

23. Biemann, *X-Mission*.

24. Biemann writes: *Given the importance of the inter-connectivity among these separated pockets of Palestinian populations, X-Mission attempts to place the Palestinian refugee in the context of a global diaspora and considers de-territorialized models of belonging that have emerged through the networked matrix of this widely dispersed community*. See Biemann, *X-Mission*.

25. This interview can be viewed in Ursula Biemann, "X-Mission: January 2009–2010," <http://tate.org.uk/intermediaart/x-mission.shtml>, accessed August 10, 2010.

26. Biemann, *X-Mission*.

27. *Ibid.*

28. I am conscious here that the term "precarious" has been used to describe the very state of being that exists within camps and the fact of "bare life"; that is, life beyond political and legal representation. However, in this context, I want to tentatively propose that this logic of precariousness is itself precarious and subject to debate. For further discussions of precariousness in relation to "bare life," see Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004).

29. I am reminded here of Aernout Mik's *Raw Footage* (2006), a collation of footage from the Bosnian war that was deemed "too boring" and mundane for mainstream news media outlets such as Channel 4, CNN, and the BBC, and thereafter edited out of the broadcasted footage.

30. The overall project had its inception in 2001, when Eid-Sabbagh and the photographer Simon Lourié initiated summer workshops in six Palestinian camps in Lebanon, including Shatila, Nahr al Bared, Ain al Helweh, Rachediyeh, Burj al Barajneh, and Burj al Shamali. Eid-Sabbagh spent the next five years in the camps before settling in Burj al Shamali, where she lived until recently.

31. A similar emphasis on production, in the form of archiving, can be found in the Arab Image Foundation, under whose aegis Eid-Sabbagh's project continues to find support. Based in Beirut, the AIF is a non-profit organization established in 1997. Its mission, according to its director, Zeina Arida, is to preserve photography from the region and contribute to the production of cultural knowledge. This, of course, involves a form of archaeology and excavation that seeks to map the production of

cultural forms in the region as a whole. The discussion here is paraphrased from a conversation with Zeina Arida and the author, Beirut, July 19, 2010. 32. In private correspondence, Eid-Sabbagh elaborates on this point: *The project continues and evolves. Photographs are being produced, even though through different approaches. One of the young ladies who collaborated with me over the past nine years is carrying on photographic work with younger boys and girls. She does pinhole cameras with them, and they develop and print in the darkroom. She also works with digital cameras. The workspace also accommodates workshops by others who work with any visual media. The archive is [also] maintained.* Communication with author, August 12, 2010. Reprinted here with kind permission of the artist. 33. Agamben, *Means Without End*, 44.

#### Pages 74–79

Claire Tancons and Jesse McKee  
*On Carnival and Contractual Curating*

- Irit Rogoff, "Geo Cultures: Circuits of Arts and Globalizations," *Open* 16 (2009), 109.
- Charles Esche, "What's the Point of Art Centres Anyway? Possibility, Art and Democratic Deviance," *republicart* (April 2004), [http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/esche01\\_en.htm](http://www.republicart.net/disc/institution/esche01_en.htm).
- Claire Tancons, "Spring," *The 7th Gwangju Biennale Annual Report: A Year in Exhibitions*, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Gwangju: Gwangju Biennale Foundation, 2008), 334–63.
- Mas', short for Masquerade, is used to refer to Carnival in Trinidad and part of the English- and French-speaking Caribbean.
- Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Presses du réel, 2002); first published as *Esthétique relationnelle* (Paris: Presses du réel, 1998).

#### Pages 80–91

Lisa Marshall  
*An Evidence Horizon*

- Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 10.
- Judy Radul, artist's talk at the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, University of British Columbia, October 17, 2009.
- Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The 'Mystical Foundation of Authority,'" in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, eds. David Gray Carlson, Drucilla Cornell, and Michel Rosenfeld (New York: Routledge, 1992), 3–67.
- The United States, China, Russia, and India remain among the non-ICC-member nations.
- V. S. Ramachandran and W. S. Hirstein, "The perception of phantom limbs: The D. O. Hebb lecture," *Brain* 121, no. 9 (1998), 1603–30.
- Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 44.
- While Fried's critique of Minimal art certainly provided a list that came to articulate artistic positions in postmodernism, it is important to note that other forces had already been eroding the exalted and separate status of art objects, as these objects came under increasing pressure in serving as props for decor, fashion, and politics.
- Judy Radul, "What was behind me now faces me: Performance, staging, and technology in the court of law," *Glänta* (January 2007), 86–98. This article can be accessed online via *Eurozine* at <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-05-02-radul-en.html>.
- Rosalind Krauss, "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October* 54 (Fall 1990), 3–17.
- Hila Peleg, *A Crime Against Art* (Berlin: unitednationsplaza studios, 2007). The film is based on The Trial in Madrid, February 2007, organized by Anton Vidokle and Tirdad Zolghadr. The film of the trial can be viewed at <http://unitednationsplaza.org/video/58/>
- Ibid.
- "Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism," *October* 100 (Spring 2002), 201–28.
- Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 54.
- Derrida, "Force of Law," 16, 22–28.
- Ibid.
- Ibid., 27.
- Derrida made a distinction between the concept of *avenir* as distinct from the notion of the future; for him, *avenir*

was best translated as "yet-to-come" and was different from the idea of the future, which he felt was too closely linked to the present and too likely to be a reinstitution of what already is.

#### Pages 92–99

Haema Sivanesan  
*Producing Images in Times of War*

- War rugs are a category of rug that first began to be produced in Afghanistan during the period of the Soviet invasion (1979–80); they incorporate scenes of war or design motifs that depict the machinery of war. They continue to be produced today and often depict scenes of the destruction of the World Trade Center or the current war in Afghanistan. See <http://warrug.com>.
- Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 1977), 104–05.
- See also Ishaq Mohammadi, "A Profile on Bamyana Civilization," 1999, <http://www.hazara.net/hazara/history/buddha.html>.
- The motivations for the Taliban's destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas are discussed in further detail below.
- "Afghan Taliban leader orders destruction of ancient statues," press release, Agence France Press, February 26, 2001, quotes a decree issued by the Taliban militia supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar: *Based on the verdict of the clergymen and the decision of the supreme court of the Islamic Emirate (Taliban) all the statues around Afghanistan must be destroyed.* Available at <http://rawa.org/statues.htm>, accessed August 30, 2010. Pierre Centlivres quotes from the decree: *These statues were and are a sanctuary for unbelievers. These unbelievers continue to worship and to venerate these statues and pictures.* See Pierre Centlivres, "The Controversy over the Buddhas of Bamiyan," in *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal* 2 (2008), <http://samaj.revues.org/index992.html>.
- F. B. Flood, "Between Cult and Culture: Bamiyan, Islamic Iconoclasm, and the Museum," *Art Bulletin* 84 (2002), [https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/faculty/flood\\_PDFs/Bamiyan.pdf](https://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/fineart/faculty/flood_PDFs/Bamiyan.pdf), accessed December 6, 2009. Flood argues that the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas was politically rather than religiously motivated.
- In *Lives of the Indian Images*, Richard

Davis notes that *Muslim chronicles of the medieval period repeatedly portray the destruction of politically significant images and temples, coupled with the establishment of mosques, as a conversion, a transformation of the land of the heathens into the land of Islam.* He notes that this practice was established by Mahmud of Ghaznavi in what is now modern Afghanistan in the early eleventh century, setting the stage for later Turkic and Central Asian rulers. Davis explains that it was important for Muslim conquerors not only to denounce religious images for theological reasons, but also to act against them as a statement of conquest. Although the Bamiyan Buddhas were not attacked during the period of the Mahmud of Ghaznavi, they were attacked later by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in the eighteenth century. See Richard Davis, *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 88.

- The Hadith is a collection of reports concerning the direct actions or statements of the Prophet Muhammed. These reports were gathered together in the eighth or ninth century and are referred to in matters of Islamic law.
- Retort (Iain Boal, T. J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, Michael Watts), *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (New York: Verso, 2005), 186.
- See Steven Livingston "Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention," the Joan Shorestein Center (June 1997), <http://genocidewatch.org/images/1997ClarifyingtheCNNEffect-Livingston.pdf>.
- Retort, *Afflicted Powers*, 187. Retort argues that the image-world has become the terrain of the spectacular dimension of international politics, brought into sharp focus by the events of 9/11.

#### Clarification

In *Fillip* 12, Keith Wallace's article "Artist-Run Centres in Vancouver: A Reflection on Three Texts," notes, in a parenthetical addendum to a section discussing St. George Marsh, that "the space [later] became Cornershop Projects" (p. 97). In fact, after it was St. George Marsh, the space located at 4393 St. George Street became Storage Gallery and then Cornershop Projects.