

Gestures of Untranslatability

Virginie Bobin, Vir Andres Hera

“*Gestures of Untranslatability*” is a one-week module of workshops, presentations and collective activities, conceived after an invitation by UNIDEE Visiting Curator Chiara Cartuccia’s two-year long project *Neither on Land nor at Sea. Meeting by the Mediterranean Im/Possible*, hosted by UNIDEE Residency Programs and Cittadellarte - Fondazione Pistoletto in Biella, Italy. It takes place from December 11 to 17, 2024.

Conducted by curator, editor and translator Virginie Bobin and artist, film-maker and educator Vir Andres Hera, Qalqalah قلقلة’s module departs from the geographical framework of *Neither on Land not at Sea* to problematize our situated relationships to the languages we speak, learn, or lose, from both political and affective perspectives. How could we deterritorialize our uses of languages, while acknowledging both the relationships of domination and extraction that they sustain; and their potential to forge paths for deviation, commoning and resistance? During the module, we wish to experiment with collective modalities of writing, translation and editing (texts, images, sound, etc); and with translation and untranslatability as gestures and methods to critically investigate language(s). We will also ask how fiction and storytelling can help us to articulate heterogenous and minor positions with modes of collective enunciation; and shake up identity and linguistic categories. Lastly, we will reflect on the formation of collectives as spaces of care (shelter) and as spaces of risk (conflict) where diverse, heterogenous positions come in contact, affect each other, and transform each other while generating bonds and alliances in the face of shared struggles.

As part of the module, we invited editor, writer and researcher Andrea Ancira, and artist, educator and curator Anna T. to each conduct a workshop. Writer Mirene Arsanios will give an online presentation.

Samples from the program

“How (Not) to Disappear in Translation?”
Talk by Virginie Bobin

Virginie Bobin reflects on the ambivalent notion of untranslatability through various theoretical and practical approaches, including a series of conversations developed with interpreters working in the ecosystem of asylum rights in France, which led to the writing of a theatrical script.

Workshop with Anna T.

This workshop focuses on linguistic playfulness and togetherness in the site of the Mediterranean; both a destination for relaxing holidays and connection with nature and the seametry (Abderrezak) of fortress Europe. How can we learn from the linguistic ingenuity of queer and countercultural creations of the past to develop a new language of resistance and solidarity for our minority communities and those who need support?

Anna T. (PhD) is an islander. She works as an artist, educator, and curator in a landlocked country. She has taught at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, the University of Art and Design Linz, and the University of Vienna. Her artistic practice and scholarly work draw from poststructuralism, queer theory, decoloniality, peripheral knowledge, aesthetics, and affect. Since 2003 she has curated and participated in numerous group and solo exhibitions and new media festivals in Europe, the Americas, and Australia. She is the author of *Opacity – Minority – Improvisation: An Exploration of the Closet Through Queer Slangs and Postcolonial Theory*.

“Footholds: Language, Translation, Possibility and Failure”
Workshop with Andrea Ancira

Can translation be a language based practice from which to hack patriarchal and colonial ways of speaking and writing? Can language be appropriated and subverted through translation in order to express our situated views instead of erasing or neutralizing them? Taking the “third language” produced in translation processes as a starting point, this workshop aims to examine gendered relationships in language and translation, our relationship with “mother” tongues vis a vis migration/displacement and the interplay of asymmetric relations among languages.

Andrea Ancira García is an editor, writer, and researcher. Her practice is situated at the crossroads of art and politics as a site of imagination, (un)learning and affective encounters. Her current research focuses on the role of translation in shaping communal perspectives of life and memory. She also works with archives and the affective economies they produce and circulate when generating and exchanging alternative narratives of a shared history. Since 2017 she co-created the publishing platform tumbalacasa ediciones. She is currently a fellow of the Jumex Contemporary Art Foundation and a PhD Candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna.

Readings and workshop with Mirene Arsanios

Mirene Arsanios is the author of the short story collection, *The City Outside the Sentence* (Ashkal Alwan, 2015), *Notes on Mother Tongues* (UDP, 2019), and more recently, *The Autobiography of a Language* (Futurepoem, 2022). She has contributed essays and short stories to *e-flux journal*, *Vida*, *The Brooklyn Rail*, *LitHub*, and *Guernica*, among others. Arsanios co-founded the collective 98weeks Research Project in Beirut and is the founding editor of *Makhzin*, a bilingual English/Arabic magazine for innovative writing. She teaches at Pratt Institute and holds an MFA in Writing from the Milton Avery Graduate School for the Arts at Bard College. Arsanios currently lives in Brooklyn, New York.

Presentation and screening by Vir Andres Hera

Vir Andres Hera shares an insight on their collective approach on cinema. It starts from the detachment of the script as being “the” embryonic standard tool for film and goes towards a more experimental, unscripted and intuitive approach that can accommodate mistakes, mystery and the point of view of the ones in front and behind the camera, questioning the status of a monolithic authorship.

Participants

Participants were selected by UNIDEE Visiting Curator Chiara Cartuccia following an Open call. They include Noemi Alfieri, Omar Al-zo’bi, Tewa Barnosa, Emma Ben Aziza, Diyae Bourhim, Allison Grimaldi Donahue, Danae Io, Joyce Joumaa, Assel Kadyrkhanova, Nona Markarian,

Publication

At the end of the week, participants collectively produced a printed publication titled “Sorry, I didn’t Understand. Can you say that again?”, which will soon be available on our website.

About *Neither on Land nor at Sea*

Curated by Chiara Cartuccia, *Neither on Land nor at Sea. Meeting by the Mediterranean Im/Possible* invites to meander around unreducible complications and on shifting grounds, to explore together ways in which geography is historically, socially, and politically produced. The project pluralises Mediterranean concepts/spaces as sites of worldmaking and experimentation in communal living. To do so, it adopts un-grounded geographies and colliding historicities as meeting places, in which to congregate to elaborate on the role played by situated practices and shared processes in the promotion of social transformations, towards epistemic justice.

The UNIDEE modules are programme-based week-long residency formats. Participating residents will be offered the opportunity to expand on their ongoing research and practice exploring Mediterranean complexities and geographical thinking in the arts and beyond, within a group of peers and invited guests.

More information on the curatorial concept [here](#).

Virginie Bobin

Virginie Bobin develops collaborative projects that take the forms of exhibitions, publications, workshops, seminars, texts, translations or ongoing conversations with artists, curators, researchers, performers and art students. She is particularly interested in a feminist approach to translation as a feminist practice of unlearning with others, which is at the core of her PhD-in-practice research at the Akademie der bildenden Künste (Vienna, 2018-2023).

In 2018, she co-founded QALQALAH قَلْقَلَة, an editorial and curatorial platform dedicated to the production, translation and circulation of artistic, theoretical and literary research in French, Arabic and English. Before that, she was Head of Programs at Villa Vassiliev, a Paris-based center for art, research and residencies, which she co-created in 2016. Previously, she worked for Bétonsalon – Center for Art and Research (Paris), Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art (Rotterdam), Manifesta Journal (Amsterdam), Les Laboratoires d’Aubervilliers and Performa (New York). Recent curatorial projects include the exhibition and workshops series “Bestiario de Lengüitas,” with artist Mercedes Azpilicueta (CAC Brétigny, 2021; Museion Bolzano, 2020; CentroCentro Madrid, 2019); and “QALQALAH قَلْقَلَة: plus d’une langue,” co-curated with Victorine Grataloup (La Kunsthalle Mulhouse, 2021; CRAC Occitanie Sète, 2020). She is a member of Textwork’s editorial committee.

Vir Andres Hera

Vir Andres Hera, born in Yauhquemehcan, Tlaxcala, lives and works in France. Vir Andres’ imagination is told in several languages: French, Spanish, Creole, Aztec and other Amerindian languages. Several language realities merge into his work. His images and representations are mostly expressed through video, but with a broader idea of writing since narration is crucial to him. In his videos, everything is mysteriously strewn with stories and strange anecdotes, literature and his faraway tales, religious myths, dreamlike figures and sacred landscapes. (Text by Julie Gil Giacomini)

Vir Andres Hera is also a member of the Editorial Committee of Qalqalah قَلْقَلَة. He is currently a graduate student at the University of Quebec in Montreal and at the Fresnoy - National Studio of Contemporary Arts. His research, *Literary heteroglossies* focuses on the coexistence of different languages within mythological stories.

