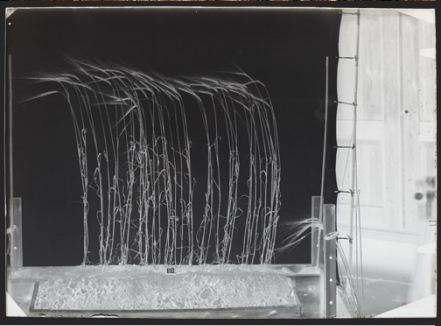
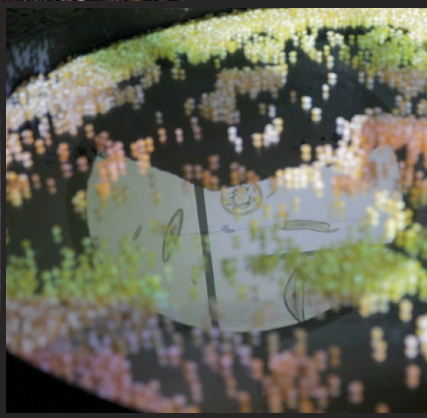
CONTESTED LANDSCAPES

Sandra Schäfer

Archive Books
Camera Austria





With Contributions by
Marwa Arsanios
Madeleine Bernstorff
Reinhard Braun
Linda Conze
Kerstin Faber
Anna-Maria Licciardello
Jumana Manna
Sandra Schäfer
Åsa Sonjasdotter


BEKAA VALLEY, LEBANON


KNV·LOGISTIK

CONTESTED LANDSCAPES

Sandra Schäfer

With Contributions by
Marwa Arsanios
Madeleine Bernstorff
Reinhard Braun
Linda Conze
Kerstin Faber
Anna-Maria Licciardello
Jumana Manna
Sandra Schäfer
Åsa Sonjasdotter

Archive Books
Camera Austria

Contested Landscapes is dedicated to different rural regions—their landscapes, their producers, and their work. I grew up in the rural region of the Westerwald, an hour's drive from Cologne. One hundred years earlier, the photographer August Sander captured his famous photography series of peasants there. My relatives were among those portrayed by him. And so, one of the iconic farmer's portraits from *People of the 20th Century* is my great-great-grand aunt Katharina and her husband Adam Horn.

August Sander's photographic work in the Westerwald region therefore plays a specific role in this book. His working methods are traced through the reconstruction of shooting locations and the images are interpreted by those portrayed or their descendants. People who lived with him in the Westerwald village of Kuchhausen describe his role in the village. In addition, the valorization of commercial photography and the relationship of the commissioned works to the artistic conceptualization are discussed. Curators from the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, the Museum Folkwang in Essen, and the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich present their view of the artistic and conceptual work. My focus is therefore less on photographic image analysis, which can be found, for example, in contributions to the Tate Papers, in the catalog *Germany / 1920s / New Objectivity / August Sander* published by Angela Lampe on the occasion of an exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, or by authors from the region such as Hanns-Josef Ortheil.

Sander's portrait of my great-great-grand aunt Katharina and her husband Adam Horn is the starting point for my two-channel video installation *Westerwald: Eine Heimsuchung* (A Visitation, 2021) [→ p. 17]. In this video installation I juxtapose August Sander's perspective with my own and contemporary view. It is also about how a region, its landscape, and agricultural use have changed over the course of time. I am interested in the various contemporary witnesses and their entanglements: How do my relatives, or the portrait subjects, speak about the artistic and documentary pictures by August Sander? What does it mean to

Farming Couple — Propriety and Harmonie, **August Sander, 1912**

hear the dialect that always also marks a class and regional difference? What knowledge is there about the photographer and his approach? How does this differ from that of photo curators in the museum context? And what does it mean for me, born and raised in Westerwald, to return to create this artistic work?

In the same year that I finished the editing of my video installation *Westerwald: A Visitation*, I made the multimedia installation *what futures are promised, what futures forgotten — Reading a Family Archive* (2021) [→ p. 61]. The forty-five photographs are taken from the private albums and collections of my family. They cover a period from 1930 to the 2000s. Most of them were photographed by my grand-uncle Erich Franken, an amateur

photographer. Enlarged and freed from their nostalgic jagged edges, specific details and signs of use become clearly visible. The photographs reveal the spirit of the times, tastes, political attitudes, and everyday life. I combined the photographs on ten panels to create new connections. Sheets of colored, transparent Plexiglas allude to a display but do not overlay the panels as a whole. Instead, they highlight a section of an image in some places and establish relationships between two images in others. In doing so, they intervene in the documentary character of the photographs. Transparent, colorless Plexiglas surfaces join the photographs. They refer to the numerous empty spaces: missing photographs but also what has not been photographed. These empty spaces also allow the viewer to fill them with their own stories. Two videos in which I leaf through five family albums without commentary complement the photo panels. This autobiographical work is about recovering unrealized possibilities in one's own biography that always go beyond the self because they reach into historical, political, and geographical dimensions. The chosen arrangement stays incomplete, fragmentary, and fragile allowing for some of the ghosts from the past to appear.

In this book, both installations are presented as image-text spreads. They are accompanied by a third work, the two photographs entitled *Contaminated Landscapes* [→ p. 49]. One of them is a still taken from *Westerwald: A Visitation* showing the destroyed forest after a storm. The second photograph is a close-up of a washed cement wall taken in the corner of a stall. It shows its grainy surface with its repaired parts.

The two photographs and both installations were shown for the first time together in the solo show *Contaminated Landscapes* at Camera Austria in Graz in November 2021. There they were exhibited together with original photos by August Sander including the portrait of the Horns from 1912. The curator, Reinhard Braun, refers to the exhibition in his text, interpreting "visitation" as a space for spectres to manifest. This can happen through the active role of the spectator but also through the active part that those photographed play in creating a photo. Ariella Azoulay calls this the "civil contract of photography." In her text, the

author and film programmer Madeleine Bernstorff undertakes a close reading of the video installation *Westerwald: A Visitation*. Bernstorff reflects and interprets the choice of motifs, montage, and narrative. She establishes relationships to biographical searches for traces in Recha Jungmann's 1979 film *Etwas tut weh* (Something hurts) or Thomas Heise's documentary *Heimat ist ein Raum aus Zeit* (Heimat is a space in time, 2019). In addition, she takes the photograph of the death mask of August Sander's son Erich, which briefly flashes up in *Westerwald: A Visitation*, as an occasion for an excursus on his anti-fascist resistance and the role of photography in it.

The reflection on my work is deepened in the text "what can be seen and what is in the shadows." This is a revision of a conversation that the photo curator Linda Conze and I had in the context of the exhibition *After August Sander* at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen in January 2022, where the video installation *Westerwald: A Visitation* and the two photographs *Contaminated Landscapes* were shown. The conversation presents the background and decision-making processes of artistic production and research. It also reflects both of our perspectives on August Sander's photographic work, that of my great-uncle's amateur photography, as well as my approach and access to it.

In my text contribution "On Margins, Peasants, and Privileges," I undertake a questioning of August Sander's photographic method by relating it to contemporaneous artistic and image-systematizing methods at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. My particular focus is on Sander's series of peasants and the extent to which the fraying edges of the commissioned photographs give us insight into his working method. In the text, I also ask what it would mean if we understood the depicted and their descendants not as objects but as equal actors and how this touches on the controversial question of provenance.

With contributions by architect Kerstin Faber and artists Åsa Sonjasdotter, Jumana Manna, and Marwa Arsanios, there is a geographical expansion into contexts as diverse as Thuringia, southern Sweden, Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, Syria, and southern Colombia. Drawing on her experiences during the International Building Exhibition in Thuringia, architect Kerstin Faber examines how the relationship between city and country has changed over the past hundred years in the wake of increasing industrialization. She presents concrete current projects and describes how they act locally and cooperate with each other to respond to social needs, climate change, and the demands of global capital markets. Artist Åsa Sonjasdotter's text takes a look at seed standardization in Sweden at the end of the nineteenth century. Sonjasdotter shows how the pure-line inbreeding method developed at that time was connected with fascist ideology in Sweden and Germany, and yet has since become the standard in the global seed production market. Sonjasdotter contrasts this monocultural standardization with a resistant practice that emerged in 2004 from an association of farmers and plant breeders in the association Allkorn in southern Sweden. They have found a legal loophole to grow their own seeds and exchange them among themselves. And so, with their seed production and its exchange, they are again in close contact with the concrete local conditions under which they grow.

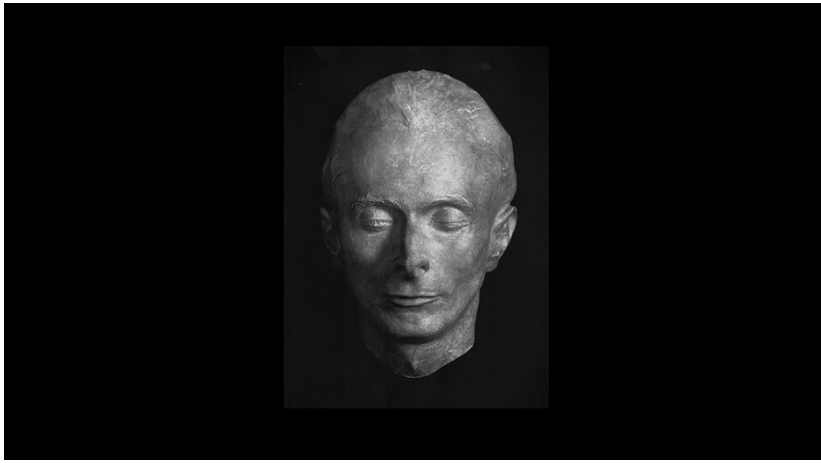
Jumana Manna's contribution also focuses on seeds, but in the geopolitical context of Syria and Lebanon. She highlights the various national and international political influences since the 1970s, including the support by President Hafez al-Assad to establish the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) nearby Aleppo in 1977: a seed bank that records seeds from regions as far apart as Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Ethiopia. Here, too, the industrialization of agriculture and seemingly more resistant seed production has led to homogenization. Paradoxically, ICARDA archives the diversity of seeds, which has already disappeared in most fields. In her contribution, Jumana Manna shows how capitalism, war, and revolution intervene in the processes of agriculture and how farmers or migrants in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley deal with this in their everyday lives. Her text was written in the course of her research for the film *Wild Relatives* (2018).

As we can see throughout these contributions, ecologies are part of serious human changes of the planetary ecosystem of the so-called Anthropocene and Capitalocene. Therefore, the term "ecology" includes precarious relations, toxic interactions, or catastrophic dynamics. Rural production operates in the complex fabric of human and non-human life, between state regulations and regional as well as global market structures and other local players and influences. In her contribution, the artist Marwa Arsanios introduces the concept of the utopian image as a reaction to the unsustainable economic system. The utopian image she evokes belongs to many spaces, is a twirl, belongs to the many ideologies that it adapts and adopts. She says "This liquid image-to-come is an image in movement." She sees this utopia embodied, for example, in the resistant practice of indigenous seed guardians in South Colombia. Even if they have lost their language, their resistance lies in the preservation of their own seeds in order to live a life independent of transnational corporations, governments, and paramilitaries. Marwa Arsanios's video *Who is afraid of Ideology? Part 4 First version* (2021) shot in South Colombia and Lebanon deals with this. It was shown at Archive in December 2021 in the film program *Contested Landscapes*, together with Jumana Manna's *Wild Relatives* and other films. To contextualize my practice at the exhibition at Archive in Milan, the film scholar Anna Maria Licciardello selected two films: *Blues. Cronache del sentimento politico* (1976) by Anna Lajolo and Guido Lombardi and *Pages of Natural History* (2019) by Margherita Malerba. In her text, she describes how Margherita Malerba captures the landscape in Northern Tuscany: abandoned houses, villages, and factories left behind during the twentieth century and now reduced to ruins. In these places, like an archaeologist, Margherita Malerba has collected the remains, the "shards," of those who lived in those houses. The experimental film by Anna Lajolo and Guido Lombardi combines three different protagonists all located in the rural context: an elderly farmer who describes nature from a perspective that today we would call ecological, a group of friends and comrades celebrating a birthday and two former antifascist partisans who had

fought during Second World War. As Licciardello writes, all of the characters embody an attitude of otherness from the dominant culture and politics that also reverberates in the film's formal choice with its open and hybrid form. Both films are linked to my work in manifold ways and, at the same time, they connect through an understanding of listening as an active practice.

Westerwald: Eine Heimsuchung (A Visitation)
Sandra Schäfer

1



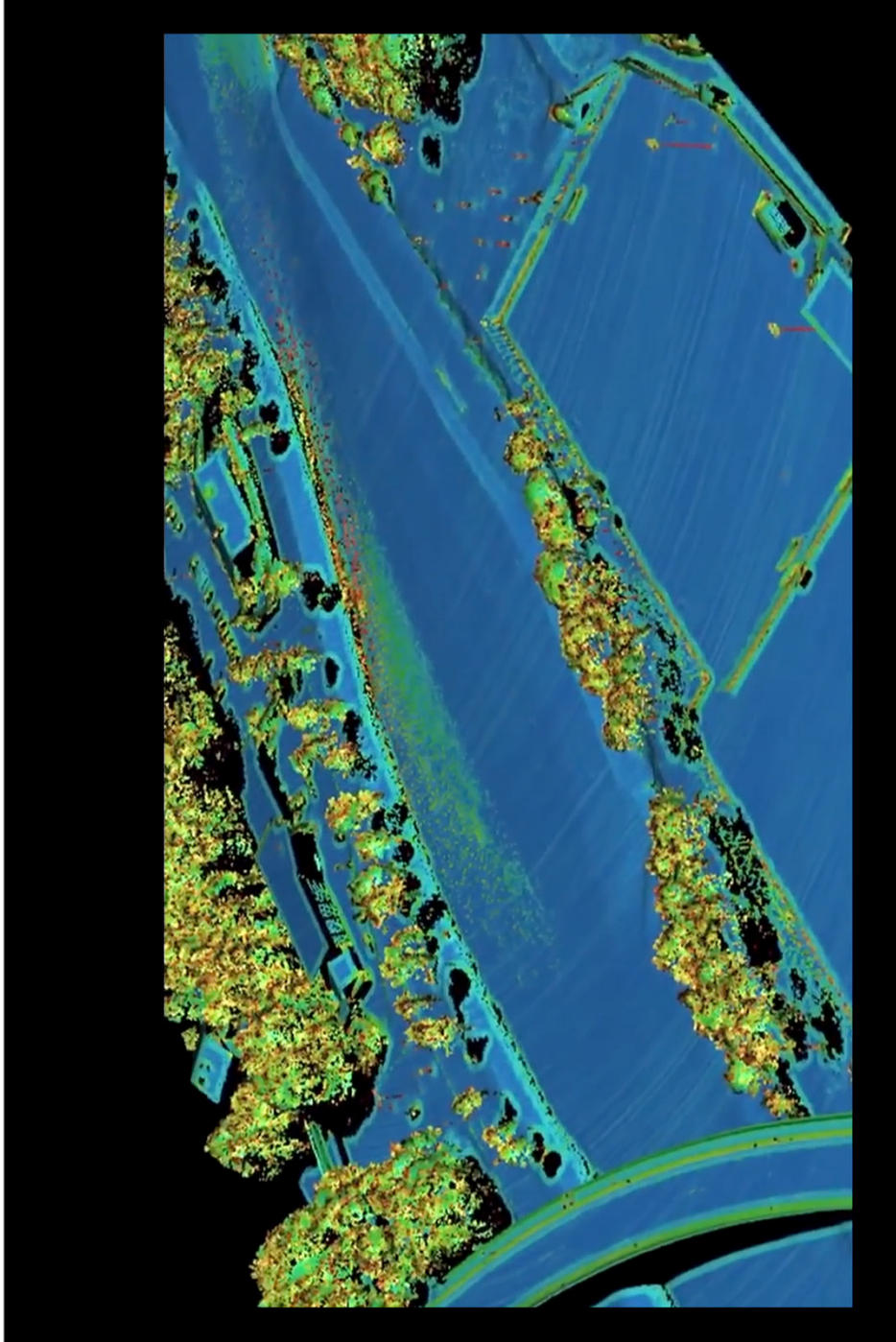
Thomas Seelig But of course the landscape was shaped by a great deal of physical work. And I don't think you can see the portrait works without the landscape. And vice versa. He really always thought of them together.

Sandra Schäfer The idea of the cultivated landscape also emerged at this time at the beginning of the 20th century. Which also relates to the way in which human traces are inscribed in the

landscape. He was also very interested in this in the portraits. That which is written in faces, postures, and poses. And I think that he was also continuously searching for this in his photographs of the landscape. Even if he took a very distanced and objective position, photographically.

2

Elfriede Bitzer This is a picture of my sister Henni, the oldest sister. And here it says—written by my oldest sister: "Sander photo, Hertha Land née Bitzer. Photographed by August Sander for half a pound of butter, 1946." This isn't a typical Sander photograph, but that's what my sister wrote on the back.



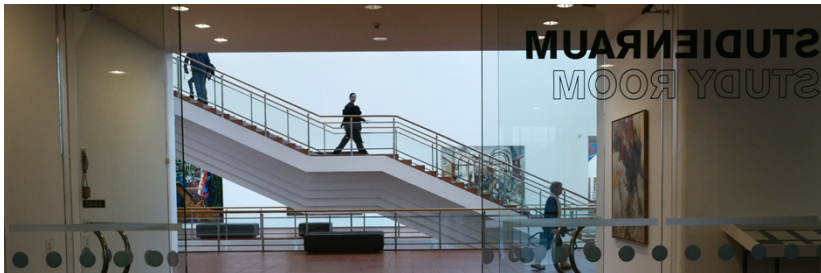
EB Günther gave me this portfolio in honour of our friendship. I used to drive him everywhere. I photographed them and sent these photographs to Frau Conrath-Scholl. And when I came to Cologne, Frau Conrath-Scholl was beside herself. I didn't want to give them away because I was greedy. Then they went up for auction at Sotheby's …

Sandra Schäfer Sotheby's, yes.

EB It took a long time. My nephew had much to do with Paris and all that … So that's when I got 63,000 Euros. I was a rich woman. And then I used the money to remodel my flat and make it age-appropriate. Especially in the garden, so that I could turn my car around without damage.

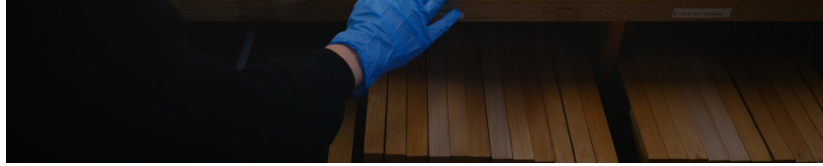
EB I loved this so much and always had it hanging in my living room. But I'm still fond of it. As if hushed in prayer, the man was silent, greying. Clear-eyed, a prophet, looking forwards and backwards. Blessing the tree trunks all around, I saw him spread his hands. But in the treetops it was like a greeting from old times. And that was also a story of my forefathers, who loved the forest. We had a lot of forest. And that's why Herr Sander always went into the forest and took the photographs of our family there.

3



STUDIENRAUM
STUDY ROOM

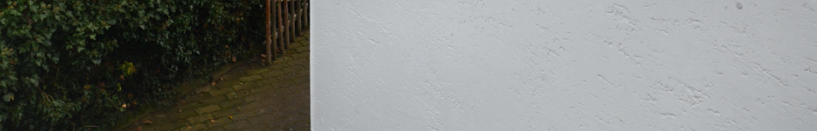
VORSICHT
GEKNICKT



Sandra Schäfer This is my great-great-grand aunt, together with her husband Adam. What role does this photograph play in the context of August Sander's work? How do you interpret it?

Miriam Szwast For me this picture is interesting, like other early photographs by August Sander that were commissioned works. They were actually intended as portraits for the family and didn't initially aim to be anything beyond that. And later Sander included them in his major work *People of the 20th Century*. He turned what was originally commissioned work into something that is a conceptual piece.

4



Karl Horn Should I start? This is a picture of my great-grandparents. Adam Horn was originally from Ingelbach, which isn't far from here. And his wife, Katharina, whose maiden name was Schäfer, was originally from here, from Isert.

Marlise Horn You can see that these hands are worn down. These people worked very hard. And they dressed in their finest clothes and went to the forest up there with the photographer. It was also a big deal for them to be photographed.

KH When Adam Horn came to Isert, the entire field had been divided up through a partible inheritance. So he went to work in the mines. And he didn't like that. Then he bought a horse and started hauling. Iron ore, too. That must have been very hard work. And you can only load a horse with so many tonnes. Petersbach—that was the name of the mine—was the only place to find work. And so many people, including Katharina's siblings, worked in the mining industry.

5

Elfriede Zimmermann There was a very dark staircase that went up to where he lived. And something was glowing at the top of the stairs. For us it was a hideous face. We were later told it was the death mask of his son, who was killed by the Nazis.

Marlene Gauss You have to view all of this in the context of that time. For everyone here it was just a matter of surviving and leaving the war behind.

MG After his wife passed away, he would have lunch at our house. Sander was given the head of the table, which was covered with a white tablecloth. I don't know if that was something he requested. I don't think so. But he didn't object. I still have this very clear picture in my mind: him at the head of the table with the white tablecloth.

EZ In 1957 none of the villagers sent their children to school. I'm sure he set our father on that path. Think of the school fees. Father worked as a carpenter in the mornings. He came home, jumped on the tractor, and did farming on the side. And in the evenings off to the workshop. He had to work very hard to earn his money. And we only spoke Platt.

MG Just to go a little deeper here. There was this pressure: you have to achieve this. You wanted to succeed. On the other hand,

it also made us outsiders in the village. As someone who was raised in a village, you're surely familiar with this. Along the lines of: "They want to be something better."

MG If you consider the structure of agrarian life, in our childhood 40 percent of people lived from farming. Even if it was only part-time farming. Dairy farming, grains, potatoes: this was people's livelihood. And for decades now, nothing. The houses are empty. The children are gone. And then strangers move in. Today everyone thinks: I don't need other people anymore. Everyone does their own thing. You watch television for entertainment. You no longer walk through the village, you drive.

6

SAMMLUNG SCHACK
ORIGINALE ERLEBEN
PINAKOTHEK DER MODERNE
ORIGINALE ERLEBEN
NEUE PINAKOTHEK
ORIGINALE ERLEBEN

DER BAUER
AUGUST SANDER • LICHTBILDNER
KÖLN • LINDENTHAL

Simone Förster For me there's something very private about this portrait. It's actually not very representative. Also because there are these utensils at the edge of the picture that could have been left out. In a way they're a distraction and are evidence, of a private life. We can only speculate as to why this photograph was taken indoors. Maybe this woman had difficulty getting up or didn't want to—was bound to the chair, as it were.

7

Silke Augst There are many reasons why farmers are increasingly taking to the streets. Along with Switzerland and Austria, we produce food of the highest standard. At the same time, we're compared with other producers who have nowhere near the same amount of restrictions. We can't compete with this global market. That's one point. And then there's also this public image that has formed in recent years.

SA It was a political decision for farms to get bigger and bigger. And suddenly it's no longer desirable. And people want more regional food and more nature and animal welfare. Yet the food needs to be cheap, and that just doesn't go together. So we can produce lots of things—maybe not everything—but it comes at a price.

Matthias Augst If we still milked the cows in the milking parlour, it would easily take an hour of milking. Plus another half hour to clean up. And that's every morning and every evening. If you want to do it right, it's every twelve hours. Anyone who's less precise about the time isn't necessarily doing their animals any good. I haven't looked at the clock tonight, but I was with the animals themselves for about 30 minutes. And in that time I managed to do pretty much everything.

MA Our old dairy was also ostensibly organized as a cooperative. But nowadays with the big cooperative dairies, this is just a façade. And the big players rule the show. It isn't uncommon for an entity like Aldi to buy a large company, with or without a straw man. When this happens, they have the raw material. And if they do it often enough and get over 50 percent. Then they're in command of that material.

Exhibition *Contaminated Landscapes* by Sandra Schäfer
at Camera Austria, December 11, 2021 — February 27, 2022

Works

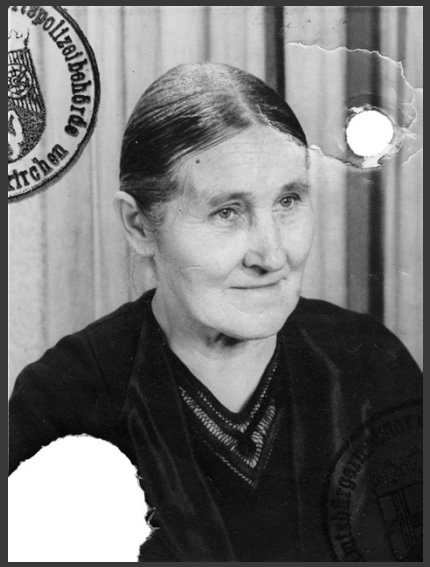
***Westerwald: Eine Heimsuchung* (A Visitation)**
2-channel video installation, 4K to HD, 43:40 min, 2021

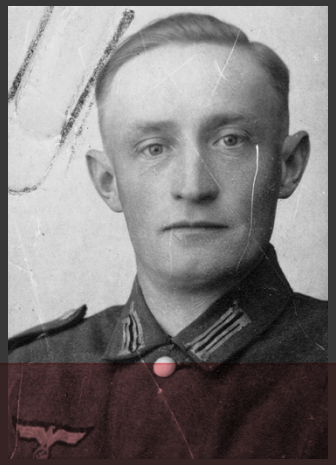
what futures are promised, what futures are forgotten
— Reading a Family Archive
45 b/w prints (variable sizes), 3 color prints (variable sizes),
Plexiglas (variable sizes and colors), Gabon blockboard,
untreated steel, 2 looped videos, 6 postcards with image and text

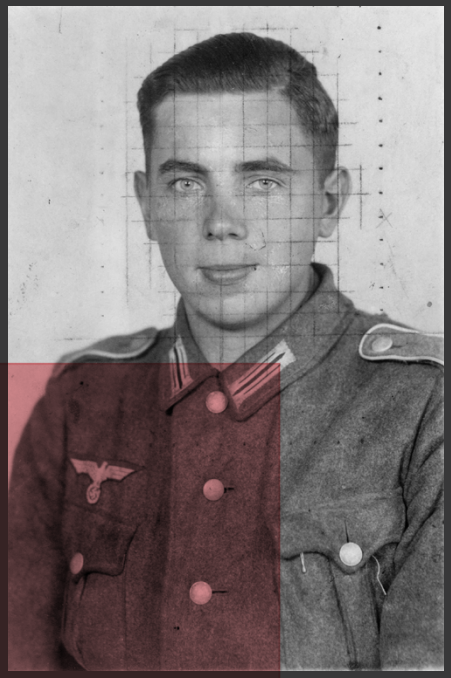
Contaminated Landscapes
2 digital prints, 90 cm × 160 cm, maple frame


Panasonic

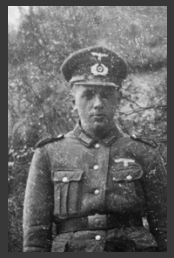
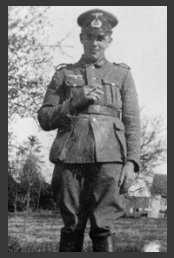
what futures are promised, what futures are forgotten
— Reading a Family Archive
Sandra Schäfer





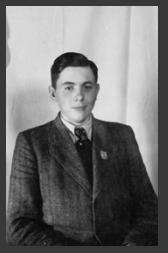


The grandfather was a convinced National Socialist. Statements in his letters to the grandmother testify to this, as does the half-torn photo album, which shows photographs taken by the official press photographer Herbert Ahrens in 1943. An uncle recounts that after all the experiences of war and captivity, the grandfather underwent a change of heart. He was delighted when his son was exempted from the German military service and is then characterized as a pacifist by the uncle.

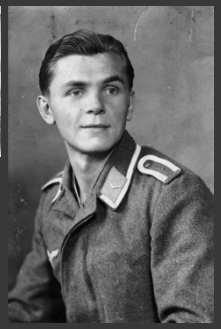






Looking at the photo wall in my studio, a friend's seven-year-old son asks about why so many of the men wear uniforms in the photographs. As I try to answer this simple question, I begin to falter. I can't take a look at the passport photos of the young men in uniforms and the photos of posing with other Wehrmacht soldiers without recalling the images that are not on display here. The looted villages during the military campaigns, the murdered people. The male relatives saw all of that and participated in it. It becomes obvious that what is visible in the photographs is not necessarily to be trusted—so what was left out?





The secret duplication of Wehrmacht photographs in the photo lab was a resistant practice to gather evidence of war crimes committed by the Wehrmacht. Libertas Schulze-Boysen, a member of the "Rote Kapelle" who worked at the German Cultural Film Center (Deutsche Kulturfilmzentrale) of the Reich Ministry of Propaganda, was one of them. However, photo companies in Warsaw also made duplicate prints of photographs and sent them to, for example, the government-in-exile in London.

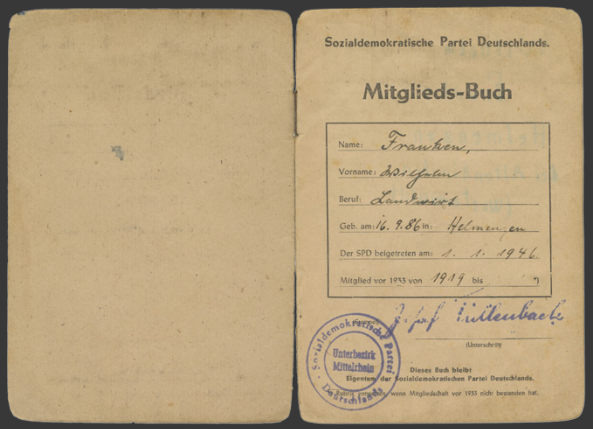
I have looked at this photograph with the grandmother many times. As always, she mentioned the names of the people in the photograph and described their activity.

Not until late I notice the parked military vehicles in the background. When I ask her about them, she talks about the US soldiers settling in in May 1945. Knowing the date, the photo suddenly takes on a different meaning: it marks the end of the war. The granduncle, who shortly before had jumped off the American prisoner transport in a village 15 kilometers away, overwrites his previous involvement in the war as a Wehrmacht soldier with his civilian clothes.

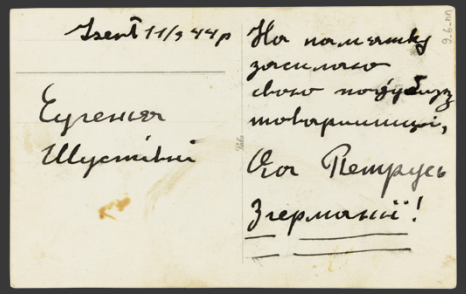
69

68

Hildesheim
1940
1938



I am puzzled by the great-grandfather's membership card in the "Kyffhäuserbund," a National Socialist apron organization in 1934, as it contradicts his party membership in the SPD (German socialist party) before and after National Socialism. Perhaps it was a strategy to escape NSDAP membership and thus represented the lesser evil?



While going through the photographs, I come across two postcards with the image of a person I don't know. On the back of one of the postcards there is a text in Ukrainian. It is Olga Petrus, who worked as a forced laborer on the father's farm in the 1940s, alongside the stable boy Remmy. After the end of World War II, she stayed for two more years. Being a child at the time, the father describes her as accommodating and a self-evident part of the family.

Research has shown that forced laborers have only been able to receive compensation from the German state in the form of a one-time payment since 2000. Polish citizens were paid by the pension insurance institution in Poland. Research into Olga Petrus's later whereabouts was without any result.

One reverse side of the postcards reads:

Isert, 11.09.1944	As a souvenir I send
	[greetings] from Germany
Eugenia	to my comrades
Schusteri	by your friend
	Olga Petrus!

[This translation represents an approximation, as the handwriting is illegible in some parts]

The grand cousin Ulrike falls in love with Marino, who works as a guest worker in wine cultivation in Marienthal on the Ahr in the late 1950s. In 1964, Ulrike moves to Marino's hometown in Alliste in southern Italy, where they grow olives and potatoes. Among the family, it is the mother who supports Ulrike's decision from the very beginning and who maintains an affectionate friendship. Summer family vacations regularly led to Alliste.






In the 1970s, the grandmother complains about the miserable milk prices. Selling the extra milk to the cooperatives was an important part of their income. However, it was no longer profitable: at the end of the 1970s, the grandparents sell their last cows to the neighboring industrial farmer.

CONTAMINATED LANDSCAPES

Reinhard Braun

Soon after the German photographer August Sander established his studio in Cologne in 1910, he started traveling to the nearby Westerwald region on a regular basis, taking pictures there for over four decades. The resulting compilation, which includes 2,500 negatives and was originally called a "Peasant Archive," is today located in the photographic collection of the SK Stiftung Kultur in Cologne, along with Sander's estate as a whole. The archive encompasses numerous individual and group portraits, as well as landscape shots, and it displays many links to the project he started in the 1920s, *People of the 20th Century*, which ultimately established his importance in the history of photography. The paths of the family of the artist Sandra Schäfer and those of the famous German photographer cross in this geographic region of Germany—a rural area, shaped by farming culture and mining. In an album belonging to the artist's great uncle, the name Hilgenroth appears on the back of a photograph; this village is situated in close proximity to Kuchhausen, where Sander resided from 1944 until shortly before his death in 1964.The artist's family was also photographed by Sander; today these pictures are still privately held.

One channel of the video *Westerwald: Eine Heimsuchung* (A Visitation), 2021, shows Schäfer visiting relatives and neighbors to talk about these photographs, how they were created, and what they meant. Hard work fills the conversation, but also landscapes and forests; outdoor portraits were also done, yet always with people posing for the camera. Further, the landscapes rendered by Sander seem to be shaped by physical labor—they are cultural landscapes—and sculpted by livestock farming and fields. *Heimsuchung* has more than two meanings here. What still ties the artist to this cultural and social milieu that she had perhaps tried to escape? Didier Eribon writes that "we are so much a product of the order of the social world that we ultimately end up reproducing it ourselves: even as we denounce it or on another level struggle to change it, we validate its legitimacy and

function." We are haunted by those specters that, as suppressed and repressed memories, secretly lead an undead life, only becoming "visible" as missing images in photo albums. Yet these specters also lead a dual life, as they reflect collectively experienced trauma and a yearning to forget or to change. So who is being haunted by whom, and when?

After the war, everyone was busy trying to survive and wanted to leave the war behind them, as is mentioned in one part of the video. *Kontaminierte Landschaften* (Contaminated Landscapes) projects these gaps and specters to the outside, into the public sphere, which in the Westerwald was and still is primarily experienced as *Landschaft* (landscape). Schäfer thus elaborates another form of visibility as well when it comes to these personal and collective gaps and also to the idea of the landscape itself: the second channel of the video shows the monocultural and automated, networked agriculture of the present day, making the album photos of livestock markets, Sander's landscape shots, and the portraits of "the peasants" seem like something that is nowadays only exploited for tourism advertising. Everything indeed revolves around questions of representation: who is doing the showing, what should actually be shown, and how have the contexts of this showing changed? The family portraits taken by August Sander present the families not in a chance constellation on the farm, but rather in their Sunday best. A bourgeois understanding of pictures here always overwrites the rural culture. Photographs of work in the fields or barns hardly exist at all in these images, or not until much later, and even the young farmers—recaptured again and again, in this case in a 1914 picture taken in the Westerwald as well—are seen dressed up for church on Sundays. Social bearing has been staged for the camera, canonized by the camera, and made a part of pictorial history, which much later will in turn become a part of art history. It's important to note that even a photographic endeavor lasting many years and considered to be of a documentary nature, like that of August Sander in the Westerwald, does not actually deliver pictures of a (social, political, cultural, or proletarian) reality. Instead, it subjects the construction of this reality to an already existing visual regime. In the 1920s, Walter Benjamin pointed out this circumstance with highly critical words:

> It [New Objectivity] becomes ever more nuancéd, ever more modern; and the result is that it can no longer record a tenement block or a refuse heap without transfiguring it. Needless to say, photography is unable to convey anything about a power station or a cable factory other than, "What a beautiful world!" For it has succeeded in transforming even abject poverty—by apprehending it in a fashionably perfected manner—into an object of enjoyment.

Yet even the family albums do not necessarily prove to be a "counter-archive" to this kind of aesthetic enjoyment that translates social reality into the pictorial form of a photograph or overwrites it in this way and establishes a canon of representation. There, too, day-to-day life is hardly present. People want to be remembered through portraits. City and landscape views from travels are found in the albums, usually devoid of people; the first drive on the autobahn has been documented. There are many group portraits taken on special occasions, at family celebrations, church days, or community festivities. Uniforms and swastikas appear and disappear again. The only pictures that might be called snapshots are found in an initially destroyed album belonging to the artist's grandfather. It documents a homecoming celebration for soldiers, featuring photos taken by Herbert Ahrens in May 1943 showing crowds of people. The pictures in the other albums are oddly arranged, the way it is in our own family albums. So, the specters have not actually disappeared from these archives—quite the contrary. Perhaps they are the very ones to force these acts of staging and to hamper change, all the while seeming to provide social stability. How to get the better of these specters? How to invent a visitation for them? Sandra Schäfer's journey back to the region of her childhood does not easily revive these specters, for their presence exists to "communicate to us that the hidden is, for us, very much alive and thwarts precisely those ever-incomplete forms of containment and suppression that are unceasingly directed at us" (Stephanie Damianitsch).

In the two-channel video *Westerwald: A Visitation*, certain details of interior spaces, or of the areas surrounding buildings or farms, are shown, such as gardens, tractors driving by, or livestock farming enhanced by new technology. As we watch the automatic milk machine do the milking, a farmer explains that, all in all, he spends half an hour a day with the cows. The people who are talking about the portraits of their family by August Sander are shown merely through the gestures they make while dealing with the images—gestures intended to bring distant memories to life. A forest seen in the background of a famous photo taken by Sander in the year 1912—called *Bauernpaar—Zucht und Ordnung* (Farmer Couple—Discipline and Order)—also appears in one of Schäfer's videos, yet this forest has meanwhile fallen victim to a storm, with a single tree left standing; a large-format print of this video still is part of the project *Contaminated Landscapes*. All of this work was preceded by the latter artist's visits to the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, the Ann and Jürgen Wilde Foundation of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, and the Museum Folkwang in Essen to view various originals by Sander. Schäfer's artistic investigations are based on the seen counters and analyses as elements which, however, do not lend themselves to constructing a cohesive history, because such a history never actually existed, as Sander's photographs have already shown: differences ranging from social, economic, and cultural to linguistic permeate this time in history and its representation, as is evident in every single photograph. Even landscape continues to be contaminated by these fragments of remembering and forgetting and to be populated by specters. This circumstance, the haunting of the hidden, which is ceaselessly directed against us, is perhaps first and foremost another example of the specters of photographic history itself. Allan Sekula exposed as an ideology that which in exhibition projects like Edward Steichen's *The Family of Man* (as of 1955) was celebrated as the universal language of photography. In Steichen's view, this universal nature of photography corresponded to another universalism: "It demonstrates that the essential unity of human experience, attitude and emotion are [sic] perfectly communicable through the medium of pictures.

The solicitous eye of the Bantu father, resting upon the son who is learning to throw his primitive spear in search of food, is the eye of every father, whether in Montreal, Paris, or in Tokyo." So, photography would be able to penetrate cultural distinctions and social differences in order to bring across the actual "essence" of "the human." Here, representation becomes a cynical ethics governing the photographic image that, as visual-political propaganda material, is meant to boost sales of Coca-Cola around the world. Yet this claim to cultural universalism could not be realized on even a few square kilometers of Germany during the first half of the twentieth century. After his wife died, Sander is pictured at lunch with his neighbors, sitting at the head of the table, the only one with a white tablecloth, an unmistakable sign of social distinction. So when Sandra Schäfer wonders how different fields and histories of images, knowledge, memory, and cultural habitus cross here, then it can perhaps only be said that even just marking the tangible fault lines of these reciprocal crossings seems tricky. A field of potential discursive closures that is both fixed and fragile arises through the clash of representational politics, the mutual diffusion of shared visual logics, the opposing canonizations (art, private snapshots), and ultimately Schäfer's point of artistic access, which intervenes in these orders and questions their "legitimacy and function."

These closures challenge each other, just as they are mutually dependent and set in motion by Schäfer. Yet perhaps such orders and functions are not in fact identifiable in the photographs themselves, at least not if the people rendered still remain what they have always been: the portrayed. It seems to me that this whole project by Sandra Schäfer invites us to reflect on how the individuals portrayed can be turned (even retrospectively) into protagonists (of their own story), and also to consider the stake they have always had in the images, what they have sought to appropriate through these images, how they have engaged with their own identity in these images, and thus what story they have tried to tell—or forget. The family albums are seen in two videos as an archive, with the artist leafing through the album pages. In addition, pictures from these albums are arranged

on ten panels, which were developed together with the graphic designer Wolfgang Schwärzler and ifau (Institut für angewandte Urbanistik, Berlin). The people populating these visual archives are extremely present in the space. Yet at the same time they appear to be the big absent ones in the project, especially because they are only present through the images. Such an ambivalent manifestation is reminiscent of exhibitions staged by earlier ethnological museums, with the intention of newly presenting their collection and making it accessible. It seems clear in retrospect that the individuals rendered in such post-ethnographic exhibitions were subject to a power that created these pictures, a power that we are used to calling colonial. The surveying, appraising, and classifying gaze of colonialism brought to life nothing more than colonialized (an usually nameless) bodies, or specters, who were subjected to a typology, made the subject of research, yet without being allowed an actual presence as subjects with their own history and culture. Maybe it is no coincidence that the artist, in her presentation, sought such proximity of form in order to make the visual archives of the Westerwald seem foreign to us in a new way, and also to seek within these archives a visual power of subjugation.

August Sander's endeavor to create a photo album of the typology of the German population, the famous *People of the 20th Century*, basically points in the same direction as classifications and categorizations—ultimately to normality and deviations—as Francis Galton, an English statistician and founder of eugenics, did investigate in his composite portraits about eighty years earlier. Sandra Schäfer's rearranging of the visual archives might well point in the direction of counteracting the order of the archive itself by interrelating pictures that might not have been pasted next to each other into the albums. As to the missing images, we can only speculate. Ultimately, it is not a matter of exchanging one order for another or playing them off against each other, as Schäfer's exhibition *Contaminated Landscapes* clearly shows, but of subverting the actual idea of order and putting instances of categorization into motion. If everything could have been different, then this history loses its unfolding exigency and

becomes the object of a material and political practice, as postulated by Marx and others. Then, however, the possibilities for agency also shift in the direction of those who posed for Sander's pictures, causing Sander's authorship to falter. The "visitation" would then need to be read from a different vantage point, for this would make it possible to grant the specters a place to manifest, or for us to think our way into the historical images or even fill them in. Ariella Azoulay calls this the "civil contract of photography," so as to strengthen the part of those involved in creating a photo. Maybe this "civil contract" harbors an opportunity to fundamentally decolonialize the history of photography, the history of archives, and our role in this history (in the images themselves and in being involved in researching these images)—if we move away from associating the act of colonization only with faraway lands to focus instead, very basically, on the state of subjugation under diverse regimes, including visual regimes. And perhaps it is not so far-fetched to start thinking about these archives, and thus about ourselves, as well,as being, in a certain sense, likewise colonized.

Bibliography

— Didier Eribon, *Gesellschaft als Urteil*. 2017 [2013]. Edition Suhrkamp, 63.

— Walter Benjamin, "Der Autor als Produzent" (1934). In Sven Kramer (Ed.), *Der Autor als Produzent. Aufsätze zur Literatur*. Reclam 2012, 228–249.

— Allan Sekula, "Der Handel mit Fotografien". In Herta Wolf (Ed.), *Paradigma Fotografie*. Suhrkamp 2003, 255–290, 275.

— Stephanie Damianitsch, *Thicket of Ideas. Thicket of Times*. Brochure for the exhibition with the same name. Akademie der bildenden Künste 2021, 10.

WHAT CAN BE SEEN AND WHAT IS IN THE SHADOWS

Linda Conze in conversation with Sandra Schäfer

Conze I am really delighted to talk to you about *Westerwald: Eine Heimsuchung* (A Visitation). We communicated sporadically while you were producing the work; I was allowed to view preliminary results and am fascinated by the form you ultimately came up with for the film. With this work, you set off on a search for traces in the Westerwald and explore August Sander's creative work, speaking with the protagonists of his photos. And you also deal with the history of the landscape, that is, with the forest and this entire region. You went there for an autobiographical reason. Your family history is connected to the Westerwald and to August Sander. What motivated your research and what expectations did you have at the onset?

Schäfer It was indeed a long-standing wish to realize a work in the Westerwald. I had previously worked in more distant geographical contexts, for example, in Lebanon and Afghanistan. However, in these works I was always also concerned with relating them to the context here, since I do not grasp them as separate. For the work in the Westerwald, I searched for an approach for a very long time: What does it mean to draw closer to a place, its history and landscapes, to which I am biographically attached? In the process of this search, I came upon photos by August Sander among private family photos. I was particularly interested in the photograph of my great-great-grand aunt Katharina, née Schäfer, and her husband Adam Horn, which is so prominently on display here in the collection exhibition of the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen. For it is hanging in the living room of the Horn family and is at the same one of the iconic photographs of the peasant portfolio, a part of August Sanders large, artistic concept work *People of the 20th Century*.

I am interested in the different ways of dealing with one and the same photo, in a family context and in an art context. That was how I got started. This photo is included in the collection

of Museum Ludwig, for example, and also in the collections of Museum Folkwang or the Stiftung Ann und Jürgen Wilde in the Pinakothek der Moderne. And it is now part of the collection acquired by the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen. At Museum Ludwig, the photograph is handled with gloves. But when Karl and Marlise Horn talk about the photo, they hold it in its old original frame with their bare hands.

C So, at issue is also that photography can only be understood in context and that its meaning can change massively depending on the circumstances in which it has an effect and is used. A picture that we perceive as an charged artwork in the museum becomes a mundane family portrait in the living room. In the interviews you conduct, you go back to the original contexts of Sander's photographs, to the people or their relatives for whom they were simply mementos—portraits meant to represent these persons. What was it like to see these pictures in a different context? Does one even see them as the same pictures that are hanging in museums and are reproduced in books?

S Yes, they are the same pictures. But I also find them different, because they are more yellowed.

C That is also a consequence of the different contexts. As family pictures, they were not treated as carefully in conservational terms.

S In the home of the Horn family, they are kept in the original frames and are quite yellowed. The woodstove is also standing right next to them, something that is by no means ideal for the photographs. Besides, the famous photo of Adam and Katharina Horn is grouped together with other portraits by August Sander that were made on the same day at the same place. And these pictures, in turn, are hanging alongside other, much more recent family photos. And when we then look at the same motif belonging to the acquired collection in the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, for instance, the print is much larger, with a more distinct black-and-white tone, hanging on the wall of a white cube and not on ingrain wallpaper. The house of the

Horn family is confined, small, an old farmhouse; it makes me read the photos in an entirely different way. In this respect, the photographs cannot be viewed independently of their context. Although the stance, the clarity, and the concentration lying in this moment of photographic encounter exists in both photos. And that is something I highly appreciate in August Sander's work: the people had to keep still for a long time, both sides let themselves in for this process. Nevertheless, I find that the photos appear more detached in the context of the museum. They lack the traces of everyday use, like dog ears, creases, labels, something which lets you sense how people lived with the photographs in a family context.

C The title of your work, *Heimsuchung* (Visitation), possesses a certain ambivalence. Between which poles does it vacillate?

S The term *Heimsuchung* describes the process of dealing with something, triggered by the presence of and the engagement with the specters of the past. The term is ambivalent for the reason that one is haunted by these specters that were suppressed, forgotten, marginalized, or are perhaps quite visible but not easy to discern. And so, in the German word *Heimsuchung*, there are allusions to the words *heimlich* (secret), *unheimlich* (uncanny) and *Heim* (home). They therefore contain what is familiar but also the moment in which the familiar becomes or has become alien. One cannot elude *Heimsuchung*, but in the best case it can release energy that leads to engaging with something. And that is the process I let myself in for together with the protagonists.

C There is a sequence in the film in which the protagonist Mrs. Bitzer talks about how she had a portfolio of Sander photographs that she received as a gift from a friend auctioned at Sotheby's after the death of her husband. She used the proceeds to have her small home converted in an age-appropriate way. This story is touching. Occasionally, one has to smile to oneself, because of the Westerwald idiom alone. But the sequence actually leads to the core of the economic and social relations connected with the medium of photography as an object of the art market and to the specific history of Sander in the Westerwald. Through the eyes of your interviewees, we see Sander as the urbanite coming to a rural region and encountering a social fabric shaped by farming. How did you experience the theme of habitual and economic differences in your research? In what relationship do the people you talked with stand today to the photographs and also the figure of Sander?

S There are different persons who are biographically connected to Sander in different ways. For example, the two sisters, Marlene Gauss and Elfriede Zimmermann, stood in a friendly relationship to August Sander. After August Sander's wife had died early, he often visited the Gauss family and also ate lunch there.

C The daughters of the Gauss family sometimes helped in the darkroom, right? What I found exciting about this story is that one of the sisters said that they squandered a lot of films, which did not seem to bother Sander. In view of economic issues, that is an interesting statement: Photographic material was expensive at the time and photography a valuable commodity in monetary terms. For many people, it was not a matter of course to have a portrait made of themselves.

S I was impressed by the fact that August Sander taught this young girl how to work in the darkroom and tolerated "squander." He also made an effort that the two girls could attend an academic high school, which was by no means a matter of course at the time, especially not for girls, and what is more, girls from a village. And this makes the class difference visible. Even if August Sander initially came from this milieu, he took a different biographical path and returned to the Westerwald as a bourgeois person, with entirely different knowledge that he then shared. For example, he helped Elfriede Zimmermann collect an assortment of plants, when she at first had no idea how to do this school assignment.

Mrs. Bitzer, in turn, was only in occasional contact with August Sander, but she was a close friend of Günther Freigang, who played an important role in the calligraphic design of Sander's portfolios. So, there was a lot of production in the background that involved other people. Sander's wife also participated, something which is often forgotten. It is interesting that Günther Freigang did calligraphic design also in the context of the church. Here, a traditional, crafts-oriented understanding of design meets a contemporary artistic idea.

Then I was interested in how people talk about the photographs. The Horn family, for example, immediately talks about work in regard to the portrait of Adam and Katharina Horn. About the inheritance relationship of gavelkind and why it was hard to live solely off the land, the reason why Adam Horn first worked in a mine and then as a wagoner. So, he was never only a farmer, but also a worker.

C That fits to a scene in your film in which it is said that Sander was actually like a foreign body in the village,

where everyone was just trying to survive with back-breaking work in agriculture or the mines.

Since the conception of the human is at issue in the exhibition here at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Siegen as well as in Sander's oeuvre, I would be interested in the reason why you decided not to show the faces of the protagonists in your film.

S That was a deliberate decision, because on the one side I find the hands in Sander's portraits very eye-catching. As so I show the hands that show something, for example. There are parts of the body that can be seen. But at the same time, I wanted to place the focus on listening and not so much on what a person looks like. There is one exception, though: In several shots, farmers can be seen working at the farm. Besides, I also show the photographs, the interior spaces, the locations. So, it was not my intention to directly transfer Sander's working method to the present, which in my view is not possible anyway.

C Since you just mentioned the farmers you filmed at work—you also include the current landscape with them in your film. What arises in this context is the topos of modernity that purportedly torpedoed the countryside idyll. In the interview, one of the farmers criticizes that people today only drive by car through the village: people don't greet each other in the street anymore. What motivated you to talk to present-day farmers?

S August Sander portrayed farmers whose daily lives were entirely different at the time. I was interested in what the everyday life of farmers looks like today. In this regard, I found the Augst family and their farmstead exemplary, because they come from smaller subsistence farming and then went through different development stages with the farm. For example, there was land consolidation leading to larger fields. A policy was enforced that was no longer interested in subsistence agriculture. This led to newly established farmsteads outside of the villages that produced on a larger scale. And I was interested in this daily life, also in the role that machines play. Although the farmers act very

locally with their cultivation, they simultaneously act within a global economy. The presented farm mainly produces milk and grain. But milk can partially be imported cheaper from other countries. And then there are EU policies whose guidelines have a concrete impact on the daily life and production of the farmers.

At the same time, many people are alienated from agricultural work, even though they grew up and live in the countryside. For this reason, Silke Augst, for example, is engaged with public relations to explain what agricultural work looks like. Currently, a lot is being foisted off on the farmers. That is why I found it important to include their everyday life.

C Agriculture, and thus the cultural landscape, appears in two respects: you juxtapose your own filmed images of fields and forests with technological image material that is, at first sight, puzzling and forms a sharp contrast. How did you come upon this image material, and what is it about?

S As to the production of images, I span a temporal range of one century with my video installation. From the indexical impression of the death mask via the analog photography of August Sander all the way to digital image production and LiDAR technology. The second channel of the video installation presents a five-minute loop that, as opposed to the main film lasting 44 minutes, is repeated a number of times. Along with agricultural landscapes in the Westerwald, the loop shows images created with LiDAR technology. LiDAR sends laser impulses and decodes the light dispersed back through the atmosphere. In this way, surfaces are scanned and distances and/or molecular densities are measured. This technology is used, for example, in the area of self-driving cars or tractors and was mainly researched and developed in the agricultural sector. In addition to being employed in self-driving vehicles, it also serves to assess tree damage in forests or the development of crops using drones flying over these areas. The video recordings that I use in my video installation are didactic videos explaining to the users how the technology works. In this scanning method, no images are produced anymore, instead, data is read and evaluated. This data-generated, imageless

process thus radically replaces the indexical image of analog photography from the beginning of the twentieth century.

C Did you consciously decide not to include landscape pictures by August Sander in your film? The film is indeed mainly about Sander's portraits.

S There is one landscape photo by August Sander in my video installation; the curator Thomas Seelig of Museum Folkwang speaks about it. At issue are the traces of human labor in the landscape: How strongly is it shaped and belabored by humans? What is Sander's perspective on this? What focus does he choose? I in fact studied many of Sander's landscape photographs and did research at the places he shot them. There are highly unusual pictures that I at first did not associate with August Sander at all: detail studies dedicated to light, shadow, and structure. In the exhibition at Camera Austria in Graz, I presented two landscape photos by August Sander and combine them with my photographic works.[→ p. 50] In my video installation, I had to be more focused.

C In one landscape shot appearing in your film, Sander explicitly views the landscape as cultural landscape. This gives rise to a nice tension with the sequence in your film that is about Sander's garden, and one of your interview partners says that he only cultivated autochthonous plants, meaning wildflowers that have always grown in the region independently of humans. Here, the topos of the original and untouched pops up after all, something which has partially shaped the historical reception of Sander. In my view, your film is also about the relationship between photography, history, and suppression. In what ways did you encounter suppression in the conversations you had? How do people talk about the relationship between suppression and photography?

S The two sisters, Marlene Gauss and Elfriede Zimmermann, talk about suppression in the postwar period, when it was all about getting back on one's feet. But in the portraits that I looked at with the protagonists, fascism hardly appears, although it does in other photos by August Sander. That is why at the very beginning, a picture can be seen that is a bit disturbing: the death mask of Erich Sander, August Sander's son. He was active in the anti-fascist resistance, arrested, and incarcerated in the Siegburg penitentiary, where he died shortly before the end of the war because he was not treated in time by the physicians. That really upset August Sander.

A bit later in my video installation, the Gauss sisters say that, as children, they interpreted the death mask in the hallway as a grotesque face. Only later did they learn that it was the death mask of August Sander's son who was murdered by the National Socialists. And I, in turn, found that this was a moment in which

National Socialism bursts into everyday life and the narration of silence is broken open. In the photos by August Sander in the various family contexts, the theme of fascism was not as visible as in this case. Even though it then, of course, became part of his work *People of the 20th Century*. There is a second piece of mine currently on view at Camera Austria, *what futures are promised, what futures are forgotten—Reading a Family Archive*, that deals with the private photos of my family. And fascism is visible there in a different way.

C In your exhibition at Camera Austria, you integrate the private photo archive of your family, adding a further layer to your work. How does this photo archive relate to your engagement with Sander? After all, the pictures are of a totally different nature.

S They are different pictures, but they are not to be understood as a counter-archive. In the private family albums, there are also staged photographs, a zeitgeist is reflected. Something that is also the case with Sander, by the way, and is revealed in his categorizations, for instance. And there are also many gaps and omissions.

Many people are probably familiar with this from older family albums, pages on which photographs are missing. Of course, when looking at them today, I ask myself: Which photos are missing and for what reason? Or which pictures were not even taken in the first place? What are these voids, really? And therefore, I take up the voids in my display in the form of colorless, transparent Plexiglas panels that are inserted in the sequence of photos. They refer to missing photographs, but also to what was not photographed or what I did not select. But the voids also allow the viewers to fill in their own stories. So, what I was concerned with in the exhibition was to establish relations that have not been established in this manner in the past. And at the same time, to propose a reading that as a possible line remains discernible in its fragmentary character.

For example, on one panel we see two studio photographs of Olga Petrus that simultaneously exist as postcards. These postcards popped up at one point during my research. I had never

seen them before and asked my parents: who is this person? And then my father told me that it was Olga Petrus who, in the 1940s, had worked on his father's farm. She was one of the forced laborers deported to the Westerwald. And she wrote a postcard to her female friends, probably in Poland at the time. In these postcards, I today also read a gesture of self-empowerment. Olga Petrus is well dressed and had this self-portrait made in a studio to remain in contact with her friends in Poland. At the same time, I set these photographs in relation to the death mask of Erich Sander and to the portraits of family members in National Socialist uniforms.

C For the presentation of the private archive, you strongly altered the format of the pictures. What was your reason? What is actually characteristic of everyday photos is that their format is oriented mainly toward their usability. The pictures are supposed to be pasted in albums or fit on the passports or, as in this case, be sent as a postcard. You strongly alienate these pictures in the exhibition display by altering the size.

S The postcards are usually 10×15 centimeters, and the photos from the 1930s and 1940s are even smaller and often have serrated edges. I collaborated with the graphic designer Wolfgang Schwärzler, and we decided to omit the serrated edges because we wanted to free them of their object character and instead focus on the selected picture itself. That is also the reason why we enlarged them. The result was that elements like the floral pattern in the background of the portrait of Olga Petrus, which

we didn't even notice beforehand, suddenly became visible. Or this photograph from 1945: In the foreground, you see my great uncle in civilian clothes driving the cows to the pasture with my great-grandmother; in the background there are military vehicles of the National Socialists that can hardly be seen in the small picture, but that prompted me to ask my grandmother, when the picture was precisely taken. It turned out that the photo was shot shortly after the end of the war, when the Allies were already in the village. My great uncle, a former Wehrmacht soldier, had jumped from a prisoner truck shortly beforehand and can now be seen here in civvies. His everyday clothes overwrite his former membership in the Wehrmacht. So, the photo marks a radical break in time, but as perceived in everyday life. The picture can only be deciphered with the help of an accidental detail in the background and the knowledge that goes with it.

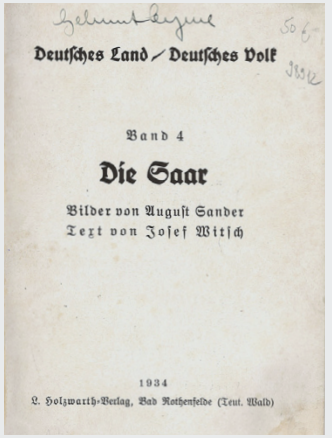
That is also why there are seven postcards with a text on the reverse side that contextualize some of the photographs on the panels. We additionally worked with transparent colored Plexiglas panels. They cite a display, but do not cover the panel in its entirety. Instead, in some places they highlight a section of a picture, in others they establish relations between two pictures. They intervene in the documentary character of the photographs and simultaneously refer to my perspective from the present.

C You say that the civilian clothes of your great uncle and the military vehicles in the background mark a radical break in time. I would say that what is revealed here is less a break than a creeping in of change in and *through* the medium of photography. It becomes clear how adequate the medium of photography is to integrate caesuras, as the end of the war or the arrival of the Allies appear to us retrospectively, in biographical narrations that are not *interrupted*, but continue. When looking back today, we might say: at this point, at the end of the breach of civilization, if you like, the album should actually come to an end and the remaining pages should remain empty. But because photography always also produces a surplus, because things appear

in the picture that were not in focus, changes can be narrated alongside in the background—in this case literally. Photography is capable of absorbing changing political and social circumstances, at first latently.

And conversely, one could also say that photography is very adaptable when considering, for example, that the photographs by Sander remained showable and publishable during the time of National Socialism as well. So, the medium nestles up to the demands of the respective time, while simultaneously showing great persistence.

S During National Socialism, August Sander edited books on certain regions, for example, the Saarland. Some of the photographs were shot by his son, Erich Sander, who used these photographic research trips as camouflage for his political resistance activities. Various regional volumes were published that sold quite well during National Socialism. There is also the portrait of a man with the caption "Typischer Saarländer (Werkmeister)" ("Typical Saarlander (foreman)"). As you say, it fits in, but simultaneously serves a different purpose. I find these contradictions interesting.




1. Typischer Saarländer (Werkmeister)

C They cannot be resolved in one direction or the other. At the beginning, I asked you about the expectations you had when you set off. What surprised you most?

C Can you tell us what you reckoned with least at the beginning of the project?

S I didn't know that the two sisters, Marlene Gauss and Elfriede Zimmermann, had lived so closely together with August Sander. I learned a lot about Sander's role in the daily life of the family and the village through this. Then we found out that on the day August Sander photographed Adam and Katharina Horn, further photos were shot of other family members at the same location. When I looked at these photos and especially the backgrounds, I was eventually able to reconstruct precisely where they were taken. That was one of those moments in which I thought: They actually went all the way up to the forest with chairs. And then I found it interesting to see the different ways in which Sander staged these persons. There's a young couple photographed at a greater distance to the forest. And then there's a young girl, Aunt Lizbeth, portrayed in front of bushes—the background is much more floral and soft. And since all of these photos exist from different angles, we knew exactly in which part of the forest the photos were shot.

C Was the shooting location perhaps chosen simply on account of the light conditions?

S If you want a forest as a background that has both spruce and deciduous trees, that is the only corner that is easy to reach.

C Then that's local secret knowledge.

S Otherwise, you would have to walk much farther. And then it would only have been the deciduous forest. Sander rode around on his bicycle and was familiar with the area.

C Location scouting, so to speak.

S In my video installation, I isolate these backgrounds. For example, I filmed one shot of the forest that can be seen in the background of the portrait of Adam and Katharina Horn. There's another shot filmed out of the forest. There were severe storms during the shooting that due to the climate change and the associated long droughts led to wind breakages and destroyed many forests. That can be seen in the last sequence of my video installation. Filmed in the evening, the few remaining trees sway in the wind.

C Sander usually shot his portraits outdoors. There is one exception that is included in your film: the old female peasant in her living room. It is said, however, that this may have been for purely pragmatic reasons; that she was perhaps not as mobile anymore, that she couldn't move about well. In your own work, on the other hand, you narrate a lot about the people you speak with via their articles of everyday use, their interiors, and domestic surroundings.

S It was a surprising moment, for instance, when during my research at the Pinakothek der Moderne I came upon the portfolio entitled *Der Bauer* (*The Peasant*) from 1926 in the context of the Stiftung Ann und Jürgen Wilde. This portfolio was a preliminary study for the Portfolio of Archetypes or the overall concept of *People of the 20th Century*, and at the same time a Christmas gift to a friend of his, the writer Ludwig Mathar. From the perspective of an artist, I found it informative to gain insights into Sander's working process in this way.

C In a certain respect, an intermediate step on the way to the actual concept. And would you say that you came closer to Sander through your work on this film? Does the film lead to coming closer to his oeuvre, for you personally? How has your relationship to Sander's work changed?

S I came closer in the sense of an engagement with his work—in a positive sense—that also raised many questions: For example, what does the application of categories entail? How did he work with the structure and backgrounds of his photos? I was very interested in scrutinizing and comprehending that. In this respect, my approach has many layers and is sometimes a coming closer and then, again, a distancing.

The portrait of Adam and Katharina Horn, for example, counts as one of *the* iconic representations of peasants. But like many other peasants, Adam worked in a mine and later as a wagoner, because subsistence agriculture on the small farmsteads was no longer sufficient to survive. And things like these are omitted in the categorizations. So, the question for me is:

How precise are these categories? What do they mean and what do they conceal? And why was this portrait chosen as being representative of the series of peasants? So many questions arose while I dealt with August Sander's work.

C This, too, cannot be resolved in one direction or the other. Did you speak with other people, apart from Mrs. Bitzer, who left their family albums to the art market? The moment the art world realized that there were still some Sander photographs lying dormant in the Westerwald, many people must have been panting for them.

S Apart from Mrs. Bitzer, I didn't meet anybody who sold or contributed photographs by August Sander to the art market. But there are persons who used their knowledge of their value and significance to talk farmers into giving them their photographs or trading them for prints or other things. The farmers were, of course, later upset when they found out how valuable they were. That wouldn't happen today anymore, because everyone now knows their value. In this manner, around 500 commissioned photos changed hands, of which 464 were sold to the Getty Museum in the mid-1980s. They are now viewable online and at least accessible again to those families from which they originally came—but only as small digital pictures and after doing complicated research.

C Would you say that your biographical connection to the region was an important door opener to talk with these people? Did your interviewees still perceive you as one of their own, so to speak?

S It played an important role in getting a read on me. And so, I was asked by those who didn't already know me from which village I'm from. Mr. and Mrs. Horn have naturally known me since my birth. So, there is great trust. But on the other hand, I have been living in Berlin and Munich for a long time, I don't speak the dialect fluently anymore and am always also someone coming from the outside.

[The starting point of this edited version was a conversation that took place in January 2022 in conjunction with the exhibition *After August Sander. People of the 21st Century* at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen, where the video installation *Westerwald: A Visitation* and the photographs entitled *Contaminated Landscapes* were on view.]

UNCANNY HOMECOMING

Madeleine Bernstorff

The person returning. To the village. She sweeps in front of her own door. She pays visits and films, asks questions and catches glimpses. The two installations, *Westerwald: A Visitation* and *what futures are promised, what futures are forgotten—Reading a Family Archive*, [1→p.121] with which Sandra Schäfer draws closer to her native region, are inspired by Annie Ernaux's sober-minded view of class history based on photographs, on photography as a still image and catalyst for writing. Photography's importance for remembering. Breaking with one's origin. Narrated from a third-person than a first-person perspective, Schäfer's film *Westerwald: A Visitation* [2] suspends the self. In 2010, Schäfer had already filmed with her grandmother. And then she decided to approach the Westerwald via a photograph of her great-great-grand aunt Anna Horn, née Schäfer, and her husband Adam Horn, which can be found in almost every August Sander collection, to proceed precisely "through this eye of the needle," to engage with photography as a recording system and the photo archive as an operating system, with industrialized agriculture and landscape, and with LiDAR technology, [3] a merely data-based, digital method of "environmental detection," and to have all this traversed by everyday things.

The film starts with the black-and-white photograph of a silvery, shining death mask, its edges blurry against a black background; it is shown very briefly, just a few seconds, so that one almost forgets it again. What we see is a video recording of a photograph of the death mask of Erich Sander, son of the photographer August Sander, who was trained in his father's studio. On May 31, 1935, the Higher Regional Court Hamm sentenced Erich Sander as the main defendant of a group of young men to a total of 90 years in prison for being a member of the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (Socialist Workers Party Germany, SAPD). He served the sentence first at the Rheinbach penitentiary and then, until his death on March 23, 1944, at the Siegburg penitentiary, where he died of an appendicitis that was

not treated in time. From December 1941, he was listed there as an "in-house worker (photographer)," "[…] occasionally, photographic work has to be done, with which I have to help out, e.g., making prints."[4] This also included the production of "repressive portraits"[5] [Allan Sekula] for identifying delinquents and "criminal biological" examinations that had been conducted there since 1935.[6] The photos were part of the assessment of the prisoners with which the National Socialist criminal justice system decided whether they would be sent to the concentration camps or not. But among these photos by Erich Sander, there are some in which a more balanced relationship comes to light: a smile, a contact, a complicity between the incarcerated photographer and the portrayed prisoner. Erich Sander continued his resistance in jail. He smuggled reports on daily life and the treatment of antifascists there, letters written with invisible ink, and photos (as glass-plate negatives) out of the prison, as well as food, writing material, and books into the prison. His photos from the penitentiary are rare examples of prison photography during the time of National Socialism.

Identification photography. Photography in service. The typologies. Many of August Sander's photos have become expensive icons due to the sets or portfolios on which he had worked since the 1920s. The often not unproblematic typologies of his arrangements seem to promise an ordered, universal overview. A sociological view in the vein of New Objectivity of the most various social milieus that also formulates a cyclical view of society and occasionally seeks an "archetype […] with all qualities of the universally human."[7]

In 1981, the artist Hans Eijkelboom responded to this with ambiguous, intelligent wit in his work *Ode an August Sander*.[8] His concept of actively involving the portrayed persons with their value systems, class attributions such as "rabble, workers, middle class, well-off" and moods such as "happy, friendly, authoritarian, grumpy" also reflects the invocations of normative stereotypes—often via snapshots in pedestrian zones.[9]

The first shot of Sandra Schäfer's video, the death mask of Erich Sander—appearing long before the opening titles—

not only becomes an image historical reference to the "true," material, indexical impression of a face, then, but is also a comment on the historical dislocations that the inquiring homecoming, the landscape, photography, and the family there cannot evade. In the work entitled *what futures are promised, what futures are forgotten—Reading a Family Archive*, Schäfer dealt with the family albums of her grandfather and grand uncle. Their covers are made of leathery cardboard, the glassine paper dryly rustles between the cardboard pages when leafing through them. Photos are often missing, and these empty spots do not appear entirely coincidental. Several photos that also show family members in National Socialist uniforms are presented larger than life in the installation on plywood panels, like ethnographic finds, disturbingly close—and at once alienated.

The German title of the installation, *Westerwald: Eine Heimsuchung*, is first a simple topological description: the Westerwald as a German uplands, followed by the iridescent term "eine Heimsuchung." Literally, a home is sought, and is then haunted by something. In the English translation, a visitation, someone comes to visit. A close association is also the Catholic Visitation of Mary. Trauma, haunting, and revenants are underway. Something that rebounds.

The filmmaker Recha Jungmann returns to her native village on the Rhön with her film *Etwas tut weh* (Something Hurts, 1979/80). As a member of the (post-)war generation, she arrives at a "politics experienced in the flesh."[10] Single-family houses with pitched roofs, some timber framework, window frames with peeled-off paint. A young woman dressed in conspicuous clothes—a white pair of pants, Manchester United jacket, white western boots—speeds through the village on a motorbike, frowned at by the few villagers in the street. A little girl plucks flowers, half hidden behind bushes. The director narrates her quest in the village of her family that she left long ago using several female figures roaming through overgrown gardens and a dilapidated house. Until the villagers start to tell stories: of the grandfather who refused to vote yes in 1933, of his isolation in the village, his bitterness, and how all that had continuing effects.

A sensually rigorous history film that has "something stubbornly discursive"[11] about it. With his film *Heimat ist ein Raum aus Zeit* (Heimat is a Space in Time, 2019), Thomas Heise freed the concept of homeland from its ideological embrace and developed a very special "appreciation of the unsaid, the hidden, that which is kept secret, also the misunderstood." "You need this too if you want to deal with the own."[12] The artist Sandra Schäfer, who after works set in Lebanon and Afghanistan, returns to her native region, is not really an outsider and also no longer an insider. She is at times the Berliner, at others, the Westerwalder.

Two monitors display a 43-minute video on the left and a 6-minute loop on the right. The loop narrates the simulation of a landscape. A technological visualization of an abstract, digital, satellite-controlled system that makes it possible to support self-driving cars and agricultural machines, and to scan wind damage in inaccessible forest areas with the help of laser technology, an imageless data process. The visualization serves solely to advertise for this system. The forest is styled brown-green, a red-white ray comes from the sky like a bundled searchlight, emitted by a small airplane. The next image consists of allegedly infrared images of a path through reddish trees on the horizon. At times, the digital foliage looks almost fragrantly spring-like.

The left channel shows the facade of a museum, the top of a tree in the atrium. Directly on the street, loud cars speed by, close to the viewing person. A reading room. On a table, a bright blue portfolio with rounded flaps is opened. Grey sleeves and white gloves to handle the artworks and photos. With routine care, a photograph is pulled from the sheet protector. A voiceover narrates, interprets, classifies.

The landscape on the right now turns into a real, slightly hilly landscape, a forest area with today's customary brown spruces that could no longer cope with the droughts and bark beetle damages of the past summers. Changing light caused by the clouds drifts over the partially mown fields. Rainbow-colored rows of trees. Suddenly a green screen covers a mountain all the way down to the valley. The LiDAR images encounter "real" images of the lush, ripe grain at eye level—are those these thoroughly

capitalized, monumental varieties? As Åsa Sonjasdotter writes in her text "By Insisting on the Practice,"[→ p. 197] the standardized cultivation of grain varieties has been closely linked to their photographic documentation since the beginning of the twentieth century. For example, the newly cultivated, "pure" varieties and monocultures were communicated by pictures *cleansed* and *detached* from their natural environment.

Schäfer pays neighbors and family members a visit and talks with them about their relationship to Sander's photographs. One neighbor, Elfriede Bitzer, opens her album and talks about the preserved small prints. Schäfer stands opposite of her by the camera and looks from a slight angle down on her hands. Faces are mostly not to be seen, something that intensifies the auditory space of listening, allows us to concentrate on the spoken dialect and distances us from the classification immanent in the portraits. As a further reference underpinning this decision, Sandra Schäfer cites August Sander's hand studies created from 1928,[13] a recurring phenomenon of the time: In 1931, *Das Buch der hundert Hände* (The Book of a Hundred Hands) was published in Dresden. In 1928/29, the filmmaker and compilation expert Albrecht Viktor Blum had collected and edited numerous close-ups of hands in the nine-minute film *Hände—eine Studie* (Hands—A Study): from reproductive labor (cleaning and cooking, childcare) to media work (developing and cutting films), to sports and magic tricks.

Schäfer's hand enters the picture and reaches for a print of the person she is speaking with. At first, a closer view of the three young sisters is withheld from us. Photographic prints are framed in everyday surroundings, another family photo collection is spread out on a glass table, the carpet and sneakers of the people standing around can be seen. Furniture, window frames with green plants, views from the window to fences, sheds and a forgotten yellow soccer ball, picture frames above earthenware and next to the light switch. Schäfer's camera does not isolate what it finds but places its objects in their living environment. A cobbled backyard with a concrete enclosure that, as we learn in the conversation, was converted like the home itself in an

age-appropriate way thanks to the proceeds of 60,000 deutschmark from the auctioning of a Sander's portfolio at Sotheby's. What becomes immediately evident here is a fundamentally different ordinariness and economy regarding the treatment of photographs. Only after this story do we get to see in more detail Sander's portrait of the three Bitzer sisters from 1947; Schäfer's montage often operates with these kinds of shifts. Bitzer then talks about the forest where Sander arranged the sitters for the photographs. Today, it is a piece of forest shredded by storm damage.

Schäfer asks a photography curator of the Agfa Collection at Museum Ludwig for a commentary on Sander's photo of her great-great-grand aunt. "Out of an originally commissioned work he made a conceptual work. He generally performs this balancing act between, depicting, fulfilling a function, being applied, and a perhaps more artistic expression." She says that the provenance chain is also important: in 1955 Agfa acquired the picture from a collector for a planned photo museum, the collector in turn stood in contact with Sander. The curator stresses how important it is to continuously enrich the collection with new narrations. But what could these narrations look like in view of the different treatments and approaches, and in a photo archive scene here in Germany that focusses predominantly on aesthetics and art photography and less on social history?

The uncanniness in Schäfer's film returns in two brief moments, which in her micro-narrations tell of instances of minor, incidental uncontrollability (of the image). A gust of wind suddenly topples an election billboard. The wall of a house with a pitched roof, trees on the right-hand side, another house in the background. Like a cheerful spook, a creature just barely recognizable as a horse can be seen for a split-second leaping in the gap between the houses.

[1] Exhibition at Camera Austria December 2021 – February 2022. https://camera-austria.at/ausstellungen/sandra-schaefer-kontaminierte-landschaften/
Exhibition *After August Sander. People of the 21st Century* at Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen December 2021 – May 2022. Conversation in January 2022 with Linda Conze: https://youtube.com/watch?v=AIFNjhu1a90.

[2] This text is based on the single-channel version consisting of a parallel montage of the 43-minute left channel and the 6-minute loop of the right channel.

[3] LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) is a method for environmental detection employing a pulsed laser to detect and categorize objects. LiDAR sensors produce precise three-dimensional information on the shape and surface features of the surrounding objects.

[4] Letter from Erich Sander to his parents dated June 12, 1936. Cited in *August Sanders unbeugsamer Sohn. Erich Sander als Häftling und Gefängnisfotograf im Zuchthaus Siegburg 1935–1944*, ed. NS-Dokumentationszentrum der Stadt Köln / Werner Jung, (Berlin: Metropol-Verlag, 2015), 267.

[5] From around 1870 onward, police photos were standardized to forced portraits shot both *en face* and *en profil*. See Jens Jäger, "Fotografie im Gefängnis," in *August Sanders unbeugsamer Sohn*, 261 ff.

[6] Since the turn of the century, criminal biology had become established in Germany. As a biographical-genealogical approach to the social environment and the supposed "genetic" dispositions of delinquents, it basically continued and reinforced class-specific resentments. As early as 1924, Bavarian penitentiaries, as pioneers, had introduced this elaborate, racial scientific, "criminal-biological" pseudo-research of all prisoners, which during the time of National Socialism was then conducted throughout Germany. The "criminal-biological" recording also included naked full-body shots.

[7] Christoph Schreier in *August Sander "In der Photographie gibt es keine ungeklärten Schatten!" Eine Ausstellung des August Sander Archives / Stiftung City-Treff Köln*, compiled by Gerd Sander, (Berlin: Nicolai Publishing and Intelligence GmbH, 1994), 6, 7

[8] Gelatin silver prints, Die Photographische Sammlung / SK Stiftung Kultur, Cologne.

[9] The portrait of Schäfer's family shot in 1912 showing Mr. and Mrs. Horn bears the title *Bauernpaar — Zucht und Harmonie* (Peasant Couple — Discipline and Harmony).

[10] Gaby Babić, "(Contemporary) History and Politics the Hard Way," in *Zu Wort kommen / Speaking up*, publication on the occasion of *Remake. Frankfurter Frauen Film Tage 2018*, ed. Heide Schlüpmann, Andrea Haller, Kinothek Asta Nielsen. e.V., (Frankfurt am Main: Kinothek Asta Nielsen. e.V., 2018), 198–203, here 203.

[11] Gaby Babić, "(Contemporary) History and Politics the Hard Way," 200.

[12] Thomas Heise in conversation with Michael Höfner in the educational material accompanying the film: https://gmfilms.de/Heimat%20ist%20ein%20Raum%20aus%20Zeit#press

[13] According to the wall text at the SK Stiftung, Sander began with these studies around the middle or end of the 1920s under the title *Studien, der Mensch*. In the 1950s, he also planned to work up the studies for educational purposes.

ON FRINGES, PEASANTS AND PRIVILEGES

Sandra Schäfer

In 1912, the Horn family carried a chair to the edge of a nearby forest in the village of Isert in the Westerwald to present themselves to the photographer August Sander. On that day, five portraits in different constellations were made. Based on the different backgrounds, one can reconstruct the precise place, even today. The oldest couple, my great-great-grand aunt Katharina and her husband Adam, is captured against the relatively close background of the spruce needle forest. The tree trunks are clearly discernible. Adam is sitting, his hands on the walking cane, and Katharina stands next him with her hands folded. A younger couple was positioned at a greater distance to the spruce needle forest so that the trees in the background are slightly out of focus. In this picture, she is seated, while he stands next to her with a cigar in his hand. The girl Lisbeth and her brother Emil were in turn photographed in front of the bushes of the deciduous forest. Lisbeth is holding a bouquet of flowers in her hands. The fifth photo depicts the mother in the middle linking arms with her two daughters. Their picture was taken in front of the path leading along the deciduous forest. The two daughters each hold a bouquet in their hands. The vegetation and clothes indicate that the photos were shot on a warm spring or summer day.

Sander selected only the portrait of my great-great-grand aunt Katharina Horn and her husband Adam from this series as part of the Portfolio of Archetypes und thus under the category of peasant for his artistic concept work *People of the 20th Century*. It has become one of the iconic photographs of the series of peasants and is included in numerous collections, e.g., the Photographische Sammlung of the SK Stiftung Kultur and Museum Ludwig in Cologne, the Museum Folkwang in Essen or the Stiftung Ann und Jürgen Wilde in the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. It is also one of Sander's few photographs bearing a specific title: *Zucht und Harmonie* (Discipline and Harmony)—that in the family context has led to many amusing comments.

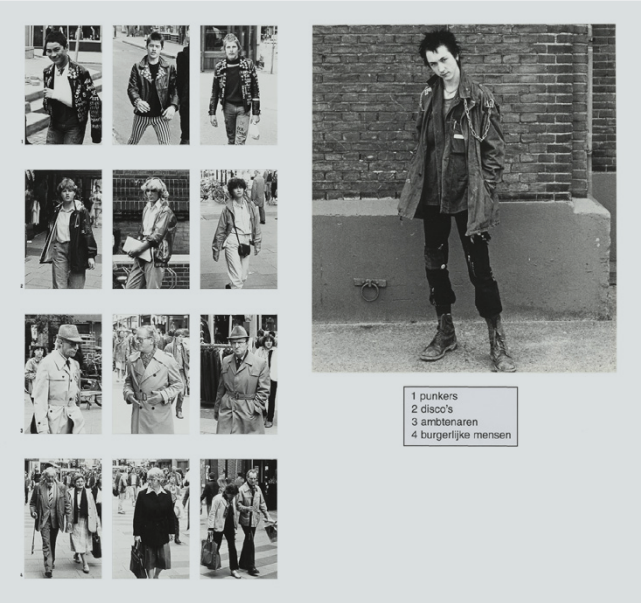
Portraits of family Horn taken by August Sander in 1912, photographed 2019

The conversation with the grandson of Adam Horn, Karl, and his wife Marlise on the photo quickly switches from the portrayed persons to the economy and thus to the inheritance procedure of gavelkind that was practiced in Germany at the beginning of the 20th century. It means that the land was equally divided among the male family members und for this reason became ever more fragmented. The consequence was that less and less land remained for the individual families to cultivate. Many could no longer make a living off the land, so that a lot of men had to work in one of the numerous iron ore mines. [1→p.139] This was also true of Adam Horn, portrayed under the category of peasants. He later worked as a wagoner. Hence, Adam Horn, like many

others, was never only a peasant but simultaneously a worker. The category under which August Sander classified Adam and Katharina Horn withholds this part of his biography. The multiple forms of labor and the attendant identities demanded by the economic conditions are omitted by Sander's narrow categories. August Sander himself was a worker at the mine in Herdorf before becoming a photographer, so he too was never only a "photographer" in his occupational biography.

Even if the photographer August Sander did portray a pensioned worker in Kuchhausen around 1945 or a group of farm hands in the Eiffel, he looked for most of the laborers included in his artistic concept work *People of the 20th Century* in the urbanized industrial regions of Cologne, Berlin and the Ruhr region. So which photographs did August Sander select as representative of which category, and what did this entail for the social cross section he compiled? The persons portrayed as three young peasants, for instance, were in reality never only young peasants but two workers and a clerk of a nearby iron ore mine on the way to a parish fair, as we today know [Pabst 2014]. Also important in this context is the assessment of Karl and Marlise that the photograph of the young couple made on the same day as the portrait of Adam and Katharina was likely not included in the Portfolio of Archetypes on account of their bourgeois appearance. Is this a time of societal transition, in which the phenomenon of multiple occupations was new and the part-time peasants still had to be recorded as such? Or did Sander reduce the complexity of their occupational biographies "for the sake of simplicity" to fit them into his pattern?

In contrast to August Sander, the artist Hans Eijkelboom undertakes a participatory opening of categories in his work *Ode an August Sander* from 1981. [2] Eijkelboom asks pedestrians in the street in Arnheim: If people are not all the same, into which categories would you divide them? He asks them to point out these people in the street. Eijkelboom portrays both the person making the respective selection and the three people that are supposed to represent the category, depicting them together along with the names of the categories. One woman chooses the categories



Hans Eijkelboom, *Ode an August Sander*, 1981

happy, businesslike, ill-tempered, and stinking rich persons. A punk, on the other hand, chooses punker, disco, official and bourgeois persons. Eijkelboom juxtaposes Sander's generalizing and objectifying approach with a variety of subjective views that playfully question Sander's empirical take. Eijkelboom's work, then, makes visible how variegated the individual views on differences in social relations are and what all can be raised to a category depending on the perspective. The work also shows how the first impression based on these categories is attributed to the respective persons.

Where does Sander's "delicate empiricism," as Walter Benjamin euphorically described Sander's publication *Faces of Our Time* from 1931 [Benjamin 1979] lead us? In *A Small History of Photography*, the philosopher compares Sander's *Faces of Our Time* with an atlas of instruction (Übungsatlas) that teaches us how to read physiognomies in regard to their origin, and writes: "Whether one is of the left or right, one will have to get used to

being looked at in terms of one's provenance. And one will have to look at others in the same way. Sander's work is more than a picture book. It is a training manual." [ibid., 252]. The art critic Benjamin Buchloh critically points to where just a few years later these physiognomic observations led: "the physiognomic observation would not only serve as the pretext to political discrimination but more brutally as the pseudoscientific legitimation of racist persecution, this exercise manual, as Benjamin optimistically claims, will educate its viewers in the physiognomic study of the relationships between the class identity of the depicted sitters and their political and ideological affiliations in the imminent future" [Buchloh 1999].

In his essay *The Body and the Archive*, the photographer Allan Sekula examines the systematizing role that photography played at the end of the 19th century with the aim of marking deviations within the social body based on the physiognomy. In this context, he mentions the invention of the criminal distinguished from the bourgeois body or the law-abiding body [Sekula 1986, 107]. In criminology, an extensive archive emerged that contained these interpreting and systematizing materials on criminals. Hence, Alphonse Bertillon developed in criminal technology the first systematic identification in which he combined photographs with anthropometric data and other information on cards. His approach was not after typical features of criminal types, but instead recorded the body that had already been classified as criminal [ibid., 117]. The natural scientist Francis Galton, on the other hand, was interested in the essentialist classification of a criminal type and in this context developed the method of composite portraiture. Several portraits were superimposed to arrive at average typologies. Allan Sekula aptly describes the composite portrait: "[it] can be seen as the collapsed version of the archive" [ibid., 126]. [3] One of his popular composite portraits at the time was that of the "Jewish type" [ibid., 126]. Galton was also a co-founder of the then new discipline of eugenics and showed interest in the "betterment" of the human race. The sinister impact of Anglo-American eugenics on the National Socialist race theory could be observed a short while

later, although the National Socialist race theory, as opposed to Anglo-American eugenics, ultimately pursued the elimination of the other. Galton also developed the method of identification by means of fingerprints. A method that is still used today as part of a comprehensive biometric identification procedure. Persecuted persons seek to elude this identification by deliberately obliterating their fingertips. [4]

Georg Pahl, *Arrival of Black Africans*, Berlin, 1931

In the wake of colonialism, the discipline of anthropology was also invented in 1870. First-generation anthropology mainly distinguished between "nature people" and "culture people." Anthropology and the empire wanted to create a difference between people of European origin and all others with this distinction. This difference consequently served the empire to legitimize itself and anthropology to legitimize itself scientifically [Houlberg Run, Vestergaard Jorgensen, and Zimmerman 2021, 49]. The false hierarchy of difference led to a close complicity between anthropology and the colonial power structure.

In the late 19th and early 20th century, exoticizing portrayals of others at *Völkerschauen* (ethnological exhibitions) at World Fairs or other ethnic shows were very popular. A photo by the press photographer Georg Pahl from 1931 shows the arrival of people of the Sara-Kara tribe at the Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin. They are depicted together with the director of the Berlin Zoo, Ludwig Heck, who was their host at one of the last, large, ethnological exhibitions before the Second World War. The group was apparently asked to line up for the photo. The women and men of the Sara-Kara tribe look insecurely to the camera. They have half-covered their faces with veils, obscuring their mouth ornaments. The zoo director looks proud. The bare breast of the woman carrying a child in her arm grants an intimate view of her body, generating a gaze that I find voyeuristic and encroaching. The relationship between subject and object appears clearly defined here. Thus, the colonial structure becomes visible in this photo, a structure of which the photograph and its production are also a part. In her reflections on photography, the art historian Temi Odumosu refers to the power relations inscribed in photography: "Who has the right to look and who has the right to appropriate, show or narrate the pictures? Who controls the pictures?" [Odumosu 2021, 138].

These colonial, racist, classifying, and stereotypical categorizations were active at the time when August Sander produced his archival concept work *People of the 20th Century*. When comparing his work with the archives of Bertillon and Galton, the difference becomes evident. Sander's photographs are mise-en-scènes that grant the protagonists space for their own individuality. The mise-en-scènes appear as if they were discussed together with the protagonists. The portrayed persons do not appear to be forced into a simple object relation or depicted in an exoticizing way, as was the case in many photos of ethnological exhibitions. The portraits usually show three quarters of or the entire body against a local background. Things get more difficult, though, when turning to Sander's categories. The category of the "Last People" refers to a common classifying construction of value during this time. Working with various subcategories may also be a sign of how difficult the narrowness of the defined categories was. At this point, the work loses its conceptual clarity. It is also striking that the portrait series of persecuted Jews from 1945 is made up almost entirely of studio portraits shown

in oblique three-quarter view. Interestingly, they are set off from the otherwise more common front view and indoor setting and refer to the specific context of their origin.

August Sander, *Persecuted* [Mrs. Levysohn?], c. 1938

The curator Linda Conze speaks of the photograph's nestling to the sociopolitical conditions in regard to Sander's publishing of region-specific illustrated volumes during the time of National Socialism, in which the portraits were reproduced with captions of characteristic regional attributions [→ p. 97]. Some of these photos were shot for the illustrated volumes by August Sanders's son Erich during his travels through Germany. These trips simultaneously served as camouflage for his anti-fascist resistance activities. August Sander's photos are initially always also commissioned works. Many of the portraits of persecuted Jews subsequently included in the concept work *People of the 20th Century* were shot during National Socialism in his studio,

because since 1938 Jewish residents had to indicate their Jewishness on an ID card along with a passport photo [Betancourt Nunez 2018, 16]. They therefore refer to the coercive conditions under which these portraits were made during the time of National Socialism.

But as the art historian Christian Weikop explicates in his article, Sander's photographs differ from the usual fascist depiction of peasants as they can be found, for example, in Lendvai-Dircksen's photos,[5] where they are often shown in traditional garb in close-ups. Sander, on the other hand, stages them in self-chosen Sunday attire against specific landscape backgrounds in three-quarter or full-body view. While in National Socialism, an archaic depiction of peasants was often chosen, the bourgeois character of the peasants' Sunday clothes seems to point to a social transition. The staging of the three-quarter portrait can also be interpreted as a reference to the bourgeois studio portrait that Sander—albeit in a rural landscape environment—chooses for his protagonists. This, too, reflects August Sander's bourgeois gaze [→ Reinhard Braun, p. 89].

However, the question arises as to the extent to which the documentary representationality according to categories succeeds in critically reflecting society. In 1931 Bertolt Brecht writes: "The situation [in capitalist society as a whole] is now becoming so complex that a simple 'reproduction of reality' says less than ever about reality itself. A photograph of a Krupp factory or the AEG says practically nothing about these institutions. Reality itself has shifted into the realm of the functional. The reification of human relationships, such as the factory, no longer betrays anything about these relationships. And so what we actually need is to 'construct something,' something 'artificial,' 'posed.'" What we therefore equally need is art." A year earlier, Siegfried Kracauer already remarked in *The Salaried Masses* that "[a] hundred reports from a factory do not add up to the reality of the factory, but remain in all eternity a hundred views of the factory. Reality is a construction." [Kracauer 1998, 32]. Proceeding from these two quotes, the writer Jochen Becker comes to the following conclusion in his study on urban architecture and its photographic depictions

by Venturi/Scott Brown, Ed Rusha and others: “In 1930, such a notion of reality as a creation of the imagination was quite extraordinary. Artifice and composition are not transposed to the realms of art, but described instead as a ‘construction.’ In essence, this is not about the nature of things, but about the process by which they are created” [Becker 2013, 389]. For artistic methods, this raises the question of how they can succeed in visualizing these construction processes. So if we, like Kracauer and Brecht, start from the assumption that the pure depiction is not enough to comprehend reality, wasn’t a much stronger artistic intervention needed at the time to arrive at a deeper understanding of society?

Walker Evans, *Louisana Plantation House*, 1935

At this point, I would like to turn to another classic. In the 1930s, the photographer Walker Evans developed his exhibition and catalog project *American Photographs*. They resulted in 1935 from a commission by the U.S. Farm Security Administration that engaged photographers to document the situation of the particularly affected rural population in the frame of Roosevelt’s New Deal relief projects. From the extensive exhibition, Walker Evans created a more compact catalog of the same title comprising 87 photographs. The catalog is divided into two sections:

The first one focuses on portraits of persons, occasionally combined with interior views of their homes, street views, billboards, or monuments. The second section combines city, landscape and village views as well as buildings and ornaments. Information on the photographs, such as date, place and subject of the photo, can be found numbered at the end of each chapter. The focus is therefore at first on the photographs themselves and their succession. As an introduction, Evans chooses the photo of a studio in New York, followed by a photo depicting the display of another photo studio with numerous passport photos. Only as the third photo does Evans show his portrait of two young men, shot in Pennsylvania Town in 1936. Starting the series in this way, Evans refers in a self-reflective and slightly ironic manner to the medium of photography and the genre of portraiture. His working method is characterized by the portraits of persons at times shot in a spatial environment, while other portraits are followed by the attendant spaces, separated from each other, as short series. He also includes visual representations such as advertising or monuments in his series. For example, he uses half torn-off posters to address the racist minstrel shows touring the United States at the time. In his montage, the racist depiction is followed by the intimacy of an empty bed in a plain housing, followed by the photo of a Black woman lying in bed, whose gaze we do not meet, because she is looking at another person outside of the image space. Evans repeatedly takes up the theme of colonialism and racism and concludes the series in the first section with a view to the devastated garden of an abandoned mansion of a plantation owner in Louisiana. Unlike August Sander in his book *Faces of Our Time* published six years earlier or his subsequent concept work *People of the 20th Century*, Evans focuses not only on the human portrait but combines it with spatial views, monuments, billboards and so forth. There are obviously staged individual or group portraits as well as unobserved shots from behind that let us gaze together with the portrayed persons. In contrast to August Sander, Evans develops condensed narrations through the montage of these diverse views and depictions. Adhering to categories plays no role here. In this small, inconspicuous

volume, Evans succeeds in showing the contradictions of American society during the Great Depression of the 1930s in a dense and sophisticated collage.

Hannah Höch, *Das bäuerliche Paar* (The Peasant Couple), 1931

During the same period, the Dada artist Hannah Höch opts for a more intimate dealing with montage in her *Ethnografische Serie* that completely refers to found footage and thus to then common depictions in magazines and newspapers. Her appropriation of ethnographic objects is not free of racist hierarchies at the beginning of the twentieth century in Germany. In *Fremde Schönheit* (Strange Beauty, 1929), she attaches to what is conventionally deemed a beautiful white body a black shrunken head whose eyes, magnified by a pair of glasses, look in the direction of the viewer. The cultural historian Maud Lavin describes the montage as follows: "the self is re-presented as the other—revisited and rendered abject. Thus, as in other Ethnographic Museum montages, there is a shifting between identification and differentiation with tribal peoples [...]. By emphasizing this fluctuation, Höch deviated from the unambiguous, folkloric representation of African and other tribal peoples in the illustrated

weeklies and laid the foundation for a critique of racism, even if she did not pursue it further" [Lavin 1996, 123]. Höch questions how race is coded in ethnographic museums. And through the distorting effect of montage, both the white female body and the black shrunken head appear alien. But since this work associates ugliness with the black body, it does bear racist overtones. In her montage *Das bäuerliche Paar* (The Peasant Couple, 1931), she goes significantly further with her critique of racism. In this montage, the head of a black man is mounted above a pair of masters boots of a white colonial ruler, and the blond pigtails of a woman are attached to an ape's face, which in turn is placed on a pair of child's shoes. The body parts in between are missing. On the horizon in the background, there are signs of rural agricultural usage, and two different arms lift a milk churn from a light brown surface. The fragmentation of bodies drawn from different culturally and racially coded contexts gives rise to a torn couple within an unequal power structure. Telling in this context is the black male head mounted on the colonial boots of a white master. Here, a transgression takes place in which the black body is not depicted as ugly or distorted. As much as Hannah Höch succeeds in highlighting the different elements, there is a certain repetition and renewed inscription of racist elements, particularly in regard to the ape's head within the overall structure. In contrast to August Sander's approach, Hannah Höch's working method appears disorderly, personal, grotesque, and deliberately transgressive. She takes her picture material from popular magazines and thus from circulating representations and depictions. She isolates the categories and mixes them up in new combinations. The cultural historian Maud Lavin describes Höch's ethnographic series: "[it] led away from the orderly and toward an exploration of the confusion between self and other, self and selflessness, ego and the abject, Western legs and African headdresses, lived femininity and images of the New Woman" [ibid., 123].

As opposed to Hannah Höch, Sander makes the effort with *People of the 20th Century* to compile a social cross section over a long period of time based on a classification system. The radical

societal changes affecting people of the twentieth century appear in August Sander's work, for example, in the expansion of categories and the portraits of persecuted Jews that were included in 1945. They are thus presented next to the portraits of National Socialists as well as of other politically persecuted persons. From today's point of view, I am particularly interested in the fringes of this monumental work, which from the perspective of the artist himself remained incomplete. What I mean by this in regard to the series of peasants is above all the commissioned photos of peasants that were not included in *People of the 20th Century*, photos of other family members, for instance, that were shot on the same day. I find these fringes of the commissioned photographs promising with respect to an expanded reading of August Sander's concept work. What belongs to this, in my view, is to listen to the way in which the protagonists or their descendants read these photos. Or also how they regard the intersection with art and their exploitation. For example, Karl Horn, one of the descendants of the famous peasant couple, makes it clear that only the use value of the photographs counts for him, although he is well aware of how valuable the photographs are. The exact price is irrelevant, however, since he doesn't want to sell them. Ms. Elfriede Bitzer, on the other hand, has been informed of the value of the photos and decides to auction them at Sotheby's for an age-appropriate conversion of her house. The knowledge of the monetary value on the art market has given her autonomy of decision in dealing with the photographs. Others are annoyed or also embarrassed that they didn't know how valuable the photos were, when especially local, knowledgeable actors talked them into giving them the photos in exchange for "high-quality" prints, a "good" bottle of wine or ridiculously small amounts of money in unfair barters that were partially not agreed upon.

If we grasp the portrayed persons and their descendants not merely as objects but as active, equal actors, it would be necessary to raise the tricky and annoying question as to the provenance of the commissioned photos of the peasants. A question that has long been raised in regard to the controversial acquisition of artifacts during colonialism. With the question of class, this appears

more vague, however, obscured by the legitimization of regional belonging and impeded by the complicity of renowned international art institutions. But embarrassment by their previous ignorance also makes it difficult for those to raise demands due to their age. To whom should they turn, when the photos have meanwhile been sold on? Of course, there is the recurring argument that the sets have been archived and kept together well, the same common argument one can hear in the provenance debate on artifacts acquired during colonialism.

I am part of both contexts, the art context generating surplus value, and the region in which the peasant portraits were made, where I grew up. Therefore, I also generate cultural surplus value with my artistic work. Yet here I feel obliged to Sekula's considerations: "Our problem, as artists and intellectuals living near but not at the center of a global system of power, will be to help prevent the cancellation of that testimony by more authoritative and official texts." [Sekula 1986, 134] If we take decolonization seriously, this naturally also affects the context of class as well as intersectionality. This would then entail moving from the center of the system of power to the fringes and understanding the portrayed persons and their descendants as actors on an equal footing. For the individual person and for the institutionalized art context based on class difference and exclusion, this would mean calling the privileges and narratives to date into question and enduring a disorder in the sense of a reordering. For the author Avery Gordon writes "that ghosts are real." [Gordon 2008, 17] What such an approach could look like in detail can only be developed together with various institutional and non-institutional actors. It would require the willingness to engage with this courageous, joyful and, in some instances, certainly also painful process.

[1] At the end of the nineteenth century, 35 % of the German iron ore requirements came from the Siegerland (Schneider 2014, 78).

[2] The exhibition *Photographische Konzepte und Kostbarkeiten — Sammlungspräsentation — Teil 1; Porträt,*

Landschaft, Botanik at the Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur in Cologne juxtaposes Eijkelboom's work *Ode an August Sander* (1981) with a selection of photographs from August Sander's *People of the 20th Century*. https://photographie-sk-kultur.de/ausstellungen/aktuell (accessed 04/06/2022).

[3] There was also a converse application of composite portraits with the photographer Lewis Hine, who in 1913 made one of child laborers in a cotton factory to show what effects the work had on the body of a child.

[4] The artist and cultural scholar Brigitta Kuster describes techniques of biometric control and how they can be evaded in her article "Biometrische Filmbilder: Eine neue Weise, in der audiovisuelle Aufzeichnungen die Wirklichkeit berühren?" (Kuster 2018).

[5] See (Weikop 2019)

Bibliography

— Jochen Becker, "Parabeton: How Can the City be Shown Concretely?" In *Concrete: Photography and Architecture*, 2013, 388–93. Zurich: Scheidegger and Spiess.

— Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography." In *One-Way Street*, 1979. London: New Left Books.

— Gabriele Betancourt Nunez, "Although it is certain that a man's life does not explain his work, it is equally certain that the two are connected. The truth is that this work to be done called for this life." In *Presecuted / Persecutors. People of the 20th Century*, 2018, 15–17. Göttingen: Steidl.

— Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Gerhard Richter's 'Atlas': The Anomic Archive." *October* 88, 1999, 117–45.

— Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters. Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, 2008. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press.

— Mette Houlberg Run, Anna Vestergaard Jorgensen, and Andrew Zimmerman, "German Anthroplogy. Interview with Andrew Zimmerman." In *Kirchner and Nolde: Expressionism. Colonialism*, 2021, 48–50. Munich: Hirmer.

— Brigitta Kuster, "Biometrische Filmbilder: Eine neue Weise, in der audiovisuelle Aufzeichnungen die Wirklichkeit berühren?" March 2018. https://transversal.at/transversal/0318/kuster/de.

— Siegfried Kracauer, *The Salaried Masses. Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany*, 1998. London, New York: Verso.

— Maud Lavin, "The Mess of History and the Unclean Hannah Höch." In *Inside the Visible: An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the feminime*, 1996, 116–24. Cambridge: MIT Press.

— Temi Odumosu, "Seeing Values: Colonial Image Work in the German Völkerschauen Archive." In *Kirchner and Nolde: Expressionism. Colonialism*, 2021, 138–43. Munich: Hirmer.

— Reinhard Pabst, "Den 'Jungbauern' des August Sander auf der Spur." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 14, 2014.

— Ekkehard Schneider, "Vom 'Bauernland' zum Industrieland." In *Westerwälder Sozial-Reformer. Von der Armut im 19. Jahrhundert über die volkswirtschaftliche und sozialpolitische Entwicklung bis heute*, 2014, 75–91. Altenkirchen.

— Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive." In *Art Isn't Fair*, 1986, 99–135. London: MACK.

— Christian Weikop, "August Sander's 'Der Bauer' and the Pervasiveness of the Peasant Tradition." *Tate Papers*, Tate Papers, 19, 2019. https://tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/19/august-sanders-der-bauer-and-the-pervasiveness-of-the-peasant-tradition.

NEW RURBANISM
Landscape narratives between new cooperative collaborations and climate change

Kerstin Faber

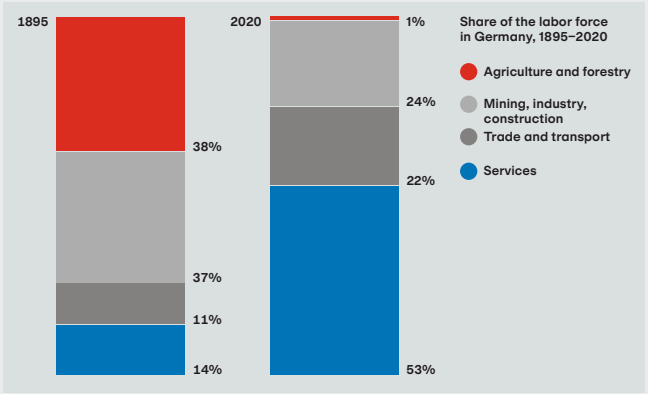
> Complex social changes lead not only to increasingly less people living in many rural regions but also to the relationship between city and country, between old and young, being thrown out of kilter. In light of this, new regional cooperative collaborations between city and country are emerging that bundle resources by means of networking. They are committed to mobility, education, culture, landscape, and agriculture, as well as to social issues, and bring about a new community spirit through the collective design process. This not only strengthens people's ties to the region, it also enhances democratic awareness and self-assurance on location. Organizing knowledge and participation is all the more important, the more polarized the spatial developments are.

In the 1970s, the French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre formulated a distinction in the urbanization process: "between urbanization and urban society: urbanization is a process connected with industrialization and involving a fundamental change in the living conditions of humans. However, this does not necessarily entail the emergence of an urban society. Urbanity is instead a possibility, a potential inherent in urbanization that in order to be realized requires fundamental societal changes—an urban revolution."[1→p.163] In parallel with progressing urbanization, though, the rural, the industrial and the urban continue to exist as overlapping social formations.[2] And therein lies a cultural-political and spatial-structural challenge.

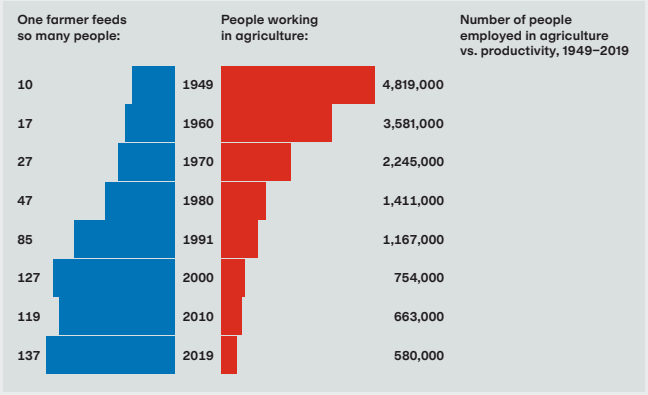
City and country between convergence and alienation

In the wake of the ongoing industrialization and modernization of the past hundred years, the opposition between city and

country has almost dissolved. While traditional rural life had been characterized by holistic agriculture, late industrialization heralded the production of a new era. Especially the use of chemical products has massively changed the agriculture-based economy in the past decades, and thus the relationship between humans and nature, city and country, as well. The expenditure of human labor was reduced by more than 90 percent, the portion of gainfully employed persons in agriculture and forestry decreased from 40 to less than two percent. At the same time,



Structural change in Germany based on the example of gainfully employed persons from 1895 and 2020



Structural change in Germany based on the example of productivity from 1949 to 2019

productivity increased: while around 100 years ago, one farmer nourished four persons, the amount today is 140. And optimization is continuing. With smart farming, driverless tractors, autonomous milking and barn robots, and the increasing digital connectivity of all work processes at the farm, the future has long arrived on the fields. Behind seemingly old facades, the countryside has become more industrial and modern than the city.

Modernization and the declining demand for agricultural workers led to people migrating to the cities. Rural exodus was already an issue in the nineteenth century, when poor peasant families—liberated from feudal rule, but without property—set off to a supposedly better life in the city. In the 1960s, the outflow of people from rural regions again came into view. This time, the attempt was made to counter the exodus by modernizing the social, cultural, and technological infrastructures. The "new" city life was basically brought to the "old" countryside, the culture changed, village schools were centralized, the distances grew. Werner Bätzing, and Alps scholar and retired professor of cultural geography, emphasizes in his book on the history and future of rural life "that the greatest secular caesura in country life began at a very late point in time, at the beginning of the 1960s. Therefore, rural life of the 1950s still resembled medieval life much than it did the present-day living conditions." [3] Simultaneously, automobiles and the new media modernized not only the city but also the country. Lifestyles increasingly converged in an entirely new manner.

At the turn of the millennium and with ongoing innovations in the labor and economic structures, but also in the light of the convergence of urban and rural lifestyles, the exodus commenced anew. Acquiring qualified and committed apprentices and workers has now become one of the greatest challenges in the generational change, not only in agriculture but also in rural craft trades. The individual demands on life and—increasingly important—care are also on the rise. Not only younger people, older ones as well are attracted to the larger cities with their more diverse offers and short

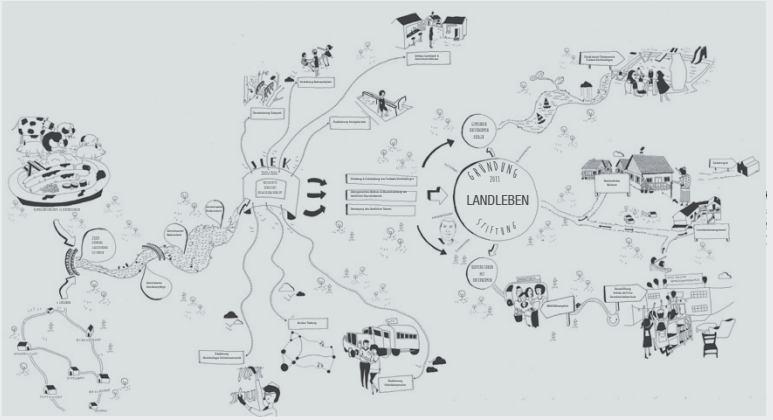
distances. The relationship between city and country that was once cooperative has become a competitive—for (new) inhabitants and attraction.

Decoupling of agriculture and settlement structure as a result of structural change

Against this background, many rural regions see themselves confronted with the depletion of existing infrastructures and offers: public bus transport was increasingly reduced to school bussing, while educational and cultural institutions, nursing facilities, and administrations continue to be bundled in central locations. But not every rural, peripheral space is simultaneously "left behind," not every sparsely populated area is already structurally weak. And this is no longer just a problem of the new federal states. The challenges of structural change affect the Wendland as much as the Altmark, the Harz as much as the Odenwald, small and medium-size towns as much as villages. A slight rise in birth rates will change only very little, for there are still more deaths than births. Furthermore, the rural, peripheral regions usually benefit less from immigration. Along with the continuous rise in life expectancy, this results in demographic challenges that differ greatly between city and country, but also regionally—and for which different responses are needed.

Frank Baumgarten is a farmer and member of the board of the agricultural cooperative Agrargenossenschaft e.G. Kirchheilingen in Thuringia. He has always lived in the country and would like to live well here in the future too. But not only he is growing older, the whole region is. And less and less people live here. The average citizen in Thuringia is 47 years old, nine years older than in 1990. 2015 was the first year since German unification that the population grew—through migration. While younger persons with a higher education and new professions move to the larger cities, mainly old people stay behind. But with this in mind, what does a good life in the country mean? And how does one grow old "well" when everyone else is also advancing in age?

Ten years ago, the four communities of Blankenburg, Kirchheilingen, Sundhausen, and Tottleben raised these questions together with the agricultural cooperative and founded the Stiftung Landleben, of which Frank Baumgarten is today the chairman. The goals of the foundation include the implementation of age-appropriate housing and the revival of the rural building stock, as well as, in general, provision of the rural region. In short: one simply takes responsibility oneself for public services and the quality of life. Until today, the foundation has created



Cooperation model Stiftung Landleben

barrier-free housing on vacant lots in town, initiated redevelopment projects for empty buildings and introduced a voluntary mobility offer for older people. It fought for the reopening of a shuttered school as an independent elementary school in 2014 and along with fellow campaigners founded the association supporting the preservation and operation of the public swimming pool. And their success proves them right: 120 children are today attending the school and the vacancy rate has dropped.

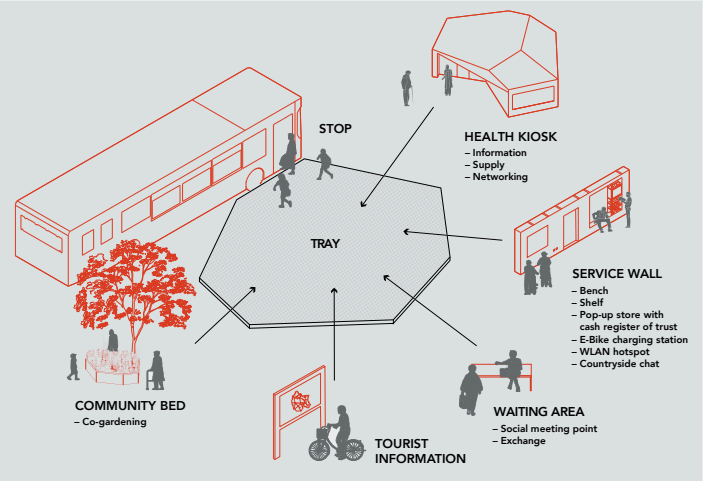
That an agricultural cooperative grasps itself as part of a caring community may owe to the fact that as early as the 1970s the agricultural cooperatives in the GDR, the Landwirtschaftliche Produktionsgenossenschaften (LPGs), were increasingly concerned with community life in the villages. The first LPG in the GDR was founded in the 1950s in Thuringia—an at first voluntary and later state-imposed collectivization of farmers that led to a transformation of peasant agriculture to large-scale industrial agriculture in the entire GDR. Today, the Agrargenossenschaft e.G. Kirchheilingen, which emerged from two LPGs and had a combined total of 700 members, has 150 employees. It continues to be one of the largest enterprises in the village region and conducts, among other things, precision farming on 3,300 hectares with GPS-controlled machines. But it is not the size or the history of the modern enterprise that is decisive for the active interest in collectively achieving a higher quality of life. It is instead the need of people in the rural region to not feel "second-rate," "left behind," or "determined by others."

Cooperative Landengel

Since 2017, Stiftung Landleben has been supporting the association Landengel e.V., which is developing a new, intercommunal nursing (caretaking) and health concept. The increasingly distant access to health and nursing services and poorer connections to primary care due to the removal of public mobility structures despite the aging population have a negative impact on the quality of life. Moreover, there is a lack of contact partners who can provide information and help in a needs-based way. For this reason, the intercommunal concept Landengel seeks to establish a new health, caretaker and provision network in the village region. This includes a rural center with day-care facilities and various health offers and services under a single roof, as well as "health kiosks" as contact points and decentral meeting places for provision issues and consultation in the participating communities.

The association is managed and organized by Christopher Kaufmann, a trained nurse and business economist, who also is now the mayor of Sundhausen. With the help of funding, a caretaker has been assisting him since January 2019. She offers regular consultations in provisionally installed spaces in the respective communities, works on solutions for problems in the areas of mobility, housing, nursing, and health, and offers assistance in bureaucratic issues. The project has expanded to now 21 partners, and the association has around 300 members—and rising. Since the beginning, around 300 people have been offered consultation, support and care per quarter year. A voluntary citizens shuttle service complements the measures, offering drives to appointments with doctors or therapists and, since 2020, also to the municipal libraries.

But how can this successful offer be made more lastingly visible in spatial and design-related terms? How and in which community should the rural center be developed? And what are "health kiosks," which do not actually exist yet? To answer these questions, the actors became project candidates of the International Building Exhibition Thuringia (IBA Thüringen). The more than ten-year planning and building-culture format ending in 2023 pursues new development approaches under the banner of StadtLand (Rurbanism). Work is conducted at the intersection of local and global, city and country, urban and rural. The team of the IBA accompanies, supports or directs more than 30 projects in the entire federal state. From the onset, it shapes and moderates the development processes of architectural, cultural and landscape projects that exemplarily give answers to societal and spatial questions related to the city and country. The focus is on cooperative collaborations, sustainability and quality of life, coupled with innovative design ambitions.



Decentral health kiosks as a new multi-social infrastructure

Health kiosks as a new building culture

Therefore, work is continuing to be conducted in a cooperative way in the frame of the IBA Thuringia. In table talks with the communities of the village region Seltenrain, the Stiftung Landleben and the Landengel association, proposals were at first discussed on attaching the so-called health kiosks to the central bus stops in the communities. Commissioned by the IBA Thüringen, Pasel-K Architects from Berlin subsequently developed a design manual that examined this idea in spatial and design-related terms and put it up for public debate. The result is a concept that grasps the maximally 25-square-meter kiosks per community as a family that, despite individual designs, represent an interconnected whole. They serve as a consultation space and a connectable waiting room for the bus, and feature an integrated restroom. Built as a wooden construction, the design for each site and community will be individual, with the aim of simultaneously presenting new paths in Thuringian wood construction cultures. Implementation has been taking place since the summer of 2021 as an public IBA construction process in the usual cooperative form.

From self-sufficiency to dependency

In its origins, country life was needs-oriented, autonomous, and very plain. The earlier peasant community was a self-contained unit whose principle was based on subsistence agriculture and keeping the cultural landscape shaped by it arable. Through cultural rites and customs, the experiences were passed on with the community given priority over the individual. Smaller land parcels were cultivated alone by the respective peasant families, and larger forest or pasture areas—the commons—collectively. The decentral settlements with their parcels were therefore shaped by culturally, structurally, and economically independent and self-sufficient communities in accordance with their requirements and depending on the soil and climate. [4]

While country life took place without differentiation in the community, in the cities, the principle of capitalism with its different forms of division of labor and wage labor emerged. Against the background of revolutions and reforms and in the wake of industrialization, at the latest, the country adapted to the division of labor and the demands of the city, simultaneously becoming dependent on it. The manufacturing industry developed in the countryside on account of the proximity to raw materials, and with the exploitation of new energy sources, new industrial locations evolved.

The most famous example is the iron dynasty in rural Coalbrookdale in England, where around 1740 the Darby family forged the first bar iron with the help of coal. In 1767 the first railroad rails were cast, thus laying the foundation of industrial production. [5] The construction of railroad lines newly divided the space into central and decentral areas, while the new means of transportation enabling global imports and exports lessened the economic dependency on the city and the surroundings. As a consequence, not only the space changed, but also the principle of the farming way of life, from formally locally, communally organized self-sufficiency to the global, heteronomous market economy. What also disappeared were the commons.

The changes in the relationship between city and country were compounded by land-use planning. Developed in the 1930s, but only gaining relevance after the Second World War, the "functional city" became the model of future developments with the aim of clearly separating in spatial terms the spheres of living, working and leisure. Environmental pollution caused by the industries was great at the time, and the living conditions were poor. Following the ideal of functional separation, not only were the destroyed cities newly built and expanded after the war, the increasingly urbanized environs were also integrated into the functional division. One no longer worked in the environs, but lived in "suburban" space and commuted as workers and clerks to the cities. At the same time, municipal and local government reforms created new borders and hierarchies that not only raised questions of spatial belonging, but also led to farther administrative distances.

Experimenting regionally, not regulating centrally

From the 1970s onward, the municipal and local government reforms also resulted in the establishment of the system of *central places*, with the aim of realizing "equivalent living conditions" in all areas through spatial planning policies. The point of orientation was the best possible offer—that of the city. Since then, regional centers, medium centers and subcenters with diverse differentiations have characterized the regional development depending on the federal state. These hierarchically tiered urban centers are to offer social, cultural, and infrastructural provisions both for each other and the rural area.

However, the system of *central places*—developed in the 1930s by the geographer Walter Christaller and later forming the basis of National Socialist spatial planning for its racist expansion policy during the World War II—was an instrument of spatial planning foremost geared to the domestic economy and designed more for preindustrial spaces, modes of production and ways of life. [6] Taking the settlement structure in Germany then and now as well as its industrial and global, export-oriented development into consideration, it immediately becomes clear that location development in the Ruhr region must function differently than in Bavaria or the Prignitz in the north of Germany. Starting in the mid-1990s, the centralistic funding policy with at first five and today 11 metropolitan regions was continued—benefitting only the rural areas and administrative districts near the metropolises.

Throughout Germany, there are now alternations between promoting competition and guaranteeing "minimum standards," between growth and shrinkage, urbanization and suburbanization, and pleasure and frustration with the country. Especially rural and structurally weak regions in eastern Germany, later also in the west, have been struggling with the latter, while the metropolitan regions and major cities are increasingly attracting young people, not only through domestic influx but, in the wake of the financial crisis starting in 2008 and the migration crisis in 2015, also from abroad.

Medium-size cities in both the east and west have (again) been attracting inhabitants from the big cities and the environs. More affordable rents than in the metropolises, but also good social, cultural and educational offers as well as health and care provision make them appealing for young and old. The development of small cities varies greatly in regional terms, the range between shrinkage and growth is the greatest here. And commuter behavior also changes depending on the area:

"Job growth in Merseburg leads to population growth in Leipzig, job growth in Amberg-Sulzbach to more residents in Nuremberg. The rural regions, which are traditionally regions of outward-bound commuters, are also becoming regions of inward-bound commuters." [7]

So, we have long not only been living in diverse regions, we also act every day in a region-specific and at once globally connected context. The attempt at standardized spatial attributions no longer does justice to the local dynamic developments. They are in truth even more differentiated. Therefore, the future of spaces lies not in fulfilling norms, but in the joint negotiation of region-specific development goals and their socially just implementation. Viewing a wide area is not decisive for successful regional development. And the purely economic and infrastructural strength of an area is not automatically decisive for a bright future. What is instead crucial is enabling more self-responsible development options so that a large number of actors can jointly define region-specific perspectives and shape them for themselves and others in a sustainable way.

This requires that the state does not withdraw from rural areas but instead also enables new cooperative relations between civil society, the state, and the economy. At the same time, the disintegration into numerous independent, often competing spaces, interests and responsibilities must be overcome. To work in accordance with a division of labor, to use synergies and resources together, to provide access to knowledge, and to simultaneously allow for and promote a high degree of organizational self-responsibility, would be an opportunity especially for structurally weak rural areas. [8]

Hybrid country, hybrid city

Digital nomads, solidary spare-time farmers, country romanticists, neo-countrysiders, summer vacationists, people fleeing the big cities and Corona-19—they all contribute in their own way to changing rural regions, just as new logistics halls alongside data processing centers and shopping malls in need of rehabilitation alongside recreational parks alter the appearance of these areas. City-dwellers grow eggplants, tomatoes, cucumbers, and keep bees on their balconies, while in the country, beef steaks from Argentina are bought at a bargain price in supermarkets in the meadow on the way home from the office or vice versa.

More than 50 percent of agricultural enterprises today are operated by part-time farmers, and the trend toward second homes is on the rise. Future scenarios envision nutrition 4.0 as chemically simulated plants, proteins, fats and carbon hydrates or as menus based on bacteria, produced by 3D printers. Food trackers analyze nutrients in unused food that can be recycled for new products. [9]

The future lies in diversity. This applies to both the development of our settlement areas and our landscapes. But land as a valuable asset is in demand, energy and food production, trade, logistics and road construction, nature, flood and landscape protection, tourism—they all compete for it. At the same time, the EU subvention policies, the global market, the (increased) energy demand, and climate protection shape the face of the landscape—depending on the funding period. The arable land itself, in turn, is increasingly becoming an income property of international food and chemical corporations.

From the perspective of the global agribusiness, rural areas are therefore by no means regions "left behind." For example, (patented) seeds are developed in America and Asia, propagation

New competition for land

takes place in Holland, the peat comes from the taiga, and the harvest hands are from Eastern Europe. The same principle applies to further processing and marketing. While agriculture and landscape are globally integrated, settlement and landscape are increasingly becoming decoupled.

Updating the regional economy in a sustainable way

When addressing regional developments between city and country, however, we must deal not only with our settlement areas and their socioeconomic interconnections, but also with the development of our cultural landscapes and resources. In short: how can we improve our regional and sustainable, economic activities?

With the progressing industrialization and modernization of agriculture, though, ever larger agricultural corporations are emerging. They have specialized in individual agricultural products are bargained and sold in vast amounts directly as raw material at world market prices, while regional food companies mainly seek preprocessed goods in larger quantities, which, however, have long been outsourced from the local, agricultural value chain. The highly efficient agricultural corporations with very little staff but an extensive transport fleet are subject to highly volatile world market prices and can hardly pursue long-term structural changes on their own.

Today's system is not very resilient in the event of crop failure, pest infestation or long-term ecological damages. At the same time, the climate is changing. For Germany, the change in regard to agriculture can be described based on the altered precipitation distribution showing more winter and less summer precipitation, as well as hotter summers. Storms and adverse weather conditions are on the rise. This also has a negative impact on groundwater recharge—in both the city and the countryside.

In the frame of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Thuringia, it is currently being examined how larger, conventionally operating, agricultural enterprises can switch to

Change of the landscape image through the modernization of agriculture

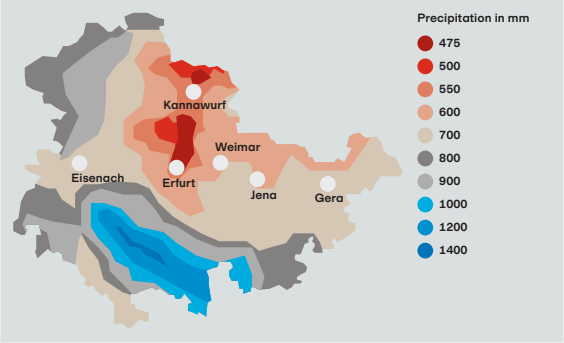
climate-adapted agriculture while at the same time boosting regional value added. Here, too, answers can be found in regional cooperation.

New climate landscape typologies

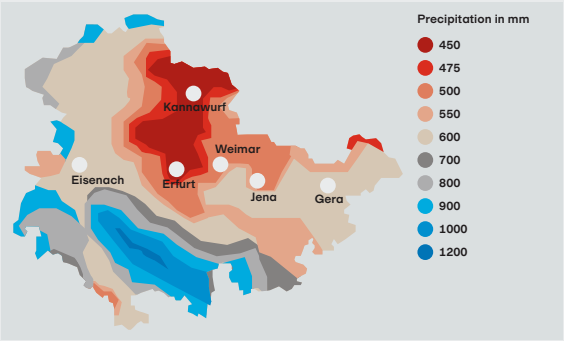
The past four years were the warmest since the start of weather records. In Thuringia, an increase of the average annual temperature by 1 °C compared with the reference period from 1961 to 1990 is expected by 2040, and until the end of the century even by 3.4 °C, with the summers, in particular, getting significantly warmer. In areas strongly shaped by agriculture, like the Thuringian Basin, winter precipitation will increase, while the already very dry summers will have to suffice with 25 percent less precipitation. [11]

The effects of the temperature rise include higher CO_2 concentration, altered precipitation distribution and an increase in extreme weather conditions. The impact on agriculture consists in the increase in pest infestations, loss of soil, greater susceptibility to diseases through heat stress in plants, and longer vegetation periods with a shift in vegetation zones. The vegetation period alone in the Thuringian Basin has increased by around

20 days in the past years. The possible, median climate scenario expects a further prolongation by 20 days in the next 30 years.



Precipitation amount, normal values, Thuringia 1961 to 1990



Precipitation amount, normal value, Thuringia 2019

In a cooperation project of the Landwirtschaft Kannawurf Betriebsgesellschaft mbH, the agrar-GmbH Oldisleben and the IBA Thüringen with the Künstlerhaus Thüringen e.V., a feasibility study was drawn up with respect to these huge challenges to cultivated agricultural areas for 1,500 hectares based on the example of the communal district of Kannawurf in the administrative district of Sömmerda by the Green4Cities GmbH in cooperation with the SEKEM Energy GmbH, resulting in the guideline "Climate Landscape Typologies with Cross-enterprise Crop Rotation Management." [12]

Three so-called climate landscape typologies—hillside, hilltop, water meadow—were identified based on their different local climatic effects. In each, specific measures are defined to minimize erosion through wind and water, to avoid heat islands, and reduce the surface temperature, and strategies are drawn up for adapting to the climate change. They include the cultivation of mixed crops, nurse crops and crop rotation specifically defined for the respective typology, as well as the implementation of "keyline design" as a sustainability technique.

Present state of the agricultural appearance of Kannawurf

Climate landscape typologies with keylines as a new agricultural appearance for Kannawurf

Keylines are, for example, lines plowed with the reversible plow parallel to the hillside so as to increase water storage on site and minimize soil erosion. To heighten the effect, damming,

stabilization and shading of existing hillside ditches through planting or water basins are also possible. This not only sustainably improves the water balance of the agribusiness but also redesigns the landscape in a climate-appropriate way. A simulation of the potential impact of keylines on the agricultural areas of Kannawurf showed that with this method up to 13 percent more water can be retained in the area, while erosion can be minimized by up to 60 percent.

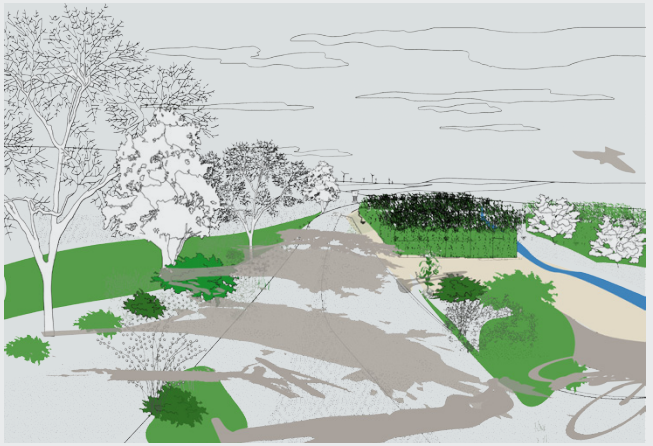
Cross-enterprise crop rotation management

Farmers are not only dependent on the climate anymore, but also on global capital markets, the EU agricultural subsidies and the monopolization of seed and food corporations. At the same time, the production and processing of field crops have been decoupled. A major portion of the revenues is gained by the direct sale of field products to wholesalers at world market prices, without being able to participate in the further value-added chains.

One possible solution is the establishment of new, regional, cooperative collaborations. Based on the climate landscape typologies, field crops are to be cultivated, for which there is a high demand today and in the future on the side of the regional processing enterprises, for example, legumes, oilseeds, hemp, and vegetable. The economic basis for this is formed by cross-corporate crop rotation management in an alliance of farmers with each other and with the processors. Crop rotation is thus not determined and oriented in-house, as usual, but across enterprises. This reduces the investment risk for farmers, because they start off with small areas, can share knowledge, employees and technologies, and commit regionally anchored contract partners as personal contact for the purchase. Moreover, regional marketing allows for independent pricing. All this leads to the agricultural enterprises becoming more independent of the global food industry and to an ecological and economic stabilization of a climate-appropriate agriculture.

But the future climate cultural landscape also needs to be rooted in the daily life of the local population—a deliberate presence—with all its peculiarities, seasonal processes, smells and sounds. Only people who are familiar with the landscape can develop a critical awareness of its usage and cultivation and appreciate the products of the landscape as well as the way in which they originate and are produced.

A coherent network of routes through the landscape oriented toward the needs of pedestrians and cyclers offers an initial access. Different growing cultures that lie close to each other in smaller areas allow processes to be clearly perceived and experienced. Seasonality plays a key role for route guidance and design: open paths are attractive in the winter and spring, shaded paths in the summer. The landscape design can support this seasonality through the selection of seasonally coordinated blooming effects of the trees and shrubs.



Green belt as a newly designed, coherent route network

Traditional or new knowledge and experiences, in turn, require active communication and communal events. Guided hikes and walks with experts make the complexity and interrelations of the ecosystem comprehensible. (Cultural) events in the landscape

contribute to a broad public engaging with the landscape. Targeted stagings of the landscape and landscape elements in the context of events can strengthen the emotional ties to the landscape. In the best case, new recipes, products and traditions are created in this way—at least new bonds between the residents, the landscape and agriculture. In view of the development of a holistic climate cultural landscape, work on the next implementation steps is being carried out with all partners in the frame of the IBA until 2023.

The future: cooperative city-country-agriculturalists

Landscapes are not only natural and economic spaces but also cultural assets, and they form the basis of our settlement structures. The way in which we take care of and cultivate them has a crucial effect on our spatial development and future life in the city and country. Therefore, city and country must be newly conceived and shaped together with their respective landscapes. The new, sustainable development of landscape and architecture plays a key role in the utility industry, just as forestry does in the construction industry. Here, the future lies in modern forms of regional, climate-appropriate collaboration between production and processing. This can be used to establish local value-added chains that once again generate direct relations between city, country and landscape as well as between producers and consumers, thus opening up new perspectives for rural areas.

Differentiated discourses on the challenges posed by structural and demographic changes and on the equality of living conditions, in turn, demonstrate that new attention is being given to the development of rural areas. With the effects of the financial crisis of 2008, the influence of populist political parties and the Fridays for Future movement, at the latest, it has become obvious that the principle of spatial development policy—*strengthening strengths* with a focus on the metropolises—is in conflict with the diverse economic, ecological and demographic developments of urban-rural regions and their landscapes. Not least in the wake of the corona pandemic, the normalization of decentral forms of labor has accelerated; they demonstrate what variegated perspectives of living and working together have now become possible between city and countryside. The equality of living conditions should no longer be viewed from the perspective of cities and against the background of norms, but be negotiated in a region-specific way and allow a socially just implementation on site.

Proactive rural development instruments are important for testing new, region-specific spatial and design strategies. Enabling new regional cooperative collaborations means testing different standards, reducing bureaucracy and making long-term state funding simpler. A top priority is to offer actors an open negotiation process and contacts in the administrations on a level playing field. Independently managed regional budgets, on the other hand, can advance projects and perspectives and motivate new actors on site. It is the task of democratic politics to provide a range of possibilities so that people can shape livable spaces according to the diverse conditions. In this way, spatial knowledge is jointly generated, discussed, negotiated, and implemented. The cooperative creation of new narratives makes social coherence visible and enables the future.

[1] Christian Schmid, "Urbanisierung und urbane Gesellschaft. Henri Lefebvres Thesen zur Aufhebung des Stadt-Land-Gegensatzes," *Arch+* 228 (2017), 22–27, here 27.

[2] Anh-Linh Ngo, "Editorial," *Arch+* 228 (2017), 1–3.

[3] Werner Bätzing, *Das Landleben. Geschichte und Zukunft einer gefährdeten Lebensform* (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 2020), 153.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 169.

[6] Karl R. Kegler, *Deutsche Raumplanung. Das Modell der "Zentralen Orte" zwischen NS-Staat und Bundesrepublik* (Paderborn: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 2015).

[7] Harald Simons, *Wohnen und Bauen nicht nur in Metropolen. Hintergrundpapier zum gleichnamigen Positionspapier*

Baukultur und dem GdW Bundesverband deutscher Wohnungs- und Immobilienunternehmen (Berlin: empirica ag, 2017), 6.

[8] Philipp Oswalt, "Der ländliche Raum ist kein Baum. Von den zentralen Orten zur Cloud," in *Raumpioniere in ländlichen Regionen*, Kerstin Faber and Philipp Oswalt, eds. (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2013), 6–16, here 6 ff.

[9] Rem Koolhaas, "Future Food. Louise Fresco interviewed by Rem Koolhaas," in *Rem Koolhaas, Countryside, A Report* (Cologne: Taschen Verlag, 2020), 80–83.

[11] Thüringer Ministerium für Landwirtschaft, Forsten, Umwelt und Naturschutz: IMPAKT—Integriertes Maßnahmenprogramm zur Anpassung an die Folgen des Klimawandels im Freistaat Thüringen, Erfurt, 2013, see also the continuation, IMPAKT II, Erfurt, 2019.

[12] See also http://klimakulturlandschaft.de

BY INSISTING ON THE PRACTICE
A note on relations of cultivation and crops

Åsa Sonjasdotter

The association *Allkorn* (Common Grains) was founded in 2004 by a group of farmers and plant breeders in South Sweden, for the purpose of providing a refuge from seed laws while growing and exchanging traditionally bred varieties of grains. Since the global seed industries had set up criteria for "universal crop standards" by the early 1960s, to grow and exchange seeds where these standards had become legislated would mean being circumscribed by a web of opaque rules that either made it expensive and time consuming to deal with the administration when trying to do things right, or being in constant fear of imperil. [1→p.175] Since an association counts as one and the same juridical entity, keeping the breeding and seed exchange within the realm of the association would be one strategy among several for avoiding legal infliction. Over the years, however, the interest in growing these crops has increased, and the association has over 400 members today. In the local region, Allkorn has become a critical mass.

Traditional, creole, peasant, or transculturally bred seeds and crops—to mention only a few of their names—open for

growth rhythms through immensely vast and at the same time tacitly intimate place. The plant matter has traveled and remained in the hands of people, in reproduction in the ground, through seasonal recurrency between growth and dormancy. When the term "traditional" is used, it refers to the etymological base of the term, which means "to trade," "to exchange." The cultivation and breeding method is not about "conservation," which is a misleading term by which farmer-bred crops are mentioned in legislative documents. Contrarily, it is about maintaining the plants in reproductive flux, on-site and across landscapes. This allows the plants to respond to changing conditions in the soils, to various cultivation techniques, and to local climates. To keep the grains, seeds, roots, and tubers in movement through reproductive selection, migration, and exchange, helps to keep the stock vital. Further, the sharing and spreading of the plants is a way to safeguard the accumulated knowledge that they embody.

The majority of the crops that Allkorn maintains, though, have not come to the members by means of migration and trade. Instead, they have been lifted out of the deep freezers of the Nordic Gene Bank (today The Nordic Genetic Resource Centre). This particular reserve was established in the late 1970s for the remedy of what had become an escalating extinction of peasant-bred crops in a region where they used to be abundant. It had taken years of negotiations between conflicting interests regarding how to settle its construct. On the one hand, as the institution had to comply to the seed industry's legislated rule, these crops were not supposed to be brought back to the fields, but remain in the freezers as reservoir for commercial breeding. On the other hand, traditional seeds undeniably do belong to the common, and laymen can therefore not be prohibited access. The solution for this incompatible situation was the following: the bank was operated by the state for the purpose to mainly facilitate the breeding industry. Laymen could order a maximum of three varieties every year from the bank on the condition that they signed a document declaring that they would not give the material further to a third person. However, by the time the gene bank finally would open, many of the varieties aimed for preservation had already

died out. [2] Samples of about hundred varieties of grains could be rescued and stored in the freezers. It was a tiny drop of the vast and undocumented amount of crop variation, which until a few decades earlier had been alive and thriving in the fields. Of these remaining grains, members of Allkorn began ordering samples, continuously, over the years. The grains would be lifted out of the freezers, thawed, and carefully observed when regaining life in the ground. This was the clandestine method for discrete subversion of the bank's initial purpose set in motion by members of the association.

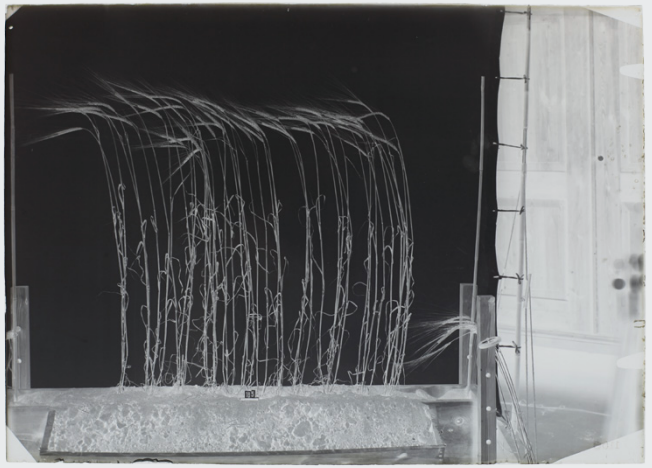
The invention of a method for plant breeding that would make it possible to genetically standardize crops was the beginning of the decline of peasant-bred crops in this region. It would provide criteria by which the Europe-based, globally prospecting seed industries would push for the imposition of "universal crop standards." The method was based on the transfer to the realm of botany, a technique that had been developed within microbiology at the Carlsberg beer brewery in Copenhagen, Denmark, in the 1880s. In the large industry's chemical laboratory, it had been invented for the cultivation of yeast for the brewing process, based on the selection of one, single, fungus. This "single-strain" yeast would rapidly come to replace the wild yeast that

previously had been used. The possibility to predict almost exactly how the brewing would turn out, made a vast difference in the large-scale production line. [3]

The experience of gaining control on the micro-level made botanists at the laboratory look for the possibility to apply a similar technique also to plants, which was the second important ingredient in the brewing process. Plants' ways of reproducing are multifarious. Some crops reproduce by cloning, some by cross-pollination, or both. Others are self-pollinating and can reproduce by their own means. The botanists turned towards self-pollinating peas, where each plant can become fertile from pollen not only from other plants, but as well from its own. By isolating selected plants and inbreeding them over several generations, they would eventually become emptied of more or less all their genetic variation, as influx of pollen was halted. [4]

This seemingly simple maneuver would open for a profoundly shifted approach to relations of cultivated lifeforms. [5] At the Swedish Seed Association for plant breeding, just on the other side of the water connecting Denmark and Sweden, the learnings made by the botanists at the Carlsberg brewery would be applied and implemented to breeding on an industrial scale. Crops that showed features of interest to the breeders were lifted out of the fields and into the clinical environment of the laboratory, where they first went through the initial process of inbreeding into what would be called a "pure line" of the variety, and which subsequently would be cross bred with a "pure line" of a different variety. The aim was to gain a new, so-called "elite-variety" that would carry desired features from both of the "pure" strains in one and the same plant. [6] The cross-bred "elite" would then become propagated into vast volumes aimed at long-distant sales distribution for large-scale cultivation. Train tracks were already laid out to pass by for pick-up at the institute's warehouses.

The invention of this technique for breeding and propagation would serve a purpose that had been preceded by a series of events to which the monoculture crops would correspond. The instigators of the breeding institute were farmers that had



gained wealth by land reforms implemented only half a century earlier—in other countries this had already happened long time ago. [7] Before the reforms, each farming village had operated as a communal production unit, responsible towards its members as well as eventual tax-lifting landholders. With the reforms, these structures were replaced by a compartmentalization of buildings and land, by which single farmers who were lucky to gain a piece would become sole, private owners. This was most often a man of a household. The reforms would radically alter the social relations within the communities as well as of practices and knowledges related to the land, the animals, and the crops. The enlarged farm units would accelerate the industrialization by giving place for monoculture cash-crop production.

A tangible element of this shift in relations was its aesthetic scope. A method for photographic documentation would accompany the breeding process at the institute, by which a format for visual representation of the new and "purified" monocultures would take shape. The recently invented light-sensitive medium would enable images in black-and-white, where contrasts in volumes and lines could be emphasized, leaving certain nuances out. The photographers elaborated a method for the visual disconnection of the plants away from their surroundings by attaching the

crops to metal sticks on wooden structures so that they seemed to be floating in the air, with horizon behind, or placing a sheet behind the crops, so as to whitening or blackening out the environment. The emerging material-visual aesthetics would as well correspond to the shifted social relations that the land reforms had brought regarding power and control over reproduction, including human labor. The photographic visualization of monoculture farming was to be distributed through advertisements and thematic journals. The pictures became vehicles for placing an imagination of what the newly reshaped landscape could become, which contributed to pushing for industrial and "purified" monoculture farming realties to emerge.

The aesthetic shift towards monoculture would further amplify, as it made real, fascist visions. Based on the achievements of the Swedish Seed Association, voices by this movement would find arguments for the possibility and eventually also the duty, to purify and uniform life forms unrestrictedly. The establishment of the State Institute for Racial Biology in Uppsala in 1922, was directly encouraged by the results of the activities at the Swedish Seed Association. Politicians from all parties agreed that such instalment was for the general betterment. [8] The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Plant Breeding Research (Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Züchtungsforschung), instigated 1928 in Müncheberg, Germany, as well as the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik (KWI-A) founded in Berlin in 1927, would become German equivalents modelled directly after the Swedish institutes. The leaders of the German institutes, Erwin Baur and Eugen Fischer, would in 1936 together with geneticists Fritz Lenz publish results of their research in *Human Heredity Theory and Racial Hygiene*, a book that would provide the Nazi biopolitical ideology with scientific justification. [9]

During and following the War, constant food shortages were an incentive for increased state control of the agricultural production, a centralization of structures and standards that would continue to benefit fascist interests, but also commercial food industries. [10] The approval on state level of uniform

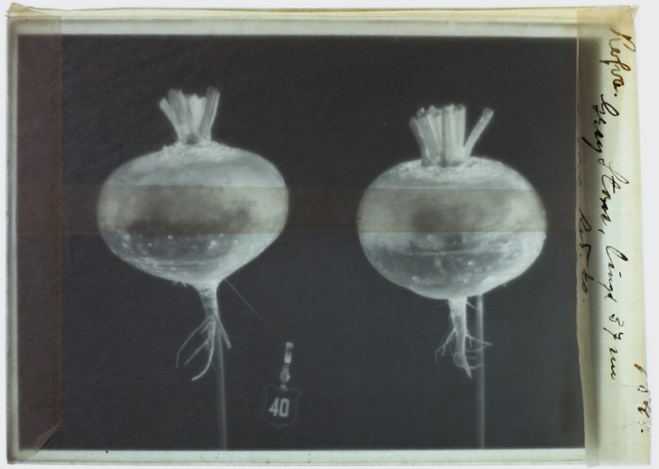
plant varieties provided an argument for seed industries to claim that they had the right to collect royalties on their "new" and "original" varieties—however engineered by the mining of peasant seeds' genetic code. Some of these seed corporations would grow big after the war. Based in Europe, they joined forces for the instigation of the globally purposed International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants (UPOV). Its aim, as it was declared, was to "protect" the commercial seed companies by stipulating "universal criteria" for the use of "original" varieties. These measurements, defined as criteria of *Distinctiveness*, *Uniformity* and *Stability* of the plants, were copied from standards developed under the Nazi controlled agricultural sector in Germany and France during the War. [11] UPOV passed a convention in 1961, defining how the so-called DUS criteria were to be applied to breeding. [12] Further, it was declared, no other crops than those meeting the DUS criteria were to be permitted for professional farmers when growing for the market according to this convention. The farmers were to pay royalties to the breeder when using these varieties, including when they save the seeds from their own crops for the next season. UPOV's convention is today fully ratified by 77 countries, including the EU. Large agricultural countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and India have

opened towards ratifying the agreement, but are still pending. Currently, peasant movements and civil-rights organizations in countries in West- and Central Africa are pushing back against its implementation, as UPOV is mobilising to gain access. [13] The UPOV Convention is packaged into free trade agreements (FTAs) and further bilateral and global trade agreements such as TRIPS on intellectual property and TPPI on trans-pacific trade, which makes the negotiation of each detail more complicated.

In response to the escalation of industrial monoculture farming and its resulting erosion of ecosystems, social structures, and local economies, peasant movements throughout the world have organised massively and globally, mobilizing several unilateral legal complexes against UPOV's claims. Central to these is Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas 2 (UNDROP). [14] The declaration was adopted in 2018 by the Member States of the United Nations and marks a considerable shift in discourse, as peasantry by this statement, to which traditional seed relations is central, have become defined and recognized as a fundamental basis of food and agricultural production throughout the world. Further central documents by which traditional seeds are protected, are articles 5, 6, and 9. 3 of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA), [15] negotiated by FAO (The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) for an open access to seeds stored in public seed banks, as well as Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. [16]

In a vulnerable moment now, some hundred years ago, where farmers lost touch with their crops as they turned their attention towards imagined futures, hovering by their grain fields' horizon—in this place—where the "traditional" was rendered "old," and where farmers left their traditional crops behind for the "new," the traditional seeds and grains would enter a dormitory state. In dry and cold storage, they could remain their capacity to germinate for up to twenty years, not much longer. In deep freezers, when carefully dried before being frozen, they could remain their germinativeness for a maximum of 100 years.

Breaking this sleep towards a slow death, the rescue maneuver by the Allkorn farmers to regain their grains, is one of the vast number of actions deployed by peasants and farmers to push back UPOVs violent infliction. In support of the peasant movement's massive mobilization to regain the initiative, what is crucial in this moment, is that the cultivation and breeding of traditional crops gains strong social networks that strengthen the practice. By insisting on the practice, the laws will not make people forget neither become disconnected—but remain with and by the crops.



All images: Early photography from the Swedish Association for Plant Breeding (Sveriges utsädesförening) founded in 1886, in Svalöv, Sweden, Year unknown

[1] Ed. Cloé Mathurin. *Incorporating Peasants' Rights to Seeds in European Law*. The European Coordination Via Campesina, (2021), 15–18.

[2] Gösta Olsson, m. fl. *SVALÖF 1886–1986. Växtförädling under 100 år*. Sveriges utsädesförening och Svalöf. 1986, 26.

[3] Christophe Bonneuil and Frédéric Thomas, "Purifying Landscapes: The Vichy Regime and the Genetic Modernization of France," *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 40, no. 4 (n. d.): 539–540.

[4] Nils Roll-Hansen, "The Crucial Experiment of Wilhelm Johannsen," *Biology and Philosophy* 4 (1989): 303–329. Wilhelm Johannsen, *Ueber Erblichkeit in Populationen und reinen Linien. Eine Beitrag zur Beleuchtung schwebender Selektionsfragen* (Jena, Germany: Gustav Fischer, 1903).

[5] Staffan Müller-Wille, *Leaving Inheritance behind: Wilhelm Johannsen and the Politics of Mendelism. A Cultural History of Heredity IV: Heredity in the Century of the Gene*, (Berlin: Max-Planck-Institut Für Wissenschaftsgeschichte, 2008).

[6] Gösta Olsson, m. fl. *Svalöf 1886–1986. Växtförädling under 100 år*. Sveriges utsädesförening och Svalöf. 1986.

[7] Åsa Sonjasdotter, *Peace with the Earth. Tracing Agricultural Memories, Refiguring Practice* (Berlin: Archive Books, 2019).

[8] Maria Björkman and Sven Widmalm, "Selling Eugenics: the Case of Sweden," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 64, no. 4 (2010: 379–400.

[9] Olga Elina, Susanne Heim and Nils Roll-Hansen, "Politics and Science in Wartime: Comparative International Perspectives on the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute," Osiris 20 (2005): 161–179.

[10] Nazi Germany gave the fascist Vichy regime—unoccupied France, its ally—the task to produce food not only for its own people but for Germany as well. This was organised through a centralized system in which a set of criteria for the genetic composition of the seeds would be implemented with the aim of increasing the yield. After the war it would show that this invention of a concept for genetic standardization would become lasting, since one had to demonstrate that it would suit not only industrial production methods but also commercial royalty interests. The alignment was manifested in 1961 when the first International Convention for the Elaboration of Regulations for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants was held in Geneva by UPOV (International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants).

[11] Christophe Bonneuil and Frédéric Thomas, "Purifying Landscapes: The Vichy Regime and the Genetic Modernization of France," *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 40, no. 4 (n. d.): 532–568.

[12] The variety must be distinct (D), that is, easily distinguishable through certain characteristics from any other known variety (protected or otherwise). The other two criteria, uniformity (U) and stability (S), mean that individual plants of the new variety must show no more variation in the relevant characteristics than one would naturally expect to see, and that future generations of the variety through various propagation means must continue to show the relevant distinguishing characteristics.

[13] Ed. Cloé Mathurin, *Incorporating Peasants' Rights to Seeds in European Law*, The European Coordination Via Campesina (2021): 15–18.

[14] https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1650694?ln=en

[15] https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/731146?ln=en

[16] https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/62651?ln=en

A SMALL/BIG THING

Jumana Manna

> "I am first and last—and of this I hope every Syrian citizen and every Arab outside of Syria will take cognizance—a peasant and the son of a peasant. To lie amidst the spikes of grain or on the threshing floor is, in my eyes, worth all the palaces in this world."
> Hafez al-Assad, March 8, 1980 [1→p.194]

Ebla

In the third millennium BCE, Ebla was a kingdom spanning all of northern Syria. It functioned as a major trading center in the Fertile Crescent, and it was of equal importance to other nearby civilizations such as the Egyptian and Mesopotamian. In the 1970s, archeologists excavated baked-clay tablets from the area. Their inscriptions enabled a better understanding of the Sumerian language and the political organization of the ancient Levant. The tablets also revealed that no fewer than seventeen varieties of wheat were being cultivated in the surrounding villages, enough to feed eighteen million people. Ebla was situated about fifty-five kilometers southwest of present-day Aleppo, a city that in 2012 became the site of a key battle in the Syrian revolution. That battle came to an end four years later as the result of a suffocating siege inflicted upon rebel forces by the Assad regime, which used brutal methods, including forced starvation.

Some decades earlier, around the same time as archeologists were dusting off the tablets and learning about Ebla's biodiversity, Hafez al-Assad was modernizing his country's peasant system, which he considered backwards. He sought to increase production and self-sustainability with a focus on wheat and cotton, placing them under a state monopoly. In the process, the dictator brought rural populations under his control: entire villages were flooded when dams were built to increase irrigation capabilities, peasants were contracted to farm and given quotas

for their yields, and technological innovations replaced traditional agricultural methods.

The late filmmaker Omar Amiralay documented the effects of such modernization in *The Chickens*, his forty-minute, black-and-white documentary from 1977. Amiralay shot the film in Sadad, a village south of Horns, where rainfall is scarce and agriculture had always been secondary to textile work. Incentivized by the state, villagers cleared out their weaving looms to make room for chicken coops. They financed their investment with money borrowed from better-off neighbors, or small loans from the government. Amiralay's sensitivity to the plight of farmers is brought forth in brief conversations with them. "I raised chickens because I saw everyone raising chickens," one farmer tells him, while another explains, "A partner always feels his partner's hopes and pains." This is claimed as the filmmaker follows the sound of clucking chickens, overlaid with mass chanting: "Syria! Syria! Syria!" But Syria's agrarian sector did not always embody this partnership. With sudden overproduction in the poultry industry and a plague affecting chickens, the farmers

who had bet everything on their coops were quickly forced into bankruptcy.

Such policies of economic liberalization introduced a whole new set of struggles for Syria's farmers, while also bettering their living standards in various respects.[2] This determination to upscale and modernize agriculture while making the previously self-sustaining peasant classes subservient to the regime in power was, in fact, very much in line with the global trend of the time, as I have come to learn. In the mid-twentieth century, a strategy to end hunger in the world through the widespread dissemination of high-yielding seeds, irrigation techniques, and chemicals was launched, and it would quickly become the standard for global agriculture across geopolitical divides. This new standard, coined the Green Revolution,expedited the transformation of vast parts of the world from traditional agrarian societies to market-oriented, state-coordinated commodity producers. In the Cold War era, American leaders and philanthropists such as the Rockefellers, the Ford Foundation, and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) believed that left-leaning sympathies were more likely to spread where there was poverty. Developing a profit-based model for agriculture in the Third World would therefore be an effective antidote to communism. While it did increase yields for some farmers and certain crops, the Green Revolution also pushed millions of agricultural producers into unemployment and caused unprecedented environmental damage and erosion of biodiversity.

Assad understood the potential of this approach to agriculture for his nation's economy. In 1977, he offered 948 hectares of land in Tel Hadya, south of Aleppo, to ICARDA, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas. ICARDA was part of a worldwide network of agricultural research centers called the CGIAR, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, funded by the very same entities that had first ignited the Green Revolution. ICARDA was initially established in Lebanon in 1976, but with the spread of the civil war that had erupted just a year earlier, it relocated its headquarters to Tel Hadya. Now, almost forty years later and with the rise of the

Syrian revolution, history has reversed, and ICARDA has evacuated its headquarters and moved back to Lebanon. It brought along some of its staff, livestock, and equipment, but was unable to move its gene bank. [3] Soon enough, ICARDA began duplicating the contents of the abandoned bank: over 140,000 accessions of seed samples from small farmers and the wild, in terrains as far apart as Afghanistan, Lebanon, and Ethiopia.

Folding Landscapes

Archives have recently served as muses for my artistic projects, nearly all of which have had something to do with characters and events that took place in the urban centers of the Levant. In my encounters with archives, I have noticed that they almost always address the subjects and materials of cities, a tendency that repeats itself in much contemporary artwork that takes the archive, or the non-existing archive, as its topic. Artifacts pertaining to rural traditions, on the other hand, such as crafts, music, and other cultural forms, tend to be placed in ethnographic

collections. In the norms of classical ethnography, the city has been synonymous with modernity, while the rural and the traditional have been synonymous with the primitive. Seen as being stuck in the past, these traditions require urgent preservation before being erased by Western industrialization and technological advances. The very terms “preservation” and “conservation” have understandably been tainted with ambiguity since the era of exploration by primarily European powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Recording as it erases, colonial violence seems to make celebration indistinguishable from invalidation. These structural problems pertaining to nostalgia in the face of looming eradication extend to the archiving of both animate and inanimate objects of culture.

Realizing the extent of these binary constructions, I decided to shift my focus from urban imaginaries to the mythologies of the rural, and to look at how different actors have negotiated their position towards the changes brought upon the agricultural landscape by modernity. I tried to visualize how taxonomic approaches to nature have accelerated material and social changes to the life cycles of plants and their allies, small farmers.

My research led me to George Edward Post, one of the first botanists to collect and categorize the flora of the Middle East. After finishing his service as a Union chaplain in the American Civil War, Post boarded a ship to Tripoli, Syria (now Lebanon). It was 1863 and he was starting a new life as a missionary and doctor, spreading the word of God and modern science to the Levant. There, he picked up Arabic at an impressive rate, and decided soon after arriving in Tripoli to move to Beirut, where he cofounded the medical school at the Syrian Protestant College, now known as the American University of Beirut (AUB). In his free time—that is to say, between working as a surgeon, a dentist, and a teacher; pursuing archaeology; and translating books into Arabic—Post ventured outdoors, where he collected plants and stuck them on paper sheets. Studying botany in Greater Syria was unlike exploring any other place, according to Post, “not only for the thrilling and important events of human history of which it has been the theatre, but for … its great diversity …

and its remarkable fauna and flora." [4] In the eye of the biblical scholar, flora in the land of the Bible carried clues to a better understanding of the scriptures. Post assigned his students an exercise: collect two hundred different plants and mount them as herbarium specimens. Post increased the students' grades the farther from Beirut they went to collect their plants. And so, with the help of dozens of unnamed students, he was able to establish one of the region's most extensive herbariums, under his name. Post's herbarium was, and continues to be, used for scientific study, surveying, and documentation (with access to such an extensive physical archive, Post was also able to author an encyclopedia of plants, titled *Flora of Syria, Palestine and Sinai*. The herbarium—effectively a cabinet-sized pre-Sykes-Picot landscape and a morgue of well-preserved, intoxicatingly beautiful forms—remains intact. Today it is located down one of the corridors of the biology department at AUB.

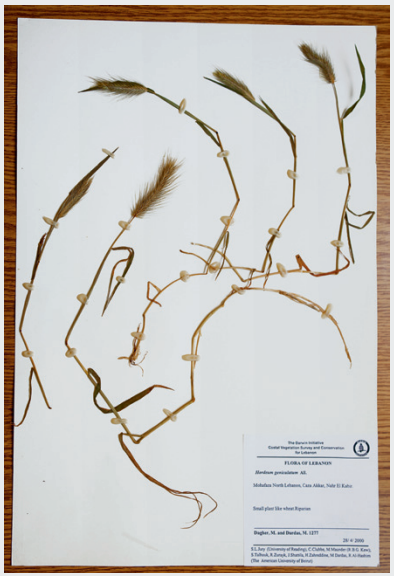
Such a painstaking organization of the Levantine landscape is the predecessor of gene banks like the one ICARDA is in the process of duplicating between Syria and Lebanon. Like a herbarium, a gene bank, with its encyclopedic impulse, is a particularly modernist image; an exhaustive hard-drive administering

what exists in the fields. Both constitute a continuum of centralizing power through collecting: the herbarium is biopower, anchored in history and colonial knowledge, while the seed bank's biopower extends that history into the management of diversity and life. Totalizing bodies of knowledge production are optimized in one central access point: Google-like portals, which reorganize not just the world's information while consolidating its points of access but also, like all colonial spatial endeavors, redefines the relationship of center to periphery. In these search engines, information is made useful, put to work, and monetized.

Indeed, in the nineteenth century, when the Levantine landscape was elegantly but forcefully made to fit a two-dimensional format—convenient for the eye of a microscope or the annotations of a map—it was also folded to fit big business, a practice that had begun two centuries earlier to quench Europe's national and trade ambitions. The studies of botany brought order to the "disorder" of plants and created systems that assisted the transfer of large amounts of flora and fauna from the four corners of the world to the European centers. With the history of this network of botanical gardens in mind, I could not help but read the agenda of the CGIAR system as an inheritor of that lineage, enacting the very logic and history of capitalism. That is, capitalism as a way of organizing nature, and with it, a racialized and disposable workforce.

Um Nadii, a mother of five, keeps a mouneh in a small room behind the kitchen, a storage of grains with barrels of lentils, burghul, chickpeas, as well as tomato sauce, pickles, dried fruits, and cheeses.

She recalls that her father used to travel from Houran to Mount Lebanon by camel, to barter his harvest. Back then, the family would eat from their harvested grain, trade with neighbors near and far, and keep a small amount aside for sowing the next season. Today, she buys most of her ingredients from the market, produce from as far away as Argentina, and as close by as local farms. Abu Nabil, her husband, stopped farming three decades ago. He makes a living from selling pesticides now.



It is Friday afternoon. Um Nabil scoops two cups of burghul and three cups of lentils out of the barrels and begins to prepare the meal as she waits her for her sons Nabil and Majd to return from their military service. She knows her children won't eat her food. "This is backwards peasant food," they often tell her. "It doesn't taste good anymore." As expected, they arrive home and order pizza, while Um Nabil and Abu Nabil eat the mjadara Later, Um Nabil asks her boys to go pick the grapes from their vineyard before the sun sets. But they don't know where the land is and frankly don't seem to care.

Entanglements

In Lebanon, I visited Post's herbarium. I made trips to the Bekaa Valley and its western mountain range, tracing the paths of the plants that had been brought to Beirut. I searched for contemporary parallels to the herbarium, visited nature reserves and agricultural institutions, and spoke to farmers, like Um and Abu Nabil, to gain insights on the realities small landholders face in

the area. When I made my first visit to ICARDA in the spring of 2016, in the village of Terbol in the Bekaa Valley, I was shown around the fields, labs, and a construction site, which, when finished, was to house the duplicate of the Aleppo gene bank. I learned ICARDA works primarily on me genetic improvement. Through breeding it releases new varieties of cereals and of legumes such as barley, lentil, fava bean, wheat, and chickpea, which are meant to increase yield and theoretically help farmers improve their livelihoods. ICARDA has three main objectives: food security, poverty reduction, and combating climatic challenges. To achieve these goals, ICARDA—whose mandated region covers approximately one-third of the Earth, from Australia to North Africa and beyond—makes use of a wide genetic pool created by farmer's selection and cultivation over hundreds of years, kept frozen in their gene bank. Within this rich pool, ICARDA crosses parents of different genotypes that would not cross under natural circumstances to create high yielding, disease resistant, drought tolerant seeds (these are not GMO seeds however).[5] When the characteristics of these seeds are stabilized and made uniform, they are shipped to government institutions and companies around the world. While ICARDA releases a number of new varieties each year, governments only certify a limited amount, based on their climatic needs as well as their control and regulation requirements. Throughout the twentieth century, this systemic limitation of varieties, along with other factors, has caused an immense loss of biodiversity.

In fact, the very paradox of improved varieties such as the ones released by ICARDA is that their dissemination eliminates the traditional varieties of seeds (landraces) from which they were made. This contradiction is at the heart of the creation of seed banks, which came about with the realization that in order to continue breeding new varieties, samples of landraces and wild varieties had to be saved, before they became extinct.

Breeding can be extremely beneficial in its ability to speed up a selection process that farmers have done over millennia. The main problem, however, has been one of scale, making

limited products to fit a globalized market rather than working in collaboration with farmers to develop a different variety for the microclimate of each area.[6] In the hopes of making more money from higher yields, farmers have been giving up their landraces and acquiring modern varieties instead. This entangles them and their soil in a system of dependence on the state, companies who sell seeds, and the chemical inputs they require. Caught in a cycle where diverse landraces are replaced by comparably uniform modern varieties, farmers could not consider the dangers—including the health hazards—of the system they were buying into. They had few alternatives to make a living,.

Today, many of the landraces frozen in ICARDA's gene bank, at minus eighteen degrees Celsius, no longer exist in farmers' fields. This system is in the double bind of being at once the protector and eliminator of biodiversity, an irony not lost on some of the employees. But their position is a common one, arguing that the game is over, that it's too late to fix the system. The global food regime—dependent on fossil fuels, vicious corporate control (one can look at the case of Monsanto to understand the consequences), and massive amounts of overproduction and waste—will not go away. Within this reality, we do our best. But critics are less forgiving. They claim that centers of this sort have had a top-down approach to farmers. Historically, such approaches "not only served as a mechanism for encouraging capitalist development in the Third World countryside, they are also vehicles for the efficient extraction of plant genetic resources from the Third World and their transfer to Europe, North America, and Japan."[7] The main concern of the CGIAR "is to have these materials effortlessly declared public property so that its scientists can freely continue their work."[8] Despite these collections being in the public domain, it is institutions, not farmers, who make use of the seed banks, due to the bureaucratic procedures shrouding them.[9]

Genetic resources taken from the farming communities in the Global South often end up being claimed as intellectual property in the industrialized North. Bio-piracy is a rampant problem in agribusiness and the CGIAR is not exempt. In one such case, seeds taken for free from ICARDA were patented completely unchanged by Australian private companies, but ICARDA decided not to pursue the case.[10] In fact, the organization does not bear responsibility if its seeds end up with companies that patent them for profit, nor does it have the capacity to monitor its germplasm flows. This passiveness and lack of monitoring are fundamental problems in the structural divide between scientific, ethical, and legal responsibilities.[11]

An agricultural plot of land has been poured over with cement to serve as an informal refugee camp in the Bekaa Valley. The land belongs to a Lebanese farmer named Abu Nabil, whose four sons are also in the army. He can no longer sustain a dignified living from working his land, so he turned part of it into a refugee camp. With grain being imported from abroad at cheaper prices, and with no government subsidies or protection, his yields barely cover input costs. Last year, the agricultural ministry refused to buy Abu Nabil's harvest, because a shipment came from the Ukraine at a far lower price. The tents go for fifty to one-hundred dollars a month, depending on their size. With about seventy tents, Abu Nabil makes over sixty-thousand dollars a year. What small farmer makes that kind of money today? Abu Adnan, a Syrian tenant, lives here with his one remaining son and his wife. His son had a twin brother, but he was killed right in front of them by one of the Assad regime's barrel bombs. They have a small strip of herbs and vegetables right outside their tent, which the son waters daily. Before the revolution, Abu Adnan planted his fields with grains and vegetables. Under the rule of Bashar al-Assad, the government paid farmers one hundred liras for a kilogram of wheat, and then sold the same amount of wheat on the open market for four hundred liras: a 400 percent profit for the government. So when the bureaucrat would come by to collect the harvest for the government's set price, Abu Adnan would pay a small bribe, keep his grain, and sell it for a slightly higher price on the black market. Even life as a sharecropper during feudal times was better than life under the Assad regime, he says.

In 2014, ICARDA walked backwards in its own footsteps: having left war-torn Lebanon in 1977, it now had to leave war-torn Syria. In order to duplicate its gene bank, ICARDA withdrew backup copies, which it had been storing in the Global Seed Vault (GSV) located in Svalbard, an island under Norwegian custody, in the Arctic Circle. The first batch of ICARDA's backup seeds was shipped to ICARDA's facility in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon and planted in the fields there.[12] The newly harvested seeds were then divided into four: two batches remained in the newly inaugurated ICARDA gene bank in Lebanon, one went to a sister institution as a backup, and the fourth batch returned to Svalbard, for long-term storage. Often referred to as the "doomsday vault,'[13] the GSV stores backups of many of the world's seeds, implicitly presenting itself as a last-chance reboot should the earth be hit by a major catastrophe. As the first institution to withdraw deposits from Svalbard, ICARDA's transaction captured the media's imagination, triggering a flurry of stories on Aleppo as doomsday unfolding.

Sensationalist headlines such as "How Syrians Saved an Ancient Seedbank from Civil War"[14] revolved around ambiguities shared in my own work—namely the manner in which a complex provenance gets reduced to false categories—but also how the categorization into scientific knowledge and the rescue of cultural-heritage objects always seems to involve a certain amount of erasure, whether of a narrative and/or material nature. I started my latest film, *Wild Relatives*, which follows the matrix of relationships involved in the transaction of these seeds between Svalbard and Lebanon, with the following questions: What has been erased in this process, and in whose hands are these seeds today? What are the negotiations involved in placing so-called Syrian seeds in the public domain? I wanted to respond to the dark irony of such an important collection of seeds for humanity's future being lodged in Aleppo, a city where weaponized starvation was being deployed.

I was also interested in motifs created by the extraction of different kinds of resources from the earth. In addition to being the largest storage facility for food-related seeds, Svalbard is also home to a number of shuttered, as well as operating coal mines. The place illustrates death and rebirth as a defining trait of the lifecycle of seeds, and what differentiates them from other resources extracted from the earth. Coal mining—the activity that first encouraged people to settle on the archipelago in the early twentieth century—is, in fact, constituted by millions of years of animal and plant life compressed underground. But while this resource can only be extracted and burnt once to produce energy, a single seed will multiply into grain, which can be sown again. A seed shipped overseas can provide the material base upon which a whole new sector of production can be established. If plant genetic resources received as free goods from the South have generated untold billions of dollars for advanced capitalist nations, how do we begin to imagine the discounted contribution of small Third World farmers to world civilization and commerce? Through dark exploitative force, the gift of these farmers has mutated into their own debt, the seeding of their offering reemerged as a toxin to their soil. Reciprocity and exchange came to be misinterpreted as aid and guilt. And no matter where the imagination leads, restoration can never provide refuge to the scale of this debt.

Ahmad is a Syrian refugee, living in the Bekaa together with his wife and two kids. He speaks fondly of a civil movement that smuggles seeds to rebel-held, besieged areas in Syria, together with manuals instructing residents on how to cultivate without chemical inputs.

Ahmad used to live not far from ICARDA's station in Tel Hadya, Aleppo. Some of his family members worked there, and he himself has planted both ICARDA seeds and landraces. He does not believe in the validity of their scientific work, arguing that their methods erode the soil and do not benefit farmers but rather the state. Ahmad oversees an organic garden, which has the primary aim of multiplying old landraces from the region and abroad. These seeds are kept in a small clay-walled room, a

seed library, with glass jars and paper bags. Anyone who wishes to farm organically can take seeds for free. He breeds worms, which give life to the soil, and makes natural pesticide out of garlic and nettle leaf. His dream is to return to Syria and open an agriculture school that will teach organic farming, based on seed sharing as well as total independence from the regime and all multi-national companies.

Making a Fuss

In keeping with international trends over the decades, ICARDA and its partner institutions in the CGIAR have made changes to their rhetoric, embracing and integrating concepts such as "environmentalism" and, more recently, "sustainability" [15] Nevertheless, they remain firmly grounded in technological determinism, seeking scientific solutions to structural inequalities. Today, the influence of the CGIAR is on the decline due to the increasing power of philanthropic giants like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, coupled with the majority of the seed market being in the hands of the world's three largest agribusinesses: Monsanto, DuPont, and Syngenta. To ensure survival, this public not-for-profit system is developing partnerships with the private sector, adding representatives from Monsanto and Bill and Melinda Gates to their funding councils. But in effect, such organizations are the promoters of a second Green Revolution, repeating the failed promise to solve hunger and malnutrition for a soaring world population. [16] A bottom-line approach to profit has clouded the biggest lesson of the past century—that the climate crisis, as well as hunger and malnutrition, cannot be confronted as a techno-bureaucratic problem alone. [17] Noticeably absent is a more profound epistemological shift, wherein these technological tools are integrated into holistic sociohistorical factors.

Political economist Ali Kadri addresses these factors, which are the blind spots of neoliberal policies, writing that "[b]etween 1980 and 2010, around 70 million people left the countryside for the cities in the Arab World." This exodus, inflicted partially by

the Green Revolution and similar reforms, has caused cultural and economic shifts in the landscapes of the Middle East. It has brought unemployment, making lives dispensable and leaving few alternatives for rural communities. In this process, a profound amount of traditional knowledge and social structure has been lost. Farmers have been pushed out of their fields, laid latent underground, only to re-emerge in cities as mushrooms and super weeds, at times dangerous, at times benign—and often life-giving. Increasingly, a disregard for agrarian life and its historically deep knowledge forms is breeding the amnesic offspring of family farmers. Mirroring the farmers' amnesia is the spread of uniform crops, which have been forced to forget large parts of their genetic heritage.

The latest amplifications of biotechnology's quest to control nature makes all the more pressing the necessity of regulation, and the need for a legal framework that can adapt to the dizzying speed of the advances and at the same time be able to enforce ethical norms around designer genetic sequences. Developments such as CRISPR, [18] a gene-editing technology, can entirely re-engineer ecosystems by promoting the passing of certain genes from one generation to the next while eliminating others. In this editing process, a certain virus, bacteria, or species can be made extinct, or a desired trait can be spread across an entire population, radically altering the fundamentals of evolution. [19][20] Speculating on a future where seeds are virtual brings forth the specter of stockbroker-style bidding on seed banks and the digital libraries that are proliferating with them. And if we project that physical banks might be rendered obsolete and replaced with digital databases' genetic sequences as code, what then happens to the materiality of soil, of land? Is it just a matter of time before soil, too, becomes a virtual affair? Perhaps the folding of space which began with European exploration will eventually eliminate space altogether, for the efficiency of human communication and survival.

In the meantime, the landscape of the Middle East only gets weedier. As talks of doomsday remain as persistent as ever, it is worth keeping in mind that the pairing of the scientific and

theological obsessions with doomsday, extermination, and extinction have only deepened crises. Rather than hedge on the "undo" command [21] approach—destroy the world and hope to rebuild it with databases, manuals, museums—why not conceive of a world where life is habitable amid the present and future ruins. We can rather make a fuss as a way of "cultivating responsibility" as Donna Haraway puts it, in order "to be witnesses for the possibility of other ways of doing." [22] The fuss of resisting the convenience of "it's too late anyway," the fuss of living otherwise, of living outside cycles of erasure-preservation-erasure, of living with more gifts and less poison.

All images were taken by the artist at the Post Herbarium, Natural History Museum, American University of Beirut, 2017.

[1] Quoted in Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of ist Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 193.

[2] These factors include education, health, transportation, electricity, and the exemption of income tax.

[3] The majority of the staff was decentralized primarily to four different countries: Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, and Egypt. The management was moved to Beirut, with research centers established in the Bekaa Valley.

[4] George E. Post, *Flora of Syria, Palestine and Sinai (From the Taurus to Ras Muhammad, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Syrian Desert)* (Beirut: Syrian Protestant College, 1896), 22.

[5] A genetically modified organism (GMO) is an organism whose genetic material has been altered to incorporate new genes from a completely unrelated species, using genetic engineering techniques.

[6] The Italian scientist Salvatore Ceccarelli worked with ICARDA for three decades. In the 1980s, he launched a participatory plant-breeding program in two dozen Syrian villages, aiming to develop seed types according to each farmer's needs. Explained to me by Ceccarelli in an interview, "One of the major differences between participatory and conventional plant-breeding is that with participatory breeding, you develop almost as many varieties as villages. You basically adapt the crops to the environments, rather than changing the environment to let the bred crop express its full potential; exactly the opposite of the philosophy of the Green Revolution." This close farmer-researcher collaboration in plant genetic improvement aims to bring back the control to the farmers, so they decide which varieties are planted, eaten, and sold while also maintaining a diversity of species in the fields. Fearful of losing control over farmers and the market, the Syrian Ministry of Agriculture finally shut the program down, preferring to stick to uniform crops and official registrations.

[7] Jack Ralph Kloppenburg, Jr., *First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology, 1492–2000*, second edition (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 189.

[8] See, for example: https://grain.org/article/entries/1883-biopiracy-by-another- name

[9] The FAO and the CGIAR include a standard Material Transfer Agreement (MTA) in every box that contains a transfer of germplasm from the centers to whomever requests samples. This MTA tells the recipient that they have "no rights" to claim intellectual property over the material "in the form received." In other words, breeders are free to cross this seed with another to create a minor change in the genetic makeup, and then patent it legally. Direct commercialization of the germplasm, by multiplying and distributing seeds to famers, is within the bounds of the agreement.

[10] See, for example: https://grain.org/article/entries/233-the-chickpea-scandal- trust-or-consequences

[11] Even within the normal functioning of the CGIAR, the countries that benefit most are those with a well-developed agricultural system. For instance, a large part of

Australia's grain and legume production is based on ICARDA varieties. The CGIAR rhetoric of food security and poverty alleviation for small farmers in the Global South must therefore be put to question.

[12] Here, this global entity takes on a local flavor. Labor in the fields is executed by low-wage workers, usually Syrian refugees and settled nomads. Under the supervision of scientists, these laborers complete a full annual cycle of growth in the fields. This consists of planting, harvesting, threshing, and drying. The duplication of the entire collection from Aleppo, via the Svalbard backups, is estimated to take up to fifteen years, meaning fifteen yearly cycles of this sort.

[13] Elaine Gan, "Seed Vault: Freezing Life for Doomsday," in *Elemental: An Arts and Ecology Reader*, edited by Krista Lynes (London: Cornerhouse Publications, 2016), 119–21.

[14] See: https://wired.com/2015/04/syrians-saved-ancient-seedbank-civil-war

[15] ICARDA now works on water and resource management and has introduced famers to zero-tillage seeders that minimize soil erosion and moisture loss.

[16] For more on this topic, see Raj Patel's "The Long Green Revolution," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 40, no.1 (2013): 1–63.

[17] Naomi Klein, "Let Them Drown," *London Review of Books* (February 6, 2016) https://lrb.co.uk/v38/n11/naomi-klein/let-them-drown.

[18] Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats

[19] For more on gene drives, see: http://etcgroup.org/content/reckless-driving- gene-drives-and-end-nature

[20] Companies such as Monsanto are already investing in this technology, raising fears that such strategies may strengthen their domination of the market.

[21] Gan, 2.

[22] See Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret, *Women Who Make a Fuss: The Unfaithful Daughters of Virginia Woolf*, trans. April Knutson (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2014), and Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 131.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE UTOPIAN IMAGE

Marwa Arsanios

If we think about "utopia" apart from its definition as an idyll, an image of an elsewhere linked to the desire for territorial expansion, then let us attempt to think about it in the present, as in the making—this is far from an idyllic image. This will entail stepping into the space of political action, while carrying within oneself the imagination, the ideologies, the politics one seeks to practice. It will involve entering the political field and not only watching it from a distance. The drive towards utopia can, of course, only be a collective movement, otherwise we linger inside a capitalist utopia—linger inside the slick, polished image.

I will attempt here to think through the image of utopia, the way it is produced and drawn, and the way it produces the political unconscious, affects it, and is affected by it. I will think through a few ecological feminist projects that deal with such questions of land repossession and the manner with which they perform a certain utopian aspiration. These projects were forced to reimagine utopia, because of a direct threat to a community's survival, whether a situation of war or targeted murder.

Marwa Arsanios, Still from *Who is Afraid of Ideology? Part 2*, 2019

Being a child of the 1980s and an adolescent during the 1990s as a young adult I looked for an experience of utopia in smaller communities and avoided confrontation with the wider political

sphere; in fact, I imagined that the only possibility for the utopian moment lay in the retrieval or retreat from society. Perhaps this relates to the ideals of modernism, or even the 1960s North American/North European experiments of living in libertarian, egalitarian communes. Although these were in absolute contradiction with my own reality and immediate surroundings, somehow together they became my dominant utopian image, and it took some time to break away from it.

I have always viewed myself as a hyper-urban subject. I grew up in Beirut and witnessed its reconstruction over the 1990s. Once a no-man's-land, the city quickly turned into a haven for neoliberal urban experiments based on property dispossession and expropriation. Nevertheless, I fantasized about, and probably fetishized, too, the utopian idyll as being a calm, far-away "green retreat"—I was performing the neoliberal imagination at its best. This projection was more than likely a way to avoid the political paralysis Lebanon had been dealing with over two generations, along with the fear of yet another political failure.

My first encounter with political organizing in the broader sense was through a feminist organization. It had become obvious to me that I had to step outside the limits of the arts, culture, and academia. However, here, I was also met with a certain establishment: in this case, a hegemonic feminism that had been promulgated mostly through NGOs, those institutions founded on individual rights and other identarian discourse produced in the post-war period. This was, of course, not so straightforward. The post–Cold War political subject has more often been built on a mix of ideologies in conflict with one another. And so, in turn, was my feminist political consciousness.

I did experience the materialization of utopia in other separatist feminist movements later on. But again, I faced nothing but contradiction. To accept political disappointments and the accumulation of defeat, whether inherited or directly experienced, is all part of building the utopian image. With every utopian imaginary comes the dystopic. They are dialectically entangled: the possibility of dystopia is embedded in every attempt at imagining utopia. I soon realized that inhabiting the

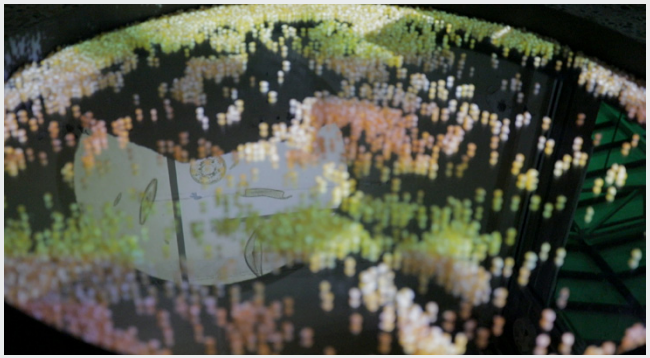
contradiction was the only way forward. Whether initiating a cultural project for the few, running away to a commune, or attempting to establish feminist politics inside the institution—the most reformist move—I was stepping outside the harshness of the urban, capitalist environment, but also the field of politics. So small communal experiments ceased being the only parameter for me. This is when a new utopian image surfaced.

Utopia has had differing meanings. It once referred to a mass movement that takes over a place, a territory, a country, yet without the acknowledgement of slipping into a dystopic situation. Later, the term was used for political projects, such as socialism formed in the nineteenth century. Today, I ask, what would a feminist socialist utopia come to mean? Could we delve into this imagination? Would it occur on a large scale? How could such autonomous zones be organized? Could we think about this utopic imagination outside of the drive for property and the repossession of land and territory (seen even in the case of the commune)?

To imagine utopia is to enter into fiction, of economics, politics, social arrangements, and agreements. It is a literary act in itself. It also relates to a very concrete, legal act of drafting a social contract, as evident in social realism. An act of writing and an act of planning, which means "drawing." Let us also add "science" in the feminist tradition of science-fiction novels, those written about a world either free of men or with dystopic predictions for the future. With both of these strands of science fiction and social realism, perhaps it could be possible to imagine this feminist utopia expanding into a wider social sphere and reshaping social relations outside of capitalist relations of production and society.

The drawing, planning, and construction of my own utopian image— made of soil, earth, and concrete— first came from the experience of being at a women-only commune in Jinwar. The commune is built on repossessed land. And although it seems close to what a twentieth century modernist utopia would look like in its architectural plan, the way the project is organized connects with a political life built around the notion of assembly. The commune also aspires towards producing a self-sufficient agricultural microeconomy, one that is in direct relation with

the land and closely familiar with the lives of fauna and flora. The feminist plan for the commune came from the absolute need to survive in a situation of war. The "image concrete" of the commune claims to tell the truth. But is it an image for what utopia could be (in the modern sense of a future projection)? Perhaps we should reframe the question and ask about the material upon which this utopian image is built, its maintenance and its changeability. What if the earth used to build the houses of the commune transformed with water and time? What kind of image would that become?



Still from *Who is Afraid of Ideology? Part 3*, 2020, set concept and design by Vinita Gatne

To build another utopia comes from the urgency of present conditions: the unsustainable economic system, for example. When the illusion of this apparently solid system melts into liquid, the solid image melts away too—in documentary terms, twenty-four frames per second dissolves. One must take advantage of this liquid moment in order to enter the matter of the liquid image. The utopian image. And its contradictions.

The making of the utopian image is a question of vision, optics, and lenses. It is an image that is in movement. It has no fixed frames and so can be easily extended. It is an image of an abstracted landscape, produced in a situation of disarray and on the run. An image that multiplies and shapes itself according to the level of liquid or its lack. An image that absorbs its producers and transforms their hands, body, faces into its subject. An image that is shapeless, yet some solid entities can be identified on closer inspection. An image that unlike the solid documentary image cannot be identified and placed into a genre. The liquid image is heard and listened to in drops. It belongs as much to the realm of the unconscious as it does to consciousness. It also belongs to social media and the physical analogue world. It is a twirl. It gets stuck on a surface and then falls with a splash, leaving traces. The liquid image is a promenade. The liquid image belongs to many spaces at once. It also belongs to many ideologies that it adapts and adopts. It changes texture and color; there is a formal change with every ideological shift.

This liquid image-to-come is an image in movement. And closer to the idea of utopia in the present it makes space for contradictions, mutations, and voids. According to Newtonian physics the void is where there is an absence of matter, an absence of property and laws; it has no energy. Feminist theorist Karen Barad conversely states that in quantum physics, the vacuum is where particles are created; there is an inseparability between void and matter. The vacuum is not silence, it is speaking; it is murmuring, she says. It counters Newton's concept, which was ultimately used as a colonial and capitalist expansionist excuse to reclaim and expropriate. It is a space of constant energy formation, a space to watch and listen to.

Utopia, too, can be a counter-expansionist project and build around the smallest entity, such as a seed or bacteria. When the smallest grain becomes the essential thing, utopia stops being a human-made plan or a human-made projection only. We start seeing the utopian image inside the earth, inside the ground, or underground. Rather than building the solid concrete image, we dig for it. Yet, in digging we do not extract. We watch the utopian image as it forms. It is made of small particles moving together in groups. An image from under the ground or what lies beneath. It is a reappropriation of territory by small entities and creatures.

While walking through agricultural land in Tolima, south of Colombia, I came upon a site where a seed guardian was once murdered and so stopped to pay my respects. I noticed that what is now delineated as the scene of a crime is a space that cannot

Still from *Who is Afraid of Ideology? Part 3*, 2020, set concept and design by Vinita Gatne

be fully seen nor captured by the camera lens; not that it cannot be framed, but that it cannot be captured. There is always a surplus of sight or a more than vision. Where a crime happens is indicated by the corpse itself, where the corpse fell and landed or where it was found. How the earth actually remembers this fall is different, however. It becomes a question of matter and material memory: the way the murder has affected the soil. The effect of the fallen corpse on the soil spreads much wider than the surface marking of the crime. It also takes the form of bacteria and other living entities, to be seen under the microscopic lens. Departing from Hannah Landecker's concept of the microcinematic image, we can perhaps think of the zoom lens as a tool to get closer to the soil of the crime site. The formations of bacteria that travel between body and soil are mainly invisible, but not only. If we think of the body as a bacterial mass, we no longer see it as having borders in the first place: the human becomes indistinct from its environment, and, more precisely, from its non-human environment. There is more life underground than there is on the surface of the planet, or in the air. This microbial dark matter of mysterious creatures consists mainly of bacteria and archaea; within each form are millions of distinct types, many of which are still to be discovered.

How could one look through the zoom lens at a woman carrying a seed and explain why she has been working to conserve it? How could one look again at the same woman in an agricultural field and show the smallest of dust particles which emerge from her working? How could one dig for the formations of bacteria that rest inside that soil without disturbing its development and make an image of this? There are the macro and the micro lenses, there is the mapping and the zooming out, there is the zooming in on the soil and the observation of the microorganisms within. There is the constant movement between. Between microscopic and telescopic viewing, macro and micro farming.

It is undeniably cold murder that is linked to the struggles for land and seed autonomy of the Campesino movements in Central and South America. This much became starkly clear to me when I met Mercy Vera, a farmer from the Pijao Indigenous community in Tolima, along with Samanta Arango from Colombia's Grupo Semillas and María Estela Barco Huerta, the general coordinator of DESMI, the most important association of Indigenous farmers in Chiapas. Barco referred to the fight for seed conservation and food sovereignty as "la guerra permanente y sistémica" (the ongoing systematic war). She also said, "si los pueblos indígenas pierden, pierde el mundo" (if Indigenous people lose, the whole world will lose). She talked about how this war is waged on the smallest things, the most essential things, such as corn seeds. Taking away the seeds deprives people of the basic right to nourishment; it deprives them of their right to be a peasant, forces them to migrate and to rely on industrial systems of food production.

Corn and native seeds are life that our ancestors bestowed upon us, and that we must pass on to our children. Corn represents resistance and struggle. It has a heart, it has nutrients, and it is the healthiest thing we have.

A few years ago, Mercy Vera went to sleep every night thinking that she would be murdered. Many of her comrades had been killed by Colombia's paramilitaries; everyone in her community expected to be next. "We Indigenous people live very close to our seeds," she said. Seeds are history, they represent heritage, and

they are proof of belonging to a certain community, to a place and to a land, as they are passed from one generation to the next. Seed autonomy is a threat for transnational corporations, governments, and paramilitaries. The reasons vary for each of these bodies, but significantly it is safety and, most importantly, self-sufficiency that seed banks give peasants, which, in turn, can potentially lead to marginalizing the state institution's "legal apparatus," the agribusiness of transnational corporations, and both patent and genetically modified crops. Samanta Arango from Grupo Semillas, an organization that was established in Bogotá to ensure conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity as well as collective human rights over territories and food sovereignty, added:

Once a Pijao woman told me that we have forgotten our language, but we will not give up our seeds. So, the seeds became like a symbol of resistance. The Pijao's recuperation of their land was done through the seeds. Those lands were considered colonial guards. During the twentieth century the lands were divided in the aim of privatizing them. Since the 1970s the Pijao have been taking back their land through seed recuperation. There is much resistance—groups like FARC were born there. Peasants are stuck in the middle of the war.

Arango works with different Indigenous communities throughout Colombia to assist in building seed banks. She also referred to the question of gender and of women as guardians in this process:

There is a very important figure for the Pijao community, which is Casica do lima, the seed guardian. She was considered a witch by the Spanish conquistadores. They thought that she was concealing a golden treasure. When they captured her, they discovered that it wasn't gold, but seeds. Before they killed her, she liberated the seeds in her territory.

Seeds, then, become the central element around which we can build another understanding of utopia. The smallest entities found inside the ground is the drive. One can imagine the tunnels, the under-image, the under-earth of the utopian image. Although we are forced to reimagine utopia because of the conditions in the present (survival, weather, the context of war, such as the women-only commune in Jinwar or targeted murder in Tolima), there is a feminist potential for its image at this time. It remembers land dispossession and is rebuilt on reappropriation, from the underground.

Bibliography

— Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter." In *Signs* 28, no. 3 (Spring 2003), 801–31.

— Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* (New York: Warner Books, 1993).

— Hannah Landecker, "Creeping, Drinking, Dying: The Cinematic Portal and the Microscopic World of the Twentieth Century Cell." In *Science in Context* 24, no. 3, 2011, 381–416.

— Ursula K. Le Guin, *Always Coming Home*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

— Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed: A Novel.* New York: HarperCollins, 1974.

Synopsis

The following films were either screened in the film programme *Contested Landscapes* at Archive in Berlin in December/January 2021/22 or at Archive in Milano to contextualise the exhibition *Contested Landscape*.

ETWAS TUT WEH
Recha Jungmann

72 min, feature film, 16 mm, 1980

Something Hurts is a film between genres. On the one hand, the highly subjective research delves into the past and on the other hand, explores the reverse side of that subjectivity: the fall into the worst objectivity. One can say: a filmed letter but also a fragment on the political behavior of those who co-dictated the letter. A regional study and, at the same time, very intimate research. Recha Jungmann brings up the history that hurts her in images. A self-questioning exploration about home, past, and the saved present, which does not belong to her. She has to reconstruct them from the ruins of the broken house of her childhood, Welkers, a village in the Rhön. The house fell apart after the war.

But it was destroyed by fascism, which took the father for the war and stamped the grandfather, who voted "No" in 1933, as an outsider. With him the village lost its spiritual center, against him it completed its connection to the "Greater German Reich."

A young girl of perhaps seven years tiptoes and hops through the abandoned house, tarried at open doors, roams through bushes to the brook. A teenager of perhaps seventeen inspects, with curious steps that tread cautiously, objects in the house whose use is now useless. Old magazines, postcards, photographs from which to blow the dust until the faded happiness of better times appears. A woman in her thirties walks, goal-orientated, through the streets of the village towards the exit, as if she were running after the mail bus that will take her back to the city. Reflections, traces of the past on one's own body in three body-stages, never cut developmentally, but running crisscross. *Something Hurts* is a film that gently and persistently stimulates the five senses to politically comprehend the history inscribed in the body. [Karsten Witte]

WESTERWALD: EINE HEIMSUCHUNG

Sandra Schäfer

2-channel video installation, 4K to HD, 43:40 min, 2021

Based on August Sander's series of Westerwald farmers, Berlin artist Sandra Schäfer tackles the transformation of the rural region, in which she grew up in, in her video installation *Westerwald —Eine Heimsuchung* (A Visitation). Schäfer juxtaposes August Sander's perspective with her own contemporary view. For it is also about how a region, its landscape and agricultural use have changed over the course of time.

In her artistic work, Schäfer is interested in the various contemporary forms of witnessing and their entanglements: How do the relatives/portrait subjects speak about the (artistic/documentary) pictures by August Sander? What does it mean to hear the dialect that also marks a class difference? What knowledges exist about the photographer and his approach? How does this differ from that of photo curators in the museum context? And what does it mean for the artist, who was born and raised in this region, to return to create an artistic work?

The confrontation with the concrete landscape raises the question of what the depiction from different perspectives and the reaction it evokes means and causes. Consequentially, it is also about how landscape, with all its political implications, sediments as a "visitation." [Sandra Schäfer]

WILD RELATIVES

Jumana Manna

64 min, Film, HD video, 2018

Deep in the earth beneath the Arctic permafrost, seeds from all over the world are stored in the *Svalbard Global Seed Vault* to provide a backup should disaster strike. *Wild Relatives* starts from an event that has sparked media interest worldwide: in 2012 an international agricultural research center was forced to relocate from Aleppo to Lebanon due to the Syrian Revolution turned war and began a laborious process of planting their seed collection from the Svalbard backups. Following the path of this transaction of seeds between the Arctic and Lebanon, a series of encounters unfold a matrix of human and non-human lives between these two distant spots of the earth. It captures the articulation between this large-scale international initiative and its local implementation in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon, carried out primarily by young migrant women. The meditative pace patiently teases out tensions between state and individual, industrial, and organic approaches to seed saving, climate change, and biodiversity, witnessed through the journey of these seeds.
[Jumana Manna]

WHO IS AFRAID OF IDEOLOGY?

Marwa Arsanios

Part 4, 2021, 28:11 min

Marwa Arsanios's *Who is afraid of ideology?* series introduces the struggles of women—in places including Northern Syria, Lebanon and Colombia—to claim the right to land and to reconnect with nature. Arsanios addresses themes of self-defense, ecofeminism, ownership, healing, state control, autonomy, collectivity, indigenous struggle, seed growing, and land rights. Her films investigate the ways ideology can coincide with living practice.

Part 4 first version (2021) combines struggles for land rights and water in Columbia and Lebanon. In Columbia the owners of rice plantages force you to rent your land to them and work for low wages on the plantage. If you stick to your land, you have to resist the multinational corporations and the systems complicit with them. It is dangerous. The film problematizes the difficulty to frame the crime site where one of the indigenous seed guardians was killed. It asks how the soil and the bacteria remember this criminal act and the violence of land-grabbing that is inscribed in the landscape. In between, the film shifts to abstract levels asking about the different readings of the void: it is the absence of matter for some or in quantum physics it is where the creation of particles takes place. The film narration highlights the inseparability of void and matter. The rhythm of a

techno-sound accompanies the microscopic drive through a pipe, shifts to a landscape, showing then the hands of the filmmaker counting and asking how to measure land. A reverse camera movement leads us through the landscape of Mount Lebanon, telling in a voiceover of peasant struggles during the Ottoman empire and the story of disinheritance of this land of a female family member. [Sandra Schäfer]

THE BLUES. CHRONICLES OF POLITICAL SENTIMENT

Anna Lajolo and Guido Lombardi

16mm b/n and color, 70 min, 1976, Italy

All three parts of the film take place in a rural setting. A peasant describing the natural world through his own experiences and sensitivity—based on a worldview we would call anti-speciesist and ecologist—is the protagonist in the first part. In the second, a group of men and women of different ages gather for a party in a rural house in which construction is underway. In the last part, two former partisans reunite in Cichero, a place of resistance in Liguria where they fought during the war. Both lament the failed political situation in Italy, as well as the betrayal of hopes and objectives that led them and many young people to fight against Nazi fascism.

The three parts of the film are respectively devoted to nature, party, and politics; they form the three chronicles in the title, three moments and events which yet express a political sentiment, a position of alterity in relation to the dominant culture, and a voice of freedom, embodied by each character, and echoed by the formal choices of the film. As a result, the work has an open and hybrid architecture that the authors themselves place between narrative and essay, and that concludes their cinematic experience (in filmstrip).

Having been immersed in 8 and 16 mm experimental cinema until 1971, Anna Lajolo and Guido Lombardi, together with

Alfredo Leonardi, another underground filmmaker, formed the video collective *Videobase*, experimenting with a new medium rooted in politics to produce videos about revolutionary and base movements of that time, such as house occupations, hospital workers at the Policlinic in Rome, and the workers' struggles at Fiat.

Between them and in their approach to documented realities, they refine a method for working that treasures some features of the video, making it an analytical and knowledge-giving tool. In one respect, the return to cinema with *The Blues. Chronicles of Political Sentiment* in this context can be seen in continuity with the five films of the alphabet series made between 1968 and 1971, as this last work (corresponding to the letter F) is included in it; however, it is also connected to the more explicitly militant activity carried out in the videotape.

The film is described in a 1976 article in *Altrocinema* as an instance of "deviant cinema," that is a cinema unlike traditional production and language mechanics, and different from solipsism of underground cinema, capable to present itself even politically as a new popular and base culture. The attempt would have required a specific (productive, political, creative) milieu in order to act as a starting point, but instead ended a cinematographic season and practice. [Annamaria Licciardello]

PAGES OF NATURAL HISTORY

Margherita Malerba

minidv and super8, color, sound, 75 min, 2019

This movie, a study of the landscape that moves between a natural and historical timeline, takes place over the course of a year in an area situated in northern Tuscany, between the Apennines and the Apuan Alps, in the provinces of Lucca, Pistoia and Massa Carrara. A geography of woods, mountains, valleys, and streams defines this hard and inaccessible region.

Images are chronologically edited to follow the variations and transformations caused by the change of seasons and light. Despite its natural beauty, however, the natural landscape preserves an imprint of human intervention, not just in the form of villages—dotting valleys or ridges—bridges, and roads, but also in the form of stone and marble quarries, which have been among the area's most important economic activities for centuries.

The area has, in fact, for most of its history, been among the most depressed in the region, the most depopulated and the furthest away from the postcard-like images that make Tuscany popular abroad as a tourist destination. In contrast, here, you will find abandoned houses, villages, and factories that were abandoned during the twentieth century and now lie in ruin. Visiting these sites, Margherita Malerba collected the remains, "the shards," of those who once lived in those houses, as an archaeologist would do.

In books, photographs, newspapers, sound recordings, and family films, we find an unofficial record of this region, of the lives that have crossed it, of the large and small events that have taken place here. These documents seem to have become a part of the landscape themselves, as if they are either debris that has accumulated over time, or ghostly apparitions of a past time embedded in the branches of trees, and now recalled in order to witness something that is no longer there.

Pages of Natural History is the first feature film by Margherita Malerba, born in Pavia but based in Bologna, and was presented in 2019 at the FidMarseille. In 2014, she made the short film *Rekongrodek*, co-directed with Devin Horan, who takes care of the editing with her. [Annamaria Licciardello]

Bios

Marwa Arsanios' practice opens questions of structures and infrastructures. What is common? How can we make use of it together and defend it? From architectural spaces, their transformation and adaptability throughout conflict, to artist run spaces and temporary conventions between feminist communes and cooperatives from different geographies, Arsanios's practice tends to make space within and parallel to existing art structures to experiment with different kind of politics. Film becomes another form and a space for connecting struggles in the way images refer to other images. In the past four years Arsanios has been attempting to think these questions through from a new materialist and historical materialist perspective through the lens of different feminist movements that are struggling for land. She tries to look at questions of property, law, economy, and ecology from specific plots of land. The main protagonists become these lands and the people who work them.

Madeleine Bernstorff is a film programmer, writer, and teacher. She explores the cinema of avant-garde groups, migration, decolonial and resistance movements, as well as early cinema in research-based, feminist-motivated, and mostly collaborative projects. Bernstorff teaches film history focusing on documentary theory, experimental film, boundaries of documentary, and the small form. She is also a long-standing member of the selection committee of the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival. In 2017, she worked with a group of activists, artists, and cultural workers producing short video spots to mobilise against rightwing structural racism in the context of NSU-Complex: *tribunal-spots.net*; Further information can be found under: *madeleinebernstorff.de*

Reinhard Braun, a writer and curator, lives and works in Graz. From 2004 to 2007, he was a visiting lecturer at University of Applied Arts, Graz; from 2007 to 2010, a curator for visual arts at steirischer herbst festival; and from 2011 to 2014, a visiting lecturer at Universität für künstlerische und industrielle Gestaltung, Linz. Since 2011 he has been artistic director of Camera Austria and publisher of *Camera Austria International* magazine. His most recent curatorial projects include *Oliver Ressler: Barricading the Ice Sheets* (2021), *Sandra Schäfer: Contaminated Landscapes* (2021), *Tizza Covi & Rainer Frimmel: On the Margins*, *Belinda Kazeem-Kamiński,* and *Günther Selichar* (2022).

Kerstin Faber is a M. Arch., planner, author and urbanist, and has been a project leader of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Thuringia STADTLAND since 2014. She specializes in topics of Rurbanism, space-design projects with new governance structures and innovative project development in rural regions. From 2003 to 2010 she was a project developer for the IBA Urban Redevelopment 2010 about shrinking cities in East Germany, from 2011 to 2014 she taught as a lecturer at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) in the Department of International Urban Design. Kerstin Faber is co-editor of the publication *Spatial pioneers in rural regions* in association with Philipp Oswalt (Spector Books, Leipzig 2013) and guest editor of the *Arch+* magazine *Stadtland. The New Rurbanism* (Edition 228, Berlin 2017).

Recha Jungmann is a film director, screenwriter, cinematographer, actress and film producer. Jungmann is considered one of the early filmmakers of the New German Cinema. She studied at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hanover from 1956 to 1959 and then worked as an actress at the Schauspielhaus Frankfurt, the Forum Theater in Berlin, the Komödie in Kassel and Theater 44 in Munich. From 1964 to 1966 she studied film at the Hochschule

für Gestaltung in Ulm, with Detten Schleiermacher, Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge and others. Her first feature and short films were shown at national and international film festivals: *Renate* 1968 at the 1. Festival Junger Deutscher Film, Hamburg. 1973 *Two Right, Two Left, Drop One* at the 1. International Women Film Festival, Toronto. *Etwas tut weh* premiered at the International Film Festival Rotterdam in 1980. The latter also screened in the Forum section at the Berlin International Film Festival in 1980. Her subsequent feature film *Zwischen Mond und Sonne* (1981) also premiered at the Berlinale. In the late 1970s she worked as a writer and director for the television station ZDF and in the 1990s she made television documentaries for public television broadcasters. She also worked as a writer for Hessischer Rundfunk and developed scripts for TV feature films and magazine features.

Annamaria Licciardello is a film curator, historian, and archivist with a special focus on Italian experimental and militant cinema from the '60s and '70s. She wrote a monograph on Alberto Grifi's cinema (*Il cinema laboratorio di Alberto Grifi,* 2018) and edited two books: in 2009, *Paolo Gioli. Imprint cinema* (coed. Sergio Toffetti)), and in 2019 *Flatform. Films and works 2008–2019*. She has also published essays in reviews and books. She has collaborated as a programmer with several film festivals. Since 2007 she works at CSC-Cineteca Nazionale (National Film Archive).

Jumana Manna is a visual artist living in Berlin. In recent projects, she has used film and sculpture to recompose various archival materials that pertain to historical narratives of the Levant and northern Europe as separate and relational geographies. These works have explored the ways in which economic, political, and interpersonal forms of power condition architectural, human, and plant life. Manna has a particular interest in the erasures that accompany the preservation practices of modernity;

her projects challenge the binary constructions of a pure and unchanging heritage on the one hand, and the embrace of innovation on the other.

Sandra Schäfer is an artist, working with film and video installations. In them, she deals with processes of unfolding and rereading of documents, images, spatial narratives, and performative gestures. Often her works are based on longer research projects, in which she is concerned with the margins, gaps, and discontinuities of our perception of history, political struggle, and urban and geopolitical spaces. Her works were exhibited at the 66th and 67th Berlinale (Forum Expanded), Berlin; at Camera Austria, Graz; Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Siegen; Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; mumok, Vienna; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Depo, Istanbul; La Virreina, Barcelona. Schäfer also is professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich and an associated member of the feminist film distributor Cinenova in London. She edited the books: *Moments of Rupture: Space, Militancy & Film,* Spector Books, Leipzig (2020), *stagings. Kabul, Film & Production of Representation*, b_books, Berlin (2009) and *Kabul/Teheran 1979ff. Filmlandschaften, Städte unter Stress und Migration*, b_books, Berlin (2006, together with Jochen Becker and Madeleine Bernstorff).

Åsa Sonjasdotter is an artist, researcher, writer, and organizer, living on the island of Ven in Sweden and in the city of Berlin, Germany. In her practice, Sonjasdotter engages in processes of remembrance and re-narration of livelihood relations. By the cultivation of outlawed crops and close reading of archived matter (dead and alive), lost imagination and knowledge of the past and the present is brought into re-existence. Sonjasdotter is a Doctoral Researcher in Artistic Practice at Valand Academy, The University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

Sandra Schäfer would like to thank everyone involved in the production of the publication, especially Jochen Becker, Amelie Jakubek, Miriam Gatt and Wolfgang Schwärzler. The team of Camera Austria especially Reinhard Braun, Angelika Maierhofer and Philip Schütz. Christoph Heinemann, Yana Kyuchukova, Christoph Schmidt from ifau. The work was nurtured by conversations with the participating authors, as well as Helmut Augst, Matthias and Silke Augst, Mareike Bernien, Elfriede Bitzer, Gabriele Conrath-Scholl, Chiara Figone, Simone Förster, Joachim and Renate Franken, Ursula Franken, Marliese Heinen, Janina Herhoffer, Judith Höhn-Engers, Marlise and Karl Horn, Marlene Gauss and Elfriede Zimmermann, Maria Iorio and Raphaël Cuomo, Recha Jungmann, Markus Krottendorfer, Elske Rosenfeld, Julian Sander, Ines Schaber, Hans-Dieter and Gisela Schäfer, Thomas Seelig, Isolde and Egon Stöber, Stefanie Schulte-Strathaus and Ulrich Ziemons, Miriam Szwast, Thomas Thiel, Erwin Wortelkamp, Isa Wortelkamp, and Maxa Zoller.

Colophon
Sandra Schäfer — Contested Landscapes

Editor: Sandra Schäfer
Editorial management: Miriam Gatt
Introduction by: Sandra Schäfer
Contributions by: Marwa Arsanios, Madeleine Bernstorff, Reinhard Braun, Linda Conze, Kerstin Faber, Anna-Maria Licciardello, Jumana Manna, Sandra Schäfer, Åsa Sonjasdotter
German-English translation: Karl Hoffmann
Italian-English: Emanuela Maltese
English proofreading: Corinne Butta
Graphic design: Wolfgang Schwärzler
Typefaces: Walbaum B, Walbaum 10 Italic, Brut Grotesque
Paper: Circle Offset White 70 g/m², Dacostern 100 g/m²
Color grading: Carsten Humme
Printing: Oktoberdruck GmbH

Photo Credits

[Cover] Marwa Arsanios, Jumana Manna, Sandra Schäfer, Photographer unknown, Reproduced with the kind permission of Lantmannen, Sweden, IBA Thüringen, Thomas Müller
[pp.1–4, 17–45, 99, 211, 229–232] Filmstills, *Westerwald: A Visitation*, Sandra Schäfer, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2021
[pp.10, 132] © Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur—August Sander Archiv, Cologne; VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2022
[pp. 46–59, 104–105] Installation view: Camera Austria, photographer: Markus Krottendorfer
[pp. 61–87] *what futures are promised, what futures are forgotten—Reading a Family Archive*, Sandra Schäfer, VG Bild-Kunst, 2021
[p.107] Exhibition: Sandra Schäfer, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2021
[p.109] Saarländer, Scans: Sandra Schäfer
[p.126] Sandra Schäfer, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn, 2019
[p.128] © Die Photographische Sammlung/SK Stiftung Kultur
[p.130] German Federal Archives, Berlin, picture 102-11560
[p.134] Gelatin silver print, printed c.1970 by James Dow, 19,2×24,3 cm, © Walker Evans Archive, The Metropolitan Museum of Art
[p.136] VG Bild-Kunst
[p.144] DBV, Situationsbericht 2021/22; Design: Lamm+Kirch
[pp.146, 155, 157, 159↑] IBA Thüringen, Thomas Müller
[p.147] Maria Garcia Perez, raumlaborberlin
[p.150] Pasel-K Architects, Berlin
[p.158] DWD Klimaatlas, 2020; Design: Lamm+Kirch
[pp.159↓, 161] Green4Cities GmbH, Vienna/Graz
[pp.167–175] Photographer unknown, Reproduced with the kind permission of Lantmannen, Sweden
[pp.180–186] Jumana Manna
[p.199] Marwa Arsanios
[pp. 202, 204] Photography by Mahmoud Safadi, Marwa Arsanios
[pp. 209–214, 216–217] Filmstills provided by the artists
[p.215] Anna Lajolo and Guido Lombardi, courtesy by Foto Archive CSC Cineteca Nazionale

The text by Reinhard Braun was first published in the framework of the exhibition *Contaminated Landscapes* by Sandra Schäfer at Camera Austria in 2021 and it was translated by Dawn Michelle d'Atri.

The text »what can be seen and what is in the shadows« is based on a conversation between curator Linda Conze and artist Sandra Schäfer that took place 29th of January 2022 as part of the exhibition *After August Sander. People of the 21st Century* at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen.

The article by Jumana Manna was first published in 2017, *Tamawuj Journal*, the online publishing platform of Sharjah Biennial 13.

The text by Marwa Arsanios was commissioned and published by *L'Internationale Online*, in 2020 in the e-book *Austerity and Utopia*, ed. Corina Oprea, Nav Haq and Pablo Martinez.

Published with the generous support by:
Senatsverwaltung für Kultur und Europa in Berlin

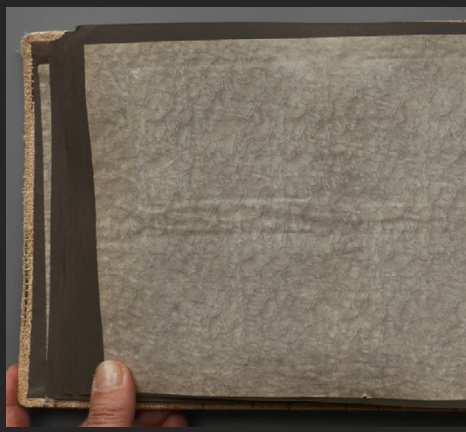
Published by Archive Books in partnership with Camera Austria Graz.

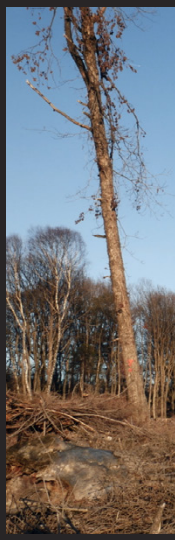
ISBN: 978-3-949973-00-0

Publisher / Orders

Archive Books
Reinickendorfer Straße 17
13347 Berlin
Germany
http://archivebooks.org
orders@archivebooks.org

Camera Austria
Lendkai 1
8020 Graz
Austria
http://camera-austria.at
distribution@camera-austria.at





Contested Landscapes is dedicated to different rural regions—their landscapes, their producers, and their work. The paths of the family of the artist Sandra Schäfer and those of the famous German photographer August Sander cross in the Westerwald, a rural area in Germany shaped by farming and mining. A hundred years ago, the photographer August Sander captured his series of peasants there including the artist's relatives. Schäfer's "homecoming" is represented in the book by three works dealing with the changes of the landscape, its farming, and Sander's photographs, as well as amateur ones from Schäfer's family. Contributions from Schäfer's interlocutors reflect on how these ghosts from the past appear in her work. Further artists and architects research rural cultivation in Thuringia, southern Sweden, Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, Syria, and southern Colombia. In different ways, they deal with the issues of agriculture, feminism, and global economy. The book therefore also takes up the pressing question of how agricultural production could be rethought within capitalism.