

HEBA Y. AMIN

İki Şehir Arasındaki Mesafenin Gökbilimsel Tayini
An Astronomical Determination of the Distance Between Two Cities

Kapak görseli / Cover image:

Asfara, 2016

Demir heykel / Iron sculpture, 225 x 200 cm

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An Astronomical Determination of the Distance Between Two Cities

7 OCAK/JANUARY – 18 ŞUBAT/FEBRUARY 2017

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Dünya Kusurlu Bir Elipsoid

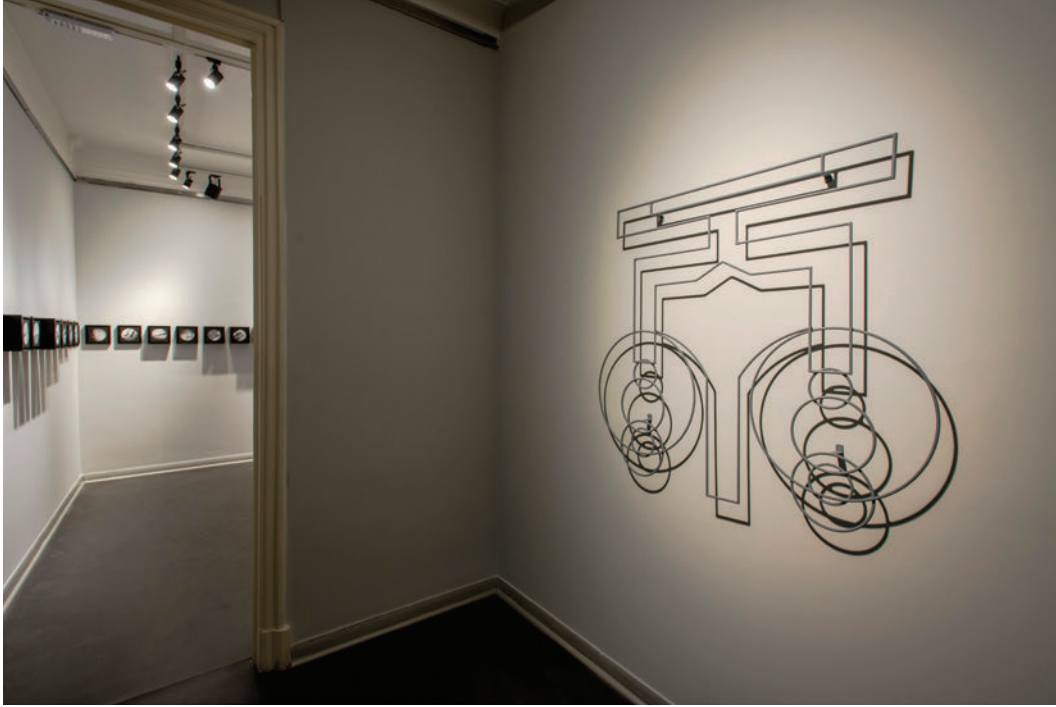
Dünya Kusurlu Bir Elipsoid, teknolojinin tarihsel paradigmalarına ve kent gelişimine, göç yolları üzerinden bakan, farklı bölümlerden oluşan bir proje. Kartografik araştırma ve peyzaj gözetleme yöntemlerini kullanan proje, peyzaja 'avcı' konumundan bakma durumunu ve kadınların bedenlerinin egzotikleştirilmesini coğrafya ile ilişkilendirerek eleştiriyor. Proje, mimari unsurlara ve cinsel hiyerarşilere yoğunlaşarak sömürgeci tarih anlatılarıyla ilişkili görsel alegoriler sunuyor.

Bölüm I. Dünya Kusurlu Bir Elipsoid

Dünya Kusurlu Bir Elipsoid, Al-Bakri'nin on birinci yüzyılda yazdığı, İslam İmparatorluğu döneminde Batı Afrika'da yer alan ticaret yollarını aktaran, Arapça coğrafya metni, "Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik"i (Yolların ve Kraliyetlerin Kitabı) kullanan bir peyzaj gözetleme projesi. Günümüzde orijinal metinler sadece bölümler halinde bulunabiliyor. 2014 senesinde, Heba Y. Amin projeyi Ghana'da başlatarak aynı yolculuğu beş ayda tamamladı. Teodolit kullanarak metinde eksik olan çağdaş coğrafyaları belgeledi. Proje "Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik"i yol gösterici olarak kullanarak tüccarların ve seyyahların gittikleri şehirleri, karşılaştıkları kadınlara dair açık saçık cinsel ifadelerle tanımlamasını eleştiriyordu. Sanatçı, sınırla ilişkili bürokratik cinsel dinamikleri gözler önüne sermek için sınır devriyeleriyle olan iletişimini gizlice kaydetti.

Bölüm II. İki Şehir Arasındaki Mesafenin Gökbilimsel Tayini

Ziyaret ettiği şehirler arasında, Ras Nouadhibou yarımadasındaki kum tepelerinin arasında yer alan bir İspanyol sömürge karakolu olan La Agüera yer alıyordu. *İki Şehir Arasındaki Mesafenin Gökbilimsel Tayini* sergisi burada en son yaşamış kişi olan Jesus Flores Thies'in 1933'te yazdığı anılarından yola çıkarak bu Sahra hayaletinin yapısal kalıntılarını inceliyor. Sergide yer alan çalışmalar, kasabanın sömürge geçmişiyle Moritanya'daki askerler tarafından korunan mimari kalıntıları karşılaştırıyor. Bir adamın İspanyol Sahrası'ndaki çocukluğuna duyduğu özlemin nostaljisi ile 1975'te İspanyollar çekildiğinden beri bağımsızlığı hala tartışılır olan bir toprak için verilen uzun ve acımasız mücadeleye arasındaki uyumsuzluğu gözler önüne seriyor.



The Earth is an Imperfect Ellipsoid

The Earth is an Imperfect Ellipsoid is a multi-part project that looks at the historical paradigms of technology and urban development connected to contemporary migratory paths. By employing cartographic research and landscape surveillance, the work critiques the predatory view of landscape and the exoticization of women's bodies in relation to geography. The project proposes visual allegories focusing on architectural fragments and sexual hierarchies linked to colonial histories.

Part I. The Earth is an Imperfect Ellipsoid

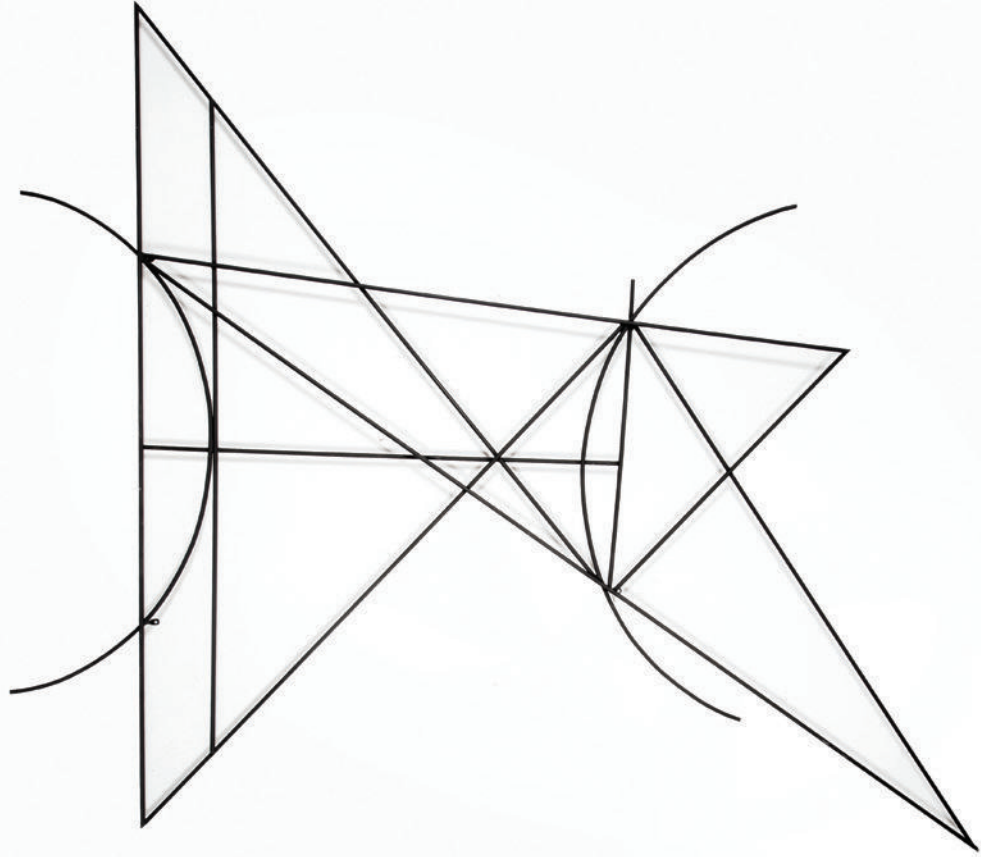
The Earth is an Imperfect Ellipsoid is a land surveillance project that utilizes Al-Bakri's "Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik" (The Book of Roads and Kingdoms), an eleventh-century Arabic geography text describing major trade routes in West Africa under the Islamic Empire. Today, the original manuscript only exists in fragments. In 2014, Heba Amin embarked on a five-month journey along the same routes, starting the project in Ghana. With a theodolite, she documented the contemporary geographies missing from the manuscript. Using "Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik" as a guide, the project critiques the authored accounts of merchants, traders and travelers who describe geographies through sexually explicit descriptions of the women they encounter. She secretly recorded her interactions with border-patrol officers to relay the sexual dynamics of bureaucracy connected to territory.

Part II. An Astronomical Determination of the Distance Between Two Cities

Among the cities visited is La Agüera, a former Spanish colonial outpost buried in the sand dunes of the Ras Nouadhibou peninsula. *An Astronomical Determination of the Distance Between Two Cities* examines the structural remnants of this Saharan ghost town through the found memoir of Jesús Flores Thies, the last living inhabitant from 1933. The work explores the town's colonial era in juxtaposition to the remaining architecture guarded by Mauritanian military forces. It confronts the clash between one man's nostalgia for his childhood in Spanish Sahara with the lengthy and brutal struggle for a land whose sovereignty is still disputed after Spanish withdrawal in 1975.







Algılamanın Matematiksel Biçimi / A Mathematical Manner of Perceiving, 2016
Demir heykel / Iron sculpture, 250 x 200 cm



1



2



4



3



5



Hatırlamanın Eylemi, İspanyol Sahrası I / The Act of Remembering, Spanish Sahara I, 2014
S/B arşivsel baskı / B/W archival print, 50 x 75 cm



Hatırlamanın Eylemi, İspanyol Sahrası II / The Act of Remembering, Spanish Sahara II, 2014
S/B arşivsel baskı / B/W archival print, 50 x 75 cm



Hatırlamanın Eylemi, İspanyol Sahrası III / The Act of Remembering, Spanish Sahara III, 2014
S/B arşivsel baskı / B/W archival print, 50 x 75 cm



Hatırlamanın Eylemi, İspanyol Sahrası IV / The Act of Remembering, Spanish Sahara IV, 2014
S/B arşivsel baskı / B/W archival print, 50 x 75 cm



Hatırlamanın Eylemi, İspanyol Sahrası V / The Act of Remembering, Spanish Sahara V, 2014
S/B arşivsel baskı / B/W archival print, 50 x 75 cm



Hatırlamanın Eylemi, İspanyol Sahrası VI / The Act of Remembering, Spanish Sahara VI, 2014
S/B arşivsel baskı / B/W archival print, 50 x 75 cm

HEBA Y. AMIN

1980, Kahire, Mısır / Cairo, Egypt

Fakülte Üyesi / Faculty, Bard College Berlin

Doktora / Doctorate Fellow, Freie Universität, BGSMSM

Küratör / Curator, DEFAULT residency program, Ramdom Association, Puglia, Italy

Görsel Sanatlar Küratörü / Visual Arts Curator, Mizna Journal, Minneapolis, USA

Eşkurucu / Co-Founder, The Black Athena Collective

EĞİTİM // EDUCATION

- 2016- PhD Position, Berlin Graduate School of Muslim Societies and Cultures, Freie Universität, Berlin
"Reconfigured Territories in the MENA Region: Visualized Landscapes in the Era of Digitization and Migration" Advisor: Professor Dr. Wendy Shaw
- 2010-2012 Post-Graduate Certificate, University of Applied Sciences Berlin (HTW): Media Computing
"Alternative Memorials", DAAD Grant, Berlin, Germany. Advisor: Professor Dr. Deborah Weber-Wulff
- 2009 MFA, University of Minnesota: New Media Art/Architectural Theory
Thesis: "Fragmented City: Visualizing the City-Psyche Relationship of Cairo"
Advisor: Professor Stephen McCarthy
- 2009 Certificate in New Media Art, Transart Institute, Berlin, Germany
- 2005 Post-Baccalaureate Certificate: Painting, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, MN, USA
- 2003 Apprenticeship in Painting, Macalester College, post-grad study
Advisor: Professor Christine Willcox
- 2002 Bachelor of Arts: Studio Art, Macalester College, St. Paul, MN, USA

SERGİLER VE SUNUMLAR // EXHIBITIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

- 2016 Berlinale Spotlight TENT Little Cinema International Festival, Kolkata
"Transparency Machines: Image Ex Machina" Arts Santa Monica, Barcelona
"Nowhere is a Place" Black Athena Collective, EXPO Chicago
"Still Lost" Schaufenster, Berlin "Beton" Kunsthalle Wien, Austria
"The Earth is an Imperfect Ellipsoid" Galeri Zilberman, Istanbul, Turkey
"The City in the Blue Daylight" Dak'Art Biennale, Dakar, Senegal Cairotronica, Cairo, Egypt
"Ultrahabitat" Gallery Zilberman Berlin, Germany
"As Birds Flying/Kama Tohalleq al Teyour" Art Dubai Film Program
"The Earth is an Imperfect Ellipsoid" Marrakech Biennale, Parallel Projects, Morocco
"Making Use" Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, Poland
"As Birds Flying/Kama Tohalleq al Teyour" Forum Expanded, 66th Berlinale, Berlin, Germany
"Fluidity" curated by Bettina Steinbrügge (Kunstverein in Hamburg), Nina Möntmann (Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm) and Vanessa Joan Müller (Kunsthalle Vienna) at Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany
"Homeland is Not a Series" Field of Vision, International Film Festival in Rotterdam, The Netherlands
- 2015 "To What End?" curated by Gulsen Bal, Walter Seidle at Camera Austria, Graz, Austria
"Say What?" curated by Gulsen Bal, Walter Seidle at Galeri Zilberman, Istanbul, Turkey
"Difference Screen" curated by Bruce Allan, Ben Eastop, Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb Croatia
"Displaced" Schlachten Contemporary Arts Festival, Brandenburg, Germany
- 2014 "CONTINGENT: ONLY IF PARTICIPATION OCCURS" curated by Erandy Vergara & Mark Clintberg, Studio XX, Montreal, CA
"UND HIER: DINGENS..." Adamski Gallery, Berlin, Germany
"Les Rencontres Internationales de la Photo de Fes-8eme edition" curated by Selva Barni & Francesca Girelli, Institut Francais Fes, Morocco
"Hopes and Impediments" Prince Claus Fund Gallery, Amsterdam, NL
"MEI Film Festival Davenport", St. Ambrose University, IA
"Art of Peace" curated by Nikki Marquardt, Artraker Award Exhibition, London, UK
"Invisible Borders" Medina Galerie Mediatheque, Bamako, Mali

"A Time for Dreams" curated by David Elliot, IV Moscow International Biennale for Young Art, Russia
"9th Forum Expanded: What Do We Know When We Know Where Something Is?" 64th Berlinale, Berlin, Germany

Difference Screen" curated by Bruce Allan, Ben Eastop
UnionDocs, Brooklyn, NYC USA

Naregatsi Art Institute, Yerevan, Armenia

Gotlands Art Museum, Visby, Sweden

Kriterion Kino, Winter Festival, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

9th Gyumri Biennale for Contemporary Art, Gyumri, Armenia

Groupe Intervention Video, Montreal, Canada

- 2013 "I'm the Son of the Nile" Light and Wire Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
"Pioneering Values" WRO 15th Media Art Biennale, Wrocław, Poland
"Subtle rEvolutions" The Hybrid City II, Athens, Greece
"Recording Against Regimes" Darb 1718, Cairo, Egypt
"Difference Screen" curated by Bruce Allan, Ben Eastop
ARKO Arts Centre, Seoul, South Korea
Artisterium, Tbilisi, Georgia
Mongolian National Modern Art Gallery, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Clearwell Caves, Forest of Dean, UK
- 2012 "Letters From the Field" Node Center, Atelierhof Kreuzberg, Berlin, Germany
"The Download" Rhizome, The New Museum, NY, USA
"It's in the 'Can'" Open Space Systems, Zentrum Für Kunstprojekte, Vienna, Austria
"(Is there) Light in outer space?" exUrban Screens, Melbourne, Australia
- 2011 "Let's Get Ready" Pixelpoint New Media Art Festival, Nova Gorica, Slovenia
"Mizna's 7th Twin Cities Arab Film Festival" Minneapolis, MN USA
"Fluid Spaces" Alfilm Arabisches Film Festival Berlin/ifa Galerie
"Northern Spark" Macalester College, St. Paul, MN
"1256 Stunden Schein" Industriesalon Schöneweide, Berlin, Germany
"Exhibition ONE: zero gravity" International Women Artist's Salon, NY, NY
- 2010 "Windows: Collaborative Multichannel Video Installation" Townhouse, Cairo, Egypt
- 2009 "White Desert Projection" Minneapolis Art on Wheels, White Desert, Egypt
- 2008 "Root Shock" Obsidian Arts Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota
"MAW X Country" Zero 1 New Media Festival, San Jose, CA
- 2007 "Latitudes" California Building Gallery, Minneapolis, MN
- 2006 "Praxis/Practice" Katherine E. Nash Gallery, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN
"Tekween: Making Art in Arabic" Center for Independent Artists, Minneapolis, MN
"Global Unity" MOSAIC Festival of the Arts, Minneapolis, MN
"Prism of Longing" The Phipps Center for the Arts, Hudson, Wisconsin
"Immigrant Status" Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota
"Heba Amin" Atwood Gallery, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, Minnesota (solo exhibition)
- 2005 "Haneen: Between Home and Homeland" Mira Gallery, El Colegio, Minneapolis, MN
"9 Degrees: Post-Baccalaureate Exhibition" MCAD, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- 2004 "Mideast-Midwest: A Tessellation of Artists" Mira Gallery, El Colegio, Minneapolis, MN
- 2003 "Revealing Truths: Muslim Women Artists" The Anne C. Fisher Gallery, Washington, D.C and A Ramona Studio, NY, NY
- 2002 "Arab Eye" Babylon Art & Cultural Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota

KÜRATÖRLÜĞÜNÜ YAPTIĞI SERGİLER, JÜRİ, HEYET // CURATORIAL, JURY

- 2016 PhD selection committee, Art Academy Stockholm, Sweden
Workshop director, "When My Future is Silent", Darb 1718, Cairo, Egypt
Workshop director, "Urban Poises", AUC_Lab, Cairo, Egypt
- 2015 "Extreme Land" Artist Residency, Curatorial Staff, Ramdom Association, Lecce, Italy
- 2013 "DEFAULT13 Masterclass: Art, Cities and Regeneration (Europe and Asia)"
Curatorial Staff, Ramdom Association, Lecce, Italy

“Disrupt!/Design!/ Competition: Entrepreneurs in the Creative Industry” Judge, Cairo, Egypt
2010-2012 “Mideast-Midwest” Curator, Mira Gallery, Minneapolis, Minnesota

ÖDÜLLER, BURSLAR // AWARDS, GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS

2014 Artist Prize (short-listed), Artraker
2013 Travel Grant, Cimetta Fund, Lecce, Italy
2010-2012 Academic Fellowship “Alternative Memorials” DAAD Stipendium, Berlin, Germany
2009 Production Grant “Rhizome Commissions Program” New Museum, NYC, NY
Book Award “Skipping Stones Honor Award: Multicultural/International Awareness category”
2008 Book Award “Middle East Book Award: Youth Non-Fiction category”
Book Award “National Best Book Award: Religion: Islam category”
Book Award “Moonbeam Children’s Book Awards: Moonbeam Peacemaker Award”
Production Grant “Block Grant Fund Graduate Student Grant” University of Minnesota, MN
2007 Production Grant “Latitudes” Mizna Granting Program, Minneapolis, MN
2004 Exhibition Grant “Metropolitan Regional Arts Council Community Arts Grant” Minneapolis, MN
1998-2002 Academic Scholarship “DeWitt Wallace Scholarship” Macalester College, St. Paul, MN

MISAFİR SANATÇI PROGRAMLARI VE ATÖLYELER // ARTIST RESIDENCIES AND WORKSHOPS

2016 Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Artist in Residence, Berlin, Germany
2015 “Walking the Line: Art of Border Zones in Times of Crisis” Heidelberg University, Germany
2015 “Getting Lost” workshop with Julie Mehretu, Fundacion Botin, Santander, Spain
2014 “Invisible Borders Road Trip 2014: Lagos to Sarajevo” Invisible Borders TransAfrican
Photography Collective, Lagos-Sarajevo (June-Oct)
“Resisting the News”, Movimiento/Puruli Kültür Sanat, Ankara, Turkey
2011 “DEFAULT Masterclass: On Art, Cities and Regeneration” Ramdom, Lecce, IT
“Art and Politics” Platforma 11, Leipzig, Germany
“REPlace” PROGRAM, Berlin, Germany
“Workshop with Rana ElNemr” Cairo Image Collective, Cairo, Egypt
2010 “Streets of Cairo” DEDI, Cairo, Egypt
“Workshop with Aras Ozgun” Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt
2005 “Women’s Art Institute” MCAD, Minneapolis, MN
2002 “Creative Community Leadership Institute” Intermedia Arts, Minneapolis, MN

PANEL, DERS, SANATÇI KONUŞMALARI // PANELS, LECTURES, ARTIST TALKS

2016 Panelist, “The Politics of Form: What Does Art Know About Society” Zentrum fuer Literatur und
Kulturwissenschaft Berlin, Nov 18
Artist Talk, “The General’s Stork”, Asia Contemporary Art Week NYC Nov, 11-12
Lecture, “Homeland is not a Series” Impakt Festival Utrecht, Oct 19
Artist Talk, “Subverting the Media as Artistic Practice” Utrecht School of the Arts, Oct 19
Panelist, “State of Urban Art, Oxymoron III” Paris Ouest Nanterre La Defense University, Oct 14
Artist Talk, “Subverting the Media as Artistic Practice” School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Sept 16
Artist Talk, “The General’s Stork” Gallery Zilberman Berlin, July 15
Panelist, “Middle of Where, East of What?” ICI Berlin, July 14
Artist Talk, “Subverting the Media as Artist Practice” Staedelschule Frankfurt, June 21
Artist Talk, Premiere screening of “As Birds Flying” Berlinale, Germany Feb 14, Feb 15
Artist Talk, “Heba Amn in conversation with Nadine Drost” Kunstverein in Hamburg “Fluidity”,
Germany Feb 9
Panelist, “Power” | Woche der Kritik 2016, Berlin Germany Feb 12
Panelist, “Five Years After” moderated by Oliver Lerone Schultz, Transmediale, Berlin, Germany, Feb 6
Panelist, “MediaActs” moderated by Clemens Apprich, Transmediale, Berlin, Germany, Feb 7
Panelist, “Culturehacking: A Panel with Simon Denny, Heba Amin, Ryan Gallagher and Brett Scott, in
conversation with Charlotte Higgins” Serpentine Galleries, Jan 28

Lecture, “Techno-Social Dreams: Digital Remembrance in the Egyptian Revolution” After Tahrir
Symposium, UC Santa Barbara, Jan 25
2015 Lecture, “The Phantom-State: Mediating “Zones of Transmigration” through Images” Medina
Symposium, Bamako, Mali, Nov 3
Lecture, “Reconfigured Territories: Urban Topologies and New Technologies” Future Perfect,
Steirischer Herbst Conference, Graz, Austria, Oct 10
Lecture, “Maps of Myths” Videonale.15: Festival for Contemporary Video Art Bonn, Feb 27
Artist Talk, “Glocal (Hi)stories” Free University, Berlin, Germany, Feb 25
Artist Talk, Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig, Germany, Jan 20
2014 Artist Talk “Invisible Borders” Goethe Institute, Accra, Ghana, June 17
Artist Talk, “Invisible Borders” Goethe Institute, Lagos, Nigeria, June 7
Lecture, “Maps of Myths: Memory Space and Digital Remembrance in the Egyptian Revolution” Pecha
Kucha Berlin #36, Berlin, Germany, May 13
Lecture, “Maps of Myths: Memory Space and Digital Remembrance in the Egyptian Revolution” re:publica
14 Conference Berlin, May 6
Panel “The Media of the Revolution” Laboratory of the Futures, with Edwin Bendyk, Mariya Gonchar, and
Klio Krajewska, Warsaw, Poland, April 10
Artist Talk, “Project Speak2Tweet” Esc atelier, Rome, Italy, April 17
Panelist, “THINK: FILM NO° 2: What Do We Know When We Know Where Something Is?” Forum Expanded
with Ala Younis and Maha Maamoun, 64th Berlinale, Berlin, Feb 13
2013 Lecture, “Voices from the Revolution” Media Art Histories Conference 2013: RENEWRiga, Latvia, Oct 11
Keynote Speech, “Project Speak2Tweet” Berlin Social Media Week, Berlin, Germany, Sept 27
Artist Talk, DEFAULT 13 Masterclass, Ramdom, Lecce Italy, Sept 25
Lecture, “Speak2Tweet: An Intimate Look at the Egyptian Psyche” The Hybrid City Conference II: Subtle
rEvolutions Athens, Greece, May 24
Lecture “The Revolution of Jokes” re:publica 13 Conference Berlin, Germany, May 6
Panelist, “Recording Against Regimes” Bayt Al Sinnari, with Mona Abaza, Piotr Krajewski, Jacek Niegoda
and Hartmut Jahn, Cairo, Egypt, March 9
2012 Lecture, “Voices from the Revolution: A Speak2Tweet Project ” Critical Information Conference School of
Visual Arts, NYC, USA, Dec 2
Lecture, “Voices from the Revolution” re:publica 12 Conference Berlin, Germany, May 6
Panelist, State of the World Week “Censorship” ECLA Bard, with Evgeny Morozov, Berlin, Feb 10
2011 Panelist, “Art in Revolution” University of Minnesota, with Fadia Afashe, Mohammed Bamyeh, Waleed
Mahdi, and Imed Labidi, Minneapolis, MN, Nov 10
Invited Attendee, Falling Walls Conference Berlin, Germany, Nov 8
Lecture, “The Egyptian Revolution and its Historical Context” The Public School Berlin, July 13
2009 Lecture, Guerilla Projection Department of Art, American University of Cairo, Egypt, Nov 23
Artist Presentation, “Minneapolis Art on Wheels” Townhouse Gallery, Cairo, Egypt, Nov 24
Invited Attendee, WISE Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, July 16-19
2005 Artist Talk, “Heba Amin Lecture” St. Cloud University, St. Cloud, Minnesota
2004-2009 Artist Talk “Moving Lives Speakers Bureau” Intermedia Arts/Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights,
Minneapolis, MN

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The Last Witness: La Agüera

by Jesús Flores Thies

Who would know what life was like three quarters of a century ago in a military outpost in the southernmost corner of the Spanish Sahara? Where could we research this? In what archives might we find the documents, papers, and photographs of this outpost at the end of the world?

The answer is very simple: only the last living witness can give information or visual details of La Agüera, the military outpost located within the confines of the Spanish Sahara, next to what is today Mauritania. That is to say, he who authors this piece.

It may seem that I write this paragraph out of stupid vanity, but it is not so. I write it to make mention of an easily proven fact: we have attempted to search the archives of the Historic Military Service, both in Madrid and in Ávila, as well as the archives of Tenerife and las Palmas de Gran Canaria and the results have been bleak. Barely half a dozen documents bereft of historic interest.

In the month of August 1933, my father was assigned as a volunteer to the disciplinary company posted by the 11th Infantry Regiment in La Agüera, in Cape Blanco. There, in La Agüera, my intelligence and memory were awakened, leaving that third component of the soul, my will, to be awakened later on. I can remember as far back to that time, of course not to when I was two and a half, but when I was a solid four years old. It is a debatable subject, but it is not one I am going to discuss due to lack of time and space. I assure you that a part of what I am going to write comes from my own memory, and I simply ask that the reader accept it. But logically, it's not my personal memories on which we are going to base these recollections of La Agüera, but on the diaries written by my parents, the documents that I have saved and, most of all, on an exceptional collection of photographs that I have, thanks to the

Orijinal metin: Thies, Jesús Flores. "El último testigo La Agüera". Ares Enyalius: Revista de Historia y Actualidad Militar, no. 18. www.aresenyalius.com/ares/

İngilizce'den çeviren: Merve Ünsal

Sanatçı, arşiv fotoğraflarının kullanımına izin verdiği için Jesús Flores Thies'e teşekkür eder.

Arşivden Fotoğraflar (Jesús Flores Thies)

1. Juan Ignacio Pombo'nun Atlantik'i yalnız başına geçerken kullandığı uçak "Santander"
2. Marcotegui fabrikası, yıllar boyu yıkıma maruz kalmasına ve terk edilmişliğine rağmen o dönemden ayakta kalan tek bina
3. Kalenin avlusuna terastan bir bakış. Kapının yanında 88mm'lik Krupp topu, ötede deniz ve Marcotegui fabrikası görünüyor.
4. Jesús Flores Thies kardeşi Rafael ile
5. Yertli Polis Birliği'nin "Mía"sı, bir kervan koruma görevi sırasında teğmen La Gándara'nın komutasında

fact that my father was a great aficionado who personally developed all that he photographed with his valuable “Woiglander” camera.

We arrived to the outpost on August 30th, 1933, where my father also served as the delegate of the Río de Oro government. He took all of us there: my mother, my brother, and me, just two years and six months of age during that point in history. This date of arrival in the Spanish Sahara gives me an advantage over General Aceytuno, who arrived in Villa Cisneros, further north from us, eight months later.

It's only logical that La Agüera is the jewel of my childhood memories. I have said before, it's where I awoke to the outside world, to intelligence, to the archive of my memories. But I did not awake in a city neighborhood, on a floor with windows to the street and interior patio, I awoke in nowhere less than an unmentionable place named Colonia Española del Sahara Occidental (Spanish Colony of Western Sahara), in the actual desert.

The outpost was situated to the extreme south of our borough, in a strip of land called Cabo Blanco that encased the beautifully named Bay of Galgo. The outpost consisted of a fort that had been built fifteen years before by Coronel Bens, and was no more than a military structure with a square base, a low, flat and cylindrical tower in one corner and three other square-shaped towers of the same height in the other corners. There was a cistern in its weapons courtyard, filled with water brought to us every fifteen days by a beautiful vessel named *Maruja* from which drums of water were disembarked for the fort and the Sahrawi of neighboring places.

The fort was located not very far from the beach where, further along, you could find a “Marcotegui” fishing factory which served to dry and salt fish and also supplied food to the garrison. Since Cabo Blanco separated the Spanish colony from the French Colony (the tip where the lighthouse was located was Spanish), it could be said that we had the French as immediate neighbors. Port Etienne, a French establishment that enjoyed an aerodrome with a hangar, was located at a mere two kilometers away. Relations with the French were cordial.

Besides the fort and the factory, there were other buildings like *Casa de la Radio* which served as the living quarters for the captain and the government. There were also some small buildings which housed indigenous workers. The nearest coast was on the Atlantic and, except in some low and sandy zones, it was steep and wild, unlike the calm waters that gave way to the Galgo Bay. The cold and forceful sea, which was disturbing to me, favored a colony of barnacles, a delight not appreciated by the French colo-

nists who were astounded that the Spanish would eat those ugly things they called *pied de biche*. The French were partial to the lobsters that flourished in those waters.

The caves of the cliffs also enclosed reduced colonies of sea lions. I recall when one of the poor things was captured after being stabbed by a Moor that hung off the cliff with a rope. It was quite the event, sad or happy, according to the opinion of each colony (of the men or the sea lions).

The surroundings of our new dwelling were dry, barren and sandy. The further one entered into the desert and away from the sea, the more the scenery of the Sahara became classic and platitudinous, with its travelling dunes and tenacious and bothersome wind that thrust sand into our bare legs like needles. We lived in a fort. I still remember the dining room, with two couches my father fabricated, a dining room where the ceiling partially fell in and narrowly missed me.

The truth is that the fort was a ruin, and may the excellent Coronel Bens forgive me. I remember it always under construction, with some scaffold or some small destruction. In front of our fort, on the other side of the courtyard, was the company troop. Other details about the fort, which I have perfectly placed in my memory, include the house of the brigade, a man with an enormous stomach who had a thick woman of dark skin and many daughters, and the dwelling of the medical lieutenant, called *Linares*.

There was a powder keg (I still don't know why) full of fleas, at least on the day I entered into its dark annex without permission of the competent authority. Oh! and the fort also enclosed a cannon, the first cannon I remember seeing in my life and that did not inspire a gunner spirit in me. It was a veteran 88 mm Krupp.

Every April 14th a gun salute was launched to commemorate the day of the Republic. My mother would place our gramophone at the entrance of the fort and when the flag was raised, she would play the *Himno de Riego*, while the 22 gun salute sounded off. I would run to hide away in the furthest corner of my house, which was the toilet room, scared and shaken. We would always fence during that holiday, while an excellent Canary cook made *ropa vieja*.

And since we are on the subject of the toilet, I will exploit the occasion to explain that marvelous toilet. It consisted of a hollow crate in which a big cube with sand was placed, and everything was covered with a thick wooden plank and a circular hole of a “physiological” diameter that was covered with

a suitable round plank. Next to it there was a crate of sand and a shovel which did the work of water and a chain in more civilized places. There was no bathtub, instead, there was a zinc pot or the nearest beach.

We also had a small farm, even an imitation of a zoo. Behind our house, in a corner formed by interior buildings, we had a small dromedary, a young ostrich and a donkey. There were also chickens and rabbits.

Periodically a steamer, the *Lanzarote*, the same that brought us to the desert and would later take us away from it, would appear. A black, dancing shell that carried packages, mail, orders, reinforcements, one-way and return permits... and sometimes a priest.

Since war affects people and things, I might add that this steamer carried the machinist that, at the end of July of 1936, got in touch with loyalists of the Popular Front to prevent the colony from joining the military uprising. He was unsuccessful. The next "historical" voyage of the small steamer was when the nationals militarized it in attempt to neutralize actions of *Viera y Clavijo*, the steamship that government loyalists had taken possession of. At the end of the war the *Lanzarote* was returned to the Trans-Mediterranean Shipping Company for its habitual service of mail between the Canary Islands.

We also received mail and newspapers by a faster and more fun way: a Dornier Wall seaplane, just like (or very similar to) the *Plus Ultra*, which was the first airplane to cross the South Atlantic, a little before the North Atlantic was crossed by the celebrated Lindberg. Around this time this North American pilot visited Villa Cisneros, capital of the Spanish colony of the Sahara. Notified by radio of the arrival of the seaplane, we would climb to the rooftop of the fort and wait for the quick arrival of our airmail. The seaplane would appear, flying very low and toss a package into the courtyard of the fort. We would get a quick view of the pilot who would wave with his hand and disappear as quickly as he had appeared.

I would get excited about everything having to do with airplanes. We would receive visits from the "Cabo Jubi Patrol," for whom we had to prepare an always-changing airstrip. Pitifully, whatever could be stomped down would be and fires would be lit along the length of the track in order to indicate to the pilots the conditions of the terrain and the direction of the wind. The heavy *Breguets* would land, and there was almost always one who would bury the wheels all the way up to the "hocks" at the end of the route. Before the pilot would leave the next day, he had to be pulled with the help of the camels. Sometimes *Fokker Trimotors* would break up our monotony, including one

whose side was emblazoned with a large 20. This particular plane would make history (something else affected by the war) since in August of 1936, it participated in the passage of the strait making it part of the first aerial bridge in history.

We were also able to contemplate, during a violet and gold sunrise, the passing of the majestic "Graff Zeppelin" in one of its journeys around the world. The aircraft looked like a huge cigar on which the rays of the rising sun were reflected.

But we had the most direct contact with heroic aviation one day when we received communication by radio from the Canaries about the immediate arrival of a plane piloted by a man, almost a boy (he was 21 years old) named Juan Ignacio Pombo, who planned to fly from Africa to Brazil. The young Pombo arrived and landed in the French aviation field of Port Etienne. The plane, a British Aircraft "Eagle", had been christened *Santander*, the name of its home city and homeland of the Pombo family from which it had departed days ago. Decorating it were paintings, drawings and allegories from different stages. My mother discovered some masonic sign that was erased immediately.

That night, Pombo ate and slept in the house. I asked him to take me with him, because flying seemed fantastic to me. He promised to take me in his plane to America, a promise he did not fulfill thus preventing my name from appearing in the books about heroic aviation. Pombo took off in the direction of Dakar very early and later on would fly off to Brazil. Years later I discovered he was successful in his effort, but had unfortunately damaged his plane in a bad landing during the triumphant trip through the Americas. The English factory immediately sent him a similar model.

My anecdotes about pioneer aviation can be concluded with the recounting of an accident that ended happily. One day, the radio communicated that an English aviator had been lost in the desert with his plane. They immediately left in search of him, some with cars and others on camels. They finally located the plane, a "Comper Swift", but not the Englishman who, with the help of some indigenous people, had walked and arrived in Port-Etienne. The plane was incredibly small. I believe the same model with which Lóring made his raid in the Philippines around that time. The plane was abandoned and for some time its skeleton adorned the desert, but with the motor almost intact it was unmounted and taken to La Agüera. The French attempted by all means to take possession of the motor, but for once the Spanish were more diligent! Years later we discovered, thanks to the Infant Foundation of Orleáns, that the Englishman was not English but Australian and that his name was Victor Smith.

In La Agüera I saw rain for the first time in my life. I had an idea of the existence of rain through stories, but never had water fallen over my head. Besides the almost continuous wind and the intense nocturnal cold, the mists were frequent.

My brother and I were aficionados of *chinchorro*. This art form of fishing in the Canaries (possibly called this way because of the use of a kind of barge, a “chinchorro”, to cast nets) was used to capture abundant fish. But it had one inconvenience: one had to wake up early. Waking early is an inhuman activity I have never gotten used to. But we would wake up early at dawn and head to the beach where the fishermen did their fishing with cables. We also pulled the damp ropes to “help.”

The Sahrawi are very interesting. I imagine the characteristics of these people have varied after the never-ending war that succeeded in the unspeakable abandonment (“we leave that there!”) of a colony that had reached the category of a Spanish province. Are there Sahrawi’s in the 21st century? I remember them with their black, blue or white garments. The women almost always dressed in black and were frequently heavily jeweled. Dark skinned people, almost black, and with features, in most cases, unlike those of black people. They were nomads, but the colonial politics, Spanish as well as French, attempted to settle them little by little. This was done with money, food, gunpowder and water.

The Sahrawi’s did not know what a border was. The Spanish Sahara had been occupied a relatively short time by coronel Bens. When someone decided to trace the limits of our colony on Africa, they proposed the eastern border to coincide, in some part, with the meridian at 14 degrees, 20 minutes until the French observed (what good eyesight they have!) the salt mines (Sebja lyit) that fell into our zone. For that reason, to the south of that imaginary line, we find a funny shaped territory allocated to the French for the possession, occupancy and enjoyment of the coveted mines. A military establishment, Fort Gourard, monitored the good order and French presence in the zone.

My father had strictly forbidden us to enter a *jaima* without his permission (a tent made from goat and camel skin), because of lice and fleas. There was no racist undertone, since my father liked them (not the fleas but with those who had them) and, like his days as a controller in Taxut, he often wore large clothing and grew a very patriarchal beard. Yes, he would let us play and bathe on the beach with the Moorish children, all of us naked and looking like worms, them with their brilliant black skin, us with our white and discolored skin.

We were lucky enough to be in the presence of the endless caravan of camels passing by. One afternoon from the fort, the general call sounded for us to lock ourselves within its walls. A sentinel had sighted unidentified little dots on the horizon from a distance. The little dots became large dots and soon we saw the components of an *mía* of camels, an assembled section of the Indigenous Police at the command of a Spanish officer, the mythical lieutenant La Gándara. This *mía* protected a caravan that paraded in front of the fort. It was a spectacle impossible to see today. The bus and the “all terrain” vehicles have substituted the camel, the dromedary, the Bedouin walker...

It was in La Agüera where my mother wanted to join the Falange. She knew about this restless group through newspapers, and perhaps by the letters from her sisters in Madrid. Their doctrine, ideals and style enthused her. One day, she wrote to José Antonio soliciting her entrance. It’s possible that my mother was the most southern Falangist (and with no doubt the only one south of the Tropic of Cancer).

At the end of 1935, my father was granted colonial license, nothing less than four months of leave. His promotion was also near and so it marked the end of our Saharan adventure. Once again the suitcases, the selling of our properties and goodbyes. In a wicker chair, two Moors boarded my mother on to the small boat that would take us to our ship home, while my father said his farewells to the troop that shouted with great enthusiasm “long live the lieutenant of the force!”. I was proud of the force, of the fortitude, of my father because I did not understand that by “force” they meant “troop.” Blessed ignorance.

We left the outpost, we left the sand and the wind and the always furious sea, and the “jaimas” and the fort’s cistern with the groups of female Moors getting their rations of water for the day, the camels with their faces in perpetual bad moods. I would no longer awake during the night, frightened, due to the voices of the watch guards when they responded to their commander’s demand to “be alert... be alert!”. We would no longer await the seaplane that tossed packages over the fort, or the airy *Maruja* with its valuable load of water for Moors and Christians alike. Nor would we see the *Xauen* coastguards pass close by who, with time, would be under the command of a ship by the name of Armada, belonging to the father of a marine friend that many, many years later would tow along the ferocious Catalan coast.

Before me new horizons and new expectations were opening. I was not prepared to miss them.

I have barely acquired any reference or news of La Agüera, perhaps the most

notable is this verse in which horrible things are said of that place.

An always irritated sea, green and harsh, / a colorless sky, of ungrateful light,
/ a sun that when it kisses, dries, and kills / and a gray horizon without chi-
aroscuro. / Two tents, a camel, a crow, a wall / That the northeast corrodes
and wrecks, / Not one shadow, or a tree, or a brush, / only sand, an unsure
bed / In which nothing can be cemented, / a stubborn wind that never yields,
/ the dune that buries men and things / between clouds of sticky flies, / a
Moor, a blue Haik, a teakettle / and old water. Sir, this is La Güera

It is possible that that lost place became degraded after our departure, be-
cause as well as I can remember the cold nights or the wind that forced
me to kneel because of the sand jabbing my legs like needles, I would have
remembered the "sticky flies", or the "northeast that corrodes..."

But this outpost must have had some importance during those years when
the Mail Offices released stamps of La Agüera.

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Translated into English by Keli Garcia

The artist would like to thank Jesús Flores Thies for his permission to use the archive photographs.

Archive Photographs (Jesús Flores Thies)

1. The "Santander" plane with which Juan Ignacio Pombo crossed the Atlantic alone
2. The Marcotegui factory, the only building from that time that has survived many years of
destruction and abandonment
3. Courtyard of the fort from the terrace. Next to the door, the 88mm Krupp canon and, in the
distance, the sea and the Marcotegui factory
4. Jesus Flores Thies with his brother Rafael
5. "Mía" of the Indigenous Police at the command of lieutenant La Gándara (with plate cap), on a
caravan protection mission