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**Final exhibition Report**

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**POLIMI**



## TRACES Project

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**Title:** TRACES | Transmitting Contentious Heritage with the Arts: From Intervention to Co-production

**Abstract:** TRACES is a three-year project funded in 2016 by the European Commission as part of the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme and focusing on challenges and opportunities raised when transmitting contentious cultural heritages in contemporary Europe. The Project deploys innovative research practices based on an artistic/ethnographic approach, and involves a multi-disciplinary team that brings together established and emerging scholars, artists, and cultural workers, in order to develop a rigorous, creative investigation on a range of contentious cultural heritages. To achieve this objective, TRACES has initiated a series of art-based action researches supported and complemented by theoretical investigations with the aim to eventually identify new directions for cultural institutions and museums to effectively transmit contentious cultural heritage and contribute productively to evolving European identities.

**Project Duration:** March 2016-February 2019 (3 years)

**Project Coordinator:** Prof. Klaus Schönberger, Universitaet Klagenfurt, Austria.

**Funding scheme:** European Union Horizon 2020. SOCIETAL CHALLENGES - Europe In A Changing World - Inclusive, Innovative And Reflective Societies. Reflective 2: Emergence and transmission of European cultural heritage and Europeanisation.

**EU contribution:** 2.303.858,75 – Grant Agreement 693857

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TRACES is structured around five experimental Creative Co-Productions, supported and complemented by theoretical and empirical investigations pertaining to six research fields.

### → TRACES Research Fields

*Artistic Research: Creative Co-Production beyond Intervention* develops and analyses participatory methods and models of innovative contemporary creative collaborations between artists, researchers, heritage agencies, and their stakeholders.

*Ethnographic Research on/with Art Production* critically examines the collaborative processes between art and research, also in relation to challenges posed by the post-colonial legacy of museums' collections.

*Research on Education and Stakeholder Involvement* investigates learning and exhibiting contentious cultural heritage in Europe, in order to identify ways in which educational settings can provide spaces of conflict and negotiation.

*Performing Heritage: Creative Everyday Practices in Popular Culture* conducts ethnographic fieldwork into contentious heritages with a focus on intangible heritage. As the theoretical backbone of the project, it evaluates, contextualises and brings together practical and theoretical results from TRACES investigations for public use.

*Contentious Collections: Research on Material Culture of Difficult Cultural Heritage* undertakes comparative and contextual analysis in order to identify the particular challenges and potential involved in transmitting contentious cultural heritage and to identify new ways of mediating difficult collections.

*Dissemination and Communication* activities are aimed at effectively communicating and promoting Project outcomes by researching and developing innovative infrastructures for knowledge communication in the field of heritage and museum studies.

### → TRACES Creative Co-Productions

*CCP01 | ABSENCE AS HERITAGE* | Mediaş, Romania

Team: Julie Dawson, Anda Reuben, Razvan Anton. Partner/Host: NGO Hosman Durabil.

Other institutions/partners: Mediaş Synagogue.

*CCP02 | AWKWARD OBJECTS OF GENOCIDE* | Krakow, Poland

Team: Erika Lehrer, Roma Sendyka, Wojciech Wilczyk, Magdalena Zych. Partner/Host:

Centre for Memory Studies/Jagiellonian University.

*CCP03 / CASTING OF DEATH* | Ljubljana, Slovenia

Team: Alenka Pirman, Jani Pirnat. Partner/Host: Domestic Research Society. Other institutions/partners: The National and University Library, the Moderna Galerija Ljubljana, the National Museum of Contemporary History.

*CCP04 / DEAD IMAGES* | Vienna, Austria - Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Team: Tal Adler, Linda Fibiger, John Harries, Joan Smith, Anna Szoeka, Maria Teschler-Nicola. Partners/Hosts: University of Edinburgh, Natural History Museum, Vienna.

*CCP05 / TRANSFORMING LONG KESH/MAZE PRISON* | Belfast, Northern Ireland

Team: Martin Krenn, Aisling O'Beirn. Partner/Host: Ulster University.

→ **TRACES Partners**

*Universitaet Klagenfurt – Institute for Cultural Analysis (A)* Klaus Schönberger (Project Coordinator), Marion Hamm, Gisela Hagmair, UNIKUM

*Politecnico di Milano – Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (IT)* Luca Basso Peressut, Francesca Lanz with Suzana Milevska

*Humboldt-Universitaet zu Berlin – Institute of European Ethnology (DE)* Sharon Macdonald, Tal Adler, Regina Römhild, Anna Szöke

*Universitetet I Oslo – Department of Social Anthropology (NO)* Arnd Schneider, Leone Contini

*Zürcher Hochschule der Künste – Institute for Art Education (CH)* Carmen Mörsch, Nora Landkammer, Karin Schneider

*Hosman Durabil (RO)* Julie Dawson, Anton Razvan, Anda Reuben

*Naturhistorisches Museum – Department of Anthropology (A)* Maria Teschler-Nicola

*The University of Edinburgh – Social Anthropology, Archaeology and the Edinburgh College of Art (UK)* John Harries, Linda Fibiger, Joan Smith

*Uniwersytet Jagiellonski – Research Centre for Memory Cultures (PL)* Roma Sendyka, Erica Lehrer, Wojtech Wilczyk, Magdalena Zych

*University of Ulster – Research Institute for Art and Design (UK)* Aisling O'Beirn, Martin Krenn

*Društvo za domače raziskave (SLO)* Alenka Pirman, Jani Pirnat.

## “Contentious Objects/Ashamed Subjects”

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*Curator:* Suzana Milevska

*Date:* 18 January – 6 February 2019

*Venue:* Politecnico di Milano, School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering | Galleria del Progetto, via Ampère 2, 20133 Milano

The project ‘Contentious Objects/Ashamed Subjects’ is a research about research: it is based on a long-term cross-disciplinary curatorial exploration of art-based research and artistic research projects. However, the exhibition is not about just any kind of art and artistic research. Focusing particularly on various methodologies, artistic research methods and strategies that are employed by contemporary artists the exhibition features those artistic practices dedicated to durational and exhaustive cross-referential research of difficult tangible and intangible cultural heritages: reflected in images, objects, spaces, and events that had problematic pasts or inhabit present contentions.

In this respect, some of the pertinent questions that triggered the exhibition concern which objects, images and spaces are considered contentious cultural heritages (Sharon Macdonald), and how they are transmitted and reflected in the European ‘culturescapes.’ These issues are extrapolated regardless of whether the researched materials are included or displayed in collections of various European art and cultural institutions, or they are presented in public spaces or kept in other contexts. The exhibition therefore aims to map and critically reflect the state of art in both the field of artistic research methodologies and in research-based art practices that deal with the shame linked to contentious heritage and its associated images, objects, entire museum collections, monuments, architectural objects, or public spaces.

The stereotypical and racialised representations; institutional reluctance to acknowledge the questionable provenience of unlawfully required objects and unethical sponsorship; as well as propositions of how to deal with the repressed memory of the spaces once inhabited by conflict or are marked with contested monuments dedicated to disgraceful historic figures or events; the collective memory about commoning movements that contested the appropriation of public space; are just some of the researched topics addressed in the projects presented here.

Most importantly, in bringing these projects together, the exhibition addresses the possibility for catalysing social change and fighting recent hateful outbursts from the far right in Europe and elsewhere (e.g. anti-Semitic and anti-Roma sentiments, racism towards indigenous and black populations, and prejudice towards LGBTQ communities), in the context of current debates regarding the reciprocal relations between art, academia and political activism, at the intersection between institutions of art and civic society as well as socio-political structures. Therefore, the exhibition explores art practices that move towards inclusiveness, creativity, and innovation, while stressing the potentiality of various artistic research strategies for the production of new, specific and critical knowledges in various research and academic fields.

Starting with invisible heritages and contentious objects, images and spaces, the exhibition also addresses the need to acknowledge past wrong-doings in order to rethink, deconstruct and dismantle pre-existing regimes of representation and systemic malfunctions, while proposing alternative trajectories for future research.

Furthermore, the exhibition explores the application of various theoretical and research methodologies (already developed in art history, museology, anthropology, ethnology, sociology, pedagogy, political sciences, etc.) together with artistic research methods, artistic media, strategies and actions will be explored in terms of their specificity, appropriateness, applicability, and efficiency in accomplishing these challenging goals, on both ethical and conceptual levels.

Most of the artistic strategies stem from the legacy of postcolonial and feminist critique, and the research practices around various theoretical analyses and case studies have developed in the frame of the humanities and social sciences. The exhibited projects include, but are not limited to, the use of critical analysis of vernacular art, field trips, photography as research, lecture performances, interviews, focus groups, hybrid records, critical databases, video essays, curatorial forensics, militant image research, institutional critique, thought experiments, social intervention, participatory research of art made by prisoners, as well as elements of material culture, re-enactment, activist campaigns for naming and renaming, counter-monuments, social design, agonistic research, critical friend, creative co-production, petition, public apology, manifestos, critical and social advertising, advocating and lobbying for decolonisation, repatriation and restitution.

Instead of dwelling on negatively charged memories, the exhibition celebrates art that deals with shared or multidirectional memory (Michael Rothberg), and productive shame (Paul Gilroy) in a committed and catalytic way. Consisting of selected archival documents as well as photographic, audio and video documentation of academic and artistic research, the

featured projects and practitioners focus on various relevant and often sensitive thematic clusters by employing various methodologies and theories, while proposing specific research methods and strategies capable of contending with their selected subjects.

‘Contentious Objects/Ashamed Subjects’ presented ten art-based and artistic research projects, followed a two-day conference, and was accompanied by several pop-up events. Politecnico di Milan’s Hall hosted the comprehensive archives of five projects realised by ‘creative co-production’ (CCP) teams created in the context of TRACES (or pre-existed the project): *Absence as Heritage*— Răzvan Anton, Julie Dawson, and Alexandra Toma; *Awkward Objects of Genocide*—Erica Lehrer, Roma Sendyka, Wojtek Wilczyk, Magdalena Zych; *Casting of Death*—Domestic Research Society (Damijan Kracina, Alenka Pirman, Jani Pirnat), Marko Jenko, Janez Polajnar, Marijan Rupert; *Dead Images*—Tal Adler, Linda Fibiger, John Harris, Joan Smith, Anna Szöke, Maria Teschler-Nicola; *Transforming Long Kesh/Maze*—Martin Krenn, Aisling O’ Beirn; and several additional long-term research and/or participatory art projects: *Solidarity Day* (a campaign with CultureShutdown platform) and *Memory Matrix*—Azra Akšamija, (T)RACE-ING LOUIS AGASSIZ: *Artistic Renegotiations of Archive, Memory & Place*—a result of Sasha Huber’s collaboration with the campaign *Demounting Louis Agassiz*; the initiative *World Communal Heritage*—Rena Rädle and Vladan Jeremić; *Research without Guarantees*—collective Urban Subjects: Sabine Bitter, Jeff Derksen, Helmut Weber; Alfred Ullrich’s project *On the Move* including his campaign regarding the sign *LANDFAHRERPLATZ KEIN GEWERBE* (En. Site for Travellers: No Trading); and the research file *Monumentomachia*—Suzana Milevska. The projects are divided into four different chapters according the topics addressed and research strategies applied: ‘Invisible Heritages,’ ‘Contentious Objects and Images,’ ‘Spaces without Bodies’ and ‘On Productive Shame.’

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‘Contentious Objects/Ashamed Subjects’ stemmed from the long-term research of Suzana Milevska, Principal Investigator at the Politecnico di Milano and curator, whose focus is on the state of art in the realm of the current debates surrounding artistic research and on the results of the Horizon 2020 project *TRACES—Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts: From Intervention to Co-Production*.

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**A rich sequence of activities and pop-up events** was be organised over the entire duration of the exhibition, by Răzvan Anton, Leone Contini, Nora Landkammer and Karin Schneider, Ian Mcdonald and CoHERE Project, Ian Alan Paul, Karin Reisinger, Elizabeth Sikiaridi and Frans Vogelaar.

## Friday 25 January

### ***Deep Space: Re-signifying Valle de los Caídos: Workshop***

Elizabeth Sikiaridi, Frans Vogelaar

h. 16.00

Valle de los Caídos (Valley of the Fallen), the Francoist monument built between 1940 and 1959 close to Madrid, will soon be emptied of Franco's remains. As it risks becoming a cenotaph—an empty burial monument—and it is at the centre of heated public discourses surrounding its future, Valle de los Caídos is paradigmatic of the difficult processes of re-signifying controversial monuments.

In October 2018, as part of the *Deep Space* independent artistic project and long-term investigative program, Hybrid Space Lab curated the international, interdisciplinary workshop “Deep Space: Re-signifying Valle de los Caídos” in Madrid.

The reliance on artistic practices and applied disciplines transgressing the arts field, such as architecture and media studies, to approach controversial heritage interrogates how these disciplines and their interaction may contribute to the re-construction of memory, exploring the potential of integrating diverse methods to process historical wounds.

By favouring artistic engagement with memory making, “Deep Space: Re-signifying Valle de los Caídos” aims at establishing a place for dialogue and proposals on possible future visual and sensual heritage landscapes in the Valley's contentious spatial and affective context.

The workshop's special focus lay on networked digital and physical tools that allow transforming the site without physically touching it. These tools also enable the integration of side-lined voices within the vision of a polyphonic monument, counterbalancing the site's totalitarian narrative, paving the way from recognition to reconciliation. The workshop kick-started the *Deep Space* exploration, focusing on how future heritage sites could look, feel, sound like, and how their digitally enriched features could affect memory-making processes.

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**Elizabeth Sikiaridi** and **Frans Vogelaar** are the founders of Hybrid Space Lab, a Berlin-based Think Tank and Design Lab (<http://hybridspacelab.net>).

Hybrid Space Lab is a laboratory for cultural innovation, a cultural breeding ground for the development of groundbreaking concepts and for the promotion of innovations that contribute to positive changes in society and the environment.

Since 1997 Prof. Elizabeth Sikiaridi has been teaching design at the Landscape Architecture Department of the University of Duisburg-Essen and the University of Applied Sciences Ostwestfalen-Lippe. She was born in London and grew up in Athens. She studied architecture at the École d'Architecture de Belleville in Paris and at the TU Darmstadt, worked in the architecture office Behnisch & Partner in Stuttgart and was an Assistant Professor at the TU Berlin.

In 1998 Prof. Frans Vogelaar founded the first worldwide "Department of Hybrid Space" at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. Frans was born in Holland and grew up in Zimbabwe and Holland. He studied industrial design at the Design Academy in Eindhoven and architecture at the Architectural Association School of Architecture, London, and worked in the Studio Alchymia in Milan and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture in Rotterdam.

Both Elizabeth and Frans are lecturing broadly internationally, among other as Visiting Professors at the Politecnico di Milano.