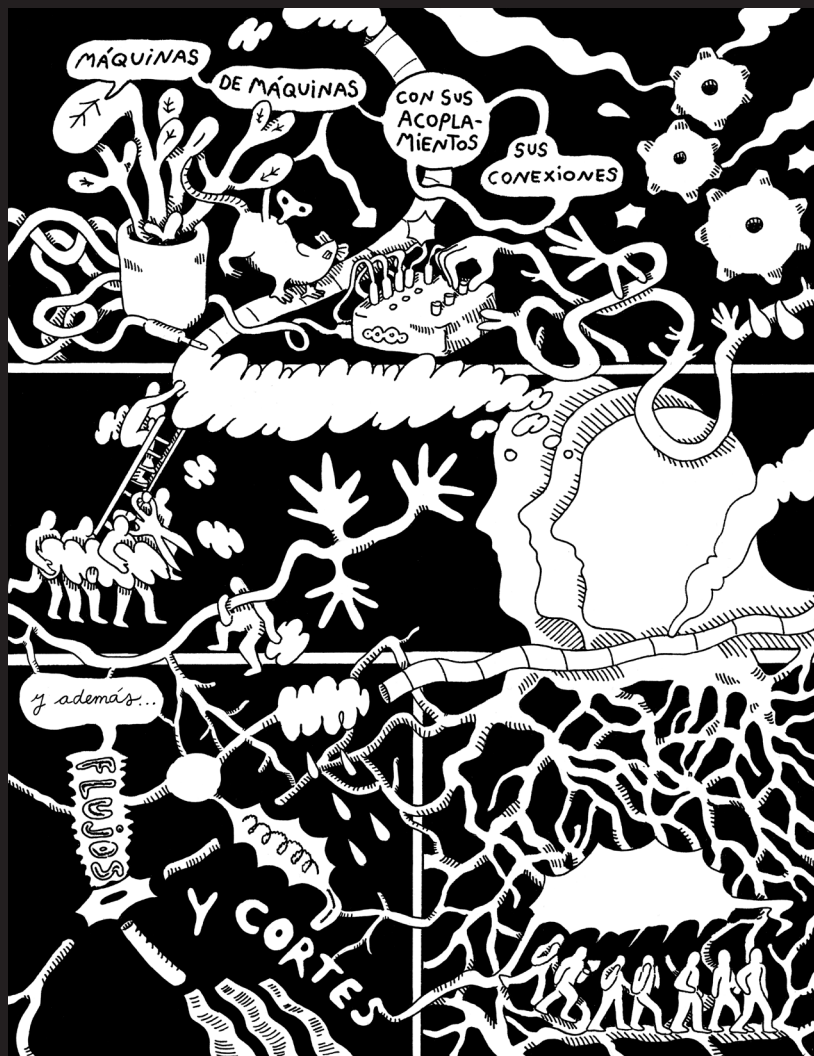


Exhibition June 21 – August 28, 2023
Sabatini Building, Floor 1, Space 1 and Protocol Room

machinations



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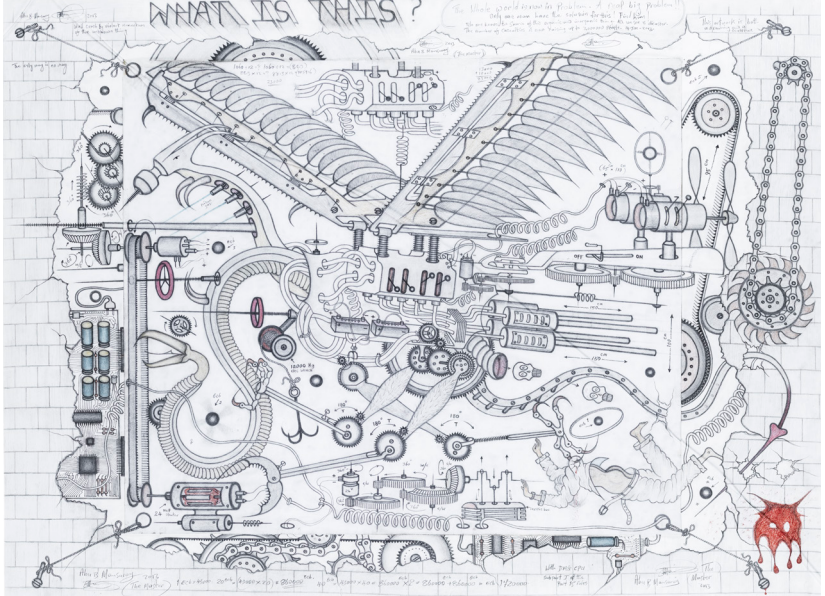
One of the fundamental contributions made by the French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari was an innovative conception of the idea of “machine” removed from its instrumental and technical functions, which were conducive to the alienation of the individual whom Marxist theory regarded as just one more piece in the capitalist apparatus. From 1968 onward, the machine conceptualized by these authors was based on relations of the human and the nonhuman, activating countless links between technologies, knowledges, and practices. Under this premise, a machine responds to the exigencies of a particular juncture, consists of connections between heterogeneous components, moves to the rhythm of its internal flows or breaks, and, when the time comes, disintegrates in the same way it has been constituted. The disparate nature of these multiple elements, together with the type of provisional rearrangements they establish, marks a key displacement from the static to the dynamic, from the scientific to the sociopolitical, and from the individual to the collective. From this perspective, a basic model of the machine is the baby coupled to its mother’s breast, making the stream of milk pass through both bodies before uncoupling itself. A more complex model might be a group of people who form an alliance to undertake a certain task, generate synergies with other groups and institutions with similar endeavors, invent their own means or procedures, and then disperse until the next opportunity.

Guattari deemed creativity the “aesthetic paradigm,” considering it ideal for extracting sense from current society, where the focal points of subjectivation are intoxicated with totalizing protocols of the capitalist market that are as empty as they are immovable. With the aesthetic machine as a spearhead for a possible form of liberation, Guattari opened the horizon to a machination that

embraces life as a connective integration of affects that is not circumscribed to the human, an “ecosophy” that intertwines mental, social, and environmental ecology.

In keeping with this theoretical framework, the project that preceded the exhibition explored diverse machinations through an open model of collaborative research that tried to spotlight the individual and collective desire to imagine other scenarios. The resulting exhibition, *machinations*, brings together some fifty artists, mostly from the Mediterranean region and Africa, whose works reflect upon the historical circumstances and current conditions of those territories. The works displayed, which cover a wide variety of formats and techniques, are articulated around three interconnected axes: *War Machines*, *Schizo Machines*, and *Cinema Machines of Care*.

War Machines presents attempts at action on a micropolitical basis that propose lines of flight from preceptive logics toward alternative ways of organizing the commons. *Schizo Machines* appeals to the deployment of subjectivities outside classic psychoanalytical patterns. Departing from the notion of “institutional psychotherapy”, Guattari’s “schizoanalysis” enables forms of malaise to be situated in the social space and repressed desire to be liberated. Finally, *Cinema Machines of Care* focuses on the moving image to engage modes of subjectivation other than the representational with the aim of corporealizing the experience of viewing, establishing affective communities, or plotting out assemblages of collective enunciation.

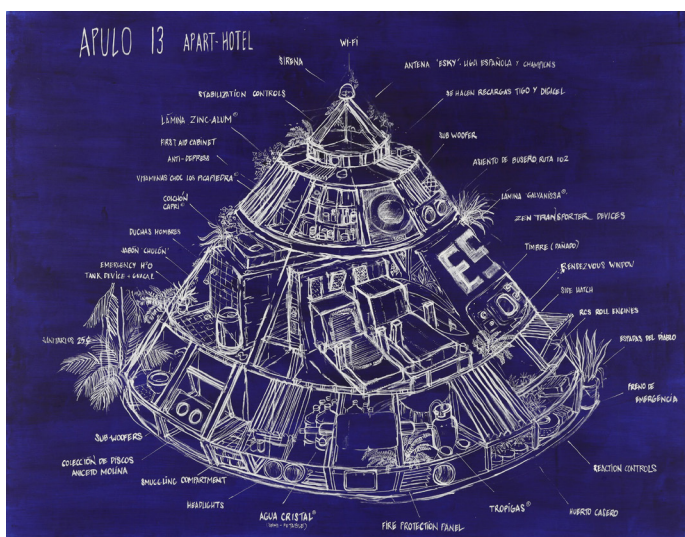


Abu Bakarr Mansaray, *What is this?*, 2013. Farida and Henri Seydoux Collection, Paris.
© Guillaume Benoit, courtesy MAGNIN-A Gallery, Paris

In their first texts on the notion of “machine”, Deleuze and Guattari counterpose it to the idea of “structure”. Traditional structures like the state, the psychiatric hospital, or the family are characterized by a principle of uniformity, bringing together what seems similar to impose bounds on what is considered different. In doing so, these structures perpetuate distinctions between the inside and the outside, between supposed normality and pathology, and between the biological and the cultural, using various strategies of control that they design themselves. The machine, by contrast, always implies complementarity with respect to external elements, keeps itself in permanent metamorphosis, penetrates several structures simultaneously, and can be dissolved at any moment. In this sense, the prime function of the machine is to “machinate”: to conspire against the established order, to imagine new possible assemblages, to invent the means necessary for a radical transformation.

Deleuze and Guattari put forward a conception of the machine that is no longer scientific but vitalist or systemic, encompassing technological, biological, informatic, social, theoretical, and aesthetic aspects. Unlike simple or complex tools, this machine is distinguished by communication and openness, by a constant flow of exchanges, since forming a single piece with something is very different from projecting oneself or having oneself replaced. With habitual provocativeness, Deleuze and Guattari go so far as to assert that machines must first break down if they are to function correctly. Mechanical malfunctioning enables proper “machinic” functioning, since short circuits in structural logic allow them to become something different. In the first rooms of the exhibition, the represented machines are at that precise moment of metamorphosis, questioning certain scientific, linguistic, or ideological conventions in the process.

The installation by Efrén Álvarez, an artist from Barcelona, is a good example of this. A large schematic composition, it



graphically outlines various episodes in a history of ideology. The one produced specifically for *machinations* focuses on the so-called Age of Reason of the late eighteenth century and establishes multidirectional relations between the French and Haitian revolutions and, therefore between the geopolitical inequalities of Europe, Africa, and America. These historical, political, and geographical coordinates are of special relevance not only as markers of the global consolidation of the modern political and economic system but also because the impact of science and technology on developed societies has been combined since then with an ideological bipolarization between progressive and conservative tendencies whose definitive form is today's "Integrated World Capitalism."

According to Guattari, the synchronic time of the state and the diachronic time of capitalism act together to circulate innovative means of semiotization (i.e., of creating signs and signifieds), with the goal of capturing, assimilating, and capitalizing on the production of subjectivity. These semiotic regimes limit

Simón Vega, *Apulo 13*, 2015. Long-Term Loan of the Fundación Museo Reina Sofía, 2020 (Gift of Mario Cáder-Frech)

the resingularization of individuals and collectives, annulling their disparity, creativity, multiplicity, or contextual variability. Against “capitalist homogenesis,” asignificant and relational forms like the diagram or cartography, which simultaneously represent both more and less than an image, allow breaks to be introduced to the dominant flows and permit lines of flight to be suggested. The maps, drawings, texts, and other atypical materials proposed by Álvarez form an autopoietic machine—one that is part of the same production process of the network that produces them in its turn—with a specific material and functional consistency that is intended not simply to illustrate or explain certain historical processes but to expose the complexity of their dynamics and participate in their processes of construction.

War Machines



Cian Dayrit (collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus), *Natural Histories of Struggle: Rhizome*, 2021. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.
Photo: Billie Clarken

The term *machine*, before the processes of industrialization circumscribed it within a technical and functionalist sense, once consisted of an assembly of various concepts. In its ancient origins, *machine* had to do with means, creation, or a device, either material or immaterial, and was applied above all to the fields of war and theater. It could refer equally to an artifact of war or to a piece of stage equipment—or to an invention of any type, thus underlining the ambivalence between machinery and machination. Leaping across time from the Greek connotation to that of Guattari, the works in this room function as theater machines but also as war machines, since they sabotage the grand structure represented by the state apparatus and its colonial and extractivist expansion.

From Guattari's first texts to the "Treatise on Nomadology," written with Deleuze and published in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the war machine is defined as irreducible to the state apparatus, alien to its sovereignty, and prior to its law. It is an invention of nomadic groups, a pure form of exteriority contrary to all that is presented as immutable or totalizing. Despite its name, the object of the war machine is not war but to trace plans of consistency and creative lines of flight. While the state-form pursues an uneven, hierarchical, Cartesian, sedentary territory that is measured for occupation, the nomadic groups, by contrast, propose a smooth, vectorial, projective, flexible, peregrinating space that is occupied without being measured.

Despite Deleuze and Guattari's concern about the forced displacements caused by the frontier policies of states, both make clear conceptual distinctions between sedentary people, migrants, and nomads. The migrant goes from one point to another, even if that other point is uncertain, unforeseen, or poorly located. By contrast, the nomad has no points, itineraries, or land. Nomads go hither and thither as part of multiple wanderings with infinite stages, whose traces are displaced and erased because they have no history, only geography. They behave like a vector of

“deterritorialization”, adding desert to desert, steppe to steppe, sea to sea, all inherently smooth and dynamic spaces. Despite incorporating features of migration, itinerance, or transhumance, the nomad can even remain immobile and at the same time full of velocity, always machinating in the throes of metamorphosis, because movement is extensive and velocity intensive.

These ideas are explicitly addressed in two works in *machinations*. The first is *Our Hirāk: The Tishreen Revolution* (2023), an investigation by the Lebanese actor, dramatist, and artist Rabih Mroué that explores the nuances which distinguish the notions of *Harakah* and *Hirāk/Harāk* on the basis of their machinic workings. Although the two terms are etymologically related and both designate processes of civil protest, the *Hirāk* or *Harāk* is distinguished by not having a grand final objective, not being centralized in a few spokespeople or representatives, not copying well-worn forms of insurgency, and not disappearing when it succeeds or fails to achieve its proposed objectives. On the contrary, it expresses movements that make numerous small demands, some of them even ridiculous or parodic; it manages responsibility in ways that are neither hierarchical nor masculinized; it invents creative modes of rebellion, often through ludic or festive activities; and it remains latent while waiting for new possible articulations. The slogans on placards and the lyrics of the songs habitual in the 2019 revolts in Beirut are good examples: they discard the grandiloquence of the official language used by the incumbent political powers or the majority media in favor of a minority literature, deterritorializing the slogans and collectivizing the signs. On the margin of political parties and stable organizations, this turbulent crowd enacts new forms of resistance.

The Israeli architect, urbanist, and photographer Eran Schaerf has devoted his investigation for *machinations* to the term *Levantine*, understood as referring to the Mediterranean Levant, which he sees as an amalgam of multiple influences defined by



Rayyane Tabet, *Exquisite Corpse*, 2017.
Sharjah Art Foundation Collection

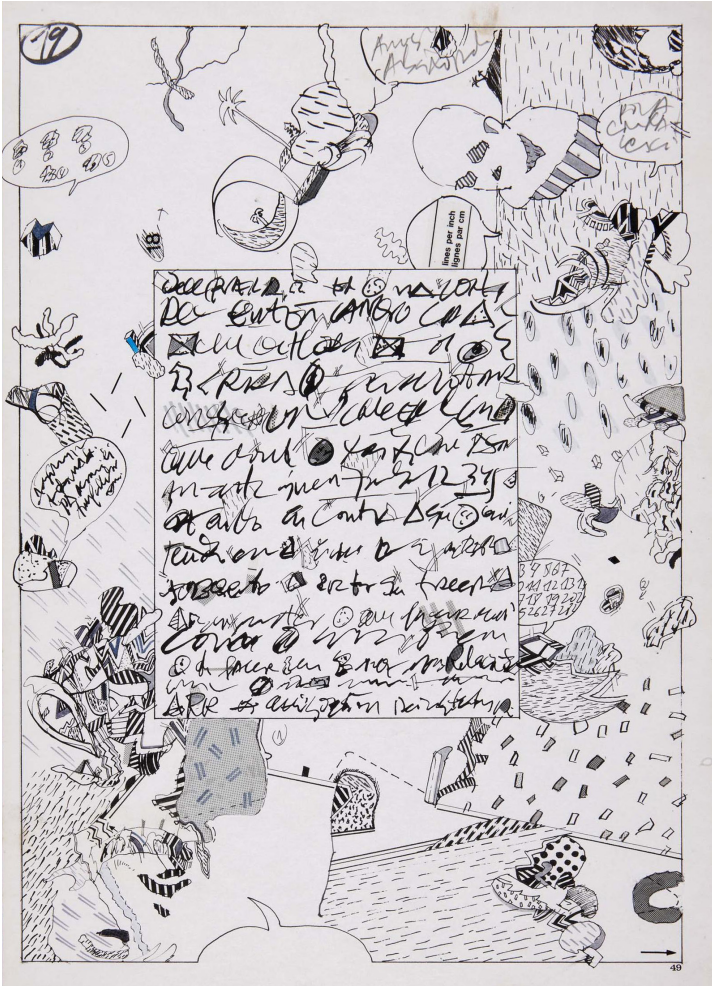


hybridization rather than fixed essences. He explores the life and work of the Frenkel brothers, pioneers of animation in Egypt, and weaves in their successive displacements from one country to another with the transformations of certain recurrent motifs and strategies. The result is the installation *Nomadesque* (2023), framed between two large curtains, each displaying a still image from work by the Frenkels taken from 1938 to 1960. One shows the gates of a city and a tent just in front of them, marking the uncertain limits between the sedentary inside and the nomadic outside. The other presents a broad landscape outside the city walls, located but not delimited. This is a smooth desert space whose layers are always in motion. Screened inside a cabin are several of the Frenkel brothers' films, from propaganda for national defense against Nazism to atomic experiments that turn the world upside down. Outside is an exhibition of

Ângela Ferreira, *Rádio Voz da Liberdade* (Voice of Liberty Radio), 2022.
Artist's collection, Cristina Guerra Contemporary and NF/Nieves Fernández

their archival materials; in particular, one of the projectors they made themselves to show their productions outside the official channels. Also included is a marionette-like cut-out figure dressed in various elements taken both from the Frenkels' imaginary and from popular Western culture, drawing attention to the bastardized, impure, and interchangeable character of features that try to pass for signs of identity.

Schizo Machines



Antón Patiño, *Esquizoide* (Schizoid), 1978, from the eponymous series.
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

As Deleuze and Guattari make clear in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972), movements of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are not necessarily geographical but appeal to the deployment of subjectivities outside the classic psychoanalytic patterns. The foundational tension between structure and machine, between capitalism and schizophrenia, is largely configured in the context of the “institutional psychotherapy” practiced by, among others, the Catalan psychiatrist Francesc Tosquelles at the Psychiatric Hospital of Saint-Alban-sur-Limagnole and the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Jean Oury at the clinic of La Borde. Underlying both initiatives is a certain nomadic, machinic sense in the approach to their organization. The one-way transference between analyzer and analyzed becomes vehicular when inserted in group relations with constant exchanges, turning the supposed patients into new analysts. The material aspects of life in common are resolved by committees made up of both carers and hospitalized persons, whose roles are periodically rotated to prevent them from stagnating in closed structures. Finally, art, theater, publishing, and cinema play a fundamental role in dynamizing social ties and creating spaces of subjectivation.

With these and other experiments, Guattari tried to overcome some of the contradictions of Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalysis, among them their familialist and universalizing conceptions, their stereotyped practice of interpretation, and, above all, their difficulty in gaining ground beyond linguistic semiology. By contrast, the “schizoanalytical metamodelization” proposed by Guattari does not fall into a conscious-unconscious dualism but favors a machinic unconscious with multiple strata of subjectivities and processes. Nor does it follow the model of neurosis and work from the representativity of structures and language; rather, it takes the model of psychosis as its basis for concentrating on the productivity of abstract machines. The works in this section thus explore other modes of communication to extract intensive, atemporal, aspatial dimensions capable of engendering radically mutant forms of collective subjectivity.



The case of the Catalan artist Albert Porta, known as Zush and later as Evru, is especially fruitful for an exploration of the concomitances between the war machine and the schizo machine. In 1968, during a period as a patient at the Phrenopathic Hospital in Barcelona, a companion diagnosed with schizophrenia suddenly yelled at him: “Zush!” From then on, Porta took the name Zush as his own. He founded *Evrugo Mental State*, a territory both real and imaginary that he describes as a parody of the concept of the state: its main industry is ironic weaponry (i.e., weapons that kill with pleasure and hilarity); ideas are its patrimony; and creative self-healing is its strategy. For this mental-physical-artistic-scientific-mystic space, Zush invented a flag, an anthem, a currency, a passport, a map, a system of diplomatic relations, and even a language with its own alphabet. All this paraphernalia of state iconography is displayed in a showcase alongside the *Casa Buja* (1995/2000), a white cube adapted to the size of his body and with a profusion of drawings on its inner faces. Inside the white cube of the museum, it imbricates certain forms of traditional institutionality. In 2001, Porta changed his name from Zush to Evru, in a way

transforming that multidimensional fiction into a vector of radical singularization.

In the Protocol Room of the Sabatini Building, the Galician artist Loreto Martínez Troncoso presents a multiphonic installation under the title *Poemarios garabato* (Scrawl Poems, 2023). On the basis of the slogan “conspiring means breathing together”—defended by Radio Alice and its circle in the 1970s, included by Guattari in his *Project for a Film on Free Radio* (ca. 1977), and brought up to date with sharp contemporary relevance after the COVID-19 pandemic—Martínez Troncoso proposes a space for “chaosmic” listening, where sound is transformed into noise and vice versa in tune with the movements and proximity of the visitors. In the center of the room is a large, half-open packing case from which wires escape like tentacles or ivy. These creep over parts of the architecture until they activate speakers manipulated expressly to search for possible new sonorities and colorings. In the manner of a newly installed pirate radio station, the radio waves attract a multiplicity of psychophonies, stammers, ventriloquies, and mental and emotional voices, perhaps incarnate, together with reverberations of past exhibitions, lectures, or performances that make up the memory of a building transformed from a hospital into a museum. On some of the walls, various schizocartographies drawn in charcoal, referring to the private scream of a child diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorder or to the general need to react to something that affects us, generate another type of echo and interference. The result is a living sound sculpture, the collective breathing of a body without organs, which tests the limits of audibility and intelligibility to explore a possible asignifying semiology.

Cinema Machines of Care



La rara troupe, exercises from the project *Rodando el límite: autogestión y disparate* (Shooting on the Edge: Self-Management and Nonsense, 2019–2020), video still.

© La rara troupe

Against the production model of commercial cinema, oriented toward the diffusion of hegemonic representations, Guattari developed an interest through theory and practice in certain proposals that used the resources of mass cinema as an effective means of expression and struggle at the service of minorities. Speaking of the cinema as machine—that is, speaking of a cinema machine—implies remembering that tools must not be taken into account separately and for themselves; they function only in relation to the combinations that make them possible or which they make possible.

Following Deleuze and Guattari in *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), art creates blocks of percepts and affects. Transforming perceptions into percepts and affections into affects implies uniting them by means of the camera-machine, which has to do with the provocative idea of a “healing cinema” suggested by the Cameroonian filmmaker and activist Jean-Pierre Bekolo. This cinema, based on attention and care and generally self-produced, disseminates images and makes them proliferate, multiplies points of singularity, and incites subjects to recount their own histories. It inserts itself in social practices located in neighborhoods or civic centers with the goal of promoting a new art of living in society, and it emphasizes the reciprocity between filmmakers and spectators, concerning itself with the diversity of its receptions and particularly with the debates sparked by its screening.

A relevant case study in this respect is that of the French filmmaker François Pain, an investigator on the *machinations* project and Guattari’s friend for several decades. Together with François Marcelly-Fernandez, he presents in *Support Polygon/CAE (Collective Assemblage of Enunciation)* (2023) a video installation with three synchronized channels. The interviews with Guattari, Oury, and Tosquelles, sometimes separate but often intermingled, serve as a guiding thread for problematizing issues such as the political positioning of



institutional psychotherapy, the impact of contemporary violence on forms of subjectivity, the self-management of social clubs in clinics as an instrument for collective healing, the need to respect free circulation in the architectural distribution of the hospital, the machinic flows produced in these institutions, and the personal and generational resonances of a nonconformist film like Jean Vigo's *Zéro de conduite* (Zero for Conduct, 1933). The conjunction of sound and image on the three channels allows disparate materials to be related, forming up to six successive "collective assemblages of enunciation." In terms of Guattarian schizoanalysis, a collective assemblage of enunciation subsumes not only elements of human intersubjectivity but also prepersonal sensitive and cognitive modules, microsocial processes, and fragments of the imaginary. It acts in the same way on nonhuman, machinic, technical, or economic formations as on semiotic, material, or social fluxes.

Guattari established certain parallels between psychoanalytic performance and cinematographic performance. However, he gave at least three reasons why the unconscious does not manifest itself in the same way on the psychiatrist's couch as in the movie theater. In the latter, the unconscious partially escapes the dictatorship of the signifier, is no longer reduced

to a linguistic occurrence, and does not respect the classic transmitter-receiver dichotomy proper to psychoanalytical transference. The spatial distribution proposed by Bekolo for his video installation *Healing Festival: Cinema and Traumas* (2021) stages this important paradigm shift. The main screen shows nine short films on a loop, one after the other, as in a film festival. Immediately opposite, another screen shows three people acting as a jury or as carers who are attentively watching the films. To one side, a third screen shows twelve more people, in this case the public or the patients, who are attending the screening. In this way, the habitual one-way flow between spectator and spectacle, which replicates that of psychoanalyst and psychoanalyzed, is triangulated in a group relationship that permits roles and functions to alternate. The image becomes event and meeting place, so that the traumas occasioned by imperialism, colonialism, racism, male chauvinism, state violence, and much more can be treated collectively and repaired with other alternatives for a common future. The affectivity and effectiveness of “healing cinema” involves a holistic approach that necessarily begins with the healing of the institutions themselves.

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