

The Other

DIALOGUES

09 and 16 June 2021

SYMPOSIUM

THE OTHER Dialogues are curated by Empathy & Risk in partnership with Looking Forward and Pastor Projects. The symposium is part of the Empathy & Risk Dialogue series. Since 2017, these have been convened as multi-national conversations between policy-makers, artists and activists, exploring the contradictory versions of 'truth' that may lead progressively towards conflict.

THE OTHER Dialogues draw from the exhibition *Dear Aliens, We Are Ready* at Galeria de la Ciudad - ICBC Tecate, curated by Thomas Vann Altheimer. The conversations will explore the limitation of understanding that can be reinforced through distance.

curated by

**EMPATHY
& RISK**

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Empathy & Risk

Empathy & Risk is an arts-led interdisciplinary initiative that addresses issues of systemic failure in contexts of contemporary global crisis. The project is developed with the support of the Art and Design Research Centre of Sheffield Hallam University, UK and the Global Challenge Research Fund. It's based on clearly articulated principles of equal agency, mutual respect and collaborative authorship in sites of publicly acknowledged empathetic breakdown. Co-designed with partners in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the project has sought to create platforms where they are absent, but also to contribute to the resilience and capacity of those that already exist.

Empathy & Risk in Mexico

Mexico has been identified as a key new context for the development and future growth of the project. A new collaborative network has been developed with Pastor Projects (Tijuana/Mexico City), focussed on the consideration of multi-modal methodologies to engage Mexican, US and other artists with the complex and uncertain context at the southern border of the USA.

A pilot programme has been created to deliver a public exhibition (Galería de Ciudad, ICBC Tecate), a symposium hosted by Universidad Iberoamericana (IBERO) Tijuana, and a book published by Abismos Editorial. The exhibition, curated by Thomas Van Altheimer (Pastor Projects) takes place from April 9 to June 20, 2021 and includes artists: Monica Arreola, David Cotterrell, Ryan Gander, Mariel Miranda, Irma Sofía Poeter, Gro Sarauw, and Alejandro Zacarias.

The symposium **THE OTHER Dialogues** is curated by Empathy & Risk and LOOKING FORWARD. It is builded in partnership with IBERO and takes place online over two sessions on June 9 and 16.

THE OTHER Dialogues

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Each artist/academic involved in the exhibition and in the Dialogues has developed hypotheses for the application of their own local experience, knowledge and mediated understanding to issues of common concern that are perceived to be of particular relevance to the Baja California region.

First session

THE OTHER Dialogues: Nationalism

9th June 11am PST

This conversation brings contemporary visual art practices into the geopolitical framework that defines the dichotomic relations deeply ingrained in discourses of powers.

In the past 18 months, the pandemic has revealed new narratives of local solidarity and international exclusion. Within a context of arguments of safety and responsibility co-existing with populist isolationism and self-interest, there is a compelling need to reflect on nationalism and its new and historic rationales.

- **David Cotterrell** is an artist and academic based in London. Cotterrell realises art, advocacy and social research projects. He has worked in conflicted landscapes, observing the ethical and practical challenges of humanitarian and military engagement within sites of tension around the world. Since 2018 he has been Research Professor at Sheffield Hallam University and is currently Director of the Culture and Creativity Research Institute and Director at Empathy and Risk C.I.C. His work has been commissioned and shown extensively in Europe, the United States, Middle East and Asia. His work appears in several collections including the Imperial War Museum, London and Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.
- **Olga Margarita Dávila García** has a degree in Architecture and Art History, and a master degree in Education and Specialized Studies in Curatorship. He has curated and museography more than three hundred exhibitions in Mexico, the USA, Hong Kong, Germany, Argentina and Spain. Among the most prominent are *The vocation and profile of the museum*, *The one who sees everything from the Forest*, *Constructo*, *Black Flow*, *Metonimias*, *Shaped in Mexico*, among others. Author of the artist book *SIN TÍTULO arte contemporáneo desde Oaxaca*, as well as the books-catalogs *Benjamín Serrano* and *Trascendencia y vanguardia desde Tijuana*, published by the Secretaría de Cultura de la Federación y el Centro Cultural Tijuana. She is currently a co-curator in Lagos, artistic studies and residencies, as well as in Arafura, residences for curators; she is also a public (conceptual) official in the Baja California Ministry of Culture.

- [Norma Iglesias Prieto](#) is Doctor in Sociology from the Complutense University of Madrid. She is a professor-researcher at San Diego State University and El Colegio de la Frontera Norte. Her main lines of research include cultural processes on the northern border of Mexico, visual arts, media, identities and the study of gender. She co-edited (with Álvaro Huerta and Donatha Brown) 'Contemporary Issues for People of Color Surviving and Thriving in the US Today', Volume 5: Immigration and Migration (2016). In 2008, she published *Emergencias. Visual Arts in Tijuana: Glo-cal urban contexts and creativity*. In addition to her academic work, Iglesias Prieto has experience as a media producer and art curator. She has curated art events such as InSite 2000 (2000, film and video series, InSite, Tijuana/San Diego); MEXartes.Berlin (2002, video series, House of World Cultures, Berlin); Tijuana. The Third Nation... (2004/2005, visual arts, CECUT and ARCO, Tijuana/Madrid); Tijuana: Laboratory of Postmodernity (2006, video and film series, Cultural Institute of Mexico, Washington), Tijuana: Strange New World (2006, video and film series, Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego), Mexican Border Expressions (2013, multimedia projection, Shenzhen Urbanism/Architecture Biennale), Point of Entry (2016, multimedia and visual arts, San Diego International Airport), Back to Basics (2017, visual arts, The Front, San Ysidro), and Frontières? (2017, film series, Douarnenez Film Festival).
- [Gro Sarauw](#) is an artist and organiser currently based in Copenhagen. Gro works with concepts of Spatial Justice; collective planning and research on 'critical adaptation'. She has an MFA from the Fine Arts program at Goldsmiths University and Architecture degrees from Bartlett School of Architecture in London and The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture. In 2019 as a member of the artistic-research group The Winter Office, (2016-2019) Gro produced two solo exhibitions in Los Angeles exploring Spatial Justice in relation to the local urban, social and environmental crisis and opened a solo show TRANSCALAR at the contemporary art platform Surdez Aps, in Copenhagen. Gro has been leading UKK - Organisation for Artist, Curators and Art Mediators in Denmark from 2015-21.

Second session

THE OTHER Dialogues: Distance

16th June 11am PST

The starting point for this session is the observation of how, during the pandemic, we have assisted an amplification of the concept of distance and proximity, making even more visible the tension at the edge of two economic zones. Migration, transmission, and translation are all experiences of mediations between contexts and identities that can trigger either resistance or understanding. How can we critically question our experience of the others' contexts and establish informed methodologies of collaboration among diversity?

- **Ingrid Hernandez** develops collaborative projects with migrants and communities that build irregular settlements, where she comes into contact

with various speakers who make up the social fabric of these places. Her methodology starts from meeting and negotiating with these agents to work together for long periods. Hernandez has been a teacher, researcher and workshop leader in educational institutions and independent associations in Mexico, Bogota and New York. In the United States she was invited to give lectures and workshops, specifically for the Blaffer Art Museum of the University of Houston (2014), the California Institute of Arts (CalArts, 2006) and the Otis College of Art and Design in their master's program Public Practice (OTIS College, 2014). Hernández also operates the 3-year-old arts center Relaciones Inesperadas (Unexpected Relations). The center offers seminars and talks geared at Tijuana's expanding artist community in addition to a master's degree in Arts and Cultural Production.

- **Fiamma Montezemolo** is both an artist (MFA, San Francisco Art Institute) and a Cultural Anthropologist (Ph.D, University Orientale of Naples). She is an established scholar in border studies and Professor in the Department of Cinema; Digital Media at the University of California, Davis. As an artist, she situates her work as a critical extension of the ethnographic turn in contemporary art. She works with various media (mainly installation and video). Her artwork has been widely exhibited both nationally and internationally. She is the co-author of *Here is Tijuana* (Blackdog Publishing, 2006) and co-editor of *Tijuana Dreaming: Life; Art at the Global border* (Duke UP, 2012).
- **Marlene Solis** is a professor-researcher in the Department of Social Studies and coordinator of the Doctorate program in Cultural Studies at El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, Tijuana. The research she has carried out deals with work, gender and labor identities, border processes and social change in maquiladora companies in Tijuana. She participates in academic networks such as the Conacyt thematic Network of Work and Working Conditions. and the Ollin Calli Collective for the Defense of Labor Rights. She is currently collaborating in projects: Mexico-Guatemala cross-border region: Regional dimension and bases for its integral development and is editor of *Gender Transitions Along Borders, The northern borderland of Mexico and Morocco* (Routledge, 2016).
- **Thomas Vann Alzheimer** is a filmmaker, activist, comedian, conceptual and performance artist. Alzheimer is known for using his identity as a site for political experimentation and exploration. He has exhibited and performed internationally in artist-run spaces like Alma Enterprises in London and municipal art spaces like the ICA in London, Angel's Gate in San Pedro and Nikolaj, Center of Contemporary Art in Copenhagen. In 2016, Vann Alzheimer founded the curatorial platform Pastor Projects, developing and presenting contemporary art projects in Mexico, United States and Europe. He currently lives and works in Tijuana, Mexico.

Both sessions are chaired by [Carolina Lio](#), curator at Empathy & Risk and director at LOOKING FORWARD.

Principles of the Empathy and Risk Dialogues

- **Empathy** – is it possible for us to look at a common concern from a very different perspective? The ER Dialogues are convened purposefully to bring together people across hierarchies and sectors – persons who would have shared concerns but possibly exclusive circles and contexts – to share knowledge and concerns with each other.
- **Risk** - The focus of the conversations will be centred around what has not been resolved, rather than what has been achieved. Rather than talk about past achievements and proven knowledge, those around the table will be encouraged to address questions, doubt and failure.
- The ER Dialogues are artist led and so they will always attempt to be connected to an artwork or a social intervention of relevance.
- An ER conversation could be either public or closed.
- Ideally there will always be more than one ER dialogue convened in a venue.

JOURNEY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMPATHY AND RISK DIALOGUES

Empathy & Risk and the dialogues series are generously supported by **Sheffield Hallam University** and the **Global Challenge Research Fund**.

Institutional partnership of the ER Dialogues has been provided by the Ubumuntu Festival of Humanity, Rwanda; the Institute of Statelessness and Inclusion, the British Council UK. Individual partnership with the ER Dialogues has been provided by Samantha Lakin, Angelica Chandrasekaran, Eunice Kangai and Stephen Stenning.

2017

WAR DIALOGUES, SCOTLAND

The **Empathy and Risk Dialogues** began with the convening of the **War Dialogues** in Edinburgh in 2017, as part of the Spirit of '47 programme of the Edinburgh Theatre Festival. The War Dialogues, deliberately linked directly to war, examined time periods that fall specifically outside of the official declaration of a state of war.

1. The first session of **War Dialogues : Conflict** looked at the Post-War context. It examined the challenges of State, societal and community structures within a nation that is emerging from a situation of declared conflict into an environment of declared peace.
2. The second session of **War Dialogues : Fear** looked at the Pre-War context – where growing polarization, paranoia, distance, walls, structures are seen to be contributing to a trajectory that pulls societies forward towards conflict even in a declared state of peace.

2018

MEMORY DIALOGUES, RWANDA

The Second set of conversations under the Empathy and Risk Dialogues project were convened in 2018. The **Memory Dialogues** - convened in Kigali, Rwanda, as part of the 4th Ubuntu Festival of Humanity.

The **Memory Dialogues** panels on Legacy and Empathy were a curated panel series between a group of artists and policy makers/activists reflecting on the area of memory and violence.

1. The first session **Memory Dialogue: Legacy** explored the challenges of inherited memory. In a time of reflection, when haunted by history, what are the mechanisms for personal, institutional and societal acceptance of the narratives of others and themselves. The conversation focused on the complexity of shared histories of polarised perspectives and the way in which human experience can be understood beyond the generations of those involved.
2. The second **Memory Dialogue : Empathy** explored the place of human discernment, empathy and discretion within structures that exist to respond to human crises. This session focused on the capacity of organisations for honest, intelligent and intuitive self-reflection within an environment of continuous change. The panel discussed the obstacles to the creation of a shared space for collective engagement.

2019

CANCELLED DIALOGUES, THE HAGUE

The **CANCELLED Dialogues** were part of the **CANCELLED Arts Programme** held within the World Conference on Statelessness in the Hague in June 2019. The **CANCELLED Dialogues** were a series of artist-led interdisciplinary discussions and debates on the subject of Statelessness. They are interdisciplinary, non-hierarchical conversations convened by artists in response to an artwork or a social intervention of relevance. The **CANCELLED Dialogues** comprised 2 panel discussions - "**CANCELLED : Risk**" and "**CANCELLED : Identity**"

1. **CANCELLED : Risk** Prof. John Packer in conversation with Prof. David Cotterrell, discussing the politics of personal and institutional risk within the issue of Statelessness.
2. **CANCELLED : Identity** – looked at Identities that exist at the exclusion of others. With an artwork as a stimulus for conversation, artists and activists discussed the politics of identities that are defined by cancellation.

2019

BORDER : DIALOGUE, RWANDA

The Empathy and Risk Dialogue series returned to the Ubuntu Festival of Humanity in 2019 with **Border Dialogue**, a panel session and a performance of Mother Wall – both which examined the impact of walls on human existence and interaction. It addressed the basic question - *Is putting up walls the only way to fortify ourselves against perceived or actual threat? And after walls go up, what does it take to bring them down?* The session was chaired by Prof. David Cotterrell.

