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Introduction: *Art, Borders and Belonging – On Home and Migration*

Maria Photiou and Marsha Meskimmon

Art, Borders and Belonging: On Home and Migration takes its lead from Hamid Naficy's statement that exile 'thrives on detail, specificity, and locality'¹ and investigates how three associated concepts, house, home and homeland, are represented in contemporary global art. The volume brings together essays that explore the conditions of global migration as a process that is always both about departures and homecomings, indeed, *homemakings*, through which the construction of migratory narratives are made possible. Although the volume is centrally concerned with how recent and contemporary works of art can materialize the migratory experience of movement and (re)settlement, it also explores how the curating and exhibition practices, at local and global levels, can extend and challenge conventional narratives of art, borders and belonging.

A growing number of artists migrate; some for better job opportunities and for the experience of different cultures, others not by choice but as a consequence of forced displacement caused by political, religious or military destabilization, economic or environmental collapse. In recent years, the theme of migration has emerged as a dominant subject in art and curatorial practices. Considering the contemporary developments around the so-called migration crisis – in 2017, 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide² – and the increased security of borders, it is a matter of urgency to understand key issues regarding the migratory experience. *Art, Borders and Belonging* thus seeks to explore how the migratory experience is generated and displayed through the lens of contemporary art.

While this is a burgeoning field of interest, and one in which diverse perspectives collide productively, it is not 'new'. In the latter 1980s and through the 1990s, a number of important exhibitions, publications and institutions emerged, signalling the power of decolonizing discourses and practices to redress a normative, Eurocentric vision of 'international' art and visual culture. Key examples, such as the second Havana Biennial (1986), the Asia Pacific Triennial (est. 1993), the first two Johannesburg Biennales (1995, 1997), the founding of the journal *Third Text* (1987) and the creation of the Institute of International Visual Arts (InIVA, 1994), demonstrate how the stage was set for a global reconfiguration of the arts and culture that examined migration, exile, diaspora and empire with a critical eye. At this same moment, one of the earliest and most insightful writers on the implications of migration, diaspora and globalization in the arts and culture, Nikos Papastergiadis, published two pivotal volumes that further helped set the agenda for the field at the start of the present century: *The Turbulence of Migration* (1998)³ and *Dialogues in the Diasporas* (1999).⁴ By the century's turn, therefore, a number of publications and exhibitions had already begun to place the significance of 'home' and belonging at the heart of the migratory and diasporic condition,⁵ and were continuing to interrogate the power politics of the Global North in the international art world.⁶ Our collection stems from this important legacy.

Also significant for the intellectual trajectories of the present anthology, 'postcolonial', 'Third World' and 'transnational' feminisms had emerged strongly by the 1990s, facilitating an intersectional dialogue with the politics of globalization, migration, diaspora and belonging.⁷ The impacts of globalization are not gender-neutral; women are positioned very differently with regard to the economic, social, legal and cultural processes that underpin the movement of global capital, commodities and, of course, people.⁸ The experience of migration – both the disruptive displacement of departure and the labour of reinventing 'home' in a new location – is materialized through gendered norms and conventions.⁹ There is not one, universal 'migrant subject', but myriad, intersectional processes through which migration comes to mark becoming-subjects in the full weight of their embodiment.¹⁰ The early insights of transnational feminisms have facilitated the later wide-ranging critique of geopolitical power politics and raised important questions of sovereignty in a radically reimagined world of vital matter, beyond the human.¹¹

Scholars working in feminist art theory have not been slow to ask searching questions concerning how historical and contemporary art practices confront the gendered terrain of global movement, diaspora, migration and exile. The volume edited by Ella Shohat, *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (1999), is a pivotal early instance of the insights of transnational feminisms connecting productively with a decolonizing take on contemporary global art.¹² A number of other books from the first decade of the twenty-first century extended these intellectual connections in important ways, particularly in rethinking the cultural contribution of women globally, both past and present.¹³

Marsha Meskimmon continued to explore the complex interrelationship between transnational feminisms, gendered geopolitics and contemporary art and visual culture in two further co-edited volumes: *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience*¹⁴ and *Home/Land: Women, Citizenship, Photographies*.¹⁵ In addition to a strong focus on tracing women's agency under the conditions of global movement, the potential of migration and diaspora to promote complex dialogues across difference, led cultural theorists to develop renewed conversations with the concept of cosmopolitanism as an embodied and immanent form of engagement with others in the world.¹⁶ More recently, transcultural, queer and new materialist methodologies brought additional sophistication and nuance to decolonial feminist analyses of art and the geopolitical landscape within which it circulates.¹⁷ The present anthology is situated within this field of contest and connection, demonstrating the importance of close attention to detail in delineating the specificity of any and all migrants' tales.

The chapters collected together in this volume explore how the concepts of 'migration', 'home' and 'belonging' are articulated and displayed in the visual arts. Each chapter examines these concepts from very different perspectives through a variety of media and from art across the world. Reflecting on the ways in which the migratory experience is constructed, the volume seeks to critically explore narratives of border crossings (both physical and psychological), past and present histories, and the sense of belonging to one's homeland (both 'lost' and existing). Considering belonging as a process, the volume weaves together a series of concepts and conversations that have become prominent in studies of migration: memory, identity, hybridity, transnationalism, multiculturalism,

ethnicity, mobility, nomadism and boundaries. Through attentive visual analysis, the chapters that follow explore artistic strategies employed in representing exile and displacement; curatorial strategies in representing the migratory experience and (un)belonging; and the role of art and architecture in fostering the construction of inclusive cities that could become 'arrival cities' for migrants.

Development of the project

The development of this book reflects the collaboration and dialogue(s) the editors have had with one another over the past decade. Our roles as the editors of this volume have differed; Photiou was the driving force of the project as it emerged from her postdoctoral research and a session she organized at the annual conference of the Association for Art History (AAH), when it was convened by Meskimmon and colleagues at Loughborough University in 2017. Meskimmon joined as co-editor by kind invitation shortly after the project was conceived and we have subsequently enjoyed many exchanges about the essays and the direction of travel of the ideas, since.

But the relationship between us preceded the publication project by some considerable time and began when Photiou embarked upon her doctoral work in 2009 under Meskimmon's supervision. While still a graduate student, Photiou became interested in exploring how contemporary art practices engage with the concepts of 'home', 'migration' and the sense of 'belonging'. These issues came to the fore in her successful doctoral thesis, *Rethinking the History of Cypriot Art: Greek Cypriot Women Artists in Cyprus*, where her research uncovered how Greek Cypriot women artists confronted and challenged conventional understandings of their histories and cultural traditions, as well as their experiences of exile, citizenship, identity and belonging in a divided nation after 1974. Photiou continued to work with Meskimmon, developing her ideas through a postdoctoral project *Narratives of Contested Lands*, funded by an AHRC Cultural Engagement award. In this project, Photiou began weaving together a set of debates concerned with home, exile and belonging in both Cyprus and Palestine, drawing important affinities between these similarly divided, but very different, locations.

At the same time that Photiou was exploring the art and activism of Greek Cypriot and Palestinian women, Meskimmon was completing the research for *Home/Land: Women, Citizenship, Photographies* (a project that emerged through a network she convened with colleague Marion Arnold) and starting the work that would lead to the Trilogy *Transnational Feminisms and the Arts*, the first volume of which was published earlier this year.¹⁸ In 2017, our paths converged again through the AAH conference, where Photiou's excellent session *Home, Exile and the Politics of Belonging* attracted an unusual range of speakers, particularly focusing on unconventional geographies and horizontal histories.¹⁹ The speakers offered close readings of artistic and curatorial practices and highlighted the conditions of mobility and the migratory experience from different disciplinary perspectives and geographical locations. Following from the lively debate generated at the conference, it became obvious that there was a need to offer a renewed understanding of the notion of home and the sense of belonging being articulated in the visual arts – there was a gap that might be filled by a well-placed anthology. It is our hope, as editors, that this anthology begins that process.

The majority of the essays in this book originated as papers presented at the 2017 AAH, but a number of further contributions were commissioned in order to reinforce the interdisciplinary nature of the volume and extend its intellectual remit. The range is not intended to be geographically inclusive and the volume is not a survey text. Rather, the essays cohere around their commitment to exploring the multiple processes of 'uprooting and regrounding'²⁰ that contemporary migratory experience manifests. These are neither solely positive nor are they relentlessly negative. Likewise, gender, class, 'race', mobility, language and culture are not conceived here as fixed or immutable entities, and their interplay within the processes of making and curating art are multidimensional and fluid. The narratives that coalesce in the volume open different perspectives on migratory subjects, often in very different voices, and, on this point, we have been inspired by recent work in the field that explores art's worldmaking potential, as well as its political role in a 'post-migrant' culture.²¹

The volume begins with Photiou's investigation into two projects that were exhibited during the 2017 international art exhibition *documenta 14*. Examining the works of Greek-Cypriot artist Vassia Vanezi and Palestinian

artist Emily Jacir, both of whom invited communities to participate in the making of their projects, the text argues that asking the audience to participate and weave together in the making of these works constructs a politicized narrative of home that is charged with references to past historical events and the ongoing occupation of both of these contested 'homelands'. The two works can thus be understood as politicized 'projects of belonging' and sites of national remembrance for the lost homeland.

Textiles have been used as a powerful communication platform, particularly in the practice of women artists. Lydia Wooldridge explores textile constriction techniques in the work of Iranian artist Parastou Forouhar in Chapter 2. She offers insights in the connection between biographical experiences and the symbolic metaphor in Forouhar's practice. In her analysis, she considers the use of weaving and entanglement techniques as a platform to communicate 'complex and often contradictory ideas concerning beauty and pain, religion and secularism, and tradition and modernity'. To develop these ideas, Wooldridge addresses the critical connection between Forouhar's migratory experience (between Iran and Germany) and the politicized combination of diverse motifs used by the artist.

In Chapter 3, Sarah Fox considers Jacques Derrida's *Archive Fever* and Ariella Azoulay's *Archive* to explore the work of Canadian artist Hajra Waheed. Similar to Wooldridge, and Photiou, Fox reflects on the artists' migratory experience and recording of personal narratives. Accordingly, Fox investigates how Waheed uses archival material to situate 'individual narratives within the context of state-propagated ideas of nationhood and belonging'. Using what Fox describes as 'manipulation of archival images', she reflects on how the artists' archival intervention becomes an alternative archive. The new archive is deployed strategically to reveal narratives of home and homeland.

Further unpacking the migratory experience, Nadia Albaladejo Garcia explores the ways in which exiled Spanish artist Remedios Varo recreated the space of home in Chapter 4. In a critical analysis of the 1957 painting *La creation de la aves*, Garcia examines the process of re-creating space as the place of home from an exilic perspective. By adopting a phenomenological approach, she argues that Varo's creative process is 'embodied and rooted in space' and that at the same time 'contributes to modify/construct space as the place of home'. As Garcia mentions, Varo's 'conception of home, given her

exiled position, is of a place where femininity is at the centre of the creative process.

Questions around identity and belonging are crucial in understanding the migratory experience from a non-Western perspective. In Chapter 5, Imogen Racz offers an insightful analysis of the 1980s artistic scene in Britain. Taking into consideration major 1980s shows focused on contemporary Black art, Racz addresses some salient points in relation to how and where exhibitions were constructed. In her text, she also interrogates sociopolitical and gendered marginalization developed in curatorial practices and how this affected the sense of (not) belonging in Britain.

A significant element of this project is the inclusion of new perspectives in exploring and recording the migratory experience and the sense of belonging. Chapter 6 is an epistolary exchange between two European academics who share migrant backgrounds and explore feminist approaches in representing the concept of home. Reflecting upon the 2018 exhibition *Home Strike*, which they jointly curated at l'etrangere gallery in London, Alexandra Kokoli and Basia Sliwinska engage in a dialogue around their own migratory experience. Their conversation is stimulated by local and global politics and their personal reflection of (un)belonging.

Concerns of historical geopolitical division(s) and formation of borderlands is pertinent to the performance projects of Chicano artist Guillermo Gomez-Peña. In Chapter 7, Eva Zetterman analyses the manner in which the 1848 relocation of the US-Mexican border is being represented in Gomez-Peña's work. Similar to Vanezi's and Jacir's work discussed in Chapter 1, Gomez-Peña's work acts against historical erasure. Zetterman's text offers an incisive account on how the memories and autobiographical narratives are articulated and become a platform against historical amnesia.

The question of border crossing and cultural dialogues is explored in Chapter 8. Taking as starting point Kazakhstan's geographical and cultural setting, Aliya de Tesenhausen analyses key themes and influences in the work of contemporary Kazakhstani artists. Since 2005, Kazakhstan artists have actively participated in the international art scene, particularly in Europe and Asia. In her text, de Tiesenhausen considers the work of Almagul Menlibayeva and examines key issues in relation to gender and ethnicity, colour and history,

textile and environment. She examines in particular the photographic work *Red Butterfly* and addresses metaphors related to the sense of belonging.

The final chapter, Chapter 9, examines how the migration crisis was exhibited at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale. While the previous chapter explored representations of migration presented in different international exhibitions, this chapter investigates how the 'Arrival City' is being constructed and exhibited. Joel Robinson discusses the exhibitions 'Places for People' (Austrian Pavilion) and 'Making Heimat' (German Pavilion), which both act as interventions and become platforms in which refugees are given agency. Robinson examines the extent to which the Biennale was being leveraged to help shape the space of the 'arrival city'.

Considering the extent in which the visual arts are intertwined with real-life events, this volume acts as a vehicle of knowledge transfer of cultural perspectives and enhances the importance of understanding artistic interventions in relation to home, migration and belonging. In bringing this volume to fruition, we concur with the comment made by T. J. Demos in *The Migrant Image*: 'Today, what is needed more than ever are powerful and creative artistic expressions and interventions that join other movements for positive change, social justice and equality, working together toward the progressive re-creation of our common world.'²²

Notes

- 1 Hamid Naficy, ed., *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media and the Politics of Place* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 4.
- 2 UN Refugee Agency, *Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2017*, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf> (accessed 1 March 2019).
- 3 Nikos Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity* (Cambridge: Polity, 1998).
- 4 Nikos Papastergiadis, *Dialogues in the Diasporas: Essays and Conversations on Cultural Identity* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1998).
- 5 George Robertson, Melinda Mash, Lisa Tickner, Jon Bird, Barry Curtis and Tim Putnam, eds, *Travellers' Tales: Narratives of Home and Displacement* (London: Routledge, 1994); Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson, eds, *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* (Oxford: Berg, 1998).

- Naficy, *Home, Exile, Homeland*; Bruce Grenville, ed., *Home and Away*, ex.cat. (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2004); Gill Perry, *Playing at Home: The House in Contemporary Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014).
- 6 Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, eds, *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading* (Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen: NAI, 2001); Hanru Hou, Philippe Vergne, Kathy Halbreich and Paulo Herkenhoff, eds, *How Latitudes Become Forms: Art in a Global Age* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 2003); Nikos Papastergiadis, ed., *Complex Entanglements: Art, Globalisation and Cultural Difference* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003); Gilane Tawadros, ed., *Changing States: Contemporary Art and Ideas in an Era of Globalisation* (London: InIVA (Institute of International Visual Arts), 2004); Saloni Mathur, ed., *The Migrant's Time: Rethinking Art History and Diaspora* (Williamstown, MA: Clark Art Institute, 2011).
 - 7 Elspeth Probyn, *Outside Belonging* (London: Routledge, 1996); Nira Yuval Davis, Kalpana Kannabiran and Ulrike M. Vieten, eds, *The Situated Politics of Belonging* (London: Sage, 2006).
 - 8 Biddy Martin and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Feminist Politics: What's Home Got to Do with It?', in *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, ed. Teresa De Lauretis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 191–212; Inderpal Grewal and Caren Caplan, eds, *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); Ruth Lister, *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives* (New York: NYU Press, 1998); Inderpal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).
 - 9 Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Gender, Europe and the Culture of Travel* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1996); Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne Marie Fortier and Mimi Sheller, eds, *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (New York: Berg, 2003); Iris Marion Young, 'House and Home: Feminist Variations on a Theme', in *Gender Struggles: Practical Approaches to Contemporary Feminism*, ed. C. L. Mui and J. S. Murphy (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 314–46.
 - 10 María Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003).
 - 11 Geraldine Pratt and Victoria Rosner, *The Global and the Intimate: Feminism in Our Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012); Joanne Barker, ed., *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Rosi Braidotti and Simone Bignall, eds, *Posthuman Ecologies: Complexity and Process after Deleuze* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019).

- 12 Ella Shohat, ed., *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).
- 13 Marsha Meskimmon, *Women Making Art: History, Subjectivity, Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2003); Elaine H. Kim, Margo Machida and Sharon Mizota, eds, *Fresh Talk/Daring Gazes: Conversations on Asian American Art* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005); Deborah Cherry and Janice Helland, *Local/Global: Women Artists in the Nineteenth Century* (Middlesex: Ashgate, 2006).
- 14 Marsha Meskimmon and Dorothy Rowe, eds, *Women, the Arts and Globalization: Eccentric Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
- 15 Marion Arnold and Marsha Meskimmon, eds, *Home/Land: Women, Citizenship, Photographies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016).
- 16 Mica Nava, *Visceral Cosmopolitanism: Gender, Culture and the Normalisation of Difference* (Oxford: Berg, 2007); Marsha Meskimmon, *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* (London: Routledge, 2010); Nikos Papastergiadis, *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).
- 17 Siobhán Shilton, *Transcultural Encounters: Gender and Genre in Franco-Maghrebi Art* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Alpesh Patel, *Productive Failure: Writing Queer Transnational Asian Art Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Leon Wainwright and Kitty Zijlmans, eds, *Sustainable Art Communities: Contemporary Creativity and Policy in the Transnational Caribbean* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).
- 18 Marsha Meskimmon, *Transnational Feminisms, Transversal Politics and Art: Entanglements and Intersections* (London: Routledge, 2020).
- 19 A number of academic symposiums and conferences generated significant debates that deal with the concepts of home and homeland, e.g., the 1995 symposium *House, Home, Homeland*, organized at Rice University, United States, and the 2012 conference *Home/Land: Women, Citizenship, Photographies*, organized at Loughborough University, UK.
- 20 Ahmed et al., *Uprootings/Regroundings*, p. 1.
- 21 Michelle Antoinette, *Reworlding Art History: Encounters with Contemporary Southeast Asian Art after 1990* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2014); Anne Ring Petersen, *Migration into Art: Transcultural Identities and Art-Making in a Globalized World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017); Moritz Schramm and Anne Ring Petersen, eds, *The Journal of Aesthetics & Culture*, special issue (Post)Migration in the Age of Globalisation: New Challenges to Imagination and Representation, 2017.
- 22 T. J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary during Global Crisis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), p. xxiii.