

The Monster Is Us: Violence, Nonviolence, and the Authoritarian Turn

Fall Symposium

As part of the symposium series *Gender and Equality in the Arts*

26 – 27 November 2024

Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW

On-site and online:

Auditorium D 1.04, Tower Building, Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW

→ [LIVESTREAM](#)

With contributions by Basma al-Sharif, Elizabeth Breiner of Forensic Architecture, Candice Breitz, Sofia Karim, Roman Selim Khereddine, Diego Marcon, Ingo Niermann, Oleksiy Radynski, Tai Shani, Stas Shārifullá, and Latefa Wiersch

Moderated by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer

Research: Marion Ritzmann

Press: Anna Francke

The symposium is open to the public and will be held in English.

Free admission.

More information and program: dertank.ch

Amid the unqualified violence of the past year and years—with genocidal wars waged mostly against civilians—we have been reflecting on the dehumanization and demonization process heralded by such war's wagers, by despots and democratically elected leaders alike. Antonio Gramsci's infamous lines, wildly paraphrased, from a fascist prison: "The old world is dying and the new world struggles to be born. Now is the time of monsters." Gramsci's reflection on the *interregnum*, a Roman idea of the limbolike moment when legality is suddenly suspended, also suggests the meaning of monster itself, which likely derives from the Latin verb *monere*, meaning, to warn. An alarm, then.

It appears that we are now in a new time of monsters—as authoritarianism moves faster than any progressive sense of solidarity and collective politics can. We'd like to ask you to join us for our two-day fall symposium, *The Monster Is Us: Violence, Nonviolence, and the Authoritarian Turn*, to be held on 26 and 27 November 2024, in Basel and online. Here we will speak within a space of artistic discourse and education—not as policy makers but as thinkers, artists, performers, writers, and filmmakers—about how our time of shattering violence might be reconsidered and contravened across our practices of living, working, and resisting together. When invocations of nonviolence are inevitably used by violent state actors to undermine resistance movements by the most oppressed peoples—and as we turn away from democratic structures toward fascism globally—how to consider the trope and figure of the monster anew, without the flat rhetoric in which it is often cast?

The symposium will be, in a sense, not just about a monstrous moment but devoted to the consideration of a figure that appears without fail in contemporary life, its politics, theories, literatures, cinemas, performances and much else. What role does the monster play in our

fictions and images, realities and rhetoric, our senses of self and other? *The Monster Is Us: Violence, Nonviolence, and the Authoritarian Turn* is part of the biannual symposia series curated by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer of the Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW. Ongoing since 2018, the series of symposiums is part of the Institute's curriculum and considers artistic practice in its entanglements with power, gender, language, coloniality, and ecology.

The symposium is dedicated to the memory of Mohammed Sami Qariqa.

Technical team

Emily Harries, Charlotte Horn, Katharina Kemmerling, Marco Mastrogiacomo, Daniele Praiano, Konrad Sigl

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PROGRAM (subject to alterations)

DAY I – 26 November 2024

Part 1

- 10.00 am Welcome by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer
- 10.10 am Reading by Quinn Latimer
- 10.25 am Candice Breitz
- 11.10 am Sofia Karim
- Noon Lunch

Part 2

- 2.00 pm Welcome by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer
- 2.10 pm Basma al-Sharif
- 2.50 pm Latefa Wiersch
- 3.30 pm Break
- 3.45 pm Oleksiy Radynski (online)
- 4.20 pm Elizabeth Breiner of Forensic Architecture
- 4.50 pm Round-up of DAY I by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer
- 5.10 pm End of DAY I

DAY II – 27 November 2024

Part 3

- 10.00 am Welcome by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer
- 10.10 am Reading by Quinn Latimer
- 10.25 am Diego Marcon
- 11:10 am Roman Selim Khereddine
- Noon Lunch

Part 4

- 2.00 pm Welcome by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer
- 2.10 pm Tai Shani in conversation with Quinn Latimer
- 2.50 pm Stas Shärifullá
- 3.30 pm Break
- 3.45 pm Ingo Niermann
- 4.30 pm Round-up of DAY II by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer
- 5.00 pm End of DAY II

BIOGRAPHIES OF PARTICIPANTS

Basma al-Sharif is a Palestinian artist and filmmaker who explores cyclical political histories and conflicts in her artistic practice. In films and installations that move backward and forward in history, between place and non-place, she confronts the legacy of colonialism through works that are once at once satirical, immersive, and lyrical.

Elizabeth Breiner is a writer and curator, and the current Head of Programmes for Forensic Architecture. Her work has addressed the slippery status of the documentary image and the challenges of researching and representing discreet forms of violence. Recent independently curated exhibitions investigated the relationship between protest, performance, and the Turkish state propaganda machine, and the entwined histories of criminology and criminal portraiture as a means of understanding the destructive scope of modern digital punishment and the American criminal justice system.

Forensic Architecture (FA) is a research agency based at Goldsmiths, University of London. Their mandate is to develop, employ, and disseminate new techniques, methods, and concepts for investigating state and corporate violence on behalf of communities affected by conflict, police brutality, border regimes and environmental violence. An interdisciplinary agency operating across human rights, journalism, architecture, art and aesthetics, academia and the law, FA's investigations employ pioneering techniques in spatial and architectural analysis, open source investigation, digital modelling, and immersive technologies, as well as documentary research, situated interviews, and academic collaboration.

Candice Breitz is a Johannesburg-born, Berlin-based artist whose moving-image installations have been shown widely. Most recently, her work has focused on the conditions under which empathy is produced, reflecting on a media-saturated global culture in which strong identification with fictional characters and celebrity figures runs parallel to widespread indifference to the plight of those facing real world adversity. She recently completed her *White Noise Trilogy*, which she has been working on since 2015.

Sofia Karim is an architect and activist based in London. Her activism focuses on human rights across Bangladesh and India, and she campaigns widely for the release of political prisoners. She was a finalist for the Jameel Prize, in 2021, and she has exhibited at galleries and museums including Tate Modern, London; Rubin Museum, New York; Arthshila Ahmedabad, in India; and as part of an offsite exhibition for documenta 15, in Göttingen.

Roman Selim Khereddine is an artist based in Zurich. His recent moving-image projects have variously featured a police officer and his dog performing obedience exercises for the artist's camera as well as documented Moroccan workers dismantling the tent of Switzerland's biggest circus. Recent solo exhibitions include *PARTNER*, Alte Fabrik, Rapperswil-Jona; *Beiss die Hand*, Helmhaus, Zurich; *Big House Narrow Grave*, Sentiment, Zurich; and *Hard-Won Images*, Espace 3353, Carouge. Khereddine holds Master's degrees in History and Fine Arts.

Quinn Latimer is a writer, editor, and curator whose recent work often focuses on the entanglement of literary and moving image technologies in the representation of transnational solidarity movements and personal histories. Her books include *Like a Woman: Essays, Readings, Poems* (2017), *Describe This Distance* (2013), *Film as a Form of Writing* (2013), and *Rumored Animals* (2012). She was editor-in-chief of publications for documenta 14, in Athens and Kassel. She is Head of the MA program at Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW.

Diego Marcon is an artist born in Busto Arsizion, Italy, whose work centers the moving image. His practice combines theoretical and structural approaches to filmmaking, focusing on the investigation of cinematic archetypes and genres. Throughout Marcon's work—spanning film, video, and installation—empathy and vulnerability are deployed with intentional ambiguity, such that the instrumental use of their forms and figures constitute a blurred morality. This ambiguity is viewed by Marcon first and foremost as a political weapon of defiance.

Chus Martínez is Head of Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW. A writer and curator, she is curatorial director of der TANK, in Basel, and curator of Ocean Space, in Venice, for TBA21–Academy. Her books include *Like This: Natural Intelligence as Seen by Art* (2022), *Corona Tales: Let Life Happen to You* (2020), and *Club Univers* (2017). Previously, she was Head of the department of artistic direction for DOCUMENTA (13), in Kassel.

Ingo Niermann is a writer of speculative essays and fiction and the editor of the Solution Series at Sternberg Press. He recently published *The Monadic Age: Notes on the Coming Social Order* (2024). Based on his novel, *Solution 257: Complete Love*, Niermann initiated the Army of Love, a collective that tests and promotes a need-oriented redistribution of sensual love. Niermann is a lecturer at Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW.

Oleksiy Radynski is a filmmaker and writer based in Kyiv. His films experiment with documentary forms and practices of political cinema. They have been screened at film festivals and in exhibitions worldwide, including at the International Film Festival Rotterdam; Institute of Contemporary Arts, London; e-flux, New York; and Docudays, Kyiv. His film *Chornobyl 22* (2023) won the Grand Prix at the Oberhausen International Short Film Festival.

Tai Shani's artistic practice—comprising performance, film, photography, and installation—uses experimental writing as a guiding method. Oscillating between theoretical concepts and visceral details, Shani's texts attempt to create poetic coordinates in order to cultivate fragmentary cosmologies of marginalized nonsovereignty. Taking cues from both mournful and undead histories of reproductive labor, illness, and solidarity, her work is invested in recovering feminized aesthetic modes in a register of utopian militancy. Tai Shani is the joint 2019 Turner Prize winner together with Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Helen Cammock and Oscar Murillo.

Stas Shārifullá, also known as HMOT, is a Basel-based researcher, musician, and artist working with sound and listening. Born and raised in East Siberia, Russia, with Bashqort roots, Shārifullá uses this dual heritage as a starting point to critically examine the [neoliberal] politics of decoloniality and indigeneity. Shārifullá is a guest lecturer at the Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW, a co-host of Artistic Research Lab at the CTM Festival, Berlin, and is pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of Basel.

Latefa Wiersch lives and works in Zurich. Wiersch's installations and performances deal with questions around identity and body in the postcolonial present. In order to investigate what it means to be human in our society, the artist often constructs clichéd images. In particular, the doll is staged as an inanimate counterpart in Wiersch's works, while the artist is also satirically dedicated to topics of collective art production, institutional critique, and to the mixing of private and public modes as presented on social media.