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Intersections

Living with Contradictions

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Until recently it has been very unusual to encounter work by artists problematising their identification with 'whiteness' or as the coloniser. But, in recent years research has shown 'white' European artists travelling to former colonies to make sense of repressed histories that continue to haunt the European consciousness.This paper considers how some 'white' artists highlighting European colonial entanglements are able to add to a postcolonial artistic framework. Using the examples of British artists Lindsay Seers and Miranda Pennell, who trace their own personal history and involvement in the colonial space, this paper discusses how they reimagine and reinvent family histories, highlighting uncomfortable personal relationships and bring the ghosts back to Europe. In addition, they open up a space from where works on mixed belongings and heritages and shifting identifications can be contextualised.

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A few years ago, I presented some of my visual practice and research at a forum in London. The location was a place that I felt comfortable in, with a more diverse audience than most visual art spaces. I was showing video and photography in which I used parts of my autobiography, having grown up as non-white in Europe. I was discussing my attempts to expose an experience of otherness in Europe to an audience that does not share this experience, and which perpetuates a knowledge system that lead to some positioning themselves as "other".

A woman in the audience asked: "why do you want to communicate with white people?" My quick response was "because my mother is white". Although the colour of my skin, inherited from my Tamil father, clearly speaks of having a different heritage than Western European, my history also includes that which can be labelled "whiteness", inherited from my mother and the society I have grown up in. I grew up in Sweden and moved to the UK as a young adult, and my involvement with both sides of a colonial system is an important aspect of my work. My position, being thrown in between one and the other, opens up a space from where this can be reflected on.

The question remained with me. It may have been the first time I considered why, and if, it is important to include what can be considered the white dominant or colonisers' perspectives in a postcolonial art space.[1] In my experience as an artist, some works made from the perspective of a "coloniser", with autobiographic content, can help articulate one's own personal position: of the experience of living with contradictions. In my visual practice and research, I work through the complexity of being part "white" and not being acknowledged as such. This conflict becomes easier for me to disentangle with the presence of other European artists examining their colonial entanglement.

I currently reflect on my own position as follows: my difference is felt and experienced in the postcolonial through a continued fetishisation of skin colour, which still leaves me marked as different within a society that perceives itself as white.[2] The continuous othering of my body in Sweden and Europe tells me that what we call the West still holds onto an idea of itself as homogeneous and white. It tells me that "contamination" is still undesirable, long after eugenics and racial profiling have proved false and dangerous.[3] It makes me analyse my society from

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within and seek out clues on how this homogeneity has been constructed.

My artworks on otherness and not-belonging in the Western society in which I live are generally understood, since there is a tacit agreement that I *am* the other. [4] For my three-screen installation *We Call Her Pulle* (2015) I travelled to the north of Sri Lanka to make a piece of work in the birthplace of my father. This work focused on my belonging there, rather than in the West. At the heart of the piece was the relationship between myself and my aunt, Pulle. We do not share language, culture or history due to the distance my father had to Sri Lanka, partly through choice, partly because of the civil war. I was frequently called *Velakari* (white woman) on the street in Sri Lanka, and my difference quickly became apparent. However, when watching my own footage, I saw something else: when comparing frames of myself alongside my aunt doing the same thing, such as sweeping, I realised that my Western audience would read these two frames as similar. I figured that my audience would see two non-white women sweeping the front porch, where one of them was making artistic work about her heritage.

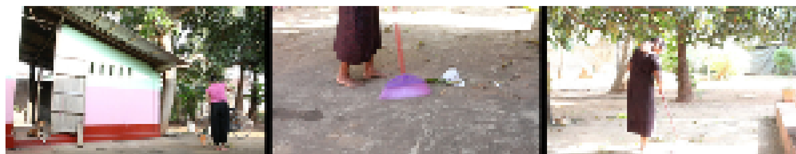

Figure 1: Video still from *We call her Pulle* 2015, 3-screen HD installation, 20 min, © Nina Mangalanayagam

My own reading of the material was different. Studying my aunt through the camera and in the editing suite, I read her movements as authentic or natural. Looking at myself carrying out the same task, I read the image as a performance: I was posing in front of the camera. This posing was not for the benefit of my aunt, with whom I was building a relationship, but instead I discovered that it was a performance for my imagined audience, a white Western audience. When watching my footage frame by frame, I could detect myself at certain points looking into the camera, adjusting my T-shirt or posture for the benefit of the image. I could see how I tried to make myself subtly visually *different* from my aunt. This discovery made me re-evaluate my footage, and my approach and intentions and made me question my assumptions of my aunt's gestures. She might indeed be *performing* for her imagined audience and for me.[5] In the editing process I tried to highlight some of

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these discrepancies through deliberately juxtaposing visual material and through the use of text that portrays me as a conflicting and presumptive character.[6] Reflecting on this work has made me critically re-consider how I and others use framing to position ourselves.

My involvement and formation in “the West” is not often acknowledged, but I repeat certain problematic tropes, desires and fantasies that I have inherited from this postcolonial society—in my case Sweden.[7] My artworks critically engage with my own positioning and invite viewers to “understand” this position, but also expose the general inability of most white audiences to recognise the effects of Western dominance and identity formation, since “white” Western identity is often unnoticed, invisible and presented as neutral.

Encountering works by artists who problematise their identification with whiteness or as the coloniser is not a common occurrence. While researching practices from artists of mixed heritage, I came across many artists who actively position themselves as the other, but not the reverse. In search of methods of how to address my own problematic relationship with dominant whiteness, I began to consider what autobiographical artworks by “white” Western artists, who actively question whiteness and their own alignment with this position, can do within a postcolonial framework. Can the inclusion of various opposing traumas of colonialism begin to undo the fixed boundaries that colonialism successfully constructed for the colonial project to take place?[8] What different perspectives can these practices offer in a discussion of privilege, guilt and history?

In recent years there has been an increase of “white” European artists making work on repressed colonial histories that continue to haunt European consciousness.[9] There is a heightened awareness of a need to face our colonial past and white Western construction.

I will consider how two artworks by British artists Lindsay Seers and Miranda Pennell can be included in a postcolonial art space, using hybridity theory. Both artists trace their personal histories and involvement in colonial space: Seers’s installation *Nowhere Less Now* (2012) and Pennell’s film *The Host* (2015) reimagine and reinvent family histories, highlighting uncomfortable intimate relationships between colonial

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entities and their European metropolitan centres. They locate coloniality firmly in Europe, rather than in an elsewhere, bringing the ghosts back to Europe. I will explain how these practices may help the discussion on the complexity of shifting identifications and the dichotomy of black and white constructions in postcolonial Europe.[10]

Hybridity in the Postcolonial Art Space

Hybridity as a critical discourse on race and culture emerged from discussions within postcolonial theory in the late 1980s.[11] Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which had problematised the creation of the category of the Eastern other from a Western gaze, was followed by elaborations by diasporic communities in the West.[12] In Britain this included observations by Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall and Homi K. Bhabha.[13] Their ideas were in dialogue with earlier theories by Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Mikhail Bakhtin and Antonio Gramsci. Bhabha in particular adopted the terminology of hybridity to describe the process of cultural differences coming into contact with each other and creating conflict.

The art and writing that came out of the US and the UK in the 1980s followed an intense period of political struggle for Black Power in the 1960s and 1970s, meaning self-determination for people of African descent in the US. Similar narratives were ongoing in Britain, when many second-generation immigrants demanded to be involved and included in British society, including the art world, as something other than "outsiders".[14] The uprisings forced the British government to respond with financial initiatives, acknowledging racial and cultural inequality. The movement united groups and communities from different histories and ethnicities, which shared similar uprooted, colonial histories and experiences of racism and marginalisation.[15] This unification led to funding for black-led arts institutions and more exhibition opportunities for black artists in the UK, who started making work around the negative effects of stereotypical and colonial forms of representation.

However, this common struggle took precedence over the individualities it contained. Bhabha described it as a unifying process under a "black" banner: through identifying with a mask, in this case the black mask, the black subject was identifying with a signifier, an image of otherness.[16] Artist Isaac Julien and theorist

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Kobena Mercer pointed out two major problems with this approach:

First, individual subjectivity is denied because the black subject is positioned as a mouthpiece, a ventriloquist for an entire social category which is seen to be "typified" by its representative. Acknowledgement of the diversity of black experiences and subject-positions is thereby foreclosed. Thus, secondly, where minority subjects are framed and contained by the monologic terms of "majority discourse", the fixity of boundary relations between centre and margin, universal and particular, returns the speaking subject to the ideologically appointed place of the stereotype—"that all black people are the same".[17]

Thus, the increased exposure of non-Western art came with the unpleasant side effect of commodifying difference and maintained, as Jean Fisher wrote, "the separation of ethnicised artists from white mainstream art".[18] Consequently, many argued that "Black Art" was no longer a valid term and that work addressing the colonial past (and present) needed to avoid binary oppositions altogether.[19]

Thus, hybridity entered the postcolonial discourse as a rejection of binaries and essentialisms. Essays formulating new directions included Hall's "New Ethnicities" (1989), which argued for new strategies of difference to highlight the multitude of diversity within the category of "black", a rather simplified "image". Hall proposed that black politics and art needed to reject sameness altogether and acknowledge differences, such as class, gender and ethnicity.[20] Hall's main argument was that identity is never a finished product, but rather always in process, and differences between us constitute what we are and what we experience. Identity is constructed from memory, fantasy, narrative, myth and experience.

Bhabha is arguably one of the most recognised theorists on hybridity. His collection of essays, *The Location of Culture* (2004), tackles the question of how one lives between categories now that they no longer function as unifying structures. He explains hybridity not as a mix of two different cultures, but as a space, or a process, where contradictions and identifications are negotiated. His work tackles fluid identities and the ongoing negotiation of historical hybridisations, with no origin ever to be found. He argues for the intervention of a Third Space, an ambivalent space of hybridity. This is not a space from two originating points that

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form a third, rather it is a space in-between multiple constructions that is neither one nor the other, which disrupts and resists linear progression of Western thought.[21]

Even though there are mixed opinions on whether hybridity is a useful term within a postcolonial art framework, I still find Bhabha's original explanation of hybridity as a conflict between positions useful as a tool to investigate artistic negotiations of contradictory identifications.[22] My focus has been on researching artists of mixed heritage who are exploring their complicity with a Western dominant position. I have found a great range of artists exploring Frantz Fanon's idea of the other, seeing themselves as other through the eyes of the oppressor, and there is work by artists mixing their differences or cultural influences and creating hybrid images of themselves. But it has been harder to come across work in which the artists of mixed heritage questions their own participation in maintaining certain ideologies and histories. Less attention has been given to the position of partaking in the construction of "whiteness"—of the perpetrator, the coloniser, the oppressor.[23]

The Perspective of the Former Coloniser

Failing to find relevant examples from mixed artists who question their identification with an idea of "whiteness", my emphasis here is on autobiographical artworks from white European artists doing so. In the two examples that follow, the work draws attention to the artists' own identification with or as the coloniser. Artists who posit the construction of their own "whiteness" as the core subject of their work have been rare. This might sound surprising, given that the majority of culture and art has been written about from this perspective. However, locating autobiographical involvement that is critical of one's own personal history has until recently been difficult. Richard Dyer has, among others, shown dissatisfaction at the lack of attention for fictional constructs of white identity in the visual arts. He argues that much less attention has been given to the fictional construct of white identity than to non-white identity in the visual arts. Black is "always particularizing; whereas white is not anything really, not an identity, not a particularizing quality, because it is everything", thus stereotypes for whiteness are not as pronounced.[24] He contends that white people need to learn to see their white construction. Cornel West has also expressed his disappointment in how discussions of identity "always begin by

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talking about the victims. [...] As if whiteness is not as fundamentally structured within the discourse of race as blackness is."[25] As a result, artists who explore ideas of Western identity often do so in contrast with the identity of the other.

In recent years, some artists who are perceived as white have turned their focus on postcolonial concerns.[26] Works by Seers and Pennell can be seen as two of such examples. They start their process and research in Europe, in Britain to be specific, and the traces left in the physical spaces where they live. Their starting point are photographs found in their family albums, with a strong involvement in broader colonial encounters. They have both spent some of their childhood in countries that were part of the colonial encounter, but their artworks firmly locate the roots of the colonial exchange in the metropolitan centre rather than in the colonies.

Lindsay Seers—Entangled Identities

Born in Mauritius, Lindsay Seers often traces her personal history and involvement in the colonial projects in her artworks. She draws upon her biography, overlaid with historical accounts, and makes likely and unlikely connections, weaving both credible and incredible stories. *Nowhere Less Now* is a site-specific installation with a narrative told through a two-channel video. The piece is based on Seers finding a family photograph of her great-great-uncle, George Edwards, taken while he was serving with the British navy in Zanzibar. The discovery takes Seers to Africa's east coast and she makes likely and unlikely relationships between George, herself, the other people in the picture and with the tin tabernacle church in Kilburn where the work was exhibited.

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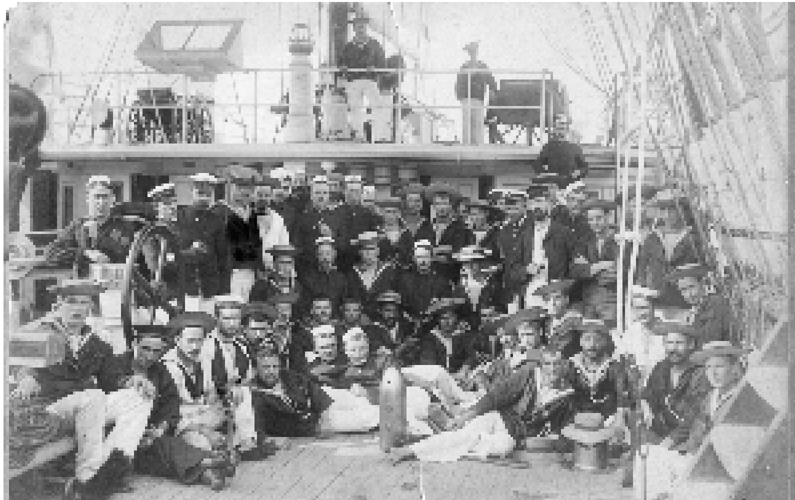

Figure 2: Photograph from Nowhere less now © Lindsay Seers 2012

To view *Nowhere Less Now* one had to book a timed slot and was let in with a small group of other viewers through a back door of the church. The audience members were invited to sit down on steps inside a structure that looked like a boat that had been turned upside down. At the front were two round screens ready for projections, one concave, the other convex. When the projection started, voices played through cordless headphones. At first it was easy to follow a woman's clear voice, but soon there were other voices and sound filling the space, making it increasingly difficult to listen to a single narrative.

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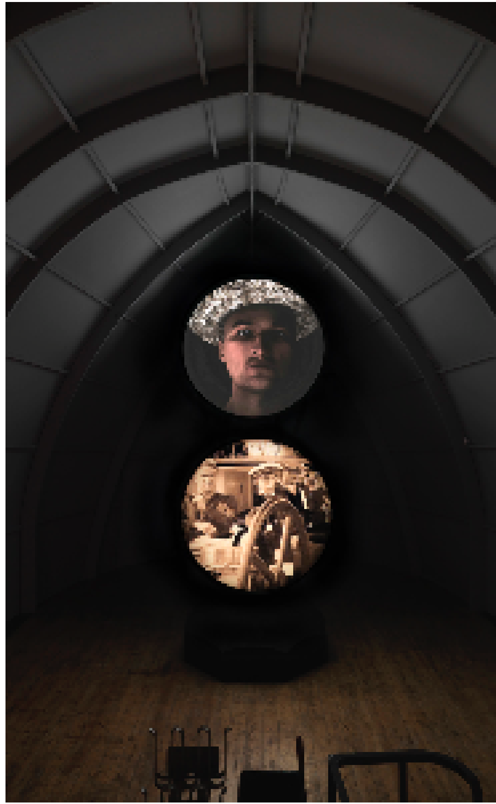

Figure 3: Installation image of *Nowhere Less Now*, Lindsay Seers, 2012. Installation. An Artangel commission. © Marcus Leith

The stories and voices combined take their starting point in Seers's search for George Edwards, who was born with two differently coloured eyes, one blue and one brown, a condition called heterochromia and which Seers returns to in many of her works. She describes heterochromia as a condition that results from an unborn twin, an unborn sibling enveloped by the living person, where the trace of the twin can be seen in one of the eyes. In order for one twin to survive, the other had to die, which can be read as a metaphor for the colonial psyche. In the book accompanying the exhibition Ole Hagen says "our existence can mean the non-existence of something else."[27] So, perhaps Seers is coming to terms with her own existence on behalf of an other. In Sartre's words, from the preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), "there is nothing more consistent than a racist humanism since the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters."[28]

The multiple coloured eyes can also be seen as an acknowledgement of difference,

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and individuals living with difference. The biological trace of the missing twin can be a reminder of a doubling within the person; a doubling that hints at dual or multiple identifications. Split identity and doublings are reoccurring themes in Seers's practice and important elements within the discourse of hybridity. Seers plays with ideas of doubles occurring in multiple times and places. When travelling to Zanzibar, Seers meets another George, a dark-skinned African man whose own great-great-grandfather, also named George, was a freed slave on the same ship as George Edwards. Finally, a third George contacts Seers from the future, where no photographs are allowed, but he has a box of them containing the same images Seers has of her great-great-uncle. In both sound and text, the various Georges that Seers comes across are mixed together. It becomes a confusing experience, one where identities from different times become fluid and entangled in each other's histories. Seers exposes boundaries of identities, how they influence each other and question clear linear narratives.

The visual work mixes black and white photographs from the archive, representing the past, with CGI animation from the future, but keeps returning to an image of the present. Seers included filmed re-enactments in the church in which her work was exhibited, as well as of the viewing construction being built. She also shows an identical tin church in Africa, which brings the work closer to home and to a history that not only happened somewhere else, in Africa, but which simultaneously took place in Europe, and grounds the viewing experience in the West rather than in the former colonies. When the screening ended, the audience members were invited to explore objects and photographs in the church. Images from the history of the church and its naval users were displayed on shelves and walls, some of which had appeared in the video. The encounter of the archival photographs and their changing meaning, depending on the accompanying text and context, questioned their use as evidence and fact within the footage. One left the space uncertain as to what extent Seers's story is based on any real events and whether any photographic history can be trusted.

Whether truthful or not, the artist exposes an idea of her own inherited memory from a colonial encounter and as such responds to TJ Demos's idea that the past is still among us as ghostly presence and haunted memories "that refuse to rest in peace".[29] Her use of multiple belongings and re-configurations in this context adds

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a construction of Western identity and history to postcolonial criticism and expose how Western identities are intertwined in complex colonial relationships. Rather than locating the postcolonial as ongoing elsewhere, Seers returns the gaze onto Europe to trace what ghosts were both created and haunt us here.

The colonisers did not return from the colonies without having been influenced by them. Bhabha argues that it is impossible to meet other cultures without being transformed, without doubting something in your self. The colonisers were split in their desires, their humanity and their beliefs. In *Playing in the Dark* (1992) Toni Morrison points out that racism does not only affect the victim, but also the perpetrator, albeit in a very different way, and she argues that this part has been severely under-analysed. Of course it is valuable to examine what effect racism has had on the once colonised subjects, but she contends that "equally valuable is a serious intellectual effort to see what racial ideology does to the mind, imagination, and behaviour of masters."[30] Morrison recalls an autobiography she read by the novelist Marie Cardinal, which deals with personal madness. This sprung out of a complicated tear inside her, resulting from being a white French child born in Algeria and her witnessing Algeria's destruction by France. The trauma of this double identification led to her madness. The body carries earlier histories, the ones we are unable to speak about still reside in our unconscious.

Seers challenges us to critically analyse which stories we choose to build our identities on and to see the role photographs play in this construction. To Seers's relief she finds that her "uncle was not the one who had enslaved Zanzibar-George's great-great-grandfather, although that doesn't absolve the British in Africa."[31] As with most details in Seers's work, we don't know if this is true, or if this is a history that she chooses to compose from the images and fragments that she finds. Indeed, we don't even know if Seers had a great-great-uncle called George. We know that someone's uncle did enslave and colonise others, yet these stories are often absent in the visual art world. How does one react to discovering that history which some grandparents and parents participated in? And how does one start making work around this, without framing oneself once again through the other? Demos argues that artists, who reinvent documentary strategies using self-reflexivity, multiple screens and physical installations, challenge essentialism "through formal means, even while it commits to the particularities of ethnicity, race

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and gender that define the lived circumstances of the subject."[32] Seers's use of multiple screens, her own subjectivity and installation in the heart of colonial power highlight the many traces that reside in the postcolonial West.

Miranda Pennell—Re-reading the Archive

Miranda Pennell's *The Host* is a 60-minute film made from archive material from the Anglo-Iranian Oil archive, now BP, together with images from Pennell's family album from the time during which they lived in Iran and worked for the company.[33] The film is made entirely from still images, layered with a voiceover and a variety of sound sources. Pennell uses film as a repository to re-appropriate archive material intended for one purpose into another context.[34] She highlights the slippages found within the official archive, and, through combining this with her own archive, within her family history too.

As in Seers's work, we are constantly thrown between temporalities and our engagement with the material is often interrupted. Pennell's timeline is non-linear and she refers to a recent past, an ancient past, a past future and a present that is always shifting and unstable. She gives us access to archival images from a range of different sources: from terrestrial photographs of the oil landscape and scanned diary notes from British expats arranging dinner parties, to her own triangular sandwich, white gloves or napkin used while working at the archive. The trace of her own involvement in the archival process collapses the past with the present and is used as a method to avoid viewers distancing themselves from "historical narratives, in order to open questions of accountability and responsibility in a context of collective forgetting and disavowal of the colonial."[35]

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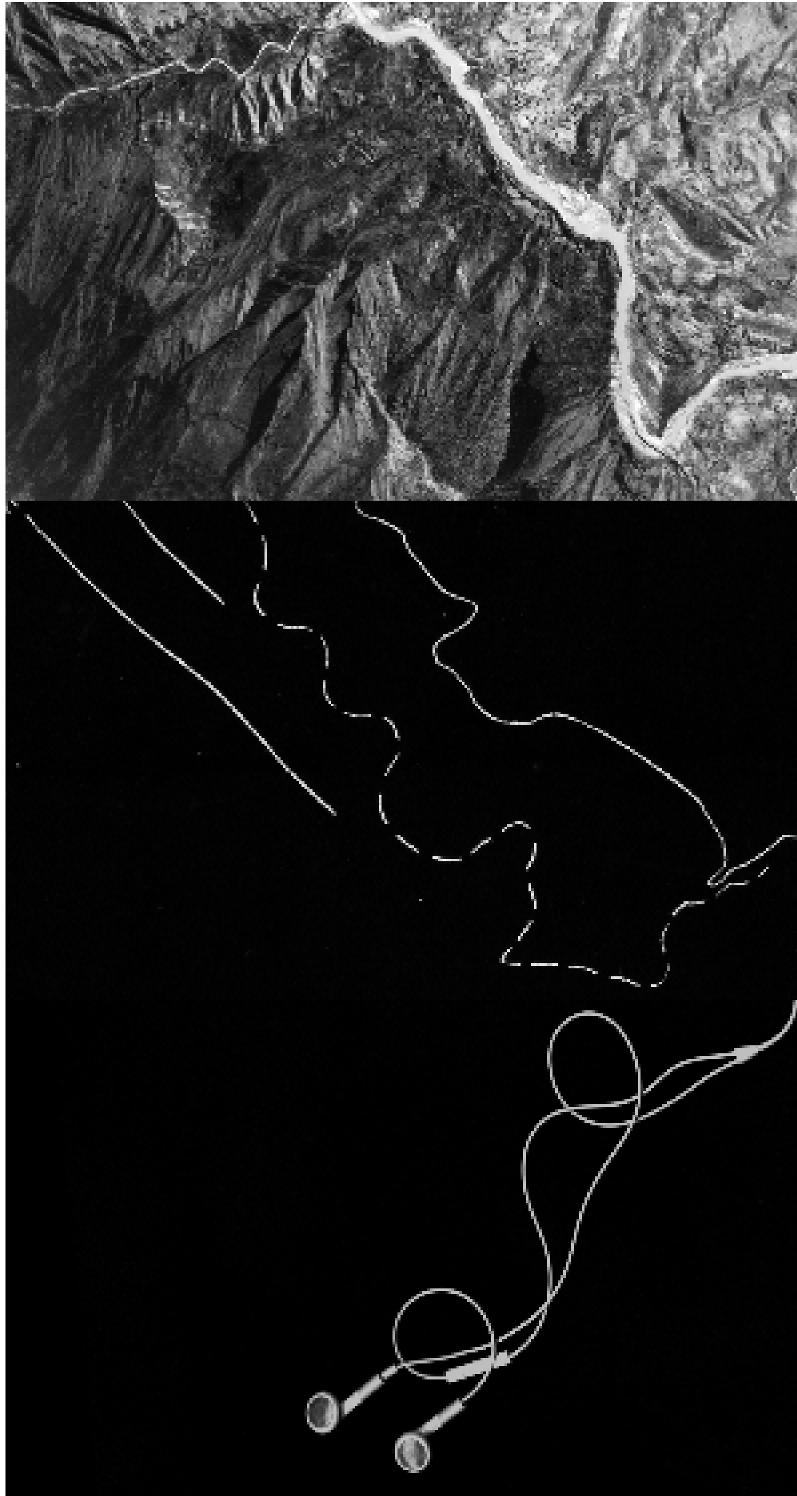

Figure 4: Video stills from *The Host* © Miranda Pennell 2015, HD video 59 min

Within the visual material she finds common geometrical patterns that link images together. Employing visual methods, she seduces us into the potential of the image,

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and then disrupts this seduction reminding us of its potential allure. We will, for example, be looking at imagery of the oil landscape in Iran, in a perfect edit with a music score, when the music very suddenly moves into the distance and we are presented with similar white lines of terrestrial mapping, but this time the lines belong to scanned white headphones. This disruption situates us firmly back in the present and on location in Coventry, Britain, and the BP archive, reminding us that this is where this knowledge is formed, categorised and based. Through careful visual juxtapositioning Pennell shows how systematic mapping was applied to the landscape of Iran as well as to the area of Coventry. Using our ability to read photographs as a tool for comparison, she highlights relationships between knowledge systems created here and re-created elsewhere. The juxtaposition of image sources in conjunction with carefully chosen soundtracks create a space for contemplation on the role of the UK in Iran.

In *The Host*, photographs are disconnected from their initial context and text. Details in the background are magnified and objects in images gain new contexts and explanations. Pennell draws "attention to some paradoxes, contradictions and failures of the photographic archive in providing historical knowledge [...] but have sought to show how failures of meaning can be put into play in order to produce other kinds of knowledge about the past and our relationship to it."[36] The material has the potential for us to re-evaluate a certain history from a changed position in the present. Mark Sealy writes in *Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time* (2019) that archival material has the potential to unsettle and adjust our image of ourselves then and now: "Historical photographs from within the colonial world [...] that celebrate white dominance over the Others, now help us identify possible new entry points into ideologies that produced racism in the West."[37]

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Figure 5: Video still from *The Host* © Miranda Pennell 2015, HD video, 59 min

We know from the beginning of *The Host* that the archive we are presented with includes the film-maker's own archive. We also know that the investigation started because of the death of her mother. Although it is clear that some of the first images belong to her family album, the majority of them are bunched together in the end without much explanation. We see the beautiful house they lived in, and the privileged lifestyle in contrast to political facts of British defamation of Iran. We are not offered an explanation or a retribution on the material, but the visual juxtapositioning makes connections between exploitative conditions set up by the British, benefiting Britain, and which more specifically benefited Pennell's family and the artist herself.

Pennell writes of the film that it is in the gap between the colonial and personal snapshots where what has been repressed can become visible.

The intermingling of imperial history and personal memory is performed through the voice of this filmmaker and her gestures in the archive, and has the power to bring the colonial home, intimately.[…] Privileged knowledge enables a pattern to be described from the inside and a more universal story to be told by means of a description that is particular because of my personal stake within it.[38]

Pennell is aware of portraying her family like any other privileged family that came

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before or after her own. However, she maintains a personal link to the material and to the imperial history it portrays, rather than fictionalising her characters. She does not defend her family's position, but portrays herself and her family in a non-favourable position, to be scrutinised by others. In doing so, she opens up a space for questions about collective responsibility and inherited memory.

The last image in the film is not from Iran. It is another image found in Pennell's father's archive, of another place, but she does not know where. The image is of dark-skinned men digging, although they have stopped to look at the camera. Behind them are blackened, burned trees. The place looks hot and my assumption is that it is somewhere in Africa. Through suggesting that her father's involvement did not end in Iran, Pennell opens up the work to be read as a continuous and systematic exploration and exploitation, in which her father was very much a participant.

Undoing the Neutrality of Whiteness

In the introduction to *The Location of Culture* Bhabha reasons that "the Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative internal to its national identity."[39] I argue that this also needs to include voices from within. Seers and Pennell expose uncomfortable histories in their own family albums to be analysed by themselves and their audiences. They use fragments, mostly photographs, not to construct a simple, linear narrative of their biographies, but to open up to possibilities of what might have been and what might be because of it. *Nowhere Less Now* and *The Host* approach the subjectivity of whiteness and European construction in tentative ways through investigating their own personal identities and relationships with the colonial. They question whiteness from within, avoiding narratives of whiteness untouched by the other. Through problematising their own position, they disturb stories of purity and linear progress, and put them up for discussion and re-interpretation. Their works do not make excuses for colonial behaviour or find scapegoats that exclude themselves. They use colonial history, photography and personal entanglement in colonial narratives to consider global relationships between people and places in the past, present and possible future. A re-reading of historical constructions can begin to recognise the complexity of all

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positions, and highlight the active positioning that we all perform in the present.

In contemporary narratives, belonging is still attained through the separation of things. There is resistance to letting go of a certainty of identity. To question one's foundation, everything trembles which is a fearful prospect. Contemporary judgements and belongings rely on historical narratives of imaginary communities. Our daily choices and judgements are informed by colonial fictions. What happens if we embrace Bhabha's ideas that there is no origin, no certainty of belonging, to rely on, and there never was? When linear and binary Western narratives are scrutinised in visual art, can the Western psyche be affected? Can this lead to self-reflexivity on how the colonial informed us as Westerners, rather than on how it impacted on an other in a place elsewhere? Could a larger postcolonial artistic space lead to informed discussions, including multiple directions and perspectives starting to break down binaries between black and white, coloniser and colonised, for a nuanced debate in which everyone can partake from their particular position?

The inclusion of practices such as these in a larger discussion on postcoloniality in art offers the potential to think about the role of the coloniser without falling back on what we know, and to emphasise what we do *not* know and how we choose to interpret and deal with that *not* knowing. Borrowing words from Demos, rather than creating new essential identities "each artistic project offers its own entrances into distinctive and immensely complex histories and places."[40] We choose to believe certain stories about ourselves and we choose our positioning according to some of these stories. If there is no acknowledgement of structures that are upheld through silence, leading to an inability to understand which positions we choose to identify with, the ghosts that Demos writes about will not stop haunting us.

To circumvent an art space of commodified, othered artists separated from the mainstream art world, as Fisher feared, the inclusion of these practices can help to widen the postcolonial artistic context. This avoids the risk that these practices bypass postcolonial debates and trajectories. Including self-reflexive perspectives from "colonisers" into a postcolonial art space can broaden it, allowing a nuanced debate that does not stop at who belongs to what construction and who is permitted to speak of what experience, and instead consider what positions we choose in the present. This can help to widen the scope of hybridity to include

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differences that go beyond otherness. Hopefully, these gestures will help others to seek out their ghosts too.

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Footnotes

1. The binary division of the two constructed categories of whiteness and blackness are simplified and set off against each other in a society based on colonial hierarchies. What I heard in the context of my presentation was that a woman in the audience equated "white people" with colonisers and therefore perpetrators. Although this can be true, whiteness does not equate to being perpetrator or even coloniser and in fact some "white people" do not benefit from past or ongoing colonisations, where the question of class comes in. However, the white subject does enjoy the privilege of being the unseen, but ever-seeing, dominant subject. Toni Morrison demonstrates this in Playing in the Dark, a foundational text in whiteness studies in America. See Morrison, Toni. Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press. 1992. ↑
2. I will use black and white as categories here since they have been used as identifiers in Western society and are very much still in use, where part of my argument is that this maintains the status quo. Although it has been generally accepted within postcolonial theory that race is a construct made to serve the colonial mission and slavery, many argue that we still live in a racialised society and endure the consequences of it. See, for example, Ali, Suki. *Mixed-race, Post-race: Gender, New Ethnicities, and Cultural Practices*. Oxford: Berg. 2003; Fusco, Coco. *Only Skin Deep: Changing Visions of the American Self*. New York, NY: International Center of Photography in association with Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 2003; Gilroy, Paul. "A cat in a kipper box or, the confession of a 'second generation immigrant'". In *Migrant Cartographies: New Cultural and Literary Spaces in Post-colonial Europe*. Edited by Sandra Ponzanesi and Daniela Meroll. Lanham, MD, and Oxford: Lexington. 2005. ↑
3. Within essentialist constructions of race, mixed-race people have historically found themselves treated as visual evidence of the longstanding fear of the contamination of culture, race, and purity, and have often become the scapegoats and symbols for a range of negative things to conceal the fiction of race. Now-discarded scientific arguments included Nott and Gliddon's 1854 statement that "mulattoes are the shortest-lived of any class of the human

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race", and Martin R. Delany's 1879 claim that "mixed race is an abnormal race". For a historical insight into key texts that have shaped the idea of mixed races or "hybrid" humans see Ali, *Mixed-race, Post-race*; Ifekwunigwe, Jayne O. *"Mixed Race" Studies: A Reader*. London: Routledge. 2004; Olumide, Jill. *Raiding the Gene Pool: The Social Construction of Mixed Race*. London: Pluto. 2002. ↑

4. Examples include Lacuna (2009) and Balancing Act (2012). ↑
5. Peggy Phelan writes that "all portrait photography is fundamentally performative", based on an imitation of an already existing image, found in other representations, in the mirror or in imagination. We perform and repeat our portrait in front of the camera. Phelan, Peggy. *Unmarked: Politics of Performance*. London: Routledge. 1993. p. 36. ↑
6. An example of how I use text to show how my Western assumptions are wrong and discriminating comes at the end of *We Call Her Pulle*: "It is late and I am going to bed, I put on my Primark pyjamas, which I intend to throw away when I leave. Pulle has ironed them to get rid of the ants. She asks me why I sleep in them. I am tired and don't want to explain how and why I do certain things. I get annoyed and want to go into in my bedroom and take a sip of gin from the bottle I have hidden in a paper bag. (To kill the germs. I know if Pulle finds it she will think that I am an alcoholic!) I shrug and instead of answering I turn the question around. 'Why do you sleep in your home dress? You don't change. That's not very hygienic is it?' Pulle thinks for a moment, but not long. 'In the war,' she says 'we were always prepared to run. If we had to run the middle of the night, we did not want to run in our nightgowns. So that's why. Now we are just used to it. It's become a habit.'" ↑
7. As a brown subject, growing up in a society where whiteness was valued higher than brownness, I internalised the racism I experienced and turned it outwards. Although on the one hand I identified as a victim, as an other, I also identified with the ideal body in my society—the white body. As a result, I turned away from my own perceived difference and strived to belong in the white society I grew up in. To some extent, maybe I even exaggerated my own Europeanness in order to not "slip back", as Fanon calls it when discussing what the "mulatto". He assumed that racialised subjects strive to identify with an image of whiteness. When making a distinction between the negress and the mulatto—both terms are problematic to use now—he writes: "The first has only one possibility and

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concern: to turn white. The second wants not only to turn white but also to avoid slipping back." Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks.* London: Pluto. 1986 [1967]. p. 38. ↑

8. Stuart Hall explains the postcolonial as a space for various traumas of the colonial to be worked out and through in Hall, Stuart. "When was the 'post-colonial'? Thinking at the limit". In *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*. Edited by Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti. London: Routledge. 1995. ↑
9. Demos, TJ. *Return to the Postcolony: Specters of Colonialism in Contemporary Art*. Berlin: Sternberg Press. 2013. ↑
10. Some of my arguments can be found in my PhD thesis, completed in 2015, in which I laid out the framework of hybridity in visual art from which my own artworks can be contextualised. My writing and methods used were in dialogue with methods used by Lindsay Seers as well as the earlier work by Adrian Piper in the 1980s. Mangalanayagam, Nina. *Living with Contradictions: Re-reading Hybridity in Visual Art.* PhD dissertation. The University of Westminster. 2015. Available at https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/a6f8a58c633ea262f1eec1ec4332ec38904dd78ae0808cf9ab87760b6c8efc99/4934440/Mangalanayagam_Nina_thesis.pdf (accessed 2020-04-29). ↑
11. The term hybridity was originally used to describe plants or animals that are the offspring of two different varieties or species, but was also used for people considered "mixed-race" during colonial times. For my argument I am choosing to focus on a specific strand of hybridity theory that is closely related to Homi K. Bhabha's writings, which is different from that from some thinkers originating from the South American hybridity writings, such as Néstor García Canclini's book *Hybrid Cultures*. This was published around the same time as Bhabha's *Location of Culture* and is an equally important contribution to the general theory of hybridity. However, since he specifically concentrates on South American hybridity, I have excluded this from my research. See Canclini, Néstor García. "Hybridization and the geopolitics of art". In *Art and Globalization*. Edited by James Elkins, Zhivka Valiavicharska and Alice Kim. University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press. 2010. ↑
12. Said, Edward W. *Orientalism.* London: Penguin. 2003 [1978]. ↑
13. See, for example, Bhabha, Homi K. "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the

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Colonial Condition". In *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto. 1986 [1967]; Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Gilroy, Paul. *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics ofRrace and Nation*. London: Routledge. 2002; Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Edited by Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence and Wishart. 1990. ↑

14. Jean Fisher has written about how the power dynamics of a leading "hegemonic 'white' elite" in the art world in the UK has shifted since the 1980s, partly due to riots that occurred in response to "poor housing, employment, education and physical abuse". Fisher, Jean. "Tales from the Dark Side: Double Agency". In *Blackpop*. Edited by Shaheen Merali. London: Saqi. 2004. np. ↑
15. I use the term black as the collective category in the UK, which united artists with diverse backgrounds such as African, Caribbean or Asian ancestry, often (but not exclusively) with a colonial past to the British Empire. As such it became a political alliance term, rather than a description of ethnicity. The use of black as a unifying signifier is particular to the UK and is different in other cultural, historical and racial contexts such as the US, South Africa, Cuba etc. Thus, what was called the British Black Arts Movement fought for a common cause across differences. For a more detailed description of how this unravelled, see Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities". In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Edited by David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. London: Routledge. 1996; and Fisher, Jean. "The other story and the past imperfect". *Tate Papers*. No. 12. 2009. Available at https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/no-12/the-other-story-and-the-past-imperfect (accessed 2020-04-25). ↑
16. Bhabha, Homi K. "Remembering Fanon". In *Remaking History*. Edited by Barbara Kruger and Phil Mariani. Seattle, WA: Bay Press 1989. ↑
17. Julien, Isaac and Mercer, Kobena. "De Margin and De Centre". In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, p. 454. ↑
18. Jean Fisher, "Tales from the Dark Side". ↑
19. Araeen, Rasheed. "The Success and the failure of Black Art". *Third Text*. Vol. 18. No. 2. 1994; Fisher, Jean. *Reverberations: Tactics of Resistance, Forms of Agency in Trans/Cultural Practices*. Maastricht: Jan van Eyck Akademie. 2000; Fisher, Jean. "Tales from the Dark Side"; Fisher, Jean. "The Other Story and the

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Past Imperfect"; Petersen, Anne Ring. "Identity Politics, Institutional Multiculturalism, and the Global Art World". *Third Text*. Vol. 26. No. 2. 2012. ↑

20. Hall, "New Ethnicities". ↑
21. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. ↑
22. Terms such as hybridity, multiculturalism, and difference have been given many different meanings throughout the decades, and some argue the terms themselves have become diluted too much to be useful within the arts. See, for example, Nederveen Pieterse, Jan. "Changing Definitions". *Third Text*. Vol. 14. No. 53. 2000. Within this debate, Sarat Maharaj has argued that hybridity runs the risk of taking the place of purity by lumping together differences. Nikos Papastergiadis agrees that the "inclusion of artists and curators from non-Western backgrounds and the incorporation of the concept of hybridity within the dominant institutions of contemporary art is reduced to another sign of appropriation" and in this way it does not offer a space for the discussion of cultural difference. He describes hybridity on the one hand as referring to "biological essentialism" and on the other as having been "elevated to promote a form of cultural nomadology". Nevertheless, he still believes that hybridity is an important "part of a force that is attacking traditional and national cultures". He argues the resistance to hybridity is based on traditional conceptions of culture as "coordinating symbolic practices that affirmed a coherent identity and differentiated its way of life from that of others". Maharaj, Sarat. *A New Internationalism*. Founding Symposium InIVA. 1994; Papastergiadis, Nikos. "Hybridity and Ambivalence: Places and Flows in Contemporary Art and Culture". *Theory Culture Society Culture.* Vol. 22. No. 4. 2005. pp. 49–52. ↑
23. Contemporary examples include artists such as Hetain Patel, Simon Fujiwara and Linda Shamma, who all make work playing on the stereotypes attached to their heritage and flip them around to play with the assumptions of their viewer. While their methods highlight hybrid influences on their identities, their methods do not necessarily critically analyse their own participation in maintaining a status quo with whiteness. ↑
24. Dyer, Richard. *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*. Second edition. London: Routledge. 2002. p. 127. ↑
25. West, Cornel. "Matter of Life and Death", *October*. No. 61. Summer 1992. p. 22. ↑
26. TJ Demos has examined a new trend of artists "returning" to former colonies to

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examine spectres haunting the consciousness of Europe. Demos, TJ. *Return to the Postcolony*. ↑

27. Hagen, Ole. *Nowhere Less Now*. London: Artangel. 2012. p. 73. ↑
28. Sartre, Jean-Paul. “Preface”. In Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. London: Penguin Books. 2001 [1963]. p. 22. ↑
29. Demos, *Return to the Postcolony*, p. 8. ↑
30. Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press. 1992. p12. ↑
31. Hagen, *Nowhere Less Now,* p. 88. ↑
32. Demos, *Return to the Postcolony.* ↑
33. Pennell, Miranda. *The Host*. 2015. HD video. Available at https://lux.org.uk/work/the-host (accessed 2020-04-26). ↑
34. Pennell, Miranda. *Film as an Archive for Colonial Photographs: Activating the Past inthe Present.* PhD dissertation. The University of Westminster. 2015. Available at https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.687208 (accessed 2020-04-26). ↑
35. *Ibid.,* p. 95. ↑
36. *Ibid.,* p. 95. ↑
37. Sealy, Mark. *Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time.* London: Lawrence and Wishart. 2019. p. 109. ↑
38. Pennell, *Film as an Archive,* p. 92. ↑
39. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 6. ↑
40. Demos, *Return to the Postcolony,* p. 11. ↑

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