

Fragments of Repair/ ~~La Colonie~~ Nomade

A collective study program realized in the framework of a multi-part project *Fragments of Repair* (17 April–1 August 2021), convened by BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht with artist Kader Attia and decolonial forum ~~La Colonie~~, Paris and hosted by La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Josserand, 93500 Pantin, Paris

17 April–3 July 2021

Fragments of Repair/ ~~La Colonie~~ Nomade is a three-month collective study program conceptualized and convened by political theorist, feminist, and decolonial activist Françoise Vergès. Along with *Fragments of Repair/Kader Attia* (an exhibition by Attia at BAK) and *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings* (an online series of lectures, conversations, and assembly forms, convened by BAK on bakonline.org), ~~La Colonie~~ *Nomade* takes place in the framework of a multi-part project *Fragments of Repair* (17 April–1 August 2021). The project is convened by BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht with artist Kader Attia and ~~La Colonie~~, Paris. As ~~La Colonie~~ currently assumes a nomadic existence, ~~La Colonie~~ *Nomade* is hosted by La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, Pantin, Paris.

In *Fragments of Repair*, Attia proposes the notion of “decolonial repair” as a tactic to engage with planetary urgencies of collective mental health in a world wounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. “Injury,” “wound,” and “repair” have been key concepts across Attia’s artistic practice, especially in relation to the material and immaterial injustices of colonial violence that persist into the present. The current conditions bring these injustices into sharper relief, while adding additional injuries through chronic uncertainty, social isolation, exhaustion, loss, and fear. What pathways can “repair”—not a return to past ways, but an itinerary shaped by demands for decolonization and the politics of restitution—offer to life in and out of the viral and psychological pandemonium?

School ~~La Colonie~~ expands on this narrative, drawing on decolonial strategies as a means for “joyful surviving” and the practice of collective acts of “repair” in spite of the cruel capitalist “economy of exhaustion.”

Exhaustion—mental and bodily depletion—is endemic to capitalism. Capitalism is premised on extractivism that produces a constant exhaustion of all forms and forces of living—humans and animals, soil and subsoil, oceans and rivers, air and water—for the well-being of a select few. The Covid-19 pandemic has magnified capitalism’s underlying health epidemic of exhaustion and the psychic debility—including but not limited to anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation—that arises from it. During quarantines and lockdowns there are, on the one hand, people with relative privilege working from home who manage their social and work connections through Zoom. Yet on the other hand, there is a spectral labor of millions of people—many women, many people of color—who keep the city sanitized, care for the sick and the elderly, and deliver food and goods to those who can afford to stay inside. This lopsided equation of those dependent on people working and living in increasingly exhausting conditions is part of what Vergès has described as the

“economy of exhaustion.” In Vergès’s words, the economy of exhaustion has “a long history in the modern world: it started with colonial slavery, mining human energy to death; the Industrial Revolution adopted this logic, exhausting the bodies of white workers and children until they finally obtained a reduction of work hours and hard physical labor thanks to the exhaustion of racialized bodies in the colonies. Liberal and neoliberal countries still rest on mining to exhaustion the bodies of migrants and people of color.”¹

Aligning with decolonial perspectives, how could “repair” as decolonial strategy allow for brief moments of “joyful surviving,” as opposed to just bare, exhausted survival? How does decolonial practice as “repair” help develop collective tools for emancipation and resistance? How could “repair,” as a pragmatic intervention in one’s own life, enable escape from the dominant subjectivity of the neoliberal economy of exhaustion? How might people think together and enact “repair” in the wake of a pandemic which has been precipitated by that which is broken (social, ecological, and economic injustices)? And, in the face of what is irreparable, how can one understand “repair” as imperfect, unfinished, and always ongoing, in opposition to the routine of repairing all kinds of wounds and hiding their scars, which is, as Attia has shown, deeply tied to European modernity?

La Colonie Nomade aims to go beyond a mere reporting on the conditions of the world and seeks to imagine and enact collective strategies and concrete gestures of “repair.” It also aims to inquire about the place and role of art in a politics of “repair” in the neoliberal-capitalist context of extraction and exploitation by (cultural) institutions, of savage inequalities, of intractable racism, sexism and xenophobia, and of global devastation of the lives of the racialized and the poor. Aware of the cultural institutions’ complicity in this situation, the conveners of *La Colonie Nomade* seek to offer a safe place where complicity is openly debated and resisted.

La Colonie Nomade is closely entwined with *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings*, an online series of lectures, conversations, and assembly forums, which is a part of its curriculum. *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings* also attends regularly to the artworks in *Fragments of Repair/Kader Attia* by means of (online) screenings and conversations with Attia, which are a departure point for the collective study that facilitate thinking about, reimagining, and practicing “repair” in and through art.

¹ Françoise Vergès, “Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender,” *e-flux journal*, no. 100 (May 2019), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/100/269165/capitalocene-waste-race-and-gender/>.

Syllabus

I. Introduction: *Fragments of Repair*

Saturday 17 April 2021, 13.30–18.00 hrs (doors open at 11.30 for participants, with lunch 12.30–13.30 hrs)

BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht; La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, Pantin, Paris; and bakonline.org

Open to public via bakonline.org; the ~~La Colonie~~ *Nomade* participants meet in person at La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, Pantin, Paris

The opening of the project *Fragments of Repair* is a hybrid—both virtual and physically located—public gathering hosted physically at BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht and La Dynamo, Pantin, Paris, and virtually at bakonline.org. On this occasion, a conversation between artist Kader Attia, BAK general and artistic director Maria Hlavajova, and BAK curator Wietske Maas introduce the multi-part project *Fragments of Repair*. The conversation reflects on the development of the project as shaped by the conditions of the pandemic, while considering how this links into Kader’s inquiry into the decolonial practice of “repair.” Political scientist, historian, and decolonial feminist Françoise Vergès speaks on the “economy of exhaustion,” philosopher Catherine Malabou reflects on the “political subconscious,” and philosopher and political thinker Achille Mbembe presents his thoughts on the “repair of reason.”

II. The Economy of Exhaustion and the Struggles for Life and Dignity

13–18 hrs Sunday 2 May 2021 (doors opening at 11.30 hrs)

La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Josserand, 93500 Pantin, Paris

Seminar and workshop for the ~~La Colonie~~ *Nomade* participants

This session traces the genealogy of the “economy of exhaustion” and its connection with extractivism from slavery to today. The participants discuss the ways in which it functions, how it fabricates what prison abolitionist scholar Ruth Wilson Gilmore has called the “fabrication of differentiated vulnerability to premature death” by racial capitalism, and how it has been resisted through the struggles for life and dignity that constitute a politics of repair.

This first session seeks to grasp the core elements of the economy of extraction/exhaustion and understand the ways in which consent to extract/exhaust is fabricated. Slavery and colonization constructed a model for wealth accumulation: extract until exhaustion and leave behind wasted lands and wasted lives. This model still dominates globally. Secondly, this session looks at the politics of repair that oppressed people have developed: politics which seek to reestablish dignity; the human against “Man,” and a reconnection with the environment; communities of maroons, antislavery insurrections, and revolutions; anti-colonialism; revolutionary, black, Muslim, and

decolonial feminism; decolonial environmental politics; and the fight for other epistemologies.

The goal is not to be encyclopedic, but rather to grasp that the politics and practices of repair have a long history, and that issues of dignity and solidarity, community and respect, transnationalism and trans-disciplinarity constitute their core notions.

Recommended reading/viewing:

Kader Attia, *The Body's Legacies, Part 2: The Postcolonial Body*, 2018, video.

Kader Attia, *The Object's Interlacing*, 2020, video installation.

Françoise Vergès, "Capitalocene, Waste, Race, and Gender," *e-flux journal*, no. 100, (May 2019), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/100/269165/capitalocene-waste-race-and-gender/>.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, "Abolition," in *Revolutionary Feminisms*, Brenna Bhandar and Rafeef Ziadah, eds. (London: Verso Books, 2020), pp. 161–177.

III. Wasted Lands and Decolonial Ecology: Slow Temporality of Reparation

Sunday 16 May 2021, 13–17 hrs (doors open at 12 hrs)

La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Josserand, 93500 Pantin, Paris

Seminar and workshop for the ~~La Colonie~~ *Nomade* participants

How can one repair the destructive power that colonization and capitalism have unleashed upon the environment for centuries? And how can people confront the fact that reparation to the seas, the rivers, the soils and subsoils, the air and water, and the plants and animals cannot be completed? What is to be done with irreparability? The amount of poison contaminating the planet is dizzying: nuclear waste; the ruins left behind by imperialist wars (Agent Orange in Vietnam for instance); the pesticides and insecticides spread over land, forests, rice paddies, and plantations; and the pandemics caused by agro-business, the meat industry, hyper consumption, global travel, and mass tourism. It will take time to repair the crimes of slavery, colonialism, and capitalism, which have all continued for centuries; the temporality of decolonial repair/irreparability is a challenge to the western/medical/technological temporality of repair—the *entangled temporalities* of repair.

Recommended reading/viewing:

Andreas Malm, "This is the Hell that I have heard of: Some Dialectical Images in Fossil Fuel Fiction," in *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, volume 53, no. 2 (April 2017), <https://academic.oup.com/fmls/article/53/2/121/3580591>.

Andreas Malm, "Pandémies, crise climatique et léninisme écologique. Débat avec Andreas Malm," in *Alternative Révolutionnaire Communiste* (December 2020), <https://alt->

[rev.com/2020/12/04/pandemies-crise-climatique-et-leninisme-ecologique-debat-avec-andreas-malm/](https://www.revueprojet.com/2020/12/04/pandemies-crise-climatique-et-leninisme-ecologique-debat-avec-andreas-malm/).

Malcom Ferdinand, “Pour une écologie décoloniale,” in *Revue Projet*, 2020, pp. 52–56.

Malcom Ferdinand, “Why We Need a Decolonial Ecology,” in *Eurozine* (June 2020), https://www.eurozine.com/why-we-need-a-decolonial-ecology/#xd_co_f=NDU4M2U0MWYtOTM2Mi00YjUzLThkNGYtZTFiYjY5OTA1MmUy~.

Malcom Ferdinand, “A Decolonial Ecology: Voices from the Hold of Modernity,” lecture as part of the symposium On Enclosed Spaces and the Great Outdoors (De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, 29 February 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNaLugt7cdI&ab_channel=OnEnclosedSpacesandtheGreatOutdoors.

Ben Lewis, *Polynésie: Le Paradis Radioactif*, 2017, documentary film, <https://youtu.be/XV5u6q8luGM>.

IV. Wasted Lives, Sanctuary, and Refuge

Saturday 29 May 2021, 13–17 hrs (doors open at 12 hrs)

La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Josserand, 93500 Pantin, Paris

Open session to ~~La Colonie~~ *Nomade* participants together with refugees and associations working with refugees

What constitutes sanctuary and refuge today? What really is a refuge? What is needed? How is it sought? Who decides what “protection” is in a world where the militarized state has made refuge a business, has imposed a vocabulary of xenophobic defense, is building walls, and destroying autonomous and community-organized sanctuaries and refuges? How does one reappropriate protection in a way that is anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal, anti-imperialist, pro-indigenous rights, pro-refugees, decolonial feminist, and abolitionist? This session looks at the ways in which states have utilized the notion of protection to further socially and racially segregate people, reinforce surveillance and control, and maintain inequalities and injustice. Equally, politics of solidarity, the routes and circulation of politics of protection are addressed alongside the notion of “vulnerability” as something used to dispossess subalterns of their agency.

Recommended reading/viewing:

Christiane Vollaire and Philippe Bazin, *Un archipel des solidarités, Grèce 2017–2020* (Paris: Loco Editions 2020), pp. 183–208.

Veronica Gago, “The Feminist International,” in *Feminist International. How to Change Everything* (London: Verso Books, 2019), pp. 181–190.

Lucie Laplace, “Économies populaires et luttes féministes, à propos du livre de Veronica Gago,” in *Contretemps* (November 2020), <https://www.contretemps.eu/economie-populaire-luttes-feministes-gago-amerique-sud/>.

Djamel Kerkar, *Atlal* (Ruins), 2018, documentary film (in Algerian with French subtitles). During the black decade that marked Algeria in the 1990s, the village of Ouled Allal, plagued by terrorism, was the scene of a disaster. Images shot on VHS allow an exploration of the ruins of the village’s past. The director meets different generations of inhabitants: he questions the memories of the oldest and the hopes of the youngest—who are deprived of perspective—about the reconstruction of their country. It is a back and forth conversation between material ruins and ruined lives (a one-time streaming link is made available to all core participants).

Women Working Group on Financing and Development, “Capital vs. Life: Corporate Capture: Financialization and Financial Extractivism,” webinar (14 September 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LNqkru1oks>.

V. The Art of Repair: Beyond Representation

Saturday 12 June 2021, 13–17 hrs (doors open at 12 hrs)

La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Josserand, 93500 Pantin, Paris

Seminar and workshop for the ~~La Colonie~~ *Nomade* participants

European modernity gave negative names to the discontent, anger, and struggles of colonial subjects: enslaved people who rebelled were said to be mad, women said to be hysterical, colonized said to be liars, Jews said to be cunning, Arabs said to be deceitful and sexist by nature, Asians said to be effeminate and genderless, all said to be backwards and “in lack” of reason, beauty, capacities, and talents. European modernity classified, silenced, erased, and objectified, and subalterns *still* live within this regime of representation. Thus, “The North African Syndrome” that Frantz Fanon analyzed in 1952—in which he argued that French doctors systematically dismissed North African workers’ ills by saying they were fabricated in order to avoid work—has been renamed as “Mediterranean syndrome.” To counter this regime of representation, subalterns have worked toward new representations in all artistic fields, in literature, and in research. The struggle around the field of representation has intensified. Seen as a central terrain for repair, it has utilized all of the techniques and tools available. Yet, to what extent is representation another trick of modernity? “Decolonial aesthetics,” Rolando Vázquez has argued, “is concerned with the struggle against oblivion; it moves towards witnessing and healing the colonial wound” and signals “an epochal movement from the age of enunciation to the age of listening.”²

Representation, as another trick of European modernity, leads to “arrangement”—an addition to, rather than a dismantling of, racism and capitalism. Take for instance the

² Rolando Vázquez, *Vistas of Modernity: decolonial aesthetics and the end of the contemporary* (Prinsenbeek: Japsam Books, 2020), p.176

controversy around colonial statues and monuments. Displacing them and/or replacing them with statues of women and non-white heroines and heroes will not *decolonize* public space. Cities will remain inhospitable to migrants, Blacks, Arabs, veiled women, sex workers, homeless, refugees, and the poor. Looking beyond representation means thinking about what will constitute a decolonial aesthetics that actively contributes to a repairing.

Recommended reading/viewing:

Frantz Fanon, "The North African Syndrome," in *Toward the African Revolution* (Paris: François Maspero, 1964),

<https://readingfanon.blogspot.com/search/label/The%20%22North%20African%20Syndrome%27> and in French at: <https://esprit.presse.fr/article/frantz-fanon/le-syndrome-nord-africain-18214>.

Sylvia Wynter, "Towards the Sociogenic Principle: Fanon, The Puzzle of Conscious Experience, of 'Identity' and What it's Like to be 'Black,'" in *National Identity and Sociopolitical Change: Latin America Between Marginalization and Integration*, Mercedes Durán-Cogan and Antonio Gómez-Moriana, eds. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), <https://trueleappress.files.wordpress.com/2020/04/wynter-towards-the-sociogenic-principle.pdf>.

VI. A Leap of Imagination

Saturday 19 June 2021, 13–17 hrs (doors open at 12 hrs)

La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Jossierand, 93500 Pantin, Paris

Open session with ~~La Colonie Nomade~~ participants together with decolonial and feminist activists, scholars, curators and artists

What does imagining a politics of repair for these times entail? How can one imagine their local, transnational, and global practice? How can doom and gloom—that ends up encouraging passivity or xenophobic scapegoating—be avoided? Is it possible to remain anchored in possibility and hope instead? Confronted with the capacity of capitalism to absorb theories, images, and representations from the oppressed, to commodify criticism, to traffic in meanings, and to steal and loot, it is necessary to develop the art of marooning—of using strategic visibility and invisibility to practice fugitivity and futurity.

An excerpt of the text written collectively for *L'Atelier*, a collaborative performance around "Utopias, Dystopias, Heterotopias," curated by Françoise Vergès in June 2017 serves as a starting point.

Extrait: "Par un insupportable retournement, les oppresseurs se présentent comme victimes. Depuis que d'aucuns ont déclaré que l'Histoire était finie, tout peut désormais être manipulé. Une fois la fin de l'histoire déclarée, il n'y a plus besoin de paix, nous pouvons entrer dans un état de guerre permanente. Le temps se serait arrêté et l'histoire ne serait plus un processus de contestations et d'aspirations mais un moment figé dans une éternelle répétition, un éternel retour du même. Le révisionnisme historique produit de nouvelles amnésies. D'un côté, l'anti-intellectualisme ambiant flatte les goûts les plus bas,

de l'autre un art désincarné se fait passer pour subversif. La notion de « décolonisation » elle-même est en train de perdre son sens.”

(Excerpt: “In an unbearable turnaround, oppressors claim to be victims. Since some have declared the ‘end of History,’ everything can be manipulated. Once the end of history declared, there was no longer any need for peace, nothing to stop us entering a permanent state of war. Time is said to have come to a standstill and history believed to no longer be a process of contestation and aspirations, but rather a moment trapped in eternal repetition, an eternal return of the same. Historical revisionism produces new amnesias. On the one hand, the ambient anti-intellectualism flatters the basest of tastes; on the other, a disembodied art is passed off as subversive. The notion of ‘decolonization’ itself is in danger of losing its meaning. Hence, the need to organize daily exercises in imagination.”)

VII. and VIII. Gestures and Practices of Repair

**Saturday 26 June, 13–17 hrs and Saturday 3 July 2021, 13–17 hrs (doors open at 12 hrs)
La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Josserand, 93500 Pantin, Paris**

Creative workshops and open sessions

These two sessions focus on teaching and learning practices of repair that can be accomplished *in situ*. Acknowledging the conceptual and organizational framework of the *Fragments of Repair* project in Utrecht and Paris as a politics of repair, the sessions start by considering the needs of people who are currently in the Netherlands or France. It will focus on those who are most exposed to brutality and cruelty, including guests of the earlier workshops “Wasted Lives, Sanctuary, and Refuge” on 29 May 2021 and “A Leap of Imagination” on 19 June 2021. With them, the core group participants engage in a collaborative experimentation of repair. The goal is not to offer refuge, but to reinforce autonomy and solidarity as tools of repair. These final two sessions are also open to a wider public in order to introduce grass-roots initiatives and families from Pantin’s local neighborhood to *School La Colonie*’s enactment of “repair.”

Practical

Where:

School La Colonie is hosted by La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, 9 Rue Gabrielle Josserand, 93500 Pantin, Paris

The in-person, fortnightly collective study sessions are accompanied by online lectures, conversations, and assembly forums *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings*, convened by BAK and streamed online at bakonline.org.

When:

School La Colonie begins on Saturday 17 April 2021 with the opening event of *Fragments of*

Repair taking place between 14–18 hrs. From 2 May–3 July 2021, the collective study takes place between 13–17 hrs on 2 May, 16 May, 29 May, 12 June, 19 June, 26 June, and 3 July 2021.

Fragments of Repair/Gatherings take place at BAK and bakonline.org between 18–20 hrs on 17 April, 29 April, 13 May, 27 May, 10 June, 24 June, 8 July, and 31 July 2021. Please check BAK's website for details.

Background and Preparation:

Artist Kader Attia and the convener Françoise Vergès invite a core group of 20–25 artists, activists, and scholars from different ages, disciplines, genders, and backgrounds to join. All participants are asked to engage in a list of preparatory reading, listening, and viewing material. On 29 May 2021 and 19 June 2021, *School La Colonie* involves a wider constellation of guests from organizations working with refugees in residential neighborhoods (29 May 2021) and decolonial and feminist activists, curators, scholars, and artists (19 June 2021). These guests are also invited to the final sessions on 26 June 2021 and 3 July 2021 to work with the core participants to engage in a collaborative experimentation of “repair.” The second part of each afternoon of the final two sessions is also open to grass-roots organizations and families from the local neighborhood of Pantin.

In addition, all participants should follow the public online program *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings*, convened by BAK.

How:

School La Colonie engages a dialogical and nonhierarchical mode of learning that is in and of itself also a methodology of “repair” and an embodied response to the challenges of exhaustion. The sessions address pressing contemporary urgencies in an intense yet convivial and patient learning environment. The group works with what is at hand, within the extant conditions, and without recourse to excessive/unnecessary “props.”

Each session begins with a shared lunch, the first is provided at La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues by the conveners; the subsequent lunches are managed by the participants.

The online program *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings*, also runs fortnightly and provides insights and theoretical references on the issue of “repair” through lectures, screenings, conversations, and public forums by artists, scholars, and activists.

Credits:

Fragments of Repair is composed of multiple dispersed yet interconnected “fragments,” including *Fragments of Repair/Kader Attia*, an exhibition by Attia at BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht; *Fragments of Repair/School La Colonie*, a collective study program conceptualized and convened by Françoise Vergès and hosted by La Dynamo de Banlieues Bleues, Pantin, Paris; and *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings*, an online series of lectures, conversations, and assembly forums convened by BAK on bakonline.org. Over the course of the project, Attia engages in the production of a new work in the form of a podcast. It probes “repair” as a concrete practice to counter the psychological impact of living through

a pandemic, realized in collaboration with Utrecht University and college students in the city of Utrecht. *Fragments of Repair* has been conceptualized by Kader Attia and Wietske Maas in conversation with Maria Hlavajova, Rachael Rakes, Françoise Vergès, and the BAK Team.

For more information about *School ~~La Colonie~~*, please contact Alix Hugonnier at alixhugonnier@gmail.com. For more information about *Fragments of Repair/Gatherings*, please contact Irene Calabuch Mirón at irene@bakonline.org.

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The activities of BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht are made possible with the financial support of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the City Council, Utrecht. *Fragments of Repair* is part of the long-term BAK research itinerary *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living* (2017–ongoing) and has received extra funding from: VSBfonds, Utrecht; BankGiro Loterij Fonds, Amsterdam; BNG Cultuurfonds, The Hague; Fonds 21, Utrecht; Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds, Utrecht; Institut français des Pays-Bas, The Hague; and Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa), Stuttgart.

la dynamo 



~~La Colonie~~
