The project is presented alongside the sculptural forms of voiceprints illustrating the frequency and amplitude of two different voices: the voice of Piet Oosten, the acoustico-technique of contours, used to map and identify the origins of phonemes, condenses Abu Hamdan’s argument about a material form, and folds together notions of voice and territory. The acoustically absorbed foam used in the construction of these sculptures directly intervenes in the audio spaces, accentuating the thoughts and commanding a dialogue between the sculptures and the documentary, one that seeks to intensify the listening experience.

The Freedom of Speech itself was produced by Russell Finch at Soma- thet Else and commissioned by The Showroom and Forensic Architecture at the Department for Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, University of London.

Avi Mograbi (born in 1956, lives in Tel Aviv)

3 Details (2005–2011)

The series Details consists of short extracts from Avi Mograbi’s directorial works. The series literally details the psychic depth of Israeli and Palestinian society and politics. It is a sequence from the movie August: A Retrospective. In the atrium of the Palestinian city of Ramallah, a modernist building by architect Piet Elling, the work is set up as a polyphonic mini-tragedy, Unrehearsed forms of performance coincide with the building stones in the ‘draima’. The adolescents act as the chorus in a playful interchange with the notions that are brought to the foreground: the audio spaces, accoustic contours, the thought of a diversity, fear, conflict and his interrupted engagements in the city of Rotterdam. The cast’s own experience and forms of expression guide the script, which took its form spontaneously during the event of the shoot. (Wendelien van Oldenborgh)

Detail 3 is a sequence from the movie August: A Retrospective (2007–2008) (in collaboration with Henrik Olesen).

Sanne vlekovski (born in 1949, lives in Zagreb)

5 The Disobedient (Reasons for Imprisonment) (2012)

The Disobedient (Reasons for Imprisonment) is a series of posters created for Documenta 13, to be displayed on the streets of Kassel, listing some of the reasons for imprisonment at the Masada concentration camp. From 1933 to 1943 and the second half of World War II. The creation was set up as an ‘education work camp’ for an estimated number of 8.500 prisoners. The ‘reasons’ show that prisoners were brought in for violating Nazi regulations, mostly related to their work obligations, but also for what was perceived as excessive solidarity or familiarity with foreigners. The work contextualizes the famous photograph of an empty concentration camp, depicting a prisoner looking at the companies, still active today, that are known to have profited from those circumstances.

Želimir Zirkov (born 1942, lives in Novi Sad)

6 Uprising in 1973

Film director Želimir Zirkov is one of the major expo- nents of the Yugoslav Black Wave, noted for his social engagement and criticism of censorship in the Yugoslav socialist era. Fighting for its survival in the face of the consumption of the political structure reconfigured after World War II did not elicit the same partisan resistance, or, finally, if Yugoslav socialism did not belong to both appropriate, partisans’ story and preempted its oppositional energy.

Cesare Pietroosti (born in 1952, lives in Rotterdam)

7 Pensiero Unico (Uniform Thought) (2003)

On 22nd March 2003, in the Saletta Comunale for Con- temporary Art in Castel San Pietro (Bologna), starting at 6 pm, I repeatedly and continuously sung the first few words of the two Italian fascist songs, Giovinezza (“Gio- vinezza, spring of beauty”) and “Bella Ciao” (“Vite, youth, spring of beauty”) and Vincere (“Vincere, vincer, vincer, in cielo in terra in mure e a man”). La parole d’ordine, una suprema volontà” - “To win, to win, we will win, in the sky, on land and on sea. It’s our word of honour, our supreme will.”. My intention was to find out the place where, in the first place, I had lost my voice. The action ended at 11.45 p.m.” (Cesare Pietroosti)

Lidwien van den Ve

Antwerp, 26/05/2008 (Abou Jahjah)

Photographs by Lidwien van den Ve zoom into the hidden facets of notorious public political events, bringing to the fore the emotionalball, unusual details, and intriguing content of situations that either go unregis- tered or are censored by the mass media.

Antwerp, 26/05/2008 (Abou Jahjah) was taken on the first day of the appeal trial of Dyab Abou Jahjah and his co-defendant Ahmed Azzuz from the Arab European League (AEL). After leaving from Lebanon in 1991 and receiving refugee status in 1996, Dyab Abou Jahjah founded in 2000 the Arab European League (AEL), an organization for migrant rights in Antwerp. Both the organization’s activities previously were targeted and defamed in the media by Vlaams Belang (Vlaams Blok at the time). In 2002, Abou Jahjah was arrested for allegedly calling for violence and participat- ing in riots occurring after the murder of a Muslim man by his Belgian neighbor. His arrest was the start of a 6-year-long process, during which he was convicted in 2005 of sedition and sentenced to 3 years in prison, and finally acquitted in 2008. (Lidwien van den Ve)

Judith Hopf (born 1969, lives in Berlin)

9 Count (2008)

10 Doors (2007) (in collaboration with Henrik Olesen)

"Judith Hopf’s film Count departs from the unusual story of Wilhelm von Osten, a mathematics teacher, phreno- logist and smoking champion at the beginning of the 20th century, working from Darwinian postulates, Von Osten successfully managed to train his horse in elementary arithmetic. The horse quickly became a sensation and prompting the German board of education to con- tinue with the horse's example. It proves how true acuity lay in the realms of psychology. Rather than determining the answers directly, Hans worked by de- coding the questions from the body language of his interlocutor. As his stamping foot approached the correct number, the crowd would tighten up with excitement,
This group exhibition investigates the forms of organized, legislated intolerance pervading the contemporary public sphere as points of suspension between democracy and one of its antonyms, fascism.

The project How Much Fascism?, initiated by the Zagreb-based curatorial collective W/WHW in 2011, engages with the claims articulated in Slovenian philosopher and political activist Rastko Močnik’s collection of texts, published in 1986 under the same title. In the midst of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, Močnik related the political conflicts and the rise of fascist tendencies in geographies “from the Adriatic to Siberia” to the establishment and consolidation of a “peripheral capitalism”. At the same time as several new state entities were created throughout the Eastern bloc on the basis of nationalist ideologies and market liberalization, Močnik outlined the “anti-anti-fascism” that propelled these political constructions and their cultural policies with racist undertones. The comfortable tandem between capitalism and democracy—a liaison largely taken for granted in the decades following the Cold War—underwent a series of dramatic changes in these new contexts, where liberalism cohabited with authoritarianism or severe nationalism. In Western Europe, the assumption that democracy and capitalism are indistinguishable has been eroded since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The symptoms that Močnik detected in the “peripheries” have taken an increasingly strong hold at the core of Western liberal democracy.

In 1995, Močnik suggested that we no longer need to ask ourselves whether “new local populism, new ‘fascism’, and new right-wing extremism” drive the contemporary condition, but, rather, how much they do so. We must not only attend to the open manifestations of fascism, but also weigh these against changing definitions of democracy itself. We need to turn our attention to the silent fascism that is becoming normalized through systematic violence seeping into the laws and everyday administration practices of the nation-state, and to assess the mechanisms of oppression that are being presented as unavoidable, pragmatic necessities. Since the time of Močnik’s texts, many things have taken a turn for the worse – one can mention Berusconism, a “functional and post-modern equivalent of Fascism”, or the compelling fact that, for the first time since WWII, people are being expelled from Western European democracies solely on the basis of their ethnicity, as with the recent deportations of Bulgarian and Romanian Roma from France. The basic postulate of Močnik still holds: the question is not “Fascism – yes or no?”, but how much of it still allows for the performance of democratic exercise.

In a recent article, filmmaker and author Hito Steyerl poignantly addresses this question from a quantitative perspective: “How many hairs do one have to lose to be considered bald? Or, in political terms: How much civility can the public sphere lose without lapsing into fascism? How much fear among minorities and how much radical, neoliberal pauperization is permissible if societies are still to qualify as democracies?”

The works on display in How Much Fascism? consider artistic agency against political manifestations that can be examined as cases of fascist resurgence: the rise of nationalistic sentiment and elaborate anti-immigrant legislations, the denial, suppression, and deformation of history, the normalization of war and excessive violence, as well as instances where the administration of daily life and the enforced patterns of thought and feeling outline the contours of tomorrow’s authoritarianisms.


Cross-examinations #2

How Much Fascism?

Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Judith Hopf, Sanja Iveković, Gert Jan Kocken, Thomas Kvam, Avi Mograbi, Wendellen van Oldenborgh, Cesare Pietroiusti, Lidwien van den Ven and Zalimir Zlínk

Curators: What, How and for Whom?/WHW, in collaboration with Miheana Mircan

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