

Counter Knowledges and Permissions. Irit Rogoff in conversation with Kader Attia, 2016

To contextualise this conversation for our readers, it took place in the wake of a presentation by Kader Attia entitled 'The Abolition of Distances' at Goldsmiths Department of Visual Cultures in London in January 2016. The discussion we had the next day picked up some of the themes of the talk regarding cultural perspectives that sustain the production and circulation of certain kinds of images of the non-West. We also focused on the ability of such images to aid the production of fear, one of the greatest forces sustaining the current security-obsessed state. But the conversation was aimed not just at the images circulating us but also their reading strategies and the other opportunities artists and thinkers have in order to question and subvert the smooth flow of over-determined knowledges. We began our conversation by insisting that knowledge could no longer operate as a set of discrete and framed forms of expertise divorced from their political conditions – this in the hope that its active potential might be let loose.

Irit Rogoff (IR)

Kader Attia (KA)

KA: I think specialisation is certainty. Not always, but the risk of specialisation is certainty. I'm sure you've experienced this with fellow academics. For instance, when I was giving lectures and doing research at Quai Branly, most of the anthropologists, specialists in this or that ethnic group, gave a formal description of the way repair was done instead of allowing a critical distance to evolve between the viewer, themselves and the object. They constantly disagreed amongst themselves because scholars are scientists, and scientists produce truth (or seek truths). Any mathematical equation is about the accumulation of a succession of truths that leads to one truth (the conclusion). But the artist has this amazing possibility to think by creating ellipses, and with this I mean unexpected correlations. Sometimes it fails and sometimes it's magical, but it opens incredible

pathways for knowledge. So, I do care about that, and I think that when you mentioned that some colleagues found the lecture reminded them of ...

IR: The Sir John Soane Museum.

KA: For me, it's a compliment. The Soane is a place full of unexpected correlations initially created by an individual mind, Sir John Soane ...

IR: I too see it as a compliment that the presentation of your work seemed to have a similar ethos to the John Soane Museum with its jumble of seemingly unconnected objects. The lack of connection has to do with the objects not having a historical, national, regional, cultural or genre-based coherence and with the fact that original objects and facsimiles are combined without distinction. I think that what worries people about such assembled presentations that don't adhere to a single logic is that they are not sure how or where they might locate the criticality of the discourse being presented. I think really one of the questions that we should talk about is, how can one, on the one hand, not limit knowledge to tiny little specialisations that cannot address the big and urgent questions, and, on the other hand, how working with a whole set of general knowledges can maintain the power for political struggle. Because that's not so obvious since most political struggles are quite specific.

For myself, I'm not frightened by generalisations because I think that the most important thing for us is to know how to think the large and important questions and that generalisations can aid the ability to think big. But, for many, I think, of your listeners, the translation between the big questions and, by contrast, how to have real effective political power in the work that one does, on an everyday basis, creates a missing link, and it would be interesting for us to maybe think about the missing link. In essence what I am invoking is the thorny old set of questions we never seem to be able to escape, between the dual need to see the big picture and the imperative to be specific, close to the lived conditions of the day.

KA: I think that when you question this missing link, you're already giving an answer because when you polarise on one side the big image and on the other the little mechanisms of specialisation, you are in fact addressing this link. Because something is always present: both in theory and in practice nothing doesn't exist.

Actually this missing link isn't absent at all; on the contrary, it's essential between the sides. It's the fundamental fold that links and divides the two sides you speak of ... but of course, it has to be exposed, made visible and audible so that we can question it. Without it, the thought process would rely only on the big image or only on the little mechanisms. This would lack distance and fall once again into an impasse ... (the dead-end of certainty).

IR: I also want to ask you about permission, which is the subject of our lecture series this term, about where you get your sense of permission. By this I mean the permission that you have to work in a different way, to start from elsewhere and mix materials that are of different histories and cultures? It seems an important question to ask within a body of work that is closely linked to postcolonial criticism. Because while postcolonial theory is crucially important as a critical body of thought, it is also often quite ethically rigid: there are rights and wrongs, offences and violations, and it's quite difficult to mix things up.

I am very interested in the question of permission because I think we struggle for it rather than simply receive it. It took me many years to get a sense of permission in my own work because I was trained as an academic and there were certain understandings about how you legitimately went about producing knowledge, so I'm interested in that as part of your own artistic process. The lecture series that you opened last night, 'Permissions: The Way We Work Now', is dedicated to examining the different kinds of permissions that accompany decolonisation or gender emancipation or being critical of neo-liberal hegemonies. It assumes that operating from a position of being politically critical requires another form of working, a new methodology.

KA: I think there's a crucial point here. In my practice, permission is an issue because, as you said quite eloquently, I address colonial matters, both directly and indirectly, dealing with instances of dispossession and reappropriation (I made work that looked at the dispossessing of traditional objects and questioned the role that the Christian missionaries and the Vatican played in this pillage). Yet colonial issues don't only concern colonisation. They lead up to or are the continuation of other calamities, such as slavery, neo-liberalism, fascism, the hegemony of Western Modernity ... the monopoly of suffering isn't owned by colonisation or slavery. The domination of man over man is made up of endless and complex ramifications that continuously spread ...

Within this sad state of things, the permission for another methodology in the creative process presented itself quite naturally in my work. In a way, it relies on permission as an act that becomes radical because it seeks freedom – freedom of thought. Colonisation of knowledge is one of the most ambivalent consequences of Modernity, and to extract oneself from it can be part of a radical choice that demands transgression of what would or wouldn't be permitted, to find in fact the missing link between things that were separated or that will arise from an unexpected assemblage.

Then I think there are two things. Probably it sounds obvious to me because I'm on the other side of the lecture – and it's not that obvious for the audience – but I have to say that I do not pretend to provide theoretical dogmas because I'm frightened of certainty. It can't last that long in a world that is constantly changing. That's why I appreciate the fact that you referred to the methodology of *how* to proceed rather than *what* we are looking for.

Yesterday's lecture presents my interest in dismantling the entire frame and canvas that we've been forced to think and from which we need to define another way of understanding, another distance, I would say. This, I think, is very difficult, and the reason why I don't want to propose a very clear political impact of the ideal I'm drawing out is that I'm not sure of it. I'm just proposing. And the lecture, as it was, is

a proposal. It suggests another methodology – how we have to deal with this extreme and escalating violence through mass media today, as this is not about to end; how we have to rethink and reinvent the entire dialogue these productions tie us to; how we have to probably reformulate or reinvent the scale of mass media which we've committed to, because I think it's all about scale. I talk about how there is a cultural scale in which we are, at some point, imprisoned.

We were talking about nature after a while, the story of the birds and the way they mimic intrusions in their environment and that, maybe, we can reflect at a different scale through nature's agency, for instance. I'm thinking about an alternative methodology we could maybe find by looking at nature. All the political failures of mankind have an echo or an interdependent relationship with nature ... That's why the extinction of species today is the mother of all crises.

IR: Extinction of spaces?

AK: I was talking about 'species' rather than spaces. What we call 'the age of Anthropocene'. The crisis of global warming, the disappearance of these 'species'. This is, for me, the mother of all crises – economic, environmental, affecting relations between groups and individuals etc. ...

IR: So this is what we were talking about last night, questions of how to shift to a planetary scale?

KA: At the same time, the abolition of 'spaces' is at the core of my lecture because it has been a crucial accelerating point these past fifteen years in world history. After being Modern and 'specialists', the Western world has woken up to a global world – global warming, global economy, global fear ... But not one nation (or what remains of this so-called great narrative) has been able to fit into this new global infrastructure. What has been built during fifty years as the first largest community of different countries is collapsing. All European countries are building fences and closing their borders to protect themselves from refugees: it is a total paradox.

But again, I totally understand why some people can have difficulties in understanding the impact of the political aspect of my work, but it's not my aim. I think it's much more difficult because the current political situation changes every day. The political situation worldwide is becoming incomprehensible ... I think of it as the metaphor of Sisyphus: at the end of the day, all we try to do is raise something above us but unfortunately it keeps going back towards the ground.

IR: While I totally agree with your analysis, I don't think that you are in charge of global political solutions. I think, for me personally, as a thinker, the real importance of contemporary art is learning other ways of thinking something, finding other entry points into a problematic, not solutions for it.

KA: Exactly. I agree.

IR: I'm interested in the way in which art can point me to other ways of thinking very urgent issues and different points of entry and different knowledges, but also a whole set of permissions, for example. That's one of the things that really interest me about the way you work vis-à-vis knowledge, giving yourself permission to start in the middle. Scholars, unlike artists, will always try to start at the beginning, whereas artists have the permission to start in the middle. I think starting in the middle is a very interesting strategy. You may have intuitively desired to start at the beginning, but it's not a classically scholarly desire, so I'm very fascinated by this.

KA: Artists certainly allow themselves to think of knowledge differently than scientists do, even if Nobel Prize recipients, such as Serge Haroche, often say that to become a great scientist it requires imagination (next to observation and intuition). I ultimately think that this is the reason why art exists. To not only use elliptical thinking and to never cease to expose this but also to allow oneself to consider knowledge not as a part of the unavoidable order of things, that comes and goes between the signified and the signifier, but also as something that is out of control, unknown, that cannot be categorised, something unexpected ... And this something that resides (as long as it isn't used) in non-knowledge requires an open methodology in order to allow such freedom of access. This freedom of non-knowledge is perhaps a necessary mirror to the certainty that science blindly advocates ... Artists are here to maintain this essential imbalance. I don't know if artists begin by thinking of knowledge 'from its middle', as you say; I mainly think that they have always been moved by an agency that links social reality to the virtual (from traditional societies until now), and that this embodies the 'middle' you're speaking of – this missing link between societies and beliefs ...

What I'm trying to do with this lecture, 'The Abolition of Distances' – especially in the conclusion when I say that it's not easy – is to illustrate how much we have been enclosed by the dialectic of the signifier and the signified. I speak of the Inca civilisation and of the Aztec in the way Serge Gruzinski explained them to me. He was working during many years on the Aztec calendar, on several Aztec codexes, and he discovered that the representations – the drawings – of what we see as depictions of a piece of corn are actually a representation of human flesh. When the piece of corn is very close to the calendar date of sacrifice or ritual, it means human flesh. And when the piece of corn is represented far from human sacrifice, it's simply corn. The thing is, if you don't know this, as a Western European academic you simply see a piece of corn. It took him more than ten years to understand this crucial detail ... The fact that the representation of corn and human flesh is the same thing goes beyond any mode of Modern Western thinking. And this is what we don't or can't understand, because we analyse everything, even if in a correlative way. Everything passes through a signifier and signified process; there is constantly something that is referred to. Yet, in traditional societies, as for example the Inca, when something is represented, it *is* the thing. If we talk about the dispossessed traditional objects that are now disseminated in the Western world of ethnology, it's the same thing. They *are* the spirits they represent.

And, what's extremely complex for an art historian today is that when you are in front of this image, it doesn't just represent one thing. It not only embodies human flesh or corn or the mountain or the butterfly or the fish, but it is supposed to *be* the thing! And for us – because I was asking him (it was a very interesting interview) about psychoanalysis and consciousness – what if we do an analysis and dig into the subconscious of traditional societies and ancient civilisations through their sculptures and what they left on paper? Well, he said, this is extremely complex because obviously they have a subconscious, that's clear, but all referents ...

So, what I found fascinating in the interview we had last time on Skype is that, like you, I care about the fact that, at the end of the day, the world we're living in today allows us to criticise the system, to struggle against the system, against neo-liberalism, against neo-capitalism – we can critique. The real question is not the critique but how we critique. And I found that one of – I mean, as far as I'm concerned, and as an artist – one of the most interesting methods that I would like to develop through lectures, artworks, discussions, teachings, dialogues is to dig into this non-knowledge thing. Because it is an alternative to knowledge. Do you know what I mean?

IR: I do know what you mean, and I think I'm really sympathetic to it, but one of the questions – and it's not a question to you, it's a question to all of us, however we work, if we work for the same urgencies – is how we set up the problematic. For example, yesterday's lecture was really a genealogy of the constitution of fear, over many, many layers, which then plays into a contemporary politics around global extremism and so-called terrorism. In this scenario one of the things you were unpacking – only one – was the fact that this does have a whole set of historical antecedents that makes the fear more powerful. It builds a layer of nineteenth-century fears and twentieth-century fears and twenty-first-century fears and so on. Each layer of fear building on a series of previous alarmist and prejudiced images. I too am interested in the politics of fear and in the systematic foregrounding of 'the terroristic' as a mechanism of surprising alarm. Except in my case, I'm interested in the spatial politics of instability, which is what I think of now as politics of fear. So, if, in an old mode, we may have been able to fortify the border, we could make the border stable by fortifying it so no one could get in and no one could get out, now the spatial politics of fear have changed dramatically. At a time when everything is exploding – cars, buildings, aeroplanes, suicide bombers etc. – fortified borders are meaningless. As a result there is a spatial instability since we are not able to isolate and fortify space. Space is vulnerable. And I think that's another aspect of the politics of fear, especially since 9/11. An aeroplane becoming a bomb, crashing into a building was a kind of spatial understanding we never had before. And probably in the same way that at the beginning of the twentieth century aerial bombing was a completely new sensibility that totally rewrote the notion of space for people and produced a new vulnerability about was coming from above, from the sky.

KA: I found very interesting the way you politicise space ... because you are spatialising the crucial issue of living together and the difficulties that arise from this. I'm thinking of migration and how it has become a so-called crisis (mass media uses this terminology constantly, but migration is a norm in nature and culture evolution). People have always migrated to survive, just like birds ... America was

built on this myth at the cost of the First Nations who were living there before. Anyway, I think it relevant to map the vulnerability of space nowadays because, as you said, from the beginning of the twentieth century, space became a threat inside of man's psyche ... Add the fact that new technologies have abolished distance and our appreciation of space becomes even scarier ...

IR: So, I think we both have a real interest in the politics of fear and the kind of instability that it brings and how it is instrumentalised politically. The question is, what is it that one can do about the politics of fear, because one thing I think we all know is that you cannot explain away fear. You can analyse and analyse and analyse and it doesn't erode or subdue fear. Fear is atavistic and you can't explain it away, you can't rationalise it, you can't analyse it.

KA: Yeah, it's a very interesting question and there are many answers.

IR: There are many answers and many directions we could take here, though I don't find any of them very convincing, but I do know that we are able to develop strategies and positions with regard to stemming fear – for example, for me, teaching is one of the most important strategies I have at my disposal to do something about the politics of fear. The classroom, for me, is a place, a political space where I can address fear as a calculated politics rather than an intuitive response. And not just fear of Islamic extremism – fear of unemployment, fear of precarity, fear of a futureless world ...

KA: Fear of yourself.

IR: ... fear of yourself, fear of the fact that your education and your knowledge are not buying you a future the way they used to buy you a future, or in the way you had been promised a future.

KA: I agree.

IR: So we have many levels of fear and I think that we are honour-bound as practitioners of whatever to find a way of dealing with fear.

KA: The thing is that fear nowadays has become a business, a trade. Fear is connected to capitalism. I have to say that when I was reading, I think it was a Hezbollah chief in the 1980s who took this from Iran – I put the quote yesterday in

the lecture – he was saying that at the end of the day, the only thing any enemy can do is create the fear of losing our lives. They have weapons to remove lives, and the psychological power they use is based on the fear we have of losing our lives. If we consider and accept that the ultimate accomplishment of life is in death, in suicide, in martyrdom, then their power collapses because their power is based on fear. So, on both sides ...

IR: So if you have agency about the removal of life ...

KA: Exactly.

IR: ... then you don't fear the loss of life inflicted on you by someone else.

KA: Yes ... at the end of the day, the most powerful answer to fear is showing that you're not afraid. You actually show your enemies that you don't fear death for instance – it comes from a very old culture of martyrdom. This exists everywhere, as, for instance, in Israel 2,000 Jews committed suicide during the Roman Army's siege of the Masada Mountain. It is probably a legend but powerful enough to have deeply impacted the local psyche, and even now many Israeli people bring their children to the Masada Mountain. It has become a kind of pilgrimage. Every culture has such mythologies and cults of martyrdom ... but maybe it's not a myth. Philosopher René Girard developed the concept that myths are actually based on real facts. And indeed, it's disturbing that these kinds of myths are being reactivated more and more nowadays, especially because they have become something else, a trend, marketing, signs of existence and of belonging to the national narrative of a political agenda.

We can observe this in other contexts, with other communities still in the Middle East, like in Iran. After the Islamic Revolution, when Iran was involved in a massive war against Iraq, they constructed the same national narrative of martyrdom to federate millions of soldiers ready to commit suicide for the Islamic Revolution ... because it was Saddam Hussein who, at that time, was more powerful and was backed by the USA through the Saudi monarchy. The Bassiji were young soldiers, some in their early teens, who were promised access to Paradise by the 'guide' Ayatollah Khomeini when they committed suicide against the Iraqi army's front line, which was full of mines ... They had reactivated the legend of Imam Hussein's martyrdom, who was at the origin of the Shia. Imam Hussein was the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad. He was slaughtered with his family and relatives by the army of the Sultan of Damascus. Today the martyrdom of the Imam Hussein is still celebrated every year with blood by all Shia communities worldwide. It is called the Ashura ...

In Iran, the reactivation of this legend had only one goal: to create a new generation of soldier-believers ready to die for the Islamic Revolution. In Islam it's probably the highest sin to commit suicide (since only God can decide when you are meant to die). So, the invention of such a thing proves that the reactivation of the myth of

martyrdom can be readapted to a political agenda.

The thing is, the struggle against fear is definitely becoming an ideological process, an act of resistance. I think if the notion of fear in the last two decades has turned into something political, it has to be understood as part of the new geopolitical order, from economy to religion. I'm also thinking here about Milton Friedman's neo-liberal derivatives, such as producing fear of losing your home, your job, your health etc. ...

IR: I suppose we have to acknowledge that beyond security fear is also central to neo-liberal ideology.

KA: Of course. Milton Friedman's theory is, on one hand, based on a pragmatic view which divides the different steps of productivity and, on the other hand, on mankind's basic individual and social behaviours. This means that 'societies that aren't ruled by cupidity don't exist'. But there is more to it than just economical facts that were thought or debated before him by, amongst others, Adam Smith, Ricardo and Keynes ... It's the psychological aspect of fear. I think Naomi Klein in her 'Strategy of Chaos' spoke of this. She writes that Milton Friedman had been in touch with a psychiatrist who survived the concentration camps, and what he saw there convinced him that what humans will do out of fear, or even worse out of the fear of fear, is by far the worst. M. Friedman then applied the psychiatrist's comments and conclusions towards economy. For instance, he sent his first students from the University of Chicago (who were called 'the Chicago boys') to Chile, because he supported Pinochet's dictatorial methods of sociopolitical administration. There weren't any public killings, but people 'disappeared' because the disappearance created fear ... So, there is nothing better than fear to manage a population, to control a population. It's the most powerful tool to control people. And Pinochet exemplifies this policy – there were tortures and kidnappings, most of the population disappeared and it was impossible to find the bodies. Remember the mothers of the missing students and dissidents called 'las locas de mayo' (the crazy women of May) demonstrating in silence with a portrait of their child? The fact that the kidnapped students were never found created far more fear than if they had been. So everyone was very scared by this fascist strategy of power. On the other hand, what Margaret Thatcher did also intended to generate another type of fear – the socio-economical fear I was talking about before: losing your job, your house etc. ... you know the story.

Apparently now is maybe a good time to get to the Frankfurt exhibition ... The title of the exhibition is *Sacrifice and Harmony*. The notions of sacrifice and harmony obviously go along the lines of many of the things I was talking about during the lecture, but not only that. It began with the philosopher René Girard, who died just two months ago ... He was also the historian and ethnologist who developed the mimetic theory. Actually, he explains by going back to the beginning of mankind how evolution, social evolution, was possible thanks to sacrifice – more specifically, because mankind has, what he calls, a 'gregarious instinct', the instinct of gathering. Sacrifice brings harmony to the group. Before we sacrificed animals, we used to sacrifice humans. Then we started to sacrifice animals because some people were affected by the disappearance of some of their relatives, but the notion of sacrifice remains fundamental to make the group not only compact but also

balanced. In his book entitled *Le Bouc émissaire* (the scapegoat) ...

IR: This is *Violence and the Sacred*, right?

KA: Well I think *Le Bouc émissaire* was published after *Violence and the Sacred*, but it's a continuation of it. For instance, they both develop his crucial argument that all myths were most probably inspired by real facts ... At the beginning of *Le Bouc émissaire* he uses a poem from the Middle Ages that describes a pogrom. The first time you read the poem you think it describes a pogrom of Jews in a barbaric, surrealistic way – there's a part where the victim is convinced to have spread poison into the river, but mathematically it's impossible at the time to have contaminated an entire river, so reading this macabre poetic description of the pogrom sounds exaggerated ... too many details sound impossible, but actually he slowly unfolds the poem and it leads to a strong conclusion, where the poem describes an event that had really happened. It was written for the ruler of the land after a massacre, at the end of the plague, which was described as an evil act committed by Jews ... What I find interesting and important here is that from the earliest ages of mankind, society always found a scapegoat to sacrifice in order to find balance again. But nowadays, from one civilisation to the next, the notion of sacrifice for the harmony of the group has taken a global turn because we are facing the age of globalisation and the end of distances. What kind of alternatives do we have within the neo-liberal financial global order we live in if it isn't to sacrifice ourselves? And this is what we are forced to do ... We waste our lives on things linked to pseudo concepts that we consume. The neo-liberalist system, a blind mutation of capitalism, pretends that it is providing you life in a democracy, but it's actually offering you nothing else than to sacrifice yourself, to work, to pay your rent or your credit, to eat, to heal yourself when you get sick in order to go back to work, then to reproduce and die. I know we are all embedded in this system, as soon as you light a cigarette, drink a glass of beer or wine or water, eat something, but it doesn't mean that we can't embody a virus to disturb this hegemonic system which endlessly colonises our life by removing what has been won after decades and decades of social struggle ...

So, this is what I found very interesting as a proposal for a solo exhibition today: in the light of these paradoxical issues, this notion of 'sacrifice for harmony' or 'sacrifice versus harmony' has to do with the fragility of the world we're living in and how to invent an alternative methodology of resistance.

IR: So you are saying sacrifice within a neo-liberal world system becomes the inability to not be entirely embedded within its logic? The inability to find an 'outside' of it?

KA: Let's go back to the economic aspect. Is it clear for you that individuals have no choice but to live in the neo-liberal system of sacrifice? For me, this is the issue I really want to raise with the exhibition. Because what the neo-liberal system says about sacrifice – whether considering its methodical acts or aftermaths – is that it is

them who are the others, the barbarians, the wild people, but us, the civilised, we don't sacrifice' since sacrifice means the blood of innocents. The relationship we have with death within these post-Modern neo-liberal systems is completely occluded by the illusion of living in peace. This form of fake peace is also very important. Because we do not care about the death of these others as much as we do living in peace and in harmony ...

I'm now jumping to the opposite side of the exhibition, where there will be an important installation of sculptures (in terms of size), where an eleven-minute movie by Abel Gance called *J'Accuse* is screened. *J'Accuse* is a movie that was shown for the first time in 1918, just after the First World War. It's an accusation – it took the 'J'Accuse' by Émile Zola as the title – against the incredible political and human disaster of the First World War. Just after the First World War, there were a lot of pacifist movements in France, in England, in Germany, everywhere. In 1938, one year before the Second World War, during the rise of the Nazis in Munich, Abel Gance reshot the very same movie.

And in this movie, you have this incredible moment when the lead character, who sounds like a kind of charismatic, messianic figure, is talking in front of a huge First World War cemetery ... you know, the ones with crosses everywhere, thousands and thousands of crosses without names. And he's calling out to the soldiers' ghosts, telling them to 'wake up, come back from hell, tell them what war is because they want to do it again!' It's very theatrical and expressive; it's beautiful. And then, with a very primitive cinematographic effect, you have this silhouette of a man coming out of the graves and walking towards the camera. The thing which I found extremely interesting is that all the actors here are real former soldiers, the broken faces of the First World War. Did you know that the First World War, because of the incredible power of the weapons and the contrast between these already extremely powerful weapons and the very classical technics of battle, produced I think 6.5 million broken faces – the injured, wounded faces of soldiers; in French we call it *gueules cassées*. There were like 2 million in France, 1.5 million in Germany and in the UK there were more than 1 million. I've been thinking and working a lot on this, because what it triggered and represented for science at that time was an incredible challenge in terms of repair. The doctors, whether in Germany or at the Wellcome Foundation in London, or in Paris, doctors such as Hippolyte Morestin and Suzanne Noël, what they did, what they had to repair was just incredible. It created transformed and destroyed faces, and very, very impressive faces ... with the mouth here and the nose on the opposite side of the face, you know the whole story ... I can tell you more about this. I'm fascinated by the position and the way these soldiers had to exist after the war. Most of them ultimately went to psychiatric hospitals. They were repaired, but the way society looked at them, seeing them like monsters, destroyed them – not the weapons, but the reactions.

IR: A lot of German Expressionism of the First World War was preoccupied with this.

KA: Exactly, like Otto Dix and George Grosz, etc. ... What I found interesting is that, in this installation of sculptures that I've been working on for many years now, because it started when I was preparing the documenta project, is the endless rhizomatic construction of links that repair is based on. In Senegal I was sculpting basically with wood. Then, I discovered that the pieces of wood I was working with

were the same age as the injured soldiers represented in each sculpture – 100 years. I used portraits from the archives of the Frankfurt Historisches Museum, the Musée du Val-de-Grâce and even from here in London, from the Wellcome Foundation ...

So, there will be a dialogue between the screen, this movie of Abel Gance and the huge installation of wooden busts representing a crowd of injured soldiers. Because it is absolutely insane to understand how these people, who were even scared by their own representation, their own new faces, accepted being screened in a movie. They actually believed that pacifism was an emergency for their time. We cannot agree more ... We all know today what it meant, and we know what happened after ...

IR: You are talking about a kind of new monstrosity, a sort of twentieth-century monstrosity. And I think the difference between the previous moments of monstrosity, medieval monstrosity and so on, is the fact that, there, monstrosity has a very acceptable place within a certain kind of cultural narrative, influenced by religious values that life was habituated in. Whereas, in fact, I think what you're talking about now is a kind of monstrosity that cannot be received, that has no designated place in culture. So, as there is no interpretative community for the monstrosity of the First World War, so it becomes detritus, it becomes the exception and it is pushed out.

My question to that would be, yes, that's a historical moment. But it begins to raise for us a new question. After a whole set of wars – not the Second World War, which has a kind of different place in the consciousness, but Vietnam, the Gulf Wars, again and again, Cambodia, Afghanistan – there is an inability to reintegrate a certain kind of experience back into the general cultural narrative. So your historical narrative starts us there, but how do we contemporise it? How do we make it part of a general cultural problematic of fear, because I think part of the inability to integrate is about illusions of the necessity of war for well-being. If wars are being argued as absolutely necessary to re-establish well-being, monstrosity cannot therefore be reintegrated into that narrative because it goes against the grain of the ultimate success of the war as re-establishing well-being. I also think that there is a capitalist narrative to what you call repair and to what I call the inability to reintegrate, because I think one of the great rhetorics of capitalism is that it can fix anything. It's a fixer, capitalism.

KA: Capitalism aims at even more than fixing; it creates your new addiction, which makes the old ones obsolete. So, in reality, it doesn't fix but addicts you to a new concept or product or goods, which you will need to consume. It replaces something you never needed by a new needless thing ...

First of all, and if indeed we consider the First World War as the paroxysm of Modernity, it is, in the light of monstrosity, a complete paradox. Because in the case of Germany, for instance, it was perceived by the society as a huge shame, whereas in France, injured faces of soldiers incarnated heroism ... Well this was in the official public sphere ... Because monstrosity always frightened the modern psyche as a visual disturbance of its obsession for perfection. But indeed, we can now focus on wars that came after monstrosity broke with the smooth flux of the

Modern narrative of well-being ...

I was interested in the injured faces of soldiers initially because the First World War is, at this point in human history, probably the strongest conflict between two eras – the Classical age and the Modern one. Of course, Modernity as a concept started much earlier, but technically and technologically its culminating point and paroxysm is the First World War. Weaponry became so powerful, whereas the battlefield was still using the classic techniques of charging and trenches. At the very same time colonial empires were the most powerful economic, cultural, political and military modern orders ... It was almost twenty years after the Berlin conference.

What's important to understand when talking about capitalism as a constant illusion of fixing is that the real issue of war is the polarisation between repair and destruction. This helped me understand how much war and creation – war and art – work together in a very narrow, complementary and interdependent process, echoing the endless processes of life in the universe, which at some point are embodied and personified, and representing the notion of repair. Because there is no repair if there is no injury somewhere. Conceptually you cannot conceive of the notion of repair without an injury. Repair is fed by injury and vice-versa.

So, what's extremely fascinating is that when you look into the First World War, first you understand that every avant-garde, every artistic avant-garde, every intellectual avant-garde started almost at the exact same time as a major conflict – either before, just after or during, like Dada in 1914 in Zurich, which was an 'Antikrieg', anti-war movement, but also pro-war movements, such as Futurism and the Performance poem left by Marinetti mimicking the sounds of bullets shot by machine guns. They were the witnesses of such extremes ...

IR: It's also a term that I don't quite understand. I would really like you to elaborate more on it.

KA: What do you mean? If you talk about repair and the way I came to conceptualise it from my artistic research into practice, here's an answer ...

Let's consider, for instance, the notion during the First World War when soldiers have these almost 'unrepairable' bodily or facial injuries, and young nurses were repairing them with what they found – string and needles – because this happened, most of the time, in the middle of the battlefields. They had no other choice than to repair them like a broken piece of wood. The very early repairs I observed in the archives, between 1914 and 1915, are extremely rough. Some people were repaired with a simple piece of wire or a string of leather. Then, slowly but surely, the evolution of repair during the entire First World War became more and more sophisticated. And by the end, you get almost 'perfect' repairs ... Needless to say that among the many scientific challenges of the First World War, maxillofacial plastic surgery was one of the most important ones ...

IR: Reconstituted faces ...

KA: Reconstitutions in which surgeons sometimes used bones prostheses, wooden prostheses, resin prostheses for the missing parts of the face. The further you go into the First World War, I mean as it gets closer to its end, in 1918, the clearer it becomes that the main goal for facial injury operations is the complete disappearance of the incurred injuries. Although the real challenge for Modern science, in medical repair and in many other fields, was clearly to remove injuries; in traditional societies the notion of repair does the contrary ...

For instance, traditionally, if a broken pot, a broken mask, a broken shield was repaired, was fixed by the repairer, this repair had to be visible. Said like this it sounds obvious, but it's very important. We have forgotten to focus on such things. I recently interviewed a plastic surgeon in Paris, Maurice Mimoun, director of a department of plastic surgery in Paris. He told me that even after thirty years of practice, he is still fascinated by the flesh's repair mechanism and the fact that a wound always leaves a scar; it never disappears ... Repair in traditional societies – it could be a calabash, could be a mask, could be whatever, and as a human derivative, a body too – has to embody the injury as a sign. It has to express the injury in a post-injury state: the repaired. So you still have the failure, the fault, and then the piece of string that is roughly and sometimes very carefully there ... It's an act that marks, that signs the time (by keeping a trace of the injury as a moment in life) – the contradiction of 'the Modern obsession for perfect', which aims at making injury disappear, pretending to go back to the original state or to the idea of the original state, which is pure illusion. We are trapped in our connection between capitalism and repair, which I think is pure illusion ...

IR: There has to be testimony to both.

KA: Exactly, that's what I call the signature. The person who repairs the calabash, the plate or a body has to leave something visible so we understand that the piece was repaired. Maybe you remember these Japanese ceramic pots that are broken and then repaired. The cracks are painted in gold, and when you're invited to the tea ceremony in such beautiful places, the owner gives you the pot with the flaws turned towards you, and you have to turn it back towards your host to give him the privilege he's offering you. What I'm saying here is that we have two opposite conceptions of repair: on one hand, Modernity is obsessed with the disappearance of injury, and on the other, traditional societies who are, on the contrary, using the repaired injury as a starting point for the object's new life. The object gets a new life, a new start. Metaphorically you can explain many things with this.

IR: But you can also say that it's absolutely parallel to a theory of capitalism, for which there is only the present – capitalism has no history – it only operates in the present, and it only operates in terms of how a set of present conditions and resources can move about, can circulate more fully. A capitalist logic tells us that the offence and the means to repair it produce one another, are part of the same

logic. So, the progress of modernity is always what you call a work of repair, the ability to find new solutions for a whole new set of offences that we have created. But parallel to that is the theory of capitalism, which absolutely refuses any kind of a history. And certainly refuses any inscription of offence. Capitalism is non-offensive. It does not have victims, it doesn't have sacrifices. What it has is ...

KA: It's denying ...

IR: It denies, but also it can't think in those terms; it can only think in terms of growing resources, growing circulations, growing spheres of influence, of profit ...

KA: No, but I also agree with you in the sense that there's a difference between considering an injury as part of the history of the object or of the body and an injury that should disappear, that's denied, because it's – this is what I have summarised with nice words such as 'the myth of the perfect' – because it's impossible. When you repair the body as a plastic surgeon – Professor Bernard Mole, another plastic surgeon I interviewed in Paris told me this – 'every patient wants to come back again. When you become a plastic surgeon, you just get people who want to come back. This is impossible. They only believe it when they look in the mirror and say, "this is perfect".' I found this to be exactly what I like about your link between capitalism and the notion of repair, because I think and absolutely agree that capitalism's temporality is an eternal now.

Indeed capitalism takes part in the denial of history, and we can observe the complete opposite in traditional repair (I am thinking of non-Western cultures and Western cultures prior to Modernity). This opposition is the ultimate celebration of history because of the importance that is given to the wound's treatment. It shows its different moments and stages by maintaining the traces (the wound) and the potentiality of what it became (repair), achieving sometimes wonderful aesthetic forms that give a new life to the object ...

IR: It's an eternal now and it's an eternal future. What you've accumulated in the present is of very little importance. This is what we learnt from Michel Feher, that the principle of neo-liberal capital is the accumulation of credit not of wealth. And credit is a promise for the future. On the basis of credit, you can grow, you can expand, you can have wider horizons, etc. etc. So this is tension of an eternal promise of the now and its expansion versus a recognition that we are propelled forwards by a series of offences in the aftermath of which we have to develop the technologies and abilities to make right, as it were, ever-more sophisticated medicine that will deal with ever-more sophisticated weaponry, that will injure more and more people that ever have to be healed ... So, we have here a problem of two very contradictory logics. We know that, this is hardly new to either of us, but the question is what do you do, how do you make these logics talk to one another.

KA: Actually, according to capitalism, destruction and repair follow completely opposite rationales ... On one side, we have perfected technologies of repair, while on the other, we have perfected technologies of destruction ... it's a huge paradox. But capitalism itself is a huge paradox. Especially since the beginning of the twentieth century, when most of the crises were caused by an excessive amount of money that doesn't exist. Every time the market crashed between 1929 and today, it was due to credit and speculative bubbles. We borrowed money that didn't exist to speculate, until the moment comes when everyone realises this and then the bubble explodes ... and then, we start again. It's what happened in 1999 with the Internet crisis, it's what happened in 2008 with the subprime crisis, it is what is happening today because interest rates have never been so low, so everyone is borrowing money excessively ...

The problem today is that the banks (via brokers and traders) that lost a considerable amount of money during the crises, which they were partly responsible for by lending money to insolvent people, are always bailed out with public money. Indirectly, it's probably what David Ricardo referred to as 'the invisible hand' – an inherent reflex of capitalism that would repair the imbalances of extreme situations. But it no longer works like this today ... Ricardo's invisible hand was based on the fact that the English businessmen who built their economy mostly on a foreign one would always prefer to return to English banks, but today, within a globalised world, this invisible hand has become completely unpredictable ... We see, on the contrary, how the Greek population, for instance, decided to refuse the dictates imposed by the relationships between finance and politics ... The extent to which we need to lie to ourselves always amazes me ...

That's why it was important for my research on the concept of repair to begin with the traditional repair of objects and continue with human repair during the First World War. I then focused on the question of the human body and went back to traditional societies and discovered the fact that, like Didier Anzieu's well-developed argument in his book *The Skin Ego*, in traditional societies body injuries have been so far a platform for exposing signs of belonging to a group – I'm thinking of cultures of scarification and human transformations. As I explained before, repair cannot exist without injury, in this sense I think the notion of repair is an oxymoron. It's an issue that functions with paradox but it isn't a paradox. It really becomes clear when we consider how scarification has always been mapping social structures in non-Western, non-Modern societies – Western or non-Western – because scarification was practiced in Europe during the Middle Ages. But this too is another issue, because scarification was in fact a medical process. The fascinating thing here is that from nature to culture, injury and its process of repair have always been working through a kind of paradox, which always leads to an oxymoron. Mirroring what I was saying about capitalism, and following your interesting comments on 'the eternal now and eternal future', I think more and more that human culture is just mimicking nature as a superior order of things, which precedes it ...

Let's go back to the First World War, because I think Abel Gance's movie is important to answer one of your questions. You said something very important – how to think about this in a contemporary way. And I'd like to give an answer to that. I think that nothing is more contemporary than the fear of a new major conflict right now. I'm thinking of the fact that Abel Gance shot his film again in 1938, two years after the rise of the Nazis. It was just before the Second World War. So he did his movie again, saying, 'Are you crazy, guys? Aren't you aware of what is rising now? We are going directly to the big war.'

I want to display with the installation, with *J'Accuse* and the wooden busts of soldiers, with the injured faces, the monstrosity of war and the incredible and genuine heroes acting in the movie, not acting on the battlefield. The heroic act of these broken faces is to transgress their own fear of being seen. I trust that the alternative to what you can't struggle against is to at least resist by transgressing your own fear, the fear of yourself ...

Many years ago, I wanted to make a movie with someone in Paris who was completely burnt. I used to work in a bar and he was an everyday customer, a very nice guy from Serbia, Goran. One day I told him I would like to make a movie. He never answered and then one day he said, 'You know, Kader, I like you, you're a very nice guy, but frankly I hate pictures.' And then I understood clearly what it meant. Because I saw Goran every day, for me it was like I didn't see that he was burnt.

I think what's important in the project *Sacrifice and Harmony* is that in this day and age of civilisation shift there's a real and very important question for curators, artists and viewers regarding a new exhibition: Why a new exhibition? Not only what and how, but why ... Why another one? There are so many exhibitions that dissolve over time because of laziness, certainty or, even worse, political correctness ... and amnesia! It is important because you were talking about the non-historical temporality in capitalism and looking for the eternal now – I would say amnesia is what's equal to that.

IR: They're mutually important.

KA: Consuming is based on amnesia.

So now we can come back to the fixed objects. In traditional societies, the notion of repair in itself is not only the signature of the repairer and the history of the object's life – in other words the non-denial of the thing's life – but it's also an anti-consumerist thing. Because if you go today to traditional societies, even in Africa (where I spend half of my life), you find broken plastic baskets (I can show you pictures) repaired in a traditional way. The dictate of the whole consumerist and capitalist process says that when the basket is broken, you buy a new one. I think that's why the notion of capitalism within the notion of repair is important to me.

But then again ... I want to go back to your second question when you said you wanted to know more about repair. I think what you need to understand is that, for me, the word 'repair' is also a concept. A concept that exists with its own paradox, the injury. As soon as there is injury there can be repair somewhere, but there is more, before and beyond our cultural understanding. When Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace described the theory of evolution by saying that a living species cannot last if it becomes unable to adapt to the evolution of its environment, it means that a portion of the chain has to be able to adapt to its environment but not all of its members. This amount is represented within the species' chain as variation. This is what's very important because this is evolution. 'Natural selection' is the name they gave to the process that defined the members of a same species

as more able to survive by generating a 'more adapted' variation. Natural selection is repair. It repairs the weakness and inadaptability of certain members by resisting against the disappearance of the entire species. Natural selection is due to an unconscious survival instinct that every living system is moved by. Variation appears in the vegetal and animal kingdoms but also within the immateriality of the intellect, human intelligence ... Indeed, remember what Deleuze and Guattari described with their 'rhizome', if not the similarity with Charles Darwin's tree of life, and probably beyond?

Remember the fruit ... the example of the peach: it can have either velvety or smooth skin depending on the climate where it grows, but we give them different names, like nectarine or peach, but it's just a variety, isn't it?

IR: It's a hybridisation of a plum and a peach.

KA: Exactly. What we have to understand here is that we shouldn't mistake the variety that is artificially created with the variety that naturally proceeds from an evolutionary cycle. Let's take for instance the lyrebird. Some years ago there was an amazing documentary showing this bird in the middle of the Papua New Guinea forest. The fact that the lyrebird is able to reproduce the sound of the modern machines that penetrate and destroy its environment doesn't create a new variety of lyrebirds, because they've always been able to reproduce any sound, even before the existence of the machines they're now mimicking. This is because like any living species on earth, these birds come from a long evolutionary chain. But at the same time, it could also be variation ... Indeed, if we go over the history of the species, the fact that the lyrebirds produce this act of mimicking sounds from its new, aggressive and changing environment is also transforming them. The explanation for this is not only the modifications in the lyrebird's environment but also natural selection ...

Over many years, Alfred Russel Wallace and Charles Darwin co-developed the theory of the evolution of species, until one of them started to become sceptical about a non-logical fault in the theory ... For Wallace, nothing explained the fact that humans have bigger brains (proportionally) than their 'cousins', the great apes. And there's more ... because of this oversized brain, humans were clever enough to dominate their environment and to survive. There was no need to lead human evolution to its greatest catastrophe, the industrial revolution, or in other words the beginning of the end of environment supremacy ... Moreover, for Wallace, the whole theory concludes that any species on earth is allowed to survive thanks to the ability to interact with its environment. In other terms, if mankind has both an oversized brain and the ability to transform its environment to survive, it is because there is something beyond human logic that created this interdependence between humans and environment and facilitated the environment's flexibility and receptivity to humans ...

Wallace thought that there was a supernatural force behind this, but for Darwin, who was utterly convinced by determinism, this was random chance. So, what should we make of this controversy? On one side, natural selection is indeed, as considered by every scientist I've met, whether a biologist or a molecular scientist, a form of repair. Within any species, the flaws are repaired, otherwise the species

would collapse. Repair is a matter of life. If you take bees, for instance, you have thousands of different species of bees, but they have all adapted to the context of their environment – the bees in Sweden are not the same as the bees in Israel etc. ... For Wallace, the real challenge is not for species to be able to evolve with the evolution of the environment but to be able to evolve with mankind's evolution.

IR: I'm really reluctant to open up yet another huge subject, but this has relevance in current debates around the Anthropocene. The belief that we existed in a naturally evolving environment and we're now shifting to a man-made environment does seem extremely naive as a set of beliefs, in the sense that things are not that simple and they have been much more intertwined for a very long time.

KA: Yeah, I don't know if you are thinking of those debates that took place last year that Bruno Latour is strongly defending. Although I have been and still am convinced by his essay 'We Have Never Been Modern', where the smooth dialectic between tradition and Modernity flows perfectly, I am very reluctant as to the relevance of the Anthropocene, which I would not qualify as naive but just delusional. I find the whole excitement around and about the Anthropocene very post-hippy re-enactment, so not really contemporary to our times ...

IR: We cannot open up yet another big subject ...

KA: The important point is that I do believe that repair is either at the origin of everything or articulating everything. If you start to observe (because watching has never been enough), you will have a hard time getting rid of such conclusions. Anything you look at – this door for instance – results from repair: there are two steps between the previous and the current state. Originally it was a piece of wood until the human hand decided to transform, cut and carve it and intervened culturally according to the natural process of agency. I think we can draw a parallel between natural selection (as a form of repair) and mankind's modes of interaction with its environment which have produced what it is called culture ...

I think it's important to understand that the very simple definition of repair, as in 'to fix something', is insufficient. It is limited and won't allow you to grasp this. But, if you keep the repair of injuries at a distance and consider together the traditional cultures and the way they created injuries to have traces on the body (scarification), the fact that when natural species that were about to collapse within their environment had to reinvent themselves and create variation to continue, if politically you try to understand whether democracy or capitalism are ideological processes of repair, if you find a complementary dialogue between art as a creative process and war as destructive process that are both completely linked and occur one after the other, only then can you really map the entire history of humanity on the fundamental process of death, creation, destruction, repair. And this for me is very interesting as a key to understanding the agency of mankind.

Most of the time I do think that creating art, any kind of art, from music to poetry, is a

deep instance of repair. Heidegger used to say that if mankind had been immortal, art would probably not exist. According to him art aims at existing beyond the finitude, either for the group or the individual. Art might be animated by an instinct of staying alive in the universe.

IR: I think I'm following what you're saying, but I find it very difficult to accept. This is, to me, mystical. I find mysticism difficult to accept. I want to finish with this ... I understand what you're saying about repair and I find it interesting analytically as it sets up a dynamic of actions or offences that are destructive and that then need to produce the mechanism of their own repair, which provides an interesting understanding of modernity and progress. But I'm not interested in the mystical part of it, which has to do with the fact that nature is imbued with its own mortality and its own destruction. However, how does one do this work as an artist, as opposed to an anthropologist or an activist? What kind of agency does this perception give one as an artist? And maybe this would be something that we could finish our conversation with ... And anyway, I think this conversation will go on for years to come, so we don't have to discuss everything that interests us today!

KA: I think there is something interesting when you said something about capitalism and this eternal now, or present. Let's put aside the mysticism you aren't into ... I mean, I don't think it's mysticism ...

IR: You're allowed mysticism; it just doesn't sit well with me, that's all.

KA: You think it's mysticism to talk about Wallace and Darwin, or ...?

IR: No, I think it's mysticism to produce a general theory of the importance of mortality for the notion of development.

KA: But this is Darwinism.

IR: Alfred Russel Wallace and Darwin are really very specific. You know, everything is linked to a particular life form, a particular kind of fieldwork, a set of observations – this bird, this lizard, and so on.

KA: But you know, sorry to interrupt you, Wallace was a mystic. He was a very powerful mystic and was convinced that there was some sort of parallel force that explained non-logical facts, such as why human brains have always been

disproportionate ... And by doing so, he also uncovered what rationalism opacified by creating mechanisms in our ways of thinking that are not self-critical but are dogmatic frames.

IR: I disagree that there should be mysticism. I don't think like that, that's all.

Right now, tell me about how the understanding of a whole set of historical and contemporary cycles as the mechanism of repair – which I think I now understand – how does this give you agency as an artist. This is what I want to finish with.

KA: I understand, but I am not sure about the epistemological relation between 'artist and agency'. Art is unpredictable ... and agency sounds like the contrary ... two dissonances ... but I agree with you, let's go back to 'the large perception of historical mechanism working as repairs' and how it affects my own intellectual project and sensitive praxis ...

When I was saying, for instance, that this object, an old crafted wooden door, completely hand-carved, is a form of repair, it's the process of transforming a piece of wood, which comes from nature, into a carving of a beautiful conception of the universe. We call this culture. I've always been fascinated by the concrete productions of the hand – the object. I think I have to say that the extreme digitalisation of everything doesn't scare me but frustrates me a lot. When I arrived here, I touched the door and I found it beautiful because of its physical presence not because of its image. I think, as an artist, as a sculptor – if you want me to go back to very concrete, less mystical things – I'm fascinated by forms when they carry physically their own history, with a kind of charge, their own energy ... You can call it mysticism as well, but it would be denying the fact that chemically and physically matter keeps the trace of time. If you ask cellists why a Stradivarius sounds so amazing, they will answer that their own instrument isn't a Stradivarius. But if they stop training for a month, theirs will sound different. Between musical instruments moved by vibrations, a religious representation made out of wood, and any other object which was cared for by an individual or a group, there is a common denominator that echoes the experience of time ... I'm very curious to reuse, explore and tackle the notions of physicality and visuality in art.

IR: Well, you see, I think that I actually see it very differently. I think that the agency – I don't know your practice very well, I know a little bit – but I think the agency comes from the incredible inconsistency between practices that you unfold when you present your work. This is where, for me, the agency comes. There is the collection of images you have assembled, there's the reading of a million different kinds of texts, there is the translation of certain kinds of ideas into almost traditional objects that operate almost like traditional art, and all of this is going on simultaneously. For me, the agency comes from the inconsistency, from a kind of sense that we're facing the world, and we have to use whatever we have in order to fire at it, and that if we retreat and work only in one idiom which has only one small audience and only one set of interlocutors and only one tradition, then we have no agency. And this really goes back to the very first question I asked you yesterday: What is the power of generalisation? I think that's the power of generalisation.

KA: It's incredible, because I was thinking about that when you were describing that inconsistency. I immediately thought that's what I find interesting in generalisation. At the same time, I think it's very easy to generalise conceptually with lectures or through dialogue like we are doing here, but it is another thing when you're an artist in front of the complex notion of the artwork. Because you're facing a Hydra snake that needs taming to perhaps reach a chaotic order ...

IR: Yes, but you also say that your practice is not just making art – it's having conversations, it's teaching, it's making archives, it's all of these things.

KA: Between practice and theory there is a narrow space which both separates and binds those very different positions. So, when 'the agency comes from the inconsistency', as you said, it reminds me of the radical artistic positions of the avant-garde ... Dada, then Surrealism, Tristan Tzara, Victor Brauner, Hannah Höch ... the list of artists, writers, poets who dealt with inconsistency is long ... but not activists, or philosophers, or theorists ... How does one produce a rational statement through inconsistency?

So, to get back to your question, I find the notion of inconsistency to be exactly what I believe and defend, even as a new or different methodology of thinking and working. And indeed, intellectuals and scholars should sometimes mimic artists and art practices to be innovative, or at least as an alternative breath outside of the academic framework.

IR: I think it's parallel to non-knowledge.

KA: I absolutely agree.

IR: I think this is a very good moment to stop. Thank you very much for joining me for this conversation.