

## MATTERS OF EVIDENCE

### A conference on how to unearth and manifest material traces.

14/15 June 2024

Speakers & Contributions

**Nabil Ahmed**

***Race and Forest***

One of the first and only attempts at criminal prosecutions for wartime environmental destruction date from the period of the Second World War. This is the untold story of a legal case filed by Poland against Germany in 1947 where Polish prosecutors laid out a novel case (numbered as 1307) at the United Nations War Crimes Commission (UNWCC) against foresters and high-ranking officers of the General Government. *Race and Forest*, INTERPRT's exhibition for the first time reconstructed case 1307 and extended the original investigation to look at how forests were used to hide the evidence of mass murder in Chelmno – Nazi Germany's first extermination camp. Not only does the project shed light on a crucial but under-researched historical case around the history of international justice, and the ecologies of the Holocaust. But also, in a global context it sets a precedence on the matters of evidence in prosecuting contemporary wartime environmental destruction and their links to international crimes and the far-right.

Nabil Ahmed is professor at the Trondheim Academy of Fine Art in the faculty of architecture and design, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), and the founder and co-director of INTERPRT, a research NGO that pursues environmental justice through spatial and visual investigations. For over fifteen years his spatial practice and writing has interrogated the representational challenges of environmental destruction and conflict across visual culture and law. INTERPRT's team which includes architects, filmmakers, researchers and developers have conducted research and investigations on the environmental destruction and human rights violations resulting from extractive projects, and conflict in legal and advocacy contexts. At NTNU leads the Norwegian Research Council funded project "Climate Rights: Designing evidence for climate justice".

**Eray Çaylı**

***Witnessing, Documenting, and Evidencing Political Violence Materially***

Eray Çaylı will take as his departure point Cengiz Tekin's video work *Silence* (2018) to discuss the limitations and possibilities of the contemporary artistic and scholarly tendency to approach witnessing, documenting and evidencing political violence as decisively object-oriented practices. Over the past decade, a growing number of visual cultural producers and theorists have enlisted objects and physical environments (across the built-versus-natural divide) as protagonists of witnessing, documenting, and evidencing to enrich the sensorial and epistemic valence of testimony, documentation, and evidence. Çaylı will open to debate (A) the aesthetic conventions involved in these object-oriented approaches to witnessing, documenting, and evidencing, (B) the contexts in which their outputs are circulated, (C) the audiences they encounter therein, and (D) aesthetics-context-audience relations.

Eray Çaylı, PhD (UCL, 2015), is Professor of Human Geography with a Focus on Violence and Security in the Anthropocene at University of Hamburg. His work explores the spatial and environmental politics of nation-statist and colonialist violence in Turkey and its environs, and among their diasporas by interweaving geography, anthropology, and material/visual culture. His publications include the monograph *Victims of Commemoration: The Architecture and Violence of Confronting the Past in Turkey* and the anthology *Architectures of Emergency in Turkey: Heritage, Displacement and Catastrophe*. He is one of the editors of the *Journal of Visual Culture*.

### **Bart Elmore**

#### ***The World Inside Coca-Cola***

Coca-Cola is one of the most ubiquitous items of commercial trade, the company selling 2.2 billion servings of its products every day. And yet, as quotidian as a can of Coke has become, very few people know about the environmental history of the natural resources found inside the can. How did this company that sold a strange patent medicine, originally peddled in the 1880s as a “brain tonic” that could eliminate “brain worry,” acquire the raw materials it needed to ensure Coca-Cola could be sold at a bargain price on retail shelves across the globe? And what did that quest for cheapness portend for the nations that supplied the plants and workers Coca-Cola needed? This is the story of the world inside Coca-Cola, of the secret ingredients that give this beverage its distinctive taste and whose extraction from the land reshaped ecosystems and the workers’ lives the world over. We peel back the shiny red aluminum shell and the iconic Spencerian script hiding a world we rarely see. This is the environmental history of the Real Thing.

Bart Elmore is professor of environmental history and a core faculty member of the Sustainability Institute at Ohio State University. His work focuses on the ecological footprint of large multinational firms. He is the author of the award-winning book *Citizen Coke: The Making of Coca-Cola Capitalism* (W. W. Norton, 2015), a global environmental history of the world’s biggest soft drink brand from his home town. From 2016 to 2018 he was a Carnegie Fellow and Eric and Wendy Schmidt Fellow at the New America Foundation in Washington, DC. He published his second book, *Seed Money: Monsanto’s Past and the Future of Food* (W. W. Norton, 2021) in October 2021. And he just completed a third project, *Country Capitalism: How Corporations from the American South Remade Our Economy and the Planet* (Ferris and Ferris, 2023), which came out in May 2023. He is also a recipient of the 2022 Dan David Prize, the largest history prize in the world.

### **Dan Hicks**

#### ***Militarist Realism: notes on the limits and possibilities of the forensic***

Forensics, we imagine, is concerned with assembling the facts to throw light upon a crime or a crime scene. But sometimes the traces of the recent past or the near-present don’t represent clues to be gathered, Holmesian-style, to reveal the truth. Instead they are speech acts, or fabrications, or even misrepresentations, or downright lies, each designed to misdirect or throw off step future knowledge through the pre-emptive making of framings, narratives and archival possibilities. In dialogue with Natalia Romik’s account of ‘the architecture of survival’, this talk draws examples of the enduring nature of militarism from public art to photography, museum displays and academic disciplines and theories. In doing so, it reconsiders the status of subjectivity and objectivity in cross-disciplinary encounters with the traces and assemblages of erasure and violence, and thus with the nature of the forensic today. The talk asks questions about how we might approach subjecthood and objecthood beyond the familiar theoretical tropes of material agency, critical realisms, nonhumans, actor-networks, new materialisms, vital materialisms, ontological enchantments, and so on. And it questions about how we might find an alternative, when talking about enduring structures of forms of supremacy, silencing and loss, to adding to that growing canon of acronyms each of which seems

to repeat the same mis-step when it comes to understanding humans and things in theory and practice: ANT, STS, OOO, FFS.

Dan Hicks is Professor of Contemporary Archaeology at the University of Oxford, Curator of World Archaeology at Pitt Rivers Museum, and a Fellow of St Cross College, Oxford. He has published widely on material and visual culture from the recent past and the near present, and across archaeology, anthropology, architecture and art. He has written for a range of publications, including Frieze Magazine, Architectural Review, The Art Newspaper, Art Review, The Guardian, Apollo Magazine, and British Art Studies. Dan's most recent books are *The Brutish Museums* (Pluto 2020), *Lande: the Calais 'Jungle' and Beyond* (with Sarah Mallet, Bristol University Press 2019), *Archaeology and Photography* (edited with Lesley McFadyen, Bloomsbury 2019) and *Isle of Rust* (with Alex Boyd and Jonathan Meades, Luath Press 2019). His next book, *Every Monument Will Fall*, will be published in 2025. Twitter/Insta: @ProfDanHicks website: [www.danhicks.uk](http://www.danhicks.uk)

### **Aleksandra Janus**

#### ***Landscape Archive. Materiality and non-sites of memory***

In recent years landscape has been increasingly understood not only as a scenery where history happens, but also a witness and participant of events, storing material evidence that can be an important source of knowledge for researchers of the past. The presentation will discuss the post-Holocaust landscape of Poland as an archive, referring to the results of field research conducted by the Zapomniane Foundation - an organization aimed at locating, marking and commemorating dispersed, unmarked burials of Holocaust victims on the territory of the country. It will also offer reflection on how new technical possibilities and new methods of non-invasive research influence the perception of such seemingly empty places, impacting contemporary strategies for their commemoration.

Aleksandra Janus - holds a PhD in Anthropology from the Jagiellonian University (UJ) in Cracow (Poland). She works at the intersections of academia, art, and activism. She collaborates closely with the Research Center for Memory Cultures (UJ), is a member of the global network and project "Thinking Through The Museum" & the editorial board of the Jagiellonian/Columbia University book series "Exhibiting Theory". She is President of the Zapomniane Foundation and co-founder of the *Engaged Memory Consortium* aimed at proposing an new approach to remembrance that underscores the relevance of remembering for social justice. In 2024 she was awarded the honorary "Warsaw Ghetto Uprising" medal. She co-founded and curated the 'Museum Lab' program for Polish heritage professionals and more recently - the working group Museums for the Climate and Culture for Climate collective.

### **Natalia Judzińska**

#### ***Materialization of Agency. Contemporary Hideouts on the Polish-Belarusian Border***

In the middle of August 2021, a group of 32 Afghani asylum seekers sat in protest when the illegal practice of pushback was being applied to them, thus preventing the Polish Border Guard from pushing them back to Belarus. Although they were not the first asylum seekers on the territory of Poland to be denied this right, the moment became the symbolic beginning of the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border.

This presentation aims at showing how material traces of migration can be read as an act of agency of the people on a move. In Białowieża Forests, one can find various types of material traces of the move. People abandon their belongings, lose them, change their functionality. They can be found in deserted camps that are located in the middle of the forest, or - if it is the last point of forest

journey before getting into a smugglers car – in the area of roads. They have become an element of the forest landscape. Although they are deserted (there are no people), they are still full of things.

People hiding in the forest and their “abandoned” belongings are images that have already been seen in this area and, more broadly, in this part of present-day Poland. Especially during Holocaust. The Holocaust past has an impact on the reception of the current humanitarian crisis, especially in the visual sphere: it activates cognitive scripts, especially in the visual sphere. Hideout recreates ‘dangerous space’ into a safer one. After Henri Lefebvre I would like to read production of space as a political act – in this case, as an act of agency of people on the move on the Polish-Belarusian border.

Natalia Judzińska - PhD in humanities, cultural studies scholar, activist, assistant professor at the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Author of the book *Po lewej stronie sali. Getto ławkowe w międzywojennym Wilnie* published in 2023 by Krytyka Polityczna. Co-initiator of the group Researchers on the Border, involved in the documentation and research of the Polish-Belarusian border crisis. Since 2021, she has been providing humanitarian support to people on the move on that border.

### **Svitlana Matviyenko**

#### ***Mapping Colonialism Elementally: Radiation and Water***

The talk will discuss the connection between the imperial legacies embedded in the Soviet Union’s military-industrial complex and the current weaponization of energy infrastructure during the Russian War in Ukraine. I will begin by discussing the “worst ecological disaster since the Chornobyl nuclear meltdown,” the destruction of the Kakhovka dam, an important element of the nuclear energy infrastructure with its reservoir supplying the cooling water for the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant’s reactors. By addressing the history of its construction, we will consider the Kakhovka dam, one of the Soviet hydroelectric facilities envisioned by Stalin’s 1948 Great Plan for the Transformation of Nature as an instrument of the Soviet industrial colonization that also continued after Stalin, for example, by expanding the “nuclear power archipelago” with the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant, now, too, the site of the technogenic catastrophe and the Russian war crimes. The history of these connected events and the violence caused to geosomatic communities who inhabited these lands is ruptured: memories are erased, lives are subjected to resettlement or terror, and the records are hidden in securitized archives or simply destroyed. And yet, by taking water and radiation as elemental media, we may still reveal the traces of colonial violence and its persistence in the ongoing war.

Svitlana Matviyenko is an Associate Professor of Critical Media Analysis in the School of Communication. Her research and teaching, informed by science & technology studies and history of science, critical infrastructure studies and postcolonial theory. Matviyenko’s current work on nuclear cultures investigates the practices of nuclear terror, weaponization of pollution and technogenic catastrophes during the Russian war in Ukraine. Matviyenko is a co-editor of two collections, *The Imaginary App* (MIT Press, 2014) and *Lacan and the Posthuman* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). She is a co-author of *Cyberwar and Revolution: Digital Subterfuge in Global Capitalism* (Minnesota UP, 2019), a winner of the 2019 book award of the Science Technology and Art in International Relations (STAIR) section of the International Studies Association and of the Canadian Communication Association 2020 Gertrude J. Robinson book prize.

**Klaus Mayer**

***Heisenberg's Magic Cube: A Piece of Evidence in Science History***

A cube with dimensions of 5 x 5 x 5 cm and a mass of 2.4 kg serves as piece of evidence in a case where nuclear physics meets German history. This cube, consisting of uranium metal, had been used by Nobel Prize winner Werner Heisenberg back in the 1940's in an experiment, which aimed at developing a nuclear reactor (or a bomb?).

The presentation will illuminate how this silent witness was "interviewed". Applying a scientific methodology, which we call nuclear forensics, helped extracting information which is inherent to the material. Measurable material properties provide the data from which conclusions can be drawn on the history of the cube. The source material, the date of production, and the irradiation history can be inferred from measured data. The nuclear forensic examination of the cube eventually revealed how far Heisenberg got on his path in developing a nuclear reactor. More generally speaking, scientific (forensic) methods get the silent witness to "talk", and by consequence, help establishing objective evidence. Physical evidence cannot lie, it cannot be wrong, its value can only be diminished by our lack of ability to find it and understand it.

Klaus Mayer, obtained his Ph.D. in 1987 in the field of radiochemistry and analytical chemistry from the University of Karlsruhe. He then worked for two years at the Institute for Transuranium Elements as post-doctoral researcher. From 1990-1996, he worked for the European Commission at the Institute for Reference Materials and Measurements in Geel (Belgium) on nuclear reference materials, on high accuracy measurements of U, Pu and Th, and on the coordination of support activities to Euratom safeguards and to IAEA. In 1996, he returned to Baden and joined the European Commission – Joint Research Centre (JRC) in Karlsruhe to work on the development and application of analytical methods for nuclear safeguards purposes and for nuclear forensics. Today, he is in charge of the JRC's activities on nuclear safeguards, combating illicit trafficking and nuclear forensics and he takes the position of Head of the Nuclear Safeguards and Security Unit. He served a chair of several international experts groups such as the ESARDA Working Group on Destructive Analysis (1997-2010) or the "Nuclear Forensics International Technical Working Group" (2004-2022). He has been frequently called upon by the IAEA as consultant in nuclear safeguards and nuclear security and contributes to the work of the "Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism" (GICNT). In 2011, the German magazine "Focus" ranked him among the 100 most influential Germans. From 1988 to today, he served as part time lecturer at „Fortbildungszentrum für Technik und Umwelt (FTU)" at FZK (now KIT – Karlsruhe Institut of Technology), giving presentations related to radiochemistry. Since 2012 he has been lecturing radiochemistry and nuclear forensics at the University of Heidelberg. Overall, Klaus Mayer has more than 35 years professional experience in nuclear science and applications and authored in this period more than 200 scientific publications in this field, including peer-reviewed articles, book chapters and conference papers.

**Efthymia Nikita**

***Bodies of Evidence: Unearthing and displaying human remains  
as material traces of past life***

Archaeological sites and museums allow visitors to engage with material cultural traces of the past; we can retrace our ancestors' footsteps among ancient buildings, imagine them using the pottery in everyday cooking or putting on their jewelry to attend various events. However, through the study of human skeletal remains we can obtain even more direct information on the people who created and utilized the material culture seen in archaeological sites and museums. The human skeleton is a repository of information regarding different aspects of an individual's lifestyle: our diet, mobility patterns, levels of activity, health and disease leave traces on our bones, which can be identified by experts thousands of years later. Contrary to material culture and textual evidence, which is often biased and focused on the elite, the study of human remains can give voice to the everyday people

of the past, the 'silenced' majority. It is through this kind of study that we can explore issues of diachronic social inequality but also the response of different societies and subgroups within these societies to economic/political turmoil, ecological crises and other pressing contemporary topics with a long history. Yet, the excavation, study and, most of all, the display of human remains is subject to major ethical considerations with philosophical, scientific, political and economic implications. This presentation will outline these considerations and aspires to generate vibrant discussion among »Fellow Travellers« regarding additional dimensions that should be considered and alternative/complementary means of engaging with our ancestor's remains and material evidence of the past.

Efthymia Nikita is Associate Professor of Bioarchaeology at the Cyprus Institute. She studies human skeletal remains across the Mediterranean, examining health, diet, demography and other aspects of life in the past, giving voice to people on the 'historical fringe' such as women and children. She obtained a BA in Archeology from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and a PhD in Biological Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. She has published over 100 research papers and the textbook "Osteoarchaeology", which received an honorable mention by the Association of American Publishers. She has co-edited Elsevier's Encyclopedia of Archaeology (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), and she is also the co-editor of the Journal of Archaeological Science. In 2022 she was awarded the Dan David Prize.

### **Natalia Romik**

#### ***On Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival***

During her lecture Natalia Romik will discuss her recent exhibition "Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival". The project is conceived as an artistic tribute to the hiding places that Jews improvised in tree hollows, wardrobes, urban sewers, caves, empty graves, and other precarious locations in their efforts to survive the Holocaust in Poland and Ukraine. "Hideouts: The Architecture of Survival" documents their creativity by presenting the results of archival research and site visits. The exhibition features documentary films, forensic recordings, photographs, documents, and objects found in the hiding places. These material traces are juxtaposed with castings of architectural details of hiding places, silver-clad to create reflective surfaces that emphasise the paradoxical visibility of hideouts, a concealed architecture built in order to keep its inhabitants hidden from their persecutors. Romik will discuss selected cases of hideouts, such as Josef Oak tree in Wiśniowa (South-Eastern Poland), a bunker built in the empty lot of the Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw, a cellar under a private house in the Ukrainian town of Zhovkva, and cave systems near Koralivka (Western Ukraine).

Graduate in political science, practitioner of architecture, designer, artist. In 2018 Romik was awarded a PhD at the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London for a thesis Post-Jewish Architecture of Memory within Former Eastern European Shtetls. She combines academic research with methods of contemporary art and architecture to explore the (post)Jewish architecture of memory. Romik has been awarded numerous grants, including the London Arts and Humanities Partnership, Gerda Henkel Stiftung. From 2007 to 2014, she cooperated with the Nizio Design studio and was a consultant for, among others, the POLIN Museum core exhibition design, co-author of the revitalization of a synagogue in Chmielnik. Romik is a member of the SENNA architecture collective, responsible for designs including the exhibition at the Museum of Jews in Upper Silesia in Gliwice and permanent exhibition at the Brodno Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw entitled "Beit Almin – Eternal Home". In 2018 she co-curated the exhibition Estranged: March '68 and Its Aftermath (POLIN Museum of Polish Jews). Member of the Association of Polish Architects. Currently the scholarship holder (postdoctoral research) of the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, Secret Architecture of Survival: Architectural Anthropology of Jewish Hideouts. Her research concluded with the exhibition Hideouts. The Architecture of Survival, presented in 2022 in Zachęta National Gallery of Art in Warsaw and Trafo Centre for Contemporary Art in Szczecin. In 2022 awarded Dan David Prize.

**Małgorzata Gurowska & Agata Szydłowska**  
***ZOEpolis / Water. A case of shallow archaeology***

The talk will focus on a methodology used in the artistic research project 'ZOEpolis / Water', which we call 'shallow archaeology'. It mimics 'scientific' methods based on the close examination of material evidence - sometimes in collaboration with scientists and using laboratory equipment - leading to observations and conclusions that are far from being legitimately scientific. We are looking for kinships and connections between elements and things that are set apart from each other by science. In our art research practice, we draw on feminist new materialism and observe relationships between the various things we observe and study.

ZOEpolis is an imaginary human-non-human community in which plants, animals and fungi have civil rights and participate in the design of their material environment. It is also a project dedicated to finding and creating a common space for humans and non-humans. "ZOEpolis is dedicated to design beyond the anthropocentric paradigm and the search for solutions that can become a platform for the creation of a radical human-non-human community. Challenging the centrality of humans in design is an exercise in empathy from which our species can also benefit. The project proposes an experiment in the field of changing perspectives and thinking about design that, without excluding humans, would approach non-humans subjectively. So far, the ZOEpolis project has produced three exhibitions (DizajnGallery BWA Wrocław, 2017; Nośna Gallery, Krakow, 2019, ARTLAB Wyspa, Gdansk, 2023) and a multi-author publication (*ZOEpolis. Building a human-non-human community*, M. Gurowska, M. Rosińska, A. Szydłowska (eds.), Bęc Zmiana Foundation, Warsaw, 2020). ZOEpolis was initiated as part of a project entitled 'Cartographies of Strangeness, Otherness, and (ex)(in)clusion. The Perspective of Contemporary Philosophy and Art', implemented by the Faculty of Philosophy and Sociology of the University of Warsaw and co-funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education under the National Programme for the Development of the Humanities.

Małgorzata Gurowska (Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw) is a visual artist, curator and book author. She works at the intersection of art, activism and science. Her work addresses political and social issues, critically describing the relationship between humans and non-humans as well as searching for more just and empathy-based scenarios. She is interested in bringing together different perspectives, people and disciplines. She looks for new connections and collaborations, including across species. She creates books and drawings, and ventures outdoors (sculpture, installations, walks). She explores the field of artistic research and is interested in generating knowledge through art practices. Her work has been shown in solo and group exhibitions in Poland and internationally, including at the 22nd Triennale di Milano (2019), Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (2020). Graduate and lecturer at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.

Agata Szydłowska (Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw) is a researcher, author and curator. A graduate of art history at the University of Warsaw, the Graduate School for Social Research at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, she has a PhD in ethnology. She works at the Department of Design Theory at the Faculty of Design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. She is interested in interdisciplinary research on design, particularly the intertwining of design with politics and social life. She has authored and co-authored books on typography, Polish graphic design and magazines from the People's Republic of Poland as well as scientific and popular science articles. In 2019, she co-created (together with Małgorzata Gurowska and Maciej Siuda) an exhibition in the Polish pavilion at the XXII Triennale di Milano 'Broken Nature. Design Takes on Human Survival' entitled 'MYCOsystem'. She is also co-creator of the long-running ZOEpolis project on interspecies communities, which includes exhibitions, artistic research and a book.

**Project team »Matters of Evidence«**

**Curatorial concept:** Kuba Szreder (Curator, Academy of Fine Arts Warsaw, Poland)

**Artistic framework and design:** Natalia Romik (Artist & Architect, Warsaw)

**Steering committee:** Alistair Hudson, Daniel Pies, Gloria Aino Grzywatz, Natalia Romik, Kuba Szreder