

REMEDICATIONS

This exhibition presents aesthetic experimentations with materials and mechanisms that contain, condition, and convey impressions of life, history, and subjectivity in and beyond human terms. The practices gathered here critically navigate a cultural environment shaped by mutually intensifying tendencies toward immediacy and hypermediacy, taking notice of how media are multiplied while traces of mediation are often masked or absorbed. A node in a larger constellation of inquiries, each project offers a different look into how no medium and no media practice operates in isolation from others, making intelligible the layers, chains, and networks of mediation and their terms of operation. Informed by research in the disciplines of anthropology, history of science, architecture, and visual studies, these works represent attempts to retrace and redraw the routes of translation or integration of one medium into another and explore what is lost and gained in the course of remediation.

Emilio Vavarella's research concerns the confluence of computation and selfhood. In the series *The Other Shapes of Me* (2020-ongoing), DNA stands as an archetypal manifestation of how *the medium is the message*—it does not represent anything but is itself presented as a body of shapes, which Vavarella extends in reenactments of his genetic code by different means. The film *Genesis* (2021) documents a convergence in this remediation process, where human labor, mechanical automation, and semiotic transposability intertwine. It shows the artist's mother operating a hundred-year-old Jacquard loom, technically a proto-computer dating back to the early 19th century, when the alchemy of automation and organized protest got permanently infused with the industrial order. The pattern that is woven into the fabric follows a program written in binary language and carried out on a chain of perforated cards reeling through the machine. This pattern is a translation of the artist's genetic code, which is compatible with a range of digital settings from textile to electronics. Vavarella's investigation in what could be called the media of the self takes personal, historical, and technological turns to demonstrate the plasticity of life within and across the contingent borders of the organic.

Pauline Shongov studies the materiality of urban environments in Bulgaria as embodied sites of ruination and excavation. In *City Digs / Раскопания Град* (2018-ongoing), her meandering camera moves along and deviates from the paths that not only facilitate (and delimit) pedestrian mobility but also mediate histories of economic duress, social regeneration, and municipal incompetence. This largely filmic project works toward an atlas of broken patterns across the superimposed topologies of the city. The viewpoint is that of a bodily schema in becoming. The fracturing blocks of pavement figure in the fragmentary characteristic of the images as well as their mode of display that remains contingent on the particular instance of their assemblage. Shongov's embodied and situated observations lean into decay and material impermanence as the medium of historical subjectivity.

Chrystel Oloukoï remediates vision away from light and through darkness in journeys through the night that unfold under the rubric of *Black Nocturnal*. A growing archive grounded in strolls around Lagos and Johannesburg, the project considers nightlife as metaphor and methodology, as a spacetime for living life away from systemic demands for exposure and visibility. The ongoing relevance of fugitivity and marronage for modes of resistance in and against racial capitalism is explored in short films including *Lantern Laws* (2021) and *Night Litany (B)* (2021), which point to the lingering afterlives of criminal codes and punitive measures introduced in colonial times. Images that spark like intervals in

the course of an extended scene of darkness might draw the invisible subjects of the city within the thresholds of detectability by attempting to trap them under the spotlight. But these images equally undermine their own appearance by problematizing the violence that undergirds visuality writ large. Oloukoï's situated and sustained engagements with opacity build toward an "anti-ethnography" of sorts, as she calls it herself, which severs critique from obligatory enlightenment and distances film from the mandates of capture and display.

Elitza Koeva chronicles the life and death of a tree on the Harvard campus. The 75-foot-tall and almost two-hundred-year-old red oak stood in the heart of the Divinity School and was felled in 2019 to make way for extensive renovations at Swartz (then Andover) Hall. Many students and members of the faculty impassionately objected to the administration's decision and reasoning. They held meetings where the University's active role in property development, urban regeneration, land grabbing, and environmental destruction, both locally and internationally, were brought to light and put to discussion. In the days preceding and following the fall of the tree, rituals and vigils were held at its location, with various kinds of offerings draped around its trunk and placed at its stump. Koeva's project *The Divinity Tree* (2022-2023) retraces this history by assembling a miscellaneous archive that consists of media reports, cellphone videos, objects and images, poems and prayers, architectural drawings, administrative documents, interviews she conducted with those involved in protests and tributes, as well as recordings of atmospheric sounds on the former site of the tree and the internal sounds of other oaks in the area. To summon the tree and its communal sanctity through different media is at once to create a memorial and to recount a neglected history of memorialization.

Shireen Hamza's project evokes remediation not only in terms of translation between mediums but also therapeutics and the remedying of ailments. She brings dance and movement studies together with her research in the history of medicine in the medieval Islamic world. *Scores for Humoral Medicine* (2021-ongoing) includes a series of short texts inspired by Arabic and Persian manuscripts that address various physical or mental *imbalances* and their treatments. They each provide instructions, whether for the individual or the group, that allow a fluid range of bodily interpretations. These "choreographies of care," as Hamza calls them, remediate the archive by performing it, encouraging a kind of embodied consciousness that channels internal conditions through their outward expressions while resisting the inquisitive authority of biomedical symptomatology.

These projects were developed in minimal contact with each other, and their coming together was less a matter of curatorial choice than voluntary participation. Therefore, the attempt to translate Critical Media Practice into a Collective Mediation Process required not only careful attention to potential associations and resonances but also maintaining the autonomy of each project without ignoring their proximity. This is reflected in the design concept of this publication as well, developed by Gregor Huber and Noha Mokhtar, which consists of a series of folded but untied sheets, pages that can stand as separate posters. Instead of filling in or even bridging over the gaps in favor of a straight course to its ends, this exhibition took on circuitous paths around the points of disconnect in hopes that it leads to longer-term collaborations and conversations beyond the restraints of the present.

— Mahan Moalemi

Shireen Hamza likes to sing and dance. She lives in Chicago and teaches through the Prison+Neighborhood Arts/Education Project. She is a PhD candidate in the Department of the History of Science at Harvard University, with a secondary field in Critical Media Practice (CMP). Her dissertation shows how Muslim scholars adapted a transregional tradition of medicine, *tibb*, to their local needs and environments across the medieval Indian Ocean World. Through CMP, she brings poetry and movement research to these premodern medical texts, enlivening them with friends in intimate workshop settings. She has also published on the history of sexuality.

Elitza Koeva's practice plays with temporality and the impermanence of tangible and intangible nature as well as the emerging in urban contexts interferences and resonances between sound and space. She holds a master's degree in Information Studies from the University of Tokyo and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at Harvard Graduate School of Design, with a secondary field in Critical Media Practice. She is a former research fellow at the Chair for Computer-Aided Architectural Design, ETH Zürich, and a recipient of the Monbusho scholarship from the Japanese government, the Fulbright and Thanks to Scandinavia grants, as well as the ETH CAAD 2017 research fellowship.

Chrystel Oloukoï is an artist, film critic, and curator, broadly interested in experimental cinema, queer cinema, and Black continental and diasporic cinema. They are completing a PhD in African and African American Studies at Harvard University. Their work engages imaginations of the night, as well as the afterlives of colonial technologies of temporal discipline. They have curated programs for Canyon Cinema, CalArts/Redcat and Monangambee, a nomadic microcinema in Lagos. They also work as a preselector on the Open City Doc festival programming team. Their writing has appeared in *Film Comment*, *Metrograph*, *Sight & Sound*, and *World Records*, among other places.

Pauline Shongov is a PhD candidate in Film and Visual Studies with secondary fields in Anthropology and Critical Media Practice at Harvard University. Her research engages oral, visual, and material histories of place within archeological methodologies on media and landscape theory. Her films and scholarship explore the ruins of modernity in the Balkan space, cultural mythologies and folkloric traditions, collective memories and imaginaries, local and diasporic forms of community belonging. Her work is supported by the Harvard Film Study Center, Harvard Presidential Scholarship, and the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies.

Emilio Vavarella is an artist and researcher working at the intersection of interdisciplinary art practice, theoretical inquiry, and media experimentation. Vavarella is the artist in residence at the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, and a 2023 Horizons Scholar at Harvard University, where he is also completing a PhD in Film and Visual Studies and Critical Media Practice. His work has been shown at MAXXI Museum in Rome, KANAL – Centre Pompidou in Brussels, Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, MAMbo Museum in Bologna, Madre Museum of Contemporary Art in Napoli, and Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, among others. His work is regularly discussed in art magazines and academic publications.

Mahan Moalemi is a critic and curator from Tehran and a PhD candidate in the Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies at Harvard University. He is the co-editor of *Ethnofuturisms* (Merve Verlag, 2018) and a former Graduate Curatorial Fellow at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.

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in Critical Media Practice

Shireen Hamza, Elitza Koeva, Chrystel Oloukoï,
Pauline Shongov, and Emilio Vavarella
Curated by Mahan Moalemi

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