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Our Inner Alterity: An Applied Method on the Otherness within the Self

Abstract

Based on Mehmet Emir and Werner Finke's photo and video collections, this contribution reports on a workshop in which participants employed artistic methods to explore personal experiences of migration, belonging, and memory. In relation to the visual collections, the workshop introduced two innovative methods, *On Touching* and *Re-Animating*, developed by the author to facilitate engagement with these themes. Through these methods, participants were encouraged to experience differences and critically reflect on notions of identity, belonging, and spatial as well as temporal relationships. This discussion paper provides a detailed explanation of these methods and their role in fostering deeper understandings of personal and collective memory within the context of migration.

Keywords

Artistic media, bodily experience, Kurds, memory, migration

Unsere innere Alterität: Eine angewandte Methode zur Erkundung des Andersseins im Selbst

Zusammenfassung

Auf der Grundlage der Foto- und Videosammlungen von Mehmet Emir und Werner Finke berichtet dieser Beitrag von einem Workshop, in dem die Teilnehmer:innen mit künstlerischen Methoden persönliche Erfahrungen mit Migration, Zugehörigkeit und Erinnerung erforschten. In Bezug auf die visuellen Sammlungen wurden im Rahmen des Workshops zwei innovative Methoden vorgestellt, *On Touching* und *Re-Animating*, die von der Autorin ent-

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wickelt wurden, um die Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Themen zu erleichtern. Durch diese Methoden wurden die Teilnehmer:innen dazu ermutigt, Unterschiedlichkeit zu erleben und kritisch über Vorstellungen von Identität, Zugehörigkeit und räumlichen sowie zeitlichen Beziehungen nachzudenken. Der Diskussionsbeitrag enthält eine detaillierte Erläuterung dieser Methoden und ihrer Rolle bei der Förderung eines tieferen Verständnisses des persönlichen und kollektiven Gedächtnisses im Kontext der Migration.

Schlagwörter

Künstlerische Medien, Körpererfahrung, Kurd: innen, Erinnerung, Migration

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1 Introduction

This research is based on an arts-based workshop, which focused on two comprehensive multimedia collections on Kurdish everyday culture between 1964 and 2020 by Mehmet Emir and Werner Finke. The workshop aimed to analyze and conceptualize the positions and approaches of Emir and Finke as eminent scholars in the production of visual materials concerning the Kurdish territories. Together with the participants, this analysis and conceptualization was applied through practices such as drawing, photography, and text production, in order to contemporize these visual materials and generate new ways of seeing and understanding. With around 30,000 still images, 8mm and 16mm films, and audio recordings by Werner Finke, in addition to approximately 30,000 still images and documentary films by Mehmet Emir, both collections hold extensive ethnographic visual materials about Kurds and their culture (see the introduction to this special issue by Six-Hohenbalken). Two methodological approaches developed during the preparation process evolved around the concepts of mobility, migration, displacement, and dispossession. These approaches were practiced with workshop participants connected to such experiences.

A preparation process lasting approximately six months took place before the workshop took place. It consisted of analyzing the two collections as well as Emir and Finke's backgrounds and proximity to the field to which they were engaged, the formation of knowledge, and conceiving the methodological approaches to these visual materials. For the workshop, I developed and initiated modest exercises to imagine Finke's and Emir's journeys to the mountainous Kurdish regions, and I prepared paths to speculate on different domains within the world we live. The participants invited to the

workshop were challenged with the following considerations: How do we speak with or listen to the environment in which we live? How can we develop a connection to the new land in which we (are forced to) move? And can we stimulate new memories that envision the past or future? The visual materials from the Kurdish context created a process of exploring and unfolding notions of belonging and memories. In elaborating on the epistemology for and the methodology of this workshop, I was influenced in my theoretical and academic approaches especially by the concepts and ideas of Juanita Sundberg (2014, i.e., walking exercise), Salman Rushdie (1991, i.e., imagining a land), and Pauline Oliveros (2005, i.e., listening exercise).

In November 2022, a three-day workshop was held in the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art based on the two multimedia collections. The workshop invited people with experiences of dispossession (e.g. dispossession of land, family, heritage, education, job) or those who carry the memories of dispossessed ancestors to take part. The group consisted of participants who themselves or whose parents came from the Kurdish settlement areas of Turkey, as well as participants from Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Lebanon, and Hungary.

Participants were encouraged to creatively explore the collection materials of their Kurdish cultural heritage through the lens of their own historical and political background. They selected some images in advance to be openly described and discussed, sharing what they saw and how they felt about them. They contributed with drawings, photos, texts, oral storytelling, and video and audio recordings to bring in their personal perspective and individual experiences when they screened these collections of Kurdish everyday life.

Concerning the methodological approach, as the workshop leader, I developed procedures, which were based on my previous research processes, referred here as *On Touching* and *Re-Animating*. The concept *On Touching*—mainly referring to Finke's position—aims to initiate and complement one's connection with unfamiliar phenomena. Through activities, this pursues the realization and development of a connection with difference, otherness, and indeterminacy.

The concept *Re-Animating* includes some activities I initially developed in a research process (Tuğrul 2021) that involved instructively engaging with the tensions between the living and the dead, the absence and the presence, the known and the unknown.¹ This concept became especially relevant in

¹ The research project *DisPossession: Post-Participatory Aesthetics and the Pedagogy of Land* and the related publication *Despite DisPossession: An Activity Book* (2021) were realized at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. They were made possible through funding by the Austrian

collaboratively working with the Emir collection when the participants applied and practiced it via their own memories and experiences in a multi-sensorial way.

Both concepts and exercises were developed on the basis of working with the two multimedia collections. I adopted the theoretical outlines and adjusted the concepts methodologically, using an arts-based approach to enable participants to bring in their experiences of loss, dispossession, migration and moving to a new land, to integrate bodily habits and sensual orientations and to depict the challenges of re-orienting the fixed points of life.

2 *On Touching*

As an artist and a veterinarian, the following points inspired me in developing the concept *On Touching*: Werner Finke traveled to the Kurdish regions of Turkey for almost three decades. He began visiting Kurdish villages, accompanying tribes to their summer pastures (see Fig. 1), and documenting their crafts and trades from 1964 onward. His relationship with the Kurdish highlands was very intense. Despite the political turmoil and the war that started in the 1980s, he visited the farmers and nomads in their environment almost every year. Through his visual depiction and his specific »ethnographic glance«, we realize his interest in the communities' lifestyle and the people's relationship with their land, i.e., the natural environment, traditional agriculture, animal husbandry, trade, and village life, and we see how these have changed in the course of almost three decades of documentary work (Six-Hohenbalken et al. [2025]).

Mehmet Emir, on the other hand, started photographing and recording his area of origin in Dersim (Tunceli, Turkey) after moving to Vienna in 1981 during annual visits for more than 20 years. In most of his stills, he portrayed the people from the region. There is a particular dynamic in portraying (the same) people over such a long time, as it allows you to track and witness the transformation and aging process of many individuals.

The images from the two collections had a very powerful, deep effect on me, since I have been connected to similar communities and lifestyles since my childhood. Beyond this, another experience made me realize, understand, and conceptualize Finke's position and experiences in this particular land. In 2009, I graduated from veterinary medicine school, and I practiced this profession for about ten years in Kurdish rural areas. As a veterinarian surgeon, I experienced the importance of my hands and fingers—not only because

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they were essential to all my activities, but also because I learned to see through them. This was especially true when performing surgical operations on deep tissues or organs full of blood or other liquids that your eyes cannot see. In one instance during my surgical training, I was advised to practice cutting, stitching or taping with my unaccustomed hand, as one might not always have the luxury of re-positioning oneself in operational sites. Thus, the ›character‹ of my hands integrate not only the sense of touching but they also reflect a differentiated and multiplied function.



Fig. 1: A marriage gathering at the summer pasture. A typical scene from the life of pastoralists in the Kurdish mountains, 1975. Photo: Werner Finke. Institut für Sozialanthropologie, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

In some ways, this corresponds to Finke's position in the Kurdish mountains and his experience of encountering a lifestyle he did not fully know, but one in which he aimed to create a process of recognition and connection as an outsider. Finke's research process for almost three decades in an environment with which he had no historical relation, reminds me of the movie *Dersu Uzala* by Akira Kurosawa (1975), a Soviet-Japanese production that profoundly emphasizes the relationship between a land and a man. The film is based on the memoir of the Russian explorer, Vladimir Arsenyev, and describes his and his troops' expedition to the Siberian wilderness in the

early 1920s. The troops' encounter with a native of the forest named Dersu Uzala, who is fully integrated into his natural environment, is the triggering point of the movie. The film conveys that Arsenyev's lifestyle is collapsing in his natural surroundings, and that civilization has apparently caused this failure. The relationship of Captain Arsenyev and his troops with Dersu Uzala unfolds the knowledge that they hold about their environment and its collapse when this knowledge is placed in a different context (see Fig. 2). Arsenyev's position as an outsider and his interaction with Uzala in the film spark ideas about possible interactions and confrontations between Finke and Kurdish communities in this particular environment.



Fig. 2: Dersu Uzala, 1975, 144 min., directed by Akira Kurosawa. Moviestore Collection Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo.

As elaborated earlier (Tuğrul 2021), the methodological concept of *On Touching* suggests that the notion of touching can create a path developing a connection with difference, alterity, becoming, and opacity to find a place while accepting the existence of uncertainty. Touching nature and touching culture may be all about touching our otherness. It may involve the unknown, uncertain, and uncanny side of our lives. Concerning the unknown and the incomprehensibility, the theorist and physicist Karen Barad outlines in the article »Nature's Queer Performativity«:

»Identity is a phenomenal matter; it is not an individual affair. Identity is multiple within itself; or rather, identity is diffracted through itself—identity is diffraction/différance/differing/deferring/differentiating. The otherness or difference is in the action of recognition, connection, acceptance. This flow of intra-action should not sound static or symmetrical, contrary it is an infinite flow of matters that construct different identities of a phenomenon.« (Barad 2011, p. 125 f.)

For Barad intra-action is a key element of an agential realist framework—a theory proposed by Barad that states that the universe comprises phenomena in the ontological inseparability of intra-acting agencies, which also allows us to rethink our notions of agency and relationality:

»[The] neologism ›intra-action‹ signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual ›interaction‹, which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the ›distinct‹ agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements.« (Barad 2007, p. 33)

Based on my veterinary experience, the hands in a surgical operational site are not only assigned for the sense of touching, but also hearing and seeing. Calculating palpation and differentiating the muscle from a vein in unseeable situations is a process of regenerating multiple complex senses. Barad emphasized in a talk:

»All touching entails an infinite alterity, so that touching the other is touching all others, including the ›self‹, and touching the ›self‹ entails touching the strangers within. Even the smallest bits of matter are an unfathomable multitude. Each ›individual‹ always already includes all possible intra-actions with ›itself‹ through all the virtual others, including those that are noncontemporaneous with ›itself‹. That is, every finite being is always already threaded through with an infinite alterity diffracted through being and time.« (Barad n.d.)

It is crucial to consider the phenomenon *différance* not only for those who are exposed to migration, specifically to forced migration, but also for those living in the country in which they grew up. New contexts, such as moving from rural to urban areas or experiencing different economic models in life, can also produce feelings of alterity or difference.

For the conceptual and methodological approach of the workshop, I was considering how we can activate certain relationalities, disparities, and entanglements in and through our body via our senses. For this reason, I asked whether *drawing* could be a tool to form new connections as an extension of our existing memories and for the creation of new memories in the context of

difference. The workshop was predominantly shaped through drawings; they became a tool that created a time frame for the participant to engage with the subject matter. At the beginning, the participants were ensured that no artistic talent was expected from them, nor was any specific aesthetical understanding to be applied in the production of visual materials. This strategy allowed for the emergence of a peculiar aesthetic on these visual materials. Before initiating the drawing exercises in the workshop, a short presentation was made for the participants to encourage their drawing activity. For this, drawings of William Anastasi, Nina Canell, Carlfriedrich Claus, Attila Csörgő, Christoph Fink, Habima Fuchs, Nikolaus Gansterer & Alex Arteaga, Monika Grzymala, Karel Malich, Isabel Nolan, Morgan O'Hara, Alina Popa, and Stuart Sherman were shared and analyzed. Each artist required an in-depth analysis of their work; however, collectively they represented a wide spectrum of conceptual, material, and performative approaches to drawing. They push the medium beyond its conventional limits, transforming it into a tool for exploring thought, movement, time, and place. The aim of sharing these references was to encourage the participants to explore the boundaries of perception and the role of change in drawing. This exploration moves beyond mere mark-making on paper by generating an internal thinking process while the activity is practiced collectively. In the drawing process, participants engaged in blending visual elements with linguistic ones, integrating abstraction, and engaging with visual culture.

Our body is equipped with certain predispositions for certain manners. Our capability for spatial navigation, our response to audio-visual presence of the environment, our sense of reacting to specific smells, all create a certain phenomenological construction of our existence. These dispositions are formed and reshaped, depending on the flow of life. The important thing to keep in mind is the trainable and educable character of these manners, and I pose the question of how we can diversify them. Without dismissing the peculiar orchestra of our senses, we may be able to play with our body's understanding and functioning by slowing down or speeding up certain habits. Kathrin Yusoff, known for her work on critical geography, the Anthropocene, and colonialism, emphasizes the factor of temporal experience:

»Both [Belgian philosopher] Isabelle Stengers and [French philosopher Jean-Luc] Nancy suggest a certain amount of patience is required (patience as a mode of becoming sensible to another's being); Stengers suggests ›slowing things down‹, being tactful, allowing new registers of sense to become sensible around new things and experiences.« (Yusoff 2013, p. 215)

A couple of exercises were developed in the workshop to open up the field of sensual experiences of the unknown and uncertainty, especially for people

who are confronted with it when they enter a new environment, move to a new country, and explore a different culture. One way to do this might be to read a text from the opposite side: Texts are read from left to right predominantly in Latin script, but this is not the case in other contexts such as Arabic texts, which are read from right to left. Individuals from this context scan and track visual samples in the corresponding order too. Either from right to left or left to right, the logic behind this exercise is breaking the monotony (routine). In that case, slowing down the habit of reading corresponds to Stengers' suggestion, so, let's try to read a text from the opposite side.

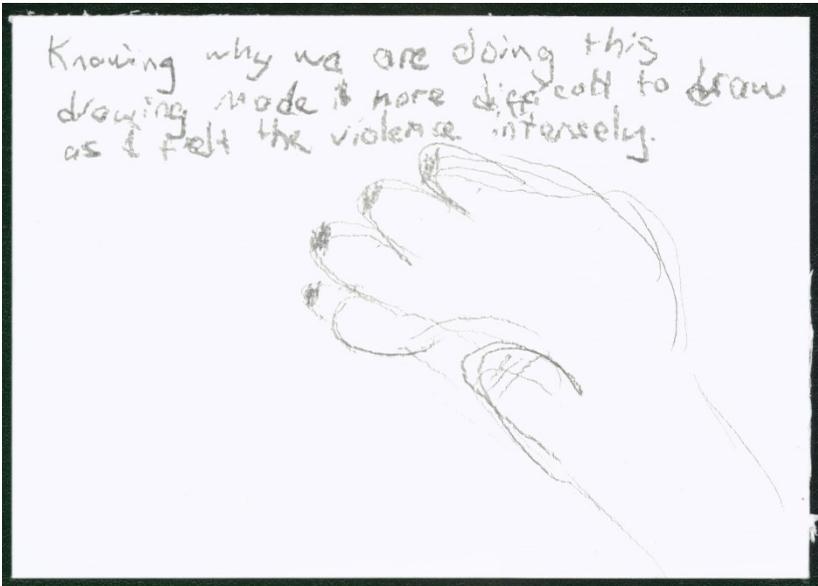
side,
opposite side,
the opposite side,
from the opposite side,
a text from the opposite side,
to read a text from the opposite side,
try to read a text from the opposite side,
Let's try to read a text from the opposite side.

Each time the sentence is read, it evolves and revolves in a different understanding until it finds its ultimate structure. Until the final structure of the sentence is built, the construction of meaning reflects a different process than reading it in the accustomed way. Additionally, one can rethink the habit of scanning a landscape. Either from right to left, from up to down, or vice versa, an individual can break with the usual way of doing this.

Within the framework of *On Touching*, the main goals are, therefore, to do something out of the ordinary to expand the bodily capacity and to keep both mind and body active. This activity strives to take another look at the habits and notions of memory, memory-making processes, and regenerating our habits within our own body.

With a couple of activities during the workshop, I intended to enable the participants to remember, learn, and produce connections with the land or environment they had lived in. With the following exercises, I wanted to make the participants' sensory perceptions more tangible and presentable.

Exercise 1: *Drawing your hand with an object from everyday life*. The participants were asked to think of an object they use every day and to consider which hand they predominantly use in this daily routine (e.g., holding a pen, watering plants, pressing buttons, using a mobile phone). They were asked to imagine using their unaccustomed hand for this routine and to draw their hand in this posture without the object. In a further step they used their non-dominant hand for drawing and kept the original posture of their hand with the absent object (see Figs. 3 and 4). At the end of the exercise, they exchanged their experience with other participants.



Figs. 3+4: Outcomes of the exercise from participants: »Knowing why we were doing this drawing made it more difficult to draw, as I felt the violence intensely.«

Exercise 2: *Drawing an object you have never used or seen.* The participants were encouraged to consider an object that they had never used (e.g., an instrument they had never played or a rifle they had never shot). The aim was to practice how their visual memory contributed to their remembering system and senses for imagining this object. We then discussed which hand they had imagined being used, how hard or easy it had been, and how educable our senses are.

Exercise 3: *Drawing without seeing the object/subject.* The participants were asked to take some time to think of a part of their body that they are not able to visually track (e.g., face, neck, backbone). They were told to focus on that part of their body and to touch it. They could close their eyes and try to sense the form and anatomy, texture, and temperature. Then they practiced drawing the part of the body they had chosen.

Exercise 4: *Drawing an object/subject without seeing the drawing.* The participants were then asked to draw an ordinary object that they encounter daily and that was present in the workshop room. They were instructed to position it in a way they were able to see and touch but hide the drawing material to sharpen their visual memory and orientation to the material they were using and the tactile process. This aimed to contribute to the participants' sense of drawing the object.

No explicit steps were taken to immediately analyze the participants' experiences. Rather, the intention was to avoid rushing to conclusions, allowing each participant to engage in their own process of reflection and digestion. The activities resonated differently with each individual, but as a whole they revealed a unique mode of perception and interpretation. For some, the use of their non-dominant hand evoked feelings of discomfort and even violence, while for others it provided a safe space to overcome challenges. The concepts of violence, discomfort, and continuous struggle were reconsidered through this experiential lens.

3 *Re-Animating*

The development of the concept *Re-Animating* was based on the portraits from the Mehmet Emir collection. The images we worked with in the workshops were portraits of people depicted in the places they live. People and their ›living place‹ created a moving encounter for Emir. In these portraits, people look directly into the lens of the camera, or rather at Mehmet Emir. The photographer created a very intimate connection between himself and the subject (Fig. 5).

To work with Emir's visual collection in the workshop, I elaborated on the concept of *Re-Animating* to encourage the participants to do a close exam-

ination of the images and to bring in their personal experiences, memories, and encounters.

As a concept, *Re-Animating* functions by awakening the emotions that individuals already carry toward their environment. This model interprets the process that Emir may have gone through in his homeland when visiting annually and capturing it visually after he had moved to another country. It is about something or a place somewhere that he did know, a connection which had been physically disrupted and which he aimed to restore. It is about something he once had, and he did not want to lose.

Mehmet Emir's work was not only a process of documenting time or place; he followed an approach to extend time and vary or shift the place. Through his photographs, he extends time and offers an opportunity to pause and experience a deepening perception. He generates images to heighten the understanding of place and time. This conceptualization is an act that can shift a body from an assigned place or change the place's destination. In this case a portrait in Emir's collection is not only an icon of his village, but also a figure that unfolds the notion of time and memory. It generates new scenes and sequences and suggests ways of thinking about time and space differently.



Fig. 5: The picture conveys the trusting relationship that Mehmet Emir had with the old woman of his village. Copyright: Mehmet Emir collection.

Emir's collection is a journey between the past and the present, which allows one to trace the relationalities and temporalities of things. A concrete example of this is the portrait of an old woman which embodies the exposure of time that is inherently layered with various records of transformation. This process of tracking transformations exposes the non-linearity and complexity of time and place.

In the workshop, the concept *Re-Animating* was formed by the activities *Re-Animating Place* and *Re-Animating Time*. Both activities aimed to generate a process of connecting individuals to the environment. These should be experienced both individually and within a group. The participants were expected to relate directly or indirectly to a particular new land that they had not been to before.

3.1 *Re-Animating Place*

For this series of exercises, an actual site needed to be determined in advance: a river, a valley, a street, a village, or a mountain. The participants could use different materials for the visualization process (pens, pencils, notebooks, fabric, cameras, tablets, recorders, etc.).

Exercise 1: *Arrival*. The workshop leader had chosen an area providing examples of a geographical transformation. The participants were asked to take their time to observe the landscape, to focus on their feelings and to find a starting point for their walk through this place.

Exercise 2: *Walking*. The participants walked and tried to develop a connection with the environment. They observed and paid attention to the ruins and remains in this field when walking: a feather, an abandoned house, a piece of bone, a cemetery, an impression of a ruin, a snake skin, a sheep skull, etc.

Exercise 3: *Drawing*. The participants were asked to draw the ›things‹ they encounter while they walk (e.g. mushrooms, snails, birds, plants, stones, mountains, insects, water, trees, etc.). As previously highlighted, this drawing session does not require talent or a particular aesthetic approach to depict these objects. The aim is to think through the object's different relations with other things in its surroundings and to catch these in the drawings (Figs. 6–8).

The participants were encouraged to also consider drawing at least one absent subject that made them feel related to a present object. If they felt troubled with the drawing of absent subjects, they were allowed to use verbal expressions instead. Finally, the participants analyzed their walking path and its relation with the items they encountered. They were expected to reflect on the change of assumed entities in relation to the specific space they had encountered.

Exercise 4: *Listening/Imitating*. The participants were asked to listen to the environment they were in and to analyze the sounds they heard. They were

invited to try and imitate the sounds they heard in this land. If they felt encouraged enough, they could try to speak with one of the entities (e.g. a bird, a leaf, a cat or a goat).

Exercise 5: *Returning*. After their walking and drawing activities, they were expected to return to their starting point. They brought together the images and words they had captured. They read the entanglements and stories these things conveyed.

Exercise 6: *A Place in Mind*. In case they were unable to realize the aforementioned activities outdoors, some exercises can be adapted, for example by visualizing an imagined place. Some stories or photographs may make the place in mind tangible and graspable. Inspired by this idea, the participants can visualize the place that they have not been to and start to sketch and apply it on the visual material.

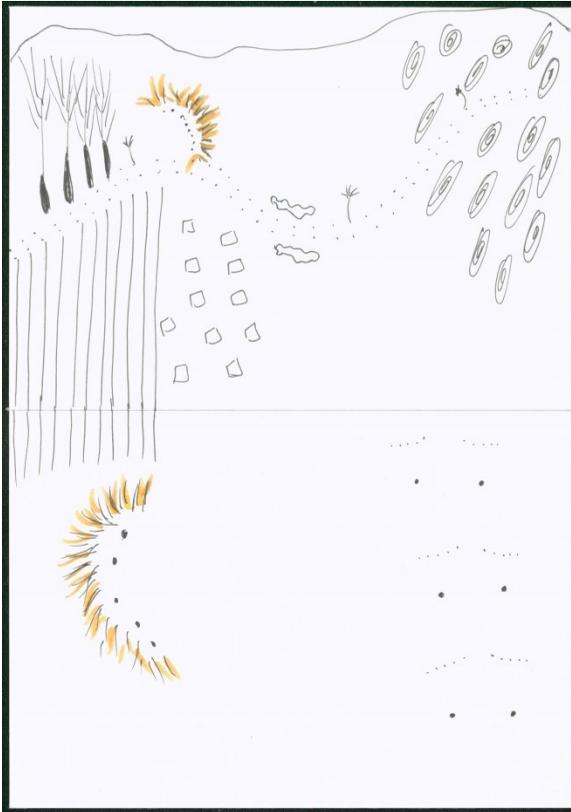
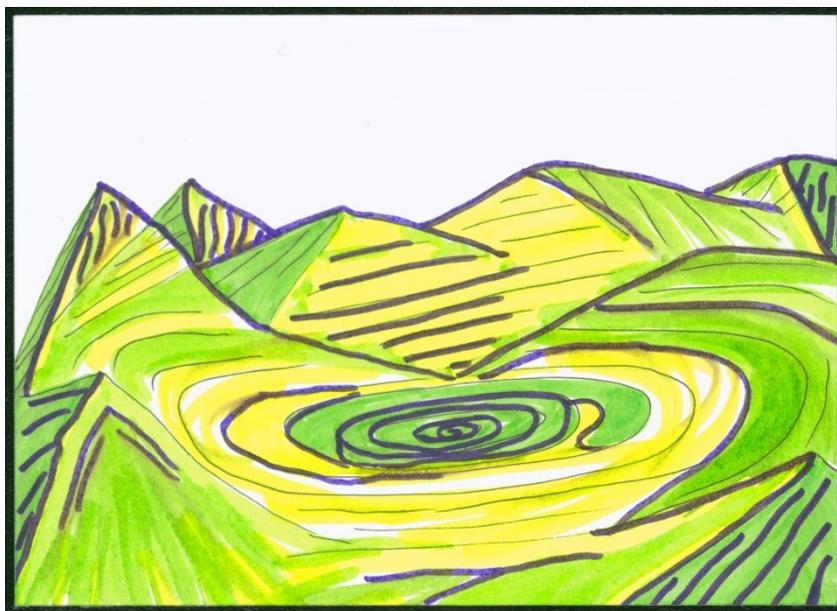
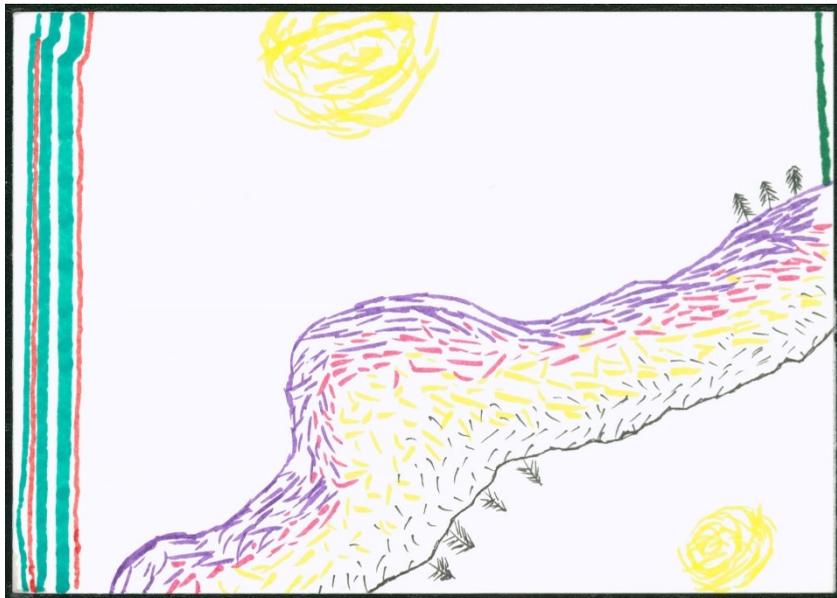


Fig. 6: Workshop result, 2022: Visualization of a place.



Figs. 7+8: Workshop results, 2022: Visualization of a place.

3.2 *Re-Animating Time*

The *Re-Animating Time* activity attempted to generate an ontological relation with the previous activity. The primary aim was to understand, empathize with, or experience the time of others. Participants were asked to pick one of the non-human entities from the exercise *Re-Animating Place* and focus on it. It should have been something that reminded them of the past and the passage of time. For this, participants were expected to provide a medium to represent this entity's journey in time and to realize it through drawing, a moving image, a printed image, etc.

Exercise 1: *Past*. The participants discussed the lifecycle of the ›thing‹ they chose. If it was a species, they researched how it came into the world and traced its transformation during its lifespan. They considered its death: What kind of death process happens in its life (natural/external causes)? The participants traced the evolutionary path within its ecology to create contours of its lifespan. They imagined and discussed the transformative process of this thing, especially in the last couple of decades. They were also asked to search for its mythological representation and other cultural metaphors.

Exercise 2: *Present*. The participants were expected to find out this thing's place in its current environment. For example, what role does it play there, and what kinds of species are related to it or endangered by it? Is there any mythological symbol or metaphor addressing the thing in the participants' language today?

Exercise 3: *Future*. The participants wrote a paragraph and identified how they envisioned the life of this thing in the future. They considered their affinity to the medium and explained how they would like to visualize or represent this process of time (orally, with text, drawing, photography, animation, video, etc.). They imagined and discussed the transformative process of this thing in the last couple of decades.

Participants were not limited by these instructions. Dancing, singing, building something in the sand and soil, or using rocks and sticks, making music, and any other way of engaging with the land were more than welcome.

4 Sparking Stories

The participants were asked to bring together the images, sound recordings, and words they had captured. They were expected to read the entanglements and stories among these things. The participants shared their inspirations, disappointments, and excitement with the group. This last part of the activities encouraged the participants to interpret their own meaning, and speculate, stimulate, and anticipate different explorations of the juxtaposed images

and words. It was aimed at expanding the participants' capacities to listen to and respond in the specific sites through fictionalizing various desired worlds.

Rethinking the visual materials from Emir's and Finke's collections decades after the moment they had been photographed immediately sparked stories in our minds. We interpreted and commented on those visuals through our understanding from today, speculating about images from the specific moment of documentation. This intersection of time—the time of interpretation and the time of documentation—is thus relevant to the outcomes, e.g. images, texts, audio recordings, or drawings the participants were engaged with and produced during the workshop.

A similar exercise was realized as the workshop group engaged with ethnographic objects that had been collected by Finke in the Kurdish rural regions in Turkey, including everyday objects, clothing, textiles, jewelry, and small agricultural equipment. The question arose as to what such objects, which are out of use but stowed in a depot or stored away as a souvenir or a decorative object, might convey to the observer. What is the impact of migration and relocation of non-human or inanimate phenomena? How have these objects influenced and shaped people's identities? Attracted by a handcrafted and beautifully decorated horse halter, produced by a Kurdish woman and used in everyday life in a rural setting, one of the participants noted down her imaginations:

»I am getting wet as we cross the river. My threads tangle in one another and drip, stuck to the chest of my horse. I can hear its heavy breathing and thumbling heart. I have never felt closer to my horse, to my land, to my world. I guess each of my threads was born on the back of a sheep, where it once grew and felt the warmth of its skin. Until one day the sharp razor of the shepherd's scissors ripped them from the body of the sheep that created them.

They were then pulled and torn apart until they became something else entirely. The warm fingers of the women turned and twisted them from their spindles into threads, cut and colored them before taking them to the loom where I was born from my threads intertwining with each other over and over. I often think of the hand that wove me—where did she know my pattern from. What of it has she seen before, what was told to her and what did she imagine herself while looking around the land she inhabits.

So began my life—I was gifted to and placed on the chest of my horse. I travel and shake and gallop together with it. I wonder about my purpose sometimes—am I here to make my horse beautiful, or is my purpose to help control it? To mark it as someone's horse, to help the men exert his power over the beast? Here I am, a traveler, a witness of time, the thread that binds the human hand with the animal.

It is good that I do not know that I will live in a cupboard someday, in a land far away, ripped away from the chest of my horse to be given as a gift or a hostage to a foreign traveler. My threads will stick together, interwoven into knots, heavy with dust and history. A piece of an archive, a memory of something that has once been, awarded for my beauty with the honor of uselessness. The loneliness of being saved.« (Marina Stoilova)

These considerations are just one example of how one could work creatively with ethnographic collections, and in doing so, open up a space that can integrate the thoughts and imaginations of people from the respective societies or of people with similar experiences of migration.

5 Conclusion

As an artist and scientist, I had the privilege of realizing the concepts discussed above with a special group of people. While encountering Emir's and Finke's collections for the first time, I developed this very subjective process of analyzing and imagining. Before taking the workshop and its steps into consideration, I had delved into the collections, started to read and analyze selected images and processed concepts through them. Once the two collections had started to reveal their own characteristics, I developed a certain understanding of both scholars' approaches of documentation in Kurdistan.

One of the most fascinating experiences for me was to apply the concepts in the workshop with people with whom I had had no previous association. Introducing the project, revealing the research process, allowing participants to approach the collections, encouraging them to scrutinize and research them independently, and ultimately creating visual materials, texts, and stories as an extension of these two collections, turned out to be unique and authentic aspects of this experience.

Applying my methods in the workshop to Emir's and Finke's collections worked as a powerful artistic approach to visualize experiences of mobility, dispossession, and (forced) migration. The practices and activities undertaken revealed the nonlinear trajectories of certain paths, emphasizing the frictions and challenges that arise during migration or relocation, both physically and conceptually. These conflicts are experienced as embodied phenomena, highlighting how movement to new places is likely to disrupt and transform the individual's relationship to space and time. Through the activities, participants were able to critically engage with the concepts, *On Touching* and *Re-Animating*, leading to a variety of practical outcomes, such as drawings, audio recordings, and texts. While the methods aimed to explore the intersection of time, migration, movement, and identity, the results suggest a complex engagement with these themes, especially while performing

the activities. Participants reported shifts in their understanding of time, perception, and self as they progressed through the process. While the method was successful in sparking reflection and discussion, its effectiveness in producing tangible, practical results varied, indicating that such explorations may require ongoing iterations and deeper engagement to fully realize their potential.

Art-based activities such as those practiced in this workshop serve as tools for uncovering new impulses in our perspective on migration. The participants' varied reactions—ranging from discomfort to a sense of safety—mirror the emotional and psychological dimensions of migration, particularly how individuals navigate unfamiliar environments and cope with displacement. Workshop exercises like this allow us to explore how migrants process dislocation not only cognitively but also through embodied, sensory experiences. Such involvements highlight the importance of adapting knowledge and understanding to new contexts, a fundamental aspect of the challenges of migration. The essential and, at times, inevitable aspects of migration—such as displacement, adaptation, and redefinition—should be revisited through creative and experimental approaches. These approaches could provide new perspectives on the subjective dimensions of migration. By exploring the phenomenological and sensory experiences that accompany the migration process, migration research could expand beyond traditional analyses of economic, social, and geographic factors.

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