Contemporary Arts Across Political Divides

Contemporary Arts Across Political Divides:

Difficult Conversations

Edited by

Alla Myzelev and Tijen Tunali

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Contemporary Arts Across Political Divides: Difficult Conversations

Edited by Alla Myzelev and Tijen Tunali

This book first published 2023

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0725-4
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0725-8

Alla Myzelev wishes to dedicate this to Eric Myzelev,
whose support and understanding are inspirational.

Tijen Tunali wishes to dedicate this to her mother Sidika Tunali.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FOREWORD

ALLA MYZELEV AND TIJEN TUNALI

The chapters included in this volume respond to the conservative backlash, oppressive political conditions, racial oppression, economic inequality, and social justice. They underscore the importance of resilience in the time of consolidation of the conservative and neoliberal policies taking place in many parts of the world. The artworks discussed create difficult conversations, either real, as a dialogue or debate, or as an attempt to abolish the presence of the work or its visibility. The relationship between artists and the political, and the social spaces where the works were exhibited were challenged by the new health crisis that added to the economic, democratic, environmental, and urban crises. Thus our aim to understand if art can provide a critical assessment and meaningful conversations around structural inequities and human rights issues that are exacerbated in times of crises has become even more imperative.

We began this edited book project before the Covid-19 outbreak and finished while the disease was a pandemic. While the book does not raise this issue, we felt the importance of creating the connection between the changing conditions of a global pandemic and analysing the same conditions of social consciousness. Aside from the obvious issues of the vulnerability of contributors to this volume's work – many of whom are artists, curators, freelance writers, or academics in precarious jobs – we asked ourselves about the importance of the project and the future of similar projects after the end of the pandemic. The works and exhibitions described in the volume would not have been able to continue during the pandemic. For instance, Covid-19 unequally affected people of colour and immigrant communities because of the higher density of the populations. In the United States and many other countries, the access to healthcare and economic depravity also became prominent. Members of the underrepresented communities were also more likely to be essential workers and thus more

susceptible to the virus. The economic crisis and stagnation that the pandemic provoked disproportionately affected the communities of colour and minority groups.

Jean-Luc Nancy offered optimism in defiance of the misery of the ongoing global pandemic. On March 20, 2020, in a blog post on Verso's website, Nancy described "a virus that communizes us."[1] Nancy has appropriated the term "communovirus" to describe how isolation paradoxically creates a way of experiencing community, as the pithy #alonetogether reductively proclaims. In contrast, there were alarming developments amidst the Covid-19 crisis: the turbulence of state apparatus in managing the crisis and questionable assertions of states' authority, an increase in domestic violence, and the rising vulnerability of refugees in camps and the incarcerated. Sheltering in place is a secure option only for the reasonably affluent. Divisions are starkly laid bare in such times, as our lowest-paid workers are deemed "essential." Foremost, this "communovirus" has called into question the efficacy of ideologies and political divides. Nancy asks: "Are we capable of thinking in such a difficult – and even dizzying – fashion? It is good that the 'communovirus' forces us to ask ourselves this question." This book investigates the ways art could instigate such difficult thinking, conversations, and togetherness in a world of not just multiple crises but also multiple paradoxes.

In the middle of the lockdown we could not see how much disruption and fragmentation of the civic public sphere would be caused by Corona-denial and the QAnon conspiracy theories, "fake news," political lies, and isolation. On the other hand, the public space of the cities has become a space of extreme contestation between those with the privilege to stay at home and those who were forced to work. While state authorities were constantly redeveloping controlled forms of behaviour, architects and urban designers were suggesting new designs for the public spaces in the cities that would allow social distancing. As a response to these developments, all forms of unsanctioned street art proliferated around the world. Street art's ephemeral nature often serves to reveal immediate but fleeting responses,

[1] Jean Luc Nancy, "Communovirus," *Verso*, 27 March 2020, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/4626-communovirus. Accessed 19 January 2023.

often in a manner that can be quite direct. At the same time, in the context of a crisis, street art also has the potential to transform urban space and foster a sustained political dialogue, reaching a wide audience, particularly when museums are galleries are shut. It has not been surprising to see an explosion of street art around the world in response to Covid-19, even as our movement in public spaces is limited due to public-health concerns. This book addresses street art, among other forms of art, to underline its faculties to cross economic, political, and ideological divides in creative, collaborative, and innovative ways.

This virus revealed inherent inequalities but also our commonality and need to come together as a global community to be properly prepared for future viruses, whose transmission to humanity is imminent. People around the globe have collectively developed visual and performative strategies to cope with the effects of epidemic-control measures, such as music performances on balconies, speculative design projects, bottom-up forms of solidarity, and artistic interventions both online and offline. This book is envisioned to address art that attempts cross-cultural and political divides, and during this project we have witnessed how on the one hand social divisions are widening, while on the other, communities creatively find ways to overcome stress, anxieties, and fears. To sustain our resilience to act as a society, based on common values, in the face of unpresented dramatic situations, we require an alternative common imagination of the future. This collected volume develops and advances the understanding of art's imaginative and dialogic properties, which is a preeminent factor of societal sustainability and resilience at a time of global crisis.

Caring for one another and being able to imagine and have difficult conversations across political borders now forestalls the devastation of a far-more destructive virus that will arrive in the future. The vulnerability we share and how we respond to this global health crisis reveals our humanity, our character, our ethos, our collectivity. We can respond by rediscovering a common cause. Together, we aspire to more equitable social realities. Confined to home and surrounded by mass death, our thinking and imagination may develop in ways that will allow new, empowering ideas, conversations, and collaborations to emerge. In the near future, we will see if this experience can be grounded by our common bond to care for one

another and share our resources. We hope that this book inspires such care and imagination.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was in development for several years and, like many undertakings of this kind, changed its nature several times. We encountered at least two major obstacles on the road to completing it: the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Difficult conversations as an idea started when Shirley Siegal, Hadieh Afshani, and Alla Myzelev met at the Feminist Art History exhibition in Toronto. The exhibition of their work, their presentations, and the conversations that these evoked became catalysts for further research. The project started as a double session at the Association for Art History in London in 2017. We are very grateful to the presenters of the session who started the discussion of what later became this volume. Alla would especially like to thank Shirley Siegal, whose dedication to feminist art guided and inspired her. This enthusiasm, energy, and artistic mastery are at the core of this project. We would also like to thank the Research Foundation of the State University of Geneseo for financial support in the final stages of this project.

INTRODUCTION

CONTEMPORARY ARTS ACROSS POLITICAL DIVIDES: DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

ALLA MYZELEV AND TIJEN TUNALI

What is called "the Neoliberal Era" has generated profound changes in the economic and political spheres and social and cultural life. Immediately before and after the dramatic political changes in Central and Eastern Europe that culminated in the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989, liberal democracy and market capitalism triumphed. The era celebrated a new political and economic liberalism, proclaiming the free market and a minimal state as the only road to the capital, disallowing all alternatives. For the past four decades, neoliberalism has come to define the economic project of a particular political philosophy – namely, the product of a discursive combination of the logic of liberal democracy with the dictatorship of the market.

In this global order under the neoliberal capitalist system, which has fostered new technological advancement, climate change, ecological destruction, and armed conflicts, we are confronting challenges of a new kind – challenges that question traditional conceptions of art and politics. Activists create alternative possibilities for politics, artists seek new visual languages, and intellectuals strive to capture and influence the constantly shifting terrain of the social conscience. The goal is to envision new ways of making systemic change possible. Art has been in the middle of this quest for several decades. We need a more thorough understanding of the generation and application of radically different epistemological frameworks and the imaginings that art pushes us to recognize. Political and aesthetic shifts are necessary to create effective responses to such unimaginable

problems as exponential growth, climate change, and economic and health crises; these shifts are also necessary if we are to negotiate commonality in plurality and difference.

On the other hand, in recent years, the state, governmental institutions, and municipal regulators have increasingly intervened directly in art's ontological framework through censorship, control of art markets, and withholding of economic support. On the other hand, neoliberal capitalism now penetrates every level of our social existence, including the media, consumption, the family, and social interactions. Our common world is a conglomeration of worlds shaped by political and economic (and now public-health) emergencies. In a society dominated by social inequalities and risk, art is embedded in the unmediated capitalist reality of the twenty-first century. Marina Vishmidt warns us that transferring art from the sphere of culture into the realm of neoliberal business is just a step away: "It allows it to stop *being art*, or to stop being *only* art and allows it to start playing a much more direct role as a channel of empowerment, governance, and even accumulation – if only of 'social capital'—for specific communities in specific contexts."[1] It is not new to observe that art can be a jewel in the crown of power, a commodity in the business world, or a safety valve that discharges repressed energies. Still, art can also be something else: a tool to create dialogical communities. Kester recently reminded us that we should not give up on art in social struggles:

> …the modalities of disruption we typically encounter in the arts have long ago succumbed to a kind of repressive re-sublimation in which the ostensibly audacious attack on the viewer's consciousness becomes simply another occasion for aesthetic delectation and profit maximization. What we require is a far more nuanced account of both consensus and dissensus as experiential modes in contemporary art and political resistance.[2]

---

[1] Marina Vishmidt, "'Mimesis of the Hardened and Alienated': Social Practice as Business Model," *E-flux Journal*, vol. 43, 2013, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/43/60197/mimesis-of-the-hardened-and-alienated-social-practice-as-business-model.

[2] Grant H. Kester, "The Limitations of the Exculpatory Critique: A Response to Mikkel Bolt Rasmussen," *The Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, vol. 25, no. 53, 2017, p. 77.

This volume offers a wealth of multidisciplinary, multinational examples united by their interest in creating participation, agonism, and the prospective capacity of "possibilizing" – equitable interaction and the common creation of the difficult imaginary and imagined agonistic coexistence through artmaking, circulating, and viewing. The art discussed here is centred on its dialogical properties rather than creating a specific aesthetic–political praxis. The contributors – who are social activists, museum professionals, art historians, and practitioners of collaborative art practices – propose strategies of engagement in art in the regions that are sharply divided politically. They ask some timely questions regarding the role of art in establishing difficult conversations and creating connections and methodologies that will facilitate imperative political responses. Can contemporary art cross political divides and move towards democratic social interaction, openness, and contingency? How can artists help to understand agonistic experiences in the urban public space? Could the artworks achieve reciprocity while regressive forces of nationalism, racism, and misogyny are dangerously gaining in strength across the globe? Whereas the autonomy of art is dissolving from view, can artists create new contexts within which to articulate a political aesthetic as a democratic dialogue?

This edited volume discusses how some experiential art projects and interventions make underrepresented subjectivities visible and audible. They also create difficult dialogues between members of different and, at times, oppositional cultural, political, and national groups. The works of art analysed in the book fall outside the commonly named categories of activist art, political art, or social-practice art. They are envisioned and created for their dialogical properties in complex topographies rather than for creating a particular aesthetic-political praxis. Articulating different modes of political and aesthetic contestations, inside and outside the institutions of art, the examples in this book raise questions about art's evolving role as a communicative apparatus, thus indirectly challenging the existing social paradigm. The contributors, among whom are museum professionals, art historians, and artists, propose strategies of social engagement in the art that has emerged in regions that are sharply divided politically. They discuss how contemporary art forms, practices, and interventions attempt to break

complacency and create a dialogical ground between members of the different cultural, political and national groups. The authors ask: can such dialogue create democratic communities?

Three decades ago, proposing the idea of "subaltern publics," Fraser wrote:

> …under conditions of social equality, the porousness, outer-directedness, and open-endedness of publics could promote intercultural communication. After all, the concept of a public presupposes a plurality of perspectives among those who participate within it, thereby allowing for internal differences and antagonisms, and likewise discouraging reified blocs … All told, then, there do not seem to be any conceptual (as opposed to empirical) barriers to the possibility of a socially egalitarian, multi-cultural society that is also a participatory democracy. But this will necessarily be a society with many different publics, including at least one public in which participants can deliberate as peers across lines of difference about policy that concerns them all.[3]

The contributors to this volume propose that democratic communities, as Fraser imagines, not only debate and improve but also find new cultural languages and modes of operation that allow for the coexistence of different and constantly competing viewpoints. In its quest to understand art's role in making social equality, cultural diversity, and participatory democracy possible, the book intends to transform this perspective of a plurality of publics into an agonistic coexistence, which the dialogical and aesthetic properties of art could enable. The major tasks of the book are, first of all, to respond to the need to conduct timely and critical analyses of art across political divides in both informing and echoing the public search for agency, dialogue, and self-representation; and, secondly, to analyse how artists across the world use aesthetic means to transform these social relations into a shared commitment to bridging political divides and conflicts. Beyond the politics of art, the contributors conceptualize art, agonism, and participation within the broader registers of political, social, and cultural differences. In light of the multifaceted opportunities of art practices to articulate counter-hegemonic voices, stories, and narratives, the authors look beyond the overt

[3] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26, 1990, p. 70.

messages of these practices and the procedures of "politics" of art towards recognizing their powers in creating agonistic and socially active places, relations, and coexistences.

Dissensus, Dialogical Communication, and Agonism

Jacques Rancière understands politics as opening a void of possibility in the partition of the sensible, wherein new political subjects emerge despite the police principle, which strives to maintain fixed roles. For Rancière, art's aesthetic is a social arena where individuals and the community come together to recompose the shared sensorium.[4] In its constant contesting of partition and exclusion, as opposed to uniting and inclusion, Rancière's philosophy could be recognized as closely related to the struggle of the oppressed for spatial and temporal reconfiguration and representation. Such politicization of ordinary citizens and their demands for the political space of visibility and speech that belong to them would open the way to true democratic representation and revolutionary politics. Rancière's remark that "words, stories and performances can help us change something in the world in which we live" points to the dialogical exchange among diverse actors and, more specifically, their aesthetic exchanges. Hence, Rancière's theory of aesthetics and politics emphasizes the conceptualization of political subjectivity based on action, dialogue, and dissensus that are not based on the "essence" of political or artistic thought.

For Rancière, politics is the configuration of the everyday world in which everybody is in their place, performing their role in society. He articulates this as the police order that passes itself off as *real*. True politics, then, starts with dissensus. When this sense-making mechanism is broken, the distribution of justice can be reconfigured: "[dissensus] is a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what has to be heard as the voice

[4] Jacques Rancière, "The Emancipated Spectator," *Artforum*, March 2007, pp. 271–281; Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and Its Discontents*, translated by Steven Corcoran (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009); Jacques Rancière, "The Paradoxes of Political Art," in *Dissensus: on Politics and Aesthetics*, edited by Steve Corcoran (London; New York: Continuum, 2010); Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp, *Reading Rancière: Critical Dissensus* (London: Continuum, 2011).

of pain and what has to be heard as the argument on justice."[5] Dissensus is not a conflict between groups or people. It is a conflict about the existence or nonexistence of our common world, and what is included, who is included, and how they are included in that common world. Rancière explains that class war should also be understood in terms of dissensus, as: "not the conflict between groups which have opposite economic interests, but the conflict about what an 'interest' is, the struggle between those who set themselves as able to manage social interests and those who are supposed to be only able to reproduce their life."[6]

Like Rancière, Chantal Mouffe insists on moving away from the desire for consensus and recognizing and accommodating antagonism, which necessarily produces pluralism. Mouffe looks at identity in Derridean terms: "the constitution of an identity is always based on excluding something and establishing a violent hierarchy between the resultant two poles – form/matter, essence/accident, black/white, man/woman, and so on."[7] Therefore, for Mouffe, antagonism is necessary, for "every identity is relational and … the condition of existence of every identity is the affirmation of a difference, the determination of an 'other' that is going to play the role of a 'constitutive outside.'"[8] She argues that "cultural and artistic practices could play an important role in the agonistic struggle because they are a privileged terrain for the construction of new subjectivities."[9] Mouffe and Rancière ascribe to art a unique potential to instigate a disruption in the existing sensory and discursive regime and to contest the emergence of hegemonic consensus. The contributors test the hypothesis that the dialogical relations that connect contested places and people in conflict can create an agonistic togetherness involving participation, interpretation, and creation – a weaving together of what is witnessed, known and recollected.

The book's discursive framework is also indebted to Mikael Bakhtin's understanding of dialogic communication. His theorization of dialogue and

[5] Bowman and Stamp, *Reading Rancière*, p. 2.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 141.
[8] Ibid., p. 2.
[9] Ibid.

dialogism offers complimentary conceptual tools with inclusive and liberating capacities that can be useful for the understanding of agonistic coexistence. We propose that dialogue provides freedom, creativity, and independence for establishing reciprocal relationships among agonistic subjects. According to this dialogical approach, the artist and the community are reciprocal and politically equal participants with unique qualities. Bakhtin's understanding of dialogue goes beyond a mere conversation or a type of narrative articulation in the process of communication. It is an interaction of a plurality of voices geared towards new understandings, connections, or possibilities. Dialogue has the capability to initiate the development of sophisticated ideas. Bakhtin writes that: "all else is the means, dialogue is the end. A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence."[10] His approach focuses on the idea of polyphony in creating plural societies with a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses."[11] Bakhtin's understanding of polyphony refers to the equality of voices interacting with each other where no single voice, particularly not an authorial voice, is important.[12] He also emphasizes that a dialogue can involve multiple participants and various perspectives in a shared existence. The many examples in this book's chapters show how disparate beings and ideas confront each other in their encounters with artistic ideas and experiences.

Echoing Rancière's, Mouffe's, and Bakhtin's perspectives on democratic communities, the chapters in this volume contest the many earlier claims that art's power is located in its originality and message, and instead show that its politics consist of the shaking of the usual order of things, relationships, and perspectives. Through conceptual framings of pluralism of dialogue and agonistic coexistence, the authors invite us to think about how art can and cannot reveal the circumstances of identities becoming hierarchical and violent, and how to bridge the political gap between those identities. The authors contend that the production of common worlds via

[10] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, edited by Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 252.
[11] Ibid., p. 6.
[12] Ibid., p. 7.

artistic practices in contested spaces operates within and against a more complex social totality of contemporary capitalism that is overdetermined by the social relations of production. The wide variety of artworks from around the world examined here have different methodological and conceptual engagements and social contexts. Still, they have a shared political drive to break away from normalized ways of seeing, doing, and viewing art. Thus, while engaged in creating another sociality and politicality, these works of art have less to do with creating consensus and more to do with locating a political demand with regards to how we share our encounters with the world in which we live.

Art as a Tool of Agonistic Coexistence

For scholars defining the space of "the political" through agonistic politics, there is no confrontation between power and freedom since the two are constitutive of each other. The question is how to create and structure power that will allow for "agonistic confrontations" that are more "compatible with democratic values."[13] The framework of the "agonistic confrontations" which could lead to "agonistic coexistence" is especially productive for this volume because it shows how the struggle for plurality and democracy happens in many parts of the world. Michel Foucault explains his understanding of agonism within the states and governments of power. Foucault writes that "the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the "agonism" between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is an increasingly political task – even, the political task that is inherent in all social existence."[14] While Foucault and his followers conceptualize agonism in relation to power and freedom, Mouffe uses it as an essential component in democratizing social conflicts.

For Paulina Tambakaki, Mouffe's use of passion is an instrument for a commitment to democratic plurality, where differences cannot be resolved through common reason. She writes that, for Mouffe: "Passion defines

[13] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London; New York: Verso, 2000), pp. 17–21.
[14] Michel Foucault, *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954–1984*, edited by James D Faubion, translated by Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin Books, 2002), p. 343.

democratic practice because it captures the type of (necessary) tie or bond that develops among democratic citizenries; that is, all those identifications – practices and discourses – that at one and the same time constitute collectivities and unite citizenries."[15] Mihaela Mihai, further discusses that Mouffe's use of passion is rooted in the construction of affective response. She notes: "Mouffe's idea that affect must support identification with democratic aims, i.e. must be made compatible with the ethico-political principles democracies are based on, presupposes an understanding of passions as malleable, transformable, sociable."[16]

Yet, as Mouffe argues, evoking emotions through resistance, political appeals, or artwork is insufficient. "Not all emotions and not all ways of expressing them are conducive to adversarial encounters," Mihai warns while paraphrasing Mouffe. Strong emotions attached to an essentialist or other non-democratic strategies or values may make agonism revert to antagonism. In this case, fostering emotions that could be used in agonistic struggles becomes the role of the institutions.[17] Institutions such as museums and galleries should be able to create an environment where affective responses can serve the agonistic coexistence and foster adversarial debates. This volume argues that affect is a vital tool in creating opportunities for agonistic discussions fostering emotional projects and, more importantly, that in some cases galleries and other institutions are not ready to represent and allow for agonistic voices. It follows that grassroots, individual artistic performances are needed to foster affective events among politically divided audiences (Myzelev, Grewal, Tunali). The contributors in this book investigate whether art can be a force to mobilize the affective responses of diverse groups in conflict with each other to consolidate a political potential for agonism.

The contributors follow Alina Kolańczyk's definition of an affective reaction as a "momentary, positive or negative reaction of an organism to a

---

[15] Paolina Tambakaki, "The Tasks of Agonism and Agonism to the Task: Introducing 'Chantal Mouffe: Agonism and the Politics of Passion," *Parallax*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, p. 6.
[16] Mihaela Mihai, "Theorizing Agonistic Emotions," *Parallax*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, p. 9.
[17] Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, p. 104.

change in the environment or in the subject itself."[18] When experiencing an artwork, one often encounters intense feelings of empathy, horror, and beauty; sometimes, it is a feeling that is impossible to define. Such an initial encounter, created outside our cognitive faculties of perception, is called an "affective event."[19] While earlier in the history of art witnessing or experiencing an artwork was related to aesthetic enjoyment and the awe-inspiring experience of looking at what was considered a work of genius – or what Walter Benjamin would call the "aura" – in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the aesthetic experience is thought to affect the beholder's perceptual experience. Luiza Nader notes that "the questions of what we feel and why, and whose affects and emotions works of art project on us, belong both to the sphere of intimate questions and to that of important political ones."[20] Mihai further explains that scholars see the formation of emotions as based partly on an individual's biological constitution and partly on the social background.[21] In this case, we can explain why people react to art differently and with varied intensity. Teresa Brennan argues that affect forces us to bid farewell to the concept of individualism.[22] While affective experience seems individual, it is in reality completely immersive and based on what a work of art can provide. For instance, Altomonte discusses how Palestinian artist Khaled Jarrar uses relatable objects, such as a soccer ball, to produce affective responses to the separation between Palestine and Israel. Such objects and artworks have the potential not only to appeal to the emotions of the marginalized – in this

[18] Alina Kolańczyk, "Procesy Afektywne i Orientacja w Otoczeniu," in *Serce w Rozumie. Afektywne Podstawy o Rientacji w Otoczeniu*. (Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, 2004), p. 16.

[19] While affective event theory was developed by Cropanzano et al. to predict and measure job satisfaction, it has been utilized to explain artistic and emotional responses. Russell Cropanzano, Marie T Dasborough, and Howard M Weiss, "Affective Events and the Development of Leader–Member Exchange," *The Academy of Management Review*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2017, pp. 233–58. See, for instance, Ernst Van Alphen, "Affective Operations of Art and Literature," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2008, pp. 20–30.

[20] Luiza Nader, "An Affective Art History," *Teksty Drugie*, no. 2, 2015, pp. 236–61.

[21] Mihaela Mihai, "Theorizing Agonistic Emotions," *Parallax*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2014, p. 14.

[22] Teresa Brennan, "Introduction," in *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 1–23.

case, the Palestinians – but also to create emotions in their adversaries – the Israelis.

Yet, as Mouffe argues, evoking emotions through resistance, political appeals, or artwork is insufficient. "Not all emotions and not all ways of expressing them are conducive to adversarial encounters," Mihai warns while paraphrasing Mouffe. Strong emotions attached to an essentialist or other non-democratic strategies or values may make agonism revert to antagonism. In this case, fostering emotions that could be used in agonistic struggles becomes the role of the institutions.[23] Institutions such as museums and galleries should be able to create an environment where affective responses can serve the agonistic coexistence and foster adversarial debates. This volume argues that affect is a vital tool in creating opportunities for agonistic discussions fostering emotional projects and, more importantly, that in some cases galleries and other institutions are not ready to represent and allow for agonistic voices. It follows that grassroots, individual artistic performances are needed to foster affective events among politically divided audiences (Myzelev, Grewal, Tunali). The contributors in this book claim that examples of outbursts of artistic energies create democratic encounters because they constitute a creative space as a common space. This commonality serves as the moderating and dialogical element in their confrontations with each other, which prevents antagonism and violence while bringing them into an open and plural coexistence rather than a consensual and harmonious one.

The Volume's Organization

In the first chapter, Gohmert and Malek discuss the collaborative artwork *Entre Quatro Paredes*. This work's public performance and interactive installation comprised four collapsing walls, emphasizing separation in political and domestic realms. The four artistic collaborators emphasize Germany's xenophobic past and comment on the increasingly less tolerant views of the populist right in Germany, the European Union, and the United States. The design of the four walls, based on DDR aesthetics, refers to a time when the performance's location was behind the Iron Curtain, before

[23] Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, p. 104.

the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The performance took place in Weimar and evoked the history of the Bauhaus art movement's progressive and inclusive ideas, and the history of Nazism that obliterated Bauhaus. Gohmert and Malak record the experiences of the four women artists who created the work and were around during each installation to explain to and guide the visitors. According to artists Gohmert and Malak, participatory art is a powerful tool to engage people by placing them in a more receptive state of open-mindedness and democratic sociality.

The relatively simple structure and clear idea of the performance allowed the artists to create opportunities for the audience to reflect on domestic violence against women, which also often remains taboo and happens privately between four walls. The artwork responded to the connotations of domestic violence by turning domestic rooms outward. It is the dualism – between "us" and "them," between inside and outside, between artist and spectator, between public and private space, between "West" and "non-West" – that *Entre Quatro Paredes* sees as epistemologically problematic, primarily because these oppositions have been constructed by the Western culture to support Western hegemony. Perpetuating such dichotomies only serves colonialist, misogynistic, and racist agendas and power structures. The chapter discusses how these walls have acquired a variety of often-conflicting meanings. During the performance, the artists become spectators, and the spectators become artists; the walls are simultaneously an object and an agent, private and public, "us" and "them." The performance then becomes simultaneous in that it produces meaning, and instead of creating meaning that is binary and oppositional, the conversations and affective responses to the artwork are dialogical. The walls, then, express simultaneity rather than "dichotomous differences." With this strategy, the artists perpetuate the understanding that what participants bring to dialogue is fused in encounters with different meanings. Therefore, in the dialogue inherent in participatory art, participants experience a fusion of horizons and unity in difference. *Entre Quatro Paredes* uses its role as an instigator of conflict-oriented artwork to expose that every individual actively takes a side as a participant on the public stage, whether they are silent or not.