



T h e r e a r e n o l o c a l s

K r i s t o f f e r S v e n b e r g

This is a collection of my art-works that relate to surfing in different ways. Surfing is part of pop-culture in the contemporary and placed in these projects as something that seeks to reach a wider audience than most regular art audiences. Surfing can be the key subject matter, but also serves as a medium, a materiality, and something to read symbolically and metaphorically as a power-position. My departure into the projects is through photography, problematizing what mediation is and how representation occurs. Things are always more complex than the representation.

These projects are dealing with inquiries on cultural imperialism, ideals, norms, gender, heritage from colonialism, post-colonial theory and gentrification processes.



“There are no locals in...” ?

Houses and hotels with sea views are highly valued. But if a house is considered to be isolated from a center, its economic value will fall. More recently, from a global perspective, statistics have shown the connection between houses located near good surf spots and a rising economic value.

Bali is a small island in Indonesia that has been completely transformed through the tourism industry. The mass tourism of this island began with wave surf tourism. And it's a common saying that it started after the premiere of the surf movie *Morning of The Earth* (1972). The film contains footage from Bali as an unexploited beautiful and harmonic paradise with amazing waves. Bali has since developed into a Mecca for surf culture.

A lot of Balinese locals are currently protesting publicly against the extensive exploitation of the island. They point to the international tourism industry, the ruling economic elite and the political power of Jakarta as responsible. The problems that the locals address, among other things, are that they themselves become invisible, run over by the ruling elite, without getting their own say.

As an artist I explore colonial heritage and trends through a globalized surf culture. Is surf culture sometimes so dominant that in some cases it displaces other cultural expressions?

I met an established art curator (producer) from Jakarta, Indonesia, that did a presentation in Stockholm, Sweden. One of the subject matters was Indonesia's current relation to a colonial history and the colonizers.

During the presentation I wrote down notes and some questions to ask. My first question was about the protest-movement “Tolak-Reklamasi” in Bali. The curator didn't really want to say or answer anything about this ongoing movement and also declared the Island to exoticized and too much of bad taste to discuss. My answer back was that the Island still exist no matter if you consider it bad taste or not.

In a critical part of a discussion that followed from this, the curator

pronounces something very remarkable with stating these exact words:

“There are no locals in Bali.”

I got stunned by the statement. What does it mean? No matter how you twist and turn on this statement, in relation to Indonesias history, it is very problematic and oppressive. Not at least when one of the main messages of the demonstrating Balinese is: “We exist!”

The Balinese is a minority group in Indonesia.

The segregation and gentrification in Bali are evident today. Gentrification is a displacement process. Those who are not financially strong enough to buy houses, pay rent or live the everyday life in an area are getting displaced. Profits on rising square meter prices control the development. This leads to consequences for the cultural identity of places since the variation in residents is replaced by one and the same class. In certain areas of Bali it means that the tourism-industry is pushing away the locals. In general terms is gentrification processes especially evident and strong in central cities, but also along ocean coastal stretches.

Is it possible to say that surf culture is part of, and accelerates, gentrification processes? This considering how places around good surf spots are attractive and how they are used. Those areas are nowadays, in cases when there are no laws protecting them, getting privatized. Is access to the great open sea and the waves a class issue in an economically neo-liberal world?



*The Re-Search, Towel, 150x97cm, 2019.
From the performancework: I dare you to
lick your screen 2019-2020.*



1. I dare you to lick your screen

Performance (ca 15 min), towels, smartphone 2019-2020

“...One of the blog posts has the title: I dare you to lick your screen. And in the blogpost there is a black square. Underneath this black square it is written: I dare you to lick your screen...”

Excerpt from: I dare you to lick your screen

This performance is about conspiracy-theories, religion, surfing and the Internet. I use printed cotton towels, a material that provides proximity to subject areas, such as beaches, hotels etc, of the presentation.

It's also a very soft and handy material to work with that implicates my body across time and place. When I point out details in the printed towels, parts of the material crumble together, and then later unfold again. I can throw them up over my shoulders, throw them away, drop them in a pile on the floor, etc.

As part of the introduction, I present a blog post with the title: “I dare you to lick your screen”. In the end, I follow this up through a symbolic connection. At the same moment, the audience is also getting invited and welcome to accept this challenge. I finish by licking the screen on my mobile phone.

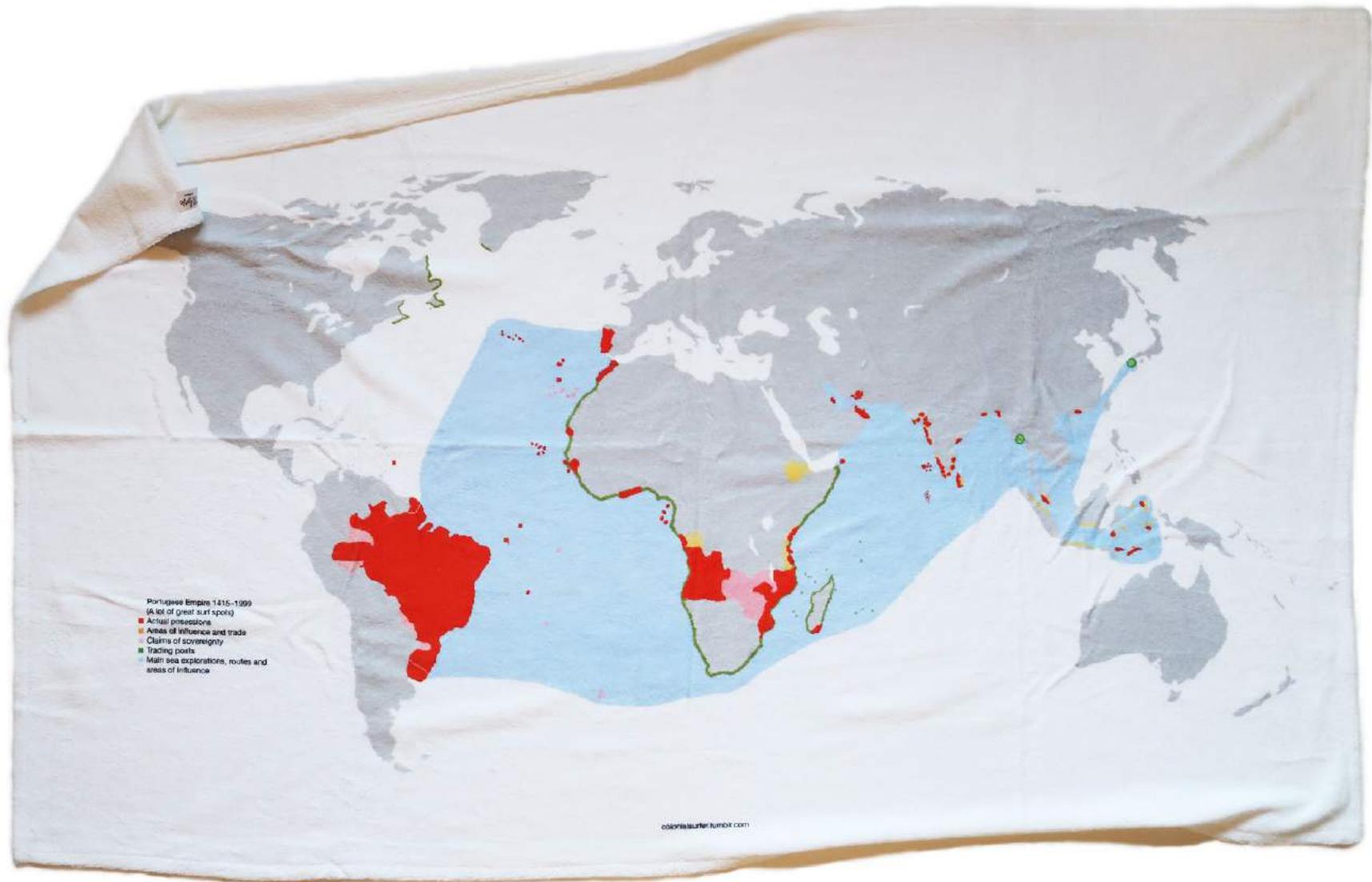


*I dare you to lick your screen, performance
(15 min). ID:I galleri, Stockholm 2019.
Photo: Leah Landau*



I dare you to lick your screen, studio rehearsal,
performance (15min), 2019





Portuguese Empire 1415-1999 (A lot of great surf spots), towel 150x97cm, 2019. From the performance: I dare you to lick your screen 2019-2020



*Bali Billboard, Towel, 150x97cm, 2019.
From the performancework: I dare you to
lick your screen 2019-2020.*



Surfers & Cowboys, towel 150x97cm, 2019.
From the performance: *I dare you to lick
your screen* 2019-2020



*Walking on water, towel 150x97cm, 2019.
From the performance: I dare you to lick
your screen 2019-2020*



Surfing The Nations [Internet], towel 150x97cm, 2019. From the performance: I dare you to lick your screen 2019-2020



Surfing The Nations - (Colonial Surfer project), towel 150x97cm, 2019. From the performance: I dare you to lick your screen 2019-2020



2. Mark x in the yes or no box

Video 36 min (loop), 2017-2020

In the silent video *Mark X in the yes or no box*, we get to see sceneries and filmed views, smooth camera rides and tracking shots in global airports. They give the feeling that something is about to happen, but no coherent narration follows. I have edited these airport scenes out from feature films but omitted what they are about.

How do our lived narratives relate to our surroundings and the environment? What are the mediated stories? Which ones are the real ones?



Mark x in the yes or no box, video 36 min (loop), From soloexhibition: *Perfect*, IDKA, Konstfrämjandet Gävleborg. Gävle 2017



Flight	Destination	Time	Remarks	Gate
SK 9366	COPENHAGEN	11.55	BOARDING	B27
MX 871	MEXICO CITY	2.35	ON TIME	B25
AC 739	MONTREAL	6.40		
AC 701	TORONTO	6.55		B20
UA 807	SEOUL	7.00		B24
UA 837	HONG KONG	7.00		B42
AC 321	VANCOUVER	7.30		B22
AC 307	OTTAWA	7.55		B27
UA 853	BEIJING	9.00	9.20 DELAYED	B46
AC 743	MONTREAL	9.00		B25
UA 881	SEOUL	9.00		B40
AC 705	TORONTO	9.10		B30
UA 1667	SAN JUAN	9.15		B44
AC 707	TORONTO	10.10		B23

All pictures on this page: Mark x in the yes or no box, video 36 min (loop), 2017





The Indian Ocean, glass, silicon and water from *The Indian Ocean* 30x42x2cm. 2004-2005

3. The Indian Ocean

Glass, silicon and water from The Indian Ocean, 30x42x2cm, 2004-2005

While travelling in Indonesia, I collected water from the Indian Ocean. I kept three liters in two 1.5-liter cap bottles and brought them home to Sweden: part souvenir, part art project. Then I asked a glassmaker to construct something like a very thin, narrow aquarium. A sculpture measuring 30x42x2 cm. I filled up the construction halfway with the water from The Indian Ocean.

As a sculpture this is imitating a picture and a very classic motif in art history: the sea horizon. With the title *The Indian Ocean*, I focus on water. Water, in a very clear and obvious sense, is part of our one eternal cycle of circulation. Water, as a resource, is also predicted in the future to have the same political

position globally as oil has today.

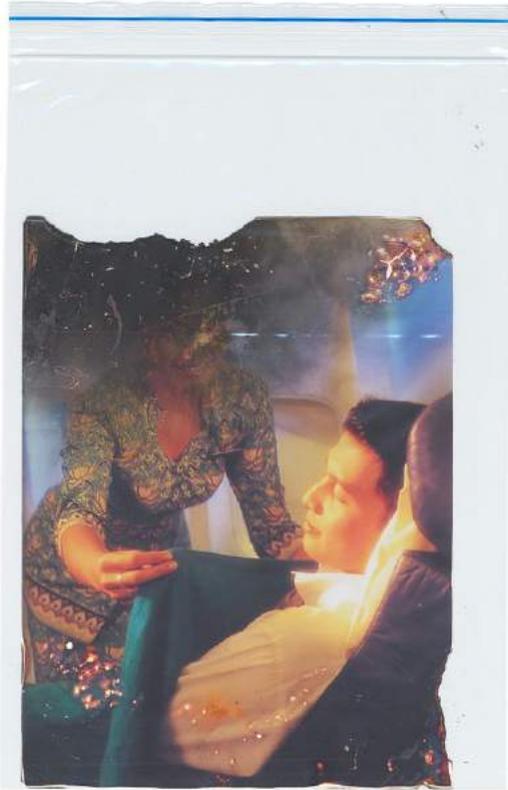
With the work, I discuss the human need to name, conceptualize and place things in compartments. I ask questions about the site-specific and the real place's importance. The geographical movement of the water is also linking to concepts of power relations, postcolonial theory, and representation.

The first time I exhibited this work was in a group show with documentary photography as the theme.

4. On the flight

Photography c-print, 2007

This work is a piece of evidence and a clue. The title *On the flight* is set as a metaphor for mediation.



On the flight, photography c-print,
40x30cm, 2007

5. The Barbershop

Video 13 min, 2011

Surfing The Nations is a missionary organization that uses wave surfing as a medium to spread Christianity around the world. A very colonial practice. As a critical role play, I worked as a missionary in Sri Lanka within the organization, playing a role in a dishonest way. I did not relate to what I did as an undercover journalist method. I was rather focusing on this as an art-performance*.

Out of this project several works have got developed as different forms of documentation. Such as the video: The Barbershop.

As part of the organization's practice, we repainted inside the hairdressing salon centrally located in Arugam Bay in south-east Sri Lanka. The video-work The Barbershop is a document of this process: a problematic practice through how the organization carries out a color scheme and design according to its terms and ideas, rather than the needs or wishes of the locals. It is the missionary's stories that are getting told and presented through this re-designing process.

An abuse through design as a medium. When we as a group arrive, the barber's name and other information are written with ornamental colorful letters on the glass pane facing the street. Partly with letters from the Latin alphabet, and partly as Tamil writing. Tamil is the oldest language that exists in our world today that is still widely spoken, a language that originates about 3000 years before Christ. These letters we carefully scrape away every part of. During the time we are in Sri Lanka, these letters are not getting replaced with any new ones.

**Through similarity and few visible differences from undercover journalism, it may seem somewhat puzzling here to call it an art-performance. But it is about the context and the perspective. It is in a similar way as when an object is used as readymade in an art gallery. In that context it is primarily a work of art and not the object itself.*



The Barbershop, video 13 min, 2011

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pi7ZK81xeEI&t=>



The Barbershop, video 13 min, 2011

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pi7ZK81xeEI&t=>



Abstract oppression, painting, wall color,
Konstfack 2011

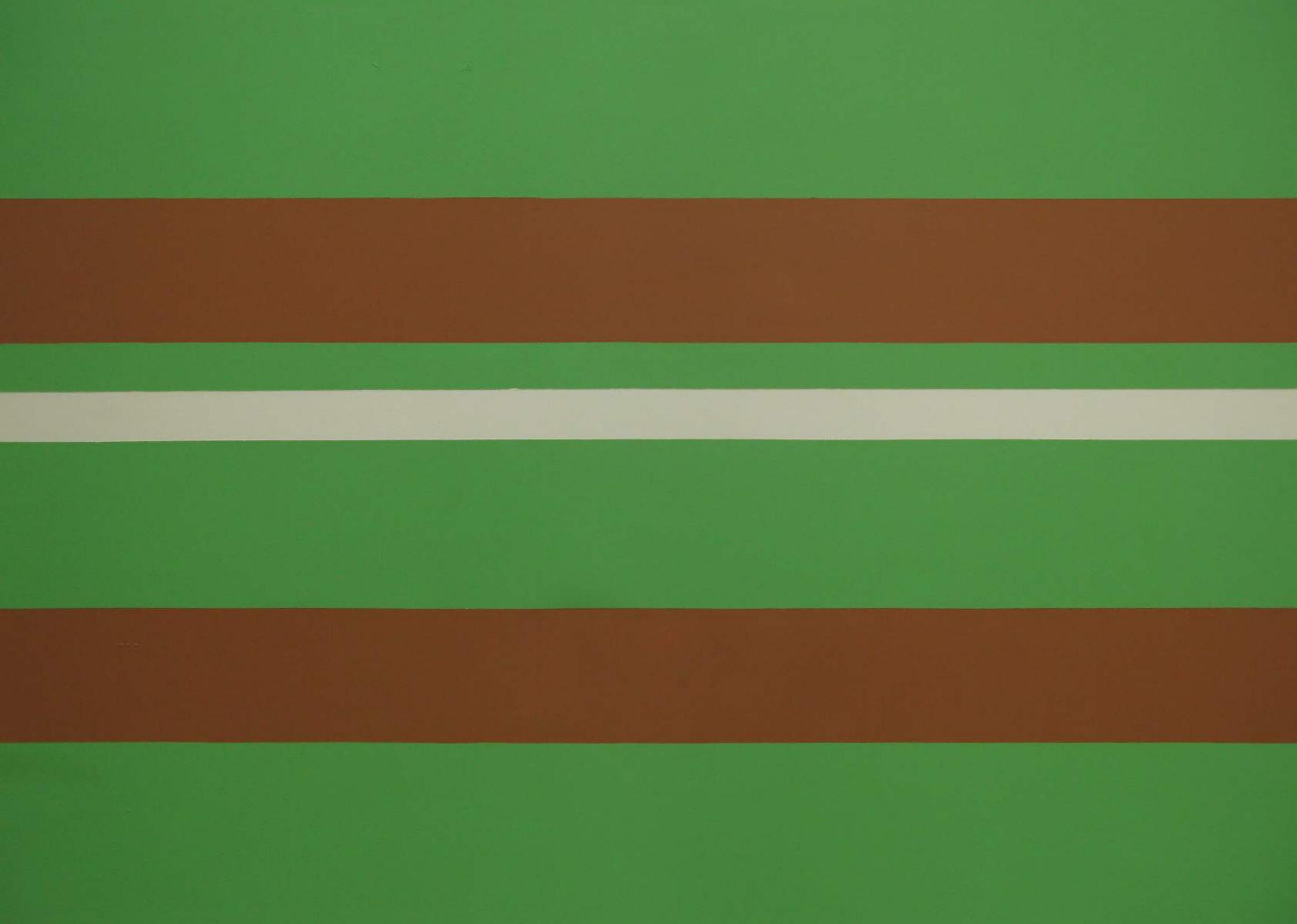
6. Abstract oppression

Painting, wall-color, Konstfack 2011

These stripes get painted on all the walls of a hair salon in Arugam Bay, Sri Lanka by an American Christian missionary organization built up by surfers. Is it a coincidence that it is precisely this aesthetic that is getting painted in the Lankesian hairdressing salon by this group?

Can abstract aesthetics be political? A wall painted in horizontal stripes. It looks like a modernism artwork. Is there something inherent in this aesthetic?

Aesthetics of stripes and monochrome color fields are in the current society connected to ideas of modernity and rationality. Such aesthetics are also widely used in commercial contexts as part of the brand's identity-making etc. The fact that the content is not so explicitly stated, makes it understood, or can be deceived as non-political. But aesthetic renegotiations and transformations happen around us in everyday life with different ideas about concepts of identity, ideology and belonging. In cities of today it is part of ongoing gentrification processes. In the work *The Barbershop*, these stripes are getting linked to a colonial practice.





*Abstract oppression, towel, 150x97cm,
2019. From the performance: I dare you to
lick your screen 2019-2020*



The Barbershop, video 13 min,
painting, wall-paint, Microstoria,
Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh,
Scotland 2011

7. Secular Surface - Surfing The Nations

Text 2016, 2019

The sociologist John Urry says that in Europe from the 1600s to the early 1800s, traveling as “leisure” changed from a focus on opportunities for conversation and discussion to a lens for eyewitness observation. This development can be linked to romanticism and its interest in landscapes and worshipers of recreation and personal enjoyment. Later in history photography made a strong entry, and traveling found its conceptual position as tourism. Travelling did then become a picture.

Images within the surf culture are very similar in the aesthetics to romanticism and their categories of motifs. With art projects around wave surfing, I investigate and problematize something that can be described as a neo-romantic movement and direction. I see this as politically relevant aim to have in a turbulent era characterized by globalization.

Through this art project, I want to bring back spoken language and discussions in to a context that is very much defined by image-making.

Link [English Version Part 1]:

http://www.kristoffersvenberg.com/PDF/Secular_Surface_Svenberg_Eng_Part_1.pdf

Link [Swedish Version Full]:

http://www.kristoffersvenberg.com/PDF/Secular_Surface_Svenberg_Del1_2.pdf



SECULAR SURFACE
SURFING THE NATIONS
KRISTOFFER SVENBERG

8. UN-STN-LOGO(S)

Digital image, 2016

A pixelated symbol very similar to the UN logo. The inscription reads: Surfing The Nations. Gliding on the surface of nations seems like a caricature of, or critical waving to, the UN. It was through the Internet that I first came into contact with the organization Surfing The Nations. During their start-up and early years, they used this logo, but not anymore. The form is too similar to the UN logo for an organization or company to be able to patent and use it. However, it is free to make satire or art of it.



9. Secular Surface - Surfing The Nations

Video 24 min, 2011

Surfing The Nations is an organization that uses wave surfing as a tool to spread Christianity around the world. The reason for my work as a missionary for Surfing The Nations is that I see it as an art performance linked to my art practice. I act a played role as a convinced Christian. Nobody on site knows anything about my intentions. I am critical of my own actions in a similar way that I am critical of this organization.

With filmed material from Sri Lanka, I have made video works with reflections and focus on representation and power relations. But to reach the wave surfing scene and create discussion/friction, I have also worked with blogs, surf-fairs, and YouTube as distribution channels.

I myself play my role as a believer in this context, I feel like that the rest of our “Surfing The Nations” team also are there as actors. We play missionaries and aid workers. Is it because I myself lack a true belief that I perceive it like this? In some situations, this is amusing, but often just a tragic theater. The locals are also acting roles. They play games to catch us and are very creative in finding ways to do business with us.

In Christianity, honesty is highly valued. You must be true to yourself and you must be true to God. In surf culture it is also important to be genuine and authentic. You should be and do things for real. Otherwise, you are just a poser.

Secular Surface as a project discusses role-playing and global politics. Economic resources are of great importance, but also what roles we are playing from our positions, and why?

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH



Secular Surface - Surfing The Nations, video 24 min, 2011

Link to short intro: <https://youtu.be/boITW-h2zFE>



Secular Surface - Surfing The Nations, video 24 min, 2011

Link to video:: <https://youtu.be/CnGbpNSpuMw>



Secular Surface - Surfing The Nations, video 24 min, 2011

Link to video: <https://youtu.be/CnGbpNSpuMw>



10. HEROES - “All we do is surf”

Video 24 min, 2004

The video HEROES “All we do is surf” is an early mashup work from 2004. I have been setting rules while editing the material consisting of surf films, and the most important rule has been about deleting all scenes with surf waves. By regularly doing this, other parts of the films are getting compressed and more in focus. Perspective on the homosocial community, gender roles, representation, and power perspectives are being clarified and perceived to be overplayed.

At the same time is the video becoming something that is very much like every day popular culture. But since the intended main content of these videos is missing, the viewer’s perspective changes. I want to shift the viewer’s gaze to a problematizing and deconstructing perspective.

The material used is films that show impressive waves, cool maneuvers and a quick portrayal of surfers and lifestyles. Films that are there to inspire and sell the sport sponsored by various companies. I’ve grown up with watching these types of videos in skateboarding and snowboarding. Films that are done through a collage way of film-editing, rather than being about narratives. But the perspective became different for me when I saw surf films in public in Bali, Indonesia, 2001. Unequal representation became very obvious. Such as racial profiling while portraying surfers travelling the world. This is something I later explored more closely when I studied at the School of Photography in Gothenburg University 2004-2007.

When our surroundings are getting photographed and filmed, it is not only about depiction. Reality is getting generated through the mediated perspectives and their structures. This exerts displacements and involves performative action. We are often blind to its ideology when this happens through what is ideal, or something we experience as just normal.

**Video mashup as a cultural phenomenon on the Internet grew strongly during the early 2000s but died out a few years ago on platforms such as Youtube through unfavorable copyright filtering systems. At the same time, there are specific laws written today to protect mashup as cultural expression and art form. But some online filters are today more restrictive and ungainly than the laws.*



HEROES - “All we do is surf”, video 24 min, 2004

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IP27RQiHZYc>



11. Perfect

Photography c-prints 2017

In wave surfing culture, the term Perfect is used extensively as a superlative: “It was perfect, perfect conditions, perfect waves.” Perfect as a superlative means somehow that nothing needs to change.

Photography as a medium has, in our time, begun to lose its connection with a historical past more and more. It is no longer about when photographs are getting shot that is essential, but rather when they are getting shared and in what contexts. If you push this a bit in theory, the historical nostalgic aspect, which was previously characteristic of photography, changes and becomes instead a constant here and now.

On the walls, these pictures/sculptures hang in different constellations, and in different numbers, depending on how they play with the rest of the room. In terms of content, they repeat exactly, except that the colors differ considerably. The exact color coordinates are also inscribed in the titles. The images consist of monochrome surfaces and on each surface the word Perfect is written with Helvetica as the font. This word contrasts in each monochrome as the letters are in exact complement color against the single-colored surfaces. This turns into a closed circuit in light.

Precise complementary colors and photographs that do not seek to capture moments but instead exact meetings – a sculpture of photography.

Perfect, photography c-print 30x40cm,
bulldog clamps, 2017



Perfect, Photography c-print 30x40cm,
bulldog clamps, 2017



Perfect, photography c-prints 30x40cm, 2017

12. The Global Village - Bali

Photography c-prints

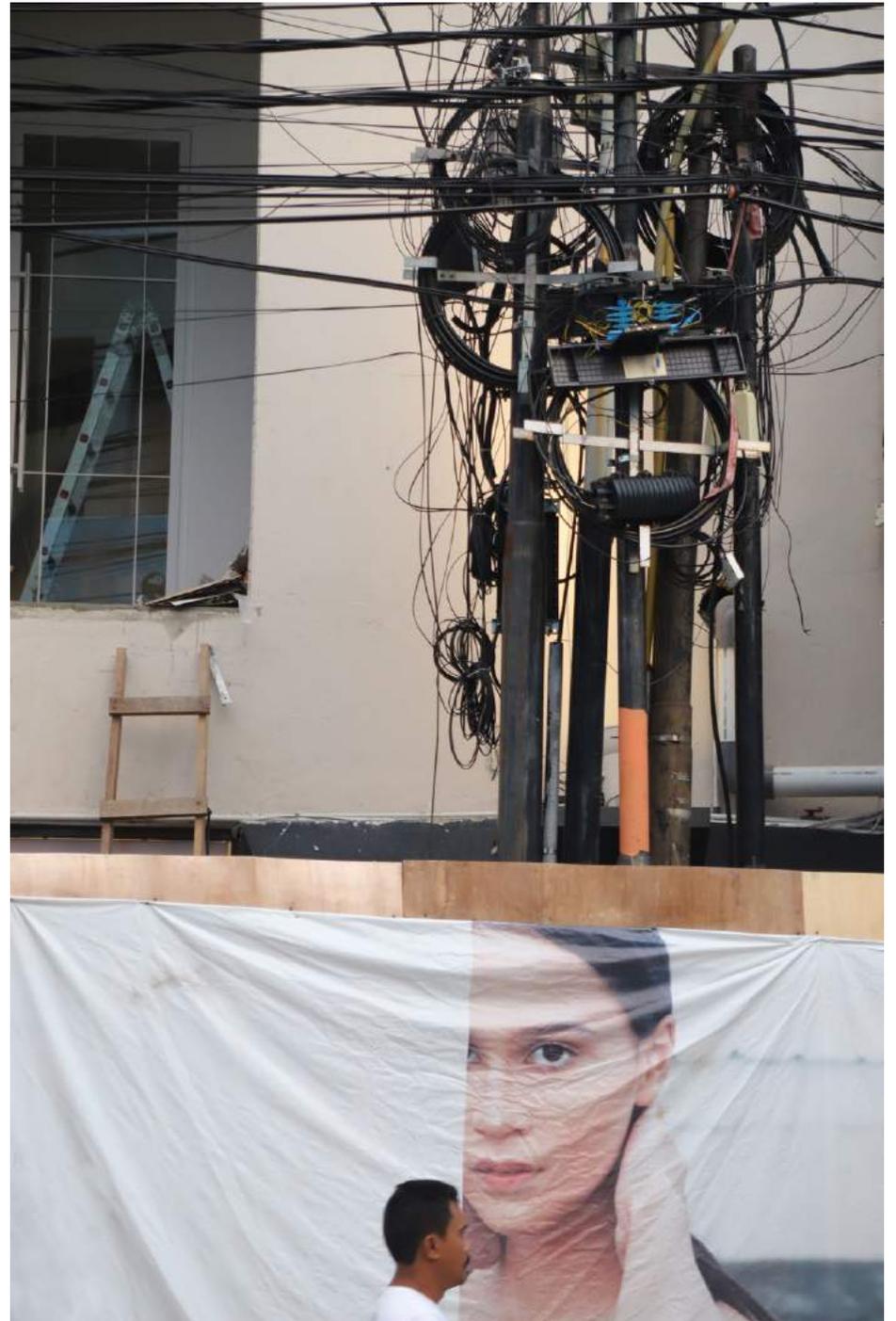
The title *The global village* is taken from a book by Marshall McLuhan from 1968. I am researching the island of Bali as a global node of mediation. I am doing this through photography, focusing mostly on already existing images in public space.

Bali is an island where the effects of globalization are clearly visible. With this project, I depict and ask questions about the globalized information society. The project is about Bali, but at the same time about the world we all live in and share, but not in equality. The situation is far from fair. Bali is a small island where several of the world's richest investors own land. Over time, more and more gated communities and fenced areas have been developed and built on the island. At the same time with those barriers and walls, there are ideas of freedom, liberalism, and boundlessness getting expressed and fabricated on this island in a neo-liberal manner.



*The Global Village - Bali, photography
c-print, 2018*









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PARIS

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HYONSE
CUSTOMER'S DREAM MASCARA

Turn up the volume to hypnotize.













TOUCH

Massage









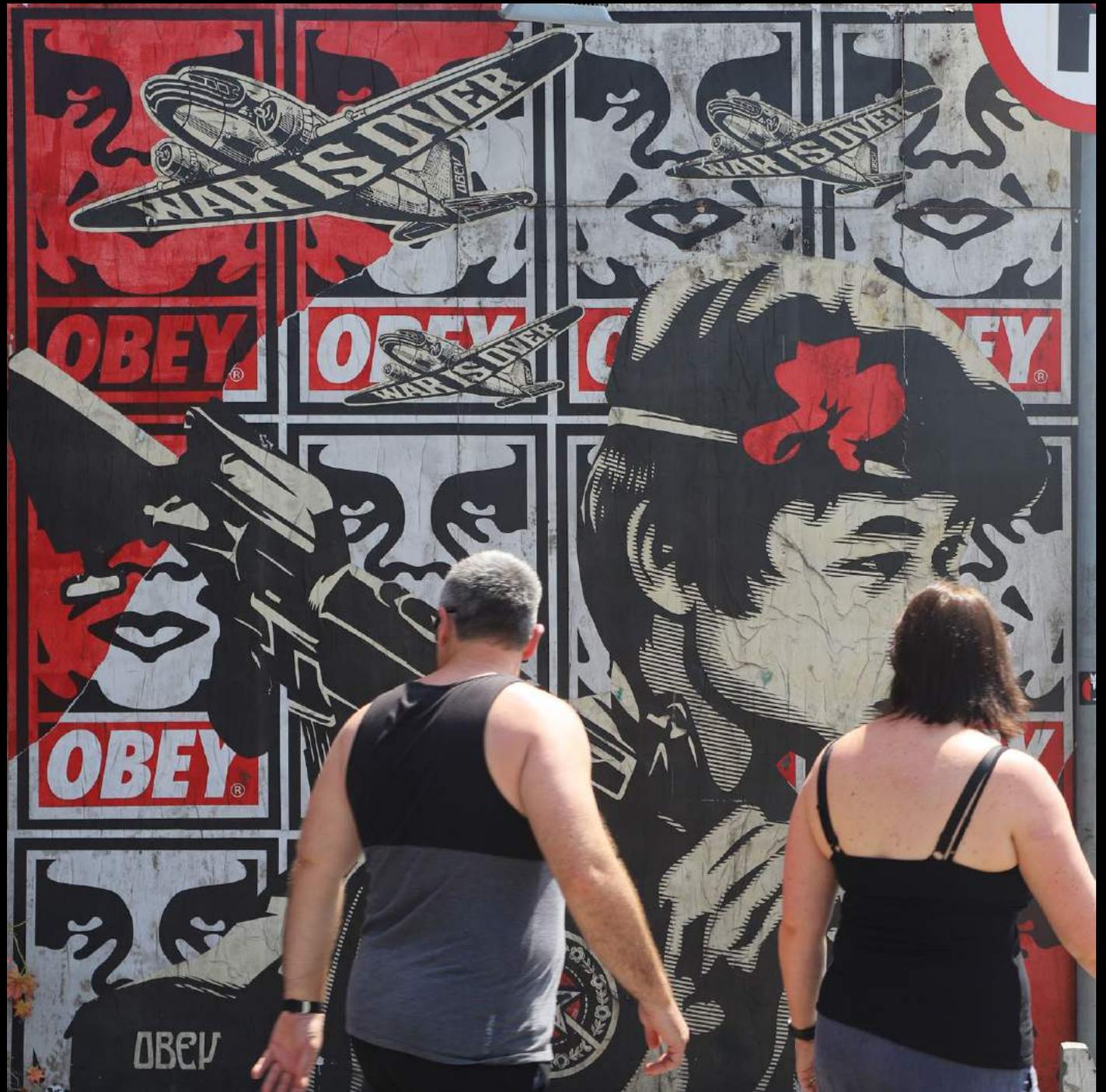








*The Global Village - Bali, Photography
c-print, 2018*



*Obey, War is over / The Global Village -
Bali, photography c-print, 2018*



*The Global Village - Bali, photography
c-print, 2018*

The medium is the message / The Global Village - Bali, photography c-print / digital image, 2019





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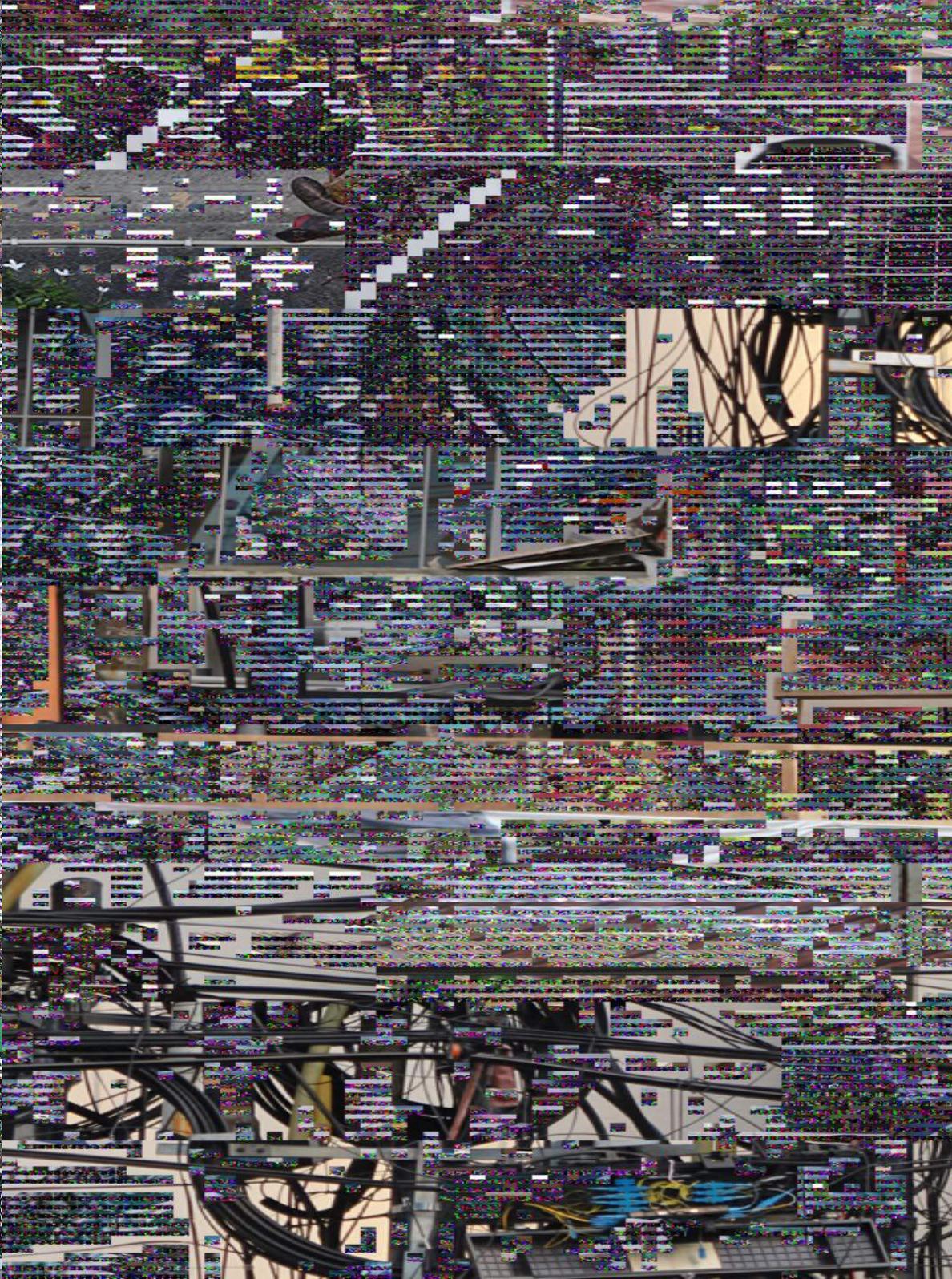
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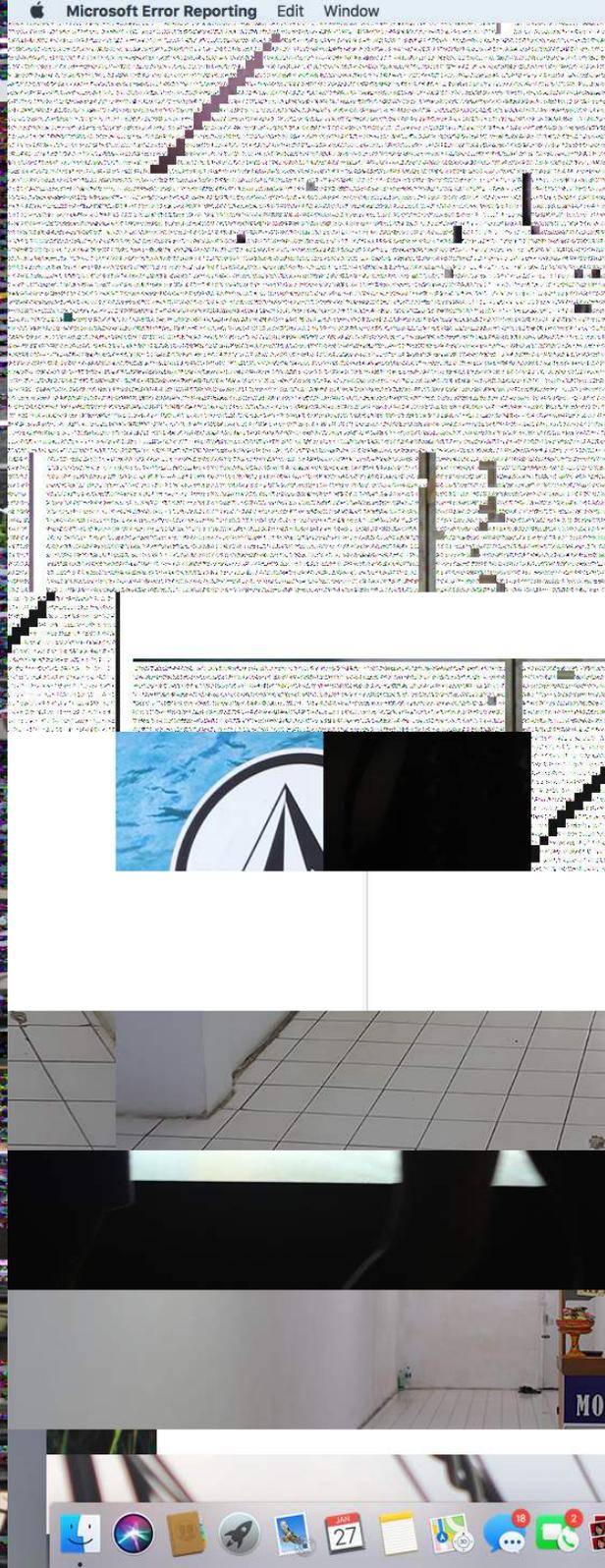
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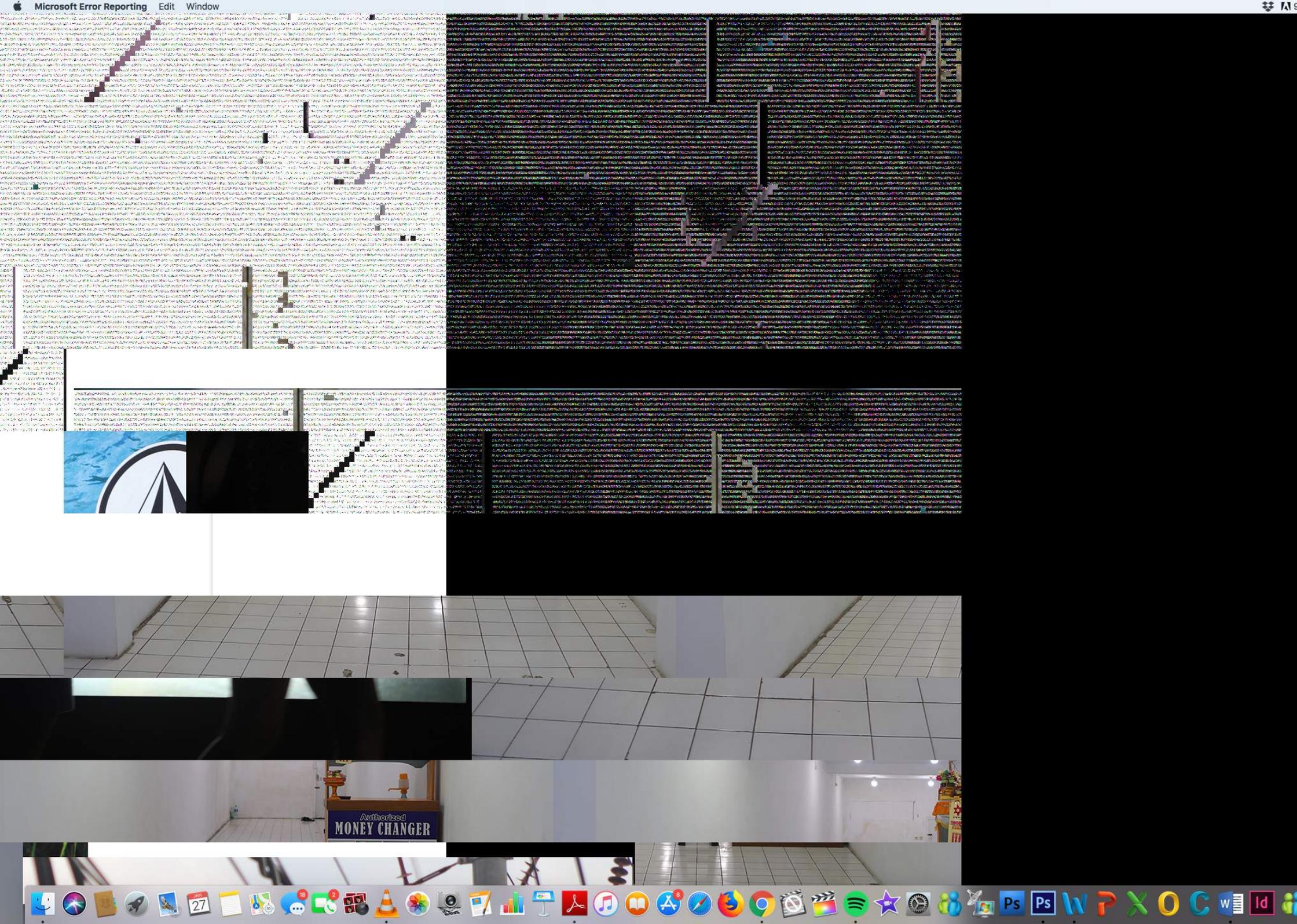
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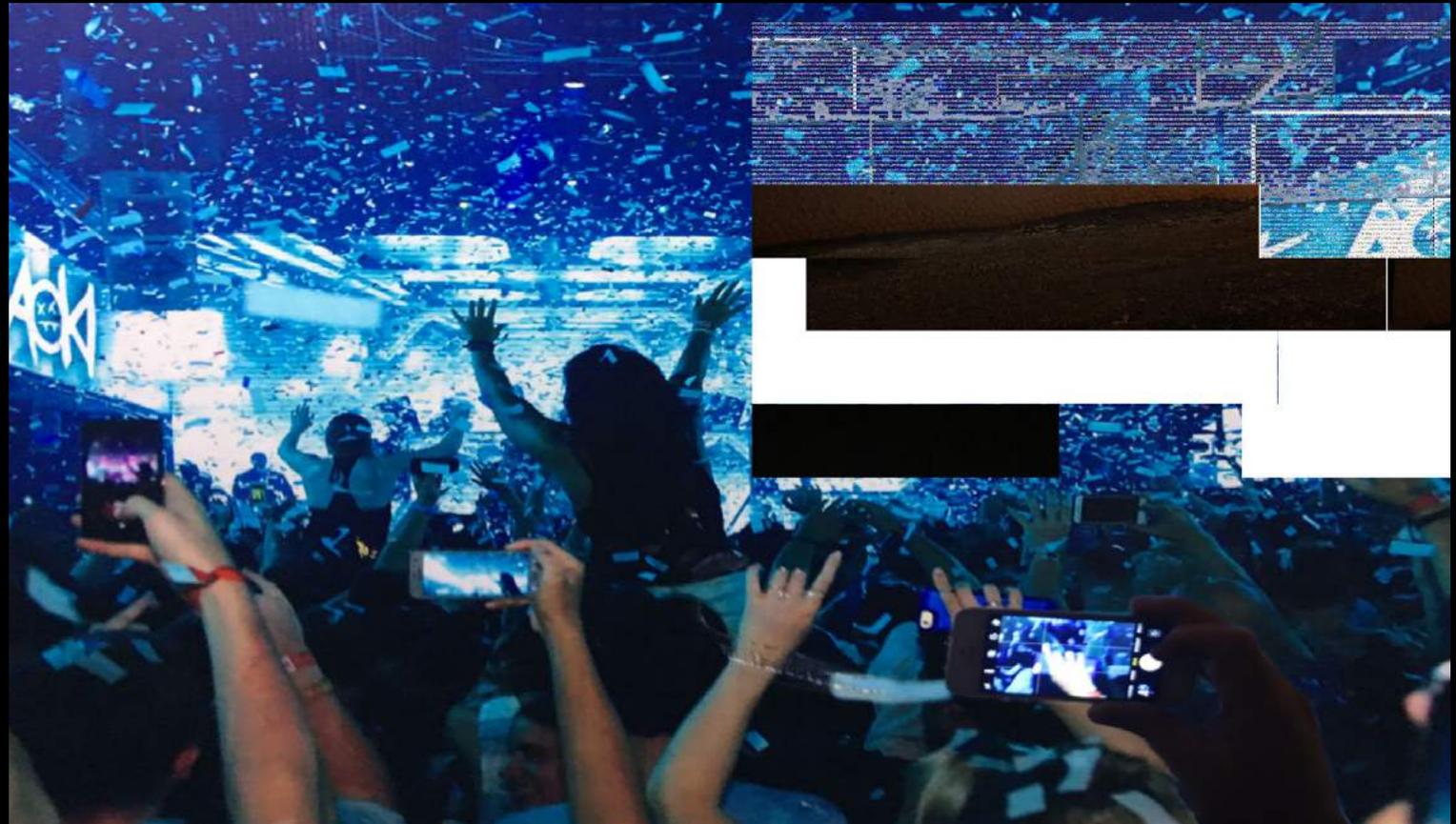
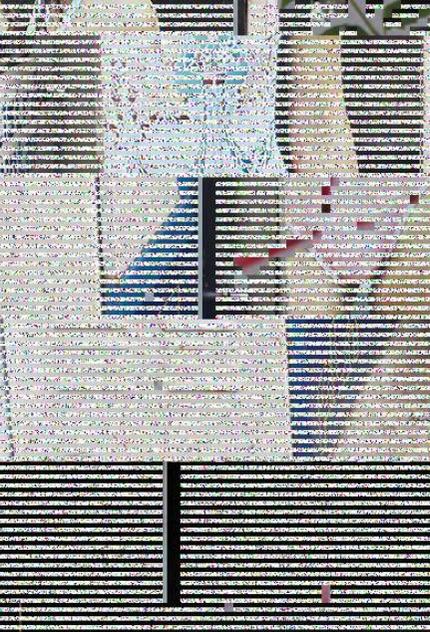




THE HOUSE OF PRAYER

THE HOUSE OF PRAYER
CHURCH









The medium is the message / The Global Village - Bali, Photography c-prints / digital image, 2018–2020

When I organize a material of very many pictures that forms the basis of the project *The Global Village - Bali*, I use a program that does not operate perfectly all the time: the program freezes and the screen glitches. When I in one occasion could read *Message* written in one of these glitches, I made a screenshot. Although I have read a lot of Marshall McLuhan, it was this picture that taught me that the title of McLuhan's best-known book is *The Medium is The Message*, not *The Medium is The Message*, which is his theoretical thesis and one of McLuhans most famous statements. Although I know that the program malfunction, I continue to use it to generate more glitches to screenshot. The glitches are of importance since they show the interface of the images that is otherwise hidden in the illusion of the photographs. It is similar to when I photograph pictures and the viewer become aware of the surfaces of the images, the scratches and the materiality. They are not see-through images.



*All We Do is Surf / The Global Village -
Bali, photography
c-prints, 2004, 2006, 2010, 2018*

13. The Backpack

Performance, text, video

A performance work that open up for discussions and asks questions about power-relations, representation, language, symbolic violence, and action.



27 March a backpack get placed on Charles de Gaulle airport in France around 14:30–15:00 as a deliberate act and an attack.

Charles de Gaulle is one of Europe's most supervised airports. A person puts down and leaves a backpack in the airport. Before leaving, the person photographs the bag. This action shows the surveillance cameras that everything is intentional and that the backpack is not forgotten. The bag is closed and locked with a padlock in the zipper opening. This means that it cannot be easily opened. The backpack is meant as an attack in the airport.

“For security reasons, baggage left unattended will be removed and destroyed.”

Studies of art, photography, postcolonial theory and my own experience of traveling as a tourist in Asia are behind my decision to perform the action. I am convinced that the action is worth doing for a number of important reasons. Placing the bag like this at Charles de Gaulle airport can scare, shock and hurt individuals. A part of the airport may be blocked by the security guards and people on their way to or from their flights might be disturbed. The ethical problem of exposing other people to my actions is included in my calculations.

I justify the action with theories of how the system itself is so much more violent, wrong and destructive.

The contents of the backpack are pictures. These images consist of scanned material from travel brochures and travel commercials printed on photo paper and then cropped to a 10x15cm format. Nothing but a large number of these pictures lies in the bag. The selection is made to represent a typical representation of the world through a European travel commercial perspective. The backpack contains something that the tourism industry generates, images that constitute the current world order.

The security system, the structure, and the strictly disciplined architecture are tangible. I'm up in this with intentions about it as art. Flying with the bag containing only pictures is part of a performance work. Passing the bag through the X-ray machine at the airport worries me. Perhaps I will face suspicion and questions. I'm afraid to be remembered, or that security staff should notice this as something strange so that I can later be linked to the Charles de Gaulle airport attack and seized as a terrorist.

Comments:

This is a pdf that represents art works. In an exhibition, there is a great deal more possibilities and ways to let the various works play with spatiality and context to make them justice, experiment, lead viewers in different ways of reading, interpretation and experience.

I work research-based and have therefore a very large material and several threads for new works. During an exhibition work, I would also create entirely new works, and reformulate some existing, to be site-specific.



Disjunktion, Photography c-print, 2019

Kristoffer Svenberg Artist Statement:

Photography and domination

Photography (video and film included) is a very dominating medium within contemporary society. A medium that changes how we behave. I would say that photography has effected the modern era within art history more than any other medium.

I started my art practice in School of Photography (Academy Valand) Gothenburg University (2004–2007). I then studied an MA in Fine Art at Konstfack, Stockholm (2007–2011). Currently based as an artist in Stockholm. As well as working with art-learning projects and pedagogy at Moderna Museet. Recently two years as artistic leader and pedagogue for Museum Museum, focusing on projects and workshops in contemporary art for young adults between 15–25 years old.

In my art practice, I work mostly with photography (mediation), representation and dominating structures. I research and learn about the medium (mediation) in connection to socio-political subjects and power relations to break, deconstruct or make this into something freer; like art.

What is photography? The question is getting asked and I do different kinds of experiments that sometimes go into narrow medium-specific details. But my art practice is not medium-specific. My expressions are variations of performances, installations, sculptures, text, video, pictures and photographs.

A lot of properties of photography is amazing and even magical. Aspects that have led to the strong position of the medium within society. As well, regarding power structures, I am critical of photography in a lot of senses. But research practice and learning about the medium, and art, have given me a lot of freedom in it as subject material. I find this field very interesting and relevant to discuss in the contemporary. My practice gives me further knowledge, perspectives, and understandings of the medium's limits and possibilities. Still far from grasping it all, and I think art is the best form of research for the subject matter.

One subject field related to dominating structures is urban construction, city planning, and architecture. For many years I have been working in this context in various constellations and projects. For example, The New Beauty Council (Co-founder 2007-2015). I am also the founder of the project Mallrats that has been run and developed with different groups of participants and art institutions since 2012. Some of the institutions that have supported the project are Moderna Museet and Göteborgs Konsthall.

A mallrat is American slang for a member of a group of mainly youths who hang around in malls without buying anything. It is usually described as an undesirable trash culture. The Mallrats project aims to focus on, and encourage people to consciously challenge this space and architecture through artistic practices. It's not about performance art as entertainment but rather as interventions and friction.

Nowadays, public spaces are frequently discussed in architecture, urban planning, and art. But most of our time is spent in private spaces. Mallrats is a project built on collective creativity. The commercial areas and shopping mall spaces are also exceedingly image-oriented. This kind of structure and architecture would not exist had it not been for photography. The spaces are not built to make us feel comfortable physically there. As consumers, we are envisioned as viewers who look at things. We are intended to see the advertisements on the premises and the shelves with products of we could potentially buy. Consuming defines our scope of action. To stage interventions and art performances in these spaces is a defiant practice.