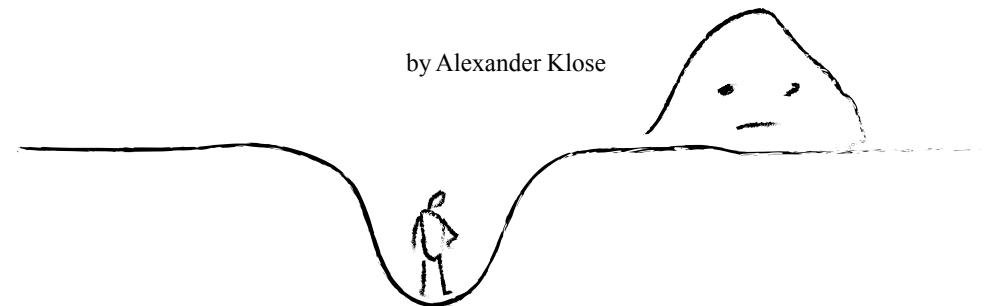


FOSSIL REASON

On war, climate and the exhibition *Fossil Experience* at Prater Galerie, Berlin

by Alexander Klose



If we dig precious things from the land, we will invite disaster. This is a prophecy of the Indigenous Hopi people quoted in the 1982 film *Koyaanisqatsi*. The title, in the Hopi language, means 'life out of balance'. For quite some time, people have been growing aware of the severe problems related to the permanent extraction and consumption of subterranean substances, namely and especially of those fossil substances like coal, oil and gas that are burned to provide light, power and heat. Yet, maybe there has been no time in history like now — after the global impact of Fridays for Future, after the pandemic, facing the war in the Ukraine — in which the dependence of our society on fossil fuels has become so obvious and so problematic.

Getting away from Russian oil, gas and coal — to become 'Putin-free' as a new kind of historical detour on the way to 'fossil-free' — has gained geopolitical relevance: warfare economy could be used to employ fast-track climate politics. At the same time, burning natural gas is now considered to be a 'climate-neutral technology' by the EU, as is nuclear energy. Meanwhile in the Ukraine, the tanks are rolling and the planes are flying on good old petroleum products. The proper biblical saying for the situation we are facing would be *to cast out the Devil with the help of Beelzebub*. The German minister for economic affairs, Robert Habeck, has brought up the calamitous entanglements of our situation in remarkable clarity: contracts with Middle Eastern sheiks or Russian oligarchs were by no means the first morally-questionable commitments. To a very large extent, our welfare and comfort were and are based on extraction and exploitation taking place somewhere else under questionable conditions.

This lifestyle is not only about using fossil resources. Far more than that, it is embedded in non-reciprocal extractivist approach towards the world, its peoples and especially all its non-human beings (and 'non-beings'). Not only are there the wars between nations and peoples, historically "necessary" for geopolitical reasons, but more often than not because of the access to fossil resources. There has also been an ongoing war against nature and climate, and non-modern ways of living. This is *fossil reason*. The corresponding psychological state might be called neglect. Living under the conditions and within the mindset of fossil reason produces fossil experience. In this sense, the timing of the exhibition project *Fossil Experience* curated by Lena Reisner for Prater Galerie, Berlin and its corresponding series of talks on political aspects of fossil economy and lifestyle couldn't be much better — or worse. We rub our eyes and find ourselves propelled back into a world of petromodern reasoning and warfare, while at the same time the very materials of petromodernity — the still ongoing period of industrial modernity, in which life has been largely shaped by technologies and materials based on petroleum — are in focus.

The exhibition puts an emphasis on what's happening when (fossil) extraction regimes, industries and their materials meet with living beings, whose environments and bodies are intoxicated. The basic material for all life is water, being shared on all levels in the organic realm. At the same time it has constantly been endangered both in quality and in availability by industrial and mining activities.

An example presented in the exhibition is the film *Infractions* (2019) by the Berlin-based Australian artist Rachel O'Reilly, which shows the existential and political struggle of aboriginal groups in the Northern Territories of Australia for their natural water supply. In a landscape characterized by a severe scarcity of water, the few existing river systems are endangered by fracking projects (=the hydraulic fracturing of bedrock formations to release oil/gas) of the Australian government in alliance with international mining companies. In the process of fracking, a cocktail of chemical compounds mixed with water is pumped into the subsurface. The process — even when conducted without accidents, spills, etc., although they happen regularly

— uses up severe quantities of fresh water and produces severe quantities of used water full of toxic residues. "Fracking is a form of chemical warfare on the poor — the rapacious classism of late capitalism" (*Fracktivist Manifesto*, New York 2020). O'Reilly's film has gained an alarming up-to-date significance, since fracking, which has been the subject of heavy political opposition in regions across the globe for two decades, is coming back in a big way as a side-effect of the measures against the Russian war in the Ukraine. LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) from the US and Australia, which is regularly produced by fracking — "molecules of freedom", as they were cynically branded under the Trump administration — together with uncanny new gas deals with oil dictatorships in the Middle East are considered key factors in the struggle against the dependence on Russian gas.

The fact that the extraction as well as the processing of raw materials (e.g. in chemical plants or steel mills) is regularly located in areas where poor people live, while the people who profit most from their products reside far away, has been called "slow violence" or "environmental racism". The Nigerian artist Ayò Akínwándé's film *Ogoni Cleanup* (2020) depicts himself performing a kind of dance ritual to clean the waters of the Ogoni region from oil slicks with his bare hands. It shows the forlornness of remediating the mess of oil extraction, which left the people poorer than before the oil boom and large parts of the formerly pristine and prolific tropical landscape of the Niger Delta in a devastation that could last for centuries. Advocating for the very core of European environmental rights, Kat Austen's multi-channel video installation *This Land Is Not Mine* (2020) deals with the physical and mental afterlives and possible futures of brown coal extraction in the landscape and people of Lusatia (Lausitz), a region in the southeast of Brandenburg and northeast of Saxony. There, former open-pit mines that had led to the vanishing of dozens of villages are now being flooded, producing a new kind of lakeland. This landscape looks beautiful, and seems to offer new tourism possibilities, but it is also threatened by the toxic reservoirs slumbering in and underneath. In this respect, the Lusatian, post-extractivist and largely post-industrial situation can be understood as typical to the condition of a 'damaged planet', with which we and our future generations, as well as all our other living (and 'non-living') terrestrial cohabitants will have to cope.

Concepts of critique regarding systemic discrimination like post-colonialism or ecofeminism have often remained rather abstract when applied in the context of Anthropocene-thinking in the art world. However, in their confrontation with the material elements and remains of the industrial-capitalist practices of extraction, production and consumption of so-called raw materials, they become very concrete. The exhibition also includes works by Marjolijn Dijkman, who deals with natural electricity — hailed today in its industrial form as a remedy for the diseases of fossil industrialism —, and Monira Al Qadiri, who links the traditional Middle Eastern profession of pearl diving with the oil business that took hold there in the second half of the 20th century and changed everything.

All the works in *Fossil Experience* tie their recipients to the material levels of the fossil extraction system. This tying to terrestrial materials and their related social and economical conditions may be the most important aspect of these days' coming-to-senses: to raise awareness of the fossil experiences of others and ourselves and to develop at-best an integral, global fossil experience — in order to be able to leave it behind.

Alexander Klose, based in Berlin, works as a freelance cultural researcher and curator. In 2017, he co-founded the research collective Beauty of Oil (beauty-of-oil.org), dedicated to understanding and leaving petromodernity.

THE INDIVIDUALS OF LA MANCHA

This is my quest — To follow that star. No matter how hopeless. No matter how far.

von SexyKapitalismus

„Was macht ein revolutionärer Künstler ohne Revolution?“, fragte der Schriftsteller Ronald M. Schernikau kurz vor seinem Tod, und heute möchte man ihm antworten: „Aktivismus“. Aber was ist dieser Aktivismus unter denjenigen, die heute Kunst machen, was sind seine Fallstricke und was ist seine materielle Basis?

Den Anfang macht also die materielle Basis, zunächst das Spielfeld selbst (das nur die Stadt, der urbane Raum sein kann). *Die (Z)erbrochenen Igel* besingen bildreich die *Saure Luft*, während *Jonathan Richman* sich der *Lonely Financial Zone* widmet. Beide stehen stellvertretend für die fortschreitende Unbewohnbarmachung der Stadt — durch die aktive Vergiftung genauso wie durch die architektonische Kolonialisierung, auf die der einzige möglichen Reflex unsere Langeweile ist. Zur materiellen Basis gehört aber auch die Arbeit, die mit fortschreitender Digitalisierung in ihren Formen immer schwerer unterscheidbar wird und von den *Woog Riots in People Working With Computers* in Richtung der absoluten Beliebigkeit der People vor ihren Computers ausgebreitet wird. Click, click, click, click. Was also tun? Radikalisiern. *Räuberhöhle* zeigen in ihrem Stück *Everyday More And More Ppl Are Going Radical* jedoch gleich die damit verbundene völlige Inhaltsleere, wenn das verständliche persönliche Aufbegehr nicht konkret auf die Menschen (die nur noch als ppl auftauchen dürfen) und ihre Lebenswirklichkeit bezogen wird. Einen Schritt weiter sind da schon *Burnout Ostwest*: thematisieren sie doch in *Viertel Lebt* die durchaus ambivalente Rolle jener Figuren, die als aktivistische Künstler*innen besondere Anforderungen an den urbanen Raum haben und damit ein fröhles, aber entscheidendes Puzzleteil im Prozess der Gentrifizierung darstellen. Daher stellen im folgende Teil auch zunächst die *Redskins* mit *Go Get Organized!*, gefolgt von *Zacharias Szumer* mit seinem Remix von *In Aye Gasn / Daloy Politsey* und schließlich *Jacques le Glou* mit seiner situationistisch inspirierten Interpretation

von *Il Est Cinq Heures Paris Seville* gleichsam den gebotenen Inhalt der Radikalisierung dar: Die Proletarisierten organisieren — am Arbeitsplatz, am Wohnort, in der aufständischen geschichtlichen Tradition. Weil die Waffe der Kritik die Waffen nicht ersetzen kann, stellt sich eben die Frage nach der Bewaffnung wie sie hier stellvertretend *Tom Waits* in seinem *Just The Right Bullets* thematisiert. Unglücklicherweise stehen wir auf dieser Stufe der Radikalisierung wieder nur vor einem weiten Feld neuer Probleme; wie uns *Cobra Killer* hierzu anempfehlen: *Let's Have A Problem*. Eine Sackgasse der Bewaffnung der eigenen Begierden stellt dabei die unter dem Label Hedonismus firmierende Rekreationsindustrie in ihren verschiedenen Graden der Kommerzialisierung dar, am Beispiel der Disco von *Antitainment* in ihrem *It Ain't No Revolution, Just Because You Can Dance To It* besungen. Eine weiterer Irrweg ist auch die Heimatliebe, unabhängig der territorialen Dimension wie uns *Max Müller* in der *Heimatmusik* wissen und spüren lässt, denn keine technische oder ideelle Prothese kann uns über die Unfähigkeit zum Aufbau von menschlichen Beziehungen hinweg helfen. Die technisch getriebene Eskalation der unfreiwilligen Vereinzelung stellt vielmehr einen praktisch bedrohlichen und erschreckend banalen Feind dar, wie es dann auch in *Facebook* von *Quasi Zombie* erklingt. Denn der große Traum der Medienaktivist*innen, das Internet könnte über allgemeine Information und allseitige Kommunikation die materielle Basis für die befreite Gesellschaft darstellen, ist tot und sein radioaktiver Kadaver grinst uns heute nur noch menschenverachtend aus den Fratzen der Bezos und Zuckerbergs an. Wir grinsen zahnlos zurück. Denn alles, was für uns bleibt, ist Frustration statt *Information*, wie *Disturbed Furniture* singen. Da uns diese ästhetisch in die Achtzigerjahre gebracht haben, dem unerschöpflichen Quell der endlosen popmusikalischen Retromania, liegt natürlich (und um der allgemeinen Verstricktheit

Rechnung zu tragen) der Entfremdungshit der *Gang of Four*, ihr prächtiges *At home He's A Tourist* nahe. Die Entfremdung fickt einen schließlich nirgends so hart wie in der eigenen Lebenswirklichkeit, *at home*. Da, wo wir sind und bleiben müssen, da kann der Ansatzpunkt für den künstlerischen Aktivismus gefunden werden, in der Aufhebung der Kunst als spezialisierter Sphäre bei gleichzeitiger Verallgemeinerung der künstlerischen Techniken; bester Prosituationismus also, wie ihn *Knarf Rellöm Trinity* zeigen, wenn sie in *Talkin' Techno* zuerst umherschweifen, um dann die Textcollage zur Waffe gegen die eigenen Selbstverständlichkeiten zu richten. Hier blitzt tatsächlich ein *break in the loop* oder vielleicht ein *hole in the pocket* auf. Und dann gilt es, in Bewegung zu bleiben, die Wege zu finden und dabei nicht zu vereinzeln, wie *Rocket/Freudental* in *Fahre Einfach* aufzeigen. Die gemeinsame künstlerische Aktion, in der Skandale gegen das Spektakel geschleudert werden und die Organisierung vorantrieben wird, streng urbanistisch, aber dabei immer poetisch — somit gehört auch das letzte Wort unseres Mixes (der nur der Anfang eines Wegs sein kann) dem Grand-seigneur der *temporary autonomous zone* Hakim Bey mit seinem Poetic Terrorism.

All tracks in this mix have been illegally pirated!



SexyKapitalismus... oder Pop ist eine Pizzaschachtel" We do broadcastings on a regular basis in the community radio stations (Freies Radio) in Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, Mannheim/Heidelberg, Halle, and Hamburg. www.sexycapitalismus.com https://www.mixcloud.com/sexykapi/ t.me/sexycapitalismus (all shows for download)

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FORCED DISPLACEMENT ISSUE

On The Streets
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While mining continues digging a hole in our world of complications, artist Karimah Ashadu questions notions of independence and the detrimental impacts of forgotten industries in “Plateau”. In this context, the posters at our centerfold highlight this form of reclamation as a philosophy of living.

BREAKING THE LOOP (OF MIGRATION)

THEO PRODROMIDIS
ZOË CLAIRE MILLER
JO VAVRA
PIA MARIE REMMERS
MIWA NEGORO

BORDERS OF PERCEPTION

VOLODYMYRA AMINOV
RAHEL AIMA
GEORGE EDWARDS
IRA KONYUKHOVA
ALEXANDER KLOSE
SEXYKAPITALISMUS
FRANCESCA BRIA
AND JAYA KLARA BREKKE
ELENA VOGMAN
AND JOSHUA SIMON

COLUMN
KLAUS SZFEDER

LETTERS OF DISPLACEMENT

FLORIAN VOSS
VOLODYMYRA AMINOV
FERRUAPY24

The image is a film still from Karimah Ashadu's 2021 work "Plateau". It depicts a vast, arid landscape with dry, cracked earth and sparse, brown vegetation under a hazy, light-colored sky. Superimposed over the bottom half of the frame is a large, bold, red text message that reads "WAVE NOT VISAS, FLAGS". The text is arranged in two rows: "WAVE NOT" on the top row and "VISAS, FLAGS" on the bottom row. The font is a serif typeface. In the bottom left corner, there is a small, black, hand-drawn illustration of a cactus with sharp, white, hair-like spines.

A collage of various magazine covers and illustrations. The central focus is a large, bold title 'NO WAY BACK' in red, overlaid on a blurred image of a modern building's interior. Below it, the word 'HERE' is partially visible. To the left, there's a column titled 'LETTERS OF WORKERS' and another titled 'COLUMN'. On the right, there's a sketch of a person in a cage. At the bottom, there's a barcode and some small text.

A MIGRATION FROM THE POSTHINKING TO THE POSSITIVE



history is like smoke