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In 2026, we look back with joy and pride on four decades of Neue Kunst in Hamburg. Since 1986, we have supported young artists who work in the Hanseatic city and enrich it with new perspectives. What began with group exhibitions and catalogue projects has become a sustained support program reaching far beyond Hamburg.

Since 1997, Neue Kunst in Hamburg has regularly awarded travel grants at intervals of roughly two years—today, five to six per cycle. What makes this program special is that the candidates are selected by an external curator. In this way, we aim to offer the artists an unbiased look from the outside. Over the years, we have repeatedly succeeded in attracting curators who were able to have a positive impact on the fellows' artistic development. The travel grants enable a self-organized, five-month stay abroad and are complemented by an exhibition in Hamburg and a catalogue. We have had the privilege of accompanying more than 100 fellows since then, many of whom are now internationally successful.

This publication accompanies the 17th Cycle of the travel grant as well as the exhibition, which returns to Kunstverein in Hamburg after twenty years. This takes place at the initiative of the curator of the current cycle, Fabian Schöneich, the founding director of the Center for Contemporary Arts (CCA) in Berlin. We would like to thank Fabian for his thoughtful selection of artists, which is once again highly international. From around 100 applications, Fabian selected compelling artists from Kenya, Russia, Switzerland, Iran, and Germany, all of whom live in Hamburg and have mostly studied or continue to study at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg. With this, Neue Kunst in Hamburg once again expands its view toward global perspectives.

We warmly thank the Katrin and Uwe Hollweg Foundation and the Ministry of Culture and Media Hamburg for their generous support of the exhibition and catalogue. We are delighted to receive additional support—now for the second time—from the Murielle Zeidler Art and Education Foundation. My heartfelt thanks also go once again to my board colleague Katharina Bittel, whose good spirits and tireless commitment make working for the association enjoyable, even in our 40th anniversary year!

Simone Kessler, Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya, Katja Pilipenko, Mohammad Poori, and Anna Stüdeli are the five artists who received the 2024 travel grant awarded by Neue Kunst in Hamburg. It has been a great pleasure to get to know these five artists, to learn more about their work and interests, and to accompany them over the past months—refining their ideas together, supporting them in the preparations for their journeys, hearing from them while they were abroad, and, ultimately, preparing a joint exhibition with them. Five artistic positions whose practices could not be more different—and yet they share one essential quality: a deep curiosity about the world, about what shapes it, about people, stories, and community.

Travel has been part of being an artist for as long as we can remember, and yet it can never be taken for granted. This is one of the reasons for my admiration and respect for Neue Kunst in Hamburg. In a time of political uncertainty, resurgent nationalist thinking, and cultural budget cuts, it is all the more important to take a stand—a stand against insularity and for a culture of openness. The travel grant does precisely this, now for the 17th time. It sends artists from different regions of the world—all of whom, at least for the moment, are connected to Hamburg—back out into the world. And this could not be more in line with the Hanseatic spirit: being a gateway to the world! At the same time, the association is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. In this sense: Happy Birthday—and to many more years of sustainable support for young artists!

While the classical journey to Italy once seemed almost obligatory for artists such as Albrecht Dürer or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, today, the world has grown visibly smaller. It is easier than ever to reach unknown corners of our planet. And yet, it seems that many people increasingly fear what is foreign to them. This is why I see this prize not only as an award for young artists, but also as an invitation to discover. And discover we do—right now, as we look at the works of Simone Kessler, Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya, Katja Pilipenko, Mohammad Poori, and Anna Stüdeli. In the past months, they have travelled to Ireland, France, Spain, Kenya, the United States, Bulgaria, Georgia, and China. They travelled by

car, train, plane, and ship, encountered new places, met new people, established new connections—and brought traces of all this back with them, which we can now see in the exhibition at Kunstverein in Hamburg and in the artist books designed by Hanna Osen and Caspar Reuss, whom are based in Hamburg and Berlin.

I am also particularly pleased that, after 20 years, the exhibition has returned to Kunstverein in Hamburg—something that was personally very important to me. As much as I appreciate the work of the galleries on the Fleetinsel that have hosted the exhibition in recent years, I believe that a grant such as this—and the exhibition that accompanies it—belongs in the very institution that has been supporting and exhibiting contemporary art in Hamburg since 1817. In doing so, two essential Hamburg-based support structures come together for a brief but all the more meaningful exhibition—one that will hopefully serve as a symbol not only for the artists, but also for other institutions and for cultural funding itself: a reminder to stay committed, and to support the generations of tomorrow today.

All that remains now is to say thank you! My heartfelt gratitude to the artists Simone Kessler, Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya, Katja Pilipenko, Mohammad Poori, and Anna Stüdeli, especially to learn from them what moves them, what sparks their curiosity, what inspires them—and also where doubts and uncertainties lie. It has been a great pleasure to work with them. An equally warm thank you goes to Judith Fell-Zeller, Katharina Bittel, and Hans Jochen Waitz, who make up the board of Neue Kunst in Hamburg, for inviting me to oversee the 17th Cycle. Thank you for your trust and your wonderful collaboration. Many thanks to Hanna Osen and Caspar Reuss for the excellent realization of the accompanying publication. It has always been important to us to create something that can be used sustainably by readers—but above all by the artists themselves. Something that lasts! Many thanks to Milan Ther, Martin Karcher, and the entire team at the Kunstverein. As I said, I am truly delighted to see this exhibition take place there once more. And thank you to the Karin and Uwe Hollweg Foundation, the Ministry of Culture and Media Hamburg, and the Murielle Zeidler Art and Education Foundation for the additional support that made both the exhibition and the publication possible.

Simone Kessler is an artist whose practice merges artistic production with research and scientific inquiry. Her works are deeply informed by scientific knowledge, yet expand it through a sensual and poetic dimension, underpinned by a strong commitment to collaboration with peers. These interpersonal relationships act as a thread that binds her entire practice together. Her work encompasses film and sound pieces, photography and photograms, as well as large-scale installations.

Kessler was interested in extending her research on interspecies communication. In preparation for her travels, the artist explored the work of the Cetacean Translation Initiative (CETI)—a research project dedicated to studying communication among whales and investigating the possibility of interspecies understanding. With this in mind, conversations with various scientists in Europe and the United States shaped her project and ultimately helped her sketch out her travel plans, which brought her during the summer and autumn of 2025 to several locations in Ireland, France, and Spain.

At the end of September, she boarded the research vessel *Celtic Explorer* in Cádiz, Spain. Together with around twenty scientists, including researchers from the STRAITS EU Horizon¹ project, she took part in a twelve-day expedition through five territorial waters, which concluded in mid-October in Cork, Ireland. During the expedition, the research focused on human-made acoustic marine pollution, water quality, and the observation of marine mammals, fish, and seabirds. On board, Kessler used the available research equipment to record long-term underwater footage with a self-constructed camera setup, capturing the phenomenon known as “marine snow”—a continuous fall of plankton remains and other organic particles from the ocean’s surface into the deep sea. This video material forms the basis of a new installation.

Complementing this work is the series *Shiver*, consisting of sixty-four photograms. For about a decade, Kessler has explored sharks within her artistic practice. For the exhibition at Kunstverein in Hamburg, she presents a series of photograms exposing the fishing hooks that environmentalist and diver Cristina Zenato

¹ The AMIGOS survey served as a platform for data collection as part of the four-year STRAITS project (Strategic Infrastructure for Improved Animal Tracking in European Seas), funded through the EU’s Horizon research and innovation program (<https://www.europeantracking-network.org/en/straits>).

has removed from Caribbean reef sharks over the past decades. Each photogram, made on baryta paper, is individually framed and displayed as a wall installation. Both aesthetically precise and deeply poetic, these works serve as memorial and metaphor alike—a symbol of injury, healing, and the potential for restoration.

Simone Kessler was born in 1985 in Regensburg, Germany. She studied sculpture and photography at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich and at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon. Since 2017, she has been living and working as a multidisciplinary artist in Hamburg. Recent group exhibitions include *Earth Rising*, Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA), Dublin; *Forces of Attraction*, DESY ArtScienceLab, Hamburg; *Transformative Visions*, Gallery of Schloss Leopoldskron, Salzburg; *schön!_das leben*, Kunstverein millstART, Millstatt Am See. Grants and residencies include the Fellowship of the University of Hamburg within the DFG Centre for Advanced Studies *Imaginaria of Force* and the Salzburg Global Seminar.





Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya

After Life Far Away

Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya's artistic practice is deeply shaped by his Kenyan heritage and his life in Germany, as well as by the diverse experiences and tensions that arise from their interplay. Working in painting, installation, and multimedia, the artist explores both the social and political realities of his homeland and the experiences of the African diaspora in Germany.

As part of his fellowship, Mboya devoted himself to a subject of existential significance: death—specifically, burial as a socio-cultural phenomenon. While death is often a taboo topic in Germany, in other parts of the world, it is regarded as an integral part of life and is celebrated. Burial rituals vary greatly depending on religion and tradition. Aware that it is particularly important for Kenyans to be buried in their homeland, the artist also traveled to Texas, home to one of the largest Kenyan diaspora communities, to understand how these traditions can be maintained across geographical distances. How are bodies repatriated? How far does one go to uphold traditions when financial or practical constraints make this difficult, or when they no longer align with one's own life?

His journey began in Nairobi, Kenya, where he visited, among other sites, a war cemetery—a place that serves more as a memorial than an actual burial ground, as most diasporic bodies are not repatriated. He also visited a tombstone producer who kept an impressive stock of prefabricated gravestones with common names. At the same time, these stones seemed almost metaphorical: like death itself, patiently waiting for its clients.

In Texas, Mboya focused on the diaspora and their engagement with burial rituals, particularly in light of the expectation that bodies should be laid to rest in their homeland. He confronted logistical and economic challenges, spoke with families torn between tradition and modern realities, and explored the difficult question of where a family's decision-making authority ends.

Although the journey specifically addressed burial rituals in Kenya and their practice abroad, Mboya's work ultimately raises broader questions: How do traditions endure or fade in an increasingly accelerated world? How do we navigate our relationships with family, homeland, and society? Where do different cultural

worlds intersect, and what new forms of community might emerge from these intersections? It is a journey whose significance extends far beyond the visible—and one that we are all still called to undertake.

As part of the final exhibition, Mboya presents a kinetic installation titled “Reverse Grief,” marking the provisional conclusion of a year-long exploration into how migrants from the Global South living in the Global North navigate the transformation of grief and funeral practices. The manipulated casket-lowering device—re-engineered to rotate in reverse—acts as a metaphor for the profound reconfiguration of mourning and burial traditions that accompanies geographical displacement and the reshaping of identity within new socio-cultural contexts.

Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya, born 1992 in Kisumu, Kenya and also known as Nikomambo, studied Fine Arts and Design at Mwangaza School of Fine Arts, Kisumu and at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg. He lives and works in Hamburg. Recent solo exhibitions include *Utopia—Dystopia*, Kunsthau Hamburg, 2025. Recent group exhibitions include *9 to 5—A Question of Time*, ICAT—Institute for Contemporary Art & Transfer at HFBK Hamburg; *Politics of Love*, Kunsthau Hamburg; *Passage*, Deichtorhallen—Sammlung Falckenberg, Hamburg, all 2024. Awards include the Deutschlandstipendium, 2024; the Leistungsstipendium, 2023; and the Freundeskreis Stipendium HFBK, 2022.



Dear Judith & Katharina

I Hope this post card reaches you.

Am Writing this from Nairobi at the moment. I have been to Kisumu and Mbatia so far. The research proved to be challenging. However I expected. I have however made some progress in formulating a plan and places to start. Through the help of some friends I will be able to interview a few individuals with the cultural understanding of their respective ethnicity.

All in all, it is great to be back in Kenya and surround my self with the culture, which hopefully continues enlighten my understanding of self and that of others.

Talking forward to extending more. Yours: Nicholas

March 3, 2025; from Nairobi, Kenya.

MFAH
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Hi Judith, Hi Katharina

Greetings from Houston. My stay has been great & challenging, but I managed to find a few Kenyans to interview, including one who I met at a hospital in Dallas when I was still in my second week of stay in Texas.

We are still in Hamburg so that I can continue with transcribing the audio interviews as well as continue with my research. All in all I'm deeply grateful to the Neue Kunst in Hamburg for making this possible and I can't wait for the development into an art work in the next months. Talking forward to meeting you again in Hamburg and talk about my experience at length.

Best
Nicholas

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Frederic Remond, Along a Corridor, 1993-2001 on canvas, 200.6 x 40.1 in. | Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Gift of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 100Museum.com

May 8, 2025; from Houston, TX, USA.

Katja Pilipenko *Do You Believe in Vanga?*

Katja Pilipenko's artistic practice is deeply rooted in her heritage. Born in Moscow, Russia, she experienced the 1990s as a time of social and cultural upheaval, marked by freedom of expression, public debate, and societal change. Yet with the rise of a new autocracy at the beginning of the 2000s, this climate shifted rapidly. An increasingly state-controlled media landscape displaced the sense of freedom that had shaped her youth. Since then, the pursuit of truth, memory, and mythology has remained a central thread in Pilipenko's work.

As part of a fellowship, the artist traveled to Bulgaria to trace the life of a figure both real and mythical: Baba Vanga. Vangeliya Pandeva Gushterova (1911–1996) is regarded as Bulgaria's most famous clairvoyant—venerated far beyond the country's borders, particularly in the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. She was celebrated as a living saint during her lifetime. Rejected by the Orthodox Church, she spoke of reincarnation, communicated with the spirits of the deceased, and practiced forms of magic.

In other works, Pilipenko explores why contemporary Russia remains so obsessed with a supposedly “great” past while firmly believing it will one day reclaim that greatness. This illusory mind-set mirrors the strategies of seers like Baba Vanga—the belief that the future and truth can be accessed through visions.

Her journey took Pilipenko to North Macedonia and Bulgaria, following in the prophetess's footsteps. In Novo Selo, North Macedonia, Baba Vanga lost her sight at the age of twelve in the eye of a hurricane—an event considered the origin of her gift. Shortly afterward, in Hamzali, she is said to have encountered a mystical rider who granted her supernatural abilities. Later, Pilipenko visited the house, now a museum, in Petrich, Bulgaria where Baba Vanga lived from 1942 to the 1970s as well as the Archives of the Institutes of Suggestology and Parapsychology preserved in the Bulgarian State Archives in Sofia, Bulgaria. Her journey concluded in Rupite, the place where the seer lived until her death and which remains a spiritual center to this day.

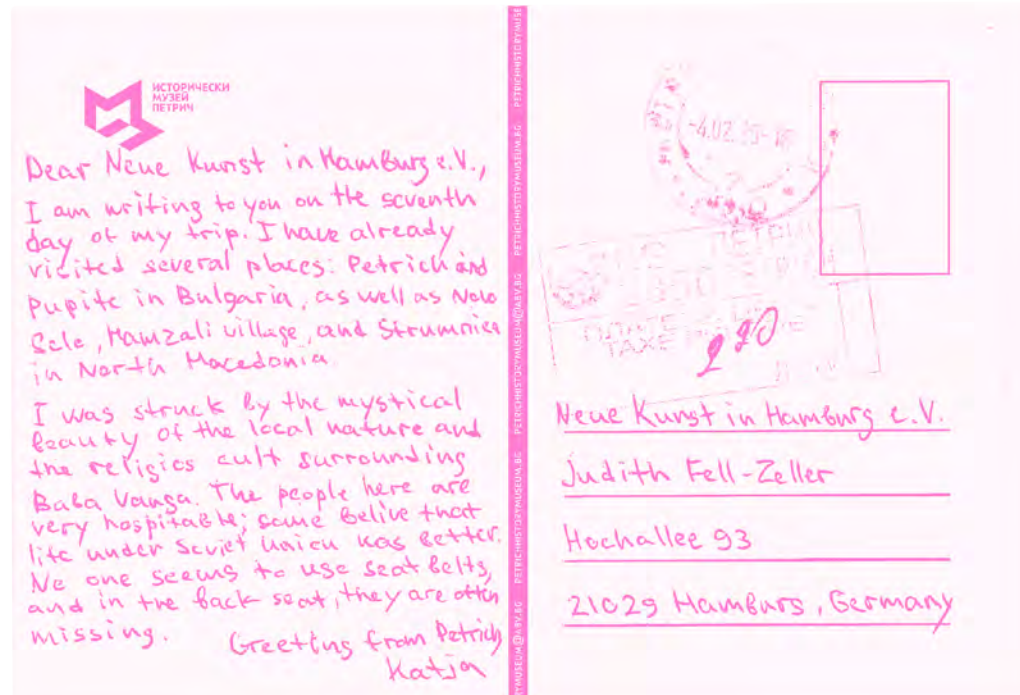
In many respects, Pilipenko's fellowship journey represents both a continuation of her previous work and a preview of projects to come. Her work remains be fascinated by the phenomenon

that seemingly invented myths and supernatural powers still resonate with so many people. Especially in times of political and social upheaval, people seek refuge in beliefs and movements that offer hope, promise strength, and nurture the illusion that the future will be better. And even though Baba Vanga is no longer among the living, it is clear that strategies of deception are more prevalent today than ever—in both the East and the West.

At the Kunstverein in Hamburg exhibition, the artist presents a series of works inspired by her journey and by Baba Vanga. These pieces directly or indirectly explore how faith, state, and media can be manipulated as instruments of power.

Katja Pilipenko was born in 1989 in Moscow, Russia. She studied at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg, Germany, and lives and works in Hamburg. Recent solo exhibitions include *Not Everyone Will Be Taken to a Bunker*, Hajusom e.V., Hamburg, 2024. Recent group exhibitions include *Future Continuous*, Kunsthaus Hamburg, 2025; NORDWESTKUNST, Kunsthalle Wilhelmshaven, 2025. Awards include the Working Grant for Visual Art from the City of Hamburg, 2025, and a scholarship from the ZEIT STIFTUNG BUCERIUS, Hamburg, 2023/2024.





Mohammad Poori

Whom I Lost In

Mohammad Poori works primarily with film and time-based media. From short video pieces to longer cinematic works, his practice combines a refined sense of aesthetics with a deep engagement in poetry and politics. However dreamlike his works may appear, they remain precise and incisive in their observation of the world.

His travel grant brought him back to Georgia—he had visited Tbilisi and its surrounding landscapes several times before—and closer to Hamlet Gonashvili (1928–1985), a Georgian singer and major interpreter of traditional Georgian folk music. Gonashvili's warm, expressive tone came to embody the so-called essence of Georgian vocal art. It was also this voice that led Poori to learn more about the musician, his legacy, his death, and, ultimately, about the country itself.

During a previous visit to Georgia, Poori found himself at a friend's table one evening, when Gonashvili's voice came over the radio—and he remembered. His grandfather, Shimon Abramov, a migrant who built a new life in northern Iran in the 1920s, used to listen endlessly to Gonashvili's records. The music, it seems, had left a lasting mark—one that, decades later, resurfaced in Poori, triggering the desire to understand how to relate to a place as a member of a globally displaced community. Ultimately, it was not the music of Gonashvili that inspired an entirely new work, but rather the subconscious memory of it. This inherited resonance, carried across generations, revealed how cultural fragments continue to shape identity, even when their origins seem remote.

Poori once again traveled to Georgia and met the singer's family—his widow and son. They shared background and family stories, offering insights into Gonashvili's life beyond that of the public figure. He learned about the musician's death: on a mild summer evening, shortly before dinner, he fell while pruning the family tree and suffered fatal injuries. As banal as it may sound, it happened in an instant. These encounters, together with the artist's further journeys in the region, have shaped a new three-channel video installation. Rather than offering a conclusion, the work traces the subtle displacements, ruptures, and continuities through which past events persist and resonate—across landscapes, histories, and generations. It marks not an arrival, but a further unfolding of a research process.

Mohammad Poori was born in 1987 in Sari, Iran. He is currently studying Film and Time-Based Media at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg, Germany. Recent group exhibitions and screenings include *Screening & Talk*, Museum am Rothenbaum—Kulturen und Künste der Welt, Hamburg, Germany, 2024 (with Kader Attia); *Long Night of Museums*, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Hamburg, 2024; *Drifting Between Pictures of the Mind*, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, 2024; *thank you for having us*, Frappant Gallery, Hamburg, 2023. recent and upcoming grants include the Neue Kunst in Hamburg travel grant, 2024–25, and the MAK Schindler Scholarship Program at the Mackey Apartments, Los Angeles, within the MAK Artists and Architects-in-Residence Program, 2026–27.





March 21, 2025; from Tbilisi, Georgia.

Anna Stüdeli *You Are My Love, My Angel*

The work of Swiss artist Anna Stüdeli engages with the forms and aesthetics of globalized-brand and advertising language. Her practice, primarily in photography and collage, examines an over-aestheticized illusion created solely to encourage consumption. Particularly significant is her background—as she seamlessly integrates both disciplines into her work. She manipulates images much like a sculptor works with marble, deconstructing not only the material, but also the message itself.

While her recent work is strongly imprinted by Europe, and especially her research and residences in Zürich, Hamburg, and Paris, Stüdeli has become increasingly interested in understanding the operations of vastly different systems of politics and economy. Her focus turned to the United States and China, two globally dominant systems that, at first glance, appear markedly different. While the U.S. was more accessible geographically and culturally, Stüdeli traveled to China, first to Shanghai, then through Shenzhen, Xiamen, Hangzhou, Huangshan, Beijing, Xiong'an New Area, Chengdu, Chongqing and Guilin.

To give a sense of the geography of her nearly two-month journey: she began in eastern China, traveled south, then back to the east, proceeded north to Beijing, and finally traced wide arcs westward, southward, and eastward again. In total, she covered approximately 9,000 kilometers by train—roughly equivalent to traveling ten times from southern Germany to the north and back.

Her inquiry focused on questions such as: How can advertising be part of a political system while pursuing capitalist objectives? How is innovation driven? How do brands and brand messaging become part of a networked society? From technology fairs to the campus of the Chinese technology and mobile-phone company Huawei—whose architecture evokes famous European university towns—and from daily life in shopping malls to the streets, the artist immersed herself in a world that appears irreversibly intra-connected.

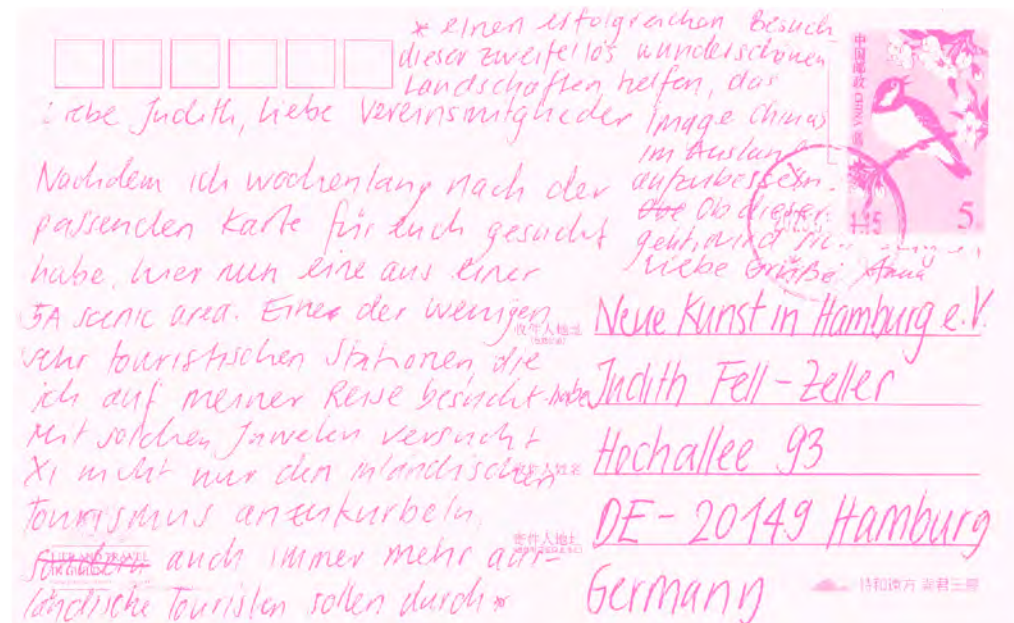
Through her observations, it became clear that this system, which in its socialist-communist nature is often considered distant from our economic and political reality, is, in many ways, closer

to home than she expected. The cliché that China merely “copies” Western technologies no longer holds. The country is technologically advanced, and this progress is evident in the branding strategies of both large corporations and of government entities. This influence now extends to fashion and merchandising, where China is beginning to set global trends that are unprecedented in scope and, from a capitalist perspective, unparalleled.

For the exhibition at the Kunstverein, Stüdeli presents a new body of work that engages with what is known as *kawaii*, or “cutesy culture.” This phenomenon relies on English-language, often nonsensical positivity slogans that circulate as purely visual signs of modernity and individuality. The artist is interested in how cuteness transforms harsh social realities into something easily consumable and superficially cheerful. Here, cuteness functions like an aesthetic sedative that softens negative emotions, while simultaneously reinforcing existing economic and political power structures.

Anna Stüdeli was born in 1990 in Bern, Switzerland. She studied at the Zurich University of the Arts, Switzerland, and at the University of Fine Arts Hamburg, Germany. She lives and works in Berlin. Recent solo exhibitions include *Finkenwerder Förderpreis*, Hamburg, 2024; *Anna Stüdeli*, ICAT—Institute for Contemporary Art & Transfer at HFBK Hamburg, 2024; DOG EAT DOG, Galerie Evelyn Drewes, Hamburg, 2024. Recent group exhibitions include *Hands Down*, Åplus, Berlin, 2025; *Aperture*, PAW Gallery, Karlsruhe, 2025; *same same but different*, galerie burster, Berlin, 2024; 40th Canton Annual Exhibition, Kunstmuseum Solothurn, 2024. Grants include the Neue Kunst in Hamburg travel grant, 2024–25; the Finkenwerder Art Prize, 2024; and an artist residency at the Cité internationale des arts, Paris, 2023.





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Judith Fell-Zeller &
Dr. Rüdiger Zeller

This series of publications
is published on the occa-
sion of the 17th Cycle of
travel stipends awarded
by Neue Kunst in
Hamburg e.V., and ac-
companies the exhibition
at Kunstverein in
Hamburg,
24.01.–01.02.2026

Curated by
Fabian Schöneich

Featuring solo
presentations by:
Simone Kessler
Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya
Katja Pilipenko
Mohammad Poori
Anna Stüdeli

Editor: Fabian Schöneich;
Texts: Fabian Schöneich;
Proofreading:
Patrick Kurth;
Design: Hanna Osen,
Caspar Reuss

Fedrigoni, *Splendorlux*
Versus Black, 120 g/qm
(Cover, artist's
publications);
Munken, *Fly*,
Extra White, 80 g/qm

Typeface: *Different Times*
by Dinamo

Print: DZA Druckerei
zu Altenburg;

Print run: 350
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Neue Kunst in Hamburg
e.V., Hochallee 93,
20149 Hamburg,
neuekunstinhamburg.de

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The exhibition at
Kunstverein in Hamburg,
as well as the accompany-
ing publication, has been
supported by:



Kunst- und Bildungsstiftung
Murielle Zeidler

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Hamburg

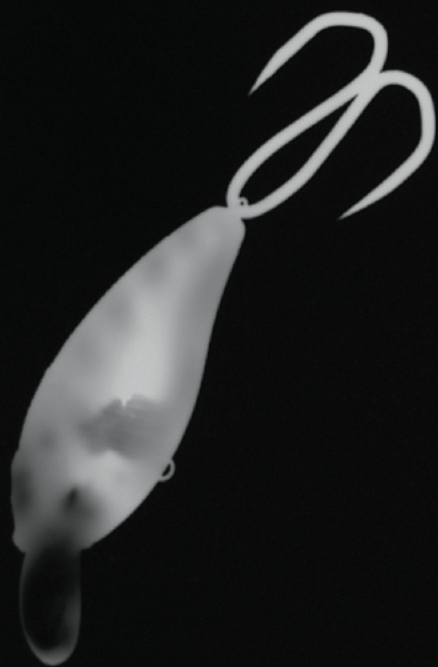
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Shiver





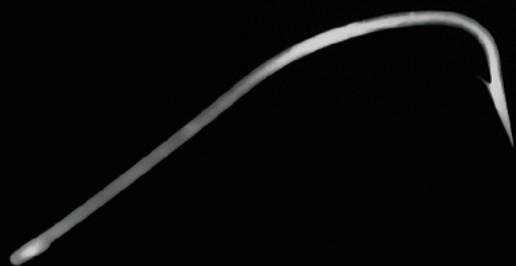


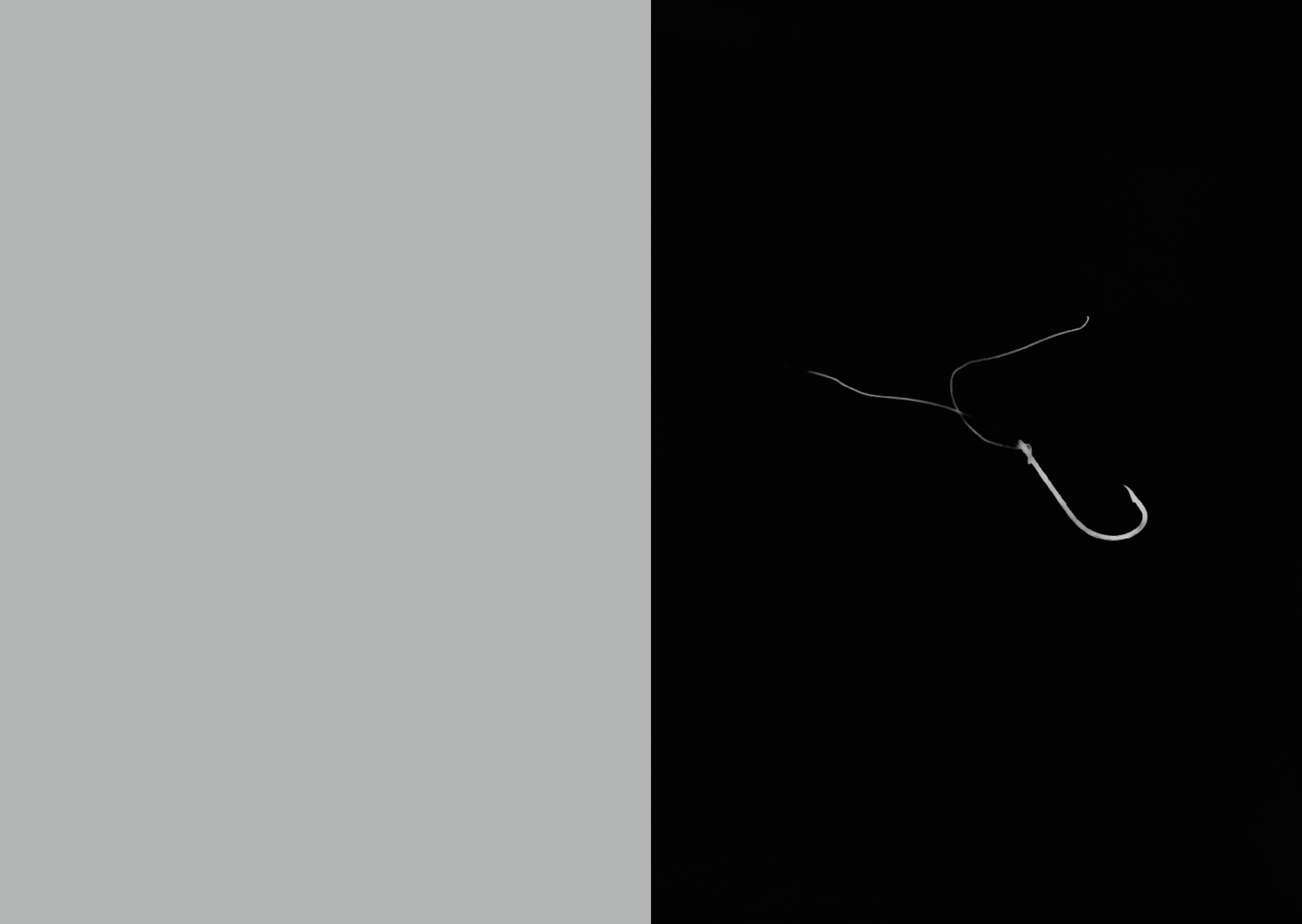






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In *Shiver*, artist Simone Kessler worked with 52 fishing hooks that the renowned diver and shark conservationist Cristina Zenato had carefully removed from the bodies of Caribbean reef sharks over the last three decades. Each hook bears witness twice to a shark’s encounter with humans: once to its capture, the other to its release.

Although sharks are legally protected in the Bahamas, they continue to be targeted: out of fear, as trophies, for their fins, or because fishermen perceive them as competitors. Globally, over one third of shark and ray species are now considered threatened, primarily due to overfishing.

Shiver can refer both to a group of sharks and to the visceral reaction provoked by the thought of sharks (or humans). Zenato has built a remarkable relationship of trust with the local sharks through calm, ritualized encounters and gentle touch. She also seems to have built a certain reputation among local sharks. Her usual diving spot attracts many individuals with distinguishing features that have earned them nicknames over the years, as well as newcomers bearing both old and fresh wounds. In a state of quiet cooperation, they allow her to remove the hooks in an often painful process, sometimes with her bare hands. These interventions represent acts of care and moments of alliance across species.

Zenato’s activism is an exercise of agency in support of a fascinating species that is often feared beyond justification. Having loaned part of her precious hook collection to the artist for a few days, she allowed these relics of harm to be transformed into an artwork: photographs of each individual hook, exposed on baryta paper. Each black-and-white image is a unique imprint and a subtle portrait of the shark whose body it pierced.

The work is composed of 52 photograms showing the shadows of hooks, along with additional black prints—together forming a large wall tableau. The black prints represent those sharks that could not be freed from their hooks; they mark a space where an image should exist but does not. This deliberate absence echoes the hooks that remain in the marine environment. Using only light, paper, and shadow, the hooks become delicate visual symbols of ecological loss, but also of connection and trust.

28	pp. 1–25	Fishing hooks retrieved by Cristina Zenato from living Caribbean reef sharks over the past three decades, including the hook on page 3 (removed from <i>Trek</i> , 2019), the hooks on pages 1, 6, and 9 (removed from <i>New Girl</i> , 2025), and the hook on page 18 (removed from <i>Crook</i> , 2024). All hooks were recovered at Shark Junction, Grand Bahama Island, at a depth of approximately 15 m. These hooks appear within the thirteen reproductions from the artist’s photogram series <i>Shiver</i> .	29
	pp. 26–27	Cristina with Sharks: <i>Cristina helping a shark</i> . Photo by Kewin Lorenzen.	
	p. 32	Photogram processed in the darkroom by Simone Kessler.	

My gratitude goes first to all the living creatures involved, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, in the hope that we will continue to learn from them and that they will be met with more respect and care, so that we can help protect them, our shared habitat, and, ultimately ourselves.

My special appreciation goes to Cristina Zenato for her compassionate work with sharks and her generous collaboration, without which *Shiver* would not exist, and to her husband, Kewin Lorenzen, whose photographs compellingly document Cristina's work.

I would like to acknowledge the following for their support, their knowledge, and the inspiration we share: Kathleen Alder, Dr. Simon Berrow, Johanna Blees, Mela Dávila-Freire, Markus Dorfmueller, Monika Fabig, Jonas Fischer, Cale Garrido, Aras Gökten, Dr. William Gough, Felix Härtel, Annemiek Hermans, Tim Huys, Dr. Clarissa Karthäuser, Nils Knott, Lucia Kaufmann, Alan Long, Dr. John Long, Patrick Lyne, Jack O'Callaghan, Deirdre O'Mahony, Andrea Orejarena, Hanna Osen, Bärbel Praun, Dr. Joseph Schnitzler, Fabian Schöneich, Oksana Yushko.

My gratitude also goes to Neue Kunst in Hamburg e.V., the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group (IWDG), the Liebelt Foundation, the Marine and Freshwater Research Centre (MFRC) at the Atlantic Technological University, and the Institute for Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Research (ITAW) at the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover.

My special thanks go to Dr. María Pérez Tadeo and Dr. Joanne O'Brien, who enabled me to spend twelve days aboard the *Celtic Explorer*, working directly with the ocean, its life above and below the water, and with the scientists conducting research there. My heartfelt thanks go to the inspiring people with whom I had the privilege of "sharing a boat"—and who tirelessly answered all my questions: Arianna Bet, Brógan Breathnach-Jones, Louise Constandt, Emilie De Loose, Alba Haro Hereu, Cilia Kootstra, Ricardo F. Sánchez Leal, Hanna Lee, Lena Lingenfelder, Ricardo Mendes, Joanne Monaghan, Dr. Yasmin Viana Pinto, Juan Jiménez Rincón, Mar León Salmerón, Lorena Vidal, Dr. María Pérez Tadeo, Alicia González Rodiles Villarreal, Dr. Ellen White.

My sincere appreciation also goes to the crew of the *Celtic Explorer* for their support, their sense of humour, and the safe passage.

I would also like to thank the members of the DFG Centre for Advanced Studies *Imaginarium of Force* at the University of Hamburg for the inspiring exchange.

I remain deeply connected to my family — especially to my father, Heio Kessler, who has shown me throughout his life how essential the bond between us humans and more-than-human life truly is.

My gratitude extends as well to all friends and helpers who are not mentioned by name here. Without all of you, neither my work over the past year nor much of what is yet to come would have been possible.



Imaginarien
der Kraft



Gefördert durch

Deutsche
Forschungsgemeinschaft



Universität Hamburg
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

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Simone Kessler, *Shiver*
Neue Kunst in Hamburg e.V.

Simone Kessler

After Life Far Away



17872 PRIVATE
ANJILLO MWAUKUSI
EAST AFRICAN
ARMY SERVICE CORPS
8TH JULY 1942



KML/12930 PRIVATE
TUOMA OTIENO
EAST AFRICAN
MILITARY LABOUR SERVICE
2ND NOVEMBER 1941







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JONATHAN KIPESI
23/04/1990 - 2/06/2024
Some truths in life are hard
To accept
Your memories will never
Be forgotten.
Rest In Peace

Alex De La Fuente
13th April 1977
2nd May 2023
You are always loved
And never forgotten
May your soul
Rest in Peace

WILLIAM
In Loving Memory
September 1947 - No
Silent Thought At
For Special Pe
And Alan

Roger Antaram
In Loving Memory Of
Apr. 195
Jan. 20
We hope to meet you again where
There's no fear of death.
Rest In Peace

Sushant Singh Rajput
Rest In Peace
(1986 - 2020)
you will always be in our hearts



Research Design

- Interviews (Semi-structured)
- Focus Groups Discussions
- Participant Observation
- Case Studies
- Review of Secondary Data
(Academic articles, funeral policies, community organizations reports)

Semi-structured Interviews

- Diaspora members (USA, UK, Canada, ~~Europe~~)



Candid unstructured Interviews with:

- Diaspora members (Germany, Texas)
- Ethnic group members in Nairobi
- Rural community elders and funeral practitioners
- Religious leaders (Pastors, priest, traditional spiritual leaders)
- Funeral service providers
- Family members who have handled diaspora deaths

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS FGDS

- Older generation vs. younger generation.
- Male vs Females (to capture gendered perspectives)
- Rural vs Urban participants
- Community organizations handling diaspora funerals.

Participant Observation

- Attend Funeral ~~at~~ ^{Planning} meetings in Nairobi and rural areas.
- Observe funeral rituals and burial preparations where permitted

Case Studies

- Study specific diaspora deaths and how repatriation / burial was handled.
- Examine instances where families opted for local burial in the diaspora vs. repatriation.

Secondary Data Review

- Analyze diaspora associations' Funeral policies.
- Review government policies on Repatriation of bodies.
- Examine community narratives (social media, online forums, etc.)



Key Research Questions

A. Funeral Traditions & Cultural Continuity

- What are the key traditional funeral practices among the Luo, Luhya, Kikuyu, and Kisii communities?
- How do diaspora communities maintain or modify these funeral traditions?
- What elements of the traditional funeral are most crucial for ethnic identity preservation?
- How do funeral rituals differ between rural and urban settings?

B. Challenges of Death in Diaspora

- What are the financial and logistical challenges of repatriating a body to Kenya?

- ^{Date} How do Families navigate the decision between burial in the diaspora vs. repatriation?
- How do religion beliefs (Christianity, traditional beliefs, Islam, etc) influence these decisions?
- What role do diaspora community organizations play in funeral arrangements?

C. Impact of Urbanization & Modernization

- How do funeral practices differ between rural and Urban settings in Kenya?
- ~~The youngst~~
- Are younger generations less inclined to follow strict funeral customs?
- How does economic status influence adherence to traditional funeral rites?
- How do funeral costs shape burial decisions in the diaspora and within Kenya?

5. ^{Date} Data Analysis Approach

- **Thematic Analysis:** Identifying recurring themes in interviews and FGDs.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Comparing urban vs. rural and diaspora vs. local burial practices.
- **Narrative Analysis:** Understanding personal experiences of families dealing with diaspora deaths.

5. Expected Outcomes

- A comparative framework of death practices in different settings.
- Documentation of evolving funeral traditions among these ethnic groups.
- Insights into the social, financial, and emotional challenges faced in the diaspora.
- Recommendations for policy changes in handling diaspora deaths.



JONATHAN KIPESI

23/04/1990 - 2/06/2024

Some truth in life are hard
To accept.

Your memories will never
Be forgotten.

Rest In Peace



Alex De La Fuente

13th April 1977

2nd May 2023

*You are always loved
And never forgotten.*

*May your soul
Rest in Peace.*



In Loving Memory

WILLIAM C

September 1947 - Nov

A Silent Thought, A Prayer
For A Special Person
God's Care



In Loving Memory

Roger 7

We hope to meet

There's no fear

Rest In Peace



Loving husband, father, brother and friend

SIMON KANYI MBUTHIA

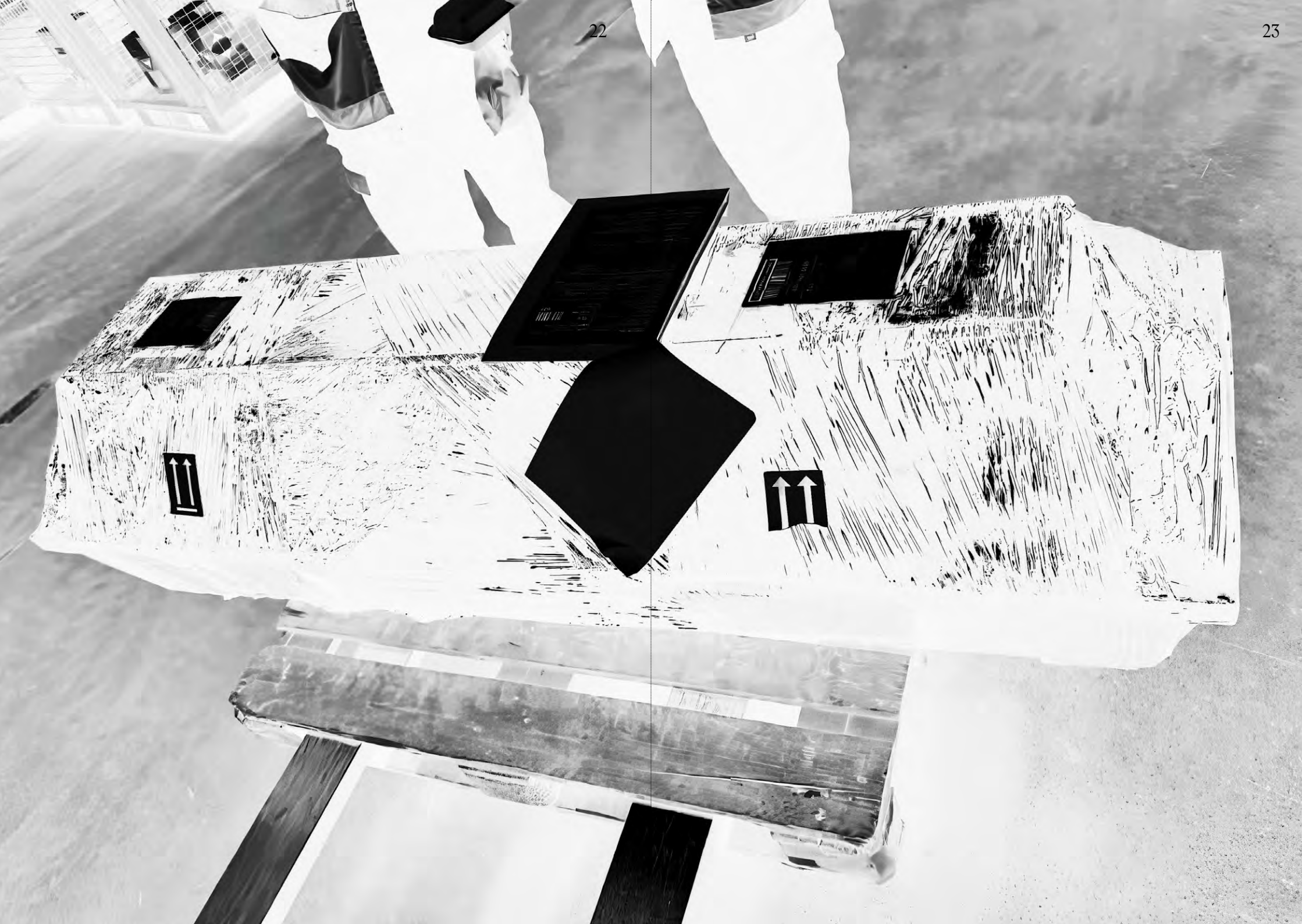
JULY 13, 1954 - JULY 17, 2022

Your life was a blessing,
Your memory a treasure...
You are loved beyond words
And missed beyond measure.
IT IS WELL, IT IS WELL











Research Questionnaire: Death in Diaspora Among Kenyan Ethnicities

Introduction

This questionnaire aims to explore funeral traditions among Kenyan communities in three different settings: **the diaspora, Nairobi, and rural areas in Kenya**. The focus is on how traditional practices are maintained, adapted, or abandoned when ethnic members migrate abroad. The responses will help to analyse the cultural, social, and economic challenges faced in conducting funerals away from ancestral lands.

Section A: Consent

Consent Statement:

You are invited to participate in a research study exploring how Kenyan communities in the diaspora experience and manage death, mourning, and funeral rites. The study focuses on changes in traditional practices, the role of transnational networks, and how cultural, religious, and economic factors shape responses to death among Kenyan migrants.

You are being invited because you are a member of a Kenyan community living(ed) abroad and may have insights, experiences, or knowledge related to death and funeral practices in the diaspora.

If you agree to participate, you might also be asked to take part in an interview or fill out this questionnaire, whichever is convenient for you. The interview session may be audio-recorded with your permission. You may be asked to share personal experiences or knowledge related to death, mourning, or funerals in your community.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without any penalty or loss of benefits.

There may be emotional discomfort when discussing personal or sensitive topics related to death and loss. You are free to skip any question or stop the discussion if you feel uncomfortable. While there may be no direct benefit to you, your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of how death is experienced and commemorated among Kenyan communities abroad. The research may help in preserving cultural practices and informing community support structures.

All information you provide will be kept confidential. Your name and any identifying information will be removed or altered in any reports or publications. Only the researcher will have access to the data, which will be securely stored.

Before we proceed, I would like to seek your consent for the following:

1. Do you agree to participate in this questionnaire?

- ☐ I consent
- ☐ I do not consent

- 2. Do you agree to have your responses recorded (audio/written) for documentation purposes?
☐ I consent
☐ I do not consent
- 3. Do you agree for your anonymized responses to be included in the final report and toolkit?
☐ I consent
☐ I do not consent
- 4. Would you like to remain anonymous, or would you prefer to be identified by your first name/pseudonym?
☐ Anonymous
☐ Name
☐ Specify

I have read (or been read) the above information. I understand the purpose of the study, what participation involves, and my rights as a participant. I agree to take part in this research.

Participant Name:

Signature:

Date:

Researcher Name: Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya

Signature:

Date: __02.05.25_____

Section B: Demographic Information

- 1. What is your age? (18-30 / 31-45 / 46-60 / 61+)

.....

- 2. What is your gender? (Male / Female / Other)

.....

- 3. What is your ethnicity?

.....

- 4. Where do you currently live? (Diaspora – specify country / Nairobi / Rural Kenya specify county)

Funeral Service Providers Questionnaire

Research Topic: Modern and Cultural Rituals in Handling Dead Bodies and the Grieving Process in Kenya

Instructions:

Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience. Your responses will remain confidential and are only for academic research purposes.

Section A: General Information

1. Name of Funeral Home / Organization: (Optional)
-
2. Location of Operations:
- Urban (e.g., Nairobi, Mombasa)
 - Semi-urban
 - Rural
3. Years of Operation:
4. Ethnic Groups Frequently Served:
- (List common ones e.g., Luo, Kikuyu, Luhya, Kisii, etc.)
-
5. Average Number of Funerals Handled per Month:

Section B: Body Preparation and Handling

6. What are the most common practices requested for body preparation?
- (e.g., embalming, dressing, body viewing)
-
7. Are there ethnic or religious preferences that influence how the body is handled? Please give examples.
-
-
8. How do you handle requests for traditional rituals during body preparation (e.g., washing by family, specific rites)?

9. Have you observed any changes in how bodies are handled over the years? If yes, what are they?
-
-
10. Are you involved in repatriation of bodies (e.g., from abroad or cities to rural homes)? What cultural issues arise in this process?
-
-
-

Section C: Funeral Ceremonies and Rituals

11. What kinds of funeral ceremonies do you typically assist with?
- Christian
 - Muslim
 - Traditional/Indigenous
 - Mixed
 - Other (specify): _____
12. Are there unique traditional rituals you’ve encountered in your work? Please describe briefly,
-
-
13. How are these rituals accommodated or clashed with modern funeral services?
-
-
14. Are there cases where families combine modern and traditional practices? Can you give examples?
-
-
-
15. What role do elders, religious leaders, or cultural custodians play in funerals you manage?

Section D: Mourning and Grieving Practices

16. Do families request specific support for the mourning process (e.g., counseling, rituals, community gatherings)?

17. Have you noticed any differences in mourning between families in rural areas, urban areas, and those in the diaspora?

18. What are the most common mourning rituals you encounter (e.g., days of mourning, attire, songs, feasts)?

19. Are there gender-based roles in mourning or funeral arrangements? Please elaborate.

Section E: Observations and Reflections

20. In your view, how are traditional practices changing in the context of urbanization and globalization?

21. What challenges do you face in accommodating cultural rituals?

22. How do you think funeral practices in Kenya will evolve in the next 10–20 years?

- p. 1 Close-up of headstones of Private Tuoma Otieno, East African Military Labour Service, and Private Anjililo Mwaukusi, East African Army Service Corps, Nairobi War Cemetery, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 2–3 Columns bearing the names of 2400 men and women who died in service to the British Crown, Nairobi War Cemetery, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 4–5 Sharp Focus Engraving & Terrazzo Contractors headstone vendors on Ngong Road, Nairobi, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 6–11 Artist's Notebook, Research Design
- pp. 12–13 Detailed close-up of headstone vendors on Ngong Road, Nairobi, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 14–15 Detailed close-up of headstone vendors on Ngong Road, Nairobi, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 16–17 Detailed close-up of headstone vendors on Ngong Road, Nairobi, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 18–19 Luo ethnic group funeral in Kisumu, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 20–21 Carpentry and coffin workshop in Muhoroni, Kenya, 2025
- pp. 22–25 Body transfer from abroad (www.ritual-services.com)
- pp. 26–27 *Research Questionnaire: Death in Diaspora among Kenyan Ethnicities* (Questions 1–4)
- pp. 28–30 *Funeral Service Providers Questionnaire* (Questions 1–15)
- p. 32 Nairobi War Cemetery, Kenya, 2025

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Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya, *After Life Far Away*
Neue Kunst in Hamburg e.V.

Nicholas Odhiambo Mboya

*Do You Believe
in Vanga?*







ОБЛАДКАНИТО В БАТА СТАЯ Е ОТ ВЕНА.
ПОДАРЕНО Е ОТ БЪЛГАРКА ЖИВЕЩА В АУСТРИЯ.

ОБСТАНОВКА В КЛАСИЧНАТА КОМИНАТА Е ОТ ВЕНА.
БИЛА ПОДАРЕНА БОЛГАРКОЙ ЖИВУЩЕЙ В АУСТРИЯ.

THE DECOR IN THIS ROOM IS FROM VIENNA. IT WAS
GIFTED BY A BULGARIAN WOMAN LIVING IN AUSTRIA.

the future.
 meaning *to predict the future.*
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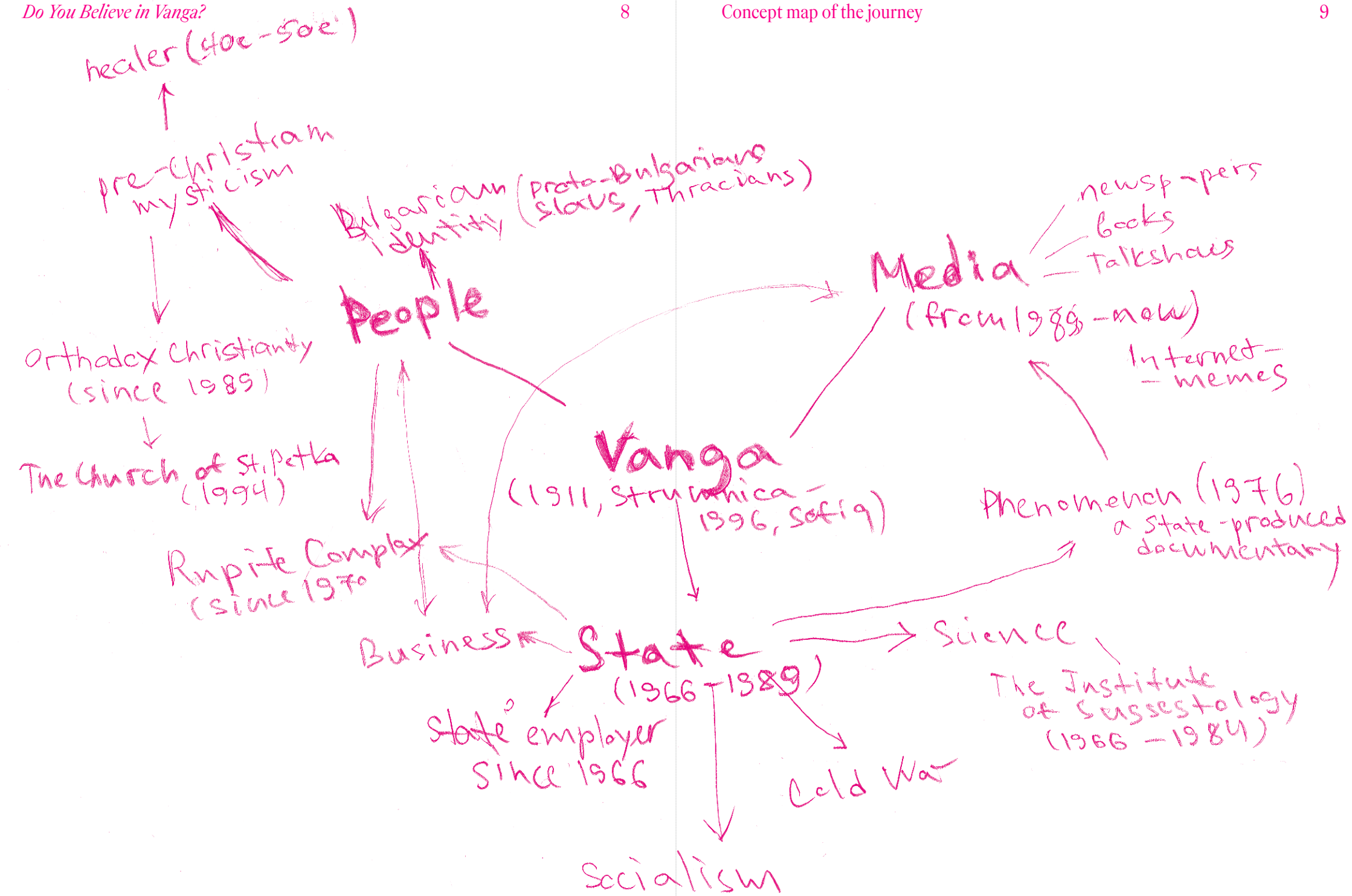
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Кирсан Илюмжиков и
ирсаном Илюмжиновым и
nykia – Kirsan Ilumzhikov and his wife.

13. Ванга в къщата си в Петрич.
Ванга в своем доме в Петриче.
Vanga in her house in Petrich.

15. Имен ден на пророчицата
Шкумбата и Наташа, дъщерята на помощника
Именины с комедиантом из Петрича Димитрием
Наташей, дочерю ее помощницы Витки. Начала 80-тых.
Name day of the prophet with the comedian from Petrich Dinitrich
bata) and Natasha – the daughter of her aid Vitka – early 80's

Baba Vanga's house, Petrich

11



JOY CRASHES OUT

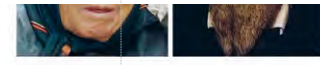
News.com.au
Expert's shock claim about Baba ...



KOSMO
Geheime Prophezeiung von Bab...



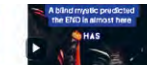
The Times of India
Baba Vanga's scary prediction: Y...



NDTV
Baba Vanga And Nostradamus H...



News.com.au
Expert's shoc...



UNILAD Tech
Shocking predictions...



Instagram
Baba Vanga's ...



YouTube
Astrologer Sri Krishna Sudhi Abo...



BGNES
Baba Vanga has captured the a...



News.com.au
Expert's shoc...



Zee News - India.Com
Baba Vangas shocking predicti...



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Radio
Baba Vanga iti prezic...
Home 03 - Radio
Baba Vanga...



The Scottish Sun
Blind mystic Baba Vanga ...



Japan's 'Baba ...
Japan's 'Baba Va...



The Economic Times
What Baba Vanga saw f...



Yahoo
Blind mystic Baba Vanga s...



YouTube
baba vanga prediction: Baba ...



Facebook
Predictions: Blind...



Daily Express
Baba Vanga's psychic pred...



Instagram
Baba Vanga w...



New York Post
Blind psychic Baba Vanga'...



YouTube
Baba Vanga Predictions: Prop...



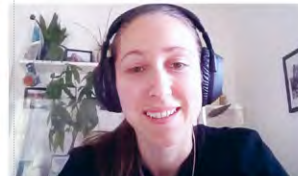
Facebook
NDTV - Reno...



The Scottish Sun
Blind mystic Baba Vanga who ...



IMDb
Baba Vanga (2016) - IMDb



News.com.au
Expert's shock claim about Ba...



The Economic Times
world war 3: Iran-Israel war ca...



Zee News - India.Com
Baba Vanga Prediction 2025: ...



UNILAD Tech
Baba Vanga make...



YouTube
Bulgarian Prophet Baba Vang...



Cornwall Live
Baba Vanga predictions fo...



YouTube
Baba Vanga బీస్సం నిజం...



Telegrafi
Baba Vanga's family tree - the...



YouTube
Baba Vanga Predictions 2026...



VAGABOND
RUSSIA BRINGS ON... VANG...



Times of India
Baba Vanga's predictions for ...



The Economic ...
baba vanga pred...



YouTube
Baba Vanga's heartbreaking p...



The Scottish Sun
Blind mystic Baba Vanga who...



City Maqazine
Baba Vanga 2024: Bab...



YouTube
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Telegrafi
What has Baba Vanga predict...



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Telegrafi
What has Baba Vanga predict...



Instagram
Baba Vanga w...

КНИГА ЗА
ВПЕЧАТАЕЛИЯ
12
КЪЩА „ВАНГА“
МУЗЕЙНА
ЕКСПОЗИЦИЯ





PARAPSYCHOLOGY: TEACHING THE BLIND TO SEE

With the emphasis on applied parapsychology in Bulgaria, Lozanov borrowed the Soviet technique of skin sight to help the blind. Whether or not the reasons why it works are known, skin sight exists and we can use it to help people right now, he feels.

"To exclude any question of fraud and to be sure the experiments were totally reliable, I worked with sixty children who'd been blind from birth or had gone blind in infancy."

Even though they were blind, for additional insurance, their eyes were blindfolded and during most of the experiments an opaque screen was placed between the face of the child and the object examined. Over four hundred tests were done in 1964. Out of the sixty youngsters Lozanov tested, three immediately showed the ability to dis-



Do You Believe in Vanga?

A collection of religious icons, including depictions of the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, St. George on a white horse slaying a dragon, and St. Nicholas. The icons are displayed in various frames, some gold and some wood, arranged on a wooden surface.







I first heard about Baba Vanga (1911, Strumica, North Macedonia–1996, Sofia, Bulgaria) in my childhood.

Russia in the 1990s is where she became incredibly known as a legendary clairvoyant. Every year, countless TV programs about her prophecies were broadcast, from in-depth documentaries to talk shows aired between Latin American soap operas and Russian evening news. Politicians, actors, neighbors, and casual visitors shared their stories of meeting her.

Vanga's figure became so deeply embedded in cultural language that a new Russian verb appeared: "ванговать", meaning *to predict the future*.

I became interested in how her sayings were documented, and by whom. Her own words sound like poetic fragments open to endless interpretation, while the more concrete "predictions" originate from others. Personally, Vanga embodies the phenomenon of post-truth, where the original voice dissolves into layers of truth, invention, interpretation, and exaggeration.

I travelled to places connected with her life: from Novo Selo, North Macedonia, where she lost her sight, and the village of Hamzali, linked to her legend, where a "mysterious horseman" first revealed her abilities, to her house in Petrich, Bulgaria and the complex in Rupite, where she received visitors and built a church. I also spent time in Melnik, the Rozhen Monastery, and the ancient city of Heraclea Sintica.

The second part of my research took place at the State Archives of Bulgaria, which hold the records of the Institute of Suggestology and Parapsychology in Sofia, active between 1966 and 1984. These documents recorded the Vanga phenomenon, claiming an accuracy rate of around eighty percent.

During my travels, I often discussed with local residents who spoke of her with deep reverence. When the conversation turned to Vanga, many asked the same question, "Do you believe in Vanga?", turning any discussion of her into an act of faith evaluation.

Each time, I hesitated before answering.

In her story, mysticism, Orthodoxy, the state, science, and the media moulded the persona of a clairvoyant and transformed her into a national myth. Beyond the myth, her figure also reflects the history of a country in transition and its search for identity.

For many, she offered consolation, a sense of order, and hope in uncertain times.



Novo Selo
... where she lost her sight ...



Hamzali
... where a "mysterious horseman" first revealed her abilities ...



Petrich
... to her house in Petrich ...



Rupite
... where she received visitors and built a church ...



Melnik
I also spent time in Melnik ...



Heraclea Sintica
... and the ancient city of Heraclea Sintica.



Katja Pilipenko, *Do You Believe in Vanga?*
Neue Kunst in Hamburg e.V.

Katja Pilipenko

Whom I Lost In





The first time I travelled to Georgia, in 2018, I encountered
the recorded voice of Hamlet Gonashvili.

3

I already knew this voice. My grandfather listened to the same
recordings in Iran, where living was shaped by displacement that had
occurred before my lifetime. The music was present in our home
as atmosphere—something that influenced how we moved through
the world, without proposing a place to return to. It stayed, and
its staying had weight.

Later, I learned how Gonashvili died—falling from a tree, his chest
striking a metal spike. In Georgian, one says: he fell with his heart
onto the lion. The phrase remained with me because it names
what follows after rupture: life continuing from the point of the break,
without repair and without resolution—simply under changed
conditions.

Displacement functions in this way. It does not conclude; it reorganizes
how one perceives and relates. The damage does not close; it becomes
part of how thought and attention form.

This year, I returned to Georgia twice.
In winter, I went to approach the unresolved pull—not to clarify it,
but to observe how it operates.

In June, I filmed. Not to capture a narrative, but to register how an
event persists across environments, gestures, and intervals—how it is
present without appearing directly.

The connection between his fall and my own rupture is not symbolic.
It is a shared condition of proceeding once the ground has shifted.

I continue from there.





A young woman with dark, curly hair is shown from the chest up, looking down and slightly to her left. She is wearing a light blue or white sleeveless top. The background is a soft-focus bokeh of green and yellow light spots, suggesting an outdoor setting with foliage and sunlight. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Then I thought, I'll pass through you.





—like a trace that appears







a sigh



Who did he lost in here?



You know, the first time I saw you,

24

all I could see was the hollow of a past.

My heart trembled and my skin flinched with fear.

Then I thought I would pass through you,

not to reach somewhere else,

but because something—

maybe time itself—

had already begun to leave the place where you stood.

And still, there you were,

like a trace that appears

only when one stops looking.

I did not follow you.

25





There are movements that do not arrive anywhere—not departures,
not returns, but slight dislocations in time.

28

The work follows what retreats without fully leaving, what remains
without revealing itself.

A presence sensed only after its passage.

A thought you might never have had, were it not for the silence it
leaves behind.

It does not attempt to clarify what draws it on.

It stays with forms that develop slowly, without needing to become definite.

What unfolds here does so in intervals, where something
unformulated begins to take hold, without declaring itself.

The work does not aim to resolve or interpret these shifts.

Not as absence, and not as conclusion, but as a different way of
being alongside what continues.

Nothing is finalized.

Nothing is returned to.

Yet the terms under which things proceed are no longer the same.

The book comes to a close here.

What continues does so elsewhere.

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Mohammad Poori, *Whom I Lost In*
Neue Kunst in Hamburg e.V.

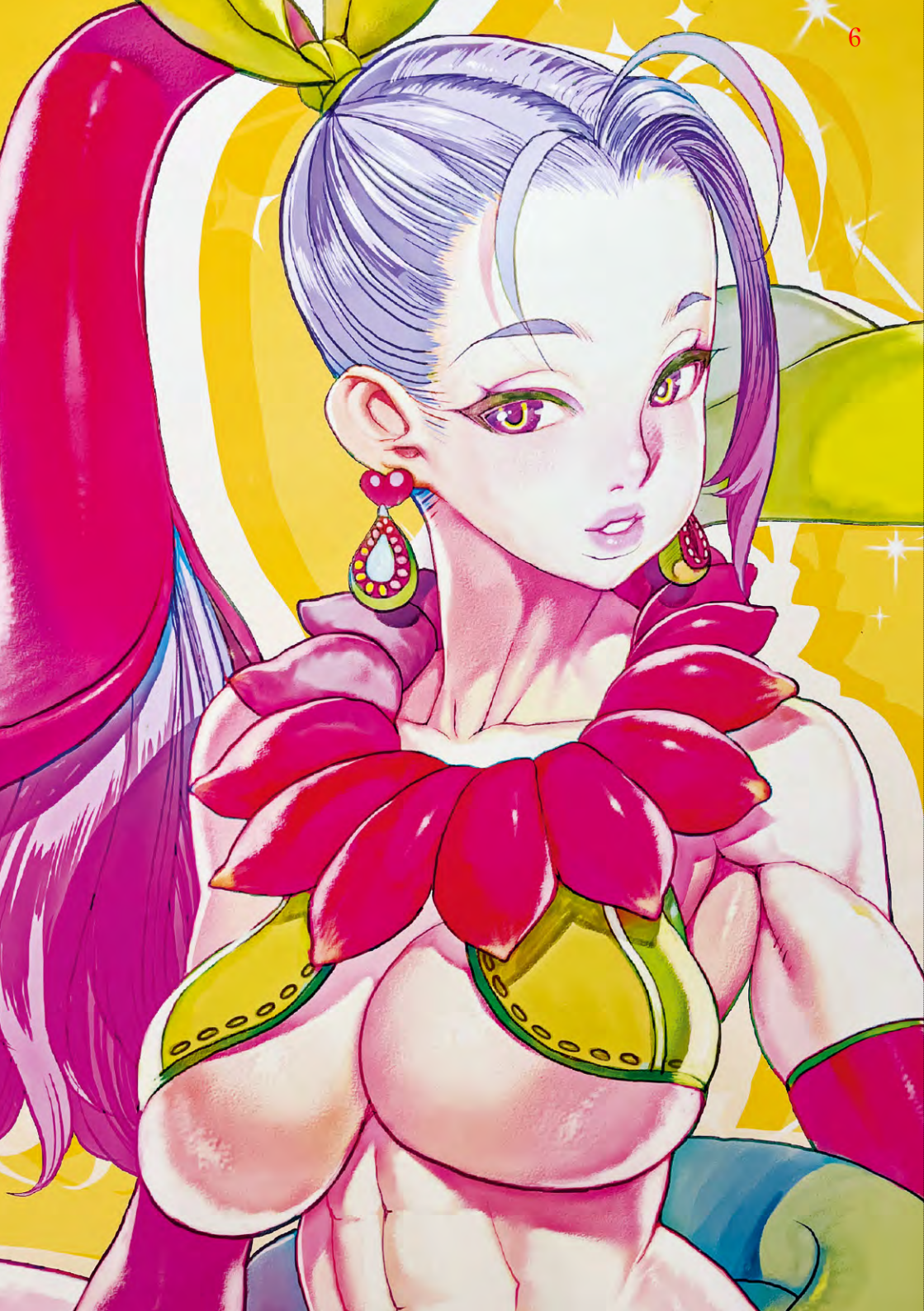
Mohammad Poori

*You Are My Love,
My Angel*













补

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88元

39.9元













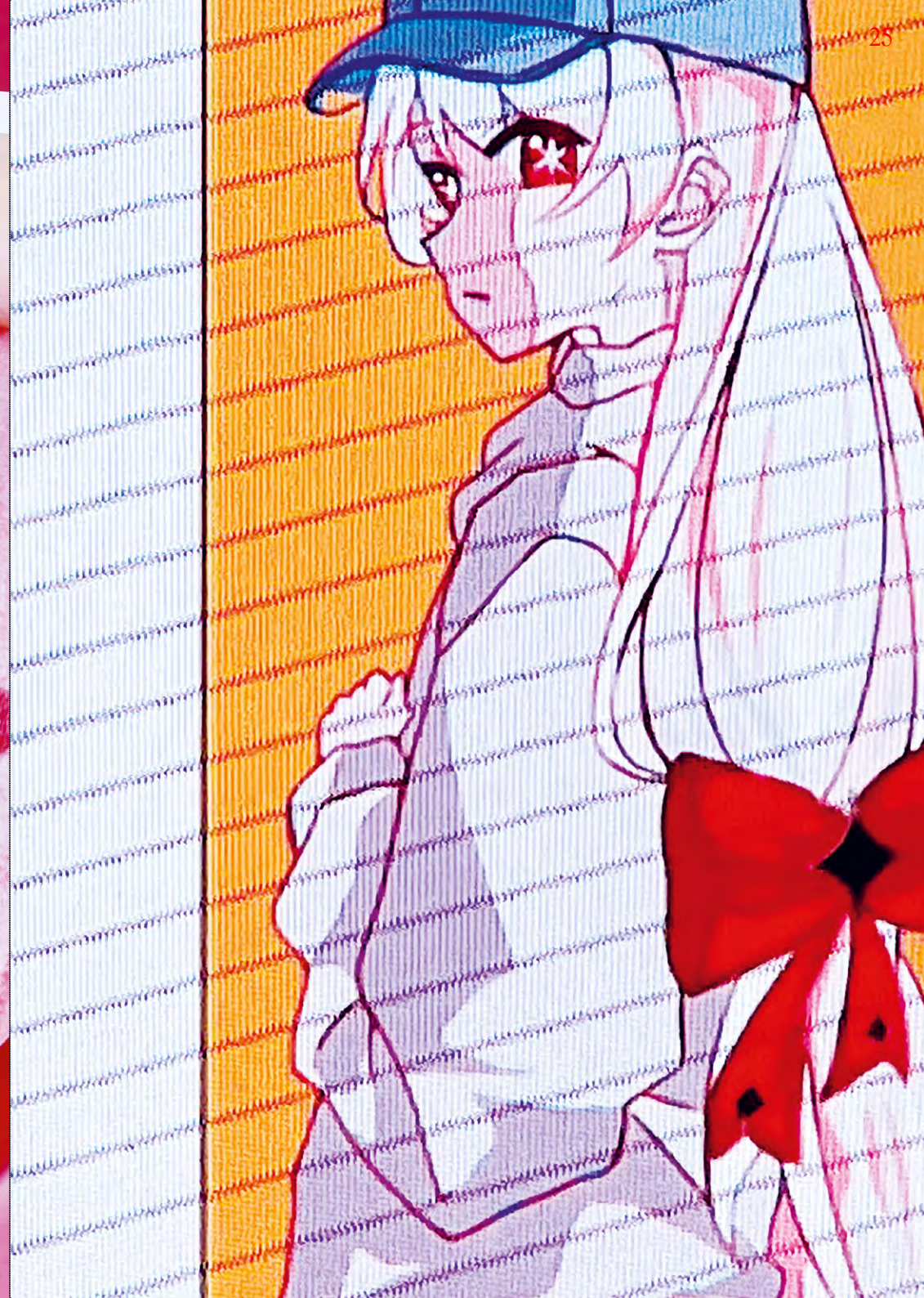
KISSME

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Anna Stüdeli, *You Are My Love, My Angel*
Neue Kunst in Hamburg e.V.

Anna Stüdeli

Neue Kunst in Hamburg 17th Cycle