

collectorspace  
presents:

*La Vigie*  
*(extrait 6)*

*Jean-Luc Moulène*

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# Introduction

Haro Cumbusyan  
and Özge Ersoy

Jean-Luc Moulène in his photographic essay *La Vigie* (2004–2011) observes, over a period of seven years, a Princess tree that keeps sprouting in a cracked sidewalk near the Ministry of Finance in Paris. Known for its ability to adapt and to grow rapidly, the plant presumably gets cut, squashed, and trampled on countless times, but keeps coming back, bearing witness to the events that take place on the streets. Its vantage point captures the banality of daily life as well as the charged emotions of public protests and the brutality of police action. At collectorspace, where we have the similar privilege of overlooking a public square, we were thrilled to exhibit *La Vigie* (excerpt 6). This fragment of the entire series of 299 photographs shows the early phases of the sprout, full of potential for change and of long-term resistance, both recurrent themes in Moulène's practice.

It was a thought-provoking exercise to take *La Vigie* as an entry point to discuss KADIST, and even to take a step further to imagine Moulène's long-term gesture as a collection—an adaptable, resilient, and ever-changing entity. Founded by Vincent Worms and Sandra Terdjman in 2006, KADIST has developed an international contemporary art collection that puts transparency and social engagement at the

core of its mission. To these ends, KADIST makes the content of its collection public on its website since its inception, and works closely with artists and curators through residency and exhibition programs. Here, the collection does not come to fore as an end in itself, but rather as a tool to support artistic production. From our viewpoint, KADIST not only challenges the familiar format of individual-centric private collections, but also creates a role model by prioritizing knowledge production through well-conceived collaborations, and actively encouraging experimentation.

In this publication, philosopher and artist Lorenzo Cirrincione makes a performative reading on collections as "cultural spaces in action." He explores the question of how to document contemporary art collections and the social worlds they create, through relations of exchange and communication. Two other commissioned texts focus on *La Vigie*. The first one is by art historian Berin Gölönü who discusses the Princess tree as a host of different identities, ranging from that of a refugee to an invader, to a revolutionary, to a city dweller, and to a witness. The second is by architect Aslihan Demirtaş who introduces the history of *Paulownia tomentosa*—how it has become an "invasive" species outside of Asia—, and talks about the ideas of resilience and panarchy. In the end, Demirtaş makes a connection between Moulène's position in *La Vigie* and Hasan, a 7-year-old character living in an ill-fated village in Yaşar Kemal's

novel *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*—a child with an exceptional imagination and a deeply engaged relationship to nature.

We would like to express our gratitude to the contributors to this publication. We also feel deeply indebted to Jean-Luc Moulène who allowed this exhibition to happen, and to Vincent Worms, Sandra Terdjman, Émilie Villez, Léna Monnier, Devon Bella, Pete Belkin, and the rest of the team at KADIST for loaning the work and for generously giving us access to their spaces and their collecting practice.

# *La Vigie* (*The Look-out Man*)

Berin Gölönü

At first, *La Vigie* reads as a mundane series of photographs of city streets. A group of sixteen photographs on view at collectorspace, selected from a larger series of 299 images comprising the entire series, direct the viewer's gaze down to focus on a city sidewalk. Here we see fixtures that are common to cities around the developed world and designed specifically to monitor and control the behavior and actions of urban residents. Wide sidewalks with strategically positioned railings are designed to accommodate large crowds; neatly planted trees are surrounded by grates to ensure that they will not outgrow their narrow plot of earth; sleek light fixtures mimic the placement of the trees (or vice versa); buildings that look like corporate towers lend the streets a certain homogeneity. In these photographs, however, we also glimpse signs of life and activity that interrupt the function and order of the modern city: chalk graffiti scrawled onto the sidewalk, splatters of blue paint, a line of police officers shielding the entrance of a building, and a persistent type of weed growing at the base of one of these light fixtures, its roots and leaves threatening to crack

the concrete. Highlighting this friction between order and disruption, the seemingly mundane photographs in *La Vigie* succeed in illustrating a host of themes that are relevant to societies around the world today, ranging from a critique of neoliberal economic policies and their effects on local populations and the environment to issues of national security, to the question of granting agency to non-human species.

Moulène took these photographs near his place of residence in central Paris, within walking distance from the Ministry of Finance and a major sports and concert arena named after an international hotel chain. While the sports and concert arena attracts tourists, sports fans, and concertgoers, the Ministry of Finance has drawn crowds of protestors objecting to the government's increasing embrace of neoliberal economic policies. For Moulène, these photographs document the place where Paris's identity as a neoliberal city, one in which the free market determines how flows of capital are generated and circulated, comes into conflict with a public that feels increasingly disenfranchised by these free market policies. Paris has certainly been an epicenter of protest movements, past and present, from May 1968 to the recent strikes against President François Hollande's labor reform program. Yet these photographs could also depict any major metropolis around the world where similar conflicts were played out in recent years, from New York to São Paulo. As free market policies spread globally, so do the consequent

discontents, contributing to shared commonalities in cities across the world—urban renewal, privatization, gentrification, income disparity, and mass protests. By both pointing to and transgressing the specificity of its locale, *La Vigie* acquires different but interrelated meanings as it circulates the art world's global networks of display.

Translating into "the lookout man" or "the lookout tower," the title *La Vigie* refers to France's "Plan Vigipirate" which are the enhanced surveillance mechanisms and security measures adopted by the state to counter the threat of terrorist activity during and after the Iraq War of 2003. *La Vigie's* entirety, comprising 299 images, were taken between the years 2004–2010.<sup>1</sup> The sixteen images at collectorspace function as a synecdoche, taken over a shorter span of time that nonetheless represents an expanded chronology. As terrorism itself has grown into an increasing global threat in the past decade and a half, many countries have adopted increased security and surveillance measures that have severely restricted the freedoms and behavior of their own citizens. The rise of the police state and its increased patrol of the urban public realm may be an outgrowth of the increased threat of terrorism, but it also furthers the neoliberal agenda. Any potentially incendiary activities falling outside acceptable systems of production, consumption, and navigation are

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1 Yasmin Raymond, "The Hammer Without a Master," *Jean-Luc Moulène: Opus + One* (New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2012) 6–19.

rigorously controlled and heavily monitored by an increased urban security presence. Any activities that can disrupt the city's capitalist order, such as panhandling, loitering, graffiti, and unlawful assembly, are increasingly criminalized in spaces still deemed "public." Not to mention the fact that the concept of "public" space itself is under threat in the privatizing neoliberal city.

Moulène has cast an unlikely protagonist, an invasive, non-native species of plant referred to as *Paulownia tomentosa* as the agent that disrupts the city's order and regulation. The weed grows into a quiet symbol of resistance. We watch it through seasons, as its roots and leaves widen and extend, eventually cracking and damaging the concrete. Just like graffiti which has an ephemeral existence, especially the chalk graffiti documented in one of the photographs, the growth of the weed enacts a tactical interference, promising to temporarily subvert the city grid's dehumanizing, regulative, or disciplinary order by transgressing its concrete barrier. A non-human actor that quietly gains strength without being detected, the weed appears to have evaded "the lookout man" at least for the time being. We learn in reading about the entirety of the series that the weed is seen periodically trimmed back when it grows too large, or when it becomes too visible.<sup>2</sup> In this excerpt of sixteen photographs, we witness the weed's regrowth, most likely after a prior trimming. Seeing as weeds themselves

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2 Ibid.

are alien invaders, wouldn't this plant be considered foreign aggressor that threatens the lives of native species? Haven't the French state's counter-terrorism measures been put into place specifically to protect French citizens against alien invaders, from immigrants and refugees who might be hiding terrorists in their midst? And aren't foreigners not likened to weeds in the fascistic, xenophobic mindset? In light of the EU's recent refugee crisis, we can certainly read this quiet protagonist as an entity who perseveres against antagonistic forces. Its growth is a testament to the fact that life takes root, even in the most inhospitable circumstances, just as refugees struggle to survive and plant roots amidst the cycle of war, extremism, racism, and xenophobia that they are forced to navigate.

It appears as though this little weed has the ability to attract and absorb a host of meanings and identities, from a refugee, to a invader, to a revolutionary, to a city dweller penned in by the rigidity of urban life, to a symbol of nature's perseverance in light of the destruction unleashed by human kind. These meanings multiply and acquire added significance when *La Vigie* is displayed within the context of Istanbul, and situated in a gallery that is a stone's throw from Gezi Park. As the author writes this text, her news feed is filled with commemorative articles marking the third anniversary of the eruption of the Gezi protests. Originally triggered by a handful city residents protesting the illegal entry of bulldozers into Gezi Park, yet another

incursion of private greed into the public sphere, the protests eventually mushroomed into a mass movement that spread throughout the country and citizens came together to express their outrage against a range of injustices perpetrated by the government. Perhaps it is fitting that the quiet protagonist of *La Vigie* can attract and absorb a panoply of symbolic meanings, just as the Gezi protests attracted a broad range of individuals with varying levels of political engagement, ranging from peace activists to grandmothers. Even though their agendas may have been different, the participants were all anxious to speak out about a growing range of social, political, and ecological ailments. Coming together in the same sit-ins and public demonstrations, they heard one another's views, shared one another's grievances, and fell victim to the same police brutality, regardless of their race, age, ethnicity, or gender. Perhaps most importantly, they bore witness to how the Turkish media censored the coverage of the protests to paint the protestors themselves as criminals, vandals, and pests who were disrupting the state's efforts to foster capitalist productivity, or foreign agents guilty of foiling the government's efforts to grow the nation into one of the world's most powerful economies. As a result of these experiences, something else took root at Gezi, a phenomenon that author Kristin Ross refers to as "relational" subjectivity.

In her book *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, Ross outlines the political climate that sparked the mass protests

and strikes in Paris in May '68, which effectively shut down the workflow of Paris for over a month and nearly toppled the Gaullist regime.<sup>3</sup> Weaving together a series of events that shook French society in the decade leading up to May '68, from anti-war protests about the Algerian War to labor strikes in factories all over France, Ross explains how protest culture with a diverse range of agendas acquired momentum in France over these years. Her most insightful observation about May '68 is the fact that the protests resulted in a temporary rejection of preexistent social categories on the part of the middle class. The spirit of convergence and solidarity fostered on a day to day basis during the protests and meetings of May '68 made it possible for middle class French university students to identify with subjectivities very different from their own—such as the blue collar worker or the colonial subject. Ross describes what came to the fore as a “relational subjectivity” built around a “polemics of equality” that accounted for the experiences of the other. This experience of equality posed a stark contrast to concepts of unity or uniformity upheld by state or market forces. A similar awakening was witnessed by the participants of the Gezi protests, in Istanbul and elsewhere around the country. When the protesters were attacked by the police, the brutality with which they had been treated didn't register in the censored Turkish media. If anything, the actions

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<sup>3</sup> Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

of the protestors were criminalized in the media, so as to justify the increased perpetration of police force. That disruption between what was really happening on the streets and what was reported on screen allowed the participants of the protests (and their sympathizers) to recognize their own alterity and identify with a host of populations who have and continue to be systematically othered by Turkish society.

Relational subjectivity may be at work when we look at the photographs in *La Vigie*. If the neatly planted young trees we see in the photographs, those confined by their iron gates, could be read as a symbol of how our movements and actions are increasingly controlled by systems of power, then perhaps a sense of hope could come from watching a living creature damage those barriers with its growth, even if that living being is just a weed and an invasive species. Such anthropomorphic comparisons aside, the non-human protagonist of *La Vigie* also prompts us to consider whether relationality could transgress the confines of human subjectivity. Having entered a geological category of time characterized as the anthropocene, we cannot continue to ignore how human actions are affecting the lives of other species cohabitating this planet. A truly insightful relationality would also recognize the non-human actors of the world, acknowledge their agency, and extend ethical concerns to their existence or survival alongside our own.

# 毛泡桐/桐/ *Paulownia* *tomentosa*/ Princess Tree/ *La Vigie*

Aslıhan Demirtaş

In Jean-Luc Moulène's photographic essay *La Vigie*, a minuscule weed sprouts through the cracks of the sidewalk in the neighborhood of the French Ministry for the Economy and Finance in urban Paris. The subject in the series is a 毛泡桐 (*mao pao tong*), a tree native to China. An influential Chinese philosopher, Zhuang Zhou, who lived around 4th century BC recounts that the Phoenix flew from the South Sea to the North Sea, perching only on these trees. In Japan, the same plant appears in Dairi's coat of arms around the 1700s and is still the central symbol in the seal of the Office of the Prime Minister. 毛泡桐 or 桐 (*kiri* in Japanese) continues to have a specific symbolic value in China and Japan today, connoting longevity and the cycle of birth and death. When a daughter is born, this precious and rapidly growing tree is planted to eventually build a wedding chest from its wood when she gets married. Another tradition associated with birth is amulets made from this tree for newborn babies.

When the tree is introduced to Europe in the 19th century by Philipp Franz von Siebold, a botanist at Dutch East India Company, 桐 is christened as Paulownia dedicated to Anna Paulowna, Princess of Orange and queen consort of The Netherlands. The plant is thereby referred to as the Princess tree. Today, in North America and Europe, where Moulène's *La Vigie* is documented, the Princess tree is considered a weed and an invasive species, an alien which "grows and produces seeds rapidly and displaces native species in disturbed areas."<sup>1</sup> A native to Asia, 毛泡桐 or 桐 displaces other natives by allegedly growing too fast—the same quality that would render the tree valuable back at home so much so that coffins or dowry chests would be made of it, commemorating birth and death.

Princess tree is a foreigner, an outsider, an alien, and an immigrant when outside of Asia. Online searches for <princess tree> lead to sites such as [invasive.org](http://invasive.org) and to instructions on how to control, or in other words, on how to kill the plant. Groups such as the Nature Conservancy Wildland Invasive Species Team advise that one needs to cut the Paulownia trees right when they are flowering<sup>2</sup> or in other words, before they seduce one with their beauty and productivity. Young

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<sup>1</sup> "National Invasive Species Information Center," last modified February 9, 2017,

<https://www.invasivespeciesinfo.gov>.

<sup>2</sup> Mandy Tu, "Weed notes: Paulownia tomentosa," *The Nature Conservancy, Global Invasive Species Team*, last modified December 2002,

<https://www.invasive.org/gist/moredocs/pautom01.pdf>.

seedlings of Paulownia can be plucked manually but one needs to be careful to not to leave any root fragments. After all, as documented in *La Vigie*, Paulownia resprouts immediately.

The denominations used for invasive species, such as non-native, alien, non-indigenous, exotic, and aggressive not only refer to the plant world. Any refugee who is a valued individual, a citizen with privileges in their native country of origin, can be an invader where they seek asylum. Immigrants may be said to be a burden on the economy, aliens who cannot adapt to their new habitats, likened to invasive species, which adversely affect the habitats and bioregions they allegedly invade economically, environmentally, or ecologically: They take jobs, change the cultural environment by or without assimilating. Anti-immigrant statesmen often use the verb “to weed out” for illegal immigrants.

The relative idea of “weed-ness”—the state of being a valued plant or human in your native geography but the opposite elsewhere—begs for a larger framework for contemplation: Are humans altogether an invasive species on earth? Paleontologist David Jablonski would say yes.<sup>3</sup> According to him, we, as humans, fit perfectly the description of invasive species: We are all over the planet, spread and sprawling everywhere; we reproduce at a remarkable speed; we co-opt and monopolize resources; and it is

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3 David Quammen, “Planet of weeds: Tallying the losses of Earth’s animals and plants,” *Harper’s Magazine*, October 1998, accessed March 23, 2017 <http://harpers.org/archive/1998/10/planet-of-weeds>.

relatively difficult for the rest of the species on the planet to get rid of us, manually or chemically. Depending on where we are looking from, the weed may be the host and we may be the invaders. The Princess tree may be looking at the the Ministry for the Economy and Finance and thinking, “What a bunch of weeds.”

Moulène witnessed the Princess tree patiently and curiously for seven consecutive years and kindly laid it in front of our eyes. Cut month after month, the tree came back and resprouted from its remaining roots. Growing in between the concrete pavement, regardless of every intervention and threat on its existence, the Princess tree is a resilient witness: It always grows back and watches the constructed world unfold, day after day, in front of it.

Rooted in ancient philosophy, mathematics, and engineering, the term “resilience” was appropriated by ecological sciences in the 1970s to define and develop the concept of “ecological resilience” by C. S. Holling.<sup>4</sup> For him, resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks. He argues that resilience has four crucial aspects:

1. Latitude: the maximum amount a system can be changed before losing its ability to recover (before crossing a threshold which, if

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4 C. S. Holling, “Resilience and stability of ecological systems,” *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 4 (1973): 1–23.

breached, makes recovery difficult or impossible).

2. Resistance: the ease or difficulty of changing the system; how “resistant” it is to being changed.

3. Precariousness: how close the current state of the system is to a limit or “threshold.”

4. Panarchy: because of cross-scale interactions, the resilience of a system at a particular focal scale will depend on the influences from states and dynamics at scales above and below. For example, external oppressive politics, invasions, market shifts, or global climate change can trigger local surprises and regime shifts.<sup>5</sup>

In case of the Princess tree, resilience lies in its capacity to grow back after it is cut off. *La Vigie* shows that the plant grows back as a tree, keeping its structure and identity for seven years and maybe more. The tree grows back because it has a wide latitude, high resistance, and apparently precariousness is not the state it is in—at least for now. Do not cry after it, thinking it is dead, or shed tears for lost landscapes, ecosystems: It is not just black or white, dead or alive. A system has its ups and downs, it evolves—it is a process, not a state.

As for panarchy, it is a term originally coined by philosopher, economist, and botanist Paul Émile de Puydt in 1860 as a political term, developed

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5 B. Walker, C. S. Holling, S. R. Carpenter, and A. Kinzig, “Resilience, adaptability and transformability in social-ecological systems,” *Ecology and Society* 9(2) (2004): 5, accessed March 23, 2017, <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol9/iss2/art5>.

as an alternative to hierarchy, which literally translates as “sacred rules,” “rules of the high priest.” Panarchy stands for “others’ rule,” pointing to governances that encompass all others—all-ruling. In its coopted meaning in ecological resilience, panarchy is a framework of nature’s rules, hinted at by the name of the Greek god of nature, Pan. Panarchy dreams of a world where the point of view of the Princess tree, or 毛泡桐 to use its original name, has equal value as humans or goats or rivers and mountains. When panarchy prevails, humans are not the only species making decisions on behalf of the rest, and the world as a resource is not at the disposal of one species.

The weed is vigilant. It is vigilant of the political world, of the constructed and material world. Moulène watches the weed, while all else mind their humanly business, involved in fights and conflicts over money, work, and power. To me, Moulène resembles Hasan in Yaşar Kemal’s *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*. In the novel, Hasan is a boy about ten years old, living in a village in Turkey. He constantly observes a particular stone, taking trips out of his village with his sister—they are peers. There is a beautiful ending to the book: While the entire village is fighting over money, jealousy, property, and power, two kids pay a visit to a stone. Hasan has been watching the stone patiently for months, seeing something that no one else could see:

He ran, slipping in and out of the boulders, and came to the great

rock that was set like an island among the pines. He found his stone and gazed at it, hope and reverence in his eyes. Then he stroked it gently once or twice and lifted it up. It was as though he had been struck by lightning. He stared at the open space under the stone, unable to take his eyes off it. Slowly, his face lit up, and the mountains, the rocks, the trees, the earth seemed to light up too.

'Ummahan!' he shouted. 'Come here! Come, quick...'

His voice was triumphant.

Ummahan rushed up, excited, and looked where he was pointing. They held their breaths.

Where the stone had lain there were three freshly blooming flowers, their long stalks trailing over the black earth. One was red, a brilliant crystal red like a flame, the other yellow, yellow as the corn, the sun, a crystal yellow, and the third blue, the blue of the thistle, the sky, the sea, a crystal blue.

Hasan looked into the Ummahan's eyes. 'You see?'

'Oh yes, I do!'

'The three of them?'

'I see them all.'"<sup>6</sup>

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6 Yaşar Kemal, *Iron Earth, Copper Sky*, trans. Thilda Kemal (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1974), 220.



# *Inventories and Documentary Sociability*

*Lorenzo Cirrincione*

For a work of art to be inventoried, it must first become visible. And it does not escape the night by the kind of light that shines on rocks, but by the values that illuminate it like they have always illuminated the forms rescued from universal confusion. Any artistic inventory is ordered by values; it is not the result of enumeration but of filtering [...] We no longer attempt an inventory of forms according to known values like beauty, expression, etc., that orient research or resurrection, but, in some respects, the contrary: for the first time research (which has become its own object) makes of art a value to be discovered, becoming the object of a fundamental question.

—André Malraux, Minister of Cultural Affairs, preface to "Plaquette Sable," a document adopted by the French national commission for the establishment of a general inventory of the monuments and artistic resources of France, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 1964.

It is up to any institution concerned with writing its own history to rethink its documentation practices on a regular basis. The history of collections shows that, in fact, the insufficiency

of documentary holdings have origins often too difficult to retrace through their past relocations and reorganizations. When it comes to a contemporary art collection, the nature and quality of recorded information is all the more important because the documents that might contribute to the biography of accumulated material possess the fluidity of recent exchanges and transactions. However, far from being used to record precise contexts of production and use, this information and these documents too often float as traces whose living memory delays the work of historical recording. Soon, this memory is effaced, making it impossible to describe the mechanisms of production and appropriation that took part in the recognition and promotion of the produced and collected works.

Ideally, the history of these changes, of which a collection is both the cause and the effect, ought to lead to a sort of "novel" whose narration would follow not only the works' trajectories but also the history of the institution itself. This novel would be all the more singular in that it could not be prejudged according to some general model. Even when a collection draws upon the archetypes by which it is inspired, it still constitutes a cultural space in action, a concrete analogue whose singularity is derived from the exchanges that determine its practical field of action and interpretation. A collection thus crystallizes a particularly dense social life in which articulated are the values attributed to the works and the ideas of the individuals who produce, diffuse,

and promote them. Documenting this shared environment, where the circulation of works, projects, and points of view connect a great diversity of people across space and time, is all the more essential as this environment changes continuously to the rhythm of collaborations and the repositioning of the actors involved. Moreover, those changes may generate an ontological shift of the artworks themselves gradually reaching an abstract type, which over time is identified by its successive occurrences.

The documentary effort to testify to the ensemble of convictions and values that in the course of this process fashions our own attitude to works of art, constitutes a committed act that depends closely on the organization, which administers that commitment. But how many institutions actually keep sufficient documentation of the personal interactions that determine one act of collecting or another? They, of course, maintain inventories whose exigencies already constitute small ethical monuments, whose content expresses the demand for the depth and quality of the information collected. But, within these overly naturalistic records, the concepts that are used constitute clusters that leave hanging the context of the exchanges and actions to which the works themselves are linked. But why should living collections document their activities according to the methods of historic inventories that deal with the objects of the past whose properties should be recorded before they disappear? With works of art whose properties are still imprinted with the usage that the artist

wanted to make of them, the inventory may be oriented to other possibilities that are better aligned with the ways in which we relate to them. From this point of view, there would no longer be any reason to distinguish between the value of the critical act and the value of working with a computer database. The range of practices and events involved demonstrates that any new record would benefit from being regarded as a site-specific process that tries to deepen not only the history of the collection, but also the history of the people who animate its cultural and social life. This ongoing work is important because the critical models of tomorrow depend directly on the richness and diversity of these documents whose homogeneity ultimately poses a major epistemological obstacle. Contemporary collections tend by nature to resemble each other. They are organized around the same family of works and ideas and groups of individuals who are capable of recognizing them and being recognized in them. If their roles and panoplies resemble each other, it is essential to document the regimes of knowledge and action that underlie particular practices.

Envisaged in this way, the mission of documentation may appear utopian. But this is not a matter of exhausting what there is to say about the works themselves, but rather of reconstructing collectively the gaze that makes them come to public attention. It is not to record what they are—insofar as that is possible—but rather to record everything said about them and everything done with them. As I

have tried to stress, works of art are, in effect, social objects whose intrinsic properties are themselves linked to forms of recognition arising from particular conventions and practices. In this sense, the works possess many properties that may be described, but these properties are inseparable from the type of recognition from which they benefit. Tomorrow we may want to be able to follow the journey of all the collections that, for a while, imitate and intersect with each other, and then may progress, stagnate, or be relegated as shared influences evolve. So, if we want to replace the idea of a collection with a view of the social worlds that produced its relations of exchange and communication, then first we must enlarge the concept of documentation.

*Translated from the French by Susan Emanuel.*

The screenshot displays a complex inventory record for Jean-Luc Moulène's work 'La Vigie'. The interface is organized into several functional areas:

- Inventory Header:** Shows the artist's name (Jean-Luc Moulène), code (Y-ADL), and surname (Moulène).
- Work Details:** Title 'La Vigie (extract 6)', Paris 2004-2011, Edition 3/3 + 2 AP, Date, and Dimensions 52.50 x 40.50 x 1.60 cm. The medium is identified as Photography.
- Description:** 'Work 16 (framed/encadré) photographs (11 clichés) mounted on aluminum.' Location: arts franc.
- Acquisition Information:** Date February 2012, Price, Discount %, VAT %, Total \$, Insurance, and Sold to Address.
- Shipping:** Packed Dimensions 108 x 29 x 82 cm, Packing Type Crated, and fields for Ship Date, Ship Co., Ship Contact, and Invoice.
- Storage & Documents:** Includes fields for Storage Location, French/Swiss Code, Master/Exh Copy, and checkboxes for Certificate, Contract, Installation, Catalogue, and High Res Image.
- Loan & Conservation:** Loan to Collectorspace, Istanbul, 2015. Includes checkboxes for Condition Report and Conservation Doc.
- Artist Info & Notes:** Year of Birth 1955, Birth Country France, and a large Notes field.

Fig. Extract from the inventory records of KADIST on FileMaker Pro 14. Jean-Luc Moulène, *La Vigie* (extract 6), Paris 2004–2011, lent to collectorspace, Istanbul, August 26–October 24, 2015.

# *In Conversation with Vincent Worms, Sandra Terdjman, and Émilie Villez*

collectorspace: It's been almost ten years since you established KADIST. What were your motivations back then, and how have they changed over time?

Vincent Worms: We founded KADIST in 2006 in Paris. KADIST is philanthropic in nature; its mission is to contribute to a progressive society. From the very beginning, we wanted KADIST to have two pillars—the collection and the programs—and we consider the two to be interlinked. The collection is essentially the material for our programs. And our programs are using and nourishing the collection with new relationships and new artists.

The KADIST Collection is relatively large for the size of our foundation. We currently have over 1,000 artworks, which is of course covering only a small layer of contemporary art production. Here, I have to emphasize that we have no ability or intention to compete with large-scale museums. For us, the collection is rather a point of engagement with contemporary artists.

Sandra Terdjman: We consider the collection as a means to support artists. We also have residencies, commissions, and exhibitions that we use similarly as tools. I'd like to tell you about one of the first pieces we acquired for the collection, which reflects our goals. It's

*Le Noeud Coulant*, a work by Jean-Luc Moulène, made in 1997. The work is a collage of two eyes, where there are two eyeballs that you can reconfigure by using the threads that connect them so that they will look at each other in different ways. For me, the work explores the idea of perspectivism, a term coined by anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro. He would explain this term by saying that the way I don't understand you is not the same way you don't understand me. I believe this a good metaphor for the KADIST Collection, because the it's founded on the idea of alterity, as this work suggests: It's about how we look at the other, how we try to see the world through different perspectives. Most of the works in the collection have a political stand and a particular take on history, storytelling, fiction, and documentary to deconstruct what we think the truth is or what we take for granted.

Émilie Villez: For me, KADIST is an in-between model. It's a private collection and has a personal history because it's related to a family. And yet, from the start, it has been looking for a professional framework, aiming for an institutional rigor. For instance, the acquisitions for the collection are decided upon with several sets of eyes—all established professionals in the contemporary art field. We have two project spaces, one in Paris and the other in San Francisco, that are open to the public and yet we don't necessarily show the collection there, which makes our position ambiguous for people who expect spectacular spaces from private foundations. The ambiguity was much stronger when we launched the first space in Paris in 2006. But today there are other models similar to us and I believe that the art world is evolving

towards hybrid models like ourselves.

**CS:** Did you start the collection with a particular methodology in mind—maybe a focus on a medium, region, of a theme? And would you say that your thinking about the collection has changed since the beginning?

**ST:** The collection started a bit earlier, in the early 2000s. Unlike public institutions, the KADIST Collection doesn't have to be exhaustive in representing a specific region, a locality, or a medium. It's much more organic in its process. What's important is to think about artworks as beyond commodities we acquire, conserve, and exhibit over time. For us, an artwork is a form of life—an ecosystem we have to know exhaustively: We feel like we have to know the various intentions behind the work, in which context it was made, what the material says about the content, etc. so that we have a better understanding about the form of life of the work in order to collect it. I guess this way of thinking of a collection is more like a curatorial approach. We also work closely with artists to produce works and to do programming around them, so we act as both curators and collectors, which is a rare position in the art ecosystem.

In our model, we acquire a work by an artist and after that we invite him or her to our residency program, where we produce new works, which we may or may not acquire in the end. For instance, we worked with the artist duo Goldin+Senneby in 2010. We had invited them to pursue a work called *Headless*—a long-term work based on Georges Bataille's ideas around the act of withdrawal and *Acéphale* (headless in French), a secret society he formed in Paris in the 1930s. The work is a police

fiction novel written by a ghostwriter commissioned by Goldin+Senneby. The plot takes place in offshore financial centers and explores spaces of invisibility. The process of writing took seven years for the duo and each chapter was produced through an exhibition they had at different institutions, including KADIST in Paris, Index in Stockholm, and The Power Plant in Toronto. Throughout the process, they created performances that eventually became part of the novel. In Paris, we conducted the research together and did a lot of programming around the work they produced, and finally acquired the work. KADIST also entered the work as a character. I like this example because it shows what different roles we may play in the process—as a curator, producer, character, and a collector.

**VW:** We have a diverse and multi-headed collection because it's made through different encounters with artists and with the help of different advisors. Our acquisition meetings are inspired by institutions. Although we're a small foundation, our collection method resembles one of large-scale museum collecting. We have a great number of people helping us to develop the collection, who are knowledgeable about different regions and art scenes. We work with a great group of curators and art critics, including Hou Hanru, Philippe Pirotte, and Jens Hoffmann, among others. Every six months, we have a meeting to discuss potential acquisitions. Everyone brings their proposals to the table and we discuss them all together.

**ÉV:** Ever since we opened our space in Paris, we wanted to invite artists to the residency. And very quickly after that, we also started inviting independent curators, as they also need support. As Sandra mentioned, the premise of the

residency is to work closely with a small team. Our team works on the production and the mediation of the show at the same time. We always witness the process, so we're always trying to talk to the public about not just the result they're seeing as a finished artwork, but more of how the artist got to that point.

**CS:** You opened a space in Paris in 2006 and another one in San Francisco in 2010. What are the specificities about these two cities and how do these two spaces work together?

**VW:** One could think that being a private family foundation was an unusual starting point for an institution. In 2006, there weren't many private public foundations in the art scene in France. Some people thought that we were a sort of artist-run space. We were building a collection and we were a private foundation with our own means. This ambiguity was at the core of our identity. Another specificity was that we aimed for a program that is interested in what is made outside of France. After a couple of years, instead of acquiring a larger space in Paris or building a museum for the collection, we decided to have two small spaces to make more programming, produce more exhibitions and discussions. And the way we do exhibitions has changed over the last ten years. After we opened the space in San Francisco, the synergy between the two places became an important part of what we do. Now we work with other institutions worldwide, in Paris, in San Francisco, but also internationally.

**ÉV:** The programs in Paris and San Francisco are related, the two teams talk to each other a lot, and we have an overarching identity—the collection. Having said that, Paris and San Francisco offer two very different art scenes and publics, and we try to do

programming in relation to the local contexts. The team in San Francisco has developed quite an intensive program of events with talks, screenings, and performances. That was an interesting way for them to create a community, engaging the dynamic art schools in the area. In Paris, we are in a different context, as there is such a huge offer in terms of contemporary art, with many large-scale museums, institutions, smaller alternative spaces, and many commercial galleries. So that type of intensive programs wasn't what we really aimed for. We mostly try to create events that derive from the exhibitions.

**ST:** We think that the collection is an asset that we can share and we share it not with an abstract public but with specific institutions that we want to collaborate with. We also learned a lot from these institutional collaborations: If you want to share a collection, you need to share the stories of the artworks too. A collection exhibition needs to be exhibited with a rigorous mediation, where you discuss how the works were made, acquired, and circulated, in order to transmit what comes with the work as a form of life.

**CS:** KADIST could also act like an Institute of Contemporary Art, working on residencies, commissions, and exhibitions, which wouldn't necessarily be connected to a collection in the end. Do you think that the collection is still essential to what you do?

**ST:** We support artists in different ways. I think it would be false to think that selling work is not part of the artist's trajectory and means to live—collecting is a way to contribute to their practice in the long term. However, I don't necessarily think that all collections are made to conserve artworks for perpetuity. So perhaps the KADIST Collection is not

necessarily made to last forever and can simply act as a generator. We get to produce and collect works that might end up in other collections afterwards—maybe a national collection or a public collection whose mission is clearly to conserve and keep them as best as possible for future generations.

**CS:** One could argue that art institutions make their own interpretation of the idea of publicness. What do you think creates the sense of publicness for KADIST?

**ÉV:** I think KADIST is a public collection because it's open to the public through the website and it doesn't sit in a collector's home. But surprisingly, it's not in the exhibition space either. Very often people are surprised that the collection is not displayed permanently somewhere. It isn't always accessible physically to the public, but we aim to make it available through programming. For me, that's also a way to make a collection public.

**ST:** It's important that the collection is accessible online. This was a decision we took early in our process. We produce more and more content to mediate it, with video interviews and texts written on particular pieces. There might be an owner to the Foundation but the collection is shared publicly—it's sort of a creative commons entity if you will.

**VW:** The Internet has always been an important aspect of KADIST, probably because we have one foot in California. And there are some new engineering approaches we're planning to bring to KADIST. One of them is a work in progress, a semantic navigation tool that we call "Index." We have a concept-driven collection and wanted to create a tool to navigate among the works through themes and keywords,

which would be effective even if the user doesn't know much about the content of the collection. 1,000 works is too large for anybody to have a comprehensive knowledge about the collection, so we hope it to be a productivity tool for the team as well.

**ÉV:** Speaking about a sense of publicness, I also want to say a couple of words about evaluation and success. In the art world, there are some concrete ways to measure success by using the number of visitors or press articles. Everyone is sensitive to that because of the effort you put into projects, you always hope for some kind of response from the public. But we'd like to think about success through the long-term relationships we create with our collaborators and residents. It's how we feel that the moment that was offered in the residency has really brought something later on into their practice. We want to see how an artist or a curator develops the ideas that were originated in Paris or San Francisco, taking the next step in their career. This is precisely when we think we've been a good support to them and have become successful in our own right.

*The interviews were conducted in San Francisco and Paris, in August and September 2015, respectively.*

# About the Artist

Jean-Luc Moulène (b. 1955, Reims) studied aesthetics and the sciences of art at the Sorbonne University in Paris. Moulène's recent solo exhibitions include: Secession, Vienna (2017), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2016); Villa Medici, Rome (2015); Kunstverein, Hannover (2015); Beirut Art Center (2013); Modern Art Oxford, Oxford (2012); Dia Art Foundation, New York (2011); Carré d'art – Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2009); Culturgest, Lisbon (2007); Jeu de Paume and Musée du Louvre, Paris (2005). He has been featured in numerous group exhibitions at Drawing Room, London (2016); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2016); François Pinault Foundation, Venice (2016); CCA Wattis Institute, San Francisco (2014); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2013); Sharjah Biennial (2012); Venice Biennale (2003); and Documenta 10, Kassel (1997), among, many others. Moulène lives and works in Paris.

# About the Authors

Berin Gölönü holds a Ph.D. (2017) from the Visual and Cultural Studies Program at the University of Rochester. Her dissertation "Modernizing Nature/ Naturalizing Modernization, Late Ottoman and Early Turkish Republican Landscape Imagery: 1876–1939" looks at how processes of nation-building, economic development, and imperatives for conservation and preservation are reflected in the region's modern landscape imagery.

Lorenzo Cirrincione is a philosopher, curator, and artist living and working in Paris. Doctor in history of science, he is currently writing on early modern scientific collections—how they challenge us and stretch beyond obsolete ideas of artistic privilege and appropriation. His artistic work investigates new ways of exhibiting and performing knowledge, mirroring the social and cultural games in the rich history of trade relations and cultural transfers. From 2004 to 2015, Cirrincione co-directed France Fiction, an artistic and curatorial entity that organized over eighty exhibitions in France and abroad. Since 2014, he has been carrying out an inquiry on geopaghia and clays with forgotten origins called "Elusive Earths" with Jennifer Teets.

Aslihan Demirtaş is an architect and the principal of the interdisciplinary studios Aslihan Demirtas Architecture & Research Office and KHORA (founded with Ali Cindoruk) based in Istanbul and New York. Demirtaş holds a SMarchs from MIT, Cambridge, MA, and a BArch from the Middle East Technical University, Ankara. She is currently working on her upcoming e-book *Graft* to be published by SALT in 2017 with the support of Graham Foundation Grant she received in 2013, and on the strategic renovation of the Lumbardhi Cinema in Prizren. She is an active member of the Initiative for the Protection of the Historical Yedikule Urban Gardens, working to keep the 1,500-year-old urban agriculture heritage and landscape of Istanbul.

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