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Putting the Boundary at the Centre. A Place Where Contemporary Art Meets Politics

This article focuses on the question of the involvement of contemporary artists in the public debate concerning boundary issues relating to migration and the treatment of immigrants. The aim of this essay is to take a closer look at some of their strategies for making the *boundary issue* more visible and their ability to draw our attention to the situation of excluded minorities, such as "clandestines" and refugees. The object of the study is, in particular, the way in which these artists address the question of the international migration process in the modern "open", "ostensibly borderless" world, and the socio-political problems it generates. The effect of the border-crossing experience on the life of an immigrant, the image attached to him or her by the "host" society, as well as the artistic reflections on EU institutions and the hospitality of contemporary European societies are also included in the author's analysis.

It is highly possible that the question of boundaries, especially geographical and political boundaries, has never been as pertinent as it is in the contemporary world. This could be due to their impressive abundance (not necessarily in a positive sense)—"there are more international borders in the world today than ever there were before" (Wilson and Donnan 2012, 1)—and also to the constantly changing character of the boundary as a point that separates and connects not only different states, but also different ideologies and visions of the world. The best example is the complexity of the European Union's internal and external boundary system, which forms the particular focus of this essay. The observation that boundaries are more numerous and, in some ways, more visible in our socio-political reality, does not contradict the common opinion that today's world is open and connected as never before. The fundamental issue of the international debate about boundaries is that this connectedness of the contemporary world remains limited to those who are privileged and wealthy enough to move freely, and who have had the chance to live in democratic and peaceful regions of the globe. The French anthropologist, Marc Augé, remarks that even in the present era of mass mobility, simplified by processes of globalization and technological development, these unquestionable inequalities still exist:

> In the overmodern (*surmoderne*) world, submitted to the triple acceleration of knowledge, technologies and markets, the gap between the representation of a globality without boundaries that allows goods, people, images and messages to circulate without limits, and the reality of a divided, fragmented planet, where the divisions denied by the ideology of the system find themselves at the very heart of this system, is bigger and bigger every day (Augé 1997, 13–14).

Thus, the problem really concerns how to reduce those inequalities in order to make the world a truly open and cross-cultural place, accessible to everybody regardless of their origins, race, political status or social class.

Obviously, this is primarily a political problem, but in order to react politically, we need a certain consciousness of the scale of the problem and its impact on individuals. This is the place where the role of social activists and contemporary artists (roles that are increasingly intertwined) starts. The aim of this essay is to take a closer look at some of their strategies for making the *boundary issue* more visible and their ability to draw our attention to the situation of excluded minorities, such as refugees and unregistered immigrants, hundreds of whom try every day to cross borders into a "better world". I shall limit my analysis

to Europe (which in this context often means the European Union) and its border issues in order to present a more precise analysis. Therefore, I will focus on the works of artists who have mostly lived or have previously lived in Europe and I will refer to the local state of affairs. The object of my study is, in particular, the way in which these artists address the question of international migration and the socio-political problems it generates, the influence of the border-crossing experience on the life of an immigrant, and the image attached to him or her by the "host" society. Finally, I will try to examine if and how the different aesthetic strategies adopted by contemporary artists attain the goals of realising an influential agency, sensitising society and achieving real political effects. In order to take into account how quickly political institutions and laws evolve, I will mainly discuss works created in the last 10 to 15 years, which can still be considered a relevant comment on the present situation and the major political figures or organisations of our times. Nonetheless, before analysing the artists' projects, we need to define our understanding of boundary and politics, as well as to define clearly the relation that we see between contemporary politically or socially-engaged art and politics.

Border and bordering perspective

What is a boundary? What does this term mean in the 21st century and what are its extraterritorial dimensions? This is the central question addressed by the field of *border studies,* which has developed with great speed over the last couple of decades in order to track the evolution of the notion of "boundary", both in its narrow material sense and in its broader symbolic, linguistic and cultural sense. Sandro Mezzandra and Brett Neilson, in their book *Border as method. On the multiplication of labor* (2013) propose a new approach to the problem of the boundary in the contemporary world.

First of all, the authors stress that the image of the line on the map or the wall, so popular in recent times among researchers working on *boundary issues*, is no longer an appropriate and operative metaphor because it fails to reveal the complexity of the boundary. The line and the wall emphasise the separating character of the boundary, which in consequence, "leads to a unilateral focus on the border's capacity to exclude" (Mezzandra and Neilson 2013, VIII), and eclipses the important fact that it can also be a place of inclusion. In Mezzandra and Neilson's opinion, boundaries are much more than "merely geographic margins"; they are "complex social institutions" that become an "essential device for articulation

of the global flows" of peoples, labour and commodities. This proliferation and heter-ogenization of boundaries (Mezzandra and Neilson 2013, 3) lies at the very heart of their ideas, and leads them to propose a different standpoint for *border studies* that sees the border as method:

> (…) for us the question of border as method is something more than method-ological. It is above all a question of politics, about the kinds of social worlds and subjectivities produced at the border and the ways that thought and knowledge can intervene in these processes of production.

> (…) the border is for us not so much a research object as an epistemological viewpoint that allows an acute critical analysis not only of how relations of domination, dispossession, and exploitation are being redefined presently but also of the struggles that take shape around these changing relations. The border can be a method precisely insofar as it is conceived of as a site of struggle (Mezzandra and Neilson 2013, 17–18).

In the same spirit of broadening the narrow understanding of boundary, James W. Scott (2012) introduces the notion of *bordering*, a highly dynamic and multidimensional process of the everyday construction (production and reproduction) of borders, and proposes the application to contemporary research of the *bordering perspective*. The emphasis on this complex process, which includes multiple elements, such as political institutions and ideology, but also symbols, culture and discourses, allows us to see the boundary in a new light and as something much more than just an administrative line.

Both theories affirm Étienne Balibar's ideas about the "polysemy" and "heterogeneity" of boundaries (2002, 76). According to Balibar and Williams (2002), "the term *border* is extremely rich in significations (…)", and "profoundly changing in meaning" (71). They argue:

> The borders of new politico-economic entities, in which an attempt is being made to preserve the functions of the sovereignty of the state, are no longer at all situated at the outer limit of territories: they are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled-for example, in cosmopolitan cities. But it is also one of my theses that the zones called peripheral, where secular and religious cultures confront each other, where differences in economic prosperity become more pronounced and more strained, constitute the melting pot for the formation of a people (*demos*), without which there is no citizenship (*politeia*) in the sense that this term has acquired since antiquity in the democratic tradition.

In this sense, border areas-zones, countries, and cities-are not marginal to the constitution of a public sphere but rather are at the center (Balibar and Williams 2002, 71–72).

This is a reason why it is so important for contemporary societies and their leaders to understand the shifting and multidimensional character of the boundary and its major significance for the future geopolitical shape of the European continent. At a time when the creation of the European Union has made it possible to open the majority of its internal borders, and when, for many privileged citizens[1] of member countries, the border has become more of a symbolic construct than a real marker of difference, we need to remember that it is still an urgent and crucial issue, especially for those on the outside. Augé, in a tone similar to Balibar, calls for a rethinking of the boundary: "This reality constantly denied and constantly reaffirmed" (1997, 15). According to him, this profound reflection on the meaning of borders is necessary in order to understand the conditions that affect modern history, particularly in light of the fact that in reality, borders cannot be erased; they can merely be redesigned.

Politics, art and the politics of art

The boundary is currently one of the main areas of interest for contemporary artists working on mobility and migration. The most intriguing and stimulating question is: How can the border be made central? That is to say, how can it be put in the centre of contemporary public debate? There are multiple strategies, but the goal is the same: to educate and to raise awareness within European societies that the progressive closure of EU borders to unprivileged migrants—especially the unqualified labour force—which is often perceived as reasonable, actually contributes to the rise of new continental (if not global) inequalities, and consequently harms both sides. This is the place where art meets politics, and where the process of the redefinition of what is visible, sayable and thinkable within

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1   I refer here to those EU citizens who satisfy the conditions defined by European Parliament and Council Directive 2004/38/EC of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States. This directive specifies that only people performing economic activity (workers and active work-seekers), students and those with "sufficient resources for themselves and their family members not to become a burden on the social assistance system of the host Member State during their period of residence" are allowed to move and reside freely on EU territory.

the horizons of our society starts (Rancière 2004). My understanding of the notion of politics is based on Jacques Rancière's definition, and is inextricably linked with aesthetics, a concept which is particularly important when speaking about the social and political engagement of art and its capacity to influence the *status quo*. As Mieke Bal and Miguel Hernandez-Navarro (2012) stress, "…in the social domain, art can enact small scale resistance against the *status quo*. These acts, which we call 'little resistances', determine the limited yet potentially powerful political impact of art" (9). The authors insist also on the fact that "art 'works' because it works politically". This is the greatest potential sphere of influence for contemporary art seeking to make the invisible visible and to mobilize society to react—art can "reduce distance and do what other forms of discourse (theoretical and critical) can't" (2012, 2), because these other forms are desynchronised from reality. This particular synchronisation of socially-engaged art with reality and reactivity is also what aligns it with social activism, a link that I have already mentioned above. It creates a situation in which artists' and activists' projects (which are more and more often the same thing) gain more effective agency than theoretical discourses, even brilliant and forward-looking ones. One of the best examples of this kind of project is *No one is illegal*, founded in 1997 at the *Documenta 10* art exhibition in Kassel. This campaign sought to bring wider attention to the situation of refugees and quickly attracted a big audience, evolving into an international network supporting unregistered immigrants in their everyday battle to be treated with dignity, regardless of their immigration status.

No one is illegal can be seen as a project in which art and politics meet and find expression in the form of open social activism. The usual metaphorical dimensions of artistic practice are pushed aside in favour of the active effectiveness of the action undertaken. However, in the contemporary art world we can find numerous examples of initiatives that try to deal with the problems of boundary and immigration by using more or less complex metaphors, and techniques of artistic expression ranging from short films, sound installations and performances to video games.

Inside the skin of an immigrant

One of the artists most involved in producing socially-engaged art about migration is Tania Bruguera, a Cuban performer living and working between Europe and the United States. Her real and deeply intimate experience of immigration drove her towards specific forms of artistic

expression and social activism, which are now often called *artivism*. As a consequence, Bruguera has developed the theory of *useful art* and *specific political timing*. The first term corresponds to her understanding of art as a tool in the process of transforming certain aspects of society by acting as an intermediary between the general public and social and political institutions. The second term refers to the fact that the piece is linked to and depends on the political circumstances existing in the moment that it is made, or in the time in which it is exhibited. This is particularly important in the case of artworks that relate to the constantly changing situation of immigrants. Even if the idea of *useful art* is not Bruguera's original invention (we can find echoes of it in the socially-engaged art practices from the 1960s onwards, such as the concepts of social sculpture of Joseph Beuys), the projects which it inspires are worthy of attention. Two of her ongoing long-term projects come to mind: *Immigrant Movement International* (2010–2015) and *Migrant People Party* (2010–2015).

However, in this essay I shall focus on her previous work, a video installation and performance first presented at *Documenta 11* in 2002. It is a work that was realised according to the assumptions of the concept of *specific political timing,* but that also contained a more universal message about border experience, in both a psychological and a literal (border-crossing) sense. The piece, *Untitled (Kassel, 2002),* consisted of a line of 700-watt light bulbs from which a powerful and intense light flowed that momentarily blinded the audience and created an uncomfortable heat. The viewers, invited to enter the installation, could also hear the steps of military boots coming from the roof of the structure and the sound of a gun and a rifle being loaded, although they were never fired. All these elements gave the audience the unpleasant sensation of being observed and followed in an oppressive atmosphere. Furthermore, after a certain time, the lights went off for a few seconds, creating a sensation of loss in the space, which could provoke anxiety, fear or even mental destabilisation. At that moment, the audience could see the image of a running person projected against the light, followed by a list showing a hundred places in the world where politically motivated massacres and genocides have taken place. The list only contained events that had taken place after the Second World War. The site-specific character of this piece refers to Kassel as a former centre for the production of ammunition for the Nazi army. Nonetheless, the video-projected list accompanying the installation suggests a broader and more contemporary reading. In an inevitable way, Bruguera's piece also makes the viewer think about the experience of contemporary clandestine border crossings (Mitchell 2010)

and the trauma of getting caught. All the elements of state power unite against the migrant, who is trapped when detected and unable to avoid arrest and the deportation process.

The installation allows the audience, assuming it consists of rightful citizens of democratic countries, to empathize with an unregistered migrant trying to cross the border (often the border of their own prosperous states or political zones, such as the European Union). It is not only a work about zones of political tensions and conflicts. The sensation of oppression and panic caused by radical measures applied by border security officers is universal for all illegitimate crossers trying their luck at reaching their dream destinations. Bruguera places her audience in this uncomfortable position and creates an assault on the senses, targeting the viewer's body with light and sound to increase awareness of the destructive and destabilising force of this experience.

Many researchers working on migration issues have remarked that the body of the immigrant is a very important aspect of migration discourse, when considered as the place from which the social fear of the invading Other (Guénif-Souilmas 2010)[2] materialises, as an object of the biopolitics of migration (Fassin 2001)[3] and even as a visual representation— a living image that the media and other influential institutions of public life try to translate into virtual and mental images of the foreigner (Papastergiadis 2012).[4] So, when Tania Bruguera decides to reach out to the viewer's body, she is perfectly conscious that there is no more evocative way to make people understand the gravity of the problem and the unpleasantness of this kind of situation (often commonplace in the lives of unregistered immigrants) than to put them in the place of those who are affected by it.

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2   The author presents the immigrant's body as a central object of the migration process by stressing that an immigrant is not only crossing boundaries but also has these boundaries within him/her – the body of an immigrant is a representation and "materialization" of the boundary. This is why today's societies have such a big problem with this threatening Other in physical form, and try to bridle it with elaborate systems of border and body control.

3   The article is an interesting analysis of the relation between immigration, the right to free movement in the EU, and the immigrant's body, which perfectly illustrates the mechanism of what is today referred to as the "biopolitics" of migration. This problem is also an object of reflexion of Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson in their book *Border as Method*.

4   Papastergiadis reports the change that took place during the 20th century in the perception of the immigrant and his/her body. According to him, we can observe a transition from the image of the immigrant as a tool in the capitalist machine of production to the zombification of the immigrant as an Other that is effectively a ghost, meaningless and invisible to society.

The strategy of drawing the audience into the immigrants' situation is also applied by the Salzburg-based art collective *Gold Extra* who, in 2008, created a video game titled *Frontiers – You've reached Fortress Europe.* The game portrays a major migration itinerary, from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe, and enables its players to experience in a 3D world the difficult and dangerous border crossing at the Moroccan-Spanish fence line in Ceuta. If they successfully traverse four border situations on their route, they will be rewarded with a final dream-like landscape and with interviews and other materials prepared by game creators. What is especially relevant in the case of this project is the fact that the game is based on extensive one-year research trips to places such as Morocco, Spain or Ukraine and on numerous conversations with refugees, refugee helpers and authorities. The second important aspect is that the players can initially choose between the role of refugees or border patrol agents. Hereby, anyone is allowed to decide which side he or she wants to represent and can learn something new about both sides by participating in the events from a first-person perspective. In a short online presentation, the artists evoke the multidimensionality of their work:

> Don't just watch, experience the news yourself: *Frontiers* as a game cannot possibly resolve the political matters of migration and refugees. But we'll aim at setting geographical areas and political fields into context to enhance the perception and understanding of the migrants' situation above a casual level of catastrophic news and create a platform for intercultural dialogue. The 3-D multi-player game is both artwork and game: It offers a mind-provoking update on the shooter-genre, as well as a documentary game portraying a real political situation. By combining both approaches it achieves a unique gameplay that turns the ambivalence of in-game representation into an asset and a starting point for discourse among the gamers themselves and beyond (Gold Extra, 2008).

By means of this game and its slogan, "*Frontiers* lets politics come into play", the art collective attempts to expand the discussion about migration and the state border by introducing a new medium as a platform for debate. It may also be an innovative and interesting way to attract a new audience consisting of people who could become socially and politically engaged when they realise the gravity and scale of the problem.

Fortress europe and its bureaucracy

Société Réaliste is another European and France-based art collective that is addressing the theme of migration and the tightening of borders, in this particular case, European Union borders. Nevertheless, their strategy is more subversive, representing an ironic imitation of existing orders and institutions and, at the same time, what can be termed critical artivism. In 2005, Société Réaliste started the long-term project *EU Green Card Lottery,* within the framework of which they created a fake Visa Lottery, clearly inspired by the popular American model. The project consisted of three parts: a website designed to mimic "parasite" websites which exploit aspiring migrant workers hoping to apply for the American Green Card Lottery; a marketing campaign promoting the "new visa program" and the website; and finally, a physical installation that created a contrived bureaucracy which appropriated the form and tactics of a real immigration service. Through these means, the French collective created a kind of realistic EU Green Card Lottery Registration Office, with the installation usually displayed within the context of art exhibitions on the theme of migration. The project had already been presented in various cities in Europe and the United States and often amazed audiences. What is the main object of the faked visa programme and bureaucratic system conceived by Société Réaliste? It is to highlight the system itself and the way that it currently treats migrants, in particular migrant workers.

The artists want to draw the audience's attention to the issue of a major shift that has occurred in recent decades in social and political approaches to migrant workers, whose numbers are still very significant in European territories. According to Société Réaliste, there has been movement from a "culturalist" integrationist philosophy of migration (that has insisted on the inclusion of immigrants into the host society, even if they were coming primarily for economic reasons) to a situation in which they are treated more as a "human resource" or as a "labour unit" whose only right in Europe is to produce (Fassin 2001). Société Réaliste (2005) explains that "the equation is simple. On one hand, the EU hosts millions of migrant workers. On the other hand, it wants to reduce to the barest minimum the rights of these workers to avoid their permanent residency." This project shows, by the power of its literalness and skill, the paradox of the openness of the European Union in "erasing" the borders and connecting the nations. Once more, we may see that real openness and hospitality are reserved only for the privileged and not for a "labour unit". At the very least, European societies get stuck in a kind of schizophrenic situation, whereby they are open, "ostensibly borderless"

European societies get stuck in a kind of schizophrenic situation, whereby they are open, "ostensibly borderless" (Scott 2012, 83), and more or less integrated inside, whilst being increasingly enclosed and separated from the outside, especially if the migrants in question are indigent workers or refugees from Eastern Europe or Africa.

(Scott 2012, 83), and more or less integrated inside, whilst being increasingly enclosed and separated from the outside, especially if the migrants in question are indigent workers or refugees from Eastern Europe or Africa. This aspect of the functioning of the European Union was also the subject of a reflection of Jacques Derrida, who noted (2005, 13):

> At a time when we claim to be lifting internal borders, we proceed to bolt the external borders of the European Union tightly. Asylum-seekers knock successively on each of the doors of the European Union states and end up being repelled at each one of them. Under the pretext of combating economic immigrants purporting to be exiles from political persecution, the states reject applications for the right to asylum more often than ever.

Peter Sloterdijk has described the same process of enclosure in his memorable book, *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization* (2013), by drawing a metaphor of the European Union as a crystal palace—a greenhouse for European societies that build a transparent wall separating them from the rest of the world. The project of Société Réaliste shows this mechanism very clearly and puts it in a new light by pointing out its inhumane bureaucratic character. The artists criticize an existing system by appropriating its legitimate tools of dehumanized bureaucracy, imitating it down to the smallest detail and revealing the absurdity of the "openness" of the EU, with its thousands of conditions and formal requirements that determine a potential immigrant's usefulness for the European community.

At this point it should also be noted that within the framework of the *EU Green Card Lottery* campaign, a French collective has prepared a model of an EU Green Card which resembles a specific identity card, with a photo and some basic personal data, complemented by three selected EU destinations. Different examples of this false document, organised and displayed in the form of wallpaper, are often part of Société Réaliste's EU registration office. These documents are more reminiscent of police files than a collection of passes to the new world. It is like an announcement that on the other side of the border a migrant exists only in the form of a document, which identifies him or her and decides his or her right to stay. The "European dream", a dream of European citizenship, turns into a bureaucratic nightmare, which denies that the immigrant's subjectivity as a human being is equal to that of rightful members of the EU.

In this context, Balibar and Williams's remark that European citizenship is "a citizenship of borders" (2002, 74) can lead to some

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interesting conclusions. The authors highlight the fact that "the question of sovereignty is historically bound up with the question of borders, as much political as cultural and 'spiritual'" (74–75), which means that the boundaries are interiorized by citizens and even if we try to erase them from the map, we still need to remember that they are rooted in our minds and in our collective imagination. Without this consciousness, we cannot even think about building a universal European identity, because the result will be purely utopian initiatives that are destined for failure. The goal of EU members today is not to "strive for a utopian space beyond boundaries, but to re-engage the sphere of possibilities that are permitted or excluded by boundaries" (Papastergiadis 2012, 135). What is most pertinent, then, is not to lose sight of the significance of particular societies, minority groups and finally, individuals.

Re-humanizing an immigrant

The dimension of the migratory experience of the individual is at the heart of the work of the last artist that I shall present in this essay. Isaac Julien is an English-born installation artist and filmmaker, whose family is of African origin. In 2007, he created an audio-visual installation *WESTERN UNION: Small Boats,* which was the final instalment of his compelling trilogy, *Cast No Shadow.* Julien's work concerns journeys made across the seas of the Mediterranean.

> The journeys and stories of so-called 'clandestines' who leave Libya, escaping wars and famines. They can be seen as economic migrant workers, along with certain Europeans – Angels in Walter Benjamin's terms – who bear witness to modernity's failed hopes and dreams, and who now travel across oceanic spaces, some never to arrive or return (Julien 2007).

WESTERN UNION: Small Boats raises questions about the movement of individuals and explores people's personal stories and the ways in which they experience displacement.

Therefore, this piece is more than just another documentary about all the difficulties that they need to overcome; it is a sublime and deeply poetic vision of a migrant's journey and life, in which the images of *clandestines* alternate with idyllic Mediterranean landscapes, photos of richly decorated interiors from Visconti's film, *The Leopard,* and modern dance scenes. This combination of highly aesthetic visual impressions, bodily movement and dream-like colours constitutes an interesting metaphor

for the psychological, interior state of his subject—the migrant. What is also very significant is that Julien, by referring to intimate personal experiences, illustrates the degeneration of wealthy European societies and, at the same time, restores the human dimension of migration without the slightest trace of didacticism. Jennifer A. Gonzalez (2001) explains that

> Julien's critique of contemporary global economic relations lies in this simple juxtaposition. National boundaries, economic policies, and international law are shown to be effective forms of capital punishment, in practice if not in name. In a world of global migrations, 'illegality' has become an ontological state that is defined by the 'not-yet' or 'not-quite' human (126).

The power of Julien's work is in his extraordinary choice of form and aesthetics, which he justifies in the following way:

> So what I am really doing is fighting with what Europe has constructed as the domain for particular subject matter. So, I am deliberately second-guessing and trying to overturn what I think has been rather vulgar and rather, shall I say, narrow way that these sorts of questions have been explored. Because the stereotypical mode of exploring these questions of migration would be conventional documentary, (…), but for some reason, I think the problem of Europeans, or the problem of people looking at art, is that they are used to looking at these questions in those forms and they want the question of aesthetics to be separated from life, and certainly to be separated from these (traumatic) stories. So the question is: why do you want them to be separated? If you go on a vacation, or beach holiday, the whole problem is that you may find your holiday interrupted by this sort of event. So the question is how you act: do you just continue sunbathing? So in fact the sublime is getting interrupted in front of one's very eyes. And I think that is crucial. So in my work I am pointing at that. I am pointing to the idea of the ruination of the sublime and turning upside down a subject that Europeans take for granted as their subject area (Bojarska 2009).

In *WESTERN UNION: Small Boats,* the aesthetic meets politics and makes an attempt to transform it; that is, to transform the politics of the perception of migrants and the migration problem. Once again, we can follow Jacques Rancière and say that even if art cannot change state policies, it can influence the societies and individuals who decide the future of Europe and the European Union by redefining the space of the *partage du sensible* (Rencière 2004). This is the reason why works like Julien's are so important; they remind us that individual lives should never be sacrificed for the benefit of a global "migration business" that treats migrant workers as dehumanised objects of trade.

This is the reason why works like Julien's are so important; they remind us that individual lives should never be sacrificed for the benefit of a global "migration business" that treats migrant workers as dehumanised objects of trade.

Through the examples that I have discussed, we can observe that the issue of boundaries—geographical, political, economic and even mental—is of huge importance in the work of many contemporary artists who are interested in migration. What is even more fascinating about this phenomenon is the diversity of strategies and techniques that they adopt in order to comment on the present global situation, to attract an audience and to raise awareness concerning this problem. Bruguera and Gold Extra's works invite us to consider a *clandestine*, a refugee trying to cross the border illegally; Isaac Julien presents a very personal vision of a migrant journey and of the experience of being "the Other"; and Société Réaliste unmasks the incongruous system of European bureaucracy by imitating it. All of these artists, using very different forms, share the same goal of broadening the public debate about migration and illegal workers in Europe. They do this by putting the question of borders, border-crossing and border control at the centre of the debate and pointing out the effects that these mechanisms have, not only on the migrants themselves, but also on their public image, which is often very harmful and makes life in a new country even harder.

The greatest power of activists and socially-engaged artists stems from the fact that they speak from the "bottom"—from the same level as the ordinary citizens who are exposed to the media messages and official discourses of politicians, which are often contradictory, incomprehensible or over-simplified. On the one hand, the media and politicians often speak about the noble ideas of openness and brotherhood between the nations of the European Union. On the other, they remain fixated on stereotyped images of the "migration problem", such as the flood of *clandestines* (the Lampedusa migrants), unqualified labour immigrants from Eastern Europe, or unwanted Roma camps.

Thus, one of the crucial obligations of contemporary artists is to remind societies constantly that even if the crystal palace of Europe still seems to shine in the sun of its unifying institutions and laws, there are hundreds of thousands of people who cannot even dream of legally entering its doors and being welcomed as equals. It seems evident that there is still much work to be done and a long way to go, before the European Union finds a balanced position in its border and immigration policies. However, the educative initiatives of contemporary artists can be seen as a first step towards illustrating that the boundary issue is a real problem in today's Europe; a problem which we need to treat critically, if we do not want the vision of European openness and integration to become its own caricature.

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