"Affect: Belonging"[1]

Alpesh Kantilal Patel

Drawing on everything from artworks and a cartoon to police documents and a personal anecdote, I consider three temporally discontinuous events in the past to engender an ethical future across racial, ethnic, and national lines. More specifically, I examine the fatal misrecognition of South Asians as 'terrorists' shortly after 9/11 in the United States; of Jean Charles de Menenez, an electrician originally from Brazil living in London, as a 'terrorist' after 7 July 2005 or '7/7' in the UK; and of teenager Trayvon Martin as a 'criminal' in Sanford, Florida, on 6 February 2012 in the US (CNN Library, n.d.; Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2007; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, n.d.). I will hone in on 'affect' to examine the complex manner in which visual identification – or misidentification in these cases – takes place and thereby connects these disparate events. 'Affect', roughly, refers to feeling before cognition. Simply put, at stake in this chapter is how certain subjects are considered as 'belonging' and others as not; and the role of artworks in reconfiguring belongingness in ways that move beyond the simplistic cosmopolitan/national binary and towards something akin to what Isabelle Stengers has defined as the 'cosmopolitical proposal' (2005). This proposal privileges the space of not knowing and of slowness that I will argue these artworks bring into being—it is a world (or cosmos)-making that is marked by lack of fixity that nonetheless does not discount the possibility of the 'ethical future', which I invoked at the beginning of this paragraph. It is through a focus on affect that I will animate the latter point.

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[1] This chapter is a slight re-working of a part of my monograph *Productive Failure: Writing Queer Transnational South Asian Histories* (Manchester University Press (MUP), 2007) that I delivered as a keynote lecture for the "Art and Speculative Futures" conference, held at Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona in October 2016. I am thankful to MUP for allowing me to re-print this essay, Modesta Di Paola for the gracious invitation to be a part of this collection, and Christian Alonso for inviting me to the conference in the first place.

Theorising Affect

To define 'affect' more specifically before moving forward I will draw on several theoretical models that mobilize the concept in relation to artistic practice and critical writing, in particular art historians Jill Bennett's conceptualisation of 'practical aesthetics' (2012), Amelia Jones's theory of 'queer feminist durationality' (2012) and Marsha Meskimmon's 'affective criticality' (2011), respectively. Bennett writes that practical aesthetics is 'defined by an orientation to real-world experience' and provides 'a means of inhabiting and moving through events' (36). Given my focus on real-word experience, this is a particularly appropriate model to begin my discussion. As she also notes, practical aesthetics 'examines aesthetics of connection that posit links between events' (36). By 'aesthetics' Bennett is specifically invoking the more recent use of the term as a 'general theory of sensori-emotional experience' which brings together art, psychology and the social rather than being concerned with judgement and highly fraught notions of beauty and taste (2).

Bennett notes that since its origin aesthetics has always promoted the idea of perception via senses, or *aesthesis* (1; cf: Baumgarten, 1961). Affect, as the core feature of *aisthesis*, is the medium of practical aesthetics (13). She further notes that affect is a defining feature of social, cultural, and political relations, however 'unlike meaning, iconography or a formal quality, affect is not easily anchored in an image' (21). It is mobile, and in this way aesthetics is not 'a means of categorising and defining art' (13). Rather, aesthetics traces 'the affective relations that animate art and real events' (13). While affect is something activated in the social, it is ultimately experienced by the individual. 'Practical aesthetics', then, allows for a 'study of (art as a) means of apprehending the world via sense-based and affective processes – processes that touch bodies intimately and directly but that also underpin the emotions, sentiments and passions of public life' (3).

The 'practical' in 'practical aesthetics' does not signify an interest in interrogating 'the philosophical ground of aesthetics or its historical determinations' but that which acknowledges 'an aesthetics informed by and derived from the practical, real-world encounters, an aesthetics that is in turn capable of being used or put into effect in a real situation' (2). In this chapter, I will weave together evidence that 'offers more than a record, a flashback or reconstruction; it generates a means of inhabiting and simultaneously reconfiguring the historical event as a radically different experience. Such an enquiry carries with it the possibility of reorienting the study of the *traumatic* event (that is, the shattering experience of a real event) away from the historiographical endeavour'(40).[2]

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[2] Emphasis in original.

Bennett mobilizes the term 'contemporaneity' to further clarify that the 'event' is not temporally bound but 'a principle of connection to an unspecified present, to whatever might happen next (29). To explain this point, she writes that 9/11 cannot be reduced to a singular catastrophe. That is, 9/11 did not begin on that day and its effects continue to be felt in the present *and* the foreseeable future. In this way, practical aesthetics does not delineate a historical event but rather focuses on an extension of it – backwards and forwards in time. Her example is not incidental in that she argues that practical aesthetics itself emerges from 9/11, which demanded a crucial shift in the way in which the field of visual arts (broadly construed) operates (18). Indeed, Bennett goes into great detail about how practical aesthetics cannot be explored in mainstream art history and visual cultural studies because of the constraining disciplinary foci of both (10–12). In short, both are too rigid to tackle 9/11's endlessly mobile affective fallout. Instead she calls for a transdisciplinary aesthetics – or an investigation of aesthetics that crosses the disciplinary confines of visual culture and art history (28–9).

As already noted above, but worth underscoring again, Bennett argues 'an aesthetic reconfiguration of experience – to which affective connection is material – does not simply restore subjective experience to history but generates new ways of being in the event. It thereby holds out the possibility of reshaping the outcomes of a given event' (43). However, she cautions that practical aesthetics should not be conflated with activism. Rather, 'Art becomes practical rather than abstract to the extent that it maintains a tension between aisthesis and signification' (46). She writes that 'It is this capacity to dwell in the interval and to untangle some of its complex operations (the links – and blockages or 'hesitations' – between apprehension and action, between feeling and believing, appearing, saying and doing) that makes a creative aesthetics so valuable to the study of social life' (4). Drawing on literary theorist and poetry scholar Isobel Armstrong's scholarship, which draws parallels among theories of affect in discourses of phenomenology, psychoanalysis and other fields, Bennett also argues that 'Art, like affect itself, inhabits an in-between space and is an agent of change' (26). By exploring artwork and visual culture as nimbly occupying the 'in-between space', I aim to link 9/11, 7/7, and the death of Trayvon Martin by specifically bringing to the fore the manner in which visual identification takes place, a process that has been ill-explored in the context of any of these events. In so doing, I will also suggest how artworks can be an 'agent of change'.

Art historian Amelia Jones in her book *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (2012) extensively explores visual identification in relation to artistic meaning. Of particular interest is Jones's theory of queer feminist durationality, which 'acknowledges the way in which identification still shadows and indeed deeply informs how we interpret, make meaning, and attribute value' (236). Rather than suggesting an interest in time-based

media, by 'durationality' Jones is referring to our embodied encounters with art objects 'which opens into connections that are born of affect as tapped into, solicited, shaped, encouraged by the prick of memory and desire that constitutes the most powerful experiences we have in engaging with the things around us' (199). Importantly, Jones insists on the identificatory aspects of affect in theorizing the encounter with an artwork that she notes both art historians Simon O'Sullivan and Jan Verwoert abstract.[3] She powerfully argues that:

> What is missing . . . is a sense of the alignment between the development of the possibility of *thinking* the rhizome . . . and what I am arguing to be among the crucial pressures that assisted in . . . the shattering of the . . . conventional perspectival system and the model of the subject it subtended and proposed: the decolonization of the so-called world and the rise of identity politics in the post-Second World War period. Without recognizing this pressure, and the role in the shifts in informing poststructuralist theories of meaning, we are left with only an abstract (if elegant) description of a shift in ways of making and interpreting art (191–2).[4]

The 'rhizome' invoked here is that theorized by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari. The rhizome as conceptualised by them is a system without a centre and within which nodal points can connect but in a non-hierarchical manner.[5] Jones writes that the rhizome is precisely about the '*dispersals* of old binary systems' but without the emphasis on identity politics that arguably instantiated it (188). In this way, my discussion of affect will be tied to thinking about identification.

Jones writes that 'the *queer feminist* aspect of durationality is as important as the performative, rhizomatic, or temporal angle' (232).[6] Jones's invocation of 'feminism' and 'queer' is specific but not essentialist, and it is useful to further articulate how identification is always already wrapped up with affect. For instance, she acknowledges how feminism has '*slowed down* the super-glue certainties of art criticism and its related discourse' and how '*queer is that which indicates the impossibility of a subject or a meaning staying still*' (170-1).[7] The latter dovetails with the thrust of Stengers' aforementioned 'cosmopolitan proposal' that similarly favours slowness. A queer feminist

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[3] Cf O'Sullivan (2006); and Jan Verwoert, lecture at McGill University, 2011 [as referenced in Jones, 2012: 214 (note 42)].

[4] Emphasis in original.

[5] For a fuller discussion of the rhizome, see the introductory chapter appropriately titled 'Introduction: Rhizome' (1987, pp. 3–25).

[6] Emphasis in original.

[7] Emphasis in original.

durational approach to practical aesthetics demands attention to visual identification as always already raced, sexed, classed, and gendered as it emerges or erupts within the complex nexus of the 'performative, rhizomatic, or temporal' relationship of the viewer (in this case me) with the artwork.

Drawing on historian Carolyn Dinshaw's (2007) and philosopher Henri Bergson's scholarship (1988), Jones argues that temporality or durationality is powerful because it opens the present to the past and to the future. Jones writes that 'This is where ethics lie, of course, nudging us to attend to past histories in order to avoid future exploitation, pain and iniquity' (171). Jones cites my research relating to 9/11 and 7/7 in her book (xx). I re-present my research in this chapter through her theory of queer feminist durationality, in particular by exploring my personal connection to these events (especially 9/11) with an eye towards a more ethical future.

Marsha Meskimmon's theory of 'affirmative criticality' in her important book *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* is crucial in further exploring ethics and its relation to aesthetics. Meskimmon draws on philosopher Jürgen Habermas's theory of the 'public sphere' and Deleuze's scholarship on ethics and aesthetics, but like Jones does not sacrifice discussions of identity/identification (90–3). While Bennett's 'practical aesthetics' considers how artworks can re-shape real world 'events' and Jones's 'queer feminist durationality' articulates a new of way of seeing – both of which allow glimpses of a more ethical future – Meskimmon's 'affirmative criticality' explores the possibilities of 'the potential of critical thinking to engender and affirm a hopeful, indeed better and more humane, future' (91).[8] This is particularly important in examining how an ethics can be produced through the writing of art histories.

Drawing on the scholarship of Rosalyn Diprose, Meskimmon invokes the Greek origins of the word ethics – *ethos* (or character and dwelling or habitat) – to suggest fascinating connections between home and home-making or place and place-making. Meskimmon writes that ethics forges a link between the 'material constraints of our position in the world and our agency in making, maintaining, and changing them' (19). She further writes that 'The subject formed at the interstices of this critical modulation is an embodied, embedded and responsible subject –the subject who can inhabit a plurilocal, cosmopolitan home' (19). Meskimonn argues that contemporary art has the potential to produce such an 'ethical, embedded and responsible subject' and the 'potential to make the world, not just merely represent it' (9).

In addition, she writes that affirmative criticality as 'a method of intellectual analysis and engagement' suggests that 'ethics and aesthetics have significant areas of intersection and, more strongly, mutual constitution' for the art historian, too: 'Where the response-ability of the subject

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[8] Emphasis in original.

meets a subject's responsibility with/in the world, aesthetics and ethics play in harmony' (91). My hope is that readers' engagement with my text engenders his or her response-ability as co-extensive with his or her responsibility with/in the world. Of course, I have no delusions regarding the limits of my academic writing, which has a fairly circumscribed audience. However, I would argue that the instantiation of what might be described as 'micro-ethics' – ethics at the level of a subject – and its potential affective accretion over time can be powerful in its own regard.

The aim of this chapter is to *re*-present these horrific events – rather than representing them (not only impossible but also ethically dubious) – so as to engender the possibility of inhabiting them differently. In so doing, I draw resonances among them and suggest that these misidentifications are not a 'Brazilian', 'Sikh', or 'black' issue – although it must be noted that the latter two populations have been disproportionately targeted though not in equivalent ways – but that they affect *all* of us who are interested in living in an ethical and just world.

Event #1: 9/11: Towards Multiple Futures

I begin by considering a cartoon by Carter Goodrich that appeared on the cover of the *New Yorker* (Figure 1). Published roughly two months after 9/11 it explores the plight of taxi drivers after the attacks. The cartoon depicts a turbaned cab driver cowering in the seat of his yellow cab. A canopy of various sizes of American flags is mounted on the rooftop, and the cab is also covered with American flag stickers and a 'God Bless America' sticker. The hyperbolic use of the American flag in the cartoon underscores the equally excessive and overwhelming identification of turban-wearing Muslim and Sikh cab drivers as terrorists in a post-9/11 New York. Turbans not only became visual signifiers of terrorism, but also carried implicit presumptions of a lack of American citizenship. For instance, Frank S. Roque who killed Balbir Singh Sodhi, an Indian Sikh from Arizona, on 15 September 2001 was heard saying that he would 'kill the rag heads responsible for September 11,' prior to his assaults, and when handcuffed, he said, 'I stand for America all the way! I'm an American. Go ahead. Arrest me and let those terrorists run wild!' (Human Rights Watch interview with Sergeant Mike Goulet of the Mesa, Arizona police department, 6 August 2002 as cited in 'United States: "WE ARE NOT THE ENEMY", 2002: 18 (note 89))

Given that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were ascribed to Middle Eastern and Islamic, or Muslim, radicals, American legal scholar Leti Volpp surmises that those who appear 'Middle Eastern, or Muslim-looking' – she mentions Latinos and African-Americans, for instance – practically became a new identity category in terms of United States citizenship (Volpp, 2002: 1575).

Although the American flag became increasingly visible as a marker of patriotism after 9/11, the cartoon indicates that for some subjects, displaying the flag became a necessity to prevent any potential misidentification as not only a terrorist, but as 'not' American.[9] Indeed, this is at least part of the reason my own parents put various flags – that are still up – in their dry cleaning business, especially after receiving at least one threatening phone call that I know of to 'go back home' after 9/11.

The visual conflation of turbans with terrorism also extends to issues of faith.[10] For instance, Sikh men do not cut their hair, including facial hair, and are required to wear turbans as an expression of their religion – 'a Badge of [visual] Identity' according to the website 'Sikhnet' ('Why do Sikhs wear Turbans?', n.d.). The aforementioned Volpp further notes that the long beards and turbans of Sikh men were often 'conflated with [Osama] bin Laden,' whose image with a beard and Afghani-style turban was heavily circulated on-line, on television screens, and in print after the US terror attacks (Volpp, 2002: 1590). As a result, Sikhs were the most vulnerable to being visually misidentified as connected to the 9/11 attacks, despite the fact that Sikhs and Muslims have separate doctrinal views, different geographic homelands, different native languages, and distinct turban styles, as noted by civil rights scholars Neha Singh Gohil and Dawinder S. Sidhu.[11] Indeed, Balbir Singh Sodhi was Sikh. The cab driver on the *New Yorker* cover is most likely Sikh rather than Muslim – as signalled by his turban, his dress, and what appears to be a beard – yet he is clearly anticipating being visually misidentified as a Muslim.[12]

Interestingly, the United States Department of Justice attempted to prevent the misidentification of Sikhs as Muslims by disseminating an educational poster among airport security staff in 2004 to educate them about Sikh head coverings ('Common Sikh American Head Coverings',

[9] See Prashad, 2001.

[10] This section on faith and visual identification is inspired by the conference, 'Faith & Identity in Contemporary Visual Culture', organized by Amelia Jones and coordinated in collaboration with Shisha, a Manchester-based agency for contemporary South Asian crafts and visual arts, among others. The conference was held on 10-11 November 2006 at the University of Manchester in England.

[11] Gohil and Sidhu, "The Sikh Turban," 19. Rajwant Singh, chief of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE), a Washington D.C.-based Sikh advocacy group, noted that in a survey conducted by his organization in 2006, "nine out of 10 educated Americans identified Sikhs with Muslims" (*The Financial Express*, "Osama becomes a pain for American Sikhs").

[12] The beard is occluded from full view given that he is cowering in fear.

2004). Yet the poster obscured the larger problem of misrecognition of a much broader group of 'Middle Eastern, or Muslim looking men' as terrorists signalled by Volpp above, and implicitly created a more appropriate object of post-9/11 animus. As American human rights and international law scholar Karen Engle notes, '[w]hether through government investigations and raids or 'private' vigilance, the brunt of the internal war has fallen on Muslims, particularly those of Arab descent (now that Americans seem to have learned the difference between Sikhs and Muslims)' (Engle, 2004: 98). In the same way, the fact that many Sikhs began to cut their hair and forego wearing turbans all together, though understandable, only seemed to reinforce the notion that turban-wearers more closely approximate 'the look' of a terrorist (Page, 2006).

This cartoon invariably takes me back to my own experience living in New York City during the terrorist attacks of 9/11. At the time, there had been reports of violence against South Asians who apparently looked like terrorists. In particular, there were three South Asians who were visually perceived to be Arab and killed in the United States within days of 9/11: a Pakistani from near Dallas, Texas, and an Indian Sikh from Mesa, Arizona, both on 15 September 2001; and a Gujarati Hindu from Mesquite, Texas, on 4 October 2001. Balbir Singh Sodhi, the Indian Sikh from Arizona, was landscaping the front of the gas station he owned when Roque fatally shot him in the back three times. Within a thirty-minute period after shooting Singh, Roque also fired at Lebanese-American gas station clerks and into the home that he previously owned and that was occupied by an Afghani couple ('Frank S. Roque', 2004). Not surprisingly, for several weeks after 9/11 I really did not feel safe leaving my apartment alone. So, I started waking up a little earlier so I could head into the city from Brooklyn with my roommate. I felt safe not only being with a good friend, but also one who was *not* brown. To explain, my skin colour was highly charged – capable of producing a strong affective reaction of repulsion, fear, or contempt on sight in a viewing subject. White skin, on the other hand, would produce no affect at all. By merely being proximal to someone with 'white' skin, I was hoping it would vitiate the affectivity of my brownness.

Approximately three weeks after 9/11, I finally did emerge alone to go meet friends of mine. It was a victory for me to be able to go out like I had always done before 9/11. At the time I worked in a film company and I would often go to the theatre alone to watch movies. In New York City going solo to a movie theatre is not a big deal. That evening after having dinner with friends, I decided to go to a theatre on Broadway and 14th Street, a well-trafficked intersection near Union Square which is a major hub of different subway lines and at the time a site of makeshift memorials.

Shortly before entering the theatre, I was hit with eggs which were thrown at me from a moving car. It was not really a violent attack in the sense that I was not physically harmed. Also, at first I was not even sure that any of the eggs had hit me. I did not see anything on my jacket – or

perhaps more accurately I did not *want* to see anything because that would have it made it more real. I was hoping to escape the entire situation by going into a dark theatre. I first went to the automatic ticket machines but they were out of order so I had to get in line to get a ticket. While waiting, I decided to take off my jacket, the back of which of course was covered in egg yolk. I could no longer pretend nothing had happened, especially since at this point those behind me in line were staring at me. Incredibly embarrassed, I left the theatre and decided to take a taxi home. I did not want to spend money on a cab but I certainly did not want to take a 45-minute subway ride in public either. I had a feeling there was probably egg in my hair, too. Fortunately, it was not difficult to find a cab that night. I cannot remember if I sought out a driver whom I thought was of South Asian descent but I did end up getting one who was. The irony is not lost on me that I typically would bristle when getting into a cab with a driver whom I thought was of South Asian descent. Often I would be asked by the drivers where I am from at which point I would indicate my family is from Gujarat but that I grew up in the US. The conversation would usually end there – perhaps the drivers could feel my lack of interest in having a conversation or maybe they were looking to connect with someone who was from the same part of South Asia from which they came. In any case, I knew my annoyance was largely connected to the fact that I never felt I could approximate what being South Asian might generally signify – heterosexual.

That night, of course, all of the above was moot. There was not anyone else I would have wanted to be with than a South Asian taxi driver whom I believed could sympathise with my situation. I did end up sharing what had just happened to me with the driver; I might have even initiated the conversation. When I got back to my apartment I threw my jacket away – it was an old Gap jacket. Really, though, I just did not want it around as a reminder of what had happened. I did not share my experience with anyone again for years.

The *New Yorker* cartoon invariably takes me back to my experience but it also allows me to inhabit the event though a much different lens – one that to a certain degree gives me back a measure of agency. Drawing on the scholarship of Jasbir K. Puar, the cartoon underscores that 'Identity is one effect of affect, a capture that proposes what one is by masking its retrospective ordering and thus its ontogenetic dimension – what one was – through the guise of an illusory futurity – what one is and will continue to be.' (Puar, 2007: 215) To explain, the cartoon effectively instantiates an affect of fear and paranoia in the viewing subject that we imagine drivers must have felt after 9/11. The cab driver is clearly anticipating that this affect could lead to his misidentification as a terrorist and even to death. Through the hypervisual display of flags, he hopes he potentially avoids this future. Indeed, the visual identification of the driver as a 'terrorist' is intersectional with *other* visual presumptions of race, faith, and citizenship as previously discussed. African-American feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in her important

theory of intersectionality points to the importance of considering multiple categories of identity as constitutive of each other (94). The cab driver hopes to redirect the dominant effect (being identified as a terrorist) of the affect of fear by redirecting one vector which is entangled with it: presumption of lack of citizenship. By doing so, he potentially breaks the 'illusory futurity' that 'what one is and will continue to be' is constant per Puar. Put another way, Puar's (2011, n.p.) conceptualisation of Crenshaw's theory as the 'becoming of intersectionality' is instructive. Puar notes that Crenshaw's cogent description of cars meeting at an intersection is suggestive of intersectionality being an 'event'. Puar writes that 'In this "becoming of intersectionality", *there is emphasis on motion* rather than gridlock; on how the halting of motion produces the demand to locate.[13] The cartoon effectively focuses on the motion before multiple vectors – or cars per Crenshaw's analogy – come together to locate or identify the driver as a terrorist.

Event #2: 7/7: The Right to Opacity

On the morning of 7 July 2005, an atmosphere of fear and panic supplanted the celebratory mood in the city of London, which had been chosen as the site of the 2012 Olympics just 24 hours before, as a series of bombs exploded within the greater London transport network during peak commuting hours. Police soon established that four suicide bombers were responsible for the tragedy – all of whom died in the blasts, along with 52 other innocent people (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007).

The city of London has survived numerous attacks over the decades, including most prominently the Nazi bombing campaign known as the Blitz from 1940 to 1941 and Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing campaigns from the 1970s to the mid-1990s (MacLeod, 2005; 'Remembering the Blitz', n.d.). In April 1999 a lone perpetrator named David Copeland devised homemade nail bombs and deployed them in the Brixton and Brick Lane areas of London – targeting their black and South Asian communities, respectively – as well as in a gay pub in the Soho area of the city (Hopkins, 2000). However, suicide bombings were relatively new to both the city of London and the entire United Kingdom. The media dubbed the coordinated terrorist attacks of 7 July 2005 '7/7,' indelibly linking them in character to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

Just two weeks later on 21 July, terrorists targeted the London transport system again – this time unsuccessfully (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 18). In one of the rucksacks containing an explosive, the police found a gym membership card with a photograph they judged to be 'a reasonable likeness' to an image of one of the suspects, Hussain Osman, captured on Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) tapes at one of the sites where the bombs were recovered

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[13] Emphasis mine.

(Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 19). Based largely on this *visual* knowledge, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) decided to conduct surveillance on the apartment building where Osman was suspected to have resided (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 20).

At 9:33 AM on the day after the failed attacks, an officer stationed in an observation van saw an individual leave the building. The officer checked the photographs of the suspects that he had been provided. Police believed Osman to be Somali at the time, though it was later learned that he was in fact of Ethiopian descent ('Profile: Hussain Osman', 2007). The officer described the subject leaving the building as 'IC-1' or 'identity code-white.' However, he was unsure of his initial assessment and transmitted a message to his colleagues over the radio indicating that 'it would be worth somebody else having a look.' (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 55) Over the next three hours, undercover police officers followed the suspect onto a bus and into a tube station where he was shot fatally twice in the head, having been *visually* identified as the terrorist Osman by police (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 81).

The person police spotted coming out of the apartment building would later be identified as Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian man. The extensive 168-page report by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) concerning the tragic events leading to de Menezes's death indicates that his misidentification as a terrorist was the last in a chain of misidentifications. During the time de Menezes was under surveillance, police had perceived him to be 'white,' 'North African,' 'Asian,' 'Asian looking,' and 'Asian/Pakistani.' (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 55, 64, 76) Many of the witnesses in the tube described de Menezes as 'Asian' and, in a case of double misidentification, frequently confused an undercover police officer, listed under the pseudonym 'Ivor' in the IPCC report, as the suspect (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 66, 68, 69). In fact, police officers pinned Ivor to the ground and pointed a gun at his head before he was able to properly identify himself (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 65). Thus, as the tragic events of 22 July unfolded in the immediate aftermath of two major acts of terrorism – one carried out and one thwarted – police officers and bystanders alike identified Osman, de Menezes and Ivor as Asian. According to the IPCC report, however, none of them are of Asian descent. This misidentification of all three men reveals an implicit visual conflation of Asian-ness with terrorism.[14]

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[14] This is not to imply, of course, that the conflation of terrorism with Arab-ness is any less problematic. See Human Rights Watch's (Ahmad, 2002; 'United States: "WE ARE NOT THE ENEMY": Hate Crimes Against Arabs, Muslims, and Those Perceived to be Arab or Muslim after September 11', 2002).

The report provides important clues regarding how these identifications are made. For instance, one of the officers, identified as 'Harry' in the report, indicated that de Menezes was 'looking over his shoulder and acting in a wary manner. He appeared nervous.' (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 55–6) Officer Harry read de Menezes through what French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to as a 'corporal or postural schema'[15] – a default position the body assumes in various commonly experienced circumstances that can be 'habitual' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 152).[16] De Menezes's postural schema could be described as habitually associated with 'suspicious behaviour' in accordance with the officer's observation that de Menezes was 'acting in a wary manner' and 'appeared nervous.' This effectively rendered invisible de Menezes's identity as a Brazilian.[17]

Merleau-Ponty has theorized the inseparability of the body, the world, and the mind. He writes that:

> Insofar as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 408).

His indication of 'my existence as subjectivity' as 'bound up with that of the body and that of the world' is in direct opposition to the philosophical separation of the mind and body advocated most prominently by René Descartes, who wrote that 'the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter, and is such, that although the latter were not, it would still continue to be all that it is.' (Descartes, 1989: 11)

Merleau-Ponty further notes that seeing involves both the viewing and the viewed subjects, who are importantly both the seen and the seer. He describes this 'coiling over of the visible upon the visible' as 'intercorporeity,' rendering oppositional terms such as 'subject' and 'object' as meaningless, as they are actually yoked together. Moreover, he refers to the site of reciprocal

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[15] 'We grasp external space through our bodily situation. A "corporeal or postural schema" gives us at every moment a global, practical and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things' (5).

[16] As Merleau-Ponty indicates, 'habit does not consist in interpreting the pressures of the stick on the hand as indications of certain positions of the stick, and these as signs of an external object, since it relieves us of the necessity of doing so.'

[17] Whether or not de Menezes self-identified as Brazilian is unclear.

interpenetration between and within embodied subjects as the 'chiasmus.' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 138, 140–1) The various identifications ascribed to de Menezes, as well as that of the terrorist suspect Hussain Osman, can be described as a chiasmic intertwining of de Menezes with each police officer's own psychic desires, fantasies, and projections. Consequently, each officer's 'gut' or affective identification reflects a complex intermeshing of synaesthetic, or multisensory, visuality with psychic process. In another example, many attacks on turban-wearing citizens following 9/11 involved a bizarre intimacy, with turbans unceremoniously removed and hair often pulled at.[18] As the deaths of the Sikh Sodhi after 9/11 in the US and the Brazilian de Menezes after 7/7 in the UK illustrate, 'subjects' (turban-wearing or not) are never fully able to visually embody an appropriate patriotism, citizenship, or any other identification.[19]

While Goodrich's cartoon brought to the fore the becoming of intersectionality as crucial to understanding the mechanism of visual identification, the IPCC report illustrates in sobering detail how central location or site – it was de Menezes's emergence from the building in which the suspect was thought to have resided that set off a chain of reactions that lead to his death – as well as the affective readings of bodies are to this process. The permanent public memorial for de Menezes at the Stockport station in south London, where he was killed, provides another important way of reconsidering his tragic event (Figure 2). Created by artist Mary Edwards in 2010, the colourful mosaic includes an image of de Menezes surrounded by representations of flowers which replace the actual ones that overflowed from the site following his death (Siddique, 2010). His photographic image is composed of large and square tiles of the same size. British geographer Karen Wells has written she is sceptical that the memorial can function beyond its 'recognition of a family's tragedy'

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[18] Women wearing the hijab were also affected ('United States: "WE ARE NOT THE ENEMY": Hate Crimes Against Arabs, Muslims, and Those Perceived to be Arab or Muslim after September 11', 2002: 21).

[19] To extend this argument, de Menezes's legality in the UK was still unclear days after his death, fuelled primarily by a statement from the Home Office of Immigration that indicated that the stamp in his passport allowing him indefinite stay 'was not one that was in use by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate on the date given.' (Booth, 2005). It was not until November 2007 when the IPCC's report into the death of de Menezes was published that his legal status was definitively confirmed: 'Evidence emerged during the course of the criminal trial into the Health and Safety charge that Mr de Menezes was lawfully in the country on 22 July 2005.' (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 21 (note 4)) The information, however, was buried in a footnote.

(Wells, 2012: 165).[20] That is, she writes 'Despite the continuing ethical demand [from viewing subjects] of the image of the face [of Menezes], what is demanded is now muted and slippery'(165). At the same time, Wells writes that for all its 'foreclosure of political claims, [the memorial] may still be taken as simply a statement of presence, a refusal of erasure' (166). Wells's reading of the memorial is compelling, but I question whether the work should be seen only through the lens of instrumentality – the demand for justice – and presence/visibility.

To explain, when my colleague and friend took pictures of the memorial he was having trouble getting a clear photograph of de Menezes's face. He first thought this was due to the lighting – it was a cloudy day when he decided to take the photographs – or that perhaps the angle of his shot needed to be adjusted. Eventually he realized that the image itself is not entirely distinct. I was not able to find out if the artist or even the family had intended for the image's slight cloudiness. Whether intentional or not, I find this fascinating for two reasons. At first glance the square tiles of which his photograph is composed seem to 'locate' him on a grid, not to mention fragment him. However, the blurriness (even though slight) of the photograph allows him to transcend the locationary power of the grid and underscores that he was denied what Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant would characterize as his right to 'opacity'.[21] Glissant's opacity is a concept he deploys to defend the right of the postcolonial subject not to be appropriated by discourses of power that originate elsewhere. He writes that opacity is 'the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence'. Glissant further notes that opacity is not the opaque or the obscure, 'though it is possible to be so and be accepted as such' (191). Instead, he provocatively writes that 'The right to opacity . . . would be the real foundation of . . . freedoms' (190). Here, he is referring to a nonhierarchical society in which equality is connected to respect of the 'other' as different. While the memorial is clearly labelled as being that

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[20] Wells is drawing on poststructuralist scholars' (she cites Judith Butler and Paul Gilroy among others) readings of Sigmund Freud's essay 'Mourning and Melancholia' (Wells, 2012: 162; cf: Freud, 1957). Wells argues that the 'moment between the burial and the erection of some permanent marker on the burial site' is one of melancholia 'when the meaning of a tragedy is located on the border between 'private grief and public justice' (160). Wells further explains that the transition from melancholia to mourning becomes the moment of 'recognition of the failure to make somebody take responsibility for his death' (161). This transition materialises at the moment of the erection of de Menezes' memorial. Wells does end her essay, though, with a more hopeful note. She writes that the 'analysis of memorials can…restore them to melancholia so that they may continue to provoke us to ask political questions about the unequal distribution of violence, risk and (in) security in the contemporary city' (166).

[21] See the chapter titled 'For Opacity' in Glissant (189–94).

of de Menezes, the opacity of the photograph places the viewer in the interval just before signification or identification takes place. This is the in-between space where the world, the body and mind that Merleau-Ponty so eloquently writes are interconnected and that Glissant further suggests includes a subject's right to opacity. Through Glissant's lens, it can be argued that the dominant West's conflation of visibility and 'coming out' with freedom is reductive, even if well-meaning.

Event #3: Trayvon Martin: Fade to White

In early 2012 I learned that a 17-year-old by the name of Trayvon Martin, an African American male, had been fatally shot in the chest as he had been walking home in Sanford, a city in Florida which is located about an hour from where I grew up. Martin actually lived in south Florida with his mother – where I moved in late 2011 – but had been in Sanford visiting his father. Eventually it became clear that an overzealous community watch guard, George Zimmerman, followed Martin against police orders and murdered him for looking like a criminal (CNN Library, n.d.).

The scholarship of Jill Bennett, Amelia Jones, and Marsha Meskimmon in different ways argue that artworks and critical writing can in fact be more than a mute mirror of the world. They may not achieve the goals of traditional activism but they can initiate micro-activism – not the grand-sweeping change on a macro level but at the level of the subject. However, when I heard about Trayvon Martin and decided to also include him in my thinking I could not help to be a little disappointed at what appeared to be the limits of academic writing. I would neither claim that the validity of art historical writing lay in its instrumentality in the 'real world' nor that I had the power to prevent the death of Martin.

To explore this notion of micro-activism and to expand on my discussion of opacity, I consider Adrian Margaret Smith Piper's *Imagine [Trayvon Martin]* (2013). Piper moved to Berlin in 2008 when she discovered her name on a US 'suspicious travelers' list ('Adrian Piper, Imagine [Trayvon Martin], 2013.', 2013). She constructed this work after the acquittal of George Zimmerman – whom she describes as a 'Euroethnic vigilante neighbour' (A. Piper, n.d.). She connects Martin's death to a number of deaths of unarmed African American males as follows:

> Trayvon Martin was not the first or only victim of police state-sponsored violence
> against unarmed African Americans. Several more recent cases have received the
> attention of the international press. Others, both before and since, have gone
> unnoticed or have been forgotten. But Trayvon Martin's shooting death was the
> wake-up call for many of those Euroethnic Americans for whom Barack Obama's
> presidency was supposedly conclusive proof that American racism was a thing of the

past (A. M. S. Piper, 2015).

In the work, the now well-known image of Martin in a hoodie is faintly visible whereas the cross hairs of a target in red are much more prominent.[22] The former perhaps suggests both how figures like Martin can become faint memories for the public *and* how they stubbornly refuse to disappear. More strikingly, the work seems to turn the portrait (if you will) onto the viewer. That is, by seeing almost nothing the viewer becomes acutely aware of himself or herself looking. Once this happens, the possibility of the viewer to 'imagine what it was like to be me [Martin]', as Piper writes on the bottom of the target in blue text, becomes more likely. Any of us could be caught in the cross hairs of the target. In this way, Martin becomes a subject rather than object. Images of Martin in a hoodie circulated through the internet, print journalism, and television with a speed that drains Martin's agency as a subject; Piper's work returns his right, but to opacity. Given that Martin is barely visible, Piper's work has even stronger connections to Glissant's concept of opacity than de Menezes's memorial does.

> Piper's Martin work is free and available to all to download from her website. As she writes,
>
> > As an antidote to further memory loss, I have been distributing this work free of charge and as widely as possible. It is available for free download as a high-resolution PNG file at adrianpiper.com/art/index.shtml, and can be printed out in a variety of sizes and formats. Please take one, or many, and pass it on (A. M. S. Piper, 2015).

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[22] Martin was wearing a grey hoodie the night he died and it has become an important signifier for his death, sometimes in problematic ways. For instance, Fox News correspondent Gerardo Rivera said: 'I am urging the parents of black and Latino youngsters, particularly, to not let their young children go out wearing hoodies. I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin's death as George Zimmerman was.' While he is correct that the hoodie probably did have something to do with Martin's death what he unfortunately reinscribes with such a statement is that the victim is to blame or that by simply removing one's hoodie one's out of danger (Erik Wemple, 2012). Perhaps more problematic, is Rivera's colleague Bill O'Reilly's statements. He said that had Martin only been wearing a suit instead of looking like a "gangsta" he would not have been killed. He also makes the provocative point that race had nothing to do with Martin's death. Both the latter points are incredibly reductive (not too mention racist) and do not take into consideration the complex manner in which visual identification works (Eric Wemple, 2003). In any case, the hoodie has become an important signifier for the death of Martin. At one point there was even speculation that the Smithsonian Museum was thinking of acquiring Martin's hoodie for its collection (Sullivan, 2013; cf: Grinberg, 2012).

More so than democratizing as an act – which it arguably is – Piper participates in the same circuits through which Martin's image has been circulated. By doing so, though, she counteracts the effect of the hyper-circulation. Rather than render the image affectless, the work accrues affective power through its circulation – it is a power consolidated through the instantiation of an embodied connection between the viewer and the work and what it does (or does not) represent. This connection is the one before the viewer signifies Martin; it again is that in-between in which meaning is held. Speed is often conflated with circulation; here we are slowed down.

Kehinde Wiley has explored the predicament of the black male in the United States. As critic Deborah Solomon writes, 'Wiley began thinking about the stereotypes that shadow black men long before events in Ferguson, Mo.' (Solomon, 2015). Solomon is referring to the death of 18-year-old African American Michael Brown, Jr., after an encounter with police officer Darren Wilson on 19 August 2014 in Ferguson, part of the Greater St. Louis area of the state of Missouri in the United States (see 'Timeline', n.d.). Brown's death happened a little over a year after that of Martin. Wiley told Solomon in an interview: 'I know how young black men are seen…They're boys, scared little boys oftentimes. I was one of them. I was completely afraid of the Los Angeles Police Department' (Solomon, 2015).

While he was an artist-in-residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York City, in 2001–2, Wiley came across a crumpled piece of paper on a street near the museum that turned out to be a New York Police Department (NYPD) mug shot of a young 'black' male (Tsai, 2015: 12). The mug shot did not become source material for his work, though, until several years after his residency ended when he began thinking of it in the context of Western portraiture, posing, and power as he explains in an interview with Roy Hurt for National Public Radio:

> . . . I began thinking about this mug shot itself as portraiture in a very perverse sense, a type of marking, a recording of one's place in the world in time. And I began to start thinking about a lot of the portraiture that I had enjoyed from the eighteenth century and noticed the difference between the two: how one is positioned in a way that is totally outside their control, shutdown and relegated to those in power, whereas those in the other were positioning themselves in states of stately grace and self-possession (Wiley, 2005).

In 2006 he would finally do a portrait of the young man on the mug shot. Wiley's depiction of his subject's skin colour in *Mugshot Study* is lush and varied in tone (Figure 3). His subject is almost beatific. Directly under his portrait he faintly painted the sequence of numbers and letters that made

up his New York State ID (NYSID) Number.[23] The digits are largely washed out and thereby become untethered signifiers. At the same time, Wiley's title for the work, *Mugshot Study*, subtly betrays the numbers's genealogy and specificity.

In this way, in Wiley's work the black male subject is *both* positioned in 'states of stately grace and self-possession' (subject) and depicted as a criminal (object).[24] This tension keeps his depicted subject between or trans (across) identifications instead of polarized as only productive reimaginations. Not surprisingly, Wiley refers to these works as 'anti-portrait paintings' (as quoted in Lewis, 2005: 122) In her thorough review of the criticism of Wiley's work, curator Corrine Choi makes the astute point that his anti-portrait paintings are 'an ironic cultural criticism by the artist when thought of in relation to the historical depiction of African American bodies and its reduction of them to stereotypes' (Choi, 2015). I would extend her argument to write that Wiley's work, by functioning between signs rather than at either pole, is about the past, present, and the future.

Wiley's works, much like that of Piper's digital work, Goodrich's cartoon and Martin's memorial, function at the in-between of significations. In so doing they hold out for more ethical futures – without insisting they will in fact happen – as much as they refuse to deny the politics and tragedy of real-world events. Empowering viewers to embrace this affective position is in fact more powerful than delivering either sharp criticism or blithely offering potentially false promises of the future. Importantly, these works do not serve as mute mirrors but provide the possibility of instantiating embodied, embedded and responsible subjects in the pluriverse of the cosmopolitical home—indeed, one in which the politics of cosmos, or world-making, neither is eschewed nor articulated as hopelessly fractured.

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[23] NYSID Number is, 'A unique identifier assigned to an individual by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)' ('NYSID NUMBER - Data Element - NY DCJS', n.d.).

[24] Even at the level of reception, Wiley notes in an interview with curator Christine Y. Kim (2003) that he does not feel that he must choose between a 'black-people-in-the-street audience' and 'a high-art audience'. Obviously, Wiley said this to make a polemical point than to insinuate that the former could not be the latter. Put another way, he wants to engage the frequent museum visitor as much as someone who may have less knowledge of the history of art. (This interview is published in its full version in Golden, 2002).

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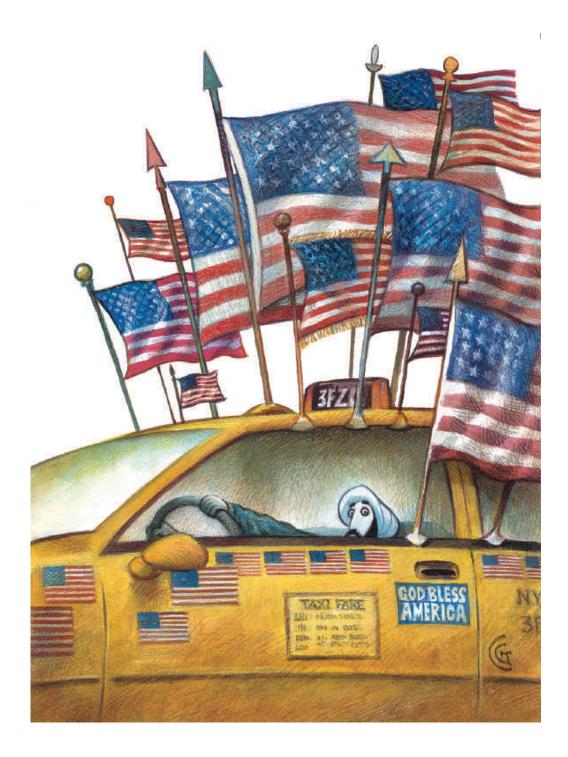
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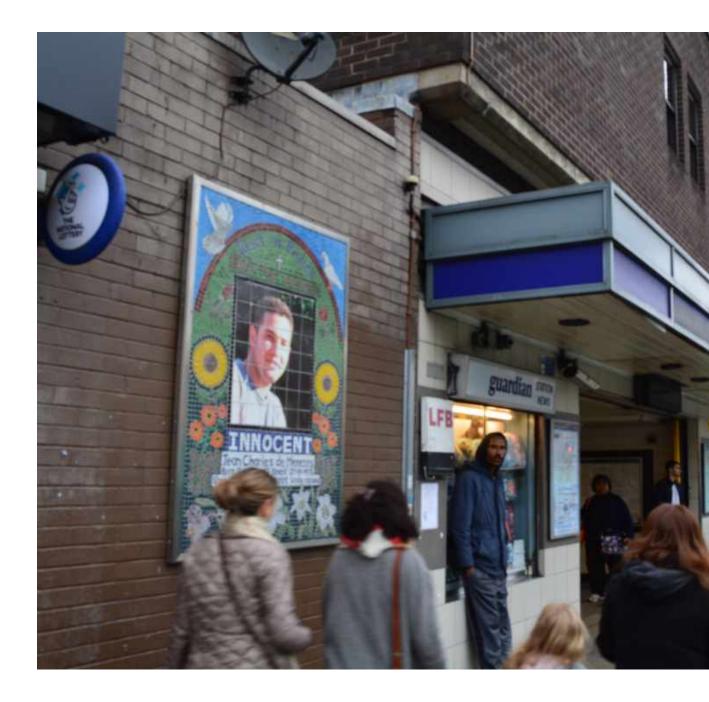
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FIGURES

1 Carter Goodrich, *Untitled*, 2001. Watercolour and coloured pencil. Cartoon used for cover of November 5, 2001 issue of *The New Yorker*.

2   Mary Edwards, Jean Charles de Menezes memorial, Stockwell Tube Station, London, England. Unveiled on 7 January, 2010.

3   Kehinde Wiley, *Mugshot Study*, oil on canvas, 36 x 24 in. © Kehinde Wiley.