

Conversation with
TOM HOLERT,
Harun Farocki Institut

I is for

Institute

What's in a name? This is the question underlying our investigation into ICA: how it came to be, what it means now, and how we might imagine it in the future.

In a field so often defined by precarity, this project is grounded in a spirit of collegiality, a looking outward that aims to facilitate self-reflection. As such, we have engaged colleagues primarily from small- and mid-scale contemporary arts organizations to discuss their institutional histories and how they understand the stakes of their work. The *I is for Institute* website acts as a repository for these ongoing conversations, as well as archival material relating to ICA's history. We thank our many colleagues for their generosity, enthusiasm, and frankness. Their thinking has in turn energized our own.

— Alex Klein,
Dorothy & Stephen R. Weber
(CHE'60) Curator, Institute
of Contemporary Art,
University of Pennsylvania

Support for the research and development of *I is for Institute* has been provided by Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. © 2017–19 Institute of Contemporary Art. All rights reserved.



05.01.19

Conversation with
TOM HOLERT,
Harun Farocki Institut

Tom Holert is a member of the Executive Board and Co-Founder of the Harun Farocki Institut (HaFI) in Berlin.

With Alex Klein and Tausif Noor

TAUSIF NOOR

Can you describe your role at the Harun Farocki Institut and how long you have been involved?

TOM HOLERT

I'm one of three members of the Executive Board. The other members are Doreen Mende and Volker Pantenburg. And then there is Elsa de Seynes, our managing director and only employee, who runs the office and does a myriad of things, like editing texts, overseeing the residency, and developing her own research agenda. I've been part of a group that came together after Harun died in July 2014. His friends, colleagues, and family were thinking about how to respond to this sudden and unexpected loss, first independently of one another, and then all together. We wanted to find a way to work with his legacy without being overshadowed by his memory and the mourning of his death.

What seemed to be most important was to maintain and continue the kind of work that came out of him as a filmmaker—a collective practice of producing, researching, teaching, writing, and organizing. There were many people, including his partner and wife Antje Ehmann, who needed support and assistance dealing with the practical, logistical, and administrative issues that came with his passing away. There was an interest in keeping the network of people and collaborations together in some way or another. This, of course, is something that nobody expected would be easy in any way because it would be completely different. It would largely be volunteer work, and so not everyone could be a part of this. But to maintain and translate an existing context of work, of production and conversation, was one of the ideas or the incentives behind the Institut's *raison d'être*. We thought long and hard about what form this response should take, and there were two alternatives actually—either we would found an association with members or we would erect a foundation.

ALEX KLEIN

That is actually one of our questions: Why an “institute” and not a foundation? “Institute” is a word that we’re really thinking critically about.

TH

On paper, legally it is a foundation. But we call this foundation an “institute,” the Harun Farocki Institut. “Institut” was a term that Farocki used occasionally and in interesting ways. He was somehow imagining an institution that would work in different ways from a normal institute. But he was also interested in the kind of authority that comes with the term, or the play that comes with such authoritative and rhetorical gestures. And it also, of course, invokes the notion of research and serious work on serious issues—which certainly has to be taken with a grain of salt. However, we decided to opt for the legal form of the foundation because we were advised that it might become difficult to run a small organization such as the one we were planning on a membership model. A foundation was, in a way, more practical, not least because we didn’t expect that so many people would be active for so long—it’s too much to expect on a largely voluntary basis. So, we decided to do it this way, creating the necessary “organs” of a foundation, such as the Executive Board (currently, Doreen, Volker and myself) and the Supervisory Board involving, among others, Antje Ehmann and Farocki’s two daughters Anna and Lara Faroqi, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus from the Arsenal Institute for Film and Video in Berlin, Doina Popescu, Founding Director of the Ryerson Image Centre at Ryerson University in Toronto, and Anselm Franke, Head of the Department of Visual Arts and Film at HKW Berlin.

AK

Are they an advisory board?

TH

They’re not exactly an advisory board. They’re something that’s demanded by German law for foundations—they have an advisory function, but they not only advise, but also monitor us.

AK

Ah I see, because it could also be a fundraising board?

TH

A fundraising board could be the next step and grow out of this supervisory board.

AK

For the record, who are the other members that came together with you? Is your title "Director"?

TH

For us, titles are really not that important. We had to allocate these positions to everyone, but it's really open. In a way, this entire network that we activated in the weeks after Farocki passed away is part of HaFI. Everyone who considers herself or himself as a member of the institute is free to do so. It is a bit of a schizophrenic situation. On the one hand, we'd like to open it up as much as possible. On the other hand, for practical reasons of the everyday...

AK

Someone has to make decisions.

TH

Yes, someone has to make decisions. And everyone is happy that someone has to make decisions. There haven't been any complaints as far as I know. And to your other question, the people who came together are partly people who worked with Farocki on his projects, such as Matthias Rajmann, Jan Ralske, and Wolfgang Schmidt and others who did editing, research, camera work and other levels of work with him. Then, there were close friends such as Christian Petzold, Aysun Bademsoy, Filipa César, Hito Steyerl, Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, Diedrich Diederichsen, Michael Baute, Stefan Pethke, Christine Lang, Constanze Ruhm, Christoph Dreher, Kodwo Eshun, Stefanie Schulte-Strathaus and many others who were part of the discussion. Farocki was the kind of person who had many friends. He was charismatic, and a great person to be around, and he was interested in working in a conversational mode. It was natural that there were many people who were interested in having a share in this. We organized smaller meetings in his and Antje's kitchen and larger meetings in other spaces to bring many people into the discussion. Then, together we decided that we'd go with the model of the foundation.

I'll speak a little bit about Elsa de Seynes, who is HaFI's only employee, sometimes on a 50% basis, occasionally on a 100% basis, depending how we are with money. Elsa studied photography and history in France, and worked for many years as a producer at House of World Cultures (HKW). She has added many things to her experience and expertise that are necessary to run

the organization for the past three or four years now, which is amazing to see. Without her we'd be lost.

AK

So, she deals with the administrative aspects and then the three of you are the vision and direction?

TH

Yes, we do many things together, like the pamphlets and brochures. One of us has the idea to do something with the archive to build a research strand around a concept or a question, and then the process of producing it—writing, editing, and graphic design, budgeting, and printing—all these things come together. We try not to pile everything on Elsa, although a lot remains on her desk to be taken care of. We're trying to do as much as possible with the resources we have at hand.

AK

Do you consider yourselves staff? Are you employed by the Harun Farocki Institut, or is it all voluntary?

TH

No, it's all voluntary. Sometimes money comes in through projects and certain tasks are remunerated, but it's rather low.

AK

I'm sure.

TH

Doreen is a curator, theorist, and a professor at HEAD–Geneva where she runs the CCC (Critical Curatorial Cybernetic Research Studies) Masters program and the CCC PhD forum. Volker is a film studies professor at Freie Universität (Free University of Berlin). They have their day jobs, or steady incomes. I work as an independent researcher, writer, and curator. There are of course, limits to the time we can afford to spend working for HaFI. We've been thinking hard about what the strategy is for the next five years and whether we consider ourselves an organization that is growing or whether we would like to stay in the limits that we find ourselves to be in and if we're more free to decide things than we would be otherwise. We have long stages in the process when it's just the four of us, but we do hire

interns and other external people when we organize events or need support from outside.

AK

And, there's a physical location, is that correct? It's near SAVVY Contemporary?

TH

It is in the same compound, in the Silent Green Kulturquartier, which is a cultural center that opened in 2015. That was the same year that Arsenal Institute for Film and Video, which is the main cinematheque in Berlin, moved their archive to Silent Green. They have one of the largest archives for international film on celluloid in Germany. This was in the planning when we met in September 2014. Stefanie Schulte Strathaus—who is one of Arsenal's three directors, the driving force behind Arsenal's "Living Archive" activities, and one of the curators in charge of the Forum Expanded section of the Berlin Film Festival—told us that they would move there. They already decided that they would have a space waiting for Harun's materials in their archives, for the things that he had kept in two storage spaces in Berlin. This was a great offer and an important incentive to move on with the founding of the Institut in 2014–2015. Another thing was that Silent Green had an office space available, of the kind we needed, for very low rent.

AK

Is your rent subsidized?

TH

We don't pay anything for this compartment in the basement for the archive, but we pay the regular rent for the office space at Silent Green. However, it's a comparatively low rate.

AK

Ah, okay.

TH

When we moved in late 2015, we found ourselves in the immediate vicinity of Arsenal's archive facilities. Arsenal was instrumental in distributing and curating Harun's work. Just a few months later, SAVVY Contemporary moved in as well. This was really ideal. A quick word about the building: it is a former crematory, the first one that was built in Berlin, before World War I. The architecture is modeled after a pastoral villa, it breathes a certain Art Nouveau morbidity. But Jörg Heitmann and Bettina Ellerkamp, who discovered

this place and who were developing it, come from the 1990s experimental film scene in Berlin. In the late 1990s and 2000, Heitmann tried to fund a feature film project and this funding went completely haywire, and he was facing bankruptcy—to make a long story short. In order to pay back his debts, he became a successful and high-end real estate developer in Berlin, without knowing about real estate at the outset. He never threw people out of their flats, but he bought empty supermarkets and resold them—things like this. So, he had all the knowledge, context, and insight into construction and developing business, but he was always waiting for something like the old crematory to emerge. In a very short time, he was able to turn this building, this entire compound, into a workable space. Then last January, for this year's Berlin Film Festival and the *ANTIKINO (THE SIREN'S ECHO CHAMBER)* exhibition, they opened a huge exhibition space for the moving image downstairs.

AK

Ah, so it's a growing complex?
What is the neighborhood again?

TH

It's in Wedding. In the 1920s it was called the "Red Wedding," and it was working class. Vicious fights between the police and the workers took place in Wedding; the "Bloody May" of 1929, was one of the most violent battles in the city and the Weimar Republic. From the 1960s on, it became a migrant and diasporic neighborhood and it still is. Wedding is one of the parts of the city that everyone expected to become gentrified very quickly, because it's so centralized, and has very interesting buildings and real estate. But somehow, it didn't happen. For a long time, it was very resilient. Even Neukölln, which is a similar neighborhood, was quicker in that process. Now, with developments such as this, gentrification is beginning in Wedding.

AK

Right.

TH

There has been a lot said about this, but it is being considered all the time by the people and organizations who run Silent Green and occupy spaces there. There is an awareness of the responsibility to give something back to the community. It's not just about bringing in tourists and art world people. There are burglaries every now and then, and there's a certain aggression which you feel, but there's also other relationships to the outside. So, we're very aware of the problematics.

TN

Can you speak about the scope of your activities at the Harun Farocki Institut? You mentioned publishing a series of pamphlets and working with the archive. Are there other types of programming?

TH

In the early stages of thinking about building such an institution, Volker was given an interesting document that Farocki distributed in 1975 among his friends and colleagues and the wider social environment that mainly centered on *Filmkritik*, a monthly journal of writing on film where Farocki was an editor for over 10 years, starting in the early 1970s. I mention this because he envisioned an institution that would work like a counter-archive—an archive mainly of film and documentary footage—that haven't found their way onto public television or more public channels, that were either discarded, or excluded, or not seen. He proposed to build something around this material that would be, somewhat mockingly, but also with a certain seriousness, called a "National Library of Images." He sent around a survey with all kinds of questions about this idea. Nothing came out of it, but these four pages or so, which we published as one of HaFI's first pamphlets, work as somewhat of a program for us. This is less with regard to the idea of building an archive of filmic gestures—a project Farocki was committed to from the 1980s to the early 2000s—but more in the way that Farocki spoke in this text about the social relationships that such an institution is supposed to entail; "working relations," as he called them. Something that we're aiming for is to be a platform that initiates and instigates work that would otherwise not happen, and that can take very different forms. We could have named this institute differently; we could have called it "The Institute of the Political Critique of the Image," or something like that.

We finally decided to call it the "Harun Farocki Institut" for reasons that Harun himself might not necessarily have agreed with, but the spirit in which we chose it, as a sly strategic move, he would've probably appreciated. Because with this choice immediately comes a bundle of expectations, projections, and memories. Everyone wonders what the institute does. We have dry mouths explaining this over and over again: "It is not a foundation in the traditional sense; it's not the Fassbinder Foundation or the Warhol Foundation," although the Warhol Foundation might be considered a model in some regard, because it's more of a facilitating agency than a heritage council. The good thing that helped us develop in this way is that we don't have any role in the commercial side of the work. We don't hold any rights; we

cannot lend things—that’s all done by the Farocki Company, the GbR, which is a classification of business entities in Germany—which is run by Antje Ehmann and Farocki’s daughters, Anna Faroqhi and Lara Faroqhi, who are also artists.

AK

Is that the estate?

TH

Yes.

AK

Is the collection non-commercial?

TH

Yes. It is a non-commercial collection and it’s not even really an archive.

AK

This is interesting.

TH

We have a hard time calling it an archive, although it comes in handy to call it that. It wasn’t conceived as an archive. It’s stuff that Harun didn’t want to throw away, but couldn’t care less about at the same time. He was putting this stuff in a rather poorly maintained storage space.

AK

So, it’s not his correspondence or things like that?

TH

No.

AK

These are things that defy normal distribution.

TH

Yes. The correspondence and the more personal archival things are with Antje in the apartment they shared.

AK

Got it.

TH

We have about 100 boxes of things relating to almost every project. It's the research material, because he didn't throw that away—the rough cuts, the film stock he didn't use, etc.—he kept it all, or most of it. In the first two or three years, we tried to get a sense of what was in these boxes. We organized workshops about archiving and got professional advice from archivists, both regarding printed matter and film and video. We've been working very closely with the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek, who holds most of Farocki's works and they also have a lot of negatives of the celluloid material. We're working with them, but there were attempts by the (public, state-run) Akademie der Künste in Berlin to get a hold of the estate, because Harun was a member of the Akademie. But the estate and inheritors decided against giving it to them and gave part of it to us.

What we are doing is working with this collection of stuff, and it's still ongoing, since there's so much to do around the work still in technological, scholarly, and archival terms. A lot of our time is absorbed with these concerns. We started out with the idea to have at least two wings of the institute. One wing would be Farocki-related research, building a database and bringing a sense of order into this material. Another would be a platform to initiate new work, research, and artistic work. We're trying to do the latter as much as the former, although it's the more difficult part as it turns out. In a way, we are also trying to develop an institutional form that emerges from a practice of making and collaborating; from a process rather than a defined structure. We cannot offer that much because we don't have production funds.

AK

How are you funded?

TH

That's a good question. We had very strong funding for the past two years, because we are part of a sub-project of an umbrella project on the politics of the archive (*The Whole Life: Archives and Reality*) funded by the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) and coordinated by Arsenal which distributed money to various smaller partners assembled in a project called *Archives Beyond Themselves*. We received approximately 200,000 Euro, which helped us to pay for almost two years of running costs. But generally, the funding comes from a mixture of public and private sources.

AK

I'm curious about the public-facing dimension of it. Is this collection something that one

could make an appointment to come and see?

TH

Yes, by appointment. We're working on a database of all the holdings that we have. Part of the database is pretty advanced and part of it is online already. What we have put online is a complete biography and a complete filmography and people can make appointments to come to the offices and see certain things. They can also go into the basement accompanied by someone and work with the material. This happens often, of course, there are often calls.

AK

There's probably a lot of PhD students calling you up.

TH

But a lot of people have a misconceived idea of what the archive is, so we have to explain what they should expect and what they can expect. For example, what we do ourselves right now in the context of the *Archives Beyond Themselves* project is that we're attending to a particular project of Farocki's that he worked on around 1999/2000 called *Prison Images*. He did the research together with Cathy Lee Crane among others, who's a filmmaker teaching in Ithaca, New York. Cathy will be our next resident in early 2020. Goethe Institut has supported us in offering a three-month residency in Berlin to visual practitioners, curators, and theorists we're interested in; since 2015 we have invited Kevin B. Lee, Shirin Barghnavard, and Ali Hussein Al Adawy, a video essayist, a documentary filmmaker, and a film curator and historian.

Now we are developing a project on the basis of this material (that not only resulted in the hour-long essay film *Prison Images* but also in a two-channel installation for the gallery space, *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts*, both 2000) because they were researching the U.S. prison-industrial complex. Farocki himself started to be interested in the technologies of prison surveillance and also in the way that film history had developed its own iconography of the prison. So, these were two of the starting points and these research interests brought a lot of material to the table. Currently, we're perusing and getting an idea of it. We did workshops on the subject of carceral aesthetics and the technologies of incarceration in Berlin, and conducted a two-day workshop at NYU, co-organized with Evan Calder Williams and Andrew Weiner in April 2019, which was also dedicated to this subject. We're trying to use this collection as a resource of investigation for developing research strands that might develop in unexpected ways. It's not only about reconstructing the situation of the production of the film, but it's to see how this film, or how such a project resonates with contemporary artists

and activists who are responding to this work, how contemporary it still is or how obsolete and anachronistic it is.

TN

That's something I find quite interesting about establishing an institution around a single artist. Even when there is a breadth of archival material, there is this desire, especially in the contemporary, to expand it forward. So, Harun Farocki, Chris Marker, these are people who have a sort of cosmology of thinking—it's not just one thing. In terms of having a fidelity to that cosmology, what kind of collaborations, what kind of similar institutions or artists are you looking towards expanding beyond the archival collection?

TH

This is a very good point. Speaking of Chris Marker and of Allan Sekula, for example, they were almost in the same generation and they died around the same time as Farocki, and their families are facing very similar questions and problems. Although we haven't really established any close contact with them, these are archives that we would be interested in working with in one way or another.

Arsenal is probably the most important partner for us as an organization, because they not only have great programming, but also very strong discourse on the archive itself and they're doing it in such a coherent and relentless way. It's productive to work with them. For example, the Harun Farocki Institut has been invited by Arsenal to select films out of their archive, and so we've started a series, a blind date kind of screening. We're choosing works we aren't familiar with from the archive and choosing them not only for the curiosity of the film but also for the condition of the print and other aspects of archived films that otherwise might be considered marginal and irrelevant.

AK

So, it has a double function?

TH

Yes, it has a double function. It's interesting to have these films that are not often ordered or asked for, and to see the condition of the prints. Apart from Arsenal, there is the HKW as a partner we sometimes collaborate with, but there are much smaller institutions that we work with. Internationally, there are no continuous collaborations, however there's a close relationship to BAK [basis voor actuele kunst (foundation for contemporary art)] in Utrecht or the Dutch Art Institute, or to people in London such as The Otolith Group or Forensic Architecture, or Raven Row, which realized Farocki's first solo exhibition in the UK in 2009–10). So, it comes with the project. And SAVVY Contemporary, our neighbors at Silent Green, also, and Archive Books, particularly now as we're working on an edition of Farocki's collected writings (published, in German, together with Neuer Berliner Kunstverein and Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther König). This is a very ambitious project because he was a prolific writer.

AK

I hope you'll be translating that into English.

TH

I hope so too. The German edition will have at least six volumes and the first four volumes are out already. There's a book-length autobiographical statement, which covers his life until his early 40s, which he couldn't complete before his death. It really is a work of literature and one of the most interesting histories of postwar West Germany. We republished an updated version of the book *Speaking about Godard* that he wrote with Kaja Silverman. Next, we have four volumes of his miscellaneous writings, some of which are long essays. These first two volumes are being edited by Volker, one of the most knowledgeable experts. He was a friend of Harun's and also wrote his PhD thesis on Farocki and Godard, and he's the most amazing researcher and scholar, and he knows everything. He was destined to do this, to start with this really heavy work. But we had to define editorial parameters and all these things. I'm currently working on *Volume 5*, which is the third part of the miscellaneous texts, the writings from the 1986 to 2000. There will be a fourth volume of the collected writings from 2001 to 2014. These four volumes of the collected writings will be translated. We didn't really think about having them translated in their entirety, because we didn't really expect any publisher to do this, to take the risk of doing this. But we found a partner with Archive Books.

AK

Oh fantastic. When can we expect that?

TH

This will take some work.

AK

I suppose it will be several years.
Do you have a good translator in mind?

TH

We will need at least two or three translators, but they should come from the literary field rather than from academia because of Farocki's writing style.

AK

I'm really fascinated by the personal investment in the project and in effect, the destabilization of the authority of the archive. There seems to be a desire to have Farocki's work live on, and to have his critical methodologies applied by others.

TH

Yes, that word cosmology was very good.

AK

Can you talk about your own relationship to him and the idea of how an artist's cosmology can live on through other things? For instance, we spoke with the Artist's Institute, where they focus on a single artist for a season, but it's not about showing a work. It's about the ethos that drives that artist, and how it can go in many different directions. There's something interesting about you having this collection of research material—the inner workings, the raw material—leading up to the thing that can create other divergencies.

This is actually the reason why I felt a certain urge, or entitlement, to make a proposal in this direction. For me, I discovered Farocki the writer, before the filmmaker, in the 1980s when I was studying at university. I was putting together a Farocki reader for myself, I photocopied his texts in the University of Hamburg's library, and I treasured this book of my own making because his voice as a writer was quite extraordinary.

He was from a generation that I didn't expect that much from at the time really—the kind of 1968 crowd that happened to dominate the academic and intellectual life with their own way of writing and speaking, a discourse that appeared limited to someone me around 1980. His approach and humor were much closer to Diedrich Diederichsen's voice and other younger critics writing on music, film, television, politics in German journals like *Sounds* or *Spex* in the 1980s. They were younger, they were Farocki's juniors, but there was still a connection to the shared polemical, almost punk way that Farocki approached certain things. At a certain point, in the late 1990s, I started teaching visual culture and visual studies at art schools. *Images of the World* became one of my favorite teaching examples and I increasingly conceived my own thinking on a critical theory of the image on the ground of his and Godard's thinking, in addition to feminist and postcolonial writings.

Through Christian Petzold, who I got to know in the 1990s, I got to know Harun personally. When you encounter someone personally whom you've admired for a long time, it's a very unique experience. He was one of the easiest people to be around and get along with and with an incredible capacity to foster a social-intellectual environment of care. He was very demanding in a way, but not in an authoritative way. But he was, through his own example, expecting something from his interlocutors. Later, when I worked as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, we were colleagues. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s we saw each other increasingly often and we became friends.

In a way, I'd always wanted to found an institute such as this. And in 2000, I founded the Institute for Studies in Visual Culture in Cologne with my friend and colleague Mark Terkessidis. It largely existed on paper, but it gained us access to all kinds of funding because we were a non-profit and we could do projects with others who needed our institutional shelter.

AK

It's interesting that you mention that this particular institute existed mostly on paper, because something that we think about with *I is for Institute* is how language and discourse create a kind of architecture.

TH

Right—the Institute for Studies in Visual Culture in Cologne was in effect reliant on a non-physical architecture. It doesn't exist anymore. After having done a lot of research and writing two books together, Mark and I decided not to pursue it any further because we professionally diverged, although we're still very close and occasionally collaborate on certain topics.

AK

On another note, and thinking through the many different questions of accessibility, how does your "by appointment only" office grapple with those politics, which are also very tied to Harun Farocki's thinking? How you practice that as an organization is interesting.

TH

Yes, it is interesting and it is not resolved. We have to be cautious with regard to ourselves because we do have privileged access to this material, not only to the materials that we hold ourselves but also to his archive. We can go there practically any time. I can send an email and ask Antje to send anything—for other people it's not that easy. It's not the most complicated thing to do in comparison to other artist estates, I guess. We have to be careful not to become too protective over our own privileges.

AK

But perhaps that's enacted through the projects that you do. I'd like to talk a little bit more about the breadth of your work at the Institut. I saw on the website that you support exhibitions and research residencies. Can you give us a sense of what comes out of these programs?

TH

We're doing a lot of things that don't have a public side. We're rather interested in organizing, meetings, and workshops that don't have the expectation of an output that could then be commodified in one way or another. A lot of the things that we are doing are rather invisible.

AK

An "invisible institute."

TH

Of course, we do have some public events. Just as two examples: During the retrospective that we co-organized with Neuer Berliner Kunstverein and Arsenal in 2017, we were also involved in organizing a larger retrospective of Farocki's work in Berlin. In the course of this retrospective, we had screenings of the entirety of the more than 100 film, television, and radio works that were available in whatever condition they might be in, from pristine digital restorations to prints in very poor shape, and it went over three months. It involved an exhibition and then we organized for several days as the institute academy, which we called "Farocki Now: A Temporary Academy".

We invited five groups of practitioners, students of different backgrounds and educational infrastructures: the Temple University Film & Media Arts MFA Program in Philadelphia; MASS Alexandria, which is a self-organized art academy; ruangrupa from Jakarta; Hito Steyerl's "Lensbased" class from the University of the Arts, Berlin; a group from the European Media Studies Masters program of the University of Applied Science in Potsdam; and a seminar run by Michael Baute at DFFB (German Film and Television Academy, Berlin). They all had half a day, and we had a little bit of production money that we could distribute. The idea was that they were invited a year before and they were in an institutional setting and their schedules would find the time to work on Farocki and take him as a touchstone of some sort. The results, as you might gather, were very diverse and productive. Our approach to this gathering was non-academic. The important thing was that people were accommodated in a hospitable way, with food, breaks for sharing ideas, etc., and we were lucky with good weather. It created this very interactive atmosphere and it also had situations that were tenser, which comes with such things. For us, this was a learning curve. As part of this process, we commissioned the artist Marianna Maruyama to reflect on the Academy from which she conceived the podcast "Farocki's Living Room" that also constituted the first issue of *Rosa Mercedes*, our online journal. It's also something we'd like to do in the future, and we'd need to have the means, or else rescale it. Another thing that we did just a few weeks ago was a conference that we co-organized with the *e-flux journal* and HKW on the notion of navigation. It was a two-day conference called *Navigation Beyond Vision*. It was one

of the best things that I've ever been involved in organizing. It was extremely rewarding and the press at e-flux is hoping to have the papers in their 2019 summer issue.

AK

I look forward to reading that.

TH

We had a double bill keynote on Friday evening with Hito Steyerl and James Bridle, and it was really strong. It started as a conference on AI and ended up being a conference about other things, ways of navigating the social. I'm mentioning this because it also came out of something Harun discussed in a talk titled "Computer Animation Rules." That was the last talk he gave, in June 2014. He discussed his *Parallel I-IV* cycle, and mentioned that he had been reading Alex Galloway's book, *Gaming: Essays on Algorithmic Culture*. He gathered from this book that it might be necessary to think about the relationship between navigation and montage in a new way. Doreen and I have been somewhat obsessed with the navigation idea. Doreen did several things in her program at HEAD Geneva, and she organized a conference on the topic at the Dutch Art Institute. This is another way that things came together.

AK

In a way, you're picking up these breadcrumbs that he left and taking the work forward in new directions.

TH

Farocki's work already presents you with an entire program and you could go on endlessly. The range of questions and programs and range of intellectual and political concerns is already huge. The intellectual environment that he provided makes for an institute that will thrive.

AK

Right now, the Institut's core members are people who had direct relationships with Farocki. What is your vision for this institute in the future, and does it depend on people who had that direct relationship?

TH

No, it doesn't and I hope it doesn't. It's my hope that one day we can pass the torch. In a way, it's already happening because we're working with so many people of a younger generation. The joy of engaging with a younger

generation—its debates, technologies, problems, and questions—is also something that we’ve learned, or we wish to carry on from Farocki. We’re really compelled to do this.

AK

Just looking ahead, if HaFI were to be extracted from you, you would probably need to create some infrastructure—financial infrastructure—to set it up for someone who doesn’t have the same kind of personal investment.

TH

Yes. And it has to because some parts, the holdings could be given to someone else. We should be taking care of the way in which we communicate our own interests, including inviting others, and including giving over to others. This is our responsibility to do this and not cling to the thing as if it is ours, but rather to present ourselves in a way that makes others think, “Well, maybe I should join.” And maybe in five years from now...

TN

Farocki’s work is incredibly generative. It seems that part of the reason that you were able to gain such momentum with HaFI is because of the clear interest in Farocki’s practice from so many groups. His practice spanned many different subjects and forms. The way that I learned about Farocki is not necessarily the same way that others did, and I think this range maybe accounts for the support you’ve had for this project.

AK

I’d love to touch on some of your other curatorial work at HKW and unpack your relationship to that institution—I’m really fascinated by it. I was just so blown away by your exhibition at HKW that I got to walk through with you last summer, *Neolithic Childhood. Art in a False Present, c. 1930* (2018). I’m still thinking about that exhibition and about being introduced to the show that you’re working on now on pedagogic

architecture. I'm very interested in how one's personal work relates to the institution that one is in. Of course, you've created an institute of your own making, collaboratively, but I'm curious about how some of your thinking about this non-instituted institute relates to some of your own research with regards to pedagogy and the archive—issues that run throughout your work.

TH

I really try to challenge the institution a bit under the cloak of this rather historical interest in educational architecture and spatial politics. I would like to try to push them to rethink their entire relationships a bit between the different departments. Usually the departments for education and communication are involved very late in the process.

TN

It's often thought of as auxiliary or adjunct.

TH

Yes, adjunct. I would like to turn this around—having them already thinking about, planning, and researching at an early stage of the project's development. In a way, I would like to decenter the exhibition, which will in the public eye probably not work that well. But if it works somewhat, it will already be a success. We are trying now, especially with the department for education, to get in touch with the various schools in Berlin and think about how we can collaborate—not only because of their buildings, but because of what these students and teachers would like to contribute, as part of a tour through the city. It may not necessarily be in the exhibition, but it would be an actual activation of the architectural and educational resources. Then, it's not only the institutional education that we would like to bring in, but also considering para- or non-institutional ways of thinking. We are working with the Street College, an extramural school run by streetworkers, which has its own academic setting outside of the formal education system for those who wouldn't otherwise feel invited to come to HKW.

I would like to reflect on HKW becoming or developing into an educational institution that is in competition with universities and art schools. This means education not only in terms of a cultural program, but also actually trying to do classes and temporary academies. This tendency towards the

educationalization of cultural programming needs to be thought about, that's where the dialectics of the situation kick in. I hope that this project is going to address this.

AK

How do you think about dealing with the idea of Farocki's legacy?

TH

To me, the meaning of the legacy of an artist and thinker such as Farocki could also be one that comes with a certain obligation and set of tasks involved. If you take a legacy seriously in that regard, then your operations become scripted in a way. Legacy in terms of a canonical state of work, or heritage status of the work, is of a completely different order. We don't want to contribute to the canonization process around Farocki; on the other hand, we cannot *not* contribute to it.

AK

You addressed this desire for exchange and instability—of it not being a monolithic historicization.

TH

Any hagiography should be avoided at all costs.
