NOMADIC ART NET & VIEWS

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This thesis entails exploring the concept of nomadic art and surveying the different aspects of the subject. I pursue the idea of the Nomadic art life, translating the notion of transition, places, trade, and identities. Nomadic Art Net is an ongoing journey, like my own nomadic life, inherited from my family. It continually pursues new horizons through stitching sessions, and evolves with its encounters. Nomadic Views provides a reflection on the places that I have visited, and how their differences are not always visible when viewed through the window.
INTRODUCTION

Nomadic Art is a contemporary art practice, arising from site-specific work where the location is integrated in the artwork. Site-specific art practices generally consist of artists being commissioned on an international scale to reside in an art institution or are invited by a governmental agency to respond to a site and create a work of art. In the 1990s, the mobility of commissioned artists became an essential part of site-specific pieces. The artists started to explore the idea of Nomadism and otherness as they experienced globalization from the end of the Cold War to the expansion of the European Union, creating opportunities for nomad artists. In Paris in 1989, at the Centre George Pompidou, artists from Africa, Asia, Australia, Russia, and Latin America were included in an exhibition, Les Magiciens de la Terre, intended to correct the western focus of contemporary art by including the other 80% of the world’s artists. The expansion of Biennales and World Art Fairs, including the creation of the first Biennale in Asia, Beyond The Borders, held in 1995 at Gwangju, South Korea, further developed this promise, with artists residing and creating works on multiple sites at an international level.

Nomadism in art is associated with borderless freedom. The Nomadic Artist is engaged with historical, social, cultural, and political experiences, identities and economic issues. But the optimistic vision of Nomadism and deterritorialization was shattered with 9-11, as new restrictions transformed the way borders are crossed, inhibiting the idea of the borderless nomad.

Contemporary Nomad Artists, inheriting postmodern theory in the post 9-11 climate, continue to explore these evolving issues, adding other elements to the list of associations; delocalization, restriction of movements, wars,

\[1\] Kwon 1997, 100
marginalization, expats, tourism. They have been the subject of exhibitions and conferences with curators and artists exploring the evolving ideal of Nomadism in Art.

The project of Nomadic Art Net and Nomadic Views convey movement with their multiple locations. I define myself as a contemporary nomad and artist. I embody several states of the nomad including immigrant, citizen, tourist, resident and expat, with a change of status in each location where the stitching sessions took place.

In Nomadic Art Net and Nomadic Views, I translate these places and encounters as an apprentice ethnographer, absorbing knowledge and sharing mine with the participants. My practice extends through time, starting in 2007, and is a Nomadic Art Practice. The locations changed from my original plan and the time-frame has extended, with several changes and my own relocation. This has emphasized that large distances and long times are fundamental part of Nomadic journeys.
HISTORY OF NOMADIC ART PRACTICE

The earliest contemporary explorations of the presence of the artist in different locations and nomadism occurred in 1973 with works by Marcel Broodthaers, and in 1975, by Jan Ader. In his book-film, Voyage on the North Sea.\(^2\) Broodthaers presents a mix of 15 images of naval paintings from the 19th century, and naval photographs of the 1920s. The artist invited the viewers to follow his journey through time, and his narrative of history. He introduced the viewer to the notion of time as part of the art work. Jan Ader’s statement “the sea is the only free place,” invited the viewer to be witness to his performance. In Search of the Miraculous (1975) was filmed at the start of his journey on the Atlantic in a small boat, before his mysterious disappearance. These early practices operated from the artist’s intention of mobility and personal vision of poetic travel. The unfinished state of one of the practices (Ader’s) emphasizes a continuous journey with a possible return.

From these earlier pieces of the 70s, nomadic art practices have expanded to encompass a broader idea. It developed to include mobility of art practices, art works and world art fairs. Nomadic practices integrate multiple narratives of history, where ethnographer-artists further developed a complex artistic identity. Those artists can be socially or politically engaged, but eventually are becoming products of globalization.

In recent years, we have been moving away from the site-specific model of the 1980s forward a focus on the mobility of the art object.\(^3\) Susan Hapgood stated, “The once-popular term 'site-specific,' has come to mean 'movable under the

\(^2\) Video of Voyage on the North Sea  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQPKG1efWGq](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQPKG1efWGq)

\(^3\) Kwon 1997, 86
right circumstances,"~ shattering the dictum (to remove the work is to destroy the work.)\textsuperscript{4}.

Art institutions have asked permission to reproduce works, as they are costly to move or impossible to transport; they also commissioned artists. Faith Wilding's installation \textit{Crocheted Environment}, first seen in 1972 at the Woman house project in Los Angeles, was later recreated and presented under a different name, \textit{Womb Room}, in 1995 at the Bronx Museum, New York. "Audiences are now offered the "real" aesthetic experiences of site-specific copies"\textsuperscript{5}. Artists are keen on undoing the presumption of criticality associated with such principles as immobility, permanence, and unrepeatability. Rather than resisting mobilization, nomad artists are working and exhibiting in international scenes and exhibiting. They are attempting to reinvent site-specificity as a "nomadic practice"\textsuperscript{6} or "site-oriented" practices.\textsuperscript{7} By doing this they adapt to a new demand. They move their practice to different locations, recreating the work to fit the new location, or creating a location-specific piece.

Since 1895 with the creation of the Venice Biennale, the phenomenon of Biennalisation has been ongoing, as art events proliferated in all corners of the world such as Brazil, China, India and Australia. Curators are invited to showcase their ideas on a large scale, choosing from a pool of international emergent artists as well as the innovations of the established ones, staging a globalization in art. These represent the globalization of the discipline, with 60 art fairs active in the world today.\textsuperscript{8} Biennials and Triennials are proliferating as global art marketing venues, as nomad artists and curators interact, offering to the locals and the international collectors a display of new trends in the art world.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 97
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 98
\textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 97
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., 95
\textsuperscript{8}Silviera 2011,157
The most prolific artists go from one art fair to the next, becoming expected fixtures on display. Biennialisation shines a light on the host city, establishing it as a contemporary art world capital. We see it with recent comers such as the **Sharjah Biennial** in Dubai, which is growing in popularity in its fifth year and is pushing some artistic boundaries. Sales are thriving despite the political uncertainty this part of the world is experiencing. “Christie’s, the renowned art auctioneer, set several world auction records at their latest sale in Dubai. The majority of the buyers were from the Mena region however almost 40 per cent were international buyers. ‘[It is] a sign that Middle Eastern art is growing internationally, it's becoming global,’ Isabelle said.”

We have moved beyond individual artists’ unique ethnic styles as displayed in biennials and triennials, and into pieces representing divergent views from international pools of artists. Artists are more and more from complex backgrounds, mixing the cultures they crossed and experienced to become global artists practicing internationally. They might portray some political views that do not represent their identities, or respond to a location from the perspective of an outsider. The artist’s identities become complex and crossbreed as the locations of their practices evolve and the significance of the surrounding transforms the meaning of their work. Mobility seems to be the norm, prevailing above any one identity.

In the 1990s, Nomadic art practice developed to involve a social and political engagement of artists and interactions with active viewers into the 1990s. Performances, installations, social actions and conceptual arts dominated the art world’s production outside and inside the art institutions.

The intent of most of the nomadic practices in the 1990s was democratization of the art practice and the artist, away from an elitist audience. The artists migrated from the studio, the gallery, and the

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9 Baslony 2011
museum to the public as participants and viewers. They took unprepared audiences through action on everyday life. The process and intentions were social, economic, and political engagements. Reaching diverse audiences, the artists used public spaces, stores, the internet, or touristic sites to perform and use conceptual art, installation and land art.\footnote{Kwon 1997, 87} The public reaction of those theatrical stagings was spontaneous, with no artistic references balancing with the analysis of the art critics.

In the exhibition \textit{Traffic}, at the Contemporary museum of Bordeaux, France, curated by Nicolas Bourriaud in 1996, we started to see a broader view of nomadic art practices, where the artists provided an experience to active participants in a mutual setting, going out to reach new encounters. The process was thought of as a collaboration, and was meant to demystify the inaccessible, solitary artist and his practice. Jason Rhoades, a US based artist, persuaded the museum to give him 51\% of the money towards the cost of a brand new saloon car, and showed some photographs of his new purchase parked at different locations in and around L.A. Though the museum retains a majority share ownership, Rhoades kept the car at home for his own use and pleasure.

Many Nomadic art practices see history as being subjective, and only one of many possible narratives, as opposed to a single standard western view. The hegemony of this view is challenged with the emergence of collaborative art projects on the international level as well as by engaging with communities. \textit{Archival Impulse}\footnote{Foster 2004, 7}, by Hal Foster, explains the practice of artists working on history by collecting and recounting in their own way the history, using the site as a function in the process. The ethnographer artists described by Foster are using the field of history to create art, making connections between events that
are not necessarily linked, and calling on collective amnesia to tell a new narrative.\textsuperscript{12} The artists use history and the manipulation of mass culture as an “endless” resource to question the subjectivity of history. The artists invite the viewer to question their references, to look with a different point of view.

For \textit{Projekt Migration}, an Internet based foundation established in 2005, Christian Philipp Muller presented continuous work in the series, \textit{Illegal Crossing Borders}, which was started in 1993 for the Venice Biennale.\textsuperscript{13} The work consists of documented photos of him in an undetermined empty landscape. He is European, crossing European borders, which are not clearly defined. The narrative of the artist is essential. These pictures could be taken anywhere, and we have to take the word of the artist on their authenticity.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 21

\textsuperscript{13} Kölnischer Kunstverein 2002-2006
In *Memorial to 418 Palestinian villages*, 2001, Emily Jacir, a Palestinian artist successfully conveys her political and social engagement. Inviting people to embroider a refugee tent representing her ethnicity, she still reaches a broader international audience away from the political message. The art object, outside of this context and with time and distance, is read in its global function, of a refugee tent. They are used in many places around the world and are representative of fragile, illusory shelter from the elements and the fragile states of refugees.

In a solo exhibition at the Fuller Craft Museum in Brockton, MA in 2006, Linda Behar presented 26 postcard-sized, photorealistic embroideries. Each photograph was printed on the cloth to be stitched. As part of the work, Behar allowed the viewer to also experience the photographic work, by not stitching the
whole printed photograph. Linda Behar’s works fit the definition of poetic travel, since she captures the sense of places she visited. She allows the viewer to draw their own interpretation of the small view of the landscapes, by leaving some of the photography untouched. Postcards embody travel, tourism and mobility, issues touched on by the first nomadic art practice from the 1970s, since they identify with the nomad tourist.

The nomad artist moves from one commissioned art piece to the next, following a pattern of random possible projects in diverse international locations. Some nomad practices follow the same strategy as capitalist globalization: easy access to transportation, a diverse choice of art fairs, and residency to multiply marketing opportunities. The art market by nature is a product of capitalism, and artists depend on demand and go where the work is telling them to go. Most artists follow the patrons of the art as they have historically. This is why there are collections in museums, and this is how artists have been able to live from their works: through the support of private patrons as well as public institutions and government. Art is a luxury in all societies, and always the first thing to be cut from the budget in times of crisis. A few artists are on the fringe of this market, and decide their work is not for sale or to be recognized by the art institutions. They don’t live from their work, as opposed to those who try to make a living from their work by following the demand.

Nomadic Artists engage concerns outside of art theory and reflect on globalization, starting within art institutions and moving to larger ideas of environment and economy. Since the global crisis of 2008, downsizing of companies and relocation have been seen as a global problem. Even before the global crisis, industrial countries had lost much of their industrial work force to cheap labor in emergent countries, yet the demand of consumerism sustains progress. Many artists have been affected by the downsizing of opportunities as

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14. Weller 2007, 54
well as the momentary freeze of the art market. Now, three years later, many of the very privileged nomads with expendable wealth who avoided visibility during the period following the global financial crisis are starting to funnel money again into this very lucrative activity of acquiring art

Some nomadic art projects have not been affected by the global crisis, and continue to glorify consumerism and luxury. Zaha Hadid’s Mobile Art was conceived as a nomadic flexible structure traveling to several landmark countries in Europe, Asia and North America. Started in 2007 and in collaboration with Chanel, this project invited an international panel of artists to create pieces on the theme of the Chanel bag. They were free to interpret their work to be displayed in the mobile structure. It was donated by Chanel in April 2011 to the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris, signaling the end of its journey.

In a post 9-11 world in the middle of a global economic crisis, Nomadic practices have been the subject of many exhibitions under different appellations. Nicolas Bourriaud, in an interview for the Tate Triennial 2009, noted, “artists nowadays are starting from a globalized cultural state.” He further pursued this thought in his manifesto on Altermodern, describing today’s artist as “a traveler integrating

15 Mobile Art, Chanel, 2011
16 ibid.
17 Mortom 2009
past movements with layers of references.”18 This implied their identities as being hybrid, with a nomad practice embodying several movements and engagements.

18 Bourriaud 2009
Embroidery is defined in the dictionary as fancy stitching, which suggests beautification of materials. It is associated with domesticity, craftsmanship and women’s work.

The spread of cultures through cloth created a universal language. Along the Silk Road, cultures traded cloths and other goods, ideas and techniques. We can trace embroidery as far back as 2000 years.\textsuperscript{19} Textiles impacted nations and became the symbol of trade, naming the Silk Road. The sharing and exchange of cultural symbols in textiles dates from at least that time. The name Silk Road came from the vast amounts of silk and other merchandise such as spices, gold, precious metals and stones, ivory, exotic animals, and people that were traded back and forth between East and West. \textit{Secrets of the Silk Road}, 2011, a traveling exhibition in the US, presents the extent of human encounters and the far reach of these encounters. Excavation of burials since the 1970s highlights nomads as the key factor in the movement and exchange of technology and goods on the Silk Road. From pastoral nomads to nomads dislocated because of the ravage of wars, drought and diseases, they all brought with them cultural artifacts and modified the cultures they came in contact with along the way. “The extensive representation of nomadic legacies in Secrets of the Silk Road – in the form of practical as well as extraordinary wool textiles and artifacts in the exhibition span the 1,500-year period of the famous route, and, in the case of early mummy burial goods, pre-date the historical Silk Road.”\textsuperscript{20} The contact with other cultures influenced and brought new cloths, weaving techniques, design symbols or modified outfits seen in several far away cultures.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Mair 2011, 38
\textsuperscript{20} Sheng 2011, 33-34
\textsuperscript{21} Scholars date the Silk Road from China’s Han Dynasty in the late second century BC to about AD 1400
Embroidery is a domestic skill recognized for its craftsmanship and quality. It is a large part of luxury fashion as well as the global economy. It is also part of the traditional identity of many countries, expressed in domestic artifacts such as samplers or cloths. Because of its attachment to industry and tradition, it is often regarded as outside the high art world\textsuperscript{22}.

Textiles, even the most precious, are practical, foldable and easy to carry in luggage. The budget required is accessible to all traveler artists. Textiles have been used by artists such as Faith Ringgold, Sheila Hicks and Judy Chicago to push open the door of art institutions, and the portability of the medium allows them to present the same works on different occasions, making their practices and art objects adaptable and mobile.

Embroidery is today seen as two disciplines, craft and art. Artists may explore this double identity, suggesting that the two disciplines are not separated but complementary, because of the common language in use by all cultures and both disciplines. Embroidery as craft became one of the symbols of the 1970s hippie movement, a peaceful rejection of modern society, going back to nature and the earth. Today, crafts are mainstream commercial goods that people are gladly consuming, valuing them because they are handmade, unique, and close to home, in contrast to mass products from far away countries that globalization has created. Modern craft fairs are growing in size and number, and internet sites increase their exposure to consumers worldwide.\textsuperscript{23}

Artists are embracing their status as craftsmen and women and asserting their choice of being part of the Handmade Nation, DIY (Do it Yourself) movement, like Jenny Hart.\textsuperscript{24} In her work and business, the work of artists and illustrators as well

\textsuperscript{22} Levine 2008, 1

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 32

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 94
as her own embroidery designs are sold as patterns to hobbyists. This opened this realm to new sets of artwork to be embroidered instead of the perpetual choices of flowers and text that dominated in the market until then.\textsuperscript{25} Like many of the Handmade Nation artists, her practice was driven by contacts and relations with people. At craft fairs, the Handmade Nation artists have a direct contact with the customers purchasing their works which are made to be used in the domestic life of everyday people. The crafts are also affordable to the masses, in opposition to fine art. Some of these Artists are also exhibiting in galleries or museums worldwide, like Sabrina Gschwandtner,\textsuperscript{26} canceling the boundaries between craft and art.

Contemporary Artists have been using this concept in their practices. Sheila Hicks, with her international works, is one of the most recognized nomadic fiber artists. She reached out to diverse cultures and fields of work early in her life of travels. She learned processes of weaving and associated ideas in communication with local craftsmen and women. She has been commissioned for works to be integrated in buildings since the 1990s and is borderless in her nomadic art practice, with a base camp in France. Creating her personal Silk Road and trading weaving techniques based on her curiosity about the other worlds, she is the subject of many exhibitions worldwide.

Embroidery along with other "crafts" benefited in the last ten years from a certain increased recognition. This followed forty years of continuous work and effort by fiber artists and feminist art theorists. Myriam Shapiro in the 70s created "femmage," challenging the superiority of "fine" Art over Craft, and "celebrated the homemaking".\textsuperscript{27} Rozsika Parker's book\textsuperscript{28}, \textit{The subversive Stitch} relates the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Jenkins 2007
  \item \textsuperscript{26} Levine 2008, 26
  \item \textsuperscript{27} Rosser 1993, 64
  \item \textsuperscript{28} Parker 1984
\end{itemize}
history of embroidery and the construction of the feminine. We can finally appreciate the different layers of meanings of The Dinner Party, 1974-79, by Judy Chicago, which has been displayed permanently at the Brooklyn Museum since 2007. The work has not only become part of an alternative culture, but it also serves as a record of the artist’s victory over many challenges. She used embroidered place mats with the names of forgotten women contributors to World History, using the domesticity of a table setting and craft as metaphors. Artists like her are the reason Fiber Arts are in art schools, museums and Biennials, and presented as art history essentials along side painting and sculpture.

Important Fiber artists helped to establish fiber arts in the art world. Faith Ringgold and Judy Chicago used their works to overturn the primary cliché of the feminine-ness and domesticity of fiber art. They challenged for years the status of craft in the art world. These artists helped our generation of fiber artists, nomadic or settled, to continue pushing open the door of the art world.

Embroidery in today’s art world is seen in exhibitions such as Metissages, 2010, with artists and professional craftsmen and women collaborating in art pieces. In this exhibition the viewer can read on the labels and the catalogue the names of both artists and master craftsmen for each artwork. Other individual practices include mixing technology and embroidery, as in Linda Behar’s Landscape postcards translating each pixel into a cross stitch or a needlepoint. Some others use embroidery as a way to divert classical media such as painting or functional objects, appropriating their meaning, like Ghada Amer does with Le salon Courbé, 2007.

Nomadic Art Net and Nomadic Views use embroidery, taking both identities of craft and art to recognize our common heritage and the contribution by prior

29 Enright 2009
artists, who brought fiber into the contemporary art scene, from which my practice has benefited. I use embroidery because it links us universally and for its outsider attribute, making it closer to the relation between people and away from being a high art object; but it can also be read and appreciated for its craftsmanship.
NOMAD NARRATIVES AND THE PERSONAL

In this Journey I explores different states of Nomad identity, and looks at my Nomadic status and contemporary nomads. There are many immigration statuses that can be adopted when traveling throughout the world if one comes from the right background, economic status or nationality. The vast population of the world does not have this privilege; instead, these people belong to a different category of Nomad altogether. Nomadic Art Net and Views are created in light of this concept.

The very privileged nomad is a wealthy adventurer collecting houses or boats throughout the world, building a hybrid identity as a citizen of the world. Such travelers are business men not affected by their surroundings, and have no impact on the locals. As Chrystia Freeland writes in *The Rise of the New Global Elite*, they are defined by interests and activities rather than geography: “Beijing has a lot in common with New York, London, or Mumbai. You see the same people, you eat in the same restaurants, you stay in the same hotels. But most important, [they] are engaged as global citizens in crosscutting commercial, political, and social matters of common concern. [They] are much less place-based than they used to be.”  

30 Freeland 2011, 18
31 Ibid., 19

[They] are the wealthy nomads of today and call themselves “global nomads,” unaffected by the global crisis, living in an exclusive borderless world club with no regards for the sedentary or underclass nomads who cannot lift themselves from poverty and from immobility. They are also patrons of the art world, owning collections and sponsoring new art institutions.
Another contemporary nomad is the idealist nomad, who has typically been a young westerner able to favorably exchange currency in exotic places such as South America, Asia and Africa. With little money and owning a western passport, they cross borders with few formalities, in contrast to the many restrictions put on other less advantaged travelers. They want to experience the exotic life of the locals, adapting to their environment. Like ethnographers they photograph, collect artifacts, and study the people in order to narrate those encounters to their loved ones back home when they return. The idealist nomad comes and observes, but will not stay long.

These contemporary nomads are in sharp contrast to the vast majority of nomads in the world, whose movements are not always voluntary and who are many times driven by economic or hostile reasons for traveling. The underclass nomads challenge the boundaries of what is humanly possible to endure through a journey with no end. They mimic the Silk Road Caravans, with the most tragic and perilous journeys ending in death. They challenge western societies, as the gap of wealth between the two worlds widens, seeking a better life within. New laws do not stop this flux of nomads as wars and natural disaster drive their displacement.

As I study other contemporary nomadic situations I realize my position is quite enviable compared to the persecuted immigrants coming from the east of Europe, or from the lost colonies, trying to prove asylum. If they are Roma, Chechen, Iraqi, Afghan, Pakistani, or from the Maghreb or sub-Saharan Africa, they are restricted and denied entry. They are one type of outsider, waiting at the door but not allowed to enter.

Their means of travel is through what is called “migration merchants,” who smuggling them in precarious means of transports with dangerous conditions. This

32 Kyle 2001
flux of immigrants experience constant modifications of the laws in the countries they seek, to deter them from coming and staying; but for them it is a question of survival. The underlying reason for tighter immigration restrictions in many case is the large gap of cultures between the immigrants and the West, fueled by fear of Islamic terrorism. Recently and with the global economic crisis, started in the US at the end of 2008 and continuing to other countries, we saw also a fear of losing jobs associated with the image of newcomers as job thieves. The laws toward illegal immigrants are strengthening and becoming tougher than ever in the US, a land built of immigrants. They are targeting US borders with Mexico and Canada. Profiling on a race basis, in some states, is becoming acceptable.

Many illegals are running from places where the West is at war with their country of origin. They are easily recognizable, since they dress and look out of place. Citizens point them out for their otherness, afraid that they will overwhelm their way of life. The Far-Right political movements of all of the western countries are growing in popularity on nationalist agendas using this as a key element. A major reason for this hostile environment is the recent global crisis and unemployment rates above 13% in many western countries as well as international corporations exporting jobs to countries where labor is cheap to benefit from consumerism in the West.

Charter planes are regularly use to send back illegal nomads to their countries of origin. Those who are caught in judicial battles inhabit make-shift camps in a no man’s lands at the border of two countries. “The Jungle,” as it is called in Calais in the north of France, is a place where illegal immigrants wait, trying to sneak onto trucks destined for the United Kingdom, hoping the laws there on asylum are more lenient. Homi Bhabha has said, "The globe shrinks for those who own it; for the displaced or the dispossessed, the migrant or refugee, no distance is more awesome than the few feet across borders or frontiers.”^{33} Jens Haanings,

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^{33} Kwon 1997, 110
The Refugee Calendar, a 2002 photographic work presents the pending of asylum seekers in Finland.\textsuperscript{34}

Being of the right nationality has allowed me to travel freely, changing status from one location to the next as I expanded the Nomadic Art Net web. In Hawaii, I was a permanent resident alien; in Thailand, a tourist on a visa for 3 months; in Panamá, a temporary resident on my husband’s work visa; and in France, a citizen of the European Union, which allowed me to cross to Italy without justification. The formalities are painless for the one holding the right tool\textsuperscript{35}.

My family came to France as refugees when Algeria became independent in 1962. My father was a Harki, an Algerian who served in the French army. Harkis have a very special status in France as the indigenous men of Algeria who fought for the colonizer. There was no returning to Algeria for them, because under Boumedienne (the leader of the revolution and President), they risk the death penalty. Settling in France was a painful moment, rejected by the French and other communities as a reminder of the lost colonies, and seen as traitors by the other immigrants coming for economic reasons. I am of the first generation born in France, but also by roots a nomad from Sidi Slimane, Algeria. Arabs from nomadic tribes were settled and their result movement restricted by the new colonizer, France, about 200 years ago. This was a way to control the locals and grab more lands. This strategy, forced rooting of the population, is still very active and described in the work of Ahlam Shibli, Unrecognized, started in 2000, on the Bedouins in Israel.\textsuperscript{36} In many places this contemporary practice is modernization of what has been experienced by nomads everywhere, like the Front Polisario, an invisible war of territory between Nomads/ Saharawis, Algeria and Morocco, since the end of the 70s. In a few generations they will root and will be

\textsuperscript{34} Bishop 2006, 184
\textsuperscript{35} Kwon 1997, 109
\textsuperscript{36} Demos 2008
assimilated as were nomads in other places. *Unrecognized* illustrates the cycle of the journey my family took before me, from nomads to settlers then to another nomad state in a foreign land.

I have changed status from a citizen, to immigrant in the US for personal reasons, to tourist, to expatriate. I experienced changes of social status in those states, from underclass nomad when my parents first moved to France, to middle class citizen after many years of improvement, to today, as one of the privileged nomads, able to travel for leisure as a tourist or as an expat. This creates differing visions of outsider and otherness. Nomadic Art Net and Nomadic Views are created in the context of being a hybrid nomad, as a resident alien, a tourist, an expat, a citizen. I retraced my roots, comparing the origin of mobility to that of other contemporary nomads, to situate my practice. I embody different states of nomad, identifying changes in my point of views in each of those locations. I experience the places where I am in the present, knowing I will not stay for long. As a Nomad artist as well I try to capture those identities as concept.
NOMADIC ART NET AND VIEWS

The trade of textiles as commodities, and the sharing of new techniques introduced from one culture to another, dates to at least the time of the Silk Road, with embroidery being used by many cultures. It has been mostly considered a craft practice, yet today it is a contemporary art, being mobile, versatile, flexible, and universally speaking to and connecting the viewers, collaborators, artist and artisans visually and metaphorically.

Mobility and practicality of the craft are tools integrated in my work using the basic concept of fibers from the original Silk Road. Nomadic Art Net and Nomadic Views follow this example as a way to work and move around with an exhibition kit contained in luggage on my journey. Embroidery is used in everyday life in all the places I relocated this practice, and is seen as accessible.

Nomadic Art Net explores the identities of contemporary Nomads as they are most prevalent today and as they are known under other definitions; travelers, illegals, immigrants, expats, refugees, tourists, business men and potential dangers. In the typical view of outsiders, as noted above, we consider the outsider to be an immigrant coming to a new country, who does not fit in. My experience has been both of being an outsider to the economically struggling masses of the countries that I have visited, while also seeing those same struggling masses as the outsiders, as observed from my gated, tower apartment or hotel. The concept of Nomadic Art Net echoes the fiber collaborative practices of artists such as Emily Jacir, *Memorial to 418 Palestinian villages*, 2001, presented at the Institut du Monde Arabe, Paris, France, in the summer of 2009. She invited Palestinians like her to participate in her process by embroidering a

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Pels 1999, 63-86

Khalili 2010
refugee tent. Refugee camps with fragile shelters are becoming the normality for all the wrong reasons. They are in use in Haiti, Pakistan, and Sudan, and are in recent years becoming permanent houses for most of the refugees.

The presentation of Nomadic Art Net at the 2009 Arts and Society Conference during the Venice Biennale was a reflection on transnationalism. The conference intended to invite practitioners, historians and art critics to examine ideas that connect the arts to their contexts in the world. It focused on art practices that may be situated within the context of international exhibitions, festivals and biennials which are engaged with the transnational production of art and its global distribution networks. Nomadic Art Net is representative and functions as a nomadic art practice. It was introduced as such and was followed by a stitching session and discussion with the active viewers.

1 Embodying intimacy

Intimacy is a feeling and can be described as an attachment to a person or thing that allows you to remain tethered to the world. Notions of intimacy inform artistic practices and can take many aspects including, but not limited to, relationships between people, people and things, creator and object, individual and environment, private and public. Intimacy implies familiarity, proximity, closeness, tenderness, and attachment. Artistic practices described by Grant Kester use the concept of empathy to invite the audience into non-hierarchal conversation pieces.\textsuperscript{39}

In the art world, exhibitions have been exploring the translation of intimacy in material and conceptual terms. One such exhibition was \textit{Intimacy}, Chicago 2011. The exhibition statement claims: “Scale, execution, and the innate
qualities of chosen materials evoke a visceral response and solicit a contemplative pause. The contexts of the works convey social, personal, environmental, humorous, political, or even disturbing situations. These settings enable the pieces to provide new and sometimes unexpected ways of thinking about and experiencing intimacy.\textsuperscript{40}

From the perspective of interactive artworks\textsuperscript{41}, it is interesting to explore how we create intimacy with objects and to each other. It begins when the viewer/participant enters into contact with the art object and is guided by the artist/mediator as he starts to be in control of the tools to be used in the interactive artwork. As an image is created, it becomes part of the art object community and is communicated to the other participants. In sharing this experience, an emotional attachment to the piece is created, as well as to the other participants and artist.

\textbf{Il Nomadic Art Net}

Nomadic Art Net consists of two US Army surplus mosquito-net tents, two cots, two sheets, tent poles to support structures which disassemble easily to fit into a traveling bag, and embroidery materials such as various colored threads, needles, hoops, and other implements for the embroidery sessions. A laptop with the video installation is also carried, while the video projector is obtained at the site.

The stitching sessions consist of an invitation to embroider on a mosquito-net tent with me. I provide all the materials with no prior experience needed. During the session the participants converse with each other at the same time they are

\textsuperscript{40} Green 2011

\textsuperscript{41} Fels 2000, 2
stitching. I give a brief introduction of the embroideries by the prior artists. The voices are recorded, documenting the session and to be mixed with the prior recordings.

Embroidery is a way to learn from the collaborators I encountered during the sessions of Nomadic Art Net. I became sometimes the student, and used this as a way to demystify embroideries’ delicate embellishments that one needs to master. Being a novice, I put the participants at ease.

In Nomadic Art Net, I began to see intimacy forming between the net and the participants during the action of embroidering, which requires concentration on the handwork, letting the other senses open and relax. The fact that the session brings together different participants in a common action of embellishment of the net which will continue moving onto future sessions, gives a sense of mutual aptitude of this encounter. Both skilled and unskilled participants are equal contributors to the work. Stitching is also a universal language recognized by all, and less intimidating, because of the slow nature of the activity, the quality of the previously done work, and the delicate instruments that are utilized, than other classical mediums.

With each stitching session of Nomadic Art Net, consisting of people I met and invited to sit and embroider with me, my awareness of contemporary Nomad expanded. My initial sense was in Hawaii, where the nomads took the form of students and other immigrants from the mainland US, China, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Tonga and Samoa. They were in transit to get a diploma and move back to their home countries or perhaps settle in the US. There were also people who lived in Hawaii from various backgrounds, being either first or second generation immigrants to Hawaii for work, personal choices, or military relocation. The embroideries that were done in Hawaii are various in style and contain symbolic interpretations of stars and the sun, little compositions of colored circles that are filled or contoured, flowers, a tattoo motif, nature, a
musical instrument and abstract thoughts. They are inspired by what they like in life.

In Thailand, the women at the massage parlor were regularly outside embroidering or knitting during the day time. Jim Thompson’s house is the symbol of the reviving of the Muslim minority silk weaving tradition in that country as well. In Panama, the Embera use needles to build intricate baskets. The locals and tourists are familiar with the Kuna’s Molas as well the embroidered Polleras which are precious belongings in the Panamanian family. In France and Italy, Haute Couture is a strong part of the lifestyle and luxury economy. The USA offers a mix of craft traditions in many areas which are a precursor to contemporary fiber art practices in the mainstream Art World. The USA is a place with a strong tradition of craft culture such as quilting, knitting, crocheting, and tatting, which continues developing today into a movement asserting and identifying itself as the “craft nation.” As all recognize the traditional heritage of embroidery, the familiarity of it takes precedence and invites the participant into contributing to this Nomadic art piece. A relational intimacy occurs with the mediator, and between the participants themselves, who are closer in common conversation about the place of embroidery in their lives, their memory, and the history of their families.

The stitching sessions took place in an art university and art conference, two protected educational environments which by themselves are impersonal yet allowed a space for the experience. It happened on a camping trip with familiar relations, in a massage parlor among strangers, in a hospital room and in different houses I have been with new encounters. The intimate surrounding is emphasized by people sitting in an enclosed circle around the net, because the participants stitch at the same time. This situation of touchable proximity between the contributors was repeated in all the sessions and places. The artist provides

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42 Hirons 2011
the opportunity for an intimate moment. Most lose track of time since it is slowed from our daily lives, concentrating on the embroidery and sharing a conversation.

As my practice took me to Thailand where I was but a guest, residing in the tourist district of Bangkok for seven weeks, my experience changed while my status changed. I no longer had a large familiar group of people to interact with, and instead sought out a different group of people who would have the time and inclination to participate.

On the street I was staying, there was a neighborhood massage parlor where the women spent long hours waiting for customers, and passed the time knitting and embroidering during the day in front of shop. The massage parlors are part of the large touristic economy Thailand is famous for, and one of the signs of sex tourism there. The women I saw were also nomads, but for economic reasons, mostly staying within their home country while migrating for opportunities. They came from poor areas, the north and north-east, as well as Cambodia, to seek a better life for themselves and their families. I used business cards in the Thai language to explain my work, presenting the embroidered Nomadic Art Net as an invitation to contribute.

The stitching session changed with the very limited English that was spoken; we used the shop owner as translator and our hands for communication while the ladies spoke Thai amongst themselves. The embroidery motifs were flowers like tulips, a house, and the first time that someone embroidered words.

In France I was with my people, most of whom are French and Algerian. The sessions took place in a house and in a hospital bedroom. I was in a familiar surrounding with people I have known my whole life. Nomadic Art Net speaks to us because of our roots and the reason we came or were born there. We are immigrants, plus the first and second generation born in France. My parents and their generation were nomads, forced to flee the country where they were born.
for political reasons and war; refugees. Over the centuries this has been one of the major reasons for people to become nomads. Most of the participants of the sessions were women, with a few children and one man of the family. We spoke Arabic and some French in the sessions and had our traditional tea. The embroideries were flowers, geometrical stitching, the first business logo, a mathematical, symbol and the first religious/superstitious sign, a protective eye to keep me safe during my journey.

In Panama, some of the participants were from the city and others from parts of the country, having come to the city to lift themselves from poverty and other dangers. They included Embera from Darien, an area close to Colombia with the paramilitary FARC in the jungle, Kuna from Kuna Yala, an autonomous territory on the Caribbean, and other mixed race Panamanians whose forefathers migrated to Panama for economic reasons, including the canal. The Embera and Kuna are indigenous to Panama and, as in Thailand, are nomads in their own lands for economic opportunities offered in Panama City.

The other people contributing were mostly privileged expat nomads, enjoying the comfort of affordable living conditions until their next assignment to another country. They came with their governments, one of the multinationals, working for the United Nations, business ventures, or as retirees. The countries they came from are: Morocco, Mexico, Tunisia, Dominican Republic, Haiti, France, Argentina, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Congo, Mauritius Islands, Colombia, Peru, Japan, The United States, Taiwan, Spain, Cuba, Ireland, Latvia, Belgium and Switzerland. The embroidery ranged from flowers, to geometric shapes, my name, a message of love, religious blessings from Christian to voodoo, reference to their place of origin, a house, a flag, and kites. A few started to respond to embroidery they noticed on the tent, stitching another version.

In Italy I was a tourist and nomad artist, and it was also the place where the collaborators were all foreign to Italy; they came because of the Art conference.
They were nomadic artists and scholarly globe-trotters from Australia, Bulgaria, and the United States. The embroidery included symbols of their country of origin, such as a bread stamp from Bulgaria and aboriginal symbols.

After the first sessions and missteps, I developed a strategy for the Nomadic Art Net by having a convivial simple introduction of the work. I stopped using the blog introduction since the site was not visited and no one gave me their information and feedback through it. I started to take the email of the contributors to send them pictures of our sessions and the tent and the embroidery they made.

Nomadic Art Net is the focus of the first conversation and introduced to the group. The concept of nomadism is explained which includes identity, places, people and trade. I retraced the prior encounters and the possible journeys in the future. I explain the function of this piece as a fiber art piece to be exhibited following stops and sessions in this unfinished journey. We discuss the status of this art piece in term of authorship and the fact that the artist is one of the equal collaborators, the mediator and keeper of the piece, owned in this contribution by them as well.

The active viewers are made comfortable, seated in a circle around the piece to stitch together. They are introduced to the tools, thread, the recording equipment and the camera to document the session and to be part of a projection on the second net for the exhibition of Nomadic Art Net and Nomadic Views. They quickly become unaware of the recording previously mentioned and enter in this slow motion practice, intimately linked to the embroidery they are creating, and conversing and sometimes laughing in this protected environment we created. The mediator explains the reason for mixing the voices and photographed handworks. The respect and protection of privacy of the encounter’s identity is the most important.
Presenting everyone’s picture, making them public in foreign lands, means we lose control of our anonymity, which is a concern to many people in the internet age. Our image and personal information is still highly prized by many. The thought of not knowing what will happen to their identity in the context of an art show can intimidate and create worries. It is a mission of trust and respect. Presenting an example of the mixing of inaudible murmurs as well as the slide show of handworks without faces is a way to invite the participants into the collaboration process with its underlying intimate private moments.

The separation of the intimate relationship which forms after the session takes place, is critical to the formation of long distance relationships, as the participants embodied in Nomadic Art Net become part of their journey. They are presented in the exhibition through their mark left in our encounter.

Nomadic Art Net is a relational piece with a sense of social responsibility, adhering to the practice of some of the participatory practices describe by Claire Bishop and yet closer to the ideal view of Grant Kester. The purpose of this work is not to shock, but to converse and collaborate with the local population, bringing the practice to a global communication. This work uses conviviality instead of the shocking tendency of some contemporary art practices. It demystifies the artist as someone with particular attributes. The active viewer is on equal ground with the artist in the art process and can see the results of the process in the installed piece at the end of the session and with pictures sent to them. The art object, created and standing alone, away from the process, has a function in a gallery setting. The viewer in a gallery, away from the session, becomes the outsider, since he did not collaborate; he only views the product of the collaborations. The viewer embodies the original gaze with a distant relation, away from the intimate initial purpose.
Through the process of making Nomadic Art Net, relations to the art work are created. The first is the viewer becoming the participant, as he is introduced to the other embroideries by the artist/mediator, and by interacting with the artwork. The second is through the control of the tools, the needles and hoops, after a short period of practice. The third is the image the participant creates, becoming part of the art object and linking them emotionally to Nomadic Art Net. The fourth occurs during the session, through the relationship built with other participants in a shared task.

In Nomadic Art Net, we embroider a military net, diverting it from its function as a military object of one country at war with others. The work begins in the US, in Hawaii during the wars against Islamic terrorism. The two conflicts, Afghanistan and Iraq, that the US is involved in are the longest since the Vietnam war and the most costly to date. I purchased the net in an army surplus store. As the art work moves locations to countries not involved in these conflicts, such as Thailand or Panama, it loses its context. The original intention of highlighting the imperialism of the latest wars in third world, foreign countries disappears in a different context. My first intention, which was political engagement, gets lost in the larger context, and becomes irrelevant in my current nomadic practice.

In Thailand and in Panama war seems far away and doesn’t occupy mainstream media. The distance echoes what used to be before the wars in Europe and the US, when war was not touching us. This change of environment pushes my pieces to evolve into a more global intention to look for interrelations and nomadism.

The Net is a temporary shelter and offers little protection to the elements. It embodies me as a nomad, temporary, exposed, and the precariousness of this state. The sessions are human contact where we engage and exchange cultures and ideas. Marks are left from the settled and contemporary nomads I
III Nomadic Views

As with the artist of the Handmade Nation, embroidery started to be part of my practice with this body of work. My journey in embroidery started with this body of work as a way to learn and explore this traditional medium, creating my own style. I have been self-teaching in Nomadic Views, embroidering with a few attempts to mix cross stitching and basic stitching in an anarchy dictated by the rendered view from my windows. Looking out the window in our domicile and taking time to briefly pause in front of it during the day, I play with colored threads and needles like paint brushes, using rapidity, spontaneity and instinct to make quick rows, balancing in more carefully executed areas.

Nomadic Views consists of five window screens in aluminum frames, embroidered with a range of views. The views are my visions from the places the Art Net stitching sessions took place, which are internally filtered and embroidered. They portray my exposure to elements at the different locations, living for a time as a nomad and wondering what gives a sense of place and defines home. In each of the stitching session locations, I explored my identity in the world as my nomadic status changed from one place to the next, and I experimented with my spatial ability to adapt to new surroundings. The choice of media used for the project is part of the concept of mobility for the contemporary nomad, taking only what is allowed to be carried by plane.

Nomadic Views documents the mobility of the artist during Nomadic Art Net sessions with each of the pieces being visions of a location in the different countries and continents where I stayed. Nomadic Views presents different
filtered geographical places, exploring the idea of sense of space and place and how we perceive and understand the world locally and globally. This follows Yi-Fu Tuan’s definition of Place, associated with security, stability, and pause, and Space as freedom, movement, openness and abstraction. These two notions question the common behavior in the settled and the Nomad. While one is in place, the other moves from space to place, since the two are interconnected.

Both the settled person and the nomad rely on spatial ability to navigate space. Spatial ability was the subject of a study by Warner Brown in the maze experiment on spatial ability in unfamiliar surrounding spaces. He pointed that we develop a tactic of movement and learn by repetitive trials until we have acquired a space mentally; the space then becomes familiar. In a large city we rely on maps and landmarks to situate the directions and as indispensable tools to do this experimenting.

Becoming familiar with a place gives us a feeling of security, a shelter where we can rest and heal when we are sick or be protected from the environment. We identify the landmarks as we integrate into its culture, learning its geography and history. We organize it to give meaning to it. We become intimate with the place, we build attachment to people. It is a motherland, a hometown, a neighborhood; we create memories, happy or sad. It is also where we connect with other people. This gives the place an identity as a permanent and stable environment; ultimately it is immobile in time.

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43 Tuan 1977, 3
44 Ibid., 70
45 Ibid., 140
46 Ibid., 141
47 Ibid., 180
We get a sense of openness when we look at the immensity of a city or the horizon from a plane or from the shore out to sea. It embodies freedom of movement, in contrast with boundaries of place. Large cities are seen as infinite and open, since we can only see part of it from a standing point. In them we are limited to one space and crowded by its construction. We can appreciate its infinity only from a distance; from an airplane, or driving to it from a great distance. It is impossible to grasp it all: the streets, neighborhoods and people. Cities can be associated with feelings of anonymity and loneliness. They are often the subject of studies in philosophy, literature or art. We learn to navigate this large space using our spatial ability, piece by piece we are able to organize it mentally and navigate it with ease.

Repetitive exposures to the same view starts to create an automatism of deletion, as our brain can process only a few elements our eyes are seeing. “What draws our attention, in many cases is change. Our senses are finely attuned to change. Stationary or unchanging objects become part of the scenery and are mostly unseen.” Memories and feelings play a part in how our brain selects what stays and what goes.

In Nomadic Views, the canvas, a domestic window screen mounted on an aluminum frame, becomes the substrate of the filtered views by the artist. Using repetitive exposures, my notes, and the memories of each view, I embroidered the window screens. The window screen is a domestic artifact, disregarded and forgotten by the people who always knew them. The screen’s function is to filter pests but it also accomplishes an unnoticed other function by filtering the outside view. The aluminum frames are considered a displeasing necessary object with which we learn to live. Transporting them to a gallery

48 Pines 1997

49 Tuan 1977, 148
setting as an embroiderer embellished artifact gives the viewer another perspective, outside of its original function.

I experienced screens on the windows for the first time when I settled in Hawaii, which is also where I started this nomadic art practice. They became familiar, but I continued to notice them since many of the places I travel in my journey do not have them. France and Hawaii are the most familiar of the places included in my pieces because I have been there for a longer time and settled and rooted. I use tactical spatial ability to explore the other places such as Panama and Thailand and both approaches for Italy since I had been there before visiting friends and was somewhat familiar.

Superimposing the window screen over the view, I stitch what stayed with me and avoid the elements my internal filter deletes. For Hawaii and Panama the actual view was there while I was embroidering. I also used the life size photo format to compare what my eyes were seeing in the real view and the photo view. This helped on the other projects. The longer I stay in a place like Panama today, the more I am aware of the place in full spectrum, as explained above, since I am able to decode the language, the city and I become street smart. I can also analyze the political climate. I am able to do that by encounters with the population and engaging in the dialogue about their place.

When in a gallery setting, shadows of the threads on the wall become an essential part of the piece when displayed. The screens are pulled away approximately two inches from the wall using construction nails to create shadows with the light. Maps of each location are printed on the wall, prior to the screen being installed, and are in a light gray color. They appear partially to the viewers in some open areas with no embroidered elements. The maps are superimposed by the threads and the casted shadows giving to the viewer multiple layers of reading, a sense of location, and place from my nomadic point of view.
Honolulu, Hawaii

I started this piece with the first session in Hawaii in 2007. It is very abstract in its appearance as the jalousie panels ruptured and occupied the screened view. This type of window is a landmark style in Hawaii. Hawaii is one of the most expensive places to live in the US and badly hit by the crisis. It is also where one of my family members settled, and the reason I moved to the US in 1994, meeting my husband.

The crowded neighborhoods and Ohana housing are some of the most difficult things to get used to because the crowding contrasts with the large amount of nature that can be seen from the house. Privacy is almost impossible when you can hear the sneezing neighbor inside his house. This creates an automatism of deletion of this multitude. I learned to look the other way, to create a sense of openness in this limited place. I am a resident alien in this place, creating attachment to people and identifying with it.
The color green is very dominant in the mountain across the valley that is visible from the kitchen window of the house. The house is located in what is considered a working class area of Honolulu. I embroider, avoiding looking at the houses in the very front plane as a way to not invade the privacy of my closest neighbors. In search of a less crowded environment, I directed my gaze to the distant greenery in the other valley. The big construction boom already happened and is over, and like the rest of the world, Hawaii is waiting for the end of the recession. For this the reason we moved to Panama.

I embroidered my view integrating the jalousie as it modified the experience by slicing it. I used small lines of stitching of several shades of green with cross stitching to present nature. Some of the houses, in close proximity, are sketched to signify their existence. Even when filtered, the neighbors’ houses are part of the composition with several lines of embroidery to signify the annoyance.

Moving to a larger format, the visible and outlined elements are also signifying larger space in the proximity where the negative space is more present in the composition and the urbanization more anonymous or distant.
Bangkok, Thailand

This is the only view with a crane, from a place where the boom and collapse of construction seems to follow in cycles. It is in the dominant colors of pinkish, gray, black, blue and green. It is a very futuristic type of place, where the construction gives a sense of claustrophobia while navigating the small crowded streets. I tried to diligently learn about this future home during my time in Bangkok, yet the tourist point of view took over since the atmosphere was very foreign with unidentifiable languages and symbols. The process of spatial ability in this case was limited, since I felt lost and grabbed only a superficial sense of the space. Bangkok is a very colorful city booming with hotel projects. The building seems to go as much vertically as horizontally. Those buildings contrast with the teak house of Jim Thompson, inviting the guest to a calm and tranquil ambiance, creating a sense of shelter.

The views embroidered are malls, offices and famous hotels and flags. In the distance are some empty shell buildings characterizing Bangkok’s cycles of construction and crisis. A few small green spaces are still standing, and see
heavy traffic from locals as much as tourists, since they are the last few open spaces left. The very touristy area where I was staying was not affected by the wave of protests by the Thai population started during this time. It was carefully kept away from Thailand’s touristic industry the country depends on.

I use various techniques on this piece such as straight lines of threads, long and short, to present urbanization. I used free random stitching for nature and a smaller stitching technique to present the distant habitations I don’t see. Yet in this place it is almost invisible eaten by this megapolis.
Chelles, France

Detail embroidery of Allée Florence

The global crisis touches everyone and one out of four young adults, many of whom are minorities, cannot find jobs for years to come. It is not the first time France is hit by a crisis and as usual minorities are blamed for the lack of jobs. It is regularly documented in the media.

My parents decided to move away from the cultural ghetto soon after their arrival in France. They saw in the projects future problems in this crowded melting pot mixing with poverty. The view of Chelles, my hometown, is from the house where I grew. It is from what was my bedroom at one time, and the one I occupy when I visit. It is toward a park built around enormous electrical towers. I forgot they were even there before. After repetitive returns I rediscovered them, and they are in the view as much as the green of nature and the fruit tree.

This piece is charged with memories and analyzes how space is organized in a place where I was rooted. Suburban life in France is built with essential needs to
be accessed by short walking distances. There are small centric neighborhoods, with a school, a bakery, a small grocery shop, a doctors office, a Pharmacy and a large green park. This creates a sense of community and friendliness in the common park where all go to play or walk through to attend their needs. Parks or large green lots surround the middle class housing developments. They are a key factor in the choice for the family oriented people who can afford to buy there.

The trees have been pruned to prepare for cherry season and a hot summer with shade. This neighborhood is frozen in time in my memory and it is where I feel at home. The familiar faces give it its identity. I experience all senses described by Yi Fu Tuan, pause, immobility, security, intimacy, stability. For the moment it is a place deeply rooted in my past and where I felt trapped when I settled too long, since it anchors me. Nomadism has been part of me for years, and I still need to continue this unfinished journey.

The embroidery in this piece is random for nature with lines to present the tree engraved in my memory and still here imposing as the major element in this composition and what I pay attention to on a regular basis. I let nature guide the random stitching using spontaneous strokes of a painter. Only few elements of urbanization are present, such as the two electrical towers, red and black, and some roofs, but all are absorbed by nature. The negative space in this case occupies a large part of the composition as many elements are not seen at all in these familiar surroundings.
Panamá City, Panamá

Panama has been the antithesis of global crisis. Construction is everywhere, with many people and businesses relocating there, from Africa, South America, Asia, the US and Europe. This is home at the moment. Panama is benefiting from the emerging South American economy and the expansion of the Panama Canal, promising a great future and a booming economy with future hardships for the US ports and rail systems.

Immigration, legal and illegal, makes this country a prime destination for migrant workers, from South America, Central America, the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia and Africa. It becomes a land of opportunity where cheap labor in construction or domestic service are increasingly available and affordable. I am in this place as an expat and one of the privileged nomads. The view from where I live is in the rich neighborhood. I see the boats waiting to transit the Canal and the “exclusive” Union Club of Paitilla where Panama’s old money congregates.

I embroidered the two landmarks of Panama’s wealthy economic success in this time of global crisis. It designates my location and state as a privileged nomad. Views to the bay are prime real estate. What the viewer does not see is the gap between the local cost of living and the large wealth of the privileged driving the
cost of living to dangerous heights, bringing protests to the streets, which are kept away from the protected neighborhoods.

The embroidery techniques here are random stitching of green and outlining or sketching of the urbanization. Visible buildings embroidered are threads of color juxtaposing as my eyes look toward the distant boats in gray shade impossible to distinguish and waiting to enter the Canal. The negative space enters in the composition in different areas. It is present in place of the ocean and the sky and in my immediate view as my balcony glass becomes invisible in this open view.

Venice, Italy

The spectacular city of Venice, as I arrive by vaporetto, invites to romance. This city is charged with history and is the prime honeymoon place in the world. It is also Europe’s pride. Construction is minimal, in order to not damage this tourist economic machine and one of the most important Biennials in the Art world. We cross more tourists than locals here during the summer, yet if you are away from the tourist landmarks and art exhibitions, you can often walk in empty streets since the town is deserted by the locals. I had a sense of place there since it was a return to a familiar location for me with attachments and memories. It was
also my first occasion to present Nomadic Art Net at a conference of artists and thinkers as well as attending the Venice Biennale.

Venice seems to have stopped in time and shows no sign of crisis from the tourist point of view. Most of the working middle class relocated to the suburbs, as did my friends. I am a tourist and nomad artist in this place. The reason I came was to present my work on transnationalism with Art and Societies. I use this time to learn about other art practices in the conference as well as at the Biennale. I embroider the view of the colorful roofs since my attention went toward them and one of Venice’s landmarks, San Giorgio Maggiore Basilica. I see across a few windows, most unopened because of the heat or because they are habitations deserted by the locals.

This embroidery is the most open in its negative space since the large gray walls disappeared except for some discolorations or strong differences of shade. The sky is open, designating my quest for infinity, and above the area where my attention was drawn. The roof and tower are in different shades of orange and light brown. I embroidered using multiple shades of the same color making straight and small diagonals lines. The elements embroidered are the most detailed and the closest of trying to render embroidery in the style of craft. The negative space becomes the essential element of the composition to install the structure.

Experience of place comes through senses and feelings as a determined human behavior. It is translated and captured in this art practice, like Linda Behar who is able to translate her sense of place in her work. Nomadic Views tries to capture, using the universal language of embroidery, and communicate what words cannot fully describe, my feeling of each of those places.50

50 Tuan 1977, 148
In Nomadic Views, I embroidered memories and direct exposure as I try to grasp the sense of each place. The embroidered window screens are displayed in an art gallery, creating a distance and a representation of the artist’s intention. Distance occurs to the artist and the viewer away from the process. Sense of place is also associated with a way to control and organize space using our spatial ability. The places in this other context, of gallery setting, enter another set of interpretations through the gaze of the viewers where the artist has no control.
INSTALLATION

Nomadic Art Net and Views were presented at the Commons Gallery at the University of Hawai‘i Manoa. The Gallery was divided into two rooms: the first one presented the five Views and Nomadic Art Net I (plate II). The second room was a similar net display with Nomadic Art Net II (plate IV). This Net is bare and serve as a tool to invite viewers to see the handworks of Nomadic Art Net I. The projection of the Handworks as document of the past sessions is presented in an oval shape to refer to the hoops we use during the sessions. This video was simultaneously visible on the cot covered with a white sheet and on one side of the net. In a dark environment, I invite the viewers to witness past sessions and hear the mixed sound inside Nomadic Art Net II (plate IV). To continue the Journey of Nomadic Art Net, a stitching session was offered in the gallery with ten participants leaving new marks into Nomadic Art Net.

The exhibition opened in November 6, 2011, on a Sunday at the same time as other events which brought a diverse amount of viewers. The comments on Nomadic Views were interesting as many never seen anything like this before, and as far as I know the work is unique: embroidering views on window screens have not been seen before. The idea of seeing all the places I have been since 2007 was dismaying and inspiring to visitors as they have been in Hawaii during this time and wish they too could follow a journey

Nomadic Art Net I, was in the center of the first room and attracted the eyes of the passersby as they entered to have a closer look. When on site, I was able to retell the stories of the embroiderings left from the previous encounters I met during this journey. Nomadic Art Net II felt separated from the other part of the exhibition as the room was dark. This piece would have benefited from a wall text introducing it with the list of the countries those handwork collaborators are from.
The slide show oval projection was presented first in a small format with no transition, but in a later date was seen with a larger format oval projection to give a better viewing and fill the room. The transition added fluidity to the experience. To minimize a visible structure for both Nomadic Art Net I and II, they were hung with invisible lines from the ceiling, using small tent poles in strategical places to hold the structure. This gave an impression of a floating light structure. This way of presenting the two tents is a good strategy I can take to the next exhibition, and can be modified so the tent can to be seen elevated above the cots or slightly touching the ground, as they were in this presentation.

The installation process was part of a common effort and discussions with my committee on how to bring layers of reading to the viewers. We decided to present maps behind the five Views, using very subtle color, and in only in one limited area of each piece. Using serigraphy, we printed maps behind each of the Views in an area of the screen clear of major embroidering, to avoid competition between the map and the shadows of the threads. The result was a definite success as the viewers appreciated the three layers of reading: first the embroidering on the window screen, then the shadows the thread cast on the wall, and finally the map on the wall behind.
The maps, which are of the actual locations of the views, were found on diverse sites such as Mapquest or Google Maps. They give a feel of the character and arrangement of the locations. For instance in Bangkok, with its straight, almost vertical, roads crossing an almost horizontal larger avenue you can see how this was developed from rice patties and foot paths which grew over time. In the Honolulu area there are more dense neighborhoods with large roads connecting. The maps give to the viewer a sense of spacial ability of the locations.

A few people who were part of the first embroideries on Nomadic Art Net were able to visit the show. Their reactions were satisfactory, showing that they understood well of what was discussed and planned. They were able to envision the dimension of the encounter from other places visited. They could appreciate the hand dialogue they observed with responses to their marks by other people they only know through me, when they view the Net and the documented video.

During the Stitching session we were able to connect with each other in a meditative state as the passersby observed us. The participants were from the University and visitors to the art department. A group of children and teachers
from Loveland Academy came to participate and be part of this journey. The marks left are a boat, a dreamcatcher, a dog, a flag, a heart, a wave, a tree, a recycling trash map, a word. As in the previous sessions, the experience was rich in conversation and enrichment. The PVC structure was used during the first presentation of Nomadic Art Net in Italy and became the mobile structure we used during the stitching session at the gallery.

This exhibition has been successful. It permitted me to test the reaction of the viewers as well as serving as a laboratory exploration of what could be added to the next exhibition as this body of work will pursue is nomadic journey in December. The cards introducing the session in the various language were left at the doorway for visitors and participants to take, and might renew interest on the blog as well.
CONCLUSION

Contemporary life makes us transit from one location to the next and from one state to another. The net and window screens provide illusions of shelter while really not offering much protection. They invite us to reflect on contemporary nomadism.

Nomadic Art Net and Nomadic Views translate many aspects of nomadic practices. I add narratives to mine with new encounters. It is situated in the present and linked to past journeys. Nomadic Views is the silent witness, translating my sense of place from those locations in this continuous journey. The maps are situating those far away distances I had covered completing the sense of displacement.

As viewers respond positively to this work in the gallery setting, I am encouraged to continue presenting them in other places. I was able to present this exhibition via Skype to people who participated on Nomadic Art Net in France and in Panama. Being able to share with them from a distance was always one of the objectives of this nomadic practice. I am able to reach and keep the collaborators informed of the progress, and will continue to enlarge the connection, inviting the people who left their information to use this tool to see the work in another country.

This exhibition is going to Panama where a decision of the space is in the process, and I am contacting galleries and institutions in France as well. Nomadic Art Net and Views’ journey is not finished and will continue, not knowing which places my nomadic life will take me next after Panama.
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Plate I. Interior view of the exhibition room 1
Plate II. Nomadic Art Net, I room 1
76" x 48" x 54"

Plate III. Detail embroideries of Nomadic Art Net I
Plate IV. Nomadic Art Net II with video and sound, room 2
76” x 48” x 54”

Plate V. Detail projection on Nomadic Art Net II
Plate VI. Puunani, Honolulu, United States, 18 1/2" x 30"
Plate VI. Soi 8, Bangkok, Thailand
27\(\frac{1}{2}\)" x 67"
Plate VIII. Allée Florence, Chelles, France
47 1/2" x 67"
Plate IX. Costa Pacífica, Panamá City, Panamá
27” x 67”
Plate X. Sestiere Castello, Venice, Italy
27\(\frac{1}{4}\)" x 67"

Plate XI. Detail of embroidering during session
Plate XII. student from the Art department in stitching session.
Plate XII. Loveland Academy embroidering session