

PETER CHAMETZKY

Turks, Jews, and Other Germans in Contemporary Art

An Introduction

The urge to migrate is no less “natural” than the urge to settle.

Kwame Anthony Appiah

One might argue, in fact, that it is simply irresponsible for European states to continue to allow significant segments of their populations to be driven by nostalgia for homogeneity. There is no longer room to pretend that European countries will return to some imagined, idealized state of ethnic and cultural sameness.

Rita Chin

ICH WERDE DEUTSCH

ICH WERDE DEUTSCH (*I become German*) provides the provocative title for a series begun in 2008 of large-scale, staged photographs by German photographer Maziar Moradi. Born in Tehran in 1975, Moradi’s series *1979* told the story of his own family’s experience in and emigration from Islamic revolutionary Iran and won the German Photographic Society’s biennial Otto Steinert Prize in 2007. In *Ich werde deutsch* each image presents a *transitional moment*, now experienced in Germany, within extended geopolitical narratives of migration not limited to the artist’s family or to Iran. Moradi has described the series:

I become German tells the stories of young migrants who have left their homelands and begun a new life in Germany, but through their families have grown up with a different cultural background. I’ve collected stories from these young people with a migration background (*Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund*) from childhood to adulthood. . . . They relate problems. . . . but also positive experiences and transformations. . . . This project is a continuation of my work about my family, *1979*. . . . but this time it’s about the next generation, their children.¹

Many of the photographs in *Ich werde deutsch* depict single, contemplative figures in evocative settings. Time haunts each image, as their subjects appear to be pondering their current situations in relationship to past memories and to futures about which viewers can only guess. In one, a dark-haired woman sits at a kitchen table. The woman and the naked, uncooked “oven-ready” chicken challenging her appear in sharp focus against a blurry background of modern cabinets and kitchen utensils, and a still life of fruit in a bowl. In another, a surgeon slouches alone in an operating room, holding a standard but illegible German identity card in his hands, as his generic scrubs and surgical mask obscure his specific identity. In a third, a blond woman and a dark-haired, swarthy man brood in the front seat of an automobile, each alone in a shared space, with the physical and psychological gap between them echoed by the sliver of dusking sky dividing the dark trees behind and above them. In yet another, a grown woman sits surrounded by dolls. While she is dressed, made-up, and coiffed as if herself a doll, her brown skin contrasts to the real dolls’ overwhelming whiteness. In the bottom left, a little red-haired girl looks up at her along a well-defined diagonal axis. Are these the little girl’s dolls? No, more careful observation, particularly of the arms, reveals that she too is a doll whose hands are hidden, in contrast to those of the woman,



MAZIAR MORADI, *Ich werde deutsch (I become German)*, 2008–13, 100 X 125CM



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large and prominent. The photograph elicits an uncanny response by momentarily blurring the boundary between the animate and inanimate, as in Eugene Atget's famous photograph of mannequins in a Paris shop window. Since, within this pictorial world, the dolls establish a norm of small-sized homunculi, the real-life woman also appears, like Gulliver amid the Lilliputians, disproportionately large and unnatural, a real person trapped in an imaginary world.

Moradi's group tableaux are more dynamic and even more cinematic than the single- and paired-figure compositions, employing what photography critic A. D. Coleman over forty years ago dubbed "the directorial mode" of photography.² These carefully constructed, intentionally ambiguous scenes often evoke public humiliations rather than private ruminations, recalling works by Jeff Wall, such as 1989's *The Arrest*. Unlike Wall, though, Moradi creates his images from single exposures and displays them as prints, rather than as transparencies mounted on lightboxes. Also unlike Wall, Moradi's images present his subjects in emotional states designed to arouse feelings for them, and even empathy with them, on the part of viewers. Moradi's images are based on narratives gathered from these "people with a migration



MAZIAR MORADI, *Ich werde deutsch (I become German)*, 2008–13, 100 X 125CM

background" in Hamburg, where his family settled and he was educated, and Berlin, where he now lives. They do not reproduce them literally. Rather, Moradi seeks through setting, lighting, and expressions to evoke their stories and especially the emotions they invoke in their subjects, who play themselves in his tableaux. Taken as a whole, *Ich werde deutsch* puts moving faces on migration and suggests that, in addition to facing economic, linguistic, political, and social dislocation, every person swept along in today's global population flows is also an actor in a uniquely personal drama, enduring psychological stresses specific to his, her, or their own story.

Moradi invented a nonnormative German phrase to designate this series, which features in starring roles "nonnormative" Germans. *Ich werde deutsch*, unlike *Ich werde krank* (I am getting sick), is not a usage one would normally hear. A leading German scholar of American Studies, Berndt Ostendorf, in a study of comparative conceptions of national communities in Germany and the United States, sums up the longstanding understanding of the difference between American and German citizenship and identity: "*Man wird Amerikaner. Aber man ist Deutscher* (One becomes American. But one is a German)."³ The title

Ich werde deutsch rejects this binary claim—that one either is German or is not, according to bloodlines. Moradi’s images challenge a racialized conception of Germanness as synonymous with whiteness, with blondness, and with Christianity. In doing so, Moradi suggests identities, or identifications that are multiple rather than singular and always in a state of process, a process of becoming. As his subjects become German, they stand for millions of migrants and for a Germany that continues to become increasingly diverse.

This essay’s title, “Turks, Jews, and Other Germans in Contemporary Art,” in addition to intending to be a bit provocative, plays off of Peter Gay’s 1978 collection of essays, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans: Masters and Victims in Modernist Culture*. But while Jews constitute a significant and growing, minority population of around 200,000 in contemporary Germany, they are far from the largest or most significant one. German Jews, or Jewish Germans, no longer (as they did in pre-Holocaust Germany—when they numbered about 500,000, less than 1 percent of the population) stand for the “other” in their midst, presenting a challenge to white, Christian Germans’ normative conceptions of German identity. The predominately Islamic Turkish population forms the largest and most influential minority group in contemporary Germany.⁴ Since the first “guest worker” treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and Turkey in 1961, this population has steadily increased through several generations, to number 3 to 4 million today. Germany’s capital, Berlin, has the largest Turkish population of any city outside Turkey. No longer confined to guest status, which implies that at some point you will have to leave (and do you make your guests work?) numerous Turkish permanent residents and German citizens are now prominent in the arts, in media, entertainment, politics, and sports. Their long-term presence in Germany has impacted the culture in many ways, from the German language to its cuisine. But Turkish Germans should also be viewed as one element within the larger picture of a society filled with more recent immigrants, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from throughout the world. From 1960 to 1990 the foreign-born population of Germany rose from 686,100 to 5,241,801, and by 1993 to 6.8 million.⁵ According to the Federal Bureau of Statistics, in September of 2015, the total resident population of Germany was between 81 and 82 million, of whom about 8.2 million, or 10 percent, were foreign nationals. In addition, in 2014, about 16.4 million had a “migration background,” as the German

term *Migrationshintergrund* describes them, so that over 20 percent of the population residing in Germany today are of non-German ethnic heritage.⁶

GEGENWARTSBEWALTIGUNG: “WIR HABEN SO VIELES GESCHAFFT, WIR SCHAFFEN DAS”

IN 2015 GERMANY accepted close to one million refugees from Syria. Unlike the Turkish labor migrants, Syrians driven out by the brutal civil war come from all classes and professions, and have rather quickly established themselves as an economic and cultural presence, as one can experience on the lively Sonnenallee near Hermannplatz in Berlin’s Neukölln neighborhood. Germans initially greeted these migrants with an outpouring of empathy, spurred on by Chancellor Angela Merkel’s simple and at the time extremely effective statement: *Wir haben so vieles geschafft, wir schaffen das* (“We’ve managed so much, we can manage this”).⁷ While there was certainly opposition, backlash, and even violence against the refugees, with that Lincoln-esque pronouncement Merkel summoned not only the better angels of the majority of Germans’ natures, but cannily appealed to and at the same time fostered their sense of national pride.



Chancellor Angela Merkel learning how to carve döner kebab, Germany’s most popular street food.

Without specifying, Merkel's first clause, *Wir haben so vieles geschafft*, evoked Germany's postwar history: at war's end Germany was a defeated genocidal tyranny with a shamed and complicit population. Some *twelve million* refugees and "displaced persons" roamed the land, seeking shelter and sustenance in its destroyed cities. Yet Germany survived and developed through occupation, initial reconstruction, war crimes trials, and division into two hostile countries—one of which was a repressive dictatorship, the other a repressed democracy focused not on reckoning with its Nazi past but on forging ahead with its "economic miracle."

In the west (FRG), the uprisings of 1968, while intertwined with the transnational anti-Vietnam War and youth movements, were also the occasion for the postwar generation to demand a more comprehensive "coming to terms with the past" (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) and reckoning for individuals and institutions that since the Nazi period had never been reformed let alone held accountable. Such events and stirrings were also registered, but suppressed, in the east (GDR), where citizens, while limited in their ability to travel, did have access to Western television, radio, and literature. At its most extreme, such reckoning was manifested in the surge in the FRG of 1970s left-wing, homegrown, Baader-Meinhof or RAF (Red Army Faction) urban terrorism that especially targeted politicians and industrialists. In the 1970s the FRG, like other Western countries, also saw the rise of an active women's movement, which has sought since then to overturn patriarchal policies, systems, and habits. In the 1980s cultural conflict centered on placing a new generation of atomic weapons on German soil and the further development of atomic power, seen by many on the left as threats to the survival of the population and the environment. These were key issues that lent support to the formation of the environmentalist and anti-military Green Party—which as of the autumn of 2018 had grown to be the second most popular party in the country, with strong support in the east as well as the west, as well as in traditionally conservative Bavaria.⁸ In 1986 the several-year Historian's Debate broke out over whether it was time to "normalize" the Third Reich and Holocaust. This was also the Gorbachev period in the Soviet Union, and of détente with the East, both of which, in addition to GDR citizens' dissatisfaction with their depressed economic and social situations—and especially their travel restrictions—led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and crumbling of German communism in

1989–90. In the early 1990s, though, the reunited Germany was rocked by an upsurge in right-wing violence and terrorism against "foreigners." And yet through all this and more (especially in Merkel's native GDR), by the new millennium Germany had established itself as Europe's largest country, strongest economy, most stable democracy, and, even, in 2015, under Merkel, *moral compass*.

Merkel's second clause, *wir schaffen das*, while evoking the slogan of the dissidents to the East German dictatorship in 1988–89, *Wir sind das Volk*, appealed to Germans' sense of their individual and collective industriousness, resilience, and get-the-job-done mentality—which in their minds, at least, enabled the difficult but ultimately triumphalist narrative of German reconstruction sketched above. It also subtly urged Germans, in light of their much discussed and often practiced *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, now to engage with *Gegenwartsbewältigung* (this author's neologism), a coming to terms with the present. The two clauses together thus positioned the influx of refugees not as an existential crisis for Germany and Germans, but as a manageable challenge, one less daunting than those already faced and overcome. Merkel's canny use of the verb *schaffen* also served as a retort to the former Social Democratic politician and banker turned polemical anti-immigration author, Thilo Sarrazin. Beginning with 2010's best-selling *Deutschland schafft sich ab* ("Germany Is Doing Away with Itself"), Sarrazin has argued that immigration and particularly Muslim immigrants pose the threat of a "hostile takeover" of German culture.⁹

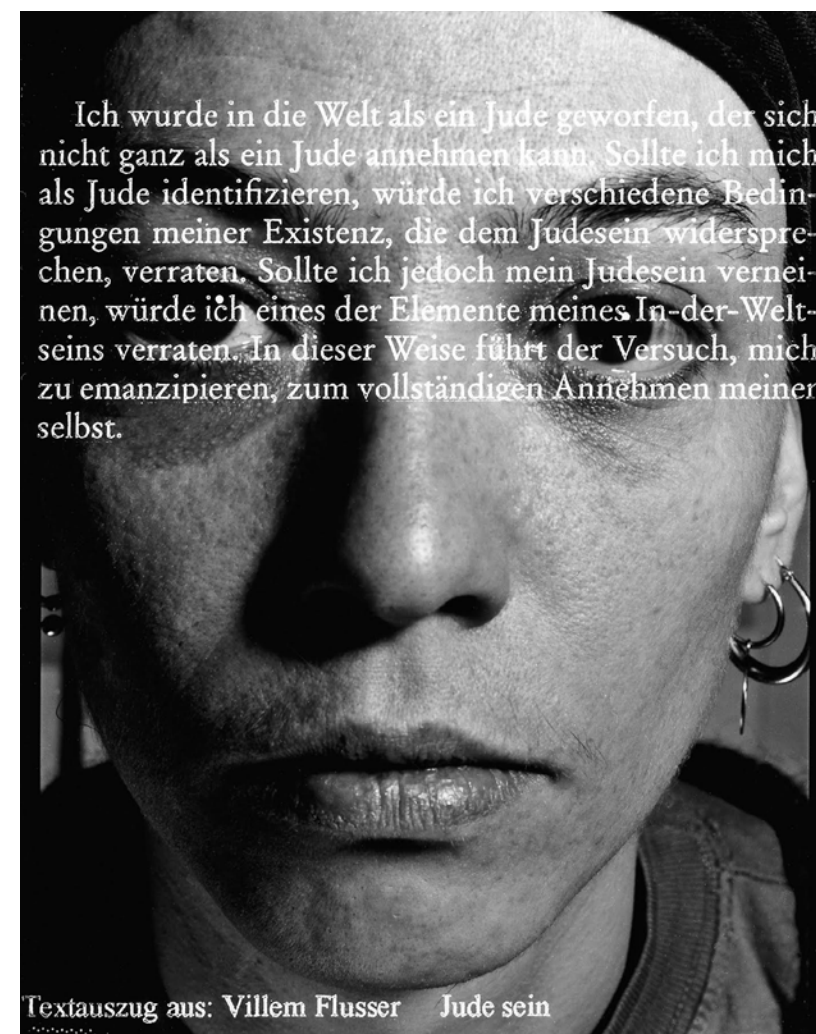
As Merkel prepared to leave office in 2018–19, Germany was once again divided over the issue of immigration. In 2017, as part of the wave of right-wing populism sweeping across Europe and the United States, led by demagogues identifying immigration as national crises, for the first time since the Second World War a far-right party, the Alternative for Germany (AfD), entered the German parliament, and Sarrazin's most recent nativist tract again became a bestseller.¹⁰ The growing anti-immigrant sentiment also had the effect of moving Merkel's conservative Christian Democrats to the right, particularly through challenges to her humanitarian 2015 position. As *The New York Times* reported on December 8, 2018, a constituent in Chemnitz, scene of ugly right-wing violence in August, chided her, "You said we would manage (*schaffen*) But we're not managing."¹¹

WHO REPRESENTS GERMANY?

IN THE BOOK-LENGTH version of the study introduced here, I explore the work of over thirty Turkish, Jewish, Arab, Asian, Iranian, Sinti and Roma, Baltic, and Afro-German artists who are part of contemporary German culture and its art world *by nature of citizenship and/or long-term residence* in relationship to the political issues sketched out here.¹² The work of these artists plays a crucial role in demonstrating the humanity of migrants and of their offspring, and exposing stereotypes about them. The work of such Jewish German artists as Tanya Ury, Esther Dischereit, Silke Helmerdig, and Marion Kahnemann also serves to preserve historical memory of Germany's Jewish culture and its destruction, while also asserting their own presence and agency in Germany today. This is political art—even when it does not have explicit political content—countering dehumanizing images of migrants as faceless masses threatening peace and prosperity promulgated by far-right nativist groups in Germany, such as *Pegida* (“Patriotic Germans Against the Islamization of Europe”) and the AfD, as well as reactionary movements and parties across the region and beyond. These include Austria's Freedom Party, Victor Orbán's Fidesz Party in Hungary, Marine Le Pen's French Rassemblement National, and the “aspirational fascism” of Donald Trump in the United States, which has exploited, galvanized, and empowered our own racist ethno-nationalism.¹³ All of these have also helped to inspire right extremist violence, such as the murder of the British Labour Party MP Jo Cox on June 16, 2016; the racist anti-immigrant riots in Chemnitz, Saxony, in August 2018; the murderous neo-Nazi demonstrations in Charlottesville, Virginia a year before, and the assassination on June 2, 2019, of the Christian Democratic politician and Kassel district president Walther Lübke, for his liberal views on immigration and outspoken opposition to *Pegida* and the NSU (National Socialist Underground—a racist terrorist organization).

The stories behind and captured in many other of Moradi's images bespeak more mundane, unexamined racism, nativism, and ethnocentrism, and not solely as practiced by Germans. The surgeon holding the ID card is in fact Moradi's brother, an accomplished orthopedic surgeon now practicing in Heidelberg.¹⁴ His story involves the difficulty of getting into the United States, shortly after 9/11, to undertake a fellowship at Harvard. While he possessed a German passport, a valid

U.S. visa, and prestigious letters of invitation, he was subjected to lengthy interrogation by U.S. border officials who asked numerous questions he considered stupid and “brainless.” No doubt to the guards of fortress U.S.A., his birthplace called the fact of his nationality into question. Ultimately, though, it worked out: he entered the United States, fulfilled his fellowship, and has his career—as we see in the photograph. And he is proud of and attached to his German passport,



SILKE HELMERDIG, *Zwei Seelen wohnen—Ach! In meiner Brust* (Two Souls Reside—Ach! In My Chest), 2005

which he describes as a talisman-like object that can open doors throughout the world for him, even if at some of them, at home and abroad, the question lingers as to whether he has, or will ever, become German. If we could see the photograph in his passport, though, it would be affectless: in Germany as in the U.S., passport photo regulations prohibit the display of emotion in that picture which inscribes one into the citizenry.¹⁵ By contrast, the affect communicated in Moradi's photographs, in his subjects' faces and gestures, their flights, fights, turns, and falls, troubles their identity as card-carrying Germans, placing their nonnormative, *queer* Germanness always in flux, motion, and doubt.

The belated emergence of non-ethnic Germans among Germany's most prominent visual artists is exceptional in comparison with film, literature, music, popular culture, and sports. Turkish German literature emerged in the 1970s with the work of the poet Aras Ören, "often described as the father of so-called *Ausländerliteratur* (foreigner literature)."¹⁶ Film, too, has been transformed by nonethnic Germans, and especially those of Turkish heritage. One of Germany's most prominent and successful contemporary filmmakers is the Turkish German Fatih Akin (born in Hamburg, 1973), many of whose films portray the lives of Turks in Germany, such as *Head On (Gegen den Wand)*, which deals with gender relations among Turkish Germans and won the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival in 2004. The Afghan German Burhan Qurbani (born in Afghanistan in 1980), whose family fled the Soviet-Afghan War, has more recently emerged as an up-and-coming film director, particularly with his 2014 feature about the August 1992 right-wing antiforeigner riots in Rostock, *We are young. We are strong (Wir sind jung. Wir sind stark)*. One of the most popular situation comedies on German television is *Türkisch für Anfänger* (Turkish for Beginners), an intercultural, Berlin-set *Brady Bunch*, featuring prominent roles for Turkish German actors and actresses.

Art scholarship has also lagged behind literary, cinema, and mass cultural studies in investigating German art's diversity and transnationalism. Some fifteen years ago, for instance, literary scholar Leslie Adelson identified and analyzed "the Turkish turn" in contemporary German literature. Since poet Audre Lorde's first sojourn in Berlin in 1984, Afro-German history and literature has also been a subject of study.¹⁷ An exception in German art history and criticism is found in the important work of the prolific Turkish German scholar Burcu Dogramaci,

who hazarded nearly ten years ago that a reason for German art history's neglect of the significance of migration in contemporary German art could lie in a general refusal to acknowledge that Germany is a country of immigration. In 1979 the Social Democratic Government under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt appointed Germany's first national Commissioner for Foreigner Affairs, Heinz Kuhn, who acknowledged that a large proportion of the guest workers were in fact immigrants to Germany and asserted that the Federal Republic needed to develop policies that would deal with the social impact of this fact. The resurgent CDU under Helmut Kohl in 1980s pushed back against this idea and these policies. By 1983 Kohl was asserting "principled opposition" to the notion of Germany as an "immigration country."¹⁸ In 2010 CDU Chancellor Angela Merkel famously declared in a speech to the youth organizations of the CDU and its Bavarian branch, the CSU, that multiculturalism in Germany had "utterly failed." Many commentators who understand multiculturalism as governmental policies that support diverse cultural practices and seek to ensure equal opportunities for economic advancement as well as personal expression regardless of race, religion, or national origin have found the pronouncement puzzling, in that Germany had to that time hardly attempted multiculturalism.¹⁹ Given this reluctance, one might add to it the observation of the German art historian Hans Belting that "German art always ends up being the measure for German identity."²⁰ Since that identity has stubbornly been confined to "German-Germans," among contemporary artists we have continually been presented with such fine and important figures as Kai Althoff, Isa Genzken, Anselm Kiefer, Gerhard Richter, or Rosemarie Troeckel, all of whom but Troeckel have enjoyed major exhibitions at New York's Museum of Modern Art (and Troeckel at the New Museum of Contemporary Art), as representatives and representors of German art and through it of Germanness.

In the United States, we call our largest national political body the House of Representatives. Discussing such political representation under democracy, whereby a larger group grants a smaller number the power to represent them and grants them a home from which to do so, the French political scientist Étienne Balibar asserts that "representation is not simply an 'authorization' of *representatives*, but actually a power, or even an 'action,' of the *represented*."²¹ Thus far this power to represent has not been granted by the majority culture in or outside of Germany to its minority artists.

In 2011 the Jewish Museum Berlin, housed partially in the celebrated void-pierced, zigzagging Daniel Libeskind building, staged the exhibition *Heimatkunde* (Local History): *Dreißig Künstler Blicken auf Deutschland* (English version of the title, How German Is It: 30 Artists Look at Germany). This was a rare instance of a prominent German museum, but not an art museum, welcoming into its space a group of ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse *German* artists as *representatives and representors* of German identity and *Heimat* in the present.²² In Balibar's sense this was an empowering and a political act, and a rare one for German museums. When multiculturalism is the topic of exhibitions in Germany's art museums, it is far more common to see work by artists from outside the contemporary German *polis*, whether African, Asian, Middle Eastern, or African American, than that of artists from these and other migrant groups resident in Germany.²³ This situation is ripe for change—German art academies enjoy multinational and cultural student bodies, and as these artists mature they will likely integrate into the German art world and collections. It is the author's hope that this essay will contribute to expanding conceptions of contemporary German art and German national identity in and of a multicultural, hybridizing Germany.

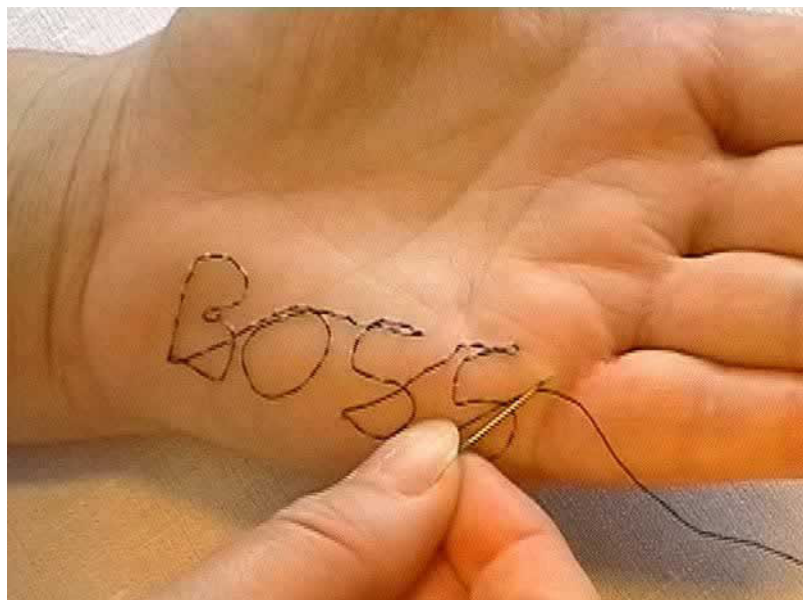
ORIGINS AND ARRIVALS IN THE PRESENT: TANYA URY, MACIRÉ BAKAYOKO IN NATASHA A. KELLY'S *MILLI'S AWAKENING*, ÖZLEM GÜNYOL AND MUSTAFA KUNT

THE ORIGIN OF the present essay lies in my initial attempt to explore the role of Jewish German artists in modern and contemporary art. In 2012 a call for proposals for papers at a session at the College Art Association Annual Meeting, titled *From Lesser to Tanya Ury: German Jewish Artists, 1890–2010*, received no proposals on living artists. The bookending figures in this call were Lesser Ury (1861–1932), to whom Peter Gay referred in *Freud, Jews and Other Germans* as a “gifted, but little-regarded Impressionist,” and Lesser's great-grandniece, Tanya Ury, born in London in 1951 and since the early 1990s active as a multidisciplinary, dual-citizen German/British artist in Cologne. I subsequently invited Tanya Ury to participate on the CAA panel and also began researching contemporary German Jewish artists, later expanding this study to minority artists in general.



TANYA URY, *Lesser is Me, More or Less*, 2003, digital photomontage

Tanya Ury's hybrid, feminist artistic practice—including photography, video, performance, installation, and sound poetry discussed in my book—engages with at least four key themes for the German minority artists studied in my book: bodies, languages, mass media, spaces and time. Her work foregrounds the Holocaust's continued contemporaneity as part of a lifetime project to probe, provoke, and critique contemporary German culture, by emphatically asserting her presence in it as a German Jewish woman, due to her ancestor's absence. Her work, while deadly serious, is also playful, particularly in its use of language, as in the 2003 digital photomontage, *Lesser is Me, More or Less*, in which she juxtaposed herself with her great-uncle. At once the same, kin, but different: a male, modernist painter of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries representing himself, and a postmodern feminist artist of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, masquerading herself as himself. Hybridity characterizes Tanya Ury's work—and also that aspect of her identity formed by inheritance and by history as not only a postmodern artist, but as a post-Holocaust German Jewish subject. A vertical scar bisects the photo, which might serve as a metaphor for the Holocaust as a scar or open wound, down the center of post-1945 conceptions of German Jewish subjecthood, bringing this past into her and our present.

TANYA URY, *Who's Boss: Röslein Sprach...* 2004, 52-minute performance videoTANYA URY, *Who's Boss: Art Prize Nr. 4*, 2004

The German Jewish newspaper *Jüdische Zeitung* wrote in 2008, “Ury’s art is always personal, always political and in every way ruthless”—which could apply to her ongoing project, with the earliest works dating from 2002, relating to the Hugo Boss fashion company, *Who’s Boss*, connecting its current public image, and art prize sponsorship, to the company’s growth in the Nazi period as a producer of SS, SA, and Hitler Youth uniforms, manufactured using slave laborers. In her 2004 video performance “Who’s Boss: *Röslein Sprach*” Ury stitched the word *Boss* into her hand.²⁴ In the same year, she created a series of four photographic triptychs, *Who’s Boss: Art Prize*, each of which consists of a Boss advertisement from 1998–99, a postcard from Franco-era Spain decorated with colorful drawings resembling children’s book illustrations of juvenile male soldiers accompanied by Barbie-like girlfriends, and a photograph of the artist in, or emerging naked out of, a World War II German Luftwaffe leather coat. The Hugo Boss Award, administered by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, was initiated in 1996. Boss’s Nazi-period activities came to light the next year.

In this piece, Ury makes explicit that she sees the former as a form of camouflage for the latter. In *Who’s Boss: Art Prize Nr. 4*, the similarity of the coat Ury wears and those that the Boss models display is undeniable. The two Boss models stand emotionless as “armored bodies,” encased in their black garb, while Ury next to them seems pensive and protective, her bare feet exposed to the scorched earth. The contemporary Boss concern is thus shown to be exploiting inherited notions of the sadistically erotic appeal of military styles and attitudes—explored by Klaus Theweleit in his important study *Male Fantasies*—the continuation of which it would be as naïve as the picture on the postcard to deny.²⁵

In February 2014, Ury was the first artist invited to create an installation in



TANYA URY, *Who's Boss: Hair Shirt Army* (opening), 2014, El-DE Haus, Cologne

a newly opened subterranean space adjacent and connected to the El DE House in Cologne—which served as Gestapo headquarters and is now home to a historical display, library, and educational center on the Nazi Period in Cologne. Her *Who's Boss: Hair Shirt Army* continued to target Hugo Boss and its mass-media image, and also documents her own aging, hair loss, and her “Jewish” hair, which is often the object of “othering” fascination for Germans, while also suggesting the ghosts of the victims of genocide in this haunted public and private space. Next door, the most famous exhibits at El DE house are the graffiti left in Gestapo cells by their captive victims. These cells are now protected by Plexiglas; when I first visited, in 1993, one could enter those spaces. Looking at actual captives’ indexical signs on the wall, time and space collapsed together into a totally terrifying experience of the captive body’s utter and complete subjection. The aura of those spaces seeped into the *Who's Boss* installation, heightening its haunting linkage of the Nazi past and Ury’s inheritance as the descendant of Holocaust victims in whose memory she asserts her bodily, intellectual, and psychological presence in contemporary Germany. She has said that her practice as an artist derives from a dream she had in 1982, in which she was looking at a mirror that reflected the mute ghosts of her ancestors’ rising: she feels she must speak for those ghosts, and she does.²⁶

In the first chapter of Natasha A. Kelly’s remarkable 2018 documentary *Millis Erwachen/Milli’s Awakening* the young Afro-German artist and curator Maciré Bakayoko inhabits not only her own black body, but, imaginatively, that of an artist’s model from over a hundred years ago.²⁷ Bakayoko was born and raised in Bremen, speaks the local German, but is still asked, like people of color in Germany generally: “Where do you come from really?” which is often followed by, “when are you going back?”²⁸ Kelly, whose website refers to her as “born in London, socialized in Germany,” is a Berlin-educated and -employed scholar, teacher, activist, and, beginning with *Millis Awakening*, filmmaker.²⁹ The title of the film refers to a 1911 painting, *Sleeping Milli*, by German Expressionist Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, which Bakayoko lectures in front of in the Bremen Kunsthalle, deconstructing its racist and sexist supine positioning and stylizations of the nude black woman’s body. Bakayoko’s active presence, her moving body, expressive gestures and features, and deep thoughts about the image effectively and affectively repudiate its colonialist ideology.

Kirchner’s *Sleeping Milli* was included in an exhibition and publication that examined critically the role of art in Bremen under the colonial system, organized by the Bremen Kunsthalle and Kunstverein Bremen in 2017.³⁰ So, neither Bakayoko nor Kelly has “discovered” the work or been the first to attempt to unpack its origins in colonialism. The colonialist enterprise, and racist (and sexist) assumptions



MACIRÉ BAKAYOKO performing in front of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, *Schlaffende Milli*, 1911, Bremen Kunsthalle, in documentary film *Millis Erwachen*, by Natasha A. Kelly, 2018

enabling and underpinning Kirchner and his *Brücke* comrade's treatment of their "primitive" subjects, has been examined in conscientious and revisionist art historical literature, particularly by Jill Lloyd, who has gone beyond stylistic and thematic analysis to place Kirchner and company in a specific time and place.³¹ That place was Dresden before World War I, where Africans were displayed in the zoo alongside animals. That place was also colonialist Europe, where African and Oceanic objects were plundered from their own cultures and used by artists such as Kirchner as ambience-creating props in their studios.³² Admirable as this scholarship is, it places its subject matter in *the past* and *as past*. For Bakayoko, as for Kelly, as women artists of color in Germany, it is an active part of their present.

In the film *Bakayoko* asks of the image, "Who was Milli, how did she live?" Kelly has also posed these questions: "How could she have lived in Dresden? Did she have children? Did she have siblings? A family? Where did she come from? What is her story?"³³ And right after posing these questions, she brings them into the present: "Who are her successors, her descendants? How do black women live in Germany today?" Kelly's film answers that question in relationship to the Afro-German women artists who are its subject.

In the spring of 2018 the Frankfurt-based artist team of Özlem Günyol (b. Ankara, 1977) and Mustafa Kunt (b. Ankara, 1978) installed a permanent public work as part of a newly created sculpture path along a paved walkway surrounded by grass in Rüsselsheim, outside Frankfurt, along the Main River. Both graduates of Frankfurt's Städelschule Art Academy, Günyol and Kunt have lived and worked in Frankfurt since 2001. The Dortmund Kunstverein presented a retrospective exhibition of their work in 2014 and they were awarded the 25,000 euro HAP Grieshaber Prize by the image-licensing agency VG-Bildkunst in 2017. Their conceptual art pieces always include a material and visual aspect, including drawings, sculptures, and videos, often thematizing migration and border crossings and shifts, while questioning national symbols and monolingual cultures. Midcareer artists who have collaborated since 2005, they have earned recognition and prizes, and enjoy ample opportunities to create and show their work. Yet, like many visual artists in Germany "with a migration background," their work is rarely if ever considered as representative of German contemporary art.

Their Rüsselsheim piece was the fourth and final work installed in the park. The theme announced for the competition, which was funded

to a total of 300,000 euros, was "flight and travel" (*Flucht und Reise*), whereby artists competing for commissions were to consider such issues as industrialization, migration, places of origin, labor conditions (*Arbeitswelt*), and structural changes (*Strukturwandel*).³⁴ Günyol's and Kunt's contribution cost approximately 60,000 euros and took two years to execute. It consists of an undulating park bench, 100 centimeters thick, 285 centimeters tall, 950 centimeters long, and weighing over 21 tons. It is the third piece one encounters when entering the park from the side nearest the town, where parking is provided. The first piece is a concrete automobile, entitled *Dauerparker* (Long Term Parker), by Würzburg artist Matthias Braun. The model of car is an Opel Manta—routinely caricatured in Germany as the "farmer's Porsche." Rüsselsheim is home to a massive Opel factory, and Braun's solid and stolid semi-sports car seems to say: I cannot not take you away from here, or anywhere you want or need to go. The next piece is a pyramidal geometric abstraction, *Heimat*, by Rüsselsheim artist Mario Hergueta. *Heimat* stands about eight feet tall and consists of open form interlocking pieces of corten steel cut into a variety of angular shapes. Upon examination, one realizes that the shapes are the letters of the word *Heimat* itself. By showing the variety of forms that go into the word, the piece suggests that its signified that allusive notion of "homeland," can also—and must also if it is to cohere—accommodate and integrate diverse constituent parts.

Günyol's and Kunt's bench comes next. The side facing the river consists of an oversized seating area, while the other is inscribed with the phrases, "Where am I? As if in a dream . . . Did we arrive?" They heard this exclamation from a Syrian woman in a BBC interview, when she arrived in Gothenburg Sweden via a route that took her through Istanbul, Izmir, Athens, Belgrade, Budapest, Vienna, Hamburg, and Copenhagen, including traversing Germany from south to north. The serpentine design of the bench replicates this path in miniature. The use of English reflects the quotation's source and English's status as the most common language among Middle Eastern and African refugees and Europeans.

According to the artists, arrival is both a mental as well as physical experience. And recent arrivals, they say, often sit and look at rivers, whose naturally moving waters are both contemplative and evocative of one's own culturally prescribed motion through time and space.³⁵ The artists hope that the large bench will accommodate multiple sitters



ÖZLEM GÜNYOL AND MUSTAFA KUNT *Where am I? As if in a dream . . . Did we arrive?* 2018, Rüsselsheim, Hesse



Özlem Günyol and Mustafa Kunt sitting on *Where am I? As if in a dream . . . Did we arrive?* 2018, Rüsselsheim, Hesse

at once, who can contemplate communally the river's flow, conceptions of and routes to and from homelands, and the experience of landing in a new and foreign place. As one sits on the bench by the river in Rüsselsheim, jets bearing more arrivals pass frequently overhead on their way into Frankfurt airport, which contributed 100,000 euros toward the sculpture path. One ponders: Have they arrived, will they arrive, have we, will we, and where? And where, and when, will Germany? Europe? The United States of America?

The various artists and artworks presented here, I believe, comprise a far more important component of contemporary German art than has yet been acknowledged. While reflecting on the past and present, their work, and they, also represent the future at which Germany will ultimately arrive, despite contemporary reactionary responses, some violent, some more measured, to the inevitability and desirability of diversification. There is simply no going back to ethnic, religious, let alone racial definitions of who is an acceptable German, or an American. The best alternative is the acceptance of the sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas's conception of "constitutional patriotism," of a postnationalist, liberal, and cosmopolitan identification with the highest ideals of the current German nation, as codified in its 1949 Basic Law. Among these are: "No person shall be favoured or disfavoured because of sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, or religious or political opinions. No person shall be disfavoured because of disability."³⁶ Serious consideration, as German art, of the works and the positions presented by the artists studied in "Turks, Jews, and Other Germans" affirms these values and affords visions of diverse and humane alternatives for Germany.

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NOTES

1. Maziar Moradi, "Das Projekt 'Ich werde deutsch,'" Moradi, *Ich werde deutsch* (Münster: Friedrich-Hundt-Gesellschaft, 2014), 11. There are sixteen photographs in the series.

2. A. D. Colman, "The Directorial Mode: Notes Toward a Definition" *Artforum*, 15 no. 1 (September 1976): 55–61.

3. *Werde*, as in Moradi's title, is the first-person singular of *werden*, while *wird* is third-person singular. Berndt Ostendorf, "The Politics of Difference: Theories and Practices in a Comparative U.S.-German Perspective," in *Multiculturalism in Transit: A German-American Exchange*, ed. Klaus J. Milich and Jeffrey M. Peck (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 1998), p. 42.

4. For a stimulating discussion of the confluences between the history of Jews and Turks in Germany, see "Jews and Turks: Discourses of the 'Other,'" Jeffrey Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), chapter 5.

5. Peck, quoting Klaus Bade, 87.
6. D Statistisches Bundesamt, <https://www.destatis.de/EN/Facts/Figures/SocietyState/Population/Population.html> (last accessed, May 12, 2016).
7. See the first chapter *Ein seltsam weichgewordenes Deutschland*, (A Germany that became strangely gentle), in the reportage by the German Islamic scholar and journalist Navid Kermani, *Einbruch der Wirklichkeit: Auf dem Flüchtlingstreck durch Europa* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2015). One could also translate the phrase “We’ve already done so much. We can do this”
8. Katrin Bennhold, “Greens Thrive in Germany as the ‘Alternative’ to Far-Right Populism,” *The New York Times*, November 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/27/world/europe/germany-greens-merkel-election.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article®ion=Footer> (accessed November 27, 2018). By Summer 2019, the Greens were Germany’s largest party, a fact that one commentator also attributed not only to “Merkel dissipation syndrome” as her final term wound down, but also to the manner of her embrace of environmentalism: “she was the greenest chancellor Germany has ever had, driven by moral convictions, even as she did so with the air of a soberly rational physicist.” Jochen Bittner, “The Greens are Germany’s Leading Political Party. Wait. What?,” *The New York Times* June 19, 2019 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/06/19/opinion/greens-party-germany.html> (accessed 19 June 2019).
9. Thilo Sarrazin, *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* (Germany Is Doing Away With Itself: How we are Gambling with our Country) (Munich: Deutsche-Verlags-Anstalt, 2010).
10. Thilo Sarrazin, *Feindliche Übernahme: Wie der Islam den Fortschritt behindert und die Gesellschaft bedroht* (Hostile Takeover: How Islam Impedes Progress and Threatens Society) (Munich: Finanzbuch Verlag, 2018). For critiques of this book’s “absurd presumptions,” “distorted picture based on prejudice,” “pitiful bigotry,” and basic ignorance of Islam, see Ulrich von Schwerin, “Thilo Sarrazin’s ‘Hostile Takeover’: An Islam expert’s take on the book,” *DW* September 4, 2018 <https://www.dw.com/en/thilo-sarrazins-hostile-takeover-an-islam-experts-take-on-the-book/a-45346358> (accessed December 15, 2018). Another Islamicist also critiqued it in Germany’s leading intellectual newspaper, *Die Zeit*. She points out that Sarrazin omits Bosnia, Albania, and the Caucasus—majority Muslim European locations—from an account that seeks to draw a line separating Europe and Islam; he also fails to mention The Alhambra when dismissing Islamic architecture. Johanna Pink, “Ist diese Religion gefährlich,” *Die Zeit*, No 36, 29–30 August 2018, <https://www.zeit.de/2018/36/feindliche-uebernahme-thilo-sarrazin-islam-buch> (accessed December 15, 2018).
11. Katrin Bennhold, “‘Already an Exception’: Merkel’s Legacy Is Shaped by Migration and Austerity,” *The New York Times* December 8, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/05/world/europe/merkel-legacy-germany.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage> (accessed December 8, 2018).
12. Contemporary artists whose work is discussed include: Rozbeh Asmani, Maciré Bakayoko, Mohamad-Said Baalbaki, Candice Breitz, Esther Dischereit, Nezaket Ekici, Parastou Forouher, Özlem Günyol and Mustafa Kunt, Manaf Halbouni, Silke Helmerdig, Candida Höfer, Mwangi Hutter, Marion Kahnemann,

Marwan Kassab-Bachi, Natasha A. Kelly, Mischa Kuball, Fatih Kurceren, Isaiah Lopaz, Yoshiyuki Miura, Maziar Moradi, Ira Moram, Andrea Morein, Loredana Nemes, Tanja Ostojić, Sigmar Polke, Nino Pušija, Farkhondeh Shahroudi, Hito Steyerl, Nasan Tur, Alfred Ullrich, Tanya Ury, and Rolf Zimmermann.

13. William Connolly, *Aspirational Fascism: The Struggle for Multifaceted Democracy Under Trumpism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2017). Brought to the author’s attention by Juliet Koss.

14. Babak Moradi, “Ich werde deutsch,” Jewish Museum Berlin, *Heimatkunde: 30 Künstler Blicken auf Deutschland* (2011), p. 125. For other stories, such as the shocking story of the black woman, named Jenny, and the dolls, see the book when it appears.

15. Lily Cho, “Anticipating Citizenship: Chinese Head Tax Photographs,” *Feeling Photography*, ed. Elspeth Brown and Thy Phu (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 164.

16. Rita Chin, *The Guest Worker Question in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 31.

17. Leslie A. Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). On Afro-German history and culture, see the pioneering anthology *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, ed. May Opitz, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992 [Orlando Frauenverlag, 1986]) and more recently, Sarah Lennox, ed., *Remapping Black Germany: New Perspectives on Afro-German History, Politics, and Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2016).

18. Rita Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 134–135.

19. Burcu Dogramaci, “Kültür für Deutschland: Positionen zeitgenössischer deutsch-türkischer Kunst,” *Kritische Berichte* 39, no. 4 (2011): 5. See Ali Ratansi, *Multiculturalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2011), p. 36 and Chin, 2017, 237ff. See also Heiner Geissler, “Germany An Immigration Country,” (1991), *Germany in Transit: Nation and Migration, 1955–2005*, ed. Deniz Göktürk, David Gramling, and Anton Kaes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 295–296.

20. Hans Belting, *The Germans and their Art: A Troublesome Relationship* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998). The quote is from the introduction written for the English version of a collection of essays first published in Germany in 1993.

21. Étienne Balibar, *Citizenship*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2015), p. 5.

22. The Jewish Museum Berlin does have an active art exhibition program but is fundamentally a historical institution dedicated to telling the story of Jews in Germany.

23. A more diverse view of contemporary German art is often displayed in alternative spaces and artist associations across Germany, such as SAVVY Berlin, Kunstraum Munich, the Dortmund Kunstverein, the Württembergische Kunstverein in Karlsruhe, as well as by such artists as the group *Le Laboratoire de Déberlinisation*, a Berlin-based group dedicated to decolonization (the name refers to the Berlin Conference of 1884–85 that subdivided Africa), which was

founded by Mansour Ciss Kanakassy, who was born in Dakar, Senegal, and has lived in Berlin since 1993, and the Algerian French Kader Attia, who also lives in Berlin.

²⁴ Hartmut Bomhoff, “Ich wollte das Deutschsein umarmen” (I wanted to embrace being German), *Jüdische Zeitung* 11, no. 39 (November 2008), English translation available on the artist’s website, http://www.tanyaury.com/admin/media/pdf/bomhoff_artikel_uk.pdf (accessed August 25, 2018).

²⁵ See *Who’s Boss: Art Prize*, <http://www.tanyaury.com/en/whos-boss/art-prize/> (accessed June 25, 2019).

²⁶ Interview with the artist, Cologne, October 17, 2012.

²⁷ The forty-five-minute black-and-white film features eight Afro-German women artists, who relate their experiences and show and discuss their work. It was commissioned for the 2018 Berlin Biennale and shown there in the summer of 2018 to great acclaim. See Hili Perlson, “5 Artists You Must Not Miss at the 10th Berlin Biennale,” *Artnetnews* (June 11, 2018), <https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/five-artists-you-must-not-miss-at-the-10th-berlin-biennale-1300448> (accessed August 27, 2018). It went on to win first place in the feature documentary category from Black Laurel Film’s Visualutionaries18 and to tour internationally.

²⁸ Tilo Neuman, “Woher kommst du eigentlich? Gesichter der Stadt: Maciré Bakayoko engagiert sich gegen Rassismus im Alltag,” *Weser Kurier* (April 26, 2015), https://www.weser-kurier.de/startseite_artikel,-Woher-kommst-du-eigentlich-_arid,1110324.htm (accessed August 27, 2018).

²⁹ <http://natashaakelly.com/> (accessed September 11, 2018).

³⁰ Julia Binter, ed., *Der Blinde Fleck. Bremen und die Kunst in der Kolonialzeit*, Kunsthalle Bremen—Der Kunstverein Bremen (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 2017).

³¹ Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 31–49.

³² *Ibid.* 47–49.

³³ Trailer for *Milli’s Awakening*, available at <https://vimeo.com/284923785> (accessed September 11, 2018). We do not know the identities of either Milli or Sam, a black man who appears in photographs of Kirchner’s studio. They are speculated to have been circus performers, and Milli and Sam to have been stage names.

³⁴ The park was funded by the Hessian Cultural Foundation and coordinated by Cultural Minister Dennis Grieser (Green Party). Grieser was able to deflect complaints as to the cost Charlotte Martin, “Kunstpfad: Beton Bank symbolisiert Fluchtweg zahlreicher Migranten über die Balkanroute,” *Rüselheimer Echo*, March 9, 2018.

³⁵ Author’s site visit with the artists, October 18, 2018.

³⁶ Deutscher Bundestag, *Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany*, article 3, paragraph 3, p. 15. The list could certainly be extended to include gender identity—or nonidentity. On constitutional patriotism and its relationship to multicultural societies and *policies*, suggesting that the extent that the “decoupling of political culture from majority culture succeeds, the solidarity of citizens is shifted onto the more abstract foundation of a ‘constitutional patriotism,’” and away from “a community of shared descent,” see Habermas, “The

Postnational Constellation and the Future of Democracy,” in Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, translated and edited by Max Pensky (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001).