



# **An examination of voice and spaces of appearance in artistic representations of migration experiences**

Art practices in a political arena

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## Abstract

Denmark has one of the toughest immigration laws in Europe and legislation has become even tighter. Amid this political climate, a gleam of hope in the form of a refugee and asylum-seeker community centre was established. This centre is called Trampoline House and works to provide refugees and asylum-seekers a place of refuge, hope and community. Inside this centre, we find an art gallery, Centre for Art on Migration Politics (CAMP) dedicated to exhibiting artworks discussing questions of displacement, migration, immigration and asylum. The gallery, in partnership with Trampoline House, hosts events, workshops and talks that encourage cultural exchange between artists, users of Trampoline House and others.

Focusing on a particular exhibition, *Decolonising Appearance*, curated by Nicholas Mirzoeff, that deals with migration and decolonialism, this study attempts to unpack the art gallery's communication approaches in order to identify strategies for transformative dialogue and social change. Issues of how political and artistic practices intersect are discussed within the framework of voice and appearance (Appadurai 2004, Couldry 2010 & Arendt 1958). By focusing on appearance and re-appearance, this paper examines how notions of voice and capacity may inform the gallery's decolonial artistic practices.

The study finds that while CAMP has ambitions to create dialogue through strategies of artistic interventions, art events and an art gallery guide programme where participants are recruited from Trampoline House, there is a disconnect between what it strives to be, and what it is. Although the vision of CAMP is to build bridges and create cultural exchanges these are only successful to varying degrees. In order to succeed in this vision, the approaches must be more inclusionary and embrace a wider segment of society.

*Keywords: art, migration, Centre for Art on Migration Politics, Trampoline House, voice, listening, appearance, capacity*

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

In the wake of the refugee crisis of 2015, migration and integration are once again at the top of national political agendas throughout Europe. The Danish government has gained international notoriety with controversial legislative proposals and bills. From the 'jewellery law' where refugees entering Denmark have their valuables seized and placing adverts in Lebanese newspapers to deter asylum seekers, to an island formerly used for animal quarantine for criminal deportees, Denmark has become one of the toughest countries in which to seek asylum.

Increasing support for extremist populist groups and right-wing political parties such as *Stram Kurs*<sup>1</sup> in Denmark and the Sweden Democrats in Sweden mean that there is urgently a need for places and forums where pressing challenges, such as how European nations can handle the pressures of mass migration and people seeking refuge, can be discussed and debated.

The Danish government's<sup>2</sup> hard stance on refugees and asylum-seekers causes social and economic exclusion to those seeking to enter the country. The refugees and asylum-seekers are housed in refugee centres scattered around the country. Conditions are questionable and there is rising discontent among the residents of these centres<sup>3</sup>. Voices among civil society organisations are becoming louder in the public discourse surrounding these issues.

And among scholars, Gurminder Bhambra states that it is crucial to address the colonial histories of Europe when discussing issues of migration and that the refugee crisis is not one *in* Europe, but a crisis *of* Europe (Bhambra 2017).

As nationalist sentiments gain more traction in nations throughout Europe, it is increasingly difficult to navigate in a society of increased xenophobia and populist tendencies for people who

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<sup>1</sup> *Stram Kurs*, a far-right anti-Islamic party and established in 2017, was on the ballot for the general elections in May 2019. The party has gained notoriety through anti-Muslim activism and its founder, Rasmus Paludan, has been reported to the police on charges of racism.

<sup>2</sup> A new leftist government was announced on 27 June 2019 following the general elections in May 2019. Perhaps this will lead to changes in immigration legislation in the future.

<sup>3</sup> <http://refugees.dk/en/focus/2018/november/social-harm-in-the-danish-asylum-system/>

don't fit into the majority society. Art or the arts may not be the solution, but artistic practices may be able to spark debate and add to a more nuanced conversation. "For the source of positive social change is not economics or politics in the last analysis - it is creativity and imagination" (Clammer 2014: 13). How can art with its ability to portray human complexities and sensibilities contribute to this discussion? And what cultural institutions and places of debate and discussion are available for addressing questions of migration?

This brings me to the subject of this inquiry, an art gallery residing in Trampoline House, a refugee justice community centre for the politically and socially excluded. The Centre for Art on Migration Politics (CAMP) was founded by Frederikke Hansen and Tone Olaf Nielsen, two art curators, in 2015. The art gallery's objective is "through art, to stimulate greater understanding between displaced people and the communities that receive them, and to stimulate new visions for a more inclusive and equitable migration, refugee, and asylum policy".<sup>4</sup> Trampoline House is a non-profit organisation that offers activities, classes and events for asylum-seekers and refugees. The house is run by a small team of paid staff and a large group of volunteers. It also provides legal counselling and forms of support for refugees. The art gallery is very much integrated in the activities of Trampoline House and uses the common areas for larger events.

This study will explore the role of art in relation to development and social change within the larger context of the Danish public discourse regarding refugees and migrants. Within this exploration, I will also look at how political and artistic practices intersect. Furthermore, notions of voice and appearance will be discussed throughout the paper.

The following research question and sub-question will be addressed:

- What are the strategies employed by CAMP to contribute to the public conversation about immigration and refugees in Denmark and how can these be seen as a social intervention in the context of Communications for Development?

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/campcph/>

- In what ways are migrant and refugee voices heard through artistic representations of migration experiences?

This study is an attempt to unpack CAMP's activities and the centre's potential for sparking debate and social transformation beyond CAMP/Trampoline House. In order to narrow down this undertaking I examine a specific exhibition and the multimodal aspects related to it; the space, the artworks as communicational tools and finally, visitors and their experience of the exhibition and art gallery.

The exhibition, *Decolonising Appearance*, ran from September 2018 until March 2019. It is the first of four exhibitions guest curated by international curators and is part of a two-year project titled *State of Integration: artistic analyses of the challenges of coexistence* (2018-2020).

*Decolonising Appearance* was curated by visual culture scholar Nicholas Mirzoeff from New York University and featured works from internationally-acclaimed artists, as well as lesser known artists. Every week, a guided tour was conducted where a guide with an asylum-seeker or refugee background showed visitors the exhibition and talked about selected works in detail.

The theoretical framework is primarily the notion of voice and appearance in analysing the artwork and artistic practices associated with the gallery. In particular, I focus on Nick Couldry's concept of voice as value and voice as a social process. I also look at CAMP through Hannah Arendt's 'space of appearance' lens. Through special events, such as exhibition openings and artist talks, I argue that a 'space of appearance' comes into being where a dialogic empowerment occurs and gives rise to the potential for action and ultimately social change. The theories I use are not postcolonial or decolonial as such; however, by looking at processes of appearance and re-appearance, I examine how notions of voice and capacity (Appadurai 2004) may contribute to decolonial<sup>5</sup> practices.

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<sup>5</sup> By decolonial, I refer to the decolonising practices and epistemic shift that philosopher Walter D Mignolo considers necessary in order to "enable the histories and thought of other places to be understood [...] and to be used as the basis of developing connected histories of encounters" (Bhambra 2014: 119).

The methodological framework will take a point of departure from visual research methodology and use textual analysis combined with semi-structured interviews with audiences and staff at CAMP. Further, a quantitative audience survey was undertaken by Tom Bennett, a researcher and student at the University of Leicester, of which the findings were made available to me for analysis and added to the audience feedback section of this paper. Thus, data is collected through interviewing, textual analysis and observation as a volunteer.<sup>6</sup>

CAMP, as mentioned, is physically located inside Trampoline House. Users of Trampoline House include new and old residents of Denmark, asylum-seekers, refugees, volunteers and interns. Most people who come here have some kind of interest migration-related topics and/or have refugee/migrant backgrounds. CAMP is heavily reliant on volunteers and interns. The only paid staff work part-time and include the management team. CAMP runs an eight-week art guide programme where people with refugee or migrant backgrounds can participate in a course designed to teach participants about the particular exhibition on display and how to guide audiences through the works.

Through readings of selected works, I discuss the works as sites of communication. These works<sup>7</sup> are:

- *The Gaze*, video installation by Jeannette Ehlers, Danish artist with parents from Barbados.
- *The Andersons*, photograph by Jane Jin Kaisen, Danish artist with South Korean heritage
- *Africa Light*, a light installation by Khaled Albaih, Sudanese political cartoonist and artist currently in Denmark.

In the analysis, focus will not be from an art critical or art history view, rather, I will look at the artworks in terms of how they convey voice and discuss the works in relation to the art gallery,

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<sup>6</sup> CAMP does not normally accept researchers at the masters' level and after two unsuccessful attempts at convincing CAMP management, my research request was approved on the condition I became a volunteer. I therefore offered my services as a communications consultant and was involved with communication and outreach work for another exhibition (*We're saying what you're thinking* by Johan Tirén) in May 2019.

<sup>7</sup> For this study, I chose three artworks for analysis. A short description of the artworks from the exhibition and why I chose these three can be found in chapter 4 Analysis.



CAMP. In this sense, how the works are looked at and who is looking, are the primary concern. Further, although I discuss the works as representational texts, I see them more as communicational tools and “art in the public interest”<sup>8</sup>, in the overall function of CAMP and Trampoline House as a bridge-building social intervention.

### Structure of this thesis

This thesis follows a traditional format with an introductory section followed by a literature review. I then briefly discuss methodology and research methods and place them within the research design. Following this, I conduct an in-depth analysis of CAMP, the art space and Trampoline House as a refugee justice community centre. This discussion is then followed by a short analysis of selected artworks from the *Decolonising Appearance* exhibition. Audience feedback will be interspersed throughout these sections.

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<sup>8</sup> Art critic Arlene Raven’s term, ‘art in the public interest’ as an art that intersects with social issues (Kwon 2002: 105).

## Chapter 2 Literature review

This literature review presents a brief background on the importance of culture and art when addressing development and how postcolonial realities shape the way we view belonging and identity. I then go on to discuss the theoretical framework for this paper which is the notion of voice and appearance. This section discusses the art gallery as a space and its artworks as connective and relational. The main focus for the analysis is Nick Couldry's notion of voice (Couldry 2010) and Hannah Arendt's thoughts on action and the 'space of appearance' (Arendt 1958). A short section on visual methodology theory follows.

### Background

Art historian Anne Petersen explores "the transformative impact of migration and transculturation through the lens of contemporary art" (Petersen 2017:1). She argues that this distinctive perspective can provide a platform for discussion on how notions of identity, belonging and community change with migration and globalisation. However, she also notes that the art world can be a closed virtual space of "discursive and sociological separation produced by a generalised community of artists, curators, collectors, critics, scholars and associated institutions and professionals" (Petersen 2017: 2).

John Clammer argues the importance of connecting the arts to the culture and development debate (Clammer 2014). As he notes, definitions of development in the past have implied primarily economic development which does not take into account what the development is for. For Clammer, culture is also a discussion of values and how it is the source of collective memories and social imagination. He considers culture to be a depository of historical experiences and this is why culture cannot be separate from development. (Clammer 2014: 5). "We may overcome material poverty, but without overcoming our cultural poverty our future in a state of 'affluence' may be one of boredom and alienation: yet another form of spiritual poverty" (2014: 6).

With the rise of populism and far-right movements in Europe in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis, scholar Gurminder K. Bhambra points out that the refugee crisis is a crisis *of* Europe and not

in Europe, as mentioned earlier (Bhabra 2017). She argues that a properly cosmopolitan Europe is one that does not render “invisible the long-standing histories of empire and colonialism that already connect those migrants, or citizens, with Europe” (Bhabra 2017: 396). For her, “a properly cosmopolitan Europe... would be one that understood that its historical constitution in colonialism cannot be rendered to the past simply by the denial of that past” (ibid).

Migrants and refugees are already connected to Europe, they are not foreign when they land on the shores of European countries. And it is the failure to address the colonial histories of Europe that make it easier to dismiss people whether they are migrants or seeking refuge when coming from outside Europe. Many governments in Europe have used fearmongering tactics to illicit fear about national security and allowing refugees to enter their borders. In response to the refugee crisis of 2015, civil society actors and local volunteer groups rallied to show their support for those in plight. Trampoline House, although established before the crisis in 2015, is one such actor. And CAMP was established as a forum for discussion and mutual exchange using art as a tool of communication.

The exhibition, *Decolonising Appearance*, that I will discuss in more detail later is concerned with the decolonisation of appearances. Looking to colonial histories of Europe, Nicholas Mirzoeff, visual the curator of the exhibition, questions how we see and appear to one another with a decolonial gaze. Bhabra widens the gaze and asks what happens when “the terms of the debate, that have for so long been taken for granted, are contextualised in broader histories” in her essay contribution to the Decolonising Appearance exhibition (Bhabra 2018: 16). She points out that the stories Europe tells itself are inaccurate. Europe’s past is “an imperial past, not a national past” (ibid, 17), and following formal decolonisation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, histories have been rewritten and those who were colonised are portrayed as different and not sharing the same values that make up various national cultures. It is this refusal to address the broader connected histories that bring the Decolonising Appearance exhibition to the fore. Most of the refugees and migrants coming to Europe were from countries once colonised by Europe. *The Gaze*, a work in the exhibition by Danish artist Jeanette Ehlers, which I will discuss in more detail, addresses this point. In her work, Ehlers shows that the refugees and asylum-seekers are here because the colonisers

were there, thereby linking the present to the past. The “decolonial” theme of the exhibition, *Decolonising Appearance*, would most obviously lend itself to a decolonial or postcolonial analysis. Instead I chose to focus on the ‘appearance’ aspect of the exhibition and found that although not using traditional postcolonial theories developed around the ideas of Homi K Bhaba and Gayatri Spivak, or the modernity/coloniality school of thought spearheaded by Anibal Quijano, Maria Lugones and Walter D Mignolo, looking at appearance with voice and capacity can provide a decolonial lens.

### Voice and appearance

The main theoretical framework for this study is an interrogation of voice and appearance, and their connection to action and capacity. In Chapter 4, these notions will inform the discussion of the artistic practices of CAMP.

The faculty of voice and the capacity to aspire is not an equal right for all. Arjun Appadurai asks, “how can we strengthen the capability of the poor to have and to cultivate voice, since exit is not a desirable solution for the world’s poor and loyalty is clearly no longer generally clear cut?” (Appadurai 2004: 62). In the case of CAMP, does the art created represent voices that can be heard? Here, Appadurai’s ideas about aspiration being a cultural capacity based on notions of recognition may be tied into the exhibition that will be discussed later. He draws on Charles Taylor’s concept of ‘recognition’ that is “an ethical obligation to extend a sort of moral cognizance to persons who shared worldviews deeply differently from our own” (Appadurai 2004: 62). In the case of this paper, recognising ‘other’s also mean taking into account their voice. In light of this, the capacity to aspire may be a process of acknowledging voice.

For Appadurai, aspirations are not individual, “they are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life” (Appadurai 2004: 67). And in viewing capacity, he not only considers aspiration but the capacity of voice that can “debate, contest, inquire and participate critically” (2004: 70).

But what do we mean by voice? Nick Couldry’s notion of voice as value and as a process is particularly useful. For Couldry, voice is “socially grounded” and “is a form of reflexive agency”

(Couldry 2010: 16). By this, he means that individuals alone cannot practice voice. Having a voice means having the resources (language) and status to be recognised by others as having a voice. Further, without an ongoing narrative with others, voice won't matter. Voice is a "means where people give an account of the world in which they act" (Couldry 2010: 95). "As such, voice is socially grounded, performed through exchange, reflexive, embodied and dependent upon a material form" (Couldry 2010: 95).

Voice is reflexive agency, since having a voice is also about taking responsibility for one's voice and undergoing ongoing reflection about exchanges between the past and present, us and others (Couldry 2010: 17). By voice being embodied, Couldry means that each person's voice is a reflection and self-interpretation of our embodied history. "For voice is the process of articulating the world from a distinctive embodied position" (Couldry 2010: 17). What is crucial here is understanding that there are different voices and it is important to respect the differences between voices. Because if we do not respect the differences in voice, it is the same as not recognising voice at all. For Couldry, voice is a social process that involves "both speaking *and listening*, that is, an act of attention that registers the uniqueness of the other's narrative" (Couldry 2010: 17).

When discussing voice, it is necessary to address listening as well. As Couldry states, "Listening is not attending to sound, it's paying attention to registering people's use of their voice in the act of giving an account of themselves. This is clear in art because giving an account can take any kind of form: it can be pasting a photograph on a wall, a graffiti, a walk through a space...It cannot be reduced to sound, and is not about the sonic wave or the way in which we use our voice to make sounds" (Couldry in Farinati & Firth 2017: 58). For Couldry, listening is about registering accounts of others and as he puts it in the same conversation, "the political edge of voice becomes clearer when you move to listening" (Couldry in Farinati & Firth 2017: 59).

Farinati and Firth discuss listening in relation to collectivity where they ask how "listening might help to create some kind of collective that could be momentary and fleeting or something more lasting" (Farinati and Firth 2017: 74). Further, how are listening as an act and agency connected?

And very pertinently for this discussion on CAMP and artistic practices, they observe that “what constitutes political action can itself be difficult to pin down, especially in relation to artistic practice and contemporary modes of work that have incorporated intellectual, creative and cooperative aspects. For them, listening is a “relational and social process through an investigation of voice” (Farinati and Firth 2017: 56).

Nicholas Bourriaud’s ideas on “relational art” are interesting for the discussion on CAMP as a relational art space (Bourriaud 2002). For Bourriaud, relational art is “an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and *private* symbolic space” (Bourriaud 2002: 14). To take this further, Suzi Gablik’s concept of a ‘connective aesthetics’, is another way to look at CAMP and the activities within the art space. Gablik’s connective aesthetics is a ‘listener-centred’ form of art rather than a vision-oriented one. For her, “art that is grounded in the realization of our interconnectedness and intersubjectivity – the intertwining of self and others – has a quality of relatedness that cannot be fully realized through monologue: it can only come into its own in dialogue, as open conversation (Gablik 1992: 4). It is this open conversation and dialogue that CAMP as an art gallery hopes to promote.

Gablik argues that “inviting in the other makes art more socially responsive” (Gablik 1992: 4). It is this invitation of the other that makes CAMP a potential site of action in Hannah Arendt’s sense of ‘action’. For Arendt, action is one of three fundamental activities that comprise the *vita activa* (the active life), the other two are labour and work. For the purposes of this discussion, I will stick to action, which in Arendt’s understanding, is linked to human condition of plurality and natality. Arendt argues that within this natality comes a new beginning and that beginning is the capacity for something new, of acting. And therefore, this element of action and natality is found in human activity (Arendt 1958: 9). In her view, action and speech are inextricably linked, as without action speech is meaningless.

Arendt refers to the Ancient Greeks’ love of poetry and how narratives contributed to collective memories, and for these memories to be preserved, a community of memory must exist, an

audience (D'Entreves 2019). Here her ideas of the *polis* come into the picture. Arendt argued that the space of appearance is a public space, or *polis* in the ancient Greek city-state which she based her writings on, that comes into being “wherever men are together in the manner of speech and action” (Arendt 1998: 199). However, as soon as people disperse, the space ceases to be there. The *polis* functioned as a community of memory and a space of remembrance where stories enacted could be remembered. It is not just the city-state, but a public realm where action and speech are possible in a community of free and equal citizens. “The *polis*, properly speaking, is not the city-state in its physical location; it is the organization of the people as it arises out of acting and speaking together, and its true space lies between people living together for this purpose, no matter where they happen to be” (Arendt 1958: 198).

Thus, the space of appearance is contingent upon speech and action. And can only exist where people are gathered in action. This is why it is a fragile notion and can only occur if certain components are in place. As I will try to show in later analysis of the space and activities of CAMP, action can be fleeting, and power can quickly dissipate. Arendt argued that power is a human creation, “power is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence” (Arendt 1998: 200). For her, power was a “power potential” and not a measurable entity such as force or strength. The limitation though, is that power is generated through people gathering together and dissolves when people disperse (1958: 244).

Arendt’s notion of space of appearance, will form the basis for the analysis along with Couldry’s thoughts on voice. Appadurai’s thoughts on aspiration will also inform some of the analysis. I propose this combination of thinking as an avenue into how to understand CAMP’s artistic practices. The connectedness of these theories also provides a participatory approach into looking at CAMP in a ComDev context. Further, this interrogation of voice, appearance and capacities may also function as a way of looking at CAMP’s artistic practices through a postcolonial lens. This postcolonial lens is concerned with deconstructing past appearances to appear in the present with a voice that matters and is listened to. This may also be considered decolonial as the exhibition and our discussion here is concerned with decolonial practices. “Decolonising the colonial mind

necessitates an encounter with the colonised, where finally the European has the experience of being seen as judged by those they have denied" (Bernasconi in Mignolo 2002: 72).

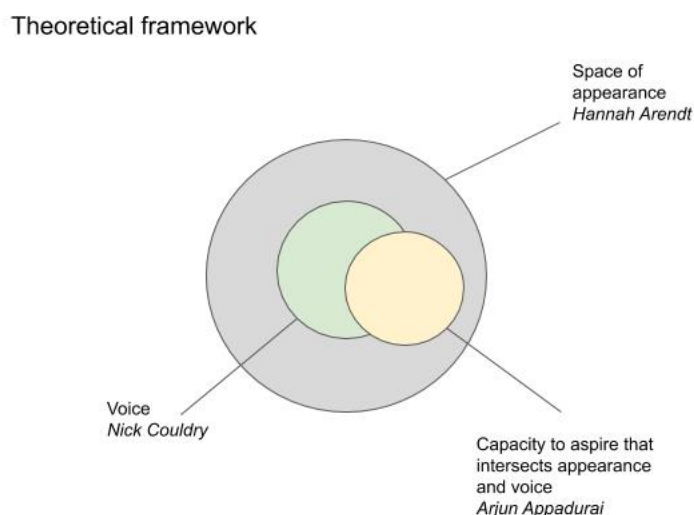


Figure 1 A visualisation of the main theoretical framework

## Visual methodology

Stuart Hall talks about culture as a process and a construction of meaning. He is summed up succinctly in Gillian Rose's book *Visual Methodologies*, "Primarily culture is concerned with the production and exchange of meanings – the 'giving and taking of meaning' – between the members of a society or group" (Hall in Rose 2007: 1).

In the case of Trampoline House and CAMP, how is meaning made through these visual representations, and how does the giving and taking of meaning take place when the audience and artist are not members of the same group and especially when some of the artists or members are excluded from the majority society? Using Stuart Hall's definition of representation, "it is a process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning" (Hall 2013: 45).



Representations and images are never innocent (Rose 2007: 2). “They interpret the world; they display it in very particular ways” (ibid). Rose speaks of the distinction between vision and visuality or the scopic regime another term with similar connotations to visuality (ibid). Further, in analysing the images, an important point to consider is, “ways of seeing” (Berger in Rose 2007:8). “We never look just at one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves” (ibid).

Apart from looking at things in relation to ourselves, we also look at objects in relation to others, and in relation to one culture and another. Following the constructionist approach, “representation involves making meaning by forging links between three different orders of things: what we might broadly call the world of things, people, events and experiences; the conceptual work – the mental concepts we carry around in our heads; and the signs, arranged into languages, which stand for or communicate these concepts” (Hall 2013: 45).

Michael Pickering talks about ‘experience’ being a “methodological touchstone in sounding an insistence on the significance of listening to others and attending to what is relatively distinctive in their way of knowing their immediate social world, for it is only by doing this that we can glean any sense of what is involved in their subjectivities, self-formation, life histories and participation in social and cultural identities” (Pickering 2008: 23).

Further, he argues that “any speaking of self or from the perspective given to us by our own locations and cultural mappings has to be balanced by listening to others and investigating the matrix of experience from which they speak of themselves” (Pickering 2008: 26).

## Summary

A brief background on migration and the importance of culture on development set the scene for the subject of CAMP and its activities. Notions of appearance, voice and, and to some extent, capacity, will frame the discussion of the art space and the artworks of the *Decolonising Appearance* exhibition. I hope this discussion will be able to connect the power that arises from a space of appearance with voice, and ultimately a form of participatory action that can arise and

ultimately lead to social change. A short discussion on methodological approaches form the basis for the analysis of artworks that follows later.

## Chapter 3 Methodology

### Research methods

This study used textual analysis of artworks, accompanying material including the CAMP exhibition catalogue, and information found on CAMP's website and social media platforms. Semi-structured interviews were also conducted for data collection.

Textual analysis was the chosen method because it is a method that “does not attempt to identify the “correct” interpretation of a text but is used to identify what interpretations are possible and likely. Texts are polysemic—they have multiple and varied meanings” (Lockyear 2012: 2).

Part of the research also involved interviewing members of the audience, CAMP's staff members including a volunteer guide with refugee status and the co-founder and curator. By conducting semi-structured interviews, I followed a set of questions<sup>9</sup> while allowing new ideas and themes to pop up during questioning and conversation. As the members of the audience were an invited group of friends, I am aware of my position as an interviewer and friend. The interviews conducted were more conversational in nature and freer than the interviews conducted with the other interviewees such as the team at CAMP.

I also had numerous conversations with CAMP's Chief Executive Officer, Anders Juhl, and co-founder and curator, Frederikke Hansen. These conversations were not recorded but served to give more insight into the art space, and the organisational structure and activities of CAMP.

I attended an artist talk with one of the exhibiting artists, Khalid Albaih, and had the opportunity to be part of an audience of about 50 people in which many refugees and asylum-seekers were represented.

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<sup>9</sup> Appendix 1

I also examined video interviews of artists and the other CAMP co-founder and curator, Tone Olaf Nielsen. I've examined written interviews and articles about the exhibition and collected data from relevant social media platforms for CAMP and the exhibition. Other online sources have been articles about the exhibition from art journals and magazines.

And finally, I had access to survey findings from Tom Bennett, a student of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, who was conducting research for an art project. His quantitative results are attached as appendix 2. The findings from the survey were used in the discussion on audience feedback in chapter 4. The findings are part of a university project which is not yet published, to my knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

The different sets of data collected from audience interviews, staff interviews, textual analysis, observation, and voluntary work, were combined to form the crux of the study.

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<sup>10</sup> At the time of writing this version of this paper 12 August 2019.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

This section will look at CAMP, the art gallery and Trampoline House in more detail. I will incorporate audience feedback, from the interviews I conducted, throughout the analysis. There is also a separate, more detailed audience section. As mentioned earlier, I conduct readings of three artworks after an initial discussion of CAMP and Trampoline House.

### **To appear is to matter**

The *Decolonising Appearance* exhibition addresses past histories of colonialism and examines how *appearing* is politically and historically charged. In the foreword of the *Decolonising Appearance* exhibition catalogue, CAMP's founders, Frederikke Hansen and Tone Olaf Nielsen write, "to appear is to become visible or noticeable; to claim the right to exist, to possess one's body, and to matter in the space of politics" (Hansen and Nielsen 2018: 6).

In his curatorial introduction, Nicholas Mirzoeff states, "In appearing, I see you, and you see me, and a space is formed by that exchange, which, by consent, can be mediated into shareable and distributable forms. People inevitably appear to each other unequally because history does not disappear" (Mirzoeff 2018:9). Colonial settlers created societies where people were ranked and categorised by appearance, in other words, a racial hierarchy was established. He refers to Peruvian sociologist, Anibal Quijano, one of the seminal thinkers on coloniality/modernity. Quijano said that 'coloniality' is the modern matrix of power, formed in 1492 and still in effect (Mirzoeff 2018: 11). In *Decolonising Appearance*, Mirzoeff shows that in order for a decolonised appearance, spaces, where appearance can be imagined outside coloniality, must be created.

The exhibition inextricably connects histories of Europe with the current migration and refugee crisis facing us today. Mirzoeff asks, "how can the refugee and the forced migrant appear as themselves in this (last) crisis of capitalism"? For Mirzoeff, appearing is a social event. In this exhibition, he questions how the refugee and forced migrant can appear and matter. For him, decoloniality is when "no one is illegal, and no one is property" (Mirzoeff 2018: 11). Bhabra notes that the challenges of decolonising appearance would require Europeans to understand that

the question of who belongs is not based on notions of the nation-state and the rights of national citizens, but rather the historical imperialist past (Bhambra 2018: 20). In order to create a decolonial space of appearance, Mirzoeff concludes,

“In decolonised appearance, people act as if they were free, as if what happens there happens everywhere, now and in the future. People do not represent and are not represented. They appear” (Mirzoeff 2018: 11).

In essence, this exhibition’s focus on appearance is what forms the basis of the theoretical discussion along with notions of voice and capacity. Further, the discussion may also be viewed through a lens that is postcolonial in the extent that I am concerned with practices that interrogate how we see each other based on the colonial past.

### The art space – The Centre for Art on Migration Politics (CAMP)

CAMP is as an invited space for art and discussion on migration politics. It is a “‘place of memory’ where experiences of immigrants will not be forgotten” (Cresswell 2009: 5). Following geographer, John Agnew, Cresswell defines place as a ‘meaningful location’ that comprises location, locale and sense of place (Agnew in Cresswell 2009: 7). A location is a physical coordinate that the word place refers to in daily speech. Locale refers to “the material setting for social relations” and sense of place points to the emotional connections that people attach to a place (Cresswell 2009: 7).

In this discussion on CAMP and Trampoline House, I will use place in Cresswell’s definition of the word, i.e. place is a space that people have made meaningful (ibid.). I look at the exhibition in relation to the opening events and the art space and place the discussion within Arendt’s ‘space of appearance’ while exploring whether a capacity to aspire arises. How does action occur and does it last? Are voices being heard? Whose voices? And who’s listening?

CAMP is located inside Trampoline House. Entering the building, a visitor first walks through an entrance with lockers for the users of the house to store personal belongings. Then you enter the main communal space where most activities take place. CAMP is situated in a room inside this

communal room. CAMP is three connecting rooms consisting of a small reception and office where CAMP's staff is located. The actual exhibition space is through yet another door inside that room and is two small connecting rooms deep inside the building.

Floor plan

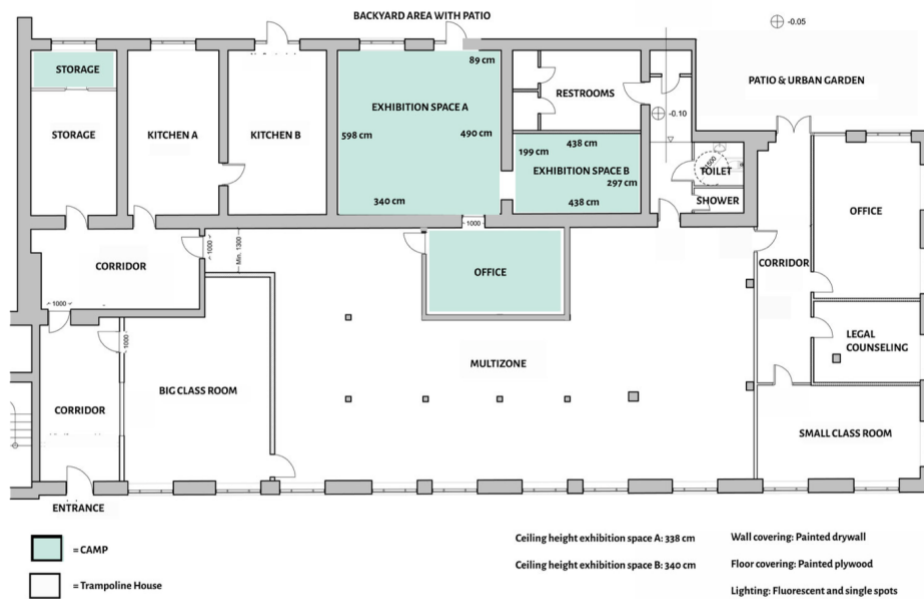
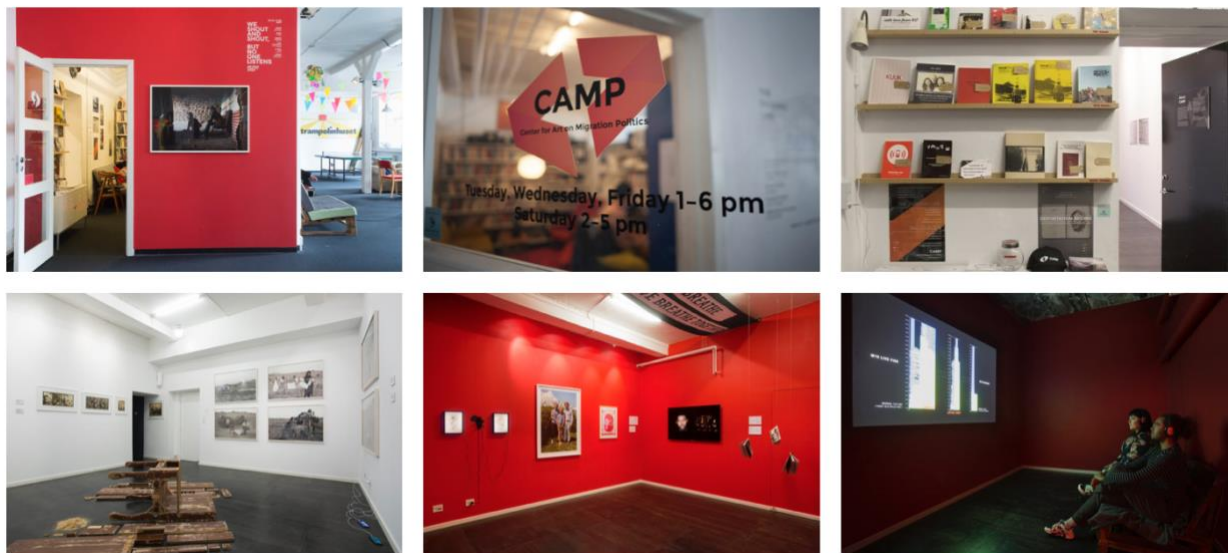


Figure 2 Floor plan of Trampoline House and CAMP. Source: campcph.org

In this way, the physical space of CAMP is deeply entrenched within the communal space of Trampoline House. As mentioned earlier, Trampoline House is a refugee justice community centre that offers activities, classes and events for asylum-seekers and refugees. Activities include communal dinners, a women's club, childcare, music nights, movie nights and other such convivial activities. And beyond this, it is a political arena for users, volunteers, staff and other interested parties to debate political immigration issues at monthly house meetings, and other events in connection with art openings in CAMP. The management teams for both organisations have overlapping roles and the co-founder of Trampoline House is also a co-founder of CAMP.

CAMP's vision is to become a centre "visitors experience art that mirrors refugee and immigrant experiences in a new home, and art that examines challenges the majority society faces with immigration" (CAMP's annual report 2018: 8).



*Figure 3 Top left: Entrance to reception/office area, top middle: CAMP logo, top right: books for sale and entrance to first room. Bottom left: main exhibition room, bottom middle: main exhibition painted red, bottom right: smaller connecting room. Source: campcph.org*

Although CAMP and Trampoline House are run as two separate organisations with two management structures, they are intrinsically linked together physically and ideologically. As one of the visitors said after a guided tour of the exhibition said, "First you see the back room, the back stage. The work they do and then you go to the centre stage. It's like a reverse experience. It's a reverse approach. Maybe it gives you a different experience. It sets the stage for what they do" (appendix 1.2).

CAMP is the embodiment of collective processes and participation. It is both an art gallery, and a political arena for activities that are aimed at social change on a larger scale. The arena becomes a space where action and voice occur. Exhibition-related events are held in conjunction with Trampoline House. Due to CAMP's locale within Trampoline House, it is not possible to keep things separate. Participating in the events during the opening period is a part of the exhibition. During the opening day, there was a full programme of speeches given by the curator and CAMP

founders, artist talks and panels with political activists, as well as activist artist performances. For example, collectives Marronage and MTL Collective, staged interventions in the form of hanging up banners and reading from their manifesto as a collective voice. There was also a mural painting event and a performance by an artist. Following this, there was a weekly guided tour with guides who had undergone an eight-week educational programme designed by the CAMP founders. And throughout the duration of the exhibition, there were artist talks with exhibiting artists and a printing workshop hosted by another artist from the exhibition. In this sense, *Decolonising Appearance* was a full experience of visual art, performance art, participatory art, political art and activist art. The exhibition is not just the artworks on display in the art gallery. The gallery becomes a relational art space, where politics, action, voice arise in a space of appearance.

The issue though is that if an 'ordinary' visitor who had not participated in the opening events, that person would have missed out on important elements of the experience of *Decolonising Appearance*.

When discussing the space of CAMP and Trampoline House, despite their separate official structural organisations, they are seen as being a part of each other, both by users and in the overlapping managerial functions. In this space of appearance, Trampoline House is a civic centre where discussions of politics and stories are shared. It is also where voices are heard among an otherwise voiceless community of refugees and asylum-seekers. And within this space of appearance, is yet another such space, the space that constitutes the art gallery, where voices from the world outside in the form of international artists, as well as local artists, who are not users of the house, are represented. These voices are there in the form of artistic representations of migration and related issues.

In this space, in the words of Hannah Arendt, "where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men [people] exist not merely like other living or inanimate things, but to make their appearance explicitly" users of Trampoline House can appear as themselves and their voices are heard (Arendt 1998: 198-9).



For Arendt, power is what keeps the realm of the public, the space of appearance, in existence. Arendt considers power something that occurs when men act together and disappears when they disperse. In CAMP and Trampoline House, I think this is particularly apt. During exhibition opening events, the power of the audience, artists, curators, activists, users are felt through the collective voice. The collective voice that is lamenting, shouting, debating, contesting the status quo.

However, what happens outside of these events, where people gather? Once they disperse, does the power and the power of their actions also disperse? For Arendt, “action [...] is never possible in isolation; to be isolated is to be deprived of the capacity to act” (Arendt 1998: 188). I would add that to be isolated would also be to be deprived of the capacity to aspire. Because when people gather, they appear to each other, and more importantly, they matter to one another. In that space of appearance, aspirations can occur. Bourriaud would call this the “arena of exchange”. For him “art is a state of encounter” and in this encounter, exchange can occur (Bourriaud 2002: 18). This exchange can be related to Arendt’s action-oriented polis where interaction is necessary in order to create a political space and where power can arise.

As already noted, CAMP is physically hidden inside the community centre. It is not a gallery that passers-by would drop in on, or chance upon. Its contradictory hiddenness as a public, yet very private space, creates an invisibility despite its efforts in wanting to contribute to the public discourse. All informants questioned had not heard of the art gallery prior to visiting the exhibition. As one informant noted,

“It is very hidden. It has very little coverage. It’s a very closed space and because it’s such a strong exhibition it should have more dialogue. And the more diverse the people who see it, the more openly you can talk about these things. it should be in a more exposed space, for sure. [It would] be more powerful that way and have more effect” (Appendix 1.1).

If we look at CAMP’s online presence or space, we are presented with another perspective. From a digital view, the art gallery seems more impressive and more visible. It holds its own in another way than the physicality of its location. Its physical space is humble, or as one informant said, “very grassroots and volunteer-like inside a community centre”. She was quite surprised at how

“professional” the gallery was – with little plaques and gallery-like presentation of the works” (Appendix 1.4). Another informant similarly observed that it was a bit dingy and not welcoming, or rather, he felt positioned in a way that made him feel unwelcome if he was not “explicitly left-wing enough” (Appendix 1.5).

A deeper look at CAMP’s social media presence, Facebook and Instagram reveals a different story. Well-articulated posts, carefully formulated opinions and informative writing on the activities at CAMP show a serious and political arena where political activism seems to be the main message. Art is almost secondary. Political calls for signing petitions feature regularly on the Facebook wall<sup>11</sup> and the many posts on the horrid conditions of deportation centres for asylum-seekers detract from art and artistic practices. In this regard, the focus is taken away from the artists and their works as the centre of activity and importance is given to the political arena of exchange as the centre of action.

As mentioned earlier, Bourriaud talks about relational art being the encounters between people where meaning is produced collectively as opposed to individually. In some ways, this line of thought applies to CAMP. From discussions with the informants, the meaning produced from the artworks and being in the physical space of CAMP were sporadic and often fragmented. Most of the informants were not interested in the artworks enough to read up or do more research on the matters presented after leaving the exhibition. In this way, the meaning produced was fleeting.

Whereas, the exhibition opening was packed with activities aimed at creating discussion, awareness and action. For the *Decolonising Appearance* opening, an extensive programme with activists, Nicholas Mirzoeff, this exhibition’s curator, CAMP’s curators, many of the artists, and public figures were invited to discuss the issues surrounding the exhibition. In this way, meaning was collectively produced by and for all actors including the audience. Arendt’s contention where action is only possible where people gather seems apt (Arendt 1998: 199). For Bourriaud, the exhibition is produced when communities or collectives have come together. If we look to Suzi

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/campcph/>

Gablik's 'connective aesthetics', the space in which the art is shown becomes a community and a communal space for connectivity is therefore socially responsive.

Looking at the Institutional framework of this art space then, and looking at the activities that take place within this space, one is tempted to ask, who is listening if the space in which these interventions are taking place is already home to those who agree? What kinds of action comes out of this?

It could be said that these activities connected to the exhibition opening are what could be considered an exercise of voice. If we turn to Arjun Appadurai and his concept of voice and capacity, he argues that the capacity of the poor (in this particular case, the artists, the users of Trampoline) to exercise 'voice' must be strengthened, "to debate, contest, and oppose vital directions for collective social life as they wish, not only because this is virtually a definition of inclusion and participation in any democracy (Appadurai 2004: 66). Here, voice is considered a cultural capacity. "Furthermore, voice must be expressed in terms of actions and performances which have local cultural force" (Appadurai 2004: 67).

Couldry discusses the complexities of how voice works on a collective level. He notes that while voice is within the collective (where everyone knows each other), once we get beyond that, "you have to rely on institutions to hold voice and allow it to stay, and for others to come back to it" (Couldry in Farinati and Firth 2017: 104-105).

CAMP and Trampoline House are the collective where voice can be held and heard. But only if people who are not already users of the house or volunteers, come back to it. These people could be art gallery visitors. The power is held within the institution. Is this action-focused power transferable? What happens when the artworks are presented by a guide and how are they experienced without the voice of the guide?

## Talking about Art – a communication strategy

Talking about Art is an eight-week educational programme for art guides at CAMP. All guides have graduated from the programme before guiding an exhibition. The aim of the programme is to “encourage the participants to engage in discussions and debates about contemporary art and broader social and political issues to enable them to participate in public debate and make their voices heard.”<sup>12</sup> The programme teaches participants how to analyse artworks, and how to present them to the public. It also “actively involves them in preparing a script for the guided tours”. Weekly guided tours of all exhibitions are conducted with a programme graduate and a CAMP educational intern “to offer different perspectives to the visitors and open up a space for dialogue and discussion.”

As a volunteer at CAMP, I was allowed to interview one of the guides, who also happened to be one of the guides of the tour I was on. I interviewed him a few weeks after the guided tour. The interview was facilitated through CAMP’s director. I was given 30 minutes with the guide and the interview took place in CAMP’s reception and office.

The guide teaches English, French and Swahili at Trampoline House. He also teaches a democracy class and is a facilitator at monthly house meetings at Trampoline House. He has been guiding since 2016 and became interested in art after coming to Trampoline House.

“After being an asylum-seeker in Denmark. I’ve been through a lot of experiences of racism and colonialism. Through art, I can see how it can work to fight racism, discrimination and hierarchies of racism” (Appendix 3.1).

There were two guides that led my group of three informants and myself along with other members of the audience. The other two informants experienced the exhibition on their own. I will go into further detail about the guided tour experience in the audience section that follows the artwork analysis.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://campcph.org/guide-program>

## A reading of three works from the Decolonising Appearance exhibition

Having discussed the art space, CAMP and Trampoline House, the community centre in which it resides, let us turn to the artworks.

The exhibition<sup>13</sup> featured the following 11 works from international artists. American artist Carl Pope contributed with letterpress posters that addressed the intersection between Black and blackness in America. The exhibition also showed photographs by Ghanaian-British John Akomfrah that visualised the temporalities of migration in a meditative series of palimpsests, a map illustration challenging how the world during colonial times were viewed by Mexican artist Pedro Lasch, and Danish activist Abdul Dube's poster on who can claim to be human. A feminist collective Marronage exhibited their work on decolonial organising in the form of a pamphlet with essays and photo stories about belonging and resistance; while Forensic Architecture, a group of videographers, showed a short film on the collective use of social media to challenge the occupation in Palestine. Dread Scott, an American artist, questioned the hierarchy of racialised appearance by questioning the liberal narrative of the Civil Rights Movement in the US. Other artist performances included a dance by British Sonya Dyer, a reading and intervention by MTL collective, and a conversation by Danish duo, Ghetto Fitness.

For my analysis, I chose three works, two by Danish artists, Jeanette Ehlers and Jane Jin Kaisen, and one by Sudanese artist, Khalid Albaih, who was in Copenhagen for an artist residency. Jeanette Ehlers' *The Gaze* is a video project addressing transatlantic slavery and Denmark's role in the slave trade. Jane Jin Kaisen exhibited a photograph depicting intersectional lives and challenged notions of power and identity in transatlantic adoption. And finally, Khalid Albaih's light installation, *Africa Light*, on how Africa's resources are exploited. These three pieces were chosen because of the Danish connection and since I am mostly concerned with how refugee and migrant voices are heard in the Danish context. Further, I found these works were the most powerful from a visual perspective. The simplicity of Khalid Albaih's installation spoke immediately to me and its message was conveyed strongly and clearly. Jeannette Ehlers' video was similarly

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<sup>13</sup> For more details about these works, please see the exhibition catalogue: <http://campcph.org/decolonizing-appearance-2018> (accessed on 22 May 2019).

powerful and evocative, also due to its simplicity. The photograph by Jane Jin Kaisen was also deceptively simple in its composition, but strong in its message, and lingered in my memory long after I had visited the exhibition.

## The Gaze



*Figure 4 Jeanette Ehlers, The Gaze (2018). HD 2 channel video projection with sound. Source: campcph.org*

Visual artist Jeannette Ehlers' video installation is an art performance with a group of fifteen people including the artist herself. The performers in the back row are standing, some with their arms crossed, others with their hands and arms pointing downwards. The second row of people are sitting on chairs, with their hands on their laps, or clasped. The people in the first row are kneeling on one knee and rest their hands on the other knee. They are all staring at the camera, unflinchingly and determinedly. The accompanying explanation on the plaque next to the TV screen and exhibition catalogue states,

“The video, *The Gaze*, depicts an intense scene centring the gaze. The confrontational style of the scene strives to poetically expose the imprint of colonialism on the present, reflect on humanity and power structures, and challenge ‘the white gaze’. Everyone in the video is of non-Danish ethnic origin, the majority applying for residence in Denmark” (Decolonising Appearance exhibition catalogue, p. 44).

The guide presented the work with individual presentations of the people in the performance. Using their first names, he told us who they were, their stories, their backgrounds and how they were still seeking asylum and some of them had already been deported. Hearing a personal story, having a name put to a face, personalised the work in a way it would not have been possible without the guide. As one informant, said, the work put faces and voices to the statistics in newspaper reports (Appendix 1.3). And as the artist herself says in an interview in a Danish digital culture magazine, *Eftertrykket*,

“Although I am an African-Dane, I have a completely different background from most of the people in the video who come from catastrophe and war-torn areas. I am very much aware of this. At the same time, I feel that, with this work, I have the chance to give voice to people who might not normally have it. So overall, I feel that our backgrounds are connected in one way or another because of the colonial project”.<sup>14</sup>

This is clear in the placement of herself, as artist and subject in the artwork. She is part of the performance along with the other participants who are of non-Danish background. However, the key difference is that she is a Danish citizen who does not need to apply for anything. As a viewer, I asked myself, did she place herself in the piece alongside the other participants to show solidarity and to become one with the others in a shared plight? I think the piece would have had a more powerful a message without her presence in the performance. By being in it, she somehow equates herself with the plight of the permanent residence seekers. Her position as a Danish citizen in this case is one of power and belonging despite her Caribbean heritage.

The piece confronts the colonial past and asks the viewer to question the systemic institutional racism that prevails today. It is this decolonising interrogation of the past that allows us to establish new dialogues about that past and “bringing into being new histories and form those new histories, new presents and new futures” (Bhambra 2014: 117).

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<sup>14</sup> Interview in [Eftertrykket](#), 14 January 2019. Translation my own.

*The Gaze* is based on an art performance called *Into the Dark* where performers and audience gazed at each for four minutes whereupon a performer and member of the audience exchanged places and a call-and-response began where the performer said to the performers on stage, “I am here because you were there”, and the performers on stage replied, “We are here because you were there”.

The video performance ends with a final frame where one of the women leaves the scene. The next frame is a close-up of her face, and still with an unwavering gaze, she says, “I am here because you were there”. With these words, she places her right to belong by connecting the present to the past. The viewer is confronted with these words and depending on who you are, these words will mean different things. To one informant, it had an uplifting and future-oriented message. “My interpretation of that piece was different from his [the guide’s] point of view. I thought it was more a piece about hope and humanity” (appendix 1.2). This informant noted that although she did not agree with the guide’s presentation of the message, she felt that the work would not have been as powerful without the personal stories and naming of each person in the piece. Another informant had a similar experience and found the work more meaningful with the stories (Appendix 1.3). All three informants who had been part of the guided tour found this work succeeded in representing the voices of migrants and asylum-seekers.

To bring Gablik’s ‘connective aesthetics’ back into the discussion, *The Gaze*, is not just a representation of asylum-seeker voice, but also an example of a listener-centric work that involves the participation of the audience. With origins in an audience participatory performance with a call/response facet, and in its video performance version, Ehlers brings performers into the piece who have asylum-seeking backgrounds. As they gaze at the viewer, and hold the viewer’s gaze, a confrontational meeting occurs. And in this way, there is a dialogue despite no words are uttered apart from the final sentence that marks the end of the performance.

And where there is dialogue, there is action. Here, Arendt’s space of appearance may arise. The performers who are also participants in what could be called an artistic intervention are in a space of appearance where they appear, they are seen, and they are heard. In this space, the past is



connected to the present and the viewer understands why they are here. By showing the connection to the past, Ehlers deftly shows the legitimacy of the asylum-seekers being here.

## Africa Light

Africa Light installation

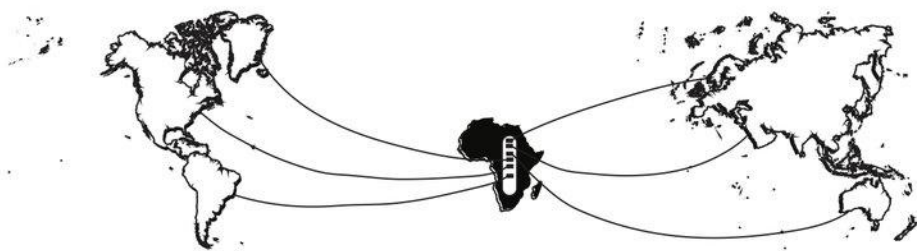


Figure 5 Khalid Albaih, *Africa Light* (2018). Mixed media light installation, dimensions variable. Source: [campcph.org](http://campcph.org)

Khalid Albaih, a cartoonist and visual artist, contributed this prototype installation to the exhibition. The installation is based on data collected by the artist and visualises the resources that are being taken out of Africa. The following description was the accompanying text that describes the work:

“Africa Light is a prototype of a larger light installation in progress. Based on data collected by the artist, the installation visualises the resources exported out of Africa. These resources are symbolised in the cables extending from the African continent, which light up the planet’s other continents, while the continent of Africa is ironically still kept in the dark” (Decolonising Appearance exhibition catalogue, p. 38).

This simple light installation managed to communicate the colonial past still very much embedded in the present. All the informants agreed that this work was very well executed in that the artist was able to use a simple method of visualisation to convey a complex issue. However, all three informants who were part of the guided tour felt that the guide's presentation of the work was distorting the facts.

They were referring to the guide telling the group about how mobile phone parts are produced in the Democratic Republic of Congo and these parts are used to supply the West with mobile phones while many of his countrymen did not own phones. Unlike *The Gaze*, where the informants found the guide's stories enlightening, the informants found this work spoke for itself and did not need any background. The guide's story about mobile phones was a good example about using his capacity and voice to create a dialogic encounter with the audience. Indeed, his story is a particularly relevant example for highlighting the critical issue of Africa's natural wealth being exploited by kleptocrats and multinationals across the continent in what some may refer to as a new form of colonialism. Although the visitors I interviewed did not find the story useful in terms of viewing the artwork, it was an attempt at establishing dialogue. Here I find the dilemma arises where the artwork should be 'allowed' to speak to itself, and where the guide sees an opportunity to inform and try to establish dialogue.

## The Andersons



*Figure 6 Jane Jin Kaisen, The Andersons, (2015). Colour photograph, framed, 93.3 x 142 cm. Source: camcph.org*

Jane Jin Kaisen, a visual artist from Denmark, turns transnational adoption practices on its head with this work. Working with the family portrait genre, she shows the inequalities and power imbalances that are present in transnational adoption. The photograph depicts a family in their garden on a sunny day. The portrait shows two Asian parents posing with their adopted daughter. The mother is performed by the artist who was adopted to Denmark from South Korea. The father is also adopted from South Korea whereas the daughter is performed by a Danish girl.

“By reversing the racial dynamic, the work is a critical commentary on transnational adoption as an overwhelmingly white, heterosexual privilege, while the composition of the photograph and the ambivalent body language and facial expressions of the characters

raise questions about idealized notions of the heteronormative family unit” (Decolonising Appearance exhibition catalogue, p. 49).

The guide presented the work with strong words against adoption. He told us he had spoken with the artist who had said that, “adoption was bad”. One informant found his commentary on the work too opinionated. “I started wondering whether the artist really meant what he said. He was trying to make the artist seem like she was trying to be very extreme about it” (Appendix 1.3). All three informants mentioned this work as one of the most standout works of the exhibition and one of the most powerful. One informant commented:

“It was supposed to make you uncomfortable and raised the question why is this making you uncomfortable? We’ve seen this so many times the other way around with a western couple and an Asian child who is clearly adopted. And you ask yourself why is this unsettling? It shouldn’t matter who adopts whom....It did raise the question, is it because it’s making you aware of the negative effects of adoption, or does it really bother you because it’s the first time, you’re seeing this the other way around?” (Appendix 1.1)

It is indeed this reversal that makes it unsettling. The viewer is confronted with questions of normative family structures, adoption being a white privilege, and who is allowed to adopt. As a viewer, you are made aware of the power and social inequalities that underlie transnational adoption. The family as a unit also comes under scrutiny in this portrait. The spectator is unsure whether the subjects are squinting their eyes from the sun, or whether they are ambivalent or even uncomfortable about having their picture taken. The child is standing stiffly with her hands clasped in front of her. The father stands uncomfortably next to the mother and child. The only person who looks proud and happy is the mother who is holding her daughter’s shoulders in a protective grasp while smiling determinedly at the camera. The family’s pose is reminiscent of old-fashioned black and white portraits taken in a studio. The product does not show a happy family.

The piece is a part of a larger project called *Loving Belinda* which started as a performative video in 2006 where the fictive family from Minnesota, USA, take part in a televised interview about

Asian-American parents adopting a child from Denmark. The project comprised the portrait, *The Andersons* (2015) and two video performances, *Adopting Belinda* (2009) and *Loving Belinda* (2015) that employ the mockumentary genre where reality is disrupted with subversive techniques.<sup>15</sup>

### Audience experience of the exhibition

Nicholas Bourriaud talks about art spaces as relational and emphasises the human interactions that occur in these spaces. In the following analysis of the audience experience, I look at the way audiences interacted with the artwork and the guides.

As mentioned earlier, guided tours were offered weekly for the duration of the Decolonising Appearance exhibition. I asked a sample audience of five visitors to see the exhibition, three of which attended the guided tour including myself. There were six others who also took part in the tour. When we arrived, the others were standing in a circle next to two guides, an older gentleman and a younger man who was a student. After a round of introductions and a presentation of Trampoline House and CAMP, we were invited into the art gallery.

The informants I interviewed had similar experiences of the guided tour whereas the informants who went to the exhibition separately had different experiences. The three informants who were part of the tour all said their experience of the works and art gallery were very influenced by the guides.

“The tour guide had a huge impact on how I took the exhibition. I’m not aligned with his views. He [the older guide] was a bit too extreme and one-sided” (Appendix 1.2).

The influence of the guides was a recurring theme throughout all my interviews with the informants who had taken part in the guided tour.

As one informant pointed out:

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<sup>15</sup> <http://janejinkaisen.com/loving-belinda-200615>

“I think the language again was quite one-sided. And the younger man, the student, all the more. As a European viewer, of course, I could fully understand the frustration that was being expressed through his language. He would often use refugees or people of colour versus white people. I fully agree that is often an ongoing issue. But his language was more or less saying that the wrongdoing is always from those who are not of colour and those of colour are always affected and it’s always because of white people. And I thought that was very problematic in terms of creating a dialogue which is also very important when you are presenting art which is supposed to help raise awareness. And it shouldn’t only raise awareness on one side, but it should raise awareness for everyone” (Appendix 1.1).

Another informant questioned whether it was the guides’ voices we were hearing or the artists’ voices when the guide presented the works:

“The way they were presented by the guides. You were wondering if there was a lot of bitterness from the guides themselves. Rather than from a so-called neutral standpoint whatever that means. You wondered if the stories were the guide’s opinion or the artists’ message that was being portrayed through the art pieces. Looking at the artworks themselves, you create your own ideas” (Appendix 1.3).

This made me wonder how much of the script was written by the guides themselves and how much were written by CAMP’s team. And if the intention was to create dialogue and a space for conversation and contribution to the public debate, was this “one-sided” approach conducive? How much dialogue can be had? Who is doing the speaking and who’s listening? I was struck by this dilemma. If the guide who is also an asylum-seeker did not express his opinion or his views, how could his voice be heard? In a subsequent interview with him, he told me that Victor Hugo had once said that when society is failing, the art comes; the artist appears. I found this reference particularly apt in the case of CAMP. CAMP as an art space serves as an antidote to the harsh tone in the public discourse about migrants and refugees. CAMP’s vision is to provide a respectful, reflective space for discussing migration. He also added,

“For instance, in Denmark, we as asylum-seekers, we don’t have voices. Because there are a lot of barriers. The media is used only for powerful people. We don’t have access to the media. The only way for me to express myself is maybe by using drawings or writing my poems” (Appendix 3.1).

To those poems, I could add that he also had an opportunity to use his voice during the guided tours, which he did. One can argue that he needed to express strong views since there was an audience to listen and to hear what he was saying. Most importantly, he could create a space where he could appear, to matter.

The visitors I interviewed had not participated in opening events. Two of them had not been on the guided tour. For those two, their experiences were most fragmented. One informant said that the person manning the reception area had expressed surprise at her coming alone and was not participating in the group tour. She was sent inside the exhibition space without any introduction. One of the video works, *The Gaze*, was not turned on. The other visitor who had also not been on the guided tour had a similar experience. He came during a refurbishment of Trampoline House and was asked to go through a construction site before entering the exhibition space. He too was not introduced to the exhibition and was not made aware of the video work and exhibition catalogue.

Although the other three I interviewed did not participate in opening events and the activities throughout of the duration of exhibition, their experience was markedly different and heavily influenced by the guides. For Michael Pickering, “experience constitutes the meeting-place of individual perception and cultural meaning, self and symbolic forms, life-story and social conditions of existence. Experience occupies the contested territory between ways of being and ways of knowing” (Pickering 2008: 27).

And since meaning can be constructed differently depending on the social identities of spectators, ways of knowing is constantly in tension. The space of appearance, in Arendt’s sense, where

action can happen, doesn't seem likely to happen in this case. There is no action, no dialogue and common grounds for constructive conversation. As one informant observed, "They just presented the problems and not the solutions" (Appendix 1.2).

CAMP's vision is to build bridges between new and old residents. It also wants to show investigative and thought-provoking contemporary art that sheds light on prejudices and establishes meetings of cultures. The purpose of the Talking about Art programme is to create dialogue and contribute to public debate. However, its graduates were "one-sided" in their communication. The guides' opinions were strong and to some extent distancing. In this sense, their voices were not reflexive, in Couldry's sense. For Couldry, having voice is also about taking responsibility for one's voice and undergoing ongoing reflection about exchanges between the past and present, us and others (Couldry 2010: 17). However, a dilemma arises when the capacity of voice can become disempowered by an audience who does not listen. If no one is listening, what capacity does that voice have?

As mentioned earlier, an audience survey of the Decolonising Appearance exhibition was conducted by Tom Bennett, a researcher and student from the University of Leicester<sup>16</sup>. He surveyed 31 visitors, mostly students and 25 of whom were Danish. The findings showed that a third of the visitors found the exhibition had no impact and that the exhibition did not reach its targets in terms of reaching a more diverse audience, i.e. second and third generation immigrations and visitors from the contemporary art scene. In an unrecorded conversation with CAMP management, I also learned that CAMP wanted to attract a broader segment of mainstream gallery-goers that also included an older demographic and the international English-speaking community in Copenhagen.

The survey also found that the events that were a part of the exhibition were diverse and "helped establish cultural meetings across communities". An interesting point was that the researcher recommended that an intern could be taken on as the face of CAMP to the users of Trampoline "to make CAMP seem more welcoming and encourage them to visit the exhibitions". This implied

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<sup>16</sup> Appendix 2 – To my knowledge, the findings are not yet published (at the time of writing 12 August 2019).



that not many visitors from Trampoline House had seen the exhibition. This may not be the case with other exhibitions, but it is noteworthy that the researcher found it important to recommend as a course of action for CAMP.

The overall impression of the exhibition by the surveyed visitors and the sample audience was that it was small, fragmented and not impactful (despite certain standout works that were discussed earlier).

It would seem that the encounters between the guides who are a voice of CAMP and gallery visitors were not meeting places of dialogue. Although the voices (of the guides who for the purposes of this small study, represented that of the disenfranchised) could be heard, those who were supposed to listen, did not appear to be not listening. Couldry says that listening is not just about attending to sound, it is paying attention to those who are giving an account of themselves. For Farinati and Firth listening is a relational and social process of investigation of voice. If we look at the capacity to aspire as an interrogation of voice and process whereby listening can take place, in the encounters between the guides and the audience; a social relation, a space of appearance nor aspiration occurred. While the audiences *heard* the guides, were they *listening*?

It did not seem as though this small group of audience I interviewed experienced a fruitful social relation with the guides. And on the whole, it would seem that the artworks were better represented on their own terms and without an added layer of interpretation.

Despite this, the Talking about Art programme seems to be a communication strategy by CAMP to give voice. As the guide said in the subsequent interview,

“It’s a way to give voice to people with no voice. To people who cannot be heard. And to people who do not have access to international media or national media” (Appendix 3.1).

This brings me back to the dilemma I mentioned earlier. There was a physical encounter between the guides and audiences of non-refugee backgrounds, and the guides used their voice in order to

try to create dialogue and a social relation where there was an equal exchange. However, dialogue did not happen. Perhaps it was not so much the audience's unwillingness to engage in dialogue or listen, but the form in which the attempt took place. When one is taken on a guided tour of a museum or art gallery, the communication is usually one-sided, i.e., the guide does the talking and presenting of the objects the audiences look at. The setup is not one conducive to exchange. Perhaps a more dialogic approach could be inviting the audience to take part in an informal discussion at the end of the tour. In this way, the audience would be prepared to contribute to the discussion, and the setting would be one of exchange rather than one-way communication which was the case on the guided tour. Either way, dialogue is not always without tension and can be conflictual.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

What does it take to be listened to? How can artists represent the voices of those who are in need of being heard? Is it their voices as artists that are heard, or is it the voices of 'others'?

When we talk about voice, we also need to talk about who is listening. When we talk about appearing to one another, we also need to talk about mattering to one another. Who matters? Whose voice are we listening to? And why does it matter?

At the beginning, I asked what kind of strategies are employed by CAMP in contributing to the public debate. I also asked how CAMP and Trampoline House can be viewed as a social intervention in the context of Communication for Development and Social Change. The discussion has centred around notions of voice and appearance connected to action and capacity. On the issue of voice, I have found that it is exceedingly difficult to convey or represent voice. Having voice comes with responsibility, especially in a public setting, such as CAMP. The two guides were representing CAMP *as well as* themselves when speaking to gallery visitors. In theory, this cultural exchange could lead to dialogue and an opening of minds, but in practice, it led to more distance between two already distant groups. A space of appearance arose only during opening events of the exhibition; in encounters with the guides, there was no such space. Appadurai refers to a future-oriented culture of capacity where voice can be cultivated, but this can only happen if there is a cultural consensus among those involved, external agents, as well as those who aspire.

I have tried to show that CAMP as an art space is a political arena of exchange. Encounters of art occur, but only fleetingly, since the main focus seems to be activist political intervention using art events. Art seems secondary, whether by design or by default, despite CAMP having success in attracting internationally renowned artists. However, the art element is used more as a communicational tool in order to integrate Trampoline House with CAMP. Participants of the Talking about Art programme are recruited from the Trampoline House community and it seems as though the programme is more about giving voice to migrants and asylum seekers than it is about art itself.

CAMP's vision is to be a place of cultural exchange and bridge building. From the findings of the audience survey and the interviews I conducted with my small audience sample, this vision seems fragmented. On the one hand, some surveyed audiences found the related events meaningful in cultural exchange, while the informants of my audience sample who had not taken part in any events and had only encountered two guides, found CAMP to be "exclusionary" and "one-sided". There seems to be a disconnect between what CAMP wants to be, and what it is. The informants did not feel a 'sense of place' and there was no affinity. Instead there was distance. There was a physical distance, in its hidden nature, deep inside Trampoline House, but also an ideological distance between the visitors interviewed and the guides (the voice of CAMP).

If CAMP were to be considered a social intervention in a ComDev context, how would one be able to bridge this distance? And how can a more inclusive strategy be implemented to invite a more diverse audience and more dialogue? In the introduction, I said it was important to have places to discuss and debate the pressing migration challenges we are facing today, CAMP and Trampoline House are in theory the perfect candidates for these kinds of discussions.

However, the strategies currently employed are not succeeding in creating dialogue within the broader society. An investigation into how more inclusive strategies can be created could be a topic for further studies. This would undoubtedly require interviews with users of Trampoline House. And a more integrated approach with a larger audience sample from different segments of society.

CAMP's strategy of using guides with asylum-seeking backgrounds are theoretically sound if inconsistent in terms of communication. The Talking about Art programme is a good idea and if executed with a more reflexive approach in terms of the guide manuscript, this could be a useful and participatory tool for development. The programme has the potential to create dialogue and meaningful encounters between groups of people who may not meet otherwise. Events related to the art openings are similarly useful and participatory for development and social change, however, these encounters were fleeting and did not create lasting action. More events throughout the course of the exhibition could encourage more lasting involvement by audiences.

The artworks as tools of communication worked well in terms of engaging with viewers and drawing attention to the various themes represented by the works. In a ComDev context, this was the most successful strategy.

In order for CAMP to succeed in its vision of building bridges, it needs to engage the community around it more. Despite CAMP's integrated position inside of Trampoline House, it did not seem as though users of the house were regular visitors. It would also need to reach other communities that are not traditionally activist or grassroots in nature since there already seems to be a large base of supporters in that category.

A more inclusive approach would create a decolonised space of appearance where we can all appear and matter regardless of background, refugee or non-refugee. To conclude in Mirzoeff's words, "political appearance has not been open to all in any 'democracy', and certainly not those of the present time. Decolonised appearance would reckon with those legacies and open a new space altogether," (Mirzoeff 2018: 9). A decolonised space where we can aspire towards change.

## Chapter 6 Limitations

I had a small audience sample of five people who were acquaintances and friends, and with similar backgrounds to me. I only had access to one user of Trampoline House who was also the guide for the exhibition. CAMP paid a regular guide fee for the interview with me. I was not allowed to interview other Trampoline House users as the two institutions are run separately and I was CAMP's volunteer and therefore did not have access to Trampoline House users and resources. The ethical aspect of using people I know as informants is not lost on me as a researcher. In this particular instance, I found that there was no conflict of interest as I am not an employee of CAMP, nor do I have any affiliations with any of the artists or guides who were associated with CAMP or the Decolonising Appearance exhibition. Therefore, I found that using informants I had a relationship with did not affect their experience of the artworks or of CAMP, the art gallery. If I was conducting research on a larger scale, I am aware this would not be a feasible solution.

After some unsuccessful attempts at getting in touch with some of the artists and due to time constraints, I did not conduct any artist interviews. Instead, I relied on second-hand interviews and articles. Nicholas Mirzoeff, the curator of *Decolonising Appearance*, declined to participate and instead referred me to the exhibition material and advised me to speak to the refugees and users of Trampoline House. Further, I did not conduct the survey whose findings I used in my analysis. The researcher, Tom Bennett, is a museum studies and art student from the University of Leicester, who was also a researcher and volunteer at CAMP. I was exceptionally allowed to use the data due to my own position as a volunteer.

And finally, as mentioned earlier, I was only allowed to conduct research at CAMP if I volunteered my time there. Initially I was planning to volunteer as a childminder in the Children's Club at Trampoline House to gain access to Trampoline House users, as well as being a volunteer at CAMP. However, due to time constraints, I opted for just the one position. I am therefore volunteering as a communications consultant for CAMP as having access the art gallery was vital to this study.

In my position as a volunteer, I translated the exhibition material for the current exhibition, *We're saying what you're thinking*, which ran from 18 May – 26 June 2019. I also created the social

media and communications plan for outreach and marketing purposes. And I was responsible for the social media communication for the duration of the exhibition. In my position as a volunteer and researcher, I was constantly reminded of my obligations as an objective researcher and observer. I had numerous conversations with the CAMP director about social media and communication strategies. I was also a part of a working group of communication interns and volunteers.

I was very aware of my responsibilities as a member of the team and being mindful of not using material, I had access to as a communications consultant, which I didn't have as a researcher. Perhaps the most challenging part of this researcher/contributor position was managing the constant tension in maintaining a critical standpoint in terms of the research and upholding a sense of commitment and duty to the team and organisation.

## Appendix 1 - Questions for semi-structured interviews with the audience

1. Did the exhibition change your perception of migration/immigration and refugee-related issues?
2. Did you find the exhibition challenging? What did you think of the exhibition?
3. Was there any particular work that struck you either positively or negatively? Why?
4. How did you experience the artwork? What emotions or thoughts were running through your mind?
5. Do you think the work represents the experiences of migration?
6. Do you think the voices of refugees, immigrants or migrants were heard through these works?
7. Did you read/look through the catalogue?
8. What was your experience of the guide?
9. What did you think of the art space/gallery?
10. What did you think of your fellow audience?
11. Had you heard of this art space and this exhibition before coming here today? If yes, how and where?
12. Would you recommend this to others?
13. How would you describe this space to other people?
14. Have you been to another exhibition dealing with similar themes? What was it and where was it shown?



## Appendix 1.1 -Transcript of interview with informant 1

Interview conducted on 2 April 2019

Background: 30 years old, female, American-German background, lived in Denmark for almost 2 years

*First question on perception of migration-related issues.*

I wouldn't really say it changed the perception of it. It visualised things that I already had a perception of and made it a bit clearer. Indirectly yes, but it didn't really add any more information. Which was still very strong, but it didn't really completely turn my world upside-down. But for other people, it might though, who haven't heard about the refugee crisis or haven't put too much thought into it.

*What about immigration in general?*

It focused more on the immigrants' perspective. There was a stark contrast between those who were the immigrants and those who were the hosts. Or those who are welcoming them or not welcoming them. And it was in that respect, it was rather one-sided because what was also presented was that here are these refugees who are fleeing their country because of war and they are being sent out again. At least that was in the video piece. That was a very clear message. And that's of course, very true, that there are these refugees that have gone through these hardships and are sent back but that's one side of it. And there are other stories that are quite different, I think. So, it does kind of show. It focuses very much on those that have been wronged because of the system. And I think that's very important, but if you don't know about the other side of the story, then it might seem as though everything is made to be made difficult for refugees. That was my perception of it and that's what I got out of the entire exhibition.

*What had you thought about migration, immigration and refugee-related issues before you came to the exhibition?*

Just that it's very complex and it's not possible to be very one-sided about it. And I think this was pushing it a bit too far in some ways, by just showing one side. I think the problem was also that it was a very small exhibition and perhaps there is a necessity for the voices to be heard by those who can't speak in public and those are refugees. They have no way of telling their stories. Than through these kinds of artwork, film or with someone who's willing to talk about these things, but they just seemed so locked within this message. Saying that everyone who was trying to find a safe space was not welcome. And whatever they tried; they couldn't come through with it. Again, I don't think these stories should not be told it's just that the perception of it, because of knowing how complex it is, this was kind of very black and white. It showed the refugees on one side and those who were responsible or made responsible for not welcoming them into the country or dealing with the problem in the right way, were the wrongdoers. it's not so simple. But of course, voices should still be heard.

*Did you find the exhibition challenging?*

*The Andersons*

I thought that was quite challenging.

The way it was photographed was supposed to be unsettling – the girl looked unhappy. The couple looked like a typical fake American couple with fake smiles- It was supposed to make you uncomfortable and raised the question why is this making you uncomfortable? We've seen this so many times the other way around with a western couple and an Asian child who is clearly adopted. And you ask yourself why is this unsettling? It shouldn't matter who adopts whom. What country what ethnicity you are. It did raise the question is it because it's making you aware of the negative effects of adoption or does it really bother you because it's the first time, you're seeing this the other way around? And from my perspective, I am European, so I'm wondering is this whole colonisation, the whole concept behind the exhibition, am I still thinking in that way? So that was definitely challenging for me personally. As an individual and coming from that background. What would someone of Asian ethnicity who is seeing this as the ethnicity as the ones in power. People in power more or less who are able to adopt another child from another country. Usually from countries that are developing or in poverty. One of the most challenging and strongest pieces.

The African light installation. It was very strong. It put a very complex problem into a very simple imagery. That was strong. Those two were probably the strongest, the photograph and the light installation.

*Do you think it represented the experiences of migration well?*

*Do you think the voices of immigrants/migrants/refugees could be heard through these works? The artists' voices or the refugees themselves?*

The voices of refugees come up but how the artist perceives refugees and the problems that come with being a refugee. I don't feel I heard the refugees' voice. Because things were quite symbolic. Which is a skill from the artist's side. It does reflect a problem, but I didn't get much individual voices out of it. The most individual one was the video. Because the artist was on that same wavelength. She had also experienced that. She found a group of people with similar experiences. Those voices were actually her voice.

*So, do you think that was the most powerful one in terms of hearing the voices?*

Yeah, and ironically, they didn't say anything except towards the very end. That was the one that gave refugees and immigrants a voice much more than the others.

*Did you look through the catalogue?*

No.

*What was your experience of the guide?*

There were two guides. I thought the gentleman from Congo did a very good job in telling the story behind the artworks. I think the language again was quite one-sided. And the younger man,

the student, all the more. As a European viewer, of course, I could fully understand the frustration that was being expressed through his language. He would often use refugees or people of colour versus white people. I fully agree that is often an ongoing issue. But his language was more or less saying that the wrongdoing is always from those who are not of colour and those of colour are always affected and it's always because of white people. And I thought that was very problematic in terms of creating a dialogue which is also very important when you are presenting art which is supposed to help raise awareness. And it shouldn't only raise awareness on one side, but it should raise awareness for everyone. Refugees are quite aware of the problems, but I am sure they could benefit from it from hearing other voices, by the symbols they can see within them. It's important for the other side to understand.

Rather exclusive. I don't think it can be of any value by being excluding. Because this was what it was about, being excluded. Fighting exclusion with exclusion. In many ways, despite the works being very powerful, I did feel challenged, a lot of these work did stay in my mind, they were excluding the people who were said to have done these people wrong. It was putting things into boxes.

It's a very difficult question. I can understand on the one side these are voices. These are the voices that are being amplified in the exhibition. They are excluded more than they are included. It's a reaction. It's a natural reaction then to exclude the other. They have been excluded so why include the other. For example, the white people who have been oppressing or excluding people of colour. But in order to really do something or change. And I think that's what the exhibition was also trying to do, to change perception – getting people to do something about it. And I think the only way to get people to do something about it is to be completely inclusive. And being able to have a dialogue with someone who isn't a refugee. Because as a non-refugee I was not talked to by the guides. But the artworks, just looking at them, less so I didn't feel they were offensive.

The language, in particular the younger student. Maybe he hasn't learned yet how to speak about these things. He was talking to a group I was not included in. That was a bit problematic. But it was still a good tour I wouldn't say I didn't learn anything from it. Maybe it was a good experience to feel excluded. Living in Europe, it's rare to feel that way. That might be an experience for everyone to have. Maybe it was their goal to exclude in that way. It is making people aware of what it feels like to be excluded.

*Q: What did you think of the space?*

I didn't know what to expect. Had expected it to be more of a white cube kind of space. I didn't know enough about it. More of a community centre with a little gem inside with a little exhibition space. I thought it was a nice alternative space. For that kind of exhibition. Putting in the right context. Because you had a community around it that was very much involved in helping people with refugee backgrounds. That was well done during the tour. The guides told us about the history of the building. The artworks were parallel to that as well.

*Q: Had you heard of this art space before?*

Yes, the art space, but not of the exhibition. Not too much coverage of it.

*We (informants 1.1, 1.3 and I) had a conversation with the younger guide after the tour while informant 1.2 was watching a video installation on Palestine:*

The way he was speaking about how it was us against them. By doing so, telling the public they were wrong. It was a very clumsy way of presenting the issue and unproductive way of solving the problem. If that's the goal. I am sure they are interested in solving the problem.

It was off-putting and almost offensive. Even if you had non-refugee backgrounds.

It's not a way to talk about the problem with putting yourself in the position of "All of us are suffering because of this particular group". It was a shame. So much can be done So much potential in these works. If they are curated in the right way, they can have an even stronger message. By not only empowering those with refugee backgrounds.

If you're being told as a viewer it's all your fault. I don't think as a viewer you would be motivated to help or even listen.

*Do you think it was because it was in the centre that that's why they were speaking that way?*

Could be but at the same time, it was the guides as individuals, I don't think everyone thinks that way. If I heard this outside that context, I would feel the same way.

Of course, you feel more uncomfortable. As a viewer coming from the outside and venturing into that space which is so foreign if you don't have that background. Maybe some people feel guilty.

Again, you're kind of being told this is your fault. You feel like you've been invited somewhere and then told you should be here. Because you're the problem if you want to take it on that level.

*Would they be more powerful elsewhere?*

If they had more exposure. It is very hidden. It has very little coverage. It's a very closed space and because it's such a strong exhibition it should have more dialogue. And the more diverse the people who see it, the more openly you can talk about these things. it should be in a more exposed space, for sure, be more powerful that way and have more effect.

## Appendix 1.2 - Transcript of informant 2

Interview conducted on 13 April 2019

Background: 45 years old, female, Filipino background, lived in Denmark for 15 years

*What did you think of the exhibition?*

I think it was interesting, but I thought it was just the works he showed us. I thought there was just four pieces.

The tour guide had a huge impact on how I took the exhibition. I'm not aligned with, I didn't like, he was a bit too extreme and one-sided. It was interesting, but it didn't convey a strong message on the subject itself. They are independent and not tied together. This one for Africa, more a commercial, capitalism take on colonialism. Economic colonialism so to speak. The other one, with the adopted child. That was pretty strong. I don't know how it correlates to the subject. It was showing a different way of perception.

*It was decolonising appearance.*

Yes, so it made sense. It provoked your thoughts. It's not usual. We are sort of programmed to see the reverse. The white supremacy over the poor Asian.

*Did the exhibition change your perception at all of migration related issues?*

No, it wasn't that strong.

*Do you feel the works represented the experiences of migration?*

Yes, the video, the gaze. That had a strong impact. He also explained the background of the people. Without the explanation, it would have been a different experience. My interpretation of that piece was different from his point of view. I thought it was more a piece of hope and humanity.

*In that sense, do you think the voices of migrants, refugees could be heard?*

Yes, if they captured the right audience. The community itself to change the perception. Immigrants can have something to contribute to society. I think that's something they're weak at. They just presented the problems and not the solutions. We already know that. He said it himself. It isn't that provocative, the art pieces. It's not like you come out and feel heartbroken and have more reflection and interest. It didn't stir much interest and I didn't go out wanting to know more. It was, like, okay, I know that. But then the message, the problems were presented. It was not that moving in that sense. It was a bit weak in that sense.

The magazine work. The woman sitting on the bed. It was closer to home. Culturally it spoke to me because I can relate to it. Being Asian living here. Interacting with au pairs here. It's true that it shouldn't be perceived as the weaker sex as them leaving their families. It's a strength instead of a weakness.

*What about the art space?*

You enter the community centre- it's in line with the theme of the art space. It's a reverse way. First you see the back room, the back stage. The work they do and then you go to the centre stage. It's like a reverse experience. It's a reverse approach. Maybe it gives you a different experience. It sets the stage for what they do. They didn't really explain what's going on. He explained what the house is, but not so much the correlation between the art space to the house. It could have been presented better. He talked about the theme but not so much the art space.

The younger guy had another background. He knows what he's talking about based on what he is studying. So, when he presented there was more credibility even though he wasn't confident. You could see, he sort of stepped in when the other guide was talking about adoption being very bad. The older guy was more hardcore in his views.

*What did you think of the rest of the audience?*

International people, interested in art. Students, three students. I don't know if that's their target audience.

*Had you heard of the space?*

No

*Would you recommend the exhibition?*

No, not really. Not the art space, but maybe the trampoline house's work. I wouldn't consider it their stronghold. If the intention is to promote support. Is it a fundraising effort for them? I think it's the location too. It's remote. A lot of things can be improved. I don't know who the target audience is? Is it the refugees to educate them or people who would be able to help their cause? I think they are quite unsure of the message they want to communicate. But it's good to have it. It's a good path for outreach, for volunteer work, creating awareness

*How would you describe the art space to other people?*

It's part of trampoline House, with different themes. Not many talking points to talk about it. I don't know much about it. I didn't learn much more about it. It didn't trigger interest for me to read more about it.

### Appendix 1.3 - Transcript informant 3

Interview conducted 30 April 2019

Background: 37 years old, male, Chinese-Singaporean background, born and raised in Denmark

*What did you think of the exhibition?*

It's an opportunity for the guides to present a story, rather than not knowing where to begin. It was nice. But after the stories were done, is there anything else. Like a teaser, is there anything else?

The works themselves, the way they were presented by the guides. You were wondering if there was a lot of bitterness from the guides themselves. Rather than from a so-called neutral standpoint whatever that means. You wondered if the stories were the guide's opinion or the artists' message that was being portrayed through the art pieces. Looking at the artworks themselves, you create your own ideas. But as the stories stacked up, you started thinking, okay okay, we get the point. You don't have to add that much oil to the fire.

*What exact situation are you thinking of when you say add oil to the fire?*

For example, the one with the plugs. Yeah, it was simple, you got it right away. But the guide started building a story around it. And he went on and on. All of a sudden Microsoft and Bill Gates was involved. Whereas in reality. It's about the white-collar corporates that are taking advantage of the situation. It would have been better not to add so many things that were questionable. It would have been better to keep it simple, so people had time to think about it.

Rather than paint the whole picture. Just give a few thought-provoking ideas. Let people chew on it. Just like the artwork. That would have made it better. Even though the stories were sad and valid, it's just the whole execution of it.

*Do you think the guides' voices were too loud and overpowered the artists'?*

Well, if you try to listen to everything he said, it wasn't about his voice or the artists voice. After a while, you ask, what about my voice. As the one seeing. The viewer's voice. The way I see something, you create an idea yourself. But now you have this person feeding you every single thing. And now you question whether what you were thinking is correct rather than having the art speak for itself. I guess you can say with the guide coming with too many stories, it begins to cloud the judgement of the viewers. It's not that they get different pictures, but it could be that the viewer associated the work with another image. For example, in the news, whenever there's something about poverty, it's always something to do Africa. Or any donation thing, you see an African kid. That's the danger.

But the video for example, because it was long and powerful imagery, it made sense to give backstory behind each person. This one got kicked out, etc., I thought that in a way, was

complimentary but at the same time, by itself, it was also powerful. You didn't need it. It was a bonus thing. The Gaze.

You already got the feeling there's a lot of hurt and pain behind. And when you started hearing, you started knowing even more. You started thinking why hasn't anyone done anything about it? It makes you question a lot of things. So, I think it worked well with that. He introduced each character at the time instead of random stories. He stuck to the piece of art.

The one with the adoptive family. I started wondering whether the artist really meant what he said. He was trying to make the artist seem like she was trying to be very extreme about it. The idea of it was great. Because you do think, white parents and a kid from a poor country, why can't it be from anywhere. But he went on and on about what a hard life she had. She was picked on etc. You started wondering what the artist actually felt in this situation.

*Would you say, in this case, the guide's voice may have coloured what you took away from it and maybe muted the artists voice in some way?*

Yes, cos I was wondering if the artist was really so extreme.

*Did the exhibition change your perception of migration and refugee-related issues?*

No, it didn't but it's good to have such a thing. You finally put faces to the news. It's just static images whereas in this case, you have names to faces, a story behind them. Make you think about it a bit more. I personally don't know any refugees, so to speak. If you take twenty people on the street, they probably don't know anyone either.

*Do you think the voices were heard through these works?*

I think part of it was heard.

*What part?*

Crying for help through the works. They just want a chance to even the field. And survive and live life like anyone else. They just want the opportunity. It's not asking for more. It wasn't that aggressive. Just saying they would like a chance at life pretty much.

*Did you have a chance to look at the catalogue?*

No

*What was your experience of the guide or guides?*

The first one was quite open. It was interesting to hear things from his point of view. Even though it may have clouded some of the art. But because he was there, it was almost like watching a show. And hearing his story.



Feeling the anger and pain in him. And you get the feeling he's also just trying to make things work. I didn't get the background story about him. But the fact that he was there said something. He wants to make a difference.

The younger one. It was his first time. He was nervous.

Contrast between presenting to people and talking to him as an individual there was so much anger. – "This is just how it is. Everything is already set."

We discussed it as well. By doing this, he was doing what the colonisers were doing. Pointing fingers. By doing that, you give the idea of colonization more power. Because you feed into the idea. Which was a bit unfortunate.

*You mean the conversation we had after the tour, in the reception area.*

Yeah. It was nice to have an opportunity to talk to them. And it was like it was a part of the whole exhibition. But in a way, they were part of the whole experience. And they were there to do this too. But at the same time, that they see things in that way, means there is a lot of work to be done. These are two functioning people, with jobs and education, but there's so much anger and bitterness. Education alone is obviously not going to solve this problem. And initiatives in the form of integration of refugees, you end up creating a bubble of other refugees or international people. And the locals are not involved. That's a risk.

*What did you think about the space?*

I thought it was really small. But they made good use of the space. They didn't make it more than it was. If they didn't have the video, they could have used it for more artworks. That piece was different, but also thought-provoking. It was away from everything but still powerful in its own way.

*Did you notice your fellow audience?*

At least half were non-Danes. Some probably spoke Danish but were not Danes. Everyone seemed like they were from other parts of the world

*Had you heard about this art space before coming here?*

Not at all. I didn't even know it existed.

*Would you recommend it?*

I think I would recommend people to go there and see it. The space is very hidden. They could put it as a part of experiencing and interact with the refugees who are there. They had classes and activities. I think that experience would be more powerful. Because you walk into the art space you see the art, you get this feedback, you get the bitterness and you get this feeling, shucks, how do you even help? And then you walk out and right there right in front of you, you have the opportunity to help somebody. That journey would be a lot more powerful in that sense than the space itself. Because as soon as you walk out you think that's what it was. Next.

*Was there any standout work?*

I liked the first one we saw. The light one. It was so simple and symbolic. It spoke for itself. It could go on a t-shirt. It was simple and powerful. And because it's true.

#### Appendix 1.4 - Transcript informant 4

Interview conducted on 4 April 2019

Background: 44 years old, female, Danish

*Did the exhibition change your perception on migration-related issues?*

No, I don't really think so. I mean, I was a little surprised. I am not sure if I can answer outside the question. Often these types of places are like community centres. I didn't expect the space to look so professional. I didn't read up on the exhibition. I thought it would be more amateurish.

What surprised me a bit was the wall full of black lives matter posters. How is that related to migration and refugee experiences? To me it felt like it started as an American, internal situation. I do know there are people who are migrants who are of course affected with everything that is happening with people of colour in the US, but I also feel it's a lot about American citizens born and raised for generations in the US.

I was thrown a bit when I saw that. Because I wasn't expecting it.

*Do you think the works represented the experiences of migration?*

I don't know. If the purpose was to specifically represent something on migration. I think a lot of the pieces no. Not really. I felt as a whole. It felt a bit random, a little bit fragmented maybe. I watched the video in the other room, with the Israeli soldier shooting Palestinians. I am not sure how that related to migration. There was a piece with a plug and two little light screens. I felt they were supposed to be dark or something. I don't know. Or was it the continent on the wall was dark. I don't there was a lot of direct commentary on migration.

There was one piece I couldn't see properly. The other video- I didn't know how to switch on the movie. I came alone and I didn't know what that was. I didn't know how to switch on the movie. That might have been more related.

*Let's move on to the next question, do you think the voices of migrants and refugees were heard through these works.*

Hm...we should have spoken in the afternoon or day after. I remember the Black Lives Matter thing,

The burka, the niqab, that one was one I could relate more to in that context. That was a voice that was being heard. Whereas some of the people we tend to talk about times you talk about them, but their voices are not heard. They are just a topic of conversation.

But again, you can say that person is not a migrant or refugee, that person could have been born here. But I thought that was one of the more powerful ones. That spoke more to me.

From the intention, that piece would have also represented. But I found it hard to decipher. Just looking at it. But maybe I was rushing, even though I did take time to look at every piece. But I don't think I got that one.

*Did you find the exhibition challenging at all?*

Yeah, I guess, in the sense, it came across as random. I wasn't sure how to tie it all together. So, in that sense, yes. I found it challenging to see the higher purpose of the exhibition a little bit.

*Was there any work that struck you positively or negatively?*

Maybe the posters, I was thrown a bit by it. It was impactful and I didn't quite get it. The impression of it being a bit random. There wasn't a clear red thread. The curation was not clear to me.

*Did you go through the catalogue?*

I didn't see it. Was I supposed to get one?

The guy was a bit...he was a little bit weird. He was surprised I came alone. You're not with the group? First, he said twenty kroner, and then he said forty kroner. It sounded like he made it up. So that was it. Not much of an intro!

*If you'd had the catalogue, you would have maybe been able to see the red thread by seeing the title of the exhibition which was Decolonizing Appearance.*

Ahh...that makes more sense now. It's like a lightbulb just went off in my brain!

*So, about the art space? You thought it was quite professionally done?*

Yeah, I just thought it was quite professional. And when I saw the actual plaques on the wall, I thought, oh this is like an actual museum. I was very impressed with that. I was surprised that. I had not heard of the space before. I knew of Trampoline House before, but I didn't know there was an art space there.

*Would you recommend it?*

No, I don't think I would recommend that particular exhibition because of my particular experience.

*How would you describe the place in general?*

The exhibition space? I would say from the impression when you just enter, you still have the feeling it's still a grassroots type of place, volunteer-type space. You're clearly not entering Louisiana, but not in a bad way, it's just very chilled. There's a guy on the sofa speaking with a friend with the speaker on. But the space inside is professional looking but very small. It's very condensed.

*Have you been to another exhibition discussing the same or similar themes recently?*

The closest is that I always go to the world press photo exhibition. It's not quite the same, but because of everything going on these days, you do see photos on the same subject matter.

## Appendix 1.5 – Transcript of informant 5

Interview conducted on 24

Background: 47 years old, male, Danish

*What did you think of the exhibition?*

There weren't many works, it didn't take long to get through. The most exciting was the film in the room at the back.

*Did the exhibition change your perception of migration-related issues?*

I don't know if it did. There was the picture of Asians with a white child. She was putting it into a Danish context of being an adopted child. This made me reflect about the ethical issues of adoption. There are adopted people in my family. It made me think about the issues surrounding it. It would be an Asian culture and Asian person who is on top, and not the other way around. I wasn't aware of this before. I didn't think about the cultural aspect that I was reminded of when I saw the picture.

*Did the works represent the experiences? Were the voices of migrants and refugees heard?*

*Which works?*

The one I just mentioned. If you can call adopted children immigrants. The fact that the racial structure was turned upside down. And the stereotype that I am used to seeing was reversed. It made it easier for me to see what it was like, and I could put myself in the shoes of the adoptee. There are power structures at play here. And I am so used to my culture being the one on top. And now it was suddenly the other way around?

I don't remember the other works.

*Did you look through the catalogue?*

No, I didn't know there was one.

*Had you heard of the space before?*

Yes, Trampoline House because I used to work for the Danish Refugee Council. And CAMP through you.

*Would you recommend the exhibition or the art gallery?*

No, there were too few works. It was surprising that there was a guide when there were so few works. I don't listen to guides. I think the works should speak for themselves. I don't want them to be translated by anyone.

*How would you describe the space?*

It was very small. There was construction work going on that day. I didn't feel very welcome. It's not bad, but I just felt that I was not left-wing enough to be there!

## Appendix 2 Evaluation report and key findings

### **Decolonizing Appearance**

#### **Evaluation Report and Key Findings by Tom Bennett**

##### **Audience**

- Nationality: Overwhelmingly Danish - out of 31 replies, 25 were Danish
- Occupation: Over half are students (17), next largest groups were visual artists (3) and teachers (3)
- Repeat Visitors: 5

##### **Motivations**

- Academic study (13)
- Interest in subject (8)
- Interest in CAMP / Trampolinhuset (4)
- Saw exhibition online (1)

##### **Expectations**

- No expectations (7)
- To see interesting works / political works / works dealing with racial issues (4)
- A bigger exhibition (3)
- To experience new viewpoints (1)

##### **Impact**

- Understand more about the issue (12)
- No impact (10)
- Recognise own white privilege (2)

##### **Stand out works**

- Forensic Architecture (12)
- The Gaze (10)
- The Andersons (10)
- Africa Light (4)

##### **Suggestions from visitors**

- Greater collaboration with universities
- A more interactive tour
- Danish information panels

#### **Did Decolonizing Appearance meet aims of Nicholas Mirzoeff and CAMP?**

- Identity:
  - Small scale
  - For the marginalised
  - Part of community trying to construct a politics of decolonisation
  
- Scope:
  - Focus on internal immigration and the politics of ownership and space
  - Designed to cater to all
  - Bridging aspects emphasised over provoking aspects
  - Expand peoples understanding of size of field of decoloniality
  
- Targets:
  - Bring a greater awareness to the work of CAMP and Trampolinhuset
  - Reach a new audience - 2nd & 3rd generation immigrants
  - Reach the contemporary art scene and a younger audience
  - Cement the standing of CAMP
  
- Expectations:
  - Designed to provoke discourse and action
  - Fit in with the identity of CAMP and Trampolinhuset
  - Establish cultural meetings across communities

From the sample of feedback forms it seems that Decolonizing Appearance did not reach all the target audiences, yet it does show clearly that the exhibition was popular among Danish students. However, it appears that the visiting audience was not as diverse as desired and more should be done to reach out to specific target demographics. One possibility could be to take on an intern to be the face of CAMP to the users of Trampolinhuset. This make CAMP seem more welcoming and encourage them to visit the exhibitions. This intern could also work on outreach programmes to reach target audiences. The number of visitors per week is the highest CAMP has seen since the first half of 2017, demonstrating that CAMP is drawing increased interest over time.

It is impossible to gauge how much of an active stance each individual takes after visiting Decolonizing Appearance, however the Decolonizing Assembly is a clear indicator that CAMP has indeed provoked discourse and action. The events, as part of the exhibition, seemed to be diverse and helped establish cultural meetings across communities. These events feel like CAMP is not only part of the community constructing a politics of decolonisation, but also a meeting place for this community. It would be useful for the next exhibition evaluation to go into greater depth examining the impact of events, however this evaluation focused on the experiences of visitors to the exhibition rooms rather than the events.

In terms of the identity of CAMP and how the exhibition fits with this, many were impressed with the political and explicitly issue based nature of the exhibition. Despite almost a third of feedback forms indicating the exhibition had no impact, the majority feel they have a broader and deeper perspective on the issues presented by Decolonizing Appearance. Seven feedback forms indicated that Decolonizing Appearance could be more challenging in terms of its ideas and with ten feedback forms claiming the exhibition had no impact on them there is scope for CAMP to push boundaries further. Overall however, the general feeling of visitors who filled out the feedback forms was very positive.

## Appendix 3 - Questions for interview with guide

When did you start guiding?  
How long have you been guiding for CAMP?  
Are you also a part of Trampoline House?  
Did you take part in the 8-week guide programme?  
Tell me more about it.  
What made you decide to take part in the programme? What was your motivation?  
How many people are part of the programme?  
Who writes the script for the guided tour?  
For the Decolonising Appearance exhibition, did you also speak with the artists?  
What was it like guiding this particular exhibition?  
Do you think the works represented experience of migration?  
Do you think the voices of migrants, refugees and immigrants were heard through these works?  
Which work did you like the most? And why?  
Which work stood out the most to you, either positively or negatively?  
Did the exhibition speak to you?  
Do you know if users of Trampoline House also viewed the exhibition?  
If so, do you know how they experienced the exhibition?

### Appendix 3.1 - Transcript Guide

*When did you start guiding?*

I started the guide education in 2015 and guiding in 2016. One year after.

*And you are also a part of TH?*

Yes, I teach English, French and Swahili. I am also a part of the Democracy class and a facilitator of the house meetings.

*Tell me more about the 8-week guide programme.*

The education gave us some basic knowledge about how to be a guide and through these workshops we tried to define what is art, what is an art work and how we can analyse this artwork. We were given key knowledge about how to be a guide. How to present yourself. How to use your voice. Many basic knowledges about how to be a guide.

We also visited some museums in Copenhagen and tried to analyse all the art works we saw there. We exchanged and analysed artworks we saw.

*How many people were part of the programme?*

Almost 10 people.

*And they were from TH as well?*



Yes, yes, and some were also native Danes. And some who had also studied art and art history. They were also students. Temi Odumoso also came. She's a very good teacher.

*What made you decide to take part in the programme?*

I followed some workshops on art and became very fond of it.

I can tell you in my future life, I will work with art.

After being an asylum-seeker in Denmark. I've been through a lot of experiences of racism and colonialism. Through art, I can see how it can work to fight racism, discrimination and hierarchies of racism.

*And you think art is a good tool for showing this?*

Yes, yes. The French writer Victor Hugo said that when society is failing, then the art comes, the artist appears. This is a good way. Those different kinds of societies where you find discrimination, hierarchies of racism. It is important sometimes to express yourself by using art, you know? For instance, in Denmark, we as asylum-seekers, we don't have voices. Because There are a lot of barriers. The media is used only for powerful people. We don't have access to the media The only way for me to express myself is maybe by using drawings or writing my poems. I am also a poet. I've written a collection of poems entitled 'Sharing the pain of the Others'. A collection of 15 poems. Maybe one day, we can record those poems. You will see that through art, we can express ourselves, a way to exchange.

*Would you say it's a way to give voice?*

Yes, it's a way to give voice to people with no voice. To people who cannot be heard. And to people who do not have access to international media or national media.

The listeners should be the politicians because they are the decision makers. Voices were heard for voters. Because these politicians are voted by voters. But the Danish politicians are not telling the truth. They are using bad propaganda. They are saying that refugees and asylum seekers are coming here to steal.

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