

Enter 15: John K Cobra/Roland Gunst

Trans-Architecture: Performing Power Figures

In recent years, I have been researching sites of memories in Europe and Africa, and how they are used as spaces to protest, to formulate criticism and to find solutions to social, political and cultural issues. I call this critical practice TRANS-ARCHITECTURE.

Sites of memories in Europe are mostly stone monuments and statues. In Africa however, it is objects or human bodies — often called 'power figures' — that serve as memory sites.

In his book *Critique of Black Reason* (Duke University Press, 2017), the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe mentions the use of colonial monuments and statues to reinforce the domination over the colonized population. 'Domination must envelop the subjugated, the colonized, and maintain them in a more or less permanent state of trance.'

Therefore, TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE, to me, is rigid stone, concrete and iron architecture that serves a rigid capitalist society. TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE creates hierarchies and classifications among human beings with limited privileges, rights and roles in order to serve Capitalism. In most cases, human beings navigate TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE without realizing that they can affect and deconstruct it. By contrast, activists who promote human, environmental and animal rights challenge the TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE that animates systems of oppression.

For example, the Black Lives Matter movement in Belgium hijacked colonial monuments and used them as props and stages to challenge the status of the black body constructed and conditioned by TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE. They performed what I call an ANTI-TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE. By damaging colonial statues, they criticize the oppression of black bodies, breaking the spell that keeps the black body in an underprivileged position.

While ANTI-TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE works within the paradigm of the TRANCE-ARCHITECTURE to fight oppression and discrimination based on differentiation between human beings, I propose TRANS-ARCHITECTURE as a fluid space where the oppositions dissolve.

In the exhibition TRANS-ARCHITECTURE: PERFORMING POWER FIGURES, I use *moving monuments* to dissolve the physical characteristics of the human body as well as the hierarchies imposed onto the body by Capitalism. They are fluid, organic forms that have the potential to counter the rigid social and spatial architecture, the stone society and monuments instilled by Capitalism.

I use KWANGA (Afropean rubber) as a medium to convey and materialize a radical transnational, trans-cultural and transgender fluidity of human entities. I propose a (meta)physical space in which social and spatial architecture converges to form multi-entity organisms beyond categorization or boundaries: the essence of mammals, an organic architecture composed of flesh, skin, muscles, vertebrae, arteries, nerves and mammary glands; a liminal space between the defined and the undefined, where entities explore possibilities without any finalities.

John K Cobra/Roland Gunst

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- 1. *Trans-Capital* (2021)**
video
- 2. *Côlon #1_IV* (2023)**
silicone
- 3. *Côlon #2_MA* (2022)**
silicone and metal
- 4. *Ensemble Premier* (2023)**
silicone and metal
- 5. *Mouvement Commun* (2023)**
latex, foam rubber and wood
- 6. *Chorégraphie_GA* (2023)**
photo and metal

