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## You Had to Be T/Here

Mary Ellyn Johnson, Federica  
Martini and Isaline Pfefferle

Restore memory. Let the one  
who is disease, one who is  
daughter restore spring with  
her each appearance from  
beneath the earth.

The ink spills thickest before it  
runs dry before it stops writing  
at all.

Close quotation marks  
Theresa Hak Kyung Cha,  
*Dictee*

Titled *T/Here*, the third issue of  
the *Blackout Magazine* convenes  
artists, writers and curators to think  
from and through the surviving  
traces of transient art processes.  
Investigating around memory gaps  
and non-linear narratives, *T/Here*  
weaves together an archival quilt  
of curatorial and artistic practices  
dealing with notions of proximity  
and distance from the events, and  
their subsequent irruption into the  
present through documentation. If  
all history is contemporary when  
there is a consciousness of ways  
in which it is performed, as John  
Berger suggests in his novel *G.*,  
how is this history going to be  
documented, by whom and how  
the archival choices are going to  
shape the memory of the events  
which are preserved?

The first section of the journal  
tracks back the collaboration  
between swissnex San Francisco  
and the EDHEA – The Valais  
School of Art in 2016. Structures  
of (in)visibility and (in)direct  
access to art historical records  
foreground Benoît Antille's writing  
on the Furka Hotel in upper Valais  
and the remaining souvenirs of

a long-lost time contemporary art residency that started in 1983 in the Alps. Antille reviews the conditions for a collective art event such as Furkart to live through oral and written memories, video documents and passed-on stories. The records of the works and experiences connect to the history of site-specific arts in the Alps through a unique conversation with Furkart curator, where facts blur into narrative.

In 2018, the afterlives of participatory and community-based art practices were at the chore of the exhibition *You had to be there*, hosted at swissnex San Francisco, and co-curated by CCA Wattis alumni MK Meador, Rosa Tyhurst and Amanda Nudelman. The show emanated from the joint workshop *Curating the Alps* held in Valais in 2016, which created a common ground between artists and curators studying at the MAPS – Master of Arts in Public Spheres (EDHEA) and the San Francisco MA in Curatorial Practice (CCA). In conversation with Rosa Tyhurst and Amanda Nudelman, Mary Ellyn Johnson traces back the exhibition's curatorial path and the challenges of showing live art events through the shared memories of those present.

The question of presence and after-presence brings into question ways of recording and transcribing collective and community art processes. A practical experiment in live recording, the visual essay *Becoming a River: Liquid Disasters and Speculative Stories* reports back from a 2019 EDHEA Summer School at the Istituto Svizzero di Roma. The essay

collects images and texts caught in a narrative network emanating from the current emergency of the melting glaciers and consequent underwater scenarios. Through poems, drawings and maps, it relates and responds to discussions and works hosted by a collective of artists, scientists, and philosophers searching for Rome's forgotten underwater routes, memories of flooding and artificial lakes.

The second section of the journal focuses on the re-emergence of art oversights and blind spots and strategies for escaping the historical record. Paul Goodwin's essay introduces yard art as a form that "eludes being captive to fixed points of view" and thinks back to curatorial strategies for (re)presenting the fugitive nature of these experimental art sites in the exhibition *We Will Walk: Art and Resistance in the American South* that he co-curated with artist Hannah Collins at Turner Contemporary in Margate in 2020. Ephemeral aesthetic and political actions are also the focus of Leslie Fernández Barrera's contribution, which brings overground and writes in the public record histories of cultural resistance at the University of Concepción's Art Institute, in southern Chile, after the 1973 coup-d'état. The flickering disappearance of affective and cultural gatherings of objects and images is at work also from Noor Abu Arafah's artist's novel. The two selected chapters hosted by *T/Here* prompt the merge of reality and fiction through tracing back the trajectory of a speculative art museum in Palestine, where

private souvenirs and fading collections are housed. Along these lines, Federica Martini's essay brings into question the fragility of memories, the media's failure to preserve them, and the re-memory processes that shed light on current artistic strategies to write (art) histories between historical silences and archival memory voids.

More precisely, *Blackout Magazine No. 3: T/Here* will be phrased around the following contents:

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## **Blackout Magazine**

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**Essays and texts:** Noor Abu Arafah, Benoît Antille, Ursula Biemann, Leslie Fernández Barrera, Paul Goodwin, Mary Ellyn Johnson, Federica Martini, Lucia Masu, Rachel Nisbet, Amanda Nudelman, Janis Osolin, Rosa Tyhurst

**Image Credits:** Noor Abu Arafah (pp. 104–5; 116–17; 133), Ursula Biemann (p. 49), J. Astra Brinkmann (pp. 28–29), Manuel Fuentes Archive / Ivan Cardenas/ Pilar Hernandez (p. 77), Deborah Ligorio (p. 37), Maria Iorio & Raphaël Cuomo (p. 135), Petra Koehle & Nicolas Vermot-Petit-Outhenin (pp. 122; 124; 137), François Lauginie (pp. 34–35), Uriel Orlow (pp. 128–30), Janis Osolin (p. 19), Aurélie Strumans (p. 45), Rosa Tyhurst (p. 30), Marie Velardi (pp. 40–44)

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