

figure of the militia. Its criminal and oppressive activity is deeply complex, operating as a parallel power to the State while also being the State itself, insofar as it involves political leaders, police officers, and former members of the military. What we know as systems of oppression in the world can also be named synthetic knowledges. These are defined by Bispo as forces oriented toward appropriation, assimilation, and possession. They move in search of domination and do not seek to relate to the world through the confluence of living beings. Within synthetic knowledge, human beings exclude themselves from nature, for they see it only for its potential to be exploited.

It is necessary to suspend the weapons, in both the local and the global contexts.⁵ The forms of violence that spread across the globe must be understood as direct effects of a network that connects the colonial and imperialist project structuring the world as we know it. In this sense, racism in Brazil cannot be confronted without also confronting the imperialist agents who expel peoples from their territories, assassinate ethnic and religious minorities, finance wars through weapons and technology, silence dissident and counterhegemonic narratives across the world, and exploit other living beings. Violence is a technology that envelops the globe, a tightly woven web. Politics must also work in this way: in the wake of countercolonization, against an ontology of separation, and toward an epistemic disarmament. To suspend the weapons is to suspend the reason that fires, to interrupt the synthetic logic and the colonialist network. When we suspend the weapons there, at the very center of the world, we will also suspend the weapons here, at the end of the end of the world.

1. Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Unpayable Debt* (Sternberg Press, 2022). The author proposes that colonial modernity is founded upon a debt that cannot be resolved, for the nation-state itself is its reproductive machinery, which makes any real restitution to racialized bodies impossible.
2. Antônio Bispo dos Santos, *A terra dá, a terra quer* (Piseagrama; Ubu Editora, 2023). Regarding quilombos and quilombolas, it is important to note that their definition is linked to Black and Indigenous people who rebelled during slavery. Groups of escaped enslaved people created self-determined and highly complex communities that existed apart from the established power structure, as in the case of Quilombo dos Palmares. The quilombolas entered virgin forests to create the quilombos and in some cases were forced to become nomads to avoid recapture. It is also important to note that quilombos

are more than just a geographical space; they are a way of life that seeks to share and converge the land with other living beings. The quilombo is countercolonial resistance.

3. The UPPs (Pacifying Police Units) were created in 2008 in Rio de Janeiro under the discourse of combating drug trafficking and violence. The project reinforced the militarization and control of Black and poor populations, reproducing colonial "pacification" logics. The program was responsible for several severe failures, such as the disappearance and death of Amarildo Dias de Souza after he was detained by military police and taken from his home in the Rocinha favela to the headquarters of the neighborhood's Pacifying Police Unit in 2013.
4. Antônio Bispo dos Santos, *Colonização, Quilombos: Modos e significados* (INCT, 2015). The notion of "countercolonizing" here is not understood as violent reversal but as epistemological reconfiguration, an ontological disobedience to the structures of the State and of modern knowledge. This perspective aligns with the proposals of Walter D. Mignolo in "Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom" (*Theory, Culture, and Society* 26, no. 7–8, 2009) and Boaventura de Sousa Santos in *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (Routledge, 2014).
5. The idea of "suspending the weapons" echoes Achille Mbembe's critique in *Politiques de l'inimitié* (La Découverte, 2016), in which he defines modernity as a global regime of enmity sustained by the management of death. To suspend the weapons here is to suspend the necropolitical logic. This gesture also dialogues with Édouard Glissant's relational cosmopolitics, which proposes the "right to opacity," a way of existing without being fully translated or dominated. The ethical dimension of this suspension can also be read in light of the ideas of Leda Maria Martins, for whom the spiral of time is a movement of restitution and of listening to what has been silenced; see Leda Maria Martins, *Performances do tempo espiralar, Poéticas do corpo-tela* (Cobogó, 2021).

Mohit Shelare in Conversation with Ashok Sukumaran, September 2025

Mohit Shelare: Hey, Ashok, I hope my starting note below leads you to some thought. Look forward to your responses.

ABUNDANCE OF WASTE, the excessive energy transformed by the human world, is shifting the gears of what we have understood about nature and its ontological call for purity. The shift is now toward infectious and contaminated energy, its gases, materials, and fermentations leading to new kinds of beings. Walking around large and small dumpings, open gutters, train tracks, carcass grounds—extra. One can see life sustaining itself on waste; the image is not of a migratory bird reaching a harmonious lake, but of arriving at the naturally growing dumping mountains, where it hunts bugs and insects muted by toxins. The

oxygenless beneath the wastelands is still able to form life. The inorganic is formulating, structuring, and organizing, creating life just as an organic process does. These life-evolving systems under the expanded fields of waste are the premises where my practice takes shape, reconstituting impurity and human relationality to its systems and history.

Ashok Sukumaran: Yes, I like this imagery. Waste is now part of city and rural life as much as gardens or forests. It reminds me of a couple of things. With Pad.ma, a footage archive that questions the relation between the construction of film and the larger archive of filming (often in ratios like 30:1), we also thought of a vast dump of wastes, from which another kind of cinema could be born.¹ In our thinking, this waste is *constitutive* of cinematic (and many other) processes, not only its *residue*. Second, I think your abundance of waste imagery shows where we have ended up with general theories of abundance, such as Bataille's general economy of the sun: The surplus now exists as waste; the sun beats down on plastic; the toxic is a commons. This also means that the "distributive" political and aesthetic ideas of, say, late modernity have this dimension—where what is being distributed is a toxin.

MS: Exactly. The distributive force was realized with the invention of human rights and large industrial production—goods and rights as a democratic distribution process. Now toxins are entering the world as a new commons, spread across all humans. The recent emergence of planetary- and climate-care vocabularies derives from this project of the unwanted distribution of the world's commons. This new undesired distribution is coming to us, challenging everything.

The oxygenless commons is in immediate proximity to the oxygenless community. In Sanskrit, Prakrit, and many vernacular languages of the subcontinent, the community can be decoded as *jati*. Jati means to be born in a specific closed group bound by norms. Jatis are systems of endless separation. Jati is not only a social behavior but also a material characteristic. We see how materiality and sociality are entangled in one's work, its substances. Systemic organization of power and knowledge depends on jati. In this sense, jati is an organ one is born with, invisible, unlike color, gender, or class. My practice takes

this invisible organ as a breathing thing that speaks with its own language.

Think of the fat that accumulates in modern sewers: human shit and waste congealed over time into monstrous forms. This organ, once named a *fatberg*, mutates and shifts across many natures in my thinking process. One example: a fatberg as a meteor—coming from outside; it shakes up our epistemic process. When it strikes the human world, it appears as monstrous, alien, xeno: a contaminated force. And yet, under capitalism, this substance is recycled, turned into fuel; as Bataille might have anticipated, it becomes energy for commuter buses.

What is missing in this process is an artistic viewpoint, one that brings weird associations and condemned materials, a history excluded from social philosophy. A philosophy and politics of impurity reconstituting the world, sustained on waste and the depth of impurity. An epistemic framework for differently sensing and speaking with the world that is coming to us.

AS: In the introduction to his nice book on waste, Brian Thill writes that, even though we may perceive otherwise, waste is simply *every object, plus time*. So instead of being a material or essential description, it is a relational description: the "name we give to our troubled relationship with the decaying world outside ourselves."² And this relation, what you call the epistemic relation, can change. So a future civilization may welcome the meteorites as gold from the skies, others may live in fear. What is monstrous may become life-giving. I am reminded of a friend from Dharavi who said, "Just one hospital contract (for recycling) and our lives are made." How would you think about this instability, and does it appear in the artistic process in a deliberate way?

On jati, is there a specific articulation with the Ambedkarite project? There is, in B. R. Ambedkar's thought, the desire to *annihilate* this fixed relation between a kind of material and a kind of human, to undo the perpetuity of this. But how is the form of this struggle changing? To simplify, the Mahad Satyagraha, in which an excluded community drank from a common water tank,³ doesn't work symbolically as a gesture if the tank water is already, as I'm

sure it is today, undrinkable. Your work is, for me, an interesting challenge to the ideological re-representation of such historical moments, also occurring in art today, that do not fully consider the evolution of the questions and their transformed environments.

MS: Here, I could recall my performance *mouth-watering*. In it, there are two everyday glasses, one filled with water and the other empty. I take a swig from the glass with water and then spit it into the empty one, repeating this action back and forth until the water vanishes. Over time, the water becomes stinky, thick, and undrinkable; yet I still attempt to drink it, even as it disappears with time and my actions. The work highlights the tensions you mentioned: instability and exhaustion of mimesis (representation). I will join them together as my response.

Our relationality with the world is worked out with instability, and we learn to utilize it without altering the outcome. There is instability in my practice, but at the threshold of "in or out"—from which side to configure the relationality. Like the water in that glass, is it in or out? The practice draws near the relation to the discarded. Where the fatberg grows, where pigs' nutrition is human shit, where toxins can be generative.

If a fatberg can become energy; a pig, an organ machine; and a meteor, gold, then this can also turn the other way around. All these relations are finding value not in their substance but within ourselves. In this deep relational system, throwing things out in the process of establishing a relation with ourselves has transformed into a gigantic force that is unavoidable (the commons: waste and toxins). I also like to call it the *unarrivable*. Here, the work takes place as a crucial ground where recycling is not the move. From this view, I bring Ambedkar into my work not as an image of liberal resistance but as a thinking mind that navigates this philosophical problem of human association with the world and outside of the world.

The impact of Ambedkar's writings and speeches lies not only in his canceling of endogamy and occupations that come with it but also in finding oneself without established relations to the world that is built upon separations as associations (the Indian mindset of finding *jati*, *dharma*, *karma*, *rasa*, and so on). These *jati* relations turned into camouflage under urban

liberalism while adapting in order to sanitize capitalism and secularism. In Ambedkar's work, he does not refer to the term *Dalit* but keeps it open, becoming imperceptible. In my practice, finding a new relationality to the world means looking at the waste that is with us even if outside of our environment.

AS: The material also offers something: It becomes stinky, thick, unswallowable. It surprises us. So it is not just an epistemic question; it cannot be dealt with *only* by thinking it. We can say with your work that it is also an exploration of the limits of thought, since we see more than a crystallization of ideas; it is an encounter with something real. While looking at your wall drawing *Curve in Desire* (2023) and also the video work you did with us in Mumbai of the *nalas*/drains (*Toxic Substance and Immediate Existence*, 2023), it struck me how much action is taking place in these images, where (adding my own memories of such spaces) rats are scaring away cats, wastes are heating up on their own, the persistent by-products of our "chemical city" from the 1960s are at our feet, the mangroves are full of human shit and the tidal living and dead. This is an imagination where your *unarrivable*, which you say is outside of *our* relationality, is actually a vast and buzzing landscape, what the philosopher Quentin Meillassoux once called the "great outdoors," outside of human thought. I wouldn't call it a living landscape, but it's not dead either. Aren't the unarrivable grounds actually full and rich—as you say, abundant? Is your attempt to craft a relation to it a kind of "new," in Ambedkar's sense of *nava-*, an inventive and nonendogamous practice? Are there conventions of art or ideas in art history here—those you want to keep, and those you would discard?

MS: I think the conventions of art and history have to be invented as they proceed. In my practice, drawing is an involvement more than a tool; it brings things near and makes it possible to think far away. I try to keep this in motion and aim to reinstall its quick relation between perception and representation. It's a question of how to confront the real when it comes to art. My drawings are basically garbage, and this garbage contains energy and insists on coming out to the world as something new.

The "new" in Ambedkar's worldview points back to thinking, a hand pointing in the direction of the unarrivable, something that is not with us but stays outdoors. My work for the 59th Carnegie International looks beyond the international as a geographic map and its human differences to the world of commons that is approaching us. It is filled with tension between thought and its outdoors, living and dead, desire and discarded. Abstraction, the ecology of impurity, and transforming ideas like catastrophe, toxin, and contamination into new kinds of discovery—my large drawings of landscapes resonate with these unarrivable grounds, disrupted by accumulations of solid material. Sculptural forms hold hovering texts—*choke*, *utterance*, *speech*—and mark the weight of language on substances, while the flat, solid pictorials are flat and solid not for representation but for an intimacy with what's there to live with. Immediacy to the oxygenless and its unconventional breathing. Drawing in the substances that are acting out of their nature, spinning into each other's direction, lost yet content, where the unexpected coming out of the substance will shape itself, reinvent, and unidentify.

1. Pad.ma was initiated in 2007 as an online archive of text-annotated video footage, rather than finished films; see also <https://pad.ma/m/documents/OH/10> for a discussion of remnant vs. reserve.
2. Brian Thill, *Waste (Object Lessons)* (Bloomsbury, 2015), publisher's description.
3. The Mahad Satyagraha was a five-thousand-person strong protest led by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on March 20, 1927, in a town in Maharashtra. Its goal was to assert the right of lower castes to use water from the public Chavdar Tank, a right denied by upper-caste Hindus not only at this tank but also commonly elsewhere.

Arturo Kameya and Claudia Martínez Garay in Conversation with Raphael Fonseca, July 22, 2025

Raphael Fonseca: I wanted to start off with a rather personal question to understand your shared trajectory, since for the Carnegie project, you two are authoring a work in collaboration, even if partially. Part of the work is together and part separate, right? This is intriguing, because I feel that, as a couple and as artists, you influence and affect each other in a very organic way. How did you first meet?

Arturo Kameya: We met more than twenty years ago at university in Peru. I was studying

painting; Claudia was a year ahead of me. She switched majors from industrial design to printmaking, and when you switch majors, you lose a year. That's when we coincided, and our timelines overlapped for a couple of years. And later, in 2008, after we finished university, we started dating, living together, sharing a studio ... everything. But at the start of our relationship, I had to go to Japan to work due to a student loan that had funded part of my studies. I had everything ready: a ticket, a contract, everything. So the first two years together were long distance, over Skype.

RF: Claudia, I know through other interviews that initially you were interested in music as well as design; in fact, you had some family pressure to study design before moving over to printmaking. What weight does printmaking have in your development?

Claudia Martínez Garay: Well, I was pressed not to study music, so I went to study industrial design to make stuff for musicians. I had no idea printmaking even existed until I got to university. My second year there, I started learning woodcut, silkscreen, metal engraving, and lithography. And what I liked most was the idea of multiplicity: You don't have just one piece, but rather several. That allows you to try, fail, find surprises, experiment. Plus, you could gift copies, which I loved. I liked that freedom, in contrast with painting, which at that time felt more rigid, more traditional. It didn't excite me as much. I think what has stayed with me from that stage has to do with transforming existing images and using the graphic language as a way to create new meanings. I haven't completely abandoned printmaking; for example, I now work with risography, a very popular technique here in Europe. But I always think about my pieces in terms of editions. It matters to me that more people can see them, access them, show them. As for the relationship between music and printmaking, it still isn't totally clear to me, but I think both share that possibility of multiplicity, overlapping, and sharing, of being more generous, more accessible.

RF: Do you think that your background in printmaking influences your interest in working with the idea of layers? When I see a work like *The Parade/The Leftovers* (2016), for example, it plays with the superposition of images, a type of visual zigzag that also comes back in your



Mohit Shelare, *Unarrivable* (detail), 2025, acrylic, nails, and paper on canvas, 100 x 5 ft.

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