

ARRESTED WELCOME

Irina Aristarkhova Hospitality in Contemporary Art



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Hospitality in
Contemporary Art

Irina Aristarkhova



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To Guna and Mama

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Introduction

WELCOME AS RESISTANCE

Hattendorf and Mirikitani

On a chilly day in early 2001, Linda Hattendorf, a documentary filmmaker and editor, noticed a homeless man with a makeshift artist's table not far from her apartment building in lower Manhattan. Attracted at first by his drawings of large colorful cats, Hattendorf started chatting with him as one artist to another. In doing so she took the first step toward extending hospitality to a stranger: she noticed him.

The man's name was Jimmy Mirikitani. When he saw that Hattendorf had a professional-level camera, he asked her to film him. She agreed, and during the days that followed she looked for him on the streets near her apartment building and recorded their conversations and his drawing. Over the course of several interviews and hours of filming, Hattendorf learned about Mirikitani's life. This eighty-year-old Japanese American artist had been imprisoned in his youth at one of the internment camps where the U.S. government held Japanese Americans during World War II. Although he was born in the United States, he had also spent years in Nagasaki, Japan, where his family lived. (Some of his family members suffered and died after the atomic bombing of the city in 1945.) American officials had pressured Japanese Americans in the internment camps to sign papers renouncing their ties to Japan, and when Mirikitani refused to do so, his U.S. citizenship had been taken away.

Unable to get his life back on track after his release from the camp, and no longer an American citizen (he was "without papers"), Mirikitani suffered years of hardship and ended up living on the streets of New York. He was angry at his home country for treating him as the enemy, separating him from his family, and contributing to the deaths of his friends in the internment camp, who had loved his drawings.

Finding his story worthy of a wider audience, Hattendorf decided to make a documentary film about Mirikitani's life.¹ In the film, a gray-haired Mirikitani, surrounded by his meager possessions, shows his drawings of the camp. Hattendorf's camera documents his anger, his anguish, and the reactions on the faces of the people on the street who pass by him.

Hattendorf's time with Mirikitani transformed his strangeness into familiarity. She got to know who he was: his name, his history, the stories behind his drawings, and the reasons for his anger. *The Cats of Mirikitani* was released in 2006, five years after the filmmaker and the artist first met. Hattendorf had planned for the film to be strictly about Jimmy Mirikitani's life and artwork, and especially in the early part of the film, Linda Hattendorf's face is rarely seen. This makes sense, because the director of a film customarily stays behind the camera. The focus is supposed to be on the central character of the story (Mirikitani), and not on the director. *The Cats of Mirikitani* follows this convention at first, but then the story and the film itself take an unexpected turn.

We see Hattendorf leave her house on the morning of September 11, 2001. She is searching for Mirikitani, but her neighborhood in lower Manhattan is filling up with ash from the collapse of the World Trade Center's towers, and it is hard to see anything on the streets. Hattendorf speaks as she searches, and her voice is concerned. After months of chatting with Mirikitani on the street, hearing his story, Hattendorf no longer thinks of him as a stranger. He has become more than just the subject of her documentary—and now he needs her help.

Hattendorf finds Mirikitani in the corner of a nearby building. We can hear him coughing, but in the grayness of the frame, it is difficult to recognize him. What Hattendorf does next she will later describe in interviews as an "impulsive decision": she invites him to her apartment.

In the following few minutes of the film we join Mirikitani as he becomes, for the first time, a visitor to Hattendorf's apartment. We see how tiny the living space is, with the kitchen, where we later see her cook, in the same room where Hattendorf arranges a bed for her visitor, barely a few feet away. (As someone who grew up in a very small government-sponsored apartment in Moscow, I relate strongly to the ways in which Hattendorf's personal space shrinks with the addition of an eighty-year-old homeless man sleeping on a makeshift bed in her cramped home, and I appreciate how graciously she shows this in the film, for both of them.)

After the ash of 9/11 clears, Mirikitani does not go back to the streets of New York. Hattendorf's film connects his story to the current events playing out on her television, with her behind-the-camera commentary implying a parallel between the post-9/11 treatment of Muslim Americans and the treatment of Japanese Americans like Mirikitani during World War II. If Hattendorf had fears about inviting a homeless man into her house, she does not express them in

the film. The film shows Mirikitani primarily in a good light. We see him drawing or singing Japanese songs while lying down in Hattendorf's living room. We watch as he plays with and talks to her cat, who "talks" back to him. At one point, he worries when she is late coming home at night. A man who a few short weeks earlier had lived on the streets is now staying up late, anxiously waiting for Hattendorf to return. When she arrives, he complains about her coming back "so late," and she responds by explaining to him that "it's okay for women today to spend time outside." He has become like a father figure, worried about her safety on the streets, which he does not see as welcoming.

The filmmaker gradually becomes more and more involved in Mirikitani's life. Over the next few months she helps him to reinstate his citizenship and apply for Social Security, and finally finds him his own apartment in public housing. She also reunites him with his family, finding his sister in California, a sister who thought her brother had died long ago. In a touching moment, Hattendorf passes the phone to Mirikitani so he can talk to his sister for the first time in decades. She also reconnects him with his niece, Janice, who was interned in another camp for Japanese Americans in Arizona. (She had become a poet, writing about the same painful past that we see in Mirikitani's drawings of the camps.) All of these actions require time and effort from Hattendorf, who goes to work every morning and comes back at night to the apartment where Mirikitani waits for her.

Because the film is meant to be about Mirikitani's life story, Hattendorf's camera continues to gloss over her role in his life while he is her guest, as if the director is wary of attracting too much attention to herself. In fact, the film is edited in such a way that we barely see Hattendorf in the frame until the very end. As a professional editor, she is particular about staying in the background. But no matter how hard she tries to direct our attention away from herself, Hattendorf becomes an active participant in her own film. It is no longer the story of a homeless man's sad life on the streets of New York, within the context of a geopolitical post-World War II tragedy updated through the lens of 9/11. It is the story of a homeless man whose life takes a dramatic turn when he finds a new home and a new lifelong friend.

Hattendorf was with Mirikitani when he passed away at the age of ninety-two on October 21, 2012, more than a decade after their first encounter. During the intervening years, which saw multiple exhibitions of Mirikitani's artwork and many Mirikitani family reunions, they remained friends.

What is unveiled in real time, in front of our eyes, in *The Cats of Mirikitani* is Linda Hattendorf's hospitality and the transformation that it led to in her own life and, especially, in the life of this formerly homeless man. This point was not lost on audience members and critics when the film was finally released in 2006.² *The Cats of Mirikitani* received several awards, including the Audience Award at the Tribeca Film Festival, where it premiered. Although Hattendorf's plan was to focus on Jimmy Mirikitani's story and his drawings, audiences experienced the greatest catharsis from the way Mirikitani's life unfolded *after* her invitation to come and stay with her.³

During the recorded question-and-answer sessions after the screenings of the film at various venues, audience members often asked Hattendorf about her decision to invite a homeless man to stay with her. Many seemed to contemplate such a decision with hesitation and fear, and they expressed astonishment at Hattendorf's welcome. For viewers of the film, the built-up collective anxiety over how or whether to welcome total strangers who need that welcome the most is released through Hattendorf's welcome, as if her audience, vicariously, also invites a homeless man home. When I show *The Cats of Mirikitani* in a classroom, the students tell me they feel as if this film redeems them a little bit, too, as human beings, in a current climate of increased hostility and intolerance in their immediate lives—as if they are the ones who extend their welcome.

In praising the film, critics have confirmed its collective redemptive quality. Political science professor Michael J. Shapiro sees in the film a hope for how the process of filmmaking itself could become transformational. When awarding Hattendorf the Film Peace Prize at the 2007 Tromsø International Film Festival, Shapiro and other members of the festival jury (which included Rashid Masharawi, a Palestinian filmmaker from Gaza living in Paris, and Silje Ryvold, then a Norwegian student at the University of Tromsø) explained what they found so extraordinary about the documentary, noting that "Hattendorf's documentary project, which began as a result of some small sympathetic gestures, ended up as an extended generosity with universal implications."⁴ In addition to telling us Mirikitani's life story prior to his meeting Hattendorf, the film has the universal appeal of contagious hospitality.

Hattendorf's discretion in showing her hosting in the film has been praised too. Film critic and editor Nell McClister highlights the self-effacing nature of Hattendorf's generosity: "Shadowing the narrative, more subtle even than the persistent, damning background murmur of war commentary from Hattendorf's

TV, is the astonishing personal generosity of the filmmaker. Never permitted to edge into the limelight, her gentleness and her restraint stand as a beacon of warm mercy in the darkness.”⁵ Here, she is presented as an “ideal hostess.” She does not claim her courage, her full labor of hospitality. She does not show us what it takes to decide and perform “small sympathetic gestures” and “astonishing personal generosity.” Echoing one another, the members of the Tromsø jury and McClister seem to be both astonished at Hattendorf’s actions (they seem to be asking themselves, “Would *we* invite in Mirikitani, a homeless man, even on 9/11?”) and thankful for her “restraint” in not bringing too much attention to herself.⁶

Not all readings of this documentary and of what Hattendorf did have been so positive. When one has something that another person needs or does not have, the resulting inequality might make a welcoming gesture seem suspect. Once, after I gave a lecture discussing this documentary, a cultural theorist and filmmaker in the audience made a comment suggesting that Hattendorf had exploited Mirikitani for her own gain, to become a well-known filmmaker.⁷ As a filmmaker, this person implied, Hattendorf had very little to lose and a lot to gain from inviting the artist in, especially after she had already decided to make a film about him. Another objection could be raised that not much risk was involved in her hosting a frail elderly man with whom she was already familiar. These are valid points, as valid as the fearful thoughts Hattendorf herself may have had after Mirikitani started to live with her at the apartment (*What have I done? How does this look? Am I safe? What was I thinking?*), and I will explore them further in this book.

However, I am making a case here that Hattendorf’s act, her hard work of hospitality, should not be dismissed just because of its “happy ending.” There is no need to rationalize Hattendorf’s actions away as if they interfere with our own everyday decisions about homeless persons. Mirikitani would probably be the first to understand the cynicism about the promise of welcome, as we see him in the film being suspicious about the United States as a country, which has been an inhospitable place for him, robbing him of his youth, his family, and his professional life just because he was Japanese. He often said, “No need, no need,” when rejecting offers to help restore his American citizenship. Understandably, he was angry and defensive because of previous bad experiences. But once he accepted Hattendorf’s invitation, after coming to know her in the months prior to 9/11, he decided to trust her without knowing how it would end. The point I am

making here is that neither Hattendorf nor Mirikitani knew for sure what would happen once they started living together in her small apartment. Most interpretations and judgments between hosts and guests are made post-factum—that is the nature of hospitality.

There is a scene in the film in which Mirikitani is sitting on his makeshift bed in Hattendorf's home, shortly before he is to leave for his own new apartment (which has been provided by social services). He has tears in his eyes, and, feeling shy about his emotions, he masks his tearfulness with a grumpy tone of voice. Why does Mirikitani cry? Why would a guest, a former homeless man, cry now, when he is finally getting his own place, at eighty years old? This is the incredible power of the film: it makes us feel his emotions, that he cries because of all that has happened to him, and because he will miss Hattendorf. The artist and the filmmaker have developed a genuine friendship. Though their experience together has not been easy on either of them, they have developed a deep understanding of each other. My writing acknowledges Hattendorf's hospitality and Mirikitani's life, his anger and tears, and one of the lessons I learned from this film is that the question of the filmmaker's motivation speaks as much to our own inner monologues, emotions, and anxieties when we pass by homeless persons as it does to her intentions.

The line between a good kind of gain (weaving one's own creative thread into the social fabric) and a bad kind of gain (manipulating others for exploitative purposes) cannot be identified in advance, before the hospitality event occurs. To emphasize once again: hosts and guests realize each other's intentions post-factum, from the effects of their actions in often unexpected or unpredictable circumstances. What is different in this case is the existence of the film, which serves as a lesson and a record, in addition to being a work about hospitality. The film enables its audience to learn from Hattendorf and Mirikitani's story. And Hattendorf, obviously, considered criticisms of her own position, too. I believe that is why she was ready to note that her decision to host Mirikitani was "impulsive," rather than calculated, prepared, and imagined in advance. She feared looking like she took advantage of her guest and his situation for her own gain. She clearly worried, as director and editor, and especially in postproduction, that it might look like the whole time Linda Hattendorf provided this homeless artist with a refuge her motivation was to make herself famous. I am glad this worry did not stop her from making the film.

My central concern in this book is the larger lesson in hospitality that artworks

offer and enable—for example, how Hattendorf carefully considered whether or not to include in the film such scenes as that of Mirikitani tearing up, and that she did so despite the risk of being accused of exploiting her subject. In the last decade of his life, Mirikitani was reunited with his family members, whom Hattendorf found, and he traveled and exhibited his art, something he loved doing; he died, arguably, a much happier man than he had been before he met Hattendorf. Hattendorf's film points to the bigger political picture—the tragedy of what happened to Mirikitani in the first place and the injustice of how the United States treats some of its citizens, such as Japanese Americans during World War II and Muslim Americans post-9/11—but it also shows how her hospitality made possible a better outcome for Mirikitani, for this one person.

With her film's warm, inviting, albeit sometimes painful story, Hattendorf takes the rest of us to a place where decisions about hosting the homeless do not seem to be extraordinary. The film brings us into a place where we can tell ourselves: *Despite our fears and anxieties, if she can do it, surely we can do it, too.* What would stop us from following this film's inspirational lessons?

Hospitality and Its Discontents

The concept of hospitality, or the practice of welcoming others, has increasingly become a central concern, albeit a contested one, in academic, cultural, and public spheres. There is currently much political debate and philosophical reckoning surrounding requests for accommodation and the needs of others—strangers, immigrants, refugees, and the displaced—who might be hosted in homes and in communities. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates conservatively that today close to sixty million people in the world can be classified as “displaced” by war, persecution, economic conditions, and natural disasters.⁸ Debates concerning the refugee crisis in Europe and immigration law in the United States are the most current, and all-too-familiar, examples of responses to the needs of such displaced persons.

In the context of political declarations that “cosmopolitanism has failed” (a phrase repeated by many European leaders, especially on the political right), an insistence on practices of hospitality represents a radical path forward and a means of political resistance. In scholarship, hospitality has been presented not only as the conduct of oneself vis-à-vis one's guests but also as an ethical means of understanding and responding to a variety of others who do not neatly “belong.”

In European philosophy, Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida have critically discussed key philosophical and political texts and founding stories (mythological and religious) to open up hospitality's contemporary possibilities. In my previous writings, I have analyzed the theories of Derrida, who asserted the need for a critical reworking of the importance placed on unconditional hospitality as an ideal.⁹ What does such "ideal" hospitality look like, without any conditions presented to guests and hosts? Fairy tales, religious writings, and other cultural foundational texts, passed from one generation to the next through socialization and education, are used as blueprints. Ancient stories of hospitality present the welcoming of strangers as proof of faith and/or proper conduct. Examples come from the Bible, in Matthew 25:40 ("Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"), the Laws of Manu, and the Dharmasutras ("If there is no food, then a place on the floor, some water and straw, and a pleasant welcome—these are never wanting in a house of a good man. . . . A couple who acts this way wins a world without end").¹⁰

From individual, personal conduct, the ideal of hospitality extends to the community, to the nation, to "we, the people." An ideal of hospitality, indeed, also influenced the development of international law in post-Enlightenment Europe when it provided a foundation for Immanuel Kant's conceptualization of a cosmopolitan right to hospitality: citizens of various countries should be able to visit each other (hence, the notion of being granted a "visa") without harm, and with an expectation of tolerance.¹¹

This ideal of hospitality, however, is not just some speculative notion that is removed from everyday life. For example, Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus," inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, could be seen as reflecting such an ideal, which is very much in the background of many conversations taking place around immigration policy in the United States today:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
 With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”¹²

This ideal implies that hospitality is challenging, and one needs to remind oneself that it lives up to its promise most when the circumstances in which it is practiced are not ordinary. Linda Hattendorf’s gesture in this respect connects to Lazarus’s call, and her film *The Cats of Mirikitani* is a testimony. But what I see in this film of those post-9/11 days, besides the political commentary, is how Hattendorf’s decision to extend an invitation to Mirikitani, to welcome him into her small apartment, effectively makes her overall point. She shows her viewers that Lazarus’s appeal on the Statue of Liberty is not a cause, as an ideal principle, but an effect, expressed through symbolic means of poetry and sculpture, of what happens in everyday situations.

It might seem that Lazarus’s poem is falling on deaf ears today. However, this is not only because hostility or, at best, tolerance has prevailed over ideals of such unconditional welcome.¹³ It is also because the traditions of hospitality, the stories and the ancient ideals, have themselves been implicated in and found to be complicit with more fundamental reasons behind the failures of hospitality to live up to its promise. Hospitality cannot be separated from the question of power: institutional, economic, national, and historical. Even in ancient texts, some people are welcomed much more than others, and some are seen as more worthy of welcome. How are people divided? The divisions in hospitality follow the patterns of disempowerment in societies. Women, the poor, members of lower classes or castes, religious and ethnic “others,” sexual minorities, non-citizens, and nonhuman living beings (animals) are usually presented, if at all, as less worthy or not worthy of unconditional welcome. Though more recent philosophical discussions acknowledge that there are ongoing problems with hospitality traditions and definitions, they do not provide much of a path forward, away from essentialist, heteronormative, and harmful histories. That is why contemporary critiques of and alternatives to existing discriminatory cultures of hospitality are needed: hospitality itself needs to be challenged.

Women especially have been categorized as welcoming of others rather than

worthy of welcome themselves. As a feminist scholar of hospitality, I have explored and critiqued how the categories of women, the maternal, and the feminine have been consistently presented as essentially, *naturally*, more hospitable than men, the paternal, and the masculine. In this system, femininity and hospitality are defined symbiotically and tautologically: femininity is welcoming because welcome is feminine. In “The New Colossus,” Lazarus equates the country with the mother, employing the association between gender and hospitality.

In addition to my feminist theorizing of hospitality, in this book I engage with other critical approaches that come out of social justice movements, highlighting how various inequalities in hospitality relations have become intertwined and are sustained by those in power. In *The Cats of Mirikitani*, Linda Hattendorf is primarily interested in encouraging change on national and cultural levels, so that those who are defined as “others” (Japanese Americans during World War II, Muslim Americans in the post-9/11 period) are not targeted as a group unwelcomed in the country. These critical approaches to hospitality show how hospitality itself needs to be changed so it does not reproduce the hierarchies, exclusions, and stereotypical expectations of its past iterations.

These critical approaches also lead me, along with the artists discussed in this book, to be mindful of positionality and inherent inequalities that bear on a claim to welcome. First, it is important to recognize that individual welcoming acts do not solve big structural problems. Hattendorf does not pretend to solve the homelessness problem in the United States by inviting one homeless man into her apartment. But that does not mean that her act is not impactful for her audience. Her resulting friendship with Mirikitani and the changes in his life raise questions for her audience about what kind of people we (in this case, Americans) are. Second, the feminist research community has taught me and other white women that it is problematic to act out of the arrogant and presumptuous “white savior complex”—that is, assuming that people of color need help, thinking we know what kind of help they need, and, though not asked, providing “help” that in fact benefits mostly the white women involved. Hattendorf seemed mindful of the possibility that she would appear as a benevolent “savior” who made a film about a homeless man but in the end benefited mostly herself. And finally, fears and anxieties accompany hospitality situations. These fears include giving away too many resources, so that one no longer has enough for oneself and one’s own family; risking one’s personal safety; being taken advan-

tage of; and not living up to cultural expectations as a host or a guest and hence being judged. Throughout this book I explore these fears and anxieties.

Stop Hosting Now!

To make the promise of hospitality come true for someone like Jimmy Mirikitani, Hattendorf had to put her fears and anxieties aside. So much could have gone wrong: Mirikitani could have had a health problem, including a mental illness; he could have killed her in her sleep (after all, he did show frustration); or he could have decided to go back to the streets of New York because he was afraid of her, or because he was unable to cope with sharing her apartment. And who would judge Hattendorf if she had decided not to let Mirikitani stay after the Manhattan air cleared, if she had asked him to leave at that time? After all, other people in the film, who called themselves Mirikitani's friends when he lived on the streets, did not invite him to their homes to live with them, choosing instead to buy him food or bring him warm blankets.

Beyond individuals' fears around extending and receiving hospitality, there is also community pressure to conform to certain notions and customs of welcome. Hospitality decisions might seem individual, but their impact is communal. As a result, the community often prescribes what kind of hospitality an individual should enact. The welcoming of a community member might be in conflict with the expectations of other members of the community. Power struggles take place among various community members about which hospitality "ideals" should win: majority, minority, traditional, new, and so on. One story that circulated in the news a few years ago presents an example of a community that interfered with an individual community member's decision to host homeless people at his house.

Unlike Linda Hattendorf, Greg Schiller of Elgin City, Illinois, lived in his own house, not in a small apartment. The winter of 2017–18 was especially cold, and Schiller feared the homeless people in the city square might freeze to death without shelter. Schiller is a white man of modest means, but like many Americans he lives in a house that can accommodate more people than just its inhabitants. When the temperature dropped below 15 degrees Fahrenheit, he invited homeless men to spend a night in his basement. He provided beds and hot meals to about ten people.¹⁴

The city of Elgin's efforts to care for the local homeless population included a food pantry and homeless shelters, which were required by city code to have more fire exits than Schiller's basement provided. In fact, Elgin's code specifically prohibited the use of private homes as homeless shelters. After receiving a tip from one of Schiller's neighbors, city officials threatened to "condemn" Schiller's house if he continued to host the homeless. From the city's point of view, Schiller was inviting the homeless into his home (and not for the first time) without assuring their safety.¹⁵

Schiller had previously been involved with a ministry named for the above-mentioned biblical passage, the Matthew 25:40 Ministry. He had disagreed with some members of the ministry and had left it before another hosting session at his house took place. Thus, Schiller's hosting of homeless men involved him in disagreements with at least four different groups or individuals in his community: city officials; one or more of his neighbors or other citizens of Elgin; his former colleagues and friends at the ministry; and his former spouse, who also voiced her own issues with his hosting.¹⁶

The desire on the part of the larger community to stop Schiller's welcome stemmed primarily from concerns about safety regulations, which presumably had been enacted to ensure the well-being of the homeless men themselves. In the news media, Elgin officials were quoted as stating that they were worried about safety and were offended by the suggestion that they were not as concerned about the homeless as Schiller was. At the same time, at least one of them admitted that there might be not enough spaces for everyone in the city's homeless shelters, especially during those extremely cold nights.¹⁷

Then there is the question of whether others should be able to stop a person's—or an entire community's—hospitality. This is something that happens all the time, especially with those groups who are excluded from communal hospitality "ideals." The current debates around undocumented migrants demonstrate my point. Should national government be able to stop the welcome of specific communities—cities, individuals, religious communities—who decide to shelter undocumented migrants? Who should decide? How should resources be distributed? This is how the power structures of hospitality are mobilized and revealed: when an open conflict takes place about whom and how to welcome, it takes place between some individuals and other individuals, testing the power, commitment, and resolve of both sides. Other members of the community then

align themselves with one side or the other according to their own views on and practices of hospitality.

Jeff Rowes, a senior lawyer with the Institute for Justice, headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, was quoted in the *New York Times* regarding Schiller's case. He defended Schiller's hosting as the constitutional right of an American citizen, stating that citizens enjoy a "right to rescue" those whose lives are in danger. He noted that homeless persons, too, have the constitutional right to "be free of government interference that endangers their lives."¹⁸ This is an example of the dynamics of hosting and power. According to this logic, Schiller and the homeless men, as American citizens, have more rights to host and be hosted than do undocumented migrants or noncitizen residents like Jimmy Mirikitani. Lazarus's ideal of hospitality, however, does not make a distinction between citizens and noncitizens.

The questions surrounding hospitality are not going away, because the problem of what we do (however "we" is defined), as a community, is not going away. It is only getting worse, as a result of human-made and natural disasters. That is why Lazarus's poem, inscribed on the Statue of Liberty, reads today as radical as ever. Whose responsibility is it to enact the ideal of hosting? Should the responsibility fall to the government, with its agencies and bureaucracy, or to the individual citizen, or to charities, or to all or none of these? The examples of Hattendorf's and Schiller's hosting of homeless men show how the personal and the political are connected. As individual Americans, we constantly debate how hospitable or not our country needs to be. Today only a little more than 50 percent of Americans support Lazarus's ideal of welcoming refugees, and opinions on the topic are sharply divided along ideological lines.¹⁹ Communities do not necessarily support welcoming actions. Across Europe, trials have been conducted in various countries as governments have sought to stop their own "Schillers" from providing shelter to refugees and immigrants.

In taking the actions that they did, both Hattendorf and Schiller followed what they were supposed to do, according to Lazarus's poem and other stories of ideal hospitality, but most people do not take such actions. Because their acts of hospitality were extraordinary, Hattendorf and Schiller transformed welcome into an act of defiance and resistance to violent hostility and indifferent tolerance. Hattendorf resisted the choice of doing nothing and defied many doubts in her own mind, I imagine, when making the documentary. She defied anxiety about welcoming a stranger, something she later acknowledged in answering

questions from audiences (When did you decide to do it? Were you not afraid?). There are many reasons not to welcome strangers or seek their welcome, in real life and in the art that I discuss in this book. However, focusing on the topic of hospitality, I have also learned from artists who, like Hattendorf, show in various ways that welcome among strangers can be mobilized as a form of resistance to the hostilities that surround us and to signs of mere tolerance, which does not seem to be enough any longer (as when Kant, for example, defined hospitality as a right to “not being harmed” when in a foreign land).²⁰

The Cats of Mirikitani also shows that when ethical decisions are made about who is worthy of our welcome and to what extent, those decisions are also lived through, and answered, step by step, aesthetically. The manifestation of who can afford to live with or without the welcome of others, or who feels entitled to welcome, is carried out through sensory, aesthetic means—what tone of voice to use, how to appear to another person in terms of clothing and greeting, what kind of food to offer or to accept, what constitutes a welcoming, sheltering, environment. *How* to approach a stranger, how to *appear* to that person—these questions constitute a hospitality scene. Welcoming is a *form* of embodiment shared with others. There are also expectations of the genre. As a creative person, as a documentary filmmaker, Hattendorf was supposed to set her role in the background: finding money, writing a story to tell, organizing everything, directing, editing. The focus of her film should be on her subject, Jimmy Mirikitani. But as I watch the film with my students, we are all glad that Hattendorf did not let either personal or professional doubts stop her. In creating the film, she transformed her welcome into an act of resistance that inspires her audience to rethink personal and national (in)hospitality. What is the role of contemporary art in this search for new forms of welcome?

Contemporary Art and Hospitality through a Feminist Lens

Since the twentieth century, the discussion around the role of art in society has resurfaced in many forms, building on old tropes. Most famously, Plato wanted to ban artists and other creative makers from his ideal state. He argued that rather than searching for, establishing, and defending justice, artists, at best, entertained the masses with dazzling beautiful forms and mimicry of real life; at worst, they spread falsehoods and illusions. Hence, artists are either harmless (in a “useless” way) or dangerous.²¹ Would Plato, then, be happy that artists

in the twentieth century invented art forms that were intended to have direct impacts on society by promoting justice? Would he describe Linda Hattendorf's documentary film as the kind of art that benefits the ideal state? After all, those who gave Hattendorf awards at film festivals said that the film renewed their hope for humanity.

There have always been artists who have sought to create socially engaged and justice-oriented works. Artists of the nineteenth-century Russian *Peredvizhniki* (Wanderers) movement used painting to bring attention to the social and economic ills of the Russian Empire. Instead of producing portraits of wealthy people and their estates, these artists depicted the hardship and poverty of serfs and indentured laborers. In the early twentieth century, around the time of the 1917 Russian Revolution, some Russian artists gave up painting altogether for new forms of creative expression, with the aim of serving a wider public; these forms included posters, film, graphic design, photography, public theater, and social organizing.²² The twentieth century saw the meaning of art as creative and cultural practice widen, in terms of both forms of creative expression and artists' activist work as citizens and members of their communities. In the twenty-first century, in contemporary art, an individual artist might be involved in a variety of forms of art making, depending on the artist's intentions. The piece of an artwork immediately "visible" to the audience might be only a small part of the artist's practice. By writing about such artworks here, in addition to thinking through practices of hospitality, I hope to expand the audiences of the works in question, with the aim of enabling an understanding of entire projects whose specific multiyear, multimedia aspects might otherwise be lost, forgotten, or missed.²³

Within the field of art theory and criticism more narrowly, recent debates have focused on the role of art in society, especially around discussions of "relational aesthetics" and "social practice" art forms. A number of scholars, curators, and artists (such as Nicolas Bourriaud, Lucy Lippard, Griselda Pollock, Grant H. Kester, Suzanne Lacy, the Raqs Media Collective, Rick Lowe, Claire Doherty, Amelia Jones, Tom Finkelpearl, Miwon Kwon, Nato Thompson, and Claire Bishop) have joined in extensive discussions of "relation" or "participation" in art practices.²⁴

Critics and scholars who support forms of art practice that include social intervention and participation in the community at large see these new forms as carrying on the legacy of socially conscious activist art from the twentieth century. They consider the new forms to be a welcome departure from the insular

commercial art world that is mostly supported by wealthy individuals and their galleries, in which artworks are collected as commodities, investments, or objects to own and admire. But art forms that seek social change and community participation have also been fiercely critiqued. The critics point out that when artists “patch” social problems with their individual actions, they are at best salving their own and the art world’s conscience (along the lines of the “white savior complex” previously described); at worst, they are enabling the very unequal system they critique by ameliorating aspects of it rather than seeking the structural transformation of the whole. As a result, the systems of inequality, “patched” by artists, philanthropists, and volunteers, can carry on; they are not forced to become more equitable and just. Therefore, in the most critical part of this argument, such artists are not merely harmless, they are “dangerous” (to follow Plato’s logic) to the larger project of social change.

Similar to the debates around hospitality described above, discussions of the social role of art become more focused when they include attention to differences in power and personal positionality. I introduce these concerns briefly here, since I explore them throughout the book. First, when the question of art’s social role is raised, a distinction is usually made between art that is displayed in or takes place in museums/galleries/art spaces and art that exists outside those structures. Because the commercial art world is seen as less interested in social change and more in art as pleasing-the-eye commodity, within this critical framework art spaces are framed as “compromised,” elitist, and serving the gazes and the needs of those in power (the wealthy, the privileged, and the institutions that support them and are supported by them). By this logic, artworks placed outside institutionalized art spaces have a better chance of intervening with existing power structures and challenging the status quo.

Second, all those involved in making and consuming contemporary art have their own personal backgrounds and are invested in issues that are closest to their own hearts, so to speak. Critics of social practice and relational aesthetics art point out that the artists are often disconnected from the very communities they want to serve or on whose behalf they attempt to speak. And even when they are current or former members of those less privileged communities, their desire to “do good” can be seen as patronizing and exploitative (done for their own careers), especially if the artists neglect to plan for sustained change. Apart from those critics who express general antipathy to these art forms based on their own personal preferences and professional interests and career invest-

ments, there are also those who are interested in the topics that these art forms represent but acknowledge the dangers of artists' being exploitative and coming across as patronizing.

This book is a contribution to the growing scholarship on the topic of hospitality in contemporary art. An example of the recent interest in this topic is Lewis Hyde's *The Gift*, which has been an inspiration to many artists.²⁵ Other scholars have considered relations within the art world as hospitality relations among curators, artists, and audiences.²⁶ In the past decade several major exhibitions have been devoted to the topic of hospitality, including *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, at the Smart Museum, Chicago, and other venues (2012–14); and the Liverpool Biennial's *The Unexpected Guest* (2012). In these exhibitions and the artworks they have featured, the problematic of hospitality has been shown to be both contemporary and ancient, as artists, designers, and architects have presented their practices in a world that poses wider questions of intimacy, generosity, refuge giving, and cross-cultural engagement in an era of social media and global markets of all kinds. The two collections that have been published as a direct result of these exhibitions—namely, Stephanie Smith's *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* and Sally Tallant and Paul Domela's *The Unexpected Guest: Art, Writing, and Thinking on Hospitality*—are important to my own study, as I build on their research and curatorial efforts.²⁷

Despite the fact that I find many of the critical arguments and counterarguments expressed in these earlier publications very persuasive in their consideration of whether artists should seek social change at all (and, if so, in what ways), at the same time, I share Grant Kester's views about "the unrelenting purism that drives a certain kind of theoretical reflection" that is far removed from the "pragmatic demands of artists working in social movements here and now."²⁸ The same kind of purist arguments can plague theoretical discussions about which hospitality is more "ideal," "pure," and "uncorrupted" by inequalities. There is no such hospitality. But that does not mean that welcome is powerless and meaningless. When hospitality is defined in theory as "all or nothing," in practice that usually means "nothing." Artists, also, do not work in a vacuum. In addition to artists' own creative community and the art world, governments and citizens, just like Plato, often try to influence or directly interfere in decisions about what kinds of art get to be supported and promoted and what kinds are discouraged or even destroyed.

In this book I provide my own feminist reading of practices of hospitality in

contemporary art. What does this mean? It means that I analyze both hospitality and artworks from a point of view that is mindful of the above-mentioned questions of power. In addition to gender, as I have described, I pay attention to categories that play a significant role in contemporary debates around power and hospitality, such as those of national origin, ethnicity, race, and class. I show how specific and international art practices around hospitality complicate existing configurations of inequalities of welcome and the categories on which they are based. To respond to criticisms that stress divisions between the gallery and the real world in contemporary art, in specific contexts of particular artworks, I focus, where appropriate, on how being in a gallery need not be limiting, but rather can enable an artist to experiment with new forms of welcome; I also show what happens when the same or other artists take their projects outside, into the “real world.”

In the chapters that follow, I examine individual artworks by eight international artists, works of different durations and executed in a variety of media and materials, for their instantiation of and explicit intent in hospitality practices. I have chosen artists who consider hospitality to be one of their primary interests, rather than a tangential concern, in their art projects. Artworks by Ana Prvački, Faith Wilding, Lee Mingwei, Kathy High, Mithu Sen, Pippa Bacca, Silvia Moro, and Ken Aptekar, together with films by Linda Hattendorf and Joël Curtz, constitute my principal case studies, though I also refer secondarily to other works. The artists whose works I discuss have systematically engaged critical topics around hospitality and have exhibited their works in major venues around the world, but they have not previously been brought together in a way that foregrounds the productive synergies and tensions between them. I address how these artists and their works relate to and challenge ideas on hospitality that have long existed in the culture at large (in folklore and religious texts) and, in the background, in philosophy (Immanuel Kant, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida) and related scholarship and critical writing in contemporary art and culture. I conducted my primary research at exhibitions and in libraries. I also visited artists’ studios, and in some cases I followed several iterations of an art project and participated in some of those iterations. When possible, I interviewed the artists about their intentions and motivations. I also observed and interviewed audience members who interacted with the art and participated in it. Where appropriate and important, I include personal contextual information in my discussion to show how the subjective position of the audience (myself included) affects the reception of a work.

I theorize hospitality by learning from selected art projects, addressing the failures of various cultures of hospitality on the one hand and showing the promise of new scenarios and potential paths forward on the other. Like Schiller and Hattendorf, the artists discussed in this book challenge how hospitality is practiced in their communities; their various approaches include offering hospitality to unusual guests, such as nonhuman living beings (transgenic rats), and seeking hospitality in unusual places, such as someone else's home or a car; revealing the mechanics of hospitality, showing that we are not born "welcoming" but rather are trained and socialized to be hospitable or hostile; and not following prescribed gender roles of hosts and guests, when women refuse to wait for their guests and men perfect their cooking, serving, and hosting. Also, some of the artists invite or accept invitations from not only those whom they already know and trust but mostly from strangers, thereby enabling their audiences and my readers to consider the limits and limitations of their own welcome.

One major lesson from these works is their challenge to the seemingly insurmountable dichotomy between "structural solutions" and "personal actions." In the oppositional view, personal action will never be enough, and that causes anxiety around individual impact and responsibility. But what if one wants to get personally involved? Is there a place for artists to practice hospitality thoughtfully and critically, as part of their creative practice? For example, when considering Linda Hattendorf's gesture of inviting Mirikitani into her apartment, audience members compare themselves to her and contemplate whether there might ever be a good way to welcome a homeless person into one's life. Hattendorf's documentary enables such responses and conversations.

Each of the following chapters is devoted to one artist or project, offering a level of detail that is not feasible in an art historical or critical survey. I engage with these works and their hospitality practices based on a comparative feminist approach that I have developed over the course of my decade-long engagement with the concept of hospitality as a feminist theorist.²⁹ I show that in contemporary art, hospitality is not just facilitated and celebrated or dismissed as a failure, it is also transformed and put to the test by creative makers who are well aware of the theoretical and political debates surrounding this notion.

Chapter 1, "Reclaimed Civility: Ana Prvački," addresses critical issues surrounding etiquette and civility as crucial and controversial elements of hospitality. I analyze *The Greeting Committee Reports . . .*, a project by Serbian-born installation and performance artist Ana Prvački. As part of her work for the *documenta 13* exhibition in Kassel, Germany, in 2012, Prvački (with the help

of professional etiquette consultants) trained more than eight hundred exhibition staff members in etiquette and civility. Borderline inappropriate and deeply provocative, Prvački's work in etiquette studies, in addition to civility training, consists of short professionally produced videos on how to respond to awkward situations; these were shown on public television during the exhibition (in place of commercials). The work, as it tries to teach how to be welcoming and prepare oneself for the arrival of guests, creates uneasiness and demonstrates the profound anxiety caused by hospitality practices as one prepares to serve and be "always ready" as a good (communist) citizen-in-becoming (hence the title, *The Greeting Committee Reports . . .*). In this chapter, I seek to unsettle an easy critical dismissal of civility on political grounds; I argue, as have bell hooks and David Farrell Krell, that there is more to civility and etiquette as it figures in Prvački's work.

Chapter 2, "Undoing Waiting: Faith Wilding," asks who our guests are and how and why we wait for them. I analyze American artist Faith Wilding's famous performance *Waiting* (Womanhouse, California Institute of the Arts, 1972) and her refusal to remake it forty-five years later, resulting in the performance *Wait-With* (*WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and other venues, 2007–8), as an example of the costs to what Levinas and Derrida describe as a feminine being who is essentially welcoming because of passive waiting for the (male) Other. I also raise feminist questions about possible differentiations among various kinds of waiting. Here I engage with Jane Blocker's reading of *Waiting* through Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* and Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*.

In chapter 3, "The Man Who Welcomes: Lee Mingwei," I address the extensive body of creative work by contemporary Taiwanese American artist Lee Mingwei and examine his aesthetics of hospitality in detail. Among other issues, I ponder why many people, on first experiencing Lee's work, assume that he is a female artist. I focus primarily on three of Lee's works: *The Sleeping Project*, *The Dining Project*, and *The Living Room*. The last of these has become a permanent "living room" in the new wing of Boston's Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, designed by Renzo Piano in collaboration with Lee. In Lee's work, the amount and quality of resources, such as food and its presentation or a room and its design, together with the demeanor and caring of the host, reveal aesthetic concerns of welcome as inherently connected to the ethics of welcome. I show how Lee challenges previous hospitality traditions by presenting a model of a welcoming man.

Moving to saying yes in welcoming all living beings, chapter 4, “Hosting the Animal: Kathy High,” raises the question of whether welcoming nonhuman living beings needs to be ethically and aesthetically problematized as even desirable. Focusing on American bioartist Kathy High’s project *Embracing Animal*, I explore what can be conceived as the anthropological limits of hospitality. High hosted transgenic rats in her house and also in a gallery as part of the influential exhibition *Becoming Animal* at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art in 2005. The rats she chose had undergone gene modification so that they could develop human autoimmune diseases (such as the one High has) and be used to test medications that High and others suffering from such diseases could potentially benefit from. Based on High’s work, I engage ideas about hosting the animal in the Jain philosophy of nonharm to consider what the arrival of an animal—such as a sick transgenic rat—means in practice.

In chapter 5, “Welcome Withdrawn: Mithu Sen,” I ask what happens when a hospitality situation does not go as planned, and host and guests test each other’s welcome, prompting anxiety but also raising new possibilities. Mithu Sen’s artworks *It’s Good to Be Queen* (Bose Pacia Gallery, Chelsea, New York, 2006) and, to a lesser extent, *I Have Only One Language; It Is Not Mine* (Kochi-Muziris Biennale, 2014–15) and *UNhome* (18th Street Arts Center, Los Angeles, 2017) serve as my case studies. Sen shows her work globally and is interested in questions of radical hospitality and crossing borders/boundaries, and her work lends itself to a discussion of the precariousness of working and living outside one’s own community and an analysis of the larger context of what it means to welcome when a host or guest withdraws a common language, or even withdraws an invitation and his or her presence. Together with an exploration of Sushmita Chatterjee’s reading of Mithu Sen as a postcolonial feminist, I show how Sen’s works, global in contexts and audiences while intimate in scale, negotiate the anxieties of hospitality.

Chapter 6, “A Leap of Faith: Pippa Bacca and Silvia Moro,” raises critical questions about inequality and power and demonstrates what is at stake in art practices of hospitality that cross the boundary between the gallery and the outside world as well as national boundaries. I begin my inquiry with an analysis of the tragic story of the artist Pippa Bacca (Giuseppina Pasqualino di Marineo). Bacca, with another artist, Silvia Moro, hitchhiked in white bridal dresses from a gallery in Milan to a gallery in Israel as part of their *Brides on Tour* art project in 2008. Bacca was killed by one of the drivers who offered her a ride in Turkey.

I discuss suggestions that she was naive in embarking on this artistic project and even neocolonial in her sense of entitlement in expecting to be welcomed as a white European woman. I explore these questions based on how Bacca's story is depicted in the documentary film *La Mariée (The Bride)*, by Joël Curtz. Bacca's decisions, I show, were based on and espoused a promise of nondiscrimination among drivers, a point on which she and her art project partner, Moro, disagreed. This disagreement between the two women forms the central part of my discussion about the tension and inherent contradictions of hospitality that this work and the tragedy highlight. I also discuss creative tributes to Bacca and *Brides on Tour* that have since been offered in Turkey and elsewhere.

In the book's Conclusion, "Hospitality Now: Ken Aptekar," I show how the stakes of demanding hospitality are often very high (a question of life and death), even when they do not seem so at first. My case study here is the 2017 exhibition by Ken Aptekar *Nachbarn/Neighbours* at the St. Annen-Museum in the northern German city of Lübeck. Aptekar's work showed how a simple gesture of leaving a basket of food for neighbors in need might become a symbol of humanity's future in the current climate of immigration panic in many communities. By bringing together contemporary Lübeck neighbors to consider the story of one Jewish family, the Carlebachs, who perished in the Holocaust, Aptekar hoped to create a possibility for a different kind of welcome. Through a discussion of this work, I develop important concluding arguments that are relevant to this entire book; they concern the role of gratitude in hospitality and how the roles of the guest and host and the practices of hospitality need to change in the contemporary world if the ideals of welcome are ever to fulfill their promise.

In this book I am interested in a set of questions that seek to go beyond specific disciplinary debates about the ideal works or theories of art of welcome and its place in society. I want to open up the question of creative hospitality practices as contributing to larger debates of our times and at our proverbial kitchen tables. This book shows that hospitality, whether collectively or individually, can be as much a political choice as an aesthetic or ethical one in times when the world and communities are becoming even more divided into "us" and "them," with growing hostility toward "them." My focus is on lessons that contemporary artists teach us about the potential of hospitality.

One

RECLAIMED CIVILITY Ana Prvački

On a summer morning in 2012, two young artists, Esta and Jack, from the Russian art group Tesamie (Those Ones), held up a sign with large printed letters: “Good Morning!” It was directed at passengers in a St. Petersburg metro station, who smiled in response or just passed by them without looking. The artists wore smart suits and carnival masks as they welcomed citizens of the city. The following day, several local media outlets reported that the artists had been removed by police. As one newspaper explained, police officers told the artists (who recorded their conversation with authorities), “Citizens have no right to address strangers and wish them a good morning.” A passerby interviewed by a local TV crew expressed dismay: “What kind of a city do we live in? It was nice to have someone wish me good morning as I was rushing to work. They did not bother or obstruct anyone.”¹ Police officers explained their actions as a matter of public policy: “Right now, you cannot express your opinion about ‘certain social values’ in public without getting official permission in advance.”² The implication is that to greet strangers is to threaten the existing political order. In this case, the welcome (of these artists) was literally arrested.

The artists wanted to dress “appropriately,” in a way that would imply respect and attention, to mirror their intention of creating a special atmosphere for those whom they were greeting. The gestures and behaviors related to a proper greeting are part of the personal repertoire that an individual employs in social encounters. The collective term for these learned behaviors is *etiquette*, which is defined in Google’s dictionary as “the customary code of polite behavior in society or among members of a particular profession or group” and in Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary as “the conduct or procedure required by good breeding or prescribed by authority to be observed in social or official life.”³ The authorities in Russia revealed the meaning behind the latter definition, as they wanted to manage how citizens greeted each other—or not—in public places. The artists, in contrast, used their own sense of polite behavior to influence what constitutes etiquette in urban spaces among Russian citizens.

When is a smile or a greeting an expression of defiant hospitality, and when

is it a sign of complacency with the inbuilt inequalities of welcome that privilege the wealthy and the powerful? The answer is complicated because the duality implied in this question, between the personal and the political, is not strictly fixed in real life, even in authoritarian societies. Individuals who have authority to enforce “proper” behavior in their own families might not have much authority in the larger society, particularly if that society discriminates against them. A smile that is seen as appropriate when directed at a member of one’s own social group might be viewed as a faux pas or even treasonous when given to a perceived “enemy” of that group, moving into the realm of “defiant hospitality.” Therefore, this topic is relevant to any society in which inherent inequalities result in some people being deemed more worthy of welcome than others.

In this chapter, I examine the tensions among various histories of, attitudes toward, and approaches to etiquette and how they reveal the politics and aesthetics inherent in the minor gestures of hospitality scenes—greetings, smiles, small talk, and the like, or what I call here *microcourtesies*, as analogous to *micro-aggressions*.⁴ I explore criticisms that such gestures are potentially complicit with existing inequalities, maintaining the status quo between the powerful and the powerless rather than challenging it. It is possible that Esta and Jack, the artists who stood in the St. Petersburg metro with greeting signs, could be seen as placating the authoritarian regime by soothing citizens’ feelings, helping to create a Potemkin village, rather than calling for regime change (as the Pussy Riot art group did, for example).

Recent years have seen increasing interest among artists and scholars regarding the topic of the use of civility and graciousness as tools for promoting social progress. To some extent, this interest is driven by the search for new forms of resistance, because old party politics are seen to be in crisis: no matter which party is in power, economic inequalities continue to grow, and social tensions are growing with them. The rise of nationalism and hostility toward immigrants and refugees often takes the form of open incivility, such as rudeness, verbal threats, and expressions of mockery intended to make anyone who looks like an “Other” feel unwelcome. Even if a society’s immigration laws protect a specific person’s right to reside in that society, that person may end up living her everyday life within a hostile environment that specifically targets her sense of belonging.

In his contribution to a fascinating collection of essays titled *Etiquette: Reflections on Contemporary Comportment*, American thinker David Farrell Krell makes an argument that civility can avert communal violence:

For a period in U.S. academic history that loves to chase loudly after an ethics, hoping thereby to found a lasting and decent politics, discussions of etiquette must seem to be aiming far below the mark—indeed, such discussions must seem apolitical, unethical, downright rude. Yet our time may come to understand that the ethico-political craze in philosophy and theory these days is precisely that, a craze, and an expression of some deep-lying desperation—so that, when all is said and done, what we have to learn how to cherish is the meager hope that human beings may learn civility. If they cannot refrain from murder, let them at least try a touch of *politesse*. Who knows? Etiquette may reduce the killing more effectively than an entire ethico-political police force hiding in our philosophy departments.⁵

If Krell is sarcastic here, it is because he believes that the grand political claims of his discipline, philosophy, have gone nowhere. Civility, which has been downgraded as a minor and bourgeois strategy, might end up being more important and powerful than larger claims to ethics and politics by academic progressives who have been fighting big political structures (think neoliberalism and capitalism). Krell does not chastise “snowflakes”—a name often used to mock college students and other young people who call for safe spaces, grammatically “incorrect” use of gender pronouns, and training about mansplaining, micro-aggressions, and unconscious biases. Although many of his fellow critical theorists do offer criticisms of “snowflakes” and their approach, Krell champions civility as a saving grace of our age. If his tone sounds desperate, it is because he seems to think that other strategies have failed.

In another contribution to the *Etiquette* collection, leading African American scholar and writer bell hooks paints a more complex picture of the power of civility. Her account is enriched by nuances regarding the differences in how civility affects those who have been welcomed by the society at large (such as white Americans) and those who have been excluded from any national welcome. In hooks’s account, a different type of hope for etiquette emerges.

Born in Kentucky, in the segregated South, hooks observed how important etiquette was for African Americans, helping them to feel a sense of belonging within their own community. Smiles, greetings, and respect for each other served as a foundation of flourishing support for the community that moved beyond mere survival in a white society that was determined to disrespect and exclude:

Growing up in the segregated South, I was raised to believe in the importance of being civil. This was more than just a recognition of the need to be polite, of having good manners; it was a demand that I and my siblings remain constantly aware of our interconnectedness and interdependency on all the folk around us. The lessons learned by seeing one's neighbors on their porches and stopping to chat with them, or just to speak courteously, was a valuable way to honor our connectedness.⁶

Here hooks makes a distinction between the mechanical following of good manners, such as the use of proper cutlery or a formal greeting, and this sense of interconnectedness. She points to how these minor gestures of civility imply community and create a sense of belonging. For her, civility matters in ways both similar to and different from Krell's interpretation. Her account is also thicker, as it complicates the sense of "one" country with "one" civility to go around for everybody, and it is especially poignant because she writes about the American South. In discussions of American hospitality, "southern hospitality" is often specifically mentioned. Anthony Szczesniul, author of *The Southern Hospitality Myth* and one of the main scholars who has written about the trope of southern hospitality, asserts that it is a myth originally created by white southern plantation owners and since perpetrated on the backs of African Americans, the white poor, and new ethnic minorities who work in underpaid jobs in the southern hospitality industries—they are the ones who have actually provided the labor of hospitality in the South.⁷

If Szczesniul's account is bitterly and systematically critical, hooks suggests how civility can heal some of these old wounds, even if it cannot also change economic inequality. Returning to the South after decades of living on the West and East Coasts of the United States, hooks meditates on what has changed and what has not. First of all, the South is now desegregated, by law. This means that she, as an African American person, cannot be discriminated against openly and legally when she purchases a house in the middle of a white neighborhood. Now living among white people, she finds that her neighbors' everyday interactions with each other, and with her as a newcomer who is not white, become important sources of information. Is she considered an equal to her new neighbors? Does she belong? She cannot know what is in their souls—they will have to express their feelings to her themselves. Their microaggressions and micro-courtesies reveal answers to hooks's question of belonging.

Various groups live different hospitalities depending on whether they are within or outside their personal communities. Old hostilities endure even when laws change. After hooks returns to the South and purchases her house with its desired porch, she notices how the civility of her now interracial welcome—when she calls out to white neighbors “How are you doing?” from her porch, with a smile—is not often reciprocated by the very white folks who probably have been taught a version of southern hospitality. In this instance, hooks’s experience confirms the conclusion of Szczesiul’s wide-ranging study, that so-called southern hospitality was designed and has since been largely institutionalized as a practice by whites for whites only.

Toward the end of her essay, hooks reaches out to white southern women in particular, who, in her sharp critique, “are the least willing to be civil, whether old or young . . . who long for the old days when they could count on being waited on by a black female at some point in their life, using the strength of their color to weigh her down.” However, there are occasions when their “racist hostile white gaze” can be contrasted “with the warm gaze of welcome and recognition from those individual white folks who also understand the etiquette of civility, of community building and peace making.”⁸ Szczesiul echoes hooks’s observations at the end of his book, finishing with the hope that “hospitality in the South can perhaps be renovated as an ethical principle oriented toward the future and the arrival of new strangers.”⁹

Here civility is envisioned not only as a strategy of huddling together with others inside one’s own community but also as something that offers a possibility of an enjoyment of shared humanity; a welcoming greeting can thus become more than just a smile. I must stress here that neither hooks nor Szczesiul suggests—and I am not suggesting—that smiles and good etiquette are enough to solve the problems of intolerance, white supremacy, and racial injustice. But neither is hospitality unimportant, as it plays a big part in the process of making people feel a sense of security and belonging.

How might we enact this change toward an enjoyment of shared humanity? What stops people from making these relatively small gestures of welcome, such as greetings, smiles, and warm waves of a hand to a neighbor? In the rest of this chapter I explore these complex questions by engaging with the work of contemporary artist Ana Prvački. When Prvački declares, “Let us not be naive about the power of hospitality,” she implies this complexity around welcoming gestures, in concert with David Farrell Krell and bell hooks as quoted above (see

Plate 1). This phrase, “Let us not be naive about the power of hospitality,” also has a double meaning. First, it would be naive to think that hospitality is so powerful as to solve all social problems. But at the same time, it would be naive to underestimate the power of hospitality in enacting social change. Prvački’s art project *The Greeting Committee Reports . . .* (*The Greeting Committee* for short) will be my focus below as I seek to learn from her about the power of civility. Before discussing the project, I will describe the personal context in which Prvački developed it, as this background is important for an understanding of her subsequent artwork.

Polite Power

Ana Prvački is a Serbian-born performance and installation artist currently based in Berlin; her practice encompasses theater, music, visual art, and design. In 2011–12, Prvački’s *The Greeting Committee Reports . . .* was realized in two venues: the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles and the *(d)OCUMENTA (13)* exhibition in Kassel, Germany.¹⁰ The project consisted of staff training, art videos, performances, and lectures.

Why did Prvački become interested in the topics of hospitality, civility, and etiquette? Born in socialist Yugoslavia, she became an immigrant as a teenager, moving from one country to another (first with her parents and then by herself) as her birth country disintegrated as the result of war. During this time she also moved from one school to another and from one group of friends to another. Prvački’s mother is Romanian and her father is Serbian. She grew up with her mother’s stories about traveling to a foreign city, in a foreign country, to marry a man whose language she did not speak and whose familial hospitality was often alien to her. In such situations, small gestures of attempting cross-cultural welcoming grow in significance. Prvački notes:

Growing up half-Romanian made me half a stranger in Yugoslavia. When I was a teenager, my family immigrated to Singapore, as Yugoslavia was in a state of dissolution. Living in Singapore as an Eastern European teenager was twice as alienating (as puberty can be its own kind of exile). Plutarch wrote, “The soul is itself exiled, errant, an arrival from elsewhere. Birth is a voyage into a foreign land.” In a world that is foreign, learning proper etiquette is a survival mechanism and a technique of assimilation and adaptation. To me, these rituals hold

the promise of social harmony, or at least a fantasy of it. Holding open doors and shaking hands, mundane as these acts may seem, could potentially save the world.¹¹

Echoing Krell, Prvački expresses a desire for a more welcoming world, or at least a fantasy of it. The experience of being forced to move has also made Prvački more sensitive to others who have had to move. *The Greeting Committee* demonstrates the impact that those early immigrant experiences had on the artist, even though her family, which was both white and middle-class, was much more privileged than many of the other immigrants in Singapore.

I can relate to Prvački's personal history. Prvački and I met for the first time in the 1990s at an art college in Singapore, in what was a new cultural setting for both of us. The city-state of Singapore was different from the countries she and I had grown up in (the former Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, both of which disintegrated). Singapore Airlines and its home base, Changi Airport, have been consistently ranked as the best worldwide; the airport greets arriving passengers with orchid and butterfly gardens and a swimming pool inside the terminals. Singapore's hospitality industry has long been supported by the Singapore Tourism Board and its governmental partner, the Economic Development Board. When Prvački and I arrived, Singapore was actively promoting its tourism sector and welcoming as many visitors as possible from around the world. As *white* women, we benefited from the racist and imperialist legacies of Singapore's colonial history as part of the British Commonwealth, as well as from its post-colonial and authoritarian present, when tensions and inequalities around race were being managed by the government from the top down.

Our shared history of experiencing various kinds of "polite authoritarianisms" helps me appreciate Prvački's message about governmental anxiety around public expressions of hospitality. There is a whole tradition regarding the spectacle of public greeting in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. Whom to welcome, when, and how are not just taught in the context of family rituals or conveyed through traditional fairy tales and folk stories. When I grew up in Soviet Moscow, most public expressions of welcome did not take place on the city streets among strangers; rather, they involved a variety of orchestrated rituals and were carried out through embodied preparation for those rituals, such as when (mostly) party men would be met in the formal aesthetic of the red carpet, with obsequious bows, smiles, schoolchildren acting as cheerleaders,

and a traditional Slavic offering of “bread and salt.” Although I was once one of those young people dancing and marching in Red Square, cheering Mikhail Gorbachev, most people observed these rituals on television. We learned them in school so that we could participate.

Hence, I was accustomed to public expressions of hospitality being either hierarchical, performed in order to establish who is important in a society, or managed through graphic design on the trains, with images calling for politeness toward certain groups (for example, passengers would be reminded of the practice of giving up seats to the “elderly, pregnant women, and disabled people”). The clash with which I began this chapter, between the artists greeting strangers in the metro and the authorities who arrived to stop them, reveals governmental concerns about welcome and its intended recipients. Greet a “wrong” person in the “wrong” place, and the community will punish the greeter through its powers of the police, the city government, the neighborhood watch, or the sheer force of peer pressure.

That is why when Singapore’s tourism authority launched a public campaign, the Singapore Kindness Movement, to encourage Singaporeans to be more welcoming to visitors and kinder to each other, Prvački and I found the strategy familiar, even if the welcome was directed toward tourists and citizens rather than limited to party leaders. Our Singaporean friends, just like us, expressed ambivalence about the government’s history with “courtesy” and “kindness” campaigns, elements of which Prvački later used in her art. We asked each other whether the adults of an entire nation could be taught to be kind. Did we need the government to tell us to smile? Wasn’t such a campaign offensive, since it implied that Singaporeans were not already kind?

Such blunt government intervention—encouraging Singaporeans to “be nice” to foreigners in specific ways understood by those foreigners (like smiling and greeting with a handshake)—seemed to us to take on the familiar form of state propaganda. Here the fear of hospitality being forced on citizens highlights the precarious nature of any hospitality relation, when the dividing line between a fake smile and a genuine one, for example, is often a matter of trust. Those who are born into such governmentally forced hospitality conventions often find themselves not very trusting. I remember a common cultural stereotype in Russia about Americans faking their smiles (“They don’t *really* care about you; they just have to wear a smile, like clothing”). The desired effect of hearing and

saying this was to feel better about “authentic nonsmiling us” by comparison with “fake smiling them.” The implication was that when individual Russians smile, they really mean it.

After meeting in Singapore in the mid-1990s, Ana Prvački and I lost contact until she moved to Los Angeles in 2010. Shortly after her move we began a correspondence about her thoughts on etiquette and hospitality, as she started working on *The Greeting Committee*. Since then, I have made several studio visits and conducted interviews with Prvački to learn more from her project, and we have continued to correspond. I also participated in the publication that was part of her exhibition in Kassel.

The Greeting Committee Reports . . .

Because humans are not born knowing how to treat each other with dignity, we must be trained. By whom, how? And who decides? Etiquette training has become the key element of Prvački’s artwork on hospitality.

The first iteration of project that became *The Greeting Committee* took place at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles in 2011. Prvački was the artist in residence at the museum and created a series of events she called *Greeting Committee Social Performance*. She worked with an etiquette trainer, Vartouhi Keshishyan, who led several informal groups in etiquette training while Prvački greeted the audience with handshakes and smiles. The project expanded for the *documenta 13* exhibition in Kassel in 2012. This specific work is the focus of the discussion that follows. The description of the project at the German exhibition reads:

Ana Prvački’s project *Greeting Committee* is made up of two distinct but complementary parts. On the one hand, it trains the guides, ticketsellers, and invigilators of *DOCUMENTA (13)* in welcoming visitors to the exhibition in order “to practice civility and congeniality” and to create a “contagious atmosphere of hospitality.” This part of the project is experienced by visitors simply through coming into contact with the trained staff. On the other hand, Prvački reflects on this process and experience by hosting two conversations. She invites Kwame Anthony Appiah to give a keynote lecture about inter-personal conversations as a model for the relationships between societies, and hosts a discussion with representatives from the Deutsche Knigge-Rat (German Etiquette Council), on current forms of civility.¹²

This description has an intentionally tongue-in-cheek, provocative tone. Is the artist laughing at us here? How can one train people in being “congenial”? The description mimics the form of the top-down approach to etiquette in the second definition presented above. By bringing together, in one work, staff members of the art exhibition, the well-known philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah, author of *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, and German Etiquette Council members, Prvački mixed usually separate worlds to create an uneasy conglomeration of people and perspectives.¹³

First, there was the etiquette training of staff members. Before the opening of the exhibition, Prvački spent two months in Kassel working with documenta employees. She hired etiquette trainers from the German Etiquette Council (also known as the Knigge Society), and with them ran workshops for the exhibition staff. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, the exhibition curator, took part in the training as well. It was highly unusual for a contemporary art show to include such etiquette training in its program, and the fact that the training was part of an artwork made it particularly controversial.

Groups of five to ten people attended the two-hour training sessions. Prvački attended all of the sessions over two weeks, training about a thousand people. She wanted the training atmosphere to be intimate rather than corporate, so that the trainees would be comfortable and enjoy the sessions. The training was offered to all documenta employees, including administrators, janitors, and security personnel, as well as all volunteers. Prvački started the sessions by explaining various elements of *The Greeting Committee*, what her intentions were, and how the training component would be complemented by etiquette videos and lectures.

Apart from a few people associated with that year’s exhibition production, no one knew about the training in advance, and exhibition visitors were not informed about the training. This was intentional, because Prvački’s idea was that her art project would change how staff members treated exhibition visitors and each other. Prvački wanted to make the exhibition more welcoming to all who experienced it, especially compared to previous years, and the smiles and handshakes of documenta staff were part of her project.

The etiquette training part of *The Greeting Committee* as it was presented in Germany was the most time-consuming and labor-intensive aspect of the work, especially for Prvački. She talked to hundreds of people about her art project and her idea of using the project to make everyone’s life a little bit smoother and

happier during the multimonth exhibition. For an artist who herself is clearly ambivalent, even if hopeful, about “the power of hospitality,” the work was hard psychologically as well as logistically.

Credit should also go to the curator, Christov-Bakargiev, for bringing many controversial works to Germany, such as this one. This work was controversial because training adults to be nice to each other is controversial: Who wants to acknowledge that they need training in kindness or in how to smile? Isn't this what authoritarian governments do in their propaganda campaigns? Isn't this how people in an aristocratic class act when they want to affirm their privileged upbringing? The training was also controversial because of where it took place and who was conducting it. The art world audience—comprising art critics, curators, intellectuals, and artists—was suspicious of “etiquette” training and trainers coming from the Knigge Society.

Difficult Conversations

What is the Knigge Society, and why is it so controversial? The Knigge Society is the best known among the number of businesses in Germany (as in other countries) that specialize in etiquette training. In fact, one of the German words for etiquette is *Knigge*. The society is named for the thinker Freiherr Adolph Franz Friedrich Ludwig Knigge (1752–1796), who argued in his book *On Human Relations* (1788) that the goals of equality in human relations and human rights for all cannot be achieved unless all persons are treated with the same measure of respect, decency, and dignity. Knigge wrote: “A person wishing to associate with men and live amongst them should study the art of accommodating himself to their manners, customs, tone, and disposition.”¹⁴ His position was based on ideas developed during the French Enlightenment; Knigge's contemporary Immanuel Kant also wrote about hosting and hospitality. These ideas, however, were politically out of favor at the time, and his writings on the subject cost Knigge his job and his livelihood.

Knigge's position represents a somewhat radical attitude regarding the proper treatment of strangers: a good person not only provides shelter and water to guests (or, as Kant suggested, treats them without harm) but also accommodates him- or herself to the guests' “manners, customs, tone, and disposition.” This progressive position, however, is not what the Knigge Society is known for in contemporary Germany. Rather, the society's reputation is tied to the more

formal aspects of etiquette, such as the business etiquette of the proper use of the handshake. Moreover, during the Nazi past, fascists weaponized these kinds of formal manners and the rules of etiquette to serve their larger message of the “civilized behavior” of ethnic Germans as opposed to the behavior of those who were not “fit” to be fully German, such as Jews, homosexuals, and Romani. Who would want to appear to be polite just for the sake of it, while at the same time being potentially complicit in Nazi violence?

Given this history, in the period after World War II, references to manners and etiquette immediately become controversial in Germany, especially in leftist and progressive circles. Despite the “progressive” history of Knigge himself, the society named for him is today considered to be nonprogressive, with a focus on maintaining old-fashioned manners and the status quo rather than on calling for social change. Although Prvački wanted to bring in members of the Knigge Society to encourage them to consider the wider social implications of etiquette, one artwork was not necessarily going to be able to change the perception of an organization that had been largely absent from public discussions about Germany’s treatment of immigrants, especially Syrian refugees. Prvački’s work could, however, enable further consideration of the role of civility and what it means to welcome each other in Europe and Germany. The artist created a space where Knigge’s ideas could become helpful again, where contemporary Germans could ask themselves if they should expect immigrants to accommodate themselves to German rules of behavior and customs versus Germans accommodating themselves to the immigrants. (No handshake with a woman? No serving of pork at lunch? How should cultural differences be handled appropriately?)

If we follow Knigge’s original suggestion, the proper behavior for Germans would be to accommodate themselves to immigrants’ “manners, customs, tone, and disposition.” More than just the minor gestures of greeting strangers, such accommodations would rise to the level of a cultural identity crisis in contemporary Germany surrounding the proper welcome of newcomers to a country or a community (I come back to this specific context in my Conclusion, where I discuss the work of Ken Apteekar). And Germany is certainly not alone in this respect (I am mindful here of current discussions in the United States about whether the country should welcome or deport refugees who cross the Mexican border).¹⁵

As I discussed in the Introduction, many societies and individuals define themselves by how they treat others who are in need of their welcome. What

can civility do around questions of power and justice? A lot more than we might think, as we can see in Prvački's work, which pushes her audience in the direction of hooks and Krell. The challenge that *The Greeting Committee* posed involved the creation of a welcoming space where the historical connection between the notions of etiquette and racial superiority would not be erased or glossed over. One has to be mindful about this history and the danger of using etiquette to mask brutality and enforce hierarchies. The artist commented that during the exhibition, the discussion with the Knigge Society representatives did not go smoothly, primarily because those who participated in it—curators, intellectuals, contemporary artists—wanted to distance themselves from what the society has come to represent.

At the same time, staff members were not as opposed to civility training, because it created a new safe space where they could raise their own concerns around power and inequality as employees of the large art exhibition. During the training days, Prvački asked exhibition organizers to enable her to listen to the many Turkish residents of Kassel who were on the staff of documenta, and she heard what they had to say about this big exhibition taking place every five years in their city. The topic of immigration, especially in relation to Turkish immigrants, many of whom came to Germany as “guest workers” (*Gastarbeiter*), was part of the artist's theme of hospitality. Ironically, it was these workers' designation as “guests” that reminded them that Germany's welcome was only temporary, rather than an invitation to stay indefinitely, or as long as they wanted. The conversations between the artist and the Turkish staff members remained private.

When I asked Prvački why there was no video documentation of her encounters with the Turkish immigrant employees, she said that she had chosen not to document them so that she could build “trust” and “authenticity” among the trainees. She did not hide that the training was the first part of her art project and informed staff members about it as part of her opening remarks when meeting them. The training was used primarily to build a community in Kassel among exhibition staff around their conversations. She gave people enough time to express themselves and mingle. The artist organized the space so that it was comfortable and not filled with intrusive cameras. Her goal in training with professionals was to build skills in what she calls “social lubrication” (which she defines as “small gestures of generosity of spirit”). Prvački did not play any kind of character or take on a persona. She was as genuine as she could be throughout her work on *The Greeting Committee*.

It is difficult for me to assess here how much the Turkish immigrant staff members responded to these discussions. I can say only that it was important for Prvački that they be visible and that their immigrant background be acknowledged. I am also mindful, however, that Prvački's own position as a white middle-class artist might have affected her interactions with the exhibition staff and other members of documenta of various cultural backgrounds. I have access to this history of etiquette training only through Prvački's own account. I appreciate, however, how the various histories of hospitalities and hostilities became part of the context of *The Greeting Committee*. Prvački mined this controversy and problematic histories when she invited Knigge Society instructors to facilitate her "etiquette training" of the exhibition staff in Kassel. She consciously wanted to bring back difficult conversations around the connection between the national welcome and the personal greeting.

The Institutional Art of Welcome

The documenta exhibition itself has a long history with questions of national German hospitality, and this context needs to be acknowledged. A big, ambitious, institutional exhibition such as documenta, which takes place every five years, represents a significant investment of funds and resources, and from its very origins, documenta was designed to present a new and "welcoming face" of the German nation in the postwar period. The exhibition is very important to the city of Kassel and to the country as a whole as a symbol of the current German cultural outlook and how Germany sees itself, as indicated by the artists who are invited to participate in the exhibition and to curate the event. The exhibition affects the whole city for a few summer months, with a multitude of cultural events and artworks. For example, in 2012, when Prvački showed her videos and did her staff training, *documenta 13* attracted 905,000 visitors. The larger cultural meaning that connects the venue and Prvački's work also speaks to this contextual history.

When *documenta 1* opened in 1955, it specifically announced a welcome of those art forms that had been banned and destroyed under Nazi rule, which had labeled them as "degenerate art." The exhibition was meant to signal a new, more open, post-Nazi Germany. Throughout the years, documenta has acquired a special status in German culture, signifying more than just what is going on in contemporary art or culture as a whole; the show also addresses the place and

the role of culture, and of art, in relation to social and political issues at large, whether in the community of Kassel or across Europe. In 2017, *documenta 14* created a dialogue between Greek and German artists, influenced by their countries' relations, including the economic crisis in Greece and the refugee crisis in Europe. The art world, thus, as part of the national agenda with its public funding, is implicated in the larger question of the "national facade." Countries often "sell" themselves as attractive to "cultural tourists." Thus, *documenta* was intended to invigorate Kassel, a city that had lost much of its manufacturing base; the exhibition was seen as a way to attract visitors, a way to put the city on the map.

Many countries use sporting events to the same end. In these cases, etiquette training of the kind that Prvački provided to *documenta* staff might be seen as "business as usual." For example, before the 2008 Summer Olympic Games in Beijing, many world media outlets circulated stories about the civility and etiquette training being provided to the Chinese hosts of the games. These articles reported that, among other things, the Chinese hosts were trained not to spit in public, especially in the presence of their international guests. The media reports often had an ironic tone, presenting such training as "exotic" and the local hosts as "uncivilized" and in need of such training. But later, when staff for the 2012 Olympics in London received civility and etiquette training, many of the same media outlets reported, seemingly with pride, how good the games were for the international guests in attendance, presumably as a result of this training. Why did the media outlets find the government-sponsored greeting committees in China problematic and ridiculous, while they complimented the training organized by the London city government? This is the kind of question that Prvački's work enables us to ask.

When etiquette training in one culture is portrayed ironically by the media of another culture, the politics of etiquette—its subtle power to divide the world into "us" (who are "civilized") and "them" (who are not)—is revealed. Prvački's project resists such divisions by asking us to "rescue" etiquette: "It is ultimately a question of morals and ethics, and beyond assumptions of good and bad, right or wrong or changing anyone. It is about doing our best to treat another with dignity."¹⁶ That is why when Prvački writes about Singapore's National Courtesy Campaign, launched by the government in 1979 and later renamed the Singapore Kindness Movement, she does not ask us to laugh at it; rather, she insists that we take it seriously.¹⁷

At the same time, Prvački does not hide her ambivalence toward these kinds of governmental campaigns. The title of her art project—*The Greeting Committee Reports* . . .—mimics governmental and official meetings, but she also subtly insists that, despite the irony, there is value in learning how to be nice, in performing a hospitable self. And I can relate to that subtlety of Prvački's stance on etiquette. The “greeting committees” that inspired Prvački's title were born in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. My own experiences with those greeting campaigns taught me to be especially sensitive about authenticity and the intention behind the greetings and smiles. Their meaning is limited when their value is outweighed by factors of disempowerment, hierarchy, and political repression.

The training that Prvački conducted benefited the staff of the exhibition, according to what staff members told her (as reported by the artist), and led to a more pleasant experience overall for visitors (I heard this from the visitors and also from the artist, who mentioned in our conversations that she still receives such feedback from those who visited the German exhibition and knew about her training). Though one could be cynical about etiquette training overall, it is important not to leave civility education only to governments, schools, or etiquette societies in a world where members of various cultures of civility encounter each other on an everyday basis.

Public Video Artworks

What the public actually saw when viewing *The Greeting Committee* in the main venue at *documenta 13* were Prvački's video artworks. Prvački first produced several videos on etiquette training in Los Angeles as part of the project. She then made another six videos for the exhibition in Kassel, which were shown in the main venue as well as by a local television station. In addition to the training of the people staffing the exhibition, these videos were intended to train the audience of the exhibition, as well as the citizens of Kassel and other German cities who watched them on television. In Los Angeles, Prvački worked with etiquette instructor Vartouhi Keshishyan. For *documenta 13*, Prvački also worked with Shane Valentino to make videos in the format of public service announcements. Keshishyan, Valentino, and Prvački appeared in the videos, in which they offered guidance on how to deal with specific faux pas situations.



FIGURE 1.1. In these etiquette training video stills, the artist Ana Prvački and etiquette trainer Vartouhi Keshishyan talk about how much personal space to give and take in public places. *The Greeting Committee*, 2012. Courtesy of Ana Prvački. The entire video is available at <http://anaprvaccki.com/project/greeting-committee>.

At the main exhibition venue in Kassel the videos were placed strategically for the audience to view depending on location. A video about a person accidentally bumping another person standing in front of her in line was shown on a monitor fixed directly facing those who stood in line to buy exhibition tickets. In the video, one woman bumps another with her bag accidentally, and the second woman responds by bumping her back; the bumping and pushing then begin to escalate, until the expert “magically” appears to explain what the best response would be in such a situation, suggesting that when bumped, that person should turn to the other person, smile, and, to defuse the situation, say something nice, such as complimenting the other person’s bag design. Other monitors, with a diverse set of scenarios of faux pas, were placed along corridors and next to resting benches and chairs, as well as in the museum bookstore, alongside the publication coauthored by Prvački and me.¹⁸ These video artworks took the form of educational videos, similar to materials produced by business etiquette training groups. Prvački deliberately imitated that format in creating her high-quality short films. In her videos, there is humor and ambivalence around awkward situations, following the overall style of this work. For example, in one of the videos a guest has food stuck between his teeth. Prvački appears in the video and asks, “What do I do in this situation? Do I tell them or not?” An etiquette instructor replies, “Smile, apologize for interrupting them. Let them know about stuff in their teeth, and they could cover their mouth to get the stuff out.” Adults in the videos are shown how to turn awkward social situations into pleasant social encounters. This follows Prvački’s desire to provide “social lubrication” by teaching people what to do in awkward situations with strangers. These scenarios are well thought through, crisp, and sincere, but at the same time they deal with social anxieties that are unlikely to be resolved so easily, and they linger in the audience’s memory.

I learned from my conversations with visitors to *documenta 13* that people remembered these videos well and found them amusing and very appropriate to specific locations. The public service announcement format of Prvački’s videos corresponded to her intention to mimic, comment on, and deconstruct governmental, policy-driven courtesy campaigns. Reaching an even wider audience, these videos were also screened on a German public television channel. This aspect of the work is little known, because Prvački chose not to include her name or references to the exhibition in the video credits; she took a similar stance in deciding not to document the staff etiquette training. These hidden aspects—



FIGURE 1.2. This scene in a video shows an awkward interaction in a public queue that causes personal discomfort and anger. *The Greeting Committee*, 2012. Courtesy of Ana Prvački. The entire video is available at <http://anapracki.com/project/greeting-committee>.

the training and the public television broadcasting of the videos—make *The Greeting Committee* profound, complex, and challenging in its execution and reception. Why did Prvački decide not to brand the videos with her name or reference to the exhibition, as most artists would want to do, to enforce their copyright and be acknowledged? Was she afraid that audiences would not take her messages seriously if they knew they were part of an “art project” made by an artist with a Serbian name?

In erasing her authorship, Prvački intended, I assume, to make the videos appear even more recognizable as parts of a “public courtesy campaign” rather than an “artwork.” After all, Prvački has declared her hope that such courtesy training might significantly improve and “lubricate” interpersonal relations, whether in Kassel, Singapore, or Los Angeles. *The Greeting Committee* presents social alternatives ever so gently—be nice to each other in everyday life; this is how you can do it, and see how it will work out for you from now on—similar to the Russian artists from the group Tesamie offering greetings in public places in



FIGURE 1.3. As visitors stand in the queue to purchase tickets to the exhibition, they watch etiquette training videos about how to react to an angry person. Ana Prvački with Shane Valentino, *Greeting Committee PSAs*, 2012. Installation at *DOCUMENTA (13)*, Hauptbahnhof, Kassel, Germany. Photograph by Rosa Maria Rühling.



FIGURE 1.4. Ana Prvački with Shane Valentino, *Greeting Committee PSAs*, 2012. Installation at *DOCUMENTA (13)*, Friedrichsplatz Walther König Bookshop, Kassel, Germany. Courtesy of Ana Prvački, Shane Valentino, and Lombard Freid Gallery, New York. Photograph by Richard Kasiewicz.



FIGURE 1.5. This video scenario shows how to diffuse an awkward situation by laughing and being at ease rather than being embarrassed, demonstrating how “social lubrication” works. *The Greeting Committee*, 2012. Courtesy of Ana Prvački. The entire video is available at <http://anaprvački.com/project/greeting-committee>.

St. Petersburg. Prvački's unusual gesture of not including her name in televised videos enhanced her effort to take this work outside the art world community and into the public sphere, where it has had, potentially, a much wider impact on ordinary people who might not visit an exhibition of contemporary art. The artist's anonymity in this context speaks to her commitment to the message of hospitality, and to her desire to increase its power of democratization and welcome.

This gesture has also made her more vulnerable to being erased and becoming invisible in art history. Ironically, presenting work in a gallery or a museum creates more cachet for an artist than showing it to many more people (possibly thousands more) but without the artist's name attached to it. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, who, as the curator of *documenta 13*, commissioned *The Greeting Committee*, makes a similar point. After praising Prvački for the complexity and impact of her engagement with new forms of sociality since 2004, for "offering her services to people in very practical ways," Christov-Bakargiev, echoing Krell in her approach to etiquette, observes how the impact of *The Greeting Committee* was largely missed by the members of the media who wrote about the exhibition:

This work occurs at a time when the world is ever more barbaric, and in an international exhibition like dOCUMENTA, to think about that barbarity as a lack of etiquette seemed urgent. It was an almost invisible and yet very "widespread" artwork that went unnoticed by the media, who generally have poor etiquette, usually noticing very spectacular, very visible, works even if only to criticize them. That's where the contradiction lies; the less spectacular works that would have been appreciated by those who criticize the spectacularity of art are in fact overlooked.¹⁹

This project is easy to overlook because so many of its elements are quiet and subtle, and the work has been distributed across various platforms and communities. I am writing here in part to preserve the memory of Prvački's *The Greeting Committee* in the scholarly community, as I find the artist's aesthetic choices in this work important to discuss because of their ethical and political impact. Throughout elements of this work, Prvački seemed to blend the artwork and the work of welcome through her efforts to erase her own importance as an organizer and "hostess"—just as a perfect hostess is supposed to do. In the next chapter I take up this topic of the expected erasure of the perfect hostess more systematically when I discuss the work of Faith Wilding.

Prvački's Social Design

The most recent war in Europe touched Prvački's family closely. When French philosopher of hospitality Jacques Derrida writes about how fragile hospitality is, especially among those who are closest to each other, he chooses to make his point based on former Yugoslavian, Bosnian, and Serbian history, when the "destructive hostility can only aim at what Levinas calls the 'face' of the Other, the similar other, the closest neighbour, between the Bosnians and Serbs, for example, within the same quarter, the same house, sometimes in the same family."²⁰ This topic of hospitality—especially European, American, or Singaporean hospitality—is not an abstract entity for Prvački. Is she also mourning the country that does not exist any longer, that was torn apart by hostility and intolerance activated among neighbors, within families, leading to a type of violence that Europe had not seen since World War II? *The Greeting Committee* was informed by all of her experiences of hospitality, both its successes and its failures.

On a traditional Serbian kitchen towel that Prvački keeps in her studio, we see an image of a woman who represents the perfect housewife and hostess, just as Prvački performed in *The Greeting Committee* videos, when training and serving others. The woman depicted on the towel is cooking, preparing a meal to greet her family. Prvački values this towel as an artifact of where she came from, and she keeps it in memory of her grandmother, who inspired many elements of her own tradition of welcoming strangers around the world, which she shares with us, her audience.

In a video recorded in 2011, a blindfolded Prvački is seen setting a table, placing one spoon after another, one plate after another, moving gracefully near the table as her guest sits patiently, watching her, with his hands on his knees rather than on the table. I am fascinated by the aesthetics of this hospitality scene. Prvački is trying very hard to be a perfect hostess. A lesson, or two, probably was in order before this performance. A crisp, formal voice-over gives the impression that this is some kind of high-end reality TV program. I can imagine this footage going straight to Martha Stewart's repository of "how-to" video manuals. Prvački repeated her training to the point that she could do the hospitality tasks blindfolded, pushing the idea that one has truly mastered a skill when one can perform it with one's eyes closed. Prvački can serve us with her eyes closed. This scene shows her precise, elegant gestures.



FIGURE 1.6. Ana Prvački holds a kitchen towel in her studio. The embroidered message in Serbian translates to “The cook cooks good, and she saves money.” Studio visit, November 26, 2013. Photograph by Irina Aristarkhova.

Prvački created and performed this scene at the Hammer Museum in April 2011, as part of the first version of what would become *The Greeting Committee*. A young beautiful woman serves an older man, as the voice-over tells us, adhering to etiquette rules that have not changed for more than a century. I happen to know that the man in the video is the artist’s father, and he is also my friend, painter Milenko Prvački. He and his artist wife, Delia, have hosted me many times in Singapore. I have sat at the table as their guest, being served by Milenko during our heated discussions about the Balkan wars of the late 1990s. We have talked about what neighbors can do to each other during war, when all etiquette rules break down and even small gestures suddenly become big.²¹ I describe this complex context to show how the meanings of this video change depending on what one actually “sees,” whether one is implicated in a scene or not, with those memories, debts to repay, and shared meals.

All these layers in this complex project of Prvački's, shown through videos, training, and public programs such as lectures and discussions, reveal the artist's ambivalence about making work as a Serbian-born artist who lived in four countries and was now making this work in Germany for a global audience. Prvački would understand her critics well if they suggested that etiquette fails, again and again, to lead to a better, kinder, more beautiful society. Additionally, citizens can become cynics, building resistance to any message coming from mass media outlets.

I can hear Prvački's ambivalent laughter about greetings, especially when they are prescribed by "committees." I also recognize how hard-earned her optimism and hope are in her own version of etiquette training. In places like the Soviet Union and Singapore, laughter at government policies is a weapon of the powerless, helping them to keep their sanity and dignity under oppressive circumstances. But what Prvački offers is more than this: she challenges her audience to start welcoming strangers, immigrants, and foreigners by learning, respecting, and sharing each other's conventions of hospitality, but without taking these conventions *too* seriously. Prvački also calls on us to give each other a break and demonstrates how we might do that. She values a stranger's smile without questioning its authenticity and forgives in advance any "wrong moves" of hospitality others might make, as it is their effort to respond to her offer to be recognized as another human that counts.

The Greeting Committee is not just a replication of the governmental aesthetic of a greeting committee—Prvački actually offers her own alternative. That is why this work is so complex, leading art critic Raimundas Malašauskas to call it "a mix of Dada, Zen, and Martha Stewart."²² Another critic, Bala Starr, describes Prvački's project as "civilizing, open-handed, 'in tune' with the present," and as having "emerged through her need to negotiate the role of stranger or visitor in so many circumstances." But there is even more to it, Starr goes on: "Prvački describes her practice as 'gently pedagogical,' and her approach as based on empathy. It stresses the person who is experiencing her work before its presenter or 'subject'—who is usually herself." Starr also considers the work much more significant than it might appear to be, since "from little things big things do in fact grow." I am particularly struck by the empathy that this writer extends to the artist, as if her hard work on social lubrication elicits this feeling: "Prvački is unusually observant of social discomfort and uncertainty as well as opportunities for seduction between people and things. She applies her



FIGURE 1.7. In this etiquette training video, Ana Prvački and etiquette trainer Vartouhi Keshishyan discuss how to speak to an adult who is just starting to learn a new language without seeming to be condescending or impatient. *The Greeting Committee*, 2012. Courtesy of Ana Prvački. The entire video is available at <http://anaprvaciki.com/project/greeting-committee>.

imagination—her problem-solving—to model new protocols for contemporary living. Her artworks represent a desire to be of service that has developed from careful attention to courtesy, propriety and decorum.”²³

Writing about a series of Prvački’s social design ideas, most recently in book form, Starr shows how central the concerns of service and protocol are to the artist in general. There is an aesthetic strategy in Prvački’s works that develops forms of sociality and being in this world that have not previously been experienced. Prvački creates new forms of sociality as a matter of fact, in the materiality of the work itself (as Chus Martínez notes about Prvački’s work, “Language is confusing but the actions are unmistakable”), which actualizes new hospitalities, what Starr calls Prvački’s “new protocols for contemporary living.”²⁴

Prvački deals with questions of protocol in video artworks, performances, installations, and drawings that have been shown in multiple exhibitions of art and design and published in art catalogs and in the artist’s books and design proposals. The artist surrenders before the unpredictability of social encounters by building a strong foundation of etiquette training. As Starr observes: “Kindness, sincerity, optimism, resilience and a can-do attitude are among the tools proposed here for ameliorating unavoidable social anxieties.”²⁵

Prvački tries to find an immediate etiquette solution to the daunting problem of social anxiety. The darker interpretation of her work is that it depicts a state of being that puts on a smile as armor against the hostile world. The artist prefers to keep us at a distance, just enough at ease to make an encounter pleasant but not too intense. Life is awkward and full of anxieties. Prvački diligently and elegantly molds herself into a socially well-adjusted artist, counteracting the stereotype that artists must be socially awkward, and, in the process, helps her audiences also find a path to potential new forms of sociality.

We, her audience, could still doubt that this is all about decorum if not for the fact that we are all too busy comparing the scenarios presented to us with our own everyday lives and trying to decide how we would (or should) react in similar situations. Audience members have no time for this artist’s anxieties—they are too busy living in their own. In *The Greeting Committee* and elsewhere Prvački approaches hospitality as a design project and tries to help us, her audience, by breaking it down into smaller elements. Handshakes, faux pas, head turns, smiles, timing, schedules, napkins—all are accounted for and redesigned for her new world of sensing each other even before we have to ask for something. The line between authenticity and acting out a lesson in etiquette is blurred.

After all, most of our social skills have been acquired and learned consciously or mimicked unconsciously, through repetition and through trial and error, like perfected dance movements. In effect, the artist also uncovers the power imbalances of the forced hospitality of greeting committees in authoritarian contexts.

Prvački is not alone in believing that etiquette “could potentially save the world.” She stands together with bell hooks and David Farrell Krell, whom I quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Prvački’s project resurrects this demand, teaching me that a first step of recognition of your fellow human being could be “just” a greeting. *The Greeting Committee* does not shy away from raising this topic, with all its difficult history in Germany, including its most recent past of grappling with whether and how to welcome new refugees and immigrants. Prvački also echoes bell hooks when she says that greeting “rituals hold the promise of social harmony, or at least a fantasy of it. Holding open doors and shaking hands, mundane as these acts may seem, could potentially save the world.”²⁶ The ambivalence of her work, the other side of her training and what being “always nice” means, is left for other artists to unpack.

Similar to Prvački, I am not naive about the power of hospitality. I do not think it will save the world all by itself. But it would also be naive not to acknowledge the power of welcome. Those initial small gestures of generosity of spirit, microcourtesies such as smiles and welcoming greetings, do not require much effort, but they are not small in their meaning and impact, especially in contexts where they have been denied.

UNDOING WAITING

Faith Wilding

The commonly presented scene of a guest's arrival, with a smiling host opening the door, signifies the happy anticipation of a social encounter. In her work *The Greeting Committee*, discussed in chapter 1, Ana Prvački focused on the politics and aesthetics of etiquette training in preparation for hosting. She was concerned with what she calls "social lubrication," or what I call microcourtesies—the smiles, small talk, and gestures that enable belonging, helping to make others feel included and invited. In this chapter, I offer a deeper engagement with the emotional labor of hospitality. This emotional labor is supposed to be concealed under cheerfulness, as any anxiety about power relations between hosts and guests should be hidden by both parties. The work of hospitality is time-consuming and starts long before the guest arrives, with tasks such as setting the table, preparing one's attire and the body to look "ready," and identifying and finding the resources necessary for welcome. Another aspect of hospitality that takes time is waiting for the guest to arrive. My focus in this chapter is on one of the more challenging situations of hospitality: when the host is kept waiting. What does this situation mean for the power relations of hospitality?

This chapter unveils the anxieties of the emotional labor of hospitality, which I define here as the mental and physical effort it takes to comport oneself as a welcoming subject. When faced with prolonged waiting for a guest, the host has to decide how long to continue the effort of waiting. Where waiting is concerned, not all hosts and guests are judged equally. Unconditional hospitality sets the highest standard, as described in the Introduction: no matter what the conditions, such as the availability of time and resources, hospitality is provided to its fullest extent; the host is prepared to give away as much as is asked for, perhaps more than is asked for—everything the host has (including time and even self). As with other aspects of unconditional hospitality, waiting is not expected equally from all people. Some people's time is considered more valuable than that of others. Some people (such as those in need of refuge, or approval, or another type of actual or social capital) are expected to spend more time in waiting than are others. What is it about waiting that makes one feel powerless?

Waiting is hard. As a part of life, waiting is looked down upon in societies and cultures that prioritize living as doing, making, moving, and action. Waiting, thus, is seen as one of the most passive moments in life, a sign of not just doing nothing but *being nothing*. Outside of waiting done as a responsibility in a position of paid employment, waiting is often involuntary, such as when we must wait to board a train that has not yet arrived, or wait for a traffic light to turn green before we can proceed to where we need to be. In such circumstances, we *have to* wait for something or someone, whether we want to or not.

There is one situation in which waiting is praised: waiting is seen as noble when it is connected to patience. In this case, waiting is viewed as virtuous because patience is supposed to be rewarded. Hence, the concept of delayed gratification associated with hospitality: if the guest turns out to be a god or a goddess in disguise, the reward can be eternal life, for example, as happens in many ancient stories of hospitality (as described in the Introduction). But even in its relation to patience, waiting itself is still negatively defined as an absence of action, because it is a time outside of and in between activities. If it is labor, it is of an emotional type, as it is unseen and unproductive. For the host, waiting starts when she has prepared everything and has nothing left to do. She is ready to open the door and welcome the guest, but the guest is not yet there. The waiting starts when hospitality is arrested in its progression.

Waiting is disempowering. That is why a good guest is not supposed to keep a host waiting. By making the host wait, the guest shows a disregard for the host's time. When such disrespect is shown, waiting can be maddening. Time is life, with all its possibilities. Time is money. Time is past, present, and future. All of that is suspended in waiting. An expectation of being waited for, unconditionally, is an indication that one considers one's own time and life to be more valuable than the time and lives of others. Waiting makes both hosts and guests acknowledge how much power they have (or do not have) when weighing their positions vis-à-vis others. When one is waiting for another, one considers various options. How long should one wait? How long is long enough? At what point is it acceptable to stop waiting and carry on with one's life? There is no law about how long one should wait for another, whether a stranger or a family member. But there are cultural expectations, and they target certain groups. A good wife is supposed to wait for her husband forever, just as Penelope did; as related in Homer's *Odyssey*, she was willing to wait for the missing Odysseus no matter

how long it took. Penelope's waiting was rewarded, but such an outcome is never assured beforehand—that is why her waiting is praised.

Prolonged waiting is often seen as a sign of love and generosity (with one's time), while a refusal to wait can be viewed as indicating selfishness or a lack of consideration. A defiant man does not wait even when he faces a more powerful force, as in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. Experiencing the anguish of waiting, Beckett's main character would rather commit suicide than experience the sense of a lack of control in his life.

Some of our cultural expectations about waiting have to do with gender. Typically, it is women who are expected to wait, and men who expect to be waited on. Can a woman, however, refuse to wait? Would that mean that she would stop being a perfect, welcoming hostess? And what would then happen to waiting, as we have known it? In this chapter, I explore the power relations in hospitality as they relate to waiting, focusing specifically on their gendered complexity. My guide to unpacking the gendered expectations of waiting, with their arrested welcome, is contemporary American feminist artist Faith Wilding, whose 1972 performance artwork *Waiting* has represented the disempowered act of waiting for many generations of artists.

In 2006, Wilding was asked to perform *Waiting* again. The occasion for considering *Waiting* anew was an important one: a large retrospective of feminist art. The artist was unsure whether a reenactment would mean anything for her at that time. During this period, Wilding was staying at my house in Pennsylvania, and I remember conversations we had about this request and her ambivalence. We discussed hospitality and our unease with that original performance. (Who waits like that any longer? we wondered. Why dwell on that kind of negative waiting today, when we have the ability to choose which guests to wait for?) As Wilding reconsidered what waiting had meant for her over the decades from 1972 to 2006, she decided that she wanted *to undo waiting* and make it a part of the larger context of hospitality and power relations (around the same time, Wilding also created collaborative projects to explore hosting in other ways). This chapter examines Wilding's ideas about what kind of waiting she wanted to undo, and whether it is even possible to do this, taking into account the cultural expectations of passive women's waiting. First, I discuss lessons from the 1972 performance, *Waiting*, and then I turn to the lessons of Wilding's more recent performance artwork *Wait-With* (2007), created more than three decades later, which imagines a role for a new, more hospitable, and equitable kind of waiting.

Lessons from the 1972 Feminist Art Movement

The year was 1972. The location was Los Angeles. Faith Wilding's performance of *Waiting* took place at Womanhouse, which was both a place and a project of the new and radical Feminist Art Program (FAP), started by Judy Chicago at Fresno State University in 1970. The FAP moved to the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) the following year, headed by Judy Chicago together with Miriam Shapiro. The women artists enrolled in the FAP renovated a large abandoned house away from the main campus of CalArts and turned it into an experimental space for the creative exploration of women's traditional roles. The field of feminist performance art was only beginning, and Womanhouse was one of the key sites of its development.

In a packed, spacious living room, guests were welcomed by an inviting brick fireplace, large windows, and colorful floor pillows. Wilding, in her performance character, rocked rhythmically back and forth, speaking into the void. "Waiting to be a pretty girl, waiting for him to notice me . . ." Her voice started softly. She stared blankly, fixated on her life of waiting. She bent lower and slower as time went on. Her voice was soft, not purposefully modulated. (Many historical accounts of this work would later describe her voice as monotonous.)¹

At first, this waiting seemed too passive to her audience. Why should she be waiting like this? Can't she just stop waiting? There was no joy in her expectation of even potentially desirable events, such as "waiting for my breasts to develop" or "for him to notice me." Even when she was waiting for something other than a man or a child ("to be myself," "for fulfillment"), the possibility of waiting for another kind of achievement did not enter her mind.

It was the peak of the women's liberation movement across campuses in the United States, including in California, where Wilding was performing. Women were refusing to wait much more openly than they had ever done before. Why were they refusing? No longer content to fit into the traditional white middle-class American housewife stereotype, Wilding and her collaborators at Womanhouse challenged such passive expectations. Judith Dancoff (and her team at Fresno) and Johanna Demetrakas (at Womanhouse in Los Angeles) filmed the participants, their processes, their work, and their lives. Thanks to their video documentation, there is an archive of this work.

Wilding's *Waiting* character was dressed to represent domestic ideals of modesty and passivity, her clothing rendering her as invisible as possible. Wilding has spoken about her choice of attire—a light, cream-colored long-sleeved blouse



FIGURE 2.1. Faith Wilding, performance still from *Waiting* (1972), in *Womanhouse*, a film by Johanna Demetrakas, 1974 (47 minutes). Courtesy of Johanna Demetrakas.

and a long wrap-style skirt with horizontal stripes of dark green and cream—not as businesslike but rather as the “ordinary dress” of a person “you would not give a second look to.”² Her costume covered her entire body, in a manner routinely described in the vocabulary of religious communes as “modest.”

For Wilding, who had grown up in a religious commune in Paraguay, this was a comfortable, everyday choice. This was what desexualized (or oversexualized?) female bodies were supposed to wear. Wilding characterized her big black shoes as an “old woman’s.” Mira Schor, a well-known artist, critic, and theorist, and one of the participants at *Womanhouse*, has referred to Wilding’s character as “old,” too (see Plate 2).³ Wilding was only twenty-four years old at the time. Later on, the body—especially the naked body—became a focal subject of feminist art. The character in *Waiting*, however, hid her body. For Wilding’s audience in California in 1972, the costume represented aging, passivity, and a compromise

with a culture that tells women how to dress and live. By portraying a dutiful waiting woman, Wilding chose to give such historical precedents of waiting a voice.

At the time when women were refusing to “wait” and were transforming their lives, the character in *Waiting* epitomized what they were refusing. She was a “good woman”: modestly dressed, sitting precariously on the edge of her chair inside a living room, dutifully waiting for anyone to come. She would be praised by someone like Emmanuel Levinas, one of the philosophers of hospitality, who described such “passivity beyond passivity” as essentially a feminine quality, enabling hospitality to be imagined and practiced. The ring on Wilding’s left hand, perhaps an engagement or wedding ring, added to the sense of her domestication and the propriety of her waiting. To add even more to that effect, Wilding kept her hands on her knees, parallel to each other in a “proper” schoolgirl position. Her hair was gathered into a “modest” bun, rather than left loose.

Near the end of the performance, Wilding’s character waited for “things to get better,” “a good bowel movement,” “the end of day,” and “the struggle to end.” Her words came out more and more slowly. Her voice was subdued and hopeless, and her breathing slowed, too, as her “end” approached. Wilding’s rocking slowed down as well, one motion at a time, almost to a standstill. This spoke to a rhythmic form in the work: unlike a metronome, which goes forever at a set speed, Wilding’s body used rhythm differently. We often attempt to ameliorate the monotony and boredom of waiting by doing something repetitious. When theatrical performances or movies depict nervous waiting, the audiences see characters rocking, fidgeting, stretching, tapping their feet, or looking around or up and down. Wilding did not do any of that; there was only waiting “for winter to end.” In one of the surviving videos of the performance, an audience member can be seen swallowing her quiet tears.

While Wilding was not deliberately trying to scare her audience by looking abandoned, lonely, or bitter, fear was one effect of her performance, as audience members could imagine their own lives in such hopeless waiting. Why was fear an effect? The nineteenth-century British poet Alfred Tennyson, in a poem reflecting on the wanderer Ulysses, expresses this fear of waiting when he presents an ideal of the good life, which involves vivid adventures and specifically not waiting. Those live fully who explore the world, who “move” “to seek a newer world,” because “How dull it is to pause, to make an end, / To rust unburnish’d, not to shine in use!” Wilding’s character rusted alive as she waited. Old age is



FIGURE 2.2. Performance stills from *Waiting* (1972), in *Womanhouse*, a film by Johanna Demetrakas, 1974. Courtesy of Johanna Demetrakas.

different for those who do not wait. As for Ulysses's waiting wife, Tennyson does not reward her patience with respect or the suggestion that her life is also "good" because of this virtuous waiting. He suggests that Ulysses should leave again, rather than be content now at home "among these barren crags, / Match'd with an aged wife" who does nothing more than "hoard, and sleep, and feed."⁴ So, according to Tennyson, being a good, waiting, loyal, welcoming wife means not having a good, well-lived life. There is a double standard here, one for men and another for women. It does not come to Tennyson's mind that the wife is cognizant that she potentially wasted her life in waiting rather than living it fully by seeking a newer world.

Wilding's performance questioned such existing traditions of hospitality, with their assumptions about when and for how long women are supposed to wait. Wilding presented a "rusty" life, but the questioning of it was not done by Wilding's character. The actual work of questioning was done by the audience and by society at large. The performance was widely popular. Wilding performed *Waiting* twice a week for four weeks. The performances took place in the living room of Womanhouse, which accommodated from eighty to one hundred people. The room was always full with paying audiences, and there was always a waiting list to purchase tickets. Hundreds of people witnessed Wilding's *Waiting* in person.

Waiting has since become a classic work of the feminist art movement in the United States. Amelia Jones, who has written extensively about feminist art performance, connects *Waiting* to "earlier manifestos such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*" (1963). She notes that Wilding produced a "feminist subject" who is "profoundly embodied, a universalized 'woman'"—a universalized woman-in-waiting, stereotyped in the United States of the 1960s as white, cis-gender, and middle-class.⁵ But can one claim that Wilding's woman, as a housewife especially, was *universalized*? Despite the ethnic diversity of the audiences at Womanhouse, as seen in video and photographic documentation, the persona that Wilding adopted in *Waiting* was also (un)recognized as a *white* woman who felt trapped in the post-Victorian, tradition-bound ideal of domestic and domesticated femininity imposed after the end of World War II.⁶ In 1969, the overwhelming majority (94 percent) of American stay-at-home housewives were, in fact, white.⁷

At the same time, many African American women held jobs in the domestic sector, with too many still working as household "help" for white families.

This work, which often involved taking care of white children, also required the workers to perform the uncompensated (or undercompensated) emotional labor of welcoming, such as appearing cheerful and attentive, smiling, and showing care for members of the employing household, all while leaving their own children at home. The whiteness of Wilding's housewife needs to be acknowledged in the context of the divergent experiences of white women, especially middle-class white women, and women of color, who often could not afford to stay at home and "wait" for their spouses and children.

Dorothy E. Roberts has summarized how race affected the gendered experiences of American women in this period, especially in relation to motherhood: "Patriarchy does not treat Black and white motherhood identically. In America, the image of the Black mother has always diverged from, and often contradicted, the image of the white mother."⁸ African American women were also much less visible on television as models of housewives and mothers. Thus, *Waiting*, as a collective product, reflected the whiteness of the Feminist Art Program at CalArts.

In contrast to Wilding's *Waiting*, a work by another famous feminist artist, Betye Saar, titled *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, unpacked the contradiction in the domestic status of white and African American women and its racist context. Saar's work was created and exhibited in Los Angeles around the same time as *Waiting*. Art historian Lisa Farrington has discussed *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* as a political statement made by Saar, who is African American, on behalf of African American women.⁹ The work was first exhibited at a Berkeley venue, the Rainbow Sign, adjacent to Black Panther territory in Oakland, California. If in *Waiting* whatever anger Wilding's character felt, if any, was left unexpressed and internalized, in *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* anger was on display through Saar's artistic choices signifying rebellion. This work was intended to transform anger into action, as the artist has explained:

For many years, I had collected derogatory images: postcards, a cigar-box label, an ad for beans, Darkie toothpaste. I found a little Aunt Jemima mammy figure, a caricature of a black slave, like those later used to advertise pancakes. She had a broom in one hand and, on the other side, I gave her a rifle. In front of her, I placed a little postcard, of a mammy with a mulatto child, which is another way black women were exploited during slavery. I used the derogatory image to empower the black woman by making her a revolutionary, like she was rebelling against her past enslavement.¹⁰

The historical and geographical contexts of making, experiencing, and remembering *Waiting* are important. Wilding and Saar operated within parallel circles while working within the civil rights and feminist art movements at the same time.

Saar herself has provided a critical take on the racial divisions she observed in the feminist movement of the 1970s, even in progressive feminist art spaces such as Womanspace (which Wilding calls “a natural progression of Womanhouse”), reminding us that, despite the fact that she knew many white women artists at Womanspace and also was a native of Los Angeles, at the opening of her exhibition at Womanspace, “it was mainly black women and men who turned out for the activities.” “It was as if we were invisible again,” Saar has stated, noting that “the white women did not support it. I felt the separatism, even within the context of being in Womanspace.”¹¹ With this context in mind, it is important to ask whether Wilding’s *Waiting* was passively complicit not only in the character’s being unwelcomed within the patriarchal order of hospitality but also in the conditions of women of color, especially domestic workers who could not afford to stay at home and did not have the option to follow the ideals of “good motherhood” and passive femininity, and who were all around Wilding when she performed in California. This kind of passive complicity damages any possibility of change as it drains personal and collective energy from efforts to build intersectional solidarities. And Faith Wilding the artist was certainly not complicit, as I show later in this chapter when I discuss her more recent take on waiting in a new performance that she wanted to “undo” *Waiting*.

Aside from the whiteness of Wilding’s character, what has also been omitted so far in discussions of *Waiting* is the assumption that this woman, as hostess and housewife, belonged to the middle class. In that regard, she was not simply a symbol of the middle-class housewife, as many critics have claimed. In fact, the character in *Waiting* was actually not very representative of a normalized image of the white middle-class American housewife, even adjusted for age. And as much as one can make an argument for this character as a representation of a housewife, she was certainly not that middle-class American, pearled and perky lady from the 1950s and 1960s television commercials. Wilding looked old rather than energetic and happy. She was successful in looking older than her twenty-four years because of her costume (including her shoes), her demeanor, her slouching figure, her hairstyle, her voice, and the words she spoke (see Plate 2). But the woman in *Waiting* looked more like a member of a religious

sect than like that cheerful person in the advertisements who packed her children's school lunches, smiling and exuding happiness. If a housewife at all, she was of a lower economic stratum, neither urban nor suburban, and not young. Wilding, arguably, could have been performing her own mother, who had lived in a strictly gendered and regulated religious commune. Or the character may have been a woman the artist was afraid of being forced to become, one who would not have an opportunity to decide how to live her own life.

The connection between hospitality and female passivity is what makes *Waiting* so poignant. Judy Chicago, describing the origins of *Waiting*, recounts that Wilding initially wanted "to do a theater piece about female passivity."¹² Chicago traces the birth of *Waiting* to a conversation she and Wilding had with Paula Harper, an art historian who was instrumental in conceptualizing *Womanhouse*:

Faith and I went to Paula Harper's house for dinner. While there, we began talking about Faith's piece and her ideas. Soon we were writing down all the things we had ever waited for in our lives, particularly in adolescence, when we "waited for boys to call, waited for boys to ask us to dance, waited for boys to take the initiative in just about everything, never daring to ask a boy out for fear of being thought unfeminine." Faith took the long list home with her and worked on it, bringing it back to the performance workshop, where we went over it, working on the lines, the emotional tone, and the rhythm until the piece felt right to all of us. The fact that we all exchanged roles provided a fluid working situation and meant that everyone had a chance to express herself. Sometimes several women would try a role until we found the one who was best suited for it.¹³

The meeting Chicago describes is connected to a series of discussions that Wilding and other FAP members had about preparations for her performance. The artist recollected during one of my conversations with her that her initial ideas about passivity and the role of waiting were fleshed out after a group of the members attended a performance of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in Los Angeles. Wilding had seen the play around 1964 when she was a student in the University of Iowa's well-known program in comparative literature, and Beckett was a big influence on her, but her character in *Waiting* was very different from Beckett's characters.

In *Waiting for Godot*, one of the most famous texts on waiting, waiting represents melancholy, where life could be framed as being-toward-death. Wilding

performed her character melancholically too, with cultural and religious references, but it is important to make a distinction between the melancholic, existential waiting of Beckett's male protagonist and Wilding's aesthetics of waiting. Both are negative, but they are not the same. Wilding's work is a *feminist critique*. In Beckett's *Rockaby*, written eight years after Wilding's *Waiting*, another waiting is portrayed, that of a woman who will eventually "sit in her mother's rocking chair where she will wait for death."¹⁴ Beckett himself could not see a woman's waiting as similar to a man's.

Feminist scholars and critics have explored the differences between the circumstances and the meanings of man's and woman's waiting in Wilding and Beckett, and have noted how differently female characters are treated when it comes to the negative consequences of waiting. Lara Shalson asks what *Rockaby*, *Waiting*, and the role of waiting in theater as a genre can teach us about waiting in real life: "Could the history of theatre be a history of waiting?"¹⁵ Her question evokes the famous Shakespearean metaphor between life and theater: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players."¹⁶ Analyzing theater critic Michael Fried's negative response to the process of waiting as "intolerable 'endlessness,'" Shalson uses Wilding's performance of *Waiting* to present "the theatrical being that waits" and who is "rendered in a specifically feminised position of dependency within patriarchy."¹⁷ "Intolerable endlessness" is what "waiting for winter to end" and the rest of Wilding's aesthetic (words, blouse, breathing, and so on) engenders.

Patriarchy, the power of men over women, is where Wilding's idea of waiting as something imposed on a woman, rather than chosen by her, comes from. Art historian Arlene Raven emphasizes this difference between men's and women's expectations of waiting in her brilliant and complex reading of *Waiting*:

Wilding is the American female vernacular of existential modern "man." Beckett's singular figures waiting for God, an interpretation of human hope and futility based on Heidegger's philosophy and Sartre's fictional characters, somehow find courage and the will to be in a world devoid of ultimate external meaning. But the housewife has not freely and fully committed herself to her own life, nor has she been invited by the structure of her existence to do so.

The housewife is a full-time solitary worker who has not, in her own mind, stood alone. Sitting and waiting, she still feels "stood up." And for the young women working on the Womanhouse project, even as they evoked her they

bade her good-bye as an image of the women they would become. Their work had already led them into far different realms than the woefully stricken traditional female model they portrayed.¹⁸

Raven asserts here that Wilding's performance of *Waiting* was undoing the patriarchal waiting imposed on women but also highlighting the fact that this existential waiting that was expected of men and praised as profound and even courageous in the face of imminent death was not available to women. The angst of those whose lives have been made "futile" by a physical or semantic imposition of passivity should be written about, performed, dealt with. Thus, the time of waiting and the work of waiting became a form of passive resistance in Wilding's performance.

Whether the audience saw Wilding's character as a housewife or just as a person whose life was encapsulated by waiting, reactions to the performance depended on individual audience members' personal and cultural histories. Because Wilding's character was virtuous and she was wasting her life, she was seen as irredeemable. What makes waiting feel so wasteful is its quality of passing life by, as Beckett's plays show and Fried's criticism evokes. There are confusing and simultaneous cultural expectations around waiting. On the one hand, "good" hosts wait unconditionally, as long as it takes. On the other, waiting is defined as inaction, and even those who might have recognized their family members or themselves in Wilding's character also struggled to feel empathy for her because they rejected her inaction: Why did she need to wait?

The reception and subsequent history of *Waiting* cannot be understood separately from the work's connection with Womanhouse. *Waiting* was part of the first collective exhibition held at Womanhouse by the CalArts Feminist Art Program, which meant that Wilding performed for a receptive audience within a broad feminist context. Important figures in the new feminist movement, including Gloria Steinem and Linda Nochlin, traveled to see the Womanhouse exhibition. Popular magazines such as *Ms.* and *Time* covered the event, as did many other media outlets, and *Ms.* published the text of *Waiting* as a poem.

Wilding performed *Waiting* for a one-hour special on Womanhouse that was broadcast on public television in Los Angeles in 1972. She was asked to wear makeup and change other elements of the performance for the show (a customary practice for the television station at the time). One of the big differences was that the performance was filmed in a bare TV studio with no audience.

This context was in stark contrast with the original performance space where Johanna Demetrakas recorded *Waiting* for her 1972 film *Womanhouse*. In addition, Wilding's hair was done differently for the television production, in a ponytail, and the speed of her monologue was faster. Though this footage is lesser known, it successfully captures the impact of the original performance.

According to Wilding, many artists who identify as women and many who are part of the LGBTQ+ community have redone *Waiting* over past decades in galleries and museums, at colleges, and in their private homes. They have spoken to her about the personal and cultural impacts of the difficult emotional state that the process of waiting entails. Waiting is connected to the cultural and social framing of disempowerment and is tied to femininity. In societies and cultures that privilege masculinity, women and sexual minorities inhabit the vulnerability of waiting as yet another sign of disrespect, because they already feel disempowered in many other ways.

Some traditions of hospitality emphasize waiting as an important virtue, as in the "Holy Waiting" of Faith Wilding's communal childhood hymns. Wilding's *Waiting*, with its "passive beyond passivity" expectation of her character, lends itself well to traditional tropes regarding how one prepares for the arrival of another and the self-discipline that it takes to perform this kind of waiting in real life and in art. However, various readings of *Waiting* in art criticism and reenactments by contemporary artists have also shown how Wilding's artwork, while *looking traditional*, does much more than simply affirm or even reenact those traditional tropes. Jane Blocker makes this point when she discusses *Waiting* in relation to Roland Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse*. Blocker sees Wilding's own performance as contributing to, critiquing, and updating Barthes's male lover's dialogue, with an effect that makes Blocker "question whether the feminization of the one who waits is as common or straightforward as Barthes seems to have thought it was."¹⁹

Was *Waiting*, then, clearing a path to a new, different kind of waiting? Was Wilding the feminist artist refusing to wait as Wilding the character did? In many mythological stories, women who have dutifully and loyally waited for their husbands (think of Penelope, who waited twenty years for Odysseus) are rewarded with happy reunions. But those are stories told, again and again, to make women wait by offering them the hope of a reward. By 1972, such endings after waiting no longer seemed so "happy," just as waiting for "one's man" to return no longer seemed like something that was rewarded. That might explain

why Wilding, when asked to perform *Waiting* again in 2006, decided to make a new work that would undo waiting.

The Aesthetics and Politics of Waiting with Others

Refusing to redo *Waiting*, Wilding decided to create a new performance that would reflect how differently she considered waiting in 2006 compared to 1972. The *Waiting* performance's legacy weighed heavily on the artist, who has done anything but wait in her own life. Wilding, in search of new political and aesthetic strategies, and also prompted by our conversations during her stay at my house in 2006, shifted her thinking toward the topic of hospitality after she was invited to redo *Waiting*. For Wilding, hospitality was always related as much to politics as it was to ethics or aesthetics. Who is welcomed, when, and how; how hospitality is connected, or not, to feminist and other civil rights projects—these were very important topics to Wilding. More than any other artist discussed in this book, Wilding has always considered her art practice as intimately and profoundly tied to her lifelong political activism. She has taught me that when hospitality becomes resistance, its practice questions existing political power and its distribution. Wilding incorporated elements of our earlier conversations into the script of the new performance, which starts with references to her mother's waiting and her desire to undo the original *Waiting* performance:

I. Waiting discussion with Irina: Nov. 24, 2006

In Waiting, I performed the woman who was trapped I want
to undo Waiting

I want to undo and redo Waiting²⁰

In 2007, the resulting performance, now called *Wait-With*, became part of *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, a traveling exhibition curated by Connie Butler and shown in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., New York, and Vancouver. The exhibition of 2007, just like *Womanhouse* in 1972, became very important in energizing a new wave of attention to feminist art and its impacts for the next decade. In this new performance, *Wait-With*, Wilding was no longer playing a woman who was waiting unconditionally and unhappily. The title indicated her intention, by moving away from a process of personal interior waiting—*waiting* as a verb, a gerund, with a sense of time in its present continuous tense—to the noun of *wait-with*, with its sense of collaboration and community, a period of

time with a beginning and an end. Wilding devised three different forms of *Wait-With* to rethink waiting.

The first form was a durational performance that occurred at Wilding's home. Between early January and March 2007, Wilding hosted tea parties with people who had been important in her life, to honor and wait with them. That "waiting with" was marked by a pot of hot tea with scones and little tarts.

Wilding would sit—symbolically and metaphorically—with the person she had chosen to wait with on a given day, whether that person was alive or not. In her diary she would record the conversation and her reason for choosing the specific person she was waiting with that day. For example: "Today I am waiting with Roland Barthes." This was followed by a quotation from Barthes's *A Lover's Discourse* about waiting for a lover who never comes. Wilding then sang an old German love song, which I remember her singing in my house as she was preparing in November 2006. To me the tonality of her voice at the time was both soothing and deeply meditative, in stark contrast with the previous *Waiting* performance. Wilding started to undo her previous waiting with invitations to those writers, philosophers, artists, activists, friends, and family members she felt she had waited *with*, rather than waited *for*. The power dynamic shifted, as "with" placed two potentially equal separate beings on the same plane, in contrast to one of them living "for" the purpose of the other's needs.

After the conceptualization of the performance in the fall of 2006 and the "waiting with" tea sessions at home in the early months of 2007, Wilding presented the second form of *Wait-With* as part of the *WACK!* exhibition in Los Angeles. She did five performances in one day, with pauses of about twenty minutes between shows. Ten to twenty people were in the room each time she performed. Two persons stayed for all five performances. Wilding wore black clothing during these performances. She had recorded herself reading the script first, and she listened to the recording through headphones while she repeated the lines (since her memory was not as good as in 1972, she told me). The recording also helped her to keep the rhythm and the timing of the performance.

Compared to the old performance of *Waiting*, with its passive, monotonous quality, these performances had a rhythm that was meditative, like Wilding's tea sessions at home. It was reminiscent of the people whom she had waited with—rather than for—as a choice, a new type of waiting. When the original *Waiting* happened in the beginning of the feminist art movement, it was seen as a break with the past, with that kind of enforced waiting, that passive, negative type of



FIGURE 2.3. Faith Wilding, *Wait-With* performance, Centre d'art contemporain, Geneva, 2007. Photograph by Isabelle Meister.

waiting. This time, the politics of waiting had changed. It might be important to pause here to mark the moment of this significant shift in Wilding's aesthetic, which also signifies her politics.

Wilding has been consistently involved in critical and political art throughout her entire life—in the subject matter of her drawings, performances, sculptural objects, and multiple collaborative works with other activist artists in the United States and internationally—and she has approached hospitality as connected to her political struggle for social, economic, and cultural change. In *Wait-With* she made politics and discussions of power into an important but often omitted element in conversations about hospitality and how and why one waits: “I/she/he/you/we wait-with those who resist violence and hatred.” Wilding stressed “waiting with” as

an act of political love.
 Wait-with, an action,
 Wait-with, a meditation,
 Wait-with, open space between actions,
 Wait-with, a space of resistance,
 in this room,
 in this moment.
 Wait-with as our work.

“Waiting with,” for Wilding, is an act of “solidarity, and not waiting alone.” By directly referring to her politics of waiting as an act that is not domestic, Wilding questioned the old separation between women's expected waiting, which was positioned as domestic at Womanhouse, and the public waiting of this new performance. *Wait-With* was resistance. Philosophers of hospitality such as Levinas and Derrida insist on separating the public and political realms from the gendered (as feminine-maternal) hospitality of home, of the domestic sphere. Wilding's new waiting refused such separation and reclaimed hospitality as this liminal relation where the individual becomes public. If in *Waiting* the personal was claimed as political, in *Wait-With* the political was personal. The internal strength to wait would come from the community of Wilding's political allies:

Wait-with the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, the Mothers of Juarez,
 Wait-with Audre Lord, Angela Davis, and Black Ministers for Peace,

Wait-with Palestinian families in Gaza, Wait-with the Soldier's Mothers of
 Russia,
 Wait-with Arundhati Roy, Vandana Shiva, and farmers fighting expropria-
 tion, Wait-with the Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan,
 Wait-with the Women in Black,
 the Center for Women War Victims in Zagreb, Wait-with the indigenous
 women of Chiapas, the Women on Waves,
 Wait-with Iraq Veterans against the war, with Women's Strike for Peace,
 Wait-with Gush Shalom supporting Israeli soldiers refusing to fight in
 Palestine

Wilding reclaimed the public and the political realms of waiting as hospitality to strangers, to prisoners, to the oppressed. She affirmed hospitality as part of the nonviolent political struggle. She was also performing herself, her own life over the last decades.

Wilding named those whom she happily waited with (rather than waited for): her personal mentors (her mother, her father), her spiritual mentors (Samuel Beckett, Virginia Woolf), her political role models (Angela Davis, Arundhati Roy, Vandana Shiva), and her friends. "Waiting with" is part of an individual life well lived. The mutual existential choice of waiting with each other is a political choice. As a feminist activist artist, Wilding showed in this new performance that it is fine to wait only for those who value you and your time on this earth.

The artist's personal history speaks not only to the childhood, private, domestic realm of waiting but also to the larger context of social and political realms. That history led to the Other entering her waiting, including in the third form of *Wait-With*, which involved the direct participation of the audience (unlike *Waiting* in 1972):

My father was a conscientious objector in England
 in World War II;
 My mother emigrated with him to Paraguay,
 She waited 25 years to see her mother again.
 I waited with her. I wait-with you. Breathe
 Listen Wait

At the end of this performance, the artist directly addressed the audience members, inviting them to respond by reflecting on who they were "waiting with" in

their own lives. She looked around, took deep breaths, and paused before her invitation to her audience to consider:

Wait-with, an act of political love.
 Wait-with, an action,
 Wait-with, a meditation,
 Wait-with, open space between actions,
 Wait-with, a space of resistance,
 in this room,
 in this moment.
 Wait-with as our work.

performer takes off headphones and
 waits with the audience to become
 participants in a dialogue.

This last sentence of the script refers to the headphones Wilding used in this performance, which caused her and her audience to experience the performance differently. It was an auditory performance as much as it was visual, and in addition to being more focused on hearing and listening than *Waiting* had been, it was longer. Further, in this performance the artist was present to her audience as Faith Wilding, and not performing the role of a waiting woman.

Dont Rhine, a sound artist and colleague of Wilding, was one of those two persons in Los Angeles who attended all five performances of *Wait-With* in one day during the *WACK!* exhibition. When I asked him about his response to the work and why he chose to stay for all five iterations, he specifically commented on the use of headphones, the passage of time, and the difference between Wilding's 1972 and 2007 performances:

The usual argument would be that by responding to the audio recording, like a mechanical amplification, the performer could no longer respond to the conditions of the real-time event. Those with a dogma around "presence" would say that such a maneuver would marginalize the audience as if the performer was speaking past them. . . . My attention to the unique composition of each sitting was amplified by the bio-mechanical reproduction of the text. Faith had something to share with us. It was important enough to be committed to tape and recited in precise fidelity to the text, the tone, the pacing, and the musical cadence of the voice. . . . It was too complex and too urgent to be handled casu-

ally or even conditionally. It was, in a sense, an unconditional performance. This fascinates me as it flies in the face of liberal morality about authenticity or sincerity. The aleatory aspects of performance were not in Faith's recitation, but in the composition of audience members; enacting a re-composition of relationships across the stratum of feminist histories. And silences.²¹

Here Rhine provides a very generous reading that captures Wilding's challenge to herself and her audience of articulating the complex connection between the internal and external conditions of wait-with, and how Wilding showed that not all waiting is disempowering. She demonstrated how waiting can be joyful in its anticipation when those who wait are equal—politically, economically, socially, and culturally—to those whom they wait for.

What Rhine did was to listen and notice, to take time to recognize the differences in Wilding and in the audience compared to 1972. Had all political problems been solved? Certainly, they had not. But a lot had been achieved, and the struggle needed to be acknowledged, the life of struggle and activism that Wilding had led as a feminist artist and political activist.

This acknowledgment of *Wait-With*'s moment in time—specifically, in Wilding's own lifetime—has not been received in the same generous vein by all members of Wilding's feminist community. In Los Angeles, the first time this performance took place, the response from the audience generally followed the artist's mood. In 2009, when she performed it in Berlin, the reaction was different. For some of those who experienced her 1972 performance, this new performance did not have the same solitary power of anger and angst. One could argue that the shift to a focus on hospitality in *Wait-With* diminished the political power of *Waiting*. We can see in the video documentation of the 2009 performance in Berlin that the audience members disagreed about the impact of *Wait-With* compared to the 1972 work. One audience member said that she missed the "old performance" and started rocking on her chair, chanting, "Waiting . . . Waiting . . ." However, not everyone missed that iconic form. Another person said that the old performance was never about the person Faith Wilding; rather, her character was a collective product of many voices in the Feminist Art Program. The comparison between the two works was intensified by the fact that the Berlin audience viewed a filmed performance of *Waiting* before Wilding's *Wait-With* performance. The screen was there, with the ghost of the original work haunting the current anticipation of Wilding's new ideas about waiting with others.

In *Wait-With*, Wilding was at peace with waiting, no longer performing passivity with downcast eyes and hands on her knees. It was her own waiting now, not imposed on her against her will by cultural and social norms. And she looked more “contemporary” in this performance than she did at twenty-four when she performed *Waiting*. Members of the audience engaged with Wilding in a conversation at the end of the performance; their experience did not include an emotional jolt of the kind many felt when they attended a performance of *Waiting*. *Wait-With* audience members were asked to think about who they wait with, who inspires their contemplative waiting, the “good” waiting that can happen when one is confident in one’s self-worth.

This later performance was of a different perceptual register, quieter, more contemplative, and introverted, corresponding to the thirty-five years that had passed and the changes that had occurred since 1972 in Wilding’s own life and successful career. But it was not apolitical—the politics of *Wait-With* were found in Wilding’s welcome of specific persons, from her mother, father, and favorite writers to leaders of liberation movements around the world. Here, Wilding represented herself. No longer the character of the housewife, as she was in *Waiting*,

FIGURE 2.4. Faith Wilding, *Wait-With* performance, Centre d’art contemporain, Geneva, 2007. Photograph by Isabelle Meister.



she was still a hostess, but her choice of waiting was just one more moment in her otherwise full and self-directed life. One could call her “wait-with” a privilege too, the privilege of a white middle-class woman who chooses to wait. But this new privilege was fought for, hard-won through self-empowerment and a life of activism and art making. And now Wilding shared this experience of arrival back to her waiting self with others, who could learn from her own waiting.

Instead of the rhythmic intensity of the original *Waiting*, the later performance was punctuated by songs, monologues, and conversations with the audience, all of which were more in line with contemporary art performances. Did that mean that we, as a culture, had moved on too, to a better place as far as waiting is concerned? Yes and no. Yes, because Wilding herself did not live her life in the complicit white woman’s *Waiting* of 1972, which was challenged by Betye Saar’s work *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*, as discussed above. When curator Connie Butler brought the two works together for the WACK! exhibition in 2007, Angela Davis came to speak about Saar’s work, just as Wilding spoke about her lifelong waiting-with progressive political leaders, including Davis. Saar has commented about the inclusion of her work in the show and what Davis said: “When my work was included in the exhibition ‘WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution,’ at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles in 2007, the activist and academic Angela Davis gave a talk in which she said the black women’s movement started with my work *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima*. That was a real thrill.”²² The fact that after decades, *Waiting*, *Wait-With*, and *The Liberation of Aunt Jemima* were all part of the same retrospective of feminist art and feminist revolution, within the context of the American civil rights movement, signifies how these works have always been joined at the hip. Although their approaches to domesticity are radically different, they share the goal of liberation. But if Wilding herself has moved on to *Wait-With*, to other “waitings” that refuse to wait any longer and call for transformation of individual anger into collective power against patriarchy and white supremacy, the challenge of her original *Waiting* remains. The patriarchy’s hold on the lives and minds of women still tells them that passive waiting is what makes them “feminine” and what enables others to feel welcomed at home and in the world.

In this sense, no, in many cases, as a culture, we have not moved to a better place as far as Wilding’s *Waiting* is concerned. As an experiment, I showed the video of Wilding’s *Waiting* performance to a class of my art students in Pennsylvania. After watching, many became angry and cried. This was in 2011.

They said they recognized this waiting woman, and it hurt to watch her performance. Then I heard from Wilding that about once a week she gets e-mails from artists around the world who ask her permission to perform *Waiting*, as it speaks to them. Despite her own progression to a space of “waiting with” rather than “waiting for,” for many people of various genders and sexualities around the world, the kind of waiting that inspired the original *Waiting* has not ended, and this needs to be acknowledged.

One waiting does not erase another. And *Wait-With* was not about moving on, leaving behind those who are still waiting. This work was more about acknowledging various types of waiting, for Wilding and her audience, and their relation to vulnerability and power. Hospitality traditions expect women to spend their lives in waiting. That is why my students are not alone in still recognizing that woman from 1972. A poem titled “The Woman Waits,” by Anna Riveloté, the pen name of a contemporary poet and writer from Novosibirsk, Russia, went viral on the Russian Internet in 2010 when many people, most of whom self-identified as women, felt the poem spoke directly to their souls and how they felt about their lives. In the poem, Riveloté suggests that if the woman stops waiting for the man, the whole world will break like a mirror into a million pieces. Her waiting is painful and heartbreaking but also dutiful, novel, and hopeful.²³

This poem is not complicated: the woman waits because if she does not, the world will break down. It is her responsibility, the duty she fulfills (notice the continuing heteronormativity here, explored further in the next chapter). At the same time, between the lines of “The Woman Waits,” in the original Russian, I can discern a set of mixed emotions about waiting. There is the pride of a job well done, a sense of moral superiority. The woman becomes important in her seemingly useless waiting, because her waiting keeps the world together. But there is also anger, together with the threat of refusal, signifying her choice to wait. Although the woman seems angry (at the man who “does not rush to see her”), she forces herself not to question her situation of waiting, because, like the woman in Wilding’s *Waiting*, she is a “good woman.” Waiting is hard, especially if it makes one feel disempowered and disrespected. And my students’ reactions in 2011 to Wilding’s performance in Los Angeles in 1972 and the viral success of Riveloté’s poem in the Russian blogosphere in 2010 show that as waiting has stayed in the zeitgeist of a woman’s life, the inequality of who waits and how continues.

The poem presents the refusal to wait as leading to the end of the world. What world? A world in which a woman's waiting keeps a community together. The woman provides unconditional hospitality by waiting unconditionally, waiting whether the one she waits for arrives or not. Someone needs to be there, in the world, at home, to take responsibility for feeding, sheltering, and caring for others. Riveloté's poem speaks directly to key philosophers of hospitality, providing affirmation of their traditional association of women with passivity. In the *Waiting* performance and in "The Woman Waits," a woman's voice confirms the connection of welcome between people and nations to the first hospitality of the home, of being welcomed by the femininity of the house (a mother, a wife, a concubine). The woman does not ask for any recognition or thanks for her unconditional waiting. It is others who ask something on her behalf: the philosophers, Riveloté, the audience of Faith Wilding's *Waiting*. Can the woman choose not to wait? Should she?

Riveloté uses the technique of an authorial voice to separate herself from her character in the poem. When Wilding said, "Waiting for him to notice me . . .," she chose to become her character, making the audience transfer their feelings about her character onto her (sometimes passersby at the galleries where she performed, seeing her sitting and chanting, worried that she was mentally ill and needed help). Riveloté, speaking on behalf of the woman who waits, speaks directly to God, asking *him* to reward the woman for her unconditional waiting.

Unlike philosophers, who ask only for cultural rewards and recognition of woman's endless waiting as representative of her everlasting welcome, Riveloté, the author, the woman, asks (begs) for something rather concrete from God for the woman who waits: wings. These wings are to be God's gift "for her waiting for him." Why wings? What would wings do for her if she is waiting indefinitely, unconditionally, forever? After all, to be called an angel—for waiting—is not the same as having the ability to fly like an angel. Perhaps wings are about hope that one day *Waiting* will become *Wait-With*. In her memoir about her childhood in a harem in Fez in the mid-twentieth century, Moroccan thinker and feminist scholar Fatima Mernissi says this about the wings:

In a harem, you don't necessarily ask questions to get answers. You ask questions just to understand what is happening to you. Roaming freely in the streets was every woman's dream. Aunt Habiba's most popular tale, which she narrated on special occasions only, was about "The Woman with Wings," who

could fly away from the courtyard whenever she wanted to. Every time Aunt Habiba told that story, the women in the courtyard would tuck their caftans into their belts, and dance away with their arms spread wide as if they were about to fly. Cousin Chama, who was seventeen, had me confused for years, because she managed to convince me that all women had invisible wings, and that mine would develop too, when I was older.²⁴

Wings here are a metaphor for freedom, as they often are in literature, mythology, and art. To clip someone's wings is to arrest her flight, to consign her to a life without the freedom to go and be where she pleases. What are those wings? In Mernissi's book, they are education and freedom of movement. Mernissi certainly developed wings through her own lifetime of work as a feminist scholar and activist in Morocco. It is not clear, however, what the wings are for in Riveloté's poem. Would they give the waiting woman the strength she needs to continue waiting and saving the world? This sounds rather cruel, that she would have wings, be empowered with even more capacity to refuse waiting by flying away, and yet still must stay and wait "for him."

The poem asks a question about the refusal to wait and the consequences of such a decision. Wilding and Riveloté have very different answers, however, to the problem of waiting. *Wait-With* was performed by an artist who had grown her own wings, in solidarity with others who had fought for women's rights to choose how and whom to wait for, and flown all over the world, to the stars, and back to the earth. She waited with her friends from 1972, her collaborators at Womanhouse. But Wilding's *Wait-With* was not about self-help. It was a testimony to a collective refusal. Having dealt head-on with violent and violating waiting, the artist had moved on. She was self-assured, confident, and calm. She was centered—even, one could argue, self-centered—and she was fine with putting herself first.

Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Penelope," which may be read as a kind of response to the work by Tennyson quoted earlier in this chapter, adds support to Wilding's choices in *Wait-With* through its take on ancient hospitality expectations. In Duffy's vision, the waiting Penelope is imagining and embroidering a new world for herself—"I was picking out / the smile of a woman at the centre / of this world, self-contained, absorbed, content, / most certainly not waiting"—when she hears her returning husband's steps.²⁵ To paraphrase Tennyson, Duffy's Penelope is creating a newer world of her own making. What does Penelope do when she

hears Ulysses/Odysseus return? What is she to do? Duffy opens up alternatives in her new ending, or non-ending, of this ancient story. Her Penelope, rather than running out to greet the arrival of her husband, continues to work on her imaginary world of a woman who refused to wait. Penelope does this defiantly and gently at the same time, with a thread becoming a weapon she uses to create a new story for her own life. Duffy writes her own vision, an alternative to Homer's and Tennyson's, leaving us with an opening to other endings of this story.

What is this new world that Duffy's Penelope creates? In this new world, unconditional hospitality is no longer a resignation to one's own fate of being the perfect hostess who experiences her life as suspended in waiting, idealized in the ancient stories of hospitality or their contemporary counterparts, such as Riveloté's "The Woman Waits." Perhaps Duffy's new Penelope is Faith Wilding in *Wait-With*, who "undoes" the sacrificial hospitality of her first *Waiting*. The path to this undoing is solidarity. The result is pleasure in waiting as a meditation on the enjoyment of having lived well, unapologetically *self-contained*, *absorbed*, *content*. If sacrifice of the woman is no longer hospitality's formula, the door is opened.

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Three

THE MAN WHO WELCOMES

Lee Mingwei

Among the many inherited assumptions trafficked by the traditions of hospitality with which I started this book, the equation of hospitality with femininity remains the hardest to challenge. This heteronormative foundation on which hospitality was built has been reinforced by contemporary philosophers such as Levinas and Derrida, and by many of their followers. One of these reinforcements is an insistence that hospitality is essentially tied to femininity, and that therefore a man becomes “feminine” if he welcomes others.¹

Even in the absence of a person who identifies as a woman, Levinas and Derrida tell us, the man is welcomed by the house, by a space that is always already tied to femininity, such that *any* feeling of being at home with oneself, of experiencing one’s own interiority (that space inside one’s own head, language, being), is somehow enabled by an abstracted notion of the maternal-feminine. In her performance *Waiting*, Faith Wilding expressed a refusal to be a function of hospitality as an abstracted universal waiting woman because this essentializing connection between women and hospitality is also heterosexist. It creates a hierarchy in which femininity is associated with negative connotations of passivity, lack of control and choice, and subservient subjectivity. Even when hospitality is praised, it is still labeled as an unimportant pursuit, unlike investments of energy in politics or the economy, and the language used to describe welcoming men is condescending. Thus, when Immanuel Kant, an important figure for contemporary discussions on hospitality, wrote approvingly about Frenchmen’s “willingness to serve,” he explained it as related to their being “lady-like” and effeminate.²

This approach is also harmful because by this logic men are assumed to be willing beneficiaries of women’s hospitality without consideration for the material and emotional resources that this hospitality requires. As discussed in chapter 2, regarding the process of waiting for others, men are not only supposed to expect women to wait for them, no matter how long and for whatever reason, but they are also presented as exploiting that waiting emotionally (as a sign of love) and durationally (as a time-consuming activity). But what if persons who

identify as men, of various races, sexualities, and national origins, are not interested in taking advantage of women's sacrifices? What if they want to become welcoming hosts in their own right? Outside of a cisgendered notion of hospitality as essentially feminine, there is a world that has not yet been considered. How can we envision alternatives to such heteronormative hospitality relations? This chapter focuses on one of these new forms of hospitality, opening up a space for a welcoming man and examining how the prospect of a self-identified "man who welcomes" unsettles the hospitality dynamic as it has existed up until now.

The artist Lee Mingwei challenges key expectations and stereotypes about men and hospitality in contemporary art and offers his unique style, his own aesthetic of hospitality, in the process. In this chapter, I consider the following questions based on lessons from Lee's art projects: Is the world ready for a welcoming man? Am *I*, a self-identified cisgender woman, ready for a welcoming man? What could Lee's audience—which includes scholars, curators, artists, and others of different genders and sexualities and from various cultural backgrounds—learn from a welcoming man? Lee's work shows that in order for women, who have been taught not to trust strangers, to become more trusting, men need to become more welcoming. And Lee provides a blueprint for a welcoming man.

Lee's philosophy of art making is summarized in this statement posted on his website:

Born in Taiwan in 1964 and currently living in Paris and New York City, Lee Mingwei creates participatory installations, where strangers can explore issues of trust, intimacy, and self-awareness, and one-on-one events, where visitors contemplate these issues with the artist through eating, sleeping, walking and conversation. Lee's projects are often open-ended scenarios for everyday interaction, and take on different forms with the involvement of participants and change during the course of an exhibition.³

Lee calls his audience members "visitors" and "participants," terms that are carefully chosen to indicate the settings of his "installations." Intimacy is a shared quality in the aesthetics of the art of welcome. A situation of hospitality unfolds as an experience of one-on-one interaction, and the language of "participatory installation" is important, too. Lee has expressed disagreement regarding the labeling of his work as "performance art," because, unlike performances such as Wilding's *Waiting*, his work is not directed at an audience. Rather, it is focused

on individual participants and their sensory experiences of hearing his voice, eating the food he has prepared, sleeping in a bed he has made, or sitting in a room that he has arranged. The situations of hospitality in which the artist serves as host are “participatory installations,” in which the artist prepares the space, his body and mind, and the activities in which his visitors choose to participate (or not). In that sense, the invitation is extended, and the other responds to it.

Focusing on developing his own hospitality aesthetic over the past two decades across multiple countries in Asia and Europe as well as in the United States, Lee has created an ambitious blueprint for becoming a welcoming man, a man who seeks to build trust and make his “guests” (exhibition and project participants) feel uniquely welcomed. In 1997, he started his career by inviting a guest for a meal (*The Dining Project*, 1997–2005). This was followed by a string of projects through which he developed an aesthetics of hospitality. *The Tourist* (2001, 2003) expressed Lee’s communal welcome, when he offered guided tours to visitors to New York, his hometown at the time. *The Sleeping Project* (2000, 2003) provided each participant with a roof and company for the night, and *The Living Room* (ongoing since 2000) created a welcoming space for visitors to a museum. From 1999 to 2002, Lee collaborated with Virgil Wong in a project called *Male Pregnancy*, which imagined what it would be like for a man to be pregnant and to welcome a child into the world.⁴ And in *Artists as Residents* (2006) Lee provided hospitality to Japanese residents of the Echigo-Tsumari region by transforming a house in the village into a gathering place. In all of these works Lee was attentive to the most minute acts of the day, to the ecology of the self in the environment of an artwork.

My point in listing these specific projects is that becoming a welcoming man takes time and many steps, some more difficult and demanding than others. However, the works mentioned represent only a small selection from Lee’s wide-ranging practice, which has been on display in recent years in a traveling mid-career survey exhibition titled *Lee Mingwei and His Relations*, curated by Mami Kataoka. The exhibition appeared at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo (2014), the Taipei Fine Arts Museum (2015), and the Auckland Art Gallery (2016), and its accompanying catalog provides in-depth discussion of Lee’s work.⁵ Lee’s hospitality practice did not develop in a day. Lee often speaks about the importance of his mentors, such as Suzanne Lacy, who has been a pioneer of participatory performances and an active member of the feminist art movement together with Faith Wilding, whose work is the subject of the preceding chapter (I mention the

connection between Lacy and Wilding to demonstrate the continuation of influences among the artists, and the attention that Lee pays to such connections). In this chapter, I focus on three of Lee's works, addressing first *The Dining Project* and *The Sleeping Project*, before moving to a sustained discussion of *The Living Room*.

An Unexpected Host

When Lee started working on *The Dining Project* in 1995, as an MFA student at Yale University, the idea of artists serving meals to expand their outreach to a community was not new. In Lee's practice, dining was an occasion for developing his unique aesthetics of hospitality into the sustained style of his one-on-one welcoming situations.⁶ Lee's practice and he himself as a welcoming man are memorable to visitors of his "participatory installations." A current colleague of mine at the University of Michigan, whom I will call Mary, happened to be one of the earliest to experience *The Dining Project*. Mary recollected in an interview with me that when she was in her junior year at Yale, she was waiting for an elevator in her dormitory when she noticed an advertisement posted on the wall inviting students to dine with an artist, Lee Mingwei, as part of his graduate art exhibition project. Curious, Mary wrote down the phone number provided. Upon hearing of her plans to call a stranger and then go dine with him at his place, supposedly "for an art project," Mary's friends feared for her safety and tried to dissuade her, but they were unsuccessful.⁷

Was Mary too trusting? How would she know whether Lee really was an artist without accepting his invitation? Mary remembers entering a room and immediately noticing how well Lee was dressed, how beautifully the food was arranged, and how nicely his room was decorated (by a student's standards). Dinner was to be several courses, formally arranged with "proper" bowls and cutlery, rather than something casual, like pizza. This was the beginning of Lee's signature hospitality aesthetic, of offering his "participants" the best food he could cook, rather than something quick and simple, to represent "his culture" for the occasion. Here a reminder is warranted about how guests receive clues about their own importance to the host from such sensory, form-driven indicators as whether simple or more complex dishes are served, how long the meal has taken to prepare, and how much the host has kept the guests in mind, putting time into their enjoyment of the food, into their *tasting* of all those elements of hospitality.

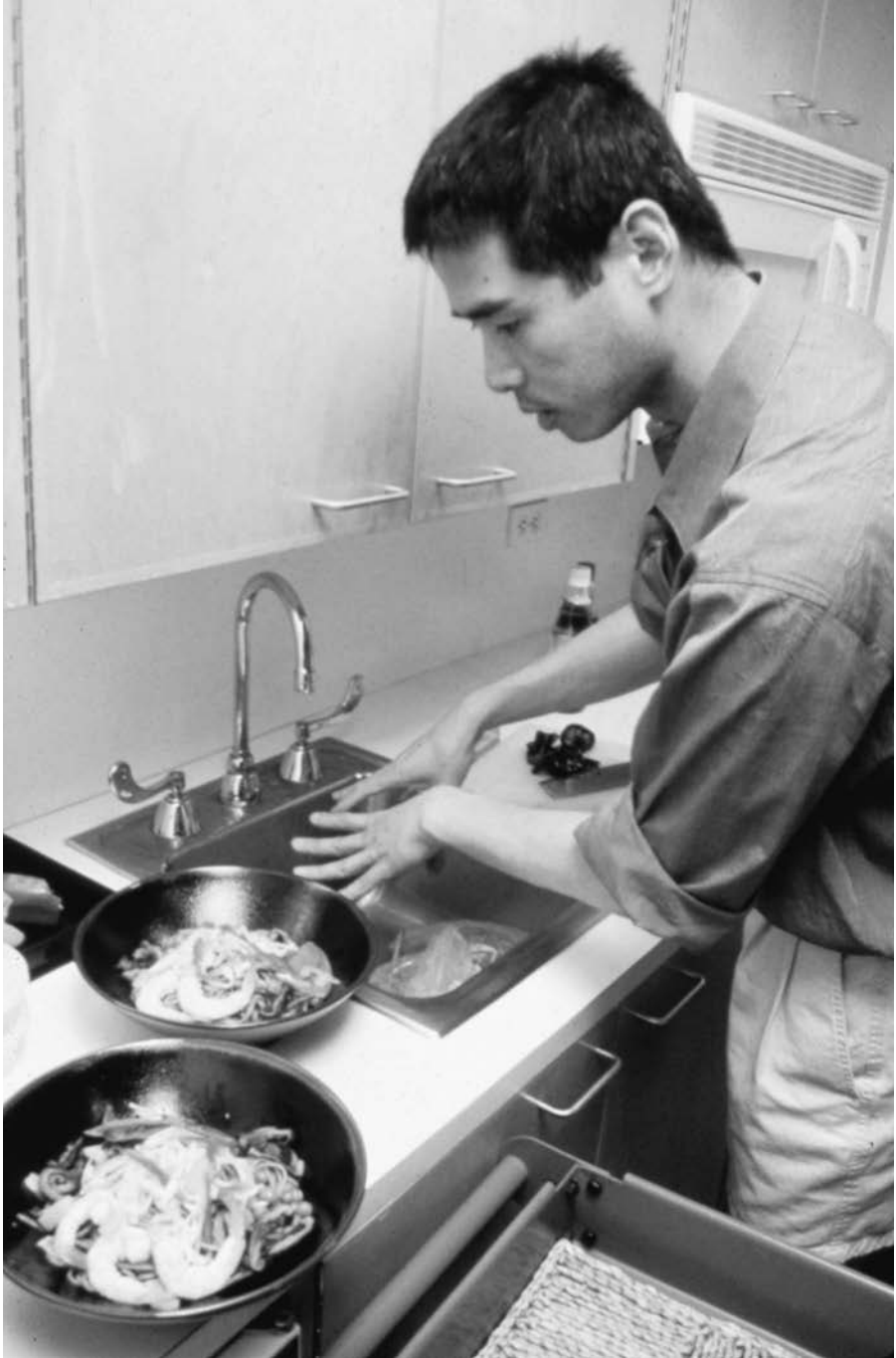
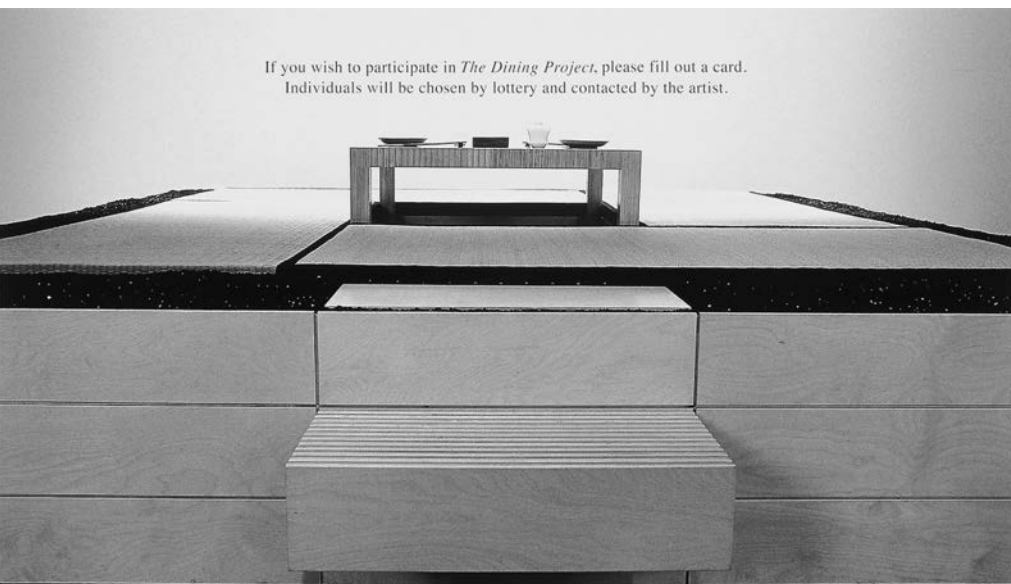


FIGURE 3.1. The artist prepares the meal he will serve to a participant in his project. Lee Mingwei, *The Dining Project*, 1997. Photograph by Charly Wittock.

As a student, Mary had not expected Lee to go so much out of his way to welcome her. His actions complicated the social dynamic because Mary was confronted by traditional requirements of hospitality, with their specific gendered expectations of femininity and masculinity. A work like Lee's highlights those expectations viscerally and not in abstract or imaginative forms. To be present, one-on-one with Lee, to be so well received by a person older than she was, when she had not dressed up or brought a gift to dinner (which would have been the polite thing to do, according to the hospitality customs she had grown up with as a Korean American), caused her to feel embarrassed. She also felt welcomed in a very special way, as a precious guest. And here another anxiety of hospitality reveals itself in her response: because Lee had prepared a formal sit-down dinner, Mary could not help feeling uneasy and shy. That is, for those who are not accustomed to being welcomed like that, such a special welcome might make them feel uncomfortable rather than entitled and comforted. Hospitality can become a burden when traditional roles weigh too heavily on our immediate, in-the-situation reactions to an actual welcome. Comparisons and awareness of hierarchies in gender, seniority, class, and status are activated. Lee's visitors had to deal with these dynamics.

FIGURE 3.2. Lee Mingwei, gift for participants of *Way Stations*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 1998. This card calls for participation in *The Dining Project*, 1997/1998. Photograph by Charly Wittock.



Mary's response to Lee's hospitality was complicated by the fact that, at the time, her immediate living environment in New Haven was "quite a mess"—a dirty, crime-ridden neighborhood with few good places to eat—"and it was hard to imagine something more unlike the city than Mingwei's room!" The contrast between her life as an undergraduate student who ate and dressed rather simply every day and the special way she was treated by this man, a stranger, who had prepared a multicourse dinner and was so attentive, meant that Mary would remember this meal well, even after many years. It also meant that her expectations for her dinner with Lee changed, even though she had not been sure what to expect in the first place. She wished that she had brought at least a small gift when she visited Lee: a scarf, a tea box, some inexpensive trifle that would signify her mindfulness about the host's efforts and the occasion. Such little gifts are aesthetically mediated steps in hospitality relations, where the objects are signs of preparation for a visit, of being considerate about the encounter. These objects are often inexpensive and beautiful at the same time: a tea box in elaborate packaging, a scarf that can be worn later as a memory of the encounter and the concern that another person had. When Lee visited Ann Arbor to give a lecture in 2013, he brought along a beautiful box of Taiwanese tea for his Michigan hosts.

One can already see in *The Dining Project* the beginning of a pattern of Lee having a strong impact on guests with his art-as-hospitality practice. The intimacy of *The Dining Project* was demonstrated by its direct focus on Lee's one guest (Mary and, later, others like her) rather than on some other intentions of this artwork or the artist himself. As mentioned above, Lee does not call his hospitality-related projects "performances," as he believes that this could potentially diminish the authentic feeling of welcome that he wishes his visitors to experience. He is not performing in front of the audience, or putting on a show; he is inviting, one person at a time. This feeling of intimacy and being invited, attended to, and served by Lee in this special way left Mary feeling more than welcomed. As she spoke to me, I could imagine that at the time she felt somewhat astonished, as if this hospitality was something unexpected.

Lee's aesthetic choices meant that he went out of his way, beyond the cultural norms of a graduate student hosting an undergraduate student for dinner at his MFA studio. He used beautiful dishes, and he wore clothes that were more formal than Mary's jeans and T-shirt, as she recollected. Lee was developing his aesthetic of hospitality, in which he treats all guests the same, rather than dressing up only for "special" and "important" guests. Mary mentioned the strangeness

of this formality between two foreigners in America, herself and Lee, from similar cultures of hospitality (Lee is Taiwanese American, Mary is Korean American). When host and guest are from similar cultural backgrounds, both are likely to make assumptions about the knowledge of a certain code of conduct for visits and meals, with particular expectations of gender and class differences in hospitality.

Perhaps Mary was going through those cultural expectations in her mind, prompted by the propriety and aesthetic qualities of Lee's preparations. Where do such expectations come from? Why do they create feelings of tension in a guest rather than relaxation? And the reverse: Where does an entitlement to being hosted, the expectation of welcome, come from? What enables one guest to feel comfortable with being dressed informally even when the host is dressed up, while another guest is uncomfortable in casual clothes? I have described some sources of these expectations in the Introduction: religious, political, and cultural texts (such as Emma Lazarus's poem on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty) that set up "proper" behavior; the ideals of hospitality expressed in fables, fairy tales, and other stories passed from one generation to the next; and family customs practiced at home, for example, during the Thanksgiving holiday. Another source is the etiquette aesthetic, as explored in chapter 1 in relation to Ana Prvački's art.

Mary's reactions also highlight how other markers of self-identification and social identification—cultural background, race, and national and ethnic origin, in addition to gender and sexuality—complicate the scene of hospitality, and how important it is that these be taken into account in the consideration of new forms of welcome. Lee informed me that visitors to his exhibitions who are unfamiliar with his work often assume that the artworks in front of them have been made by a woman; they do not expect that a male artist could be interested in creating art that is healing and welcoming to everyone, equally and openly. (Another reason for this assumption could be a lack of familiarity with Chinese names; Mingwei is a male name, like John in English.) There is also the history of racist and sexist feminization of men of East Asian descent, who have been stereotyped as more feminine and passive than men of other ethnicities.⁸ Lee is aware of such connotations, and in interviews he often resists attempts to apply one type of explanation—cultural, ethnic, sexual, religious, or art historical—to his practice. Thus, speaking with Tom Finkelpearl for his book *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation*, Lee expressed that his personal

interest and cultural background in Buddhism have played a role in his aesthetic, but he also noted that he has been influenced as much by contemporary art practices.⁹

Cultural, religious, and ethnic differences matter in approaches to hospitality as much as in any other cultural practice. I have affirmed the need to recognize and study those different places of hospitality in Western cultural traditions in relation to, for example, the Indian tradition.¹⁰ Some traditions have made hospitality a much more important marker of their philosophy and ethics than have others, and such differences need to be acknowledged. At the same time, contemporary artists such as Ana Prvački and Lee Mingwei, as well as others discussed in this book, work globally, presenting the same projects in different countries and cultures of hospitality. Some of their audience members travel as much as they do or have mixed cultural backgrounds, and some have never traveled outside their culturally homogeneous communities of hospitality. The global nature of contemporary art challenges traditions of hospitality between artists and audiences, letting artists experience their own work from various points of view. This is a complicated dynamic for the artists discussed in this book, who challenge traditional roles in hospitality and question how power is distributed in terms of gender, class, race, and other markers of identity that have been instrumental in discriminating among certain hosts and guests in various settings. At the same time, these artists use hospitality to bring back its original promise of a democratic, indiscriminate, unconditional welcome. Some elements of their work, therefore, may be seen as familiar and others as radical, depending on who is experiencing the work and when and where they are experiencing it.

Thus, Lee Mingwei's work might be interpreted through multiple reference points in Buddhism, through his Taiwanese American background, through relational aesthetics and social practice in contemporary art, or, employing my take on it, through the new formation and imagination of a welcoming man. In interviews with other scholars and critics and my conversations with him, Lee has made it clear that he welcomes diverse interpretations; his work cannot be reduced to one identity marker, and it is not my intention to do so. It is important to acknowledge Lee's cultural background, but his work is not derived directly from that background, nor does his cultural heritage fully explain his unique style.¹¹

There is a danger in a reductive reading such that when audience members

learn that Lee is a male Taiwanese American artist, they might explain (away) his art of welcome by crediting it to his cultural background. Just as Immanuel Kant believed that a general disposition to serve would lead the men of France (and the French nation as a whole) to be more “hospitable” to strangers and foreigners than men of other nations, the supposed “effeminate” qualities commonly attributed to men of East Asian descent could be understood as a factor in their being more welcoming than other men.¹² A real problematic logic is at work here that might prevent the turn to hospitality and the culture of welcome: across various cultures men are supposed to be wary of being overtly welcoming, especially to women and others “below” their own social status. The art of welcome makes men lesser men, their cultures tell them. This is what Lee’s work is up against, and his choice of the aesthetic of hospitality requires courage, I would argue, in the face of such double-negative cultural stereotyping of race and gender.

These are the topics that Lee’s work prompts his participants to consider further, but in ways that are not always direct, apparent, or visible. What is actually happening in the work is not necessarily an open call to resist cultural, racial, or gender stereotypes. Lee wants his participants and collaborators to become aware of their own “comfort levels” with being welcomed, and in my conversations with the artist his thoughtfulness about these topics has come through clearly in his aesthetic choices and decisions. In my several studio visits, interviews, and other encounters with Lee, I have observed that he is very particular about two aspects related to hospitality. First, he seeks to treat each guest as the person most precious to him in that moment, and second, he strives to present each guest with the highest-quality offerings he is able to provide (to be a perfect host).

The Dining Project was Lee’s final work for his MFA degree. After graduating, he was asked to repeat the project at a gallery in New York City. When I asked him what he changed in adapting his MFA project to the gallery, he replied, “I could afford much better ingredients, and guests were chosen through [a] public lottery rather than through an ad in a dormitory to manage the schedule and the signing-up process.”¹³ From Mary’s perspective, her friends might have worried less about her safety if they had known that her dinner with Lee would take place in the public space of a gallery rather than in his MFA studio.

Acknowledging this division between a personal space, or nongallery space, and the more formal space of a gallery or museum is important in considering a



FIGURE 3.3. Lee Mingwei, *The Dining Project*, 1997/2015. Mixed-media interactive installation at Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan. Wooden platform, tatami mats, beans, rice, video. Courtesy of Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taiwan.

new hospitality and understanding the risks that artists take—or do not take—in their art of welcome. Most of the artists discussed in this book have done both: they have worked in contemporary art spaces, such as galleries and museums, and they have also challenged the boundaries between the real world and the art world. There is a tendency in some critical and scholarly circles to diminish the impact of projects that take place in galleries or that seek participation of the audience under the art world umbrella.¹⁴

Indeed, gallery and museum spaces might be considered “safer” than the “real world,” and Lee Mingwei’s friends and family would probably support such a view—otherwise, they would not have worried about him in the contexts described below. The wider implication of the criticism, however, is that the more dangerous it is for artists to do their work, the more real and significant the work

is, especially when it involves hosting strangers. From my point of view, this is a problematic position that fetishizes danger as an element that makes some forms of welcome somehow more “authentic” than others. While I agree that the gallery space is often more circumscribed, and therefore supposedly more predictable, as a space of hosting, I doubt that Lee would welcome a guest in a gallery with more or less genuine hospitality than he would show to a guest outside a gallery space.¹⁵ The artists discussed in the following chapters have challenged the too-rigid separation between formal and informal art spaces by engaging with projects in places other than galleries and museums.

Asexual “Sleeping With”

The undercurrent of questions of trust versus fear in Lee’s work—trust and fear for him as a host as well as for his projects’ guests—continued after *The Dining Project*. At the 2003 Venice Biennale, Lee invited visitors who had been chosen through a lottery to spend a night with him. He prepared a bed for and entertained each visitor individually, and each was asked to leave something behind in the morning. In this way, Lee developed a collection of personal artifacts for others to discuss when they visited. Titled *The Sleeping Project*, this installation represented another form of hospitality of a welcoming man.

The Sleeping Project developed from an earlier version in which Lee used an advertisement to invite strangers to spend a night with him at a New York space of the Lombard Freid Gallery. When Lee’s family and friends first heard of his idea, they were especially worried for his safety. Like Linda Hattendorf, who, as described in the Introduction, “impulsively” invited the homeless artist Jimmy Mirikitani to stay in her Manhattan apartment after 9/11, or Greg Schiller, who on a dangerously cold night in Illinois invited homeless men to stay in the basement of his house, Lee was pushing the boundaries of expected hospitality to strangers and raising anxiety among those who knew and cared about him. In post-9/11 New York City the fear of new terrorist attacks and the so-called war on terror led to Islamophobia, a general atmosphere of vigilance, and a heightened sense of insecurity around strangers and in public spaces. By inviting strangers to spend a night with him, Lee challenged himself and his family to trust the strangers who responded to his invitation. He also challenged his guests to trust him, just as Mary trusted him despite her own friends’ fears.

Lee does not offer grand statements about morality and ethics—or politics,



FIGURE 3.4. Lee Mingwei, *The Sleeping Project*, 2000. Mixed-media interactive installation. Wooden beds, nightstands. Lombard Freid Gallery, New York. Photograph by Anita Kan.

for that matter—when he is asked about the ideas behind his works. He often mentions moments of human contact or personal childhood experiences as offering inspiration for particular works or challenging more “common” responses to his works. Thus, when discussing *The Sleeping Project*, he has offered innocent memories of his childhood experience of “sleeping with ten cousins in the same room” to contrast and displace the “sexual humor, punning on the meaning of the phrase ‘sleeping with’ the artist.”¹⁶ On his website, Lee states that the project developed from an encounter he had on a train from Paris to Prague, “sharing my sleeper compartment with an elderly Polish gentleman who was going back to receive his compensation after surviving the horrors of a Nazi concentration camp.” Lee asked the man to share his memories about his and his family’s time in the camp, with him being the only survivor. The man told Lee about his experiences, and then he went to sleep, but Lee was unable to fall asleep, imagining

the lives of Holocaust survivors and how one had come to be on a train such as this one. He explains:

It is only after all these years that I am able to create a project in response to the emotions I experienced that night.

In “The Sleeping Project,” I examine the differences between “sleeping” and “sleeping with.” How do two strangers shape a night together into an open, profound, mutually influential encounter that they know will not be sexual?¹⁷

Learning about Lee’s intentions, his iterative process, and his inspirations enriches one’s understanding of the depth of his work as the art of a welcoming man whose hospitality aesthetic is multilayered, years in the making, and considerate. However, although Lee’s hospitality is desexualized, it is not asensual. His work is sensual in terms of how he presents himself (his demeanor, style, clothes, soft and welcoming gesturing, and voice tonality) as well as in the materials he uses (the quality of the textiles, the lighting, the plants and flowers, the serving dishes, and the taste of the food). His work’s sensuality, however, is not about—or mostly about—eroticism. This is what makes the work open, I argue, to the new form of a welcoming man’s hospitality. It is an art in itself to be able to be sensual in one’s hospitality, hovering on the verge of the erotic but without its explicit assertion. This is especially challenging in the context of Western art history, with its creation of explicitly hypersexualized imagery in the relationships between men and women, in which women often appear *only* as sexualized or not at all.

Kay Larson’s account of Lee’s record of what happened each night during *The Sleeping Project* when he presented the work in 2000 in New York provides a glimpse into this new gender dynamic: “Sandra arrived at 9:42 p.m. and left at 10:30 a.m., depositing a pile of magazines topped off by *The Economist*. She added a gentle thank you note. . . . Mary came at 11:27 p.m. and left at 11:45 p.m., taking Mr. Lee bar-hopping with her. He begged off at 1:30 a.m., he said, after seeing a side of New York he rarely encounters. Mary came back at 4:25 a.m. and left at 9:06 a.m. Her table holds an unopened bottle of wine, an open overnight kit, a necklace, a gift pendant of the Virgin and Child, and a wilted flower from a dot-com company.”¹⁸ How many other times had Sandra and Mary been welcomed—sheltered and entertained, asexually—for a night, simply as a matter of fact, by a man who was a stranger? My rhetorical question points to the cultural norm in which men—perceived by default as cisgender—who offer women

hospitality are suspect, because they are supposed to be benefiting from women sexually or in some other way, such as by having them pose nude for paintings. Lee treated women and men as equally valid and valued guests of his hospitality, and—as my interviews with some of his guests as well as my own reactions to his works attest—this experience was impactful for many of his visitors, particularly women.

As discussed in chapter 2 in relation to Faith Wilding's performance *Waiting*, women have historically lived in a world where they are expected to welcome others, men and children, and do not feel entitled to or expect to be waited on or welcomed by men, especially male strangers, unconditionally. This is particularly true when the context of welcome is divorced from sexualized overtones. To reinforce my earlier points: hospitality is a matter of power and class (one can "buy" hospitality if one is wealthy, but that is an aspect of the hospitality industry, and not the hospitality that interests Lee Mingwei or me), but it is also linked to gender in terms of expectations of femininity and masculinity as they relate to welcome.

Compared to its earlier iteration in New York, *The Sleeping Project* as presented in Venice, at an important exhibition, was certainly different. But the two versions illustrate the consistency of Lee's strategy of hospitality, of not discriminating among those who invite him or those he invites. His early works, such as *The Dining Project* and *The Sleeping Project*, often had gallery and nongallery components, starting in smaller nongallery spaces and then scaling to larger, more formalized institutions of contemporary art.

Arguably, *The Dining Project* had less at stake, in terms of hospitality, than *The Sleeping Project*. Cooking a meal and then entertaining one's guest for a few hours is not as challenging as preparing a bed and providing a guest with company for an entire night, staying awake and being inconvenienced for a guest over several hours. In the overall atmosphere of suspicion at that time in New York especially, Lee's art project targeted the needs of the other person, the stranger. During a time of mistrust the artist allowed himself to be vulnerable and hopeful in relation to strangers. Through his unique public exploration of his art practice as a man of welcome, Lee taught himself and his guests the value of becoming attuned to another person's wants and needs.

In August 2013 and August 2017, I had the opportunity to experience three works in which Lee Mingwei created welcoming scenarios: *The Mending Project* and *When Beauty Visits*, both at the Venice Biennale in 2017, and *The Living*



FIGURE 3.5. Lee Mingwei, *The Sleeping Project*, 2000/2003. Mixed-media interactive installation. Wooden beds, nightstands. Taiwan Pavilion, Fiftieth Venice Biennale.

Room, an installation at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, which I have visited on several occasions since 2013. *The Living Room* exemplifies the lasting and expanding impact of Lee's hospitality as his work has moved from his own personal impact with regard to individual hosting to permanent installations, public spaces, and institutions. This new scale in Lee's work opens up the art world to the question of institutional hospitality. *The Living Room* reimagines previously elitist and exclusionary spaces as democratic. The work also highlights the challenges that capitalist accumulation and its resulting inequality present for art institutions, such as museums and collections, that are striving to expand their visitor bases.

An Unexpected Room in the Gardner Museum

On a beautiful warm day in August 2013, I spent an afternoon in *The Living Room* at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum. In addition to its extensive collection of artworks acquired by the Gardners, the museum houses a number of works that have resulted from its artist-in-residence program, which is unique in many ways. As part of this program, each invited artist spends a month or more living in an apartment at the museum or nearby and then proposes a work; the final product does not need to be realized exactly as the artist envisioned it in the proposal.

As I entered the museum to experience *The Living Room* of Lee Mingwei, I was skeptical, expecting to be bored. I was thinking, *What is the purpose of having a “living room” in a museum? Will it be used for corporate events and weddings? Isn’t a living room an architectural fixture of a middle-class life, a symbol of striving toward a lifestyle of leisure and “wasting time”?* If I were more cynical, I might even have expected that a living room in a museum would be similar to a museum café or restaurant, a place where visitors would be less interested in encountering art than they would be in socializing, meeting with friends of similar status and persuasion at the museum to show their appreciation for “culture.” I certainly did not expect to feel welcomed.

The Living Room is situated in the new wing of the museum designed by Italian architect Renzo Piano. Several elements in this living room make it a distinct space, especially within the museum context, and made me feel welcome. I was greeted by a staff person who was standing right next to a poster inviting me into the living room. The poster features a portrait of Lee Mingwei in which he wears a beautiful silk robe, holds an opened book, and smiles, looking at his guests as they experience the space. A description of *The Living Room* was placed right at the entrance to welcome me. According to the description, I did not need to pay any museum admission fee, as the living room has a separate entrance and the new wing provides some facilities free of charge, including a classroom (where I later found objects made by students of the Raqs Media Collective, an artists’ group whose members had stayed at the Gardner as part of the artist-in-residence program), a restroom, a flower nursery with colorful plants, a meeting room, and a café.

Aside from this welcoming beginning, what truly separated my visit to *The Living Room* and the new wing at the Gardner from similar museum experiences

was this: I was not monitored or scrutinized by security or any other museum personnel. Thanks to administrative decisions made by the museum in relation to *The Living Room*, I did not feel like I was under surveillance every step of the way, and that made a real difference to my experience. I could work on my computer for hours, and no one came in to “check on me.” Sitting on a comfortable sofa, I could observe, through a large glass wall, a sculpture garden outside. Such gardens are common fixtures in many museums, but Lee had conceptualized this one not just for visitors walking outside but also to serve as a respite for the eyes of visitors inside the installation who might be seeking shelter from the cold Boston climate.

There was also a bird in a cage, which was supposed to sing for visitors. Lee mentioned to me that the bird was taken care of according to the professional advice of an ornithologist, and it was moved elsewhere to rest on a regular basis. (The garden and the bird were part of Lee’s original installation of *The Living Room* in 2000.) I noticed that others felt comfortable and welcomed in *The Living Room*, too. A couple came in to change their child’s diaper, visibly grateful that they were able to do it in comfort, surrounded by flowers and a bird, rather than in a restroom. The toddler stared at the bird, and both made chirping sounds. A family peeked in, perhaps not sure what to expect, and looked around with curious, somewhat surprised glances. Others talked on their cell phones or read books they found on shelves in the room, including books about the museum’s history and a biography of Isabella Stewart Gardner. By including books about her, the original hostess, Lee had essentially invited her, too, and she was there in spirit (see Plate 3).

Other elements also contributed to making the space feel welcoming. Despite the room’s glass outer walls—which could potentially cause the people in the room to feel exposed and under surveillance—the lighting created a pleasant effect. Rays of light overlaid each other, and reflections filled various spaces outside the room. Museum visitors outside could not easily see inside the room despite the glass walls. Some rays of light fell on the stairs and then reflected off the walls and ceiling. The floor was placed on the same level as the grass outside the building, inviting visitors to step out effortlessly. This leveling was important to Lee because he wanted his guests to feel immersed in greenery. Purple, white, and pink flowers supplied by the museum’s flower nursery were everywhere, both outdoors and in *The Living Room*.

This room, which is now a permanent installation in the museum’s new wing,

was inspired by an earlier, temporary project created by Lee for the Gardner. That first *Living Room* was the result of an invitation from Jennifer Gross, then, in 1999, the contemporary art curator at the museum. Lee was a visiting artist who spent a few months at the museum, doing research on various rooms of the Gardner house (which today is the older wing of the museum) and focusing on the history of the main living room where Isabella Stewart Gardner used to welcome her guests. Lee's special style as an artist, mentioned above in relation to *The Sleeping Project*, here reveals itself in his attentiveness to the Gardners' family history. Isabella Stewart Gardner built the house after her wealthy husband passed away. It was important to her that she regularly invite artists, writers, and performers (in other words, "people of culture") into her space. When she decided to open her vast collection of art to the public, Lee noticed, she was not interested in the democratization of museum visitors. Lee wanted to change that. Hospitality for Lee is also resistance to the history of unequal welcoming, especially when it comes to economic inequality. In his own small way, he made this museum more accessible and enjoyable, for example, for students from nearby

FIGURE 3.6. A panoramic view of the original exhibition. Lee Mingwei, *The Living Room*, 2000, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. Mixed-media interactive installation. Sofa, coffee table, carpet, lamp, plants. Photograph by Anita Kan.





FIGURE 3.7. Museum visitors could feel comfortable and at home with themselves in the space Lee created. Lee Mingwei, *The Living Room*, 2000, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. Mixed-media interactive installation. Sofa, coffee table, carpet, lamp, plants. Photograph by Anita Kan.

colleges who otherwise might not have had such a sensually welcoming place, free of charge.

In writing about *The Living Room*, Lewis Hyde emphasizes the distance between Gardner's generosity to some guests and the way she displayed her elitist, exclusionary, class sensibilities on other occasions. Hyde mentions that Gardner's will was written to make sure her nondemocratic preferences would control the museum's functioning long after she died.¹⁹ The only room the hostess did not control posthumously was a recently created contemporary art space. This space was what Lee used for his *Living Room* project in the spring of 2000, and for which he wrote a proposal to convert the space into a living room for *all* visitors. With *The Living Room*, Lee shows that one can pay homage to the original owners for allowing this space to exist without accepting their gift uncritically and

apolitically; his critique is so hidden that it might actually be missed entirely by those who need more visible signs of politically activist art.

Isabella Stewart Gardner was a representative of a patronage class who divided the public into those who are “cultured” and those who are not. What else can a “Venetian palazzo”—the model for her house, now the museum’s main building—be but an elitist space in Boston? Lee had a challenge on his hands. Museums value their collections based on their current market price, and they expect visitors to do the same (for example, the Louvre can charge high admission fees because it has Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa*). That is why I was especially pleased to notice that, together with the new *Living Room* that I visited, the new wing of the Gardner museum was built with democratic principles in mind, and visitors were not required to purchase entry tickets to access toilets and educational spaces (a restaurant does not count because it is a revenue-generating space). How to make museums more welcoming to the public, a principle that private institutions such as the Gardner might not have had in mind when they first opened, has become a topic of ongoing conversation. The times have changed, and many museums (willingly or not) want to change too, because unless they can attract socially and economically diverse visitors by making them feel connected to their collections and events, museums will increasingly be perceived as no more than elite clubs housing valuable commodities.

With time, Lee’s carefully planned aesthetic of hospitality changed how the Gardner Museum viewed its public, and I experienced that. In her essay for the museum publication that accompanied Lee’s 2000 exhibition, Jennifer Gross quotes the artist: “Two notions that form my work are hospitality and collection.”²⁰ These notions were important to the museum’s new building as it used Lee’s work to redefine its own sense of itself as a welcoming space. After the exhibition proper, Lee created programming for this space, inviting volunteers and then training them to be hosts for a few hours at a time (see Plate 4). The lengthy preparation that went into *The Living Room*’s existence in the new wing is further evidence of the persistence and consistency that Lee applies in his rather nonspectacular way of working. In addition, Lee’s work demonstrates how much of hospitality, as I argue across this book, is experienced and received sensorially, aesthetically. I focus on this project also to show how Lee’s art can make one feel wanted, acknowledged, whole, as the guest of a great host is made to feel. My hope is that, by writing about Lee’s work, I may help to expand his audience, if only in an indirect way.

In contrast to Isabella Stewart Gardner, who wanted to restrict public access to her museum and was very conscious of social hierarchy and its maintenance, Lee built a new room in the new wing of her old museum that seeks to welcome all equally. Educated in Lee's ethos of hospitality and with a new wing in the works, museum administrators and curators decided to continue Lee's *Living Room* by making it a permanent part of the new building. This is how *The Living Room* was transformed from a temporary idea for an initial exhibition to a lasting change to the museum. Discussions about the room became more collaborative, with various people involved, including the artist and the architect.

The Renzo Piano wing of the Gardner Museum is an airy, open, opaque light-blue building, in stark contrast to the dark, enclosed villa. It is as if Lee tells us that new hospitality—true hospitality to all—begins only when there is a general move toward equality, when museums stop being signs of separation between the rich and the poor. A museum might not be expected to be a welcoming space, especially for those who do not feel entitled to be welcomed there and who may not know much about the museum's art collection. Being part of neither a house nor a museum, *The Living Room* represents a new hybrid, a place that fosters a new type of relationship between those who own and run a museum and those who visit it. After centuries of cultivating a select, educated, elite audience, museums are now trying to survive by pursuing democratization.

In designing *The Living Room*, Lee created the most “democratic” piece in his repertoire of hospitality art. Democratization of a museum, Lee shows, can be achieved through the creation of a welcoming place for “others”: those who do not know what they are looking at in a typical Western museum of art, and those who feel intimidated and alienated by museums in general, especially those presenting contemporary art.

It takes many people to make a museum space welcoming, more than one artist whose temporary position is precarious. After all, Lee is a guest at the Gardner—that is why his ambitious project had to be collaborative. He worked with museum director Anne Hawley, the architect Piano, donors to the new wing, and museum staff members. His efforts and their leadership paid off and transformed the museum into a new kind of space. Lee's seeking to welcome all types of people through *The Living Room* project shows how invested he is in the practice of hospitality. His original vision needs to be sustained by the museum staff. Lee still visits the museum on a regular basis to conduct two-hour sessions centered on hosting. At a time when the architectural profession is trying to become more



FIGURE 3.8. A panoramic view of the two wings of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. Photograph copyright Nic Lehoux and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

welcoming, especially to women and underrepresented minorities, Lee's *Living Room* provides an example of where a welcoming architectural practice can go.²¹

The space, however, is primarily the consequence of Lee's intention to welcome—it is not remarkable because of its walls and couches. Pieranna Cavalchini, the current contemporary art curator at the Gardner Museum, has also contributed greatly to this vision of a welcoming and relevant museum in today's changing times. She and other members of the team at the museum have enabled *The Living Room* to become an extension of Lee as a hospitable man. When visitors sit in *The Living Room*, they are surrounded by beauty: a beautiful garden, beautiful flowers, beautiful light, beautiful architecture. This beauty is not cold like marble or stainless steel. It is cozy, inviting, and warm, as a truly welcoming space should be. Lee, as an artist, uses the resources made available to him to extend similar resources to others.

When Lee is not at the Gardner, trained volunteer hosts welcome visitors to *The Living Room*. People from the Boston area can sign up to host for two hours at a time. Before hosting, they receive training in how to be welcoming; they are taught to use welcoming facial expressions and are instructed in how to invite people to engage with them, how to anticipate visitors' reactions, and how to show attention and concern (see Plate 4). They are also encouraged to try to share something about themselves even when they are feeling shy. Of course, spending two hours being hospitable to any stranger who shows up in a public place requires effort and stamina. But in addition to the job's demands, it provides an opportunity for those volunteers who are so inclined to share their own artworks; for this reason, students from nearby art colleges often become volunteer hosts.

The first time I visited *The Living Room*, an art student was the volunteer host. She had placed a few family photographs and her own creative works on a table as conversation starters, and she was engaging in conversations with any visitors who entered and were interested in talking. She explained Lee's ideas and talked about the museum. When I chatted with her, she mentioned how tired she was at the end of each of her two-hour hosting sessions. Of course, in addition to not expecting praise or acknowledgment, the etiquette of being a good host includes not showing how tired one is. Lee has also mentioned to me on several occasions that he no longer participates in every iteration of his projects because he feels so drained afterward that he needs months to recuperate; *The Dining Project* and *The Sleeping Project* are especially exhausting for him. (Ana Prvački has also talked about her need for recovery time after art performances.)

Anyone who would like to become a welcoming man like Lee Mingwei ought to know: the art of welcome takes a lot of time and effort. Hospitality is rewarding but also exhausting. It is not easy, no matter how effortless the host's welcoming smile and gracious gestures appear. The room needs to be cleaned. The clothes need to be laundered and ironed. Guests, however, are not expecting to hear about that. They praise the host's cooking skills and welcoming atmosphere *because* they do not hear about how hard it was to cook, how long it took to clean the room, and how exhausting the entertaining conversation can be. To speak about that would be a faux pas, as Ana Prvački has taught us. But to speak about that would also be a political, rebellious act, as Wilding's *Waiting* was, especially if there is an expectation of being welcomed as an entitlement, and not a mutually equal, chosen act of "waiting-with." Rather than showing his labor and his

fatigue in his creative work, Lee always acknowledges the hospitality of others in his interviews and his artistic statements about his inspirations, pointing out that he learned about hospitality from others.

Lee's *Living Room* creates a space that is no longer domestic (unlike a private room in Gardner's house), but that does not feel fully public either (unlike a concert hall or a post office). Lee creates a new kind of place.²² Likewise, in *The Sleeping Project*, Lee challenged the separation of hospitality traditions into domestic and public spaces, blurring the distinction between home and community. The gallery became a place to spend a night with an artist as a guest. Lee makes us feel as if what we do outside our homes is no longer different from what we do at home. This is also a liminal space of art, between the private and the public.

When Linda Hattendorf invited Jimmy Mirikitani into her apartment, her documentary film followed him inside. The aesthetic, sensual quality of hospitality—where taste, vision, and touch are all engaged—signals intimacy, and the artist's intention is to re-create that feeling of being a host's only guest. Mary felt this way when she responded to Lee's ad for *The Dining Project*, and I had a similar feeling when I experienced Lee's hospitality while visiting *The Living Room*.

Lee also notes the absence of men responding to his work. The curators who have invited him to their galleries and museums to be part of their exhibitions, those who have commissioned his new works, the audience members who have responded to his calls for one-on-one interactions, and the volunteer hosts he has trained have been primarily, though not exclusively, women. In my own one-on-one encounters with the hosts of *The Mending Project* in 2017 and *The Living Room* in 2013, I was welcomed by women volunteers. Lee has mentioned to me a number of times that for "some reason," so far, most of the people who have volunteered to become hosts have been women: "For example, *The Mending Project* now at Richmond ICA [Institute of Contemporary Art], there are three or four male hosts, out of thirty to forty."²³ These low numbers testify to anxieties surrounding the gendered definitions of hospitality that I outlined in the Introduction.

If femininity equals passivity, and both are defined as negative, weak characteristics, then men of various cultural backgrounds are discouraged from pursuing welcoming practices. That is, one simple reason that so few men volunteer to participate in or respond to Lee's work could be fear. The fear men have (or are supposed to have) of being perceived and labeled as weak, feminine, passive, and

subservient—what women are supposed to be—could be a deterrent to men’s involvement in hospitality practices.²⁴ If Faith Wilding’s work, discussed in chapter 2, shows how damaging such an assumed welcoming norm is for women, while her later work redefines hospitality on her own terms, Lee redefines hospitality for men by raising cultural expectations of men’s welcome.

This raises another problematic reaction to Lee’s work: misogyny and the homophobia attached to hospitality traditions, such that men are supposed to “fear” for their masculinity if they dare to practice the “feminine welcome.” Other than misogyny and homophobia, or a type of disdain for “effeminate men,” what can explain the fear of becoming a welcoming man?²⁵ Lee goes out of his way to offer each guest, each audience member, the best food he can, the most time he has. Lee’s affirmation of hospitality in his art supports my larger argument about the uniqueness and courage of Lee’s aesthetic of welcome and the radical, albeit unstated and easily missed, change that Lee creates as a welcoming man. Lee tells us that this is what the norm should look like. As if playing with expectations and stereotypes associated with race, gender, sexuality, and cultural background, Lee affirms hospitality in his art with a matter-of-fact and unique style. He partakes of several cultural forms that might appear to his audience as identity markers. He chooses what to cultivate, keeping what he is most comfortable with and what he thinks will indicate to his guests the highest level of welcome. He seems to be saying, “Why even talk about gender here, or ethnicity, or cultural background? Shouldn’t we all be striving to make our artwork open to all kinds of people just as we enjoy being who we are?”

A man who welcomes does not feel threatened in his masculinity or creativity in hosting all people, including women. In his interviews and artworks, Lee often praises and acknowledges the women in his personal and professional life. This makes him a rather rare model of new hospitality in contemporary art. Lee’s work has certainly shown me my own evolution. The same year he was serving a lavish meal to Mary in his Yale studio in 1995, surprising her with his special, attentive welcome, I was sitting in a London flat with a new friend, having been invited to her place for dinner and to discuss our dissertations. After a short chat, my friend said, “My boyfriend is making dinner in the kitchen so we will eat soon.” I jumped from the sofa and asked if he needed help with dinner. She simply said, “Sit down, don’t worry, we need time to finish our dissertation discussion.”

I was so startled I do not remember if he joined us, what kind of food we ate,

or what happened afterward. Although my father had cooked for our family on occasion, unbeknown to liberated and confident me, I had been enculturated to feel uncomfortable when two women are talking in the living room while a man is in the kitchen, behind the scenes, cooking dinner for them. I know in this time and age my shock of 1995 might reveal how traditional I was in my gendered expectations of hosting. I certainly did not see myself that way. Judging by how I have reacted on other occasions, I know I would not have been startled or jumped up to help if my friend had said, “My mother is cooking us dinner.”

A lot has changed since then, as I noted while I sat comfortably in *The Living Room*, judging every little detail I could notice in this space that was carefully prepared for my enjoyment. I understand those who assume that Lee Mingwei is a woman artist. They do not necessarily hold any ill feelings about connecting men, masculinity, and hospitality—it is just not done, whether in theory or in practice. I live in a society where women do not grow up expecting men to go out of their way to serve and welcome them, and men do not grow up expecting that of themselves.²⁶ Those expectations might be changing, but Lee remains unique in contemporary art and a model of an unexpected host.²⁷ The unexpected host reveals and transforms his guest’s expectations.

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Four

HOSTING THE ANIMAL Kathy High

Artistic and academic attitudes toward animals are changing, reflecting an ethical evolution and a turn to sustainability in the face of ecological crises. What were normal practices just a decade ago—the confinement of animals in tanks and cages for entertainment, the use of intensive farming technologies to produce inexpensive meats, and so on—are now matters of public debate. One well-known example of today’s evolving attitudes is the public response to *Blackfish*, Gabriela Cowperthwaite’s 2013 documentary film about captive orcas (killer whales) at SeaWorld theme parks, which prompted a public relations crisis for SeaWorld as well as a change in governmental regulations in regard to whales in captivity. My own attitudes toward animals in captivity have also changed, which I noticed as I was sitting in *The Living Room* at the Gardner Museum for the first time in August 2013, enjoying the welcoming space. One of the elements of Lee Mingwei’s installation was a bird in a cage. Twenty years ago, I would have been excited by the bird’s inclusion, having grown up with pet birds, but this time my reaction was different.

That afternoon, the bird was sleeping. A family with a toddler came in, and the grandfather lifted the child up to the level of the bird’s cage. The bird responded to that gesture by waking up and moving deeper into the cage, away from the people. The child was smiling, animated, making sounds, gesturing, clearly excited to see the bird. As I observed the child’s response, I appreciated his connection to nature. I also thought, “But what is the bird thinking or feeling?”

As I observed this interaction I wondered also why I cared about the bird’s thoughts and feelings. After all, the bird was there as another element intended to create a welcoming environment for me and other visitors. Lee imagined that birdsong would contribute to an aesthetic of relaxation in *The Living Room*.¹ Indeed, I appreciated his gesture of including the bird, together with the flowers, the garden, and the comfortable furniture, in addition to the lack of an admission fee. I thought of the old proverb “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth”—I did not want to seem ungrateful by questioning the artist’s gifts and his choices.

I reflect on this proverb, which originated around 400 AD, to acknowledge

that for thousands of years humans have expressed hospitality through the gifting of animals, either by offering them as food or by using them for entertainment and hospitality rituals.² Animals have played a significant role in hospitality relations among humans. But what if we were to treat all living beings with the same level of welcome we typically reserve for our fellow humans? In this chapter, I consider critical issues arising from this question based on the art project *Embracing Animal* by American artist and filmmaker Kathy High. I will show how serious contemplation of what it means to host animals might lead us, High's audience, to ponder how to let animals live on their own terms. I will also discuss how High's work inspired me to consider how Jainism, as a philosophical and ethical tradition that emphasizes human nonviolence toward and noninterference with all living beings, offers an important approach to outlining the limitations of human hospitality toward animals.

Embracing Animal and Bioart

For decades, Kathy High has engaged with the topic of communication with animals of all kinds. Her work has focused on pets such as dogs and cats (*Lily Does Derrida: A Dog's Video Essay*, 2010–12), telepathic communication with horses on animal rescue farms (*Animal Attraction*, 2000), animals used in scientific research, such as laboratory rats (*Animal Films*, 2002–4), and imaginary animals from our dreams, stories, and images (*Cow Film*, 1979; *Skin-to-Skin Dome*, 2009).

High is also one of the leading figures in bioart, the recently developed genre of art making that involves the use of living substances and beings as materials and media. Bioart also encompasses the use of biotechnologies such as cloning, genetic manipulation, and tissue engineering.³ In the language of contemporary bioart and its theory, animals are “nonhuman living beings”; this terminology accentuates the commonality between humans and nonhumans. In this new field, High has often engaged with the latest scientific research to provide her own interpretation of the relationship between human and nonhuman living beings, even as many scientific researchers continue to rely on animal testing for human benefit, prompting further bioethical questions.

High's work with transgenic rats, which began in 2004, was inspired primarily by two conceptual strands: Donna Haraway's writing on the OncoMouse (especially in her presentation of the mouse as her “sister”) as well as her later work on “companion species,” and Deleuze and Guattari's theories of “becom-

ing animal.”⁴ High began to explore the issue of genetic modification with other bioartists as she began the process of working with transgenic animals. Adam Zaretsky, who has also used genetically modified animals in his art, was one of the artists who encouraged her.⁵

The transgenic laboratory rats that High chose to work with had the HLA-B27 gene, which had been introduced into the rats because of its association with autoimmune diseases, especially arthritis and autoimmune digestive disorders. The letters HLA stand for human leukocyte antigen, the presence of which indicates inflammation. In bones, for example, such inflammation leads to rheumatoid arthritis. As part of her research, High interviewed Joel Taurog, a leading expert on autoimmune diseases who specializes in arthritis and was instrumental in creating the genetically modified rats. She asked Taurog why rats, rather than mice, had been chosen for this research, and he told her that “rats are more susceptible to arthritis than mice.” Once researchers isolated the HLA-B27 gene associated with a series of autoimmune diseases, they were excited to make a product, an animal that would be “a model of predictably induced arthritis.”⁶ Rats with this gene modification would be susceptible to developing “desired” diseases, and researchers could then test new treatments on them.

High chose to work with these animals because they shared her own autoimmune digestive condition, and so she felt an empathic connection with them. She had an understanding of their physical symptoms not just in theory but also through her own experience. In addition to the health affliction she and the rats had in common, High enacted other strategies to become experientially connected with and bonded to the rats, including referring to them as her “siblings” and her “sisters” (in the spirit of Haraway): “I identify with the rats and feel as though we are mirroring each other. The rats and I are all retired breeders. I feel some kind of strange kinship with them. If they ache when being touched, I understand this is from fevers.”⁷

Embracing Animal has been a multiyear project, realized in multimedia forms, including video, installations, performance, everyday life with animals, writing, and photography. Over the course of the project, High has worked with a total of five transgenic rats, in two groups. The first group consisted of two rats from Taconic Biosciences, a biomedical supply company. High purchased them in the winter of 2004 for three hundred dollars apiece. The rats acclimated in her house before they became part of the exhibition *Soft Science: Embracing Animal* by Kathy High, curated by Sam Smiley at Judi Rotenberg Gallery/Videospace in

Boston, which opened in March 2004. The exhibition lasted for one month. High exhibited the rats in their cage, and their movements triggered the playback of a video displayed on a monitor. The installation also included sculpted heads of rats. After the exhibition, the rats lived at High's home for about another year before they died (below, I describe the impact of their deaths on High).

The second group, consisting of three rats also from Taconic Biosciences, arrived at High's home in April 2005 before becoming part of the group exhibition *Becoming Animal*, which ran at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art from May 2005 to February 2006. Several exhibition employees and High took care of the rats at MASS MoCA until the end of the exhibition, at which time two gallery employees took the rats home and cared for them until they died.

Identifying with transgenic rats was not as easy for High as the description of her project above might make it seem. As rats, they were initially repulsive to her, and she had to engage in the affective, emotional labor of hospitality (as

FIGURE 4.1. Kathy High, *Embracing Animal*, 2004/2006, MASS MoCA. Rat housing designed by Kathy High and built by the fabrication team at MASS MoCA; tube scopes construction design by Jack Naughton/Fab Inc. Transgenic rats provided by Taconic.



defined in chapter 2 in regard to Faith Wilding's work) before the rats' arrival. High questioned her decision to take this project on when she saw the rats for the first time:

Why did I decide to work with these rats? I am afraid of them. And I don't know how to relate to them. They make me nauseous and queasy. They make my skin crawl. I have never touched a rat before except accidentally when they ran over me, when they crawled over me in bed at night, when they ran by my foot in the alley or the subway. They terrify me. Plague-laden animals, low to the earth, crawlers, sneaky, creepy vermin.⁸

It is readily apparent from these expressions of repulsion that High was aware of the difficulties of claiming an "easy" and seamless identification with transgenic rats; she had to engage in a process of "becoming sisters" rather than simply assuming some "natural" affinity with the rats from the start. It was a "strange," rather than a "natural," kinship. High had to go out of her way to identify with the rats to overcome her disgust of their texture, their smell, and the sounds they made; later, she wrote that even the memory of them still "creeps her out." The artist was mindful that these were animals that she as a human could identify with because of their transgenic constitution with human genetic material: "They are extensions, transformers, transitional combined beings that resonate with me in ways that other animals cannot because of that small addition of human DNA."⁹ Keenly aware of the dangers of anthropocentrism, High was also particular about distinguishing between her pets and the transgenic rats: "I . . . know they do not know how to behave as pets. They are not pets."¹⁰ She acknowledged that the rats could not easily be domesticated into the economies of her home because they were not even familiar with the conventions of such behaviors; they "do not know how to behave as pets." These rats were always already aberrant, unlike her pets at home.

In her work with the rats, High framed her artistic intention with reference to the larger question of the "human-animal encounter." The artist had used animals in some of her earlier artworks, mostly working with her own cats and dogs and even sometimes involving animal communication/telepathy specialists. High's work with these rats represented a significant departure from her previous works. In her earlier works with/on animals, she had investigated the anthropomorphic projections of human fantasies and anxieties (*Animal Attraction*, 2000) and had created a series of video works in which she "collaborated" with animals

on specific situations embodying the human–animal encounter (*Animal Films*, 2002–3). In *Embracing Animal*, she made the act of living with the laboratory rats the focus of the work; the media and material outcomes that resulted from these encounters were secondary aspects of the project.

High's work began with her genuine desire to rescue "laboratory animals" by hosting them in her house instead (hosting here includes sheltering, caring for, playing with, and feeding). She conceived of her home as a refuge for these creatures, a space away from the trauma of experimentation. The artist tried to be prepared to be attentive to their smallest needs, whatever they might be. She did not want to impose the already fixed rules of the household on the rats; rather, she approached their arrival as a collaboration: "We will be a closed system, the rats and I, reading and reacting to each other, defining our conditions. We will collaborate and make up our own rules."¹¹ When asked to clarify the nature/substance of this "collaboration," High responded: "They [the rats] act; they wanted a lot of attention; they became very friendly and demanding; they would want to play; not eat certain foods; on my end, collaboration was awareness and observation; I do believe in animal telecommunication, there is a kind of communication going in-between; mindfulness in every moment; like in a love relationship; it is not verbal."¹²

The artist seemed simultaneously fascinated with the rats because they were like her (with regard to their gene mutation) and aware of how they differed from her and from her pet family (as pests, parasites); she also saw them as a third kind, between the living and the artificial—animal cyborgs, human-made transformers, born of a draconian experimental procedure (only 2–3 percent of transgenic pregnancies are successful). They were her strange "kin," her "companions," her guests of a new kind, neither pets nor pests. In addition to reckoning with this "strange kinship" with the rats, initially inspired by ideas of identification with them because they suffered in ways similar to her own suffering, High seemed methodologically and philosophically committed to ensuring that her project would be largely for the benefit of the individual rats.

The Claim to a Strange Kinship

High's work enables me to ask whether it makes sense to apply human terms of hospitality to animals. What does it mean, exactly, to include animals in—or exclude them from—our ideas of hospitality? High's work demonstrates how our



FIGURE 4.2. Holding the rat. Kathy High, *Embracing Animal*, 2004/2006. Courtesy of the artist.

individual and cultural answers to this question are built into the definitions of human and nonhuman beings. These are the definitions that frame human and animal relationships. In the biological sciences, humans are defined as animals (“heterotrophic, motile, having specialized sensory organs, lacking cell wall, and growing from a blastula during embryonic development”).¹³ But, unlike humans, nonhuman animals are used for food in most human societies. Animals, like the transgenic rats that High rescued, are also used for scientific and medical research. At the same time, humans share this planet with animals and often find themselves, whether they want to or not, having a kinship with animals, as explored by Donna Haraway.

Jacques Derrida has framed the question of human–animal relations as one of unconditional welcome:

Let us say yes to who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female.¹⁴

Here, Derrida wants us to say “yes” to any animal who “turns up.” This passage has become an important point of departure for those who celebrate “hosting the animal.” Thus, David Clark claims that “radical possibilities . . . can be opened up when the reach of the ethical question *who is my neighbor?* is widened to include nonhuman acquaintances.”¹⁵ Many authors agree with him, that we need to expand the ethics of hospitality to the animal as an extension and extrapolation of Levinas’s and Derrida’s concepts of “excessive” responsibility and “radical” hospitality to the other. What does such hospitality mean, especially in practice? Perhaps High’s *Embracing Animal* project is one answer.

Two interpretations of Derrida’s works on hospitality and the animal are instructive here. In his thought-provoking book *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida*, Leonard Lawlor proposes that we must receive animals unconditionally, even if they remain the “food” of hospitality, both divine and secular. Lawlor argues, after Derrida, that “it is necessary that sacrifice itself be sacrificed. Instead of the substitution that defines sacrifice, there must be a kind of saving by means of replacement or even by means of misplacement. In the space that there is (which is neither the world of forms nor the sensible world), we must receive the animals.”¹⁶ Oscillating between hospitality

as “not capturing” (the least that we can ask for in acts of hosting the animal) and hospitality as “giving the animal all of one’s home and oneself” (the most that we can ask for), Lawlor calls for a “receptivity” to animals today as a radical departure from the current practice of capturing animals for food, clothing, experimentation, entertainment, and other forms of appropriation.

For Kelly Oliver, Derrida’s concept of hospitality as transposed to animals requires an inquiry into what constitutes “animal ethics.” Oliver argues that we must be able to think of animal ethics through a notion of animal kinship, where the focus is not on what makes animals different from or the same as humans. After all, she stresses, animals and humans are different and not different at the same time. What interests Oliver is the “relationship between the human and the animal, humans and animals.”¹⁷ In her strategic articulation of humans and animals in the plural, she seeks to multiply differences and make it impossible for these universal categories to stand in opposition to each other in their singularity. Oliver calls for an ethics of “relationality and responsivity” based on an emerging awareness of the interdependence between animals and humans: “Once we recognize that kinship is an impossible ideal, and a violent bloody ideal at that, we may be open to the possibility of ‘strange kinship’ based not on blood or generation but on a shared embodiment and the gestures of love and friendship among living creatures made possible by bodies coexisting in a world on which we all depend.”¹⁸

Oliver sees the recognition of this “strange kinship” with animals as the basis for questioning the “purity” of our conventional ethics toward the animal, enabling us to redefine it not as a question of pure intention but, rather, as a call for unconditional hospitality—a notion related to Derrida’s own call for “unconditional hospitality,” of saying yes even before we know who or what might arrive. Oliver calls for “sustainable ethics,” in which unconditional sharing and generosity are central in our response to the “environmental urgency” of our times.¹⁹ But how can one say yes unconditionally in hospitality to the animal without anthropomorphizing or simply restricting the animal to the anthropological dimensions of human welcome?

Among humans, hospitality is already fraught. Fears and anxieties often highlight the unequal distribution of power and resources, which many of the artworks discussed in this book underscore and problematize. Inequalities in power and resources between humans and animals make the human desire to host animals even more suspect. Derrida himself warns against the seemingly

“logical” inclusion of animals in human hospitality relations. His warning issues from the recognition that when animals are welcomed, this welcome takes place not only on human terms but also on what we consider to be human property (be it a house, farm, nature reserve, or country), with grave consequences for animals. It cannot be otherwise because the definition of hospitality is based on the question of “place (house, hotel, hospital, hospice, family, city, nation, language, etc.)” and its *oikonomia*, “the law of the household.”²⁰ To offer unconditional hospitality is to “give the new arrival all of one’s home and oneself, to give him or her one’s own, our own, without asking a name, a compensation, or the fulfillment of even the smallest condition.”²¹ However, the challenge is in identifying who decides what is “one’s own” and “our own.” Derrida’s intention here is to underline clearly the inherent connection between the very definition of hospitality and the question of right and, therefore, of duty and responsibility. Who has the right and the duty to give? It is especially critical here to note that the “who” is a (human) subject. Derrida notes:

It is a human right, this right to hospitality and for us it already broaches an important question, that of the anthropological dimension of hospitality or the right to hospitality: what can be said of, indeed can one speak of, hospitality toward the non-human, the divine, for example, or the animal or vegetable; does one owe hospitality, and is that the right word when it is a question of welcoming—or being made welcome by—the other or the stranger [*l’étranger*] as god, animal or plant, to use those conventional categories?²²

In considering the question of hosting the animal, Derrida points to the need to reevaluate the very notion of hosting in its “anthropological dimension” in order to accommodate an otherness that is nonhuman. Can we imagine a less anthropomorphic and anthropological concept of hospitality? If so, how? Derrida does not offer an answer—he only points to the question and the need to consider such questions.

Displaying Animals

My answer to the question of whether we, as humans, can imagine such a concept of hospitality—one that is not from our own (human) perspective only—is *it depends*. It depends on our ability as humans to reorient our ideas about hospitality to include the animal, and on what we are ready to do for the sake of the

animal, including, potentially, letting go of our own lifestyles, habits, tastes—even homes, lands, and property. For me, High’s project provides a positive answer to this question. High rescued the rats from a damaging environment to lessen their suffering and provide them with a good life. She rejected the option of releasing them into the “natural environment” because they were already sick and did not know how to survive on their own; they would have died quickly. High’s work provided a better life for the rats than they would have had in a biomedical facility’s small cages. High acknowledges that her work came about as a result of the rats’ maltreatment as laboratory animals, rather than from a desire on her part to create a happy situation of hospitality between humans and animals.

For others, the choice of using animals for, as, and in “art” is suspect by itself, even when the use is ostensibly for educational, critical, or other “better” purposes that seek to lessen animal suffering. In 2014, after I shared an article about High’s work with a prominent art critic in the world of bioart, he expressed to me his unease with High’s acceptance of the invitation to exhibit the rats at a gallery. From his point of view, presenting animals at an exhibition was worse than hosting them at home, because an exhibition space showcases artists in their professional capacity, which benefits their careers. His logic seemed to be that the animals were being exploited for the professional career of an artist and the entertainment of the artist’s audience, which was similar to how whales had been exploited at SeaWorld. This awareness of the dangers of exploitation is why I was uncomfortable in the Gardner Museum when I became aware that the only reason the bird was in *The Living Room* was to sing for me and other humans visiting the installation. I did not want to be hosted at the expense of another living being, another creature who was put in a cage.

This critic is not alone in being suspicious about displaying animals in art. High herself was not sure whether to say yes to the curator who wanted to show the rats as part of his exhibition. I share the more general concern regarding artists’ use of animals and other living beings (for me, plants are included in this group for reasons explained below, related to Jain principles) for the sole purpose of making a statement about the human condition or some other grand point about humans’ relations with other, nonhuman living beings. I have seen enough frightened or dead animals and dying plants at various exhibitions of bioart to become suspicious about the artists’ claims to sustainability and human–animal companionship and kinship of the sort that Haraway, Derrida,

Oliver, and Lawlor describe. Why should animals suffer for the human desire to be more ethical?

I did not share this particular critic's concern, however, which he expressed mostly in relation to the exhibition of the rats at MASS MoCA. To understand why I did not, I considered what was different about High's use of the rats at the exhibition compared to other times when I had seen exhibited animals. The answer came to me when I realized that learning for many years about High's work, especially its elements of hospitality, had tuned me in to the rats' point of view. High spent hours with me during my visits to her studio and in interviews describing the rats' behaviors, their likes and dislikes, what kinds of touch they preferred, how they liked to play with her, what kinds of environments (cage, air temperature) they preferred. High observed the rats' reactions and health and employed others to assist in their care, such as a veterinarian and exhibition staff.

Over the course of our conversations, the rat's point of view shifted to become the main point of view. And from that perspective, the concept of a "gallery" did not make much sense. It did not have the connotations of "elitism" and "exploitation" in terms of spectatorship (of people coming to watch animals as in a zoo) that it had for the art historian and critic who raised the issue, and as it also had for High when she initially questioned whether to exhibit the rats outside her home environment. When I imagined life from the perspective of a rat, the difference between the gallery and High's home meant something else, and it was clear that the rat's perspective was different from that of an art historian. For a rat, it was more important to have an environment that was as good as or even better than the environment the home provided. I must also emphasize that this discussion happened among we humans. *We* were the ones who seemed to be concerned with the gallery/home separation—the issue may not have mattered to the rat at all.

From a rat's or a bird's point of view, having a "better deal"—in terms of shelter, food, and social interaction, whether with one's own kind or humans—might be a good reason for being present at an exhibition. Is this an ideal place? No. But is it a bad place to be, if the gallery provides a better environment than home could? Another no. Let me be clear: we humans, not the animals, are the ones who fight over and debate all these ideas. High's rats are long gone, but with her work the artist reoriented me, one of her audience members, to the sick transgenic rat's point of view. In the following brief section, I, as a human

being, attempt to represent what I imagine one of High's rats was thinking and feeling throughout the *Embracing Animal* project. I base my imagining of these thoughts and feelings on High's documentation of her work in videos and photographs, my interviews with the artist, High's own writings on the topic of her hosting the rats, and my observations at one of High's exhibitions of this project.

The thoughts and feelings expressed below are my own. Though my writing here from a rat's point of view might seem to be tongue-in-cheek, it is not my intention to be funny. I consider this imaginative exercise to be another way in which my writing might expand the impact of High's *Embracing Animal* project. Whatever it is worth, I hope that this "diary" will serve as a modest tribute to High's gesture and desire to host individual, concrete animals in her life, to an extent that most of us—myself included—have not considered before this work, and that brought me to read Jain writings about nonviolence to all living beings and thus engage with them more systematically. I make assumptions here about how rats perceive the world and what is happening around them; hence, what follows is an argument about High's work. It reflects the lessons I have learned from the artist, one of which led me to consider that imagining how the rats felt at each moment of the human–animal encounter was helpful to High and could be helpful to me, and to my readers as well, as a way to experience her work more fully.

A Diary of Flower

I am a rat. My name is Flower. I was born in a science laboratory. I was genetically modified with human DNA to develop an autoimmune disease so that humans could test their new drugs on me. One day I was taken out of my cage—what scientists call "the animal station unit"—and placed in another cage, together with a second rat, later named Echo, who is now my friend. We were taken outside the building for the first time in my life. The air was cold, and the world was much larger than I ever imagined it. (The small laboratory was all I had known until then.)

I don't remember much about being transported. Stress was part of my everyday life. Stress makes autoimmune diseases worse, so I ended up shivering the whole time. I also threw up. I wonder how much a lab rat's stress affects the drug testing results. But who would think of that? Being alone in a cage increases my stress further because we rats are very social animals (as scientists often say to each

other). I just wanted to rest. I was so stressed and felt sick; my skin was itching and my eyes were burning.

When we arrived at our destination, a human opened the door and introduced herself to the person who carried me in the cage—the human’s name was Kathy High. She immediately turned her attention to me and my rat companion. She looked directly into our eyes and whispered “Hello . . .” Compared to other humans I have encountered, she looked less sure about herself; her gestures were muted, and she held her body back as if she did not know how to lift the cage. She was not wearing a white laboratory gown, which relaxed me for some reason.

I immediately noticed there were other nonhumans in her space. Later I learned these were her dogs and cats. They were curious. Their noises got my fellow traveler and me really scared and stressed out again.

After observing us for a few days, High named us. When humans include animals in their lives, especially when they welcome us into their homes, they give us names. Giving names to animals makes them feel good because they give names to each other, and hence, this elevates us to their level of uniqueness and identity. This is how I became Flower and my cage companion became Echo.

High then moved us out of our temporary small plastic cage into a larger cage that she called the “penthouse.” It was much bigger than what we were used to (I later learned that in human terms it was 2 feet by 4 feet), just for two of us. Inside the cage I found the best food I had ever had, all kinds of treats like cabbage and sweets. We were there for a long time without being subjected to any testing. No white coats, no drugs, a large cage—what kind of experiment was this? I felt like I was in heaven.

I quickly figured out that High’s dogs and cats were not there as part of any experiment, and High did not allow them to disturb us very much. That calmed me down even more.

The second day, High started talking to me and Echo in a strange, calm voice. I also noticed she could barely glance at us, as if she were disgusted with how we looked. Then why was she trying? I didn’t understand what was happening, but I really appreciated her effort as she tried to look at us without getting nauseated. Unlike the scientists back at the lab, High did not have the habitual skill of “handling” us deftly. She was hesitant in her gestures. This was totally new to me. I felt taken care of rather than “studied” like a lab rat, and I was not sure how to react. I suspected that this, too, was some kind of experiment, but without my lab

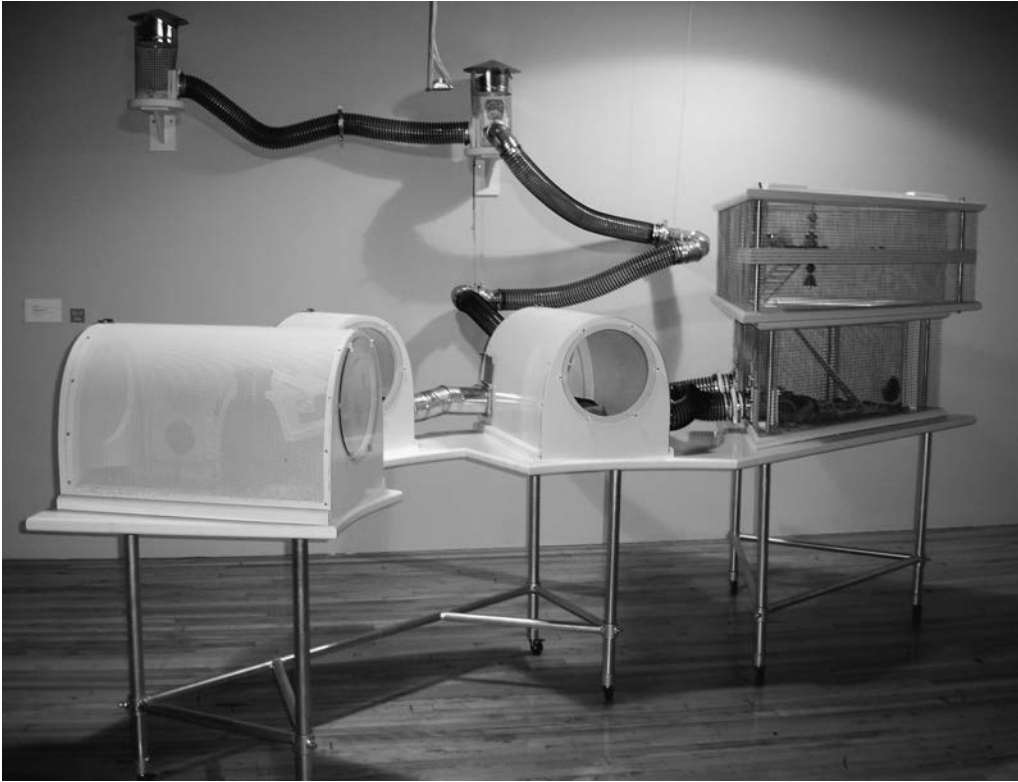


FIGURE 4.3. The “penthouse.” Kathy High, *Embracing Animal*, 2004/2006. Rat housing designed by Kathy High and built by the fabrication team at MASS MoCA; tube scopes construction design by Jack Naughton/Fab Inc. Transgenic rats provided by Taconic.

routine I felt anxious. I trembled and refused to eat or drink for two days, although the food looked fresh and there was plenty of it.

One day the cage door opened and High stuck her hand in, drawing it near to me. Was this the end? I thought. This was how it usually ended: a human hand reaches out to you, into your small space. I had seen it happen many times at my old lab. But this time, for whatever reason, the human just carefully touched my tail. I moved it away, but the feeling of touch was pleasant, and after a few seconds I let her slowly move her fingers along my tail. Wow. So pleasant.

Those who know what kind of treatment rats like will sometimes massage our



FIGURE 4.4. Touching and playing with the rats. Kathy High, *Embracing Animal*, 2004/2006. Courtesy of the artist.

tails and bodies. After that first time, High massaged our bodies constantly. She also employed a veterinarian to learn our preferences, our likes and dislikes. Usually, the care we animals receive is just enough so that we can serve the humans in whatever way they want us to serve: as pets, as food, as guardians, as hunting “game.”

I finally learned what was going on when I overheard High talking about us on the phone. She said she was hosting us at her home to provide us with a refuge from the lab at the end of our lives. She felt she needed to do this because she has an autoimmune problem similar to the one we have. Science is all we learned about in the lab, and I am familiar with “science-speak.” I understood our genetic research identification, “model HLA-B27.” I am the model HLA-B27, and my creation at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center was funded by Harold Simmons, who himself suffered from ankylosing spondylitis, or AS, a

form of arthritis. I find it perplexing that one human with an autoimmune disease enabled my sickness and suffering to help himself, while another human with an autoimmune disease, who potentially benefited from Simmons's original investment with new drugs, spent several months of her life massaging my tail. Does it mean the times are changing and more humans will welcome us in order to heal from previous injuries inflicted by other humans?

I did not question why humans used us rodents in their research, because I already knew from scientists' conversations in the experimental lab that we are excluded, together with birds, from the Animal Welfare Act. This allows American researchers using rodents to bypass regulations governing the use of other animals for scientific research; because of this, we are much cheaper and easier to use than other animals, and we now constitute 95 percent of all laboratory animals used for experimentation. Until recently, no one seemed to care about us, but that has been changing (slowly) because of the work of animal rights activists with organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, or PETA, as well as the advocacy of some scientists who argue against the need for animal testing.

After some time at High's home, I came to the conclusion that even if Echo and I were going to die a violent death (is there another kind, in a lab or in a cage?), it would be okay for us to enjoy ourselves and not think about it for now. Our new owner provided each of us with our own little house inside our large cage, a custom-built tunnel that humans think we enjoy (it's good for hiding from them, for sure, to have some privacy), and many toys, such as balls of dry paper.

I like the sound and feel of dry paper, and I crawled all over the paper balls just to make that sound. The best times were when High played with us, tossing those paper balls and then letting us move them around, enjoying the sounds and touch. She certainly spent time with us, entertaining us, making us feel welcomed.

After a while Echo and I stopped guessing why High was doing all of this for us. Life was good. I ate much better. I put on weight. My sleep improved. When we had constant eye infections from the human disease gene, High called our veterinarian and he administered medicine to our eyes—the same medicine that was tested on our sisters and brothers in the lab, but now it made my eyes feel better. I also overheard High on the phone informing her friends that the massages she gave us were to relax us. Remember, stress makes our immune systems falter, and then everything hurts more. She was doing something to address this.

When High traveled out of town she worried we might be lonely, so she paid people to come and play with us. At the same time, as she told her friends on

the phone, it was important to her to distinguish between us, the rats, and her pets. I always felt like we were more guests for her, while her pets were her family. Sometimes we could see that High did not feel well. I wished I could help her.

Hosting Matilda, Tara, and Star on Jain Terms

The imagined monologue above demonstrates High's hospitality as an example of the strange kinship that has grown out of the sad maltreatment of animals for the sake of humans. More people had the opportunity to reflect on the rats' situation and High's care of them and formulate their own responses to her work when High exhibited the rats as part of an important show at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, *Becoming Animal*. Nato Thompson, the exhibition's curator, approached High with a proposal to exhibit a new group of rats. Thompson's idea was to bring together twelve artists to "explore the closing gap between human and animal existence."²³ The exhibition opened on May 29, 2005.

The title of the exhibition, *Becoming Animal*, and the name that High subsequently adopted for her art project, *Embracing Animal*, refer to and evoke the title of the section "Becoming Animal" in Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. In this book, Guattari and Deleuze use "becoming" to refer to the symbolic enacting of a position by those who are marginalized in a society, with two of their most famous examples being "becoming animal" and "becoming woman." Thompson's exhibition questioned this abstract, philosophical becoming by raising questions about concrete animals and concrete humans: those affected by mad cow disease (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) and those affected by technology, as in the model HLA-B27 that High exhibited.

After grappling with her doubts about the exploitation of animals for the sake of art, which were similar to those expressed by the critic mentioned above, High purchased three new rats and made new videos and an installation for the exhibition. Collectively, this project and the first project High did with rats in Boston are part of the same multiyear project known as *Embracing Animal*.

High and the three new rats (Matilda, Tara, and Star) benefited greatly from High's previous experience with Flower and Echo. From the very beginning, High indicated that her decision to exhibit the rats in the MASS MoCA show would depend on whether the rats' needs would be met—this outweighed any consideration of her needs as a professional artist. Because the lungs of trans-

genic rats are already damaged by inflammation at birth, these animals need very clean air to thrive—air that is cleaner than what one would normally find in a building used for public art exhibitions. The air quality in the museum's gallery was tested, and it was found to be not clean enough to keep the rats well. High requested the installation of a new ventilation system that could meet the rats' needs, and the museum complied; the new system was paid for by exhibition funds.

Next, the rats' house inside the gallery needed to be large enough, with both individual and communal spaces where the rats could rest from human contact, if they chose. In response to this request from High, the gallery oversaw the construction of what the artist has called another penthouse, a space "with various environments: providing places to climb, to hide, to be invisible and unthreatened by the public; lots of 'enrichment'; designed to be easily maintained; also designed to quarantine any rat who became sick from the others."²⁴

Being social animals, Matilda, Tara, and Star often came out of the depths of their house's private areas to play with the audience members and the curatorial staff who cared for them during the ten months of the exhibition. High has noted that the gallery's night watchman, Mike Wilber, developed an especially "close bond with the rats."²⁵

With her decision to invite other humans into her circle of "rat welcome" by exhibiting the rats, High not only enabled the rats to be better welcomed and better taken care of but also allowed more humans to learn how to host rats by redistributing their care. The rats were less alone than they had been in her house and did not have her dogs and cats disturbing them. The museum gallery was, arguably, a better space than High's home for welcoming these sick transgenic animals: they had better air, more people to care for them, and less disturbance from other animals.

High admits that she was at first "terrified" of her rat houseguests because they were "ugly vermin." Transgenic rats are usually "nude," or hairless, so they look even uglier than ordinary street rats or pet rats when judged by the usual standards of beauty and hierarchies of cuteness. How many "cute rat" videos go viral on the Internet, compared to videos of dogs, cats, and even sloths? Would it be an exaggeration to assert that more people care about the suffering of the captive whales depicted in *Blackfish* than about the suffering of laboratory rats like Matilda, Tara, and Star? High's work encouraged audiences to view these sick, "ugly" rodents differently by showing them being hosted in a space for rats

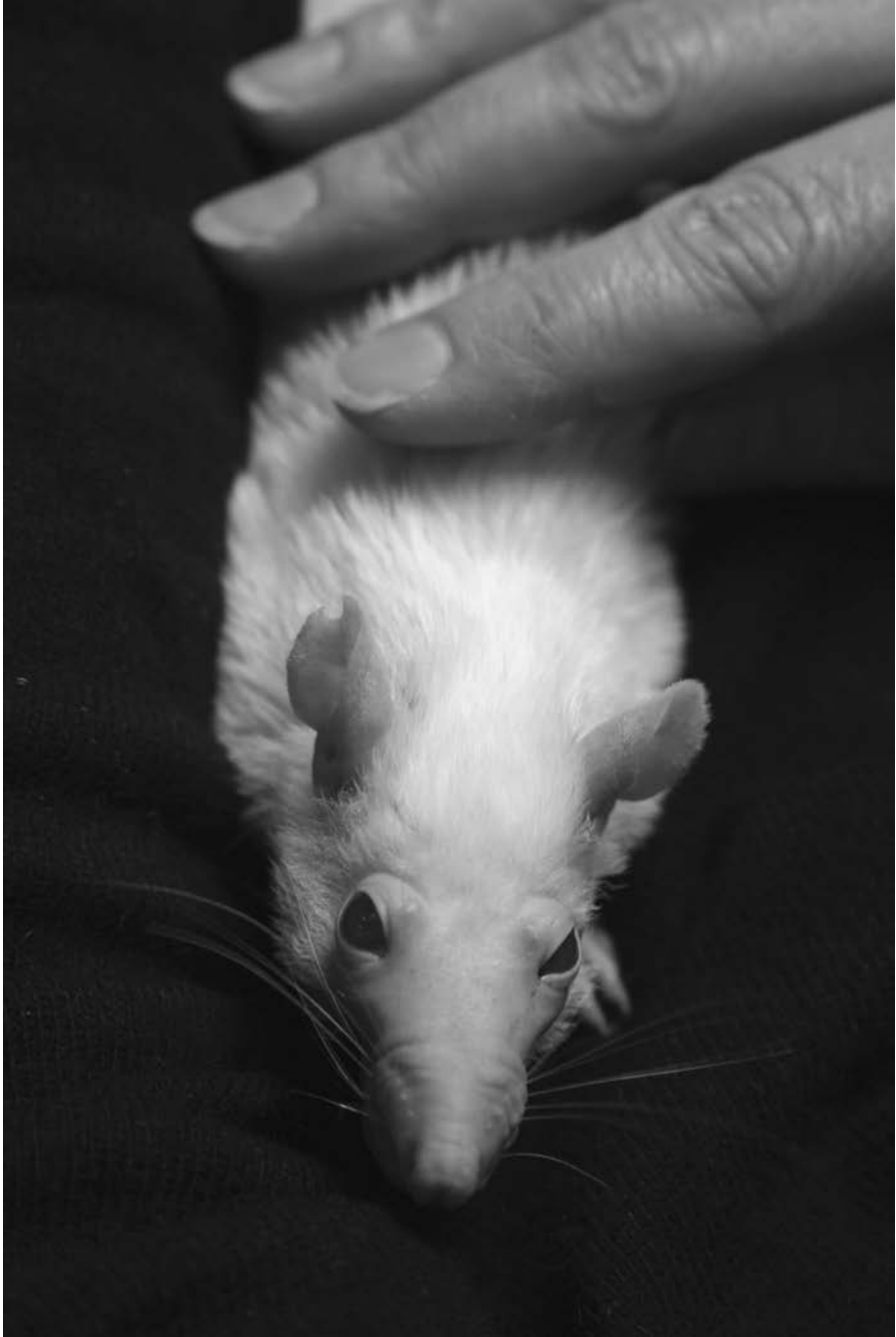


FIGURE 4.5. Caressing a transgenic rat. Kathy High, *Embracing Animal*, 2004/2006. Courtesy of the artist.

similar to what Lee Mingwei envisioned for people in his *Living Room* project: a comfortable and welcoming space, above and beyond basic.

In the remainder of this chapter I explore the suggestion that hospitality should be extended to all animals, whether they are pets or raised for meat, whether we feel an affinity with them or not. I examine what certain ecologically friendly ideas mean in practice, such as the notion that all nonhuman living beings are either our guests on this earth or hosts who welcome us as part of “nature,” the ecosystem in which we are embedded.

The work High did with rats for her *Embracing Animal* project—hosting the rats for months and changing human lives for the sake of the rats’ needs as guests—might make very little sense or even feel odd and repulsive as a form of “art.” To better understand why High did what she did, I turned to the ancient tradition known as Jainism.

High believes in offering hospitality to all kinds of animals, a philosophy similar to the Jains’ belief in nonharm to all living beings. Growing up, I heard the expression “They won’t kill a fly,” but I did not know that “they” referred to Jains. Jainism, like Buddhism, arose from ascetic movements in ancient India, and it shares with Buddhism the principle of life without harm, Ahimsa. Jainism goes further than many other traditions and cultures in extending this principle and its corresponding practices of nonharm to all living beings, not just humans.

For Jains, going out of one’s way to heal or care for injured animals is a rather normal occurrence, a practice of everyday life. Jains started the first animal shelters in India. Rather than pitting humans and animals against each other and arguing about which has more value (if humans have more value, then hospitality to them would be more urgent than hospitality to animals), Jains propose that extending the practice of carefulness to animals logically fulfills a principle of compassion and striving toward a life without harm to any living beings. What is carefulness for Jains? According to Jain ethics, every time one embarks on any action, such as moving around one’s environment or choosing one’s profession, one needs to be as careful as possible, so as not to harm other living beings. Thus, “a monk who forms no resolutions and is possessed of carefulness, should wander about, giving no offence to any creature.” A person should strive to give offense “to no living beings, whether they move or not, whether above or below or on earth, by putting a strain upon them by his hands or feet.”²⁶

Humans “made” Echo, Tara, Star, Matilda, and Flower fully dependent on

human care, and High in her welcome acknowledged that creation by assuming responsibility for their care, not for her own sake, but for theirs. Jains support such “lessening of harm” to animals, but Jain ethics suggest another possibility of what a human welcome to animals could be as a general principle: leaving animals alone. Leaving animals alone and not interfering in their lives takes the human factor, with its potential for harm, out of the picture. This is the first principle that explains why Jains, especially Jain monks, try to avoid encountering animals as much as possible, such as by not traveling after dark (to avoid hitting them on the road, for example) and by covering their mouths when walking outside (so as not to accidentally ingest any flying insects). The second principle entails the lessening of harm done to animals by other humans, such as by caring for injured animals in shelters or at home, or buying animals’ freedom from butchers and zoos. High’s actions in her art project abided by this principle.

The third principle for Jains (I am simplifying here for brevity) is not to have desiring thoughts about animals, for example, wanting to be with them, because that kind of “love” for them more often than not leads to their confinement in cages or to other forms of human capture and enclosure. That is why Jains do not have pets or farm animals. Domesticated animals, pets or not, serve many purposes for humans. Freeing animals from domestication includes freeing human minds from rationalizing why domestication is good for animals (for example, through the notion of “companion species”). Leave animals alone in your mind, too, say Jains. Attachment to them leads to their suffering.

High’s decision not to make the rats a part of her “family,” like her pets, seems to me to be one such strategy of nonattachment. For almost two years High took care of the rats, hosting them at home and then in the gallery, without capturing them in her mind as “hers.” High’s work led me to discoveries of Jain thinking, as I see many affinities between the two. Reference to Jain principles is still very novel in bioart discussions and contemporary debates regarding animals (Derrida, Haraway, Lawlor, and Oliver do not mention Jainism, for example); that is why I believe comparing High’s work with these principles can be fruitful.

Unlike scholars and artists involved in philosophical and creative explorations of “becoming animal,” animal rights activists have advocated for Jain principles of nonharm to animals for a long time. For them, Ahimsa is not a rare idea; rather, it is one of their founding principles. At the exhibition *Becoming Animal*, animal rights organizations were represented by People for the Ethical

Treatment of Animals, which initially protested against High's project. But several weeks after the exhibition opened, when PETA representatives had taken the time to learn more about the project and how the rats were taken care of, they agreed that the conditions of the three rats at MASS MoCA were excellent. Exhibition leaders and MASS MoCA enabled this rare conversation between bioartists and PETA. A continuation of this novel dialogue in the bioart community would be encouraged by greater attention to Jain thought.²⁷

At the end of the exhibition, which lasted ten months, the rats were adopted by curatorial staff, who took them home and cared for them until they died, cradled in soothing human hands. Ten months is a long time in transgenic rat years. In laboratories, these animals are usually killed during experiments so that their tissue samples can be examined and documented. The fact that High's rats lived longer lives with less suffering supports my argument of a connection to the Jain principle of lessening harm to animals in those situations when "leaving them alone" is a more damaging option—for them. This is not some kind of exotic choice. During conversations with many biomedical scientists, I encountered at least one who left the field altogether because she decided she did not want to kill rats anymore at the end of each experiment.²⁸ Is this an excessive response? New developments in bioethical approaches indicate that it is not. For example, in 2008 Switzerland's Federal Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology released a report suggesting that plants should be treated with dignity in scientific experimentation and not simply exploited for human needs.²⁹ One could say that this movement still acts based on human principles and not for the sake of plants or animals; thus, it is "tainted" by human interest. From my point of view, these arguments go back to Kester's notion of theoretical purism, discussed in the Introduction. Finding a strategy for ending experimentation on plants and animals has become an ongoing goal of a number of important biomedical research centers; these efforts go beyond theoretical arguments for and against.

High's work led me to a serious consideration of the Jain ideas that withdrawal from nonhuman living beings is the best way for humans to "host" such beings, and the second best is to help those who have already been injured by humans. In that respect, an ideal of hosting would be "letting go," weaning humans off their reliance on other living beings for food and attachment. Humans do not need to capture and study animals to "know" what they want. As

feminist scholar Catharine MacKinnon states, we in fact know what animals want from us: “to be let alone.”³⁰ This knowledge is not based on enacting and sustaining relations with animals, but rather on a foundational commitment to equality of all living beings, so that one does not produce a “veritable hierarchy of life.” MacKinnon’s position on animals, in its feminist questioning, allies well with the Jain notion of animals being of a living soul, or *jiva*: “But fundamentally: Why is just existing alive not enough? . . . Men as such never had to hurt or to suffer to have their existence validated and harms to them be seen as real. It is because they are seen as valid and real to begin with that their suffering registers and they have rights against its harm.”³¹

I came to *The Living Room* in the Gardner Museum after I had been transformed by High’s work, which had led me to read more about the Jain philosophy of nonharm toward all living beings.³² Getting to the rat’s point of view is not easy. It means developing a sensibility beyond the usual sense of what is a “normal” human welcome of an animal. High continued to consider how she could, as an artist, evoke such sensibility in her audience. The results were extreme close-ups of the rats, as if High wanted to enable viewers to experience what she felt when touching them, feeding them, massaging their tails, playing with them; all these multiple gestures of building intimacy were represented (see Plate 5). Is it possible to know how this felt for Flower? No. Could the resulting images be seen as invasive? Yes. But High did not give up imagining how to express her hosting. Her active imagining of the rat’s point of view and artistic intention to form a strange kinship with the rats had the main purpose of lessening the harm done to them. I end this chapter with a few more words from Flower, imagining her looking down on us from a rat’s paradise. In the same spirit as in the earlier monologue, I do not pretend to know what the rat was thinking. My writing is purposefully fictional. This is a modest attempt to follow High’s artwork and to expand human welcoming sensibility.

Flower’s Final Comments

In conclusion, I want to say that as a rat, I could not believe that a human being took such good care of me, took me into her house, and asked for nothing from me in return. I forgot to be terrified of human bodies, their hands reaching out to me in the cage. Would I want this life if I had a choice? Compared to being free, no. Compared to being in the lab, yes.



FIGURE 4.6. Kathy High, *HLA-B27*, 2008. This photographic series presents intimate, close-up images of the transgenic rats that participated in the two iterations of *Embracing Animal*. Courtesy of the artist.

Do I remember my own death? Certainly, I do. Kathy was there. She held me in her hands, and tears were slowly flowing down her cheeks. Who would guess it was the same Kathy who was initially disgusted with me? Look at her now—she was embracing me. She said, “Goodbye, Flower, sleep and do not worry about anything.” I was two hundred years old in transgenic lab rat years. My death was as good as it could be for a lab rat. Goodbye, Kathy.

Five

WELCOME WITHDRAWN Mithu Sen

Hospitality situations can go wrong in many ways, given the unpredictability of human nature and the many variables involved, such as level of commitment and availability of resources. No matter how hard a prospective host prepares, the process of welcome remains open-ended, full of promise and hope but also fear and anxiety. As I noted in the Introduction, this anxiety leads many people to ponder whether to host at all. In addition, existing inequalities feed into and are fed by the unequal treatment of various groups in hospitality traditions and customs. So far, the artists I have discussed in this book have overcome their fears and anxieties by creating artworks that find new forms to expand hospitality. Their artworks imagine and enact the promise of welcome to make hospitality traditions less discriminatory and hierarchical, as Kathy High did when she hosted transgenic rats in an attempt to cross the anthropocentric boundary of unconditional hospitality.

Mithu Sen, a contemporary Delhi-based artist, has devised a different strategy for engaging with the practice of what she calls “radical hospitality.” Sen puts herself in difficult, often unpredictable situations, as a host and a guest, both inside and outside the art world. She also creates difficult moments for participants in her artworks. What does this mean? In one of her more recent art projects, *I Have Only One Language; It Is Not Mine* (2014), developed for the Kochi-Muziris Biennale in Kerala, India, Sen spent several days in a girls’ orphanage as Mago, a fictional character who did not speak any of the languages the girls could understand: “Mago wanted to offer them an unusual form of experience in life with strangers, using non-language communication/performance.”¹

The artist brought along a camera and, together with the girls, shot footage that was later used to create a beautiful and moving video artwork. The filter used to edit the film makes half of it look like an animated painting; this also serves to protect the girls’ privacy by masking their faces.² The viewer can see how Sen’s hosts react to her, devising strategies to interact with their strange guest. The girls came to the screening of the video at a venue of the Biennale, and Sen has kept in touch with them since the exhibition. In this Sen is similar

to Lee Mingwei, who also stays in touch with many of his artwork participants, but unlike Lee, Sen does not smooth the edges of hospitality. On the contrary, she challenges her hosts and guests.

Frustration arises in hospitality situations that test trust, authenticity, and power dynamics between hosts and guests. In this project, Sen, already a stranger in the home she shared with the orphan girls, alienated herself further by taking on a fictional identity and withdrawing one platform of communication, a common language. While viewing the video, I kept wondering what that experience meant for the girls who were put in the situation of being Sen's hosts. In my communication with the artist, Sen welcomed my questions about her responsibility, both as an artist and as an adult. I was not the only one thinking about responsibility. Adults at the orphanage and curators at the Kochi exhibition also had their concerns. Their discussions and negotiations with the artist became integral parts of this work and Sen's process. For Sen, her stay at the orphanage provided the girls with a space of a different type of encounter. By withdrawing a common language, Sen created an opportunity for each individual "host" at the orphanage to attempt to connect with her outside the "normal" forms of communication. She was not there to interview the girls. She was there to be hosted. I present this withdrawal of a common language as just one example of Sen's art practice that provokes and reveals elements of power dynamics in the realities of welcome.

Although this chapter includes a brief discussion of several of Sen's projects, my primary focus is a work that I experienced personally and have researched extensively, the work that started Sen's exploration of "radical hospitality": *It's Good to Be Queen* (2006). From Sen's point of view, radical hospitality is not supposed to be an easygoing, effortless experience of welcome. And it is not just a matter of hard work and preparation. In the radical hospitality of Mithu Sen, the promise to welcome "anyone" who comes ashore (any stranger in need of welcome, similar to Derrida's call, as discussed in chapter 4) opens up vulnerabilities and power dynamics that are often unequal and unpredictable but rarely revealed or addressed. Sen welcomes these difficulties rather than shying away from them. In this chapter I describe how the artist deconstructs hospitality and then, with the help of her participants and collaborators, reconstructs it.

Over the past two decades, Sen's art projects have included drawings, installations, videos, residencies, objects, poetry, performances, and collaborations. One effect of her work, among others explored in this chapter, is the revelation

of how much hosts' and guests' perceptions of what takes place—how successful or limited hospitality is—depend on the level of trust, especially with regard to the authenticity of each other's intentions, within the larger context of questions of identity and power that trust in each other implies.

Location

Mithu Sen and I first met in New York in 2006, at a time when both of us were relatively new to our experience of being foreigners in the United States. From April 15 to June 16, Sen was an artist in residence at Bose Pacia Gallery in New York. As part of her residency, she stayed at what was at the time Bose Pacia's new Artist Space in Chelsea.³ Shumita and Arani Bose, two of the owners of Bose Pacia, invited Sen with the understanding that the apartment she was staying in for the residency would subsequently become the venue for her exhibition. The Boses also had an agreement with Sen that the owner of the apartment would use the place during those few days when Sen was not there. As an artist invited by a gallery, and as a guest in someone else's apartment, Sen was in a vulnerable position. (Keep in mind that this was happening before the advent of social networking sites like CouchSurfing and Airbnb, which have since mainstreamed the subletting of one's personal space to strangers.)

Sen and I met at a party shortly after her arrival in New York for her first two-month-long visit. I had arrived in the United States only a year before, so we had a lot of opinions to share about the differences between our cultural expectations of the United States and how we found it. At the time, I was writing a book on the philosophy of hospitality, and I was really excited to meet an artist whose practice resonated with my interest; hence, Sen and I discussed the welcome we had expected and the actual welcome that we had received.

We both found people in the United States generally very welcoming, but we also noted some peculiar customs. One of these that we discussed was the seemingly normal practice in the United States of inviting guests to one's home for a specific amount of time. For example, a month after arriving, I received a written invitation to a party at a colleague's house. It clearly stated that the party would begin at 4:00 p.m. and end at 6:00 p.m. Sen and I both thought this practice of telling guests when they would be expected to leave was unusual, especially for a party at someone's home and not at work. We did not immediately judge the practice itself as good or bad; rather, we both simply expressed

surprise—the idea was alien to us. (Now, in fact, this practice seems perfectly normal to me.) We imagined ourselves informing our guests that they are supposed to be gone by a specific time, and we were reminded of the Bengali film *Agantuk* (*The Stranger*, 1991), the last film of the famous Indian screenwriter and director Satyajit Ray.

In the film, a woman named Anila Bose finds herself, along with her husband and their son, dealing with a man who claims to be her wandering uncle (not unlike Odysseus). The “uncle” becomes a guest at the family’s house on this pretext and overstays his welcome. Over time, the son becomes friends with the guest and does not want him to leave. As mistress of the house, Anila feels ambivalent about asking the guest to go, but her husband worries that the man has nefarious motives. The film’s message—it is wrong to prompt a guest to leave—solidified common ground between Sen and me regarding our understanding of hospitality. We had been taught that it should be the guest, not the host, who makes the decision about when a visit ends.

After that initial meeting, Sen invited me to visit her at the Chelsea apartment, which I did in early May. The apartment was spotless, with white walls, white kitchen cabinets, and a soft cream-colored rug (see Plate 6). Sen prepared a cup of tea for me and served sweets. Her radiant smile and the excited, warm tone of her voice made it seem as if all she wanted to do that day was to meet me. I felt really special.

I asked her what her residency days looked like, and her daily diary provided a record: “I provoked and cocooned myself by different incidents and storms . . . I discovered each and every nook and corner in that flat with lots of stories . . . I watched the rain for hours from the window . . . I went for sushi and watered my ginger flower pot. . . .”⁴ During my visit Sen also told me about other visitors who had come to the apartment (the Artist Space), and her practice of taking Polaroid snapshots of them with her face close to theirs. Back in 2006, we did not call such pictures “selfies,” but that’s what they were. Sen played with her visitors, with their personal space, their comfort and discomfort:

The photographs in particular are an exploration of intimacy, as characterized by the tension between proximity and distance among us. One must choose, make an immediate decision when confronted with another person. How close? To hug or not? To touch or not?⁵

Sen asked me if I would be willing to have my picture taken with her, and I said yes. Notice how she asked here for “consent” to take a photograph. Her manner was playful and forthcoming. Though we had only just met, her face was close to mine, and she was hugging me to take the picture, prompting a feeling of awkwardness and intimacy at the same time. Hugging was not something I was used to, culturally or personally. I was still figuring out what I thought about it. (The current public discussion about the need to mind the personal space of others in public settings and ask for consent to enter that space if in doubt, prompted by accusations of intrusiveness and insensitivity, is important because it highlights various scenarios in which the “warmth” of a welcoming hug can transition into an intrusion, especially if the person initiating the hug has actual or perceived power over the person receiving it.)

When Sen took that intimate photograph of the two of us, I was also curious: *How would we look so close together?* If our foreignness in the United States provided us with common ground, our cultural and ethnic differences could offer another opportunity for exploration and wonder or create a distance impossible to bridge. What was the role of race and ethnicity in Sen’s hosting? Sen’s photograph revealed my whiteness as a matter of fact. To me, it felt like something that mattered and did not matter at the same time, depending on how each one of us was situated and what we wanted to do about it. So it seemed to me at the time, given Sen’s playful gesture. Since then, it has taken me many conversations with Sen and a great deal of reading of other scholars’ and critics’ writings on her artworks to continue approaching this question of Sen’s ability to create wonder in welcome not by reaching for commonalities but by accentuating and exploring differences.

One scholar who has written about Sen’s positionality is Sushmita Chatterjee, whose poignant and multilayered analysis of Sen’s use of her own face in her artworks is relevant here. Chatterjee approaches the question of race in Sen’s art by developing a larger theory of postcolonial feminism in her works. What is postcolonial feminism in this definition? Chatterjee defines it through humor as “a covert counter-colonial strategy”:

Humor acts as the bulwark against the limits of postcolonialism with its proclivity toward generalizations, and feminism in its move to represent “third-world women.” Thus, by desettling an easy answer, Sen as a “trickster” unmasks postcolonial feminism. Through a “changing of skins,” Sen asks: Who is the

“woman” of postcolonial feminism? Sen’s incomplete pictures of men, women, and animals draw our attention to assemblages of power, co-constitutions and different layerings of social constructions. Maybe through incompleteness and humor, Sen lays out an ethos for postcolonial feminism that prevents border-crossing from falling into the traps of neo-colonialism. Without claims to know or be the “whole” picture, Sen’s aesthetics nudge against ossifications. Rather, process-oriented becomings prevent a reiteration of the status quo where post-colonial feminism would keep repeating the rhythms of colonization.⁶

Within this understanding of postcolonial feminism, Sen’s art is political in its uses of her face, mostly in photographic form, manipulated through drawing or, as she did in the Polaroid photograph with me, by reaching out to other faces and skins. This enables Sen to create a strategy toward “an active mode of self-making.” In doing so, she subverts “frames that declare fair (or white) skin the epitome of beauty in India.” And, I would add, elsewhere, as I agree with Chatterjee that even if neocolonialism wins, it is now much more self-aware as neocolonialism. Chatterjee argues that “as a ‘woman of color’ creating art, Sen faces herself through her art,” affirming the specificity of her face as not fixed as either, or only, Indian or woman.⁷ Chatterjee’s analysis deepens my understanding of what the effect was of that moment when I saw the photograph of me and Sen together. My skin color, not hers, was accentuated, bracketed, and marked. Immediately, when Sen gave me the photograph to look at, I had to decide on the spot what kind of “white” I am: From which period in history? Which side of the present? I was just one guest, in one photograph. When a photograph album containing Sen’s images with many other guests became a part of the final exhibition, it in effect created many Mithu Sens, all in the process of “self-making.” Through hospitality, such “process-oriented becomings” constitute a strategy that seeks enjoyment and thriving, even under the duress of history.

Sen also showed me a small photograph of Shah Rukh Khan, a Bollywood star, whom she told me she loved, and a few little dolls that she called, metaphorically, “her son and daughters.” Along with pink roses and family portraits, they had all traveled with her from Delhi. She had also brought in objects she had found outside the apartment, mementos from street vendors she encountered nearby in Chelsea. When I left the apartment that day, it was with the expectation that I would see Sen again at the exhibition opening. I eagerly anticipated our future meeting.

Remove Your Hair

After my visit, Sen and I exchanged e-mails about ideas related to more “radical” forms of hospitality, such as offering an unconditional welcome to all or experiencing the unpredictability of a guest who overstays her welcome. Then, one day, I received an e-mail from Sen requesting a phone conversation. When we spoke, she told me she had found a handwritten note on her pillow, left there by the owner of the Chelsea apartment.

Dear Guest

Please use one set of bed covers/pillows etc what's on the bed for your use.

Make sure the bed room does not have hair on the floor. We will keep everything tidy for your use also.

Thanks

Sen was upset. Her negative feelings were intense. It did not help, as she told me during our conversation, that the host was from her home country (India), so she felt particularly affected by why and how he wrote the note. She felt targeted. The person who wrote the note seemed to be saying, “Those American women don't know better and don't care, but you are Indian. The standard is different for you.” In a situation where the message could have been more appropriately conveyed in person (or by phone, if speaking in person was not an option), the apartment owner chose to write a letter in red pencil. Was his choice of color accidental? As if a reference to a woman leaving behind her hair as something shameful would not be enough of a hint about the need to discipline her body and sexuality, he had to emphasize his message with his choice of color.

When people travel outside their home countries, they carry with them traditions for greeting, grooming, cooking, and hosting. Familiarity with traditions can be a blessing because it can produce a sense of belonging. “We” belong, and “they” do not, because “they” do not share “our” traditions. When Sen and I chatted about the “strange” American custom of inviting guests between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m., we felt as if “our” traditions of hospitality were validated. But familiarity can also be a curse, when assumptions and judgments are made about us as hosts and guests based on a common place of origin. (Would the note that Sen received have been written differently, or at all, if the note writer did not see Sen as an Indian woman? Sen certainly had her doubts.)

Sen learned through the grapevine that the note writer, the owner of the

apartment, might have been affected by seeing her hair because it reminded him of his sister, who was far away, and whom he missed very much. What these friends tried to tell Sen, through this message, was that she should not be offended. They provided an explanation as an excuse for his note, but Sen did not want to guess what the note writer had on his mind. Whether he acted because of his own nostalgia or to criticize her uncleanness, she had been affected by his action. She knew that and expressed it to me.

By questioning her presence in the apartment, the note produced a ripple effect in Sen, moving her attention inward, away from the busy life on the streets. It changed her *modus operandi*. It reminded her of the unwritten rules of hospitality in private settings, which are different from the rules in public settings, such as those governing the hospitality industry (for the rental of hotel rooms, for example). In real life, hospitality in private settings involves vague expectations and habits that often are not spelled out explicitly among adults. Preparations for hospitality are usually done in advance and out of sight (just as Ana Prvački trained the *documenta 13* exhibition staff, as described in chapter 1). A host does not start dressing up in the guest's presence; rather, when the guest arrives, the host is already dressed for company, perhaps in beautiful robes, as Lee Mingwei was for *The Dining Project*. Visitors did not see Lee arranging the pillows and flowers in *The Living Room* at the Gardner Museum—the host took care of these details in advance, so that guests could enjoy the event of their visit. Also, just as in some cultures a host needs to wait for a guest to initiate the end of a visit, so in many hospitality traditions hosts do not ask their guests to clean up after themselves.

Sen was in an awkward situation, caught between a hospitality scenario of everyday life and a hospitality scenario of the hospitality industry. And the author of the note did not make that position easier for her by referring to her hair specifically. I would argue that by writing this note, which the artist received in the early days of her stay, the apartment owner unwittingly defined the direction of Sen's installation by prompting her to narrow down the multitude of potentialities of her being in New York. This experience, of working with the unpredictable, subsequently led Sen to be even more open to difficult experiences during multiple other residencies in Brazil, Singapore, and South Africa, to name only a few of the countries where Sen has been hosted. As an artist, Sen soaks in the new experiences of the places where she stays, noticing what is happening outside her residence, as will be illustrated by another example presented at the end

of this chapter. In her New York residency, however, Sen focused her attention inward, toward her status as a guest, with all the unspoken rules associated with that status.

Long, thick, shiny, black hair is often praised and considered to be beautiful on a woman's head, but it becomes an object of shame and horror on the floor of a bedroom being shared by strangers. The owner of the apartment emphasized Sen's status as a guest, with the string of cultural expectations attached to it. Referencing his own care for his guest by leaving towels and keeping everything "tidy" for her, his message conveyed a demand for gratitude and reciprocity (saying implicitly, "Keep your dirty hair out of my sight").

It's Good to Be Queen

A few weeks later, I received a beautiful card inviting me to a private party to celebrate the opening of Sen's exhibition *It's Good to Be Queen* at the Artist Space—the Chelsea apartment, which had become a gallery. Amazing drawings in red ink, Sen's signature style, adorned the invitation, which indicated that the party would last from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

With minimal traffic, it would take me four hours to get to New York City by car from where I was living in central Pennsylvania. But the day of the opening, June 2, fell on a Friday, when traffic tends to be heavier. I allowed extra time for the drive to avoid being late, because I wanted to have a chance to have a good talk with Sen before other guests arrived. However, it took me two hours just to cross the bridge to Manhattan from New Jersey. I was concerned about arriving after the party's specified end time—9:00 p.m.—but I made it to Sen's apartment around 8:00 p.m.

As an artist, Sen is very well known for her large-scale drawings and sculptures, and the apartment was full of her works, as well as a crowd of people and a buffet spread in the kitchen—the same white kitchen where Sen had brewed me tea a few weeks prior. The familiarity was pleasant, especially for a new immigrant. Though I knew only three people out of the hundred who were there, several other attendees immediately introduced themselves to me, and we chatted about how excited we were to see the show and especially the artist with whom some of us had visited and had our pictures taken.

We sat on a pristine white couch in front of a coffee table, browsing through an album full of our pictures. (I could not find the image of Sen and me, but



FIGURE 5.1. Mithu Sen, *It's Good to Be Queen*, 2006, a site-specific residency project for Bose Pacia Gallery, New York. Drawings are placed on hangers like clothing in an apartment, mixed media on paper, size varies.

others around me were recognizing themselves in the photographs.) To browse through the album of all those intimate moments between Sen and her visitors, the guests at the opening wore white linen gloves, several pairs of which Sen had left on the table (see Plate 6). Gloves felt inviting in this case, because typically audience members are not permitted to touch art objects, so the gloves indicated that it was okay. When I saw people wearing the gloves, I felt like we were at an upscale party. White gloves also provided a sense of separation between the wearer's own skin and the rest of the world, alluding to an inherent anxiety about fusion with others involved in our rituals and routines of hospitality. (For example, how much intimacy and touching is too much? Kathy High expressed this in the work described in chapter 4, when she was at first repulsed by her guest rats but then later felt comfortable with taking extreme close-up photographs to express her intimacy with them.)

In some cultures, people take off their gloves before shaking hands; this indicates that they feel comfortable touching the other person and is intended as a sign of trust and respect. Sen's choice of providing gloves contradicted the sense of proximity that I felt when she asked to take that selfie with me earlier, but here, it seems to me, she was more interested in the aesthetics of preciousness. Such seemingly small decisions carry a lot of weight in situations of hospitality. Here the material used (white linen) indicated to guests their own preciousness.

In her work, Sen deconstructs the notion that hospitality is at its best when the situation of welcome goes smoothly. Working across various cultural contexts, she enjoys drawing on differences, contrasts, and comparisons, teasing them out, experimenting with them, and using them in her artworks. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, unlike other artists discussed in this book, who create hospitality situations to smooth the transitions between different audience members with their aesthetic interfaces, Sen accentuates and welcomes the sense of being inaccessible to each other. She is a global artist who is fiercely uninterested in smooth communication as a foundation of hospitality.

"It's good to be queen," Sen seems to tell us, because the queen can do whatever she likes. Appropriating the status of royals enables Sen to claim a privileged relation to hospitality. In a fairy tale, the queen is above mere mortals. This special status is bestowed upon her by gods and goddesses, by her birth. When we describe a girl or woman as "behaving like a queen" (or princess), we mean that she does not expect to serve herself or clean up after herself—she does not need to worry about removing her hair from the floor. In titling her work *It's*

Good to Be Queen, Sen was also being ironic, playing on various meanings and expectations.

Another aspect of Sen's queen status was the context of her artist residency. Artists are often referred to as prima donnas, especially as they become professionally and commercially successful and in demand, and artist residencies are considered to be something of a luxury. Being provided with time, place, resources, and new experiences for inspiration enables an artist to create new work or just recuperate and contemplate. Artists seek such opportunities for being treated like queens because residencies are an expected part of an artist's professional life, but also because in many countries (including the United States and India) there is little public funding for new work by contemporary visual artists. Mithu Sen, as the queen, seemed very generous at the opening of her exhibition, leaving many things for her guests to discover. After all, the word *generosity* is etymologically derived from the notion of a noble birth. Being "noble" in this sense allows one to share because, presumably, one's wealthy background enables one to give things away. And Sen, indeed, shared.

For the exhibition, Sen made drawings that were displayed on hangers like clothes, created installations with ready-made and newly made objects, and compiled a photograph album. A lot of her artistry involved hair: actual hair, drawings of hair, hair as a metaphor for the female body and cultural notions of propriety. There were many pillows, too, reminders of where the unfriendly message had been left. The pillows had messages on them as well as beautiful drawings, some depicting figurines of little girls—her metaphorical "daughters," whom she called real. The artist made her own set of bed covers and pillows, which were splendid, gorgeous, and outlandish, as if refusing to use the bed linens left for her by the apartment's owner, as he mentioned in the message to her, to press the point of his hospitality. She created her own pillowcases out of paper, with hand drawings made with watercolors and red ink. She created an atmosphere of a palatial bed, fit for a queen. Two large drawings separated the bed from the room, serving as an entrance into a sacred realm. Sen reclaimed the space with her art, as if to say the space belonged only to her and her imagination.

Sen had followed the instructions in the note she received from the owner of the apartment and left no hair on the floor. But hair was very much present everywhere else, and stayed there for the duration of the exhibition, from June 6 to June 30. In the living room, beautiful balls of hair were placed on two serving plates, arranged like yarn for knitting. Long black hair came out of the torso



FIGURE 5.2. Mithu Sen, *It's Good to Be Queen*, 2006, a site-specific residency project for Bose Pacia Gallery, New York. Installation views: *Comb in the Loo*, mixed media on paper, 84 × 42 inches, and toilet.





FIGURE 5.3. Mithu Sen, *It's Good to Be Queen*, 2006, a site-specific residency project for Bose Pacia Gallery, New York. The hair hanging in the shower is a response to a note about her hair left for the artist by the apartment's owner.

of an ephemeral gorgeous patterned pink tunic, a *shalwar kameez*, which hung ominously in the window. (It reminded me of the famous 2002 Japanese horror movie *Ju-On*, which was released in the United States in 2004 as *The Grudge*.)

On the bathroom wall, a huge drawing of a comb was spectacular, the first thing visitors saw as they came in. It was dripping with hair and paint, larger than life, both domestic and formally perfect in its verticality. Strips of black tape crisscrossed over the toilet bowl seemed to reassure guests that no creature could appear from there, nor would they disappear into the bowels of the house.

The motif of hair was not new to Sen's installations and drawings, but in this particular installation hair took on a special significance and sensation. The places where she used hair indicated how strongly she had been influenced by the note from the apartment owner. The note itself was on display, so that the whole audience (and not just the guests who, like me, were "in the know") could understand the reason for so much hair. Hair was important that night, and Sen was not hiding its inspirational source.

Sen's gorgeous artworks also expressed a conventionally accepted guest's anxiety around cleanliness. If a place to which a guest is invited looks posh and spotless, the guest may be expected to avoid spoiling that condition. Sen's abandoned black hair, with its connotation of dirtiness in a whitewashed apartment, accentuated the almost clinical hygiene in the rest of the installation, including the white gloves mentioned above. It was as if she were telling us, "I know how these pristine surroundings will feel. I know the effect of this contrast."

Abandoned Guests

In all of that abundance the artist was nowhere to be seen. My first thought when I entered the apartment, after a six-hour drive, had been "I do not see Mithu." I worked my way through the crowd, politely chatting with others and looking at work, at all that hair. As I waited for Sen to appear, I whispered to someone I knew, "Where is Mithu? Do you know?" Her answer was simply, "She is not here." *Did that mean Sen might not show up at all?*

As the 9:00 p.m. time when guests were supposed to leave came closer, it became clear to me that Sen was not going to come. The hostess had abandoned her guests, whom she had invited. Her guests kept themselves busy talking and exploring the apartment. The story of her absence also started with that note about hair, I thought, as I looked at how much hair she had left around

the apartment and her rebellious act of withholding hospitality on the opening night. As I learned in subsequent years, testing the hospitality principles of hosts and guests, whether others or herself, is an important feature of Sen's aesthetic.

It was not a great feeling for me to be without Sen at her exhibition opening, in a city where at the time I knew only three people. I was fine, of course. I was an adult. But questions still came to my mind. *Do I stay? Do I leave?* It was not clear to me why she had abandoned us. Had my effort of driving for six hours to meet her at an agreed-upon time and place, to show appreciation for her previous welcome and my attention to her art, figured in her decision? It is hard to be an abandoned guest, even as part of an artwork.

I do not know what others at the opening felt. Certainly, my friends looked puzzled and expressed disappointment at Sen's absence. I wondered if something in the apartment owner's note had set her off, or if she might be feeling overwhelmed with meeting so many people on her visit to New York. I believed there was a lesson in Sen's withdrawal of hospitality. Her absence meant that her guests thought of her even more.

This oscillation between total acceptance and total abandonment is seen not just through the shift in the positions of guests and hosts but also dialectically: Sen breaks the rules to create new potentialities of welcome. The result is a new kind of game of hide-and-seek that builds on a fantasy of her imagery and her person. In her artistic and poetic work, Sen finds ways to show how people become alienated strangers, foreigners, immigrants, and the forgotten; how someone can be shown the door, metaphorically and in real life, and thereby turns from a potential friend into an "alien" through a process of unwelcoming. Sen tests hosting as a form of communication between hosts and guests.

By withdrawing hospitality in *It's Good to Be Queen*, the missing Sen alienated her audience. Who is an alien? The English word *alien* may be translated into Russian in at least thirteen different ways. In New York, Sen and I shared many of the meanings of those translations (stranger, foreigner, visitor from another planet, actually and symbolically). Sen mined these meanings to make whatever could form a common ground between herself and her guests strange again.

On the day of the opening I carried my "alien card" as a new arrival in the United States. In the paperwork I had had to file repeatedly, first as a nonresident, and then as a "resident alien," ALIEN appeared prominently in all uppercase letters. Around the same time, in the summer of 2006, an American embassy official in Moscow verbally abused my seventy-year-old mother, who had gone to

the embassy for her interview as part of the visa application process. He denied her application on the spot and in a manner that made her feel so unwelcome that she has since refused to set foot in the embassy or even speak about the encounter. That word, *alien*, still makes me feel uncomfortable every time I see it or hear it, but Sen's symbolic gestures validate, rather than exacerbate, the memory of my mother's absence from my American life. Why is that so?

As an artist, Mithu Sen plays the role of an alien voluntarily. She devises forms of conscious alienation, revealing other heartbreaking stories of those who cannot choose when and how to become alien. For *It's Good to Be Queen*, she left her guests at the opening. For other art projects and poetry readings, she sometimes speaks only in gibberish, rather than in a comprehensible way.⁸ She challenges her audiences to work harder at hosting her, to decide whether to wait for her when she is the hostess, or whether to ask her to leave when she is the guest. Sen sets up alienating situations so that audience members can ask themselves, "What would I do in this situation? What *should* I do in this situation?"

Drawing Out Hospitality

One day Sen is a perfect hostess serving me tea and making me feel like I am the only one she has waited for. Later, she is not even there to greet me. Unlike a guest who is always late, Sen had issued an invitation to a private party for her exhibition opening. She had choreographed every decision and gesture carefully. Her choices were not random. So, what had happened? Shortly after that opening night, Sen sent an electronic message to those who had visited her during the previous weeks. Without apologizing, she explained why she had been a "bad host," absent from her own party:

Dear, I am sorry for not being sorry about my physical absence in my opening night. Let me contextualize my thoughts and feelings regarding my absence on June 2. I am sad but not sorry for my act . . . it was a conscious decision . . . it was a part of my whole relationship (guest-host-hospitality-tolerance) project.

As one of the guests who was "stood up" by the host, I thought it was nice to know that Sen was okay, and I realized how deeply she had thought about her decision not to be present. Her absence was part of her performance, her way of showing us how it feels to be on the receiving end of withdrawn hospitality. It also served as an occasion for her to explain why she had to be a horrible—absent—host.

I know it was announced in the invitation card of doing an artist discussion during that evening with my viewer . . . AND I was away. (I did not escape or run away) . . . I just took my physical presence off from that very gallery site on that evening.

She then went on to reveal her thoughts about the “absent artist” in relation to the many art objects presented in the apartment-gallery.

In most art openings the artist’s presence is needed to explain the intimate details of the artist’s persona in order to put the art objects into context. In this case however all of my most intimate details were and are open for your viewing and I did not want my presence to interfere with your process of discovery of those very private and intimate details.

As a hostess who seemed to know she had stretched her guests’ goodwill and jeopardized the possibility of a future welcome, Sen used her note to reach out to me and all the other guests who were at the party just for her. As sincerely and strongly as she could, she pointed out the little details of our moments together:

I truly hope you understand my project and support what I did. I love you all and . . . believe me, I was overwhelmed when I came back completely soaked and drenched . . . I found the wet foot steps all around my apartment . . . I found the white gloves filled up with touches of invisible friends . . . who visited my space in my absence . . .

Sen felt that what she did was right, important, and harder than just going with the flow. She did it for her friends and to help us, her audience, learn more about ourselves.

It was hard for me to not to be there knowing that you are coming for me . . . I was sad . . . I walked all the way to the river and finally got into a New York site seeing bus, made a night trip in the city . . . believe me, it was so wonderful . . .

She assured us, her now friends, as a result of her hospitality, that her feelings were intense in each moment of her being absent, and that she felt sad and wonderful at the same time. Sen ended her message by reiterating what the exhibition was about:

I treated myself as a queen.

Sen took back her dignity by not waiting for others to bestow it on her; instead, she found her own form, showing one possible path of responding to withdrawals of hospitality. Sen knew she would be missed. She acknowledged that her presence would have been special to those with whom she had built the intimacy revealed in her letter through her choice of words:

I will try to meet you before I leave, I promise. I again hope that you did not miss me that night because I was really with you . . . Thank you for bearing with me. I love you. Yours and only yours, Mithu.⁹

Sen's letter told us that after being left, abandoned, we were the only ones among her friends who truly mattered to her. Should we have believed her? Her authenticity was almost too much. I do not doubt for a second that Sen felt horrible about not being at the opening, imagining that she might lose some friends over her choice, something that is always hard for artists, who rely on their audiences, curators, and critics to come to their openings. If she wanted to teach us a specific lesson about being emotionally prepared for the absent hostess, I believe that as an artist this was not an easy gesture for her.

It's Good to Be Queen sought to exceed the normal boundaries of welcome. Even the catalog of the exhibition, which was published in 2007, was beautifully designed, illustrated, and conceived as a gift, carefully packaged in a transparent, shimmering red cover. What distinguishes Sen is her continuous, remarkable commitment to her art of radical welcome. Even if such moments might go unnoticed by the majority of her audience—who, for example, were not invited to the private opening party and did not experience her absence—similar kinds of gestures accumulate over time. When I first met Sen, I did not know that such gestures of disruption and withdrawal were her way of “testing” her audience.

Art critic Nancy Adajania finds in Sen's work another meaning for withdrawing, which is relevant to my point concerning the questioning of Sen's hair by the apartment owner and expectations about how women's bodies are supposed to operate in space:

Sen is recovering the nuance of the “withdrawing room,” the room where women once discussed their private affairs. Instead of secreting the private fantasies of the women away from the patriarchal tentacles of the present-day drawing room, Sen returns this room to its original owners: the women, literally drawing them out of their isolation and marginalization.¹⁰

“Drawing out” here does not mean revealing or clarifying. “Drawing out” could mean insisting on being alive, having a right to one’s own secrets, to be revealed when and how one chooses. Sen asks us to give her space to make a new kind of hospitality possible. In *It’s Good to Be Queen*, Sen demanded that we wait for her without knowing if she would appear, as if we were her ladies-in-waiting for the night. *It’s Good to Be Queen* ended well despite—or, as Sen would argue, because of—the note about her hair on the floor, which made her feel unwelcome.

Since 2007, Sen has challenged herself consistently by imagining new forms of radical hospitality, especially, as discussed above in relation to her work *I Have Only One Language; It Is Not Mine* (2014), during her time as an artist in residence far away from home, when she unsettles boundaries and expectations of welcome. During her 2017 artist residency at the 18th Street Arts Center in Los Angeles, Sen spent her days getting to know her new surroundings, much as she had during her New York residency in 2006. She found that the reality of Los Angeles contrasted sharply with Hollywood’s representation of its elite inhabitants, with deep divisions between rich and poor. Then one day she was given another “gift,” which started with the offer of a mansion in Hollywood as the venue for her final exhibition. Inviting her “guests”—all new friends she had met during her residency—to a Hollywood mansion to mark the end of her residency would be a significant way of starting a conversation about the economic and everyday disparities between the lives of the rich, living in the hills, and the lives of the rest of the folks living below, especially the homeless people of Los Angeles.¹¹

The exhibition invitations were printed and sent out, and a Facebook page documented the preparations and Sen’s time in Los Angeles. Then, forty-five minutes before the exhibition was to open on June 23, the owner of the house, the “host,” withdrew his invitation to Sen. By extension, all her guests were also disinvited at that moment. As the guests were in their cars driving to the Hollywood Hills, Sen was desperately trying to reach them by phone.

The Hollywood mansion owner decided to withdraw his hospitality after Sen arrived at the mansion empty-handed. He asked Sen about the art that was to be shown (“Where is your artwork?”), and Sen informed him that she had no artwork to show: the gathering at his house was to be her exhibition in Los Angeles. The owner would not have minded hosting the opening of Sen’s exhibition if some of her “other” artworks (drawings, paintings, sculptures) were going to be there on display, transforming his house into a museum of contemporary

art by Mithu Sen. But, unlike in New York in 2006, Sen had prepared no “art objects” for the installation—there was no installation. When the mansion host-owner realized that his house was not going to be used as a trendy art gallery for one night, but instead was going to serve as a “free” rental space for a party (as it might have seemed to him, given discussions in the local news media at the time surrounding loud one-night parties in rented Hollywood mansions), he may have felt misled and taken advantage of.

Sue Bell Yank and Vasundhara Mathur documented how it felt from the point of view of Sen’s guests, who had to change plans quickly and find a new location for the exhibition as they were driving to the mansion. They also wrote about the owner of the house (a professor of philosophy at a local college), asserting that he missed the meaning of Sen’s art of radical hospitality: “What the philosopher could not see was that Mithu approached her entire residency at 18th Street like an artwork. Art at its best captures the eye and the imagination, and draws us into a world of unimaginable depth.”¹² But the mansion owner may have been even more wary if he had known that Sen was interested in a discussion about economic disparity. Her party at his house could have “exposed” him to such discussions among Sen’s guests.

The owner withdrew his hospitality when he realized how he would be implicated by Sen in the “personal is political” of hosting. Without objects to mediate the hosting and present the owner as welcoming, his house would have become the central topic in a discussion about wealth disparity. The owner was probably surprised by Sen’s “art” and had not carefully thought through his own gesture of inviting Sen and her guests. Even if economic disparity is on full display in Los Angeles at large and not a secret that Sen’s work would somehow reveal for this mansion owner himself, exposure under such circumstances would be different, glaring. There would be no “art” to cover the mansion as the mansion.

Sen also explored questions about the “American dream,” as a dream, during her residency. The poster that Sen prepared for the exhibition played on the glitzy image of Los Angeles’s cinematic history.

“UNhome” is the first word. The way I construct my sentences, the vernacular use of the language feels incorrect. It’s like when you translate something with Bing—it’s a mess, but you get some interesting ideas. I just said, “City IF Angels,” as in “Only if . . .” I ended up getting a different kind of home while here, because of the angels who supported this event.¹³

The title Mithu Sen chose for the Hollywood show, *UNhome*, played on the negative connotations of being denied the feeling of being at home—the ultimate invitation when a guest is truly welcomed. The title seemed to point out, as did that note Sen received in the New York apartment in 2006, *You are not at home*. Ironically, in a twist of fate, the title’s message became reality as Sen was dis-invited by the host at the last minute. The same was true for Sen’s play on the nickname City of Angels, which she transformed into “City IF Angels” on the poster. Grammatically incorrect, this phrase nevertheless claimed a higher truth of economic disparity and hard life in Los Angeles rather than an encounter with angels. But the “if” was not just ironic. It was, in Sen’s view, a question about the possibility of “What IF,” and “Only IF” in hospitality: its unnerving unpredictability.

What if . . . all gather in a huge, beautiful, dreamy Hollywood mansion, full of flowers, as welcoming as *The Living Room* in the Gardner Museum created by Lee Mingwei? What if . . . a polite host trained by Ana Prvački opens a door, waiting for the guests happily, like Faith Wilding in *Wait-With*? What if . . . the mansion owner takes care of all of the wishes of Sen and her guests, as Kathy High did for the rats in *Embracing Animal*? Imagine that!

Withdrawing hospitality leads to a conditional welcome, where a guest must guess “what if” and imagine “only if.” Withdrawal represents a promise of welcome that ended before it could even begin properly. Conditionality here is full of possibility, if not necessarily of naive hope in the power of hospitality. The artist gives others a chance to reveal their hospitality, with unexpected outcomes. In Mithu Sen’s works, hospitality is often made of dreams that do not come true, and her audiences are prompted to imagine what they would do if they had guests who overstayed their welcome, or if a host ended hospitality abruptly.

Sen and her guests had to relocate *UNhome* quickly, and they ended up in a park not far from the mansion. In a 2018 interview, Sen called the host’s withdrawal a “gift”:

He played the best role, as a catalyst. I have since thought about the limits of this “Radical Hospitality” and where it can go from here. Sharing, interaction, the human connection on different levels—these are the things I love. In the end, the event was magical. It was beyond magical. It was unnerving.¹⁴

Sen’s response makes me think that the note she received about her hair that led to *It’s Good to Be Queen* was also a gift for Sen the artist circa 2006. Sen uses her



FIGURE 5.4. Mithu Sen, *UNhome* Poster, 2017. This digital image was part of Mithu Sen's project when she was artist in residence at the 18th Street Arts Center in Los Angeles. Courtesy of the artist.

artwork to transform the withdrawal of hospitality into a new kind of hospitality, enabling audiences to consider what hospitality means to them and how far they would go as hosts and guests, especially in the real world beyond the contemporary art context.

A LEAP OF FAITH Pippa Bacca and Silvia Moro

The art project I explore in this chapter, *Brides on Tour* (in its original Italian *Sposa in Viaggio*), centered on one of the most vulnerable positions a person can be in: asking for hospitality from total strangers. In the Introduction I described an impactful film that documents how filmmaker Linda Hattendorf invited a homeless man, Jimmy Mirikitani, to stay with her in her small New York apartment in the aftermath of 9/11. This inspirational story lives up to the promise of the challenging ideal of hospitality, as expressed in Emma Lazarus's poem ("Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses") inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. I asked why many of us, myself included, stop short of practicing these ideals of hospitality and postpone, arrest, or deny our welcome, both as individuals and as communities. My answer was that hospitality situations are full of fears and anxieties that arise from cultural socialization about who is more or less worthy of welcome. This socialization also allows us to conclude that certain kinds of people should not be welcome in our communities at all. (Be afraid of these groups of people! Beware of strangers!) I also discussed how some people feel more entitled to welcome or have more resources to share than others, and how these inequalities of hospitality are built into the cultural traditions and frameworks of proper behavior between hosts and guests.

The artworks I have discussed thus far have challenged the cultural traditions of hospitality by offering new, more democratic forms of welcome, despite any fears or anxieties that the artists may have felt. The artists experimented with public, private, and gallery/museum locations for their hospitality-themed projects: their own homes, public museums and galleries, other people's homes, public television studios, artist residencies, and orphanages. For artists and their audiences, galleries and museums might feel safer than other kinds of spaces for creating hosting situations, which is why, as described in chapter 3, Lee Mingwei's family and friends feared for his safety when he decided to invite total strangers to have one-on-one encounters with him in private settings for *The Dining Project* and *The Sleeping Project*.

Shifting the aesthetic from finding forms to welcoming "anyone who turns

up,” the artist Mithu Sen decided to reveal limitations and inequalities built into the current forms of hospitality by not playing the role of a “nice” and “proper” guest. As discussed in chapter 5, she tested her hosts’ welcome at an orphanage in Kochi by withdrawing a common language and at a mansion in Los Angeles by inviting her audience to discuss the inequality that the Hollywood mansion represented. Sen stretches and breaks what are considered “normal” boundaries between hosts and guests, mining the unpredictability of the outcomes in hospitality situations. She sees even “bad” outcomes, when she is refused others’ welcome, as “gifts” because they enable her to reveal what she calls “radical hospitality,” especially in failures of welcome, in what does not happen as planned. But what happens when an artist is physically attacked, injured, or harmed in other ways? Is this also a “gift”? What happens to the promotion of the challenging ideals of hospitality when someone is hurt while seeking new forms of welcome in contemporary art?

Sadly, *Brides on Tour*, the artwork at the center of this chapter, was interrupted by a tragedy: one of the two artists involved was murdered in the middle of the project. As the key focus of the artists was on the potential of hospitality among individual persons to bring peace between nations, I believe it is important to address the tragedy within the context of this book. Careful consideration of this project forces me to avoid shying away from the high stakes of this promise of the ideal of hospitality, as a leap of faith in strangers, be it in art or everyday life. The circumstances surrounding this project and its tragedy raise questions about how hospitality gets arrested by inequalities, hostility, and violence on the one hand and by a sense of entitlement and a naive faith in strangers on the other. In this chapter I also reveal and unpack the interests and positions of the project’s stakeholders, including the artists, those who have been inspired by this work, and those who have critiqued and written about it, including myself. These positions may be summarized with a paraphrase of a statement by the artist Ana Prvački quoted in chapter 1: the artists discussed in this book and I are not naive about the power of hospitality.

Brides on Tour

In April 2008, the international news media reported that an Italian artist had been killed in Turkey while doing an art project. Upon hearing this news, I read what I could find online about the tragedy. According to several articles, at the

time the artist died, she was hitchhiking across Turkey as part of an artwork about the possibilities of bringing peace between the nations affected by wars.¹ The artist who was killed, Pippa Bacca (also known as Giuseppina Pasqualino di Marineo), was collaborating with another artist and designer, Silvia Moro, who had not been harmed. For their work titled *Brides on Tour*, Bacca and Moro had embarked on a symbolic journey, hitchhiking from an art gallery in Milan to a gallery in Israel. Their journey started in Milan on March 8, 2008. The artists wore white bridal dresses to signify “the marriage between peoples and nations.”²

Bacca and Moro decided to separate in Turkey and planned to reunite in Lebanon. Communication with Bacca stopped shortly after she left Istanbul. Concerned, her friends and family members called the Turkish police. Her body was found on April 11, 2008, in Gebze, an area near Istanbul. Police used her cell phone signal to track and arrest Murat Karataş, who was subsequently convicted of her rape and murder. Another man, never caught, might have been involved, too.

Bacca and Moro chose a route from Italy to Israel that would take them through the Balkans and the Middle East. With so much at stake regarding the “peace process” in this region, the artists wanted to highlight how the simple gesture of hitchhiking and seeking help and welcome along the way from strangers could become a symbol of humanity’s ability to heal the wounds of intolerance and war. They also wanted to recognize the significance of their route between Asia and Europe, along which traders and other travelers have been hosted since ancient times. The artists intended to mark the end of their trip with an exhibition that would open in Israel, with a final exhibition scheduled to be held in Italy in the fall of 2008.

As news of Bacca’s death spread, the press reported that the story had become a matter of national significance in Turkey: “People were incensed that a Turkish man could carry out such a heinous crime on a young woman who was on a trip for peace. . . . Turkey’s president, Abdullah Gul, called President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy to relay the ‘heartfelt grief of the Turkish population for the tragedy.’”³ As I continued collecting information about Bacca’s death and her art project, I learned that many local women’s rights activists and artists pointed to what had happened to raise awareness about the lack of safety for women in public places (I discuss specific examples later in this chapter).

At the same time, critics began to speak out about the circumstances around Bacca’s death, including her hitchhiking as part of an art project to promote the message of peace, and all the press coverage and the national conversation that

her death elicited. Some newspapers implied that it was naive for the artist to hitchhike and expect a positive outcome. Was she “crazy”? Had she acted out of a sense of entitlement? In addition, as an Italian woman she was much more privileged than most local women, leading some to suggest that the death of a Turkish woman would not have prompted such swift police work and the arrest of her murderer.⁴

Bacca’s story raises many questions important to this book: What are the limits of demanding hospitality as a guest? How should a woman who is privileged—by her national origin, her race, her class—go about asking for hospitality? Is it possible for a woman—privileged or not—to expect a welcome from strangers without being blamed for what might happen to her? How far should one go to yield to a culture different from one’s own when crossing national and cultural borders? When does respect for another culture become complicity with the inequalities and hierarchies that one seeks to challenge? Individual answers to these questions depend on, among other factors, the weight one gives to various identity markers and which identity markers one considers predominant; in this case the relevant markers include race, class, gender, national origin, and cultural background.

La Mariée, by Joël Curtz

For six years, from 2008 to 2014, I collected the information presented above from news media and from the *Brides on Tour* project’s website built by Bacca’s family, now an archive that includes photographs and texts prepared by the artists for their journey as well as documentation of events prior to their departure and after Bacca’s death. Images from the posthumous exhibition of Bacca’s dress, which was found at the murder scene, are also posted on the website.⁵ I looked at the face of Bacca’s murderer in Turkish newspapers. I read what was written about Bacca and *Brides on Tour* and followed the tributes by artists, theater directors, journalists, and activists discussed below.⁶ Although a lot of information was available, I found no answers to many questions I had about the project: Why did the two women separate? What happened to Silvia Moro? What did Bacca’s family, friends, and local artists think about *Brides on Tour* after her death? Then, in 2014, I came across a reference to a recent documentary film about *Brides on Tour* directed by artist and filmmaker Joël Curtz: *La Mariée* (*The Bride*, 2012).⁷ Much of my analysis in this chapter draws on information presented in this film,

which answers many of the questions I had about *Brides on Tour* and also provides original footage of the artists as they were hitchhiking.

When I learned about *La Mariée*, I contacted the filmmaker, who very kindly arranged for me to see his film, which was then showing only at film festivals I could not attend; he was also generous in responding to my requests for interviews. Curtz told me that he learned about Pippa Bacca from friends when he was doing a performance of his own that created uneasy encounters between himself and strangers. For example, he would walk up to a car that was parked and waiting for someone else and open the passenger-side door and sit down, while a collaborator filmed the driver's reactions.⁸ When he heard about Pippa Bacca, in the immediate aftermath of her death in the summer of 2008, Curtz went to Italy to see her relatives and subsequently became a family friend.

What caused Curtz, who was just out of graduate school and already off on his own creative career, to spend four full years on his film about *Brides on Tour*? After all, like me, Curtz never met Bacca. In our conversations, Curtz has suggested that Bacca's story draws people in not only because of the tragedy and its potential sensationalization but also because as an artwork *Brides on Tour* explored many different topics that moved many different people. "It was an artistic gesture, a conscious life work," and thus part of a much larger context that included questions of community, relations between strangers, crossing borders and nation-states, and hospitality—topics that all interest Curtz, too.⁹

La Mariée paints a very complicated picture of the *Brides on Tour* project, the two artists, and Bacca's friends and family. It is a deep engagement with the message of the work and the limits of asking for hospitality. Additionally, as much as the film is a welcoming gesture by Curtz to Bacca and her family, the filmmaker's editing and other aesthetic decisions also point in the direction of questions about privilege and European colonial attitudes. Bacca's friends are often seen being interviewed in grand-looking living rooms—presumably in their homes. The camera pans from a beautiful floor vase to a giant dining table, slowly, almost coldly, before focusing on one of Bacca's friends, who is impeccably and even extravagantly dressed. Does Curtz intentionally point out the wealth of those in Bacca's social circle? It surely appears so. The images from this world seem to be very detached and different from the footage found on the artist's camera. As someone who has created challenging social encounters to provoke the reactions of strangers, Curtz seems to be both challenged by *Brides on Tour* and critical of it.

It does not help that, as the film suggests, Bacca's ideas about peace and hospitality seem to have developed from her interpretations of the Bible and, more specifically, her Catholic faith. Why? Because this supports a strong undertone of inappropriateness, making it appear that the project sought to impose the artist's Christian faith on others. Ecumenical messages about all people being each other's neighbors and sharing responsibility for each other slide easily into missionary martyrdom—the willingness to die for one's faith and one's God. In this less generous interpretation, Bacca's actions would be seen as akin to those of the American Christian missionary who set out in 2018 to spread the word of Jesus on an island in the Andaman Sea. He was warned that the local tribe was hostile to outsiders, but he insisted on landing on their island despite its remote location. The tribe killed him. The analogy of this interpretation (with which I do not agree) implies that both the missionary and Bacca cared less about respecting the customs and desires of their potential hosts than they did for their own souls. They tried to spread the word of *their* God even if it meant interfering with the communities and ways of life of others. This line of criticism asks why Bacca's message of peace and welcome was more important than someone else's values or desires.

However, there are also places in the film where Curtz seems to be very sympathetic to Bacca's journey and *Brides on Tour* in general. He appears to be supportive of a larger message about contemporary art taking on more challenging topics, such as how strangers treat each other, and creating new forms to express those topics, similar to other artists discussed in this book. Curtz also seems to be concerned about the effects of contemporary art on various traditions of welcome, both in challenging and critiquing them and in taking care not to appear paternalistic, moralistic, or neocolonial and insensitive to cultural differences. His film implies that there are many hospitalities and that the desire for some universal type of hospitality tradition across the world is problematic.

La Mariée is extraordinary, both in its detail regarding the art project and in how the film itself was made. We see footage from when Bacca and Moro were leaving the gallery in Milan on March 8, 2008, and photographs taken of them during their journey (Plates 8 and 9). We also see Bacca's white dress being returned to the family by police. And then, we learn of another extraordinary story—hard to believe, and often doubted as too good to be true—that of Bacca's camera. One day, about a year after Bacca's death, the family received a parcel from Turkey. Her video camera, the one that Bacca and Moro used to document

their journey, had been found, and Turkish police returned it. But the family could not see any footage—it was corrupted.

They decided to pass the camera to Curtz with the hope that he would be luckier. He was—a friend managed to restore the footage in a video laboratory. It showed what Bacca and Moro had recorded on their journey, and something else. The murderer (as the family, the police, and Curtz believe) had recorded a local wedding over some of Bacca's footage, just before he was caught. Bacca's family and Curtz watched the footage of the wedding, and after careful discussion with the family, Curtz decided to include the murderer's footage in his film. According to Curtz, Bacca's mother and sisters felt that the wedding images, with another bride wearing and dancing in a white dress, provided a sense of hope for the future. This is what we see at the end of *La Mariée*.

Unlike Bacca's family and Curtz, I did not feel any hope while watching the murderer's footage of a wedding. In fact, I had just the opposite reaction. I felt that the zooming in on young people at the wedding, especially young girls and the bride, was disturbing. It also felt haunting, because as I watched it, I thought about Bacca, who was gone, while her murderer's life went on. Does this footage provide an opportunity for the audience to see reality through the murderer's eyes, and not just Bacca's and Moro's? If so, is that a good thing or a bad thing? I am not sure. This footage serves as important documentation of the story, however, and it is now preserved for our consideration.

The best parts of the film, from my point of view, are the ones in which Curtz's camera is gentle, tender, trying to present the intimacy of feelings around the tragedy of Pippa Bacca's death with grace and introspection. There are at least four extraordinary scenes in the film that exhibit these characteristics: first, a scene in which Bacca's mother speaks about her artist daughter; second, one in which Bacca's sisters reminisce about her and how they hitchhiked together; third, a scene in which Silvia Moro talks about when she and Bacca separated; and fourth, a scene of original footage shot by the *Brides on Tour* artists, shown within the intimacy of Bacca's home, with its objects and photographs. I will engage with these moments in more detail in the rest of this chapter.

La Mariée is an important film, and a difficult one to watch. Curtz is also an artist, a video artist and a filmmaker who, like Bacca and Moro, is interested in relations among strangers in private and public spaces. The film is a tribute (after all, Curtz spent years of his own life to make it), but it is also a working through of the challenge that Bacca presented to all of us, especially those who think about



FIGURE 6.1. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. This film still shows Pippa Bacca and Silvia Moro, on television, as they were hitchhiking in *Brides on Tour*. The setting is a house featured in the documentary film about the art project.

hospitality in contemporary art professionally. What is the role of art? What kind of artistic gesture was *Brides on Tour*, and how was it helpful, challenging, and different—or not—from Curtz’s own thinking about “our world” and how he makes his work? Curtz’s care in making his film enabled my thinking about the lessons I have learned from this work.

Preparing to Hitchhike

The *Brides on Tour* project had been two years in the making and involved a lot of preparation. Bacca and Moro engaged many of their friends and colleagues from the art world, making the project the work of a whole community.¹⁰ The bridal dresses were designed by Manuel Facchini from Byblos Art Gallery in Verona and had been part of a sculpture and social design exhibition before the artists departed. The national flags of the countries they would visit were embedded in the cloth used to make the dresses, presenting visible symbols of the artists’ message of internationalism.

To prepare to be a good guest, Bacca studied Arabic for two years so she could speak the language of her hosts when she passed through Lebanon, as the artists wanted to emphasize their message of welcome.¹¹ Their preparation testifies to their seriousness and offers a rebuttal to the criticism, noted above, that this project was an irresponsible gesture of two white women who decided one day to hitchhike without giving much thought to the situated differences of the places they would be going. They also collaborated with local artists and communities along the way.

Bacca and Moro contacted local artists in Sarajevo, Istanbul, and other cities where they planned to stop en route. They arranged for professional local photographers to document their journey and prepared interactive performances for local exhibition spaces. Bacca was especially interested in the idea of “welcoming new life into the world” and contacted midwives in each country to interview them. In *La Mariée*, Bacca is seen washing a midwife’s feet as she asks the woman questions about smiling at a newborn. Their interaction made Bacca feel as if she was participating in a birthing process with other women. Hospitality here is a circle of life, a positive version of the expression “What goes around comes around.” Welcoming a new life into the world is connected with providing welcome to those who help in this process, such as midwives. The artists carefully thought this through as part of their intention to connect individual and phenomenological moments of human condition to collective being. In many ancient traditions, hosts show welcome and respect by observing the custom of washing the feet of their guests, or by offering water so that guests can wash their feet.

Bacca’s intimacy with total strangers expressed itself on several levels in *Brides on Tour*. In Curtz’s film, we see Bacca happy and smiling as she speaks to midwives through a translator, in footage presumably recorded by Moro. This footage recovered from Bacca’s camera is now part of what *Brides on Tour* remains as a project with all its varied elements of exhibitions, objects, preparation process, interactions with many different people in various countries, relationship between Moro and Bacca, and text by the artists and others who have been involved in the project, as well as photographs and video.

The central element of the artists’ journey was the hitchhiking. On their initial website for the *Brides on Tour* project, Bacca and Moro included this statement: “Hitchhiking is choosing to have faith in other human beings, and man, like a small god, rewards those who have faith in him.”¹² Especially for Bacca,



FIGURE 6.2. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Pippa Bacca washes the feet of a midwife as she and Silvia Moro hitchhike across the Balkans as part of their project *Brides on Tour*.



FIGURE 6.3. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Pippa Bacca wipes the midwife's feet with her white dress after washing them during *Brides on Tour*.



FIGURE 6.4. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée* (*The Bride*), Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Pippa Bacca laughs happily while talking to a midwife in *Brides on Tour*.

hitchhiking was a test of faith as well as a test of hospitality. In many traditional cultural stories of hospitality (such as Homer's *Odyssey* and stories in the Bible and the Laws of Manu), there is a trope of gods or goddesses testing the faith of common people by disguising themselves as strangers looking for refuge, a meal, or other welcoming actions.¹³ This project relied on the assumption that putting one's life in the hands of another person leads to a reward. In chapter 2, in my discussion of waiting, I noted a poem in which a "perfect hostess" is rewarded for her waiting with "wings," which she has requested from God. Here, the reward for trusting a stranger is hospitality, with the women being rewarded for trusting others and for putting their lives in others' hands.

Hitchhiking is very much about hospitality, from its inception as a precarious moment between strangers when the hitchhiker gets into a car with a person who is kind enough to stop to what ultimately happens on the journey. Hitchhiking also implies radical vulnerability, because the hitchhiker is trapped in another's private space, a space much smaller than a house and located in the middle of a public road or another public realm.



FIGURE 6.5. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée* (*The Bride*), Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Pippa Bacca's image of a road during her hitching.

The driver is also vulnerable, with the perceived level of vulnerability often based on the appearance of the person asking for a ride. In North America, hitchhiking became an activity to be feared around the mid-1970s, in part because of media portrayals, including several well-known horror movies, such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *The Hitcher* (1986). In recent years, the practice of hitchhiking has been revived, in a way, by ride-hailing services that use smartphone applications to connect drivers and passengers; the safety features built in by these services seem to provide both drivers and passengers a sense of security that was not part of the original practice.

Though not as common in North America as it once was, hitchhiking is still practiced widely in Europe. Both men and women do it all the time, and a number of young women document their experiences in hitchhiker blogs.¹⁴ Hitchhiking was essential to the *Brides on Tour* project because it was more intimate and demanded more trust in others than simply flying over those countries or renting a car. Hitchhiking offered an effective way for the artists to deliver their message of welcome. In *Brides on Tour*, they aimed to show that when you place

yourself in strangers' hands, when you are vulnerable as a guest who needs help in a foreign or alien community, people will step up and be Good Samaritans.

From their own perspective, the two artists tried to do all they could to look "safe" to those who might offer them rides. Their odd white dresses notwithstanding, the stereotypes of safety from the drivers' point of view were in their favor: two young women, with signs in local languages (indicating seasoned hitchhikers), would not seem to present a threat. Can strangers ignore you or even take advantage of you? Yes, they can, but *Brides on Tour* implied that the odds of a good outcome are in your favor. For Bacca this was not just a theory, some grandstanding abstract message. It was her lifelong experience. Bacca "began thumbing as a child, in the company of her mother at first, and later alone. For her it was the normal way of getting around; almost every week-end she would go to meet friends in Italy or abroad, always hitchhiking her way."¹⁵

In fact, Bacca's previous exhibition in Perugia, Italy, in 2004, titled *More Than (Più Oltre)*, featured photographic portraits of drivers who had picked her up on earlier hitchhiking trips, prior to *Brides on Tour*.¹⁶ Thus, Bacca's trust in the hospitality of strangers for the *Brides on Tour* mode of transportation was not a radical departure from her previous experience, including from her previous artwork. Her partner in hitchhiking, however, did not fully share her trust in humanity.

Good Face, Bad Face

The two artists had agreed that they would hitchhike for this project. During the journey, however, they argued over the strategy they should use in choosing who to accept rides from. According to Moro, Bacca wanted to accept rides from all drivers, while Moro was not willing to do that. In *La Mariée*, we see Moro pause and then recall a moment when she refused to get into a car with a few "fat, dirty-looking" men. "For Pippa, the fact I did not want to get into the car was treason," she says.¹⁷ Moro's attitude toward hitchhiking in *Brides on Tour* was more conditional than Bacca's. She might have believed in the overall message of the project, but she was not about to get into a car with just anyone who offered them a ride.

How did she decide which rides to accept? One of Moro's conditions was that a driver had to have a "good face": "I don't get into the car if the guy does not have a good face. . . . a calm, serene one."¹⁸ In the film, as she says this, Moro makes a

gesture with her hands as if she is drawing a narrow, well-proportioned circle in the air—a “good face.”

As I watched Moro, I wondered, what is the image in her mind? For myself, I imagined Italian Renaissance paintings, with their representations of what virtuous persons (men) are supposed to look like, based on tropes of Western art history. Those images were fed to me in my Soviet school art history curriculum and on visits to the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. And how does one go about choosing a driver based on a “good face” in one’s mind? Arguably, what Moro meant was not that one compares each stranger’s face to a “good face,” but rather that one has a gut feeling of who is safe or not, as a stranger. When Moro and Bacca disagreed, I imagine that Moro argued about what a “safe” driver would look like. It is unlikely she meant a calculated comparison to a set of “good face” standards each time a stranger is judged. That is how the *feeling* of danger or safety is formed (I speak to that later in this chapter in more detail).

Nevertheless, those types of decisions and gut feelings are repositories of unconscious biases and cultural stereotypes about what kind of people are “safe” as strangers, and what kind of people are not. From a personal safety point of view, Moro’s position about discriminating against men with “fat, dirty” faces is not that far-fetched. Many movies portray villains as having “those” kinds of faces. This kind of judgment happens more often than one might think and is involved

FIGURE 6.6. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée* (*The Bride*), Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Silvia Moro makes an impression of a “good face” as she speaks about deciding how to choose a driver when hitchhiking with Pippa Bacca in their project *Brides on Tour*.



in other decisions too, aside from hospitality situations. Such decisions may not be conscious but they are very visible, especially to those who are being judged. When Barack Obama mentioned in a speech about race relations in the United States that his grandmother “once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street,” he spoke to this kind of judgment, a gut feeling of being in danger when reacting to certain groups of people.¹⁹

Then there is the question of whether it is polite to discriminate between drivers when you are standing by the side of the road with a sign asking for a ride. Would such discrimination not be the kind of faux pas that Ana Prvački’s work trained her audience to avoid—to be a supplicant and then say, “No, thank you, not you, I don’t want this kindness or this service from *you*”? Moro’s discrimination between “good” and “bad” faces could be read as prudent—or insulting. It could also be read as racist or sexist, when guests and hosts are chosen based on their appearances. This is why many ride-hailing and home-sharing platforms, such as Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb, have been accused of discriminating based on race, gender, and national origin.²⁰

I once got into an elevator with a man in Moscow and was deciding about his face and my chances of a safe ride. As the elevator doors closed, my own face must have been distorted with fear because he asked me a question.

“Are you afraid of me?”

I replied honestly, “Yes.” No other word was exchanged between us.

As he exited the elevator, I was not sure about my answer or my behavior. On the one hand, I was tired of trying to be nice in covering up my consideration whether this man had a “good face” or a “bad face,” to use Moro’s distinction. I said, *yes, afraid*, because it was true; I was still undecided about whether to trust or to fear him. On the other hand, this interaction made me feel sad and ashamed rather than “brave,” as if I was questioning his humanness in mentally profiling him. My hesitation notwithstanding, I did enter the elevator and was right there with him. But clearly, I did not successfully disguise my fearful hesitation. What would that man have wanted his wife or daughter to do in my situation?²¹

Many adults my age remember running around their neighborhoods when they were children, playing with each other or visiting their adult neighbors. “Times were different then,” we say today. Children today are given specific instructions about not getting into elevators with strangers, particularly male strangers. As with other matters related to cultural and social tropes regarding

acceptable levels of safety around strangers, our reliance on laws and institutions to regulate our sense of safety does not change the indeterminate, situational, and arbitrary character of that sense. Thus, an online community called Free-Range Kids now tracks arrests and other legal troubles of parents who let their children walk a dog by themselves, or go alone to a park, or walk home from school alone.²² The calls to police in these cases are usually made by so-called concerned citizens. These neighbors and other members of the community decide who is safe and who is dangerous. It is hard to distinguish among perceptions of safety, the reality of danger, and racial or gender profiling. When one's community or loved ones are concerned, fear and profiling often win over trust and faith in strangers.

Bacca's firm position on accepting rides while hitchhiking was the opposite of Moro's. The practice of hitchhiking—of asking for and offering each other rides in our private spaces—is about community through hospitality, and therefore the only strategy Bacca had to prove her point was to get into *any* car that stopped, with *any* driver who offered her a ride. For Bacca, the relationships between her and Moro and the drivers on their journey were as important as what happened at each destination (the meetings with curators, artists, and midwives). By asking to be picked up and accepting rides from others, she and Moro were recognizing others as their fellow “neighbors.”

Bacca did not start this project alone, however. It was not her intention to hitchhike all by herself. When she initially conceptualized the project, she invited Moro to travel with her. Did she hedge her bets on this new journey across many unfamiliar countries by seeking a partner rather than doing it by herself, as she had for her previous exhibition in Perugia? We will never know. There were other elements that added to the artists' perception of safety, at least potentially. They informed the drivers who gave them rides that they were hitchhiking as part of their creative project, probably because the drivers were filmed, with their permission. There were other material elements as well. Bacca and Moro stood beside the road in their “strange-looking” bridal dresses with attached national flags and with cameras nearby documenting everything (see Plates 8 and 9). All these elements seemed to add layers of security, especially when they were together.

In *La Mariée*, director Joël Curtz asks Moro about why she and Bacca separated in Istanbul, and she explains that when they reached that city, Moro's boyfriend joined her, and the two of them decided to fly to Lebanon rather than



FIGURE 6.7. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. One of the drivers who gives Pippa Bacca a ride as she is hitchhiking in *Brides on Tour*.

hitchhike with Bacca. Why did Bacca decide to continue hitchhiking alone at that point? Her plan was to meet up with Moro again in Lebanon and then finish their journey hitchhiking to Israel. If initially Bacca did not embark on *Brides on Tour* alone, inviting Moro to join her, why did she decide to continue on alone? Was it because she felt that Moro's position about discriminating between drivers challenged her total trust in strangers, and she could not back off her principle now? Since the two women disagreed strongly about this specific topic, of whether to get into *any* car that would stop, it is possible that Bacca felt she had something to prove after Moro had left, and that may have played an important role in her decision. When challenged, in the heat of the moment, people do things they would not do otherwise. However, Bacca's decision to continue to hitchhike alone seems to me much more deliberate than impulsive. This was her life's work and a sign of her faith in strangers, including men with "fat, dirty" faces.

For Bacca's mother, also, the tragedy had nothing to do with Bacca being alone. In *La Mariée*, she says that her daughter's death was an accident, no different

from “being bitten by a rabid dog.” As such, it should not alter or dismiss the initial message of *Brides on Tour*, a message of “peace . . . fraternity . . . fellowship, and faith in one’s neighbor.”²³ Moro and Bacca disagreed about how to progress on their journey, but not about their overall message. In the film, Moro says that the project was conceived by both of them, and that she supports its message of peace. And Bacca’s mother certainly does not blame Moro; she views what happened as a random act of violence that could have occurred on any day in any part of the world.

This artwork, especially in Bacca’s case, challenged many of the decisions that we make every day—whose face looks “good,” whose face does not—and how we profile each other based on tacit, often unconscious, biases. Gender is only one category we use in such profiling. Race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, and social status are all involved in our quick gut decisions about who has a “good face,” a “good look.”

Pippa Bacca traveled alone and trusted men as her hitchhiking hosts. She refused to guess who was the wolf and who was the Good Samaritan based solely on appearances. Here lies the profound contradiction that this tragic story exposes: women are expected to be “good” as people and “safe” as women, but their safety seems to depend entirely on their own judgment. The wolf is the wolf. He cannot help himself. A woman needs to guess correctly who is in front of her. According to this logic, Moro guessed correctly; Bacca did not. I will come back to the problem of profiling, but first I will explore this fear that women are supposed to feel in public spaces and toward strangers.

Vicarious Fear and Cultural Difference

In the Introduction I presented the story of filmmaker Linda Hattendorf and artist Jimmy Mirikitani, the homeless man Hattendorf invited to stay in her small New York apartment after 9/11, to protect him from the ashes and devastation in lower Manhattan. The result of Hattendorf’s multimonth durational welcome was a happy ending, teaching us how hospitality can be transformational for both the host and the guest, as documented in a cathartic, brilliant work of art: Hattendorf’s film *The Cats of Mirikitani*. One of the questions that audience members ask after watching this film, echoing my own, reflects our own fears of welcoming a stranger, a homeless man: What was the worst that could have happened? After Hattendorf chose to host Mirikitani in her apartment, she was

asked, “Weren’t you afraid for your safety?” But when Greg Schiller, a man, invited homeless men to stay in his basement, he was not asked the same question, the implication being that he had no reason to fear for his safety. As I have shown in other chapters, hospitality involves very different choices for men and women. On the one hand, women are identified with welcome par excellence, as those who provide its essence of passive waiting, serving, and hosting others. On the other hand, a completely opposite message is delivered by countless warnings to women throughout their lives to fear strangers, especially male strangers.

You, a woman, do not want to listen and still want to explore the big and dangerous world on your own, despite your elders’ and your culture’s advice? Go ahead, but at your own peril, as you have been warned. Anything that happens will be *your* fault. When I have presented lectures about *Brides on Tour*, I have been asked, “What was Bacca thinking by hitchhiking in Turkey?” In my conversations with other artists, curators, and scholars, I have found that many put the blame on Bacca for what happened to her (her choices, her behavior, caused her death). They assert that it was irresponsible of her to expect a different result, suggesting that she was baiting the drivers, behaving as a seductress. By opening herself up to hospitality she was, in a sense, “asking for it,” inviting an assault, especially when she crossed the border into Turkey. To these critics, Moro seems much more cautious and reasonable than Bacca, and even more respectful of cultural and other differences as the women traveled across unfamiliar territory.

Contrary to the ideal of becoming the “Mother of Exiles” from Lazarus’s poem on the Statue of Liberty, the message to women is that they should trust only their relatives and those strangers who are part of their community. And even when something happens to them in their own communities, it is their fault. In a memoir that explores her own experience with sexual violence and subsequent fears, award-winning investigative reporter Joanna Connors writes about the connection between women’s socialization and their perception of risk. Her journalist husband, who wrote about crime on the streets of Cleveland when they moved to that city in the 1980s, warned her about specific locations in the city; she observes that “sometimes that first year I felt like a child listening to fairy tales about the dangers lurking in the woods. Go straight to work, Little Red Riding Hood, and don’t stop or the wolf might get you.”²⁴ Though the danger in her case came not on the streets but in what she perceived as the “safe space” of a college campus, she nevertheless blamed herself for being sexually assaulted, because she felt she had been warned: “It was my fault. My own,

stupid, gullible, naïve fault.”²⁵ Connors shows how that sense of self-blame goes back to the real lesson of warning that women are supposed to receive: *Be nice at all times, including to strangers, but if something happens, it’s your fault. You were not careful enough.*²⁶ Moreover, as Connors argues, women become more fearful because they are exposed to secondhand accounts of harm by strangers, especially toward certain groups of women (white, middle-class, young, just like Pippa Bacca). Such stories proliferate not just in fairy tales, in the news, and in social media but also in personal everyday interactions among friends and relatives, leading to what researchers call “vicarious fear.”

Vicarious fear is not based on personal experience but on stories, real and fictional, about things that have happened to other people. It is a sympathetic fear. For example, after reading Connors’s book, a woman might start feeling scared on college campuses, experiencing rapid heartbeat, fight-or-flight reactions, anxiety, and so forth. Vicarious fear is a *feeling*. Vicarious fear is about *believing* that you or your loved ones are in danger (an example is Mirikitani’s fear about what might happen to Hattendorf when she stayed out late). And vicarious fear has a huge impact on decisions about hospitality to and from strangers, and even on feelings of being unwelcome in any public place. That is why a strong dismissal of fears and anxieties, or even the provision of statistics about how “safe” a situation truly is, does not help to promote a sense of safety. Statistically, Bacca’s mother is right. A woman is much more likely to be harmed by a family member or boyfriend, or to be hit by a car on the way to work, than to be the victim of a stranger attack. But that is not how women are *supposed to feel* in public spaces.

More men than women are victims of murder and other types of violent physical harm (in total numbers). But no one expects men to stay at home because of the high level of risk they face or blame them for being harmed. Men are culturally praised for taking risks and embracing the unpredictability of encounters with strangers and the world at large even if in doing so they may be endangering their lives. Cultural, social, and legal changes are needed to address this kind of gendered double standard. That is why the specific contexts of the art projects discussed in this book, including the cultural aspects of fears and anxieties, need to be analyzed.

Fear is a method of social control and discipline. It has been used to preclude various groups of people, especially women and members of religious, sexual, racial, and ethnic minorities, from living full lives and gaining full access to employment and other opportunities. As interpersonal violence researchers

Samantha Riggs and Carrie L. Cook observe, “Fear can be as harmful as victimization in some cases, as fear causes people to alter and restrict their social activities and daily routines which can affect life experiences.” Further, they note, studies have shown that modifying one’s behavior because of fear, such as not going out or not inviting others in, “has a reciprocal effect on fear at best, or at worst actually increases fear of crime.”²⁷ That is, fear produces fear. Fear leads to a diminished quality of life and the social and cultural expectation that one should be scared for one’s life and always on guard.

Vicarious fear shapes cultural and social expectations of women artists. Perceived risk around strangers and the implied lack of risk around friends and family leads to an inability, even in literature about hospitality, to imagine alternatives regarding how women artists should go about public encounters. Artists are often praised for taking risks, stepping outside the safety of the gallery and doing projects in the “real world” and in “diverse communities.”²⁸ This standard, however, seems to apply only to men artists. Women artists are told: better work in groups; if you want to take a risk, do it in a gallery; be safe or be blamed for being “naive.”²⁹ This social control through fear makes it harder for women artists to work on such ambitious projects as *Brides on Tour*. Fear divides. It is one more element that collectives of women artists, unlike gender-mixed or men artists, have to take into account and discuss—and are expected to discuss, as reactions to *Brides on Tour* show. This work cannot be understood without a deep consideration of the role that vicarious, expected, controlling, and fracturing fear has on hospitality.

Since the #MeToo movement started, a number of hashtag campaigns have highlighted the inequities faced by women. One that is particularly relevant to my discussion here is #Viajosa (I travel alone). This hashtag was started in 2016 in protest after two Argentinian women were murdered while traveling in Ecuador and many people responded to the news by blaming them for their own deaths. Critics questioned why the women were traveling alone—that is, not accompanied by men. According to this logic, when Bacca and Moro were hitchhiking together, they traveled alone. The murders of the Argentinian women again raised the question of whether women should be more cautious and not trust strangers. Vicarious fear means that in public spaces, women must assume that any “strange” man they encounter is a potential rapist and murderer; the message is, just stay in your home country—at least there you will have a better radar for who has a “good face.”

The reality is not so simple, of course. The disagreement between Moro and Bacca brought up more than just considerations of violence against women. Compared with Bacca, Moro was potentially more sensitive to cultural differences and less inclined to assume a universal humanistic message. This position would add weight to the arguments of those who wanted the artists to show more awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences and other identity markers in addition to gender. For example, a suggestion could be made that it was especially naive and even culturally insensitive to hitchhike in rural Turkey, and that the women should have been more scared to be in unfamiliar public places. These arguments highlight the fine line between cultural sensitivity and cultural stereotyping.

The call for cultural sensitivity would imply that the *Brides on Tour* artists needed to be more respectful of expectations of women's behavior in public in the areas where they were traveling and not just bring with them their own expectations as white middle-class European women. What would this approach have meant in practice? One scenario might have been for them to abandon hitchhiking in rural Turkey altogether. Let us see how this would have sounded, if Bacca and Moro had stated, "After hitchhiking throughout Western and Central Europe, we plan to fly over Turkey and Lebanon straight into Israel, for a show at a gallery. This will enable us to respect cultural differences in those countries where women do not customarily hitchhike or travel alone, without men." Such a statement would also have been problematic, as it would have stereotyped the whole region as unwelcoming to women traveling on their own.

I had a personal encounter with a man who attended a lecture I gave about *Brides on Tour* at a university in one of the countries that Bacca and Moro had traveled through. This man commented that Bacca's murder proved to him that "Turkish Muslim men are animals," implying that they consider women as second-class citizens, unlike "civilized men" like himself. His anti-Turkish Islamophobic statement demonstrates that distinguishing between sensitivity to cultural differences and blatant xenophobia is less straightforward than it might seem. I was taken aback by the fact that this man felt so comfortable in expressing a hateful stereotype at an open academic forum. I pointed out to him that his statement was offensive and that *Brides on Tour* and my lecture were both intended to fight such hateful stereotypes. His hostility toward Turkish Muslims, however, was more powerful than anything I could say. He used the circumstances of Bacca's death to feed his hatred. Then, as other audience mem-

bers asked questions that revealed their negative judgment of Bacca for being so naive as to hitchhike in Turkey, I realized how in that forum blaming her for what happened to her was connected to viewing all Turkish Muslim men as “rapists.” This is the type of hatred that Derrida described in reference to the recent wars in the Balkans, as discussed in chapter 1 in relation to Ana Prvački’s project. In that moment, the decision that Bacca could have made, to just fly over some countries and not others in an effort to be culturally sensitive, would have reinforced the worst stereotypes based on gender, national origin, religion, ethnicity, and class.

How does one know, then, what is the most culturally sensitive approach to take? The answer depends on how much one can, in fact, choose. Moro and Bacca had two choices, to fly or not. Many of Bacca’s critics assumed them to have those choices too. This implies that one can choose to not travel to “dangerous” parts of the world or to “unsafe” parts of one’s own city or country. But what about those who do not have such choices, who live in “those” areas and cannot travel?

This line of criticism allows a deeper dive into the *Brides on Tour* project, beyond the suggestion that Bacca should not have hitchhiked at all in Turkey and, hence, should be blamed for what happened to her. *Brides on Tour* highlighted how when only some have choices to travel and create projects for peace, their choices might gloss over or even reinforce already existing inequalities in other respects (class, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation). Bacca and Moro, as I described above, were not insensitive culturally from their point of view. They learned Arabic, they had national flags stitched to their white dresses, they had arranged local contacts. But at the same time, their agenda, at least for me, was not critical enough, relying as it did on the premise that the ideals of hospitality are already good, if only we—humanity—practice them.

In treating the ideal of hospitality uncritically, as a universal strategy for peace, the artists in *Brides on Tour* did not realize that contradictions and inequalities are built into this ideal. It is not a failure of one man, or a man with a “bad face,” but rather a systemic failure of hospitality, as a social practice, and its ideals that women have not been welcomed in public spaces to the same extent as men. They are not meant to be welcomed. It is only recently that there has been a push toward changing this situation, and not just in the field of contemporary art. Then the question becomes, Whose cultural differences to support? Those who want change or those who resist it? There is no such thing as one

unified, uncontested notion of “culture” and its “differences,” as in one Italian culture or one Turkish culture. *Brides on Tour* raises an important question: Is it possible to respect cultural differences without providing cover for those who perpetuate gender-based violence? Originally, the project, although it started on March 8, International Women’s Day, did not seem to have much of a feminist agenda—the artists did not raise the issue of women’s rights in the locales they visited or connect with women’s rights activists. Most of that work took place after the tragedy, when other artists and activists who made tributes to *Brides on Tour* argued for women’s right to inhabit and be welcomed in public spaces without the expectation of being harmed.

Bacca’s Lessons

Brides on Tour is an example of contemporary artists’ desire to leave the gallery and change the world, to make art by going into the community at large, to blend art and life. In my experience speaking about this work, I have found that women artists are judged differently from their male counterparts. The blending of art and life is often written about as avant-garde and courageous when the artists are men, but for women and gender-nonconforming artists the combination of art with life is seen as precarious and personal, if not outright stupidly dangerous, far from avant-garde.

Despite my reservations about blaming the victim, Bacca, for what happened to her, I understand the rationale of those who do not see anything in this project other than colonial entitlement: white women from Europe expected the whole world to welcome them and wanted to heal war-torn regions by enabling others’ welcome. For such critics, Bacca was no different from many other white tourists and travelers, or even missionaries and colonizers, with their goal of religious conversion, in her zeal to affirm the universalism of her vision of peace. But is that all there is to this work? I do not think so.

I agree that Bacca’s background was privileged, and that her work was problematic because of the missionary zeal with which she explored a potential message of universal hospitality. Her message could easily be construed as having elements of what I described in the Introduction as the “white savior complex,” in which a white person assumes that people of color need help, thinks she knows what kind of help they need, and, though not asked, provides help that benefits mostly the white person herself. I recognize many of these elements in

Brides on Tour. At the same time, I find Bacca's radical idea of accepting hospitality from all who offered it, without discrimination, to be a significant element of the *Brides on Tour* art project and a challenge to hospitality as we have known it to date. This project needs to be considered as a whole, with all of its contradictions and vulnerabilities, including its problematic universalism. And Bacca's affirmation that one should not discriminate among hosts should not be dismissed either.

Explanations of what happened to Bacca and how it happened have relied to varying degrees on arguments concerning class, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, geographic origin, and even the mental health of Bacca's murderer, Murat Karataş. Would such identity markers have mattered to Bacca herself? I do not think so. The responsibility for what happened to her is not hers just because she decided to trust drivers of any gender, class, ethnicity, geographic origin, and religion. Her critics say these aspects of identity should have mattered to her more, and hence she bears responsibility for her own death. I do not believe that her death adds to the significance of the identity markers of her murderer outside of our own choices to interpret the tragedy one way or another. How Bacca felt about this question is what is important to me here: that Bacca insisted to Moro that her principle was to accept *any* driver's offer, otherwise we will continue this profiling of ourselves and others as acceptable guests and hosts rather than opening up new possibilities of welcome.

Hitchhiking is highly visible as an act that takes place in public among total strangers. As far removed from an art gallery or a museum as it gets, hitchhiking often occurs in rural areas, far from international art centers. Other artists have seen Bacca's choices as standing in solidarity with their own artworks that claim public spaces around the world for those who have previously been excluded from them. The tradition of public spaces as being unwelcome, hostile, dangerous places for women and minorities has been promoted and sustained for so long that those who question this assumption may be seen as suffering a lapse of commonsense judgment.³⁰

That is why *Brides on Tour* and Bacca were supported by many Turkish women artists, who paid tribute to the work and transformed its original message of peace into a demand for safety for women travelers. One significant art project inspired by *Brides on Tour* that sought to make Turkey itself more welcoming to women was created by Turkish film director Bingöl Elmas. In her documentary *Pippa'ya Mektubum* (*My Letter to Pippa*, 2010), Elmas finishes Bacca's journey in

Turkey by hitchhiking from the place of Bacca's death to Lebanon. Rather than accepting women's fears for their safety in public as the "reality" or necessity, Elmas points to the low expectations that women especially are accustomed to when it comes to their being welcomed in the world outside their homes.

In the film, Elmas reads her letter to Pippa Bacca on-screen, addressing the artist directly, saying that when she disappeared, "we guessed what had happened to you, because we knew what it means to be a woman here." In footage from Turkish protests about Bacca's death, some of the signs carried by demonstrators say, "Just being a woman means that you can be killed."³¹ Elmas is seen wearing a bridal-looking dress that is black, presumably the color of mourning, as she hitchhikes along the same roads that Bacca and Moro planned to travel in their white dresses to the border with Lebanon. She tries to hold her camera so that the scenes look very similar to Bacca's video footage. In one scene, a man in a sweater looks curiously at the camera but does not say anything. Another driver smiles, then we see two men next to Elmas. Elmas shows that the time has come to demand that women be welcomed in public spaces as guests equal to men, without the expectation that they must know how to judge and profile others properly, especially men, in order to assure their personal safety.

Other creative projects have sought to affirm Bacca's message of peace and hospitality among strangers as well. One, the theater play *Pippa*, has been touring the world since her death, in her memory. The play also affirms the message of peace and hospitality among strangers.³²

Can there be solidarity among persons from different countries to demand safety in public spaces for people of all genders and sexualities, or would such solidarity imply the flattening of many significant cultural differences? I do not think that solidarity on this issue would necessarily imply a flattening of differences, as two examples above show. This question, after all, is not an abstraction, and Elmas answers it loudly and clearly. She stands in solidarity with Bacca. If the ideal of hospitality excludes anyone based on gender or sexual orientation, or some other identity marker, the ideal fails. My argument in this book is that welcome is arrested when hospitality fails to live up to its promise by being hostile to some groups, when it creates and maintains exclusions and hierarchies of entitlements. My position is similar to Bacca's, that the demand to be able to distinguish between a "good face" and a "bad face" among hosts and guests is a slippery slope. The notion that women must develop such internalized radar for safety only leads to demands for individual women to modify their behavior.

If something happens to them, they can be blamed for it. In addition to abandoning the idea that women should profile men, we should recognize that men can do more to create welcoming spaces for all, as Lee Mingwei did with his art projects described in chapter 3. Since the 1970s, there have been movements of men against rape and rape culture, and, more recently, men who openly support the #MeToo movement have also supported robust public debate about the need for men to actively listen to women who speak out about abuse and act to oppose such abuse.

Another lesson of *Brides on Tour* is that differences among women do matter. The lack of more robust collaboration between the artists and other activist women meant that only one side—the Italian side—of this project contributed initial ideas, stated intentions, and determined the overall message of peace. There were differences between Bacca and Moro too, especially in their views of what it meant to be a hitchhiking woman. Involving other women from the areas where they traveled might have deepened the project's practice and meaning.

Yet another lesson is that when hospitality situations are set up outside museum spaces and art galleries, artists need to be especially thoughtful in carrying out their artistic intentions. When artists push the boundaries of art by making projects that profoundly involve total strangers, they are perceived not primarily as artists but as persons with gender, race, class, and national identities. In the case of *Brides on Tour*, the artists were seen first as white Western European women, as persons of privilege and resources in the regions in which they traveled. Curtz's film emphasizes this fact, as described above, even if only in the background of the story about the project.

This project continues to elicit many strong and often opposing reactions. I have been asked whether I would have written about *Brides on Tour* if Bacca had not been murdered, and I have given the question a lot of thought, because Bacca's death matters. Like Curtz, I do not want to sensationalize the tragedy. The question of whether this work matters only because of what happened to Bacca, however, assumes the possibility of going back in time and imagining, like Mithu Sen did, "what if" and "only if." Saying yes, that I would have written about this work without reference to the tragedy, implies that what happened to Bacca can be disconnected from the work. But neither is the tragedy the only reason this work remains so important. I discuss *Brides on Tour* because the work was about hospitality between strangers, offering a rare example of an artist, alone, hitchhiking to seek that hospitality from *anyone* who offered it,

without profiling. I wish the work had ended differently. I wish it had ended well, as planned, as did the other works discussed in this book. The fact is, Bacca's death happened in the middle of the artwork, as a result of the artwork, and cannot be separated from it.

There will never be a time when encounters between strangers within a framework of hospitality become totally predictable, and that has not been my point here. As a scholar of hospitality, I have studied the ancient stories quoted by contemporary philosophers who have brought hospitality back as a major topic in intellectual discussions, especially in response to the refugee crises around the world. Often, just like *Brides on Tour*, those ancient stories end in tragedy, especially for women.³³ One of the key lessons for me is how Bacca's own refusal to discriminate among potential hosts is connected to the need to create public spaces that are more welcoming to previously excluded guests. Does Bacca's tragic end mean that we should give up on hospitality? Not according to those who were inspired by this work and created their own projects about more welcoming public spaces for those who have previously been excluded.

HOSPITALITY NOW

Ken Aptekar

To come to this country,
my body must assemble itself
into photographs and signatures.
Among them they will search for me.
I must leave behind all uncertainties.
I cannot myself be a question.

—Gabeba Baderoon, “I Cannot Myself”

South African and American poet and scholar Gabeba Baderoon refuses to anticipate or fear the inhospitality of others. This is not just a leap of faith in another person. In her poem “I Cannot Myself,” Baderoon issues a new challenge regarding what it means to be welcomed, an urgent demand for hospitality on behalf of those who have been framed as “a question.” In its sparse lines, the poem also reveals the cost to one’s inner sense of peace when the question of one’s belonging to a community is constantly externally probed, leaving a lifetime burden of proving oneself with “photographs” and “signatures.”¹ The state apparatus uses legal language to translate communal inhospitality into bureaucratic application forms and unending paperwork, making it easy for citizens of the state to fail to see the personal role they play in supporting this inhospitality.

This experience of being existentially unwelcomed can lead to an injured sense of self. In her book *Uninvited: Living Loved When You Feel Less Than, Left Out, and Lonely*, Lysa TerKeurst describes how she carried a sense of being uninvited from childhood into her adult life: If “someone doesn’t invite me to her event, my thoughts recount all the faults and frailties I’ve voiced about myself recently. Suddenly, I assign my thoughts to that person. I hear her saying these same hurtful things. I feel labeled and judged and, yes, rejected.”² TerKeurst identifies her family of origin as a source of her feeling of being uninvited in

this world, with the initial cause being her father's rejection of their family. She shares her personal healing journey, offering readers insights into how they can overcome this type of rejection. But what happens if a person forms an injured sense of self as a result of having been uninvited by society, community, history? When entire groups of people are harmed by their systematic exclusion from the hospitality of those who are in power and in the majority, "living loved" requires challenging the foundations of communal inhospitality.

Community is an abstract notion until a welcoming gesture and labor of hospitality take place. The new forms of hospitality presented by the artists discussed in this book are not new just in terms of the artists' looking into the future and helping their audiences imagine hospitality differently. They are also new in relation to the old habits of arrested welcome that discriminate between the "good face" and the "bad face," as described in chapter 6, and the practice of offering unconditional hospitality only to some groups—those privileged by class, gender, race, national belonging, and other markers of social status—at the expense of others. The new forms of hospitality discussed in this book take not only imagination but also courage and a leap of faith, because exclusions from and denials of welcome have long been part of how the promise of unconditional hospitality is conditioned in practice by divisions between "us" and "them." Extending an invitation to (or accepting one from) "them" might mean standing up to the inhospitalities perpetrated by one's own community. A community wields communal disciplinary power, and it might act against its own members to enforce a communal vision of (in)hospitality. The consequences of becoming unwelcome within one's own community range from relatively mild, albeit potentially significant and consequential, forms of discipline, such as stern warnings and threats, to harsh physical punishment and exclusion. Historically, there have been many instances when defiant hospitality has been punished by death. That is why new forms of hospitality require not only a new vision of community but also solidarity and support among those who are committed and courageous enough to enact this new vision.

Neighbors

Early in 2016, contemporary American artist Ken Aptekar asked me to translate several sentences from English to Russian for his *Nachbarn/Neighbours* exhibition at the St. Annen-Museum in Lübeck, Germany. The exhibition, which ran

from February 7 to May 29, 2016, was designed to address the topic of neighbor-to-neighbor relations, past and present, among ethnic Germans, German Jews, and recent Turkish and Russian immigrants and their descendants (for this reason, the exhibition materials were presented in German, Turkish, English, and Russian). Most of the original German Jewish residents of Lübeck had been murdered or had fled during the Holocaust, so the present-day Jewish community consisted primarily of Eastern European immigrants, many of whom spoke Russian. My translations were for this audience.

I had visited Aptekar's studio a year before. We talked about my interest in hospitality, and I saw the paintings he planned to use for *Nachbarn/Neighbours*. The exhibition installation also included a video and objects. As I was translating into Russian several passages about one family's fate, I was struck particularly by the story of one key object, a towel:

1941. Food rations for the Simson Carlebach family are reduced. Jews are not permitted to buy meat, milk, cigarettes, or white bread, and can shop only between the hours of 4PM and 5PM.

After nightfall, neighbors provide the family with food that they secretly leave inside their garden gate, a crime severely punished by the Nazis.

When the Carlebachs find out the Nazis are coming to pick them up, they tie a monogrammed kitchen towel to the garden gate, a final thank you and farewell.

1984. Nearly five decades after the Nazis murdered most of the Lübeck Jews in the Bikerniecki forest in Riga, the Hanseatic City welcomes Simson Carlebach's son Felix. He managed to escape to England in 1939.

In the town hall near the synagogue, where Salomon Carlebach was Rabbi from 1870 to 1919, Felix Carlebach and his family are honored by the people of Lübeck.

A woman approaches the guest of honor. "Our parents were neighbors. I brought you something that belongs to you," she says, and hands him the monogrammed kitchen towel.³

For the exhibition, Aptekar presented this family story in six paintings with German text accompanied by English translations (see Plate 10). The paintings were based on motifs found on Renaissance altarpieces that were part of the St. Annen-Museum collection. Through the paintings, Aptekar wanted to raise the question, "What can Christian paintings from long ago, some with

anti-Semitic imagery, possibly have to say to Jews, and Muslims, not to mention Christians, today?”⁴ By strategically selecting centuries-old scenes and overlaying portraits with the family’s Holocaust-period story, Aptekar compressed time in the paintings, making neighbors of many centuries coexist in the same space at the same time—making them contemporaries.

This kind of connection to community takes time. Aptekar took the time (he spent ten years preparing the exhibition) to ensure that his work would enable his audience to “see” neighbors in this intimate light, throughout centuries, as contemporaries of one another. Aptekar spent years with German Christian, Jewish, and Muslim residents of Lübeck of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. He immersed himself in the city’s Jewish diaspora and learned many stories before focusing on one element, that of the neighborly defiant welcome. Aptekar was hosted by residents of Lübeck throughout a decade, which is why the story of neighbors was so precious to him. This exhibition proposed a new form of welcome that Aptekar envisioned for Lübeck; it was a platform not only for recovering the past but also for returning the welcome he received.⁵

Aptekar sent me the names of his hosts in Lübeck:

- Heidemarie Kugler-Weimann, head researcher for the Stolpersteine project in the city⁶
- Albrecht Schreiber, former newspaper editor and author of several books about the history of the Jewish community in Lübeck
- Rolf Verleger, professor of neuropsychology at the University of Lübeck and former president of the city’s synagogue
- Murat Kayman, legal counsel for the Muslim Community in Germany, based in Cologne
- Alla Prien and her son, Tim Prien, Lübeck residents

The Priens were new, post-Holocaust, Jewish residents of the city who provided the artist with Russian-language expressions, the sorts of things that neighbors would say to each other, which Aptekar incorporated into his paintings. Many of the citizens of the city who had hosted Aptekar attended the opening of the exhibition.

I list the people who supported Aptekar’s work here to make a point. A work of art about hospitality such as this one, developed with community members who have given their time and resources, imagines a new form of equitable neighborliness, with a hope of releasing welcome from its previously arrested states. The artist did not just fly in for the exhibition. For Aptekar, it was not just



FIGURE C.1. Ken ApteKar, *Nachbarn/Neighbours*, 2016, Kunsthalle St. Annen, Lübeck, Germany. The opening of the exhibition brings the community together. Ken ApteKar wears a dark suit and talks to visitors in the gallery. Photographs copyright Linn Underhill.

a “gallery” show; rather, it was an act of immersing himself in the community with a desire to ask questions about the future of hospitality in a specific location, responding to the presence of specific people, with their varied histories, identities, and traditions of arrested welcome. The result of this exhibition is the possibility of a new community, in Lübeck and beyond, right here and now. Aptekar, like Ana Prvački, is not naive about hospitality as a solution to all problems, but he does want his audience to be confronted with the possibility of a new solidarity, enabling new forms of welcome.

Aptekar’s exhibition confronted the viewer with personal implications in a political reality, where individual choices could lead to outcomes of historical magnitude. The distinction between “us” and “them,” which is often to blame for historical violence, is not fixed and thus depends on such individual choices. The Carlebach family members who were taken by the Nazis were murdered without much protest from those whom they used to call neighbors. Were they ever *real* neighbors who could rely on each other in times of need? Neighbors are defined by their proximity in space (living near to one another) and time (being together in the same moment). Community is defined through shared territory, language, and customs. Even if the members of the Carlebach family considered themselves to be part of Lübeck’s community because they lived in the same space and time as ethnic Germans, the question posed by this exhibition concerned what they meant for each other as neighbors. After all, Jewish families had been living under the precarious rules and regulations of European anti-Semitism for centuries, including in ways depicted on the altar paintings in St. Annen-Museum. For Aptekar, such history did not mean that his audience should resign themselves to a future of the same violence that was experienced in the past; rather, he challenged his viewers to wonder about contemporary “Lübeckers’ attitudes toward Muslims—and the Russian Jews now living in Lübeck.”⁷

Here, in the spirit of this specific exhibition, Aptekar chose the story of a towel, rather than larger legal, structural issues, as his focus. The story speaks to the power of art in considering the question of communal hospitality.

The Carlebachs’ Towel

In this exhibition, the key object that represented both the hope of welcome and the violence of its failures was the towel. There was nothing extraordinary about the towel itself, or about the glass cabinet that housed it. A visitor had to take

the time to read the story and imagine neighbors risking their own lives and the lives of their loved ones to bring baskets of food to the starving Carlebach family. Placed in this exhibition as an art object, the towel represented the will of the Carlebachs, who, after having been tipped off that Nazis were coming for them, wanted their neighbors to see the towel on the threshold of their home—at the gate—and understand . . . so many things, I imagine. That they had been taken, that food was no longer needed, and leaving a basket would jeopardize their own safety. They did not expect to return and wanted at least one personal possession to remain behind, a sign of their presence in this world. This one possession, a towel, was left for someone who had been courageous enough to feed them. Although the food was helpful, it was not enough to save them. They needed much more than food. They were also in need of shelter, refuge, and escape, things the neighbors did not offer.

This kitchen towel had the initials of Felix Carlebach's mother, Raisi Graupe, embroidered on it. Such embroidered kitchen towels are passed from one generation to the next as wedding gifts across many regions in Europe. This towel was

FIGURE C.2. Ken Aptekar, *Nachbarn/Neighbours*, 2016, Kunsthalle St. Annen, Lübeck, Germany. A view of the exhibition, including the modest display case for the towel and paintings on the walls. Photograph copyright Linn Underhill.



similar to the one that the artist Ana Prvački received from her grandmother (chapter 1), who had inspired Prvački's own memory of her grandmother's hospitality practices, leading her to Kassel, Germany, where she trained employees of the *documenta 13* exhibition in etiquette and courtesy with strangers. The quality of an embroidered kitchen towel speaks to the care of the material choices. Families do not use these towels just for wiping their hands. The labor involved in hand embroidery, along with the fabric's crispness and coolness to the touch as well as the quality of the weaving, speaks to the care and respect offered to guests. Therefore, such towels are reserved for use by guests on occasions of hospitality, their embellishments showing the pride of the house and attention to the aesthetics of welcome.

There is more to the story of how this towel came to appear in the exhibition. The anonymous woman who eventually gave the towel to Felix Carlebach in 1984 had kept the towel in her family, waiting forty years for the opportunity to return it. I suspect she knew the story of the Carlebachs' towel from the whispers of her own family members before they passed away. One can only imagine what Felix Carlebach felt when he heard the story about the last neighborly gesture of his perished father and other family members, and held his grandmother's welcoming kitchen towel in his hands more than four decades later. All we know for certain is that he kept it.

By the time of the exhibition in 2016, Felix Carlebach had passed away, and the towel was now in the possession of his daughter, Sula. When Aptekar learned about the existence of this towel during his long visits to Lübeck, he wanted to find it for potential display in his exhibition. He asked a friend, art scholar Janet Wolff, who wrote an essay for the exhibition's catalog, to facilitate his inquiry. Wolff lived in Manchester, England, as had Felix Carlebach, and she happened to know Sula. Wolff asked Sula Carlebach to take a picture of the towel and then requested her permission to include the towel itself in the exhibition. Sula obliged and sent the towel to Lübeck by mail from Manchester. After the exhibition, it was returned to her by mail. Thus, many people had to know each other and be connected in their communities, and give time and effort, so that this modest-looking object could take its place in the exhibition.

The significance of the towel was that it offered evidence, in this case, of both crime and defiant welcome. As an old object made of soft white cloth, touched by many hands, the towel enabled Aptekar's message of the need for more courageous hospitality today. Moreover, for Wolff, as for Aptekar, the modest-looking



FIGURE C.3. Ken Aptekar, *Nachbarn/Neighbours*, 2016, Kunsthalle St. Annen, Lübeck, Germany. Cylinder towel of the Carlebach family, circa 1900. This towel was originally intended to clean the glass cylinder of an oil lamp; it was likely used later by the Carlebach family as a kitchen towel. Lent by Sula Leon, London. Photograph copyright Linn Underhill.

towel represented hope, despite its history of bearing witness to collective violence between neighbors. In the exhibition catalog Wolff describes the process of obtaining the towel and what that “ordinary” object meant for her:

I checked with Felix Carlebach’s daughter, Sula, who sent me by return of email a photo of the thing itself. Of course it turns out to look rather different from Ken Aptekar’s imagined version. It is embroidered with the initials of Felix Carlebach’s mother, Raisi Graupe. In one way a very ordinary piece of cloth, it appears imbued with melancholy and with the knowledge of its history and of the fate of its owners. It also retains the ineradicable presence of hope—the memory of the generosity and constancy of neighbours.⁸

But just as one hopes for a better future, the emotions around this towel pulled the subject of welcome in opposite directions, speaking to the ambivalence of Aptekar’s key question in this exhibition: “Can people recognize and respect their profound differences and together build a vibrant community?”⁹ The towel for him represented the possibility of an affirmative answer, provided that difficult histories could be acknowledged and openly considered. Aptekar’s new forms of hospitality were woven from the threads of this towel, as he hoped for new solidarities among Jewish, Muslim, and Christian neighbors, such that they would not only tolerate each other but also build a *vibrant, welcoming* community, *together*. Vibrant communities are usually characterized by strong and neighborly relations, with events such as block parties and invitations among community members to participate in one another’s family celebrations. Vibrant communities provide food and refuge to *any* of their members in times of need, rather than divide members into groups of “us” and “them.” Aptekar’s artwork also shows that divisions are not as stable as one might imagine, whether in law or in everyday life. Some of those who are treated as part of “us” today may become “them” tomorrow.

The Problem with Gratitude

The woman who gave Carlebach the towel preferred to remain anonymous. The two did not become friends or keep in touch. Why did she not want her name revealed? Was she modest? For the artist, her anonymity was a positive sign, because it signified that she did not want anything in return: “What impressed me

most,” Aptekar has stated, “is that the woman then just disappeared. She didn’t want anything. She wanted to give and receive nothing back, not recognition, atonement, nothing.”¹⁰ But she could also have felt ashamed that more was not done to save the Carlebachs—her family’s neighbors—a possibility that makes the mention of gratitude suspect. These past events, after all, are still living on in new generations, in people such as Sula Carlebach, who was not present in person at the exhibition. I am not aware of whether the woman who passed the towel to Carlebach is still alive, and I do not know if she visited Aptekar’s exhibition. Could it be that she was still scared of “outing” herself and her family as defying their own community in what would ordinarily be a relatively small gesture of hospitality—leaving a dish at the door? Was she still embarrassed and ashamed that her ancestors did not do more? Fear and shame arising from issues of arrested hospitality run deep, leaving scars, but for Aptekar, they also provide the basis for hope.

The woman’s decision to remain unnamed is open to various interpretations. Several reviewers of the exhibition followed Aptekar’s hopeful reading, describing the towel as “a sign of gratitude” from the Carlebach family to their anonymous German neighbors.¹¹ This explanation for the towel’s presence was conveyed to the exhibition audience through the text in one of the paintings, as quoted above: “They tie a monogrammed kitchen towel to the garden gate, a final thank you and farewell.” Building on the tension of the historical context, however, I am also interested in other, less generous readings of the towel and what it represents for the subject of arrested welcome. My reading centers on the question of gratitude.

I have written very little about gratitude in this book, and that has been intentional. Feelings of gratitude tend to follow “unexpected” hospitality, when someone does not anticipate or feel that they are entitled to being welcomed. Pippa Bacca assumed unconditional hospitality from the world. To those who consider that assumption to be naive or the result of a sense of entitlement on the part of a privileged white European woman, I ask: Should Bacca have felt “grateful” to any man who did not rape and kill her? Should women feel grateful to others for not harming them? Should the Muslims in Lübeck be grateful today? Or the Jews who survived? Even if I agree with Aptekar’s reading of the towel as a gesture of thanks, I am not sure if gratitude is what I find helpful now. Furthermore, against the common reading, I can also imagine that the

Carlebachs left the towel out of desperation, to indicate that they had been taken (and to protect neighbors from leaving more food and getting into trouble with the Nazi authorities).

The towel is precious because nothing else is left. The object itself, apart from the rest of the exhibition, including the paintings, is meaningless. Gratitude in such cases, even if it exists, is bittersweet, and likely mixed with anger. Instead of neighborly courage, the towel could represent for survivors how little was done by neighbors who perhaps could and should have done more. The towel represents all the lost meals together, all the welcomes that never happened. There is no gratitude to speak of here. In such a reading of the towel, even the topic of gratitude itself is offensive. And who am I to write about all of this?

When I translated Aptekar's text for the exhibition into Russian, I imagined how Russian-speaking visitors would feel about the story the exhibition was telling. In the post-Soviet period several authors have written about Russian anti-Semitism. One of them is Lev Rubinstein, a poet, writer, and public intellectual. In one instance, Rubinstein has written about his Jewish grandmother, "a very kind person" who was terrified of Russians as an entire ethnic group. As a child, he could not understand why she would fear his schoolmates, who were habitually welcomed at their apartment to play. Later he learned she feared them because Russians had been the ones who, over the same several decades of the twentieth century covered by Aptekar's exhibition, had entered her house uninvited "on at least four occasions," taken whatever they wanted ("furniture, chairs"), and, upon leaving, suggested "you should be grateful" for being left alive.¹²

For Rubinstein, Russians were his school friends. For his granny, who could not be convinced otherwise, Russians were people to be feared, not trusted or shown gratitude. She had her own experiences to support her fears. What happened to her is summed up by the Russian word *pogrom*, which has entered multiple languages in its original Russian transliteration. In fact, the meaning of the word in Russian entails breaking furniture in someone else's house, just as Rubinstein's grandmother experienced. *Pogrom* also means to break a building itself, a violent gesture of destroying things to destroy lives. The word was initially applied to the destruction of Jewish neighborhoods and livelihoods in imperial Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, and its usage later expanded to include any mass violent destruction directed at areas where minorities live. Pogrom is just one step removed from genocide. That was the warning

in the Russians' words to Rubinstein's grandmother: be grateful to us that you are being allowed to live.

The artists discussed in this book have shown how hospitality premised on hierarchies, exclusions, and inequalities of welcoming expects groups excluded from unconditional welcome to express gratitude for any minimal gestures of tolerance, even those conditioned on proof of worthiness, of belonging, of blending. According to this logic, Lev Rubinstein's grandmother should feel grateful to the Russians for not being killed, and the Carlebach family should feel grateful for not being starved to death before they were taken by the Nazis.

If the hospitality of the artworks discussed in this book has seemed extraordinary or unusual, it is because the artists challenged their audiences to consider personally and collectively what is enough, what is normal, what is too much. However, their interrogation of hospitality as it has been transcends individual artworks. The renewed discussions around expectations of gratitude from immigrants and refugees that fill television screens and dinner conversations point to the wider context of the current search for a different welcome. In the countries where the artworks I have discussed have been situated, renewed debates about the treatment of newcomers, immigrants, minorities, and women have made people take sides. For some, the absence of a pogrom or physical violence is "good enough" welcome. Others want to live in a society with a welcome that goes beyond tolerance, and are ready to offer and redistribute resources toward that goal. More citizens are asking, Should I be grateful to my community for letting me exercise my hospitality without fear of punishment or arrest? In this context, a gallery or museum becomes an incubator, a testing ground for new forms of hospitality, with artworks transgressing into the public sphere.

Ken Aptekar's exhibition *Nachbarn/Neighbours* challenged this demand for "gratitude" because it affirmed respect for profound differences among neighbors as a *normal* part of being in a community. Dina Nayeri, author of the novel *Refuge* and a former refugee herself, challenges the demand for gratitude forcefully and clearly when she refuses to be grateful:

It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks. It is your duty to answer us, even if we don't give you sugary success stories. Even if we remain a bunch of ordinary Iranians, sometimes bitter or confused. Even if the country gets overcrowded and you have to give up your luxuries, and we set up ugly little lives around the corner,

marring your view. If we need a lot of help and local services, if your taxes rise and your street begins to look and feel strange and everything smells like turmeric and tamarind paste, and your favourite shop is replaced by a halal butcher, your schoolyard chatter becoming ching-chongese and phlegmy “kh”s and “gh”s, and even if, after all that, we don’t spend the rest of our days in grateful ecstasy, atoning for our need.¹³

Nayeri feels gratitude fatigue. Simple things like neighbors sharing food or furniture with others in need and strangers welcoming each other with a smile and a warm gesture now seem to demand visible and eternal gratitude, she implies. According to such problematic logic of gratitude, women are supposed to be grateful every time they are not raped and murdered when hitchhiking, refugees should be grateful when they are not arrested and detained (or taken advantage of in other ways)—and the list goes on. Gestures that are supposed to be everyday accumulative steps of hospitality, such as the microcourtesies described in chapter 1 or the hosting described in chapter 3, should not be treated as extraordinary.

The demand for gratitude, however, is also hierarchical, as this book has shown. Some are supposed to feel grateful all the time, just for being able to be part of a community without being harmed, while others expect to be welcomed as most precious guests, at home or abroad, in public and private. Here hospitality connects to other lines of power distribution: class, gender, national origin, race, and other social identity markers. When Faith Wilding’s persona refused to wait for those who assumed that they could freely consume her labor of love and welcome (marriage, motherhood), she created a new form of “waiting-with,” without expressing gratitude for being able to choose when, how, and for whom to wait (chapter 2). Nayeri points out that inequality of gratitude expectations and their double standard reveal in turn the inequalities built into hospitality and the need to recognize different modes of being together today.

Challenges to Arrested Hospitality

I started this book with a story of a homeless man in New York City, Jimmy Mirikitani, whose life changed dramatically on 9/11 when filmmaker Linda Hattendorf invited him to her apartment to escape the ashes of the destruction of the World Trade Center. His soul had been injured by the lack of welcome he

had experienced previously. I remembered Hattendorf's welcome and her subsequent friendship with Mirikitani when I was standing in a museum in Athens in 2017, looking at a painting by Albanian artist Edi Hila titled *Hospitality*, which was included in the Greek outpost of the large German *documenta 14* exhibition. That year, for the first time, the exhibition was held in two countries, Germany and Greece, because *documenta's* history was tied to considering the role of art in society and the question of the German past in relation to World War II (this history is discussed in more detail in chapter 1).

The 2017 exhibition took place during difficult times in the relations between the two countries. Tensions between Germany and Greece had escalated because of the economic crisis, and because of the perception that Germans, who live in a wealthier country, wanted Greeks to suffer more economic consequences rather than increase their national debt before receiving any further funding from the European Union. Germany did not want to help Greece any longer—at least, that was the perception in Greece, as expressed by some members of the creative community. Art is always created within specific cultural and political contexts, and that was especially clear during this exhibition. On the campus of the major Greek art college the walls were covered with graffiti reading in English “Fuck *documenta*.” In addition to serving as hosts of the German exhibition, the members of the Greek art community were divided by questions of power, funding, and inequality of opportunity.

That is why I found Hila's painting especially ambivalent that day. Gray skies fill the top of the image, above an island in the distance and a house on a beach in the foreground; at the end of some low stairs in front of the house is a deep-blue carpet stretching toward the sea (see Plate 11). I noticed the painting was made in the same year, 2001, when Hattendorf invited Mirikitani into her New York apartment. The painting depicts a scene of waiting: a few steps of the house going into the sea. A hopeful reading could imagine that the blue carpet left at the doorsteps is an indication that any arrival will be welcomed. This indication would be especially politically charged now, when the Mediterranean Sea has become a battleground with respect to immigration in Europe. A less hopeful reading would imagine that the carpet, eternally waiting since ancient times, might not be for everyone. Then who is this carpet for? There is no one around to be seen. This could, therefore, also be a painting of welcomes that have been arrested and never realized, leaving the carpet just for one's own family. Or of

hospitality gone violent, failing the trust of the hosts. It is impossible to know or predict. There are many possibilities, as the artworks described in this book have shown.¹⁴

Belonging does not just happen. Especially among strangers, belonging takes time and effort. And hospitality is a big part of this process. A carpet, an open door, a garden full of flowers—all of these signify the art of welcome, with its openness and care. Hospitality is embodied in the labor it takes to prepare, arrange, and serve food; in the courage and trust required to leave one's own community to be welcomed by strangers; in the smile, the welcoming of another with open hands and body language that says, "We are waiting for you!"; in the readiness to offer shelter without knowing how the scene of hospitality will proceed or how it will end. Many people engage in such ordinary acts of hospitality every day, without fanfare or acknowledgment.

Hospitality is not easy. Its aesthetic labor is directed at senses, perceptions, and the body, because the politics of hospitality—the power involved in the host–guest relation—is enacted through taste (food), touch (a handshake or hug, a rest in a chair or a bed), smell (aromas and flowers), sight (the prepared space, the smile), and hearing (a greeting). Therefore, the welcoming gesture of food baskets from the Carlebachs' anonymous neighbors should not be dismissed lightly. It is easy for me in hindsight as I consider the subsequent murders of the Carlebachs to think of their neighbors' food as "not enough" hospitality. But would I risk my own and my family's lives for my neighbors by just offering them some food? Who is the "I" in this question—from which language, which community? One answer is my own: I am a white, middle-class Russian American professor who has not faced that kind of dilemma, of choosing between my loved ones' lives and those of my neighbors, but still has fears about what the future will bring, based on the history of pogroms, totalitarianism, and hostility. When Nayeri says, "It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks," her voice joins those of other artists who, like Hattendorf, seem to say that such gestures of hospitality appear extraordinary only because so many of us, their audiences and readers, arrest our welcome.

As the artists discussed in this book show, there is no need for us to stop our own seemingly "small" gestures of hospitality just because they seem modest or even futile, because they are not capable of solving "big" problems. As a part of our daily activities, these gestures not only mend inhospitalities but also make

for a more beautiful, enjoyable life. For some, an artwork that enacts hospitality as part of a beautiful and enjoyable life might seem inappropriate at a time when a great many people are suffering. For others, an artwork that seeks to democratize a beautiful and enjoyable life through hospitality could seem like a form of resistance to the same forces that divide people into those who are worthy of welcome and those who are unworthy.

I am not a champion of hospitality as a “cure-all” for economic, racial, and gender inequalities around the world; addressing such inequalities requires multipronged approaches. But does the complexity of these issues mean that art has nothing to contribute to our imagination about the power of hospitality? I do not think so. One should not mistake artistic gestures of hospitality—or any artistic gestures, for that matter—for individual efforts that do not have wider audiences and impacts. At least, that is one thing I learned from the works discussed here and my conversations with their participants and audiences: such artistic gestures are impactful, memorable, and influential. This book is an attempt, therefore, to expand the audiences of these challenging works of contemporary art, most of which are no longer in existence, given their temporal nature—a characteristic true to hospitality itself.

Some scholars and art critics assume that calls for structural changes (such as changes in laws, institutions, or economic policy) are more “valuable” for progressive causes than more qualitative, personal, and cultural practices such as hospitality. According to this logic, artists are just individuals who cannot change anything unless their artworks contribute directly or symbolically toward structural change. It is problematic, however, to conclude that because the context within which an artist explores the subject of hospitality is individual, the focus of the work and the results the artist hopes to achieve have no impact beyond the individual level. Such strict division between the individual and the collective is not helpful—indeed, it is actually problematic, as I have shown throughout this book.

Even more problematically, those who dismiss the individual aspect of artistic gestures tend to fetishize the collective and present it as a faceless and generalized list of categories. After all, “structures” and “institutions” are also abstract categories, and as useful as they are, their missions are carried out by human representatives. Hospitality itself, as a practice, defies neat categorizations between the one and the many, the institutional and the personal. It operates on

a collective level of relationships between communities carried out mostly on a personal, sensory level. In hospitality, the personal continues to be political.

The artists whose works are discussed here are not naive about or blind to the existing inequities in and problems with hospitality; after all, I chose them for this book because they challenge, stretch, and transform hospitality as we have known it. Thinking about hospitality with these artists is important, especially today, as we navigate the urgent problems and dilemmas of individual and collective welcome. In one's everyday life, a smile does not seem like a radical welcoming gesture, unlike hospitality decisions in life-or-death situations, as was the case for the Carlebach family's neighbors. Ken Aptekar's exhibition *Nachbarn/Neighbours* told a story about the successes and failures of communal hospitality with a vision into a more hopeful present that does not deny or forget the painful, violent past, but rather offers models of courage. Such courage should not be punished. Rather, models of defiant hospitality, of welcome as resistance, should be celebrated and given communal, legal, social, and cultural support, as I have shown in this book.

It would be a mistake to dismiss a smile as insignificant. The writer and scholar bell hooks, whose thoughts about civility inspired my arguments about reclaiming it in chapter 1, tells us that small decisions about smiles and invitations signify our recognition of other persons' presence and their unconditional equality in our shared humanity. Equality in welcome is not a given, she says, waiting on her porch for a neighborly return of her welcoming smile. Rather, it is an ongoing project. Is it as important as the legal protections achieved by the civil rights movement? Perhaps not. But is it insignificant and to be dismissed as too minor in the grand scheme of things? No, because a sense of belonging does not come only from the ability to physically inhabit a place and to have the same legal rights and financial means as others. It also comes from feeling welcomed in that place as an equal human being. No law can dictate gestures and feelings of welcome. And we probably do not want to force each other to smile, as Ana Prvački has implied in her work. The art projects discussed in this book have sought to subvert many strict divisions prevalent in previous discussions of hospitality: personal/political, individual/communal, within family/among strangers, safe/dangerous, feminine/masculine, human/animal, conditional/unconditional, entitled/unexpected.

In defying fears, prohibitions, and entitlements, expecting or providing hospitality in its various forms becomes a political choice as much as an aesthetic

or ethical one. In those cases, hospitality is more than just an individual trait or ethical predisposition within a certain cultural framework of what is normal and acceptable. It becomes a radical welcome, which is desperately needed, especially today, when hosting seems to have narrowed down rather than widened, when invitations are extended only to members of one's own group, community, or family.

The topic of hospitality is difficult to write about, as so much of the world today does not feel compatible with the notion of unreserved welcome. However, these times of loud animosity and hostility have also seen a renewed resolve to welcome now. This book has been sustained by that resolve.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing in a foreign language is akin to living with a stranger in one's mind. The struggle between the “me” me and the English-speaking, -writing, and -thinking me gets tiring at times. Who is this stranger in my head? What kind of English am I specifically referring to—made-up Soviet school English, academic British English, everyday Singlish (peculiar to Singapore), American English? Returning to my mother tongue, I am enveloped in familiarity and ease. The feeling of being at home with myself makes writing in my native tongue flow, interrupted only occasionally as I pause to consider a more expressive or precise word.

The foreigner in my head, *the other tongue*, requires a different set of skills to calm the vulnerability and frustration of an adult learning to speak anew. But my struggle with a new language also reveals that the mother tongue imperceptibly, in the background, carries with it much more than just the ease of self-expression. Audiences and communities, cultural identities, and personal, intellectual, literary, and national histories have all blended in the Russian-speaking “me.” My writing in English, then, is also a testimony to new intellectual and personal histories, communities, and audiences that have welcomed and challenged the English-speaking/writing me. Many members of my various communities worked to make English more welcoming to people like me who will always speak, think, and write with an accent. Collectively, I am grateful to them for the encouragement to write in my own voice.

There is also a question of genre and audience. When I started to work on this book I envisioned an enjoyable read about the art of welcome. My target audience was everyone interested in contemporary art. I told myself that this new writing would be different from my previous book, which was purposefully theoretical and academic. My first bump on the writing road happened when I discovered that creating enjoyable writing is hard—and not a highly exercised muscle in an academic. After trying on my own, I decided to seek professional help. I am grateful to Jennie Nash, Kemlo Aki, and Kathleen Furin for their editorial advice, patience, and good humor.

Though I never approached hospitality uncritically as a solution to all social problems, as my writing progressed the topic of hospitality proved even more

difficult to feel good about given contemporary political realities. I am grateful to those colleagues who were generous with their critical and engaged feedback on earlier drafts of this book: Charissa Terranova, Anna Greenspan, Silvia Lindtner, Anna Fisher, and Antoine Traisnel. Silvia Lindtner, Anna Fisher, Antoine Traisnel, and I formed a writing group, and I am happy that their books will be published around the same time as mine. Reading each other's writing works!

I thank Paul Domela for inviting me into discussions around hospitality and contemporary art in Liverpool. The MFA students in my 2013 graduate seminar *Testing Hospitality* at the Penny W. Stamps School of Art and Design at the University of Michigan contributed to many conversations on the topics raised in this book; Michael Bianco, whose own creative and intellectual practice encompasses questions of community and sustainability, was especially helpful in this regard.

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My thinking about bioart and hospitality to animals owes a lot to conversations and interviews with Amy Youngs, Marta de Menezes, and a biomedical researcher who preferred to remain anonymous at Cultivamos Cultura Foundation, Portugal, in the summer of 2016, as well as Oliver Grau, Wendy Coons, and students of the Media Art Histories Department at Danube University Krems. I thank the participants and the audience for their questions to the panel "Un-

becoming Animals” at the 2014 conference of the College Art Association. Olga Shishko and Assimina Kaniari engaged with my thoughts about hosting animals and published my earlier texts on the topic in their collections, for which I am grateful. Zafos Xagoraris generously shared his work, ideas, and references at later stages of the writing of this book.

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Gabeba Baderoon has been a role model of a welcoming person since I met her in 2006. She and other friends in State College, Pennsylvania, and Arani and Shumita Bose in New York helped me feel welcomed into a new country. They made a difference. Susan Squier and Katherine Behar provided intellectual and personal support that has sustained me during the past several years.

Finally, this book is primarily a result of the generosity of the artists. I hope my writing does justice to the depth and impact of their creative works. Lee Mingwei, Mithu Sen, Ana Prvački, Kathy High, Faith Wilding, and Ken Aptekar spent numerous hours with me in person and online in conversations about hospitality and art. I am deeply grateful for their kind permission to reprint images of their art, and I thank Edi Hila for permission to reprint an image of his work. Joël Curtz, whose film *La Mariée* enabled me to write about Pippa Bacca and

Silvia Moro, has been very gracious in sharing his film and ideas. I thank Curtz and Natalia Trebik at Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains, France, for permission to publish stills from the film.

My family and friends in Russia and Singapore nourish me with their love. I am lucky to have them in my life.

NOTES

Introduction

1. Linda Hattendorf, *The Cats of Mirikitani* (2006; New York: Arts Alliance America, 2008), DVD. The title of the film references one of the most frequent subjects of Mirikitani's artworks.

2. Hattendorf and her producer and collaborator Masahiro Yoshikawa struggled for years to find funding to finish production of the film. For more information, see "Filmmaker Bios," in "The Cats of Mirikitani," Independent Lens, PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens>, accessed November 21, 2019.

3. "Linda Hattendorf Interview at the Port Townsend Film Festival," May 6, 2010, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUpTOcTNZgw>.

4. Jury statement quoted in Michael J. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 87.

5. Nell McClister, "Editor's Choice Film: *The Cats of Mirikitani*," *BOMB*, no. 100 (2007): 20.

6. Shapiro, *Cinematic Geopolitics*, 87.

7. This particular logic that denies any motivations and intentions in hospitality relations other than personal gain is common among the responses to the works presented in this book; it will be explored further throughout. As we contemplate whether or not we would go out and welcome the homeless person, this "all or nothing" critical approach is seductive in its sophistication. As I make clear in the rest of this Introduction and throughout the book, I am mindful of the criticism that even in displaying generosity, or especially in doing so, a white middle-class privileged woman could be seen as reinforcing her sense of her own superiority and benevolence. At the same time, seeing only the gain for the woman in this example seems to justify discrediting the action presented here and rationalizing inaction. I do not dismiss the criticism, but my interest in this book is in exploring other potential readings of these artworks as I have found them useful for my own thinking about the limits and limitations of hospitality.

8. For information about the UNHCR's research methodology and data, see "Figures at a Glance," UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, accessed November 21, 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org>.

9. I discuss the hospitality-related writings of Kant, Levinas, and Derrida in detail in my book *Hospitality of the Matrix: Philosophy, Biomedicine, and Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

10. *Dharmasūtras: The Law Codes of Āpastamba, Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Vasiṣṭha*, trans. and ed. Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 47. Also see Olivelle's translation of *The Law Code of Manu* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), which lists many sacrifices that "good" hosts should expect to endure for their guests.

11. See Aristarkhova, *Hospitality of the Matrix*.
12. Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus," 1883, inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty, New York, 1903.
13. See Wendy Brown, *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2006).
14. Chris Hush, "An Answered Prayer': Suburb Compromises after Resident's Homeless 'Slumber Parties,'" NBC Chicago, January 9, 2018, <https://www.nbcchicago.com>.
15. Hush, "An Answered Prayer."
16. See Janelle Walker, "Ex-Wife of Elgin Man behind Basement Homeless Shelter Calls Donations 'Sickening' as Thousands Owed in Child Support," *Chicago Tribune*, February 20, 2018, <https://www.chicagotribune.com>.
17. Maya Salam, "Man Who Sheltered Homeless People in His Basement Stops after City Order," *New York Times*, January 6, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com>.
18. Quoted in Salam, "Man Who Sheltered Homeless People."
19. Hannah Hartig, "Republicans Turn More Negative toward Refugees as Number Admitted to U.S. Plummet," FactTank, May 24, 2018, Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org>.
20. Irina Aristarkhova, "Exotic Hospitality in the Land of Tolerance," in *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art*, ed. Stephanie Smith (Chicago: Smart Museum, University of Chicago, 2013), 353–59.
21. Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (Scotts Valley, Calif.: CreateSpace Publishing, 2014), bk. 10.
22. Irina Aristarkhova, "Stepanova's Laboratories," in *Place Studies in Art, Media, Science, and Technology: Historical Investigations on the Sites and the Migration of Knowledge*, ed. Andreas Broekmann and Gunalan Nadarajan (Weimar: VDG, 2008), 167–82.
23. In this paragraph I have purposefully chosen to tell one specific version of an art historical trope, developed through my own research interests. As for a contemporary example of a creative maker whose art practice connects deeply to personal activism, Carol Jacobsen serves my point. She is a video art maker and photographer whose practice focuses on incarcerated women who are serving life sentences for the murder of an abusive partner in the state of Michigan. To a viewer of Jacobsen's gallery show, other parts of her practice—working to get the women in her photographs and video art pieces out of prison by collaborating with the American Civil Liberties Union and other activists and organizations—are not apparent; only those who seek out more information about the artist learn about the other parts of her practice and her activism. So far, thirteen of the women depicted in Jacobsen's photographs and videos have been released in the course of her activist art practice. See Carol Jacobsen, *For Dear Life: Women's Decriminalization and Human Rights in Focus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2019).
24. See, among other titles, Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with Mathieu Copeland (Dijon, France: Les Presses du Reel, 2002); Nato Thompson, ed., *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991 to 2011* (New York: Creative Time Books and MIT Press, 2012); Ted Purves, ed., *What We Want Is Free*:

Generosity and Exchange in Recent Art (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005); Claire Doherty, ed., *Contemporary Art: From Studio to Situation* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004); Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (New York: Verso, 2012); Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011); Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002); Renate Dohmen, *Encounters beyond the Gallery: Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2016).

25. Lewis Hyde, *The Gift: Creativity and the Artist in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

26. Michael Corris, Jaspar Joseph-Lester, and Sharon Kivland, eds., *Hospitality: Transmission Annual* (London: Artwords Press, 2010). I thank Maureen Connor for bringing my attention to this book, and for gifting me with a copy.

27. Stephanie Smith, ed., *Feast: Radical Hospitality in Contemporary Art* (Chicago: Smart Museum, University of Chicago, 2013); Sally Tallant and Paul Domela, eds., *The Unexpected Guest: Art, Writing, and Thinking on Hospitality* (London: Art/Books, 2012). I thank Paul Domela for inviting me to contribute to earlier discussions about hospitality in Liverpool, which subsequently became a publication edited by Domela and which I revised for Smith's *Feast*. Paul Domela, ed., *Refugee-Hospitality-Occupation* (Liverpool: Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, 2005).

28. Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 161.

29. Aristarkhova, *Hospitality of the Matrix*.

1. Reclaimed Civility: Ana Prvački

1. Quoted in "They Forbid to Say 'Good Morning!' in St. Petersburg Metro" [in Russian], NTV, August 25, 2012, <http://www.ntv.ru/novosti/325237>. Police justified their detention of the artists by comparing Esta and Jack with the famous feminist punk art group Pussy Riot. For a television report about Esta and Jack and why they were stopped, see Olga Pismanen and Dmitry Kaznin, "RAIN Searched for the Detained Metro 'Well-Wishing Guy'" [in Russian], Dozd' TV Station, August 24, 2012, https://tvrain.ru/teleshov/here_and_now/dozhd_razyskal_zaderzhannogo_v_metro_cheloveka_dobro-329656. Since this incident, the artists have continued to appear at various metro stations and in other public places with similar signs expressing greetings. Archives of audio and video recordings of their interactions with police and metro authorities are available on Tesamie social media pages: Esta & Jack, "Tesamie" [in Russian], https://vk.com/te_samie; and Esta & Jack, "Tesamie" [in Russian], Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/tesamie>. The artists have explained that the costumes and masks they wear are meant to enhance their messages.

2. Esta & Jack, "Tesamie," https://vk.com/te_samie; "They Forbid to Say 'Good Morning.'"

3. Google Dictionary, s.v. "etiquette," accessed November 22, 2019, <https://www.google.com>; Merriam-Webster Dictionary online, s.v. "etiquette," accessed November 22, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com>.

4. Sue Derald Wing, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley, 2010), xvi.

5. David Farrell Krell, “Handy Etiquette,” in *Etiquette: Reflections on Contemporary Comportment*, ed. Ron Scapp and Brian Seitz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 117.

6. bell hooks, “A Place Where the Soul Can Rest,” in Scapp and Seitz, *Etiquette*, 171.

7. Anthony Szczesiul, *The Southern Hospitality Myth: Ethics, Politics, Race, and American Memory* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017).

8. hooks, “A Place Where the Soul Can Rest,” 177–78.

9. Szczesiul, *The Southern Hospitality Myth*, 218.

10. The name of the latter exhibition has appeared in various written forms. From this point onward, I use the name *documenta* (no italics) to refer in general to the exhibition mounted in Kassel every five years by the organization of the same name. The individual iterations of the *documenta* exhibition are numbered, and I treat these as the exhibition names, italicizing both elements; thus, for example, *documenta 13*. These are the forms most commonly used in publications mentioning the exhibitions (in quotations and citations, the forms of the names used by the sources are retained). I was involved with Prvački in conversations and worked on a joint publication about hospitality and art for *documenta 13*. Ana Prvački and Irina Aristarkhova, *The Greeting Committee Reports . . . : 100 Notes, 100 Thoughts* (Documenta Series 043) (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2012).

11. Prvački and Aristarkhova, *The Greeting Committee Reports*, 6.

12. “Information: Greeting Committee,” *dOCUMENTA* (13), <https://d13.documenta.de/#/en>.

13. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

14. Adolf Knigge, *Practical Philosophy of Social Life, or The Art of Conversing with Men* (Lansingburgh, N.Y.: Penniman & Bliss, 1805), xii.

15. A well-known example in contemporary German literature that speaks to this concern is Jenny Erpenbeck’s novel *Go, Went, Gone*, trans. Susan Bernofsky (London: Granta Books, 2018). The novel describes how a German man is changed by his growing involvement in the plight of African refugees in Berlin. The discussion about hospitality extended to strangers in our times is a collective endeavor, and Prvački’s work contributes to the discussion about cultural identity in Germany and elsewhere. I thank an anonymous reviewer for the reference to Erpenbeck’s work.

16. Ana Prvački, *Greeting Committee*, 2012, <http://anaprvački.com/project/greeting-committee>.

17. Prvački and Aristarkhova, *The Greeting Committee Reports*.

18. Prvački and Aristarkhova, *The Greeting Committee Reports*.

19. Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, “A Brief Monologue about Ana Prvački’s Art,” in Ana Prvački, *Finding Comfort in an Uncomfortable Imagination: A Catalogue of Ideas* (Singapore: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Lasalle College of the Arts, 2015), 124–25.

20. Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes (London: Routledge, 2001), 49–50.
21. Ana Prvački, “Ana Prvački—Exercising Table Setting and Table Manners,” May 15, 2011, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDwxIaLpgGM>.
22. Raimundas Malašauskas, “Ana Prvački: Music-Derived Pain Killer,” in Prvački, *Finding Comfort*, 116.
23. Bala Starr, “Finding Comfort in an Uncomfortable Imagination,” in Prvački, *Finding Comfort*, 1 B, 14.
24. Chus Martínez, “Language Is Confusing but the Actions Are Unmistakable: On the Work of Ana Prvački,” in Prvački, *Finding Comfort*, 118; Starr, “Finding Comfort,” 114.
25. Starr, “Finding Comfort,” 114.
26. Prvački and Aristarkhova, *The Greeting Committee Reports*, 6.

2. Undoing Waiting: Faith Wilding

1. Mira Schor, *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 11; Arlene Raven, “Womanhouse,” in *The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact*, ed. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 58; Amelia Jones, “Faith Wilding and the Enfleshing of Painting,” *n.paradoxa*, no. 10 (June 1999): 17.
2. Faith Wilding, conversation with author, August 25, 2013.
3. Schor, *Wet*, 111. See also Lara Shalson, “Waiting,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 23, no. 1 (2013): 79–82.
4. Alfred, Lord Tennyson, “Ulysses,” 1842, Poetry Foundation, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org>.
5. Jones, “Faith Wilding,” 17.
6. What became the poem of *Waiting*, collectively imagined by participants in the FAP and then edited by Wilding, reflects the experiences of the members of the faculty and the student body, with their specific social and educational backgrounds. The early feminist art movement mirrored the racial segregation of the world at large. Years later, Judy Chicago admitted that she had overlooked the fundamentally intersectional nature of patriarchal oppression: “We cast the dialogue incorrectly in the seventies. We cast it around gender, and we were also simplistic about the nature of identity. Identity is multiple. . . . But I’ve learned a lot in these years, that one is both a woman and a person of color; an American and of African descent, as well as a person of a particular class.” Judy Chicago, in Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, “Conversations with Judy Chicago and Miriam Schapiro,” in Broude and Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art*, 72.
7. Rose Kreider and Diana Elliott, “Historical Changes in Stay-at-Home Mothers: 1969 to 2009” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta, Georgia, August 14, 2010), 10. I recognize the problem of equating a housewife with a stay-at-home mother. Wilding’s character certainly did, as she was waiting for a husband and children to appear in her life. In addition, taking into account housewife-targeted advertising and the fact that African Americans constituted less than 10 percent of the

American middle class at the time (1970), one assumption (or argument) I am making here is that, as far as a concept of the housewife was concerned, both the media and the public usually imagined a white middle-class woman.

8. Dorothy E. Roberts, "Racism and Patriarchy in the Meaning of Motherhood," *Journal of Gender and the Law* 1, no. 1 (1993): 6.

9. Lisa E. Farrington, *Creating Their Own Image: The History of African-American Women Artists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also the following art catalogs devoted to Saar's work: Jane H. Carpenter and Betye Saar, *Betye Saar* (San Francisco: Pomegranate, 2003); Arlene Raven and Betye Saar, *Betye Saar: Workers+Warriors, The Return of Aunt Jemima* (New York: Michael Rosenfeld Gallery, 1998).

10. Betye Saar, "Influences: Betye Saar," *Frieze*, September 27, 2016, <https://frieze.com>.

11. Betye Saar, quoted in Yolanda M. López and Moira Roth, "Social Protest: Racism and Sexism," in Broude and Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art*, 152. For Wilding's remark about Womanspace, see Faith Wilding, *By Our Own Hands: The Woman Artist's Movement, Southern California, 1970–76* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Double X, 1997), 48.

12. Judy Chicago, *Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1977), 122.

13. Chicago, *Through the Flower*, 122.

14. Charles R. Lyons, *Samuel Beckett* (London: Macmillan Education, 1983), 178.

15. Shalson, "Waiting," 79.

16. William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Internet Shakespeare Editions, "As You Like It (Modern)," ed. David Bevington, accessed November 22, 2019, <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca>.

17. Shalson, "Waiting," 80, 81.

18. Raven, "Womanhouse," 60.

19. Jane Blocker, *What the Body Cost: Desire, History, and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 80.

20. This and subsequent quotations from the *Wait-With* monologue come from Faith Wilding, e-mail message to author, August 20, 2007.

21. Dont Rhine, e-mail message to author, June 28, 2018.

22. Saar, "Influences."

23. Anna Riveloté, "The Woman Waits" [in Russian], available online at "Анна Ривелотэ," Lirta (blog), December 31, 2011, <https://lirta.livejournal.com/10916.html>; translations are my own. Many Internet users "perform" this poem on YouTube, similar to how Wilding's *Waiting* poem is performed. Since 2010 Riveloté has published three books and received an award for literature. "The Woman Waits" remains her most famous poem, and I present it here as a link to Wilding's *Waiting*, which is her most famous work as well. These two works are connected by the intense feelings they evoke in audiences about the specific kind of waiting expected in women's lives.

24. Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus Books, 1994), 20.

25. Carol Ann Duffy, "Penelope," in *The World's Wife* (London: Picador, 2000), 70.

3. The Man Who Welcomes: Lee Mingwei

1. I have explored this in the Introduction and in more detail in my previous book on hospitality, *Hospitality of the Matrix*.

2. For Kant, the French nation is hospitable because “the language of ladies has become the language shared by all high society. It cannot be disputed at all that an inclination of such a nature must also have influence on the ready willingness in rendering services, helpful benevolence, and the gradual development of human kindness according to principle.” Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans. Mary Gregor (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), 228.

3. “Artist Statement,” Lee Mingwei’s website, accessed November 22, 2019, <http://www.leemingwei.com>.

4. See Irina Aristarkhova, “Man as Hospitable Space: The Male Pregnancy Project,” *Performance Research* 14, no. 4 (2009): 25–30, doi:10.1080/13528160903552907.

5. Lee Mingwei and His Relations: *The Art of Participation—Seeing, Conversing, Gift-Giving, Writing, Dining, and Getting Connected to the World* (Tokyo: Mori Art Museum and John Rule, 2018).

6. Artists who were part of the 1970s feminist art movement described in chapter 2 also engaged in the practices of cooking, serving, and hosting audience members as guests. See, for example, Broude and Garrard, *The Power of Feminist Art*. Since the 1970s, interaction with audiences and audience participation have become mainstream parts of the work of contemporary artists. One of the most widely known and frequently written-about examples relevant here is the work of the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija. Tiravanija cooked pad thai in New York’s Paula Allen Gallery in 1990 and since then has re-created that work in various other forms. Nicolas Bourriaud has used Tiravanija’s work, as well as that of others, to develop his notion of “relational aesthetics.” See Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*. For surveys of art that deals with hosting and community participation, which art critics have framed as “the art of social practice,” see Smith, *Feast*; Thompson, *Living as Form*; Purves, *What We Want Is Free*; Tallant and Domela, *The Unexpected Guest*; Doherty, *Contemporary Art*.

7. Mary [pseudonym], interview by author, September 19, 2013. All quotations from Mary are from this interview or from our electronic correspondence, June 21–23, 2018.

8. See, for example, David L. Eng, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2001).

9. Tom Finkelpearl, “The Seer Project: Lee Mingwei, Artist,” in *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2013), 302–12.

10. Aristarkhova, “Exotic Hospitality in the Land of Tolerance.”

11. See Finkelpearl, “The Seer Project”; Lee Mingwei and His Relations.

12. Eng, *Racial Castration*.

13. Lee Mingwei, interview by author, April 1, 2013.

14. For divergent viewpoints on this topic, see Kester, *Conversation Pieces*; Kester, *The One and the Many*; Kwon, *One Place after Another*; Dohmen, *Encounters beyond the*

Gallery; Bishop, *Artificial Hells*; Tallant and Domela, *The Unexpected Guest*; Corris et al., *Hospitality*.

15. Furthermore, I would argue that Lee's works challenge what galleries and museums have historically been and serve to push such art spaces to redefine themselves.

16. Kay Larson, "To Take Part in the Art, You Sleep with the Artist," *New York Times*, November 5, 2000, 3; Margaret Hawkins, "Impermanence, Full of Life—and Death," *Chicago Sun-Times*, May 18, 2007.

17. "Projects: The Sleeping Project," Lee Mingwei's website, accessed November 22, 2019, <http://www.leemingwei.com>.

18. Larson, "To Take Part in the Art."

19. Lewis Hyde, "Isabella's Will," in *Lee Mingwei: The Living Room* (Boston: Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, 2000), 15–21.

20. Lee Mingwei, quoted in Jennifer R. Gross, "Osmosis," in *Lee Mingwei: The Living Room*, 9.

21. Aaron Betsky, "Le Corbusier and the Sexism of Architecture," *Architect Magazine*, August 20, 2013, <https://www.architectmagazine.com>.

22. There is a widespread interest now in hybrid art spaces that (more often than not) re-create "domestic" spaces of homely welcome in a public art context. For example, the Raqs Media Collective created such a space in 2012 during the group's art residency at the Gardner Museum, in a work titled *The Great Bare Mat*. See *The Great Bare Mat*, in *Common Threads: Weaving Stories across Time*, 2012, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, <https://www.gardnermuseum.org>. A less common practice is the reverse: making a domestic space public, welcoming the public at one's home as a gallery or a small museum. Some examples of such gestures are Lee Mingwei's *The Dining Project* at Yale and Mithu Sen's *It's Good to Be Queen* (2006), which I discuss in detail in chapter 5.

23. Lee's practice over the years has been framed in various terms that seem to fit such more welcoming definitions of the male artist. Two larger frameworks get mentioned the most: Buddhism and other "Eastern" traditions, and relational aesthetics or social practice in contemporary art. What I want to develop and emphasize here, based on my conversations with Lee, his published interviews with others, and especially his oeuvre over the years, is his unique and sustained, highly original, and independent practice of hospitality as a welcoming man, which does not fit neatly into any of the existing categories of art movements. This is not the only aspect of his work, certainly, but it is the most relevant one for this chapter. For further reading on this topic, see Dohmen, *Encounters beyond the Gallery*.

24. In conversations, some women artists have expressed to me their anxieties around hospitality, which arise from their not wanting to be associated with stereotypically perceived women's qualities. I discuss this kind of fear of being forced to be "welcoming women" in chapter 2, in relation to Faith Wilding's work and the feminist art movement.

25. See, for example, Long T. Bui, "Breaking into the Closet: Negotiating the Queer

Boundaries of Asian American Masculinity and Domesticity,” *Culture, Society & Masculinities* 6, no. 2 (Fall 2014): 129–49, doi:10.3149/CSM.0602.129.

26. Though it is not the focus of this book to compare the art of welcome with the hospitality industry, it would suffice to note here that as a business that is supposed to generate a profit, hospitality industry often exploits these and other cultural expectations. Feminist artists who have developed a unique form of “service art,” such as Maureen Connor, point out this cultural hypocrisy around the “labor of care.” For a philosophical approach to this topic, see Judith Still, *Derrida and Hospitality: Theory and Practice* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010).

27. My argument that Lee’s work offers one model of a welcoming man complements and does not replace the feminist critique of associating women with “care” and “hospitality” or of not acknowledging their welcome as affective and physical effort. Thus, I share concerns expressed by Helena Reckitt that the praise of contemporary artworks involving relationality and hospitality as groundbreaking when they are made by men is often uninformed and may even work to silence those art historical precedents created by women and LGBTQ+ artists. Reckitt shows how many authors who write about relational aesthetics and social practice overlook feminist history and the complexity of gendered expectations as far as relationality is concerned. See Helena Reckitt, “Forgotten Relations: Feminist Artists and Relational Aesthetics,” in *Politics in a Glass Case: Feminism, Exhibition Cultures and Curatorial Transgressions*, ed. Angela Dimitrakaki and Lara Perry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 131. That is why earlier in this chapter I mentioned that Lee often credits Suzanne Lacy as one of his mentors and inspirations, along with women in his family—his sister, mother, and grandmother.

4. Hosting the Animal: Kathy High

1. When I had an opportunity to follow up with Lee Mingwei on my experience in *The Living Room*, I asked him about the bird’s welfare. The artist was prepared for my question. He explained that the museum followed the advice of an ornithologist on how to take the best possible care of the bird. The bird is moved out of the installation at regular intervals so that it “can rest.” Interacting with guests in *The Living Room* takes a toll on the bird just as it does on the volunteer hosts during their two-hour hosting periods (as discussed in chapter 3).

2. Jacques Derrida and others have presented many examples of animal use in human hospitality; see Jacques Derrida, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject,” in *Points . . . : Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. Elisabeth Weber, trans. Peggy Kamuf and others (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 255–87; Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999); Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality,” trans. Barry Stocker with Forbes Morlock, *Angelaki* 5, no. 3 (2000): 3–18; Jacques Derrida, “And Say the Animal Responded?,” in *Zoologies: The Question of the Animal*, ed. Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 121–46; Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, trans. David Wills

(New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Rudinresco, "Violence against Animals," in *For What Tomorrow: A Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 62–76; Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000).

3. For more on bioart, see the following texts: Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000); Sheilah Britton and Dan Collins, eds., *The Eighth Day: The Transgenic Art of Eduardo Kac* (Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 2003); Stuart Bunt and Oron Catts, "A Complicated Balancing Act? How Can We Assess the Use of Animals in Art and Science?," in *The Aesthetics of Care? The Artistic, Social and Scientific Implications of the Use of Biological/Medical Technologies for Artistic Purposes*, ed. Oron Catts (Perth: SymbioticA, University of Western Australia, 2002), 12–18; Oron Catts and Ionat Zurr, "The Ethics of Experiential Engagement with the Manipulation of Life," in *Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience*, ed. Beatriz da Costa and Kavita Philip (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 125–42; Robert Mitchell, *Bioart and the Vitality of Media* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010); Cary Wolfe, "From Dead Meat to Glow-in-the-Dark Bunnies: Seeing 'the Animal Question' in Contemporary Art," in *Ecosee: Image, Rhetoric, Nature*, ed. Sidney I. Dobrin and Sean Morey (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 129–52; Charissa N. Terranova and Meredith Tromble, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Biology in Art and Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Susan Squier, *Poultry Science, Chicken Culture: A Partial Alphabet* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011).

4. Three relevant titles by Donna Haraway are *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan@_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997); *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2015); *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016). On Deleuze and Guattari's theories, see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978).

5. Kathy High, "Playing with Rats," in da Costa and Philip, *Tactical Biopolitics*, 466.

6. "Projects: *Embracing Animal*," Kathy High's website, accessed November 1, 2010, <http://kathyhigh.com>; Anna Franca Milia, Lidia Ibba-Manneschi, Mirko Manetti, Gemma Benelli, Luca Messerini, and Marco Matucci-Cerinic, "HLA-B27 Transgenic Rat: An Animal Model Mimicking Gut and Joint Involvement in Human Spondyloarthritis," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1173 (September 2009): 570–74, doi:10.1111/j.1749-6632.2009.04757.x; High, "Playing with Rats," 465–78.

7. High, "Playing with Rats," 489.

8. High, "Playing with Rats," 489.

9. Kathy High, "Rat Love Manifesto," *Embracing Animal*, accessed November 1, 2010, <http://www.embracinganimal.com>.

10. High, "Playing with Rats," 489.

11. High, "Playing with Rats," 466; see also High, "Projects: *Embracing Animal*," "Playing with Rats," video documentation, duration varied, 2004–5; High, "Rat Love Manifesto."

12. Kathy High, online and telephone correspondence with author, March 2010.
13. Biology Online dictionary, s.v. “animal,” last modified January 31, 2019, <https://www.biology-online.org>.
14. Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 77.
15. David Clark, “On Being ‘the Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’: Dwelling with Animals after Levinas,” in *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*, ed. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (New York: Routledge, 1997), 178.
16. Leonard Lawlor, *This Is Not Sufficient: An Essay on Animality and Human Nature in Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 73.
17. Kelly Oliver, *Animal Lessons: How They Teach Us to Be Human* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 21.
18. Oliver, *Animal Lessons*, 228.
19. Oliver, *Animal Lessons*, 306.
20. Derrida, “Hostipitality,” 7.
21. Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 77.
22. Derrida, “Hostipitality,” 4.
23. “Becoming Animal,” MASS MoCA, accessed November 26, 2019, <https://massmoca.org>.
24. Kathy High, “I Offer My Power in the Service of Love,” 3, accessed November 26, 2019, <http://becoming-animal-becoming-human.animal-studies.org/img/EmbracingAnimal.pdf>.
25. High, “I Offer My Power,” 3.
26. *Jaina Sutras*, trans. Hermann Jacobi (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968). Also see *Ahimsā, Anekānta and Jainism*, ed. Tara Sethia (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004); Christopher Key Chapple, ed., *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press for the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard Divinity School, 2002).
27. Amy Youngs, a bioartist, has written about her unease with the use of rabbits in bioart, based on her own childhood experience; see Amy Youngs, “Creating, Culling, and Caring,” in Catts, *The Aesthetics of Care?*, 68–73. In this case, the artist describes why she chose “nondoing,” a concept similar to Jainism’s nonharm. Another bioartist, the curator and director of Cultivamos Cultura Foundation in Portugal, Marta de Menezes, is currently looking for a biomedical research laboratory to partner with on a project that would seek to cure the hairless rats that are born without immune systems and hence are used as models for testing immune system responses to various potential drugs and genetic modifications. If the project is successful in curing the rats, they could then be released into the wild. Once cured, they would also be unusable for biomedical experimentation. The new technology de Menezes is considering is called CRISPR gene editing. As it becomes cheaper, researchers may have other options in the near future besides using transgenic rats. This project is an example of “lessening of harm,” as a cure will stop these animals from being so attractive to experimenters. The project is also somewhat ambivalent, as the

artist plans to “cure” animals from a natural mutation. Marta de Menezes, interview by author, July 8–9, 2016, São Luis, Portugal.

28. Biomedical scientist (who asked to remain anonymous), interview by author, July 8, 2016, São Luis, Portugal.

29. Jain principles have affinities with recent discussions in Europe about the dignity of plants. For example, Switzerland adopted the principle of plants’ dignity in its constitution. See Ariane Willemsen, ed., *The Dignity of Living Beings with Regard to Plants: Moral Consideration of Plants for Their Own Sake* (Geneva: Federal Ethics Committee on Non-Human Biotechnology, 2008).

30. Catharine A. MacKinnon, “Of Mice and Men: A Fragment on Animal Rights” (2004), in *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader*, ed. Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 325.

31. MacKinnon, “Of Mice and Men,” 326.

32. See Irina Aristarkhova, “Thou Shall Not Harm All Living Beings: Feminism, Jainism, and Animals,” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 27, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 636–50.

5. Welcome Withdrawn: Mithu Sen

1. Mithu Sen, e-mail message to author, November 2, 2015.

2. Shireen Gandhi, “‘I Have Only One Language; It Is Not Mine,’ Film by Mithu Sen” (excerpts from the original video), October 6, 2016, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/UAB7widHDq4>.

3. Since then Bose Pacia has moved several times, and it now operates as a foundation; see its website at <http://www.bosepacia.com>.

4. Mithu Sen, *It’s Good to Be Queen* (New York: Bose Pacia, Artist Space, 2008), 22.

5. Sen, *It’s Good to Be Queen*, 81.

6. Sushmita Chatterjee, “What Does It Mean to Be a Postcolonial Feminist? The Art-work of Mithu Sen,” *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* 31, no. 1 (2016): 37, doi:10.1111/hypa.12225.

7. Chatterjee, “What Does It Mean to Be a Postcolonial Feminist?,” 34, 35.

8. See Sen’s performance *I Am a Poet*, part of the exhibition *Project Space: Word. Sound. Power*, held at the Tate Modern, London, July 12 to November 3, 2013, <https://www.tate.org.uk>.

9. Sen to assembled guests at the opening night, 2006, in Sen, *It’s Good to Be Queen*, 24.

10. Nancy Adajania, in *Half Full: Mithu Sen* (exhibition catalog) (New York: Bose Pacia, 2009), 3.

11. Susan Krane, “Provocation and Insistence: A Conversation with Mithu Sen,” *Sculpture Magazine* 37, no. 4 (May 2018), <https://www.sculpture.org>.

12. Sue Bell Yank and Vasundhara Mathur, “UNHomed: The Radical Hospitality of Mithu Sen,” 2017, 18th Street Arts Center, Los Angeles, <https://18thstreet.org>.

13. Mithu Sen, in Krane, “Provocation and Insistence.”

14. Sen, in Krane, “Provocation and Insistence.”

6. A Leap of Faith: Pippa Bacca and Silvia Moro

1. Laura King, "A Plea for Peace in White Goes Dark," *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com>; Elisabetta Povoledo, "Performance Artist Killed on Peace Trip Is Mourned," *New York Times*, April 19, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com>.
2. "Sposa in Viaggio—Bride on Tour," Pippa Bacca website, November 2, 2012, <https://www.pippabacca.it>.
3. Povoledo, "Performance Artist Killed."
4. Ahu Antmen, "Performing and Dying in the Name of World Peace: From Metaphor to Real Life in Feminist Performance," *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 2, no. 1 (2010): 59, <http://rupkatha.com>.
5. "Sposa in Viaggio—Bride on Tour."
6. One of the most recent tributes is Nathalie Léger's *La Robe blanche* (Paris: Les Éditions P.O.L., 2018). I thank Joël Curtz for bringing this book to my attention.
7. Joël Curtz, *The Bride (La Mariée)* (Amsterdam: Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains, 2012), HD, 40 min.
8. This work, titled *Intrusion*, was made in February 2008. Curtz's collaborator was artist Younes Baba-Ali. Joël Curtz and Younes Baba-Ali, *Intrusion (filmed actions)*, 2008, video, <http://www.joelcurtz.com>.
9. Joël Curtz, interview by author, October 27, 2015.
10. "Hotel," Byblos Art Hotel, Villa Amistà, accessed April 14, 2019, <https://www.byblosarthotel.com/en>.
11. I have explored the question of cosmopolitan hospitality in *Brides on Tour* in another publication. See Irina Aristarkhova, "Baiting Hospitality," in *Security and Hospitality*, ed. Jeffrey Clapp and Emily Ridge (London: Routledge, 2016), 64–77.
12. Quoted in Povoledo, "Performance Artist Killed."
13. For examples, see Aristarkhova, "Exotic Hospitality in the Land of Tolerance."
14. For example, see Iris Veldwijk's blog, *Mind of a Hitchhiker*, <https://mindofahitchhiker.com>.
15. "L'Autostop—The Hitchhiking," Pippa Bacca website, November 13, 2012, <https://www.pippabacca.it>.
16. "L'Autostop—The Hitchhiking."
17. Curtz, *The Bride*.
18. Curtz, *The Bride*.
19. Barack Obama, "A More Perfect Union," Constitution Center, March 18, 2008, <https://constitutioncenter.org>.
20. Two research studies have described the pattern: Yanbo Ge, Christopher R. Knittel, Don MacKenzie, and Stephen Zoepf, "Racial and Gender Discrimination in Transportation Network Companies" (NBER Working Paper 22776, National Bureau of Economic Research, Cambridge, Mass., October 2016); Benjamin Edelman, Michael Luca, and Dan Svirsky, "Racial Discrimination in the Sharing Economy: Evidence from a Field Experiment," *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics* 9, no. 2 (2017): 1–22.
21. In his study *Men on Rape: What They Have to Say about Sexual Violence* (New York:

St. Martin's Press, 1982), Timothy Beneke demonstrates that many men who have been convicted of rape downplay their own violence as ordinary, and many claim to be fearful for the safety of women around the "real monsters" in public spaces (compared to them, one assumes).

22. See Free-Range Kids, accessed December 11, 2019, <http://www.freerangekids.com>.

23. "Sposa in Viaggio—Bride on Tour."

24. Joanna Connors, *I Will Find You* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2016), 38–39.

25. Connors, *I Will Find You*, 57.

26. I thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing out a long history of feminist literary scholars, including Ruth Bottigheimer, who have engaged with the Little Red Riding Hood fairy tale's tropes. My interest here lies in how Connors refers to the fairy tale as one element in her socialization that resulted in her victim blaming herself. I find her point here relevant to my own analysis, which does not seek to offer a deeper critique of the fairy-tale canon.

27. Samantha Riggs and Carrie L. Cook, "The Shadow of Physical Harm? Examining the Unique and Gendered Relationship between Fear of Murder versus Fear of Sexual Assault on Fear of Violent Crime," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 30, no. 14 (2015): 2402. See also Elizabeth A. Stanko, *Everyday Violence: How Women and Men Experience Sexual and Physical Danger* (London: HarperCollins, 1990); Elizabeth A. Stanko, "The Case of Fearful Women: Gender, Personal Safety and Fear of Crime," *Women & Criminal Justice* 4, no. 1 (1993): 117–35; Elizabeth A. Stanko, "Women, Crime, and Fear," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 539, no. 1 (1995): 46–58; Jennifer E. Cobbina, Jody Miller, and Rod K. Brunson, "Gender, Neighborhood Danger, and Risk-Avoidance Strategies among Urban African-American Youths," *Criminology* 46, no. 3 (2008): 673–709.

28. See Bishop, *Artificial Hells*.

29. For an excellent analysis of *Brides on Tour* as situated in the history of radical performance art, see Antmen, "Performing and Dying."

30. See, for example, Shilpa Phadke, Sameera Khan, and Shilpa Ranade, eds., *Why Loiter? Women and Risk on Mumbai Streets* (London: Penguin, 2011). This book is a result of the Gender and Space Project, which is based in Mumbai. For information, see "Gender and Space Project," PUKAR, accessed December 2, 2019, <http://pukar.org.in>.

31. "My Letter to Pippa Trailer," Asmin Film, 2010, Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com>; "Pippa'ya Mektubum," Asmin Film Yapım, accessed April 16, 2019, <http://www.asminfilm.com>.

32. Deniz Altun, *Pippa*, production directed by Lerzan Pamir, Sisli Blackout Theatre, Istanbul, February 21, 2012.

33. I have written about this topic in relation to *Brides on Tour* in Aristarkhova, "Baiting Hospitality." See also Still, *Derrida and Hospitality*; Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "The Levite's Concubine: New Light on a Dark Story," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 20, no. 1 (2006): 125–46; Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988). I thank Ruth Tsoffar for bringing Bal's book to my attention.

Conclusion. Hospitality Now: Ken Aptekar

1. The poem is from Gabeba Baderoon's poetry collection *The Dream in the Next Body* (Cape Town: Kwela Books/Snailpress, 2005), 23. See also Gabeba Baderoon, *Regarding Muslims: From Slavery to Post-Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2015), in which, through cultural texts and artifacts, Baderoon discusses the history of inhospitality to a minority Cape Malay Muslim community in South Africa.

2. Lysa TerKeurst, *Uninvited: Living Loved When You Feel Less Than, Left Out, and Lonely* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2016), 7.

3. Ken Aptekar, e-mail message to author, January 14, 2016. Here is the Russian original version, which was also part of the exhibition:

1941. Продовольственные пайки для семьи Симсона Карлебаха урезаны. Евреям запрещена покупка мяса, молока, сигарет, и белого хлеба, а магазины открыты для них только между 4 и 5 часами дня.

С наступлением темноты соседи снабжают семью едой, тайком оставляя ее под садовыми воротами,—преступление, строго караемое нацистами.

Узнав, что за ними скоро придут нацисты, семья Карлебахов привязывает свое кухонное полотенце с монограммой к садовым воротам, в знак последнего выражения благодарности и прощания.

Почти пять десятилетий с тех пор, как большинство евреев Любека убиты нацистами в Бикерниекском лесу под Ригой, ганзейский город (Любек) радушно принимает Феликса, сына Симсона Карлебаха. Он спасся побегом в Англию в 1939 году.

Жители Любека почитают Феликса Карлебаха с семьей в городской думе, недалеко от синагоги, в которой Саломон Карлебах служил раввином с 1870 до 1919 годов.

К почетному гостю подходит женщина. “Наши родители были соседями. Я вам принесла вещь, которая принадлежит вашей семье,” говорит она, протягивая ему то самое полотенце с монограммой.

4. Ken Aptekar, “NACHBARN/Neighbors in a German Town,” Repainter Diary (blog), January 28, 2016, <https://repainterdiary.com/2016/01/28>.

5. Ken Aptekar, e-mail message to author, June 2, 2018.

6. The Stolpersteine (stumbling stones) project, created by German artist Gunter Demnig, remembers “the victims of National Socialism by installing commemorative brass plaques in the pavement in front of their last address of choice,” before they were sent to a concentration camp or another location by Nazi officers. Residents in separate cities in Germany, Austria, Hungary, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Norway, and Ukraine volunteer to raise funds and install plaques. A lot of research needs to be carried out to locate the victims' former addresses. For more information, see “Home,” Stolpersteine, accessed April 5, 2019, <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en>. On Lübeck's participation in the project, see “Deutsch-jüdischer Geschichtspreis für Lübeckerin,” Initiative Stolpersteine für Lübeck, last modified January 26, 2010, <https://www.stolpersteine-luebeck.de>.

7. Aptekar, "NACHBARN/Neighbors in a German Town."

8. Janet Wolff, "The Cross Purposes of Neighbours," in *Ken Aptekar: Nachbarn/Neighbours* (Lübeck: Kunsthalle Sankt Annen, 2016), 52.

9. Aptekar, "NACHBARN/Neighbors in a German Town."

10. "'Our parents were neighbours. I brought something that belongs to you,' she said, and handed the rabbi the kitchen towel. The scene is commemorated in the last painting." Quoted from Stuart Jeffries, "What My Blond Jesus Could Teach Germany," *The Guardian*, February 16, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com>.

11. In reviews of the exhibition in *The Guardian*, *The Hindu*, and *Kunstforum International*, "gratitude" was mentioned as the key message the Carlebach family intended to send by leaving the towel. "News," Ken Aptekar's website, accessed April 5, 2019, <https://kenaptekar.net>.

12. Lev Rubinstein, *Slovarny zapas* (Moscow: Novoe Izdatelstvo, 2008), 48, my translations.

13. Dina Nayeri, "The Ungrateful Refugee: 'We Have No Debt to Repay,'" *The Guardian*, April 4, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com>.

14. A curator who invited Edi Hila to show his work at *documenta 14*, Pierre Bal-Blanc, evokes many historical events and tensions in an open letter to Hila: "A Letter of Invitation to *documenta 14*, part 2," February 18, 2016, <https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13559/edi-hila>.

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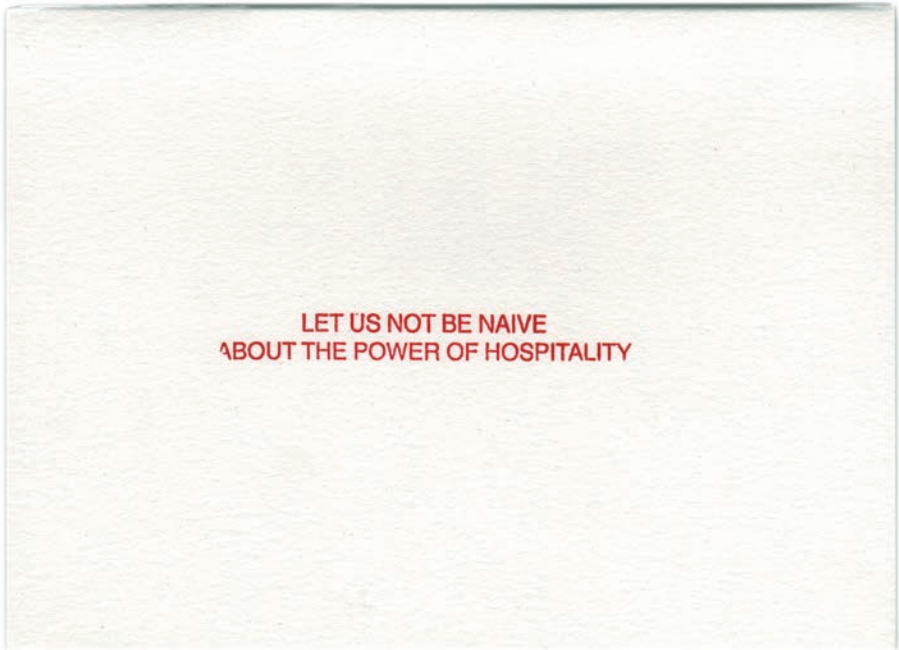


PLATE 1. Ana Prvački, *Let us not be naive about the power of hospitality*, 2012. The form of each card could indicate a message, a gift, or a greeting card. Photograph by Ana Prvački.



PLATE 2. Faith Wilding performs *Waiting* at Womanhouse, Los Angeles, California, 1972. Photograph by Lloyd Hamrol.



PLATE 3. Lee Mingwei, *Living Room 2*, The Richard E. Floor Living Room, 2012. Designed by Renzo Piano Building Workshop in conversation with 1999 artist-in-residence Lee Mingwei. Photograph copyright Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.



PLATE 4. *Living Room* host Zoe Strauss engages her guests in conversation, March 2016. The Richard E. Floor Living Room, 2012. Photograph copyright Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston.



PLATE 5. Kathy High, *HLA-B27*, 2008. This photographic series features intimate, close-up images of the transgenic rats that participated in the two iterations of *Embracing Animal*.



PLATE 6. Mithu Sen, *It's Good to Be Queen*, 2006, a site-specific residency project for Bose Pacia Gallery, New York. Queen's Durbar Hall, installation in living room.

PLATE 7. Mithu Sen, *Grave Garment*, in *It's Good to Be Queen*, 2006. Lace and satin dress, hair, coat hangers, safety pins, and paper; 84 × 42 inches. This haunting and harrowing view of a colorful dress with hanging long black hair attached to it is in response to a note about her hair left for the artist by the apartment's owner.





PLATE 8. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. This still from the documentary film about the project *Brides on Tour* by Italian artists Pippa Bacca and Silvia Moro shows a television image of Pippa Bacca hitchhiking with a sign showing her destination, just before she disappeared in Turkey.



PLATE 9. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. The two artists Silvia Moro and Pippa Bacca smile in a television image during their journey/performance *Brides on Tour*.



PLATE 10. Ken Aptekar, *Carlebach Küchentuch #6*, 2015. Oil and linen mounted on wood, sandblasted glass, bolts; 100 × 200 cm (diptych), in *Nachbarn/Neighbours*, Kunsthalle St. Annen, Lübeck, Germany, 2016. This painting by Aptekar tells the story of the Carlebach family, who perished in the Holocaust, and their towel that was returned to a survivor by a relative of the neighbors who had secretly given them food. The English translation is “A woman approaches the guest of honor. ‘Our parents were neighbors. I brought you something that belongs to you,’ she says, and hands him the monogrammed kitchen towel.” Photograph by Linn Underhill.



PLATE 11. Edi Hila, *Hospitality*, 2001. Oil on canvas, 180 × 121 cm. This painting, presented at the *documenta 14* exhibition in Athens, Greece, speaks to the hosts' ambivalent anticipation: they wait for those arriving from the sea, be they strangers or long-lost friends. Photograph by Jens Ziehe.