



Merve Kaplan, *Yoldaş*, 2025, installation detail

we encounter archetypal portraits associated with guest workers, including Mehmet Aksoy's 1983 painting of a pieceworker in the subway – a portrait of an exhausted woman in her best Sunday dress with her eyes closed as she turns inward, and Yıldırım Denizli's 1984 painting *The Brightness of Our Rooms*, which features an anonymous sitter in a blue, corporate suit, whose surroundings remind us of a cage or prison cell. Nearby, Azade Köker's 2021 sculpture *Child Bride (Dress and Shoes)*, made from papier-mache and epoxy, rests on a table that has been turned upside down across the pews. Through a simple white wedding dress with a red bow tied around the waist, the artist confronts us with a sinister side of the sacrament of marriage that is usually initiated or performed in places of worship such as a church.

At St Bonifatius, the stories of the guest workers become more tangible and personal. Atiye Atül's quiet still-lives of a can, a rose, a tomato, and onions (all 1974–76) are drawings of everyday objects that are symbols of personal transformation, acceptance and longing. On loan from Kunstmuseum Bochum is İhsan Ece's 1974 photorealist painting series 'Passbilder BRD', which includes portraits of his friends, trained engineers from Istanbul, Kadir Topal, Yusuf Ziya Aktaş, Lütfü Çağdagül, Ramis Çakır, as well as his father, Hasan. The painting's dark grey backgrounds suggest an official passport page, replete with a fictitious, yet nonetheless authoritative-seeming stamp that reads '*Gastarbeiter*' – 'guest worker'.

The future of the Ruhr and its abandoned churches may remain uncertain, but Manifesta 16 Ruhr's true achievement lies in the quiet, yet authoritative presence of artworks and commissions relating to the migrant stories that have shaped the region, past and present. Their visibility over 105 days is an important first step towards recognising migrant artists and migrant histories as an integral part of German art history.

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Artists' Books

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Jimmy Robert: distinguish the limit from the edge

An object of wonder from London's Book Works, *distinguish the limit from the edge* is a collaboration of sorts between Korean artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982) and Guadeloupe-born artist Jimmy Robert (b1975), who initiated the project with curator Jacob Korczynski. This collaboration is, of course, posthumous on Cha's part; indeed, the question of how a deceased artist's work ought to be sampled and represented by a living one lingers in the background somewhere – I raise this in genuine curiosity, not admonishment.

In practical terms, what we have here is an A4-sized booklet with spiral bindings on both sides, each coil holding in place one of two card cover sheets, in blue and grey, one smaller than the other, across which the title phrase is staggered. On the underside, both bindings hold the thick cardboard backing in place. The format gives a hint of a school or university exercise book, but the enclosing loops of wire also suggest something of the locked or bound box, Harry Houdini-style: it suggests, rightly, that the contents will not offer themselves up for easy skimming.

Cha's visual-poetic works, mostly in Letraset on plain and gridded paper, can be followed with relative ease from obvious starting point to obvious finish. Robert's contributions, by contrast – photographs, poems and prose – are on pages opening to the right, sequestered away behind Sha's. As well as seeming to literally enfold the two oeuvres into one another, the mode of presentation poses various thorny questions of reading order: where to start, what comes next? Such questions seem heavy with connotations of fractured sense and language, themes connected to both artists' migrant identities (Cha lived and worked mainly in the US, while Robert grew up in France and is now based in Berlin).

Cha was fluent in English, Korean and French. The playful word experiments we find across the first half of the text – selected by Robert – seem to articulate a kind of critical distance from semantic sense tied up with multilingual identity. For example, the second – and lengthiest – work, 'L'Image Concrete feuille L'Objet Abstrait', 1976, has wry fun with phonetically and thematically enmeshed words in French: *feu* (fire), *feuille* (leaf/newspaper), *feuillet* (leaflet), *feuilletage* (puff pasty), *feuilleton* (TV show). The connotations, broadly speaking, are of information transmission and fragmentation.

Pieces on graph paper, such as *Untitled (Après tu parti)*, 1976, perhaps predict the spirit of the grid as defined by Rosalind Krauss in 1979: emblem of both formalist monomania and reverie. But they also follow very much in the footsteps of the concrete poetry movement of the 1950s and 60s, with its use of the

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typewriter's even character widths and phonetic play, albeit freighted with questions of globalisation, economic colonialism and conflict. (Indeed, these works of Cha's might seem somewhat slight, even *late*, taken out of context from her performance and video work, in which the language and the body is more centrally placed.)

Jimmy Robert's engagement with Cha for this project began when Korczynski approached him, noting an 'intuitive connection' between the two artists. This was, as a dialogue between Robert and Korczynski notes, connected both to the range of media used – from artists' books to film, video and performance – and to the Francophone-Anglophone hybridity.

The themes of Robert's contributions will be familiar to many: questions of how meaning survives through multiple translations or representations, however these are laced with a quality of critique regarding the ways in which cultural-historical narratives have excluded queer and black bodies (though the latter topic is less to the fore here). There are photographs of hands holding pictures of hands, photographs of drawings of books, photographs of drawings of piles of paper on fragments of torn paper, and so on.

At stake, perhaps, is a sense of attentiveness to the spaces of contradiction and non-meaning that must be studiously ignored for meaning to carry across from sender to recipient in unsullied form. 'Bail out of formatted minds / distinguish the limit from the edge' reads a poem-like text called 'Parameters', 2012. There is also some photocopied and highlighted prose from a thesis submitted when Robert was a student at Goldsmiths. In this context, I struggle not to see this as self-indulgent, particularly as the writing is of the slightly performative abstruseness one might expect.

The format of this booklet is a thing of ingenuity, beauty and resonance. The contents might seem to suffer slightly from being presented in isolation from the engaging performance-based practices of both artists, which connect questions of linguistic slippage and miscommunication to embodied realities. Greater reference to them might have circumvented the slight sense of poststructuralist navel-gazing that occasionally creeps in; then again, there will surely be enough knowledge of that wider context among this text's readers to ensure generous engagement.

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha and Jimmy Robert, *distinguish the limit from the edge*, 2025, Book Works, 110pp, £35, 978 1 912570 32 4.

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Performance

Jeremy Nedd: from rock to rock ... aka how magnolia was taken for granite • slidin' thru

In December 2018, three lawsuits were separately filed against Epic Games, the developer of the sensationally popular videogame *Fortnite*. Each related to specific dance moves being used by the platform's characters without attribution or compensation for their original creators. The litigation, which focused on *Fortnite*'s purchasable in-game dances (Emotes), alleged unauthorised misappropriation of likeness and intellectual property, unfair profiteering, and the exploitation of protected creative expression. The most high-profile plaintiff was Alfonso Ribeiro, whose swaying arms and steps to Tom Jones's 'It's Not Unusual' had become popularly associated with Carlton, his character on *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. The dance, Ribeiro alleged, had been directly lifted to create *Fortnite*'s 'Fresh' Emote; a second case centred on the 'Floss' dance, a devilish emblem of late-2010s meme culture which emerged as *Fortnite*'s irrepressible hallmark.

The third lawsuit held deeper meaning for US hip-hop, dance stylistics and African-American cultural production, all of which drew choreographer Jeremy Nedd to the subject. Brooklyn rapper 2 Milly brought a case against *Fortnite* for use of the 'Milly Rock', a two-step motion described in his 2015 song of the same name as 'first arms up then left and right / then MJ get out my sight'. In the music video, filmed at various locations in Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, 2 Milly locks his arms at rough 90° angles, raises them to chest level and then swipes them side-to-side, a move mirrored by his entourage. Within a few months, Rihanna and Travis Scott had been seen performing the move, prompting an excitable *Vice* writeup in which 2 Milly claimed: 'If you ain't Milly Rockin', you ain't doing nothing. Nobody don't want to be in the spot standing around looking lame.'

from rock to rock ... aka how magnolia was taken for granite sees Nedd elevate the 'Milly Rock' into a motif for five dancers (himself included), who variously soften, sharpen and reiterate it to the tune of Deniece Williams's 1976 track 'Free', a down-tempo soul number which helps to elongate 2 Milly's original gestures. By the end of the 75-minute sequence, the dance has become disjointed, even theatrical: a dancer inside a silver sleeping bag writhes around the stage while another plods around in concrete-block shoes and barks what sounds like an instruction: 'Shots!' Another dancer dons a motorcycle helmet and circles around on a hoverboard, evoking the playfulness of 2 Milly's music video and adding an absurdity to the otherwise earnest choreography.

The setting transforms and confounds the original hip-hop context. PS21: Center for Contemporary Performance is set in 100 acres of woodland orchards outside Chatham in New York state's Hudson Valley. Nedd's troupe performs in a covered outdoor amphitheatre, a slither of orange sunset visible either side of the stage. *from rock to rock* premiered at Kaserne Basel in 2023, before travelling this year to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and the inaugural Lincoln Center Contemporary Dance Festival. Here, it is presented to a mixture of locals and day-trippers from New York City, and is accompanied by *slidin' thru*, a second Nedd work for three dancers which riffs on the Electric Slide and other African-American social dances. Performed earlier