

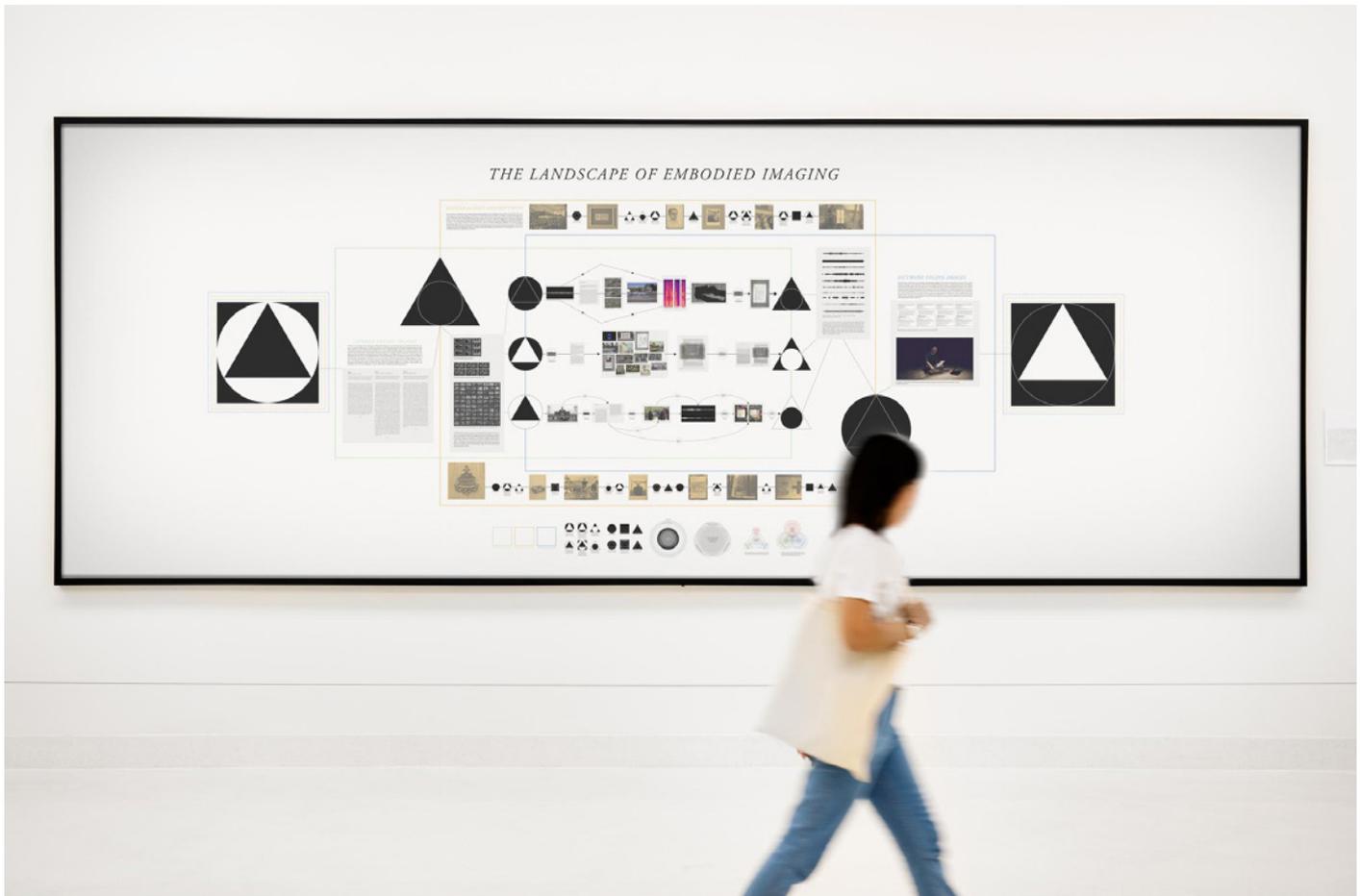
# TO CARRY IMAGES

THE LANDSCAPE OF EMBODIED IMAGING

*Guston Sondin-Kung - PhD Defence*

**June 23rd, 9:15-12:15 Kunsthall Charlottenborg**

Please arrive by 9:00 to be seated. The doors will close at 9:15. Following the defense at 12:15 there will be champagne and canapes.



**Medical Museion at Department of Public Health, and CBMR, University of Copenhagen**

**Primary Supervisor:** Louise Whiteley, Associate Professor, Medical Museion, Department of Public Health and Novo Nordisk Foundation for Basic Metabolic Research (CBMR), Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen

**Primary Co-Supervisor:** Marianne Ping Huang, Associate Professor, School of Communication and Culture - Comparative Literature, Aarhus University

**Co-Supervisor:** Adam Bencard, Associate Professor, Medical Museion, Department of Public Health and Novo Nordisk Foundation for Basic Metabolic Research (CBMR), Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen

## **Defence Committee**

**Chair:** Ken Arnold

Ken Arnold is Professor in the Public Health Department at University of Copenhagen and Director of Medical Museion (part of the Novo Nordisk Foundation Center for Basic Metabolic Research), which combines adventurous research in medical humanities with innovative public exhibitions and events. Until March 2022, he was Head of Cultural Partnerships at Wellcome - the London-based charitable foundation focused on health research. Earlier, he helped establish Wellcome Collection and directed its first decade of programming. He regularly writes and speaks on museums - today and in the past - and on the interactions between arts, humanities and sciences.

**Opponent:** Rebecka Katz Thor

Rebecka Katz Thor is a researcher, writer and editor. She holds a PhD in Aesthetics from Södertörn University, Sweden. Her research focuses on the aesthetics of commemoration, image production's and contemporary art's relation to historical, ethical and political claims. She leads the research project entitled Remember us To Life - Vulnerable Memories in a Prospective Monument, Memorial and Museum, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond 2021-2023. The research will follow three ongoing commemorative projects in Sweden and investigate their relationship to notions of vulnerability and grievability.

**Opponent:** Christopher Bratton

Christopher Alan Bratton is an artist, former President of the San Francisco Art Institute, and co-founder and Executive Director of the Center for Arts, Design and Social Research. With an extensive background in socially engaged cultural work and media, Bratton has spoken widely on issues of art, media, and technology education and access. As an artist, his video and installation works, addressing questions of contemporary media cultures, have been widely screened and exhibited, including the Museum of Modern Art and the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York; and international film festivals, including Seoul, Berlin and Havana. Bratton is currently a Professor in the School of Arts, Design, and Architecture at Aalto University in Helsinki, Finland.



#### Dissertation Abstract:

*“...I see my ribcage. I see the protrusions of each of my ribs and I’m putting my arm above my head in the air. When I’m doing this the ribs are poking out further. With my other arm and my pointer finger I’m touching the ribs. I’m running my finger over them and feeling each of their bumps protruding out of my ribcage.”*

This excerpted transcript, titled Mental Imagery 01: Ribs, is from an audio recording that I conducted in 2021 where I attempt to describe a recurring mental image in real time. The content of this and other related mental images that arose in the same period are connected to stories of genocide from the World War 2 European Holocaust that were told to me throughout my childhood as a third-generation descendant. These mental images have arrived with renewed force in tandem with a growing authoritarian, populist movement that in recent years has been sweeping the world configuring the “jew” once again as a target of vitriolic hate, violence and scapegoating.

In the dissertation I argue that the interfacing of this internal mental imaging process with exterior shifts in the notion of “the jew”, along with the passing of the generation who directly experienced the holocaust, led me to a process of “becoming Jewish”. This, for me, has ignited a sense of responsibility to carry these images, and with them the violent and traumatic knowledge that is passing from one generation to the next. This has motivated me throughout the dissertation and compelled me to understand more deeply how memory as imagery is passed transgenerationally and how artistic research and practice can map this process by articulating its insights through dialogical works of art. Furthermore, it has led me to consider how the use of this knowledge thus passed on can contribute to the resistance against ongoing and future genocide.

This inquiry has necessitated working within an interdisciplinary frame that draws from the fields of moving-image artistic practice, neuroscience and memory studies. I conceptualize this approach as that of the minor specialist, someone who approaches these disciplines as an outsider from within with the aim of expanding the meaning of each disciplinary practice. This approach has been shaped by a matrix of critical analysis consisting of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988), decolonial theory (Mignolo, 2011; Rothberg, 2014) and substance monism (Spinoza, 1677; Bergson, 1896). Doing so, I have developed a novel artistic research tool called The Landscape of Embodied Imaging through which I map the emergence and transformation of images as internal and external representations as they are engaged in a communicative multigenerational dialogue.

The thesis presents the Landscape of Embodied Imaging, outlining the three distinct zones of relation that comprise it: 1) Inward facing images; which serves to map the way that images enter our bodies and remain over time. These are presented through transcriptions of audio recordings (Mental Imagery 01: Ribcage; Mental Imagery 02: Fingerprint, Mental Imagery 03: Skin); 2) Externalized representations: which maps the ways in which images are inscribed externally for the purpose of reflective articulation. These are presented through experimental short stories and essayistic reflections: The birthday, The clock face, The Microscopic Burial, Holobiont Faciality, Epidemic Relations: 5G and the Microbe, Chromosomal Imaging, and 3) Outward facing images that seek communication and dialogue beyond the self, presented through the audio performance The Microscopic Burial (2021).

As a whole the dissertation conceptualizes, articulates, and demonstrates how The Landscape of Embodied Imaging produces a unique interface between subjective coordinates, communal affinities and memorial processes. This in turn creates an emergent notion of imaging referred to as Postmemory Neuro Imaging as a mode of imaging that engages in recuperative processes of epistemic reconstruction through reconnecting the relations between internal and external representations. The hope is thus that this research, beyond contributing to the matrix of disciplines that it engages, will help us comprehend some of the key memorial lessons that have been passed transgenerationally and enable us to resist ongoing and future genocides.