

Article

Born in Translation and Iteration: On the Poetics of João Delgado

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Abstract: João Delgado's poetry first appeared as an anthology of translated poetry in *He'arat Shulaym* Issue 1, published in November 2001 in Jerusalem by the artist collective Sala-Manca. The entire issue was devoted to João Delgado. Delgado was a Portuguese-Argentinean poet, born in Lisbon circa 1920 (or not), who left Portugal as a political refugee for Buenos Aires. He disappeared in 1976 during the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983). Since 1976, there has been no trace of his fate, although new fragments of his work are constantly being discovered, translated, and published by the Sala-Manca group. There is no evidence of any originals of his work. Literary critics in Israel praised Delgado's poetry and art and even identified previously unknown relationships to poets and artists from the European avantgarde. In Sala-Manca's artistic work, dating back two decades, João Delgado and his heteronyms would have a central role and focus, blurring the boundaries of the group, blurring the fictional with the "real", and proposing a subjectivity that embraces multiplicity and dispersion. Translating his poetry into Hebrew, a foreign language (to Delgado), and bringing it into print for the first time in neither its original language nor the cultural context in which it was created may be seen as a kind of de-contextualization of the poet's poetry, since Delgado always kept himself and his oeuvre connected to the immediate surroundings where it was produced. On the other hand, perhaps it is actually this possibility—to "become only in translation"—that is one of the outstanding characteristics of Delgado's poetry, emblematic of its linguistic and conceptual elasticity. This paper examines João Delgado's poetic work in relation to Sala-Manca's artistic work and the way in which both Sala-Manca and Delgado create a "system of life" by being heteronyms of one another, allowing for a multiplicity of identities, and stressing the relation to Others.



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1. Introduction

João Delgado, a Portuguese poet, was born or died in Lisbon. He stayed in Alcântara for three days. On the fourth day, he joined the navy and set out for Buenos Aires. There he read the great poets of the 1920s in the 1970s, participated in art evening classes at the city's night schools, and these impelled him to drop both poetry and art. (Delgado 2001, p. 8)

João Delgado's poetry originally appeared as a translated anthology in the first issue of the journal *He'arat Shulaym* (Notes in the Margins) published in November 2001 in Jerusalem by the artist group Sala-Manca. The entire issue was devoted to Delgado, a Portuguese-Argentinean poet. Born in Lisbon circa 1920, Delgado left Portugal as a political refugee, settling in Buenos Aires. He subsequently disappeared in 1976 during the military dictatorship in Argentina (1976–1983). Since then, no trace of him has been found, although new fragments of his work are constantly being discovered, translated, and published by Sala-Manca.

The surprising publication of Delgado's poetry for the first time in Hebrew, translated by members of the Sala-Manca group, elicited a positive response. Literary critics praised Delgado's poetry and art, finding and sharing with the readers previously unknown

relationships between Delgado and poets and artists from the European avantgarde. Albert Swissa, a renowned writer and art critic, wrote in his review:

In Paris, I met experts from the Oulipo group who told me that Delgado's life and work are summarized in a crossword puzzle by George Perec, a crossword puzzle based on hidden codes inside words that were removed over the years from the Larousse dictionary and found their new home in footnotes dispersed throughout Perec's oeuvre. I have the crossword puzzle with me, but I didn't dare start dealing with it. No matter what, all the researchers agree that one or two verses from J.L. Borges' 'The Golem' (quoted in the article "76"), prove that Delgado came across Borges in Buenos Aires at some point during the late 50s and that this event had a decisive influence on Delgado's internal world and destiny. Borges posed for Delgado a simple riddle: "João Delgado surpasses João Delgado. Who is who? And who surpasses who?" Following this, Delgado discovered his ascendance and relationship to the 16th century (?) João Pinto Delgado, a crypto-Jewish poet, who is named together with Luis de Leon and other poets. (Swissa 2001)

Swissa, thus, enriches Delgado's virtually unknown biography and lineage and, in a way, collaborates with the Sala-Manca group in their project of writing, publishing, and performing Delgado's biography. Yoram Melzer, an influential literary critic and translator, wrote a review of the first issue of *He'arat Shulaym* in which he discussed João Delgado's poetry as presented by Sala-Manca in translation:

I admit. I'd never heard about the man [João Delgado] beforehand. After reading the [first] issue, I had my concerns regarding his existence, concerns that were heightened specifically by some of the texts (i.e., "he used to say that that is the thing," Rodriguez¹ would argue "nothing." That word game is possible in Hebrew, not in Spanish or Portuguese).² An interesting case, especially in light of the prose, poetry and conceptual art linked to Delgado's name. A thorough reading of *He'arat Shulaym* Issue 1 reveals that indeed it is a double heteronymic game. The confident issue reveals (does it?) a group of creators who have decided to cling to art, and they do whatever they want to in the framework of an intensive dialogue with the artistic field. (Melzer 2002)

While Swissa enriches Delgado's biography by linking him to Oulipo and stressing the poet's lineage as a descendent of João Pinto Delgado, the crypto-Jewish poet, Melzer attempts to decode the poetry by referring to the contemporary artists behind Delgado's persona. Translating and publishing poetry without the original; the idea of iteration; the construction of a collective identity comprising João Delgado and his heteronyms; the blurring of the fictional with the "real"; all these characterize not only Delgado's oeuvre but the construction of an artistic identity for a two-member artistic group who are at once a couple, team, and collective embracing of multiplicity and dispersion.

2. The Beginnings of the Relationship between Sala-Manca and Delgado

He'arat Shulaym is a print art journal published in Hebrew in Jerusalem by the Sala-Manca artistic group.³ Sala-Manca (which means "without space" or literally "without room") is based in Jerusalem and has been active since 2000. Its members and the authors of this article are a pair of artists and scholars who were born in Buenos Aires, and both immigrated to Israel in their early twenties. The journal was published independently. In the editorial note of the first issue, the editors write that its main objective is "...to distract the individual's gaze for a moment from the dominant cultural reality" (Sala-Manca 2000, p. 1).

The first issue, as mentioned, was devoted to the publication of João Delgado's poetry and art. The editors defined Delgado as a pseudocharacter on the fringes of Argentinian culture and literature. In the absence of any original texts, Delgado's poetry was published for the first time in Hebrew translation. The cover was a facsimile of an empty page with a footnote in Hebrew: a quote from Delgado (see below). To devote the first issue of *He'arat*

Shulaym to Delgado was a statement. For the editors of the journal, it was a way to establish an artistic lineage that would contextualize their work not only in the Israeli artistic and literary scenes but in a hybrid cultural territory in which translation could become original. The members of the Sala-Manca group were two young artists, not raised in and not yet connected to the local Israeli art scene, nor connected anymore to the Argentinean art scene. The journal was a way to inscribe the artists in a tradition related to a radical South American avantgarde artist whom they admired.

The specific tradition in which they inscribed themselves was that of a fictive wandering avantgarde poet, a political refugee, in the margins, and in the idea of being only in translation. The original disappeared. The poet disappeared. Delgado disappeared during the last Argentinean dictatorship. The only way to survive was in translation. What remained? The construction and reconstruction of a translated I. Sala-Manca brought (and/or created) a group as their lineage—João Delgado and his heteronyms—to share themselves with the Israeli art scene, relate to it, and contest it. They were not an I but a We or a multiple “I”.

This article examines João Delgado’s poetic work in relation to Sala-Manca’s artistic practice and the way both Sala-Manca and Delgado create, much like the Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa, a “system of life” (Zenith 2012, p. 140) by existing as heteronyms of one another, allowing for a multiplicity of identities and stressing the relation to Others. A *pseudonym* might be described as signing with another name, although the writer uses the same style and writes from their “own” personality and positionality. By contrast, a *heteronym* is the utterance of the sentiments, positionality, and personality of an Other beyond the writer. A heteronym is a splitting of the creative self, allowing different personas to write in different ways and even sometimes having different kinds of relationships between them.⁴ In discussing heteronyms, we will try to problematize the relationships between authorship and identity in relation to the dynamics of the Sala-Manca group as immigrants in terms of language and culture and yet belonging to the Jewish majority in Israel. Taking academic writing as a dialogical and artistic process, this article examines those with whom we have conversed as immigrants, as artists, as new citizens of a country, and as citizens who hold critical political viewpoints vis-à-vis the country they joined.

In the film “Edouard Glissant: One World in Relation” (Diawara 2010, 00:09:21), Glissant says that every diaspora is a passage from unity to multiplicity. To be diasporic is to leave behind unity and become multiple, to belong and not belong at the same time, and to be able to exist as a hybrid self. One must know how to cultivate “a son’s viewpoint, the vision of a foreigner” (Plenel 2011). João Delgado’s life story and work try to be a work of multiplicity and diaspora(s), continuing to exist through his heteronyms.)

We argue, following Vered Maimon, that Sala-Manca’s work “enacts disruptions in specific economies of the visible and the ‘sayable’ through the creation of fictional roles and identities” (Maimon 2009). We discuss Sala-Manca’s work as one that is diasporic and de-centered, and at the same time in tension with and influenced by issues of identity and sole authorship as promoted by the artistic field. This article is based on Mauas’ M.A. thesis (Mauas 2020) and two papers presented by Rotman at two academic conferences (Rotman 2016).

3. The Beginnings

The story of João Delgado’s life cannot be told in a linear manner. The information available is sporadic and fragmentary. According to Sala-Manca, he was born in Lisbon in 1921⁵ (this is not actually possible; apparently he was born some years earlier), worked for the newspaper *La Opinion* from the age of fifteen, and left Portugal after performing an intervention at the newspaper in 1926. A day after the military coup d’état, Delgado, who was responsible for writing the newspaper’s obituaries, changed the color of the ink in the printing press from black to white. In this way, the words were “silenced”, nothing was written, or so it appeared. With subtle poetics, the blank issue anticipated the dark times that would descend upon the Portuguese people. All copies of that issue were confiscated and burnt by the army with only one copy surviving. That single copy, signed by the poet

and given to his friend and heteronym Arturo Maure, was published for the first time as a facsimile in the eleventh issue of *He'arat Shulaym* in 2006.⁶ On that ostensibly blank page, Delgado wrote, in white letters, his own obituary as a Portuguese citizen. Indeed, that very same day he was born as a wandering poet, a refugee.

According to his autobiography (which is written in the third person and appears as an epigraph at the beginning of this article), he arrived in Buenos Aires, where he lived until he disappeared during the “Process of National Reorganization.” This was the official name used by the Military Junta for the military dictatorship that ruled between 1976 and 1983 which led to the disappearance and killing of thousands of opponents of the regime or those the Junta perceived as such, Delgado among them.

Close to nothing is known about Delgado’s family history and childhood. He may be (as pointed out by his heteronym Arturo Maure in the article “76” (Maure 2001) and followed by Albert Swissa in the press article) a descendent of the *marrano* poet João Pinto Delgado (~1582–1653).

4. Delgado’s Family History

João Pinto Delgado, born in Portugal around 1582, is considered one of the prominent exponents of crypto-Jewish poetry. João Pinto Delgado escaped the Inquisition in Portugal, leaving for France and then Antwerp, where he died in 1653 (Roth 1935). As both Cecil Roth and Timothy Oelman note (Roth 1935; Oelman 1982), people often confused him with his grandfather who bore the same name. This note complicates Maure’s quote from Jorge Luis Borges in the article “76”: “João Delgado’s literary talent surpasses João Delgado’s talent.” Borges may have been also playing a double game here, connecting the contemporary Portuguese poet João Delgado with either of the two sixteenth-century poets of the same name.

The latter two João Delgado were forced to leave the city where they were born and raised. João Delgado the 2nd was forced to leave due to religious prosecution. Delgado the 3rd escaped Salazar’s dictatorship for political reasons, fleeing to Buenos Aires. The decision to travel to Buenos Aires is another enigma; perhaps “he got lost using Lewis Carroll’s map of the ocean” (Sala-Manca 2000, p. 20; Swissa 2001).

Indeed, as his heteronym Arturo Maure wrote:

João Delgado the 3rd was a multi-faceted artist. Among other things, he was a poet, dramaturg, journalist, researcher, compositor and collector of objects of no value [...] Delgado wrote to be forgotten. To melt into the otherness. He hunted the essential, the succinct. Multi-faced anonymity.

(Maure 2001, p. 4)

João Delgado the 3rd (1920?–1976?) disappeared during the last military dictatorship in Argentina in 1976; his heteronym Arturo Maure is the one who survived to tell the story:

Delgado disappeared; it is said he had gone elephant hunting. Those who got to know him can testify that this is impossible. We could recognize the literary reference immediately. Perhaps it was a rumor initiated by Delgado himself, a way to let us know that he succeeded in escaping, ran away from the police and from Hemingway—to cross the border.

(Maure 2001, p. 4)

According to Sala-Manca’s introductory note (see Figure 1), the article was published for the first time in 1996 in the magazine *La Arroba*, edited by Pablo Suarez in Montevideo (Sala-Manca 2000, p. 4). This original, as Delgado’s poetry, is inaccessible, perhaps nonexistent, and its translation is the only document upon which we can rely.

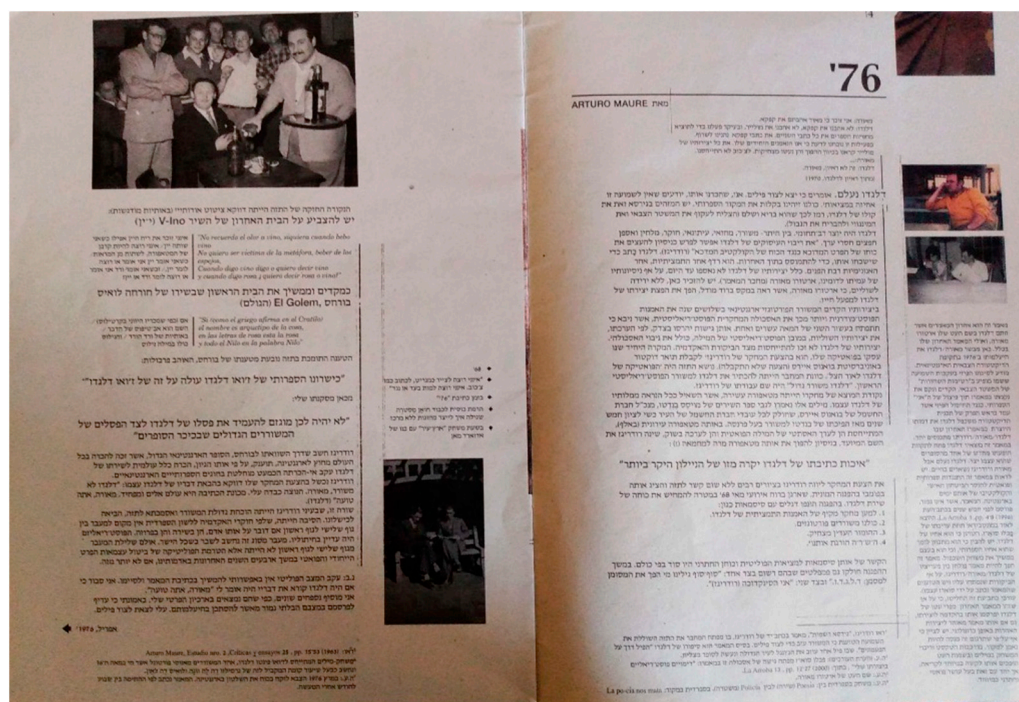


Figure 1. '76' by Arturo Maure. He'arat Shulaym, Issue 1.

In Argentina, as a poet and an activist, Delgado knew that his name was on the Argentinian dictatorship's blacklist. To protect himself, he began to multiply his literary self and split it into different heteronyms: Arturo Maure (literary critic), Rodriguez (architect), Juan Mestre (anarchist and compass maker), Regina Handke (Hungarian-Jewish poet), Marian Loop (Romanian sound artist and inventor), Prof. G. Vakulinchuk (writer and theoretician), and Irena Fantlova (cubist actress). "He was looking to become invisible through the many faces of his own anonymity," Maure writes in "76".

5. Delgado and Pessoa

Delgado cannot be read without connecting him to one of the most original and prolific poets of the last century: Fernando Pessoa. Daniel Blaustein, a scholar of Latin-American Studies at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, sent an attachment in a private email to Sala-Manca containing the writings of Nanando F. Pietrazzurra, an Italian Hebraist who also translated Pessoa into Hebrew. In the attachment, Pietrazzurra recounted how Delgado got to know Pessoa:

There are so many coincidences that Jung, Carl Jung, might have coined his notorious notion of "synchronicity" taking as a starting point this constellation of events: the picture of João Delgado as a young boy was taken in Lisbon in 1929; in the same city, between 1913 and 1935, Fernando Pessoa—under the heteronym Bernardo Soares—writes the 479 fragments that will compose "The Book of Disquiet".

(Blaustein 2006)

Pietrazzurra, according to Blaustein,⁷ set sail from Reggio di Calabria for Buenos Aires on 18 November 1931, aboard the *Malcolm*. Due to a technical problem, the ship was delayed in Lisbon for seven weeks; there, in the harsh winter of 1932, Pietrazzurra might have become acquainted with Soares. His translation of fragment 148 into Hebrew was found in the Leprosarium "Ariel O. Cozzoni" in the city of Rosario, Santa Fe province, Argentina in 1965. Fragment 148 reads:

Everything stated or expressed by man is a note in the margin of a completely erased text. From what is in the note we can extract the gist of what must have been in the text, but there is always a doubt, and the possible meanings are many.

(Pessoa 2002, n. 148)

A year later, Pietrazurra committed suicide. His body was recognized by the only person who came to visit him at the leprosarium: João Delgado.

The art magazine edited and published by Sala-Manca for seven consecutive years between 2000 and 2007 was called *He'arat Shulaym* which means “Notes in the margins”, and the art events that were organized for the launch of each issue were entitled *He'ara*—“Comment”. Both for Sala-Manca and for Delgado and his heteronyms, fragment 148 by Fernando Pessoa reflects the spatial way in which they perceive their marginal practice.

Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935) and his heteronyms were among the greatest exponents of heteronymic philosophy; he also inspired Delgado. Fragment 148, selected from the “Livro do desassossego” (1982) by Fernando Pessoa, engages with Delgado’s passion for the margins, that which is not considered central by the hegemonic system as a gateway to the importance of life.

During the 1920s, Delgado was a young adult living in Lisbon, and Fernando Pessoa and his heteronyms were already active in Portugal’s literary scene. It is highly possible that Delgado knew, as Daniel Blaustein suggests, the “system of life” (Zenith 2012, p. 140) called Fernando Pessoa. For Delgado, the heteronymic poetic was a way to search for anonymity, to dissolve himself, or what Maure calls “multifaceted anonymity.” This was anonymity characterized by a plurality of selves, not by non-showing, but by a multiplicity of manifestations.

In his article “Fernando Pessoa’s Heteronymic Machine” (Morris 2014), Adam Morris alleges that Pessoa’s heteronymic system of life is a precursor to Deleuze and Guattari’s rhizomatic philosophy. Deleuze and Guattari describe the interaction of concepts which themselves are “centers of vibrations, each in itself and everyone in relation to all the others” (Deleuze and Guattari 2011, p. 23). Furthermore, we can understand “schizoanalysis” and “heteronymity” as concepts resonating with one another in one of these vibrational relationships. João Delgado expanded the “heteronymic machine” to different media and genres: theatre, poetry, performance, and academic works. An example of the latter is the case of the proposal for a doctoral thesis about Delgado presented by one of his heteronyms, the architect Rodriguez at the University of Buenos Aires (Maure 2001). The playfulness of Delgado’s heteronymic writing, along with a subtle or open critique of the cultural and political establishment, is present in all their works, including most pointedly a critique vis-à-vis their own selves.

Delgado’s search for anonymity and multiplicity is a construction that results from this dissensus. João Delgado’s work was developed by trying to create an antonymic relationship to individuality, unity, and marketable artistic production perhaps also against the idea of the mere existence of a subject/star/figure. He is a non-capitalist poet, a non-product, a fiction, a remembrance, and an oblivion. If the “individual” becomes a question of space, but a non-physical space of “in-betweenness” situated at the fluctuations between one thing and another, as Deleuze and Guattari formulate it, Delgado is a footnote, and this is why the name of Sala-Manca’s journal is in a sense an homage to Delgado.

6. The Footnote

Delgado found himself in the situationist detour, in the margins, and in the footnotes. In a letter to Beatriz Lugosi (another heteronym), the Czech translator of Delgado’s texts, Delgado wrote:⁸

Yesterday I went to the Jewish theater to see the play “After Midnight” in the Jewish language.⁹ One of the actors, Avraham Stavski, playing a secondary role fascinated me. Please notice how the acting quality of the secondary roles is generally much better than the primary roles [...] When the play ended, I went

to thank him for his work. He was surprised and said he had a small role (!) and that I was exaggerating. I proposed that he should document his career as an actor (he doesn't act so much, he is a textile worker). And perhaps, in an impulsive way, I also offered him to write his autobiography.¹⁰

Writing the biography of Avraham Stavski was more critical for Delgado than writing his own. Perhaps the intention was for Delgado to write his autobiography with himself as a secondary figure. Writing Delgado's biography and publishing his/their works can also be considered as a way for Sala-Manca of writing their own legacy or at least to write a legacy at all. In seeking to find the center in the margins, the secondary becomes the primary, it is an attempt to think of the world.

Anat Danziger points out that the texts appearing in *He'arat Shulaym* are a "palimpsest, nothing can be written about it unless it is written on it, on its actual material surface, over semi-erased layers of history and ideology" (Danziger 2014, p. 58). She also highlights that "Notes in the Margins" is a "writerly text" in Roland Barthes' terms: it is not a "readerly text," closed and hermetic, but it is an open wound that re-writes itself with each new reading (Danziger 2014, p. 59). In that sense, Delgado's heteronyms and works open up possibilities of re-reading and re-writing, sending the spectator or reader to the cultural spheres of *others* to allow disruption in the local.

When Sala-Manca re-constructed Delgado's works and also presented themselves as a heteronym of João Delgado, they implied that they are another sentence in a text—a text that performs, as written by Barthes, "a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (Carlson 2003).

"Otras Gentes" is the name of the series of poems written by João Delgado: Other People(s). In English, people and peoples are two different words; however, in Spanish, "gentes" is an incorrect noun. The collective noun for a group of persons would be "gente." Thus, "Gentes" is an impossible noun in Spanish. In calling this series of poems "Otras Gentes," Delgado or Sala-Manca are making a reflexive call for multiplicity, emphasizing in a poetic way the different Others, the different people(s) that confine João Delgado.

One of the poems in the series "Otras Gentes"¹¹ reads:

When I reach the corners I must turn,
Before the abyss of the straight line/beeline. (Delgado 2001)

The poem is about the possibility of escaping what is considered the proper way, linearity, instead proposing a rhizomatic way of being. Delgado—his history, his poetry, their poetry—is always around the corner.

In another short poem named "First Signs Regarding Globalization Consciousness", he writes:

Time passes, and there are no signs
There are no bay leaves at the grocery store
There is nothing at the grocery store
But ketchup

The gates close in front of me
There is no place to buy hats or croquettes
Once, there was a man with a moustache who used to sell croquettes
But he shaved or stopped cooking.

Delgado is writing about the influences of the neo-liberal economy, of globalization, but he denounces it through the shaving of the croquette seller; a ketchup container presents its emptiness. In Delgado's poem, nothing remains apart from the ultimate symbol of a globalized world—ketchup. This world does not celebrate an insular and multiple being but rather a unitary and capitalist force—the continent, in Glissant's terms. As Maure or Delgado wrote, Delgado pretended to be dissolved in the "multi-personal anonymity," to survive, to disappear. In a sense it was perhaps this same idea that pushed Rotman and

Mauas to become a collective: to dissolve themselves in a possible multiplicity or perhaps an attempt to make from their feeling of outsiders as immigrant artists a Glissantian “Whole World” wherein humanity is multiple, diversity the number one common asset, where feeling fragile is the first mark of lucidity, and where the very principle of uncertainty is a precious compass.

7. Sala-Manca and Delgado

The publication of the first issue of the art journal *He'arat Shulaym*, devoted to Delgado, was launched together with a performance-installation project named “Potemkin Village—A Reconstruction of a Never Performed Performance.” According to Sala-Manca, the project was based on writings and instructions for performance left by João Delgado. A reconstruction of an absent original. This aesthetic characteristic of Sala-Manca’s works repeats itself when the artists introduce the work of a poet who exists only in translation, in his re-makes, as a subject for homage.

The term, Potemkin Village, is a concept that implies building a façade to hide another state of things. It was broadly used to describe a fake version of a concentration camp, in which Nazi officers presented a “beautified” version of what was really happening in 1944 to the Red Cross representatives. The origins of the term relate to a trip that Catherine the Great organized in 1787 to Crimea to which she invited several European diplomats. She wanted to show how the area had developed since being conquered by the Russian Empire. According to rumors, General Potemkin, in charge of the area, constructed fake settlements along the banks of the Dnieper River and brought people from other areas to play the part of happy peasants (Davies 2014). Nowadays, some revisionist historians claim that the villages in the Crimea built by Potemkin were in fact real and not fake facades.

Sala-Manca’s event in 2001 was comprised different performative actions, installations, talks, performance art, and video projections, encompassing the entire infrastructure of the Hazira Theater in Jerusalem not only the stage. The stage became one of the many venues alongside the theater hall, foyer, actors’ dressing rooms, and rehearsal room. The stage was multiplied, decentralized in a rhizomatic approach that attempted also to deconstruct the idea of performative time, and challenged the beginning and ending time of the performance.

The show started in the foyer of the theater where a projected self-portrait of Delgado (his naked legs) with his name and his date of birth and disappearance contextualized the event. On one of the walls, a text about Potemkin Village explained the context of the idiom and the project; other small installations and reconstructions of Delgado’s works, as well as the issue of *He'arat Shulaym* devoted to him, were exhibited (and sold) in the foyer.

In place of the stage, the interactive installation “The Art is in Another Place” was reconstructed: the empty seats where the public sits were projected onto a white screen on the stage. It was a real-time screening: thus, if the audience sat in the hall chairs, they would appear on the screen. Sala-Manca would mechanically submerge the screen with pulleys into a rectangular aluminum container of water as a “baptism” or a “drowning.”

In one of the aisles, one could hear the sound installation “Encore”: a Wagner opera played from a craft-made metal conus that worked as an analog speaker. The installation was a free interpretation by Sala-Manca that referred to the state of cultural politics in Israel. More precisely, it commented on the fact that acclaimed pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim¹² was declared persona-non-grata that year by Minister of Culture Limor Livnat. Barenboim had been invited to the Israel Festival with the Berlin Staatskapelle Orchestra. For years, German composer Richard Wagner was banned in Israel because his persona and music were associated with Nazism. Maestro Barenboim asked the public at the end of the concert if they wanted to hear a Wagner piece; most of the public cheered him on while some protested and left the hall. Barenboim played “Tristan und Isolde” as an encore (McAskill 2011).

Other performance actions in Potemkin Village were: “The Day the Performer Killed the Actor”: an anti-acrobatic and absurd number; “Homage to Marcel Duchamp”: a shadow-theater piece on an overhead projector, using toilet paper, where a paper plane took down two towers as a low tech remake of the 9/11 attacks; or “Uprising against

8. Who Is Who?

Mauas and Rotman became immigrant artists as young adults; Mauas was twenty years old and Rotman twenty-two. Both followed the ideals on which they had raised, but five months after their immigration,¹⁴ the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated by a right-wing Jewish extremist. It was a breaking point for Israeli society. Since then, or because they were not locals or natives, Sala-Manca embarked on trying to understand the place in which they had chosen to live, the context, the codes, and they did so by using a parallel language, a parallel culture. They read Israeli society through an Argentinean lens, as a double-layered reality, culminating in the performance and exhibition “Que se vaya todos!” exhibited at the Mamuta Art and Research Center in Jerusalem in 2019. There they reenacted the Argentinean protests of 2001 to protest local politics in Israel. The exhibition, replete with homages, includes a room devoted to João Delgado’s Poetry Machine (La máquina de hace pájaros).

9. He’arat Shulaym—The Journal

It was a thin journal, printed on recycled paper, designed by Maya Shleifer. The front cover was a blank page with a footnote: “One day the flowers will reveal and will cut off the heads of the gardeners, one day the Indians will rise up and will discover America.” In the period of the second intifada (the Palestinian uprising of 2000–2005), those lines, written by João Delgado in the 60s or 70s in Argentina, were a direct reference to the rights of the Palestinian people to the land. Some random purchasers of the journal immediately understood this reference, sometimes generating discussions and dialogue about it in the streets. The journal was, in the words of Yoram Melzer, “at the top of an avant-garde scale” (Melzer 2002). Most of the first issue consisted of translations of texts written by João Delgado and Arturo Maure.

The first issue of He’arat Shulaym is devoted to the works of the poet and collector João Delgado. Delgado or his pseudonym (heteronym)¹⁵ Arturo Maure was a central figure in the margins of literature and culture in Argentina, a country defined as “Third World” in the hegemonic Western discourse and “El Occidente Final” (The Final West) in the words of Maure. Delgado’s oeuvre, written mainly during the 50s and 60s of the twentieth century, was not well known in Argentina, both because of the Argentinean dictatorship and as a result of the poet’s choice.

We might allege that the translation of his poetry into a foreign language (for him) is a kind of betrayal of the choices the poet would have made, but it seems complicated to undermine the importance of having those texts published and presented to Israeli audiences.

(Sala-Manca 2000, p. 3)

“The Bored” by João Delgado (poetry), “76” by Arturo Maure (article), “Otras Gentes” by João Delgado (poetry), and the front and back covers comprised most of the journal.

The works by Delgado/Maure accompany two other works. The first is the text of “Meditations of a Queen in Exile,” a play written by Diego Rotman. The other artwork in this first issue included the documentation of an intervention by Sala-Manca in the streets of Jerusalem. The intervention consisted of proposing Shalom Aleichem (a Yiddish writer¹⁶ whose work is characterized by humor and a mix of critique and love for the Jewish villages of East Europe) as a candidate for Prime Minister in the run-up to the February 2002 elections.

To bring João Delgado, through the play and the journal, to Israeli audiences was intended as a way of creating an artistic genealogy part of an existing movement. Sala-Manca wished to present themselves not only as two young immigrant artists with broken Hebrew but as a collective who succeeded in publishing an art journal that brings the oeuvre of one of the most important figures on the margins of Argentinean culture to an Israeli audience.

The profits from the sale of the journal were earmarked to support the publication of the next issue.¹⁷ Every night, for a month and a half, Sala-Manca sold the journal outside cinemas, theaters, and galleries until they succeeded in selling 400 of the 500 printed copies. In that way, they obtained the necessary funds for a new issue.

The second issue (March 2002), devoted to the “Jerusalem Art Scene,” was comprised of the printed issue along with a VHS tape containing seven video works or documentation of performances.¹⁸ The issue also included a video work: 8mm footage by João Delgado, re-edited by Sala-Manca. The name of the video was “His/My Memories That Are Not” (Figure 3). The video features a building in Buenos Aires and a green Ford Falcon, the car used by the military junta in Argentina during the last dictatorship to kidnap/threaten/follow people they considered subversive. Delgado’s voice-over says in Spanish: “This is my house [...] this is a green falcon [...] this is the television [...] a soccer game (addressing the infamous World Cup of 1978¹⁹), [...] this is the woman, an ear [...] they are taking it all [...] a gunshot in the navel [...]”. The printed issue included a page of texts and pictures related to the video.



Figure 3. “His/My Memories That Are Not”, Video, 2002.

If Delgado’s literary works were translations without originals, something similar might be said regarding Delgado’s pictures. The portraits labeled as “Delgado” are not photographs of João Delgado but pictures of Samuel Rotman, Delgado’s friend, father of Diego Rotman, and photographer of Delgado’s films. The use of Rotman’s pictures was interpreted by scholars and policemen²⁰ as a visual translation, an expression of the absence of the author or images of him (Sala-Manca 2002), or a tactic to avoid recognition.

In the fourth issue of *He’arat Shulaym*, devoted to photography, Xerox, and fax works, two photos appear on the back cover with the caption, “They are listening to us, they are filming us.” The pictures allude both to the dictatorship in the 1970s in Argentina and also to the increasing surveillance of citizens in the occupied Palestinian territories and inside Israel by the Israeli government. The closing page of the issue was an X-ray of a broken hand that read, “Those are the hands of the poet João Delgado, broken by the army in 1976” (Figure 4). This reproduction was a reference to Israeli politics at that time which included growing persecution of Palestinian political figures and activists and increasing censorship of dissident voices that also extended to Jewish-Israeli society. This was especially evident with regards to growing reports by organizations, such as B’Tselem or The Public Committee Against Torture, in Israel concerning the abuse of power by the army and police vis-à-vis the Palestinian population and especially activists.²¹ What in 2002 was a warning sign has today become a deeply established practice. The minister of culture appointed by Prime Minister Netanyahu, Miri Regev (2015–2020), instituted a policy of persecuting institutions and artists that present content which, in her eyes, contains “anti-Israeli values.” Rotman (2000).

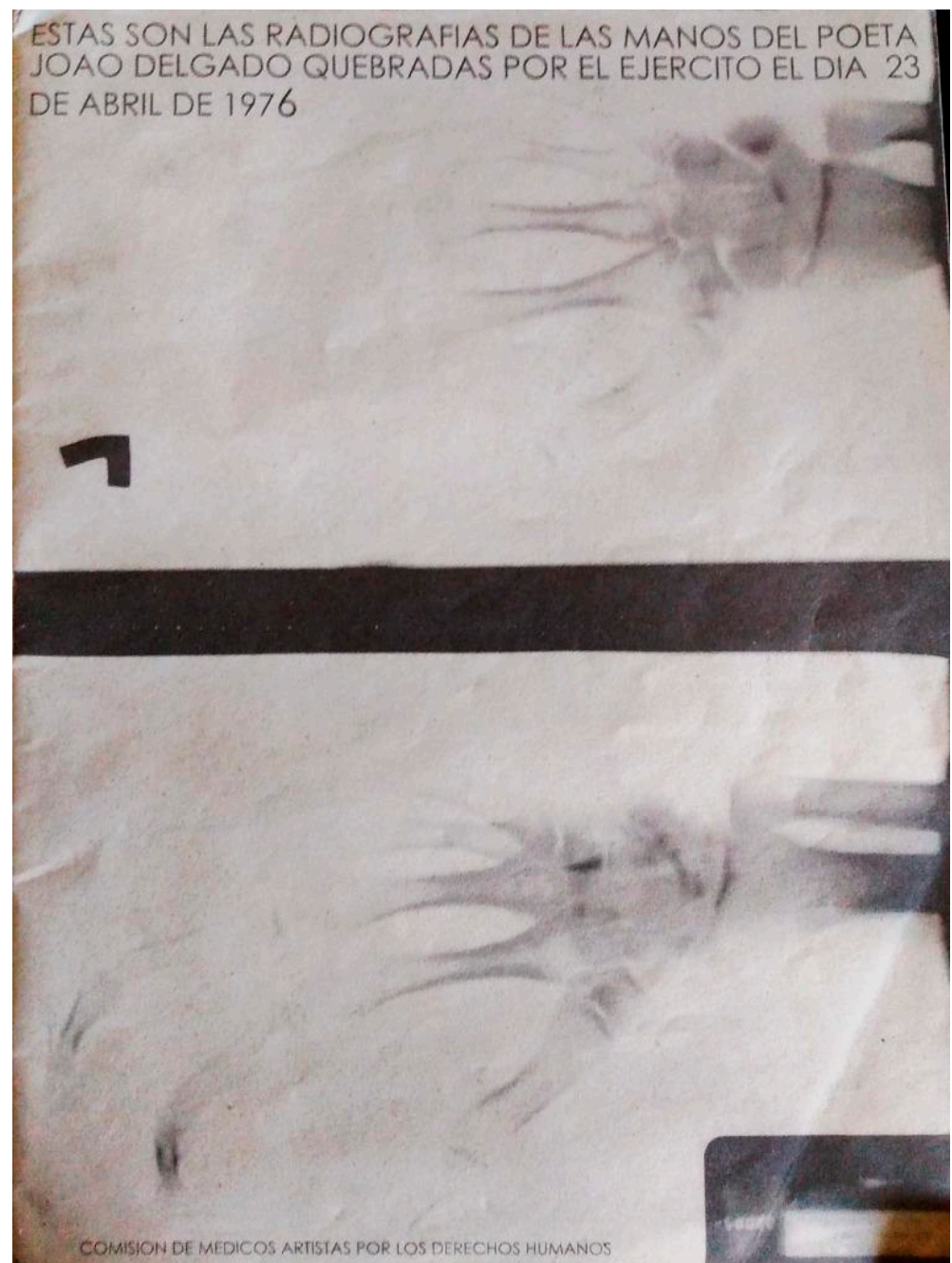


Figure 4. Back cover He'arat Shulaym, Issue 4.

In an unpublished quote by Mestre, the anarchist and compass maker heteronym, Delgado's oeuvre is described as "a process of national disorganization,"²² another plot "in the labyrinthic oeuvre of an architect without plans" as the (heteronymic) architect Rodriguez defines it, or "a monument to marginality" in the words of the poet Regina Handke—all of them different versions of the same self (Rotman 2016). According to Mestre, Delgado is a critic of the military dictatorship that was responsible for his disappearance. In the same paper, presented at the Truman Institute at the Hebrew University, Rotman stated that:

The *raison d'être* of Delgado's work may be the result of a need to create a literary past that could function as a point of reference for immigrant Argentine artists Mauas and Rotman [...]. The reading that Sala-Manca proposed was to read the

local reality but with the place of the “never” was occupied by the present Israeli politicians who gave clear signs of a repressive cultural policy.

Delgado became an allegory, a symbol of poetic freedom, and a code by which to read the local reality through the Argentinean past, and Sala-Manca themselves became an embodiment of this duality, or more precisely, this multiplicity.

Another example of these ideas is seen in works by Regina Handke—one of his heteronyms—a Jewish-Hungarian poet who succeeded in fleeing Hungary during the Second World War. Regina Handke was an intellectual and poet, and all the literature related to her is full of playfulness, contradictions, and humor as in the “letter” below:

I was not thinking of leaving the Netherlands anymore
When I was suddenly surprised and found myself
Singing German songs in a Nazi cruiser on its way to Peking.²³

She was invited to read her poetry at Carnegie Hall and brought with her all the heteronyms (João Delgado, Maure, and Rodriguez), making it a political performance and exploiting the event.

Together with the playfulness and humor, there is a statement about the possibility that the political can manifest itself in the realm of art. The political is more than the words said; it is the instance of the way they are manifested: the playfulness and the irreverence.

Delgado’s oeuvre allowed the Sala-Manca group to refer both with freedom and authority to Israeli politics that resembled the manners of the “gobierno de facto” in Argentina—although at that time, most of the Jewish-Israeli population found it difficult to discern this. “Sala-Manca proposed an intertextual reading of the Israeli reality with the Argentinean one.” (Rotman 2016)

Other examples of this diffuse or diverse authorship and creation of heteronyms can be found in Roe Rosen and Justine Frank, the Belgian-Jewish surrealist, pornographer, and artist, or, as he calls her “the grandmother I should have had.” A character and figure who represents an agonistic understanding of influence: the past as staged in the present and constantly contested, politically, and culturally” (Rosen 2018). Another example of this strategy is Walid Ra’ad and the Atlas Group. Walid Ra’ad presents himself as the creator of the Atlas Group, but this does not take away the validity of the fictional project as a real one. In the interview with Alan Gilbert (2002), he declares: “I also always mention in exhibitions and lectures that the Atlas Group documents are ones that I produced and that I attribute to various imaginary individuals. But even this direct statement fails, in many instances, to make evident for readers or an audience the imaginary nature of the Atlas Group and its documents.” The Atlas Group can be defined, for example, as a *mockinstitution* (Sholette 2016)²⁴ or as a *parafictional* practice (Lambert-Beatty 2009), similar to The Museum of the Contemporary or The Underground Academy, both para-institutions that challenge through practices of iteration, quote, and parodical structure and discourse, the role, definitions, and arguments of established institutions, such as museum and universities.

10. Final Words

Since its establishment, the Sala-Manca group has been working with a blurred identity vis-a-vis authorship. Rotman and Mauas created this collective of heteronyms for themselves and for the world that surrounds them. The collective is for them an attitude; the heteronyms are partners and collaborators. These heteronyms are not a means or a tactic but rather part of their art. The collective of heteronyms is Sala-Manca’s invented cultural tradition: it is a source, a reference, and a frame of belonging. Sala-Manca’s platforms, which involve cooperation with other artists, are a working artistic community.

Sala-Manca see themselves as a parallel channel of work to mainstream art. They generally create platforms for their work along with other artists. These collective platforms have changed shape over the years, and they include Hearsa Art Events for Contemporary Art (since 2002),²⁵ He’arat Shulaym Art Journal (since 2001),²⁶ the no-org.net site (in collaboration with Matvery Shapiro, since 2004),²⁷ the Mamuta Art and Research Center

(since 2009),²⁸ the Museum of the Contemporary (since 2012), and the Underground Academy (since 2014). Sometimes these are nomadic or ephemeral platforms, such as the events, but they also include stable ones, such as the Mamuta Art and Research Center.

The Museum of the Contemporary is a nomadic and evolving platform that allows them to engage with critical and poetical views on museology in relation to the spaces the art center inhabits. The Underground Academy is another platform collaboration between artists, researchers, and activists which is inspired by the outlines written by João Delgado for an alternative academy:

In 1963 Portuguese poet João Delgado wrote, in an unpublished manifesto, that all museums, universities, and sports clubs should be closed for at least one year, to reopen a year later. After Delgado locked two municipal museums with his own locks, he was arrested. In jail he wrote the outlines for The Academy of the Contemporary.²⁹

All these platforms and different names are also a continuous search for multiplicity and heteronymical platforms. We do not argue that Sala-Manca's works are detached from the art field's written and unwritten conventions, but rather that they continually challenge themselves and the frameworks in and in relation to which they work. In this sense, the identity of the group has undergone transformations over the years. At first, the group only signed *Sala-Manca*, yet different requests for proper names or their desire for more "visibility" brought them to sign *Sala-Manca (Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman)*. However, this was not consistent. When signing as *(Lea Mauas and Diego Rotman)*, they also signed only as *Sala-Manca*.

In the case of Sala-Manca, the collectivity—given by the group of heteronyms (or fictive identities) or by the collaboration with other artists and the creation of platforms for common work—has a common aim: to allow a political stance between the individual and the group. It is a flexible identity that does not respond to the way authorship has been sanctified by the art market since the eighteenth century. The identity of the creators is in itself an artwork. Collective authorship, in this case, is a model that has different layers, connecting an artistic playfulness and poetical imagination to a political stance vis-à-vis the artistic establishment and the Israeli ethos and Israeli politics. The questions of who and where the author is are challenged, but at the same time, they are relevant: the identity of the author/s is a factor at times, but it is also the attitude towards collectivity as a central value to challenge sole authorship.

It is a delicate movement wherein individual identity has a place, but the collective nature of being in the world is also acknowledged. Further, it is the need to free artistic creation from market values and instead install another set of appreciation, in which imagination and the political power of aesthetics to create dissensus are at its center (or in its margins).

Rodriguez, the architect, the heteronym failed to present a PhD thesis on Delgado's work at the University of Buenos Aires. Fifty years later, Lea Mauas, another heteronym(?), tried her luck in a more modest but no less challenging way through an M.A. thesis at Queen's University, ON, Canada. This time Delgado and his heteronyms succeeded in setting foot in the archives of histories of migration and diaspora in translation.

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Notes

- ¹ The architect Rodriguez is one of Delgado's heteronyms, and is quoted in Maure's article "76".
- ² Nor in English. In Hebrew "the important thing" and "nothing," are written in almost the same way, only one letter alters the meaning.
- ³ It was published in its printed version 2001–2007. All the issues were uploaded as PDFs for free download. In 2014, a book about all the events and journals was published and in April 2020 a new issue (this time only digital) appeared.
- ⁴ Although it is broadly accepted that Fernando Pessoa was the first writer and poet to introduce the concept and use of heteronyms, some scholars argue that this quality of authorship can be found first in Yeats' work. See (Ghahremani Kouredarei and Shahbazi 2018).
- ⁵ See: Installation in the foyer of Hazira Interdisciplinary Arena, Kfar Potiomkin, 2001. Issue number 11 of *He'arat Shulaym* was dedicated in its entirety to a facsimile of that intervention. The editors of the issue (Sala-Manca) mistakenly noted that the intervention occurred in 1928. See: *He'arat Shulaym*, Issue 11, 7 (September 2006). <https://no-org.net/pdf/issue-0000000b.pdf> (accessed 20 November 2020).
- ⁶ Blaustein (*Blau* means blue in German, which is *azzurra* in Italian; and Stein means rock, *pietra*). This suggests a literary game by Dr. Blaustein in his email to Sala-Manca.
- ⁷ It is interesting to note that the name Beatriz Lugosi is a combination of Bela Lugosi and Beatrice Weeks. Bela Lugosi, the exiled Hungarian actor, who immigrated to the United States, played the famous Dracula (1931) and several roles in Edward Wood's "B" class movies. Lugosi married Beatrice Weeks in 1929, and they divorced three days later. See: <https://beladraculalugosi.wordpress.com/2012/03/28/whatever-happened-to-beatrice-weeks-the-unhappy-story-of-the-third-mrs-bela-lugosi-by-frank-j-dello-stritto/> (accessed 18 July 2020).
- ⁸ Yiddish.
- ⁹ *He'arat Shulaym*, Issue number 1, 8. Stavski himself gave original pictures of himself at school and confirmed his story as an amateur actor to Sala-Manca at a club for Jewish seniors in the Argentinean neighborhood Almagro.
- ¹⁰ *He'arat Shulaym*, issue number 1, 8–9.
- ¹¹ For more info on Daniel Barenboim, see: <https://danielbarenboim.com/about/> (accessed on 21 November 2020). Concrete Response I & II were two performances for the Festival "The Voice of the Word" at Hazira Theatre in Jerusalem (in 2002 and 2003, respectively). They evoked the concrete poetry movement developed in Brazil and South America during the 1950s. The main characters in the performances are João Delgado and Regina Handke. For more information about the performances, see <http://sala-manca.net/?p=214> (accessed on November 2020).
- ¹² Diego arrived in June 1995, Lea on 27 July 1995.
- ¹³ This is an incorrect translation into Hebrew in the original.
- ¹⁴ Born 1859, Pereyaslav, Russia [now Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky, Ukraine]; died May 13, 1916, New York, New York, U.S.
- ¹⁵ Issue number one was supported by private donations from friends and acquaintances who found the proposal interesting.
- ¹⁶ Hadas Ophrat, Hagar Goren, Eytan Ronel & Noa Heymann, Niv Hachlili, Effie & Amir, Pil & Galia Collectiv.
- ¹⁷ The 1978 FIFA World Cup was played in Argentina, even though the countries participating knew about the dictatorship. Argentina won the finals (against the Netherlands), using the whole event as a kind of "Potemkin Village" to show the world, as the famous sticker—refuting the accusations of human rights organizations around the world—read "The Argentineans are right and are humans." The appearance of those elements in the video are a hint that the video was not filmed by Delgado himself, since he disappeared in 1976, as well as the title "His/My Memories That are Not".
- ¹⁸ In Hebrew, "scholar" and "investigator" are the same word.
- ¹⁹ For further information see "State of Torture in Israel 2020", <http://stoptorture.org.il/the-state-of-torture-in-israel-2020/?lang=en> (accessed on 21 November 2020), and Betsalem reports and publications: <https://www.btselem.org/publications> (accessed on 18 November 2020).
- ²⁰ Yair Ashkenazi and Yonatan Lis, 2016. "Regev poelet letaksev mosdot tarbut lefii 'neemantu lekhukey hamedina'". *Haaretz*, 26 January 2016.
- ²¹ Referring to the "Process of National Reorganization"—the name given to the military coup d'état (1976–1983).
- ²² "Mockstitution" is an informally structured art agency that overtly mimics the name and to some degree the function of larger, more established organizational entities including schools, bureaus, offices, laboratories, leagues, centers, departments, societies, clubs, bogus corporations and institutions." <https://www.on-curating.org/issue-32-reader/gregory-sholette.html>, accessed on 1 May 2023.
- ²³ See: <https://no-org.net/events.php.html> (accessed 20 August 2020).
- ²⁴ See: <https://no-org.net/issues.php.html> (accessed 20 August 2020).
- ²⁵ See: No-org.net (accessed 20 August 2020).
- ²⁶ See: www.mamuta.org (accessed 21 August 2020).
- ²⁷ See: <https://mamuta.org/portfolio/the-underground-academy-open-studio-2014/> (accessed 21 August 2020).

²⁸ See: www.mamuta.org (accessed 21 August 2020).

²⁹ See: <https://mamuta.org/portfolio/the-underground-academy-open-studio-2014/> (accessed 21 August 2020).

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