

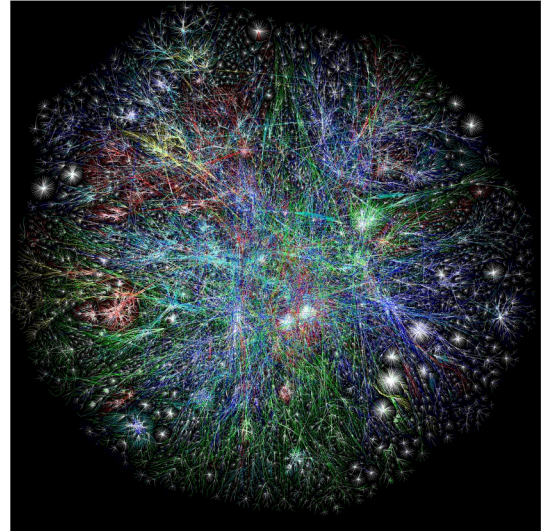
# **The GLOBAL FLOW of VISUAL CULTURE**

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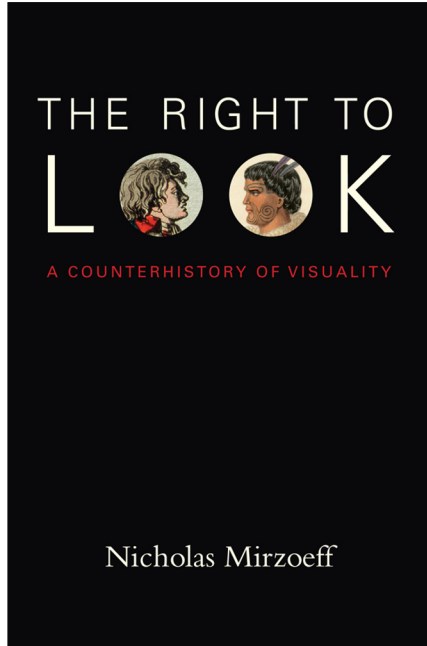
# INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we discuss the concept of Global Flow; how images and information move around the world, and the broader net of digital globalization

In the twenty-first century, images can move across the globe at previously unimaginable speeds. Yet, this flow is subject to economic, legal, and political power struggles, as well as debate around taste and tradition.







Nicholas Mirzoeff discusses who is given “the right to look”. This defines who is granted the right to look at an image, and under what political, legal, and monetary terms does that looking take place.

Mirzoeff proposes the concept of Anthropocene visibility.

**Anthropocene:** the name given to the current geological time period, in which the Earth’s formations and environments have been degraded by human activity to an extent that can be seen and felt pervasively.

“Anthropogenic” impacts can be visible in the landscape, but they can also be invisible, or even concealing.

Mirzoeff proposes that Anthropocene visibility is a mode that typically obscures rather than reveals the environmental changes and social injustices caused by humankind’s impacts on the planet.

Geographical borders regulate and reorient the flow of goods, capital, data, information, and people, due to their differences in politics, culture, law and policy. These dynamics of power give shape to the flows of visual culture, and control the right to action of the gaze in its different potential fields of vision.

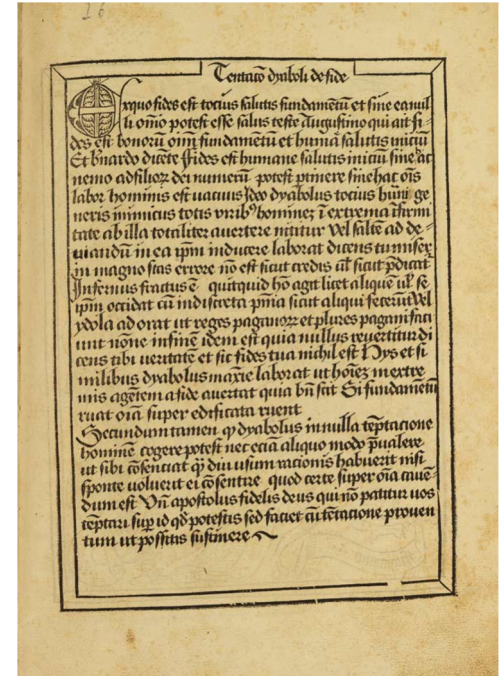


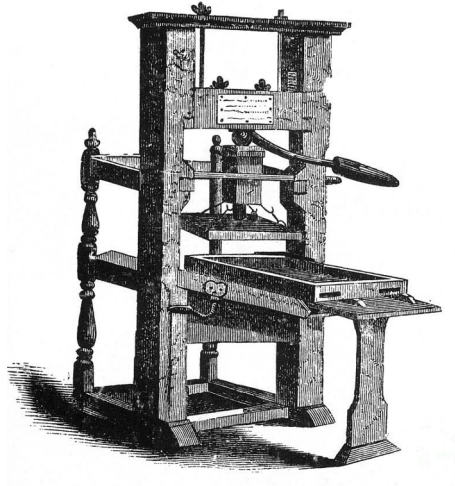
# The History of GLOBAL IMAGE REPRODUCTION

To understand the global flow of visual culture, we must consider how images circulated prior to the internet era.

Before the fifteenth century, images were unique, and did not circulate widely. Between the ninth and tenth centuries, wood and metal block printing was introduced in Egypt to copy images for prayers and amulets.

Mid-fifteenth century, woodcut images begin circulating widely throughout Europe in the form of block-books; books in which both text and image are cut into a single block for each page. Around the same time, moveable type used in China and Korea was Introduced to the European printing process.





Innovations made by Johannes Gutenberg, provided a fast and accurate system to assemble large quantities of type, thus increasing reproduction.

This coincided with Western society's ethos of industrial factories and mass production, thus facilitating the creation of the culture of mass media.

The Ben-Day technique, introduced in 1869, used a series of tiny colored dots spaced closely, or widely, and sometimes overlapping, to produce differences in color and tonality. Still, the resolution was fairly low.

The introduction of halftone printing in the mid 1880's made mass reproduction of black and white images possible.





Popular French magazine Le Petit Journal tested the marketability of colored reproductions. The success led them to invest in mass reproduction of colored images.

The US took notice of this popularity, and began circulating colored inserts and supplements with their newspapers.



Henry Luce, wealthy founder of Time and Fortune magazines, was one of the few entrepreneurs with enough capital to take the risk on the equipment possible for large scale reproductions of high quality color halftone photographs

Luce began to include high quality color halftone prints in his picture-based magazine Life, from which it gained a global reputation during the years of 1936-1972, establishing the demand for high resolution color photojournalism.





The business of stock photography; the collecting and selling of photographs for reuse, had become a highly viable industry in the 1980's. The storage, reproduction, and shipping of physical negatives was the core of the business.

With the emergence of computers, the internet, and image digitization in the 1990's, led stock photography companies to change their approach. Digital file storage, digital reproduction techniques, and transmission of files online was the practice.

With stock houses and media outlets no longer limited by physical storage limitations, and allowing their stock to be browsed online from anywhere, photos attached to stories may come from anywhere at any time.

<sup>TM</sup> **iStock.**  
by Getty Images

The internet creates a globally linked space, where images, information, media, and texts circulate rapidly across the world. This global flow increases the circulation of news, ideas, knowledge, and message, but it does not necessarily mean the information is better, or more accurate.

In addition to reproductions or redistribution of pre-existing work, new digital work is created, in which the original resides online.



Communities are linked across broad geographic areas through podcast/webcast services, websites, and blogs. People increasingly move around the world as tourists, workers, refugees, immigrants, or global citizens, and the distance of labor, services, and consumption grows.

Ideology and identity, and how it relates to a specific place, becomes more complex as the flow of cultures and communities grows.



# Concepts of GLOBALIZATION

Global flow is not a new thing, but the concept of globalization as a term characterizing the digital era has a much more recent, post-Cold War provenance

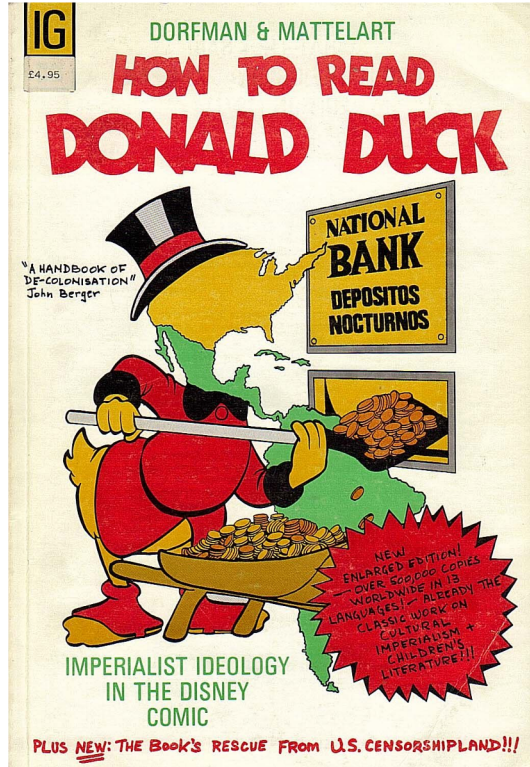
The key factors in this concept include:

- Increased cross border migration
- The demise of the Cold War
- Global trade liberalization
- Emergence of multinational corporations
- The globalization of financial networks
- Development of global communications and transportation systems
- The decline of the sovereign nation-state
- The rise of a global humanitarian movement and international policy organizations
- The formation of new local communities that are not geographically bound



One of the primary reasons for the movement of culture across national borders during the Cold War was **cultural imperialism**; how the ideology, politics, and the way of life of a nation are exported through the cross-border marketing of popular culture.

Critics, such as communications theorist Herbert Schiller, argued that television, radio, film, and consumer products were a means for world powers to invade other countries with cultural texts, images and messages.



This form of cultural “invasion” seduces the subject through entertainment, so that they may accept and conform to the ideals and political values of the imperial force.

Chilean-American novelist Ariel Dorfman, and academic Armand Mattelart wrote about the US cultural imperialism in Latin America, through equating capitalist exploitation with the popular Donald Duck comic series.

They proposed that the US used the wealthy capitalist character of Uncle Scrooge McDuck to promote the sentiment that US capitalism is, at its worst, just the benign antics of a well-meaning uncle.

Contemporary globalization is defined by emphasizing the vast increase in the rates of connectivity and speed at which information and capital flow in the digital era.



Sociologist Anthony Giddens describes it as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa"

Geographer David Harvey introduces the term "time-space compression", noting that the acceleration of economic activities shrinks distance, by bringing together people over the internet, or facilitating the flow of goods internationally.

Globalization also involves cultural identity. The concept of **diaspora**: a term denoting an ethnic community that exists in a state of being dispersed across different places outside the country of origin, is used to describe the effect of global flows on cultural identity

A number of concepts are used to further describe this:

- **Hybridity**: The mixing of peoples, or the mixing of cultures of identity positions within a single individual, due to multiple allegiances.
- **Cosmopolitanism**: The qualities acquired by individuals who move from nation to nation for work and study, acquiring habits, ideologies, and tastes that are varied and global.
- **Deterritorialization**: The separation of people or objects from a traditional home territory.

Arjun Appadurai proposed a model for understanding globalization across social/cultural realms using the term “scapes”; a suffix derived from the geographical metaphor of landscapes. This provides a framework for thinking about global flows:

- “Ethnoscape” is a group of people of similar ethnicity whose members move across borders
- “Mediascape” describes the global movement of media texts and cultural products within a given frame
- “Technoscape” is the framework that contains the complex technological industries that circulate information and services.

# The WORLD IMAGE

Understanding globalization is necessarily tied to the ways in which the world itself has been visualized and represented iconically as a unitary global entity

A key moment in this visualization came from the first photographic images of Earth as seen from space.

Images of the globe had been previously used as a means to denote world power by forces such as the British Empire. These photographs however, carrying connotations of photographic truth, launched a new embrace of the world as a unified globe.



The image Earthrise, taken during the Apollo 8 Mission, was transmitted across the world via television broadcast.

Through the lens of an astronaut, the people of Earth saw themselves and their planet as small and receding. It changed their perception of the world to that of a whole.

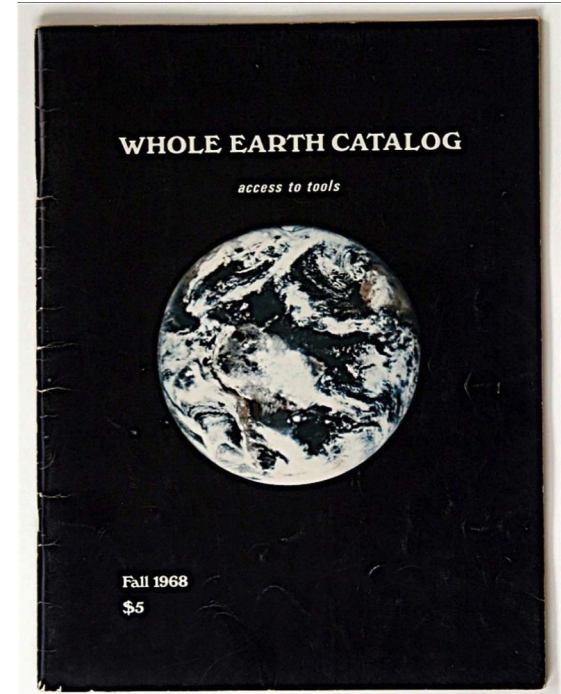
These events fed the idea that we live as one on a shared, unified planetoid that entity is in need of protection and care, yet photographs of Earth from space were still not available to the public.



Stewart Brand, founder of Whole Earth Catalog, led a movement for NASA to release these images of the Earth. He thought that these images would have a unique power to change the worldview of everyone on the planet.

Geography scholar Denis Cosgrove notes that the image prompted a broad popular discourse about world unity, despite the fact that it was the product of a US imperial Cold War mission.

Communication scholar Fred Turner notes, Brands ethos, as well as the Whole Earth Image, informed the emergence of cyber culture, serving as a symbol of the utopian vision of the World Wide Web as a ubiquitous network providing connectivity for a future decentralized, harmonious, and free society.





Satellite technology has been an important feature of these changing ways of seeing the Earth and situating ourselves within it.

Satellites are a primary force in communication and visualization practices, being used to survey land and development, to spy on other nations, to transmit news and television images, and to route telecommunications.

Media studies scholar Lisa Parks notes that satellites point to a profound paradox of visibility: although we typically do not see or sense them, they are virtually everywhere around us outside the globe, in the space beyond our field of vision.

Live satellite news feed was introduced in 1962 with a broadcast to Europe and North America. It showed US and European audiences at a Chicago Cubs baseball game, and a Washington D.C. press conference with president John F. Kennedy.

Interconnectivity was a primary theme of early uses of satellite in television. Parks argues that satellite helped create a “global presence”. Liveness and presence were indistinguishable from western discourse of modernization. Developing nations could only claim themselves as “modern” if they were in range of American, Western European, or Japanese satellite television signals, earth stations, or networks.



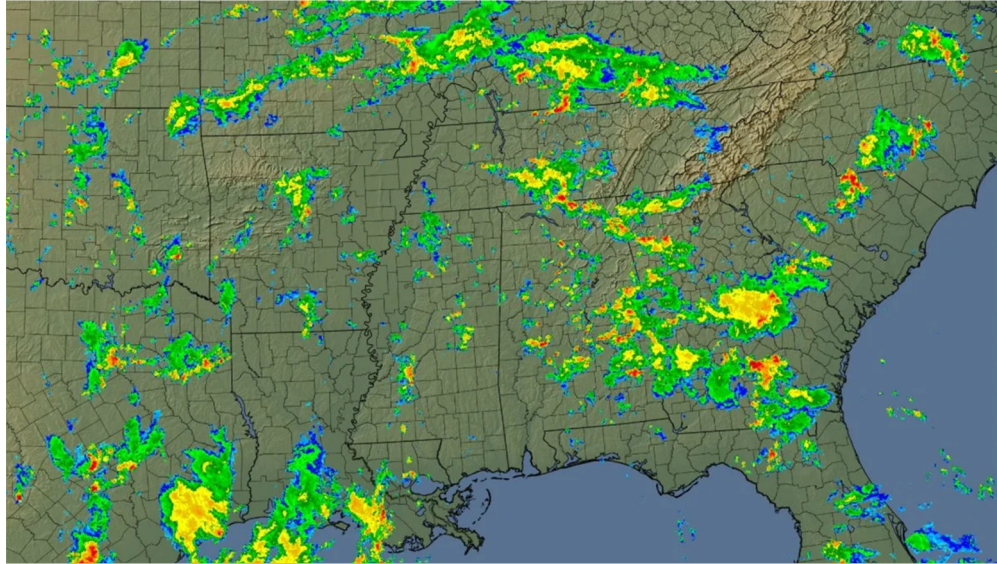
Cable, satellite, and digital platforms have been used to extend “regional” or “local” television programming to communities across a diaspora.

Media studies scholar Nick Couldry explains, the production of “liveness” as a way of experiencing “the real” has been a powerful feature of media since the broadcast television era.



A key feature of the use of satellite images is remote sensing, the practice of using satellites and related technology to obtain information about an object of human subject from a distance. This involves the conversion of satellite, television, and computer imaging in the production of images from a great distance.

In the late 2010's, people with access to both television and internet have available to them a broad array of satellite technologies as well as online satellite image databases.



Weather reporting often shows satellite images, but the optics are laden with implications about power and meaning. Jody Berland notes that viewers have become accustomed to seeing the weather from the disembodied perspective of looking powerfully down upon the Earth, rather than looking reverently up to the skies.

Satellite imagery offers the experience of viewing vast landscapes, as well as finding your place within them. These images provide both wonder of seeing the world with omniscience, and the satisfaction of knowing your own small place in it.

Satellite images show our world from a vantage point that few humans will ever see. These images can be used for political purposes, such as for climate change campaigns.



# GLOBAL Television

Global flow of television culture entails not only transnational circulation of programs but also the circulation of program formats

TV broadcast, network, cable, narrowcast, web-based programming

TV series are not simply broadcast but are remade for differing national and regional contexts.

“Global” news venues (like CNN) have become a battleground for control over the shaping of world opinion

In the 80s “niche” markets were globalized, access to air travel was increased and globalization of education and industry.

“Superpower” networks have been challenged by multiple media outlets like Al Jazeera garnering 40 mil viewers globally, and broadcasting 24 hours a day.

Facts are generated and harder to verify independently.

Tibetan protesters were killed by Chinese police. Reporters were blocked from the region and coverage was blacked out in China.

National news and global news are in constant tension.

Private and state supported news reporters use global media to shape international opinion.



# The GLOBAL FLOW of FILM

Globalization and digitalization have changed production, distribution, and finance in the world's film industry...

- Hollywood industry influence began to erode in the global film market
- Many productions are multinational coproductions and are owned by foreign corporations
  - The financing for many "Hollywood" films are transnational opposed to being financed nationally

Contemporary global image flow - US culture industry is key source but it is waning influence transnationally...

Shifting audiences, homogenized content, changing financial models, independent/commercial film markets are all reasons for this...

DVD piracy, torrent sites, YouTube, etc., all whittle away Hollywood's revenue dominance

Hollywood's relative decline is also due to the result of enormously popular diasporic popular culture...

...from Hong Kong cinema, Telemundo telenovelas, Bollywood cinema, and Korean pop culture (K-Pop)

All are forms of media produced not only for global diasporas but also for mixed audiences that include viewers who are not members of the diaspora...

## BOLLYWOOD

- Hindi language sector of Indian film industries
- World's biggest filmmaking entity (twice as big as Hollywood)

Bollywood and Hollywood were able to recruit many of the Hong Kong's industry's top figures... This turn toward globalization of talent led to further cross-appropriation, with genres, styles, and talent circulating between Hollywood, India, China, and Hong Kong...



These film cultures appeal to populace that studies, works, travels, and lives across nations and between continents...

Audiences are transnational subjects whose lives have been constituted through global flows

# **SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, INDIGENOUS MEDIA, and VISUAL ACTIVISM**

media images express the geographic dispersal of peoples, the breakdown of nation-states, the hybridization of cultures, etc.

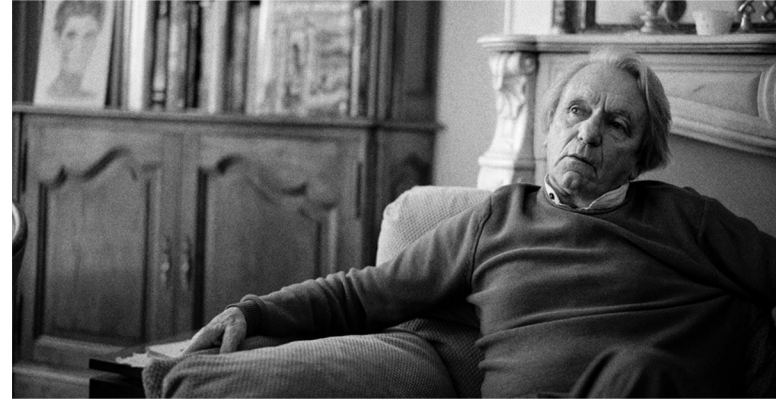
Global social movements have arisen in the last decade are fueled by social injustice and aided by social media...

The connection between demanding social movements throughout the world are largely enabled by social media... Countries throughout the Middle East, southern Europe, and the US have seen demanding social movements enabled by social networks...

Jacques Rancière - political theorist

“distribution of the sensible” - how power relations designate that which is visible/heard/understood, and that which cannot be seen...

This means that “artistic practices are ‘ways of doing and making’ that intervene in the general distribution of these ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to models of being and forms of visibility...



Globalized networks have enabled political movements to disseminate their ideas and build support throughout the world, thus constituting global communities of support...

### The Zapatista National Liberation Army

- Centered political movement in Chiapas region

### Zapatistas - Mayan descent, peasant farmers

- Protest NAFTA in support of indigenous rights
- Wear black masks to protect identity
- Souvenir dolls created - can be purchased throughout Latin America

The Zapatistas participated in a sophisticated discourse about image-making and the politics of indigenous people's relationship to tourist images...



In the struggles of indigenous populations for cultural and economic autonomy, digital media has opened up new cultural genres

Video game culture has been a site of indigenous media production

### Never Alone

- Video game of Native Iñupiaq girl and her Arctic fox companion
- Aspects of native life
- Play as situate or alaskan girl



# The GLOBAL MUSEUM and CONTESTS of CULTURE

Cultures global flow has intersected with  
postindustrial economies in the 21st century  
to produce global cultural tourism...

- The transformation of urban centers into  
global tourist destinations
- Economies becoming based on cultural  
production, design industries, and business,  
artistic institutions have emerged with  
postindustrial/service industries and  
gentrification



## Museum Gloabalization

### The Guggenheim

- Franchising to int'l cities
  - Venice, Berlin, Vegas, Guadalajara
- **Guggenheim Bilbao**
  - “Bilbao effect” - power of architectural design and institutions of culture to economically revitalize a region
- Guggenheim Abu Dhabi
  - Projected to attract tourist businesses to a global market in world class art viewing as a form of consumption that marks a city as a global center



These designs are not contextual or referential of other styles, as most postmodern architecture is... they are architectural brands that celebrate the architect Frank Gehry himself and therefor are more Modernist.

The use of museums to turn urban centers into creative global economies has proliferated over the past 2 decades throughout USA, Europe, & Asia...

The major museum collections of the world aka “universal” museums were established in the 19th & 20th centuries:

- British Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Smithsonian, Musée du Louvre
- This global sharing can potentially decentralize the distribution of the world’s greatest artworks...



The Louvre Abu Dhabi

- Not technically a branch of the Louvre, but a separate museum that is “renting” the Louvre brand until 2037. By lending its name, the Louvre continues the tradition of architectural pastiche...

The Abu Dhabi cultural project is being constructed by migrant workers who labor day and night to build the structures... primarily from Southern Asia, the workers were effectively indentured with few rights at low pay...

#### Relationship of art and labor

- NYC Guggenheim faced protests by artists and activists
- Gulf Labor Coalition demanded fair pay for labor workers

#### Abu Dhabi Guggenheim & Louvre

- major icons of “borderlessness” of trade liberalization and cultural exchange
- Cultural movement situated in Anthropocene
- Enhanced flow of goods including art - came from industrial expansion



## Ownership battles over artifacts

- Getty museum and other institutions have returned some artifacts to their places of origin in an attempt to recognize, belatedly, that Western institutions are not the rightful repository of the world's cultural gems acquired through domination...
- Contemporary “universal” museums can also expand their collections in ways that reflect histories - the intersections of art and museums with the histories of colonialism and the economics of petro-capitalism and indentured labor...

# REFUGEES and BORDERS

Global politics are rife with contradictions, built out of oppression as well as liberatory aspirations...

We now live in a world in which distance is bridged by communication technologies...

## Refugee Crisis

- 45 million worldwide
- Syrian civil war, 2011, anti-govt protests
- Social media escalated, images shown globally

issues of humanity, desperation, survival, tragedy in which borders and movement are sites of tremendous political upheaval and change

### 3 yr old Aylan Kurdi

- Syrian boy who drowned en route to Greece
- Graphic image of dead body on Turkey beach
- Inspired performance artists, etc.

### Inspired artists

#### Banksy - refugee boat as Dismaland Bemusement Park, Somerset, England, 2015

- Can be navigated by park visitors in his dystopic theme park, Dismaland - open for 5 weeks in England
  - Also housed 58 other artists work that spoke on the refugee crisis



Borders foreground technology, visibility, and environmental change

## US & Mexico

- Condos vs shantytowns
- Epitomize practices of appropriation, pastiche, and bricolage
- Dwellings furnished from left over materials of urban construction from CA
- 85,000 people among the border
- Adjacent to sensitive environmental / militarized zones



Teddy Cruz, architect

- Architecture proposes, camouflages bad planning
- The Political Equator
- The project invited immersion in a field of the gaze in which environmental protection, national natl securitization, and informal settlement collide
- the image can never in itself encompass that is entailed in the living world

Visual culture - paradigmatic form of the 20th century  
- Engineering/built environment - 21st century

Everyday life and the public sphere of the streets are sites where we may post signs and messages, but also where we may intervene in institutions, coax new visions, and shape the conditions for change.