

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

MIGRANT OBJECTS

S27 – Kunst und Bildung // Domestic Affairs // Migrant Objects







Domestic Affairs

©Berlin 2023, S27 – Kunst und Bildung

Herausgeber

Verein zur Förderung der interkulturellen
Jugendarbeit e.V. / S27 – Kunst und Bildung
Schlesische Straße 27 b
10997 Berlin
www.s27.de

Projektleitung

Philip Crawford (Künstlerische Leitung)
Abdel Amine Mohammed (Bildung und Empowerment)
Brooke Meenan (Projektkoordination)

Mitarbeit

Clara Sak
Daria Py
Jessy Medernach
Vincent Falasca

Fotos

Philip Crawford
Luis Kruppenacher
Nele Düll

Gestaltung

Nele Düll
Philip Crawford

Redaktion

Nele Düll
Philip Crawford
Brooke Meenan
Luis Kruppenacher
Barbara Meyer

Essay

Sepideh Behruzian

Domestic Affairs

gefördert durch die Senatsverwaltung Kultur und
gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhalt.



Domestic Affairs ist ein Kunstlabor von Studio Karfi /
S27 Bildungsmanufaktur, gefördert durch die Senats-
verwaltung für Bildung und die UNO Flüchtlingshilfe,
Stockhausen-Stiftung und Drosos Stiftung.



DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

STUDIO KARFI

Tauchen Sie ein in die überraschende Objektwelt des Domestic Affairs Laboratory von Studio Karfi. Der Katalog versammelt künstlerische Experimente, ortsbezogene Untersuchungen und Performances von 2023. Die gewachsene Sammlung von Artefakten und die Erfahrungen des Teams soll keine abschließenden Antworten bieten, sondern katalytische Impulse setzen, um kritisch über das Häusliche und Heimische nachzudenken. „Domestic Affairs“ steht für einen breiten konzeptionellen Fokus, der sich nicht nur auf physische Räume und Inventar beschränkt, sondern das Heimische in Bezug setzt zu Geschichte und Kolonialgeschichte, Politik, Ritualen und Emotionen.

Sind häusliche Räume privat oder öffentlich? Geteilt oder gemeinschaftlich? Wie erschaffen, pflegen und erweitern wir sie? Wer wird ausgeschlossen und wer ist eingeladen? Welche Gefühle und Empfindungen prägen häusliche Sensibilitäten? Wie fühlt es sich an und wie schmeckt es da? Wie bewegen sich Häuser? Wohin tragen sie uns? Wie hat das Heimische und der damit verbundene Heimatbegriff eine oppressive Konnotation erfahren, wie funktioniert darüber Abgrenzung und Ausschluss? Verbergen sich darin exkludierende Kontinuitäten der Kolonisierung, im Sinne einer kruden Idee von Zähmung, Willen zur Unterdrückung?

Domestic Affairs schlägt zur Analyse einen forschenden Umgang mit dem Alltäglichen und Gewöhnlichen vor - durch Transformationen am Material und Objekt, durch Umbau von Dingen, mit denen wir leben: so wird das Außergewöhnliche geweckt und eine Welt von zyklisch erzählten Geschichten, von bewegten Häusern, Körpern, die Raum beanspruchen, formt sich aus.

„The Laden“ in der Schlesischen Str. 10 in Kreuzberg bot unseren Forschungsteams einen lebendigen Raum für ihre Experimente. Kontinuierlich arbeiteten hier das Jahr hindurch Arbeitsgruppen von 5–10 Trainees; junge Geflüchtete im Alter von 15–27 Jahren, die aus verschiedenen Krisenregionen der Welt stammen. Zusammen mit den Künstler*innen haben

sie Alltagsgegenstände aus der Umgebung zusammengetragen und beim benachbarten Trödler erworben. In der Werkstatt wurden Funktion und physische Strukturen neu gedacht und Materialien umgeformt sowie Interieur performativ in den öffentlichen Raum katapultiert. Die Sammlung der transformierten Bilder und Objekte bildet nun ein neues Narrativ: eine Reflexion zum Häuslichen, die sich mit Wissen-Teilen und Handeln verbindet – wie könnte sich das alte Häusliche in Richtung eines globalen „Zuhause“ auf den Weg machen?

Jedes unserer Experimente begann mit einem Austausch von Ideen und Fähigkeiten in den Bereichen Modellbau, Holzarbeit, Nähen, Zeichnen, Druckgrafik, Tanz und Kochen. Befreit von der Notwendigkeit, rein funktionale oder dekorierende Objekte zu schaffen, konzentrierten wir uns auf Optionen der Umdeutung und auf den Schaffensprozess. Unsere Arbeitsphasen im Laden starteten typischerweise mit einer Gruppenarbeit an einem gemeinschaftlich ausgewählten Bild/Objekt/Bewegung/Rezept, um daraufhin in einem eigenen Experiment die Erfahrungen und den Perspektivenwechsel zu vertiefen. Getrödelte antike Möbel und anderes Sammelgut, etwa weggeworfene Laufräder wurden zu lebendigen Skulpturen umgebaut, die sehr anschaulich die Charakteristika von Häuslichkeit, Jugend und Mobilität um-modellierten.

So sollte auch die Statik des Teppichs in Bewegung geraten, dafür wurden Imitationen von Orientteppichen aus den „Deutschen Werkstätten“ der DDR und dem westdeutschen Möbelmarkt der 70er Jahre auseinandergeschnitten und in anspruchsvoller Handarbeit zum Schuhwerk umgenäht. Die avantgardistischen Pantoletten irritieren – sie vertauschten sofort die Qualitäten von Statik und Bewegung; was sonst liegt und beständig erscheint, läuft plötzlich davon... ein Zeichen der Zeit?

Die künstlerischen Eingriffe, mit denen vorliegende Formen und Farben, erkennbare Muster und Chiffren des Häuslichen und Funktionalen, dekonstruiert wurden, prägten die Atmosphäre einer waghalsigen Expedition, plötzlich bildete sich in unserem Kreuzberger Laden die Welt- und Kulturgeschichte ab.

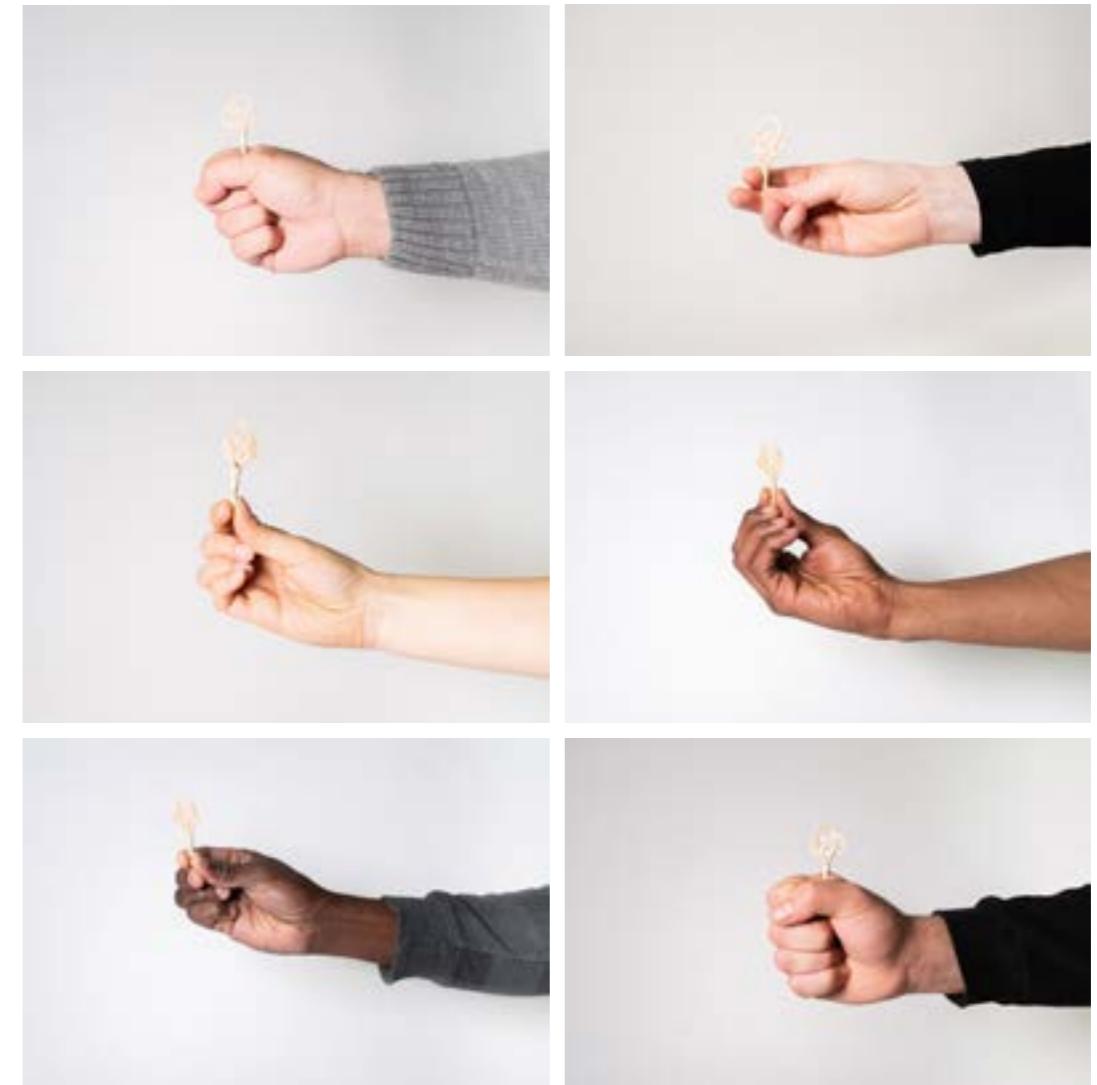
Über die gestalterischen Interventionen, Objektumbau, Durckgrafiken und über akribisches Handwerk entfachte sich im Team eine große Lust auf Weitermachen, auf Umdenken im Großformat – Weltumbau? Das Domestic Affairs Laboratory ist während der einjährigen Projektzeit tatsächlich zu einem kleinen, quirligen Zeugnis der transformatorischen Kraft der Kunst herangewachsen!

// WIR DANKEN allen Künstler*innen und den Mitarbeiter*innen der S27, ganz zuerst aber den Jugendlichen, die mit ihren Ideen die ungewöhnliche Untersuchung lebendig gestaltet und geprägt haben.

//HERZLICHEN DANK

Mohamed, Mustapha, Selim, Bella, Mohammed, Rauzatullah, Nabiqullah, Jones, Sedik, Fadel, Nasrat, Rohullah, Sejawidin, Anna Nicole, Housseem, Musaab, Sefiatullah, George, Shaheen, Oumou, Farouk, Anastasiia, Kateryna, Lisa und Zayed.

// WIR WÜNSCHEN IHNEN, liebe Leserinnen und Leser, nun viel Freude auf der Entdeckungsreise durch den kleinen Katalog, vielleicht kriegen Sie Lust und Mut, Ihr eigenes Zuhause auf den Kopf zu stellen? Im Perspektivenwechsel liegt wohl eine reizvolle Prise Erkenntnis, wie alles auch ganz anders sein könnte.



DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

STUDIO KARFI

Immerse yourself in the intriguing world of objects and images produced in Studio Karfi's Domestic Affairs Laboratory. This catalog documents a collection of artistic experiments, site-specific investigations, and performances from 2023. The resulting assemblage of artifacts and experiences are not intended to provide conclusive answers, but rather act as catalytic impulses encouraging critical reflection on the domestic as something both familiar and foreign. „Domestic Affairs“ signifies our broad conceptual focus on probing not just the physical spaces synonymous with “home,” but also the domestic in relation to particular objects, sites, histories, politics, emotions, rituals, and experiences.

Are domestic spaces private or public? Shared or communal? How do we create, maintain, and expand them? Who is excluded, and who is invited in? What feelings and sensations shape domestic sensibilities? What does it feel like, and what does it taste like there? How do homes move? Where do they carry us? And how have the domestic and associated notions of home and land acquired oppressive connotations? How does it function to foster boundaries and exclusions?

The Domestic Affairs Laboratory proposes a creative research approach to expanding rather than answering these questions. Through transformations of materials, objects, and images - a reshaping of the everyday things we live with - the extraordinary is awakened. A world of cyclically retold stories, of homes that move us, of bodies claiming space, of learning as collective belonging, and of rituals of hosting and caring, takes shape.

„The Laden“ at Schlesische Str. 10 in Kreuzberg provided our research teams with a vibrant space for their experiments. Throughout the year, working groups of 5–10 participants— young refugees aged 15 – 27 from various crisis regions around the world—made their creative homes here. Together with artists and educators, they gathered everyday items from their urban surroundings. Returning these collected materials to the workshop, we reim-

gined physical structures, repurposed materials, created haptic experiences, and mobilized domestic spaces into public spheres. The collection of remediated artifacts now forms a new narrative: a reflection on the domestic as intimately intertwined with knowledge-sharing and action-taking. How might old domestic structures be reconceptualized as foundations for home-making as an insistently global affair?

Each of our experiments began with an exchange of ideas and skills in areas such as model building, woodworking, sewing, drawing, printmaking, dance, and cooking. Freed from the need to create purely functional or decorative objects, we focused on reinterpretation and the creative process. Our work phases in the store typically started with group work on a collectively chosen image/object/movement/recipe, followed by individual experiments to deepen experiences and perspectives.

Antique furniture and discarded Laufräder were reassembled to construct vibrant sculptures that complicate narratives of youth and mobility. Static carpets were set into motion as well. Old imitations of oriental carpets from the „Deutsche Werkstätten“ of the GDR and the West German furniture market of the 70s were cut apart and meticulously hand-sewn into Hausschuhe. These disorientingly avant-garde footwear evoke the subtle relationship between camouflage as comfort and reveal a liminal space between “staying put” and “staying in motion.” Other interventions deconstructed form and color. Recognizable domestic patterns collected by our participants guided our daring expedition until, suddenly, world histories were refracted through the windows of our Kreuzberg Laden.



Through creative interventions, object transformations, image-making, and meticulous craftsmanship, a strong desire for continued exploration and rethinking on a large-scale was ignited within our participants. How will they reimagine the world? Indeed, during the one-year project period, the Domestic Affairs Laboratory has grown into a small, lively testament to the transformative power of art!

// WE THANK all the artists, educators, social workers and staff of S27, but above all, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our young collaborators who collectively shaped and enriched this unusual investigation with their energy and ideas.

// THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Mohamed, Mustapha, Selim, Bella, Mohammed, Raizatullah, Nabilqullah, Jones, Sedik, Fadel, Nasrat, Rohullah, Sejawidin, Anna Nicole, Housseem, Musaab, Sefiatullah, George, Shaheen, Oumou, Farouk, Anastasiia, Kateryna, Lisa, and Zayed.

// WE WISH YOU, dear readers, much joy on your journey of discovery through this small catalog. Perhaps you'll be inspired and find the courage to turn your own domestic spaces inside out? While shifting perspectives one often arrives at a delightful realization: the possibilities of imagining, creating, and remaking a thing are more numerous than the threads in a carpet.





























Punsch, Glühwein
und Leckereien.

GLÜHWALD

Mit vielen Tannern, gemüth-
lichen Sitzmöglichkeiten und Feuer-
stellen.

Ab 4. Novemb 20**23**
Mi. - So. ab 16.00

mercedes-pla

BLICK BASSY.

Di 12.12.2023
Dauer 19.30 | Show 20.30

GRETCHEN

Ticket
perbe











































Sumakh

Sumakh-Teppiche von Halbmond sind orientalisches Teppichkunst nachempfunden. Sie werden in 8-chinger Webmaschinen gefertigt. Jeder Sumakh-Teppich und -Läufer wird einer strengen Qualitätsprüfung unterzogen. Die Nutzschicht besteht aus 100% Polypropylen (Heat Set).

HALBMOND
TEPPICHWERKE

Das reichhaltige Farbangebot und Zierliche sind vorhanden.

Handmade in Turkey




Dessin: 004
 Farbe: 721
 Größe: ca. cm
 3251 721 1



MIGRANT OBJECTS

SEPIDEH BEHRUZIAN

“It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.”

(Donna J. Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene)

This is storytelling in motion. Scooters and slippers, creative interventions and narrative artifacts, these material retellings of stories through objects transcends the normal temporality of beginning-and-end tales. Crafted over the course of a year-long series of experiments in S27's Domestic Affairs Laboratory, these objects present the commonplace as something new, brought to life through the labor and love of the teenagers and young adults from different countries and migration backgrounds who participated in their making. 'Domestic' in the Domestic Affairs Laboratory not only refers to a physical home but also explores its relation to objects, affective spaces, and movement connected to these participants making and remaking their homes as stories.

// What stories do these objects tell? We can consider them, alongside Haraway, as carriers, holders and transmitters: facilitators of an ongoing narration of 'other stories.' They chronicle stories of lives in the making, life stories in motion. As Migrant Objects, these repurposed artifacts propose a revised, non-linear temporality associated with the making and finding of new homes. Migration might be retold not as a chronology of movement or displacement, but a cyclical creation of homes, a recycling and repurposing of a personal sense of the domestic. These objects unravel established yarns of geopolitical borders, market exploitation, scientism, and mechanization, narratives that were once woven in a different fabric.

// And for the makers? In a host society where the ground beneath the feet of migrant bodies is often unsteady, the material outcomes from Domestic Affairs Laboratory suggest that finding steady ground is an act of remembering, repurposing and re-worlding. They propose disassembly and reassembly as a primary ritual of survival, a method of navigating the challenges of the world while remaking it.

These techniques of salvage as survival have the power to reinvent the world out of ruin.

The use of discarded and recycled domestic materials in these projects—old tables, chairs, lamps, children's bicycles—challenges our perception of their final forms. Participants breathe the new life into everyday relics that have lost functionality or fallen out of fashion. These objects, once abandoned, not only regain utility but carry with them the material and cultural memories of their past lives. By combining these acts of salvage with the simultaneously mundane and curious repurposing of Oriental or "Persian-style" carpets from the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the experiments in the Domestic Affairs Laboratory situate their newly formed Migrant Objects in a uniquely German context.

How does art, craft, and symbolic artifact creation empower individuals navigating displacement, dispossession, and new cultural barriers? How does storytelling become possible through objects and cultural material?

Aligned with the symbolic transformation of objects during these experiments, migrants arriving in a new country and integrating into a different society experience several stages of adaptation. Initially, they face the challenges of adapting to a new environment, navigating cultural differences, and overcoming bureaucratic and linguistic barriers. This adjustment period may include experiencing culture shock and a sense of disorientation.

In response to this experience of displacement and disorientation, the entangled practices of unraveling and mending objects might also function to reorient the practitioner. A slow craftsmanship is involved in transforming domestic objects: turning them upside down, altering material and design, dismantling and rebuilding them. Combining pedagogy with the therapeutic potential of handicraft, the act and performance of remaking these objects is integral to the empowerment and personal development of those who participate in the process. A unique practice emerges through the Domestic Affairs Laboratory that offers a vital tool for revitalizing a sense of agency and processing feelings of displacement or alienation.

Though unsettled, each of these objects still offers space for the body and reinvents reality only through the active engagement with the body. As defamiliarized modes of transportation, the mobility devices and footwear produced in the laboratory suggest the movement and transportability of domestic spaces and sensibilities. Carpets, as familiar elements, create a sense of belonging, comfort, camouflage, and a secure corner of the world that magically connects one to „home“ by drawing a line to cross-cultural memories. In allowing us to keep home underfoot, the Hausschuhe also prompt a reassessment of our assumptions and more active engagement with a revitalized domestic space and its objects.

Unwieldy scooters with table leg handlebars and brightly colored tires reference youth and vitality, but also a certain social frustration with youth in public spaces, especially in cities like Berlin, which have become „overrun“ by pay-to-use scooter fleets. Scooters are often found obstructing sidewalks, loitering in parks, and gathering in large unruly groups. How do we move with and around these objects? How do they teach us to claim space?

“ It’s not just about the things we’re making. It’s like, we’re using our bodies to communicate without words. Like, how we move and groove in the process, and it’s a whole experience. Riding the carpet scooter we put together, for example, is more than just a ride. It’s a journey of deciding how you wanna do it – stand, sit, whatever feels right. It’s like your home is tagging along with you every step, and walking on Earth feels different when there’s a carpet beneath you. It’s like the ground becomes this vibrant canvas of familiar patterns in a totally unfamiliar world. You transform, and so do the things around you.”

Learning is done “on the go” with and against the domesticating forces of integration. Hinted at, perhaps, in use of parts from children’s walking bikes, learning and unlearning benefit from the ignorance of youth. Early on we are educated that mobility is synonymous with freedom of movement. As we learn and move, move and learn we may also realize that sometimes objects travel more easily, and with less restriction, than bodies.

// Oriental and Persian-style carpets from the GDR frequently appear as versatile elements among rejuvenated objects in the workshop, torn apart and reconstructed as scooters, slippers, sculptures, and prints. The salvaging of GDR carpets ties these objects temporally and spatially to the workshop’s location at the border of former East Berlin.

It also complicates the narrative of migrant objects by raising questions about how, from the very outset, the aestheticized oriental carpet was traded as a commodity and eventually appropriated and sold back in 'the Orient'. The exoticization of the Oriental has a long history that includes the commodification and trade of domestic objects and styles from Middle Eastern, Asian and North African societies. Above and beyond mere cultural exchange or direct appropriation, we can consider perspectives of the Orient as intimately connected to a colonial imaginary that presupposes the otherness of peoples and cultures: a one directional gaze that has shaped and distorted perceptions of the East.

Within the history of oriental carpets, the products adorned with the crescent moon label from the GDR exemplifies a paradigm shift in the colonial trade relationship in the 20th century. Produced by the state-owned company VEB Halbmond-Teppiche from the Vogtland region, GDR's machine-made oriental carpets—meticulously mimicking Persian counterparts—were exported to the Orient in the 1960s. Signifying a reversal of the trade arrow, Halbmond's signature Täbris Super carpets were sold widely from Damascus to Kuwait, Beirut to Jerusalem, Baghdad, and beyond. They were presented as equals to their Oriental counterparts, or at least an ostensibly accessible compromise in both price and quality. In addition to establishing an unexpected trajectory from West to East, GDR's crescent moon products subtly reshape the conventional narrative of carpet craftsmanship.

Patterns, designs, and textures have been transformed into raw materials to be extracted from the Orient, industrially reworked, and sold back to the very region from which they were extracted. This economic relationship—the stages of production, circulation, and consumption—seemingly renders inert the inherent vitality of the carpet as "something active and energetic." (Bennett, 65)

“The lines and colors of the Persian carpet were imprinted on my memory. I used to lie on it as I did my lessons; I'd be so close to it that I'd gaze at its pattern and find it looking like slices of red watermelon repeated over and over again. But when I sat down on the couch, I would see that each slice of melon had changed into a comb with thin teeth. The clusters of Rowers surrounding its four sides were purple-coloured.”

(Al-Shaykh, 109)

// Carpet-making is a deeply-rooted part of many societies, an immanent production integral to the concept of home since ancient times. It serves as a unique reflection of a social life, culture, and heritage, with the vernacular motifs, designs, and signs woven into each carpet revealing ecological and social aspects specific to each temporality and locality. Ancient traditions embodied in hand woven carpets carry an essence of living and dwelling within their warp and woof, becoming vibrant and vital material presences. They might tell stories, for example, of the phantasmagoric ground of childhood games: the unleashed torrent of imagination that their designs conjured up, mapping out far-off lands and unknown people through familiar patterns. Stories of new encounters, or of when its rough fibers unexpectedly turned into a ship that rescued us from the wild chaos of imaginary waters. Stories of growing up, making love, and sharing food on its adorned surface.

In contrast to the stereotypical and orientalizing imagery often depicted in popular images of diasporic communities from the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa (such as the flying

carpet trope) the incorporation of GDR carpets into Migrant Objects involves critical acts of deciphering, expropriating and overwriting. This process should be viewed as a sensitivity to embodied cultural differences and an attempt at reviving a lost material vitality. Moreover, in a time when connections to the past and ancient traditions are becoming more and more rare due to cultural homogenization and assimilation, repurposing domestic materials such as carpets enables participants to reconnect with their own heritage and cultural identity.

// Objects have agency. They play a crucial role in our lives, influence our perceptions of stability, security, and connectedness. They impact our notions of beauty, comfort, and identity, shaping us even as we shape them. Our everyday relationship with material culture, especially commodities, is often unconsciously constructed. Unlike explicit rules governing language and socialization, these material relations are disciplined through haptic and sensory experiences embedded in the object itself. Our understanding of the world is shaped by the objects that emerge from cultural encounters.

// In the Domestic Affairs Laboratory, the ongoing metamorphosis of the story, the context, and the materiality of objects is not just revealed through merely functional nor purely aesthetic artifacts. The resulting things have become vessels for the stories we use to tell our stories. They have evolved into Migrant Objects, perpetually traveling back and forth—just like the nomads who carry their carpets with them—across the borders of essentialist cultural identities, use- and affective valuations, and geopolitical territories. This transformation invests Migrant Objects with a power that surpasses pure nostalgia, allowing them to suggest salvaged stories of homes as intimately bound to memory, liberated through movement, and claiming space in a new world that they also create.

// References

- Al-Shaykh, Hanan. "The Persian Carpet," in *Arab Short Stories*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, p. 109.
- Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter: a Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010, p. 65.
- Moallem, Mino. *Persian Carpets: The Nation as a Transnational Commodity*, Routledge, 2018. p. 3.
- Haraway, Donna J. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016, p. 12.
- Pokern, Tina. "Wie die DDR den großen Reibach mit Orientteppichen machte, die sie in den Orient verkaufte." *stern.de*, October 3, 2020. <https://www.stern.de/panorama/wissen/von-den-osten-in-den-nahen-osten--so-huebschte-sich-die-ddr-mit-imitat-orientteppichen-die-staatskassen-auf-9438258.html>.
- Wiesner, Jens. "Der Perser aus Sachsen." *Monopol Magazin*, August 6, 2020. <https://www.monopol-magazin.de/der-perser-aus-sachsen-orient-teppiche-ddr-industrie-kulturerbe>.
- "Halbmond Teppichwerke: Über Uns." *halbmond.de*. Accessed December 15, 2023. <https://halbmond.de/de/ueber-uns.html>.





