

# Nanopublication – Four diffractions from one archive – but 'equal legitimacy' has no ledger for domination

by Arnaud Quercy

The line is between structure and stakes: the lens's diffraction/reception machinery describes the exhibition's four-part multiplication cleanly, but its neutral and ludic vocabulary for emitter-receiver relations has no native register for the domination the source treats as its subject – P31's ethics reaches toward that asymmetry without being built for it.

## WHAT THE SOURCE SAYS [1]

At Museum Rietberg, twenty artists rework colonial-era photographs – including images from the museum's own collection taken in Africa and Asia between the late 19th and early 20th centuries – across four sections (Shape-shifters, Confrontation, Care, In the Photo Fantastic), using counter-archiving, collage, protective reframing, and speculative fabulation to contest images that once codified racial hierarchy and erased or distorted the people they depicted.

## WHERE THE LENS GRIPS

The multiplication-of-creation model (P17) and alterity of reception (P16) grip with real texture, not just label-matching: a single kind of source material – the colonial photographic archive – produces four structurally distinct, non-hierarchical modes of creative divergence (counter-archive building, dismantling of clichés, protective reframing, speculative fabulation), each an 'alien' diffraction relative to the original documentary/propagandistic intent. P18a's ricochet also finds purchase: the artists, having received and transformed the colonial wave, become emitters in turn, their works now circulating toward new museum-visitor receivers. The literal cutting, stitching, and annotating of photographs is a material enactment of P13's claim that lossless transmission produces nothing – alteration is what generates the new works at all.

## WHERE IT BREAKS

The edge is at P17's 'neither is superior, both are real' and P28's ludic frame of artist-as-game-designer, receiver-as-player. The exhibition insists on a moral asymmetry

the framework's neutral vocabulary has no slot for: the colonial photograph was not an artist's wave released for playful diffraction but an apparatus of extraction whose intent was to codify hierarchy, and the contemporary artists' response is named by the source as protection, confrontation, and reclaimed dignity – not 'play.' This slips IF one reads P17/P28 as flattening emitter and receiver into symmetric, value-free positions regardless of what was emitted or why; it holds IF one reads P31's ethical center (responsibility for conditions, not outcomes) as already supplying the needed asymmetry – but P31 is built around the artist-as-game-designer, and it is left open whether it extends to a non-consensual, non-artistic historical apparatus like a colonial ethnographic archive.

## PROPOSITIONAL GRID [2]

**Read this grid.** “Not evaluated” does **not** mean the source has nothing to say about that proposition. It means **the reading did not instruct it**. That is not a result, and it counts in no denominator. A silence, by contrast, is a finding: the reading touched the proposition without concluding, or noted its absence itself.

## Evaluated

| proposition |                            | audit status | relational verdict |
|-------------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| P13         | Generative Loss            | not audited  | evidence-for       |
| P16         | Alterity of Reception      | not audited  | evidence-for       |
| P17         | Multiplication of Creation | not audited  | evidence-for       |
| P18a        | The Ricochet Effect        | not audited  | evidence-for       |
| P28         | The Game Principle         | not audited  | pressure-against   |
| P31         | Ethical Center             | not audited  | open-question      |

**Not evaluated (31)** – P1, P2, P3, P3a, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P14a, P14b, P15, P16a, P18, P19, P19a, P20, P21, P22, P23, P24, P25, P26, P27, P29, P30

*Overall verdict: Bounded – taxonomy of the August 2026 pass, predating the move to relational verdicts. Kept as metadata: the gap between the two forms is data, not residue. This reading's judgement is in the grid above.*

Reading of 2026-05-28 · model claude-sonnet-5 · source 5,042 chars · 1 attempt(s)

Version1Published2026-08-05

FIRST PASS – KEPT AS WRITTEN

*Reading produced by the T50 RSS pass, before the boundary lens. It is reproduced UNCORRECTED. Keeping it is the point: without it, a changed title is just a changed title – with it, what the second pass refused becomes legible.*

Twenty global artists diffracting colonial photographs through their own ouvertures—transforming the wave of a colonial image into new narratives of memory, identity, and resistance. This is not reinterpretation; it is structural diffraction. The physical invariant (the photograph's material form) remains stable, but the intentional invariant (the colonial codex embedded in the image) is deliberately destabilized by each artist's singular ouverture. The ricochet is bilateral: the colonial photograph reveals what it *meant* to encode, and the contemporary artwork reveals what the artist *carries* that the photograph activated. Museum Rietberg becomes a site where generative loss—the gap between colonial intention and contemporary reception—becomes the engine of creation.

T50 RSS assessment · 2026-05-28 · remplacée par boundary-lens-2026-08

REFERENCES

[1] A Kind of Paradise: Reclaiming Colonial-Era Photography Through Contemporary Art. Hyperallergic, 2026-05-28. <https://hyperallergic.com/a-kind-of-paradise-reclaiming-colonial-era-photography-through-contemporary-art/>

[2] Quercy, A. (2026). The 31 Propositions of Ideamorphism. <https://ideamorphism.org/en/publications/2026/03/the-31-propositions-of-ideamorphism.html>

EPISTEMIC PROFILE

|                  |                                                                                                              |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Claim type       | boundary reading                                                                                             |
| Voice            | third person analysis                                                                                        |
| Epistemic status | bounded grip                                                                                                 |
| Methodology      | Boundary-finding lens applied to one source, model claude-sonnet-5, 1 attempt(s), traceability check passed. |

CHECKSUM (SHA-256)

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