

About the Artwork

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One of the recurring issues in my work as a comic artist, researcher and illustrator is the question of how to depict violence in a way that evokes recognition and speaks to the viewer but does not feed into the cycle of violence from which it has sprung in the first place.

When engaging with realities of war and large-scale political violence, but also the small violences of everyday life such as racial profiling and epistemic violence, one has to somehow relate to the reader that these are the topics at hand. Yet, how explicitly does one have to visualize violences in order to criticize them and, relatedly, which images is the viewer left with when closing a book? I believe there are no universal answers to these questions. Rather, they have to be asked again, and again, whenever embarking on a new project.

When it comes to visualizing epistemic violence and injustice for the cover of this book, I was very happy to engage in a process of collective rather than individual meaning making. Together with the editorial team, Peter Hoffmann-Schoenborn, and myself, we discussed the core intellectual and emotional messages of the book before I started making rough sketches. However, up until now, there was one important member still missing in the chain of visual meaning making for this book: you, the reader!

Until you opened this book, it was impossible to know if the anger, ambiguity, and hope that provided our emotional baseline for the cover made their way through to you. Therefore, I invite you to think along with me while reading and engaging with the contributions of this book: what did you feel when opening this book? What images do you think you will be left with when closing it? Do they reinforce violent power structures?

I think it is only in answering these questions together, that we can push towards disrupting the visual cycle of violence even further next time.

