The art project I explore in this chapter, *Brides on Tour* (in its original Italian *Sposa in Viaggio*), centered on one of the most vulnerable positions a person can be in: asking for hospitality from total strangers. In the Introduction I described an impactful film that documents how filmmaker Linda Hattendorf invited a homeless man, Jimmy Mirikitani, to stay with her in her small New York apartment in the aftermath of 9/11. This inspirational story lives up to the promise of the challenging ideal of hospitality, as expressed in Emma Lazarus’s poem (“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses”) inscribed on the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. I asked why many of us, myself included, stop short of practicing these ideals of hospitality and postpone, arrest, or deny our welcome, both as individuals and as communities. My answer was that hospitality situations are full of fears and anxieties that arise from cultural socialization about who is more or less worthy of welcome. This socialization also allows us to conclude that certain kinds of people should not be welcome in our communities at all. (Be afraid of these groups of people! Beware of strangers!) I also discussed how some people feel more entitled to welcome or have more resources to share than others, and how these inequalities of hospitality are built into the cultural traditions and frameworks of proper behavior between hosts and guests.

The artworks I have discussed thus far have challenged the cultural traditions of hospitality by offering new, more democratic forms of welcome, despite any fears or anxieties that the artists may have felt. The artists experimented with public, private, and gallery/museum locations for their hospitality-themed projects: their own homes, public museums and galleries, other people’s homes, public television studios, artist residencies, and orphanages. For artists and their audiences, galleries and museums might feel safer than other kinds of spaces for creating hosting situations, which is why, as described in chapter 3, Lee Mingwei’s family and friends feared for his safety when he decided to invite total strangers to have one-on-one encounters with him in private settings for *The Dining Project* and *The Sleeping Project*.

Shifting the aesthetic from finding forms to welcoming “anyone who turns
The artist Mithu Sen decided to reveal limitations and inequalities built into the current forms of hospitality by not playing the role of a “nice” and “proper” guest. As discussed in chapter 5, she tested her hosts’ welcome at an orphanage in Kochi by withdrawing a common language and at a mansion in Los Angeles by inviting her audience to discuss the inequality that the Hollywood mansion represented. Sen stretches and breaks what are considered “normal” boundaries between hosts and guests, mining the unpredictability of the outcomes in hospitality situations. She sees even “bad” outcomes, when she is refused others’ welcome, as “gifts” because they enable her to reveal what she calls “radical hospitality,” especially in failures of welcome, in what does not happen as planned. But what happens when an artist is physically attacked, injured, or harmed in other ways? Is this also a “gift”? What happens to the promotion of the challenging ideals of hospitality when someone is hurt while seeking new forms of welcome in contemporary art?

Sadly, Brides on Tour, the artwork at the center of this chapter, was interrupted by a tragedy: one of the two artists involved was murdered in the middle of the project. As the key focus of the artists was on the potential of hospitality among individual persons to bring peace between nations, I believe it is important to address the tragedy within the context of this book. Careful consideration of this project forces me to avoid shying away from the high stakes of this promise of the ideal of hospitality, as a leap of faith in strangers, be it in art or everyday life. The circumstances surrounding this project and its tragedy raise questions about how hospitality gets arrested by inequalities, hostility, and violence on the one hand and by a sense of entitlement and a naive faith in strangers on the other. In this chapter I also reveal and unpack the interests and positions of the project’s stakeholders, including the artists, those who have been inspired by this work, and those who have critiqued and written about it, including myself. These positions may be summarized with a paraphrase of a statement by the artist Ana Prvački quoted in chapter 1: the artists discussed in this book and I are not naive about the power of hospitality.

Brides on Tour
In April 2008, the international news media reported that an Italian artist had been killed in Turkey while doing an art project. Upon hearing this news, I read what I could find online about the tragedy. According to several articles, at the
time the artist died, she was hitchhiking across Turkey as part of an artwork about the possibilities of bringing peace between the nations affected by wars.\textsuperscript{1} The artist who was killed, Pippa Bacca (also known as Giuseppina Pasqualino di Marineo), was collaborating with another artist and designer, Silvia Moro, who had not been harmed. For their work titled \textit{Brides on Tour}, Bacca and Moro had embarked on a symbolic journey, hitchhiking from an art gallery in Milan to a gallery in Israel. Their journey started in Milan on March 8, 2008. The artists wore white bridal dresses to signify “the marriage between peoples and nations.”\textsuperscript{2}

Bacca and Moro decided to separate in Turkey and planned to reunite in Lebanon. Communication with Bacca stopped shortly after she left Istanbul. Concerned, her friends and family members called the Turkish police. Her body was found on April 11, 2008, in Gebze, an area near Istanbul. Police used her cell phone signal to track and arrest Murat Karataş, who was subsequently convicted of her rape and murder. Another man, never caught, might have been involved, too.

Bacca and Moro chose a route from Italy to Israel that would take them through the Balkans and the Middle East. With so much at stake regarding the “peace process” in this region, the artists wanted to highlight how the simple gesture of hitchhiking and seeking help and welcome along the way from strangers could become a symbol of humanity’s ability to heal the wounds of intolerance and war. They also wanted to recognize the significance of their route between Asia and Europe, along which traders and other travelers have been hosted since ancient times. The artists intended to mark the end of their trip with an exhibition that would open in Israel, with a final exhibition scheduled to be held in Italy in the fall of 2008.

As news of Bacca’s death spread, the press reported that the story had become a matter of national significance in Turkey: “People were incensed that a Turkish man could carry out such a heinous crime on a young woman who was on a trip for peace. . . . Turkey’s president, Abdullah Gul, called President Giorgio Napolitano of Italy to relay the ‘heartfelt grief of the Turkish population for the tragedy.’”\textsuperscript{3} As I continued collecting information about Bacca’s death and her art project, I learned that many local women’s rights activists and artists pointed to what had happened to raise awareness about the lack of safety for women in public places (I discuss specific examples later in this chapter).

At the same time, critics began to speak out about the circumstances around Bacca’s death, including her hitchhiking as part of an art project to promote the message of peace, and all the press coverage and the national conversation that
her death elicited. Some newspapers implied that it was naive for the artist to hitchhike and expect a positive outcome. Was she “crazy”? Had she acted out of a sense of entitlement? In addition, as an Italian woman she was much more privileged than most local women, leading some to suggest that the death of a Turkish woman would not have prompted such swift police work and the arrest of her murderer.4

Bacca’s story raises many questions important to this book: What are the limits of demanding hospitality as a guest? How should a woman who is privileged—by her national origin, her race, her class—go about asking for hospitality? Is it possible for a woman—privileged or not—to expect a welcome from strangers without being blamed for what might happen to her? How far should one go to yield to a culture different from one’s own when crossing national and cultural borders? When does respect for another culture become complicity with the inequalities and hierarchies that one seeks to challenge? Individual answers to these questions depend on, among other factors, the weight one gives to various identity markers and which identity markers one considers predominant; in this case the relevant markers include race, class, gender, national origin, and cultural background.

La Mariée, by Joël Curtz

For six years, from 2008 to 2014, I collected the information presented above from news media and from the Brides on Tour project’s website built by Bacca’s family, now an archive that includes photographs and texts prepared by the artists for their journey as well as documentation of events prior to their departure and after Bacca’s death. Images from the posthumous exhibition of Bacca’s dress, which was found at the murder scene, are also posted on the website.5 I looked at the face of Bacca’s murderer in Turkish newspapers. I read what was written about Bacca and Brides on Tour and followed the tributes by artists, theater directors, journalists, and activists discussed below.6 Although a lot of information was available, I found no answers to many questions I had about the project: Why did the two women separate? What happened to Silvia Moro? What did Bacca’s family, friends, and local artists think about Brides on Tour after her death? Then, in 2014, I came across a reference to a recent documentary film about Brides on Tour directed by artist and filmmaker Joël Curtz: La Mariée (The Bride, 2012).7 Much of my analysis in this chapter draws on information presented in this film,
which answers many of the questions I had about *Brides on Tour* and also provides original footage of the artists as they were hitchhiking.

When I learned about *La Mariée*, I contacted the filmmaker, who very kindly arranged for me to see his film, which was then showing only at film festivals I could not attend; he was also generous in responding to my requests for interviews. Curtz told me that he learned about Pippa Bacca from friends when he was doing a performance of his own that created uneasy encounters between himself and strangers. For example, he would walk up to a car that was parked and waiting for someone else and open the passenger-side door and sit down, while a collaborator filmed the driver’s reactions. When he heard about Pippa Bacca, in the immediate aftermath of her death in the summer of 2008, Curtz went to Italy to see her relatives and subsequently became a family friend.

What caused Curtz, who was just out of graduate school and already off on his own creative career, to spend four full years on his film about *Brides on Tour*? After all, like me, Curtz never met Bacca. In our conversations, Curtz has suggested that Bacca’s story draws people in not only because of the tragedy and its potential sensationalization but also because as an artwork *Brides on Tour* explored many different topics that moved many different people. “It was an artistic gesture, a conscious life work,” and thus part of a much larger context that included questions of community, relations between strangers, crossing borders and nation-states, and hospitality—topics that all interest Curtz, too.

*La Mariée* paints a very complicated picture of the *Brides on Tour* project, the two artists, and Bacca’s friends and family. It is a deep engagement with the message of the work and the limits of asking for hospitality. Additionally, as much as the film is a welcoming gesture by Curtz to Bacca and her family, the filmmaker’s editing and other aesthetic decisions also point in the direction of questions about privilege and European colonial attitudes. Bacca’s friends are often seen being interviewed in grand-looking living rooms—presumably in their homes. The camera pans from a beautiful floor vase to a giant dining table, slowly, almost coldly, before focusing on one of Bacca’s friends, who is impeccably and even extravagantly dressed. Does Curtz intentionally point out the wealth of those in Bacca’s social circle? It surely appears so. The images from this world seem to be very detached and different from the footage found on the artist’s camera. As someone who has created challenging social encounters to provoke the reactions of strangers, Curtz seems to be both challenged by *Brides on Tour* and critical of it.
It does not help that, as the film suggests, Bacca’s ideas about peace and hospitality seem to have developed from her interpretations of the Bible and, more specifically, her Catholic faith. Why? Because this supports a strong undertone of inappropriateness, making it appear that the project sought to impose the artist’s Christian faith on others. Ecumenical messages about all people being each other’s neighbors and sharing responsibility for each other slide easily into missionary martyrdom—the willingness to die for one’s faith and one’s God. In this less generous interpretation, Bacca’s actions would be seen as akin to those of the American Christian missionary who set out in 2018 to spread the word of Jesus on an island in the Andaman Sea. He was warned that the local tribe was hostile to outsiders, but he insisted on landing on their island despite its remote location. The tribe killed him. The analogy of this interpretation (with which I do not agree) implies that both the missionary and Bacca cared less about respecting the customs and desires of their potential hosts than they did for their own souls. They tried to spread the word of their God even if it meant interfering with the communities and ways of life of others. This line of criticism asks why Bacca’s message of peace and welcome was more important than someone else’s values or desires.

However, there are also places in the film where Curtz seems to be very sympathetic to Bacca’s journey and Brides on Tour in general. He appears to be supportive of a larger message about contemporary art taking on more challenging topics, such as how strangers treat each other, and creating new forms to express those topics, similar to other artists discussed in this book. Curtz also seems to be concerned about the effects of contemporary art on various traditions of welcome, both in challenging and critiquing them and in taking care not to appear paternalistic, moralistic, or neocolonial and insensitive to cultural differences. His film implies that there are many hospitalities and that the desire for some universal type of hospitality tradition across the world is problematic.

La Mariée is extraordinary, both in its detail regarding the art project and in how the film itself was made. We see footage from when Bacca and Moro were leaving the gallery in Milan on March 8, 2008, and photographs taken of them during their journey (Plates 8 and 9). We also see Bacca’s white dress being returned to the family by police. And then, we learn of another extraordinary story—hard to believe, and often doubted as too good to be true—that of Bacca’s camera. One day, about a year after Bacca’s death, the family received a parcel from Turkey. Her video camera, the one that Bacca and Moro used to document
their journey, had been found, and Turkish police returned it. But the family could not see any footage—it was corrupted.

They decided to pass the camera to Curtz with the hope that he would be luckier. He was—a friend managed to restore the footage in a video laboratory. It showed what Bacca and Moro had recorded on their journey, and something else. The murderer (as the family, the police, and Curtz believe) had recorded a local wedding over some of Bacca’s footage, just before he was caught. Bacca’s family and Curtz watched the footage of the wedding, and after careful discussion with the family, Curtz decided to include the murderer’s footage in his film. According to Curtz, Bacca’s mother and sisters felt that the wedding images, with another bride wearing and dancing in a white dress, provided a sense of hope for the future. This is what we see at the end of La Mariée.

Unlike Bacca’s family and Curtz, I did not feel any hope while watching the murderer’s footage of a wedding. In fact, I had just the opposite reaction. I felt that the zooming in on young people at the wedding, especially young girls and the bride, was disturbing. It also felt haunting, because as I watched it, I thought about Bacca, who was gone, while her murderer’s life went on. Does this footage provide an opportunity for the audience to see reality through the murderer’s eyes, and not just Bacca’s and Moro’s? If so, is that a good thing or a bad thing? I am not sure. This footage serves as important documentation of the story, however, and it is now preserved for our consideration.

The best parts of the film, from my point of view, are the ones in which Curtz’s camera is gentle, tender, trying to present the intimacy of feelings around the tragedy of Pippa Bacca’s death with grace and introspection. There are at least four extraordinary scenes in the film that exhibit these characteristics: first, a scene in which Bacca’s mother speaks about her artist daughter; second, one in which Bacca’s sisters reminisce about her and how they hitchhiked together; third, a scene in which Silvia Moro talks about when she and Bacca separated; and fourth, a scene of original footage shot by the Brides on Tour artists, shown within the intimacy of Bacca’s home, with its objects and photographs. I will engage with these moments in more detail in the rest of this chapter.

La Mariée is an important film, and a difficult one to watch. Curtz is also an artist, a video artist and a filmmaker who, like Bacca and Moro, is interested in relations among strangers in private and public spaces. The film is a tribute (after all, Curtz spent years of his own life to make it), but it is also a working through of the challenge that Bacca presented to all of us, especially those who think about
hospitality in contemporary art professionally. What is the role of art? What kind of artistic gesture was Brides on Tour, and how was it helpful, challenging, and different—or not—from Curtz’s own thinking about “our world” and how he makes his work? Curtz’s care in making his film enabled my thinking about the lessons I have learned from this work.

Preparing to Hitchhike

The Brides on Tour project had been two years in the making and involved a lot of preparation. Bacca and Moro engaged many of their friends and colleagues from the art world, making the project the work of a whole community. The bridal dresses were designed by Manuel Facchini from Byblos Art Gallery in Verona and had been part of a sculpture and social design exhibition before the artists departed. The national flags of the countries they would visit were embedded in the cloth used to make the dresses, presenting visible symbols of the artists’ message of internationalism.
To prepare to be a good guest, Bacca studied Arabic for two years so she could speak the language of her hosts when she passed through Lebanon, as the artists wanted to emphasize their message of welcome. Their preparation testifies to their seriousness and offers a rebuttal to the criticism, noted above, that this project was an irresponsible gesture of two white women who decided one day to hitchhike without giving much thought to the situated differences of the places they would be going. They also collaborated with local artists and communities along the way.

Bacca and Moro contacted local artists in Sarajevo, Istanbul, and other cities where they planned to stop en route. They arranged for professional local photographers to document their journey and prepared interactive performances for local exhibition spaces. Bacca was especially interested in the idea of “welcoming new life into the world” and contacted midwives in each country to interview them. In La Mariée, Bacca is seen washing a midwife’s feet as she asks the woman questions about smiling at a newborn. Their interaction made Bacca feel as if she was participating in a birthing process with other women. Hospitality here is a circle of life, a positive version of the expression “What goes around comes around.” Welcoming a new life into the world is connected with providing welcome to those who help in this process, such as midwives. The artists carefully thought this through as part of their intention to connect individual and phenomenological moments of human condition to collective being. In many ancient traditions, hosts show welcome and respect by observing the custom of washing the feet of their guests, or by offering water so that guests can wash their feet.

Bacca’s intimacy with total strangers expressed itself on several levels in Brides on Tour. In Curtz’s film, we see Bacca happy and smiling as she speaks to midwives through a translator, in footage presumably recorded by Moro. This footage recovered from Bacca’s camera is now part of what Brides on Tour remains as a project with all its varied elements of exhibitions, objects, preparation process, interactions with many different people in various countries, relationship between Moro and Bacca, and text by the artists and others who have been involved in the project, as well as photographs and video.

The central element of the artists’ journey was the hitchhiking. On their initial website for the Brides on Tour project, Bacca and Moro included this statement: “Hitchhiking is choosing to have faith in other human beings, and man, like a small god, rewards those who have faith in him.” Especially for Bacca,
FIGURE 6.2. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Pippa Bacca washes the feet of a midwife as she and Silvia Moro hitchhike across the Balkans as part of their project *Brides on Tour*.

FIGURE 6.3. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Pippa Bacca wipes the midwife’s feet with her white dress after washing them during *Brides on Tour*. 
hitchhiking was a test of faith as well as a test of hospitality. In many traditional cultural stories of hospitality (such as Homer’s *Odyssey* and stories in the Bible and the Laws of Manu), there is a trope of gods or goddesses testing the faith of common people by disguising themselves as strangers looking for refuge, a meal, or other welcoming actions. This project relied on the assumption that putting one’s life in the hands of another person leads to a reward. In chapter 2, in my discussion of waiting, I noted a poem in which a “perfect hostess” is rewarded for her waiting with “wings,” which she has requested from God. Here, the reward for trusting a stranger is hospitality, with the women being rewarded for trusting others and for putting their lives in others’ hands.

Hitchhiking is very much about hospitality, from its inception as a precarious moment between strangers when the hitchhiker gets into a car with a person who is kind enough to stop to what ultimately happens on the journey. Hitchhiking also implies radical vulnerability, because the hitchhiker is trapped in another’s private space, a space much smaller than a house and located in the middle of a public road or another public realm.
The driver is also vulnerable, with the perceived level of vulnerability often based on the appearance of the person asking for a ride. In North America, hitchhiking became an activity to be feared around the mid-1970s, in part because of media portrayals, including several well-known horror movies, such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) and *The Hitcher* (1986). In recent years, the practice of hitchhiking has been revived, in a way, by ride-hailing services that use smartphone applications to connect drivers and passengers; the safety features built in by these services seem to provide both drivers and passengers a sense of security that was not part of the original practice.

Though not as common in North America as it once was, hitchhiking is still practiced widely in Europe. Both men and women do it all the time, and a number of young women document their experiences in hitchhiker blogs. Hitchhiking was essential to the *Brides on Tour* project because it was more intimate and demanded more trust in others than simply flying over those countries or renting a car. Hitchhiking offered an effective way for the artists to deliver their message of welcome. In *Brides on Tour*, they aimed to show that when you place

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**FIGURE 6.5.** Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Pippa Bacca’s image of a road during her hitching.
yourself in strangers’ hands, when you are vulnerable as a guest who needs help in a foreign or alien community, people will step up and be Good Samaritans.

From their own perspective, the two artists tried to do all they could to look “safe” to those who might offer them rides. Their odd white dresses notwithstanding, the stereotypes of safety from the drivers’ point of view were in their favor: two young women, with signs in local languages (indicating seasoned hitchhikers), would not seem to present a threat. Can strangers ignore you or even take advantage of you? Yes, they can, but *Brides on Tour* implied that the odds of a good outcome are in your favor. For Bacca this was not just a theory, some grandstanding abstract message. It was her lifelong experience. Bacca “began thumbing as a child, in the company of her mother at first, and later alone. For her it was the normal way of getting around; almost every week-end she would go to meet friends in Italy or abroad, always hitchhiking her way.”15

In fact, Bacca’s previous exhibition in Perugia, Italy, in 2004, titled *More Than* (*Più Oltre*), featured photographic portraits of drivers who had picked her up on earlier hitchhiking trips, prior to *Brides on Tour*.16 Thus, Bacca’s trust in the hospitality of strangers for the *Brides on Tour* mode of transportation was not a radical departure from her previous experience, including from her previous artwork. Her partner in hitchhiking, however, did not fully share her trust in humanity.

**Good Face, Bad Face**

The two artists had agreed that they would hitchhike for this project. During the journey, however, they argued over the strategy they should use in choosing who to accept rides from. According to Moro, Bacca wanted to accept rides from all drivers, while Moro was not willing to do that. In *La Mariée*, we see Moro pause and then recall a moment when she refused to get into a car with a few “fat, dirty-looking” men. “For Pippa, the fact I did not want to get into the car was treason,” she says.17 Moro’s attitude toward hitchhiking in *Brides on Tour* was more conditional than Bacca’s. She might have believed in the overall message of the project, but she was not about to get into a car with just anyone who offered them a ride.

How did she decide which rides to accept? One of Moro’s conditions was that a driver had to have a “good face”: “I don’t get into the car if the guy does not have a good face. . . . a calm, serene one.”18 In the film, as she says this, Moro makes a
gesture with her hands as if she is drawing a narrow, well-proportioned circle in the air—a “good face.”

As I watched Moro, I wondered, what is the image in her mind? For myself, I imagined Italian Renaissance paintings, with their representations of what virtuous persons (men) are supposed to look like, based on tropes of Western art history. Those images were fed to me in my Soviet school art history curriculum and on visits to the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. And how does one go about choosing a driver based on a “good face” in one’s mind? Arguably, what Moro meant was not that one compares each stranger’s face to a “good face,” but rather that one has a gut feeling of who is safe or not, as a stranger. When Moro and Bacca disagreed, I imagine that Moro argued about what a “safe” driver would look like. It is unlikely she meant a calculated comparison to a set of “good face” standards each time a stranger is judged. That is how the feeling of danger or safety is formed (I speak to that later in this chapter in more detail).

Nevertheless, those types of decisions and gut feelings are repositories of unconscious biases and cultural stereotypes about what kind of people are “safe” as strangers, and what kind of people are not. From a personal safety point of view, Moro’s position about discriminating against men with “fat, dirty” faces is not that far-fetched. Many movies portray villains as having “those” kinds of faces. This kind of judgment happens more often than one might think and is involved

FIGURE 6.6. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. Silvia Moro makes an impression of a “good face” as she speaks about deciding how to choose a driver when hitchhiking with Pippa Bacca in their project *Brides on Tour.*
in other decisions too, aside from hospitality situations. Such decisions may not be conscious but they are very visible, especially to those who are being judged. When Barack Obama mentioned in a speech about race relations in the United States that his grandmother “once confessed her fear of black men who passed by her on the street,” he spoke to this kind of judgment, a gut feeling of being in danger when reacting to certain groups of people.19

Then there is the question of whether it is polite to discriminate between drivers when you are standing by the side of the road with a sign asking for a ride. Would such discrimination not be the kind of faux pas that Ana Prvački’s work trained her audience to avoid—to be a supplicant and then say, “No, thank you, not you, I don’t want this kindness or this service from you”? Moro’s discrimination between “good” and “bad” faces could be read as prudent—or insulting. It could also be read as racist or sexist, when guests and hosts are chosen based on their appearances. This is why many ride-hailing and home-sharing platforms, such as Uber, Lyft, and Airbnb, have been accused of discriminating based on race, gender, and national origin.20

I once got into an elevator with a man in Moscow and was deciding about his face and my chances of a safe ride. As the elevator doors closed, my own face must have been distorted with fear because he asked me a question.

“Are you afraid of me?”

I replied honestly, “Yes.” No other word was exchanged between us.

As he exited the elevator, I was not sure about my answer or my behavior. On the one hand, I was tired of trying to be nice in covering up my consideration whether this man had a “good face” or a “bad face,” to use Moro’s distinction. I said, yes, afraid, because it was true; I was still undecided about whether to trust or to fear him. On the other hand, this interaction made me feel sad and ashamed rather than “brave,” as if I was questioning his humanness in mentally profiling him. My hesitation notwithstanding, I did enter the elevator and was right there with him. But clearly, I did not successfully disguise my fearful hesitation. What would that man have wanted his wife or daughter to do in my situation?21

Many adults my age remember running around their neighborhoods when they were children, playing with each other or visiting their adult neighbors. “Times were different then,” we say today. Children today are given specific instructions about not getting into elevators with strangers, particularly male strangers. As with other matters related to cultural and social tropes regarding
acceptable levels of safety around strangers, our reliance on laws and institutions
to regulate our sense of safety does not change the indeterminate, situational,
and arbitrary character of that sense. Thus, an online community called Free-
Range Kids now tracks arrests and other legal troubles of parents who let their
children walk a dog by themselves, or go alone to a park, or walk home from
school alone. The calls to police in these cases are usually made by so-called
concerned citizens. These neighbors and other members of the community de-
cide who is safe and who is dangerous. It is hard to distinguish among percep-
tions of safety, the reality of danger, and racial or gender profiling. When one’s
community or loved ones are concerned, fear and profiling often win over trust
and faith in strangers.

Bacca’s firm position on accepting rides while hitchhiking was the opposite
of Moro’s. The practice of hitchhiking—of asking for and offering each other
rides in our private spaces—is about community through hospitality, and there-
fore the only strategy Bacca had to prove her point was to get into any car that
stopped, with any driver who offered her a ride. For Bacca, the relationships be-
tween her and Moro and the drivers on their journey were as important as what
happened at each destination (the meetings with curators, artists, and midwives).
By asking to be picked up and accepting rides from others, she and Moro were
recognizing others as their fellow “neighbors.”

Bacca did not start this project alone, however. It was not her intention to
hitchhike all by herself. When she initially conceptualized the project, she in-
vited Moro to travel with her. Did she hedge her bets on this new journey across
many unfamiliar countries by seeking a partner rather than doing it by herself,
as she had for her previous exhibition in Perugia? We will never know. There
were other elements that added to the artists’ perception of safety, at least poten-
tially. They informed the drivers who gave them rides that they were hitchhiking
as part of their creative project, probably because the drivers were filmed, with
their permission. There were other material elements as well. Bacca and Moro
stood beside the road in their “strange-looking” bridal dresses with attached
national flags and with cameras nearby documenting everything (see Plates 8
and 9). All these elements seemed to add layers of security, especially when they
were together.

In La Mariée, director Joël Curtz asks Moro about why she and Bacca sepa-
rated in Istanbul, and she explains that when they reached that city, Moro’s boy-
friend joined her, and the two of them decided to fly to Lebanon rather than
hitchhike with Bacca. Why did Bacca decide to continue hitchhiking alone at that point? Her plan was to meet up with Moro again in Lebanon and then finish their journey hitchhiking to Israel. If initially Bacca did not embark on *Brides on Tour* alone, inviting Moro to join her, why did she decide to continue on alone? Was it because she felt that Moro’s position about discriminating between drivers challenged her total trust in strangers, and she could not back off her principle now? Since the two women disagreed strongly about this specific topic, of whether to get into any car that would stop, it is possible that Bacca felt she had something to prove after Moro had left, and that may have played an important role in her decision. When challenged, in the heat of the moment, people do things they would not do otherwise. However, Bacca’s decision to continue to hitchhike alone seems to me much more deliberate than impulsive. This was her life’s work and a sign of her faith in strangers, including men with “fat, dirty” faces.

For Bacca’s mother, also, the tragedy had nothing to do with Bacca being alone. In *La Mariée*, she says that her daughter’s death was an accident, no different

FIGURE 6.7. Joël Curtz, *La Mariée (The Bride)*, Le Fresnoy Production, 2012. One of the drivers who gives Pippa Bacca a ride as she is hitchhiking in *Brides on Tour*. 
from “being bitten by a rabid dog.” As such, it should not alter or dismiss the initial message of *Brides on Tour*, a message of “peace . . . fraternity . . . fellowship, and faith in one’s neighbor.” Moro and Bacca disagreed about how to progress on their journey, but not about their overall message. In the film, Moro says that the project was conceived by both of them, and that she supports its message of peace. And Bacca’s mother certainly does not blame Moro; she views what happened as a random act of violence that could have occurred on any day in any part of the world.

This artwork, especially in Bacca’s case, challenged many of the decisions that we make every day—whose face looks “good,” whose face does not—and how we profile each other based on tacit, often unconscious, biases. Gender is only one category we use in such profiling. Race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, and social status are all involved in our quick gut decisions about who has a “good face,” a “good look.”

Pippa Bacca traveled alone and trusted men as her hitchhiking hosts. She refused to guess who was the wolf and who was the Good Samaritan based solely on appearances. Here lies the profound contradiction that this tragic story exposes: women are expected to be “good” as people and “safe” as women, but their safety seems to depend entirely on their own judgment. The wolf is the wolf. He cannot help himself. A woman needs to guess correctly who is in front of her. According to this logic, Moro guessed correctly; Bacca did not. I will come back to the problem of profiling, but first I will explore this fear that women are supposed to feel in public spaces and toward strangers.

**Vicarious Fear and Cultural Difference**

In the Introduction I presented the story of filmmaker Linda Hattendorf and artist Jimmy Mirikitani, the homeless man Hattendorf invited to stay in her small New York apartment after 9/11, to protect him from the ashes and devastation in lower Manhattan. The result of Hattendorf’s multimonth durational welcome was a happy ending, teaching us how hospitality can be transformational for both the host and the guest, as documented in a cathartic, brilliant work of art: Hattendorf’s film *The Cats of Mirikitani*. One of the questions that audience members ask after watching this film, echoing my own, reflects our own fears of welcoming a stranger, a homeless man: What was the worst that could have happened? After Hattendorf chose to host Mirikitani in her apartment, she was
asked, “Weren’t you afraid for your safety?” But when Greg Schiller, a man, invited homeless men to stay in his basement, he was not asked the same question, the implication being that he had no reason to fear for his safety. As I have shown in other chapters, hospitality involves very different choices for men and women. On the one hand, women are identified with welcome par excellence, as those who provide its essence of passive waiting, serving, and hosting others. On the other hand, a completely opposite message is delivered by countless warnings to women throughout their lives to fear strangers, especially male strangers.

You, a woman, do not want to listen and still want to explore the big and dangerous world on your own, despite your elders’ and your culture’s advice? Go ahead, but at your own peril, as you have been warned. Anything that happens will be your fault. When I have presented lectures about *Brides on Tour*, I have been asked, “What was Bacca thinking by hitchhiking in Turkey?” In my conversations with other artists, curators, and scholars, I have found that many put the blame on Bacca for what happened to her (her choices, her behavior, caused her death). They assert that it was irresponsible of her to expect a different result, suggesting that she was baiting the drivers, behaving as a seductress. By opening herself up to hospitality she was, in a sense, “asking for it,” inviting an assault, especially when she crossed the border into Turkey. To these critics, Moro seems much more cautious and reasonable than Bacca, and even more respectful of cultural and other differences as the women traveled across unfamiliar territory.

Contrary to the ideal of becoming the “Mother of Exiles” from Lazarus’s poem on the Statue of Liberty, the message to women is that they should trust only their relatives and those strangers who are part of their community. And even when something happens to them in their own communities, it is their fault. In a memoir that explores her own experience with sexual violence and subsequent fears, award-winning investigative reporter Joanna Connors writes about the connection between women’s socialization and their perception of risk. Her journalist husband, who wrote about crime on the streets of Cleveland when they moved to that city in the 1980s, warned her about specific locations in the city; she observes that “sometimes that first year I felt like a child listening to fairy tales about the dangers lurking in the woods. Go straight to work, Little Red Riding Hood, and don’t stop or the wolf might get you.”24 Though the danger in her case came not on the streets but in what she perceived as the “safe space” of a college campus, she nevertheless blamed herself for being sexually assaulted, because she felt she had been warned: “It was my fault. My own,
stupid, gullible, naïve fault.” Connors shows how that sense of self-blame goes back to the real lesson of warning that women are supposed to receive: Be nice at all times, including to strangers, but if something happens, it’s your fault. You were not careful enough. Moreover, as Connors argues, women become more fearful because they are exposed to secondhand accounts of harm by strangers, especially toward certain groups of women (white, middle-class, young, just like Pippa Bacca). Such stories proliferate not just in fairy tales, in the news, and in social media but also in personal everyday interactions among friends and relatives, leading to what researchers call “vicarious fear.”

Vicarious fear is not based on personal experience but on stories, real and fictional, about things that have happened to other people. It is a sympathetic fear. For example, after reading Connors’s book, a woman might start feeling scared on college campuses, experiencing rapid heartbeat, fight-or-flight reactions, anxiety, and so forth. Vicarious fear is a feeling. Vicarious fear is about believing that you or your loved ones are in danger (an example is Mirikitani’s fear about what might happen to Hattendorf when she stayed out late). And vicarious fear has a huge impact on decisions about hospitality to and from strangers, and even on feelings of being unwelcome in any public place. That is why a strong dismissal of fears and anxieties, or even the provision of statistics about how “safe” a situation truly is, does not help to promote a sense of safety. Statistically, Bacca’s mother is right. A woman is much more likely to be harmed by a family member or boyfriend, or to be hit by a car on the way to work, than to be the victim of a stranger attack. But that is not how women are supposed to feel in public spaces.

More men than women are victims of murder and other types of violent physical harm (in total numbers). But no one expects men to stay at home because of the high level of risk they face or blame them for being harmed. Men are culturally praised for taking risks and embracing the unpredictability of encounters with strangers and the world at large even if in doing so they may be endangering their lives. Cultural, social, and legal changes are needed to address this kind of gendered double standard. That is why the specific contexts of the art projects discussed in this book, including the cultural aspects of fears and anxieties, need to be analyzed.

Fear is a method of social control and discipline. It has been used to preclude various groups of people, especially women and members of religious, sexual, racial, and ethnic minorities, from living full lives and gaining full access to employment and other opportunities. As interpersonal violence researchers
Samantha Riggs and Carrie L. Cook observe, “Fear can be as harmful as victimization in some cases, as fear causes people to alter and restrict their social activities and daily routines which can affect life experiences.” Further, they note, studies have shown that modifying one’s behavior because of fear, such as not going out or not inviting others in, “has a reciprocal effect on fear at best, or at worst actually increases fear of crime.” That is, fear produces fear. Fear leads to a diminished quality of life and the social and cultural expectation that one should be scared for one’s life and always on guard.

Vicarious fear shapes cultural and social expectations of women artists. Perceived risk around strangers and the implied lack of risk around friends and family leads to an inability, even in literature about hospitality, to imagine alternatives regarding how women artists should go about public encounters. Artists are often praised for taking risks, stepping outside the safety of the gallery and doing projects in the “real world” and in “diverse communities.” This standard, however, seems to apply only to men artists. Women artists are told: better work in groups; if you want to take a risk, do it in a gallery; be safe or be blamed for being “naive.” This social control through fear makes it harder for women artists to work on such ambitious projects as Brides on Tour. Fear divides. It is one more element that collectives of women artists, unlike gender-mixed or men artists, have to take into account and discuss—and are expected to discuss, as reactions to Brides on Tour show. This work cannot be understood without a deep consideration of the role that vicarious, expected, controlling, and fracturing fear has on hospitality.

Since the #MeToo movement started, a number of hashtag campaigns have highlighted the inequities faced by women. One that is particularly relevant to my discussion here is #Viajosola (I travel alone). This hashtag was started in 2016 in protest after two Argentinian women were murdered while traveling in Ecuador and many people responded to the news by blaming them for their own deaths. Critics questioned why the women were traveling alone—that is, not accompanied by men. According to this logic, when Bacca and Moro were hitchhiking together, they traveled alone. The murders of the Argentinian women again raised the question of whether women should be more cautious and not trust strangers. Vicarious fear means that in public spaces, women must assume that any “strange” man they encounter is a potential rapist and murderer; the message is, just stay in your home country—at least there you will have a better radar for who has a “good face.”
The reality is not so simple, of course. The disagreement between Moro and Bacca brought up more than just considerations of violence against women. Compared with Bacca, Moro was potentially more sensitive to cultural differences and less inclined to assume a universal humanistic message. This position would add weight to the arguments of those who wanted the artists to show more awareness and sensitivity to cultural differences and other identity markers in addition to gender. For example, a suggestion could be made that it was especially naive and even culturally insensitive to hitchhike in rural Turkey, and that the women should have been more scared to be in unfamiliar public places. These arguments highlight the fine line between cultural sensitivity and cultural stereotyping.

The call for cultural sensitivity would imply that the *Brides on Tour* artists needed to be more respectful of expectations of women’s behavior in public in the areas where they were traveling and not just bring with them their own expectations as white middle-class European women. What would this approach have meant in practice? One scenario might have been for them to abandon hitchhiking in rural Turkey altogether. Let us see how this would have sounded, if Bacca and Moro had stated, “After hitchhiking throughout Western and Central Europe, we plan to fly over Turkey and Lebanon straight into Israel, for a show at a gallery. This will enable us to respect cultural differences in those countries where women do not customarily hitchhike or travel alone, without men.” Such a statement would also have been problematic, as it would have stereotyped the whole region as unwelcoming to women traveling on their own.

I had a personal encounter with a man who attended a lecture I gave about *Brides on Tour* at a university in one of the countries that Bacca and Moro had traveled through. This man commented that Bacca’s murder proved to him that “Turkish Muslim men are animals,” implying that they consider women as second-class citizens, unlike “civilized men” like himself. His anti-Turkish Islamophobic statement demonstrates that distinguishing between sensitivity to cultural differences and blatant xenophobia is less straightforward than it might seem. I was taken aback by the fact that this man felt so comfortable in expressing a hateful stereotype at an open academic forum. I pointed out to him that his statement was offensive and that *Brides on Tour* and my lecture were both intended to fight such hateful stereotypes. His hostility toward Turkish Muslims, however, was more powerful than anything I could say. He used the circumstances of Bacca’s death to feed his hatred. Then, as other audience mem-
bers asked questions that revealed their negative judgment of Bacca for being so naive as to hitchhike in Turkey, I realized how in that forum blaming her for what happened to her was connected to viewing all Turkish Muslim men as “rapists.” This is the type of hatred that Derrida described in reference to the recent wars in the Balkans, as discussed in chapter 1 in relation to Ana Prvački’s project. In that moment, the decision that Bacca could have made, to just fly over some countries and not others in an effort to be culturally sensitive, would have reinforced the worst stereotypes based on gender, national origin, religion, ethnicity, and class.

How does one know, then, what is the most culturally sensitive approach to take? The answer depends on how much one can, in fact, choose. Moro and Bacca had two choices, to fly or not. Many of Bacca’s critics assumed them to have those choices too. This implies that one can choose to not travel to “dangerous” parts of the world or to “unsafe” parts of one’s own city or country. But what about those who do not have such choices, who live in “those” areas and cannot travel?

This line of criticism allows a deeper dive into the Brides on Tour project, beyond the suggestion that Bacca should not have hitchhiked at all in Turkey and, hence, should be blamed for what happened to her. Brides on Tour highlighted how when only some have choices to travel and create projects for peace, their choices might gloss over or even reinforce already existing inequalities in other respects (class, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation). Bacca and Moro, as I described above, were not insensitive culturally from their point of view. They learned Arabic, they had national flags stitched to their white dresses, they had arranged local contacts. But at the same time, their agenda, at least for me, was not critical enough, relying as it did on the premise that the ideals of hospitality are already good, if only we—humanity—practice them.

In treating the ideal of hospitality uncritically, as a universal strategy for peace, the artists in Brides on Tour did not realize that contradictions and inequalities are built into this ideal. It is not a failure of one man, or a man with a “bad face,” but rather a systemic failure of hospitality, as a social practice, and its ideals that women have not been welcomed in public spaces to the same extent as men. They are not meant to be welcomed. It is only recently that there has been a push toward changing this situation, and not just in the field of contemporary art. Then the question becomes, Whose cultural differences to support? Those who want change or those who resist it? There is no such thing as one
unified, uncontested notion of “culture” and its “differences,” as in one Italian culture or one Turkish culture. *Brides on Tour* raises an important question: Is it possible to respect cultural differences without providing cover for those who perpetuate gender-based violence? Originally, the project, although it started on March 8, International Women’s Day, did not seem to have much of a feminist agenda—the artists did not raise the issue of women’s rights in the locales they visited or connect with women’s rights activists. Most of that work took place after the tragedy, when other artists and activists who made tributes to *Brides on Tour* argued for women’s right to inhabit and be welcomed in public spaces without the expectation of being harmed.

**Bacca’s Lessons**

*Brides on Tour* is an example of contemporary artists’ desire to leave the gallery and change the world, to make art by going into the community at large, to blend art and life. In my experience speaking about this work, I have found that women artists are judged differently from their male counterparts. The blending of art and life is often written about as avant-garde and courageous when the artists are men, but for women and gender-nonconforming artists the combination of art with life is seen as precarious and personal, if not outright stupidly dangerous, far from avant-garde.

Despite my reservations about blaming the victim, Bacca, for what happened to her, I understand the rationale of those who do not see anything in this project other than colonial entitlement: white women from Europe expected the whole world to welcome them and wanted to heal war-torn regions by enabling others’ welcome. For such critics, Bacca was no different from many other white tourists and travelers, or even missionaries and colonizers, with their goal of religious conversion, in her zeal to affirm the universalism of her vision of peace. But is that all there is to this work? I do not think so.

I agree that Bacca’s background was privileged, and that her work was problematic because of the missionary zeal with which she explored a potential message of universal hospitality. Her message could easily be construed as having elements of what I described in the Introduction as the “white savior complex,” in which a white person assumes that people of color need help, thinks she knows what kind of help they need, and, though not asked, provides help that benefits mostly the white person herself. I recognize many of these elements in
Brides on Tour. At the same time, I find Bacca’s radical idea of accepting hospitality from all who offered it, without discrimination, to be a significant element of the Brides on Tour art project and a challenge to hospitality as we have known it to date. This project needs to be considered as a whole, with all of its contradictions and vulnerabilities, including its problematic universalism. And Bacca’s affirmation that one should not discriminate among hosts should not be dismissed either.

Explanations of what happened to Bacca and how it happened have relied to varying degrees on arguments concerning class, race, religion, nationality, ethnicity, geographic origin, and even the mental health of Bacca’s murderer, Murat Karataş. Would such identity markers have mattered to Bacca herself? I do not think so. The responsibility for what happened to her is not hers just because she decided to trust drivers of any gender, class, ethnicity, geographic origin, and religion. Her critics say these aspects of identity should have mattered to her more, and hence she bears responsibility for her own death. I do not believe that her death adds to the significance of the identity markers of her murderer outside of our own choices to interpret the tragedy one way or another. How Bacca felt about this question is what is important to me here: that Bacca insisted to Moro that her principle was to accept any driver’s offer, otherwise we will continue this profiling of ourselves and others as acceptable guests and hosts rather than opening up new possibilities of welcome.

Hitchhiking is highly visible as an act that takes place in public among total strangers. As far removed from an art gallery or a museum as it gets, hitchhiking often occurs in rural areas, far from international art centers. Other artists have seen Bacca’s choices as standing in solidarity with their own artworks that claim public spaces around the world for those who have previously been excluded from them. The tradition of public spaces as being unwelcome, hostile, dangerous places for women and minorities has been promoted and sustained for so long that those who question this assumption may be seen as suffering a lapse of commonsense judgment.30

That is why Brides on Tour and Bacca were supported by many Turkish women artists, who paid tribute to the work and transformed its original message of peace into a demand for safety for women travelers. One significant art project inspired by Brides on Tour that sought to make Turkey itself more welcoming to women was created by Turkish film director Bingöl Elmas. In her documentary Pippa’ya Mektubum (My Letter to Pippa, 2010), Elmas finishes Bacca’s journey in
Turkey by hitchhiking from the place of Bacca’s death to Lebanon. Rather than accepting women’s fears for their safety in public as the “reality” or necessity, Elmas points to the low expectations that women especially are accustomed to when it comes to their being welcomed in the world outside their homes.

In the film, Elmas reads her letter to Pippa Bacca on-screen, addressing the artist directly, saying that when she disappeared, “we guessed what had happened to you, because we knew what it means to be a woman here.” In footage from Turkish protests about Bacca’s death, some of the signs carried by demonstrators say, “Just being a woman means that you can be killed.” Elmas is seen wearing a bridal-looking dress that is black, presumably the color of mourning, as she hitchhikes along the same roads that Bacca and Moro planned to travel in their white dresses to the border with Lebanon. She tries to hold her camera so that the scenes look very similar to Bacca’s video footage. In one scene, a man in a sweater looks curiously at the camera but does not say anything. Another driver smiles, then we see two men next to Elmas. Elmas shows that the time has come to demand that women be welcomed in public spaces as guests equal to men, without the expectation that they must know how to judge and profile others properly, especially men, in order to assure their personal safety.

Other creative projects have sought to affirm Bacca’s message of peace and hospitality among strangers as well. One, the theater play Pippa, has been touring the world since her death, in her memory. The play also affirms the message of peace and hospitality among strangers.

Can there be solidarity among persons from different countries to demand safety in public spaces for people of all genders and sexualities, or would such solidarity imply the flattening of many significant cultural differences? I do not think that solidarity on this issue would necessarily imply a flattening of differences, as two examples above show. This question, after all, is not an abstraction, and Elmas answers it loudly and clearly. She stands in solidarity with Bacca. If the ideal of hospitality excludes anyone based on gender or sexual orientation, or some other identity marker, the ideal fails. My argument in this book is that welcome is arrested when hospitality fails to live up to its promise by being hostile to some groups, when it creates and maintains exclusions and hierarchies of entitlements. My position is similar to Bacca’s, that the demand to be able to distinguish between a “good face” and a “bad face” among hosts and guests is a slippery slope. The notion that women must develop such internalized radar for safety only leads to demands for individual women to modify their behavior.
If something happens to them, they can be blamed for it. In addition to abandoning the idea that women should profile men, we should recognize that men can do more to create welcoming spaces for all, as Lee Mingwei did with his art projects described in chapter 3. Since the 1970s, there have been movements of men against rape and rape culture, and, more recently, men who openly support the #MeToo movement have also supported robust public debate about the need for men to actively listen to women who speak out about abuse and act to oppose such abuse.

Another lesson of *Brides on Tour* is that differences among women do matter. The lack of more robust collaboration between the artists and other activist women meant that only one side—the Italian side—of this project contributed initial ideas, stated intentions, and determined the overall message of peace. There were differences between Bacca and Moro too, especially in their views of what it meant to be a hitchhiking woman. Involving other women from the areas where they traveled might have deepened the project’s practice and meaning.

Yet another lesson is that when hospitality situations are set up outside museum spaces and art galleries, artists need to be especially thoughtful in carrying out their artistic intentions. When artists push the boundaries of art by making projects that profoundly involve total strangers, they are perceived not primarily as artists but as persons with gender, race, class, and national identities. In the case of *Brides on Tour*, the artists were seen first as white Western European women, as persons of privilege and resources in the regions in which they traveled. Curtz’s film emphasizes this fact, as described above, even if only in the background of the story about the project.

This project continues to elicit many strong and often opposing reactions. I have been asked whether I would have written about *Brides on Tour* if Bacca had not been murdered, and I have given the question a lot of thought, because Bacca’s death matters. Like Curtz, I do not want to sensationalize the tragedy. The question of whether this work matters only because of what happened to Bacca, however, assumes the possibility of going back in time and imagining, like Mithu Sen did, “what if” and “only if.” Saying yes, that I would have written about this work without reference to the tragedy, implies that what happened to Bacca can be disconnected from the work. But neither is the tragedy the only reason this work remains so important. I discuss *Brides on Tour* because the work was about hospitality between strangers, offering a rare example of an artist, alone, hitchhiking to seek that hospitality from anyone who offered it,
without profiling. I wish the work had ended differently. I wish it had ended well, as planned, as did the other works discussed in this book. The fact is, Bacca’s death happened in the middle of the artwork, as a result of the artwork, and cannot be separated from it.

There will never be a time when encounters between strangers within a framework of hospitality become totally predictable, and that has not been my point here. As a scholar of hospitality, I have studied the ancient stories quoted by contemporary philosophers who have brought hospitality back as a major topic in intellectual discussions, especially in response to the refugee crises around the world. Often, just like *Brides on Tour*, those ancient stories end in tragedy, especially for women. One of the key lessons for me is how Bacca’s own refusal to discriminate among potential hosts is connected to the need to create public spaces that are more welcoming to previously excluded guests. Does Bacca’s tragic end mean that we should give up on hospitality? Not according to those who were inspired by this work and created their own projects about more welcoming public spaces for those who have previously been excluded.