

Archive journal

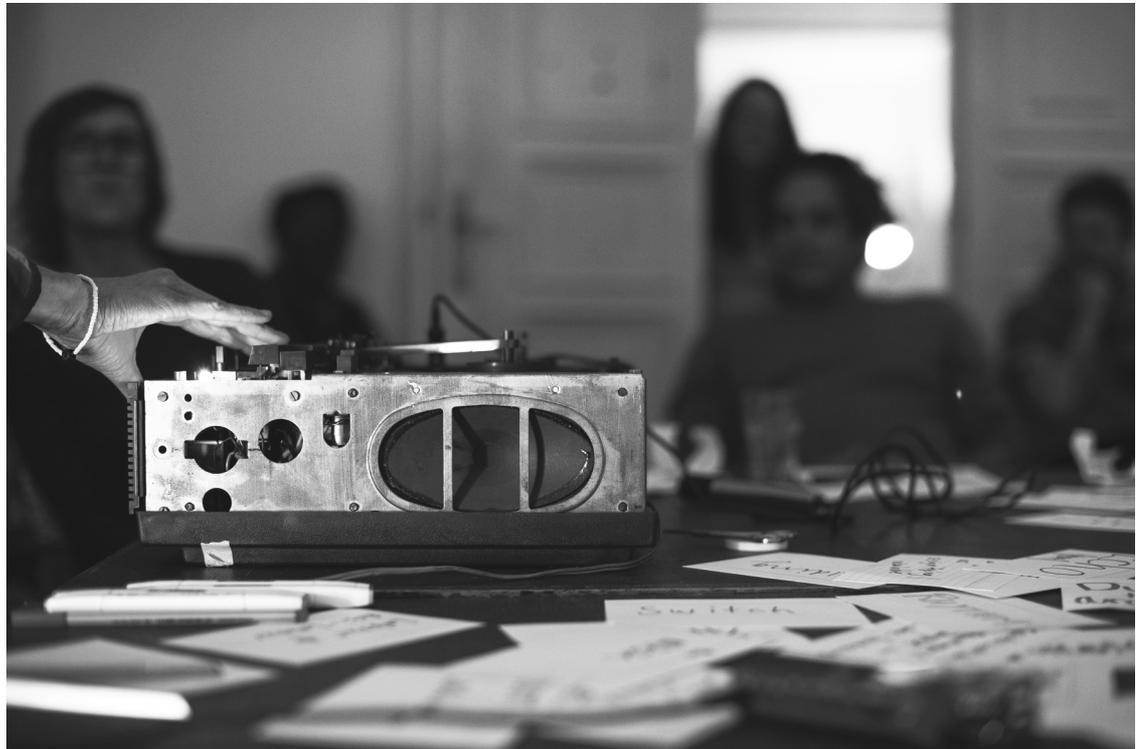


AntiColonial Records

“What becomes possible after the poet hijacks the terms of justice and opens up their potential for re-signification?”

—Denise Ferreira da Silva

AntiColonial Records was a two-day workshop in the context of the five-year research program, AntiColonial Methods, designed by the Critical + Creative Social Justice Studies Excellence Research Cluster (Critical Racial and Anti-Colonial Studies Thematic Network, Social Justice Institute, UBC). This broader project gears to gather artists, activists, curators and academics whose practices raise the question/ing of existing formulations of universal justice by attending to the reverberations of colonial and racial violence—such as the current refugee crisis and the postcolonial conflicts behind them—in Europe and the postcolonies in Africa, the Middle East, the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific. The encounter provided the space for interrogations of the onto/epistemological grounds of the colonial (violent-judicial) and racial (formal-symbolic) appropriation of land and body. The objective of the program was to contribute to the assemblage of research-based critical and compositional tools apt to delineate a transformative theory of justice.



The AntiColonial Records Workshop was planned as a preparatory encounter to explore the possibilities of establishing partnerships with collaborators, which involve both knowledge creation and knowledge mobilization elements. This encounter was designed to facilitate a collaborative exploration of the potential of the creative work to disrupt ingrained ideas and representations through affecting the senses and the imagination. The AntiColonial Records Workshop proposed to the participants a particular collective working structure including the formation of working groups, presentations, screenings and performances, to promote a space for exploring the radical potential of work that sits at the intersection of art, activism, and critical scholarship. The participants were asked to present and discuss their practice in dialogue with the working group.



GROUP A

Records / Archives, Technologies of the Eye, the Sonic

Technologies of the eye, once weaponized, became the prostheses of militarism in industrialized societies. Decomposing the word “Enlightenment” reveals how light and its techno-propagation structures an epistemic system of transparency and clearness to inform a racialized system of judgment and values. In many of his works, Harun Farocki investigated the history of this visual regime, and he traced how today, images merge with technical processes to become “operational images”. This shift has many implications: Step by step, it creates new and more sophisticated forms of domination that pervade the military and non-military, public and private, industrial and post-industrial sphere. Antoinette Rouvroy has coined the term *gouvernementalité algorithmique* (algorithmic governmentality) and asked for perspectives of emancipation in this realm characterized by a universal currency of data. In a world of data, technologies of light and optics and the digitalization of sonic and voice work side by side with the biometric data transfer and various technologies to identify and trace people and then control their movement. How and where these sets of data are produced, stored and accessed impacts what kinds of counter practices are possible to imagine. Archives become another form of proof and memory, but to what ends?

Participants: Phanuel Antwi, Alima de Graaf, Mustafa Emin Büyükoçkun, Chiara Figone, Louis Henderson, Bettina Malcomess, Doreen Mende, Arjuna Neuman, Volker Pantenburg, Viktor Sommerfeld, Wendelien van Oldenborgh, Marika Yeo.

Mapping / Harnessing Technologies

Volker Pantenburg: Antoinette Rouvroy has spoken of “algorithmic governmentality” to describe our present situation and its regime. In a seminar with Bernard Stiegler, she also points to small niches of resistance against this general shift to data. She asks: which realms of experiences and practices can escape digitization since the basic condition that something can be traced, processed etc. is that it exists in digital format... What are the things that cannot be converted into this new currency? At one point she says, “I think that the unrealized in the future is effectively a source of recalcitrance even if of course many of these methods are about predicting;” and extrapolating into the future she continues that “the actual future is something that cannot be processed in data”. At another moment in the text she invokes emotions and concepts like misery, pity, justice as elements that cannot be conceived of as digital. According to her, there’s a reservoir of resistance attached to these concepts.

Louis Henderson: But that is exactly what’s being contested today. You would think that human emotions cannot be so easily digitized. They’re not so much part of biometrics for example, but in fact they are—entirely. Take facial recognition. People’s faces are studied when they’re watching something on the computer or when they’re shopping on Amazon. And then their facial reactions to certain images and things reveal whether they’re happy or sad. From that they can quite easily calculate different approaches to different strategies to better sell us things...

Mustafa Emin: If I understood Rouvroy’s point correctly, it’s about information which is not digital or not yet converted into digital information and therefore makes resistance possible. This brings to mind the analog—not only in technologies, but also other forms. If it’s about not being converted, then every kind of analog form becomes a potential reservoir of resistance. Not just media practices, but all kinds of material practices that stay on the analog level. To give an example: After warfare technology became so advanced, with drones and all kinds of observation technologies, some guerilla groups in the south-eastern regions of Turkey and at the Syrian border started to use simple umbrellas in order to be able to defend themselves from the thermal cameras which are very sensitive and easily recognize the differences between human beings and animals by their blood temperatures. However, the simple umbrella was able to redistribute this kind of heat and thus prevent them from being recognized. This is an almost primitive analog form of resistance.

Or the smoke, which is set off by Palestinians during the Great Return March in Gaza, to prevent sight of IDF soldiers, or the blankets hung between streets, borrowed from Sarajevo siege to Aleppo, to hide from snipers. In some way, these people create a kind of *barrière* against the digital, disrupting their sophisticated systems, simply converting and decoding back the information. Primitivity challenges the superiority of technology.

LH: Zach Blas has a work called the “weaponization suites”. He uses the primary analog system which is the human body as a kind of *détournement* of biometric capture. A piece in this series of masks is called “facial weaponization suite”. He does one which he famously calls the “fag face”. In that instance, Zach was working with queer people, and they would do a scan of each person’s face. I can’t remember exactly how it works but some kind of computer program then creates a sort of *mélange*, a kind of mixture or blend of all these 30 people’s faces into one face which then he calls “the fag face”—like a prototypical face. This face is turned into a mask which can be worn by people. It’s a serious gesture but it’s also very playful and uses forms of comedy to poke fun at rather grave political situations. You can wear the mask, but the mask doesn’t actually represent anything. It’s like a piece of armour that blocks the possibility of your face being captured and recognized.

Bettina Malcomess: This brings to mind the words “machine” and the “machinic” in a Deleuze/Guattarian sense. There’s a strange relationship that get described in the drone and the texting drones and essentially *s/censorship* (with the play on sense). The soldiers become affected by it, or are affectionate in it. They’re affectionate towards the drones. For instance, they give them names. So there’s a relation between the body and the machinic. I was wondering about that as a space of potential resistance within the matrix of the algorithmic and the datafication of knowledge. I’ve had this experience when I was working with reel-to-reel recordings in the last three years to make sound compositions from these personal tape archives I’ve collected over time. I work with all the objects as if they’re bodies, not human, but organic in some way. For instance, I hug an overhead projector for a long time at some point. And there is this interesting relationship to one’s hand and the technology, the analog.

Phanuel Antwi: Marika, you are working with ceramics, so there must also be a close relation to touching...

Marika Yeo: Yes, I do ceramic sculpture work. I usually make the clay and then create the work. But even in this case, technology comes in since the sculptures aren’t ready until they go into an electric kiln which is controlled digitally today. Before this shift, they would be fired in an open pit, and your senses would be a bit more engaged. Digital technology is not really needed, but still, I’ve become reliant on it. However, you could also do it by feel and by looking at the color. You get a sense of the heat and of the color that the flame produces and you know basically what stage defines it.

VP: I like Vilém Flusser’s definition of the gesture: the gesture is what escapes any functional reason. It’s like an excess. You can always describe and explain a certain movement of the body movement but to become a gesture there needs to be something which is not explainable.

Viktor Sommerfeld: Maybe the word functional is important in this context. I’m not so sure if digitization and functionalization is the same thing. Nowadays, machines also try to mimic emotions and be less functional than they used to be. They try to mimic gestures and also grasp the irrational rest. There’s a tension between the digital and the functional.

PA: One word that has been used earlier in our discussion is “mapping”, connected to the word “untraceability”. I’m curious about the language we are using around this “mapping” and I’m wondering about the difference between “harnessing” and “mapping”? What are we to harness? Is it the emotions? We can map something, but can we harness it? Particularly as a method.

Arjuna Neumann: The thing is: We can’t map algorithmic governmentality. High frequency trading is the traditional example of something that we can’t humanly map. If we can’t comprehend it, if we can’t map it, what then is the relation that we should aim at? Is it harnessing?

VP: What does “harnessing” mean?

AN: A harness is gear used with horses. You put the bridle around the head in order to harness the horse. It gives the momentum to something and directs it.

Wendelien van Oldenbourg: It’s interesting that you relate this to mapping. If mapping is like grasping a number of elements and distributing them so that the elements become readable in a certain way, would harnessing imply being able to write those elements as well?

Archives

Mustafa Emin: Today, at the city or state archives in Germany we see a vast trend of digitization which finances itself. Most of the time this digitization works in a rather silly way and mainly produces souvenir materials: You can go into the archive and get a picture of your grandfather or footage from a place you feel somehow attached to. Those are items which you can access to get a DVD, an album. Step by step, the whole archive is transformed into souvenir material which can easily be commodified in the public and become quite accessible.

Chiara Figone: I think many have witnessed as the issue with archives is a systemic one. Not only in terms of presences and omissions but also in terms of categorization and accessibility. Even if you digitize everything, how can material be made accessible in a meaningful way? We don’t think enough about the interfaces that actually determine what can be found and seen in very intentional way. By attributing categories and a certain order within the categories a layer is created, one that can very well manipulate what is visible and what is not. It’s not only about the physical absence of a record or document, it’s also about the way in which things are categorized. The interface often reproduces the biases and structures of the sites we are in.

PA: In 1993 Time magazine produced this image of “The New Face of America”. That face was an amalgamation of all the interracial mixing. The claim was: This is going to be the new face. But of course, it reproduces the very same logic. I’m interested in this desire that gives us this kind of map. Like Chiara said, the logics that produces this “newness” is actually reproducing the logics of the same old one. So this is a fucking racist shit in terms of what is desirable and what the future is going to look like. What kind of eugenics is actually being applied within such an image and what kind of a desire for sort of the biometrics? It’s as you say: It’s not only the absence of things, but the structural reproduction.

CF: Archives are also spaces of surveillance—especially state ones: There is someone looking at you while you’re looking at material; to get in there, you need permission; you are directed towards certain documents. You cannot simply spend time with the material. A lot has been written about the archive but somewhere I am left asking a simple question: How can we do more to bridge the gap between the discourse and the practices.

PA: We've been talking about "looking"—in some sense it seems that we are taking it for granted. Earlier on, however, there was the notion of "touch". So how do we deal with this long history of the technologies of the eye that are bound up with colonialism? If we're thinking about AntiColonial Records, we need to ask: What are the senses aside from the imperial eye and the sense of surveillance that we can turn to and start to think with.

LH: There's a nice line from Fred Moten: "Sound gives us back the visuality that ocularcentrism has repressed." It's from *In the Break*, in a passage dealing with violence and visuality. He talks about the photograph of Emmett Till's dead body and he suggests what kinds of sounds we could draw from this photograph. We could hear the grief and wailing at his funeral, and then he relates this to saxophone solos and Jazz. It's interesting to think about this: What other types of affective and emotional relations we can have through different senses that somehow allow us to not exactly surpass the visual, but the ocularcentric reading of the visual.

PA: When Marika said earlier: "I make the clay", this evoked something for me. It evoked the idea of the land for me. Where is your clay? A different set of question emerges. I'm obsessed with a character I'm trying to develop who moves from place to place to be closer to its clay. He wants to make these mugs, but every clay he tries does not produce the right shape, does not allow the mug to come into being. And so he has to move around. There is a history in the land that might move us away from the different modes of archives. How do we think about archives that are not bound to the enlightenment idea inherent in them. It's not that we can step out of this history, but it opens up a different way of mapping. Referring to my character and the clay: He cannot simply take the clay and move it to where he needs it, because the minute he transports it, it changes. This moves us from the logic of archives that we're comfortable with, to another place.

WvO: In the beginning, we were talking about data gathering and finding ways to escape this—for instance by shielding oneself off or going to obscure places. And then we turned to the question of archives, where things are often purposefully hidden and made to be obscure so that it is hard to find them. So in one case, it seemed like a strategy to escape visibility, but when we look at the reality, there are a lot of things that are obscure even if we should be knowing them. How do we work around this? Since we are looking for strategies: How do we move between the imperatives of revealing and the necessity to obscure and escape visibility?



AN: I recently travelled to the Marshall Islands. That's where the USA tested over 57 nuclear bombs. One of the ways in which they deal with this history, which is very present and has completely disrupted the structures of life, was to adapt folklore to account for this history. They have a creation myth and it's a character called Letao who's a trickster. He brought fire. There are a lot of stories he's a character in, but in the latest version that appeared in the 1950s, when the testing took place, he is the one who brought the knowledge of the nuclear weapons to the US as a trickster gesture and that the US then brought it back. As a kind of archive or historical account what happened, this is complex and significant, because it gives the Marshallese people an account of what's happened within their own terms. It's very different from the US narrative of saying: "This is for the benefit of mankind." This story is omnipresent, everyone knows it in different ways. Everyone lives and partakes in the story. It is woven into the fabric and ecology of everyone's lives. I don't want to romanticise oral history, but I think it's successful in reclaiming a narrative for themselves.

ME: There is project in Istanbul by Tayfun Serttaş "Foto Galatasaray" which revisits the image archive of an Armenian woman photographer Maryam Şahinyan. During her studio practice she has collected more than 200.000 glass negatives. After Tayfun and his team had digitized the archive, they made public tagging sessions, especially between

Armenian and Assyrian diasporic circles living in Europe. Through this public tagging, an alternative structure was created and the archive became public as well as decentralized. Somehow the images which were taken away from those oppressed, exiled, massacred communities were taken back by themselves. It also brings up the question: What kind of verticals do you create by tagging? Each vertical creates a different aspect and territory of data. If you collectivize the tagging process, it will become much more diverse. The more we open the table to common interests and interventions, the more the general, colonial notion of the archive could be changed and so decolonized.

GROUP B

The Global Condition, Raw Materialism, Inscriptions, Extractivism, Transplants

Plato's abstraction of framing the four elements (water, earth, fire, air) into geometric forms predicts and informs the separational logic that laid the groundwork for the larger project of western modernity. The complex historical and contemporary global conditions, framing recent discussions of the "anthropocene" and confronting us with alarming developments of climate change and ecological violence, actualize the rifts with natural resources and ecology through treacherous extractivist patterns that have been dominant for centuries. Raw materialism proposes an approach to the planetary through another, more tenuous knowledge. Reading the scars of inscription that tattoo the earth (traces of reckless mining, of slash-and-burn elimination of forests etc.) can activate less violent forms of extraction – an access to knowledge that also allows alien transplants to thrive in the harshest of conditions.

Participants: Filipa César, Eric de Bruyn, Denise Ferreira da Silva, Natasha Ginwala, Raphaël Grisey, Emma Haugh, Suza Husse, Anjalika Sagar, Wu Tsang, Susanne Winterling.

Theory of Justice: Transformative Radical Compositional Poethical

Denise Ferreira da Silva: I've been writing on this Transformative Theory of Justice. But at the beginning I didn't have any idea about what that was. But now I can say basically two things what I think it encompasses: the transformative as the thesis for justice. It has to be radical in the sense that it attends to the ontological, the etymological and the colonial expropriation and capitalist exploitation and answer the call. The goal, the finality of this Thesis of Justice is decolonization, which I call "the end of the world as we know it" or "the return of the total value exploited from native lands and enslaved bodies". Which is also tied to the radical praxis as a description of the Black Feminist poethics. Another element of it is compositional, whatever justice is presented in this sense, it's not as an abstract form, a category. The composition now, in the sense that we think of justice as a form, as a shape like a formal cause and not the abstract, platonic. It is transformational, in the sense that it requires an image of the world that precedes the thinking of justice, something that can be recomposed. So then justice is something that can change its shape in terms of protocols, praxis and procedures because if we begin by acknowledging colonial and racial violence we already assume that we live in an uneven space. You can't pretend that you can enter in a relationship in even terms because that's not what it is, right? So it needs to be transformed, it has to be acknowledged. And then in the relationship we do need some decisions as to how to relate. So whatever those are, the starting points would be materiality, raw-materialism, that we acknowledge the actual conditions of existence and unevenness at all levels but then also be aware of not reproducing the violence that makes it possible for us to exist and thrive in colonial contexts. Another starting point is that whatever it is, the theory for justice it is confrontational. So it is committed through decolonisation and those would be aspects of the protocols and practices. And it's also critical. I don't think we can abandon criticality again. You can't just pretend we can reinvent the world without actually doing some unpacking and some analysis of the conditions themselves—thinking and practice towards the end of the world. But that goes through an examination, a critical examination of what it is. But then at the same time it's poethical—if we do not know how to know what a just world would be like, we could live as if it is already there. It's poethical in the sense that it is an ethics that does not demand for the impossible actualization of certain forms of justice, but actually but actually demands for reconfiguring the world.

Mercenaries' muscles

Anjalika Sagar: I'm feeling actually quite scared right now of the future, desperately scared and I feel as if everything, everything that I have predicted, dreamt about, had images of, visioned, has preceded my positivity... I feel like life is becoming a panic attack, a panic attack of gaslighting abusive men and their female cohorts. I feel that we have also been attacked and our position is increasingly precarious. I increasingly feel that, while we read lectures, the right wing is actually building muscles, physical muscles. These images of these mercenaries marching in Brazil. This mercenary kind of presence, in life, everywhere, this kind of hyper-masculinity.

Emma Haugh: What you say about this muscle makes me think of Octavia Butler, she wrote two novels that really reflect the moment. It's not just physical muscle that they are exercising it's also the muscle to put pressure on government and funding. You need to meet it not necessarily muscle but probably offer support where pressure might come in a really destructive way.

Eric de Bruyn: That's where the Alt Right in Germany and in other places is really winning out at this point because they're moving through little towns in Germany and directly talking to people who are holding town meetings and all kinds of stuff that in the 60s was done by the left. I'm working at a university, this point, was for me a moment of complete awareness about the failure of the academic situation after the election of Trump. I'm an editor of an academic journal called *Grey Room* and I said to my fellow writers—you know we can't let this pass. I've been looking at a lot of political and juridical theory also, particularly in relation to some art-making going on in Brazil, in the way that Brazil is always being marked differently on the maps with a big *Mare Liberum* and Middle passage in between. So I've moved a little bit back and forth between the contemporary and the 50s. And then I realize it's a very perverse way in which I might have a contribution here, which is that I was not originally trained as an artist at all but as a geologist. But I fled that in 1981 because I could see my career path which would probably end up as a prospector maybe visiting your archipelago prospecting for oil or would end up in some kind of Shell lab.

Raphaël Grisey: I'm working on a "research project" since three years. I just call it now research because of the academic frame that I got into, but I actually work since more than ten years in collaboration with Bouba Touré. He's a photographer, activist, peasant, former migrant worker in the car industry.

He co-funded a farming cooperative in the 70s in Mali after being involved in solidarity groups supporting liberation movement in Africa and migrant worker movements in France. And so along those years I've been, to this day, questioning the conditions for the erasure of certain stories of struggles, stories that aren't been told anymore, less listen to or shared, because of the precarious conditions they emerged from and circulate within.

AS: I don't mean to be rude, but I am wondering why isn't this stuff going on like right here? I'm just interested in, why this needs to go somewhere else when there is so much that hasn't even been acknowledge in the cities or areas where many of you are all from in Europe, right?

Susanne Winterling: I was also hoping that we would actually start with maybe something like this. So going into the engineering, so what is the motherboard and how, why are these dynamics constantly reproduced, in academia, in the art world, in things like this group, like here? These coordinates, this physical space, why is it constantly and it's accelerating? There's a panic reaction but panic doesn't help. It is a luxury to be able to panic, because, if you see it existentially, certain people are not able to panic. It's like on a frontier of survival level. That has to be acknowledged.

Natasha Ginwala: I think it's important also to explain what he [Raphaël] does; he didn't just go to Africa...

RG: Exactly, my entry in this story started with my own experience in the "banlieue", the Parisian suburbs, with my experience of the relations between public space in Paris and in the banlieue. It has been about not separating one space from the other; it is more an entanglement of space. Our collaboration deals with intertwined multiple geographies and perspectives.

NG: It is not about venturing into the distance without a critical investigation of the context and what you bring to it. Let us consider here the transgressive and revolutionary approach of a figure such as Amílcar Cabral. There is constantly the unveiling of a complex relationship that way they lived and fought—which defies binary logic of the oppressor and the oppressed. Moving between Portugal or France or these places where they struggled and worked and then there was there is a return to invert the colonial stranglehold, a kind of galvanizing revolutionary return.

RG: One thing, that doesn't solve the problem, is the mode of collaboration. I mean, there no comfort zone for me like at any moment, it's always have to be re-discussed.

Science lab / support group

SW: I'd like to take on this image of an engineer because I find it difficult to follow a lot of the presentations here. There should be better tools for handling this being a problem of representation. So in terms of engineering, one path could be a little bit like a science lab and the other a little bit like an AAA meeting. Someone mentioned Felix Guattari, within Marxist tradition, using this split up of the psychological, ecological and the social. I mean there are many transformers in the motherboard that can put in some destruction of this constantly looping back representation problem that I think would get us boosted on another level.

DFS: This social group ran out of Emily Carr, which is an Arts College in Vancouver, and now it's a combination of artists, academics and scientists. So, kaon is a type of elementary particle, it's a quark so it's like mass, and once in every 10 billion times it decays into two particles, that is not supposed to happen. But the beauty of this rare decay is that the two particles it decays into, once split, if they are brought together they don't form a kaon again. So the idea is that if C and B come from A, if you add C and B, you only get A. But that particle is material, it is matter, it doesn't. B and C does not become A after A split into C and B, which is something that doesn't make sense philosophically, theoretically. It's crazy actually how the little particles behave. Those things in physics, I'm interested in, not because of anything that they can tell us about how we actually live or we should live but, in the political process, if they can be deployed in the moment of critique and then, at the same time towards already imaging the world as if it is something else towards the world of the imagination.

WT: I guess the question of the record and records is interesting to me because it is about processing what is happening. When you were talking I kept thinking about this article that Dean Spade, this legal scholar, published in response to the new leak about how the government is trying to define gender roles in the Constitution. He made a few important moves in the article, first of all, to address why that's a problem. So the point is, actually what we've been doing is working to undo the enforcement of gender. So it's like looking back at civil rights movements and saying this was happening and it is happening. And it's about how we see and how we process the records.

Filipa César: Sana na N'Hada once told me how he dislikes talking about his practice as militant cinema, because for him, there is nothing else than being militant.

And this is not his choice, it is just that there is no alternative then to rally in solidarity with everybody. Cabral was also proposing class suicide; it has to be a class suicide in order to achieve liberation on the level of grassroots. This was a kind of demand for a new society in the context of the limits, the framing scars of colonialism. Education for everybody on a grassroots level. Everybody participates in the politicisation process and not only an elite that makes this kind of representational democracy that we are trapped in. He was saying that prior to any kind of discussion on race and racism one should reflect on class privilege.

EH: Paulo Freire, the Paulo Freire system of education.

EdB: So I don't want to get wrapped up in those technicalities too much. I'm just kind of wondering. So what is it we're trying to do, are we trying to extract value from institution or are we trying to educate the institution?

DFS: Channel the value, get the money from the institution and send it to where it is needed, I don't want to change the neoliberal universe.

EdB: Besides, it is not a class suicide but a general strike, which is never going to happen.

AS: I mean radical pedagogy is so important in a situation where working class kids cannot go to university. In a situation where there has been a welfare state and it was free to go to university. I basically want a welfare state where everyone lives cheaply and artists can suspend for years to making great art, great art, great music like Prince was doing. That's what it takes to make really great work, it's just not having to be visible all the time. You really need to go under for a long time. And now in order to survive, we really need to have a strategy for rich people.

FC: Artists are often reproducing the same kind of extractivist value production. Those works and the knowledge produced rarely return to the place where it comes from. I have a feeling also that the groundwork that many of us are doing is being often extracted from its context and codified into bigger structures. How can we do that ourselves, without letting the institutions with bigger funding capitalize on our practices?

Resource people

NG: We talked about the Global South, I'm just talking about Germany and Berlin because we are here right now. All too often those who are invited from the Global South are received as resource people meant to relay a kind of lesson from their situated context. What does it mean to create a circulation that is not extractive but can instead grow in unpredictable and wild ways? Rather than devouring the knowledge of those who are temporarily hosted in European institutions, we need to strategize a longer-term approach for affective relationality. It's really messed up and it's happening more as bigger institutions have this hunger to stay relevant and they don't know what to do about it.

WT: I'm interested in the psychology that capitalism generates in everyone around the feeling that what they have isn't enough. So we could all actually take that analysis to ourselves at wherever we are. It's about radical transformation. It's also on that human levels, but I feel like the unofficial project scope can succeed in that way because it's about reminding people What's important? What's impossible? Beyond just "I gotta get mine", that whole thing that capitalism does, take that analysis to ourselves as much as to others.

EH: I was listening to a talk with bell hooks and she often references this support group she has. It's a women's support group and they've been going there for years and she describes it as a very mixed group. There are some academics and some people from very different class backgrounds, but they have a commitment to meet and support each other. Sometimes it might be emotional support, sometimes it's economic... My question is, why is it so difficult to realize something that should be so integral to existence?

Suza Husse: For me it is exciting to work collectively on structures of the imagination—an embodied and relational one, not one that is solely of the mind. What is the counter-imagination to extraction, how can we nourish it from here, where we are? It would be good to spend some more time to try and understand what are the practices in the room and how they can come together. What are the different experiences and politics involved—the places we work from, from inside. How do they resonate and dissonate, and where does their connection launch us?

NG: It is like Susanne's Pandora box project, it is an archival practice that encapsulates an individual as well as a collaborative practice. And I really appreciate that because it is as if she structures a poetical connection, that allows materials and conversations to flow together.

Each dimension of the project generates new constellations of thought and collectivity. With technology and its neoliberal apparatus, a fragile existence has been gained but a lot has been lost and the loss is in language. Our collective loss as an expressive race is calculated I think in the deterioration of language-ideas.

FC: For instance, the fact that Guinean Creole is not yet writing down or officially grammarized, makes this permanent possibility of growing, it expands the possibilities of resisting control. It is like in the quantum quality of matter, the moment we want to measure and account it from one perspective, everything collapses again into one dimension that makes it difficult to completely control and fix. Its constant transformative structure doesn't allow it to be captured. People do studies on Creole, they extract it as knowledge, but don't really have access to its all cosmology because it's not translatable and it shouldn't be.

Geological language

WT: I think that it's like this renewal thing. It's maybe more about acknowledging that it has to always change. That's never a fix. And I definitely feel like I go through phases in and out of feeling like language is useful and not, and I believe it is in a phase of not really useful.

EH: Generating space for a new language. To put it through certain processes that aren't just language based, but through gesture or drawing or physical response or improv or... Or dance or images or cutting it up and re-formulating it and see what comes out of it.

WT: The thing I like about PAF [Performance Art Forum] is this idea of there being a space, that's returning, it does generate the possibility for more people to become involved.

FC: Let's find a word for that. What is shown, what is the publicness of this group. And what is the underground subversive kind of space of moving, transforming.

EH: It could come from Cabral and his soil science mushroom station.

NG: Yeah, it could actually be literally from the geological. There is a way to mark the distinct degrees of organic matter. And each one is alive, basically. The Otolith Group titled their film *O Horizon*, and it is a level that indicates the soil profile. I found that quite beautiful, the way this term is extended from soil science to visualize a communitarian campus.



SH: I have been interested in stones and rocks as earthly bodies, archives and spirits for some time, especially in relation to queering colonial relationships with “nature” and fascist ideas of land. Earlier this year I had the opportunity to work on these queer petrographies with a group of art students. Our starting points and primary interlocutors were three stones from different places on the planet that are located around Berlin. We approached their diasporic and stubborn stoney matter as kind of anti-colonial records. They are abused as memory objects for supremacist histories imagined to be solid, immobile, but we can think of them in terms of process, instability and transitory states. Their materiality tells stories of the cultures of extractivism, of colonial violence, but also of their place within their ecological and ontological communities of origin and within indigenous land and decolonial restitution struggles. We were beginning to speak nearby these stones and develop a vocabulary in relation to their migration through space, time and meaning. That would be a thing I could contribute to a joint language making together with these sister stones and blocks of anger, as we called them..

FC: I was also thinking of that meteorisation as being an interesting word. It connects to another form of materialization. The conflict of this clash between lithos and atmos, idea and shape. Meteorisation is a phenomenon on the soil, but it actually derives from meteor that piece of stone detached from the rock and surrounded by air. I mean, it brings also the possibility of thinking about cosmologies of the soil that are very much like connecting with the actual subject of this group, but brings us all these possibilities. Maybe meteorisation could be a word to use for these underground practices.

Stubborn place

NG: Elizabeth Povinelli has been addressing the need to be “stubborn”, in becoming part of an indigenous group, which basically needs to constantly create itself anew. You may be displaced overnight. And then how do you actually go back to that stubborn place in order to be a group again and to continue being a group anew? Stubbornness and obligation also exist in nature and natural plant species that cannot be weeded out. You can still actually start over and rebuild and so that seems to be something that’s a way to conceive a group as a common denominator.

SH: I like this unfinished, vernacular way of meaning making, both as a way of being porous—so that people can feel invited into the conversation—and of resisting to be fully readable. That could be part of our practice and maybe a way to not lose too much energy by constantly moving outside of it for the kind of institutional demands.

NG: If you become hyper visible as the only black academic or as the only Indian curator, to leverage a certain amount of institutional power, then you are more under threat to be cut down, you will be in the negative already, as though in their eyes (heteronormative power structure), they have already predicted your downfall in the aftermath of success. The question is how we lay out our complicity but also the messiness of our alliances.

EH: Also this idea that only two or three go to an institution and are present, but in fact you know that you are 30 or more.

NG: I remember Elizabeth Povinelli and the Karrabing Film Collective did an interview where they were basically dissecting these problems and insufficiency of language. And so they’ve started to draft articles that are in conversational Emiyengal language and English, like a transcript that is based on dialogue, and purposely explodes English language spelling, lets things be written down as they are spoken, as they are expressed through sound and emoted—like a hip hop tune.

SH: That to be part of what we accept as our practice and not outside of it.

EH: Many of us are trapped in this neoliberal vortex, in such a level of personal responsibility to every little thing and it also ends up feeling shameful if you have to ask for help. It’s almost shameful because we should have an insurance, or enough money saved so you can deal with this situation. I think we are at a critical point of where we need each other but also still at a point where people don’t have that structure. There is something missing, I mean for me and the people I’m close with, there is too much isolation.

WT: This also makes me think about the condition of participating in the art world making me constantly move. I’m not complaining but it’s hard to always have this feeling that my effectiveness as an activist or community participant has been totally neutralized by this movement.

SW: We’re all talking about infrastructure, the raw material got lost.

GROUP C

Collective Practices, Body, Voice, Language

In an intersectional perspective combining race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, age, territory, amongst others, the idea of this group will be to think the minoritarian body as new merchandise in the economy of visibility. To see how this contemporary body must negotiate its apparition – and its flight – as much as its manner of saying and naming itself to escape the recurrence of history’s violences and multiple forms of appropriation. To also think identity politics as spaces of a sometimes painful contingency between dominated and domineering, and examine the co-production of the political labels of the White and the Black. To debate of the novel exhaustion of the black body, of white innocence and all its consequences from conservative spheres to progressive circles. To speak of allies and accomplices. To look into the way of telling the narrative, into language’s tragic and sly relations, to consider poetics and performance practices as singular ways to create spaces of enunciation, shelters. To roam the potentialities of corporal, collective and non-verbal practices like spaces of knowledge and transmission by ritual. To imagine the possible transformations and metamorphoses.

Participants: Jorgen Gario, Sabine Groenewegen, Olivier Marboeuf, Diana McCarty, Jota Mombaça, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Camilla Rocha Campos, Vivian Zihel, Doreen Mende, Felipe Meres, Krista Bell Stewart.

On Language

Olivier Marboeuf: There is an issue of language, academic language, but also poetry, slang, all that ways that we talk about things. It is an issue of naming things and translating them too. I have used the term nigger, I’ve always use the term nigger, because in French, there is only one term, not two, there is only “Nègre”, which is something between Nigger and Negro. So I use it in poetry, really concretely because there is that ambiguity. So in English, working on a text, I was asked to choose or use Negro or African American and finally, if you choose, you take out that ambiguity. And I refused to use that expression called the N Word, it is super puritan. As Fanon would say, there is a necessity for me to go down to the “Nègre” to be able to raise myself with him.

It makes sense to ask “if I can use it or not.” There are different words in Portuguese, French, other languages that are used, can be used or were used. So it is a question of positionality and translation too—as another kind of displacement. We can use English as a practical way of sharing, but keeping the possibility to input in our conversation something coming from Arab, something from other languages, words from non-Western languages. It would be important to put that in opposition, in addition or in subtraction to introduce that body and the way we say it. That said, let’s discuss the issue of body, of the physical, legal, economical and imaginary body, the black body and its relation with a white innocence.

Diana McCarty: I want to mention reboot.fm, an artist run radio, and how the politics of inclusion operated and also triggered animosity from the white German culture of free radio. It is very simple, we talked to many groups here in Berlin when we started. We asked them what it would take for them to listen to such a radio and what it would take for them to participate in making such a radio. Those were Afro-German groups, Kanak Attak (kanak is a german expression for foreigner that is meant to be derogatory—and they worked to mess with identity politics) DJ collectives, artist groups, and so on. We also asked the German groups that were interested in free radio—which is a very specific culture, which for them is very open, but very closed for people that don’t know their codes and languages or follow their structures.

What was interesting is how this provoked such conflicts: the inclusion of such a diverse body of bodies was totally at odds with the the “open” structure of the traditional free radio. People like Darius James and Eric D. Clark had never made radio before and now they were working together, along with all kinds of other groups that went in every direction, white, black, East, West, old, young and so on. Everybody is there because of what they do, not who they are or their identities. And the traditional free radio guys just got really angry because we weren’t doing it right.

There is also the faces community. It is an online space for women in art and media that I co-founded many years ago. It is really just a mailing list. Out of this, we started a series of projects called Prologue: New Feminism, New Europe. It was an attempt to remap Europe, East and West, but also how Europe reaches out around the world and to reclaim some feminist practices—especially within East Europe. Within these events that tried to be transnational and interdisciplinary, we had a big problem with terminology. And too many of the real discussions were taking place in private discussions in the stairways. There were conflicts, but they were not being dealt with. Some exposed the rifts between critical debates and white fragility. Then we organized a whole event in Berlin to deal just with the stairway discussions. We broke it down to three main terms: culture, economy and participation so we could get to the basics of how we communicate and talk with each other (across fields and borders). We wanted to have an internal space where the critical discussions couldn’t be reduced to an individual. We also needed to look at how one term can be used differently by artists, by activists, by theorists and how it makes discussions nearly impossible.

OM: It can be a central issue, because you used that term of white fragility. It can be an attitude and a problematic attitude that puts the body at the center. I use white fragility for critical purposes and it can be used to introduce other elements. Does anybody want to react to this?

Jota Mombaca: I don’t really like the notion of white fragility because it somehow creates this idea of fragility and it is something you have to take care of and need to deal with. It generates a structure of power and as a distribution of emotional labor that will again create imbalance. I’m calling it a nostalgia for the plantation. How could we name it fragility when served to hold the very structure of power that held the power and produced the afterlife of slavery? I understand that in certain contexts it is useful because it has a

specific meaning and all of us that are connected with the debate know what it means and how to use it.

OM: I think it is very much about your work, trying to find other ways to problematize the terms.

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung: What about re-centering the discussion on blackness. Whether it is about white fragility or white something else, it still recenters whiteness. And that is not my interest at all. I cannot spend my time talking about the perpetrators of, or the actor. I would like to think about those people in that space of the historically disprivileged, the historically disenfranchised. I want to put my energy into thinking about those spaces and knowledges that come from those space and how we can actually use our bodies, other methods of disseminating the knowledges that we have, rather than fighting things that have been put in place. That’s how it is, that’s how I’m free. I think a lot of the fight has been fought. My fight now is to find out how I express, the methods. Beginning from that.

OM: Do you use the body as a method? So perhaps something can continue in that way because we know about naming things and we are using more of names as an exercise. Can you say more about how to use the body as a method?

BSBN: I would like to take another direction. Amiri Baraka wrote about this beautifully in *The Philosophy of the Sea*, the body as the site where the discourse is happening, the way the body carries knowledge. The way people were taken, were carried, were forced and displaced into the middle passage and carried just their bodies and through their bodies, survived. The body as an archive. It is still being produced. We are not just being transmitted.

JM: It is a process of transition, and that is what I would like to focus on much more. The necessity of a collective resistance, some sort of situation where we can actually step outside of the white center. There is a known epistemological initiative, how to reconnect it with materiality of the process of life of each of us, and the way that modern colonial determinism operates as real. Now the words really matter because it is hard to describe I want to say real, but it is not real, it is a fiction. I want to say material, but is not object material because it is an epistemology. We face borders, I face borders. The border is an infrastructure. Centering whiteness, and Europeaness and citizenship as a opposite to something. What would it mean to operate, not trying to step outside of the system, because we cannot. It is really predicated on how we can exist and how we cannot exist.

What can we create when we are the operation of power. My concerns are what would be blackness, operations of power, blackness in relation to whiteness... a generation that demands visibility. The paradox, the contradiction, as objectified bodies and position, we are, simultaneously hyper-visible and invisible. When I try to center blackness, I also ask “how can we disappear?”

BSBN: This is what Baraka talks about as being outside, as being permanently outside. Not wanting to be inside, stepping out. Being in that space of darkness which Olivier has written about. There are a couple of things that happen in that space, the physical process of accommodation takes place with your eye. You can see each other in darkness and you can see who is in light, but the person in light cannot see you because you are in darkness.

Vivian Zihel: In terms of language, I’ve been thinking in terms of categories. So a functional or legalistic conception of language which goes together with thinking its undoing, particularly in in dialog with artists, Richard Bell, Gordon Hookey and Vernon Ah Key, who are constantly jamming language and who claim that having been dispossessed from language they must use the english language against itself. Gordon Hookey has a particular composition that he uses again and again which is “They want our spirituality and not our political reality, the perpetrators and perpetuators of cultural colonialism, the oogie boogie.” There is something in that oogie boogie that is a non-functional but hyper-functional language operator.

In terms of the categories of modern determinacy, there is something that has been developed in dialog with Denise and Elizabeth Povinelli. There is something very productive about working between those two spaces.

I would like to share something about an intervention into into the modern determinist conception of value which begins with the classical Marxian critique of value. That is, the classical formulation of value being that which is produced by capital and labor bringing force upon the natural, which produces value. The classical account of value, that, within language, would be called the mode of production. The natural is the most interesting category because it derives from natural law, which defines natural as separate from the human because it is ascribed to divine, divinity, which is the basis of natural law, and that has a very significant point of conjuring within the colonial stories. It is conjured by Spanish theologians in the late 1500s, as a way of resolving the ethical crisis of the conquistadors in the americas.

It is then called upon again by the Dutch in their first encounters in Singapore. In 1604 it continues to define the law of nations that organizes global space. Al thought it happens also in the also in the early 1600s, simultaneously to the Dutch conjuring of natural law which supersedes the earlier papal edict and ... which is what the Iberian global world is conjured through. Simultaneous with the moment in the 1600s is the disenchantment of the natural. So the natural remains that which is non-human, but is disenchanted. Which is a process that completely goes together with emergence of cultural history, taxonomy and the basis of the museum and the basis of hierarchies of human cultures. So the Marxian intervention into this that is in fact wage labor and it is in fact, surplus value. So it is an intervention within this vertical strata of a mode of production. The basis upon which the critique of wage labor emerges is, in the Marxian text, is called primitive accumulation, which in the Marxian text, is seen an ordinary stage that has been surpassed. Within critical theory there have been a number of critiques of primitive accumulation that look upon the frontiers of the sussemic space that the enclosures and the factory system of the UK were based upon.

The cotton fields gives you the category of the racial. The entire basis of the critique is upon cotton and cloth production, which does not include the value of the labor that went into producing the cotton.

Doreen Mende: This must make us speak about racial capitalism, as proposed by Cedric Robinson and further discussed by Françoise Vergès or Nikhil Pal Singh; racial capitalism facilitated the production of race—and gender—as fiction to be mobilized into value-making systems. At the moment, in a seminar in Geneva, we are trying to evidence the entanglement of capital, race and gender by confronting the visual cultures of a Swiss/French colonial textile called “les indiennes”—likely similar to the cotton and cloth production that also Vivian speaks about; we are trying to rehearse methods to organize research for listening to impossible stories ... stories that have been silenced, killed, raped, violated ... by racial capitalism, and that have neither been documented nor might be reconciled under current capitalist conditions; we are trying to voice these textiles by confronting the horror found in these visual cultures of these textiles without showing the textiles, without reproducing their visibility but exposing that which we must listen to; we are trying to create situations for voicing and listening; or, as Denise once proposed to mobilize methods for reading art as confrontation; it is not easy and I am not sure whether it

will work out in the framework we are in; I think that it is important to connect contemporary struggles as we discuss them right now with the fact that most of European art institution and art academies where we are invited to speak or to teach, e.g., the one in Geneva, are built with money from racial capitalism, e.g., the trans-Atlantic trade, in which textiles played a major role; I think, it is important to understand violence, therefore, as an inescapable condition to relate to, and to seek for collective processes as a network of collectivities. How can we endure / survive those situations of pressure where it becomes difficult to speak? How do we speak with and to each other?

OM: And also the visibility of work. In the factory, you could see the act of working. The workers in the fields were not at the same level of visibility. So there was an issue of visibility in the production of capital and a kind of “ghost working class”.

VZ: Within this, as a diagram of value, it is produced as a category of no value, in fact, non-human, concealed, naturalized within the category of the natural. Then there is the work done by Silvia Federici, in which she establishes the production of the female as another category of no value, naturalized within the natural.

The governance of the space time of history that produces a governance which is different from the racial, or that which is prior or primitive to, progress. So there are the governance of the female, the racial and prior. They are all different forms of difference within the value of the natural.

That which is non-human and of no value, available to be acted upon by capital and labor and available to be accumulated upon. That is a relation that I call the four fold. It can be imagined as a series of cuts of the body of man. The cut of the female, vertically down the genealogy of the society of man. The cut of the racial, horizontally across the genealogy across the society of man. The cut of the prior, is a space time cut that produces the first platonic solid ever, the tetrahedron, as the imagined society of man, produced as that which is of human value. When Bonaventure speaks of this relation of the one-way mirror it is this sort of figure that I’m imagining.

The Non-natural, Natural Bodies of Black and White

OM: Within the category of languages there are some solutions that I’m having trouble with, even with Donna Haraway, about the nature/culture category. That means we refuse the separation between the natural and the cultural exactly for that reason, not only for technical or scientific reasons. We are living the non-natural, natural, which is a cultural one. I like that idea of the disenchanted natural, that means that finally there is also an issue of affect in that. It was enchanted by exoticism. People say about us in Guadeloupe “Oh, it used to be such a nice island, before it became an angry person.” So it is really a case of disenchantment. “You used to live on such a beautiful island, but you are such a mother fucker now. It is a waste of paradise.” You are guilty to live in a paradise and not consider it a paradise. So something can be played with the categories.



DM: I'm asking what we do with a critique of capitalism. Or how to understand the relationship between race and class in our discussion. It seems like the other side of Vivian's charts.

OM: If we want to enlarge the group of people we are talking with, I think we need to find a way to talk about racism in an anti-capitalist perspective, which is less and less the case in the larger debate. In the neighborhoods where we are working and we try to make visible that that problem is also a problem.

In France, we see a new racial position, even with activism, which got rid of the class issue. Which is really problematic because we have to work around it. It is not a problem of knowledge. I can explain who Marx is, it is not a problem. People from the outskirts, people coming from the rap music, are all dealing with class issues, all black. So we felt that we need new tools to share with people, to make that sense more present. So the thing about class is that they live in that, but they refuse it. So it is really something we have care about.

DM: During some events about Detroit, the guys from Underground Resistance talked about class all the time. It was interesting to hear that because Americans almost never talk about class and especially not in club scenes and UR totally located their techno-music production within a class structure. They explained how they came from Detroit's black middle class, had jobs that paid to buy their own production equipment and how important it was to own their labels. Basically, they said it was totally different from Hip-Hop, which they said was more working class and made it more exploitable by labels.

Sabine Groenewegen: One of the things about class, is the need to understand it from a personal perspective and from the family unit. There is very often class division inside the family structure, people from broken homes or different constellations of family and how a huge concept of global force and understanding and relating, it seems very confusing and blurred on a small personal scale when you have children living in a constellation with parents that have very different class backgrounds where there is a lot of economic manipulation going on amongst the parents via the children and how people live with a very I'm curious if there are theorists that have explored this. Sometimes I think it is good to bring it back to the person, their heart, their family, where they came from and how all of that plays out.

OM: You can also use a racial perspective. When you are in a family like mine, it is there and it is not there. Like listening to Vivian, the level of education can be a kind of reflection of the position. For a black parent, what is important? My brother, who didn't study so much, he would never say the same things. He has more money than I've got, but he is more from the people. He doesn't have the social, the technical tools that I do. It is really hard because sometimes you are high and sometimes you are low.

DM: It might be important to remember that class privileges are not the same thing as economic privileges, it shouldn't be reduced to economics. It is important that class be understood in lots of different terms. This is where something like performativity is useful to understand how I can have definite skin privileges in some places, and not in others. There are plenty of privileges we can embrace, even when we don't have all the others. There should not be a weaponization of privileges where people fight to be the least privileged.

Felipe Meres: Where you apologize for being white or being rich or being whatever. Like in terms of white fragility. You are just asking for help. Now, I want to start from the point of agency, of being visible and I'll try to connect it to the nature culture binary and my interest in anthropomorphism. As an artist, the second that I moved to the United States, I started to inhabit this category of the artist of color. In a primarily Euro American art world, I started to see what my cultural production should look like and what my interests should be. I often find myself in this situation where what is expected of an artist of color is what a white public already understands should be done: it is an indirect demand to fulfill their need. It feels like a straightjacket. If I refuse to perform that labor, then my presence becomes something that people are not aware of what to do with me, which I find very productive. It exposes something that is very persuasive. What is the point of having an artist of color or a scholar in the department or a queer artist of color from Brazil if they are not going to make work or talk about those things? How can one refuse to inhabit that category and perform that labor while at the same time critical position that serves to undo that structure and that project and simply to exclude oneself from a political conversation or conversation that matters in terms of power differentials. I struggle with this a lot. So I'm trying to find the third place, not to whiten yourself,

JM: This brings me back to this question: how can I disappear as a black queer artist, in order to produce outside of this position.

BSBN: Within this space, this phenomena, prescription of what you have to do and how you have to do it, especially if you come from a certain race or gender. What we have seen in the last years is an extreme commodification of precarity. That is why I'm invited to do shows in museums, to do the African show. Or to teach in universities. Last year I wrote a concept called "dis-othering as method" and included seven prescriptions for dis-othering. In the first place, I refused the invitation, but Beaux Arts insisted and finally I agreed. The thing is, I don't have to do this. So I asked the director "Why do you do this?" and he said "Because Belgium is so multi-cultural..." So I asked him how many of this 300 plus staff at the Beaux Arts reflect this? It is something we do, in Germany, Austria and other places. We map the organizations that get more than 70% of their funding from the state. Let's look at them. It is a simple strategy from the guerrilla girls. The so-called Africa desk in the Beaux Arts is made up of three people out of more than 300 and the person leading the group is a white Belgian woman, not that it is a problem, but... My proposal is, if I am confronted with this, to dis-other.

DM: They need you more than you need them, but it takes a certain amount of credibility to be able to refuse or to do it, a kind of professional confidence that they can't erase you.

JM: It is very risky. Taking on institutions.

FM: It is much safer if you have some cultural capital, some wealth.

BSBN: Grada Kilomba said something very interesting about this. She said she was in academia for ten or 15 years, one guest professorship after another and never a full time position. The day she chose to leave academia to become a full time artist things changed. She had mastered the economy of the ability. She could choose when to leave and under what terms because she had understood the mechanism. The economic values. You are singled out, you are put there, you have to be the token. You are not meant to conquer people, you're meant to play a certain game. You are meant to suppress each other, because you are meant to be the only one. So the strategy is to come with a tribe. I do not come along.

OM: You have to consider that when it is the community, not just one person can go into the institution.

Camilla Rocha Campos: It is important to organize some words and discuss and argue, but also to accept the complexity of each one and each access that our bodies are allowed to go through.

JM: The risk of dis-othering is to become a subject, to reclaim sovereignty, which is also tricky because it is such a part of the colonial project. So how to not become the subject.

DM: I'm not sure about the subject position. Hito Steyerl wrote a brilliant text about embracing the object position. It is a way of giving up the subject.

BSBN: If it is you choosing, then it is fine, but when you are put into that position. A generation of feminist thinkers like have rejected the existing categories and created new spaces. So maybe it isn't about claiming object or subject status, but something else.

JG: Yes, you can claim being queer, but that is different from being called queer.

OM: I think it is more exciting to learn new forms, to hear new things. We can play with all of this and shape our own desires. What does it mean to be a "good man?" I don't want to fit into a category, I want to figure it out for myself.

CRC: There is a Bolivian theorist that wrote about the relation between the identity and the identification of something. So the identification is more like choosing something. So we are spotted. You see the black and the orange of the jaguar. There is this old myth of a jaguar that goes from the Andes to the Amazon forest and has two different ways to live in those different landscapes—and it helps the people in those places to understand their own environment and other ones. We are both the spots and the other. How can we deal with that? It takes away the idea of purity.

Krista Bell Stewart: I'm an indigenous person from Canada. It is already problematic and complicated just to say those words. I grew up on a very small reservation, in the Okinagen.



I live in Vancouver and in New York before that. For now, I want to speak about a place that I live in. It is a model of subsidized housing for indigenous artists. It is a collective housing project that is paid for by renting out rooms and selling artwork. So we live and work together. We cook together, we bead together and gather together. We talk about many different things. Mostly it is about a place to heal and share indigenous experiences.

OM: What would you like to say about the collective body? How is to continue that with other bodies and how you live like that? How does a housing project like that work? Do you think working collectively is a way to get around the imaginaries of the others?

KBS: We are all so different. We are from different places, different reservations and different forms of segregation. It is a very new model and we are all figuring it out.

It is very much about coming together and healing. We are trying to figure out to dismantle how indigeneity has been interpreted by others. It is the first one, started by Vancouver Native Housing and a new model of housing since one year. There are dancers, musicians, visual artists, actors and artists that work with traditional materials. It is really effective. There are major transitions that are happening there. As a collective, it is more empowering, as indigenous people. Vancouver is such a new city and being there as indigenous artists and what that means. What does that mean, what does it mean for me. All the bodies that come together. Those are the discussions that we are having. We talk about what it means to work with our different languages, what it means to be artists, indigenous artists and create a collective practice. We look at what it means to inhabit our bodies in the world we are building.

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