

DECOLONISING THE WHITE ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Along the lines of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
and Nelson Maldonado-Torres

By Rosanne Jonkhout, July 2017

Introduction

A few months ago I wrote an essay on the substantiality of black feminism relative to the insubstantiality of white feminism. When I submitted my original research proposal to my professor, among the many sub-questions was the following: 'What does my own whiteness mean in contribution to talking about race?'. When my (white) professor returned to me my research proposal I found this particular question resolutely crossed out, accompanied by the comment: '*superfluous and impossible to research anyway*'. I was taken aback. Another note scratched into the paper with red ink may clarify this reasoning on the subject a bit more: '*at the end this gets to be an opinion-piece; stay completely neutral*'. I wondered how anyone could ever really be impartial on a subject like this. For days I pondered on changing the subject of my essay entirely: there is no shortage of academic papers by white authors on race, which in my opinion mostly contributes to further obscuration and persistent misconceptions. So why would I choose to join in on this cacophony? I could write excuses here in attempt to exonerate myself, but what matters is that in the end I complied with what my professor asked of me; I did not elaborate on my whiteness in the essay.

I have since overcompensated on account of what no doubt is residual guilt of the essay by making this the third essay this year about contextualising whiteness in these spaces of contestation. Over the years, nothing stuck out at me quite as much as the perplexity and incompetence of fellow white people when it comes to being confronted with issues regarding race. In the spirit of 'staying in my lane' I found that here might lie my contribution, namely to sketch an ever renewing contextualisation of whiteness and show my fellow white people that the anxiety and disfavour they harbour against the decolonial movement and even people of colour in general is unnecessary. As an artist I thought I would start with the discrepancies in my own field. In my essay *Sterility in critical art* (2017) I problematized the white western artist making artworks that deal with social and economic inequality they themselves have not dealt with. In the essay I wrote after, called *Hybridising the critical artist* (2017), I provided a possible solution to the issues raised in the previous essay; a design for the place of the white western artist in dealing with social and economic inequality and a new, inclusive and sustainable relation to the white cube.¹ Although these issues are intimately intertwined I have not yet linked them explicitly to decolonial theory before. I will write this essay from the perspective of the white critical artist's practice.² With the help of *Use and Abuse of Human Rights* (2005) by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and *Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality* (2013) by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, I wish to take a step further in visualizing an artist's practice that specifically aids the decolonisation of the artist's practice and the white cube. I will be doing so by using the method of the normative political philosophy of Maldonado-Torres and Spivak as and decolonial studies will be the methodology. Ultimately, I argue that in order for the white artist to assist in decolonising the contemporary art-world the centre of gravity needs to shift away from the artwork and/or the white cube and back towards the artist and their practice. To prove this hypothesis, I will first briefly explain what decolonial theory is and why it is needed. The second chapter

¹ I use the term 'white cube' the same as in my previous essays; the four white-walled space and everything that follows in its wake such as art centres, lecture halls, art festivals, etc.

² Critical art refers to the artwork that addresses or is critical of a space of social or economic inequality.

consists of a disquisition of coloniality within the contemporary art-world. In the third chapter I will use the texts of Maldonado-Torres and Spivak to support my hypothesis and attempt to provide a model for a new sustainable artist practice for the white artist. To form a bridge between Spivak, Maldonado-Torres and the contemporary art-world, the help of Gregory Sholette's *Delirium and Resistance: activist art and the crisis of capitalism* (2017) will be invoked on occasion as Sholette has done extensive research on contemporary art and capitalism.³ Since Maldonado-Torres provides (and refutes the) extensive accounts of the various attempts at delegitimizing the movement, I will recommend reading *Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality*. I myself am often surprised that the legitimacy of decoloniality is a conversation that is still taking place, and will depart the essay with the conviction that the validity of decoloniality is a given.

Decoloniality

'Colonialism' is the political invasion, control, and economic exploitation of one state over another.⁴ 'Decolonialism' then, is the undoing of this control. These are both terms that are associated with historical events and a frequently heard counter-argument is therefore that it is no longer relevant. However, even after there is no longer official political control, the structures generated by longstanding colonial thought are still articulated today. Western(-style) education and knowledge production is viewed as neutral while non-western intellectuals advocating decoloniality are put aside as biased or sensitive.⁵ Economic exploitation is still proceeding, labelled as the liberalist global market.⁶ The existence of a person of colour can already be seen as a violent act, and *damnés* are therefore more often criminalized and met with extreme violent behaviour under the guise of protecting the safety of modernity/coloniality.⁷

liberalism is by no means the opposite of racism, racist state formations, colonialism, or apartheid. Liberalism is rather a political ideology that facilitates a transition from vulgar legal forms of discrimination to in many cases less vulgar but equally or more discriminatory practices and structures. Liberal institutions in a modern/colonial world aim to advance modernity without realizing that doing so also entails the continuation of coloniality.

– Nelson Maldonado-Torres⁸

³ The contemporary art-world refers to the white cube plus its audience.

⁴ *Oxford Dictionaries*, s.v. "colonialism" (accessed 15 July 2017).

⁵ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality".

Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013 Budgeon, Shelley. p.6, 9

⁶ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". p.17

⁷ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". p.11. I use the term 'damné' as borrowed from Maldonado-Torres in referring to any and all subjects that are perpetually racialized within any kind of colonial structure. Also borrowed from Maldonado-Torres is the term 'modernity/coloniality', the currently dominant (neo)liberal political ideology and its modern forms of colonial structures.

⁸ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". p.5

'Coloniality' then, is a term that is used to identify the legacy of colonialism/decolonialism. Decoloniality is the demolition of these structures. As the title of the text by Maldonado-Torres describes, it exists of ten theses to analyse the multiple layers of what he calls the '*endless war on specific bodies, cultures, knowledges, nature, and peoples*' and how this war might be counteracted.⁹ The subjects on the receiving end of this violence Maldonado-Torres refers to as *damnés*; a collective term for all the different forms of racialized subjects. The terms coloniality and decoloniality have come to mean more than merely colonial structures that are based on the social and economic inequality which sadly is often still affiliated with race. As Maldonado-Torres puts it: '*Colonization and decolonization as well as coloniality and decoloniality are increasingly becoming key terms for movements that challenge the predominant racial, sexist, homo- and trans-phobic conservative, liberal, and neoliberal politics of today*'.¹⁰ This essay, however, will focus on the artist's practice that deals with social and economic inequality, as this is a common phenomenon in contemporary art, and a longstanding theme in my previous essays.

Decoloniality strives for an equal world where oppression is not ignored under compulsive myths such as post-racialism but rather, it aims for inequalities to be recognised, resolved and differences ultimately accepted and celebrated. Decoloniality seeks to dethrone the west of the perception as being 'neutral', and the rest of the world as being 'in the process of becoming civilized'. The decolonising of coloniality/modernity is generally met with extreme violence in order to keep it intact; making decoloniality not just a theory, but an urgency, an issue of life and death for the *damné*.

Coloniality within contemporary art

This chapter builds onto the two major conclusions previously made in my essay *Sterility in critical art* (2017). The first conclusion was that the critical artwork in the white cube has virtually no agency. The white cube has the image of being a blank slate; a virginal white space to have the focus be on the artwork as much as possible. It is considered to be nothing but a podium for the artwork as omphalos; the artwork brings the white cube to life and in return the white cube provides a safe space for battles to be had with no judgement; a podium for both individual wars as well as those of entire armies. In actuality, white cubes themselves are perpetual warzones.

Contemporary critical art that carries social or economic inequality as its subject is incredibly popular. It is logical that every artist that recognises a situation of inequality has a potential goldmine on their hands.¹¹ This does not mean critical art is to be stripped completely of its attachment and devotion to the world and reduced to indifferent commerce. However, the love of the artist and audience to feel involved and up to date on global issues is as much a supply/demand chain as iPhones or Nutella jars. The line between protest and commodity blurs here. The world is not short of white western artists traveling to

⁹ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". "Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013 Budgeon, Shelley.p.2

¹⁰ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". p.1

¹¹ Jonkhout, Rosanne. "The sterility in critical art". Rosanne Jonkhout website (Feb 2017), Rosannejonkhout.com (accessed June 25, 2017). p.4

places of, for example, poverty or war as inspiration for their art piece. These are often spaces the artist themselves does not hail from; these experiences are not their lived-experience. They extract their material and return west where the exhibition generates profit for the artist, its curators, the contemporary art institution itself, lecturers, etc. The success of the artwork contributes to the presence of the white cube, inevitably gentrifying entire areas. However, very little proceeds ever make their way back to the original subject of the artwork. As I have argued in *Sterility in critical art*; critical art can be extracted, packaged, sold and consumed in contemporary art spaces, all maintaining a colonial capitalist system under the motto of 'bringing awareness'. As established in the last chapter, land and resources are being appropriated by the west cloaked as a global trade market. There can be concluded that western artist is thereby facilitating a colonial structure. It may seem rather innocent and insignificant that the action of one, a few, perhaps a couple tens of thousands artists exploit their subject matter far from home, but a pattern that extends beyond art is able to be recognised here. The disarming of *damnés* is to be identified in the extraction of natural resources, cheap labour, journalism and/or even non-profit organisations; contemporary art is no exception. As Spivak states, "*development' can quickly become a cover for economic, military, and political intervention*".¹² Together they facilitate coloniality, functioning as a deck of cards forever stacked in favour of the west. The critical artwork by the white western artist then protests a phenomenon it simultaneously facilitates, thereby effectively immobilizing it. To illustrate this point, I involve what has gradually become my archetypal example: Richard Mosse with his work *The Enclave* (2013). Mosse travelled to eastern Congo to make the multi-screen video-installation depicting scenes of the brutal and unforgiving war in Congo. With Mosse being an Irishman, his work was featured at the Irish pavilion of the 55th Venice Biennale. One of the main sponsors of the Venice Biennale is the JTI (Japan Tobacco International), a company that has frequently been accused of exploiting its tobacco farmers and plantation workers and employing child labour.¹³ Besides numerous accounts of cooperating with smugglers, another scandal that followed JTI around is a shady deal of nine million cigarettes being shipped to Syria, sold to a company that has close ties to Rami Makhoul. Makhoul, accused of agitating further conflict in Syria, is cousin of president Bashar al-Assad.¹⁴ This deal implicated JTI with capitalizing off of the Syrian war. To rephrase the value chain more concretely; a company that effectively aids poverty and war, sponsored a white western artist that extracted its footage from Congo, to protest poverty and war, to generate money in the west. Any 'awareness' on the inner workings of the Congolese war *The Enclave* might have brought its audience gets lost in the entanglement of art and capitalism.

So far there has been established that critical art in the white cube has virtually no agency and is sterile; it is based off of a colonial though process. *'In this process land and resources are taken away, but so also are the very possibilities for the colonized and dehumanized self of emerging as embodied subjects that can properly give, receive, think,*

¹² Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.132

¹³ Palitza, Kristin. "Child labour: the tobacco industry's smoking gun". *The Guardian* (Sept 2011), theguardian.com (accessed 23 July 2017).

¹⁴ Doward, Jamie & Fulford, Lucy. "Tobacco giant JTI quizzed over shipment to Syrian tycoon 'bankrolling Assad's terror'". *The Guardian* (Jan 2012), Theguardian.com (accessed 23 July 2017).

create, and act'.¹⁵ The critical artwork by the white western artist disarms the *damné* of being able to fight their own battle and profit off of their own inequalities. This extraction unfolds itself in another way.

This brings me to the second conclusion I made in *Sterility in critical art* (2017). Behind the white walls the contemporary art institution is connected to, or funded by colonial structures.¹⁶ The protest gives an idea of activism and progress while in the meantime it can be aiding the exact same practices the artwork is protesting. White cubes are often financed by corporations upholding and feeding poverty and war; technology companies with backdoor arms dealing, consumer goods companies exploiting the natural resources and workers of plantations and sweatshops.¹⁷ Even though workers of non-profit organisations do good work, I suppose, one can argue if the part they play in upholding modernity/coloniality does more harm than good. Spivak call this '*corporatism in philanthropy*'. A dangerous likelihood of being oppressive under the guise of liberalism and democratization lurks here; this is again, more often than not, followed by violence.¹⁸ All these kinds of corporations share ties with white cubes. As Gregory Sholette beautifully puts it, the white cube is '*simultaneously unified and fragmented by capitalist hegemony*'.¹⁹ Awareness counts for something; but not enough. The art industry has come full circle then; the west builds companies that create inequality for the white western artist to make artworks about, that fund the companies that create inequality, in an endless cycle. As soon as the white artist places a critical artwork inside the white cube, it becomes as good as immobile, a sterile artefact in service of modernity/coloniality. After having established all this; what is the white western artist with a passion for making critical art to do?

Solutions

To form a sustainable decolonial artist's practice for the white artist I will use multiple entry points for possible solutions to the issues raised in this essay. First I will focus on the white western artist and a decolonial position toward the white cube.

There has been established that even after official political independence colonial models are still to be recognised everywhere. Not just in the west; its outward pressures have taken root globally. Take for instance the example provided by Spivak in the term 'human rights'. The meaning of 'human rights' was born out of a western idea of what it means to be human. Still, Spivak argues one can no longer speak of 'human rights' as being

¹⁵ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality".

Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013 Budgeon, Shelley. p.17

¹⁶ For more information on the funding of white cubes: Jonkhout, Rosanne. "The sterility in critical art". Rosanne Jonkhout website (Feb 2017), Rosannejonkhout.com (accessed June 25, 2017). p.5

¹⁷ Steyerl, Hito. "*Is the Museum a Battlefield*." Vimeo.com. N.p., 2 Oct. 2013. Web. 13 Nov. 2016. 00:16:30

¹⁸ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.163-4

¹⁹ Sholette, Gregory G. "Delirium and Resistance: activist art and the crisis of capitalism" PhD diss., Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam, 2017, Universiteitsbibliotheek Singel (N6490.S46 2017). p.265

eurocentric as is it already assimilated around the world and endowed with meanings that may vary depending on location; some even protesting eurocentrism.²⁰ This assimilation means that it is no use uprooting these diluted colonial thoughts completely; both Maldonado and Spivak see this as they both strive for developing criticality.²¹ However, it is important for both of these authors to dismantle what can be dismantled and build decolonial structures to cease further violations that are still being made today. Spivak uses the metaphor of a cultural fabric that is torn.²² It might not be possible to restore the fabric to its original state but decoloniality can prevent further tearing and attempt to suture it. A shift is needed and the movement cannot wait for modernity/coloniality to authorize this, because if decoloniality wants to dislocate from modernity/coloniality it must not play by its rules; it needs to be something new. What this means for the white cube is that it needs to be reformed if not completely reinvented. It is important that the white western artist also take initiative in this. This is a conversation that continuously needs to be brought up; a task that does not befall the *damné* artist alone. A good illustration to use is Maldonado-Torres' use of 'breathlessness'. When a *damné* finds themselves in modern/colonial surroundings they are continuously racialized. To be 'othered' is to feel there is no space for them, not even to breathe. When the *damné* addresses this and is met with 'decadent' behaviour it marginalizes them, again experiencing breathlessness.²³ The white artist does not have to be a passive bystander while the *damné* asphyxiates while fighting for legitimation. Since white people do not experience breathlessness, they might not recognise the same urgency; they might have the tendency to avoid conversations about decolonising the white cube, for they might be awkward and can be perceived as offensive. The *damné* however, has no choice; their very necessity to breathe compels them to speak up about these matters. The white artist should not abandon the *damné* just because it might compromise their comfort slightly. The decolonial white artist needs to take their share and deliberate with the white cube over its reform, alongside the *damné* artist and together with other artists, curators, directors, lecturers, conservators, etc.

If the white cube remains evasive and unresponsive, a way to deal with this -that is already quite popular- is to sabotage the contemporary art institution by using the budget or proceeds of sold work to invest against the companies that sponsor the white cube.²⁴ However, this way the white cube still profits and it might require to break ties with it completely and urge others to do the same. To keep some momentum of the contemporary art industry going as to prevent its entire collapse, the energies otherwise spent could go to the formation of new, inclusive and sustainable art institutions that can take the place of the white cube.

²⁰ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.134

²¹ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013. Budgeon, Shelley. p.2

²² Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.166

²³ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013. Budgeon, Shelley. p.5

²⁴ I write about this in my essay *Hybridising the critical artist*

The second facet to address is the white western artist's practice and its positioning towards the damné artist. The contemporary art scene is predominantly white, while there are plenty of damné artists. The obvious first suggestion would be that the decolonial white artist is required to step back to make room for the damné artist. Even though this should be done whenever possible, if this approach is not taken further this remains a rather passive move. The white artist stepping back to make room for the damné artist only gets us so far, as I will explain in two different problems. Firstly, 'stepping back' or declining work to make space for the damné artist should only be done if certain the space will be taken up by a damné artist; the probability that the vacated space will be taken up by just another white artist is unfortunately very high. 'Stepping back', of course, still plays an important role in the internalised responsibility of the white artist. However, the second issue that remains when 'stepping back' (and what makes this approach such a passive one, were it to remain the *singular* act of the white artist) the damné artist will still make artworks inside the confines of an institution that is built on a modern/colonial foundation. In this course, the white critical artist takes no responsibility in the reform of the white cube, and the critical artwork will remain sterilized for a longer period of time. Therefore, merely the 'stepping back' will leave even the critical decolonial artwork in danger of remaining artefactual within the white cube and may never be dislocated from colonial ties.²⁵ This does not mean, however, that no truly decolonial artwork may ever be put within four white walls again. It means that in order to desterilize the artwork, it must extend beyond the white cube, beyond a solitary act; this is my essential point. In order for the artwork to exist as a decolonial one, it needs to have a sodality with other actions, connections to people and the readjusting ideas of the decolonial white artist. This front, this decolonial network, comes together at the artist's practice as epicentre. In other words; not the artwork is the product of the decolonial white artist, but their practice. Maldonado-Torres speaks of a similar approach in regard to the damné. He explicitly includes the role of the artist among scholars and activists within the network of decolonial practices:

Thinking and creating cannot by themselves change the world. One can also add other activities, such as spirituality, and still, by themselves, they cannot change the world. The damné needs to try to take hold of multiple such activities, thinking, creating, etc., and make them part of strategies and efforts to effectively decolonize power, knowledge, and being. This requires the emergence of the damné as an agent of social change. This means that the damnés cannot take refuge in intellectual work, in artistic creation, or in spirituality, which is not to say that agency in these areas is not vital for decolonization. Rather, the point is that for decolonization to move, for it to generate fresh air, that each of these areas need to be put in relation with each other, along with the imperatives for concrete social change and strategies for changing the world.

- Nelson Maldonado-Torres²⁶

²⁵ The same guidelines may not always apply to the damné artist; the damné artist can make work derived from or related to their own lived-experience. Their practice is less at risk of becoming sterile when their existence, their bodies are by default already political.

²⁶ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality".

Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013 Budgeon, Shelley. p.28

The decolonial white artist too needs to be a part of this network that must be (if in general, then for the white artist especially) constantly renewed. I realise that with the deliberately vague ‘we’ Maldonado-Torres uses in his text, is meant to unify all damnés, but does not include the allyship of white people. I emphasize here the importance of realising that some spaces are not to be invaded and need to be demarcated at the direction of the damné. Nevertheless, the connections will make this an extensive network that will act as a front against modernity/coloniality, among which the harmful structures of the white cube. To provide a practical handle for the contribution of the white artist, I adopt the following quote by Spivak:

*Teaching is my solution, the method is pedagogic attention,
to learn the weave of the torn fabric in unexpected ways, in order to suture the two,
not altering gender politics from above.*
- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak²⁷

It is my opinion that this structure of thought could also be applied to rethink the model of the white cube; possibly at the grassroots of art schools or a completely new decolonial brand of art institutions.²⁸ The design and contents of these new art structures are to be determined by damné artists, -historians, -curators, -conservators, etc. It is not my place to contrive anything there. I do, however, mention it here to stress the importance of the white critical artist to provide the damné artist with ‘fresh air’ to establish these kinds of institutions that need to take their own form without modern/colonial interference.²⁹ As Maldonado-Torres puts it: ‘*The challenge is to create new meanings, new concepts, and new forms of being human*’.³⁰ One of the major points Spivak pushes in her text is a call for the ability for subaltern to be taught an non-colonial educational model without outside pressures and expectations, so they can establish criticality towards it.³¹ It is vital for a decolonial white artist to provide these spaces in order to have new forms come into being.

The third facet is that of the decolonial white artist and what they can do with regard to the content of their own practice. The subject matter that the decolonial white artist will surround themselves with is incredibly important. The bottom line is that in order to have a decolonial practice as a white artist means to play an inferior role:

²⁷ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Use and Abuse of Human Rights”. *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.170

²⁸ We see experimentation already happening as for example with the *Lusanga International Research Centre for Art and Economic Inequality* (2014 - now), which I have written on in *Sterility of critical art*.

²⁹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Use and Abuse of Human Rights”. *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.182-5

³⁰ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. “Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality”. *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013. Budgeon, Shelley. p.16

³¹ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. “Use and Abuse of Human Rights”. *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.181 When I use the term ‘subaltern’ I do so as borrowed from Spivak meaning non-western people who are ‘removed from lines of social mobility’ (p.132). For more information on Spivak’s definition of ‘subaltern’ in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, p.269–74.

The point is rather that one can only criticize properly when one knows enough about what one is criticizing, and that the only way to know enough about movements that seek decolonization is not by studying them in books or looking at them from the outside.

- Nelson Maldonado-Torres³²

The lack of lived-experience of repeatedly being set up for failure -in both the playing of the game and in inventing a new game- is why a white person can never be in the vanguard of the design and meaning of decoloniality. I described in my essay *Hybridizing the critical artist* how the white critical artist wishing to partake in a decolonial art practice will have to not only play a secondary role but must be forever connected to others. Constant feedback is vital to avoid the danger of misrepresentation and/or the disarming of *damnés*. Should the white critical artist disregard this, then they are effectively furthering modern/colonial affairs. This is because the white artist does not live the same narrative as the *damné*; it makes sense that they should leave the artworks that address these issues to the ones that actually do live them. The white artist needs to be always reflexive, dynamic and open to feedback and criticism of the *damné* artist without getting defensive when the white artist feels uncomfortable in these conversations. One of the crucial aspects of the white artist wanting to be a part of a decolonising art-world is to place themselves within a network that consists of at least a majority of *damné* artists. The decolonial artist's practice of the white artist should thus always be part of a collective that is able to give feedback. The white artist should not have a dominant role within this collective, but rather function as a link in a chain of artists and others that together work for decoloniality in the white cube, and beyond.

The first philosophers are therefore those who, oriented by a decolonial attitude, commit to creating the conditions for love and understanding. These are decolonial activists, artists, theorists and intellectuals, as well as community leaders and everyone committed to undermine coloniality and to promote decoloniality.

- Nelson Maldonado-Torres³³

Conclusion

After reading this essay, the white artists should be capable of understanding how not to cause the *damné* breathlessness. In fact, white artists are able to supply the *damné* with fresh air by relieving them of constantly having to defend the movement and thus their very ability to breathe, by deliberating alongside them, protest behind them and fighting with them to be part of the reform.

³² Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013 Budgeon, Shelley. p.6-7

³³ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". p.22

Spivak argues her method does not mean that human rights interventions should stop, or that all human right workers are obliged to learn her method.³⁴ It is in this same manner that I do not mean to suggest that the critical artwork of the white artist should never again be put into a museum or gallery space, nor that *all* critical artist are obliged to adhere to the method described in this essay. As Spivak states: '*Activate is the keyword here*'.³⁵ This essay is not meant as a reproach; it is rather meant to activate the white critical artist that is questioning.

So what exactly *is* the place of the white artist in dealing with coloniality and decoloniality? Spivak reasons that what is learned and taught to bring about lasting epistemic change is never correct.³⁶ These are boundaries that should be set and continuously reset by the *damné*. It is therefore impossible to say if the guidelines written in this essay are durable, as these practices will forever be readjusted. I have asked myself on multiple occasions; can there even exist such a thing as a truly decolonial white artist? It is my opinion that there can, though rather precariously. Not because such a practice is difficult to understand; but because it demands of the decolonial white artist constant flexibility, openness and most of all, never-ending reflexivity with *damnés*.

*Let us then call this a relationship, a discontinuous supplementary relationship,
not a solution.*

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak³⁷

It has become clear that Maldonado-Torres too stresses that decoloniality is a collective project.³⁸ To achieve this the decolonial white artist needs to see themselves and the embodiment of their practice as their goal; always folded together with multiple disciplines and people. Only with the practice as point of departure will the decolonial white artist form a front on multiple planes that together with others is able to contribute to decoloniality. This will be a constant process in order to work toward the decolonising of artist's practice, the art work, the white cube and the world.

And it is the damnés and others who also resign from modernity/coloniality who, thinking, creating, and acting together in various forms of community can seek to disrupt the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being and change the world.

- Nelson Maldonado-Torres³⁹ [emphasis added]

³⁴ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.173

³⁵ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". p.170

³⁶ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". p.145

³⁷ Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Use and Abuse of Human Rights". *boundary 2* 32:1 (spring 2005): 131-189. p.146-7

³⁸ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". *Exhibiting Cinema in Contemporary Art*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013. Budgeon, Shelley. p.28

³⁹ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Outline of Ten Theses on Coloniality and Decoloniality". p.29

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