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EUROPA VERRÜCKEN: KÄMPFE ZWISCHEN KOLONIALITÄT UND DEKOLONIALISIERUNG

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Dialogue

CARLA BOBADILLA, ROLANDO VÁZQUEZ

**“What would it mean to decolonise Europe?” Arts, Options
and Practices to overcome Modernity/Coloniality**

ABSTRACT *This text reflects a two folded dialogue: The central part of it is an actual dialogue between Carla Bobadilla and Rolando Vázquez about the possibilities and limits of decolonising. It was produced in the wake of a multifaceted decolonial event which took place on April 26 and 27, 2019 at the Tanzquartier in Vienna, including, on one hand, the dance and performance project “The Jaguar and the Snake” by Amanda Piña, Lina María Veneers and Juan Carlos Palma together with nadaproductions¹. On the other hand, this event comprised a conversation within the series of the so called “Jaguar Talks” on questions of decolonising the senses, indigenous contemporaneity, and resistance, in which Rolando Vázquez, among others, took part. The editors of this special issue asked Carla and Rolando if they would be interested in talking about the topics that were brought up during the event and about their work, in which the role of decolonisation in arts, the university, museums, and the practices of the future takes an important place.*

KEYWORDS *Decoloniality, Decolonial Aesthetics, Europe, Decolonial methods, artistic research*

1. Introduction

Why did we, on the suggestion of Rolando, choose this form of a dialogue that is so important to a decolonial perspective? Since the

founding contributions of decolonial thinking, there has been a fundamental critique against self-centred discourses and processes of reflection. In his ground-breaking work on the ‘invention of the Americas’, Enrique Dussel (1995) relates such self-centred thinking to the violent colonial removal and extinction of the non-European others, starting in the Americas. This “Eurocentric fallacy in understanding modernity” (ibid: 11) is based on the founding ideological myth that European thought possesses exceptional internal characteristics, which enabled it to surpass all other traditions of thought in terms of rationality. Consequently, all non-European knowledge was degraded to a mere object of a supposedly superior European grasp of reality. This European, provincial, regional view of modernity (Dussel 2000: 469) explains its development without making recourse to anything outside Europe, which is then converted to being a mere periphery to the European centre.

When Rolando talks in this conversation about “breaking the Eurocentric enclosure of critique”, he confronts this ‘self-centred’ reason. Dialogue is the specific form with which to decompose the epistemic hubris of such ‘self-centred’ thinking and make visible and audible what is excluded from this hegemonic rationality by referring to the eclipsed other as a source of cognition. Since every knowledge is situated and positioned, there is a fundamental impossibility of completeness. Both Carla and Rolando are complexly positioned within and outside academia, within and outside the European centre, within different but interrelated patterns of domination. In their dialogue, their positioned experiences, their inclusions and exclusions, they are able to encounter each other, not in order to close their perspectives mutually, but to realise a reciprocal incompleteness. This is the counter-strategy to self-referentiality. Thus, decoloniality and decolonising processes do not aim simply to intervene in academic fields in order to produce academic turns; rather, as a matter of constant self-critique (see Rivera Cusicanqui 2012), decolonial thought refuses to get integrated into pure academic struggles and orients itself towards the needs and activism of the colonised, with whom it allies itself, instead of representing and speaking for them.

The other layer of this dialogue arises from the multifaceted interaction in which we, as an editorial board of this special issue, participated as regards the text-making and contextualisation of what was said.

Therefore, we also feel responsible for making transparent how we were involved in producing this text. We transcribed it and, due to the modality of transferring spoken word into written text, topics and issues may be scattered throughout. Thus, for a better comprehension of the text and for a better understanding, we also added some interventions. First, we looked for subheadings which would indicate the transition to new topics in the course of the dialogue with a view to de/coloniality and the arts and their relation to theoretical explanations in the Introduction to this issue. Secondly, we added references to point to publications by Rolando and other decolonial theorists, in which these authors deepen our understanding of certain concepts and topics. In instances of great importance for understanding the dialogue, we added explanatory endnotes. As editors we also tried to clarify a few ambiguous spots within the text, spots that we marked accordingly.

What emerged is a text that not only is a written-down form of what was said, but the reflection of a communal piece of work representing the dialogue partners, Carla Bobadilla and Rolando Vazquez, as well as catering to the needs of an interested readership who will, it is hoped, continue this dialogue in another way.

2. Dialogues as practices of decoloniality

Carla: Could you give us a brief introduction to your research focus?

Rolando: The most general question is the most difficult one. I don't really have a research focus. I think we are working with decoloniality, or rather, decolonialities in research and practice. But mostly the research that I do is based on dialogues, like the one we are having now. Dialogues give us forms of practice. And for me the most important is in the classroom, with the Decolonial Summer School², in my own classroom at the University College Roosevelt during the semesters, trying to practise alternative pedagogies.

I cannot separate decoloniality just as a research focus from practice. In terms of ideas, I think we've been engaged in developing vocabularies that can articulate different struggles for the decolonial. That's the beauty

of encountering, for instance here in Vienna the dance scene, or in Berlin the music scene, or also with visual artists in Amsterdam or Copenhagen. The beauty has been that decolonialty becomes an articulation whereby we can all talk with each other in a friendly manner across disciplinary fields. At the Decolonial Summer School in the Netherlands, we have realised that decoloniality enables us to come together and think together, even when we come from very different trajectories and geographies.

2.1 Temporalities:

Precedence and the colonial erasure of the future

Carla: So, to turn this general question into a more focused one; I would like to address three topics that were part of your talk yesterday here in Vienna³. The first is *defuturing*, the second is the *critique of chronology* and the third, which is just part of the second one, is the idea that “*the past is in front of us*”. Can you tell us, the way you are working with these topics, where did you find them for the first time or where are you applying these topics in your actual practice?

Rolando: I’ve been working with the question of time since my PhD⁴, that is, before really encountering decoloniality. But in particular the question of defuturing comes from a dialogue with Tony Fry⁵, who is a theoretician of design. We had an encounter in Moscow four years ago, when Madina Tlostanova⁶ invited us. From there we began having this conversation about the question of defuturing. I normally do not talk of the future, because the future is a commanding category of Western chronology, almost an obsession. It creates a politics and a society that is insatiably hungry for the future and that is numbed in its forgetfulness. That’s why I fear the risk of talking about the future. But when Tony Fry invited us to engage in the question of defuturing, we did it from a decolonial perspective. The problem of defuturing, of the loss of the future, appears to us not as a problem of lack of creativity or lack of innovation. Modernity addresses the need to change the future by enshrining the idea of radical innovation. This is, for example, the way contemporaneity functions as a social formation. The problem of defuturing for the communities that have lived under coloniality, under the oppression of the modern system, is the

loss of the future. Coloniality has meant for them the loss of their worlds, the loss of their lands, the loss of their languages, the loss of their dances, the loss of their clothing. Their worlds of practice, their life-worlds⁷, have been or are under extreme danger, and in many cases have been eradicated through genocide. This is what we see as a loss of the future. Defuturing is the condition of coloniality.

The question of defuturing is easy to understand for the Western mind using the example of extinction. There are species that have been extinct, that is species that no longer have a future and that will not come back. I think it is the same for life-worlds. Earth-worlds that see their habitats and their languages disappear, that are facing the vanishing of the memory of the elders, that are living the disjointed time between who they have been and what they can become, experience defuturing as the loss of the paths towards the future, the possibilities of becoming. The paths toward the future are being severed; that's why we speak of the foreclosure of the future and the consequent radical impoverishment of the plurality of worlds.

While praising innovation and novelty, we are in fact facing a radical impoverishment, the loss of times, because the great diversity of these historical times is being cut from us. This is where the question of the critique of time, because linear chronology – the mathematisation of time – produces a sense that the past is gone and fixed. Chronology tells us that what has passed is past. In that way, we cannot see that by destroying the heritage of the world we are destroying the possibility of alternatives, the possible pluralities to come. We do not see that the radical diversity of the past is what contains the possibilities of alternative futures. That's why our work focuses on the critique of time and in particular proposes the notion of precedence⁸.

The notion of precedence is not our invention, it is the result of listening across the colonial difference⁹. We practise the making of theory or of vocabularies not as novelty or individual authorship, but as a form of listening to other epistemologies, other aesthesis, other worlds of sensing-meaning¹⁰. In many of the First Nations of Abya Yala¹¹ there is this notion that “the past is in front of us”. Something that may be called ancestrality. But when the Western mind hears ancestrality, it sees something mystical, something outside the real, or in the best of cases, just a belief. For us

it expresses a non-modern philosophy of time. We propose listening to it as a philosophy capable of producing a radical critique of the modern notion of time, a critique that comes from the outside of Western epistemology. Therefore, we realise that the notion of time in the West is bound by the dichotomy between immanence and transcendence, which is one of the ruling dichotomies of Western philosophy and one that has remained largely unquestioned, even in these times when Western thought has been busy with the questioning of dichotomies. When we say that ‘the past is in front of us’, we are not speaking of immanence, because the past is not in the present, is not in the presence of space – it is not conceivable from the notion of immanence as present. But also, the past is not transcendental, it is not something that is invented, utopian or which is beyond the human, or divine. The past is what has happened: it’s what has been lived by the elders – for many it is the underlying experience of coloniality that has existed. It is this lived past that is ‘in front’ in the mode of precedence, and it is the past ‘when from’ stem the paths to walk towards alternative futures, always already precedential futures.

The notion of precedence is a word that exists in the languages of the West and I found it very useful to translate this notion of time, because it indicates that what precedes you precedes you. What is before you in time is before you, in front of you. It is “the before the before”¹². Even in the procession of a carnival, the precedence of the procession refers to those who are in front. And they are in front precisely because they come before. Under modernity and its metaphysics of presence we have lost that conception of time. The chronology of modernity is an empty time, a time with no precedence.

2.2 On coloniality as erasure, and decolonial strategies

Carla: According to what I heard yesterday in your talk at the [Tanzquartier], the logic of coloniality¹³ has been to erase and forget. What do you think we can recover of all these forgotten knowledges? And where, especially, do you see the relevance of this recovering in the moment in which we are living?

Rolando: One way of understanding the notion of coloniality is as a movement of erasure that has been necessary for the affirmation of the Western modernity as a dominant global narrative. There is no affirmation of eurocentrism without the denigration and erasure of others. This has been carried out through many different strategies; some are material (extraction) and economic (impoverishment), while others – such as racialisation, denigration and enslavement – are of a different order that cannot simply be reduced to economic or material aspects. Others move through aesthetics: through the dominance of the canon of beauty and the control of the senses, more generally the control of experience. Others operate through epistemology and the erasure of other knowledges. One of the common objectives shared by many different decolonial practitioners is to better understand coloniality.

Coloniality is a question that does not arise from Western thought. Unlike Western epistemology, coloniality is not merely concerned with the question of what is there; or with the description of the real. We are also concerned with what has been lost and with the colonial wound. Therefore, the methodologies of objectivity and a phenomenology that are concerned with researching what is there, become insufficient. We ask what has been lost, and what remains hurting and is awaiting healing and/or mourning. We are thus concerned with the colonial difference, coloniality and the processes of erasure.

We are undoing what we call the double erasure. We say that modernity is built on a double erasure, because it erases other life worlds materially, epistemologically and aesthetically. Yet, at the same time, it erases that erasure from its own narrative. The narrative of modernity is that of development and civilisation; and there is no mention of coloniality or of the erasure of the other that has been necessary for its formation. There is a double erasure: a concrete, material, historical erasure and an erasure from the epistemic and aesthetic forms of representation.

Coloniality is a crucial term for us. It comes from Anibal Quijano; it is a term that does not come from the epistemology of the West nor does it come from Western experience. No Western thinker, no matter how sophisticated or important, would have come up with a notion like coloniality, because coloniality comes from the experience of living under a situation

of coloniality at the other side of the colonial difference. It is not a Western question; it is a question coming from a positionality outside the West.

Once we understand the analytic of modernity/coloniality, the imposition of a single reality under the erasure of other realities, then the question of decoloniality emerges as a response to that modern/colonial order. There are, of course, many different responses, but in the light of your question I would say that a key response that comes from the work with decolonial aesthetics is the movement of *re-existence* that Adolfo Albán Achinte¹⁴ introduced. It is a term that takes on a lot of significance vis-à-vis Maroon philosophies¹⁵ and that is also very close to the notion of *autonomía* or autonomy in the First Nations in Mesoamerica. It has to do with a movement of redignification, a movement of healing the colonial wound, of undoing erasure. Importantly, it is not a movement towards modernity. That is a big distinction from various postcolonial strategies. Decoloniality is not attempting to make modernity a place for those who have been excluded from modernity, because we understand that modernity and its modernities are constructed on coloniality. For us the way out of erasure or denigration is not that of being accepted within the terms that have been in the first place complicit with the very erasure that we want to overcome.

The notions of delinking¹⁶, *re-existence* and/or *autonomía* are all movements signalling the creation of alternative realities. They are reclaiming the right to become historical reality, with their own cultural archives. Delinking is not an essentialist move. It is a movement towards pluriversality, towards a dialogue of knowledges, towards a world where many worlds can fit to quote the dictum of the Zapatista movement. It builds on a pluriversality that is only possible in the radical diversity of time. What that says is that we are moving towards the celebration of difference, but of non-dominant difference¹⁷. The only difference that we cannot accept is one that does not accept the other differences, or that imposes a dominant difference, or a dichotomy, and becomes hegemonic. The idea of the pluriverse or pluriversality are thus also ethical principles¹⁸.

2.3 Decolonial work within and against institutions: Academia, museums and positionality

Carla: One of the things I remember from Walter Mignolo's lectures is how he suffered from racist experiences when he studied in France, and

how this moment marked a before and after in his research. I take this anecdote to ask you a personal question: Have you ever had a racist experience in the academic field in which you work? If this has not been personal experience, how do you think that the academy and other institutions, such as the museum, will accept the knowledge of the South? I ask this because in the art world artists from the south are always very welcome to participate in exhibitions or projects but not necessarily to be hired within the institution. What should the institution and the academia, from your decolonial point of view, change in order to accept the knowledge of the south and incorporate it into their institutional structures? Now, you are working in a European institution, you are teaching European people, and you are producing knowledge from Europe.

Rolando: It's a very complex question – it contains many things. What we have learned in dialogue with non-white feminisms – Black feminism, Chicana feminism, decolonial feminism, First Nations feminisms – is the importance of always speaking from a position, a location, in other words, the importance of the question of positionality. Positioning oneself decolonially means that we are aware of the colonial difference and that we know where we are standing in relation to that colonial difference, because we are all somewhere in relation to the colonial difference. The question of positionality is not that of an individualised self-identity; it is geo-historically located along the colonial difference and all the intermeshed oppressions of that difference. There is no position of 'purity'. In that regard, I have been searching to locate myself in terms of this question. Here, I am very much indebted to our conversations with María Lugones¹⁹ and Gloria Wekker²⁰. I cannot position myself as a victim of racism, for example. I see myself as having been privileged along the axis of race and whiteness in Mexico, along the axis of gender and heteronormativity. Our positionality becomes undeniable when you cross a border, and much more when we are in Mexico. Those experiences create a particular location. You cannot speak from everywhere, you have to speak from somewhere. That consciousness has gradually been informing my work and my engagement with teaching, and with opening spaces and creating practices. For example, in terms of work, in a book on decoloniality and psychoanalysis, edited in Mexico²¹ by Maria Amelia Castañola, Mauricio González and Walter Mignolo, I wrote a text²² engaging with the question of masculini-

ties and the necessity of exiting the notion of the subject, but this is a work I know I cannot do by myself; I need to do it in dialogue with non-white feminists. This is a dialogue I have had with María Lugones and Gloria Wekker, but it hasn't really been recorded, or written down. It is a very long process and still a pending task. How to engage decolonially with masculinity? I have been working towards this also in my teaching practice, but that is still an open path.

Obviously, we have been in situations where the knowledge of the south is marginalised. Sometimes we are invited as a token for institutions, so as to add to the diversity or colour of the space in terms of epistemology, discourse or simply geographical background. But I also think that decoloniality is calling for the humbling of the academic position. We do not assume anymore positions such as that of the organic intellectual, who has to speak for everybody and has to design the future, and who is in the most critical position, and so on. That is really a part of the hubris of modernity. We are actually seeking a position of listening: listening to the movements, listening to the students, sustaining spaces of dialogue. This creates a whole different set of practices. For example, we have been engaging with decolonising the university and the museum, particularly in the Netherlands. In the Decolonial Summer School, which has reached its eleventh year, and which, together with Walter Mignolo, I coordinate, we have produced an alternative space within a formal institution. What is said and experienced in the Summer School is delinked from the parameters of the institution. We are using the institutional space, which implies dealing with constraints, like financial constraints which don't make it a really autonomous space. Nevertheless, epistemologically and pedagogically it is an autonomous space, one that has transformed the thinking of many people and that has created many communities of learning, including our own community. The main faculty does not come to the summer school in search of prestige; they come for our annual coming together. There is a communal principle that moves us. The Summer School has become a space for nurturing each other, for learning each other. It is a place of gathering among this part of the modernity/coloniality network in which we have become close friends. Many ideas that are today being publicly discussed have been first shared and experienced at the summer school. That is the simple way in which we are realizing our practice; we are not

becoming the institution, we are inhabiting it to do something else. We are inside the institution, we have this privilege; what can we then do with that machine without becoming it? Can we inhabit it to do something different? We have not always managed to do that, but it has happened and we try to sustain those spaces.

In relation to decolonising the university, we participated a very important report at the University of Amsterdam, which was coordinated by Professor Gloria Wekker (cf. Wekker, Sloodman, Icaza, Jansen, Vazquez 2016). It was the report of the Diversity Commission, which was installed at the University of Amsterdam as a result of the student movement that had, among its demands, the decolonisation of the university. In that report, we use the intersectional framework of Black feminism together with decoloniality as a research framework to analyse the institution. I think that this was done for the first time. We address the problem of diversity in the institution by looking at three levels: the who, the what and the how. Who is at the university and in which function; what is being taught and researched (the curriculum, the canon); and how is teaching and learning practised at the university?

In a very diverse city such as Amsterdam, the university is international but does not reflect the diversity of the city. This was one of the findings – the confusion of internationalisation and diversity. The question of the ‘who’ also looked at who is working at the universities and how they are distributed in terms of hierarchical function. Not surprisingly, the university replicates the colonial social structure. People of colour are in the hospitality, cleaning and security services, and if you go all the way up in the administrative and academic hierarchy, the university becomes overwhelmingly white and male.

About the what, we looked at the necessity of diversifying the curriculum, so as to undo its Eurocentrism and locate it along the colonial difference. We also thought that it was insufficient to change the curriculum and the people if we did not change the practices inside the institution. We found examples in which people were teaching non-Western literature – i.e. Black literature – but they did so in a racist way. If you change the curriculum, this doesn’t necessarily change the structures of oppression that are replicated throughout the university. We think that the university has a social responsibility to be at the forefront in undoing the structures

of power that sustain the modern/colonial order. Obviously, there is much to be done at all other levels of education.

In a similar vein, we have been engaged in the Netherlands with the question of decolonising the museum. This has to do not just with which artists are presented and collected, which of course is very important in relation to the politics of exhibition and collections. We are also concerned with who manages the institution, and with the generation of publics. What is the social function of the museum? It seems to me that a museum, most noticeably the ethnographic museum, but also other museums, including the contemporary art museum, has had a key role in the production of whiteness, in the production of the normative subject. For example, the publics come to the contemporary art museum to acquire their cultural capital – to be in and of the *Now* of contemporaneity. And, at the ethnographic museum, we could say that the publics come to become the white self of civilisation in distinction from the ‘other’ across the colonial divide.

The question is not so much about changing or attaining an adequate representation but actually about modifying the social function of the museum, modifying the way it produces its publics. We need to ask which publics access the museum and for what. Why is it that other publics do not feel welcome, or do not want to go through that process²³? These are the questions that are open now, and there is a very big debate on. We see slow changes, but there are changes. The Diversity Report at the University of Amsterdam is not radically changing the institution, but it has given current students and following generations a tool to struggle for a better – more open, just and diverse – institution. The report became a tool to sustain the demands of those student movements that tend to be discredited as ideological. Our research shows that there is racism in the university and that there are concrete measures that can be undertaken, concrete policies that can be changed. These are the type of practices we are engaging with.

3.4 The (im)possibilities of decolonising Europe, and agency through research

Carla: Fantastic; I will now move to the question of how European-ness depends on the suffering of others and of the earth. How do you

think your thoughts and reflections can change our daily life in Europe? I ask you this because I feel that in Europe there are enough people already aware of this problem²⁴, especially in the artistic or activist field and also in the workplace. To which places has this knowledge to reach in order to have a sustainable effect?

Rolando: I think we need to engage in the local struggles in our own contexts; in the museum, in the university, in the classroom, in our families. These are struggles that do not seem very relevant for changing the whole structure, but that is also a concrete way of recovering a political life, instead of feeling de-politicised and feeling impotent in the face of the disaster that we are facing collectively, with the destruction of earth and the destruction of people's lives. When we realise that we can do something with the people around us, then that produces spaces of meaning.

One of the things that I ask to do of my students, for example, is what I call outreach. As part of my sociology classes, the students have to go into the city and find a place to become volunteers and meet people that are doing things; working with the elderly, with refugees, working with alternative gardening, with a transition town, etc. In this way, they really recover the meaning of their life, instead of just learning analyses that are saying that the world is getting destroyed, and then feeling impotent and depoliticised. For us, political agency is not necessarily about becoming a member of a political party or becoming a politician. A political life is about engaging with the people around you, for example, understanding the classroom as a political space. Then you have something in your hands that you can do and you are not deluded that this will change the whole world, but it is a doing, it is a political life, it is a measure of freedom, and also something that can give you some hope. This is also a lesson we learn from the struggles of the First Nations. They sustain their hope because they do what they can do in their localities, with their hands, with their people and also in relation to others across the world. Ironically, we tend to be so individualised that we just think how we can change capitalism or the European Union, and then we become totally powerless.

Now, in the epistemic and aesthetic struggle that we are engaged with, because of our positionality, a question has emerged in recent years, also in the Summer School: the question of decolonising Europe. What would it

mean to decolonise Europe? This, for us, is something which is happening because we are moving towards a decolonial consciousness in many spaces, such as universities and museums, and through social movements. Europe is not any more being understood solely through its own self-narrative, through its own dominant authors, or even its own dominant notions of critique. In the tradition of the critique of the West, there are very important authors, such as Heidegger, Foucault and Deleuze. They are very important and I read and teach their work, but when they become the canon, they have the effect of enclosing critique within a Eurocentric perspective. Even those who are criticising the totalities of modernity have contributed to making of modernity a total horizon of intelligibility. Even when they, the internal critics of modernity, show us that the narratives of modernity are false or problematic, or that the discourse of modernity produces false dichotomies or false universalities, the only thing we can see with these authors is modernity and its critique. In other words, modernity becomes the total horizon of thought.

I see that the movement of decolonising Europe and ending the contemporary in the arts, corresponds to the moment when non-Eurocentric aestheses and epistemologies begin to be experienced and received in the West. It is through this decolonial reception that Europe can begin for the first time to understand itself through the eyes of the other and outside its self-centred narration. These non-Eurocentric aestheses and epistemologies, that originate at the other side of the colonial difference, bring the possibility of a non-Eurocentric understanding of Europe. Europe has impinged on the lives of the rest of the world for 500 years. In Abya Yala (the Americas), as in other colonised territories, there are very clear understandings of what Europe is, particularly in its imperial formation. It is a view that has not been part of the European narrative about itself, but which is necessary to overcome the arrogant ignorance of Eurocentrism and to envisage the possibility of decolonising Europe.

One of the things that is happening in the dialogue between the Western tradition of critique and decoloniality is that we are breaking the Eurocentric enclosure of critique and allowing for a different form of understanding of Europe through the decolonial. This dialogue is opening and transformative. One of the things we see opening is a Europe that begins remembering its 800 years of medieval times, the 'dark ages', as a place where there was a plurality of knowledges, of languages, of rela-

tions to Earth and Earth-beings. As a place where there was primary forest in Europe, as a place where women had power, women were healers, had knowledge; a place before the inquisition that destroyed the knowledge of women, as Silvia Federici²⁵ shows. Even in the early renaissance paintings you can behold the majestic European forests. Europe is the first place of modern ecological devastation. There is no original forest remaining in Western Europe except for Scandinavia. Next to ecological devastation, Europe has been the site of a harsh imposition of the dichotomy of gender as a patriarchal hierarchy and of the enclosure of the commons. These are the sort of reflections that we see coming through the dialogue with non-western epistemologies.

Where are the other possible Europes that have been displaced by that hegemonic model that also became the global hegemonic model? Last year we did the Summer School on the Others of Europe. We had conversation with participants coming from the Sami people from the North of Europe, Gitanos from Spain (they don't call themselves Roma, they call themselves Gitanos, because this way of naming themselves was forbidden in Spain before the colonisation of the Americas), and the Irish. By engaging with decoloniality, all of those, who have not been involved in the formation of a hegemonic Europe, are uncovering other strategies to deal with European-ness.

The other aspect that is emerging is the idea of the plurality of knowledges and the idea of wisdom that is to be found in medieval theologies. Non-dominant theologies were displaced because of the hegemony of a patriarchal theology that was useful for power. All of these thinkers, people such as Meister Eckhart or Duns Scotus²⁶, are thinkers from Europe that are poorly received at the moment, but which offer new possibilities of dialogue with thinkers from other geographies and from other genealogies. We see how decolonising Europe emerges as a possibility in dialogue with thinkers that are not European.

3.5 Decolonial strategies for the arts and the necessity of a continuous struggle

Carla: Yesterday we saw the touching performance of Amanda Piña in Museumsquartier. What, according to you, has to happen after this experience in order to generate change in society? What do you think

could artistic strategies contribute to this purpose? Many artistic strategies coming from Latin America, as well as those produced by Latin American artists living in Europe, focus their proposal from a position of victimhood. Yesterday, it was so moving for me to see how the representation of these animals²⁷ were looking into our eyes, laughing, being so generous as if working from the full power of love and generosity. These are, then, artistic strategies that do not start from a victimizing point of view, but offer something else - coming from privileged spaces such as museums or galleries - that can transform the public and multiply to other audiences.

Rolando: Decolonial strategies are grounded in locations, in places, in memories, in personal and communal archives, in embodied memories, and they take many different shapes. Here lies the core of pluriversality. There are many artists focusing on, and showing, colonial wounds. Like, for example, the wound of enslavement and ongoing racism, because these histories have been erased. These are, I think, very important pieces of work.

In general, I would say that decolonial aesthetics is working against oblivion, working against this forgetfulness, this erasure. Now, this work against erasure can be about revealing the colonial wound but can also be about re-existence. These are often artistic strategies that are not present in museums, or galleries, or big forums. They are in the communities and have been there throughout the history of the modern/colonial order. They show the power of overcoming coloniality, not by conquering modernity, but by recovering the freedom of joy, the freedom of being in relation. Part of the possibility of freedom under coloniality is through the recovery of joy. That means that we not only made in the image of oppression nor solely in the resistance against oppression, but in what María Lugones emphasises as going beyond oppression. I think a lot about Jean Casimir²⁸, who also comes to teach at the Summer School; he says that the power of the Haitian revolution is this recovery of the freedom of joy. This freedom is grounded in a communal and decolonial aesthetics that is not for the white publics or the museums, or the gallery.

All these are different strategies of dignification, and when they are happening in forums, in the institutions of the West, one of the big struggles is, as we see it, against the borders of contemporaneity. Who is contem-

porary? If you are not contemporary, you are not allowed in these spaces. That is where the strategies of Fabian Barba and Amanda Piña are really powerful, because they have managed to enter those spaces, which are heavily policed through who validates the contemporary, and within them engage in alternative aesthesis. Now, Amanda Piña and Fabian Barba have different strategies that are informed by their own distinct positionalities and concerns. I understand them as working with what I call relational temporalities and the notion of precedence. They use the space of enactment that is sanctioned by the contemporary to bring in temporalities that go beyond the contemporary. They disobey contemporaneity within the spaces of the contemporary.

These forums and museums present big challenges for the decolonial artist. Decolonial artists can do a lot to bring forms of embodiment beyond the modern/colonial order. In the case of Amanda, that means going beyond the anthropocentric body and recovering the deep memories of earth and earth beings. But artists have a limited capacity to influence the issue of who comes to the spaces and the conditions of reception. That is why I think that the institutions need to be decolonised. Often, the work of a diasporic artist has a decolonial content in its intentionality and its thought, but it ends up being consumed through the white gaze. It can be enjoyed, but it is enjoyed through what Egbert Alejandro Martina called the pleasures of racism²⁹.

How much of the enjoyment of the publics of the late 19th and early 20th century, with the human zoos that were present in all European metropolises, is still ongoing in today's forms of reception, of aesthesis that come from the other side of the colonial difference? I think that the condition of reception cannot be the sole responsibility of the artists. It is often the condition under which and against which they are working. For us, the question of the public, the relation to constituencies of art fora is crucial. How can we deal with the conditions of reception that are capable of consuming the most decolonial piece of work in an imperial way, and enjoy it? With a performance of two hours, no matter how good it is, you cannot change the white gaze that has been instilled in people from kindergarten to the university, with the stereotypes of indigenous people, of people from Africa, and so on. People enter the space with this frame of mind. Of course, decolonial work can be confronting, make people itchy

and uncomfortable, or make them experience the limits of their subjectivity.

But, most often, the public that has not been exposed to decolonial critique or decolonial conversation or experiences of life create very limited conditions of reception. This is part of the tensions we are working with. It's the same for us in the classroom; when you are talking about histories of enslavement that have not been taught previously to your students, even when they are an essential part of the history of their country – then you face what we call arrogant ignorance. It is very difficult to undo this in the classroom, even through many months of working together. That does not mean we should stop working; we should not stop working because of the generalised ignorance of eurocentrism. It is a tension we have to be conscious of.

Carla: I think that this is a very important and crucial point on which to stop. Thank you very much for the conversation.

Rolando: Thank You.

- 1 See <https://nadaproductions.at/performance/the-jaguar-and-the-snake>, 10.02.2021.
- 2 The Middelburg Decolonial Summer School has taken place every year since 2010 and is organised by Rolando Vázquez and Walter Dignolo, as well as members of the Coloniality/Modernity Research Group. It brings together students, activists, scholars and artists to address the problems of a Modern/Colonial world order and to mutually learn about the decolonial option. (see <https://decolonial-summer-school.com>)
- 3 See Amir et al. 2019
- 4 See for an introduction to this problematic Vázquez (2009).
- 5 Tony Fry is a design theorist and philosopher who writes on the relationship between design, unsustainability, and politics.
- 6 Madina Tlostanova is a Russian decolonial researcher and Professor of Postcolonial Feminism at Linköping University in Sweden.
- 7 The notion of life-worlds here refers to a broader range of connected concepts such as “life-projects”, “worlding”, and “uncommons”, all of which stem from a debate on the so called “Ontological Turn” in Anthropology, loosely connected to decolonial thought. The principal proposition of this turn is the argument that non-European societies must be understood on the level of ontological difference, whereby the relationship between the social and nature is, unlike in oc-

cidental modernity, not perceived and performed as a completely separated binarity, but as an interrelated ensemble, which cannot be reduced to the human, but comprises also more than-human agencies (see also Blaser/Feit/McRae 2004; Blaser/de la Cadena 2017; de la Cadena/Blaser 2018).

- 8 To follow up on this topic we recommend reading Vázquez (2017)
- 9 Editor's note: The colonial difference manifests itself in the contradictions between the promises of a universal modernity that offers equal development and progress for all, and the real experience of subjects, communities and living environments marked as 'other', and thus as opposed to modernity. Conflicts arise in the borders between modernity and the 'other' because the biographical perception of the bodies defined as 'different' does not match their reality or the myth of modernity. Colonial difference consequently does not refer to an essentialised non-historical but rather to an historically-produced difference. It is the colonially established denial of a common humanity, this oppressive division between a zone of humans and a zone of subhumans or less than humans, that is foundational for the "metaphysical catastrophe" (cf. Maldonado Torres 2016) which the colonised experienced in the process of their subjugation, a process which affects the subjectivities, the bodies and the territories of the colonised. To hear and understand the diversities of this colonial difference as well as to contextualise power relations between them is a central concern of decolonial perspectives.
- 10 See Mignolo/ Vázquez (2013)
- 11 'Abya Yala' is in the Kuna language the name of what is today known as Central and South America (cf. Curiel 2015: 13). In contradistinction, the term 'Americas' refers to what is at the beginning of the 21st century known as the whole of North- as well as South America. The concept of Abya Yala, emerged out of the struggles of the Kuna people in the defence of their territory, which is situated within the state borders of Panama. Abya Yala means "land in its full maturity" in the Kuna language and the Kuna pointed out during their struggles, that the term for them refers to the continental totality of the insurgent movements and processes of indigenous communities. By rejecting the colonially imposed name connected to the Italian cartographer Amerigo Vespucci and by renaming the continent in non-European terms, they set a first step toward epistemic decolonization and the establishment of indigenous peoples' self-determination. Since the 1980s, many indigenous activists, declarations and organizations have embraced this suggestion (see www.e-ir.info/2014/05/20/self-determination-a-perspective-from-abya-yala/, 10.02.2021)
- 12 For an explanation of the notion of precedence see Vázquez (2017)
- 13 In the introduction to this special issue we expand further on the term coloniality. Suffice it to say here that coloniality points to the ongoing effect of colonial power and mechanisms (e.g. in the production of knowledge or the control of the labour force – see Corrado in this issue) on a local and especially on a global scale. Thus, the formal decolonisation of colonies is not to be equated with an end to colonial power structures. Quijano (cf. 2000) grasped this conceptually with the term coloniality.

- 14 Adolfo Albán Achinte is a Colombian anthropologist, artist and researcher. For the concept of re-existencia, which contains and merges the terms resistance and existence (as a way of life and relating to the world), see Achinte (2006) and Achinte (2013).
- 15 The English term 'maroon' goes back to the colonial Spanish expression 'cimarrón' (a racist term for runaway slaves). It is used to signify enslaved people who evaded the oppression of their colonial masters and founded autonomous settlements, which they also defended against colonial attacks.
- 16 For the concept of de-linking see Mignolo 2007
- 17 'Non-dominant differences' is the term María Lugones borrows from Audre Lorde in order to explain her denial of simple dichotomies in the liberal conceptualisation of the site of political resistance and agency, which is ascribed exclusively to individually entered 'communities of choice', as opposed, in a depoliticising liberal understanding, to communities of place. For Lugones, the subjectivities of subalterns are characterised by the effects of many different forms of oppression and positionalities, thus suggesting an 'impure' intersection of resistances and resistant subjectivities between different, complexly interwoven worlds (Lugones 2003: 183ff)
- 18 See, for an introduction to the Latin American concept of critical interculturality, Walsh (2008) and Walsh (2012)
- 19 María Lugones is a recently deceased sociologist and feminist philosopher whose works are part of the decolonial project of thought. Drawing on Aníbal Quijano's concept of coloniality, she coined the term of the colonial/modern gender system, which is shaped through specific constellations of race, gender, and sexuality. For an introduction to her central thoughts see Lugones (2007) and (2011).
- 20 Gloria Wekker is an Afro-Surinamese Dutch university teacher and writer who works, among other issues, on entanglements between colonialism, racism, white privilege and heteronormativity. For her recent work see Wekker (2016).
- 21 See Castañola/González (2013).
- 22 See Vazquez (2013)
- 23 Editor's note: Rolando Vazquez refers here to the museum as a colonial institution, which started out by appropriating plants from the colonies (cf. Schiebinger 2004) and proceeded by stealing cultural and ancestral artifacts (cf. Sarr /Savoy 2018) and presenting non-European people in zoos (cf. Bodley 1977). Thus museums, and especially their ethnographic collections, are often violent, colonial places that replicate colonial genocides and thus attract a certain, rather white audience that feels represented as a superior self through the represented oppression of the others rather than critically questioning these power relations and their representation.
- 24 Editor's note: Carla Bobadilla is referring here to the 'European-ness' of people living and being socialised in Europe. 'European-ness' and Europe thus here refer to an ideology that still refrains from viewing Colonialism as the foundation for the relative wealth of privileged subjects who are typically situated within the po-

- litical project of Europe. ‘European-ness’ shares similarities with Eurocentrism, in assuming that Europe is the epicentre of the world, the ultimate historical guideline for all, while eclipsing the foundational and still ongoing colonial violence.
- 25 See Federici (2004) for the original publication in English and Federici (2012) for the German translation.
 - 26 Rolando gives here examples of medieval authors, which he includes in the aforementioned plurality of knowledges: Eckhard von Hochheim was a German theologian and philosopher in the late 13th and early 14th century. John Duns (ca. 1266-1308), commonly called Duns Scotus, was a Franciscan friar from Scotland, as well as a philosopher, university teacher and theologian.
 - 27 In order to get an impression of the contents of the performance “The Jaguar and the Snake” see Piña/Vadori/ Gillinger-Correa Vivar (2019).
 - 28 Jean Casimir is a Haitian sociologist and anthropologist and member of the Faculty of Human Sciences at the University of Haiti. He received his Doctoral degree in Sociology and Anthropology at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) and focusses in his work on issues of social structures, culture and social transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean. For his notion of oppressed cultures see Casimir (1981).
 - 29 See Martina (2013)

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ABSTRACT Dieser Text spiegelt einen nach zwei Seiten gerichteten Dialog wider: Der zentrale Teil ist ein tatsächlicher Dialog zwischen Carla Bobadilla und Rolando Vázquez über die Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Dekolonisierung. Er entstand im Rahmen einer vielschichtigen dekolonialen Veranstaltung, die am 26. und 27. April 2019 im Tanzquartier in Wien abgehalten wurde. Diese bestand einerseits aus einem Tanz- und Performanceprojekt „The Jaguar and the Snake“ von Amanda Piña, Lina María Veneers und Juan Carlos Palma, das unter der Produktion von nadaproductions aufgeführt wurde. Zum anderen umfasste diese Veranstaltung ein Gespräch im Rahmen

der „Jaguar Talks“ zu Fragen der Dekolonisierung der Sinne, der indigenen Kontemporanität und des Widerstands, an dem u. a. Rolando Vázquez teilnahm. In diesem Kontext traten die HerausgeberInnen dieser Schwerpunktausgabe an Carla und Rolando heran und öffneten einen weiteren Dialog zu Themen der Veranstaltung und darüber hinaus zur Bedeutung der Dekolonisierung in der Kunst, der Universität, den Museen sowie zu zukünftigen Praxen - Themen, die in den Werken der beiden AutorInnen eine zentrale Rolle spielen.

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