Decolonizing Art History

Catherine Grant and Dorothy Price

When, in 2015, students at the University of Cape Town in South Africa demanded the removal of a statue of British colonial and diamond merchant Cecil Rhodes from their campus, they initiated what was to become a global call to 'decolonize the university'. In the same year, students at University College London began to ask the question: why is my curriculum white? Other public sector cultural institutions soon joined the chorus in an overdue acknowledgement that unspoken colonial legacies had for too long upheld and promulgated white privilege. The role of public sculpture as a catalyst for political debate and change has a long tradition within art's histories. It serves to remind us of the centrality of the discipline in promoting and maintaining dominant cultural values; and yet it also enables us to interrogate them as historically located and subject to inevitable temporal mutation. Whilst postcolonial studies and critical race studies have been informing and challenging the shape of art history for several decades, new generations of students, scholars, critics, curators, collectors, artists and audiences are seeking radical re-evaluations of the academy and those cultural institutions who hold themselves up as standard-bearers of our collective cultural heritage. But, what, if anything, is specific about the current moment's demands to reassess how universities, museums, and galleries teach, research, collect and exhibit? How can art historians, curators, collectors, museum directors, artists and writers respond to the call to decolonize art history? How can we draw from the rich legacy of postcolonial, feminist, queer and Marxist perspectives within art history, and what are the new theoretical perspectives that are needed?

Writing these questions within the context of the UK, the backdrop of Brexit cannot be ignored, along with the impact of austerity and precarity in the university and museum sectors, and the rise of nationalism and xenophobia in response to both economic and political migration. There is a sense of instability in the political landscape, and conversations are often harder to hear than accusations, condemnation or dismissal. This is coupled with an increasing sense of art history being an embattled discipline, an unnecessary luxury for many students faced with tens of thousands of pounds of student debt. Yet conversely some of the loudest voices in the conversations around decolonizing art and its histories have been from young artists, scholars, curators and students, demanding that the institutions from which they feel excluded start to listen. For many of us working within (and alongside) the discipline of art history, these calls have asked us to reckon with what we do as teachers, scholars and curators. In order to continue this conversation, we have asked a range of art historians, curators and artists

Abe Odedina, *Beulah's Garden*, 2018. Acrylic on plywood, 122.2 x 122.2 cm. London: Collection of the artist. © Abe Odedina. Photo: Ed Cross Fine Art/Alan Roderick.

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to respond to a series of questions that consider some of the recent calls to 'decolonize art history'. The responses vary in format, length and focus. We offered some guidelines regarding length but otherwise were open to the ways in which the questions were addressed. Continuing the vision for *Art History* set out by Price in her inaugural editorial in February 2018, the following seeks to give space to some of the conversations that many of us are having within and between our institutions. The questionnaire format indicates that there is not one way to 'decolonize art history', but rather it is a debate that the editorial board of *Art History*, alongside many of our colleagues in the discipline, feels needs public discussion. We publish the questions and a selection of the responses below.

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

David A. Bailey

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

I think that it is important to break down the idea of 'decolonizing' into how this emerges in the form of movements. I am from a generation or movement of artists, writers, theorists and activists who came together in the 1980s to take control of discourses of both race and art production. In my case this meant becoming a guest editor for key magazines and journals such as *Ten.8* or curating major shows in institutions such as the ICA, Whitechapel and Hayward Gallery. In the publication *Shades of Black* (a project with Sonia Boyce and Ian Baucom) we try to historicize a moment that called for and changed infrastructural and epistemological ways of looking at a British art practice. I think what we are seeing now is how a new generation of people, or in other words 'another movement', are taking on and at the same time learning about this history. So I think it's about describing specific formations of various moments that have emerged in relation to this question.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

I think a decolonized art history should always include multiple narratives so that it's about different histories and not a story that becomes *the* canon. When I was working on the Harlem Renaissance exhibition *Rhapsodies In Black* in the 1990s (with Richard Powell

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and Roger Malbert for the Hayward Gallery) our main concern was not to write and curate a counter black art-historical narrative but to produce one that was cohabited by multiple and diverse artists – black and white.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

I have to say I never went into this field or arena with the idea of decolonizing in any way. When we did the Frantz Fanon project *Mirage* at the ICA in 1995 its aims were to think and explore how diasporic twentieth-century thinkers and activists could be curated intellectually through a visual and moving installation practice. Since the 1980s my practice in the area you are describing has always been to support and develop new institutions which then produce multiple areas of research and practices that support new narratives such as Autograph, Iniva and more recently ICF (International Curators Forum) and the Stuart Hall Foundation. Reflecting on this, the reason I did it was that in the past there were virtually no infrastructural and institutional support systems. There were no extant long-term initiatives that were able to succeed over a period of time, which is why so many came and went.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

For me decolonization can only happen with in a discourse that has a real and lasting relationship with practice. For example, in my own practice, since 2005 I have been working with the organization Platform in collaboration with the artist Sokari Douglas Camp. We have produced a living memorial sculpture for the Nigerian artist and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa. In order to fund, gain support for and produce this work we had to challenge various artistic communities and contest the role, nature and aesthetics of public art in a twenty-first-century context. We also had to think about how to decolonize the history of memorial sculpture in the UK via a body of work that incorporated an address to environmental racism, figuration and kinetics in relation to sculpture.

David A. Bailey is Director of the International Curators Forum.

Tim Barringer

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

While the term 'decolonize' art history has significant rhetorical power, it is founded upon a misconception. Art history can decolonize itself only to the extent that it acknowledges that Euro-colonial art and our discipline itself are themselves products of empire. Powerful symbols of racial oppression such as the Rhodes statue, or the naming of a Yale residential college after John C. Calhoun, are legitimate targets for contestation and removal. But even if such emblems are erased, the history of art cannot deny its own intellectual inheritance: it has developed as an academic discipline since the eighteenth century with racialized concepts at its core. It is a dissimulation to behave as if art history

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were a colonized territory fighting for independence and a return to an indigenous condition innocent of ideological corruption. Art history is never innocent.

That said, the field is absolutely capable of self-reflexivity: indeed, if art history is not a radical practice, a site of dissent, a provocation, it is worthless. Teachers and students of art history, and museum curators, can and must read their objects of study, their archives, and their inherited methods, against the grain. We can formulate critiques of art-historical legacies and lexicons, and of colonialism itself as manifested in the visual and material. Art history can and must take a critical approach to empire and colonialism, and can use the privileges of its position to undermine the assumptions implicit in an imperial subject position.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

A key to moving ahead is to diversify the voices at the heart of the discipline. Art history departments in the UK still overwhelmingly focus on art in the Western tradition. While most programmes in the US attempt a more global spread of coverage, there is still a great disparity between the ways the arts of Africa, for example, are taught, usually by a single faculty member, and the arts of Europe, often broken down into many chronological and regional sub-fields, each taught by an individual scholar. The arts of the Islamic world, covering vast territories and periods, are likewise frequently deputed to a single individual. As it is unrealistic to expect a massive increase in staffing, as occurred between the 1960s and the 1980s, we need to consider training doctoral students to work with wider fields and areas of expertise, in order to be able to teach – say – across the Mediterranean basin in the early modern period, including Eastern and Western European traditions, Islamic art and other arts of north Africa. Such a training would take longer and would require more investment in terms of languages and archives, and additional support for research travel.

Perhaps the most crucial question in settler-colonial environments such as the Americas (and most especially the United States under the presidency of Donald Trump), Australia and New Zealand is the status of Indigenous people and their cultural production in the discourses of art history. Until recently Native American art history has been marginalized within the academy. Collections of Native American art are often positioned within an ethnographic rather than a fine art museum context (as still now at Yale). Yet pioneering work of Maori scholars in New Zealand and Aboriginal scholars in Australia, alongside that of Indigenous art historians in the Americas, indicates that the structures of art-historical thought can be disrupted, reconfigured and ultimately strengthened if Indigenous art and the related intellectual and cosmological perspectives are placed at the centre of our teaching and research. This means that a plurality of voices, including many Indigenous people (and not a single token person), must occupy the centreground of art history – art history departments, curatorial and management positions in museums, media outlets new and old. If, and when, art's histories are studied, taught and disseminated by people of truly diverse origins, the conversation will be vastly enriched.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

The study of British art, as supported by institutions such as the Tate Gallery/Tate Britain, the Paul Mellon Centre and the Yale Center for British Art was, until the late twentieth

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century, unthinkingly limited to the work of white, male and mainly metropolitan artists. The identity of those writing largely matched that of those about whom they wrote. While this is implicitly a nationalist and even imperialist strategy, questions of empire were largely absent from debates in the field – a conspiracy of silence of sorts, which took place under cover of the notion of 'quality'. Explicit reference to questions of empire and race, so the argument went, were only brought forth by 'bad art'.

Historiographically, a first stage was to identify empire as a major force in the emergence of art in the modern world, indeed as in many ways coterminous with modernism itself. Geoff Quilley, Douglas Fordham and I formulated such an argument about British art in the introduction to our 2007 collection *Art and the British Empire*. Such a project is fraught: the *Daily Mail*, for example, welcomed Tate Britain's ill-conceived and hastily thrown-together exhibition *Artist and Empire* (2015) as a celebration of Empire's achievements, which was probably not the curators' intention: 'no reasonable observer can deny', wrote Dominic Sandbrook, that the British Empire 'often represented a tremendous force for good'.[1]

Histories of the African diaspora and of the material and visual cultures of slavery and its legacies have received belated, but crucially important, interest in recent decades, inspired by the theoretical positionings initiated by Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. These debates have emerged in dialogue with the artists of the African diaspora whose work itself constitutes an intervention into art history. The work of Kara Walker, Kehinde Wiley, Yinka Shonibare MBE, and Isaac Julien, among many others, constitutes a significant reinterpretation of the art-historical canon. An art history placing people of African descent at its core has the potential to reconfigure existing narratives. The twenty-one contributors to *Victorian Jamaica* (2018) argued that the serious study of Jamaican visual and material culture under colonialism is significant not only as an art history of the Caribbean but as a part of a larger history of the period across an Atlantic interculture that included the United States and Great Britain. Rejecting a centre–periphery model, we insisted that Jamaica is central to understanding British culture in the age of empire.

Major arbiters of the canon of British art, such as the Tate, included very few works that explicitly engaged with empire and until recently, almost none were on display from before 2000. The Yale Center for British Art reconfigured the hang of its permanent collection under the title *Britain in the World* as recently as 2016. Currently in its early stages is a reconfiguration of the field, to include at its core artists such as William Hodges, Marianne North or Edward Lear, but also figures such as the Indian painter Gangaram Tambat who collaborated with James Wales and Thomas and William Daniell to produce innovative representations of the cave temples of the Deccan, the Mahara or Tupaia, the Ra'iatean high priest who joined James Cook's ship in 1769-70, adopting European artistic conventions to articulate religious and cultural concepts of the South Pacific islanders; to move beyond painting to look at drawings, aquatints and engravings; to engage seriously with material culture; to reintegrate the discussion of buildings and material environments with those of fine art. Crucially this must be achieved without sacrificing the intensity of analytic engagement. A classic reactionary response is the argument that an art history that moves beyond the Western canon must be inattentive to aesthetic questions, to 'quality'. The only way to counter this is by employing our skills as practitioners of art history to reveal the power, complexity and, on occasion, the beauty of objects traditionally banished from the canon. Such a strategy has been largely successful in the rehabiliation, for example, of Victorian art.

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Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

Unlike many academic disciplines, the history of art embraces a remarkably pluralistic set of practices and discourses. Museum exhibitions and collections are seen by millions; television programming and websites engage large numbers of interested viewers. The contemporary art world has performed a spectacular transformation from self-imposed exile at the margins of cultural discourse to mass spectacle. Debates and controversies about contemporary art spill over into the popular press. Yet we as a profession have not been effective in shifting the opinions of a larger public away from certain core concepts: a heroic history of Franco-American modernism, long abandoned even by its most retardataire academic exegetes, lives on as a zombie ideology among museum goers; the celebration of historical art is still entangled with nostalgia for the glory days of aristocracy (as in the National Trust's presentation of country houses); assumptions about the linear nature of historical development still identify historical agency exclusively with white, male, Euro-American actors and exclude people of colour. While it is tempting for academic art historians to concentrate on academic audiences, university press monographs, tenure dossiers and REF submissions, it is incumbent upon us all to engage with wider debates and discourses, disrupting and challenging inherited ideas. Although a 'decolonized' art history, or at least an art-historical practice alert to issues of race and empire, thrives in some classrooms, it is a greater challenge to bring such ideas to a wider audience. While the crass requirements of the British government's system of funding have given the term 'impact' a bad name, communication with a wider, and thus more diverse, public through digital media, exhibitions, public programmes, and through collaborations with living artists offer us a platform for debate available to few other disciplines. Crucial, here, is the identity of the person addressing a wider public. The days of Kenneth Clark, Sister Wendy Beckett and Andrew Graham-Dixon are (or should be) long past. If the faces and voices of art historians on the screen are as multifarious as those on the streets of the post-colonial metropolis – from Cape Town to Sydney to Toronto – then art history will have more chance of engaging with a wider world.

In terms of museums, we need to broaden the canon and erase the distinction between 'fine art' museums (Tate, National Galleries in London and Washington), 'decorative art' museums (V&A/Cooper-Hewitt), and 'ethnographic' museums (British Museum in London, Natural History Museum in New York). Within universal survey museums, such as the Metropolitan, departmental boundaries and hierarchies likewise need to be broken down. Curatorial work can achieve a shift in perceptions and public discourse that even a multitude of peer-reviewed articles will struggle to match.

Tim Barringer is Paul Mellon Professor in the History of Art at Yale University.

Notes

[1] Dominic Sandbrook, 'The Empire Strikes Back', *Daily Mail*, 22 July 2015.

Priyanka Basu

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

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Current calls to decolonize art history seem to me to be different from earlier disciplinary challenges. Decolonization must respond in some way to histories and contemporary realities of Indigenous dispossession. It requires creating spaces to learn from and it must allow the subjects of colonization/decolonization and others historically underrepresented to 'appear' (in Nicholas Mirzoeff's terms).[1] These concerns cannot be adequately addressed only by incorporating types of radical theory into my primary areas of European, especially German, modern/contemporary art and historiography training. While my own teaching/research are strongly inflected by aspects of social and feminist art history, visual studies, and postcolonial theory, these do not provide all of the necessary tools. From my perspective, the response to Indigenous dispossession seems particularly urgent, as I recently began teaching in a Native American-serving institution.[2] In addition, in my small department, I am one of three professors all trained in European areas, and I am responsible for modern/contemporary periods.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

My understanding of decolonizing art history now is that it requires responding to historical and contemporary issues of decolonization, whether that be with students, through collaborative study with colleagues, research, and/or activism. For my teaching, this has meant addressing white supremacy and histories of violence against Indigenous peoples; teaching modernity as 'multiple'; teaching modern art through histories of colonialism and decolonization; teaching modernism as a multimedia phenomenon emphasizing radical production methods and addressing climate change/environmental issues, among other issues and strategies. Undertaking all of this in my teaching necessarily involves jettisoning or marginalizing some content that I previously taught or that was taught by my department and thought of as essential.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

The decolonization of art history affects my research/practice by requiring me to think modern/contemporary art history in more transcultural and networked ways, as well as pushing me to research new areas. This has involved drawing more deeply on methodologies of key postcolonial scholars, including those who provide ways to connect visual studies, postcolonialism, decolonization, and contemporary culture.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

I believe that decolonizing art history has to take place in the classroom, through research, and in broader art-historical discourse. The practices of teaching modern art history as interconnected, successive movements, in a timeline chronologically linked to industrial modernity, within national frameworks, as well as emphasizing certain iconoclastic values, are impediments to carrying out the above goals.[3] Open source materials innovating curricula and methodologies are particularly helpful, just as they are a key platform of decolonization, and something that art history scholarly organizations could aid in developing. The availability of even one textbook on global modernisms has been a great resource (*Modern Art in Africa, Asia and Latin America* edited by Elaine O'Brien *et al.*).

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[1] Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Empty the Museum, Decolonize the Curriculum, Open Theory', *Nordic Journal of Aesthetics*, 53, 2017, 6–22.
[2] For readers outside of North America, 'Native American-serving institution' comes from the term 'Minority Serving Institutions', defined as 'institutions of higher education that serve minority populations', with an active support programme in North America; see 'Minority Serving Institutions Program', available at https://www.doi.gov/pmb/eeo/doi-minority-serving-institutions-program.
[3] For one response to the latter concern, see Helen Molesworth, 'Only Connect', *Artforum International*, 55: 4, December 2016, 236–239.

Naomi Beckwith

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

The best instincts of current efforts to decolonize, in my opinion, ask succinctly for structural change in pedagogy and curatorial work. Though certain previous challenges (including those listed in the question) did agitate for structural changes, for the most part they were interpreted within institutions as calls for diversity and inclusivity. We now see that playing a mere numbers game – bringing in more women or people not identified as white – does very little for both power structures or the stories we tell about art. Decolonization seeks to get to the root of the problem, not just the results.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

I can only answer this question personally but for me it means several things: working with the broadest definition of art (remembering that multi-disciplinary practice is the norm); questioning definitions and accepted terms (sometimes 'artist' wasn't a label that someone could apply to themselves); trusting the anecdotes and stories of those not yet included in the canon; and, above all, seeking to abolish the notion of a canon altogether.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

We would have to jettison the notions of hierarchy first: the valorization of painting over found objects, or the academic over the inspired, for instance – and we would have to keep context alive at all times. Not only to consider what was happening in the social world to make certain forms and practices possible, but also to remember that those things that live in cultural memory didn't arrive in our consciousness by accident, or by virtue of some notion of quality, but by a series of deliberate moves by folks with power, voices, and resources.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

Decolonization can happen now and in every classroom. I can't talk to pedagogical practices specifically but I can insist that a decolonized curriculum is as applicable to the colonizer as it is to the former colonized. We have to de- and re-construct notions

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of whiteness as power as much as we think afresh about the representation of those we want included in the historical record.

Naomi Beckwith is Manilow Senior Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago.

David Bindman

These are all difficult questions but we should begin with what we have inherited. The problem we have in the history of art is that it is strongly rooted in national narratives. When asked, we all identify ourselves as working predominantly in, say, British, French or American art. This means that the transnational tends to be marginalized, but it can also be an excuse for ignoring the colonial.

It may well be very difficult to avoid national specialization but it can be turned to art history's advantage by regarding the nation as encompassing its empire, so that, say, the study of Spanish art includes the slave colonies of Latin America, and British art the slave colonies in the Caribbean. In a sense we need to re-colonize the history of art.

This would require a much stronger grounding in history, not as background but as integral to the subject. All medievalists should, for instance, be aware of connections with African kingdoms, the influence of Islamic art and architecture, just as those working on the Italian Renaissance need to be aware of connections with the Ottoman empire.

In terms of the discipline there needs to be more emphasis on the power of images to construct ideas of nationality and race. We need to investigate the visual construction of other peoples, for it plays a decisive role in naturalizing ideas of difference that can result in social action. This will involve a broadening of experience to include the study of all forms of visual culture along with the art of the museums.

David Bindman is Emeritus Durning-Lawrence Professor of History of Art at University College London.

Jill Burke

I am not sure a truly ethical 'decolonized' art history can exist, at least not for the study of Renaissance and early modern art as it is normally understood – painting and sculpture with significant financial value. The institutions of art are so tied to the market and often, especially in the case of old master painting, serve to shore up hierarchies of inherited wealth and social power. In my experience, publishing, curating exhibitions, even access to our materials, necessitates ethical compromises that make me increasingly uneasy.

Old master painting and the notions of 'history' and 'culture' are used to justify, covertly, and even overtly, structures of inequality that have a real effect on people's life chances. It has been increasingly striking to me over the last few years that I may be on the wrong

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side. As art historians we urgently need to question the ethics of the market, both financial and cultural, in old master painting.

This is perhaps encapsulated in the story of the *Salvator Mundi* by Leonardo da Vinci (or, as it turns out, probably not by Leonardo da Vinci). Sold in November 2017 for $450.3 million to an agent of the ruler of Saudi Arabia, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, this painting was destined for the Louvre Abu Dhabi, but for a while no one was sure of its whereabouts. Dianne Modestini from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University is one of the conservators who worked on the painting. She perhaps echoed the feelings of many when she said to the *New York Times*, 'it is tragic. To deprive the art lovers and many others who were moved by this picture – a masterpiece of such rarity – is deeply unfair.'[1] Is this more unfair or tragic, however, than the murder of *Washington Post* journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October 2018, a murder ordered (according to 'credible evidence' says the UN special rapporteur) by the Saudi regime?[2] Does the money spent on culture and art galleries make up for the repression and murders enacted by powerful regimes, both in the Renaissance and since? Even without the assassinations, a world that allows such extreme accumulation of capital in the hands of a small number of individuals is responsible for a curtailing of the life chances – and, indeed, the lives – of masses of the population. No individual should have that amount of money, and spending it on art just serves to justify the possession of such wealth.

As I discuss in my book, *The Italian Renaissance Nude* (2018), the invention of 'art' – with its histories, its discourses and its institutions – in the Renaissance was closely linked to the military leaders who killed thousands in the Italian Wars, a way of bolstering their shaky regimes and creating a shared language of a European cultural elite, deeply entwined in colonialist violence. The way Renaissance art is presented to us, still, is often a story of progress, a narrative that is frequently unthinkingly linked to a certain kind of breezy European/Western cultural dominance understood as fundamentally a good thing for the world. There is no doubt that this is true in some ways – but this kind of cultural gaslighting works precisely because it has good aspects, aspects that even subordinated populations want to embrace. As Michel Foucault said, 'what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse'.[3] Repression can be experienced as pleasure, and indeed, many Marxists would argue this is an ineluctable facet of capitalism. By promoting Renaissance art (as my work inevitably does), I feel like a nicotine addict, always drawn back to that last cigarette with the vague feeling that it will somehow do me some good. All we can do as researchers and writers in this field is reveal – again and again, with more and more force – these power structures for what they are, but whilst I work through these issues, I'm giving up my Renaissance art habit for a while.

Jill Burke is Professor of Renaissance Visual and Material Cultures at the University of Edinburgh.

Notes

[1] Quoted in David D. Kirkpatrick, 'A Leonardo Made a $450 Million Splash: Now There's No Sign of It', *The New York Times*, 30 March 2019.
[2] As quoted in Nick Hopkins and Stephanie Kirchgaessner, ''Credible Evidence' Saudi Crown Prince Liable for Khashoggi Killing', *The Guardian*, 19 June 2019.
[3] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–77*, trans. Colin Gordon, London, 1980, 119.

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Pamela N. Corey

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

The call to decolonize art history now appears to target a broader swathe of institutions and institutional practices that shape art history as a practice of knowledge and as a public resource, most notably the university and the museum, than previously. What situates these calls in the current moment is the recognition that the problems that postcolonial, feminist, queer, and Marxist critiques addressed in recent decades have not only lingered, but have become even more entrenched with the consolidation of the university as a neoliberal institution.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

To decolonize art history now is to cite, expose, and critically respond to the structures and residues of the colonial project as they have shaped the discipline and its institutionalization. Critical response entails rendering such structures (linguistic, temporal, ontological) transparent and as sites of intervention (rather than simply dismissing them as inapplicable or of no value). It also involves engaging in the work of decentralizing and reconfiguring modes of creating, representing, and disseminating knowledge. What distinguishes the decolonial from the postcolonial is the recognition that today's structures of inequity and suppression have complex relationships to historical projects of empire (beyond 'the West and the rest' paradigm), and that new hierarchies of power have been compounded through autocratic forms of the postcolonial state in tandem with vested interests in the movement of global capital. Decolonial art-historical work addresses these forces as they have taken shape not only through the canons and timelines propounded by the discipline's centring (and production) of 'the West', but also through the production of exclusionary nationalist narratives of art history and their representative institutions, and in the current beleaguered state of governmental support, through the compromises made to sustain funding and major donations to universities and museums.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned? Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

In my work on contemporary art in Southeast Asia (in particular Vietnam and Cambodia) and its diasporas, I have been particularly concerned with exclusionary modes of identification as they have been reified through categories installed by colonial regimes, nationalist historiographies, and developmental discourses. The latter may take form, for example, through what Sarat Maharaj has called 'multicultural managerialism', in many instances today taking on the guise of the decolonial project but misconstrued through ill-conceived diversity initiatives.[1] These are not independent of one another; it is important to understand the ways in which constricted identifications of artists and their works linger as a result of a confluence of such phenomena, and the ways in which these can be tracked historically and across geographies. In terms of questioning and reorganizing

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such categories and systems of interpretation, whether it be style-based classifications of sculpture or heavily context-driven framings of practising artists, some of the most significant contributions to the field of Southeast Asian art history came from Stanley J. O'Connor and T. K. Sabapathy.[2] These are scholars who beginning in the 1970s dared to merge methodologies and perspectives on art and culture from beyond the East–West and premodern–modern binaries, and were deeply attentive to the value of historiographical examination. They were public-facing intellectuals who also addressed the role of the university classroom, the museum, and the field site as vital contexts for such knowledge production. In so doing, they inaugurated new ways of writing and teaching about art in Southeast Asia, and in my view, were doing decolonial work *avant la lettre*.

For communities engaged with modern and contemporary Southeast Asian art history, the call for decentralization is strong, in terms of representation from within the region and the provision of greater access to resources. It is important to recognize that undergraduate and postgraduate curricula in art history – as a primary course of study – are scarce in the region, with what are arguably more substantial programmes at either BA or MA level in the Philippines, Singapore, and Malaysia. Efforts to produce and share knowledge in the region and beyond the institution have resulted in the founding of an open-access scholarly journal dedicated to Southeast Asian art and visual culture, in one instance.[3] My caution is that decolonization must continue to situate such scholarship as a part of 'the centre' rather than apart from it as a disciplinary annex. More is needed beyond representation. In this vein, I would be very hesitant to pronounce any materials, theories, or systems of knowledge as subject to jettisoning. Such an urge would seem to echo nativist permutations of colonial pedagogies that suppressed access to 'modern' foreign influences deemed unsuitable for colonized subjects.

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Notes

[1] Sarat Maharaj (interviewed by Daniel Birnbaum), 'In Other's Words', *Artforum*, 40: 6, 1 February 2002, 106–110.
[2] For Stanley J. O'Connor I am thinking in particular of his essay 'Art Critics, Connoisseurs, and Collectors in the Southeast Asian Rain Forest: A Study in Cross-Cultural Art Theory', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 14: 2, September 1983, 400–408. See also Nora A. Taylor, ed., *Studies in Southeast Asian Art: Essays in Honor of Stanley J. O'Connor*, Ithaca, NY, 2000. For T. K. Sabapathy, see the recently published anthology of his writings: T. K. Sabapathy, Ahmad Mashadi, Susie Lingham, Peter Schoppert, and Joyce Toh, *Writing the Modern: Selected Texts on Art & Art History in Singapore, Malaysia & Southeast Asia, 1973–2015*, Singapore, 2018.
[3] *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia*, published by the National University of Singapore Press, https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/716.

James D'Emilio

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

Calls to decolonize art history build on earlier movements. The historical specificity of this moment may lie less in a new 'challenge' than in a worldwide reactionary turn threatening art, culture, and education. In North America and Europe, neoliberal corporate economies exacerbate inequalities and unleash authoritarian, demagogic politics that ignite xenophobic nationalisms. Those championing decolonization of the curriculum, canon, and institutions of art history should beware of fragmentation

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as we confront these shared dangers. Symbolic victories within the discipline may prove meaningless in a world where education is less accessible, academic and arts employment precarious, and cultural institutions underfunded.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

A decolonized art history looks beyond diversifying canons, curricula, and practitioners. It recognizes that we now study, teach, and display art with culturally specific methods whose universal claims reflect early modern and modern European hegemony. Rather than reshuffling canons, shouldn't we reject them as inherently exclusionary? Rather than, for example, globalizing the Middle Ages, shouldn't we abandon developmental models and judgements behind periodizations?

To broaden the practice of art history transformatively, university curricula should encourage combinations of fields across traditional clusters and boundaries. After over a century of monographs and journal articles, our global, digital age demands more than individual specialization. We should support continuing education and collaboration, so professionals gain expertise in new areas, bridging generational and cultural divides. Lastly, as we wrestle with white privilege inside our discipline, we must respond to populist attacks on art and education as the realm of global intellectual elites. Our professional voices need to be heard, over the distorted echoes of internal debates, by engaging a wide public on the internet and social media. That is our largest classroom and the place for shaping our future.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

The outsized role of ancient and medieval Europe in curricula invites challenge. Jettisoning these cultures, however, as strongholds of a white curriculum implicitly concedes their appropriation and transformation into 'heritage' by nationalist, imperialist, and racist ideologies. We should reject that colonization of the past. Exhibitions and public discussions about colour and whiteness deconstruct modern uses of Graeco-Roman sculpture. Critical interrogation of medievalism and of popular images of medieval Europe as primitive, irrational, and violent exposes their colonialist roots as foils to modernity. Nonetheless, I question efforts to remake these cultures as more racially diverse than perhaps they were: better to sever them from modern constructions and uses of race. The arts of these cultures address issues relevant to decolonization: power and marginality, centres and peripheries, cultural exchange and appropriation, and competing claims to tradition. Moreover, we may provincialize Europe by studying these periods cross-culturally with methodologies from outside Western art history.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

Decolonization reaches the most diverse communities through museums and public spaces. At the Bode-Museum, Berlin, the 2017–19 exhibition 'Beyond Compare' invited us to contrast contemporary approaches to African and European sculpture. More difficult conversations, however, remain, as is clear from controversies over the Humboldt Forum, its recreated imperial setting, the colonial origins of its collections, and a dubious effort to detach scientific exploration from the narrowest view of colonialism.[1]

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Challenges to monuments thrust decolonization into public view. In the United States, the removal of those erected to celebrate the Confederacy under the racist Jim Crow regime is long overdue. Monuments have a life span, as art history shows, but the past should be confronted, not erased. Monuments with multiple, contested, and nuanced interpretations are best contextualized and used for debate. The recent San Francisco Board of Education proposal to destroy Victor Arnautoff's WPA mural was, in my view, profoundly wrong. To decide that elements of a work, regardless of context or intention, can justify its destruction, if individuals allege harm, is a foolish and dangerous precedent. One must ask whether decolonization will transform the uses of power or just replace those currently exercising it.

This final example can be hopeful as well: we need more discussion of primary education where the arts are too often barely an accessory. We should battle together for visual culture and skills to be on a par with language and texts in primary education. Even the sciences, after all, make heavy use of visual observation, comparison, and analysis. Can we teach our children – all our children – to become sophisticated, thoughtful viewers and creators of a visual culture that is open, diverse, and critical?

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Notes

[1] Thomas Rogers, 'Berlin's Troubled Humboldt Forum Pushes Back Opening', *New York Times*, 13 June 2019; Graham Bowley, 'A New Museum Opens Old Wounds in Germany', *New York Times*, 12 October 2018; Gero Schieß, 'Is Berlin's Humboldt Forum Shying away from Colonial History?', *DW [Deutsche Welle]*, 14 August 2017.

James Elkins

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

They aren't different in kind; they are different in reach. Previous challenges took large parts of the discipline for granted, but calls for decolonization are potentially more radical, as the violent events in South Africa in 2016 demonstrated.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

Much of this questionnaire depends on how 'decolonization' is understood. Let me propose three principal ways the word has been used:

1. *Decolonization as epistemic disobedience* (in Walter Mignolo's expression): divestiture, deconstruction of the colonial heritage, and reconceptualization of art history.[1] This would potentially involve the traditional subjects and institutions that have supported art history. There are serious conceptual and practical issues here. A concerted decolonization of South African universities would entail decommissioning the universities themselves, because they are indebted to UK models. Proportional representation of African voices in South African art history

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would involve hiring Black African faculty up to 75 percent of the total and reducing White African representation to less than 10 percent, to reflect the demographics of the country. A change in faculty on that scale is at least conceivable, but I wonder if decommissioning or abandoning the structure and idea of the university can make sense: without programmes in art history, conferences, and journals like this one, what would remain that could be called 'art history'?

2. *Decolonization as incremental change*. Decolonial theory in North and South America is more a matter of accelerating the work of postcolonial theory. My North and South American students at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago (representing, this past year, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, Colombia, Chile, and Uruguay) tend to speak of decolonization as a science of individual interventions – texts, performances, acts of curation.

3. *Decolonization as an interpretive strategy*. At the moment decolonial studies is aimed at institutional change, but it is already operating as an interpretive strategy, in the way that postcolonial theory, feminisms, queer theory, and other theories have done for some time. The move from activist critique to interpretive strategy is a characteristic of academic poststructuralism; an early example is psychoanalysis, whose clinical dimension has long been absent from the academy. In my seminars in Chicago, I am more likely to encounter decolonial theory as a scholarly aid to the interpretation of art than as a justification for resisting or avoiding habits ingrained in the art world or in art history.

Perhaps this list of three senses of decolonial theory forms a temporal sequence, from radical change to academic writing. If so, then 'decolonized art history' is actually a name for an art history that has added decolonial theory to its battery of interpretive methodologies. If not – if something like the first meaning of 'decolonization' is nearer the mark – then a 'decolonized art history' won't 'look like' anything at all. If it does, then the revolution won't have taken place.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

I'm sure you'll have plenty of responses about postmodern and contemporary art, so let me add two other areas that also concern me.

1. *Regarding 'unknown' modernisms*. I'm interested in modernisms that aren't part of the 'master narrative'. There were modernist practices, for example, in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and in areas still part of Russia, such as the Republic of Bashkortostan. A decolonized art history would present a very different narrative of modernisms. Theories of multiple modernisms have opened doors in this regard, and so have recent exhibitions, but where is the story of modernisms that gives equal place to France and Hungary (which had a very large modernist movement), or the thirty or forty other regions and countries that produced modernist work, from Georgia to Paraguay?

2. *Regarding art before the modern age*. The history of colonialism goes back much further than the five centuries that concern current scholarship. From the earliest pottery sequences to the modern age, art history can seem to be nothing other

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than a continuous series of colonizations. The politics is different (or, often, it is unknown), but the results are analogous: certain practices are marginalized in relation to others, and it can require energy to refocus interpretive effort away from the apparently central, significant, or canonical. Entire cultures have nearly been erased from memory (little remains of the Phrygians, the cultures associated with Jinsha and Sanxingdui, the Valdivia culture, and hundreds of others). And yet when the historical record permits, the history of subjugation, erasure, iconoclasm, and syncretism can be compelling (recent scholarship on Angkor Wat is exemplary in this regard). The way art history has dealt with the problem of 'unknown' cultures and colonial complexities is by teaching a 'master narrative', the one codified in E. H. Gombrich's *Story of Art*, with additions for cultures that have been more widely studied since Gombrich's generation, such as Inka, Rapa Nui, Chavin, and Nok. A decolonized history of art before the modern age would be almost incomprehensibly alien. At the moment no such textbook exists. I am trying, in my own teaching and writing, to see what kind of sense might be made of art history if it is told with the hundreds of unfamiliar, partly erased, undeciphered, 'forgotten' cultures that comprise the vast colonized past.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

I am writing this in Yirrkala, in the Northern Territory in Australia, where there's a workshop on 'postnational art histories'. The participants are interested in Yolngu Aboriginal art and the voices of Aboriginal art in future Australian art histories. One of the organizers, Ian McLean, proposed we consider whether 'postnational art practices and histories decolonize national art practices and histories'. What is at stake here is the postnational, not the decolonial, which has barely been discussed. It's made me think it may be helpful to assemble a conference, and produce a book, on the geographic distribution of the meanings of 'decolonization' and 'postnationalism'. It would be wonderful if the authors of the next generation of art history textbooks written outside the US and UK could compare notes on how to decolonize the discipline. After all, we have a common purpose: to give art of all kinds the capacity to collaborate in inclusive conversations, while retaining something we can still call a history of art.

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Notes

[1] Walter Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 26, 2009, 1–23.

Jaś Elsner

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

I am not sure that the historical specificity of the current calls to decolonize art history is different in kind from earlier interventions: they represent the movement in politics

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of younger generations and their keenness to confront the limitations of earlier models. But there is an anger perhaps greater than before, and an intolerance.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

A decolonized art history is incredibly difficult – much more so than most of those calling for it may grasp. The issue is *not* changing the topics of our attention (that is easy). It is that the discipline of art history as conducted worldwide today is fundamentally Eurocentric, founded on (post-)Christian Enlightenment axioms of thought and critical assumptions. These assumptions are grounded in a long ancestralist meditation on the nature of images that reaches back to Classical antiquity (from Plato's attack on mimesis to the art histories reported in Roman authors like Pliny the Elder and aesthetic explorations in such texts as the *Imagines* of Philostratus) via the many Christian debates about images (including Byzantine and Reformation Iconoclasm). In modernity this body of reflections was welded into a modern scholarly discipline in the wake of Vasari's *Lives of the Artists* and especially Winckelmann's *History of the Art of Antiquity* and came to their maturity in the great critical projects of the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries associated with names like Riegl, Wölfflin and Panofsky. That is a great tradition of thoughtful European (and later American) self-reflection on our own history of aesthetics and visual production. Every reflex, assumption, starting point – from methods to concepts – is inherently Eurocentric, which means (when applied outside or beyond the European tradition) colonialist and worse. The thrust of so-called 'global art history' or 'world art history' or of non-European cultures turning to art history (e.g. in contemporary China) simply to translate our classic art-historical texts and apply their methods to non-European materials is an internalization of all the worst Eurocentric assumptions: self-hynotizing colonialism. Is there a solution? In my view, there is but it will take at least a century of very hard work from many people, and would need a collective will whose current absence is palpable. If we (meaning a large number of practitioners in all parts of the world and in all cultures) were to gather the conceptual materials relating to images, art, artistic technique, artists, visuality, that lie deep in the literary and scholarly traditions, not to speak of the stories, in a range of ancient literary cultures (for instance, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Tibetan, Indian – which means Tamil, Sanskrit, Bengali, Urdu and many others – South Asian, Persian, Arabic, Coptic, Ethiopic, etc., not to speak of the pre-Columbian Americas) as well as what can be gleaned from such records and contemporary anthropological accounts of the more oral cultures of Africa, and Australasia, we can construct a series of models and categories for thinking about what passes for art in the West that will be constitutively different, challenging and incompatible. The starting point of a decolonized art history is the conversation that begins with categories not our own and discombobulates all the starting points we normatively and unselfconsciously employ. The enormity of the project indicates both how difficult it would be and how demanding. Note that there are no simple collections of any relevant texts about images or on what images are or any of the materials that constitute the starting point for this investigation for any culture east of Byzantium (i.e. east of Christian hegemony), south or west of Europe.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

Decolonization in the global sense I have attempted to explain above is central to the project of my own work. What needs to be jettisoned is the fantasy of the solo scholar

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working outside a global dialogue; what can perhaps be produced are more rigorous, comparative and theoretically astute accounts both of our own European cultural heritage (I am after all a historian of Greek, Roman and early Christian art, at least in my origins) and of other cultures (for instance the artistic worlds of Islam or Buddhism) by contrast.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

It needs to happen everywhere and now. But the strategies are an issue. In modernism and contemporary art we live (globally) in a world defined by Eurocentric attitudes and practices (including the digi-sphere). Here different strategies are needed (and I don't at all see the way with any clarity) from artistic worlds in the past, and especially before the colonial era, where we can identify and explore cultures (like that of Buddhist art in Gandhara or Abbasid art in Iraq or Insular art in the early medieval British Isles) whose mix of visual, theoretical and literary reflections are capable both of independent analysis and comparative investigation.

But let me end by returning to the first question: there is anger. If the anger leads us to killing the father for his colonialist crimes, then – because our discipline is the ultimate ancestralist self-reflection of the West on its pasts and on its presents – we will end up killing it and ourselves.

Jaś Elsner is Humfry Payne Senior Research Fellow in Classical Archaeology and Art at Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

Richard Hylton

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

In post-war Britain, challenges to Eurocentric art history have been sustained across the fields of artistic practice, curating, cultural theory and research. Arguably, initiatives which exist outside academia have previously been at the vanguard of this work: from the Caribbean Artist Movement (1966) and *Third Text* (1987) to the African and Asian Visual Artists Archive (1988) and the creation of the Institute of International Visual Arts (1994, formerly the Institute of New International Visual Arts). Notwithstanding the important contributions made by such initiatives, for many years the museum sector and academe remained largely indifferent to this work. Today in Britain, the museum sector, ahead of academe, appears receptive to presenting more racially pluralized definitions of British art. A number of recent high-profile public gallery exhibitions and awards coupled with growing interest from the commercial sector in senior Black British artists such as Frank Bowling, Denzil Forrester and Lubaina Himid provide some context for a new cultural politics in art. However, close associations between the museum sector and academia present a paradoxical situation, whereby academics are called upon to validate the 'retrospective'; conversely their art history departments remain largely resistant to offering and engaging more pluralistic concepts of the discipline.

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What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

Feminist art historians have argued for an art history which prioritizes structural change over visibility. Similarly, in challenging the spoken and unspoken racial dynamics at play within art history, decolonizing art history not only requires a diversifying of subject matter, course offerings and staffing but also more opportunity for genuine and disinterested critique. We cannot separate the subject and politics of art history. Therefore, whilst it is welcomed that artists who have historically been marginalized are now receiving much deserved critical attention, can we ignore the politics of 'historical recovery'? A system which has for decades either excluded or offered tokenistic engagement with wider notions of art history must itself be part of this critique. In the current cultural climate, academia has a key role to play, beyond merely endorsing the museum sector's current agenda.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

Working for many years running exhibition programmes, writing and researching I have been an avid advocate for engaging with a wide range of art and art history. There are almost incalculable benefits to expanding and revising provision for a 'decolonized' art history. How can the momentous and enduring impact of slavery, the British Empire, post-war migration, for example, not be factored into any account of British art history? What are the relationships between ethnography, contemporary art and the Western museum? The role of African American art in the international arena? Spoken and unspoken delineations between *white* and *raced* art histories must also be more carefully considered, as they are more a hindrance than a help in establishing progressive views of art history.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

It is important to recognize that many individual scholars have contributed and continue to contribute important work to the field of art history from within and without the academy. Equally, we cannot underestimate the formidable and longstanding structures and practices which are antithetical to 'decolonization'. In Britain, the field of art history would greatly benefit from strategies which go beyond segregated provision. Longer-term initiatives and support for new courses are critical.

Institutions and research bodies hold all the cards in determining and developing new agendas and initiatives. To date what significant outcomes have been generated by short-term research initiatives? Have initiatives achieved what they set out to? How do their achievements align with the wider academic context in which they take place? In this regard, an understanding of (art) history is paramount. The Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) was not originally located within academe but key aspects of its output during the 1990s and early 2000s challenged Eurocentric art history. In 2007, Iniva (along with Autograph) celebrated the opening of Rivington Place (designed by Sir David Adjaye) which, at the time, was described as London's first publicly funded purpose-built visual arts venue for 'culturally diverse visual arts and photography'. Barely five years later, Iniva suffered a series of catastrophic cuts to its Arts Council

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funding culminating with it having to vacate the very venue it had been instrumental in establishing. Today, Iniva is based at Chelsea School of Art and Design. It is perhaps too early to speculate on Iniva's new position. However, compared to its once substantial international programme and profile (in publishing, exhibitions and conferences), unfortunately, Iniva currently appears to be a shadow of its former self. The relative demise of this once prominent revenue client of Arts Council England illustrates and cautions against the pitfalls of top-down initiatives.

We also cannot underestimate the extent to which the art world has radically changed over the past two decades. To talk about decolonizing art history without acknowledging the role of the market place is akin to attempting to address climate change without addressing the problems of capitalism and consumerism. The market place (dealers, collectors and patrons) seemingly has greater influence over all aspects of the arts arena (exhibitions, publishing, awards, etc.). To what extent does the market place inform and influence the practice of 'decolonizing' the canon? What are the possible benefits and conflicts of interest?

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Kajri Jain

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

From where I sit, in the Canadian academy, current calls to decolonize art history cannot be delinked from the most recent wave of Indigenous activism, art, and scholarship: its damning indictments of ongoing occupations of land, institutional racism, sexism, and anthropocentrism; its powerful counter-cosmopolitics; and its modelling of the inextricability of being, knowing, and doing. The response has been a set of top-down institutional agendas that risk co-opting or defusing this force. But institutional initiatives can also open up spaces to listen carefully to Indigenous and other ex-colonized voices, take them seriously, and reconsider what we do and how: in the classroom, in publishing, in museums or galleries, and also, more fundamentally, on colonized land *tout court*. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang cogently put it, 'decolonization is not a metaphor'.[1] This, to me, is a major difference from earlier challenges to art history: the call is to attend to practices of land, space, and images in a rigorously materialist and political mode not easily recuperated to metaphorics, while maintaining a commitment to aesthetics as the very ground of politics. This entails among other things a nuancing, extension, and deepening of attunements to settler colonialism, including internal colonialisms within ex-colonized states, and a related engagement with ecological emergency. But I would not want to overemphasize the differences from 'previous' challenges to art history, since those are still salient – indeed, often newly urgent – and deeply inform any current waves of rethinking. What may be worth dwelling on in these differences is the erasure of certain elements of Marxism wrought by neoliberalism's colonization of the imagination: for instance of the very horizon of structural change in political economy, so integral to any project of decolonization. I am reminded every day in the classroom that my students were

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all likely born after the fall of the Berlin Wall: that is, into a world with no palpable alternatives to the neoliberal order.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

To me postcolonialism already encompassed projects of recognizing, analysing, and working to dismantle colonial structures – political, epistemological, affective, psychic – which persist in the present. As indicated above, I am persuaded by those who want to take the term 'decolonizing' literally, which takes us well beyond art history as we know it into an emergent domain of practice whose forms cannot be predicted in an avant-gardist theoretical mode. If postcolonialism denaturalizes colonial categories of thought, decolonization needs to literally un-settle colonial spaces, a far taller order. Both are necessarily ongoing, experimental, political processes that militate against comfortable closure, so I can't speak in terms of a fully 'decolonized' art history, let alone predict what it will look like. If in these processes something recognizable remains of art history, my hunch is that it will be our close attention to emergence – processes of becoming that include, but aren't confined to, human making – and to the work of the senses.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

I work on modern and contemporary Indian images in the 'vernacular' domain, so my approach has been postcolonial from the get-go. To some it is unrecognizable as art history, because it entails thinking about the power, value, and affects of non-canonical images, in ways that both include and complicate the frame of 'art' but also go beyond the hegemonic frame of the 'visual' in 'visual culture'. In other words it tries to reckon with *both* the undeniable inadequacy *and* the ongoing force of the categories we have received from colonialism to understand objects-images-events-practices. Even as these concepts cannot be jettisoned entirely, they can and must be historicized and provincialized. This is the task I am bringing to thinking about space, presence, and touch in relation to images. My practice unfolds in the register of crafting ideas, of reading and writing, of looking, listening and talking, of learning from and attempting to amplify the force of those who are already doing the political work of unsettling. The latest wave of calls to decolonize directs our attention to spatial practices and the appropriation, resignification and repurposing of land. For my work on India, this means thinking not only about the state's interface with Indigenous peoples, but also about the spatiality of caste, gender, and class, and the deep social orderings entailed in the sensory regime of touch. As art historians we are so used to thinking of vision as *the* hegemonic sense when it comes to images, it doesn't occur to us how it could also be otherwise.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

In part decolonizing art history can begin in the classroom and in our research, curation, and practice, simply by expanding the scope of what each of us sees fit to teach, learn, and think about. Unfortunately the highly specialized expertise that art history has fostered asymmetrically precludes a basic working knowledge of the non-West. Yet

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for those of us working on and in the non-West, we have to know about the West in order to even inhabit the academy as art historians in the first place. This asymmetry has been exacerbated by certain kinds of philosophical emphasis on radical otherness, which can enable a continued distance from the other rather than fostering actual engagements that render us vulnerable and impinge on our habitual sense of the world. I think we all need to get over it and do the work – and share the pleasures! – of listening to and learning from each other in ways that proactively address and redress current asymmetries. But this is not about a kind of additive inclusion that amounts to tolerance. The point is not just to invite those hitherto excluded into the spaces of the academy, the gallery, the museum, public art, publishing, theatres, and so on, but also, once they are there, to *actually listen* to and *see* them in ways that affect the conduct of business as usual (again this is a sensory demand, to sense and make sense). Only if that happens in a real way will the spaces of art history even begin to unsettle, let alone decolonize.

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Notes

[1] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is Not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1: 1, 2012, 1–40.

Zehra Jumabhoy

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

I think the current calls to decolonize are related to previous ones, but there is a perceptible shift in the exercise of power. If calls for decolonization once came from those who saw themselves as the victims of (art) history, it is increasingly coming from those who feel in a position to master a defunct narrative. In Britain, one could say that the first systematic challenge to a colonial art history (not synonymous with a white art history – you can be white and colonialized, as many Welsh people would argue), started with artist and pedagogue Rasheed Araeen. Araeen's group show *The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post-War Britain* (staged at the Hayward Gallery, London in 1989) and his founding of *Black Phoenix*, which later became *Third Text* journal, were milestones. One could call this the opening up of a dialogue that demanded that those on the other side of the colonial encounter be acknowledged by the mainstream. It was also the start of the post-colony taking charge of its *own* art history to some extent. So, what we are seeing today – with strident demands for the de-colonialization (I prefer this word to 'decolonizing' as it is a more active reminder of the colonial past) of art history in the West – is the direct fallout of what Araeen started.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

These questions assume that art history is a cohesive discipline – which it is not. These days it is under threat from within its own ranks as well as from other disciplines (like visual studies, anthropology and theory) which stand at tangents to it. The boundaries of art history are being constantly challenged. So, to deal with this issue of decolonizing

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art history, it is important to flesh out (at least provisionally) art history's current crisis-points. Art history itself is a perennially perched discipline – ideologically speaking it sits between formal analysis (i.e. the politics of looking and ascription of aesthetic value) on one hand and history on the other. How much visual analysis versus historical context is required when looking at art is a continuous debate. Does the term 'art history' connote a value judgement about quality in a way that labelling something 'cultural history' or part and parcel of 'visual studies' does not? I think so. For instance, I recently guest curated an exhibition on modern Indian art at the Asia Society museum in New York. Part of this exhibition involved re-staging an early show of the Progressive Artists' Group (founded in Bombay on the eve of independence from British rule in 1947). While the Indian artworld found this re-visiting very satisfying aesthetically, many American critics were taken with it for presenting artefacts of cultural history. I noticed that, for these critics, modern Indian painting from this period was not part of art history, although they were willing to accept that it contained cultural artefacts worthy of study for historical reasons. My position on de-colonializing art history is twofold: firstly, it is to understand that the term comes into tension with other types of study (cultural history, visual studies); and secondly, to demand that this tension should be *examined* rather than side-stepped. I believe that de-colonializing art history is important because there is a value judgement involved in calling something 'art' versus a visual or cultural artefact. Hence, to decolonize – or, perhaps, more accurately to de-colonialize – art history is to argue that the discipline (with all its contradictions) remains a space to be argued *for*.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

There is an interesting tension between the terms 'postcolonial' and 'decolonizing'. The first is usually associated with a group of South Asian historians, known as the 'subaltern theorists' – the most famous being Ranajit Guha, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Partha Chatterjee – as well as with the post-structuralist Gayatri Spivak. To simplify, one could argue that for these thinkers it was essential to re-examine the terminology of progress and modernity: to allow for alternative *ways* of being modern. The term 'postcolonialism' has also been tied to a time-frame: that is, the period *after* colonialization came to an end. De-colonialization, however, has the potential to be more nuanced on both counts. It inherently lays stress on the fact that while the Imperial era may seem to be over, contemporary society still bears its after-effects, so that, in fact, we might not be in a *post*-colonial epoch after all. Decolonizing art history, then, is a *method*: it is an approach to the past and an *attitude* towards the modern. For instance, subaltern theorists called for a history (and, hence, promoted an art history) which encompassed *multiple* modernities. In academia, this was often interpreted as the requirement to create inclusive canons: for example, that Western institutions could fulfil their post-colonial obligations by making token insertions of art from outside Euro-America. Such art could be safely buried in area studies departments and be included as examples of alternative modernities. But de-colonializing the modern is more invasive and more far-reaching. It insists that the very concept of the modern needs to be re-examined for its colonial imprint. Real de-colonialization is a much less comfortable position for art history. It's not about making token inclusions, it's about looking at the discipline as it stands and questioning its assumptions. This can't help but explode some of its prevailing myths. Take Clement Greenberg's idea of the disinterested nature of American abstraction (based on a misunderstanding of Kant's disinterested aesthetics) as an example. If we consider the supposedly a political, 'art for art's sake'

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stance of abstract expressionism, we now recognize how political it was in the context of the Cold War: if Russia and countries that had socialist leanings (like India) were advocating figuration with a political message, it stood to reason that the opposite style should be championed by the US. The fact that the 1960s saw a rash of abstract art exhibitions in Asia – funded by American government bodies – demonstrates just how politically important such a-political art really was. Greenberg himself was appointed by the US Department of State to accompany the travelling show, *Two Decades of American Art*, to Japan and India in 1966 and 1967, respectively. De-colonializing art history is about letting counter-examples disturb canonical facts: it is a refusal to allow the myths of Euro-American art history to be taken at face value.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

I think that de-colonialization should begin at home for all of us. I am defining 'home' here purely subjectively: for me it is the Courtauld and Britain. As a bastion of art history, I think decolonizing the Courtauld would mean running more courses about non-Western art. That sounds simple enough – and rather obvious. However, I also think that the *existing* syllabus should be restructured. For instance, if one is studying the Renaissance and the prominence of the Medici, why can't we also look at the other powers in the world at that time: the Mughals, the Ottomans? This should not be a separate course – it should be integrated into the study of the early modern. The history of British art should, likewise, no longer be synonymous with English art. To de-colonialize the Euro-American past is to recalibrate the way we look at it, rather than just tacking things onto art history like so many add-ons which can be conveniently disposed of when they are no longer trendy.

However, I think there is a tendency to see decolonizing art history in overly simplistic terms: that is, let's knock down statues that celebrate people involved in the slave trade and pretend it never happened: for example, the Cecil Rhodes controversy at the University of Oxford, which proposed taking down the Rhodes statue outside Oriel College. Surely, de-colonializing the institution is not as simple as removing the sculpture: letting it remain, but with an active awareness of what it represents (i.e. Britain's colonial guilt) might be more productive. I don't think *erasing* history is ever a way of correcting the past. The obvious example is colonial history in British schools: why is the reality of the British Empire not taught at GCSE and A levels? At a societal level this lacuna leads to *systemic* and sometimes overt racism – for instance, in the wave of immigration policies directly affecting the Windrush generation. There seems to be a general lack of awareness among certain members of the voting public that immigration is related to Britain's own colonial past, its one-time Empire. Empire is a vital context for de-colonializing the social space in which art history operates. De-colonializing art history is the airing of dirty linen in public – *acknowledging* the fact of former colonies and their contemporary repercussions.

Zehra Jumabhoy is an art critic and an Associate Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art.

Sumaya Kassim

On receiving an invitation to participate in this questionnaire, I enquired whether contributors would be paid to do so. When told that they would not and that

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submissions to *Art History* are never remunerated, I sent the following response which I offer in place of answers to the questions set out by the editors:

I need to think about it. If I do contribute it will reflect my honest experience of 'decolonizing' art in this country which has usually involved the expectation of my providing consultation, my words and perspective without any remuneration despite the fact I am a freelancer. When I refuse or draw attention to the power dynamics at play, it is perceived as my being 'difficult'. In my view, this is a reflection of how institutions in much of the UK work, which is to reify and support legible intellectual endeavour (made legible by writers/academics being white and/or in secure academic jobs) and dismiss people who are deemed illegible, thereby diluting decoloniality's call to action... It's a very complex issue because I don't think that paying BIPoC freelancers adequately addresses the structural inequalities created by our colonial past. However, I do think the way I am received (and my precarity) as a visibly Muslim, racially marked woman is symptomatic of this country's history, and that it's important to draw attention to how publications and institutions are enthusiastic about ideas of decolonizing, survival, reparations et cetera, but rarely make practical provisions to address the labour and people associated with the theory. I don't think it's 'intentional' per se; it's more insidious than that. It's 'business as usual' and that's why it's so dangerous, that's why change is so often brought to a halt. People mean well, but real change requires a complete overhaul of how we conceive of the relationship between labour, ideas, movements, and individuals.

Sumaya Kassim is a freelance researcher and writer.

Dele Layiwola

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

The changes since the Cold War era have brought us into a modernity that perceives the world within a more global and diverse frame than before. However, in spite of this globalist framework, there is a resurgence of the Darwinian theory of natural selection which continues to see the world in two broad media archetypes of the civilized on one hand, and the barbaric on the other. This way of seeing the world, which is presently prevalent in the utterances of a few ultra-nationalists in the Western world, has suddenly overshadowed the previous challenges of postcolonialism, gender studies, alterity, queer studies, and Marxism. In the broad methodology by which we now look at art and society, there is a polarization which sees the world as the primitive versus the civilized. This worldview will certainly complicate the method by which we can advocate the decolonization of art, other works of culture and the imagination. People will continue to look at sculptural works in public places in the context of selective idiosyncrasies. Take, for instance, the recent attacks on public sculptures of erstwhile prominent figures like Cecil Rhodes by left-wing protestors in South Africa and on Mahatma Gandhi by supporters of the centre-right Bharatiya Janata Party in India, at two extremes. They represent different positions in relation to decolonization and its praxis. A further aspect of decolonial activism includes challenging the exclusive preserve of Western museums and institutions that have previously permanently imprisoned or enslaved artworks from former vassal continents including Africa, Oceania and Latin America.

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What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

The theory, as opposed to the praxis, of 'decolonizing art history now' is the attempt at a more robust methodology of art history which will be more accommodating and tolerant of other world civilizations. Many of the plastic and creative endeavours of colonial peoples are both technically robust and aesthetically beautiful. Take, for instance, the lost wax method of metal casting (*cire perdue*) that has long been practised in Ife and Benin; or perhaps the wood carving processes of certain West African communities. These conceptual and practical approaches to making constitute comprehensive scientific contributions to world knowledge. We should, therefore, be looking at new curricula which seek interpretation as a result of the origin and history of the same works. Works of art also have nations, cultures and languages by and through which they speak to us and address our sensibilities and emotions. Colonized objects out of place as a result of looting, such as those from the British expedition to Benin, Nigeria in 1897, need to be rethought indigenously, rather than as products of Western museums.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

The decolonization of art history will give rise to the multidisciplinary, multicultural rebirth of the study of art and culture. It will result in a broader way of looking at learning, scholarship and the world at large. If anything is to be jettisoned from it, it will be the bias and the 'parochialism' associated with territoriality and narrow specializations. The world is becoming increasingly multi- and trans-disciplinary in outlook. A more liberal outlook might gradually and steadily emerge.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

The geography of decolonization is not space-bound. As with the dictates of cultural studies, the willingness of institutions to modify methodologies is key. It is necessary for art institutions to begin to call for discussions on what best practices should be in the near future on decolonization. It is noteworthy that Western institutions have always had the resources, the wherewithal, the good will and the courage to lead the initiative even as second and third world countries make commensurate efforts to catch up or elaborate patterns by which convenient alternatives are practicable. There is greater economic and human capacity in the Western world to begin exploration on the future of decolonization.

Dele Layiwola is Professor of Performance and Cultural Studies at Ibadan University, Nigeria.

susan pui san lok

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

Modern colonialism continues to engender and enforce capitalism – engenders and enforces supremacism (white, male, human) – engenders and enforces slavery,

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genocide, ecocide, domestic and environmental violence – exploitation of cheap and invisible labour, human and natural resources – engenders and enforces chronic inflammation, slow and sudden deaths, transgenerational trauma. Our bodies are inflamed, the world is enflamed – literally burning.

The moment demands unity and alliances beyond discrete and solitary causes – notwithstanding seemingly irresolvable tensions, conflicts and animosities between them. As disparate calls for action grow out of local conjunctures of power and abuse, as 'minor' injustices ratchet up, those dismissed as powerless, useless, inept, less than human (too young, too old, not white nor male nor straight enough) refuse manipulation and turpitude. Anger ricochets – how to amplify long drowned out voices, including the voices of the drowned, to dampen and change the course of the fires?

The moment demands that we move against the apparent global tide – through praxes in tension and in concert – that we dismantle the monumental narratives that mask historical violence, violence that continues to reverberate through discriminatory structures and systems, still dividing and conquering along racial, gendered, heteronormative, class and ableist lines, obfuscating commonalities and strengths (lest we remember the Emperor's new clothes, the houses of cards/the oceans of waste that will eventually asphyxiate us). We are fantasists if we imagine that alliances will be easy. We are fantasists if we fail to admit that we are all on the same terrifying brink.

Our social, economic, political and cultural differences, privileges and positionalities will always be multiple, intersecting and shifting, in unequal relations of domination, located within mutually imbricated local and global ecologies. There is no denying that many suffer daily violence, pain, fear, threat and humiliation, that some of us cannot know. Decolonization entails the deeply discomforting, deeply disturbing work of confronting our own complicities and silences. Decolonization entails the dismantling of enduring systemic and structural laws and institutions and pedagogies and practices, to resist their dehumanizing, annihilating affects. As others have said: dehumanization = death.

Fifty or so years of challenges to the discipline, from within and without, appear in some ways to be converging – forming bipartisan and non-binaristic alliances that have the potential to reach across and undermine actual and perceived silos. Ideologically entrenched in the intricate global legacies of five hundred years of colonialism and imperialism that continue to oppress, damage and destroy, perhaps such alliances can only ever be temporary and tactical, riven as they are with internal conflict. Assemble, disassemble, reassemble. Attune, re-attune to decolonial ways of seeing-thinking-doing-listening. Trans- and anti-disciplinary activism, through artistic, creative, critical, poetic, curatorial and museological intervention and disruption, may take slow, quiet and solitary forms, effecting small, modest changes. Yet these are crucial to the collective work of dismantling the ruling structures, de-territorializing the political and intellectual terrain, and reinventing our relations to each other.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

De-centred, de-territorialized, de-disciplined; heterogeneous, contested, contradictory, confused, confusing; multiple, multitudinous, multilingual, translingual,

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untranslatable; diasporic, migratory, translocal, transhemispheric, oceanic, archipelagic; uncertain, indefinite, unstable, transforming, transformative.

We might begin by asking: what everyday de-territorial acknowledgements do we need to make, here and now, in the places we occupy? We need to recognize that the afterlives of imperialism and colonialism continue to deny and negate Indigenous peoples and their relation to unceded lands; that we continue to deny and negate the histories and experiences of former enslaved and indentured communities; that we continue to deny and negate the histories and experiences of immigrant, racialized and displaced communities. We need to recognize the specific histories and pervasive legacies of domination and exploitation in Britain and that 'after empire', our public collections and archives are always already colonial and imperial.

And: how can we displace and undo the terms and orders of value and visibility, in order to attune to and re-attune our ways of seeing otherness to ways of seeing-thinking-doing-listening otherwise?

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

No more hoarding (no more stealing, appropriating and amassing of valuable/useless stuff), but also no more jettisoning – another violent act of dispossession, disownership, denial.

Twenty-five years since my BA in Fine Art at Bretton Hall, Leeds University; twenty-two since my MA in Feminism and the Visual Arts with Griselda Pollock; fifteen since my PhD with Aavaa (the African and Asian Visual Artists Archive, founded by Eddie Chambers and relocated to the University of East London under the co-direction of Sonia Boyce and David A. Bailey); two children on and, against various odds, it looks like I am still pursuing an ambivalent career – or 'careen' – between artworld and academia.

My practice research/research practice, across archives, moving image, installation, sound, performance and text remains resistant to 'identity politics' and aspirational towards what I have hesitantly called a critical diasporic aesthetics, where 'identification' might be understood as the ongoing negotiation of place, language, memory, and voice, from an uncertain, unstable and shifting positioning, undone yet determined by cultural aphasia and amnesia. My first solo exhibition was called *Un- (Retrospectre, part 6)* (Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, 1996-97) – the title and work a compact undoing, fragmenting, rehearsal, refusal and resurfacing of misleading originary narratives. My most recent solo show was called *A COVEN A GROVE A STAND* (FirstSite, Colchester, 2018) – a retrospective witnessing of past persecutions through transhistorical and transcultural assemblies or assemblages of voice and stitch; and an ever uncomfortable 'return' to my so-called 'Essex roots', to uproot and transpose an ancient oak tree as symbol and sanctuary of witches.

Moving in the last year into a new academic role as Director of the UAL Decolonising Arts Institute, currently in development, I have been navigating the complex ecology of decolonization within the university: the attenuated links between research, practice, and pedagogical communities; the historical research projects and curriculum change

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initiatives over several decades, and more recent student campaigns (#UALSoWhite, #liberatemycurriculum); the enduring privilege of some, and ongoing marginalization of others; the minimizing and silencing effects of white entitlement and fragility on loud and swaggering display; the question of resilience, well-being, collective- and self-care; the uneven distribution of unacknowledged labour related to 'diversity work' (diversification ≠ decolonization); the invisibility of staff and students who may choose not to identify by ethnicity or gender or sexual orientation or disability … I am only beginning to situate and understand this ecology in relation to wider various global cultural and socio-political perspectives, as well as in relation to my own practice research/research practice.

I have always resisted the burden of representation – I am more interested in its politics and poetics – and the particular conjunctions, affinities, alignments and relations, that, for example, prompted the twenty-four-year-old me to introduce myself as a 'YBBAACRYRWBWA', or 'Young-Black-British-Anglo-Asian-Chinese-Yellow-Red-White-and-Blue-Woman-Artist'. Asked to identify myself, I might respond with: why? Or simply refuse. Tactics change, but perhaps not so much. As far as I am concerned, the same goes for the emerging Institute – to refuse the burden of representation. A Decolonising Arts Institute is arguably a contradiction in terms. It is both an admission and confrontation and embrace of the need for institutions to decolonize from within. Its 'success' cannot be envisioned without its eventual 'failure' or dissolution, in the reimagining and reinvention of the university. Its purpose is not to represent institutional politics or ecologies (the university has other mechanisms and processes for that). For me, a Decolonising Arts Institute must be anything but territorial. Rather, the Institute is for instituting, generating, challenging old and new knowledges, and their wilful or unwilling gatekeepers and audiences – opening up and disrupting and reconnecting spaces and habits of thinking and doing, to attend and attune to decolonial praxes – including experimental practice research, research practice and practice pedagogies – and perhaps the occasional Decolonial Fight Club. (First rule: We talk about the fight club. Second rule: We talk about the fight club. Third rule: Someone yells 'stop', we find another way. Fourth rule: Everybody fights. Fifth rule: Break the rules).

The Institute is for enacting, performing and testing the de/territorialization and dis/embodiment and dis/possession of what we know and what we forget, of what we do and how we do it. The Institute needs to be peripatetic, connective, interstitial, intersectional, porous and generous, but also contradictory, challenging, difficult, uncomfortable – more than the sum of its strategic and tactical, solitary and collective acts and gestures of resistance, refusal and reinvention.

How to negotiate and hold a space or spaces, as both host and guest, without succumbing to proprietorial habits, without trying to own or disown, or dominate others? How to give; to give some things up; to never give up; to forgive yet not to forget?

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

In the studio, in the seminar room, in the lecture theatre, in the canteen, in the museum, in the gallery, in the street, in the journals, in the books, in the

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broadsheets, in the tabloids, in the broadcast media, online and off. All these spaces demand that we challenge our everyday interactions, our habitual, disciplinary norms, call out unconscious biases, resist the urge to draw lines, do everything to decentre and resituate ourselves as unconditional allies. Ask questions and listen differently and deeply:

Who is in the room? Who is outside the room? Who (wo)mans the door? Who is gatekeeping? Who holds the keys? Who is speaking? Who is silent? Who is listening? Who is heard? Who is looking? Who is being looked at? Who is seen? Who is not seen? Whose gaze is privileged? Whose gaze, whose desires are denied? Who has the right to *not* be seen? Who can refuse visibility? Whose language dominates? Whose rules determine value? Who and what is denigrated? Are you mansplaining? Are you whitesplaining? Are you blacksplaining? Who is uncomfortable? Who is apologizing? Who is doing the work?

susan pui san lok is an artist and Director of the University of the Arts London Decolonising Arts Institute.

Emanuele Lugli

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

Rather than speaking of the historical specificity of current calls in the singular, as if they all shared the same agenda, I would insist on the shapes that studies of racial oppression have taken across the world. After all, they differ profoundly in terms of awareness, scale, even urgency. Compare, for instance, African American studies in the United States, which has generated wonderfully active departments and done tremendous work to show to the public the fundamental role that slavery has played in that country's economy, to the little research about the persecutions of ethno-religious communities (Jews, Romani people, the Valdesi) in the modern Italian states and that struggles to gain even some scholarly attention.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

It is difficult to say what it may look like because studies of decolonization are calls to work and thus embrace openness. They interrogate: they question the language we employ, the categories by which we judge, and the focus of our research projects. Even if such an ambitious process of resensitization has been going on for a few decades now, we have started seeing its benefits only recently. One of them is that some art historians no longer teach a list of artistic achievements but instead focus on processes of socialization that are at the core of material production. Unfortunately, I see the current landscape as rather jagged, with many institutions only making some cosmetic adjustments, if any. I also see much analysis as taking the form of abstract commentary whereas I would like to see more teachers, writers, curators, and public historians spend energies articulating the ongoing hardship of racial exclusions.

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How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

My area of research – late medieval and early modern European art – has been much reshaped in recent years as scholars have challenged the ways cultural exchanges and clashes across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic should be discussed. Many historians have also substantiated and added much detail to Michel Foucault's intuition that the modern state was constructed on projects of total exclusion. Yet, despite wonderfully radical studies (Mignolo, Quijano, Wynter, to name a few), I see little change at the level of teaching and public dissemination. University curricula and museum exhibitions are still built around the old-fashioned illusion of the greatness of the old masters. In an alleviating move, some postcolonial scholars have argued for an expansion of the field, but the material cannot simply increase while maintaining the same modes of transmission. The lengths of university courses and the sizes of publications have not changed, so to decolonize art histories necessarily means to review and cut. It's the only way to make time for what has routinely been left out of the picture.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

On one level, it needs to happen within each of us. Structures of oppression are insidious. It is way too easy, for instance, to fall back into verbal routines that perpetrate the biases and oppressions embedded in language. In a way, to remedy such a fallacy is to embrace collective criticism. As racism is a form of socialization, a lot of the work needs to be carried out collectively. On another level, it is impossible for one person to expand the field single-handedly, so research centres need to intensify their work in understudied areas and museums need to collaborate with institutions that they do not regularly work with despite the inevitable cultural and logistical arduousness.

Emanuele Lugli is Assistant Professor of Art History at Stanford University.

Marsha Meskimmon

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

Current calls to decolonize art history are not discontinuous with earlier interventions that interrogated knowledge production in the field. Nor are recent calls the first insistent challenges to the institutional structures that sustain these knowledges. What does seem clear, however, is that important lessons have been learned from the past calls for change and that the current processes of decolonizing the discipline are especially adept at making connections between all levels of institutional power, knowledge and authority – the authorizing voices of 'value' – and thus the present critique is not so easily being confined to the margins, or to the last chapter of the canonical textbook, as it were.

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What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

Decolonizing art history is an ongoing project; there is no point in the future where we will be able to say 'at last, it is complete: we have decolonized art history.' If that point is taken, then it is equally clear that there is not one model of a decolonized art history, but a range of practices that will continue to change and develop over time.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

In my own work, the impact of transnational feminist thought and activism brings the imperative to decolonize knowledge practices very much to the fore. This is root and branch; the questions being asked by the research, the material that forms the basis of the enquiry, the citational practices and the writing itself are impacted by it. It is increasingly urgent to address the question of *how* we claim to know (rather than *what* we claim to know) and to move away from 'mastering' a field of study towards creating epistemic communities through dialogue.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

I certainly think there are a number of spaces – institutional, epistemic – where the discipline is practised in ways that serve to reinforce colonizing forms of knowledge production, including schools and universities, museums, galleries, archives, auction houses, art publishing and the 'heritage industry'. Decolonizing strategies in each of these spaces will need to be different in order to be effective in their specific contexts, but I hope they will not remain disconnected from one another. Ensuring that connections are made between and across the varied institutional terrain in which art's histories are produced, even when we may not speak each other's languages with ease, is a vital component for lasting change.

Marsha Meskimmon is Professor of Art History and Theory and Director of the Institute of Advanced Studies at Loughborough University.

Parul Dave Mukherji

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

The theoretical frameworks proposed by postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies and Marxism preceded globalization. I take the much used and abused term 'globalization' as a shorthand for the unprecedented flow of people, goods, capital, images and ideas across the globe via the technology of mass media and travel. It has created conditions for a closer contact between nationalities and given rise to new hierarchies most visible in the new labels like the global south and global north. The aspiration for a more egalitarian world order in the 1980s, driven by identity politics around race, class, gender, sexuality and so on, seems like a chimera today. There is a huge gap between

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the theoretical landscape imagined by a discipline like postcolonial studies and today's reality which the new concept of decolonization needs to address. I see this as the challenge of our times.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

Decolonizing art history has to first pitch itself at the level of art theory and then to the writing of 'history'. Basic art-historical concepts and vocabulary need to be problematized and historicized. Take formalism as a method. What are its complicities with nineteenth-century imperialism? Can we flatten cultural difference by seeing commonalities across shape, line, colour and so on? In retrospect, methods of this kind served to domesticate the other. Decolonizing art history has to be aware of the past amnesia perpetuated by formalism, for example, and open up unfamiliar territories from overlooked knowledge systems.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

My current research engages with the concept of decolonizing mimesis. Mimesis, a very slippery term, needs to be redefined away from Eurocentric definitions in which it signifies a domination of the environment through visual appropriation. I have found alternative definitions and concepts in the classical Sanskrit theory of poetics as theorized by ninth- and tenth-century Kashmiri thinkers like Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta, to mention only two major figures. Their concerns are more about mimesis between two producing subjects (between the actor and the audience in a play or between the artist and the spectator in the case of a painting) rather than just between two produced things (between a horse and its image in the latter case). I have developed this shift in my proposition of 'performative mimesis' which is less about a correspondence theory of representation (e.g. the mirror metaphor of representation common in Italian Renaissance imagery, which aims to 'capture' reality) than about mimesis of equivalence. Anandavardhana, for example, deals with mimesis (samvada) in the context of 'copyright' rules in poetry and literature. Accidental similarity between two living bodies is valorized over a reflection of a face in a mirror. A reflected image is too dependent on another body standing before it. If a poem accidentally resembles another, it is permissible but not when there is too much of a correspondence; in which case, we can say poem A (being derivative) only reflects poem B (the source).

At this point, it seems futile to jettison authoritative histories and concepts from mainstream art histories as they help us in mapping the difference. However, the big challenge is how to tackle difference in non-essentialist terms.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

The obvious place for decolonizing art history is curriculum reform which challenges the assumption that art theory has a natural home in the Euro-American context. English, being the lingua franca of discourse, is both enabling and restrictive when it comes to entering conceptually unfamiliar territory. Engagement with alternative art theories entails not just different visual experience but also a different kind of 'difficult'

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language in which concepts are framed. At the very level of typology, Eurocentric art theory reveals its normativity when non-familiar terms are italicized.

However, in today's world of burgeoning nationalism, it is vital that our decolonizing strategies veer clear of jingoism, best avoided via the concept of double consciousness: how to engage with an alternative knowledge system of a culture that may not have produced art history in the normative sense but employed powerful conceptual tools to rethink representation and challenge essentialist thinking. At the same time, a contemporary reader has to be wary of a model of political economy based more on class and gender differences alone, as it does not capture power dynamics arising from caste asymmetries. Decolonizing art history has to reflect sharply as much on the legacy of colonialism as on that of caste-based hierarchies that have shaped and continue to inflect much of Indian art history in the current times of escalating nationalism.

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Jennifer Nelson

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

The previous challenges listed parenthetically in *Art History*'s questionnaire have destabilized postcolonial, gendered, sexual, and class hierarchies. One result has been greater inclusion of marginalized people. However, as is implied in the work of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, and stated outright by Erich W. Steinman, inclusion in the neoliberal order is *not* decolonization, and in fact can detract from decolonial processes.[1] For all their metaphorical 'unsettling' of discourse, none of these projects has inherently made the Indigenous subject their focus as anything but an object of study or a maker of objects of study.

Current calls to decolonize art history share sensitivity to the systemic trauma of settler colonialism and its violent maintenance; its forms, having spread outside literal settler colonization, are global. I call this response to trauma 'step one'. The second step of decolonization would centre the Indigenous subject, not just as a maker or an object of study themselves, but *as* subject: as student, as researcher, as thinker with a relation to their own place systemically replete in itself. The second step also requires dismantling the exploitation of enslaved people and their descendants, an exploitation that systemically renders repleteness ever more unattainable: the workplace overpolices and undervalues the productivity of these populations while affording them ever less opportunity to survive. Decolonization would mean letting Indigenous modes of being drive existence instead.

Step one is bolstered by a shift in (at least Anglophone) psychology: the increased importance of trauma as a heuristic for treatment.[2] The expansion of trauma as a concept, and the practical expansion of the terms PTSD and C-PTSD, coincided with the onset of widespread calls to decolonize curricula and scholarship during the last decade. The terms BIPOC and IBPOC, prioritizing Indigenous people and people who have

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inherited the onus of the Atlantic slave trade, emerged at the same time that 'trigger warnings' and came into public debate.[3]

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

Although in my three years of reconceiving an introductory art history survey I decolonized curriculum *content*, taught about art history's methodological Eurocentrism, and performed 'step one' (pedagogically accounting for trauma), and though I am not as strict in my definition as Tuck and Yang, I am sceptical that art history can be decolonized.

Art history uses art as evidence: of a society, of *Kunstwollen*, of the latest shift in trade in Sulawesi, etc. Often, art history seems to colonize and settle objects as a *terra nullius*, making them productive of ever more meaning by repopulating their relationship to the world. Much object-oriented scholarship can be seen to displace settler subjectivity directly into the object. Can art history accommodate an Indigenous subjectivity that might instead find the object replete in its own immanent and contingent context, that would include further discourse about the object as always already in that self-renewing context?

I am not sure that an evidence-based epistemology can do more than sprinkle in moments of immanence and contingency. If one uses too much, one is no longer doing art history. Creative redefinitions notwithstanding, one must be honest about what art history has been. Though there have been many rich variants on how art history works with its evidence, ultimately it almost always treats objects forensically. This would be fine, niche practice that it is, if the world could decolonize.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

In my book, I try to privilege a co-creation of meaning among objects, their makers and me instead of supporting analyses based only on a chain of forensically determinable events.[4] I am not Indigenous; but this is my version of an art history that does not feel like a crime scene. I have not thrown out evidence, but I try to render things people have made as more than just evidence.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

I think it is important and liberatory, contra reckless free-speechers, that step one is happening in classrooms (in nuanced ways beyond caricature). As for step two, even if art history cannot be decolonized, it should be put in the service of decolonization. Non-Indigenous art historians should first read the section of Tuck and Yang's work about 'settler moves to innocence' and learn from it. All art historians should prepare themselves to marshal their evidence to aid the centring of Indigenous subjects and the dismantlement of legacies of enslavement. This should include providing our services and diverting resources for decolonized approaches to art beyond art history.

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Notes

[1] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1: 1, 2012, 1–40; Erich W. Steinman, 'Decolonization Not Inclusion: Indigenous Resistance to American Settler Colonialism', *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 2: 2, 2016, 219–236.
[2] See, for example, Angela Sweeney *et al.*, 'A Paradigm Shift: Relationships in Trauma-informed Mental Health Services', *British Journal of Psychiatry: Advances (BJPsych Advances)*, 24, 2018, 319–333; and with a narrower focus on the evolution of trauma in the DSM, specifically with regard to the diagnostic criteria for PTSD, see Anushka Pai, Alina M. Suris, and Carol S. North, 'Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in the DSM-5: Controversy, Change, and Conceptual Considerations', *Behavioral Sciences*, 7: 1, March 2017, 7.
[3] There is no authoritative account of the origin of the terms 'BIPOC' and 'IBPOC'. But Google searches for news material and book material using these terms yield nothing till about 2015. (Previously, '#bipoc' was used to refer on Twitter, for example, to bisexual people of colour.) For a useful summary of the development of 'trigger warnings', see Ali Vingiano, 'How the "Trigger Warning" Took Over The Internet', on Buzzfeed, 5 May 2014, https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/alisonvingiano/how-the-trigger-warning-took-over-the-internet; Vingiano notes that while the term had been in use previously, public debates intensified only in the present decade.
[4] *Disharmony of the Spheres: The Europe of Holbein's* Ambassadors, University Park, PA, 2019.

John Onians

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

Colonization and decolonization take many forms. In the physical world colonizing a territory involves disempowering its occupants by taking control of their resources and reducing their agency, while offering them a narrative that helps them to accept their new situation. Something similar can happen in the academic world. In recent decades many art historians have handed over control of the materials they study to theorists whose narrative around the 'social construction of culture' does provide them with important new analytical tools but reduces the range of the explanations they can offer by effectively excluding influences from 'nature'. Decolonization typically involves giving colonized people back their freedom, and the freedom to invoke nature is one that art historians need to recover, if they are to help others to decolonize. This is especially so today, when the system of resources and constraints constituted by nature has never been so well understood, above all in two areas, the external world of the material environment and the internal world of the human body, contact between them being mediated by our nervous systems. Indeed, the mediation of our nervous system is central to the process known as the social construction of culture.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

An essential step toward the decolonization of art history is thus to take advantage of the freedom to invoke nature, by exploring the interconnection between the environment and the nervous system which always and everywhere lies at the basis of culture. It is not just that humans, wherever they live or have lived, always adapt their behaviours to their ecology. All this adaptation has neural correlates. As the latest neuroscience shows, our nervous systems are plastic, that is they are built up by our particular sensory, motor and cognitive activities, so that each experience lays down specific neural connections on which we then depend for our subsequent activities, and the pattern of those connections necessarily provides the basis for our culture. Words can

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be used to share experiences and influence those connections, but since most of those we listen to tend to come from our environment the experiences we share are liable to be similar, and so generate similar neural correlates. There is no clearer demonstration of the need to be able to invoke nature than the recognition that the process that we call social construction has a largely neurological basis, a realization anticipated by Michael Baxandall with his concept of the 'period eye'.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

Decolonization is one of the many projects sustained by World Art Studies, a framework designed to escape the constraining assumptions associated with the existing disciplines dealing with art by treating equally the enormous variety of art of all areas of the world and all periods, as outlined in *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (2008), edited by Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme. The extent to which World Art Studies allows a much wider than usual range of explanations for global variations in art-related behaviours, acknowledging, besides familiar personal, social, economic and political factors the nature of the physical environment and the properties of the human nervous system, is well illustrated by the systematic mapping of artistic activity worldwide in the *Atlas of World Art* (2004).[1] This was created by seventy scholars under my editorship, while the particular relevance of the nervous system itself was demonstrated first in my survey of earlier attempts to invoke it, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny* (2007) and then in *European Art: A Neuroarthistory* (2016), in which I applied the latest neuroscientific knowledge to a single continent.[2]

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

Decolonization in the context of art history requires each individual and institution to acknowledge and engage with other pathologies of our field. Twenty years ago, in the School of World Art Studies at the University of East Anglia, we sought to combat the normative tendency of university departments to rely on similar books written by the same authorities in a limited range of languages. We did this by collecting resources from as many different places and peoples as possible around the globe to create a World Art Library. We collated a great variety of publications, ranging from exhibition ephemera to the catalogues of national museums, in as many languages as possible. The resulting library provides an exceptional survey of, amongst other things, the interests, and often the emotions, of the descendants of both colonized and colonizers.

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Notes

[1] John Onians, ed., *Atlas of World Art* [later *Atlas of Art*], London, 2004 [also in Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Russian and Spanish editions].
[2] John Onians, *Neuroarthistory: From Aristotle and Pliny to Baxandall and Zeki*, New Haven and London, 2007 (paperback and Chinese editions, 2017); John Onians, *European Art: A Neuroarthistory*, New Haven and London, 2016.

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Kymberly Pinder

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

The project of decolonizing art history seems more totalizing than such movements as feminism and postcolonialism. However, all efforts to disrupt the canon destabilize the discipline itself. Decolonization just considers that goal its prime directive. Will we just tweak the discipline again or does it need a complete rebuild from the ground up? Will decolonizing be additive or transformative? Conciliatory or annihilating?

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like?

Art historians are gatekeepers. We 'discover', interpret and preserve objects. We are often defenders of the status quo. Although we have expanded what we deem art, we have not really changed how we bestow such honours. Conservation and the role of the archive are now up for very public and political debate outside of our discipline. Changing the ways we decide whether any object, new or old, is worthy of our time and resources decolonizes art history. The ubiquitous access to all types of imagery and social media's focus on a culture of self-curation make art history either more relevant or merely obsolete. Creating one's own online collection of favourite artworks from the Met or SFMOMA and accessing the collections of other virtual visitors feels more accessible but these museums still allow this access to *their* objects. As a discipline, art history's most productive iterations today are less mediated. Online journals, blogs, Pinterest, Instagram stories and thematic exhibitions that address contemporary issues through a historically fluid lens strive to include more voices.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

As a critical race and mural historian, I see the increase of public art initiatives and organizations around the world as a barometer for art history's future. Public art-making, its collaborative process, curation, and interpretation are steadily dominating the field as an incredibly present and fertile art-historical *methodology* that presents histories through practice and participation from the artists and their audiences in endless ways.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

What happens when scholars include responses from viewers other than themselves in their work? What if their work is largely facilitating instead of didactic? Those art historians who embrace the fragility of their own authority will lead the way in decolonizing art history. We must not only be open to multiple and conflicting narratives but do everything in our power to provide forums for them – and even my inability to write this sentence without colonizing language lies at the crux of why such a project will always be a struggle, but one worth having. The tenure system, publication industry, art market and philanthropy mutually reinforce which art is validated and

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the nature and pace of that validation. These arenas are beginning to acknowledge the centrality of community engagement. Awards such as the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification for universities and colleges and the Mellon Foundation's wide-ranging diversity fellowships in the arts are prime examples of this belated acknowledgement.

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Griselda Pollock

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

South Africa has been the site of convergence for two major political catastrophes of the modern: multiple and contesting European racist colonization since the seventeenth century and the installation of a semi-totalitarian 'concentrationary' society after 1948. The idea of a 'concentrationary' society is developed from Hannah Arendt's three-volume study *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Arendt drew on accounts written by political prisoners who had returned from the concentration camps of Germany after 1945, in particular the 'concentrationary universe' proposed by the French Trotskyist and political deportee, David Rousset, writing in 1946.[1] Arendt understood the 'concentrationary' as a system and instrument of both German and Stalinist totalitarianism. The first volume of her trilogy studied the horrors initiated by both regimes. It focused in particular on the pre-history of their experiments in destroying political life and human dignity that occurred under imperialism. Arendt revealed that colonial imperialism was a necessary foundation for, but not unique cause of, the racist totalitarian empires of the twentieth century. Significantly South Africa, still pre-apartheid until 1948, was one of Arendt's key case studies. Thus, the fact that the call for decolonization has emerged from today's South African students, twenty years after the jubilation at the end of the apartheid system, should not surprise us. Historical specificity in this instance relates to the political or rather *anti-political* convergence of a viciously racist concentrationary society with the historically racist foundations of European colonialism and imperialism. The cultural forms, including thought, fiction, art, science, anthropology, that were at once the product and the alibi of the imperial and colonial project became identical with thought, fiction, art, science, anthropology *tout court* and have been disseminated as culture itself.

The critique of the legacy of empire – the colonized mind – has long been advanced by postcolonial thinkers as part of the struggle for decolonization. It is not new as anyone who has read this literature from the eighteenth century on will know. Indeed, it is clear that the emergence of the new social movements of the 1960s (women's liberation, gay and lesbian liberation, civil rights and student protests) were deeply influenced by a much longer history of anti-colonial political and cultural activism. To go beyond classic Western class struggle, these new social movements drew on the writings of Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, James Baldwin and many other writers. Yet decolonization efforts themselves were inflected with other forms of unquestioned dominant ideologies and imaginaries that were sexist with regard to all women and as Stuart Hall observed, were in denial about black homosexuality.[2]

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I would resist a historical genealogy implied in this question in terms that list 'previous' challenges that place decolonization as the most recent. In the call for decolonization, what is the colonial? Is it imagined exclusively in Marxist terms that are indifferent to overlapping and entwined agonistic patriarchal relations and the complex ideologies and practices of sexual use and abuse in situations of multiple dominations? Surely Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and the critique of its initial formulation offered by many feminist art historians revealed the deep hold of the colonial, within which, however, sexuality and sexual difference as critical axes were not acknowledged.

In art history, a colonial or hegemonic mindset preserves 'the discipline' intact, even if challenged *from outside* by various theoretical projects that clearly enrich it theoretically while never being allowed 'in' enough to deconstruct the original premise of 'the discipline'. These so-called challenges (femininst, queer, postcolonial) represent sustained projects of art-historical writing and thinking, even as they extend the frontiers of what that is by insisting on an already socio-economic-political-colonial-patriarchal structuring of the discourse and 'knowledge' that have constituted art history. As I once rather boldly declared: 'art history' cannot survive feminism because what art history as a discipline has enacted and performatively iterated is a continuing production of a classed, raced, gendered and heteronormative representation of art contested structurally by feminism.[3]

The impact of the 2015 call from South African students has released new energy and urgency with world-wide circulation as a result of the social platforms for dissemination and visible public agitation. It is to be welcomed. It is not, however, new. It emerges now as a desperate indictment of the failure of major hegemonic aspects of the discipline to change in the face of the impact of forty years of postcolonial, queer, feminist, materialist art histories. Why is that the case? The latter represent a deeply political struggle played out on the ground of the symbolic and imaginary spheres of the socio-economic ensemble. Accommodation of and limited permissiveness towards postcolonial, queer, feminist, materialist practices takes the form of labelling them as 'other' to 'the discipline', quarantined as perspectives and approaches, often identified with specific individuals. The historical specificity of the present, namely a response to the 2015 uprising and struggle led by South African students, may well fail to 'know' the specificity and complexity of race/class/gender/sexuality struggles within South Africa. To look at their desperation in the face of failed democratization shields those of us in the North/West from recognizing how consistently 'we' have failed to listen and learn and change, for we have been called upon to do so for centuries and we have had plenty of opportunities. What I can say personally is that I see very little real evidence of the diverse forms of art-historical writing and teaching embracing the theoretico-political frameworks that are necessary for 'decolonizing the mind', to use the title of Ngugi wa Thiong'o's key publication from 1981.[4]

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

There are two levels to my answer. The first involves decolonizing the curriculum, changing what is taught. This means that no class or seminar or lecture can be delivered without the following two questions: what is my class, lecture, seminar doing in relation to challenging the normative hierarchies? is it maintaining the colonial imaginary or is it actively displacing and deconstructing it? At first, the methodology

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for responding to the inevitable, 'yes, I am probably maintaining and reproducing the default position of non-decolonization' is hard work. It cannot be 'I do not know anything else'. As a scholar, you are trained to find out what you do not know. So that is not hard. The difficulty lies in finding the will to do so. This lack is the sign of an endemic political failure to recognize the ease with which each of us reproduces the power relations and axes of difference in which we are ourselves privileged and hence comfortable and confirmed.

The second question is: how does the picture of the world I am producing *look and feel* to those present (or not yet present because already alienated) if they are not white, middle class, Northern/Western straight men and indeed white straight women? How is what I am teaching *unlabelled*, so that it is normatively masculinist, Euro-American, heterosexualizing? What universal words have I used that are not at all universals? What and whom have I othered in just doing what I do and speaking as I do without thinking, that is, without addressing difference and differences that displace my occupation of universality and the normative? Finally, speaking from the lectern or the head of the seminar table in a language that de-universalizes at all times is a powerful methodology even as it aggravates and sounds aggressive to those who have never been named in relation to abuses of power. If I speak of white straight men, each of the adjectives sounds pointed and nasty. Yet if I have to mention that an artist is a woman, the added adjectival woman in 'woman artist' slips by. The effect is that I have unconsciously excluded her because of her gender - and the listeners can ignore her because my evident feminist politics disqualify a woman as 'an artist' and therefore part of the serious field of important art. If I, as a white woman, then name an artist who is a woman as a *black artist-woman* (my way round the adjectival disqualifier problem and so I suggest we also write artist-men) the cue comes from the existence of Black discourse, Black politics, self-naming as a political collectivity or identity and not as a phylogenetic attribute. That must be clear. So, one strategy will be to identify the community of origin, the geopolitical situation and training or the political identification of the artist in question because decolonization involves not merely gestural and thus partial inclusiveness. It calls for real knowledge of the political, discursive and intellectual histories, terminologies and politics of different creative individuals and larger collective struggles. Research again. It is all available to know.

The more as a teacher or lecturer I introduce into the world through language the complexity of the socio-subjective positions from which artists make art and cultures analyse it, the more the individual students in the room and audience are relieved of the imposed silence or required self-naming with regard to 'minority' status. Queering, postcolonializing and developing a feminist analysis for the classroom is not the obligation of the individual student but the person who is responsible for the culture of that moment and that room. This requires work on the part of those who have not felt the need to read feminist, queer, postcolonial and decolonizing texts, theories, studies – because all that 'other stuff" can be left to the postcolonial feminist queers. Then how are these positions themselves to be challenged with regard to the elephant in most rooms: class? The material sociality of class ravages women and men of all societies, sexualities, majority and minority histories. Some of the major decolonizing thinkers were Marxists, but without either feminist or Marxist-feminist inflections. Their patriarchal assumptions were untampered as were their homophobias. Their indifference was also part of the decolonizing re-assumption of colonially destroyed national and cultural traditions by curing the indignities imposed on othered men through re-inscription

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of masculinist nationalist and cultural ideology. So, what we need to undertake is not an uncritical denigration of European traditions but a careful dialectical negotiation of complex positonalities. Let me give one example. Many years ago, the New Left historian Robin Blackburn delivered a lecture on his latest work on enslavement and the struggle for its abolition. He referenced the story of one enslaved African woman who had written a petition on behalf of abolition of enslavement. She declared that she was willing to work and to work hard. What she wanted was for her labour to be recognized as work she willingly undertook. As an enslaved person, her labour had no value. She protested against the fate of being thrown away or allowed to die like a useless dog when too old or infirm to work. Blackburn showed how this woman's argument for the right to her own labour formed a foundation for what was taken in nineteenth-century industrial struggles as workers' rights. His point was that historians had heretofore compartmentalized the colonial and enslavement as separate from the classic territory of Marxist theories of industrial class relations. By doing so, they had failed to see the relations between the resistance of Africans enslaved in chattel slavery and the terms later used by the European working-class and women's movements to articulate and claim new rights. How this project should be written or practised is not for me to define. It is for me to share with you questions I ask myself, the examination I make of my writing and talks, the research I constantly need to do and the terms and language that is needed to change, every day.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

As an art historian born into apartheid South Africa as a privileged white child, who immigrated to Canada and lived in a Francophone, Catholic majoritarian province in the grips of emerging separatism (being neither), my world was already marked by questions of difference that shaped my discontent with the indifference of what I was later offered as a historian and art historian as knowledge. My own academic thinking about difference was shaped in the encounter with student radicalism informed by Western Marxism of the 1960s and then with the Women's Movement and with socialist feminism and Afro-American and British Black feminism. I was then plunged into structuralist/postructuralist and psychoanalytical cultural theory often written by writers from class and geo-political and ethnic minorities, many directly exposed to historical racism. I revolted, therefore, against what I was offered as and in art history. From the start, I used all of these encounters and resources to build a practice that needed perpetually to be challenged for assumptions I did not realize I was making, and in order to respond to demands that were made of me. One question came up quite early. Did I have the right to write about artist-women who were Asian or African or African-Caribbean? This question was posed: can a white woman write about Black women? If I did write, what could I know of another's experience of racism when I was benefiting from my white privilege in a racist world? If I wrote only about white women, was I not implying that artist-women from Black communities were not worthy of entry into art history? Given that my whiteness, class and education gave me a platform and my publications would be read, would my politically sensitive silence have occluding effects? The obligation as an art historian was to write about the art that exists. I have a training in looking and thinking about art. I can practise my craft and use my knowledge. I also have to be silent at times, and listen or overhear conversations of which I cannot be a part. Others have to be centre-stage making the histories. In writing, however, and feeling that I cannot remain silent if silence effaces, I have to respect each

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person as an artist and avoid the ways in which labelling focuses on identity and not the specificity of the artist's project and practice. Yet I am sure to blunder. Or fail to notice things of importance.

Lubaina Himid, an artist about whom I have written over many years, told me that when art historians or critics fail to see something important for her in her work, or say something that really does not fit, this can, however, become an incitement for change. Undesirable as it is for something to go unrecognized, it can indirectly be useful to the artist and lead to a different strategy. This does not make me feel any better when I realize how class, race and sexuality disfigure my insights. It does mean, however, that critical recognition and art-historical respect for artistic work can dialectically, even in the negative, feed into the practice of an artist who, like all artists, desires to be seen, to be recognized for her work, to have critical engagement with her practice and her project. All I can say is that, through study, interviews, reflection, research and commitment, I have blundered on in an ethico-political commitment to the work of artists I consider to have profound importance, especially when their creativity smashes up against the solid wall of indifference.

Regarding the question about 'jettisoning' I would like to make one final comment. When we first introduced an MA in Cultural Studies at Leeds, Kofi Nyaako, a Ghanaian journalist, took the course. As a Marxist intellectual from the tradition of Nkrumah, Kofi Nyaako criticized our core course which introduced Marxism but only as a European project. What about teaching Marx through African writers or Caribbean thinkers such as C. L. R. James or through an Indian postcolonial thinker such as Gayatri Spivak, he asked us? Students could then go back to Marx having started their encounter through the decolonizing uses of his thought in struggles beyond the European continent. Yet when Paul Gilroy was invited to speak to the students on this MA course, what became apparent were differing interpretations of decolonization through the uses of Marx in relation to pan-African politics versus what Gilroy was developing as 'The Black Atlantic'. What this exchange then made visible was that the issue is not one of replacement or even a one-move reorientation but a process that really grasps the complexity of decolonization, which must include and respect the internal complexity of the oppositional field. There might be a danger of creating decolonization-based canons without ensuring that the voices of postcolonial feminist and queer artists and theorists are included. Each domination has to be interrogated intersectionally, from several positions. We can imagine removing the great white men and still having a canon of diverse thinkers who are all 'men' or men-thinking women. We can add 'women' without deep and internally self-questioning feminist theory and end up with nothing very radical and possibly very white. We can queer art history and still silence the specific issues around lesbian theory and experience; or even queering art history we may find we are no longer 'allowed' to consider the category of women at all.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

This call for the decolonization of art history is way too late. The demand has been made. Any self-critical and thinking scholar has to respond, now. It must happen in every instance and location as a daily work. Just as ending patriarchal, racist and heteronormative assumptions that bruise, wound and exclude every day must happen

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every day. I have been working on this for fifty years and have been challenged over those five decades for my own indifference, blindness and stupidity. The key thing is to respond with real work when our own racism, sexism, class privilege and colonial mind-set is called out. Decolonizing must also include continuous engagement with the fabric of human life composed of the threads of race, gender, sexuality, sexual difference, geopolitical inequality and the brutality that is globalizing capitalism.

Griselda Pollock is Professor of Social and Critical Histories of Art at the University of Leeds.

Notes

[1] See Griselda Pollock and Max Silverman, eds, *Concentrationary Cinema: Aesthetics and Political Resistance in* Night and Fog *by Alain Resnais*, London and New York, 2011; *Concentrationary Memory: Totalitarian Terror and Cultural Resistance*, London, 2013; *Concentrationary Imaginaries: Tracing Totalitarian Violence in Popular Culture*, London, 2015; *Concentrationary Art: Jean Cayrol, The Lazarean and the Everyday In Post-War Film, Literature, Music and the Visual Arts*, London, 2019.
[2] Stuart Hall in Isaac Julian's film *Fanon: Black Skin, White Masks*, 1996.
[3] Griselda Pollock, 'Can Art History Survive Feminism', keynote address, Women's Caucus for the Arts, College Art Association annual conference, New York, 1990.
[4] Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*, London and Nairobi, 1981.

Nada Shabout

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

I would assert that the historical specificity of the decolonial is predicated on the mobility and accessibility of the global age. We could argue that despite different socio-historical contexts, the postcolonial and the decolonial still share a similar theoretical framework to some extent. The main difference, however, is that the decolonial calls for abandoning Europe as the point of reference, and hence in essence is a calling to decolonize the postcolonial. As such, the decolonial takes off from where postcolonialism, feminism, etc. stopped or perhaps rather failed to extend beyond the specific exclusions for which they advocated.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

Decolonizing art history would entail a process with several stages that starts by accepting the need to reframe how art historians categorize the world: a re-education of sorts. At the moment, it seems that art history starts by accepting modernism as a European event and accomplishment and then extends back and forth in history with an understanding of European primacy. Consequently, everything else in history that falls within the sphere of European influence is either elucidated as what led to modernism or is its eventual product. Anything else that is outside of that frame of influence is an 'other' that exists in a perpetual state of comparison: trying to defend its existence as worthy of inclusion through explaining the 'dire' socio-cultural consequences and political history that are the result of imperialism and colonialism, and that are ultimately the reason for its exclusion. This is a circular argument that does not allow the postcolonial to escape the binary. Within today's 'global' discourse, a decolonized art history should start by writing in the particularities and specificities

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of all that has been absent from art history, situated within its own historical contexts. Art history needs to practise an inclusion of equal pluralities. There will be no denying the colonial reference, but it should not be allowed to continue as the main and central point of reference for all. As these particular local stories of art-making come together, a more inclusive, non-linear understanding of the world can develop. We would stop teaching the chapters on Islamic art that cover almost thirteen centuries, or the one on China as something that happened out of history or almost on another planet, but rather as a contextualized history with expanded influence. We would then arrive at an understanding that modernism is not a European condition. This would of course necessitate a re-evaluation of the art-historical categories and styles that we have, or at least allow for their loosening. Imagine how the postmodern would be taught then!

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

If achieved, a decolonized art history would accept modern and contemporary Arab art *not* as an 'other' (or as non-Western, pushing from the margins to be recognized) but as an equal participant and contributor to a larger body of knowledge about art. Then I would not have to defend its objects and production against the assessment that they are derivative or imitative. I would not need to teach about art that 'looks like' cubism or surrealism; I refer here to attempts by North American museums to become more inclusive whilst still being restricted by a knowledge produced through colonial eyes. I guess that would necessitate a reimagination of what and how my area of research would advance. I do know that I would be happy to be able to abandon having to assert Arab modernity and focus instead on writing its history.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

Decolonizing art history should happen simultaneously in academia and its writing, and in museums. In time it would extend to other media and social outlets. I would caution that it is not accomplished by simply hiring a non-Western art historian or including non-Western artists in an exhibition, although we accept these steps in good faith. All spaces *must* start with moving away from Europe as the centre and the reference. This is happening more steadily in academia and among younger scholars of the so-called non-West. It needs to occur more rapidly and with a clear intention to be more effective. Many major museums are taking steps to do this as well, some more successfully than others. Mostly they are still struggling with how to shed the reference of Europe while operating within a context of art history that has not yet been decolonized.

Nada Shabout is Professor of Art History at the University of North Texas.

Simon Soon Sien Yong

There are many people who are making different calls to decolonize art history. We can form strategic alliances, but often these obligations still tend to rely on funding systems that perpetuate strict separation between rhetorical gestures of theoretical radicality without attending to the structural mechanism that continues to privilege a neoliberal education culture and economics.

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In his inaugural address delivered at the first general meeting of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1877 at the Raffles Museum and Library in Singapore, then president Archdeacon George Hose pointed to a blown-up incomplete map of the Malay Peninsula and conjoined: 'What a hoard of wealth there is for the Botanist and the Naturalist; and what splendid possibilities for the Planter and the Merchant.'[1]

Herein lies the rub: whilst we have often distinguished the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake from the avarice of instrumentalizing knowledge for the purpose of economic gains, Hose's observations above suggest that they are really flipsides of the same coin. Simply put, just consider for a moment the cost of building and sustaining today's labyrinthine global knowledge infrastructure. At no point could the expansion of such a knowledge system be driven purely by intellectual curiosity untainted by other converging incentives and purposes.

Failure to account for the economic conditions undergirding a knowledge system with a universalist ambition to collect 'worlds' means that the current fad for decolonization tends to be restorative often by means of being additive. Meanwhile, structures such as university rankings continue to police the norms of disciplinary knowledge.

As a result, what does it mean to decolonize in Europe when it does not critically engage in the history of decolonization that attended the formation of postcolonial nation states? Reading the work of intellectuals will not suffice if we do not also attend to the sordid histories of how imperial power structures were perpetuated by the leaderships of many postcolonial nation states.[2] Anyone who refused to act as a comprador and began posing serious challenges to the global economic order was clandestinely removed from power or would be subjected to either various forms of economic sanctions or direct political interference.[3]

With this in mind, my frustration comes principally from some well-meaning mentors and colleagues in established universities in first world countries who ultimately suggest that if I show any promise of being recognized in the field as an art historian, this can only be achieved on the condition that my academic labour produce measurable outputs that have already been decided by the mechanism of global academia – funding structures, publications, links with industry, and forms of accounting.

What we also face is a digital and networked world that allows institutions and spaces wealthy enough the option (often unintentionally) of not listening and assume that the measures and standards to which they adhere are 'global'. This scenario forecloses the possibility of academics becoming more accommodating to different forms of art history. I find it amusing that there is a constant attempt amongst academic art historians operating from institutions in Euro-America, as well as newly-minted graduates of art history returning back to their non-Western home countries, to assert when the occasion permits that formal/visual analysis is the core methodological principle upon which the discipline of art history is built.

While not discounting formalism's methodological importance, the anxiety to assert its centrality to what qualifies as the vital ingredient to produce great art-historical knowledge smacks of Greenbergian fibbing to me. As art history interacts with other fields and sites of knowledge throughout the world, the art historian is bound

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to discover the possibilities of embracing new intellectual genealogies. I am more interested in exploring the dissolution of boundaries where potentials of transforming the discipline can be found.

Over time, I am beginning to learn how to write with a regard for such new genealogies, working for a group of people to whom I owe moral, emotional and intellectual debts. They make me human and I insist on calling them my community. I write without fidelity to schools of thought, universities, or theoretical frameworks. My current book project is a creole history of nineteenth-century Muharram processions in the Malay world. Undertaking this research requires me to perform new roles: running workshops for non-university affiliated publics on using digital archives to research colonial histories; initiating a reading group on the history of Islam and modernity in the Malay world; performing the role of a curatorial and historical interlocutor within an interdisciplinary forum on migrant workers, global logistics and unequal citizens in contemporary global contexts; and finally as an artist who collaborates with other artists in Southeast Asia.

I am very taken by the Malay-Islamic concept of the *salsilah*, or genealogy. When inflected with the shamanistic Malay world concept of *asal*, or origin, genealogical recitation is not merely a rehearsed genuflection (to intellectual forebears, schools of thought, theoretical or professional allegiances). I prefer to learn about their *salsilah* and *asal* as imagined in the Malay world. Unlike the Middle East, lines of descent in the *salsilah* of the Malay world are inventive, tubular, encompassing. One's *asal* is never where one comes from, but where one finds a home in the world and therefore one can possess many *asals*. My *salsilah* stretches from Abdullah bin Mohammad (Nakula) to Kang Youwei, Alice Guilermo to Doreen Valiente, S. Durai Raja Singam to Mahani Musa, John Clark to James Francis Warren, Reynaldo Ileto to Rosalind Krauss. I seek to open myself to different types of intellectual formation, and not let nation, skin colour or geographical location get in my way.

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Notes

[1] George Hose, 'Inaugural Address', *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, July 1878.
[2] See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*, London, 1986; and Mark T. Berger, 'After the Third World? History, Destiny and the Fate of Third Worldism', *Third World Quarterly*, 25: 1, 2004, 9–39.
[3] See, for example, '1948–1991: US Intervention and War in South East Asia', 9 September 2006, www.libcom.org/articles/sout-east-asia-us-intervention.

Jeannine Tang

I write from the occupied lands of the Lenape peoples, to recognize and acknowledge their community, elders past and present, and future generations. I am an uninvited guest and settler on Turtle Island, an inhabitant of institutions founded upon the structure of settler colonialism's erasure and exclusions of Indigenous peoples. Although this land acknowledgement is not intended, by itself, as redress to colonization, nor do I understand its meaning as essential to different Indigenous peoples, I begin as such in hopes of unsettling my own reflection and learning. Beginning with reflection upon ongoing dispossessions of land and resources is to refuse the distinction of cultural

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work from these political conditions.[1] I understand decolonizing art history within a decolonial project of acknowledging, supporting and participating in centuries-long struggles for Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination, against the violence of settler colonialism, the mass dispossession of people from lands and territories, the extraction of cultures and resources, the imposed extinction of languages and forms of animate life. And to honour and support what Gerald Vizenor has called 'survivance' – a term connecting survival and resistance as a form of active Native 'narrative presence over absence nihility and victimry'.[2]

The decolonization of art and its histories by Indigenous peoples has already unsettled the ground upon which the art and the relationships that comprise it may be conceived and practised.[3] Whether in the reciprocal and respectful relation between a writer and those persons engaged or referenced in a text, and the gathering, interpretation and hermeneutics of information understood as research, the significance of methods encompassing sharing, story and ceremony, the unmaking of Enlightenment values that continue to underpin cultures, organization and forms of knowledge within universities, the transformation of curatorial, exhibitionary and educational methods through community negotiations to privilege relation – in all these and more, Indigenous peoples have already offered alternative philosophies, modes of being and values by which cultures, living history and relation may be practised, understood, described, and stewarded.[4] As historian, artist and curator Jolene Rickard has stated, 'Indigenous artists are already part of the global dialogue on contemporary art' and how it is 'important to broaden the current analytical framework for Indigenous art to create a global Indigenous cultural network that includes the field of Indigenous Studies and the UNPFII'.[5] Rickard coined the term 'global Indigenous art' to emphasize especially those 'whose works show an acknowledgement of the ongoing conditions of colonial settler nations, the continuing dispossession of land and resources, and an awareness of Indigenous worldviews as part of the future of global cultures'.[6]

In describing 'global Indigenous art', Rickard significantly conjoins – while not conflating – the Indigenizing of prevailing frameworks of global cultures, and critical responses to the persistence of settler colonialism through foreclosures of land and resources. I am reminded of how Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang have argued that, 'decolonization is not a metaphor', to critique the 'ease with which the language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education and other social sciences'.[7] They argue for the distinctiveness of decolonizing settler colonialism from other rights-based social justice projects and the necessity of not subsuming it into them.[8] When conversations on decolonizing schools, methods and thought proceed without reference to Indigenous struggles for recognition of sovereignty, contributions by Indigenous intellectuals and activists, or immediate contexts of settler colonialism, 'this kind of inclusion is a form of enclosure, dangerous in how it domesticates decolonization' while 'also a foreclosure, limiting in how it recapitulates dominant theories of social change'.[9]

For Tuck and Yang, decolonization requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life to Indigenous peoples, and desettlement of non-Indigenous persons and cultures. Curator and writer cheyanne turions references Tuck and Yang's overall critique of how 'settler moves to innocence', in which settlers attempt to alleviate and reconcile their guilt and complicity, with the consequence of further entrenching settler futurities; turions also draws on frameworks of decolonization to understand work with cultural objects, ideologies and interrogations of gallery and cultural spaces. Citing the writings

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and work of David Garneau on cultural decolonization in the Canadian context, turions explores the ironies of settled adaptations, and new modalities of Indigenous being that involve contemporary negotiations with different settled and Indigenous, Aboriginal and international cultural identities.[10] Or, as turions argues via Garneau, 'decolonization is specific' in its space, actions and impulses.[11]

In reflecting on several trajectories of recent decolonial epistemologies in contemporary art by prominent Indigenous intellectuals, it is palpable how decolonial references in art history and curatorial studies have increased more broadly. Decolonial art, knowledge, criticism, exhibitions and histories by Indigenous peoples have been developed throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries if not longer; however, the past ten years of recognition by non-Indigenous scholars, curators and editors working in more mainstream contexts is striking. In many ways this is an important recognition and unsettling of modern and contemporary art history. At the same time, I am also concerned when work does not centre recognition of or relation to Indigenous intellectual and social life, and when work is not positioned against the necropolitical and settler colonial targeting of Indigenous peoples, their lands and resources. I wonder if the resurgence of notions of decolonization is sometimes unconsciously driven by widespread experiences of extraction and dispossession, historically forced upon Indigenous peoples, with effects – including those of climate crisis – now generalized to those whose safety and accumulation were founded on this violence.

When fantasies of protection by settler state interpellation are now so evidently disabused, I hope our responses do not further entrench political frameworks that recuperate forms of wealth, futurity, protection and rights originally founded on colonial state violence. The time has always been now, to centre Indigenous survivance and sovereignty, not to extract from Indigenous peoples yet again in the grammar of decolonization. The research, writing and teaching of art history can continue to listen and stand with demands for the repatriation of lands and redistribution of resources, the honouring of treaties and Indigenous stewardship of their cultures and lands. As historians, in our writings, forms of relation, demands of those institutions and states that house us and our work, we can endeavour to enact values opposed to extraction, profiteering, dispossession and premature death, to respect and desire Indigenous futurity, by way of old, renewed and renegotiated philosophies, entanglements, forms of relation, kin and care to be present in the work that we produce, and the lives we support.[12]

Even as I cite these recent epistemological interventions as ones that have guided my own work and teaching in contemporary art history, they are by no means intended to centre the dualism of settler-Indigenous as the only axis of thought, nor are they cited as representatives of an extremely diverse field of political positions and concerns. As Paul Chaat Smith recently wrote, 'I see it as a powerful blow against white supremacy to insist that vast amounts of post-contact Native history is not a binary struggle between settler and the Indigenous. That history is complicated and scary and dense, precisely because it centers around political agendas of Indian peoples rather than a neatly constructed 21st-century fantasy that everything that ever happened to us is about the white man. It wasn't. It isn't. These are difficult but worthy projects for my intellectual brothers and sisters who consider themselves social justice warriors. Join me if you dare.'[13]

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Notes

[1] See cheyanne turions and Sadia Shirazi, 'the cuts', in the proceedings of *Indigenous New York: Critically Speaking*, New York, 11 March 2017: http://www.veralistcenter.org/media/files/8e6c745fbf4ddcb6f61d2ee6a8a651ff.pdf. See especially turions' words on the relationships between territorial acknowledgements and resource and power redistribution, and her connection between acknowledging territory and other 'structures of dispossession' like those 'at work in, for instance, the seven/six nations travel band' as both bound up in 'an ongoing colonial project and a ubiquitous white supremacy' that conditions us.
[2] Gerald Vizenor, 'Aesthetics of Survival: Literary Theory and Practice', in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, Lincoln, NE and London, 2008, 1. Vizenor elaborates: 'Survivance stories create a sense of presence and situational sentiments of chance. Monotheism takes the risk out of nature and natural reason and promotes absence, dominance, sacrifice and victimry. Survivance is a practice, not an ideology, dissimulation, or a theory. The theory is earned by interpretations, by the critical construal of survivance in creative literature, and by narratives of cause and natural reason. The discourse on literary and historical studies is a theory of irony. The incongruity of survivance as a practice of natural reason and as a discourse on literary studies anticipates a rhetorical or wry contrast of meaning' (12).
[3] Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1: 1, 2012, 5. 'Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand, in this article). Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. This violence is not temporally contained in the arrival of the settler but is reasserted each day of occupation. This is why Patrick Wolfe (1999) emphasizes that settler colonialism is a structure and not an event.'
[4] For an extremely brief list of references, see: Paul Chaat Smith, *Everything You Know About Indians Is Wrong*, Minnesota, 2009; Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Contesting Knowledge: Museums and Indigenous Perspectives*, Lincoln, NE and London, 2009; Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London and New York, second edn, 2012; Margaret Elizabeth Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts*, Toronto, 2009; 'Community + Museum' and 'Museum + Community' guidelines at the School of Advanced Research: https://sarweb.org/guidelinesforcollaboration/; Pip Day, 'When the Colonizer Comes to Stay', in *How Institutions Think: Between Contemporary Art and Curatorial Discourse*, New York, 2017, 86–99; Jane Anderson and Kim Christen, *Local Contexts*: http://localcontexts.org/.
[5] Jolene Rickards, 'The Emergence of Global Indigenous Art', in *Sakahan: International Indigenous Art*, exh. cat., Ottowa, 2013, 54.
[6] Rickards, 'The Emergence of Global Indigenous Art', 54.
[7] Tuck and Yang, 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor', 2.
[8] Tuck and Yang, 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor', 2.
[9] Tuck and Yang, 'Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor', 3.
[10] cheyanne turions, 'Other Electricities', in *Other Electricities: Works from the AGW Collection*, exh. cat., Windsor, Ontario, 2013, 6.
[11] turions, 'Other Electricities', 6.
[12] Janet Berlo and Jessica Horton, 'Beyond the Mirror: Indigenous Ecologies and "New Materialisms" in Contemporary Art', in *Third Text 120: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*, ed. T. J. Demos, January 2013, 17–28.
[13] Paul Chaat Smith, 'The Most American Thing Ever Is In Fact Native Americans', Walker Art Center blog, posted 20 September 2017: https://walkerart.org/magazine/paul-chaat-smith-jimmie-durham-americans-nmai-smithsonian.

Deniz Türker

What is the historical specificity of current calls to decolonize art history? How are they different from previous challenges to the discipline (such as postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism)?

The most remarkable aspect of the current calls to decolonize art history, at the level of the discipline within the university, is that they are largely student led. The movement not only reflects students' dissatisfaction with the Eurocentricity of the established curriculum but also the intellectual rigour behind their awareness of such exclusivity. While young scholars at postgraduate level are finding their way into non-Western subject matter and relevant theoretical grounding through individualized, closer, more directed work, newcomers to the field often lack wider geographical and cultural representation in what they are taught. There is no denying that their sentiments are deeply impacted by the current global climate of nationalism, populism and isolationism; therefore, their call should be acknowledged as a form of commendable

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resistance. However, it is important to note that their methodological approach to this disciplinary resistance is informed by their knowledge of former challenges to the discipline including but not limited to postcolonialism, feminism, queer studies, Marxism and critical race theory. Lastly, the push for change from within is indicative of growing diversity among the student and faculty body. What matters most now is to celebrate what such diversity brings, to be attentive to its various concerns, and strive to maintain and even expand it.

What is your understanding of decolonizing art history now? What does a decolonized art history look like? How should it be written/practised?

In thinking through this broad question, strictly in terms of a humanistic field of instruction in a university setting, decolonizing art history offers an invaluable opportunity for scholars in the field to rethink their curricula. For instance, one way to achieve increased representation of visual cultures previously neglected in the art-historical survey is by finding ways to teach art history in a diachronic manner, which cuts across geographies along synchronous timelines. Rather than attempting to distil a periodic zeitgeist, the intention can be to allow students to have a referential, comparative, global repertoire of their wonderfully expansive field. It would also mitigate the perpetuation of an art-historical telos, which asserts that a Western classical past informs an allegedly Western modernism. In the methodological domain, although theories, histories and methodological parameters of European art might have been constructed mostly by white men (which in itself is a reflection of institutional biases highlighted by Linda Nochlin and others), there have been non-Western thinkers just as occupied with making sense of their visual environments and writing about them. In rethinking how we introduce the field to a new generation of art historians we should aim to incorporate these texts, now with accessible translations.

A diachronic, globalized art history will, of course, not absolve the field from having to tackle the repercussions of cross-cultural encounters in colonial contexts. Behind any object that commemorates victory lies inequity and loss, and the best kind of art-historical method is one that approaches its subject matter with that in mind. Therefore, as a quick example, when introducing museum histories, especially those with claims to universality and heritage preservation, it is up to us to underscore power imbalances that have direct effects on rights to cultural artefacts.

How might the decolonization of art history impact upon your own area of research/practice? What would be produced from it? Might anything have to be jettisoned?

In many ways, the field of Islamic art is an accidental by-product of a form of disciplinary decolonization that took place at the turn of the twentieth century against classical humanism. It was a young group of radical art historians, unconvinced by the Rome-centred historiographical purview of the field, who ventured into understudied geographies and their artefacts. Though this quest led some into dangerous ideological territories, it nevertheless placed early 'Islamic' monuments such as the Mshatta palace at the centre of the most heated art-historical debates of the interwar years. If anything, queries that question the boundaries of any field will break new ground.

Already a few decades in practice, postcolonial theory has taught scholars, who work on non-Western imperial actors, to never lose sight of the fact that these figures might

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have committed similar acts of repression, othering, and orientalizing to the empire's minorities.

Where should decolonization in relation to art history happen? What strategies might different spaces for decolonization demand?

I began to explore the first part of this question above with a diachronic global art history survey in the setting of a university. In two other settings, Gülru Necipoğlu formulated what she called 'synchronous geohistories': for the completely reworked displays of the Pergamon Museum, Berlin, and later for the most recent survey book on Islamic art and architecture that she co-edited with Finbarr Barry Flood.[1] Certain museums, previously staged as repositories of colonial imperialism, have pioneered ways of coming to terms with their past, ahead of the field's instruction in the classroom. Institutions such as Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (*The Past is Now*), Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum (*Multaka-Oxford*) and Cambridge's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (*Untold Histories* Museum Tours) have initiated repatriation efforts, ways to engage with cultures whose artefacts were plundered and/or whose knowledge and memories about these objects were crucial, and tours and wall labels that are honest about the provenance of objects.

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Notes

[1] Gülru Necipoğlu, 'The Concept of Islamic Art: Inherited Discourses and New Approaches', in *Islamic Art and the Museum: Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber and Gerhard Wolf, London, 2012, 57–75. Reproduced electronically in *The Journal of Art Historiography*, 6: 1, June 2012 (special issue, 'Islamic art historiography' guest edited by Moya Carey and Margaret S. Graves).

Kamini Vellodi

The call to liberate the subjects, practices and discourses of art history from colonialist, Eurocentric and imperialist frameworks extends calls for its 'globalization' that have been part of the discipline's self-interrogation and practice for decades. It also affirms the critical ethos of the art-historical practices of the 1970s and 1980s that drew on tenets of Marxist, feminist and postcolonial theory to expose and challenge previously hidden ideological assumptions of the discipline.

Decolonization adds to these histories in two ways: first, in taking its aim at the university as a privileged locus of colonial legacies and reciprocal relations of knowledge and power; second, decolonization projects a revisionist intent, proposing not only exposure but the displacement of Euro-American figures and texts from the historiography and current practice of the discipline. Here the provocation invoked by a certain investment of the prefix 'de' – of destroying, negating, reversing, removing (rather than, for instance, the temporal connotations of 'post') – comes to the fore. Thus the 'whiteness of the curriculum' would be undone, and replaced by 'figures of colour'.

Such essentialist thinking must be countered through considered appraisal of the stakes of the debate that expose the 'differences in the origin' rather than obliterating

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those origins. By affirming its continuity with the postcolonial theories that oriented themselves through post-structuralist 'philosophies of difference' – undermining the universals, binaries and essentialism associated with the imperialist image of Western thought – decolonization can ensure a practice of critique that is more nuanced, and indeed more anti-imperialist, than one that simply replaces 'white' or European with a 'non-white' or non-Western curriculum.[1]

The 'historical specificity' of current calls to decolonize university education is inseparable from their geo-political specificity. That the *Rhodes Must Fall* student protest movement began in South Africa, and spread to Europe and to the US, reminds us that the meaning of decolonization is not unified or normative but – like the histories of colonialism, decolonization and postcolonialism themselves – assumes different characteristics and poses different imperatives with respect to heterogeneous lived necessities and collective experiences. If it is to avoid being re-colonized as a purely disciplinary question posed by art historians in Euro-American departments, the question of the stakes of decolonization cannot be separated from the question of *who* is calling for it and the variations in the way this call is posed across the globe.

Decolonizing art history *today* prompts reflection not only on the history of art history's complicity with the colonial sovereignty of Western empires, and the reinforcement of this complicity through the early histories of universities and museums that comprised the dual institutionalizing origin of the discipline, but also on the global condition of current art-historical practice – namely, the embedding of scholarship within a global network crossing academia, museums and galleries, publishing, the art market and art production.

As such, the question of decolonizing art history needs to be posed alongside the question of decolonizing art. The global reality of art production since the 1980s shows how dated (and still modernist) the binary distinctions of 'West' and 'non-West' are. To pose the question of decolonization as contemporary rather than historicized, art history needs to launch its enquiries from an acknowledgement of the transformed condition of the object of its study. The global character of contemporary art supplies new frameworks of intelligibility for a contemporary practice of decolonizing art history.

At stake here is the very understanding of the term 'art history'. Do we address art history as a discipline formed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, or from the perspective of the collective practices of reflection and writing on art, images, cultural objects and aesthetic practices that have accompanied their production across the world? The latter displaces the preoccupation with art history's disciplinary origins, legacies and burdens with a more elastic concept sensitive to the plasticity of its transhistorical and transcultural material. This in turn permits an inclusion of global discourses of art, both before and after colonialisms, into reflections on the history of art history. Many would argue that such expansion is precisely what has emerged in interdisciplinary spaces such as visual and material cultures and image studies. But the question is not to cipher off critical interrogations into other fields, but to harness this critique to transform art history as a category.[2]

Expansion alone is not enough. Decolonizing art history cannot only be about diversifying content, returning to supposed 'authentic' histories before colonialism, and/or exposing the colonialist historiography of the discipline and its objects. In themselves, such interventions do not eradicate the imperialist or colonialist vestiges

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in its ongoing practice. Rather, it needs to address the form of art-historical thought, and not only the content of what it thinks about. That is, the decolonization of art history must proceed as a reassessment and critique of the epistemological, rational and representational *thinking* that marks art history's scholarly debt to its eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European roots.[3] Critical historiography and the introduction of new material that challenges the dominance of Euro-American content needs to be accompanied by a loosening of the project of knowing from these disciplinary roots, and on the practice of other ways of thinking, knowing and learning.

Here, it seems useful to stress a difference between 'decolonizing art history', a critical process whose forms can't be predicted in advance, aimed at the unhinging of the discipline's ground such that *it cannot continue as it did before*, and a 'decolonized art history', which – like 'feminist art history', 'postcolonial art history', etc. – reappropriates the critical term as a new attribute of a discipline *that continues* (reintegrating the critical term as a disciplinary method). The former in turn requires the explicit confrontation with and prising apart of fundamental, and often assumed, categories of art-historical enquiry – such as time, space, history, experience, subjectivity and thought – and their genealogy in intellectual history.

Framing the discussion of decolonization with respect to 'areas of research' seems counter-productive. Specialisms manifest as bordered territories that academics protect and defend through a mastery of knowledge that confers authority – two of the imperialist values that decolonization ostensibly seeks to challenge. In contrast, work that is broad-ranging, that precariously moves between fields of study, without allegiances, and in so doing confronts institutional impositions on the products of scholarship, is not encouraged by the academy, especially not in young scholars. But to my mind this is precisely the kind of work that a decolonizing art history calls for.

That many undergraduate 'Survey/Introduction' courses in Anglo-American art history departments continue to foreground chronological narratives of Western art history shows how little previous critical interventions such as postcolonial theory have impacted upon the core values that shape pedagogical practice. If art history is to invest the call to decolonize as an opportunity to radicalize its practice and teaching, it needs to embrace new tenets oriented by values of critique, hermeneutic reflection, risk, problematization, lateral conceptualization, active interrogation, and the *passage of ideas*, in place of knowledge of facts, certainty, specialist mastery, and the *settling of ideas*.[4] Decolonization invites much more than new reading lists and objects of study: it offers an opportunity to challenge and transform the very nature of art history as a practice of thought.

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Notes

[1] Both Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak exposed the inner variations of monolithic terms like 'West' and 'non-West', and showed that models written in the West, such as deconstruction, were anti-colonial and anti-imperialist in their values (cf. Jacques Derrida's critique of the 'white mythology' of metaphysics), unhinging Western thought from within. I do not see the project of decolonizing art history as calling for the exclusion of theories and figures and practices of the 'West' – the absorption of which, we must remember, *irrevocably transformed* colonized cultures, including in the emergent diasporic communities that were embedded in the West – but rather of exposing and challenging unexamined values, including epistemological certainty. In this sense, Gadamer's notion of 'effective-historical consciousness' by which the interpreter makes himself aware of their own historicality

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remains a potent tool. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming, London, 1975, 267–268, 324.
[2] As explored in the important interrogations of scholars such as James Elkins, John Onians, David Summers, David Carrier and Claire Farago.
[3] As such, projects such as Georges Didi-Huberman's critique, in *Confronting Images* (University Park, PA, 2000), of art history's 'tone of certainty' is decolonizing without being about the 'non-West'.
[4] 'Methodologies' classes might be replaced by training in: (1) Critical conceptualization – the interrogation of leading concepts of art history such as history, art, time, language; (2) Critical historiography – the interrogation of the hidden histories of art history, accompanied by exposure to a broader range of material and sources; (3) Critical presentism – art-historical enquiry explored through a critical interrogation of the present.

Francesco Ventrella

Writing under dangerous circumstances in 1940, Walter Benjamin suggested that 'to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognise it "the way it really was". It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger.'[1] Thus he identified the task of historical materialism with the destruction of the myth of facticity. Danger is what I think also makes present calls to decolonize the discipline historically specific: the danger of neo-populist claims to identity, the danger of police shooting black bodies in the streets, the danger of deportation, forced migration, and of being left dying at sea, the danger of modern slavery. 'The danger', Benjamin concluded, 'affects both the content of the tradition and its receivers'.[2] We must recognize the interdependence between the writing of history and the mobilization of traumatic memories in the present if we want to undo a version of the past that masquerades hegemonic power with tradition. It is therefore from a position of danger that calls to decolonization are making art history matter urgently today.

It may have become a cliché to state that art history, a nineteenth-century discipline fixated with identity and national encampments, is implicated with modernity's colonial project. Coloniality is in fact rooted in historical conditions that art historians need to delink if they want to disrupt the linear periodizations that maintain the effects of modernity's aesthetic consistency, which made that which was distant from Europe appear unmodern.[3] 'Decolonial thinking', writes Walter Mignolo, 'strives to delink itself from the imposed dichotomies articulated in the West, namely the knower and the known, the subject and the object, theory and praxis'.[4] But while this project already makes sense in theory, it is only in practice that it can be verified. The intention to diversify the curriculum by expanding the global range of themes and objects is certainly commendable. We assume such aspirations are good. Only, it is easier to be judged on good intentions, rather than by the effects of behaviours because behind good intentions we can leave unquestioned the conditions by which some of us are entitled to particular resources of knowledge.[5] Who are the 'others' that we reproduce in our discussions about decolonizing art history? Nirmal Puwar's critique of a new-century politics of inclusivity may be useful in asking how the subject of a decolonized art history is being created. Neither bodies nor the spaces this subject occupies are neutral: 'the observation of more or less different bodies statistically, in terms of "race" or gender, in the predominantly white and male echelons of power does not by itself speak of the contradictory terms of their existence, or, indeed, how their presence is received in an overwhelmingly white or male outfit'.[6] I wonder how we can start to rethink art history from these questions of socialized space.

In a recent article on decolonization and repatriation, V&A director Tristram Hunt celebrates the fact that numbers of BAME schoolchildren visiting the museum are

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going up, but he does not ask how they may feel during their visit.[7] I am not calling here for more visitor questionnaires and metric evidence of the emotions at work during a museum tour. However, the question of how museum narratives make one feel excluded, uncomfortable, or in the wrong place calls into question processes of memory and remembering which are essential to discuss decolonization. Instead, Hunt defends the structure and form of the encyclopaedic survey museum: 'there remains something *essentially valuable* about the ability of museums to position objects beyond particular cultural or ethnic identities, curate them within a broader intellectual or aesthetic lineage, and situate them within a wider, richer framework of relationships while allowing free and open access, physically and digitally'.[8] Nowhere in the article does he unpack how the encyclopaedic universal museum fabricated the categories of what is *essentially valuable* only to justify its own mission, but he dismisses the historical arguments proposed by the decolonizing movement as 'dictated by a political timetable'. Hunt's discussion not only creates a fraught opposition between temporalities, in which the timetable of the decolonizing movement is devalued in order to revalue the version of history embodied in the encyclopaedic survey museum. What is being devalued there is also the ability for some people to speak for themselves, and to represent their strategies of resistance, *in spite of* the material categories of oppression maintained by the very aesthetic structures of the encyclopaedic survey museum. Creating a space for anti-colonial stories of resistance in art history and in museums is a necessary transformation if we want to move on from reproducing only the voice of the colonial museum and of a white male director whenever we talk about decolonization.

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Notes

[1] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, London, 1999, 247.
[2] Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', 247.
[3] On the colonial temporalities of modernity, see Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps: Nations, Culture and the Allure of Race*, London and New York, 2004.
[4] Walter D. Mignolo, 'Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality', *Afterall*, 43, 2017, 42.
[5] Robin DiAngelo, 'My Class Didn't Trump My Race: Using Oppression to Face Privilege', *Multicultural Perspectives*, 8: 1, 2006, 55.
[6] Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place*, Oxford, 2004, 10.
[7] Tristram Hunt, 'Should Museums Return their Colonial Artefacts?', *The Guardian*, 3 July 2019: https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jun/29/should-museums-return-their-colonial-artefacts [accessed 4 September 2019].
[8] Hunt, 'Should Museums Return their Colonial Artefacts?' [my italics].

Toshio Watanabe

All terms such as decolonization, globalization or transnationalism have their own history of ups and downs. Within the context of fluctuations in preferences of these terms, 'decolonization' seems to have gained momentum within the last few years. What is quite notable is that with some exceptions the debates on decolonization have been largely Euro-centric. What I mean by this is that in most cases the colonizers being discussed are from the West and the colonized are not. Of course, the discussion has moved on to a more nuanced level from the 'West dominates East' formula of the pioneering 1978 *Orientalism* by Edward Said. Investigations into hybridity or contact zones are such examples, but still in most cases the 'baddies' are the Westerners.

What I am interested in in my current research is Japanese colonialism in Asia, an East versus East scenario. The Japanese have learned a lot from the West which unfortunately

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included colonialism. From about the 1890s to 1945, colonialism was a major feature of the Empire of Japan and we are still going through a painful process of decolonization. I am at an early stage of a project on 'Gardens and the Memory of the Asia Pacific War' for which decolonization would play a central role and I am already quite overwhelmed by so many issues piling up.

The first one is the selectivity of memories, because, whether consciously or unconsciously, a memory is a choice both of what to remember and what to forget. Therefore, your memory and my memory of the same event are very likely to be different. This would apply to all memory-based evidence. As historians, we have to sort out this morass to reach a picture of an event which would be the closest to what actually happened. A big dilemma I have not yet resolved satisfactorily in relation to this issue is whether in some cases forgetting is a virtue and could lead to a more peaceful world.

The second one is my own unconscious bias. My starting point is that, as a Japanese person, I am probably unconsciously biased against the Koreans, because I am steeped in the Japanese information sphere, but then need to find out more and check my own possible bias constantly, while still being true to scholarly integrity, examining and analysing evidence whether the outcome is pro- or anti-Japanese. In spite of this, personally I find the open hostilities shown by activists on both sides emotionally troubling.[1]

The third one is about justice. For most researchers dealing with decolonization, this issue is probably foremost in their mind and even their motivation for doing it. As an example, I find how Bryan Stevenson presents this issue in his 2014 book *Just Mercy* most inspiring. Also my blood boils when I see how the Japanese police, judiciary and media treated the rape case of Shiori Ito.[2] For me it was a clear case of justice betrayed. However, I also have a constant nagging worry whether shouting for justice is always the most productive way forward.

This leads to my fourth issue and that is how to deal with victimhood. This is so far the most difficult one for me. In one way it is not that problematic to point out atrocities and find blame where it is due. I find it more difficult when I come across what could be described as a wallowing in victimhood. I know even saying this much is probably offensive to many people. Most Japanese probably think that they carry a sense of victimhood regarding the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombs, but they are probably less worried about what the Japanese did during the Nanjing massacre or what happened to the Korean comfort women. Is this right and if not, what can we do as researchers?

There are no easy answers and I am still grappling with these questions, but for me one exemplary case shows how we should go forward. The War and Women's Human Rights Museum in Seoul is not a museum of comfort women by name, but deals mostly with them. The Japanese atrocities are properly recorded, but the main feature I took away was the women's own voices. When I visited the museum, there was a corner which announced the recent death of one of them with a photograph, and visitors could put a white flower in front of it. What I was most impressed by in this museum was that they have also pointed out that Korean soldiers in Vietnam ran comfort stations there, and apologized to the Vietnamese for these atrocities.

Certainly, if I am a perpetrator, I should never forget about the ill-doings I have committed, but what about if I am a victim? How could I escape from the yoke of

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perpetual victimhood? Memory is not something unchanging kept in a drawer, but is created afresh by overwriting the old memory every time one remembers.[3] Apologies from the perpetrator, or the victim's hitherto unheard voice being listened to, or just one's hands being held, are possible ways for softening the harsh memories I have as a victim. However, if I am a victim, would some kind of forgetting lead to at least a modicum of peace? Is forgetting as a weapon against the memory of victimhood perhaps only the prerogative of the victims themselves and not for others? Our research on decolonization continues…

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Notes

[1] The documentary film *This Island is Ours* (dir. Nils Clauss and Alexander Bukh, 2016) describes, without any commentary, two opposing activists and was for me the most thought-provoking piece on this issue.
[2] Shiori Ito is a journalist and filmmaker and was at a tavern in Tokyo with Noriyuki Yamaguchi, a prominent TV journalist, and was regarded as quite close to the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe. After she got 'drunk', Yamaguchi took her to a hotel and she accuses him of raping her there. Since the criminal charges did not succeed, she is currently going through civil proceedings. The BBC film 'Japan's secret shame' (20 June 2018) vividly describes this case including CCTV footage of him taking into the hotel a very 'intoxicated' Ito.
[3] Julia Shaw, *The Memory Illusion*, London, 2016.

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