

## Re-inventing politic and aesthetics in a white art academy

**Krishan Rajapakshe**  
visual artist and designer

*A (more) decolonized art history may be possible if we are able to rethink both what we teach and how we teach it. How might this manifest through re-reading and reassessing the traditional canon? How might it manifest through challenging the traditional lecture format, inviting students to relate to each other and their own histories more closely?*

*Decolonial Strategies for the Art History Classroom*  
zine for sharing exercises and resources  
assembled by Amber Hickey and Ana Tuazon

Politics have to be reinvented. German art schools and most of the white students and teachers are too comfortable with the privilege they have been consuming. It's even dangerous to them but it's becoming deadly to people who are non-white. It seems that we cannot separate the notion of an art school from the white nation-state ideology. There is nothing to hide, especially since the European art schools are serving the power of the white Europeans. German art school is its prime example.

Art schools are producing aesthetics that the white national state is asking for. For a long time, art schools never get confronted with BIPoC politics or aesthetics. These environments keep (re)producing visual language that fits into white ideology. While we demand a "safer" space for BIPoC students in the art school, we must reinvent politics and aesthetics from the perspective of art and design education.

In my paper, I will talk about my practice as an artist who is teaching. I will also share the politics of teaching in *the \*foundationClass* anti-racist art school programme at the Weissensee School of Art and Design Berlin open for artists and designers who were forced to flee from their home countries and have to experience racism.

Creating, learning, and unlearning a space and playground for the neglected Global South art and design related knowledge. Also confronting the ugly relationship between the capitalistic art market and the art school in order to raise and create awareness regarding how the racist-capitalistic system keeps maintaining white supremacy on the top level of attendance. Art schools also still keep ignoring class-relationship and the many shadows that are being created. This system maintenance in the art school is patrolling our politics not to enter into their canopy.

The paper attempts to raise important questions within the art school from the lens of the BIPoC art education perspective. I will explore the teaching methods and relationship between educators and students. Instead of just demanding the dismantling of the white institute, I focus on re-intervening politics and producing narratives and aesthetics in order to make the white institute accountable and empower the young BIPoC artists.

**Krishan Rajapakshe** (they/them), visual artist and designer. Practitioner of graphics, comics and illustration. Krishan Rajapakshe's artistic practices are negotiated by producing counter-narrated images and visual processes. They are investigating how to decode biography, home and its micro socio-political chronologies into a new image production. Art and design education is also part of Krishan's practice which helps them reflect on their artistic approach. Since 2019, they are part of the teaching team of *\*foundationClass* at the Weissensee School of Art and Design Berlin. In 2021-22, they taught as Guest Professor for Drawing at the Weissensee School of Art and Design Berlin. Between 2016/19, Krishan was an active member of *The Real-Lab* at the Pädagogische Hochschule Heidelberg – a long-term interdisciplinary artistic research project regarding “what is the home aesthetic of people on the move”. Their work was published and shown in documenta fifteen (*\*foundationClass\**collective), Savvy Contemporary, Lighthouse Gallery in Kampot, Cambodia, Werkstard Gallery in Berlin, Forum der Kunst in Heidelberg, Satay in Kathmandu, Nepal, JDS in Colombo, Sri Lanka. They also self-published several comic and graphics zines.

E-mail: [rajapakshe@kh-berlin.de](mailto:rajapakshe@kh-berlin.de)