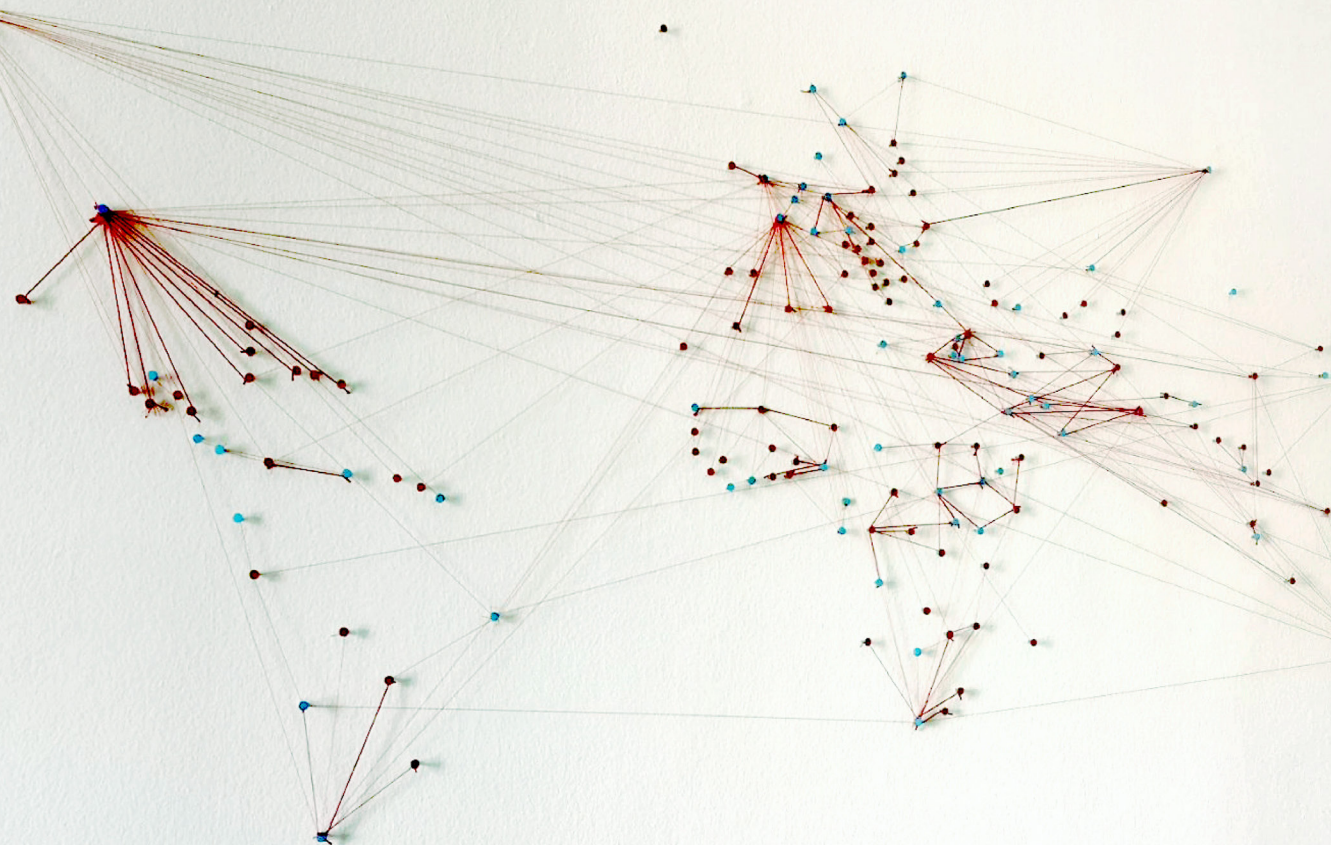




Sharing footnotes of subaltern
knowledge and practices:

Questioning North-South relations and
ethics of international collaboration



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
SHAKIN' CONFERENCE

BELGRADE, 26-28th JUNE 2023

**In from the margins -
Sharing footnotes of
subaltern knowledge and practices:
Questioning North-South relations and
ethics of international collaboration**

Book of Abstracts

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SHAKIN'

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Organization of the Conference

The Conference is organised by the UNESCO Chair for Interculturalism, art management and mediation in the Balkans of the University of Arts in Belgrade in collaboration with the Association of Independent Culture of Serbia (AICS).

Conference call

Contemporary education within cultural, artistic and media field globally is mostly fed by Eurocentric dominant discourses and submitted to a classical epistemological framework, which silences multiple understandings of specific contexts, local knowledge-making systems and practices of cultural creation. Pedagogical, artistic and cultural practices whose methods are based on sensual, intuitive, interdisciplinary, open-ended and experimental practices traditionally get ignored in academic teaching. Knowledge, thus considered, limits the capacity of its various recipients, be they academics, professionals, students, citizens, etc., to appreciate, produce, and use it in an autonomous and emancipated way outside the labelled frames of institutions. The common representation of what knowledge is supposed to be, thus makes alternative or subaltern knowledge invisible and widens the gaps between mainstream, canonized knowledge construction and the more hidden, marginalized ways of producing knowledge.

The notion of “subaltern knowledge”, developed by Gayatri Spivak within what is called Postcolonial Thinking, significantly broadens the boundaries of knowledge towards narrative, corporeal, experiential, sensed, popular, community-based, traditional, non-legitimized forms. Despite decades of post-colonial and decolonial thinking engaging in issues of subalternity, both cultural and educational institutions still hold on to a narrow, cerebral, academic, Euro-centric canons of what is “legitimate” knowledge. How to break away with the self-legitimising practice by those who have power to produce knowledge and transfer it to others? How to engage with subaltern knowledge and perspectives? How can subaltern knowledge be produced, accessed or activated in a respectful and sensitive way within cultural and educational institutions? How can South-North power relations be rethought and reworked so as to lead to ethical and just international cooperation?

This conference wants to challenge the dominant discourse on knowledge and open up discussion on other forms of knowing and sharing, that have been on the margins both within and between societies. We want to discuss ways of constructing, sharing, and using a plurality of knowledge, especially when educating new generations of culture and media professionals, with the desire to make cultural and media field more sensitive, plural, inclusive and just. In doing this, we invite the global community of cultural activists, researchers, scholars, teachers, artists and cultural operators, to submit their ideas and abstracts for this conference, its workshops and other forms of presentations. We welcome a broad range of contributions that go beyond classical academic papers, providing direct subaltern or activist perspectives (experiences, project proposals, art works, educational presentations and workshops, policy measures, etc.).

Critical spaces at white art academies or art academies for everyone?

Ulf Aminde and Christine Goutrié
Weißensee School of Art and Design, Berlin

Critical education only attempts to perfect professional education. The professions constitute themselves in an opposition to the unregulated and the ignorant without acknowledging the unregulated, ignorant, unprofessional labor that goes on not opposite them but within them. But if professional education ever slips in its labor, ever reveals its condition of possibility to the professions it supports and reconstitutes, critical education is there to pick it up, and to tell it, never mind – it was just a bad dream, the ravings, the drawings of the mad. Because critical education is precisely there to tell professional education to rethink its relationship to its opposite – by which critical education means both itself and the unregulated, against which professional education is deployed. In other words, critical education arrives to support any faltering negligence, to be vigilant in its negligence, to be critically engaged in its negligence. It is more than an ally of professional education, it is its attempted completion.
Moten and Harney, *The Undercommons*, 2013: 32

... white supremacy culture trains us all
to internalize attitudes and behaviours that do not serve any of us
Tema Okun, *White Supremacy Culture*, 2022

What does it mean for a predominately white art academy to open up to the demands for participation and diversity in order to make heard those voices that are not part of the institutional self-understanding due to unequal power relations, racist continuities, and the associated exclusions? What does that mean for teaching, the space of the university, and the students themselves?

In this paper, we will describe from a white perspective how in our experience a predominately white art university has a strong interest in integrating anti-racist and anti-discriminatory perspectives as long as they operate on a symbolic level. However, translating this to levels of structural change, connected with the questions of jobs, spaces, resources, policies and above all admission criteria for prospective students, it means producing sometimes insoluble conflicts. We describe several projects and working contexts that we have initiated and/or accompanied, in part in an activist way, at the Art University.

Using the description of the article *White Supremacy Culture* by Tema Okun, which we understand as a working proposal to read the institution in which we are employed, we ask about the place of conflict as a space of negotiation, of positioned collaboration between people who are not affected by racism and/or other forms of discrimination, and those who are affected by racism and/or other forms of discrimination. It is a place of shaping, negotiation and appreciation and necessary work to be done rather than avoiding conflict in favour of working well and collegially.

Finally, we negotiate a place of critical knowledge as a space caught between work that needs to be done again and again (Peggy Piesche) and a grateful possibility for the institution to reproduce itself and the inclusions and exclusions it entails (Fred Moten / Stefano Harney).

Ulf Aminde (he/him) is an artist working on the intersections of critical commemoration, resistance, and subjectivity. Since 2016, he has been developing together with victims of racist violence and initiatives in solidarity and with the help of Augmented Reality technologies, a hybrid and film-based memorial that will commemorate the racist attacks of the NSU in Cologne, and make stories and struggles of those affected against racism and anti-Semitism visible. Since 2014, he is a professor at the Weissensee School of Art Berlin, teaching Performative Spaces. In 2016, he initiated the **foundationClass* for artists and designers forced to flee their home countries and experience racism. In his own teachings at the Foundation Year department, he is researching critical methodologies to develop an inclusive space as an educator from a white perspective. He is also taking part in *ARTIS (Art and Research on Transformations of Individuals and Societies)* Horizon 2020-funded project.

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Christine Goutrié (she/her) has been a professor at the Weißensee School of Art and Design in Berlin since 2013, teaching digital media. With a background in computer science and interaction design, she enthusiastically teaches first-year students the basic concepts of digital media and encourages them to leave behind their fears and scepticism about programming. Her approach to creating inclusive spaces for all students with different experiences and backgrounds always includes the political and sociocultural dimensions. In 2005/06, she was a visiting professor at UC Berkeley/USA at the Center of Information Technology in the Interest of Society and currently is taking part in *ARTIS (Art and Research on Transformations of Individuals and Societies)* Horizon 2020-funded project. Christine Goutrié grew up in East Germany and was 21 years old when the GDR collapsed.

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The Politics and Possibilities of 'Safer Spaces': Confronting Academia as a Site of Violence

Anisha Gupta Müller
Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin

Decolonial (a working definition):

Is a school of thought and approach to 'thinking and doing' (Mignolo, 2011: 9) which is invested in our 'whole social structure being changed from the bottom up' (Fanon, 1963: 35). Deriving from Black, Indigenous and/ People of Colour in the Global South, it is a fight against racist and colonial power structures that are present in the world today. It aims to shift away from white Western Europe and settler colonies as the centre of power and knowledge production. Instead, it works towards the structural, physical and psychological liberation of 'colonized people' (Thiong'o, 1988: 9); this includes reparations, land back and abolishing systems of classed exploitation. Ironically, today it has become a metaphor constantly used in academia; by the very people and systems the work is fighting against (Tuck and Yang, 2023). To quote Spivak: 'Many people want to claim subalternity. They are the least interesting and the most dangerous' (Steyerl and Gutiérrez Rodríguez, 2003: 17-37).

This paper will consider how academia is a site of violence for many BIPOCs, where freedom of (academic) speech, intellectual appropriation ('epistemological extractivism', Sousa et al., 2020) and silencing tactics are weaponised in the classroom. With both scholarship and personal anecdotes from the European (more specifically German) context, I will explore how the university as an institution is not a safe space for many students, extending even into the realms of postcolonial studies and other critical classes. I will then investigate the practice of 'Safer Spaces' that in this paper refers to the political and intentional spaces for People of Colour, often disputed in higher educational contexts. I hope to show how anti-institutional 'Safer Spaces' can offer a concrete method to contest academia's extractive approach to knowledge acquisition. Finally, I would like to draw on my experience as an anti-discrimination facilitator to offer a discussion space where we will ask ourselves – what are we all actually tangibly doing to redistribute power?

Anisha Gupta Müller is a pedagogical facilitator who specialises in feminist body practices. She leads empowerment workshops and she founded the dance fitness class *FemmeFitness*. Anisha's projects question body politics and power dynamics in arts education, focusing on the creation of safer spaces. More recently, she has been teaching interdisciplinary seminars on anti-discrimination at the Weißensee Kunsthochschule Berlin with topics ranging from the politics of representation, over the art historical division of art/artist, to the limits and possibilities of 'transformative art'. She has lectured at institutions such as the Staatliche Akademie der Bildende Künste Stuttgart, Kunsthalle Wien, Sophiensaelen, and Haus der Kulturen der Welt.

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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.

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