

# Call for contributions

## Decolonial visual practices, number 2:

### *Aesthetic coloniality and contemporary art*

#### **Presentation of the research group: *Minoritart***

The Minoritart Research Group is led by Eddy Firmin, PhD student in Artistic Studies and Practices, by Catherine Cosaque, who studies tourism practices, particularly in the postcolonial context, and by artist Fred Laforge, PhD (Artistic Studies and Practices). The translation of the texts (English) is carried out by Sarah Tchou, BA in Political Science and Art History. Together, we form the reading and writing committee of the Arts section of the Réseau d'Études Décoloniales (Decolonial Studies Network).

#### **Context and publication: Decolonial visual practices No. 2**

The French-speaking world was recently exposed to decolonial thinking. The scientific journal CAL 62<sup>1</sup> or more recently the book, "Penser l'envers obscur de la modernité" (Thinking the dark side of modernity) (2014)<sup>2</sup>, under the direction of Claude Bourguignon Rougier, Philippe Colin and Ramon Grosfoguel, are a part of a revolutionary way of thinking that nowadays connects the continents. For two years, the inter-university team of the Decolonial Studies Network has been publishing some of its research on its website (<http://reseaudecolonial.org/>). It is within this framework that we are calling for contributions for the number 2 of the online magazine *Decolonial Visual Practices*.

This young journal dedicated to decolonial artistic practices has found a strong ally, Diversité Artistique Montréal (DAM), which will also take part in the publishing and outreach of your papers. On a final note, all the texts of the first issue were consulted more than a thousand times in two weeks, already making the journal one of the important areas of visibility in current artistic research.

#### **What is decolonial thought?**

At the turn of the 21st century, a new field of research called decolonial studies surfaced. It questions, among other things, the fact that knowledge specific to Europe and then to

the West has become a "universal" model, supposedly valid for all. Described under the term "coloniality of knowledge", this dominant posture invalidates or rejects the knowledge formed by colonized people (magical, perceptive, non-rational, simplistic thinking, etc.) playing the game of the *subalternization*. Thus, schools and universities have only allowed access to knowledge from paradigms defined by the West. At the same time, they have been vectors of normalization preventing individuals (intellectuals, artists, civil society) from thinking outside this matrix. To quote Annibal Quijano (1992), this ambition to achieve universal validity "establishes relations with other cultures that paralyze any real development<sup>3</sup>."

Instead of a sterile confrontational posture of the philosophies of knowledge, decolonial studies concentrate their efforts on a bordering posture. Their aim is to balance the relationship of power / knowledge for the emergence of an alter-modernity: a "pluriversal" modernity where the knowledge of the colonized peoples (know-how, savoir-être, thoughts and relationship to the world) would participate actively in the political, social and cultural changes of the globalized world of tomorrow.

## **Decolonial visual practices No. 2 Aesthetic coloniality and contemporary art**

### **General context:**

The word coloniality (as opposed to colonialism) refers to an invisible form of power and domination. Just as intercultural, social and family structures are transforming and changing over time, so does colonialism. It has abandoned its old forms (too obvious and visible) to better suit its new globalized environment. Its new shape has sunk deeper into the matrix of reality and is now embedded in the workings of the world and the conscious perceptions of reality. It is therefore clear that globalization did not bring about the end of colonialism, which can still be seen in areas as various as culture, economics, etc.

A trademark of coloniality is appropriation, a phenomenon that is different from traditional cultural exchanges between humans as it consumes and strips cultural aesthetics of their meaning. Appropriation does not seek to foster a dialogue with the cultures it takes from. Thus, appropriation can be described as a legacy and a continuity of universalizing thought and the West's desire to assimilate people and cultures; to swallow the other and to make them its own according to its defined set of values and norms. In other words, this is a relationship of subalternity rather than exchange. To quote Frantz Fanon, this coloniality breaks «[the subaltern's] old world without providing a new one. It has destroyed the traditional tribal bases of their being and [blocks] the road of the future after having destroyed the road of the past... » (Fanon, 1952, p. 149).

### **Question :**

In the artistic field, the separation between exchanges and appropriation can be blurry at times. However, coloniality establishes the universal norm that makes appropriation possible. The art critic Michelle Baj-Strobel writes this bold statement :

« There is no need to beat around the bush. To be considered [a practice of contemporary art], an artwork has to be part of a formal and conceptual analysis whose development is defined by Western criticism and be completely defined within the logic of these expressions ». (Baj-Strobel, 1999, p. 36)

If it is accepted that the West has become aware of its ethnocentrism since the end of WW2 with contemporary art, more than a half a century later, where are we exactly?

Thus, three questions arise for artists, artists-researchers and art historians:

- ✓ Is contemporary art and particularly current art devoid of coloniality? Can it ever be?
- ✓ How do you experience aesthetic coloniality? Especially, how do you perceive appropriation and/or the struggle of thinking yourself outside of the paradigms attached to Western ideas of aesthetic (through philosophical ideas and/or its other formal expressions)?
- ✓ How can one go beyond the current forms of production to bring about the emergence of an aesthetic program that is not subaltern or perceived as such?

### **Your texts :**

Your contributions are between 3000 and 3500 characters maximum and must reach us **no later than April 22 2018**.

It is strongly encouraged to submit images and / or video links along with your texts. These elements will be relevant data during the selection process.

The articles will be published on the Decolonial Studies Network website (in french) at <http://reseaudecolonial.org/>.

Please send your proposals along with a brief CV (half a page maximum) to:

- Eddy Firmin ([eddy.firmin@me.com](mailto:eddy.firmin@me.com))
- or Catherine Cosaque ([cat.cosaque@yahoo.fr](mailto:cat.cosaque@yahoo.fr)).

<sup>1</sup> Revue Cahier des Amériques Latines (2010), numéro 62, édition HIEAL

<sup>2</sup> Bourguignon Rougier & al., (2014) Penser l'envers obscur de la modernité, une anthropologie de la pensée décoloniale latino-américaine, éditions Pulim

<sup>3</sup> Quijano, A. (1992). Réflexions sur l'interdisciplinarité, le développement et les relations interculturelles *Entre savoirs. Interdisciplinarité en acte. Enjeux, obstacles, résultats* Paris · Éditions UNESCO - FRES