Decolonising the Cultural Institution? A Critical Intervention into Discourses of Decolonisation in the Cultural Sphere

Date: 15th June   **Time**: 09.00
Finishes: 16th June   **Time**: 19.30
Venue: SOAS Main Building; Brunei Gallery   **Rooms**: G3; B111; B102
Type of Event: Conference
Deadline for Submissions: 15th April 2017

Concept:
Decolonising the Cultural Institution? conference

What does it mean to decolonise a cultural institution, particularly one whose very raison d'être is inherently enshrined in the colonial project? Is it possible to reform such institutions from within or should alternative structures be sought to converse with them? Who gets to define what shape these processes of decolonisation might take, and what are the power dynamics involved in this? How do issues of class, gender, religion, race, language and (hyper)nationalism intersect with processes of decolonisation in the cultural sphere? And what might be the role of cultural and artistic production in driving this kind of change?

Decolonising the Cultural Institution? invites graduate and post-graduate students to interrogate what processes of 'decolonisation' might mean in the contexts of the production, dissemination and consumption of cultural practices, as well as for processes of knowledge production and the assignment of value onto 'art'. We anticipate papers which explore: the politics of aesthetics and the aesthetics of politics; the financial contingency of artistic production; the politics of representation; processes of erasure, inclusion and exclusion; challenges to existing power relations and hierarchies; and the role of nationalism.

The conference will include a screening and discussion of the film 'Rati Chakravyuh' (Ashish Avikunthak, 2013) on Thursday evening as well as a round-table discussion with artistic and cultural practitioners on Friday afternoon.

The conference is free and welcome to all! To register please use the following link:

https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/decolonising-the-cultural-institution-tickets-34916122061

Website: https://decoloniseculture.wixsite.com/soas
Facebook: http://fb.me/decoloniseculture
Email: decoloniseculture@soas.ac.uk

Organiser: CCLPS, SOAS

Decolonising the Cultural Institution?
SOAS CCLPS Postgraduate Conference

Contact email: decoloniseculture@soas.ac.uk

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1) Keynote Speakers:

Dr. Rolando Vázquez (Assistant Professor of Sociology, University College Roosevelt, Utrecht University)

Rolando Vázquez is assistant professor of Sociology at University College Roosevelt (UCR) of Utrecht University in The Netherlands. He coordinates the Decolonial Summer School at UCR together with Walter Mignolo.

Professor Anthony Downey (Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa, Birmingham City University)

Anthony Downey is an academic, editor and writer. He is Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa within the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media at Birmingham City University. He is the Editor-in-Chief of Ibraaz (ibraaz.org) and sits on the editorial advisory board of Third Text (thirdtext.org).

2) List of Participants:

Sayan Bhattacharyya (Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow, Price Lab for Digital Humanities, University of Pennsylvania)

Sumedha Chakravarthy (MA, Comparative Literature, SOAS, University of London)

Teresa Cisneros (Curator, Art Educator and Arts Manager, Sorry You Feel Uncomfortable Collective)

Denise Clarke (PhD Candidate, Department of Art History and Archaeology, SOAS, University of London)

Jack Clift (PhD Candidate, Centre for Cultural Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS, University of London)

Subhadra Das (Curator, UCL Collections)

Anthony Downey (Professor of Visual Culture in the Middle East and North Africa, Birmingham City University)

Ayesha Fuentes (PhD Candidate, Department of History of Art and Archeology, SOAS, University of London)

Frances Grahl (PhD Candidate, Centre for Cultural Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS, University of London)

Davinia Gregory (PhD Candidate, Sociology and Cultural Policy Studies, University of Warwick)

Charlotte Holmes (Community Engagement Officer, Collecting Birmingham, Birmingham Museums Trust)

Yan Jia (PhD Candidate, Centre for Cultural Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS, University of London)

Grit Köppen (PhD, University of the Arts, Berlin; Beyreuth International Graduate School of African Studies, Beyreuth)

Clair Le Couteur (PhD Candidate, Fine Art, Royal College of Art)

Aakriti Mandhwani (PhD Candidate, South Asia Department, SOAS, University of London)

Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan (MA, Postcolonial Studies, SOAS, University of London)

Alex Mason (PhD Candidate, University of Sheffield)

Maya Oppenheimer (Design writer, tutor at Royal College of Art)

Lauren Pyott (PhD Candidate, Centre for Cultural Literary and Postcolonial Studies, SOAS, University of London)

Carol Que (DPhil Candidate, History of Art Department, University of Oxford)

Chinmay Sharma (PhD, South Asia Department, SOAS, University of London)

Flair Donglai Shi (DPhil Candidate, English Language and Literature, University of Oxford)

Nur Sobers-Khan (Lead Curator for South Asia, British Library)

Olivia Windham Stewart (SOAS alumna, Museum of British Colonialism)

Laura Vallés (PhD Candidate, Curating Contemporary Art, Royal College of Art)

Rolando Vázquez (Assistant Professor of Sociology, University College Roosevelt, Utrecht University)

Sara Wajid (Head of Interpretation, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery)

Smita Yadav (School Tutor of Anthropology, University of Sussex)

Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson (PhD Candidate, Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis, University of Amsterdam)

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Conference Programme

Thursday, 15th and Friday, 16th June 2017

Room G3 (Main Building)
Rooms B111 and B102 (Brunei Gallery)
SOAS, University of London
Russell Square, London WC1H 0XG

	Day 1: Thursday, 15th June, Room G3 (Main Building)
09.00 - 09.30	**Registration** *Tea & Coffee*
09.30 – 09.45	**Welcome and Opening Remarks** ***Professor Francesca Orsini, CCLPS Chair*** ***Lauren Pyott, Yan Jia, Frances Grahl, Conference Organising Team***
09.45 – 10.45	**Keynote Speech** **Dr. Rolando Vázquez** (Assistant Professor of Sociology at University College Roosevelt, Utrecht University)
10.45 – 12.45	**Panel 1: Decolonial Discourses and Cultural Contexts: A Critical Overview** **Chair: Yan Jia** 1. Nine Eglantine Yamamoto-Masson: *Art as Modern Missionary Mission and Inequity in the Attention/Profit Economy of Art* 2. Denise Clarke: *What Else Can They Do? World Picturing And Decolonial Aesthesis At Sharjah Biennial 11* 3. Lauren Pyott: *'East East East' and Decolonial Labour Pains: When a New Cultural Cartography is Not Enough* 4. Flair Donglai Shi: *A Failure to Decolonise the Literary Prize: the Man Asian Literary Prize and the Politics of Recognition*
12.45- 13.45	*Lunch: Sandwiches Served*

13.45 – 15.45	**Panel 2: Practical Manifestos and Radical Ideas: Methods for Decolonising the Cultural Institution** **Chair: Aakriti** Mandhwani 1. Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan: *A Manifesto: Decolonising the "Postcolonial Theory and Practice" course* 2. Jack Clift: *Challenging the colonised underpinnings of academic history: representations of the past in post-independence Indian historical fiction* 3. Ayesha Fuentes: *Cultural detritus, conservation ethics and contemporaneity* 4. Sayan Bhattacharyya: *Categorical order makes the heterogeneous less visible: Scaling up in digital text repositories*
15.45 – 16.00	*Break: Tea & Coffee*
16.00 – 18.00	**Special Discussion: Decolonising Pedagogical Practices at SOAS** On the day that the SOAS Academic Board meet to discuss decolonising within the institution, you are invited to an open discussion about methods for decolonising practices at every level of the institution. *With presentations by:* 1. Alex Mason, Sheffield: *Cultural erasure in the university space* 2. Smita Yadav, Sussex: *Academic precariousness, Hierarchies, and Colonial Pedagogy* **Chair: Frances Grahl** Speakers from the SOAS community (TBA)
18.00 – 18.30	*Break: Light Refreshments*

	Day 1: Thursday 15th June, Room B111 (Brunei Gallery)
18.30 - 21.00	**Film Screening: 'Rati Chakravyuh' (Ashish Avikunthak, 2013)** Followed by an open discussion on decolonising practices in film led by Sumedha Chakravarthy and Chinmay Sharma, chaired by Yan Jia.

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	Day 2: Friday 16th June, Room B102 (Brunei Gallery)
10.00 - 10.15	*Registration: Tea & Coffee*
10.15 - 11.15	**Keynote Speech** **Professor Anthony Downey** *Neoliberal Visions: Cultural Institutions and the Political Economy of Global Culture in the Middle East*
11.15 - 13.15	**Panel 1: From the Inside Looking Out? Positionality and Decolonising in Museums and Exhibitions** **Chair: Lauren Pyott** 1. Sara Wajid, Charlotte Holmes, and Subhadra Das: *Is it possible to decolonise museums from within?* 2. Clair le Couteur: *Decolonising, Non-Binary Research and the Fictive Museum* 3. Laura Vallés: *The Potosí Principle: How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* 4. Grit Köppen: *Anti-Colonial Legacies and Decolonial Strategies of Ethiopian Artists*
13.15 - 14.00	*Lunch: Sandwiches Served*
14.00 - 16.00	**Panel 2: An Alternative Cultural Toolkit for Decolonisation** **Chair: Chinmay Sharma** 1. Sumedha Chakravarthy: *'Another museum, Another History': Tracing the de-colonization of authorship in Indian Documentary Cinema* 2. Frances Grahl: *From the Text to the City: The Novel as a Decolonising Tool* 3. Carol Que: *Speculative Homelands in Larissa Sansour's Video Essays* 4. Davinia Gregory & Maya Oppenheimer: *Collaboration and Solidarity Among Junior Academics as Methodology for Decolonization in the Art School – Case: The Royal College of Art*
16.00 - 16.15	*Break: Tea & Coffee*
16.15 - 17.45	**Roundtable Discussion: Lived Realities and Reality Checks: Hopes and Fears in Decolonising the Cultural Sphere** **Chair: Lauren Pyott** 1. Teresa Cisneros (Sorry You Feel Uncomfortable Collective) 2. Nur Sobers-Khan (British Library) 3. Olivia Windham Stewart (Museum of British Colonialism)

17.45 - 18.00	*Closing Remarks*
18.00 - 19.30	*Drinks Reception*