# How Art Can Be Thought

## A Handbook for Change

Allan deSouza

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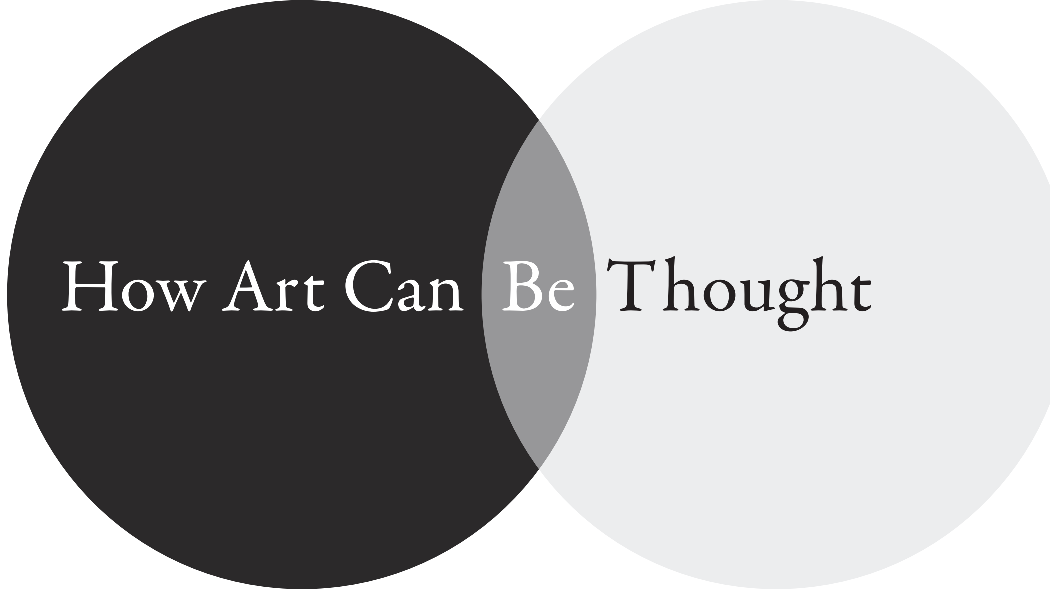
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# A HANDBOOK FOR CHANGE

Allan deSouza

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Cover art: Allan deSouza, *Polar Sky (fghtbtwntgrndbffl)*, from the *Redactions* series, 2011. Digital painting, 60 × 40 in. Courtesy of the artist and Talwar Gallery, New York and New Delhi.

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# Image Notes

With the exception of works by Daniel Joseph Martinez and Susan Silton (both of whom have been colleagues of mine at different schools), and Aaron Hughes, the images in this book are the works of my former students. I hope the reader perceives this not as nepotism but as a deliberate choice closely entwined with the book's arguments on pedagogy, historiography, and the development of artistic ideas and practices. The artworks I discuss in the book are mostly well-known, even canonical, modernist works by the likes of Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. My intention is to propose continuities and interruptions between these works that are discussed and the works that are depicted, and regardless of the intentions of the former students. In the case of Shari Paladino and Paige Davis, selected because of the general trajectory of their work, I asked them if they would "respond" to the works by Marcel Duchamp and Édouard Manet, respectively. Davis made a "blind" contour drawing from Manet's painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1882), and describes it as "a drawing done by looking only at/into the woman's eyes, using my peripheral vision to fill in the rest of the image." Readers can tease out relations between her method and the various discussions in the text around the gaze and visuality, and employ similar modes of interplay with the other images.

The selection of other former students' works was made directly by me. Their inclusion is not to single them out as that of the "best" students but because of the coincidence of their works to the artists I have discussed.

However, I have to admit how proud I am—though I take no credit—that as artists in the early stages of their careers, they are each deeply engaged in the development of their work and in how it will function in the world.

Last, though first encountered, the cover image is from one of my own works, connecting my writing (and pedagogy) with what might be considered a more conventional studio practice. In this case, the image is from my *Redactions* series, in which paintings by Paul Gauguin and here, Henri Rousseau, are "redacted" by overlaying a single color, chosen from the horizon in the original painting, onto the rest of the painting surface. The *Redactions* have been written about elsewhere, so I will mention here only that their process overlaps with the investigations and intentions in this book, of decolonizing Euro American modernism by restaging or perhaps translating its aesthetic and affective possibilities.

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# Acknowledgments

To my students, teachers, and editors, future, present, and past.

Like any writing, and despite the many hours spent alone, this book has been a collective endeavor. I would not have been able to work on or complete it without the support of my family, my partner Zeina Barakeh, and numerous friends, fellow artists, and academic colleagues. The many faculty, staff, and students at different schools have been instrumental in the book's conception and material. Particular thanks to the students, faculty, and staff at the Vermont College of Fine Arts, Low Residency MFA program, the Performance department at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Photography department at Bard College MFA Program, and to the New Genres department at the San Francisco Art Institute—the MFA students in my Critique Seminars were the first to receive the "*Lexicon of Contested Terms*," which morphed into the present chapter 5. Thank you to my Art Practice colleagues at UC Berkeley for helping me be a better Chair even while I was working on this book, and to my graduate students who have been test subjects, as readers and critters. A number of these, alumni of both SFAI and UC Berkeley have contributed the majority of images in the book.

The book began to take shape following two jointly written essays, one with Allyson Purpura, published as "Undsciplined Knowledge" in *African Art, Interviews, Narratives: Bodies of Knowledge at Work,* edited by Joanna Grabski and Carol Magee, the other with Jeannene Pryzblyski, published as "ArtSchooling"

in *Shifter*, no. 20, 2013, edited by Rit Premnath and Matthew Metzger. Part of the entry, [#Time] in chapter 5, was published as "What It Is, Now," in the issue of *Representations* journal, *Time Zones: Durational Art and Its Contexts*, edited by Julia Bryan-Wilson and Shannon Jackson, Vol. 136, No. 1, Fall 2016.

Thank you to the readers of different sections of the manuscript, including Karen Fiss, Jackie Francis, and Allyson Purpura. My studio assistants, Shari Paladino and Alexandra Nicole Solis-Sison, contributed invaluable help.

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And finally, my two anonymous readers, the production team and my editors at Duke, Ken Wissoker (who seems to have worked on a substantial number of books in my library), Elizabeth Ault, and Sara Leone for their encouragement, diligence, and guidance.

My heartfelt thanks to each of you.

Thought in reality spaces itself out into the world. It informs the imaginary of peoples, their varied poetics, which it then transforms, meaning, in them its risk becomes realized.

---

ÉDOUARD GLISSANT, *Poetics of Relation*, 1

**Fig. Frontis.1** • Allan deSouza, *Polar Sky (fghtbtwntgrndbffl)*, from the *Redactions* series, 2011. Digital painting, 60 × 40 in. Courtesy of the artist and Talwar Gallery, New York and New Delhi.

Although I have offered a childhood story to begin this preface, it is a fable irreducible to fact.

JUDITH BUTLER, *GENDER TROUBLE*

# INTRODUCTION

# A FOOT IN THE DOOR

## VeXing

I began writing a straightforward biography of where I had studied and had taught, thinking it would help students to know about my personal experience of becoming an artist. My ambivalence was that, as an artist (of color), I am often required to authenticate myself, with my work too often read primarily or only in terms of autobiography, as though I can only speak from within some anthropological containment field. Rather than a personal biography, then, I hope to mark pathways through the maze of contradictory and often routinely discriminatory practices within art institutions.[1] I'm not offering myself as a victim, nor do I warrant commendation for endurance. My intention is to situate my experience in broader historical and institutional frameworks.

I have taught at numerous schools, but my full-time, long-term teaching has been primarily at the San Francisco Art Institute, a small private art school, and at UC Berkeley, a large public university. I have taught painting, photography, performance, writing, "new genres," theory, and critical studies. I have assumed administrative positions (I use this phrasing to suggest self-punishment) of chair and director of different programs. It's fair to say that as a student, educator, and administrator, I have covered a fair amount of experiential, geographic, temporal, disciplinary, and conceptual ground. Let me trace some of these routes.

A possible beginning moment might have been in 1976, in high school in London, when I announced to my art teacher that I had been accepted into the Foundation Art course at Goldsmiths College. I remember his disbelief, and his demand to see the proof. It was something that neither of us could have put into words at the time, but I understood even then that there was no trajectory for someone like me to be an artist. "Someone like me," meaning an "East African Asian"—to use the nomenclature of the time—one of the first generation to be primarily educated in an England that had yet to come to terms with immigration from its former colonies. People like me did not become artists.

After the foundation year, I applied three years running to bachelor of fine arts programs.[2] Applicants were required to send a physical portfolio of work to their first choice of three schools. If the school was interested in the work, they called you in for an interview. If not, you were passed on to the next-choice school, and so on, until you ended up in a pool of applicants waiting for any remaining places. For three years, I was interviewed at every school I had listed. Each time I walked in the door, I registered the surprise on the faces of the interviewing faculty. There was nothing in my name and, in the cases of telephone preinterviews, nothing in my accent to let them know that I was not white.[3] Each time, at the end of consistently awkward interviews, I would be told that they liked my work, but that they "didn't think I would fit in to their school." The decision, I knew, had been made the moment I walked in the door.

After twelve interviews, and in my fourth year of applying, I was accepted to Bath Academy of Art in the painting department, possibly because a number of their faculty—including the just-retired Howard Hodgkin—were Indophile painters. However, when I arrived for my first semester, I felt they were disappointed that I wasn't Indian *enough*, and unlike some of the faculty who made regular trips to India, I had never been there. Despite encouragement about the "wonderful opportunity," I also declined to be Hodgkin's gardener. It wasn't the last time I'd be told how ungrateful I was.

Not being Indian enough was probably getting under my skin, so to speak, and so, during my first year, I went to India. With the brashness of youth, I simply showed up at art schools, looking for artists. With unbounded generosity, I was welcomed and introduced to artists and critics such as Vivan Sundaram and Geeta Kapur in Delhi, Nalini Malani in Bombay (now Mumbai), Bhupen Khakhar, Ghulam Mohammed Sheikh, and Nasreen Mohamedi, and then students Rekha Rodwittiya and Ajay Desai in Baroda. These artists were

establishing international careers, prompted in no small part by the incisive writings of Geeta Kapur.

After my BFA, and back in London, the idea of a career for an "Indianish" artist, with now Indianish work, seemed too distant. I was repeatedly told that I was too tainted by the West. This was an obvious catch-22, an effective lockout. Whenever I would walk through any door, I was too westernized, but not Western enough—"white, but not quite," in Homi Bhabha's inimitable phrase—or I would be required to perform an orientalist Indianness. If I were an actor, I would have gotten auditions only for roles with bad accents.

While at Bath, I *had* become involved with theater, and together with a number of peers had formed a theater group. We had petitioned the school to have our performance work reviewed as part of our degree but were refused on the grounds that it wasn't "art." I had also studied the dancelike form of expressive mime, and was influenced, or perhaps smitten, by having seen years earlier a live performance of *Flowers* by the Lindsay Kemp company. Now back in London, I wanted a similarly immediate interaction between performer and audience. I also wanted something more collaborative, and more directly political, than the isolated studio that art school had tried to prepare me for.

I was squatting in South London at the time, part of an organized response to homelessness and the government policies that excluded the young from already limited stocks of affordable housing. The network of squatters formed my primary collaborators and audience. Our collective artistic outlets were at weekly meetings, producing newsletters, stickers, and posters for different campaigns and political organizations. I was also part of a street theater group that produced events during demonstrations and pickets, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, or Stop the City mass demonstrations that prefigured the Occupy movement. Larger buildings were mass squatted and turned into public "peace centers" that included living spaces; cafés; and music, performance and art spaces, and provided legal and squatting advice. The centers tended to be short lived, since they attracted the immediate attention of the police and fascist gangs, and needed constant defending, often physically.[4] My first exhibitions were in such spaces, although I considered myself a "cultural agent" intimately connected to my living surroundings, rather than an "artist," which is what I then thought of as someone aloof from the rigors of everyday life.

Financially buoyed by the "dole," as were all art workers that I knew, I also had a succession of part-time jobs, from messengering to kitchen worker to road sweeper. These were invariably short-term, and mind-numbingly repetitive.

I alleviated the boredom with "art interventions," thinking to stimulate my mostly bemused fellow workers.[5] As a messenger, for example, I added my own mail for office workers, with instructions to make drawings and leave them in the outgoing mail for pick up. I installed guerilla exhibitions of these in office elevators. The drawings tended to be revealingly depressing, of coffins, withering cacti, locked cubicles, and the like. By the end of the day, if any drawings remained in the elevators, they would invariably be covered with racist, misogynist scrawls and anticommunist rants, as though any interruption of normal routine could only have been conducted by infiltrating communists.

During those years, it was almost normal to be constantly confronted by racism, from the "polite" remarks of how well one spoke English to the violence of street confrontations. I was drawn to the artistic and/or political organizations set up in response, and which strove to represent "British Asian" experiences. I joined theater companies: Tara Arts, and Hounslow Arts Collective (HAC), and its offshoot, the Hounslow Asian Visual Artists Collective (HAVAC), a group of South Asian artists in west London. Hardial Rai, the theater director of HAC, remembers that such groups grew out of a DIY punk ethic that prioritized political commitment over formal training.[6] In a HAVAC group art exhibition, one of my artworks about immigration and police brutality, and depicting a Union Jack flag, was removed, as its "political nature might cause offense to the *indigenous* community" (emphasis added).[7] This was another instance of being made to feel like an interloper who should have been grateful for any opportunities but was instead biting the feeding hand.

During this time, I also joined a socialist, anarchist-leaning (though *not* communist) artist collective called Community Copyart. In the years before Kinko's, Copyart provided cheap and creative photocopying for a broad clientele, including community and youth groups, individual artists, and activist organizations. The collective had begun providing mobile workshops with a single photocopier and a van. It eventually squatted in a large building in London's Kings Cross, equipped with a number of different photocopiers. This new space was the site for ongoing exhibitions, sometimes in partnership with other groups, for example hosting the Festival of Plagiarism.[8]

After three years with Copyart, I cofounded Panchayat, an arts and education database and training facility whose emphasis was to provide documentation on "Third World, First Nation" artists.[9] This was partly in response to the then common refrain from grade school teachers that they couldn't teach a multicultural curriculum because they didn't have the materials or

training. Panchayat ran teacher-training workshops in conjunction with local councils and teacher centers, and trained artists to work in schools.

I was hired as an artist-in-residence at various schools around the country. The most challenging was in 1986 at an East London all-boys high school. The students were split into two rival factions of Bangladeshi and white youth, with some of the latter being self-described fascist skinheads. All the students were working class, but the two groups were disenfranchised in different ways. The skinheads used preexisting, conveniently redirected racist discourses of immigration, employment, and eugenics to blame their disenfranchisement on the Bangladeshi students. They had been conducting a regime of attacks against the local Bangladeshi population, attacks violent enough to make national news. The older Bangladeshi students formed self-defense groups to protect younger students, but as the attacks diminished, the Bangladeshi students, unwilling to give up their newfound street presence, were themselves beginning to reformulate into gangs. Although I was hired as an artist, it was quite clear that I (as a brown-skinned role model) was expected to differently empower the Bangladeshi students and to help diffuse the situation by also working with the white youths (by somehow transcending my brown skin). Critique methods, inadequately used by me at that time, would have been useful to address the overtly racist imagery being produced by some of the white students in the same art classes as the Bangladeshi students it was directed against (with teachers either ignoring or condoning the imagery as "self-expression" and as "English culture"). Teachers in other departments were campaigning against racist attacks, but there were no procedures or language in place in the art department for examining the (displaced) anxieties of white, working-class students, nor any artistic means to undo the intimidation and physical violence experienced by the Bangladeshi students and to redirect *their* anger and fear.

This experience educated me profoundly in the broader workings of British racial politics. I might have always been dealing with race, but not in such a protective role on behalf of others, nor in such volatile circumstances. Throughout my own formal education in England, I was invariably the only person of color in a classroom, in a department, or at a school. During my four years as an art student, I had not had a single faculty of color, and there had been one black student, one semester.[10] At Goldsmiths, I had compensated by socializing with the large international student body in other departments. While at Bath, I had become aware of students "like" me in other schools, and had begun to read about and attend their exhibitions on trips to London. Many

of these, such as Keith Piper, Chila Burman, Said Adrus, Eddie Chambers, and Marlene Smith, would later become my professional peers. After graduating, the squatters and punks I was living and working with were again mostly white. My diasporic experience, and the very labeling of being "East African Asian," meant that I had grown up with a fractured sense of location and the necessity of performing multiple positions. I inhabited many worlds: queer, trans, and straight; black, South Asian, and white; and all kinds of assimilating, oppositional, alternative, and "marginalized" groups.[11] This was "normal." Less understandable to me was how others remained within their one group, or identified as only one subject position.

My first gallery participation in what became known as the Black Arts Movement (BAM), was through an invitation by Lubaina Himid to exhibit at her new gallery space, The Elbow Room. Indebted to the groundwork of an older generation of artists, such as David Medalla, as well as the pivotal Rasheed Araeen, the founder of the journals *Black Phoenix* and *Third Text*, BAM developed from the first generation of the "colonized within," who saw Britain as their rightful base, even if they hadn't experienced it in any way as homely. This was the first generation of students to enter British art schools, students who were either born (like myself) in the former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and South Asia, and primarily raised in England, or the first generation born in England to immigrant parents from those former colonies. Having grown up within a virulent period of British racism and the beginnings of Thatcherism, they, we, were aligned with activism around immigration and antideportation, racial equality, housing, workers' rights, and the cultural movements around carnival, reggae, punk, and bhangra. BAM was modeled as an anticolonial cultural movement, extending those activisms to deterritorialize the otherwise exclusive and segregated art institutions. This extensive network, including the likes of Stuart Hall, Sonia Boyce, Zarina Bhimji, Isaac Julien, Yinke Shonibare, Mona Hatoum, and Kobena Mercer—to name only a few of the more well known—is what enabled me to rethink the term "artist" and feel that this designation had a role to play in the world. It also felt like a world-making responsibility.

The Elbow Room exhibition received a lot of press coverage, what artists think of as their "break." It did lead to other exhibitions, but for the most part, these were initiated and curated by other artists of color. Institutions might organize a large group show, but then feel that they had fulfilled their "ethnic" quota for the decade, leaving their other programing intact. Very few artists of color had solo exhibitions in galleries that were not run by their peers.[12]

In 1989, I participated in the 3rd Havana Biennial, as part of a small delegation of "Black British" artists.[13] Along with Carlos Villa, from San Francisco, we were the first artists based in the global north to be included. This had been my first professional visit outside Britain, and it opened my eyes to an internationalism beyond England's island mentality, and outside my supposed ethnic connection to Indian contemporary art.

In 1991, I was included in the exhibition *Interrogating Identities*, curated by Kellie Jones and Thomas Sokolowski, opening at the Grey Art Gallery in New York, and traveling to numerous other venues around the United States. The exhibition examined the term black, as it was differently applied in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. America's specific history of slavery overwhelmed the then British use of Black to signify a political coalition along anticolonial lines rather than as a description of race or skin color.

In the United States, it made no sense for me to claim the term black, or it was understood only as that I was mixed-race. However, when I said that I was Indian, I was once asked, in all seriousness, "What tribe?"

After moving to New York in 1992, I became involved with Asian American art, and in particular with the artists' network Godzilla.[14] Godzilla's focus, and the coalitional possibility that attracted me, was the space *between* Asia and America as a space of multiplicity, connection, and possibility rather than how the "hyphenated identities" are framed as sites of isolation, segregation, and limitation. An instance of this "multiplicity, connection, and possibility" as artistic practice was a video I made with Yong Soon Min, my then partner, for Shu Lea Chang's multiartist, multichannel video installation *Those Fluttering Objects of Desire* for the infamous Whitney Biennial in 1993.

I mention these groups and movements in passing—and with numerous gaps and omissions—though they each require their own histories, alongside the histories of their constituent individuals—all of whom are necessary to any broader grasp of art histories.[15] I would also point to them as precursors for what would later become known as "social practice."

In New York, I attended the critical studies component of the Whitney Independent Studies Program, while enrolled in the Bronx Museum's Artist in the Marketplace program. I taught art workshops at the Bronx, as well as in the AIDS center and at the secure prisoners' unit at Saint Vincent's Midtown Hospital. I also taught a contemporary art seminar at the College of New Rochelle, my first college-level teaching job in the United States.[16] In England, I had been a visiting or guest lecturer at numerous colleges and art schools but had never held a regular position.

The Whitney was my first structured introduction to theory. Like many art students, I was initially resistant. In my case, I imagined my street knowledge to have qualified me as better informed. However, theory and the rigorous seminars provided me with language tools to better examine, think through, and bring together the "different worlds" that had made up my life. The broad range of visiting faculty also made it seem like we were engaged *with* the world, rather than isolated from it. Theory for me became a means for inquiry. It also provided me with ammunition against those who wielded it as authority.

After the Whitney, I moved to Los Angeles, and nineteen years after entering Goldsmiths, I began an MFA in photography at UCLA. It was difficult being a student again, given my experience and what by now could be termed a "career." However, I wanted to teach, and needed an MFA. While I was highly attracted to a university environment, and the opportunity to take classes in other disciplines, the UCLA art department had gained a reputation of laying a glittering pathway to commercial galleries for its students. Once again I entered a school with no faculty of color, and with a largely market-driven focus on what it meant to be an artist—though the prevailing rhetoric was of individual, "posteverything" freedoms. In my first year, the only female faculty were married to male faculty (this had also been the case at Bath Academy of Art). This is not to question the female faculty's capabilities but to criticize the department's limited hiring practices. At the end of my first year, when the school hired Mary Kelly as incoming chair, the mood was that it marked the end of the department's heyday. For some, it was the end of the party.[17] With continuing new hires, the department continues to remain highly ranked, and has lost its previous "bad (white) boys' club" mentality.

I was never an exemplary student, and seemed to consistently generate low or no expectations from faculty. At worst, faculty's sweeping pronouncements about art and society were rarely sweeping enough to encompass my experience. Not only did it make *them* seem limited, it placed me outside of their knowledge, as though there was no place and no language for my own. Even as I was molded through these institutions and their behaviors, I reacted against much of what they thought they were imparting to me. However, I am entirely in their debt, and in the case of the US institutions, I mean this literally.

My teaching experiences have been mostly rewarding, and occasionally inspiring, but have also included the idiotic, the antagonistic, and the shameful (and shaming). I have personally encountered numerous incidents of ignorant and overt discrimination by which students and faculty are ostracized. While these can sometimes be addressed as they occur, there are also more insidi-

ous, pervasive, difficult-to-identify patterns of discouragement and exclusion whose *deliberate* and *practiced* invisibility is what allows them to continue (while it is connected, I am not referring to the chronic sexual harassment and violence on campuses that is only now being exposed). I knew that if I were to teach, I would want to work against institutional, procedural, and curricular limitations. Those were the more important questions, yet the everyday, casual dismissals that I had faced or saw around me are the ones that remain most immediately in memory: being told that I was in the West now, I didn't need to make work that looked Indian (though white students around me were incorporating Hindu gods and henna into their work); after "getting emotional" because of something offensive that was said to me, being told by my faculty advisor that I should be in a "secure" institution, not an art institution; female students being "encouraged" that getting naked would lead to artistic liberation; overhearing faculty discussing how it was hardly worth teaching female students since, upon leaving school, they were more likely to make babies than art; a black student being told that no one wants to see paintings of black people; an Iranian student being told that her country was bigoted and repressive and that the faculty member didn't see any reason why he should look at her work; faculty ridiculing transgender students behind their backs; a review committee telling a student that they're not interested in work about motherhood (I would now advise that student to respond that, psychoanalytically, *all* artwork is about motherhood; what makes her work necessary to an *adult* conversation is that it's from the experience and perspective *of* a mother); students being told that work about identity is so "over"; students of color having their work talked about only in terms of and being dismissed as restricted to their identity even when *they* never use the term and describe their work only in formal terms. There were also (only slightly) more coded dismissals of work being "too pretty," "not muscular enough," "too Third World," "not universal," "for the wrong audience," or "not having an audience." I've had a student snap, "I don't know where you're from, but that's not how we do things in *this* country." A white faculty member welcomed me to a new school, saying that we are the same because she has a Native American grandmother, with the insinuation that this ancestral legacy made her, and hence the department, *already* "diverse." In faculty meetings, a faculty member made cracks about Africans and coconuts, and after waiting for white faculty to respond, I eventually stopped the proceedings to be told that "it's only jokes" and that "not everything's racist." Basically, I'm told to "lighten up." The still ongoing, six years later, trolling emails and Facebook posts from that former disgruntled,

*entrumpled*, colleague after I was a witness at arbitration proceedings about his supposed jokes. The time when a senior faculty of another school said he would "blacklist" me from ever teaching in Southern California because I asked why I was the only writer of color in a book he was editing on contemporary art and black humor, and if I could include his racist emails to me in my essay (I was "withdrawn" from the publication, and told that it was now *my* fault that there were no writers of color included). The constant presumptions that I am a student, since I don't (nor do I "imagine ever wanting to") fit the template of an art professor, let alone of a chair or director—a presumption faced particularly by female faculty of color.

These individual encounters reflect the ignorance and prejudices of the aggressors but, more importantly, they act in concert to bring unruly subjects to heel. To make them conform, or to isolate, ostracize, and silence them. Their *intent* is to cause female faculty and faculty of color to fail, then drive them out, thus reinforcing the intimidators' own "success." A demographically homogenous faculty group can easily function under the delusion that they have attained their positions because they are the best ones *for* and *in* those positions, rather than considering that they have attained those positions because others have been systemically eliminated *before* they could be contenders. When better to start? As early as possible, when they are still students.

Whoever criticizes these behaviors risks ostracism and loss of opportunities, not only from the institution—with its disciplinary consequences of failure to be rehired, denial of tenure, and so on—but also social ostracism by colleagues for not being "able to take a joke," for being "noncollegial" and disruptive. The shrill woman, the dragon lady, the newly minted nasty woman, the uppity person of color, the angry black man, the troublemaker, the chip-on-the-shoulder, the narcissist, the egotist, the nut job, the whiner, the victim, and the holier-than-thou are stereotypes commonly deployed against those who dissent.

The self-perpetuating cultures of discrimination, the sad but vicious behaviors of those holding on to meager power, are often normalized to the extent that there is no language to address them. They retreat to an imagined past of when art schools were "great" (with only white art students and white male faculty, and white European art history). Their demands for assimilation ("*lighten up*") over other models of coexistence amount to playground bullying conducted on institutional, systemic levels.

There might be little or nothing within the curricula or other forms of speech that offer any counter or that inform and empower students (and faculty) to speak back against the provincialism that determines what success would be

and who would achieve it. While these attitudes and circumstances are unfortunately not as rare as one might hope, my interest is to examine their effect on what and how art histories are discussed, what (low) expectations are placed upon artworks and students, and what terms are used to discuss and reinforce them. This provincialism and its operative methodologies necessarily (should) become subject to historical, aesthetic, political, and conceptual inquiry within art pedagogy.

Despite the repertoire of exclusion described above, I have also found enormous support, and any success or longevity (or endurance) I have gained as an artist or as an educator is wholly attributable to these many peers and colleagues. While my critique is of the various forms of white suprematism (I am deliberately conflating terms to suggest a racialized art movement), many of my closest allies (and best friends!) are white.

Needless to say, my pedagogy is focused against discriminatory practices. Speaking back not just to those experiences so as not to give them more substance than they deserve, but also speaking back to their enabling cultures remains central for me—whether as a teacher, administrator, or artist. This then leads to other questions of the most effective means, forms, and language—including this book—through which to speak back. And to speak forward, as it were.

Questions of who succeeds, on whose terms, and what constitutes success form the macro and daily politics of academia, and also of art. These mirror artistic questions about art's function in and with the world (I am using Paulo Freire's phrasing of "in" and "with" to emphasize being as relational).[18] What does art do? Should art respond to the present? Is art's purpose—as one is often taught in art schools—to take the longer view; to not be swayed by ever-changing current circumstances, petty politics, and crises; to not be caught in the short term of only ever reacting? Should art have a conscience, or is it meant to be above that? When does being "above" conscience mean avoiding one? Perhaps we now expect art *to* respond, and various forms of social practice and "artivism" do just that, prioritizing the response above other criteria.

At various schools where I teach and visit, these are not isolated questions: students are frustrated with the lack of political engagement; they demand increased diversity of faculty and presumably of opinion. They want their work to mean something in/with the world. Balancing this, they are painfully aware

of the long-term financial burden of art education, and want reassurance that they've made the right decision to pursue art.

There are no reassurances, and art does not supply easy answers, ways forward, or a viable career—paid or otherwise. Nor does education. Both can be fully coopted to become means of containment and pacification, while supplying promise, entertainment, and escape. And yet I pursue both art and teaching, believing that they play crucial roles in how we are and act in/with the world.

## ForeWords

If it were possible to produce a full account of how art is taught it might be *a boring*, *irrelevant*, *pernicious document*, *something that should be locked away*.
—James Elkins, *Why Art Cannot Be Taught*

The fictive narratives and accepted truths of the languages through which art is discussed, defined, controlled, circulated, and valued; the different desires of artists; and the ways in which art is learned and taught—what constitutes "art speech" and the discursive mechanisms of the "art world"—are this book's broader playing field. Within that, my primal scene of scrutiny is the preparatory training that artists undergo in the art school critique.

The book, aspiring to be pernicious, is divided into seven main sections. This introduction, "A Foot in the Door," lays out some broad pedagogical groundwork, including the role of the pedagogue within decolonizing processes. In the first section, "How *Art* Can Be Thought," the primary questions I pursue, as per the book title, are how we think and speak about art, and what the material, aesthetic, and political consequences might be. The second section, "Entry Points," returns to fundamental questions of art and pedagogy, particularly around quality, equality, and diversity. The third and fourth sections, "How Art Can Be Taught" and "Critique as Radical Prototype," focus on how these questions are put into practice within the art school, particularly in MFA programs, and their primary pedagogical form of the critique.

A clear model for the fifth section, "How Art Can Be Spoken: A Glossary of Contested Terms," is Raymond Williams's *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*.[19] Williams's methodology, as elucidated in his introduction, is what I aspire to. This is not to claim any parallel insight or equivalent research on my part but to acknowledge Williams's influence on the field of critical studies and its intersections with art practices.

In the last section, "Afterwords: *How*, *Now*, Rothko?" I return to some of the book's arguments through looking at Mark Rothko's paintings. I reconsider learned viewing habits and propose ways to move forward, as artist, educator, and art viewer.

Throughout the book, I will persist with questions of decolonization, of why it arises as a necessary project within art and pedagogy, how it can be pursued, and what outcomes might be expected. A major aspect of this project is that thinking and speaking about art are proposed as active processes that lay the discursive foundations from which art is generated.

Like an exhibition, a book does not mark the end of a project but its entry into public dialogue. The impetus is always to what comes next. In this, I draw support from the current resurgence of discourses and activism that seek to dismantle discriminatory practices, particularly around race, sex, and trans/gender. While education and pedagogy are certainly implicated, art may be seen to be less so in its material effects and consequences on *which* lives and *how* lives matter. For educators, the lives of each student have to matter equally, but to arrive at that equality requires institutional and societal overhaul—with policies of inclusion as only a first step. To maintain, in the present moment, that all lives matter equally, ignores the sometimes blatant effects of how policies and policing treat different people differently. Pedagogy can be utopian in its ambition but is a necessary *practice* toward the possibility that all lives might matter equally (notice to what extent this claim is qualified).

While my interest here is to develop decolonizing languages *within* what might otherwise be the colonizing language of art industries, this can lead me toward the polemical. I am conflicted about this, partly because I feel called upon to write for a fictional general reader, and partly because I feel that I am not being polemical enough to address the high stakes of what roles culture can play in what feels like a time of constant crisis.

In contrast to my wish to be polemical as response to the present is an equal pull as an educator to stand back and to measure my words. I am constantly called upon to engage only on artistic terms. Is my teaching role to remain above both conscience and the fray? To keep my political (what detractors might call my "race-based") views to myself, and address only the artistic issues of students' work—if such separations can indeed be made?[20] These are delicate plays, and extend to how one engages with artwork, allowing for its affect without rushing to judgment. This is tactical, patient, and deferring, rather than neutral. A central role of pedagogy is to expand students' critical facilities, whereas to be neutral is to align with keeping things as they are, as a holding operation

*against* student development. This book is intended as a handbook for change, which means that there will be no neutral reader.

My apologies, then, for being too polemical and for not being polemical enough.

### Pedagogy and Embodied Subjects

Pedagogy, broadly speaking, is the theory and practice of education. In ancient Greece, a pedagogue was not a teacher but a slave who accompanied children to school—where a teacher would take over. The teacher would provide a more formal education (didactics), whereas the pedagogue would assist in social education and the general welfare of the child. In both cases, the meaning of pedagogy remains—to lead a child—though the pedagogue's role of accompanying and "being with" is more nuanced, not least because of the pedagogue's ambiguous status of being entrusted while being enslaved. Pedagogues are compelled to assist in producing the next generation of masters, which is to assist in perpetuating their own subjugation. What do they teach the young masters? To be more human, and therefore to elevate the humanity of others? To challenge the hierarchy that empowers them to subjugate others?

Closer to the present, in the American South, and in South Africa, generations of white boys have been raised and taught by black women (other countries and cultures practice similar class- and caste-based servitude). These boys might have "loved" the individual black women who were forced to abandon their own children to raise them. They might have had their first sexual desires for these women. But as a political, privileged class, they grew up—too easily—to overlook the humanity of these women, and continued—too easily—to treat them as less than human.

The pedagogue's only hope was to humanize those in their care. Their own lives were too perilous to act otherwise. And yet, theirs is a profound generosity and forgiveness, refraining from enacting revenge upon the child for the actions of their parents, their class, their privilege, their wielded power, their violence, and their political system. Or perhaps, generosity, forgiveness, and humanity were the only viable, enduring revenge. In the overthrow of South African apartheid, one can witness this profound generosity in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of 1994—however one may see it as weighted toward the perpetrators and a political mistake for not bringing those responsible to account.[21]

In present-day art schools, teachers may feel their roles are wrenched between leading, accompanying, and serving, and buffeted by national curricula, con-

strained academic freedoms, administrative expectations/exploitations, and student demands. The status and economic viability of teachers has been continually plummeting as they are made into scapegoats for high costs and lowered resources. Teaching status can range from the precarity of adjunct teaching to "art star" professors (though these elevated positions remain subject to administrations). Teachers might see the prime purpose of pedagogy as ranging from having students assist them in their own quest for mastery status to assisting students toward becoming independent, critical thinkers and artists—in whatever form that takes, and through whatever form of art that takes.

This expansiveness of "whatever form" is art pedagogy's limitation and its greatest potential. The "form" can prioritize a single medium or technique (the primacy of realist painting, for example, in some art "academies"). It can entail rote copying of the instructor's technique, sometimes using the language of acquiring mastery. It can be "poststudio," where the student is inculcated into a conceptual vocabulary but appears to learn no practical skills. It can be something in between, where skills are taught as necessary to make ideas manifest. It can lead to artists as object manufacturers, or emphasize art as intervention, with the artist as "aesthetic activist" intervening into or interrupting existing social relations. These few possibilities (and all are being taught now, somewhere, in art schools) are political and economic decisions, and responsive to the perceived needs and pressures of the times.

My focus is on what might be seen as conventional, even traditional media, such as painting, photography, and sculpture, rather than digital media and social practice. Not because I have less interest in these "new" forms but because I want to attend to what are popularly held to be the core conventions of art. Similarly, many of my references are to the artistic canon of popularly known, established artists. As an educator, I am acutely invested in the directions taken by art schools. I want to maintain the different disciplines on offer, seeing them—much as I would written or spoken languages—as worldviews that provide singular, though relational, engagements with the world, and whose loss we could not begin to fathom. I want students to learn any and all of the available histories and languages (disciplines), and adapt them to their present lives, remaking those disciplines in the process.

My emphasis will be less on the formal instruction of didactics, of dispensing skills and information, and more on "being with" students as fully embodied

subjects in their quests as critical thinkers and makers. In service to this, I am proposing pedagogies gleaned from decolonial models, from those artists, theorists, and activists who have worked *against* the myriad forms that enslavement takes, and *toward* fuller, humane potentials.

While the terms "colonialism," "decolonizing," "decolonial" might cause some readers to feel that I am addressing a "minority," I am using those terms to refer to all subjected peoples, that is, to everyone. We are each subjected in different ways and to different extents—no matter to what degree we might benefit from our participation in subjection. For example, those who—however unknowingly—benefit from hierarchies that are identified by terms such as "white privilege" or "patriarchy" might nevertheless *feel* their hierarchical position not as a privilege but as an economic, social, and bodily constraint, alongside with *feeling* their own bodies threatened, producing both an envy of othered bodies, and an anxiety and competitive resentment of "them." To live with this anxiety, just one of the effects of the constant jockeying to maintain or raise one's hierarchical position, is a form of constraint, no matter to what extent it is displaced onto others, no matter the extent to which one benefits from it, and no matter how self-manufactured it is to appease one's conscience and mask one's elevated position within the hierarchy.

I am not drawing any equivalence between forms of subjection, nor implying that colonizers, colonized, and their descendants are subjected to equal forms of violence and constraint. We each participate in multiple ways and from multiple positions within hierarchies of power, even to the extent that those in positions of power might see themselves as being victimized by the powerless or the less powerful. The bottom line that informs my arguments is that there can be no liberation for only a few, nor for only specific groups. Having said this, I have to admit that I am less motivated by the "suffering" of the privileged.

While these are implicit and explicit questions of how we function as societies, I will concentrate my arguments on how they play out within art and pedagogical practices.[22] The practices I am most focused on here appear neither discriminatory nor overtly violent. They are so normalized and everyday that they form the fabric of our most intimate and social selves, but whose very normalization is cumulatively discriminatory and enacts a slow violence. In the particular scenario of the art critique, I mean "decolonizing" in a broad sense, as a weaning from, a counter to, a reconception and implementation of strategies by subjected, hierarchized individuals against that subjection and hierarchization by disciplining power. This power is identified in the various

means through which it multiply manifests and acts to limit bodily experience, whether these manifestations are articulated and *organized* through racial, gender, class, and/or sexual constraints—the "isms" that delimit what experience can be, who/what can have them, and *how* those experiences can be felt, shared, and understood. Privileges, whatever they might be, are maintained at the expense of siding against—and, if required, *acting* against—those without the same privileges.

Two aspects of colonization that I will continually reference are its control over history (time and memory) and its exertions upon the body (affect and mobility). Colonization aspires to determine history, controlling how time and the past are narrated in order to produce future narratives. It does so in part by creating a rupture from the past as well as within the present, a cut from any sense of historical continuity. Its capacity to wield these cuts is not only as an outside force but also one that is fully embodied, psychically and physically acting upon and from within the body, forming how each one of us is organized, how and what we know, how we feel, think, and act in/with the world; that is, intimately producing any sense of "who we are" in relation to "our" history and to the bodies and histories of others.

Intrinsic to "who we are" are practices of both remembering and forgetting. Writing about the closed Plantation system of the Americas, Édouard Glissant outlines how two cultures develop that are integral to modernism: one is a culture of actively forgetting, the other is one of remembering actively—I am deliberately linking this to activism.[23] This remembering is undertaken at great risk, against the strictures, impediments, and punishments imposed on remembering one's languages, one's histories, one's humanity, and the violence that has been perpetrated against those. Forgetting is also not a simple or lightly undertaken erasure, since it too is activist in its demands for returns to imagined pasts. Not only brutal in its eradications, forgetting can entertain, or rather, infotain, eventually producing, for example, the plantation as heritage tourist destination through the industry jargon of "authentic recreations" of willing participation, of happy, cared-for slaves singing in the fields.[24]

Glissant reminds us that landscape, a supposedly neutral genre of nature observation, is highly implicated in this practice of forgetting, emphasizing the "conventional splendor" of the Caribbean landscape over the lives and death grounds of slaves—an eviscerated landscaping that is integral to how contemporary tourists imagine themselves in that landscape (and how the imagining is enacted for them). In this resort equivalent of terra nullius, the only natives are there to provide "luxe, calme, et volupté."[25]

**Fig. I.1** • Sofie Ramos, *decorate/defecate*, 2015. Multimedia installation, variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artist.

The will to forget and the will to remember. How and what does one remember, if a (pre)dominant modernism produces a culture of forgetting? How does art function as island of forgetting within seas of turmoil, as "comfortable armchair"—to keep Henri Matisse in mind—in the rooms of the living and the caverns of the dying?[26] While Matisse himself was almost obsessively driven, and hardly the epitome of an "armchair painter," I dredge him up since his work has come to stand for not quite an escape, but a point of view, and an experience that "rises above" the troubles of the world, a rising that marks a central aspiration for Western modernism. The critic Peter Schjeldahl epitomizes this aspiration at exactly the moment of crisis, as a salve to the mowing down of revelers along the Nice waterfront in July 2016: "To share in the delicate truth [that rigorous art can be at one with routinely melting pleasures], you look at, show, or send a picture by Matisse. People have been doing that often, these awful recent days."[27]

Similarly, in a review of a Matisse exhibition in 1992 Hilton Kramer writes, "It has the effect of making one feel a lot better about the century in which we live—a terrible century in so many ways, yet one in which we can nonetheless feel an immense sense of pride if, beside its unremitting record of suffering, bloodshed, and tragedy, it can also boast of an achievement as sublime as

Matisse's." Curiously, this rebalancing of the scales of beauty leaves Kramer mourning Matisse, though his mourning is symptomatic of a more generalized melancholia for a world that never was. He concludes, "When we exit this exhibition and return to the sordid cultural landscape of this last decade of the century, it is hard to believe that we shall ever again witness anything like it, now or in the foreseeable future."[28]

In these examples, forgetting—closeting melancholy—is purposeful and elevating, with beauty as the engine whisking us away from the tragedies of the world. The will to forget and escape are understandable, but we might also measure privilege by the degree to which we *can* forget, ignore, or be whisked away from the tragedies of others (including the privilege of being able to think of them *as* other).

Artists such as Glenn Ligon, Carrie Mae Weems, Betye Saar, and Kara Walker (to name only a few of the more well known) might be considered as doing the work of remembering (of slavery and the plantation system).[29] A different tactic of remembering is pursued by the artist Simone Leigh. As well as creating counterrepresentations, Leigh works directly with and upon the body of the viewer, transforming galleries and museums into healing spaces for the traumatic memories that have been generationally inscribed onto black and brown bodies, and that are reexperienced in the onslaught of ongoing racism and sexism. Leigh turns the gallery into a site of (self and communal) actualization, to activate viewers to new forms of representation.

A more demanding, destabilizing way to think of these artists is that they play resounding roles in repurposing (post)modernist forms and languages against the (modernist) project of forgetting. Rather than framing such artists as addenda to a central narrative, how might we rethink that central narrative of modernism when we replace what has been purposefully removed and forgotten? And rather than policing the political effectiveness of black artists in / accepted by white institutions, we might—to use the vernacular of the plantation—consider that the work of remembering and replacement needs to be done as much in the big house as in the slaves' quarters, at least until the institutional architectures and locations of memory work have been rebuilt.

The other main considerations I will consider through colonization will be on control over mobility and access, of how emotions, languages, and ideas circulate, of which bodies have mobility and institutional access, including to ideas, and through which artistic practices and vocabularies these are extended and simultaneously withheld.

Throughout the book I will return to these questions, of memory and forgetting, of language, mobility, and access, and what implications they have for looking at and understanding art, for pedagogy, and for social relations (and disconnections) developed around art.

In doing this, I am not prescribing what a decolonizing culture and its forms can or will be, since any such prescriptions should be suspect as returns to and applications of colonizing authority. My aim, then, is not to prescribe what art can *be* but to work toward language to describe what it *does* and *does not do*, how it does that, and what it *can* do—language being the prime means to articulate what those possibilities might be.

Decolonizing culture, and the modes of art-political inquiry that I am proposing, cannot exist in isolation or with any claim to autonomy. They are entwined with and can only be experienced, understood, and enacted *as* decolonizing through art's institutions, practices, discourses, and participants. Like any other object or event, art/political work becomes politicized through the culture, agents, institutions, and systems that (re)produce it, through which it operates, and which it in turn produces.

By turning to the political (and I concede that what the "political" means and how it functions are always contested and temporal), and in pulling from different sources, my interest is in placing a spectrum of ideas and practices in service of the idealism that many art students have and continue to have (in more subdued form) as artists. It's an idealism that desires more from art than being a commodity, that grounds art politically and socially while repurposing aesthetic and formal invention, that pursues art as complex intersections between individual and collective interests. It is an idealism that continues to inspire (me), yet it is an idealism that currently lacks an adequate language to articulate, investigate, and interrogate its interests, desires, demands, methods, and outcomes.

# Notes

**INTRODUCTION. A FOOT IN THE DOOR**

1. *Merriam-Webster*, "Vex," a: to bring trouble, distress, or agitation to; b: to bring physical distress to; c: to irritate or annoy by petty provocations. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vex.

2. Note the anachronism of the title "bachelor."

3. My use of "white" and "whiteness" point toward institutionalized, racialized inclusions, which have been legislated, enculturated, aestheticized, naturalized, normalized, and rendered invisible so as to mask their grounding in economics and categories of nonwhite, exploitable labor.

4. These kinds of alternative, underground, self-run spaces have never disappeared, as artists continue to seek some degree of independence and control over their own creative lives while negotiating poverty and societal neglect. Such spaces came back to (media and local government) attention following the fire of the Ghost Ship warehouse in Oakland in 2016, in which thirty-six people died. This particularly affected the Bay Area's creative music and artistic networks, as many of those who died were linked to the area's schools and nonprofit spaces.

5. My first job was as a supermarket shelf filler. I was fired after a week, deemed by the manager to be "too stupid" to work there, given my predilection to stock shelves by color and pattern (it didn't occur to me to document my arrangements as "art").

6. See the online interview, "FiPA Arts, Hardial Rai (British South Asian Theatre Memories)," March 25, 2014. British South Asian Theatre Memories Oral History Project is supported by Heritage Lottery Fund, SOAS University of London, APAF, Thurrock Council, Contact Theatre and Avaes Mohammad. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PGVwrN8CDxE.

7. Gallery notice, installed by Hounslow City Council in place of the removed artwork. "Indigenous" here referred to white English.

8. One of the main organizers was Stewart Home. The exhibition consisted of twenty-seven participants all exhibiting under the single name Karen Eliot. From an exhibition flyer: "Karen Eliot is a name that refers to an individual human being who can be anyone. The name is fixed, the people using it aren't. . . . The purpose of many different magazines and people using the same name is to create a situation for which no one in particular is responsible and to practically examine western philosophical notions of identity, individuality, originality, value and truth." Other exhibitions included *Against the Clause* at Community Copyart in 1988; *Copyart Goes South* at Bedford Hill Gallery; *Photocopyart* at Shaw Theatre; and *Copyart at the Cockpit* at Cockpit Gallery, all in 1987.

9. Cofounded with Bhajan Hunjan, Shaheen Merali, Symrath Patti, and Shanti Thomas.

10. In the United States, even in the present, in a marketing fantasy of integration, one is still more likely to find students of color in art schools' advertising than in their actual programs.

11. I use "marginalized" in the sense of societal gerrymandering, whereby individuals and groups are deliberately displaced from history, power, decision making, and agency.

12. This is a much bigger subject than can be addressed here. Some historicizing of BAM is currently being done by scholars and research groups such as Black Artists and Modernism, http://www.blackartistsmodernism.co.uk/. See also *The Place Is Here*, *Nottingham Contemporary*, curated by Nick Aikens and Sam Thorne, with Nicola Guy, February 4, 2017–April 30, 2017.

13. This was achieved primarily through the efforts of Shaheen Merali, and included the two of us, with Keith Piper, Sonia Boyce, and Ptika Ntuli. It was also where I met other American artists, including Yong Soon Min, later to become my partner and artistic collaborator.

14. Formed by a core group of artists, including Ken Chu, Bing Lee, and Margo Machida.

15. Useful references include Eddie Chambers, *Black Artists in British Art: A History Since the 1950s*; Alexandra Chang, *Envisioning Diaspora*; and Margo Machida, *Unsettled Visions: Contemporary Asian American Artists and the Social Imaginary*.

16. I was invited to teach the class by the then chair Sue Canning.

17. See, for example, Dennis Cooper, "Too Cool for School," *Spin Magazine*, July 1997, 86–94.

18. "To be human is to engage in relationships with others, and with the world. It is to experience that world as an objective reality, independent of oneself, capable of being known. . . . But man's separateness from and openness to the world distinguishes him as a being of *relationships*. Men, unlike animals, are not only *in* the world, but *with* the world." Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 3; emphases in original.

19. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

20. The role of the teacher is increasingly scrutinized, politicized, and monetized in ways that severely challenge any notion of academic freedom, and already constrain how teachers feel that they can speak and act.

21. The TRC was based on an idea of "restorative justice," as opposed to the more commonly implemented model of "retributive justice."

22. Whether or not these manifestations become explicit is generally linked to moments of crisis. That they manifest and can be mobilized so immediately is evidence that they do not disappear but remain latent until called upon.

23. Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

24. See, for example, Derek Alderman and Arnold Modlin, "(In)Visibility of the Enslaved Within Online Plantation Tourism Marketing: A Textual Analysis of North Carolina Websites," in *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing* 25 (2008): 3–4.

25. The title of a Henri Matisse painting from 1904.

26. To use Matisse's description, "What I dream of is an art of balance, of purity and serenity, devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter, an art that could be for every mental worker, for the businessman as well as the man of letters, for example, a soothing, calming influence on the mind, something like a good armchair which provides relaxation from physical fatigue." Henri Matisse, "Notes of a Painter," [1908], translated by Jack Flam, in *Matisse on Art*, Revised Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

27. Peter Schjeldahl, "Finding Solace in Henri Matisse's Nice," *New Yorker*, July 18, 2016, written following the Nice, France, attack by Mohamed Lahouaiej-Bouhlel, who drove a lorry into crowds celebrating Bastille Day on July 14, 2016.

28. Hilton Kramer, "Reflections on Matisse," *New Criterion*, Vol. 11 (November 1992): 7.

29. At the risk of omitting others, one can add to this list Alison Saar, Faith Ringgold, Hank Willis Thomas, Lorraine O'Grady, Lyle Ashton Harris, Martin Puryear, Noah Purifoy, Roshini Kempadoo, and Senga Nengudi.

### CHAPTER 1. HOW *ART* CAN BE THOUGHT

1. See "Art," the *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/art.

2. I'm being facetious, but this is not so far-fetched in other arguments. See, for example, Alva Noe, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015). Noe links breastfeeding and art as "organized" and "organizing activities" (his terms).

3. Albert Boime, *Art in an Age of Revolution, 1750–1800* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1987), xxi.

4. Aimé Cesaire quoted in Katherine McKittrick, ed., *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as a Praxis* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

5. Kobena Mercer, *Travel and See: Black Diaspora Art Practices since the 1980s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), xv.