

# On Place-Based Artist Pedagogies

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EDITORS NANA AMA BENTSI-ENCHILL DANIEL PELTZ

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Nordic/Baltic Studio for  
Continued Engagement

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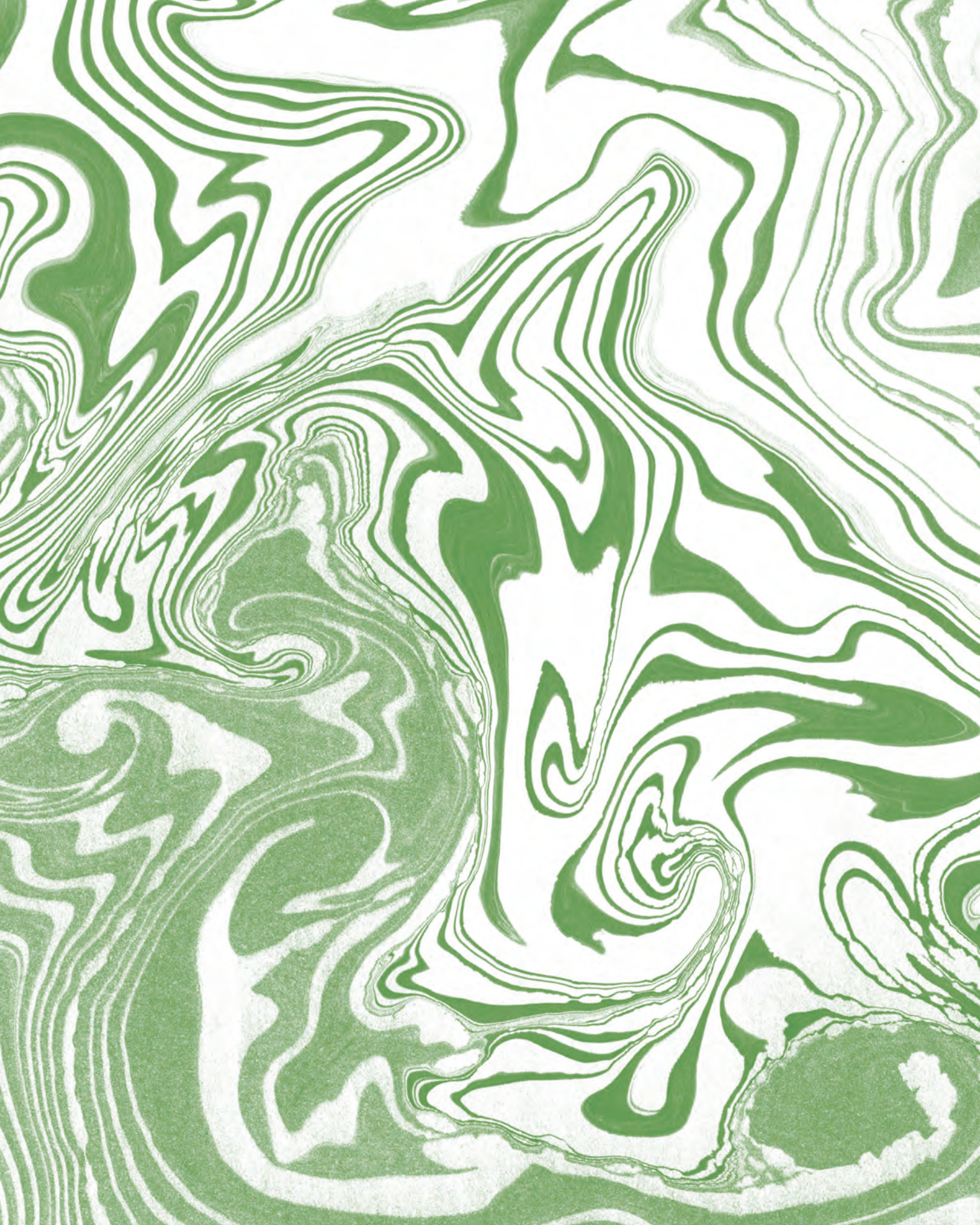
This volume opens a path that teaches us about the material possibilities occurring beyond the given lenses of normative pedagogies and thinking in the arts. Let's give them shelter in our own bodies, through a careful reading, and let them teach us how to unlearn the hegemonic perceptual ecology. Give them the resonance to create other pedagogic ecologies.

— LUIS GUERRA MIRANDA

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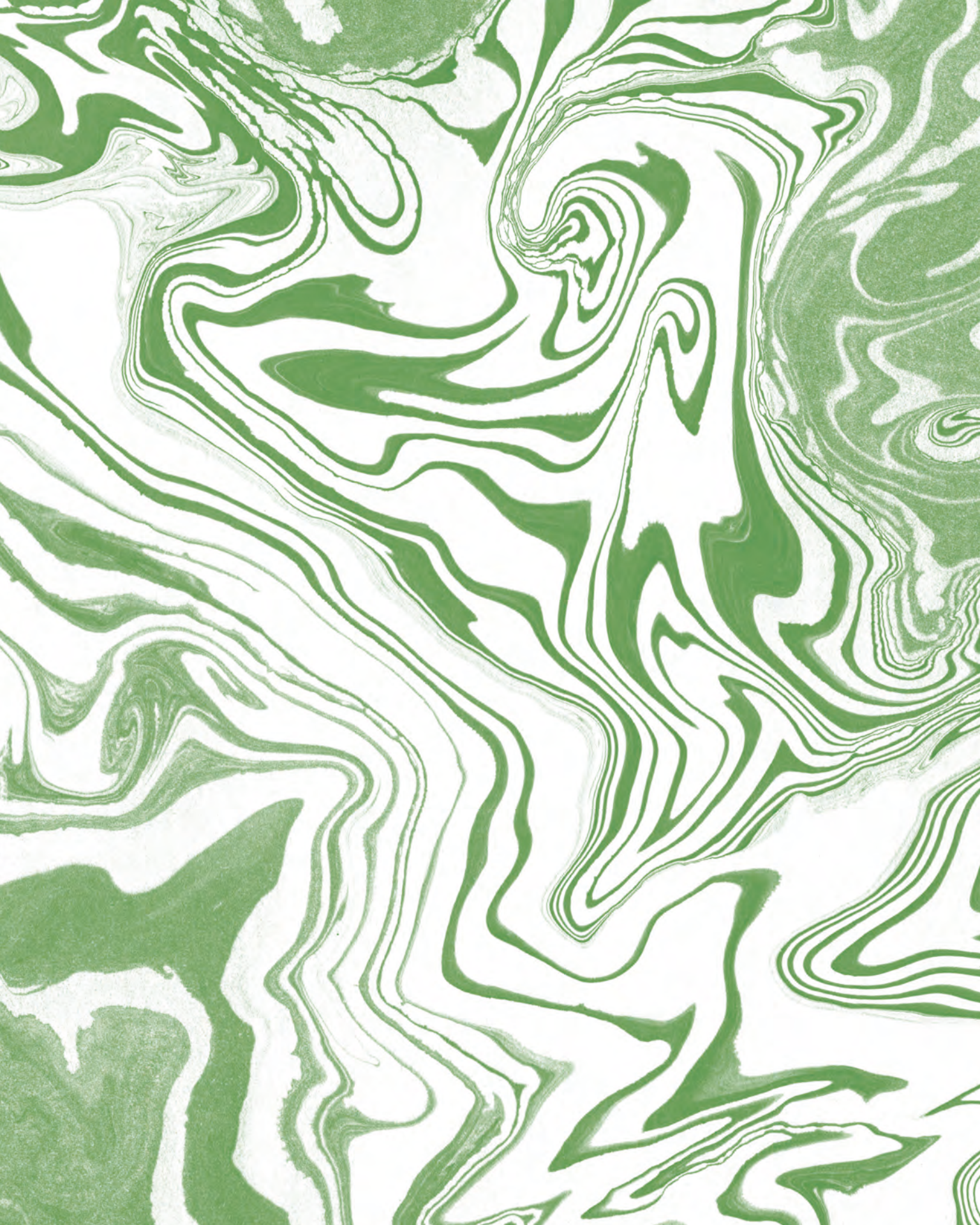
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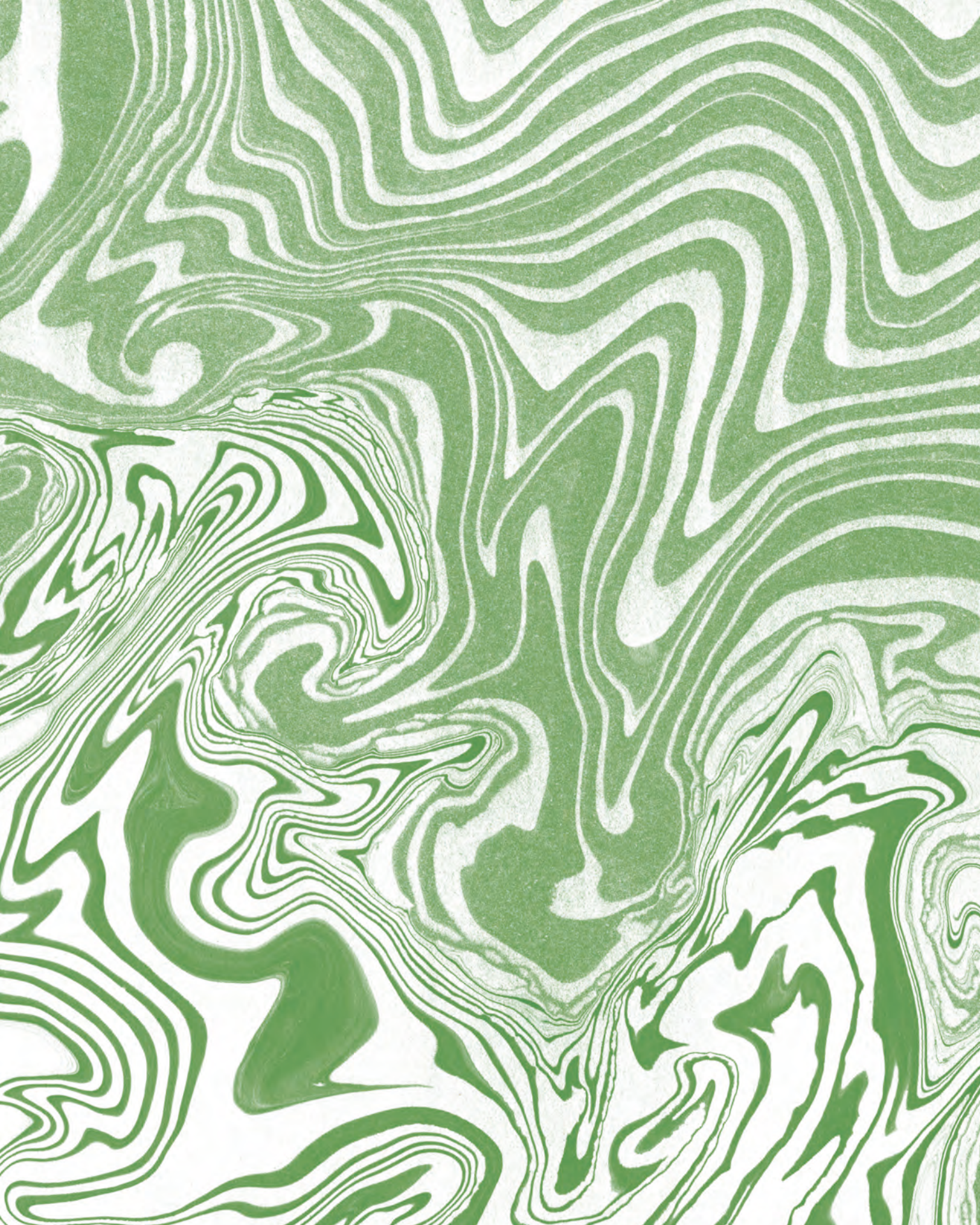




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Nordic/Baltic Studio for  
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**On Place-Based Artist Pedagogies:  
Àsikò Art School and the Nordic/Baltic  
Studio for Continued Engagement**

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**Editor's note**

Nana Ama Bentsi-Enchill

## a confluence

When Oyinda Faithful (CCA Lagos) and Daniel Peltz (Uniarts Helsinki) invited me to edit this book, the project's ambition to coalesce years of Àsikò Art School and the Nordic/Baltic Studio's experience-based pedagogies in a single publication felt like a tall order. As entities, they are situated geographically and culturally worlds apart and appear to have little in common. How will these two distinct streams of knowledge converge in a cohesive body?

While both are driven to redress absences in the art pedagogical landscapes they encompass, the fissures they aim to heal are effectively inversions of each other. One amends gross absences of structure and criticality in the contemporary African art landscape; the other mitigates the hierarchical and individualistic character of the Nordic/Baltic art education system. Yet both take root in pliant styles of site-responsive, embodied learning that privilege collective exploration over units of production. Together, they buoy the merits of world-bridging through holistic inquiry and intent. So, how can this published work materially serve as both confluence and witness to possibility in art pedagogy?

## an undercurrent

Midway through this project, my body staged a coup – an insistent overthrow of my own sense of cohesion. In response, I was quickly pulled into a medical labyrinth, moving through a conveyor belt of doctors, specialists, lab work and scans. Each rigidly focused on gathering metrics on hyper-specific cubits of my body. Each procedure designed to anatomize me under the scope of specialization, and without explicit plans to convene their findings as a whole. By way of its fixed, siloed, and truncated forms of expertise, the medical industry I am navigating seems designed to evade cohesive resolution. These processes amplify the ways in which ambitions of specialization easily tend towards confinement. But the human body is fluid and porous, bending toward symbiosis.

Strikingly, the medical system's reflex to dissect and individuate within its pedagogy and practice mirror the prevailing landscape of art pedagogy and its inclination to develop the (mythical) solitary genius. Both fields are historically kaleidoscopic, rendering awe-inspiring beauty within the mirrored walls of their own constructs. It is outside of these walls, however, that the value of nuanced approaches are given room to be stretched, examined, and rescripted. This book gives such room.

## a wave

This publication reflects on the ways artistic bodies can contain and propagate learning, and contextualizes the role of place in shaping the currents of pedagogical exploration. As such, this volume aims to open up the kaleidoscope and embrace more supple and liminal forms. It performs as verse and score for both pedagogies, meeting at points of mutual interest and departing at moments of divergent priorities. Moving between narrative, photographic, academic, and conversational forms, the book's cadence resonates with the decidedly poetic, ephemeral nature of the Nordic/Baltic Studio and the visceral, assertive discourse of Àsikò Art School. Their methodologies are intended to be read in and between the written word.

Dr. Luis Guerra Miranda opens with a poignant foreword which lays philosophical ground for this volume, drawing insight from his extensive research on the work of Chilean poet and artist Cecilia Vicuña. Vicuña is cofounder of the Oysi School, whose nomadic teaching methods embrace instinct, gesture, and ancestral memory. Dr. Aura Seikkula anchors the book by detailing the synergies between the Nordic/Baltic Studio and Àsikò Art School that inspired her to introduce the two programs to each other after years of devoted work with Bisi Silva and encounters with Rejmyre Art LAB. Co-founder of Nordic/Baltic Studio

and Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies and Professor of Time and Space Arts at Uniarts Helsinki, Daniel Peltz, interweaves texts throughout this book that tell the history, necessity, and compelling approaches to the artist-led, place-based pedagogies engaged in these spaces. A 2013 presentation by the late great Bisi Silva revisits her motivations for founding the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos and the formation of a still-nascent Àsìkò Art School.

Meri Linna, David Larsson, and Tilda Dalunde write richly textured reflections on their relationships to time, place, and learning in their experiences with Nordic/Baltic Studio.

Odun Orimolade considers Àsìkò as an ever-evolving site of continuous learning and Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh structures a strong analysis of collaborative approaches to curation and pedagogy. Finally, two contemplative conversations expand the possibilities of place-based pedagogies. Amilcar Packer and Tarcisio Almeida discuss resonances between *Práticas Desobedientes*, an educational initiative based in Bahia, Brazil, and Àsìkò, while Oyindamola Faithful, Executive Director of CCA Lagos, and Ama Ofeibea Tetteh, Àsìkò's Programme manager, speak to Àsìkò's future.

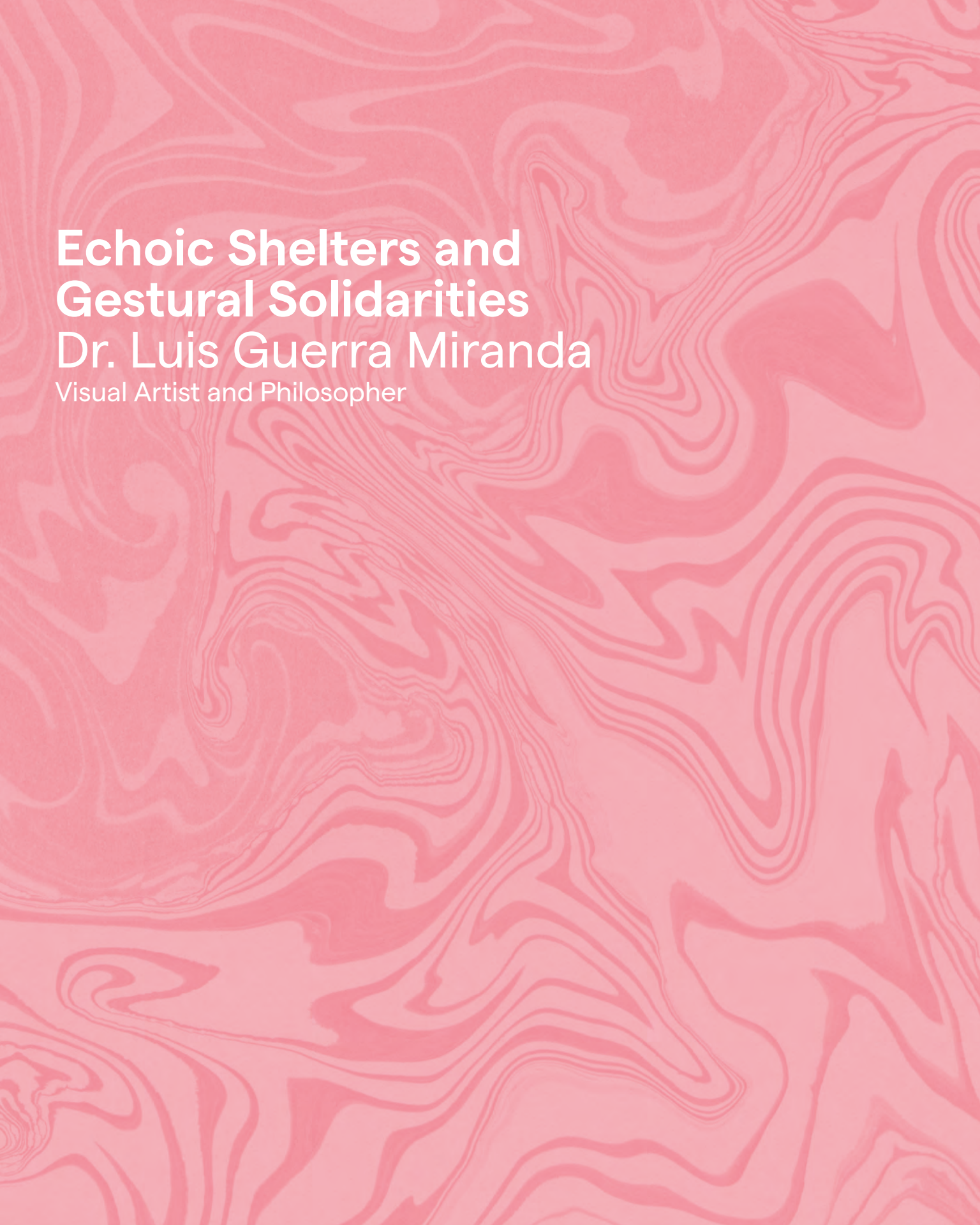
## a shore

I extend deep gratitude to Daniel Peltz, Oyindamola Faithful , and Ama Ofeibea Tetteh for the invitation to edit this work and to all contributors. A special thanks to Serubiri Moses, who convened two pivotal roundtables for both Àsìkò Art School and the Nordic/ Baltic Studio, effectively seeding many of the reflective lines of inquiry offered in the following pages.

It has been a privilege to witness each writer's willingness to draw from deeply personal experience, to sit, at times, with saudade, and offer up the gifts of insight to this work. The importance of this work extends beyond the landscape of art pedagogy. It has steered my pursuit of wellness toward a deliberately collaborative, alinear, and flexible approach and invites readers to stitch inventive methods of site-relational learning into their work and lives as a whole.







**Echoic Shelters and  
Gestural Solidarities**  
**Dr. Luis Guerra Miranda**  
Visual Artist and Philosopher

Je suis, pour ma part, persuadé que l’humanisme porte en lui-même les fascismes, totalitarismes, et tous les désastres de civilisation, tout comme on a dit que le capitalisme portait la guerre, de la même manière que la nuée porte l’orage.

Fernand Deligny<sup>1</sup>

In 1995, the Chilean, NY-based artist Cecilia Vicuña<sup>2</sup> began The Caleu Project, which was part of the OYSI School Project.<sup>3</sup> OYSI School is a nomadic platform and self-organized network that Cecilia Vicuña and the poet and filmmaker James O’Hern created to teach “the value of orality, art, and poetry as multidimensional vehicles to expand knowledge for the future” (Oysi 2024). As they proclaim in their statement, Oysi School is not a place but a process. This implies that the activities carried out by Oysi are based on practices that experientially transmit from within potential ancestral wisdom that has been disrupted by the imposed conditions of life under so-called modernization and capitalist accelerationism. The ancestral wisdom that seems to have been erased by external forces can

be recuperated and repaired through artistic gestures that create the circumstances to shelter it. Art practices can emerge surfaces through which unknown knowledge can rise again, promoting bifurcations.<sup>4</sup> A bifurcation is the emergence of a difference that shifts a given situation. Oysi School understands that teaching and pedagogy occur through practice in shaping momentary, communal self-awareness outside of the given language and behavioral grid. In the case of the Caleu Project, Vicuña went to Caleu, a small town in the mountains of central Chile, where she developed a series of workshops in the children's school:

“The day I arrived, the school was closed. I sat on a stone to listen, and I heard two old men talking, I approached them and we talked at length. I learned

<sup>1</sup> “For my part, I’m convinced that humanism carries in itself the fascisms, totalitarianism, and all the disasters of civilization, just as capitalism has been said to carry war, just as the cloud carries the storm.” Fernand Deligny (1979) *Les détours de l’agir ou le moindre geste*. Paris: Hachette. My translation.

<sup>2</sup> Cecilia Vicuña is a poet, artist, activist, and filmmaker. Born in Chile, she lived in exile since the early 1970s after the 1973 civic-military coup d’état perpetrated against President Salvador Allende’s democratically elected government. Cecilia Vicuña won the 2023 Premio Nacional de Artes Plásticas, one of the most prestigious awards given by her homeland, Chile. Preceding this recognition, Vicuña was elected a foreign honorary member of the United States Academy of Arts and Letters and received the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in 2022 at the 59th Venice Biennale: “My work dwells in the not yet, the future potential of the unformed, where sound, weaving, and language interact to create new meanings.” <https://www.ceciliavicuna.com/biography>.

<sup>3</sup> For more information, please visit the Oysi site: <https://oysi.org/>

<sup>4</sup> The notion of bifurcation comes from French philosopher Bernard Stiegler. Bifurcation, in short terms, means “opportunities to branch off in new directions, whether positive or negative.” Bernard Stiegler (2021) *BIFURCATE ‘There Is No Alternative’*. Translated by Daniel Ross. London: Open Humanities Press. In this case I use the term understanding that some artistic gestures can open a path to a return, for listening and giving space for an echo to come or operate even a break within an already structured situation. I have largely discussed this approach in other articles where I have mentioned, as examples, the Ghost Dance or the performances developed by the feminist collective LASTESIS, among other contemporary practices.

<sup>5</sup> Cecilia Vicuña (2023) *educare/educate*. New York: Oysi Books. <https://oysi.org/oysibooks/educare-educate>

that Caleu had been a “Baile chino” center whose ceremonial dance had died out 30 years before. Their story made me realize that the dance had to be revived. I knew from my friends José Pérez de Arce and Claudio Mercado (ethnomusicologists and musicians) that this dance was a unique creation of central and northern Chile, a pre-Columbian art adapted by miners, fishermen and peasants to the new Christian colonial culture.

To return a dance to life is an impossible task, that is why I entered Caleu’s school undoing myself, becoming nothing, a non-being that arrived in full absurdity, running, making noises, lacing the children to a game that disordered the military line and the salute to the flag obligatory in Chilean education.

Seeing me come in like this, the children thought I was a ridiculous being, an “Indian” (pejorative), a foreigner or a madwoman, and they laughed and joined in the game.”<sup>5</sup>

The project aimed to “reconnect the community with its ancient oral poetic traditions, the Bailes Chinos of the Aconcagua culture” (Oysi 2024).<sup>6</sup> Caleu means “to be transformed” in Mapudungun, the language of

<sup>6</sup> “Bailes Chinos are brotherhoods of musicians who express their faith through music, dance, and singing in the context of commemoration festivities. The practice stretches mainly from the area known as the Norte Chico to the central region of Chile and comprises five fully differentiated styles, each named after the valley or basin where it is most prevalent. Organized mainly by men from

rural areas, Baile Chino dances consist of jumps and flexing movements of the legs, performed to the rhythm of isometric instrumental music played on drums and flutes of pre-Columbian origin.” UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/baile-chino-00988?RL=00988>. Also, UNESCO Video & Sound Collections: <https://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/document-3677>

the Mapuche people (Sadowsky, Painequeo, Salamanca, and Avelino 2013). After the settlement of the Spanish Conquistadores, as in many other places in Latin America, the people adopted and adapted Christian rituals to former rituals. The dance Bailes Chino entangled the ancient gestures with Christian references. In 1965, the Caleu's Bailes Chino dance was lost after an earthquake buried Caleu's Capilla. The Caleu Project consisted of a series of workshops Cecilia Vicuña had developed since 1995. I will describe the first one, *The Thread at Play*, 1995, and the last one, *Tugar Tugar*, 2011 (Vicuña 2012). Vicuña says in the video that documents the experience, that the workshop was made so the children and the people of Caleu could "recall their own memories" (Touchstone Center, 2009). What did she do then? She played with the children. The first time, Vicuña appeared in Caleu's school carrying colorful threads in her hands. She approached the children and invited them to be part of the play. Through her action she interrupted the educational system for a moment, building with the children a fragile anarchitecture.<sup>7</sup> The participation of the children was immediate, even innate: playing with

<sup>7</sup>I am using the notion of anarchitecture as proposed by the American artist Gordon Matta-Clark (1943 – 1978). As stated by James Attlee the term Anarchitecture has usually been attributed to Matta-Clark, even though the term was created collectively. The notion expressed a creative tension between architecture and anarchy by exploring those discarded

or forgotten urban spaces that expose the capitalist functionality of architecture affecting daily life. Attlee, James (2007) "Towards Anarchitecture: Gordon Matta-Clark and Le Corbusier", Tate Papers, Tate's Online Research Journal, Spring 3, <http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/7297>.

precarious materials in groups allows them to build the strange tools (Noë 2016) that make emergent and alternative knowledge that even puts in brackets the concept of art as it has been systematized. The collective body that the children were, which existed as part of a State educational system, suddenly, for a moment, gave rise to an alternative body, self-aware of that event that they were building. The apparent disorder, created by Vicuña's action, exposed an inner knowledge hidden in the structural behavior that conducted their lives. Through this gestural device, these bodies, normalized by the State's educational system, considered apparently without any context, resituate themselves. The emergent experience built something unknown till then. They created a space of resonance for an echo to come: "The school of hearing began in Caleu, as a school of remembering, releasing, letting go, giving up the idea that we know something." (Vicuña 2023, 22).

In 2008, Cecilia Vicuña returned to Caleu and developed the last workshop. In the video document, she states she was working with an empty method, a method that works "in the void of not-knowing"<sup>8</sup> (Vicuña 2012). Throughout the workshop, there is a moment when the children are given flutes, and they start to learn how to play with them. There is no proper

<sup>8</sup> <http://oyasi.org/2012/05/caleu/>





training in this process, except for a solidary encounter formed by the short cane and the children's bodies. The inhale and exhale create a sound that, together with their movement, allows a knowledge to re-awake: the Bailes Chinos. An important advice is given during the activity: In order not to get dizzy when blowing the cane, it is necessary to move the body, to dance with the sound, which is why the Baile Chino looks like that. The artistic gesture bodily shelters a memory allowing a drift that interrupts the imposed perceptual ecology. Cecilia Vicuña's practice creates a space for sharing the unlearning of the given system. It is an example of what French pedagogue Fernand Deligny expressed as the main aim of the teacher: the creation of circumstances where a situation can happen (Deligny 1970, 212).

Pedagogy is not a static concept but a dynamic process that emerges from sustained relationships between bodies, shaped by time, actions, exchanges, adjustments, communications and conflicts, cultures, and languages. In the arts, pedagogy is a social cognitive process based on a series of exchanges and interactions that create relational surfaces of inscription.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> A surface of inscription as a concept was originally created by the philosopher François Lyotard in his text *Discours, Figure*. I use it here following Jean Louis Déotte's approach, considering it as the space created by apparatuses to support a change. Déotte has theorized the way in which an event, which perhaps happens inadvertently to the conditions in which it occurs, becomes an epoch. This capacity for transformation that the event possesses, even if it is non-existent at the time of its occurrence, is supported by mechanisms and engines

that allow the inscription of the event a posteriori. Déotte has worked on certain apparatuses that, for him, expose this surface: the museum, the cinema, and perspective, among others. I have been extending this approach to surfaces that are perhaps less visible, produced by gestures, performativities, and actions created collectively, even intermittently over time. Jean Louis Déotte (2001) *La révolution des appareils*. In *Lignes* 2001/1 (N° 4), 61 – 67. <https://doi.org/10.3917/lignes1.004.0061>.

These relational surfaces, however, are delicate, like a cell's membrane. They are sustained by echoic collective gestures of hospitality, generosity, recognition, and solidarity. What does the concept of echoic mean here? The echoic refers to the phenomenon whereby a hitherto absent territory emerges through a fabric formed by echoes lodged in the cavities expressed by different bodies. These sheltered echoes configure an echoic field among themselves where they can reside for a time. In this solidary gestural fabric, the echoes hold the trace for a memory to come, in spite of the circumstances in which the echoes themselves have to resist. This echoic field and the geography that it reveals endure long enough to awaken potential paths of further action.

A gesture is a movement that participates in a non-verbal community of expressions, sometimes communicating indirectly within an emergent field of meaning. Through gestures, a community under repression can handle critical discourses without engaging directly with the figures of control in place. A provisional state of solidarity is constituted through gestural apparatuses (Guerra 2024), allowing supportive resonances to emerge in the middle of agonistic conditions of life. In fact, I will suggest it is through minor gestures, infrapolitical ones<sup>10</sup> (Scott 1990, 183-201), that a community can reveal itself and recognize its borders constituted now by the resonances



<sup>10</sup> James C. Scott names as infrapolitical all those acts that in a community under repression sustain a hidden resistance. It is the case of jokes as political verbal ways of expressing dissidence, or even the acts through which a community defies the imposed laws, as it is the case for example of the 'cacerolazo', a form of social expression produced through banging cooking tools to make noise. James C. Scott (2009) *The Art of not Being Governed. An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>11</sup> "Parada's act intensifies the situation through a gestural device that marks an operational lack. Through the embodiment of a loss, a different attentional device was formed. The echoic matter it carries recovers its potentiality in different times, keeping the memories for encounters to come. His act, now known through traces, will constantly disturb the tissue of essences and grounds that tend to solidify a community." Luis Guerra (2024) Bernard Stiegler's postfoundational aesthetics and gestural apparatuses for a memory to come. *Aisthesis. Pratiche, Linguaggi E Saperi dell'estetico*, 16@, 133–146. <https://doi.org/10.36253/Aisthesis-14746>.

of those same gestures sheltered in other bodies (Guerra 2023a, 2023b). It is, in fact, what happens through certain artistic practices, considered here as more than just the production of art in the traditional Westernized sense and the processes through which encountering spaces (Ford 2023), like those referred to in this volume, are built. Sometimes, artistic gestures have happened without recognizing the possibility of their endurance. In fact, they often occur without any teleological aim or certainty of their becoming within the conditions in which they appear. I have mentioned in other places the cases of artistic gestures, such as El Siluetazo in Argentina or Hernán Parada's actions in Chile, that defied the conditions of existence.<sup>11</sup> They happened without knowing how the gesture would endure the oppressive situations within which they occurred. Here, I will claim the gesture remains intentionless, beyond the conscious will or teleological desires. It is also the case of the Czech artist Jiří Kovanda, who developed a series of artistic actions during the so-called Period of Normalization<sup>12</sup> in the former Czechoslovakia<sup>13</sup> (Guerra 2024, 120).

<sup>12</sup> The Normalization Period names the time after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact in August 1968. This invasion occurred in response to the events called the Prague Spring, which was a period of reforms led by Alexander Dubček. The notion of normalization meant a restoration of the party rule and the return of the country under the iron fist of the socialist bloc.

<sup>13</sup> Czechoslovakia was part of the Eastern Bloc between 1948 to 1989. In 1989, the communist regime ended during the Velvet Revolution, and in 1992 Czechoslovakia split peacefully into two states: Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Kovanda's work at that moment considered actions that imperceptibly interrupted the perceptual conditions of Prague's social and political life (Guerra 2016, 166-173). Kovanda's artistic gestures were not only simple; they were "normal" in that they were formally invisible to everyday life. Kovanda used public space like any other citizen and started to articulate and perform these gestures, such as touching his nose, crossing his legs, and scratching his head. As the subtitle of one of Kovanda's works says, he "follows a previously written script to the letter. Gestures and movements have been selected so the passers-by will not suspect that they are watching a 'performance'."<sup>14</sup> In this invisible, rather inexistent condition, I have claimed that there is a form of political resistance. His actions probably seemed irrelevant inside the political conditions within which they occurred; nevertheless, they carried out a resistance that indirectly confronted the repressive situation (Morganová 2014, 183-184).<sup>15</sup>

Derek R. Ford, in his book *Teaching the Actuality of Revolution. Aesthetics, Unlearning, and the*

<sup>14</sup> Jiří Kovanda (2006) *Actions and Installations – 1976-2005*. Edited by Vít Havránek. Texts by Vít Havránek, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Pawel Polit, Georg Schöllhamer, Jirí Sevcik, Igor Zabel. Geneva: JRPIRingier/Tranzit series.

<sup>15</sup> Commenting on another action, *Untitled, 1976*, an action where Kovanda just stood in the streets of Prague opening his arms, forming a kind of cross, and waited to be touched by the passers-by, art historian Pavlína Morganová asserts: "His position 'of being kind of crucified' expresses that which many

of his generation (not only artists) were deprived of by the totalitarian regime, though there is also something in him determined to preserve his identity despite the warped conditions. This performance was not merely an affront [to] those simply walking past, an attempt to bridge the anonymity of the city and break down the barrier that each carries." Pavlína Morganová (2014) *Czech Action Art, Happenings, actions, events, land art, body art and performance art behind the iron curtain*, Karolinum Press.

Sensation of Struggle exposes<sup>16</sup> that “pedagogy can contribute to political struggles by offering educational forms organizers can utilize at various levels with the appropriate and correct content” (Ford 2023, 10), meaning those forms that can hold a delay within the existent perceptual ecology in place. Ford proposes to promote “forms and practices that sensually and cognitively expose the limits of our present imaginary and induce sensations of an alternative world in the present” (Ford 2023, 57). For him, teaching is about unlearning. A form of teaching that will help us to unlearn those given maps through which the capitalist perceptual ecology is sensed and built through us (Ford 2023, 58). Based on Gert Biesta’s approach to teaching as the basic gesture of redirecting someone else’s gaze (Biesta 2022, 77), Ford articulates the need to search for pedagogical practices that enlarge our sense of possibility. Perhaps it is here that I found that the methodologies and philosophies assembled in this volume correspond with this material and gestural artistic thinking and pedagogy. Nomadic, itinerant, alternative, and egalitarian, these practices and institutional fabrics challenge the prevailing paradigms, creating situations within which shared heritages,

<sup>16</sup> Derek R. Ford (2023). Teaching the actuality of revolution: Aesthetics, Unlearning, and the Sensations of Struggle. Madison: Iskra Books.

historical narratives, communal experiences, and political discourse can converge, rise, and take shelter. The gestural solidarities compose a space of and for echoic shelters, where, at least for a while, provisionally even, an encounter can be cultivated. The art of art pedagogy is a collective endeavor through which unlearning can take place, and therefore, the possibility to imagine that another consciousness can happen: “teaching as the facilitation of unlearning is aesthetic as it opens fissures within the world as it is, inaugurating a break in learning and interrupting the dominant sensorium” (Ford 2023, 59).

This volume opens a path that teaches us about the material possibilities occurring beyond the given lenses of normative pedagogies and thinking in the arts. Let’s give them shelter in our own bodies, through a careful reading, and let them teach us how to unlearn the hegemonic perceptual ecology. Give them the resonance to create other pedagogic ecologies.

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# Knowledge and to be Known

Dr. Aura Seikkula

On the 29th of February I was taking my regular exhibition opening tour around Helsinki museums and art galleries. Only a few days before, the global art community had commemorated Bisi Silva's (1962-2019) passing. As a founder of the ambitious Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos and pioneering Àsìkò Art School and as the grand force of African art, she created innovative programming, curated historically meaningful exhibitions, redefined the meaning of education and gave African contemporary art its international, independent character. We worked together for over a decade.

Throughout the evening, on three separate occasions, individuals approached me to discuss Bisi and our collaborative projects. They remarked on her unwavering ambition, which radiated through her constant smile, and praised her visionary leadership, which propelled us to uncharted territories and facilitated encounters that broadened our perspectives. However, underlying each interaction was a commitment to the critical and conceptual exploration inherent in artistic endeavors, urging us to interrogate, investigate, and comprehend our world with greater depth and insight. Bisi possessed a grand vision, systematically cultivated with relentless dedication and determination that knew no bounds.

Bisi articulated a critical stance towards the limited scope of initiatives promoting "art from Africa"

tailored for Western consumption, noting the absence of reciprocal benefits accruing to the continent. Additionally, she scrutinized the unevenness in curatorial research pertaining to local art scenes across Africa, the dearth of published art histories, and instances where colonial legacies persisted despite years of independence and democratic struggles in nascent states. To tackle this, Bisi established the Àsikò Art School amalgamating elements of workshops, laboratories, and residencies, thus constituting a multifaceted educational institution. As one of the co-founders of this comprehensive program, I attest to its pivotal position within the African art environment. Operating as a nomadic entity, Àsikò Art School provides a distinctive platform for artists and curators to partake in rigorous training, collaborative endeavors, and experimental pursuits.

Since its inception in 2010, Àsikò has adopted an itinerant approach, traversing Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone Africa, with sessions convened in various countries including Nigeria (2010 & 2012), Ghana (2013), Senegal (2014), Mozambique (2015), Ethiopia (2016), and Cape Verde (2022). Functioning as an Africa-centric initiative, Àsikò has facilitated the training of numerous artists and curators while fostering connections among art professionals from across the globe, thus presenting an alternative and egalitarian pedagogical model that diverges from prevailing mainstream paradigms.

After Bisi's passing, I and as so many of us who had worked with her, started to look into ways to carry on with her immense legacy. In this search to continue the intellectual legacy of not only Bisi but the Àsikò Art School, I contacted my colleague, artist, educator, and researcher Daniel Peltz. As Bisi, I first met Peltz in Helsinki. Daniel Peltz's artistic practice is characterized by its thought-provoking engagement with pressing social issues and its communal approach to artistic expression. Peltz frequently collaborates with communities, institutions, and individuals to create works that reflect on the complexities of contemporary life exploring themes such as labor, migration and, technology through a persistent social practice.

After I moved to Stockholm, I had the pleasure to get acquainted with the Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies, an ongoing artistic research project situated in Rejmyre, that Peltz founded with artist Sissi Westerberg. Through an ensemble residency model, Rejmyre explores contemporary issues using diverse artistic practices. Activities include fellowships, residencies, seminars, exhibitions, and installations, all centered around the town's unique context. The initiative aims to create a platform for artistic experimentation, critique, and community engagement, emphasizing the role of artists in society. Its focus on embedded installations, as Peltz calls them, challenges conventional notions of site-specificity.

As an artist-run organization, Rejmyre Art LAB has endeavored to establish a post-institutional teaching and learning environment in Rejmyre. The project claims to foster growth, sustained critique, and exploration of topics of collective interest, not only for its members but also for the wider community. Here, I saw a lot of social, cultural and intellectual characteristics relating to those of Àsìkò Art School. For this publication, I was asked to look into these two pedagogical models of Àsìkò and the one founded by Peltz, Nordic/Baltic Studio for Continued Engagement, for their synergies, possible similarities and to consider pedagogic practices in more general from their initial objectives.

## The Weight of a Region

Àsìkò Art School's unwavering commitment to an Africa-centric ethos underscores its mission to furnish artists and curators with tailored training and networking opportunities that transcend geographical confines. By espousing an alternative pedagogical model, Àsìkò not only challenges prevailing paradigms but also advocates for inclusivity within the realm of art education and practice.

Bisi Silva characterized Àsìkò Art School as a space that embraces the imperative of 'learning to unlearn'. In a publication authored in 2017, which was

curated as part of the Àsìkò project, Silva articulated that the absence of critical theory and the limitations within art history as entrenched within African educational curricula, compounded by the persistent prioritization of skill acquisition over process-oriented learning, served as the catalyst for the Center for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA Lagos) to initiate a curatorial endeavor with a pedagogical emphasis.

In considering synergies and parallels between Àsìkò Art School and the Nordic/Baltic Studio for Continued Engagement, I am drawn to negotiate the question of the site as is fundamental to both pedagogical models. Characteristic to both initiatives is to comprehensively understand a site by examining it from multiple dimensions, including its local, historical, social, and cultural aspects.

However, whereas the Nordic/Baltic Studio revolves around the idea of a community, contextualized by the locality of Rejmyre, Àsìkò Art School defines a site as radically African, simultaneously questioning what African is. Embarked on an itinerant journey across Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone Africa, organizing sessions in diverse locales such as Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Mozambique, Ethiopia, and Cape Verde, Àsìkò's peripatetic approach underscores the program's dedication to engaging with varied communities and facilitating cross-cultural dialogue throughout the continent.

As I see this, initially Bisi's aim with this Pan-African school of thought was to create a distinctive identity of Art from Africa within Africa and in the African Diaspora as well as on the global level at large.

So, the foundation of Àsìkò builds upon a site as a composer of an artistic Pan-African identity through social dynamics, historical narratives, cultural practices as well as belief and value systems examining communities, collective memories, social hierarchies, shared heritage and contested meanings associated with the site. Each iteration of Àsìkò does this within a changing geographical context, the main incentive for its nomadic nature. Critical engagement and ongoing dialogue are essential for realizing the vision of a united and prosperous Africa and Diaspora.

As titled, Nordic/Baltic Studio for Continued Engagement also builds upon strong geographical context, the Nordics. The idea of the Nordic-Baltic as a coherent region has gained a concept of New Nordics reflecting a broader regional cooperation and integration, potentially leading to new political, economic, and cultural dynamics addressing inequality, promoting sustainable development, enhancing civic engagement, and upholding democratic principles.

I would define these two site-specific approaches differing in one main way. Nordic/Baltic Studio is rooted in its immediate local context of Rejmyre, using the context as a possibility to negotiate

what site is and can be as a shared practice whereas Àsìkò continuously deepens the understanding of what Africa was, is and will be within arts, for arts and through arts. Let's share a bit deeper look into how these two pedagogical models gain their form.

## Àsìkò Art School

Àsìkò emerged as a response to the limitations of the traditional academic artist education model, which often neglects art history, critical theory, and visual culture beyond Eurocentric perspectives. By broadening access to diverse perspectives and historical narratives, Àsìkò expands the possibilities for artistic production and critical engagement among participants.

The Àsìkò Pedagogy represents a paradigm shift in artist education, addressing the lacunae in traditional academic models by centering on decolonial theory, Africanness, Pan-Africanism, materiality, and the intersection of locality and globalism. Grounded in Africa and the African Diaspora, Àsìkò fosters critical engagement with colonial histories, post-colonial realities, and contemporary cultural production, offering a platform for professional development, critical thinking, and curatorial practice among African artists. Àsìkò also counts as a vital curatorial intervention speculating on the future of contemporary art practice in Africa and beyond.

By centering Africanness and Pan-Africanism, Àsikò empowers participants to reclaim their cultural heritage and challenge dominant paradigms in art history and theory. Here, visiting historical African sites is an effort to underscore their connection to not only cultural heritage but to create a sense of a context defining artistic practices. Àsikò thus provides a space for examining shifts and developments in African cultural production and thought within the contemporary context. Through curated explorations of African exhibition history and art history, participants engage with the rich tapestry of African artistic expression, situating their practice within broader socio-political and historical frameworks.

Àsikò addresses the need for local, regional, and continental support structures for art production, critical thinking, and curatorial practice in Africa. Emphasizing methodology, critical thinking, and the implementation of conceptual ideas, the program nurtures artists and curators, expanding their possibilities for creative expression and critical engagement. The program immerses participants in the history and culture of the location where Àsikò is situated, culminating in a final project rather than a traditional exhibition.



## Nordic/Baltic Studio for Continued Engagement

The Nordic/Baltic Studio Pedagogy is a multifaceted approach to artistic education that challenges the traditional emphasis on individualism, instead promoting collaboration, site responsiveness, and exploration of rural contexts. This pedagogy, characterized by its incorporation of ensemble research, embedded installations, thematic intensives, and community engagement, offers a unique platform for advanced artists to collectively investigate and redefine the role of art in public spaces.

The Nordic/Baltic Studio represents a holistic approach to artistic education, combining theoretical inquiry, practical exploration, and community engagement. By challenging dominant paradigms and embracing collaborative practices, it offers a dynamic platform for artists to reframe their relationship with space, community, and the role of art in society.

Participants contribute their expertise to collectively explore shared topics of investigation, disrupting the dominance of individualistic approaches in Nordic artist education. Through collective exercises and project development, participants develop their approaches to the theme, enriching their understanding through shared dialogue and experimentation. The Nordic/Baltic Studio revitalizes the concept of site-responsive installation by embedding artworks

in the socio-cultural landscape of rural communities. These installations, strategically placed in unmarked locations, prompt encounters between what Peltz refers to as accidental audiences and objects of uncertain origin. This approach reimagines the role of art in public spaces, encouraging viewers to reconsider their relationship with the environment.

Thematic intensives form an integral part of the Nordic/Baltic Studio, allowing new themes to emerge organically from previous iterations. This long-term, place-based research focuses on the rural, glass factory-town of Rejmyre. Through theoretical and practical exploration, participants interrogate the spatial dynamics of rural environments, challenging the implicit bias towards urban contexts in contemporary art practice.

The Nordic/Baltic Studio emphasizes community engagement through evening presentations of participants' work and shared hosting of collective dinners. These gatherings facilitate meetings with diverse, local constituencies outside the art world, fostering dialogue and exchange of ideas. Participants also learn about the development of Rejmyre Art Lab's Center for Peripheral Studies, which serves as a model for creating art centers on the periphery of urban art worlds. This focus on peripheral spaces challenges conventional notions of artistic centrality, encouraging participants to explore alternative modes of artistic practice and engagement.

## Synergies of Sites

I would like to draw this thinking together. While both pedagogies aim to address gaps in traditional artist education and promote critical engagement, they differ in their geographical focus, conceptual frameworks, and approaches to professional development and cultural exposure. Àsìkò emphasizes decolonial perspectives and Africanness, while the Nordic/Baltic Studio focuses on ensemble research and rethinking the role of art in rural spaces.

### Focus and Conceptual Framework

Àsìkò centers on decolonial theory, African-ness, and Pan-Africanism, addressing colonial histories and post-colonial realities as well as emphasizes materiality, locality vs. globalism, and cultural production within the African Diaspora. Nordic/Baltic Studio challenges individualism in artist education through collaborative research and practices and focuses on revitalizing art in public spaces via embedded installations and explores rural contexts. By doing so the Nordic Studio conceptually examines the rural-urban dynamic in art practice.

### Geographical and Cultural Emphasis

Anchored in Africa and the African Diaspora, Àsìkò focuses on shifts in cultural production and

thought, having a curatorial emphasis on African exhibition and art history. Based on long-term research in a rural, glass factory-town, with a focus on contextualizing art practice within local landscapes, Nordic Baltic Studio explores the role of rural spaces in contrast to urban-centric art discourse.

### Professional Development and Methodology

Àsikò provides support structures for art production, critical thinking, and curatorial practice in emphasizing methodology, critical thinking, and conceptual implementation. Led by a core group of artists, facilitating collective investigation into selected themes the Nordic/Baltic Studio encourages participants to develop their approaches through collective exercises and projects.

### Response to Educational Models

Àsikò is initially a response to the limitations of traditional academic artist education, aiming to expand possibilities for production and critical engagement while the Nordic/Baltic Studio challenges the dominance of individualism and the urban bias in artist education and seeks to rethink the role of art in public spaces and explore alternative models for artistic engagement.

## Cultural Heritage and Exposure

Both Àsikò and the Nordic/Baltic Studio foster a connection with cultural heritage and exposure to renowned practitioners engaging with local communities to broaden perspectives on art and place.

The core nominator for both radically relevant pedagogic models is the embodied experience. I am always drawn to philosophically analyze any given situation but will not dwell on theory here. However, I would like to give some philosophical ground on the importance of this embodied experience. In his influential work “Phenomenology of Perception,” Merleau-Ponty explores the relationship between the body and perception, arguing that our experiences are fundamentally embodied. He emphasizes the importance of the body as the primary means through which we interact with and make sense of the world. Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenological approach sheds light on how bodily experiences shape our understanding of ourselves, others, and the world around us.

Merleau-Ponty claims that our embodied interactions with a site play a pivotal role in shaping their comprehension and appraisal of said site. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty’s emphasis on the embodied experience highlights the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between individuals and sites. Just as our bodies shape our perception of a site, the characteristics and features of the site also influence how we

move, perceive, and interact with it. This reciprocal relationship underscores the importance of considering the embodied experience when studying and designing sites, as it provides insights into how individuals engage with and make meaning from their surroundings. Within Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological framework, the embodied experience emerges as a foundational element.

## In Closing

To conclude my parallel consideration, the distinctions between these pedagogical approaches are discernible in their methodologies and the constituencies they serve. Àsìkò, grounded in a pan-African ethos, frequently employs itinerant residencies that immerse participants in various African contexts, thereby fostering a profound engagement with local cultures, histories, and contemporary socio-political issues. This mobile, context-responsive model encourages artists to engage critically with decolonial theories and practices, challenging and deconstructing colonial legacies within their creative work.

Conversely, the Nordic/Baltic Studio is entrenched in the rural landscapes of the Nordic countries, leveraging the unique characteristics of these environments to stimulate artistic practice. Through an emphasis on ensemble research, the Nordic/Baltic Studio promotes collaborative methodologies and

collective knowledge production, aiming to reconceptualize the relationship between art, community, and nature. This approach not only contests urban-centric art paradigms but also endeavors to revitalize rural areas through artistic interventions and sustainable practices.

Both pedagogies prioritize professional development, yet through distinct frameworks. Àsìkò provides mentorship and critical feedback within a paradigm that scrutinizes power dynamics and global art hierarchies. Participants are encouraged to cultivate their artistic voices and practices in ways that resonate with their cultural identities and socio-political milieus. The Nordic/Baltic Studio, in contrast, emphasizes competencies pertinent to working in rural settings, such as site-specific art-making, community engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration. It supports artists in developing projects that are deeply embedded in and responsive to the local environment and its inhabitants.

Cultural exposure within these programs also diverges significantly. Àsìkò's peripatetic model facilitates a rich exchange of ideas across diverse African locales, exposing artists to a wide array of cultural practices and artistic discourses. This cross-cultural engagement is pivotal to its mission of nurturing a pan-African artistic identity. Meanwhile, the Nordic/Baltic Studio's cultural exposure, though more localized, is equally profound, as it immerses artists in the

traditions, narratives, and ecological knowledge of the Nordic countryside. This deep, place-based learning cultivates a nuanced understanding of the intersections between art, ecology, and community.

Ultimately, both Àsikò and the Nordic/Baltic Studio endeavor to transform the pedagogy and practice of art, each contributing to a more inclusive, critically engaged, and contextually aware global art community. Through their distinct yet complementary approaches, they expand the possibilities for artists to explore new narratives, challenge dominant paradigms, and forge meaningful connections with diverse audiences and environments. These programs are instrumental in shaping a new generation of artists who are attuned to the complexities of their cultural and ecological contexts.

Bisi Silva's enduring legacy, characterized by her transformative contributions to contemporary African art and her visionary curatorial practices, finds a profound parallel in the dynamic expansion of embodied learning through experimental pedagogies such as Àsikò and the Nordic/Baltic Studio. Silva's work, which continues to influence and inspire successive generations of artists, mirrors the commitment of these pedagogical models to decolonial practices and contextual engagement.

Silva's emphasis on fostering spaces for critical dialogue and cultural exchange is echoed in the methodologies of Àsikò, with its itinerant and

pan-African orientation, and the Nordic/Baltic Studio, with its emphasis on site-specific and collaborative approaches. Both programs embody Silva's expansive vision, creating environments in which artists are encouraged to engage critically with their cultural and socio-political contexts, interrogate dominant paradigms, and innovate within their creative practices.

Through these experimental pedagogies, Silva's legacy is perpetuated, expanding the horizons of art education and practice in deeply embodied and profoundly impactful ways. These initiatives not only honor Silva's contributions but also continue to push the boundaries of artistic and educational frameworks, ensuring that the principles of critical engagement, contextual responsiveness, and cultural inclusivity remain central to the evolution of contemporary art.





**On the origins of Àsìkò:  
Curating at CCA Lagos**  
Bisi Silva

This is an edited excerpt from a presentation given by Bisi Silva, founder of The Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA,Lagos), at an IKT (International Association of Curators of Contemporary Art) Lab which convened during the 2013 exhibition “Present Tense: Photographs from Southern Africa”, curated by António Pinto Ribeiro at the Fondation Calouste Gulbenkian in Paris, France. The Lab’s central question, “African Art? What For?” invited presenters to explore pertinent themes around the utility of the “African Art” label in the contemporary landscape, the roles and particularities of art criticism, curatorial practice, and mobility in (and outside of) Africa.

We are privileged to meet Bisi here in a supple period in CCA, Lagos’s timeline. She speaks to the necessity of CCA’s curatorial interventions and the educational impetus of a not-yet-named Àsikò Art School.

Bisi Silva: Brilliant. So, for those who don’t know, because I don’t know who’s in the audience, CCA was set up in 2007... six years last weekend. After living for a long time in Europe, I moved back to Nigeria, and found that, even though Nigeria has a dynamic visual art scene with commercial galleries, actually, there

was no contemporary art space that allowed for experimentation. Most of the exhibitions were commercial, were conservative-- focusing on painting, and sculpture, and very little platforms for photography, video art, performance art, sound art, and other lens-based, time-based and other experimental media. There were quite a few artists who did want to develop work and projects that engage these media, but also engaged topics that bordered on the political and the social.

Also, there was a lack of critical debate going on around the exhibitions that [took] place, and very, very few live reads. So, the original idea was to set up a library, a resource center; a research center for visual art and culture. However, I felt that it would be premature to just set up a library without having the gallery space, where you know, the exhibitions and projects could happen. Artists [and] young art professionals who wanted to develop a curatorial career could have a place or space where they can actually carry out a lot of their activities. So, those are the reasons for setting up CCA Lagos.

Over the first year or two, we had an extremely dynamic, extremely full calendar that focused on exhibitions, talks, seminars, [and] workshops. Basically, [we] did a little bit of everything with regards to the curatorial. With regard to the yearly programme, we wanted to focus on a theme and a medium throughout

the year. So, in 2006,2007, [and] 2008, we focused on democracy-- "Democrazy" from the title of a song by Fela Anikulapo Kuti. Another year, we focused on photography. There are a lot of photographers in Nigeria, but most of them are doing photojournalism, documentary, and reportage. There are very few, a handful of artists working in a more conceptual manner. We focused on photography for the year with a residency, workshops and exhibitions. But we also had a theme which was art, fashion and identity in 2010, in which we presented the works of J.D Okhai Ojeikere... We also had an exhibition from Germany, Prêt-à-partager and an exhibition by Nigerian photographer Jide Alakija on the politics of dress in Nigeria. So, ...thematic focus allows us to engage with the specific idea of theme from different perspectives, and in-depth.

We [were] one of the first [to] focus on video art in Nigeria in 2008, 2009. This started with an introduction to video art. (I don't think I knew any video artist working in Nigeria, in 2008.) We did a one-week introduction program workshop, followed a few months later by a three-week workshop, then a few months [later] the first video art exhibition in Nigeria, complimented by the first publication on video art in Nigeria. [Formed out] of that [was] the group called VAN Lagos, Video Art Network Lagos which consists of artist, Jude Anogwih, who's also curator at CCA Lagos, Oyinda Fakeye, as well as sound and



video artist, Emeka Ogboh. Over the last three, four years, they have been doing video exhibitions around the world, and workshops in West Africa, and other parts of Africa. They just came back recently from Zimbabwe, where they presented video works at the Live Art Festival initiated by Jelili Atiku. So, that gives you a general idea of the kind of programmes that we've been doing.

I also want to talk on two areas of focus that I want to develop further over the next two to three years. One is publication, and the other is education.

In 2010, we started a program, we don't have a [formal] name for it, but we call it the International Art Program. It's part informal art laboratory, part informal art academy, part residency, where for a one-month period, we select [and work within] a theme. The first one was in 2010, called 'On Independence and The Ambivalence of Promise'. We have a call for applications for artists from across Africa, to participate in this program for four weeks in Lagos. Then we have a rotating faculty, between 15 to 20 faculty members of artists, curators, writers. In an extremely intensive program, we try and engage the team. But the idea is less about creating new works, more about developing critical thinking, conceptual strategies of the artists, getting them to think [in] more of a research driven process. Because what I find with a lot of young artists here is that there tends to be



a disconnect between the work that they're showing, and the context, the ideas, that they are articulating about that particular work.

In the schools, at least in Nigeria, where most of the universities that have a faculty of art and applied art, -- over 30 universities and institutions of higher education,--there's a lack of recent art history, little or no visual culture, very little critical theory, and the focus is more on the technical. You do have artists who come out of the art schools with proficient technical skills, [and] very little, contextual. So, the art program that we do focuses on bringing together education and curatorial practice.

We've done three programs to date. This year, [2013] we changed the program into a moving art school, and for the first time, it went to Accra. In 2014, it will go to Dakar, and we hope that in 2015, it will go to Maputo covering Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone Africa. It's a way of making the program available to the widest audience possible, as well as sharing skills and knowledge across the continent. So that's a program that I'm committed to for at least five years. We've done three, we're moving to the fourth one and it's something that [I] feel is challenging the out-of-date educational system of art that exists across Africa today.



**On the Nordic/Baltic Studio:  
Seeking a space of exception  
(1 of 4)  
Daniel Peltz**

In 2009, along with a small group of artist colleagues, I co-founded Rejmyre Art Lab's Center for Peripheral Studies in the rural, glass factory town of Rejmyre, Sweden. It was somewhere between an experimental institution/an experiment in instituting and an artwork. We were attempting to create a particular kind of space, for collective study and co-making, in response to the art schools we were teaching in, the artist residencies we were attending and the curatorial projects we were being invited to join:

- a space that allowed for return over an extended period of time, perhaps even a lifetime,
- where the focus was on making art as a way of thinking and being together, as opposed to time and space for solitary practice,
- and where the structure of the residency, or commission, embodied the values of our practices, where 'the space' and 'the work' were less separate.

We were inspired by many of our peers' work, developing artist-initiated, (post)pedagogic spaces. Some of these experimental spaces were historical but many were contemporary. Some we experienced directly, others we imagined from a distance; Joseph Beuys' Free International University, Tania Bruguera's Cátedra Arte de Conducta (Behavior Art School),

Mark Dion and Morgan J. Puett's Mildred's Lane, Andrea Zittel's A to Z West, and SOMA's alternative MFA in Mexico City all figured in our conversations. I was not aware of the work of the Àsikò Art School at the time, but I now see it as a peer project for this work in Rejmyre.

My primary collaborator on the project has been my partner, the Swedish conceptual craft artist, Sissi Westerberg. When we met, she and a friend owned a piece of land with a small farmhouse, some fields and old barns, in the village of Kalbo, ten kilometers from Rejmyre. Sissi and her friend organized a project engaging a group of artists in the glass factory and invited me to join, prompting my first visit to the town. Buying this land was a conscious attempt, upon Sissi's graduation from Konstfack, to have some space of her own for hosting and making. At the time, it was the cheapest house with a larger plot of land on the Swedish housing market; a decaying farmhouse in an agrarian village, nearby the decaying glass factory town of Rejmyre.

We refer to Rejmyre Art Lab's Center for Peripheral Studies as a long-term, place-based, artistic research project. We come together to explore issues of vital concern through and with our varied artistic practices. We utilize what I refer to as an ensemble residency model to conduct this research, coming together to collectively 'think' aspects of our complex

existence in this place and time. The notion of an ensemble orients us towards the location of the act of study being within and through the group. I will elaborate further on this form in this book.

Over the years, Sissi and I have been joined in our work in Rejmyre by many colleagues. The Swedish artists Hanna Lundborg and David Larsson and the Finnish artist Meri Linna have been particularly critical in supporting this work and central to its further development. Our activities have included a series of thematic post-MFA fellowship gatherings, a long-term, place-based ensemble research program, a platform for experimental and conceptual projects in the Rejmyre Glass Factory, public seminars, exhibitions and programs of public artworks embedded in the rural factory town of Rejmyre.

We've worked with an evolving set of annual and, more recently, multi-year themes, that are both materially and conceptually connected to the site and open to its entanglements with others. The emphasis has been less on 'choosing' a theme and more on 'noticing' the themes that are emerging as the project evolves. We aim to take our time, to move with multiple modes of awareness and to follow an organic line through the site. Finding our themes has involved many inputs, with the final selection made by me, which has allowed for consultation but also an element of intimacy and spontaneity in the process.





They have included: Place as Matter (2009), Transparency and Mediation (2011), Infinite Gestures (2012), Everything you want was already here (2014), Clearcut (2016), Rural Resistance (2017), Performing Labour (2015-17), Detox – Clean it up! (2018-20) and Refuging (2020-present).

The Nordic/Baltic Studio for Continued Engagement began in 2009. It took shape as a series of post-MFA gatherings, rooted in a desire to create a healing space, in the wake of master study and its accompanying professionalization and indoctrination. We gathered students from a range of prominent art academies in the Nordic and Baltic region, drawing on an informal network of colleagues to nominate recent graduates for this opportunity. Many artists are drawn to master study in art because they are seeking an artist community. They arrive at art schools and encounter institutions of learning and production that often, implicitly or explicitly, encourage competition and radical individuation, qualities seen as necessary to survive in an 'art world' enmeshed in capitalist and individualist logics. The aim of the Nordic/Baltic studio was to return to study as a primal act of intentional gathering, as artists, to forge and practice kinship.

Capitalist logics at play in contemporary art schools tend to wrestle the understanding of study, as part of the commons, away from us. They package it in marketing campaigns, constantly evolving

menus of programs and degrees, vague missions and ever-changing goals. Study is further housed within glistening buildings and robustly posturing administrations, all, inside the added logic of crisis capitalism, under constant threat of financial cuts or even dissolution. This results in leading contemporary art schools existing in an ironic state of luxury, lack and constriction.

There is something deeply personal in the project of the Nordic/Baltic Studio, in terms of my own desires for healing as a student and as a teacher. The activation of the conventional power relations, between art students (as the representatives of the free artist, speaking truth to the power of the institution) and their teachers (as representatives of the capitalized institution), is often quite painful and ironic. Many of us are drawn to the practice of teaching by utopian desires, for a space where the value of art practice, and our own value as artists, can be taken for granted. We are seeking a space of exception, from the external demands on art, where peer-exchange across generations of artists might be possible. The asymmetrical power relations of the art school (as art institution) exist, but, to locate that power in the teacher and play it out in the space of the classroom has often felt deeply off to me. This is especially true given the precarity of so many employed by the institution, but even for those of us with tenure, our pow-







ers are limited. The power and agency of teachers, to shape and lead the art school as an institution, is severely curtailed by the incontestable financial logics at play, that are consistently imposed by administrators, boards of directors and shifting political regimes. Faculty governance, a vital principle within higher education, meant to ensure that academic institutions are led by academic values, has come to be understood as necessarily secondary to this financial governance.

As teachers, we cannot take the power of the art school, as art institution, with us. For this inability, we can find ways to be grateful, ways to make craft of leaving it behind. Rejmyre offered a small group of us this opportunity.



**I long for my body  
to walk with me**  
Tilda Dalunde

On the first day, there is no map, there is only a direction. The direction starts to pull on the compass needle, and I start walking.

I walk along the black soil, tracing its edges against the brown beside it. I heard long ago that black soil often marks a history of human presence in a place – that it is something that archeologists keep an eye out for – and as we have all been invited to settle down here, I like the idea of making my home on this dark patch, this (perhaps) old settlement, in this open field close to the old and the new house. An app on my phone follows my movements and draws the shape of the black soil, as my body measures my surroundings. The other participants pick their homes where it suits them: one in an old hunting tower, one on a pile of rocks.

We, the new inhabitants of this neighborhood, are invited to relate to this place and to each other, and we describe our histories to each other in something like 60 seconds, and we listen intently, with focus, even when we trail off and don't remember what our lives consisted of before this moment. Big empty gaps, in our minds, and between the planks in the barn where we sit and watch the rain fall on our castles in the sky. The black soil goes even darker. I can almost smell it from here.





I write a list for my house:

- seeds for this perfect soil
- walls, floor, roof, windows, fireplace
- little stream
- silence, but friends close by
- an archeological dig
- a history book for the land
- old trees

I arrive the day before, by long distance bus in the afternoon light. The air smells of warm asphalt and sounds like swaying reeds by a lonely road. We are all strangers being picked up here, and arrive at the old house where we will eat and sleep, and start to meet each other.

On a different day, my body measures a different relationship to the ground. Blindfolded, I am offered the end of a rope, and follow where it leads me, along a fallen tree, over grass, stone, wood, close to the insects that I would keep my hands away from, except I have to touch everything to understand how to move forward. Removing sight makes watching from a distance impractical; I need to engage with the grass, stone and wood to know where to put my feet and knees. My hands know matter and now I move among matter, as matter: I pour along the ground like living clay, finding its way between sharp rocks and through smooth leaves. We are not living in this world as external entities. We are parts of the world: we are built of its materials, we move its materials around.



We (the inhabitants) ponder things while sitting on the ground, swimming in the lake, walking on the road, lying in the moss. Important things that I can't remember anymore, since they have become part of me, or passed me by. We collect materials in the forest and the old barn, build things and present them to each other, we give each other suggestions. We become each other's materials. I gain new context, new texts to read, new music to listen to, a new group to belong to.

I find a book in the old house where we sleep. It's a history of crimes committed in the area. Old records from local police reports and courts. It's mostly minor, understandable crimes, committed out of hunger or other forms of power imbalance. The people step out of the book and make the history of this place real. They also measured this ground with their bodies, walked this land and ate the food that grew in this soil. They built their bodies out of the materials of this place.

On the last day, there still is no map, but we have left traces and tangled lines, suggested roads out of forests and into lakes. Measured the distance between our perfect soil, hunting tower, and pile of rocks. We have built a toolset for rural resistance out of the forest, and left it in the forest. My tool is armor (like it always is), made out of pinecone-scales. I long for this place we are standing in, and the group I am part of. I long for my body to walk with me.





**Reminiscing Àsìkò**  
Odun Orimolade

Àsìkò was made for Africa. It engenders the ability to be plural. That is why it can embrace anything, any rule, break any rule, jump in at any angle, approach things from any point, so long as it serves the purpose of the aim at that time. In a long look, Àsìkò as much as it is a space of learning, it is more of a space of experience. It's not like Àsìkò lives in theory and that we're testing the theory out. It lives as a continued experience. When I got into what is now Àsìkò, it hadn't yet been named. I guess it was still feeling its way through. Interestingly, it still is and that, for me, is a beautiful thing.

People come from all over for the weeks of Àsìkò and then go back to their lives. It was not the same for me because I work so close to The Center for Contemporary Art, Lagos, Àsìkò just lived on for me because of its proximity and openness. So, I jumped in and out as much as I could. If I had a free hour, sometimes less, sometimes more, Àsìkò always made space for people like me. Always accepting and including. Naturally, embracing this access, became part of my world. It allowed. I didn't have to schedule. I just come in and knock on the door. In this way, Àsìkò got to permeate the rest of my practice outside of the residency period. Other iterations of Àsìkò came

after the one I carved time for in Ghana. Even though the stars didn't align for me to participate in another cohort, it didn't bother me too much because I still had it all within my reach. Interestingly, that proximity did not vanish when Bisi left the stage...

Now, there are two different narratives of the Àsikò experience. There is Àsikò with Bisi and Àsikò without Bisi, they are two different experiences. Those that had been in the Àsikò with her would tell you that it was like a mental boot camp on steroids. The import, urgency, seminal purposefulness of critical engagement and reengagement of excavating present value in creative and navigational processes was at the heart. It was the crowning reward as well as the base of our frustrations.

It empowered you to 'go conquer' and show 'who you really are' when you left. It was so saturated and draining at the same time. It sought to pull every ounce of your value to the forefront, just show it to you and kick start a new critical, inward investigation. You self-evaluate about what you're studying and how you want to use it in the world.

There was a lot of pooling of experiences that always opened portals into something else. For example our gatherings to address critical texts brought to the fore methods and contexts of dissection. They could lead into heated debates, belly flopping comedy, it could even evolve into an excursion

or some long-term collaborative project. It was a perfect imperfection that offered sanctuary but did not permit comfort.

I think of the Àsìkò experience as a bit of a dream, it is highly experimental. It lives outside a formalised system with few prerequisites. The only requirement is that everything you meet you can take in and use everything as material. Àsìkò might seem untethered. But Àsìkò's ideology of practice and research is, "just keep shooting". There is a possibility that I will fall on my face, or sound like a bumbling idiot. But then there is the possibility that my perspectives expand, or that my pathway is fortified. It fosters ingenuity, non-conforming, and assuredness in one's expression. Àsìkò strives for perspectives drawn from an imbued awareness of genealogical, location-based and contemporary experience. Àsìkò urges participants to investigate who they are and unearth critical contexts that shed light for their own development. Àsìkò (through Bisi) asks why our stories aren't being told by us the way we want them told. Do we know what stories we want told? Do we know how we want them told? It engages the possibility of navigating other cultures without positioning an external perspective as an authority.

The Àsìkò iterations were open to different knowledge bases and spaces, formal, informal and self-taught. It made developing relationships





accessible for participants, in the knowledge that keeping up any relationship is work. This is not in the context of networking. It offered a lens for all involved to see and be seen without all the invisible barriers in professional and academic situations. That may be why there was always a side door, back door, ceiling latch and any other possible means of accessibility for those seeking safe spaces for development. It draws strength from intersecting methods, ideals and materiality.

Àsikò continues to shape-shift in its participants, contributors, and locations. It is this living organism that is not held by a fixed structure. It was not cast in stone, it is highly elastic, organic, mutating, evolving, and individualistic. Compared to other initiatives, Àsikò seemingly exists in a non-conformist state. Each iteration is so unique not just in its participants, or even the changing geographic spaces. It adopts, integrates, and explores languages, histories, visions every time it moves. It is not a pop-up show, it leaves itself as much as it takes away and can return to whatever that place space or people have mutated into. Everything keeps changing for the vastness of the continent.

It is not necessarily seeking to be defined, and continuously explores and experiments with itself in motion. This brings to mind something the Senegalese filmmaker Ousmane Sembene stated in 1983, "I'd like them to understand me but it makes no

difference...why be a sunflower and turn towards the Sun? I myself I am the Sun!" Àsìkò seeks to be sought. Everywhere it seeps it sows.

Bisi Silva envisioned how Àsìkò might continue to rove in experimentation reaching across all African countries. This is a vision hoped to become an actualization in the near future that not only reaches all Afro-centered spaces but continuously intersects in its breadth of networks to nourish African artists and curators.





**Memories transform like  
the textures of dreams**  
Meri Linna

Ever since the very first time I came to Kalbo I felt at home with certain aspects of the pedagogics in the Nordic/Baltic Studio program. The experimental teaching/facilitation methods and the poetic framing in the program resonated deeply with me as it gave me the courage to grasp further towards something unknown. Back then, I was in the middle of a process of letting go of the academic educational environment which I had come to know as a student of the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts in Helsinki. As a part of my final master thesis, I had initiated a process of reconnecting with certain types of inquiry, (which I had to let aside while focusing on other types of artistic making that felt more suitable to explore during my academic education). There was something fragile in this process for me, something which I hadn't fully dared to grow in the soil of the academic curriculum and in the environment of critique I had experienced as a student. Returning several times to Rejmyre Art LAB, since my first visit as participant in 2014, the Nordic/Baltic Studio program and later as facilitator but also as an artist in several other programs, offered me opportunities to explore this fragility. Through it I have had many rewarding and important insights through which I have developed greatly both as a pedagogue and as an artist.

In this text, I aim at grasping the experimental nature of the Nordic/Baltic Studio pedagogics that feels meaningful to me by exploring the dreamlike nature of memories created by my personal life experiences, my artistic process and the several roles in which I have become a part of the Nordic/Baltic Studio organization over time.

Sometimes I would run the nail of my thumb across my upper lip.  
It was unbearably smooth meeting the unbearable soft.

I was a child the first time it happened to me when I layed down to relax in the darkness. Inside the empty space behind my closed eyes, in the absence of light, I would see a formless shape morphing, its essence suddenly interrupted by a texture that would form on its surface. I experienced this image as sensations gradually intensifying, interlinking and changing from one to another. These sensations, as they compressed, expanded beyond my senses, transforming from one immense contrast to another, creating an almost unbearable perception. There is something timeless about its reach beyond sensory limits.

The first time that I entered the lower barn at the Nordic/Baltic Studio I was offered a promise: Everything you want, is already here. So I entered a space where the linearity of time collapsed. From within such a space teachings emerge, and (I) transform.





In my memory, my experiences as a facilitator and participant co-exist, but in reality, they are separated by time (linearity) and foremost by responsibility though never through hierarchy.

One of my personal extra-sensory teachers is the absence of light. In my artistic practice, I deliberately spend time in such an environment, a sort of sensory deprivation. But more than that it is an opportunity to look at what is within. The absence of light is altogether a different experience from how we encounter darkness in our everyday life, however one of our primary reactions to both is fear. Fear and darkness are closely related for many, especially in our childhood experiences. As a facilitator, I invited the group to meet after the evening presentations at 10 pm, to walk in the dusk to the middle of the clear-cut. There, in each other's company, we spread out our sleeping bags and blankets and talked about the fear, while the darkness was closing in.

David's cut down tree was lying on the hill between the old house and the new house. Nearby, we had brought out a tv monitor to share our artistic practices with each other in the evenings. We didn't want to miss out on the sunset and the fire, both of which were not only aesthetic experiences but also, potentially, pedagogical tools. In the spot the tree was laying now, bark had peeled off of the tree's trunk during the winter. The exposed trunk was so smooth,

I ran my hand over the surface and it triggered a memory of the rough surface of the bark from the year we cut it down and the smell of fresh cut wood almost seemed to be lingering in the air once again. There was sawdust in the air from all the cutting, carving, molding of the wood, I ran a piece of the naked wood across my upper lip. Back then I just wanted to let it rest in peace.

In another temporality, where sawdust is snow falling and melting as it lands on my skin. I can no longer remember which year and where I found that piece of wood. Was it a part of David's tree cutting? Was it already there? Either way, this wood transports me in time. There, I found myself sitting on the porch to the old house (again) with a carving knife in my hand. I had been sitting there so many times before and in the future. Maybe I am still there now, through melting memories. Somewhere still sitting and carving, with a knife so unbearably hard, unbearably sharp.

The memory in my hands guides sensations into the wood as it is transformed by the movement of the knife. I carved while talking to a participant that was making a book of seeds for the tool box we all contributed to. I decided to cut the bottom of the thumb I was carving open, reattach it with a joint and carve a small cavity into it. Just small enough to host some things yet unknown.

The next year when I came back to visit, I went together with Daniel to look at the toolbox and how it had developed over winter. Around the small hill that was the home to the tool box they had opened yet another new clearcut. I found my thumb, I held it against my lip and felt the smoothness. I opened it, and inside was a small seed from a tree.





**On the Nordic/Baltic Studio:  
Embedded installation (2 of 4)  
Daniel Peltz**

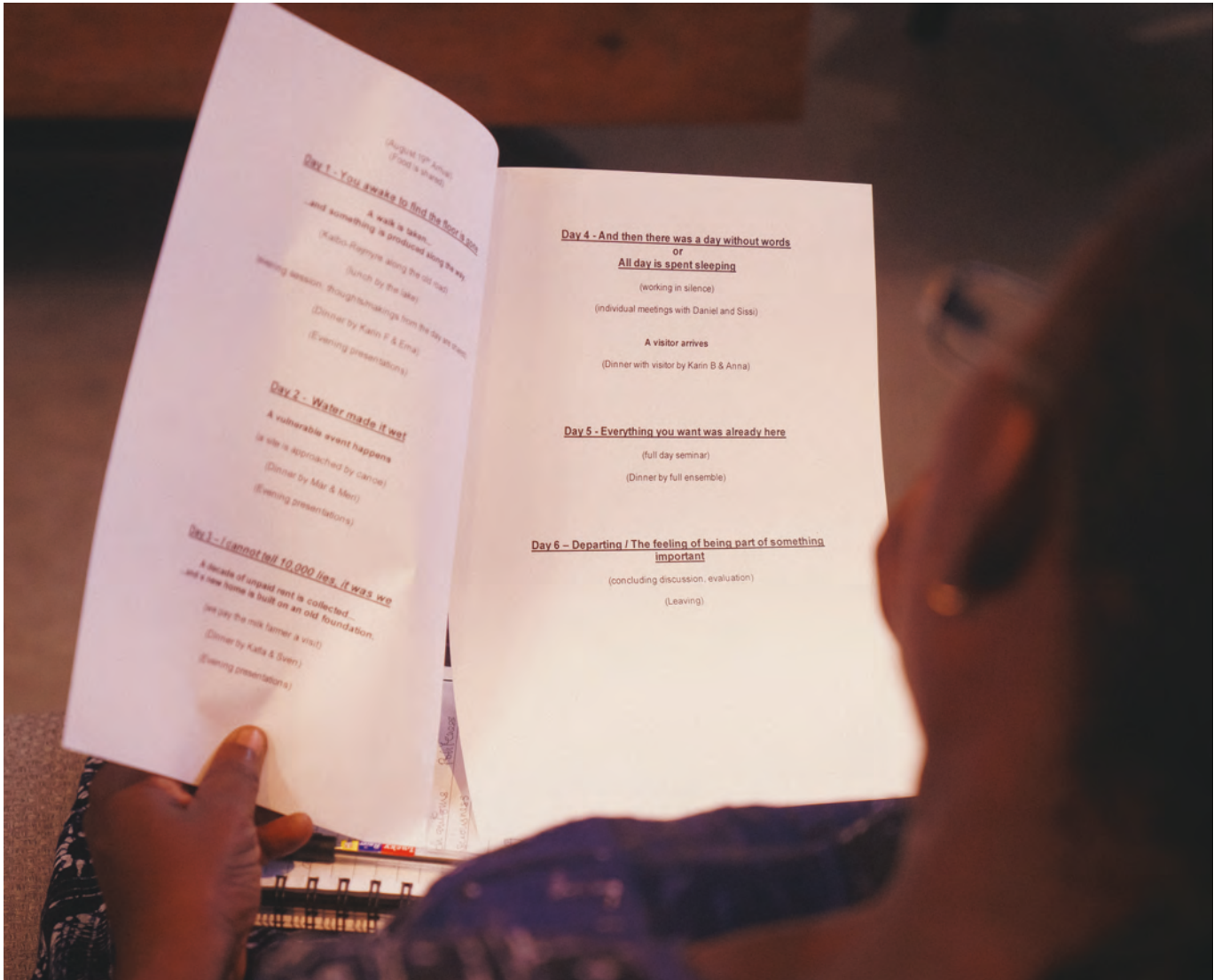
The Nordic/Baltic Studio is also engaged in the larger project of Rejmyre Art Lab's Centre for Peripheral studies, which involves revitalizing the concept and practice of site-responsive installation art. This work is very much an extension of interests coming out of my own artistic practice in restaging the encounter between art/artist and audience. Specifically, we have been doing this in Rejmyre through an exploration of what I refer to in my practice as 'accidental audiences' and their encounters with objects of uncertain origin. This involves artworks and gestures being embedded, in unmarked ways, in the socio-cultural landscape of Rejmyre. Sometimes this is quite literal, such as embedding a work in the context of the Rejmyre Pizzeria, or the abandoned gas station, or inside of the collection of the Rejmyre Historical Museum but has also involved embedding conceptual artworks in socio-cultural processes, such as inside the regional government's process and plans to remediate the toxic waste at our site.

This orientation, towards embedded installation, is rooted in a certain disappointment with the possibilities of the encounter with an artwork when it is framed within an institutional setting, or, by extension, within the conceptual institution of art itself.

Embedding is used to reactivate our thinking with respect to more received notions such as sited, site-specific, site-responsive, etc. In describing our methods and the works themselves, I tend towards the terms embedded and contextual to reference a space where there is no 'site' in which to intervene that can be understood as separate from the intervening object.







## Performative scripts/scores/protocols and poems guide us

In structuring our gatherings in Rejmyre we have typically begun with a phrase or a word, Everything you want was already here, Clearcut, etc. We use these phrases to build poetic scripts, scores and protocols that refer to our site both literally and metaphorically. The aesthetic frame of any space invested in co-study, needs to find ways to acknowledge the limits of anyone's capacity to know either what we are studying or what will emerge from this space of study. At the same time, we need to offer something, some kind of complex offering, to initiate the space. We have been experimenting with doing this through writing scripts, scores, protocols and poems for each gathering.

To root this in an example, in 2014 we worked around the theme Everything you want was already here. We returned to this theme in 2022, when we experimented with using the Nordic/Baltic Studio methodologies as part of an official MFA course offering. The call for the workshop suggested some possible ways of understanding the phrase, Everything you want was already here, with a focus on notions of abundance and lack and how those manifest both at the end of an institutional art education and in the specific rural context of Rejmyre.







**Reflections on Trakthyggesbruk  
or the practice of  
cutting down a tree**  
David Larsson

I was waiting by the tree when the group arrived. I remember the group spreading out as they made their way over the rough terrain in the clearcut area. On the ground next to me, was the old chainsaw which, years earlier I had brought back with me from my grandfather's farm in Västergötland, Sweden. It waited a long time, first in a farm outhouse, then on a shelf in my studio, and it was now going to be used again in the forest around Kalbo.

To cut down a tree is essential to human life. It has been for a very long time and will likely continue to be essential in the foreseeable future. That morning in August 2016, in the forest in Kalbo, when I was standing there in the clearcut with my grandfather's old chainsaw, the felling of a tree was going to be the start of a performative and open-ended pedagogical experiment.

Cutting down a tree is a violent act. That is, to cut off, to dislocate and to utilise a living thing that has been growing in the same spot for decades. And it is a typical human act. People have been cutting down trees for tens of thousands of years. The pre-modern way was to use an axe. It was heavy work, but it provided firewood which could be used to cook food and material to build houses, canoes,





weapons and tools. With modernity this practice changed. The work, that before required several people over a period of several days, could now be done by a single operator with a logging machine in just a few hours. Before, processing was simply chopping firewood, whereas now it has become an industrialized process in which strong chemicals dissolve the wood into a slurry of separated wood fibers: paper pulp. That processed outcome enables a wide range of other industrial products: paper, textiles, biofuel, or food thickener agents.

In the summer of 2016, a group of recently graduated artists from MA programs in fine and craft art from Nordic and Baltic countries, met in the small village of Kalbo just outside of Rejmyre, Sweden. They were there to attend a post-MFA workshop, part of a structure called the Nordic/Baltic Studio initiated by Rejmyre Art LAB in 2012. That year's workshop explored the theme "Clearcut".

Trakthyggesbruk or clearcutting is an established practice of forestry in Sweden. It involves cutting down all of the trees in a designated area, all at the same time, and then planting new trees to start the next growing cycle. It creates large patches of forest area completely empty of trees, called kallhyggen or clearcuts, and where the ground is disrupted and overturned from the large wheels of heavy logging machines.

Kalbo is a village surrounded by forest, and there are many clearcuts within walking distance from the house where we stayed. Daniel and Sissi, founders of the Nordic/Baltic Studio and the Rejmyre Art LAB, own a house and patch of land in the village. As a theme for an artist workshop “Clearcut” was meant as a proposition. What could be learned from spending time in such areas? What would be a meaningful relationship between forestry practices and art education? Could the practice of clearcutting --removal before regeneration -- be used to think about institutionalized art education?

Just a 10 minute walk from the house where we lodged, there was a small clearcut area next to a sheep pen. In between was a narrow stretch of aspen trees. I had always wondered what it would be like to cut down a tree. Within the theme of the workshop on “Clearcut” this seemed to be a suitable moment to find out. As part of the Nordic/Baltic Studio, I was one of five facilitators each tasked with leading this group in an exercise during the workshop. I decided to start with my grandfather’s old chainsaw. I had sought and gained permission from one of Sissi and Daniel’s neighbors to cut down one tree. Up until that point, when the group met me in the clearcut, they were unaware of what they were about to do. When I told the group their reactions were mixed. Some were excited. Like me, they were curious about the experi-



ence. Others were reluctant and questioned the necessity of going through with it. I told them that the tree would be cut down anyway by the forest owner at a later point. I told them the story of the old chainsaw that used to belong to my grandfather, and how I had kept it in my studio for the past six years. I showed them the bright orange safety helmet that I had purchased for this occasion.

Sweden is a country of forests, which cover 69 percent of the land. The country has a large forest industry. According to the industry its forestry model *Trakthyggesbruk* (the practice of clearcutting and replanting) is the most sustainable way of managing a forest, but this claim has been questioned by a growing number of ecological experts, researchers, and, recently, economists. The purpose of *Trakthyggesbruk* is to generate a forest homogeneous in age and species. Given how quickly the trees might grow, the clearcutting and replanting is repeated every 50-100 years. This cyclic model is often compared to the conventional farming of crops, except the turnaround cycle is much longer. And it creates a “forest” that is the direct opposite to what a non-industrialized forest would look like: a forest with a variety of species, both coniferous and deciduous trees and a broad variation of ages, ranging from young plants to trees that have been standing for far more than 100 years. According to current estimations the

non-industrialized forest is only around 0.3 percent of all the forests in the country. That type of primeval forest is more or less extinct in Sweden.

What lessons might art education glean from the cyclic nature of Sweden's forestry model? Is institutional learning a process of removal before regeneration? Does this call into question the bringing together of a homogenous group of art students learning the same things at the same time? Or rather, might art education learn better from an ecologically diverse model of forestry: where young and old trees stand together comprising a variety of species, animals and insects? With roots that go deep down in the ground connecting with roots from other beings. What lessons might such an ecologically diverse model of forestry offer to art pedagogy?

When it came to using my grandfather's chainsaw to cut down a tree, my knowledge was limited to what I had picked up from watching YouTube videos. I knew how to ignite it, and basic safety measures, but that was about it. Luckily, one of the workshop participants had some real experience of forestry work, and, together, we managed to get the tree down. Yet this was not seamless. The tree would fall in the opposite direction from where I had initially planned. Rather than fall to the side of the clearcut area, the tree fell into the sheep pen,

which luckily had no sheep in it at the time. Then the challenge began. How would we get the tree back to the house?


What felt important to me was for everybody to experience the physical sensation of carrying a whole tree. It was my hope that together, we would be able to carry it in one piece. I started to doubt this idea as soon as we tried to move the tree around in the grass. Was I asking too much of the group? Was it even possible to carry it in one piece? And the worry in the back of my head: What if it was too heavy? What if we dropped it? What if someone got hurt? Given my doubts, I started saying to the group that we needed to cut the tree up into smaller pieces to be able to move it. The group rejected that idea, and then strongly expressed their dedication to completing the initial task, which was to move the whole tree in one piece.

I have come back to this moment many times. It has given me pause to reflect on what learning and teaching means. This is regarding my feelings and expressions of doubt, and the collective action that emerged from a sense of responsibility. I am not exactly sure of the details of what happened in the group at that moment, but I know that it was important. I have since experienced similar moments in other teaching situations. Not very often, but a few more times. When I, as a teacher, start to feel and express



doubt about whatever mission I have set out for the group, and in response, the group comes together and takes responsibility to complete the task. For me, as a teacher, it is a moment during which, for a short while, I can withdraw from being the leader of the group to just participate. Thereby dissolving the hierarchies implied by the teacher/student dichotomy. What I felt in that moment was trust in the group, and confidence that whatever actions followed would be a significant learning experience not only for the students, but just as much for myself.

Through a makeshift construction of ropes and some branches, we managed to drag the tree along the gravel road and back to the house. To this day, I am still not sure how we managed. My memory recalls this whole activity being just a short while, I have since learned it was over an hour. We dragged the 20-meter-long aspen tree back to the yard outside Sissi and Daniel's house. That evening, I showed the group some YouTube clips of modern logging machines. When operated by one single individual, these machines effectively did in 30 seconds what had taken half a day in the capable hands of 15 artists with a 20-year-old chainsaw.



**On the Nordic/Baltic Studio:  
Offerings (3 of 4)**  
Daniel Peltz

There was no formal teaching in the Nordic/Baltic studio, I would describe our relationship to pedagogy as wondering, together, through practice. Wondering is important, as a form of opposition to more instrumentalized or targeted approaches to studying. Togetherness serves to locate study in the space/time of our coming together, as opposed to in the hands of any particular individual member of the study group.

Facilitation in the Nordic/Baltic Studio was also approached as an ensemble practice. For each workshop, Sissi and I gathered a core group of artists, including ourselves. These groups were mostly composed of former participants. We typically came together, a few days before the gathering, to test out the exercises/approaches that we were considering using in our work with the larger group. We would often also have a secondary activity that we would do while we were discussing the plans for the workshop, or unpacking our recently tested offerings to write the poetic scripts for the workshop. These activities varied but I recall one year we were carving our own utensils, for the coming communal meals, from pieces of wood collected on site. Sissi's coming from a craft background, and her experience working within a craft collective, informed this aspect of the

pedagogy but it was also rooted in a pedagogic investment in what I refer to as second attention. Second attention is a repositioning of the act of study so that it is not directed at or precisely on a subject, rather it recognizes the importance of studying alongside/nearby, of seeing askew.

When we started our work in Rejmyre, making a sort of alternative post-art school, we brought together students from fine art/media art and craft backgrounds. Over time, I realized that this unintentional choice had created an unusual meeting, at least in a Northern European context where craft and fine art education are separated. There is a mostly unspoken hierarchy between craft practitioners, who are often working with embodied epistemologies, and fine artists, who are trained to work between embodied methodologies and more conventionally valued theoretical knowledges. The Nordic/Baltic Studio was somewhere between a residency, a post-MFA fellowship program and a workshop and in many of those spaces fine and craft artists would not meet. Our meetings revealed themselves to be important and also challenging, as conversations across different communities often are. Challenges came up around the different methods, both of making and conceptualizing, that are naturalized and privileged in fine art vs. craft contexts. There was something about the structure of the Nordic/Baltic Studio that



also embodied these tensions. We were gathering and working through making, in often very simple and playful ways, but also within a quite conceptually and intellectually challenging frame.

I often refer to the exercises initiated by the core group of facilitators as “offerings” to connote the way in which they are connected to our practices but are in some sense a sacrifice made to the larger, collective goal of exploring the chosen theme. These offerings use the methods and language of our practices to enlist the group in investigating the theme. The practice of coming together in advance, to test out these offerings, has been an important part of the Nordic/Baltic Studio. It allows for a different kind of facilitation, where the facilitation group has an embodied knowledge of the exercises/offerings of each of the other facilitators. This model of developing a space of study is fundamentally different from the curricular development processes utilized in the contemporary arts university, with its financialized relationship to time and thinly connected classes and faculties.

Participants in the workshops continue to build on this groundwork of facilitator offerings. They develop their own approaches to the theme and bring them to the group through further offerings, in the form of additional collective exercises. We close the space of the study group by making a





series of thought objects/performances. We have experimented with different ways of leaving these objects and performances behind, to be picked up by some imagined other, who is drawn to continuing the study.

## we are all hosting each other

This is something I spoke out loud, as an orienting wish of the Nordic/Baltic Studio, at each gathering, we are all hosting each other. This notion of shared hosting was enacted in many ways but mostly concretely through rotational cooking of collective dinners and adopting a posture of co-responsibility to care for the needs that arise during the time of the gathering.

The environmental activist and Buddhist thinker Joanna Macy reminds us that all gatherings will need three things: somewhere to sleep, something to eat and a process for conflict resolution. We begin with these basic elements and build a micro-society of study, together, from there, trusting in the sites in which we gather, and the practices we bring with us into them, to be exactly the teachers we will need in this moment.



**A conversation on  
Disobedience (and) Matters**

Tarcisio Almeida  
& Amilcar Packer

Translated from Portuguese by Amilcar Packer

## Prelude

I don't exactly recall when I saw Bisi Silva for the first time. It was probably in 2009 in Thessaloniki, Greece, with Gabriela Salgado and Syrago Tsiara, during Praxis: Art in Times of Uncertainty, the 2nd Thessaloniki Biennial, which they were co-curating. What I do remember sharply is when I first met Bisi. It was in 2012, at her office at CCA-Lagos. I remember her warm welcome, the sunlight entering from the window, her voice, her unique embracing atmospheric smile, the weight and thickness of her words on the meanings of what they had been doing at/with/from CCA, her thoughts on what we were about to do. Mostly, I remember Bisi's quality of presence. I had just arrived from São Paulo, Brazil and went straight from the airport to start my contribution for "History/Matter", Asiko's 2012 program. Looking backwards, it was like being in a particle collider that propelled me to unforeseen trajectories intertwined with acknowledgment, commitment and gratitude, a gift Bisi gave me and that I am still unfolding. After this intensive time, we had the chance to meet on some other occasions, even in the street by 'chance'. In 2013, with Manuela Moscoso, we organized a talk/

workshop with Bisi at the Museu de Arte do Rio de Janeiro. Then, in 2016, came her invitation to write a piece for “Àsikò: On the Future of Artistic and Curatorial Pedagogies in Africa”, another gift. I always felt an urge, something imperative in Bisi’s invitations that made me receive them as summons. Although we were never really close, I keep sensing the presence of her absence, and the challenges she is still proposing. In December 2022, Serubiri Moses contacted me to participate in an online roundtable on Àsikò, and more recently Nana Ama Bentsi-Enchill made the invitation for a textual contribution for this publication. On both occasions I heard the echoes of Bisi’s summons. I realized that to approach making sense of what making sense could be in this context, this writing should simultaneously attend several dimensions, starting by enacting gratitude. Thus, I invited Tarcisio Almeida – to whom I am grateful – to co-weave this piece. We’ve been sharing some dreams and I acknowledge the relevance of Tarcisio’s commitment to study and/as art practice. He has been coordinating *Práticas Desobedientes*<sup>1</sup>, an educational initiative for

<sup>1</sup> *Práticas Desobedientes* (Disobedient Practices): <https://www.praticasdesobedientes.com/>

<sup>2</sup> The State of Bahia, in the Northeast of Brazil, has the largest black and brown population of the country, and the geographical region called *Recôncavo da Bahia*, has the highest percentage of afro-descendants, more than 80%, composing

its population. Despite the international recognition of its relevance for traditional and contemporary Afrodiasporic culture – it is considered a national patrimony –, the communities suffer from a racial cleavage of infrastructural asymmetries, notably regarding the precarity of housing, the lack to access basic sanitation, low educational levels, of employment and income.

young artists based in the Recôncavo Baiano, in the State of Bahia, Brazil<sup>2</sup>. Their work focuses on collective learning and pedagogies of/for liberation. I hear a high resonance between *Práticas Desobedientes* and *Àsikò*, notably when echoing the challenges posed by Panafricanism and afrodiaspora within the context of Brazil.

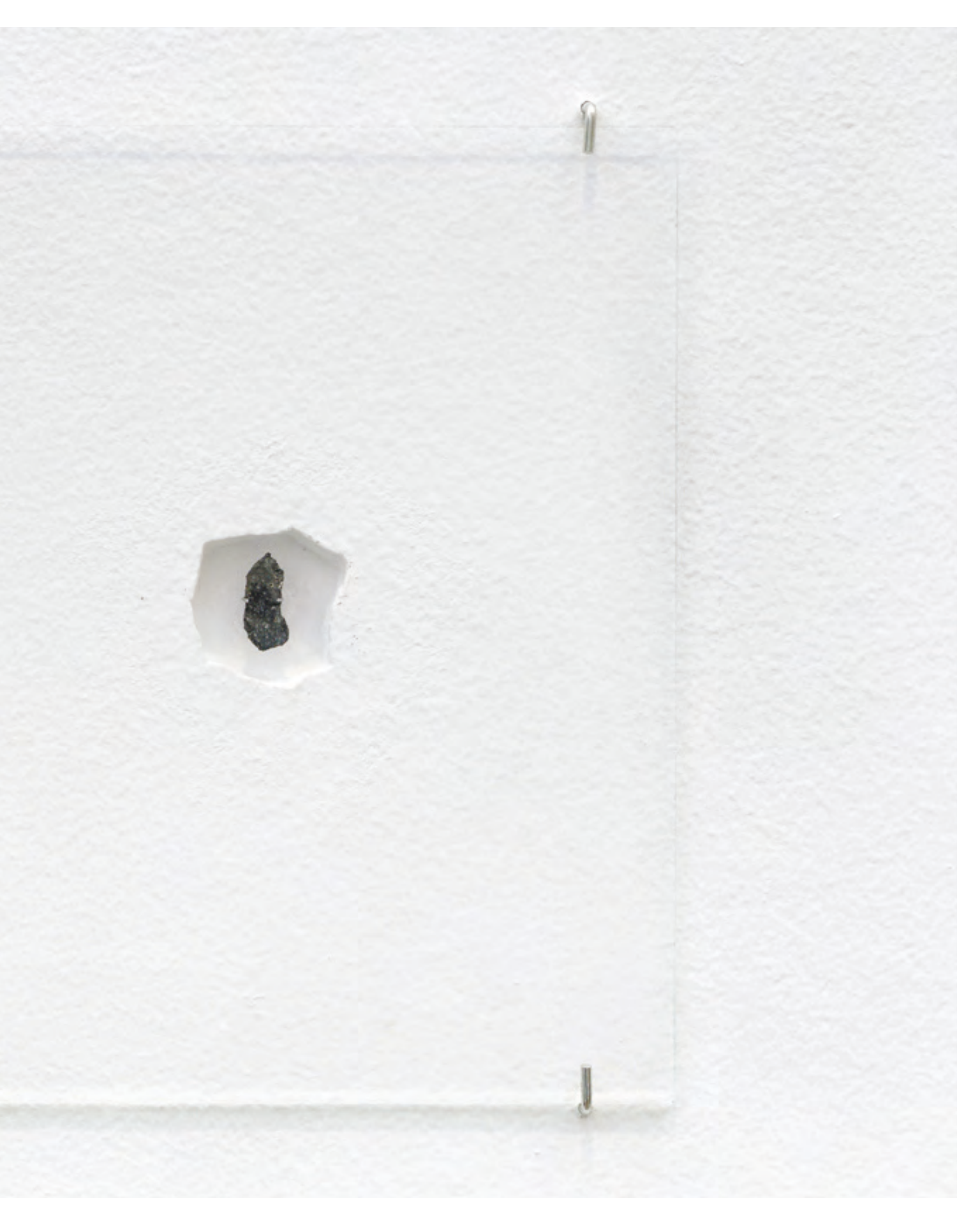
Tarcísio Almeida: Something that seems to make our conversations always find more possibilities to further continue moving is the idea of gathering itself. When I think about gathering and being together, I come across the notion of study as it has been articulated by the practice and thought of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney: "... walking around with other people, working, dancing, suffering, some irreducible convergence of all three, held under the name of speculative practice." Within this possibility of articulating a speculative practice with others, for you (as an artist and researcher) this idea of an 'encounter-study' could also be ultimately understood as the very raw material (*matéria prima*) of poetic making. In this way of acting, there are several interfaces (situations / provocations) for inscribing practice. Contexts such as education, social articulation, group formation, and exhibition making end up becoming blurred, borders are destitute. How do you experience this reading?

Amilcar Packer: Thank you, Tarcisio, for accepting the invitation and also for launching this thread. In the end, it's about trying to find excuses to continue being together. I mean, not only us, you and me. I would like to start by unpacking a little bit the notion of "raw material" (*matéria prima*), since I feel that from this we can maybe learn about encounters and being together in a broader manner. I don't want to hermeneutically dispute definitions and neither to essentialize formulations, but rather to take the opportunity to follow some meanderings of meaningful streams of thought. To make it short, I think that the notion of raw material can work by reducing matter to something passive and affectable, uninformed, available to be accessed (to be in-formed). From this, it often follows that matter lies in an ontological state of lack and that forms necessarily improve matter, and even that there would be a proper ideal and aprioristic form to bring matter to matter. There is something in the formulation of raw material that almost logically requires and enunciates a specific human subject as an entity that is allegedly authorized to inform this uninformed matter. What is uninformed is transfigured as an available resource waiting, ready to be extracted. I see sometimes students and young practitioners being taken as if they were raw materials. Formalism is foundational to Modernity, and not only in the arts, and I see this as a major epistemic enabling of catastrophic avalanches

of colonial brutality. At the same time, I often find very problematic approaches that simplistically bring animism to “solve the problem”, as if attributing agency or a perspective would magically resolve imposed dichotomies such as the ones that separate and oppose animate to inanimate, subject and object. I read these moves as too loaded with forms of subjectivity, intentionality and interiority, and trying to make things that are firstly assumed to be separated, stick together. In this sense, working [from] ‘critical matters’ is, for me, before all, an invitation to collective and non-disciplinary research based in study as in the words you brought from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney.

TA: Following the question of the criticality of matter, I would like to share a little of what we have been doing within *Prácticas Desobedientes* over the last 5 years. Our conceptual commitment lies in the radical understanding of language as a generative component of and for liberation, which is ever guaranteed. This has been taking us to approach the use of language as an offer towards a material redrawing of reality. In other words, as an emancipating, driving force of and for our cognitions and sensibilities. This commitment to practices of freedom and liberation based on language has, in our case, manifested itself not only in the way we conduct our actions, which are organized around a permanent study group, but as well in the way the artists who are part of the





program understand their singularities and processes of work – as an example, the racial paradigm itself that structurally permeates our composition as a program. In this sense, the very notion of freedom also needs to be understood beyond the established parameters of justice and equality, achievements that were impossible within the world we have had access to until now. Since language is a dimension that is capable of establishing doses of fugitivity and autonomy, would it be possible to think of this approach as the way in which you have elaborated the notion of critical matter?

AP: The formulation ‘critical matters’ has been working for me as a way to not assume a pre-linguistic dimension and also to avoid the idea that there is matter per se, so it acknowledges the inseparability of epistemology and ontology. The invitation made from critical matters calls to resist reductions and exclusionary modalities, without neglecting contributions. For instance, despite its fundamental tools and methodologies, the matter and the matters of the world cannot, should not, be resumed to materialistic approaches such as historical dialectical materialism. Matter is certainly not approached in the formalistic sense, which often confuses and reduces –especially in Modernity–, matter to material and, within this, to what can be done with it. This formulation of critical matters is embedded and indebted to the work of people

such as Denise Ferreira da Silva and Karen Barad, but also takes a step to acknowledge that art and poetry were always approaches of studies of matter.

To give an example of the sort of operation that critical matters have enabled me, I have been working with a slice of the Allende meteorite and a piece of Trinitite. I exhibited them together but have mostly used them as pedagogical devices making people hold them. Allende trespassed Earth's atmosphere on February 8th, 1969, landing near Pueblito de Allende, in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. As you can guess, the CV3 carbonaceous chondrite meteorite was named after the pueblito. It is considered the most studied meteorite to date and parts of it are over 4.567 trillion years old; it has been key to understanding the formation of the universe. Its fall preceded by 20 months the election of Salvador Allende to the presidency of Chile, on September 4, 1970, and by 46 months the coup d'état which overthrew his government with the help, among others, of the US, to prevent an elected Socialist government in South America. This also simultaneously provided the context for advancing the neoliberal model developed by the Chicago School of Economics, which today is pervasive. Trinitite, also known as "Alamogordo or Atomsite glass", was produced by the vitrification of sand during the Trinity nuclear explosion, on July 16th, 1945, in New Mexico, United States. Allende (the pueblito) is located about 889 km from ground zero

of the Trinity Site, in Alamogordo. If we do a space-time re-scaling, we can come to perceive that the meteorite Allende landed in Earth at the same place and time of the Trinity explosion, which also coincides with the death of Salvador Allende and his body falling inert in Chile's presidential palace, La Moneda, in 1973. I believe that juxtaposing these two matters allows us to collapse colonial spacetime. So, by saying critical matter, I don't mean that matter has some kind of hidden intentionality or meaning that should be found and interpreted, but I expect that we can work from questions such as: What critical matters emerge from studying with and from matter when approached in its fugitive and multidimensional qualities? This takes me to the excerpt of a textual matter of *Práticas* that you brought for this conversation:

"The effect of this encounter is the emergence of a language that takes place in a learning space that requires listening with the whole body. When we lean over this language, we articulate compositional possibilities that enable us to redraw reality. Allowing our tongues to find shelter in the sphere of languages is also one of the strategies to escape the project of obliteration of our cognitions-sensibilities. Operating languages, we sow a mode of political thought that is often barely recognizable. The voice that speaks from inside the vertigo, where the violence inflicted, is the means by which the body defines itself, [and] is the same source of insurgency outside systemic spaces."<sup>3</sup>

This takes me back to something that you were saying... The idea that the ultimate manifestation of freedom is achieved in individuation and self-expression is very marketable. At the same time, it seems that simply opposing individual to collective seems to be unproductive. It is necessary to operate simultaneously on different scales to bring about, as Denise Ferreira says, “the end of the world as we know it”. I always tend to read this sentence backwards, as “the ways we know can contribute to ending this world (of colonial brutality)”.

TA: You bring some reflections on the individual and collective that make me return to the creation of *Práticas Desobedientes*. In 2019, when a group was formed for the program, something in this direction appeared, something that was not restricted to the way each artist was thinking [about] their own practice [when] we were faced with the impossibilities of escaping the ethical, political, legal, economic operative that is the racial paradigm in Brazil.

Raciality informs the operations of the subject and of subjectivities as if there actually existed

<sup>3</sup> “O efeito desse encontro é o aparecimento de uma linguagem que se dá em um espaço de aprendizagem que requer uma escuta de corpo inteiro. Quando nos debruçamos sobre ela, articulamos possibilidades de composição capazes de redesenhar o real. Permitir que nossas línguas encontrem abrigo na esfera das linguagens é também uma das estratégias para contornarmos o mesmo projeto de morte programado para nossas cognições. Operan-

do linguagens, semeamos um modo de pensamento político muitas vezes pouco reconhecível. A voz que fala de dentro da vertigem, onde a violência infligida é o meio pelo qual o corpo se define, é a mesma fonte de insurgência fora dos espaços sistêmicos”. *Práticas Desobedientes* in “As tardes de quinta-feira ou, Como podem as fudidas experimentar o prazer da criação?” (“Thursdays Afternoon or How Can the Fucked-up Experience the Pleasure of Creation?”).

# SOJA 大豆

- dàdòu - [chinês]  
- da izu - [japonês]

SUDESTE ASIÁTICO  
CHINA / CORÉIA / JAPÃO

\* produção mundial  $\approx$  249 Mt/ano  
\* superfície mundial cultivada  $\approx$  90 Mha

E.U.A.  $\approx$  90 Mt/ano  
BRASIL  $\approx$  70 Mt/ano  
CHINA  $\approx$  52,7 Mt/ano

• cultivada desde  $\approx$  2800 a.C.



glycine max.

MILHO - MAÍZ [taíno]  
CHOCLO - CHOCCLLE [quechua]  
- ELOTE [nahuatl] - AVATI [guarani]

MESOAMÉRICA / AMÉRICA DO SUL

\* produção mundial 817 Mt/ano

E.U.A.  $\approx$  333 Mt/ano

CHINA  $\approx$  163 Mt/ano

BRASIL  $\approx$  51 Mt/ano



• cultivado desde  $\approx$  7.000 a.C.

# BATATA

- PAPA [quechua]; AKSHU  
- PATATA [taíno] / CH'UQI; AMQA [aimara] / CAMO  
AMÉRICA DO SUL - ALTIPLANO ANDINO

\* produção mundial  $\approx$  324,2 Mt/ano

\* superfície mundial cultivada  $\approx$  23 M d'ha

CHINA  $\approx$  75 Mt/ano

ÍNDIA  $\approx$  36,6 Mt/ano

FÉD. RUSSA  $\approx$  21 Mt/ano



• cultivada desde  $\approx$  8.000 a.C.

solanum tuberosum

# CANA-DE-AÇÚCAR

गन्ना (hindi)

ASIA - ÍNDIA / MALÁSIA / NOVA GUINÉ

• cultivada desde  $\approx$  6.000 a.C.

\* produção mundial

\* superfície mundial cultivada

BRASIL  $\approx$  734 Mt/ano

ÍNDIA  $\approx$  342 Mt/ano

CHINA  $\approx$  115 Mt/ano



poaceae saccharum

# A INVENÇÃO DAS AMÉRICAS

# AÇUCAR

\* produção mundial  $\approx$  60 Mt/ano



NINA PINTA SANTA MARIA

CRISTÓVÃO COLOMBO  
(\*1451 - †1506)

REPÚBLICA DE GENOVA?  
CUBA, PORTUGAL?

# Línguas TUPI-GUARANI

- peros TUPI
- AMOPIRA
- ARICOBÉ
- CAETÉ
- POTIGUARA
- TABAJARA
- TAMOIO
- TEMIMINÓ
- TUPINAIÉ
- TUPINAMBÁ
- TUPINIQUIM
- VIATÁ
- AMANAÍÉ
- ANAMBÉ
- APIACÁ
- AQUAUA
- ARAUAETÉ
- ASSURINI
- AVA - CANOEIRO
- CAAPOR
- CAIABI
- CAMAUIURÁ
- CAMBEBA
- CAUAIBE
- COCAMA
- GUAJA
- GUARANI
- OIAMPI
- TAPIRAPÉ
- TENETEARA
- TUPI
- TUPINAMBÁ
- XETA
- ZOE



**CACAU**  
 - KAKAW [MAIÁ] povos ASTECA BARRA MAIA  
 MESOAMÉRICA  
 • cultivado desde ≈ 4.000 a.C.  
 \* produção mundial ≈ 3,6Mt/ano  
 COSTA DO MARFIM ≈ 1,23Mt/ano  
 GANA ≈ 746.000 t/ano  
 INDONÉSIA ≈ 490.000 t/ano  
 - CACAHUATEL [nahuatl]



*theobroma cacao*

**CAFÉ** قهوة - cultivado desde o século IX  
 - qah'wa [arabe] (vinho) AFRICA - ETIOPIA - povo OROMO



\* produção mundial ≈ 7.000.000 t/ano  
 \* superfície mundial cultivada ≈ 280.000 ha  
 BRASIL ≈ 2.700.000 t/ano | VIETNAM ≈ 1.167.000 t/ano  
 INDONÉSIA ≈ 634.000 t/ano

coffea → CABOCCO; CARIBOCA  
 MAMELUÇO; CAICARA  
 BRANCO + ÍNDIO - BRASIL



a escrava Isaura  
 branca  
 BERNARDO GUIMARÃES  
 1875

**COLZA**

CANOLA (Canada oil, low acid)  
 EUROPA MEDITERRÂNEA  
 \* produção mundial 35Mt/ano  
 \* superfície mundial cultivada 25M d'ha  
 • cultivado desde séc. XVIII



CHINA ≈ 13,5Mt/ano  
 CANADA ≈ 12 Mt/ano  
 INDIA ≈ 7,2Mt/ano

*brassica napus var napus*

SÍTIO DO PICA-PAU AMARELO  
 MONTEIRO LOBATO 1.924



*triticum*

→ TRIGO • cultivado desde ≈ 9.000 a.C.  
 AFRICA/ORIENTE MÉDIO

CRESCENTE FÉRTIL  
 \* produção mundial 651Mt/ano  
 \* superfície mundial cultivada 215M d'ha  
 CHINA ≈ 126Mt/ano  
 INDIA ≈ 95Mt/ano  
 E.U.A. ≈ 62Mt/ano

QUILOMBO  
 → ZUMBI DOS PALMARES  
 (★1655 - †1695)



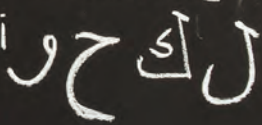
cachaça pingã  
 me  
 branquinha



ARGENTINA  
 BOLÍVIA  
 BRASIL  
 PARAGUAI  
 URUGUAI

ÁLCOOL - al-Kohul [arabe]

ama ZULU - GRUPO BANTU  
 • língua isi ZULU [BANTU]  
 KwaZULU-NATAL  
 AFRICA DO SUL/  
 MOÇAMBIQUE/  
 TANZANIA/  
 ZIMBABWE/



BEENGATU  
 ERAL

O GUARANI  
 JOSÉ DE ALENCAR  
 1857

WARANÁ [sateré-mawé]  
 GUARANÁ [tupi-guarani]



IRMÃO GÊMEO DA LUA

*paullinea cupana* AMAZONIA

JESUS DE NAZARÉ CRISTO (★0 - †33)  
 O FILHO; O MESSIAS  
 O HOMEM DA ECONOMIA

a set of a priori data for that subject itself, a set of predicates... As if a set of pre-established rules for this very subjectivity determined what should or should not be, how [one] should or should not be, [regarding] the conduct of a young black artist in Brazil. Now this dimension goes beyond the dimension of artistic practice itself, as it touches the sphere of production of subjectivity of these artists. For *Práticas*, this was formulated as the challenge of producing a place that could escape the experience of producing excess. Of excess, in the sense that Denise Ferreira da Silva speaks, of violence as this surplus of production of this very subjectivity, of this racial violence that we usually call violence-violence. It is from this place that the idea of producing strategies of freedom and cognitive liberation arises.

*Práticas Desobedientes* appeared in the context of a university extension program, that is, of official institutional education and also presented pre-conceived and pre-formulated ways of knowing and learning. The program soon overflowed into a non-institutionalized modality of study, – building strategies of and for cognitive liberation, even if ephemeral, even if fleeting, even if invisible, quantic, so to speak, – and for us to also think with the idea of critical matter as well. How could these experiences provide opportunities for experiencing freedom and cognitive liberation? This would be exercised in our studio practices, as the program opened up as a training space for

other young artists and within this, it also created a dialogue with the territory that expands in other activities. In other words, it is not a purely theoretical relationship applied to resolve a group dynamic, but rather a lived, embodied experience that generates demands based on ethical bets and commitments.

AP: Yes, I understand that it is not something external but inherent to the very creation and ethical implications of the program. I keep thinking of a double separation operated by raciality, the brutal process of production and segregative separation of a collective based on the fiction of race and, as a (counter)part of this, the separation operated by the notion of the individual subject. I have considered that the invitation for study based on my understanding of critical matter can contribute precisely so that, in the face of contradictions, such as between reform and abolition, it is not necessary to choose, to try to resolve things, either through a dialectical conceptual arsenal, or by pointing out alleged inconsistencies of a false contradiction. The criticality that can come from the study of matter allows us to operate from coexistence and simultaneity, without having to produce a cohesive, consistent and coherent synthesis or image.

TA: I suggest that we appropriate this relationship so... this urgency for reform also arises without losing sight of practices of abolition.

AP: This “without losing sight” reminds me of the image that Moten and Harney make in Undercommons where they say: “Critique lets us know that politics is radioactive, but politics is the radiation of critique. So it matters how long we have to do it, how long we have to be exposed to the lethal effects of its anti-social energy.” One of the things I read from this is that the effects of individuation are lethal, that making reforms is fundamental, but it matters how long you stay there, since abolition can be compromised. This brings me to what I consider to be false debates about education in Brazil, when we see economically and socially privileged people, predominantly white and liberal, making demands about deschooling...

TA: ... alleged radical pedagogies...

AP: Exactly... or promoting extremely expensive and elitist schools, which claim to be democratic, constructivist, transdisciplinary, and based on the children’s interests. Meanwhile, what is predominantly seen in black and brown peripheries in Brazil are demands for official schooling, regulated, with disciplines, with teachers being teachers. Because, after all, when life is guaranteed and granted in advance, experimentalism is inscribed in speculative systems where “risk” is calculated as part of the production of surplus value, of capital accumulation in its various manifestations, symbolic and financial, for instance.

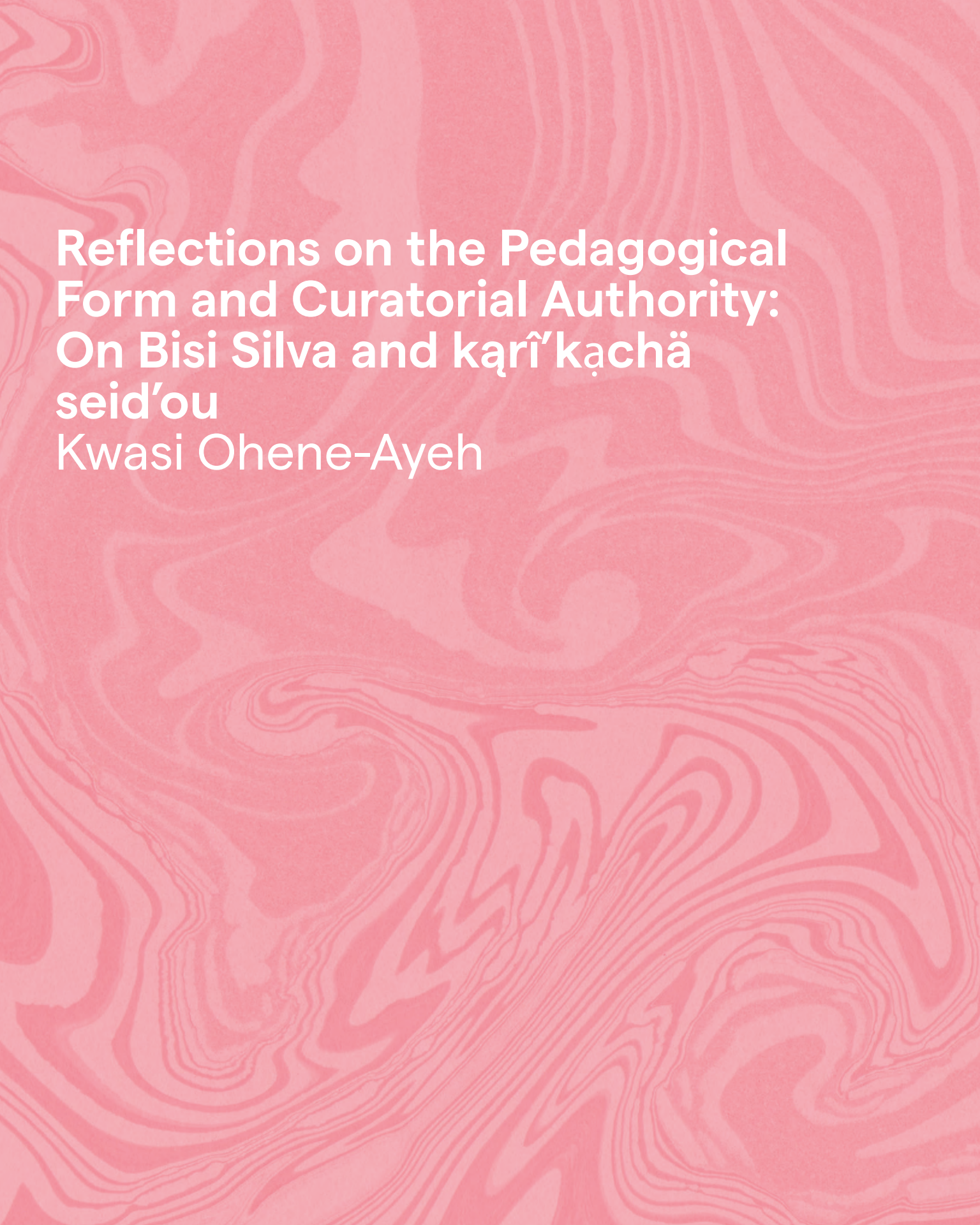
TA: The idea of politics, as it is recognized today, like governance models, are experiences of abstraction, right? It is not the opposition of matter and form, it is a relationship that happens at the same time, it's not contingent, abstraction is contingent. That is from where our ethical premises were born, were developed. When we talk, for example, about embracing the fear of freedom, deindividualizing all types of suffering resulting from this fear, hence we are aiming to access these experiences of freedom, of liberation. There is also the idea of being able to allow the body not to fear aesthetic forms that are not necessarily recognizable. Because this process of liberation, of freedom generates an expansion of the possibilities of knowing other ways. So, this idea of being able to recover and attribute ethical and political aesthetic value to our founder experiences emerged because quite often these experiences are not inscribed in the established regimes of truth and legibility. That is why we speak of processes based practices that are neither recognized nor legible from the point of view of official history, as a consequence of official cultural materiality. This is precisely where ethical bets come in. I usually use the word bet because the idea of guarantee is not given and that is why we are talking about processes of joint creation, between people who actually go through this common experience. This is one of the central points of the program's constitution, producing an

environment, elaborating a minimum set of agreements to generate a space-time that structures guarantees where the forces of oppression do not persevere; only in this way is it possible to break and operate a critique specific to the idea of representation and break with these parameters of representation.

In Brazil, when we talk about representation, this has little to do with representation in the processes of building rights and social justice. Representation is linked to this set of predicates established a priori for the subject. To be able to break through, to be able to criticize systems and modes of representation, there needs to be a minimum environment of security, so to speak, involved, where processes can appear because these processes do not come without fissures, without fears, without collapses. Also understanding that this commitment to language, this care for language, has an emancipatory dimension, especially as an intimate commitment to the courage to face one's own work, one's own practice of creation, as access to material redesign of the real. These ethical bets lead us to places like now, in 2024, where one of the lines that has informed our field of research is what we recently named as "Since I learned about this land, I no longer feel helpless". We begin to understand the exercise of a collective practice as a generative space of solidarity, sociability, and the idea itself, in short, which also permeates its production, which finds an

echo in Stefano and Fred's thinking, in the notion of study. Think about sociability as a practical dimension of study. I think this point goes back to the first provocation I made to you.

AP: Moten and Harney have also been working with incompleteness, which allows to escape the need to choose between the individual and the collective. I feel that you are approaching the possibility of incompleteness when, returning to the beginning of our conversation, getting together can help to prevent falling into the trap of wanting to complete oneself as an autonomous and self-determined subject. What still makes me believe it is worth continuing to invest in what we call artistic practices, is that I believe there is still much to unfold of what Gayatri Spivak points in her *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* as a graphic dimension of colonial thought that we can extend not only to Western Modernity foundational textuality, but to the matrix that entails the production of geo-graphy, ethno-graphy, carto-graphy, photo-graphy, historio-graphy, porno-graphy.... Faced with this graphic dimension, I see that your proposition to address the material redraw of the world is also a material disobedience against this brutal onto-epistemic kidnapping. History matters.



**Reflections on the Pedagogical  
Form and Curatorial Authority:  
On Bisi Silva and qarî'kachä  
seid'ou**  
Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh

In 2014 I participated in the Dakar edition of the Àsìkò Art School programme. I had applied as an artist. The year before that, Àsìkò had happened in Accra and I was able to catch the last day of presentations by the artist- and curator-participants at the Dei Centre. This was also when the group's exhibition opened. I stayed for the show and met a few of the participants and facilitators afterwards. This experience left an indelible impression on me and partly accounts for what influenced me to apply for the programme when the open call came out the following year. Back then, I had a post-studio art practice and thought to explore this critical intellectual programme as another step in my trajectory. Àsìkò was the first professional development programme I had taken part in [see fig. 1]. This was also my first experience of visiting a biennale, as the programme took place around the same time as the eleventh edition of the DAK'ART Biennale of Contemporary African Art. Keeping in mind that this was five years after my undergraduate training at the Department of Painting and Sculpture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Ghana (KNUST), where I majored in Painting, the impact this Àsìkò adventure had left on me effectively spawned my professional career. Between the crit sessions, one-on-one conversations with facil-



Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, S.A.F.P.A (Six and Fours: Prison Anxieties), 2013, jute sacks, jute ropes, scaffold, fabric, Installation view, Chale Wote Street Art Festival, Accra 2013, photo by Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh.

itators, spontaneous stopovers from art professionals who were visiting the programme and/or participating in the Biennale to discuss their work [see fig. 2], team bonding sessions, site/studio visits, and the molecular relationship between the Àsikò programme and the Biennale, I came away from the experience buoyed with newfound enthusiasm, direction, and purpose for pursuing art professionally.

For all the benefits I had derived in the time of our five-week stay, I had also been conflicted by a particular incident that happened during the course of the programme. In preparation for the final exhibition project, which we titled *Dear Dakar*<sup>1</sup>, the curators were curiously separated from the artists. Prior to that we had done everything together. This was perhaps stemming from the well-intentioned, yet traditional, belief that the curatorial and the artistic are stand-alone operations that only come together after both parties have figured things out. But this spurious idea does not consider that curatorial work is, from inception, also embedded in the artistic process if only by way of studio visits. In our case one group was tasked to develop the conceptual framework for the exhibition and the other was asked to make the objects that

<sup>1</sup> *Dear Dakar* is the final project that emerged from the fourth edition of the CCA, Lagos Àsikò International Art School programme titled *A History of Contemporary Art in Dakar in 5 Weeks*. The participants involved are Nduwhite Ndubuisi Ahanonu (Nigeria), Lassana Igo Diarra (Mali), Eza

Komla (Togo), Taiye Idahor (Nigeria), Kitso Lynn Lelliot (Botswana), Vasco Manhica (Mozambique), Rafiy Smith Okefolahan (Benin), Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh (Ghana), Moses Serubiri (Uganda), Tito Valery (Cameroun), Dana Whabira (Zimbabwe), and Clifford Zulu (Zimbabwe)

would be displayed within the exhibition in response to what the other group would propose. This gesture in itself is not necessarily problematic, as long as the division does not lead to a verticality which cannot be mutually abolished between the parties when it is no longer needed. But, if this is the structure that is taken for granted then it engenders its own hurdles. Unfortunately, the latter is how things panned out during the 2014 edition of Àsìkò. To the point that the writing workshop, which was intended to sharpen the participants' competency for art criticism, was initially designed for the curators in the programme until we the artists dissented and challenged the latent belief that artists are to be spoken for in the realm of critical writing. It was after this that the decision for the workshop was changed to include all participants.

I, in particular, was in a quandary about this mutual exclusivity that developed because my practice, prior to Àsìkò, did not adhere to any such separations. Although curating was new to me at the time, I was already exploring art historical and theoretical linkages in my work through writing as a medium. This was partly influenced by the fact that between 2011 and 2014 I was co-organising Ehalakasa<sup>2</sup>—a grassroots initiative created by spoken word poets, musicians,

<sup>2</sup> Ehalakasa is a neologism forged out of three Ghanaian languages. Eha means song in Ewe, La means sing in Ga Dangbe, and Kasa means to speak in Akan (Twi). The community is still active in Accra and elsewhere around the country.

Group photo of participants and guest facilitators  
From left: Taiye Idahor, Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, Dana Whabira, Clifford Zulu, Rashida Bumbray (curator/guest facilitator), Eza Komla, Kitso Lynn Lelliott, Erin Rice, Tito Valery, Moses Serubiri, and Simone Leigh (artist/guest facilitator). Photo courtesy of Erin Rice.



artists, writers, dancers, and other performers as an experimental ground for testing new relational, unrehearsed, and durational forms. This experience instilled in me the courage to go beyond established media. Prior to that I had been exposed to the expanded field of art during my final year at the university in 2009 by the artist-pedagogue *kərĩkəchä seid'ou* whose insistence on demystifying the “epicolonial” and insular curriculum of the KNUST Department of Painting and Sculpture led to the revolution presently unfolding in Ghana epitomised by the community known as *blaxTARLINES KUMASI*.<sup>3</sup>

*seid'ou's* approach was to focus on the Painting Programme of the Department to doubly reveal and transcend its official, hidden, and missing curricular<sup>4</sup>, along with their orthodox limits, so that the practitioner could cultivate an indifferent attitude to genres, materials, processes, forms and so on in their respective art practices. This is what he called the Emancipatory Art Teaching project, launched in 2003, which served as the impetus for the experimental art curriculum currently operative at the Department. Learners are now exposed to the possibilities of exploring other fields—such as art criticism, curating,

<sup>3</sup> *blaxTARLINES* is an art coalition and experimental incubator hosted by Ghana's foremost art college in KNUST, Kumasi. The coalition has a lineage of non-proprietary art and community projects dating back to the early 1990s. Since its inception, *blaxTARLINES'* guiding axiom has been to transform art from the status of commodity to gift. Thus, it operates as a sharing community and a transgenerational

and transcultural network inspired by key moments in emancipatory politics.

<sup>4</sup> *kərĩkəchä seid'ou*, “Theoretical Foundations of the KNUST Painting Programme: A Philosophical Inquiry and Its Contextual Relevance in Ghanaian Culture” (PhD diss., Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2006), 331.

professional studies, and art history—in addition to the studio-based art programme. This pedagogical project is also what serves as blaxTARLINES’ *raison d’être*. seid’ou’s subversive proposal noted that the dearth of criticality in Ghana’s discursive community at the time necessitated a new teacher-subject who would “double as an art historian, art critic and philosopher”<sup>5</sup> in the spirit of self-embodying an alternative to the status quo<sup>6</sup>. Since these personages and others, like the art curator, constituted a lack in the critical intellectual infrastructure of the Ghanaian contemporary art scene, one way to progressively intervene in this condition is for this dissident teacher-subject to renege the illegitimate privileges conferred on them by the academic establishment and become or affirmatively embody this lack. This paragon jettisons the veil of superiority that cloaks the teacher’s relationship to knowledge and positions them as lifelong learners. seid’ou’s pedagogical method was also premised on the independence of the learner and this is what leads him to recommend in his pre-eminent doctorate research that “the Painting Programme ought to shift from the ‘assignment giving lecturer/assignment making student’ model to the ‘guardian lecturer/self-conscious student’ model.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the former creates a situation of per-

<sup>5</sup> seid’ou, “Theoretical Foundations,” 308.

<sup>6</sup> For more on the point about self-embodying alternatives to the status quo see David Graeber and Charlie Rose, *A Conversation with Anarchist David*

Graeber, filmed in 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVDkkOAOtV0>.

<sup>7</sup> seid’ou, “Theoretical Foundations,” 347.

petual dependency which goes against the tenets of intellectual freedom. Therefore, if pedagogical authority does not aspire to undermine or abolish its own basis by way of the emancipated learner then it only serves as a stultifying authority.<sup>8</sup>

I am convinced that conventional attitudes to exhibition making have something to learn from seid'ou's "guardian lecturer/self-conscious student" model, especially as it treats the curator as though they are the ones who possess some form of concrete knowledge while the artist and the spectator who come into the engagement merely come with the will to learn what the curator knows. And this is what sets up the asymmetrical power dynamic between these actors. The somewhat pedagogical relationship that exists between the curator, the artist, and the spectator cannot be hinged on the logic of the inequality of knowledge but rather on the "equality of intelligences"<sup>9</sup> exemplified in seid'ou's pedagogical project. In any case, if the curator is to be regarded as an enabler, then this principle is non-negotiable.

In the anecdote I have shared above, there

<sup>8</sup> I owe this thought to the American economic anthropologist and anarchist David Graeber (1961-2020) who made this remark in Graeber and Rose, "A Conversation". In the interview, Graeber contends that "there are forms of authority that are legitimate but you don't worship authority as a thing in itself. For example, I like the notion of self-subverting authority. I think there are certain types of authority which undermine their own basis and I think those are very good." He then

proceeds to give the example of a good teacher whose authority should undermine itself and finds no further basis once the student learns what the teacher knows, and a good doctor whose power diminishes after a patient is cured.

<sup>9</sup> Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, trans. Kristin Ross (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), xxii.

was tacit segregation between two forms of knowledges—the curators’ and the artists’, with the latter inadvertently subordinated to the former, only to be revalued by the curatorial authority—and this inevitably stultifies. Upon leaving Àsikò I was preoccupied with this question of power and the tendency of privileging one figure over the other in the dynamics between the curator and the artist. To put it bluntly, this “make or break” authority that the curator wields over the artist, given the necessity of curatorial direction in the mainstream of contemporary art is a problem of authority. More so when we consider that prior to the establishment of museums curating had not been essential to the infrastructure of exhibitions. To say this is to admit that the practice of exhibition making predates curating (and here we can think of the phenomenon of Academic Salons in addition to the state-orchestrated and the self-organised exhibitions by the historical avant-garde artists in metropolitan centres as well as the emergence of criticism and the institutionalisation of the art market which significantly influenced display models during the early modernist years in the colonial epoch of the nineteenth century<sup>10</sup>). Curating, hence, strictly functions as a contingent means by which the becoming public

<sup>10</sup> For more on this see Bruce Altshuler, “Introduction,” in *Salon to Biennial—Exhibitions That Made Art History Volume I: 1863-1959*, ed. Phaidon Editors and Bruce Altshuler (New York: Phaidon Press Limited, 2008), 09-20

of a work of art is achieved, for the simple fact that it has not always existed. Once invoked, however, curating occasions its own necessities with regards to its models of care, thought, selection, display, and mediation. With these in mind curating may disappear or further evolve from what it is now if the conditions for making exhibitions in the future require it to. But the same cannot be said for art[ists]. It is with this concern that I felt compelled to write the text titled *The Artist and the Curator* for the Àsikò book published in 2017<sup>11</sup>. I was then reflecting on the mutual dependencies, risks, vulnerabilities, and discoveries shared between these practitioners in any collaborative endeavour related to exhibition making.

## Àsikò: A Curatorial Project with a Pedagogical Focus

Bisi Silva shared a similar decolonial desire with seid'ou with respect to her curatorial work. Both of them situate curatorship and pedagogy alongside each other as a compelling emancipatory and interventionist strategy. When Bisi discloses that "Àsikò eschews a 'master' teacher hierarchy in favour

<sup>11</sup> Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, "The Artist and the Curator," in *Àsikò: On the Future of Artistic and Curatorial Pedagogies in Africa*, edited by Stephanie Baptist, 42-43. Lagos: Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, 2017.

of a changing and diverse roster of facilitators and guest speakers who are invited less to teach and more to share, exchange, and in turn, to learn”<sup>12</sup>, she is making a poignant declaration that concurs with the egalitarian thrust in seid'ou's model. She is, at one and the same time, intervening in and undermining the legacy (and logic) of stultifying pedagogical structures which have endured in Nigeria in particular, and in former colonies in general, due to colonial domination<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, my criticism<sup>14</sup> of the isolated incidents that came up during the 2014 Àsikò is in keeping with the project's own generative ethos of pedagogy.<sup>15</sup> My position constitutes an affirmation of the foundational principles which gave birth to the Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) Lagos which, in turn, created Àsikò. Even though not all the issues that came up regarding the example I have raised during my time in Àsikò were resolved, they were engaged productively and we were able to negotiate alternative, if not new, ways around it. What is at stake here is the tendency for stultification, even within projects that have emancipatory aims.

<sup>12</sup> Bisi Silva, “Creating Space for a Hundred Flowers to Bloom,” in *Àsikò: On the Future of Artistic and Curatorial Pedagogies in Africa*, edited by Stephanie Baptist, xvii. Lagos: Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos, 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Silva, “Creating Space,” xiv-xvi.

<sup>14</sup> I have to say that my argument is strictly limited to the 2014 edition. After the programme the cohort of participants gave recommendations the Àsikò team on how to improve later editions

<sup>15</sup> Bisi prefers the descriptors “hybrid, experimental, and fluid structure” of pedagogy.” See Silva, “Creating Space,” xvii



AU 212 BAR-RESTAURANT  
*Balade en fermes* Source d'eau douce

*Balade Pirog*



Moving on, Bisi has revealed that “the absence of critical theory and the limitations of art history in the [Nigerian educational] curricula coupled with the continued prioritisation of skill over process provided the impetus for CCA, Lagos to initiate a curatorial project with a pedagogical focus [Àsikò].”<sup>16</sup> But why? Why would the visionary Bisi co-locate the curatorial and the pedagogical? Why is pedagogy essential to [emancipatory] curating at all? What is it about the pedagogical that curatorial authority needs to learn from? And vice versa? She leaves us a clue when she speculates: “How could an expansive approach to curating take place within our immediate context as well as across the [African] continent in order to effect radical transformation in artistic thought and presentation? How might unconventional approaches to curating catalyse social, cultural and structural change? At the time [ca. 1999], these concerns were somewhat lofty, and produced no easy answers. We realised very quickly that there was a fault line in terms of knowledge and practice, whether artistic or curatorial, and there was an urgent need to address gaps in art education.”<sup>17</sup> The key epithet here is *epistēmē*—the anarchic process of knowledge generation, distribution, preservation, and/or exchange as well as the class implications associated with it.

<sup>16</sup> Silva, “Creating Space,” xvi.

<sup>17</sup> Silva, “Creating Space,” xv.

In terms of human cognition, there are the two poles of knowns and unknowns. Yet between these are more complex constellations such as the so-called “known knowns” (established norms/conventions and things that are present in our consciousness and therefore we know), “known unknowns” (the awareness that there are things we do not yet to be known), and “unknown unknowns” (things we have no conception of, which exist but we don’t know). The unconscious of psychoanalysis adds another compelling category to these: the “unknown knowns”—which is to say, things we don’t know we know.<sup>18</sup> To oversimplify, pedagogy has to do with the methods of teaching, and by implication, learning. It is generally used in the context of formal education even though it characteristically extends beyond. One could even say that it is the situation of the everyday experience of life, regardless of whether teaching and/or learning is happening passively or intentionally. In the human-centred and conventional sense this process involves someone mandated with the authority (a master, teacher, “classroom practitioner”, etc.) to convey what they know to another person (a slave, student, child, apprentice, neophyte, etc.) who does not yet know what the master knows. The trajectory of this

<sup>18</sup> “What Rumsfeld Doesn’t Know that He Knows About Abu Ghraib by Slavoj Žižek,” Lacan.com, accessed April 29, 2024, <https://www.lacan.com/zizekrumsfeld.htm>.

transfer of knowledge is unidirectional. This is what critics have been decrying about the technocratic, compulsory, and standardised orientation of mass/public education since the nineteenth century. According to the Austrian theologian Ivan Illic (1926-2002), “public schools are designed on the assumption that there is a secret to everything in life; that one’s quality of life depends on knowing that secret.”<sup>19</sup>

Strictly speaking, the realm of conventional pedagogy is dealing with the category of “known knows”.<sup>20</sup> This is akin to what seid’ou identifies in the antecedent Painting programme at KNUST as the explicit or official curriculum. “The [Painting] Programme’s explicit curriculum,” seid’ou explains, “finds expression in the specified course syllabuses, related exercises and activities, and messages and communicative acts purveyed by teachers and students in the course of academic work [...] The explicit curriculum constitutes what is symptomatic and observable, defined by the official and actual scripted and implemented curricu-

<sup>19</sup> Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (Harrow Books, 1972), 33.

<sup>20</sup> And to a moderate degree, “known unknowns”.

<sup>21</sup> seid’ou, “Theoretical Foundations,” 291. Consequently, the implicit/hidden curriculum “indicates what is unstated but implicated in the teacher’s or the school’s particular approach to the explicit curriculum [and would] explain and clarify why the efforts of Laboratoire agit’Art, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Zwelethu Mtethwa, Bernie Searle, Willem Boshof

and Maria Campos-Pons would be invisible examples in the teaching and learning of art in the twenty-first century African Painting Programme while Jackson Pollock, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo and Impressionism have been privileged” (see seid’ou, “Theoretical Foundations,” 294-296). The null or missing curriculum is connected to the implicit curriculum in the sense that it “refers to superscribed, erased, forgotten or under-represented ideas that are deliberately or unintentionally left out of the defining teaching and learning experience in the Programme” (see seid’ou, “Theoretical Foundations,” 296).

lum.”<sup>21</sup> When we gravitate towards exhibition making, the dimensions multiply exponentially since we are always dealing with human and non-human actors and phenomena. The curator has, since a century ago, emerged as the “one omniscient orchestrator”<sup>22</sup> who wields the power to converge these entities in what tends to be determined as the exhibition situation. By exercising their power to select, display, and legislate aesthetic experiences for a generic public, curators constitute an authoritative voice in the becoming public of art today.

So, what kinds of pedagogical models can we implement for this ecological situation of art? Certainly, one that goes beyond the “known knowns” horizon of human cognition and can also speculate into the “known unknowns” and “unknown knowns” (we can take the “unknown unknowns” as a structuring void that will always plague human subjectivity). However, even if we stay with the “known knowns”—which, to a large degree, outlines the conformist attitude Modern art and mainstream public education takes to knowledge—the “unknown knowns” are always already present and function as its other.

Modern art proceeded to repress them by bracketing all that was surplus to its purist, medium-specific ethos and proceeded to regulate this

<sup>22</sup> Terry Smith, *Thinking Contemporary Curating* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2012), 113.

conceptual insularity with the sanitised, neutralising, and standardised regime of the white cube [also] for commercial ends. Autonomy meant absorption into the transcendent realm countenanced by the work of art. The idealism at play portends to a superficiality that could exclusively tolerate an able-bodied adult spectator who could only come into the engagement with a “disembodied eye” as the privileged apparatus of perception. In this context, curatorial authority could only mean domination, attempting to demarcate a uniform experience for spectators by pretending everything that is external to the shape of the painting and the boundaries of the sculpture are irrelevant to the meaning making process. This is no doubt a form of violence which continues into our present dispensation. In an inegalitarian regime, knowledge that is not sanctioned by the powers that be is not granted the right to exist. However the ecological paradigm, and the multiplicity it engenders, requires us to fashion new tools by which to come to terms with the plethora of knowledges always and already at work in the dynamics between the curator(s), artist(s), artwork(s), exhibition site(s), spectator(s), information system(s), funding institution(s), and so on and so forth. Even though the curatorial voice delineates the “known knowns” horizon of the exhibition situation, it is nonetheless haunted by its other, in addition to the new forms of intelligences

that the supplemental actors bring into the picture. And the curator with egalitarian aims would have to exercise diligence in order not to subjugate everyone or everything else to the perspective they have defined as the starting point.

Gerardo Mosquera, co-curator of the third edition of the Havana Biennial in 1989, has suggested that one of the legacies of this watershed transnational, anti-imperialist, and counter-Venetian show is that “nowadays we curators have to work from a certain awareness of our ignorance.”<sup>23</sup> He meant precisely letting go of the “genius” that frames the mainstream curator—as the subject who knows the “secrets” of art, and from whom everyone else needs to learn—to explore new egalitarian conditions for the concerted production and sharing of knowledge with regards to the exhibition situation. In effect, Mosquera seems to be nudging us to enter the ambit of the “known unknowns” (which is what the “awareness of our ignorance” connotes). To begin from such a counterintuitive position throws out all the rules set by centrist art establishments and creates the possibility of exploring alternative models as well as forms of intelligences and knowledges. Àsìkò carries this burden in its own

<sup>23</sup> “Stedelijk@Rijksakademie #1 - Booklaunch Making art global (part I) - the third Havana Biennial 1989,” Rijksakademie, the event took place on January 9, 2012, accessed on 28 April, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UbpQSkAZKo>.

<sup>24</sup> Silva, “Creating Space,” xvi.

way, especially when described by Bisi as a space that embraces the urgency of “learning to unlearn”.<sup>24</sup> Similar to seid’ou, the egalitarian thrust of Àsìkò pedagogy “allows us to respond to the failure of postcolonial education systems on the [African] continent, by equipping artists with skills and knowledge that counter the market-orientated gallery environment of most African cities, the moribund art institutions of the state and outdated curricula of tertiary education institutions.”<sup>25</sup> Àsìkò therefore affirms the pedagogical dimension of Bisi’s curatorial practice.<sup>26</sup> This is why she explicitly proclaims that “Àsìkò positions itself as a pedagogical project framed within an expanded field of curatorial practice”<sup>26</sup>. Hence when the current artistic director of CCA, Lagos, Oyindamola Faithful, intimates that “not knowing”<sup>27</sup> characterises Àsìkò pedagogy, I read it as a futural step in keeping with the radical verve of emancipatory pedagogy outlined at the inception of the programme.

Bisi and seid’ou are egalitarian masters who have explored the expansive opportunities the intersection between the curatorial and the pedagogical have to offer. Their divergent, yet related, resistance politics serve as paradigms from which to evolve. Whereas the former proceeded to realise her revolutionary impulse outside

<sup>25</sup> Silva, “Creating Space,” xvii

<sup>26</sup> Silva, “Creating Space,” xxi.

<sup>27</sup> “Oyindamola Fakeye: ‘Not Knowing Is Our Pedagogy,’” *ArtReview*, accessed on 20 April, 2024, <https://artreview.com/oyindamola-fakeye-not-knowing-is-our-pedagogy/>.

of the traditional art educational environment (yet maintaining a collaborative relationship with it)<sup>28</sup> the latter, through a politics of “ironic overidentification”<sup>29</sup> implanted himself within the university as an “anamorphic stain” with the hope of transforming the institution such that “the older picture [is left] as a stain in the new picture.”<sup>30</sup> This way, seid’ou forces an immanent confrontation between the status quo and its other. The criminal establishment of colonial and neo-liberal economic philosophies that characterise today’s formal educational institutions only serve to reiterate the oracle of inequality. This criminality requires the “subversive intellectual”<sup>31</sup> to “be in but not of” the university<sup>32</sup>.

Bisi’s scepticism of the colonial art educational apparatus was laced with some hopefulness when she acknowledges that: “There is reason to be optimistic about the possibilities for art on the

<sup>28</sup> Oyindamola Fakeye mentions the fact that “CCA is located very close to two prominent schools with art faculties, the Yaba College of Technology and the University of Lagos, which has allowed us to learn more about the educational system, especially in Nigeria. Asikò has actually allowed us to develop relationships with many lecturers in higher institutions, like Yaba and University of Nigeria Nsukka.” See “Oyindamola Fakeye”, *ArtReview*.

<sup>29</sup> kqrĩkqachä seid’ou and Jelle Bouwhuis, “Renzo Martens: Tretiakov in Congo?: kqrĩkqachä seid’ou and Jelle Bouwhuis in Conversation, in *Critique in Practice: Renzo Martens’ Episode III: Enjoy Poverty*, eds. Anthony Downey and Els Roelandt (New York: Sternberg Press, 2019), 186-195.

<sup>30</sup> kqrĩkqachä seid’ou and Jelle Bouwhuis, “Silent Parodies: kqrĩkqachä seid’ou in Conversation with Jelle Bouwhuis,” in *Project 1975: Contemporary Art and the Postcolonial Unconscious*, eds. Jelle Bouwhuis and Kerstin Winking (Amsterdam and London: SMBA and Black Dog Publishing, 2014), 109-118.

<sup>31</sup> Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013), 26.

<sup>32</sup> Which is why Fred Moten and Stefano Harney have contended that “the only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one.” See Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*, 26.

continent. As we attempt to answer one of our key questions—what [are the] futures for artistic and curatorial practice and pedagogies?—it is pertinent to conclude with a living example of the art academy as a catalyst for change and transformation. One of the more radical ‘futures’ taking place in Africa today can be found at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, particularly in the Department of Painting and Sculpture [...] There we met the lecturers *kařĩkächä seid’ou*, Kwaku [Boafo] Kisiedu, and George [Buma] Ampratwum and some of the graduates who spoke eloquently about their work [...] The quality of work and thought in Kumasi today, by many accounts, started with a “small revolution” in 1996 (of which *seid’ou* was part) where students staged “unannounced performances, silent happenings, textual paintings, poetic bricolage, exhibition on trees, publicly posted political cartoons, etc.,” and which has now grown into a full blown cultural revolution [...] the department has created a project space called *blaxTARLINES*, which is positioned as a site of artistic and curatorial exploration [...] *blaxTARLINES’* exhibitions and smaller projects are transforming the art scene through collaborations that are both local and international in their scope and audiences. The department’s activities provide a good example of the way in which artistic and curatorial pedagogy can be developed by engaging from within the institution but also reach-

ing out to the wider population [and] ever challenging traditional educational orthodoxies that have stifled cultural production in Ghana and across Africa [...] While artists may be aware of and even participate in global contemporary forums like documenta today, we must not lose sight of the possibilities inherent in projects like Àsikò and blaxTARLINES.”<sup>33</sup> Bisi and seid'ou have given us two extant models of egalitarian strategies that conscientiously intersect curatorship with pedagogy. One significant consequence this bears on curatorial authority is that it is affirmed only to be undermined to make way for new possibilities—in short, the curator, in order to exist as an authentic authority, acts as a vanishing mediator.

<sup>33</sup> See Silva, “Creating Space,” xxi-xii.

Author’s note: This essay is based on Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh’s doctoral research at the Department of Painting & Sculpture, KNUST. See Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, “Curating in the Void: The Exhibition as Pedagogical Situation and the Curator as Vanishing Mediator” (PhD diss., Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2024), [forthcoming].



**On the Nordic/Baltic Studio:  
The barely there institution  
(4 of 4)  
Daniel Peltz**

One of the concepts that has been important in developing the Nordic/Baltic Studio for Continued Engagement, and the whole of Rejmyre Art Lab's Center for Peripheral Studies, is this notion of the barely there institution. We began our work in Rejmyre from the act of constituting an institution that owns nothing, a community of study that is re-constituted in each gathering, that gathers in disused spaces and makes craft of whatever is there. This way of being was 'facilitated' by the fact that it was the truth of our conditions in Rejmyre. We had no dedicated space and no money, aside from the small amounts that we'd applied for to make the gatherings happen. This has changed over time but remains a core ethos.

This way of 'instituting', as a barely there institution, is vital in contrast to the highly capitalized, architecturally ensconced art schools we were all coming from, with their well-equipped workshops and wealth of intellectual and material resources. There are certain kinds of study and artwork that can happen in such capitalized spaces but many others are excluded. Many artists are trained and inclined towards an ambivalent, agnostic or antagonistic relationship to institutions of power. When the art school appears in these highly capitalized forms, with

conventional divisions of labor, as a normative institution of power, it unleashes a set of well-rehearsed antagonisms and strained relations.

We were interested, in our work in Rejmyre, in what was possible inside of an art school that owned nothing, that didn't even have a sign, or a fixed meeting place. All the administration was done by the teachers/facilitation group, from raising the money for everyone to gather, to cleaning and setting up the housing and meeting space, to cooking the welcome dinners.

This kind of art school, that is barely there, allows for a reconditioning of artists' relationship to the institution, within the act of study, but it also allows for different kinds of art making. Without the support, or the burden, of the capitalized institution, the works created are cast into a more uncertain space of artistic encounter, both for the artists who make them and for those who encounter them.

We did the work of making this barely there institution in our summer terms, our 'free time' from our various institutional positions (for my part, I was serving as Professor of Film and Video at the Rhode Island School of Design in the U.S., many of the others were teaching full or part-time at RISD and various northern European art academies). We left the learning communities of these schools and academies to re-form another kind of learning community, that was radically less resourced and radically less encumbered.

This act of making our own barely there institution was not a separatist act, it was a resuscitative one. It was clear that many of us in the academy were seeking this kind of study space, were longing for and mourning the loss of this space. Beneath the hyper-rational institutional body, endlessly striving for control and perfection, through the gymnastics of regulatory refinement and curricular review, lies a child's unrestrained curiosity and desire to make, awaiting the milk of a space that offers loving companionship and reciprocal care.

As skeptical as I am of most metrics of evaluation, this way of gathering, inside a barely there space, often 'worked'. Participants came with their skepticisms and institutional ambivalences but settled quickly into a realization of how fragile and intimate this space that we were all making was; and then, something happened, often happens, a kind of generosity and warmth flows.

## co-study

Within the Nordic/Baltic Studio for Continued Engagement, we were attempting to create a space for co-study that asked all those entering it to take a kind of radical responsibility for the space of study and the study itself. I use the concept of study, as opposed to education or teaching and learning,





because study is more easily understood as part of the commons, as something that was and remains already ours. The term also references the writings on fugitive and black study of Harney and Moten, published in 2013 in their influential book *The Undercommons*.

## ensemble research / practicing alternatives to the ethics of individualism and extraction

Despite advances in fine art education and exhibition that acknowledge the role of socially-engaged and collective practices, the dominant ideologies remain those of individualism and the market. You can see this clearly in the progress narrative embedded in most higher education curricula in the arts, wherein progress is constituted as moving from group to individual projects (and in parallel from rural to urban areas). In response to this, we developed a model of gathering in Rejmyre that I refer to as ensemble residencies, importing the concept of the ensemble from the field of performing arts to disrupt and call into question the dominance of individualist and extractivist logics in contemporary artist education. We have been focused on developing a space and models that engage artists, at an advanced stage in their education or careers, in contributing their practices

to a collaborative thinking of a shared topic of investigation. Critical to this work has been the concept of studying in a space that is not for export. This builds on questions in my own art practice about how sites of extraction, former factory towns like Rejmyre, can be transformed into sites of long-term, place-based study, the fruits of which are inseparable from the site and thus, in some way, not for export.

## **long-term, place-based research**

Within our work in Rejmyre, we have maintained a conceptual focus on theorizing the space of 'the rural' in relation to the history of contextual art practice's implicit bias towards the urban. One way we have performed this conceptual focus is through a long-term commitment to return to this rural, Swedish factory-town of 900 inhabitants. Within this work of return, we allow for the cycles of interest and exhausted interest, hope and despair, to move through and we work counter to the demands of artist geographic mobility and 'moving on' that are nearly ubiquitous in site-responsive, contemporary art practice.

As a contemporary artist operating in an international field, it is something of a performed philosophy to make an open, long-duration commitment to one small place. This becomes even more challenging when the chosen place is of no widely shared





significance. We are interested in what it means to make a vow of commitment to such a place, to remain in relation. We do not return to Rejmyre as a resource from which to extract but as a place with its own knowledges, that, given time, attention and skill, we will inevitably participate in. This is a vow that some of us have made personally, but, above all, it is a vow made by the institution and, as such, one that every participant contributes to fulfill.









**A Conversation: On Roving  
Pedagogies and Envisioning  
the future of Àsìkò**  
Oyindamola Faithful and  
Ama Ofeibea Tetteh

Àsìkò was founded to address an absence of critical art pedagogy in African art institutions. Can you talk about how you have observed change within the African pedagogical landscape?

Oyindamola: While many art schools in the West (I use Global North and the West interchangeably) had seen reforms in arts education that allowed for art criticism to develop in the curriculum, this was happening at a much slower pace and scale across Africa, based mainly on the Beaux Arts model. What Àsìkò provided was an in-depth, specialist breakdown of a subject matter, inviting artists to research and think about research within their practice and to reference local art history. CCA, Lagos, which is the governing institution for Àsìkò, is found close to two very prominent art schools: Yaba College of Technology and the University of Lagos. This positioning placed us at the intersection between the global art world and local art education. Through workshops, we were able to provide opportunities for learning and research to take place between artists and curators in our network (local and international) that also welcomed students and early-career artists.

Àsikò has situated itself alongside other alternative and important programs on the continent, including the Dakar-based Raw Material Company. Ker Issa, RAW Material Company's residency program started in 2011 and has welcomed more than 50 artists, writers, researchers, and curators of various nationalities, to Dakar. The Witsrand University in Johannesburg, Department of Curatorial, Publics and Visual Cultures, run by Àsikò alumni Nontobeko Ntombela, focuses on a range of themes, theories, spaces, and times, which all begin with an understanding and positioning in Johannesburg, South Africa. These are spaces that have been contributing deeply to the critical thinking and growth of contemporary arts on the continent.

In 2010, I attended the second cohort for the Independent Curator International (ICI) in New York. Recently, they held their second edition in Africa, in Uganda, which highlights the increase in demand for international training that takes place on the continent. When Bisi started Àsikò, this was really before widespread use of the internet by artists in Africa. Post-COVID, we're seeing more artists and curators accessing online training. So there are new opportunities for learning.

Ama: When Bisi Silva first founded Àsikò Art School (Àsikò), she spoke about addressing the knowledge and educational gap around critical thinking and historically relevant curricula to our local contexts. I





think it is safe to say that in 2024, we can see some of those gaps being brought to the forefront. We can see things changing. Interestingly enough, upon reflection, people and institutions making a huge impact in this space such as KNUST, or the ExitFrame program often have direct links to Bisi and the Àsìkò Art School. So this has definitely been fundamental in opening certain doors of dialogue and new ways of thinking around how we understand and approach learning about art as Africans. Also, I feel that there is a hunger, a desire for more critical curricular content; there is a desire for more collaboration. So in terms of dialogue, as a theme within Àsìkò and similar programs I've looked at, it now goes beyond the confines of one classroom, or one institution, or even one country. There is a proliferation of close dialogues across the continent, and even across the world. So, things do feel very much Pan-African at the moment, and obviously, that's a strong theme within Àsìkò's methodology. It feels like there's a hunger to really understand and delve deeper into local context, African contexts and being".

How does Àsìkò give formal structure to roving site responsive pedagogies? What is Àsìkò's methodology?

Oyindamola: Àsìkò's 3-6 week part-lab, part-workshop, part-artist residency structure is designed

to allow for knowledge from the Global North and South, specifically Africa, to germinate in African cities during curated moments of time. Contrary to the traditional school methodology where individual artists or curators work on personal projects, Àsìkò requires a collective approach to study. Participants and facilitators engage in workshops, site visits, studio visits, crit labs, and reading sessions. An important part of the methodology is the act of eating together. These moments are curated to experience the local cuisine while connecting to the food culture through knowledge sharing and dissemination by invited guests and/or the workers and owners of the meal locations.

When designing Àsìkò, Bisi wanted to encourage the movement of artists and curators across the continent. The premise that African artists have very few opportunities to attend contemporary art courses on the continent and also face tougher travel restrictions led to the school being designed with them in mind. However, faculty come from all over the world. This is because she believed that while they would be facilitating sessions, they would also be in a position to learn from the people and environments they encounter during the program. Recently, the school opened up participation to those within the Diaspora as we continue with the itinerant learning methodology.

The legacy of colonial borders has often meant that language and trade routes play a major

influence in the relationship between nations. So far, the program has been held in Lagos, Nigeria; Accra, Ghana; Dakar, Senegal; Maputo, Mozambique; Praia, Cape Verde; and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We are currently looking at the Arabic-speaking Northern nations and preparing for an edition in Cairo, Egypt.

Ama: Roving by nature is essentially place-based and may infer that the programme itself will be different everywhere it goes. In the case of Àsikò, there certainly is a different experience in each place, but what gives a structure some formality is centering the aim and vision. The structural format in terms of how people learn, having a kind of critical framework in mind is consistent, those tenets stay the same in every place Àsikò holds. So, that does give some structural formality to the roving.

Through Àsikò, I think we (importantly) also allow for space to respond to the place that we are in. So as much as a proportion of the curriculum will be determined in advance, and we will work and collaborate with local facilitators, there is still the space for the pedagogy to adapt itself to its environment and our experience of the site in real time. Many of these elements, even when you are working with local facilitators, cannot be planned in advance. They are a response to being in and imbibing a place. So I think we are aware and actively work with that element of not knowing and allow ourselves to respond critically.





Oyindamola: Agreed. I think it's also important to note that in the last Àsìkò [2022], we introduced a weekly evaluation process for the participants, and we also set aside time for us as faculty to discuss what happened during the week in order to adapt the program to respond to any new points of reference.

Àsìkò and Nordic/Baltic Studio sought to exchange experiences in site responsive pedagogies within vastly different cultural and geographic landscapes, talk about lessons learned, about both approaches to pedagogy, their similarities and points of departure.

Oyindamola: Àsìkò primarily moves through capital cities on the continent, whereas the Nordic/Baltic Studio has taken place in rural spaces. Àsìkò encounters are between three to six weeks of engagement. So, for us, it's more about learning and engaging as much with the ecosystems and sites while we're there. The Nordic/Baltic Studio, in contrast, has more of a durational approach, allowing for continuous engagement within a specific community. The Nordic/Baltic Studio is designed to have a deeper long-term impact, whereas we allow for knowledge, connections, collaborations, and networks to form during the program. We've spoken quite a lot about language in terms of delivering the program. For us, we move between Francophone, Lusophone, and Anglophone

African nations, whereas most of the Nordic studios, even though they are delivered in English, have people coming from a smaller geographic landscape. The focus is more on Nordic thinking, and the Nordics are quite a small geographic area even the space in Rejmyre.

When you're doing a program in a town like Rejmyre with less than 900 people versus delivering it in Lagos, Nigeria, which has nearly 20 million people, there is definitely going to be much more variety in opinions and knowledge centers. So, I think there's a different type of encounter that takes place in those heavily populated spaces.

What I did love about our time at Rejmyre was that there were non-academic spaces of engagement that also felt weighty. In the Nordic/Baltic Studio, they cook for each other. For us, we have our family brunches because we feel that the connection that takes place across and through food is also an important part of learning.

Ama: Communal dining is really key in both programmes. There is so much knowledge that transfers through food and dining. Referring back to your points about the place-based experience, it is indeed site responsive. The Nordic[/Baltic] Studio has one particular site they are focused on, and Àsìkò obviously roves between different African cities. In program design, we are fully cognizant of this and make deliberate

efforts to incorporate it into the learning experience. The idea isn't that a city should just host an edition of Àsikò - as much as we take from the city to inform our curriculum, our learning, our experience. We also hope to leave something there, in terms of knowledge from other places, networks, conversations and dialogues forming. I also feel central to the uniqueness of Àsikò is the fact that it takes elements from previous editions into the convenings that follow.

Our collaboration with Nordic[/Baltic] studio, is truly such a special partnership. On similarities, both programmes take place outside of the confines of traditional art school structures, and both are for artists and curators. One of the differences is around experience and opportunity. Typically, the participants of the Nordic/Baltic Studio programme are either in education or have had some kind of high level formal arts education. Whereas, Àsikò participants are coming from very different walks of life, with some never having had any formal arts education whatsoever. This is reflective of the state of arts education in our local context, in that there is not as much academic programming (degrees, MFAs) in the Arts on the continent. As such, the openness to learning, the communal dining, the kind of acceptance of non-traditional or non-formal ways of teaching is a shared feature of both programs.

Àsikò deals with a much broader pool of participants, with African artists and curators from across

the continent, and now also the diaspora. What you realize is just how intricate the cohort is because of the rare opportunity afforded to us to learn about each other in person. Much of this because of logistical factors such as travel, institutional confines and ethno-cultural relations. So for example, traveling across the continent to get to know other African countries isn't as easily done as it is in Europe, where entry requirements, flight connections and border porosity all facilitate the ease of movement. Therefore, as much as the profile of the group (African artists and curators) may at first appear somewhat homogenous, convening groups such as these is actually rather radically diverse and quite a feat. Engaging with the nuances and sometimes stark differences of people with different cultures, languages, levels of understanding again flavours the curriculum in ways that cannot fully be predetermined. I would say that's the point of departure in terms of the two programs.

Oyindamola: Definitely. I also feel like they've done a pretty good job of integrating the Nordic/Baltic Studio program into the University of the Arts. They have been able to provide a module that places a durational artist's residency within an institution. Àsìkò has existed outside of the formal educational institution for a long time, so it's very interesting for us now to be looking at or seeing ourselves as insiders.

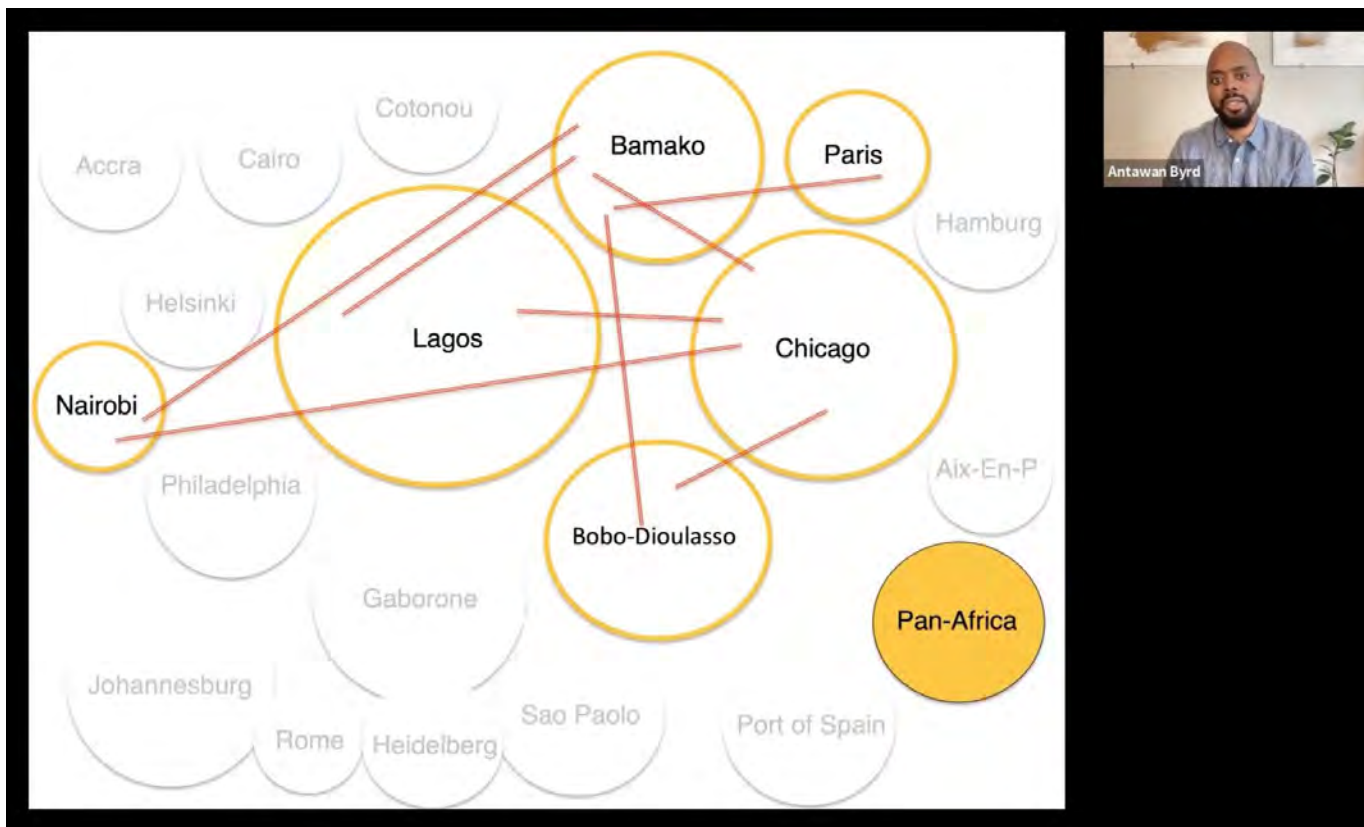




What would a certification program mean for the formalization of a roving pedagogy in an African context?

Oyindamola: I think we are really at the pilot stage so it's difficult to say outright what this would mean. We are however in a position to learn by doing, all the while asking ourselves questions for instance, "can we do this a different way" or "has the programme become too rigid". What it does allow is for participants, many of whom are self-taught, to have some sort of document that shows that they have made a commitment to developing themselves within the arts and for those who may have an undergraduate degree but not in arts, it affords them the opportunity to further their professional development.

Ama: In the African context, certification is key because culturally, it is still very much the currency which adds value to (and really validates) education. Not only does certification validate the individual learner, but also for the wider sector; as increasing numbers of people are 'seen' as qualified this ripples into recognition of visual arts more broadly, and the potential contributions it can make. So whilst this is clear, I think it also opens the door to other conversations about what the certification should look like. You queried before, could it be too rigid? Should it follow



art school models? Who should give the certification? How do we measure learning and metrics? I think in traditional academic models, there is a sense of a joint or common entry level. Students have typically completed an undergraduate degree or a foundation, but Àsìkò draws people from all walks of life, as you mentioned, some are even self taught. So certification becomes a really interesting conversation in terms of how you group these people together, their experience and how you communicate what they have experienced, and what they have committed to. Whilst I do think certification can be necessary, it must be nuanced, sophisticated and respond specifically to an African arts context.

Oyindamola: FAPI [Finland-Africa Platform for Innovation] provides the room for us to design an internationally recognised certification programme, that directly responds to the needs within Africa, while directly contributing to the global discourse on place based or roving pedagogies and contemporary art education as a whole.

Do you envision more cross cultural geographical expansion for Àsìkò alumni, and other innovative art schools?

Ama: Absolutely, yes. I think a dialogue that we are very interested in having is Àsìkò on the continent,

and Àsìkò in the wider diaspora. We are looking at Latin America and the Caribbean, the historical, contextual ties that we can explore through art and art history. It could mean that we collaborate with institutions there, or hold an edition of Àsìkò in Latin America, but we are really delving into that conversation more and unpacking really what it means. I think that the whole time we are delivering Àsìkò, we are also trying to define on the go what it means to be an African artist, African curator, what progression in terms of career and individual development can look like, how we can collaborate with others for opportunities. It's a good place to be because everything feels so open, things feel very possible. People are open to collaboration, people are open to learning, and there are opportunities there that we are interested in teasing out.

Oyindamola: Definitely. Although Àsìkò started as a roving school across Africa, in preparing for the Praia edition we decided we would lean into a diasporic connection, inviting three participants from the diaspora; one from the UK, one from America, and one from Netherlands. Two of the additional participants had Caribbean backgrounds and their inclusion ignited further conversations about how we could connect more with the Caribbean and South America, places with large diaspora communities due to the Transatlantic Slave trade. Going forward, I am hoping that we can partner across the global south, introducing the



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Middle East and South East Asia as points for connection. We've already started thinking through collaborations and institutions within alternative art education in Brazil. We hope that these conversations and partnerships will allow for a rich dialogue for the program.

Currently we have developed an institutional partnership with Hyde Park Art Centre, that provides an artist residency program for the alumni to travel to Chicago, the first participant Letaru Dralegu has already completed her stay. The partnership will offer one or two opportunities per year. With the FAPI we have also designed a global expertise exchange, which will allow for facilitators to come from the University of Arts into our collaborative organization, and for our alumni to go into Finland to also teach at the University of Arts. I think it is important that we can distinguish that while Àsikò Art School will continue to centre Africa and its diaspora, the alumni programme will have a more global scope.







## Image Credits

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To Catch a Mirage (in 21 Days) performance by Ama BE, 2022, royal poinciana bloom, jimson weed bur, Cape Verdean sea salt and clay. Performance view. Photo courtesy of Àsikò Art School 2022, Praia, Cape Verde.

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To Catch a Mirage (in 21 Days) vessel release performance, Quebra Canela Beach, North Atlantic Ocean, 2022. Àsikò Art School 2022, Praia, Cape Verde. Performance view. Photo courtesy of Ama BE.

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Between spaces and places by Emmanuel Ndefo, Kitty Blunt, Liberatha Alibalio, Praça Center, Palmarejo. Performance view. Photo courtesy of Àsikò Art School 2022, Praia, Cape Verde.

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Rural Resistance, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2017. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Asiko 2022, participants visit neighborhood murals in Praia, Cape Verde. Photo by Daniel Peltz.

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Àsikò 2014 participants and facilitators make a site visit to Lac Rose, Senegal. Photos by Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh.

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Everything You Want Was Already Here, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2014. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Clearcut, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2016. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Coracles, Bruce Chao, Rejmyre Art LAB Resident Artist 2014. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's for Peripheral Studies.

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Everything You Want Was Already Here, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2014. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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(top) Everything You Want Was Already Here, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2014. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

(bottom) Process Documentation, Rural Resistance, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2017. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Process Documentation, Rural Resistance, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2017. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Here & Here Exhibition view, Àsikò Art School 2016, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Photo courtesy of Papa Shaban

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Performance by Mediaw N'diaye, Here & Here Exhibition view. Àsikò Art School 2016, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Photo courtesy of Papa Shaban.

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Everything You Want Was Already Here Script, Nordic/ Baltic Studio 2014. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Clearcut, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2016. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Infinite Gestures, Nordic Studio 2012, Rejmyre Art LAB's Centre for Peripheral Studies. Photo by Sophie Barbasch

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Rural Resistance, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2017. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Trinitite (left) and Allende (right), Installation view, The 4 Cardinal Points are 3: South and North, exhibition curated by Amilcar Packer at CRAC-ALSace, France (2022/2023). Photo by Aurélien Mole.

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Amilcar Packer, Boardscape (Mapaisagem), 2014. Photo by Amilcar Packer

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Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, S.A.F.P.A (Six and Fours: Prison Anxieties), 2013, jute sacks, jute ropes, scaffold, fabric, Installation view, Chale Wote Street Art Festival, Accra 2013, photo by Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh.

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Group photo of participants and guest facilitators. From left: Taiye Idahor, Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh, Dana Whabira, Clifford Zulu, Rashida Bumbray (curator/guest facilitator), Eza Komla, Kitso Lynn Lelliott, Erin Rice, Tito Valery, Serubiri Moses, and Simone Leigh (artist/guest facilitator). Photo courtesy of Erin Rice.

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Àsikò 2014 participants and facilitators make a site visit to Lac Rose, Senegal. Photos by Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh.

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Rural Resistance, Nordic/Baltic Studio 2017. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Poetics of Place Exhibition, Installation view, Àsikò Art School 2022, Praia, Cape Verde. Photo courtesy of Àsikò Art School.

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Àsikò Art School 2016, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Photo courtesy of Papa Shaban.

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Praia Cityscape, Àsikò Art School 2022, Cape Verde. Photo by Daniel Peltz.

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Àsikò Art School visitors at Everything You Want Was Already Here, KUNO Course held in Rejmyre 2022. Photo courtesy of Rejmyre Art LAB's Center for Peripheral Studies.

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Presentation by Antawan Byrd, Àsikò Art School 2022, Praia, Cape Verde. Photo courtesy of Àsikò Art School.

## Contributors' Bios

**Odun Orimolade** is an artist, academic, and cultural practitioner who directs her work in trans-disciplinary approaches, research, and collaborations. She lectures in the Fine Art Department, Yaba College of Technology and is Curatorial Director of the Yaba Art Museum. She is a Research Fellow of the College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa.

**Tarcisio Almeida** is an independent curator, researcher and teacher living and working between São Paulo and Bahia, Brazil. In 2023, he joined the curatorial team of the 35th São Paulo Biennial Choreographies of the Impossible. His work is dedicated to liberation, freedom and cognitive justice from the field of visual arts.

**Nana Ama Bentsi-Enchill** is an artist (Ama BE), educator and researcher living between the US and Ghana. She has managed public art commissions, facilitated public workshops and lectures internationally. Her art practice investigates roving ecologies of African migration, labor, and relationships to nature and emerging technologies.

**Tilda Dalunde** is an artist and translator based in Stockholm, Sweden, who received her education at Konstfack and Stockholm University. She investigates how stories appear in relation to objects, first through the maker's and then through the viewer's attention, as we – as meaning-making creatures – cannot refrain from assembling pieces into a whole.

**Oyindamola (Fakeye) Faithful** is an Experiential Art Curator and Learning & Participation Producer working to facilitate contemporary art workshops, events and exhibitions. She is the current Executive and Artistic Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA, Lagos) and Chair of the board for Res Artis, the worldwide professional body for artists' residencies.

**David Larsson** is an artist and Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Konstfack University, in Stockholm, Sweden. His work revolves around issues of social development, modernity, political events, natural resources and collecting/archives.

**Meri Linna** is a visual artist working predominantly with various collaborations, the most prominent being their engagement with the duo Harrie Liveart since 2010. Linna also teaches at Uniarts Helsinki's Fine Arts Academy, where they graduated in Sculptural Studies in 2014.

**Kwasi Ohene-Ayeh** is a curator and critic based in Ghana, working in the fields of pedagogy, criticism, curatorship, and art. He teaches at the Department of Painting & Sculpture, at KNUST in Kumasi and is a key member of the blaxTARLINES coalition and Exit Frame Collective.

**Amilcar Lucien Packer Yessouroun** lives and works in São Paulo, Brazil. He combines research-based artistic practice with editorial and curatorial projects, organizing collaborative initiatives such as artistic residencies, research trips, seminars, and workshops. He has participated in group exhibitions such as Abduction, Norway (2020), 32nd Biennial of São Paulo (2016); Thessaloniki Biennale, Greece (2009).

**Daniel Peltz** is an artist and researcher based in Finland. He serves as Professor of Time and Space Arts with a specialization in Site and Situation Specific Practices at the Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki. He is also co-founder of the long-term, place-based research project Rejmyre Art Lab's Center for Peripheral Studies.

**Dr. Aura Seikkula** is an international Art and AI epistemologist with an extensive background in curating and art advising with a focus on strategic development. She has been part of the founding group for several innovative curatorial models including the Àsikò Art School and has curated exhibitions, biennials and events in over 30 countries on six continents.

**Ama Ofeibea Tetteh** is founder and lead consultant at Chapter54, committed to leveraging the Creative Industries to drive sustainable social development, with a special interest in the UK and the African continent. She is currently consulting at CCA Lagos as Programme Manager for Àsikò Art School.

**Dr. Luis Guerra Miranda** is a visual artist, philosopher. He is Chair Tomás y Valiente at Madrid Institute of Advanced Studies where he is researching Art and Design Reparatory Practices. He is a Senior Researcher at the University of the Arts in Helsinki, Finland and co-organizes the GOAP (Open Group of Political Art) at the Arts Santa Mònica Center, Barcelona.



