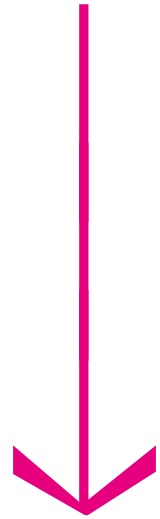


HfR dekolonial



HfR dekolonial:
→ Eine Unterhaltung
über Lehre und weitere
Felder der kritischen
Auseinandersetzung mit
Hochschule und Kultur

English Text Version

HfK Decolonial:
A conversation about teaching and other forms
of critical engagement with higher education
and culture

with
Xiyu Tomorrow
Beatrace Angut Lorika Oola
Mara Recklies
Cornelia Lund

Edited by
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HfK Decolonial: A conversation about teaching and other forms of critical engagement with higher education and culture

Whether it's candy wrappers, furniture, nation branding or a world fair: design always requires an examination of the attitude behind it. On 2nd of March 2021, the exchange and brainstorming meeting "Design for Debate: Decolonial Perspectives for Design" took place at the University of the Arts (HfK) Bremen. Lisa Baumgarten (Berlin), Imad Gebrayel (Berlin), Bianca Koczan (Berlin), Cornelia Lund (Berlin), Beatrace Angut Oola (Hamburg), Mara Recklies (Berlin), Xiyu Tomorrow (Hamburg) as well as Annette Geiger and Tania Prill (both University of the Arts Bremen) discussed the development of new perspectives for teaching, practice and research at the HfK Bremen. In the course of their joint assessment, questions about non-Eurocentric knowledge and thinking, about de-privileging ways of working, and about the relationship between theory and practice emerged.

This publication takes the results of the workshop as a starting point: In an email conversation, Cornelia Lund, Beatrace Angut Oola, Mara Recklies and Xiyu Tomorrow talk about the possibilities, challenges and perspectives of decolonial work in cultural institutions and at universities, using the University of the Arts Bremen as an example.

The editors would like to thank the HfK Fund for Research and Development for financially supporting the project, as well as Annette Geiger and Tania Prill for filing the funding application. Furthermore, we would like to thank the students of the course "Druckpool AG" under the direction of Tania Prill and Andrea Rauschenbusch for designing the German version of this publication.

Mara:

I would like to open our dialogue with the concern that has been driving us to realize this project: That decolonization is not just a topic that can be touched upon at universities in the context of lectures or texts, but that it is a profound process that has to be nudged. Thus, for the four of us, teaching and research that is critical of colonialism and colonality means more than reading the decolonial canon. Namely, it means engaging with our own artistic and scientific practices and the institutions they are linked to. A case in point is the University of the Arts (HfK) in Bremen, where the four of us teach. Do you find yourselves represented in this summary?

Cornelia:

Thank you very much for starting our conversation, dear Mara. You have raised some essential topics, and I would like to take up the question of the profound process, which is certainly one of the core problems of decolonial work at universities or colleges in general. Because even a decolonial approach to the canon should not just mean replacing or adding a few texts or examples. “Decolonizing design” (and by extension, design teaching) means more than just a few minor tweaks to the curriculum, or, in the words of the Decolonizing Design group, “it is a radical rather than reformist project.”¹

But it is precisely this radical implication of the process that makes decolonizing in higher education, and in institutional contexts more generally, a not-so-easy undertaking. For it is not easy to implement change literally from the roots, the *radices*, and/or down to the roots. Institutions are inherently focused on stability, and due to their complex sets of rules and legal constitutions, they are often rather slow entities in which small reforms may still be implementable, but larger changes lead to a fierce squeaking in the gears or even to a complete standstill of any process of change.

I would like to mention here just two elements that make decolonial work difficult in the university context as well: First, the hierarchical structures, which stand in the way of collaborative approaches in the decolonial sense, as well as established structures of (project) budgeting. The experience of working with decolonial approaches shows that, for various reasons, these forms of work are more time-intensive and therefore would actually require higher budgets, which, however, are usually not provided for structurally. This in turn leads to a whole series of problems and questions, such as the fact that people from often already marginalized or precarious groups end up once again in unfavourable financial contexts ...

What is your take on this? I would be interested in your perspectives on these questions.

Xiyu:

Thank you very much, dear Mara and Cornelia for your great contributions. I want to add that I understand decolonization primarily as an attitude that radiates into procedures, staffing policies, methods, content, and resource allocations. Speaking as a person that is affected by racism, this attitude starts with the interaction between individuals. Over the past six months, I have often experienced that my statements were not taken seriously by conversation partners, that they would project something onto me that I am not, be it in casual conversations, on the street, in the train, in everyday work contexts, etc. I then have to remind myself that these actors are acting out a global paradigm focused on inequality. The “radices” for this emerged at a time when racist, sexist, classist, etc. attitudes have been

¹ Schultz, Abdulla et al., Editors' Introduction, in: Design and Culture, 2018, p. 3.

in vogue. It is built into these roots to reproduce inequalities through hierarchies, power relations, etc. This system is very good at presenting its operation as a desirable normal, even though it is one model among many. It engages in what is often called “identity politics” by the supposed “others” (bearing in mind the unequal distribution of power). So how can a sustainable structural change, an update for the 21st century, succeed under these circumstances?

I believe that change begins with gestures. A lot is already achieved if we maintain an attitude of appreciation in our interactions. Ideally, we do this from an intersectional perspective and question traditions with new parameters, creating something new. Institutions, including paradigms, did not fall from the sky, but are entities created and designed by humans. To be competent in one area, e.g. in the critique of racism, does not necessarily entail to know about the subtleties of other realities of life and to be able to deal with them sensitively. Thus, it requires constant engagement with one’s own practice. This creates friction and is tedious and draining for everybody involved, marked at different points with different challenges. While I am patching up my wounds and claiming equal rights, for others it may mean imagining what it is like to constantly adapt to mainstream society. From this exercise, it is then a matter of deriving corrective actions, such as relinquishing or sharing privilege. Even though I consider the process a two-way street, I also think marginalized people have done enough. Now it’s up to the other side.

I do find that things are starting to change. It’s great that our project and formats like the HfK’s Awareness Team are taking place at a university that is not dominated by cultural studies. I am grateful that I am allowed to teach here and that I am free in terms of content. Who knows if that would have been possible in this form 5 or 10 years ago. At the same time, I am annoyed by the time limits and vocational insecurity, the precarious salary, the unpaid conceptual, supervisory and administrative work, the structural powerlessness. This leads to either economic self-exploitation in order to be involved in projects, to give literature recommendations, to pass on feedback, to do administration OR to shift the consequences on the quality of the work and teaching, on the students, and on their education, because pay can only be accounted for by “SWS” (actual teaching hours) or (small) project budgets. The institutional and, unfortunately, often individual learning process is just starting (again) from scratch in many places. I hope that this process will develop with vigour and that it will have a lasting influence on the political will to allocate resources.

Beatrace:

It’s a pleasure to be part of this project. I think it’s a great idea to raise and discuss our concerns in an email conversation. The issue of decolonization has never before been so explosive. Unfortunately, decolonization is not properly understood by most of society.

Universities are practicing it, but it is rather heavy handed, and I wonder what else needs to happen socially for institutions to get serious about implementing it.

Some of you know that I am not so fond of the term “decolonization” because I think it does not adequately reflect the depth of the issues, some relevant perspectives were not involved in the creation of the term, and it does not call strongly enough for action. I think the term “deconstruction” would be more appropriate.

Also, I think that a historical event such as colonialism and decolonization should not be equated with a buzzword that is now often used as a metaphor.

I agree with you, Mara, that teaching and research which are critical of colonialism involve much more than just reading texts. They require action and, most importantly, engagement with one’s own understanding of identity. I think we should focus much more on the structural processes of change than on the outcomes. Cornelia, you speak from my soul with your two given examples. Indeed, it can get quite uncomfortable when it gets down to the nitty gritty. Unfortunately, this system is so used to hierarchies that the idea that marginalized people also want privileges triggers something like fear in many.

I can’t help but think of my father right now, who studied medicine in Germany in the 1960s/1970s and who told me about his career. He was grateful to be able to provide a nice life for himself and his family and believed that, as a doctor, he would most certainly be treated as an equal. But when he drove his Mercedes to work, it was a thorn in the side of some of his colleagues. The fact that a Black man was a doctor was something they had to digest – and driving a Mercedes, was too many privileges all at once. In the course of this, huge microaggressions were perpetrated against him and my father had to adopt a strategy to stand up to them. His economic independence was such a strategy, as was his satisfaction in owning a brand-new Mercedes, Volvo and VW bus.

@Xiyu

I share similar experiences as you, except I’m not surprised to still run into interactions where all you can do is roll your eyes. Anyway, I’m amazed at how people who think they understand what structural racism is and how it plays out keep reproducing it with their actions without even realizing it. So how can sustainable structural change, an update for the 21st century, succeed under these circumstances? I find a statement by Dominique Drakeford very appropriate – “Don’t Just Pass The Mic. Relinquish It.”²

By this she means that it is important to give up something, e.g. control or an entitlement to which one is not actually entitled. Collectively, we might be able to implement a structural change. For this, the dominant society should realize that it has to critically deal with its

² Quoted in Melissa June Rowley, “What Decolonizing Fashion Has To Do With #BlackLivesMatter”, Forbes online, 23.06.2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/melissarowley/2020/06/23/what-decolonizing-fashion-has-to-do-with-blacklivesmatter/>.

whiteness. Only with self-reflection can a new structure take effect and old, colonially shaped thought patterns and the power structures that go with them come to an end.

Cornelia:

First of all, I would like to thank you, dear Xiyu and dear Beatrace, for sharing your personal experiences with us!

At this point I would just like to briefly add something that has been on my mind for a few days, specifically since an incident at *documenta fifteen*: Most German institutions or their representatives seem to be so far removed from the actions we want them to take that they haven't even done their homework in terms of reading. Not to mention turning anything into concrete actions. The incident in Kassel is just one example of many: There, members of the Party Collective from New Delhi got into a racist anti-LGBTQIA+ attack after a meeting. Afterwards, they clearly criticized *documenta* as an institution and event that did not provide enough information about Kassel and did not offer any protective mechanisms. Yet, for some years now, there has been excellent literature offering reflections on and guidance for such situations in the cultural sector. I'm thinking of the book *Allianzen. Kritische Praxis an weißen Institutionen* (Alliances. Critical Practice in *white* Institutions) from 2018.³ Reading it and implementing its insights could actually have helped to avoid such an incident. For all the positive developments that can be observed, I sometimes have the feeling that everybody is diligently reading the rather abstract theoretical texts, whereas there is a lack of engagement with concrete situations and considerations, from which one could draw conclusions for one's own context.

Mara:

Thank you very much for your posts, which I find very insightful.

Beatrace and Xiyu, you both brought up that there are not only many misunderstandings regarding the process and the notion of decolonization, but also many fears that stem from the fact that there can be no decolonizing work without reflecting on one's own point of view, which of course can be uncomfortable. Especially for the institutions and individuals who benefit from the established structures. Even for me, as a *white* humanities graduate who studied philosophy at a European university and was trained for a tradition of thought in which for far too long there was little awareness of the colonality, racism, sexism, or classism of my own discipline, coming to terms with the colonality of our sciences and their institutions has been a major shift. Understanding why decolonization is necessary ultimately left a rupture in my thinking. Many certainties suddenly broke away. It took time to develop an idea of what "decolonization" even means in different contexts.

³ Liepsch, Warner, *Allianzen*, 2018.

Decolonial work forces us to abandon passivity. Because no institution, no practice, and no person can be passively decolonized. I agree with Xiyu that decolonization means that the people and institutions that have had discourse power until now begin to listen instead of speak. But it has to be active listening. Not in this gesture of “I’m going to fold my arms, lean back and let these ‘others’ come to us at the institutions so that they can decolonize us”. I often experience, that institutions proceed in the same way.

Cornelia, you were able to provide a sad example of this with the incident in Kassel. It doesn’t work to invite non-*white* people, for example, who are then supposed to act “somehow critical of coloniality” and hope that one can sit back and they will do the decolonial work. Walter Dignolo has repeatedly emphasized that decolonization precisely does not mean that the colonized have to be decolonized, but that it especially affects those who profit from the structures of the colonizers.⁴ If this is not taken into account, problematic structures are reproduced. For example, when institutions brag about a series of events for which artists or scientists from non-European countries are invited for poorly paid digital lectures that deal with decolonization. This does not shake hierarchies, but stabilizes them. This institutional inertia fosters what we are criticizing here: Decolonization becomes an event.

I think especially *white* scientists or artists are sometimes inhibited to work collectively in diverse teams. Because there are uncertainties about how different privileges and points of view should affect work processes.

Xiyu:

Thank you for your posts and sharing your experiences. I resonate with Beatrice’s view that coming to terms with one’s privilege is imperative and needs more action orientation. I am happy to pass along Peggy McIntosh’s *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*⁵ at this point, as well as Mohamed Amjahid’s “Tips for Sweet Potatoes”⁶. I also find *What White People Can Do Next* by Emma Dabiri⁷ to be very well written.

Regarding collective work in diverse teams: In my opinion, a topic like decolonization/deconstruction needs representatives of as many social actors as possible. The process of negotiation comes with many prerequisites and is resource-intensive. On the one hand, it requires self-reflection and a prior determination of the participant’s position,

⁴ See Dignolo, *Epistemischer Ungehorsam*, 2012, pp. 65 and 77–78.

⁵ McIntosh, *White Privilege*, 1989.

⁶ See Amjahid, *Der weiße Fleck*, 2021.

⁷ Dabiri, *What White People Can Do Next*, 2021.

which is rather difficult anyway under the condition of scarce resources. On the other hand, it often requires additional sensitization for contexts, changes in perspective, etc., in order to be able to agree on joint work processes at all: whether and how, for example, functions and responsibilities are to be separated, which decision-making procedures are to be used, how a Code of Conduct is to be interpreted and implemented, etc. In my own freelance practice, I have had good experiences with resource transfers and the comparatively large room of manoeuvre. However, I have also heard of contexts where such collaboration went awry – and I would be reluctant to leave the cutting edge between BIPOC and *white* people, but would like to remark that even within the postcolonial group of actors* and BIPOC (which, by the way, don't always have to be congruent either...) there are very different and sometimes not very reconcilable positions (which I often find a pity as well).

Beatrace:

I think that collaborative, egalitarian work can succeed when different perspectives are acknowledged. It is important that there is room for different perspectives, and above all that there is a willingness to value new approaches, to learn and understand new things.

@Cornelia

Indeed, the *documenta* incident could definitely have been avoided if homework had been done. I agree with you that there is a lack of actual engagement. The necessary work is not being done, or is being done inadequately, because there are few consequences for misconduct. Institutions (their employees) allow themselves to do unbelievable things, I can't think of any other way of putting it right now.

In this case, there was a serious consequence, which was also necessary. I believe that this is what is needed to bring about lasting structural change. When I remember a personal case that happened in 2019, where, due to the hierarchical structure, I received a contract with bad conditions, I still get dizzy. At first it seemed kind of acceptable, but when it came to economics, it simply became distasteful. Institutions like to hide behind administration, which is so complicated and like it's set in stone. This is exactly where the work starts, it's time to properly reorganize and put an end to comfort and ease. There needs to be more transparency and better distribution to avoid the emergence of power structures. Here we need to change things so that there are equal conditions for everyone. Otherwise, it comes back to exploitation, as in my case – and the institution still profits economically from it.

@Mara

Thank you for your input and yes, you understood me correctly. It is true that decolonial work takes time. I think it is going too slowly for activists since so much was already made clear 10, 20, 30 years ago and even in the 17th century. For example, by Anton Wilhelm Amo (c.

1703–1789), also called Amo Afer. He is the first known philosopher and jurist of African origin to have studied at a European university. By birth, he was from what was then Guinea and is now Ghana. He was enslaved as a child and taken to Amsterdam. From there he was “given as a present” – as it is interpreted – to Anton Ulrich of Brunswick and Lüneburg-Wolfenbüttel, who “passed him on” as a “Kammermxxx”⁸ (Black court servant) to his son August Wilhelm. He studied at the University of Halle in 1727 and wrote his first dissertation there, *Die Rechtsstellung der Mohren in Europa* (The Legal Status of the Black Person in Europe).

Now to your question about working collectively in diverse collectives. I think it takes empathy, time, and an honest understanding of culture. This is almost impossible to develop for non-BIPOC who grew up with colonial-influenced thought patterns and belong to the 50+ generation. Some succeed, of course, but that is rather the exception, in my opinion. For the next generation, it is a natural process to hold an honest understanding of culture. Those who have a diverse environment learn to think differently from the beginning and get different perspectives and influences in their upbringing. I believe that while working in diverse collectives, it is necessary to live the culture, to approach it with depth and respect, and to get to know and appreciate it with all that it entails. Do you understand what I mean?

Cornelia:

The topic of collaborative work is also very important to me in my own practice. In the art context, collaborative work is popular, however, “collaborative”, similar to “decolonial”, is also a buzzword that can be used to push funding applications. Once the projects get funded and implemented, however, institutions often show a rather blurred understanding of collaborative work; but also financial and contractual constructions make equal, collaborative work as a core element of decolonial approaches difficult. At universities, for example, there is usually only a proportionate fee for jointly held seminars. Yet it would be important, even in seminars, to present multiple perspectives already at the level of the lecturers. Beatrice and I held a seminar together at the HfK, which, financially speaking, was precarious and of course a debacle because of the shared teaching assignment. But we had very consciously decided to hold the seminar that way, because we thought it was important. And I found it to be an incredibly good and enriching format, with extremely lively discussions with the students, even though the course took place online.

At the same time, this leads back to the point that decolonial forms of work often lead to unfavourable financial outcomes because it is mandatory to share funding and the time that is really invested often remains voluntary and unpaid – as you had mentioned before, Xiyu.

⁸ The German “M” word is, equivalent to its English translation, an archaic term to describe a Black person; it is firmly rooted in stereotyped, racist and colonial concepts. There is no English equivalent for the “Kammermxxx,” a combination of the M word with the function of the “Kammerdiener”, the valet.

In this context, I have a question for both of you, Xiyu and Beatrice: In conversations as well as in various texts, it is repeatedly mentioned that BIPOC lecturers are often the content-related and emotional contact persons for BIPOC students. This means that additional care work ends up with them, even though they are frequently in precarious positions at universities and thus do this work unpaid or underpaid. Have you had similar experiences?

Xiyu:

To answer your question, Cornelia: YES. I consider the conversation with BIPOC students a gift every time. I have my doubts about whether the Social Counseling Center or a student awareness team can meet the need because I think it's not just about discussing the issues (everyday discrimination, feelings of alienation and isolation, etc.) but also being a role model and confidant in lieu of the care structures. This opens up the structural gap that we have already highlighted.

I am a very big friend of doing things because they are right (out of an attitude) and not because a transaction takes place through the act. In this context, I also see, for example, my care work for students or for this project, in which we all also put in volunteer hours. It becomes difficult when social inequalities are reproduced, which is what happens in the context of higher education and culture right now (e.g., university: doing a PhD is supposedly a private pleasure, hence the lousy pay, but necessary to be considered for a professorship, which in turn is the position of power to be able to initiate any change at all, etc.). This happens as institutions buy competence as tokens or, after Alice Hasters,⁹ mascots. They adorn themselves with the precariously purchased knowledge. At the same time, I understand that structural change is an incremental process and that it probably needs intermediate steps, such as BIPOC lecturers and the ambivalences associated with them. What leverage do we have to instigate enough momentum for change? It's difficult because the ball is in the other court (hand over the microphone, make room, listen actively, put theory into practice and (allow yourself to) make mistakes in the process, etc.). I want to advance my empathy, listening, taking seriously and sharing responsibility and handing off only to a certain extent. At some point I want this to be returned, especially from actors who profit from my structural inequality. Otherwise, I, and the part of the structure I support, will eventually collapse. At this point, I found the news by some *documenta* artists about the events telling.¹⁰ Hito Steyerl's essay, which should have been read at the cancelled panel, is also worth a read.¹¹

⁹ Hasters, *Was weiße Menschen*, 2021.

¹⁰ "Censorship must be refused. Letter from lumbung community", e-flux, 27.07.2022, <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/481665/censorship-must-be-refused-letter-from-lumbung-community>

¹¹ Hito Steyerl, "documenta 15: Kontext ist König, außer der deutsche", *Zeit online*, 03.06.2022, <https://www.zeit.de/kultur/kunst/2022-06/documenta-15-postkoloniale-theorien-kunst-kontextualisierung>

As far as the teaching situation is concerned, my current solution is to expose students to content outside the German, so-called “high culture canon” and to provide supervision within the allocated time frame. I was very proud when a student gave input about her everyday experiences with racism and sexism and the course was able to hold that. I was also very proud when the course discussed how decolonial issues were handled while in school and we reflected together after this disillusionment: What now, how to go on? I and/or we will not solve the problems (or only to a limited extent) in the courses, but we can at least dare a beginning by giving them space. I have hope that change will happen through the students, to whom I regularly say that the reason for the existence of a university is precisely them as students, even though I feel the pressure to perform (and the possibly limited capacities for extra engagement).

Mara:

I see it the same way as Xiyu, students need to be made familiar with content outside of the European high culture canon. The canon must be disrupted - but not without commenting on it thoroughly. This does not only concern the canon of institutions like theatres or museums, but also, for example, the canonical texts of teaching. We have to reflect critically on what has been taught or shown completely uncritically over decades – and is sometimes still being taught or shown today. Because that is a scandal.

In the winter semester, I added a trigger warning to the announcement of a course at the HfK that my seminar would deal with explicitly racist texts and content. In doing so, we did not read any exceptional texts, but rather the canon that can be found in any German book on design history, design theory, or research. For example, we looked at the first World’s Fair, which is still stubbornly negotiated in design history as an “industrial exhibition” to hide the fact that it was also an ethnological show and a celebration of European colonialism. We took a close look at problematic passages and statements in the works of Gottfried Semper, Adolf Loos and Victor Papanek. We examined the extent to which the entire theory and history of design is permeated with genuinely colonial and racist motifs, such as the concept of the ‘progress’ of civilizations. I understand Xiyu’s pride in the students, because I too learn a lot from them. Two students from China gave an impressive presentation about how devastatingly German functionalism has displaced Chinese architectural and design traditions. Problems like that are not mentioned in Germany, they are ignored. As are the problems created by the global hype about the Bauhaus. Lebogang Mokoena describes in her article *When a House is Not a Home*¹² how problematic the houses in the South African townships are, which were planned according to the architecture of Ernst May and Walter

¹² Mokoena, *When a House*, 2020.

Gropius and forced upon the people there. Such things are often left out – as is the discussion of which indigenous peoples were reviled by Loos and what this explicitly has to do with German colonial history – for instance, German Guinea. There is shamefully little knowledge about European, and especially German colonial history. And that is – to take up the title mentioned by Xiyu – one thing that *white* people can and must do: decolonial work in their own, racist stocks.

In the theoretical seminars I teach, I try to engage in this matter – even without offering only explicit courses on decolonial theory. In a regular seminar on design history, for example, I can address the colonial ideas that shape European modernism. And in a seminar on social design, I can thematize the neo-colonial structures that have spun around the so-called political design disciplines – Danah Abdullah has already spoken about this.¹³

Long story short: decolonial work also means coming to terms with the past on which our present is still based on. Decolonial cultural work, research and teaching need a historical consciousness.

Xiyu:

Keyword canon: disrupt, yes, to reflect critically, yes. At the same time, this clashes with the so-called autonomy of art as a maxim of the (Western) post-war period, which in my opinion was quite political in its attitude of refusal at the time, but has since become apolitical. DIE ZEIT has done an interesting exercise on the alternative canon, with Adichie and Morrison, without Kant.¹⁴

Cornelia:

I think that this year's *documenta* is an example of a huge complex of "construction sites" in our society that urgently need not only to be discussed, but also actively worked on. And not only in the cultural context, they can be found everywhere.

That's why I would like to emphasize again what you, Mara, have mentioned on the basis of your own path: namely, that *white* people and institutions most certainly have to do decolonial work, too. In the last few days, I had very intense discussions with a South African friend in which it came up again and again that attending workshops and reading texts, or perhaps delegating to responsible bodies, is not enough. It may be a start, but if *white* fragility takes refuge in well-sounding discourse, correct verbiage, and abdicating responsibility, nothing will ever change. Like Mara, I don't want to claim a successful decolonization process for myself, but at least, we have started the process. Which means, first of all, as a *white* person, to start questioning one's own position, privileges, and learned,

¹³ Abdulla, A Manifesto of Change, 2014.

¹⁴ Tlusty, Meyer, Luig, Kanon, 2018.

colonial ways of thinking and acting. And that, as Mara has already described, is sometimes unsettling and definitely an arduous process involving a lot of work. I think it is indispensable, though, socially necessary and of course ultimately absolutely enriching. And it is the only way to perhaps and hopefully soon return the effort and dedication described by Xiyu.

BIOs

Xiyu Tomorrow is a drawing artist from Austria in Hamburg and works in the field between social change and art. She is interested in maps, memories, and what it means to be human in an ever-changing world. Before her life as an artist, Xiyu worked in international development. Exhibitions include Gabrovo Biennial, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, A4 Museum Chengdu, Atelierhaus Salzamt Linz.

Mara Recklies' research focuses on the philosophy of design, with a particular interest in the political dimensions of design, which she explores from intersectional-feminist as well as decolonial perspectives. While working on her dissertation on philosophical design criticism, her research and teaching activities took her to Burg Giebichenstein in Halle, HfK Bremen, and HFBK Hamburg, among others. Her texts have been published by Merve Verlag, Kursbuch or form Magazin.

Beatrace Angut Lorika Oola works as a freelance interdisciplinary curator, creative producer and consultant with a focus on fashion installations and editorial as well as a guest lecturer at the HfK Bremen. In 2012, she founded the digital information platform Fashion Africa Now, which was awarded the 2022 Kultur- und Kreativpiloten Award. She is also one of the global pioneers of the African fashion movement and is on the advisory board of Decolonization Hamburg.

Cornelia Lund is a Berlin-based art and media scholar and curator. She has a long-standing career in teaching and research, mainly on documentary and audiovisual artistic practices, design theory as well as post- and decolonial theories (among others HU Berlin, HfK Bremen, FH Salzburg, PUC São Paulo). Since 2004 co-director of fluctuating images (Berlin), an independent and non-commercial platform for media art and design (www.fluctuating-images.de).

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