



Being White in pluralist proximity

Concerning postcolonial art, education and research
in Scandinavia

Helen Eriksen

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Dissertation for the degree philosophiae doctor

University of Agder
Faculty of Fine Arts, Department of Visual Art and Drama
2023

Doktoravhandlinger ved Universitetet i Agder 427
[Doctoral dissertations at the University of Agder 427]

ISSN: 1504-9272
ISBN: 978-82-8427-143-9

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Design: Marie Payan
Print: Make!Graphics

Acknowledgements

My first acknowledgement must be that this cannot be an exhaustive list. At this stage, I am looking forward to my next party with you to celebrate what we have accomplished together.

My mind wanders back over the years. I am overawed by the amount of collective work that has gone into this publication. I have oceans of thanks to the many people who have helped, encouraged and supported me during this journey. There have been innumerable encounters with remarkable individuals who have given their time and energy to participate in the exhibitions, engage in conversations, read texts, and encourage and comment on the content as it emerged from the mess of the research process. Someone has always picked me up when I have fallen down. Thank you!

Meeting and talking with people from minoritized backgrounds in galleries, trains, on the streets, in bars and cafés on websites and in zoom rooms has inspired me to keep working through this PhD. Deise Nunes deserves special thanks for her sharp analysis, kindness and insistence that I push forward to understand how whiteness works through me. More shout-outs to Thomas Talawa Prestø, Ronald Mayora Synnes, Jacob Cisse, Victor Mutelekesha, Karin Erixsson, Fadlabi, Didier Chinarian Muya, and Jide Alakija who have passionately shared their work, thoughts, feelings and analysis of living the postcolonial (Scandinavian) life.

I am immensely grateful for the privilege of presenting my doctoral research in a Fine arts department with professors who propose togetherness and dissent as essential components of art. A massive wave of thanks to my first professor Eli Cook who inspired me to keep writing and making from the very beginning at the University of East Anglia.

I am incredibly indebted to my excellent team of mentors and supervisors: Helene Illeris, Zahra Bayati and Lisbet Skregelid, always handy with their supervisory intellectual scalpels.



Anon: The matriarchs and nannas

Thank you to Germain Ngoma for his hands-on supervision, ongoing conversations about material value, art practice, animals and constant physical reminders of what artistry can be that we didn't know then.

Inspirational gratitude to my new friends, colleagues and fellow Killjoy travellers – Gry O. Ulrichsen and Zahra Bayati – aka the Solmaz collective. You are the rocks that I stand with when throwing my killjoy stones. Thank you for opening your craniums to reveal your glowing synapses. They shine so brightly; without you, this dissertation would have been exceedingly dull to complete!

A warm Mediterranean ocean of thanks to my wonderful doctoral cohort for all their help, curiosity and questions during our seminars and coffee breaks. Special thanks and love to the Stitch Sisters: Samira Jamouchi, Monica Klungland and Mali Hauen - for playing with me and engaging in sensory experiments where materiality entangles us tighter together with each project.

Hats off to the grown-ups from the Art in Context PhD milieu who are expertly juggling the growing array of doctoral projects

in their care and especially Anne Haugland Balsnes, with her steady support and cheerleading. A shout out to colleagues from the art and society and art and young people research groups. A special wave of appreciation goes to Kristian Nødtvedt Knudsen and Lisbet Skregelid for feedback and support during the making of Elephants in the archive. Fond thanks to academics, curators, teachers and artists from other institutions for their interest and feedback on my/our work and for making space for me/us in your corridors and coffee breaks. Special thanks to Jan Verwoert for his comments during my final seminar.

Eternal gratitude for kindness and patience from Roozbeh Behtaji, Hans Byberg, Marie Payan and Marianne Nordtvedt Knudsen with their artistic, technical and listening skills that have lifted the dissemination of the thesis into a new dimension.

Where would I be without old friends and colleagues from Oslo: Ebba Moi and Stefan Schröder, who started this journey into art education with me in 2009 and initiated Tenthaus in 2011. The exhibition making in the thesis is indebted to the members of Club Solo in Breda and Galleri Box in Gothenburg and, of course, Ebba, with her never-ending patience and Stefan for his continued abundance of energy. Specific thanks to Mechu Rapela for all her support and excellent directorship of Tenthaus. My gratitude goes out to all the members of this pulsating collective for your support and sustenance: Joanna Chia-Yu Lin, Valentina Martinez, Wei Ting Tseng/Zeng, Adriana Calderon, Jacky Jaan-Yuan Kuo, Shahrzad Malekian, Nikhil Vettukatil, Ida Uvaas, Matilde Balatti, Stan D'haene, Hamza Ali, Siri Austeen, James Finucane and not least Anawana Haloba from the Tenthaus family circle. It has been an incredible journey to be on with you all.

I want to thank my old sisterhood friends for your encouragement to make it to the finishing post and get on with life. Those spread across Europe are my literature cohort and advisors in life. Angela and Nicola are forever helpful with editing, whatever your own circumstances and Bex, Annie and Leysa for being there whenever. A special thank you also to my old friends within close reach, Lotte, Knut, Ann-Sofie, Janneke, Kaj, Bård and Ingvill. You all kept me more or less sane during covid!

Favouritism has to be acknowledged, and I begin by thanking my parents, who encouraged my curiosity from a very early age. Moving between Liverpool and Notodden, between families and languages, has provided me with anthropological and other experiences and insights that I actively use in my writing. Then Ralph, the big little brother, who has constantly challenged me to think better, harder and faster. Gratitude to my grandparents for their stories, recipes and their ways of doing things that they gave to me at a very early age.

As always, profound love and respect go to my extended family. My aunties, uncles and all my steadfast, loving cousins are always encouraging, interested and willing to share their experiences and lives with me. I am indebted to my Kari, Gerd, Tove, and Ove, who opened their doors and hearts to me as a teenager leaving home. In their living rooms, art, education, socialism, Samí politics, Alta, and reindeer climbed out of books and into my life.

Love and eternal thanks to my steadfast Gunnar, for his never-ending unflappability, as I entered the different challenging phases of the process. He provided never-ending cups of tea, praise, and encouragement as I sat writing upstairs – chasing one sentence after another around the computer screen.

Miriam and Hans, this is dedicated to you. May you both surprise yourselves in where life takes you and enjoy the different paths you travel along in getting there.

Summary

This combined doctoral thesis comprises 50% theory and 50% art practice. It emerges through the intersections of art, education and research. I share my evolving understanding of working processes in those fields as the sum of history, geographical context, materiality and an imaginary. It includes three peer-reviewed texts (Eriksen, 2022; Eriksen et al., 2020; Ulrichsen et al., 2021), three exhibitions (Dijkstra & de Bie, 2018; Eriksen et al., 2018a, 2018b) a film (Solmaz, 2022) and other artist practices such as drawing, collage and object-making. Its content takes a form that seeks to disrupt the binary division between academic text/practice and artistic research practice.

I explore the paradox of how the majority of Scandinavians denounce racism while reconciling themselves with the fact that it exists (cf. Wekker, 2016). I explore this through my entanglement, as a White European female artist, with a working-class background in art, education and research. I discuss how artists generally and my-self specifically experience aesthetic decision-making in post-colonial Scandinavia. My position as the subject-researcher is located not only through peer-reviewed texts but also in vignettes included in the metatext based on my memories, private journals, and field journals/notes from my professional life.

I use a diffractive method based on the theory of agential realism (Barad, 2007). This method inspired me to think through and with post-colonial scholars (Ahmed, 2021; Khanna, 2020; Said, 1994, 2003; Spivak, 1988) and thinkers in critical race and Whiteness theories (Bayati, 2014; Ignatiev, 2009; Matias, 2016; Wekker, 2016; Werner & Björk, 2014). I explore the significance of the embodied colonial cultural archive (Said, 1994; Wekker, 2016) and emotion (Khanna, 2020) and their role in the cultural production of racial stereotypes.

Dominating European practices in art, education and research emerge as complicit in the structures of White

supremacy and rooted in the philosophical foundations stemming from modernity. Globally dominating aesthetic/ethic ideologies of artistic autonomy and freedom and academic ethical norms are seen to converge in a “safe ethical space” to protect dominating White knowledge production and exclude other knowledges (Eriksen et al., 2020). It is only in the proximity of other knowledges, in uncomfortable situations of conflict, that my Eurocentric White understanding of these practices is challenged (Ulrichsen et al., 2021) and is conceptualised as being in pluralist proximity.

I would like to consider this thesis a decolonising praxis (Kuokkanen, 2010; Walsh, 2018), as it is hopefully an intervention in the context in which it is researched, supervised, and published. The form of the final 100% thesis itself can be seen as an insistence on the right to question what Biggs and Büchler (2010) identify as very different dissemination practices of artistic and academic communities. It is a thesis that bulges in every direction. I aim to disseminate the same textual and visual materials to different audiences and maintain the complexity and entanglements within them.

Publications and exhibition documentation

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- De Boer, J. & Vermunt, R. (2018). Tenthau Oslo. Club solo
<https://clubsolo.nl/en/agenda/tenthau-oslo/?archive=1>
- Dijkstra, F., & de Bie, M. (2018). *Tenthau - Moment of Trust*. Club Solo.
- Eriksen, H. (2022). Elephants in the Archive. In L. Skregelid & K. Knudsen (Eds.), *Kunstens betydning? Utvidede perspektiver på kunst og barn & unge* (pp. 239–264). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
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- Eriksen, H., Moi, E., & Schröder, S. (Eds.). (2018a). *Spring Depot - exhibition catalogue*. Tenthau.
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<https://doi.org/10.23865/JASED.V5.2978>

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Time travellers
Helen Eriksen & Germain Ngoma, 2022



Entanglement



Colonial playtime



Scandinavians in Liverpool

Child entangled

Vignette 1

I was born into an average working-class family. My brother and my-self grew up in a matriarchal family. Like the rest of the men in the family, my father was away at sea for long periods. I feel proud that my mother, one of three children, was raised by her unmarried mother and maternal grandmother. They had the stamina to work hard in a community that ostracised them. My mother was the result of a relationship with an ever-absent Norwegian war sailor.

As children, we only spoke English. Our Catholic great-grandmother and my grandmother guided my extended matriarchal family. As a child, I was singled out and identified as Norwegian not only by my family and by the adults around me. I was very blond and had sky-blue eyes. When my curly-haired brother was born, my parents moved us away from the close-knit extended family. I missed my grandmother and cousins and have been told stories about my obstinance in accepting the new nuclear home. I remember being incredibly bored even though my grandmother visited us every single day. When she didn't, I fretted. When she put on her coat and shoes, I put on mine. My mother looked at me as I told her, «I am going home with Nanna today.» It was not an isolated incident.

“Can we go home now?” comes back like a chorus during my childhood.

As a teenager, my Norwegian aunt and grandmother saw me knitting in a Tunisian technique. They commented that I was a skilled knitter as they drew my attention to the way I was knitting: the English way. I remember asking them to show me their techniques for knitting traditional Norwegian patterning and blocking. I was a fast learner, and soon I was designing my own clothes and knitting without purpose, discovering texture and colour, smell and form.

I had entered adulthood in Thatcher's 80's, and without too much thought, I joined a great exodus of unemployed young adults leaving Liverpool. The Norwegian passport that my father had insisted on, gave me unlimited access to Norway before the EUS opened for foreign workers. First, I had left for Norway, then after a year I returned to unemployment. When I first arrived in Norway, I was told that Norway and the UK had very different histories. Sitting in my grandmother's Norwegian living room, I remember watching Liverpool burn in the race riots of 1981. It was traumatic to see my city burn. I later learnt there was a convergence with other uprisings in history*.

Later, on a full scholarship, I studied four years of Scandinavian languages, literature and art history at a reputable university in the south of England. In other houses besides my home, I met and shared my life with women from very different backgrounds - we defined ourselves as Scandinavian and even ran the university's Scandinavian Society for a year. But I was acutely

aware I was an outsider, an interloper who would have to work harder than my friends to gain acceptance or a job at all. It was the small signals that came every day when I opened my mouth; my ever-present Liverpool accent, frequently commented on, and stereotypes of up North flowed through me: untrustworthy, lazy, violent, promiscuous, stupid and dirty. I would never shake that stereotype off when my accent reminded my-self and others of it. Unemployment in the north was sky high and I had lost hope of ever getting work in the UK when the Conservatives won the election in 1987. I left the UK behind; there was nothing for me there.

In Norway, I quickly found that I was either not qualified or overqualified or wasn't a fluent enough Norwegian speaker. At one point, when I approached the municipal social services for help, they suggested that I went back home, as it was better to be unemployed back home with so many others in the same situation; otherwise, they said, I was eligible for a large loan to take at least another two years of education and a teaching qualification so that I could teach. Great advice to someone who equated debt with a lifetime of poverty!

Doomed by that common immigrant experience of being overqualified and never good enough in Norwegian, my university education was useless. I was never considered for administrative jobs for which I was qualified and had applied to because of my language skills. But, unlike most immigrants, I had a family who, with their roots

and networks, provided help and support. A life-changing moment arrived when an acquaintance of my Norwegian family asked me to try out kindergarten work. It was there, in a tiny inner-city kindergarten, that I first rediscovered how thinking did not need to be linguistic. My writer's block was diverted as I painted and made things with those small children. I learnt to play again and understand that the world was infinitely dangerous and infinitely absurd. It was possible to laugh and cry at the same time; there was no either or. For the first time, I had work, and I wanted more insight and responsibility and started looking into enrolling in a part-time preschool teaching degree; there weren't any.

I became increasingly concerned about paying for a second degree when there were no clear career pathways and no national recognition of British degrees. If I were to start again, it needed to be something I could use forever. I followed joy and passion to find another way to live with poetry. I decided to study visual art at the most exclusive art academy in Norway, Oslo; I entered the Academy with a full scholarship but left with massive debt.

* Da Silva, 2017



Inflatable



Inhabiting the rabbit

This thesis investigates naturalised racialising practices through my entanglements with artist educator and research practice¹. Philosopher and feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti (2022) evocatively calls the embodied subject a '*time machine and a spatial object*'. I am my own time machine – the researcher subject and object of my own enquiry. In *Child Entangled* (Vignette 1), I move between Liverpool and Norway embodied in a White² human female spatial object.

The thesis takes place within the fields of postcolonial study, critical race and whiteness studies and activist decoloniality. It should be contextualised in an entanglement with work by the Solmaz collective, with artist researcher and educator Gry O. Ulrichsen's PhD thesis (2023), with researcher in early years education Zahra Bayati's article on epistemic silencing (n.d.), with the developing practice of the Tenthous art collective (Momentum Biennale, 2022; Oslo Kunsthall, 2020; Ulrichsen, 2017) and not least with the cultural archive that I am struggling with.

I use a diffractive method based on the theory of agential realism proposed by quantum physicist and professor of feminist studies, Karen Barad (2007). Through diffraction, I unpack the folds in the entanglement between stereotyping through image making, embodied knowledges and world power systems and use concepts derived in the field of comparative literature. First, the idea of the *cultural archive* proposed by postcolonial professor of comparative literature Edward Said (1994) and developed by postcolonial gender scholar Gloria Wekker (2016) suggests how cultural artefacts such as texts and images convey a set of emotional understandings that underpin structural racialising processes. Second, the notion of *contagion* proposed by professor of comparative literature Neetu Khanna (2020) argues that physical proximity between the colonised and coloniser leads to an emotional contagion that manifests racial binaries. Finally, I work with the notion of the *colonial matrix of power* proposed by professor of literature and semiotician Walter D. Mignolo (2007a, 2017b).

1.1 Aim and research questions

This investigation aims to study White artist educator practices through my position as a White artist educator and my entanglements with colonial hierarchies.

During the research process, three questions repeatedly surfaced:

- How do art, education and research practices enable the production of colonial hierarchies and whiteness?
- How does whiteness function through my position to produce race in my professional practice?
- How can the paradox that sustains whiteness be met through practices in pluralist proximity?

1.2 Timeline

During my initial doctoral year, I was developing three separate exhibitions included in the thesis – *Winter depot* (Eriksen et al., 2018a), *Spring depot* (Eriksen et al., 2018b) and *A Moment of trust* (Dijkstra & de Bie, 2018) – with the Tenthaus art collective (Balatti et al., 2021; Ulrichsen, 2017). At that time, Tenthaus comprised visual artist and educator Ebba Moi, visual artist and educator Stefan Schröder, art historian Mechu Rapela and my-self (Tenthaus, 2020). The exhibitions were a development of our long-established participatory practice with students from Sofienberg and Hersleb schools since 2011.

I was also reading for my PhD researcher exams and searching for a way to disseminate a combined thesis. During that process, I found resonance with artist practice in Barad's (2007) theory of agential realism. The theory offered a space in science where the artist could thrive. It gave room for me to examine my diffuse and inseparable practice as an artist researcher in education and ideas of neutrality, which fuelled my interest in researcher bias and scientific exclusions. It posed many questions about my motivation for working with artists and minoritised groups.

1.3 **Structure of dissertation**

This study has its starting point in artist educator practice. I describe artistic and academic research practices as research to avoid conventional field-specific hierarchies and conventions (Biggs & Büchler, 2010). This metatext pulls the different parts of the thesis into a single unit expressed by the term *mesh*, which is the process of writing and entanglements. It encompasses three exhibitions, three peer-reviewed articles, images and a film. I have attempted to keep the structure recognisable for academic readers, but I depart from the conventional language used for scientific chapter and paragraph headings. The thesis is divided into four chapters that recount intricate spaces of thought, action and materiality from which whiteness and colonial mindsets emerged. At certain times, there can be a fragmentary relationship, rather than textual coherence, that is further underscored between images and text.

1.4 **Visual elements**

1.4.1 **The exhibitions**

The exhibitions *Winter depot* (Eriksen et al., 2018a), *Spring depot* (Eriksen et al., 2018b) and *A Moment of trust* (Dijkstra & de Bie, 2018) were developed by the Tenthaus collective.

Since its inception, Tenthaus has brought local artists and local students from minoritised backgrounds together through art making. Tenthaus initially exclusively worked with a primary school for immigrants with limited or non-documented schooling equivalent to Norwegian primary and secondary education and training. The students in this school were aged 16–25 years (Ulrichsen, 2017). Our studio was in the school building, giving us access to this school. We found some aspects of school life both puzzling and interesting; different conversations were taking place between ourselves, the students and the teachers. We saw the opportunity to invite other artists to engage in this dialogue.

The exhibitions were designed to explore the structural hierarchy of key holder positions within the art world, where Tenthaus collective took a meta-position of research and production.

Gallery Box, Göteborg, January 2018
Working title: United Artists of Göteborg
– THE KEYS ARE UNDER THE DOORMAT
Tenthaus Artist Group proposes to shift the elitist reading of the role of the curator as a keyholder to a more generous gesture whereby the doors of the project space are metaphorically left unlocked. Tenthaus Oslo will design an installation in the rooms available at Galleri Box. Local artists and artist groups will have an open invitation to come with works for the show. ... The 'installing' of the work will affect a discussion of aesthetics between artist and participant and can lead to both new understandings and new knowledge production in the process.
Questions this project raises are – what does the local artist scene look like when the keyholder becomes a collective action to show local art production in all its varieties and forms? What discussions are relevant between artist and 'uninitiated' participant when trying to grasp the 'others' position in the field of aesthetic knowledge? (Tenthaus Collective, 2017)

We wondered how this exhibition concept would play out and were concerned with what these meetings gave to the local art scene³. Tenthaus gave the curatorial positions to a group of adult participants learning the national language at municipally funded specialised language training schools. Thus, the participant groups had similar backgrounds to each other. The majority of participants were refugees from areas of conflict. For each exhibition, the Tenthaus collective made open calls for local artists to participate in a project curated by the students. The students were responsible for discussing and receiving artwork and for finding space to install the artwork in the gallery. The exhibitions are documented in catalogues with quotes from the participants, photographs and my catalogue texts written immediately after the installation.

I try not to read the exhibitions through theory or discourse but to highlight the small actions of humans attempting to define the world around them through the agency of the object – in this case, the artefact defined as art. The events documented in the catalogues clearly show the presence of the destabilising consequences of pluralist proximity⁴. Although unarticulated at the time, pluralist proximity becomes a line that leads to later emergences and the final research question.

The mesh includes my many process images, sketches and drawings, referred by title. They have contributed to the thinking process of the thesis in much the same way as text does as a thinking tool. It also includes collages to announce chapters in the mesh. Artist and educator Germain Ngoma (Ngoma & Evers, 2018; Snyder & Ngoma, 2021), the artistic supervisor in the mesh, and I have been working together since 2013 to investigate collaborative making as a challenge to our artist signatures. Works included are the collages comprising found images made into temporary shifting images.

The mesh includes *Silencing and Slicing* (Solmaz Collective, 2021), a film with Zahra Bayati and Gry Ulrichsen based on our two articles. It is made in collaboration with film director Roozbeh Behjati. It is an outcome that also performs⁵ research (Haseman, 2006; Østern et al., 2021). This film is an outcome of our research process.

1.4.2 Design

This pdf aims to draw attention to the materialities upholding the binaries, boundaries and conventions sustaining exclusionary academic and artistic dissemination formats (Biggs & Büchler, 2010). Despite the specific disciplinary dissemination demands of a combined PhD, its final forms – those of the dissertation or mesh and viva voca – are developed to bring attention to the binary split between art and academia.

Writing and positions of power are linked (Derrida, 1979). Yet pragmatically, language is what we have to communicate with. One of the most exclusive boundaries to Eurocentric knowledge production is the written word that can deny access due to its academic register. From the very outset of this doctoral program, I have asked my-self: Who am I writing for? Who do I want to write for?

Here, what seems to be a series of functional design decisions is embedded in and challenges the idea of appropriate aesthetic choice and expectations of the system within which this knowledge will be disseminated. I allow form and content to work together to be integrated and add to an overall understanding of how form and content have a relationship that is seldom neutral. The text and image layout remain within the remit of this university's dissertation format (UiA, n.d.).

The layout of the dissertation is not part of the regulations or evaluation process but should follow the same standards as other dissertations in the series. The University library is charged with the responsibility to check every dissertation before printing and will report issues that need correction. (UiA, n.d.)

Designer Marie Payan and I have decided on a format that is as inclusive as possible within the given limitations. We want the overall design to increase readability whilst maintaining the content's complexity. For example, we use different background colours to reduce glare that tires the reader. We also sort the text and images into similar categories whilst drawing attention to them, thus destabilising the text–image boundary.

Furthermore, I do vary from the requirements of the university's PhD template: *'Normal text; Font: Times New Roman; Size: 13 pts; Line spacing: 1,3'* (UiA, n.d.).

All texts are in sans serif fonts. Titles are in inconstant regular⁶, a freeware specifically designed for dyslexic readers. Many special education teachers consider sans serif fonts as more readable font types for European readers, and by implication, they are more inclusive for people with dyslexia⁷ (Banerjee et al., 2011).

1.5 Text

The mesh includes three peer-reviewed texts where image and art emerge as agential in the process of understanding the colonial relationships between humans. These texts explore the relationship between racialisation and whiteness during the human condition of *pluralist proximity*. The texts include:

An individually authored book chapter published in a peer-reviewed anthology entitled *Elephants in the Archive* (Eriksen, 2022), hereafter *Elephants*.

A co-authored article entitled *Struggling to Decolonise Ourselves as an Antiracist Act Within the Field of the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021), hereafter *Antiracist*, by Zahra Bayati, Gry Ulrichsen and my-self.

A co-authored article, *Stones and the Destabilisation of Safe Ethical Space* (Eriksen et al., 2020), hereafter *Stones*, co-written by Zahra Bayati, Gry Ulrichsen and my-self.

The departure point for the co-authored articles was our experiences from a gathering where the three of us first met in person at a publicly funded and open seminar about the inclusion of minoritised groups in municipal Nordic art education (Ulrichsen et al., 2021). We strongly felt the need to intervene in faltering discourses and strategies of social inclusion in art, education and research. 'The political and cultural debate must go beyond concluding that cultural policy is not working for inclusivity, diversity, and participation based primarily on statistical macro-data' (Haugsevje in Ulrichsen et al., 2021). During our continuing collaboration, we became our own research subjects. The Solmaz collective evolved from collective text writing with Gry Ulrichsen and Zahra Bayati.

Besides the articles, I include other texts described as textual islands. They include a letter to my supervisor, professor of art education Helene Illeris, the vignettes that cut through the chapters and the narrator's stone with question clusters. Their function is to disturb the linearity of the argument. They stop and start processes, hopefully for the reader too.

1.5.1 About vignettes

The vignettes are short stories, factual fiction from memory, which latch on to the theory that I was encountering at the time of writing⁸. They are used to comment on and frame the content of the chapter. They are starting points for exploration, where I return to emotional states that were once beyond articulation. They are locations of cognitive dissonance⁹, spaces and time when things do not make sense, which can lead to unease or confusion¹⁰.

The watchers and movers
(Adapted)
Helen Eriksen, 2023



To address the past (and future), to speak with ghosts, is not to entertain or reconstruct some narrative of the way it was, but to respond, to be responsible, to take responsibility for that which we inherit (from the past and the future), for the entangled relationalities of inheritance that 'we' are, to acknowledge and be responsive to the noncontemporaneity of the present, to put oneself at risk, to risk oneself (which is never one or self), to open oneself up to indeterminacy in moving towards what is to-come. (Barad, 2007, p. 74)

Child Entangled (Vignette 1) is written in first person¹¹ to define and categorise my-self as unmarked¹² White and female. It is an autobiography of the my-self and a way of allowing you access to some of the embodied cumulative experience that has vague reference points in the text. Otherwise, the vignettes or short stories are bluntly addressed to *you*, as I aim to include and weave you into my narrative mesh as the second person and protagonist. However, the White female gaze *you* represent in the vignettes is an ambivalent choice. How could it not be White without claiming another's experience? This is what I know. But how does this work for the reader in another body with other experiences, not least the marked racialised body?

1.5.2 Film

The film *Silencing and Slicing* (Solmaz Collective, 2021) was inspired by an experimental performance lecture to engage participants at an international conference (Bayati et al., 2021) during the Covid lockdown. It is based on *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020) and *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2020) and contributes to the thesis as a dissemination project and as research itself (Østern et al., 2021). The media of film with sound bypasses a discourse and focuses on the embodied nature of *doing* race.

1.6 The bodies of knowledge

The racialising identities, positions and prescriptions that you encounter in *I look like a hungry African* (Vignette 2) are entangled with the flux of a White self; it raises the question

of 'how' White identity or self relates to the world and other beings in it. This thesis aims to use my embodied and entangled knowledge of Scandinavian art production to understand how my whiteness produces race in everyday events. *Child Entangled* (Vignette 1) ends as I enter the artist profession and start to practice the formal lessons that I had previously learnt.

1.6.1 Colouring in the body of practice

The groundwork for this PhD started a decade after my graduation, when I was working with participatory projects in a run-down urban school with Ebba Moi, Stefan Schröder (Tenthaus, 2020), Søsja Jørgensen and Geir Tore Holm (Zeiner-Henriksen, 2022) in a precursor to what later became Tenthaus. I was also teaching Norwegian as a second language in a specialised school for young migrants who had not previously been to school.

In 2009, I attended a workshop led by artist and educator Grada Kilomba entitled *In Your Soul – Postcolonial Theory and Performance* (Kilomba, 2009); the workshop was based on her performance practice and a psychological analysis of her experiences of everyday racism (Kilomba, 2008). Kilomba's lessons raised my awareness of the stereotypical gaze of whiteness to the representation of the Black African body. Previously, I thought of the Black body as the same as my own. After Kilomba's analysis of the photographic representation of the Black body, I understood that the White gaze (Eriksen, 2020) was as real, constructed and repressive as the male gaze (Pollock, 1988).

Kilomba pointed out that I was the only White participant who could identify my-self as White. At that time, I did not realise that this identity was problematic; I am British and in the UK race is naturalised in discourse. Nevertheless, this terminology and understanding that race was a concept gave me a tool that my White Scandinavian co-participants did not seem to have. I could acknowledge the concept of race as a materiality bound to skin colour and thus make race someone else's problem.

Elephant and wheel of production (Adapted)
Helen Eriksen, 2022



I look like a hungry African

Vignette 2

"They are trying to close the school", our teacher contact says -

"But why?"

"Because they are afraid of declining school numbers, it makes us expensive."

"They might have a point though?"

"The point is there aren't enough white faces in the school, and the Norwegian families are moving away or sending their kids to other schools."

"But what about how second language teaching is a core competency across the board? Not many schools have that, do they?"

"Doesn't count for anything!"

"We're going to be spread to the winds - We need help with a protest action!"

"I'm not sure how we can help! What other things are you going to do?!"

"There's an organized protest. Could you do something for that?"

"Let us think about it. Perhaps we can come up with something."

It was a very overcast day, and you were shooting indoors: a bad start. You had prepared for natural lighting and had no lamps. You had to resort to improvised aluminium foil reflectors to bounce ambient light back onto the faces of the students.

It did not take too long for you to understand that even though you had spent many years taking telling portraits of people who you came across, something was amiss. You just couldn't get it. You also could not figure out what you didn't get. You were struggling with the faces of these students – overexposed, underexposed black and white images filled the small digital screen at the back of the camera.

You were stressed, sweating and hardly communicating in whole sentences: neither a good teacher nor an artist. You were something else. You were fully focused on some sort of technical problem that you just couldn't understand. You were almost choking; you had bitten off more than you could chew; You just couldn't figure out where the problem lay. You didn't give up, but you did give everyone a long break.

You just wouldn't let it slide but kept taking pictures during the break. Perhaps your stress levels dropped because the focus was on food and not the project. Fiddling with white balance and exposure metering points, you managed to capture a fantastic portrait – full face – you had gotten it. You were ecstatic and enthusiastically showed it to the student.

His response:

He looked at you with the same serious look he had given the camera and asked you to erase the picture.

"I look like a hungry African," he said flatly.

My response:

"You look like a boy. It doesn't hide your skin

colour, if that's what you mean by African, but you don't look particularly hungry to me!"

And on the discussion, went. He refused to give up; he refused to give in. Like boxers in the ring, you circled around each other, hoping the other would back down. He insisted: he insisted: he insisted. He made you listen, listen and listen again. He demanded that you erase the image. No! He did not want this picture of him in your camera. This photo was not one he wanted out in the world, and for the life of you, you couldn't understand why?

So back and forth the debate went. You found pictures on the internet. You referenced black scholars and artists. You said that you understood where he was coming from, but you did not accept his opinion about his representation, and most importantly, you refused to wipe the image off your flashcard.

That day did, after all, end with a migraine. Eventually, you negotiated a deal to keep the image. You asked him how he wanted his picture to be taken. He pointed at two young women and asked them to be in the frame with him. You felt a surge of anger; your heart sank; your eyes started prickling. You could see an oncoming escalation if this was to be the scenario.

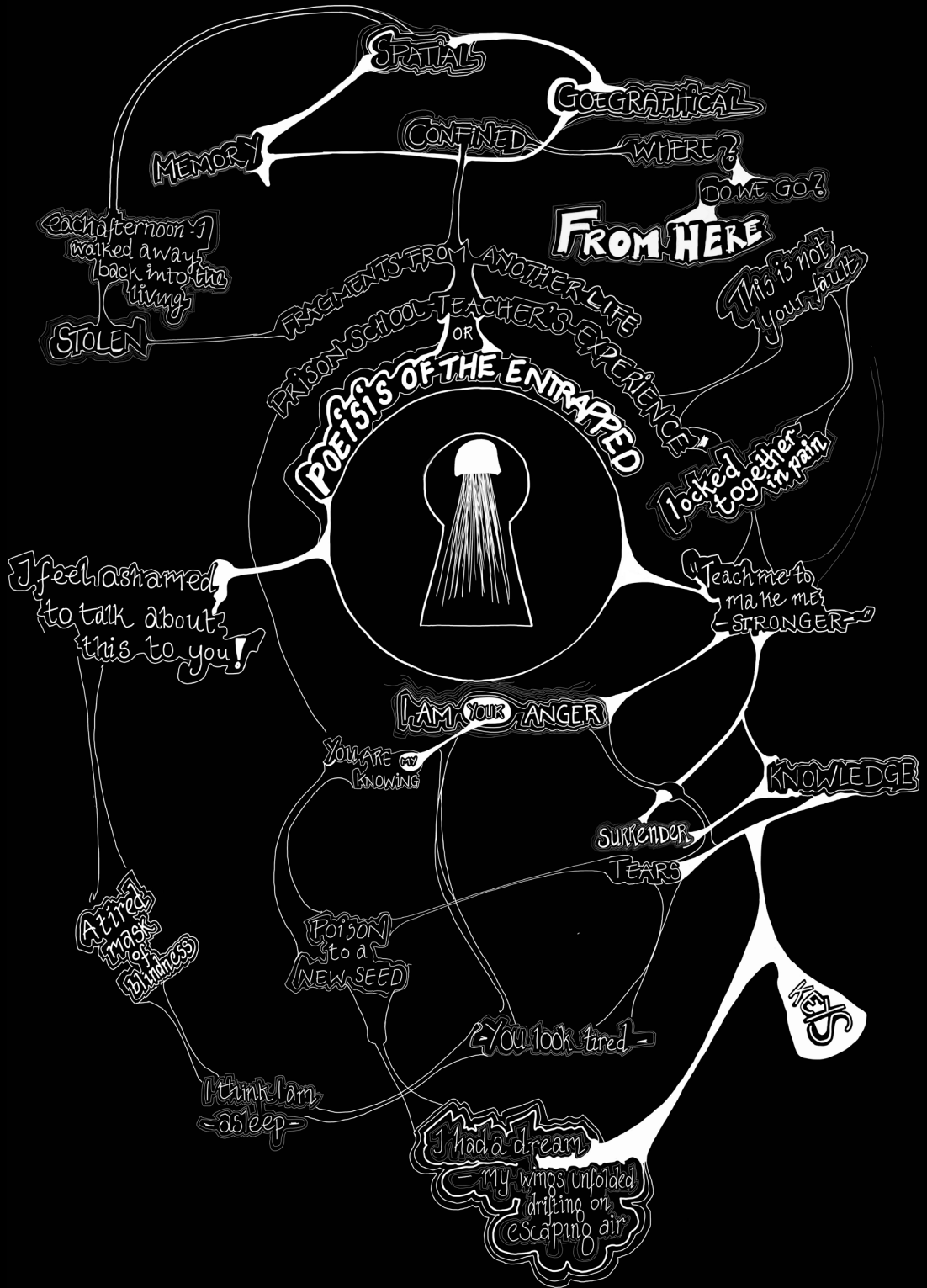
Did the girls have to be entangled in this mess? Was this the best deal you could get? You were a teacher and obliged to follow through rather than argue even more, and you were also convinced that the young women would say no. To your amazement, they said yes, and they posed

with him! You took some awful shots and thought he wouldn't want them – he didn't look like the macho man he was emulating when these young women were making signs behind his back.

They laughed when they saw the pictures. He was laughing with them, not you. He was annoyed still, but like you, he wanted it to end. He had said yes, and that's how you managed to salvage the original portrait.

His portrait gained another meaning. One that you did not intend. The image will never be made public. It's a sore on your hard drive to be scratched open every time your search engine discovers it through an algorithm interpreted from your need to find something else. You will catch your breath, feel the rupture, and wonder how this image repeatedly finds its way to your desktop.

(Eriksen, 2022)



Poesis of the entrapped
Helen Eriksen, 2020

That workshop was a definite surf break¹³. It was a defining before and after moment. I thought I could intellectually understand the White gaze and that I could identify when it was at work. However, my White gaze surfaced as the centre of the conflict between my-self and the young man some years later¹⁴.

1.6.2 **Agential realism**

My theoretical starting point was my encounter with agential realism (Barad, 2007). This theory is based on Barad's theoretical grounding in two fields: quantum physics and gender studies. It resonates with my experience of materiality through artist practice and has encouraged me to read differently – that is, through a diffractive method that I describe later in section 2.9.1.

Agential realism is a relational onto-epistemology¹⁵ that focuses on specific locations in time, space and materiality. Agential relations queer object and subject where they are seen to be constantly in flux, and agency is not bound to the animated object: *'agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has'* (Barad, 2007, p. 178). Performative intra-action is more than discourse. Here, knowing includes embodied knowledge and organic and inorganic materiality. Furthermore, intra-action is specific to entanglements and is not pre-relational but emergent in specific entanglements of materiality. Therefore, outcomes cannot be predicted.

This theory also repositions scientific thought away from human exceptionalism and the Eurocentric linear conception of time. Barad (2007) argues that humans gain knowledge through *being*, which cannot be separated from the world's materiality: *'Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated. We don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are of the world'* (p.185). Thus, the researcher subject is not neutral but instrumental in their observations and results. This echoes the core of artist practice, where imaginative making is contingent on the meeting or relations between the artist as a subject and the material world¹⁶. In this researcher subject position, I investigate what it means to be a White artist where I affect the situations I describe in the mesh.

Throughout the mesh, the image or artefact repeatedly brings material discourses that racialise the intra-active subjects. Here, I recognise something from when I was a young woman. I never failed to notice the halt in conversation when I entered a room full of men. The dynamics shifted, and the undertones of the conversation were checked against me as the female representative before being spoken; I could feel it happening, and I always wondered how the conversation would have developed without me.

Furthermore, in the mesh, the question of how I relate to the world is central. Racialising identities and prescriptions are entangled through the flux of the self. Barad (2007) argues that the self is threaded by the excluded: *there is no absolute outside; the outside is always already inside. In/determinacy is an always already opening up-to-come. In/determinacy is the surprise, the interruption, by the stranger (within) re-turning unannounced* (p. 178). The self is porous and flows between boundaries. This diffractive notion of identity converges with Hall's (1996b) understanding of cultural identity as unstable. Barad (2007) further argues *identity [is] undone by a discontinuity at the heart of matter itself* (p. 180). As pluralist proximity emerged, I began to understand that intra-action was a conceptual hook to understand my identity and human relationships. In the porous state of pluralist proximity, individuals¹⁷ become inseparable as phenomena emerge.

In *Elephants* (Eriksen, 2022), the specific intra-activity of material practice and discourses in a workshop setting brings about a rupture in the racial understanding of my-self. Most importantly, in this project, the location of the researcher subject, whether scientist or artist, is an embodied part of the knowledge apparatus that affects outcomes. When the researcher becomes part of the apparatus, the notion of scientific neutrality needs to be rethought. Furthermore, as I discuss in the article, whiteness in *I look like a hungry African* (Vignette 2) is beyond the embodied; it is also entangled and embedded into the science of the analogue and digital technology of the camera and the spatial context of the White cube where the event happens.

Is it incomprehensible that my-self, as a White researcher, is responsible for producing race and enacting racism in an everyday context?

That was an extremely painful sentence to write. I want to spit at my screen and walk away. But I do not. Am I broken?

It is this embodied emotional pain, a continual chaffing to my bones, that indicates the mechanics of dehumanising that author Toni Morrison talks about with postcolonial scholar Paul Gilroy?

Slavery broke the world in half, it broke it in every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. You can't do that for hundreds of years, and it does not take a toll. They had to dehumanise, not just the slaves but themselves. They have had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true. (Gilroy, 1993, p. 221)

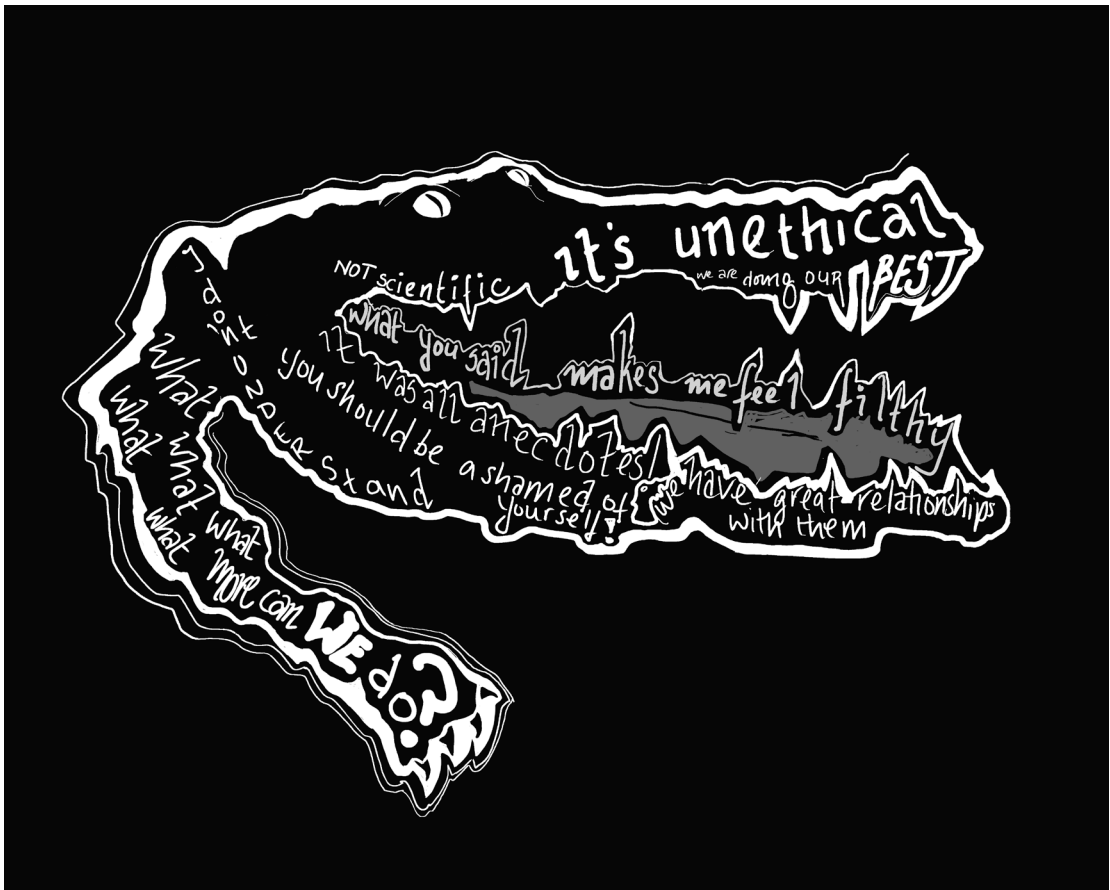
According to Painter (2011), slave trade, necessary for the European colonial expansion, was a crucial moment that linked the Black and African bodies to slavery¹⁸. In the above quote, Morrison emphasises the consequences of colonisation on both sides of the racialising divide¹⁹.

My eyes itch. It is painful to realise that I do not understand that my actions perform race. I cannot compare this pain with the historical trauma and experiences of the marked racialised. I have to ask my-self: What is a human? Am I human?

1.7 Pluralist proximity

Pluralist proximity can be understood as a condition of being and becoming that destabilises racialised positions. Zahra Bayati, Gry Ulrichsen and my-self developed this expression to indicate a transformative space for knowledge production when multiple divergent knowledges are considered equally valid²⁰ (Miller et al., 2008). Here, identity is not an absolute essence but is in flux with the ability to shift and transform itself (Barad, 2014; Hall, 1996a). We show subjects as dependent on others to define and understand themselves in terms of race.

Pluralist proximity is easily recognised in the emotional bonds we experience in intimate and familiar relationships²¹. Furthermore, it resonates with many indigenous knowledges. Senior research fellow and professor, James Ogude, describes ubuntu,



Safe Ethical Space: Responses to critical position by dominant White majority at a network conference, 2020. (Adapted) Helen Eriksen, et al. 2020.

a traditional African philosophy, as being rooted in ‘a relational form of personhood, basically meaning that you are because of the others. In other words, as a human being—your humanity, your personhood—you are fostered in relation to other people’ (Ogude et al., 2019).

Pluralist proximity repeatedly surfaced in the mesh as the foundation for co-research in many different constellations. It is precisely this relational aspect of pluralist proximity that is productive for understanding racialising processes.

Pluralist proximity first emerged during a gathering of artists, educators, researchers and administrators in municipal art education. During Solmaz’ writing projects, Zahra, Gry and I,

why do



what can

why am I continually working

[Handwritten signature]

Narrator's stone I
Helen Eriksen, 2018

to feel the need to include everyone in art?
Art for social equity beside illustrate or represent?

g with participants?
winds of our shurb reality by being in it?

with our different backgrounds, stay with the troubling racialising processes as they emerge when an image intra-acts with our different knowledges²². This process also echoes my long-standing studio practice with Germain Ngoma.

1.7.1 Safe ethical space

This term evolves from the well-known concept of safe space²³. The conventional concept of *safe space* dedicates a space where marginalised people can voice an opinion without fear of reprimand. This can often mean excluding other, more dominant groups.

Safe ethical space is unpacked in *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020) in an investigation of knowledge-making in seemingly irreconcilable fields of visual art and academia. Zahra's physical presence challenged artist autonomy, producing different questions about professional artist practice. This idea of the field expert was an internalised mindset defending our White location as autonomous artists²⁴. Here, the ethical concerns of academic research converge with artistic *freedom of expression* and artistic autonomy to maintain and produce racialising stereotypes by excluding experiences of race from being scientifically or artistically worthy of consideration. This is a mechanism that transgresses field boundaries and facilitates the production of race in the fields of art and education. It prevails in the discussions of methodology, ethics and autonomy (freedom of expression) and produces a safe space for the continuing production of race and White supremacy.

1.7.2 Animal imagery

Animal imagery relentlessly invaded all aspects of the research period and mesh-making. The images often emerged as links between the emotive experience of race and the understanding of the my-self and insight. They are metaphors, symbols, allegories and indications of how the colonial archive works through me. They work on the periphery to continually remind the reader and me that they are categorised as different and separated in the hierarchy of human exceptionalism (cf. Berger, 1980/2016; Rajamannar, 2012; Saha, J. 2015).

1.8 Mesh or mess of entanglements

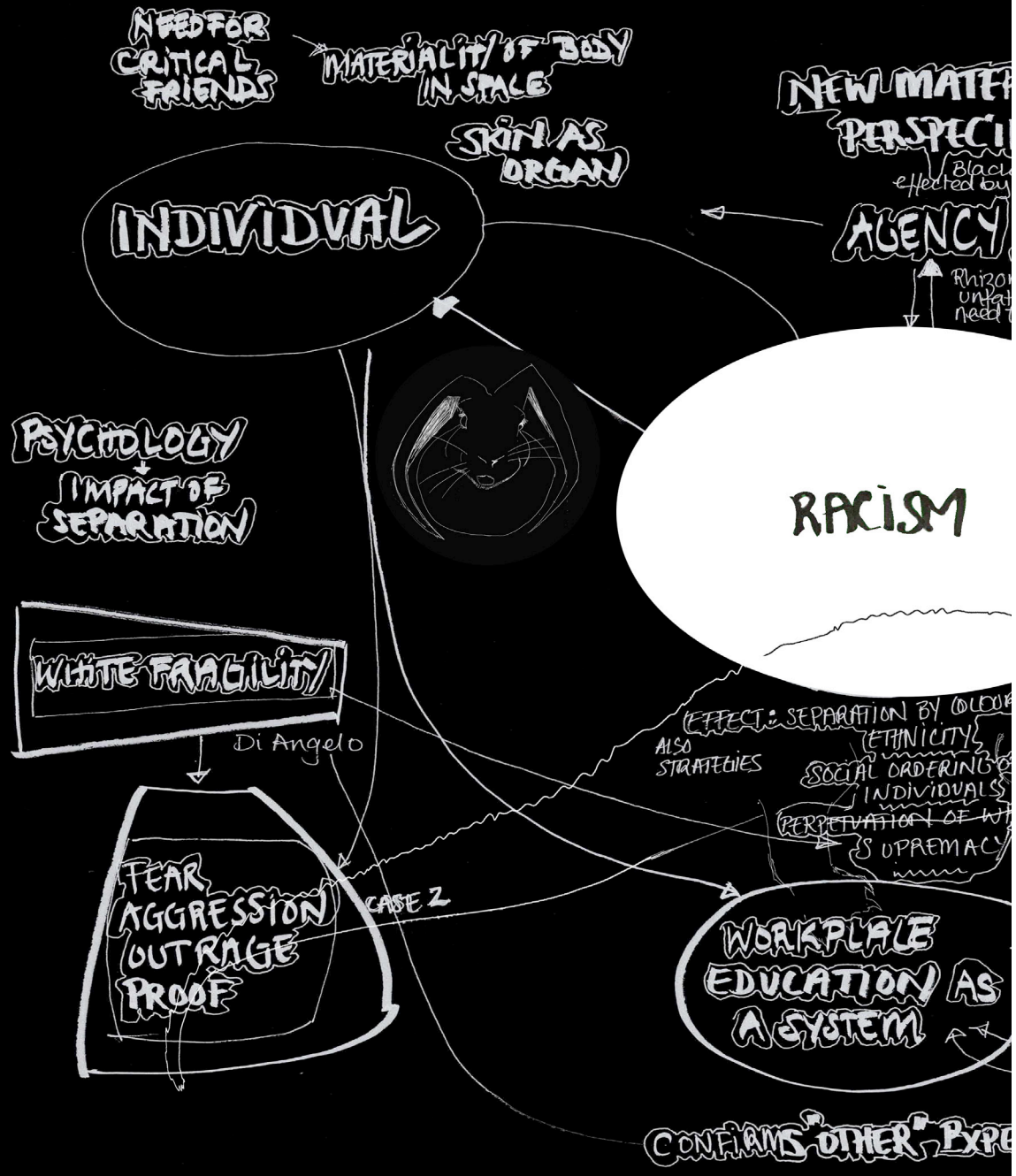
This metatext entangles different elements into a *mesh* that is part of broader entanglements and, ultimately, an unfinished work. It is inspired by Tim Ingold's (2013) thoughts of an agential meshwork drawn together in knots:

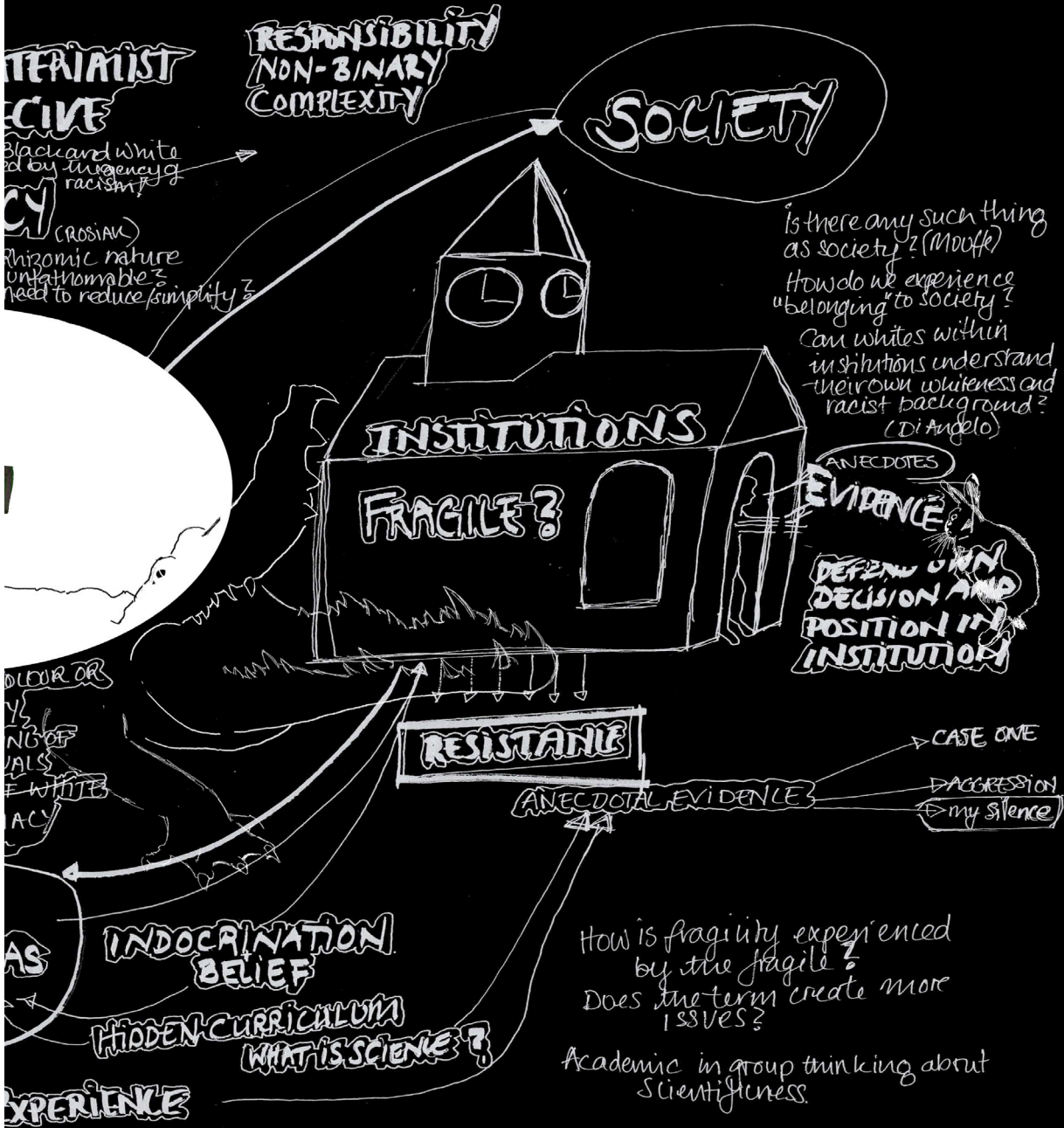
Knots are places where many lines of becoming are drawn tightly together. Yet every line overtakes the knot in which it is tied. Its end is always loose, somewhere beyond the knot, where it is groping towards an entanglement with other lines, in other knots. What is life, indeed, if not a proliferation of loose ends! It can only be carried on in a world that is not fully joined up, not fully articulated. (p. 132)

This idea of the world becoming resonates with Barad's (2007), where there is no closure or final state. The mesh threads different discourses and embodied knowledges into knots through the exhibitions and articles. It is sometimes an unfathomable, complex knot of messy realities beyond words. This multidimensional matrix creates complex entanglements that disturb hierarchies between the living and non-living material world in a giant tangle of materials²⁵ with spaces or gaps between boundaries in the network that become productive and transformative spaces.

We are part of the world in its differential becoming. The separation of epistemology from the ontology is a reverberation of a metaphysics that assumes an inherent difference between human and nonhuman, subject and object, mind and body, matter and discourse. (Barad, 2007, p. 185)

In the mesh, knowing is experienced as a living, entangled and embodied practice (Barad, 2007). Although I use research and thoughts from many other fields and knowledges, I cannot claim to be a part of those fields. I view this as a non-categorising strategy; I intellectually and emotionally climb around the mesh, looking for new patterns between the separations of disciplinary²⁶ and field borders. The concept of safe ethical space was one such pattern that emerged in the mesh.





The mesh is entangled with concepts of diffraction (Barad, 2007), cultural archive (Said, 1994; Wekker, 2016) and emotional contagion (Khanna, 2020)²⁷ that are dispersed in society and affect the individual body as emotion and even identity. This dynamic structure can be understood as agential materialities working through the cultural archive to produce race and through intra-actions (Barad, 2007) and identifiable as contagion (Khanna, 2020).

One final underlying concept in convergence with the mesh is that of the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2007a, 2007b; Quijano & Ennis, 2000) as an inherited network of colonial domination that affects global and local economic and political life practices.

1.8.1 **Whiteness**

The origins of race hierarchies lie in discredited race science (Painter, 2011; Werner, 2018), the consequences of which persist in producing naturalised social divisions based on racialising identities (Wekker, 2016). The naturalised production of these hierarchies is racism. I consider racism as institution-alised and systematic (cf. Bonilla-Silva, 2012, 2021; Wekker, 2016); its agency slides around in intersectional relationships and often hides there (Carbado et al., 2013; Crenshaw, 1989). Critical whiteness theory is a significant anchoring line in this study owing to my White location within the Scandinavian racial hierarchy.

Whiteness functions in multiple ways to uphold its racialising dominance. I use sociologist Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) definition of whiteness and understand it as an unmarked category and a standpoint with a specific way of seeing. It is a constellation of processes and practices rather than a subtle agent, as exemplified in skin colour (Alexander, 2009; Said, 1994, 2003; Wekker, 2016).

Whiteness is a 'location of structural advantage' related to a position of privilege in a social and economic organisation (Frankenberg, 1993). White privilege describes the power gap between Whites and other racialised groups. According to feminist, activist and scholar Peggy McIntosh (1988), White

privilege means never experiencing discrimination or negative stereotyping owing to racialised background. Thus, when whiteness is a dominating unmarked racialising category, the subject sees themselves as the norm. It is also the category by which difference is measured.

Wekker's case studies show how emotions are prevalent in situations where race is considered in a political or an economic agenda. White innocence manifests as emotional responses of national exceptionalism when White individuals protect systematic racism and structural injustice (Wekker, 2016). In many ways, it overlaps with the concept of White fragility coined by professor of education and psychologist Robin Di Angelo (2011). They have similar arguments, but I use them with different nuances. White fragility addresses the individual psychology of whiteness, as seen in the initial appearance of the rabbit in *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021), whereas *Elephants* (Eriksen, 2022) contextualises White innocence to understand the role of structural racism through centring the cultural archive in the psychological production of race. In my research, these concepts proved to be productive in identifying whiteness through the embodied knowledge of feeling and emotion and in understanding their consequences in my own institutional and structural contexts. The emotional charge of whiteness is also linked to Neetu Khanna's contagion, whereby she views the body as a primary site of coloniality²⁸. In this concept, the agency of race is experienced as emotional charges between bodies (Khanna, 2020)

The research is positioned within whiteness studies as an attempt to denaturalise its function in my own embodied context. To ignore White as a racial category would be to naturalise it further.

Racial identities are not only black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and so on; they are also white. To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it. Without specifically addressing white ethnicity, there can be no critical evaluation of the construction of the other. (Fusco, 1998, as cited in Bayati, 2014)

Fusco links whiteness with the construction of the other in the same process. During the research process, I tried to learn what being White means as a racialised and racialising identity.

1.8.2 **Blinded by the White**

Educationalist Sandra Fylkesnes (2019) argues: *‘Despite attempting to promote social justice, researchers are actors who produce a discursive ideology of White supremacy’* (p.24). Her discourse analysis of whiteness in the field of education suggests that White supremacy is a product of the research field. Whiteness is entangled in all aspects of the mesh through my actions and presence. I seek to know how I contribute to that dominating knowledge system by identifying and understanding the working of the White blind-spot.

As an unmarked, it is difficult for me to see my-self in a privileged racial category. I am blinded by the White. I can always excuse my-self as average – the norm in a White universal template for all human experience in Norway and Scandinavia. When marked racialised individuals are seen outside the norm, the discourse of race and racism can be seen as the concern and domain of the marked racialised or the good person rather than a matter of social justice²⁹. In this thesis, this is seen through how individuals defined as racialised are met by ‘altruism’ and the ‘good intentions’ of ‘inclusion’ that Fylkesnes (2019) argues promote White supremacy. One central function of unmarked whiteness is to discipline, silence and erase other knowledges that are different or challenge the dominating systems of knowledge production (Spivak, 1988). As we indicate in *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021), the good intentions of White activists can backfire to produce race through silencing knowledges (cf. Fylkesnes, 2019).

1.8.3 **The cultural archive**

The cultural archive is not in any specific place and transcends any given pattern or structure because it is dispersed throughout culture and collected in individual memory (Wekker, 2016). The cultural archive has a sustained ability to produce culturally embedded stereotypes that nurture racialising processes. It becomes an embodied racial knowledge³⁰ that

shapes racial emotions with ‘particular knowledge and structures of attitude and reference’ (Said, 1994). In this thesis, the cultural archive is highly relevant to understanding the role and position of visual arts in sustaining racialising hierarchies in society (Said, 1994; Wekker, 2016).

1.8.4 Scrutinising the binary through pushing boundaries

One main activity in the research was the exploration of boundaries. It seems that little has changed since literary theorist Terry Eagleton (1983) argued that the static nature of the binary is only upheld by surveillance of boundary transgression. Boundary transgressions are indicated in *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021) and *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020), where disciplinary boundaries function to stabilise the racial hierarchies that *safe ethical space* enforces in the fields of art, education and research in Scandinavia.

Another significant boundary I explore through the binary of artist and academics can be seen in the research dissemination needed to fulfil the criteria of a combined doctoral thesis³¹.

The expectation of this combined PhD thesis separates clearly defined modes of knowledge production to perform the binary of art and academia. However, the porosity between practices, where emergences and forms learn with and from each other, do not necessarily respect or perform the binary of research / creation (Manning, 2015). The dissemination modes of performance lecture and disruption of text image hierarchy are articulations of the performative nature of the boundary. It is also a direct implementation of post-qualitative language scholar Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre’s challenge to push the membranes of field and disciplinary conventions and limitations in educational research.

‘We must overturn the entire conceptual order in which those conceptual binaries can be thought, and the work may begin by catching at each concept (e.g., practice) that exists in a binary opposition (e.g., theory/practice) and not using it.’ (St. Pierre, 2019)

I find my-self joining the boundary transgressions of other researchers in the emerging post-qualitative paradigm.

Nevertheless, I am trapped in the binaries produced by a defunct race theory. To ignore this would be to ignore the world we live in.

Furthermore, I assume that the artistic and academic fields of knowledge are not homogeneous. Conflicts and tensions within disciplines and fields forward different notions to define what academic practice is and should also be and what art is and can be, not including the complexity of artistic research discourses within the academic community itself (Borgdorff, 2012).

1.9 Following Chapters

Chapter 2 Trilobite logic.

In this chapter, I briefly describe notions and concepts from postcolonial and critical whiteness studies and theories and the umbrella method of diffraction. *Trilobites and chocolates* (Vignette 3) is compared with the student in *I look like a hungry African* (Vignette 2) to suggest how knowledge becomes embedded through adherence to disciplinary boundaries. Chapter two also unpacks the diffractive method by introducing new events and materials not seen in the articles or articulated in the catalogues. This is central to understanding how the mesh entangles itself in postcolonial Scandinavia, for example, through the continuing presence of my colleague Deise Nunes.

In this part of the mesh, the concepts of the cultural archive (Said, 1994; Wekker, 2016), contagion (Khanna, 2021) and the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo, 2007a, 2007b; Quijano, & Ennis, 2000) are discussed as world-producing materialities (Barad, 2007).

Chapter 3 Beneath the Surface.

This chapter situates the main emergences in the mesh through the manifestation of the animals. Here, I describe how pluralist proximity emerged in the collective research project with Zahra and Gry. The concept of pluralist proximity is exemplified and drawn from various parts of the mesh; it includes conversations that indicate different manifestations of pluralist proximity. I pay close attention to the catalogue texts and field notes from the exhibitions in 2018 to explore when and how pluralist proximity manifests.

Chapter 4 The Penny Drops.

Here, I pay specific attention to the unstable identity in my language use and conclude that despite the unease of pluralist proximity. The unstable identity it encourages is a way to struggle out of mind-imposed shackles that form our racial imaginary and influence our intra-actions. I ask the reader to take a small leap of faith to see the broader relevance of this entanglement that starts from my-self as the research subject intimately bound by coloniality that invades all aspects of existence.

1 The contents of the thesis can be read in any way you prefer, but I have assumed that the reader will first read this chapter, then watch the film (Solmaz Collective, 2021) and look at the exhibition documentation (Eriksen, H., Moi, E., & Schröder, S. (Eds.).2018a,2018b; Dijkstra, F., & de Bie, M.,2018) and finally read the articles (Eriksen, 2022; Eriksen et al., 2020; Ulrichsen et al., 2021) before commencing the reading of chapter two.

2 Black and White are consistently uppercase to acknowledge these unstable cultural and political identities. Lowercase would lead to confusion between the name of the political power position and skin colour. I recognize that some readers would not like being racialised or grouped with political organisation such as Black Panthers or White Supremacists, where White is generally capitalised. However, the aim is to explore our historical and contemporary condition of being and our actions of becoming.

3 This concept has been further developed by one of the artist participants, Johan Nahoj (Johan Lundqwist), in *I staden växer ett fält - 50 konstnärer i Malmö* (2023) at Malmö Kunsthall.

4 Pluralist proximity: a major emergence in the mesh. A condition of being and becoming that signals the racialised position as an unstable condition or state of being.

5 'Performative' in this thesis is about utterance as words and images that describe a given situation but also change the reality that they describe. This notion conceived by Austin (1962/1975) has influenced Judith Butler's (1988) theory of gender performativity. Material performativity is an essential aspect of Barad's (2007) agential theory.

6 Designed by Daniel Brokstad (see <https://danielbrokstad.com/Inconstant-Regular>).

7 For further information about including individuals with lower readability scores in the workplace, see: <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/advice/employers/creating-a-dyslexia-friendly-workplace/dyslexia-friendly-style-guide>.

8 Here, I refer to the embodied understanding of the world that can coincide with theory. The vignettes coincide with autoethnographic writing strategies and their use in establishing theory through embodied experience (Crawford, 2018; Holman Jones, 2005; Knowles et al., 2012).

9 Theory of cognitive dissonance by Leon Festinger (1957) found that there is an inner drive to maintain harmony – where there is disharmony or dissonance, something must change. As such, cognitive dissonance could be a sign of transformations to come.

10 In post-qualitative research practice, this is an indicator that something is worth investigating – that there is something outside the model of the qualitative paradigm that needs to be further investigated (St. Pierre, 2016).

11 Also, as part of a wider strategy that points to the destabilisation of the identity of I in the text.

12 The unmarked is from the semiotic concept by structural linguist/semiotician Roman Jakobson's theory of markedness in phonology as a binary distinctive feature of language.

13 Where ocean waves break because of obstacles on the ocean floor.

14 See: I look like a hungry African (Vignette 2).

15 Barad considers the theory of agential realism an onto-epistemology that is simultaneously a general metaphysical study of being and the study of knowledge production. They argue it is impossible to split knowing from being.

16 In the theory of agential realism, this meeting is called intra-action, where agency is tied not to living material or beings but to a performative and relational meeting between materials (living or non-living).

17 Here, I use my-self as an experiential example.

18 For a substantial art historical analysis of notions of the slave, beauty and whiteness and the representation of the unmarked and marked body, see Painter's (2011) work.

19 Morrison's argument of dehumanisation converges with Mignolo's notion of coloniality (2007) and the role of coloniality/modernity in knowledge production.

20 Epistemological pluralism recognises that, in any given research context, there may be several valuable ways of knowing and that accommodating this plurality can lead to more successful integrated study. Epistemic pluralism is also political pluralism (see Miller et al., 2008).

21 It was recognised as a sensation of porous boundaries between bodily material substances and discourses.

22 Intra-action is specific for agential realism. Here, agency is not inherent in any body or thing but is a performative enactment that happens when materials meet.

23 'In its conventional mode, a safe space is aimed at allowing a critical discussion by centring minority voices in settings otherwise dominated by majority perspectives' (Eriksen et al., 2020, p. 162).

24 The idea of autonomous art splits art from its social function.

25 In agential realism, the concept of material and matter includes discourse and narratives as world-making materials.

- 26 Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) is written diffractively as an attempt to disseminate a genuine transdisciplinary research method that could move knowledge production in a different direction.
- 27 The cultural archive and contagion are entangled with cultural theorist Raymond Williams' notion of vague structures of feelings. It is a controlling structure with patterning through undulating impulses. It is an irreducible aspect of social experience (see Williams, 1977). Williams' notion is specifically used to analyse colonialism by Said (1994), Wekker, (2016) and Khanna, (2020).
- 28 Coloniality is the ongoing process of embodied colonisation.
- 29 This is evident in visual arts when racialised artists are often exhibited and thus read in the context of race. It is a division and segregation. This can also be considered a mirroring of the segregation between ethnographic and fine art.
- 30 Similar to Bonilla Silva's (2012) concept of racial grammar with its own syntax.
- 31 The PhD program of Art in Context at the University of Agder offers what is termed a combined thesis, where art practice and academic outputs are understood as equally valid modes of knowledge production. The expectation is to create research that is 50% artistic and 50% academic. This mesh specifically aims to draw together different parts of the research project as a unified totality of thought and doing. The combined artistic scientific thesis (variant 1) must contain a written as well as a creative part. The creative part shall produce one or more public presentations/concerts and shall be documented for posterity.



Oh! Clock
Helen Eriksen & Germain Ngoma, 2021

Trilobite Logic

Trilobites and chocolates

Vignette 3

He is sitting before you in the zone of zoom as the first wave of a 21st century pandemic washes over you. He says that he has something very old and your heart sinks because you don't think that anybody sees Old in the same way you do.

You've met him before and exchanged pleasantries, but you were not prepared for him to take that formless thing before the eye of his computer. He probably saw many people staring back at him and realized it was difficult to decipher the blob his hand was holding.

This is a trilobite – a trilobite, he said smiling. But where were you then? You were being pulled into a wormhole of memory.

Instantly, you smell wet grass and the stink of human in rubber boots. Light filters through canvas and you are fiddling with a hazelnut crumb at the back of your tooth; the chocolate taste lingers between reality and fiction and next bite reminds you of the melting sensation on your tongue.

Mr G., your teacher, was talking about that day's scrambling around in the field. Your whole group had struggled to climb up a shale embankment to find the fossils Mr G promised you were somewhere in there. The slope would only hold



Blueprint for the antesociety
Helen Eriksen, 2020

a person with difficulty; the shale broke up and gave way underfoot. The crumbling mountainside shifted shape around your feet and the famous local drizzle you were moving around in was probably not helping the situation. Back in the tent Mr G. came around to talk about that day's find.

"Trilobites, Eriksen – are not just relicts! Not dead things to be stowed away like treasures. They are time itself, just like this stone is time itself. Everyone thinks of time through life cycles and death like your biology teacher who's always going on metabolic cycles that really are time on hyperspeed. Geology is about how you can't escape from time; time is slow and remorseless. It just keeps on grinding and shifting.

That trilobite you found today isn't about death or life – it's about being – it's about transformation and time. It's like any mountain or rock you find on the ground. It has its own story, its own birth and transformation from the melting to crystallisation to what you hold in your hand. Because we are insignificant molecules compared to this, we cannot grasp the transformations of which the earth is capable; we do not see the shale escarpment that we tried to climb today as the ocean floor, it's beyond us! The world can be dated before and after trilobites – we can still find their cousins running around in the deep ocean on tomorrow's shale mountainsides."

His eyes settled on you and your friend, and he smiled as he reached over for the chocolate

he was being offered. You both knew he would accept and immediately stop the rant of knowledge that you loved and hated listening to.

A week later, back in the classroom you are writing up your field reports and Mr. G. is walking around the class chatting and talking fluently in fossil language as usual. You were one of the few students who had found a trilobite that day and you are drawing it – it is one of the rare incidences when you feel that drawing has a use; otherwise, your imagination is relegated to the margins of your notebooks, or in art lessons skilling up to draw reflect light on metal surfaces. It was sort of not part of any subject anymore. But now you are enjoying yourself. Mr. G. left you alone, he stopped as he was walking past and looked at you and decided not to say anything. You did not mind.

The fieldnotes were returned the week later. You had drawn a massive trilobite covering the open spread of page in your geology report.

It had the spider marks of red ink all over the picture. You got the message. There were arrows showing that you had missed out part of a segment that the scale was wrong that the head was incorrect for a trilobite.

Mr. G. must have decided that you needed an explanation for all the redness you were looking at. He pulled out a textbook and started comparing it to your drawing. There was a difference you could clearly see, but the drawing in the textbook

was perfectly symmetrical not lopsided like yours. Yet it did not look remotely like the trilobite that you had found either.

"The aim of a drawing in geology is to make a catalogue of reality. What you drew is an artistic impression!"

You didn't understand. You started looking at the other students' drawings – some had drawn trilobites, some other fossils. You wondered why these ugly drawings that really looked like cartoons of the fossils they were representing did not have the red squiggles and arrows all over them.

"Geology is a scientific endeavor Eriksen, there is no room for art in science."

And so, an age-old understanding of the separation of art and science was handed down to me with the trilobite.

I kept my trilobite until it crumbled just as the rest of the shale embankment from where I had dug it.

Animal ancestors and relatives
Helen Eriksen, 2023



Trilobites and chocolates (Vignette 3) is constructed from a childhood memory. In it, a binary split caused a dissonance between the observational drawing and the teacher's demand for scientific modelling. It is one of the many binaries and boundaries that I find my-self falling between even now. This chapter is an attempt to weave theoretical concepts into in my transgressive disciplinary practice and investigate the entanglements of the mesh. I attempted to remain situated between the theoretical model and reality. I have gravitated towards theories of science that can help me to work through experiences of frustration and discomfort and understand the instability of my-self in relation to many visible and invisible disciplinary and field boundaries. Barad's (2007) theory of agential realism resonated both with my embodied knowledge of the world and with art practice, my in-between locations walking the tightrope of the binary split.

My way into theory has not been to theorise more or to enter one discourse but to understand theories and concepts through experience (cf. St. Pierre, 2016). The mesh recounts my embodied experiential understanding and responses to critical race theory and postcolonial concepts such as the cultural archive (Said, 1994; Wekker, 2016) and contagion (Khanna, 2020).

2.1 **Postcolonialism, critical race theory and whiteness studies**

Postcolonialism and critical race theory are entangled in their aim for racial equality; for this project, I will define them from their points of origin.

In brief, postcolonial theories and studies are multidisciplinary schools of thought that critically look at the legacies of imperialism and colonisation (Elam, 2019). These schools of thought mean that it is impossible to make sense of the world without understanding the colonial impact on contemporary society (Elam, 2019). Postcolonial writers include feminist and literary theorist Gayatri Spivak (1988), psychiatrist and philosopher Frantz Fanon (1952/2017), critical theorist Homi Bhabha (1994), comparative literature theorist Edward Said (1994) and filmmaker and writer Trinh T. Minh-Ha (1989). In Norway and Scandinavia, whiteness studies and postcolonial theory have been used as conceptual tools to investigate the way in which Scandinavian education produces stereotypes of race and coloniality

(Bayati, 2012, 2014; Eriksen, 2020; Eriksen & Svendsen, 2020; Finbog, 2020; Massao & Fasting, 2014; Thomassen & Munthe, 2020; Werner & Björk, 2014) and the relationship between art production and colonial mindsets (Danbolt, 2017, 2020; Danbolt et al., 2022; Ulrichsen, 2022; Werner & Björk, 2014).

Like agential realism, postcolonial and decolonial schools have an encompassing understanding of the geo-politics of knowledge control (Bhambra, 2014). Here, conventional academic methods and practices are understood as supporting an underlying hierarchy that dismisses other knowledges and methods such as art and indigenous as irrelevant, non-scientific, uncivilised or untrustworthy (cf. Smith, 2012; Spivak, 1988).

Critical race theory grew as an academic and activist response to issues of racial social justice in the US. It aims to study and transform the relationship between race, racism and power³². Central theorists in critical race studies include civil rights lawyers Derrick Bell (1987) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988).

Whiteness studies are a strand of critical race theory that applies the study of race to the dominant Eurocentric conceptualisation of itself as White to explore structural agency. Scholars include historian Noel Ignatiev (2009), historian and artist Nell Painter (2011), sociologist Ruth Frankenberg, psychologist Robin Diangelo (2011) and social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002). Critical race and whiteness theory is developed in the field of education by critical theorist Zeus Leonardo (Leonardo, 2013; Leonardo & Grubb, 2013; Leonardo & Manning, 2017) and educationalist Cheryl Matias (2016).

One major criticism to whiteness studies is that they become a further anchor of the racial binary. However, without discussing this binary in terms of whiteness, it disappears and becomes colour blind. How do we learn to deal with the naturalisation of whiteness without naming it?

Thus, postcolonial theories and critical race and whiteness studies position the production of race as a human entanglement. In the mesh, race and whiteness as postcolonial and critical race concepts converge with Barad's (2007) agential theory to question the foundations and practices of conventional knowledge production and the continued production of Cartesian binaries. The binary system is shown as a powerful division.

In the research Zahra's knowledge is pushed out of the discourse through disciplinary arguments that converge in safe ethical space.

2.2 Decoloniality and the colonial matrix of power

The central concern of this mesh is the mechanisms of a colonising aesthetic understanding through the cultural archive (Said, 1994; Wekker, 2016) and its position in sustaining world power systems grounded on colonialism (Mignolo, 2007a, 2007b). Furthermore, I speak from a central position of whiteness and do not engage in specific territorial decolonialism with regard to indigenous land rights (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

In the mesh, decoloniality is a process that manifestations through intra-agential activity – as a continuing practice of decolonisation (Walsh, 2018). In *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020), we use the term 'decolonising ourselves' to suggest an embodied collective process. Both terms refer to a continued state of unlearning or dismantling coloniality rather than a theoretical or a discursive standpoint. In this context, decoloniality is about epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) in knowledge production to de-link the Cartesian ontology of modernity and coloniality of the human world.

2.3 Tension in the mesh

The theory of agential realism (Barad, 2007) is a starting point rather than a grand theory of everything; this onto-epistemology raises issues with 'how' I know things. Thus, I can unfold profound influences that direct my behaviour and thinking. The theory allows me to think about the human–animal binary that continually surfaces, and I find my-self between an optimist love and belief in the agential vitality of all matter³³ and a subtle critical scepticism. One of the many questions I find my-self asking is: *'Is it easier for the White researcher to decentre the category of human in relation to materials and nature rather than to start at the White Eurocentric midpoint for human exceptionalism?'* After all, it is easier to work out a more ethical and decentred research practice when your co-researchers cannot directly answer your questions with human language. But you must interpret first in order to analyse. They can never retract permission to print³⁴.

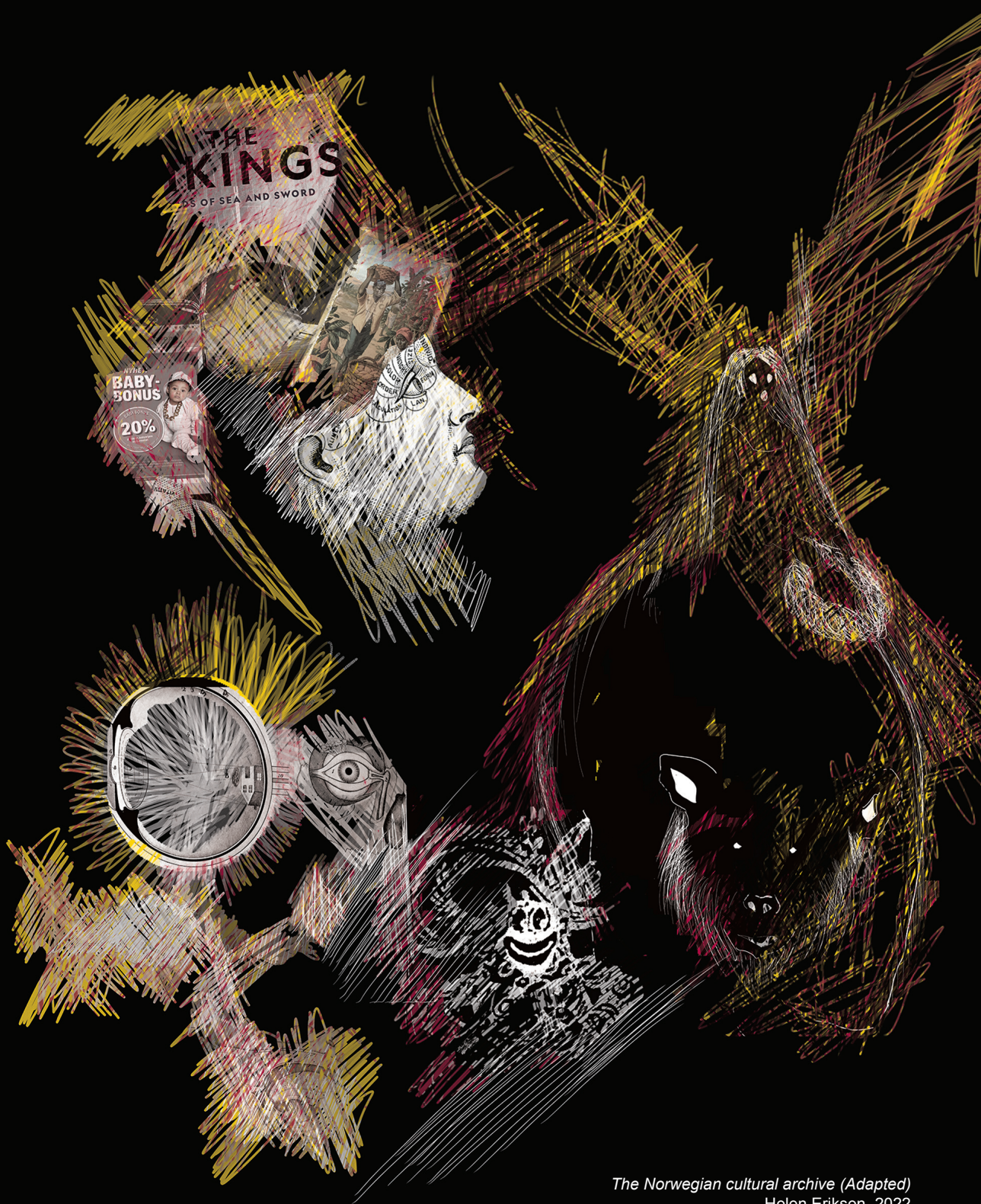
Postcolonial studies and critical race theory criticise systems of racial organisation and aim to bring about racial equality in society. This aim for racial equality and future justice converges with Barad's (2007) onto-epistemology that can be seen as a development of deconstructionist Jacques Derrida's ideas of time, responsibility and future justice.

no justice seems possible ... without the principle of responsibility, beyond all living present, within that which disjoins the living present, before the ghosts of those who are not yet born or are already dead, be they victims of war, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism. (Derrida in Barad, 2007, footnote p.475)

However, this aim for justice to come is abstract, vague and less tangible than postcolonial or critical race approaches that are exemplified through social history. Barad (2007) presents a thick philosophical text grounded in quantum physics.

Despite Barad seldom mentioning the issue of race in their theory, they do create a framework for inquiry into difference and power relationships. According to physicist and education-
alist Jerry Rosiek, agential realism is a relevant analytical tool to understand race and racism. He argues that individual disciplines or schools of thought cannot adequately address racism and extinguish it, as it is an agential phenomenon intra-acting in entangled complex contexts. Racism is an agential phenomenon, a metaphoric vampire. It is more than an individual or a singular aspect of it such as education, economy, history or housing; as such, it will slip through any single or specific disciplinary argument. He argues that remaining 'loyal' to one particular school of thought is productive for scholarly output measure; it will not solve the issue of race (Rosiek, 2019).

Rosiek is thus pointing to agential realism's relational capacity to hold complexities and understand the holistic nature of phenomena such as racism. In this mesh, my research approach



The Norwegian cultural archive (Adapted)
Helen Eriksen, 2022

involves relationality and interventions; it is multi-focal and multi-disciplinary, complex and messy. In this mesh, it is most apparent that I draw from divergent schools of thought. I do not want to be restricted by any concept and perhaps merely swap one way of seeing the world with another and assume that format.

A criticism often raised about agential realism is that it is not new and repeats the message of indigenous philosophies without specifically citing them. It converges with indigenous knowledges and cosmologies in its concern with human responsibility to the earth in a vision that decentres the human being. In agential realism and indigenous cosmologies, the earth is seen as an entanglement of becomings that are not predetermined but are dependent on the agencies entangled at a specific time, space and mattering (Tompkins, 2016). This entangled life of a multitude of agencies and knowledges existing and affecting each other is described by indigenous scholars as a pluriverse³⁵ (Balser & de la Cadena, 2018; Kayumova & Dou, 2022).

I would make the case that the division between agential realism and indigenous knowledges resides in their origins. Agential realism's starting point is in the Eurocentric tradition of philosophy (Davies, 2018). Indigenous knowledges are founded on a non-Eurocentric³⁶ understanding of matter and mattering, whereas agential realism is both based on and challenges European conceptions of the scientific with its conventional scientific methods and protocols.

As a White European female, I embody the logic and structures of feeling that modernity generates in a Eurocentric thinker. For me, agential realism addresses the vital question of 'how' whiteness became an invisible part of my-self by locating the whiteness in my fluid subjecthood. Furthermore, exploring racialising processes entails an interrogation of earlier learning processes. Thus, when I identify as racialised White³⁷, I must consider race in its historical context and my being as an ontologically constructed perpetrator and culpable in the production of racialising hierarchies.

2.4 **White Innocence or White fragility?**

During my explorations, concepts drawn from whiteness studies were central to situating my feelings in a framework

of racialising that supports White supremacy. My emotional unease was initially aligned with the concept of White fragility (Diangelo, 2011; Matias, 2016) when the emphasis was on emotional response and my feeling of vulnerability. Later, in *Elephants* (Eriksen, 2022), I use Gloria Wekker's (2016) concept of White innocence. This concept focuses on the production of race as a contemporary paradox within institutional structures. Wekker uses case studies to analyse how individual White emotional responses are part of the cultural weaving of whiteness in the normalisation of everyday racism. The paradox that Wekker describes lies in the ability of the White subject to be in emotional denial as a response to race as it surfaces, which enables White supremacy.

I saw another way to be in this situation. I ached to be that person that could articulate their position. I left the space with a question that has taken me on a rewarding, but painful path of understanding and growth. "What if ... I was that White researcher?" As usual, I weighed it up with another question: "Why not?" (Eriksen et al., 2020 p.31)

However, in *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020) my typical emotional White response to the situation at hand led to my-self questioning *why* I was responding in this manner. In that moment, I described the possibility of responding otherwise.

2.5 Emotion and visceral understanding

Although diffraction and concepts such as mesh, agency, entanglement and intra-action have all been productive concepts to use in my-self explorations, they are neglectful of other power relationships, such as age and gender.

In this study, whiteness needed to be anchored through a mechanism that could specify racism as a phenomenon in power relationships. An anonymous peer reviewer for *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020) directed us to this gap and to a recent work by professor of comparative literature Neetu Khanna. Her book *Visceral Logics of Decolonization* provides a particularly helpful question to think with: 'How do we feel new feelings?' (Khanna, 2020, p.1).

Khanna's work focuses on the embodied resistance of the marked and racialised subject to the unmarked White body as it presents itself *between* bodies to signify race. This phenomenon between bodies is described as contagion, which converges with Barad's concept of intra-action. Here, no single material body has true agency. In contagion and intra-action, the phenomenon of race emerges in a blurry space between bodies.

Khanna exemplifies embodied responses to colonialism through post-colonialist psychologist and author Franz Fanon's famous depiction of his meeting with a young man/boy and his mother in a railway carriage in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952):

Mamma, see the Negro! I'm frightened....in the train it was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. ... I existed triply: I occupied space. I moved toward the other ... and the evanescent other, hostile but not opaque, transparent, not there, disappeared, nausea.
(Fanon, 1952, as cited in Khanna, 2020, p.5)

Khanna interprets the passage below:

Like tuning forks, the somatic responses of this scene focus the energies vibrating between subjects. Their energies animate and enervate the subjects in ways that synchronize their physical responses, even as the scene seeks to stage the violence of colonial power and difference.
(Khanna, 2020. p.7)

Fanon's marked racialised body can and does physically respond because he embodies colonial history and memories. In this project, I look at the same space between bodies and the phenomenon of race through my White embodiment. I have placed emotion at the core of knowledge production, and it became an empowering resource (cf. Braidotti, 2006; Khanna, 2020). In this zone of emotion, discrepancies between reality and belief emerged and question clusters arose.

The articles and exhibition include everyday professional occurrences that faintly echo coloniality through embodied responses. In *Elephants*, I vaguely refer to my stomach and ecstatic feelings:

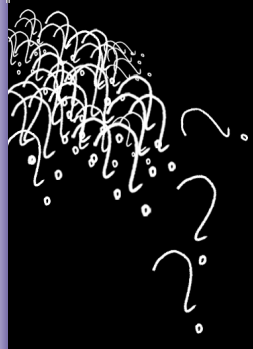
Perhaps your stress levels dropped because the focus was on food and not the project. Fiddling with white balance and exposure metering points, you managed to capture a fantastic portrait – full face – you had gotten it. You were ecstatic. (Eriksen, 2022, p. 248)

In all the articles, my repeated enactment of the power of definition and control over another body signifies the embodied White colonialism of my-self. In *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen, et al., 2021), my emotional reaction is a contagion from the conflict as I long to be the researcher who calls out racist behaviour rather than remaining as a rabbit. I explored the possibility of decolonising learnt embodied responses by actively engaging with ideas of plurality intra-action and contagion. Khanna suggests that '*(a) collective revolutionary consciousness [that] must both arise from and transform the psychic trauma of racialization*' (Khanna, 2020). In other words, the decolonisation of the body is not a singular intellectual endeavour but an emotional and collective one. In this emotional zone of contagion or intra-action, pluralist proximity can lead to the unlearning of colonial frameworks for knowledge production.

2.6 Scandinavia and Nordic Exceptionalism

Critical race theory and the concept of whiteness are strongly associated with slavery and the North American context in which they were developed (Painter, 2011). However, they are also relevant for each Scandinavian country with specific local contexts of colonising practices.

A major challenge in Scandinavia is rooted in the association of race with debunked racial biology and with extreme events such as the Holocaust (Gullestad, 2004). Thus, racism is not seen as a structural manifestation of ontologies or ideologies as in postcolonial understandings but is more associated with bad attitudes of individuals. However, racial inequality exists at a structural level and is easily visible in the discrepancy in the average monthly income and proportion of homeowners between non-European migrant communities and the general



When does the research process
distract me?

Can I be a
distract

Can I collect
community

How

Can I ^{what particular place am I working}
feel new feelings?

Who will read or even benefit from this process?

Do I produce race in research



do
th
?

population. Furthermore, non-European migrants are shown to live in more cramped conditions (Statistisk sentralbyrå, n.d.). The challenge exists when these discrepancies become naturalised, normalised and thus unquestioned.

Whiteness most clearly emerges when it is understood together with the concept of exceptionalism. Nordic exceptionalism denies the presence of race and racism by externalising colonial knowledge through national branding (Eriksen, K. 2020).

At an individual level, this national branding becomes part of what it means to be a citizen, a national identity.

Nordic exceptionalism embraces the notion that Scandinavia and the Nordic countries are harmonious egalitarian societies with social democracy (Browning, 2007). Swedish critical race scholars, senior lecturer in intercultural education Tobias Hübinette and senior lecturer in ethnicity and migration Catrin Lundström (2020), connect the fiction of the homogeneous race with feelings associated with nation presenting as a form of racialising nostalgia. Finnish professor of social anthropology Anna Rastas (2012) argues that national exceptionalism 'serves to deny the racialized "others" their legitimate claim to exercise their rights as residents and citizens of Finland'.

The picture below shows my-self as a child in a Norwegian national costume passed down from post-war generations in my family. The clothes of local Telemark identity suggest spatial identity, a belonging, and are undoubtedly nostalgic. They have been worn by my body to signify a local and national identity and cultural capital (Eriksen, 2004). I was seen as belonging to Norway, with my white hair and blue eyes. This badge of identity is highly contested when used by a body that is not White (Thomas et al., 2020). It is a textile signifier for a fictional homogenous nation that belongs to specific Norwegian branding.

In their own contexts, Denmark, Sweden and Norway all had well-documented colonial practices but retain an innocent identity (Eidsvik, 2012; Tvedt, 2003). To add further complexity, the Scandinavian region has historically been positioned as colonised and coloniser and has undergone settler colonialism³⁸.

In my specific context, I will argue that Norway is complicit in the European colonial project through a nationally sanctioned

and entangled history of colonising knowledge and belief. Its national narrative claims innocence and victimhood in issues of colonial exploitation owing to its centuries-long colonisation by Denmark (Gullestad, 2004). Race is seen as a new phenomenon and irrelevant because Norway is still in a learning trajectory (McIntosh, 2015). Furthermore, Norwegian claims of colonial victimhood seem to ignore Norway's involvement in slave trade (McIntosh, 2015). However, neither homogeneity nor the denial of a colonial empire can dismiss the concept of race as an active, historically rooted phenomenon in Norway. First, Norway's international missionary activities (Eidsvik, 2012) and settler colonialism with the Samí peoples (Valkeapää, 1983) are well-documented. Second, the concept of race has been active in the whole of colonial and colonised Scandinavia, as seen in art history (Werner, 2018; Werner & Björk, 2014) and all fields of art. Third, I draw on Said's (1994) argument about the cultural archive affecting the colonial metropolis through cultural artefacts. Scandinavian port metropolises such as Stockholm, Oslo and Copenhagen were colonial trading points of contact as well as cultural entrances for dominating colonial beliefs. Finally, the high percentage per capita of Norwegians in missionary activities (Engh, 2009) and migrant Norwegian business developments outside Europe, including Africa (Kuparinen, 1991), produced colonising spaces that dismissed local indigenous knowledges.

In short, feelings and emotions associated with racial challenges (Diangelo, 2011; Kendi, 2019; Matias, 2016) are channelled and dismissed through notions of Nordic exceptionalism by White individuals to counter accusations of racism or racial inequalities in their social and institutional structure (Wekker, 2016) and thus evade moral and ethical debates that could lead to change (cf. Rastas, 2011).

2.7 The Cultural Archive and agency

In *Elephants* (Eriksen, 2022), I argue that the living cultural archive, with its historical roots in the colonial domination of dehumanised bodies, emerges to produce race in and through us. 'This cultural archive is an agential phenomenon: the complex entanglements of cultural materiality surround us

and are at work in our everyday lives' (Figure 3, p. 245). In *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (2016), Gloria Wekker develops Edward Said's (1994) concept of the cultural archive through the analysis of race in contemporary Dutch society. She argues that the contemporary cultural archive stabilises the production of colonial structures by reproducing its stereotypes and mindsets: 'The cultural archive has influenced historical cultural configurations and current dominant and cherished self-representations and culture' (p. 2). Wekker's understanding of the role of the cultural archive in producing and stabilising cultural identity converges with Barad's (2007) notion of intra-action, described as an ongoing process rather than an inherent state associated with life force.

According to Barad (2007), agency is found in the individual's relations in meetings between bodies, bodies and institutions, and bodies and materials; the intra-action of material agencies is world-making. It is in world-making that an ethical being is made. *'We have to meet the universe halfway, to move toward what may come to be in ways that are accountable for our part in the world's differentiable becoming. All real living is meeting. And each meeting matters'* (Barad, 2007, p. 383). This is a convergence with the indigenous philosophies of responsibility³⁹.

This idea of agency broaches the idea that the artist is in a relationship with the viewer or participant. In an effort to further contextualise the cultural archive, I would like to cite works by racialised or non-European artists that explore and challenge the subtle and naturalised aesthetic representations of racial stereotypes (Haloba, 2021; Lundestad Joof, 2019, 2021; Salad Hilowle, 2021). All these works explore the agential racial stereotyping of the cultural archive through what cultural theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff (2013) calls the 'right to look'. Mirzoeff (2013) argues that looking is not a passive but a political act; it is a challenge to the authority that upholds the rules of visibility.

These artists challenge the representation of their own bodies through explicitly articulating and challenging the normalising manifestations of the cultural archive. From their racialised position as artists, they point to differences and experiences of race whilst intervening in dominating narratives of race and



National Costume/Identity

ethnicity. This is a slightly different position to Zahra when, as a non-artist, she is expected to take a passive, inactive role. However, breaking the binary of 'uninitiated', she responds to the images that Gry and I make and thus draws attention to the space in which stereotypical, racialising production occurs. She raises the question: *Where does stereotypical reproduction occur? In the image or with the reception?* (Eriksen et al., 2020, p. 165). Zahra asserts her 'right to look', recognise and respond to art-making as a political act in a series of interventions in White artist practice.

2.8 Colonial matrix of power and the arts

Mignolo (2007b) argues that the prevailing doxa of modernity is rooted in the philosophy of European enlightenment⁴⁰. The

current global power systems and their economic inequalities are overlaid on the matrix of older colonial territories, where the colonial matrix of power is continued through epistemic violence and the continuing colonisation of the body, spirit and mind. Mignolo and cultural sociologist Ronald Vázquez suggest that this results in a coloniality of knowledge through the entire sensual apparatus. It leads to the exclusion of other knowledges and affects production in the aesthetic field. They make a direct association with art education as a method of producing coloniality in the aesthetic field and see this as instrumental in maintaining the colonial matrix of power (Mignolo & Vázquez, 2013).

This converges not only with Said's idea of the image as fundamental in spreading ideas to colonise the imaginary through stereotypes but also with visual artist and educator Ariella Azoulay's (2019) proposal that artefacts in Europe signify colonialism's destruction of established communities. Art, she claims, shows a pathway of broken and destroyed communities and knowledge. These objects have lost their original significance, and the communities to which they belong no longer have their significant objects. She intertwines present day immigration into her proposal, suggesting that the human migrants to Europe are coming from places with communities destroyed by colonialism. Seeing the colonial matrix of power as a materiality, she proposes that the human pathways of migration follow art objects in trying to resolve a sense of belonging.

Azoulay draws on real migratory pathways of movement established during colonial expansion to show the relevance of art practices and world-building. If we read this in the light of the colonial matrix of power, we can understand it as agential and being present on a global scale. The exhibitions, through their participants, show links to art practices bound by the idea of the modern and the migrating body. The Tenthaus collective explicitly shows that the migrant body is not the norm in a gallery space and that the migrants' participation as curators can disturb notions of what art can be.

2.9 Pathway in the mesh

In the remaining part of this chapter, I will explain how I practiced research. My first obstacle is to understand how my



Toto yapped outside

artist educator curator and research practices are relevant to each other in the diffractive process. My aim in the PhD program was to learn more about researching participatory artist practice. My preliminary research design dictated the boundaries of not only scope but also actions/methods that could be included in my research. My initial aim was to develop a grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1999) through qualitative social science methodology. I thought that participant observation and non-structured interviews (conversations) with coding and analysis would lead to a breakthrough about decision-making in artist practice. However, after listening to hours of interviews and reading field notes made during *Winter depot*, *Spring depot* and *Moment of trust*, I was no closer to understanding why people were acting how they did. There was something more. When I started writing, the words and thoughts did not gel; the text was uninteresting and flat. I realised that this material would fizzle out

and I would not be able to complete it if I could not find a more interesting way to use and disseminate what I was feeling and experiencing.

My main supervisor, Helene, had advised me to let go and jump into the project with the skills I came with and to not overthink the situation. At that juncture, I joined meetings in researcher forums that threw open the doors to colleagues in the field of art and education. I was inspired by Barad (2007) and wanted to understand more about diffraction as a research tool or practice. What would that mean in the context of art production?

2.9.1 Diffraction

Philosopher and biologist Donna Haraway (1996) introduced the notion of diffraction as a helpful tool to make new patterns of difference. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), Barad introduces the idea of diffraction as a methodology and research method for agential realism that moves away from the domination of observation, neutrality and objectivity in research. Here, the researcher subject – that is, my-self – is the research apparatus. Working through diffraction as an umbrella method encourages the exploration of complex materialities, time and spatial entanglements⁴¹ within and between the separate parts of the thesis and the complicated dissemination process.

Barad introduces diffraction as a specific material meeting that both splits and entangles materiality in time\space: *'diffraction is not a set pattern, but rather an iterative (re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling'* (Barad, 2014, p.168). This simultaneous movement that splits and entangles is called an agential cut. It makes new configurations by paying attention to the details of the materiality present.

Barad explains this patterning in the example of throwing a stone into water:

Diffraction phenomena are familiar from everyday experience. A familiar example is the diffraction or interference pattern that water waves make when they rush through an opening in a breakwater or when stones are dropped in a pond and the ripples overlap. (Barad, 2007, p.28)

The stone from Barad's example would sink rather than float because of gravity. When you know about it, it seems obvious that gravity exists because it is a natural phenomenon that we experience through a learnt and simplified conceptual reasoning⁴².

In their article *Diffraction, Diffraction*, Barad (2014) maintains that quantum diffraction is a method that radically '*queers binaries* and calls out for a rethinking of the notions of identity and difference' (p.171). Citing feminist Chicana cultural theorist Gloria Anzaldúa, they argue that returning, as happens during diffraction, makes it possible to destabilise the most sedimented binaries. 'What we are suffering from is an absolute despot duality that says we are able to be only one or the other' (Anzaldúa, 1987, as cited in Barad, 2014, p.173).

In this reference to gender boundaries, Barad argues that nothing is truly stable and that closure is impossible. Further, they converge with Hall's understanding of cultural identity as unstable and performative, allowing difference to emerge rather than the conflict inherent in the binary system.

The key is understanding that identity is not essence, fixity or givenness, but a contingent iterative performativity, thereby reworking this alleged conflict into an understanding of difference not as an absolute boundary between object and subject, here and there, now and then, this and that, but rather as the effects of enacted cuts in a radical reworking of cause/effect. (Barad, 2014, p. 174)

Diffraction is a method in which the researcher-self can interrogate the fuzzy or blurry boundaries of the individual fluid identity of which whiteness is an aspect.

In the mesh, articles, texts and images entangle and diffract through each other; here, the same questions are returned through cascades of questions thrown out into the mesh during analysis. It is a complex method to unpack owing to the position of researcher-subject as part of the agential cuts. Professor of early childhood education Karin Murriss (2022) contextualises Barad's theory in education. She proposes that agential cuts are violent, as they are specific and exclude bodies and mate-

realities. She emphasises the need to keep asking how these cuts are made. In this enquiry, I repeat questions of how the exclusion of the racialised takes place. I want to know how these cuts function and what phenomena are involved in the intra-actions. Diffractive collaborative work like that with Zahra and Gry is a relational process between co-researchers, where insights are read through one another. Our research collaboration predominately involves the sharing of embodied knowledges through image-making, and language becomes a tool to articulate embodied knowledge, hidden in silence and image-making, and to share insights with each other (cf. Murriss, 2022). The state of pluralist proximity and the notion of safe ethical space are iterations of our diffractive pattern.

2.10 Practice with materials

In the following section, I will look closer at my material practices that are entangled in the mesh. Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) is an onto-epistemology, bound in a philosophical and abstract text that forwards diffraction as a method without describing how this could look like in other practices.

2.10.1 Collectivity and polyphony

The complex entangled nature of togetherness and collective learning (Anundsen & Illeris, 2019; Illeris, 2017; Valberg, 2019), is experienced in the golden moments⁴³ identified in Tenthaus educational practice (Klungland, 2021; Eriksen, 2019) and documented in the exhibition documentation and catalogues through participant and curator statements.

In the mesh, very little happens in solitude even during the final writing phases of this text. This exact paragraph emerges from comments from Helene, and I asked my supervisors if I can claim the following sentence: 'Learning is not a one-way process – the feeling is that we are all gaining something, student and supervisor alike'. They agreed. The mesh is thus a collective intra-active learning arena (Private communications, August 2022).

I think of collectivity in the mesh as a manifestation of intra-action that I experienced during moments of research with others. Collectivity has been a continuing method in the mesh – the socially engaged art practice in the Tenthaus collective

(Ulrichsen, 2017) and later with Zahra Bayati, Gry Ulrichsen and Germain Ngoma. In *Spring depot* (Eriksen et al., 2018b), I use the metaphor of balloon to describe the experience of developing ideas together.

Often when Ebba, Stefan and my-self sit down to hatch plans, we play a very serious game. It's like we're bouncing a balloon back and forth, there are laughs, stretches, shouts, irritations, jumps and falls – but we do anything to keep the balloon from landing and ultimately popping – if we were to take a high-speed picture of this balloon in flight, we could notice how it shifts shape slightly as it gets thumped around. It looks like the original balloon when we finally allow it to come to rest, yet the energy used to keep it in flight can't be denied. (Tenthaus, 2018b)

It is interesting to look at the methods that Tenthaus and the emergent Solmaz collectively use to develop notions of pluralism through polyphony – that is, specific methods to simultaneously develop and articulate difference, coherence and unity.

The notion of polyphony is also present in this introductory metatext. Despite the focus on my-self and researcher-subject experience with whiteness in the production of race, I draw in other voices and references to the emergences in the mesh. It is a way of creating a multi-focal text; this can hopefully suggest alternative knowledges to that of the emerging whiteness⁴⁴.

The polyphonic text allows different voices to speak with their own uncontrolled agenda, and they can indicate how plurality can work, albeit with a struggle for reading coherence. Collective academic texts include *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020) and *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2020). An even clearer example of polyphonic textual production is Tenthaus collective's text for the exhibition catalogue *Death of the Curator* (Tenthaus, 2021).

This text is a 13-person polyphony designed to disrupt notions of a singular institutional voice, which is often how the collective signature is experienced. The function of text design facilitates an apparent need for unity in the visual presentation. Despite an obvious plurality in the content of the text, the design

T
E
N
T

Exploring a *holacratic* structure - autonomous teams dedicated to each project.

Is announcing death always polemical?

The ahistorical popularity of figurative art. The *undying*. What cannot die cannot live.

H
A
U
S

Gramsci: "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born. In this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."



being
and
becoming *

* What cannot die cannot live

T

as:

Heterotopia

Spaces that have more layers of meaning or relationships to other places than immediately meet the eye. A playful space! A space that explores how to make places/cities/neighbourhoods more playful, participatory, and enjoyable to live in.

E

A space that creates tiny moments of connection that turn strangers into neighbours and passersby to locals!

H

A

HETEROPTOPIA is a project that includes times and places. Heterotopia refers to places and moments that are both physical and mental, that disrupt the continuity and the norms of everyday places. In this sense they are spaces of otherness.

N

is:

The state or fact of existing, occurring, or being present in a place or thing. The friendly reception and treatment of guests and strangers.

U

T

The feeling is that of a multi-layered exhibition space, art collective, artist-run space, non profit art gallery with PEOPLE at its core. What is art if not about PEOPLE anyway. Why should exhibition spaces not be about PEOPLE as well if what they exhibit IS PEOPLE: sorrow, abandonment, depression, trauma, thrill, enjoyment, fun, amazement, surprise, engagement. Tenthaus lives the art from inside out, connecting, sharing, bridging, activating, thinking, incorporating the other into itself. Tenthaus is about the PEOPLE.

S

T E N T

Terthaus is its own entity that we are all contributing to. In a way Terthaus is an organism that needs nourishment - its reciprocal - we are Terthaus and Terthaus is us but at the same time no single one of us is Terthaus and we all contribute in different and unique ways. We do the best we can, when we can for as long as we can. I suppose when thinking about organising a system like Terthaus, we do it out of free will; we are part of something bigger than ourselves and it is satisfying to be in a world where we are active in creating our own roles in our work every day. Ha ha - a master plan - that'd be the day. You make plans so God can laugh! We make plans, in fact I would say, we make excellent plans but we allow ourselves to adjust and redirect as the temperature of what's happening in the space we occupy and the world affects us.

Altogether, the task is to create a situation in which exhibition making can be re-democratized. That entails, having debates before, and not only after the exhibition, in order to exert influence and to change and shape decisions.

A collecti
common g
giving exat
we are but
not your ov
capacities
common g
reason the
protect six
Norway of
violence, e
common-p

I think you'll find the sofa
fine to sit down, and have
Peel away all your layers c
water, just in case. Tertha
people. Terthaus walks in
ever smaller in a more ant
can only do so much.

T "We don't know who it was who discovered water, but we're pretty sure it wasn't a fish." S

Herbert Marshall McLuhan

unifies the dissonance by creating a visual coherence. Here, we can all be in the same space with all our differences.

Our entangled polyphonies indicate the complexity as well as the common experiences of all racialised humans. The colonial patterns emerging through diffraction are not unique.

2.10.2 Animals

One of the polyphonic aspects of the text is the appearance of animals. They were constantly and mysteriously present and insistent. They were annoying, riotous invasions in what was otherwise very serious business. I understand now that they can be even considered co-researchers. They knew more than me, but most of the times, I did not understand what they were saying.

I introduce chapter 3 with *Beneath the Surface* (Vignette 4), where I first account for the materialisation of the animal as an imaginary or metaphor figure. I was walking and mapping Kristiansand⁴⁵ during an artist research method seminar. The animals came from a space that was so far away that I can hardly understand their origins. Later, different animals began to emerge during reading and writing. When they first surfaced, they were a form of enunciation – an expression of complex emotional states and resulting situations that were difficult to describe but often very recognisable⁴⁶. Nevertheless, they became predictable in their unpredictability – they arrived with a disturbing regularity.

One of my embodied responses to the emergences of animals in the mesh has been to use costumes or clothing to represent the animal experience as sensorial. I become more intimate with them by living in their skins. However, these emergences were unstable and were apt to shift. For example, my initial emotional response with the white rabbit as timid and fragile shifted to an ambivalence that is reflected in the absurdity of the rabbit outfit on an aging body.

I was repeatedly asked to expand on the general role of imagination and specifically the pesky position of the animals as well as the position of the vignettes in this metatext. I am tempted to pull an 'artist' strategy of non-disclosure. Does the imagination even fit into a conventional category without it being constrained by discourse? Is it enough to say that imagination can be seen



Inhabiting the White
Film still from Solmaz, 2021

as a space that is neither illustrative nor merely analytically descriptive but an agential form of knowledge? Is it not the imaginary that that Barad (2007) indicates when speaking of the potential of intra-action to reformulate the real and the possible?

The world's effervescence, its exuberant creativeness, can never be contained or suspended. Agency never ends; it can never 'run out'. The notion of intra-actions reformulates the traditional notions of causality and agency in an ongoing reconfiguring of both the real and the possible. (Barad, 2007, p.177)

The animals are far more than what they first appear to be. They were troubling, as I failed to grasp their meaning, and I still feel that I have misinterpreted them. Furthermore, I misunderstood them as superficial and tapped into what I already think I know rather than asking my-self: What or who does that knowledge benefit? ⁴⁷

2.10.3 Resisting elephants

During an in progress presentation of *Elephants* (Eriksen, 2022) for my cohort at Agder, Deise Nunes, researching performance practitioner, talked about actress and activist Hannah Wozene Kvam's description of herself as the elephant in the room at a meeting for cultural workers (National Theatret, 2018).

To me, being the elephant is about being one of very few or the only Black/racialised person in a room with white, powerful people. Like I am there as the only one with a different racial background, and people think this is ok or there's nothing to be discussed. It also illustrates the privilege it is not to have to deal with the issue. (Deise Nunes in private e-mail correspondence)

That moment landed in the pit of my stomach, and a feeling of extraordinary debt engulfed me. Was I erasing Deise from the mesh where she is deeply entangled? We first met in 2009 at Grada Kilomba's workshop. Deise Nunes is a central human agency hidden in this dissertation; I do not want to turn her into an elephant in this dissertation space. She is a living, breathing human entangled in the many emergences of the research mesh.

Years after our first meeting, Deise and I became part of the Art in Context PhD Program at the University of Agder. During the early years, we sat in Tenthaus, and I mentioned *I look like a hungry African* (Vignette 2) as an introduction to *Elephants* (Eriksen, 2022). I had been reading critical race theory and postcolonialism and was particularly interested in the psychological strategies outlined in DiAngelo (2011). Deise understood the power of my White blind-spot to reflect whiteness again. She talked about many things but interrupted my thinking aloud about the conflict. She repeated the same sentence: 'you ignored the fact that he wanted to decide how his body was going to be represented'. Deise did not move in her opinion, even though I tried to persuade her that I had made a 'perfect photo!' I also think it was the last thing she said to me as she walked out the door. Deise unwaveringly maintained her position. However, I have to ask my-self about the cost of this resistance and engagement for Deise, Zahra and Germain, for Angela, my proof

editor, and for all the other minoritised artists, educators and researchers who are entangled in this mesh. Their proximity, patience and engagement with me as I discover how whiteness works indicate that they feel the whiteness I produce working on them. It means they feel racism. I feel a hairy caterpillar crawling up my leg as I write this.

2.10.4 Scavenging as a decolonising and diffractive practice

Said (1975/2003) argues, by pointing to nineteenth century French and British painters, that the visual arts were intimately caught up in the development of stereotypes of the orient and the 'other'. Visual art now uses various media, and visual representations of racialised groups are found far beyond the gallery room. I use very different sources, including Facebook messenger threads, webinar series, news media, exhibitions and their catalogues, close readings of artefacts, emails, notes from conference participations, novels and films. In the context of academic text, I am inspired by Wekker's (2016) method of cultural scavenging, a feminist strategy that queers normative academic principles through disrupting the dominating ways of knowing or the things taken for granted and placing value on contradictions and incongruities (Waite, 2015). This queering of academic research norms converges with diffraction in its encompassing of complexity and its messiness.

Scavenging is also common in arts practice where both image and found object encourage analysis through the visual representation of non-logical aspects of understanding or argument⁴⁸. When the cultural archive is dispersed over unrelated sources (Said, 1994), the practice of scavenging enables the finding and patterning of agential stereotypes to explore ideas of race. *'What bound the archive together was a family of ideas and a unifying set of values proven in various ways to be effective'*(Said, 2003, p.42).

In the mesh, cultural scavenging unpacks a colonial cultural archive that is still culturally active in the workshop or classroom situation and performed by White teachers (Bayati et al., 2021; Eriksen et al., 2020; Ulrichsen et al., 2021).

It does not take much to see the intimidating and dangerous Black African chief's transformation to

the New York gangster rapper. Despite continual waves of civil rights movements, these stereotypical images continue to naturalise the idea that White Europeans are civilised and superior to non-European subjects. (Eriksen, 2022, p.253)

2.10.5 **Collage play**

The collaborative collages made with Germain introduce the thesis chapters. They are inspired by Gry O. Ulrichsen's participatory teaching method. As a response to her lessons, Ulrichsen asks her students to make collages from a wide range of images sourced from old magazines and adverts. These immediate responses are then collectively discussed at the end of the lesson. This practice has informed and become central to the Solmaz collective's research and is central to articles *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2020) and *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020). In this mesh, I choose to use this method because of its immediacy and the way in which the ordinary becomes elevated through other elements (Scotti & Chilton, 2017). Furthermore, the scavenging nature of taking often non-related sources resonates with my diffractive method.

During our collage work, Germain and I had a large selection of images, pre-cut from magazines, spread on the table. The backgrounds are A3 sheets of thick black sugar paper. We were free to add other elements if needed for visual coherence. Our own visual preferences and understanding emerge during this practice. Images in the collages are chosen and composed by one person and then altered or informed by the other. Because Germain and I have long-standing collaboration, we worked quickly, and the collages develop through visual play and each other's curiosity towards the emerging compositions. This curiosity and openness are suggestive of the condition of pluralist proximity.

2.10.6 **Image**

There is a relational aspect between image and text in the thesis, as they draw forth an understanding of the my-self position within different research entanglements. The visual elements were made with a continuing intra-action with the



Subjective first person cloud
Helen Eriksen, 2018

know nothing group voice classroom thump

base failure gigging lastly amidst sliding others choir bench answer wrinkle like remember offered last finish main shares moment kitchen divided uncertainties new piece
bowl brings wrinkles Water lean immediate information Smell question approach locked attempting chosen matter proceed green knives
expended ever started cutting dough people rather left strings difference rose aged note well fit
desk impact gathering almost locked



reading and writing in the research processes; the images throughout the mesh are also a way to sort and sift through notions and identify stabilised, racialised positions.

The drawings, as conceptual bubbles, attempt to hold on to complexities and seek new patterns or understanding. Photographs and images document processes; they weave themselves as substances in a weft of texts and concepts. They represent a refusal to conform to the binary of the contested and constructed fields of art and academic production and the text–image hierarchy.

2.11 Text

The mesh has intra-active relationality between images and text that encourages meaning-making between the two. My choice of a more immediate first-person form⁴⁹ is a general statement about the convention of the academic text as a neutral, cold and analytical rendering of truth that hides a passive author.

In an attempt to see how this worked in my practice, I used notes written in the passive form from a field experience and analysed them into word clouds.

Then, I repeated the same process with an active first-person form⁵⁰. It became very obvious that text written in the first person does not hide the subject position of the researcher. This is problematic to the notion of centring the researcher-subject when the object of diffraction is to decentre the researcher-subject.

So how do we linguistically move forward? According to Jackson and Mazzai (2008), the narrative 'I' is a performative act and not a stable origin. Thus, the subject of the 'I' is not a fixed transparent identity but is bound to unstable relations of power. *'[T]he performative 'I' is constituted by the act of narration (which it needs to produce itself), but the 'I' is always already limited in its self-expression and reflection on experience'* (p. 305).

Within the text, the performative 'I' seeks to understand entanglements that diffract through experience⁵¹. However, 'I' do slip into the passive form, creating a disjunction. This was not intentional, and it often happened when I was deep in thought with theory. Rather than struggling with text fluidity, I have decided to keep these hops in register. This suggests conflicts and incongruities of boundaries and the difficulty

in establishing new forms when they are so obviously anchored in historical narrative formats such as the PhD system.

The centring of the my-self, through the I form, risks exposing the author as being over-indulgent and self-centring (Sparkes, 2002). In this context, it can possibly add to and support racialising deafness of the White subject who does not hear the minoritised (Ahmed, 2021; Spivak, 1988) and thus continue the 'White monolog' that is deaf to the minoritised voice (Bayati et al., 2023). It is problematic and can also be tied to the PhD system that centres on candidates' individual research trajectories. The system itself encourages individual rather than pluralist approaches to research education, whereas the research community has a long history of co-authorship.

One strategy to counteract this individual centring is the use of polyphonic texts at various stages in the research process. Another is my attempt to use the concept of plurality in the mesh by splitting my-self into component parts of my-self⁵² and gather several forms of pronouns – my-you-our-self – in the last chapter to anchor the idea of entanglement of plurality, porosity and fluidity of the identities reading and writing the text (Murriss, 2022; Waite, 2019).

2.11.1 Vignettes – Islands of text

Text islands include clusters of questions and vignettes and are presented as separate from the main text, as they disturb it. Vignettes, a form of factual fiction dependent on memory and creative writing skills, are a method of contextualising the postcolonial discourse and practices of decoloniality. I consider these vignettes to be 'worth telling' as they link the personal embodied experience to cultural and political fields (cf. Ellis, 2004).

As the chapters in this text develop, the vignettes become entangled in the argumentation. However, an intentional vulnerability exists when I write of my shortcomings as intimate acts of confession. As part of a state of decoloniality, this is a personal dilemma; it opens me to feelings of culpability in past actions (Ellis, 2004). However, without personal disclosure about the mechanisms of whiteness through the cultural archive in me, the process would have remained in a discursive narrative owing to its lack of emotional and embodied engagement (Khanna,

2020). This attempt at transparency however, does not make this project unproblematic. The 'I' writing this is sceptical to experience as authentic but sees it as a construction.

The vignettes are developed throughout the research process. They embody insights that were not always present at their conception. The vignettes are short stories based on real situations or events. Most of the protagonists are written in the second person to bring the reader closer to relationships and feelings. Thus, *you* perform those texts and hopefully can feel the boundaries and porosity of yourself too. It encourages a reciprocal relationship, one that asks for mutual responsibility and participation by the reader (Holman Jones, 2005).

I wanted to give the reader the opportunity to see things differently and therefore inverted the black and white binary normalised in text and image. In the processes of the mesh, I tried to replace a light background with colour and darkness to draw attention to normalised reading/processing dynamics and create a contrast that leads to a concrete disturbance of visual expectations.

The dark paper/background accentuates the culturally bound normalised/naturalised process of decoding and interpretation. Think about non-European reading conventions such as Arabic, which is read horizontally from right to left, or Japanese, which is read vertically from right to left. Owing to its negative emotional association, black is seen as darkness or shadow and references physical or existential void; perhaps it even evokes and is slightly laden with anxiety – it is without light⁵³ and other forms. Furthermore, the black background is used in *Silencing and Slicing* (Solmaz collective, 2021) to highlight the enactment of colonial narratives irrespective of time and context.

I am inspired by the works of many literary authors, but the most resonant writers for my study of whiteness have been Namwali Serpell (2019), Toni Morrison (1987/2016) and Claudia Rankine (2019, 2020), who draw out postcolonial and intersectional understandings of race with historical and everyday examples in their works. I am also inspired by White feminist writers such Virginia Wolfe (1924/2014, 1928/2014) and Simone De Beauvoir (1949/2011, 2006/1967) and the polyphonic works of Svetlana Alexievich (1985/2018, 1985/2020). The above

authors are female literary innovators who embrace emotion as a strategy to understand intersectional/female gendered embodiment as theoretically and politically implicated in the substance of their lives and work.

2.11.2 The narrators stone – Question Clusters

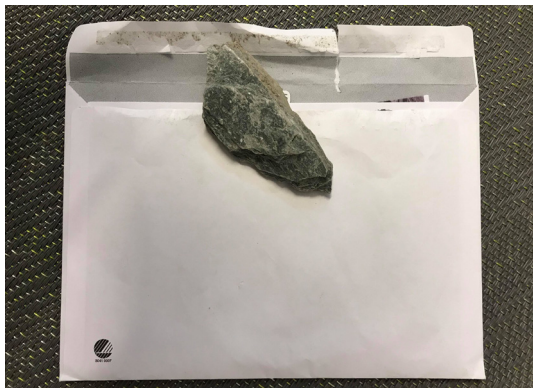
The narrator's stone appears when question clusters break through the flow of the text. I want to stress the research process where there is chaos of the questions that arrive, leading to moments when I have to decide which thread of an entanglement I should follow. It is also part of my writing and a series of small interventions in my thinking process. The stone becomes a metaphor for transformations in thinking and links to a diffractive method⁵⁴ that ultimately brings about more questions than it can answer.

In this mesh, the symbolic implication of the stone is introduced by Gry in *Stones in MIL – The Mosque as an Inclusive Force in the Local Community* (Eriksen et al., 2020, Figure 3, p.165). The animation that we discuss proved challenging for the emerging Solmaz collective; the silence surrounding it will be unpacked later. However, we did understand that the stone was more than what it appeared to be. *'Instead, we all agreed to present a physical rock as an object of resistance, the material world that says: "No! You cannot walk through me; I am the world, the universe'* (Eriksen et al., 2020, p. 166) It was part of something we could not articulate.

In a performance lecture, the stone transformed from image to reality and was delivered in an envelope to each member of the audience. Scholars with indigenous backgrounds shared with us that the stone had specific meanings in their differing cosmologies. In traditional cultures, objects are more than their functional everyday purposes; they can transform into a symbolic object for ritual purposes. Just think of a ring and its function in the wedding ceremony, where the object becomes performative. The same can be said when we cross the road at the sight of a black cat or light candles for the dead on Christmas eve in Scandinavia or on 1st November in catholic communities. In my Northern English culture, we throw accidentally spilt salt over our left shoulder to blind the demon behind

us. The everyday occurrence of salt spillage takes on a ritual aspect. In my childhood culture, it was handed down by action, not by instruction.

The stone is a performative and thus transformative object: a material to play or build with, another way of telling the time, an object of beauty and a weapon thrown to intervene in situations of violence. The unarticulated knowing of the stone and its ability to transform its own meaning re-emerges as the narrator's stone that casts itself out in cascades of questions.



Stone and envelope
Photo by Gry Ulrichsen, 1028

Spring 2022

Dear Helene,

As you can see I am re-working the project again – (sigh of resignation). Going through your comments I read this.

“I am curious about the role of imagination, really. Including strange memories, appearances, fantasies, dreams. All these vignettes, drawings, narratives that intertwine with the text. I would like to know even more about them – or from/with them. This is something missing in research! (even animism)”

It is very interesting, and I would like to take the manifestation of this response into the mesh as it positions the artist researcher in binary of knowledge production in the academic and art fields.

Let me try to explain.

From the very start of this project, everyone has pointed out that the animals are special, and I have to agree with this. Yet, it disturbs me that they disrupted the writing process that I thought I could keep cleaner, smoother. Sometimes, I hated them when I remembered their origin, but I realised that it is wrong to keep them to my-self; it would take away an important part of how I came to understand what I now understand. However, the narratives, memories and drawings are more tradi-

tional manifestations of artist practice that I am using to disrupt the binary between artist/academic production and the different expectations that that binary enacts.

I do not think I can answer your request in a way that is fitting the academic format but perhaps I can make some comparisons that might help my-self and those curious to understand what the memories, the more than humans and narratives contribute the working process.

I think it to be an essential part of my-self and not something that can be explained away in rational terms or something that can be analysed in a holistic manner, even though I have tried. The beings in the mesh and the memories share the characteristic of shape shifting in their instability when faced with difference audiences and perspectives; that is, they are part of my own porosity.

I have friends and loved ones in the natural sciences and they tell me that at a certain level of expertise you can see and sense numbers and almost feel incongruities and balance points. Perhaps for me the vignettes, drawings and animal otherness generally are just this? They are part of my process, perhaps the same human process that the mathematician uses when balancing algebraic formulae – there is a weight and logic that they embrace that takes a longer time for the uninitiated to grasp. Or perhaps the comparison to a surgeon which is the practical application of science in its purest form – a surgeon must use not only all available knowledge but be able to skilfully apply it in individual situations that can call for innovative responses. There is a jump from knowing something to the application of that knowledge in circumstances that test the limits of protocol and knowledge itself.

We can't really grasp what imagination or creativity is because we are bound by the limitations of previous experience and knowledge. With new technology we can see and hear creativity working in the brain, but we are

far from understanding the brain's mechanics, the body's meaning or the impacts of the cultural archive.

For me, it is associative and in this doctoral mesh, it brings to it a non-conventional way of thinking and manifesting research. These creative associations are like magnets in the mesh emerging as intra-actions with the rationalized White academic world that I encounter.

When I started looking at aesthetic decision-making, things were hiding in the margins of my working practice. I kept journals and notes from conversations which began to take on new dimensions. The margins of the notebooks were always doodled on, the themes were often repetitive motifs from nature a stylized tree or flower – they were like mandalas that I wandered into during meetings when I needed my ears to focus. The appearance of stylized text and the frightened rabbit signified a shift; the rabbit was something else and the text and image were agential - they were telling me more than the words. They came from me to tell me something; almost like messengers playing around in my notes.

It did not happen like you read in the books with a flash of light – it's a gut feeling that needs an answer. It is a glimpse of something - but the drawing, narratives and the things you mention - I do not feel them to be a creative invention, but they do tap into an imaginary one that I already have; they are just part of me and my way of being. They are my norm. They are also deeply entangled in the cultural archive.

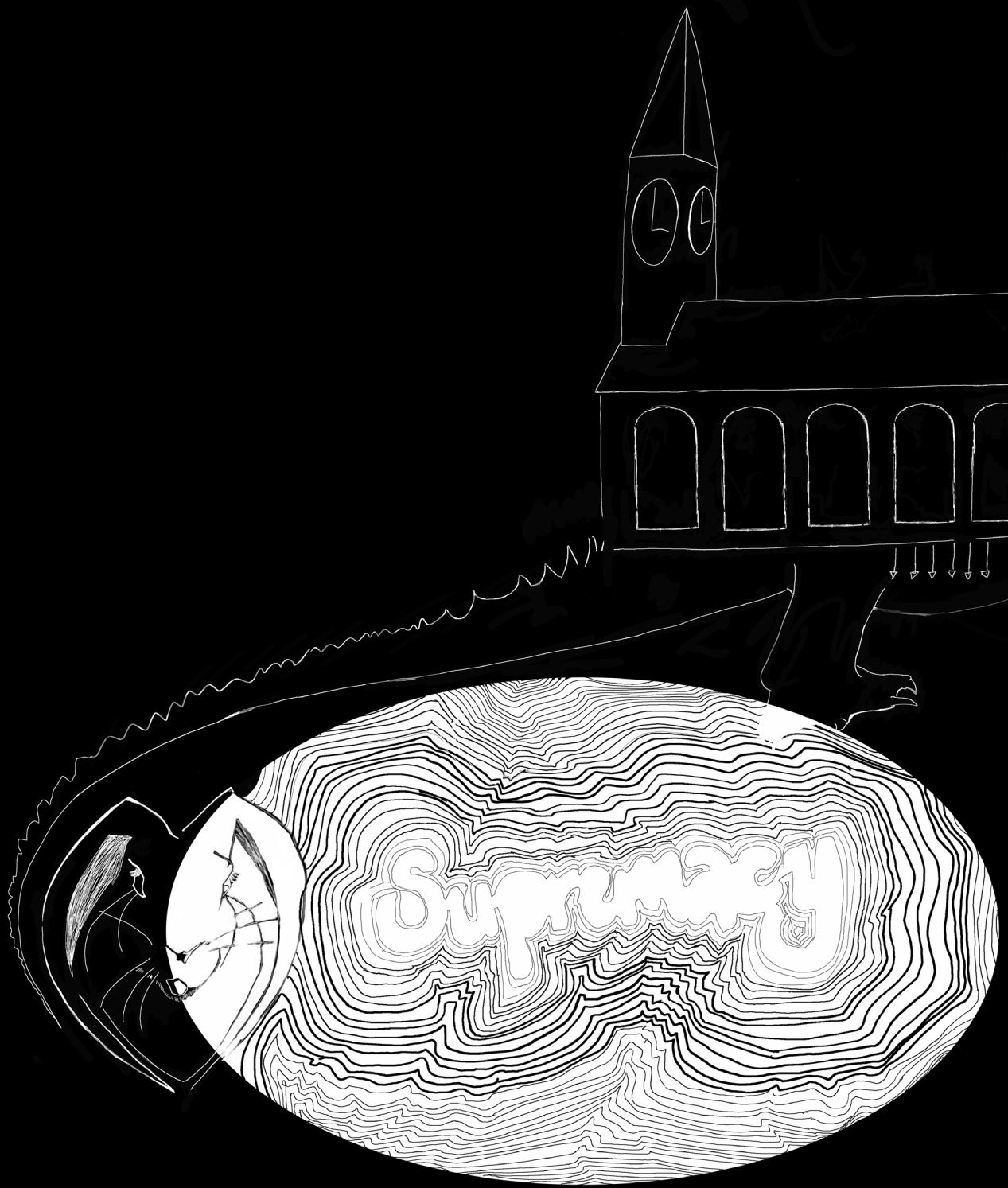
I don't know how they arrived at their mechanics or role. I just know that they are and that I must acknowledge them and their place in my own strange cosmology. They are there, they have their own agencies, and they connect with the world that I inhabit, through them my world has expanded to accept them as part of a plurality of being in the world.

I apologise that I can't give you more. It would be the splitting of a tortoise shell to expose a circulatory system pumping life around the creature. The tortoise has given glimpses of itself through the emergence of the other creatures. Isn't that enough? I fear splitting the tortoise shell would harm my animal otherness. Here I call on my right to refuse research. I think it could reduce a wonderful complexity into something that is easy to understand, but misrepresented.

I also think that trying to understand what the imaginary is can only limit it through a definition which makes it into a territory rather than a state of mind or being in the world without boundaries.

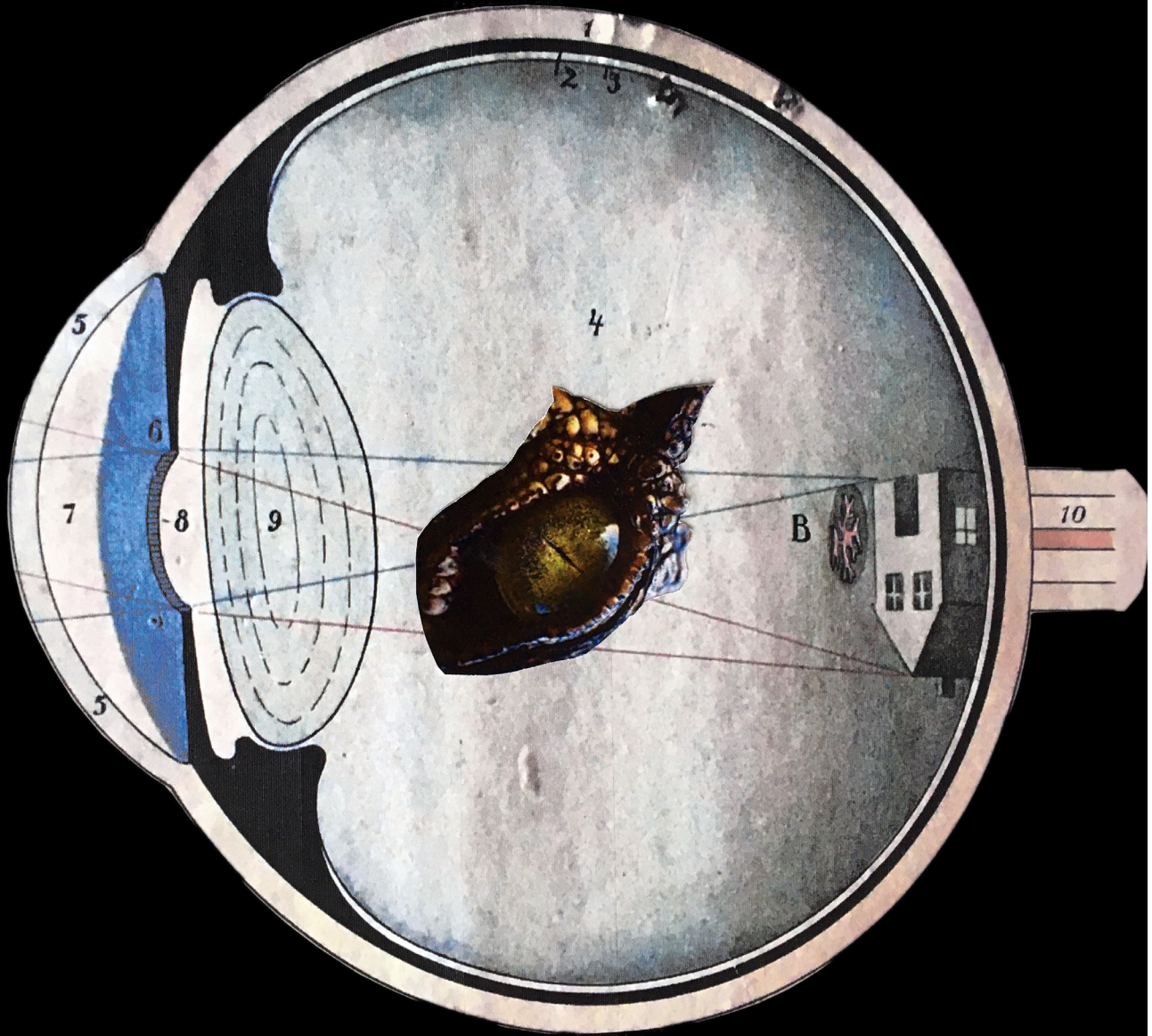
*Best wishes
Helen*

- 32 Critical race theory does not aim to compensate what is seen as a faulty system but looks at the underlying reasoning behind theories and reasoning with a focus on the rationalism of modernity. See Delgado and Stefancic, (2015).
- 33 New materialist definition of matter – and mattering.
- 34 For example see Gerlak & Mukhtarov,(2015) for a discussion on ontological/cosmological understandings of the water management and safety that transcend science and technology.
- 35 This is also a convergence with the definition of pluralism that I am working with.
- 36 Pre-modernity – in the sense that the roots of indigenous cosmology and wisdom lie before the advent of modernity.
- 37 Marked racialised according to Frankenberg's definition.
- 38 Furthermore, the recent official Scandinavian acknowledgement of indigenous Samí cultures, with their long history of cultural suppression, implicitly suggests that Scandinavian national states are dominating powers that 'allow' indigenous survival (Valkeapää, 1983).
- 39 For an introduction to indigenous understandings of responsibility, see Kuokkanen (2010).
- 40 Mignolo develops sociologist Aníbal Quijano's (2000) understanding of the modern/colonial paradigm.
- 41 These entanglements are the mesh.
- 42 As a visual artist, my understanding of the physics of diffraction is taken at face value; I understand it like a child learning about gravity.
- 43 The moments in which all classroom participants are hyperfocused and engaged in the activity at hand (Eriksen, 2019). Perhaps it is the enjoyment of a collective state of flow that makes the moment golden? (Walker, 2010)
- 44 Here, I think it is important to point out that whiteness is centred in order to name and frame its central role in producing race. Through naming this phenomenon as a productive agency, those producing it can recognise themselves in the experiences I have encountered.
- 45 The main campus site for the University of Agder.
- 46 Feelings are generally vague, difficult to precisely articulate and differ from subject to subject (Feldman Barrett, 2017).
- 47 Vazquez (2020) suggests that the basic question of positioning decolonial thought is 'Who is speaking?'
- 48 A common Eurocentric example of this would be Duchamp's iconic Fountain (1917): the title and the object itself are conflicting as liquids of urine and water conceptually circulate in the work in a way that induces an embodied response. The corporal aspect of this work is often under-communicated in art historical texts that focus on the temporal aspect of the work as the historical birth of conceptual ready-made art.
- 49 I and my-self.
- 50 My given name is substituted for 'I', as the word cloud software would not process the first-person 'I'. As you can see, Helen dominates and towers above the text.
- 51 The mesh is a transformational process whereby I unpack experience, insights and different knowledges. To be honest, in this mess, total transparency is impossible because I do not know what will emerge. The performative 'I' remains unstable because it is uncertain, and I want to open it up (Jackson & Mazzai, 2008).
- 52 This draws attention to the identity aspect of self. It asks questions such as: Who owns the self? How is ownership of the self possible?
- 53 Agential realism suggests that light and darkness are not separate –they exist within each other – and that a vacuum is in fact filled with matter (see Barad, 2007).
- 54 In this thesis, the 'question cluster' is part of a diffractive method that allows questions to remain in a more inclusive research investigation. According to Murris (2022), asking many questions simultaneously, 'tends to be seen in education as a sign of ignorance, of not knowing' (p. 80).





Beneath the surface



Beneath the surface

Vignette 4

It was late autumn in a foreign town two years before the pandemic. To your right, you could see a landscape. You had been there before. But how? You had never set foot on this path before. A strong sense of déjà vu.

Your ears and heart were hammering:
"I love this place."

The golden path beckoned me upward with all its charm, as it seemed to announce:

"Here I am! Find a map, and you will find me".

This feeling of uncanniness stayed with you. You needed to find something in your inner chartings – hidden deep away from everyday access. An attic of sorts. It would not let go.

What did you recognise?

As the day broke, a small dog yapped outside the sleepy bedroom. You could hear Toto, Dorothy's companion – you smiled as the Yellow Brick Road began flooding into your memory with song and magical vividness. You now realise that Toto is inside you, part of you somewhere. That small beast has become your companion as much as Dorothy's. He sits, waiting to be called by the gap of another dog outside. You wonder if a lion will join you as it did Dorothy and Toto.

No! It was not a lion without courage but a ferocious crocodile. You were standing on a manhole cover when it first emerged. The sewer lid was pushed open early one cold morning, and a crocodile crawled out to walk with us. Those old

myths of crocodiles living in New York and Florida sewers were reignited. It was one of the first times the more than humans travelling with you came out.

You were fascinated with the manhole covers scattered in the roads of Kristiansand. Those heavy iron objects were difficult to lift; they were a covering and an entrance to pathways we never dreamt of using. The manhole was like a cut in the epidermis: a scab grown over, joining one area of skin to another, pick, pick, pick, until eager nails peel it back. The bright pink flesh spotted with a bloody glow.

It tires you to think of all the possible ways the sewer lids can be interpreted, so you hold onto the crocodile because that is yours. Who would want to crawl down there? The manholes are decorated with meaning and ideology: the city's central institutions of the cathedral, school and town hall in heavy bronze relief of the quadrics of the town map. No people, no more than humans, just religion, politics and education inextricably bound together with the map to cover the waste eternally running beneath our feet. They were symbolic and representational at the same time. The powerful institutions of the city channelling the shit to where it would neither offend nor harm anyone.

When you told a friend about these thoughts, she smiled, saying that it would have been considered blasphemy to tread on the religious symbol where she grew up. That was another way of understanding. You fixated on the manhole cover. It started to connect with how the surface of the world, what we see, is only the surface,

and a question comes "What are those complex systems that keep the surface vibrant and alive?"
"What are the above surface systems that are active all around that we do not normally notice?"
I wonder if it is friends with Toto?



Trilobite dances
Helen Eriksen, 2023



I introduce this chapter with a memory of the first emergence of animals in the mesh. They were living somewhere in me: barking for my attention, warning me of the crocodile crawling out of a manhole and exerting itself in an exam room. It surprises me, even now, how a dog could conjure up a crocodile.

I held my exam presentation showing drawings and photographs on top of a grand piano⁵⁵. I was, after all, performing in a room made for music, not in a white cube. I started to think through the piano! I had pictures of my crocodile and my project plan on top of the piano. I had been talking about the research subject when Helene asked:

‘But what are you going to do with the crocodile?’

I replied, ‘Keep him beside me. I think it’s important to always know where it is’.

Helene asked, ‘What do you think it means? What will you work with?’

I replied, ‘My researcher bias, I think’.

Let us think through the piano, an instrument of aesthetic composition. It is still a central instrument in European music. The child prodigy Mozart, the Beethoven family and all those members of the canon had all sat at one. In its smaller version, it is a feature in the home of the educated and aspiring middle-class family. It becomes agential when we connect that conversation snippet with the piano’s materiality – its sleek black varnish, golden lettering and black and white keyboard. The keys were traditionally made from materials plundered from the continent of Africa⁵⁶.

Thus, the presence of the piano in the household tells us much more than the family members’ appreciation of music. It suggests that in a Eurocentric hierarchy of aesthetic pleasure, music produced in a local context is more important than the consequences felt at its material source.

The piano and the crocodile are parts in an intra-agential entanglement. Later, other animals become tightly entangled in unpacking pluralist proximity and safe ethical space.

3.1 **Animal transformations**

The animals are a fuzzy⁵⁷ part of my *becoming* through the mesh⁵⁸. They constantly reminded me that my imagination was

uncontrollable. They disturbed me with their ability to engage me in spaces to which I felt they had no connection. The drawings were often childish, and I thought them unworthy of inclusion. However, when I shared my notes about a specific gathering with Zahra and Gry, they unexpectedly responded. They loved the rabbit as a metaphor. I had not shown them the drawings of it yet. This surprised me; I assumed they would want a more academic language and, not least, a more complex artistic rendering of the feeling.

As I wrote to Helene earlier:

... I do not feel them to be a creative invention, but they do tap into an imaginary one that I already have; they are just part of me and my way of being. They are my norm. They are also deeply entangled in the cultural archive.

The undisputed centrality of the uncontrollable animals suggests the deepest affects of the imaginary. They are more than childish figures of my imagination. They lock into processes of racialisation and White dominance (c.f. Rajamannar, 2012; Saha, 2015). For example, I account for the white elephant in *Elephants* (Eriksen, 2022) as a possible manifestation of my intuition. However, as I diffracted the white elephant as a historical and cultural being, something else arose. I had no knowledge of the elephant apart from visits to the zoo. This phantom in my imaginary is a cultural object. I tie that proposal to novelist, painter and art critic John Berger's suggestion that the rise of the zoo and circus during the industrial revolution coincides with a general rupture between nature and the family. Berger proposes the nursery and its toys are a child's learning arena where they can master and control toy animals as their subjects (2016). Furthermore, the elephant's presence in historical Eurocentric knowledge suggests that human exceptionalism is tightly associated with the slavery of colonisation (Vázquez, 2020). Furthermore, the white elephant is historically significant as a reminder that the White and thus all racial identity was always understood as constructed (Bullen, 2017). The skin of an actual white elephant is a case of biological albinism; a lack of skin pigment gives a pink tinge to an albino elephant. My constantly insistent elephant is an example of how the cultural archive is alive and well in the Eurocentric imaginary. When



A collage artwork on a black background. The central element is a cutout of a fish, possibly a salmon, swimming horizontally. To the left of the fish is a large, semi-circular cutout of a globe showing continents and oceans. Below the globe is a cutout of a modern building with large windows. To the right of the fish is a large, white, irregularly shaped paper cutout. Below this white cutout is a smaller, dark cutout of a cross or star shape filled with a fiery, orange and yellow pattern. Another white paper cutout is positioned above the main white one. The word "Water" is printed in a clean, white, sans-serif font on the right side of the main white cutout.

Water®

Water
Helen Eriksen & Germain Ngoma, 2022

seen in their totality, animal interventions and entanglements in the mesh are the insistence of the cultural archive to assert itself through my imaginary, an imaginary that I have developed and stored since childhood.

Furthermore, they acted as a constant reminder of human exceptionalism. The animals are part of my White othering process – a visual manifestation of the stabilising isolation of my-self. Shockingly, it shows my naturalised ability to categorise everything, not my-self, as outside or beyond my-self as human while I continually try to brush the meaning and relevance of the animal away as trivial and unimportant.

3.1.1 **White Blind-spots,**

White blind-spots are seen in the White strategies of othering (Spivak, 1988) in many of the seminars and conferences that I attended with Gry and Zahra⁵⁹ and in my own behaviour during activities in the institutional intersections of art, education and research. Throughout the mesh, the idea of inclusion was normalised. This concept suggests that the White body is at the centre of knowledge production and that other bodies need to be included. The centralised position of the White body in institutional structures was never scrutinised, and if so, it was cursorily dismissed as irrelevant owing to the lack of competency in the minoritised population. Thus, the body of the minoritised was seen as a problem and pushed to the periphery of knowledge boundaries (cf. Spivak, 1988). The dominance of the White child participating in municipal programmes and higher arts education was never even mentioned.

In *Just Us* (2020), professor of literature Claudia Rankine flips the normal argument of the destructive effects of racism on Black children by citing the famous doll tests by psychologists Kenneth and Mamie Clark⁶⁰. She asks: 'but what about the adverse effects on white children? Or on Asian children? Should we care about that?' (p. 156). Here, Rankine is pointing to the invisibility of whiteness to itself and the way in which this White blind-spot converges in research that primarily focuses on the negative consequences of race outside the White body. How do we rewrite the script and grasp that whiteness is the problem and a consequence of the colonial binary split that is active in



Iron protection

producing it and us⁶¹. Here, Rankine specifically points to the child as a key to understanding how White supremacy is perpetuated⁶².

3.2 Silence

Pluralist proximity challenged stereotyping in the White blind-spot through localising race as it emerged. When Zahra, Gry and I made objects, images or text together, communication was not always in words. Gry and I repeatedly flailed about, trying to confront and *unlearn*⁶³ our naturalised whiteness. *'White normativity and its blindness to itself have repeatedly prevailed in our inquiry'* (Eriksen et al., 2020, p. 168).

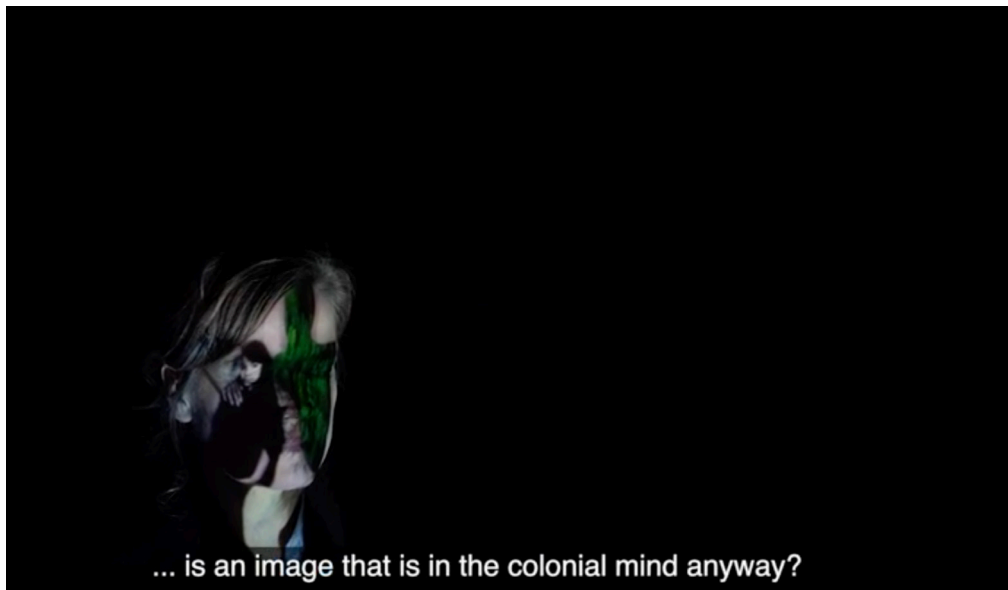
White blind-spots allowed us to operate in a safe ethical space, where we could legitimise the professional dismissal of other knowledges. White scripts emerged as tenacious threads when Gry and I started making images; our thinking was restricted. We were drowning in the White patterns we were performing⁶⁴. We were making race as we made our images.

Zahra told us that as a child, she had worn a chador. She transformed into the dark costume worn by the women in the illustration. Like a bolt

of lightning, the rock hanging precariously over the women's heads became a powerful symbol of something else. (Eriksen et al., 2020, p.166)

At this point, Gry and I silently agreed to remove the images rather than move forward with Zahra in the human condition of pluralist proximity. The silence suggests how racialising intra-actions are quickly buried for the sake of peace and maintaining a status quo. The underlying causes of this uncomfortable friction remain unchallenged. That silence converges with Zahra's:

'Then it felt increasingly problematic because I had thought that Gry and Helen were open and inviting people with a critical eye for stereotypes. In just a few seconds, these thoughts crashed into me and came back and rebounded in the room; I tried not to show what was rushing through my mind. ... Almost immediately I thought, 'we are going to have lots of other presentations starting from today, so it's best not to draw too big a conclusion'.' (Eriksen et al., 2020, p.165–166)



Film still (Solmaz, 2021)

Despite our knowledge of the power of whiteness to silence the minoritised, Gry and I silenced Zahra. Zahra repressed her own feelings for the sake of future discussions. But we felt that something had happened. It was simply too shame-filled and painful in the moment of enactment. The role of silence on both majority and minority individuals is not only evident in intimate contexts. Silence also plays a structural role in education and research (Ahmed, 2021)⁶⁵.

Silence maintained the status quo when Zahra and I were silenced at the same public event. Zahra describes how she reacts to the racialising resistance to her research: *'I kept my mouth shut. I was still shocked by such a direct and personal attack'* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021, p.29). My silent rabbit had emerged at the same event. Thus, it seems that the silence of the marked racialised and the unmarked White work entangles to produce race in intimate and structural contexts.

Silence was agential in racialising and stereotyping. Whiteness, as it emerged through our image-making, triggered negative emotions and was interpreted as bad, immoral and wrong. They were associated with behaviour rather than understood as complex phenomena in the intra-agential production of race. The embodied source of the coloniality of different forms of knowledges affects everyone, even Zahra, a trained academic in postcolonial theory.

When we were together, uncomfortable silences and disquieting dialogues emerged, and I became physically uncomfortable: *'We were all stricken by silence, and we have had to painfully negotiate and adjust our positions'* (Eriksen et al., 2020, p.169). I was confronted with my racialising attitude and behaviour. In the Solmaz collective projects, Gry and I repeatedly understood that we cannot break through our White blind-spots without Zahra's presence to destabilise our positions.

Through physical proximity, we came closer to an understanding of both marked and unmarked racialised identities as unstable. ... Representation of minoritised groups in dominant White and racialised hierarchies is an important step in achieving the proximity that we found necessary to include 'other' perspectives. (Ulrichsen et al., 2021, p.34)

We were struggling with the understanding of ourselves in emerging pluralist proximity. This is initially articulated in *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021).

3.2.1 Rupture

The open racial conflict described in *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021) is what the White art, education and research community aggressively tried to silence. The gathering ultimately succeeded in excluding a dissenting racialised voice to the periphery. This can be seen as a rupture that destabilised my ability to stay within a White group identity without seeking a strategy of comfort. Here, the aggressiveness and hostility of the situation allowed me to understand my-self in the condition of the rabbit (Ulrichsen et al., 2021).

Looking back at my journal entry from that event, I had written: '*what did Shakespeare say? If all the world's a world's*'. My-self was clearly outside prevailing whiteness, as I understood that we were enacting something beyond individual selves; it seemed scripted and was full of clichés, stereotypes and real living human beings. The silence surrounding the conflict still shocks me. It was noisy and unpleasant. It was only when an articulated challenge to whiteness came from another researcher that I understood that there was another way to respond and acknowledge my own complicity and the instability of my own internalised category of whiteness.

One of my colleagues was agitated enough by the verbal conflict and the response of collective silence – they refused to be still and take part in the act of silencing the much-needed debate – they said that they were 'tired' of White people in managerial positions refusing to acknowledge their part in a system that racialised people and their experience of the world. I saw another way to be in this situation. I ached to be that person that could articulate their position. (Ulrichsen et al., 2021, p. 30)

There is a continual pattern of whiteness emerging in intra-action with other knowledges. There are also several points of rupture. Examples are in *I look like a hungry African* (Vignette 2), where

Where does the script reside?
The my animals an invasion?
What threads of thought should I hold onto?
Will I ever find a place
How can the artist producing whiteness intervene in their own or my own
productive
animals shape shift?



Narrator's stone III
Helen Eriksen, 2022

the young man and I clash on my aesthetic decision of worthy, pleasing photography. After many years, this only processed as a rupture as I began to understand it as my departure point in this doctoral mesh – the vocabulary of a young Zambian almost instantly ruptured my understanding of the photographic act (Eriksen, 2022).

3.2.2 Resistance

As we became the Solmaz collective, Gry and I understood that Zahra was needed in our proximity for our whiteness to become visible to us and for understanding it as an unstable identity. Many emotions were at play; the most identifiable were negative irritation and being consciously disturbed. It felt as if she was interfering. Gry and I could easily dismiss Zahra's knowledge as non-artistic or invalid. Furthermore, our colleagues responded with the same opinion.

When presenting the animation for discussion, other White artists have asked: Why should anyone else's emotions concern me and govern my artistic choices? (Eriksen et al., 2020. p. 167)

At one moment, Zahra intervened in the making and insisted on 'being included' in the image. She annoyed me, and sometimes she even enraged me. I reacted from a space far within my-self. Whiteness emerged as an emotion.

Zahra analysed my picture and said that I needed to do something with the rabbit... she wants me to make an image that includes her....

Now! When she said it – it really annoyed me. It felt she was interfering in something that was my field, not so much when she pointed it out – she pointed to an element in the picture I was very uneasy with, but she had the outrageous idea to put the whole of Gry's image into my own. That clashed inside my head – I could see the two terrible pictures in a collage before me. (Private journal entry, 2020)

I felt it best not to mention this to Zahra; I knew I was being unreasonable. After all, they were only images, representations

of reality, not reality itself. Gry and I were still professionally engaging with modernity's idea of the artist as a skilled, specialised and autonomous expert. It is difficult to understand that I could still have that identity when I intellectually know about what that means for collective experience.

My headache is bad today. I simply cannot think enough to understand that I am protecting a boundary that I do not want to believe in.

Gry and I talked about our resistance to Zahra's input on our solitary image-making; we were confused about our own attitudes. Because we were exploring decoloniality, our moments of irritation were an obstacle. This *emotional block*⁶⁶ entailed maintaining a relational hierarchy in which Zahra's opinion was subordinate to ours.

To understand the mechanisms at work, we started to more closely look at our collective practice. Although Zahra was mainly concerned with interpreting the work, she also insisted on some strategies that developed images into a collective understanding of how the images worked together.

We soon understood that our opposition was grounded in the same disciplinary policing in the wider art, education and research communities that we criticised in *Antiracist* (Ulrichsen et al., 2021). The prevailing argument for exclusion was that Zahra had no artistic education and came from another discipline⁶⁷. She was invited as a critical friend.

Gry and I were reading reality through theory but implementing new thoughts in our own realities. Without the rupture caused by Zahra's utterances we would have simply echoed our well-meaning intentions (Eriksen et al., 2020).

In our case, we had to overcome our emotional constipation. Zahra was diffracting our production of whiteness and race and making new patterns. The new patterns that Zahra made through her resistance allowed us all to understand how resistance worked in the image-making processes.

If we had listened to our colleagues, this very productive relationship would have taken another direction. Our resistance would have silenced Zahra's knowledge, and we would have been able to produce anonymous whiteness in the zone of artist

autonomy. I doubt Zahra would have continued working with me⁶⁸. Zahra has the agency to resist; she will not let go of my White blind-spot.

The White blind-spot and its work in pluralist proximity emerged as a pattern. As I understand what is happening when Zahra is in proximity, I begin to understand other moments, small ruptures that I had stored away from touch. In the mesh, they insist on poking me in my tender blind-spot.

One such moment was the conflict that I describe in *I look like a hungry African* (Vignette 2). From the position of artist educator, feelings of superiority of knowledge, inadequacy of teaching strategies and anger at resistance are quelled to convince the young student that he was wrong to experience racialisation (Eriksen, 2022). He takes decolonising action, which is to make noise, to dissent, to resist and to intervene (Gopal, 2019).

3.2.3 Micro-movements

Interestingly, resistance is a necessary quality for artists to maintain their practice and preserve against obstacles such as challenges to artistic autonomy, professional failures and economical struggles⁶⁹. But how does resistance manifest in meetings with participants in a colour-blind setting? The exhibition installations gave vague glimpses of the dynamics of art production with participants. I saw repeated instances when both artist and student participants engaged in a silent disagreement about the spatial orientations of objects⁷⁰.

'I noticed students were micro-moving the objects in relation to each other' (Eriksen, 2018. p.10). An example of micro-movements from everyday actions is those tiny movements of cutlery and glasses made by a European person laying the formally arranged dinner table for guests.

The micro-movements of the installations puzzled me; why would the spatial orientation be so important? The curatorial idea was to open the exhibition room, where power was given to the uninitiated to make decisions about the installations. These objects showed a physical, spatial struggle to define an artwork when students directly intervened in the artist's definition of their



Material sharing

own work. The artists did push back. Some of the students also added to the work in a way almost unheard of in curatorial practice.

Kristina (artist) arrived and was introduced to a group of men who were keen to see what she would show them. She had a rucksack clinging to her back and seemed content to chat and get to know her group but one of the men, Basel (student), seemed impatient and he helped remove her backpack. She opened it and gave him a painting wrapped in a stripped⁷¹ cloth.

Basal removed the cloth and looked at the painting; he asked Kristina about it. A smile of appreciation spread over his face; he liked it. He seemed energised by it. It was quite a difficult abstract painting to understand but her explanation was straight forward." it was a painting with sky that I found in a sec-

ond-hand store – I decided to paint more sky on it-so it was only sky – I was living in a flat with few windows at the time and I used it as a window" Basal jokes about something and quickly moves across the room to deposit the picture on a shelf – he turns around shouting – what about this then. He's waving the cloth. No! comes a male voice back. No – perhaps not - Kristina says. He arranges the cloth in a particular way and puts the painting on it. I am impressed and daren't say a word in case I interrupt the moment. Kristina comes forward, a little uncertain, and decides that perhaps it's ok. Perhaps, he has a point; this is an installation. Kristina allows the work to stay and after a while seems pleased with the result. This is a game she is happy to play, she is open to shift. Basel looks round, a little insecure, but is met with smiles and acknowledgement - that art can work like that too (Eriksen, 2018. p.11)

In the event above, Basal tests his position as curator to express his knowledge of Kristina's work. When I re-read this passage, I remember this act as an everyday action of poetry. He latches onto the artist's concept of *sky* through the artist's own material. This coincidence of materiality shows an intimate everyday connection of colour that the artist had excluded or bypassed. He places the cloth under the painting. He is insisting that he knows something of colour and her conceptual intention. He is also showing Kristina that she has bypassed an association. He persists in materialising his imaginary in a demanding situation and despite Kristina's resistance.

As Said (1994) and Wekker (2016) point out, the cultural archive provides us with a predetermined imagination of racial stereotypes that uphold boundaries and expectations⁷². This free curatorial positioning of the students breaks the stable disciplinary expectations and racial boundaries that remain in the White blind-spot. Artist Lise Sore says: 'When I returned, they say they wanted to hang it on the wall, but with the sleeves

suspended on wires, turning it into a three-dimensional object. I was very surprised' (Dijkstra & de Bie, 2018).

Lise entangles her positive emotional state of being *surprised* by the unexpected results of the students. I take her 'surprise' to signal a moment of instability.

The surprise of the curatorial intervention and the openness and unfinished nature of the works are interesting. They suggest that the artist sees the exhibition installation as part of a making process.

Two young men introduced themselves, and we got to work straight away. I had made a sort of cake from clay, or rather, the students called it a cake. My work quickly changed under their involvement. Initially, it wasn't a work, and afterwards, it was one. That was very good, I thought. I struggled to think of a way to take control at one point, but I eventually left them to their own devices. I had characterised one of the symbols on the 'cake' as a 'happy symbol', but one student told me that wasn't right: it was a symbol of loneliness; since it has no eyes, you couldn't communicate with it. The young men also proposed a title: Felt Cake. I think that's a good title because it's their call. (Lucia Koevoets in Dijkstra & de Bie, 2018)

Both artists were sensitised to interventions, thus appreciating and accepting a shift in their spatial and material intentions. Lise and Lucia did speak of feeling challenged or protective of their intentions. Connected in an 'inclusive' gallery space⁷³, different knowledges and imaginaries affect their works. Lucia was corrected in her singular intention to describe specific assumed universal emotions through her felt symbols. The artist and curator participants were in pluralist proximity in these two instances. We see the artists' imaginary shift in a space of porous knowledge-making. They move through embodied knowledge with feelings of surprise or acceptance without the embodied resistance that Gry, I and, to some extent, Kristina encountered.

3.3 **Breaking the silence – Diffracting the Gaze**

In *Silencing and Slicing* (Solmaz Collective, 2021), Zahra points out that the White reading of her family photograph allows stereotypical reproduction, as it focuses on the marked racialised body rather than the White power to reinvent and stabilise itself. In the film, the embodied aspect of the racialising gaze is more apparent. The body becomes a site of violence and stereotyping. Zahra, speaking Farsi, tells us the story behind the picture. We are cutting a family with real bonds to make an image that will show the workings of the cultural archive. We need to know how we can emancipate ourselves from the colonising images of the cultural archive.

We all break our programmed silences and speak with the visceral spit in our mouths.

Although pluralist proximity can potentially expose the violence of the White gaze, the experiences of Lise and Lucia suggest that it does not necessarily have to be so. They exhibit a sense of curiosity about what can happen during interventions. This sense of curiosity is perhaps a manifestation of the porosity of subject boundaries, whereas resistance is the attempt to stabilise the boundary.

3.4 **The studio - a Continued Conversation**

In a very different relationship, Germain and I have been colleagues and have had conversations through, about and with art for decades. The collages used in this metatext involved a process of subtractions, additions and micro-movements. It was much a repeat of Gry's collage-making. The collages are one of many works where we find objects and images and make them into something else. In this case, we watched and discussed each other's choice and preferences, but the differences that emerged were minimal. Do we know each other too well to see differences? Are we already in a process of pluralist proximity that works to adjust each other?

However, these making actions of collaging led to conversations that opened up our understanding of what our hands are doing on a symbolical level. As an example,

Germain enters the room and says something like: *'I really like this work; you are not only dismantling but you are making*

something to fill an empty room'. Through this statement, Germain indicates a potential for the work to be part of the art discourse. We sat down and began to weave with a greater ambition, talking of how to weave, the pattern-making and the boundaries between ourselves and what we were making in the choreography of the weaving process. By the end of the day, we have made this.



Anatomical Atlas
Helen Eriksen, in progress

At this instance, we have the same departure point – that of the object of atlas and the content of maps. We slice open the atlas, releasing the book's mechanism, and slice strips that cut across countries and continents. However, our embodied knowledges seep out through our conversation. We start to talk about

what nationalism really means. From Germain's experience, national borders and land ownership have different connotations than my European understanding.

I notice Germain trying to weave his favourite colour yellow into the developing object. The yellow shape represents China. We see a link and laugh about the designer, but when I think of pirates as I weave in Mogadishu, Germain reminds me of Boku Haram; I wonder what a person from Mogadishu would say to our first re-actions? (Private journal notes)

The thought of that future conversation intrigues me. In this pluralist proximity, we were both reminded of a state that is deeply complex and not reducible to singularities. We are tweaking each other's perceptions of the world as we imagine it to be. We are also curiously changing each other's perceptions through the collage.

In another instance, I had just drawn an elephant grasping a rabbit on the wall of my studio. Germain looks at it and smiles; I ask about his thought. He relates what is happening on the wall to bravery! He surprises me; the brave figure is the rabbit.

In my mind, I had focused on the rabbit as the fearful animal, the exact figure that presented itself in *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020). It was a stereotype of an animal transferred from the cultural archive in the form of children's literature.

I have been caught, trapped by my White gaze, in these two representations of animals. I do not have Germain's embodied experience; mine does not go beyond the circus or zoo. I lost my footing; I was flung back into childhood.

Where did I know this from? I could vaguely remember a fable where elephants had been scared by mice. This African hare could cause a stampede. Why did I not remember that when I was drawing?

A thought sinks in my stomach that I can never really know the world when I keep repeating only what I know about the world. Our state in pluralist proximity shifted my embodied naturalised understanding. I was corrected and strengthened. In Germain's version of the image, the elephant is a timid, easily frightened

creature. In mine, it was powerful and fearless. Can they be reconciled?

Perhaps, the elephant is both timid and fearless? But much more than that, it is a gentle reminder that I could neither embody an elephant nor pretend to have an extended real-world experience. It showed me the colonial cultural archive as a shapeshifter reproducing stereotypes that suit the White gaze.

55 I continued with this dissemination practice, and it has resulted in the viva format of performance lecture.
56 The colonial project was based on expanding the European empire for material gain. The piano
keys therefore are all certainly a result of plundering and the dehumanisation of the peoples with the
knowledge that sustained these materials (see McQuade, 2023; www.theconversation.com).
57 Here, fuzzy refers to agential theory's understanding of a boundary being temporary and in flux. See
Barad, (2003) for details on boundary.
58 Their individual manifestations are described earlier.
59 For a further contextualisation of the seminars and contexts, see Ulrichsen et al. (2021).
60 These US studies of children and Black self identification were carried out with a series of doll tests.
In the particular study I reference here, Black children between the age of 3 and 7 were asked to say
which of 4 dolls with different skin tones they preferred. The findings were triangulated with chosen skin
colour of self portraits. It showed that Black children emotionally preferred the white doll. See Clark, K.
& Clark, M. (1950).
61 This can be used to understand Rosiek's argumentation for the need for a more complex
understanding of racism as agential and dispersed throughout society.
62 This is not an attempt to deny that such research is needed. It is an attempt to point to the need for
more than a cause and effect understanding of racism. This leads to compensations rather than
addressing the colonial roots to racism.
63 We also call this decolonising.
64 See footnote 4.
65 In Complaint (2021), Sarah Ahmed shows how the university as an institution silences minority voice
when universities process complaints of racism and equality. The criticism itself is not heard, and
the complaint becomes attributed to and located in the complainer's body. Ahmed suggests that the
feminist ear listens to complaints that are not heard.
66 Here I am using obstacle and blocking to suggest how internalised these excluding processes are.
67 The parallel to the argument that women meet in male-dominated professions trying to ensure gender
equality: there are no qualified women.
68 Here, Khanna's (2020) visceral logics of the individual body converge with intra-action. The space of pluralist
proximity is the location of emotional responses to racialising processes intra-acting between racialised
positions. In the episode with the animation, White incomprehension to the Zahra's reception of an intended
emancipatory animation was ruptured by an agential image that produced the materiality of race.
69 This can be seen in Gry's and my artistic resistance to Zahra's interruptions.
70 Winter depot and Spring depot exhibitions were different from Moment of trust. In the former
exhibitions, there was a rigid structure of shelves that the artists were asked to respond to. In the latter,
the gallery was so big that it could room monumental works and was more spatially flexible. Obviously,
in a group exhibition such as this, spatial organisation was responsive to other artists' works. In the
former exhibitions, some artists made small installations with a predetermined compositional structure
for the work. These works had an internal integrity based on the artist's intentions to make meaning.
This strategy closed the compositional aspect of the work in the same way that a painting would not
have been painted on during installation. I interpret this as an obvious manifestation of artist autonomy
within a conventional gallery setting. It is normalised and expected.
71 Striped – spelling mistake in original text.
72 In the imaginary, the non-European body is outside the boundary and thus unworthy of being included
in producing new knowledge (Spivak, 1988).
73 A space that craves to move away from the idea of art as an elitist construction and to be
democratically included through participation strategies. See Brenna's (2016) work for an analysis of
political participation and the shifting mandate of the museum.

Everyday entangled beauty



No words
Helen Eriksen & Germain Ngoma, 2022



The penny drops

The penny drops

Vignette 5

It must have been late summer or early autumn. Flowers were withered, and seed pods swelled in the garden. There is a smell of coffee that burns your nose with its still freshness.

You were getting to know your family. You sat in the living room of a small house in the small industrial town where your father had grown up. You were a young immigrant living with your uncle, aunt, and two cousins at this moment in your life. The youngest was crawling around, always claiming focus.

He was the pretext for the family visit you were preparing for as your aunt dropped a hat and woolly jacket on her baby and tenderly plopped him in the pram outside. You remember her movements as she speeded off to the corner shop to buy coffee and water biscuits. Her grandfather and brother were arriving soon, and she knew that the older man's diet had consisted of water, biscuits and vitamins in these last years.

You saw the car draw up and looked on as the elder was guided through the front door to his seat in the centre of a massive corner sofa. He was obviously a well-loved and respected elder, a stringy stooping person with sharp, piercing eyes and wisps of white hair. Great fuss with cushions and slippers for him. Small mocha cups and the best china were placed in front of you. It was a ritual you had gotten

used to even though you dearly missed the tea with milk that you drank at home.

To you, he seemed timeless. Do you remember sitting around drinking that bitter coffee whilst they chatted away? Your aunt was from the very top of Norway, born in the arctic circle. You could not understand a word they said.

It had taken you some time to understand what being from the North actually meant. Even now, when you think you know, it escapes you again. It is difficult to conceptualise a culture so far away, that you think you know.

His name was Mikael, and he was very interested in Britain and what it was like to live there. You remember him asking about things you knew about Norway and if you had ever eaten or even seen a whale or a seal. His manner was much the same as your recently dead Liverpudlian grandmothers'; speaking local dialects with their local knowledge, with obscure words and intonations; difficult for outsiders.

He insisted that you ate a water biscuit which you reluctantly did. This you remember vividly and have later thought that the old fox was testing you! No-one else ate the biscuits but him and he was interested to know if you had enjoyed it.

You remember your embarrassment at being honest. You did not like them and avoided the question by laughing and saying it was a bit dry.

He emphasised his question by inviting you to have another.

You said you would rather not.

Somehow you understood he meant something

else, and you were selecting words to keep up your end of the conversation.

He laughed and said:

"I think you did not like it because you choose not to eat one more. But you ate it though. You did not push it away or show distaste!"

Not sure of how to answer him, you smile

"who would take one bite and decide that they did not enjoy a whole biscuit. It would be only a bite not the whole thing. Besides it would waste!"

He laughed as he said he had never got anyone else to eat these dry wheat crackers he lived on. You felt as if you had failed a family test.

He started to tell you about his life when he was young, healthy and tall. Like your father, he had been to sea. You can't remember what sort of ship he had sailed on but in your mind, he was on either a cargo fleet or a fishing boat. His time was before the oil.

Your uncle later told you a story about him .. being in Rotterdam. But that's his story to tell.

The old man pulled an old penny out of his pocket and asked you if you had seen one before.

You could actually remember those pennies from your early childhood and told him that you and your cousins loved them because they were so big, even though they were of little value. But the really pretty ones had eight corners, there was also a shiny small one called a sixpence – which he told you was a man's hat – you both thought that extremely strange. We all laughed as our imaginations filled with hats becoming currency and coins becoming head gear.

We chatted about coins in the UK and Norwegian money and he told you how he came by the penny.

This is the story you remember.

He was a teenager walking across the Finnmarksvidda plateau, which is a moor-like terrain, without trees and famous for the nomadic Samí reindeer culture. He met an English man who had lost his way so instead of pointing him in a direction, he walked 4 hours with the man to the nearest road and then pointed him in the right direction. Before the man left, he put placed the penny in the young lad's hand.

The boy thanked the man but felt perplexed. What was the coin for? He understood it was a coin and that it was worth something, but he had not traded for it. It was obviously a gift, but he had nothing to give back and felt disturbed by it. He had no choice but to walk far out of his way to make sure this person found a path that he could recognise and read; that was not a trade that was what he did without thought of transaction.

He stood by the side of the road and watched the man disappear. He kept looking down at the coin filling his palm. What was this for? There was a picture of a woman on it: it was the great queen Victoria. He thought it big and beautiful and had kept it for all those years in his bedside table.

We continued to talk a while through our translators and sometimes they would talk amongst themselves and sometimes you could just grasp that they were talking about you. You had gotten used to that. You didn't understand

what was being said so you just sat quiet until addressed directly. You remember being tired of not understanding a word.

Suddenly this very long visit was over. As he got up to leave, pressing himself upwards with the help of a cane you leant forward to help him. As he straightened, he reached out for your hand and kissed it. You smile as he starts fumbling around in his pockets looking for something. His face bursts into a grin. He asks you for your hand again and presses a coin into it.

But he had kept it for all those years. You did not understand. He nodded and said it was yours now.

And so, it became part of your story.

And now, like him, you have been wondering about the coin. Why had he chosen to give it to you? And now you must also wonder why you are giving it to you, here in this form? It will take time before the penny drops.

But it is bound by its own sort of gravity, the same gravity that propels the stone through space – the penny will drop.

Its meaning will be yours to claim.



Colonial copper

In this final stage of printed dissemination, a dilemma becomes apparent – diffraction and the starting point of agential realism in quantum physics dismiss the idea of closure. The entanglements are threaded through you and are open for you to think with (cf. Murriss, 2022).

The penny drops (Vignette 5)⁷⁴ is based on strange and disturbing life events beyond my understanding. The warm copper penny Mikael places in that hand becomes a small drop of materiality. Its meaning comes as a ripple from the globalised economy and your-my-our-self as a young migrant looking for economic stability in the fluctuations in the colonial matrix of power. Only recently, when I discovered the penny in a box, did that memory flood me, giving me a different connection to the coin gifted to me by Mikael. His story is now yours.

My research is an intimate process of diffraction, reaching across fields and looking for relevance and connections to locations within those fields. I explored my marked White female embodied knowledge to understand how whiteness functions in my incomplete life cycle. The stable, centralised idea of the transcendent humanist my-you-our-self has shifted through intra-actions in the mesh (Marn & Wolgemuth, 2016). When the penny drops, knowledge will ripple around it; at this point, it contributes to postcolonial and critical race studies in art, education and research.

Institutional structures comprise educators, administrators and researchers, all humans who intra-act with norms, convention and policy. The mesh has shown how the cultural archive, safe ethical space and pluralist proximity are entangled through artistic and institutional knowledge production in postcolonial Norway and Scandinavia. The identities you meet in the articles become visibly unstable, unprofessional and emotive during racialising events. They suggest the disruptive potentiality for researchers when emotionally engaged (cf. Skregelid, 2021) and the role of epistemic disobedience with the academic institution (Ahmed, 2004/2014, 2021). Whiteness emerges as an unrelenting agential phenomenon with profound influence on the individual, irrespective of racialised identity. It is a manageable, rather than quantum, leap for me-you-us to a general understanding of how racialising learning happens through art, education and research in Scandinavia.

In this manageable leap, the embodied cultural archive is alive and kicking in the deepest White Scandinavian cultural imagination. In the mesh, the arts and academia play a part in sustaining the colonial matrix of power through normalising cultural and racial stereotypes. Said (1978/2003) warns us *‘that systems of thought like Orientalism, discourses of power, ideological fictions - mind-forg’d manacles - are all too easily made, applied, and guarded’*. During this investigation, stereotypical manifestations of the agential cultural archive shapeshifted as animals ceaselessly ran riot in my imaginary and invaded the research activities. I-we-you have experienced how the my-you-our thinking processes of artist autonomy, researcher protocols and ethical arguments manacle and protect the racial ideological imaginary. However, I am not the only archiver of the colonial imaginary. There is a growing need to understand the function and experience of institutionally sanctioned art dominated by the understanding and experience of art as White property in Scandinavia (cf. Gaztambide-Fernández et al.).

In *Stones* (Eriksen et al., 2020), the denial of exclusion or racism, by researchers and educators in positions of authority, and through claims of Nordic exceptionalism aligns with field-specific border controls in a *safe ethical space*. *Safe ethical space* operates to safeguard the status quo of White supremacy and to discipline dissent by refusing to accept knowledge production that challenges White institutional structures. Thus, at the institutional level, where art, education and research meet, White epistemic violence (Brunner, 2021; Spivak, 1988) forcefully emerges when artistic autonomy, freedom of expression and ethical protocols in art, education and research converge.

In the mesh, whiteness emerged in situations of pluralist proximity, where the cycle of racialisation and stereotyping was identified and challenged. Furthermore, intra-agential contagion suggests that emotional knowledge can be forge a pathway to intervention in the stereotyping function of the cultural archive and the social imaginary. Bodily feelings arise in pluralist proximity when I-you-we are engaged in aesthetic teaching practices. It seems they intuitively guard coloniality and protect the cultural archive. Toni Morrison proposes that the success of

the European colonial project was dependent on dehumanisation across the racial binary (Gilroy, 1993). Is it possible to humanise by struggling out of the Eurocentric racialising binary splitting between me-you and us-them and centre visceral embodied responses to resist the notion of a bound separate identity to embrace the human as porous and in flux?

We need to contextualise Rankine's question about our caring, of the effects of racism on the White child in the Clarkes' famous doll experiments, and think what the privileged White child's access to Eurocentric cultural capital⁷⁵ implies. Arguing that cultural capital is the way in which the culture imprints on a child, artist educator Ninos Josef (2019) states: '*If the cultural cycle is imbued with a colonial view of what is accepted as cultural capital from its very beginning, we have planted the seed for an exclusionary Nordic cultural sector*' (p. 3). It is difficult to argue that the child-teacher relationship in the cultural cycle is unimportant. If we do care about race, we need to care about the way in which the colonial cultural capital is entangled in children's lives. In the classroom experience of *Trilobites and chocolates* (Vignette 3), your-my-our teacher tells you-me-us that science models and dictates how reality should be perceived and rendered anew. When I diffract that vignette through *I look like a hungry African* (Vignette 2), dominating Eurocentric knowledge and hierarchies are reproduced through the teacher's position of power despite dissent or resistance in the learner. Like the young man, you-me-we resisted the teacher until we became silent. Your-my-their intimate sensual experiences of reality were discarded in preference for the dominating model despite the best of art-educator-research intentions. It still physically chafes me to know that I reproduce race – I cannot remain so. How do I-you-we learn to be otherwise? A spider crawls across my-your-our fingers.

I-you-we have convinced my-your-our self that there is a set of 'manacles' confining the artist, educator and researcher. Admittedly, pluralist proximity leads to racial emergences that are stressful, confusing and painful for those involved. I have no solution that can mitigate the effects of whiteness on the marked racialised in these processes. We can pragmatically think of this and name it in terms that exist. It is called

racism, and by naming it, I, you, we, the White subject can actively engage with it as a process of decoloniality rather than defending embodied coloniality to stabilise cultural identities.

In *Silencing and Slicing*, Gry's attempt at a utopian scene failed (Solmaz Collective, 2021). Nevertheless, the ensuing dialogue produced a new image when it considered the pluralist complexity of our racialised collective lives. The new and different pictures also manifest through the micro-movements, actions and conversations in and about the exhibitions. Nothing is finally resolved as we differently repeat our learnt thinking, but we learn to struggle with it rather than dismiss it as an ugly, unwanted emotion. However, it remains to be seen how the different silences divided by the concept of race are to be brought into dialogues of pluralist proximity in art and education. How can pluralist proximity be encountered in Scandinavia, where only whiteness dominates? This is perhaps a future research avenue.

If there is no absolute fixed identity, claiming that I am an antiracist becomes as impossible as claiming that I am not racist. Race itself is unstable and thus the positions of racist and antiracist are unstable. Thus, it becomes possible to be two things at once and to think about race through dialogues in pluralist proximity together. However, this possibility implies a desire to engage with that unstable identity and the emotional confrontations that implies. This can be a painful and awkward move towards a new imaginary.

Ultimately, this mesh and its entanglements resisted new patterns of racialising in today's Scandinavia. Pluralist proximity interrogates agency and power to understand the racialised and its functions 'not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are' (Foucault, 1983 as cited in Thomas, 2019). The professionals within art, education and research in Scandinavia are amongst the most privileged groups in the colonial matrix of power. Will individual professionals be prepared to refuse to be what they are in terms of racialising identities? When we are sensitised to pluralist proximity, in everyday encounters with race, it opens a potential to negotiate racial power positions

and disrupt the status quo. However, this move entails a shift in allegiance from the fragmentary complicit racialised White self to a more polyphonic understanding and amplification of ourself. It entails understanding the power of everyday actions and the consequences of thinking otherwise and understanding meetings as mattering. It further implies acts of trust that can embrace the positive and negative aspects of such a process (cf. Hauen & Klungland, 2023).

Tiny acts of opposition to everyday racialising processes are rooted in and repeated throughout colonial history (Gopal, 2019, Otele, 2020). At this moment, the most significant price for participation in the colonial matrix of power is still being paid by the least privileged in every corner of the pluriverse⁷⁶. It can be otherwise.



The leftovers after performance lecture



How do we practice whiteness and produce a new imaginary?
How do we commit to be different?
What is human?
How do we acknowledge responsibility look like?
Whiteness?
Human?

- 74 If the penny drops, you suddenly understand something; see <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/penny-drops>.
- 75 Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1973) ties cultural capital to social status and cultural competence.
- 76 The latest summit that created a climate fund for third world countries is evidence of this (United Nations Press Release, 2022, 20. November).

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Appendixes

Appendix 1

Text 1

Eriksen, H., Ulrichsen, G. O., & Bayati, Z. (2020). *Stones and the destabilisation of safe ethical space*. *Periskop - Forum for Kunsthistorisk Debatt*, 24, 156–171.
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Text 2

Ulrichsen, G. O., Eriksen, H., & Bayati, Z. (2021). *Struggling to decolonise ourselves as an antiracist act within the field of the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts*. *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education*, 5(4), 19–38.
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Text 3

Eriksen, H. (2022). *Elephants in the archive*. In L. Skregelid & K. Knudsen (Eds.), *Kunstens betydning? Utvidede perspektiver på kunst og barn & unge* (pp. 239–264). Cappelen Damm Akademisk.
<https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.163.ch11>

Stones and the Destabilisation of Safe Ethical Space

This article investigates the role of ethical boundaries for the academic and the artist/researcher in stabilising or destabilising colonialised positions of power. It stems from an increasingly urgent need to understand how the exclusion of pluralistic knowledge production continues in professional contexts and how this supports supremacist structural power imbalances. Our point of departure is postcolonial theorist Edward Said's (1935-2003) concept of "othering" the non-western human being via false colonial narratives, brutal invasions, and colonial settler practices (Said 1978/2000). One of the main focuses of post-colonial theorists is to reveal and criticise categorisation practices that refer and differentiate between "us" and "others", and denote subjects associated with the "West" and "non-West", respectively (Bayati 2014, 44). In this article, we investigate the process of Othering and categorisation that we encountered during various gatherings of artists and educators to improve inclusion and diversity in publically funded art education institutions. We ask: How is it possible to negotiate ethical standpoints when built on a colonial construction of Otherness?

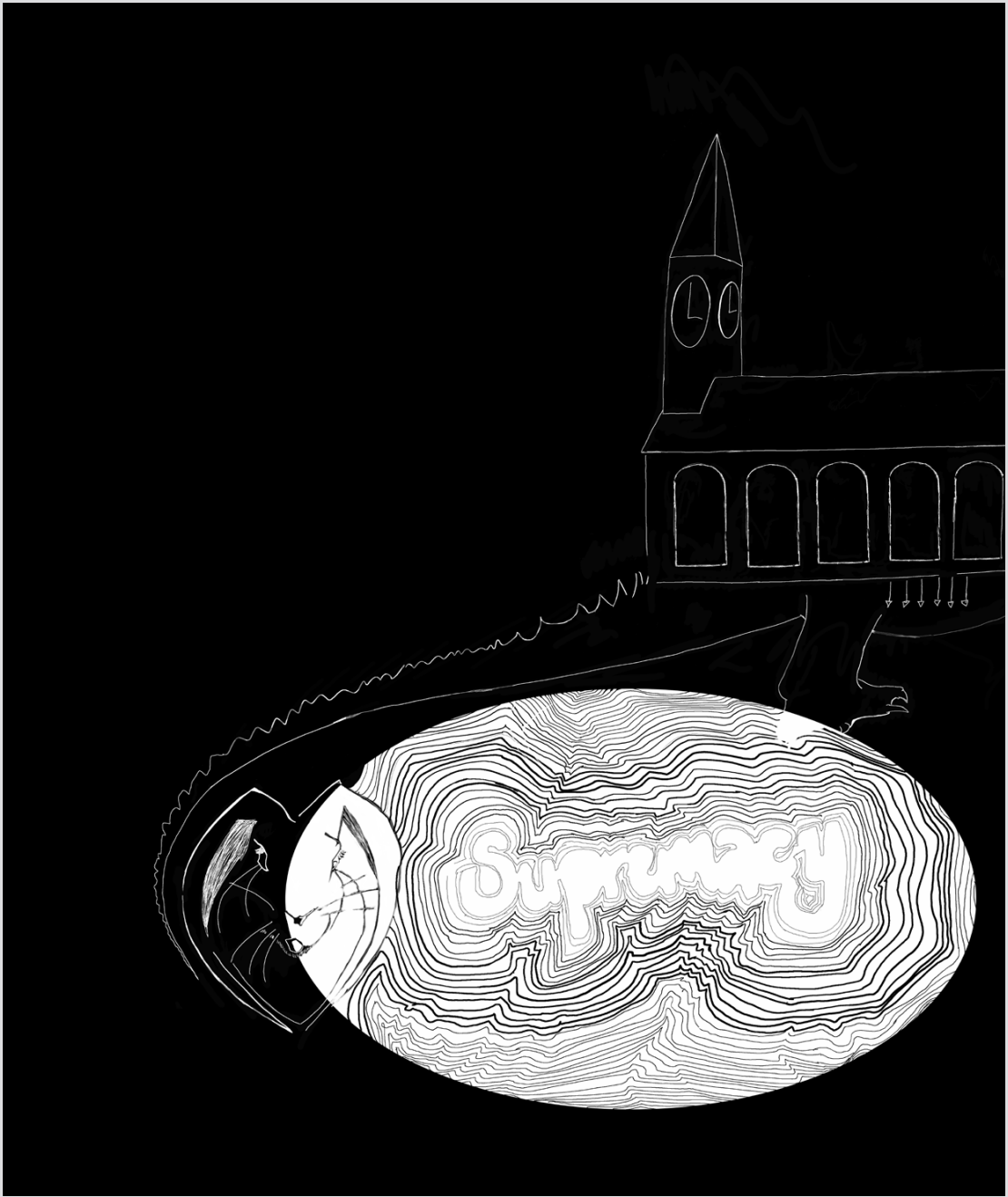
We have developed an understanding of an ethical practice that we term the "Safe Ethical Space," where norms and standards of ethics are used to dismiss pluralistic knowledge production. We draw on our experience as artists and researchers in processes and discourses of decoloniality, education, and art production. We consider how dominant ethical boundaries, albeit with noble intentions, support institutionalised colonising structures, in this instance art education.

There are various discourses of decoloniality and decolonisation that develop concepts associated with geo-territorial boundaries and knowledge production. However, this article sites decolonisation primarily in the body as a living territory, a specific site of intersectional, gendered, and colonised suppression. Theorist in comparative literature Neetu Khanna explores this aspect of decolonisation in *The Visceral Logics of Decolonization* (2000). She analyses involuntary bodily reflexes and reactions apparent in decolonising processes from literary sources including the works of postcolonial psychiatrist and political philosopher Franz Fanon (1925-1961). She maintains that these bodily reflexes and reactions are transmitted between two bodies.

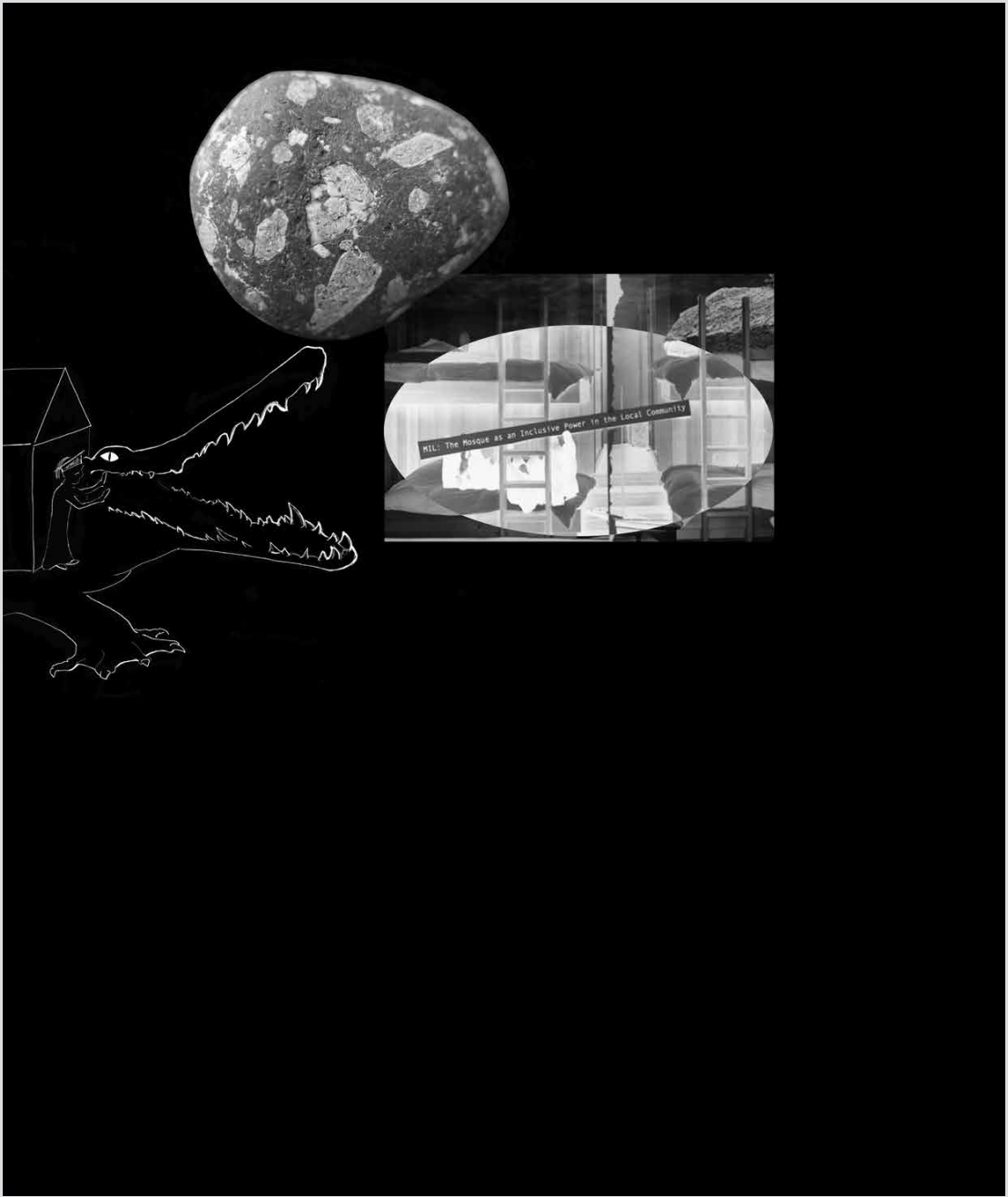
Furthermore, she draws attention to the discursive nature of postcolonial analysis that neglects consideration of affect and the body. She asks us to consider the consequences of undoing the visceral lessons of colonialism in the thoughts and emotions embodied in postcolonial subjects. We partially explore this question in the discussion of *MIL-The mosque as an inclusive force in the local community* [3]. However, where Khanna suggests that racialised historical memories are allowed to play out because they go unrecognised, this article draws attention to what happens in an aesthetic knowledge-making process when the focus of attention is the visceral or embodied reflexes of a conflict.

In the context of art education, as semiotician Walter Mignolo and sociologist Ronaldo Vázquez argue, contemporary research and art production are part of “the colonial matrix of power” (Quijano 2007) that controls global economies, politics and knowledge production, but also the senses and perception through aesthetics, thus colonising all aspects of human life (Mignolo and Vázquez 2013). They claim that modern aesthetics with its normative canon help disregard and reject other forms of artist practice. This decolonising perspective, read with feminist and philosopher of physics Karen Barad’s theory of “agential realism,” which decentres human agency (Barad 2007), allows us to understand how individual visceral human responses (Khanna 2020) come to matter in reproducing colonising structures. Agency in agential realism is not bound to any being or object: “agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has” (Barad 2007, 178). Reading with this understanding, ethical response-ability, the ability to respond ethically to the Other, in a matter or entanglement is central to decolonising research activities for a more equitable future (Barad 2007, 394-396; Mignolo and Vázquez 2013). We will later discuss how visual art functions as a material in ethical intra-actions in our desire to be response-able in decolonising processes during knowledge production of text and image.

>
[1] Helen Eriksen. *Throwing stones and hatching*, 2020.
© Helen Eriksen.



Appendix 1 • Text 1 (3/16)



Appendix 1 • Text 1 (4/16)

This study is based on an event that transpired between the authors/participants at a preconference meeting and comprises different intra-actions with emerging visual elements. We are inspired by duoethnography as an approach to study how two or more individuals give similar and different meanings to a common experiential phenomenon (Sawyer & Norris 2012). It avoids the hegemonic style of the meta-narrative found in autoethnography. It can serve as a means to discuss how “lessons of difference” (McClellan & Sader 2012, 137) enable us to unpack, expose, and engage in the intertwining of racialised voices and experiences.

Our individual narratives gain relevance through the intra-actions within the narrative structure, as well as with art making, and other humans. Helen and Gry produced several visual works articulating their own embodied understanding and experience of decolonisation processes. Gry used collage, text, and animation with sound as an entry point into the complexity of decolonisation. Helen draws colonising phenomena in the form of a crocodile and a rabbit [1] [4], developed during the inquiry. They are the sum of many conversations between Helen, Zahra, and Gry. All elements are visually balanced but conflict with each other as much as our positionalities tried to find equilibrium as we conflicted with each other in conversation. Crocodiles, in particular, are used to draw attention to dangerous false empathy when the colonised structures of any institution are questioned as in Ryen (2019): “This makes higher educational institutions resemble crocodiles. Despite their tears, their empathy is not with their victims” (619). The rabbit symbolises fear, flight, and silence as an embodied response to racial conflict that supports dominant White institutional structures in both the workplace and domestic settings (DiAngelo 2011, 55; Matias 2016). Artistic research practice, in the materiality of the image, brings forward and develops a conversation about ethical norms and behaviour across disparate fields that we could not otherwise have engaged in. *Throwing stones and hatching* [1] and *MIL-The mosque as an inclusive force in the local community* [3] mattered because of the power they had to provoke conversations about meaning-making and knowledge production through the agency of imagery, and our visceral and analytical intra-actions.

Our inquiry moves between two fields of research practice: art and education. Superficially, these fields appear to understand research ethics differently. At first glance, they seem to stem from incommensurable rationalities (Kuhn 2012). In conventional scientific practice, ethics are developed and followed through standardised guidelines and judgements of ethical committees², whereas in artistic research discourses, artistic autonomy and professional integrity have

hidden codes or laws of equal strength and dominance to conventional scientific ethical understanding. As art historian Grant Kester (2011, 1-17) indicates, the apparent epistemic pluralism in the field of art follows a prevailing Modernist doxa that regulates artistic knowledge production and the application of ethical codes in art production and art-based research. This doxa is revealed in the debate on artistic research and academic research. The distinction is made between free art on its own terms and unfree art that follows academic regulations and demands (Ericsson 2020). The concept of free art presupposes art as detached from ideology, values, politics, and a lack of epistemological training in art education. Where discourses of the artist's autonomy and individual integrity prevail, they lean on formalities, legitimising and arguing for a position drawn from art history (Helguera 2011). It encourages a micro-detachment from knowledge production in a macro perspective to reproduce an understanding of art production as autonomous and performed by an individual White male genius isolated in his studio. Thus the artist is perceived without a binding context and beyond a collective process, operating as an isolated individual in his production process where the object is presented and received as passive, without agency. Inspired by Barad (2007), this inquiry perceives the production and existence of images and the becoming of this text as intra-active processes that raise ethical questions related to our positionality within the colonial matrix of power.

Positioning within the Matrix

Our different starting points are embodied in us at different positions in the colonial matrix of power which is barely revealed in our bios. Zahra is perceived as part of the dominant Iranian majority. In a Scandinavian context, she is racialised as non-White and Other; she fled to Sweden with a small child during the revolution. Helen is unmarked³ racialised White, British with a Norwegian parent, she was brought up in the UK and moved to Norway in 1990. Gry is also unmarked racialised White, born, raised and living in Norway. All three authors have children often seen as Other due to their physical appearance: hair, eyes, skin colour. These different starting points enable us to challenge and thus destabilise the colonial matrix of power as it emerges in the setting of knowledge production. Individual identities are given different spaces and prominences depending on the context and the current power schemes by which our identities are surrounded and structured (Bayati 2014; Bhabha & Rutherford 1999; Gutmann 1999). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall's (1932-2014) description of cultural identities as "unstable points of identification or sutures created by the discourses of history and culture. In other words, a position rather than essence" (Hall 1999,

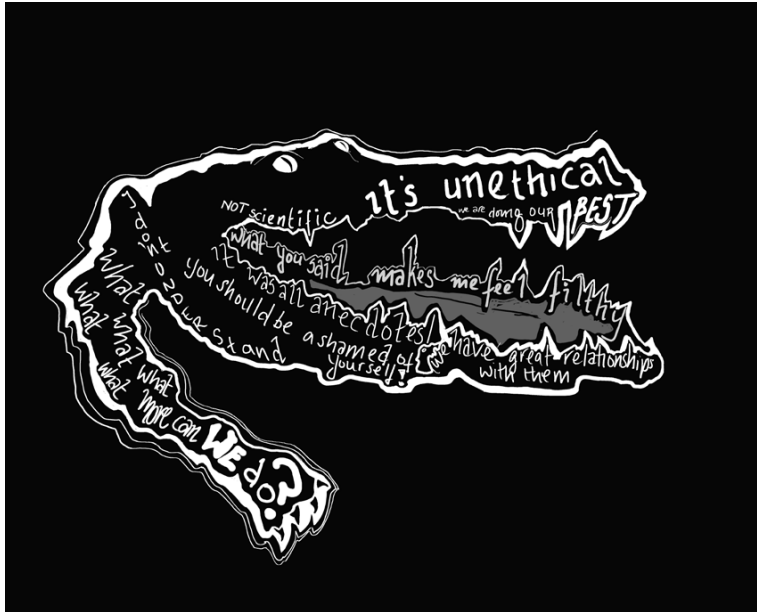
234) is consistent with our conception of identities. This instability of position is an important factor in this inquiry, since it allows for the transformation of the researcher-subject. As the study's main participants with starting points in our own singular identities, we encountered blurred and porous boundaries. This research contributed to the transformation of our identities with even more diffuse boundaries.

Point of Collective Departure

Our collaboration started as a post-qualitative mode of response to the enactment of aggressive reactions to critical perspectives at a network conference of teachers, administrators, and researchers. The conference theme was the inclusion of minority children and young adults in Scandinavian municipal non-compulsory art education. Later, we attended several other conferences with similar themes hosted by educational and artistic institutions and experienced episodes that questioned our position as anti-racist individuals [2]. Our discussion emerged when the three of us met for a preconference meeting. This collaboration was unplanned, but the situation arose where conventional scientific procedures were incommensurable with the reality we encountered. According to St. Pierre (2018, 605), post-qualitative inquiry refuses Enlightenment's idea of scientific methodology because it reduces reality rather than expanding it. Our inquiry attends "to the sur-prises that point to difference and refus(es) the impoverished answers we've given to the questions the world has posed" (St. Pierre 2018, 605). Thus, our inquiry begins in embodied experience, and uses drawing and collage as artistic research strategies to engage with the "provocation," "the anomaly," and the "too strange" which were our starting points for new questions and discussions.

Struggling in Safe Ethical Space

This text responds to the term "Safe Space for Unsafe Ideas" which was used by facilitators at a conference. In its conventional mode, a safe space is aimed at allowing a critical discussion by centring minority voices in settings otherwise dominated by majority perspectives. Zahra, one of the Critical Friends,⁴ was invited to talk about children and young people's encounters with art education from minority perspectives. During this session, entitled *Safe Space for Unsafe Ideas*, the Critical Friends were verbally abused and chastised for voicing critical perspectives on the lack of diversity and inclusion of identifiably non-western youngsters within Scandinavian art and education: fields and perspectives that they were explicitly invited to discuss. When we challenged the conference



[2] Helen Eriksen. *Struggling in Safe Ethical Space – Responses to critical position by dominant White majority at a network conference*, 2020. © Helen Eriksen.

initiators about the racial conflict this meeting performed, the dominant White and homogenous group leaned on well-known arguments of exceptionalism to defend their position. The good intentions of the White Scandinavian network members *doing their best* to create inclusive educational organisations was given precedence over the actual reception of those same good intentions by these two Othered speakers [2]. The metaphor of the rabbit [1] suggests Helen's reaction in this racial conflict typical of the fragile White response. The rabbit is frozen, unmoving and silent—observant, neutral, and waiting for a cue to run from conflict.

We asked: Who was the safe space for? Later, feedback from various academic sources questioned our ethical positions as our empirical material was generated during conference attendance. We did not have the delegates' consent to use our experience for research purposes. How could we have asked for the consent expected by prevailing ethical norms and standards? We did not know that this situation would arise and that Others would be attacked in a safe space. Our analysis of this and several other conference experiences showed that the idea of a "Safe Ethical Space" protects a colonised understanding of humans with



[3] Gry O. Ulrichsen.
*MIL-The mosque as an inclusive
 force in the local community*,
 2019. Animation still.
 © Gry O. Ulrichsen.

different non-European backgrounds, aiding in the reproduction of colonial knowledge systems generally and in art education specifically.

Ethical Response-ability

As we continued our collaborative inquiry, we began to look at our positions as ethical boundary markers. The embodied reaction to *MIL-The mosque as an inclusive force in the local community* [3] paralleled certain aspects of our earlier encounter. We recognised the rabbit's silence and neutrality and its desire to run away in our discussion of it [3].

All Those Good Intentions: Gry

I made the animation when I returned from a conference feeling troubled and confused [3]. Forty researchers and practitioners from the White Scandinavian majority working within the arts and education were focusing on the integration of minority children and youth in their art educational organisations. I wanted to draw attention to mechanisms and discourses about inclusion in art education [3]. This animation with sound defracts questions about who is present in the discussion about inclusion in art educational institutions and how invitations are distributed in the research community. The fictive discussion, between female members of a Muslim congregation, is about the possibility of persuading members of the agnostic majority to join them. How would they benefit, and what name could they use to describe members of that group? The words I put in the mouths of Others made the power gap more evident to me. In the anima-

tion, the vibrating rock in the upper bunk was pointing towards the force of self-satisfied White privilege, a metaphor of the complacent and self-sufficient work of inclusion that refuses to relinquish White privilege.

The Stone: Helen

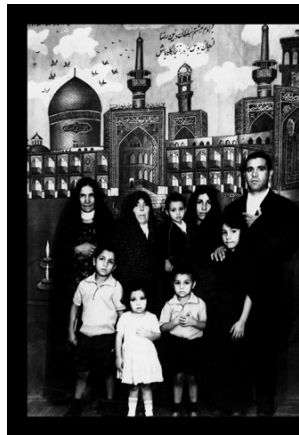
When I first saw the animation [3], I thought it was witty, idiosyncratic, and mysterious, but really didn't get it. It made me laugh out loud, turning the conversation on its head. It could be a good apparatus⁵ to illustrate how we position ourselves with the Other in our conversations. The stone was strange, it was cryptic, but I attributed that to the hidden secret of artmaking, the great ambiguity of the art experience—discomfort and laughter at the same time.

I Wore a Chador:

Zahra

Gry, Helen, and I were together preparing our first conference presentation. We discussed several suggestions when Gry mentioned a montage she thought would make it more interesting for the audience. She showed us a couple of pictures; one of them was of women in chadors⁶ sitting on the lower level of a bunk bed; above them on the upper bunk was a large stone resembling a cliff which appeared to be about to fall on the women's heads. My immediate reflection was to ask them: "Do you know that I wore a chador as a child and as a teenager, years before the Islamic regime?" [4].

I looked more deeply into the stone and its function in the picture. My first impression was that the stone suggests women's oppression in Iran. Then it felt increasingly problematic because I had thought that Gry and Helen were open and inviting people with a critical eye for stereotypes. In just a few seconds, these thoughts crashed into me and came back and rebounded in the room; I tried not to show what was rushing through my mind.



A highlight from this holiday was when we had our picture taken at a photographer's shop. We were all expressing something by our poses. The photographer had instructed us to show reverence for the holy place which now existed as a large poster behind us.

But I took my hand out of the chador, thinking it a nice gesture whilst my brother on the far left takes the pose as a cowboy from the films he loved. As soon as the photo was taken we ran to the bazaar and bought sweets and toys with our pocket money, which was for us children the high point of this holiday trip.

[4] Zahra Bayati. *The agency of the image: Where does stereotypical reproduction occur? In the image or with the reception?* 2020. Digital collage. © Zahra Bayati.

Maybe it was Gry's hasty withdrawal of the picture, her stiff face and widening eyes that drew me back into the time and space of the situation. Helen looked down and pulled at her mouth as she usually does when she is gathering herself and formulating. We were focused on writing a chapter for an anthology. Almost immediately I thought, "we are going to have lots of other presentations starting from today, so it's best not to draw too big a conclusion."

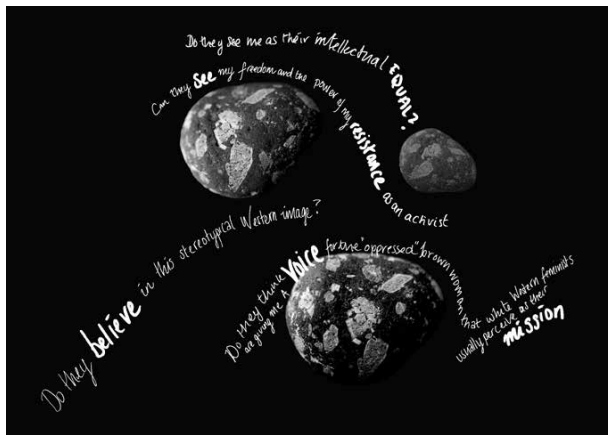
Throwing Stones at the Universe: Helen and Gry

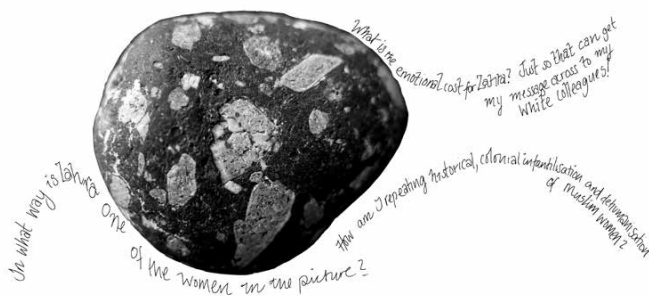
Gry opened some PowerPoint slides we were thinking about presenting; they included *MIL-The mosque as an inclusive force in the local community* [3]. Zahra told us that as a child, she had worn a chador. She transformed into the dark costume worn by the women in the illustration. Like a bolt of lightning, the rock hanging precariously over the women's heads became a powerful symbol of something else. It became highly illustrative of stereotypes of the female body in Iran and other Muslim countries, an image of death, morality, and stoning; it evoked stereotypical ideas of Iranian society. We exchanged glances and removed the slide from the presentation. Instead, we all agreed to present a physical rock as an object of resistance, the material world that says: "No! You cannot walk through me; I am the world, the universe."

The rock gained a meaning beyond our perception as we sat within physical reach of Zahra's perspective. Feminist social activist bell hooks (1990) describes

the appropriation of pain and the silencing of the Other: "Only speak from that space in the margin that is a sign of deprivation, a wound, an unfulfilled longing. Only speak your pain. /---/ I am still colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are the centre of my talk" (152). In this instance, we were not even aware of the pain we were appropriating. Here, we were complicit in ignoring intersections of Zahra's perspective and

[5] Helen Eriksen. *Zahra's unspoken questions*, 2020. Digital image. © Helen Eriksen.





[6] Helen Eriksen.
 Gry's unspoken ambivalence,
 2020. © Helen Eriksen.

experience; we relied on a definition whose consequences and meanings were perceived differently by Zahra, and to which we were blind.

When presenting the animation for discussion, other White artists have asked: Why should anyone else's emotions concern me and govern my artistic choices? However, we think it more relevant to ask whose boundaries should be taken into account when drawing up limits of ethics and integrity.

The Stone Penetrates Safe Ethical Space

Time actually stood still for us all. The stream of experiences captured in Zahra's sentence evoked a powerful affect. This decision to exclude the image did not take much linear time. We interpret it as a destabilisation, a rupture in understanding, a place to reconsider our positions and all our cultural/colonised identities. Barad's (2014) understanding of diffraction and entanglement in time, space, and mattering can be applied to this event between us: a moment of recognisable intra-action where coloniality/decoloniality of knowledge production was the matter, the material with which we were struggling. The stone of the past, in the form of the production of modernity/coloniality, the becomings of the future in the impending presentation and the incident collided through the matter of Gry's image. We were thrown into an ethical space that demanded we hold ourselves accountable and take response-ability for the image.

We were all stricken by silence and we have had to painfully negotiate and adjust our positions. If no event can cancel historical understanding (Hacking 2002), then experience, historical events, and understanding far beyond our immediate space or time function come to matter in our present-day existence. "We have to meet the universe halfway, to move toward what may come to be in ways that are accountable for our part in the world's differentiable becoming. All real living is meeting. And each meeting matters" (Barad 2007, 383). We now have to ask; would we have reached the understanding we have today if we were not together in that time and space? Despite working on themes of Whiteness,

inclusion and institutional racism as artists and academics, would Gry and Helen have been able to maintain a much-needed critical distance to their own Whiteness? White normativity and its blindness to itself have repeatedly prevailed in our inquiry. It is here that Khanna's visceral logics (2020) come into play: the space between all three participants in their intersectional positioning allowed emotive charging and affect to emerge where there was no apparent pre-disposition for conflict from the dominant perspective. Here, White incomprehension to the Other's reception of an intended emancipatory animation was ruptured by the materiality of colonisation. Despite Gry withdrawing the animation [3] because she does not want her work to stabilise colonialised power positions, our collective silence stabilises these positions to secure future collaborations. In this event, the artistic ethos of absolute autonomy is ignored. Still, an apparent function of the Safe Ethical Space, silence, is upheld in our response, which also inhibits decolonising knowledge production. Our reactions in this event were founded on a discursive awareness of our positionality within a (de) colonising practice; however, it did not create new knowledge. It merely produced segregated experiences that inhibited dialogue. As educational theorist Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2018) informs us, this silence was "too strange." It was a moment that we could later recognise as significant. Thus, the discussion present in this article is a disruption in recurring colonial memory, allowing an embodied or visceral logic of decolonisation to emerge.

The Safe Ethical Space—a space of normative ethical standards and considerations—functions as a silencer, even in close collaborative settings. It is entangled with colonised mindsets and enables the creators of images and texts to stabilise stereotypes and reproduce structural power imbalances through dismissing alternative narratives because they supposedly compromise autonomy and free expression, or are unethical. However, one central question remains in order to consider the structures upholding the coloniality of knowledge production: who is the assessor of ethical quality and how does their position in the colonial matrix of power affect their judgement of the Other and their knowledge?

Our empirical material joins discourses in a hierarchical, racialised system of power and domination. What we express and practice is not a single phenomenon of an individual, but an entanglement in the phenomena of the processes of modernity/(de)coloniality (Mignolo and Vázquez 2013). Gry and Helen had understood the theories within which they were working, but implementing them within their own realities without the destabilisation or rupture caused by Zahra's presence and utterance about her experience of the chador would risk a furthering of colonial knowledge production and simply echo their well-meaning intentions.

Where the Stones Landed

During this inquiry, we were challenged to work beyond field-specific norms of ethical accountability to allow for pluralistic knowledge production. This inquiry indicates that normative ethical conduct from the divergent fields of artist practice and educational research converge in their outcomes. Both fields avoid grappling with complex power relationships by deploying ethical accountability to protect both the artistic and academic positions of power.

Our well-meaning intentions, positioned to defend the Other, can backfire to further entrench colonising structures if unchallenged. Our collective work beyond the Safe Ethical Space to decolonise knowledge is challenging, risky, uncomfortable, at times painful, and by no means assured of success. However, it has allowed us to collaboratively contest histories, narratives, and spaces and raise questions about our own positions within the colonial matrix of power in our processes and quest for decolonisation. Our words and images interact through a critical perspective to destabilise ethical boundaries decided by existing power structures.

Our differing starting positions inform our divergent interpretations of *MIL-The mosque as an inclusive force in the local community* [3]. It's almost inconceivable that Zahra can interpret it that way when Gry has an entirely different intention. Neither has the universal objective truth about the picture. How does Zahra arrive at these thoughts, including the perception of women wearing chadors as oppressed and without their own will, in her own story? What invades Zahra's consciousness is an ongoing undesired colonial historical memory, evoked by the animation [3]. These images have been carved into our collective embodied historical memory for so long that they have become symbols of something more than clothing. The subtle power of the image in the animation allows us to reproduce stereotypes despite well-meaning intentions (of helping and giving voice to silenced minorities) and to disregard underlying colonising implications. We needed to take issue with the ethical substance of experience and intervene with how narrative, discourse, and art are normatively reproduced as if they were devoid of ideological and historical agency.

When discussing [3], Gry asks a central question: are her thoughts and expressions at all possible, or must they be compromised because of Zahra? In this complex issue, the question of free expression is not about Zahra and Gry's right to express themselves. We do not act as individuals; the relationship between us neither starts nor ends with us. In fact, some histories and spaces allow discourses to be repeated without obstruction and thereby be cemented as universal, embodied, and normative *truths* through the modernity/coloniality of

epistemologies and aesthetic productions (Khanna 2020; Mignolo and Vázquez 2013). At this moment in history, we liken these truths to a historical pandemic that surrounds us all and affects everyone around the globe. No one is free and beyond its sphere; neither the oppressor nor the oppressed. Furthermore, being the oppressed in any single context does not mean that one is liberated from the sedimentation of colonial truth.

How can we explore ethics and maintain opportunities for academic and artistic autonomy for different groups with different positions of power, whatever the context? The minimum ethical requirement may be that these images and discourses are taken up with those who have been subjected to stereotyping and demonisation. Our conviction is that we must question systems that support the global and Nordic continuation of colonial practice and knowledge production. The ethical response-ability of knowledge producers in all fields is to raise issues with ourselves and individuals in positions of power such as politicians, artists, and academics and strive towards a pluralistic knowledge production. We insist on the need for open discussions in professional arenas as well as in public spaces where everyone is held accountable for their words and deeds in coloniality's entangled matrix of power.

NOTES

- 1 All authors have contributed equally to this article.
- 2 Ethical Guidelines for Research (Norway) Accessed April 1, 2020. <https://www.etikkom.no/en/ethical-guidelines-for-research/general-guidelines-for-research-ethics/> and Vetenskapsrådet Forskningsetiska principer. Accessed April 1, 2020. (Sweden) <http://www.codex.vr.se/texts/HSFR.pdf>
- 3 Svensson (2020, 34) uses concepts of marked and unmarked racialisation. Marked racialisation is the construction of the non-normative body that usually occurs to non-whites. However, it is not always equal to a reduction of privileges, for instance a white person of European origin in a group of non-white people is markedly racialised but continues to reap the benefits of white privilege. Furthermore, the most common and highly valued form of racialisation which occurs to the white body, its language as well as aesthetics is unmarked. Svensson draws on a concept of whitened which she describes through the word whitening which emphasizes that all forms of racialisation, marked as well as unmarked, are human constructions. Those who are whitened attain their privilege by it.
- 4 The concept was in frequent use in the project an *Inclusive Cultural Sector in the Nordics* were the reference group Critical Friends was established with the objective to highlight artists and cultural workers with non-western knowledges and competencies. Critical Friends's mandate had an advisory function in other networks/institutions/organisations created through the project and contributions at conferences and seminars. Accessed April 1, 2020. <https://www.kulturradet.no/inkludering/vis/-/aktivitetar-og-initiativ-i-inkluderande-kulturliv-i-norden-prosjektet>.
- 5 For a wider understanding of apparatus see Barad (2007, 140-208).
- 6 Chador: A specific type of covering for Iranian women.

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Helen Eriksen, Gry O. Ulrichsen, and Zahra Bayati's contribution has been peer reviewed.

Struggling to decolonise ourselves as an antiracist act within the field of the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts

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Abstract

This article will investigate a general concern with the practical implementation of inclusion as recommended in policy documents in art education in general and the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts (NCSMA) specifically. We ask: What do policy documents mean by inclusion? In what way can or do art educators practice inclusionary strategies? We consider homogeneity in this field and the need for pluralism in this institutional framework. We will diffract discourses through words and images in threads from a post-colonial perspective, critical race and Whiteness studies. Struggling through our blind spots in knowledge production, we seek to understand how Other perspectives received in the NCSMA can emerge. The three research scholars from the field of education and art embody different educational and geographical starting points and differing but shifting power positions in various contexts. This triangle of embodied knowledge allows us to investigate these conflicting positions and perform intentional antiracist response-ability in research related to the NCSMA as an educational institution. Our analysis shows a discrepancy between general intentions of inclusion and practical outcomes.

Keywords: *Nordic Community School of Music and Arts (NCSMA); decolonising practices; response-ability; pluralistic knowledge production; Whiteness*

Received: February, 2021; Accepted: August, 2021; Published: November, 2021

Our article is a developing and collective investigation of experiences in Nordic art education that considers homogeneity and the need for pluralism in this institutional framework. We explore the dilemmas inherent in the implementation and practice of inclusion, as recommended in policy documents from an inter-Nordic

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Citation: G. O. Ulrichsen, H. Eriksen & Z. Bayati. «Struggling to decolonise ourselves as an antiracist act within the field of the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts» *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education, Special issue: Decolonizing perspectives of arts education*, Vol. 5(4), 2021, pp. 19–38. <http://dx.doi.org/10.23865/jased.v5.2978>

educational system, the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts¹ (NCSMA) (Arts Council Norway, 2019; Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2016, 2019; Kulturskolenetverket, 2019; SOU 2016: 69). NCSMA is publicly funded and organises voluntary schools for children and young adults throughout the Nordic area. The NCSMA's policy documents suggest the need to actively attract and recruit participants from a diverse society, which contrasts with the recruitment needs of obligatory educational structures. We agree that the recruitment of a pluralistic student body should be prioritised and seek understanding of how this is addressed in the art educational sector.

During this study, we struggled through blind spots in our knowledge to understand how other perspectives are received. We explore conflicting individual positions in Nordic art educational systems, in the colonial matrix of power (CMP)² (Quijano, 2007). The three members of our emerging collective, Gry, Helen and Zahra, embody distinctive educational and geographical starting points and varying, shifting positions in the colonial matrix of power and its constructed racial hierarchy. All three authors are educators in visual art education. Gry is unmarked³ racialised White, born, raised and living in Norway, and is also an artist and a doctoral candidate in these fields. Helen is unmarked racialised White, British with a Norwegian parent; she was brought up in the UK and moved to Norway in 1990. She is an artist and a doctoral candidate. Zahra's point of departure is perceived as part of the dominant Iranian majority. In a Scandinavian context, she is marked racialised as non-White; she fled to Sweden with a young child because of war and political oppression. Zahra holds a doctorate in educational systems and supervises doctoral candidates in visual art practices; she is the doctoral supervisor for Gry and Helen. All three authors have children often seen as Other due to their physical appearance: hair, eyes, skin colour. These different starting positions enable us to challenge the colonial matrix of power as it emerges, for example, when we were collectively working on the images.

The key agency in this article is the image. Its reception through our collective dialogical method is central to its final manifestation (cf. Vázquez, 2020). The porosity of our individual positions allowed the tacit, implicit knowledge in the image to reorientate our respective positions to otherwise colonial, stabilised phenomena (Eriksen et al., 2020). We tried to resist locking ourselves in our first reactions or thoughts; we tried to give each other time to change direction and allow ourselves to challenge each other's non-fixed positions which were apt to shift when confronted.

¹ We draw on the official Swedish translation of Community School of Music and Arts in this context and use the term Nordic Community School of Music and Arts (NSCMA).

² Quijano (2007) argues that the colonial matrix of power is a world power system that has colonised knowledge/imagination globally. This process was initiated during the Spanish seizure of land in South America and naturalised by the rise of modernity during the Enlightenment.

³ Svensson (2020, p. 34) uses concepts of *marked* and *unmarked* racialisation. Marked racialisation is the construction of the non-normative body that usually occurs to non-Whites. Those who are Whiteness attain their privilege by it.

Thereby, we began to understand our reactions as the emergence of a position that we momentarily inhabit.

Our analysis developed when we, the authors, met alone and in gatherings with other groups of academics, decision-makers and teachers in the field of Nordic art education. We were concerned about how the practice of inclusion meets recommendations in policy documents in the NCSMA. We found ourselves entangled in events and situations that demanded something of us as humans; they called for a response-ability to act ethically (Eriksen et al., 2020). Our research question became: What can prevent pluralistic cultural knowledge production in the NCSMA? More questions emerged as we pursued the research question: Who is absent in art educational knowledge production spaces? How is that absence maintained?

This study-as-assemblage is a deliberate performance of the kind of epistemic disobedience argued by decolonial scholar Walter D. Mignolo (2011, p. 45). It is an experimental attempt to contribute to the development of a more organic presentation of thought processes and creative forms of expression.⁴ In the following text, we move away from a conventional linear academic format to accommodate the complexities and multi-dimensionality of our collective and individual thinking processes. We alternate between positioning our subjectivity as we and as I (in the form of our various author agencies). The text, written from a we-position, is disrupted by interventions written from individual perspectives.

The initial intervention is placed as the beginning of our journey: Gry participates in a homogenous White gathering consisting of researchers, teachers and decision-makers aimed at inclusion in art education. Then the unified voice of “we” re-returns: centring the NCSMA’s historical and present social mission as we draw on post-colonial, theoretical perspectives and decolonising practices. Then we describe our diffractive method. Zahra intervenes: she shares her experience of offering her critical perspective to a group of teachers, researchers and decision-makers. Helen responds: she shares her experience and positions herself in a majority perspective to suggest the invisible work of Whiteness in the conflicting forms of silence and verbal aggression. Finally, we close in on specific entanglements in knowledge production and discuss the call to respond.

Gry: Who can Speak? Who must listen?

I came home from another all-White gathering in the Scandinavian art educational field focusing on inclusion, feeling troubled and confused. I made an animation of pictures and sound (Fig. 1) responding to the questions arising in me:

⁴ Cf. Barad (2014); Dovey (2020), hooks (1990) Rankin (2020), Shields & Hamrock (2017) for researchers experimenting with the conventional format.



Figure 1 MIL – The Mosque as an Inclusive Force in the Local Communities, 2019. Animation by Gry O. Ulrichsen. <https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/563166615>

- Who is present in the discussion about inclusion in art educational settings?
- How are invitations to participate in these discussions distributed?
- Whose knowledge is desirable?
- Which questions are permissible?
- Who is allowed to interpret and judge the definition of relevant knowledge in this context?

I was trying to draw attention towards mechanisms and discourses about inclusion in art education by flipping the lens. The words I put in the mouths of Others made the power gap much more apparent to me. The discussion in the animation (Fig. 1) between fictive female members of a Muslim congregation is about the possibility of persuading members of the secular majority to join them. How will the secular majority benefit? And what name could be used to describe this group of people? In the animation, the vibrating rock in the upper bunk is pointing towards the force of self-satisfied White privilege, a metaphor of the complacent and self-sufficient work of inclusion that will neither relinquish positions nor privilege to the people they wish to include.

My thinking resonates with Ninos Josef (2019), Swedish-based artist and educator: “If the cultural cycle is imbued with a colonial view of what is accepted as cultural capital from its very beginning, we have planted the seed for an exclusionary Nordic cultural sector” (Josef, 2019, p. 3). They argue that marked racialised children in the Nordic countries do not have equal rights, opportunities and access to participate in the cultural cycle, the NCSMA being the first stop in this exclusionary cycle.

I believe there is a need to focus on cultural production to be enacted locally, in the everyday institutional lives, on everyday decision-making with their situational dilemmas and challenges (cf. Alemanji, 2019; Haugsevje et al., 2016). The political and cultural debate must go beyond concluding that cultural policy is not working for inclusivity, diversity, and participation based primarily on statistical macro-data (Haugsevje et al., 2016, p. 82). I was immersed in a dominantly White art-educational gathering that demanded another way of thinking about plural representation, so I asked for structural action to be taken.

The managerial response was to invite artist-researchers as Critical Friends (CF)⁵. CF's mandate holds an advisory function in networks, gatherings and seminars that lacks representation (Arts Council Norway, 2019). Invitations to CFs is a strategy to perform inclusion at an institutional level used by the Nordic culture field in general and the art education field specifically. Marginalised or minoritised individuals or groups defined as Other (cf. Said, 2000) are invited to give their reflections on their needs related to the centre of knowledge construction.

NCSMA: Mission and reality

The history of the NCSMA is overwhelmingly dominated by a White western majority producing Eurocentric knowledge. From a socio-economic class perspective, the rise of the NCSMA in the mid-20th century had a compensatory mission to address the lack of access to culture and contributed to cultural production: to fill a gap between the different socio-economic classes (Berge et al., 2019; Jakku-Sihvonen & Kuusela, 2002). However, the contemporary flow of migration from the global South has resulted in demographic changes; in the Nordic region, class background is no longer the most central indicator of social position. Social position and its economic fundament have been racialised. Racialised people are excluded from upward social and economic mobility as their expertise is undervalued; most visibly in being overqualified for the job market in which they are included. Economic incomes are thus reduced (Bayati, 2016; Josef, 2020). This challenges the idea of what is possible and normative for cultural production in the Nordic region. Thus, the NCSMA needs to reconsider its original and established task of aspiring to socio-economic equality through conventional policies and strategies by reassessing the ways that pluralist knowledge productions are included or excluded, ignored and silenced.

Publicly available curricula and strategic documents published for use in and by the NCSMA express an aim to attract a more diverse student body to represent all groups in contemporary society. Recent enquiries show that extracurricular music education in Finland functions as a closed or autopoietic social system (Väkevä et al., 2017). In Norway, the NCSMA is “characterised by static organisation” unavailable

⁵ The concept was central in the project *Inclusive Cultural Sector in the Nordics* where CF was established as a reference group. Its objective was to highlight artists and cultural workers with non-Western knowledge and competencies.

to all children and is thus “Norway’s best-kept secret” (Berge et al. 2019 p. 186–187, our translation). Furthermore, frequent and continued launching of inclusivity and diversity projects in national as well as Nordic programmes suggests that inclusivity is difficult to accomplish. The Nordic national states’ ministerial and art educational institutional policy documents specifically articulate the idea that cultural expression is indicative of freedom (democracy) and transformation (development). A strategic document from the NCSMA states:

Art and culture create arenas for belonging, community and participation that are a prerequisite for Nordic democracy [...] NCSMA shall be an accessible place in the lives of children and young people, for art and cultural experiences, for personal, social and artistic growth and development, regardless of gender, social class, ethnicity, orientation, economy and origin [...] NCSMA must be a carrier of continuity and tradition, but also be at the forefront of art and cultural development and relevant in the society from which it springs. (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2020, p. 3)

However, there is a tendency towards arts advocacy rather than critical thinking in art education. Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, Amelia Kraehe and Stephen Carpenter (2018) claim that the emphasis has rather been how the arts can challenge racism and encourage social justice than looking at how racism and White supremacy define and constitute the field. The tendency to advocate rather than to think critically about its field of knowledge production can be attributed to the often fragile status of the art institutions:

The arts in education has been late to reckon with its racist past and white supremacist present. This is in part because the scholarship of the arts in education has been largely about arts advocacy, and as such there has been a general reluctance among arts educators and researchers to recognize, theorize, and address the ways in which the arts operate in relation to and are implicated in white supremacy. (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2018, p. 2)

We consider it imperative to challenge any “well-meaning” policy based on ineffective advocacy of the arts.

Knowledge production, entanglements and the call to response

We met with specific entanglements in the NCSMA that we analyse through our understandings from the transdisciplinary fields of post-colonial, critical race and Whiteness theories and processes of decoloniality. Post-colonial theories relying on understandings of the western practice of Othering (Said, 2000) and the silencing of the subaltern (Spivak, 1988) provide a framework in this study to explore the absence of the discursive Other in the NCSMA. Furthermore, contemporary research and cultural production are entangled in the colonial matrix of power (CMP) that controls all aspects of human life through mechanisms of global economies, politics and knowledge production, as well as aesthetics through the senses and perception (Mignolo & Vázquez, 2013).

This entanglement can be contextualised by understanding the limitations of the Cartesian logic of modernity (Feyerabend, 2010) with its dualistic preferences that prioritise expansion and technological innovation and create a binary split between the environment and human life forms and the development of the separated subject (Barad, 2007; Ferreira Da Silva, 2007). The ongoing Enlightenment discourse of emancipation is based on changes within the existing system and unquestioning about the logics of coloniality that emerging nation-states were enacting. Modern aesthetics founded on Enlightenment logic conserves a normative canon to disregard and reject other forms of artist practice as being proper and true art forms (Kester, 2011, Mignolo & Vázquez, 2013; Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2018; Vázquez, 2020).

Critical race and Whiteness theories understand Whiteness as a racialising category that dominates all categorisation through unarticulated White privilege (McIntosh, 1988). When White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011) manifests in racial conflict, it is seen in “the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear and guilt and behaviours such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation” (p. 54). White innocence (Wekker, 2016) explores the social paradox of denial of racial discrimination and historical colonial violence. Both innocence and fragility are structures that could unwittingly support an oppressive colonial structure, that is, White supremacy, despite the good intentions of the subject. White supremacy as articulated here is hidden, non-articulated and commonsensical for the dominant group and thoroughly epistemologically, ontologically and culturally embedded (Bayati, 2014; Mills, 2015; Wekker 2016).

The concepts of Whiteness and White supremacy and their implications for Nordic societies can be understood through another concept: Nordic exceptionalism (Hansen et al., 2015; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). Nordic exceptionalism is the notion of self and the understanding of the Other in Nordic countries. It perpetuates the idea of neutrality, peace, equity and social equality with satisfied nations and citizens who believe they have for example a generous asylum policy. The public welfare system is assumed to be the perfect role model at the forefront of antiracism, feminism and the environmental movement (Hansen et al., 2015; Lundström & Hübinette, 2020; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). Contextualising this chapter with Nordic exceptionalism will allow the reader to notice a gap between good intentions and the failing implementation of inclusionary NCSMA policy. In our specific art and academic contexts, our challenge to Nordic exceptionalism is inspired by indigenous political scientist Rauna Kuokkanen’s concept of homework (2010). She refers to Derrida’s argument that if theory is to be grounded in the practice of everyday life, any intervention in the process of decolonisation has to be more than theoretical but performed in social and material relationality with bodies of resistance (Lugones, 2010). Rather than doing fieldwork outside, we are working to make our home, that is, the art education system, a pluralistic place of work with a more hospitable environment for everyone to work and thrive in.

Tracing diffractive methodology

The starting points for our collective are the experiences of being a CF (Zahra) and being participants in a gathering where CFs were invited (Gry and Helen). We are three co-researcher-subjects as we became our own research subjects. Over the course of 24 months, we held two-hourly weekly meetings predominately in virtual spaces. Our empirical material emerged as we diffracted theoretically and embodied understandings. Our sources were individual note-/logbooks, memory work, social media chats and e-mail correspondence between us, drawings, animation and collages, literature, the socio-historical context and the study of policy documents, colleagues' input on our work, experiences in conferences presenting this inquiry and our own autobiographical stories. We also delved into official reports and communicated, challenged and provoked each other in our internal discussions. For example, Gry used collage, text, and animation with sound as an entry into the complexity of decolonisation (Fig. 1 and 2). Helen draws colonising phenomena in the form of a rabbit and a polar bear (Fig. 3) developed during the inquiry. In our analysis, "thinking and feeling cannot be understood as separated but entangled" (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013, p. 676). All authors have contributed to the composition of the images through dialogue and comments exemplified in Figure 2 and the following comment.

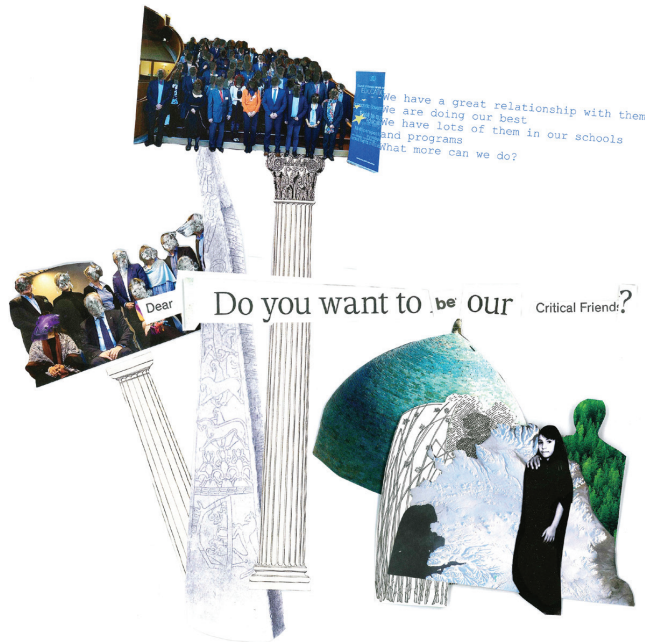


Figure 2 Dear, Do You Want to be Our Critical Friend. Collage by Gry O. Ulrichsen

Zahra's rendering of Gry's collage in Figure 2:

My interpretation is that the right side of the image represents the good intentions of the project that I described earlier; it is about White subjectivity. The left side of the image shows how good intentions make themselves a subject and the Other an object. At the same time as you have made the picture of me as a child visible, you have erased my family and turned them into somewhat ghostly figures.⁶ How about moving and putting them onto the heads with the White gaze at the top of the pillars where they are ghosts in the colonial mind anyway. My family are real and exist! You must show more clearly that the ghostly figures are the White gaze's projection of their own colonial and racist historical narrative. The White gaze is cut off from the child's reality because there is a pre-existing colonial stereotype of those children and their parents and their relationships.

The epistemological concerns produced in this text are founded on the concept of diffraction (Barad, 2007, 2014). This concept allows a way of understanding the complexity of decolonising processes in our study. Diffraction allows new patterns to emerge if we understand our positions as entangled in many differing phenomena beyond linear cause-and-effect scenarios. We experience research as having a performative agency of its own. Through it, we explore our entanglement as research subjects within the academic discourses: art education, decoloniality, and antiracism. We observe that we move in a porous, nomadic manner between qualitative and post-qualitative inquiry,⁷ searching the outskirts of methodology to understand different perspectives, experiences, and conflicts in our collective. A diffractive analysis allows us to inquire into "encounters of multiple material- discursive agents and situated practices, and what emerges as differences in these events" (Lenz Taguchi & Palmer, 2013, p. 672).

Furthermore, we incorporate the materiality of art production when generating analysis, as well as when disseminating results. In dialogue and analysis between us, we produced several visual works articulating our own effect and embodied experiences. In the intra-action during image co-construction, we come to understand the entanglements and reciprocal response-ability of the maker and receiver of the image (see Fig. 2 and 3). Our images unpack artistic methods starting from individual artistic actions and are developed through peer discussion, transferring them to a transdisciplinary expression. This enables us to unpack our lived and racialised experiences.

⁶ See Eriksen et al. (2020) p. 165, Fig 4.

⁷ Inspired by Bhattacharya's (2018) use of Anzaldúa's notion on being a *Nepantla*, whilst moving in and out of multiple worlds without being indoctrinated in any particular one, we certainly are aware of the possible danger of promoting post-qualitative research as something "new" and "better".

Zahra: Safe space for whose unsafe idea?

In my position as a senior lecturer, I have been invited to speak at countless seminars, conferences, student unions and staff gatherings and, on occasion, as CF, as well as an inspirational speaker to talk about my research and PhD thesis entitled *The Other in teacher education – A study of the racialized Swedish student's conditions in the era of globalization* (Bayati, 2014).

This time, another researcher and I had been invited as CFs to present our perspectives on inclusion and diversity in Nordic art education and to participate in following discussions in smaller groups. The moderator reminded everyone that the gathering was defined as a *safe space for unsafe ideas*.⁸ We both talked mostly about the problem of exclusion, colonial and stereotypical images, Eurocentric content that affected the education system and cultural scene in the Nordic countries. We were discussing how representation matters in education, knowledge production and cultural life in an era of globalisation. My presentation was based on my own research, and I presented the empirical results from my PhD study that shows how students from non-European backgrounds were challenged by and struggled with exclusion and other obstacles in three Swedish universities. In this instance, and in a dedicated safe space, our presentations

Helen: Deafening silence

My way into this chapter is through the event that Zahra has just described, as it awoke an understanding in me. It was embodied and can be described as leaving a feeling of unease that started a process of questioning.

I was at a gathering of teachers, researchers and decision-makers in art education when things got heated. Here, I find myself in the same position as always in aggressive atmospheres. I stayed silent – it was extremely uncomfortable for me to sit and listen to these CFs being bombarded with resistance through accusations of unfairness and suggestions of partisanship and over-sensitivity. Perhaps the idea that “neutral” scientific institutions could be considered colonial and racist triggered this outrage? Perhaps the representatives of these institutions felt confronted and incompetent? Perhaps the arrow had pierced their own skin, and they felt hurt?

A CF had just delivered a speech about the state of Swedish academia based on her research as an educational researcher positioned as the Other in academia. A researcher confronted the CF by reinforcing the suggestion that their institution was doing its utmost to recruit and keep the Other.

The finger of blame at ethnic imbalance in the Swedish university system was not pointed to the institution and its structures, but it was laid at the feet of the physically obvious Other. The CF calmly

⁸Safe space is in its conventional mode, aimed at allowing a critical discussion by centring minority voices in settings otherwise dominated by majority perspectives.

as CFs were harshly criticised with similar accusations from decision-makers or researchers from the dominant majority of our respective countries. We were denounced in various ways: of ingratitude, of being naughty and rude, and dirtying them individually with properties that they did not recognise in themselves; accused of speaking nonsense and relying on anecdotal references.

When we split up for group work, a researcher I was not acquainted with accused me of shameful behaviour and throwing muck on them. No one else in the group of teachers and or decision-makers commented on this at all; they just exchanged glances; I was so shocked that I could only say that what I had said was not directed at anyone personally and was, in fact, the results of my study. I also wondered why if everything was as positive as people were indicating why these types of gatherings were being organised to create inclusive and diversity in art education? Afterwards, I kept my mouth shut. I was still shocked by such a direct and personal attack; it reminded me of what bell hooks says:

Often this speech about the Other annihilates, erases. *No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority* (hooks, 1990, p. 151–152)

suggested that it was the framework of the system that sabotaged integration, and it held the power of definition about utmost in this context.

Another CF also had their experience refuted by a decision-maker. The criticism of the recruitment of children from minority backgrounds was not only challenged but refuted and disregarded as acceptable. They too were doing their utmost, and doing well, because they have minority pupils in their schools.

This was a meeting of affect. It was embodied in two non-White bodies challenging the system of producing Othering in education systems and art scenes in Nordic countries. In this meeting, witness statements were challenged and rebutted. Whiteness with its privilege and power rejected any form of criticism and thus closed the window of dialogue.

Here, emotions ran high; the room was triggered, engaged – here was an agency at work provoking reactions to the presence of CFs in a room of privileged Whiteness. If I took their place, I would feel highly vulnerable in this situation. What happened to this human aspect of the Other position in a safe space and unsafe ideas? I have never encountered such fierceness when I deliver an opinion in public. Since then, I have experienced that the discussion of integration strategies, despite inherent tensions, is always civil when Gry and I present our work. This has not often been the case when Zahra is present in the presentation: criticism of our perspectives can often be harsh and belittling.



Figure 3 Whiteness working through Nordic exceptionalism and White innocence. Digital drawing by Helen Eriksen

In the light of the bell hooks quotation, it is interesting to observe the surprise of Helen and Gry when they held presentations of our research without me. They observed that they met little resistance and were in a bubble of consensus with an audience that was almost only White Scandinavian. This is very interesting as it is the opposite of the reactions provoked by the same material

One of my colleagues was agitated enough by the verbal conflict and the response of collective silence – they refused to be still and take part in the act of silencing the much-needed debate – they said that they were “tired” of White people in managerial positions refusing to acknowledge their part in a system that racialised people and their experience of

when I was with them. Their point was that my body caused the difference in reactions towards the same materials when I was absent or present. It suggests how entangled my physical presence is to the reception of our research. Do they meet little resistance when I am not there because they have a privileged background? Are they more included despite having the same critical approach as me? Do Nordic White people understand the insight of Gry and Helen as generous, tolerant and open-minded as a reflection of themselves?

the world. I saw another way to be in this situation. I ached to be that person that could articulate their position.

I left the space with a question that has taken me on a rewarding, but painful path of understanding and growth.

“What if ... I was that White researcher?”

As usual, I weighed it up with another question:

“Why not?”

Presumption for structural pluralism and decolonisation

The departure point for this chapter is Gry’s unease at the lack of pluralism in a gathering about inclusion, in an art educational institution. It was a matter that caused general concern at this meeting. The prevailing assumption was a lack of competency in the art and education field in marginalised groups. In the Norwegian context, musicologist Sunniva Hovde (2021), drawing on Sætre et al., suggests that the lack of data on teacher background in primary and secondary education must be addressed as learners are found to place importance on the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of their teachers in learning processes. Hovde further argues that it becomes increasingly significant that student teachers explore cultural experiences outside of their own contexts. Hovde also draws attention to teaching being nominally influenced by structural policy documents. This supports our primary assumption of a discrepancy between well-meaning intentions / policy documents aiming at inclusion, and the enactment of critical antiracism in art education.

During our analysis we encountered entanglements that showed how and why racism emerges invisibly at an organisational level in art education. Helen and Gry emerged with a deep-rooted, undetectable ontological bias that White researchers and educators perform with research colleagues from non-Western backgrounds (cf. Smith, 2013). This coloniality of knowledge production is embedded in the Enlightenment’s ontological framework, with cultural and political anchoring and psychological mechanisms that enable racial inequality within education in general. For example, the Swedish school curriculum (Skolverket, 2019) describes current values: “In accordance with the ethics borne by a Christian tradition and Western humanism, this is achieved by fostering in the individual a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility. Teaching in school must be non-denominational.” The implications of our exploration relate not only to different levels in the field of art education but to a wider discussion of the ontological frameworks in western academia. Recurring questions kept appearing in our discussions:

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Whose knowledge do we recognise as curriculum?
Whose knowledge do we dismiss as identity politics or anecdotes?
Who is gatekeeping the definitions of valid universal knowledge?
What are the desired values of Western humanism?

Response-abilities

We were entangled in complex situations/events that demanded a response. We could not predict how any of these events would develop. If we could have foreseen them, we would have surely avoided some of them. Therefore, part of our study becomes a “flashback” to situations/events that we experienced as we became increasingly sensitised to what was happening when we were presenting our work in progress. We ask ourselves what are the response-abilities of the researcher in situations entangled with the phenomena of Othering, exclusion and racism. Our definition of response-ability is more than a response to the situation, but also an answer from a position of answer-ability: “ethics are not just a problem of knowledge but a call to a relationship” (Spivak et al., 1996, p. 5). Furthermore, our response disrupts existing margins to include the opening of a new discursive space for each other. In order to decentralise Eurocentric academic thinking and look at knowledge production as more than a transaction between the academic and art educational institutions, we would like to deepen the understanding of the relationship between institution and individual beyond the transactional.

We have opted to be transparent about our own starting points whilst anonymising other people and places. We do not identify specific individuals but focus on structures that support some groups of individuals whilst excluding other marginalised or minoritised groups (Eriksen et al., 2020).

Deafening silence, aggression and resilience

We recall art educational gatherings in which we participated, and racial conflicts to which we responded through our collective research practice. Here we saw the racial conflicts from the educational gatherings echoed. However, in the context of the gatherings, the conflict was amplified. The perspectives of the CFs evoked well-known bullying techniques of aggression and silence (cf. DiAngelo, 2011; Bayati, 2014; Matias, 2016; Wekker, 2012).

These manifestations of Whiteness intra-act with the demand of the Other to expand the margins by categorising and expelling challenges to dominating knowledge as irrelevant or uncouth (cf. Motturi, 2007; Said, 2000). The frightened rabbit modus, as in Figure 3, can be seen as a metaphor for White fragility and innocence that limits White emotional engagement in a knowledge conflict. However, the silence that is produced is an enabler for pacified colonial mindsets (cf. DiAngelo, 2021; Matias, 2016; Spivak, 1988; Wekker, 2012). It is only during the intervention of the

protesting White colleague that the desire to act otherwise is ignited in Helen. Here, the intervention in local structural processes not only challenges entrenched structures, but also negotiates and shifts individual positions within the CMP.

The resistance met by CFs should also be contextualised within the CMP as it coincides with a hardened political and public debate apparent in social media and the daily press. These responses include: the problem lies with the marginalised or minoritised group or person exposing and criticising social inequalities, excluding these critical voices from public conversations. Another symptom of a hardened public debate is the ready dismissal and exclusion of researchers with a critical perspective that challenges power structures from both academic and artistic perspectives, especially during processes of knowledge production. Critical perspectives are fiercely attacked when the person addressing these problems is a part of a marginalised or minoritised community (Ahmed, 2012) rather than when a member of the majority tells the same story as the earlier bell hooks quote points out. Examples from the National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) turbulence around decolonising the curriculum (Kallelid & Pettrém, 2020; Kifle, 2020), and academic artist interventions (Skovmøller & Danbolt, 2020), and fear of loss of academic freedom (Brekke & Heldal, 2020; Vartdal, 2019) show a polarisation. Critical post-structural thought and conventional knowledge production are apparently under threat when the premise for knowledge production within arts and education is questioned.

The re-turn

Re-turning to our research question: What can prevent pluralistic cultural knowledge production in the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts? During this process, we encountered clear parallels between our own need to include and be included and the articulated desire of the NCSMA to be an inclusive social power (Norsk kulturskoleråd, 2019). The organisational structure of the NCSMA is entangled with privileged White individuals in positions of power.

Our exploration was diffracted through multiple perspectives, and the total research experience encounters prevailing racialised inequalities. We tried to immerse ourselves in racial sensitising and the realisation of situations through intra-action in a context where the inclusion of marginalised youth was the main focus for teachers, decision-makers and researchers in art education. We experienced structural as well as psychological phenomena that restricted the emergence of pluralist knowledge. As researcher-subjects, our ongoing analysis re-turned us continually to a specific entanglement that obstructed pluralism and the inclusion of marginalised groups; that is, the continuing construction of Nordic Whiteness that is affected by and affects research communities, teachers and decision-makers in the cultural and educational sectors. This powerful Eurocentric phenomenon allows the hierarchy of White supremacy to keep the racialised CFs and other minoritised individuals in its organisational margins.

This study acknowledges the tensions that can arise when White positionality is paired with decolonising practices. Whiteness when considered a product of coloniality will always reflect the racialized conflicts of colonialism. However, we have needed to name our positions in the CMP in order to centre the process of racial destabilisation encountered. Through our collective work, race emerged as a point of emotional vulnerability. If the concept of race is to be understood as unstable, flexible and thus porous (cf. Garvey & Ignatiev, 1993; Painter, 2011), the very phenomenon can be open to a collective transformative process. We show that our co-research processes were dependent on the presence of researchers placed in different positions in the CMP. Through physical proximity, we came closer to an understanding of both marked and unmarked racialised identities as unstable.

We show this in our continual dialogue, for example, when Zahra articulates her reception of Figure 2 and when Helen wishes to transform into the vocalising White researcher. The intention is not only to shift position but to transform into another state of being; a state of being that can allow room for these learning processes. It is promising that the NCSMA articulates inclusion in its policy documents with the best of intentions; it does, after all, suggest a willingness to change. However, when the NCSMA is embedded in the culture of Nordic exceptionalism, as indicated in this article, good intentions become an impervious membrane of resistance to Other perspectives. The organisation becomes difficult to penetrate for non-Eurocentric thinkers and doers; its perspective of knowledge production is resolute and difficult to challenge.

It is time to direct the question towards larger structures. We ask ourselves, why do organisations and individuals experience pain when human inadequacy is challenged in the context of art education? The answer could lie in Spivak's understanding of a Eurocentric move of innocence; it is a "right" not to know or understand the constructs of racialising structures (Spivak, 1994, p. 25). How do we activate the processes needed to breathe life into ineffective, but well-meaning, policies in a manner acceptable to everyone? Representation of minoritised groups in dominant White and racialised hierarchies is an important step in achieving the proximity that we found necessary to include Other perspectives. However, it is far from adequate without its companion concept of individual and organisational porosity. The NCSMA facilitates the access of power to produce knowledge; the question is how this privilege of access is facilitated to all its potential students. All organisations, community institutions or groups and individuals need to consider their actions in the shadow of Eurocentric colonial structures and epistemologies. We claim that, through the NCSMA's related research on integration, there is an accumulation of privilege taken up by centre dwellers, benefiting from the centre's power and a continuation of constructing the contours of the margins (cf. Spivak, 1988). Space must be created for plural forms of art and Other knowledge so that they can contribute to a pluralistic and cosmopolitan knowledge production with many centres (Kuokkanen, 2010; Motturi, 2007).

Yet, it appears that the desire to be inclusive, that is good intentions, is in fact the foundation for a shift in racial understanding on a personal level. However, as this study shows, those good intentions have to be anchored in a willingness to enter into undefined, muddy areas that are painful to reconcile with the idea of the benign White racial self-understanding. These are subtle and ongoing processes that individuals encounter. We experienced that these processes can only happen if pluralist perspectives are allowed to develop through proximity and a willingness to engage with and actualise good intentions. Otherwise, we repeat Whiteness, which on a systemic level, creates systems that are inflexible and non-permeable, and that conserve a White European knowledge system. Thus, it seems that the way in which to be more inclusive is through proximity to individuals with different knowledges than prevailing systems. On an organisational level this means beings fully acknowledged and respected members of groups aiming for plurality.

This effort of practising decolonisation in an art organisation means accepting and rising to the challenges faced by dominating organisational and knowledge production practices, rather than dismissing them.

We re-turn to the question raised by Gry: “Who can speak? Who must listen?” Challenges must be heard in their entirety, with the full contextual and historical implications for the positions in which we are entangled in the CMP. As Zahra later confronts Gry about Figure 2:

“you have made the picture of me as a child visible, you have erased my family and turned them into somewhat ghostly figures [...] they are ghosts in the colonial mind anyway. My family are real and exist!”

We take a pause in our research and a final question asks of us: *Is it at all possible for the teachers, administrators and researchers, in art education generally and the NCSMA specifically, to practice antiracism and decoloniality as inclusionary strategies and thus meet the needs of their own teaching mandates and student-teacher curriculums?*

We re-turn to Helen’s flippant comment: “Why not?”

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Struggling to decolonise ourselves as an antiracist act

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KAPITTEL 11

Elephants in the Archive

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Abstract: This chapter is an attempt to show how racialised meaning is produced through art practice. It is founded on the following paradox: How can we reconcile ourselves with the fact that racism exists in society when the majority of Norwegians will publicly denounce it? I examine how prevailing art teaching practices are influenced by racial understandings of the self and the Other. Inspired by post-colonial theory, I interrogate experiences in my own White artist-educator practice to uncover power differences and acts of racial dominance. I examine the events of a visual art workshop through two central concepts, White innocence (Wekker, 2016) and the cultural archive (Said, 1993; Wekker, 2016), and consider the operationalisation of structural racial bias through digital technologies and contextualising spatial understanding of art practice.

This is an experimental text that aims to engage the viewer with their emotional embodied understanding of racial positioning as much as academic discourse. I employ the figure of the elephant as a narrative device to disturb reading patterns. The clumsy elephant is a disruptive element in the text, weaving together two distinct forms: the literary and fictive narrative, and the academic discourse. I conclude with the idea of decolonial aesthesis (Vázquez, 2020) as a tool to challenge the dominant aesthetic understanding of art practice as an individual form of expression. Thus, decolonisation or undoing erasure of otherised knowledges and experience is deemed a vital process imperative for students' well-being, as well as that of teacher educators and student teachers wishing to teach in a pluralistic society. I ask the reader to resonate with the unfolding of "White" gaps in a subjective understanding of the self and give discursive room for addressing the complexities of race through understanding how Whiteness works as a complex phenomenon within Norwegian art education.

Keywords: post-colonial, cultural archive, White innocence, racist lens, artistic research, teacher education, narratives

Sitering: Eriksen, H. (2022). Elephants in the Archive. I L. Skregelid & K. N. Knudsen (Red.), *Kunstens betydning? Utvidede perspektiver på kunst og barn & unge* (Kap. 11, s. 239–264). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. <https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.163.ch11>
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Figure 1. © Eriksen, H. (2022). Elephant and wheel of production.

Once upon a time, a very long time ago, in a very different golden moment (Eriksen, 2019) that stretches time in all dimensions, a young man gave me three gifts. The first is the vignette “I look like a hungry African” that you will find in Figure 2; it is both the start of and the never-ending journey. The second gift is a White elephant, an imaginary figure, a metaphor of mind and intuition, my constant companion and insisting guide (Fig. 1). When she rests, she finds food to think with before she guides us further. The final gift that the young man gave me is always in front of us, a pot of rainbow gold, always in the making: insight. Together, we will unpack these gifts and hopefully allow you to experience the web that the co-protagonists, that is, the elephant, the vignette and I, are entangled in. The White elephant is gently tapping me on the shoulder, reminding me of her presence; sometimes I forget her; perhaps her name is *Intuition*. She is a form that allows me to poke into painful spaces where logic will often stop. She is helping me to find a way back to the place where we, a world broken apart, can heal ourselves. She stops me in moments of rupture to return with a thread to lead me back to “I look like a hungry African”, like a visit to an elephants’ graveyard¹ where we turn the bones of our ancestors, mourning the past and searching for present-day meaning.

In this text I argue that destructive globalised radicalised discourses and hierarchies are not only a concern of those who are marked as Other and otherised in a false narrative but also those of us who, albeit unwittingly, maintain and thus benefit from them. I place the White² artist/teacher of contemporary image-making in Norway in the foreground rather than focusing on representation of the minoritised in the larger institutional structure. I centre Whiteness in order to understand how racialised hierarchies of difference are produced through me. How can it be that Scandinavian societies exhibit racialised hierarchies whilst avidly denouncing racist ideologies as seen by the reactions that the word *racist*

¹ The elephants’ graveyard is a mythological place where older elephants go to die. Legend says that the elephant knows when it will die. In this sentence, I understand that the Elephant is telling me that something in me should die. In life, when an elephant comes across elephant bones they smell, move and toss them, they mourn their loss before being able to move forward.

² White and Black are capitalised in this chapter to draw attention to politicised categories and positions of power. My premise is that in order to discuss a phenomenon we have to name it.

triggers? I will do so by taking a single incident and contextualising the situation through images, post-colonial thought and histories, different personal experiences, and identifying underlying digital imaging technology bias.

My approach skirts around the edges of qualitative research and I enter the project as a visual artist engaged in post-qualitative inquiry as described in St. Pierre (2019). Furthermore, I situate myself in a forceful emerging paradigm steering from the qualitative paradigm towards a performative one (Østern et al., 2021). Both the performative paradigm and post-qualitative inquiry resonate with artistic practices in the field of research. The performative paradigm forwarded by Østern et al. (2021) centres the researcher and her entanglement with specific, complex phenomena in time and space:

A performative paradigm produces a space for movement, (artistic) freedom, (post-qualitative) experimentation and inclusion. A performative research paradigm also offers provocations that shake long-established notions about what research is and should be. Within a performative research paradigm, learning/be(com)ing/knowing is always in-becoming – as is the performative paradigm itself. (Østern et al., 2021, p. 1)

In this mode of research, I raise the question: How am I as a subject affecting future art production and reception? I show that it is possible to continually produce racialised hierarchies in the art classroom despite honourable pedagogical and personal intentions. I do this by understanding racism as a phenomenon in which the cultural archive (Said, 1993), White innocence (Wekker, 2016) and physical, temporal agencies such as the camera and the White cube combine to stabilise art production as a possible racialising agent in itself. In this narrative, the agency of the photograph evokes the figure of the elephant that eventually led me to an acknowledgement of how colonial ways of being affect my emotional life, my thinking process and drive my actions. My way of being and of understanding my world has shifted as the incident continues to live in and through me.

Although this text might prove taxing I ask the reader for their time and patience to enact a *re-sponsible* reading as suggested by St. Pierre (1996).

I ask the reader to allow complexities and perhaps even contradictions to exist in the text; it is part of the confusion when repositioning oneself in the context of race in the paradigm shifts touched on above. There is no easy answer, no single straight line to follow. My aim is to allow the reader to understand themselves as already entangled in the machinations of a racialising discourse that disregards Other ways of being.

Firing the canon

Picasso, Debussy, Renoir, Munch, Pollock, Rodin, and Da Vinci are instantly recognised as central artists in art history. Their names signify innovation, genius and the rise of the modern. They are part of an undisputed canon in European art history centring the White male genius (Pollock, 2013). Contemporary cultural and art-historical discourses have challenged this centring by arguing that the universality of experience seen in the canon is a dominating White male experience that cannot represent pluralistic experiences (Pollock, 2012; Said, 1993). The canon in itself acts as an erasure of otherised knowledges and experiences (Azoulay, 2019). This is inherent in European art educations and those from earlier colonised territories (Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2018). It is a global phenomenon whereby recognition for Indigenous art still struggles to find an equal rather than a compensatory place beside the modernist canon (Garcia-Anton et al., 2020). Scandinavian art institutions' reliance on the modernist canon can be illustrated through inspection of art historical, educational curriculums from the major Scandinavian universities. The lack of space for non-canon/modernist logics and images within the institutions has allowed entrenched marginalising structures to exclude other experiences and knowledges from the Nordic art scenes.

The Nordic art scene has recently been forced to take into account institutionalised racist strategies and educational practices that exclude minoritised citizens from institutions. Through focused debate and activist strategies, art professionals and students brought about a public debate about the place of minorities in art institutions (Garcia-Anton et al., 2020; Josef, 2019; Lundestad Joof, 2019; Nunes, 2019a, 2019b). The

discussion has drawn attention to art educationalists' role in accommodating otherised knowledges in their educational practices.

Analysis of the vignette in Figure 2 is inspired by post-colonial thought, using the cultural archive (Said, 1993) and White innocence (Wekker, 2016) as its central conceptual tools. The argument rests on the presumption that the naturalised globalised racialising discourses that Said (1993) identifies are mutually supported by the cultural archive and the phenomenon of White innocence that can organise racial understanding to ignore the complexity of otherised ways of being. I take the standpoint that colonialism not only harmed groups that were subjugated, enslaved and minoritised, but also harmed those placing themselves at the top of the racial hierarchy whilst wiping out the ability to understand how that position is established.

Slavery broke the world in half, it broke it in every way. It broke Europe. It made them into something else, it made them slave masters, it made them crazy. You can't do that for hundreds of years, and it does not take a toll. They had to dehumanise, not just the slaves but themselves. They have had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true. (Toni Morrison, in Gilroy, 1993)

But what is my starting position, and where do I stand in the madness that Morrison perceives? I define myself as White, with a working-class, matriarchal background, a feminist, and an anti-racist. I fall on Frankenberg's, (1993) threefold understanding of race where Whiteness is a location and structural advantage or privilege, a standpoint or position in which I experience society, and most relevant to this chapter; Whiteness manifests in cultural practices that are naturalised, unmarked and unnamed (Frankenberg, 1993).

How can I, as a White female, commit to a pedagogy of pluralism when social and educational structures do not value otherised forms of knowledge? What part do I, as the teacher, play in undermining Other knowledges and experiences in art education? To look at these questions, I have journeyed through the idea of the minoritised Other living and interacting through students of colour in my professional life. This article asks the reader to understand the ongoing colonial complexities involved in how I, the representative of the White female artist-researcher subject,

can constitute a situation where I can unwittingly take a superior racialised position in the classroom, thus producing racial difference.

The cultural archive

The cultural archive is not a physical entity or thing (Wekker, 2016); it lives within us and is reinforced by media images in which we are engulfed. This cultural archive is an agential phenomenon: the complex entanglements of cultural materiality surround us and are at work in our everyday lives (Figure 3). This phenomenon is impossible to understand if separate cultural objects are seen outside of their colonial context (Said, 1993). Although Said develops the concept of the cultural archive through literary analysis, the mechanisms within the cultural archive are simple to understand despite being culturally invisible.³ Think about the naturalised position of tea, coffee and sugar in your own kitchen. It is almost unthinkable that European ancestors did not have access to these ingredients. Where do these kitchen staples originate? How have they become natural ingredients in your daily routine? The cultural archive works similarly; it normalises and bolsters existing racial hierarchy ideas as a scaffolding for Whiteness and White supremacy to work within. It is a system that has been naturalised to such an extent it is unquestioned by those who benefit from it. Destabilisation, such as the one described in Figure 2, is often unrecognised in its challenges to naturalisation or colonial racial understanding. In this case, it could easily be attributed to the young man's status as a teenager with all its connotations.

Wekker, (2016) suggests how the national majority conceive of themselves as an ethical nation, non-racist and not heeding skin colour as a defining factor of value or worth, despite continuing normalised colonial

³ Said (1993) argues that a close reading of the 19th and 20th canons of literature (and culture) exposes a colonial ontology that naturalises the imperial global context on which the metropolises were founded and in which they are still embedded. When single works from the 19th and 20th century canon are read together, they indicate a much larger discourse of colonialism that indicates a naturalising racialised discourse in the metropolises (Said, 1993; Wekker, 2016). Thus colonialism did not just happen far away, but it was happening in the metropolises, creating the idea of the European as a superior race.

structures functioning in society. There are strong parallels between Wekker's concept of Dutch exceptionalism and the Norwegian exceptionalism that foreigners living in Norway experience. There is a similar positive national narrative focusing on high ethical motivation and promoting colour blindness in Norway. Furthermore, when seen as a national narrative, White innocence can also be internalised in individual understandings of their own position within larger organisational structures. Individuals believe themselves to be part of a nation and organisation that is ethical and colour blind. This, combined with psychological manifestations of individual innocence in forms of White fragility (Diangelo, 2011) and White resistance to racial confrontation (Matias, 2016), can cement the individual in the unwitting position of White supremacy through acts of onto-epistemological violence. I will discuss how these mechanisms work by centring the phenomenon of White innocence and the cultural archive work in a specific teaching context.

The shape-shifting phenomenon of racism

Visual artist, mentor and educator Germain Ngoma tells me that there is "no template for racism."⁴ In this statement, he is suggesting that we can never know where and when it will appear. Regarding it as a phenomenon, that metaphoric vampire (McQueen et al., 2020) becomes more than an individual or singular act; it is a complex entanglement of agencies and other phenomena that are not easily bound by disciplinary schools of thought (Rosiek, 2019). Furthermore, I would also suggest that neither is it easily submitted to an individual's conscious control. In Figure 1, I identify both animate agencies, myself and the young man, and inanimate agencies – such as the camera, the photograph, and the workshop space – and work to unfold this complexity. Differentiating processes, in one hour, converge previous historical processes and discourses in a single incident. The agencies present also include harder to define emotions and intuitions as seen in my elephant guide; the photograph, time, through history and the development of understanding and awareness of my own permeability; place, in

⁴ Conversation notes June 2020 and January 2021.

the space of the vignette and the visit to Zambia; inanimate objects; such as a camera, and scientific choices as in chemical film technology.

I suggest that for any teacher to commit to a life-long meritocratic and anti-racist pedagogy, they are obliged to account for their own entanglement in colonial history and racialising structures; it is an individual experience in the midst of a collective shift evoking change. Understanding our own position allows a critical engagement with it. An understanding of racialised pedagogical actions open to the complexity that the false binary of us/them me/Other, Black/White to challenge the idea of the world and humanity reduced to simplicities. As Toni Morrison declares, to divide the world into human and subordinates meant cutting humanising aspects of the White self-narrative. The consequences of which philosopher Hannah Arendt (2006) discusses in light of the post-war German understanding of the Holocaust as being perpetrated by individuals following national political agenda and the ethical understanding of actions did not affect the individual perpetrator's understanding of themselves as good people, but mere bureaucrats for the greater good (Arendt, 2006).

The images (figures) in this chapter are also traces of events unfolded in word and image. Much of the animal imagery is drawn from memories of the elders in my family entertaining me with Aesop's Fables, Beatrix Potter's Adventures of Peter Rabbit, Rudyard Kipling's Tiger, Tiger and Just so Stories, and Norwegian folktales. Images are also pilfered from hard media and from the internet, where the cultural archive is continually producing itself to be cut and collaged into new images visualising relationships and intra-actions. Lines drawn between words become three-dimensional mind maps in space and time.

How is this young person identifying with the representation he sees in the picture? Obviously, now, I failed to grasp that it was about representing an individual through skin colour. This failure to comprehend the foundation of his insistence allowed me to resist his protests that the image was not a good portrayal of him.

I LOOK LIKE A HUNGRY AFRICAN

“They are trying to close the school,” the teacher says –

“But why?”

“They say declining school numbers make us expensive.”

“They might have a point, though?”

“The point is there aren’t enough white faces in the school, and Norwegian families are moving away or sending their kids to other schools.”

“But what about how second language teaching is a core competency across the board? Not many schools have that, do they?”

“Doesn’t count for anything!”

“We’re going to be spread to the winds - We need help with a protest action!”

“I’m not sure how we can help! What other things are you going to do?!”

“There’s an organized protest. Could you do something for that?”

“Let us think about it. Perhaps we can come up with something.”

It was a very overcast day, and you were shooting indoors: a bad start. You had prepared for natural lighting and had no lamps. You had to resort to improvised aluminium foil reflectors to bounce ambient light back onto the faces of the students.

It did not take too long for you to understand that even though you had spent many years taking telling portraits of people who you came across, something was amiss. You just couldn’t get it. You also could not figure out what you didn’t get. You were struggling with the faces of these students – overexposed, underexposed black and white images filled the small digital screen at the back of the camera.

You were stressed, sweating and hardly communicating in whole sentences: neither a good teacher nor an artist. You were something else. You were fully focused on some sort of technical problem that you just couldn’t understand. You were almost choking; you had bitten off more than you could chew; You just couldn’t figure out where the problem lay. You didn’t give up, but you did give everyone a long break.

You just wouldn’t let it slide but kept taking pictures during the break. Perhaps your stress levels dropped because the focus was on food and not the project. Fiddling with white balance and exposure metering points, you managed to capture a fantastic portrait – full face – you had gotten it. You were ecstatic and enthusiastically showed it to the student.

His response:

He looked at you with the same serious look he had given the camera and asked you to erase the picture.

“I look like a hungry African,” he said flatly.

My response:

“You look like a boy. It doesn’t hide your skin colour, if that’s what you mean by African, but you don’t look particularly hungry to me!”

And on the discussion, went. He refused to give up; he refused to give in. Like boxers in the ring, you circled around each other, hoping the other would back down. He insisted: he insisted: he insisted. He made you listen, listen and listen again. He demanded that you erase the image. No! He did not want this picture of him in your camera. This photo was not one he wanted out in the world, and for the life of you, you couldn’t understand why?

So back and forth the debate went. You found pictures on the internet. You referenced black scholars and artists. You said that you understood where he was coming from, but you did not accept his opinion about his representation, and most importantly, you refused to wipe the image off your flashcard.

That day did, after all, end with a migraine. Eventually, you negotiated a deal to keep the image. You asked him how he wanted to his picture taken. He pointed at two young women and asked them to be in the frame with him. You felt a surge of anger; your heart sank; your eyes started prickling. You could see an oncoming escalation if this was to be the scenario.

Did the girls have to be entangled in this mess? Was this the best deal you could get? You were a teacher and obliged to follow through rather than argue even more, and you were also convinced that the young women would say no. To your amazement, they said yes, and they posed with him! You took some awful shots and thought he wouldn’t want them – he didn’t look like the macho man he was emulating when these young women were making signs behind his back.

They laughed when they saw the pictures. He was laughing with them, not you. He was annoyed still, but like you, he wanted it to end. He had said yes, and that’s how you managed to salvage the original portrait.

His portrait gained another meaning. One that you did not intend. The image will never be made public. It’s a sore on your hard drive to be scratched open every time your search engine discovers it through an algorithm interpreted from your need to find something else. You will catch your breath, feel the rupture, and wonder how this image repeatedly finds its way to your desktop.

Figure 2. Eriksen, H. (2022). *Gift one: I look like a Hungry African – Agential words*

I look like a Hungry African took place during an art workshop facilitated by Tenthaus Art Collective in 2010. Briefly, Tenthaus Art Collective has an ongoing artist in-school project, a socially engaged art project (Tenthaus, 2021; Ulrichsen, 2017). With only the best intentions, and as a workshop leader, I was working towards something that could represent a group of minoritised teenagers and their relationship to the future. They were stuck in a conflict in which politicians were pushing through the closure of the urban centre school they intended to sell on the commercial market. The consequences would mean that the whole teaching community would be split up into new schools; specialised teaching competencies, experience and knowledge of this group of teenagers would be pulverised throughout Oslo. Furthermore, the closure of the school signified that politicians did not want schools with students with non-European backgrounds only; they wanted more White Norwegian students to signalise better integration, and above all they measured success on exam results.

I find it difficult to describe the feelings that awoke in me during the workshop. I am, even now, highly ambivalent about how to articulate them. My journal reports feelings of confusion, loss of control and professional inadequacy, loss of laughter, headache, tightening of the skull, frustration, and irritation towards teenage vanity. There is no way of escaping that feeling of inadequacy and failure when I think about this workshop, even though the images were good enough for their intended purpose.

What was this obstinate teenager articulating beyond a vocalisation of his own position? How did this understanding of his body as a hungry African enter his imagination? How could he see himself in that way? From his language, he was obviously not foreign? He did not look starving, but he did look African.

How is the cultural archive affecting our way of intra-acting with each other today in Norway, a globalised national society? How is teaching images through practice or cultural history facilitating repetitions of unfounded racialised hierarchies?

An early reader of this text points out that the cascade above seems naive when Google can find thousands of “hungry African” pictures. Yet, a close look at this cascade of questions can say something about

how colour blindness works. Here was this past me, asking how a child of African heritage living in Norway could consider himself equal to the hungry African. I was puzzled; I keep reliving these moments in my thoughts and conversations, not only immediately afterwards, but even now the elephant is tapping my shoulder and nudging me forward, showing me routes back and forward through threads of conversations with my colleagues at Tenthaus, with educationalists and with colleagues of colour.

The initial emotional rupture of that conflict (Fig. 2) is the continual starting point for this haphazard journey. What really happened in that room? Every time I reiterate it, it develops; the event's narrative has its own agency; the narrative has moved to become a turning point, a pin in the map, which I circle around trying to understand it better. I am repeating and changing, repeating and changing. By repeating it, I keep the strangeness of the incident alive.

Rupture in the archive

Ten years after the event, when COVID broke into the world, I was teaching in a workshop in Zambia.⁵ I desperately needed a SIM card for cheap local communication, and a colleague arranged for a salesperson to visit the house. The young man came, and we sat under the shade of the tree as I signed the legal documents for a SIM card. He said that he needed to *capture* me. Puzzled at first, I smiled, realising that he needed to take a photograph of me when he waved his own phone at me. Capture is etymologically rooted in Latin *to take, hold, or seize*, and I thought of these connotations as I heard the imitation camera click in his phone. It disturbed me; it forced me to think about what photography meant to that particular person behind the camera and how the act of *capturing* a photograph has deeper connotations than that of mirroring the world. The word *capture* would not be used in a similarly informal context in the UK, where I am raised. Sitting under the tree in my colleague's garden, I was drawn back to "I look like a hungry African". And so, it has been,

⁵ Zambia, an earlier protectorate of Britain where English is one of the first languages.

small ruptures ripping into my activities and readings that bring me back to and forward towards a place of complex utter discomfort.

Gift Two: The White elephant in the archive

The White elephant, that gift I am continually unpacking, seems to be smiling at me. It hits me, a stone from a slingshot: Where do the animal images I am using in my research project come from? The only physical elephants I have encountered have been at a circus or zoo; I have no other knowledge of that creature; it is not a material part of my childhood or adult life. It is a literary figure transmitted through the cultural archive. It is presumed that Aesop's fables were told by anonymous slaves of the Roman empire and circulated ever since. Such is the power of the cultural archive to span history through me, so that the power appropriates and naturalises images and thus restricts the imaginary field on which art educators play.

Agency of the photograph through the cultural archive

By taking into account that the dominant ideas about non-European culture and Indigenous cultures are stored within the cultural archive, the agency of the photograph in question becomes part of an ongoing narrative whereby I, as a White teacher, define how the student is to be experienced and seen. The gap in our power positions in a racial hierarchy that I had naturalised was destabilised by the student response.

In your narratives, histories, travel tales, and explorations, your consciousness was represented as the principal authority, an active point of energy that made sense not just of colonising activities but of exotic geographies and peoples. Above all, your sense of power scarcely imagined that those "natives" who appeared either subservient or sullenly uncooperative were ever going to be capable of finally making you give up India or Algeria. Or of saying anything that might perhaps contradict, challenge, or otherwise disrupt the prevailing discourse. (Said, 1993, p. 32)

The student's resistance to his representation needs to be anchored through me to the ongoing colonial narrative within the agential cultural archive⁶ that thrives in the Nordic regions. The way that this image works on me, at an emotional level, must also be transferred to understanding the way the cultural archive works.

Photographic images = racialised discourses?

The cultural archive is active in all positions and perspectives within the photographic process: the photographer, the subject and the viewer. The photographer's decisive role in inscribing non-Europe and Europeans in terms of dominant discourse is historically embedded in early ethnographic photographic practices (Sealy, 2019). Much of that archival narrative plays on the need of the African subject for the intervention of Europeans to quell tribal violence, and uncivilised and pagan behaviours and rituals. Much post-colonial analysis has been written to contest these destructive embedded colonial narratives, yet these narratives and shifting associations are still active in our international relationships and media representation. It does not take much to see the intimidating and dangerous Black African chief's transformation to the New York gangster rapper. Despite continual waves of civil rights movements, these stereotypical images continue to naturalise the idea that White Europeans are civilised and superior to non-European subjects.

In a Scandinavian context, the cultural archive is filled with these images of Africa, as well as its own specific colonial activities. The people of Sápmi, Roma, and other national minorities are part of the Norwegian cultural archive. This can be exemplified by close examination of photographs of Indigenous Sámi people where colonising practices of Norwegianisation continued until very recently. These include

⁶ The fields of literature, art history and media studies have widely discussed how photography is used to represent and produce colonial knowledge of racialised Others; scientific neutrality of optics in the film camera has been previously discussed in terms of imagery and the references those images produce (Said, Sontag, Sealy, Hall).

photography used for quasi-scientific argument for racial hygiene and middle-class exotification trends of staging photographs for middle-class subjects appropriating Sámi clothing (Kyllingstad, 2014; Lien, 2017; Valkeapää, 1983). *The Norwegian Government's Action Plan against Racism and Discrimination on the grounds of Ethnicity and Religion 2022–2023* quotes that the Sámi national minority experience 4 times as much discrimination than majority Norwegians (Ministry of Culture, 2020). This and recent social media reports of continued racist attacks on the Sámi population in Tromsø (Andersen et al., 2020) point to the relevance of understanding the concept of the cultural archive in Scandinavia as a way of perpetuating and supporting racism.

The violence of the canon to capture for the archive

The dialogue between myself and the student displays our different positions in colonial experiences and histories outside of our own making. In the utterance “I look like a hungry African,” he refuses to accept the representation of his body as an image of generic African hunger needing help. On my part, I presumed he was referencing hunger stereotypes that have flooded the European media during post colonisation processes. My defence of the image was based on good intentions; I am not a wicked person, and I knew about the post-colonial discourse of the hungry African. I defended my good intentions and protected the image from interference with the dominating concepts of aesthetic “quality” that I abided by. I argued from a position of authority, after all, which parent has never argued with their child during a tantrum about a photograph deemed unacceptable when it has been on the living room wall since it was taken. As parents, we hold on to that picture as if it was a magic talisman fearing the destruction of the moment that the camera clicked. Once again, the agency of the photograph and the cultural archive working through us all, keeping familiar and unfamiliar in order, becomes apparent in all our lives.

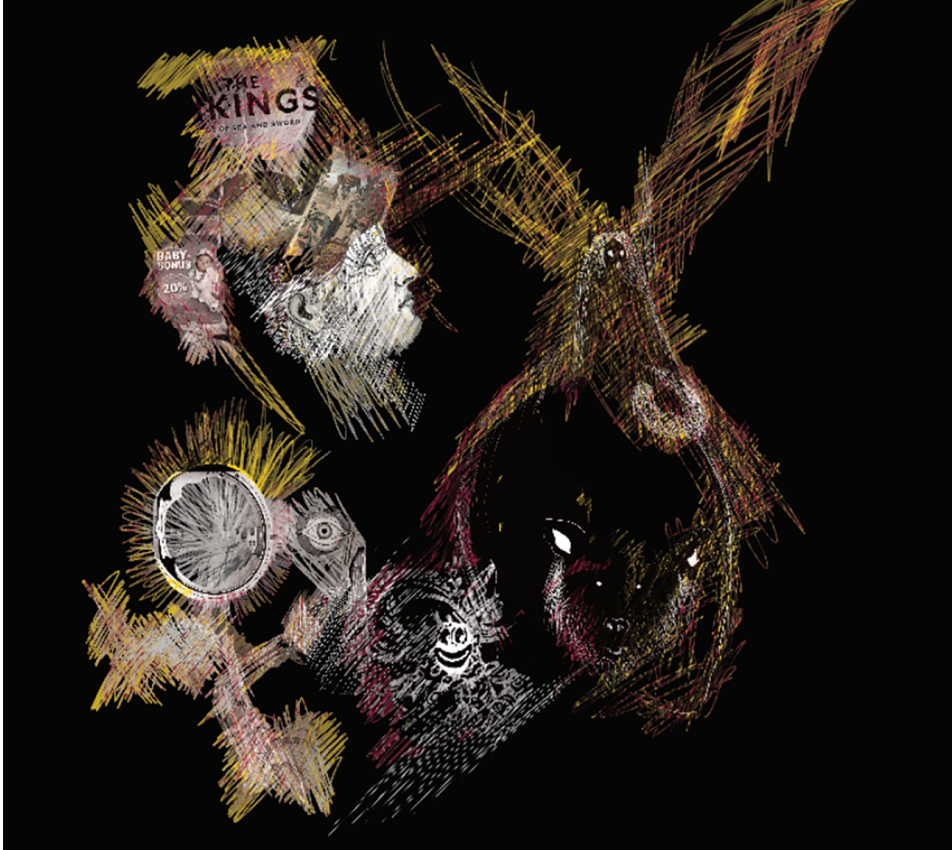


Figure 3. © Eriksen, H. (2022). *The Norwegian Cultural Archive*.

My artist autonomy and teacher authority gave me an ethical zone where I could assume that my image was something to protect and cherish. The student's protest was met with incomprehension painfully embodied as White innocence. It allowed me to resist him and defend the racialised narrative that I had created in that image. I literally could not see nor understand how I was instrumental in the cultural archive producing itself. The present me can see how that other me refuses to acknowledge how the young man's experience of Norway is connected to his skin colour. By refusing to engage with his embodied experience where skin colour is agential and an essential part of his identity, I disregard his opposition to normalised White experience and view him as an unruly, obstinate teenager. This perspective is part of my educational experience and training, and I had a neat category I could place the conflict into, where the source of the disagreement would rest firmly with the student. I gained comfort in a racial conflict by allowing me to see myself as an artist, non-aggressive, ordinary, and thus remain in a position of White authority, which is a position the White educator is deemed to possess. I was engulfed in a White reflective response; I was reflecting Whiteness in its work. It is a form of self-preservation of Whiteness at the individual level. In the self-preservation of the White educator, I also stabilised dominant White power structures.

The White cube

When writing this article, a colleague asked me if the space of the conflict itself could be described as agential. Yet, it took time to connect and understand how the physical aesthetic space intra-acts in this conflict. This incident took place in Tenthaus collective's studio and gallery space, which in effect was a White cube artist space. The site of the conflict can be seen as an artistic territory of post-war modernity. For me, it was a familiar and naturalised territory: a habitat. That habitat is bounded by safe-ethical space (Eriksen et al., 2020), a concept whereby the belief in the autonomy of art acts as a mechanism to protect freedom of expression in artistic production, without broader responsibility to an audience

affected by that expression.⁷ Despite my part in a socially engaged art project that sought a liberating dialogical pedagogy (Freire, 2017), I was challenged as the gatekeeper of established modernist, and racist, artistic boundaries.

Calibrating the racial lens

Let us turn to the central agency in this conflict; an image on a tiny digital screen that faded quickly when the machine was shut down. The image itself can be seen as immaterial, manifested as pixelated light on the back of the camera and later, on my computer display. However, those few minutes of viewing the picture also have to be related to the confusion that preceded it. Why were the photographs not reflecting skin colour accurately? Why were my skills so inadequate? Why was there such a great need to compensate within the technology of the camera?

The agency of the image itself needs to be considered through the apparatus that captured the picture: the camera. Modernism and technological development have well-established links in art historical links (Kester, 2011). When I blame the camera as inadequate – do I simply become a second-rate tradesman blaming her tools? A colleague commented that the camera is not racist, but the person behind it can be. The comment is interesting because it weaponises the digital camera, apt in a post-colonial reading of the cultural archive and the role of photography. If the camera becomes weaponised, how does that weapon work? Does the camera as a technology have an agency of its own? What are the mechanisms of image reproduction in the digital camera itself? If the shutter button is a metaphorical trigger, how is the weapon built to deliver a metaphorical bullet; is it indiscriminate, or does it have mechanisms in it that make it more challenging to represent darker than lighter skin tones?

During these last months, my elephant has led me into conversations with photographers of colour; you could say she nudges me on, rummaging through the archive. The following is expressed not as a plea for forgiveness for actions described in the vignette, but to describe

⁷ For a wider discussion of Ethical Safe Space, see Eriksen et al., 2020.

the structural nature of the pictorial narrative produced in the cultural archive. Yet, I fear response, your response. Delivered on the White page and read by a dominating White audience, I ask of you: Could you believe that *your camera, your telephone, and everyone's camera lens have an inbuilt racial bias*?

How is this at all possible? It is best understood through understanding White skin as a historical and dominant norm (Lewis, 2019). When White skin was accepted and considered a social and cultural norm, commercial chemical emulsions for colour image reproduction were developed and chosen to favour White skin tones. Even when the possibility to use other chemical emulsions were available to give a broader range of skin tones, commercial chemical film continued to favour White skin (Roth, 2009).

Shirley, a generic name for the women on colour processing calibration cards, was for generations White, evidence in itself of the prevailing normative White gaze (Fig. 4). This normativity inherited by the digital camera continues to favour and normalise White skin tones. This technological bias creates the idea that Black skin is a problem that requires compensating,⁸ and, furthermore, reinforces racialised behaviour when darker skin tones are perceived as a technical problem. Technology and racialised understanding and behaviour are seemingly mutually constitutive (Lewis, 2019).

Skin tone became an issue for me during the workshop; it was something that I was unprepared for. Why should I experience the reproduction of darker skin tones as an advanced technical problem? Why was this not a matter for camera manufacturers to educate their consumers about? After all, they have user manuals! This is not simply a matter for professional photographers whom I have been in conversation with; it applies to those being represented. Photographer and Nikon ambassador Jide Alakija has developed his own software to make processing darker skin tones easier. (J. Alakija, personal communication, May 28, 2020).

As arts education is becoming increasingly digitalised, it is vital to understand that digital image and facial recognition technology have an

⁸ This is not only in photography but also in stage lighting and make up artistry.

Figure 4. © Eriksen, H. (2022). Gift 3: Insight - Shirley! The girl next door (2021).



inbuilt racial bias that is seldom encountered by the White teacher in the White classroom. The agency of the camera exemplifies how racism is much more than individual acts of microaggressions and everyday racism or the ephemeral cultural archive but is a complex phenomenon with structural, physical components such as the camera and the White cube that we encounter daily. Multiple agencies play into the phenomenon of racism in (art) education (cf. Rosiek, 2019).

The third gift - insights

The photograph initiating the conflict continues to have its own agency. The incident itself pins the moment when a young man forced me into a conversation with my own emerging post-colonial knowledge of history and naturalised White understanding of the world. As time has passed, the agency of the photograph has departed from the object itself and is reinforced in its absence through conversations with beings both living and imaginary. The photo discussed in Figure 2 is not published because I can no longer prioritise my ideas of aesthetic quality and value that are so obviously related to wider schemes of racialised power structures in the art world. The so-called work of art itself has to be considered in light of the response by those represented in the work itself. This is perhaps a process of what sociologist Vázquez (2020) conceptualises as *decolonial aesthetics* in which the colonised aesthetic production of art is destabilised by other equally valid experiences.

In my reading, the photographic apparatus, the digital camera, is not a benign object – it is agential and a powerful tool that maintains and produces the cultural archive by wiping out details in the dark face. It leaves the unaware photographer to grapple with technicalities that could be pre-programmed into the camera imaging software and discussed in user manuals.

As an advocate for the need for art in society at large and in young people's lives, in particular, I cannot ignore how art education not only reflects society but lacks an inner criticality to its own mechanisms that support racialising processes (Gaztambide-Fernández et al., 2014). Art education is a very specific public sphere that carries with it a

responsibility for the way that images are made and received in society. When Scandinavian art education institutions are eurocentric and modernist and continue to exclude Other knowledges and art practices, they give agency to the racism inherent in the cultural archive. We must ask members of the art teaching communities to consider their own educational background and teaching positions and address their relevance to their teaching ethics and practices. The question “How is my heritage affecting future art production and reception?” then becomes a life project as manifestations of the cultural archive and technological bias are understood as constitutive of today’s society.

When Germain Ngoma says that “there is no template for racism,” he points to a mighty overwhelming phenomenon of racism as an agential shapeshifter. It finds new forms and strategies to survive to keep the racial balance in check. The part of arts education in an anti-racist pedagogy is to give the skills to identify and engage with the colonial racist narrative in the visual forms it takes on. Understanding how the combination of the concepts of the cultural archive and White innocence works through ourselves has consequences on decision-making in artistic practice and the reception of new images. These concepts are apt tools for anti-racist teaching in art education. It is crucial for students and instructors in visual art education to engage with the cultural archive’s continuing production whenever, however, and wherever it surfaces. However, these tools demand a personal conviction and dedication to not only master but to continually explore and develop. It can open the way to other forms of art developing, forms of art that cannot yet enter our imaginaries.

Time is now overripe for the Norwegian art education system to prepare its teachers to participate as anti-racists. This can be possible through teaching critical awareness that can destabilise power positions in the entangled material, immaterial epistemologies and imaginaries of their professional field. Without engaging in a critical discussion about racism, art production will be locked in an imaginary of a colonial past. Our aim must be to restructure the cultural archive in such a way as to open up to an imaginary of an encompassing, equitable future on and for Earth and all its beings.

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KAPITTEL 11

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Appendix 2

Links to practice documentation.
Moving image and catalogues

Eriksen, H., Moi, E., & Schröder, S. (Eds.). (2018b). *Winter depot* - Exhibition catalogue. Galleri Box.
Eriksen, H., Moi, E., & Schröder, S. (Eds.). (2018b). *Spring Depot* - Exhibition catalogue. Tenthaus.

(Film)

Sigmundstad, B. *Spring depot*. (2018). Tenthaus.

<https://rs.videokunstarkivet.org/pages/view.php?ref=7140&k=797dffcf79>

Password: Tenthaus2018

Dijkstra, F., & de Bie, M. (2018). *Moment of trust*. Club Solo.

<https://clubsolo.nl/en/agenda/tenthaus-oslo/?archive=1#publicatie/>

De Boer, J. & Vermunt, R. (2018). *Tenthaus Oslo*. Club solo

<https://clubsolo.nl/en/agenda/tenthaus-oslo/?archive=1>

(Film)

Solmaz Collective. (2021). *Silencing and slicing*. Parse Conference 2021: Violence.
University of Gothenburg.

<https://rs.videokunstarkivet.org/pages/view.php?ref=6898&k=56c8563328>

Solmaz2022

(Lyd)

Tseng, W. (2022) *Witnessing Whiteness*. Radio Tenthaus.

00:00:00 – 00:36:20

<https://www.tenthaus.no/radio/radio-tenthaus-85-witnessing-whiteness/>



Declaration of artist practice at Tenthaus Oslo

Helen Eriksen is a co-founder and member of Tenthaus art collective, established in 2011.

In 2018, Tenthaus with Helen Eriksen, Ebba Moi, and Stefan Schröder developed, conceptualized and produced the following exhibitions: *Winter Depot* at Gallery Box in Gothenburg, Sweden, *Spring Depot* at Tenthaus project room in Oslo and *Moment of Trust* at Club Solo in Breda, Netherlands.

These three exhibitions are a significant part of Helen Eriksen's practical work for her combined doctoral thesis at the University of Agder.

These three exhibitions are collective endeavours in which all stages of exhibition production were made collectively. At that time, Tenthaus Oslo was a small collective consisting of Ebba, Moi, Stefan Schroder, Helen Eriksen and Mechu Rapela. Tenthaus retains its original non-hierarchical framework. In 2018, all exhibition production was a collective undertaking, with everybody contributing to all parts of the development and production of the three exhibitions. Helen Eriksen wrote the catalogue texts for *Winter Depot* and *Spring Depot* after feedback and discussions with Ebba Moi and Stefan Schröder. In the *Moment of Trust* catalogue, Helen Eriksen represented the collective in an interview.

These three exhibitions are documented and already in the public realm, shared in catalogues or shown in an exhibition context; they are already published. The documentation of the exhibitions is freely accessible via our archives. Furthermore, all documentary materials have participant release agreements to allow public sharing.

The signatories are Tenthaus collective members Ebba Moi and Stefan Schröder, representing the collective from 2018 and Matilde Balatti, representing the present-day Tenthaus art collective.

Matilde Balatti
date

Matilde Balatti

Nov 4, 2022

Ebba Moi
date

Ebba Moi

Nov 4, 2022

Stefan Schröder
date

Stefan Schröder

Nov 4, 2022

Tenthaus is an interdisciplinary art institution that strives to redefine the role of artists and art in society. Tenthaus is rooted in the local area with a global perspective and network. Tenthaus' practice is based on understanding how cultural activities coexist and interact in a given socio-political environment, constituting a cultural ecology. We do this by arranging exhibitions, workshops, publications, radio broadcasts on Radio InterFM, and discursive events such as dinners, artist talks, network talks, etc.
www.tenthaus.no

Signature: 

Email: matilde@tenthaus.no

Signature: 

Email: stefanschroedermail@gmail.com

Signature: 

Email: ebba@tenthaus.no












Tenthaus declaration

Final Audit Report


2022-11-04


Created:	2022-11-03
By:	Helen Eriksen (helen@heleneriksen.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAT6IM9iC-BOgFbZmeOsJKqX_hpb18lh-d

"Tenthaus declaration" History

-  Document created by Helen Eriksen (helen@heleneriksen.org)
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-  Email viewed by matilde@tenthaus.no
2022-11-03 - 6:31:04 PM GMT- IP address: 84.211.173.119
-  Signer matilde@tenthaus.no entered name at signing as Matilde Balatti
2022-11-04 - 11:00:21 AM GMT- IP address: 195.0.191.190
-  Document e-signed by Matilde Balatti (matilde@tenthaus.no)
Signature Date: 2022-11-04 - 11:00:23 AM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 195.0.191.190
-  Document emailed to Stefan Schröder (stefanschroedermail@gmail.com) for signature
2022-11-04 - 11:00:24 AM GMT
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-  Signer ebba@tenthaus.no entered name at signing as Ebba Moi
2022-11-04 - 2:46:04 PM GMT- IP address: 171.23.6.112



 Document e-signed by Ebba Moi (ebba@tenthaus.no)
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2022-11-04 - 2:46:06 PM GMT

 **Adobe Acrobat Sign**

Appendix 3 Declaration of artist practice at Tenthaus Oslo (4/4)

Required enclosure when requesting that a thesis be evaluated for a doctoral degree

Co-author declaration

Describing the independent research contribution of the candidate and each co-author

This declaration should describe the independent research contribution of both the candidate and each of the co-authors for each paper constituting the thesis.

Article no.:2

Title:..... Stones and the destabilisation of safe ethical space

Eriksen, H., Ulrichsen, G. O., & Bayati, Z. (2020). Stones and the destabilisation of safe ethical space. *Periskop - Forum for Kunsthistorisk Debatt*, 24, 156–171. <https://tidsskrift.dk/periskop/issue/view/8920>

The above article is shared co-authorship. All authors were equally involved in all processes of the research development

Candidate: Helen Eriksen

First author Shared first authorship Second author Senior author Other

The independent contribution of the candidate:

As above the article has been fully co-authored.
All authors have contributed equally to development of method, theory and analysis presented in this article. All stages in the production have also been collaborative and dependent on all authors.
Finding: Safe Ethical Space is a collaborative finding.

Co-author: Zahra Bayati, University of Gothenburg

First author Shared first authorship Second author Senior author Other

Co-author's contribution:
As above the article has been fully co-authored.

Co-author: Gry O. Ulrichsen

First author Shared first authorship Second author Senior author Other

Co-author's contribution:
As above the article has been fully co-authored.

To the best of your knowledge, has this article been part of a previously evaluated doctoral degree thesis?
NO

Helen Eriksen
.....
Signature of candidate

.....
Signature of co-author

Gry O. Ulrichsen
.....
Signature of co-author

Zahra Bayati
Zahra Bayati (Jan 31, 2023 16:06 GMT+1)
.....
Signature of co-author






Stones co-authordeclaration 2 docx

Final Audit Report

2023-01-31

Created:	2023-01-30
By:	Helen Eriksen (helen@heleneriksen.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAA1qjx0liSEF53nfhjR_6YBS4hbcjQ5GA0

"Stones co-authordeclaration 2 docx" History

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2023-01-30 - 12:54:43 PM GMT
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2023-01-30 - 4:50:33 PM GMT- IP address: 66.249.81.211
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2023-01-31 - 3:07:36 PM GMT



Required enclosure when requesting that a thesis be evaluated for a doctoral degree

Co-author declaration

Describing the independent research contribution of the candidate and each co-author

This declaration should describe the independent research contribution of both the candidate and each of the co-authors for each paper constituting the thesis.

Article no.:1

Title:..... Struggling to decolonise ourselves as an antiracist act within the field of the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts

Ulrichsen, G. O., Eriksen, H., & Bayati, Z. (2021). Struggling to decolonise ourselves as an antiracist act within the field of the Nordic Community School of Music and Arts. *Journal for Research in Arts and Sports Education*, 5(4), 19-38. <https://doi.org/10.23865/jased.v5.2978>

The above article is shared co-authorship. All authors were equally involved in all processes of the research development

Candidate: Helen Eriksen

First author Shared first authorship Second author Senior author Other

The independent contribution of the candidate:

As above the article has been fully co-authored.
All authors have contributed equally to development of method, theory and analysis presented in this article. All stages in the production have also been collaborative and dependent on all authors.
Finding: towards pluralist proximity.

Co-author: Zahra Bayati, University of Gothenburg

First author **Shared first authorship** Second author Senior author Other

Co-author's contribution:
As above the article has been fully co-authored.

Co-author: Gry O. Ulrichsen

First author **Shared first authorship** Second author Senior author Other

Co-author's contribution:
As above the article has been fully co-authored.

To the best of your knowledge, has this article been part of a previously evaluated doctoral degree thesis?
NO

Helen Eriksen

Signature of candidate

Signature of co-author

Gry O. Ulrichsen

Signature of co-author

Zahra Bayati
Zahra Bayati [Jan 31, 2023 16:07 GMT+1]

Signature of co-author






Antiracist co-authordeclaration

Final Audit Report

2023-01-31

Created:	2023-01-30
By:	Helen Eriksen (helen@heleneriksen.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAuGoZsYm6MGDPR3MSvJz2wpSRJZ69HZ_D

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Signature Date: 2023-01-31 - 3:06:33 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 130.241.223.9
-  Agreement completed.
2023-01-31 - 3:06:33 PM GMT



Appendix 4: National Museum - videokunst archive

From: Håvard Oppøyen [REDACTED]
Subject: SV: Arkivering av PhD kunstnerisk forskning prosjekt inkludering dokumentasjon
Date: 17 November 2022 at 16:32
To: Helen Eriksen [REDACTED]

Hei Helen.

Hyggelig å høre fra deg!

Da har jeg opprette en kunstnerinnførsel på deg samt koblet denne mot din bruker. Dvs. da kan du logge inn og registrere og laste opp.

Logg inn fra hjemmesiden, www.videokunstarkivet.org

User: [REDACTED]

Psswrd: [REDACTED] (midlertidig, så kan du sette passord selv)

Si ifra om det ikke funker. Nå har du tilgang til å søke og se alt i arkivet.

Når du logger på finner du en knapp oppe til høyre (My work) til dine krediterte verk/filmer - men der har du ingen foreløpig. Straks du har registrerte titler vil disse bli relatert til din innførsel. Inntil da:

Søk helen eriksen i fritekst-søkefeltet, da vil du finne din kunstnerinnførsel. Jeg la til biografi/tekst om deg og det du jobber med. All info kan du redigere ved å klikke Edit metadata i menylinja. Jeg la til portrett. Beklager, jeg burde ha spurt deg. Det kan enkelt endres/byttes under Alternative files.

Alternativt kan du bare klikke New artwork og starte å registrere.

Det ligger en enkel brukerguide på førstesiden, men der ganske lett. Klikk New artwork og legg inn så mye som mulig. I første omgang er det stort sett tittel (titler) og teknisk info. Lagre, deretter kan du gå på Edit for å legge til mer, bl.a. beskrivelse, krediteringer, merkader, m.m.

Videofiloplasting gjøres under den enkelte film, under Upload a file i menyen.

Systemet takler alle format. Det kan selvsagt ta litt tid avhengig av størrelse, osv. Når en fil er ferdig lastet opp, gjør systemet resten med prosessering og transkodning av en lett visningsfil. Bare sørg for at filoplasting fullføres.

Bare spør om det er noe.

hilsen

Håvard Oppøyen

Seksjon Bibliotek og arkiv, avdeling Samling
Tlf: 45 50 48 91 // havard.oppoyen@nasjonalmuseet.no

P.b 7014, St. Olavs plass, 0130 Oslo, Norge
www.nasjonalmuseet.no

-----Opprinnelig melding-----

Fra: Helen Eriksen [REDACTED]

Sendt: torsdag 17. november 2022 13:33

Til: Hildegunn Gullåsen [REDACTED] Håvard Oppøyen [REDACTED]

Kopi: Helen Eriksen [REDACTED]

Emne: Re: Arkivering av PhD kunstnerisk forskning prosjekt inkludering dokumentasjon

Hei Hildegunn og Håvard,

Først så må jeg beklager at det har tatt så lang tid å svare deg Hildegunn. Det var en veldig hyggelig og konstruktiv møte.

Jeg har vært innpå synes at videokunstarkiv ser ut som riktig sted for filmen vår.

Jeg har søkt om adgang til å laste opp men lurer på om det er noe formatteringsting som jeg må bli klar over?

[REDACTED]
Vennlig hilsen
Helen Eriksen

On 11 May 2022, at 13:36, Hildegunn Gullåsen <Hildegunn.Gullasen@nasjonalmuseet.no> wrote:

Hei Helen,

Takk for hyggelig møte i biblioteket i dag.

Jeg sender deg her lenke til Videokunstarkivet som avtalt:

<https://www.videokunstarkivet.org/>

Og setter Håvard Oppøyen på kopi her - han kan gi deg tilgang til arkivet dersom dette ser aktuelt ut.

Med vennlig hilsen

Appendix 4 Agreement for documentation archive