

Statements & DemandsSpeaking Of Discrimination,  
Or, Who Is Not Speaking?

First, I would want to emphasise the importance of prefiguration. It is the idea that, when people try to change society, the *way* they try to change it will determine the outcome of their endeavour more than their mission, shared vision or discourse will. It is, in this light, key to think through how you organised this table on inclusivity here in State of the Arts. Who sits at the table and who does not? This will not only influence the outcome of the discussion but also the impact State of the Arts will have. I would propose to stop here and try to organise a new table discussion and invite the persons, artists, producers, critics who have no other choice than to deal with the question you are posing (even if they formulate them differently) and are compelled to develop different aesthetic strategies outside the white institutions. They are really not hard to find. Secondly, I want to question the theme of the table organised today. "Inclusivity" functions in a representational way. It implies it would be sufficient to include the "diversity" of the supposedly "excluded" to have a proper art field. I think we need to go beyond inclusivity or exclusivity to rethink how the structures in the art field can be thoroughly changed. Other concepts for working through

difference and similitude can easily be found in the various spheres where people struggle for a liberated and dignified future.

Some of you might have noticed there is a fundamental change in the way difference is being discussed worldwide and struggle is gaining momentum. Difference used to be thematised from within the art scene as multiculturalism, interculturality, diversity, superdiversity. Now, there are different artists moving outside of the mainstream spaces of the art scene, developing decolonial aesthetic practices and decolonising discourses. It is the first time in Belgium that you see a form of radical self-definition emerging from below, the collectivities who are directly implicated are setting their own agenda by connecting their local diasporic and displaced condition to historical and geopolitical dynamics. We came to a point that even white institutions such as KVS, rekt:verso, Demos or Beursschouwburg engage with the discourse of "decolonisation" but without always having a clear view on their own position, power and impact. There is a real risk of appropriation and instrumentalisation here. The question has to be posed as to whether white institutions can decolonise and if so, how?

You just need to listen and watch closely to what is happening beyond the mainstream to hear parts of the answers being whispered, little by little.

So, SOTA might be a good platform to be engaged in such matters because they are in but not from the institutionalised art world. But then, of course, you need to take these questions

seriously, study the different ways the arts can be decolonised, try to be clear about the positionality of SOTA, reorganise this discussion and first include those concerned by your reflections before taking any action.

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With Or Without Institutions?

It is important to remain critical of institutions but we should find ways to make use of the capital and power that they have to change our conditions. It's important not to push them out of the sphere of engagement. However, institutions should be held accountable. The fact that people from outside can hold representatives of institutions accountable is very important. It's a type of power.

A critical mass, which is what we need, includes institutions, especially certain individuals working within those structures. And although, as Audre Lorde reminds us, we can't use the masters' tools to dismantle his house, we can use his resources.

*Tunde Adefioye*