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## **An Art School Schizologue [George Floyd, Rest in Power]**

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### **Abstract**

This critical cartography surveys seven moments in critical practice/art pedagogy, which oscillate around the protests of 1968 and diffract the contemporary possibilities of art education in association with Halberstam's (2019) notions of evacuation and wildness. The article reads across Deleuzoguattarian (1994 and 2007) schizoanalysis and Baradian (2007) intra-action to articulate struggles for racial justice as instances of Harney and Moten's (2013) undercommons, operating as alternate sites of knowledge production and collective self-experimentation outside the neoliberal university. These moments of practice—Black Lives Matter protests in Bristol, the UK, the writings of Aimé Césaire, Audre Lorde, Mohamed Melehi, Benjamin Patterson, and Howardena Pindell, as well as a student occupation of Central Saint Martins, also in the UK—are aligned in series allowing the reader to appropriate each one in resonance with each other as a proposal for an art-pedagogy-to-come.

### **Keywords**

Art-pedagogy-to-come; schizoanalysis; Deleuze and Guattari; Barad; wildness

## Introduction

In *May 68 Did Not Take Place*, Gilles Deleuze (2006) claims the protests of that year amounted to a “visionary phenomenon” awaiting “creative redeployment” (pp. 233-234). In Deleuze’s argument, 1968 retains a virtuality “of the order of a pure event”—a potential only graspable in “fluctuations” within the status-quo (p. 233). The fluctuations to which Deleuze refers, occur in the rhythm of the ongoing neoliberal restructuring of the global economy, which contains a subterranean force of possibility “for something else” (p. 234). The murder of George Floyd in the United States on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2020 was a brutal reminder that such fluctuations are ongoing, and that neoliberalism’s contemporary economic reforms have allowed institutional racism to continue to fester within the social body, while calling forth the potential for creative change. The urgency of this and other contemporary instances of racial injustice, as well as wider injustices emerging from neoliberalism, re-establish the mobilisation of modes of the above-mentioned creative redeployment as the common project of progressive movements as well as the critical humanities. And this while demanding a renewed attention to resonances across disciplines. To this task, we contribute a critical cartography of struggles for racial justice cutting across fields of democratic pedagogy and critical practice. We return to the reading of desire as a driver of the social undertaken in Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project (1994 and 2007) and seek to mobilise the transformative force of schizoanalysis in order to, as these two thinkers propose, dismantle Oedipalising forces and transform “the analytic machine into an indispensable part of the revolutionary machinery” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 82). Reading schizoanalysis in relation to Karen Barad’s (2007) concept of intra-action<sup>1</sup> and Donna Haraway’s (1997) model of diffractive critique,<sup>2</sup> this paper proposes an art-pedagogy-to-come; an undercommons<sup>3</sup> (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 28), capable of sustaining an

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<sup>1</sup> Intra-actions—or “causal enactments” (Barad, 2007, p. 178)—articulate a dynamic process of interdependent phenomena formation, while designating relationality as a condition of existence.

<sup>2</sup> Diffractive critique is an affirmative practice that reads across differences to examine distributions of agency. Barad (2012, p. 52) contrasts diffractive critique with tendencies to frame critical practice around the isolation and disclosure of phenomena. For Haraway (1997, p. 16) diffraction extends criticality by framing it as a difference-attentive process resistant to the articulation of phenomena within a recurrence of the known.

<sup>3</sup> The undercommons names a space of commoning within the university; a site of subversive practice to steal back “the life stolen by enlightenment” (Moten & Harney, 2013, p. 26). We read the undercommons as a process of un/learning manifest as ad-hoc intervention and para-institutional organisation.

experimentation within enclosures of identity that Fred Moten (2017) has described as a practice of blurring.

### **1979, New York, Audre Lorde, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House***

Audre Lorde's paper, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House* (2017), given at the conference The Second Sex – Thirty Years Later in New York in 1979, enfolds the methodological parameters of schizoanalysis. As a black lesbian, Lorde felt compelled to call out the conference's limited range of speakers and themes, demonstrating how subjugation may inhere in tools of emancipation. Deleuze and Guattari (1994, pp. 28-31) account for such contradictions by rethinking desire as social production, demonstrating how critical modes can internalise oppression from inherited modes of mastery. Schizoanalysis mobilises the unconscious as a factory reconfiguring codified material flows (*hyle*) and systems of interruption (machines) (pp. 36-39), dismantling group fantasies, and subjecting them to creative transformations. Deleuze and Guattari identify three tasks of schizoanalysis: destroying beliefs, representations and interpretations to make Oedipus and castration explode (p. 314); identifying machinic syntheses—"flows, chains and becomings" (p. 338)—and mobilising flows through collective lines of escape (p. 362).

Lorde's schizoanalytic gesture destroyed the Oedipalising assumptions that had been mediating the conference, identified alternate (machinic) intersections of individuals and groups, and anticipated new mutualities prioritising difference that she called "redemptive" (2017, p. 90). We align the function of art-pedagogy-to-come with such a disruption of the frame in a manner that extends beyond the scope of recent pedagogic engagements with schizoanalysis (see e.g., Kruger & Le Roux, 2019; Webb, 2009), and therefore align our project with the beyond of the university. This institutional ruin, which has taken on the character of the double bind<sup>4</sup>, such that the social good of education is marketed through the metrics of excellence (Edu-Factory

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<sup>4</sup> Bateson (1956, p. 252) conceives the double-bind as a recurring pattern of encounters with a specific irreconcilable structure that shapes psychic development. The double-bind comprises three primary elements: a negative injunction, whereby action or lack of action will be punished; a secondary injunction, which denies, obscures or re-frames the first; and a tertiary negative injunction, which is the relationships and contextual factors that make the prior injunctions inescapable.

Collective, 2009), is useful only as a site of evacuation (Halberstam, 2019). Just as Lorde's exposure of her subordination and demand for respect forced into process an alternate mode of transaction, we aim to initiate a diffraction pattern in the university's dual messaging, producing a "wildness" in art pedagogy: a "somewhere else entirely" (Halberstam, 2019, n. p.), the redemptive promise of which lies in the disarticulation of subordination.

Our methodology diffracts ontological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions through contextual dynamics (Murris & Bozalek, 2019) and conceives art pedagogy as a meshing or queering of schizoanalysis and Baradian agential realism<sup>5</sup> into new approaches for the reconstruction of identities. So, whilst Deleuze and Guattari prioritise the functionality of material process through the interdependency of the body without organs and machinic organisation of the assemblage, and Barad (2007) prioritises the interpretative dynamics of agential cuts in material entanglements, we argue their co-relation is necessary to account for the historico-material construction of race and its basis in interlinked chains of association. For example, Kathryn Yusoff (2018) demonstrates how black subjectivity and geologic transformation couple in the mechanism of colonial history. Further, reading across differing models of justice and redemption we extend Deleuzian (1994) senses of the inhuman to Haraway's (2016) notion of thinking-with or *sympoiesis*, which we argue integrates an ethical impulse with an embrace of shock. The Deleuzian inhuman, which describes a field of virtual intensities and their incommensurable relation to actualised identity, characterised by the neologism *different/ciation*, informs our prioritisation of disjunctive practices seeking to return identities to a state of mutability. Barad (2017) shares a similar concern, viewing the shock and arrest that characterise Benjamin's notion of *Jetztzeit* (now-time) as integral to modes of entanglement and diffraction. "The messianic—the flashing up of the infinite, an infinity of other times within this time—is written into the very structure of matter-time-being itself," as Barad (2017, p. 70) writes. In this sense, *sympoiesis* and the inhuman are not incommensurable. For example, Lorde's (2017, p. 90) question, "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of the same patriarchy?" was combative but not adversarial and opened a space for the re-assembly of values in the spirit of comradeship. For Barad,

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<sup>5</sup> Agential realism conceives a phenomenon as a "specific intra-action of an 'object' and the 'measuring agencies'" (Barad, 2007, p. 128). As appropriation informs mattering and turns on selections and preferences, the primacy Barad ascribes to entanglement is at once ethico-onto-epistemological.

embracing shock involves risking oneself to exposure with “entangled relationalities of inheritance” and the “non-contemporaneity of the present” (Barad, 2010, p. 264). Further to the gift of realising how you are historically implicated, the diffractive/deterritorialising charge of shock and arrest brings a productive encounter with the inhuman as a field to be mobilised in “the assembly of counterfutures” (Eshun, 2003, p. 3).

As practice, such diffractive entanglements re-orient the neoliberalising impulses unleashed by 1968 (Ross, 2002)—which otherwise perpetuate the neoliberal socio-economic order (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007)—producing transformative pedagogic agencies and reframed institutional priorities. Art projects that have characterised the educational turn (Rogoff, 2008, n. p.) have too often envisaged the art museum as a refuge for education. Irit Rogoff’s project *Academy* (2006), which mobilised the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, to pedagogic ends as a challenge to the standardisation of university education across the European Union, nonetheless accepted the museum as the container of the project’s interstitial dynamics. Our aim is institutional disarticulation, dereliction, and evacuation: an “undercommons” that Stefano Harney and Fred Moten identify with “thinking through the skin of teaching toward a collective orientation to the knowledge object as future project” (2013, p. 27). The undercommons is a scandalous “wildness” (Halberstam, 2019, n. p.), a subterranean fluctuation (Deleuze, 2006, p. 233), a diagram of alternative art pedagogy, and the blueprint for the reconstruction of the university written in the act of withdrawal. The historic reference is the occupations of universities and art schools such as The Sorbonne and Hornsey College of Art throughout 1968. At Hornsey, the precarity of the occupation forced the urgent development of a collective aim through discussion and artistic production. Such activities can be aligned with Alain Jouffroy’s identification of art strikes with a change in production (1970, p. 181). The undercommons as critical cartography disarticulates institutional practices and is the formative condition of a re-imagined possibility of art pedagogy.

We term such critical cartographies schizopedagogies, because they generate critical/constructive flux or experimental intra-activity initiating sites of un/learning. In agreement with Barad’s (2012, p. 50) claim that diffraction “depends on reading insights through one another, building new insights, and attentively and carefully reading for differences,” schizopedagogic un/learning enumerates cuts, identifies

machinic intra-actions, and stages re-combinatory processes. Schizopedagogy functions in accordance with Stephen Zepke's (2014, p. 32) claim that schizoanalytic art operates across "ontological, political and aesthetic poles of a diagram of insurrection" as a proliferation of abstract machines invading normative practice. An example is Lorde's (2017, pp. 1-6) reading of silence as desire compressed to capitulation, whose tyranny she claims must be unlearned. Oscillating around the fulcrum of 1968, this paper is a diagram of art pedagogy beyond its conventional institutional frames. We describe it as a *schizologue*, because the many actions and voices it mobilises are central to its argument. The sections below are conceived as *schizzes*, which for Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 43) "have to do with heterogeneous chains, [...] detachable segments or mobile stocks resembling building blocks or flying bricks." This paper then is a chain of actions and voices which together function as a critical cartography of resistance to racism and an example of schizopedagogy in practice.

## **2015, London, St. Martin's College, Student Occupation**

On the psychoanalyst's couch, the art school spurts neurotic fantasies about economisation (Brown, 2015), marketisation (McGettigan, 2013), and excellence (Readings, 1996) that have transformed the institution into a neurotic performance of coherence overlaid upon the schizophrenic fragmentation of extractive capitalism. The symptoms are the arms race of signature architecture and capital expansion projects, the chase for international course validation, student satisfaction surveys and online forums, the dematerialisation of teaching into online archives, lecture capture, and search engines, the professionalisation of creative self-employment, and proliferating health and wellbeing machinery. Each so-called strategy is a reaction to big data (Fuchs, 2019) and cognitive capitalism (Boutang, 2012), Oedipal stimuli re-normalising art education. What the industry calls resilience (Bradit et al., 2019) appears to be adaptative arborescence akin to the self-deforming cast or transmutating sieve of Deleuze's (1992) society of control. Having developed careers in art departments recast by the 2010 Browne Review of UK Higher Education, our view is such departments are snags: dead corpses standing, whose embalmers cannot arrest the rhizomatic processes eating them from the inside—capital

contagion, viral contagion, ecological collapse, neurosis of the socius, and the continuum of reactive policy.

Let us qualify: the art school was always undead—a Frankensteinian construct, founded on divergent ideologies of romantic individualism and utility (Atkinson & Baldwin, 1971) since the expansion of 17<sup>th</sup> century mercantile capitalism. In the contemporary art school, these dual functions morph into fraudulent self-realisation enacted through the spectacle of the degree show and the alleged real-world pragmatics of the professional practice module. A holy trinity of self-control, self-entrepreneurship and self-evaluation disindividuates subjects into component parts, whose perpetually accelerated modulation (Hui, 2015) is assumed to confirm their value. Within this context it no longer makes sense to talk of genesis or essence. The father always arrives late and overreacts. This point is exemplified by University of Arts London's castration complex, which during the last decade's delirium for austerity developed into a morbid fascination with self-amputation. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2015, the university announced plans to cut 800 places on the foundation course at Central St. Martins, UK, and funding for widening participation. On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, following the 2015 Rhodes Must Fall protests at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, students occupied the reception area accusing the university of institutional racism. In response, a temporary reception corridor was wheeled into place to subvert the occupation. Painted bright green to look friendly and decorated with hastily laminated signs, it demonstrates the reactionary transformation of the art school into a spectacle of control.

Subject to Deleuzoguattarian analysis, the neurotic symptoms of the neoliberal art school reveal: 1) an institutional breakdown wherein the pleasure principle and reality principle of the art school are in a state of permanent warfare; 2) a structural relationship between this internal conflict and the general condition of war regulating the wider global order (also see Hardt & Negri, 2005, p. 3) current university conflicts constitute instances of "imperial civil war" (p. 4) within Empire and therefore interconnect with other forms of blended warfare and data-mining redefining the relation between state, citizen, and consumer in the techno-digital sphere; 4) that these new techno-digital and transnational materialities radically redefine the interpellative subject-Subject synthesis Althusser (2001, pp. 115-120) identifies as the desired production of the educational ISA. Our diagnosis is that only an inhuman

schizopedagogy—rather than the bourgeois-humanist pedagogies endemic to the art school—can reckon with these new material conditions of academic production. Art schools can support schizopedagogic practice—the next section on Mohamed Melehi’s work at Casablanca Art School is a good example—albeit not simply within existing university systems. We propose instead the imposition of schizophrenic shock upon the hyperactive, transactional brain of the art school until it can see that it should be everywhere accelerated beyond the studio and seminar room.

### 1969, Marrakech, Mohamed Melehi, *Exposition-Manifeste/Présence Plastique*

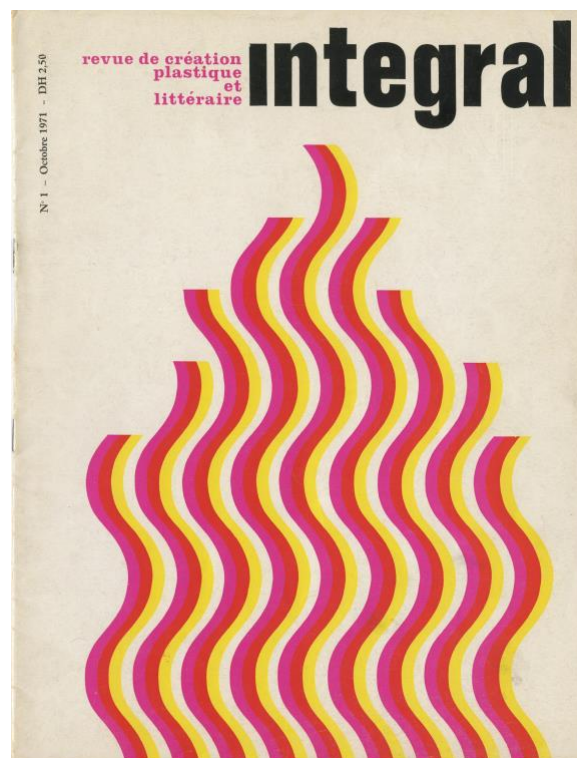


Figure 1: Cover of *Integral* n°1, October 1971.  
Courtesy of Toni Maraini Archives

We now turn our attention to the figure of painter Mohamed Melehi as an exemplar of postcolonial schizopedagogy. We analyse the Melehi artistic/pedagogic assemblage through the prism *Exposition-Manifeste/Présence Plastique* in Jemaa-el-Fna Square, Marrakech, Morocco in 1969 as a functioning structure of institutional affiliations, organisational engagements, and personal relationships. Born in Morocco in 1936, Melehi studied in Spain, Italy, New York, and Minneapolis before he was recruited by Farid Belkahia to École des Beaux-Arts de Casablanca in 1964 where he became

head of painting and photography. Eight years after independence, Melehi returned to a nation of revolt and repression; the so-called years of lead under the rule of King Hassan II.

This context informed the development of Melehi's artistic/pedagogic practice as a de-facialising war machine. Faciality concerns subject formation. Deleuze and Guattari (2007) describe a correlation between a black hole or affective zone in which the subject invests their passions and a white wall onto which signs are projected and from which they rebound. Melehi's project de-facialises because it sets formed subjectivities back into a process of re-development, creating a space to produce alternate senses of Moroccan identity. Working alongside artist Mohamed Chabâa, art historian Toni Maraini, and anthropologist Bert Flint, Melehi adapted the notion of *Bildung* developed by Gropius at the Bauhaus (1938) into a multi-disciplinary curriculum that linked indigenous 'artisanal' production (Berber, African, Arab-Muslim, Mediterranean traditions) and Western avant-garde art. Melehi disseminated these innovations through international exhibitions and artist networks. that foregrounded pan-Arabism and Third-Worldism as central to the activity of the school.

In this context selection became a central and politicised authorial concern. Writing in the journal *Souffles*, Maraini (2015) states,

Two basic issues arose as painters sought to promote modern art through their works and ideas: that of the "avant-garde" [...] and that of tradition. In questioning themselves on these issues, or in being brutally confronted by them, they had to make choices (pp. 105-106).

Abdellatif Laâbi (2015) views such decisions as examples of the wider cultural condition of the colonised subject and the construction of postcolonial nationality. Citing Frantz Fanon's claim that "the colonial mother protects the child from itself, from its ego, its physiology, its biology, and its ontological misfortune" (1963, p. 149), Laâbi (2015, p. 63) addresses colonial schooling as a process of acculturation, whereby aims of "liberation and self-mastery" result in "disorientation" and uprootedness. Forged in this dynamic, the aims of the Casablanca group related to postcolonial reconstructions of Moroccan national identity. Melehi's choice to embed his practice within the Moroccan urban everyday re-contextualises the avant-gardist credo 'art into life,' and his inter-disciplinary fusing of painting and architecture draws influence from

European practitioners such as Moholy-Nagy and Walter Gropius. Such decisions demonstrate that Fanon's terms of opposition—the colonial oppressor and oppressed native population—are entangled. As Laâbi (2015, p. 63) also argues, decolonisation exists as one collective fantasy amongst others, and hegemonic order resurfaces in new postcolonial “micro-castes” and “micro-classes.” This commentary demonstrates how far faith in supersession had been eroded by the conflicted postscript to Moroccan independence after 1956 and the revelation of change after 1968, into which context Melehi's practice was emerging.

Deleuze and Guattari align the insights of this moment with the capacity of capitalist desiring production to fragment and recouple. “No one has ever died from contradictions. And the more it breaks down, the more it schizophrenizes” (1994, p. 151). Deleuze and Guattari argue racialisation integrates non-white indigenous populations as a divergence from the generalised schema of the White-Man face whose model is the image of Christ. All faces are constructs, intersections of signification (white wall) and subjectivity (black hole). “From the viewpoint of racism, there is no exterior, there are no people on the outside. There are only people who should look like us and whose crime it is not to be” (2007, p. 197). Racialisation is an interplay (rhythm) of polyvocal subjectifying forces, or pulsating “backward waves” (p. 197), subject to binary organisation upon the facialisation machine. The counteraction of de-facialisation returns subjectivity to an experimental state and reterritorialises a “new set of artifices” (p. 193). Deformations of facialisation scramble the binary parameters of white (superior) and non-white (inferior) identity, delegitimising colonial ideologies, creating space for the formation of postcolonial nationalities.



Figure 2: *Exposition-Manifeste/Présence Plastique*, Place Jemaa el-Fna, Marrakech, 1969.  
Courtesy of Toni Maraini Archives

*Exposition-Manifeste/Présence Plastique* (1969) functioned as a defacialising machine by bringing the coupling of indigenous and European avant-garde visual languages into Jemaa-el-Fna Square, a mercantile space in the centre of Marrakech dating back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Exhibits became a part of the activity that animated the square, producing a flux of visual/behavioural/architectural modes: decompositions initiating micro-fissures: “exothermic reactions” and sudden “crystallisation[s]” (Barad, 2017, p. 25) or diffraction patterns within backward waves of facialisation. We read the wave motif recurring in Melehi’s practice as an emblem of Deleuzian (2006) fluctuation, colonial de-facialisation, and networked commitment to de-colonisation and cosmopolitanism. Creating anew within the existing social relations *Exposition-Manifeste/Présence Plastique* exemplifies schizopedagogy.

### 1962 Paris, Benjamin Patterson, *Pond*



Figure 3: Benjamin Patterson (1962), *Pond*.  
Courtesy of Erin Smith for Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, USA

Benjamin Patterson distills the diffractive flux of schizopedagogic counter-waves into sound actions. His *Variations for Double-Bass* (c. 1962) is a demonstration comprising a series of “[p]itches, dynamics, durations, and number of sounds” (Patterson, c. 1962) that approaches the instrument’s body without organs. The performer improvises Patterson’s score, preparing the instrument with a sequence of objects—clamps, clips, pegs, and paper strips, etc.—plucking, bowing, rubbing, or agitating it to examine the double-bass’s sonic potential. Patterson set out to become “the first black to ‘break the color-barrier’ in an American symphony orchestra” (2012, p. 110), but upon meeting John Cage and David Tudor in 1960, he shifted focus towards experimental practice and became central to the formation of Fluxus in 1962.

Works, such as *Pond* (1961), dismantle sound meaning and disarticulate illocutionary structures of performance and reception. As Kotz (2007, p. 64) also notes, “Rather than pulverizing language into sonorous fragments, the scores focus on the instructions themselves as poetic material.” Patterson’s works enumerate socio-artistic potential that Fred Moten (2012) identifies with the genre of the recipe—enumerating and connecting of components rather than synthesising them into a singular artistic statement. Thus, they invite mobile attention, moving between binary signification, through series in resonance, to the body without organs—whose critico-pedagogic functionality seeds a capacity to diffractively read everyday contexts in a manner consistent with the onto-epistemological orientation of Baradian agential realism. Or as Barad writes, “Practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated” (2007, p. 128). To articulate knowing as an aspect of differential becoming, Barad examines the case of the brittlestar. This relation of the starfish does not possess a brain, and instead operates through an array of optical lenses meshed with its diffuse nervous system. To avoid predators, the brittlestar can change colour and even break off parts of its body, which it then re-grows, making “matter’s dynamism [...] intrinsic to its biodynamic way of being” (2014, p. 227). The brittlestar is an optical-material morphology, whose mode of apprehension and bodily structure exist in reciprocal presupposition.

*Pond* possesses a similar morphology. Eight performers stand around a six-by-six square floor-based grid before columns marked Q (question), A (answer), and E (exclamation). At timed intervals, each performer releases a wind-up frog into their space and repeatedly utters a choice of phrase appropriate to the column the toy enters, until it leaves. The arbitrary operation of the toy-grid machine regulates mechanical activity and recurring poly-vocal utterance, decontextualising speech and transforming the gallery into a sound environment of human pond-life: a humorous construction that invites participants to imagine further transformations of everyday practices and institutions. Repetitions of co-present terms comprising this sound action enact syntagmatic and associative dimensions of signifying chains. Analysing this process, Deleuze and Guattari refer to Lacan’s reading of Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Purloined Letter* (1972). Lacan analyses how different actors predict the identity of a letter they believe might contain incriminating content, because face-down on a table its actual content cannot be proved. Each actor judges the identity of the letter

according to their understanding the other. The letter's identity becomes subject to a pattern of association akin to the feedback loops of cybernetics. Lacan identified this process with predictive game play, such as the children's game Even or Odd featured in Poe's story, stating, "the symbol's emergence into the real begins with a wager" (Lacan, 2006, p. 192). Deleuze and Guattari (1994) relate interference patterns between signifying chains to schizzes, or detachable segments that cut across chains, facilitating the capture of fragments of one chain by another. A rhythm of recurrent association ensues based on differential variation. Listening to *Pond* is akin to navigating such interference patterns, as associations form between recurring statements, questions, and exclamations; resonances that initiate proto-significations as one phrase is comprehended in the context of another. *Pond* demonstrates how material affection between bodies shapes meaning.

Race is one socio-artistic material of Patterson's practice, amongst others. In *Puzzle-Poems* (1962), it is subjected to a process of cutting, recontextualisation and recombination. Patterson (2012, pp. 113-114) has expressed disdain for the indifference of Fluxus to the civil rights movement and queries simplistically racialised interpretations of his work (see Stiles, 2013). *Puzzle-Poems* situates race alongside other socio-political tensions through selections of images from newspapers and magazines cut out and pasted onto the front and back of cardboard sheets, which are then cut into pieces and presented in boxes. Images of famine and war in Africa contextualised alongside fashion photography and youth culture are first encountered as fragments, which the viewer-participant re-configures. The works were first exhibited in Europe in Robert Filliou's Galerie Légitime presented from under the artist's hat and thus were encountered in the context of the Parisian every day. The work accelerates the ideological mesh of discontinuous geographies and histories manifest on a newspaper frontpage or in a magazine spread, presenting fragments of their material as a technical problem to be solved in the hand and as a diffractive pedagogy to be solved in the mind.

## 2020, Bristol, England, Black Lives Matter Bristol, Colston Action

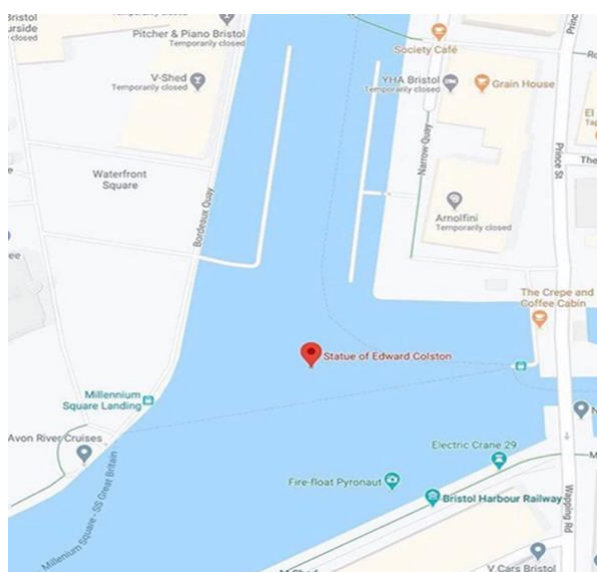


Figure 4: Screenshot of Google Maps showing John Cassidy's statue of Edward Colston in Bristol Harbour, 7th June 2020. Credit Google maps

In 1895, a statue of Edward Colston by John Cassidy was erected in the centre of Bristol, UK. Colston's wealth, accumulated by transporting 84,500 enslaved people to the Americas (19,300 of whom died in transit) through the Royal Africa Company (Nasar, 2020, p. 1218) has been central to urban development of Bristol, yet since the 1990s, campaigners have called for the statue to be removed. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, Black Lives Matter Bristol took matters into their own hands and dismantled the statue and pushed it into the harbour.

Occurring shortly after the murder of George Floyd on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, the spectacularised symbolism of these acts delivered a shockwave through British culture. A series of gestures instantaneously photographed and shared across the digital commons connected colonialism, enslavement, and institutional racism—Colston was blindfolded to show his indifference to the lives he took, a protester placed his knee on the statue's neck mimicking Floyd's murderer Derek Chauvin, Colston was dumped into the harbour like the bodies cast overboard on the middle passage, and a placard left at the base of the statue listed black people killed in British police custody. Reports were posted in the international press and in the following days statues of Churchill and Cecil Rhodes were called into question.

Proving Gramsci's maxim "destruction is difficult" (2007, p. 25), these actions demonstrate iconoclasm—image (*eikon*) breaker (*klastes*)—to be productive activity.

Having been thrown into the harbour on Sunday, by Thursday Colston had been dredged by the council, and placed in store, like some return of the repressed. Conservation work is ongoing to preserve the statue, graffiti and all. The unseating of Colston should be understood as part of a chain of co-related actions. The following week political reaction brought the action into question, obscuring the opportunity for the recognition of those killed and enslaved by Colston that the Black Lives Matter action briefly achieved. The leader of the Labour Party Keir Starmer called the action “completely wrong” (cited in Walker, 2020, n. p.), French President Emmanuel Macron spoke of “historic erasure” (cited in “France won’t ‘erase’ history,” 2020, n. p.) as if this were not the function of Cassidy’s statue in the first place, and the UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson simply cried “thuggery” (cited in “Boris Johnson: Anti-racism protests,” 2020, n. p.). More ominously, the Conservative government mooted increased jail terms for desecration of war memorials and the grave of Scipio Africanus—an enslaved man laid to rest in Bristol—was vandalised. The future of the statue appears to be museum display. According to curator Ray Barnett, the display of the statue will show “people what he represented and what he represents today” (cited in “Inside the secret facility,” 2020, n. p.). This ‘analytic’ approach demonstrates awareness of how museums have historically paraded partiality as objectivity, yet also retools disinterestedness as arbitration. The differing ratios of force manifest within this chain of actions shapes the untimely jostling of the historic within the contemporary, endlessly redrawing networked relations shaping conjunctures—the field in which schizopedagogy of Black Lives Matter Bristol continues to play out.

In schizopedagogy there are no outcomes, only multiple processes and ongoing flux that are the actualisation of wider eventual processes. The power of unseating Colston belongs to its capacity to carry forth ideas of justice, recognition, freedom, dignity, and respect by reconfiguring the social materiality of these seemingly intangible aspects. The bronze cast into the shape of Colston, the stone plinth that gave him his stature, and the harbour water that gave channel to his trade suppressed these ideas: the reframing of these sites within different signifying chains is the condition of redrawing the histories they articulate. Deleuze (1990, p. 151) explains such changes in states of affairs as a “mobile instant” in which the broader and deeper processes that constitute events are represented. He furthermore claims we need to account for ideas by attending to their generation in “the very being of the sensible: difference, potential

difference and difference in intensity” (Deleuze, 1994, p. 57). Ideas are multiplicities, actualised out of an intensive flux subtending states of affairs. Justice, recognition, freedom, and dignity are events cycling in intensive fields, oscillating in the having taken place and to come of the Colston statue. To articulate the capacity for events to transform states of affairs, Deleuze draws upon the words of the poet Charles Péguy. “Events have critical points just as temperature has critical points—points of fusion, congelation, boiling, condensation, coagulation and crystallisation” (Deleuze, 1932, p. 269). Black Lives Matter Bristol brought the injustice of Britain’s institutional racism to a critical point, producing a rhythmic wave of dissensus set within wider currents of desiring production, some expediting its project and others arresting its movement. The drama of revolutionary action is not the guarantor of change, which occurs at the deeper level of the event.

Desire, Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 118) claim, is revolutionary and “potentially capable of demolishing the social form.” Yet desire can also be harnessed to exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy. Like the feedback structure of association comprising signifying chains, the historic recursion of racism, whose contemporary manifestation Saidiya Hartman (2017) identifies with dispossession, subordination, indebtedness, inferiority, and domination has led Patterson (1982) to develop a thesis of social death underpinning Afro-pessimism. He claims colonial subjugation can be reproduced with shocking effectiveness at economic and ideological levels. Yusoff (2018, p. 16) relates such conditions to Black Anthropocenes, identifying enslavement as a “geologic axiom of the inhuman in which nonbeing was made, reproduced, and circulated as flesh.” In the latter case, experimentation upon the body without organs needs to function through critical institutionality, focusing upon structural privilege. The action of Black Lives Matter Bristol cannot save historic wrongs, but it can contribute to the project of resetting narratives of colonialism in a way bell hooks (1989, p. 15) describes as “moving out of one’s place.”

The critical cartographies of schizoanalysis provide a way of enumerating histories of material-semiotic entanglement that structure racialisation and provides a process of creative reconfiguration which inheres potential for their ethical resolution. Schizopedagogy is disarticulated normativity. Its lessons operate as staccato jumps across ramifying phenomena. One exercise is to piece together deterritorialised components into a mosaic one can survey. We also call this solidarity, and it is how

we are seeking to write now. Schizopedagogy is always a group activity, even when undertaken by individuals—at La Borde, Guattari (2006, p. 144) sought to produce a “group drive.” Such an arena of collective un/learning and becoming might approach racial identity based on exchange and creative reconfiguration to redraw its bounding enclosures. We now turn to the work of Howardena Pindell, who exemplifies this approach.

### 1980, New York, Howardena Pindell, *Free, White and 21*



Figure 5: Howardena Pindell (1980), *Free, White and 21*. Single-channel video (colour, sound; 12:15 minutes).  
Courtesy the artist and Garth Greenan Gallery, New York

When I was in kindergarten, I had a teacher who was not very keen on black students. There were very few of us possibly two in the kindergarten class, out of a class of perhaps forty. During the afternoon hours we were given a time to sleep. Each of us had our own cot and we were told if we had to go to the bathroom, we should raise our hands, and one of the teachers would take us to the bathroom. I raised my hand, and my teacher flew into a rage, yelling ‘I can’t stand these people’, and took out sheets and tied me down to the bed. She left me there for a couple of hours, and then finally released me. One of the students filed a complaint, perhaps to a parent who did not know I was black, perhaps the child did not know or had not learned to differentiate race at that point in time. I later found out that that teacher had been fired for bothering a student. Perhaps I was not the first one. (Pindell, 2020, n. p.)

Howardena Pindell recounts this childhood trauma to the camera in her video work *Free, White and 21* (1980). As she utters the words ‘tied me down,’ Pindell starts to bandage her head as if dressing the wound of her own presence, then winds the bandage around her neck and pulls the cord as though tightening a noose. The sequence ends with an elongated still of this image. Around the central motifs of binding, covering, enclosure, and obliteration the sequence dialectically opposes the hateful objectification of her teacher’s deeds and the shame manufactured in Pindell by those actions, framing these finally within an image of lynching.

Pindell’s work is a schizoanalysis of her subjectivisation through a sequence of racist abuse. It frames Pindell as a figure agitated by such a “positionality of ‘absolute dereliction’” (Wilderson III, 2017, p. 67) within a framework of universal rights, who has been made painfully aware of “subjugation that rights instigate and the domination they efface” (Hartman 2017, pp. 32-33). Pindell (2020) considers herself the opposite of “free, white and twenty-one” an American idiom meaning “beholden to no one.” There is no expectation of a sovereignty to come within the work (Fanon, 1963), which demonstrates such a figure to be “radically unwritten, and [...] enigmatic” (Marriot, 2018, pp. 1-2). Rather, we are presented with an artist scouring her identity in a manner akin to how Deleuze and Guattari (1994, p. 311) describe the task of schizoanalysis as “a complete curettage”—isolating herself before the camera, haranguing herself from the side of the screen in whiteface, listing experiences of racist abuse, and even mimicking the act of peeling her own skin. This is a nomadic unlearning—an act of escapology. A similar position is taken up by Fred Moten (2017, p. 234) who questions the value of committing to definitive predications of blackness in yet another act of mastery, critiquing Fanon’s “rubric of epidermalization, which is yet another form of enclosure.”

Pindell uses video performance as a schizopedagogic enclosure; a frame that connects overt racist aggression with covert institutional racism, revealing both as absurdities. The process is akin Jack Halberstam’s (2019) strategy of wildness and results in a production of excess. E. Patrick Johnson (2001, p. 3) identifies with the term “quare,” which he considers “offers a way to critique stable notions of identity and, at the same time, to locate racialized and class knowledges.” One way to think about the queering undertaken by Pindell is as creative mobilisation of the resonance between racist behaviour directed towards her and her own reactions to that

behaviour. In this process Pindell engages her personhood as a semiotic/material knot, and makes different temporalities converge—pasts from which she takes flight, the present in which to experiment, and futural becomings to anticipate. The work's recollections, mimicry, and physical transformations disarticulate, traversing the interval between realised modes of identity and fully present intensive potentials. *Free, White and 21* confronts us with the problematically impersonal nature of subjectivity. The work is a traumatised replaying of shocks, and an elongated arrest of formative experiences in crystals of diffractive unlearning. In each of her strategies, the point of counter-actualisation at which the constructed subject and immanent singularities touch is the spark that sets this process in motion. In these terms *Free, White and 21* can be read through the Deleuzian notion of the crystal image. Deleuze (1997) claims,

The crystal image stands for its object, replaces it, both creates and erases it [...] and constantly gives way to other descriptions which contradict, displace, or modify the preceding ones. It is now the description itself which constitutes the sole decomposed and multiplied object (p. 126-128).

*Free, White and 21* stages encounters with the inhuman as disarticulating force of a counter-actualisation. Diffraction disarticulates material-discursive assemblages to produce, in the words of Donna Haraway (1997, p. 16) “more promising interference patterns on the recording films of our lives and bodies.” Facialisation machinery connects identities through intersecting feedback loops networking social, political, historical, economic, and geologic fields. Pindell's video work is a visceral unpicking of these dynamics.

### **1957, Martinique, Aimé Césaire's *Lettre à Maurice Thorez***

If schizopedagogy enacts solidarity as intra-subjective development across social fields by exposing the double bind it also foregrounds inequalities between enclosures, otherwise obscured by universal rights. Respecting this point, we end by emphasising that whilst relational ontologies make a value of connection, solidarity can mean asserting enclosures in the interest of equality. Thus, we conclude with the example of Martinican poet and theorist Aimé Césaire's resignation from the French Communist Party (PCF) on the grounds of a disconnect he observed between the internationalism of European Marxist organisations and anticolonialism of Third-World activism.

Césaire (2010) considered that unity within a Caribbean context was superior to the general sense of unity offered by the PCF, which he believed committed the struggles of former colonial nations to its margins. The double-bind is obvious, and we express solidarity with similar calls made by *The Free Black University* (Owusu, 2020) to operate in the undercommons outside the British university system or para-institutional structures as per *Dark Study* (2020). Césaire (2010, p. 148) also held out a hope of a “form of organization as broad and as flexible as possible, capable of giving impetus to the greatest number.” If such hopes are achievable, ideas of equality, justice, and solidarity that animate organised struggle should be conceived as virtual intensities diffracted through specific discontinuous groups and struggles, not as blunt ideological distortions common to none. Common struggle is the diffraction of an equality, a justice, and a solidarity specific to each, diffracted across the whole. The critical cartographies we have examined clear space for solidarity as the theme of art-pedagogy-to-come. Racism, whose event spans history, recurs as a multitude of violations and denigrating motifs. In our situation racism is articulated across social fields and through state apparatuses, so what is immediately necessary is the dismantling of racist assemblages to make it possible for alternate non-racist structures to emerge. Racism in all its literal and structural variants rests in attitudes and practices. The point is to change those attitudes and practices and through this process ourselves. George Floyd, Rest in Power.

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