Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative
(De)Coupling as Discourse on the Global South
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What's Wrong with Multiculturalism? featuring talks by
Rasheed Araeen, Artist and Writer and
Nav Haq, Senior Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp,
followed by a conversation moderated by
June Yap, Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator, Latin America.
Introductory remarks by
Sara Raza, Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator, Middle East and North Africa

SARA RAZA

Good afternoon, everybody. My name is Sara Raza and it's a great pleasure to have you here. I'm the Guggenheim UBS MAP curator for the Middle East and North Africa, and the curator of the current exhibition, *But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise*. It's a great pleasure to welcome you all for the second part of the symposium, *(De)Coupling as Discourse on the Global South*. This symposium is something that we have been thinking of throughout the entire duration of the MAP project, as a way to summarize what is now the third and possibly final phase of the project as it currently stands. Firstly, I'd like to say that none of this would be possible without the generosity of UBS, and of course the wonderful support of my curatorial and education colleagues here at the Guggenheim, who have enabled us to put together these wonderful programs, such as this symposium and all the performances and public programs that have taken place throughout the course of the project. So I'm very grateful to them.

This symposium was largely designed to unite all three phases of the MAP project, bringing together my colleagues June Yap, the creator of the South and Southeast Asian phase of the project, and Pablo León de la Barra, the Latin American curator. As you all know, MAP is a multiyear, multi-city project which dovetails across different parts of the globe. So concurrent with my project here in New York, Pablo's project was at the South London Gallery in London, and prior to that at Jumex, in Mexico City. All three projects have originated here from New York. This was the first showcase of them. So it was a series of acquisitions, curatorial projects, and public programs extending to those that are on the Internet, also. Today's symposium is really here to highlight some of the multiplicity and some of the challenges that we've faced as curators bringing together what is really defined as a geographically specific region, and really the ways we used our own strategies—strategies that were more elastic or fluid in their definition—in particular to push back at some of these prescribed definitions.

Today's symposium is, rather, concerned more with ideas about *becoming*, rather than *otherness*. That is something that is underlining today's discussions, and I'm very, very pleased to welcome back both June and Pablo, as well as a series of wonderful speakers, artists who have participated in the MAP project, such Ergin Çavuşoğlu, whose work is on view here in *But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise*, and Javier Téllez, who has participated in the Latin American phase. We also have Rasheed Araeen, who will be giving a keynote discussion here this afternoon, and Nav

Haq, who was the curator of the MHKA museum in Antwerp, Belgium. So I thank you all for being here, and our speakers.

Following two discussions this afternoon, two panels, "What's Wrong With Multiculturalism," and then second, "Ethnographic Turns," there will be a short break between 4:15 and 4:45 in which we will serve coffee, and I urge you to go outside and refresh yourself. Then we'll return at 4:45 sharp to have a discussion with Public Movement, who have been our artists in residence during my exhibition, *But a Storm Is Blowing from Paradise*. They performed yesterday, with the premiere of *Choreographies of Power*, and have had a long-running performance, *Debriefing*, which explores one-to-one performance about contemporary art practice prior to the state of Israel being built, and Palestinian art before 1948. We'll be joined by the core members of Public Movement, Alhena Katsof, and Dana Yahalomi, and we will then follow this with a discussion between ourselves, a triangular discussion, which will interrogate some of the objectives of the performance, and some of the trials and tribulations of working within institutional history and knowledge. Thank you, and welcome. I'd like to welcome now June Yap and her participants to the stage. Thank you very much.

JUNE YAP

Hello, and good afternoon, everybody. Thank you for being here with us today, and thank you too to our panel speakers for being part of this first session, "What is Wrong With Multiculturalism?" Indeed, what *is* wrong with it? This is a subject that my fellow curators and colleagues of the MAP Global Art Initiative have grappled with over the course of five years, and the sense of its complexities and even complicities. Certainly, in a proposition of a global and regional project, the question arises of what such a compass and framing might entail. And following that, how such a proposition and its attendant issues may be considered through the prism of art. Coming from Singapore, a young nation-state that has multiculturalism embedded in this narrative of emergence, and as a condition of continuous negotiation, this is a subject that is pertinent beyond cultural work. In fact, in 1988, an exhibition was presented by the artists S. Chandrasekaran, Goh Ee Choo, and Salleh Japar, titled *Trimurti*, which may be seen as a response to the subject of multiculturalism, and its attempt to problematize the influences and inheritances of culture and identity, as its aesthetic project. In reflecting on this exhibition a decade later, Ahmad Mashadi was to comment that an issue was not merely in the negotiation of cultural distinction, but rather an uneasy situation arises also when political efficacy is given priority in state-instituted multiculturalism, resulting in a narrowing and a delimiting of cultural patrimony as a consequence of the administrative management of differences in a model that assumes and implements congruity and complementarity. The subject of multiculturalism certainly continues to be an issue today, and its concerns have definitely figured in the development, presentations, and discourses of the MAP initiative, with this panel as a platform for its further disentangling and teasing out.

But this disentanglement is not limited to discourse. I think a crucial part of the process in the MAP initiative has also been how art, and artists too, respond to this subject. So in relation to this, I would like to share a conversation that came about recently, in the midst of the development of this panel, in a reference to an artist from Indonesia whom I had included in the first phase of the MAP Global Art Initiative, the *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia* exhibition. This is Reza Afisina, with his work titled *What*, from 2001. My

curatorial colleague Sara Raza had asked me about Reza's name, and if he had a Persian lineage or association. I didn't actually know, so I asked the artist, whom we also call by the nickname Asung. He shared that his name comes from an interest of his family in the philosopher and intellectual Avicenna, or Ibn Sina, of Hellenistic Islamic tradition. From Avicenna, you get Afisina. And yes, the artist confirmed that *Reza* is a Persian name, although not necessarily because of any Persian bloodline—at least as far as he knows. The artist in fact hails from west Java, tracing his lineage to the Sundanese and Chinese of the region. As for his nickname, Asung, it was assigned to him while in college, in reference to a term of address adopted from a stall-holder in central Java. This stall-holder would call his customers "Sung." And as Reza looked a little Chinese, his friends started calling him Asung. Incidentally, the word *Asung*, while rarely used, refers to the meaning of "to incite" or "arouse anger and revenge."

As for Avicenna's philosophy, it is grounded in reason and knowledge, and it is therefore quite apt that Reza's early experimental video performance for the MAP initiative presents a reflection on understanding and navigating difference. Shot during the Islamic holiday Eid, the artist is seen within the video to be reciting from verses of the Bible on the subject of truth and confession, as well as mindfulness and justice in faith, lessons that he notes are also conveyed in the Quran. The work is presented as a reflexive moment of spiritual contemplation that is interrupted by self-inflicted violence, with the artist watching himself as he records his performance. Significantly, the artwork surfaces issues crucial to the considerations of multiculturalism—of the need for preservation, and commitment, as well as for a relativization from which compassion, empathy, and therefore perhaps knowledge and understanding might arise. What for me is particularly crucial, and what speaks to the versatility of aesthetic expression, is how fluidly, yet specifically, the artist navigates a thorny condition of juxtaposing two domains of belief. So with this introduction to the complex subject of multiculturalism, I wish to welcome our first speaker, artist, author, and founding editor of *Third Text*, Rasheed Araeen, to address us. Rasheed, please.

RASHEED ARAEEN

Hello everybody, good to see all of you. "What is wrong with multiculturalism?" The question "what is wrong with multiculturalism?" was answered and dealt with more than twenty years ago by many, among them such eminent thinkers as Slavoj Zizek and Fredric Jameson, for whom it was a new form of racism. Despite my agreement with them, I feel it is unnecessary to repeat their arguments here. What is more important now is to go into the complexity of the issue, which goes beyond what is commonly understood by *racism*, and this complexity lies within the historical trajectory of its development. The history of multiculturalism is in fact the history of both the fascination for and the disavowal of the other; and my aim is to go into this history in Britain specifically in order to show why it was necessary for the British state to create and impose multiculturalism upon people of Asian and African origins.

The history of multiculturalism is, however, extremely complex and complicated, with both contradictions and paradoxes, and what I want to say here is merely a simplified rough outline of its picture. I will use in this presentation the word *black* for all non-white people in Britain, no matter where they come from, Asia, Africa, or the Caribbean. However, before I proceed further, I want to say something about the presence of Asian and African cultures in the West, the creativity of which you can find in the streets of London, Paris, and New York, for example, and

this creativity is the genuine creativity of ordinary black people. We must recognize the positive aspects of the creativity of Asian and African cultures within Western metropolises, and this should not be confused with multiculturalism. Multiculturalism, as I aim to show here, is what has been created, sponsored, promoted, and funded by the British state in particular, and imposed upon those who are defined and treated as minorities in order to prevent them and their cultures from penetrating the mainstream culture of modernism and confronting its racist Eurocentric ideology, particularly in the visual arts.

The postwar history of Britain is the history not only of its indigenous white people but also of people from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, who were brought to Britain by the British state itself to work in the factories, to run its transport system and hospitals, and to do other essential things. They were meant to work and work alone, but when they became visible in the streets, in the pubs, in the shops, when they began to open their own places of meeting and entertainment, when they started playing their own music, it was the beginning of the problem for white British society, which in fact caused the first race riots of London, in Notting Hill in 1958. However, these riots were attributed to so-called Teddy Boys and Sir Oswald Mosely's Fascist Party, and were soon put down through the machinery of peace and order, which was necessary for the economy. What came out of them was the slogan "Keep Britain White," which had far-reaching effects. In fact, it has remained fundamental to the ideology of the British state, which as I have said, involved both a fascination for and disavowal of what were considered to be alien to British culture. But more significantly, it was the fear of other cultures which defined and constructed the discourse of multiculturalism. It is also necessary to point out that this fear has been used consistently and persistently by the ruling classes in Britain to fool and deceive the general public in order to gain support for their own power.

The first politician who began to articulate and openly express this fear was a respectable and respected parliamentarian, Enoch Powell, who delivered his notorious "Rivers of Blood" speech in 1968 in Wolverhampton. His main point was that there were too many what he called "new immigrants," and because they were too many, they were affecting the basic values of British culture. In his subsequent appearances on TV, he said that he was not a racist but only worried about the increasing numbers of immigrants from different cultures. They should therefore be repatriated to their countries of origin in order to reduce their numbers, so that their subsequent small number would not impact upon British culture. On a different occasion, he also said that these immigrants could not become an integral part of mainstream British life. There was of course widespread disagreement with his views, and he was removed from his position in the shadow cabinet of Mr. Heath, but he remained a respectable and respected Member of Parliament until his death, when he was praised by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair for being a good parliamentarian. .

The consequences of Powell's ideas and views were twofold: first, he laid the foundation for what later led to the institutionally legitimized racism of multiculturalism. But more importantly, he unleashed a kind of violence against all black people that was unprecedented. While many white workers came out in the streets in support of Powell, white youngsters called skinheads went around attacking in particular Asian people, which they called "Paki Bashing"; in fact many Asians were killed by them, particularly in East London. All this happened at a time when black people were being used by the system unscrupulously, to say the least. It was not unusual

for them to work for 16 to 18 hours a day doing dirty jobs in the factories in order to earn enough to survive. They also had to put up with rundown houses without basic amenities. Given their exploitation and oppression, and then the racial outburst of Mr. Powell and its resulting violence, it was no surprise that black people had to stand up and fight back. The result of this was the emergence of radical organizations within the Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities in particular, which began to take stand against not only their exploitation, but also its racism. They argued for and promoted the idea of the postcolonial transformation of the whole of British society through revolution, which began to worry the establishment. It was then that the establishment began to think of using culture to pacify this development.

Sometime in 1973, the Gulbenkian Foundation invited black organizations to a meeting to discuss what it considered to be their problems, which was attended by many but also boycotted by some, including the one I belonged to, Black Panthers. We don't know what actually went on in this meeting, as the minutes were never made public. But it seemed to have concluded that the problem was the problem of African and Asian cultures in Britain, because soon afterward, a journalist from the magazine *Time Out*, Naseem Khan, was appointed by the Gulbenkian, in association with the Commission for Racial Equality and the Arts Council of Great Britain, to investigate these problems. Naseem Khan was assisted in her investigation by a committee that included Stuart Hall, the eminent Marxist academic, and Lola Young, now Baroness Young and a member of the House of Lords. Ms. Khan's report came out in 1976 and was titled *The Arts Britain Ignores*, and subtitled *The Arts of Ethnic Minorities in Britain*. Its conclusion was clear from these very titles. Khan then proposed and demanded state funding for the traditional arts of Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, which she considered to be the genuine cultural heritage of black people in Britain and which was thus called "Ethnic Minority Art." However, her report had little immediate impact.

About two years later came another outburst of racism, not from any ordinary person but from the honorable Margaret Thatcher, who became the next Prime Minister. It was evident that she had used her racism to win the support of white voters. Here is what she said addressing them: "I think it means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people of a different culture. [. . .] The British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world, that if there is any fear it might be swamped, then people are going to be rather hostile to those coming in."

Thatcher's racism does not need any elaboration here, but it was evident to black people then what it meant. Racism was now being openly institutionalized, as not much opposition to her views came from within the establishment. There was therefore only one choice left for black people; they had to stand up and fight. This resulted, in 1981, in the uprising of ordinary black people in the major cities of Britain, including London, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, and Bradford. This was something that was not expected, and the establishment began to worry. It therefore had to do something to find out what was behind it, if not to pacify the discontent and anger of the black community. It was then that Lord Scarman was appointed by the Prime Minister to investigate the matter. Lord Scarman came up with the same conclusion as the Gulbenkian and Naseem Khan. In his view, it was a problem of other cultures that could be resolved by state support and funding for the aforementioned Arts of Ethnic Minorities. Now Mrs. Thatcher faced a paradox of her own making; she had to support and fund the very same

cultures that she disliked and had disavowed only a few years earlier. In 1982, the Arts Council announced the inclusion of "Ethnic Minority Arts" in their future programs, and in 1986 received special instructions from the Prime Minister herself to spend 4% of their funding on the category. Thus began the official regime of multiculturalism in Britain.

Let me now go into the background to all this, to show that there was in fact a class struggle that was pacified by multiculturalism. The postwar migration of people from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean included mostly working-class people, particularly landless peasantry from the Indian subcontinent, but it also included highly educated people. These people were either educated in their own countries of origin or, as a younger generation, had gone to school and university in Britain. By the 1970s, there was a substantial black middle class (both of Asian and African origins) in Britain, the aspirations and ambitions of which were no different from those of the white middle class. While black working people were employed in factories, the transport system, hospitals, and other areas, mostly doing low-paid menial jobs, most of the educated blacks had no jobs or also had to do low-paid menial jobs. It was these frustrated people from the black middle class who were there in the meeting called by the Gulbenkian Foundation in 1973, and who then supported the recommendation of Naseem Khan for state promotion and funding of the traditions of Asian and African cultures in Britain.

However, even then the struggle of the black bourgeoisie in Britain was not easy. It had to struggle hard for a respectable place within Britain, and found it only when the establishment realized the usefulness of this class in defending the system.

It was in fact the socialist GLC of Ken Livingston that opened the doors for those who now began to be called *ethnic minorities*. The GLC set up a special department for this, headed by an Afro-Caribbean, Herman Ouseley (now Baron Ouseley and a member of the House of Lords), with a section for the support and funding of Ethnic Minority Arts run by a young Asian girl who had no qualifications in or understanding of arts, with a staff of about two dozen people recruited not on the basis of any qualification and merit but on the color of their skin. Although the GLC did create a lot of awareness about the exploitation of black people—particularly owing to racism—its promotion and funding of ethnic minority arts projects was a disaster. Its promotion and funding of naive and amateurish works as the only artistic achievements of black people was not only an insult to their actual achievements but contributed further to institutional neglect, ignorance, and further marginalization.

Although the Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, abolished the GLC in 1986 because of her opposition to its socialist views and policies, the GLC's ideas about Ethnic Minority Arts were picked up by the Arts Council, then becoming the basis of its own ethnic minority funding. And although the Arts Council now began to fund Ethnic Minority Arts projects, the real money was there only in 2002 when it announced a budget of about 30 million pounds (then about 50 million dollars) to set up separate art centers or projects on the basis of different ethnicities, with which thus emerged centers like Chinese Art Centers, South Asian Art and Community Centers, Afro-Caribbean and African Centers, and so on.

Since then, things have changed enormously in Britain, politically and socially as well as culturally. The slogan "Keep Britain White" is no longer there. We have now black people in

Parliament and some in the House of Lords, and almost every local council has ethnic minority staff. But in spite of all this, the situation on the ground has become worse. British society is much more divided than it was about twenty or so years ago. There is now a widespread discontentment, frustration, and anger among all sections of society, and many people put the blame on multiculturalism if not on the so-called immigrants. Former Prime Minister David Cameron himself, complaining in 2011 about the lack of community cohesion in Britain, said "previous governments were the victims of fear and muddled thinking in backing state-sponsored forms of multiculturalism," and "we have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong." By *they*, he was referring to what is called "radicalized" Muslim youth. I did in fact write to him asking what he meant by "a vision of society," but he did not reply.

My final point was to have been about the impact of multiculturalism on the work of black artists and its institutional legitimization. But I have reached the end of my allocated time, and have to be very brief, which actually takes me back to what Enoch Powell said in 1968, much before state-sponsored multiculturalism. As I pointed out before, Powell had repeatedly said that he was not racist, but only wanted black people to remain within their own place, within their own culture, without entering and impacting mainstream culture. How was this different from apartheid in South Africa? The apartheid government always maintained that it was not racist, and that the purpose of apartheid was only to allow for the *different* development of black people based on their own cultural traditions. My point here is to show that black artists in Britain faced a somewhat similar situation.

Artists from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean began to arrive in Britain in the late 1940s—except for Ronald Moody who came there in the 1930s—and after some struggle they became part of what then became a multiracial art scene in London, and showed their work alongside their white contemporaries. They were all part of the same mainstream modernism. But when their work was looked at and written about, they were treated differently, as their work was now contextualized within their own cultures and outside the mainstream. Those who were on the forefront of the avant-garde, particularly in the sixties, were totally neglected and ignored, and thus their historically important achievement was excluded from consideration.

However, some black artists have benefited enormously from the emergence of multiculturalism in the 1990s, to the point of being celebrated internationally. But the institutionally recognized and legitimized mainstream history of art in Britain is still exclusively concerned with the achievements of white British artists. Now, the benevolence of multiculturalism, along with the help of those who have benefited from it, is being used by the establishment to cover or shield its institutional racism. Bravo multiculturalism!

<div align="center">JUNE YAP</div>

Thank you very much, Rasheed, for a very illuminating talk, and for emphasizing to us the importance of the historical perspective on multiculturalism. But before we go into a discussion, first perhaps we could hear from our second speaker, Nav Haq, senior curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Antwerp. Nav, please.

<div align="center">NAV HAQ</div>

Thank you, June, and thank you Guggenheim for the invitation to talk today. It's actually really, for me, a personal honor to talk alongside Rasheed. And I think when you talk after Rasheed, there's always this question of whether there's anything left to say. No. There isn't. Thank you.

RASHEED ARAEEN

That might be said.

NAV HAQ

Thanks a lot. I think in a certain sense, I'm going to echo the beginning of Rasheed's talk, and in terms of this invitation, to talk about the subject of multiculturalism. You know, when I was given this invitation, to talk about this subject, I really thought to myself, do we really have to talk about this? Do we really have to do it? It's something that I've tried to avoid for a long time. And I guess the way I think you could legitimize this topic as a subject of debate is if you actually tried to differentiate multiculturalism as a social-cultural facet from its institutionalized form. I think about how June described a sort of state-sponsored multiculturalism, particularly under the conditions of the huge resurgence of the myth of national mono-culture, which seems to be once again an alarming global trend. I think that's one way of legitimizing it. The second, in a more personal way, is as a British person now living in mainland Europe, in Belgium. Belgium is a place that's actually, in a certain sense, having its first moment, now, of institutionalized multiculturalism, and it actually makes you realize that some places are having their first moment now, actually many decades after other places. And you know, actually coming from Britain to Belgium, into this particular context, I have this really strange feeling. It's a bit like coming from the future or something like that, where you see something that happened in your own country many decades ago. So you have a certain sense of how they might or might not want to address it in their local context. So there is a sort of personal dilemma about the extent to which you want to get involved in this.

But I guess, still, ultimately, I try to work constructively with civil society questions, and determine how culture relates to it. I would say that my own interests are quite broad, looking at questions of internationalism, power relations, universality versus relativism, exclusion, broadly speaking, the intersection of art, society, and politics. As a backdrop, I'm going to have some images from a project that I worked on in the Antwerp Museum two years ago. It was called *Don't You Know Who I Am: Art After Identity Politics*. I organized it together with my colleague Anders Kreuger, my colleague at the museum. It's going to be completely impossible for me to talk about all the artists and works in the show, so there's just going to be a load of images of works that were in the exhibition. These were all the artists that were in the exhibition. What I suggest is if you're interested to find out more, then I would go to the URL "AfterIdentity.MHKA.be," where you can see information about all of the artists, about the exhibition. The catalogue for the exhibition was made purely as an e-book, and you can download that for free. So I'm basically going to just let this run as a backdrop whilst I'm talking.

So, the more serious subtitle to this exhibition was *Art After Identity Politics*. And of course, identity politics and institutionalized multiculturalism are closely linked. The term itself, *identity politics*, has strong historic connotations, particularly of the '70s and '80s generations' artistic movements, where at that particular point, they were quite concise constituencies of identity-

based practices in art, based around, most visibly, race, gender, and sexuality, from a particular perspective of social marginalization. Of course, there was a certain, as in emancipatory movements, a certain sort of desire, or a mode of seeking visibility. A sort of "visibility politics." Very often, this desire for visibility manifested itself in very particular aesthetic forms, very often representations of the self, or the body, what Peggy Phelan called "the economy of reproduction," where there would somehow have to be some sort of connection between biography and content, a sort of ontological link between practice and one's cultural background. I think a bit like Rasheed, I have a very strong sort of British perspective on this. Also, I think a perspective on it, in a certain sense, is its decline or failure as a movement. I think, for different reasons, there was a sort of failure, partly because of, for example, some aesthetic limitations. Also, because I think there was a sort of strong realization that the transition that people wanted wasn't quite as they hoped. It was more a transition from marginalization, i.e. outside of the artistic system, to a sort of ghettoization within the artistic system. And a strong sense of what kind of practice somebody would make if they were from a particular background of marginalization. So if you were a black person in Britain, you would be expected to make art about being a black person in Britain. I think a key person for me, in terms of this discourse, is somebody like Arthur Danto. Of course, it is more than fifty years ago that he wrote his text *The Art World*, in which he tries to describe what it actually is, you know, what is art? What is the art world? There are a lot of things that come up in his writing that we take for granted now, that are actually somehow still of fundamental importance. Even basic things like the idea that when you have an artwork, an artwork is not an artwork because it looks like an artwork, it's an artwork because the art world says it's an artwork. In that sense, it's about group behavior and group dynamics, and there is an art-world meme, a sort of memetic behavior, these forms of codification that exist between people, that legitimize who can or can't be in the art world, or what can and can't be deemed an artwork. This is more the invisible side of the art world, in contrast to the visibility of identity politics.

These are some of the things I talk about when I talk about ultimately the failure of identity politics. And I think what we were trying to do with this particular exhibition is actually very much based on observation, of what artists are doing, and the fact that we felt there was some sort of reappearance of notions of identity, and more broadly speaking, selfhood, but in a completely different way, more invested in notions of complexity, which the art system has not always been able or willing to accommodate, and through very different aesthetic strategies. Through things like abstraction, experiments with non-figurative representation, performativity, fiction, objecthood, things like object relations, how the sense of the self is formed through our relationship to objects, and many different artistic strategies that might even not even necessarily reinforce each other. But of course, artists have not ever accepted any kind of ban on self-contradiction. I guess there was also a sense of thinking about generationality, something that happens with other kinds of artistic movements. So, for example, when we think about things like institutional critique, we see figures like Mark Dion and Andrea Fraser as somehow second-generation institutional critique artists. If you were to apply this logic to identity politics, what would that look like? Particularly if you think about the current generation, to think about that really in terms of practice, and not, say, in terms of age, or things like that. These practices are not necessarily always fundamentally from the perspective of marginalization, and where somehow, because of the different kinds of aesthetic practices, these connections between biography and content are somehow taken away, and really somehow interrogating this question

of whether you can have identity without identification. Can you have identity without identification? Looking at the works of these artists, yes, of course you can.

So this really was about the role of artistic intelligence, or artistic propositions, somehow trying to be constructive in terms of working against any kinds of myths of a monoculture, like the kinds that we see within these very much present-day right-wing identitarian movements, which adopt an inherently conservative, essentialist position. And of course, there are some other fundamental differences between then and now, between the '80s and the present day. Technological advancement—how technology helps us construct and understand what identities are. And of course the art world is much more international now—another fundamental difference in what internationalism means. And the fact that the Western art world has somehow opened itself up to other places. I think one key factor of this project for us was about how these historical forms of legitimation within the art world, where previously marginalized people, in a similar way to how it eventually legitimized those who were socially marginalized in their own societies in the '70s and '80s via institutionalized multiculturalism, are somehow now mirrored within the framework of art internationalism. There are codifications in place that allow it to be determined whether people are allowed on the inside or the outside, based on whether there can be these connections between biography and culture and content. I just wonder whether there's a real lack of awareness of this mirroring in today's internationalism, with the institutionalized multiculturalism of a few decades ago, raising the question of how it interacts with an international art scene.

That's what this exhibition wanted to address. There were many outcomes for us, in terms of this project. One of them was whether there is a necessity still to use terms like *identity politics* or *multiculturalism* anymore. Probably not. At the very least, because of historic connotations that ultimately form a kind of baggage, which is not necessarily always useful for artists working today. I think there needs to be some kind of radical reorientation of what was previously referred to as identity politics. It's already happening in practice, and I would argue that somehow the system is lagging behind. Perhaps I would suggest a better way of dealing with the situation is to have some kind of faith in the idea that artists possess more intelligence than the art system. I think I could probably leave it at that point. Thank you.

JUNE YAP

Thank you, Rasheed and Nav. I was really enjoying listening to both of you speak, and looking at where both of you are coming from. On the one hand, looking at the history of multiculturalism, and on the other hand, the contemporary navigation of this inheritance of a problematic multiculturalism. I think that the problem is, on multiple levels, on the one hand, the historical aspects of it, you know, recalling what has happened before, and the necessity of that as a narrative, and then at the same time, navigating it in a practical and day-to-day operational sort of basis, whether as curators, as artists. One thing that came up was the subject of legitimation, which both of you brought up. And I'm thinking what do you think might be useful possible strategies to address legitimation today. Do we construct new forms of legitimacy, new agents of legitimacy?

NAV HAQ

I think, for me, the thing about this particular process of legitimation is that it is strongly connected with this idea of the meme that I'm talking about, this little art-world meme. And I think the first thing is, somehow, that there needs to be more of an awareness of it existing. Even at the level of education, you know? Because the amount of times I go to visit students in art school, and of course there's something very specific about the art school environment. It's different. It's about being the best student that you can be, you know? And then as soon as you leave art school, it's not like that anymore, because the art world is not necessarily based on meritocracy anymore. And there's somehow a sort of lack of awareness of this difference. And the amount of people that I meet who are completely unaware of the fact that it is about sort of a group dynamic. So I think on a very basic level, an awareness that the cultural field has a particular way of functioning would probably make a big difference.

JUNE YAP

I suppose, in a way, we're all part of this as well—yourself, curating. Perhaps a way in which you were working through that was through the exhibition that you took us through as well. As a curator, I am also encountering the same sorts of questions, in attempting to navigate the complexities that we've been talking about. But I'm also wondering, well, from Rasheed, from your point of view, what about for artists? You know, what can artists then do to address the problem?

RASHEED ARAEEN

Use their imagination.

JUNE YAP

Yes. Actually, yeah, that's probably the answer. Would you like to elaborate a little more? Perhaps for yourself, perhaps in your practice?

RASHEED ARAEEN

In my practice, there are so many things, I don't know if I can elaborate on them all here. However, I think I should make one point, which is of historical importance but has not been recognized by art history. Right from the beginning of modernism, art has been multicultural. Let's take the example of Picasso. You have Africa in it, you have Spain in it, and then his view of all other cultures. And he managed to bring them together to produce one language, which was synthetic. Then we can move to Paul Klee, who was inspired by Islamic culture in North Africa. You can look at Matisse, particularly his paper cutouts, and you frequently find symmetry in them. So multiculturalism has been there within art history but not recognized because art history is still Eurocentric. That means the center of the consciousness that produces art history lies in Europe. This consciousness can do anything it wants. It can bring things from Asia, Africa, anywhere. But it doesn't give them equality in the production of what Europe's artists do, because it is not based on a dialogue between these cultures. For Picasso, there was no dialogue between Africa and himself. For Picasso, Africa was the raw material to be used, very much like capitalism does. It can use material from all over the world and transfer it into something else and claim it as its own. So the presence of multiculturalism within modernism is a very complex problem. But what we are talking about today is very different and specific, which has taken place only in the last twenty or so years as part of globalization. What we have today as multiculturalism is only meant for those who are defined in and by the West as "ethnic

minorities," or people from cultures other than that of the West. It has in fact been imposed upon them, as I have shown in my paper, in order to keep them outside or marginal to the mainstream modernism. If they were allowed in, then they would confront and disturb the whole basis of Eurocentrism.

And now I can go on to what Nav said about internationalism. There's no longer internationalism; it's globalization now. And with globalization, all cultures have entered into the discourse of globalization. Not on the basis of the importance of the work artists do, but on that of their ethnicities. Art is now secondary. In globalization you have to be first a Chinese, an Indian, an Arab, an Iranian, an African, and so on, before you are an artist. Only when you can establish your ethnic or national cultural identity, would you be recognized as an artist. Hope this answers your question—how that is mirrored in globalization.

JUNE YAP

Yes. And the difficulty of also trying to find strategies to resist them. Does anyone else have questions? No?

RASHEED ARAEEN

I hope you have not been intimidated. Come on, say something! Don't ask questions. Just say something.

JUNE YAP

Please use the microphone, because we're recording.

QUESTION

Okay. I'll start with a comment, but it is a question that I've been thinking about, and mulling over. I happen to be a Turkish artist. I've been living in this country for over forty years. There is a confusion that is also constantly perpetuated by the artists, and also by the art mechanism, and right now I feel I have to speak, and maybe ask a question. I'm prefacing it for a while first. I appreciate what you said, and that's why I just had to say this. I feel like we are in a position of total hypocrisy, claiming this thing about globalization or internationalization, and then, what is really happening is that the powerful West, of which I've become a kind of member, is usurping all artistic values, and shifting them, and then shuffling them around, and then creating this other structure in the forms of museums, galleries, collections, collectors, stratifications of artists, and notions of art and creativity. And then passing that along. And this is not just happening on a global scale, but also on a local scale. Because I, as an artist of, you know, so many, many years, after some level of success and some level of failure, which I basically am impervious to at this point, have realized that it's almost like a game that you want to jump into, but it doesn't really include a lot of people. And I'm not talking just about myself, there are, I believe hundreds, thousands of us out there, who are both American artists and international artists, who have never even been able to get into the conversation. So slowly, the international conversation, or the dialogue, has become a monologue, and then a soliloquy.

When we talk about Decoupling as Discourse on the Global South, I was thinking, basically it really has become a case, when I look at the works, too. There is no such thing as local art. I'm not talking about crafts. I mean, there's a certain level of sophistication. I apologize to everybody

for taking your time, but at least for the sincerity of my ideas, I should be heard. Because I am not speaking just as some Turkish artist here in America, it's not about that. It's more about the status of the arts, what's happening to art, how it has been really usurped from artists as well, both economically, and in terms of trendsetting. It's become such a messed-up situation. I can think of other words other than just globalization. It's almost like a trendsetting that's initiated by the West, and slowly through these institutions, the Guggenheim Museum included in them, it becomes this other structure that, in the end, eliminates art. What happens is people, like collectors, buy because they buy with their ears. They don't really buy because they understand the work, or they like what they're seeing. But it's become such a material, and then slowly, like Chinese artists, or Asian artists, who I believe have immense talent and history, end up creating works that try to channel this idea. Is there anything, in terms of globalization, that can make this situation a better situation for all artists? Because what I'm seeing is basically that it's being hijacked by the art authorities of the West. That's my question.

JUNE YAP

Thank you. It's definitely a very complex situation. Nav, would you like to respond?

NAV HAQ

Thanks, June.

JUNE YAP

You're welcome.

NAV HAQ

I don't know if I really have an easy answer. I mean, talking personally, I try my best. I try to do things a bit differently. I think these things are also a bit generational, as well. I don't know if I agree that there's no such thing as local art anymore. Maybe you're touching on an American problem, I don't know. But you know, where I live now, in Belgium, there definitely is. You know, there's a strong tradition, for example, of figurative painting that is very easily traceable back to Flemish primitives. And that's just one example. I think it's in many places, you know? And I think those kind of conditions of practice are also quite important to recognize. I think that's one key thing, rather than this floating layer of consensus internationalism that the art world tends to revolve around, you know? I think that there are individuals that are trying to do things differently, but I think you're right, there is a sort of wider structural problem. Dominant markets that have a whole other motivation.

RASHEED ARAEEN

When you want to be an artist—I repeat—when you want to be an artist, you have a problem. Give up art. And be creative.

JUNE YAP

Well, with that, perhaps, we can wrap up this session. I think we have quite exceeded our time as well. I would like to thank Rasheed and Nav, and all of you.