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### Decolonial AestheSis

## Decolonial AestheSis: Colonial Wounds/Decolonial Healings

By [Walter Mignolo and Rolando Vázquez](#) on July 15th, 2013 [0 Comments »](#)

I

This dossier is one more step of the journey that began toward the end of 2009/beginning of 2010, and that already has roads planned into the future. The idea of this dossier, however, emerged in Middelburg, The Netherlands, during the Decolonial Summer School of 2012. It was Roland Bolz, at that time one of the course assistants, who suggested the idea of contributing to *Social Text: Periscope* with a theme circulating around the decolonial.

To mark these beginnings here means that there were some sort of visible signs of underground conversations in which decolonial aestheSis was already at work. What it is certain is that this dossier is an expression of the journeys that we will briefly outline here, extended by the trajectories of each of the contributors. We can say that these trajectories are all marked by their contact with the general frame of the project identified as modernity/coloniality/decoloniality. For short, we write “modernity/(de)coloniality” and we understand this to be a single concept not three different ones. If you are used to the relations between “words and things,” you may have difficulties understanding to what “thing” these three words, united and separated by the slash “/” and the brackets “(),” may “represent.” They do not in fact “represent” anything. They are a signpost of conflicting enunciations: the rhetoric of “modernity,” and its continuing promises of salvation; and the logic of “coloniality,” the continuing hidden process of expropriation, exploitation, pollution, and corruption that underlies the narrative of modernity, as promoted by institutions and actors belonging to corporations, industrialized nation-states, museums, and research institutions. “Decoloniality” appears inbetween modernity/coloniality as an opening, as a possibility of overcoming their completeness. Decoloniality refers to the variegated enunciations springing from global-local histories entangled with the local imperial history of Euro-American modernity, postmodernity, and altermodernity.

As it is now, the modernity/(de)coloniality project emerged in South America, involving both scholars and citizen-intellectuals based in South America, as well as those from South America and the Caribbean who are based in the United States. The trajectory of this project since 1998 has **been well documented**. At the beginning, the project concentrated on the question of epistemology, political economy, and political theory. By 2003 the expression “decolonial aesthetics” was introduced into the collective’s conversations by Colombian citizen-intellectual, artist, and activist, Adolfo Albán Achinte. In 2009, Zulma Palermo, at the Universidad Nacional de Salta, started working on an edited volume, *Arte y estética en la encrucijada decolonial*, published in Spring 2010. At the same time, *Calle 14: Revista de Investigación en el Campo del Arte*, under the leadership of Pedro Pablo Gómez and the auspices of the **Facultad de Artes**–(ASAB), Bogotá, Colombia, was publishing articles (see especially Volumes 3 through 5) devoted to “decolonial aesthetics.”

All of this was connected to the PhD program in Latin American Cultural Studies at the Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar (Quito, Ecuador), led by Catherine Walsh. In July-August of 2009, a group of five or six graduate students, out of a class of twenty-four, were interested and working on decolonial aesthetics. Adolfo Albán Achinte, who was a graduate student when he initiated the conversation on decolonial aesthetics, was at that time the assistant to the director and a professor at that university. It was then and there that Pedro Pablo Gómez began to publish a series of articles on the topic and suggested to organize an exhibit-cum-workshop, under the auspices of ASAB. The **first exhibit and workshop**, *Estéticas Decoloniales*, took place in Bogotá, in November of 2010. Many of the contributors to the current dossier (Tanja Ostojčić, Dalida María Benfield, Pedro Lasch, Miguel Rojas-Sotelo, Raúl Moarquech Ferrera-Balanquet, and Rolando Vázquez) participated in that event, which was co-curated by Pedro Pablo Gómez (ASAB), Elvira Ardiles (Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá) and Walter Mignolo (Center for Global Studies and the Humanities, Duke University).

That was indeed the beginning. After it came the second round—the **exhibit-cum-workshop** on decolonial aesthetics at Duke University, in May of 2011. The cast was pretty much the same as in Bogotá: Pedro Pablo Gómez, Pedro Lasch, Tanja

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Ostojčić, Walter Mignolo, Dalida María Benfield, Raúl Moarquech Ferrera-Balanquet, Miguel Rojas-Sotelo, and Rolando Vázquez. But new members joined the club: Hong-An Truong, Nayoung Aimee Kwon, and Guo-Juin Hong, together promoting the dialogue on decolonial aesthetics with East Asia that continues in this issue of *Periscope*, enlarged with the participation of Vivian Y. Lee. The presence at Duke of Alanna Lockward was instrumental for future developments. In June of the same year, Alanna, Rolando, and Walter created the Transnational Decolonial Institute (TDI). That same summer, a collective **Decolonial Aesthetic manifesto** was posted on TDI's website. Soon after, Alanna began organizing what would be the third event in the series, in Berlin: *Be.Bop 2012-Black Europe Body Politics*, of which Alanna provides a report in this dossier. Madina Tlostanova couldn't attend any of these events, but she has been in continuous conversations and working her way on Central Asia, Caucasus, and Moscow. She also published a relevant article in *Calle 14* after the *Decolonial Aesthetics* exhibit in Bogotá.

In the meantime, other events and publications continued the explorations and the conversations. Miguel and Raúl compiled a dossier on "Decolonial Aesthetic Creative Practices in Progress" published in Romanian journal *IDEA: art +society*; in 2012. In May of the same year, a panel on the topic at the Havana Biennial gathered a number of the protagonists who have been participating in other events (a report on this panel can be found in the contribution to the present dossier by Raul and Miguel). Last but not least, Pedro Lasch organized "And, And, And. Five Days of Decolonial Aesthetics" at *Documenta 13*, in Kassel, about which he is also reporting in this dossier.

This dossier in *Periscope* is not an isolated event but one in a series of processes that started in 2009, continues until today, and has many branches growing toward the future. In the spirit of this collective work in progress, Rolando and Walter drafted the following ideas that were distributed among the contributors of this issue.

## II

The collective conception of decolonial aestheSis that has been unfolding in various events (that in this dossier take the name of "decolonial aestheSis"), that are framed in the larger project known as "modernity/(de)coloniality." It considers aestheTics as being an aspect of the colonial matrix of power, of the imperial structure of control that began to be put in place in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and the colonization of the New World, and that was transformed and expanded through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and up to this day.

Decolonial aestheSis is a movement that is naming and articulating practices that challenge and subvert the hegemony of modern/colonial aestheSis. Decolonial aestheSis starts from the consciousness that the modern/colonial project has implied not only control of the economy, the political, and knowledge, but also control over the senses and perception. Modern aestheTics have played a key role in configuring a canon, a normativity that enabled the disdain and the rejection of other forms of aesthetic practices, or, more precisely, other forms of aestheSis, of sensing and perceiving. Decolonial aestheSis is an option that delivers a radical critique to modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics and, simultaneously, contributes to making visible decolonial subjectivities at the confluence of popular practices of re-existence, artistic installations, theatrical and musical performances, literature and poetry, sculpture and other visual arts.

It is important to distinguish two currents of what has come to be called "decolonial aesthetics" (now "decolonial AestheSis"). One is aestheSis, which has been denied validity under the modern aestheTics hegemony, and which precedes any naming of the "decolonial." We can find this in what has been called popular culture and popular arts. In the work of Adolfo Albán Achinte and Zulma Palermo, we witness the working of decolonial aestheSis as a re-valuation of what has been made invisible or devalued by the modern-colonial order. In this regard Adolfo Albán Achinte speaks of the possibility of re-existence through the everyday aesthetic practices and the senses.

The other current, which is of course in communication with the first, is decolonial aestheSis, seen as a critical intervention within the world of the contemporary arts. This practice runs parallel to the decolonial epistemic critique being made in the realms of philosophy and academic thought. It circulates not so much around the question of the re-existence of practices and forms of sensing that remain present in everyday life, but more around biennales and curatorial projects. It stands as a confrontation with modern aestheTics within its own field. This dossier is centered around this second current of decolonial aestheSis-as-critical intervention, the one in which the artist and the curator are struggling to challenge the hegemonic normativity of modern aestheTics. The emphasis of the dossier is not meant to diminish in any way the centrality of the first current that re-values and enacts the aestheSis that have been denied validity; it is a current that has been there since the beginning of colonial times. The current of decolonial aestheSis has sustained forms of being and forms of experiencing and relating to the world that are and have been in great danger under the modern/colonial rule. It is a current that attests both to the violence and the finitude of the modern/colonial project.

## III

A distinction between "aestheTics" and "aestheSis" is the first basic step. Both terms come from the Greek language. As Greek concepts, they are not Eurocentric for Europe did not exist at the time of the Greek wise men. For the Greeks of the classical age, Europe was just a vague geographical idea connected to mythology: **Europa** (Greek Εὐρώπη *Eurṓpē*), from where later on the name of a sub-continent (the continent being Eurasia) was derived.

AestheTics become Eurocentered in eighteenth-century Europe when it was taken as the key concept for a theory of sensibility, sentiment, sensations, and, briefly, emotions, in contrast with the obsession for the rational. On the other hand, Kant mutated it into a key concept to regulate sensing the beautiful and the sublime. This was the starting point of "modern aestheTics" that emerged from European experience and local history, and that became, even already in Kant's work, the regulator of the global capability to "sense" the beautiful and the sublime. In this way, aestheTics colonized aestheSis in two directions: in time, it established the standards in and from the European present. and, in space, it was projected to the entire population of the planet. Aesthetics and reason became two new concepts incorporated in the colonial matrix or power. Today, decolonial aestheSis is a confrontation with modern aestheTics, and its aftermath (postmodern and altermodern aestheTics) to decolonize the regulation of sensing all the sensations to which our bodies respond, "from culture as well as from nature." (Two concepts that also need to be decolonized but we must leave that for another occasion.) Let's concentrate on aestheTics-aestheSis:

### aes·thet·ic or es·thet·ic

*adj.*

1. Relating to the philosophy or theories of aesthetics.
2. Of or concerning the appreciation of beauty or good taste: *the aesthetic faculties.*
3. Characterized by a heightened sensitivity to beauty.

4. Artistic: *The play was an aesthetic success.*

5. Informal Conforming to accepted notions of good taste.

n.

1. A guiding principle in matters of artistic beauty and taste; artistic sensibility: *"a generous Age of Aquarius aesthetic that said that everything was art"* (William Wilson).

2. An underlying principle, a set of principles, or a view often manifested by outward appearances or style of behavior: *"What troubled him was the squalor of [the colonel's] aesthetic"* (Lewis H. Lapham). (Free Online Dictionary)

**aesthesia** – an unelaborated elementary awareness of stimulation; "a sensation of touch"

**esthesia, sensation, sense datum, sense experience, sense impression**

**perception** – the process of perceiving

**limen, threshold** – the smallest detectable sensation

**masking** – the blocking of one sensation resulting from the presence of another sensation; "he studied auditory masking by pure tones"

**visual sensation, vision** – the perceptual experience of seeing; "the runners emerged from the trees into his clear vision"; "he had a visual sensation of intense light"

**odour, olfactory perception, olfactory sensation, smell, odor** – the sensation that results when olfactory receptors in the nose are stimulated by particular chemicals in gaseous form; "she loved the smell of roses"

**gustatory perception, gustatory sensation, taste, taste perception, taste sensation** – the sensation that results when taste buds in the tongue and throat convey information about the chemical composition of a soluble stimulus; "the candy left him with a bad taste"; "the melon had a delicious taste"

**auditory sensation, sound** – the subjective sensation of hearing something; "he strained to hear the faint sounds"

**synaesthesia, synesthesia** – a sensation that normally occurs in one sense modality occurs when another modality is stimulated (Free Online Dictionary)

The first is a concept that now belongs to the sphere of philosophy; the second to language in general, in any language. Thus, if aesthetics is indeed modern/colonial aesthetics and a normativity that colonized the senses, decolonial aesthetics has become the critique and artistic practices that aim to decolonize the senses, that is, to liberate them from the regulations of modern, postmodern, and altermodern aesthetics.

#### IV

In the final stretch of building this dossier, we consulted the participants about whether they would accept changing in their text the use of "aesthetics" and "aesthetics" according to the above definition and with the capitalized "T" and "S" to mark the distinction, or whether they preferred to leave their text as was originally composed. For Pedro Lasch the changes would have implied extra work, and he requested to leave the words as they were. A conversation over email between the three of us (Pedro, Walter, and Rolando) started around the issue. We asked Pedro to include his thoughts in this introduction. Here are his comments:

The issue clearly highlights a necessary discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of using Greek/Latin terms that have been so much used and abused by modern European colonialism (aesthetics, democracy, theory, politics, etc.). I would formulate the problem in the form of a question or challenge: What words outside Anglo-Saxon and Greco-Roman tradition can we use to talk about art, aesthetics, culture, and many other notions so crucial to our decolonial concerns and struggles? Is it time we begin to speak more openly and insistently of these things in their Quechua, Aymara, Arabic, and other formulations? What are these words and formulations in the first place, and how may we best teach them to each other in the many languages and systems of knowledge silenced by modern/colonial oppression?

In the process of the email conversation, Rolando summarized what he understood was at stake in the definition of both terms and in the use we proposed (that is, colonial/modern aesthetics and decolonial aesthetics):

I think that with this movement three fundamental things are happening,

1. By naming the origin of the concepts, we start with the recognition of where they come from; they become located and therefore lose their claim to universality.
2. By talking of decolonial aesthetics (instead of decolonial aesthetics), what is being recognized is that decolonial aesthetics is not just an indictment of the universal validity claim of modern/colonial aesthetics, but that it asserts itself as an option. Instead of promoting an aesthetics, as a normative framework in the likeness of modernity, decoloniality suggests an aesthetics that is, an option. It is an option because it does not seek to regulate a canon, but rather to allow for the recognition of the plurality of ways to relate to the world of the sensible that have been silenced. In my opinion to speak of decolonial aesthetics is to affirm its value as an option, as an opening of alternatives and not as the closure of norms.
3. Finally in relation to the modern/colonial vocabulary that includes words such as aesthetics, but also like progress, capitalism, human rights, education etc., I believe that the movement that is here being made, signals that these words are not only not universal but that in their coloniality they conceal the diversity of ideas and ways of relating to the world that do not belong to the genealogy of the Western tradition. Thus, beyond the specific words or the language that we speak, it is essential to say that 'Aesthetics' became the western norm but that every society in the world has its own notion of aesthetics, the sensible, the beautiful... The same can be said of Human Rights that became the western norm but that every society in the world has its own notion of justice. The same with the idea of progress that became the western norm but every society in the world has its own idea of [the] good life. The same with the idea of capitalism that became the western norm but every society in the world has had its own idea of exchange, of 'economy'. The same with the idea of education that became the western norm but every society in the world has had its own idea of learning. The same for 'nature', 'gender', 'democracy' and so on and so forth...

Each one of these concepts requires a decolonial work which implies: 1) To show their genealogy in western modernity that

allows us to transform the universal validity claims of western concepts and turn them into concepts historically situated; 2) To show their coloniality, that is how they have functioned to erase, silence, denigrate other ways of understanding and relating to the world; and finally 3) To build on this grounds the decolonial option, as a non-normative space, as a space open to the plurality of alternatives. These three steps are in my view, the three moments of what we can call a decolonial method.

## V

In this analytical frame, we see aestheTics coming into being as a philosophical discourse in eighteenth-century Europe to regulate “taste,” not only in Europe but also from Europe to the globe. “Art” was and still is understood as the set of social practices upon which modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics work on regulating, self-critiquing their regulations, and occupying as much space as they can. “Art” entered the Occidental vocabulary (the west of Greece) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, meaning “skill as a result of a practice.” It was most likely the derived translation of “poiesis,” which also meant skill. The moment when “poiesis” becomes “poetics” is what Aristotle discussed in his celebrated small treatise, *Poetics*. (Jorge Luis Borges wrote a short story, “El Hacedor,” in which he muses on the lost and confused meanings of these concepts). The transmogrification of “art” as skill into “art” as norm, as good taste and beauty, is what Kant brings to completion in his *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime* and later in the *Critique of Judgment*.

Beyond regulating taste, aestheTics as normativity also has served to reproduce the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality: the coloniality of knowledge and the coloniality of beings. Modern aestheTics have served as a mechanism to produce and regulate sensibilities. Decolonial aestheSis are processes of thinking and doing, of sensing and existing, in which the modern distinction between theory and practice has no purchase. Decolonizing the senses means, in the last analysis, decolonizing modern, postmodern, and altermodern knowledge regulating aestheSis, in order to decolonize the subjectivities controlled under the modern imperial aestheTics and their aftermath.

Consequently, the uses of “aestheTics” and “aestheSis” in our vocabulary demands certain explanations that can be obtained through a decolonial reading of Kant’s *Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime* (1767). This text is a canonical point of reference in building the second modernity (Enlightenment) concept of aestheTics, and in binding it to philosophy. Before Baumgarten and Kant, aestheTics was not used in the history of Western philosophy (even less in the rest of the world) in the sense we use it today. “Poetics” and “poiesis” were two terms encompassing different strategies for reaching the subjectivity of different audiences. Aristotle did not use “aestheSis” in his *Poetics* and he did not write a treatise on *aestheTics* but *poetics*. It was a good reflection on Greek society and its different levels of organization. But of course, it was not global and even less universal! Borges revealed the blindness, not of Aristotle, but of the universalization of Aristotle by his Western followers. In a short piece called *Averroes*, Borges imagines a morning in which Ibn Rush was working on the translation of Aristotle’s *Poetics* into Arabic. He got stuck in the translation of two words: “tragedy” and “comedy.” This is the key moment of the text:

His pen moved across the page, the arguments entwined irrefutably, but a slight preoccupation darkened Averroes’ felicity. It was caused by the *Tahafut*, a fortuitous piece of work, but rather by a problem of philological nature related to the monumental work which would justify him in the eyes of men: his commentary on Aristotle. This Greek, fountainhead of all philosophy, had been bestowed upon men to teach them all that could be known; to interpret his works as the ulema interpret the Koran was Averroes’ arduous purpose [...] The night before two doubtful words had halted him at the beginning of the *Poetics*. **These words were *tragedy* and *comedy* [...]; no one in the whole world of Islam could conjecture what they mean** (emphasis added).

Averroes put down his pen [...] From this studious distraction, he was distracted by a kind of melody. He looked through the latticework balcony; below, in the narrow earthen patio, some half-naked children were playing. One, standing on another’s shoulders, was obviously playing the part of a muezzin; with his eyes tightly closed he chanted: “There is no god but the God.” The one who held him motionlessly played the part of the minaret; another, abject in the dust and on his knees, the part of the faithful worshippers.

Averroes’ difficulty in translating the term comes from the simple fact that the Greek concept of “mimesis” was totally alien to Islam, and of which—let’s say it, just in case—Islam has no need. Mimesis is not a universal concept. For that reason Averroes couldn’t conceive that what the children were doing was, in the eyes of Aristotle, imitating. Decolonial aestheTics is a double trajectory, that of the artist who is no longer creating on the principle of imitation (nor even in the frame of Kantian’s beautiful and sublime), and that of the sets of conceptual, theoretical discourses that on the one hand provide decolonial readings of canonical Western aestheTics (modern, postmodern, and altermodern), and, on the other hand, provide, together with artists who are themselves theoreticians and conceptualizers (as it is clear in this dossier), the prospective trajectories of decolonizing being and decolonizing knowledge.

Consequently, when aestheTics replaced poetics in eighteenth-century Europe, two simultaneous phenomena took place: 1) the formation and transformation of Western civilization displaced poetics and replaced it with aestheTics, and 2) aestheTics was universalized and became used as a normative framework within European philosophy. AestheTics, as many other normative frameworks of modernity, was used to disdain or ignore the multiplicity of creative expressions in other societies.

From the Enlightenment to the end of the twentieth century, art became a powerful medium to shape the senses of modern subjects in Europe, and, because Europe was becoming the economic and political center of the world, European art and aestheTics touched non-European actors, institutions, and knowledges all over the world. These actors had to deal with European arts and aestheTics in a way that differed from those European actors (“artists and philosophers”), who themselves did not have to get involved with non-European ways of world-making (art) and thinking about world-making (philosophy). For the former, the question became whether to accept, assimilate, reject, integrate, or appropriate European arts and philosophical aestheTics into their own histories, ways of living, and sensing. For Europeans, the rest of the world (following Kant’s evaluation) did not reach the state of producing art or literature/narratives, but what they produced was considered “arts- crafts” and “myths.” These classifications, to which Kant contributed significantly, served to legitimize the “superiority” of European arts and aestheTics.

Kant’s observations on the beautiful and the sublime mark a crucial moment in this double transformation: the colonization of the European’s own past, and the colonization of the present and the past of all co-existing civilizations. This is an expression of the denial of coevalness, the temporal discrimination to which aestheTics contributed. To decolonize aestheTics means to delink from the “universal” mirage of a local experience.

Starting with this dossier we propose the spellings “aestheTics” and “aestheSis” to make sure that the two concepts are clearly distinguished, especially for readers for whom this distinction is unfamiliar. In short, there is no pre-modern aestheTics. AestheTics was an invention of European enlightenment. If we think that there is a pre- or non-colonial aestheTics, we accept the modern conceptualization that aestheTics is universal and not a regional invention of the European

Enlightenment that precisely colonized aestheSis, all kind of sensing, and aimed at regulating taste. One task of decolonial thinking and doing is precisely not to deconstruct but to decolonize (thinking and doing and doing while thinking) key concepts in the European genealogy of thoughts to show their historical and regional scope.

## VI

Decolonial aestheSis is, today, an option entering the artistic, philosophical, ethical, and political debate. By saying that the decolonial is an option and that decolonial aestheSis is an option, we mean that there are other options. In fact, we assume that there isn't anything but options. Kant inaugurated the modern aestheTic options, which were followed recently by postmodern and altermodern aestheTics. To better grasp what we are implying, let's quickly review four coexisting options—some in conflict and others in harmony—in the sphere of aestheTics and aestheSis, and their political, economic, gnoseological, and ethical implications:

- 1) The market option. Art has become one of the most distinguished commodities. The value of art is the value of the market: all values that have characterized arts in the recent past (aestheTics, innovation, nationalism, artistic schools, periods, etc.) are subsumed and surrogated to market values. This option is a derivation of modern, postmodern, and altermodern aestheTics. The difference is that aesthetic values **have been converted into commodities**.
- 2) The altermodern option. Next to the market value of art is the tendency to maintain artistic and intellectual values within a discourse that underlines “novelty,” not in solely in the West but in the identification of common artistic discourses around the globe and the denial of identities. This is the altermodern option. The altermodern options are parallel to the market value options. They both inoculate artistic practices from any type of identity politics and impose the “neutrality” of values that respond to the dynamics of the market value.
- 3) The de-Westernization of art option. Confronting and contrasting with the previous two options we find the de-Westernization of art. That is, a perspective where the value of art is not that of the market or that of the global commonality of artistic discourses and techniques, but artistic practices that aim at delinking from the imperial hegemony of Western artistic values. Two examples of this are the forthcoming *Sharjah Biennale 2013* and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha.
- 4) The decolonial option. The decolonial option operates from the margins and beyond the margins of the modern/colonial order. It posits alternatives in relation to the control of the economy (market value), the control of the state (politics of heritage based on economic wealth), and the control of knowledge.

Last but not least, the previous outline was not constructed from a perspective disconnected from the trajectories and options that we mentioned. These “trajectories and options” are in movement; they have their own genealogies and future orientations. By making this clear, we also make two additional claims: a) each of the trajectories is an option and any claim about the rightfulness, truthfulness, or superiority of any of these options is unwarranted; and b) the decolonial option is not the “best” without parenthesis, for the decolonial option claims precisely that the claim that something is the “best or preferable” without parenthesis is unwarranted in a world in which every “true” and “preferable” option is always in parenthesis. This doesn't mean “cultural relativism” and “everything goes.” It means that the differences are played out not by denying the validity of the other options but by recognizing their distinctive locations, their particular horizons, their commonalities, and their tensions. It is as an option that the decolonial posits itself as a locus of enunciation. Likewise it is only as options that the non-decolonial options can generate their enunciations, their claims on their role and place in the definition of “art” within the framework of global social interactions.

There is nothing beyond coexisting options. The decolonial is one among the four emerging options, offering alternatives to the modern/postmodern canonical options, that of the market and the altermodern. The de-Westernizing and decolonial options are delinking from it. However, in our opinion, the decolonial option is so far the only one committed to advancing a world of art in which many options can coexist.

## VII

Modern aestheTics has been such that what it excluded was erased; at best, it was accumulated in ethnological museums in order to “preserve the cultures” that had already been deprived of their validity as contemporary aestheTics. One of the basic strategies of coloniality was the classification and ranking of people and regions. Racism manifests in both disqualifying the minds in bodies of color and disqualifying regions as “falling behind” modernity (conceptualized as Second and Third Worlds, underdeveloped and emerging economies, etc.). People of color and in relation to these regions are considered at best second-class people, artists, scientists, intellectuals, etc. This aberration, that for such a long time has been accepted, is now ending, and it is ending because of the decolonial confidence and affirmation that racialized people are enacting. Decolonial aestheSis is one sphere where decoloniality is flourishing. It is not a question of “increasing the number of adepts, like in politics or economics, or adepts, like in the case of institutional religions, but of delinking, of disobeying. The decolonial names the empowerment and affirmation of those dignities wounded under racial classifications, under the logic of the disposability of human life in the name of civilization and progress. Decoloniality becomes a process of recognizing the colonial wounds that are historically true and still open in the everyday experience of most people on the planet.

Decolonial aestheSis departs from an embodied consciousness of the colonial wound and moves toward healing. It is a heterogeneous historico-embodied move, it perceives the wound of coloniality hidden under the rhetoric of modernity, the rhetoric of salvation. Decoloniality is at once the unveiling of the wound and the possibility of healing. It makes the wound visible, tangible; it voices the scream. And at the same time decolonial aestheSis moves towards the healing, the recognition, the dignity of those aesthetic practices that have been written out of the canon of modern aestheTics.

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