

States of Opacity
Art, Politics and New Social Imaginaries

Lahore Biennale 2018 - Workshop
by Elvira Dyangani Ose

In his quest for a *Poetics of Relation* — namely, a poetics, that is free of norms, goals and methods, as much as it is open, participatory, and is directly in contact with everything possible—poet Édouard Glissant urges us to claim the *right to opacity*. Opacity references the possibility of every individual to claim a plural and mutable identity, **an essential condition for a new sense of collectivism to emerge**. History is constituted of myriad episodes and **movements of cultural and socio-political solidarity towards utopias**, among them, revolutionary movements such as the Non-Aligned Movement, *Négritude* and the so-called *Bandung Spirit*.

All of these episodes were impregnated by those who strongly believed in **change**; moments in which **imagination** and purposefulness provided the **condition of possibility** for the establishment of a **new social order**. Conflicting memories and interpretations apart, these movements constituted genuine cultural alternatives for all dimensions of human activity, particularly in relation to education, culture and political representation.

In restoring the premises of these practices of **cultural and socio-political solidarity**, how can we engage with their values, their ethics, without falling into nostalgia? What is the legacy of critical philosophical endeavours that have often transformed into questionable political ventures, such as *Négritude*? How do these aspirations effect specific **cultural and artistic strategies and socially-conscious practices**? How can we construct new forms of **collective work**, and what is the role of art —its agents and its institutions— in that equation?

States of Opacity discusses recent artistic and cultural endeavours engaging with the reinvention of history, memory, futurity and the common good. These practices assume a new horizon from where to imagine a sense of purpose and formulate new forms and states of collectiveness.

**DAY TWO
FOR OPACITY AND GLISSANT
WHY**

My theoretical work has focused on new forms of environment that artists have evolved in the absence of conventional institutions and contexts as for example in many cities in Africa. The pursuit of common space in the public and private sphere as well as sound and performance of tradition, together make up an affective context that is communal rather than concretely spatial.

- Sense of the collective, and movements of cultural and socio-political solidarity towards utopias
- Art from specific territory
- Agents living simultaneously multiple temporalities
- Context and urban space in particular, what does it mean and how it affects the art and culture artists produce?

MORNING — CASE STUDIES

- GIBCA, A STORY WITHIN A STORY**
- DEL TERCER MUNDO***
- LUBUMBASHI BIENNALE**

AFTERNOON — CASE STUDIES

- GUGULECTIVE**
- LUBUMBASHI BIENNALE**
- CENTRE FOR HISTORICAL REENACTMENTS**

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