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The urgency for more sustainable and just practices in art, design and fashion is grounded in the language of an impending climate catastrophe. Yet there is evidence that we are no longer approaching the collapse of life on Earth as we know it. We are already there. What would it mean to declare, today, a state of ecological and environmental emergency? How might this shift notions of artistic autonomy or institutional neutrality and the modes of representation we have held dear for so long? If we accept that we are indeed out of time, would it be enough to galvanize us to make every conceivable effort to work in concert? How could we transform the ways in which art institutions work and the ways in which contemporary art is practiced?

The climate and social crisis require not only administrative solutions but a profound transformation in our ways of understanding and doing. Using Rolando Vázquez's concept of relational aesthesis (Vázquez, 2020) as a practical framework, we propose putting practices of relationality, positionality and transition at the nexus of cultural production and shifting the current emphases on novelty and contemporaneity towards acts of relating and listening. The question of enduring the climate collapse is, at heart, an ethical one, based on seeking social, environmental and ecological justice grounded in processes of mourning, healing and restitution. In this conversation, we speak about the importance of grasping the deep entanglement between cultural production and the formation of publics and subjectivities. Is it possible to envisage an ethical life or an ethical cultural practice today?

Hicham Khalidi: I would like to begin first with the problem of autonomy in the arts. The world we have built rewards personal accomplishment and personal satisfaction above collective life and the wellbeing of our environment. In art schools we are often taught that every artistic gesture is an expression of radical singularity, yet we are not taught to question the conditions of cultural and institutional production that sustain these acts. How, then, should art, design and fashion be practiced?

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Rolando Vázquez: Thinking through the conditions of cultural production brings to the fore the following questions: **What does cultural practice mean in a world in which the conditions of production are implicated in the destitution and exploitation of others, in the epistemic silencing of other worlds of meaning, and in the continuous economy of ecological devastation and destruction of Earth?** How should art, design and fashion be practiced under the generalized conditions of loss, under the conditions of the loss of Earth: Earthlessness and the loss of the plurality of worlds: worldlessness?

To respond to these challenges, cultural practices first need to acknowledge that they have been implicated in the annihilation of other worlds, in fostering notions of time that undermine relational temporalities, and in reinforcing a metaphysics of western modernity predicated on presentism and subject-centred anthropocentrism. We also need to ask: What type of subjects are practitioners and institutions producing?

Cultural practices can understand themselves and respond to their role in the production and reproduction of the colonial difference. They can help us address the (im)possibility of an ethical life in a world in which our well-being and sense of self are made dependent on the consumption of the lives of others, on worldlessness, on the destruction of Earth and on Earthlessness.

HK: It is important to dig deeper into the role of artists and arts institutions, however unwitting, in the destruction of Earth and life. In this respect, it is revealing to look at how the defence of personal artistic autonomy often goes hand in hand with a defence of institutional neutrality to protect individual expression. How can we puncture these fallacies if we are to rethink art, design and fashion practices?

RV: The notion that institutional cultural practices are neutral can be dangerous. Unlike plurality as the possibility of hosting differences, neutrality pretends to defend an apolitical sphere, a space of indifference. Indifference is a mode of rejection of difference. Pluriversality (Escobar, 2018) is the reverse of indifference in so far as the pluriversal is only possible with and through the difference of the Other.

The pretension of neutrality also corresponds with a denial of how we are implicated in the urgent problems we are all facing. The pretension of neutrality enacts a false innocence, it masquerades as if cultural practices were not part of a history that is implicated in the colonial difference, in the erasure of other worlds, in the consumption of the labour of others, of the life of others and of the life of Earth.

Neutrality, therefore, is a political position, one that is complicit in the denial of accountability towards the Earth and towards each other. It negates the history of modern and contemporary art, design and fashion as a history that is implicated in colonial difference, in the erasure of other worlds and in the consumption of the labour and lives of others and of the life of Earth. We do not call for neutrality to be replaced by ideology. We call instead for positionality (Vázquez, 2020), for a humble positioning that recognizes the partiality of our knowledge and the fullness of our accountability. A positioned humility is neither innocent nor pure.

HK: In art schools we learn about the object, the aura, what objects do, how they are received and how they are disseminated. Yet we learn nothing or little of, for example, the toxic materials we use or the devastating price of bringing them to students' studios. In the context of ecological collapse, what are the consequences of continuing to privilege the individual and anthropocentric *geste* above collective or communal action within our educational and other institutional systems?

RV: In general, to question the presupposed neutrality of western aesthetics is to question the timeless, ahistorical authorship of individual selfhood. An individualized self is constituted in separation. Separated from the world of others, he (and here I am using the masculine in speaking of the dominant self) is separated from other worlds, from time, from the communal, from our relation to those who preceded us and from Earth. **It is a self that, fundamentally, has lost the consciousness that his whole body is made of Earth.** In sustaining a claim to neutrality and individual autonomy, we have lost awareness of our relational existence.

The institutions in which we are both located are structures that produce a way of living in our bodies that is entwined with systems of power. In whose body have we been made to live? Ours is a body that has lost its Earth consciousness, that has lost its communal consciousness, that has lost its temporality. It is a body forcefully separated and individualized, a body that is made to live in the fiction of the separateness of the self.

With whose words do we speak, with whose ideas are we thinking the world? Whose ideas constitute our world views? Where do they originate? With whose eyes are we seeing? What are our ways of sensing the world in which we live? In which ways have we been made to experience reality? If we examine these questions carefully, we begin to realize that we are not sensing and experiencing the world in ways that relate to Earth and to others. Rather, we are living in bodies whose experiences are mediated by the dominant system: by modernity and coloniality, capitalism and contemporaneity. **The epistemic and aesthetic territories of modernity become the limit of what we picture, sense and ultimately comprehend.**

This brings us to the question of the subjects our cultural and academic institutions produce and reproduce, both as those who have the power of enunciation – as authors or researchers – and those who consume that enunciation. What publics are we producing? What students are we producing?

HK: In a world in which the conditions of the production of art precipitate the destitution and silencing of others and the devastation of Earth, is it still possible to think of a transition towards ethical art making? Can we practice art ethically?

RV: We cannot live an ethical life in a world in which our well-being and sense of self is dependent on the destruction of others. We must first acknowledge our drastic impoverishment – what we are losing and we have lost – in modernity's extractive system of life and monoculture that has reduced us to a single experience of self. Some of these losses are irretrievable. In genocide, as in the destruction of rainforests, no amount of recycling or retribution can bring back the dead or restore our primeval forests. In this sense, the call for positionality is also a call for a politics of mourning. We must first grieve the past and the loss of all the possible futures that have been erased or eradicated.

From a politics of mourning we can move towards a politics of transition, away from claims to abstraction and the false innocence of supposed neutrality, into a position that is capable of being responsible, of re-membering our relation to Earth in relation to others, cognizant that everything we eat, everything we wear or dress with, every electronic we use, is in relation to Earth and to others, in relation to other earth-worlds.

Positionality is a necessary condition for this transition. A decolonial positionality should not be confused with identity. 'My positionality is not my identity', it is not what I think I am. Rather, positionality is a consciousness of our social-historical and Earth being, of how we are sustained by Earth, how we are sustained by the work of others, of our debt to the lives of the human and non-human others who preceded us. Any artwork is always already positioned on Earth and in a historical world; it is related to Earth and other worlds, to geo-genealogies that inform and enable whatever is done. Every single word we are using now in this conversation comes from somewhere. We did not invent it. Temporality exceeds the realm of the contemporary, what sustains us in time exceeds the empty present of modernity. Language and form, movement and thought, do not originate in the empty now, they do not originate in individuality. They come from a reservoir that is communal and which does not belong to us.

HK: I had a great conversation with the artist Nithya Iyer, who said we should not be preoccupied with anticipating climate collapse but with building the tools and means necessary to endure it. I think she nudged me over the fence to conclude for myself that collapse is already here and that the transition we need to make is how we will live with and through it, and what world we will build on its ruins. What the idea of enduring collapse omits, however, is the loss of futures or, as you have called it elsewhere, defuturing (Vázquez, 2017). Decolonial discourse looks to the past to discern what is needed for the future. Your politics of mourning acknowledges that the past is still moving, that the erasure of other worlds of being has meant the erasure of possibilities into the future and the possibility of other futures. As we endure collapse, how do we cope with this loss of future?

RV: What is at stake in the word 'climate' in 'climate collapse' or 'climate crisis' is Earth, the forgetting or the loss of Earth: the condition of Earthlessness. What is at stake in critiques of Eurocentrism, of Universality, is the loss of worlds, the loss of the plurality of ways of being in and of becoming the world: the condition of worldlessness.

Earthlessness and worldlessness speak to the radical impoverishment of experience under the spread of global modernity. We are losing possibilities into the future because the future is constructed by the diversity that we hold in our pasts: the diversity of languages, of ways of sensing and experiencing, the diversity of epistemologies of aesthesis and the diversity of earth, of beings on earth of Earth. It is this plurality and its preservation where the hope for alternative futures lies.

The loss of the future does not have to do with a lack of speculation or fiction, it has to do with the loss that is produced by a system that extracts life and reduces the plurality of Earth-worlds to the single experience of the self, the consumer self. It has to do with the spread of oblivion. Today the consumer self is perilously setting the standard of humanity, of what it means to have a good and developed life.

HK: If the politics of mourning is a process of grieving irrevocable loss it is also a deep acknowledgement of our responsibility towards seeking a positionality and a politics of transition that offers a path for communities and institutions to move away from the oblivion that is Earthlessness and worldlessness. What role does restitution have in recuperating our rooted futures?

RV: Restitution becomes one of the urgent tasks to meet the dangers of defuturing. Restitution cannot be limited to notions of property or ownership or to the restitution of material objects. Of course, the restitution of material heritage and of Land are fundamental matters because they provide the material support for alternative worlds to become historical, to wrestle against their historical erasure, but restitution is also, importantly, about the restitution of epistemologies and aesthesis, of world-making practices, of weavings of relations. Restituting the possibility of undoing separations, of weaving-back what has been severed by the dominant system can enable the futures that have been negated.

The question of restitution has to do with confronting that politics of defuturing, that loss of hope. Defuturing is leading us towards cynicism and resignation or indifference. Restitution is a move towards enabling the futures that have been negated by the modern/colonial system. But optimism for the future cannot derive from speculative fictions. It must derive from the restitution of epistemologies and of ethics, of relations and weavings between humans and the Earth, that have been severed by dominant systems of power.

A question I bring to my classes, to students or cultural practitioners, is: What would it mean to restitute to Earth all that we have taken from Earth in our single life? For each of us, this is a question that is painful but important to bear. Even as an exercise, it makes us more conscious of all we take and have taken from Earth. It can help us overcome our false innocence and realize how deeply we are implicated. What does it mean to restitute, to give back to Earth? We have been made to enjoy the loss of Earth and the loss of worlds without retributing and holding ourselves accountable.

That is why we have the urgent task of remembering, of re-membering and membering back, how to be a person beyond that individual self that is so ignorant and arrogant in its pretended autonomy and neutrality. We need to transition from personhood, the state of being a single person, towards forms of earth-hood and communal-hood. **Restitution is the process of remembering how to be 'human' beyond the self, in relation. It is a chance to recuperate truncated pasts and to enable possible futures. Restitution is our act of hope.**

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