

# STANDING IN THE CRACKS OF MULTIPLE

# HISTORIES

## SAVVY CONTEMPORARY WITH THE TERRA FOUNDATION FOR AMERICAN ART

STANDING IN THE CRACKS OF MULTIPLE HISTORIES investigates the contours of the history of the United States and the hegemonic narratives that form and uphold it. This research project maps the ruptures caused by these narratives to invoke stories that were lost between, took form within, or stood above its cracks. With the arts as our plurivocal medium, we trace genealogies and counter-narratives of diasporic and indigenous communities within, and beyond, the imperial reach of the United States.

We call on extra-disciplinary artistic contributors to lead us from a genealogical understanding of their own lived experience and to reflect with us upon the manifold worlds within our own, composed of intergenerational memory. We take Maria Lugones' work on building coalitions against multiple oppressions as a point of departure by posing a query on the types of agency needed for resilient empowerment against worldwide systems of domination, which have come from American colonialism and imperialism. We echo her question:

“How much and what sort of ‘agency’ do we need to move with others without falling into a politics of the same, a politics that values or assumes sameness or homogeneity [...] Attempting to stand in the cracks and intersections of multiple histories of domination and resistances to domination?”<sup>1</sup>

Maria A. Lugones

This multi-limbed project features pairs of micro-residencies and digital contributions across two years,

<sup>1</sup> Lugones, Maria A. *Pilgrimages Peregrinajes, Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2023.

with three on-site iterations per year – each comprised of combinations of sonic, performative, and discursive interventions in collaboration with SAVVY's radio pillar SAVVYZAAR, dedicated to the sonic as a space of healing, catharsis, and rebellion. As a means of resisting the homogenizing tendencies of the western art-historical canon, where subjectivities of struggle and epistemological diversities are marginalized, we invite practitioners whose works are hybrid and heterogeneous. Across the ongoing philosophies of decanonization and unlearning at SAVVY Contemporary, we extend our premises in this sonic and corporeal series to seek alliance against such structures of omission.

We recognize cracks as crossings and openings. We see them as pathways that can allow us to build bridges across our differences and towards joined strategies of liberation, while simultaneously, refusing the universalizing trap of a “sameness” that Lugones warns against. These cracks allow us the possibility to enable agency across diverse forms of dissent and against forces of subjugation. Ours is an effort to unfurl the archives which took form within multidimensional, and even paradoxical, complexities of terrain and body – to trail how these entanglements have created roots of underground networks, climbing in non-linear turns and twists, while strengthening each other from below.

It is by living in the cracks of imposed structures, and breaking through them, that intersections of multiple histories of resistance are harnessed. Through these invitations to think, create, and join distinct threads into a multiplex tapestry, we assert the survival of a “mestiza consciousness”, Gloria Anzaldúa's dynamic and transgressive mythos countering dualistic, dominion-oriented paradigms in order to acknowledge a hybrid whole. She writes that the energy of “mestiza consciousness”, “though [...] a source of intense

pain [...] comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm".<sup>2</sup> Anzaldúa encourages the dissolution of binary thinking to embrace pollinations of relation across identities and cultures.

In this programme, we look toward the roots of communities and cosmologies that have been, or continue to be, under the influence or threat of the United States and turn to artists, activists, scholars, and each other, as narrators of our own stories, rather than observers of histories told and mistold by hegemonic throes. We call upon the continued birthing of worlds within worlds and the rising of transfigured forms amidst splits: where (dis)identifications<sup>3</sup> morph self, community, and place as a result of resilience or sheer need, due to being sites of violence in land or body through colonial time.

Let us understand diaspora as displacement, and societal fractures as teachers, where refusal of the imposed "given", as in the feminist practices of Saidiya Hartman and Adriana Cavarero, can be forms of world building. It is by honoring liberation movements and traditions, deeply rooted in present community engagements and struggles, so that we can continue to be carried by them. We lean on past protests and the learnings of our ancestors whose strategies and wisdoms are situated in vulnerable archives<sup>4</sup>, and yet, remain open to our shared activations:

"To believe in the world, therefore, is the task that those who seek to inhabit our world otherwise carry out in the wake: in the wake of the world we have lost, of the worlds we have brought to an end as a result; in the wake of the devastation that [...] modern dreams of progress and [...] imperial projects of world-monification have brought about; in the wake of the dreams that have never come to pass; in the wake of the world quakes that make our desolate world quiver, that make us hesitate, that make our reasons tremble; in the wake of realities fantastical, divergent and abandoned, risking ourselves from moment to moment, casting our lot with the fragile indeterminacies opened up by divergent worlds in this world."<sup>5</sup>

Martin Savransky

<sup>2</sup> Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands, La Frontera*. Aunt Lute Books, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> "Disidentifications is meant to offer a lens to elucidate minoritarian politics that is not monocausal or monothematic, one that is calibrated to discern a multiplicity of interlocking identity components and the ways in which they affect the social.", in: Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1999

<sup>4</sup> Alampi, Antonia. *Vulnerable Archives. On Silenced Archives and Dissenting Views*. <https://savvy-contemporary.com/en/projects/2021/vulnerable-archives/>

<sup>5</sup> Savransky, Martin. *Around the Day in Eighty Worlds: Politics of the Pluriverse*. Duke University Press, 2021.

What are the terrains and stories of resistance across the United States and the Americas which tell us stories of resilience, that show us broader landscapes than those buried and made absent? Together with The Terra Foundation for American Art, we invite a pluriverse of perspectives, as in Savransky's callings: finding empowerment through sonic and corporeal conjunctions in the cracks of various histories, within and beyond the weights, fissures, punctures, and scars of imperialist hierarchies that are in need of troubling.

"a wider landscape [...] to draw a map [...] of a critical geography [...] without the mandate for conquest."<sup>6</sup>

Toni Morrison

As Morrison describes, we welcome the wide maps of critical geographies of peoples living under occupation or within the matrix of American power. How do conditions of dislocation, conquest, and exploitation echo in varied communities? How is racial and structural violence in the United States creating psychological illness, poverty, and addiction in response to resource extraction, labor exploitation, and disenfranchisement? How have artists and their communities been denied societal and interpersonal prosperity at the hands of imperial power and influence? Where indigenous lands once reaped and sowed for the collective good, they have now been capitalized upon to satisfy the greed of the powerful. We trace modes of refusal which persist defiantly and surge towards communal protection.

The stories from the cracks are the stories of those who live undocumented as much as they belong to those whose homes have been transformed into tourist destinations, duty-free regions, or sites of territorial control. They are the stories which explain the continued subjugation of the Bahamas, Panama, Nicaragua and Haiti, and interrogate the structures which maintain Puerto Rico and Guam as colonial properties while rendering the Virgin Islands a tax haven. The continued cicatrization of the entire Caribbean is an enduring project of US hegemony.

These stories also find their parallels across the planet from Iraq to the Congo – countries which find themselves under US military occupation, economic subjugation, or both. We open with these weighted questions and call for more from our invited artists. These histories which are situated outside of Western hegemonic canons of knowledge production are also neighbors to "las nuevas revolucionarias (the new revolutionaries, Anzaldúa), whose existential imperative of making ones' life intelligible and [holding] the moral

<sup>6</sup> Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark, Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Harvard University Press, 1992.

agency to transform ones' lives",<sup>7</sup> as pronounced by M. Jacqui Alexander.

This research project engages with the realms of the sonic, discursive, visual and beyond. It is an aim to expand the narratives of history of, or in relation to, the United States by bridging connections across communities who continue to fight towards healing, reparations, and collective dignity. Drawing upon the practices of artists and contributors of various mediums, disciplinary interests, and geographic terrains of relation, we come together to further develop their research and practices at, or with, S A V V Y Contemporary.

Working in this vein and alongside The Terra Foundation is a shared effort to foster intercultural dialogues and encourage transformative practices to expand narratives of American art and the histories embedded within it. *STANDING IN THE CRACKS OF MULTIPLE HISTORIES* invites artists, practitioners, scholars, activists, dancers, poets and beyond who live in the United States' indigenous and occupied territories, are displaced as a result of American conquest or captivity globally, or work abroad with diasporic roots and relations to its terrains. *STANDING IN THE CRACKS OF MULTIPLE HISTORIES* is a two-year research based project:

For the on-site micro residencies of two weeks, trans-disciplinary American artists and contributors are invited to further develop their work and practices through researching and exchanging in Berlin with S A V V Y Contemporary as their host. The sonorous contributions encourage communications across the arts as their own knowledge systems which can bring attention to diverse histories, connections, and cross-generations of sovereign, joyous, and dialogical futures.

Over the course of two years, contributors are invited to share their work at S A V V Y or through S A V V Y Z A A R radio where sonic commissions and contributions from artists and community radios will be hosted. For those physically present in Berlin, the S A V V Y Contemporary team will guide two residents at a time through a two-week, on-site micro-residency and programme, with the contributors presenting their work in their chosen performative medium as a culmination, alongside a panel discussion with the curators. Within these micro-residencies, both emerging and established artists from varied geographies and realities, each with roots and connections to American contexts and influences, are paired. Our goal is to enable grounds of exchange across distinct artistic practices, for a cross-pollination of alliances and experiences. These micro-residencies occur during

other ongoing projects within the space and aim to contribute to a wider discourse on contemporary art, connecting geographies and solidarities.

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<sup>7</sup> Alexander, M. Jacqui. *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred*. Duke University Press, 2006.

ARTISTIC DIRECTION Renan Laru-an  
CONCEPT Kelly Krugman  
CURATION Kelly Krugman Mokia Laisin  
PROJECT TEAM Manuela García Aldana Billy Fowo Lili Somogyi  
MANAGEMENT Lema Sikod Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock  
PROJECT MANAGEMENT Lisa Kolloge  
COMMUNICATION Anna Jäger  
HANDOUT DESIGN Lili Somogyi  
GRAPHIC DESIGN Juan Pablo García Sossa