

## **De-Colonizing Art Institutions**

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*Destined to fail*

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# DESTINED TO FAIL

text fragments by Stefan Baltensperger + David Siepert

We are used to fail  
People expect us to fail  
Failure is in our DNA

The terms Decolonizing and Institution fit so well together – just like like Diversity and Unity. We are stuck trying to think about the idea of Institution without thinking about power structures, the apparatus that defends values.

## We fail

The field of art is a hierarchic one and aesthetics is just another word for the way we perceive and interpret what surrounds us – the world. Visual expression is embedded into culture and tradition. To develop a forward-looking visual discourse means to encourage a continuation of modernism and a declassification of everything that does not originate from a western tradition.

We try to spin the wheel, mix the ingredients and squeeze them through the pastry tube — another device, a kaleidoscope for reality. It's great to be curious and to have no expectations. If we try to think beyond the scope of a single civilization, we have to forget about traditional terms and think about their meaning within the context of other traditions. At this point it starts becoming complicated when we try to use intellectual terminology.

Maybe it is more of a burden to have gone through a formal education, to know what other people have approved as important, to find oneself in this tried-and-tested system, and to repeat what already has been said before. If you aren't familiar with existing traditions, you are less likely to follow them.

Institutions are bound to the established. Consequently they are backward looking, one foot in the past, the other in the present, while trying to exercise their influence and authority onto the future.

We invent imagination machines through which we dare to try and understand the world, a kaleidoscope for reality, which is, philosophically speaking, just another fiction. Machines for confusion with no answers but countless questions – We really should think about establishing our own institution to defend our own values.

At birth we're all allocated a place in society. We learn how to behave according to this placement and we value ourselves accordingly. This applies to social class, as well as to regional identities. We learn to identify ourselves through what we were taught to be like. Over time it becomes natural ... the stigma is internalized.

Players continue to push the ball across the field. De- and re-contextualizing thoughts and values, goods and individuals, and thereby accepting that individuals are subjected by being divided into the different functions of a economic system. This stigma, the “trust machine” works well, and spins the wheel again and again.

Shall we really limit the ability to shape one’s society to a few selected people, or do we have to invent a new machine to make the subaltern heard?

We are in a whirl, playfully oscillating between definition and redefinition. Defining one-self through the other, through differences, stigmatizing not only the self, but creating the other as a fiction, a collage of exoticism and fears. A house of cards, built to collapse, endangered by knowledge and a lack of distance and imagination.

Friction can be produced by confusion and unusual connections. Deviations from leading discourses, displacement and fragmentation of things we thought were clear, but actually aren’t. A multifaceted network of thoughts, emotions, and connections, right and wrong ones (the wrong ones

are usually the more interesting ones). If we think about new fictions, we create a multitude of fictional spaces — third spaces located on a neutral playground that make no claim to truthfulness – spaces in which we might be able to escape our prejudices – Different shades of gray appear inside of zones that used to be black and white, defining a new field by renegotiating space.

### **Again, we are destined to fail**

There is a belief in tomorrow. A tomorrow that will be brighter — if not for us, maybe for a future generation. More specifically, we wish that better and brighter future particularly for our own offspring, much more than for somebody else’s descendants – Again we should establish a different institution.

It seems that tomorrow is more related to space than to anything else. Tomorrow happens on a stage somewhere, and if you want to participate, you need to be the actor who is there, moving toward the future, to those places where anything is possible, to write your own story of success. The further you are physically from those places, the longer it will take you to get there. You actually might never get there, or else, you’re already there, but access is denied to you. And then there is also the day after tomorrow — and one day you will die.