

## 9 Peeling the paint off the walls

### Kelli Morgan on Black performance and racial justice in Western institutions—A conversation with Hanna B. Hölling, Jules Pelta Feldman and Emilie Magnin

Kelli Morgan is a Professor of the Practice and the Inaugural Director of Curatorial Studies at Tufts University. She is a critical race scholar as well as a curator, educator and social justice activist who specializes in American art and visual culture. Her scholarly commitment to the investigation of anti-Blackness within those fields has demonstrated—among others, in persuasively formulated statements<sup>1</sup>—how traditional art history and museum practice work specifically to uphold white supremacy. Morgan has held curatorial positions at the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields, the Birmingham Museum of Art, and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Before joining the Tufts faculty, she held various teaching positions where she merged the classroom and the museum gallery to create anti-racist paradigms for how curators can actively address the complexities of traditional art history, community engagement and scholarly innovation. In this conversation, Morgan discusses the endurance of Black performance, reforming museum practices and her work as an educator.

**Hanna Hölling:** Kelli, your expertise in American art and visual culture, particularly your commitment to investigating anti-Blackness, provides a valuable perspective for examining how conservation operates and how it perpetuates, not only objects, but also certain structures within the institutions that are often based on, and codify, white supremacy. Our current research centers on performance and the questions of whether it might be preserved. Art history and museum practices often have preconceived notions about what it means to preserve performance. With an awareness of the rich histories of Black performance and Black tradition that it embodies, we are curious about the unique conditions of care and maintenance required for this type of performance. How can we meaningfully care for performance both inside and outside of museums? How can we preserve radical performativity? Given that these works often combine the radical presence and endurance of the Black body,<sup>2</sup> how can we ensure the preservation of their identity?

**Kelli Morgan:** When I received your invitation to the conversation on this topic, Hanna, I thought, “oh my God, this is so important!” We rarely know how to think about performance. Often, performance is documented and sits in a file. And we don’t necessarily talk about the interpersonal ways through which performance might be conserved—the cultural transmission and, for

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instance, human behavior. My recent thinking is directed towards the shift in how we approach collections. This is hard because so much of it is concretized in imperialist and colonial histories. I'm trying to break up these standard ways of thinking.

Valerie Cassel's exhibition "Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art" continues to exist because there is a catalog and exhibition files in various places as the show traveled.<sup>3</sup> But how does the show, and performance, exist beyond a temporary format of the exhibition? And my answer was: this problem has to be solved by rethinking how we approach collecting, and that approach has to be *very* anti-colonial and anti-imperialist. I always mention anti-whiteness as a system—I'm not necessarily anti-white people because we must disconnect these two aspects, not just for white folks, but even for people of color, too.

I've been thinking a lot about how major Western collections exist as repositories of white colonialization and what happens when we completely reinterpret permanent collections through that lens. One way is community engagement, with museum educators and community engagement departments doing work on that front, and just bringing in other voices. This is giving people a stake, ownership in the institution itself.

I've worked on a couple of projects where the community writes the interpretation for shows, artworks and installations. It really is important to do this also with permanent collections—even more so than with exhibitions—because exhibitions are impermanent, they go away after a while, and if there is no publication, or an archive, it is as if the exhibition didn't happen.

These topics became interesting to me in graduate school while reading about Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum*.<sup>4</sup> In 1992, Wilson worked with the Maryland Historical Society to place objects of enslavement on prominent view. He assembled the museum's collection in this way to not only mine the museum, but to challenge our worldviews and deeply rooted preconceptions about race, place and the process of knowledge formation. He reenacted this idea so many times in so many different institutions, but it never fundamentally changed curatorial practice. Curators and directors alike reference Wilson's project a lot, but it always amazed me that it still didn't change the way the field approaches curation and collecting and care. So in my mind, there is a deeper problem. It was only after my drama in Indiana<sup>5</sup> that I realized that what I am doing is applying Black radical traditions to museum practice to try to address this problem. Wilson works with permanent collections. I think that, as a start, we must rethink how we approach permanent collections and our interpretation of them. I don't think that's the end. I think that's a start.

**HH:** Performance enters museum collections somewhat reluctantly; it is a form that is difficult to contain within institutional frameworks. While these conversations are not new, what interests me is whether there is something that we could learn from the processes of acquiring performance, especially in relation to the Black radical tradition. Is it possible that acquiring these types of performance calls for a different approach?

**KM:** My friend and colleague Bryn Jackson and I—Bryn was the curator of Audience Engagement and Performance at Newfields with me—would have this conversation all the time about the institution not necessarily understanding how to collect performance or if that was even possible and how even just the thought of approaching collecting performance requires a different type of thinking and a different value system. He and I would talk about this all the time, because we often referred to ourselves as “fish out of water.” Meaning that we were curators who worked in non-traditional ways that were also employed by a very traditional institution. There is an entire demographic of younger curators now who just think differently than the institutions are designed for. This is why I thought this conversation would be helpful to me too, because even though we work as Black curators, we don’t always work in the same ways. I work from a different value system and that value system is not respected, or oftentimes not even acknowledged by institutions.

So, going back to Valerie’s show, “Radical Presence,” which illustrates different types of Black performativity, we, Black artists and curators, just have to show up and do it. We have to show up and carry out the tenets of our value systems to codify it in a way, which I don’t think has happened yet, despite the fact that there is a critical mass of us—Black artists and Black museum professionals—working in the field. That is why I’m currently thinking about documentation versus repetition. Meaning, I’m interrogating the overall *success* of exhibitions and catalogs—the typical ways we document museum work—as the last thirty years of said documentation of Black curatorial work has not changed the toxicity and the discrimination we often face as Black artists and curators. So, I’m asking what are the ways in which performance gets repeated, and how does it change with every repetition? And how can repetition possibly make predominantly white work environments safer for us? I think I am a Black curator who is different in my approach, because I am very anti-whiteness. Thus, I analyze historical work from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, primarily by white male artists, through anti-racist frameworks to demonstrate how whiteness was constructed, which is very distinct from the work that a lot of my Black curatorial colleagues are doing.

So, I think there’s a way that we must be in these spaces, doing the work in a repetitive way to solidify or to codify that there are different ways to do the work. It is not something that you can check out of a library. You have to talk to people, and we have to keep this performance alive by passing it down.

**HH:** Traditional conservation practices have long focused on physical objects, often preserving them in their perceived static materiality. There has been limited consideration, however, for the knowledge or narratives associated with heritage conveyance. Performance, and performance conservation, challenge this status quo by emphasizing the importance of communities and networks of care in knowledge transmission. Despite this, Western museums have historically prioritized, and still prioritize, documentation and archiving in their preservation efforts.

**KM:** Your ideas remind me also about the discussion around restitution. Western museums are designed to own everything all at once. So, conservation procedures, like traditional curatorial procedures, or archival procedures, exist to maintain these collections that were often stolen, disconnected from their original, cultural and geographical contexts, and then completely redefined around a market that only benefited the people to whom these works didn't belong in the first place. So, the idea that now we should give works back seems problematic. Certain Indigenous nations and certain African nations maintain that some works weren't even supposed to be preserved—they were created to disintegrate or to remain ephemeral. Therefore, they have lost value within their original contexts. Their preservation for museums was a European idea.

Does performance operate similarly, does it disallow that type of ownership? That's a question I have been conversing about with museum leaders and other curators around the States – the collectability of performance. Should we be concerned about keeping performance if we can't hoard it, and value it, or revalue it in a way that benefits the institution? It's hard to sell a performance at auction. Why don't we ever really unpack why we're trying to collect any other art form—painting, sculpture, design—in the first place? Do we even maintain these items properly? How capitalist and greedy are these problems? I think performance forces us to answer these difficult questions because it ultimately forces us to think about how and why we collect in the first place.

**Jules Pelta Feldman:** It sounds like you're making a connection between lasting institutional change—as opposed to institutional-critique-style interventions that, as you say, rarely last—and the conservation or the passing down of Black performance works. You suggest that if these works are going to be able to change an institution, they will need to last beyond the single event or book or exhibition, to be woven more into the everyday of the institution. When it comes to works or items that might come from different traditions or from artists who have a different way of thinking—what might the needs of these types of works be? And, how can the different perspectives and traditions that they're coming from help us rethink what it means for a performance work to be conserved?

**KM:** This reminds me of African oral traditions present in Black studies. It isn't true that there is no literary tradition in African culture, as many would have it, but African culture includes primarily an oral tradition. As you said, there are different ways that we can think about conserving, where it's not necessarily about writing something in a log or in an exhibition catalog, but there's a process of verbal passage, verbal exchange. In many African cultures, histories and traditions are preserved by griots. In Indigenous communities, elders often train the next keeper of the community's traditions and histories.

Could this be a new way to approach collecting performance? Is it okay for us to just have it in our heads? Maybe, instead of various institutions, it is about the human mind and the human body as a type of institution that is able to hold and preserve cultural production and historical production.

**JPF:** That's really fascinating. Could you say more about that idea of human minds as institutions or rather human beings as the carriers of culture, rather than the institutional structures?

**KM:** We think of ourselves as ephemeral, particularly in the United States. We are aware of death. Nobody wants to die, and nobody wants to get older. We're a country that values youth, but we don't value children. But we have a prevailing belief that once we are gone, there is no continuation, which is why knowledge must be passed on. I'm rethinking what we're capable of as humans. It is an interesting moment to be doing this kind of work, because the United States is so anti-facts and anti-intellectuality right now. Technically, we are like institutions, in terms of what we believe in and how we move through the world. One always has one's own set of beliefs and sometimes, one's own trauma, that really informs how one behaves. So, it's perhaps about finding ways to reprogram or to heal from that way of being. If we can do that as human beings, we can kind of repurpose that type of psycho-emotive essence, sentiment, and act into a way to preserve culture, and into a way to preserve art, too. But we never think about it that way.

**Emilie Magnin:** I've been looking at the attempts to preserve performance within institutions and obviously, the institutions are currently also looking at the practices of embodied transmission existing in other cultural contexts and are trying to implement them within museum conservation strategies. This is a remarkable development, but I'm also wondering, what does it mean that institutions are involved in extractive practices in that they draw on external knowledge and appropriate it? How do we avoid that? And how do we still benefit from it without being extractive?

**KM:** It is such a slippery slope, and I think there isn't an easy way to approach these things. As human beings, we like binaries and hate the gray. But I think we're in the gray the majority of the time. And if we were to be diligent, we would need to establish a set of rules. But sadly, the Geneva Convention isn't always considered in war. Exceptions to the rules are made all the time for not the best reasons. Coupled with the fact that the rules are typically established to benefit those with the power anyway. Theoretically it's a great thing to think about ways to adopt other forms of embodiment that could revolutionize collecting and conservation, but ethical implementation of that in my mind comes down to integrity and morality, two things that art museums lack as a whole simply because they are colonial projects. So again, it would take a dismantling of everything that informs what we think.

I remember this interview that Black feminist scholar bell hooks did in the 1990s with PBS journalist and talk-show host Charlie Rose. In it, she states that white supremacy informs everything that we all think all the time, and whether one is willing to admit that or not, one has to deprogram oneself as best you can.<sup>6</sup> I believe that the possibility of becoming "an extraction" is possible. To unplug from the Matrix, so to speak. People must be able to say no, to push back. And I'm most interested in what that would look like in a museum context.

**HH:** You identify as an Americanist, but above all as “a Black woman from Detroit, Michigan.” This identity forms the foundation for your worldview. You also state: “My curatorial philosophy is rooted in a working-class, womanist value system which does not uphold white patriarchy as a standard of universality or excellence.”<sup>7</sup> As a woman of color, you are aware that within society at large, “... white-maleness has always been and is still considered to be ‘right.’”<sup>8</sup> Although conservation is often perceived as a female profession, it is entrenched in Western museum institutions that uphold white, male, racist and exclusive cultures, which you describe as white patriarchal culture. This culture shapes conservation discourses today. Several conservators working mainly in the academy have taken a stance outside these structures. And nonetheless conservation is still heavily influenced by the ways things are performed in museums, and how objects are displayed and kept within the museums. Can we engage with the concept of continuity in art, particularly in performance, without imposing our museological lens on it?

**KM:** A purposeful refusal is the answer. I think the field needs to learn how to see art for its own value to the people it serves, rather than the value the field wants to assign it. In the Black community, we sometimes say “you can be in it, but not of it.” Meaning, we can be in museums while also rejecting a white patriarchal museological lens. But, it’s hard to get new paradigms solidified within art museums. Again, think about how Fred Wilson’s work, as much as it’s referenced, didn’t fundamentally shift curatorial approaches to historical collections. Thus, it has to be a conscious, purposeful refusal of white supremacist “standards” and a deliberate adaption of diversity, equity and inclusion with the goal of becoming both a person and an institution that embodies these notions. People are approaching diversity, equity, inclusion as if they can just flip a switch and *voilà*, centuries of systemic oppression and erasure just vanish. No, it doesn’t work that way. You must embody it, you’ve got to believe in it wholeheartedly, therefore you must *be* it.

**HH:** In one of your writings, you reference Tony Bennett’s *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1993). Bennett argues that although museums are intended to educate the public and address an undifferentiated audience composed of free and equal individuals, their functioning as an instrument of public reform “in giving rise to the development of various technologies for regulating or screening ... has meant that they have functioned as a powerful means for differentiating populations.”<sup>9</sup> Conservation is also intertwined in these relations. When we conduct artist interviews or audience research, we inadvertently perpetuate the established structures that are rooted in white supremacy. It is only recently that we have come to realize that the entire system, along with its underpinning values, is flawed.

**KM:** One of the reasons why I use Bennett is because he was one author who talks about these problems with that kind of depth in regard to class. In chapter one, a little paragraph confirmed that what I was thinking was not entirely crazy. I use that text in my classes a lot, because he delineates the class issue

and how museums really function to reinforce class hierarchies and how objects are also used to do that. Dan Hicks in his *The Brutish Museums* (2020)<sup>10</sup> addresses how objects carry out similar functions regarding race and colonization. The book is amazing.

**HH:** I agree and would like to add the insights of Ariella Aisha Azoulay, particularly her book *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (2019). Azoulay calls on us to recognize the imperial foundations of knowledge and to reject its strictures and violence.<sup>11</sup> Returning to conservation, it's worth noting that old differentiations still persist, such as the distinction between the conservation of artworks and artifacts reflected in the specialist fields (e.g., ethnographic conservation is distinct from painting conservation which is distinct from furniture conservation). This distinction perpetuates certain values and structures that are no longer suitable for contemporary material culture and culture at large. I believe that the conservation of performance is best suited to address and act upon these old, deeply rooted but unscrutinized value systems and to instigate change by consciously addressing exclusion, systemic racism, elitisms.

**KM:** We are the generation that breaks down that elitism. Elitism has always been part-and-parcel of the curatorial field. There is a sense that the curator is the authority and I don't subscribe to this view at all. Which many of my institutions have found to be bizarre. Frankly, elitism is a type of performance that maintains the inequitable design of art museums. You are expected to do certain things as a curator. If I had a dime for every time somebody says to me, "Well, that's not what a curator does," I would be rich.

**JPF:** I don't want to fail to ask about your pedagogy and your new role at Tufts University. I'm sure that you have something to say about the role of education in making this change. And I'd like to ask about that in light of something that you said in an interview recently.<sup>12</sup> You said something that a lot of us have felt over the past few years: That you no longer necessarily believe that museums can be reformed and that they have to be torn down. But you said that as a person who is continuing to work in these systems and continuing to try to make change. I sometimes think that education, in the largest sense, is the most powerful space in which change can happen within an institution.

**KM:** Yeah, it took me a minute just to get there! Primarily, I thought we can't continue curating in this way. This goes back to something Hanna was saying earlier. Of course, I could reinstall the American collection and create a permanent collection plan, but then I realized, the problem is much deeper. Once I began to face adversity at Newfields that was basically a mirror reflection of the adversity I faced in Birmingham and at PAFA, I realized that the issue is the field, and more specifically the ways in which whiteness was constructed by it and functions within it.

I spent the majority of 2020 recovering from the PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder], needing to heal from the Newfields situation.<sup>13</sup> All the while asking myself, what am I going to do? I am so fractured from the work that I have always loved to do. Not because I did anything wrong, but because a few powerful white folks didn't like it. But all the while, I was receiving invitations

to lecture about the problem. I was receiving calls, letters, texts, etc. from professionals field-wide who were telling me similar stories about their own experiences. People weren't just interested in my story; they were tired of being abused and discriminated against in museums and they were ready to do something about it. The more I lectured, the more me and my Newfields colleagues talked about it, I asked myself, how can I teach this? And as luck would have it, I received an email from Tufts, who were thinking about the issues of racial and social injustice in their own way.

So, to answer your question, Jules, I'm creating a graduate certificate program for working museum professionals in anti-racist curatorial practice. I'm designing a curriculum that will retrain museum professionals in the critical theory and cultural history that grounds colonization as the basis of museum existence, and the proliferation of whiteness as the basis of its functionality, which is often lacking in art history programs. Specifically, I'd like to help curators, museum educators, and other museum professionals build counter-hegemonic approaches to institutions. To do that, one has to know what white hegemony is, how it was established, and why. For instance, one of the first classes that students take in the program is called *Art, Whiteness, and Empire*, which looks at how art museums developed as repositories of colonialization. We ask questions like, what do imperialism and colonialization mean? How do we define racism and anti-racism? We study museum history, and particularly art museum history, as something that has been in service to the larger colonial project. We start with an attempt to gain understanding of how museums work, then how this understanding subsequently changes our approach to collections. One of the next classes, which focuses on curatorial approaches to collections, is called *The Art of Dispossession*, which asks, among other things, who owns cultural heritage? How did these institutions even get these works in the first place? What is our job or responsibility for caring for objects that do not technically belong to us? Is it about caring for the archive or is it about caring enough about the people from which the object hailed? Can we give an object back to its original context, or should we maintain the quality-of-care familiar from a Western standpoint?

We often hear the argument that African nations or Indigenous nations don't have the proper facilities for caring for ancient art objects. My thoughts are, if /when we return them, it is not our job to dictate what those nations do with them. If museums are so concerned about African nations not having a particular level of technology, invest the resources that are needed to care for the object. Or you could just respect that the nation knows how to care for its own cultural heritage. I think that sentiment demonstrates that Western museums literally don't know how to care about an object or its meaning to the places and people it represents because the field is designed primarily around capitalism and the object's relationship to whiteness. This is one of the foundational field principles the class will unpack.

**HH:** I'm intrigued by your idea of human being as an institution, and I wonder how our capacity to both care for objects and humans as carriers of



knowledge might prompt us to reconsider what ethical care or “caring for” really means. Your discussion of different models of ownership and different modes of owning of performance also caught my attention, particularly in the context of ownership over Black objects. Fred Moten’s writings have been particularly insightful in exploring the persistence of the Black object.<sup>14</sup> I would love to hear your thoughts on the ideas of ownership in relation to performance within Black radical tradition.

**KM:** For us it’s a communal ownership. Hip Hop is the best example. Although it became commercialized in the 1990s, in the late 1970s and ‘80s it was owned collectively, and it was for everybody. In the ‘80s, people debated whether or not Hip Hop started in the Bronx or in Queens. But there has always been a collective sense of ownership in Hip Hop, and I think that, in the Black community, jazz works in a similar way. It’s not always about owning the physical thing. It is the essence that matters, and everybody should have equal access to that essence. You should feel something within you. It’s easy to understand that sentiment with music. It’s a little harder to apply it to performance. But, I think about the work of artists like Rashida Bumbray, whose work is very spiritual and has a kind of collective essence.<sup>15</sup> I think Sonya Clark’s performative work does a similar thing.<sup>16</sup> And that’s the point: the ways in which we can think about the essence of a work as belonging to everybody, instead of a singular work that belongs to a singular institution.

**HH:** I am curious how this concept could be applied to the evolving nature of institutions, specifically in relation to community involvement which plays such an important role in your work when you talk about art history. Your statement that “It’s not about objects, it’s about people” emphasizes the importance of the human factor in this field.

**KM:** Art history divorced people almost completely, and now that I’m coming at this from the lens of colonization, I understand the situation better. Although Raul Peck’s *Exterminate All the Brutes* (2021)<sup>17</sup> is a hard documentary series to watch, it’s true. White colonial powers literally tried to kill all the people and basically took all the stuff. So when considering colonization as the basis for museums, the people who created the objects can’t exist if we’re going to profit for generations off of the work. The problem is they didn’t actually kill all the people. And I had never thought about it in that way before—divorcing certain peoples from the objects was necessary for the discipline and the market to maintain itself. We now have a lot of conversation about African and Indigenous works and how they got in these Western institutions. But have you noticed that conversations about Asian art within these contexts are interestingly missing?

**JPF:** Do you see a role for performance specifically in doing this work, in institutions or outside? Does performance possibly have a kind of revolutionary, or at least maybe a reforming or reconsidering, potential?

**KM:** I think it does. Performance pushes back and encourages us to think differently about ways in which ideas live. Performance is always different every time it is performed. It is about what we can lose every time the work is

reperformed. There's an ontology that should be considered in the curatorial philosophy as well as in the institutional approaches to collections.

**HH:** As we conclude our conversation, I have one final question for you: If you were to experience a piece of Black radical performance, what would be your ideal approach to staging the work? And, most importantly, how would you ensure the performance's continuity and attend to its afterlife?

**KM:** That's a good question. I think for me it would have to be something that completely dismantles institutions. It would be about interpersonal passing down. The way performance is conserved is that people continue to do it, no matter how it changes. So that we imbibe it. With each generation, or with each group of people that comes into the institution or reperforms it, the institution loses a little bit more of its traditional structures. This would happen gradually enough and would be something that would completely recreate the space. It's almost like peeling the paint off the walls.

*This conversation was conducted in January 2022. Editorial assistance by Electra Maria Letizia D'Emilio. Our thanks to Rebecca Schneider for her initial suggestion.*

## Notes

- 1 See, for instance, Kelli Morgan, "To Bear Witness: Real Talk About White Supremacy Culture in Art Museums Today," *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 23, 2020, <https://indianapolisrecorder.com/9a593596-b4b3-11ea-b6bd-23f712e03f32>; Kelli Morgan, "It's Time for Museums to Take Critical Race Theory Seriously," *The Art Newspaper*, January 10, 2022, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/01/10/comment-or-its-time-for-museum-s-to-take-critical-race-theory-seriously>.
- 2 Valerie Cassel speaks about

The idea of the black body in particular, [as being] so loaded and so complicated. There's no way to escape it... Endurance in this context suggests that you are pushing the body up to and beyond its limits in order to engage various discourses.

William S. Smith, "Valerie Cassel Olivier Talks Black Performance Art," *Art in America*, September 13, 2013. <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/interviews/valerie-cassel-oliver-talks-black-performance-art-56220>.

- 3 Valerie Cassel, *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* (Houston: Contemporary Art Museum, 2013).
- 4 For the related book published on the occasion of Wilson's exhibition, see Lisa G. Corrin, ed. *Mining the Museum: An Installation by Fred Wilson* (Baltimore, MD: The Contemporary, in cooperation with the New Press, New York: 1994).
- 5 In July 2020 Morgan resigned from her position as curator at the Indianapolis Museum of Art at Newfields after her efforts to address DEI issues, for which she was hired, were consistently thwarted. She charged in a letter to Charles Venable that Newfields was "consistently fail[ing] its BIPOC staff, allies and local communities and, as an institution, was 'toxic'." Dan Grossman, "Kelli Morgan's Response to the Newfields 30-day Action Plan," *NUVO*, March 21, 2021, [https://nuvo.newsnirvana.com/equality\\_free\\_dom/kelli-morgan-s-response-to-the-newfields-30-day-action-plan-the-entire-leadership-needs/article\\_64c3e406-8b10-11eb-b3ed-e7edb63b6115.html](https://nuvo.newsnirvana.com/equality_free_dom/kelli-morgan-s-response-to-the-newfields-30-day-action-plan-the-entire-leadership-needs/article_64c3e406-8b10-11eb-b3ed-e7edb63b6115.html). On a related topic, see Morgan, "To Bear Witness."

- 6 bell hooks appeared twice on Charlie Rose's eponymous talk show for the U.S. Public Broadcasting Service, on February 24 and October 24, 1995.
- 7 Morgan, "To Bear Witness."
- 8 Morgan, "To Bear Witness."
- 9 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- 10 Dan Hicks, *The Brutish Museums: The Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence and Cultural Restitution* (London: Pluto Press, 2020).
- 11 Ariella Aisha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London and New York: Verso, 2019).
- 12 Julia Bernier, "An Interview with Kelli Morgan," *Black Perspectives*, blog of the African American Intellectual History Society, July 7, 2021. <https://www.aaihs.org/an-interview-with-curator-kelli-morgan>.
- 13 The museum has since faced further controversies about its approach to racism. Domenica Bongiovanni, "Curator Calls Newfields Culture Toxic, Discriminatory in Resignation Letter," *Indianapolis Star*, July 18, 2020, <https://eu.indystar.com/story/entertainment/arts/2020/07/18/newfields-curator-says-discriminatory-workplace-toxic/5459574002>; Morgan, "To Bear Witness."
- 14 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).
- 15 Rashida Bumbrey is a choreographer, curator and critic, and the Senior Program Manager of the Arts Exchange at The Open Society Foundations.
- 16 Sonya Clark works with topics related to diaspora and Afro-Caribbean traditions. By using simple objects such as human hair, combs or seed beads, the artist explores the many associations and stories that individuals create around things.
- 17 Raoul Peck's *Exterminate All the Brutes* is a documentary miniseries that discusses the history of colonization and genocide. The series is largely based on Sven Lindqvist's book *Exterminate All the Brutes: A Modern Odyssey into the Heart of Darkness* (1996), which, in turn, borrows the phrase from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899).

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