

**François Piquet**

**Contemporary Art - Guadeloupe**

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## **Prerequisite for decolonial discussion**

### **A multi-media participative project**



This artistic project aims to establish the conditions of the meeting and help the decolonial discussion, by highlighting the archetypes and breaking points of this dialogue and to provide elements of resolution.

It will affirm essential discussion bases in this debate, and pose them as "truths" to assimilate, despite the violence inherent in this process.

This project will be declined in several art forms, from video installations to the numeric public space, including the new digital writings.

### **The autor**

Francois Piquet lives and creates in the "Tout-Monde", the caribbean area, which he considers as a "laboratory of the world which is coming". He chooses to experiment Edouard Glissant's "creolisation" and the contingencies of a contemporary multiform art, to replace art in its social and utopic functions and create encounters.

## **Decolonial discussion or war**

We are at a time of global movement of people, material and immaterial goods, and also disasters. In this context where cultures intermingle and interpenetrate inexorably, the issues of decolonization far exceed the strict framework of independence and occupy all current societies in the political, social, economic, and cultural.

The announced climatic upheavals, the swings of economic powers, the inconceivable of a highly uncertain and technologically bewildering future, generate an unprecedented loss of landmarks, resulting in strong identity, religious and cultural tensions, and fuel the temptation of rejection, ostracism, populism and xenophobia.

Even though decolonial movements have always been accompanied by bitter struggles, even wars, any attempt at decolonialism is now ontologically linked to a process of discussion, search for compromise and common representation, because of the global nature of the questions that it underlies.

It is now essential to consider decolonial movements as attempts to develop new forms of sovereignty, new structures of societies, new relationships to the world, new "living together".

## **A discussion between two irreconcilable postures**

Despite the diversity of its aspects, the decolonial debate is nevertheless articulated globally around archetypes inherited from the recent history of humanity.

On one side there will be the colonized, and on the other, the colonizers. Paradoxically, in contemporary globalization, this binary division is found within every society, every country, even within each individual, as identities and affiliations multiply and stratify.

This binary archetype is, however, central and unavoidable in decolonial discussions.

Two camps, two visions of the world, two antagonistic or even irreconcilable postures, confront each other:

- the colonized / dominated / racialized / non-white / afro-descendant / black / etc;
- the colonizers / occidental / europeans / white / dominant / etc.

In these decolonial discussions, one can almost use one or the other of the preceding terms, not that they are equivalent or designate the same persons or concepts, but the archetypes of the discourse which characterizes them are similar, regarding the narrative time and the definition of the interlocutor himself.

## **Collective identity and narrative time: Godwin Points of the decolonial debate**

On the colonized / racialized / etc side, one of the archetypes of decolonial discourse is to address as a collective identity ("black people", "minorities", etc.) to another collective identity ("the occident", "the whites", the norm, etc.). Another archetype of discourse is the affirmed continuity between past and present: "oppression continues", "nothing has changed", "they are the same". The idea of collective identity induces a durability that is logically articulated in a temporal and historical continuity.

On the occidental / dominant/ etc side, this relation to the world and to history is very often approached individually, not collectively: "I'm not guilty", "I have nothing to do with it".

This non-collective posture is logically accompanied by a discontinuity, a break between past and present: "it's past," "it's all over," "I was not born."

These archetypes of postures seem irreconcilable, and lead to kinds of "Godwin points" of the decolonial discussion, breaking any possibility of dialogue:

- "you enslaved us" / "I did not do anything to you";
- "you are racists" / "I am not racist";
- "you are guilty" / "I was not born";
- "you can not understand" / "you mix everything", etc.

## **The experience of the All-World (Tout-Monde) to rethink the truths**

My personal experience of life and creation within the All-World has led me to work deeply on these issues, which have shaken my life for 19 years.

The All-World, theorized by Edouard Glissant, brings together many characteristics of the world that enter into the decolonial debate:

- economic domination undergone by globalized mechanisms beyond reach and control;
- multi-cultural society, interweaving different layers of crossed influences and domination;
- white minorities in a non-white country, with a post-colonial hexogenetic power structure.
- a total unpredictability of the future and announced upsurges;

In a way, I could feel, experiment, analyze, assimilate many points of view and arguments from both sides of this discussion, and the violence that accompanies them, as my involvement in shaping these issues is at the center of my artistic practice. This constant exploration has obviously led me frequently to these points of rupture of dialogue, which I was able to identify, accumulate, and sometimes resolve. But I had to swallow them before, to assimilate them.

I have seen people so convinced of their truths, however contrary to mine, that I was led to reformulate my thought starting from the postulates of the other. The experience of the All-World is indispensable here.

In order to advance in the decolonial debate, to admit the truths of the other makes it possible to rethink its truths from the truths of the other.



## **Prerequisite for decolonial discussion**

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### **Explicit contents**

This project is based on two sets of very simple sentences corresponding to the archetypes of the decolonial discussion described above, one corresponding to the discourse of the colonized/raced/etc, the other to that of the colonizer/dominant/etc. These simple and direct affirmations must be perceived as "indisputable truths", they compose a "basis of discussion" to assimilate imperatively in the preamble to any discussion, for lack of rupture of dialogue. I have collected these phrases during my experience of life and creation in the All-World, most of them addressed directly to me in strong discussions. Most shocked and marked me.

None of these statements correspond to clichés or stereotypes about a given population. None mention a given population. All are excerpts of face to face dialogue, expressed in the first or second person, without periphrases nor precautions of use, delivered in their violence. All are defensible truths.

### **Shared writing for a participatory video project**

People wishing to participate in this project are filmed while they state an affirmation, a truth to be assimilated by the other in this decolonial discussion. Some modify the proposed texts, others choose their words or their language, others say truths of the two antagonistic texts, all say what they want in their way, without scenic indication, without decor, without costume, as they wish it. If you want to participate in the project, I come and I film you.

I actually rewrote and arranged some of the sentences of these texts proposed to the participants, which corresponds to a plastic work of formalization.

It is obvious that this approach may be called "whitesplaining", or process of confiscation of speech, by some activists for whom my skin color is a sufficient and irrefutable argument. My experience of the All-World and the colonial discussion prepared me for it, and this project is already a response to these early breakages of dialogue.

The different architectures envisaged, and especially those based on the new digital writings (see below), will allow an even more direct expression of the participants.

NB: the artist has already made other projects of participatory videos, including the series "Utopia of the Liberation".

<http://www.francoispiquet.com/UtopieLiberation-piquet.htm>

### **A humanistic and multiversal aesthetic**

Shooting choices were made to reinforce the participants assertions :

- a very close-up portrait, looking at camera, so that the other's presence is unavoidable to the viewer, for a direct relationship of flesh to flesh, from human to human;
- slight counter-diving, to give authority and strength to the stated affirmation ;
- no costume or visible decor, not to pollute the affirmation by an interpretation of the other;
- the diversity of faces, of filmed people and their different ways of asserting their truths, introduces nuances and surprises, a human plurality within these binary archetypes;
- it is the spectator who "chooses his side", his belonging to one or other of the interlocutors of the decolonial discussion.

## **A multi-media participative project**

Several architectures are envisaged for this project.

Some accessible directly to the artist, his technical skills and means of production, others requiring collaboration.

### **Scenic installation of the decolonial face to face**

Two videos are linear montages of these statements, one by the colonized/racialized/etc, the other by the colonizer/dominant/etc.

They are presented in a loop, face to face or side by side, leaving space for the spectators, standing in the middle of this decolonial discussion.

#### **Pré-requis à la discussion décoloniale**

Video HD, 4minutes 55, stéréo.

<https://vimeo.com/303127075>

#### **Pré-requis à la discussion décoloniale**

Video HD, 4minutes 38, stéréo.

<https://vimeo.com/332554343>

## Pre-requisites to decolonial discussion

you enslaved us  
you raped us  
you tortured us  
you murdered us  
you treated us like animals  
you are criminals  
you are guilty  
we suffered because of you  
we suffer because of you  
you are racists  
you invented racism  
your past is racist  
your history is racist  
your country is racist  
your economy is racist  
your religion is racist  
your education is racist  
your system is racist  
your imaginary is racist  
you are racists  
you make us suffer  
you exploit us  
you eat us  
you feed on us  
you live on our backs  
your comfort is our misery  
you are rich because you rob us  
you are rich because you sell us  
your comfort is our suffering  
you believe yourself superior  
you are privileged  
you have the power  
you know we are suffering  
you make fun of us  
you want to stay masters  
you don't want it to change  
you are not like us  
you are afraid of us  
you are against us  
you have trained your dogs against us  
you are not afraid of the police  
you are not afraid of justice  
you are not used to being humiliated  
you know we are suffering  
you don't suffer like us  
you are not in our place  
you can not understand us  
you don't want to understand  
you don't want to hear  
you are criminals  
you are responsible  
you are indebted  
you are guilty  
you know what you are doing  
you make us suffer  
you have to pay for it  
you will pay  
you don't want it to change  
you are not like us  
you don't want it to change  
you are not like us

## Pre-requisites to decolonial discussion

I did not enslave you  
I did not buy you  
I did not sell you  
I did not rape you  
I did not commit a crime against you  
I am not guilty of the past  
I am racist but I treat myself  
I am not guilty of history  
I am not like you say  
I am not powerful  
I do not have the power  
I know I'm not superior  
I know that I am privileged  
I am protected  
I was born like that  
I was lucky  
I did not choose to be born like that  
I'm not ashamed to be born like that  
I did not do anything to you  
I am not responsible for your suffering  
I do not want your suffering  
I am afraid of your suffering  
I know I am privileged  
I do not want to lose my place  
I do not want to be in your place  
I can not give you my place  
I have nothing against you  
I am not angry  
you are angry  
you mix everything  
you accuse me of everything  
you accuse me of the past  
you accuse me of your suffering  
you mistake the culprit  
I am not more guilty than you  
I am not like you say  
you mix us all  
we are not all the same  
you are not all the same  
you are not all innocent  
we are not all guilty  
our country is guilty  
our history is guilty  
our education is guilty  
our economy is guilty  
our money is guilty  
our comfort is guilty  
we are guilty  
I am innocent  
I was lucky  
I know I am lucky  
I am innocent  
my luck is guilty  
my luck comes from your suffering  
we made you suffer  
we inherited your suffering  
I know it's not fair  
we are indebted to you  
I am protected by this injustice  
I am well like this  
I'm afraid it will change  
I know it will change  
everyone can not be privileged  
I know I'm not superior  
I'm afraid to suffer like you  
I know it's not fair  
I know it will change

## **Solo exhibitions**

Réparations, Fonds d'Art Contemporain, Guadeloupe, 2016.  
Jean de Souche, Guadeloupe, 2014.  
Les Archipels du moi, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Sint-Marteen, 2013.  
LE FER ET LA PEAU, Scènes nationales de Guadeloupe & Martinique, 2011.

## **Collective exhibitions & events**

Pré-requis à la discussion décoloniale, workshops, Aarhus, Danmark, 2018.  
Eclats d'Îles, collective exhibition, Paris, France, 2018.  
Kreyol Gartden, jardins du Memorial ACTe, Guadeloupe, 2018.  
Ink & Blood, International Slavery Museum, L'iverpool, United Kingdom, 2017-2018.  
Foire d'Art Contemporain, Lausanne, Suisse, 2017.  
Echos Imprévus / Turning Tide, Memorial ACTe, Guadeloupe, 2017.  
VERA Festival, Lisbonne, Portugal, 2016.  
Festival Caribéen de l'Image, Memorial ACTe, Guadeloupe, 2015.  
Alternate currents, exhibition with DVCAI artists from Miami, Guadeloupe, 2015.  
Pool Art Fair, Guadeloupe, 2014.  
Art BEMAO, Guadeloupe, 2013.  
Les Faubourgs de l'art, Nancy, France, 2013.  
Symposium de sculpture, Villers-lès-Nancy, France, 2013.  
Culture à l'Hôpital, commandes pour le CHU de Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, 2012.  
Equipaje Compartido, Palacio Nacional de Bellas Artes, Republica Dominicana, 2012.  
Equipaje Compartido, Galeria Guatiribi, Puerto-Rico, 2012.  
International Conference of Caribbean Studies Association 2012 Program, Guadeloupe, 2012.  
NOU, Interactive street sculptures, POC festival, Marseille, France, 2011.  
Installation, Amiens, France, 2011.  
Carte blanche aux artistes guadeloupéens, musée Schoelcher, Guadeloupe, 2010-2011.  
Corps / identité, collective exhibition, Martinique, 2010.  
Marché d'Art Contemporain du Marin, Martinique, 2009.  
Cheminement, Awtis 4 chimen collective exhibition, Musée Lherminier, Guadeloupe, 2009.  
Trio, collective exhibition, Guadeloupe, 2008.  
Espaces délaissés, espaces intermédiaires de la ville, Guadeloupe, 2007.  
Collectif, urban art collective, Guadeloupe, 2006.  
Noires sur blanc, Guadeloupe, 2005.

## **Residences**

Remix & Me, Guadeloupe, Senegal, Sint-Marteen, 2015-2016.  
Artistes caribéens en Residence, Guadeloupe, 2014.  
Republica Dominicana, 2012.  
Portes Ouvertes Consolat, Marseille, France, 2011.  
Essertival, Amiens, France, 2011.

## **Public collections**

International Slavery Museum, L'iverpool, United Kingdom  
Fonds d'Art Contemporain du Conseil Général de la Guadeloupe.  
Parc de Madame de Graffigny, Villers-lès-Nancy, France.  
Totems du Grand Saint-Pierre, entrée de ville, Martinique.  
MEMORIAL ACTe, Guadeloupe.  
Beauport, Pays de la Canne, Guadeloupe.

## **Catalogues**

« Réparations », édité par le Conseil Départemental de Guadeloupe.  
« Carte blanche aux artistes guadeloupéens (An I) », édité par le Conseil Général de Guadeloupe.  
« LE FER & LA PEAU », 2011

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[www.reparations-art.org](http://www.reparations-art.org)