

A Curatorial Manifesto:  
Mexicanx Futures

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## Abstract

This curatorial manifesto focuses in creating a Mexicanx identity beyond post-colonialism. Throughout this work, I pay attention to rereading of the modern capitalist colonial system today, and unveiling what colonialism obscured. In my research I examine curatorial social organizations from which people resist the oppressive machinations of capitalism in race, gender, and class. By examining the works by Maria Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa, Deleuze and Guatarri, Kodwo Eshun and Barbara Glowczeski, the curatorial manifesto gives an historical overview to the philosophical and historical marginalization's that Mexico faces. Many communities struggle today with race and gender oppression in the current system of capitalism. The manifesto argues that social activism (embodied performativity) provides ways to find alternative resistant interactions towards colonial difference and harmonic disobedience. The essay explores the socio-political activism by The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (ELZN), and juxtaposes curatorial exhibitions such as: Maria Thereza Alves, *The Return of a Lake*, in dOCUMENTA 13, Mariana Castillo Deball at Hamburger Bahnhof Berlin and artist Erick Beltran's intervention at Documenta 15. Lastly, the essay weaves upon the publication "Songs and Spells and Images by Mayan Women." The "fathermothers" of the poetry and incantations spell out magical ways of dwelling. By exploring ancient decolonial language and rituals. The expanded field of the curatorial can create spaces for care and becoming. Therefore, *Mexicanx Futures* investigates decolonial alternatives, the vital potential of solidarity and its future possibilities yet to come.

**Words: 244**

## A Curatorial Manifesto: Latinx Futures

In response to the realities of México, this essay delves into the creation of a Mexicanx identity beyond post-colonialism. The word Mexicanx derives from Latinx. The coining of the word 'x' in Latinxs, is a new decolonial noun that refers to Latin American peoples.<sup>1</sup> Latinx removes the gender connotation; the feminine "a" or masculine "o" to an "x". Thereby, Latinx denounces the patriarchal bias derived from Spanish Colonisation, which also generates sexism.<sup>2</sup> As Latinx Futures cannot be narrowed down to one specific medium, my research allows me to utilize an interdisciplinary perspective to examine various exhibitions, publications, and the curatorial extension towards socio-political activisms. Its aim is to contribute to the expanded field of the curatorial, in the distribution of the sensible through activism in contemporary art.<sup>3</sup> Drawing on the works by Maria Lugones, Gloria Anzaldúa, Deleuze and Guatarri, Kodwo Eshun and Barbara Glowczeski, the curatorial manifesto argues that social activism provides ways to find alternative resistant interactions towards colonial difference. In my research I examine curatorial social organizations from which people resist the oppressive machinations of capitalism in race, gender, and class. The essay explores, the Zapatista's activism, some artistic interventions in Documenta 13, Documenta 15, and *Mayan Spells and Incantations* publication by Mayan women. In doing so, the manifesto will investigate decolonial alternatives in feminism, popular cultures, forms of collective resistance and curatorial alternatives, the vital potential of solidarity and its future possibilities yet to come.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Salinas, Cristobal, 'The Complexity of the "x" in Latinx: How Latinx/a/o Students Relate to, Identify With, and Understand the Term Latinx', *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 19.2 (2020), 149–68

<sup>2</sup> O'Neill, P. and Wilson, M. (2015) *Curating research*. London : Amsterdam: Open Editions ; de Appel.

<sup>3</sup> Serafini, P. (2018) *Performance action : the politics of art activism*. New York: Routledge. Pg 8

<sup>4</sup> Eshun, K. (2003) 'Further Considerations on Afrofuturism', *CR (East Lansing, Mich.)*, 3(2), pp. 287–302. doi:10.1353/ncr.2003.0021.

Throughout this work, I pay attention to rereading of the modern capitalist colonial system today, and unveiling what colonialism obscured.<sup>5</sup> More than thirty years after the first poetics release in the internet network<sup>6</sup> and the artistic activism performed by Zapatistas (The Zapatista Army of National Liberation), mostly Mayan descendants from South-eastern Mexico. Have performed with real and electronic poetic bodies and this continues to enthrall the contemporary art scene.<sup>7</sup> The anti-patriarchal squad appears as militant, whereas their artistic activism is an embodiment of harmonic disobedience. By dreaming of another world and reimagining the notion of peace, Zapatistas dreams opened and continues to inspire, a speculative place for questions of becoming, in relation to the cosmos, ecology, society and possible futures. Their artistic activism and way of dwelling may be considered a form of interweaving Guattari's "Three Ecologies" or Ecosophy.<sup>8</sup> By examining their ecological relationship to Earth<sup>9</sup>, their collective social behaviour (which inspires the local and the global) and the mental process of the inclusion of the collective and not only the individual.<sup>10</sup> The Zapatista's artistic activism manifests futural emancipatory decolonial difference. Zapatistas struggle demonstrates a social movement that opens cultural, socio-political possibilities for minorities in Mexico facing poverty, lack of human rights, abjection, and discrimination. The essay argues that the term "curatorial activism" momentarily sounds superfluous. The curatorial must break traditional museum formats of privilege and expand into the inclusion and creation of alternative narratives to the historical marginalization of minorities. The mentioning

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<sup>5</sup> Rodrigues, L. (2022) 'Decolonial Feminism', *Estudios feministas*, 30(1), pp. 1–14. doi:10.1590/1806-9584-2022v30n184278.

<sup>6</sup> Zapatistas, E. (2014) *Al Pueblo de México: En Nuestros Sueños hemos visto otro mundo*, Enlace Zapatista. Available at: <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1994/03/01/al-pueblo-de-mexico-en-nuestros-suenos-hemos-visto-otro-mundo/> (Accessed: 29 May 2023).

<sup>7</sup> Heathfield, A. and Glendinning, H. (2004) *Live : art and performance*. New York: Routledge.pg 73

<sup>8</sup> Guattari, F., Pindar, I. and Sutton, P. (2014) *The three ecologies*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>9</sup> Léger, M.J. et al. (2022) *Zapantera Negra : an artistic encounter between Black Panthers and Zapatistas*. [Second edition].. Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions, pg 19.

<sup>10</sup> Glowczewski, B. (2021) *Indigenising anthropology with Guattari and Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pg 14.

of the word superfluous expands in rhizomatic ways, and in many directions given that most of museums and galleries wish to strive for the newest fashionable idea for “spectacle” without truly caring about the real marginalized word out there that exists and that faces repression.

To begin with, any analysis necessarily implies an historic overview, and this contextualization may guide us into understanding the urgency for the term Mexicanx Futures and fictionally reimagine the future. In early 16th century there was a land in which different peoples coexisted; these peoples were classified or stereotyped as “indians”. All the history before this colonial conquest was named named Pre-Colombian- meaning before Colombus and by doing so, the memories of the peoples from Latin America were regarded as less relevant to the new European influence. Furthermore, during the Spanish Invasion of México by Hernán Cortes. More than half of the “Indian” population was lost.<sup>11</sup> The colonisation process thus can be regarded as a necro-political action towards the ethnical population.<sup>12</sup> But also, in 1514 a new hybrid race was born known as ‘mestizas’, or ‘mestizos’, people with mixed half ancestral and Spanish genes, today known as Mexicans. As such, the mission to colonize bodies of colour was through erasing their spiritual, agricultural, cosmological, and ecological memories. But also, by judging their sexual behaviour which was considered sinful and bestial.<sup>13</sup> In essence, the word ‘indigenous’ or ‘indians’ derived 500 years ago as colonised bodies were compared from the Western normative ideal perfection of whiteness, man, and woman. The colonized bodies were regarded as non-human given that their sexual behaviour and ecological relationship to earth was incompatible to Western past dialectics with nature. Therefore, to decolonize previous categories, the contemporary terminology ‘indigenous’ for

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<sup>11</sup> Anzaldúa, G., Saldívar-Hull, S. and Ikas, K. (1999) *Borderlands = La frontera*. 2nd ed.. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books.

<sup>12</sup> Mbembe, A. and Corcoran, S. (2019) *Necropolitics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>13</sup> Rodrigues, L. (2022) ‘Decolonial Feminism’, *Estudios feministas*, 30(1), pp. 1–14. doi:10.1590/1806-9584-2022v30n184278.

referencing worlds outside capitalism, no longer functions. Indigenous is neither an identity or cultural form but rather a political manifestation.<sup>14</sup> It is certainly a violent intervention to speak about solidarity to indigenous communities without truly understanding their struggle. The manifesto will propose the possibilities of a future in which we regard Zapatistas, Mayans, Tzotzil people without the 'indigenous' interpellation.

*Towards Decolonial Feminism* by academic Maria Lugones explains the civilizing mission of Christianity; its main domination and biopolitical form of control was to impose dichotomous categories regarding race and gender.<sup>15</sup> Lugones articulates, "*Unlike colonization, the colonization of gender is still with us; it is what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power.*"<sup>16</sup> As such, bodies of colour continue to face oppression from the machinations of current capitalist practices. Some of the economic and impactful events include the 1800's, specifically when United States of America seized the promised land of *Aztlan* (now the South-eastern area of the US, once was the ancestral home to Aztec culture.)<sup>17</sup> Americans invaded the land illegally, like Mexican immigrants cross the border today. Whiteness possessed more privileges in their classification of race and class, it appears that it was easy for the United States to dominate and declare war to those that appeared to be from a different race. In 1848 the border between Mexico and the United States was created.<sup>18</sup> As academic and theorist Gloria Anzaldua reinforces, "*The Gringo, locked into the fiction of white superiority, seized complete political*

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<sup>14</sup> García-Antón, K. (2022) *Art and solidarity reader: radical actions, politics and friendships*. Amsterdam: Valiz.pg 200.

<sup>15</sup> Rodrigues, L. (2022) 'Decolonial Feminism', *Estudios feministas*, 30(1), pp. 1–14. doi:10.1590/1806-9584-2022v30n184278.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, pg 7.

<sup>17</sup> Maestri, N. (2019) *Historical evidence for Aztlan, the mythical Aztec homeland*, ThoughtCo. Available at: [https://www.thoughtco.com/aztlan-the-mythical-homeland-169913#:~:text=Aztlán%20\(also%20spelled%20Aztlan%20or,in%20the%20Valley%20of%20Mexico.](https://www.thoughtco.com/aztlan-the-mythical-homeland-169913#:~:text=Aztlán%20(also%20spelled%20Aztlan%20or,in%20the%20Valley%20of%20Mexico.) (Accessed: 29 May 2023).

<sup>18</sup> Anzaldúa, G., Saldívar-Hull, S. and Ika, K. (1999) *Borderlands = La frontera*. 2nd ed.. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, pg 28.

*power, striping Indians and Mexicans of their land while their feet were still rooted in it. We were jerked out by the roots, truncated, disembowelled, dispossessed, and separated from our identity and our history.*<sup>19</sup> The US-Mexican border became a traumatic open wound for Mexicanx identity.<sup>20</sup> As such, bodies of colour, women and queer bodies have been alienated from their beliefs, silenced, and oppressed. The ubiquitous term “colonialism” ruled for centuries and continues today in the social realm in the form of capitalism; mainly at the discrepancy between the economic gaps: rich and poor in Latin America. More recently, curator and activist Lucy Lippard argued in 2018, that Trump’s government’s right-wing agenda catalysed xenophobia and we must be reminded of the inhumane policies created by white supremacy.<sup>21</sup> (Index 1) For many decades, Americans dehumanized Latinxs subjects who attempted to cross the border, stereotyping them as gangsters and troublemakers. As such the counter memories of the violence caused by the border may serve to reconcile the futures of Mexicanx identities and expand into the Latinx diaspora given that the Mexico-US border is also the border for Latinx.

The essay considers curatorial ethics of care, to knit together forms of kinship for Latinxs. Which may lead us to think about, how can solidarity art take place between places of privilege and communities wanting their autonomy without creating more oppression and not only merely repeat cultural appropriation? As well as curatorially create spaces that disrupt with harmful structures. The answer may lie in community practices of collaboration and care. Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil wrote in “*Making a Territory of Collaboration Possible. Art Solidarity and Indigenous peoples.*” suggested that the term ‘solidarity’ lost its influence, at least in México. This was provoked by the government administration during the 1980’s and early

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pg 29.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pg 25.

<sup>21</sup> Reilly, M. and Lippard, L.R. (2018) *Curatorial activism. Towards an ethic of curation*. London: Thames & Hudson.

1990's, as they created the National Programme of Solidarity (PRONASOL) (Index 2) The programme utilized mass media (radio, television) to enhance the gaze towards indigenous communities utilizing the word 'solidarity'.<sup>22</sup> PRONASOL's superfluous support and its wrong cultural appropriation catalysed racism and more injustice.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, as a result, new ways of expressing togetherness were raised in rejection to the state discourse. Words like 'brotherhood' and 'sisterhood' were coined to create alliances towards discrimination. Yasnaya Aguilar, ultimately recognizes that 'solidarity' can create worldly forms of kinship. Equally, artistic political activism may distort oppressive relationships in our contemporary world. By oppressive relationships I refer to the power dynamics at the intersection between capitalism, socio-political and cultural realms. It is true that exhibition making cannot make social discrepancies disappear.<sup>24</sup> But by pointing out the fragmentations and weaknesses, the curatorial expanded field can generate or catalyse more egalitarian worlds.<sup>25</sup>

The term *Mexicanx Futures* is inspired by *Afrofuturism*<sup>26</sup> concern in providing different African/Latin American colonial fictions to create new present and possible futures. *Afrofuturism* is a fictional post-colonial theory in relation to Africa which explores the exploitation of black bodies in history through slavery, and alienation during the colonial period and Transatlantic Trade. Afrofuturism has inspired counter memories like Drexciya's Transatlantic sonic fictions, and Sun Ra's cosmological futures. A great contemporary example is *Zapantera Negra's* artistic collaboration between Black Panthers and Zapatista

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<sup>22</sup> García-Antón, K. (2022) *Art and solidarity reader: radical actions, politics and friendships*. Amsterdam: Valiz.pg 200.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, pg 198

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pg 200

<sup>25</sup> Léger, M.J. *et al.* (2022) *Zapantera Negra: an artistic encounter between Black Panthers and Zapatistas*. [Second edition].. Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions. Pg 35.

<sup>26</sup> Eshun, K. (2003) 'Further Considerations on Afrofuturism', *CR (East Lansing, Mich.)*, 3(2), pp. 287–302. doi:10.1353/ncr.2003.0021.



communities.<sup>27</sup> As both communities highlight decolonial alternative visions struggle for dignity and liberation. Afrofuturism movement rejects the science fiction market driven by speculation, which privileges whiteness and Western narratives.<sup>28</sup> (Index 3) Philosopher Kodwo Eshun articulates: “*To establish the historical character black culture, to bring Africa and its subjects into history denied by Hegel, it has been necessary to assemble counter memories that contest the colonial archive*”<sup>29</sup> Classically, art history was invaded by narratives of enlightenment and mastery of an ideal beauty. In *Philosophy of Fine Arts*, Hegel confined art history discourse for centuries as any other form outside Western representation was regarded as imperfect art, in other words, judged as primitive. The limitations in the judgement of beauty used to be the ideology for museums and institutions around the world. These narratives deemed and confined alternative visions and bodies for centuries. Today, current contemporary artistic theories and exhibitions recognize the need to reconcile and empower identities that were subjected to colonialism and whose artistic practices may serve us to imagine more collective ecological worlds.

In response to the ways in which colonialism proposed an unequal relationship between colonizer and colonized. *Manifold (2022)* at Documenta 15 by Mexican artist Erick Beltran connotes the Western dialectic between the individualism and collectivities. The artist claims that separating everything in units or separations was created 300 years ago, but that instead he proposes to approach narratives as an interrelation of multiplicities.<sup>30</sup> His digitalized model serves to decolonise power narratives, envision multiple ideas together and how these would be embodied in the world. Beltran artistic representation reinforces a future whereby

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<sup>27</sup> Léger, M.J. et al. (2022) *Zapantera Negra: an artistic encounter between Black Panthers and Zapatistas*. [Second edition].. Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions.

<sup>28</sup> Eshun, K. (2003) ‘Further Considerations on Afrofuturism’, *CR (East Lansing, Mich.)*, 3(2), pp. 287–302. doi:10.1353/ncr.2003.0021.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, pg 288.

<sup>30</sup> Ruangrupa and Documenta (2022) *Documenta fifteen handbook*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz. Pg 96.

communities can share their memories in the creation of collectiveness- a sharing of ideas that goes beyond binary ways of thinking and understands the true complexities and rhizomatic need to include the unseen, sometimes dismissed experiences. The work of Erick Beltran speaks about the relevance of both histories and relationships between the colonizer and the colonized, the past, present and future given that in his artistic model everything has visibility at the same time and has the equal relevance.

Today, the formation of decolonial Mexicanx collectivity can empower and reinforce ancestral wisdoms. In essence, during the colonial mission many of the Mayan and Aztec ancient books were burned as they were considered superstitions.<sup>31</sup> For instance, an ancient Mayan text, known as *Popol Vuh* describes through myth the origins of nature. The 'fathermothers' or gods, created the first Latinxs bodies with natural elements, in their first attempts humans were made of mud and then of wood but both failed. Lastly, Latinx bodies were made from maize, which is the primary basis and foundation of its culture.<sup>32</sup> Latinx identities and myths appear to dwell between both interfaces between rationality and the more than human, spiritual, ecological worlds. Another example would be the Ancient Aztec "Coatlicue" in the National Museum of Anthropology, in Mexico City. The stone sculpture resembles a goddess serpent combining gender in a form of dreaming androgyny. The Aztec rituals presented the becoming of more than human, in connection to ecological stewardship. The sculpture contains the essential symbols of Aztec philosophy: cosmological visions of heaven and the underworld, the becoming-animal in reference to the eagle and the serpent, as well as beauty and deviance. Nonetheless, these enigmatic visions were erased from

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<sup>31</sup> Past, Ambar, Antel Péres Ok'il, María Xila, Manwela Kokoroch, Xunka' Utz'utz Ni', Munda Tostón, and others, 'Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images by Mayan Women', *Bomb* (New York, N.Y.), 100, 2007, 102–6

<sup>32</sup> Pavez (Producer), & Ana María Pavez (Director). (2006). *Popol Vuh*. [Video/DVD] Documentary Educational Resources (DER). <https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/popol-vuh>

everyday life culture, as these were altered and culturally appropriated into Christian/Catholic Hispanic Cultures. Academic and philosopher Gloria Anzaldúa explains,

*“After the conquest the Spaniards and their Church continued to slip Tonantsi/Guadalupe. They desexed Guadalupe taking Coatloapeub goddess the serpent sexuality out of her. They completed the split begun by the Nahuas by making la Virgen de Guadalupe/Virgen Maria into chaste Virgins and the Tlazolteotl/ Coaticue/ la chingada into putas; into the Beauties and the Beasts. They went even further they made all the Indian deities and religious practices the work of the devil.”<sup>33</sup>*

Due to the political intervention by colonialism rhetoric, bodies of colour were forced to erase their eco-social memories and ways of dwelling in the world. The Aztec goddess hybrid serpent was therefore transformed into a Catholic virgin, or the hybrid goddess was given a female gender in the hierarchical macho imposition of privileged men, to impose the idea that female sexuality was evil. Also, by judging female moral behaviour with religion and the creation of ‘sins’. Any women who attempted to break with this normative imposition was stereotyped as ‘puta’ which translates to whore. As such Latinx identity was imposed enormous cruelty. Latinxs bodies futures is therefore to spell out social injustices and break the silence. In 2019, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum in Berlin presented a group exhibition “Time For Fragments” including “No Solid Form Can Contain You, 2010” installation by artist Mariana Castillo Deball, the title evokes the idea immateriality in spiritualism. Bahnhofs’ curatorial intervention exemplifies how contemporary art may serve to construct lost historical representations.<sup>34</sup> Deball’s installation presents an archival installation in remembrance to the buried statues in 1790’s by the Spanish Colonial mission. After

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<sup>33</sup> Anzaldúa, G., Saldívar-Hull, S. and Ikas, K. (1999) *Borderlands = La frontera*. 2nd ed.. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, pg 50.

<sup>34</sup> Hamburger Bahnhof (2019) artmap.com. Available at: <https://artmap.com/hamburgerbahnhof/exhibition/time-for-fragments-2019?print=do> (Accessed: 30 May 2023).

centuries of being forgotten, Deball recreated the original sculpture of “Coatlicue”, her work utilizes fiction in remembrance of the ‘goddess serpent’ forgotten memories and this technique provides a way to reconciliation for Latinx decolonial culture. Also, by reviving the ecological and hybrid traditions, new alternatives for decolonising queering arise. The artistic intervention by Mariana Deball reinforces the idea that decolonial feminism serves to rebel against these post-colonial contradictions, impositions of cultural betrayal and social norms.

Another example in which decolonial feminism has been rearticulated, in constituting new forms of resistant meaning is the publication *Incantation: songs, spells and images by Mayan Women* by the ‘fathermothers’ Xun Okotz, Xpectra Ernánides and translated by Ámbar Past. The artistic collaboration with native storytellers in 2005 gives visibility to oneiric dreams, myths, spells, and drawings in ink. Yet also, alchemy and shamanic healing processes. The “fathermothers” of the publication present a decolonial publication as they do not know how to write, because knowledge and traditions are passed to generations through storytelling. It is also important to note that contemporary art is a Western manifestation, and this form of creativity differs from ancestral rituals. The publication among different women of different backgrounds, serves as a collaboration in the community, the translation by Xpectra Hernandez fortifies the connection with women who speak other languages. The intervention serves as a reconciliation between the mystical and the world of rationality.<sup>35</sup> The poem read as follows:

*“Mother of the Night,*

*Father of the Night,*

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<sup>35</sup> Anzaldúa, G., Saldívar-Hull, S. and Ikas, K. (1999) *Borderlands = La frontera*. 2nd ed.. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, pg 67.

*Great Star of Venus,  
Mother Month, Mother Moon:  
  
Get up. Put on your best clothes.  
  
Let's Maruch Vet's body  
Out of where she's scared to death,  
sold to a cave, sold to a mountain."*

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- Antel Péres Ok'il<sup>36</sup>

The poem reinforces the ancient traditions and Mayan sensible aesthetics which blossom with 'motherhood' and expands from the human to the non-human into corn, the stars, thunder, light and the body. The Mayans envision a future that dwells in an age of sensibility, the age of women and motherhood in Earth. Their asygnifying aesthetics dwell in poetry, decolonising dance and making masks. Their beliefs extend into the discourses of magic such as Deleuze and Guatarri's idea of "becoming-animal" in Tzotzil known as *wayhel*. Wayhels are animal companions. The human and wayhel are mystically connected. Similarly, *Xpakinte* poetry references a supernatural being: a tree that appears as a women and spooks drunk men in the dark. Ambar Past expresses, *"The German language is considered appropriate for training horses. Italian for courting women, French for diplomats. Spanish is said to be addressing God. Without a doubt, Tzotzil Maya is a language suited to magic."*<sup>37</sup> As such the publication

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<sup>36</sup> Past, Ambar, Antel Péres Ok'il, María Xila, Manwela Kokoroch, Xunka' Utz'utz Ni', Munda Tostón, and others, 'Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images by Mayan Women', *Bomb* (New York, N.Y.), 100, 2007, 102–6

<sup>37</sup> Past, Ambar, Antel Péres Ok'il, María Xila, Manwela Kokoroch, Xunka' Utz'utz Ni', Munda Tostón, and others, 'Incantations: Songs, Spells and Images by Mayan Women', *Bomb* (New York, N.Y.), 100, 2007, 102–6

proposes solidarity, sisterhood and conversation among women of different backgrounds.<sup>38</sup>

Poetry, storytelling and sharing memories, decolonial feminism may create new collective memory and kinship worlds.

As I mentioned before, The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), took over the city of Chiapas in 1994. In the uprising they protested “*What are they going to forgive us for?*”<sup>39</sup> This enigmatic quote empowers the Mayan descendants reclaiming land stewardship and autonomy from the state. Their discontent was catalysed from the perpetual colonial dispossession of their territories.<sup>40</sup> Philosopher Guattari coined the term ‘Fifth World’ for collectives proclaiming their autonomy amid post-colonialisation.<sup>41</sup> Their internet archive proclaims that the NAFTA agreement is a necro politics technique for ethnocide.<sup>42</sup> Their artistic activism was provoked by governmental injustices and their performativity gave visibility to their dignity and resistance towards discrimination.<sup>43</sup> Their collective performance in a public space reterritorializes the social-cultural normativity and generates something greater.<sup>44</sup> In addition, Zapatistas recent emancipatory performative ‘invasion’ of The European Continent on June 21st, 2021,<sup>45</sup> reverses the historical conquest. Upon arrival the collective named the continent in Tzotzil Mayan language “*Slumil K’ajxemk’op*” meaning rebel land. (Index 4) The collective arrived at Europe not victimising themselves, but rather showing opposition by emphasising

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<sup>38</sup> García-Antón, K. (2022) *Art and solidarity reader: radical actions, politics and friendships*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

<sup>39</sup> ¿De Qué Nos van a perdonar? (2021) Enlace Zapatista. Available at: <https://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/1994/01/18/de-que-nos-van-a-perdonar/> (Accessed: 29 May 2023).

<sup>40</sup> Demos, T.J. (2016) *Decolonizing nature: contemporary art and the politics of ecology*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, pg 152.

<sup>41</sup> Glowczewski, B. (2021) *Indigenising anthropology with Guattari and Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pg 12.

<sup>42</sup> Demos, T.J. (2016) *Decolonizing nature: contemporary art and the politics of ecology*. Berlin: Sternberg Press pg,151.

<sup>43</sup> Léger, M.J. et al. (2022) *Zapantera Negra: an artistic encounter between Black Panthers and Zapatistas*. [Second edition].. Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions, Foreword.

<sup>44</sup> Deleuze, G., Guattari, F. and Massumi, B. (2013) *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>45</sup> Léger, M.J. et al. (2022) *Zapantera Negra: an artistic encounter between Black Panthers and Zapatistas*. [Second edition].. Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions.

that their struggle continues as an open rebellion. Their journey goal was to unify forces with communities who resist the destruction of nature and land. As such, their artistic activism connects to Guatarri's idea of 'ecosophy' which is mainly about thinking transversally, to disagree and disrupt demarcated divisions. Their practice delineates a new way of being in the world.

A few years before in 2009, curator Mia Eve Rollow and Caleb Duarte Piñon felt a disillusionment with contemporary institutional art practices. Their institutional critique questioned the notion of hierarchy, power, and visibility. The curators and activists, wanted to make exhibition making through collective participation. This guided them to create a decolonial alternative space to violent and harmful structures.<sup>46</sup> They founded an alternative artistic space to work together with marginalized communities and Zapatistas. 'EDELO' artistic space took over the where the United Nations used to be in Chiapas, México. Caleb Duarte expresses, *"That was quite a revelation. Here we are, after having spent years learning cutting edge contemporary art at the San Francisco and Chicago Arts Institutes and at Stanford University. Drawn to one of Mexico's poorer states by these small, stretched paintings authored by autonomous Mayan farmers."*<sup>47</sup> EDELO collaborated in an ongoing participation with activists, farmers, academics, women embroidery collectives, artists and musicians.<sup>48</sup> By restructuring the dynamics of the space, this intervention proved to be an emancipatory curatorial space by standing up for minorities and a duty of care. The exhibition space created new configurations that did not hierarchize ethnicity, gender, or race. It instead formed a space

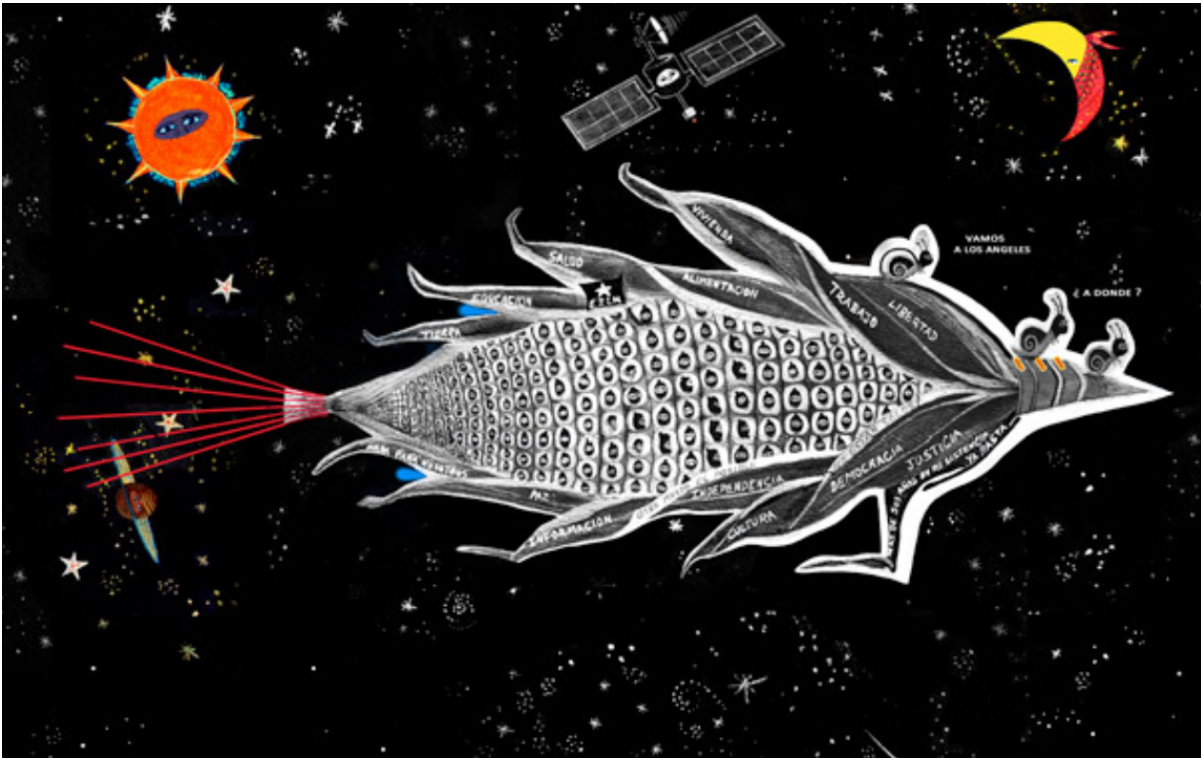
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<sup>46</sup> Ibid. pg 13.

<sup>47</sup> Léger, M.J. et al. (2022) Zapantera Negra : an artistic encounter between Black Panthers and Zapatistas. [Second edition].. Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions, pg 19.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, pg 11.

for becoming,<sup>49</sup> in a process of coming together, in creating kinship among different backgrounds.



Programa especial autónomo intergaláctico, 2012. Design: Mia Rollow and Tomás.<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, the First World Festival of Dignified Race was the *Sixth InterGalactic Commission* by Zapatistas in San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico in 2008. The commission explored Mayan decolonial aesthetics, cosmologies and ecological worlds. Zapatistas understand the violent impact from colonisation, and their struggle allows them to drift into different survival imaginaries, and these are not superficial like those in the West.<sup>51</sup> Their futural world proposes ‘degrowth’, to decrease production and create an “harmonious ecological metabolism.”<sup>52</sup> Their artistic interventions prove to vertically connect the three ecologies

<sup>49</sup> Guattari, F., Pindar, I. and Sutton, P. (2014) *The three ecologies*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/34310/rigo-23-autonomous-intergalactic-space-program/>

<sup>51</sup> Demos, T.J. (2016) *Decolonizing nature: contemporary art and the politics of ecology*. Berlin: Sternberg Press pg,152.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pg,154.



terrains articulated by philosopher Guattari: These encompass their social relations, the environment, and human subjectivities. The public event catalysed further participation and exhibitions such as: *Rigo 23: Autonomous InterGalactic Space Program* in REDCAT Los Angeles, California 2012. The exhibition may be considered a heterotopia space, as the collective artists reveal cosmological imaginaries and possibilities. Zapatista's ethico-aesthetic paradigm presents a sensibility of how to dwell in the world. As Mayan ancestral wisdoms are passed across generations which ultimately becomes a multi-situational experience. Expressed through working collectively and with the environment, their shamanic, ritualistic, and activism expresses their interconnection between art, politics, life and the spiritual. This contrasts with Western vision of isolating the different epistemes. The installations interweave in the representation of vegetable spacecrafts to planetary constellations.<sup>53</sup> The commission gives visibility to the dreams of sustainability and democracy, thus a futural egalitarian space-time. The installation presents dreams of dreams, in other words oneiric visions in their relationship between the mind, land and body.<sup>54</sup> Barbara Gloczewski articulates:

*"Its through Dreaming that everything takes on a life and a meaning, but throughout all that exists, it's the earth itself, the land, that is the source of power, or the force that makes of the Dreaming this force which passes throughout all the inherent energies found within matter, the so vital forces of the species that constitute Dreaming and life."<sup>55</sup>*

Their intergalactic dialogues through installations, painted murals and tapestries express a connection to non-humans and a human state of becoming. These elements delve into indigenous communities' ceremonial traditions with nature. Exploring ancestral wisdoms practices about community care, class solidarity, kinship with all beings. Zapatistas artistic

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<sup>53</sup> Rigo 23: Autonomous Intergalactic Space Program - announcements - e-flux (2012) e. Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/34310/rigo-23-autonomous-intergalactic-space-program/> (Accessed: 29 May 2023).

<sup>54</sup> Gloczewski, B. (2021) *Indigenising anthropology with Guattari and Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pg 15.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, pg 11.

interventions prove Guattari's argument that "*At the heart of ecological practices there's an asynifying rupture.*"<sup>56</sup> Given that is disruptive and goes against the order of things. It also attempts to break the signifiers and colonial implications of language, and this is why it may be so overwhelming and perplexing. Zapatistas understanding of the world differs to Western knowledge production. Western classification systems make separations, demarcations, and distinctions against the world for domination.<sup>57</sup> For instance, we must question the colonisation of Space and scientific astronomy attempting to name the indescribable phenomena of galaxies to dominate them.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, Zapatistas propose a world and use Mayan ancestry to reinvent language, through renaming as a decolonial anti-hierarchical strategies. In similarity to Deleuze and Guattari's proposition of the 'rhizome', Zapatista's attempt to decolonize nature. For instance, the word *caracol* 'snail shell' signifies that the political party obeys the people demands. In their decolonialisation of their mindset, they do not seek approval from the white gaze or hegemonies.<sup>59</sup>

Alternatively, another exhibition that resonances with decolonial alternatives was Documenta 13. By recognizing varying artistic and curatorial interventions which express concern towards the cultural, socio-political realms as well as institutional critique. *The Return of a Lake, 2012* by Maria Theresa Alvez presented a large-scale installation exploring decolonial difference by mapping site-specific colonial events in 1908. Beforehand, the artist made social and activist work in 2009. Alvez worked together with the Community Museum of Xico Valley, and later on they requested the visibility of the event.<sup>60</sup> The collaboration and

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<sup>56</sup> Guattari, F., Pindar, I. and Sutton, P. (2014) *The three ecologies*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>57</sup> Foucault, M. and Rabinow, P. (2010) *The Foucault reader*. New York: Vintage Books.

<sup>58</sup> Adorno, T.W. (1997) *Aesthetic theory*. New ed.. London: Athlone.

<sup>59</sup> Léger, M.J. et al. (2022) *Zapantera Negra: an artistic encounter between Black Panthers and Zapatistas*. [Second edition].. Brooklyn, NY: Common Notions, pg 37.

<sup>60</sup> Demos, T.J. (2016) *Decolonizing nature: contemporary art and the politics of ecology*. Berlin: Sternberg Press pg,156.

collective research in the archival material created dialectical tensions regarding their past. Alvez's community practice amplified the hardships by reckoning colonial histories and the disasters brought by polluting the area with industrial waste. Throughout the centuries, such actions affected the infrastructure, economics and ecologies of the region known as Chalco. The exhibition serves to criticize the processes by which colonisation privileged the decisions of a few in the detriment of the majority. In this case the perpetual domination of native's people lands and their lack of voice. Secondly, curatorial exhibitions may serve to construct imaginary objects and displace meanings.<sup>61</sup> The installation at Kassel recreated a hydro-agricultural island invented by ethnical communities, as it served as a sustainable body of water.<sup>62</sup> These ecological systems were utilized before the Spanish Invasion. The "chinampa" was a sustainable practice of producing maize. Her eco-political protest of care acts as a source of inspiration in the creation of more sustainable worlds. By bringing into the fore an erased ecological tradition. Alvez therefore proposes the revival or resurface of decolonial ecological worlds, for the creation of more sustainable worlds.<sup>63</sup>

In conclusion, Latinx Futures fictionally reimagines an egalitarian future; by exploring decolonial feminism, exhibition making, archives, artistic political activism, ecological and cosmological visions. The curatorial intention of the essay is to create a state of harmonic disobedience for Mexicanx bodies towards present social oppressive hegemonies. Artistically speaking, Biennales and curatorial exhibitions are seeking to give visibility to more ecological worlds and race politics. The essay also explores the expanded field of the curatorial in

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<sup>61</sup> Mbembe, A. and Corcoran, S. (2019) *Necropolitics*. Durham: Duke University Press.

<sup>62</sup> Demos, T.J. (2016) *Decolonizing nature: contemporary art and the politics of ecology*. Berlin: Sternberg Press pg,157.

<sup>63</sup> Maestri, N. (2019) Historical evidence for Aztlan, the mythical Aztec homeland, ThoughtCo. Available at:[https://www.thoughtco.com/aztlan-the-mythical-homeland169913#:~:text=Aztlán%20\(also%20spelled%20Aztlan%20or,in%20the%20Valley%20of%20Mexico.\(Accessed:29May2023\).](https://www.thoughtco.com/aztlan-the-mythical-homeland169913#:~:text=Aztlán%20(also%20spelled%20Aztlan%20or,in%20the%20Valley%20of%20Mexico.(Accessed:29May2023).)

transforming spaces in acts of care. The collaborations discussed in the essay work with communities whose community practices need visibility for change and inspiration. Curatorial exhibition making or publications can create spaces for becoming and social transformation. Most strikingly, the curatorial manifesto heightens the potentials from the political activism by The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), and these have shifted to uprisings, maritime voyages, public protests, and exhibition-making. Zapatista's asignifying aesthetics deconstruct present normative impositions and uphold the values of equality, inclusion and participation. Their ancient Mayan wisdoms enable them to envision cosmological worlds and oneiric dreams towards Earth. The future for Latinx bodies lies in the creation of subjectivity through collectivity, embodied performativity, kinship and equality for the creation of a just future. As we have seen the ancient Mayan practices of storytelling, sustainable worlds, and collective ways of healing through shamanism, rituals, songs and spells are suited to a language of magic. Their ecological worlds and decolonial language resonate with transient and magical ways of dwelling. These are crucial insights to understand our world.

**Words: 4,091.**

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## Index

- (1) As curator Lucy Lippard argues: “In the USA in particular, the Trump administration brought with it an alt-right conservative agenda rooted in racist, xenophobic, gynophobic ideology. We need now – perhaps more than ever – to be reminded of the dangers of white, male supremacy, its insidiousness. We must deploy strategies to ensure that other artists are acknowledged as major contributors to our civilization.”<sup>64</sup>
- (2) During the six-year Carlos Salinas de Gortari Administration. The song Solidarity was commissioned for the PRONASOL in 1989 as part of the official propaganda of the government of Salinas de Gortari, President of Mexico. Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil, *Making a Territory of Collaboration Possible. Art, Solidarity and Indigenous peoples.* García-Antón, K. (2022) *Art and solidarity reader: radical actions, politics and friendships*. Amsterdam: Valiz.

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<sup>64</sup> Reilly, M. and Lippard, L.R. (2018) *Curatorial activism. Towards an ethic of curation*. London: Thames & Hudson.

- (3) As well as the imbalances of collections in race discrepancies and gender – the financial market and patrons of museums preferences continue in the investment of white male artists. Reilly, M. and Lippard, L.R. (2018) *Curatorial activism. Towards an ethic of curation*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- (4) Voyage began on April 10, 2021 on a sailboat called La Montania, and maritime delegation Escuadron 421 composed of four cis women, two cis men, and one transgender nonbinary person. Lupita, Carolina, Ximena, Yuli, Felipe and Marijose. <https://piedepagina.mx/la-orilla-de-paris-saluda-al-escuadron-zapatista/>
- (5) In his *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, Guattari (1989-2013) will develop a way of thinking his concept of existential territories and the refrain (la ritournelle) that is simultaneously more multi-situational and oneiric. Glowczewski, B. (2021) *Indigenising anthropology with Guattari and Deleuze*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, Pg 15.