Contextual Studies

Year 2

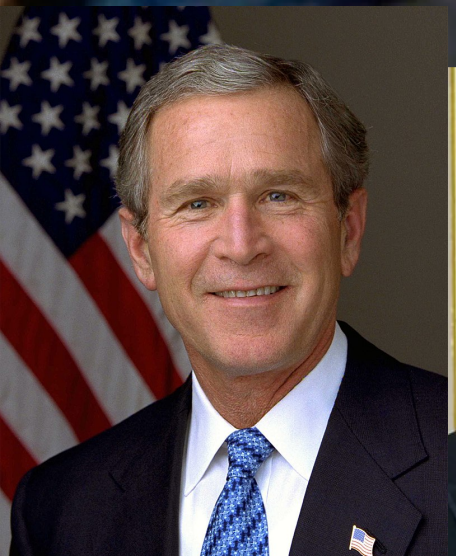
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CURATORIAL ACTIVISM

RESIST

CHALLENGE

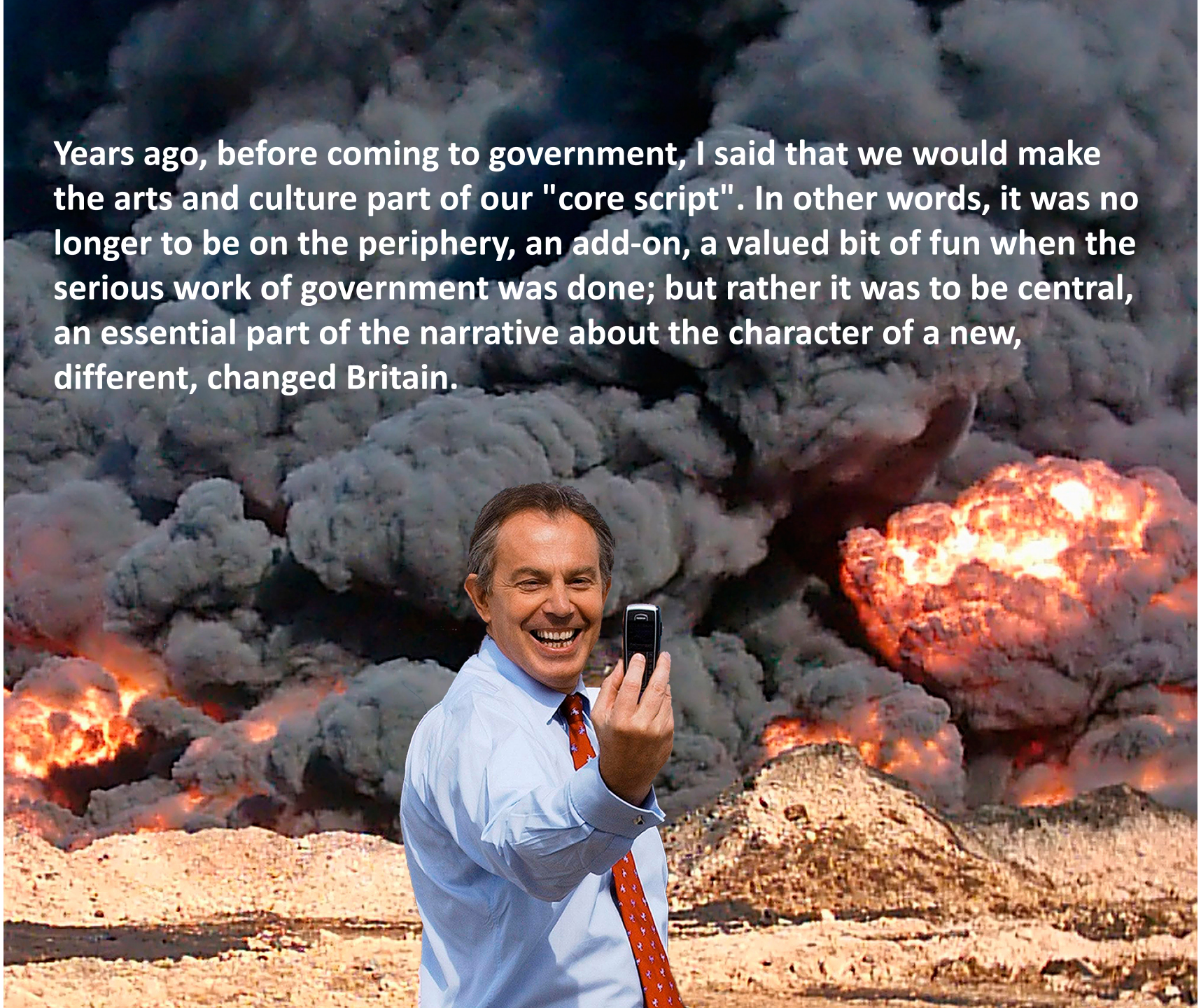
CONFRONT










Years ago, before coming to government, I said that we would make the arts and culture part of our "core script". In other words, it was no longer to be on the periphery, an add-on, a valued bit of fun when the serious work of government was done; but rather it was to be central, an essential part of the narrative about the character of a new, different, changed Britain.

When people **on low incomes** can visit museums free of charge, and see great works of art, they take something of the inspiration with them. A nation that cares about art will not just be a better nation. In the early 21st Century it will be a more successful one.

And a more **cohesive one**. **Because art**, more than any programmes of government, worthy and necessary though those are, **can make people consider, see things differently, understand where the other comes from**.

Tony Blair, 2007

Cultural Democracy / Democratising Culture

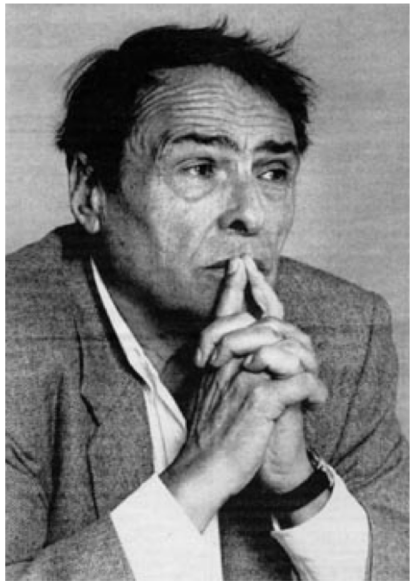
Democratising culture = public accessibility of culture

- Price
- Location
- Education

Cultural Democracy = the desire for every culture to be respected equally without hierarchy

The Responsive Museum, eds Lang, Reeve & Woollard

Cultural Capital



Pierre Bourdieu

Like Marx, Bourdieu argued that **capital** formed the foundation of social life **and dictated one's position within the social order**. For Bourdieu and Marx both, the more capital one has, the more powerful a position one occupies in social life.

However, Bourdieu extended Marx's idea of capital beyond the economic and into the **more symbolic realm of culture.**

Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital refers to the collection of symbolic elements such as skills, tastes, posture, clothing, mannerisms, material belongings, credentials, etc. that one acquires through being part of a particular social class.

But Bourdieu also points out that cultural capital is a major source of social inequality.

Certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others, and can help or hinder one’s social mobility just as much as income or wealth.

Cultural Capital comes in three forms:

Embodied – eg accent/dialect

Objectified – expensive car/big house

Institutionalized – credentials/qualification eg degrees or titles that symbolize cultural competence and authority.

Habitus

refers to the physical embodiment of cultural capital, to the deeply ingrained habits, skills, and dispositions that we possess due to our life experiences.

In the right situations, our habitus allows us to successfully navigate social environments.

Habitus also extends to our “taste” for cultural objects such as art, food, and clothing.

aesthetic sensibilities are shaped

by

the culturally ingrained habitus

Habitus = so ingrained people often mistook feelings as natural instead of culturally developed.

This often leads to justifying social inequality, because it is (mistakenly) believed that some people are naturally disposed to the finer things in life while others are not.



Dr Hartwig Fisher



Tristram Hunt



Alex Farquharson



Frances Morris



Nicholas Kenyon



Ralph Rugoff



This book ultimately asks:
how can we get people in the art world to think about

gender, race, and sexuality,

to understand that these are persistent concerns that require action?

how can we all contribute to ensuring that the art world becomes more inclusive?

In the West, greatness has been defined since antiquity as white, Western, privileged and, above all, male.

Linda Nochlin

Despite decades of postcolonial, feminist, anti-racist, and queer activism and theorizing, the art world continues to exclude "Other" artists – those who are women, of colour, and LGBTQ.

Some stats

- In 2013 less than a third of artists represented in US commercial galleries were women.

- Yet between **65% - 80%** of US art students and around **70%** MFA students are women.

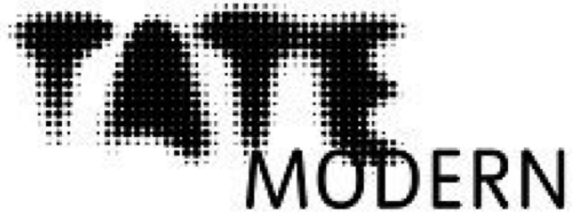
RESIST: masculinism and sexism

Definition:

Advocacy of the rights of men; adherence to or promotion of opinions, values, etc., regarded as typical of men; (more generally) anti-feminism, **machismo.**

In 2013 the ELF (East London Fawcett) examined the artists represented at 134 London galleries and less than 1/3 were women.

At the re-opening of the Tate Modern in 2016, of 300 artists represented in the re-hang of the permanent collection, less than 1/3 were women, fewer still non-white.





Pussy Galore –
"an international feminist art collective — artists, curators, critics, collectors, educators, and writers — dedicated to eradicating sexism in the art world via a series of insurrectionist tactics —

be it artwork, actions/performances, exhibitions, purchases, articles, classes, books, and so forth,"



Guerrilla Girls
(1989)

Strategies of Resistance

Revisionism

- The most frequently cited counter-hegemonic strategy addressing exclusion in the canon is a “revisionist” one, whereby individuals are reclaimed from history and the canon itself is re-written, the principal aim being to include those who had hitherto been refused, forgotten or hidden.
- A revisionist approach… rediscovers what the canon conceals and supresses.

benefits of a revisionist strategy.

- They address critical exclusions
- Provide a deeper, more contextual understanding of key issues by creating space within white male institutions and mainstream discourses that help audiences understand visual culture from a wholly different perspective.
- Broader, more comprehensive view of art history

Action/Abstraction



Willem de Kooning, Gotham News, 1955, oil on canvas. Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo: Gift of Seymour H. Knox, Jr., 1955, K1955.6. Copyright 2008 The Willem de Kooning Foundation/Artists Rights Society (ARS) New York.

The Jewish Museum, New York
2008

Revised the narrative of Abstract Impressionism to include **Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Bontecou, Joan Mitchell, Ann Truitt, Lee Krasner** and **Norman Lewis** – 5 women and an artist of colour who had previously been excluded from the "canon".

Dora Maar







Mesurez-vous

Vous corrigerez vos défauts

Measure yourself

You will correct your faults

Editorial shoots like this for *Rester jeune* and *Votre beauté* represent the complex position women photographers occupied in relation to emancipation. As working professionals, they embodied the concept of the modern, liberated woman, but their achievements were discussed in gendered terms. 'A brunette huntress of images . . . [possessing] the candour of a man, with the curiosity of a woman' was one description of Maar. And while publications like *Rester jeune* and *Votre beauté* offered women photographers opportunities that would previously have been given to men, they also contributed to what we now understand as a complex history of the representation of women's bodies in magazines.

ROOM 7

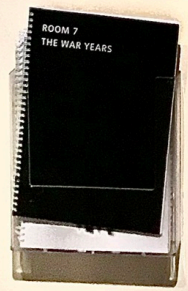
THE WAR YEARS

From 11 May to 4 June 1937, Maar documented the progression of Picasso's painting *Guernica*. He made this monumental work in response to the 26 April, 1937 aerial bombing of the Basque town, one of the worst atrocities of the Spanish Civil War. Until that point, Picasso had never been overtly political. With Maar, his outlook was changing.

A commission for the art journal *Cahiers d'art*, Maar's complex project recorded the ways in which Picasso progressed the composition. In her images, we can also see that he settled on a palette of black, white and grey, evocative of illustrated newspaper reports. It was 'like an immense photograph … absolutely modern' she observed.

Maar's presence in Picasso's studio impressed itself in discreet ways. Historians have long speculated that the electric lamp in *Guernica* was inspired by one of her studio lights, which Picasso used to illuminate the canvas as he worked. But Maar also stated that he borrowed the motif from a painting she made earlier that year – possibly *The Conversation*, on display in room 6.

From studies for *Guernica* came the 'weeping woman', the guise in which Picasso cast Maar over 30 times. Yet for Maar, this was not a portrait but a metaphor for the suffering of the Spanish people during the civil war.





Guernica 1937

Dora Maar (1907–97) is widely known for her provocative photographs and photomontages that led her to become a celebrated icon of surrealism. Growing up between Argentina and Paris, she studied decorative arts and painting before switching her focus to photography. In doing so, Maar became part of a generation of women who seized the new professional opportunities offered by advertising and the illustrated press.

Inspired by the bold shades worn in the 1930s, this richly pigmented shade of red is a build-able formula with a luxurious velvety matte finish. This bold Jazz red lipstick has been exclusively selected in collaboration with London makeup brand Code8 and is available from our Dora Maar exhibition shop.

Jazz red lipstick

By Code8 x Tate

£14.50 ~~£29~~



barbican

Masculinities

Liberation through Photography

Thu 20 Feb—Sun 17 May 2020, Art Gallery

Area Studies

- While revisionism involves an integrative approach “area studies” produces new canons and supplements the traditional discourse by focusing on work that is based on either racial, geographical, gendered or sexual orientation. Eg Women Artists, African American Art, LGBTQ art, Middle Eastern Art etc
- These exhibitions are viewed as entirely separate to the canon – this is why many postcolonial and feminist theorists have argued against them, claiming that they are ghettoizing, segregating and culturally/or biologically essentialist insofar as they isolate artists on the basis of gender, nationality and sexuality – any difference

Benefits of area studies

- About global perspectives – about thinking outside of the comfort of the locality.
- Specialist frameworks to present artworks often seen for the first time.
- They function as curatorial correctives.

Key concept is ‘visibility’ – crucial in terms of prominence in the art marketplace and in art history.
More visibility means they are taught in schools, colleges, and universities – women only exhibitions have had a transformative impact on the art world.



curator Clare Barlow explained: “We (were) absolutely not presenting it as a closed canon. It (was) the start of a conversation.”



'Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent' features the work of more than 85 artists from 25 countries on the African continent and the Diaspora. Considered to be the largest exhibition of contemporary African art ever seen in Europe, it includes painting, sculpture, installation, video, drawing, photography and design.

Light from the Middle East: About the Exhibition

13 November 2012 - 7 April 2013

Photography is a powerful and persuasive means of expression. Its immediacy and accessibility make it an ideal choice for artists confronting the social challenges and political upheavals of the Middle East today.



Nermine Hammam, 'The Break', from the series 'Upekkha', 2011. Museum no. E.1129-2012. The Art Fund Collection of Middle Eastern Photography at the V&A and the British Museum

Light from the Middle East: New Photography presented work by artists from across the Middle East (spanning North Africa to Central Asia), living in the region and in diaspora.

The exhibition explored the ways in which these artists investigate the language and techniques of photography. Some use the camera to record or bear witness, while others subvert that process to reveal how surprisingly unreliable a photograph can be. The works range from documentary photographs and highly staged tableaux to images manipulated beyond recognition. The variety of approaches is appropriate to the complexities of a vast and diverse region.

Why do Abbas's images start the exhibition?

They do so for two troubling reasons: because photojournalism is framed as the originary technique in a narrative of photography that begins with a particular conception of recording; and because the Iranian revolution is framed as the originary event in a narrative of the contemporary Middle East that is too often unwilling to tear its eyes away from political Islam.

Mariam Motamedi-Fraser

Relational Approach

- A relational approach to curating presents art as if it were a polysemic site of contradictory positions and contested practices.
- This focus goes beyond a mere description of discrete regions and cultures, it transcends the “additive” approach, collapses the destructive centre-periphery binary, and is essentially postmodern in nature: it is textual, dialogic and “**writerly**”

*polysemic - Having a number of meanings, interpretations or understandings.

Barthes “ a writerly text is characterised by heterogeneity and incoherence” It is “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash.”

In a “writerly” exhibition then, the reader or viewer, can be seen as an **active participant** in the construction, or “writing” of meaning with respect to the works on view.

- Heterogeneity :*the quality or state of being diverse in character or content.*

documenta11
8 June – 15 September 2002
Platform 5: Exhibition

Artistic Director
Okwui Enwezor

Venues
Museum Fridericianum, documenta-Halle, Kulturbahnhof / Balikino, Binding-Brauerei, Orangerie, Karlsaue, Kasseler Innenstadt / Nordstadt

Artists
117

Visitors
650.924

Budget
18.075.420 Euro

Website
documenta11.de



Curators who adopt a relational approach highlight cultural differences by presenting a collection of voices that " tell alternate stories of difference, culture, power and agency."
Okwui Enwezor

“The one duty we owe to history is to re-write it”

Oscar Wilde

“Not until the white people, who now hold the power in the art world, scrutinize their own motives and attitudes toward people of colour, will it be possible to *unlearn racism*.”

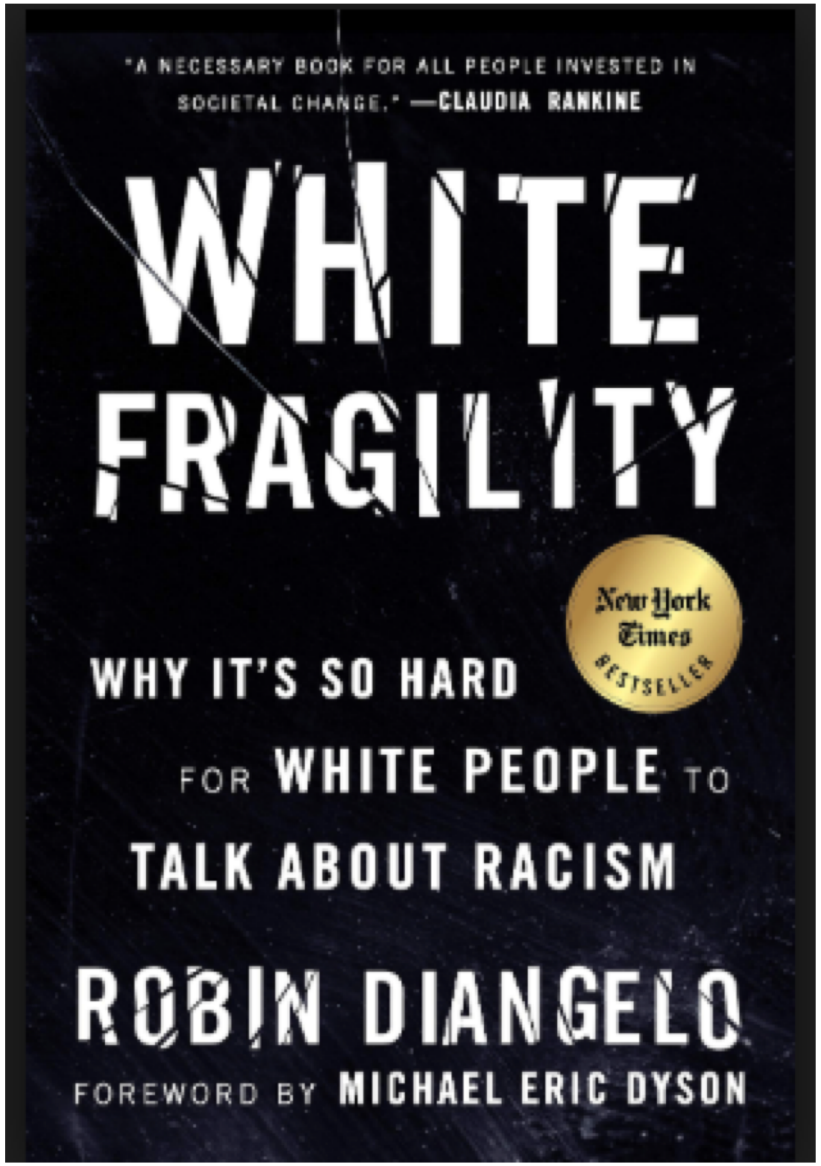
Maurice Berger

Confront

- Confronting our own privilege and prejudice
- Tackling White Privilege and Western Centrism
- “(The art world) is one of the last bastions of white supremacy-by-exclusion” Judith Wilson



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzLT54QjclA



Challenge

Don’t just sit and wait for change to come…

- Be proactive
- Call out institutions, critics, curators, collectors and gallerists for their sexist and racist practices.

Inclusivity

- Not just about representation.
- What other issues can you think of?

Book references

The Responsive Museum, Eds Caroline Lang, John Reeve, Vickly Woollard (2017 edition)

Pascalian Meditations, Pierre Bourdieu (1997)

White Fragility, Robin DiAngelo (2018)

Curatorial Activism, Maura Reilly (2018)

Museum Activism, Robert Janes, R Sandell (2019)

- https://www.channel4.com/news/rapper-and-author-akala-no-correlation-between-tougher-sentences-and-reduction-in-crime

