



Postcolonial Spaces and Decolonising Places
Lecture 7 Essay Seminar | The Politics of Place
Coexistent Perspectives (ADAA7000)

Question 3. Space and Place: *How do contemporary creative practices engage with the politics and poetics of space, including questions of displacement, postcolonial geography, affective architectures, or the uncanny? What critical frameworks can be used to analyse these spatial imaginaries?*

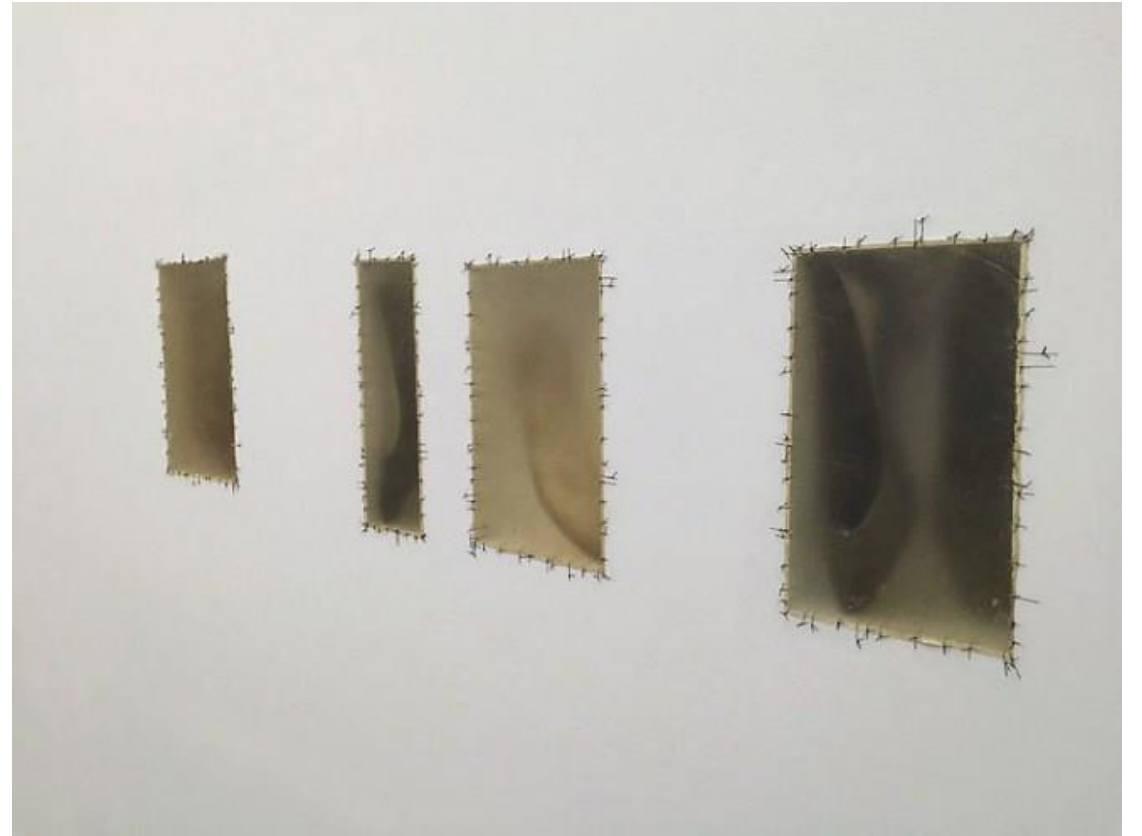
Question 4. Time, Memory and the Archive: *In what ways do contemporary artists and designers reimagine time, memory, and archival practice, whether through repetition, rupture, slowness, or non-linear temporality? How do these temporal aesthetics intersect with cultural, technological, or historical concerns?*

Example Essay 1 — Doris Salcedo: Architecture of Absence

Doris Salcedo: Architecture of Absence



Shibboleth (2007)



Atrabiliarios (1992–2004)

EXAMPLE 1 — *Doris Salcedo: Architecture of Absence*

Essay Question

How does Doris Salcedo's sculptural practice transform architectural space into a site of mourning and political remembrance? In what ways can affect theory and postcolonial thought help us understand her work as an “architecture of absence”?

Thesis Statement

Salcedo's installations, from *Shibboleth* (2007) to *Atrabiliarios* (1992–2004), convert institutional and domestic architectures into memorial landscapes that materialise the invisible histories of political violence. Through the interplay of absence and trace, her work engages the poetics of space (Bachelard) and the politics of place (Mbembe), revealing how colonial legacies persist as affective imprints within built environments.

Theme: Postcolonial memory and affective architecture

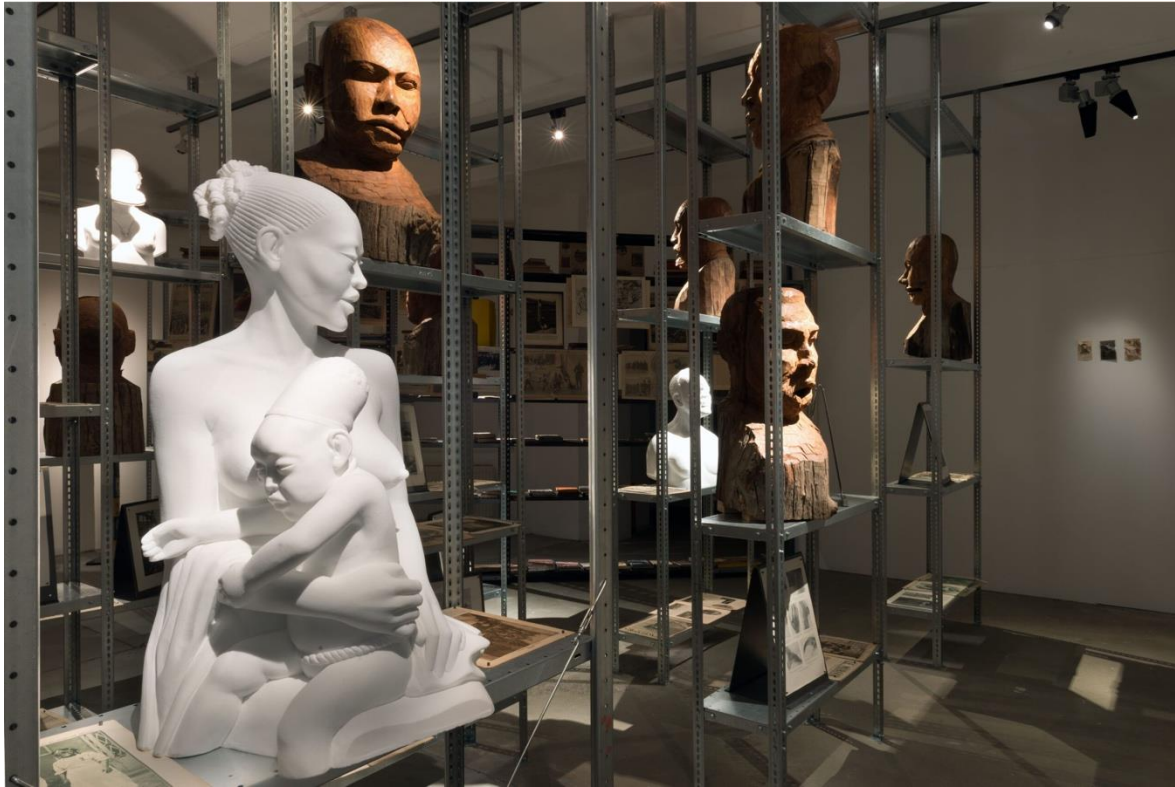
Theory frame: Gaston Bachelard (*The Poetics of Space*), Achille Mbembe (*Necropolitics*), and Doreen Massey (*For Space*)

Outline Essay Structure

1. **Introduction** — Outline the essay's scope: postcolonial memory, spatial poetics, affective resonance.
2. **Theoretical Context** — Bachelard's “intimate immensity” and Mbembe's “necropolitical architectures”; Massey's relational space.
3. **Case Studies** — Close analysis of *Shibboleth* (Tate Modern Turbine Hall) and *Atrabiliarios* (shoe niches).
4. **Spatial Reading** — How absence, cracks, and voids signify loss and resistance; the politics of visibility in institutional space.
5. **Conclusion** — Spatial trauma as collective memory; art as reclamation of haunted architectures.

Example Essay 2 — Kader Attia: Repairing Colonial Space

Kader Attia: Repairing Colonial Space



Repair. 5 Acts (2013)



The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures (2012)

EXAMPLE 2 — *Kader Attia: Repairing Colonial Space*

Essay Question

How does Kader Attia's concept of "repair" reimagine colonial and architectural space as a site of cultural hybridity and decolonial healing?

Thesis Statement

Attia's practice transforms museum and exhibition spaces into contested zones where histories of colonial violence and cultural restitution are reworked through the aesthetics of "repair." By integrating Bhabha's hybridity and Glissant's relation, his installations propose a "third space" where colonial fractures become the very materials of reconfiguration — a visual and spatial ethics of decolonial repair.

Theme: Decolonisation, hybridity, and spatial restitution

Theory frame: Homi K. Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*), Édouard Glissant (*Poetics of Relation*), and Walter D. Mignolo (*Decolonial Aesthetics*)

Outline Essay Structure

1. **Introduction** — Introduce the idea of repair as both metaphor and methodology.
2. **Theoretical Context** — Bhabha's third space; Glissant's opacity and relation; Mignolo's decolonial aesthetics.
3. **Case Studies** — *Repair. 5 Acts* (2013) and *The Repair from Occident to Extra-Occidental Cultures* (2012).
4. **Analysis** — Spatial re-inscription of colonial legacies; the politics of museum display.
5. **Conclusion** — Repair as a spatial poetics that unsettles Western museology and reclaims hybrid belonging.

EXAMPLE Essay 3 — Zineb Sedira: Cinematic Spaces of Memory and Belonging



Dreams Have No Titles (2022)



Mother, Father, and I. (2003)

EXAMPLE 3 — Zineb Sedira: Cinematic Spaces of Memory and Belonging

Model Essay Question

In what ways does Zineb Sedira use moving image and installation to navigate diasporic belonging and the memory of colonial displacement? How can phenomenological and postcolonial frameworks inform our reading of her spatial imaginaries?

Thesis Statement

Sedira's cinematic installations such as *Dreams Have No Titles* (Venice Biennale, 2022) and *Mother, Father, and I* (2003) trace a geography of displacement across domestic, cinematic, and maritime spaces. Through Gilroy's transnational lens and Ahmed's phenomenology of orientation, her work transforms the "non-place" of migration into a sensorial space of re-memory — a poetics of home-making amid dislocation.

Theme: Diaspora, displacement, and the cinematic construction of place

Theory frame: Paul Gilroy (*The Black Atlantic*), Sara Ahmed (*Queer Phenomenology*), and Marc Augé (*Non-Places*)

Outline Essay Structure

1. **Introduction** — Contextualise Sedira's Franco-Algerian identity and her use of cinematic space.
2. **Theoretical Context** — Gilroy's diasporic routes; Ahmed's orientation and embodied spatiality; Augé's non-places.
3. **Case Studies** — Analysis of *Dreams Have No Titles* and *Mother, Father, and I*.
4. **Discussion** — The spatial aesthetics of in-betweenness; cinematic space as memory architecture.
5. **Conclusion** — Sedira's work as affective cartography of diasporic belonging.

Artist	Theme	Key Theorists	Core Concept	Spatial Focus
Doris Salcedo	Affective architectures & postcolonial memory	Bachelard, Mbembe, Massey	Absence / trace	Institutional & domestic architecture
Kader Attia	Decolonial repair & hybridity	Bhabha, Glissant, Mignolo	Third space / repair	Museum & cultural restitution
Zineb Sedira	Diasporic place & cinematic space	Gilroy, Ahmed, Augé	Orientation / belonging	Filmic & migratory space