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**Critical Thinking**

The Normal's exhibition at Edinburgh's Talbot Rice Gallery (2016-), appeared in fleeting subjectivities inspired by trending hashtags that often reflect painted on traditional classroom blackboards, highlighting the artist's view that anti-racism isn't something fixed to be easily disregarded, nor is traded in for cultural capital. The set up *Detention* for The Normal's exhibition, the old school punishment of writing lines was given to members of management staff at Talbot Rice Gallery and the University of Edinburgh, in order to shift hierarchies of labour and force the institution to reflect upon its own privileges.

[illegible]

## RELENTLESS INTERROGATORS

## WHO SAID IT WAS SIMPLE?

**DETENTION**

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## DECOLONISING NARRATIVES

Avant-garde Acti  
MLLE BOURGEOISE NOIRE  
GOES TO THE MUSE

## ACTIVITIES

- In groups design and develop a performance ceremony that positively opposes violence / prejudice.
- Your ceremony should include a vow or a set of commitments.
- Think about what costumes the performers will wear. Draw or sketch your costumes.
- Where would your performance be staged and who would be on your guest list?
- Who would you invite to officiate at your ceremony?

*Illustration inspired by the image: Elizabeth Stephens and Annie M. Sprinkle, The Love Art Laboratory 2005-2011 (Blue Wedding to the Sea - An Eco-sexual Performance Art Wedding, 2009)*

## SENTIMENTAL EXCHANGE

*Chicks On Speed*, a feminist art collective, invited audiences to exchange personal objects with sentimental value. Referring to this project they recall that 'We traded our passports, earrings [sic] from a long lost boyfriend, books, polaroid camera, a sealed letter to a friend. Again we found ourselves as social workers, having long conversations about the worth of 'material passions' (*Chicks On Speed*, 2004).



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## ACTIVITIES

- What do you understand by this artwork? Talk to the lines written on they might refer to, and how, in:
  - a) the contemporary world
  - b) history.
- In what ways does this artwork tackle racism? Write a paragraph about how effective it is.
- Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. What can you do to be an active anti-racist? Discuss in groups and come up with a list of actions.
- How does the artwork speak of discipline, power and labour in educational and institutional contexts?
- What does it demonstrate about the labour of writing?

I'll festival out on the backs of my back.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my nose.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my mouth.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my hand.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my arm.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my leg.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my foot.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my head.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my neck.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my chest.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my stomach.  
 I'll festival out on the backs of my butt.

ion inspired by Larry Achiampong – *Defending "Y"ALL*.  
**AL OUT ON THE BACKS OF OUR PAIN**, Tallbot Rice  
 Edinburgh, 2021.

## ACTIVITIES

- Pick a topic related to your practice that you wish to explore further.
- Write what you know already about the topic under the headings 'who', 'what', 'when', 'where', 'how' and 'why.'
- Become a relentless interrogator. Make a list of things you need to find out more about and why.
- Turn this list into questions and note how and where you might begin to find answers to these questions.
- Did any new questions emerge from this exercise?



## ACTIVITIES

- Find 'Who said it was Simple' online and read it slowly. Make a note of the phrases that stand out for you.
- Can you pinpoint examples in the poem of oppression?
- What are the multiple expressions that Lorde's poem describes?
- Spend some time researching Intersectionality online. Can you think of any other examples of intersectionality?
- Share your findings in groups.



## ACTIVITIES

**Discuss the following questions in pairs:**

- What did you have for breakfast?
- Where was the contents of your breakfast grown, produced, made and processed and by whom?
- How was it presented and packaged? Who packed it?
- Where did you purchase it and how did it get there? Chart its journey to you.
- Estimate how many people touched your food before you ate it.



## ACTIVITIES

- Spend some time researching. Try to find a definition of colonisation and consider what the effects of colonisation are?
- Next carry out some research into theories of decolonisation.
- Write a paragraph about how this performance is relevant to understanding the effects of colonisation and relates to theories of decolonisation.

Illustration inspired by: *The Year of the White Bear and Two Unfettered Americans visit the West Coast Forest Gallery*  
 Kramer-Polke | 1992 - 1994

**MILLE BOURGEOIS  
OES TO THE**

**THE LOVE ART LABORATORY**

ne O'Grady undertook action to challenge inequalities in the art world. Lorraine O'Grady, in her 1981 "chanted poems of protest," "Now is the time for action of the art scene in the face of racism and sexism" performance, O'Grady wore a sash, reminiscent of the *Jeune Garde*.

er, B. R. (eds) (2014) *...*  
of the Live Art Develop...

In 2015, artist couple Annie M. Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens began a project called *The Love & Labor Laboratory*. The project responded to the start of the war in Iraq and also the prohibition of gay marriage by the California Supreme Court. The couple decided to stage "an annual marriage ceremony" for at least 7 years to renew their commitment to each other. The Supreme Court, the couple declared, "performs a marriage ceremony for all of us." The couple decided to continue, in doing so, they challenge the violence of war and the queer invisibility movement. Queer artists and sex activists are invited to officiate at each ceremony.

Land, M. and Meyer, R. (2013) *Art and Queer Culture*. London: Pluto.



## ACTIVITIES

- What inequalities do you see in the contemporary art world or creative industries?
- Create a poem or statement that highlights these.
- If you had a performance persona, what would you be called?
- What costume would you wear for the performance? Design a costume.
- Who would be the ideal audience for your performance? Where would you perform it?

Illustration inspired by Lorraine O'Grady, *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire Goes to the Museum* (1981).





## Use of the Cards in Learning Environments

The box set of cards is designed to be used flexibly.

For example, lecturers could:

- Build a class around all the categories in the box set.
- Use the five cards from one category as group exercises in a class. Eg. Critical Thinking
- Use a card from each category for group exercises.
- Use one card as a class exercise.

So far colleagues have used the cards in their Academic Support teaching for the following:

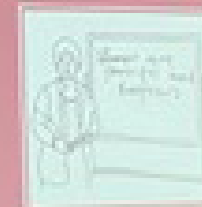
- Critical thinking sessions
- Time management workshops
- Object and artefact analysis
- Visual Analysis
- As warm up exercises
- As group discussion activities

## Critical Thinking

- Audre Lorde's poem "Who said it was simple?" was published in 1973
- It critiques those who call themselves feminists but continue to benefit from the oppression of other groups

### WHO SAID IT WAS SIMPLE?

Who said it was simple?  
The black woman? The woman of color?  
The woman who is poor?  
The woman who is old?  
The woman who is disabled?  
The woman who is lesbian, gay, or bisexual?  
The woman who is trans?  
The woman who is a mother?  
The woman who is a worker?  
The woman who is a citizen?  
The woman who is a human being?



## Thinking Time

- In post-revolutionary France, the French Republican Calendar was introduced
- Decimal time was used, with ten hours in a day, 100 minutes in an hour and a 100 seconds in a minute.
- Ruth Ewan's clock is a recreation of a decimal clock from this time.

### DECOLONISING THE CALENDAR

The French Republican Calendar was introduced in 1793, during the French Revolution. It was a decimal calendar, meaning that it used base 10 for its units of time. The calendar was designed to replace the Gregorian calendar, which was based on the Roman calendar and the Christian era.

Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/french-republican-calendar>

