

# DIGITAL AGNES

Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University  
agnes.queensu.ca

## De-Centering Europe in North American Institutions

*An Institute for Curatorial Inquiry*

17 August 2022

### SPEAKERS

Suzanne van de Meerendonk, Diva Zumaya, Adam Harris Levine, Qanita Lilla, Romuald Tchibozo, Julianna Ribeiro de Silva Bevilacqua, Nomusa Makhubu, Nasrin Himada, Pamila Mathrau, Maggie Whitmore, Audience Member

### KEYWORDS

European Art; Decolonization; Indigenization; Colonial Legacies

### TRANSCRIPT

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** So, very good afternoon and welcome back to the Institute for Curatorial Inquiry. And my name is Suzanne van de Meerendonk and I am the Bader Curator of European Art here at the Agnes Etherington Art Centre at Queen's University. Before we begin this conversation this afternoon, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that Queen's University is situated on unceded Anishinaabe, and Haudenosaunee territory. There's also a significant Metis community in Katarokwi and there are first peoples from other nations across Turtle Island present in this area today. I would like to express gratitude for their ongoing stewardship of the land which makes it possible for all of us to gather here today. And I would also like to reflect on the privilege I have to work and build a new life on these lands as an uninvited guest. I am myself a somewhat recent settler of Indonesian Dutch heritage coming here from the Netherlands by way of what is now the United States. This journey echoes the path of arrival of Dutch and other European settlers during the same periods we will turn much of our focus to today. In doing so, let us also recall the basic principles of equality and friendship that were agreed on in the Two Row Wampum, a treaty concluded also at that time, between the Dutch and Haudenosaunee peoples and pertaining to these lands. This is particularly important because much of our conversation today will revolve around the long-lasting repercussions of Europeans' failure to honour this treaty and instead violently impose worldviews and cultural practices on indigenous peoples here and elsewhere. The effects of this breach of trust are still felt, including in museums and other art institutions, where European categorizations and preferences became deeply entrenched. So, today's conversation brings together curators of European art who work on this continent, on Turtle Island, as those same institutions are now in the process of working towards decolonization and Indigenization. And to this ends, it is my great pleasure to introduce these wonderful colleagues. First, Adam Harris Levine is the Assistant Curator of European Art at the Art Gallery of Ontario and also a Ph.D. candidate at Columbia University in New York City. And Levine's area of specialty is Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture and Decorative Arts. He holds a BA in Art History and Spanish Literature from

McGill University in Montreal, Quebec, and an MA in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. Prior to becoming Assistant Curator of European Art in 2020, he held various curatorial roles at the AGO and conducted extensive work with a Thomson Collection of European Art. He has also recently curated the exhibition European Art on First Nations Land as well as the current exhibition Faith and Fortune Art Across the Global Spanish Empire which is still on view until October 10. Diva Zumaya is Assistant Curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in Los Angeles. She received her Ph.D. from the University of California Santa Barbara in 2018 as a specialist in 16th and 17th-century Dutch art, with a minor specialization in Spanish colonial art. Prior to assuming her current role in 2020, Zumaya the Wallis Annenberg Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Old Master Painting and Sculpture at LACMA, and she worked in the curatorial department of the Santa Barbara Museum of Art before that. As an independent curator, Diva also co-curated the Getty Pacific Standard Time LA/LA Affiliated Exhibition, Sacred Art in the Age of Contact: Chumash and Latin American Traditions in Santa Barbara for the Art Design and Architecture Museum at UC Santa Barbara and also at the Santa Barbara Historical Museum in 2017. She's currently preparing an exhibition on Northern European Wunderkammern or Cabinets of Curiosity that is scheduled to open in June of next year. Is that still correct? September of next year. So, thank you both so much for being here today and spending time with us at this Institute and I must say I'm particularly grateful to have this conversation with the two of you, and not only because I have such admiration and respect for the work that you do. But I also think it's significant that you both -- or even the three have us all have family histories and backgrounds that are very much enmeshed in colonial histories, which I think informs our perspective on and also commitment to the importance of decolonial museum work. So, I look forward to what I hope will be a very frank conversations about the possibilities, but also the challenges and the limitations of the work that we do. So, I thought to kick us off, I might ask you both to really briefly situate a bit the European art collections that you both work with and how those relate to, you know, the rest of the scope of the collections in your institutions. Do you want to go first, Diva?

**Diva Zumaya:** Okay. Sure. Is this on? Yes. Hi. Thank you for Suzanne and Agnes for having me. Yeah, just to kick off. LACMA is a purportedly encyclopedic museum. I always put that in quotes, because it's kind of a fake thing and we're not really encyclopedic. But that's what we call ourselves. And we do have a wide range of cultures represented from across the globe. We have I believe, 15 curatorial departments. And we have about 40 or so curators, just to give you a sense of the scale. I, myself and my colleague, Dr. Leah Lembeck are the Department of European Painting and Sculpture. And we -- our material runs from antiquity through 1900, at which point, the Department of Modern Art takes over the rest of Europe for the 20th century.

**Adam Harris Levine:** Thank you so much, Suzanne, for the introduction for bringing us together. I'm really happy to be here. The Art Gallery of Ontario doesn't make the same claim as LACMA towards encyclopedic status. But we were founded in 1900, out of a historic home much like Agnes, and some of the first objects to enter the collection were European paintings. And it was really only in

the 1960s, with the arrival of some Inuit sculptures that the collection really started to broaden beyond the context of European and Settler Canadian Art, especially painting and sculpture. And one thing that I think about a lot is that when you enter the Art Gallery of Ontario today, the ground floor around the kind of main space, Walker Court, is the European galleries. And so, they're European artists sort of inevitable and central to the layout and the experience of the AGO, which is something that I've thought a lot about and would love to see change in the future. You know, this panel is called Decentering. European Art. I would love also to think about it as marginalizing European art in North American museums. Because I don't think that it should be taken for granted or naturalized that a visit to an art museum on Turtle Island, inevitably features looking at art from Europe. Or that it should be the entry point for a visit to an art museum on Turtle Island. I think that European art is important to thinking about, you know, global histories and to contextualizing lots of ways that we relate to the land that we live on. But I don't think it should be essential or primary. And so, that is something that I think about a lot and would love to see change.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** Yeah, thank you. And yeah, this morning, we talked about, you know, the politics of space also in the museums, that it's good to keep in mind. So, in regards to these processes of decolonization and Indigenization that are ongoing in many institutions, I imagine in yours as well. Can you talk a bit about how these processes are taking place and maybe talk a bit about the projects that you've been involved in? That -- yeah, take up this question. You can start.

**Adam Harris Levine:** Sure. I'd love to. You know, my work is -- obviously exists in a much broader institutional context, where I'm really lucky to work with colleagues like Wanda Nanibush, who's, you know, an important leader in the field. I do think that it's important for curators in every single department to play a really active role in this work and to not put the onus, or the -- you know, the -- all of the load on our Indigenous colleagues. So, I have images up on the screen from an exhibition that I had up a few years ago that I think about a lot, and for me, was really foundational work called European Art on First Nations Land. It's in a gallery called Leonard Rotunda, which is kind of like the first -- it's the entry gallery to the European Art Galleries at the Art Gallery of Ontario. And this is sort of an inaugural exhibition, a series of collection-based exhibitions that myself and my boss, Dr. Caroline Shields, have done that kind of greet our visitors and welcome them to the European Galleries with a series of questions that really seek to kind of call into question the very existence of European collections on Turtle Island and to think about what they do or what they can do. A question that I have all the time is, is it possible? Is it even possible as a starting place to show European art in an art museum on Turtle Island without reifying or reasserting Eurocentrism and without continuing to perpetuate colonial harm as like just the starting place? And so, I brought together well, I'll just, this is -- the view that we have on the screen has, you know, three, like celebrated works from the Art Gallery of Ontario's collection. At the far left is a piece called "The Academy" painted by Kent Monkman, a Cree artist. Anishinaabe artist Norval Morrisseau, one of his most -- one of my favourite paintings that he ever made, is -- it's on craft paper with acrylic paint called "Man Surrounded by Serpents". And then John Lorenzo Bernini's "Crucified Jesus", from 1650

in Rome. And so, this is just one view of that. But I'll show you also the kind of -- so this is just the intro text from that exhibition that raises a series of questions that we hope that our visitors would carry with them as they move through the European galleries. At the very core of this, I think that we really want to call out is understanding that the economies and the global power structures of European colonialism funded and yeah, like literally funded the art making that then you go on to see in the galleries that follow, but also then brings the visitor into the present with questions like how can we admire objects of tremendous beauty and acknowledge at the same time, the ugly, violent systems that produce them? This is a question that I think about every day in my work. And also, I think, a question that I'm trying to evolve and advance because I think, one thing is about sitting with complexity and conflict and another is also just I've sort of, I mean, this was two years ago that I put up the show and now I'm -- I've joked with you both the other night that this whole beauty thing is a really big problem for curating. Like, engaging, right, with beauty and thinking about what is and isn't beautiful, or ugly. I mean, these are like really subjective value systems that I think get really, really messy and complicated. But that is -- I did want to kind of invite visitors to play with that duality and sit with this tension when they're looking at works of art in the collection. But also, to understand that we're not, you know, a big part of I think what museums are supposed to do is to put historical art in context and I'm less interested in putting in context, like brushstrokes and like, treatises on perspective, than I am about extractive economies and enslavement and an empire. And like, yeah, but I -- hopefully, that will get borne out in the next few slides. Sorry, just so you know, we rehearsed that we would -- I would talk for a bit. I don't want you to feel like -- I'm just rambling with -- for -- without interruption. I promise this was rehearsed, this rambling. I mean, the Monkman is a really like -- that's a piece that was commissioned by Gerald McMaster in I think 2007 and invited Monkman to look at works of art from the AGO's collection by Indigenous and settler and European artists. And really kind of take this very question into account. Sort of like, what is the kind of power that Eurocentrism continues to hold on the visual culture of this place? And so, I felt very lucky that this piece already existed in the collection, that I could lean on it. But it was really nice to kind of bring together some of the references that Monkman was making for the first time in the galleries. He told me that he had never actually seen some of the works that he brought together in this kind of imaginary painting into one gallery space. And I was really excited for that. Yeah, I think these are just -- on the side, these are some of the European paintings that we included that I thought were really important because they can be really -- they can function as really important bodies of evidence for understanding the history of white supremacy in European art. And the -- you know, painting on the left is a 16th-century painting by Luca Giordano. Sorry, 17th century. And then on the right, Nicolas Monsiaux, a late 19th-century painting. And both of them like, really, really, I wanted to treat them as like bodies of evidence for understanding the kind of like long histories of white supremacy that are embedded in European art that we display, kind of often with our -- or that museums can sometimes display without comment. And that, you know, that one of the risks I worry about when we show this art without comment or without intervention is that people can continue to kind of -- that, yeah, that these paintings, like re-inscribe these systems. And that museums can perpetuate these systems just simply by showing this art within -- without intervention. Recently, we reinstalled the European Permanent Galleries. And I'll just say this is a small thing. Well, maybe it's -- we talked about it. It's not a small thing for within our field,

that, you know, European art curators are often really beholden to academia and to, I feel like sometimes curate for their peers rather than for museum audiences. And that's a big problem. And so, these are two galleries. One on the left is a gallery dedicated to art that's domestic and civic art, life in Europe, in the 1600s. And the one on the right is religious life. Those galleries used to be Northern European art and Southern European art, which I thought were divisions that I didn't really expect anyone except for like someone super embedded in art history, European nerdery, to appreciate or to care about. But that like it -- I really wanted to throw out this kind of commitment to academia, and instead to be more accessible, and to put people in a position where they didn't have to read the labels necessarily, to make their own connections and to feel confident and to feel like they knew what was going on. I wanted to free our visitors from like a reliance on the museum's voice as a way for them to make their own knowledge or to make their own connections. So -- and I'm happy with how that turned out. And the other thing that I'm really excited about in the permanent collection galleries is that we've started to really kind of think in the language of empire as a way of talking about colonial history. So, for instance, the painting on the right is a work that I acquired for the museum, probably two years ago by José Campeche, who was a Puerto Rican painter, who lived from 1751 to 1809. This was a really important acquisition for me. I'm Puerto Rican, my mother was from Puerto Rico. My father is Jewish. They met in Lenapehoking, in New York, and I was raised there. And I -- my -- and I ended up sort of studying Spain for many years. And my relationship to Spain, I think, is informed by being Puerto Rican. And my interest in Spain is a morbid one, right? I often wonder, like, is it possible for me to sit with the fact that I probably wouldn't exist and that my family wouldn't exist, if not for Spanish colonization, but to do that, without any gratitude towards Spain? Like is it possible to kind of sit with those histories of empire and understand the ways that they have constructed mine and my family's lives and lots of people's lives like mine, without celebrating Spain? So, anyway, I really -- what I was -- and that made me think in the permanent collection galleries of many museums that when you go into these galleries of Spanish art, for instance, and you never have to look at the art of the lands that Spain is, you know, extracting and profiting off of to fund artmaking of say, Velázquez that visitors are kind of allowed -- yeah, they're only given a tiny fraction of the real picture. And so, it was very important for me to bring art from the Hispanophone, Caribbean. And actually, there's a work from Quebec. A 17th-century Virgin from a Quebec church in this gallery that's supposed to be about European art of the 1700s. And it's just to me quite exciting because you -- visitors have to think about the sort of colonial sphere when they're in a space that's supposed to be about Europe. They're no longer kind of able to just think about Europe as if it exists in a vacuum that is, you know, pure of violence and extraction. And I'm sorry, I'm aware I'm talking slow. So, I'll go fast now. But I currently have this exhibition up at the AGO, that kind of really looks to expand -- and on this idea of very, very explicitly. It's called Faith and Fortune Art Across the Global Spanish Empire. And it looks at art from Latin America and the Philippines and Spain from the years 1492 to 1898. So, basically starting with Columbus's arrival in the Bahamas, when he thinks he's in the Moluccas. And then ending with Spain losing the Spanish American War, and no longer really being an empire except for its colonial territory in Western Sahara. And yeah, I'll just -- I have a couple of -- I just always, whenever I talk about an exhibition that I've done, I always want to, at least briefly show the names of everyone that worked on it. And I'll talk a bit later, hopefully, about the community advisory process and the

audio guide in the exhibition, which I think is really important. But yeah, I really -- this exhibition looks at the visual culture of an empire. It takes a kind of forensic perspective. I say that because I really want to under, you know, underscore the extent to which crimes took place. And looks at basically this broader colonial economy of art making. And so, for instance, the object on the left is a piece of gold bullion from a shipwreck off of Cuba in 1622 that's in the AGO's Thomson Collection. I often make the point that if the ship had arrived in Madrid, that gold might very easily have been turned into coinage that would have been paid Velázquez for some of his earliest commissions at court. When he arrives at court and 1623, that painting is from 1623. So, when we talk about the so-called Golden Age of Spanish art, rather than losing that term, which some of my colleagues have proposed, we don't use that term anymore. I'm more interested in people thinking about this gold. Right? Gold that is stolen from stolen land, mined by stolen people, and brought to Spain to support this art economy. You know, sometimes people say like, why can't we just talk about brushstrokes? And why does every conversation about Velázquez have to be about colonization? First of all, almost no conversations about Velázquez are about enslavement and colonization, despite the fact that Velázquez enslaved a man named Juan de Pareja, who might very well have actually produced some of the brushstrokes on this painting. So, when we talk about brushstrokes, and you know, I'm happy to have that conversation, but so long as we're talking about the fact that Juan de Pareja is one of the people -- one of the practitioners there. And that we can -- I really wanted our visitors to be able to draw a direct connection between this painting and this piece of gold. And then this sort of incredible map of Potosí, which is a mine in Bolivia, which produced most of the world's silver for centuries. And so, to kind of bring these together in a constellation. And then the other thing that I think is really important that the show does that really hasn't been widely practised in the way that we talked about these histories is that -- is really talked about the role of the Philippines, which was colonized by Spain for over 350 years. This was important because it's historically important and accurate, but also because Toronto is home to an enormous and thriving Filipinx population, who haven't really been welcomed to the museum before. And I wasn't really at all -- you know, I really wanted to intervene in this history in this way. And so, you know, just, for instance, you have these textiles, one from Mexico and one from the Philippines on the left. And then all of these are works of art that are kind of born out of artistic exchange between artists in Latin America and artists in Southeast and East Asia via trade across the Pacific Ocean. So, I think that's something I'm just really excited about and very proud of that came out of this exhibition.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** Thank you. There's a lot there that we can talk about. And I know Diva, you're also both working on exhibitions, temporary exhibitions that kind of draw a broader picture of European art as well as also working on permanent displays that eventually will be seen in the new LACMA building. So, I'll just turn over to you to answer the same question and talk a bit about work you've done in the past and also work you're currently working on.

**Diva Zumaya:** Now a lot of my stuff is future tense, but this is -- thankfully already happened. This is, as Suzanne so graciously mentioned in my introduction, an exhibition I curated with my brilliant

friend and colleague, Maggie Bell, who's now at the Norton Simon Museum when we were both struggling grad students. And it's called Sacred Art in the Age of Contact, Chumash, and Latin American Traditions in Santa Barbara. And basically, we had just studied for our minor field exams, the period of contact of Cortés arriving in Mexico, and Book 12 of the Florentine Codex. And so, our idea was to look at the moment of contact in Santa Barbara, which is a city, if you don't know, about an hour and a half north of Los Angeles up the coast of California. And we pretty much immediately realized that that show was not possible without working with a wide group of Chumash people from all kinds of different groups. And Suzanne was actually involved in this process in our program and a couple of other colleagues of ours. And we got kind of a working monthly seminar group together with about 10 or 12 rotating different Chumash people, including Jonathan Cordero, who was one of our key collaborators. He's a professor in sociology at Cal Lutheran in Thousand Oaks, California, and he's Chumash, as well. And we basically worked through the exhibition with them. It was kind of a group curatorial project. And we pretty much learnt everything about these objects, historical objects, through them, and kind of it shed so much light on things that we could never have ever known. You know, their oral knowledge and their shared knowledge as Indigenous people was kind of the primary source and how -- that's how we worked. Yeah, thank you. Just two examples of things I was especially proud of from the show. On the right, that's a little iPad that was installed in the Santa Barbara Historical Museum iteration of the show. And you'll see little kind of circles there. It's hard to make out. But essentially, we produced -- we got a grant from Cal Humanities to produce oral histories with a whole group of Chumash elders. And these are still online on their YouTube channel. So, they're kind of in their full uncut forms. So, they exist as kind of a learning resource. But we had kind of clips centred around different topics available in this space. So, you could hear the voices of Chumash people in this space, and you could learn and see their faces and hear them talk about their traditions in their culture. And then on the left, this is a Chumash regalia. And this is just an example of one learning experience we have. Because as curators ignorantly going into this process, my colleague, Maggie and I were like, of course, we want regalia. It's beautiful. You know, we're thinking about the exhibition. We quickly learnt that's not something that would be appropriate. Because their regalia is loaded with all kinds of medicine, and it just would not be something they would be comfortable with us displaying. And so, through those conversations, we learnt that we could display this -- these pieces of regalia because they were made for didactic purposes for the Natural History Museum of Santa Barbara. So, these were appropriate because they were made not for use in ceremony. Oh, yeah. Keeps going. And then just -- I'll talk about these projections and the back wall here. We had the idea to put up basically photos from our community collaborators in the back. And the idea was to kind of signal in this big visible way throughout the whole show -- so, you're seeing Catholic Spanish colonial objects, you're seeing Chumash objects all from like, the mission period. Right? That's what the exhibition comprised, which is like 1769 to the 1820s in Santa Barbara. And the idea was that the whole time you can see, you know, a big visible format. The living, thriving, present-day Chumash community. So, the idea is that they did not succeed, the missions, in their quest to eradicate and suppress Chumash traditional culture. Yeah. So, this is the building that does not exist yet. The -- some parts of the -- it exists. I can see it from my office. But this is the new LACMA that will be built in 2024. We are not closed, I must say. Everyone always asks that. We have two very large buildings open. One for

exhibitions. One for modern and contemporary art. But this is where our permanent collection buildings have been bulldozed. This is what will take their place. And as I mentioned, LACMA has 15 curatorial departments. And the idea that our director Michael Govan had, which I think is really visionary for this building, is that all collections will be displayed on one level. There's no hierarchy. There's no clear entrance or exit. No one is given priority over another department. And in previous permanent collection installations, you really were shortchanged, I feel. A lot of material from especially non-western departments and different materials. So, you were not seeing a designated costume and textiles space. You were not seeing a designated prints and drawing space. Dec[orative] Arts was just scattered throughout. And now you're going to see more of the collection. And we will also rotate it with greater frequency. So, we have this fluidity to play around with the kind of installations we want to do. And a lot of people have pointed out that it's not an expansion in terms of size. But that is not the point. The point is -- and we certainly in terms of labour, curatorial work, do not need more gallery space. The point is to kind of re-envision what a permanent collection can do, and how it can be more flexible to the needs of our broad scope of our collection. And yeah, so this is all hypothetical. I've again, I can't promise -- I can't give away too much about the new building. But I wanted to talk about a little bit about the process of working on it because it's extremely collaborative. And basically, Europe -- I'll address this oil lamp in one second. But basically, Europe went about it -- I say Europe -- my colleague and I -- Leah and I wanted to go about it by kind of approaching other departments and saying, how can we benefit your projects and your installations? How can Europe you know, be an accent to the things you have going on? Because too often, European art curators just like, you know, here, let me grab one Asian thing and plop it in the gallery. And so, I can check some box right and kind of tokenize it. This feels like they've diversified their holdings. But what we wanted to do is really kind of reverse that dynamic and say, like, hi, you know, Chinese art, like how can Europe help you or you do you want any of our paintings, essentially? And kind of trying to be -- have a spirit of generosity and openness to collaboration, where it wasn't about us. It wasn't Europe-centred. And we've really tried to marginalize Europe. There's still, of course, European galleries. There's of course, European art. It's not going in the garbage; I think like some people like to tell me. I'm working on it for many years. But anyway, this -- I wanted to bring this in because it's not really a Europe-centred installation. It's not my installation, either. I have to give all the credit to my brilliant colleague, Rosie Mills, who's the curator in Decorative Arts. I can't talk about the installation in great depth. But this is just an example of a type of the pairing that we'll be looking at. And this is an oil lamp from the American Art Collection. This is just an example of the type of pairing and of course, I wanted to bring it in, because it's an example of something that involves an Indigenous artist. And again, it's not -- I defer the credit to someone else. But I wanted to show also how great it's been to be a collaborator. This is Courtney Leonard, a Shinnecock artist from Long Island, New York. And this is a ceramic representation of whale teeth. And her work is part of a larger installation, I believe that's getting at, you know, the whale -- harmful whale industry and whale oil, which of course would have been burned in the type of lamp that we just saw. So, this is just a very loose example of a pairing, and how we're thinking about showing early American art. And this is something that could easily be paired with 17th-century European art that shows the Atlantic world, for example. And so, we're trying to think about the European collection holistically, in terms of this Atlantic colonial context,



and I'm really interested of -- in exploring Indigenous contemporary art, and how it can relate to the European collection in the coming years. Okay. Oh my gosh. All right. I don't want to talk for 1,000 years, but this is my show. It's coming out in September 2023. The World Made Wondrous: The Dutch Collector's Cabinet and the Politics of Possession. There's a big kind of component to it. I'll go into more later. But for now, I'll just basically introduce the idea. It's a 17th-century Dutch Cabinet of Curiosities. I hate the quotes -- big quotes there, or Collector's Cabinet, Wunderkammer, however you want to call it, that belongs to a 17th-century Dutch merchant. So, think of like, if you know Nicholas Witsen, Johan Maurits, kind of you know, the most elite, terrible merchant, Dutch merchant from that time. You're going to go next. Oh, yeah. So, here's a picture of a collector's cabinet. Since they are kind of obscure, maybe, you know, things that people aren't familiar with. So, I wanted to bring this illustration in Paladanus's collector's cabinet so you can see the kind of thing I'm talking about. Next. And this is a slide just to show you types of objects that will be in the exhibition. The -- it includes objects, thank you, from almost every curatorial department at LACMA, as well as a huge group of objects from the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles. So, collector's cabinets included things from both art, quote-unquote, and science. They're kind of seen as the first museums. And they included lots of things brought back through, overt colonial means, and also through global trade. There's just a smattering of things and Ottoman textiles. I'm also getting rare books and maps and scientific instruments from some different lenders. And there's about 300 objects in the exhibition total. So, it's very dense. But yeah, I'll hold off. But just suffice to say, it began as me trying to find a way to treat this subject in a way that was overtly anti-capitalist and anti-colonial because very, very often in our field, collecting in the early modern period has been treated as something very virtuous and noble and kind of motivated by curiosity and wonder, and you know, the pursuit of knowledge and science and all these things that sound very good. And to some extent, those things are present, but they're missing a huge part of the picture, which is the commercial interests of colonialism and mercantile capitalism. And they're missing the kind of political symbolism of owning something you purport to be a microcosm of the world. Which sounds pretty colonial to me.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** Thank you. Yeah. And what I find interesting in both of your projects is that you seem to challenge a bit this notion, which is often discussed in regards to European art, that there are limitations posed by the works themselves to hold space or give context to these important topics. First of all, I guess I would say do -- yeah, do you think that is in some way valid? You often hear people say, oh, I would love to do a show about X,Y,Z, but we don't have the objects or we -- our collection doesn't lend itself to this narrative? So, I suppose, you know, will say no, I don't think that's true. But how have you developed strategies to create more space for these kinds of conversations beyond the objects as well? So, both working with objects and beyond the objects to yeah, broaden the narrative? And I'll let you continue also, Diva.

**Diva Zumaya:** Yeah. That's a great question. And I would obviously say, no. I don't necessarily think that's valid, although I do understand where it's coming from. I think if enslavement or colonialism

isn't like overtly, quote-unquote, represented in a picture, people don't always think that they can talk about it, or people think you have to talk about what's in the painting. But I think there's a lot of other strategies besides addressing what's in a painting for bringing in different narratives. So, we can bring in my other slide here. Yeah. Okay. So, I'm going to talk about my digital guide project, and then eventually these -- what these images are will become clear to you. But basically, in doing my show, I realized that my big stress factor was that I didn't want to just re-perform colonialism, because essentially, bringing that collection together is a very colonial thing to do. I'm being a colonial mercantile guy, right, in doing that. So, I really wanted to find a way to undermine that and to find a way to essentially bring this phenomenon together, this collector's cabinet. But once you entered the space, just like, delete that collector and we don't have to hear about him anymore. And we would hear about -- from different voices from different kinds of experts and speakers who have different things to say about the objects in the exhibition. And this will take the format of an audio guide and written texts, and the exact technological delivery system of this is still being worked out. So, I can't, as we speak -- I've got a meeting later today. So, on the left, this is one example of something that was kind of inspiring to me in thinking about this audio guide. This is in the shifting image "In Search of Johan Maurits". It's at the Mauritshuis in The Hague in 2019, where they had multivocal -- meaning kind of perspectives and kind of texts written by different speakers, and they had them on a tablet and you could swipe right to read different texts. And then on the right, this is an example of the lens at the Australian Museum of the Moving Image, or Centre for the Moving Image. Sorry. And that was an inspiration I know for our technical team and initially starting up the project because this is an example of near-field technology. I do not understand the technical side of it, but I know that there's a card that you swipe against, a kind of a sensor and it sends something to your phone. So, it's kind of an alternate way, other than a QR code, which we're -- we might experiment with. But anyway, the kind of curatorial point, the decolonial point, I guess, of the project for me was that a huge section of the speakers will be Indigenous contemporary Brazilian artists. Because there's a huge part of the show that focuses on the Dutch colony in Brazil, which lasted from 1630 to 1654. And this is a much more significant colonial endeavour than it has been portrayed in the past. Although, it's starting to get more scholarly attention. And basically, my idea was to -- but not only include Indigenous voices in this space, in this way, but also Indigenous contemporary art. And again, I can't make any promises. This is all very much in process right now. But I'm hoping to also have this -- their work very visibly present in the space in some capacity. So that, this is not just living in the interpretation and this sort of interruption to the notion of a European collection can be very visceral. And I should mention, I'm also going to invite contemporary artists from the Netherlands, kind of Dutch colonial historians, I'm also going to invite, in the process of inviting, I should say, ecological historians and Marxist ecologists, as well as experts on resource extraction. So, I'm hoping to kind of run the gamut of different perspectives other than the curatorial and institutional.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** Yeah, and I think in your current exhibition, Adam, also you have been thinking about these questions, in addition to of course, what the objects themselves hold in terms of stories. and I—

**Adam Harris Levine:** So, yeah, just while this -- while Suzanne -- until the slide comes up, I'll also just give you a short answer of no. About this insistent, you know, and this -- and just for -- not everyone here is a curator of European art. So, the thing that we're responding to, is this kind of like, this thing that comes up a lot in our sort of subfield that, you know, that European art, I don't know, if somehow, like the subjects depicted, especially, you know, for instance, in the, you know, scenes of like, daily life in Amsterdam, for instance. Like that -- it's hard. It's not actually, you know, the -- if you want to talk about colonization, it's a big stretch, because the depiction -- what you're seeing in the painting is really focussed on life in the Netherlands. And, you know, you're trying to kind of like -- folks like us have been accused of trying to shoehorn in conversations that people don't want to have. And then so you know, you're really trying, you're kind of mistreating the work because you should be really talking about what the painting depicts. And you shouldn't be talking about what you want to talk about right now, what the, you know, this current social agenda of decolonization? I hope I kind of summarized that in a way that you both agree with. But like, I think, what I would say is that, like, even when the object does have direct ties, I still get pushback. So, like, for instance, we have a Bernini in the European collection at the Art Gallery of Ontario that is directly related to a commission that he made for Philip the Fourth of Spain, who was to my mind, like my sort of like primary colonizer in Faith and Fortune. And I talked about this in the label, and I have received, you know, the most angry letters I've received about anything I've ever done is this tiny label about the Bernini and saying, you know, this is -- you should be talking about art you shouldn't be talking about the social context of art making. And I'm just like, I really don't know what art is, to be perfectly honest, if not, like, also the worlds that created these things. So, I guess what I would say is that, like, I find that even when there is like an explicit connection, people still resent this shift in conversation. What I guess what I would call a sort of call to accountability for Europe around colonization. So, I don't take it very seriously because it just seems that like, it's kind of a way of trying to distract from the agenda. I am very lucky, I'll admit, to have this piece of gold bullion in the collection because it is, for me, the key to having like -- it's a really important object for kind of going from A to Z. You have to have this kind of middle thing that really makes it super tangible when I want to talk about extractive economies, you know, environmental destruction, and enslavement, and capitalism.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** Okay. And it kind of shows that even the material itself that our artworks are made of often are tied into these histories already, right?

**Adam Harris Levine:** I mean, what's not pictured on this slide is that that gold bullion in the exhibition is in a room that's about research extraction and looks at, you know, gold and silver work in the 16th and 17th century in Spain and in colonial centres in Latin America. And so, it's even interesting to see, you know, to kind of not only imagine it as a sort of hypothetical coin that pays Velázquez, but even like this, you know, elaborate chalice for, you know, mass to see it kind of

transformed in that way. But yeah, I don't I don't feel beholden to that argument that, you know, it has to be a painting of something really vile for us to be able to have a conversation about, you know, difficult social history.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** And then, there's didactics?

**Adam Harris Levine:** Yeah, I mean, I think, so these are just two didactics that we have in Faith and Fortune. You know, you wanted us to when we were talking about planning this talk, we were talking about sort of different strategies that we have available to us and ways to kind of be in conversation with artworks. And, you know, I think there were two really important issues that, to me, felt like they needed to have like large panels of their own and one was really thinking about the Doctrine of Discovery. And so, that's an subject that we talk about, in this panel called "Columbus Didn't Discover Anything." And, of course, it feels particularly meaningful and I'm glad that we have it up in the exhibition right now. Because after the Pope's recent apology to the Indigenous people of Turtle Island -- you may have heard a number of calls by Indigenous leaders in response to say, you know, "What you could really do that would be meaningful, would be to revoke the Doctrine of Discovery or the Papal Bull Inter Caetera." And then also, really to think about sort of the fact that contemporary white supremacy really has its origins or its blueprints in a pseudoscience of racial logic that was established by early colonizers. I really wanted people to understand and feel -- to draw sort of a very direct line from history of 500 years ago to contemporary social issues. I think that's something that, you know, the three of us have talked about before about really trying to not really serve history, but instead, to get history to serve the present and to serve our contemporary audiences. So that, to me, feels really important. And, you know, these were subjects on which we really didn't want to be cagey or mince words and I'm glad that we, you know, really just put exactly what we meant on the walls in a way that left very little room, I hope, for misunderstanding.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** And then, you also have an audio guide that people can access through a QR code in the space, but it's also available online if people are interested.

**Adam Harris Levine:** Yeah. So, we developed that exhibition, working with a community advisory groups of Latinx and Filipinx, GTA-based art workers, art workers, sort of writ large curators, art makers, a tattoo artist, and that was a really productive and wonderful process for which I'm really grateful. But we also then invited a number of people who had, you know, sometimes there were moments in that process where I said, "Gosh, I wish, you know, someone could, you know, I wish the audience could just hear you saying exactly this when they're standing in front of the work." And so then, we realized that we could ask them to like do that and replicate that so that you can, instead of just hearing it from like the "museum voice", hear it directly from community members

about how they sort of, how the works in the show or the histories in the exhibition, you know, how they connect to them in a contemporary, in their contemporary lives. And I'm really very grateful for that because I think that that is also a really important strategy for intervening in the sort of capital M, Museum; capital A, Authority.

**Qanita Lilla:** And I thought that it would be a good idea to just start off this discussion, by thinking about the ways in each one of our practices. We are changing the traditional roles of the collections in our care. So, the new kinds of ways that we are changing our practices, but also the kind of challenges that we are encountering, because I think in everybody's practice, there's like a radical shift towards rethinking old practices. So, you could start.

**Diva Zumaya:** I'm on the stand. Yeah. I mean, I think that's the whole purpose of, I mean, both my exhibition but also the LACMA permanent collection reinstall, and I think one really key thing that comes to mind is just the process by which we're doing it is entirely generous and collaborative and people have really let go of sort of this territorial, you know, attitude about my collection or, you know, you can't have this or that. And my colleagues are extremely generous with their knowledge, with their research, with their collections. And we, you know, we kind of just share endlessly with each other. The other thing that comes to mind is, specifically for the European collection, I think there's a different expectation placed on it. A different kind of pressure placed on being the curator of like "masterpieces of European art," right, where people expect certain things to be up. People expect it to be up in a certain way, you know, the press, and people are much more demanding about how they're displayed in ways that are, of course, very unbalanced compared to the rest of our really rich collections from around the world. So, I think it's been difficult to sort of -- that will be a challenge sort of balancing that and public perceptions and expectations with the kind of directions that we want to go and the kind of ways we want to push it in the future. But, like I said, in my kind of spiel earlier, I think what's really exciting is going without the reinstallation with, you know, de-centering, literally de-centering Europe and not acting like we're the end all be all. We don't have to be the centre of the gallery, we don't have to be, you know, the highlight of a certain area. We want to be the accent or, you know, the periphery.

**Adam Harris Levine:** I, you know, I really relate to that, I think, similarly, like a significant shift that I hope -- it sounds absurd enough to say it -- but like not taking for granted the role of the place of European art in a museum that isn't in Europe, is actually really important. And also, for me, I think displaying, placing European art in an imperial context has really significant potential for opening up broad conversations about the history of colonization and the history of empire that, you know, really will politicize and activate the collections in ways that help us to learn about, you know, broader social history.

**Romuald Tchibozo:** So, I thought that our discussion will be around the question of where to live here. In my presentation, that left one slide, I think I didn't present that. And this slide is the Bucha [phonetic] in the Berlin Ethnographic Museum. The one we have in this museum that there is a problem. The problem is the confusion the European Museum has around African pieces in a museum, the provenance. For example, in the museum, this piece is the catalogue said these piece is from Togo. This, we don't have that in Togo. That is a special piece in -- that means Without studies, without research, the pieces in the museum in reality disappear, do not exist, because they are not in exhibitions, and they is not research about them. And that is a great problem now, and I think more and more now in Europe, there are the students of provenance. And we also we have the history I tell in my presentation. We have this project with a colleague from Berlin, the results is that we have the exhibition called Object Geography. You can read that on today on our website.

**Julianna Ribeiro de Silva Bevilacqua:** So, I have been working to rethink labels in museums. And I have been exploring this issue with my students here at Queen's and mailing about authorship, because it's so common for us to read "unknown author" regarding African art collections, of course, or the same information and the same text is usually used to address works made during completely different times. And people usually see all these issues that are natural and common and that it's impossible to solve them. And I'm really eager to change the way museums write labels and approach works. All masks were made by an artist. If you don't know the name, we need to bring it - this is our, this issue is ours we need to address. It's an institution problem. And this problem is probably related to the way the work was collected with violence in a violent context, for example. So, I think its urgent to rethink the way we address African art collections through the labels, because sometimes it's the only information that the audience accesses, right? And that's it.

**Nomusa Makhubu:** Does, what does it feel like? It's not working? Is it working? Here we go. So, okay. So I, yeah. I work in a city that's jokingly referred to as the European boil on the bottom of Africa, you know? So, the challenges are many. And what we found is that, over the years, of course, the main priority was to bring in African scholars into the institutions. So, we found, of course, that we mainly working as a minoritized majority. Within the institution, we are minority, but generally in the country we are a majority. So, of course, working with those politics is something that is particularly different. And, of course, that impacts on the practice itself. Curatorial practice, but I mean, even teaching, we often have to begin from scratch, teaching ourselves things we were never taught. You know, we kind of have to fashion ourselves as pathfinders. But I think it's quite hopeful. It's an exciting time. Because, you know, I think there are many more of us who are really, you know, experimenting with collaborative ways of working, engaging with the, the possibilities for care, but even the shortcomings in terms of, how it's possible to care. But yeah. So, I think it's an interesting time. It's an in between time, but it's, in many ways, a very hopeful time where we feel that we have something new to build, especially in rethinking how we reformulate what institutional building should mean from the African perspective.

**Qanita Lilla:** And then, I think also, you know, I think there's like deep discrepancy between so much institutional resources, That have a focus on European collections versus African collections, and the fact that there's so much catch up like very, very, very basic kind of groundwork that, you know, African scholars, and scholarship has to do before we even start thinking about display, and labels, and all those kinds of things. But that's, your right. I think it is a wonderful time to start like building new ways.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** And I don't know if maybe it's best to open it up for questions from the audience because we also have time for that today. So, I don't know if anyone already has any questions for the panellists that they would like to pose. Feel free to walk up. We have a microphone here at the front.

**Nasrin Himada:** Sorry--Is it working? Yes, it is. Thank you so much, all of you. I am actually hung up on this term provenance. Feel like that actually comes up a lot in our acquisition meetings here. Thinking about like what you were just saying, Qanita, like they're not just like monetary resources that are given to certain collections, but also that there are no way to trace the line of resource when it comes to certain collections here in the museum, and just how -- I don't know if I have a question. But I feel like it also is kind of connected to what you were saying about the carcerality of institutions and like this, the carceral space of museums and how they also function in this way, where there's like a certain way of a certain condition that comes with how things are kept and then known. And that feels like there's a lot to do. And I just, it's hard to think of also what to do when it comes to thinking about forming a kind of knowledge around how to how to even talk to students or patrons who are visiting the museum. And given the resources that we don't have for certain collections here, it's -- we're so limited and how we can also express our own -- Also, where we're coming from when we're trying to talk about collections that we want to talk about but don't have information on. It's not a question. It's just, it's a thought, I guess, yeah.

**Qanita Lilla:** I think, I think that you're right. There is, there's a lot to do. But I think what the past is taught us is that we need to think of new ways of doing things. So, you know, instead of like building up knowledge in a linear way, we need to kind of open up the field, you know, and bring more voices in because I feel that the museum's space has been very insular. And just to bring in artists, for example, or people with like lived experience from Africa, people have a connection to things from Africa in another way, I think, you know, has the potential to open up things. [Inaudible]

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** Yeah, this may be ties into a question that I had hoped to bring into the conversation with Diva and Adam before, which is also to kind of think beyond exhibitions, and

permanent displays, or putting artworks in spaces and think about how processes of decolonization or Indigenization work beyond that. So, in the roles that we have as curators or museum workers, and we've talked a bit about provenance research, or cataloguing, or these other activities at the museum, but also inherited funding structures, or you know, these things that are a part of our worlds in the museum. How do we deal with, you know, when we try to participate in these processes, right? So, I don't know if any of you -- kind of looking at you know, Diva and Adam, but anyone really, that has thoughts on that, like how beyond exhibitions and beyond sort of the first things that come to mind with museum work? What role, or responsibility, or commitments do you see for yourself to work, you know, within the museum to transform some of these structures or even a broader field beyond your own institution?

**Adam Harris Levine:** I'll just, kind of thread the needle about a few things, which just to say that we at the AGO, we have a joint committee for restitution and repatriation. And I'm really excited about that model because I think sometimes museums work around Holocaust restitution in a way that they work differently around repatriation of stolen art objects from Africa, or from Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island or in, sorry, Oceania. And I think that like we're trying to operate from the basic principle that museums shouldn't own stolen things. They shouldn't try to own stolen things. And so, we really want it to just pool our resources, and not only share strategy, like to share the single ethos but also to share the resources in the way that we work. And so, I do feel like we're working really hard not to prioritize one process over another and to like work in solidarity across departments and across these issues that really do boil down to a single principle of, you know, trying to think about how a museum can own things ethically. And so, I hope that, like that is something that I'm really excited about and proud of. And I think that it's one way that we can be sure that we don't accidentally kind of absorb more resources towards restituting a single painting to an heir over, you know, returning sacred objects to a whole nation.

**Romuald Tchibozo:** Yeah, so I think the transformation of institutional science in twenty years. If we don't pay attention, we can still make this same mistake. We really continue with mistake. If you pay attention on the transformation from the Musée du Trocadéro If we take the case of France from the Musée du Trocadéro to Musée de l'Homme. And from the Musée de l'Homme to Musée du quai Branly. That is the same transformation, the institution needs transformation. And this transformation is not about the colonization. That is the way to change a thing to make a new way to present and to have more visitors for the exhibition and so on. And the same need now to have transformation, if we don't pay attention, that will be the same mistake. And it is really, really important to say the issue of the colonialization of institution is really, really important. And to know that the relation of peace with the countries of origin have to pay a more important role in this transformation. That is why the issue of restitution is important. Not to have all our pieces back but to work on how we can have that [inaudible] part And to not make the same mistake.



**Nomusa Makhubu:** I wanted to touch on the point you made about patronage and I think it's probably one of our biggest challenges. Often, you find that there are, you know, old agreements between patrons who are often mining magnets who then collected in the museums. And do you find that sometimes the condition of having that collection within that museum is that it's permanently up. And so, not only are you stuck in terms of what you can do, but you're kind of beholden. And at that point, of course, you then have to have the kind of courage to sever particular patronage relationships. And I think that's probably one of our biggest challenges as well, in terms of how far we can change. Of course, it's always nice to talk about, you know, ideally, the ideal that we have in terms of changing. But, you know, documents come and creep up from centuries ago, decades, you know, that then limit what we can actually do, yeah. But I just wanted to pick up on that point.

**Pamila Mathrau:** Hi. Thank you so much for your presentation, and your talk, and your moderation. Couple of things also flashed before my eyes. I was thinking the same thing like the Sacklers and the problematic association. But my brother works in marketing and he was like, "Yep, tobacco, big oil, liquor. Like, these are the companies that fund pretty much the Olympics. And then also, yeah, big museum culture and big sporting events." So, it's a very sticky situation there. That's a sidebar note. But then, I work with youth and, I -- we also in the, obviously I teach in Ontario. So, like the Ministry of Education revamped its curriculum and last revamp was 2010 for arts education. And we went from the chronological timeline or like going through the timeline much like what we might like, you know, obviously cumulatively, like teaching so we can prep them for college or university. But I don't think youth are very interested in writing art history essays anymore. So, much like in my high school class.

**Qanita Lilla:** I don't think they were ever.

**Pamila Mathrau:** I know. Yeah, I know. It was a struggle for me too, yeah, when I was like crying in grade 13. But my -- something that flashed before my eyes when we're thinking about two things popped up into my mind. The recent show, I think it was like 2018. It was before the pandemic. I forget the curator's name. Was it maybe Denise Murrell, "Posing Modernity?" That was a brilliant show. I didn't get to see it. But all my friends who went and saw it and stuff I was just like, "Whoa." And then, I used parts of whatever I could find and shared that with my students. And they really were engaged, you know? So, I then realized it's all thematic, really. That really, that's the hook, right? So, are you thinking that way around like public programming or like, or do you guys engage with the public programming department around that piece? Because I think it's, you know, as someone who practices, [inaudible] and Bell Hooks, and for sure, so I meet my students in the middle. And I was like, "How do you guys address that piece?" And then, something else that popped into my mind was a vision of Beyonce in the Louvre with "Apehit." You know, she was a game changer, or the Carters were a game changer, like no word of a lie. Like, I'm not trying to be

funny or anything but that really attracted my youth. They were like, "What?" I was like, "Yeah, it's the Louvre." They're like, "How did she get it open at night," you know? Well, it was Beyonce. Who wouldn't open their gallery up to Beyoncé? But, but I really liked how popular culture then started to attract a new way of thinking, definitely with youth culture. Has that ever crossed any of your minds around that piece? So like, how to think of some intersectional points around -- I'm just using youth culture as an example because that's what I work in 10 months of the year. Yeah.

**Qanita Lilla:** I think that Beyoncé's video shifted things radically. And even [inaudible]. No, seriously. Even within music video, you know, like actually taking place in art museums. There was--It's huge, it was huge. There was like eight music videos after that. And there was even in South Africa, like YoungstaCPT did like a rap video in the District Six Museum all about like personal agency and past trauma. And, you know, it's really, really interesting. And I just, I have this like intuitive feeling that that's where it lies. It like lies within like the vernacular tradition--

**Pamila Mathrau:** Exactly.

**Qanita Lilla:** Of like, and that's where it will kind of percolate and that's how we will find our ways.

**Pamila Mathrau:** Yeah.

**Qanita Lilla:** You know, to engage or to, I mean, these are the audiences that we want.

**Pamila Mathrau:** I guess I've never talked to like the fields, like you guys are a field, right? So, it's like I haven't been [inaudible] an official response. It was like, like five magazines devoted to popular culture, music people go [inaudible] But no art historian really [inaudible].

**Qanita Lilla:** No, art historians wrote--

**Pamila Mathrau:** They did?

**Qanita Lilla:** Yeah. I mean, yeah. I mean, they kind of had like questionable like, you know, they were not so keen on all aspects of it.

**Pamila Mathrau:** Obviously.

**Qanita Lilla:** But I think I think the impact was huge, yeah.

**Diva Zumaya:** Yeah, I'd love to jump in. Just obviously, I'm chomping at the bit to respond to Beyoncé. Because I love her. And she, I think she's going to continue the trend with "Renaissance," you know, it's a great album. But yeah, I think that's so important to connect with youth culture and popular culture. And I just wanted to add that this division between "high culture" and like, you know, porcelain tea cups and you know, classical music and Renaissance paintings as if that's a different culture than whatever's below it is absolute nonsense. And we should all just throw that notion in the garbage and just like do away with those divisions and not look down on any visual musical culture whatsoever. But I also wanted to say that like I loved -- I thought of when you were talking something Adam said about his permanent collection installation and how he wanted to kind of curate things for people to enjoy it and not for his peers. Because a lot of academically-minded curators and in our field, at least, kind of curate for other curators, you know? Kind of like do this sort of thing that they kind of make these little niche scholarly points. And I think in kind of a lot of my galleries in the new building I'm working on, especially where it's just Europe on Europe, you know? I'm trying to think what's like the most accessible, thematic, or kind of dynamic way to hang this work so it's going to be not only visually interesting and visually apparent, but like have a real scholarly point too that will be accessible. You know, I'm not just jumbling things for the sake of jumbling, right, because I think youth, and they can appreciate a lot more difficult points than academics give them credit for.

**Pamila Mathrau:** And plus you're informing the next generation of artists like curators and historians.

**Diva Zumaya:** Yeah.

**Pamila Mathrau:** And historians.

**Adam Harris Levine:** And just really quick, I'll say that when I was designing the galleries that we reinstalled, I -- like the keywords for me where I wanted to create moments of joy and of surprise -- I wanted people to see like rooms that they maybe had been in before and kind of say, "Whoa, I've never seen it like this." And for people who had never been there before, I wanted to kind of reward

wandering and create moments of like unexpected drama. And I also like explicitly set out to create moments that I thought people would Instagram. I know that some curators like find it so loathsome when people take selfies in their galleries, and they think it's just like the worst decorum. And I'm just like so uninterested in decorum in museums. You know, like I hope that people talk loudly in my galleries, I hope that they, you know, gesticulate wildly. I hope that they, you know, like act as -- like spontaneously and that they don't feel like their behaviour is being scrutinized. And certainly, like if someone's taking a picture of it and sharing it on their networks, that means that more people are seeing it and that they're engaging with it. I just like have absolutely zero time for the kind of like classism and ageism that comes with like people being like, you know, taking selfies in galleries is like poor taste. It's just like I can't think of anything less interesting and more telling about the person's biases than when they like think that, you know, selfies and museums are gauche like, you know? So, I like set out to create spaces where I thought young people would want to hang out. And I've been really pleased to see how people engage in these new galleries because I think it's working.

**Pamila Mathrau:** Thank you.

**Maggie Whitmore:** I just wanted to say thank you so much for this discussion. It's been absolutely phenomenal. I work with Professor Bevilacqua, for my masters at the moment. So, it's really nice to hear this discussion. But I just wanted to ask about, I've noticed that a lot of the exhibitions that we saw today, and a lot of the ones that are discussed were temporary exhibitions. And so, I'm wondering how they've placed a greater emphasis -- and a lot of temporary exhibitions do this now -- of placing this huge emphasis on the decolonial practices and decolonial movement within their temporary exhibition. But I'm curious what your thoughts are on why we don't ever really see the permanent collections engaging in this discussion, particularly like the permanent collections of African art at a lot of survey museums and how they tend to sort of disregard the decolonial movement while temporary exhibitions seem to really want to address it. I'm just wondering if there's any sort of like things behind the scenes that it takes a longer time to process or anything like that.

**Julianna Ribeiro de Silva Bevilacqua:** She's my student.

**Qanita Lilla:** Perhaps I could just say something, I think we're very fortunate at Agnes that we don't have a permanent collection on display. Actually, I find them deeply problematic. So, we don't have those things. But I think like in the nature of larger museums -- perhaps these guys could speak to it -- I think that like processes work on different scales. And, you know, the different people working on different, you know, portions of things and perhaps like sometimes certain portions just take a longer time to catch up, you know, with temporary exhibitions, which are moving and keeping like a

better pace, like better pace worth like current thinking. So, I think that's part of the -- Maybe you could speak to LACMA?

**Adam Harris Levine:** I'll just say really quick. I mean, I think the silence that you were met with was, is because you've hit the nail on the head in like a really crit -- that's a really critical observation that you've made. And I've been told a lot of times like that if I want to try something or not even try, like there -- these ideas are sometimes seen as experimental. And I think there's an idea that experimentation is supposed to take place only in temporary exhibitions. I like -- I will say that I think because rehangs tend to happen sometimes like every five years, it may be that it's some of them just haven't happened yet. But I think we're both uniquely in a position where I've just done a rehang and Diva's about to do a rehang. And so, I think, like we, I think, you know, I'm proud of some of the strategies that we used in our most recent rehang. And, you know, I invite you to come to Toronto and tell me what you think. And then, I'm anxiously anticipating what Diva's working on with her colleagues because -- it sounds, honestly, quite radical.

**Diva Zumaya:** Yeah, I was just going to add, I think your question is a good one. And I think maybe this opportunity for me to bring up a point that like with the term decolonial, too, because I think we've been talking about decolonizing European art collections. And, of course, for my part in European art, I would love to have a hand in collecting say, Indigenous art or contemporary art that addresses European colonial history, right? But I'm not sure if 100% if I can call myself doing that "decolonial." You know, that's like the best I can do towards that, perhaps, and I would love to do that. However, you know, I think the most, the only perhaps -- or I wouldn't say the only -- but like the most decolonial thing LACMA does is we continually repatriate things and retribute things regularly. And, to me, I mean, not to be like one of those academics that name drops, you know, articles and books, because I hate that. But if you haven't read "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," like I recommend doing so, you know? It's a great, important text for me. And so, I try to not use decolonial when referring to my show, for instance, because I really strictly believe that that word is for like the restitution of Native Indigenous land and life. And so, I think that, you know, it's not something that I throw around lightly. But yeah, again, I can't take any credit for those repatriations but I'm proud when they do happen.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** I think okay, so, there's one more question. Is there one more question? So, this would be our final question.

**Audience Member:** I'm not sure whether this is relevant or not but I'm sitting here wondering about the definition of European art in a North American context. Are we talking about literal works done by Europeans? Are we talking about works painted by Canadians in a European tradition? And where's the line or is there a line?

**Adam Harris Levine:** Yeah, thank you. I'm so glad you asked that question. I think about this all the time. And actually, in the current exhibition, "Faith and Fortune", that I have up, I really look at this closely. I look at -- there are a number of settler Spaniard artists who settle in Mexico City for a number of different reasons. But mostly they're patrons at home, are appointed to either being like the governor, or the viceroy, or the archbishop and so they basically have to resettle with them. They, you know, travel with an entourage and so I find those to be like, really interesting examples because I think, you know, I wanted to understand like how a colonial visual culture was constructed. And one of the ways was that artists were literally transposed from Spain and into Mexico and at what point do we start to call them Mexican artists as opposed to Spanish artists? And then, to what curatorial department do they belong? I think that also like really comes up. I'm really interested in how that comes up in the Canadian context. So, with artists like Antoine Plamondon, and Francois Malepart de Beaucourt, or like early like settler Quebec painters. Francois Malepart de Beaucourt is sometimes like in a very racist colonial way been called the, you know, the first painter of Canada because he was simply just like the first settler who was trained in a European art academy who then set up a practice in Montreal. And that's the sort of superlative of the first painter in the history of this land. So, I don't know. I mean, I currently display -- like when the exhibition comes down, that Jose Campeche will go back in the European galleries. And I would happily lend that painting to any other department in the museum if it made sense. You know, we have a department of "Global Africa and the Diaspora" and because Campeche was an Afro Puerto Rican painter and his father had been brought to Puerto Rico through enslavement. I would happily, you know, I see how that painting could also hang in, you know, an installation in those galleries. I think what I would like to say is that, you know, the very nature of like questioning these categories, and playing with them, and being amorphous with them is like the most powerful thing you can possibly do with settler and European art to kind of complicate the question of who belongs where and who has lived where over what time. So, I think that like, there are many ways to answer the question, but all of them are really fruitful in kind of destabilizing the idea that settlers have been here for a very long time. And thinking about sort of even just questioning how they arrived, how settler artists have arrived on Turtle Island, I think is, you know, by putting them with their European peers, I think is really interesting. I don't know if I answered your question well or not.

**Audience Member:** Well, it complicated

**Adam Harris Levine:** Yeah, but it's a really rich, wonderful complication that I think -- yeah.

**Audience Member:** But Mexican art a bit different because there is such a cross between European and Indigenous traditions, whereas Canadian art doesn't really have that does it?

**Adam Harris Levine:** Well so, I guess what I'd say and I have to like say, I'm not an expert on Canadian art. But what I would say is that like looking at these settler artists, this genre of settler artists like Alonso Vasquez is a painter who's in the exhibition who trained in Seville, and he's basically a contemporary of Velasquez. And instead of moving to Madrid to become a court painter like Velasquez did, he goes to Mexico City to become, you know, court painter for the viceroy of Mexico. There's like nothing particularly Mexican about him but he had a tremendous important impact on Mexico, because for the final six years of his life he makes paintings in the European style the way he was trained to work in Spain for, you know, cathedrals, and palaces, and religious complexes. And that, you know, like fundamentally transforms the visual culture of colonial Mexico. So, I understand how I think it would maybe be just as, you know, it'd be important to call him a, I guess, a settler Spaniard artist in Mexico. It's much longer than calling him a Mexican artist or a Spanish artist. But I think it really accurately explains not only where he grew up and how he trained, but also the long term impact of his work.

**Suzanne van de Meerendonk:** So, I think lingering on these complications might be a good place to stop. We've been a little over so long to make sure everyone has a bit of a break before the next thing on the agenda. So, I thank you all again, so much for your contributions and yeah, I'll see everyone soon. Thank you.

[ Applause ]