

Research Project Critical Culture

**Curatorial activism and decolonial voices: Controversies and
discussions on ruangrupa collective curatorial performance for
Documenta 15th edition**

Cleide Regina de Oliveira

**National College of Art and Design
School of Fine Arts - Media Department - Final Year
2022 - 2023**



National College of Art and Design
A Recognised College of University College Dublin

School of Visual Culture

I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

Signed: 

Programme / department: **Fine Arts School / Media Department**

Date: **30th January, 2023**

Table of Contents

1. Introduction, Pag. 03

Curatorial activism throughout the history of contemporary art, Pag.03

2. Documenta 15 art and antisemitism - Indonésia collective accused of antisemitism in German festival, Pag. 07

3. Conclusion, Pag. 15

4. Bibliographic References, Pag. 17

List of Illustrations

Fig.1 Taring Padi, People's Justice, 2002. 8 x 12m. Kassel, Germany.

Documenta 15 modern art fair on June 18, 2022 in Kassel, Germany. (Photo by Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images). Page 09.

Fig.2 Taring Padi, People's Justice, 2002. 8 x 12m. Kassel, Germany.

Documenta 15 modern art fair on June 18, 2022 in Kassel, Germany. (Photo by Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images). Detail of the mural. Page 10.

Curatorial activism and decolonial voices: Controversies and discussions on ruangrupa collective curatorial performance for Documenta 15th edition

Introduction

1. Curatorial activism throughout the history of contemporary art

The role of the curator emerged over the years as a response to the need to establish a mediation link between the artist and the institution where the artistic process and its purposes would meet the expectations of both. The artist, in turn, embodied this role of curator, making his performance the representation of the artist's voice as the most faithful means of his art. Along with autonomy and independence came the responsibility to defend their artistic and collective practice and also to ideologically criticise the institution and public art spaces and how they function.

The curator assumed a multidisciplinary approach denying the role of caretaker and manager of artworks and art spaces, where educating and acting is not teaching art history, but creating spaces for counter-hegemonic narratives and raising institutional critique against the canon that permeates the artistic universe through the aggregation of artistic forms that communicate with each other. To give continuity to this work, the artist or collective as curators proposed to face not only pre-protected ideological foundations in the Eurocentric world, but also to challenge the political governmental institutions, making art a medium of raising social and cultural awareness.

Practising the curator's role as part of their curatorial activism responsibilities will inevitably lead to conflicts and contentions. Challenging the appeasing role of institutional representatives. When practising the curator's role within their curatorial activism responsibilities, conflicts and controversies in turn will eventually be raised. And the questioning of the appeasing role of institutional representatives brings to the light a delicate and controversial problem that still haunts and makes us question the bias behind the justifications that in turn, ends in backlash critique and sometimes, censorship. When those adventurous events happen, it makes us wonder about the meaning and purpose of making art in postcolonial times. Is the conceptual art scene beyond the geo-political issues that are often used to control decolonial narratives? Can European contemporary art scenarios accommodate multicultural disciplines without post colonial conflicts of interests? How far can decolonial art delve into the issues that are still used to protect the imperialist and colonial legacy that left irreparable scars and

still continue to leave their bloody legacy around the world? To answer these questions this essay will provide definitions and attributions of the curator subject and his social responsibility towards postcolonial art as well as the various forms of presentation and performances. And to contextualise, will be presented a practical and recent example that took place in the 15th edition of one of the most important international decolonial art festivals, the Documenta. Where the invited curators, the Indonesian art collective ruangrupa, had their curatorial performance contested and as a result, some works were censored due to accusations of intentional anti-Semitic and pro-Palestinian representations.

As modernism, postmodern art has been bringing a new language to translate the various forms of artistic expression in the 20th century. However, with a broader and multiethnic language that expands beyond the institutional walls where it once housed symbols of colonial conquests and hegemonic privileges. Postcolonial art breaks imposed and sustained paradigms that until then, divided society and the way artistic productions were represented. It is a new way of making art that considers previously neglected and excluded aesthetic values. The voices that were silenced at other times, gained strength and reached societal scales that came to know, produce and be part of this context. Thus ceasing to be a unidirectional cultural expression claimed by an exclusive audience. With the demographic changes that occurred in the last century, postmodern art became stronger and added new members and fans. As Portera points in his essay, with the rapid increase in migration and the demographic shifts that happened in the post war era made it necessary the development of the multicultural and intercultural approaches and this effort was supported by international cooperation through governmental agencies such as the United Nations (UN), United Nations Educational, Scientific and the Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and European Union (EU) in order to assure the same rights to education and information to people of all cultural backgrounds, respecting the individuality and complexity of each culture. The discipline of multiculturalism extends to many aspects of the society as well to postcolonial, decolonial and conceptual art in which the context is expressed through political voices calling for reparation and re-appropriation of space, identity, history and ideas. The subjects dealt within began to have a less hegemonic and more contradictory view compared with art history's Eurocentric canon (2020, p. 390 - 406) .

In the late 1960s, at the dawn of conceptual art, activism was finally brought inside of galleries and exhibitions. The conceptual artists, considered themselves cultural critics in an aesthetic denial and refusing the status of modernism, "sought to

establish a link between art practice and the ideological and institutional structures through institutional critique” (Wark, J. 2001, 44). It is also when the term of critical curating was used for the first time to define the “emergence of the independent exhibition-maker. The curator is a cultural agent of social change which may take the form of one person or a collective who come to curate from a political, social, and ethical position.” (Fraser, M. and Jim, A. M. W; 2018, p. 5). The authors also elevated the position of the curatorial figure by assuming a critical curatorial strategy. Their position of managing private collections and museums is abandoned and he becomes a more dynamic author of public exhibition, as they are creating a space of resistance that does not follow conventional art spaces (2018, p. 5 - 10). The curator takes the position of a broader interdisciplinary, multicultural and diverse advocate for all forms of artistic expressions on sites of cultural production as well as in places outside of the institutions and artist- run spaces. Curating critically, in some ways means an engagement with activism or social justice work and eventually, curators become distrustful and uncomfortable with the re-institutionalization of critical curation that inevitably occurs in academic practice.

As in Nora Sternfeld’s hypotheses on her conversation and contribution for the book *Across Anthropology* from 2020, the author implies the role of the curator as a subject of transformation of institutions from public to privatised institutions. As the “position of the curator as we see it emerging is to make conflicts liveable (2020, p. 362 - 374). Conflicts might break out in all those places because, as we know, institutions for contemporary art play a significant role in processes of gentrification” (Sternfeld, 2020, p. 364). It is from this hypothesis that the author observes that the creation of artistic collectives where artists defend their own work, were the precursors for the emergence of this curator subject, as well as his position within the institutions.

The role of curatorship can also be exercised collectively. And the presence of collectives of artists has been common, sometimes taking on the curatorship, sometimes of large exhibitions whose theme revolves around a subject in common with aesthetic demands and close relevance. As well as the phenomenon that will be analysed in this essay. Wai, W.Y.C. defines the method of curating collectively as the exhibition or artistic project carried out in collaboration by a group of people (artist or curators) rather than a single person with the aim of developing concepts and working together. In this process, the curator role is assimilated by the group in common agreement, so that the curator subject does not necessarily need to be an exclusive individual, since the decisions will be taken collectively. In some cases, the artists may also be involved also

with other projects, collectives and institutions. The collective curators may invite the audience itself to collaborate with their participation during the exhibition or in the collective artistic practice. Terms other than collectivities may be used based on the relationship between the participants and the creative processes adopted, including teamwork, cooperation, interaction, collective action (2019, p.80 - 91). These collectives are founded around the idea of inventing an exhibition as a place where different artistic positions and ideas come together and challenge each other. Therefore, as Sternfeld explains, the curatorship model that we see today, where collectives are responsible for bringing together artists and other collectives, is based on the collective exhibition projects of the avant-garde that took place in Western Europe and the Soviet Union in the 19th and 20th centuries. Such as Dadaism, Impressionism, German expressionism and Russian suprematism (2020, p. 362 - 374).. And there were conflicts, rejection and criticism towards the new way of showing art and the new ideas that were arising from it. They were considered different, unconventional, and boldacious in going against the traditional aesthetic of artistic movement and expression. In those collectives, the figure of the curator was usually difficult to identify, and they did not receive the same level of attention as they would today.

With this opening and multifaceted role, the curators as well as the artist could therefore work together on subjects that align with the postmodern ideology. Eventually in the 1990s, the curatorial activities reached their peak. As Fraser, M. and Jim, A. M. W. explain, famous and influential curators emerged from this decade and became organisers of world celebrated art events and festivals such as international biennials and triennials. The discussion that surrounded the history of curatorial practice went back to the managerial and corporate scenario. The curators could not fail to have the international recognition that biennials and major festivals brought to their curriculum, in addition to the notorious and lucrative takeoff of the art market through the influential presence of collectors and art galleries at these events (2018, p. 5 - 10). Therefore, it becomes necessary to constantly analyse the curatorial discourse as a mediating agent and representative of art. In a decolonial discourse, where artistic expression comes with the resumption of space and the historical reconstruction distorted by colonial and imperialist policies, the role of curatorship is activism as well as that of artists. And this activism would come with an educational purpose and ethical and social responsibility. In his article, the art history professor Diego. J.A discusses activism and curating as opposite actions. Activism as an act capable of exceeding the limits of representative politics and transposing conflicts into the public sphere. And

curatorial practice is a highly institutionalised activity that aims at guiding the viewer's experience and that tends to produce a type of knowledge recognised within cultural circles. (2018, p. 17 -29). However, when combined, they create a critical dialogue between activism and institutions where curators become the bridge to this process. Aligning the artist's work and the agendas of social movements with the institutional interest in promoting social and political diversity. Bringing together art and activism through the curation of an exhibition of contemporary art in the postcolonial premises and decolonial aesthetics will eventually promote a political dialogue within the institution in which the honest narrative would be made by those who lived through social and political experiences. The curator has ethical responsibilities in keeping art events unbiased and allowing the artist's true voice to come through and also to have legitimate reasons for raising issues, which in turn may be controversial in favour of the interest of the artist and his audience.

Maura Reiley coined the term 'curatorial activists' "to describe those individuals who have committed themselves to 'counter-hegemonic initiatives' that give voices to those who have been historically silenced or omitted from the 'master narrative'. In other words, curatorial activists focus exclusively on work produced by women, artists of colour, non-Europeans or queer artists."(Reilly M. 2011, p.14). Curatorial activism has the great challenge of adding and expanding the message of the artist and the artistic work in order to meet the need to fill in the gaps left by the hegemonic history that until then was told without taking into account the experience and the original source of the facts, which in turn are illustrated through cultural appropriation and opportunism. "The political work identified as activism continues to encourage us to reflect on the way to integrate this activity, labile, energetic, and always guided by the desire to intervene politically in reality into the space of contemporary art." (Diego, 2018, p. 20)

The curator's role as educator can also be interpreted as gatekeeper of the multifactorial versions of original subjects, often left at the mercy of institutions and conveniences. In the midst of this assimilation between collective critical curating and activism, the institution often presents itself, through its sponsors and board of directors, in the position of moderator, interfering in the activities proposed in favour of interests and internal policies and agendas or imposed by external political agents. In this case of intervention, a fine line can be crossed and internal and external interests will be defended in the form of censorship. In this case, the institution fails to meet the interests proposed by the collectives, curators and artists.

To illustrate how the critical theory on post colonialism, multiculturalism and curatorial activism in contemporary art are relevant and necessary, this essay presents a review of events that occurred in one of the most prestigious European contemporary art festivals, Documenta, in its 15th edition allocated in Kassel, Germany from June 18 to September 25, 2022. A conflict erupted between the invited Indonesian collective of curators ruangrupa and the festival's sponsors erupted after a message, shown through some artworks exhibited, was politically and socially reinterpreted, leading to a scandal involving accusation of anti zionism and anti semitism. This resulted in the activation of the censorship mechanism by the festival board from covering up to complete withdrawal of important artworks.

2. Documenta 15 art and antisemitism - Indonésia collective accused of antisemitism in German festival

The collective ruangrupa (written and spelled in lowercase and it can be translate as “art space or spatial form”) is a non-profit organisation founded in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2000 by a group of artists who felt the need to create a physical and mental space for visual arts such as public art, performance art and video art in which the attention was focused more on the means of analysis than on the production of works of art in order to achieve a critical sensitivity in society. The collective is made up of fourteen other collective artists from different backgrounds and the house where the ruangrupa are located is considered an open interdisciplinary space for artists and the community.

They are recognized by the social engagement, urban context and the manifestation of social culture through exhibitions, festivals, art laboratories, workshops, research and the publication of books, magazines and newspapers online. As Teh D. describes in his article about ruangrupa curatorship, that the contemporary art scene in Indonesia is deeply rooted in its history and permeated with intellectual work. Amid this growing and fruitful trend, the core curatorial faculty not only attracts talent, but stands out for maintaining both its independence from the art market and its autonomous position vis-à-vis the curatorial control that serves it. However, curators have their influence limited by the traditional market and the absence of reliable institutions of validation and power. The role of curators is focused on the artistic community and not on the collection of works itself. (2012, p. 108 - 117)

The Collective was selected as the first Asian and the first collective to be chosen as artistic directors and curatorship along with other artists and curators of the festival

Documenta 15 that took place in Kassel, Germany from June 18 to September 25, 2022.

The ruangrupa collective was chosen unanimously by Documenta's international commission . The Conclusion Committee justified the choice of ruangrupa due to the collective approach and participation that is employed in the group's artistic and social activities. Furthermore “At a time when innovative power emanates in particular from independent, collaborative organisations, it seems logical to offer this collective approach a platform in the form of documenta.”(Documenta 15, 2022). The collective participated in the previous edition of the festival, Documenta 14 in 2017. At the time, ruangrupa was involved with its internet radio as a partner in the decentralised radio project ‘Every Time an Ear di Soun’ which connected eight radio stations worldwide.

The Jakarta-based artist’s collective has built the foundation of their Documenta 15 edition on the core values and ideas of lumbung, a traditional Indonesian communal barn used for storing and redistributing surplus of rice and other crops which functions in a similar way to a social insurance system. Lumbung as an artistic and economic model is rooted in principles such as collectivity, communal resource sharing, and equal allocation, and is embodied in all parts of the collaboration and the exhibition. “Where they seek to learn from their accumulation of collective experiences in directly practising institutional building as an artistic form” (Documenta 15,2022). They called the effects of Lumbung, the rhizomatic effect. As they spread and multiply by aggregation of more than 50 other artists and some of them bringing their own collective. The idea of sustainability is also comprehensively considered in the planning of the exhibition in all its manifestations. ‘The strategy used by the ruangrupa for the Documenta 15 was decentralising their curatorial authority by inviting a cluster of art collectives who then invited other artists and collectives’ (Sholette G. 2022).

With this decentralisation, many artists and collectives began to compose and set up the exhibition. In addition to affirming their post-colonial history, from the peripheries to the centre of the world, and with that, they also brought up some political issues. These issues, which are permeated by the experience and cultural load of their countries marked by colonisation and imperialist domination strategies , were not well received. In turn generated a whole unease and uproar on the part of the press and others who lurked among the public waiting for an opportunity to validate their ideologies.

In January 2022, the curators and several artists of Documenta 15 including artist from the collective ruangrupa and member of the advisory board were accused of antisemitism on the WordPress blog from a Kassel-based group called Bündnis gegen

Antisemitismus [Alliance Against Anti-Semitism]. The only member of the alliance Jonas Dörge wrote in his blog a series of statements accusing artists and the collective of curators of promoting anti-Israel and pro-Palestine propaganda. Insinuating the use of pejorative and stereotyped figures and symbols that suggest correlation between the Israelis policies of colonisation against Palestine State, to the Nazi's (2022). In summary they raised the statement that there is no anti-Zionism without anti-Semitism. Although the Alliance also has nothing to do with the Jewish Community of Kassel, it provoked an in-depth discussion about whether or not there is prejudice, anti-Semitism and racism among members of the exhibition's Finding Committee and Artistic Team, curators and artists from Documenta 15.

Despite the initiative of the Finding Committee and Artistic Team of bringing curators and artist to show the counter hegemonic view and legacy of imperialistic practice on countries subjected to colonisation, dictatorship and violence, fulfilling one of the premises of the renowned decolonial art festival, some measures were taken by the board of directors of the festival, such as removing works that represent Anti Israeli and pro palestinian motifs, which open the door for discussion about the credibility of the festival as a post colonial and uncensored. 'In late June, an outdoor billboard painting by Indonesian artist group Taring Padi, *People's Justice* (2002) Fig.1 and Fig.2, was covered in dark grey cloth after the delayed exhibition due allegedly "restoration was taken down entirely 24 hours later.'" (Heiser, 2022)



Fig.1 Taring Padi, *People's Justice*, 2002. 8 x 12m. Kassel, Germany. Documenta 15 modern art fair on June 18, 2022 in Kassel, Germany. (Photo by Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images).



Fig.2.Taring Padi, People's Justice, 2002. 8 x 12m. Kassel, Germany. Documenta 15 modern art fair on June 18, 2022 in Kassel, Germany. (Photo by Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images). Detail of the mural - The mural has caused an uproar as Germany's Central Council of Jews as well as a number of leading politicians have levelled outspoken criticism at the Documenta for showing the piece, claiming that it depicts elements that are anti-semitic, including the depiction of an orthodox Jew wearing a hat with the symbol of the Nazi-era Waffen SS as well as a pig wearing a helmet with "Mossad" written on it. (Photo by Thomas Lohnes/Getty Images)

In a press release released by Documenta 15 on the dismantling of the Popular Justice mural on June 26, 2022, the Taring Padi collective apologised to the entire public and especially to the Jewish community for images that acquired a specific meaning in the historical context of Germany. They also explain the context from which the banner was made in 2002:

'The banner was born out of our struggles of living under Suharto's military dictatorship, where violence, exploitation and censorship were a daily reality. The banner attempts to expose the complex power relationships that are at play behind these injustices and the erasure of public memory surrounding the Indonesian genocide in 1965, where more than 500,000 people were murdered. The imagery of People's Justice presents these internal and external powers in a pictorial scene and tries to capture the complex historical circumstances through a visual language that is at once as disturbing as the reality of the violence itself and it was never intended as hatred directed at a particular ethnic or religious group, but as a critique of militarism and state violence. We depicted the involvement of the government of the

state of Israel in the wrong way—and we apologise.
Anti-semitism does not have a place in our hearts and minds.
Taring Padi (Press release documenta 15. 26 June, 2022)

After many attempts of conversations between the curatores, political figures and shareholders of the Documenta 15 festival, a press release on 1 of July 2022 by the organisation, announced that a scientific advisory panel composed by seven scholars experts in the fields of antisemitism, perspectives from global contexts and post-colonialism, art and constitutional law, deliberated and justified the measures taken against some of the work censured. The press document points to the scientists responsibility of analysing the works and giving recommendations on the structure and development of the festival. They discussed the possibility of further antisemitic imagery and language as well as works already identified as antisemitic. The final deliberation from the scientific advisory panel was considered in three levels: The level of exhibition of the work, mostly films with considerable pro palestinian propaganda such as the Tokyo Reels Film Festival by the collective "Subversive Film", which eventually had its exhibition ceased during the festival. The artistic direction, although not being accused directly, was considered responsible to amend and regulate the works and for the last, the level of organisation of the Document 15 that was neither opposed to the works or established boundaries about what could be shown. 'Taking these three levels together, it becomes clear that the serious problems of Documenta 15 exist not only in the presentation of isolated works featuring anti-Semitic imagery and statements, but also in a curatorial and organisational structural environment that allowed an anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Israel sentiment. (Press release Documenta 15, September 2022).

The organisers of the event, in a following release declared their openness to discuss the matter with curators and keeping the open door for further events for the Indonesian collective which declared its discontent and disappointment in an open letter published in E-Flux magazine. The letter described their frustration for the measures taken by the Supervisory Board and shareholders. Saying that they refuse the board commission deliberations and they will extend the refusal by withdrawing collectively from the futures edition of the festival, in the same way as they accepted to work collectively as principles of the lumbung community. "We do it together, affirmatively and poetically. We assert that lumbung continues after documenta fifteen ends; our solidarity continues while your superiority, arrogance and power games end"(Lumbung Community Open letter. 10 September, 2022.)

“We are angry, we are sad, we are tired, we are united. Because we stand by our rejection of censorship, we vigorously opposed the creation of this scientific advisory panel. We do not accept the allegations of their preliminary report, which unashamedly reproduce poorly researched claims from the media; likewise, the report lacks scientific proof, academic references, rigorous argumentation and integrity.” (Lumbung Community Open letter.10 September, 2022.)

During and after the festival, the press and art critics continued to discuss the collective curatorial project and the responsibilities assigned to the Finding Committee as well the general organisation of the festival. Questions were raised about the purpose of the festival and measures taken by deliberation of the Supervisory Board in comparison with other editions of the festival as well as other events with the same purpose and its future consequences for conceptual art in terms of the importance of post-colonial discourse.

Jörg Heiser (2022) in his article for E-Flux Magazine criticised the curators of the Finding Committee for the Artistic Direction that commissioned the ruangrupa collective and others artists, for accompanying the development of the works presented in the exhibition at distance, neglecting and making impossible to foresee such conflicts of interest regarding the ideological and political approach. Heiser also compares previous editions of Documenta based on the festival's premise of creating a globally oriented, collaborative and interdisciplinary art and culture platform. The author questions the meaning of these historical guidelines and the repercussions that would put the future of the festival in check. And he also concluded that many of the works already presented at the festival have a questioning historical context, such as the Hannah Arendt Institute of Artivism (INSTAR), based in Havana, in its work recalling the Cuban revolution, presented metallic sculptures that resemble human skulls, referring to the lack of global recognition for the atrocities committed. The Black Archives of Amsterdam presented archival documents on black representation in the early 20th century by adding the letter N, indicating contamination of the material, on the cover of a book. While the Archives des Luttes des Femmes en Algérie [Archives of Women's Struggles in Algeria] featured a reproduction of a 1988 booklet about Palestine that depicts Israeli soldiers appearing as monsters capturing a child. The author argues the importance of these works but questioned the purpose through the exploration of delicate subjects that require contextualization. Why then, would the

2022 festival be so controversial? It also frames the lack of contextualization of many other works that could have been a fine dish for the press. Perhaps the large panel with racist caricatures drew a lot of attention and was therefore noticed regardless of all the arguments that were presented. And the whole endeavour of the festival was not more than an illusion. Heiser, also argues that the event proposed an environment of disservice to the decolonial struggle for acknowledgement and commemoration. He also points out that the accusation was opportunist because it ignores Jewish and Jewish-Israeli voices and can be counted as a shield for German responsibility and German Colonialism as it happens in the European hegemonic version of colonialism. Few decades ago, Enwezor, O. also criticised the purpose of mega exhibitions and curatorial projects of contemporary art such as Biennales and Documenta in his article about Postcolonial Constellation. He called those events speculative in nature and sensationalist. “It is fascination with contemporary art as novelty, by effects of reification as a pure image and object of exhibition with spectacle culture. This means that it tends to equate the exhibition with entertainment, fashion, new thrills and discoveries that seasonally top up the depleted inventory of the "new" exhausted in the previous season”. (Enwezor, O. 2003, p. 60). For Heiser, those responsible for the Finding Committee for the Artistic Direction event disregarded the controversial details of each work in the hope of letting the works speak for themselves. Therefore, seeking indirectly to cause shock and controversy as a market strategy. Not taking into account the political repercussions that could cause in a country whose pressure for the decolonization process, ethical and cultural reparation such as Germany, is a striking and fragile point to be addressed in the public sphere (2022).

Gregory Sholette in his article contesting the “bad” curating as collective resistance that happened at Documenta 15 in 2022 made a comparison between the Biennale Berlin and Documenta 15, where the first one shows and it is a demonstration of post-conceptual critique of visual culture, capitalism, and colonialism. Meanwhile, Documenta demonstrates an artistic reflection required to compensate for more serious underlying issues of historically, materially and culturally uneven distributions of meaning. It is clear that academic research does not offer a ‘neutral platform’ to artistic research. In both cases, however, the attitude by the collectives towards the art world borders is one of indifference. They want to use their own voices on an international platform as a chance to speak out loud what is to be on their side of history. (2022)

The members of the Finding Committee for the Artistic Direction of Documenta 15, declared in a Press Release, Documenta 15 ,(June 23, 2022) that they fully endorse

the collective of ruangrupa curators and will remain by their side as they have always been, following lumbung's work, even if from a distance and believing in the capacity and transparency of the group of artists involved as a collective of exemplary artistic production and for offering a differentiated vision from collective art to the role of public art. However, the commission also agreed with the decision of the general art director of the festival, Dr. Sabine Schormann, and her supervisory board team, for withdrawing the work *Justiça Popular, 2022* from Taring Padi collective, after finding caricatures on the panel that express an anti-Semitic sentiment. The committee makes clear and continues to delimit the difference between criticism of the imperialist policy of the state of Israel and the anti-Semitic purpose through images that make reference to nazi caricatures and also pejorative and racist images that hurts the Jewish community as a whole. And above all, they declare the respect and memory of all those affected by the horrors of the Holocaust, they emphasise the total repudiation of the fascist dictatorial policy. They also recognize the reparative role that Germany has played in the path of colonisation in many countries around the world throughout its imperialist history as they express their respect for the Indonesian art collective Taring Padi for its long struggle against oppression and dictatorship during the Suharto political regime in Indonesia in the 1960s. "The legacies of European colonialism and the ongoing matrix of power across the world are subjects that touch almost all the world's living creatures. The interconnections and shared concerns are only gradually being understood in Western Europe and we are convinced this documenta makes a significant step in giving them form within the cultural field." (Press Release, Documenta 15, June 23, 2022).

According to the press release Documenta 15 published on the day after the ending of the festival activities 26/09/2022, despite the polemical debate that brought to the conversation delicate historical subjects which makes it questionable how far can one go when telling the story from the "other" point of reality, the festival had a record of attendance and validation from the public. After 100 days of exhibition with more than 1,500 artists performing in 1,700 events in 32 different exhibition spaces, Documenta 15 was considered a success with only 17% less spectators present in the previous edition, Documenta 14 in 2017. And the performance of the collective curatorship of ruangrupa, among other invited artists and collectives, were praised.

3. Conclusion

Disciplines with a multicultural agenda is not just a trend to be followed, but a commitment to diversity and inclusion. As Gunew, S. explains, the critical theory in postcolonialism deals in retroactive way with historical events and multiculturalism deals, in a more dynamic way, with the management of contemporary geo-political diversity in former imperial centres and their ex-colonies (1997, pp. 22 - 39). Therefore, conflicts of interest are almost inevitable when postcolonial art exhibitions and events are hosted by countries with colonial past. A critical multiculturalism manages diversity and sometimes, the discussion becomes embarrassing as terms such as ethical background, religion, race are not assimilated with the same weight by the European state which is still embedded in imperialist concepts. She also points out “that Multiculturalism has been developed as a concept by nations and other aspirants to geo-political cohesiveness who are trying to represent themselves as homogeneous in spite of their heterogeneity.” (Gunew, S. 1997, p. 23)

However, while expanding the practice taking in consideration the colonial and imperialist historical past of European countries and the legacy of those geopolitical practices upon the ex- colonised and explored countries, the cultural exchange of experiences can diverge. Rekindling atemporal claims that by its own nature, are polemical and invite a broad and complex discussion that also need to be inclusive and ordered to be honest to avoid censorship, which can disassemble the whole premise of multiculturalization.

What happened at Documenta 15 is the result of work that has been done since the beginning of the artistic category in the 60s. Expressing oneself culturally and also politically through art, as well as using institutions and public spaces for the dissemination of ideas, education and research arguments compose the work. When these spaces are opened to meet genuine needs for revision and repair, a discursive line is also opened that has a life of its own even when it is decontextualized. The collective curation of ruangrupa and the entire operational structure of lumbung demonstrate one of these developments. Since the doors have been opened for them, it also invites all of us to join this journey and join the discussion. Like any open dialogue, ideas can be understood, revised or reinterpreted according to the context that each one carries in their cultural baggage. And in the midst of polemics and controversies, the seeds for future discourses are planted and new concepts and expectations are created for new discussions to grow. Despite being controversial and sometimes censored, the words

released circulate among those who want to hear it or not as a rhizomatic effect of Lumbung without respecting a hierarchical subordination.

And going back to Maura O'reilley's concern of what we as curators, artists, educators, gallerists and museum directors, should do to differentiate from the art historical canon, and present a more fair and accurate representation of the multicultural art world is to advocate collectively against the institutional ideological bias. Applying not only critical theory but revise cultural and social practices on race, gender, social class and place and understand the importance involved in all those issues for future references.

References

Diego, J.A. (2018). 'Curating Activism: Art, Politics and Exhibitions (In, Around, and Beyond Institutions)', *Critique d'art* [Online], 51 Automne/hiver, Groupement d'intérêt scientifique (GIS) Archives de la critique d'art pp. 17 - 29

Available at

<http://journals.openedition.org/critiquedart/36575> ; DOI : 10.4000/ critiquedart.36575
(Accessed: 18 December, 2022)

Documenta 15 (2022) - About the Documenta. *Documenta 15 Website* [Online]

Available at: <https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/about/> (Accessed: 10 November, 2022)

Enwezor, O. (2003) 'The Postcolonial Constellation: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition.' *Research in African Literatures*, 34(4), pp. 57 - 82. JSTOR [online]. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4618328>. (Accessed: 05 January, 2023)

Fraser, M. and Jim, A. M. W. (2018). Introduction: What is Critical Curating? / Qu'est-ce que le commissariat engagé? *RACAR: Revue d'art Canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 43(2), 5 - 10. JSTOR [online].

Available at: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26530763> (Accessed: 15 December, 2022)

Gunew, S. (1997) 'Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism: Between Race and Ethnicity.' *The Yearbook of English Studies*, 27, pp. 22 - 39, JSTOR [online]. Available at:

<https://doi.org/10.2307/3509130> (Accessed: 09 January, 2023)

Heiser, J. (2022), 'Contested Histories: on Documenta 15', *E- Flux* [online]. Available at: <https://www.e-flux.com/criticism/477463/contested-histories-on-documenta-15>.

(Accessed: 09 January, 2023)

Jonas Dörge (2022) 'There is no anti-Zionism without anti-Semitism.' *Wordpress* [online]. Available at: <https://bgakasselblog.wordpress.com/> (Accessed: 01 November, 2022)

Lumbung Community Open letter (2022). 'We are angry, we are sad, we are tired, we are united: Letter from lumbung community.' September 10, 2022. *E-flux* [online]. Available at:

<https://www.e-flux.com/notes/489580/we-are-angry-we-are-sad-we-are-tired-we-are-united-letter-from-lumbung-community> (Accessed: 25 January, 2023)

Press release Documenta 15 (23 June, 2022) 'Documenta Finding Committee On The Deinstallation Of "People's Justice" By Taring Padi'. *Documenta 15 website* [Online]. Available at:

https://documenta-fifteen.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/230623_Statement-Finding-Committee_EN.pdf (Accessed: 08 January, 2023)

Press release documenta 15(26 june, 2002)'Statement by Taring Padi on dismantling people's Justice, *Documenta 15 website* [Online]. Available at:

<https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/news/statement-by-taring-padi-on-dismantling-peoples-justice> (Accessed: 08 January, 2023)

Press release Document 15 (1 August, 2022) 'Shareholders of documenta introduce scientific advisory panel.' *Documenta 15 website* [Online]. Available at:

<https://www.documenta.de/en/press#press/3051-the-statement-of-finding-committee> (Accessed: 09 January, 2023)

Press release Documenta 15 (15 September 2022) - 'Press release from the undersigned members of the scientific advisory panel of documenta fifteen'. *Documenta 15 website* [Online] Available at:

<https://www.documenta.de/en/press#press/3051-the-statement-of-finding-committee> (Accessed: 09 January, 2023)

Press release Documenta 15 (26 Setembro (2022) 'Documenta 15 closes with very good attendance figures.' *Documenta 15 website* [Online] Available at:

<https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/news/documenta-fifteen-closes-with-very-good-attendance-figures/> (Accessed: 25 January, 2023)

Portera, A. (2020), 'Has multiculturalism failed? Let's start the era of interculturalism for facing diversity issues', *Intercultural Education*, 31(4), pp. 390-406, JSTOR [online]. Available at: DOI: 10.1080/14675986.2020.1765285 (Accessed: 12 November, 2022)

Reilly M(2011) 'Towards a curatorial activism essay' *Maura O'Reilly publications and Essay* [online], pp. 11 - 22. Available at:
<https://www.maurareilly.com/pdf/essays/CIAFessay.pdf> (Accessed: 10 January, 2023)

ruangrupa (2022), 'Anti-Semitism Accusations against documenta: A Scandal about a Rumor' *E-Flux*. [Online]. Available at:
<https://www.e-flux.com/notes/467337/anti-semitism-accusations-against-documenta-a-s-candal-about-a-rumor> (Accessed: 25 January, 2023)

Sholette G. 2022. 'A short and incomplete history of "bad" curating as collective resistance'. *E- Flux* [online], Available at:
<https://www.e-flux.com/criticism/491800/a-short-and-incomplete-history-of-bad-curating-as-collective-resistance> (Accessed: 09 January, 2023)

Sternfeld, N. (2020). 'How Do We Come Together in a World that Isolates Us?' In M. von Oswald & J. Tinius (Eds.), *Across Anthropology: Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial*, Leuven University Press. JSTOR [online]. pp. 362 - 374. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv125jqxp.24> (Accessed: 04 January, 2023)

Teh, D. (2012). 'Who Cares a Lot? Ruangrupa as Curatorship'. *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, 30, pp. 108 - 117. Available at:
<https://doi.org/10.1086/667250> (Accessed: 10 January, 2023)

Wai, W.Y.C. (2019). 'Curator as Collaborator: A Study of Collective Curatorial Practices in Contemporary Art', *Journal of Urban Culture Research*. Centre for Art, Society and Transformation (CAST), School of Architecture and Design, RMIT University. Australia. 18, pp. 80 - 91[online] Available at:
<https://so04.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/JUCR/article/view/194832/135493> (Accessed: 15 December, 2022)

Wark, J. (2001). 'Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson.' *Woman's Art Journal*, 22(1), pp. 44 - 50.JSTOR [online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1358731> (Accessed: 12 November, 2022)

Illustrations (Online Photographs)

Lohnes, T. (2022) 'Taring Padi, People's Justice', *Getty Images* [Online]. Available at: [justice/https://www.gettyimages.ie/detail/news-photo/detail-of-the-mural-called-peoples-justice-by-the-news-photo/1404059348?adppopup=true](https://www.gettyimages.ie/detail/news-photo/detail-of-the-mural-called-peoples-justice-by-the-news-photo/1404059348?adppopup=true) (Accessed: 08 January, 2023)