

Transmission for Transformation: On Artistic Pedagogies and Democracy

Fall Symposium

As part of the symposium series *Gender and Equality in the Arts*

13 – 14 November 2025

Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW

On-site and online:

Auditorium D 1.04, Tower Building, Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW

→ **LIVESTREAM**

With contributions by Daniel Bozhkov, Jurriaan Cooman, Özgür Demirci, Edwige Dro, Wafa Gabsi, Selom Koffi Kudjie, Paul Pfeiffer, Sadie Plant, Lea Porsager, Filipa Ramos, and Carmen Winant

Moderated by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer
with Ruth Estévez and Kateryna Botanova

Research: Marion Ritzmann

Press: Anna Francke

A collaboration of Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW, Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, and Culturescapes 2025 Sahara

The symposium is open to the public and will be held in English.
Free admission

More information and program: dertank.ch

skowheganart.org

culturescapes.ch

What is the transformative potential of the transmission of knowledge? Transformation at once aesthetic and social, poetic and political, yes, but what else? In a global moment when academies, universities, and cultural institutions are being assailed and defunded by increasingly anti-democratic regimes across the world, the radical importance of artistic education must reassert itself. For its transformative potential is not just for the artists within its systems, but for democratic society and its wildly vulnerable structures at large. Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW, in collaboration with Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture and Culturescapes 2025 Sahara, will thus dedicate its fall symposium to artistic transmission and transformation writ large, and to the production of pedagogies that can resist the anti-intellectual, supremacist political forces of the present. To create and sustain environments in which artistic practices are nurtured and centered on transformation—across generations and geographies—this is our aim.

True transformation rarely occurs in isolation. Nor does art. As Edward Said once noted, paraphrasing T. S. Eliot: “No artist of any art has his complete meaning alone.” Thus for Institute Art Gender Nature’s fall symposium at the Basel Academy of Art and Design FHNW, in Switzerland, we are partnering with two cultural institutions devoted to artistic education in its abundant guises and geographies. Skowhegan was founded in 1946 in the United States by a group of artists, and its alternative art school in Maine remains devoted and governed by artists; Culturescapes, a transdisciplinary Swiss arts festival dedicated to intercultural exchange, is engaged in a four-year

program devoted to the Saharan region, its cultural practices, diverse epistemologies, and political histories and futures. Together with them—namely Ruth Estévez, co-director of Skowhegan, and Kateryna Botanova, co-curator of Culturescapes—Institute Art Gender Nature will dedicate its autumn symposium to the artistic transmissions and transformations that happen both inside and outside the institution.

Art schools—whether public and within a state academic system, like HGK Basel FHNW, or privately organized, like Skowhegan and Culturescapes—are structured around ideas of community and its culture, both ongoing and newly created every term. In an era when the social is placed under such expert political pressure, and when community building is often antithetical to the very systems in which we live and work, how might we teach collective practices as much as the transfer of knowledge and artistic techniques, so as to ensure that the students leave our institutions with this set of democratic skills and priorities, both as an ethos and a practice? Too, how might we bring language and practice in alignment within our academic environments, so that one does not supersede the other? In the academies, as in contemporary culture at large, there is often a real pressure to perfect a certain language—political, artistic, technical—while the very practices that such languages speak to seem to disappear. How can teaching install the importance of their alliance, making room for ambiguity, uncertainty, and opacity, so that the projection of false authority of knowledge production is instead replaced with the complications of practice and learning in real time?

That said, the conceptual utility of artistic systems habitually dictates how we should discuss and present art. The instrumental reason emphasizes the effectiveness of images and words based on what one believes an audience to expect. Similarly, the art market dictates artistic formulas, as biennials and museums increasingly align with a capitalist system that favors funds over ideas. What is the role, then, of poetic imagination in terms of self-reflective and communal practices and sensibilities? Is it possible to develop alternative forms of art production that transcend the market and the competitive mechanisms that are imposed on art academies and spaces? Are there any remaining places—real and true—for artists to rehearse their imaginations?

We believe, fervently, that art schools and education initiatives—in all their myriad forms and experimental factors—are such a space. The symposium's participants will include celebrated artists from Skowhegan's long history, exceptional figures from artistic and educational initiatives across Saharan Africa and its diasporas, and those integral to the teaching community of the Institute Art Gender Nature and Switzerland at large. Artist, thinkers, poets, filmmakers, performers, educators, curators: all will consider the role of artistic solidarity and the transmission of knowledge in self-reflective and communal practices. For all believe in the transformative possibilities of artistic life—one based in the social—as well as in those future generations who might further such knowledge.

Transmission for Transformation is part of the biannual symposia series, ongoing since 2018, curated by Chus Martínez and Quinn Latimer of the Institute Art Gender Nature. In February 2026, *Transmission for Transformation* will have a second iteration at Skowhegan's program space in New York. The symposium also acts in concordance with the forthcoming HGK Basel FHNW book, *Desire for Transmission: On Movements of Materials and Knowledges* (Christoph Merian Verlag, 2026). The second volume in the *Basel Dialogues* critical book series, edited by Claudia Perren and Quinn Latimer, *Desire for Transmission* will feature conversations from the HGK Basel FHNW's lecturers and guests on issues of artistic and political transformation, and technologies of transmission, image production, and justice.

The symposium is dedicated to the memory of Refaat Alareer.

Technical team: Emily Harries, Charlotte Horn, Daniele Praiano, Konrad Sigl, Kim Surenthiran

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BIOGRAPHIES OF PARTICIPANTS

Kateryna Botanova is an independent cultural researcher and curator who lives and works between Ukraine and Switzerland. She writes and lectures on ecosystems, decoloniality, and solidarity in societal transformations and cultural practices. She co-curates the Swiss multidisciplinary biennial *Culturescapes*, for which she has worked with the cultural landscapes of the Amazon and Northern and Western African regions (2019–25). She is an affiliated senior curator of the Research Platform of the PinchukArtCenter, Kyiv.

Daniel Bozhkov is a Bulgarian-born artist based in New York City. He employs a variety of media in his work, from fresco to performance and video. In his practice, he often works with professionals from various fields and enters the worlds of genetic science, department mega-stores, and world-famous tourist sites as an amateur intruder/visitor who functions as a producer of new strains of meaning into seemingly closed systems. Bozhkov is a recipient of the Guggenheim Fellowship, a Visual Arts Grant from The Foundation for Contemporary Art, and the Rome Prize of the American Academy.

Jurriaan Cooman is the founder and artistic director of *Culturescapes*, a multidisciplinary biannual cultural festival held in Basel and across Switzerland. After studying at the University of Basel, he became a dancer of eurythmy at the Goetheanum in Dornach. In the 1990s, he became a producer and tour manager for independent theater and dance groups. He has been a festival maker since 1995. He is a board member of the European Festival Association (EFA) and sits on the program committee of ISPA.

Özgür Demirci, in his videos and installations, brings a poetic aesthetic to a political perspective, exploring memory, testimony, and the trace of the unseen. His works navigate a mythological path, where the personal and the collective converge, extending into the terrains of industrial legacy, machinery, masculinity, and the socio-economic transformations orbiting automobile culture. He is a co-founder of MONITOR, an independent video-focused art initiative in Izmir, Turkey, and he is also a part-time lecturer at Izmir University of Economics, Faculty of Fine Arts and Design. He's currently a resident at Atelier Mondial in Basel/Münchenstein, as part of *HGK BASEL @ Atelier Mondial*, invited by Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW, and in collaboration with the SAHA Foundation, Istanbul.

Edwige Dro is a writer, translator, and literary curator from Côte d'Ivoire. She works at the intersections of literature, feminist thought, and the arts. She is the founder of 1949, a library in Abidjan of women's writings from Africa and the Black world focused on feminist and women-led decolonial practices. The library is named for the year when women marched against the colonial government in the southern port of Grand Bassam.

Ruth Estévez is a writer, performer, and curator who develops new artistic fields of knowledge through historical research and interdisciplinary narratives. She is co-director of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture; visiting professor at MICA's Rinehart School of Sculpture, Baltimore; and adjunct faculty at the School of Visual Arts curatorial program in New York. She organized "Idiorhythmic" at MACBA in Barcelona (2017–20) and directed REDCAT/Calarts Theater (2012–18). She is currently preparing a series of choreographed lecture-performances on the fraught history and enduring impact of intelligence testing for the Vera List Center in NY.

Wafa Gabsi is a researcher, curator, and art critic with a PhD in Art Sciences from the Cultural Studies Department of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. She was an assistant professor at the University of Architecture and Design, in Tunis, and she has worked as an editorial correspondent for *Ibraaz*, the editorial platform for contemporary African and Middle Eastern art, from 2007 to 2012. In 2020, she founded the contemporary art platform ARCHIVART. It serves as a space for visibility, promotion, and archiving of works, texts, and content related to the projects of Tunisian, Arab, and African artists.

Selom Koffi Kudjie is the Artistic Director of Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art, in Tamale, Ghana. An artist and curator, he recently organized the exhibition *Notes on Friendship: Breaking Bread*, at Nairobi Contemporary Art, in Kenya. His own work is informed by drawing, which is approached as a conceptual and relational medium, and considered as a site to reflect on technological objects mediating our social relations. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Curatorial Studies, at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.

Quinn Latimer is a writer, editor, curator, and Head of the MA at the Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW. She is the author of *Like a Woman: Essays, Readings, Poems* (2017), *Sarah Lucas: Describe This Distance* (2013), *Film as a Form of Writing* (2013), and *Rumored Animals* (2012). Her recent curatorial projects include *SIREN (some poetics)*, which explored technologies of myth and mouth, earth and alarm, at Amant, New York, and *Perpetual Language: Patricia L. Boyd and Na Mira*, made under the signs and spirits of Roland Barthes and Teresa Hak Kyung Cha, at Croy Nielsen, Vienna. She was editor-in-chief of publications for documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel.

Chus Martínez is a writer and curator, and Head of Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW. She is curator of Ocean Space, in Venice, for TBA21–Academy; curatorial director of der TANK, in Basel; and Artistic Director of the 36th Ljubljana Biennale (2025). Previously, Martínez was curator of KölnSkulptur #9 and has curated numerous exhibitions. Her books include *Like This: Natural Intelligence as Seen by Art* (2022), *Corona Tales: Let Life Happen to You* (2020), and *Club Univers* (2017). Previously, she was Head of the Department of Artistic Direction for DOCUMENTA (13), in Kassel.

Paul Pfeiffer is an artist from Honolulu, Hawaii, who lives and works in New York. He often recasts the visual language of mass media spectacle to examine how images shape our awareness of ourselves and the world, in work that encompasses video, photography, installation, and sculpture. Pfeiffer's work has been shown widely, including at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin; and Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil. Pfeiffer's first large-scale retrospective, at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2023–24) traveled to the Guggenheim Bilbao and to the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago.

Sadie Plant is a writer and thinker who teaches in the Contemporary Arts Practice MA at the Hochschule der Künste Bern. She comes from Birmingham, in the UK, where she published three books in the 1990s: *The Most Radical Gesture*, about the situationists; *Zeros and Ones*, an alternative, feminist account of the history and nature of digital technology; and *Writing on Drugs*, which discusses the influence of psychoactive substances on mainstream Western culture. Her latest publication is *Comment lire a bookshelf in einem Buch*, published by Spector Books.

Lea Porsager probes the tension between quantum theory, tantric technologies, and feminist theory, in a practice that spans film, sculpture, text, and earthworks. She holds a PhD from Malmö Art Academy/ Lunds University (2021), followed by Mads Øvlisen Postdoc Fellowship (2023–25). Her exhibitions include Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; dOCUMENTA (13), Kassel; and the 14th Istanbul Biennial. She was awarded the Carl Nielsen and Anne Marie Carl-Nielsen Scholarship in 2014. Her large-scale earthwork and memorial Gravitational Ripples was inaugurated in Stockholm in 2018.

Filipa Ramos, PhD, is a writer and curator whose research focuses on how contemporary art engages with nature and ecology. She is Lecturer at Institute Art Gender Nature HGK Basel FHNW and Artistic Director of Loop Festival, Barcelona. Ramos was curator of the Art Basel Film sector (2020–24) and a founding curator of the online artists' cinema Vdrome (since 2013). With Lucia Pietroiusti, she is the curator of *The Shape of a Circle in the Mind of a Fish* (2018–onwards). Recent projects include *BESTIARI*, the Catalan representation at the 60th Venice Biennale; *Persones Persons*, the 8th Biennale Gherdëina (with Pietroiusti); and *Bodies of Water*, the 13th Shanghai Biennale. Her book, *The Artist as Ecologist* (2025) pursues art's engagement with environmental thought and action.

Carmen Winant is an artist and the Roy Lichtenstein Chair of Studio Art at Ohio State University. Her work utilizes archival and authored photographs to examine feminist care networks, with particular emphasis on intergenerational, multiracial, and sometimes transnational coalition building. Winant is a 2019 Guggenheim Fellow in photography, a 2020 FCA Artist Honoree, and a 2021 American Academy of Arts and Letters award recipient. She is also a community organizer, prison educator, and mother to her two children, Carlo and Rafa, shared with her partner, Luke Stettner.