

# AIPCC



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# AN INTER PERIPHERY CENTRE FOR 'CONTEMPO- RANITIES'<sup>1</sup>

CENTERING  
INTER-PERIPHERAL  
MAKING IN  
THE PERIPHERY



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<sup>1</sup>'Contemporanities' is a word I have coined to refute the idea of one singular notion of what contemporary actually is. There are many versions of the contemporary and these different versions are like different rivers that do not all need to meet and flow into the same sea to be valid rivers. Eurocentric viewpoints focus on the contemporary as a singular notion that is tied to their own locations and practices. Based on this understanding 'the contemporary' can be introduced to a non-European space that is somehow not yet contemporary. This thinking is behind a lot of the movement of contemporary artists around the world and it seeks to infect local art scenes with the contemporary. European art centres jockey to be understood as the epicentre of the contemporary, which has moved between Paris, Rome, London or New York at different times. If enough artists from these epicentres congregate in another geographical location, that space is then understood to be at the forefront of contemporary art practices but only for the duration of their stay. Famously, this is the art fair model of the Venice Biennale.

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WHAT /

SPACE  
AIPCC  
WHAT

**Aipcc is a  
300m<sup>2</sup> space  
for making /  
thinking /  
being,  
instituted  
by a black  
female artist  
and located  
in Bavaria in  
Germany.**

Aipcc is above all an attempt to think differently and take up a self defined/determined space. As a black female artist, creating this space in 2017 was necessary to help me endure many aspects of other existing arts spaces.

I welcome the opportunity to share the concepts behind Aipcc in written form in the same way that I invite photographers to document my sculptural works in photographic form.

Photographic documentations are somehow always bound to 'fail; in the sense that they are an impoverished experience of the whole sculpture. All the same, I am aware that, for many black female artists, all that remains of their work is photographic documentation.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps this document, which is somehow bound to fail to capture the

experience of Aipcc, is what will remain of Aipcc. Aipcc has welcomed many artists, thinkers and creatives over the years. However, it is still more solid as a conceptual framework than as an actual space that works in the way I would like it to.

This is because of who I am.

Who I am has also enabled the creation of this framework.

Who I am (time and cash poor) has also limited the development of Aipcc, leaving some of these concepts unrealised.

I recognise that cultural and economic resources flow like water away from black single mothers. In our cultural landscape, I stand on a hill and not in a valley.

Aipcc was born out of a number of push factors:

**First and foremost, it was in response to the shared testimony of black artists who had had bad experiences in other residencies. Horror stories included: Tokenism<sup>3</sup>; racism; explainer roles<sup>4</sup>; context-vacuum spaces<sup>5</sup>, showing without communities<sup>6</sup>; "I am the only black person at my artist talk"; homophobia; writing endless proposals that get tweaked and twerked until you don't remember what you actually wanted to make any more; making on a small scale and not being able to contemplate bigger scales; working out of your apartment; not making work; not being able to document your work.**

<sup>2</sup> There are so few black females with a sculptural practice; Augusta Savage is one of the exceptions, producing works that are mostly lost and only known through photographs.

<sup>3</sup> Tokenism as opposed to inclusion or diversity.

<sup>4</sup> Explainer roles, artist is repeatedly asked to facilitate insights to the whole culture as and when white people feel the need to know.

<sup>5</sup> Context vacuum spaces, Artists are expected to show the work in spaces that don't have texts that contextualise the work in cultural terms. Prevailing dominant understandings are therefore privileged. No text is not every text but prevailing texts.

<sup>6</sup> Showing without communities (SWC), is artists making work with and about communities that never are invited to enter the artspace nor would they ordinarily do so.

Other Planes of There II — Photo: Courtney Henry



To draw a line under these situations, creating a respite space for creatives led to the following invitation, which was first extended in 2010:

**Tranquil, surrounded by woodland lakes, trees and fields, two small villages with hardly any traffic and sparsely-populated.**

**A private 200m<sup>2</sup> unobstructed white cube type warehouse**

**space – floodlit using natural skylights during the day and using strip lighting at night. With a poured concrete floor and electricity.**

**Bathroom, office space tea/coffee making facilities in additional rooms.**

**Run by a black female artist (me). You don't have to write a proposal.**

**The space and self-catering or catered accommodation can be enjoyed as a package for as little as €30 for a day.**

This type and size of space is something usually offered to artists at the end of a commercially successful career. This project aims to enable black artists in particular to develop and meet other peripheral practitioners to make and document work on a scale that would otherwise be inaccessible to them at a mid or early stage in their career.

Carers are invited to bring their dependents. The space is in a peaceful location where there is barely any traffic and there are many other spaces to explore. The site is on the edge of a forest with lakes for swimming and a large green field for outdoor meetings and making outdoor works. The accommodation is wheelchair accessible with a wheelchair-friendly bathroom. Participants can cook and live together or they can be catered for and live separately. In 2017, this space was opened with the following text:

**"It can be challenging to create the work you need to make and have it fit funding criteria that don't really anticipate your concerns. When you have managed the hard work of getting in, you might then have to challenge the internal workings of organisations that predate you and your focus.**

**It is vitally important that we create our own spaces with our own agendas. For artists of colour and other peripheral makers, radical self-care is making the work for which a funding criterion has yet to exist and afterwards to be able to carry on and make more work.**

**Perhaps we can stop fighting to make and be seen on our own terms, in the centre. For some work, there is more room and resources go further in the periphery. We can co-create and encounter each other on our own terms in spaces of our own making in the periphery. We can then use tools that can escape the centre-periphery model such as the internet to share and disseminate our work.**

**Now more than ever we need expansive, powerful visions on**

**our own terms. We cannot afford the double burden of fighting to make the work and fighting to make the space work for the work.**

**We cannot afford to have our work be dominated by sharing what is wrong with 'them' and 'their institutions' obliquely or explicitly.**

**As long as funding committees fail to include individuals that could hope to access our experiences, we should not subject all our making to such scrutiny and selection processes. We cannot ignore the role our creativity has in urban centres on paving the way for gentrification and the resulting exclusion of the communities that we are identified with.**

**Therefore: An Inter-Peripheral Centre for Contemporaneities Aipcc or A centre for the periphery."**

AIPCC A FIVE LETTER<sup>7</sup>

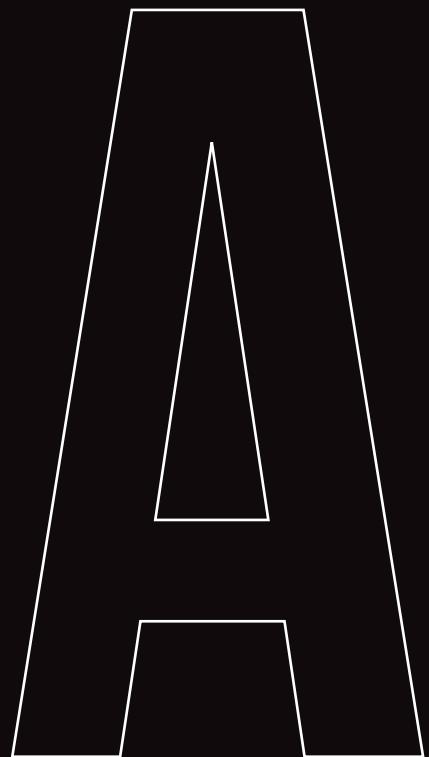
FIVE THEORY SITE<sup>8</sup>

**Aipcc was  
born out of the  
understanding  
I developed  
from a  
number of  
other places,  
people and  
artists as  
I tried to  
find my  
place in art.**

**Behind each  
letter of  
Aipcc there is  
a story/theory.  
Let me start  
with A:**



Kieth Piper — Photo: Sonia E. Barrett



IS  
FOR  
AN

Attending the 2014 revisionist conference run by the late Okui Enwezor, when he was Director of Haus der Kunst in Munich, led me to understand how damaging the prefix 'The' can be.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The British Museum. 'The' creates the totalising space that sets up expectations that cannot be met. The Museum of Modern Art sets itself up to be representative of modern art.

Okui's conference started to unpack all of the work that would be needed for so many institutions to hold collections to begin to justify such a title.

However, it struck me at the end of the conference how much more useful it would be to refuse this totalising space – not to make it contain "all the world's futures"<sup>6</sup> so to speak. And that the totalising space was created by the 'the'.

We could save a lot of work by remaining honest and simply calling it 'A' Metropolitan Museum of Art instead of 'The' Metropolitan Museum of Art. This makes room for a Metropolitan Museum

of Art in Uganda, in Jamaica etc...

'A' or 'An' as in 'An; apple is different from 'The' apple. A Metropolitan Museum of Art would admit it is one of a number of possible versions, one local to this place but it would admit or even invite the possibility that there are others and that, whilst this is a singular exceptional space, it isn't a singular authoritative canon. Because it isn't.

We can let go of the idea of trying to include all and concede that, to have a global picture, you will have to visit global sites and their globally diverse contexts. It is the death of the totalising omniscient authorship of European culture.

It is beyond the diversification and inclusion in Eurocentric spaces and structures, beyond European frameworks. The irony of Aipcc is that it is at the centre of Europe, in the middle of nowhere according to art geographies.

To write 'A' is to admit the fallacy of a totalising singular critical point of access to culture that everyone must make

a pilgrimage to before they can somehow be able to articulate culture.

Of course, there is a sense out there in the world that such places exist and it is vitally important that they include multiple narratives. This work is critically important. However, it still really fails to resist the idea of a master narrative.

I decided I would stop trying to get into the "The" cultural spaces and create an 'A' cultural space: Aipcc. The first letter stands for An.

I also was excited at the idea of lots of spaces that refuse the totalising 'the' and linking them up. This explains the second part of the title:

<sup>6</sup>The Title of his Biennale.



# IS FOR INTER

To go beyond refusing the 'the' is to actively signpost your dependency on other spaces, to flag up your non singularity.

As an inter-space, you are not only shunning singularity but you are actively proposing flows and networks that might not even privilege you. It is to admit taking a backseat, being a conduit, a node, a conductor.

Many European spaces function in this way, lending expertise and parts of their collections, but it is mostly a side function and not a central part of their work. The key function is always the site of lending rather than the actual exchange.<sup>7</sup>

My experience of residencies is that the same artists cycle through many arts spaces in a permanent rotation. Each space will then hold that artist up as an example of their care and attention and explain how they are enabling the artist's practice.

I have witnessed artists applying for their next

residency while still on a residency.

Actually all these spaces are 'inter' spaces for artists. Together they facilitate a certain set of 'mobile artists' collectively.<sup>8</sup>

Aipcc wants to embrace that inter status.

Having attended TransArts, where interdisciplinarity was a curricular requirement, I see this as a powerful way of working.

Aipcc is also interdependent, with the farmhouse sharing essential facilities such as bathrooms, electricity and water with the family members who permanently live there.

Gentrification is the result of artists in centres not engaging in considerate relationships with economically challenged communities. Moving around urban centres, gentrifying them and then moving to another poor migrant community is always inappropriate (although

welcomed by capitalists). For a black space, it is highly inappropriate. Aipcc locates itself in a subservient inter-relationship with the existing community that is more economically powerful than Aipcc is. Via self-catering and local consumption, it takes care not to create gentrification.

This brings me to the P in Aipcc.

Some of the first Caribbean artists I studied were exploring interconnectedness in their work such as Leroy Claire, Leonard Daily and Sonia Boyce.

The idea of the periphery was huge for me (see next section): inter-periphery would connect peripheries without involving the centre. This seemed even more radical and powerful to me.

<sup>7</sup>One exception to this was the MOMA in Berlin where the NY MOMA Collection was hosted in Berlin by The Neuen Nationalgalerie in Berlin. The exchange stepped to the fore but it was somehow still about two art centres.

<sup>8</sup>Mobile artists are those that "stay light" they don't have dependents or caregiving roles or relationships with a particular geography of a person who is tied to a place. They are not committed to generating an income outside of their art practice that is location specific. They don't have passport or visa issues. They are often but not always white, male, financially stable and polyamorous or single.



D

IS  
FOR  
PERIPHERY

Black American artist Carrie Mae Weems really embodied for me the idea of art centres as a physically exclusionary place long before I began to start to covet access. Her series of works where she documented her body outside a number of art institutions in art centres really had a powerful impact on me.

Her images explained the architectural shoring up of 'the' in The Museum of Modern Art. The Tate, The Centre Pompidou. They embodied a physical menace dwarfing a singular black female body.

**She depicted the centre as menacing.**

Maria Galindo in the Creative Time conference at the Venice Biennale<sup>9</sup> introduced me to the idea of the periphery as a space of power for decolonial and feminist agendas. Located in Bolivia but not in its capital, she used decentred approaches and media to further a feminist agenda.

When she came on stage, screaming in a bamboo cage, she was visually

articulating things that are often left unsaid at conferences in no uncertain terms.

She was using radio, she was in the periphery, she was part of a collective, she said:

**"we are more powerful in the periphery. We have more room, more resources."**

This really hit home.

It was maths that made sense. Take a fraction of the time and money it takes to create an art centre (art centres tend to be in capital cities) and deal with the agendas in the centre, often involving a hit list of issues. Instead, put this energy into placemaking with wishlists in the periphery.

To create a centre is competitive, and takes up a lot of time and resources. You pay more rent to live in an art centre (NY; London ect). Transport is expensive. Part time work is hard to come by.

When you manage to get a foothold in an institution in the art centre, you

face difficult agendas that arise because the space was not created with you in mind.

Rather it was created for a body from another gender and race with no caring commitments. Sometimes the very definition of culture in these institutions is aggressively pitted against the culture you draw on or create from to make your work.

This can be as simple as not having anyone knowledgeable in your artistic vernacular in the institution. It can also be an institution's inability to serve the communities your work is drawn from or involves participation with.

What I call 'hit lists' arise from issues that require your attention in the institution you are in before you can even begin to make, or share there. These 'hit lists' can exhaust the artist before they can attend to their craft, or they have to become their craft.

**But what was our work before that and how could we begin to remember? Where does all that work go? Is it like 'a dream deferred'**<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> I went to Okui's Venice Biennale on a budget airline. I was not sure where I would sleep because I knew I had to witness this event. I remember walking past gondolas and wondering if I could sneak under those rocking covers and sleep there without anyone noticing?

<sup>10</sup> See Langston Hughes's poem "Harlem (a Dream deferred)"

At Aipcc I wanted to move from hit lists to wish lists. In other words, to start from a list of wishes, things I would actively want to see first as opposed to simply responding to the things I wanted to sweep away.

The power of moving from a combative 'fixing' stance to a 'what would I like if I was in on the creation from the get go' was a powerful shift that influenced my practice.

**It is the difference between always having to re-sew someone else's suit to work in and then deciding what kind of naked I wanted to be.**

Some of those wishes were:

**Space to make large works, the kind of large works privileged artists get to make.**

**I had been to the studios of successful male artists in Berlin and met the women that worked for them. I had exhibited in their store cupboards.**

**I wanted that kind of space. But I did not want it just for me and the assistants I didn't have.**

**Space to walk and think in nature.**

**Space to be alone and dive deep into work or congregate and think/make together with others.**

**Space to move between these polarities as individuals feel fits their mental health.**

**Low expenses, creating more time to be able to do things that would otherwise have to be done more quickly and on a smaller scale in the city.**

**A space that welcomes black people and is welcoming to artists.**

**Space to make mistakes on a grand scale and the ability to share work in a participatory way by invitation without 'audiences'.**

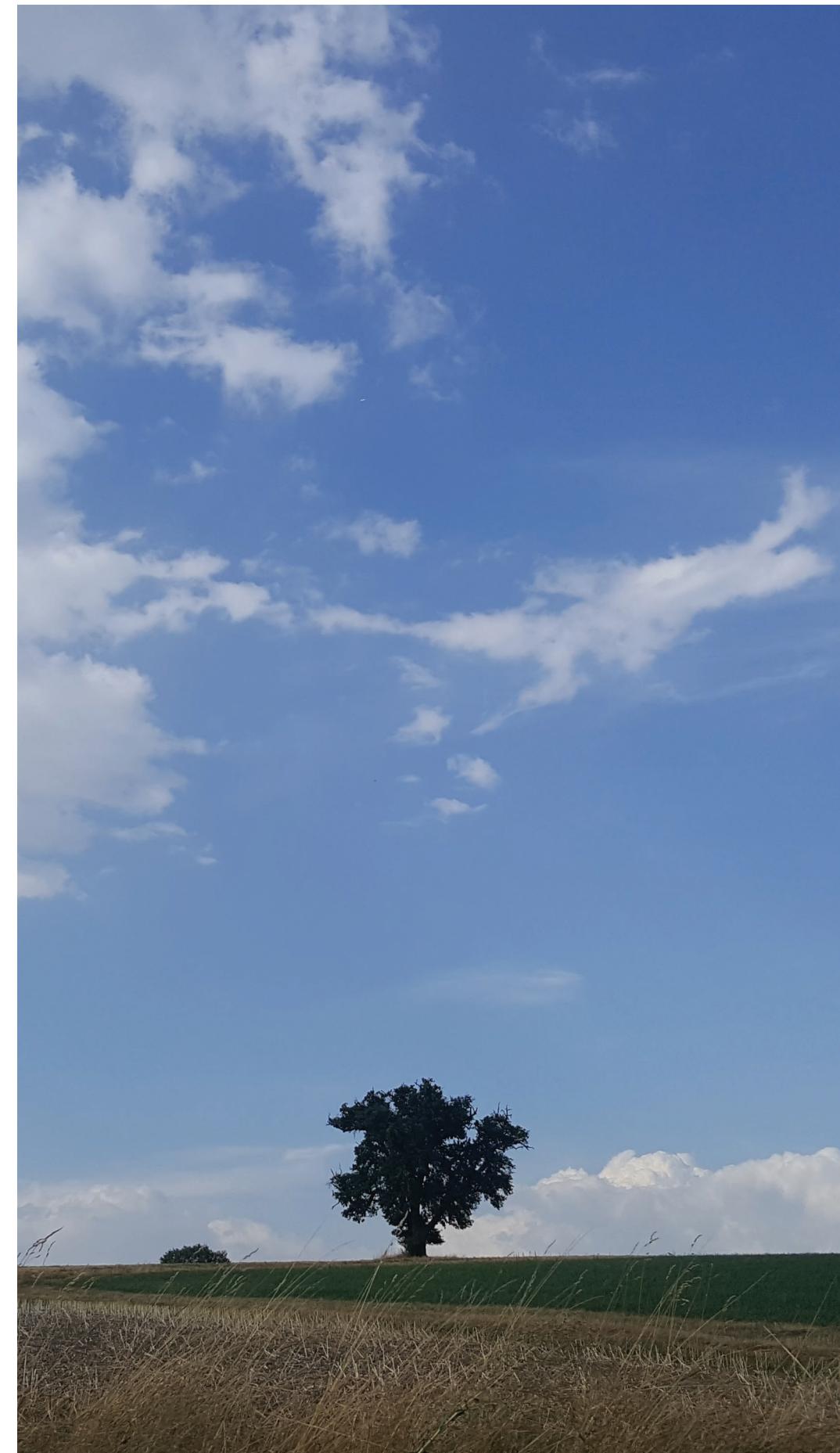


Photo: Sonia E. Barrett

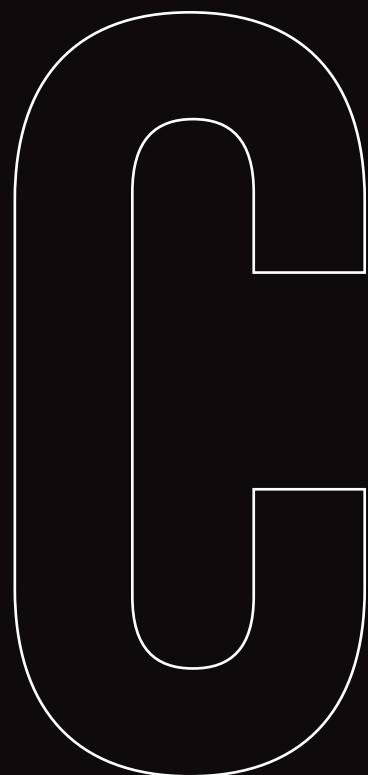
#### Carrie Mae Weems: The Museum Series

<https://studiomuseum.org/exhibition/carrie-mae-weems-museum-series>

Visit her website: <http://carriemaeeweems.net/>

#### Huellas Maria Galindo

<http://mujerescreando.org/huellas-maria-galindo-artista-visual-performer-cofundadora-del-colectivo-mujeres-creando-bolivia/>



# IS FOR CENTRE

An inter-peripheral centre because I wanted to not just recognise the existing geographies of resources and cultural attention but also to disrupt them.

My experience of cultural creation in the centre was that, when I met artists from the diaspora, we were all so busy handling the written/unwritten agendas of the centre that we didn't get time to address us and our concerns.

A peripheral centre is to disavow the mapping process. It is to take these geographies at once very seriously and at the same time to make them ridiculous.

Space is a scarce resource at the centre. The gift of time at another residency in the USA<sup>11</sup> enabled me to understand the relationship my practice was having to space, or my lack of it. When I was given one of the largest studios I was shocked but it pushed my work in new and exciting ways. I had never known until then that my space (or lack of it) was affecting my practice to that extent.

All the same, I dealt with the residency's name as a 'colony' in a number of works before getting to my intended work. After this gift of space, I wanted to enable other black artists who were maybe not as adept at writing a proposal or perhaps didn't have time to write. Apart from resource scarcity, the thing that demarcates spaces in the art centres of the world is the lack of affordable space for creativity.

At 300m<sup>2</sup>, Aipcc offers creative space on a scale that would only be available to an artist that was at a late stage of their trajectory.

The space with its concrete floors and lighting looks like any successful white cube space in any art centre. But outside, unseen the turkeys scratch, tomatoes ripen and corn blows in the wind.

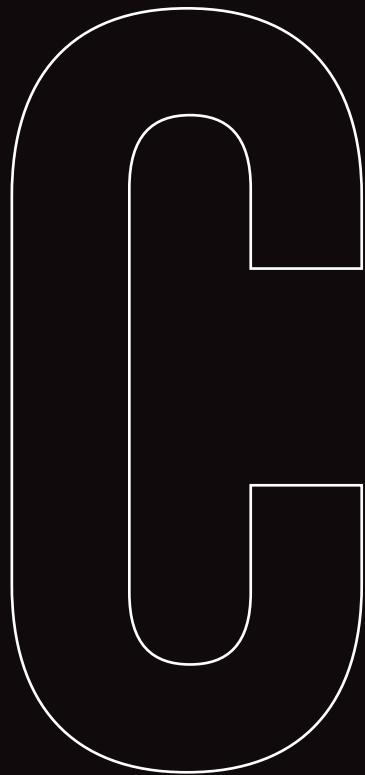
The space feels like the kind of release I get from deliciously illicit black comedians. These comedians take recognisable existing geographies/power structures and overlay them with hidden lived experiences

of geographies/power tilting them in such a way as to make them into insider jokes. This arts space is a bit like that. The joke is not at the expense of the most vulnerable; it is 'punching up'.

<sup>11</sup> Macdowell (then called the Macdowell Artists Colony).



# IS FOR CONTEMPORANITIES



This is a new word I have coined to express the idea of the contemporary happening in different ways in different places at the same time.

It struck me that art is too narrow a lens for the issues facing us globally and that the most valuable conversations and actions will not just be inter-peripheral but they will also be interdisciplinary.

It strikes me that the contemporary issues of climate catastrophe and racial injustice require radically different thinking/moving/dwelling spaces to inhabit the questions, pose better questions and intuit ways forward. I still think those spaces will be relevant to augment the online spaces we currently need.

I wanted to make a space for 'all our contemporaries' so Okwui's idea of "all our futures" would be at all possible. Not to endorse a linear understanding of time but rather to have people on the fringes now meeting beyond disciplines in this space. To date, Aipcc has hosted black geographers, activists, dancers, artists and filmmakers.

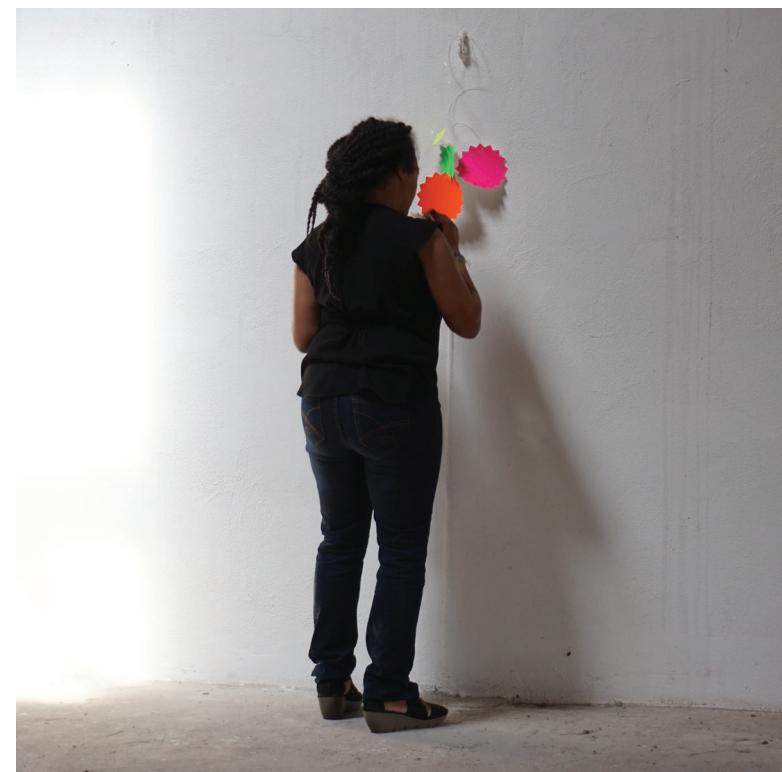


Photo: Monica Haller

# ALLYSHIP: HOW CAN YOU CONNECT?

**Allyship, are  
you in a white  
arts space?  
What can  
you do?**

MFA students The University of Minnesota — Photo: Monica Haller



In order for Aipcc to come to full realisation, it would mean that other organisations need to do more than borrow its concepts for their own spaces.

Allyship is not just about inviting black creatives into your white space, proactively carving out a little space for them – although that can be a clunky start.

I would like to suggest allyship as potentially twofold:

Firstly, it could involve recognising your structure is raced and white and not somehow ‘neutral’ – integrating an aspect of a black-led organisation into your white one. That would require you to look at

the aspects of your organisation predicated on race; it would require that you study how other organisations have managed things differently.

Secondly, it could also involve a sharing of current resources to support a directorship or artist bursary and enable black creatives to work on their own and not on anyone else’s terms, potentially in other (black run) spaces and not your own.

Recognise that the resources you have are because what looks like a natural lush valley is actually a pit that your culture has dug. Black individuals are up on the dry hill slope in that landscape.

It would mean allowing artists to pick the resources that suit them and leave those that don’t, without taking offence.

I might not want to make work in your space but instead I might want access to your mailing list. Don’t make me put up with your space to get access to your list. Don’t ask me to fix your space. Get a consultant in and pay them to find out what is not working and why.

# HOW CAN YOU ASSIST

**Support an artist to attend Aipcc (or any black arts space) with a stipend that can be named after your space, organisation or self (financial support).**

**Let people know about this space in your newsletter to members (no financial cost).**

**Encourage artists of colour you know to apply for a directorship term at aipcc (no financial cost).**

**Don't know an artist of colour? Support a directorship term with equipment you no longer use or offer financial support.**

**Commission a work to be made in a black-run space.**

**Hold a class or workshop or retreat in a black-owned space, and pay to do so.**



Photo: Katayoun Amjadi

# THANKS TO

**The people, creatures and elements that actively created the physical and logistical aspects of this space.**

**These include:**

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Familie Pfeifer:  
Roland Pfeifer

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(nee Canaletto)

Monika Haller

Tia Simone Gardner  
The planet Sun

University of Minneapolis

Sim and Nic

JUXTA

DAAD

The Studies Abroad Programme

The Turkeys

The Scopic Collective

The Soil

"What the Hell She Doin"  
Collective

Sim and Nic

And all the artists who enabled the space and were enabled there, producing public and private outcomes.

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Thank you so much, Vicky and Ella, for all your hard work with this text



Photo: Prema



# AN INTER PERIPHERY CENTRE CONTEMPORANITIES