

leo

# *everything is every-thing*

and approaching the question of the black artist, Langston Hughes writes the essay „The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain“, which is opened and developed upon an analysis of the following statement by a young black artist:

I DO NOT WANT TO BE A  
**BLACK** POET... I WANT TO BE  
A **POET**

Even though writing in 1926 the proeminent man of the Harlem Renaissance provides as basis for his text a statement that resonates with current discourses on identity and with the dismissal of such category. Despite the appeal in that direction, Hughes's next step consists of unraveling the former statement and of exposing its underneath content: the author affirms, „to be a poet“, he continues, and not a **BLACK** poet, means to be like a white poet or, more specifically, it means to be **WHITE**.

leo is just a girl whose intentions are good. a collective of one person who does not believe in such things as past, present, future nor in dichotomies. to the moment, they study at the UdK Berlin.

— GUUUURLL, I WENT TO SEE THIS A-MAAAZIIING  
WHITE ARTIST'S EXHIBITION, YOU KNOW!?  
THE SUPER DOPE DUDE OF CUBISM?

— OH, YOU MEAN PICASSO?  
HE IS NOT <sup>WHITE</sup>,  
HE IS SPANISH.

Hughes asserts that the removal of the adjective <<black>> does not assure the achievement of a new status inside of society, but rather shows a performance of whiteness by bodies which are usually marked as coloured. Following his logic, to be just an artist is to be a white artist.. Therefore

A BLACK ARTIST WHO WANTS  
TO BE JUST AN ARTIST,  
IS A BLACK PERSON  
WHO WANTS TO BE  
WHITE.

To be white means to be human. Humanity and also the very idea of human being is definitely not a new invention, some of its roots can be traced to what we understand as being the *Enlightenment*. In the development and definition of the human subject (as I like to call this) the *Enlightenment* thinkers outcasted part of our species of its spectrum. Reason was the marker of humanity and so being, those who did not "perform" reason were then, by exclusion, non-human. History has a very large compilation of how this ended up.

must say  
though, I am not  
advocating that only the  
concept <>humanity<> is the  
perpetrator of the objectification  
of different bodies and maturation of  
otherness... I am underlining how, in the  
theoretical realm, this came to play a role.

With the condition that <>reason<> was the qualifier of humans and, according to Plato, people have two different drives that command their lives <>reason and passion<>, those who were overwhelmed by the second should (could) not be considered to be as human as those who mastered the first. In a speculation move, this resumes the reencounter of Africa and Europe: heart and passion on one side, brains and reason on the other, i.e. object and subject.

*europe101* says: i love the way you dance, you  
are so passionate  
*motherf\*\*\*landconnection212*: it sure wasn't yo  
mama who taught me, she ain't got the brains  
*america(pleasedontrapeme)* says: UUH! BURN! DOPE!

Post- and transhumanism approaches seem to look to this part of history and neglect how humanism inflicted on the current status of racial-politics and otherness, drawing from this concept without further deliberation. Those theory grounds defend an emancipated understanding of human beings beyond race, gender, sexuality and ethnic position, but what they seem not to be aware of is that to do so means also to strive against the growth of identity politics and intersectional works, which expose power structures related to knowledge and its development.

Seeing from afar one could say that both theories support implicitly ideal communities where people can either understand themselves as oppressed others or as emancipated beings beyond their physical bodies.

Although incoherent in regards to identity politics combined with intersectional approaches - which points towards an acknowledgement of difference and the combination of systemic forms of oppressions - this assumption seems to tackle an important point in post- and transhuman perspectives, reopening the question of <>representation>> as it has been already discussed within black communities, i.e. the fact that one single closed concept ignores divergences and bases itself on exclusion.

In the mid 90's the movie *Black is... Black Ain't* by Marlon Riggs appeared in the USA forwarding the discussion of <>representation>> inside of the black community. The film is an investigation of the complexity of <>blackness>> and its multilayered essence developed through Riggs' personal experience as a black gay man. The piece follows different black movements in the United States, questioning who they were representing and what they were aiming at.



Converging divergent points of view,  
*Black is... Black Ain't* builds itself  
upon a critique and also a celebration of  
how different blackness can be, arguing against  
one single simple definition of it and platforming as  
multiple and colorful concepts of <>black as possible.

In 1990, on the other side of the Atlantic, Kobena Mercer also addresses the question of <>representation for the black community in the occasion of a pioneering exhibition with afro-asian artists in Britain: 'The other story'. He engages himself with this attempt to show an universal narrative of ethnicities inside of the art world stressing the impossibility of such action - to put inside the white cube, a space created to the promotion, definition and celebration of high culture - a concept <>blackness that does not play with dualistic approaches of reality, rather is based on difference.

Mercer argues that art spaces function defining what enters and what does not belong to the exhibition space, and such reality unables efforts of addressing issues disconnected from universal perspectives. In other words, whereas the conditions of the exhibition frame, to represent all is a task that cannot be executed. Functioning as a selective trial, art spaces seem to present a gate quite like one that once terrorised Dante with the following inscriptions:

# ALL HOPE ABANDON YE WHO ENTER HERE

It seems like these perspectives... they all face the same issue when challenging <>blackness<> and its modes of representation, suggesting by their way that: to enter the art world and to belong to "high culture" one is expected to abandon all - or maybe some - aspects of otherness one embodies. The underneath assertion points then that not everything can fit into the <>white cube<>, because this very concept relies on exclusion to exist.

Lauyn Hill's song that entitles this essay presents an interesting point of view on this topic, when it says

It seems we lose the game, / BEFORE we even start to play

In the game of fitting in exhibition spaces - and we would like to call your attention to the usage of the word "fit" - one encounters a set of pre-determined rules, a set of humanistic or, depending on where one stands, some post- and or transhumanistic ideas. But if a question appears that cannot be framed by the language that holds many captive,