

# Playing the Decolonial; Humor, Art, Tech



23 & 24 May 2024 at Forsøgsstationen & IT University,  
Copenhagen

Convened by Britta Timm Knudsen & Miguel Sicart,

With the Support of  
The 'Playing With Ghosts' AUFF Nova  
Research Project,  
<http://decolonisingplay.com/>  
The Cultural Transformations Research  
Programme, IKK, Aarhus University  
The Centre for Digital Play, IT-  
University, Copenhagen

In two previous seminars, we have explored the concepts of play and playfulness and the role they play in building worlds and alternative realities. In this seminar, we will add humor and treat play and humor as affective drives seriously. Acknowledging that humor is derivative and parasitical to serious and heavy situations, we will look at the role of humor and playfulness in decolonizing endeavors in a range of fields – arts, games, media – and technology practices, education, comedy genres. We claim that playfulness and humor open up a field of practice rather than being just another tool in the critical toolbox. Humor and playfulness inject ambiguity, opaqueness, and dissonance into the fields in which they operate. It also seems that humor and subject-formation belong together, as well as humor and playfulness are engaging with boundary-drawing processes and vectors of inclusion and exclusion. We ask the very simple question: what does humor and playfulness bring to the table in decolonial agendas?

## 23 May at Forsøgsstationen

Sønder Boulevard 81, 1720 København V

- 10:00 Welcome – Britta Timm Knudsen on behalf of Playing with Ghosts
- 10:10 Introduction to Forsøgsstationen, Lotte Fårup
- 10:30 Stage Conversation between Julie Edel Hardenberg og Naja Dyrendom Graugaard
- 11:15 Coffee Break
- 11:30 Laughter and ‘Anticipatory Aesthetics’: Contemporary Art and Enactments of Statehood by Chrisoula Lionis  
  
Laughing in the face of evil: Taxi’s for Peace project & Kassaram by Thania Petersen
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:00 Powering Imagination through Interactive Storytelling: The Afghan-Danish Diplomatic Rebels, by Karen Waltoorp, Nilab Totakhil, Lea Glob & Mursal Khosrawi
- 15:30 Voices in the Shadows of Monuments, Audio-walk facilitated by Katrine Dirkinck-Holmfeld, Nanna Elvin Hansen & Barly Tsibanda with Q & A Session
- 17:30 End of the day

## 24 May at IT-University

3A20. Rued Langgaards Vej 7, 2300 København S

- 10.00 Welcome – Miguel Sicart
- 10:10 Stand-up comedy as a site for imagining decolonial futures, talk by Marcelle C. Dawson, University of Otago, Zoom-talk
- 10:40 The politics of decolonial memes, Britta Timm Knudsen, Playing with Ghosts project, Aarhus University
- 11:10 Coffee Break
- 11:30 That's absurd! Disruptive tactics in social media, Susanna Paasonen, University of Turku
- 12:10 Lunch
- 13:00 Decolonizing AI through playfulness, Meghna Singh, artist from Cape Town & Playing with Ghosts Project, Aarhus University
- 13:30 Understanding Affect in Reimagining Playful Learning, Jennifer Ann Skriver, Aalborg University
- 14:10 (De)colonizing the Virtual Battlefield: The Case of Escape from Tarkov, Hans Joachim Backe, Centre for Digital Play, IT-University
- 14:50 Roundtable discussion with coffee and cake facilitated and moderated by Miguel Sicart
- 16:00. End of the day



## Conveners/Performers/Participants/Presenters:

### **Britta Timm Knudsen**

- is Professor of Culture, Media and Experience Economy at the Department of Scandinavian Studies at Aarhus University and has been working on difficult heritage – Holocaust, Communism, Terrorism, Colonialism – for the last 20 years. She has been part of and directed several research projects: such as Rethinking coastal tourism – a design for new engagements (2016-2019), and ECHOES, European Colonial Heritage Modalities in Entangled Cities (H2020 2018-2021). She was recently granted the AUFF Nova Grant to the project Playing with ghosts – affective ambivalence in decolonial art practices.

### **Miguel Sicart**

- is Professor of Digital Play at the Center for Digital Play, IT University of Copenhagen and a philosopher of technology who enjoys playing with computers and questioning them in the process. He is the author of Play Matters (MIT Press, 2014), and Playing Software (MIT Press, 2023), as well as research on game ethics, game design, and philosophy. He is currently working on the ridiculous software project ([www.ridiculous.software](http://www.ridiculous.software)).

### **Lotte Faarup**

- is stage director, playwright and artistic director of Det Olske Orkester and Forsøgsstationen. She was for 18 years director of the children's and youth theatre Theater La Balance together with Dutch director Marc van der Velden; the subsequent 4 years state ensemble Corona La Balance. In 2009 founded Det Olske Orkester and Forsøgsstationen together with Øyvind Kirchhoff. She works overall in three artistic tracks: Poetic/political texts in physically expressive choreographies, musical works in disharmonious absurd frames and boundary-seeking place or audience-engaging formats.

### **Julie Edel Hardenberg**

- is from Nuuk, Greenland, and has been educated as a visual artist in Finland, Norway, England, and Denmark. For the last 30 years, she has worked with themes surrounding identity, language, and colonial structures. In 2022, she was a PhD scholar in practice-based artistic research with the title: "Between power and powerlessness – the decolonized mind," through which she investigates the impact of colonial structures on human behavior. She is currently attached to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Copenhagen, in addition to her position as associate professor at the Bergen Academy of Art and Design in Norway.

### **Naja Dyrendom Graugaard**

- is a Danish-Kalaaleq(Inuk) postdoctoral researcher at the School of Communication and Culture at Aarhus University. Her research focuses on past and present colonial relations between Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) and Denmark, Inuit knowledge and stories, and decolonizing and Indigenizing research methodologies in the Arctic. She often draws on auto-reflexive, arts-based, and collaborative approaches as ways to unsettle colonial knowledge regimes. Besides her research, she also engages in different forms of public dissemination on Nordic colonial histories through debates, workshop facilitation, creative writing, and performative engagements

### **Thania Petersen**

-Thania Petersen is a multi-disciplinary artist who uses photography, performance and installation to address the complexities of her community in contemporary South Africa. Focusing on the pre-colonial connections of the Indian Ocean between Africa and Asia. Her practice is an effort to restore lost heritage histories, and relationships. Petersen's reference points sit largely in Islam and in creating awareness about its religious, cultural and traditional practices. Petersen is represented in various public and private collections including World Cultures Museum Rotterdam (Netherlands), Smithsonian Museum (Washington DC), Oscar Niemeyer Museum Curitiba (Brazil), The Durban Art Gallery, The IZIKO South African National Gallery, Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (MOCAA), The Kilbourn Collection, The Jochen Zeitz Collection (South Africa), and The Yeoojoo City Collection (South Korea), The Perez Collection (Miami).

### **Crisoula Lionis**

- is an academic and cultural producer based between Athens and Manchester and is the author of Laughter in Occupied Palestine: Comedy and Identity in Art and Film (I.B. Tauris, 2016; Bloomsbury 2022) and editor of Comedy in Crisis: Weaponising Humour in Contemporary Art (Palgrave 2023). Lionis is Co-director of the international pedagogical artistic platform Artists for Artists, Chair of Exhibitions at Hunar Symposia in Australia, and is currently Senior Research Fellow at the University of Manchester working on AHRC project Understanding Displacement Aesthetics.

### **Diplomatic Rebel:ARTlife Film Collective**

- was selected for the CPH:DOX Lab 2022-23, an incubator for documentary projects and digital interactive technologies headed by Mark Atkin. Diplomatic Rebel is an interactive novel with game elements; a role-playing-game (RPG) where you play the 16-year-old Aryanna, a refugee to Denmark and a High School student. It makes up part of the larger ARTlife/Diplomatic Rebel Universe which also consists in a documentary film and a number of co-authored articles.

### **Karen Waltorp**

- is Director of the ARTlife film collective, associate professor and filmmaker as well as Head of the Ethnographic Exploratory and MediaLab, University of Copenhagen. She is the Recipient of the Royal Anthropological Institute award and Nordic Panorama New Nordic Voices Award for her debut documentary *Manenberg* (2010) and author of *Why Muslim Women and Smartphones: Mirror Images* (2020).

### **Lea Glob**

- is a member of ARTlife Film Collective and a graduate of The National Film School of Denmark. In her films you often find strong women, and she insists on seeing both beauty and humor of everyday life. *Apolonia, Apolonia* from 2022 is her debut as solo-director, it won the main award at IDFA 2022 and the firebird award at HKIFF 2023.

### **Mursal Khosrawi**

- is a member of ARTlife Film Collective and holds an Cand.scient.pol from the University of Copenhagen. She is a public opinion maker sharing her views on issues related to inequality, minority issues, refugees, immigration and integration policies in Denmark. She is the current President of Handletanken, which works towards equality with a focus on gender.

### **Nilab Totakhil**

-is a member of the ARTlife Film Collective and a Teach First Alumnae, and. She holds a Cand.scient.soc from Lund University. She has conducted fieldwork in India with focus on women empowerment and the impact on social structures upon a women's agency and identity, and has worked with children in a Human Right's context in Kenya. She was previously the president of AYAD: Afghan Youth Association Denmark. Totakhil is the co-author of *Why Care: Voluntary work* (2021).

**Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld**, PhD, is a visual artist, independent researcher and educator affiliated with the Uncertain Archives research collective (University of Copenhagen). Her work explores "reparative critical practices" as collaborative, audio-visual practices that explore the debris of broken histories. Current artistic work and research traverse the entangled colonial archives between the United States Virgin Islands, Ghana, Greenland, India and Denmark, often presented in video installations, performative presentations and publications. She was the head of the Institute for Art, Writing and Research at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, where she was also a postdoctoral researcher. She is the co-founder of Sorte Firkant bar & cultural venue in Copenhagen.

### **Nanna Elvin Hansen**

- is an artist and filmmaker based in Copenhagen, whose practice often focuses on questions related to politics of feminism and migration. These questions are mostly researched through collective and collaborative process of film, video and sound production. She is a member and has been part of forming the Bridge Radio Collective, which makes radio and sound about people's movements, migrant struggles and freedom of movement. She recently graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts where she studied at the Media Art School with Angela Melitopoulos and Jane Jin Kaisen.

### **Barly Tsibanda**

- was born and raised in Kinshasa, Congo. He received his education from the Academie des Beaux-Arts Kinshasa and INA (Institut National des Arts de Kinshasa), and is currently studying at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Denmark. His practice is centered around decolonization processes and anti-border regime strategies. He draws inspiration from different lived experiences with the European border regime and racism in Denmark. He has a strong connection with local activist and artist groups in Denmark and Congo. Amongst others he is a member of Bridge Radio from Copenhagen and La Folie dance crew from Kinshasa. In the work of Tshibanda the necessity to connect these two places of belonging is present.

### **Marcelle Dawson**



- is Associate Professor in Sociology at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Prior to this appointment, she was employed at the University of Johannesburg. She holds a DPhil in Politics from the University of Oxford. She currently serves as Head of the Sociology, Gender Studies and Criminology Department. Her research and teaching interests centre on social movements and popular protest, alternative futures, social identities, and cognitive justice.

### **Susanna Paasonen**

- is Professor of Media Studies at University of Turku, Finland. She is the PI of the research consortium "Intimacy in Data-Driven Culture" (2019-2025) and the author of e.g., *NSFW: Sex, Humor and Risk in Social Media* (with Kylie Jarrett and Ben Light, MITP 2019), *Who's Laughing Now? Feminist Tactics in Social Media* (with Jenny Sundén, MITP 2020), and *Yul Brynner: Exoticism, Cosmopolitanism and Screen Masculinity* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

### **Meghna Singh**

- is an artist and researcher with a PhD in visual anthropology from the University of Cape Town, a Fellow at the MIT Open Documentary Lab 2023-2024, an honorary fellow at Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery & Emancipation. Her work focuses on themes of human migration, globalization & critical mobilities, immersive experiences within public art and the decolonization of the digital. Working with video installation, sculpture and XR, blurring boundaries between documentary and fiction she creates immersive environments highlighting issues of 'humanism' through the tool of the imaginary.

### **Jennifer Ann Skriver**

- is a soon to be Postdoctoral Researcher who has just completed her PhD entitled "Advancing Inclusive Playful Learning Practices: Critical Exploration of Affective and Embodied Dynamics in Artful Educational Practices as Catalysts for Playful Learning." She is interested in investigating playful methodologies that intersect with educational praxis, notably emphasizing the integration of pedagogical theory with tangible practice and has done so through collaborative efforts with the Kolding Design School.

### **Hans-Joachim Backe**

- is Associate Professor at the Center for Digital Play of IT University, Copenhagen. His research revolves around the aesthetics of digital games and comic books. He has published extensively on strategies of self-referentiality and discourses of alterity in these media. Other research interests include game analysis, ecocriticism, narrative theory. He has participated in and chaired numerous research committees on digital culture and comics within the frameworks of the International Comparative Literature Association, the German Association for Comic Studies and the German Association for Media Studies.

**Registration:** <https://events.au.dk/playingthehumorart2024>