

German Colonialism. Artist Interventions (Bremen, 25–26 Mar 26)

Vortragssaal, Kunsthalle Bremen, Am Wall 207, Mar 25–26, 2026

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Artist Interventions and their Afterlives.

Constructor University Workshop in the Bremen Kunsthalle.

When reckoning with Germany's colonial past, creative practitioners must typically navigate the holdings of Western museums or colonial historical records, in other words, the same institutions and epistemological tools that were originally developed to facilitate and justify colonial subjugation. Faced with the 'violence of the archive' (Saidiya Hartman), and particularly its erasures and silences, contemporary artists step into and transform the roles of researcher, investigator, historian, archivist, witness, and memorialiser. Through their work, they variously pursue evidence-led and investigative frameworks to seek justice (Forensic Architecture; Laidlaw Peringanda), adopt indigenous spiritualist practices to address historic trauma (Anguezomo Nzé Mboulou Mba Bikoro; Tuli Mekondjo), or adapt and subvert historical convention by privileging oral histories and personal archives (Lisa Hilli; Nicola Brandt). Taking into account this wide spectrum of methods for engaging with histories of German colonialism, the workshop aims to examine the role of the artist as decolonial researcher.

As Claire Bishop has identified, contemporary practitioners are now frequently found in the archive rather than the studio, interpreting data and producing ever longer textual pieces accompanying their works (Disordered Attention, 2024). In the case of works seeking to redress or interrogate German colonial history, research-led approaches raise a specific set of questions, such as:

- How may interventions by contemporary artists contribute to or shift critical discourses surrounding histories of German colonialism?
- What emotional and intellectual labour can or should be performed by artists addressing histories of German colonialism?
- How do these works challenge omissions within German memory culture (Erinnerungskultur)?
- How do artists working in this field articulate the relationship between histories of German colonialism and neo-colonial realities?
- How is decolonial artist research able to expose and exceed institutional and disciplinary limitations?
- And finally, how can we stimulate 'afterlives' for recent decolonial exhibitions, installations, or research initiatives in order to embed their impact and sustain dialogues between artists, institutions, and publics?

In acknowledgment of the city's central role in German colonial expansion that led to its allotted

title of 'city of colonies' during the Nazi period, the workshop will take place in Bremen. A German-language roundtable discussion, open to the public, will reflect on participants' experiences producing or supporting artist-research to identify strategies for translating decolonial artistic interventions into structural change.

Schedule for Day 1

14:00 | Registration

14:30 | Welcome address

Panel 1

15:00 | Franziska Kaun, 'Revisiting "Objekt Atlas": Otobong Nkanga's Intervention and Questions of Distributed Agency in Curatorial Contexts'

15:35 | Tanja-Bianca Schmidt, 'Disrupting Archival Authority: Rajkamal Kahlon and the Reformatt-ing of History'

16:10 | Sela Kodjo Adjei, 'Fragments of Empire: Artistic Interventions into the Afterlives of German Colonialism in Ghana'

16:45 | Coffee and refreshments

17:15 | German-language Roundtable discussion open to public: 'Afterlives of decolonial artist research and interventions' (Dekoloniale künstlerische Forschung und Interventionen. Was kommt danach?)

Discussants: Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock, Philip Kojo Metz, Anna Yeboah, and Kokou Azamede, moderated by Fabian Lehmann

18:30 | Caroline Schäfer, 'Walkthrough of Bremen's Anti-Colonial Monument "The Elephant"'

Schedule for Day 2

10:00 | Registration

Panel 2

10:30 | Matthew Hansen, 'Objects & Memory Lab – Colonial Objects, Living Memory'

11:05 | Julia Rensing, 'Namibian Archives and Art: Aesthetics, Ethics, and Violence'

11:40 | Sarah Hegenbart, 'German Cultures of (Colonial) Remembrance in Times of Crisis: "Archive Fever" Revisited'

12:15 | Lunch

Panel 3

13:15 | Petra Löffler, 'Re-mediating Colonial Photography & Decolonizing Methodologies'

13:50 | Natasha A. Kelly, 'Refractions: Global African Arts, Archives, and the Conditions of Visibility'

14:25 | Tour of Kunsthalle's decolonial 'Remix' rehang

15:00 | Closing remarks

15:20 | Scheduled close

Regarding workshop attendance, please contact lbyford@constructor.university as capacity is limited.

Eventbrite link for roundtable: <https://bit.ly/4ablXGN>

Reference:

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(accessed Feb 13, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51738>>.