

University of Dundee

The Ignorant Art School Sit-in #3, The Otolith Group

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**SIT-IN #3:
THE OTOLITH
GROUP**



...But

There Are

New Suns

13 October – 16 December

Cooper Gallery

SIT-IN CURRICULUM #3

DEPARTMENT OF XENOGENESIS

Sit-in Curriculum #3 is conceived and activated in collaboration with The Department of Xenogenesis or DXG, a time space enacted by The Otolith Group. The curriculum of events is an open invitation for interlocutors to think together critically.

DXG #1: Thinking the Otolith Sigil

Thursday 12 October, 6–9pm (In-person)

In-conversation between Anjalika Sagar, Kodwo Eshun and Ranjana Thapalyal followed by exhibition preview

DXG #2: Thinking Futurisms Critically

Thursday 26 October, 6.30–8PM (Online)

Seminar for filmmakers and artists led by The Otolith Group

DXG #3: Thinking Hydropoetics Critically

Thursday 2 November, 6.30–8pm (In-person)

Discussion with Natasha Thembisio Ruwona, Sabrina Henry and The Otolith Group

DXG #4: Thinking Butler Attentively

Thursday 23 November, 6.30–8pm (Online)

Reading session led by Akwugo Emejulu and The Otolith Group

DXG #5: Thinking ‘The Idea of Black Culture’ Critically

Thursday 30 November 6.30–8pm (Online)

Discussion with The Otolith Group and Gus John

DXG #6: Thinking with Improvisation Critically

Thursday 7 December, 7–8.30pm (In-person)

Sound improvisation by Maria Chávez, Lore Lixenberg, Elaine Mitchener and Shiori Usui

L'ÉCOLE DU SOIR CINÉMA

Screenings of moving image by The Otolith Group will be complemented by audio recordings by The Otolith Group followed by responses from invited artists and writers in Scotland.

#1

Wednesday 18 October, 6–8pm

Otolith II (2007)

Response by Rae-Yen Song

#2

Tuesday 31 October, 6–8pm

I See Infinite Distance Between Any Point And Another (2012)

Response by Daisy Lafarge

#3

Wednesday 15 November, 6–8pm

In the Year of the Quiet Sun (2013)

Response by Anne-Marie Copestake

#4

Wednesday 13 December, 6–8pm

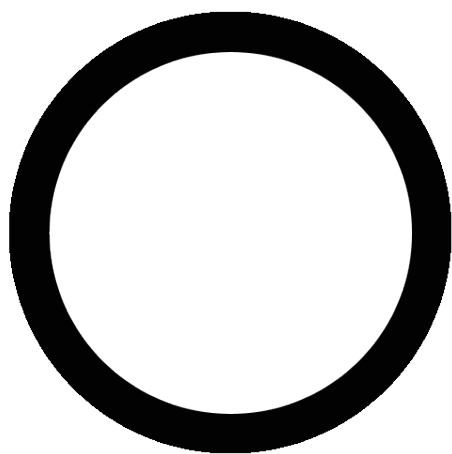
INFINITY minus Infinity (2019)

Response by Ashanti Harris and Sabrina Henry

Book tickets via Eventbrite.

The curriculum is free and open to all. Attend one or more event(s).

All enquiries please email: exhibitions@dundee.ac.uk



The Otolith Group

...But There Are New Suns

Cooper Gallery's critically lauded five-chapter exhibition and event project *The Ignorant Art School: Five Sit-ins towards Creative Emancipation* enters its third iteration in Autumn 2023 with Sit-in #3 titled *...But There Are New Suns*; the first major exhibition in Scotland by the Turner Prize nominated artist collective The Otolith Group.

Founded in London in 2002 by Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun, The Otolith Group practices modes of digital image-making, exhibition making and discourse making that seek to activate the chronopolitical potentials of differentiated futurisms.

...But There Are New Suns approaches the politics of time through its engagement with the poetics of temporal reconfiguration.

In drawing upon moments and moods evoked by the aesthetics of Afro-Asian avant-gardes, as formulated by Joan Kee in *The Geometries of Afro-Asia: Art Beyond Solidarity*, The Otolith Group's inhabitation of the structures provided by *The Ignorant Art School* aims at sustaining 'interpretive communities' enabled by the prospect of aesthetico-political work.

In its citation of the epigram written by the great science-fiction novelist Octavia Butler, the exhibition title *...But There Are New Suns* alludes to an imagination of scale capable of gaining traction upon the multiple alienations differentially experienced by communities living and working in and through the Racial Capitalocene.

Underscored by a commitment to methods of study and objects of investigation that operate beneath, between and beyond the protocols and parameters of institutional legitimation, The Otolith Group approaches Cooper Gallery as an opportunity to assemble an interscalar vehicle that enables a tractive force upon what C.L.R. James calls 'the future in the present.'

The Otolith Group

...But There Are New Suns

In approaching digital video as the occasion and the site for the study of study *...But There Are New Suns* focuses upon two installations: *What the Owl Knows* (2022) and *O Horizon* (2018).

Co-produced with Cooper Gallery, the UK premiere of *What the Owl Knows* can be characterised as a work that revels in what it does not reveal.

A work that attunes the auditor to the tone and the texture of attentiveness devoted by painter Lynette Yiadom-Boakye to the demeanour and the disposition, the manner and the moods within and outwith her paintings.

A work whose refusal to satisfy the disclosures expected from what appears, on first sight, as documentary, returns the eye and the ear to the play of recursion and the work of attunement.

The installation *O Horizon* (2018) invites audiences to encounter scenes from the life within and outwith Visva-Bharati, the university that extends the art school founded in Santiniketan in West Bengal in 1921 by the polymath Rabindranath Tagore.

Researched, videographed and recorded over a period of five years, *O Horizon* alludes to the quotidianity of Tagorean ecosophy transfigured by the multiple crises of capitalogenic violence.

The studies of study evoked throughout *O Horizon* offer prismatic insights into the forms and shapes of a Tagorean ethos in the second decade of the 21st century.

In embracing Senegalese film director Ousmane Sembène's idea of cinema as a night school or l'école du soir, the events series Sit-in Curriculum #3 celebrates the sociality of moving images as the occasions for the informal study of study.

In assembling dialogues between the political aesthetics and aesthetic politics of science fictions, insurgent futurisms, chronopolitics, anti-colonial, postcolonial, decolonial and settler colonial theories, theories of anthropogenic and capitalogenic crises, and experimental musics, electronic and otherwise, the screenings, discussions, performances and reading groups that constitute the Sit-in Curriculum #3 aim at the interruption and suspension of colonial orders of knowledge production through an open invitation to all that wish to gain traction upon the convergence of multiple crises.

The Otolith Group

Biography

The Otolith Group is an award-winning artist led collective founded by Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun in 2002.

Their moving image, audio works, performances and installations are characterized by an engagement with the legacies and potentialities of diasporic futurisms that explore modes of temporal anomalies, anthropic inversions and synthetic alienation.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *I See Infinite Distance Between Any Point and Another*, greengrassi, London (2023); *A Sphere of Water Orbiting a Star*, Galway Arts Centre, Galway and Hangar Artistic Research Centre, Lisbon (both 2023); *What the Owl Knows*, Secession, Austria (2022–2023); *Xenogenesis*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2022–2023); Sharjah Art Foundation (2021–22); SAAG (2020); Buxton Art Gallery, Melbourne (2020); ICA, Virginia (2020); Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven (2019); *O Horizon*, The Rubin Museum of Art, New York (2018); *Reconstruction of Story 2*, National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (2018); *The Radiant*, Art Gallery Miyauch, Japan (2017); *In the Year of the Quiet Sun*, CASCO, Utrecht (2014); *Novaya Zemlya*, Museo Serralves, Porto (2014); and *Medium Earth*, REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/Cal Arts Theater), Los Angeles (2013).

About The Ignorant Art School

Bringing together artists, designers, educators, activists, cultural workers, students and other publics The Ignorant Art School questions what art education is and whom it serves. Enthused with revolutionary solidarity and organised as a collaborating collective The Ignorant Art School creatively re-imagine and co-constitutes radical blueprints for a socially transformative art education that opens towards an emancipated future.

The title of the project is inspired by French thinker Jacques Rancière's seminal book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, in which Rancière recounts the story of Joseph Jacotot, an exiled French schoolteacher who in 1818 formulated a teaching method that dissolved hierarchies in conventional pedagogical practice.

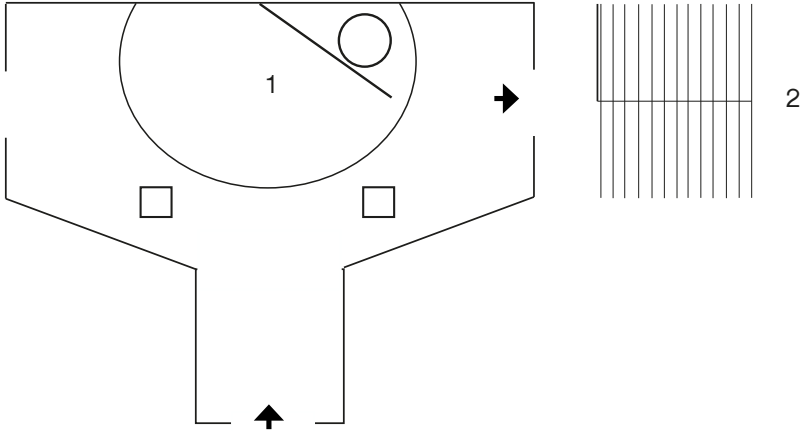
Repurposing equality as a practice rather than an ideal, The Ignorant Art School examines the histories and future possibilities of art education. Directed towards a revolutionary and creative emancipation The Ignorant Art School celebrates feminist and social activist bell hooks' declaration of "education as the practice of freedom" * by building communities of resistance and care.

Composed as five 'Sit-ins' The Ignorant Art School adopts the activist tactic of occupying institutional space as a critical and creative attitude and praxis to transform the Cooper Gallery into a laboratory for radical, ethical and accessible pedagogies for the many underscored by an economy of solidarity.

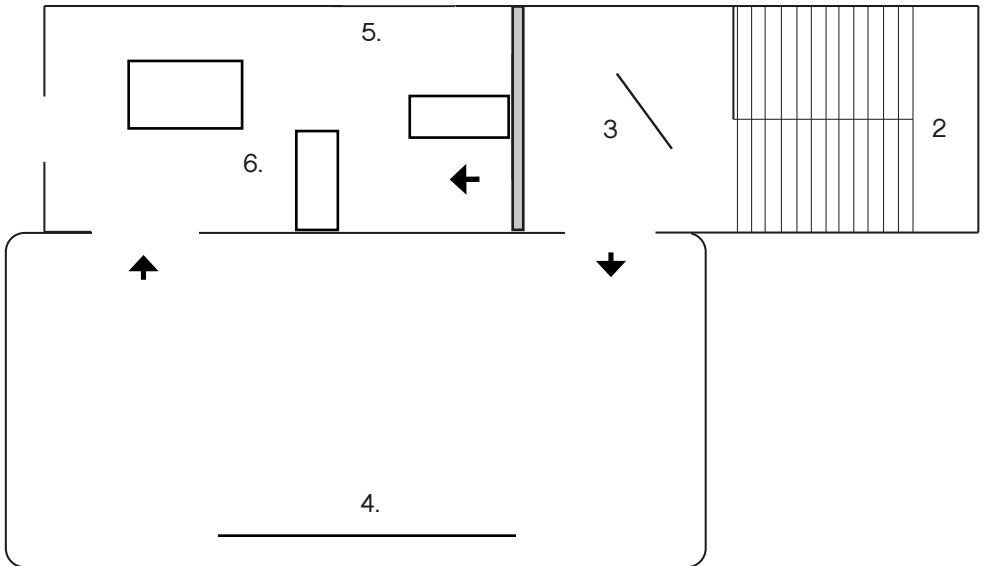
*bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, 1994.

Artworks

Ground Floor



First Floor



1. *O Horizon*, 2018

Original format 4K video 16:9 colour, sound

Projection screen, cork, rubber, seating

Duration 81 minutes 10 seconds

2. *Otolith Sigil*, 2023

Animation dimensions variable

3. *OwLoop (DoomLoop)*, 2022

HD video, colour

Projection screen

Duration 1 minute 33 seconds

4. *What the Owl Knows*, 2022

HD video, colour, sound

Projection screen, seating

Duration 55 minutes 7 seconds

5. *On the idea of Otolith and the idea of Group*, 2022

Vinyl wall text, dimensions variable

6. Exhibition Study Area

Selection of references for further reading by The Otolith Group and Cooper Gallery

O Horizon

Researched, filmed, and recorded on Visva-Bharati campus at Santiniketan, Sriniketan and surrounding areas of Birbhum, West Bengal, *O Horizon* stages moments from Rabindranath Tagore's extensive environmental pedagogy as a series of portraits, moods, studies, and sketches that allude to what might be described as the outlines of a Tagorean cosmopolitics. The film begins with the recital of a question posed in Tagore's poem, 'In the year 1400' of what has transpired "today in a hundred years," that reveals future monumental cultural achievements and the extensive environmental degradation after a long century.

The title refers to the surface layer of soil, changed in the area around Santiniketan as the result of Tagore's introduction of new flora in development of the campus. In studying this trajectory, the film extends The Otolith Group's ongoing consideration of the Anthropocene, a premise that denotes the current geological age as one wherein human activity spurs the primary changes of climate and the environment. With *O Horizon*, The Otolith Group proposes that Tagore's project could be understood by the notion of terraforming—a term originating in science fiction and now more widely used—whereby a party, typically but not always an interloper, reshapes the atmosphere of a place for their own needs.

O Horizon reflects upon modernist theories of dance and song developed by Tagore and the experimental practices of mural, sculpture, painting, and drawing developed by India's great modernist artists affiliated with Santiniketan: K.G. Subramanyan, Benode Behari Mukherjee, Nandalal Bose and Ramkinkar Baij. *O Horizon* draws together visual arts, dance, song, music, and recital to assemble a structure of feeling of the Tagorean imagination in the 21st Century.

Text by The Otolith Group



The Otolith Group, *O Horizon*, 2018 (film still)
Commissioned by bauhaus imaginista, co-produced with
Rubin Museum of Art, New York, supported by Project 88,
Mumbai. Exhibition architecture Diogo Passarinho Studio.

What The Owl Knows

What the Owl Knows (2022) is inspired by the desire to shift the focus away from the painter as the object of attention and towards the quality of attention that the painter gives to her work. *What the Owl Knows* strives for a poetics of recursion in which the viewer attends to the digital video as it attends to the artist Lynette Yiadom-Boakye as she attends to her practice.

Attention to the recursive duets with a series of scenes in which Yiadom-Boakye appears as an isolated figure, silhouetted in the sodium light of streetlamps; unobligated to the camera, she walks in the familiar parks and housing estates of London's cityscape. As Yiadom-Boakye reads from her poems, each rearranged for and through the video, the constrained economy of introspective expressionism increasingly determines the staging.

Overriding documentary cinema's call for explanations opens up an abyss of meaning that allows for a heightened state of intuition and suggestion through video's recourse to the deviant drama of poetic language. Oscillating between the intimacy of the interior of the studio and the drama of the outdoor scenes takes on the structure of feeling whose interplay refers to the power of gathering in the medium of video. In the encounter between painting and poetry, the movement of the video from day to night transfers Yiadom-Boakye's nocturnal thoughts from the light to the dark and back again. To listen to the light of night is to hear the night of the day. It is to sense the ceremony of the medium of video which convenes a meeting between the immortality of painting, the dead of poetry and the life of the voice.

The Otolith Group's attention to shifting expectations is palpable in the vivid allegory that appears at the centre of *What the Owl Knows* – Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's text *Plans of the Night*; the animated fable between an owl and pigeon that sees the pigeon as an engineer of her own demise, falling into her own trap.

Text by The Otolith Group



The Otolith Group, *What The Owl Knows*, 2023 (film still)
Commissioned by the Association of Visual Artists, Vienna
Secession, co-produced by Cooper Gallery, Duncan of
Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee.

Contextual Reading Suggested By The Otolith Group

O Horizon

Rustom Bharucha, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin* (2009)

A Meeting of Two Minds: Geddes Tagore letters (3rd. ed) edited and compiled by Bashabi Fraser (2005)

Confluence of Minds: The Rabindranath Tagore and Patrick Geddes Reader on Education and Environment. eds. Bashabi Fraser, Tapati Mukherjee and Amrit Sen (2017)

Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siecle Radicalism and the Politics of Friendship* (2006)

Geeta Kapur, *When was Modernism: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India* (2000)

R. Siva Kumar, *Santiniketan: The Making of a Contextual Modernism* (1997)

Anna Neima, *The Utopians: Six Attempts to Build the Perfect Society* (2021)

Rabindranath Tagore, *Fireflies* (1928)

Santhal Family: Positions around an Indian Sculpture, eds. Anshunman Dasgupta, Monika Szewczyk, Grant Watson, Will Bradley, R Siva Kumar, Stephen Morton (2008)

Bauhaus Imaginista: A School in the World. eds. Marion van Osten and Grant Watson (2019)

Rimli Bhattacharya, *The Dancing Poet – Rabindranath Tagore and Choreographies of Participation* (2019)

What the Owl Knows

Kodwo Eshun, *To Be Hoist by Your Own Petard: Studying the Study of Lynette Yiadom-Boakye* in Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, *No Twilight Too Mighty*, ed. Lekha Hileman Waitoller (2023)

Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (2013)

Daniel Morgan, *The Lure of the Image: Epistemic Fantasies of the Moving Camera* (2021)

Shola von Reinhold, *LOTE* (2020)

Marlon b. Ross, *Sissy Insurgencies: A Racial Anatomy of Unfit Manliness* (2022)

Derek Walcott, *The Muse of History*, in *What the Twilight Says: Essays* (1998)

Oscar Wilde, *The Uncensored Picture of Dorian Grey*, ed. Nicholas Frankel (2012)

Virginia Woolf, *Walter Sickert: A Conversation*, in *Virginia Woolf, Oh, to Be a Painter* (2021)

On the idea of Otolith and the idea of Group

Dambudzo Marechera, *The Black Insider* (1999)

The Otolith Group, *Xenogenesis*. eds. The Otolith Group and Megs Morley (2021)

Tinashe Mushakavanhu, *Reincarnating Marechera: Notes On A Speculative Archive* (2018)

Watching

Chris Austin, *The House Of Hunger*, 1983

Ritwik Ghatak, *Ramkinker Baij*, 1975

The Otolith Group, *Message To The Forest*, 2018

Satyajit Ray, *The Inner Eye*, 1972

(videos available on Vimeo & YouTube)

Contextual Reading

Suggested By Cooper Gallery

Further Reading

Octavia E. Butler
Xenogenesis/Lilith's Brood series
Dawn (1987)
Adulthood Rites (1988)
Imago (1989)

Octavia E. Butler, *Wild Seed*
(1980)

Etel Adnan, *Sea and Fog* (2012)

Hortense J. Spillers, *The Idea of Black Culture*, in CR: The New Centennial Review, Vol. 6, No. 3, *W. E. B. Du Bois and the Questions of Another World* (Winter 2006), pp. 7–28

Hortense J. Spillers, *Black, White, and in Colour: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, (2003)

C.L.R. James, *The Future in the Present: Selected Writings of C.L.R. James* (1980)

Joan Kee, *The Geometries of Afro-Asia: Art Beyond Solidarity*, (2023)

Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (ed), *Futures of Black Radicalism* (2017)

Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Black Feminist Poethics: The Quest(ion) of Blackness Toward the End of the World*, *The Black Scholar*, Vol. 44, No. 2, *States of Black Studies* (Summer 2014), pp. 81–97

Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (1983)

Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2019)

Françoise Vergès, *Racial Capitalocene: Is the Anthropocene racial?* (Verso Blog post, 2017)

Kevin Ochieng Okoth, *Red Africa: Reclaiming Revolutionary Black Politics* (2023)

Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A critique of postcolonial reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999)

T. J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (2017)

T. J. Demos, *Radical Futurisms Ecologies of Collapse, Chronopolitics, and Justice-to-Come* (2023)

Akwugo Emejulu and Francesca Sobande, *To Exist is to Resist: Black Feminism in Europe* (2019)

Ranjana Thapalyal, *Education as Mutual Translation* (2018)

Mohammad A. Quayum, *Education for Tomorrow: The Vision of Rabindranath Tagore*, (Asian Studies Review, 2016)

Ranjan Ghosh, *A Poet's School: Rabindranath Tagore and the Politics of Aesthetic Education South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 35:1, 13–32 (2012)

Sara Danius and Stefan Jonsson, *Occupy Education, An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: boundary 2*, Vol. 20, no 2, p. 24–50 (1993)

Naman Ahuja, *The Making of a Modern Indian Artist–Craftsman–Devi Prasad* (2011)

David A. Gall, *Countering Modernity: Toward a Nondualist Basis for Art Education* (2019)

Medha Bhattacharyya, *Rabindranath Tagore's Santiniketan Essays: Religion, Spirituality and Philosophy* (2019)

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, *Decolonization is not a metaphor*, Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society, Vol.1,No.1,2012, pp.1–40

Acknowledgements

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Our colleagues at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art & Design, and University of Dundee and the Cooper Gallery staff team.

Exhibition Open
13 October – 16 December 2023
Monday – Saturday, 12–5pm
Free

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