

Women Artists from non-Western Backgrounds in the Swedish Context: An Intersectional Perspective to Artistic Resistance

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Master's Thesis

Master of European and Nordic Studies

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Fall 2018

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I. Introduction

I.I. Background

"If one could make a people lose touch with their capacity to create, lose sight of their will and their power to make art, then the work of subjugation, of colonization, is complete." bell hooks, *Art on My Mind*

This above quotation from bell hook's *Art on My Mind* has perhaps been the most inspirational in concretizing the topic of this Master thesis. As one can easily observe, throughout centuries, the most influential and appreciated artists one can see in the museums, art history books and in the collective memory has almost exclusively been white Western males, and the female and non-Western presence have been largely absent from the canon of great artists. This absence is due to two main reasons: First of all, the works by female and non-Western artists have been effectively erased from the sphere of mainstream arts and made invisible, even though their prominent ideas have been borrowed and appropriated - without giving the due credit - by those who enjoy a greater authority within the existing hierarchies of the cultural sphere. Secondly, as it is articulated in the above quotation, these institutionalized systems of domination result in discouraging the 'othered' identities from making art and make them lose touch with their capacity and will to create.¹

Thus, even though art and its power to move and emotionally engage with its audiences is often romanticized as the 'universal' language, this thesis will argue that the art world is not a space free of hierarchies. As Vasquez & Mignolo argue; starting from the enlightenment until the present reality, as Europe became the political and economical center of the new world order, the European notion of arts and aesthetics also acquired a central place and shaped the artistic senses, modes of knowledge and practices in non-European geographies and institutions. Even though there has always been encounters and cross-cultural inspirations within the art world, as Vasquez & Mignolo further argue, the way non-European actors and artists had to deal with the European artistic styles have been different than the way

¹ hooks 1995

European artists were expected to deal with non-European styles and inspirations. Whereas European artists were not expected to be familiar with non-European artistic styles; non-European artists have had to validate their status as artists through their knowledge and accurate practice of the European ways of art making. The European artists, on the other hand, were not expected to be familiar with the non-European styles of artistic expressions, and when they did wish to be inspired by and borrow from such styles, they were free to experiment at their own will.² Thus, the cross-cultural encounters happen on hierarchical terms; and whereas the European artists, critics, and even the public in general, are in the position of judges on how well and accurate the non-European artists practice the European artistic styles, European artists are free from such obligations and they do not need validation from their non-European peers in order to be validated as successful artists. It can accordingly be argued that the artist's ethnicity, along with other considerations such as social class and gender, do matter, and those in the margins of the society often have to struggle much harder for validation and recognition. Moreover, these existing hierarchies do not only determine who can be a successful artist, they also shape perceptions and regulate the sense of taste through the essentially subjective and Western term *aesthetics*, which is a term that creates a normative visual canon under which certain styles are canonized as high, quality art while other forms of creative expressions are devalued.³

Particularly during the last few decades, the Western and male hegemony in the sphere of arts and culture has started to be questioned and challenged more and more by critical artists, academics, and activists. Especially following the substantial increase in the migration waves to Europe in the second half of the 20th century, the issue of 'cultural citizenship' started to be increasingly more articulated, given that simply the participation of artists from immigrant backgrounds in the mainstream arts scene have become a political issue. The claims on inclusion, cultural citizenship and the title of artist by people of non-Western origin have been unsettling for the cultural industries in many European countries, as they did not know how to accommodate the newcomer artists. Many European countries, including Sweden, initially identified the immigrant artists as a subordinate, homogenous group and set up a separate fund for them, which effectively erased their presence from the mainstream arts

² Vasquez & Mignolo 2013

³ Vasquez & Mignolo 2013

scene and pushed them into more alternative arts spaces with less visibility.⁴ Similarly in the US context, the participation of African-American and other ethnic minority artists in the mainstream arts scene and the reception of their works have been problematic for the similar reasons of disrupting the hegemonies and existing power structures of the industry.⁵

As a policy stand, multiculturalism can be defined as an advocacy of equality and inclusion among people of various ethnic, cultural and religious orientations in a given social or national context. This advocacy is usually promoted through policies to recognize and preserve the existing cultural diversity on an institutional level.⁶ As the topics of cultural diversity and equal rights started to come to the forefront, there have been significant shifts towards equality and inclusion also in the arts industry, both from institutional and cultural policy aspects. Nevertheless, there are still many artists today who are critical of the state-sponsored, institutionalized practices of multiculturalism as well as the commodification of ethnicity in the neoliberal art markets. There is a common criticism that these top-to-bottom attempts on equality only make the existing hegemonies more subtle without actually doing away with them. Working from a counter-hegemonic perspective, through their art works, these artists expose the hidden politics of exclusion, racialization and hierarchical power structures that still remain intact in today's cultural industries.

Accordingly, this thesis will focus on two female visual artists/artist duos with non-Western backgrounds from Sweden as a case study, namely Roxy Farhat and Mahoyo. These artists were chosen on the basis of the content of their art works, as both make artistic interventions into the society and the art world, and they use art as a creative platform to voice the challenges, injustices and stereotypes they are subject to as female artists with non-Western ethnic backgrounds. What Roxy Farhat and Mahoyo have in common is that they interrogate the power structures, objectification and various other challenges they experience as a result of their positioning at the intersection of being a woman, an immigrant and an artist in the Swedish context. The reason why two artists are in focus is to present a variety of artistic intervention and resistance techniques, and to analyze the similar and different perspectives and stylistic choices they pose in their works of art. However, it is important to stress that this

⁴ Delhaye 2008; Lagerkvist 2000

⁵ Lippard 1990

⁶ Parekh 2002

thesis is intended only as a case study and a micro-analysis of the diversity of the ways art functions as an intervention and a political tool in the context of identity politics, and the strategies these artists individually employ to re-assert their identity, culture and personal history in autonomous and empowering ways through their art. Thus, this study does not in any way aim to generalize its findings, or to speak for the experiences of all female artists from non-Western backgrounds practicing in Sweden.

I.II. Research Questions and Motivation of Research

Through its focus on women artists from non-Western immigrant backgrounds, this study aims to map out the challenges the artists face, both on a societal and institutional level, and how their art functions as a site of possibility for alternative personal narratives and as a tool in scrutinizing unacknowledged power relations and subtle hierarchies within the arts and culture sphere in Sweden. The reason why particularly women artists are in focus is in order to better investigate the intersectional challenges that are specific to the situation of being a non-Western female artist. As Kimberle Williams Crenshaw, the scholar who coined the term intersectionality, asserts; multiple overlapping and/or intersecting social identities result in specific systems of oppression, discrimination and domination. Moreover, given the possibility of countless combinations of different intersecting identities, and the peculiarity of the challenges that occur in various specific intersections, intersectional identities are usually not mapped out properly by normative discourses, and they often go overlooked. Laws and policies tend to address one form of marginalized identity, such as that of artists with immigrant backgrounds, or female artists. Hence, the intersection of multiple disadvantaged social identities are usually not studied in detail.⁷ Similarly, in the Swedish context, there are a few studies, cultural policy reports and statistics that focus on the category of women artists or artists from immigrant backgrounds; but not the combination.

Sweden provides an interesting research environment for this topic, given that the country vigorously promotes itself as a feminist and multicultural country; and according to Hübinette & Lundström, Sweden has an exceptionalist image and a privileged position due to

⁷ Crenshaw 1991

the global perception of the country as the "humanity's avant-garde and a beacon for anti-racism and everything that is considered to be good and progressive."⁸ However, as Hübinette & Lundström further note, despite having a large percentage of immigrants compared to its small population and having the most thorough and detailed anti-discrimination legislations; Sweden actually has the most racially segregated society pattern in Europe, both in terms of urban structures and the labor market.⁹ The statistics reveal that the unemployment rates among the Swedish citizens with immigrant backgrounds, first and second generation alike, are 4-6 times higher than the native Swedes.¹⁰ This situation can also be observed in the Swedish arts and culture scene, as the industry is rather dominated by native-born Swedes and the representation of non-native Swedes are in fact quite low despite the country's rather utopian image and strong emphasis on multiculturalism.¹¹

Thus, in addition to the difficulty that arises regarding mapping out the particular challenges that arise at the intersection of being a woman artist with an immigrant background, it can be argued that the global exceptionalist image Sweden has as the beacon of feminism and anti-racism also obscures the problems and discriminatory practices on the basis of gender and race that continue to take place on both institutional and societal levels in contemporary Sweden. Therefore, it is of great importance to study artistic narratives as alternative sources and personal experiences of being a woman artist from a racially stigmatized background in order to get a glimpse of the realities and challenges that might have been otherwise rendered invisible by the grand narratives surrounding Sweden.

Moreover, the topic of power relations, hierarchies and white supremacy in the field of arts and culture is an area that has not been explored in depth. Until the 1990s, there has been little to no academical focus and discussion regarding the participation of artists from immigrant or racially stigmatized backgrounds in the mainstream arts scene, the problems and challenges that occur regarding their participation, and how this participation is received by the industry and the public. Furthermore, the field of arts, and particularly visual arts which is the focus of this study, is traditionally perceived as a liberal, anti-racist field which

⁸ Hübinette & Lundström 2015

⁹ Hübinette & Lundström 2015

¹⁰ Tidningarnas telegrambyrå 2012

¹¹ Pripp, Plisch, Werner 2005

is not supportive of regimes of oppression; which might partly explain the lack of research within the area.¹² The existing research and body of literature mostly comes from the US concerning the inclusion and equal participation of the African-Americans and other minorities in the sphere of arts. In Europe, almost all of the research comes from the UK, Germany and the Netherlands, the countries which host the largest amount of immigrants with the longest history of immigration. There is very little research and academic interest about this topic in Sweden; and almost all of the debates that take place are voiced by the artists themselves. Given the large percentage of immigrants in Sweden, and the country's popular image as an anti-racist and feminist utopia, this topic requires more attention and in-depth analysis since today there is a significant number of artistic voices from immigrant backgrounds who challenge the overly-positive grand narratives surrounding Sweden.

In line with these points, this study aims to answer the following research questions through performing a qualitative content analysis of the works of art by the selected artists:

- How does art function as a site of critical intervention into the systems of oppression and marginalization that operate both within the Swedish society in general and arts & culture sector in particular?
- How does a female and minority-identifying artistic perspective confront issues of marginalization, objectification and social pressure?
- How does the artistic personal narratives of intersectional identities confront and challenge the grand narratives on multiculturalism, anti-racism and gender equality in the Swedish context?

¹² Kılıç & Petzen 2013

I.III. Methodology

This thesis can be described as two-fold, given that it aims to provide an overview of how equal and inclusive the contemporary Swedish art scene is, as well as to analyze the artistic strategies the selected artists employ in criticizing the inequalities and oppressing mechanisms they are subject to through their art. Given that the study has a strong intersectional focus, the intersectionality theory by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw composes the main theoretical body in analyzing the intersection of being a woman, an artist, and having a non-Western ethnic background. In order to answer the question of how equal and inclusive the Swedish arts and culture scene is, first, the existing literature on the equality and inclusivity on Western arts and culture scene will be analyzed. Some of the authors whose works will be utilized in investigating this topic are: bell hooks, who is an academician and a cultural critic, and mainly focuses on the intersection of race, gender and class in her writings. Her book title *Art on My Mind*, in which she examines art's role as a revolutionary and empowering tool within the black community, as well as the challenges of producing art for artists of color, will be in focus. The writings of another prominent author on this topic, Trinh T. Minh-ha, who is a literary theorist and a filmmaker focusing on cultural politics and post-coloniality in arts will also be utilized. Moreover, the accounts of various artists and academicians from minority backgrounds such as Rasheed Araeen and Adrian Piper, who often deal with the questions of post-coloniality in the artistic sphere in their artworks and writings, will be analyzed in order to have an understanding of their own experiences and criticisms of the Western cultural industries.

At this point, it is also important to open a parenthesis and briefly refer to the debates and hierarchies within the post-colonial debate in order to introduce a critical perspective to the research material used in this study. As a research field, post-colonialism mainly focuses on the Western conquer and control of the Third World, and the resulting social, political and cultural hierarchies between the nations. It also interrogates the subtle means of colonial power in the cultural and intellectual sphere. It is argued that the colonial power is usually created and sustained through grand narratives, which can be defined as single, unified stories that attempts to explain the whole world from a single perspective and in a linear, essential-

ized order. The post-colonial debate mainly aims to dismantle such narratives and to reclaim validity for the Third World perspectives and narratives that had previously been excluded.¹³ Critical approaches to post-colonialism dwell on the inherent danger to conceive of the Third World in a monolithic conception, as well as the danger to ignore the inherent hierarchies within the Third World itself. For example, in her book titled *Paradoxes of Postcolonial Culture*, Sandra Ponzanesi problematizes the dissymmetrical relationships and issues of representation within these debates, and how certain postcolonial perspectives, such as the Anglo-Indian perspective, can dominate the debate at times.¹⁴ Thus, although post-colonialism works against the essentializing perspectives of the colonized, there is also a danger to essentialise the ‘colonizer’, as well as the diverse experiences and perspectives within the ‘colonized’. Due to the limited scope of this study, this topic won’t be analyzed in further detail, but it is nevertheless important to recognize the inherent subjectivity of the research material that is used in order not to create a simplified and totalizing portrait of the Western hegemony within the art world.

In order to analyze the topics of equality and inclusion within the artistic sphere in Sweden, existing reports, cultural policy papers, and statistics will be utilized. The report by Sweden’s Arbetslivsinstitutet (National Institute for Working Life) authored by Cajsa Lagerkvist and titled *Världar emellan? Frågan om etnisk mångfald* [The worlds in between? The question of ethnic diversity in the cultural field] composes one of the main sources. The report titled *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity] authored by Oscar Pripp, Emil Plisch, Saara Printz Werner and published by Mångkulturellt centrum [Multicultural centre] is also an important source that provides significant insight into the question of equality within the Swedish cultural field. Through surveys and interviews, this study analyses the officially funded cultural institutions' work with ethnic and cultural diversity in Sweden. In addition to these, reports from Konstnärsnämnden - the Swedish Arts Grants Committee - on artists’ demographics, social and financial situations, as well as the cultural policy papers, will also be utilized. All these will be analyzed in light of the situation that is observed in general in the

¹³ Gandhi 1998

¹⁴ Ponzanesi 2004

Western arts and culture institutions, in order to be able to point out the similarities and differences between the Western arts industries in general and the Swedish case in particular.

A qualitative content analysis method will be adopted to analyze and interpret the artist profiles, statements and works of visual art by the selected artists. As stated previously, the artists and their works have been chosen for the reason that the works of both artists are socially and politically informed, and that the artists use their art as a creative platform of resistance to produce counter-hegemonic representations of themselves, to reclaim their identities and finally, to criticize the mechanisms that continue to oppress or marginalize them in the contemporary Swedish context. Since this study has a contemporary time frame, it focuses on young artists who currently live and practice in Sweden, and all the artworks that are to be analyzed are produced in the 21st century.

II. The Inherent Hierarchies & Hegemonies within Arts

II.I. The Problematic of Art History

Although this study has a contemporary focus, a historical perspective is necessary in understanding the male and Western hegemony in arts as well as the subtle yet systematic mechanisms of exclusion, given that the oppressing patterns that are still persistent in today's industry are mostly continuations of the historically rooted traditions and perceptions regarding what is considered art and who is considered an artist. According to Vazquez & Mignolo, the term aesthetics is "an aspect of the colonial matrix of power of the imperial structure of control that began to be put in place in the sixteenth century with the emergence of the Atlantic commercial circuit and the colonization of the New World."¹⁵ They go on to explain that this colonial and imperial structure of control do not only claim domination on the politics and economy, but also on more subtle topics such as knowledge, perception and taste. Therefore, it is accordingly argued that the term aesthetics is a concept which emerged in the locality and the historical subjectivity of the European experience, but ended up being the global criteria for taste and creativity.¹⁶

This colonization of taste, and the denial of validity to all other forms of creative expressions which does not fall into the normative canon of aesthetics, is crucial in understanding the subtle power relations and the mechanisms of exclusion in arts that remain intact today. As the normative understanding of aesthetics has established the standards of taste on a global scale with hiding the essential subjectivity and the historical locality it was rooted in, the exclusion of all artists and art forms that do not conform to these standards are often justified on the basis that they lack artistic merit and quality.¹⁷ By presenting the exclusion that takes place on a systematical basis only as a matter of artistic quality, the inherent Western

¹⁵ Vazquez & Mignolo 2013

¹⁶ Vazques & Mignolo 2013

¹⁷ Lippard 1990; Nochlin 1971

hegemony in the arts can effectively be obscured.¹⁸ Lucy L. Lippard similarly argues in her book *Mixed Blessings: New Art in Multicultural America* that:

Ethnocentrism in the arts is balanced on the notion of Quality that 'transcends boundaries' — and is identifiable only by those in power. According to this lofty view, racism has nothing to do with art; Quality will prevail; so-called minorities just haven't got it yet... The conventional notion of good taste with which many of us were raised and educated was based on an illusion of social order that is no longer possible (or desirable) to believe in . . . Time and again, artists of color and women determined to revise the notion of Quality into something more open, with more integrity, have been fended off from the mainstream strongholds by this garlic-and-cross strategy.¹⁹

Here, Lippard exposes the subjective perspective and the position of authority that is inherent in the concept of artistic quality: Even though it is claimed to be a universal notion that 'transcends boundaries', only the gatekeepers of the arts industry, who are most often from a certain privileged social group, have the authority to decide the definition of 'universal' notions of quality and aesthetics. In her book, Lippard talks about the mainstream and multicultural arts scenes in the US around the decades of 1980s and 1990s, however, her above criticism shows that the exclusion and marginalization that takes place in these decades has historical roots that go much longer. As she argues, the conventional notion of good taste and aesthetics is essentially rooted in the idea of a social order which no longer reflects our contemporary reality. However, the historically privileged groups continue to have a dominant presence and hold key roles in contemporary arts institutions. Thus, in this context, the historically rooted privileges continue to be preserved; and the threats coming from critical women and non-white artists in revising the normative notion of aesthetics continue to be systematically evaded.

At this point, the question regarding what kind of social order and hierarchies were intended to be created and upheld by imposing a certain kind of aesthetics arises. As it was

¹⁸ Lippard 1990

¹⁹ Lippard 1990

previously quoted of Vazquez & Mignolo, aesthetics functions as one of the many colonial and imperial mechanisms of social control by regulating the public perception and taste. In his article titled "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order", Timothy Mitchell defines these colonial practices of the Western art industries as a political act of creating a superior self-identity as well as a counter-identity of the 'orient other' and sustaining these binary oppositions through artistic representations, exhibitions and ethnographic documentations in museums. In this context, the art institutions, and mainly the state-funded museums, are essentially a continuation of the Western imperial project of ordering and categorizing the world through its subjective perspective and inherent bias. As Mitchell argues, the air of objectivity surrounding museums and other official art institutions validates these essentially arbitrary and biased Western perceptions as objective truths; and it hides away the inherent elements of subjectivity, prejudices and stereotypes. The visual representations of the orient in museums under this veil of objectivity helps spread and concretize the imagined identity of the inferior other; and places it in the collective memory. Furthermore, under the colonial project, the non-Western art and culture have also been anthropologized and exhibited from a Western perspective. And since a good deal of non-Western art do not fall into the category of Western aesthetics, it has commonly been labeled as primitive and amateurish, and has mostly been confined to the museums of ethnography for the purpose of preservation of culture. This Western portrayal of non-Western art and culture as primitive and amateurish has also served the imperial purpose of asserting Western superiority and legitimizing colonial interventions.²⁰

Another point Mitchell makes is that, in categorizing everything according to its own perspective, the West creates an 'object world' in which everything becomes a spectacle for the dominating Western gaze to name and define. Similarly, the hegemony of the term aesthetics, which is essentially a subjective understanding of taste based on Western artistic production, also dominates all other forms of creativity by colonizing the mind and the notion of taste. Thus, even though the colonial order is no longer today's reality in the practical sense, the colonization of the mind is still persistent in terms of knowledge and perception.²¹ In this

²⁰ Mitchell 2004

²¹ Mitchell 2004

context, the globally imposed Western definition of aesthetics continues to shape the artistic imagination. As bell hooks remarks, this makes the colonized mind lose touch with its ability to create, to make art, and in general, to think outside the 'object world' created by the colonial powers.²² It can therefore be argued that the othered identities have systematically been denied the position of 'subjects' in history, given that these dominant perspectives make it very difficult for them to perceive and define themselves outside these norms. Vasques & Mignolo similarly asks: "What words outside Anglo-Saxon and Greco-Roman tradition can we use to talk about art, aesthetics, culture, and many other notions so crucial to our decolonial concerns and struggles?"²³ This question powerfully reveals the extent of the colonization of the taste and artistic imagination, and shows how deeply rooted it has become in history, culture and language. Therefore, the matter is not simply the exclusion of non-Western artistic representation from the global arts history, but rather stripping them off of the ability to think, perceive and create through non-Western notions and terms.

²² Mitchell 2004

²³ Vasques & Mignolo 2013

II.II. Feminist Critiques to Art History: Artist as He-man

”There are no women equivalents for Michelangelo or Rembrandt, Delacroix or Cezanne, Picasso or Matisse, or even, in very recent times, for de Kooning or Warhol, any more than there are black equivalents for the same.” Linda Nochlin, *”Why Have There Been No Great Female Artists?”*

In her much renowned essay *”Why Have There Been No Great Female Artists?”*, Linda Nochlin critically examines the practice of art making and art history writing, and claims that throughout history, the white Western male viewpoint has been uncritically accepted as the de-facto viewpoint of the art historian.²⁴ This viewpoint tends to reduce the centuries-long artistic output to a linear, progressive order of a few names and movements where the torch is handed from one male artistic genius to the next. According to Nochlin, this linear order *”link together such unlikely superstars as Michelangelo and van Gogh, Raphael and Jackson Pollock under the rubric of ”Great””* in order to create an illusionary progressive and coherent narration of the world’s art history.²⁵ Even though it is possible to occasionally spot names of women referred to as ‘great’ artists in the grand narratives of art history, they have almost exclusively been the names of white women, and they have never been granted a status nearly as high as their male counterparts.²⁶ Similar to the notion of aesthetics that was discussed in the previous chapter, this historically rooted subjective position of the white Western male as the art historian and his common assumptions regarding art making is still so intrinsic and prevalent today that it has only very recently started to be questioned and challenged. Just like the notion of aesthetics, the white Western male viewpoint of the art historian has globally shaped the perception to such extent that it requires diligent efforts to decolonize the mind and to acknowledge the inherent subjectivity.

When one turns a critical eye towards the exclusion of female and non-white artists from art history, it is possible to see many overlapping patterns, therefore indicating that these problems are interrelated and the same system of domination is oppressing various dif-

²⁴ Nochlin 1971

²⁵ Nochlin 1971

²⁶ The Guerrilla Girls 2003

ferent marginalized identities. In such a context where the arts industry and history are dominated by a white Western male point of view, any identities that fall outside these categories becomes excluded from the history of art. Like it was pointed out in the opening quotation, as much as there is no women equivalent for Michelangelo, there is no non-white man equivalents for him, either. One obvious parallel that emerges regarding the exclusion of female artists and non-white artists is the issue of artistic merit and quality. Since the inherent hierarchies within arts are so deeply rooted in history and thus normalized, the artistic sphere has the illusion of being an equal space where every artistic talent, regardless of their background, is appreciated. Nochlin calls this "the myth of the Great Artist."²⁷ The uncritical assumptions regarding art making assume that anyone who has the "Genius", which Nochlin goes on to define as an "atemporal and mysterious power somehow embedded in the person of the Great Artist" will be appreciated as such.²⁸ Thus, similar to the denial of the systematical exclusion of non-Western artists' participation by claiming that their art simply does not possess the artistic quality, the systematical exclusion and marginalization of women from the sphere of arts and the canon of great artists is also explained away by the lack of artistic "Genius". By artists, historians and scholars alike, this "Genius" is commonly perceived as something innate, and the social and institutional privileges or disadvantages that are also significantly determinant in being an artist are often left unacknowledged.²⁹

First of all, despite its idealized image, art is not a free and autonomous practice; and the social structures arguably play a much more important role than the innate "Genius" in determining whether one makes it as an artist or not. Despite the liberal, free and open-minded characteristics that are commonly associated with the art world, it would be rather naive to consider the arts as an area free from the systematical privileges and oppressions that are dominant in all the other social structures. As Nochlin further remarks: "Things are as they are and as they have been, in the arts as in a hundred other areas, are stultifying, oppressive, and discouraging to all those, women among them, who did not have the good fortune to be

²⁷ Nochlin 1971

²⁸ Nochlin 1971

²⁹ Owens 1992

born white, preferably middle class and, above all, male.”³⁰ Historically, the household labor demanded of women and the expectation for them to stay in the private sphere have systematically discouraged women from being artists. These social expectations and responsibilities women have been burdened with throughout centuries simply made a total devotion to art impossible. In addition to these societal burdens, for a long time, it had indeed been practically impossible for women to establish themselves as professional artists on an institutional level: Up until the 20th century, women were rarely allowed to get education in the art schools, nor were they allowed to have their own ateliers or to join artists’ unions. Only the women whose fathers were artists could have the privilege to get an informal education from their fathers and work in their father’s ateliers; if their fathers let them.³¹ In addition to the practical difficulties it poses, it can be argued that this male-dominant institutionalized system might have also burdened women with self-doubt and fear of ridicule, given that they did not have any models of their own gender to look up to and to benefit from their experiences.³²

Back in 1929, Virginia Woolf similarly questioned the social structures that determine who can achieve artistic success through a fictional character, Judith Shakespeare, who was William Shakespeare’s sister. Through the example of Judith, Woolf concretized the existing societal and institutional hindrances against women artists. She argued that if this sister was bestowed with the same artistic genius as William Shakespeare, she would not have had the opportunity to develop her talents or to reach her works out to a wider audience due to various barriers such as no schooling, non-supportive parents, household duties, etc. Thus, whereas William Shakespeare had the chance to explore and develop his innate genius, Judith would have been confined by the expectations and responsibilities of being a woman, and her genius would have gone unnoticed.³³ Even though the social circumstances changed considerably and there has been significant improvements regarding gender equality since Woolf wrote these words, reports reveal that in today’s Sweden and globally, women artists still face

³⁰ Nochlin 1971

³¹ The Guerrilla Girls 2003

³² Nochlin 1971

³³ Woolf 1929

systematical and institutional disadvantages since their yearly income is consistently lower than that of male artists and the percentage of the art works by women exhibited in contemporary art museums is still significantly lower than art works by men.³⁴ Despite significant improvements on behalf of the museum and galleries to be more inclusive and to highlight underrepresented women artists and/or artists of color, the top galleries around the world still have a 70% presence of male artists in their collections and exhibitions.³⁵

Looking back at the history of art making as a male-dominated domain and the history of art writing as an essentially male perspective discipline, one can easily see that things are definitely not as bad for women artists today as it had previously been throughout the centuries. However, as previously stated, these centuries long institutionalized privileges and systems of dominations do not disappear so easily, and the existing statistics and figures reveal that women still face systematical challenges and disadvantages in being recognized and succeeding within the mainstream arts scene. The current challenges women artists of color face within the industry and the new challenges brought by the multiculturalist strategies of state museums as well as the demands of the neoliberal art market will be further explored in the upcoming chapters.

³⁴ Konstnärnsnämnden 2016

³⁵ Artsy 2017

II.III. The Intersectional Position of the Female 'Other' Artist

Since this study has an intersectional focus, a detailed look at the theoretical framework of intersectionality is necessary in order to better understand and map out the challenges that arises at the intersection of being a woman, having a non-Western ethnic background and being an artist. Introduced by the critical race scholar and civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 and further developed by the sociologist Patricia Hill Collins in 1990s, the intersectionality theory originally intended to address the oppressed and marginalized position of women of color in society. It can be said that the intersectionality theory was born due to a primary necessity; given that the dynamics of being a woman and a person of color had been largely overlooked in the feminist history and theory - especially during the first wave feminism. The first wave feminism initially ignored the experiences and voices black women, and thus helped create a falsely homogenous identity of women in the collective memory where the conventional image of a woman was conceptualized as white; and gender was conceptualized as the only marginalized aspect of one's identity and therefore the ultimate cause of all social inequalities.³⁶ Thus, since the initial feminist theories and movements did not acknowledge the complexity of intersecting social identities and various systems of dominations, they catered mainly to the needs of middle-class and upper middle-class white women and was not relatable to the everyday experiences and struggles of women of color.³⁷

The key argument of the intersectional theory is that the systems of oppression and domination are interwoven in a complex manner, and, the resulting oppression is not an accumulation of all the existing marginalized aspects of an identity and the disadvantages that comes along; but it is rather the intersection of these disadvantages that can potentially create site-specific problems at every individual intersection. To exemplify, women of color may face specific problems that neither white women nor men of color face. Therefore, the theory asserts that it is not fruitful to conceive various systems of oppressions; such as racism, sexism, etc., as separate entities; and underlies the importance of analyzing the intricately inter-

³⁶ Crenshaw 1991

³⁷ Crenshaw 1991

woven nature of social systems of privileges and oppressions. To make it more clear, Crenshaw explains how women of color are simultaneously in the position of both subject and outsider within the discussions regarding race and sexism. Since racism and sexism had largely been understood as separate topics of discussion prior to the 1990s, as a result, even though both discussions were relative to the experiences and struggles of women of color; they were marginalized within these discourses. This was because the discourses on racism mainly conceptualized the person of color as a male; while the discourses on sexism conceptualized the woman as white.³⁸ Thus, the theory argues that the experience of being a woman and a person of color cannot be captured in terms of being a woman and being a person of color separately, and it should instead be analyzed within the discourses of interactions and intersections; with special focus on how the seemingly separate forms of oppression reinforce one another.³⁹

In order to answer the question of how to capture the site-specific, individual experience of an intersecting identity, the intersectionality theory introduces two concepts: the standpoint theory and the outsider-within status. Arguing that the systems of knowledge as dictated by institutions and dominant groups within society can never be complete, the standpoint theory focuses on the individual experiences of marginalized identities whose knowledge within these systems is devalued and ignored; and argues that the point of departure must be the perspective of the women of color instead of the general and institutional perspectives of feminism and racism, since they cannot fully capture the site-specific experience of the intersectional identities. Thus, the individual standpoint narratives of the marginalized intersecting identities give more accurate insight into the specific problems and challenges that are relevant to the people positioned at the same intersections, and sheds light into an largely unexplored area of knowledge which is often bypassed or ignored by more orthodox approaches and grand narratives.⁴⁰ In addition, highlighting the personal, subjective accounts of marginalized identities can also be considered a political act given that it allows them to be subjects and gives them the power of self-definition by designating their perspectives to be the primary source of knowledge, whereas the grand narratives tend to define these marginal-

³⁸ Crenshaw 1991

³⁹ Crenshaw 1991

⁴⁰ Collins 1986

ized identities in an objectifying and othering manner; therefore positioning them as passive objects and silencing their voices within the general systems of knowledge. Collins similarly argues that self-definition challenges the political knowledge-validation processes where the knowledge and viewpoints of those enjoying a greater social status and power are more easily and readily validated.⁴¹ These existing hierarchies regarding the validation of individual perspectives as sources of knowledge results in the creation of externally defined images of marginalized identities as well as dehumanizing stereotypes that comes along with these essentially biased and prejudiced outsider perspectives. Hence, according to Collins, in addition to providing more insight into the lives and experiences of the intersecting identities, the standpoint narratives voiced by these identities themselves are also a form of resistance. By asserting their own standpoints and perspectives, the intersectional identities challenge the dominant systems of knowledge where only the privileged have the power to define, and they resist against being defined by these external perspectives and being categorized as the 'other'.⁴²

The second concept, namely the outsider-within status, is closely related to the standpoint theory, in that the outsider-within status is conceptualized as the standpoint perspective of the intersecting marginalized identities. This is because, as it was pointed out earlier, the intersecting identities are simultaneously in and out of the discussions which are partly relevant to their experiences, yet still failing to fully capture the diverse reality of such identities. bell hooks captures this positioning of being an outsider-within based on her life experience of being an African American woman in U.S. in the following words: "Living as we did - on the edge - we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the inside in and outside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both."⁴³ This quote by hooks reveals the previously discussed potential of highlighting the subjective narratives of intersecting marginalized identities, given that they have a particular way of seeing reality which could help bring out new perspectives and produce an alternative to the grand narratives by the dominant groups. Their simultaneous positioning at both the center and the margin of the society allows them to see patterns that might not be visible

⁴¹ Collins 1986

⁴² Collins 1986

⁴³ hooks 1995

neither to dominant groups nor to complete outsiders of the given socio-cultural context. Collins argues that the outsider-within status allows the intersecting identities to take a step back from the reality they simultaneously belong and not belong; and to evaluate this reality in a different light as their "stranger" perspective allows them to notice things that might be more difficult, or even impossible, for those who are more immersed in the dominant group culture to see.⁴⁴ Therefore, the unique standpoint perspective that comes along with the outsider-within status can be seen as a productive challenge and a counter-narrative to the grand narratives that contain them.

While acknowledging the many difficulties that comes along with occupying an outsider-within status in one's home society, many scholars also highlight the creativity this position fosters. It can be argued that, in a setting where one's identity and perspective is externally defined; asserting one's own self-definition and perspective essentially requires a creative perspective and an imagination that could see beyond these largely accepted structures and definitions. Alfred McClung Lee also notes that: "for a time this marginality can be a most stimulating, albeit often painful, experience. for some, it is debilitating . . . for others, it is an excitement to creativity."⁴⁵ This unique standpoint perspective that allows one to be simultaneously the subject and the object lets one to see patterns that others do not see due to their positioning; and therefore, as Lee asserts, it can be both a painful and a creatively stimulating position to inhabit. The hybrid positioning and border-crossing can be unsettling for the dominant mindset's tendencies to categorize; given that these identities resist rigid categorization. Thus, simply by asserting its own self-definition and personal perspective, the outsider-within status offers intersecting identities a creative potential for disrupting the rigid categorizations and externally defined stereotypes as well as exposing their biased and constructed nature.

An examination of the intersection of being a woman artist of color shows that many artists situated at this intersection use this creative potential of the outsider-within status in order to critically intervene with the rigid discourses, to resist the stereotypical representations, and to produce counter-hegemonic narratives of their identities and cultures.⁴⁶ It is pos-

⁴⁴ Collins 1986

⁴⁵ Collins 1986

⁴⁶ Kılıç & Petzen 2013

sible to argue that the outsider-within standpoint perspective that the women artists of color possess allows them to see the systematical patterns of exclusion and hierarchies that exist within the Western art industries more clearly. As discussed in the previous chapters, these systematical patterns of exclusion are usually not acknowledged within the industry, and the lack of representation regarding artists who are not white or male are often treated as individual cases where these artists simply do not meet the established art world's criteria of artistic talent and quality. Thus, as outsider-withins who suffer from such criteria on both personal and professional levels, women artists of color can more easily recognize the systematical nature of these criteria as well as how these unspoken and unacknowledged subtle patterns work to protect the historically rooted privileges of certain groups.

For instance, Adrian Piper, a notable conceptual artist whose artworks often address the issues of racism and otherness, calls the art by women artists of color an "innovative threat to the systemic intellectual integrity and homogeneity of the Euroethnic art tradition."⁴⁷ This quote by Piper can also be analyzed in connection to the outsider-within status and the creative potential that comes with this status; given that the innovative threat comes from a unique standpoint perspective whose existence challenges the 'homogeneity of the Euroethnic art tradition'. In essence, this is an illusionary and synthetic homogeneity that is sustained through the exclusion of voices that threatens to disturb this illusion. Thus, even though they are bestowed with a unique standpoint and a perspective which makes it easier to critically examine the hierarchical patterns in society; there are many institutional and societal difficulties regarding voicing one's own marginalized perspective and challenging the dominant narratives through this perspective. As Piper points out, the creative and critical artistic perspectives that originate within the marginalized standpoint are often seen as threats that need to be eliminated as quickly and as completely as possible by the Euroethnic art tradition.⁴⁸ Thus, it seems that the intersection of being a woman, a person of color, an artist and having a critical voice creates site-specific challenges and hinders the artistic success and recognition of such identities. While they are already at a disadvantaged position due to their gender and ethnic background in a Western and male dominated art world, challenging this very art world and its hierarchies adds another layer to the existing disadvantages.

⁴⁷ Piper 2003

⁴⁸ Piper 2003

These site-specific disadvantages that occurs at the intersection of being a woman artist of color with politically charged works of art can be observed in the writings of many artists and academicians of such backgrounds. Trinh T. Minh-ha, a Vietnamese-American filmmaker and literary theorist, argues that when a woman artist of color takes up the feminist fight; she is immediately faced with what she calls a 'triple jeopardy' and is accused of committing three potential betrayals: First, she can be accused of betraying men - as feminists can stereotypically be seen as 'men haters' even today; secondly, she can be seen as betraying her own ethnic community for taking up the feminist fight instead of prioritizing the fight against racism; and thirdly, she can be accused of betraying women as she does not prioritize women's struggle over other struggles.⁴⁹ Another critical artist, Carrie Mae Seems, puts forward that being a woman artist of color and embracing oppositional thinking puts one in a double cultural context of exile; and that the artist's journey to success and recognition becomes intensified by these struggles as the dominant ideology tries to keep them in their place and is well equipped to try to undermine these artists through objectification either on the grounds of their ethnicity, gender or oppositional stance.⁵⁰ Similarly, Adrian Piper also calls the critically loaded artworks by women artists of color a 'triple-barreled threat', and argues that such works tend to be dismissed by the mainstream arts scene as these works assert themselves as alternative sources of truth by exposing the patterns of exclusion, prejudice and repression of the mainly Western controlled industry. Piper further argues that, in order to eliminate such threats; the mainstream art world uses certain strategies of stereotyping to discredit the artists. For example, a woman artist of color expressing political anger in her works may be stereotyped as being aggressive; a woman artist of color who works with gender and sexuality may be seen as seductive; or an artist that does not explore such political topics can be stereotyped as the exotic artist.⁵¹ All these examples illustrate how women artists of color are at a specific disadvantage given that the complexity of their identities are not acknowledged by the majority; and they are marginalized even among their own communities or activist groups as they are expected to make a choice between their ethnicity and gender. A woman of color who does not prioritize one of these aspects of her identity is accused of mul-

⁴⁹ Minh-ha 2003

⁵⁰ hooks 1995

⁵¹ Piper 2003

tiple betrayals by different communities; and their identification as a woman of color disturbs the existing categories in society and resists being pinpointed in a single category. Feminist scholar Bonnie Thornton Dill calls this imposed choice between identifying as either female or black "a product of the patriarchal strategy of divide-and-conquer"⁵², as it keeps the different marginalized communities divided and therefore less powerful to fight against the same system of domination that suppresses them. Thus, the notion of two (or possibly more) separate identities where the mixing is not possible continues to keep the intersecting identities oppressed and invisible. As seen from the cited examples, the artists situated at this particular intersection who challenge these divide-and-conquer strategies are suppressed through various means by various actors.

The narrow focus of identity politics that forces women of color to align themselves with only one sort of marginalized identity also emerges as a challenge to personal and artistic creativity, as it dictates a linear path to follow where the fixed notions of identity are not disturbed. Many artists and scholars from non-Western ethnic backgrounds often complain that the complexity of their identities or their works of art are not acknowledged, and there is often a too-narrow focus on their identities. In a way, their ethnic identity as an artist of color always seem to attract more attention than the art itself, and the critical reception of the art is always clouded by the artist's ethnic background as the critics and public alike are often eager to search for traces and representations of this background in the work of art. For example, in an interview with bell hooks, Carrie Mae Seems states that, as an artist of African American origin, her race is often an overdetermining factor in the critical reception of her works, and that there is a widespread tendency to assume that the minority artists' artistic ability is limited to dealing with questions of race.⁵³ Similarly, artist Alison Saar contends that there is often a significant gap and meanings lost in between the artistic intention and the cultural & societal reception of the art works. According to her, this gap results from a tendency to overemphasize the artist's racial and gender identity in the works of art, and because of this, Saar concludes that, "when we look at a work of art by someone from a marginalized group it is crucial to acknowledge complexity, profundity and multilayered possibility."⁵⁴ Even though

⁵² Collins 1986

⁵³ hooks 1995

⁵⁴ hooks 1995

both male and female artists of color suffer from their racial identity receiving more attention than their art; Piper states that this situation is particularly troublesome for women artists of color, as they need to "battle gender and race stereotypes simultaneously."⁵⁵ She further argues that this cryptic focus on the artist's race and gender works to reinforce the so-called homogeneity of the Eurocentric art world, and objectifies and marginalizes the artist while at the same time stripping them off of their subjectivity and unloading the content of their art through racial assumptions.⁵⁶

Another problem that may potentially arise regarding the over-determining focus on the artist's racial and gender identity is the trivialization of the critical content of these artworks. It can be argued that the shallow focus on the artist's identity hinders genuine engagement with the content of the art work, and it can thus be seen as a strategy to eliminate these threats by trivializing them, and refusing to engage with the real critical content of the works. Minh-ha also refers to this systematic trivialization of the political content in the works of women artists of color, and argues that political views held by women of color are often seen as personal angers and aggressions towards the dominant group, and the ideological nature of their criticism against the system tends to be completely ignored.⁵⁷ bell hooks makes a similar remark that, through the existing unspoken and unacknowledged censorship mechanisms within the mainstream art world, overtly political content by women artists of color is neither welcomed nor taken seriously, despite the fact that they are often encouraged to speak about what it is like to be a woman artist of color in interview settings.⁵⁸ This point by hooks is in line with the previously argued point that the artist's ethnic and/or gender identity seems to receive much more interest than their artistic concerns and works of art. This one-dimensional focus on the ethnic and gender identity of the artist poses limits on the artist's artistic abilities, and it also helps the hierarchies within the industry, as well as the rigid categories of Western vs the non-Western, remain in place. Furthermore, the reluctance to acknowledge the complexity, diversity and innovative elements in the art by women artists of color also helps put them under the category of artists who do not possess the universal

⁵⁵ Piper 2003

⁵⁶ Piper 2003

⁵⁷ Minh-ha 2003

⁵⁸ hooks 1995

notion of artistic Quality, therefore obscuring the systematical patterns of exclusion. In her essay titled "The Triple Negation of Colored Women Artists", Adrian Piper also refers to this strategy by arguing that art by women of color is systematically denied their rightful status as innovations, in order to eliminate their threatening position against the cultural hegemony of the Eurocentric art tradition.⁵⁹ Therefore, based on all the quoted examples from artists and academicians, it can be stated that it emerges as a common problem that women artists of color suffer from their art not being taken seriously or the multitudes in the content of their art work not being understood; all due to the preconceived bias and prejudices regarding their ethnic and gender identity which overshadow the critical reception of their works.

To conclude this chapter, it can be stated that the personal and creative insights from women artists of color is of particular importance in today's world, since their intersectional positioning and the resulting individual standpoint perspective sheds light into an largely unexplored area of knowledge. Through these artistic narratives, one can get a glimpse of what it is like to be a woman of color in the art world with politically inclined works of art, and the difficulties that arise at this intersectional positioning. The statements and arguments by women artists and scholars of color referred in this chapter reveal that there are certain patterns and challenges they face as women of color in the creative field; such as the pressure they face from the dominant art world to confine to its norms, as well as the pressure from different marginalized communities to identify first and foremost with their own struggle. Another common problem that surfaces is the over determining focus of the artist's racial and gender identity that makes it impossible for the artwork to be received and critiqued with the same level of complexity that the mainstream art receives. As this focus on the artist's identity obscures and pushes the artistic production into the background, it is of great importance to focus into the artworks of the women artists of color in order to fully acknowledge and appreciate the complexity and multilayered potentials of their work, and to see how they choose to build their own personal narratives. Asserting itself as an innovative challenge and counter narrative to the dominant knowledge-validation processes, art by women artists of color has the potential to disturb the status quo, to decrease the omission of non-dominant ways of knowing and to help build a more equal platform where marginalized voices and artistic creativity are equally valued.

⁵⁹ Piper 2003

III. The Institutionalized Multiculturalism and Neoliberal Art Markets

III.I. The Museum Display Culture of Diversity

Building on the previous chapter which has provided an historical account of the hegemonic structures and the discriminatory norms that have existed in the art world, this chapter will dwell on the questions of whether, and to what extent, these historically rooted structures remain intact today, and how they continue to disadvantage artists from marginalized backgrounds. The discriminatory practices and the patriarchal and colonizing patterns of the arts industry started to be questioned in a visible manner in the 20th century. Particularly after the 1960s, scholars and artists have increasingly started to turn a critical eye towards the museums and art institutions, and the emphasis has mainly been on the exclusive frameworks of the Western museum in which the curatorial perspective is typically Western biased and the exhibitions are traditionally aimed at educated, white, upper class audiences.⁶⁰ These criticisms, together with the population of Europe that have started to be increasingly more heterogeneous with the immigration waves, forced museums to consider conceptions of equality and diversity, and to introduce multiculturalism in their practices. In his article titled “Museums and the combating of social inequality: roles, responsibilities, resistance”, Richard Sandell argue that, particularly in the last two decades, concerns for diversity, equality and social justice have been on the agenda of the museums; and such issues have ceased to be peripheral considerations and have been moved to the core of the museums’ vision and practices.⁶¹

However, many scholars and artists have been critical of the multiculturalism as practiced by museums and other institutional contexts. The core of these criticisms focus on the lack of acknowledgement of the intrinsically embedded and historically rooted privileges and hierarchies that still persists in museums and other art institutions today. For instance, during their research on interviewing museum practitioners on their practices of inclusivity and multiculturalism, Adams and Koke identified one of the main barriers as the reluctance of engaging in “uncomfortable conversations” on the part of the museum authorities. As Adams &

⁶⁰ Coombes 1998

⁶¹ Sandell 2002

Koke explain based on their survey, today, majority of the museum staff, especially those on leadership and decision-making positions, still tend to be white, well educated men and women from middle class or upper middle class backgrounds. Therefore, an effort to be truly inclusive and multicultural requires one to be self-critical, and to have a hard look in the mirror and to recognize one's own biases, prejudices and assumptions. Adams & Coke's interview survey reveals that a significant portion of the staff coming from dominant social groups are unwilling to engage in such conversations, and, in many cases, they are not eager to even accept that there is a problem at all.⁶² Guerrilla Girls, a collective that defines itself as feminist activist artists with an agenda to expose ethnic and gender bias in the art world, also report that their research have shown that museums and galleries in Western Europe and in New York, despite their outspoken attitudes, are in fact the worst when it comes to inclusivity, and that women of color have the most difficulty getting their work shown in these places. They further state that especially in prestigious shows, such as Venice Biennial, Whitney Biennial, etc., there is never room for more than a few women artists of color, or for any artists of color at all; and these artists are often displayed as tokens without any critical discussions regarding access, inclusivity and multiculturalism taking place.⁶³

Some scholars refer to this kind of multiculturalism, where there is a diversity of cultures present in a social or institutional context without any critical engagement regarding the existing hierarchies between the cultures, "liberal multiculturalism".⁶⁴ As Acuff & Evans argue in the introduction to the anthology *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, the most basic principle of multiculturalism, which is critically evaluating cultural subjugation and the resulting power structures, is often completely ignored by liberal multiculturalist practices of museums and art institutions. As a result of the lack of critical assessment and understanding of cultural hybridity, liberal multiculturalism tends to conceptualize culture as a fixed notion, and according to this view, the indigenous and minority cultures tend to be seen as something to "simply teach about" without the necessary assessment of existing institutionalized hierarchies, and how these hierarchies disadvantage the non-dominant cultures.⁶⁵ Hence, liberal

⁶² Adams & Koke 2014

⁶³ The Guerrilla Girls 2003

⁶⁴ Acuff & Evans 2014

⁶⁵ Acuff & Evans 2014

multiculturalism tends to provide knowledge on other cultures to be consumed, without transforming the essentially biased and binary conceptualizations of culture and the narratives of 'us vs. them.'

When an art institution practices this form of liberal multiculturalism, the deeply rooted and institutionally protected discriminatory practices remain intact, and it prevents the museum space from being truly inclusive and multicultural. In such contexts, minority cultures continue to be essentialized and exoticised, and the multiculturalism takes the form of tokenism where works by non-Western artists are displayed to fill up the quota, and to be culturally diverse on the surface. In her article titled "Inventing 'Postcolonial': Hybridity and Constituency in Contemporary Curating", Annie E. Coombes describes this tokenism in a very accurate manner in the following words:

The museum culture of hybridity threatens to collapse the heterogeneous experience of racism into a scopic feast where the goods on display are laid out for easy consumption in ever more enticing configurations, none of which actually challenges or exposes the ways in which such difference is constituted and operates as a mechanism of oppression . . . The Western museum poses some form of impossible universal internationalism, making it untenable to speak of shifting the binary oppositions and the structural principles of Western appraisal of non-European culture.⁶⁶

This section by Coombes reveals how liberal multiculturalism replicates the problematic logic of essentialism through displaying cultural diversity by simply exhibiting artifacts from different cultures and by artists of color in a manner that highlights difference. Moreover, since the curatorial perspective is still essentially Western biased, the non-Western art and artists continue to be evaluated and appraised through a Western lens, and they become exotic spectacles to be consumed by the Western eye. Therefore, it is not possible to speak of a mutual exchange or cultural fluidity in these liberal multicultural contexts, since such exhibitions continue to engage in the colonial understanding of the non-Western cultures in an othering manner. Whereas such exhibitions does little to disentangle the power relations and to stimulate change, Coombes further argues that this strategy of surface multiculturalism ac-

⁶⁶ Coombes 1998

tually ensures the continuation of such mechanisms of oppression by invoking a "misleading rhetoric of equality" that makes the museum immune to any form of criticism.⁶⁷

As there is a common unwillingness to engage in 'uncomfortable conversations' and to transform the existing hierarchies and privileges in the art world, the multiculturalist and inclusive practices in the art institutions also tend to happen on hierarchical terms. Rasheed Araeen, an early generation non-Western artist living in the West and the founder of *Third Text*, a journal that focuses on the institutional closures of the Western art world; claims that art institutional power still follows a linear and binary vision where colonial overtones and racial views continue to shape the reception, evaluation and recognition of the non-Western artist.⁶⁸ This means that the change is still envisioned and practiced through a colonial lens where the non-Western artists continue to be subject to certain othering mechanisms, biases and prejudices based on their racial identities. Similarly, in their article titled "The Culture in Multiculturalism and Racialized Art", Kılıç & Petzen also dwell on these colonial patterns of the art world's multiculturalism, and they argue that the problematic discourses of cultural diversity based on difference, racial logic and national identity continue to exist and be supported by the multicultural state and its art institutions, as well as by the independent global art market. In such circumstances, as previously argued, the inclusion happens as a form of tokenism where a few artists of color are allowed entry and recognition within the mainstream arts scene. Thus, it can be argued that the liberal multiculturalism as typically practiced by Western museums and arts institutions operates in a top-to-bottom fashion where those in positions of power gets to decide which non-Western artists to support and promote. In this framework, as Kılıç & Petzen put forward, multiculturalism becomes a political project to prove that the migrant artists, and artists from marginalized backgrounds, have been successfully integrated, and that the racism has been overcome.⁶⁹ Araeen similarly argues that the art world claims to be free from racism through promoting the works of non-Western artists on the basis of not their art, but rather their ethnic or cultural identities.⁷⁰ Both these remarks are in line with Coombes' previously mentioned argument that the liberal mul-

⁶⁷ Coombes 1988

⁶⁸ Araeen 2000

⁶⁹ Kılıç & Petzen 2013

⁷⁰ Araeen 2000

multiculturalism creates a misleading rhetoric of equality which effectively obscures the ongoing practices of inequality in the field, and through creating an surface image of cultural diversity, it shields itself from criticisms by avoiding the 'uncomfortable conversations' that is necessary to transform the industry.

As it has thus far been argued that the inclusion happens on the Western terms, it is essential to have a more detailed look into these gatekeepers of the arts industry to see how, and on what terms, they regulate entry. In this context, many artists and scholars refer to the conservative structures of the Western museum and art institutions, and many of them in fact claim that the art world is the last social and institutional space that remains where little to no discussions about racism and critical reflections have yet taken place. Artist Adrian Piper argues that the Eurocentric art world is fueled rather by the principle of entrepreneurship, and not of intellectual curiosity, and adds that whereas many other domains have been adjusting their perspectives to accommodate the insights of those previously excluded from their discussions, the art world is still having a hard time seeing non-Western artists and critics as equal agents.⁷¹ Rasheed Araeen also makes an almost exact remark that the art world is maybe the only section of society where a self-critical reflection on racism is yet to occur, and he argues that the reason preventing these reflections is the strong grip of institutional control exerted in the museum space which makes such discussions very difficult.⁷² Likewise, Lippard argues that the art world, despite its innovative and free image, is "better equipped to swallow cross-cultural influences than to savor them."⁷³

Given that artists are, most of the time, dependent on institutional recognition, these conservative structures which regulate entry proves highly problematic as it means that however innovative, successful or ground-breaking an art piece can be, it cannot reach masses and gain recognition unless it enters the institutional space and gets promoted by institutional agents.⁷⁴ Thus, in an industry which is reluctant to let go of the institutionally protected privileges and which practices multiculturalism on the basis of tokenism, it is no surprise that art

⁷¹ Piper 2003

⁷² Araeen 2000

⁷³ Lippard 1990

⁷⁴ Araeen 2000

which challenges these very structures is not welcomed.⁷⁵ Since multiculturalism and inclusion happens within a certain framework that is determined by those who control the institutions, this naturally leads to stereotyping and commodification of the artist and their culture, and, as a result, the non-Western artist with a specific artistic style rooted in their ethnic/cultural background becomes a new stereotype.⁷⁶ It can be argued that this type of an artist with strong, visible implications of his racial and cultural identity in his art is a safe choice for the Western art institution, given that it makes the exhibition space visibly multicultural in the traditional sense and does not pose any threat to the existing system of cultural privileges within the industry. For example, a German-Turk artist with a migrant background argues: “Nobody wants a Turkish Pollock [in an exhibit]. You need to bring the colorful headscarf and the mustache to be included.”⁷⁷ This statement suggests that within the frame of liberal multiculturalism, artists from non-Western background face significant limitations to their creativity, because they are expected to produce works of art only dealing with their cultural background in a stereotypical manner in order to be recognized and uplifted within the mainstream arts scene.

To sum up and conclude this chapter, it can be stated that whereas the last two decades have seen increasing concerns and efforts on the parts of Western museums and art institutions to be inclusive and multicultural, the existing body of criticism suggests that the institutional structures are very difficult to penetrate, and such structures that continue to protect racial and cultural privileges need to be questioned, challenged and transformed in order for the Western art institutions to be truly inclusive and multicultural. As long as the people in power positions who regulate entry continue to be majorly composed of Western people, it will remain difficult for new insights to enter and have a significant and transformative effect in the industry. And as long as the people in power positions continue to be reluctant to engage in uncomfortable conversations, the multiculturalism occurs only within a surface level without penetrating into all layers of the industry. Furthermore, this type of surface multiculturalism reinforces the existing stereotypical and binary images of Western vs. the ‘other’ cultures, and the promotion of a selected few artists from non-Western backgrounds with a cer-

⁷⁵ Araeen 2000

⁷⁶ Lippard 1990; Araeen 2000

⁷⁷ Kılıç & Petzen 2013

tain profile that fits the stereotypical image of the 'other' creates unequal opportunities for artists from non-Western backgrounds and hinders their creative expressions.

III.II. Identity Politics: The Authentic Position of the 'Other Artist' and Commodification of Difference

Since the previous section gave an account of the liberal multiculturalism policies typically practiced in Western art institutional contexts and argued that the entry of non-Western artists into the mainstream arts scene still happens on Western terms with colonial implications, this chapter will focus on the resulting 'other' identity of the non-Western artist, and the commodification of cultural difference in the neoliberal art world. As it is possible to observe a trend among Western arts institutions to implement multiculturalism in their practices in a problematic manner of tokenism, there consequently emerges a certain stereotypical profile of a non-Western artist to play a designated role in this multicultural transformation. Many artists and scholars find this emerging appreciation of the artists from non-Western backgrounds to be problematic, given that it has mostly been due to the fact that cultural diversity and art by non-Western artists are "hot" right now, rather than a genuine interest in the individual artists' works.⁷⁸ Thus, this creates a market demand for a certain type of exotic 'Other' artist who has a strong emphasis on their home culture and difference.⁷⁹

Given that the inclusion of the non-Western artist happens on the grounds of how exotic and interesting they are for the typical Western audiences, it can be argued that, instead of being eliminated, the discriminatory patterns of the industry rather become more subtle and sophisticated.⁸⁰ This is because, when the dominant group demands to see a particular representation of a minority artist, the dialogue between the majority and minority groups takes place on an unequal platform. In such a context, the non-Western immigrant artist becomes the guest that is invited by the Western institutions, which is the host, to participate in the arts scene. What is problematic about this is that when the West is in the position of the host, the hierarchies remain intact, and the resulting dialogue between the host and the guest becomes a rather scripted one where the host, who is in the position of power, stirs the conversation and demands to hear what they want from the guest. This new trend of multicultur-

⁷⁸ hooks 1995

⁷⁹ Araeen 2000

⁸⁰ Kılıç & Petzen 2013

alism and the interest in difference can be observed in Vietnamese-American filmmaker and scholar Trinh T. Minh-ha's account:

Now, I am not only given the permission to open up and talk, I am also encouraged to express my difference. My audience expects and demands it, otherwise people would feel as if they have been cheated: We did not come to hear a Third World member speak about the First (?) World, we came to listen to that voice of difference likely to bring us what we can't have and divert us from the monotony of sameness. . . . Eager not to disappoint, I try my best to offer my benefactors and benefactresses what they most anxiously yearn for: The possibility of a difference, yet a difference or an otherness that will not go so far as to question the foundation of their beings and makings.⁸¹

This account by Minh-ha powerfully exposes the hierarchical terms and the colonial implications of the multiculturalism that happens in the art world. The West still seems to assert its colonial power as it sustains its power to describe the non-Western identity. Even though it is no longer practiced as blatantly as it was before, and there is the appearance of an equal platform and a mutual dialogue where the non-Western identities speak for themselves, the non-Western identity is still described by the West as the West decides whom to bring to this so-called equal platform to have the dialogue with. Araeen argues that this is a very entrenched phenomenon within the Western colonial expression that continues to express itself in the domain of culture today; and that according to this expression, the colonized is defined in a stereotypical, static and limited manner. As this expression is focused on proving the difference of a specific culture than the West, the limits of this culture as dictated by the colonizer is confined to these stereotypical attributions.⁸² Likewise, Minh-ha also argues that uprooted artists with non-Western ethnic backgrounds who do not play the game according to its rules and refuse to paint themselves "thick with authenticity" are rarely invited to participate in such platforms. Artists that are not satisfying these expectations are typically seen as too Westernized, and as mere followers and copiers of Western art traditions.⁸³ Such expectations for the non-Western artists to only deal with their stereotypically defined cultural back-

⁸¹ Minh-ha 2003

⁸² Araeen 2000

⁸³ Minh-ha 2003

grounds, no matter how visible they are within the mainstream art institutions, effectively puts them under a separate subordinate category of "ethnic art". Through this category, these artists are appreciated for their difference, but they are not seen as equally competent practitioners of modern art forms, which are conventionally seen as Western products. This results in a 'positive' stereotyping of the non-Western artist, and whereas the non-Western artists are celebrated for their difference, they still cannot claim a place for themselves in the history of modernist art.⁸⁴

Thus, it can accordingly be argued that, in today's multicultural Western art world, there is no autonomy in its true sense for the artists with non-Western backgrounds. The rhetoric of colonial modernity where the West still seems to be in the position of the savior gives visibility to only those who successfully plays the predetermined role of the liberated 'Other' who still preserves their authenticity. For instance, Kılıç & Petzen argue that, in order for the multicultural project to be successful, the non-Western immigrant artist should provide a critique of their backward homeland that hints at how happy they are that they are not there. They further argue that a female artist living in the West with her racial roots in an Islamic land is much more likely to be celebrated if she criticizes her homeland and expresses her gratitude for living in the West as a free subject.⁸⁵ When this situation is analyzed from an intersectional point of view, it could be argued that the artists with intersectional identities could possibly be subject to more stereotypical expectations as a result of their multiple marginalized identities. As seen in this example, a female non-Western artist might be expected to criticize the patriarchy in her homeland while also offering something about her culture in her art.

It could consequently be argued that the multicultural practices in today's mainstream arts scene in the Western world still have neocolonial overtones. Whereas the artists who accept to play the predetermined roles are celebrated and promoted on the basis of the exotic, racial make up of their artist profiles; the artists who do not conform to such stereotypical representations struggle much harder for visibility, as they are ignored and excluded by the industry's gatekeepers. This creates a context where works of art which try to challenge these discriminatory practices or disturb to status quo are even harder to produce; both for the rea-

⁸⁴ Araeen 2000

⁸⁵ Kılıç & Petzen 2003

son that there is no perceived market for them, and also because they pose a threat to the neo-colonial institutional structures. Thus, it seems that a truly inclusive and multicultural arts scene is far from reality at this stage. In order for the art world to be truly multicultural, the Western art institutions need to revolutionize, and the historically rooted and institutionally protected hegemonies need to be eradicated. It is only under such circumstances that the non-Western artist can truly have artistic freedom and produce without the burden of representation.

IV. Equality and Inclusion in the Swedish Arts and Culture Scene

A look into the Swedish arts and culture scene in light of the two previous sections suggests that Sweden does not seem to differ considerably from the other Western countries in its practices of multiculturalism and diversity within the cultural field. A literature review of the existing research reveals that, overall, there are many parallels with the other Western arts and culture institutions' practices that have been discussed in the previous sections; such as tokenism, stereotypical expectations from the non-Western artists, the reluctance on the part of authorities to acknowledge that there is a problem, and to truly transform the industry. Moreover, according to Cajsa Lagerkvist, who is a museum curator and an author who has perhaps produced the most extensive literature within the last decade on the multiculturalism in Sweden's art scene, the questions of cultural diversity and equality are generally overlooked within the Swedish art field, and they are not very well known or studied in detail.⁸⁶ Thus, in order to provide the context for the case studies that will be analyzed in the upcoming chapter, this section will look at the current situation for non-Western artists in Sweden through an analysis of academical research, reports and cultural policy papers. The focus will be on the question of how the situation in Sweden resembles or differs from the situation generally observed in the Western arts and culture institutions. The general tendency to overlook the existing problems and the reluctance to transform the industry, which Lagerkvist, as well as other artists and researchers in Sweden, problematize; and the consequences of these for non-Western artists will also be analyzed.

I. Segregation

When it comes to multiculturalism, what is interesting about the Swedish case in particular is the segregated patterns in the society and the labor market. As it was briefly mentioned in the introduction section, despite boosting a very multicultural and anti-racist image and hosting a large ratio of immigrants that is comparable to the much larger European countries, the unemployment rates among immigrant groups, are 4-6 times higher than the native Swedes. Moreover, in terms of social segregation, a government report dating 2013 reveals

⁸⁶ Lagerkvist 2000

that, outside of working life, as many as 80% of Swedes state that they rarely or never socialize with any people of non-European origin.⁸⁷ Pripp, Plisch & Werner argue that, even though Sweden may be characterized by a multicultural outlook and policy within the international context, in the normative sense of the term, Sweden is actually not multicultural. This is because, even when the immigrants are well educated and speak fluent Swedish, they continue to be malnourished and underrepresented in all areas of society. Yet, there is nevertheless a general tendency to explain the lack of integration by the immigrants' poorer language skills or lack of qualifications. Accordingly, the role of the majority in integration remains to be ignored.⁸⁸ This tendency of the majority to not acknowledge and play their part in the integration process can also be tied to the concept of anti-racial colorblindness of Sweden that Hubinette & Lundström problematize. According to Hubinette & Lundström, Swedish society is completely colorblind, meaning that speaking about race is immediately condemned, as everyone is ideally seen as equals. Therefore, the colorblindness effectively transforms racism into a 'non-Swedish' issue.⁸⁹ This tendency could arguably help explain why the problems of integration are attributed to immigrants, as the colorblind approach of the majority assumes that there is no racism whatsoever in Sweden, which leaves only the immigrant to blame for not integrating into a society that welcomes them and treats them as equals. Consequently, this attitude obscures the lesser opportunities for immigrants as well as the ongoing practices of everyday racism. As both Pripp, Plisch & Werner and Hubinette & Lundström argue in their texts, everyday racism continues to be an unrecognized topic in Sweden.⁹⁰

The existing research suggests that this general segregation in Swedish society and the labor market is also reflected in the country's arts and culture industry. In their report on the multicultural practices and the diversity in Swedish arts and culture organizations, Pripp, Plisch & Werner argue that cultural institutions do not reflect the society from an ethnic and cultural point of view, given that the number of employees with a non-Swede ethnic background is generally very low. And most commonly, people with foreign backgrounds who are

⁸⁷ Hübinette & Lundström 2015

⁸⁸ Pripp, Plisch & Werner 2005

⁸⁹ Hubinette & Lundström 2015

⁹⁰ Pripp, Plisch & Werner 2005; Hubinette & Lundström 2015

employed in cultural organizations occupy the lowest positions.⁹¹ In a report, Konstnärsnämnden (the Swedish Arts Grants Committee) states that 16% of the artists in Sweden are of foreign background compared to the 22% in general population. It is further reported that artists born in EU or other Western countries are overrepresented in this percentage, and the percentage of artists born in Africa and Asia are the lowest.⁹² Marita Flisbäck similarly argues that, whereas Swedish cultural sector is portrayed as being increasingly global oriented today, this internationalization hardly reaches beyond the European borders.⁹³ When it comes to the annual income, Konstnärsnämnden's report reveals that the artists who are born in Sweden to native-born Swedish parents have an annual income that is 25% higher than artists born abroad, and 13% higher than the artists born in Sweden to foreigner parents. Although these percentages look quite high, the situation in the art world looks better than the general labor force, as the statistics for the same categories in the general labor force is 40% and 25%, respectively.⁹⁴ It can therefore be deducted from these statistics that the general tendency of segregation in Sweden is also reflected in the artist group, though to a considerably lesser degree than that of the general population. Yet, as the Pripp, Plisch & Werner's survey reveals, apart from the artists, the employee profile in the Swedish arts and culture institutions, especially the high-level positions, continue to be dominated by native-born Swedes. This could possibly lead to the same problem of hierarchies and 'gate-keepers' of the art industry as discussed in the previous sections.

⁹¹ Pripp, Plisch & Werner 2005

⁹² Konstnärsnämnden 2016

⁹³ Flisbäck 2005

⁹⁴ Konstnärsnämnden 2017

II. Cultural Policy

In Sweden, the first cultural policy objectives on state level was established in 1974. In these objectives, cultural diversity does not appear as a clearly set objective, yet, it can be argued that certain goals that are formulated in this document refer to cultural diversity. For instance, some goals include the following: "Cultural policy should promote an exchange of experiences and ideas across different languages and national borders" and, "Cultural policy should be expanded according to the disadvantaged groups' experiences and needs."⁹⁵ In the following 1996 cultural policy, cultural diversity has been more clearly formulated, and many scholars accepts this as the first time the perspective of cultural diversity was officially introduced to Swedish cultural policy.⁹⁶

One critical shift in perspective that can be identified between the cultural policies of 1974 and 1996 is that, whereas the first one identified the immigrants as well as other disadvantaged groups as a subordinate group to the majority which needs special treatment, the latter acknowledges that immigrants are not a homogenous group with the same experiences and needs.⁹⁷ For example, the third goal of the 1996 cultural policy references cultural fluidity, and highlights the need to create new expressions for the multicultural generation that does not fit into the traditional and static understandings of ethnic and cultural identity. The same goal also acknowledges that the mixes of different cultural backgrounds lead to the formation of new creative expressions and new understandings of quality.⁹⁸ When this policy goal is analyzed in relation to the general problems in the Western arts industry that has been discussed in the previous two sections, it can be said that the Swedish cultural policy is quite forward-looking and expresses a true understanding of multiculturalism compared to the typical liberal multiculturalism practices of Western arts and culture institutions. Whereas the liberal multiculturalist practices tend to confine the artistic production of the non-Western artists to their home culture's tradition, the Swedish cultural policy goal acknowledges the new and different creative expressions that the multicultural generation can adopt. Moreover,

⁹⁵ Kulturutredningen 1974

⁹⁶ Pripp, Plisch & Werner 2005; Flisbäck 2005, Lagerkvist 2000

⁹⁷ Lagerkvist 2000

⁹⁸ Kulturpolitik 1996

in previous sections, another problematic issue in the Western art industries has been identified as the Western conceptualization of the notion of artistic quality, and how this functions as a mechanism of exclusion when different artistic expressions are deemed as not possessing artistic quality in Western standards. The cultural policy also acknowledges the need to expand and modify the notion of artistic quality in order to include different and newly emerging forms of creative expressions. Thus, it seems that the authors of the cultural policy are well aware of the general topics of discussion within the field and the existing problems in the industry, and they address these in the designated goals.

However, even though the cultural policy goals look well-thought out and forward looking in the first glance, many scholars in Sweden are critical of the 1996 cultural policy for various reasons. One of the common criticisms is that the goals and the notion cultural diversity is vaguely formulated, and that the policy does not offer any solid guidelines for institutions on how to achieve these goals. For example, both Lagerkvist and Pripp, Plisch & Werner argue that the term cultural diversity is not clearly formulated in the document, and, because of the multifaceted nature of the concept, it could mean many things. They further argue that, within this framework, the term cultural diversity might have possibly been used to refer to artistic variation, rather than ethnic diversity.⁹⁹ Thus, as ethnicity is not directly specified in the policy, the institutions are also free to interpret this however they wish, and they are not required to report the ethnic diversity aspect in their reporting. Accordingly, the existing surveys and studies suggest that whereas Swedish cultural policies emphasize the importance of cultural diversity, albeit in a vague manner, the goals are not followed closely by many institutions, although the situation may differ from institution to institution.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Lagerkvist 2000; Pripp, Plisch & Werner 2005

¹⁰⁰ Plisch 2004

III. Hierarchies and Cultural Elites

In Sweden, many artists, scholars and researchers point to the existence of a cultural elite, which is described as a rather closed power field where the inclusion into the scene often happens through informal ways of networking and through contacts.¹⁰¹ Although the position of a cultural elite and how one becomes a member of this group is not very much elaborated in these researches, it seems that the cultural power is usually accumulated through having a privileged class background, e.g. having educated parents, preferably on the field of arts and culture, and through attending a Swedish art school on a higher education level.¹⁰² When this is analyzed from a gender perspective, it is revealed that it is harder for women to attain the position of the cultural elite. In her research on the cultural power and the obstacles and opportunities for artistic recognition, Marita Flisbäck cites the international elite studies which shows that women in cultural power positions tend to have more capital resources, such as active parents within the field, as well as a more privileged class position than men in corresponding positions. In addition, women in the cultural elite often come from metropolitan cities, have higher education levels than the men in the same positions, and their parents are also more highly educated.¹⁰³ This clearly shows that women need to compensate with their higher education and class levels in order to reach a high level position in the industry and to be considered as a cultural elite. Moreover, when the segregated patterns of the Swedish labor force in general and the low number of culture workers with foreign background in particular is taken into consideration, it can be argued that the Swedes with immigrant backgrounds may have a much harder time in being accepted into this group of cultural elites. This is because, as immigrants, they often do not come from upper class backgrounds, and given the low percentage of foreign representation in the high level culture positions, their parents are not likely members of the cultural elite, either. The statistics by the report of Konstnärsnämnden's 2017 report on artists' working environment also supports this claim, as it cites gender, age, and ethnic background as three most common grounds for discrimination

¹⁰¹ Bethoui 2004, Flisbäck 2005, Lagerkvist 2000

¹⁰² Konstnärsnämnden 2016

¹⁰³ Flisbäck 2005

in the field.¹⁰⁴ The fact that age is also a significant factor can possibly indicate the conservativeness of the field, and its prejudiced attitude towards new ideas and creative expressions; given that the report states that it is the young artists whom are prone to discrimination.

It can accordingly be argued that the existence of such a cultural elite group resembles the gatekeepers of the art industry referred in previous sections, as it regulates entry through contacts and its closed nature indicate conservativeness. The existence of such a group also explains the small number of foreigner artists, especially those of non-Western origin, within the field. Moreover, in addition to the vague formulations and the lack of a proper guideline in the cultural policy documents, the unwillingness to put the cultural policy objectives into practices can at least partly be explained by the existence of this cultural elite, given that the group seems to follow an almost hereditary rule of succession where the people whose parents are important figures within the cultural elite, and people who possess certain cultural and class capitals, are allowed entry. Therefore, truly transforming the industry and eliminating the hierarchies would possibly go against the preserving of such old-fashioned codes of entry, as the existing literature indeed shows that the existence of such a group effectively reduces the opportunities for artists with immigrant backgrounds. For example, while Swedish cultural policies promote innovation and argues that the notion of artistic quality must be expanded, Lagerkvist argues that, in the existing situation where a cultural elite dominates the industry, the ones who are encouraged to experiment with different artistic expressions are the established names who already belong to this cultural elite.¹⁰⁵ In this hierarchical setting, innovation that comes from outside of the group is naturally met with suspicion, and the normative notion of artistic quality re-appears as a tool of assessment. Similarly, in their interview survey of the cultural institution managers, Pripp, Plisch & Werner observed that questions of cultural diversity often raised concerns about reduced quality and skills, and the managers often had a questioning attitude on the competence of the immigrants.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it seems that the existence of such a cultural elite reduces the opportunities of the artists with immigrant backgrounds to gain recognition and succeed within the industry. Likewise, Lagerkvist argues that this cultural elite, which revises the concept artistic quality according

¹⁰⁴ Konstnärsnämnden 2017

¹⁰⁵ Lagerkvist 2000

¹⁰⁶ Pripp, Plisch & Werner 2005

to who is being assessed, reduces all the diverse artistic expressions coming outside of this group to "immigrant art".¹⁰⁷

Another interesting point that emerges within the Swedish arts and culture industry is the apparent hierarchy of nationalities and the rather vague categorization of "immigrant art". For example, artist Ximena Narea also talks about the existing problem of reducing the artistic expressions of Latin American artists to "immigrant art", regardless of the content of their art. Yet, she further argues that whereas this puts the Latin American artists in a disadvantaged position, not all immigrant artists are disadvantaged or necessarily classified as immigrants.¹⁰⁸ Lagerkvist similarly argues that some immigrant groups, particularly those from other European or Western countries, are privileged; and she mentions that an American artist that she interviewed had never considered herself an immigrant or an immigrant artist, and haven't been called those names by anyone else, either.¹⁰⁹ Narea and Lagerkvist's remarks offer a possible explanation of the data represented in Konstnärsnämnden's report, as the underrepresentation of the artists from non-Western backgrounds can thereby be explained by the closed nature of the cultural elite in Sweden and their suspicions on the quality and skills of the immigrant artists.

The conceptualization of only the non-Western artists as "immigrant artists" also recalls the previous sections in which the problem of conceptualizing the modern art traditions as Western products was discussed. The arts and culture industry in Sweden seems to follow this trend, given that the skills and the quality of the artists who come from Western art traditions are not questioned, and they are not labeled as immigrant artists. The labelling of the non-Western artists and their artistic expressions as immigrant art indicate that they are seen as outsiders who are not considered equally competent artists.

Moreover, Charlotte Bydler argues that this unspoken criteria in categorizing artists and assessing their artistic quality according to ethnicity is a very sensitive and even a taboo discussion within the industry, which is again in line with the general reluctance observed in the Western art world to have the necessary uncomfortable conversations and to do away with the hierarchies. Moreover, Bydler further states that talking about the invisibility of and dis-

¹⁰⁷ Lagerkvist 2000

¹⁰⁸ Narea 1998

¹⁰⁹ Lagerkvist 2000

crimination against the immigrant women artists is an absolute no-go zone within the contemporary arts circles.¹¹⁰ Thus, within the Swedish case in particular, this situation can again possibly be linked to the colorblindness that Hubinette & Lundström discusses, as the assumption of racism and patriarchy as being non-Swedish issues could also make the critical discussions on the discrimination against non-Western women artists particularly difficult.

IV. Orientalist Discourses and Inequalities

Since there seems to be a tendency to reduce the creative expressions of non-Western artists to the category of immigrant art within the Swedish context, it is possible to talk about an orientalist discourse. One major issue that comes up in most of the literature on Sweden's arts and culture scene is that, the artist identity of the non-Swedish artist, as well as their art, often tend to be seen as integration projects. This suggests that the participation of an artist with a non-Western immigrant background in the mainstream arts scene is not yet a normalized phenomenon. Lagerkvist argues that artists and cultural producers from immigrant backgrounds often occupy a grey zone between art and social integration, even when the artists don't have such intentions at all. This naturally affects their positioning within the cultural institutions, as they become "more immigrants than artists".¹¹¹ For instance, Lagerkvist gives an example through a Swedish-Pakistani visual artist that she interviewed, and how such expectations have shaped her artistic career. In the interview, the artist states that although she initially didn't have any intentions of her art being received that way, upon the request and the support she received, she started holding workshops with young immigrant girls and discussed the theme of having a dual cultural identity through her works of art.¹¹² Thus, this shows that the situation in Sweden is similar to the general tendencies in the Western industries, as the establishment and the recognition of the artists with non-Western backgrounds are easier if the artists chooses to deal with their cultural background in their works of art.

¹¹⁰ Bydler 1999

¹¹¹ Lagerkvist 2000

¹¹² Lagerkvist 2000

However, although there is an orientalist discourse present, it seems to follow a rather different trend in Sweden compared to the general picture of the Western art institutions. In other words, whereas it was argued in the previous chapter that celebrating diversity through the stereotypical representations of the non-Western artist is 'hot' right now within the liberal multicultural practices, there doesn't seem to be a strong trend like this in Sweden. Although there are many overlapping patterns, such as the highlighting of the 'immigrant' aspect of the artist's personality, and designating the immigrant artist as the representative of their community and expecting them to deal with their cultural background in their art; many scholars claim that "immigrant art" is not exactly popular in Sweden. For example, Miguel Benito from the Immigrant Institute says that museums and galleries in Sweden are not particularly welcoming towards artists from immigrant backgrounds, and that it is much easier for international guest artists to exhibit in Sweden than the immigrant artists residing in Sweden. He further states that the tag "immigrant" that is associated with the artist stigmatizes the art and makes it uninteresting for the public.¹¹³ This remark by Benito could possibly be linked to the aforementioned tendency to view art by artists with immigrant backgrounds as integration projects, and this could be the reason why it is not appealing to the museum and gallery visitors as they may not see it as professional art. Another possible explanation for this disinterest in the art by artists from immigrant backgrounds may be the colorblindness in Swedish society. As it was previously discussed, speaking about race is kind of a taboo subject in Sweden, as there is a general tendency to assume that there is no racism in Sweden. Thus, uplifting and celebrating an artist on the basis of their ethnic background would go against the colourblind attitude.

Whereas the general tendency observed in the Western institutions to uncritically celebrate cultural diversity through the stereotypical artistic representations is problematic, it can be argued that the situation in Sweden, albeit different from these tendencies, is also problematic. The colorblind attitudes in the society and in general and in the art world in particular obscures the lesser opportunities and stigmatization of artists coming from non-Western immigrant backgrounds. It also causes the hierarchies within the industry to remain intact while preserving the existence and the privileges of the cultural elite which functions as the gate-keepers of the industry and regulates entry through informal ways. Thus, it can be con-

¹¹³ Lagerkvist 2000

cluded that the Swedish arts and culture industry, just like the Western arts and culture institutions in general, needs to be transformed in order to eliminate the present hierarchies and the stigmatization of non-Western immigrant artists. In order for this to happen, the taboos on speaking about race and discrimination within the industry needs to be challenged, so that the majority can acknowledge the ongoing practices of everyday racism.

V. Case Studies: Artistic Interventions and Resistance

V.I. An Introduction to Artistic Strategies of Resistance

Although this thesis has so far painted a rather gloomy picture of the Western and Swedish art industries and the disadvantaged position of the non-Western artists, there are nevertheless many artists who actively revolt against the hierarchies and claim their place in the industry without conforming to the stereotypical expectations. As art can offer countless different creative ways to critically intervene in the rigid discourses of the industry, there are various strategies the artists adopt to produce counter narratives. Thus, before moving on to the case studies of the artists in the upcoming sections, this section aims to briefly introduce the reader to the concept of artistic intervention and explain the general themes and trends that can be observed among the strategies of the critical artists.

Even though there can potentially be as many different strategies as the number of artists, as each artists creatively pose their own criticism in unique ways, it is still possible to map out some main themes and methods that the artists from marginalized backgrounds tend to adopt. Mainly, the artistic intervention and resistance strategies deal with the concepts of de-essentialization, destabilization, and deconstruction.¹¹⁴ That is to say, the artistic interventions to the discriminatory norms in both the arts industry and society usually work by destabilizing the notion of reality that is constructed by the dominant groups. As bell hooks remarks, counter hegemonic representations and narratives are produced when the artist self-asserts their presence and perspective in the dominant narratives, and moves the audience to a grey zone beyond all history and documentation. hooks goes on to call visual arts as a central aspect in the process of decolonization, given that it offers one the chance to reclaim their identities and to resist the stereotypical definitions of the colonizing eye.¹¹⁵ Thus, visual arts offers a possibility to introduce the viewer to another reality and perspective that has been ignored and suppressed despite being just as valid as the dominant one. In this way, the work of art challenges the present reality and exposes its subjective construction. Similarly, Vasquez & Mignolo describes the decolonizing practices of the artists as "at once the unveil-

¹¹⁴ Lippard 1990

¹¹⁵ hooks 1995

ing of the wound and the possibility of healing.”¹¹⁶ Considering the institutional barriers of the Western art world where critical and transformative discussions are yet to penetrate, this quotation very accurately describes the effect of artistic interventions. This is because, rather than transforming the industry at once, such interventions unveil the wound, and make the existing wound visible to the public eye. This effectively challenges the liberal multiculturalist practices which creates the illusion that racism and discrimination has been overcome through their tokenist practices. Thus, by unveiling the wound, artistic interventions function as a resistance to such practices as well as an invitation to have the necessary conversations to transform the industry, and therefore offers a possibility to heal the wound.

Another significant method of artistic resistance is the refusal to participate in the hierarchical setting of the liberal multiculturalism where the West invites the non-Western other in. Instead of participating in such settings and playing the designated role of the stereotypical non-Western artist, artists who adopt a critical approach negotiate new settings and build new relationships in the industry.¹¹⁷ As Minh-ha argues, in order to truly challenge and disrupt the existing hegemonies, an artist does not “ask permission from the ideology”, and instead devise new, innovative methods to challenge it.¹¹⁸ This is of particular importance, because, as it was discussed in the previous sections, the dominant ideology of the cultural sphere does not give a true autonomy to the non-Western artist, and instead limits their artistic expression. Thus, the artists may need to invent new methods, expressions and norms that in order to better communicate their perspective. Adrian Piper also argues that the critical artists who have been excluded from the mainstream arts scene no longer adopt the existing tools of the industry, as they are the tools of the ‘oppressor’ and therefore not compatible to voice their own perspectives and criticisms. Instead, the artists create their own idioms and visions.¹¹⁹ For example, as it has been argued in the intersectionality section, the common collective perspective may lack the necessary tools and expressions to voice the experiences of the intersectional identities. Thus, the artists can devise new tools that are better equipped to communicate such experiences. However, as it has already been emphasized, it is impor-

¹¹⁶ Vasquez & Mignolo 2013

¹¹⁷ Kiliç & Petzen 2013

¹¹⁸ Minh-ha 2003

¹¹⁹ Piper 2003

tant to note that the method is completely up to the artist's imagination and creativity, thus an artist could also possibly devise a new way to tell their story through the existing tools of the industry. Therefore, it can be stated that devising new tools and rejecting the existing tools of the Western art traditions is one common option, yet it is not the only alternative.

The critical artists from stigmatized backgrounds also commonly build solidarity among each other through collaborations, and inventing alternative safe spaces, etc. In the following words, Adrian Piper explains this solidarity building perspective in a very precise manner: "As we come to feel the strength of our numbers and the significance of our creative potentialities, we approach a readiness to drop out of the zero-sum game and claim our roles as players in a very different kind of game, in which the payoffs are not competitive, but, rather, cooperative."¹²⁰ As it can be observed from this quote, the solidarity aspect in artistic resistance is crucial, given that the institutional power and the historically rooted hierarchies of the Western art world are well-equipped to suppress and exclude the oppositional stances. Thus, critical, marginalized artists can feel more powerful when they are united together and are strong in numbers. In this way, they can potentially have better opportunities to transform the industry to a better one where they have more autonomy and cooperation rather than having to conform to the existing restrictive norms in order to gain recognition.

In sum, the artistic strategies of resistance and intervention mainly serve to disrupt the existing discriminatory norms and prejudices within the art industry in particular and the society in general. It also serves as a tool to re-assert one's own perspective and identity, for those whose identities defined by the dominant, normative discourses through one dimensional and stereotypical attributions. By doing this, the artists simultaneously challenge these existing discourses as well as the viewer's perceptions and prejudices, while also taking cooperative steps to move to a better future where everyone's perspective can find a place in a non-hierarchical, equal platform.

¹²⁰ Piper 2003

V.II. Roxy Farhat

Roxy Farhat is a visual artist who is born 1984 in Tehran, Iran, and currently lives and works in Stockholm, Sweden.¹²¹ She mainly works with moving image, and explores the themes of gender, class, ethnicity and culture in her works. She also works as a director and music video editor, and has shot award-winning videos for several artists in Sweden, such as The Knife, Gnučči, Zhala and Marit Bergman. In her performance Open Letter to Kim Kardashian, Farhat describes herself as a radical feminist and a political artist, and on her artist page, the first thing that welcomes the visitor is a flashing anti-Nazi sign.¹²² In this section, the following video art works by Roxy Farhat will be introduced and analyzed: Middle Class Paradise (3:35, 2010), I'm A Girl From Iran (2:33, 2008), The Decency Squad (3:25, 2010), and What Are Your Intentions Here? (13:01, 2011). The artist's documentary project HUR and her involvement in the anti-national cabaret Europa and Europa will also be briefly touched upon and discussed.

The first example, "Middle Class Paradise", is a cover of the song Gangsta's Paradise by the rapper Coolio. Roxy Farhat has re-written the lyrics to this song, and instead of a gangsta's paradise, she is singing about another paradise which she identifies with the bubble in the art school that she was attending at the time. The video is shot in the corridors of an art school in Sweden, therefore making it possible to link her lyrics to the context of the Swedish art world. In her lyrics, she talks about the art school and the artists as being detached from the outside world, and as an homogenous bubble in which there is a need to conform to certain codes of behavior. For instance, in one verse she raps: "You better watch how you dressin', what you expressin', / Or you and your homies might not be progressin'", and on another verse she says "Looking alike is our greatest passion," referring to the artists and the students in the art school. These lyrics express Farhat's critical stance against the exclusivity and the homogeneousness of the art bubbles and its rather conservatory codes that preserve this homogeneity by dictating everyone to look and behave in a certain manner. The lyrics suggest that there are certain ways to "make it" in the art world, and that is by playing the rules of these game and acting according to these pre-established codes of behavior. In the

¹²¹ <http://www.roxyfarhat.com>

¹²² <http://www.roxyfarhat.com>

lyrics, Farah further asks: "Could this be the way the artists want to be like? / The real world aside, making art for the art life?" and, "We making art, ain't no doubt / But are we reaching out?". These verses expose the closed nature and the relationships between the artists within the art world, where people are just trying to impress each other through the pre-established codes of the industry, without a concern to reach out to the wider public and to make an impact. The song also mentions the reluctance on the part of the artists to change the industry, as the lyrics say that despite everybody says that things need to change, nobody really does anything.

This work by Farhat can possibly be linked to the cultural elites in Sweden that was discussed in the previous chapter. As it was mentioned then, the cultural elite is a closed group where the entrance and recognition within the scene usually happens through the informal rules of this group, and that it has a rather conservative structure which is not particularly welcoming towards new initiatives and ideas, unless they come from the established names of this group. Therefore, as a politically inclined artist, Farhat seems to voice her uneasiness and concern about being in this bubble that is so disconnected from the life outside of itself. When the video is analyzed from a stylistic point of view, an ironic and mocking tone is immediately visible. Farhat's adaptation of a song that is a very well known example of the gangsta rap subculture into the context of the Swedish art bubble can possibly be interpreted as a mocking of the established codes of behavior as well as the fixed notion of artistic quality of this bubble, since she adopts the low culture, 'street' style to mock the rather pretentious and exclusive practices of this group.

In the videos "I'm A Girl From Iran" and "The Decency Squad", Roxy Farhat draws upon her homeland Iran as well as her Iranian identity. In the video "I'm A Girl From Iran", Farhat is seen singing in Farsi and dancing with various sceneries from Iran photoshopped in the background, and subtitles in Swedish provide the translation to her lyrics. Like the previous video, this video also has a quite ironic tone. It can be argued that, in this piece, Farhat plays to the most stereotypical expectations of how an Iranian girl should look like and behave. While quite typical, stock image-like photos of the landscape of Iran circulate in the background, Farhat is dancing in a traditional manner, singing and looking at the camera with a flirty gaze. Throughout the lyrics, Farhat emphasizes that, as an Iranian girl, she was made for love, as she sings "When I am in love / No one else can love as much as me", "God

has put love in my nature”, and ”I am a flower with roots in the noble land of love.” Here, Farhat seems to refer to the stereotypical idea of an ‘exotic girl’ whose life revolves around her lover, as she keeps connecting her loving nature to her Iranian heritage throughout the lyrics.

In his article titled ”Juggling Burdens of Representation: Black, Red, Gold and Turquoise”, Tom Cheesman identifies one of the strategies to cope with the burden of representation imposed on a migrant artist as ‘parodic ethnicisation’. He argues that this type of ethnicisation ”takes the ascriptions of ethnic characteristics found in the discourse of multiculturalism to an extreme, representing minorities as constituting a compound ethnicity whose characteristics consist in being exactly what the majority dreads them to be, or despises them for being.”¹²³ The video “I’m A Girl From Iran” fits this description very well, as the artist overly identifies with the stereotypical ethnic characteristics of an ‘exotic girl’. Although, different from Cheesman’s description, Farhat does not necessarily dwell on the ethnic characteristics that the majority necessarily dreads or despises, but rather the characteristics through which the majority exotifies Iranian girls, or possibly any non-Western women in general. Through her over-identification with such stereotypical and exotic attributes, Farhat satirizes the static discourses on identity and exposes their constructed, one-dimensional and prejudiced nature. This criticism on the Western discourses of identity can also be analyzed from an intersectional feminist lens, as Farhat deals with the problem of exotification, and the implications of being an Iranian and a woman in a Western setting. The identity of a foreign woman is exoticised as being a lover is seen as the major, if not only, attribute to her identity without any distinct, individual characteristics. Thus, it could also be argued that the video’s ironic tone and Farhat’s way of pushing the exotification to the extreme can also function as a tool of self-assessment, as it throws the conventional bias and prejudices of the majority right back at the viewer’s face, and therefore gives them the opportunity to question such bias and prejudices.

In the video titled “The Decency Squad”, Farah is again seen rapping in a mixture of Farsi and English, and she appears as the leader of a squad consisting of three women patrolling the streets in burqas. In this video, Farah again adopts an ironic tone to reflect on the situation of women in her homeland Iran. Farhat’s decency squad keeps patrolling the streets

¹²³ Cheesman 2006

and warning women who are not appropriately dressed according to the laws of the regime, such as when a single strand of hair is showing. The lyrics of the song have a quite patronizing and a threatening tone, as they go: "Girl, you should be ashamed of yourself, / Correct your headscarf!", and "Do you think you look pretty?/ You're gravely mistaken." As the leader of the decency squad, Farah sings that they are representing the regime, and the lyrics further threaten these women throughout the song, as they stress that the decency squad may just show up and punish them at any moment these women are breaking the rules. Through this imagery of a 'decency squad', Farah familiarizes the viewer with the dire situation in Iran where the bodies of women are under constant surveillance, and the conservative and patronizing nature of these rules as dictated by the regime can also be seen in these lyrics: "We are doing this for you, from our point of view / But we know we are right, so don't try to fight." These lyrics strikingly show that how the women in Iran don't get to claim any right or voice their opinions under these absolute rules.

Although Farhat similarly adopts a rather ironic and parodying tone in this video, the real life footage at the end of the clip which shows an almost identical conversation between a moral police woman in Iran and an 'improperly dressed' woman, suggests that the rapper decency squad portrayed in this video is actually not exaggerated, and it not far from the reality at all. In this footage, the moral police makes very similar remarks such as "Your scarf is too thin, your hair is showing . . . Don't you think that what you are wearing is problematic with regard to the Islamic social norms?" Thus, in this work of art where Farhat reflects on the situation of women living in Iran, she expresses the seriousness of the situation in a rather unconventional way, through her parodying rap lyrics with a rapper squad of three women in burqas. In this way, she offers a fresh critical approach to a topic that is often tend to be covered in a rather one-dimensional and othering manner in mainstream media outlets.

Compared to the works that have so far been analyzed, the video "What Are Your Intentions Here?" is different in style. While the previous videos all included scenes where the artist was singing in a rather ironic and parodying manner as a tool of criticism, the video work "What Are Your Intentions Here?" just involves a couple talking about their past experiences and their move from Iran to Sweden. Throughout the video, the faces of this couple are never seen, and instead, the view of some residential apartment blocks in a snowy weather and a tractor cleaning the snow accompany the video. Occasionally, the camera also pro-

vides a panorama of the town Örnköldsvik, which is where the couple lives. The video starts with the couple talking about how they decided to move back to Iran when the revolution happened and a new regime started to emerge there as the Shah left the country. At the time, the couple had been living and studying in France for seven years, and despite the warnings they received from their surroundings in France about going back to Iran, they wanted to go back to their country and contribute to the democracy there, as they were excited about the new regime and the bright days that were awaiting Iran. In the video, the couple also mentions that all Iranian students studying abroad at the time went back to Iran following the revolution. Yet, once the couple went back to Iran, the democratic atmosphere there ended up being short-lived, and soon after they found themselves in an oppressive regime where more than two people couldn't gather in the streets and talk.

The couple recalls how they wanted to go back to France when Iraq attacked Iran and a war broke out. However, at this point, it was very difficult to leave Iran, and, moreover, France was no longer willing to accept Iranian immigrants. Thus, they decided to go to Sweden. Although they knew little to nothing about Sweden, it was the only country accepting Iranian immigrants at the time, and, at this point, it was enough for them to know that Sweden was a country that treated its citizens in a democratic manner. As the couple starts talking about their move to Sweden towards the end of the video, it is revealed that the couple is in fact Farhat's parents. Following their move to Sweden, Farhat's mother talks about how they had to have many interviews with the officers and was asked the question "What are your intentions here?" multiple times. The video ends with the father's remark: "Freedom and democracy, what more can you ask in life?" which, in a way, serves as an answer to the authorities' aforementioned question.

In this video, Farhat takes the rather bureaucratic question of "What are your intentions here?" that many non-Western immigrants, asylum seekers, and even tourists are faced with upon entering the borders of EU, or other Western countries. She poses the same question to her own parents, and lets them tell their story in an unrestricted manner spanning over 13 minutes. Two people simply talking about their story of immigration in a casual, conversational setting becomes a counter-hegemonic challenge to the existing one-dimensional discourses on immigration, as they get a chance to tell their own story without any institutional or societal pressures that demands a clear, simple answer to the question "What are your in-

tentions here?”. Their story also challenges the stereotypical view where the immigrants come to exploit the economical sources in Western countries, as the couple talks about how they, as well as all the other Iranians living abroad, immediately went back to Iran as soon as there emerged a glimpse of a democratic future there, and how they would have loved to stay in Iran if the conditions permitted, and if there was a democratic environment without any wars.

Farah’s style of combining the interview audio with the camera views of the residential blocks, the town of Örnköldsvik and the tractor clearing the snow is also worth mentioning. From the camera angle, it appears that the video is shot from the apartment where the interview takes place, and probably it is also the apartment where the couple resides. The peaceful and silent imagery of the tractor clearing the snow and the small town poses a contrast to the content of the interview which includes themes such as war, revolution and fleeing. Moreover, it can also be interpreted as giving a platform to the silenced stories of those who inhabit the same surroundings. Telling her parents’ story through the landscape and the immediate environment, Farah makes their story heard, and, at the same time, she reminds the audience of their everyday existence by bringing their story to the otherwise silent public sphere.

In addition to her own works of art, Farhat also collaborates with other artists and artists groups with similar political orientations and/or artistic perspectives. For example, her documentary titled HUR is done with collaboration with the youth group HUR, which focuses on topics of youth development and health in the neighborhood of Holma in Malmö. This neighborhood has a strong immigrant presence, and is often categorized by the mainstream media as a dangerous place.¹²⁴ Similar to the artwork “What Are Your Intentions Here?”, this documentary also highlights the individual portraits and stories of marginalized identities. The trailer to the documentary opens up with the remarks of a young boy from this group, and he talks about how he was too naive to think that he could be Swedish when he was a kid. He continues that, as he grew older, he learned a thing or two, and started feeling ashamed for being different and for the fact that his mother was veiled. He further complains about how, no matter what he does, he doesn’t get fully accepted into the society, and how he is always subject to stereotypical judgments that accuse him of exploiting the welfare system

¹²⁴ Farhat, <<http://roxyfarhat.com/art/hur>>

and stealing jobs. In the trailer, he claims that even if he could walk on water, then he would be accused of not being able to swim; which strikingly illustrates how he is never good enough no matter what he does, just because he is not a native Swede. Therefore, the project HUR is aimed at lifting the skills, personal stories and the visibility of these youth and portraying their personality in the way that they want to be portrayed.¹²⁵

The themes of prejudice, exclusion and in-betweenness that are dealt with in the documentary can be linked to the colorblindness in the Swedish society that was discussed in the previous chapter. As it was stated then, the colorblind approach tends to view the Swedish society as completely free from racism. Accordingly, the immigrants are supposed to have the exact same opportunities and rights as the native born Swedes, and, when they fail to be as successful as the native Swedes, all the blame tends to be put on the shoulders of the immigrants for not integrating. Therefore, the documentary HUR challenges this colorblind perspective by highlighting the individual stories and thoughts of the immigrant youth, and by exposing the ways in which the majority fails at treating them as equals and viewing them without prejudices. The documentary can also be analyzed from a solidarity point of view, as it was mentioned previously that one of the effective methods of artistic resistance is through collaborating and building solidarity with other critical artists, activists, communities, etc. Therefore, by collaborating with the youth group HUR as a filmmaker and producing a documentary of their activities, Farhat helps spread their presence, work and perspective to a wider audience.

Another collaboration Farah has been involved is the anti-national cabaret Europa Europa. It was presented by the artist group FUL in collaboration with the music band The Knife, and it premiered in the election year 2014 in Almedalen, Gotland, the place where the politicians in Sweden get together for a week to discuss political issues. Europa Europa deals with the migration politics, and they describe themselves in the following words:

The cabaret Europa Europa praises all those hundreds of thousands of people who defy the cameras, the deadly waters, the barbed wire, the violence and the compact political resistance, and make it across the external and internal borders of Europe every year. Borders that are growing more monitored with every day that passes . . .

For many years now, the media and the public debate have concentrated on discussing

¹²⁵ Stadens Konstråd 2017

migration and migrants in terms of volumes, difficulties and costs for non-migrants. Europa Europa does the exact opposite. We want to praise these people and criticize those who are truly criminal, i.e. border patrols, Frontex and the governments of the EU, who constantly pose a threat to the life and safety of these heroes.¹²⁶

Farhat was involved in this project as the director of the music video to the song “För alla namn vi inte får använda” [For all the names we cannot use] by The Knife. The lyrics of the song are spoken by the perspective of the immigrants and asylum seekers, and they recall how they have been called various names such as freeloaders, criminals, thieves, burdens, illegal etc. In the lyrics, these people object against these names and instead demand to be called heroes. As the quotation above states, the cabaret Europa Europa shifts the normative perspective on the migration politics which reduces the migrants to numbers, and only talks about immigration from the perspective of non-migrants. By giving voice to the migrants themselves, the initiative Europa Europa empowers these otherwise ignored voices and points the fingers to those responsible for the lives lost while crossing the borders of Europe.

Farhat’s participation in Europa Europa is in line with her previously discussed works of art, as she again works with an underrepresented community in an effort to make them more visible and create a platform for their voices to be heard and to reach wider audiences. Moreover, also by collaborating other artists and artists group, the artists join forces to help create more equal opportunities for everyone. Thematically, the music video “För alla namn vi inte får använda” directed by Roxy Farhat is similar to the documentary project HUR as well as the video work ”What Are Your Intentions Here?”, as all of them provide a platform for the marginalized voices to express themselves freely, and to challenge the stereotypical representations of themselves.

All in all, it can be concluded that Farhat’s artworks often have a political dimension and a critical stance. Farhat employs different methods of artistic intervention and resistance in her different works of art as a tool of criticism. While she sometimes adopts an ironic and parodying tone to address the objectifying and exotifying mechanisms as well as the exclusive practices of the Swedish art bubble, in other works, she adopts a strategy to empower and make visible the identities and stories that are often rendered invisible by the grand discourses. It can be argued that many of her works challenge the colorblind approaches of the

¹²⁶ Europa Europa, <<http://www.europaeuropa.nu/#kabaren>>

Swedish society as well as the utopian image of Sweden as an anti-racist, multicultural country. Through highlighting the difficulties and the everyday racism marginalized identities in Sweden are subject to, Farhat's works encourage the majority to question their own bias and prejudices by presenting them with the silenced personal stories of these marginalized identities. Moreover, apart from her own works of art, Farhat's work as a music video director and editor can also be analyzed from the perspective of solidarity and making the underrepresented identities more visible, given that she works almost exclusively with women artists with non-Swedish backgrounds. Therefore, on a concluding note, it can be stated that Farah's art functions as a critical intervention into the ongoing mechanisms of oppression and discrimination in the Swedish context, and she uses her art as a tool to confront and resist these notions.

V.III. Mahoyo

Mahoyo is a creative duo consisting of Farah Yusuf and MyNa Do. They are based in Stockholm and Malmö, however, as stated in their website, “they find inspiration for their work through international travels”¹²⁷, therefore the duo is very mobile and travels around the world to realize many of their art projects. Although Mahoyo initially started as a feminist network of DJs and an online store for clothes, today, they also engage with many other art forms such as film, photography, costume design, graphic design and styling. Yusuf defines Mahoyo as their creative space where they can do anything they love.¹²⁸ The duo has a strong focus on collective work and transnational collaborations, and, they state that, through these collaborations “they try to constantly challenge the status quo and push the limits – creativity becomes a weapon to challenge norms, structures and stereotypes.”¹²⁹ In this section, Mahoyo’s documentary film *The Mahoyo Project* will be discussed. Some of their collaborative projects with other artists and creatives, such as “Busy Creating The Future”, “Svarta Revolutionärer Faller Inte Från Månen” [Black Revolutionaries Do Not Drop From The Moon] and “Vitsvit” [White Blight] will also be touched upon. The interviews with the duo that are published on various magazines will also be utilized in discussing their work and inspirations.

The Mahoyo Project is a 2015 documentary produced by Mahoyo and Flip-Flop Interactive. It is directed by Moira Ganley, together with the co-directors MyNa Do, Farah Yusuf and Gustaf Nord, and it has won the SIMA (Social Impact Media Awards) 2016 jury prize for innovation.¹³⁰ The documentary spans Mahoyo’s trip to Johannesburg, South Africa where they explore the music and urban dance scenes there. During this visit, the Mahoyo duo holds DJ workshops for women free of charge, and teaches them how to DJ. During their time there, Mahoyo also collaborates with other local artists and creatives. In the end of the documentary, their South African counterparts come to visit the duo in Stockholm,

¹²⁷ Mahoyo, <<http://www.mahoyo.com/documentary/>>

¹²⁸ Araweelo Abroad 2017

¹²⁹ Mahoyo. <<http://mahoyo.com/about/>>

¹³⁰ SIMA Awards 2016, <<http://simaawards.org/2016-winners>>

and so the collaboration continues. Thus, it can be said that this film is essentially a documentation of building transnational collaborations and solidarity. The duo states that, through this documentary, they aim to “break stereotypes of gender, race and location”.¹³¹ It is highlighted throughout the documentary that more multi-faceted, personal, different and positive stories need to be told of Africa as a continent in general, and South Africa as a country in particular. Mahoyo states that they felt the need to make a documentary out of their visit as they believed that these positive stories were necessary in order for people to have a more genuine interaction and to build a better understanding of each other. For instance, they recall the reactions they got from people in Sweden when they said that they would be going to South Africa, and how people were so worried about them and even asked questions like “Aren’t you gonna get killed there?”. Such remarks illustrate Mahoyo’s point clearly, as they reveal that South Africa is stereotyped as a dangerous place where people are afraid of visiting. Such stereotypes created by the one-dimensional covering of mainstream media prevents people from seeing the thriving urban scene in the country which exists beyond such stereotypical images. Therefore, by traveling to South Africa and uplifting the personal stories of marginalized creative people there, Mahoyo helps build different, and more personal images of South African peoples that challenge the existing stereotypical definitions.

In the documentary, there is a great focus on the intersectional position of the black female creative youth in Johannesburg. By giving them a platform to speak about their own inspirations, motivations and struggles, the documentary makes visible the often ignored challenges of being a female DJ in world of electronic music, as well as being a black female artist in South Africa. The featured artists and creatives talk openly about the challenges they face in succeeding and becoming recognized names in the industry in the South African context, such as the segregation, lesser economic opportunities and discrimination. However, the documentary doesn’t let these challenges overwhelm these individuals’ stories at any point. Instead, their powerful stance is continuously emphasized, and how these difficulties become tools of inspiration and creativity is discussed. Many South African creative women express how the fighting spirit of the city as well as the energy that is created through the solidarity among the artists with marginalized background motivates them to be better and to keep fighting for disrupting the hierarchies and transforming the society. One local artist discusses

¹³¹ Mahoyo, <<http://www.mahoyo.com/documentary/>>

how there is currently an overflow of creativity in Johannesburg right now, and states that as South Africa is gradually improving in terms of democracy and freedom, the black youth now have more opportunities to explore and showcase their creativity. Thus, the creative black youth is trying to make up for the lost time of previous generations. Similarly, another local artist refers to the confidence of black people, and how their blackness and struggles empower them and make them more confident.

As the documentary highlights these silenced yet powerful stories, it also takes an interactive approach and builds a bridge between being a woman of color in South Africa and being a woman of color in Sweden. Mahoyo states that it is their personal experiences of being born and raised in Sweden as women of color that make them sensitive to the dangers of stereotyping and of overly simplified narratives.¹³² Because they have been subject to such stereotypes themselves and suffered from them both on a personal and an artistic level, they are better aware of the need to deconstruct these dominant narratives and stereotypes, and that is what inspires them to go around the world, connect with people from different settings on the common ground of being marginalized, and share their stories. Mahoyo states that it was intersectional feminism that opened their eyes, and allowed them to see these common structures that exist everywhere in the world and marginalize the intersectional identities.¹³³ Accordingly, their motive to travel around the world and build transnational collaborations and visibility among intersecting identities can be seen as an act of artistic resistance and empowerment.

This point could be discussed in regards to the ‘divide and conquer’ patterns in the patriarchal world, and the personal experiences of intersecting identities as an ignored and largely unexplored area of knowledge, which were both discussed in the intersectionality section. As it was previously mentioned there, intersectional identities are usually suffer from a ‘divide and conquer’ pattern through which they are expected, and at times even forced, by their surroundings to only ally with the struggles of one of the communities they belong to. And, whenever they do so, they are accused by the other community for not primarily identifying with them. Such a strategy keeps the intersectional communities divided and their stories silenced. For instance, Yusuf tells that during her youth in Sweden, she has been made to

¹³² Mji 2015

¹³³ Araweelo Abroad 2017

feel like an outsider, such as when Swedish people were continuously being impressed at how good Swedish she spoke, whereas for her speaking Swedish was the natural thing to do as someone born in Sweden. While she remarks that Sweden was not the most inspiring environment for her to grow up because of being subject to such stereotypes, she also felt like an outsider in her Somali community. She often heard comments about how she didn't look like Somali or looked like another ethnicity, as she was perceived to be 'too extra' or 'too alternative' because of her style and her way of expressing herself. Such remarks suggest that there was a certain stereotypical way to be a 'real Somali', and Yusuf didn't fit into that one-dimensional notion, either.¹³⁴ Hence, through intersectional feminism, Mahoyo establishes a ground for empowerment and solidarity on the basis of "in-betweenness", and celebrates the multi-faceted identities that are not contained by these one-dimensional and stereotypical expectations. Yusuf further states in the documentary that: "Our project developed out of a longing to tell our own stories and a desire to define ourselves," and, in another scene, she remarks, "We are breaking stereotypes simply by being women who dares to take space and by executing initiatives like this." These remarks emphasize the resistance element in the documentary, and the duo similarly defines The Mahoyo Project as "a reaction to the current narrative of minorities".¹³⁵ Thus, in this aspect, the documentary devises a new tool for the marginalized minority identities through which they can define themselves and tell their own stories, given that the existing tools of the dominant discourses fail to capture the multifaceted nature of their identities. Furthermore, these discourses often do not let the minorities define themselves, and instead does the defining for them. Through creating a collaborative space for minorities, The Mahoyo Project strategically intervenes in these rigid discourses and rejects their external and one-dimensional definitions. Furthermore, as Yusuf further remarks, they want to reclaim the power of defining one's self. Thus, as it is stated in the above quote, just by being women and taking up space, their insistence to define themselves without the constraints of the dominant narratives, and their way of building transnational initiatives and solidarity becomes an act of resistance.

In her paper titled "Art and Transcultural Resistance", Rachida Triki defines transcultural collaborations as a resistance against the globalized taste in art as well as the traditional-

¹³⁴ Araweelo Abroad 2017

¹³⁵ Ellison 2016

ist clinging to ethnic identity that is still predominant in today's societies and art industries. Thus, in this setting, transnational and transcultural collaborations offer artists a possibility to transgress these conventional modes of identification and the standardized behaviors expected from them. Triki further argues that, by claiming cultural plurality, remaining open to "otherness" and creating a space of in-betweenness without borders allow artists to produce new methods of artistic expressions.¹³⁶ These remarks are very much in line with the documentary *The Mahoyo Project*, given that the post-national collaborative space created by the artists effectively bypasses the restricting borders of nationality and culture. As the focus is on intersections and fluidity, the women artists with minority and/or marginalized backgrounds from Sweden and from South Africa find a common creative ground where they can share their experiences and relate to each other. This transnational collaborative space becomes a source of inspiration and empowerment as the female marginalized identities unite and overcome the divide-and-conquer strategies of the dominant patriarchal social order. Similarly, Mahoyo also declares that through the power of these transnational collaborations, they create new forms of expressions and cultural experiences rather than consuming the already existing ones. They further state that "... no one can represent the way we see the world but ourselves," thus explaining the need to create new ways of expression.¹³⁷ This remark by Mahoyo significantly resembles the notion standpoint perspective that was discussed in the intersectionality section, and shows that Mahoyo's artistic practices are informed by the intersectionality theory. As standpoint perspective argues that the perspectives of the intersectional identities are unique and cannot be captured by the normative discourses, *The Mahoyo Project* answers to this need by creating new tools of expression through transnational collaboration and by uplifting the standpoint perspectives of intersectional identities around the world.

Mahoyo defines collaboration as the key aspect of their artistic practices, so they also often collaborate with other artists and initiatives in Sweden and globally. For instance, they worked as costume designers for the theatre plays *Svarta Revolutionärer Faller Inte Från Månen* directed by Ellen Nyman and *Vitsvit* by the director Farnaz Arbabi. The play *Svarta Revolutionärer Faller Inte Från Månen* is inspired by the autobiography of Assata Shakur,

¹³⁶ Triki 2009

¹³⁷ Mji 2015

who is a political activist and a former member of the Black Liberation Army. The play is described as “art performance about rootlessness and political activism and practice”, and a desire to fill the gaps of knowledge by sharing one’s own experiences and questioning the regime.¹³⁸ The play *Vitsvit* is an adaptation of a poetry book with the same title by Athena Farrokhzad. Both the book and the play portray a family portrait and dwell on their experiences of migration, both from the parents’ and children’s perspectives. Through the theme of immigration, the play explores language barriers, generation conflicts and the question of belonging within the family dynamics.¹³⁹ Therefore, the themes of both plays bear similarities to the artistic concerns and practices of Mahoyo, as they dwell on questions of belonging, rootlessness, activism, alternative perspectives, immigration and belonging/not belonging.

Through their role as costume designers in these projects, Mahoyo also aims to push the status quo from a stylistic point of view, and to create non-conventional images of marginalized identities. Farah Yusuf from the duo defines fashion as a way of expressing herself more freely, and says that when she got into fashion and styling, she started to care less about fitting in and more about just being herself.¹⁴⁰ The duo identifies fashion as one of the key milestones that gave them a different perspective and inspiration on the topics of self-expression, marginalization and pushing the status quo. Farah Yusuf and MyNa Do are childhood friends who grew up together in a quite small town in Sweden, and, in an interview, they recall how throughout their childhood and adolescence years, they didn’t dare to express themselves through their clothing, experimenting with fashion or wearing anything that could be perceived as extra. They further explain that being non-white in a small Swedish town was enough to attract attention, and, because of this, any piece of clothing that was extraordinary was out of question. When they started traveling together, first to Vietnam, Hong Kong and Thailand, they saw many non-white people expressing themselves freely through their clothing and style, and this was a completely new idea for them.¹⁴¹ Thus, this was what inspired

¹³⁸ Mahoyo, <<http://mahoyo.com/portfolio/svarta-revolutionarer-faller-inte-fran-manen/>>, Teater Tribunalen, <<http://tribunalen.com/arkiv/svarta-revolutionarer-faller-inte-fran-manen-fritt-efter-assata-shakur/>>

¹³⁹ Unga Klara, <<http://www.ungaklara.se/forestallning/vitsvit/>>

¹⁴⁰ Araweelo Abroad 2015

¹⁴¹ Backström & Kiros 2016

Mahoyo to work with fashion and costume design, and to resist the limitations on how people of color are supposed to look and dress. Furthermore, through their collaborations with these theatre plays whose themes bear similarities to the themes that inform Mahoyo's works, they build a platform where marginalized identities are portrayed in new, innovative and subjective perspectives that defy stereotypical expectations. Through their role as the costume designers, Mahoyo contributes to this platform from a stylistic point of view, and adds a visual layer to the content of the theatre plays that introduces the audience to the alternative, minority perspectives. At this point, it is also worthwhile to note that fashion was one of the main things that inspired Mahoyo with their international travels, as they wanted to photograph and document the styles and creative expressions of the people they meet along the way. They have many photography series with local creatives from around the world, and these inspiration trips are what eventually led to the making of the documentary *The Mahoyo Project*.

The last example that will be discussed in this section is "Busy Creating the Future", which was an event organized in collaboration by Mahoyo, RMH and This is Sweden; and it took place in Bråvalla music festival in 2016. RMH is a hip-hop music collective which represents many prominent rappers in Sweden, such as Silvana Imam, Adam Tensta and Erik Lundin.¹⁴² This is Sweden is a creative platform founded by the siblings and designers Ana and Pablo Londono. The duo's main activity area is fashion, and they describe their creative practices as "primarily driven by a social commitment and an anti-racist agenda, where fashion and creativity becomes the tools we use in our activism."¹⁴³ By joining their forces, these three platforms with similar practices aimed to offer the festival goers the image of an utopian future by creating a space for people who believe in activism through creativity to come together and to create a future. This event had its own space and line up within the festival area, and all the artists and musicians that performed in the event were from minority backgrounds and had similar critical perspectives in their art. In this way, the event aimed at highlighting the borderless and universal quality of the notion creativity, as well as the possibility of seeing the world from a different perspective through creativity.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² RMH <<http://www.rmhsverige.com>>

¹⁴³ This is Sweden <<http://thisissverige.nu/about/>>

¹⁴⁴ Mahoyo <<http://mahoyo.com/portfolio/busy-creating-the-future/>>

This event can possibly be analyzed in the category of artistic intervention, which is a term used to describe the works of art that are designed to interact with an already existing structure, such as the public, an institution, a social gathering, etc. Artistic interventions aim to transform the conventional role of the artist and an art piece, and they usually take the art out of the gallery space and invite the audience to take part and interact.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, this event can be seen as an intervention in the festival space, as it is something out of ordinary in the otherwise routine festival that takes place annually in more or less the same format. By intervening in the festival space and offering the festival goers something out of ordinary where they can interact and “create the future” with the artists, the event *Busy Creating The Future* invites the festival goers to contribute to their goal of making the festival space and the world a more equal place. While creating their own line-up for artists of colors to perform in the festival, *Busy Creating The Future* also allows the festival goer to enrich the event with their own creative perspective. Thus, through the participatory aspect of this event, the conventional form and purpose of an art object is transformed, and art takes the form of an event which is open to be shaped by everyone.

If one takes an overall look at the analyzed works of Mahoyo in this section, it is possible to observe some main themes emerging in the art works of the duo that span across various art forms and mediums. In these analyzed examples of works of photography, documentary, styling and event organization; Mahoyo continuously aims at presenting the audience with a different perspective, and to highlight the individual stand-point narratives of those whose stories have been erased by the dominant discourses. By empowering these people and highlighting their fighting spirit and ambitious characters, they also aim at changing the stereotypical images of the non-Western ‘other’ identity who is often victimized or described as less competent. As the duo’s own life experiences as being a minority in Sweden is what inspires their art works to a great extent, they naturally have an intersectional focus on women from minority backgrounds. Another key theme in Mahoyo’s art practices is collaborations. Given that the creative duo itself is a collaboration project between two childhood friends, it can be argued that collaboration is the core element of the duo’s creative practices. By joining forces with other artists from minority backgrounds, their resistance against the stereotypes become stronger, and, especially through their transnational collaborations, they

¹⁴⁵ Marshall 2012

create creative networks and safe spaces where minority and intersectional identities take back the power to define themselves without the restraints of the existing dominant discourses and their stereotypes. In this way, they work towards dismantling such stereotypes and initiating change all over the world.

VI. Discussion & Conclusion

I. Summary

In order to discuss the analyzed case studies in light of the presented research questions and to conclude this thesis, this section will first offer a summary of the main points of argumentation that were made in the preceding sections before the case studies. Afterwards, the case studies and the presented research questions will be analyzed according to the main points that will be highlighted during this summary. Firstly, this study opened with an historical perspective, and argued that there have always been historically rooted structures of privileges and hierarchies within the Western arts and culture domains. These structures were upheld and maintained through the practice of Western art history writing, which traditionally adopted the white male perspective as the de-facto objective perspective of the art historian. Naturally, such a perspective was rooted in exclusion, and it helped create a misleading narrative of a linear art history, where the torch was handed from one great white male artist to the other. In addition to excluding many names, particularly those of female artists and the non-Western artists; these art history narratives also commonly assumed artistic genius to be an innate feature that the great artists were born with. Therefore, until recently, the societal factors such as class, gender, ethnicity, that either encourage or hinder one from developing and expanding their creativity were almost entirely ignored. Similarly, the existing privileges and hierarchical structures which favored the white male artists and excluded the other identities had remained unrecognized and undisturbed throughout centuries. One last important remark that was made in the historical overview was that arts and culture had been used as a colonial matrix of power, and it colonized the artistic expressions and the notion of aesthetics worldwide by declaring the European artistic expressions and aesthetic perspective as the universal taste, and therefore standardizing the artistic perspective.

The chapter “The Institutionalized Multiculturalism and Neoliberal Art Markets” investigated the present day reality within the Western arts and culture scene, and argued that although there has been increasing concern for diversity and equality within the scene, there is still a common lack of acknowledgment of the historically rooted hierarchies that are still present. This chapter focused on the liberal multiculturalist practices, and argued that such

practices still have colonial overtones as the West is in the position of the host that invites the non-Western artist in, and the inclusion happens on Western terms. It was further argued that the liberal multiculturalist practices often highlight cultural diversity on an essentialist basis of difference, and this creates a new stereotype of an exotic non-Western artist who deals with their cultural background in their art. As this creates a market for a certain profile of non-Western artist, it becomes more difficult for the artists that don't fit into these stereotypical definitions to gain institutional recognition and become successful within the industry. Overall, this chapter argued that the historical structures of privileges and hierarchies remain intact in today's Western arts and culture institutions, and they have just changed form and become more subtle under the veil of multiculturalism. Furthermore, it has also been stated that multiculturalism is often practiced in the form of tokenism where a few non-Western artists are exhibited without any critical discussions taking place.

A look into the contemporary arts scene in Sweden revealed that Sweden does not differ considerably from the tendencies that are typically observed in the Western arts and culture contexts. The literature review suggested that artists from non-Western backgrounds face significant challenges also in Sweden, and the inclusion of non-Western artists often bring up questions of competency. It is possible to observe that there is a Swedish cultural elite that exists, and this group, mainly composed of native Swedes, informally regulates entry into the scene through networking, contacts, etc. Similar to the Western settings in general, there is also an observed reluctance to accept that there is a problem, to have the uncomfortable conversations, and to truly transform the industry. Furthermore, considering the fact that the colorblind attitude in Sweden makes any critical discussions on racism a taboo subject, it can be argued that this situation is even worse in Sweden compared to the other Western countries. The utopian image of Sweden as a gender-equal country also makes the discussions on sexism difficult. Accordingly, the sexism and the white supremacy in Swedish arts and culture remains as a topic that is not studied in detail.

In the intersectionality chapter, it was argued that women artists from non-Western backgrounds are subject to site-specific challenges in an industry that is based on white supremacist and patriarchal exclusion. Although both men and women artists from non-Western backgrounds suffer from the stereotypical and colonial tendencies of the Western art world, women artists are at a particular disadvantage as they need to battle both gender and racial

stereotypes simultaneously. Because of this, critical art by non-Western women artists is often perceived as a double threat to the illusionary integrity of the Western art world, given that they threaten various exclusionary practices of the industry at once. Thus, the Western art world is well equipped to suppress and undermine these artistic practices in order to maintain its integrity. Thus, as an act of artistic resistance, many women artists from non-Western backgrounds re-claim the power to define themselves through art, to emphasize the complexity of their identities that are often straightened-out by dominant discourses, and to challenge these structures that see them as ‘threats’. Highlighting their standpoint narratives, which is the personalized, subjective accounts of intersectional identities, becomes a political act as they designate this marginalized perspective as the primary source of knowledge that defies the objectifying grand narratives.

II. Review of the Research Questions

The following research questions were posed at the introduction part of this study:

- How does art function as a site of critical intervention into the systems of oppression and marginalization that operate both within the Swedish society in general and arts & culture sector in particular?
- How does a female and minority-identifying artistic perspective confront issues of marginalization, objectification and social pressure?
- How does the artistic personal narratives of intersectional identities confront and challenge the grand narratives on multiculturalism, anti-racism and gender equality in the Swedish context?

When the works of art by Roxy Farhat and Mahoyo are analyzed in light of these research questions and the main points of argumentation that are highlighted in the above summary section, it can be argued that the two artists/artist duos employ both similar and different strategies of artistic intervention and resistance in their artworks. First of all, both artists uplift the marginalized identities and perspectives in their works of art in order to confront objectification and marginalization, as well as to challenge the grand narratives on mul-

multiculturalism, anti-racism and gender equality. For example, Roxy Farhat's documentary project HUR challenges these by uplifting the marginalized voices of the immigrant youth that lives in a malnourished neighborhood with a bad reputation, and offers a counter-narrative by highlighting the experiences of racism the youth group have faced throughout their lives. Similarly, Mahoyo also voices the stereotypes they have been subject to as women of color while they were growing up in Sweden both in their works of art and in interview settings. Moreover, by giving a platform to the marginalized and unheard voices, both artists offer alternatives to the mainstream media approaches which often straighten out these people's stories through one-dimensional perspectives. The documentary *The Mahoyo Project* offers a brand new perspective to Johannesburg, South Africa by highlighting the creative scene and the fighting spirit in the city, and offers a contrast to the stereotypical mainstream media images that depicts the country as a dangerous place. Roxy Farhat's documentary project HUR and the project Europa Europa that she is involved in also challenge the mainstream conception of marginalized identities, namely that of the immigrant youth in the neighborhood of Holma and the asylum seekers. Thus, through their artistic personal narratives, both Roxy Farhat and Mahoyo challenge the grand narratives on multiculturalism and anti-racism both in Sweden and in the world by highlighting the silenced stories of marginalized identities, and their different, personal experiences of multiculturalism and racism which are not always in line with these grand narratives.

When it comes to the second research question which has more of an intersectional perspective, it can be argued that both artists have a focus on the intersectional identities as they highlight their marginalized perspectives and the objectification they face. Through their travels, Mahoyo highlights the experiences and personal stories of women of color around the world, and builds a transnational solidarity network through which they can resist the marginalization and objectification. In this way, they also create a counter-narrative that aim at disturbing the hegemonies. Similarly, in her works "I'm A Girl From Iran" and "The Decency Squad", Roxy Farhat both dwells on her identity as an Iranian woman as well as the situation of women in Iran. In the video "I'm A Girl From Iran", she focuses on the stereotypical attributions and exoticification of the non-Western female identities, and in her video "The Decency Squad" she offers a perspective into the everyday life for the women living in Iran, the policing of their bodies and the constant monitoring they are subject to in the public sphere.

As it was argued in the case of the neoliberal tendencies of the Western art markets, the non-Western artists are usually expected to act as ambassadors and deal with their cultural backgrounds in their art. Since the market arguably still has neocolonial overtones, the artists who dwell on the problems of their backward homeland and who express their gratitude to live in the free West are particularly appreciated. In this framework, both Roxy Farhat and Mahoyo confront these expectations by dealing with the topics they are expected to deal with in a whole different way. For instance, it can be argued that Roxy Farhat's dealing with the dire situation of women in Iran would fit the stereotypical expectations as she is an artist of Iranian heritage living in Sweden. However, while Farhat poses a criticism to the system in Iran that oppresses women, she doesn't do this in a way that is stereotypically expected from her. That is to say, she doesn't look at the situation from the same Western mainstream media perspective that victimize the women in Iran without offering much further insight into the situation. She instead looks at the situation from her own artistic perspective, and poses a criticism towards the Iranian government that polices the women's bodies and clothes through the morale polices on the streets. She does this by forming a street morality gang of women in burqas and rapping about the moral codes in Iran that women are expected to conform to, and through this way, she offers an alternative, unusual approach to the everyday struggles of women in Iran. Similarly, Mahoyo also offers a perspective to the challenges creative women of color in South Africa and elsewhere face, but they also don't do this in a way that would cater to the conventional expectations of Western audiences that pity or victimize these women. On the contrary, the marginalized perspectives they uplift counter these conventional perspectives by highlighting how strong and multi-faceted they are.

Lastly, to answer the first question of how art functions as a critical intervention into the systems of oppression, it can be said that both artists use art as a tool for reaching out and initiating change. Their works of art are loaded with the concern to disturb the status quo and to make their voices heard, both within the arts sector and in society in general. For example, Roxy Farhat's video work "Middle Class Paradise" criticizes the art bubble in Sweden for not reaching out or doing anything groundbreaking with their art, and instead focusing on impressing others within this same bubble. Her concern and criticism displayed in this video shows her own view of art, and how she believes that art should reach out to the wider public and make an impact. Similarly, Mahoyo also makes critical interventions through art as they

highlight the different perspectives and stories of people that they meet throughout the world in order to break the stereotypes. Another method that both artists employ to make a critical impact through their art is to form collaborations with other like-minded artists. These collaborations can also be seen as a form of resistance within the otherwise closed and conservative codes of the art world; as they aim to change these rules and to disturb the hierarchies within the scene by joining forces. In this way, they make their critical stances more visible, and they also threaten the existing privileges and codes of behavior within the industry by refusing to conform to these roles and instead creating a new artistic sphere that is free from the exclusive practices of the existing art world.

III. Conclusion

Through the literature analysis and the case studies of the chosen artists and art works, this thesis aimed to analyze how equal the Swedish arts scene is, and how women artists from non-Western backgrounds resist the perceived inequalities from their intersectional artistic perspectives. In light of the existing research on the topic of equality and inclusion of the non-Western artists and perspectives into the mainstream Western arts scene, it can be concluded that this is a quite recent and under researched topic that needs to be investigated further. While there is certain amount of research conducted in this topic in the U.S. as well as some bigger European countries with longer histories of multiculturalism, there is hardly any academic interest on this topic in Sweden. However, the literature review on this topic from different Western countries suggests that the situation seems to follow more or less the same pattern in every Western setting. Since it was argued that the hierarchies and the privileges within the Western art world are centuries old and historically rooted colonial matrixes of power, it is hardly surprising that the same pattern is visible all over the Western world.

The review of the existing literature and statistics on the case of Sweden revealed that the same patterns are also visible in the Swedish arts and culture scene, and the non-Western artists are at a disadvantaged position to succeed within the industry compared to the native born Swedes. However, as it was argued, there is also some local dynamics in the Swedish context, such as the colorblind attitude and the popular image of the country as a multicultur-

al and gender equal utopia, which makes the situation more unique. Considering the fact that the Western and male hegemony within the arts sphere remains an under-explored and ignored topic within the world in general, these dynamics in Sweden makes the topic even more difficult to talk about. It is possible to observe that almost all researchers and artists writing about this topic in Sweden agrees that this is a taboo subject within the Swedish art scene, and, as long as this topic is ignored and not discussed, the non-Western artists continue to face significant difficulties and challenges beneath the deceivingly perfectionist image of a multicultural and gender equal Sweden.

Thus, the critical artistic voices of artists like Roxy Farhat and Mahoyo are particularly important in this atmosphere, given that they are the primary actors for initiating discussions and change on these taboo subjects. Their focus on the intersectional, marginal identities and their perspectives reveal that not everyone experiences the multiculturalism and the gender equality in Sweden in the same way. The analyzed works of art by Roxy Farhat and Mahoyo highlights the artists' own positioning both within the Swedish society and the Swedish art world, and they battle gender and race stereotypes simultaneously in both domains. It can therefore be concluded that these artists are pioneers of change: By shedding light on a largely unexplored domain of knowledge, which is that of marginalized intersectional identities, they reclaim the right to define themselves, and to get their own perspectives valued, respected and acknowledged. By refusing to play the game which protects the historically rooted privileges of the art world, they demand transformation from the arts scene to better accommodate different identities and perspectives. Hence, their way of using art as a political tool to initiate change brings the art world and the society one step closer to acknowledge their prejudices, biases and stereotypical perspectives on minority identities, and to be more inclusive towards various perspectives.

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