Libraries in Practice: Tending Toward Liberation

May 18, 2023
6:30–8:00 pm

Social Justice Hub, University Center
The New School, 63 5th Avenue, 5th Floor
Presented by the Vera List Center for Art and Politics
Exhibition Information

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics and multimedia platform Contemporary And (C&) present **C& Center of Unfinished Business** at The New School, a roving reading room that speaks to the persistence and presence of colonialism in contemporary life. Conceived by C& Co-founders and Artistic Directors Julia Grosse and Yvette Mutumba, the project offers a selection of key, and, at times, unexpected texts that spark discourse on the enduring structures that continuously undergird colonial legacies in modern society. “Unfinished,” here, subtly echoes the “post” in postcolonial—hinting at an incomplete reckoning with colonialism and its evident and insidious aftermaths.

The Vera List Center iteration of the reading room features a curated selection of books, including titles from The New School faculty, alumni, and the VLC Fellows Library. Inaugurated during the VLC Forum 2022 and 30th anniversary celebration, the VLC Fellows Library is a collection of publications by each of the forty-four fellows the Vera List Center has hosted over its thirty-year history, celebrating and making available their research and work.

Both the installation and accompanying broadsheet publication are designed by New School students. As with previous iterations, the reading room upends traditional forms of display in both content and form. Books meander through angular shelves next to, above, and across from each other in challenging, experimental, unconventional ways to mirror the tension and discomfort historically embedded in discussions on colonization. To this end, the C& Center of Unfinished Business occupies The New School’s Social Justice Hub, an interstitial space designed and designated for conversations on equity and solidarity across communities.

The reading room plays host to public programs that inscribe the VLC’s 2022–2024 Focus Theme *Correction* into colonial legacies and postcolonial realities. Conversations with local and international libraries as well as a public reading series explore libraries as sites of intervention, liberation, and repair.

This iteration of the C& Center of Unfinished Business (conceived by Contemporary And’s Julia Grosse, Yvette Mutumba, and Mearg Negusse) at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics at The New School is co-curated with Erinola Pira, Curator and Director of Programs. It is presented with the support of the Daisy Schapiro Lectureship Fund.

Program

**Libraries in Practice: Tending Toward Liberation** explores the unequivocal relationship between books, libraries, freedom, and liberation. Hosted within the C& Center of Unfinished Business library and exhibition at The New School’s Social Justice Hub, this program follows New School New Books, a reading and celebration of new publications by faculty from across the university, and Libraries as Correctives, an online program featuring Contemporary And (C&) in conversation with international libraries: Keleketla! Library in Johannesburg, Sister Library in Mumbai, and Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong.

Bringing together organizers from local independent artist-run libraries, non-circulating collections, archives, reading rooms, and small presses, Libraries in Practice considers the role of libraries in making space for freedom-work. At a time when libraries in the United States are under threat by right-wing legislation, the program explores the crucial ways in which these spaces shore up education and literacy and expand personal and collective narratives toward liberation.

**PARTICIPANTS**

Emmy Catedral, Pilipinx American Library  
Julia Grosse, Contemporary And/C& Center of Unfinished Business  
Yusuf Hassan, BlackMass Publishing

**Moderator**

Re’al Christian, Assistant Director of Editorial Initiatives, Vera List Center

**Host**

Eriola Pira, Curator and Director of Public Programs, Vera List Center

This event is being recorded and will be available at www.veralistcenter.org.
Participant Biographies

Emmy Catedral is a Butuan born and Queens and East Harlem raised artist, educator, and curator. Through multi-form installation, performance, and texts, she has shown work under institutional personas The Explorers Club of Enrique de Malacca, The Amateur Astronomers Society of Voorhees (AASV), and as herself. Her work has been presented at Queens Museum, The New York Historical Society, LaMama Experimental Theater Club, Columbia University’s Wallach Art Gallery and Department of Astronomy, Center for Book Arts, and other sites without names. Catedral is co-librarian of the Pilipinx American Library, and is Curator of Public Programs at Center for Art, Research and Alliances (CARA).

Re’al Christian is a writer, editor, and researcher based in Queens. She is the Assistant Director of Editorial Initiatives at the Vera List Center for Art and Politics. VLC publications comprise anthologies, artist books, exhibition booklets, and Post/doc, a newly launched digital series. Christian’s criticism, exhibition and book reviews, essays, and interviews have appeared in numerous publications, including ART PAPERS where she is a Contributing Editor.

Julia Grosse is co-founder and artistic director of the platform Contemporary And (C&). She is a lecturer at the Institute for Art in Context at the University of the Arts in Berlin and since June, associate curator at Gropius Bau. Grosse studied art history and worked as a columnist and arts journalist in London for Taz, FAZ, and AD Magazine. She has written and co-edited books, such as Ein Leben lang in 2018 (Hoffman und Campe). In 2020 she was (together with Yvette Mutumba) winner of the prize “European Cultural Manager of the Year.”

Yusuf Hassan is the founder of BlackMass Publishing. Hassan’s work explores the idea of the book. His reductive technique and meditative approach challenge the physical and poetic boundaries of his materials. Canceling the idea of restrictions within his work allows him to analyze it with no limitations. Using printed matter as a physical way of expression Much of Hassan’s success is attributed to his unique ability to express dramatic and emotional content through publications and printmaking. Hassan holds publications in the permanent collection of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The Langston Hughes Library, Thomas J. Watson Library, The Houghton Library, and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

Vera List Center for Art and Politics

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics is a non-profit research center at The New School in New York. Through its dynamic interdisciplinary programs, conferences, artist fellowships, residencies, publications, and exhibitions, and publications, the VLC imagines and supports new forms of politically engaged art, research, public scholarship, and community around the world.

The 2022–2024 Vera List Center Focus Theme Correction* and the programs, fellowship projects, publications, and exhibitions dedicated to it explore the tension, discomfort, potential, and sociopolitical implications of “correction.”

All programs and events of the Vera List Center are free for all to attend, in person and online.

The New School campus is wheelchair accessible and has elevator access to all floors. Service animals and assistive devices are welcome. If you have specific accommodation questions or needs for future programs, please contact us at least five days prior to the program at vlc@newschool.edu.

The Spring 2023 programs of the Vera List Center for Art and Politics are generously supported by members of the Vera List Center Board and, members of Vera’s Listother individual donors, as well as the following institutional donors:

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts
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We also acknowledge the support of The New School, our academic home.
The VLC Fellows Library is a collection of publications by each of the forty-four fellows the Vera List Center has hosted over its thirty-year history and counting. It celebrates and makes available the rigorous research and wide-ranging work of the Center’s fellows including:

For more information, a complete list of holdings, or to plan a visit to the library, please visit our website veralistcenter.org.

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<th>Lawrence Abu Hamdan, 2015–2017</th>
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<td>Maurice Berger, 1994</td>
<td>Omar Mismar, 2022–2024</td>
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<td>Beatriz Cortez, 2022–2024</td>
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<td>Dean Erdmann, 2018–2020</td>
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<td>Bouchra Khalili, 2011–2013</td>
<td>Victoria Sobel &amp;</td>
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CURRENT & UPCOMING

EXHIBITION
C& Center of Unfinished Business
April 1–May 26, 2023
Social Justice Hub, University Center, The New School

PUBLISHING SERIES
Post/doc
Ari Melenciano and Catalina Ouyang
Spring 2023

PUBLICATION
Breaking Protocol
Edited by Maria Hupfield
Co-published by the Vera List Center and Inventory Press
in association with the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands
Fall 2023

PUBLICATION
Maria Thereza Alves: Seeds of Change
Edited by Carin Kuoni and Wilma Lukatsch
Co-published by the Vera List Center and Amherst College Press
April 2023

For more information about our work, visit www.veralistcenter.org where you can also find additional information, resource guides, and documentation of all events.