

Vera List Center for Art and Politics  
Contemporary And (&)

C& Center of  
Unfinished  
Business  
at *The* New  
School\*

The Vera List Center for Art and Politics and multimedia platform Contemporary And (C&) present the C& *Center of Unfinished Business* at The New School, a roving reading room and exhibition that speaks to the persistence and presence of colonialism in contemporary life. Conceived by Contemporary And's Julia Grosse, Yvette Mutumba, and Mearg Negusse, 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 exhibition features a curated selection of books, including titles from The New School faculty, alumni, and the VLC Fellows Library. Inaugurated during the 2022 VLC Forum 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.



# The C& Center of Unfinished Business

*The C& Center of Unfinished Business* is a reading room that offers visitors an extraordinary, and also disconcerting, selection of books that are connected to the topic of colonialism in various ways—from the German colonies to Congolese fashion to 21st century capital markets, the reading room stretches the subject to the many different areas that are affected by it. However, it is not about creating a library on colonialism that is consistent and complete, because: when would it ever be? Colonialism is an unfinished business that continues to exist in many ways.

Launched in 2017, the reading room has traveled to art spaces and museums around the world, connecting in various ways with institutions such as ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), Transmediale in Berlin, school in Vienna, Musée Les Abattoirs in Toulouse, Para Site in Hong Kong, or for its first US iteration the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati.

# The 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, 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, and

potential it inspires to pose questions about the metaphorical, political, and social dimensions and implications of correction.

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.





*Center of Unfinished Business (detail), Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, May 8-September 11, 2022. Photo: Wes Battoclette, 2022.*



# New School New Books

## A Reading Series

Friday, April 21, 2023  
11am–4pm EDT  
Social Justice Hub,  
University Center  
The New School,  
65 5th Avenue, 5th Floor,  
New York, NY

Hosts, Re'al Christian, Assistant Director of Editorial Initiatives; Carin Kuoni, Senior Director/Chief Curator; and Eriola Pira, Curator and Director of Public Programs, Vera List Center for Art and Politics.

*New School New Books: A Reading Series* brings together faculty from across The New School in recognition and celebration of milestone publications in the fields of film studies, fashion, musicology, design, environmentalism, and philosophy. Hosted in conjunction with the C& Center of *Unfinished Business*, this multimodal event launches a series of programs that activate the reading room. With books housed within the installation and other recent publications, the readings cover topics ranging from punk aesthetics to primatology and are divided into three sections:

### 11 am–12 pm: Material Identities

- \* Amanda Bellows, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, *American Slavery and Russian Serfdom in the Post-Emancipation Imagination*, 2021
- \* Evan Rapport, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, *Damaged: Musicality and Race in American Punk*, 2021
- \* Ricardo Montez, Schools of Public Engagement, *Keith Haring's Line: Race and the Performance of Desire*, 2021
- \* Genevieve Yue, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, *Girl Head: Feminism and Film Materiality*, 2021
- \* Gwenda-lin Grewal, The New School for Social Research, *Fashion | Sense: On Philosophy and Fashion*, 2022
- \* Terry Williams, New School for Social Research, *The Soft City: Sex for Business and Pleasure in New York City*, 2022

### 1–2 pm: Sounding Democracy

- \* Ricky Tucker, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, *And the Category Is...Inside New York's Vogue, House, and Ballroom Community*, 2022
- \* Claire Potter, The New School for Social Research, *Political Junkies: From Talk Radio to Twitter, How Alternative Media Hooked Us on Politics and Broke Our Democracy*, 2021
- \* Simon Critchley, The New School for Social Research, *Bald: 35 Philosophical Short Cuts*, 2021
- \* Julie Beth Napolin, Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts, *The Fact of Resonance: Modernist Acoustics and Narrative Form*, 2021
- \* Pablo Helguera, College of Performing Arts, "When Institutional Attitudes Become Form," 2023
- \* Brittnay Proctor, Schools of Public Engagement, *Minnie Riperton's Come to My Garden*, 2022

### 3–4 pm: Public(s) and Common(s)

- \* Lauren Redniss, Parsons School of Design, *Oak Flat: A Fight for Sacred Land in the American West*, 2021
- \* Radhika Subramaniam, Parsons School of Design, "Notes for a Seedy Politics," *Maria Thereza Alves: Seeds of Change*, 2023
- \* Nicolas Langlitz, The New School for Social Research, *Chimpanzee Culture Wars: Rethinking Human Nature alongside Japanese, European, and American Cultural Primatologists*, 2021
- \* Ann Stoler, The New School for Social Research, *Interior Frontiers: Essays on the Entrails of Inequality*, 2021
- \* Jilly Traganou, Parsons School of Design, "Girl with Maquette: A Memoir of Prefigurative Imaginaries at Work," *ARENA Journal of Architectural Research*, 2022

# Libraries as Correctives\*

C& Center of  
Unfinished Business,  
Keleketla! Library,  
and Sister Library  
with Asia Art  
Archive

Monday, April 24, 2023  
10–11:30 am EDT  
Online

How do libraries act as correctives? How do they become sites of intervention, gathering, and radical storytelling? This event—co-presented with Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong—brings together the C& Center of Unfinished Business in Berlin, Keleketla! Library in Johannesburg, and Sister Library in Mumbai to explore the transformative potential of libraries in the cultural field. The C& Center of

Unfinished Business discusses how an itinerant reading room highlights the traces of colonialism in the holdings of existing institutional libraries. Keleketla! Library introduces how a library initiates advocacy programs to bring stakeholders in the fields of culture, heritage, and governance. Sister Library investigates the tension between temporary and semi-permanent reading sites to contribute to discussions of feminisms.

## Participants

- \* Malose Malahlela, Keleketla! Library, Johannesburg
- \* Meang Negusse, C& Center of Unfinished Business, Berlin
- \* Aqul Thami, Sister Library, Mumbai
- \* Moderator, Özge Ersoy, Senior Curator, Asia Art Archive, Hong Kong
- \* Host, Eriola Pira, Curator and Director of Public Programs, Vera List Center for Art and Politics



# Libraries in Practice

## Tending Toward Liberation



Thursday, May 18, 6:30–8 pm EDT  
Social Justice Hub, University Center  
The New School, 65 5th Avenue, 5th Floor  
New York, NY

*Libraries in Practice: Tending Toward Liberation* explores the unequivocal relationship between books, libraries, freedom, and liberation. Hosted within the *C& Center of Unfinished Business*, this program brings together organizers from local independent artist-run libraries, non-circulating collections, reading rooms, and small presses to consider

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, C& Center of Unfinished Business
- \* Yusuf Hasean, BlackMass Publishing
- \* *Moderator*, Re'al Christian, Assistant Director of Editorial Initiatives, Vera List Center for Art and Politics

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 Eriola Pira, Curator and Director of Programs. It is presented with the support of the Daisy Schapiro Lectureship Fund.

#### Credits:

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Eriola Pira, Curator and Director of Programs

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This publication includes the winning essay of the 2023 Vera List New School Art Collection Writing Awards, which are bestowed on New School students for the best essays inspired by works in the university's art collection. The 2023 edition, reflects on The New School Art Collection's 2014 commission of Alfredo Jaar's iconic *Searching for Africa in LIFE*, permanently installed in the seventh-floor reading room in the University

Center's Arnhold Forum Library. Special thanks to The New School Provost's Office, especially Alex Carnes, as well as Paul Gottlieb, Mochi Liu, and Janice Shaman in The New School's Buildings Department.

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**THE NEW SCHOOL**

**VERA LIST CENTER  
FOR ART AND POLITICS**

\*  
*Correction*

**C&**