

THE DECOLONIAL TURN IN CONTEMPORARY ART PRACTICES AND TERMINOLOGY IN POSTWAR GUATEMALA. AN ART HISTORY OF DELINKING

Edgar Colel and Rosario Sotelo, *Abuelos* (Grandparents), installation with stones brought from San Juan Comalapa and fruits, exhibited as part of the Bienal de Arte Paiz, Ciudad de Guatemala, 2014



SUBJECT

My dissertation project deals with the tensions between (art) practices of critique before and after the 'decolonial turn' in Guatemala around 2012. It investigates these practices in relation to modern, Eurocentric understandings of critique and contemporary art.

While gaining access to an apparently global art sphere, decolonial theories ask artists to **delink from modernity and colonialism, and to relink with other ways of being in the world, i.e. of the Mayan people.** Through such distancing, the **critical subject and the understanding of critique change.**

RESEARCH INTEREST

Through the exploration of particular (art) practices of critique both, before and after the decolonial turn, the aim is to critically revise the relations between formerly Western and local (i.e. Mayan) epistemologies, thus overcoming the still dominant division between 'indigenous' and 'modern', 'peripheral' and 'central', 'global' and 'local' art.

APPROACH

Relationality exposes several issues that go beyond contemporary art, art history, and theories of decoloniality, and that require the consultation of Mayan theories, Guatemalan (post-)war history, and theories of indigeneity. These include:

- Mayan concepts of the **body**, especially of the female body in relation to the (colonized) territory.
- Natural resources and their historical, spiritual and epistemological charge, i.e. **maize** as the material women and men are made of in the Popol Vuh (sacred book for the Maya-K'iche').
- Context-based constructions of identity, such as the '**ladina/o**' or someone who negates her/his indigenous ancestry.
- **Pan-indigenous alliances**, for example between the Mayan and other indigenous groups living in Brazil today.