

Preciado Paul B., 'The Parliament of Bodies: Black Athena Reloaded 2: A Trial of the *Code Noir* with Colin Dayan, Pélagie Gbaguidi, Tavia Nyong'o, David Scott and Françoise Vergès'. www.documenta14.com, 17 June 2017.

The Parliament of Bodies: Black Athena Reloaded 2: A Trial of the *Code Noir* with Colin Dayan, Pélagie Gbaguidi, Tavia Nyong'o, David Scott, and Françoise Vergès

JUN
17

6-10 pm
Fridericianum, Friedrichsplatz 18, Kassel
● Live stream available



Books are material surfaces of inscription where political fictions have the opportunity to become collective reality. The *Code Noir* was an economic and legal decree passed by King Louis XIV in 1685 to regulate colonial traffic and exchange within the French Empire. Operating until 1848, the *Code Noir* set up the conditions of white supremacy and violent racialized division of social and political access to technologies of government. Far from being a mere economic treatise, it is one of the central necro-political texts of modernity, regulating life and death, sexuality and freedom, giving full rights to white (non-Jewish, non-Muslim) colonial owners to traffic with, slave, possess, rape, and kill a human body on the basis of "color." If Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* is the visible foundation of the modern liberal economy, defining individual property and the market as political conditions of liberal societies, the *Code Noir* could be considered its second invisible foundation, establishing conditions of slavery and total dispossession for the greatest percentage of human beings.

Actively engaging with the exhibition, the Parliament of Bodies has brought the *Code Noir* to the center of contemporary discussion. Exhibited at the Neue Galerie, it is a small four-centimeter book that nonetheless was, at one time, powerful enough to legitimize racial policies of death and dispossession.

Whereas the norms and rules stipulated by the *Code Noir* have been abolished, its racialized division of power seems to continue operating within political, economic, and institutional discourses. We invite you to collectively read the *Code Noir*, interrogate the continuities between its rules and contemporary neoliberal policies, as well as to reflect on the resistance strategies elaborated by anti-slavery struggles since early modernity. This debate is also an attempt to think about the performative status of legal and normative texts today and to invite artists and writers to engage critically in their transformation.

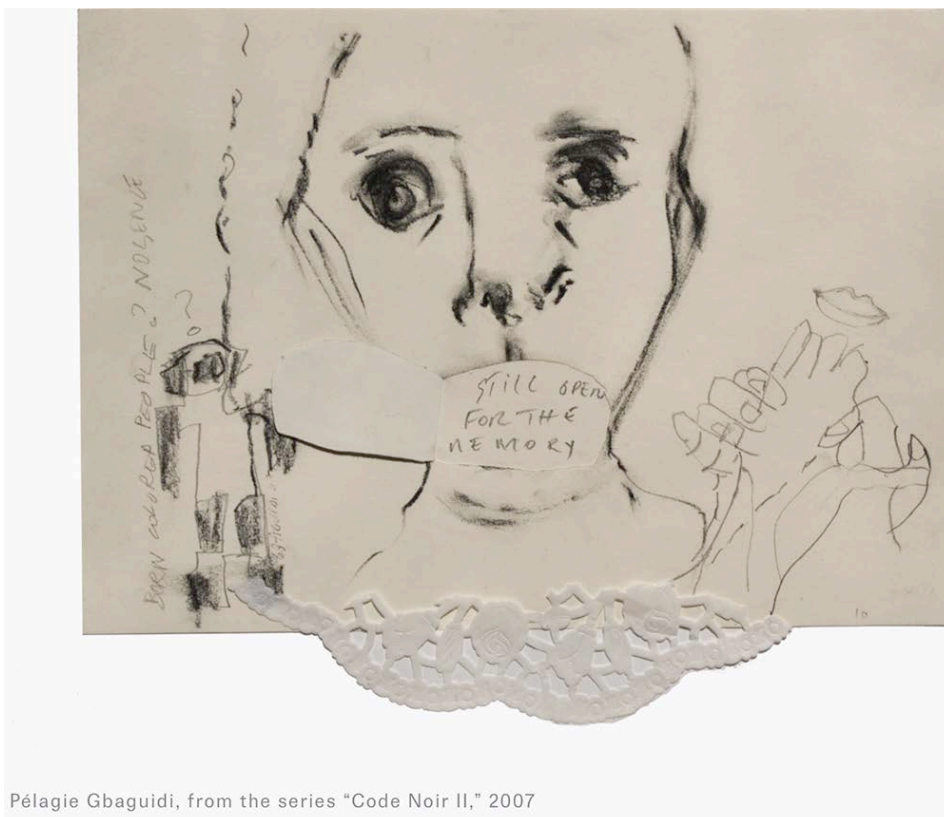
—Paul B. Preciado

Program

- 6 pm, Pélagie Gbaguidi, *Le Code Noir*: a forgotten piece of History

“My contribution to this debate is constructed around the reading of poems and texts that reflect my different experiences with this piece of historical archive. The thoughts delivered will highlight the urgency to break the silence related to power and sacredness. These thoughts are also used to confront *Le Code Noir* from a perspective of racial ideology and to bring forward a contextual approach of *Le Code Noir* in today’s society.

My vision is to share my experience with the public and find a way to deconstruct *Le Code Noir*, to repair humanity’s faults and advance in a world in which everyone can prosper. I went through different archives where I extracted one side of history we rarely see. I intend to open up the historical archives and share the information with the audience. To give a sense of self-awareness to the public is crucial because the topics I approach affect all of us.”



Pélagie Gbaguidi, from the series "Code Noir II," 2007

Pélagie Gbaguidi lives and works in Brussels. Her work is an anthology of signs and traces on the trauma. In fact, it is one of her recurrent subjects, evidenced by the acquisition of 100 drawings of the *Code Noir* (1685) series at the Memorial Act in Guadeloupe. Her work is on the colonial and postcolonial archives, the unmasking of the process of forgetting in history. This readjustment of the imaginary arouses in the artist the urgency to give it form, a writing of liberating images and a corpus from which contemporary forms can be drawn.

Françoise Vergès holds the Global South (s) chair at Collège d'études mondiales, MSH, Paris. She has written extensively on memories of slavery as a counter-hegemonic narrative, Frantz Fanon, psychoanalysis, Aimé Césaire, colonialism of power and feminism, has worked with artists, was project advisor for Documenta11, organized for the 2012 Paris Triennial the program *The Slave in Le Louvre. An Invisible Humanity*, and has written film scripts.

David Scott is Professor of Anthropology and Fellow in the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, Columbia University, New York. He is the author of a number of scholarly articles and three books, *Formations of Ritual: Colonial and Anthropological Discourses on the Sinhala Yaktovil* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994); *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton University Press, 1999); and *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke University Press, 2004), and co-editor with Charles Hirschkind of *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors* (Stanford University Press, 2006). He is also the editor of the journal *Small Axe*.

Colin Dayan is the Robert Penn Warren Professor in the Humanities at Vanderbilt University. Her books include *Haiti, History, and the Gods*; *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons*; and *With Dogs at the Edge of Life*. Her memoir, *Blue Book*, is forthcoming.

Tavia Nyong'o is professor of African-American Studies, American Studies, and Theater Studies at Yale University, and a co-editor of the journal *Social Text*. He is the author of *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance and the Ruses of Memory* (2009) and is completing a study on the fictions of history in contemporary black art, performance, and theory.