

# PRINCIPLES FOR DECOLONIAL FILM

By Nitasha Dhillon

1) Decolonial film dis-articulates cinema from the space and time of modernity, settler-colonialism, and the nation-state—but also those of capitalist globalization and neoliberal multiculturalism.

2) Decolonial film is not derived from theory of history of cinema per se. It begins by asking, who is in the room, who is part of the conversation, who has a stake in the images and sounds, the times and the places that will be brought together within the film and the work surrounding it? Although these questions have long been asked within the history of cinema itself, especially through postcolonial thinking and revolutionary cinema, a decolonial film will find ways to delink from modernity and the terms, frames, and conventions it imposes.

3) Decolonial film dismantles patriarchy. The work of decolonial feminism is central, from the poetics of Suzanne Césaire, to the filmic work of Heiny Srour, to contemporary thinkers like Angela Davis. Patriarchy is forever creeping back into even the most radical cultural and political spaces. Any decolonial project worthy of the name must take aim at the gendering powers and voices and the systems that reproduce and enable them.

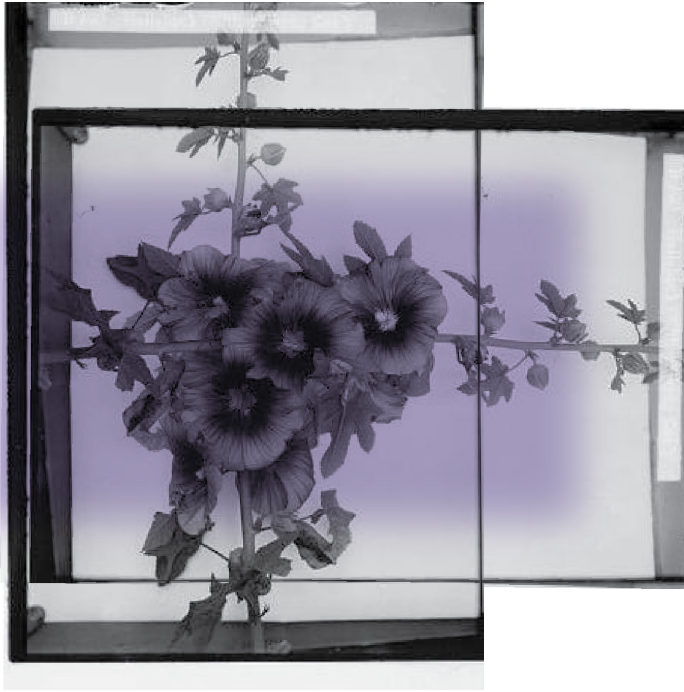
4) Decolonial film is not representational, whether epistemically or politically. Image, sound, and sequence flow into life, land, and liberation. Decolonial film is grounded not in representation but facilitating spaces and enunciation as an event, act, or rupture into the field of the sensible, the visible and the audible.

5) Decolonial film assumes that spectatorship is always already marked by dynamics of racialization, colonialism, and patriarchy, and that the wounds incurred in these processes are sources of creativity, healing, and solidarity.

6) Decolonial film holds space for the People. The People is not a single thing, but an event of solidarity between and across struggles in this place, and this place, and this place...again and again, forever. As shown by the Zapatistas, the People can be reinvented, but only insofar as it is recorded from the a stance of Indigenous world-making and ontological disobedience.

7) Decolonial film begins before cinema, and points beyond it. It digs into the ground, grows with the trees, moves with the water, and watches the sky. As Nelson Maldonado-Torres describes, “The decolonial aesthetic, erotic, and spiritual turn is a shift away from the coloniality of established meanings, of sensing, of feeling, of vision, of gender and other modern/colonial conceptions of the body, as well as a rejection of the modern/colonial hierarchy of human experiences. A decolonial way of sensing or decolonial aesthesis is a key aspect of the decolonization of being, including the decolonization of time, space, and embodied subjectivity, but also of power and knowledge. Since aesthetics is so closely connected to embodied subjectivity and this subjectivity is at the crux of the coloniality of knowledge, power, and being, decolonial aesthetics very directly challenges, not only each basic coordinate of modernity/coloniality, but its most visceral foundations and overall scope.”





8) Decolonial film does not involve a discreet cinematic work. It sets cinema to work in an expanded field of media practices, direct action, and political organizing. It, for example, incorporates many languages and does not find it necessary to translate everything into English or for everything to be legible or comprehensible.

9) Decolonial film does not assume an audience. Its audience

is forged not only in the work of the image but also in the work of organizing, collaboration, and solidarity between struggles.

10) Decolonial film moves beyond institutional critique. It sees that cinema is bound up in the economies and institutions of the culture industry, the art system, and the non-profit industrial complex, from Hollywood to Documenta to Sundance.

11) Decolonial film points to a cinema of liberation and a liberation of cinema. This process involves assemblages of place and image, sound and struggle, time and desire within filmic works themselves; and it requires old/new arrangements of resources, technologies, space and time, and networks in the interest of decolonial movement building. It moves with and beyond histories of Third World and Fourth World Cinema.

12) Decolonial film problematizes and breaks the horizon line that enables colonialism and global capitalism. It questions everything from Truth and Objectivity to Reality and Science, beginning with rejecting the linear perspective of time that homogenizes space. It does so by allowing for other ways of seeing the world and adhering to revolutionary time.

13) Decolonial film understands the technologies used by filmmakers are the result of ongoing colonization driven by capitalism. It is also mindful that many do not have the means to see films. In practice, decolonial film strives to develop and cultivate ethical tools and practices in the making, the screening, and the community that develops around it. It also seeks that films can be experienced in a variety of settings, in the street or village as well as a gallery or museum.

