

Intersectionality التقاطعية Intersektionalität

By Bayan Hilles

Introduction text for the term intersectionality:

Intersectionality is a concept that describes how oppressive systems intersect and overlap, influencing the daily experiences of individuals, particularly those who belong to multiple marginalized communities. An individual can simultaneously face several forms of discrimination depending on their identity. For example, the daily life of a migrant woman of colour is affected by sexism, racism and xenophobia. The term Intersectionality was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw, professor of gender studies and critical race theory. In her book; *On Intersectionality. Essential Writings* Crenshaw argues that whether rooted in racism, sexism, classism, or homophobia, different discrimination forms are intricately interconnected¹. All forms of discrimination mutually reinforce each other because they share a common foundation: the notion of a dominant group benefiting from the oppression of a marginalized group. This is why discrimination forms can only be deconstructed if they are acknowledged as integral parts of the same puzzle. This interconnectedness gives rise to a global struggle that is intersectional in nature, highlighting that true freedom is collective liberation that can only be achieved until it extends to all individuals.

Introduction for the vision board:

When I initially encountered the term "intersectionality," I experienced a sense of relief in discovering a word that resonates with my lived reality. As I curated a vision board for intersectionality, a multitude of associations flooded my thoughts, reflecting the diverse facets of this concept. My associations are rooted in literature, artistic interventions, museum theories and practices as well as the

¹ Crenshaw, Kimberlé (2022): *On Intersectionality. Essential Writings*. New York: New York Press.

global geo-political context. Unravelling intersectionality and what it means to me was a process that has unfolded throughout my life, a journey I chose to capture in this vision board.

My initial exposure to feminist literature began while I was living in Paris with the works of French writer Simone de Beauvoir, a pivotal figure in the feminist movement. While initially framed by the perspective of a white author, my journey evolved as I delved into the writings of feminist women of colour like Egyptian writer Nawal Sadawi, black American activist Angela Davis, and queer Afro-german writer Audre Lorde. Their work, challenging the limitations of white feminism, and advocating for intersectional feminism and the rights of *all* women, has profoundly shaped my feminist views. This was where I started to understand how the liberation struggle of different marginalised groups is deeply interconnected.

A particularly inspiring example when it comes to challenging the status quo in museums are Guerilla Girls. This anonymous artist collective stages actions and interventions in criticism of gender and ethnic biases in the art world. Their artwork brought my attention to the extent to which museums exclude minorities in favour of those who conform to the norms of society.

My understanding of representation in art and culture was also shaped by the writings of Edward Said. In his book *Orientalism*, a central work in post-colonial studies, he unveils the stereotypical depictions of the Middle East in Western art that stem from a long tradition of romanticising the Orient and its people. Said's writings unravelled how euro-centric cultural representation reaffirms colonial narratives established by imperialist Western powers.

When I think of intersectionality in museums I think of Savvy Contemporary, which is a cultural space in my neighbourhood close to where I live. Their program is dedicated to addressing issues such as colonial legacies, decolonial perspectives

on culture and identity politics within post-migrant societies. To me, Savvy Contemporary stands out in Berlin's museum landscape as a space that shapes museum migration discourse, and postcolonial museological practices.

Another museum that stands out to me when I think of intersectionality is the FHXB Museum, dedicated to the history of Berlin, with a specific focus on the Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg neighbourhood. Similar to Savvy Contemporary, a key aspect of the museum's mission is to explore topics and perspectives that have been previously underrepresented. Their latest exhibition, "We Call It Revolution: Transnational Activism in Berlin " delves into the transnational struggles of people who sought refuge in Berlin due to repressive authoritarian regimes and explores how transnational activism shapes Berlin.

Creating this vision board amid the ongoing war in Palestine, an image of a demonstration poster with the slogan "Global South United " that I recently saw kept coming to my mind. This demonstration was jointly organised by both Jewish and Palestinian NGOs to mobilise people in Berlin, to protest for a cease-fire and an end to the war from Palestine to Congo to Sudan to Namibia. This demonstration is an example of intersectional struggle and solidarity showing how anti-colonial movements across the Global South are inseparable from one another.

In conclusion, I would like to draw inspiration from the neon art installation by Alfredo Jaar "Be Afraid of the Enormity of the Possible:" which I saw at Uferhallen. I think this powerful phrase encapsulates our collective journey towards understanding and dismantling oppressive systems. It serves as a reminder that, despite historical injustices and the discrimination faced by marginalized communities, there is potential for positive social change and museums play a big part in that. In the face of injustice, cultural spaces can inspire hope and act as a catalyst for action. The enormity of the possible becomes a guiding force, holding the key to the future we seek to build.