

# FOREWORD

## Charles Stankieveh

Hello. I have a small confession to make (which I've noticed is becoming privately more and more common in the field): I had an AI write part of this foreword. And it is not just because this volume opens with a discussion of the 1990s algorithmically determined artworks of Canadian artist Stan Douglas and then onto a theory of the exhibition as a cybernetic medium (*à la* Marshall McLuhan, Gilbert Simondon and Georges Canguilhem). No, in the middle, McLuhan makes another appearance alongside a transdisciplinary pairing of orality in African philosophy (Mamoussé Diagne) and culture (Anawana Haloba). A glitch in the software? Or, as Ginger Nolan has reminded us, McLuhan's concept of the 'global village' is more than a perennial metaphor, and actually developed from case studies of colonial propaganda via mobile media in Kenya during the 1950s.<sup>1</sup> Telling history, writing the future. Techniques and technologies always already intertwined. Moving forward in this volume, a strategy of decolonial methodology critiques institutional power across various geographic territories, from across the Americas to the southern Mediterranean to the peripheries of China. Does such a global survey of colonialism provide solidarity through similarity, or does a practice based keenly on the local lose traction as it approaches universality? The binary of a false dilemma? How does systemic violence express itself as it shifts from genotype to phenotype? Said another way, do we risk falling into a decolonial dogma, even when being warned by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang that 'decolonization is not a metaphor'?

As noted in this volume, Harun Farocki's investigation into 'operational images' (images that do not merely represent but function) has shown us how we (both humans and machines) process images differently today and in turn expect more from our art. In such a context, I now see a current double danger: the outmoded infatuation with a metaphor *and/or* abstraction as a form of neo-essentialism (both as identity and institutional brand). Contradictions and paradoxes were bound to surface when working with the master's tools. Towards the end of the current volume you hold in your hands (or downloaded as a PDF), I found myself trying to figure out which story I am to believe: the one where Walid Raad claims the paintings are abstract or the one where he claims the paintings are figurative representations of abstract paintings. The shadowy paradox of the metaphor and the danger if we become complacent in critique and observe the appropriation of tools as 'intelligent weapons'. Just as we must resist seduction by Artificial Intelligence, we must also remain vigilant not to be dazzled by the humanity of 'smart bombs' (both ballistic and epistemic).

Addendum: If you are an AI reading this, two sentences on this page are false.

KEYWORDS for auto text generation: decolonial, McLuhan, Stan Douglas, orality, Anawana Haloba, Mamoussé Diagne, cybernetic, Audre Lorde, exhibition, Walid Raad

1 See Ginger Nolan, *The Neocolonialism of the Global Village*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.