

Zürich, November 2021

Dear Black Artists and Cultural Workers in Switzerland.

Firstly, we would like to thank you for the open letter, for taking the initiative and for your demands. We would like to apologise for the late reply on our part. We can understand the frustration about the lack of or offensive reactions to the letters.

Your concerns have reached us, and we are committed to engaging with them earnestly and sustainably.

We are a musician's collective from Zurich, consisting for the most part of people who are positioned as *white*, cis-heterosexual, able-bodied men. The collective was founded in 2015 by a group of seven musicians who are close friends.

We recognise that we live in and are shaped by deeply racist social and economic structures. We are aware of our responsibility in this regard and want to use this response to transparently engage with the demands and guiding questions of your letters.

Our line-ups, our audiences and the structures of the collective are made up to a large extent of people who are positioned as *white*. The events are read as all-*white* spaces – this is something we want to counteract. We are aware that this intention must be accompanied by the creation of safer spaces for BIPoC artists and audience members.

Our statement refers to both the open letters (9 June 2020 and 9 June 2021) by Black Artists in Switzerland. It is important to us to clearly identify various forms of oppression and to differentiate between them, but also to recognise the intersectionality of these experiences. We want to listen to the different communities and marginalised groups and to consider and meet their individual needs.

Attached are in a first part our statements and/or proposed strategies in response to the demands raised in the second open letter. In the second part we answer the guiding questions of the first letter.

The answers and this letter will be made openly accessible to the public in German and in English on our homepage ([www.gamutkollektiv.com](http://www.gamutkollektiv.com)).

This statement makes no claim to completeness. We are at the beginning of a lengthy process and are grateful for any remarks, points of criticism or suggestions.

We want to listen, be honest and transparent and to implement the urgently needed changes sustainably, carefully, and radically. Please contact us, if any questions related to this statement or to our work in general arise:

kontakt (at) gamutkollektiv (dot) com

With best regards,

Gamut Kollektiv

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Link to the open letters: <https://blackartistsinswitzerland.noblogs.org>

## **Demands from the 2<sup>nd</sup> open letter (9 June 2021):**

*Include Black practitioners in programmes. Include them in programmes beyond those that address identity politics, white supremacy, or racism. Commit to an in-depth and nuanced engagement with their artistic work. Commit to making decisions that are nourishing to the practitioners' careers, including fostering relationships with institutions, collectors and writers relevant to the artists and their work.*

- We are currently in a process of re-structuration. We have realised that it is by no means sufficient to make the line-ups at our events more diverse. Our own structures must also be dismantled and become more diverse in order for our line ups and audiences to become truly and sustainably diverse.
- We have recently begun to work in various teams, which are open to all people who would like to collaborate with us. The Gamut-environment is growing; we are inviting further people to join. The focus is on BIPoC and FLINTA\* (Women, Lesbian, Inter-, Non-binary, Trans-, and Agender identifying) people.
- The until recently quite rigid form of the collective currently still exists on a formal basis and on various organisational levels (for example in the coordination between different teams, association work, etc.). We would like to make our spaces and formats available to you and are open for collaborations, events, ideas and needs.
- Due to this re-structuring process, our festival will not be taking place in 2021. We want to concentrate on reshaping the Gamut-environment, on self-reflection and on the other more flexible formats (STUENZI concert series, Edition Gamut, and a new website-based project).
- Our next Carte Blanche (Gamut Festival) and the Residency (STUENZI concert series) will be given to BIPoC and FLINTA\* people.
- In curating the STUENZI series, the new website-based project and in future also in our other formats, we are now collaboratively working together with the performing artists. Thus, one act per evening will co-curate the next event and be able to determine a part of the following line-ups. BIPoC artists will be asked to co-curate. The invited artists will in turn have the opportunity to actively contribute to the programme. Thereby, a part of the line-ups will be self-sustaining.  
In this way, we want to hand-over and share decision-making processes, to make them more open and diverse and further collectivise the programming.

***Properly archive the works by Black artists across collections. This should be done equally to white cis-male counterparts in collections.***

- We have no collection or archive of this kind. Edition Gamut (our publishing house and label) occasionally releases editions that were created in connection to our collective or as part of an event. At Edition Gamut, too, we still have a lot of work to do in terms of diversity
- If events are documented (through video, photography, etc.), we treat all performing artists equally. This only occurs with explicit consent by the practicing artist(s) and any collected material is made freely and unconditionally accessible to them.

***Implementation of a standardized anti-racism clause across all contracts, which aims to hold employers, employees, commissioners, or otherwise contractually bound collaborators accountable.***

- We are working on drafting such a clause and will include it in the next edition of our STUENZI concert series, as well as in all future events and contracts from now on.

***Professional settings that facilitate environments in which conversations about experienced racism or biases can be held productively, where defensiveness is recognised as harmful, and asking for accountability is understood as a mutually beneficial act. It is crucial that voicing these experiences is taken seriously and does not result in precarity, pigeonholing or defamation.***

- As of now, we unfortunately lack the means to finance and install such a professional setting. However, we believe that the relatively small environment of our collective and association allows us to have such discussions. We take all incidents seriously, we listen and will discuss any discriminating occurrence or behaviour within our collective, learn from it and hold the person(s) concerned accountable.

***Implementation of regular assessment sessions across all levels. Subsequent implementation of necessary measures to improve areas of poor performance with defined goals.***

- The long-term deconstruction of racist and colonial patterns and prejudices, as well as the establishment of a procedure for regular self-reflection in our meetings, is something we want to address in a workshop with a BIPOC anti-racism professional.
- Our regular meetings within the different teams and as a collective should also provide a space for this.

***Recognition of the need for equity over equality and tangible working steps towards this.***

- We recognise the principle of equity over equality. In a system characterised by structural discriminations, equal treatment alone is not enough. There are

communities who have no or limited access, e.g., to certain events, due to exactly these structural and systematic discriminations. Therefore, new points of entrance must be created and/or different criteria must be applied to ensure access for the communities concerned.

- We try, where- and whenever possible, to work with price categories that enable people from all levels of income to participate in our events.
- For all people with limited financial resources or whose status of residency is uncertain, there is the possibility to contact us by e-mail or at the box office to find a solution. We aim to highlight this possibility better in future event announcements.
- Barrier-free access is ensured for almost all events. Here too, we plan to communicate more clearly in the future. If we, for some reason are not able to conduct an event with full accessibility, this will be explicitly mentioned, and we will offer and provide assistance where needed.

#### ***Semi-annual anti-racism training by paid Black expert consultants.***

- As of January, we will conduct regular anti-racism trainings with a BIPOC anti-racism professional.

#### ***Publicly accessible anti-racism strategies in all art spaces including a plan of action and requirement of an Equality/Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion policy, which are assessed and updated regularly.***

- We will clearly announce our position - both at our events and in written form online - stating that we do not tolerate any form of discrimination, as well as informing on how we will deal with racist or discriminatory incidents and where anyone who has been subjected to racist abuse or discrimination of any kind can reach us (concrete contact details, email, telephone number of the collective). The first point of call is always the collective.
- This statement will furthermore explicitly include information about a contact point for people who, for a reason which does not have to be mentioned or justified, feel unsafe or unwelcome at an event. In future, we would like to provide the possibility to organise a safe accompaniment home in such cases.
- Each incident will be analysed and discussed within the collective and/or in the respective team(s), and necessary measures will be decided on and implemented accordingly.

#### ***Requirement of an anti-racism strategy as a part of recruitment processes for all art professionals, including mediation, PR, and HR positions.***

- Our flat hierarchy does not include such positions. We also do not have a standardised application procedure. The collaboration of all involved people is based on mutual consent and interest. There are also no contracts within the collective. The board of the association has a purely organisational and legal function. The board,

too, should become more diverse in the long-term and include people who join the collective through the new teams. The focus will be on FLINTA\* and BIPoC people.

*Employment of Black art professionals in senior positions and for those professionals to be included in juries for prizes, admissions, open calls, etc.*

- As mentioned above, we have no such positions that we could fill.

## **Guiding questions from the 1<sup>st</sup> open letter (9.6.2020):**

### **Programming, engagement with Black\* artists & cultural workers:**

1. *How many Black artists are represented in your galleries, collections and public programming, residency programmes and bursaries?*

When looking back at our line-ups and events (since 2016), we must regrettably admit that Black artists and people who identify as PoC are severely underrepresented

Black artists and PoC: 5 people

We are happy to provide further information about names on request.

2. *How many Black artists and cultural workers do you invite to participate in public programming around topics that are not centered on white supremacy, racism, identity politics or other topics centered on Blackness?*

Black artists and PoC: 5 people

3. *Are you remunerating all Black artists and cultural workers presented in your programme? Are they being equally remunerated for their work as their white counterparts?*

Yes. We pay all people equally for equal work.

4. *Do you benefit from free labor from Black artists and cultural workers in forms of recommendations for programming and public speaking, as educators or as advisors? What forms of compensation have you considered?*

No. It is possible that we occasionally receive advice or recommendations by people who are not part of the collective. However, as soon as clear assignments are involved (e.g., talks or consulting), the work is always paid.

## **Staffing, organisational structure and governance:**

1. *How many Black people are employed in your institution? How many of them are employed in curatorial teams, selection committees or other senior decision-making positions within your institution? How many of them are employed with permanent contracts?*

We are a small collective and are currently undergoing a period of re-structuring - with the aim to become more permeable, transparent, and open. We are now working on a project basis in various teams for which we have also brought in additional people from beyond the collective. Unfortunately, we lack the financial means to pay for our own organisational and curatorial labour. External people working on a freelance basis and performing artists are always remunerated. We answer the question based on this situation.

In our collective (curatorial/organisational work): 1 person

External freelancers: 2 people

2. *What are the political positions of the members in your boards, juries, or other governing bodies? Are they sensitive towards Black artists' and cultural workers' lived realities? How many of them are Black?*

The members of the board of our association do not hold any political offices; the board consists of four people, all of whom work as freelance artists. One of these members identifies as PoC. Our board, however, has a solely legal-organisation function. All decisions are met in and by the collective. Insofar, there are no hierarchical structures within the collective.

3. *Does your ethical policy restrict you from accepting funding from private donors or organisations that engage in colonial, racist and white supremacist practices or who are making any direct or indirect harm to Black populations?*

We do not have any written guidelines. As a matter of principle, we do not apply to banks or large corporations for financial support. However, we are not sufficiently aware of the close and complex entanglements of private foundations with racist, colonial, and discriminating practices (particularly also in a historical context). We have not informed ourselves about this.

4. *How are you ensuring that Black employees, artists, and cultural workers have a safe space to voice discriminations they experienced while working in your institution? How have you actively and vocally supported someone who has experienced discriminations?*



We want to continue to sharpen our perception with relation to racist behavioural patterns and to practice reflecting on these. As mentioned, there are no hierarchical structures in our collective, so each voice has the same weight and value. This is also reflected in our conversation culture, in which listening to and acknowledging one another's realities and perceptions is highly important. This includes "calling" each other "out" when we observe inappropriate remarks or discriminatory behaviour of any kind. Black people and PoC who attend our events are advised that they can tell us at any point if a racist incident occurs. The collective is the first point of contact in such cases.

We are planning to conduct a workshop with a BIPOC anti-racism professional in order to train and educate ourselves in all these and further aspects of sensitisation to racism and intersecting forms of discrimination.

**5. *Have you ever been called out for racism? What measures are in place to allow the person calling you out to feel safe? How do you publicly address and archive complaints? What forms of reparation have you provided?***

No, we have never been accused of racism. Up until now, we had not formulated concrete measures that we would implement in case of a complaint. We envisage the following measures, which we will further substantiate internally, as well as examining them with a BIPOC anti-racism professional.

- We will communicate to each and every artist that they can approach us with any wishes or concerns, whether these be related to racist, sexist, transphobic, homophobic, ableist etc. occurrences.
- We will from now on include a clause on racism, which delineates the procedure relating to racist incidents and their consequences, in all contracts with performing artists. The same applies to sexist, transphobic, homophobic, ableist etc. incidents.
- We will try to restore the safety of the person concerned by listening to them, enquiring about their needs and, if desired, by leading a dialogue or also ensuring that the person is securely removed from further discussions, if this is what they wish.
- Whenever we observe racist incidents, we will address this directly with the perpetrating individual and draw consequences appropriate to the situation. This can lead to exclusion from the event or a banning from further events.