

**The "Southern Question": Conference**

**ARTMargins (<http://www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/artm>)**

**The Department of Fine Arts and Art History, American University of Beirut**

**Nov. 3-4, 11-6pm**

**Participants**

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Image Courtesy: Joshua D. Gonsalves

The idea of the “South,” not only as a geographical or geopolitical designation, but also as a critical framework for art, has gained traction in recent years. To paraphrase the terms of the most recent Documenta exhibition, what might it mean to historicize the art and artistic networks of the colonial and post-colonial world as neither merely “places on a map” nor “states of mind” but from the point of view of their mutual implication in the concrete societies from which they emerge?

The “Southern Question” in our title alludes to two seemingly incongruous critical frameworks for approaching the potentially political role of art and intellectual production: while one evokes the movement towards political solidarity and economic autonomy uniting the emerging nation-states of the global south as part of the Cold War Non-Aligned Movement, the other takes as its analytical framework the intertwined material and ideological conditions of determinate national social formations. Seeking inspiration in Gramsci’s treatment of the Southern Question it aims to explore the potentials and limitations of the category of class for mass political organization.

Invoking the “Southern Question” is an invitation to consider the usefulness of the “South” as a category for the criticism, theory, and history of art. As hitherto marginalized art and social contexts become the common fare of particularized canons and global art markets, how shall we define the “marginal” in critical-methodological terms? What kinds of critical and artistic work might help us to seize the current moment of the disorganization and re-organization of capitalist hegemony? Bracketing inherited divisions within and between the fields of Marxism and post-colonial studies, we invite participants to help define the critical and methodological questions implied by the term “South.”