



ENGINE FOR ART DEMOCRACY & JUSTICE EADJ

The first Episode of the 2020-21 program of the Engine for Art, Democracy and Justice (EADJ) was held online on Wednesday, September 24th. In collaboration with the Frist Art Museum and Fisk University, Prof. Maria Magdalena Campos-Pons (Dept. of Art) launched “Art, Democracy and Justice” in 2018 as part of her appointment as the Cornelius Vanderbilt Endowed Chair Professor of Fine Arts. In 2020 the word “Engine” was added to the program’s title to underscore how it is intended to drive critical reflection and ultimately, change.

This year’s program, “Living in Common in the Precarious South(s),” will examine the consequences of social and historical inequities on the southern imaginary, as seen in art from Latin America, Africa, South Asia, and the American South. The discussion will unfold through eight programs over the course of the academic year with the common format of several international speakers and a moderator. In addition, one of the artist speakers in each Episode will be creating a work of art that will serve as an intervention in the real space of Nashville. To accompany the first Episode, artist and EADJ participant Carrie Mae Weems designed interventions for Vanderbilt (in the form of a banner on Cohen Memorial and a moving sign on the main library), Fisk University and the Frist Art Museum. They all offer a message of hope in the face of the coronavirus pandemic which has inflicted suffering disproportionately on communities of color.

Episode One included, in addition to Weems, artist Hank Willis Thomas, Amsterdam-based curator Monika Szewczyk, and Ben Davis, critic. Prof. Kevin D. Murphy, Andrew W. Mellon Chair in the Humanities and Prof. and Chair in the Dept. of History of Art and Architecture, served as moderator. The Department was one of the co-sponsors of the program.

EADJ’s first episode explored the history of monuments as instruments of ideological glorification, persuasion and oppression. Panelists discussed the creation of counter-narratives, in the form of a public-facing art that redefines the concept of monuments as vehicles for propagating inclusive ideals in contemporary idioms. The discussion continues in **Episode Two**, on Wednesday **Sept. 30th at 10 AM** (Central Time). Further information about EADJ can be found at: <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/eadj/>.