

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

THE OFF-WHITE PROJECT is a collaborative art project investigating white privilege. It consists of a series of shows. It is open to all forms of art practice. It is an **open-source model** for creating social-engagement art projects and an amplifier for social issues.

Members of the **OFF-WHITE GROUP** form an ad hoc art group (**OWG**). Members are in Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto and Quebec with others expressing interest. Teams assemble for different shows.

The first show (**THE OFF-WHITE PROJECT - PRELUDE**) will be held June 20 – July 16 in Trinity Gallery A, Shenkman Centre, Ottawa.

THE OFF-WHITE PROJECT examines white privilege from the **inside** and the **outside**.

The Inside-Out Look – Self-identified “white” artists will be challenged to reflect upon their own white privilege - something often invisible to them due to our biased outlooks and the implicit power structures in society. For these “white” artists this will create an avenue into discussions of race. It will test their artistic practice to examine themselves and express those ideas and feelings without appropriating stories or images from other cultures.

The Outside-In Look – Self-identified “non-white” artists will be asked to express the face and form of white privilege as it has been presented to them. These artists will be encouraged to appropriate aspects of dominant culture and thereby overturn the power imbalance created by our implicit assumptions of normalcy within our racialized society.

THE OFF-WHITE SHOW - Structure

Art pieces that will challenge the artists and audience members to reflect on white privilege – privilege that is embedded in our societal structures – and within individuals.

Components of this show include:

Exhibition/Performance

Visual art
Performance
Protest poetry

Digital Platform

A collection of on-line resources on white privilege
Audio/video/digital platform links (YouTube, podcasts, web)
Social media connections (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram)

Social Engagement

Whiteness survey

Interviews

Open call

Conference session

Certain works will be linked to **web-based media** (audio/video/text) by using **QR codes**. These codes will be printed on labels that can be scanned by a smartphone.

To provoke more introspection and reflection we will present a **short whiteness survey** to participants and **conduct audio interviews** with the artists and audience members.

THE OFF-WHITE SHOW – Target Communities and Engagement Strategy

During the show we will perform a **live open call for local artists/students** to create a follow-up show of their own.

We will hold a **discussion forum** at the end of the show to hand over the ideas and methods of this project to interested local artists and art students. This is an open-source model.

We hope these artists/students can use their local knowledge to reach out to their communities (other disciplines of study, ethnic groups, neighbourhoods...) and engage their own communities in their own ways.

Key to this project is archiving each show on-line thus creating virtual shows and allowing a network to be developed.

This digital platform will be used to: share the artworks, create feedback & promote dialogue, develop a network of engagement on this issue, share background research materials.

We supply all artwork and on-line resources.

GROUP ARTIST STATEMENT

Theory and Praxis

This project demands a deep self-examination of aesthetics and will challenge artists to examine their prior learning and precepts about art. It will inform their theory and praxis. We hope to unlearn some of what we have been taught.

Members of **OWG** have shared/studied resources investigating white privilege to learn more about critical race theory.

In terms of **artistic expression**, the project challenges artists to express universal issues that are systemic but sometimes invisible to the owner of privilege.

It **engages artists** outside of conventional processes and practices.

On-line feedback will allow individuals from diverse communities to critique our art. That will allow observers outside the art system an avenue of discourse to inform the artists.

“Non-artists” can be invited to participate in the creation process for follow-up shows and that further challenge our norms of what art is, how it is made or who artists are.

This **open-source model** could be used to engage artists and communities on other social issues (e.g. indigenous/human rights, patriarchy/misogyny, Anthropocene ...)

Why this project now?

This show is a response to attitudes and events occurring today – locally, nationally and globally. Sadly, these things have always been part of our world.

It is also a response to the system of contemporary art and aesthetics that the commercial gallery system promotes. Much of what that system defines as art limits the discourse that art can have or who can be seen as valid authors of art. This perpetuates a bias of the dominant culture and class.

We believe that art must stand up and speak to humanity now.

This project creates a safe space for dialogue on race. We believe that art can open an emotional and intellectual door into the individual and help lead towards learning, collaboration, change and action.

We see the need for people in dominant positions in society (and art) to listen to the “other”, to self-reflect and learn what they may have been blind to their whole life.

Our group collaboration has already increased our awareness and has led us to begin these art-actions.