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Odili Donald Odita,
Otobong Nkanga,
Lynette Yiadom-Boakye,
Simon Njami,
Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie,
Riason Naidoo,
Chimurenga.

(Re-) Mapping the field: a bird's eye view on discourses.

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The challenge of any journal aiming at hoisting the flag of art critic and thus putting critical writing on art as its fundament is to pin point the eye of the storm in the cyclone of positions and criticism within the realms of its conceptual background. To participate in the discourse means not only to add fuel to it but also see how far one can go. A discourse is the only context where ideals, ideas or concepts can be taken towards the end.

In this light, the editors of the journal SAVVY | art. contemporary.african. sailed out on a journey to map the field by capturing an overview on some ongoing discourses in the academia and non-academic circles by renegotiating and reflecting on terminologies, spaces, concepts and contexts at stake in the field of contemporary African art in its second journal edition with the title: **(Re-) Mapping the field: a bird's eye view on discourses.**

The challenge of this challenge was soon enough to realize that we had just placed a life-long task of the journal as our goal for this edition and that it was sheer unattainable to contain all the streams of discourses in one edition of the journal but rather to adopt a step-by-step (journal-by-journal) policy in covering the critical concepts, thematic choices, orders, correlations, positions, functioning and transformations reigning within the framework of contemporary African art.

On this "Mapping the field" expedition Simon Njami recounts on the incentive and onset of *Revue Noire* in **Ancient guilt, new tool**, Sylvester Okwunodu

Ogbechie reshuffles the cards in **Where is Africa in Global Contemporary Art?** while Riason Naidoo reflects on his historical milestone **1910-2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective**, *inter alia*. The trip also accompanies us through features on Otobong Nkanga and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, negotiates turns on interviews with the likes of Odili Donald Odita in **Chromatic Symphony** and re-imagines with Ntone Edjabe, publisher of the literary journal of arts, culture and politics, Chimurenga magazine. The journey takes a retrospective glimpse at exhibitions with African artists on board like **Make Yourself at Home** in the Kunsthall Charlottenborg, **The Idea of Africa (re-invented)** in the Kunsthalle Bern, **AFROPOLIS** in Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne, as well as the **Addis Foto Fest 2010** and an almost nostalgic take on Okwui Enwezor's **The Short Century**.

This edition of the journal is especially dedicated to the loss of two beacons in the field of contemporary African art who have paved the way for many today and even more to come: the painter, poet and philosopher Valente Ngwenya Malangatana and the media artist, cultural worker, pedagogue and visionary Goddy Leye.

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung
Editor-in-chief

Die Herausforderung einer jeden Zeitschrift, die es sich zum Ziel gesetzt hat, in der Kunstkritik die Flagge zu hissen und somit kritisches Schreiben über Kunst als ihr Fundament zu betrachten, ist es, das Zentrum des Sturms in den Zyklen von Positionen und Kritik innerhalb des Bereichs seines konzeptuellen Hintergrunds auszumachen. Am Diskurs teilzunehmen bedeutet nicht nur, Öl ins Feuer zu schütten, um zu sehen, wie weit man gehen kann. Ein Diskurs ist der einzige Kontext, in dem Ideale, Ideen oder Konzepte bis zum Ende durchdacht und durchdiskutiert werden können.

Mit diesem Vorsatz begaben sich die Editoren der Zeitschrift SAVVY | kunst. zeitgenössisch.afrikanisch, auf die Reise um das Feld neu zu zeichnen, indem ein Überblick über einige laufende Diskurse in der Wissenschaft und in nicht-wissenschaftlichen Zirkeln zu geben. Terminologien, Räume, Konzepte und Kontexte wurden neu verhandelt und reflektiert und stehen letztlich im Bereich der zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst in der zweiten Edition mit dem Titel: **(Re-) Mapping the field: a bird's eye view on discourses**, zur Debatte.

Die Herausforderung der Herausforderung war eigentlich, dass wir eine lebenslange Aufgabe der Zeitschrift als Ziel dieser Edition gewählt hatten, und dass es schier unmöglich ist, alle Diskursströme in einer Edition der Zeitschrift wiederzugeben. Stattdessen adoptierten wir eine Schritt-für-Schritt (Zeitschrift-für-Zeitschrift)-Einstellung, durch die wir die kritischen Konzepte, die thematische Wahl, die Ordnung, die Wechselbeziehungen, Positionen, Funktionierweisen und Transformationen, die innerhalb des Rahmens zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst regieren, abdecken.

In dieser "Mapping the field" Expedition erzählt Simon Njami den Ansporn und Anfang von Revue Noire neu, in **Alte Schule, neues Instrument**, Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie mischt die Karten in **Wo ist Afrika in der globalen zeitgenössischen Kunst?** während Riason Naidoo über den historischen Meilenstein **1910-2010: Von Pierneef zu Gugulective**, inter alia, reflektiert. Die Reise begleitet uns auch durch Features über Otobong Nkanga und Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, behandelt Wendungen in Interviews mit von Odili Donald Odita in **Chromatic Symphony** und stellt sich mit Ntone Edjabe, den Herausgeber des literarischen Journals zu Kunst, Kultur und Politik, das Chimurenga Magazine. Die Reise führt uns mit retrospektivem Blick zurück zu Ausstellungen mit afrikanischen Künstlern an Bord, wie **Make Yourself at Home** in der Kunsthalle Charlottenborg, **The Idea of Africa (re-invented)** in der Kunsthalle Bern, **AFROPOLIS** im Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Köln, als auch zu dem **Addis Foto Fest 2010** und einem beinahe nostalgischen Trip zu Okwui Enwezor's **The Short Century**.

Diese Ausgabe der Zeitschrift ist vor allem auch dem Verlust zweier Leuchttürme im Feld der zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst gewidmet, die den Weg für viele heute gebreitet haben und für mehr die noch kommen mögen: der Maler, Dichter und Philosoph Valente Ngwenya Malangatana und der Medienkünstler, Kulturarbeiter, Pädagoge und Visionär Goddy Leye.

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung
Chefredakteur

Go tell it on the mountain...

*Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Okwui Enwezor comes.*

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung / Andrea Heister

Using John W. Work's gospel hymn to announce Okwui Enwezor's nomination as director of the Haus der Kunst in Munich is not meant to compare the curator with the messiah but tossing a praise to the continuation of brilliant, courageous, conceptual and global perceptions of art in the Haus der Kunst in Munich. But if one were forced to stay in the realms of this analogy then Okwui Enwezor would be the saviour of the art scene in Munich and Chris Dercon would be John the Baptist, who well enough paved the way, forcing not only the Munich public but Germany as a whole to open their minds and eyes towards a less conservative understanding of what contemporary art is and can be.

From october 2011 on, the Nigerian-born curator, author and critique, Okwui Enwezor, is going to direct art events in the Haus der Kunst in Munich. He is taking over the position from Chris Dercon, who got appointed director of the Tate Modern.

Enwezor is not an unknown figure in Germany. The documenta 11, of which he was the artistic director and the curation of the exhibition *The Short Century* were some of his most prominent activities in Germany. But Enwezor gets in on many other panels and boards unnoticed such as the Deutsche Bank Global Art Advisory Council or in the private collection Walther, where he recently curated a photography exhibition.

Although the decision to enrobe this position with the elegant and in intellectual discourses well-versed Enwezor was generally well received, some pettifogging members of the German press once more ceased this opportunity to reveal their provinciality and narrow-mindedness.

While the big newspapers, like *F.A.Z.*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Welt* or *Die Zeit*, appreciated the news, the *Berliner Zeitung* (20.01.2011) featured an article entitled "An African in the Haus der Kunst", spiced by a couple of derogatory remarks.

Other art journals such as *Art – Das Kunstmagazin* or *Monopol* reported elaborately and rather positively on this appointment.

A brief overview of the press resonances can be accessed below:

Art Magazin:
http://www.art-magazin.de/kunst/38027/okwui_enwezor_muenchen

Monopol:
<http://www.monopol-magazin.de/artikel/20102394/Okwui-Enwezorn-Chris-Dercon-Haus-der-Kunst-Kommentar.html>

Süddeutsche Zeitung:
<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/museumsdirektor-wechsel-okwui-enwezor-wird-neuer-chef-im-haus-der-kunst-1.1048302>

Bayrischer Rundfunk:
<http://www.br-online.de/kultur/kunst/okwui-enwezor-haus-der-kunst-direktor-ID129543251148.xml>

Berliner Zeitung:
<http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2011/0120/feuilleton/0075/index.html>

Go tell it on the mountain...

*Over the hills and everywhere
Go, tell it on the mountain,
That Okwui Enwezor comes.*

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung / Andrea Heister

Man sollte die Ernennung Okwui Enwezors zum Direktor des Hauses der Kunst mit dem bekannten Gospel von John W. Works einleiten, nicht um den Kurator mit dem Messias zu vergleichen, sondern um die Fortsetzung der brillanten, mutigen, konzeptionellen und globalen Weitsichtigkeit im Bereich Kunst zu loben. Wenn man nun im Bereich dieser Analogie bleiben möchte, könnte man Okwui Enwezor als Retter der münchenerischen Kunstszene bezeichnen und Chris Dercon als Johannes den Täufer, der ihm den Weg ebnete und dabei nicht nur die Öffentlichkeit Münchens, sondern auch Deutschland zwang, ihre Perspektive zu erweitern um zu einem weniger konservativen Verständnis davon zu gelangen, was zeitgenössische Kunst ist und sein kann.

Ab Oktober 2011 wird das Haus der Kunst von dem nigerianischstämmigen, in New York lebenden Kurator, Autor und Kritiker Okwui Enwezor geleitet. Er übernimmt die Position von Chris Dercon, der seinerseits zum Leiter der Tate Modern ernannt wurde.

In Deutschland keine unbekannte Figur mehr, hat Enwezor nun einen Posten in einem der wichtigsten Ausstellungshäuser Deutschlands inne. Die Documenta 11, deren künstlerischer Leiter er im Jahr 2002 war, und die kuratorische Betreuung der Ausstellung The Short Century waren die wichtigsten, der Öffentlichkeit bekannten, Aktivitäten in Deutschland. In vielen anderen Gremien und Kollektionen mischt Enwezor eher unbemerkt mit, wie beispielsweise bei dem Deutsche Bank Global Art Advisory Council oder in der

Privatsammlung Walther bei Ulm, in der er kürzlich eine Fotoausstellung kuratierte.

Obwohl die Entscheidung diese Position mit dem eleganten und im intellektuellen Diskurs gut-versierten Enwezor im Allgemeinen gut aufgenommen wurde, haben einige kleingeistige Mitglieder der deutschen Presse einmal mehr zugeschlagen, um bei dieser Gelegenheit ihre Provinzialität und Engstirnigkeit zu offenbaren.

Die Pressereaktionen in deutschen Zeitungen auf die Ernennung sind hier nun ein Ereignis für sich. Während die großen unter ihnen, die F.A.Z., die Süddeutsche Zeitung, die Welt oder die Zeit, die Ernennung begrüßen, titelt die Berliner Zeitung (Berliner Zeitung, 20.01.2011) die Neuigkeit unter „Ein Afrikaner im Haus der Kunst“ mit ein paar anderen abträglichen Bemerkungen.

Andere Kunstzeitschriften, wie beispielsweise das Art Magazin oder Monopol, äußern sich ausführlich und positiv über die Ernennung.

Anbei eine kurze Übersicht der Pressestimmen:

Art Magazin:
http://www.art-magazin.de/kunst/38027/okwui_enwezor_muenchen

Monopol:
<http://www.monopol-magazin.de/artikel/20102394/Okwui-Enwezorn-Chris-Dercon-Haus-der-Kunst-Kommentar.html>

Süddeutsche Zeitung:
<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/museumsdirektor-wechsel-okwui-enwezor-wird-neuer-chef-im-haus-der-kunst-1.1048302>

Bayrischer Rundfunk:
<http://www.br-online.de/kultur/kunst/okwui-enwezor-haus-der-kunst-direktor-ID129543251148.xml>

Berliner Zeitung:
<http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2011/0120/feuilleton/0075/index.html>

A maestro kicks the bucket: An obituary on Valente Ngwenya Malangatana

Andrea Heister

The art scene of Mozambique seems not count as one of the most important ones - compared to countries like Nigeria, South Africa or Senegal which have been more searched upon, more recognized and more promoted - maybe because of their supporting relation to financially more potential and politically more influential ex-colonial powers or maybe because of the language barrier (Portuguese) in the case of Mozambique.

There has been one big exception, one outstanding figure that ruled the Mozambican art scene over decades, gathered international fame and also reached the anglophone academic circles: the painter, poet and philosopher Valente Ngwenya Malangatana.

Born 1936 in the small town of Matalana, he went to Lourenço Marques, now Maputo, and joined the Núcleo De Arte, one of the leading art associations at the time, where he was taught and encouraged by some members and few colonial artists including Zé Júlio and Pancho Guedes. Slowly he developed a political consciousness and his artist career got intertwined with his political views.

Malangatana developed a remarkable artistic language that is easily noticeable. Topics of his paintings are everyday human actions, like eating, fighting, loving, giving birth, sleeping or screaming. Any kind of emotional expression seems to act as artistic inspiration. His paintings are filled with humans and human-like monsters, mythological beings, no space between them, a literal "horror vacui". Surrounded with thick, black lines, the figures show extreme emotions, despair, devouring each other, crying, and staring with empty eyes. Many see in them a reflection of the barbarity of the colonial wars, the irrationalism of colonialism.(1)

In his early paintings, he used bright, strong and diverse colours. Later, in the 1980s, his works became more monochrome, the paintings are tone in tone and his forms more repetitive.

The often politically inspired, energetic themes perceived in his earlier works disappeared with time.

An indefatigable creativity led him to paint almost every day, until the end of his life. His driving force was his soul – the crocodile (Ngwenya) - to which he never lost connection. Brotherhood with his people and roots was the essential element in his life and work. (2)

International reputation increased, as he got named as an UNESCO Artist for Peace in 1997. A designation which is bestowed upon internationally-renowned personalities who use their influence, charisma and prestige to help promote the agency's message and programmes.(3)

On January 5th 2011, Malangatana deceased in Matosinhos, Porto, Portugal.

He was honoured and appreciated by politicians, artists and a great deal of the population of Mozambique. His funeral was a state affair. Throughout his life he was politically active, refused to obey the restriction of the colonial government and therefore spent one and a half year in prison (1965).(4)

As a symbol for freedom, the Mozambican people bid farewell to their Master: Adeus, Mestre! (Savanna 07.01.2011).

In the middle of the lamentation voices emerged that demanded for a huge party to celebrate the life of Malangatana instead of celebrating his death at a funeral. This, according to some, would follow the intentions of Malangatana.



Thoughts on the future

And soon came up first aspirations and concerns on a future without the great father-figure. What does the death of one of the dominating characters mean for the Mozambican art scene? The end, a relief, a new start? The discussions are fierce.

A lot of young artists and students saw him as a mentor and his art inspired many to develop similar imagery. The upcoming artists' generations will have to find their own way.

A retrospective in Évora, Portugal, last year, was introduced by the lyrics of a song:

„Não me façás chorar tanto porque já a minha infância foi de lágrimas. Mas também não me dêś piedade porque foi a piedade que me embruteceu.“

*Don't make me cry so much
because my childhood already was full of tears*

*But also don't feel pity
Because it was the piety
That made me brutal*

Endnotes:

(1) SOARES, Mario. Texto da exposição virtual Malangatana: desenhos da prisão. Acessado em <http://www.fmsoares.pt/> date: 20/10/2006.

(2) see the documentary by Camilo de Sousa : Ngwenya, O Crocodilo. Mozambique 2007, direction: Isabel Noronha. 90 Min.

(3) http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_director_general_expresses_sorrow_over_death_of_mozambican_artist_malangatana/

(4) Schneider, Elizabeth Ann: Artist of the revolution. In: African Arts Vol. 31, No. 3 (May 1988).

Der Vorhang ist gefallen: ein Nachruf auf Valente Ngwenya Malangatana

Andrea Heister

Mosambik ist nicht der Nabel der Kunstwelt. In der westlichen Welt wurde die Kunstproduktion in Nigeria, Simbabwe, Äthiopien oder den westafrikanischen Ländern traditionell mehr erforscht, mehr anerkannt und mehr gefördert. Dies könnte vielleicht an der Unterstützung der finanziell potenteren und den politisch einflussreicheren ex-kolonial Nationen, Großbritannien und Frankreich, liegen oder an der Sprachbarriere im Falle Mosambiks.

Es gab eine große Ausnahme, die die Regel bestätigte, eine herausragende Figur, die die mosambikanische Kunstszene über Dekaden hinweg dominierte, internationalen Ruhm sammelte und es auch in die Rezeption der anglophonen akademischen Zirkel schaffte: Der Maler, Dichter und Philosoph Valente Ngwenya Malangatana.

Geboren 1936 in der kleinen Stadt Matalana, kam er nach Lourenço Marques, heute Maputo, und schloss sich dem Núcleo De Arte an, bis heute eine der führenden Künstlervereinigungen, in der er unterrichtet und ermutigt wurde, künstlerisch zu arbeiten. Seine Lehrer waren Mitglieder der Vereinigung und einige Kolonialkünstler, unter anderem Zé Júlio und Pancho Guedes. So entwickelte er auch langsam ein politisches Bewusstsein und seine künstlerische Karriere war von nun an untrennbar mit seiner politischen Einstellung verbunden.

Malangatana entwickelte eine auffallende künstlerische Sprache die einfach wiederzuerkennen war. Die Themen seiner Gemälde sind essentielle menschliche Tätigkeiten: Essen, Kämpfen, Lieben, Gebärend, Schlafen oder Schreiend. Er scheint jegliche Art von Gefühlsausdruck als Inspirationsquelle zu nutzen. Seine Gemälde sind mit Menschen und menschenähnlichen Monstern vollgestopft, mythologische Wesen zwischen denen kein Raum ist, eine wortwörtliche „Horror Vacui“. Die Figuren, von dicken, schwarzen Linien umrandet, zeigen die Extreme der Gefühle, Verzweiflung, sie verschlingen einander, weinen, Starren mit offenen Augen. Viele sehen darin eine Spiegelung der Unmenschlichkeit der Kolonialkriege, des Irrationalismus der Kolonisierung. (1) Während er in seinen frühen Gemälden helle, starke und viele Farben verwendet, werden seine Bilder später ab den 80er Jahren mehr und mehr monochrom, die Farben wechseln und seine Gemälde sind Ton in Ton gehalten mit sich wiederholenden Formen. Die oft politisch inspirierten, dynamischen Themen früher Arbeiten verschwinden mit der Zeit.

Eine unermüdliche Kreativität zwang ihn dazu beinahe jeden Tag zu malen, bis an sein Lebensende. Die Kraft dazu nahm er aus seiner Seele – das Krokodil (Ngwenya) – zu der er niemals die starke und wahre Verbindung verlor. Bruderschaft mit seinem Volk und Wurzeln war das wesentliche Element seines Lebens und seiner Arbeit. (2) Der internationale Ruhm wuchs und er wurde 1997 zum UNESCO Künstler des Friedens ernannt, eine Bezeichnung die international bekannten Persönlichkeiten zugesprochen wird, die ihren Einfluss, ihr Charisma und ihr Ansehen benutzen, um die Botschaft und die Programme der Agentur zu unterstützen. (3) Am 5. Januar 2011 starb Malangatana in Matosinhos, Porto, Portugal.

Er wurde von Politikern, Künstlern und einer großen Menge der Bevölkerung geehrt und wertgeschätzt. Seine Beerdigung war eine Staatssache. Zeit seines Lebens war er politisch engagiert, weigerte sich den Restriktionen der kolonialen Regierung zu folgen und wurde deswegen für eineinhalb Jahre inhaftiert (1965). (4) Als Symbol der Freiheit, verabschiedete sich das mosambikanische Volk von seinem Meister: Adeus, Mestre! (Savanna 07.01.2011).

Inmitten der Trauer wurden Stimmen laut, die nach einer Riesenparty verlangten, um das Leben Malangatanas zu feiern anstatt seinen Tod auf dem Begräbnis. Dies, so Einige, entspräche dem Anliegen Malangatanas viel mehr.

Gedanken über die Zukunft

Und bald entstanden auch die ersten Vermutungen und Sorgen über die Zukunft ohne der großen Vaterfigur auf. Wilde Diskussionen werden darüber geführt, was der Tod einer der Hauptfiguren für die Kunstwelt Mosambiks bedeutet. Das Ende, eine Erleichterung, ein neuer Anfang?

Viele junge Künstler und Studenten sahen in ihm einen Mentor und sein Stil inspirierte viele dazu, eine ähnliche Bildsprache zu entwickeln. Die jüngeren Künstlergenerationen werden nun ihren eigenen Weg finden müssen.

Eine Retrospektive die letztes Jahr in Évora, Portugal, stattfand, wurde von dem folgenden Text eines Liedes eingeleitet:

*„Bring mich nicht so sehr zum Weinen
Denn schon meine Kindheit war voll von Tränen*

*Schenke mir aber auch kein Mitleid
Denn es war das Mitleid
Das mich brutal werden ließ.“*

Endnoten:

(1) SOARES, Mario. Texto da exposição virtual Malangatana: desenhos da prisão. Acessado em <http://www.fmsoares.pt/> date: 20/10/2006.

(2) Vgl. Den Dokumentarfilm von Camilo de Sousa : Ngwenya, O Crocodilo. Mozambique 2007, direction: Isabel Noronha. 90 Min.

(3) http://www.unesco.org/new/en/media-services/single-view/news/unesco_director_general_expresses_sorrow_over_death_of_mozambican_artist_malangatana/

(4) Schneider, Elizabeth Ann: Artist of the revolution. In: African Arts Vol. 31, No. 3 (May 1988).

Wangechi Mutu passes the courvoisier to Yto Barrada

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

The years 2010 and 2011 have been fruitful years for both Wangechi Mutu and Yto Barrada, who have respectively championed the title of „artist of the year“. This award initiated by the Deutsche Bank is aimed at rewarding young artists who have already created a mark with their extraordinary oeuvres (whatever that might mean) and who use photography and works on paper as medium of artistic expression. That this award has consecutively been granted to two female artists of African origin is far from just a foot note in contemporary art but rather an affirmation of a trend and a new wave of non-Western artists, who are re-marking the international art scene.

While Wangechi Mutu drew attention with her frivolous till atrocious collages and politically conscious installations, Yto Barrada acts in a wider concept of space and builds bridges between art, ecology, post-colonial politics and urban-rural developments or degenerations.

In an intertwinedness between urbanism and politics her projects are often urban interventions presented as photography, films and publications. With a project like the video *Beau Geste* Yto Barrada focuses attention, via a commando team, on a palm tree on a deserted site, which is destined to be sacrificed in the course of the subsequent building construction of that site. In other projects like *A Life Full of Holes: The Strait Project* Barrada makes a sensible portrait of her home town and its citizens at the cross-roads between Africa and Europe, at the strait of Gibraltar and in *Iris Tingitana* she draws and researches on the boundaries between botanical and urban landscapes in Tangier. Such works have rightly earned Yto Barrada the nicknames: art activist (1) and urban poet.

Endnotes:

(1) Abdellah Karroum; Yto Barrada: Ein bescheidener Vorschlag

The in 1971 in Paris-born and in Tangier-resident artist studied history and political science at the Sorbonne, Paris prior to her photography studies in the International Centre of Photography, New York. One of the reasons that must have convinced the selecting jurors of the „artist of the year“ prize in Barrada's favour is her wide range participation in exhibitions in one of the finest addresses of contemporary art, be it the MoMA New York, the Jeu de Paume Paris, or the Venice Biennale.

The „artist of the year“ prize is granted by the Deutsche Bank Global Art Advisory Council, which is made up of the prominent likes of Okwui Enwezor, Hou Hanru, Udo Kittelmann and Nancy Spector and headed by a member of the Deutsche Bank board of directors, Pierre de Weck. The award owns the particularity that it is not accompanied by a huge sum of money but the „artist of the year“ is credited with a solo exhibition in the Deutsche Guggenheim Berlin, which will be subsequently presented in a number of international art institutions and accompanied by an extensive exhibition publication and an artist edition.

One of the many projects that have brought Barrada a lot of respect and prominence is the *Cinematheque de Tanger*, of which she is co-founder and back-bone. The *Cinematheque de Tanger* is a film and cultural centre in her home town in North Africa.

Yto Barrada's exhibit at the Deutsche Guggenheim entitled *Riffs* is scheduled for the 15.04. - 19.06.2011. This exhibition will be accompanied by a 144 pages exhibition catalogue with contributions from Okwui Enwezor, Friedhelm Hütte, Daniel Soutif and Marie Maruacciole.

Wangechi Mutu reicht den Courvoisier an Yto Barrada

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

Das Jahr 2010 und 2011 waren sowohl für Wangechi Mutu, als auch für Yto Barrada sehr produktiv, beide erhielten den Preis „artist of the year“. Diese wurde von der Deutschen Bank initiiert und dient der Auszeichnung junger Künstler, die mit ihren außergewöhnlichen Werken bereits ein Zeichen gesetzt haben (was immer dies bedeutet) und die Photographie und Werke auf Papier als künstlerisches Ausdrucksmittel verwenden. Dass diese Auszeichnung nacheinander an zwei Künstlerinnen afrikanischen Ursprungs vergeben wurde, ist keine Nichtigkeit, sondern die Bestätigung eines Trends und einer neuen Welle Nicht-westlicher Künstler, die die internationale Kunstszene neu markieren.

Während Wangechi Mutu durch ihre frivolen bis grauenhaften Kollagen und politisch-motivierten Installationen Aufmerksamkeit auf sich gezogen hat, handelt Yto Barrada in einem breiteren Raumkonzept und erbaut Brücken zwischen Kunst, Ökologie, post-kolonialer Politik und urban-ruralen Entwicklungen oder Degenerationen.

In einer Verflechtung zwischen Urbanismus und Politik sind ihre Projekte oft urbane Interventionen, die als Photographie, Film oder Publikationen dargestellt werden. Mit einem Projekt wie dem Video *Beau Geste* richtet Yto Barrada ihr Augenmerk auf ein Kommandoteam in einer Wüstenregion, dass auf eine Palme angesetzt wird, welche im Zuge einer Baumaßnahme geopfert werden soll. In anderen Projekten, wie *A Life Full of Holes: The Strait Project*, kreiert Barrada ein sensibles Porträt ihrer Heimatstadt und der Bewohner auf der Kreuzung zwischen Afrika und Europa und auf der Strasse von Gibraltar. In *Iris Tingitana* malt und erforscht sie die Grenze botanischer und urbaner Landschaften in Tangier. Solche Werke haben Yto Barrada zurecht Spitznamen wie *Art activist (1)* und *Urban Poet* beschert.

Die im Jahre 1971 in Paris geborene und in Tanger wohnhafte Künstlerin studierte Geschichte und Politikwissenschaften an der Pariser Sorbonne, bevor sie Photographie am International Centre of Photography in New York studierte. Einer der Gründe, der die Jury der Auszeichnung zum „artist of the year“ von Barrada überzeugt haben wird, ist ihre weitgefächerte Teilnahme an Ausstellungen, wie an den vornehmsten Adressen zeitgenössischer Kunst, sei es die MoMa New York, das Jeu de Paume Paris oder der Biennale von Venedig.

Der „artist of the year“-Preis wird von dem Global Art Advisory Council der Deutschen Bank gesponsert, welches sich aus Prominenten wie Okwui Enwezor, Hou Hanru, Udo Kittelmann und Nancy Spector zusammensetzt und von Pierre de Weck, einem Vorstandsmitglied der Deutschen Bank, angeführt wird. Die Auszeichnung besitzt die Besonderheit, dass sie nicht von einer hohen Geldsumme begleitet wird; stattdessen wird sie mit einer Soloausstellung in der Deutschen Guggenheim Berlin kreditiert, welche anschließend durch eine Vielzahl internationaler Kunsthäuser wandert und von einer umfangreichen Ausstellungspublikation und Künstleredition begleitet wird.

Eines der vielen Projekte, welches Barrada viel Respekt und Prominenz eingebracht hat, ist *Cinémaèque de Tanger*, dessen Mit-Begründerin und Rückgrat sie ist. Die *Cinémaèque de Tanger* ist ein Film- und Kulturzentrum in ihrer Heimatstadt in Nordafrika.

Yto Barrada's Ausstellung mit dem Titel „Riffs“ findet am 15.04. – 19.06.2011 im Deutschen Guggenheim statt. Diese Ausstellung wird von einem 144-seitigen Katalog begleitet und beinhaltet Textbeiträgen von Okwui Enwezor, Friedhelm Hütte, Daniel Soutif und Marie Maruacciole.

Übersetzt von Johanna Ndikung

Endnotes:

(1) Abdellah Karroum; Yto Barrada: Ein bescheidener Vorschlag, 2010: universes-in-universe.org, nafas magazine

House of African Art (HAA !) First African Art Space in Asia

Prune Helfter

At first glance, nowhere could be more foreign to Japan than Africa. Still, maybe because of this preserved “exotism”, Japan has been witnessing in the past 10 years a growing interest for African cultures. Taking note of this trend and of the absence of permanent structure that could fill this demand for African cultural events, a team of multicultural curators, researchers and artists based in Japan, have committed themselves to establishing the first African artistic and cultural space in Asia. The objective is to be ready to inaugurate the art space in 2013, when all African leaders are gathered in Japan on the occasion of the fifth edition of Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), held every 5 years.

Japanese Growing Interest for Africa Art

There are numerous examples of the increasing diffusion of African cultures in Japan. These include: the annual two-day African Festa festival organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the famous “Africa Remix” collective exhibition which came to Tokyo in 2006 after touring through Paris, Düsseldorf and New York. In 2010 only, solo exhibitions by William Kentridge or El Anatsui, the festival “Africa Cinema”, and the Staff Benda Bilili Japan tour, illustrated the frequency and quality of the African art scene represented in Japan. The purpose is to shed light on the African cultural activity in Japan and around the world.

Despite such clear evidence of Japan’s growing interest in Africa, there is still no permanent organization or establishment that could fill this demand for African cultural events. With the exception of two small galleries located in the countryside, there are no museums or art spaces that specialize in African art, be it traditional or contemporary.

In stark contrast to the situation in Japan, many countries around the world have made decisions to provide African artists with spaces in which to present their works. Portugal will be the latest in this trend, the inauguration of its “Africa.cont” being planned for 2012. House of African Art (HAA!) will be the first African artistic and cultural space in Asia.

Changing Perceptions

The purpose of the HAA! is to allow the Japanese public to discover the dynamism of the African continent with its deeply rooted traditions while giving birth to innumerable creative geniuses: photographers, painters, musicians, dancers or film-makers. These talented artists, with their utterly original and individual voices, realize their works in a universal dimension that overcomes social, religious and linguistic barriers.

Putting Africa in a positive light by emphasizing its rich art and culture will contribute to a much needed change in the general Japanese perception of the continent.

The ambition is simple: to reintroduce Africa to Japan, through the beauty, energy and spirituality of African arts, both traditional and contemporary, as well as to provide a space for voices from Africa to tell their stories in their own words. In that sense, the significance of African countries having their own permanent cultural center in the heart of Japan cannot be emphasized enough.

Current Activities

The project of HAA! already received the enthusiastic support of such internationally famous names as the choreographer Germaine Acogny, the visual artist Barthélemy Toguo, the sculptor El Anatsui, the singer Lokua Kanza, the writer Léonora Miano, or the stage director Moïse Touré. In Japan, HAA! has gathered the most respected researchers (Sayaka Funada-Classen, Daisuke Bundo, Eiichi Yoshida), curators (Toshio Shimizu, Miyako Takeshita), artists (Noboru Tsubaki, Yoshinari Nishio), and is officially supported by the whole African Diplomatic Corps.

To foster the collaboration of creative people from both continents, HAA! has already started organizing events and artist residencies in Asia and in Africa. In August 2010, HAA ! participated in the exhibition « Tokyo Diversity » at 3331 Arts Chiyoda, showing works from the Senegalese painter Amadou Tounkara, the Cameroonian designer Serge Mouangue, the Japanese artist Yoshinari Nishio and sculptures from Gabon. Last summer, HAA ! held talks on African Art in Japan in BankART 1929 (Yokohama), during a symposium organised by Palette in Calabash Restaurant (Tokyo) and during a PechaKucha session in SuperDeluxe (Tokyo). In November, HAA ! organized a two-day private exhibition of Amadou Tounkara's recent paintings in Tokyo. It was also associated to the photo exhibition by Jonathan Torgovnik « Intended Consequences: Rwandan Children Born of Rape » at Kyoto University of Art and Design. In 2011, the Senegalese artist Piniang and the photographer from Angola Kiluanji Kia Henda, should be welcomed by HAA ! partners for 3-months residencies in Japan.

HAA! was conceptualized and developed in cooperation with some of Japan's most influential artists in accordance with one of its primary missions to bring together African and Japanese artists through artist residencies for collaboration on joint projects.

Once inaugurated as a permanent art space, HAA! will welcome artists from Africa and the diaspora, organizing exhibitions from renown or young visual artists, dance performances or live concert. The program will be decided on presenting only the best quality in contemporary art, with a special attention given to respecting the diversity of artistic expressions.

The team of founders of the HAA! will put a special emphasis on selecting artists who might not correspond to the tastes of the main institutional donors, France, UK, Belgium, and for that reason might have not yet received the attention they deserve from the art world. In other words, a fundamental work of searching for new talents out of the main "African art circuits" will be pursued. The same effort will be done with movies, in order to present a more honest picture of the African movie scene.

But HAA! will be much more than just a venue for exhibitions and performances. It will also offer regular African dance and music workshops, for children and adults, amateurs as well as professionals. Introductory classes to Swahili language will be offered, as well as classes in Wolof and Hausa. The new cultural center will also be home to a unique shop specializing in African cultures, art and design that features designers' objects, books, music CDs, and DVDs of films by African film-makers. An art gallery, the first in Japan specialized on contemporary African art, will promote African artists' works among Japanese collectors. Last but not least, the restaurant "On dit quoi?" will offer a selection of dishes across the continent that will delight any gourmet in search of new tastes.

HAA! wants to offer the opportunity for African artists to share their vision with a very educated and art-savvy Japanese public. Its creation is propelled by the political urge to change the misleading perceptions of Japanese people towards the African continent. But, in the end, the sheerest hope of the founding members is that HAA! will become the most inspiring and stimulating cultural spot in Japan, the roots of the artists just "happen" to be in Africa.

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House of African Art (HAA !) – Erstes Haus für afrikanische Kunst in Asien

Prune Helfter

Auf den ersten Blick könnte nichts fremderartiger für Japan sein als Afrika. Trotz oder gerade wegen des gewährten "Exotismus" hat Japan in den vergangenen zehn Jahren wachsendes Interesse an der afrikanischen Kultur gezeigt. Dies zur Kenntnis nehmend und dass permanente Strukturen, welche die Nachfrage nach afrikanischen Kulturevents stillen könnten, fehlen, hat sich ein Team multikultureller Kuratoren, Forscher und Künstler in Japan zusammengetan, um das erste afrikanische Kunst- und Kulturzentrum in Asien zu gründen. Ziel ist es, den Kunstraum 2013, wenn alle afrikanischen Staatsoberhäupter zur fünften Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) versammelt sind, welches alle fünf Jahre stattfindet, einzuweihen.

Japans wachsendes Interesse an afrikanischer Kunst

Es gibt zahlreiche Beispiele für die wachsende Verbreitung afrikanischer Kultur in Japan. Dies beinhaltet u.a. das jährliche, zweitägige African Festa Festival, dass vom Außenministerium organisiert wird und die berühmte "Africa Remix"-Sammelausstellung, welche 2006 nach Tokyo kam, nachdem sie durch Paris, Düsseldorf und New York gereist war. Alleine im Jahr 2010 haben Einzelausstellungen von William Kentridge oder El Anatsui, das Festival "Africa Cinema" und die erfolgreiche Staff Benda Bilili-Tour die Häufigkeit und die Qualität der afrikanischen Kunstszenen Japans veranschaulicht. Ziel ist es, über die Aktivität afrikanischer Kultur in Japan und der ganzen Welt, Aufschluss zu geben.

Trotz des offensichtlich wachsenden Interesses Japans an Afrika, gibt es immer noch keine permanente Organisation oder kein Etablissement, dass die Nachfrage nach afrikanischen Kulturevents erfüllen könnte. Alles was es gibt, sind einige wenige Restaurants, die afrikanische Küche anbieten. Und da es keine spezialisierte Tanz- oder Musikschule gibt, sind Lehrer und Schüler gezwungen, Räume zu mieten und in Privatwohnungen oder Gemeindezentren zu üben. Mit Ausnahme zweier kleiner Galerien auf dem Land, gibt es keine Museen oder Kunsträume, die auf afrikanische Kunst, sei es traditionelle oder zeitgenössische, spezialisiert sind.

Im krassen Kontrast zur japanischen Situation, wurden in vielen anderen Ländern der Welt Räume für afrikanische Künstler eingerichtet, damit sie dort ihre Werke ausstellen können. Als aktuellste Entwicklung wird Portugal sein "Africa.cont" eröffnen, dass für 2012 geplant ist. Das House of African Art (HAA!) wird der erste Kunst- und Kulturraum Asiens sein.

Wechselnde Perspektiven

Ziel des HAA! ist es, dem japanischen Publikum die Entdeckung des Dynamismus des Kontinents zu ermöglichen, welcher trotz (oder wegen?) oft katastrophaler politischer und ökonomischer Umstände, seine tief verwurzelten Traditionen beibehalten hat, während sich unzählige kreative Genies, wie Photographen, Maler, Musiker, Tänzer, Filmemacher etc. entwickelt haben. Diese talentierten Künstler realisieren mit ihren absolut originellen und individuellen Stimmen ihre Werke in einer universellen Dimension, die über soziale, religiöse und linguistische Grenzen hinausgeht.

Die positive Beleuchtung Afrikas durch Betonung des Kunst- und Kulturreichtums wird zu einer längst nötigen Veränderung der allgemeinen Wahrnehmung des Kontinents durch Japan beitragen.

Das Streben ist einfach: Afrika Japan durch die Schönheit, Energie und Spiritualität der traditionellen sowie zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst neu vorzustellen und einen Raum für Afrika zu schaffen, seine Geschichten in eigenen Worten zu erzählen. In diesem Sinne kann die Bedeutsamkeit afrikanischer Länder, die ihr eigenes permanentes Kulturzentrum im Herzen von Japan besitzen, nicht genug betont werden.

Aktuelle Aktivitäten

Das HAA!-Projekt hat bereits die enthusiastische Unterstützung international bekannter Namen wie dem Choreographen Germaine Acogny, dem Bildenden Künstler Barthelemy Toguo, dem Bildhauer El Anatsui, dem Sänger Lokua Kanza, der Schriftstellerin Léonora Miano oder dem Regisseur Moïse Touré erhalten. Außerdem hat das HAA! in Japan die viel respektierten Forscher (Sayaka Funada-Classen, Daisuke Bundo, Eiichi Yoshida), Kuratoren (Toshio Shimizu, Miyako Takeshita) und Künstler (Noboru Tsubaki, Yoshinari Nishio) versammelt und wird offiziell von dem gesamten afrikanischen, diplomatischen Korps unterstützt.

Um die Zusammenarbeit kreativer Menschen beider Kontinente zu fördern, hat das HAA! bereits damit begonnen, Events und Künstlerresidenzen in Asien und Afrika zu organisieren. So hat das HAA! im August 2010 an der Ausstellung « Tokyo Diversity » im 3331 Arts Chiyoda teilgenommen, wo Werke des senegalesischen Malers Amadou Tounkara, des kamerunerischen Designers Serge Mouangue, des japanischen Künstlers Yoshinari Nishio und Skulpturen aus Gabun gezeigt wurden. Ebenso wurden letzten Sommer Vorträge über afrikanische Kunst im BankArt 1929 in Japan (Yokohama), während eines von Palette im Calabash Restaurant (Tokyo) organisierten Symposiums und während eines PechaKucha im SuperDeluxe (Tokyo) vom HAA! gehalten. Im November hat das HAA! in Tokyo eine zweitägige private Ausstellung von Amadou Tounkaras neuesten Werken gezeigt. Damit assoziiert war die Photoausstellung « Intended Consequences: Rwandan Children Born of Rape » von Jonathan Torgovnik in der Kyoto Universität für Kunst und Design. 2011 sollen dann der senegalesische Künstler Piniang und der angolische Photograph Kiluanji Kia Henda für eine dreimonatige Residenz vom HAA! begrüßt werden.

Das HAA! wurde in Kooperation mit einigen von Japans einflussreichsten Künstlern primär entwickelt und entworfen, um afrikanische und japanische Künstler über Künstlerresidenzen in Gemeinschaftsprojekten zusammenzubringen.

Einmal als permanenter Kunstraum eingeweiht, wird das HAA! Künstler aus Afrika und der Diaspora einladen, welche Ausstellungen bekannter und junger bildender Künstler, Tanzperformances, Livekonzerte, etc. organisieren. Das Programm richtet dabei seine Aufmerksamkeit auf die Vielfältigkeit der künstlerischen Ausdrücke. Das Gründerteam des HAA! wird seinen Schwerpunkt auf Künstler setzen, welche möglicherweise nicht dem Geschmack der Hauptdonoren, Frankreich, UK und Belgien entsprechen und somit noch nicht die ihnen zustehende Aufmerksamkeit in der Kunstwelt genießen.

In anderen Worten wird eine grundlegende Suche nach neuen Talenten aus der "umlaufenden" afrikanischen Kunst verfolgt. Derselbe Aufwand wird für Filme gemacht werden, um ein ehrlicheres Bild der afrikanischen Filmszene zu präsentieren.

Doch das HAA! wird viel mehr sein als nur ein Veranstaltungsort für Ausstellungen und Performances. Es wird auch regelmäßige Workshops für Tanz und Musik aus Afrika anbieten, an dem Kinder und Erwachsene, Amateure und Profis teilnehmen können. Zusätzlich werden Einsteigerkurse für Swahili, Wolof und Haoussa angeboten werden. Das neue Kulturcenter wird ebenfalls einen einzigartigen Laden beherbergen, der auf die afrikanische Kultur spezialisiert ist und Kunst, Design, Bücher, Musik und CDs sowie DVDs afrikanischer Filmemacher anbietet. Eine Kunstgalerie, übrigens die erste, die sich in Japan auf zeitgenössische, afrikanische Kunst spezialisiert hat, wird bei den japanischen Sammlern für die Werke der Künstler werben. Zu guter Letzt wird das Restaurant "On dit quoi?" eine Auswahl aus Gerichten rund um den Kontinent anbieten, die jeden Feinschmecker auf der Suche nach neuen Geschmäckern entzücken wird.

Das HAA! möchte afrikanischen Künstlern die Möglichkeit eröffnen, ihre Vision mit einem sehr gebildeten, kunstwissenden, japanischen Publikum zu teilen. Seine Kreation wird durch die Dringlichkeit vorangetrieben, die irreführende Wahrnehmung des afrikanischen Kontinents durch die japanische Bevölkerung zu verändern. Aber letztendlich ist es der frommste Wunsch der Gründungsmitglieder des HAA! der inspirierendste und stimulierendste, kulturelle Ort in Japan, mit Künstlern, die quasi zufällig afrikanische Wurzeln haben, zu werden.

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Goddy Leye is dead

Annette Schemmel

The media artist and visionary, Goddy Leye, died on February, 19th 2011 after a short illness in Bonendale, an artist village outside of Douala (Cameroon), where he initiated the artist association *ArtBakery*. The ex-student of the Rijksakademie (NL) was a brilliant and committed mediator between the continents and initiator of many South-South-contacts as well as a generous father figure for the younger artistic generation. He leaves a gap in the fragile art system of Cameroon that is hard to fill. One can only hope that his plans for a nation-wide introduction of art classes, pioneering with a school in Bonendale, are going to be taken as a model and that the *ArtBakery*, his well established platform, can be kept as an egalitary and international networked artist formation.



Goddy Leye ist tot

Annette Schemmel

Der Medienkünstler und Visionär Goddy Leye verstarb am 19.2.2011 nach kurzer Krankheit 46-jährig in Bonendale, dem Künstlerdorf außerhalb Doualas (Kamerun), wo er 2003 seine Künstlerinitiative ArtBakery ins Leben rief. Der Abgänger der Rijksakademie (NL), der als brillanter und engagierter Vermittler zwischen den Kontinenten und Initiator vieler Süd-Südkontakte auch eine großzügige Vaterfigur für den künstlerischen Nachwuchs darstellte, hinterlässt eine kaum zu füllende Lücke im fragilen Kunstsystem Kameruns. Es bleibt zu hoffen, dass seine Pläne zur landesweiten Einführung des Kunstunterrichts von einer Pionierschule in Bonendale aus aufgegriffen werden und dass ArtBakery, seine gut eingeführte Plattform für eine egalitäre und international vernetzte Künstlerausbildung erhalten werden kann.



Ancient guilt, new tool.

Simon Njami

Revue Noire was born out of a need: a need to make visible what Ralph Ellison called the “invisible”. A need to give his name back to the “unknown”. A need to open up the very exclusive world of contemporary art and which was, back in the days, Western. The challenge was monumental. It is difficult for people today to imagine a Documenta, a Venice Biennale or any other major international contemporary art event without an African artist. In 1991 it was another story, another millennium. I remember a conference held in Düsseldorf, when I was confronted with Jan Hoet, then artistic director of the Kassel’s Documenta. Hoet was coming back from a research trip in Africa, and from that very revealing experience, was stating that there was not such a thing as contemporary on the continent. Needless to say that he had to face my rather violent reaction (I was very young then). At that time, we had just published the first issue of the magazine that I was carrying with me. As a conclusion of the little battle we had, I offered him one copy; inviting him to get some education about a subject he obviously knew nothing about.

He was not the only one. My problem with ignorant people is not that they are ignorant. I have a problem with them when, despite their lack of knowledge, they claim to speak out and tell the world about something they don’t know. But well, Hoet proved to be somebody willing to learn. A couple of months after our encounter in Düsseldorf, he called to have a few addresses, and some African artists were included in his show. I am using this example to give an idea of the situation back then. I am a Parisian. I am a Cameroonian. I couldn’t stand to live in a place where “my people” were considered the same way Hegel would describe over a century sooner, when he was stating there was no movements, no history and so on in Africa. So the first goal of *Revue Noire* was to prove anyone who would claim there was nothing going on in Africa wrong. Show the works, in best possible manner and let it talk for itself. We didn’t want to be heavily demonstrative, for, at that time, there was no much to say. We were rather in a learning and observation process. Trying to decipher the trends, the environment, the intellectual and physical conditions the artists were struggling with. And it worked. Most of the “usual suspects” who can be seen around the world were published in *Revue Noire*.

The very core of the issue we were trying to address at that time is still completely valid today: how and who defines otherness. The postcolonial intellectual failed in trying to answer that very question because they were envisioning it from the wrong perspective: they were still dealing with the deeds of the colonial order when history and concepts have moved far away from the centrality of the ancient powers. The quest today is to forge a new language adapted to what is wrongly called “emerging realities”. Those realities have always been there. Simply, they have a greater visibility in our *global* disorder, and what they are telling doesn’t deal with the past and the ancient Western guilt, it is dealing with the future and a new type of organisation of the *global* society. Art has never been anyone’s property. The history of art is not the sole tool to comprehend what is an artist’s message. New tools are at work. In New Delhi, Sao Paulo, Havana, Lagos, Cairo... And those tools are those that are needed to understand the contemporary world.

Simon Njami is an independent lecturer, art critic, novelist and essayist. He is also a consultant in visual arts for the Association Française d’Action Artistique and co-founder and editor-in-chief of the cultural magazine Revue Noire. Njami has been the artistic director of the Bamako photography biennale since 2001, and was co-curator of the first African pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007. Njami is visiting Professor at UCSD (University of San Diego California).

Alte Schuld, neues Instrument

Simon Njami

Revue Noire wurde aus einem Bedürfnis heraus geboren: Jenes sichtbar zu machen, was Ralph Ellison als das "Unsichtbare" bezeichnete. Und das Bedürfnis, seinen Namen dem "Unbekannten" zurückzugeben. Das Bedürfnis, die exklusive Welt der zeitgenössischen Kunst, die zu dem damaligen Zeitpunkt westlich war, zu öffnen. Es war eine monumentale Herausforderung. Für die Menschen ist es heutzutage schwer sich eine Documenta, eine Biennale von Venedig oder eine andere größere internationale Veranstaltung mit zeitgenössischer Kunst ohne einen afrikanischen Künstler vorzustellen. 1991 war die Geschichte eine andere, ein anderes Jahrtausend. Ich erinnere mich an eine Konferenz die in Düsseldorf gehalten wurde, auf der ich mit Jan Hoet, dem künstlerischen Direktor der Kasseler Dokumenta, aneinander geriet. Hoet kam gerade von einer Forschungsreise aus Afrika zurück und, auf Grund seiner sehr erhellenden Erfahrung, stellte er damals fest, dass es auf dem Kontinent nichts gäbe was man als zeitgenössisch bezeichnen könnte. Es ist überflüssig zu betonen, dass er meine sehr aggressive Reaktion in Kauf nehmen musste (damals war ich noch sehr jung). Wir hatten zu dieser Zeit gerade die erste Ausgabe der Zeitschrift herausgebracht, die ich mit mir herumtrug. Eine Folge des Streites war, dass ich ihm ein Heft anbot um ihn dazu einzuladen, etwas Bildung zu einem Thema zu erhalten, von dem er offensichtlich keine Ahnung hatte.

Es war nicht der Einzige. Mein Problem mit ignoranten Personen ist nicht, dass sie unwissend sind. Ich dann mit ihnen ein Problem, wenn sie, trotz ihrer Wissenslücke, etwas behaupten und der Welt ihre Meinung über etwas mitteilen, von dem sie nichts wissen. Aber gut, Hoet bewies sich als lernwillig. Ein paar Monate nach unserem Treffen in Düsseldorf rief er mich an um ein paar Adressen zu erfragen und einige afrikanische Künstler wurden in seine Show integriert. Ich gebe dies als Beispiel um eine Idee davon zu geben, wie die Situation zu dieser Zeit war. Ich bin Pariser. Ich bin Kameruner. Ich könnte es nicht aushalten an einem Ort zu leben, an dem „mein Volk“ so betrachtet wurde, wie Hegel es über ein Jahrhundert zuvor beschrieb als er feststellte, dass es in Afrika keine Entwicklung, keine Geschichte und so weiter gab. Eines der ersten Ziele von Revue Noire war es also zu beweisen, dass jeder falsch lag, der behauptete, dass sich in Afrika nicht bewegen würde. Die Werke in der bestmöglichen Weise zu zeigen und

sie für sich selbst sprechen lassen. Wir wollten nicht extra demonstrativ sein, da, zu jener Zeit, nicht so viel zu sagen war. Wir befanden uns eher in einem Lern- und Beobachtungsprozeß. Versuchten, die Trends zu erkennen, die Umgebung, die intellektuellen und physischen Bedingungen mit denen Künstler zu kämpfen hatten. Und es funktionierte. Die meisten der „üblichen Verdächtigen“ die in der Welt zu sehen sind, wurden in der Revue Noire publiziert.

Das zentrale Thema dem wir uns damals widmen wollten ist heute noch aktuell: wie und wer definiert Andersheit. Die postkolonialen Intellektuellen haben in dieser Frage versagt, da sie sie von der falschen Perspektive angegangen sind: sie waren immer noch mit den Taten der kolonialen Ordnung beschäftigt, während die Geschichte und die Konzepte sich schon weit von der Zentralität der alten Mächte fortbewegt hatten. Die Suche von heute ist es, eine neue Sprache zu schmieden, die mit dem abgestimmt ist, was fälschlicherweise als „aufkommende Realitäten“ bezeichnet wird. Diese Realitäten waren schon immer da. Sie haben jetzt nur einfach eine größere Sichtbarkeit in unserer globalen Unordnung und was sie erzählen handelt nicht von der Vergangenheit und der alten Schuld des Westens, sondern es handelt von der Zukunft und einer neuen Art von Organisation der globalen Gesellschaft. Kunst war noch nie jemandes Eigentum. Kunstgeschichte ist nicht das einzige Instrument um eine künstlerische Aussage zu verstehen. Neue Instrumente sind am Werk. In Neu-Dehli, Sao Paulo, Havana, Lagos, Cairo... Und das sind die Instrumente, die man braucht, um die zeitgenössische Welt zu verstehen.

Übersetzt von Andrea Heister

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Where is Africa in Global Contemporary Art?

Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie

I

I am glad to contribute to SAVVY | art.contemporary.african.'s second issue and its attempt to present an overview on current academic discourses, aimed at renegotiating and reflecting on terminologies, spaces, concepts and contexts at stake in the field of contemporary African art. The American academy as we know it is undergoing one of the most fundamental shifts in its history as a system of education constructed mainly to provide labor for an industrial society confront changes in a post-industrial information society where old structures and frameworks are no longer quite as relevant. The relevance of the Humanities to society is being questioned and education itself is becoming corporatized. Within this context, the question of what constitutes the spaces, concepts and contexts of Contemporary African art is newly relevant, since it appears that there are several competing ideals of Contemporary African art in the disparate locations of African art as a field of study. Out of these competing ideas, the American academy and art market has increasingly normalized an interpretation of Contemporary African art whose premises is questionable but also quite disruptive. This interpretation is increasingly beholden to a monocular view of art history in which curators and culture brokers merely impose a Western-derived model of contemporary art on Africa while using artists of African descent based in the West as primary subjects of "contemporary African art".(1) The representation of contemporary African art as a largely Diaspora-based context of practice has had the unfortunate effect of writing most African and African American artists out of art history by marginalizing contemporary art and cultural production based on the continent, or based within the African American community, that deals with important cultural concerns of interest to Africans.(2) In the following essay, I focus mainly on a critique of this new interpretation of contemporary African art, seen through the academic endeavor of art historical analysis.

II

The heritage of Humanities study in American academia is very Eurocentric. This statement is not your usual postcolonial criticism of Eurocentrism as a cultural construct; it acknowledges how the hegemony of Western narratives of contemporaneity reinforces imperialist constructs enabled by the Eurocentric domination of global capital, through which its narratives of cultural practice coopt and subsume contending narratives within the spaces of globalization. More importantly, it criticizes a hegemonic and dominant paradigm of "the global contemporary" that merely normalizes Western models of art making, reception, marketing and critical discourse while eviscerating the important historical struggle of the so-called "non-Western peoples" to reframe a politics of representation that at least allowed for, if not affirmed, a critique of modernism, postmodernism and the rather naïve notion of an art practice "after the end of art". This hegemonic model is currently triumphant in scholarly interpretations of contemporary art and rather pervasive in scholarly analysis of Contemporary African art, at least as it exists within the American academy and its critical infrastructure. The study of Contemporary African Art in Europe and the United States is increasingly the study of the reception of African art in the West, rather than in the African context of its production. This interpretation of contemporary African art is validated through the works of artists of African ancestry who live and work in the West, and further assumes that for an African artist to be truly "contemporary", they essentially have to live in, or have their art shown and validated in the West. Granted, many Africans live abroad now but it is hard to argue that the number of Africans who actually live abroad is significant in any way relative to the overall population of the continent or its active artists and culture workers. My estimate is that there are less than one thousand "Contemporary African artists" who live and work in the West although they account for 99% of all artists included in international exhibitions of "Contemporary African art".

In contrast, there are one billion Africans who encounter contemporaneity within their individual spaces of existence and cultural practice. Given the smallness of this number of diaspora/expatriate African artists relative to the much larger numbers of African artists who live and work in Africa, and the multiple contexts of contemporary art that can be found in this context, how valid is a discourse that uses a limited number of artists to stand in for contemporary African art in general?

I should point out that I am not making a nationalistic or ethnically framed argument here. I believe that it is possible to recognize the disparate locations of African artists and Africans on a global continuum, and their increasing visibility in and interaction with the West, while centering Africa itself as a site of globalization and important context of contemporaneity. Centering Africa in this manner allows a definition of Contemporary African art that recognizes both transcultural movements aided by current information technology that allows virtual, if not physical, access to spaces of global art practice and discourses, while paying important attention to the vagaries of place and time specificity, of how artists are located both within their bodies as active subjects of political and economic imperatives, located within the physical and psychological reality of their local spaces of practice and also within the politics of access to transnational space. The goal is not to define contemporary African art on the basis of ethnic/cultural identity, nationality or political affiliation; it is to define the relevance of African artists to, and their location on, the global continuum. Can you live in Lagos or Kinshasa and “be a Contemporary African artist” whose work is taken seriously and analyzed with the same diligence that we give to exhibitions of artists who live in New York, London and other Western metropolis? Is Lagos as much a site of globalization as London? Does Dakar provide us with anything worth investigating as an item of particular interest in the unfolding of a global ethos of contemporary art practice?

The identity of the “contemporary” in contemporary African art highlights a question of equal importance to art history in general: what is the location of the contemporary in art and how might an art history of contemporary art be written? This is not a simple question by any means: art practice and art history are increasingly merging in the practice of most contemporary artists, who as Terry Smith notes, appear to be doing art history as art.⁽³⁾ Similarly, curatorial practice is increasingly seen as a form of performance art that uses selected artworks *artists* to express a curatorial interpretation of contemporary (art) practice. Moreover, Terry Smith also notes that art historical evaluation of contemporary art and revisions of earlier art historical narratives “actively remains, largely, focused on artists who were active in the United States and Europe and trails the presumption that what they [do] is what counts as real transformation in art as a whole”.⁽⁴⁾ By this conclusion, Smith recognizes the continued hegemony of occidental frameworks as an active issue in any definition of contemporary art, given how the discourse itself is largely framed in terms of the West’s fascination with its role as *the* engine of history.

In Fall 2009, a questionnaire in the journal *October* attempted to gauge scholarly consensus on a definition of contemporary art. The *October* questionnaire highlighted the strange finding that although “contemporary art has become an institutional object in its own right... in its own heterogeneity, much present practice (of Contemporary Art and its critical apparatus) seems to float free of historical determination, conceptual definition and critical judgment”.⁽⁵⁾ As with many statements of this kind, the supposed heterogeneity and free-floating context of “contemporary art” masks a resolutely Eurocentric grip on its spaces of practice and structures of interpretation that, being subsumed, becomes an ideologically poignant underpinning of *October’s* findings.

The assumption that contemporary art “seems to float free of historical determination...and critical judgment” falters when confronted with the fact that artists continue to have bodies that engage in artistic practice, eat, sleep and appear at art exhibitions, all activities conducted within very tangible geographical, conceptual and socio-political spaces. Despite their transcultural practice and increasingly global reach, artists continue to pay taxes to specific governments, and to travel with passports issued by specific countries (passports issued by Western countries provide access to transcultural practice; those issued by African countries almost always make it impossible for artists to travel at all). One would have to disregard all the ways in which the contemporary human body is marked at all sites of its existence and movement across international borders to propose something as ridiculous as the idea that art produced by such individuals float free of “historical determinism.

We can thus argue against *October* that there is no such thing as a free-floating artistic or cultural space in the world as we know it today, since all local spaces are subject to local structures of power and so-called global spaces subject to the hegemonic force of predatory capitalism through which Western power continues to be projected across the globe with very real world consequences for Africans and other peoples in their individual geo-political locations. And this is the crux of the matter: our attempt to interpret contemporary art as a pervasive context of transcultural movements in which ethnic, racial and cultural identities are superseded by “global” artists who nevertheless occupy very tangible Western locations confronts the reality of their Western location as an ideologically coded (and hence advantaged) vantage point that largely excludes African contemporary art based in Africa as a consequence of their location outside the West. More importantly, the idea of free-floating artists or cultural production is negated by the rise of geo-spatial media tools, through which it is now possible to precisely locate any individual anywhere on the planet through Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) and other locative technologies. And this is, for me, the most baffling aspect of the current negation of history and geo-spatial realities by the interpretation of contemporary art as a free-floating context: why is it that in this age when locative technologies affirm the tangible nature of our location in global space and time, as well as our movements and interactions within global media technologies, some curators and critics continue to deny the importance of place in the production of contemporary art or critical discourse of subjecthood?

If we agree that transcultural interactivity is a condition of global contemporaneity, we have to also question the conditions of access to contexts of interactive global cultural practice since it is clear that this context is very exclusive: ethnicity and race all work against black artists who seek access to transcultural contemporary art practice. In this regard, Terry Smith argues that decolonized peoples have yet to transform the world in their image and that their struggle might be manifest in the most distinctive qualities of contemporary life, which he described as “the interactions between humans and the geosphere, the multitude of cultures, the ideoscape of global politics and the interiority of individual being”.⁽⁶⁾ Far from validating an idea of contemporary art as a ‘free-floating context’ he proposes an idea of “translocality [which] in practice amounts to a focus on local artistic manifestations, and on actual existing connections between them and art and ideas elsewhere”⁽⁷⁾ (*italics mine*). He concludes that we need a variety of kinds of critical practice, each of them alert to the demands, limits and potentialities of both local worlds and distant worlds, as well as to the actual and possible connections between locality and distance.

From Smith’s conclusions above, one might assume that recent mega exhibitions of contemporary art have in fact traced such connections until you look closely and notice that they mostly define locality in terms of Africa and distance in terms of its conceptual and ideological distance from Western models. I argue that we must invert this process in order for a valid definition of contemporary African art to emerge, one in which artists, curators and art historians are as familiar with how Lagos engages its contemporaneity within global space, as they are with how New York does the same. To merely impose New York’s experiences of contemporaneity on Lagos (as most of these curatorial projects in fact do) is to negate the coeval contemporaneity of Lagos and New York in a context where, perhaps for the first time in the history of art and its discourses, it is possible to actually affirm their coeval contemporaneity. A curatorial practice that supports the effacement of African artists from the sites of their own creativity is essentially part of the armature of a neo-colonial and neo-imperialist interpretation of African art and culture. It promotes the West’s continued marginalization of Africa in all spheres of global discourse.

III

Furthermore, a critical discourse that appropriates the term “Africa” to describe artists whose connection with Africa is tenuous at best does incalculable damage to the African struggle for colonial emancipation mainly because it essentially argues that the only way for Africans to emerge into global space as viable historical subjects is to adopt a Western sensibility. If you have to live in Europe or the USA in order to be taken seriously as a “contemporary African artist”, or if interpretation of your contemporaneity as an African artist depends on how well your art conforms to prevailing Western protocols of art production and reception, then the curators who promote this erroneous view of African contemporaneity are essentially saying that Africa doesn’t matter and its histories and genealogies of the development of new visual languages also doesn’t really count. It puts us right back to Hegel’s formulation that Africa exists outside of, and is not capable of being a proper subject of history, a formulation that ultimately provided the original justification for Africa’s colonization by the West.

The idea that cultural analysis or critical theory can operate outside of “history” is what Terry Eagleton used to criticize as the blind spot of postmodernism, the ironical reality that ideological struggles resurfaced in global politics precisely as postmodernist discourses predicted an end of ideologies.⁽⁸⁾ I will add that contemporary art’s willingness to negate history and its aspiration to live in a perpetual contemporaneity are both signs of a willful denial of the present and its relationship to the past out of which the West might be held accountable for its past and current exploitation of Africans and other peoples. It also represents the ultimate triumph of a corporate culture that emerged from America and now reigns supreme in all contexts of Western discourses, that affirms the right of Western countries to dominate global capital, and through this, control global discourses. The American academy has proven recently to be very susceptible to its allure. By appropriating half-baked ideas about the corporatization of educational culture and monetization of knowledge, it is busy dismantling one of the most significant educational structures of the past few centuries.

Discussions of scholarship and production of knowledge, at least in the USA, often underrates the fact that the American academy is a corporation—putatively non-profit corporations but corporations nevertheless. Its founding goal of making high quality education available to American citizens formed the backbone of the great expansion of post-WWII American creativity in all spheres of life. Government subsidized the production of knowledge and through this, provided an avenue for upward mobility for large numbers of the citizenry. This might be described as the non-profit ideal of academia. Recently, the focus has shifted to the corporate nature of academia and the production of knowledge has become increasingly subordinate to monetizing the services provided by various academic institutions, all of which face dwindling government support for education and higher costs of delivering the same. The fact that the gains of labor in this context is often shifted to managers and administrators who are much better compensated than teachers mirror a similar development in financial services, where fund managers and administrators make hundreds of times the sums of money made by the common worker in the various financial institutions.

I have argued elsewhere that the reimagining of curators of contemporary art as culture brokers imports the same logic into the art world where the curator is displacing the artist to become the one who most directly benefits from the work of artistic production. (9) In this regard, Theaster Gates, a performance artist, criticized the American academy for adopting “the weakest, least appealing aspects of contemporary capitalism—its surface, managerial aspects—characteristics easily mimicked because they entail no fundamental redistribution of labor, expertise or curiosity”.(10) This movement, accelerating of late, is now reaching a critical point.

As a component of Humanities education, art history is one of the fields affected by emerging questions about the value of the Humanities to American society in general. As a rather marginal field in American art history, the history of African art in general is susceptible to such questions, given its perceived importance mainly to a segment of the American population (African Americans) whose political and economic power is marginal at best. It was barely fifteen years ago that “modern African art” was struggling to emerge as a viable field of study, in an academic context where standard narratives of art history disregarded Africa’s role or relevance to the unfolding of a global, modernist ethos in art. The first significant books that carried out critical analyses of African modernism (11) were published mainly in the past decade and have been quickly eclipsed by a spate of publications on “contemporary African art” that mostly disregard the historical engagement with time, place, medium and transcultural practice that analysis of modern African art focused on. In this regard, consider the following fact: the study of “contemporary African art” is the only aspect of African Studies in the academy that negates the reality of the African continent as a site of historical and transcultural engagements due to its tendency to define contemporary art practice itself as a free-floating transcultural context. Most other academic programs of African Studies continue to engage Africa as an active site of their critical discourse, despite the fact that most of the archives through which scholars study the interaction of Africa with Western colonial apparatus are located in the capitals of their former colonial powers. In so doing, they recognize Africa’s centrality as a site of historical and contemporary experiences, and their own role as scholars who document and analyze rather than *invent* Africa’s history of engagements with the West.

I have argued elsewhere that Okwui Enwezor’s curatorial practice largely inaugurated this erroneous interpretation of a “Contemporary African art” that disregards Africa itself as a site of globalization and disregards African artists as relevant to the production of narratives about their own spaces of practice.(12) Its role in reshaping the American academy’s perception of African art history is immense in this regard, and entirely negative. I did not base that argument on a notion that there can only be one type of critical practice of contemporary African art or its analysis: in fact, I agree with Terry Smith that we must be open to a variety of kinds of critical practice although I would add that their validity depends on the idea of Africa they project to academic and critical discourse. The shaping of African art history in American academia (and in many other contexts of Western academic work) has too often treated African art as a discourse meaningful only in the context of its reception rather than that of its production. This attitude underlies the common fact that representations of African art in Western museums are most likely to name Western art collectors rather than the African producers of artworks. Similarly, there is an increasingly tendency to disregard the African context of their production as irrelevant to our understanding of these artworks, which are seen to achieve their status as art through the conditions of their packaging for the Western art market rather than through their intrinsic definition as art or valuable cultural objects within the African contexts of their production. The operating assumption here is that if “African art” and “African art history” is a creation of the West, it follows that there is no need to pay any attention to the context or history of the African producers of the cultural objects that were transformed into art by Western mediation. (This is not a blanket criticism of scholarship in African art history. I should point out that many important scholars of African art in the American academy have done and continue to do very credible work researching and interpreting African works of art according to their indigenous meanings, while also pushing back against the Eurocentric perception of African art as a creation of the West).

The struggle to direct attention to the African context of production of important African artworks is thus an ongoing struggle that has largely defined how African art is framed in art history, and it is also relevant to how contemporary African art is framed within the American academy. The consequence of effacing Africa as a viable location of “Contemporary African art” is that it will inevitably cause African Art History to disappear within the American academy. If contemporary African art is located in the West rather than in Africa, then it is possible to study it without investigating how Africans (all one billion Africans who still live on the African continent) engage contemporaneity as a condition of their location in space and time. The Diaspora African artists whose works now stand in for contemporary African art occupy multiple spaces in the name of transcultural artistic practice: they are afforded international visibility and global access by their very specific histories as citizens of “First World Countries”, which ironically serves to marginalize African engagements with contemporaneity in their individual locations in Africa. Consider in this regard the ongoing transformation of African studies in the American academy: almost all academic positions focused on African art history are now being offered to scholars of the African Diaspora, and the field faces an increasing reluctance by researchers to conduct “Africa-focused” research *in* Africa. Consider also that museum collections devoted to contemporary African art are primarily filled with artworks from African artists based in the West. More importantly, the scriptocentric focus of history within an American academy that still looks askance at the value of oral history means that colonial archives play a large role in the interpretation of African history despite their very problematic inscription of Africa. The age of information technology makes this inevitable because it is now possible to study the accumulated archive of the field rather than create new research projects in Africa. As this process accelerates, I expect most of the African art history positions in the American academy to face increasing pressure to redefine their scope.

For those African art history positions located within public school systems (the majority in other words), reduced state budgets will occasion cuts in education and in faculty positions at state schools and further changes in the academic definition of Humanities education might force substantial curricular changes that focus more on the Diaspora context of “contemporary African art”. In about ten years, assuming this shift continues, most of the current African art history positions will be redefined as “Global Contemporary/World Art with a focus on the African Diaspora and Africa (note the order of relevance). By the time the current crop of senior scholars retire in the key institutions with African art history programs, the scholars who replace them in these positions, assuming the positions themselves remain, will no longer be recognizable to us as Africanists and the actual study of Africa itself will be left to the African Studies and Black Studies programs of various institutions, if these survive.

The study of “traditional African art” will remain, mainly because of the need to mediate the value of existing collections of African art in various museums and private collections but this aspect of African art history will increasingly be subsumed within an economic analysis of art and cultural production. Art History already mediates the reception of cultural objects of great economic value and the financial potentials of brokering art (and monetizing the discourse of art history itself) have only just started being tapped. This latter focus might shift art history from its current location as a Humanities-subject to a more viable location as a Social Science field focused on analysis of how economic value is produced for artworks and cultural objects. It will however complete the marginalization of Africa in academic and critical discourse simply by removing it as a useful frame of reference.

IV

I want to conclude this essay by engaging a glaring issue: I am an art historian who studies African and African Diaspora art from my location in a prominent American university. One might thus point out that my critique of Okwui Enwezor's characterization of contemporary African art as a Diaspora-based discourse is self-serving since I am also located outside of Africa, as Enwezor is. I have not argued that we should leave the study of Africa to African scholars or to scholars located in Africa, but that our analysis of contemporary African art should center Africa itself as a site of transcultural engagements and globalization. The entire history of African studies in academia has been devoted to affirming the value and relevance of African knowledge to global discourses. This battle is largely successful in most other fields of African studies except in art history where Africa is still marginalized in the analysis of its cultural production. Just as scholarship on indigenous African art tried to write Africa out of history by affirming an unchanging nature to its cultural practices (and by representing whole cultures by singular objects interpreted in manners alien to the African contexts of its production), the reception of African art has been regulated by the art market in a manner that severely limits the scope of valuable and validated cultural objects from the continent mainly to African artworks held in Western collections: in essence, this process means that for an African artwork to gain any significant discursive or financial value, its provenance must tie it to a Western collection. Comparable African artworks held in Africa are considered less valuable. There is a similar problem in the inscription of modern African art as a context of primitivist production, whose ethos was supposedly best represented by Africans with no formal education, and the ongoing inscription of contemporary African art as a context of practice best exemplified by artists of African ancestry who mainly live and work outside of Africa. In each instance, the overwhelming control of technologies of discourse allows Western scholarship to interpret African art in ways that suit Western imperatives. In this regard, I have tried to trace how seemingly innocuous interpretations of contemporary African art have real world impact on the academic framing of African art history and on how the value of "contemporary African art" is affected by its location in or out of Africa.

The American academy is often impacted by social pressure and changes in the country's political orientation. Such changes led to the establishment of Black Studies programs and African, Asian, Latin American, and Women's studies programs at various times in its history due to pressure from marginalized Americans for greater representation of their histories and contemporary concerns. The negative shift in the fortunes of African studies programs in the American academy can arguably be tied to the diminished power of Afrocentric discourses in the larger American political landscape. While my analysis above suggests that African art history (and other aspects of African studies perhaps) may face difficult times ahead, they are not a prediction of the shape of things to come. They do however track some important changes in our definition of contemporary African art, and I have endeavored to link these changes to an ongoing history and politics of representation of Africa in the West. The effort of "Contemporary art" to escape the embrace of history, what *October* journal defined as its attempt to "float free of historical determination, conceptual definition and critical judgment", is doomed to failure. If similar previous pronouncements in art teach us anything, it is that all forms of contemporaneity eventually become historical. In this regard, the effort to define "Contemporary African art" as a diaspora context of practice that negates the reality of contemporary engagements on the African continent is doomed to failure. It is an attempt to silence Africa in global discourse and thoroughly misguided. We can only hope that by the time the field rouses itself to mount a useful criticism of this problematic view of contemporary African art, there will still be a viable field of African art history that focuses on specific African engagements with contemporaneity.



- (1) I am aware of the essentialism inherent in this formulation of a hegemonic "West". I use it as a shorthand definition of the consortium of Euro/American countries that are collectively identified as "First World" nations who largely dominate global capital and politics.
- (2) See Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, "The Curator as Culture Broker: A Critique of the Curatorial Regime of Okwui Enwezor in Contemporary African Art". *Art South Africa*, 9/1, 2010: 34-37. Enwezor's curatorial work of the past decade is mostly responsible for African art history's current focus on the reception of contemporary African art in the West rather than on the actual contexts the practice of contemporary African art in Africa.
- (3) Terry Smith, "The State of Art History: Contemporary Art". *Art Bulletin*, XCII/4 (December 2010): 366. Smith's effort to define how a history of contemporary art is commendable and my analysis here engages several arguments he delineates in his article.
- (4) Smith, 2010: 378.
- (5) "A Questionnaire on the Contemporary." *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 3-124.
- (6) Smith, 2010: 379.
- (7) Smith, 2010: 380.
- (8) Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- (9) See Ogbechie, "The Curator as Culture Broker", 2010.
- (10) "Our Literal Speed, presented by Theaster Gates". Performance at the College Art Association, February 13, 2010. <http://www.ourliteralspeed.com/content/ols007b.html>
- (11) These books include Sidney Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000; Elizabeth Harney, In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics and the Avant-Garde in Senegal 1960-1965. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004; Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, *Ben Enwonwu: The Making of an African Modernist*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008; and John Pepper, *Art and the Struggle for Apartheid*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
- (12) Ogbechie, "The Curator as Culture Broker", 2010.

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Wo ist Afrika in der globalen zeitgenössischen Kunst?

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I

Ich bin froh darüber, zur zweiten Edition von SAVVY | art.contemporary.african. einen Beitrag zu schreiben und über den Versuch, einen Überblick über aktuelle zeitgenössische Diskurse zu geben, der darauf abzielt, Terminologien, Räume, Konzepte und Kontexte, die im Bereich der zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst auf dem Spiel stehen, neu zu verhandeln und reflektieren. Die amerikanische Wissenschaft, so wie wir sie kennen, unterläuft gerade fundamentalen Veränderungen in seiner Geschichte als Bildungssystem. Sie wurde hauptsächlich dafür konzipiert, einer industriellen Gesellschaft Arbeit zu verschaffen, die nun durch die Wandlung hin zu einer post-industriellen Informationsgesellschaft alte Strukturen und Rahmenbedingungen aufgeben musste. Die Relevanz der Geisteswissenschaften für die Gesellschaft wird grundsätzlich in Frage gestellt und Bildung corporatisiert. In diesem Zusammenhang ist die Frage danach, was Räume, Konzepte und Kontexte in der zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst konstituiert, erneut relevant, da es scheint, als gäbe es verschiedene rivalisierende Ideale zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst in den unterschiedlichen Bereichen afrikanischer Kunst als Forschungsgebiet. Auf Grund dieser rivalisierender Ideen, hat die amerikanische Wissenschaft und der Kunstmarkt mehr und mehr die Interpretation zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst normalisiert, deren Prämisse ebenso fragwürdig wie polarisierend ist. Diese Interpretation ist zunehmend mit einer einseitigen Sicht auf Kunstgeschichte verbunden in der Kuratoren und Kulturschaffende schlicht ein vom Westen abgeleitetes Modell zeitgenössischer Kunst auf Afrika applizieren, während Künstler afrikanischer Herkunft im Westen als elementare Subjekte "zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst" verwendet werden. (1)

Die Repräsentation zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst als eine weitestgehend Diaspora-basierte Praxis hatte die unglückliche Folge, dass die meisten afrikanischen und afro-amerikanischen Künstler in der Kunstgeschichte, in der zeitgenössische Kunst und Kulturproduktion die auf dem Kontinent angesiedelt ist, oder innerhalb der afro-amerikanischen Gemeinschaft und die sich mit wichtigen kulturellen Fragen und Problematiken von Afrikanern beschäftigt, außen vor gelassen wurden. (2)

Im folgenden Essay, lege ich meinen Schwerpunkt auf die Kritik dieser neuen Interpretation von zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst, die ich durch die Augen des akademischen Ehrgeizes kunstgeschichtlicher Analyse sehe.

II

Das Erbe des geisteswissenschaftlichen Studiums an die amerikanische Wissenschaft ist sehr eurozentrisch. Diese Aussage ist nicht eine übliche postkoloniale Kritik am Eurozentrismus als kulturelles Konstrukt; sondern es erkennt an, wie die Hegemonie westlicher Erzählweisen von Zeitgenossenschaft imperialistische Konstrukte verstärken, die von der eurozentrischen Dominanz globalen Kapitals ermöglicht wurden, wodurch die in Konkurrenz stehenden Erzählweisen im Rahmen der Globalisierung kooptiert und subsumiert werden. Noch wichtiger ist, dass es ein hegemoniales und dominantes Paradigma der "globalen Zeitgenossenschaft" kritisiert, das lediglich westliche Modelle von Kunstschaffen, Rezeption und kritischem Diskurs normalisiert, während der wichtige historische Kampf der sogenannten „nicht-westlichen Völker“ bedeutungslos gemacht wurde um eine Repräsentationspolitik neu zu gestalten, die eine Kritik der Moderne, Postmoderne und des eher naiven Begriffs von Kunstschaffen „nach dem Ende der Kunst“ zumindest zuließ, wenn nicht bekräftigte.

Das hegemoniale Modell ist das derzeit führende in den akademischen Interpretationen zeitgenössischer Kunst und eher durchdringend in der akademischen Analyse zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst, zumindest insofern, als es innerhalb der amerikanischen Wissenschaft und seiner kritischen Infrastruktur existiert. Das Studium zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst in Europa und den Vereinigten Staaten ist zunehmend mehr ein Studium der Rezeption afrikanischer Kunst im Westen als seiner Produktion im afrikanischen Kontext.

Diese Interpretation zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst wird durch die Arbeiten von Künstlern afrikanischer Herkunft, die im Westen leben und arbeiten, bestätigt. Außerdem wird unterstellt, dass ein afrikanischer Künstler im Grunde genommen im Westen leben oder seine Kunst dort gezeigt und diese für gültig befunden werden muss, um wirklich "zeitgenössisch" zu sein. Sicherlich, viele Afrikaner leben jetzt im Ausland, aber es ist schwierig zu beurteilen, ob die Zahl der Afrikaner, die tatsächlich im Ausland leben, signifikant in irgendeiner Weise ist, gemessen an der Gesamtbevölkerung des Kontinents oder dessen aktiven Künstlern oder Kulturschaffenden.

Ich schätze, es gibt weniger als tausend "zeitgenössische afrikanische Künstler", die im Westen leben und arbeiten, obwohl sie 99% aller Künstler ausmachen, die bei internationalen Ausstellungen "zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst" dabei sind. Im Gegensatz dazu gibt es eine Billion Afrikaner, die der Gegenwart innerhalb ihres individuellen Lebensraums und ihrer kulturellen Praxis ausgesetzt sind. Angesichts der geringen Zahl der Diaspora- und ausgewanderten afrikanischen Künstler im Verhältnis zu der viel größeren Zahl afrikanischer Künstler, die in Afrika leben und arbeiten, und zu den vielen Kontexten zeitgenössischer Kunst, die in diesem Zusammenhang gefunden werden können – wie stichhaltig ist ein Diskurs, der nur eine begrenzte Zahl von Künstlern als Vertreter der zeitgenössischen Kunst im Allgemeinen nutzt?

Ich sollte darauf hinweisen, dass ich hier keine nationalistische oder ethnisch gefärbte Erörterung liefere. Ich glaube, dass es möglich ist, die verschiedenen Standorte der afrikanischen Künstler und Afrikaner in einem weltweiten Kontinuum zu verstehen, sowie deren wachsende Transparenz und Interaktion mit dem Westen, während Afrika selbst Standort der Globalisierung und wichtiger Kontext der Gegenwart ist.

Das auf diese Weise zentrierte Afrika ermöglicht eine Definition zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst, das beide transkulturellen Bewegungen bestätigt, unterstützt von der aktuellen Informationstechnologie, die virtuell, wenn schon nicht physisch, ermöglicht, Räume globaler Kunstpraxis und Diskurse zugänglich zu machen.

Dabei ist auf die Launen der Eigentümlichkeiten von Ort und Zeit zu achten, wie Künstler in ihren eigenen Körpern unter politischem und wirtschaftlichem Druck als aktiv Handelnde lokalisiert werden, sowie in ihrer physikalischen und psychologischen Realität ihrer lokalen Handlungsräume und auch in der Politik des Zugangs zum transnationalen Raum.

Das Ziel ist nicht, zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst auf der Grundlage ethnisch-kultureller Identität, Nationalität oder politischer Zugehörigkeit zu definieren. Es gilt, die Bedeutung afrikanischer Künstler und ihrer Standorte im globalen Kontinuum zu definieren. Kannst du in Lagos oder in Kinshasa leben und ein "zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Künstler" sein, dessen Arbeit genauso ernstgenommen und mit der gleichen Sorgfalt analysiert wird, die wir Ausstellungen von Künstlern entgegenbringen, die in New York, London oder in anderen westlichen Metropolen leben? Ist Lagos genauso ein Ort der Globalisierung wie London? Bringt uns Dakar irgendeinen Mehrwert als Ort des besonderen Interesses in der Entfaltung eines globalen Ethos zeitgenössischer Kunstpraxis?

Die Identität des "Zeitgenössischen" in der zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst wirft die Frage nach dem Einfluss der Kunstgeschichte im Allgemeinen auf: Was ist der Stellenwert des Zeitgenössischen in der Kunst, und wie kann eine Geschichte der zeitgenössischen Kunst geschrieben werden? Das ist auf keinen Fall eine einfache Frage: Kunstpraxis und Kunstgeschichte verschmelzen zunehmend in der Praxis der meisten zeitgenössischen Künstler, die Kunstgeschichte als Kunst zu machen scheinen, wie Terry Smith anmerkt.⁽³⁾

Ähnlich wird die kuratorische Praxis zunehmend als eine Form von Performance gesehen, die ausgewählte Kunstwerke benutzt, Künstler, um eine kuratorische Interpretation zeitgenössischer (Kunst-)Praxis auszudrücken. Darüber hinaus bemerkt Terry Smith, dass kunsthistorische Auswertung von zeitgenössischer Kunst und von früheren kunsthistorischen Berichten "sich hauptsächlich mit Künstlern beschäftigt, die in den Vereinigten Staaten und Europa aktiv waren, und er stellt die Vermutung an, dass das, was sie tun, als wirkliche Transformation in der Kunst als Gesamtes gilt."⁽⁴⁾

Mit dieser Schlussfolgerung erkennt Smith die fortdauernde Hegemonie okzidentaler Rahmenbedingungen als eine aktive Problematik bei jeglicher Definition von zeitgenössischer Kunst an, angesichts dessen, wie der Diskurs selbst weitestgehend durch Begrifflichkeiten der westlichen Faszination geprägt wird in seiner Rolle als die treibende Kraft in der Geschichte.

Im Herbst 2009 versuchte die Zeitschrift *October* in einem Fragebogen die akademische Übereinstimmung bei der Definition von zeitgenössischer Kunst abzuschätzen. Der Fragebogen ermittelte den seltsamen Befund, dass *“contemporary art has become an institutional object in its own right... in its own heterogeneity, much present practice (of Contemporary Art and its critical apparatus) seems to float free of historical determination, conceptual definition and critical judgment”*.(5)

Und mit vielen ähnlichen Aussagen verbirgt die angebliche Heterogenität und der lösgelöste Kontext „zeitgenössischer Kunst“ einen resoluten eurozentrischen Griff in die Räume von Praktiken und Interpretationsstrukturen, die aufgesogen werden, und der Griff zu einem ideologisch scharfen Untermauerung des Befundes von *October* wird.

Die Annahme, dass zeitgenössische Kunst *“frei von historischer Bestimmung...und kritischem Urteil zu treiben scheint”* schwankt dann, wenn man sie mit der Tatsache konfrontiert, dass Künstler weiterhin Körper haben, die in das Kunstschaffen eingebunden sind, dass sie essen, schlafen und auf Kunstausstellungen auftauchen, alle diese Aktivitäten werden innerhalb eines sehr greifbaren geographischen, konzeptionellen und sozio-politischem Raum durchgeführt. Trotz ihrer transkulturellen Praxis und der zunehmend globalen Reichweite, zahlen Künstler weiterhin Steuern an bestimmte Regierungen und um mit Reisepässen zu reisen, die durch bestimmte Länder ausgestellt wurden (Reisepässe die von westlichen Ländern ausgestellt wurden, erlauben Zugang zu transkultureller Praxis; die von afrikanischen Ländern ausgestellten jedoch machen es beinahe unmöglich für Künstler überallhin zu reisen). Man müßte all diejenigen Arten und Weisen übersehen, durch die der zeitgenössische menschliche Körper an allen Orten seiner Existenz und Bewegung durch internationale Grenzen markiert wird, um etwas so Lächerliches zu behaupten wie die Idee dass Kunst, die durch solche Individuen produziert wird, frei von „historischer Bestimmung“ treibt.

Wir können somit *October* entgegenen, dass es so etwas wie einen lösgelösten künstlerischen oder kulturellen Raum in der Welt, wie wir sie heute kennen, nicht gibt, da alle lokalen Orte Subjekte lokaler Machtstrukturen sind und sogenannte globale Orte Subjekte hegemonialer Macht des plündernden Kapitalismus durch den westliche Macht weiterhin rund um den Globus verbreitet wird mit sehr realistischen Folgen für Afrikaner und andere Völker in ihren individuellen geo-politischen Lokaltäten. Und das ist die Krux des Ganzen: unser Versuch zeitgenössische Kunst als durchdringenden Zusammenhang transkultureller Bewegungen zu interpretieren in dem ethnische, rassische und kulturelle Identitäten von „globalen“ Künstlern ersetzt werden, die nichtsdestotrotz sehr greifbare westliche Orte besetzen. Dieser Versuch konfrontiert die Wirklichkeit ihrer westlichen Orte als ein ideologisch kodierter (und somit fortgeschritten) Fluchtpunkt der meistens afrikanische zeitgenössische Kunst, die in Afrika beheimatet ist, als Konsequenz aus ihrer Beheimatung außerhalb des Westens, ausschließt.

Noch wichtiger ist, dass die Idee der losgelösten Künstler oder Kunstproduktion vom Emporkommen räumlich-geographischer Medienwerkzeuge negiert wird, durch die es jetzt möglich ist, jedes Individuum irgendwo auf diesem Planeten durch Global Positioning Satellites (GPS) oder andere Technologien, zu orten. Und das wiederum ist für mich, der erstaunlichste Effekt der momentanen Verneinung von Geschichte und räumlich-geographischer Wirklichkeiten in der Interpretation zeitgenössischer Kunst als lösgelöster Kontext: Wie kann es sein, dass in diesem Zeitalter, in dem örtliche Technologien die greifbare Natur unseres Aufenthaltsortes in globalem Raum und Zeit bestimmen, aber ebenso unsere Bewegungen und Interaktionen innerhalb der globalen medialen Technologien, wie kann es da sein, dass einige Kuratoren und Kritiker weiterhin die Wichtigkeit des Raumes in der zeitgenössischen Kunstproduktion oder dem kritischen Diskurs über Subjektheit verneinen?

Wenn wir darüber einig sind, dass transkulturelle Interaktivität eine Bedingung globaler Zeitgenossenschaft ist, müssen wir auch die Zugangsbedingungen zu diesen Kontexten interaktiver globaler kultureller Praktiken in Frage stellen, da es klar ist, dass dieser Kontext exklusiv ist: Ethnizität und Rasse arbeiten gegen schwarze Künstler die Zugang zu dem transkulturellen zeitgenössischen Kunstschaffen verlangen. In dieser Hinsicht, argumentiert Terry Smith, müssen entkolonisierte Völker noch die Welt in ihrem Bild verändern und ihr Kampf könnte sich in den unverwechselbaren Qualitäten des zeitgenössischen Lebens manifestieren, die er als „the interactions between humans and the geosphere, the multitude of cultures, the ideoscape of global politics and the interiority of individual being“ beschreibt. (6)

Weit davon entfernt eine Idee von zeitgenössischer Kunst als „lösgelöster Kontext“ zu bestätigen, schläft er eine Idee von Translokalität vor: *“translocality [which] in practice amounts to a focus on local artistic manifestations, and on actual existing connections between them and art and ideas elsewhere” (italics mine).* (7)

Er schließt, dass wir den Reichtum aller Arten von Kritik brauchen, jede von ihnen den Ansprüchen, Grenzen und Potentialen von beiden, den lokalen und den entfernten Welten angepasst, als auch den aktuellen und möglichen Verbindungen zwischen Nähe und Distanz.

Aus obiger Schlussfolgerung von Smith kann man annehmen, dass kürzliche Megausstellungen zeitgenössischer Kunst tatsächlich solche Verbindungen gezogen haben, bis man einen genauen Blick darauf wirft und feststellt, dass sie meistens die Lokalität hinsichtlich Afrika und Entfernung hinsichtlich seiner konzeptuellen und ideologischen Distanz von westlichen Modellen definieren.

Ich behaupte, dass wir diesen Prozess umkehren müssen wenn wir eine gültige Definition zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst entwerfen wollen, eine in der Künstler, Kuratoren und Kunstgeschichte mit der Frage wie Lagos seine Zeitgenossenschaft im globalen Raum bestimmt genauso vertraut sind wie mit der Frage wie es bei New York ist.

Die Erfahrungen von New Yorks Zeitgenossenschaft einfach auf die von Lagos (wie es die meisten dieser kuratorischen Projekte tatsächlich tun) zu übertragen, bedeutet die gleichzeitige Zeitgenossenschaft von Lagos und New York in einem Kontext zu negieren, in dem, vielleicht zum ersten Mal in der Kunstgeschichte und ihren Diskursen, die Möglichkeit besteht, tatsächlich ihre gleichzeitige Zeitgenossenschaft zu bestätigen. Eine kuratorische Praxis, die die Auslöschung afrikanischer Künstler von den Orten ihrer eigenen Kreativität unterstützt ist wesentlicher Teil der Ausrüstung einer neo-kolonialen und neo-imperialistischen Interpretation afrikanischer Kunst und Kultur. Es treibt die permanente Marginalisierung Afrikas durch den Westen auf allen Ebenen des globalen Diskurses weiter voran. Und noch etwas: ein kritischer Diskurs, der den Begriff „Afrika“ verwendet um Künstler mit einer Verbindung nach Afrika zu beschreiben, ist heikel und ruft bestenfalls unkalkulierbare Schäden im afrikanischen Kampf nach kolonialer Emanzipation hervor, dies hauptsächlich, da die wesentliche Argumentation darin besteht, dass der einzige Weg für Afrikaner im globalen Raum als überlebensfähige historische Subjekte zu erscheinen nur möglich ist, indem ein westliches Empfindungsvermögen entwickelt wird.

Wenn man in Europa oder den USA leben muß um als „zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Künstler“ ernst genommen zu werden oder wenn die Interpretation unserer Zeitgenossenschaft als afrikanischer Künstler sowohl davon abhängt wie gut unsere Kunst mit dem herrschenden westlichen Protokoll von Kunstproduktion und Rezeption konform ist und dann die Kuratoren, die diese falsche Sicht auf afrikanische Zeitgenossenschaft verbreiten, die wesentlich besagt, dass Afrika kein Gewicht hat und seine Geschichten und Entwicklungsgenealogien einer neuen visuellen Sprache auch nicht wirklich zählt.

Das wirft uns genau in die Zeit der Hegel'schen Formulierung zurück, die besagt, dass Afrika außerhalb existiert und nicht fähig ist ein eigenes Subjekt von Geschichte zu sein, eine Formulierung, die letztlich die ursprüngliche Rechtfertigung für die Kolonisierung Afrikas durch den Westen lieferte.

Die Idee, dass kulturelle Analyse oder kritische Theorie außerhalb von "Geschichte" operieren kann ist, was Terry Eagleton als die blinden Flecken von Postmodernismus zu kritisieren pflegte, die ironische Realität, dass ideologische Kämpfe in der globalen Politik wiederauftauchten als postmodernistische Diskurse, sagte ein Ende von Ideologien hervor. (8)

Es repräsentiert auch den ultimativen Triumph kooperativer Kultur die aus Amerika auftauchte und nun als oberste in allen Kontexten westlicher Diskurse regiert, die das Recht der westlichen Länder bestätigt, das globale Kapital zu dominieren und dadurch globale Diskurse kontrolliert. Das amerikanische Wissenschaftssystem hat kürzlich erst gezeigt, dass es für diesen Reiz sehr empfänglich ist.

In dem es halbausgereifte Ideen über die Privatisierung des Bildungssystem und der Vergeldlichung von Wissen annimmt, ist es damit beschäftigt, eine der wichtigsten Strukturen im Bildungswesen der letzten Jahrhunderte auszuhöhlen. Diskussionen über die Wissenschaft und die Produktion von Wissen, zumindest in den USA, bewerten oft die Tatsache unter, dass das amerikanische Wissenschaftssystem ein Unternehmen ist – ein vermeintliches non-profit Unternehmen, aber nichtsdestotrotz ein Unternehmen. Sein Gründungsziel, eine hohe Qualität von Bildung für alle amerikanischen Bürger zu produzieren, war das Rückgrat der großen Expansion der amerikanischen Kreativität in allen Lebensbereichen nach dem 2. Weltkrieg.

Die Regierung hat die Wissensproduktion subsidiarisiert und hat dadurch einen breiten Weg für die steigende Mobilität einer großen Zahl von Bürgerschaft geebnet. Dies könnte als non-profitäres Ideal von Wissenschaft beschrieben werden. Kürzlich verlegte sich der Fokus auf die unternehmerische Natur der Wissenschaft und Wissensproduktion wurde zunehmend den monetären Dienstleistungen untergeordnet, die von vielen akademischen Institutionen angeboten werden, die allesamt versiegende Unterstützung für Bildung seitens der Regierung und höhere Kosten für dieselben Dienstleistungen erfahren.

Die Tatsache, dass die Gewinne von Arbeit in diesem Zusammenhang oft Managern und Administratoren zu Gute kommen, die sehr viel höher als Lehrer kompensiert werden, spiegelt eine ähnliche Entwicklung im finanziellen Sektor wieder, wo Vermögensverwalter und Administratoren die Summen des Geldes, das von gewöhnlichen Arbeitern in den unterschiedlichen Finanzinstituten erwirtschaftet wurde, verhundertfachen.

Ich habe an anderer Stelle argumentiert, dass die Neufindung des Bildes des Kurators von zeitgenössischer Kunst als Kulturagent dieselbe Logik in die Kunstwelt importiert, wo der Kurator den Künstler ersetzt um einer zu werden, der meistens direkt von der Arbeit der künstlerischen Produktion profitiert. (9)

In dieser Hinsicht kritisiert Theaster Gates, ein Performance-Künstler, das amerikanische Bildungssystem: "the weakest, least appealing aspects of contemporary capitalism—its surface, managerial aspects—characteristics easily mimicked because they entail no fundamental redistribution of labor, expertise or curiosity". (10)

Diese Bewegung, die uns nun spät einholt, erreicht nun einen entscheidenden Punkt.

Als ein Bestandteil der geisteswissenschaftlichen Bildung ist die Kunstgeschichte eines derjenigen Fächer, die von den aufkommenden Fragen über den Wert der Geisteswissenschaften für die amerikanische Gesellschaft im Allgemeinen betroffen ist. Als ein eher marginales Fach in der amerikanischen Kunstgeschichte ist die Geschichte afrikanischer Kunst, angesichts dessen, dass seine Bedeutung mehrheitlich in einem Segment der amerikanischen (der afro-amerikanischen) Bevölkerung gesehen wird, dessen politische und wirtschaftliche Macht bestenfalls nebensächlich ist, ganz allgemein für diese Fragen anfällig.

Es ist kaum 15 Jahre her, dass „moderne afrikanische Kunst“ dafür kämpfen musste als sich ein wachstumsfähiges Fach in einem akademischen Kontext zu entwickeln, in die Standardkunstgeschichtserzählungen die Rolle Afrikas oder seine Relevanz in einem sich verbreitenden, modernistischen Ethos in Kunst, nicht anerkannten. Die ersten bedeutenden Bücher, dass eine kritische Analyse des afrikanischen Modernismus durchführten, wurden meist in der letzten Dekade veröffentlicht und schnell von einer Flut von Publikationen über „zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst“ in den Schatten gestellt, die zumeist die historische Eingebundenheit mit Zeit, Ort, Medium und transkultureller Praxis vernachlässigten, aus die sich die Analyse moderner afrikanischer Kunst konzentrierte. (11)

In dieser Hinsicht, möchte ich die folgende Tatsache berücksichtigen: das Studium „zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst“ ist der einzige Aspekt von Afrikawissenschaften in der Wissenschaft, der die Realität des afrikanischen Kontinentes als Ort historischen und transkulturellen Engagements, dank seiner Tendenz zeitgenössische Kunstpraxis selbst als losgelösten transkulturellen Kontext zu definieren, negiert. Mehrere andere akademische Programme im Bereich Afrikawissenschaften fahren fort Afrika als einen aktiven Ort im kritischen Diskurs miteinzubinden, trotz der Tatsache, dass die meisten Archive, durch die Gelehrte die Interaktion Afrikas mit westlichen kolonialen Apparat studieren, in den Hauptstädten der ehemaligen Kolonialmächte lokalisiert sind. Dadurch erkennen sie die Zentralität Afrikas als Ort historischer und zeitgenössischer Erfahrung an und auch ihre Rolle als Gelehrte, die die Geschichte von Afrikas Verwicklungen mit dem Westen vielmehr erfinden als dokumentieren und analysieren.

Andernorts habe ich argumentiert, dass Okwui Enwezors kuratorische Praxis weitestgehend durch die fälschliche Interpretation von einer „zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst“ eingeleitet wurde, die Afrika selbst als Ort von Globalisierung missachtet und ebenso afrikanische Künstler als relevant in der Produktion von Erzählungen über ihre eigenen Praxisräume.(12)

Seine Rolle darin, die Wahrnehmung von afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte durch das amerikanische Bildungssystem neu zu formen ist in dieser Hinsicht immens und vollkommen negativ. Ich habe mein Argument nicht auf das Verständnis gebaut, dass es nur eine Art von kritischer Praxis zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst oder seine Analyse geben kann: tatsächlich stimme ich mit Terry Smith darin überein, dass wir für eine Vielfalt von Arten kritischer Praxis offen bleiben müssen, obwohl ich hinzufügen möchte, dass deren Gültigkeit von der Idee Afrikas abhängt, die sie auf den akademischen und kritischen Diskurs projizieren. Die Gestaltung afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft (und in vielen anderen Kontexten westlicher akademischer Tätigkeit) hat afrikanische Kunst zu oft als bedeutender Diskurs nur im Kontext seiner Rezeption behandelt, nicht hinsichtlich seiner Produktion.

Diese Einstellung unterliegt der gewöhnlichen Tatsache, dass Repräsentationen afrikanischer Kunst in westlichen Museen viel eher die Namen westlicher Sammler nennen als die afrikanischen Hersteller der Kunstwerke. In ähnlicher Weise gibt es eine zunehmende Tendenz den afrikanischen Kontext ihrer Produktion als irrelevant für unser Verständnis dieser Kunstwerke unter den Tisch fallen zu lassen, die anscheinend ihren Status als Kunst nur durch die Bedingungen ihrer Aufmachung für den westlichen Kunstmarkt erhalten als durch ihre intrinsische Definition als Kunst oder wertvolles Kulturobjekt im afrikanischen Produktionskontext. Die gängige Hypothese ist, dass „afrikanische Kunst“ und „afrikanische Kunstgeschichte“ eine Kreation des Westens ist, woraus folgt, dass es nicht notwendig ist, dem Kontext oder der Geschichte der afrikanischen Hersteller der Kulturgüter irgendeine Aufmerksamkeit zu schenken, die durch westliche Mediation zu Kunst transformiert wurden. (Dies ist nicht eine blanke Kritik am Gelehrtentum in afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte. Ich sollte darauf hinweisen, dass viele bedeutsame Gelehrte afrikanischer Kunst in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft unglaubliche Arbeit geleistet haben und immer noch leisten, indem sie afrikanische Kunstwerke erforschen und entsprechend ihrer autochtonen Bedeutungen interpretieren, während sie damit auch gegen die eurozentrische Wahrnehmung von afrikanischer Kunst als Kreation des Westens angehen.)

Der Kampf um Aufmerksamkeit auf den afrikanischen Produktionskontext wichtiger afrikanischer Kunstwerke ist folglich ein laufender, der weitestgehend dadurch definiert ist, wie afrikanische Kunst in Kunstgeschichte eingefügt wird und ist ebenso relevant für die Frage, wie zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft platziert wird. Die Konsequenz dessen, wenn man Afrika als schwankenden Ort „zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst“ auslöscht ist, dass es unabwendbar dazu führt, dass afrikanische Kunstgeschichte in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft verschwindet. Wenn zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst eher im Westen als in Afrika lokalisiert ist, dann ist es möglich diese zu studieren ohne zu untersuchen, wie Afrikaner (die ganze Milliarde, die immer noch auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent lebt) mit Zeitgenossenschaft als eine Bedingung ihres Lebensortes in Raum und Zeit umgehen.

Die afrikanischen Diaspora-Künstler deren Werke jetzt für zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst stehen, beanspruchen multiple Orte im Namen transkultureller künstlerischer Praxis: ihnen wird internationale Sichtbarkeit und globaler Zugang durch ihre besondere Geschichten als Bürger der „Erste-Welt-Länder“ gewährt, die ironischerweise dazu dienen, afrikanisches Engagement mit Zeitgenossenschaft in ihren individuellen Orten in Afrika zu marginalisieren. Berücksichtigt man in dieser Hinsicht die fortdauernde Transformation von Afrikawissenschaft in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft: beinahe alle akademischen Positionen fokussieren sich auf afrikanische Kunstgeschichte die heute von Gelehrten der afrikanischen Diaspora angeboten wird und das Fach wird mit einer zunehmenden Unlust seitens der Gelehrten konfrontiert, eine „Afrika-fokussierte“ Forschung in Afrika durchzuführen. Zur Kenntnis nehmen muss man auch, dass museale Sammlungen zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst vorrangig mit Kunstwerken afrikanischer Künstler angefüllt sind, die im Westen leben. Viel wichtiger ist, dass der Fokus auf schriftliche Geschichtsschreibung innerhalb der amerikanischen Wissenschaft immer noch misstrauisch gegenüber des Wertes oraler Geschichtsschreibung ist, dass heißt, dass koloniale Archive eine große Rolle in der Interpretation afrikanischer Geschichte, trotz ihrer sehr problematischen Insription Afrikas, spielen. Das Zeitalter der Informationstechnologie macht dies unabwendbar, da es nun möglich ist, das angehäuften Archiv des Faches zu studieren und nicht mehr neue Forschungsprojekte in Afrika kreiert werden müssen. Da sich dieser Prozess beschleunigt, erwarte ich von den Positionen afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft, dass sie den zunehmenden Druck spüren, ihren Bereich neu zu definieren. Für jene Positionen in afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte, die innerhalb des öffentlichen Schulsystems lokalisiert sind (mit anderen Worten die Mehrheit), wird ein reduziertes staatliches Budget Anlass dazu sein, Kürzungen in der Bildung und den Positionen im Fachbereich in staatlichen Schulen vorzunehmen und weitere Veränderungen in der akademischen Definition der geisteswissenschaftlichen Bildung könnten substantielle Veränderungen im Lehrplan bedingen, die den Fokus mehr auf den Diaspora-Kontext in „zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst“ legen.

In ungefähr zehn Jahren, angenommen dass diese Veränderung fortfährt, werden die meisten der aktuellen Positionen in afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte als „Globale Zeitgenössische Kunst/Weltkunst mit Fokus auf der afrikanischen Diaspora und Afrika“ (man bemerke die Reihenfolge in der Relevanz) neu definiert werden. Mit der Zeit wird die derzeitige Führungsschicht etablierter Gelehrter in den Schlüsselinstitutionen mit Programmen afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte in Rente gehen und die Akademiker, die sie in diesen Positionen ersetzen, annehmend, dass die Positionen selbst erhalten bleiben, werden von uns nicht länger als Afrikanisten erkennbar sein und das aktuelle Studium von Afrika selbst wird den Afrikawissenschaften und den Black Studies Programmen in unterschiedlichen Institutionen übrig bleiben, wenn diese denn überleben sollten. Das Studium „traditioneller afrikanischer Kunst“ wird erhalten bleiben, hauptsächlich auf Grund des Bedürfnisses den Wert der existierenden Sammlungen afrikanischer Kunst in den unterschiedlichen Museen und Privatsammlungen zu vermitteln, aber dieser Aspekt afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte wird zunehmend in einer wirtschaftlichen Analyse von Kunst und Kulturproduktion aufgehen. Kunstgeschichte vermittelt sowieso schon die Rezeption kultureller Objekte von großem wirtschaftlichen Wert und die finanziellen Potentiale im Kunsthandel (und den sich in Geld umwandelnden Diskurs in Kunstgeschichte selbst) wurden gerade erst angetippt. Dieser letztere Fokus könnte die Kunstgeschichte von ihrer derzeitigen Position als geisteswissenschaftliches Subjekt in eine schwankendere Position als ein sozialwissenschaftliches Fach mit Analyse darüber, wie wirtschaftlicher Wert für Kunstwerke und Kulturobjekte produziert wird, bringen. Wie auch immer, wird es die Marginalisierung von Afrika im akademischen und kritischen Diskurs allein dadurch vervollständigen, dass es als nützlicher Referenzrahmen eliminiert wird.

IV

Ich will diesen Essay mit einer deutlichen Aussage beenden: Ich bin ein Kunsthistoriker, der sich mit afrikanischer und afrikanischer Diaspora-Kunst von meinem Standort aus an einer berühmten amerikanischen Universität befasst. Man mag also darauf hinweisen, dass meine Kritik an Okwui Enwezors Charakterisierung zeitgenössischer Kunst als ein Diaspora-basierter Diskurs eigennützig sei, zumal ich genau wie Enwezor außerhalb von Afrika ansässig bin. Ich habe nicht behauptet, dass wir die Afrikaforschung den afrikanischen Wissenschaftlern oder in Afrika ansässigen Wissenschaftlern überlassen sollten, sondern dass unsere Auseinandersetzung mit zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst Afrika selbst als ein Ort transkulturellen Engagements und der Globalisierung in den Mittelpunkt stellen sollten. Die ganze Geschichte der Afrikaforschung an der Hochschule konzentrierte sich darauf, den Wert und die Relevanz afrikanischen Wissens gegenüber globalen Diskursen zu behaupten. Dieser Kampf ist in den meisten anderen Bereichen der Afrikaforschung im Großen und Ganzen erfolgreich, außer in der Kunstgeschichte, wo Afrika immer noch marginalisiert ist bezüglich der Forschung seiner kulturellen Produktion. Nur die Wissenschaft der indigenen afrikanischen Kunst versuchte, Afrika geschichtslos zu schreiben, indem sie den kulturellen Praktiken Unveränderlichkeit zugrunde legt (und indem sie ganze Kulturen durch einzelne Objekte repräsentiert, deren Produktion in einer dem afrikanischen Kontext fremden Art und Weise interpretiert werden). Die Rezeption afrikanischer Kunst war vom Kunstmarkt auf eine Weise abhängig, die die Reichweite der wertvollen und anerkannten kulturellen Objekte des Kontinents hauptsächlich auf afrikanische Kunstwerke in westlichen Sammlungen begrenzt: im Wesentlichen bedeutet dieser Prozess, die Herkunft muss an eine westliche Sammlung geknüpft sein, damit ein afrikanisches Kunstwerk irgendeinen signifikanten diskursiven oder finanziellen Wert erlangt. Vergleichbare afrikanische Kunstwerke in Afrika werden als weniger wertvoll angesehen. Es gibt ein ähnliches Problem in der Bezeichnung moderner afrikanischer Kunst als primitive Produktion, deren Ethos angeblich am stärksten durch Afrikaner ohne höhere Bildung vertreten ist, und die permanente Bezeichnung zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst als Praxis, deren beste Beispiele Künstler afrikanischer Abstammung geben, die hauptsächlich außerhalb von Afrika leben und arbeiten.

In jedem Fall ermöglicht die erdrückende Kontrolle der Diskurstechnologien der westlichen Wissenschaft, afrikanische Kunst so zu interpretieren, wie es der Westen vorschreibt. In dieser Hinsicht habe ich aufzuspüren versucht, wie scheinbar harmlose Interpretationen zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst wirklichen weltweiten Einfluss auf die wissenschaftliche Ausarbeitung afrikanischer Kunstgeschichte haben, und wie der Wert "zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst" durch den Standort in oder außerhalb Afrikas beeinträchtigt wird.

Die amerikanische Wissenschaft ist oft durch sozialen Druck und die Veränderungen der politischen Orientierung des Landes geprägt. Solche Veränderungen führten durch den Druck auf marginalisierte Amerikaner, ihre Geschichte und ihre gegenwärtigen Belange besser zu repräsentieren, zu unterschiedlichen Zeiten in der Geschichte zu Gründungen von schwarzen, afrikanischen, asiatischen, lateinamerikanischen und frauenspezifischen Studienprogrammen. Die negativen Veränderungen der Afrikanistik in der amerikanischen Wissenschaft haben wohl mit der verminderten Leistung der afrozentrischen Diskurse in der größeren amerikanischen Politiklandschaft zu tun. Während meine Analyse oben darauf hindeutet, dass afrikanische Kunstgeschichte (und andere Aspekte afrikanischer Wissenschaft vielleicht) schwierigen Zeiten entgegen geht, so sind sie keine Vorhersage der kommenden Entwicklungen. Sie verfolgen einige wichtige Veränderungen in unserer Definition zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst, und ich habe mich bemüht, diese Veränderungen mit der laufenden Geschichte und der Repräsentationspolitik Afrikas im Westen zu verknüpfen.

Das Bestreben der "Zeitgenössischen Kunst", aus der Umklammerung der Geschichte zu entkommen, was das October Journal als Versuch, "frei von historischer Bestimmung, begrifflicher Definition und kritischer Beurteilung zu treiben", bezeichnet, ist zum Scheitern verurteilt. Wenn uns derartige frühere Äußerungen über Kunst etwas lehren, ist es, dass alle Formen von Gegenwart irgendwann einmal historisch werden. In dieser Hinsicht ist der Versuch, "zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst" als ein Diaspora-Phänomen zu definieren, das die Realität zeitgenössischen Engagements auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent negiert, ist zum Scheitern verurteilt. Es ist ein Versuch, Afrika im globalen Diskurs zum Schweigen zu bringen und völlig irrig. Wir können nur hoffen, dass sich der Bereich mit der Zeit selbst aufrafft, konstruktive Kritik bezüglich des problematischen Blicks auf die zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst zu üben. Es wird immer einen entwicklungsfähigen Bereich in der afrikanischen Kunstgeschichte geben, der den Fokus auf eine konkrete afrikanische Auseinandersetzung mit der Gegenwart legt.

Übersetzt von Andrea Heister und Katja Vobiller

Endnoten:

- (1) Ich bin mir des dieser Formulierung innewohnenden Essentialismus eines hegemonischen „Westens“ bewusst. Ich verwende dies als Kurzdefinition des Konsortiums euro/amerikanischer Länder, die kollektiv als „Erste Welt“-Nationen identifiziert werden die überwiegend das globale Kapital und die Politik beherrschen.
 - (2) Vgl.: Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, "The Curator as Culture Broker: A Critique of the Curatorial Regime of Okwui Enwezor in Contemporary African Art". *Art South Africa*, 9/1, 2010: 34-37. Enwezors kuratorische Tätigkeit der letzten Dekade ist hauptsächlich für den Fokus der afrikanischen Kunstgeschichte auf die Rezeption zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst durch den Westen verantwortlich, mehr als auf dem aktuellen Kontext der Praxis zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst in Afrika.
 - (3) Terry Smith, "The State of Art History: Contemporary Art". *Art Bulletin*, XCII/4 (December 2010): 366. Smiths Bemühung, wie eine Geschichte der zeitgenössischen Kunst zu definieren ist, verdient Anerkennung, und meine Analyse hier greift einige Argumente aus seinem Artikel auf.
 - (4) Smith, 2010: 378.
 - (5) "A Questionnaire on the Contemporary." *October* 130 (Fall 2009): 3-124.
 - (6) Smith, 2010: 379.
 - (7) Smith, 2010: 380
 - (8) Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996.
- Ich möchte hinzufügen, dass die Bereitschaft der zeitgenössischen Kunst, die Geschichte zu verneinen und seine Bestrebung, in einer ewigen Zeitgenossenschaft zu leben, beides Zeichen einer gewollten Verneinung der Gegenwart und seiner Beziehung zur Vergangenheit sind, durch die der Westen für seine Vergangenheit und die aktuelle Ausbeutung von Afrikanern und anderen Völkern zur Rechenschaft gezogen werden könnte.
- (9) See Ogbechie, "The Curator as Culture Broker", 2010.
 - (10) "Our Literal Speed, presented by Theaster Gates". Performance at the College Art Association, February 13, 2010. <http://www.ourliteralspeed.com/content/ols007b.html>
 - (11) Diese Bücher sind Sidney Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2000; Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor's Shadow: Art, Politics and the Avant-Garde in Senegal 1960-1965*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004; Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, Ben Enwonwu: *The Making of an African Modernist*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008; und John Pepper, *Art and the Struggle for Apartheid*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009.
 - (12) Ogbechie, "The Curator as Culture Broker", 2010.

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Of Movements and Craftsmanship: Painting Fela Anikulapo Kuti

Kangsen Feka Wakai

Art movements are born in the strangest ways. For example, when Robert Fry, a British art lecturer and curator, coined the term Post-Impressionism, it was an attempt to promote a show—on short notice—of a rather myriad collection of recent French art for New York's Metropolitan Museum. The year was 1910.

Later, Fry would reveal in his notes that his goal was to exhibit something 'distinctive, dynamic and revolutionary.' According to Fry, as recounted in *Belinda Thomson's Movements In Modern Art: Post-Impressionism*, the movement he helped birth—by virtue of his naming and defining it—were 'a generation of artists who consciously emphasized and exploited the formal elements inherent in the medium—in the case of painting, the decorative elements of line and colour, line and composition— as the means whereby to convey or express emotion.'

While adhering to these fundamental tenets of the craft, the Post-Impressionists in a way avoided aspects they considered irrelevant to picture making; 'three-dimensional illusionism and narrative content.'

In fact, Fry would later argue, citing Cezanne then a relatively unknown painter whom he called the 'originator of the whole idea', that subject matter was irrelevant to aesthetic: an argument that does not necessarily hold true in all schools of artistic interpretation.

But the problem with movements—artistic or otherwise—post-impressionism being no different, is that as soon as they are born, often accompanied by critical ululations, their dead beds are already being made by those—usually critics—who were responsible for their midwifery in the first place.

In fact, most artistic movements are still born, or, at best born accidentally. They often enable the death of the preceding movement and are devoured by the next. Post-Impressionism was no different, and so was surrealism, modernism and cubism.

Thus, when French writer Andre Breton launched the surrealism movement in his *Manifeste du surrealisme* he was just re-echoing what Guillaume Apollinaire had described a few years earlier while reviewing Jean Cocteau's ballet *Parade*, as a truth beyond realism, 'a kind of sur-realism', which comes about when there is a combination of certain elements in a creative production: And that is how surrealism was born. Surrealism, being no different, died, and was devoured by the next trend.

But then, even though the Post-Impressionist artist—not that they necessarily viewed themselves as such—embraced the fundamentals of the medium while rejecting subject matter, what set them apart from their Impressionist ancestors, according to Thomson, was their ability to 'analyse and capture, through broken touches of colour, the way shifting light transformed landscape.'

The young Nigerian painter Abidemi Olowonira's portrait of the iconic Fela Ransom Kuti on 'san-san' encapsulates the post-impressionist's affinity for the 'formal elements' of the medium while rejecting their rejection of subject matter.

But, then again, Olowonira is not a Post-Impressionist. For one, artistic classification has been a primarily Western preoccupation, even though his work derives its strength from his efficient management of color and mood in a Post-Impressionist manner.

Olowonira's *Fela* is a disciplined composition and a luminous mélange of color, mood, tone and narrative. Yet painting Fela can be a risky venture because of the density and complexity of the Fela narrative.

And, because Fela was Fela—a colossus of charisma and talent, one is compelled to ask: How do you even begin to paint him? Do you paint him on stage in his underwear, breathing his essence into his cowried hone? Do you cast him alongside Shango, Yemoja, Ogun and other deities in the ethereal clouds of the hereafter? Do you paint his flickering shadow behind barbed wired cages with a pack of hounds barking at him? Or do you capture those subliminal notes in surrealistic brush-strokes? Do you imagine him with his coterie of queens? So, how do you paint that recipe of voice, microphone and sound that was Fela? How do you draw meaning from somewhat whose artistic sensibilities were at metaphorical yet palatable?

Summarizing Fela can be a challenging task, one that even his own cousin, Wole Soyinka, approaches with caution—cognizant of the layers that made up the whole.

Fela, according to Soyinka's memoir *You Must Set Forth at Dawn*, was at once simple yet complex; a bundle of hope silk-wrapped in despair.

"Outside of public adulation, however, my mind remained retentive of a decades-old image of Fela, a private one...He had a faraway look, filled with discontent, and I thought I read in those eyes a longing that they could will the pungent fumigation that emerged from between his lips into a transforming agent for a nation's putrefactions, yet acknowledging that he was powerless to effect this dream, that the mocking immensity of the task would forever render him tormented, inconsolable."

It is this 'mocking intensity' of the task at hand—in Fela's Nigeria and elsewhere on the African continent—which compels theorists like Achille Mbembe to conclude, as he did in his treatise *On the Postcolony* that:

"...power, in the postcolony, is carnivorous. It grips its subjects by the throat and squeezes them to the point of crushing their bones, making their eyes pop out of the socket, making them weep blood. It cuts them in pieces, and, sometimes, eats them raw."

And indeed, Fela was gripped by the throat by his own government, his body scarred after every incarceration. But Fela never wept—at least not in the way his tormentors wished he would. Instead, his impact would leap from spinning records and blaring speakers and land on unsuspecting canvasses whilst inhabit the imaginations of others. Like the Pharaoh that he claimed to be in his later years, his legacy—hidden from sight—is guarded in a crypt within the abstract pyramids of the creative muse.

Olowonira's tribute to the Afrobeat icon, a reincarnation of a bronze toned Fela with microphone in hand, almost munching on it—a frown on his face—rendered visible by the contours of sand glued to the canvass giving the portraiture its 3D character. In *Fela*, Olowonira, reflects, and then applies a synthesis of artistic influences, which when married to the trained hand of an attentive student, has delivered an essentially disciplined, straightforward but befitting tribute to an icon of Fela's stature.

But then again, it is paintings like Olowonira's Fela, modernist in essence, yet apart from the world from which such classifications arise in the first place that seem to ridicule the idea of classification in the first place. As a second generation academic descendant of the great African-American muralist John T. Biggers, Olowonira, a student of Biggers's protégé, Harvey Johnson, seems to have imbibed the Biggers ethos of seeking that proper balance between subject matter and craft.

With this in mind, is it then possible to appraise African art from a rational and objective standpoint without the accoutrement of its history and the stark realities of the contemporary? It is a question that elicits even more questions than answers, the kind of questions Mbembe [based on Heidegger's reflections on the *Dasein*] poses about the postcolony:

"...how is it possible to live while going to death, while being somehow already dead? And how can one *live in death*, be already dead, while being-there—while not having necessarily left the world or being part of the spectre—and when the shadow that overhangs existence has not disappeared, but on the contrary weighs ever more heavily?"

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Von Bewegung und Handwerkskunst: Painting Fela Anikulapo Kuti

Kangsen Feka Wakai

Kunstströmungen entstehen auf ungewöhnlichste Art und Weise. Als beispielsweise der britische Kunstdozent und Kurator Robert Fry den Begriff „Post-Impressionismus“ ins Leben rief, war dies der Versuch, kurzfristig eine eher ausufernde Sammlung jüngster französischer Kunst in das New York Metropolitan Museum zu bringen. Das war im Jahr 1910.

Später sollte Fry in seinen Aufzeichnungen enthüllen, dass es sein Ziel war, etwas „Anderes, Dynamisches und Revolutionäres“ auszustellen. Nach Fry ist der Post-Impressionismus – dem Fry durch Namensgebung und Definition auf die Welt geholfen hat, eine Generation von Künstlern, die konsequent die formalen Elemente eines Mediums – in diesem Fall die Malerei – herausarbeiteten und erforschten. Es ging ihnen dabei um die dekorativen Elemente von Linie und Farbe, Linie und Komposition, die ihrer Meinung nach Emotionen fördern und ausdrücken.

Obwohl die Post-Impressionisten an diesem fundamentalen Grundsätzen ihres Handwerks festhielten, vermieden sie auch Aspekte, die sie als irrelevant für das Entwerfen eines Bildes erachteten, so zum Beispiel ‚dreidimensionale Entwürfe und narrativen Inhalt‘.

Später argumentierte Fry mit einem Zitat Cezannes, damals ein relativ unbekannter Maler, den Fry als den Erfinder der ganzen Idee sah, dass das Subjekt irrelevant für ästhetische Darstellungsweise war: ein Argument, dass nicht allen Schulen künstlerischer Interpretation stand halten sollte.

Das Problem aller künstlerischen Strömungen – den Post-Impressionismus mit inbegriffen – ist, dass die Geburt einer Kunstrichtung vom Geheul der gleichen Kritiker bewirkt wird, die später auch für ihren Untergang sorgen werden.

Tatsächlich sind die meisten Kunstrichtungen mehr aus einem Zufall heraus geboren. Oftmals leiten sie das Ende der vorangegangenen Bewegung ein und werden ihrerseits von der nachfolgenden Bewegung verschlungen. Beim Post-Impressionismus verhielt es sich nicht anders, ebenso beim Surrealismus, Modernismus und Kubismus.

Auf diese Weise ahmte der französische Schriftsteller Andre Breton, der die surrealistische Bewegung durch sein Manifeste du surrealisme einleitete, Guillaume Apollinaire nach, der einige Jahre zuvor Jean Cocteau's Ballett Parade als eine Wahrheit jenseits des Realismus – eine Art Surrealismus – bezeichnet hatte. Diese entstehe, wenn eine Kombination bestimmter Elemente in einer kreativen Produktion zusammen kommen: So ward der Surrealismus geboren. Surrealismus wiederum, verging wie die Bewegungen davor und wurde vom nächsten Trend überholt.

Auch wenn sich post-impressionistische Künstler nicht als solche bezeichneten, unterschieden sie sich von ihren impressionistischen Vorgängern dadurch, dass sie die Wesensmerkmale eines Mediums in den Vordergrund stellten und dabei gleichzeitig thematische Inhalte vernachlässigten. Laut Thomson besaßen sie starke analytische Fähigkeiten und konnten mit Hilfe durchbrochener Farben und sich veränderndem Licht Landschaft transformieren.

Das Portrait des jungen nigerianischen Malers Abidemi Olowonira von der Ikone Fela Ransom Kuti beinhaltet die post- impressionistische Affinität für Formalelemente eines Mediums und für die Zurückweisung eines Themas.

Gleichzeitig ist Olowonira kein Post-Impressionist. Künstlerische Klassifikation ist von jeher ein westliche Tätigkeit, auch wenn seine Arbeiten ihre Stärke aus dem effizienten Management von Farbe und Stimmung in post-impressionistischer Manier entnehmen.

Olowonira's Fela ist eine disziplinierte Komposition und eine geistreiche Mischung aus Farbe, Stimmung, Tönen und Erzählungen. Gleichzeitig ist das Gemälde "Fela" ein riskantes Unterfangen aufgrund der Dichte und Komplexität der Fela- Erzählung.

Und natürlich vor allem, weil Fela nun eben Fela war – ein charismatischer und talentierter Koloss, so dass man gezwungen ist, zu fragen: Wie sollen wir überhaupt anfangen, ihn zu malen? Sollte man ihn in Unterhose auf der Bühne malen, wie er dabei ist sein ganzes Wesen in sein Kaurihonwerkzeug zu atmen? Oder sollte man ihn wie Shango, Yemoja, Ogun oder anderen Gottheiten der ewigen Hölle darstellen? Malt man seine tänzelnden Schatten vor dem Hintergrund von Stacheldrahtkäfigen und einer Horde Hunden, die ihn anklaffen? Oder fangen wir diese unterschwelligten Nuancen in surrealistischen Pinselstrichen ein? Stellt man sich ihn mit seiner Gefolgschaft aus Königen vor? Wie also malt man eine Stimme, Mikrophone und Sound, der Fela verkörpert? Wie zieht man aus etwas Bedeutung, dessen künstlerische Sensibilität metaphorisch und dennoch schmachhaft ist?

Eine Zusammenfassung Felas ist eine anspruchsvolle Aufgabe, so dass selbst sein eigener Cousin Wole Soyinka, sich ihr mit Vorsicht nähert – sich der Schichten die das Ganze ausmachen, bewusst.

Fela war laut Soyinka's Memoiren *You Must Set Forth at Dawn* zunächst simple, dann komplex, ein Bündel Hoffnung, verzweifelt in Seide eingewickelt.

(„Unabhängig von der öffentlichen Beweihräucherung, blieb ein Jahrzehnte altes Bild von Fela in meiner Wahrnehmung haften, ein sehr privates Bild...Er hatte eine Blick, der in die Ferne schweifte, erfüllt von Unbehagen und ich meinte, in seinen Augen das Bedürfnis zu erkennen sich in durch die scharfe Ausräucherung, die zwischen seinen Lippen hervortrat, in einen Agent nationaler Fäulnis zu transformieren, weil er erkannte, dass er machtlos war, seinen Traum zu realisieren und ihn die immense Verspottung der unlösbaren Aufgabe für immer schikanieren und trostlos zurücklassen würde...“)
Es ist diese ‚mocking intensity‘ der anfallenden Aufgabe – in Felas Nigeria und anderswo auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent – welcher Theoretiker wie Achille Mbembe nötigt in seinen Abhandlung *On the Postcolony* zu sagen, dass

(„...Macht in der postkolonialen Zeit fleischfressend ist. Sie, die Macht, packt ihre Opfer beim Kragen und zerrückt sie bis die Knochen brechen, Augen ausfallen und Blut ausströmt. Macht zerschlägt in ihre Opfer in Stücke und frisst sie roh.“)

Tatsächlich wurde Fela von seiner eigenen Regierung am Kragen gepackt, sein Körper mit jeder Inhaftierung mehr vernarbt. Aber Fela schwankte nie, jedenfalls nicht derart, wie seine Peiniger es sich gewünscht hätten. Im Gegenteil, sein Einfluss wuchs mit jeder Platte und lauten Fürsprechern und unerwarteten Mitstreitern indem er die Vorstellung anderer bewohnte. Wie der Pharao, für den er sich in seinen späten Jahren hielt, ist seine Legende, von der Öffentlichkeit versteckt, gut bewacht in einer Krypta abstrakter Pyramiden der kreativen Muse.

Olowonira's Tribut an die afrikanische Ikone, ist eine Reinkarnation in Form eines bronzenen Fela mit Mikrofon in der Hand, die fast daran knabbert und dabei einen finsternen Blick aufgesetzt hat, was durch aufgetragenen Sand auf der Leinwand einem 3-D Effekt nahe kommt. Olowonira reflektiert in seiner Arbeit Fela die synergetische Anwendung künstlerischer Einflüsse, die durch die trainierte Hand des aufmerksamen Schülers zu einer essentiellen und direkten Ikone von Felas Statur wird.

Gleichzeitig sind es Gemälde wie Fela von Olowonira, die in ihrem Wesen modernistisch sind und dennoch weit entfernt von jeglicher Klassifikation im engeren Sinne und sogar die Idee der Klassifikation ad absurdum zu führen scheinen. Als Vertreter der zweiten Generation des großartigen afroamerikanischen Wandmalers John T. Biggers, scheint Olowonira, ein Schüler Biggers's Schützling Harvey Johnson, Biggers Ethos angenommen zu haben und die damit verbundenen Suche nach Balance zwischen Gegenstand und Handwerk.

Ist es eingedenk dieser Tatsache möglich, afrikanische Kunst von einem rationalen und objektiven Standpunkt aus zu begutachten, ohne den Einfluss der Geschichte und starken Beziehungen zur Gegenwart? Dies ist eine Frage, die wiederum mehr Fragen als Antworten aufwirft und zwar Fragen der Art wie sie Mbembe – basierend auf Heidegger's Reflektion über das Dasein – zum Postkolonialismus stellte.

(„...wie ist es möglich zu leben und gleichzeitig dem Tode entgegen zu gehen und gleichzeitig schon tot zu sein? Und wie kann jemand im Tode leben während er noch hier ist und die Welt noch nicht zwangsläufig verlassen hat? Wie ist es möglich, dass der Schatten, der über einer Existenz hängt noch nicht verschwunden ist, aber schwerer wiegt als die Existenz selbst?“)

Übersetzt von Claudia Lamas Cornejo

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Reflections on 1910-2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective

An exhibition on a century of South African art

Riason Naidoo

The South African National Gallery's initial schedule for 2010 was looking like the schedule of many other art and cultural institutions in the country: it was about football. At the National Gallery we had numerous requests from abroad to show high profile foreign artists in the year of the FIFA World Cup.

But I thought that if I was a visitor to a foreign country I would want to get a glimpse of that country's art and to see how the context of the country – the politics, the economics, the social or the historical – had (in)formed the work produced there. When we look at the art of the Renaissance today we can see the influence of the church and the state on art produced during that era. On a recent visit to Leipzig in the former East Germany, I visited the art museum there and it was a treat to see the art produced during the time of the GDR and how that directly or indirectly linked with the political context.

So it seemed inappropriate to me to show celebrity foreign artists at the South African National Gallery, who could choose to show anywhere in the world, anytime they wanted. Historically South African art has been under the international radar, and so this was an opportunity to reflect on our art, and showcase our artists. This was the first shift that had to be made towards the exhibition.

With a store of over nine thousand artworks in the national gallery collection, we cleared the schedule and decided to reflect on our stories. At the same time it was not just about putting up an exhibition showcasing a century of South African art. It was also an opportunity to tie in a new vision for the gallery with the exhibition. It was a moment to address longstanding and pertinent issues.

For example how do we address the legacy of apartheid ideologies that determined which artworks were collected and which exhibitions were shown?

But if we say that we are the National Gallery, then the next question is how representative is our collection of the nation's art? I wanted to move away from a kind of geographic parochialism, away from a Cape Town centred exhibition, in a show that we could say was truly representative of artists and works from around the country; an exhibition that celebrated the richness and diversity of cultures on offer, while engaging with the history of the country over this period. So it was not simply about raising the National Gallery flag, but about meaningfully and sincerely working with other museum collections and learning from them and not being afraid to show the gaps in our own collection, for the benefit of visitors, for research, for students and learners.

And so there was a drive to go out and look at other collections around the country. With this in mind, I travelled around with Joe Dolby, long time curator of works on paper at the National Gallery. We visited the big municipal collections as well as university, corporate, and some significant private collections. We also looked to the main commercial galleries in Cape Town and Johannesburg for oversights in our contemporary collection.

I grew up in Durban and worked at the Durban Art Gallery so I was familiar with some of the collection there, and I had been a regular visitor at Johannesburg Art Gallery during the seventeen years I studied and worked in Johannesburg, so I knew some of that collection. But to go through the storerooms at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Durban Art Gallery, the Tatham Art Gallery, the Pretoria Art Museum – was revealing in the story of how art was collected around the country. This yielded a number of pleasant surprises. Jabulani Ntuli's drawings (c.1940s) from the Killy Campbell Collection (University of KwaZulu Natal), Richard Baholo's painting *What a Horror!* (1992) from the Johannesburg Art Gallery, Bongi Dhlomo's abstract painting *Serving Time*, (2004) from the Standard Bank collection, Harold Strachan's *Nature Morte*, (1970) from the Durban Art Gallery – these were unexpected. Most of the collections were strong in collecting artists from their cities and provinces, as maybe one would expect.



One of my main intentions was that someone walking through the gallery would get an idea of who the important artists were and are; that a visitor would get to see works from around the country, and would also get a sense of place via the history, which I find is one of the most interesting themes when talking about South Africa. While the intention of the show was to also showcase prominent artists and some iconic works of art in the permanent collection such as Jane Alexander's *Butcher Boys* (1985/86) and Andries Botha's *Alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991), many of the loans were intended to open a window on some less known artists and pieces.

Also, how do we speak about the diversity of cultures through aesthetics in the country, about artists from different communities, about art production through formal and informal schools within the context of privileged racial access to art education; and where do these all fit in to the larger narrative of what we call South African art?

Another important issue was how do we get audiences who have never been to the National Gallery to see their own histories (and themselves) reflected in the space? For long considered elitist and exclusive, part of the challenge of how to broaden our audiences and invite communities to take ownership of the National Gallery relates directly to the exhibitions that we show and the artworks that we collect. How do previously marginalised individuals, artists and audiences see themselves, their histories, their cultures, their art reflected in the National Gallery? So it was also about changing the image of the National Gallery, creating a new space where all kinds of people from different backgrounds (of culture, nationality, race, class, in levels of education, etc.) could feel more at home; that this was also *their* National Gallery.

These were all questions that I was also occupied with.

Back to the exhibition and the thinking behind it. With a show like this we are dealing with the general chronology and a grand structure. For instance the rooms were allocated a variety of themes. Some were chronological like looking at the period roughly from the time after the union from around 1910-1930; or the articulations of an early modernism from 1930-1960; or the photographs from DRUM magazine, which at its peak in the 1950s was distributing 450,000 copies a month across the continent; or the informal art school Polly Street in Johannesburg, where Bill Ainslie and Cecil Skotnes guided many talented black artists like Durant Sihlali and Louis Maqhubela; or Rorkes Drift, that other prominent training ground for black artists, especially for work on paper, that produced the likes of Lionel Davis, Bongi Dhlomo-Mautloa and Azaria Mbatha; or the theme of abstraction, which has been so contentious in the history of South African art; or the period we now refer to as Resistance Art, which looked at the political where artists of all backgrounds both black and white and all shades of brown, took on the apartheid state with their art, their posters and photography and inspired by the slogan of using 'culture as a weapon of the struggle'. I won't go into details of each art movement here because that would require some detail but each was significant in the telling of the South African narratives of art and history. And significantly half of the gallery – 6 rooms – was allocated to art of the last twenty years.

Recognising the perils of nationalism, and its manifestations, I also wanted to be critical of the South Africa in the now. I am reminded of the graffiti painted on a wall on the corner of Hunter and Cavendish streets in Yeoville, Johannesburg. It quotes from Nelson Mandela's 1994 inauguration speech, "Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another." Fourteen years later, the xenophobic attacks left many bodies in its wake and thousands mentally scarred. With this in mind I also included a selection from the exhibition *US*, curated by Bettina Malcomess and Simon Njami, that featured a handful of mainly young South African artists, including Gugulective commenting on the issue and bringing the making of art in this country full circle.



The title of the exhibition *1910-2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective* was also meant to reflect the intentions of the show. 1910 marks the year of the Union of South Africa, the moment of the formation of a colonial nation state under the British Empire. 2010 refers to the contemporary, the now, the moment of the FIFA World Cup in South Africa, a first for the mega global sporting event on the continent. Pierneef was one of those South African artists that started to articulate a South African brand of modernism. While trained in the Netherlands, and no doubt influenced by European traditions and influences, his work responded to the particularities of the South African landscapes. He was part of that generation that started to articulate a fresh, local formal language. Based in Pretoria (and the Pretoria art Museum) has an interesting and varied collection of his work, his work has been associated with an Afrikaner nationalist interpretation of the local landscape in the first half of the last century. Gugulective (an art collective of young black artists from Gugulethu, the township of on the outskirts of Cape Town) is a marker for the contemporary, of the present, and possibly the future. Time will tell. So the title itself marks the timeline that links to significant moments in the country's history, the beginnings of a local modern idiom to the contemporary and refers to geography from the capital in Tshwane (previously Pretoria) to a township in Cape Town today.

So while we have a broad chronology and the major themes there were also other intentions in the curation. I did not want it to be a tedious staid chronology. Where's the adventure in that? An important idea I was playing with was different takes on the past; that if you ask a diverse group of South Africans about the history of this country you are likely to get, in return, many different versions of that history. I wanted to put those different responses next to each other, to set up relationships between them, to juxtapose them.

For example, you've got JH Pierneef's painting of the Union Buildings (1938) – the South African parliament buildings built in 1910 and designed by Sir Herbert Baker – and Willie Bester's bench after the 1913 Land Act (1995) – the Land Act brought racial territorial segregation into law and reserved over 80% of land for Whites, who made up less than 20% of the total population – directly opposite each other. Pierneef's painting brings the artist, Baker and the Union all together. You also have Anton Momberg's maquette of Gandhi in close proximity to the same Pierneef artwork. Gandhi lived in the country for twenty-one years from 1893-1914, at the same time as the formation of the Union, so this is a direct connection to the Union Buildings and the British history in the country. The intention was not to obliterate the Pierneefs or Afrikaner history, or the Union, or British colonialism – we all acknowledge these things – they are part of our history. But what *else* was happening?

So apart from the Maggie Laubers and the Irma Sterns interpreting South African landscapes, how did black artists such as the Moses Tladis and the Jabulani Ntulis differ in representing the landscapes, their own environments and their own people? How does their work differ in the broader discussion on the representation of blackness? This was another major thread that ran throughout the exhibition: the politics of representation. How do the ethnographic and scientific photographic studies of Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin differ to these portraits by Gerard Bhengu and Simon Nguni? And how do these relate to the emergence of black photographers working for DRUM magazine in the 1950s, whom for the first time give insight into intimate instances of black urban life. So while we have a room foregrounding the art from 1910-1930 for instance there is already another major theme on the politics of representation working alongside. That was definitely a strategy on my part, so that someone walking through a room gets different takes, multiple voices, rather than a master narrative.

Also there were visual connections that sprang up that I could not resist. Pierneef's *Karibib* (1924) next to Wayne Barker's *Blue Colonies* (1995), a parody on Pierneef, which is easy to see when these works are next to each other, was also about introducing an element of play, while still raising serious issues.



Portrait of Ali Bhai (c.1950s) by Ebrahim Badsha is shown together with Bertram Dumbleton's *Abdul*, (c. 1942) and Edward Roworth's *White Wall on Signal Hill*, (c.1920) (Roworth was also the first director of the National Gallery in 1930) touch on the presence of presence of Muslim communities in the country. Elsewhere in the show works by Faiza Galdhari and Chris Ledochowski reflected more contemporary expressions on the same theme.

As we know art does not operate in isolation so the intention was to simultaneously reflect on important moments as well as attitudes of different eras.

Tretchikoff's figure of the *Herb Seller* (1948) was set against the backdrop of United Party and National Party election posters. This was a turning point in South African politics that brought the National Party into power in 1948 and that led directly to apartheid policies being enforced. Tretchikoff, a Russian emigrant to South Africa, was an art phenomenon in the country. He sold thousands of prints of his paintings in unconventional places like department stores in the 1960s and 1970s which made their way to millions of households both within the country and outside of it. And his appeal cut across race and class – very important in the context of apartheid South Africa. Because of a certain genre of his work that was regarded as kitsch, the artist was an outcast of the South African art establishment. This was the first instance of a Tretchikoff being shown at the National Gallery.

So juxtapositions, multiple layers and narratives, and visual connections were the threads of the exhibition.

Well known artists like Gavin Younge and Sue Williamson shared limited hanging space with fairly obscure names like John Roome and Vedant Nanackchand. Zulu earplugs sparked off a relationship with Kevin Atkinson's *Arena* (1975). A similar affair developed between the group of Ndebele beadworks and Georgina Gratrix's *Les Demoiselles D'Avignon* (2008).

Harold Rubin, Gerard Sekoto, Gavin Jantjes and Harold Strachan offer very different takes on the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, a violent turning point in apartheid history. A range of expressions from the likes of Colin Richards, Tyronne Appollis, Dikobe Martins, Jane Alexander, Paul Stopforth and Derek Bauer on Steve Biko's murder in 1975 speak volumes about the diversity of art production in South African society.

Inspired by the debate sparked by Albie Sachs's paper critical of "art as an instrument of political struggle" the same room also shows Deborah Bell's *Lover's in the Cinema* (1985) and other works from the time related to the universal themes of romance and love, something that we can all identify with.

Archival posters from the Community Arts Project (CAP), housed the University of Western Cape, provide context to the activism of the violent 1980s prior to Mandela's release. Photography also plays a very important documentary role at this time as illustrated by the range from the Afrapix collective. The exhibition also closes traces the development of photography in the country, and David Goldblatt's trajectory from *Family on Northbeach, Durban, June 1949* to a work of an old mineshaft simply entitled *12 July 2003*.

Progress Matubaku's *Something for Growth* (1995), Jackson Nkumanda's charming work entitled *The Presidential Inauguration* (1994) and Joe Ratcliff's *Vlakplaas* (1999) are reflections on voting for the first time, the inauguration of the first democratically elected government in 1994 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission respectively, which are all in close proximity. These shared the same room with other outstanding works from the period by key artists such as Penny Siopis, Clive Van den Berg, Johannes Segogela and Noria Mabasa.

During the curation many smaller themes made their way into the show. Indigenous initiation rites, influences after colonial Dutch masters, the influence of San art, landscape, afternoon tea, depictions of township life, humour, the formation of a new national identity, representation and reflections of Africa, romance and sexual politics, domesticity, AIDS, and identity politics give some idea of the sub themes that were operating in contemporary section, which were not pre-scribed, rather, they emerged from the selected works themselves. This was an important process of the curation.



Both Zanele Maholi's photo *Katlego Mashiloane and Nosipho Lavuto Ext. 2, Lakeside, Johannesburg 2007*, and Pierre Fouché's *Kiss*, (2008) in crochet lace depict homosexual couples in tender embrace that are visually echoed by Tracey Rose's *The Kiss* (2001). Muholi, who describes herself, first and foremost as a lesbian activist, had been the centre of media attention when the Minister of Arts and Culture Lulu Xingwana had found offensive her photograph of a nude lesbian couple lying in bed together. The media debate surrounding the furore also gave Muholi's career a gentle shove in the right direction.

Works by Brett Murray (*Xhosa*, 2002) and Sthembiso Sibisi (*Going Home*, 2005) use humour to poignantly reflect on the local condition. Stuart Bird's tongue-in-cheek *Zuma Biscuits* (2007) encapsulates the moment preceding the 2008 national elections, a time of internal power struggles in the ruling party. This work, which is evocative of the ice zoo biscuits, depicts four symbols (a Zulu warrior's shield, a shower, a mini skirt, and an Ak-47 machine gun) each relating to Zuma's (the current president) public portrayal at the time.

Ed Young's *Bruce Gordon [Torino]* (2005) may have had special place for Cape Town art groupies recalling the conceptual piece from 2003, where a bar owner (a found object) was purchased by the National Gallery and the acquisition number tattooed on the artwork (or bar owner's arm). This particular piece on show is the suit made for and that the artwork wore when it was loaned to the Triennale in Torino. The artwork (Bruce Gordon) recalls three weeks of non-stop parties, drinking lots of alcohol and meeting lots of women.

The logistics were a piece of art in itself. We scheduled the three major exhibitions (*Strengths and Convictions*, *Dada South?* and the *Alexis Preller*) to simultaneously close at the end of February. The gallery closed its doors from the 1 March – 15 April; allowing for the concurrent de-installation of the three large shows that occupied the whole gallery.

In the meantime I also had a meeting with the Bailey Trust that oversees the collection of over 400 paintings and works on paper donated to the National Gallery in 1947. These include the likes of William Turner, Thomas Gainsborough, George Stubbs and Joshua Reynolds, etc. – English artists from the colonial era. One of the conditions of the bequest the collection is permanently on display. And for the first time in 63 years the Bailey collection was taken down.

After two and a half weeks of de-installation the whole National Gallery had a fresh coat of paint was completely empty of artwork. Some staff joked that the gallery had never looked so good! The loans arrived at once from all over the country. Then the curation of integrating the loans and the permanent collection started in earnest.

The programme for the opening evening was also meant to indicate a shift in thinking. Cameroonian born guest speaker Achille Mbembe (Research professor in politics and history at Wits University and author of *On the Postcolony*) opened the exhibition, followed by music by a Mozambiquan band. The opening also attracted a much more diverse and younger audience than previously.

Of course no art show is ever complete without the critics' part in it. The South African Art Times ran an article on the cover for the May edition boldly emblazoned with the headline *SA National Gallery's reputation thrashed for 2010 show*. Lloyd Pollak penned the piece which read, "It is apparent that Naidoo, who has piteous little curatorial knowledge, is out of his dept. As none of his fellow curators have ever been responsible for a pratfall of this magnitude, one can only conclude that he refused to heed their advice, and consequently one entertains the gravest fears vis-à-vis the future of the gallery under the present incumbent."

A week earlier, Miles Keylock wrote a review entitled *Out with the Old* (Mail & Guardian, 23-29 April 2010), "It what can only be described as a revolution the National Gallery has been entirely rehung. Gone are the hallowed halls of 'putrid' colonial treasures. Gone are the same tired artworks eternally oozing out the permanent collection."

Gerhard Schoeman wrote in *Art South Africa* (Vol 08, Issue 04, Winter 2010), "A reflective selection? What is all this clutter then? Where beyond the disingenuous platitudes about insight into the 'soul of the nation', is the lucid theme, the Adriane's thread, the astute discernment, the rhyme? While Anne Sasson writing for *artcritical.com* (29 June 2010) a New York based online journal wrote, "There is color, wit and gravitas, not only within the works themselves, but in the unpredictable relationships set up between them. There were many other reviews too – see full list online - <http://izikomuseums.com/blog/?p=279>.

Bronwyn Law Viljoen, the new editor of the *Art South Africa* magazine, questioned the outcry in the two main publications *The South African Art Times* and *Art South Africa* in an interview with me published on *Art South Africa* online. She suggested that some of these reviews were particularly visceral and disguised as being about aesthetics, composition and curatorial decisions.

Interestingly at the conference the National Gallery held at the end of the exhibition panellist Lloyd Pollak, in responding to a question from one of the members of the audience about ethics in reviewing the show, indicated that one or two of the National Gallery curators and some of the Friends of the National Gallery approached him privately to say that the new director was not heeding their advice. So I'm not sure how to read that and to what degree that influenced his review of the exhibition. It does pose all kinds of questions and is very revealing of how relationships and old networks of power function both within the National Gallery and outside of it and how these are entwined to maintain the status quo.

It is interesting to note however that the National Gallery doubled its figures for the same period the previous year compared to other museums in Cape Town that experienced a 2% drop in figures.

Riason Naidoo is the curator of the exhibition 1910-2010: From Pierneef to Gugulective that was held at the Iziko South African National Gallery from the 16 April – 3 October 2010. He is also director of the South African National Gallery, part of Iziko Museums in Cape Town.

Reflektionen 1910–2010: Von Pierneef bis Gugulective Ein Jahrhundert südafrikanischer Kunst – eine Ausstellung

Riason Naidoo

Das ursprüngliche Programm der Südafrikanischen Nationalgalerie sah 2010 so aus wie das Programm vieler anderer Kunst- und Kulturinstitutionen im Land: es ging um Fußball. In der Nationalgalerie hatten wir viele Anfragen aus dem Ausland, bekannte ausländische Künstler im Jahr der FIFA Weltmeisterschaft zu zeigen.

Aber ich dachte, als Besucher eines fremden Landes würde ich gerne einen kleinen Einblick in die Kunst dieses Landes bekommen und sehen wollen, wie der Kontext des Landes – die Politik, die Wirtschaft, das Gesellschaftliche, das Historische etc. – die dort produzierte Arbeit beeinflusst hat. Wenn wir uns die Kunst der Renaissance heute anschauen, können wir den Einfluss der Kirche und die Stellung der Kunst in jener Zeit sehen. Neulich bei einem Besuch in Leipzig im ehemaligen Ostdeutschland ging ich in das Kunstmuseum. Es war ein Vergnügen, die zu DDR-Zeiten produzierte Kunst zu sehen und wie sie direkt oder indirekt mit dem politischen Kontext in Verbindung stand.

So schien es mir unangebracht, in der südafrikanischen Galerie berühmte ausländische Künstler zu zeigen, die ausstellen können, wo und wann immer sie wollen. Historische südafrikanische Kunst war unter internationaler Beobachtung – eine günstige Gelegenheit, über unsere Kunst nachzudenken und unsere Künstler zu präsentieren.

Mit über 9.000 Kunstwerken in der Sammlung der Nationalgalerie verwarfen wir das Programm und entschieden uns, über unsere Geschichte nachzudenken. Gleichzeitig ging es nicht einfach darum, eine Ausstellung aufzubauen, die ein Jahrhundert südafrikanischer Kunst zeigte. Es war auch eine Gelegenheit, die Galerie in ein neues Licht zu rücken. Es war der Moment, Altlasten und entsprechende Punkte anzusprechen.

Wie gehen wir beispielsweise mit dem Erbe der Apartheid-Ideologien um, die festlegten, welche Kunstwerke gesammelt wurden und welche Ausstellungen gezeigt werden?

Aber wenn wir sagen, wir sind die Nationalgalerie, dann ist die nächste Frage: wie repräsentativ ist unsere Sammlung nationaler Kunst? Ich wollte weg von der geografischen Engstirnigkeit, weg von einer auf Kapstadt bezogenen Ausstellung, hin zu einer Ausstellung, die wirklich für Künstler und Arbeiten vom ganzen Land repräsentativ ist; eine Ausstellung, die den vorhandenen Reichtum und die kulturelle Vielfalt feiert, während sie sich auf die Geschichte des Landes in diesem Zeitraum einlässt. Es ging also nicht einfach darum, die Flagge der Nationalgalerie zu hissen, sondern um sinnvolles und ernsthaftes Arbeiten mit anderen Museumssammlungen, von ihnen zu lernen und keine Angst zu haben, die Lücken in unserer Sammlung zu zeigen, zum Vorteil für die Besucher, für die Forschung, für Studenten und Schüler.

Und so entstand der Antrieb, hinauszugehen und sich andere Sammlungen im ganzen Land anzusehen. Auf meiner Reise wurde ich von Joe Dolby, dem langjährigen Papierrestaurator der Nationalgalerie, begleitet. Wir besuchten die großen städtischen Sammlungen ebenso wie Universitäts-, Unternehmens- und einige bedeutende private Sammlungen. Außerdem sahen wir uns bei den wichtigsten kommerziellen Galerien in Kapstadt und Johannesburg nach Lücken in unserer zeitgenössischen Sammlung um.

Ich bin in Durban aufgewachsen und habe in der Durban Art Gallery gearbeitet, weshalb mir die Sammlung ein wenig vertraut war, und ich war ein regelmäßiger Besucher in der Johannesburg Art Gallery in den 17 Jahren in denen ich in Johannesburg studierte und arbeitete, so dass ich die Sammlung etwas kannte. Aber durch die Depots der Johannesburg Art Gallery, der Durban Art Gallery, der Tatham Art Gallery, des Pretoria Art Museum zu gehen, war aufschlussreich hinsichtlich dessen, wie Kunst im Land gesammelt wurde. Es gab einige angenehme Überraschungen: Jabulani Ntulis Zeichnungen (c.1940s) aus der Killy Campbell Collection (University of KwaZulu Natal), Richard Baholos Gemälde *What a Horror!* (1992) aus der Johannesburg Art Gallery, Bongi Dhlomos abstraktes Gemälde *Serving Time* (2004) aus der Standard Bank Collection, Harold Strachans *Nature Morte* (1970) aus der Durban Art Gallery – das hatten wir nicht erwartet. Die meisten Sammlungen sammelten hauptsächlich Künstler aus ihren Städten und Provinzen, so wie man vielleicht erwarten würde.

Einer meiner wichtigsten Vorsätze war, dass man beim Gang durch die Galerie eine Vorstellung davon bekommt, wer die wichtigen Künstler waren und sind, dass ein Besucher Arbeiten aus dem ganzen Land zu sehen und ein Gefühl für den Ort mittels der Geschichte bekommt, was meiner Ansicht nach eines der interessantesten Themen ist, wenn über Südafrika gesprochen wird. Während das Ziel der Ausstellung war, bedeutende Künstler und einige Arbeiten mit Kultsymbolcharakter aus der ständigen Sammlung zu zeigen, solche wie Jane Alexanders *Butcher Boys* (1985/86) und Andries Bothas *Alleenspraak in Paradys* (1991), sollten viele der Leihgaben ein Fenster zu einigen weniger bekannten Künstlern und Arbeiten öffnen.

Außerdem – wie sprechen wir über die Vielfalt der Kulturen durch die Ästhetik im Land, über Künstler aus unterschiedlichen Gesellschaften, über Kunstproduktion durch offiziellen und inoffiziellen Unterricht im Zusammenhang mit dem privilegierten Zugang der Rassen zur künstlerischen Bildung, und wie passt das alles zusammen, was wir südafrikanische Kunst nennen?

Eine andere wichtige Frage war, wie bekommen wir das Publikum, das nie in der Nationalgalerie war, dazu, ihre eigenen Geschichten (und sich selbst) im Raum widergespiegelt anzusehen? Lange galten wir als elitär und exklusiv, und nun war Teil der Herausforderung, wie wir unser Publikum erweitern und Gemeinden einladen, sich in die Nationalgalerie einzubringen, sich mit den Ausstellungen, die wir zeigen und mit den Kunstwerken, die wir sammeln, zu identifizieren. Wie sehen, zuvor zur Randschicht gehörige, Menschen, Künstler und Besucher sich selbst, ihre Geschichte, ihre Kultur, ihre Kunst – widergespiegelt in der Nationalgalerie? Es ging also auch darum, das Image der Nationalgalerie zu ändern, einen neuen Raum zu schaffen, wo alle möglichen Leute unterschiedlicher Herkunft (Kultur, Nationalität, Rasse, Schicht, Bildungsniveau etc.) sich immer mehr zu Hause fühlen können; dass es auch ihre Nationalgalerie wäre.

Das waren alles Fragen, mit denen ich mich auch beschäftigte.

Zurück zur Ausstellung und zu den Überlegungen dahinter. Bei solch einer Ausstellung setzen wir uns mit der üblichen Chronologie und einer großen Struktur auseinander. Beispielsweise wurden die Räume verschiedenen Themen zugeteilt.

Einige betrachteten chronologisch die Zeit nach der Union etwa 1910 bis 1930; oder die Artikulierungen eines frühen Modernismus von 1930 bis 1960; oder die Fotografien des *DRUM Magazine*, das in seinen Spitzenzeiten in den 1950er Jahren eine Auflage von 450.000 monatlich über den Kontinent verteilte; oder das informelle Kunstzentrum *Polly Street* in Johannesburg, an dem Bill Ainslie und Cecil Skotnes viele talentierte schwarze Künstler wie Durant Sihlali und Louis Maqhubela ausgebildet haben; oder *Rorkes Drift*, dieser andere bedeutende Ausbildungsbetrieb für schwarze Künstler, vor allem für Arbeiten auf Papier, der solche wie Lionel Davis, Bongi Dhlomo-Mautloa und Azaria Mbatha hervorgebracht hat; oder das Thema Abstraktion, das in der Geschichte südafrikanischer Kunst so umstritten war; oder die Zeit, die wir jetzt Widerstandskunst nennen, mit Blick auf das Politische, wo Künstler aller Herkünfte, sowohl schwarz als auch weiß und alle braunen Farbnuancen, sich mit dem Apartheidstaat mit Hilfe ihrer Kunst, ihren Plakaten und Fotografien anlegten, entstanden durch das Motto „Kultur als Kampfzunge“. Ich gehe jetzt nicht bei jeder Kunstbewegung ins Detail, da dies einiger Einzelheiten bedürfte, jedoch jede war maßgeblich in den Erzählungen der südafrikanischen Geschichten über und Kunst und Geschichte.

Ich erkenne die Gefahren des Nationalismus und seiner Erscheinungsformen an, wollte aber auch im heutigen Südafrika kritisch sein. Ich wurde von einem Graffiti auf einer Mauer an der Ecke Hunter- und Cavendishstraße in Yeoville, Johannesburg, daran erinnert. Es handelt von Nelson Mandelas Amtsantrittsrede im Jahr 1994: „Nie, nie und nie wieder soll es dazu kommen, dass dieses wunderbare Land die Unterdrückung von einem durch einen anderen erlebt.“ Vierzehn Jahre später hinterlassen die fremdenfeindlichen Angriffe viele Tote und Tausende psychisch Vernarbte. In diesem Sinne nahm ich eine Auswahl aus der von Bettina Malcomess und Simon Njami kuratierten Ausstellung *US* dazu, die eine Handvoll hauptsächlich junger südafrikanischer Künstler zeigt, Gugulective eingeschlossen, der das Problem thematisierte und das Kunstmachen in diesem Land zu seinem Ausgangspunkt zurückbringt.

Der Ausstellungstitel 1910–2010: Von Pierneef zu Gugulective sollte auch die Intentionen der Ausstellung reflektieren. 1910 ist das Jahr der Union Südafrikas, der Zeitpunkt der Vereinigung zum kolonialen Nationalstaat unter dem Britischen Empire. 2010 bezieht sich auf das Zeitgenössische, das Jetzt, den Zeitpunkt der FIFA Weltmeisterschaft in Südafrika, eine Premiere auf dem Kontinent für das weltweite Mega-Sportevent. Pierneef war einer derjenigen südafrikanischen Künstler, die ein Zeichen des Modernismus setzten. Während er in den Niederlanden ausgebildet und ohne Zweifel durch europäische Traditionen und Einflüsse geprägt wurde, antwortete seine Arbeit auf die Besonderheiten der südafrikanischen Landschaften. Er gehörte zu der Generation, die sich durch eine frische, lokale Formsprache auszudrücken begann. In Pretoria ansässig, (das Pretoria Kunstmuseum hat eine interessante und abwechslungsreiche Sammlung seiner Arbeiten), wurde sein Werk mit einer nationalistischen Afrikaaner-Interpretation der lokalen Landschaft in der ersten Hälfte des letzten Jahrhunderts assoziiert. Gugulective (ein Kollektiv von jungen schwarzen Künstlern aus Gugulethu, dem Township am Stadtrand von Kapstadt) ist ein Merkmal für das Zeitgenössische, für die Gegenwart, und vielleicht für die Zukunft. Das wird sich mit der Zeit zeigen. Der Titel selbst kennzeichnet also die Zeitachse, die bedeutende Momente in der Geschichte des Landes verbindet, von den Anfängen einer modernen lokalen Ausdrucksweise bis zur zeitgenössischen, und bezieht sich auf die Geografie von der Hauptstadt in Tshwane (vormals Pretoria) bis zu einem Township in Kapstadt heute.

Wir haben zwar eine umfassende Chronologie, aber beim Kuratieren verfolgten wir einen anderen roten Faden. Ich wollte keine langweilige, trockene Chronologie. Wo ist also das Abenteuer? Ein wichtiger Gedanke, mit dem ich gespielt habe, war, die Vergangenheit aus verschiedenen Blickwinkeln zu betrachten. Wenn du unterschiedliche Südafrikaner nach der Geschichte ihres Landes fragst, wirst du wahrscheinlich viele verschiedene Versionen dieser Geschichte erhalten. Ich wollte diese unterschiedlichen Antworten nebeneinander stellen, um Beziehungen zwischen ihnen herzustellen.

Zum Beispiel hast du das Gemälde der Union Buildings (1938) von J.H. Pierneef – die 1910 gebauten und von Sir Herbert Baker entworfenen südafrikanischen Parlamentsgebäude – und Bench after the 1913 Land Act (1995) von Willie Bester – der Land Act verankerte die räumliche Rassentrennung im Gesetz und reservierte über 80% des Landes für die Weißen, die weniger als 20% der Gesamtbevölkerung ausmachten – gerade das Gegenteil. Pierneefs Gemälde bringt den Künstler, Baker und die Union zusammen. Anton Momberts Modell von Gandhi befindet sich auch ganz in der Nähe von demselben Kunstwerk von Pierneef. Gandhi lebte 21 Jahre lang von 1893 bis 1914 in dem Land, in der Zeit der Unionsbildung. Das ist also eine direkte Verbindung zu den Union Buildings und der britischen Geschichte im Land. Die Intention war nicht, die Geschichte Pierneefs oder der Afrikaaner oder der Union oder des britischen Kolonialismus zu vertuschen. Aber was sonst ist passiert?

Abgesehen also von Maggie Laubers und Irma Sterns Interpretation südafrikanischer Landschaften, wie unterschieden sich schwarze Künstler wie Moses Tladi und Jabulani Ntulis in der Darstellung der Landschaften, ihre eigene Umgebung und ihre eigenen Leute? Wie unterscheidet sich ihre Arbeit in der weitergehenden Diskussion über die Darstellung des "Schwarzseins"? Das war ein weiterer roter Faden, der durch die ganze Ausstellung lief: die Repräsentationspolitik. Wie unterscheiden sich die ethnografischen und wissenschaftlichen fotografischen Studien von Alfred Martin Duggan-Cronin von den Porträts von Gerard Bhengu und Simon Nguni? Und wie stehen sie in Verbindung mit dem Erscheinen von schwarzen Fotografen, die für das DRUM Magazine in den 1950er Jahren arbeiteten, welches erstmalig einen Einblick in die Privatsphäre des schwarzen städtischen Alltagslebens gewährte. Während wir also einen Raum haben, der die Kunst von 1910 bis 1930 in den Vordergrund stellt, gibt es daneben auch einen weiteren Schwerpunkt auf der Repräsentationspolitik. Das war definitiv eine Strategie meinerseits: wenn man durch einen Raum geht, soll man unterschiedliche Perspektiven, mehrere Stimmen mitbekommen, statt einer Lehrmeistererzählung.

Es sind auch visuelle Zusammenhänge entstanden, denen ich nicht widerstehen konnte. Pierneefs *Karibib* (1924) neben Wayne Bakers *Blue Colonies* (1995), eine Parodie auf Pierneef, was leicht zu erkennen ist, wenn diese Arbeiten nebeneinander hängen, und ein spielerisches Element wurde eingebaut, während es stets um ernsthafte Themen ging.

Portrait of Ali Bhai (c. 1950s) von Ebrahim Badsha wird zusammen mit Bertram Dumbletons *Abdul* (c. 1942) gezeigt, und Edward Roworths *White Wall on Signal Hill* (c. 1920) (Roworth war 1930 der erste Direktor der Nationalgalerie) geht auf das Vorhandensein muslimischer Gemeinden im Land ein. An anderer Stelle in der Ausstellung reflektieren Arbeiten von Faiza Galdhari und Chris Ledochowski weitere zeitgenössische Äußerungen zu diesem Thema.

Wie wir wissen, funktioniert Kunst nicht isoliert, weshalb die Intention war, gleichzeitig über wichtige Momente und Haltungen verschiedener Epochen nachzudenken.

Tretchikoffs Abbildung des Herb Sella (1948) wurde dem Hintergrund der Wahlplakate der United Party und der National Party gegenübergestellt. Das war ein Wendepunkt in der südafrikanischen Politik, der die National Party 1948 an die Macht brachte und der unmittelbar dazu führte, dass die Apartheidpolitik durchgesetzt wurde. Tretchikoff, ein russischer Einwanderer in Südafrika, war ein Kunstphänomen im Land. Er verkaufte in den 1960er und 1970er Jahren Tausende von Drucken seiner Malerei an unkonventionellen Orten, wie z.B. Kaufhäuser, die ihrem Weg in Millionen Haushalte machten, sowohl im Land als auch außerhalb. Und seine Anziehungskraft ging quer durch alle Rassen und Schichten – sehr wichtig im Rahmen des Apartheid-Südafrika. Weil eine bestimmte Art seiner Arbeit als Kitsch angesehen wurde, war der Künstler ein Außenseiter im südafrikanischen Kunstbetrieb. Dies war das erste Mal, dass Tretchikoff in der Nationalgalerie gezeigt wurde.

Gegenüberstellungen, mehrere Schichten und Erzählungen und visuelle Verknüpfungen waren die Leitgedanken in der Ausstellung.

Bekannte Künstler wie Gavin Young und Sue Williamson teilten eine begrenzte Hängefläche mit ziemlich unbedeutenden Namen wie John Roome und Vedant Nanackchand. Zulu Earplugs stand plötzlich in Beziehung zu Kevin Atkinsons *Arena* (1975). Ein ähnliches Verhältnis entwickelte sich zwischen dem Bereich des Ndebele-Perlen schmucks und Georgina Gratrixs *Les Demoiselles D'Avignon* (2008).

Harold Rubin, Gerard Sekoto, Gavin Jantjes und Harold Strachan zeigen sehr unterschiedliche Blickwinkel auf das Sharpeville-Massaker von 1960, ein gewaltsamer Wendepunkt in der Apartheidgeschichte. Eine Reihe von Äußerungen von Colin Richards, Tyronne Appollis, Dikobe Martins, Jane Alexander, Paul Stopforth und Derek Bauer über Steve Bikos Ermordung im Jahr 1975 sprechen Bände über die Vielfältigkeit der Kunstproduktion in der südafrikanischen Gesellschaft.

Inspiziert von einer Debatte, die durch das kritische Blatt "Kunst als politisches Machtwerkzeug" von Albie Sachs entfacht wurde, zeigte derselbe Raum auch Deborah Bells *Lover's in the Cinema* (1985) und andere Arbeiten aus der Zeit, die einen Bezug zu den Universalthemen Romantik und Liebe hatten – etwas, womit wir uns alle identifizieren können.

In der University of Western Cape archivierte Plakate vom Community Arts Project (CAP) zeigen die Zusammenhänge des Aktivismus der gewaltsamen 1980er vor der Freilassung Mandelas. Fotografie spielt in der Zeit auch eine wichtige dokumentarische Rolle, wie die Reihe des Afrapix Collective veranschaulicht. Die Ausstellung legt auch Spuren der Fotografieentwicklung im Land dar, und David Goldblatts Entwicklung von *Family on Northbeach, Durban, June 1949* zu einer Arbeit eines alten Minenschachts mit dem einfachen Titel *12 July 2003*.

Progress Matubakus *Something for Growth* (1995), Jackson Nkumandas anmutige Arbeit mit dem Titel *The Presidential Inauguration* (1994) und Joe Ratcliffs *Vlakplaas* (1999) sind Betrachtungen der erstmaligen Wahl, eine Neuerung der ersten demokratisch gewählten Regierung im Jahr 1994 bzw. der Wahrheits- und Versöhnungskommission, die alle nah beieinander sind. Sie teilen sich einen Raum mit anderen hervorragenden Arbeiten aus der Zeit von Künstlerpersönlichkeiten wie Penny Siopis, Clive Van den Berg, Johannes Segogela und Noria Mabasa.

Während des Kuratierens fanden viele kleinere Themen ihren Weg in die Ausstellung. Initiationsriten von Eingeborenen, Einflüsse von niederländischen Kolonialherren, der Einfluss von San Art, Landschaft, Nachmittagstee, Darstellungen vom Leben im Township, Humor, die Entstehung einer neuen nationalen Identität, Darstellungen und Reflexionen über Afrika, Romantik und Sexualpolitik, das häusliche Leben, Aids und die Identitätspolitik vermitteln eine Vorstellung der Unterthemen, die in der zeitgenössischen Abteilung behandelt werden. Sie waren nicht vorgeschrieben, vielmehr haben sie sich aus den ausgewählten Arbeiten selbst herauskristallisiert. Das war ein wichtiger Prozess beim Kuratieren.

Sowohl Zanele Muholis Foto *Katlego Mashiloane and Nosipho Lavuto Ext. 2, Lakeside, Johannesburg 2007*, als auch Pierre Fouchés *Kiss* (2008), ein Häkelbild von einem homosexuellen Paar in zärtlicher Umarmung, ist ein optischer Nachhall von Tracey Roses *The Kiss* (2001). Muholi, die sich selbst in erster Linie als lesbische Aktivistin beschreibt, stand im Mittelpunkt des Medieninteresses, als der Kultusminister Lulu Xingwana ihre Fotografie eines nackten lesbischen Paares, das zusammen im Bett liegt, anstößig gefunden hatte. Die Aufsehen erregende Mediendebatte gab Muholis Karriere einen sanften Schubs in die richtige Richtung.

Arbeiten von Brett Murray (Xhosa, 2002) und Sthembiso Sibisi (*Going Home*, 2005) nutzen den Humor, um messerscharf über die lokalen Bedingungen zu reflektieren. Stuart Birds ironische *Zuma Biscuits* (2007) spiegelt den Zeitpunkt vor den nationalen Wahlen 2008 wieder, eine Zeit der internen Machtkämpfe in der führenden Partei. Diese Arbeit, die an die *Ice Zoo Biscuits* erinnert, stellt vier Symbole dar (ein Zulu-Kriegerschild, ein Duschstrahl, ein Minirock und ein Ak-47-Maschinengewehr), die sich alle auf Zumas (der derzeitige Präsident) öffentliche Darstellung beziehen.

Ed Youngs *Bruce Gordon [Torino]* (2005) mag eine besondere Stellung für Kapstadter Kunst-Groupies gehabt haben, wenn man sich an die konzeptuelle Arbeit von 2003 erinnert, wo ein Barbesitzer (ein *Objet trouvé*) von der Nationalgalerie erworben wurde und die Kaufdaten auf das Kunstwerk (oder den Arm des Barbesitzers) tätowiert wurden. Das ausgestellte, ungewöhnliche Werk ist der dafür gefertigte Anzug, den das Kunstwerk trug, als es an die Triennale von Turin geliehen wurde. Das Kunstwerk (Bruce Gordon) erinnert sich an eine dreiwöchige Non-Stop-Party, viel Alkohol und viele Frauen.

Die Logistik war ein Kunstwerk für sich. Die drei Hauptausstellungen (*Strengths and Convictions*, *Dada South?* und *Alexis Preller*) endeten gleichzeitig Ende Februar. Die Galerie schloss ihre Türen vom 1. März bis 15. April, um den parallelen Abbau der drei großen Ausstellungen, die die ganze Galerie einnahmen, zu ermöglichen.

In der Zwischenzeit hatte ich auch ein Treffen mit Bailey Trust, der die Sammlung von über 400 Gemälden und Arbeiten auf Papier betreute, die 1947 der Nationalgalerie gestiftet wurden. Diese beinhaltet Persönlichkeiten wie William Turner, Thomas Gainsborough, George Stubbs und Joshua Reynolds etc. – englische Künstler aus der Kolonialzeit. Eine der Bedingungen des Sammlungsvermögens ist die ständige Ausstellung. Und zum ersten Mal in 63 Jahren wurde die Bailey-Sammlung abgebaut.

Nach zweieinhalb Wochen Abbau wurde die ganze Nationalgalerie frisch gestrichen und war komplett leer geräumt. Einige der Mitarbeiter witzelten, die Galerie habe noch nie so gut ausgesehen! Als bald kamen die Leihgaben aus dem ganzen Land. Dann begann die ernsthafte Aufgabe, die Leihgaben mit der ständigen Sammlung zusammenzubringen.

Das Programm für den Eröffnungsabend sollte auch ein Umdenken erkennen lassen. Der in Kamerun geborene Gastredner Achille Mbembe (Forschungsprofessor für Politik und Geschichte an der Wits University und Autor von *On the Postcolony*) eröffnete die Ausstellung, gefolgt von Musik einer mosambikanischen Band. Die Eröffnung zog auch ein viel bunter gemischtes und jüngerer Publikum an als zuvor.

Natürlich ist keine Kunstaussstellung je vollständig ohne Kritik. Die *South African Art Times* veröffentlichte in der *Maiausgabe* einen Artikel fett gedruckt auf der Titelseite mit der Schlagzeile *Der Ruf von Südafrikas Nationalgalerie ruiniert durch 2010-Ausstellung*. Lloyd Pollak verfasste den Beitrag, der lautete: "Offensichtlich ist Naidoo, der über ein kläglich mickriges kuratorisches Wissen verfügt, überfordert. Da keiner seiner Co-Kuratoren jemals für einen Reifall dieses Ausmaßes verantwortlich war, kann man nur daraus schließen, dass er sich weigerte, deren Rat zu befolgen, und infolgedessen fürchtet man das Schlimmste für die Zukunft der Galerie unter dem jetzigen Amtsinhaber."

Eine Woche davor schrieb Miles Keylock eine Rezension mit dem Titel *Zeit, sich zu trennen* (*Mail & Guardian*, 23-29 April 2010): "Dass die Nationalgalerie vollständig umgehängt wurde, kann man nur als Revolution bezeichnen. Weg sind die geheiligten Hallen mit den grässlichen Kolonialschätzen. Weg sind die verleideten Kunstwerke, die ewig aus der ständigen Sammlung quollen."

Gerhard Schoeman schrieb in der *Art South Africa* (Vol 08, Issue 04, Winter 2010): "Eine reflektierende Auswahl? Was ist sonst all dieses Durcheinander? Wo ist hinter den verlogenen Binsenweisheiten über die Einsicht in die 'Seele der Nation' die klare Thematik, die Logik, der Reim? Indes schrieb Anne Sasson, die für das in New York ansässige Onlinejournal *artcritical.com* arbeitet: "Da ist Farbe, Esprit und Würde, nicht nur in den Arbeiten selbst, sondern auch in den unvorhersehbaren Zusammenhängen, die sich zwischen ihnen gebildet haben. Es gab noch viele andere Rezensionen, siehe die komplette Liste online unter <http://izikomuseums.com/blog/?p=279>."

Bronwyn Law Viljoen, die neue Herausgeberin des Art South Africa Magazine, hinterfragte den Aufschrei in den beiden wichtigen Publikationen The South African Art Times und Art South Africa in einem Interview mit mir auf Art South Africa online. Sie unterstellte, dass einige dieser Rezensionen besonders die Eingeweide betreffend und so getarnt seien, als ob sie von Ästhetik, Komposition und kuratorische Entscheidungen handelten.

Auf einer Konferenz, die in der Nationalgalerie am Ende der Ausstellung abgehalten wurde, machte interessanterweise der Teilnehmer Lloyd Pollak, als er die Frage über die Moral in der Ausstellungsbewertung eines anderen Teilnehmers beantwortete, darauf aufmerksam, dass ein oder zwei der Kuratoren und einige Freunde der Nationalgalerie sich unter vier Augen an ihn gewandt haben, um ihm zu sagen, dass der neue Direktor ihre Ratschläge nicht befolgte.

Es ist allerdings interessant zu beobachten, dass die Nationalgalerie ihre Zahlen im gleichen Zeitraum des vorigen Jahres verdoppelte im Vergleich zu anderen Museen in Kapstadt, die einen Rückgang von 2% verzeichnen.

Riason Naidoo ist der Kurator der Ausstellung 1919–2010: Von Pierneef zu Gugulective, die in der Iziko Südafrikanischen Nationalgalerie vom 16. April bis 3. Oktober 2010 stattgefunden hat. Er ist auch Direktor der Südafrikanischen Nationalgalerie, einem Teil der Iziko Museen in Kapstadt.

Übersetzt von Katja Vobiller

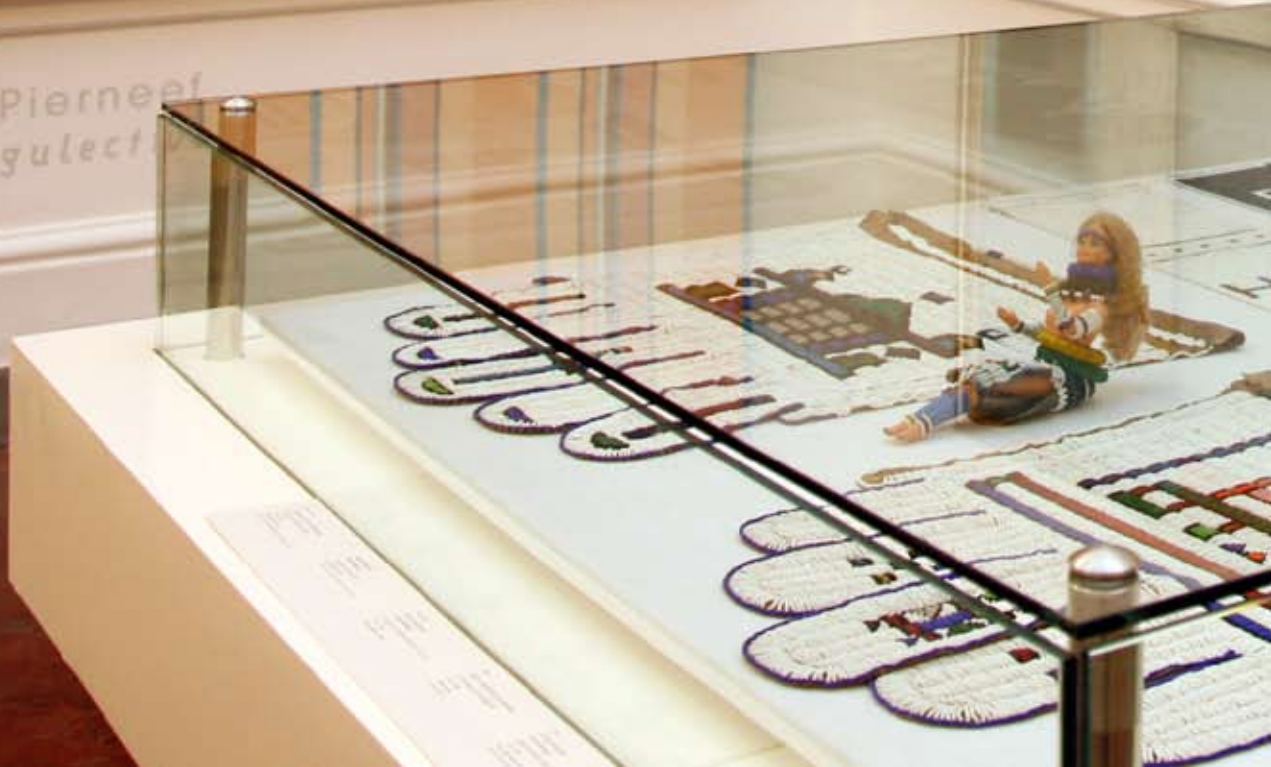








191C from Pierneef
201C to Gugulethu







ANTON WOLFF (1891-1968)
Mahatma by the Land
Memorial 1968, Polymers
1968
From the collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

At the top of the wall, there is a line of text, likely a gallery label or introduction, which is partially obscured by the angle of the photo. It appears to be in a light blue or grey font.



Main discourses of the 2nd Salon Urbain de Douala (SUD) in Cameroon seen by an Indian runner duck

Annette Schemmel

To take on a bird's perspective – as suggested by the editors of this journal – on an art event like the *SUD 2010* in Douala is far from easy as a participant. Too entangled am I as earth-bound festivalier, curatorial contributor to the *SUD*'s Off-program, researcher and emotional being, to discern and retrace this festival's set of discourses in a detached manner. So, if I had to characterise my bird's perspective, it would be that of one of these Indian runner ducks: strong legs, short wings, not much high fly, but diving deeply.

We also have to consider that the term „discourse“ (from latin *discurrere*: running back and forth) is not clear without ambiguity. Generally it denominates “a long and serious treatment or discussion of a subject in speech or writing”.¹ Jürgen Habermas' and Karl-Otto Apel's influential theory from the 1960s instead conceptualises a “Diskurs” as an ideal, power-free speech situation, one which stresses freedom and equality for each participant – especially freedom to join the discourse in critical ways so as to express one's desires, attitudes and needs. This model is derived from an idealization of the Platonian dialogues that continue to shape the form of academic seminar debates up to today. It has been strongly criticized by postmodernists for its claim to universality.² The idea of a power-free speech situation is furthermore put into question by Michel Foucault's reflections on power, which is then less a tool of repression than a ubiquitous, anonymous mechanism, controlling the relations between discourses, instruments and institutions.³

The *Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe* provides us with yet another popular definition. Here a „Diskurs“ is a neutral academic umbrella term in the humanities, unifying a variety of discussions of a specific period about one subject.⁴ Foucault adds a critical dimension to this definition: for him „un discours“ is a set of anonymous historic powers that limit, control, produce that which can be said, about a specific topic at a given historic moment.⁵ Judith Butler paraphrases this as the “the limits of acceptable speech”.⁶

We'll come back later to these definitions to see which seems most appropriate for the discourses under scrutiny here.

The SUD's set up

It would make sense to picture the *SUD*'s setting for a start. The second edition of this public art triennale was a highly complex crossroads of institutional interests, international diplomacy, multi-curatorial framing, environmental debates, artistic innovation, artist initiatives' self-promotion and academic research, all culminating in a single festival of eight days (4.12. – 11.12.2010). A group of ca. 100 Douala-based artists, Cameroon-born diaspora artists and other artists, organisers, curators, contributors to the festival (musicians, actors, craftsmen, hostesses, ect.) and mainly European guests experienced this festive event in a convivial manner, starting every day with an optional morning debate, a delicious outdoor meal and some spare time in the lush garden of *Doual'art*.

It took a couple of days for the visitors to internalize this loose routine in the unfamiliar city and to know that at some point in the afternoon we would all jump into a couple of climatized buses and take off to one or more of the 20 public art works commissioned for a variety of settings throughout the city. The Off-program – basically every artistic activity, group show, presentation, institution not dealing with the *SUD*'s water-topic – was integrated into this daily schedule.

Only on site, at the locations, a changing number of Douala residents would spontaneously join the celebratory inaugurations. This is how an in-crowd feeling evolved amongst the festivaliers with their nametags and info bags in the pretty *SUD 2010*-look.

In the following, we will consider three simultaneous, sometimes concurrent discursive streams produced for or in the course of the *SUD 2010*: the institutional, the thematic and the curatorial discourse. The images of art works produced for the *SUD* that accompany this text can be considered as products of these discourses or as individual discourses.



The institutional discourse of Doual'art

First of all – constitutional for all the others and most visible – there is the institutional discourse of *Doual'art* as initiator of the *SUD*, manifest in the PR for the festival, in its visual design and spatial layout, in the selection of strategic and financial partners, and in the official speeches produced during the festival. *Doual'art*'s discourse had a smart look and a professional and diplomatic attitude. It was brought forward by the dynamic couple heading this institution since its foundation: French-born Didier Schaub (artistic director) and Marilyn Douala Bell (president), direct off-spring of Rudolph Douala Manga Bell, a Douala king and resistance leader in the German colony of Cameroon, hanged by the Germans in 1914.

Doual'art's general mission is to contribute to Douala's urban development with art and to better the lives of the multi-ethnic inhabitants of this major harbour city through the communicative dynamics inspired by public art works that are brought even to the less urbanised parts of town.⁷ As NGO, *Doual'art*'s development mission is supported by a range of euro-american funding partners (a significant number of which is Dutch) as well as by the Cameroonian state. In 2009, *Doual'art* received the Dutch Prix Prince Claus „in recognition of exceptional achievements in the field of Culture and Development“⁸.

Doual'art's claim to participation in their city's development was once more underlined by the *SUD*'s range of public art commissions throughout the city; by the dignified habitus of *Doual'art*'s representatives during the inaugurations of the art works; by the diplomatic inclusion of the city's political representatives at the festival's opening ceremony in a newly renovated town hall; not to forget the parties and receptions co-organised with the foreign cultural institutions, namely the German embassy/Goethe Institute and the Spanish embassy. All these strategic alliances and the related official tone constituted the institutional discourse. It co-existed with a friendly and personal touch of the event as a whole.

The thematic discourse: Water

The second discourse to be addressed is closely linked to the first. It developed around the thematic focus of the *SUD*: water. At this point it is worth mentioning that the Douala people, amongst whom Marilyn Douala Bell is an authority, constitute the so-called autochthonous community of Douala. Their cultural identity is inexorably linked to the water, by means of this people's long history at the golf of Guinea and the Wouri river's vast delta, including early commercial contacts with European traders.⁹ It was probably not accidental that the *SUD*'s opening coincided with the main cultural festivity of this by now minority community: the water oracle named Ngondo.¹⁰

Beyond this allusion to an ethnic identity marker, the water subject was chosen because of its economic and ecological importance for Douala. Douala's economic hegemony in Cameroon and beyond is due to the city's vast overseas harbour. Ecologically, the abundance of water in tropical Douala shapes both its natural specifics (such as the Mangrove shores) and its nutrition supply (fish), as well as a couple of nuisances to the city's inhabitants in the form of yearly floods during the rainy seasons, insufficient sewage systems and a lack of drinking water supply.¹¹

The water subject was the linking element between all of the newly commissioned art works and the four morning conferences at *Doual'art* that constituted the explicit discursive part of the *SUD*. Those conferences involved water specialists, local environmental NGOs and politicians, as well as mainly Dutch architects and culture managers with some experience in water-related fields (progressive urbanism, harbour re-structuring projects, cradle to cradle design, public art) in simultaneously translated presentations and discussions.¹² The conferences were headed as follows: What are the traces of the water culture in today's Douala? (Tuesday); Is the mangrove's preservation conflicting with urban development? (Wednesday); Perspectives provided by the re-location of the harbour (Thursday); The paradox of simultaneous abundance and lack of water in Douala: current state and perspectives (Friday).



The relocation of Douala's harbour to Kribi, some 150 km down South with the help of Chinese developers, and its consequences for Douala, will be the main topic of the next *SUD* in 2013. A couple of Dutch contributors to this next edition were invited to the *SUD* 2010 to already develop ideas for this next issue.

The water topic, with both its Douala specificities and its self-evident global importance, and the way in which it was addressed through the *SUD*, went far beyond an African issue only. Consequently, unlike the elder biennale *Dak'art* that presents itself as a "Biennale of Contemporary African Art", *Doual'art* did not choose to explicitly relate to the festival's africanity, but to position Douala as a city with its concerns on the globe.

The thematic choice and the hands-on attitude with which issues of engineering, city-planning and sanitary improvement were addressed during these conferences, is characteristic of *Doual'art's* efficiency in contributing to their city's development. It also shows this institutions' pragmatism when it comes to the role of public art. (Not unlike in other cities elsewhere, this type of art works risks being instrumentalised.) This attitude produces good results with intelligent artists like Salifou Lindou. His beautiful paravent installation at the riverbank is partly protecting bathing men from the glances of people enjoying the panorama and partly playing with these glances, as the paravents do not cover the whole scene.

This work is complementary to French artist Lucas Grandin's „Jardin Sonore“ [Sound Garden], a look-out offering a variety of uses. The tin-can watering system for the flowers on all levels of the structure produces a meditative sound scape by simply dropping – a very convincing installation. New staircases made from used tires and built by Lindou in collaboration with youths from the neighborhood, are linking the two art works. Both of them are based on the observation that the dwellings of the adjoining neighborhood turn their back to the beautiful river site for traditional fear of the water and for respect for the bathers' nudity, causing the bank to turn into a trash dump.

Yet, this pragmatic institutional attitude when it comes to bettering the city also seems to have inspired a couple of less convincing art works. Some artists' effort to directly improve the lives of the residents seemed slightly patronizing and little daring on an artistic level. There is a certainly useful, but formally little exciting small bridge in the suburban village Ndogpassi (Ties den Bosch); some certainly needed, but poorly designed drinking water fountains (Aser Kash, Loris Cecchini), or the hard-wood covers for the open canals aside of some streets in New Bell with an ornament of functional drainage holes forming banalities like “water” or “drinking” (Kamiel Verschuren). It is hard to imagine that the residents won't find another use for this costly wood soon.



The curators' discourses

We have seen how closely the institutional and the thematic discourse are intertwined and how carefully this link has been crafted. The curatorial discourse instead, the third discursive set I would like to address, was less homogenous. The curatorial committee of the *SUD* 2010 was headed by *Doual'art*'s artistic director Didier Schaub. It included Simon Njami, based in Paris with Cameroonian roots, his Cameroon-born colleague Koyo Kouoh who is based in Dakar (i.a. advisor for Documenta 13), as well as Elvira Dyangani Ose from Spain, resident in NY.

The distribution of tasks in this committee was not particularly stressed, but it seemed like Didier Schaub had chosen the four local artists contributing to the prominent *Liquid Projects*, Salifou Lindou, Hervé Yamguen, Hervé Youmbi, Aser Kash, and the above mentioned Lucas Grandin. While Koyo Kouoh came with Philippe Aguirre (Belgium) and Kader Attia (France), Simon Njami brought in the Cameroon-born Diaspora artists Billy Bidjocka (France) and Pascale Marthine Tayou (Belgium), as well as Tracey Rose (South Africa), Ato Malinda (Kenya) and the French duo Aliette Cosette and Isabel Forner.¹³ Most of the other artists on the list came through foreign cultural players related to *Doual'art*, such as Ties Ten Bosch, invited by the Dutch Fonds BKVB or Christina Kubisch, invited by Goethe Institut Yaoundé.

In the following I will show how each of the individuals in the curatorial team articulated their own „curatorial signature“ by means of levels of discourse that they addressed or by their way of framing the artists they collaborated with. The actual stage of the *SUD*'s curatorial committee and its discourse was the public presentation of the curators on the Monday morning after the opening weekend. Simon Njami's introduction addressed more general requirements for designing art events in Africa that were taken into account for the *SUD*: longevity as in permanent public art projects; orientation towards the citizens and therefore an educational, festive and transformative quality of the event; freedom to the artists with regard to their site of intervention, yet a request for them to interact with residents.

A good example is Pascale Marthine Tayou's sculpture on a busy roundabout in a popular neighbourhood of Douala. It consists of a simple type of cooking pots stapled up to form a column. Ironically referencing a modern public art icon, Brancusi's "*Coloana infinitului*" (Infinite Column) from 1938, this sculpture was introduced by the artist on spot as a homage to the neighborhood women's daily reproductive labour taking place in front of such pots, a gesture that was enthusiastically welcomed by the passers-by. Two days earlier, the duo Aliette Cosset and Isabel Forner had catered to the thematic topic of the *SUD* with a spectacularist video projection on a water screen at the site of the Ngondo. Their video dealt in a clearly opportunistic way with the cultural role of water for the Douala people.

In his statement Didier Schaub briefly expanded on the complexities of mixing art and development purposes and the antagonisms *Doual'art* had to overcome in this respect. He then introduced the *Liquid Projects*, those four art works amongst the new commissions that were realized by established artists from Douala. The *Liquid Projects* had been thoroughly introduced to the public and contextualized as process-related pieces in a series of 6 *Liquid* newspapers from the beginning of 2009 onwards. The slightly enigmatic curatorial strategy behind them is to "place" local artists in their own neighborhoods, i.e. at home, as artists-in-residence with the mission to produce a site-specific work – in relation to the water topic. As an example Hervé Yamguen presented his successful collaboration with local rappers. Its visible and highly poetic result was the installation of some sets of their lyrics in the public space of New Bell as neon lights. The rapper's entire songs were performed during an impressive concert in a schoolyard after the neon lights' inauguration.

Koyo Kouoh presented the two artists she had brought along as two of her usual suspects, as artists she is "in love with". She gave some examples of their practice with a slide show to contextualise their new works for the *SUD* and gave a hint at her recent curatorial project in Copenhagen. Kader Attia went on to present his just finished video installation for the *SUD* in his highly eloquent style. With the ubiquitous, discarded plastic bottles for drinking water as protagonists, his piece showed a range of local actors performing their individual act of breathing with the help of a bottle that produces sound when being subject to in- or exhalation.

Elvira Dyangani Ose framed the contribution of artist Younès Rahmoun (Maroc). His piece from the “Ghorfa” series is a little wooden cabin shaped according to the space under the staircases of the artist mother’s house. It was placed as a cell of privacy in the Mangroves surrounding Douala. Elvira Dyangani Ose who arrived after the curators’ conference, informed the public about this piece’s spiritual dimension as a room for meditation during an open mic session on the last morning of the *SUD* at *Doual’art*.

I think it would have made sense to also use this semi-official moment before the festive closing ceremony for a collective evaluation, i.e. a critically productive debate about the *SUD* and the commissioned art works. Instead, *Doual’art* decided to ask for individual evaluations from the festivaliers by means of a detailed online form after the event. This anonymous feedback system will certainly produce useful material for further editions of the *SUD* and is once more prove of the organisers’ professionalism, but the festivaliers’ opinions could have also constituted an interesting additional discourse on site, one that could have been informative and transparent in an almost Habermasian sense.

Discursive qualities

Coming back to our introductory excursus about the different notions of the term “discourse” and in order to decide which definition of the term applies best to the earlier presented main discourses, we could state the following: There was definitely more to the discourses of the *SUD* than merely “long and serious treatment[s] or discussion[s] of a subject”. The idealist Habermasian understanding of a discourse as a power-free communication does neither apply to the discourses of the *SUD* that took place on stages for a previously asserted set of players, institutional representatives, curators, artists and cultural diplomats.

Instead, the discourses of the *SUD* were shaped by constellations of anonymous historic discourses, such as city marketing, global warming, economic globalization, multi-cultural urban life styles, local discourses dealing with the need to cope with the water for instance, and institutional decisions that shaped the texts, art works, public appearance of speakers, their level of speech, the *SUD*’s timing and its design. This is in sync with Foucault’s concept of discourses as manifestations of the social, economic, scientific powers at play that control and limit that which can be said by whom about a given subject or a set of subjects at a specific moment in time.

The murmur of the SUD

And yet, there was a level of communication hosted by the *SUD* that escaped these predominant discursive powers at play. The institutional, the thematic and the curatorial discourse were accompanied, crossed and at times drowned out by a kind of murmur: That of the guests, the artists and the off-program contributors – as well as the organizers and the curators at times. All of them were having informal discussions during the meals, in the garden or in the buses and reflecting in ever-changing groups and constellations on what they just had been presented, admiring the *SUD*'s solid organisation or commenting on the climatic challenges. They were making contacts with other professionals, presenting their art work, their music or their craft, "discovering" local artists, imagining and realizing new projects, conceiving of journalistic representations of the event, flirting, projecting onto future travels to Douala, working online in the lounge area of *Doual'art*, exchanging about research projects and similar events like the *SUD*, in short: pursuing their interests in the relaxed atmosphere of a temporary community constituted by the international network of *Doual'art*. And the Indian runner duck was running back and forth happily in the middle of it all...

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Dominante Diskurse auf dem 2. Salon Urbain de Douala (SUD 2010) aus der Perspektive einer indischen Laufente

Annette Schemmel

Um es gleich vorab zu sagen: Es ist mir nicht leicht gefallen, den SUD 2010 in Douala (Kamerun) aus der Vogelperspektive zu analysieren. Als Festivalteilnehmerin, als Kuratorin im Off-Programm, als Forscherin und als Gefühlswesen bin ich viel zu verstrickt um die Diskurse dieser Triennale in distanzierter Weise wiedergeben zu können. Aber weil es viel zu berichten gibt, wollte ich es dennoch nicht unversucht lassen. Deswegen ist meine Vogelperspektive, wenn es denn eine solche sein soll, allenfalls die einer indischen Laufente: starke Beine, kaum flugfähig, aber gut im Tauchen.

Der vieldeutige Begriff "Diskurs" erfordert ein paar Vorbemerkungen. Er stammt vom lateinischen Wort *discurrere* ab, was im Deutschen hin- und herlaufen bedeutet. Im Allgemeinen bezeichnet er eine "methodisch aufgebaute Abhandlung über ein bestimmtes (wissenschaftliches) Thema".¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas' und Karl-Otto Apels einflussreiche Theorie aus den 1960ern skizziert den Diskurs hingegen als eine ideale, machtfreie Redesituation, in der jede(r) RednerIn frei und gleich ist – insbesondere darin, in kritischer Weise an der Debatte teilzuhaben und seine/ihre Wünsche, Bedürfnisse und Haltungen zum Ausdruck zu bringen. Diese Idee leitet sich von einer Idealisierung der platonischen Dialoge ab, die bis heute die Form wissenschaftlicher Debatten prägt. Sie wurde von PostmodernistInnen für ihren Universalitätsanspruch scharf kritisiert.¹⁵ Michel Foucaults Machtkonzeption stellt darüber hinaus die Idee einer machtfreien Debatte grundlegend in Frage, denn die Machtverhältnisse seien "tief im sozialen Gefüge verwurzelt und nicht im Nachhinein als ein Zusatz auf die Gesellschaft aufgesetzt, von dessen radikaler Entfernung man vielleicht träumen könnte." [Übers. der Autorin]¹⁶ Das Wörterbuch der philosophischen Begriffe liefert noch eine andere, weit verbreitete Definition: Ein Diskurs ist demnach ein neutraler akademischer Überbegriff in den Geisteswissenschaften, der die gesamte Bandbreite der Diskussionen zu einem bestimmten Thema in einem begrenzten Zeitraum zusammenfasst.¹⁷ Auch hierzu findet sich bei Foucault eine kritische Ergänzung: „un discours“ sei vielmehr ein Set anonymer historischer Kräfte und Machtkonstellationen, die das, was über einen bestimmten Topos zu einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt gesagt werden kann, begrenzen, kontrollieren und damit erst hervorbringen.¹⁸ Judith Butler fasst diese Kräfte als "die Grenzen des Sagbaren".¹⁹ Wir werden an späterer Stelle auf diese Definitionen zurückkommen um zu sehen, ob und wie sie auf die Diskurse, die hier verhandelt werden sollen, anwendbar sind.

Was ist ein Salon Urbain?

Führen wir uns nun zunächst einmal den SUD als Veranstaltung vor Augen. Diese Triennale, die der Kunst im öffentlichen Raum gewidmet ist, wird von Doual'art, Doualas wichtigstem Kunstraum, organisiert, der schon 1992 gegründet wurde. Der zweite SUD war eine komplexe Schnittstelle von institutionellen Interessen und kulturdiplomatischen Auftritten, kuratorischen Zugriffen, drängenden Umweltfragen, künstlerischen Setzungen, Selbstbehauptungen von Künstlerinitiativen und teils im Prozess befindlichen (kunst-)wissenschaftlichen Forschungen, die in den acht Festivaltagen aufeinander trafen (4.12. – 11.12.2010). Die etwa 100 TeilnehmerInnen, die das gesamte Festival begleiteten, setzten sich zusammen aus kamerunischen KünstlerInnen, Diasporakünstlern mit kamerunischen Wurzeln, KünstlerInnen, ArchitektInnen und DesignerInnen von auswärts, OrganisatorInnen, KuratorInnen, MusikerInnen, SchauspielerInnen und Handwerkern, die in einzelne Projekte involviert waren, und hauptsächlich europäischen Gästen, die gemeinsam die gelöste Atmosphäre dieses festlichen Ereignisses genossen. Jeweils morgens fanden Vorträge statt, danach wurde ein köstliches Mittagessen auf der Wiese hinter dem Hauptgebäude angeboten und daneben hatte man ausreichend Freizeit, die man im kühlen Garten von Doual'art zubringen konnte.

Es dauerte einige Tage bis wir als BesucherInnen diesen lockeren Rythmus in der fremden Stadt internalisiert hatten, zu dem auch gehörte, dass die klimatisierten Busse uns täglich im Laufe des Nachmittags zu ein paar der 20 im Rahmen des SUD in Auftrag gegebenen Kunstwerke in der Stadt kutschierten. Erst dort, außerhalb der institutionellen Räume, gesellte sich eine wechselnde Anzahl von PassantInnen spontan zu den Einweihungen der Kunstwerke hinzu. Nicht zuletzt deshalb entstand unter den akkreditierten FestivalteilnehmerInnen mit ihren Namensschildern und Umhängetaschen im hübschen SUD 2010-Look ein Gemeinschaftsgefühl.

Das Off-Programm war in diesen Zeitplan eingepasst worden. Es umfasste all die Kunstprojekte, Gruppenausstellungen, Präsentationen, und Beiträge der Galerien oder Stiftungen vor Ort, die nicht um das Hauptthema des SUD, das Wasser, kreisten.

Im Folgenden werden wir drei gleichzeitige, zeitweilig miteinander konkurrierende Diskursströme unter die Lupe nehmen, die sich schon im Vorfeld des SUD 2010 herausgebildet hatten oder sich während des Festivals formierten: den institutionellen, den thematischen und den kuratorischen Diskurs. Die Fotos der Kunstwerke, die für diesen SUD produziert wurden, und die diesen Text begleiten, können übrigens entweder als Ergebnisse dieser dominanten Diskurse angesehen werden oder als Träger eigenständiger Diskurse.

Doual'arts institutioneller Diskurs

Allen anderen Diskurse vorausgehend und von allen am sichtbarsten war der institutionelle Diskurs von Doual'art, der sich in der PR des Festivals artikulierte, ebenso wie in seinem Look und seinen Örtlichkeiten, in der Auswahl strategischer und finanzieller Partner und in den offiziellen Reden. Doual'arts Diskurs wurde mit Bedacht und mit einer professionell-diplomatischen Haltung nach außen getragen. Hauptsächlich wurde er durch das dynamische Paar – bestehend aus dem Franzosen Didier Schaub (Künstlerischer Leiter) und Marilyn Douala Bell (Präsidentin) – vertreten, das dieser Institution seit ihrer Gründung vorsteht. Letztere stammt in direkter Linie von Rudolph Douala Manga Bell ab, einem Douala-König und Anführer des Widerstands gegen die deutsche Kolonialregierung in Kamerun, der von den Deutschen 1914 gehängt wurde. Vielleicht ist es von Interesse, dass Doual'arts schönes Gebäude mit dem einstigen Königspalast und seinem Grabmal ein Grundstück im Stadtzentrum teilt und dass Marilyn Douala Bell den Titel einer Prinzessin trägt.

Die NGO Doual'art hat es sich zur Aufgabe gemacht, mit Kunst zu Doualas städtischer Entwicklung beizutragen. Die Kunstwerke, die sogar im öffentlichen Raum der noch wenig städtischen Randgebiete der großen Hafenstadt angesiedelt werden, sollen die Kommunikation unter der Vielzahl der hier ansässigen Ethnien verbessern.²⁰ Diese Entwicklungsaufgabe von Doual'art wird von europäischen und nord-amerikanischen Finanzpartnern, von denen eine Mehrzahl in den Niederlanden angesiedelt ist, unterstützt, ebenso wie vom kamerunischen Staat. Im Jahr 2009 wurde der holländische Prix Prince Claus an Doual'art verliehen, „in Anerkennung außergewöhnlicher Leistungen im Bereich Kultur und Entwicklung“²¹.

Der thematische Diskurs: Wasser

Doual'art beansprucht ein Mitspracherecht in der Entwicklung der Stadt Douala, eine Forderung, die mit der Vielzahl an Kunstwerken, die für den SUD in Auftrag gegeben wurde und die das ganze Stadtgebiet einschlossen, einmal mehr unterstrichen wurde. Diesem Zweck diene auch der würdevolle Auftritt der Repräsentanten von Doual'art bei den Einweihungen der Kunstwerke, sowie die diplomatische Einbindung der politischen Elite der Stadt bei der Eröffnung des Festivals in einer frisch renovierten Stadthalle; ebenfalls nicht zu vergessen sind in diesem Zusammenhang die Cocktails, die in Zusammenarbeit mit ausländischen Kulturinstituten wie dem Goethe Institut sowie der deutschen und der spanischen Botschaft gegeben wurden. All diese strategischen Allianzen und der entsprechende hoch offizielle Tonfall bildeten den institutionellen Diskurs des SUD. Er ko-existierte mit der freundlichen und persönlichen Grundstimmung, die den Event im Allgemeinen kennzeichnete.

Der zweite Diskurs, der hier vorgestellt werden soll, ist eng mit dem institutionellen Diskurs verbunden und entfaltete sich um den thematischen Fokus dieses SUD: Wasser. Hierbei muss man wissen, dass die Bevölkerungsgruppe der Douala, in der Marilyn Douala Bell eine Autorität ist, den Status der Autochtonie für sich beansprucht, also vor allen anderen Ethnien hier angesiedelt gewesen sein soll. Die kulturelle Identität der Douala ist aufgrund ihrer langen Siedlungsgeschichte am Golf von Guinea und am Delta des Wouri untrennbar mit dem Wasser verbunden. Diese geografische Position ermöglichte auch frühe kommerzielle Kontakte mit europäischen Händlern.²² So war es vermutlich kein Zufall, dass die Eröffnung des SUD auf das Wochenende des Wasserorakels mit dem Namen Ngondo²³ fiel, dem kulturellen Höhepunkt des Jahres bei den Douala, die inzwischen eine Minderheit in der Stadtbevölkerung darstellen.

Neben seiner Funktion als ethno-kulturelles Identitätsmerkmal ist das Thema Wasser auch in ökonomischer und ökologischer Hinsicht von größter Bedeutung für die Stadt Douala. Ihre wirtschaftliche Vorherrschaft in Kamerun und in der Region ist auf ihren großen Überseehafen zurück zu führen. Der Überfluss an Wasservorkommen und Niederschlag schafft darüber hinaus die natürlichen Voraussetzungen für die Mangrovenwälder und die reichen Fischvorkommen, wie auch die jährlichen Überschwemmungen während der Regenzeiten, verursacht durch eine unzureichende Kanalisation.²⁴ Das Wasserthema verband die in Auftrag gegebenen Kunstwerke untereinander und stellte den Bezug zu den morgentlichen Vorträgen, die den explizit "diskursiven" Teil des SUD ausmachten, her. Daran waren Wasseringenieure, vor Ort angesiedelte Umweltschutzorganisationen und Politiker, sowie die vorwiegend niederländischen Architekten und Kulturmanager beteiligt, die Erfahrungen mit diesem Thema mitbrachten (progressiver Urbanismus, Hafenumstrukturierungsprogramme, cradle-to-cradle Design, Kunst im öffentlichen Raum). Jeder Vormittag stand unter einem eigenen Unterthema: Welche Spuren einer Wasserkultur gibt es in Douala? (Dienstag); Steht die Erhaltung der Mangroven der Stadtentwicklung im Wege? (Mittwoch); Möglichkeiten, die sich aus der Hafenverlegung ergeben (Donnerstag); Das Paradox von gleichzeitigem Wasserüberfluss und Trinkwassermangel in Douala: Bestandsaufnahme und Ausblicke (Freitag).

Hier bleibt zu bemerken, dass die zusammen mit chinesischen Investoren geplante Verlagerung des Überseehafens nach dem 150 weiter südlich gelegenen Kribi und ihre Auswirkungen auf Douala den thematischen Schwerpunkt des nächsten SUD bilden wird. Einige der niederländischen Gäste waren schon jetzt eingeladen, um für die kommenden Triennale im Jahr 2013 Ideen zu entwickeln.

Das Schwerpunktthema Wasser trug den SUD weit über einen möglichen afrikanischen Bezugsrahmen hinaus. Dementsprechend vermied es Doual'art auch – anders als die ältere Biennale Dak'art, die sich als "Biennale Zeitgenössischer Afrikanischer Kunst" labelt – die Afrikanität des Festivals herauszustreichen. Viel eher schien es darum zu gehen, Douala als Stadt mit ihren Problemen in einem globalen Kontext zu positionieren.

Die zupackende Haltung, mit der Themen wie Wasserversorgung, Städteplanung und Hygienestandards im Rahmen des Festivals debattiert wurden, ist charakteristisch für die Rolle, die Doual'art in der Stadt übernehmen möchte. Hier zeigt sich der Pragmatismus dieser Institution im Hinblick auf Kunst im öffentlichen Raum, die bekanntermaßen anfällig für Instrumentalisierung ist. Wo diese Haltung auf intelligente Künstler wie Salifou Lindou trifft, ist sie produktiv. Dessen attraktive Installation aus einer Gruppe von Paravents am Flußufer von Deido schirmt die Männer, die dort baden, einerseits gegen die Blicke derjenigen ab, die das Panorama bewundern wollen. Da die Paravents aber nicht alles verhüllen, wohnt dieser Blickregie auch ein spielerisches Moment inne.

Diese Arbeit ergänzt vortrefflich den ebenso überzeugenden „Jardin Sonore“ [Klanggarten] des Franzosen Lucas Grandin, eine Art Aussichtsturm auf dem Hochufer. Ein System aus Blechdosen bewässert die Blumen auf den Brüstungen der Holzkonstruktion und produziert beim Tröpfeln eine meditative Soundkulisse. Eine Treppe aus gebrauchten Reifen, die Lindou zusammen mit Jugendlichen aus der Nachbarschaft baute, verbindet die beiden Kunstwerke. Beide basieren auf der Beobachtung, dass die Siedlung der schönen Flußlandschaft den Rücken zuwendet und das Ufer immer stärker zur Müllhalde verkommt, was einer traditionellen Furcht vor dem Wasser, ebenso wie dem Respekt vor der Nacktheit der Badenden geschuldet ist.

Der Pragmatismus von Doual'art scheint aber auch eine Reihe weniger überzeugende Kunstwerke inspiriert zu haben. Die sichtlich bemühten Versuche einiger Künstler, die Situation der StadtbewohnerInnen unmittelbar zu verbessern, wirkten leicht besserwisserisch und künstlerisch wenig gewagt. Dazu gehören eine sicherlich nützliche, aber formal wenig aufregende Fußgängerbrücke im Vorort Ndogpassii (Ties den Bosch, NL); ein paar sicherlich dringend gebrauchte, aber armselig gestaltete Trinkwasserbrunnen (Aser Kash (CM), Loris Cecchini (IT)), und die Hartholz-Deckplatten, die neuerdings einige offene Gräben neben den Strassen in New Bell verbergen (Kamiel Verschuren, NL). Bohrlöcher, die das Wasser ablaufen lassen sollen, ornamentieren die Bretter und ergeben banale Schriftzüge wie "Wasser" oder "trinken". Es ist davon auszugehen, dass bald jemand eine andere Nutzung für diese kostspieligen Planken finden wird.

Die kuratorischen Diskurse

Bisher haben wir gesehen, wie eng der institutionelle und der thematische Diskurs verknüpft waren und wie sorgfältig diese aufeinander abgestimmt waren. Im Gegensatz dazu ist das dritte diskursive Set, das wir hier betrachten wollen, wenig homogen. Dem kuratorischen Team des SUD 2010 stand Doual'arts künstlerischer Leiter, Didier Schaub vor. Es umfasste Simon Njami aus Paris, der kamerunische Wurzeln hat, die kamerunstämmige Koyo Kouoh, die in Dakar lebt (u.a. Beraterin der Documenta 13), nebst Elvira Dyangani Ose aus Spanien, die nun in New York lebt.

Zwar wurde die Arbeitsteilung in diesem Komitee nicht besonders hervorgehoben, im Laufe des Festivals wurde aber klar, daß Didier Schaub die vier Künstler vor Ort eingeladen hatte, die die sog. Liquid Projects als Kernstück des Festivals erarbeiteten: Salifou Lindou, Hervé Yamguen, Hervé Youmbi und Aser Kash. Auch der zuvor erwähnte Lucas Grandin scheint auf seine Einladung gekommen zu sein. Während Koyo Kouoh den Belgier Philippe Aguirre und Kader Attia aus Frankreich mitbrachte, war Simon Njami für die Teilnahme der kamerunstämmigen Diasporakünstler Billy Bidjocka (Frankreich) und Pascale Marthine Tayou (Belgien), sowie von Tracey Rose (Südafrika), Ato Malinda (Kenia) und dem französischen Duo aus Aliette Cosette und Isabel Forner verantwortlich.²⁵ Die meisten anderen TeilnehmerInnen wurden auf Vorschlag ausländischer Kulturinstitute eingeladen, so wie Ties Ten Bosch über den holländischen Fonds BKVB oder Christina Kubisch über das Goethe Institut Yaoundé.

An dieser Stelle wollen wir nun zeigen, wie all diese KuratorInnen ihre jeweils eigene „Signatur“ hinterließen, mit Hilfe verschiedener Themenkomplexe, die sie zur Kontextualisierung der Arbeiten heranzogen oder über die Art, wie sie die KünstlerInnen vorstellten, mit denen sie zusammen arbeiten. Die eigentliche Bühne des kuratorischen Komitees und seines Diskurses war eine gemeinsame Präsentation am Montagmorgen nach dem Eröffnungswochenende. Simon Njami führte die Veranstaltung mit seinen Überlegungen zur Gestaltung von Kunstereignissen in Afrika im Allgemeinen ein: vorteilhaft sei eine langfristige Wirkung wie sie für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum charakteristisch ist; auch eine Ausrichtung auf die BürgerInnen sei erforderlich und deshalb eine bildende, festliche und transformative Qualität des Events; deswegen müsse man den KünstlerInnen zwar den größtmöglichen Freiraum geben – auch was den Ort ihrer Intervention anbelangt, jedoch gleichzeitig die Forderung stellen, die Bevölkerung zu involvieren.

Beispielhaft hierfür und sehr gelungen ist die Skulptur von Pascale Marthine Tayou, die auf einer Verkehrsinsel im Zentrum eines stark frequentierten Kreisverkehrs steht. Sie besteht aus einfachen Kochtöpfen und nimmt durch die Art wie diese aufeinander gestapelt sind, lakonisch auf eine Ikone des 20. Jahrhunderts Bezug, auf Brancusis „Coloana infinitului“ (Unendlichkeitssäule) von 1938. Die „Colonne Pascale“ wurde bei der Einweihung vom Künstler selbst der täglichen Reproduktionsleistung der Frauen des Viertels gewidmet, eine Geste, die von den Passanten begeistert aufgenommen wurde.

Zwei Tage zuvor hatte das ebenfalls von Njami eingeladene Duo Cosset /Former das Thema des SUD mit einem spektakelhaften Video bedient, das auf einen Schirm aus Wasser projiziert wurde. Gerade an dem Uferstreifen, wo kurz zuvor die Feier des Ngondo stattgefunden hatte, affirmierten sie einmal mehr die kulturelle Bedeutung des Wassers für die Bewohner Doualas, eine ebenso opportunistische wie überflüssige Geste.

Um auf die Präsentation der Kuratoren zurück zu kommen: Didier Schaub hob kurz auf die Verbindung von Kunst und Entwicklung ab, die Doual'art anfangs auch einige Widerstände eingebracht habe. Dann stellte er die Liquid Projects vor, die sorgfältig und mit langem Vorlauf bei den BewohnerInnen der umliegenden Viertel angekündigt worden waren. Dazu waren seit Anfang 2009 sechs Auflagen der Liquid-Zeitung verteilt worden. Hinter den Liquid Project steht die eigenwillige kuratorische Strategie, Künstler, die in Douala leben, in ihren eigenen Vierteln, d.h. bei sich zu Hause, als Artists in Residence zu stationieren. Von dort aus produzierten sie neue Arbeiten mit Bezug zum Thema Wasser. Hervé Yamguen berichtete stellvertretend für alle vier Künstler über seine erfolgreiche Zusammenarbeit mit Rappern aus seinem Viertel. Aus ihren Texten entnahm er die poetischen Zeilen, die – teils aus Neonlichtröhren, teils aus anderen Materialien – an verschiedenen Stellen im öffentlichen Raum von New Bell angebracht wurden. Ein beeindruckendes Konzert, für das wir uns nach dem Rundgang durchs Viertel auf einem Schulhof einfanden, lieferte den Kontext dieser Zeilen.

Koyo Kouoh stellte die beiden Künstler, die sie eingeladen hatte, als zwei ihrer "usual suspects" vor, in die sie "verliebt" sei, ebenso wie in ihr Werk. Mit Hilfe einer Diashow mit früheren Arbeiten bettete sie die für den SUD entstandenen Projekte in deren Gesamtwerk ein und machte auch auf ihr letztes kuratorisches Projekt in Kopenhagen aufmerksam. Kader Attia griff den Faden in seinem gewohnt eloquenten Stil auf: In seinem Video spielen die leeren Wasserflaschen aus Plastik, die in Ländern ohne trinkbares Leitungswasser ein echtes Müllproblem darstellen, die Hauptrolle – als Instrument mit Hilfe dessen SchauspielerInnen aus Douala ihren Atem hörbar machten.

Elvira Dyangani Ose liefert den kuratorischen Rahmen für den Beitrag des Künstlers Younès Rahmoun aus Marokko. "Ghorfa" ist der Titel einer Serie von Arbeiten, die Rückzugs- oder Meditationsräume verkörpern. Für Douala schuf er eine kleine Holzkabine, deren Form dem Hohlraum unter der Treppe seines Elternhauses entspricht, den er einst nutzte (siehe erstes Foto im Text). Sie wurde in den Mangrovenwäldern Doualas als diskretes, offenes Angebot platziert. Elvira Dyangani Ose, die erst nach der Kuratorenpräsentation anreisen konnte, lieferte den Kontext zu dieser Arbeit während einer Open Mic Session bei Doual'art am letzten Morgen des Festivals.

Mir scheint, es wäre sinnvoll gewesen, diesen halboffiziellen Moment vor dem Abschiedscocktail auch für eine gemeinsame Evaluation zu nutzen, das heißt für eine kritisch-produktive Debatte über den SUD und die in Auftrag gegebenen Kunstwerke. Stattdessen bat Doual'art die Festivalteilnehmer im Nachhinein einzeln um ihre Meinung mit Hilfe eines Online-Formulars. Zwar wird dieses anonyme Feedback-System sicherlich wertvolle Anregungen für die nächsten Ausgaben des SUD liefern und es zeugt auch von der Professionalität der Organisatoren. Aber ein Dialog mit dem Publikum hätte vor Ort einen zusätzlichen Diskurs bilden können, mit einem beinahe Habermasianischen Grad an Offenheit und Transparenz.

Diskursive Qualitäten

Wenn wir nun auf die anfänglichen Definitionsversuche rund um den Begriff "Diskurs" zurück kommen, um zu sehen, welche auf die hier betrachteten Diskurse am besten anwendbar sind, drängen sich folgende Schlüsse auf: Die Diskurse des SUD, die die ganze Veranstaltung in verschiedensten Erscheinungsweisen durchzogen und formten, waren selbstverständlich mehr als nur eine "methodisch aufgebaute Abhandlung über ein bestimmtes (wissenschaftliches) Thema". Die idealisierte machtfreie Redesituation im Sinne Habermas war – wen wundert's – auch nicht anzutreffen, waren doch die "Bühnen" für die Diskurse des SUD wohlweislich im Voraus für eine festgelegte Gruppe von SprecherInnen reserviert worden.

Tatsächlich waren die Diskurse des SUD von globalen Diskursen geprägt, darunter City Marketing, Global Warming, ökonomische Globalisierung und Migrationsgesellschaften, die durch ihre lokalen Ausprägungen, wie den Umgang mit dem Wasser in Douala, ausdifferenziert wurden. Neben den historisch bedingten ökonomischen Kräfteverhältnissen zwischen dem globalen Norden und Kamerun war auch die institutionellen Logik von Doual'art entscheidend. Zusammen beeinflussten sie die Texte und die Kunstwerke ebenso wie die Auswahl und die Performanz der SprecherInnen und ihre Sprachebenen, das Timing des SUD ebenso wie seinen Look. Eindeutig greift also Foucaults Konzept von Diskursen als Manifestationen von anonymen sozialen, wirtschaftlichen und wissenschaftlichen Kräfteverhältnissen am besten. Zusammen kontrollierten, begrenzten und produzierten diese Kräfte das, was im Rahmen des SUD offiziell gesagt werden konnte.²⁶

Das Geraune des SUD

Nichtsdestotrotz bot der SUD auch Raum für inoffizielle Äußerungen, die den herrschenden Verhältnissen weniger stark unterworfen waren. Das Gefüge aus institutionellen, thematischen und kuratorischen Diskursen wurde begleitet, durchkreuzt und manchmal sogar übertönt vom "Geraune" der FestivalteilnehmerInnen. Ihre Unterhaltungen fanden während der Mahlzeiten statt, sie saßen im Garten oder in den Bussen zusammen, diskutierten in wechselnden Konstellationen einzelne Programmpunkte, bewunderten die solide Organisation des SUD oder kommentierten die Hitze. Man machte Kontakte, erklärte das jeweilige Arbeitsfeld, "entdeckte" lokale KünstlerInnen, setzte Projekte um und dachte sich neue aus, flirtete, überlegte sich wie man über das Gesehene berichten würde, arbeitete in Doual'arts neuer Internetlounge, diskutierte Forschungsvorhaben, verglich den SUD mit anderen Biennalen und Kontexten – um es kurz zu machen: Man ging seinen Interessen in der entspannten Atmosphäre einer vorübergehenden Gemeinschaft nach, die das internationale Netzwerk von Doual'art zusammen gebracht hatte. Und inmitten von Alldem lief die indische Laufente hin und her und hin und her...

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<http://www.enoughroomforspace.org>

Endnotes:

- (I) Duden Fremdwörterbuch. Der Duden, Bd. 5, Mannheim, Wien, Zürich 1990, S.190 (Artikel zum Begriff „Diskurs“)
- (II) vgl. Martin Gessmann (Ed.): Philosophisches Wörterbuch, Stuttgart 2009, ISBN 978-3-520-01323-1, S. 174 f (Artikel zu den Begriffen „Diskurs“ und „Diskurstheorie, Diskursethik“)
- (III) Michel Foucault: The Subject and Power. In: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics. Hsg. von Hubert Dreyfus und Paul Rabinow. Chicago 1982. S. 222.
- (IV) vgl. Armin Regenbogen, Uwe Meyer (Hsg.): Wörterbuch der Philosophischen Begriffe, Hamburg 2005. ISBN 3-7873-1738-4, S. 154 f (Artikel zum Begriff „Diskurs“)
- (V) vgl. Reiner Küppers: Künstlerinnen und Künstler zwischen kreativer Freiheit und sozialer Sicherheit. Ein Diskurs zur Kulturpolitik in Zeiten der europäischen Integration. Frankfurt/Main 2010, A. 34 ff
- (VI) Butler, Judith: Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York 1999. S. xxix.
- (VII) vgl. dazu das Editorial der ersten der 6 Liquid-Zeitschriften: Liquid #01. Hsg.: Doual'art. Douala, Jan/Feb/March 2009
- (VIII) www.doualart.com (15.01.2010)
- (IX) Für die vorkoloniale, koloniale und postkoloniale Geschichte der Interaktion der Douala mit den Europäern siehe Ralph Austens und Jonathan Derricks Studie "Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers. The Duala and their Hinterland, c.1600-c.1960", Cambridge (1999). Peter Geschieres Studie "The Perils of Belonging: Autochthony, Citizenship, and Exclusion in Africa and Europe", Chicago (2009), liefert zusätzlich wertvolle Einrichten in die wachsende Bedeutung der Autochthonie in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire und den Niederlanden.
- (X) Das Wasserorakel mit dem Namen „Ngondo“ basiert auf einer Unterredung mit den Wassergeistern und der Analyse der Anordnung frisch emporgetauchter Wassergewächse. Bei diesem Fest, das einmal jährlich auf dem Wouri und am Wouriufer stattfindet, erhalten die Stadtbewohner Auskunft über die Geschicke des nächsten Jahres.
- (XI) vgl. Vorwort von Didier Schaub zu Liquid #6. Spécial SUD 2010, Hsg: Doual'art. Douala 2010
- (XII) Außerdem sind sie diskret operierenden Kuratorinnen des Off-Programms zu erwähnen: Darunter ist Adeline Chapelle aus Frankreich, die in der Artbakery mitarbeitet – der interessantesten Künstlerinitiative in Douala neben Cercle Kapiski. Artbakery ist in Bonendale einem idyllischen Dorf am Stadtrand von Douala angesiedelt. Adeline Chappelle plant eine Doktorarbeit zu den Künstlerinitiativen von Douala. Andere Kuratoren kamen als Gäste mit eigenen Missionen, darunter Iolanda Pensa (Lettera 27, Italien), Kerry Greenberg (Tate Modern, UK), Christine Eyene (independent curator, London), Arno van Roosmalen (Stroom Den Haag, NL). Ich selbst war als Kuratorin der unabhängigen Künstlerplattform Enough Room for Space angereist, um das Projekt IN_DÉPENDANCE zu unterstützen und meine Doktorarbeit zu informellen Professionalisierungsstrategien von KünstlerInnen in Douala voran zu treiben/FU Berlin.
- (XIII) Vgl. Philipp Sarasin: Michel Foucault. Zur Einführung. Hamburg 2010. S. 105.

A Commentary: Legitimising the legitimate

A self-reflective discourse – Part 1

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

Whilst the art world purports to have expanded its otherwise picky and cocky tentacles in the last decades and thus decentralized its point of gravity from a western to a more global focus, the claim of democratisation and de-concentration of the art field still has to be questioned and reflected in various critical discourses amongst art critics and artists, philosophers and sociologists, politicians and laypeople.

On the one hand, being a layman with at least an ear on the ground, eyes wide open and a loose tongue I engage into discussions with the supposed opinion-makers of my generation and alleged discourse-initiators in the art scene in Berlin (today's self-acclaimed capital of the art world), where I gather that because there are biennales in Dakar, Havana, Sao Paulo or Gwangju and because there have been a couple of non-Western artists in the band wagon of some Western biennales, the art world has thus opened its arms to embrace the non-West. Well, he that believes and is baptized shall be saved²⁷... but my experience on the field, and for that matter working in the grass roots, reveals to me every day that the discourses are still pillared in or seesawing along the Euro-American axis.

On the other hand, being a curator and writer who has worked in- and extensively with diverse international artistic positions from the West and non-West (see Savvy Contemporary) and bearing a particular affinity to contemporary African art and its critical concepts (see SAVVY | art.contemporary.african.), I more than often find myself forced to be the advocate of the "other" and obliged to slip in the role of legitimising non-Western positions.

Writing this article for the second edition of SAVVY | art.contemporary.african. with the title "(Re-) Mapping the field: a bird's eye view on discourses" I decided to lay focus on how I am re-mapping the field (with Berlin as my geographical umbilicus) and thereby engage in a self-reflective discourse. While I could figure out one more objective theoretical text on discourses, I prefer to take this journal's current topic on a subjective note, which by no way implies singularity in its essence. This article will take you on a journey in the form

of a commentary, giving answers to some of the questions and remarks that usually come to my notice concerning art from the non-West, e.g. contemporary African art, especially from some Western colleagues; incl. some 'specialists' in the field. Because all these questions cannot be treated in a go, this commentary will intentionally be left open-ended so as to continue with further points in future editions of this journal. Some remarks to be treated in this series will include but are not restricted to:

1. Why do a journal about Contemporary African Art? Is that not contra-productive, disadvantageous and segregating? Why not simply a journal of art?
2. There is no such thing as Contemporary African Art. Many artists of African origin do not want to identify themselves with such labels and, by the way, there is no theoretical discussion on Contemporary African Art.
3. The concept of art, as it is, is something European and thus the idea of a global art is utopian. Africa is a construct of Europe, so Contemporary African Art is just a construct of European art.
4. The presence of non-Western artists in major biennales reduces the quality of the biennales.

In her article Import-export: History of the history of contemporary African art Iolanda Pensa interestingly states that „Differently from what happens in shows and publications focused generically on contemporary art, most projects on contemporary African art are nourished by justifications. In most cases, in catalogues, articles and press releases we'll find an explication about why it is necessary to promote African art, why it's indispensable to change the perception of Africa and why it's time to sustain intercultural dialogue.“²⁸ While this statement is true for many cases, it is of importance to differentiate who the author of any justification is and what the intentions of these justifications are. This is the same with the need to change the perception of Africa. The crave and zest of wanting to change the perception of Africa or sustain an intercultural discourse, no matter how absurd that might seem in anno Domini 2011, is legitimate and probably dependent on any author's affinity to Africa,

African art and reasons for this affinity. But this is not the concern of this article.

Taking Pensa's supposition into consideration, this article is not intended to be a justification but rather a rectification (a fine but important difference) of contorted images, misinterpretations, and refractions of contemporary African art as seen through the prisms of Western critiques; be it due to a disinterest in opening the concept of art to other modernities or due to a blatant ignorance. But even if this were a justification, is justification not a part of the *reactio*, which comes as a response to every *actio*, i.e. the foundation of every *discursus*? As Foucault put it "whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say that we are dealing with a discursive formation."²⁹ This article is thus an effort to define some regularity between some statements and concepts about contemporary African art.

The first part of this article series will concentrate on the questions:

Why do a journal about Contemporary African Art? Is that not contra-productive, disadvantageous and segregating? Why not simply a journal of art?

Half-truths and the non-linearity of art history

"I can remember quite well how it was when we showed Amrita Sher-Gil in the Haus der Kunst Munich as well as in the Tate Modern, and many colleagues earnestly asked if I was paid by the Indian government. There is a similar reaction towards our current show on Arabic art in Munich."³⁰ This quote from the *Monopol* art magazine is by one of today's most progressive curators, Chris Dercon, whose concept of showing art positions from all corners of the globe also inspired the art space Savvy Contemporary. This quote is a good summary of the reaction you get from many Western colleagues towards non-Western positions.

This unwillingness to develop perception towards other forms of modernity is deep-rooted in many of today's art discourses. But this is nothing new and we do not intend to drift into the polemic discourse of the victimisation of the non-West by the West. Simon Njami writes in his article *Ancient guilt, new tool*³¹ about an episode in 1991 where the then

Documenta art director, Jan Hoet, stated that there was not such a thing as contemporary art on the African continent.

Almost 20 years later another famous art critic and former member of Harald Szeemann's Documenta 5 art directorate, Jean Christophe Ammann, reacts in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* on the participation of non-Western art and artists in biennials these days: "...that is exactly the problem. The principle of the globalised exhibition (i.e. global art) eliminates our occidental culture..."³² These are just a few examples of a bastion of art critics and historians that still fight for the exclusivity of art from the West and still aim at keeping it as a standard. This clearly runs in the line of what Mary Douglas terms 'matter out of place'³³. It implies both the existence and the contravention of an established order or system and of that which some find inappropriate in a given context, just to hold on to the old, the known, and the conversant and repel the "other". This given context is the claimed linear genealogy of art history, which is still taught in art schools today and still prevails in the art discourses and media these days. We know that art and artists from non-Western regions were for a long time thought of as living in a time outside history, just as much as the colonies were removed by Hegel out of History, that for him was a strictly Western prerogative³⁴. This policy of de-historicizing the African continent has been well cultured over centuries and has occupied many African intellectuals, who have sought out not to justify their positions but to rectify these falsifications. Just as Cheikh Anta Diop, for instance, dedicated a chapter on the "modern falsification of history" in *The African Origin Of Civilization*.³⁵ Diop showed how African history and its civilizations were systematically read out of the commentary of human history. He also analysed the role played by Western historians in the re-writing and distortion of world history in favour of the Europeans, in the last five hundred years. These historical, conceptual and perspective distortions do exist till today.

Thus, it will be more than naïve for anybody to think that the positioning, media coverage, advertence, respect and understanding of African artists or African art (or art from Africa; no matter how this is termed, the terminology is just a side note in this article) is self-evident. It is even more preposterous to think that contemporary African artists or African art is treated and measured with the same standards as their counterparts in the occident. If we do agree that there is a disparity in the “objectivity” of the art world with respect to the geographical off-spring of artists, then it is more than important to have journals which investigate on, reflect and position the discourses, developments and centres of gravity on contemporary African art but also journals which have the guts to rectify these half-truths and the non-linearity of historic development.

The state of Critique

It goes without saying that the coverage of contemporary African art in the local media in African countries is in many cases lacking and desirable. If they cover art exhibitions, the local press is more interested in the spectacle than in the concepts of the exhibitions. Art and its discourses play little or no role in the *feuilletons* of many daily newspapers on the continent and the specialized media on contemporary art circulate and play in the global league and are often written in English. Many of the global league journals which have in the last decades set up a cutting-edge in art's critique deal with African art, be it the *Nka – Journal of Contemporary African Art*, *Revue Noire* or *Third Text – Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture* (just to name the most prominent). They have built the foundation of critique on art from the non-West. Still, these journals have been restricted to an extremely exclusive circle, due to logistical difficulties to get them to the grass roots on the continent and beyond, as these journals can hardly be found in any press stores. On the other hand due to the relatively high cost of acquisition, these journals have been confined to a financially apt academic generation. But times are changing. The new media fever is contagious and has swept through the rooms and cellars of young and upcoming art critics who want to create platforms for discourse on old and new concepts of African art. This new and self-confident generation is armed with blogs and other websites, which are not only free of charge but also widely accessible. Even the aforementioned precursor journals have gone online.

The coverage of art from Africa or contemporary African art in the art journals in the West is less than a ‘deficiency syndrome’. Summer 2010 was an extremely good period

for contemporary African art as a by-product of the football world cup in South Africa, with many journals fighting in a populist *manière* to get their own piece of the cake. In Germany for example there were exclusive editions on contemporary African art (mostly on South African art) in the journals *Art – Das Kunstmagazin* and *Monopol* but since then the weather has been relativised to the reality of the years before. Discourses on contemporary African art are almost inexistent in the art media in Germany and many other Western countries. Only something “extra-ordinary”, like the nomination of Okwui Enwezor as the director of the Haus der Kunst in Munich, had to happen for art journals or the daily press to mention something on Africa. But even with this would-be positive news, the daily newspaper *Berliner Zeitung*, representative of the coverage of Africa in the daily media, published an appalling article with the title *An African in the Haus der Kunst* which concluded with the quote “(Enwezor)... is a global player of art, no African art patriot but rather one with a Western perspective. As curator of the Johannesburg-Biennial in 1997 he was rather interested in presenting Western art to the world than African art. Such a thing is called ‘coconut’: brown outside and white inside”³⁶. This article by Ingeborg Ruthe is an epitome of the ‘objectivity’ towards contemporary African art, spiced by prejudice and inadequate research.

As Jyoti Dhar rightly described it (although this article was focussed on art critic of art from the Gulf region, the arguments widely apply to art critic of art in general from the non-west) in the article on how international critics write on art from the Gulf region, they “display fantastic ignorance, intellectual laziness and shorthand everything into generalized responses based on categories of judgement that are problematic.” Dhar went ahead to give reasons for these faux pas, which included the perception of non-Western art through the prisms of European art history, and proposed that an “alternative and more relevant approach may be to contextualize these artists using other global contemporary artists (not necessarily from the west)” and that the responsibility of the critic should be that of a chronicler, “where one has to be sensitive to the socio-political and time-specific context of the art work, without making it solely about that.”³⁷

Another pertinent issue, when it comes to writing about the non-West, is the designation of experts. The reason why some people are experts is still a conundrum to me. One has the impression that it has, more or less, become trendy to be an expert on Africa in whatever field of life, be it on political issues, economic matters or art. Anyone who spent

his/her last vacation on the African continent, anyone who is chanced to visit the Dak'art biennial or anyone collecting some masks could be interviewed as an "Africa expert" these days. Thus, it seems as if almost any one can pose to be an expert, write an article or book and give a comment on contemporary African art.

I will like to conclude this first part of this article series by throwing a question into the room. Journals like American Art Review, Frieze-European contemporary art and culture magazine, Western Art & Architecture, The Latin American Art Journal, Nka – Journal of Contemporary African Art, Third Text – Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture or ArtAsiaPacific exist with all legitimacy and represent their respective positions... there are museums of American, European, Latin American, Asian or African Art... why should a journal as legitimate as SAVVY | art.contemporary.african need any more legitimisation?

The next edition of this article will treat the questions on the terminology contemporary African art.





DAHIVAN P. S. B. NDIKUNG '09

Ein Kommentar: Legitimierung des Legitimen

Ein selbstreflexiver Diskurs - Teil 1

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

Auf der einen Seite bin ich ein Laie mit mindestens einem Ohr auf dem Boden, die Augen weit geöffnet und einer losen Zunge mit der ich mich in Gesprächen mit den vermeintlichen Meinungsbildnern aus meiner Generation und den angeblichen Diskurs-Initiatoren in der Kunstszene in Berlin (der heutigen selbsternannten Hauptstadt der Kunstwelt) beteilige. Andererseits sehe ich Biennalen in Dakar, Havanna, Sao Paolo und dass westliche Biennalen ein paar nicht-westliche Künstler mit im Gepäck haben, so dass es scheint, dass die Kunstwelt ihre Arme geöffnet hat, um den Nicht-Westen zu umarmen. Nun, derjenige, der glaubt und hofft, wird errettet werden... aber meine Erfahrung auf diesem Feld, und deshalb arbeite ich von den Wurzeln aus, zeigt mir jeden Tag, dass die Diskurse noch in oder entlang der europäisch-amerikanischen Achse verlaufen.

Auf der anderen Seite, bin ich ein Kurator und Autor, der in- und ausgiebig mit diversen internationalen künstlerischen Positionen aus dem Westen und Nicht-Westen (siehe Savvy Contemporary) und mit einer besonderen Affinität zur zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst und ihrer kritischen Konzepte (siehe SAVVY | art. contemporary.african) gearbeitet hat, sehe ich mich oft gezwungen, die Verfechter des „anderen“ zu sein und verpflichtet, in die Rolle der Legitimierung nicht-westlicher Positionen zu rutschen.

Während ich nun diesen Artikel für die zweite Auflage von SAVVY | art.contemporary.african. mit dem Titel "(Re-) Mapping the field: a bird's eye view on discourses" schreibe, habe ich mich entschieden, mich darauf zu konzentrieren, wie ich selbst das Feld (mit Berlin als mein geografischer Nabel) neu- lokalisiere und damit in einem selbstreflexiven Diskurs eingreife. Ich bearbeite das Thema dieses Journals aus einer sehr subjektiven Haltung heraus, ohne dem Thema die Singularität seines Wesens zu nehmen. Dieser Artikel wird Sie auf eine Reise in Form eines Kommentars schicken, der Antworten auf einige Fragen und Bemerkungen über Kunst aus dem Nicht-Westen gibt, z. B. zur zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst, vor allem von einigen westlichen Kollegen, inkl. einiger „Spezialisten“ auf diesem Feld. Alle diese Fragen können nicht in einem behandelt werden, einige Kommentare bleiben absichtlich offen und werden in zukünftigen Ausgaben dieser Zeitschrift fortgesetzt werden. Einige Bemerkungen zu dieser Serie behandeln vor allem, nicht ausschließlich:

1. Warum eine Zeitschrift über zeitgenössische afrikanischer Kunst? Ist das nicht kontraproduktiv, nachteilig und trennend? Warum nicht einfach eine Zeitschrift für Kunst?

2. Es gibt so etwas wie zeitgenössische afrikanischer Kunst nicht. Viele Künstler afrikanischer Herkunft wünschen nicht, sich mit solchen Etiketten zu identifizieren und übrigens, es gibt keine theoretische Diskussion über zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst.

3. Der Begriff der Kunst, wie sie ist, ist etwas europäisches und damit ist die Idee einer globalen Kunst utopisch. Afrika ist Konstrukt von Europa, zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst ist nur ein Konstrukt der europäischen Kunst.

4. Die Anwesenheit von nicht- westlichen Künstlern in den großen Biennalen reduziert die Qualität der Biennalen.

In ihrem Artikel import-Export: Geschichte der Geschichte zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst stellt Iolanda Pensa interessanterweise fest, dass "Differently from what happens in shows and publications focused generically on contemporary art, most projects on contemporary African art are nourished by justifications. In most cases, in catalogues, articles and press releases we'll find an explication about why it is necessary to promote African art, why it's indispensable to change the perception of Africa and why it's time to sustain intercultural dialogue."
38

Während diese Feststellung in vielen Fällen wahr ist, ist es von Bedeutung, zu differenzieren, wer der Autor jeglicher Rechtfertigung ist und was die Intentionen dieser Rechtfertigungen sind. Dies ist dasselbe mit dem Bedürfnis die Wahrnehmung von Afrika zu verändern. Das Begehren und die Lust danach, die Wahrnehmung von Afrika zu verändern oder einen interkulturellen Diskurs zu erhalten, egal wie absurd dies in anno Domini 2011 erscheint, ist legitim und hängt wahrscheinlich von der Affinität des Autors zu Afrika, afrikanischer Kunst und den Gründen für diese Affinität ab. Aber dies ist nicht das Anliegen dieses Artikels.

Zieht man Pensas Annahme in Betracht, dann ist dieser Artikel nicht als Rechtfertigung, sondern eher als Berichtigung verdrehter Bilder gemeint (ein kleiner aber wichtiger Unterschied), misslungener Interpretationen, und Brechungen zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst wie es durch die Prismen westlicher Kritiken gesehen wurde; sei es auf Grund eines Desinteresses daran, ein Konzept von Kunst für andere Modernen zu öffnen oder auf Grund eklatanter Ignoranz. Aber selbst wenn dies eine Rechtfertigung wäre, ist Rechtfertigung nicht ein Teil einer reactio, die als Antwort auf jede actio folgt, d.h. die Begründung eines jeden discursus?

Wie Foucault sagt, „whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, position, and functionings, transformations), we will say that we are dealing with a discursive formation.“³⁹ Dieser Artikel ist somit ein Versuch, einige Regularitäten zwischen manchen Aussagen und Konzepten über zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst zu definieren.

Der erste Teil dieser Artikelserie wird sich auf folgende Fragen konzentrieren:

Warum eine Zeitschrift über zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst machen? Ist das nicht kontr-produktiv, unvorteilhaft und trennend? Warum nicht eher eine Zeitschrift über Kunst?

Halb-Wahrheiten und die Nicht-Linearität von Kunstgeschichte

„Ich kann mich sehr gut daran erinnern, wie es war, als wir Amrita Sher-Gil im Haus der Kunst in München als auch in der Tate Modern zeigten und viele Kollegen ernsthaft fragten, ob ich von der indischen Regierung bezahlt würde. Es gibt eine ähnliche Reaktion gegenüber unserer derzeitigen Präsentation von arabischer Kunst in München.“⁴⁰ Dieses Zitat aus dem Monopol Kunst Magazin stammt von einem der heutigen meist progressiven Kuratoren, Chris Dercon, dessen Konzept über das Zeigen von Kunstpositionen aus allen Ecken der Welt auch den Kunstraum Savvy Contemporary inspiriert hat. Dieses Zitat ist eine gute Zusammenfassung der Reaktionen die man von westlichen Kollegen angesichts nicht-westlicher Positionen bekommt. Diese Bereitschaftslosigkeit eine Wahrnehmung gegenüber anderen Formen von Moderne zu entwickeln ist in vielen heutigen Kunstdiskursen tief-verwurzelt. Aber das ist nichts neues und wir können nicht anstreben in eine Art von polemischen Diskurs über die Viktimisierung des Nicht-Westens durch den Westen abzudriften.

Simon Njami beschreibt in seinem Artikel Alte Schuld, neues Instrument⁴¹ eine Episode von 1991 wo der damalige Art Director der Documenta, Jan Hoet, feststellte, dass es so etwas wie zeitgenössische Kunst auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent nicht gibt. Beinahe 20 Jahre später reagiert ein anderer berühmter Kunstkritiker und ehemaliges Mitglied von Harald Szeemanns 5-köpfigen Team als Art Direktor der Documenta, Jean Christophe Ammann, in der Neue Zürcher Zeitung über die Teilnahme von nicht-westlicher Kunst und Künstlern in Biennalen dieser Tage: „...that is exactly the problem. The principle of the globalised exhibition (i.e. global art) eliminates our occidental culture...“⁴²

Dies sind nur einige Beispiele einer Bastion von Kunstkritikern und -historikern die immer noch für die Exklusivität von Kunst aus dem Westen kämpfen und diese immer noch als Standard erhalten wollen.

Dies ist genau das, was Mary Douglas mit ‚matter out of place‘ meinte. Es impliziert die Existenz und die Kontravention einer etablierten Ordnung oder Systems und das Einige in einem gegebenen Kontext unangebracht finden, um an dem Alten, Bekannten und Vertrauten festzuhalten und das „Andere“ zurückzuweisen. Dieser gegebene Kontext ist die behauptete lineare Genealogie von Kunstgeschichte, die heute immer noch in Kunstschulen gelehrt wird und immer noch die Kunstdiskurse und Media heutzutage beherrscht. Wir wissen, dass man von Kunst und Künstler aus nicht-westlichen Regionen für eine lange Zeit angenommen hat, dass sie in einer Zeit außerhalb der Geschichte leben, genauso wie die Kolonien von Hegel aus der Geschichte gelöscht wurden, die für ihn ein strikt westliches Vorrecht hatte.⁴³ Dieses Gebot der De-Historisierung des afrikanischen Kontinents wurde über Jahrhunderte hinweg gut kultiviert und hat viele afrikanische Intellektuelle beschäftigt die nicht nur versucht haben, ihre Positionen zu rechtfertigen, sondern auch jene zu falsifizieren.

So wie Cheikh Anta Diop zum Beispiel, der ein Kapitel des Buches *The African Origin Of Civilization* der „modernen Falsifikation von Geschichte“ gewidmet hat.⁴⁴ Diop zeigte, wie afrikanische Geschichte und ihre Zivilisationen systematisch aus dem Kommentar der Menschheitsgeschichte herausgelesen wurden. Er analysierte auch die Rolle, die westliche Historiker in den letzten fünfhundert Jahren übernahmen, indem sie die Weltgeschichte wiederumschreiben und verzerrten, zum Vorteil der Europäer. Diese historischen, konzeptuellen und perspektivischen Verzerrungen existieren bis heute. Folglich wäre es mehr als naiv für jemanden zu denken, dass die Positionierung, die Medienaufmerksamkeit, die Beachtung, der Respekt und das Verstehen von afrikanischen Künstlern oder afrikanische Kunst (oder Kunst aus Afrika; egal wie man es bezeichnet, die Terminologie ist nur eine Nebensache in diesem Artikel) selbstverständlich ist. Es ist sogar mehr als grotesk zu meinen, dass zeitgenössische afrikanische Künstler und afrikanische Kunst mit den selben Standard wie ihre Gegenüber im Okzident gemessen würden. Wenn wir darüber übereinstimmen, dass es ein Missverhältnis in der „Objektivität“ der Kunstwelt hinsichtlich des geographischen Nachwuchses von Künstlern gibt, dann ist es mehr als wichtig, Zeitschriften zu haben, die das erforschen, reflektieren und die Diskurse, Entwicklungen und Schwerpunkte zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst positionieren aber auch Zeitschriften, die den Mut haben, die Halbwahrheiten und die Nicht-Linearität von geschichtlicher Entwicklung zu berichtigen.

Der Stand der Kritik

Es muss nicht extra betont werden, dass die mediale Aufmerksamkeit auf zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst in den lokalen Medien in afrikanischen Ländern vielerorts lückenhaft ist und zu wünschen übrig lässt. Wenn sie Kunstaussstellungen erwähnen, dann ist die Lokalpresse mehr am Spektakel als an dem Ausstellungskonzept interessiert. Kunst und sein Diskurs spielen eine kleine oder keine Rolle in den Feuilletons vieler Tageszeitungen auf dem Kontinent und die spezialisierten Medien zu zeitgenössischer Kunst zirkulieren im globalen Rahmen und sind oft in Englisch verfasst.

Viele der Zeitschriften der globalen Liga in den letzten Dekaden haben einen innovativen Weg in der Haltung der Kunstkritik gegenüber afrikanischer Kunst eingeschlagen, sei es NKA - Journal of Contemporary African Art, Revue Noire oder Third Text – Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture – um nur die prominentesten zu nennen. Sie bauten dadurch das Fundament für Kritik zu Kunst aus dem Nicht-Westen. Immer noch aber sind diese Zeitschrift auf einen extrem exklusiven Leserkreis ausgerichtet und auf Grund logistischer Schwierigkeiten sie zu der allgemeinen Öffentlichkeit auf dem Kontinent und darüber hinaus zu bringen, sind diese Zeitschriften kaum in den Presse- und Bücherläden zu finden.

Auf der anderen Seite wurden diese Zeitschriften, dank der recht hohen Erwerbskosten, für eine finanziell gut gestellte Akademikergeneration zurechtgeschnitten. Aber die Zeiten ändern sich. Das neue Medienfieber ist ansteckend und hat die Orte und Zellen junger und nachwachsender Kunstkritiker überschwemmt die neue Diskursplattformen für alte und neue Konzepte afrikanischer Kunst kreieren wollen. Diese neue und selbstbewusste Generation ist mit Blogs und anderen Webseiten bewaffnet welche nicht nur kostenlos, sondern auch weitläufig verfügbar sind. Selbst die zuvor genannten Vorläuferzeitschriften sind online gegangen.

Die Abdeckung von Kunst aus Afrika oder zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst in den Kunstzeitschriften im Westen ist mehr als eine „Mangelerscheinung“. Der Sommer 2010 war eine extrem gute Zeit für zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst als Nebenprodukt der Fußballweltmeisterschaft in Südafrika, in der sich viele Zeitschriften in populistischer Weise darum stritten, auch ein Stück des Kuchens abzubekommen. In Deutschland beispielsweise gab es Exklusivausgaben zur zeitgenössischen afrikanischen Kunst (meist südafrikanischer Kunst) in den Kunstzeitschriften Art – Das Kunstmagazin und Monopol. Aber danach hat sich der Wind wieder in Richtung der Realität der letzten Jahre gedreht. Diskurse über zeitgenössische afrikanische Kunst sind in den Kunstmedien Deutschlands und der anderen westlichen Länder beinahe inexistent.

Nur etwas „Außergewöhnliches“ wie die Ernennung Okwui Enwezors zum Direktor des Haus des Kunst in München, war für die Kunstzeitschriften oder die Tagespresse interessant genug, etwas aus Afrika zu erwähnen. Aber selbst diese vermeintlichen positiven Neuigkeiten wurden von der Berliner Zeitung, repräsentativ für die Abdeckung Afrikas in des Tagespresse, mit einem schrecklichen Artikel mit dem Titel Ein Afrikaner im Haus der Kunst verbreitet, die zu folgendem Schluß kommen: „Ein Global Player der Kunst, kein afrikanischer Kunstpatriot, eher einer mit westlichem Blick. Als Kurator der Johannesburg-Biennale 1997 ging es ihm eher darum, dort die westzentrierte Kunst zu präsentieren, als die afrikanische Kunst dem Rest der Welt zugänglich zu machen. So was nennt man dort „Kokosnuss“: außen braun und innen weiß.“⁴⁵. Dieser Artikel von Ingeborg Ruthe ist ein Inbegriff von „Objektivität“ gegenüber zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst, gewürzt mit Vorurteil und mangelhafter Recherche.

Wie Jyoti Dhar es richtig in seinem Artikel darüber beschreibt (obwohl dieser Artikel auf Kunstkritik in der Golfregion fokussiert können die Argumente weitestgehend auf allgemeine Kunstkritik über den Nicht-Westen appliziert werden), wir internationale Kritiker über Kunst aus der Golfregion schreiben, diese “display fantastic ignorance, intellectual laziness and shorthand everything into generalized responses based on categories of judgement that are problematic.” Dhar ging noch weiter und gab Gründe für diese Faux Pas, die die Wahrnehmung nicht-westlicher Kunst durch die Prismen der Europäischen Kunstgeschichte beinhalten und schlug vor, dass “alternative and more relevant approach may be to contextualize these artists using other global contemporary artists (not necessarily from the west)” und dass die Verantwortlichkeit des Kritikers jene eines Chronisten sein sollte “where one has to be sensitive to the socio-political and time-specific context of the art work, without making it solely about that.”⁴⁷

Ein anderes einschlägiges Problem beim Schreiben über den Nicht-Westen ist die Ernennung von Experten. Der Grund weshalb einige Personen als Experten gelten ist für mich ein Konundrum. Man erhält den Eindruck dass es mehr oder weniger trendy geworden ist ein Experte für Afrika zu sein, egal in welchem Lebensbereich, sei es für politische Fragen, ökonomische oder für Kunst. Jeder der ihre/seine letzten Ferien auf dem afrikanischen Kontinent verbrachte, jeder der die Möglichkeit hatte die Biennale von Dak’art zu besichtigen oder jeder der einige Masken sammelt kann heutzutage als „Afrika-Experte“ interviewt werden. Folglich scheint es, als könnte beinahe jeder vorgeben kann, ein Experte zu sein, einen Artikel oder Buch schreiben und einen Kommentar zu zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst abgeben.

Ich möchte den ersten Teil dieser Artikelserie damit beenden einige Fragen in den Raum zu werfen. Zeitschriften wie die American Art Review, Frieze - European contemporary art and culture magazine, Western Art & Architecture, The Latin American Art Journal, Nka – Journal of Contemporary African Art, Third Text – Critical Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture oder ArtAsiaPacific existieren mit aller Legitimität und repräsentieren ihre spezifische Positionen.... es gibt Museen über amerikanische, europäische, lateinamerikanische, asiatische und afrikanische Kunst... Warum sollte eine Zeitschrift so legitim wie SAVVY | kunst,zeitgenössisch.afrikanisch ist, noch mehr Legitimisierung nötig haben?

Die nächste Edition dieses Artikels wird Fragen zur Terminologie in zeitgenössischer afrikanischer Kunst behandeln.

Übersetzt von Andrea Heister

Endnotes:

(I) Mark 16:15-16; New Testament

(II) Pensa, Iolanda: Import-export: History of the history of contemporary African art

(III) Michel Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972)

(IV) Dercon, Chris: Der Unesco-Mann: Vergesst die Idee einer Leitkultur! Monopol Feb. 2011

(V) Njami, Simon: Ancient guilt, new tool. SAVVY | art.contemporary.african, Edition 1.

(VI) Interview «Poesie! Kunst ist Poesie!» 12. Juni 2010, Neue Zürcher Zeitung

http://www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/kultur/literatur_und_kunst/poesie_kunst_ist_poesie_1.6048546.html

(VII) Douglas, Mary. Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo. London: Ark Paperbacks, 1966.

(VIII) Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg (eds.): The Global Art World, Ostfildern 2009

(IX) Diop, Cheikh Anta. The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality. Lawrence Hill Books 1974

Ruthe, Ingeborg. Ein Afrikaner im Haus der Kunst, 20.01.2011

<http://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fcgi/2011/0120/feuilleton/0075/index.html>

(X) Dhar, Jyoti. Beyond Prisms: In search of Alternatives in Critique - May 2010 Contemporary Practices Journal - Volume VI, 2010

(Re) Constructing Mindscapes

Nancy Hoffmann

Before we enter the space, we are confronted with a man-high photograph on the other side of the wall. It shows a landscape, dry, red soil with mountains in the background. In front of the mountains there are palm trees and an old, decayed colonial building, like a caravanserai in the desert. At our feet we see an old torn-up t-shirt and a broken bottleneck. Different layers of events in time are there... I am at the exhibition 'Unfixed' at the CBK in Dordrecht where curators Sara Blokland and Asmara Pelupessy have invited visual artist Otobong Nkanga (Nigeria, '74) – among others – to give her view on the relationship between the post-colonial discourse and the medium of photography.

Like Walter Benjamin pointed out in the early days of mass photography: "the camera introduces us to unconscious optics, as does psychoanalysis to unconscious impulses". (1) A camera in the hands of Nkanga immediately becomes a tool to investigate exactly these aspects of the environment she enters. Leading us to the traces of the past, the present and the future, the things that are easily to be looked over or left unsaid. But it is not the only tool she uses. Like drawing, for Nkanga the photograph is part of the laboratory of visualization.

We go back to the work 'Memories of a Landscape' (2010) she created for 'Unfixed' and stride into the space on the other side of the wall. Entering the black room we find the content of her memories; filled with images, texts written on the walls in chalk connected by arrows, some words replaced by other words, some words added, drawings of what she saw in that landscape and how everything spread out in her mind. "Now I remember why I took the picture of the broken bottleneck and the shredded t-shirt" she wrote on the walls, "there were a lot of issues in the islands concerning illegal immigration, so I imagined (maybe) that a man (or a woman) was living in the old ruined house and tried – he or she – not to leave traces of his (or her) existence".

If a beginning of things is to be marked out, it might have all started with a residency in Fuerteventura, an island close to the African continent that is part of the Spanish Canary Islands. Invited for the 1st Biennial for Art and Architecture in 2006, Nkanga felt how the past and present came together in the landscape she found herself in, and the objects built by mankind. As ever, Nkanga investigated her surroundings meticulously by looking, feeling, smelling, by making photographs, restructuring, using her body and even her voice, to point out to us what has been left unseen. For the Biennial in Fuerteventura she created a day-length performance: 'Arrested Moments (Before the State of Amnesia Crops In)'. Sitting on top of an 18th century colonial manorial house that had recently been restored, on a towering wooden chair, she captured snapshots of the landscape during a whole day. (2) The 360 images, all consisting of a mountain, a palm tree and the ruins of an old colonial workers house that remained un-restored, were produced with certain intervals and printed on postcards that were handed out to the public. On this spot culture and nature both were witnesses of the past. A past that was on the threshold of Amnesia, as the old workers house clearly would not survive the next era where the prominent house of the colonels would. A past that could be uprooted any time if someone would decide to erase it from the face of the earth. Only the trees and the mountain would remain as silent witnesses, for the people would forget about their black pages in history as time moved on.

The landscape did not only leave a strong after-image in her memories, it also became a symbol, an exemplary for many stories of her own and those of others. Her investigation of the aspects that were unseen, she captured by reconstructing the landscape into a model. The work 'The Alterscape Stories' (2006) that came out of this process takes this piece of the earth out of its context and makes it into a universal tale of creation and destruction.

This time Nkanga puts herself in the landscape. Like a black paper-cut image she is representing mankind, like the Almighty, taking control of its surroundings: polluting, uprooting, restructuring and obviously not caring about nature that brought us there in the first place.

By presenting the works as altarpieces, a diptych and a triptych, Nkanga might be suggesting to us to build altars for the things that were painfully lost in time. The active volcano is there, like the skull in 17th century still life paintings, to refer to the fact that time goes up in smoke and we all will remain as dust in the end. It feels like she is making a wink to us, a reminder that nature could erupt at any time and we would have no control over the forces of nature what so ever. As there will be no view left on reality in the end, the staged model created for 'The Alterscape Stories' was photographed and then destroyed.

Images of her country of birth, Nigeria, the beauty of nature and the painful memories of her childhood, have all found their way into Nkanga's work. Just as the landscape in Fuerteventura they have become universal stories of hope and despair, violence and displacement, construction and deconstruction, entangled in the threads that connect us through life.

In the book 'No be today story O!' that was recently published, three series of drawings entitled 'Filtered Memories' and 'Social Consequences I and II' are reproduced, that give us a fabulous set of tools to read the installations, performances and photographs of Nkanga and the mindscapes that are the bases of her work. Like the dark space representing her reminiscences when we enter 'Memories of a Landscape', she shapes the blanks in our memory just as the images that are still there, Black bubbles that float through the air like the black holes in our galaxy: what goes in, never comes out. But it doesn't mean that it is not there. All the rest is connected with dots and arrows, slivers of images, uprooted like trees; traces of existence taken from their contexts like root-balls violently torn from the earth. We are destined to forget, but we have to force ourselves to fill in the blanks, hold on to our root nodes, and connect to our surroundings, if we ever want to make visible what would be so easy to ignore...

Nancy Hoffmann

Art historian, critic, curator and co-founding director for the Instituto Buena Bista – Curacao Center for Contemporary Art in the Dutch Caribbean

Details on the work of Otobong Nkanga:
<http://www.otobongnkanga.com>

Endnotes:

(1) Walter Benjamin – Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit, p. 13

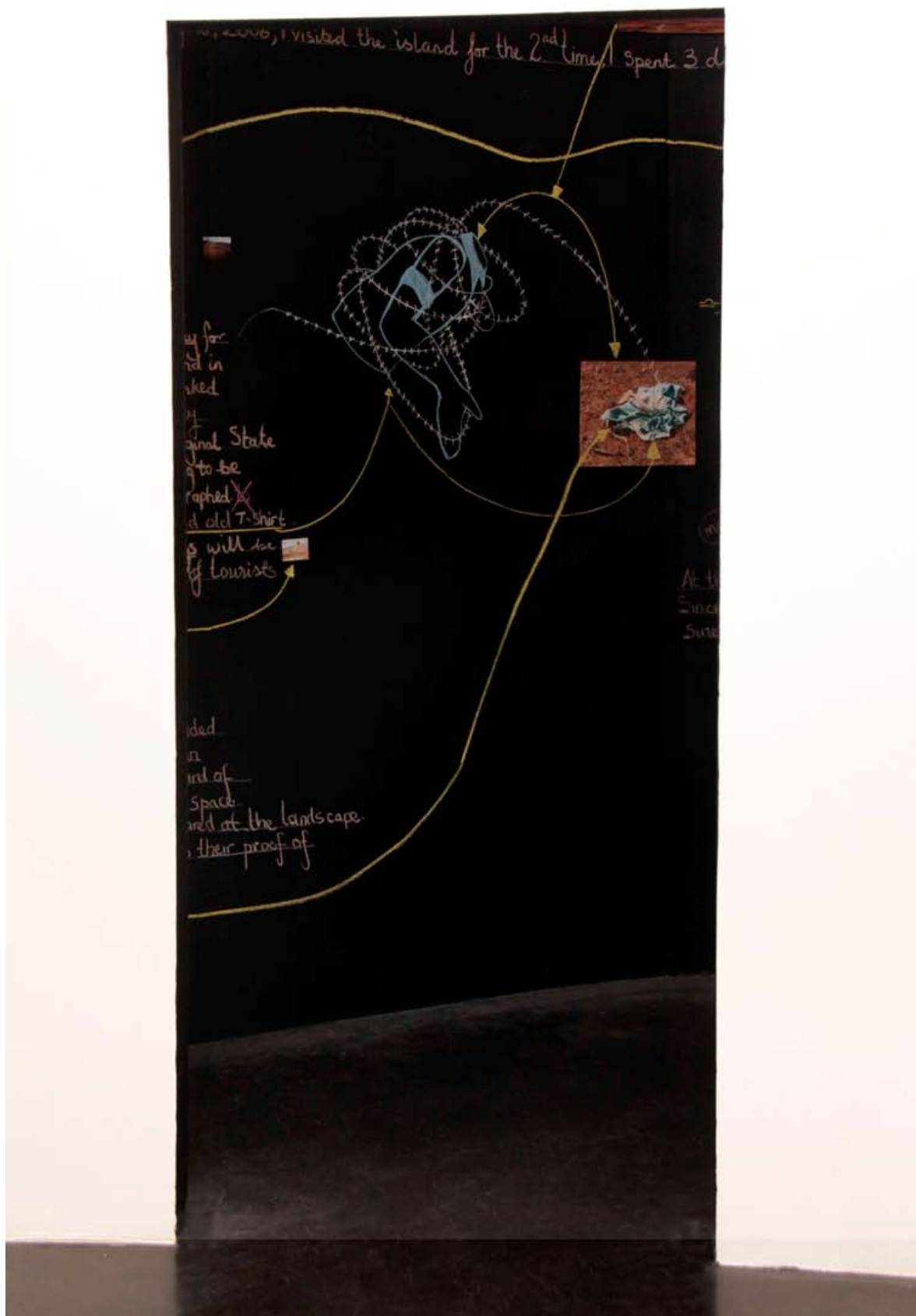
(2) La Casa de los Coroneles (1708), La Oliva, Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, November 24/25, 2006











visited the island for the 2nd time

Spent 3 days making and observing the mountain
Snapshots

Renovate
The King
the Sp

17th Century old

Looking from
the old manor to
the ruined house

≈ 300m

maybe the
side

At the back of the empty ruined I found more broken
Since I did not make any image of the back
Sure if the broken bottles were really there

The Signifying Donkey

Brenda Cooper

When my mother was a teenager at school in Johannesburg, her teacher shockingly levelled an anti-Semitic insult at her in front of the whole class. She had been the only one to achieve the correct answer to something, I forget what, and the teacher had said: "If one Jewish donkey can get it ..."

My mother told this story often. It was soldered onto her but I stopped hearing it, irritated as by old fogies who go on about their War. I haven't personally experienced anti-Semitism. But I thought about my mother, the Jewish donkey, as I puzzled over Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's ghoulish painting with the intriguing title.

The Signifying Donkey's Feat, 2003

Lynette's titles tease and tickle with their riddles. Signifying is the coded double talk hiding place of wily black tricksters and pranksters, jokers, Anansi the Spider, Briar the Rabbit, Esu, the slippery Yoruba spirit, the African American signifying monkey. Do not be taken in by its sing and song of riddle, rhyme and no apparent reason. This lopsided ass of a woman with her black, grey, white and blond wild hair, her ugly gapped teeth and bruised black eye has hidden power, the knowledge of which is embodied in her smirk. Her feat lies in the angry slashes of paint, in her evil eye. Lynette paints in the language of "medusaspeak", as coined by Dorothea Smartt, the London born poet, whose parents migrated from Barbados.

Smartt had been taunted by the neighbourhood children in the eighties in South London, where she lived. They looked at her dreadlocks and called her 'Medusa'. In "medusa dream", Smartt re-enacts the brutal moment when Perseus "butchering her image captures her head" (62). She reincarnates her with her "Snakes hung, glorious" ("dream bed" 61) and syncretises her with Shango, Nigerian Yoruba god:

Medusa is my shield
impregnable
my aegis –
no mythical Aegean people shield
this is my armour
with Shango double-headed axe
Yemoja-Ocuti
my battle dress armour
of serious dread (Smartt, "medusa: cuts both ways", 60)

As Medusa melds with Shango's thunder and lightning, she becomes a new creature. She is double, multiple, cuts both ways, carries a twin headed axe, which is her weapon. But the snakes do not always hang so gloriously. Black hair torments the owner when neighbourhood insults hit their mark:

Scrub it bleach it operate on it powder it
straighten it fry it dye it perm it
turn it back on itself
make it go away make it go away (Smartt, "medusa? medusa black!", (57).

All of this is so because "My hair as it comes/is just not good enough" (58). It:

Is too tuff too unruly too ugly too black
too tuff too unruly too ugly too black. (58)

Black hair signifies when Medusa becomes a strong, black woman with an African identity and Caribbean dreadlocks.

Medusa was a Blackwoman,
African, dread (Smartt, 2001, 57).

The signifying donkey with black eye and missing tooth, with wild hair, which might have been straightened, and her slashed face, which lacks refinement, is also still struggling to signify. Six years later Lynette brings her back as a magnified, signifying monkey. Her features have settled, albeit her eye is still black and bruised. She occupies more space with her torso whole (but strangely sexless). Look closely. She is cradling her black Medusa hair, turning her into two heads. To see this, you need to cut off her white face at the neck (note) and then the blackness between her arms becomes another being. Now comes the crux.

Once you see this two headed, forked tongue Medusa, what is magnified is her massive head of black hair, on which the body lies and which supports it. The mass of big hair is the gigantic, signifying monkey incarnate.

*

My mother was not a signifying donkey. I never heard her bray or saw her smirk. Sad.

Professor Brenda Cooper was for many years the Director of the Centre for African Studies at the University of Cape Town. In 2009 she moved to Salford where she is an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Manchester. She has published four academic books on African and Diasporic writing.







Chromatic Symphony

Interview with Odili Donald Odita

Missla Libsekal

Interviewed by Missla Libsekal (Another Africa) and Ilpo Jauhiainen

Following his recent solo exhibition entitled *Body & Space* this past Autumn in New York, I had the pleasure of interviewing Nigerian-born (b. 1966 Enugu) abstract painter and hard-edged, colour field enthusiast Odili Donald Odita. His oeuvres, architectonic creations on canvas, plexiglass and wall drawings explore the mysteries of colour, its infinite possibilities considering colour anew - as a conceptual space. The journey discovering his work and thoughts behind his practice has been both intellectually and visually stimulating. His rigorous practice, specificity yet instinctual abandon to chromatic freedom create visual vistas ocularly titillating. Viewing his paintings in the flesh, one can easily find themselves lost in time, gazing and seeing different perspectives shapes and forms ultimately experiencing a renewed faith and love of colour.

During our recent telephone interview in December 2010, Odita spoke candidly of his work, his thoughts on colour how it marks, codifies and shapes our world, influences our understanding and perceptions whether it be at loftier heights such as in relation to socio-political constructs or to the mundane yet rather logical extrapolation as to why stop signs are typically red.

MISSLA LIBSEKAL: What are the themes you have found yourself naturally gravitating towards through your paintings?

ODILI DONALD ODITA: Quite a lot of things actually that I've been wanting to push through with the work. I feel as if I have wanted to speak about painting primarily; it's a very important thing for me to speak through. I want to speak to it in a specific way, from a cultured position, from one who is speaking from a certain place in the world, in a certain mindset from within this world.

I want to speak clearly about painting as not only an African but as a human being. It is interesting for me to try to address certain things that I am concerning with, certain things dealing with power relations within cultures, certain ideas that have, that exist underlying in painting that are very in certain ways hegemonic let's say and so there are a lot of different things that I am trying to do within painting. I want to expand the content of colour and the understanding and awareness of colour rather than for it to be assumed and dealt with in a superficial manner as it is in art and painting. As I look at colour, colour can become an enormous conceptual space that has only begun to be scratched in the realm of painting it's always been looked at in a certain political, conceptual way rather than only a technical way.

ML: The understanding of colour in the West is said to be influenced by Chromophobia, Can you tell us what this is?

ODO: I am borrowing the term from David Batchelor whose great book titled *Chromophobia* goes into the whole notion of the fear of colour in Western culture and it's a book that I use extensively with my students in colour class. It's a book that is interesting because when American kids read this book and I am reading in class, they look at it as an attack against them, or a slight against them, and that is very, very important - that reaction and I highlight to students that he is speaking towards Western culture and they already are feeling attacked. What does this say about their awareness if not intuitive, their conscious awareness of their participation, their embodiment of the West - how they embody the West, how they are the West and how they are receiving this argument in this way, this particular way. It's interesting, this book goes into some good scholarly, historical detail into how colour has been perceived, written in texts, philosophies, colour theories in a way that genderizes it, makes it a state of psychosis, puts it in the space of drugs, illicit drug use, talks about colour almost as a state of anarchy and all these sorts of things. This is all in documented, historical, academic official text. You said something really interesting to me about perception and colour, and again I think this is to speak about how we understand colour our perception meaning or being understanding, perception being the way we see, perception being the way we think, and how colours can affect when used well and used interestingly, can affect, modify and maybe change one's perceptions and feelings, thoughts, considerations, a particular point of view.



So I think that there is a lot of power in colour, and there is a lot of distrust in the normal say Western sense of colour, there is a distrust of it because it is used as something that can't be managed quite easily.

ML: Do you think that chromophobia is something that typically occurs only in North America?

ODO: I couldn't say that either because I know the book, *Chromophobia* documents the West very thoroughly but again it's also a book from the West. It's an analysis of Western culture. If I was going to make an analysis say of Nigerian culture, I might get into aspects of chromophobia there too - I wouldn't know where to begin in that sense but I think that that could be the case as well. There might be colour associations, symbolic associations, colour that is related to a symbol that one is to say do not trespass this space, because this colour represents this idea or this particular thing. So in that sense it's about surviving and life is always all about this on one level - you know survival. I think that art is this other level, where it's like how do we live and move beyond only wanting to survive. What is life beyond the mere necessity of survival - where is the beauty of life beyond that and that is when I think - you know wow plants with their colours, they are made to attract bugs so that they can pollinate let's say, or plants with colour, bright colour that are meant to be a warning in nature, that is if you eat this plant you are going to die, drop dead and you know you can start to contemplate those things. How does it happen that we have colours and we actually code things with colours and we identify from plant life to stop signs, colour to help us move through things. Certain colours kind of repeat as a certain understanding, commonalities let's say that goes through certain colours identifies in a certain way, the feeling that we have for red then there is fire then there is blood, then there is a stop sign. It is interesting when you think of it in that sense but you have to think about it, you can't just reduce it to only a stop sign, then I think that colour becomes inadequate and becomes only technical

ML: Living in the Digital Age where computers are a common part of many of our lives, how do you feel this is influencing our experience of colour?

ODO: But always remember that you have the colour from the monitor, colour from an image, and then you have colour entering your eyes from a natural light, from being outside, from being in the sunlight - there are multiple experiences. I'm interesting in the quality of colour generated from machine light, from mechanic light, like a computer or a TV light and what that does.

I am also interested in what happens with colour in nature under the sun, or in the atmosphere. Because I believe that when we experience colour, through our eyes, just through our eyes in the real world we are going to experience infinity - the infinite, the infinite potential - the infinite possibility. When we have man-made, mechanical light we are going to have another kind of experience, it's just going to be flatter, but it can be equally intense - different. Like an apple and an orange, it's just different. It's a different meaning and a different feeling. To be under a bright sun, outside on a brightly sunlit day or indoors in an intensely neon lit space or fluorescent space. It's just a different kind of experience, and I think that those experiences are equally intense and valid, and specific and I love that specificity of one verses the other because it talks about condition, and it talks about stage and it talks about state of mind.

ML: Your abstract paintings have been likened to the scrambled reception of a TV, unrecognizable imagery yet somehow familiar with the images penetrating the viewer like a slogan. What led you to isolate and define this particular attribute in your paintings?

ODO: Well it's all about contrast for me, all about condition and contrast - what is the nature of the space, how can I bring the space to an alert consideration, to an alerted and alarm consideration, how might I deal with say the subtlety of say a whisper, how can one whisper and bring attention to what they need to say. How can one scream, shrill, and bring attention to what they say. So a lot of it is about being effective. Having a sense of effectiveness of force being able to modify, being able to render in colour, being able to hold in colour the nature of a given space. It's really that I think that there can be so much clarity and at the same time so much openness when one uses colour and there is so much possibility with it and I think, and I know for sure that colour as much as I have talked about it specifically doesn't exist by itself. It needs so much of everything else for it to be something at it's most intense.

ML: The installation in Cincinnati, Flow, you juxtaposed the confederate flag colours with white and black skin colours. Is this one of those invisible penetrations?

ODO: The penetration again is in the mind's eye. It's about trying to change the mind or affect the way that somebody can engage the space. I wanted to be able to come from my consideration of that space you are talking about the one in Cincinnati. To me, my consideration of the space, the nature of the space with Zaha Hadid's design in the space.







I am just trying to do many different things in this sense. I am just addressing some of the many layers, reality to colour. Good colour doesn't exist. Space doesn't exist without colour and drawing. You need line and form. Colour with edge to be able to help give one a definition of space, to give oneself a sense and a definition of space and I'm trying in my work to be able to understand all the different polarities that can possibly exist to get to this notion of space and in that sense having the body react to that space, react to that in new, different and varying ways. I am always interested in being able to come across some other situation or condition that I didn't foresee because then it talks to me about the infinite, about infinity; positivity and infinity of space and the world around us you know, and on many levels, from the level of music, to the level of intellectual inquiry, to the notion of reality I am trying to investigate what colour can be and it's not just wanting to use it to define form or wanting to use it to depict objects, but I want to use it also to help create an understanding of the world we live in and an engagement in that world too through a better understanding of colours, our sense of how we perceive colour. How we deal with it, how we handle it in our daily, our day-to-day experience and it's just so interesting how from one place to the other with travels, literal travel as well as Internet travel, how one can see and experience these changes. If you were travelling, you're going from one city to the next, if you are sensitive you are going to notice that light is different that daylight and the night-light is different and I think that's an important thing to realise. What you are saying is I am here. I am in this world and I see and I can see.

ML: You've described your wall paintings as events, ephemeral, for a definitive period, to be experienced in person and then gone. What does this ephemerality bring to the work?

ODO: As a student, I loved this artist On Kawara, a Japanese artist. He started out making postcards where he would say, he said I'm alive, I'm here and he would send them out to people, his friends and people he knew and later on he made these date paintings which were painted on the day, and the subject matter is the day that they're painted. September 12, 1967 ... February 18, 1966 ... December 30, 2004. They carry the meaning from just the day that they were made. It becomes just a really beautiful experience as I see it - just existing. They have a sense of permanence because that is real, and they are temporary because the day passes and another thing about them is that they were painted out of a suitcase essentially. This guy doesn't need a lab or studio with twenty assistants running around, it's just a modest scale painting with this date on it, written on it, and that is it and I've always liked that idea.

So for me, maybe I'm excited by this notion of the wall paintings because being essentially not literally but essentially something it's like this, I go to the hardware store, buy my paints, I have a pattern and everything, I go in there and paint on the wall, give something to the public, give something to them you know, they can take part in it, enjoy it, and then it comes down and the experience is heightened by the fact that somebody, that you the viewer where able to go see it you know.

ML: Mentioning Kawara he has been archiving the colours from his painting for many years which in turn became *an artwork unto itself. We heard that you too archive your colour palette. Your paintings sometimes use up to 100+ colours, it seems like the archiving process would be quite rigorous. What importance do you put on this process of documentation?

ODO: Well yes I've documented since the very largest painting I made in '98. I document the colours that I've used in my paintings maybe part of it is just the fact of my father being an art historian. It is partly in my mind to want to, to have the desire to document and to make documentation of my actions. It was something that I was taught from him but at the same instance it's about being able to see just the experiences that I've been able to have with colour. On another level it's being able to see how far I have gone with colour. I want to look to see if I am using the same kinds of colours, if I am using different ones, if I am reaching for different considerations or different positions or different spaces through colour. Colour creates space; colour is about space as much as it's about paint. So I want to know that I am being able to challenge myself, challenge my considerations of what it can be, useful, appropriate, what could work with colour.

* Journals 1966 - 2000, On Kawara. Shown in Colour Chart: Reinventing Colour 1950 to Today, MoMA New York 2008.

ML: In reflection where have you gone in your dialogue with colour for example in one instance?

ODO: For me right now, with the show that I have up*, I am very happy with the way that I have been able to create a dynamic that goes beyond just colour itself. The dynamic of the colour and the colour situation, and the composition of the colours created this light, created this type of energy in the space where light and colour and form came together in a way that blew the space apart, that really just pushed the space apart.

I was interested in the physicality of light and the physicality of light being generated through colour and the physicality of light as it moved through the room because it was generated by the colour in the room.

* *Body & Space* exhibited at Jack Shainman Gallery from November 18 to December 23, 2010 in New York

ML: It's interesting your articulation of this intangible phenomenon; I was able to experience this at the show.

ODO: Art in the academy and discourse of the academy, we are trained to find ways to speak of things that there are no words for but you know, it's the power of colour, it's phenomena is beyond words. It's about reality, it's about being able to experience physical nature, how it shapes how it defines, it identifies. It is very important to be able to for me, to be able to experience those things and that is rewarding. It reminds me that colour is not just only an item to fill identification of a space but it is used to really make the world new and again, make the world new and again.

ML: What role does the pursuit of innovation play in your practice; you've written that you hope to make a contribution to the intellectual future of painting? Where do you think you are?

ODO: Well, I am still in the process of it. I had this show that I had a really good experience with. I almost killed myself doing the show cause it was so much work and so much preparation in such a short time but you know I appreciate the process, I appreciate what I learned. There's an artists who once said, talked about coming out of your space, your studio to know what fear is and I think that strong work can be like this experience of coming to face one's fears and learning to live beyond them, yah.

This coming April, Odita will participate in a group exhibition at ARS 11, Kiasma, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki Finland where he will be exhibited a piece inspired by Africa.

About the artist

Odili Donal Odita was born in Enugu, Nigeria and lives and works in Philadelphia and New York. Odita is currently an Associate Professor of Painting at Tyler School of Art, Temple University in Philadelphia. His work has been exhibited around the globe in solo and group exhibitions. Of note, the 52nd Venice Biennale, The Contemporary Art Museum, Houston, The studio Museum in Harlem and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco.

Odita is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and Michael Stevenson Gallery, Cape Town.

<http://www.odilidonaldodita.com/>
<http://www.jackshainman.com/>
<http://www.michaelstevenson.com/>

Missla Libsekal

Founder of online magazine Another Africa, a platform to showcase a contemporary vision of Africana. She works as a design business consultant earning her degree in Business Administration with Honours in Management though recently made a foray into the world of publishing and journalism. (www.anotherafrica.net) She is passionate about Africa and conveying stories that speak to the richness and cultural wealth from and inspired by this continent.

Ilpo Jauhiainen

He is a composer, sound artist and writer. Studied Sonic Arts at the Middlesex University, London, UK.

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Odili Donald Odita. *Body & Space* 2010. Image courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, NY.









I am still trying out...searching and finding and searching

Interview with Maimuna Adam

Andrea Heister

Born in Maputo in 1984, Maimuna Adam received her BA (Hons) in Fine Arts from the University of Pretoria in 2008. Group exhibitions include MUVART Bienal '08 and the Bienal TDM'09 – where she received an 'honourable mention' award for A Cortina / The Curtain – both held at the National Art Museum of Mozambique. In 2010 she participated in the project Ocupações Temporárias / Temporary Occupations, exhibiting the body of work Papel / Role at Minerva Central bookshop in Maputo.

On a hot and sunny day at the beginning of January 2011, I met with the young artist Maimuna Adam in her studio in Maputo, Mozambique. The little, inviting place was filled with paint, canvas, cameras and, in the centre of all, a computer. On a shelf some random art books on Mozambican art, and some others from South Africa, where the artist was trained.

In spite of her young age, Maimuna is already teaching digital photography and drawing. She is well connected with the contemporary art scene in Mozambique; observing and acting in it.

Andrea Heister: Maimuna, I would like to start by talking about your own work. There is a mixture of different artistic material and media in your space. You were trained in fine arts in Pretoria and I see you have been working in the “traditional” genres in the old sense: painting and drawing, but it seems as if you use this wall for video production. If you were asked to give a resumé on your artistic development over the last five years, on the use of techniques, material and on your focus, how would you describe it?

Maimuna Adam: I must admit that I feel like I am constantly ‘in process’ so this is a bit difficult to answer, but essentially I feel that during the past five years I was exposed to different approaches to art making, from drawing and painting using ‘traditional’ materials such as oil paint, gouache, charcoal, ink, to alternative materials such as coffee. It was also during this time that I went deeper into photography, learned stop-motion and developed my digital video editing skills further.

The concepts and themes that I use in my work relate quite directly to personal experience, especially that of travelling and displacement - at times personal events such as living in Sweden for about three years from when I was 5 years old, and spending two years in Swaziland studying, but also in a more indirect way through my family, as my father's side of the family is of Indian origin, and my mother, although born in Norway, grew up and currently lives in Chile.

For me (digital) video and photography have become a way to ‘make sense’ of the physical and tactile part of my studio work as well as bringing the dimension of time to my painting, drawing and photography. In a way the media has been instrumental in helping me in the process of forming my own opinion, which includes the searching and interpretation of personal as well as historical events.

AH: Some of your paintings are self-portraits, in colour, in black and white, and in your video works you repeatedly use your own body as main actor and element. Is this one of your main topics – the examination of yourself?

MA: Yes, in the sense that I use my own experiences as a starting point for my work - the element of moving and the feeling and questions of belonging and not belonging in different places has fascinated me for a while – I have also been exploring memory, and how problematic it may be to have or not have ‘proof’ of events through objects and photographs.

AH: Currently you are focusing on video. The works I have seen so far on your blog and now here, are not only very aesthetic, but also narrative. In *The Curtain* (2009) and *Paper/Role* (2010) we accompany slow transformations of situations. But there is a double sense, you enjoy playing with significations, Paper for example stands not only for paper to write on but also for toilet paper. Where do you get your inspiration and what are your intentions in the videos?

MA: Much of what I reflect and explore in my work is somewhat autobiographical - my use of (toilet) paper as a material as well as a conceptual element came from an exploration of the differences in hygienic practices I grew up observing, and how they differed at my parents' home compared to my Muslim paternal grandparents' house. Later on, paper took on various other roles and meanings, and I have used it as a support for drawings made in charcoal, coffee and ink, as well as to make objects such as the dress in the photographic series *The Travelling Dress* (2008).

I pre-suppose that there are always different ways of analysing and interpreting what I make, so I deliberately allow for ambiguity in my titles as well as in elements in the works themselves to encourage this. Although my work is autobiographical to a point, I am constantly reflecting on more general links with regards to events in the history of Mozambique and the world.

AH: Besides your own art production, you are also overlooking the contemporary art in Mozambique. There are great painters like Malangatana, Bertina Lopes, Chissano, sculptors like Shikhani and ceramists like Reinata. What about the use of new, digital media. How is the situation here?

MA: I find it quite interesting here because we are still in the initial stages of developing the art form – there is a Video Art Association that has been instrumental in exposing video art from places such as Portugal, and motivating events that aim to lead to a deeper understanding of the language of the medium. In addition, artists such as Berry Bickle, Gemuze and Mario Macilau have already been showing their video work locally and internationally.

At the moment my focus is in exploring the possibilities that digital media can allow for, and at the moment I have more questions than answers in relation to the presentation and consumption of the art form, as well as the different approaches to it.

AH: In several conversations with artists I repeatedly heard that there are a lot of changes happening in Mozambique, particularly in Maputo. In what sense is the art scene changing and developing?

MA: I believe it is opening up, in the sense that there is more diversity in what artists are making now, in terms of the materials and techniques as well as the themes and subjects employed. There is now also more access to advanced courses such as the Design and Visual Arts degrees offered by the *Instituto Superior de Arte e Cultura* in Maputo. Although Maputo has always been a meeting place for international artists and researchers, I do feel that there is also an increasing focus on the part of artists, curators and researchers to network and maintain a dialogue and continuing projects rather than 'once off' events.

There are constant exhibitions, workshops and performances throughout the year, organised independently as well as through the various cultural centres here. In addition, there are larger and recurring events such as *Dockanema*, the Documentary film festival that runs for about a week annually in various venues around the city, as well as *Kinani*, a contemporary dance platform, and annual and biennial exhibitions such as those hosted by the telecommunication company *TDM*, as well as the exhibitions organized by *MUVART*, the Contemporary Art Movement of Mozambique.

AH: What are the topics you feel you want to work on and explore and how would you like to work in the future?

MA: In different works different themes will show up, and mix, and disappear and re-appear, and for me the act of making art is almost like building a puzzle without knowing what the actual puzzle pieces look like. At the moment I am focusing on exploring the possibilities of images, symbolism, meaning and techniques further - whilst at the same time, I'm also analysing my own work in relation to local as well as international art history, elements that I hope to bring out more explicitly in my work in the future.

More info:

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“Re-imagining...”

A conversation with Ntone Edjabe, writer, DJ and publisher of the literary journal of arts, culture and politics, Chimurenga magazine.

Aicha Diallo

Chimurenga (a word which means in Shona, Zimbabwe, “liberation struggle”) was initiated and is edited by Cape Town-based Ntone Edjabe since 2002. Almost ten years later, the pan African literary magazine has established itself as a contemporary platform and laboratory for writers, artists, scholars who have gone into capturing, exploring and re-imagining the connection between African arts / culture and politics not only on the continent, but also on a global level.

Aicha Diallo: The next issue of Chimurenga magazine is a newspaper: the Chimurenga Chronicle. How is the working process? When is it planned to be out?

Ntone Edjabe: There are a couple of events that we have planned for September where we want to feature that: one is in Sweden, another in Jo’burg. So there are a couple of projects where the newspaper will be the main feature. So we are hoping for September. In the meantime we produce a monthly version. The next one will be in February so that we get into the newspaper routine, fine tuning this and that, the aesthetics. We won’t release it to the public though but still we are making full editions like a newspaper.

AD: So that means that you release the editions only within the Chimurenga team as an internal practice, as a work-in-progress practice?

NE: We normally work like a literary magazine. Therefore we had to find a different rhythm to work on this thing.

AD: What contributions have you received so far?

NE: A few things... Actually, it is only now that we are going into the production phase. Things are falling into place. The past few months we’ve been building this website to take down all the ideas, all the possibilities, to research newspapers, to research about the period.. So it is based on that. We are going to commission stories. It’s only now that we started engaging with people. So we have started working on this website, writers started to submit ideas. We try to find out what we will cover, what we will be chasing as stories and who has been chasing it, who has already done work on what? We spent a couple of months doing that on this website. The editorial process is somehow in the open because all the stories that will be in the newspaper will be coming from this kind of list of ideas, short briefs. There is already a story but we are actually interested in a particular angle of the story. It is also a useful tool. We are working with a number of publications who are spread out: in Nairobi with *Kwani?*, in Lagos with *Cassava Republic* and in Bangalore with *Civil Lines*. We have had to create a platform that allows for everyone to have access to the information. Also, the advantage of this website is that when I correspond with a writer I can actually send a link, s/he can look at the stories we are interested in. In this work-in-progress, there is a chance to look at the ideas. Questions arise such as how we are looking at these ideas, what are the angles? The Project is complex and has many layers.

AD: How do you define and create the language (form&content) of the Chimurenga Newspaper?

NE: How do you communicate with 200 people? How do you communicate the ideas? Journalists usually find stories to write in the present tense. So it’s quite relevant to us as the present tense is set three years ago and at the same time, it’s entirely non-fiction as everything that we write about three years ago actually happened. It in a way leaves in this space of between fact and fiction. It’s a different creative engagement from classic journalism, reporting.

AD: How do you combine ‘l’actualité’, the past and the notion of re-imagination, the future? – quoting from the blurb on your website: ‘back-dated to the week May 11-18 2008 reporting on the first of the so-called xenophobic violence in SA and events around the world. This is not only a commemoration. It is also a second chance... to provide a space from which to re-engage the present and re-dream the future’

chimurenga

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NE: My own take is that generally speaking non-fiction, academic research, theory, journalism, writing about Africa is somehow caught in a sort of jet-lag. It is so far behind reality that it wishes to articulate. For me, at least on the personal level, it is a stark reminder of this conceptual weakness. When writing about these events, there was this expression of shock like caught in this kind of moral paradigm which has nothing to do with the history. This is a conviction that I have for some time. Chimurenga has always tried to work and create outside of linear time. We deal with stories not necessarily with trends. We can deal with an issue which happened 200 years ago but which we think it is very relevant today. So this newspaper is also in a way a culmination of a practice, of a way of thinking, a way of approaching because for me it ought to be a literary platform which embraces this jet-lag, which at least acknowledges this jet-lag, this inability not as a failure, but as a predicament that is a fact that we cannot be present tense in a conceptual or philosophical sense. Our reality is too mobile and too active. There are practices, institutions such as museums that are age old but we have not been yet able to translate into our contemporary. Our contemporary seems to leave us, to function in an essentially practice of body but ideas are also living a century behind. Our conceptual language is quite weak. I think, the language that we use to articulate, even to analyze, even to query, to put relevant queries to our realities. Chimurenga is very interested in this invention of language. Speculative forms, science fiction, forms are always interesting to us as they generate thinking about language, how it functions, how to liberate it. The newspaper in a way falls in this practice. I thought we have to stretch the news time, to stretch the present, to make it a microsecond, to snap it out of the facebook, twitter reality into this kind of more considered analytical space. I think it's not just a control of time, but rather a control of pace, of rhythm that you need; multiple rhythms. And I think as a literary journal, as this space, we are trying to create a room for a different rhythm which is neither too fast, nor too slow, so which is in the contemporary.

AD: What is the role of critical theory? What is the role of the non-fiction?

NE: If we look at critical theory as Mbembe would say: Are we locked in history that we are actually unable to be here? We can be in practice, but we still have not found a way to articulate this practice, we haven't found the conceptual language to articulate our being here. Artists, musicians have done so though, but this is not the case in the critical realm. Therefore non-fiction is very interesting. So yes, this newspaper attempts to function in this space, invite both writers of fiction and journalists to find a meeting ground. And it's not only limited to the writing, i.e. the alphabet, but also the visual language of the paper. We also use this approach.

AD: How do you integrate images, illustration in the next issue of Chimurenga?

NE: If this work lives in this parafiction space, images cannot be classical documentary photography or photojournalism or the classic imaging of newspaper. You have to find another device to image this pseudo-reality that we present. For instance I was thinking of backstage photography or studio photography of the 70s in Guinea, in Mali and so forth. Even in Central Africa today there is already a practice that is relevant to us, where the photographer is able to kind of stage this reality if you talk of a press conference, you can stage a press conference. Because the writing is also staged, studio photography may be perhaps a useful form or a useful approach to capture "reality" in our newspaper. Of course you have all the other aspects such as illustration, etc, which are classic forms. We say this is real it actually did happen, we are representing it, we are not capturing it, we are representing. It is usually what a photographer does, it is this sort of objectivity we are interested in...

AD: Why did you choose the xenophobic attacks that took place in South Africa in May 2008 as the entry point?

NE: First of all, there is a collective *nombri*lism in South Africa. I don't know if it is a consequence of being watched so long by the rest of the world, there is this self-conscious examination or obsession that South Africans have with themselves and the way that those events were discussed here. There was no discussion of these events in relation to what was happening around the world e.g. in Côte d'Ivoire, in relation to what had happened in Kenya just 2 months before the election riots in Kenya, in relation to riots between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria just a few months before. There is actually a context, at least a historical context you don't have to go 200 hundred years back to see that this kind of brutal manifestation against the system really saying this shit is just not working.

MBizo "Johnny" DYANI...
RAS MUS GATAN-2^c
21446 MALMO
Sweden
Tel-040/92 0782

Hej- IAN -SIR-BABY-MR.!!
I'm fine hoping you the
same right -EH?! Well I spoke to
Ben in Durban (SA) he nice cat
he sounds like -NEH?! You know
him?! there is the CASSETTE-TAPE
SIDE-A(A) - continues to side (B)
FIRST song - MUSICIAN'S MUSICIAN then
House Arrest is the second song!!
STOP! Just By the end of side
(A) we PLAY Free When THE TENOR
SAXE Solo is TAKEN OVER By ED
EPSTEIN" ALTO SAXE then THE TAPE
CUTS off - Then on (B) Side continues
Right ED STILL solos he finishes
then there is BASS SOLO BACK TO
~~the~~ Tune end → JUST these
2 songs OK!!

By the way Side A
Begining doesn't START clear
for 1 or 2 seconds!! FADE in
Don't kill the opening of the
Melody OK!! Hej By the
time you Finish with me, you'll
end up A musician IAN!!! Send..me
the copy of your copie when P.T.O

It's not just like a volcanic eruption, or some kind of catastrophe or some force of God. No it's actually due to a historical process which happens. There was that lack of interrogation I felt about what was going on in a broader African and even global sense like what is it going on, why is it going on and where does come from? Why does it manifest itself in this place, not in another one? So this was a opportunity to actually ask those questions but not ask retrospectively that's what historians do as we are still in this historical time, context. The reasons why that violence happened 3 years ago are still here Somalis are still selling in the streets and they are still attacked. They still feel the way they felt 3 years back. Now we talk about it as if this has come and gone, that it has disappeared, and that we live happily ever after. That was a good opportunity to interrogate how we deal with history, how we write history, how we deal with time, but also an opportunity to interrogate in a broader sense geographical but also historical sense also linked it to what was going on in Kenya, in Nigeria etc. And really to produce this fictional newspaper which clearly never existed and might not exist because we approach it pretty much like creative people as opposed to journalists. There is a little bit of utopia involved. But a lot of these ideas are based on what I perceive as a lack of criticality towards how we have engaged with those events. I feel that a lot of the writing, the creative, the non-fictional writing, as well as the academic writing about life in Africa is in this kind of jet-lag.

AD: Do you think that this "jet-lag" is specific to Africa or is it a global thing?

NE: I don't think that this only happens in the African context. I certainly think that writing about Africa whether it is by Africans or non-Africans is historically being a kind of terrain miné. I am referring to Achille Mbembe's African modes of self-writing. So it is not necessarily about how the West, Europe writes about Africa, but more about in which way Africans write about themselves. But it is limited to the continent whether as an idea or as a geographic space. But Africa is my area of focus: this is where I live, and this is where a lot of my experiences are concentrated on and a lot of my engagement with politics and so forth. And I engage the reality from here on a daily basis. If there is a universal aspect to these events, I have to seek the universality in the very specificity of this place. This place is Cape Town, South Africa...

AD: Do you consider Cape Town a suitable site for engaging culture and politics in relation to panafricanism?

NE: There are all the layers, all the connections, all the trajectories that might not go necessarily over land, but over water for instance with the rest of the world that are equally important. I think that the physical landmarks, connections, tipping point etc is over-emphasised. I found it interesting for instance how Cape Town relates to North Africa. It may not necessarily be related to East Africa, but to North Africa. What I found interesting about Cape Town is that it forces us to question Sub-Saharan identity as we can become quite complacent about it through the heritage from colonialism. Hence, we have to equally interrogate how we relate to a place like Tunisia. Is it part of this theoretical conglomerate called Africa? Or are there actually these connections also with Egypt and so forth? In this respect, Cape Town is for me interesting forcing us to rethink even the idea of Africa which in many ways comes from the Diaspora. Mainly the English-speaking Diaspora and principally the United States have propagated the idea of the Black Atlantic. Yes, there is no arguing of that reality, even that history. But there are other histories. There is the Indian Ocean, for example. Indeed, there is a whole history of interaction and engagement with Asia which preceded colonisation at least European colonisation. So I think in a way this is what we were when we were working on the Indian issue to re-examine our engagement with the world, but outside of the lands for example the Black Atlantic, to explore all the connections. And within those connections and practices, Islam has to be part of these connections in a big way, in a central way. It has to be in a way that we are not able to engage with it on an Atlantic debate because the Atlantic debate is completely embedded in Christian history and the spread of Christianity. So coming back to Cape Town, Cape Town in many ways forces these questions because the reality of Cape Town, in its demographics, in its histories are relevant to these questions here. So that is what I found interesting about this place. It is certainly not an African city in the way you would read about African cities in a classical African cities reader, so to speak, or African Studies. It is not Lagos, it does not meet that cliché of the survival. It's a whole different dimension. I think that deserves as much study, as much attention.

AD: Would you say that the aspects of Islam are missing in the Black Atlantic?

NE: Well, I wouldn't say that they are missing. Yet again, you know, the Black Atlantic is a Christian project. I just want to say that there have been other engagements with the World. When you begin to look at the Indian Ocean, the engagement with the World through that trajectory, Islam plays a central role. Islam cannot be central in the Black Atlantic where the spread of religion and civilisation through Europe is in the core. Whether you are looking at Zanzibar, Mozambique or Senegal. I suggest clearly that how we examine ourselves in Africa comes from the United States faculties. You expect some bias on what is looked at and what is left out. Especially, how the world is re-making itself. For instance, China and India have to our eyes always been superpowers but now they are acknowledged as such. I think that it is a great opportunity to use that momentum. The central question in our Indian Issue was to re-examine the idea of the Third World project, what was essentially the project by mainly politicians, artists, activists. There was an attempt, at least a utopian one to re-imagine the world outside of European centrality in different terms engaging with South America, engaging with Asia. It is about exploring those collaborations in the contemporary, but also in the history, for instance; the fact that Ghandhi stopped in Cairo on his way to India. There are histories of such interactions that are not always mediated by Berlin, Paris, London, etc. I think there is a political strength in that. Achille Mbembe in an interview in Chimurenga questions the funding of developmental organisations: until today Europeans are still unable to imagine the production of art, culture on this continent presumably else where outside of the logic of development. It is a very narrow thinking: if you see a play, the play must be a play about HIV and AIDS, or it must be about stopping the war...

A literary magazine comprises works from authors and artists; some of them can be relevant to issues and some can just be imaginative and beautiful. I think beauty is important.

AD: The current issue: The curriculum is everything. You re-define and re-design a textbook. Which ideas lie behind the current issue?

NE: Well, every issue of Chimurenga is in response to the previous edition. The process on working on one issue somehow generates the next. We started working on the idea of language in a couple of issues back that was called "*A conversation with poets who refuse to speak*" it was an exploration of silence as an act of resistance in this kind of hyper-mediated world, everything must be seen, every little personal lives and struggles must be highlighted. People are seen as victims; they send a couple of aid workers to Africa just in order to find some poor people to help... This is an almost 'oppressive love'. I wanted to explore the various responses to that.

It is Edouard Glissant who wrote about the right to opacity, the right to be opaque, to be misunderstood, to be untranslated, just as a strength-building exercise. It is a very strong idea in this era. We started looking at movements, at artists, at writers who work around these ideas both in the use of language as well as in the practice or in the political thought. A lot of it is also in response to the way that the struggle has become a technocratic engagement where radical struggles have transformed themselves into bureaucratic engagement. You know all you have to do is to leave the politicians do their jobs. That was the question which led to the exploration of science fiction as one of the spaces leading to the Indian issue, the re-engagement with the Third World project, historicising all of this. It then led to the idea of education. If these practices are there, how are they communicated? How are they learned? What are the methodologies, the approaches to communicate from generation to generation? Is this instinctive? Is this something that gets passed on in the oxygen we breathe? How do we get our knowledge? We did not want to do a mere critic of the education system. That would have been f.... weak. We know how bullshit the education system is. I spent a lot of time unlearning the crap I learnt there. So that's not the issue. The issue is what I have been learning since unlearning is also a process of learning on a very personal level. Looking at artists, at their capacity to teach: what can we learn from them? Although they are not necessarily framed as teachers so to speak look at saxophone player Winston Mankunku who says in an interview in the current issue that "I cannot teach", but at the same time every saxophone player, musician in Cape Town say everything they learnt is from Mankunku. What is that gap between the self-consciousness as a teacher and actually the fact of teaching? That was the project. That all the stuff that got passed on from our aunts, uncles, brothers or sisters in many different ways that we learn, but we haven't quite put the finger on it and say this is what it is. That was the thought of the project. And that project brings us here to the newspaper. Newspapers have been historically the first point of contact at least until the last century for knowledge dissemination across the world. We want to engage with that medium, re-think it and also investigate the relevance of that medium in the time of internet, facebook and twitter where very few people get their information from the paper. The point is not to save the newspaper. The point is before I reject it the way that Microsoft and Apple want me to reject it and to buy their tablets

I have to take the tablet in my own terms to engage with that space, that space that has been so influential and so important historically speaking.

AD: Chimurenga was founded in 2002 – next year would be its 10th anniversary. How do you feel about that?

NE: I am just aware of that when I am having a conversation such as this one when we talk about issues that came out five years ago. Quite frankly, my personal engagement with the project is always in the present tense. It is like an artist beginning a creative process. Chimurenga, in a way, I never really thought of it as a magazine, rather as a project. It is always limited at this point. Chimurenga is a newspaper.

AD: Has anyone of the Chimurenga team volunteered in a newspaper realm in order to get some experiences to build in the working process of the Chimurenga Chronicle?

NE: That's the point of the Curriculum we have to teach for ourselves. It connects with the previous concept: we actually decide we are a newspaper. We function as we go. We don't have of course that commercial pressure and imperative to deliver. Now that I'm thinking that I'm not a literary magazine editor, but a newspaper editor is just to strengthen the project. *Donc je ne suis pas un intrus* so to speak, someone who is masquerading or playing. I am!

AD: Does this have anything to do with confidence?

NE: Yes certainly. And this confidence sometimes flirts a little bit with arrogance, the readiness to be misunderstood is a very strong one because in the essence there is the sense of integrity in the way you approach things, why you are doing that. That does not mean that we are islands. I don't think that artists are islands anyway. I do think that.

And cease to be machine that generates products. So confidence plays an important role and even if it is not there we have to build it in. We have to spend a year to produce a newspaper because there is also a confidence-building process. It cannot be resumed to a production process. Being reduced to the end product. It is important as much as the process itself to expose our readers to our process, to make them part of the process

AD: Do you seek to reach out to South America?

NE: Yes but to reach out, out of curiosity. Curiosity is important but there must be a built-in integrity. You cannot flirt with an exotic notion. The idea of South America not being the *Other*, but being me. Being myself is what I am interested in. A self that I haven't accessed because of linguistics or all sort of other barriers. When you just learn about Cuban involvement in Angola...

My interest in South America is very much linked to the quest and interrogation of the Third World project. What exactly were these people trying to do? And what they were trying to do is it achieved – is it still achievable, is it relevant. And South America is in many ways central to these questions. The idea of Cuba; the idea of Brazil so that we think of ourselves in a global sense, not only linked to our specificities. But one has to find an entry point, one has to give time. You have to allow the idea to ferment. The engagement between South America and what is happening contemporarily on the continent is certainly existent but there is not yet an entry point, a platform. I think it will come eventually.

AD: Tell me more about your other projects such as the Panafrican Space Station aka PASS...

NE: For me all the other projects are Chimurenga. Through other media. Some thoughts and ideas are better conveyed and experienced through music, sound, performance than on the page, through reading etc. There is a sensory aspect, the experimental aspect. The Panafrican Space Station allows to engage as critically as the magazine but with its own aesthetics and logistic production.

AD: Is it taking place this year, in 2011?

NE: Yes, but no longer as a festival, but as a permanent activity like the magazine. The events and the radio will take place throughout the year, maybe monthly. Dependent on the resources available. We will have a specific venue for PASS giving it a permanent life. As for the radio, we started a studio in Limbé, in Cameroon. This year we are going to start a studio in Kisangani. We are also using the network, the relationships not only on the page, but also through this kind of events, the radio...last year it was coming from a studio in Limbé, this year it will be in Kisangani. Also, there is a possibility for Accra. We are always looking for partners. We rather invest in relationships, people, the skills, the knowledge. We have to value it.

AD: What is Panafricanism to you? Do you consider it to be a construct?

NE: It is necessarily a construct. There is no doubt about that. It is a useful one historically and that still continues. Actually it is not the idea of gathering strength. This idea of unity; I'm not essentially talking political Panafricanism in the kroumanian sense, but I do mean that if one is able to identify the kinds of methods and tools that have been developed, that have taken place, the sense that living in Kenya even though it is specifically Kenyan and/or a Nairobi experience,

a person in Johannesburg can learn from it and use as methods this idea of the curriculum as a framework. And that framework is what I call Panafricanism. There is a conceptual base, a historical one, a curricular one for the solutions and methods you have developed. You are not outside of the world, you are in the world. It can be one of these confidence-builders, a project like the newspaper that has been very difficult to conceive. We have been in conversation with people like *Kwani?* and *Cassava Republic* who allow us to think very differently about the possibilities because there are different strategies that can be used also here. This kind of bank of strategies and methods is what I call Panafricanism. And I agree with someone like Achille Mbembe who says that one has to free oneself from ideas of nativism constrained to the idea of race. He suggest the term of Afropolitanism. It should not be about semantics: What I call panafricanism, he calls it afropolitanism. It should be a practice, an engagement. I am not suggesting words are not important though. But still, we are talking about the same thing.

AD: What does Contemporary in the African context mean to you?

NE: In the African context, for me, it is about an engagement with self, speaking with oneself while also speaking with the world. It is that dialectic which I know sounds vague and philosophical but that is the closest to an image to the notion of contemporary I can get to and that I can manifest in many different ways. So one will not seek the contemporary in a particular form, in a particular manifestation, but rather in an intention, in an engagement, in an idea... the idea of speaking for self in a confident and assured manner, as well as speaking for and into the world, and continuously, that can prevent us from provincialism and nationalism. That allows us to be in the present tense as opposed to as a result of history.

AD: Thank you Ntone for sharing your ideas in this conversation.

Aicha Diallo is an educationist, a curator and theater person. Diallo studied Cultural Studies (Queen Mary, University of London) and holds a M.A. in Intercultural Education (Freie Universität, Berlin).

More info:

www.chimurenga.co.za
www.chimurenganewsroom.org.za
www.panafricanspacestation.org.za
www.chimurengalibrary.co.za
www.africancitiesreader.org.za

www.pilgrimages.org.za



chimurenga

Who no know go know

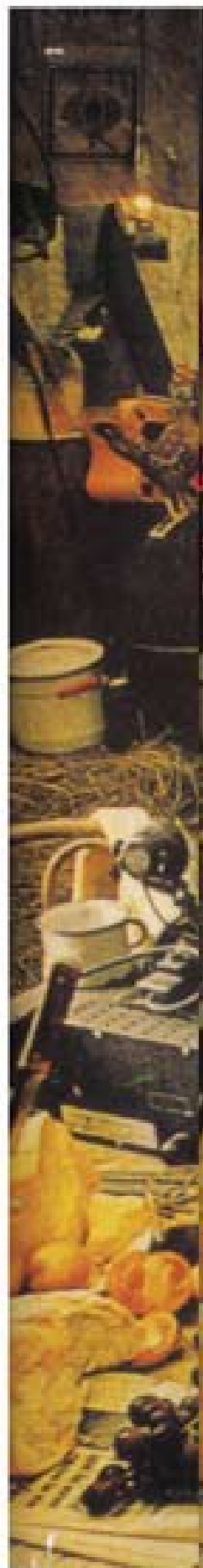
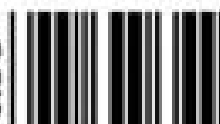
Chimurenga #11

Conversations with Poets who Refuse to Speak:

Gael Reagon: Yambo Quologuem: Quiet
Encroachers: Fidel Castro: Hereros:
Okpu Ndi Chie: Ethel Sharrif: Mokotux
Charlie: Melodius Thunk: Ralph Lemon:
Ranallah Underground: Ruben Um Nyobè:
Julius Eastman: Johnny Dyani: Stompie
Mavi: Seithlamo Motsapi: Letta Mbulu:
Dudu Pukwana: Everybody in Dudusa.
Cradock and Queenstown: Everyone inside
Camp X-Ray, GITMO: Margaret Masingana:
Pat Matchikiza: Tsakane Maubane: Mongezi
Feza: Stonethrowers: Necklacers: War
photographers: Black Arkologists: Mr.
Parks: Maria: Mehdi and Jack Henry
Abbott. Cover: sarko, fanon and the
jazz baroness

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Chilavertena #11

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Make Yourself at Home

4 September – 21 November 2010,
Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Denmark, www.kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

The expression *Make Yourself at Home* could at any time probably take lead in a competition of vain phrases, obviously tightly followed by greetings like *good morning* or *good day*, as they have become part and parcel of our daily life and are more or less a reflex rhetoric than well intended phrases. Nonetheless, where *Make Yourself at Home* is expressed intentionally, it is a paradigm of hospitality and welcome. Still, Derrida sees this expression as ambiguous and describes the expression 'make yourself at home' as a self-limiting invitation: please feel at home, but remember that this is not your place and that you should respect my rules.

According to popular lore some regions around the world, be it Minnesota, Pakhtunistan (the Land of hospitality), Africa or the orient are said to be most hospitable and hence such expressions like "Minnesota nice" or "Southern hospitality". Coming to think of it, hospitality holds a very important part of many cultures, which not only stems back to the notion of the Homeric ages, where under the protection of Zeus every stranger passing-by is said to have been invited into the family house and the strangers feet were washed, offered food and wine and made comfortable before asking the strangers name. This story also corresponds to a biblical reference in the book of Genesis 19 (The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah), where Lot not only pleadingly beckons two angels into his house, baked unleavened bread and made them a feast and but also protects them from rape by a wild mob and instead offering his two daughters to the mob in the name of hospitality: "*Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as is good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof.*" Genesis 19:8, Holy Bible (King James Version)... which later saved Lot from the subsequent destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

The exhibition *Make Yourself at Home* in the Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Denmark strived at addressing the notion of hospitality in the form of an exhibition by inviting ten internationally acclaimed artists and artists' groups from around the world. This exhibition curated by the Danish and Cameroonian curators Charlotte Bagger Brandt and Koyo Kouoh brought together witty positions by A Kassen, Philip Aguirre y Otegui, Kader Attia, Kenneth A. Balfelt, Olaf Breuning, Mie Mørkeberg, Otobong Nkanga, George Osodi, Pascale Marthine Tayou and Wooloo pivoting around concepts of home, migration, colonial heritage, national and international conflicts.

About 9.9% of the Danish population is as of 2010 either immigrants or descendants of recent immigrants, i.e. sometimes more and often less a part of the Danish ideal of 'hygge' ('cosy living'), as news spreads of tighter immigration laws and initiatives spearheaded by the anti-immigrant Danish People's Party by offering migrants from "non-Western" countries 100,000 Danish kroner (US\$20,000) if they voluntarily give up their legal residency and move "home". (1)

What ever this "home" might be the exhibition *Make Yourself at Home* scrutinises the complex and sometimes double-edged nature of hospitality as well as the notion of home.

Amongst other positions, the Cameroonian artist **Pascale Marthine Tayou** showed a new installation/sculpture of bird houses tied together on wooden columns, entitled *Home Sweet Home*. From the installation emanates the calls of a variety of local and exotic birds – which the artist describes as the sounds of freedom. The piece continues on the ground with a large group of readymade *statues colons* of the early 20th century from West Africa, which depict black figures in Western attires.

The French-Algerian artist **Kadia Attia** presented an installation of couscous moulded into the shape of a city, entitled *Untitled (Ghardaia)*. With a soft-spot on architectural history and research, Attia's installation is reminiscent of a traditional building type found in the Mزاب valley in the Algerian desert, a style which had a major influence on Le Corbusier, who visited the region in the 1930s and who was inspired by its airy and hospitable buildings. By using couscous as material to (re-)construct this city of Attia comments on the principles and challenges of re-appropriation. Life is nothing without all the material objects around us. While the reference of home could be languages or people to the Nigerian artist **Otobong Nkanga** *The Taste of a Stone* is a focal point of hospitality.

Stones function in Nkanga's work as an object of worship but also other stories connected with the stone include: stories of love, rejection, fear, submission and dependence. The Swiss artist **Olaf Breuning** presented a social analysis of otherness in the video *Home 2* which depicts the world tour of a traveller from the West, through Japan, Papua New Guinea and Ghana. This piece gives a view of hospitality from the perspective of the stranger in a satirical effort to be like the host. One of the most impressive pieces in the show seems to be the collaboration between the Nigerian photographer **George Osodi** and the Danish art collective **Wooloo**. For the exhibit Osodi stayed with and portrayed three different families in Denmark, who opened their doors as part of the hospitality network New Life Copenhagen. The photo essay documented the life of the families that hosted him and the piece was shown as three slide projections.

This exhibition supported amongst others by the Danish Center for Culture and Development (DCCD), and by the Danish International Visiting Artists Exchange Programme (DIVA), Culturesfrance, Institut français, Sølyst Artist in Residency Centre (SAIR) and Pro Helvetia was accompanied by a 144 pages catalogue with texts by Charlotte Bagger Brandt, Koyo Kouoh, Jacob Alsted, Oumar Ndao and Wambui Mwangi. A variety of film-screenings and performances that coincided with the My World Images festival also accompanied the exhibition.

Make Yourself at Home is a perfect example of an artistic cooperation between the "West" and the "Non-West" based on an electrifying contemporary theme, with artistic concepts and positions from some of the most diligent artists at the forefront, while geographical paradoxes played a rather marginal role.

Endnotes:

(1) <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2009/11/11/denmark-immigrants-offered-money-to-leave-the-country/>

























The Idea of Africa (re-invented) #1:

22 October – 05 December 2010, Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland,

<http://www.kunsthalle-bern.ch/de/>

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

What is our perception of the African continent? What do we know about the philosophy, architecture, photography, arts or science of this old continent? What pictures pop-up in our minds when Africa is mentioned? Are these pictures remnants of the pictures the colonizers left behind of Africa as an epitome of the uncivilized and an antithesis of the European? Or are the pictures rather reminiscent of the exotic and wild outlook as seen through the eyes of the likes of Leni Riefenstahl? These seem to be some of the questions that make up the frame work of the exhibition **The Idea of Africa (re-invented) # 1**, especially related to the discrepancy between the prejudiced colonial perception, conception of Africa and the idea/ the re-invention of the idea of Africa by its own intellectuals as postulated by the Congolese philosopher Valentin Yves Mudimbe.

This very ambitious exhibition project **The Idea of Africa (re-invented)** at the Kunsthalle Bern is aimed at critically revisiting the “idea” of Africa in the form of exhibitions, conversations and publications in the twilight of the 50th anniversary of independence celebrations of 17 African countries. The exhibit carries the title of Mudimbe’s *The Idea of Africa* published in 1994, which dwells on the influence of the ideology of the Western colonial powers on the way Africa is still perceived today, his philosophy on the origins and development of negative conceptions of Africa, on “otherness” and how African scholars act in re-inventing the idea of Africa within the limits of imposed language and an epistemological frame.

As a starting point for a series of exhibitions **The Idea of Africa (re-invented) # 1** brings together one of Africa’s most brilliant photographers J. D. Ojeikere and a young generation of Nigerian photographers of the artist collective Invisible Borders, with their captivating *The Trans-African Photography Project*. The exhibition also features *Lagos Wide & Close* by Rem Koolhaas & Bregtje van der Haak that represents a unique engagement with Lagos, capturing multiple perspectives of a volatile moment in its evolution and which can be described as an “interactive journey into an exploding city”.

Based on the press release for this project, the exhibition “represents an inquiry into the approaches and ideas found in very specific examples of contemporary photography from Africa and about Africa, in which the perspective of the author and the viewer, as well as the temporality of the recorded realities function as difficult variables”.

J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere (1930 in Ovbiomu-Emai), who gained an international artistic prominence after his participation in the Documenta XII in Kassel in 2007, has been the eye of his country over several decades. He has produced photographic studies on the urban development of the city of Lagos, its harbours, its highways, airport and most important buildings but his works also explore the aesthetic form of the ephemeral hairstyles on the streets of his motherland, i.e. using his photography he has documented a kind of design and social architecture on the heads of his compatriots. Consciously or unconsciously, J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere has been a witness of decolonisation and other political, social and economic transitions that Africa and more specifically Nigeria gone through over the last 6 decades. Thus, there is hardly any one who could present a better photographic testimonial of the re-invention of Africanism and the idea of Africa than Ojeikere.

The other artistic position in this exhibition is the collective of ten Nigerian photographers, filmmakers and writers who aim at experiencing the ‘invisible borders’, border with no basis in geography, unnatural borders that were arbitrarily created at some drawing board, in the course of their art projects.

It all started in November 2009, as Uche James Iroha, Lucy Azubuike, Emeka Okereke, Amaize Ojeikere, Uche Okpa Iroha, Ray Daniels Okeugo, Unoma Giese, Chriss Aghana Nwobu, Nike Ojeikere, Charles Okereke, Chidinma Nnorom set up to conquer barriers in west Africa by travelling from Lagos to Bamako (Mali) in a rented bus. What seems to be a simple adventure from one country to the other is in reality a risky business, spiced up by humiliations, bureaucracy, corruption and crime, when it comes to borders of African countries. The pictures and writings in this trip were destined to be presented as documentation at the Bamako Biennial for African Photography and Uche Okpa-Iroha, one of the 10 photographers of the Invisible Borders ended up winning the Seydou Keita Award at the Bamako Photography biennale. Their next performative, photographic, filmic and writing project that put the Invisible Borders-team back on the road had as destination: Dakar for the Dakar Biennial for contemporary African art Dak'Art 2010. These works of this year's project are part of the exhibition at the Kunsthalle Bern.

It is always very difficult to do an exhibition with the concept of Africa as its major caption, even if it draws reference to Congolese philosopher Valentin Yves Mudimbe's *The Idea of Africa*. The issue is, this caption almost always brings with it a bunch of generalizations and volitionally or unintentionally simplification is pre-programmed. It is even more difficult to place Africa beside the term „(re-) intention“ especially from a European perspective, as this automatically carries the connotation of a colonial discovery/ invention or a pedagogical interpretation/ re-invention of what should be or who is the appropriate interpreter.

The question that automatically arises is how can the idea of Africa be presented in the framework of an exhibition? The Kunsthalle Bern plans a subsequent exhibition **The Idea of Africa re-invented #2** in the period of the 05.02. - 27.03.2011, which will feature the Egyptologist, linguist, historian, anthropologist and founder of the Afrocentric Egyptology Cheikh Anta Diop (1923-1986, Senegal). And definitely Cheikh Anta Diop has played a predominant role in re-inventing, re-defining and re-writing the history, culture and idea of Africa in his numerous publications like *Precolonial Black Africa* (Lawrence Hill Books, 1988) or *Towards the African Renaissance: Essays in African Culture and Development, 1946-1960* (Red Sea Press 2000). Sven Augustijnen (1970, Mechelen) is the next on the list for **The Idea of Africa re-invented #3** in the period of 08.10. - 27.11.201. Apart from Sven Augustijnen's 2007 participation in the Documenta 12 magazine project, he is known for his installation and photographs *Les Demoiselles de Bruxelles* of African prostitutes while drawing a bow between these prostitutes along Avenue Louise in Brussels and Leopold II's/ Belgium's colonial history. He is currently working on the video project *Spectres*, where ex-colonials, royalists, psychiatrists, Communists, believers, historians and anti-colonialists all have their say on Belgium's colonial past.

So far, it is unknown how many exhibitions will make up the **The Idea of Africa re-invented** series but it is already clear that this exhibition series will only make sense if conceptual and artistic positions reflective of the heterogeneity of the contemporary ideas of Africa from many different regions of the continent (not only the West but also the North, East and Southern Africa) and multiple perspectives are presented in the course of this exhibition. If this is not the case, even the exhibition makers that conceived this project run the risk of falling in the trap of the aforementioned given colonial perception of Africa as a cross-the-board construct and not the sum of entities, with different and independent cultural and social developments. But with the line up for 2011 the project promises a challenging „Auseinandersetzung“ on the idea of Africa.









Addis Foto Fest 2010

December 7th – 12th, 2010, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Addis Foto Fest 2010

Andrea Heister

Out of lack and need, as Aida Muluneh, the curator and director to the Addis Foto Fest, stated, this festival was born. Out of the need to change the Ethiopian photography landscape, to boost it, but in a sustainable way. The lack of an appropriate opportunity for photographers to meet and talk, analyse the situation and find strategies how to improve it. And, finally, the longing for artistic growth instigated her to take upon this initiative. Driven by her personal story as an African in the American Diaspora for more than half of her life, she had to realize this huge project with the aim to finally start discussing images of and on Africa, works done by Africans and all those who have a serious interest and story to tell.

After a long preparation period in which one of the main problems was to find sponsors and partner willing to partake in this event, the Addis Foto Fest took place from December 7th till 12th 2010. The idea was, to create a meeting ground for photographers, curators and teachers who share a common interest: negotiating the image of Africa.

Exhibitions were set up at different venues all over the city, a shopping complex, museums, a commercial gallery, cultural centres; the diversity was used to reach as much people as possible. Besides exhibitions, the concept included a pedagogic program too. At portfolio reviews, young photographers had the opportunity to show their works to elder ones, advisors like Akinbode Akinbiyi, Simon Njami, Mark Sealy, Bisi Silva and Chris Dercon who are either experienced photographers or curators themselves. Also panel discussions were held on two topics: *In Focus: Questioning the Representation of Africa and the Diaspora in Photography* and on *The Business of Selling Images; A global View of the Photography Market*. Through this, an ideological perspective was amplified by the discussion of a common and realistic problem of photographers, which is to get to know the market and promote them. The intention was to talk about all the issues that professional photographers will have to face. Good photographers these days are rarely ones that shoot good pictures. Being able to talk about them, find the right words and vocabulary, and in the end promoting them, are the other part of the job.

In the screening section, picture shows extended the event by a multimedia ingredient and added, in line with the curator's style of work as well, an image-concentrated perspective which doesn't allow a strict and anyway senseless separation of the artistic genres any more. The picture shows presented photographic projects that have been conducted over a longer period of time. The viewer thus gave testimony to a photographic development.

In a 20-day workshop, part of an ongoing residency program, selected artists had the opportunity to work with experienced photographers.

The internet as a means of distributing information was the main channel used to realize the important goal of sustainability. In a blog the reader could follow a description of the daily program and impression of its reception.

The level of collaboration was high, as it could be seen not only at the diverse exhibition venues, but also because of the partners of this event. The program of the festival mirrored in a way the problems the curator had to go through herself; setting up a convincing artistic concept but also realizing if, the financial and organisational part of it. Aida Muluneh set up a huge international festival with a global perspective that on the one hand combined her bird's eye view on Ethiopian photography and on the other her personal hands-on experience of a global nomadic photographer.

More Information:
www.addisfotofest.com

AFROPOLIS – Stadt, Medien, Kunst. Kairo, Lagos, Nairobi, Kinshasa, Johannesburg

Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum, Cologne, 5.11.2010-15.3.2011

Fiona Siegenthaler

Curating is a practice that includes not only taking care of the art (curare = lat. to care for), but it also aims at caring for the exhibition visitors by giving them the opportunity of a special experience beyond the everyday routine. To curate is actually to create a setting in which art can be experienced. This task becomes particularly challenging when a team of curators sets out not only to show contemporary art from five major African cities, but to additionally provide for an actual (however forcibly limited) experience of the African metropolis itself. *Afropolis*, curated by social anthropologists Kerstin Pinther and Larissa Förster and artist Christian Hanussek, represents such an attempt as one of the first exhibition projects of this kind in central Europe – and it does so in a convincing way.

Their approach is both highly inclusive and risky. The newly opened Joest-Rautenstrauch Museum in Cologne offers a vast exhibition space that has been sectioned by movable walls, thus creating a number of individual exhibition spaces which are loosely connected to each other. In this spatial choreography, each of the African cities receives its section in which it is reflected in art works and documentation. But they also are connected among each other, so that you may, rather unknowingly, suddenly stumble from Cairo into Lagos and from there to Nairobi. The exhibition layout thus suggests that each African city in its individuality has something in common with the others – the notion of the African metropolis, *Afropolis*, its own way to function and its particular visual, auditory and physical presence.

The number and density of art works presented contributes to this experience: Photographs, installations, sculptures, paintings, but also a lot of video and text information reflect the city as a visual appearance and as a socially, politically, economically and culturally marked realm of exchange and transition in a permanent state of potential as well as decay. While, on the homepage, the curators attempt to draw a distinction between documentary sections and the art works, this clear delineation is slightly dissolved in the actual exhibition. The amplitude of the material on display, the non-linear path through the exhibition, and the intermingling of creatively produced documentary and art works that use documentary approaches level the distinction between the roles of art and documentation.

Information and documentary material thus claim the same degree of attention as the art presented. While this may be criticized – and it has been so by art critics – this combination can also be considered as a remarkably balanced and indeed successful one. Because informational parts as well as the art works interact with each other in such a setting, the exhibition creates something that may best be described as an introduction into visual and popular culture and practices in African metropolises. Surprisingly, and quite different to other exhibitions of this kind, *Afropolis* manages to deal with a rather small selection of photo artists. It also requires – like an adequate introduction into a real African city – a lot of time and patience from the viewer.

The exhibition, however, also induces critical questions – if purposefully or not. How to handle, for instance, a carefully painted part of a Matatu? Is it a singular artistic expression or does it reflect urbanity as a designed lifestyle? Is it a residue imported from Nairobi to Köln or is it a curiosity worth to be collected? Another question rising is: Why are there so many works dealing with the streets, the exterior of buildings and public space? Does urbanity really only take place in a built public environment, and how much do we leave out when we concentrate on the busy streets and not on what is happening within the buildings, in the homes, in the offices, schools, taverns and shops? In what relation do the visible surfaces of the city stand to the subjective experience of the tourist, the visiting researcher, the local artist and the local residents? While some art works deal with these questions, they are not necessarily reflected on a curatorial level. Another interesting question which could be more thoroughly thought about – mainly when urbanity is looked at through the lens of art works – is the role that art plays in the representation of cities, but also in terms of social as well as art historical traditions and visual cultures. For instance, some exhibited works are reminiscent of iconic artworks by other artists which had been circulating for about 20 years in the international art world. Does the utopian *Tourist City* by Pume Bylex, or *Casualties* made from beer cans by Kainebe Osahenye, stand in a tradition with the work of Bodys Isek Kingelez or El Anatsui? Are Bylex and Osahenye random figures in global or globalizing cities, or do they occupy a specific place in local or transnational art history?

Some questions are reflected and partly also answered in the exhibition catalogue which without exaggeration can be considered as the first relevant and visually rich publication in German language on contemporary African metropolises.

It includes contributions by significant theorists as well as texts by authors highly familiar with the diverse cities and their cultural history, mixed up with artist interviews and insights into popular media such as city-related cinema or literature history. With its German translation of one of AbdouMalik Simone's seminal essays, *People as Infrastructure*, the catalogue introduces an important field of research and discourse from the English-speaking world into German attention.

To complete the array of visual, acoustic and scholarly approaches to the African city in this exhibition project, a rich program was set up with public lectures, artist conversations, film screenings, concerts, spoken word events and much more, thus contributing to the experience of a broad spectrum of what constitutes urban culture in African metropolises for a German audience.

Fiona Siegenthaler is an art historian currently writing her interdisciplinary PhD thesis on Visualizing Urban Transition: Contemporary Art in Johannesburg (working title). She is a co-editor of Art and Artistic Research (Zurich 2010) and author of several essays and exhibition reviews.

Link: www.afropolis.net

Afropolis will be travelling. Next venue:

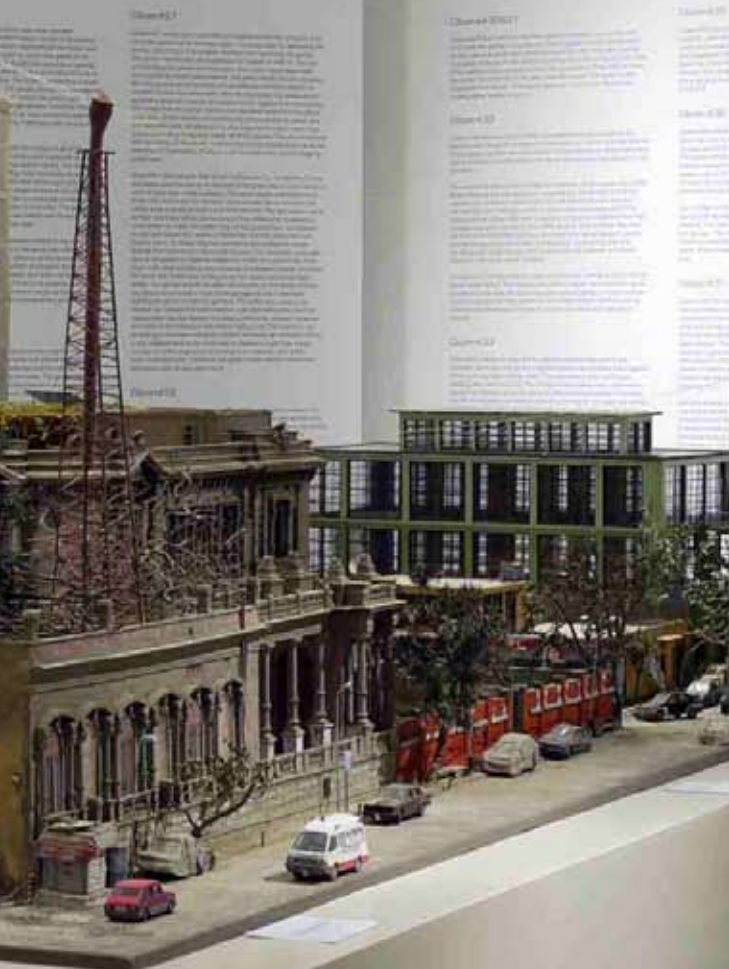
Iwalewa-Haus Bayreuth, 28.4. – 4.9.2011



KINSHASA

CHANNELS





The Era of Negritude. The Short Century, Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994

Alanna Lockward

Official webpage of the exhibition

http://universes-in-universe.org/eng/specials/2001/the_short_century/

A decade after its first opening this landmark exhibition continues to speak volumes about what is now being established as “contemporary African art”. I remember the visit to the Museum Villa Stuck in Munich with utmost clarity; it was one that changed my life, literally. After that first encounter with the epistemological connections between the political and artistic movements in the Caribbean and the African continent my understanding of my own Caribbean legacy was completely turned. From this new dimension, which I recognize as the beginning of the process of my own (material, spiritual and theoretical) decolonization, my gratitude to all those involved in making this exhibition possible grows continuously through the years. Writing this review took me six months. After completing this task my relief was, of course, enormous. It might be unnecessary to add that this relief has turned into a great satisfaction, but please allow me to share this deepest of feelings. I am also very thankful to the editors of SAVVY | art.contemporary.african. for republishing this article at such a timely moment. In December 2010, I was invited to the III. Black World Festival, which was an original idea of Léopold Sédar Senghor. It was a celebration of Negritude and Pan-Africanism, an extraordinary event that embraced all participants in a deep sense of historical achievement – the perfect corollary for the road opened to me by “The Short Century” ten years ago.

“It was at this meeting (Berlin Conference, November 14, 1884 – February 23, 1885) that Africa’s final fate at the hands of the imperial powers of Europe was sealed. To be sure, the colonial enterprise was short, a mere but brutal seventy years (as the history of the Belgian Congo under Leopold II reminds us). Yet it left an indelible mark, whose crude, schematic features remain difficult both to erase and to reconcile with civilized conduct”.

Okwui Enwezor

“We suddenly realize that the new has been new for quite some time. This accounts for the fact that there are no disciplines. It is impossible to speak of one thing without referring to others, but this is not an instance of the interdisciplinary; rather it is the image of a global world.”

Yona Friedman

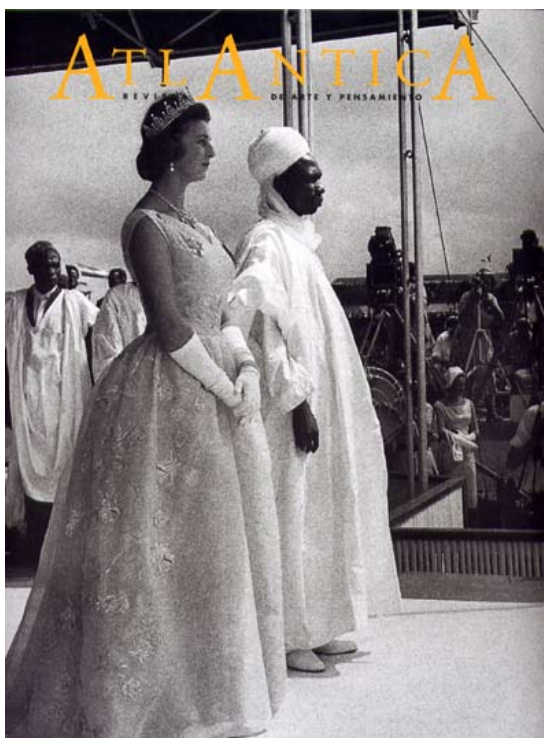
In the face of these reflections, a complicated and comprehensive framework of modernity became established as a model in the African continent: this modernity being understood as the systematization, deployment and use on the different countries in the continent of structures, values and forms of the modern.

As a metaphor of liberation and counter narrative to the methodology based on the immovability and demarcation of both geographical and cultural and disciplinary territories, Okwui Enwezor and his co-curators wove, from the standpoint of social scientists and aesthetes of history, an infinite, multilayered fabric, accessible and striking, but without the slightest trace of sensationalism. The linear narrative of each element – artistic, documentary, journalistic and studio photography; science fiction and documentary films; sculpture; painting; drawing; engraving; architecture; textiles; posters; music; literature and theatre – with the rest to establish its right to monopolize the production of signification in the optimized space of Munich’s Villa Stuck Museum.

Each room was a set where it was just as easy to find the scene of a crime (**David Goldblatt**, *No Rest Location*, 1986), as it was to watch the construction of the utopia of a fantastic metropolis (**Bodys Isek Kingelez**, *Stars Palme Bouyjeus*, 1989), or an invisible individual pedaling away with his bicycle saddle precariously tied up with a piece of jute rope (**Kay Hassan**, *Flight*, 1995). And it was in this area of convergence, with an elaborate choreography of image and thought, where a vision of the shortest and bloodiest century of the West commenced, steered by a monumental capacity for synthesis.

In the basement, the intimate and the social, the individual and the urban experience, underpinned architecture of modern times in the African continent. In the tiny space, five tacit (anti-)rules which governed that new, global approach to the continent’s last five decades were elevated to the heights of sublimity. A review of its counter-strategy, or parts of it, has enabled us to make a more thorough interpretation of the relationship between the omnipresence of the production of signification and its iconography, bringing in countless exegeses.

The large-format colour prints of **Zwelethu Mthethwa**, *Untitled*, 1998, portraits in which individuals face the camera, dressed in their best clothes as they stand at the corner of their shelter-cum-home where every single detail seems to reflect dignity as the modus operandi of survival, looked across at the nitrates belonging to **David Goldblatt**’s photographic essay, *The Structure of Things Then*, 1998, situated on the left-hand side.



In a lyrical manner, they document the brutality of the systematized uprooting practiced under the *Territorial Apartheid Acts* (1), with the absolute relinquishment of the commonplace of police violence, which, until now, has constituted the almost mandatory reference to the issue. The ostentatious facades of the Gereformeerde Kerk and the Dutch Reformed Church stood in contrast to the desolate scenery of a township christened by its inhabitants with the name, No Rest Location, an adaptation of the original New Rest Location, in reference to police harassment. This image was paired with one of the Apostolic Multiracial Church in Zion of South Africa, a tent with a sign rocking tenuously to and from on a framework of rods and material, harbouring a space which gives no assurance that more than three people can congregate there.

Here we had the illustration of two (anti-)rules. The first, no to the spectacle of the helpless victim; the second, no to the distancing between the organic relationship of the individual and his existential container; and of the latter with the anthropological reading of reality. Human experience is calculated in terms of ergonomic meters.

To the left of the entrance, **Kay Hassan's** installation of two bicycles (of German origin, perhaps purposely) spoke of the forced traveller. The two bicycles pointed in opposite directions. While the "service lift" of one transported a television, on which a red and black overcoat tied with a hangman's rope was resting, the second carried an old brown suitcase with a blanket beneath it and the entire cargo was crowned with a bundle of black material and a red overcoat. Apart from the difference in direction, one bicycle was covered in dust while the other was not. The urban connotation of the monitor was a reference to obligatory urban migration. The bicycle was quite clean. The rural one spoke of a longer journey: the dust reflected this and tempted the viewer to touch it to make sure that it was not the result of negligent maintenance.

Behind the eloquent, visual dramatization of the exodus, two huge colour prints, *Untitled*, 2000, by **Zarina Bhimji**, presented a form of "universal" modernity on the facades of two spacious residences which could just as easily belong to the urban genealogy of Mexico City, or Havana.

Immediately to the left, another large-format, this time by **Sue Williamson**, *For Thirty Years Next to His Heart*, 1990, brought together 47 laser reproductions of identity papers, the organization paraphernalia of Apartheid. In 1979, two years after the assassination of the charismatic **Steve Biko**, **Williamson** and some of her white colleagues boycotted the international representation of South Africa until their Black peers were allowed equitable access to the states' artistic institutions.

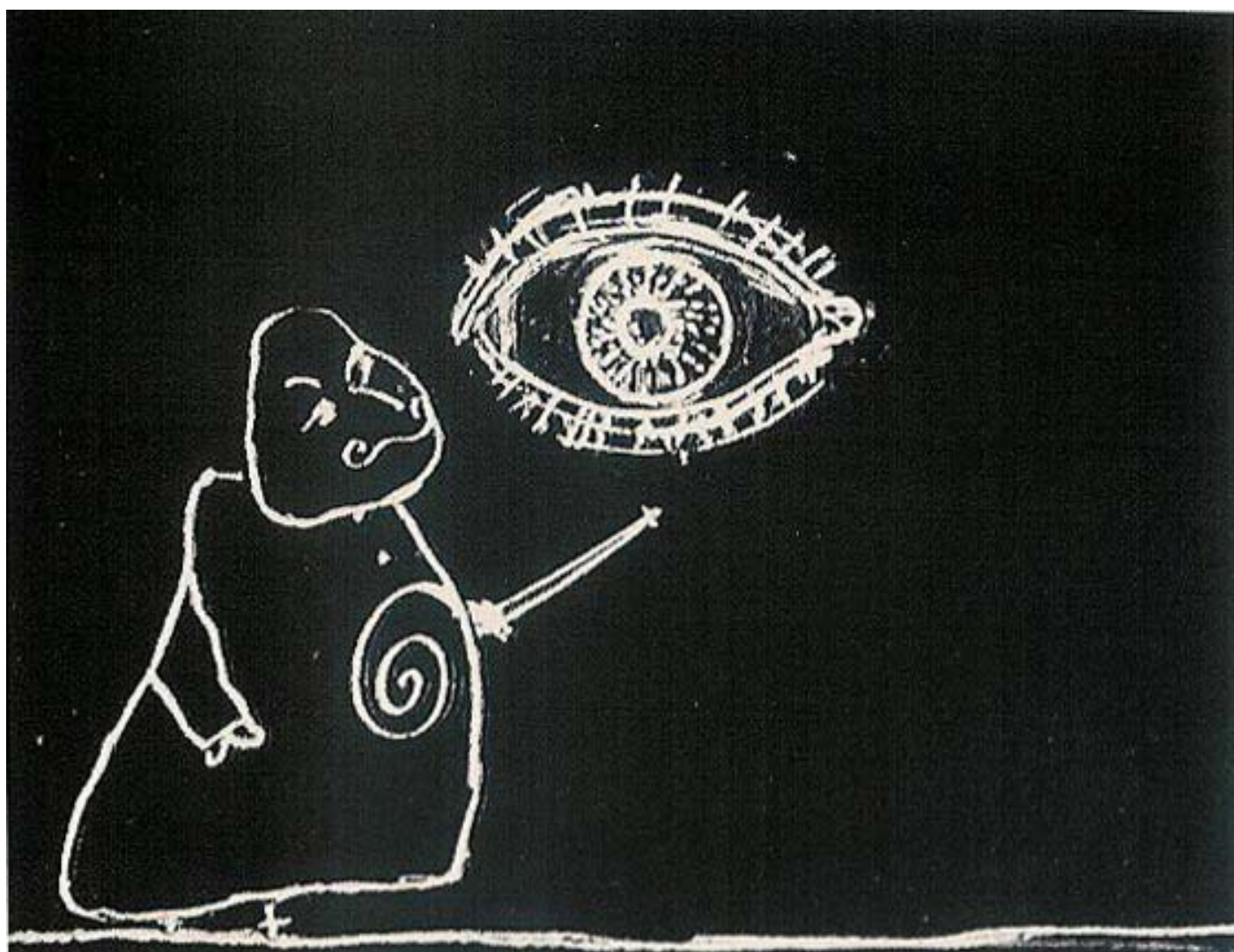
This art of resistance, peculiar to the seventies and eighties, underwent profound change after the fall of the segregationist wall in South Africa. While some, like **Williamson**, have remained true to their political activism, with the conviction that the artist should be committed to her/his social environment, others have pursued the path of the inner search, exploring personal narratives, investigating identity and the awareness of gender, or experimenting with art as the legitimization of individual narratives.

Liberation brought similar consequences in other countries, such as the Congo. The idiomatic corpus of **Bodys Isek Ingelez** sent the imagination flying in different directions. It revived the nostalgia for what might have been achieved by independence – with the assassination of **Patrice Lumumba**, in 1961, as the backdrop – while re-creating the decadent, consumerist optimism of current times in a fantastic proto-architecture where syncretism between the Moslem, the European and Hollywood late 50's set aesthetics ironized kitsch as a metaphor of utopia. In its hallucinated synthesis, two options of the contemporary artist in the African continent are clearly intermingled: without forsaking his socio-historical links, she/he repositions her/his chimera, feeding it with her/his innermost visions. Individuality is not negotiable.

Two of his playful scale models, as intricate as they are transparent in their ability to communicate, acted as a portico on the narrow corridor, on either side of which stood glass boxes containing architectural projects and city-planning documents referring to different places on the planet. Between them was the bicycle saddle of which we spoke earlier.

The emotiveness of Caribbean poet **Aimé Césaire** prefigures the foundations of the continent's construction of modernity:

*"My Negritude is neither tower nor cathedral
it takes root in the red flesh of the soil
it takes root in the ardent flesh of the sky
it breaks through the opaque prostration with its
upright patience".*



The nationalist dreams and aspirations of its leaders urged on by the voices of their peoples, translated into a contradictory architectural language. An instance of this is to be found in Ghana's Arch of Independence, commissioned by the country's flamboyant prime minister, **Kwame Nkrumah**, an evident adaptation of the Roman triumphal arch, which forces one to question the crisis of memory and identity it causes. However, on the basis of **Sartre's** approach to Negritude's poetry, it could be argued that the colonial codes haven't been reverted by the perspective of the oppressed subject in her/his effort to lay the foundations of her/his dissidence. As **Nnamdi Elleh** states, this does not mean the exclusion of the possibility that a bit of an inferiority complex may have influenced **Nkrumah's** decision. **Elleh** goes to say: "Certain North African architects, like **Hassan Fathy**, have adapted Islamic heritage, but architects in West, East and South Africa, instead of exploring how precedents in traditional African architecture can be applied to contemporary needs, are reproducing European inspired forms (2)."

Here we had the third (anti-)rule: no to the non-critical approach of ethnocentric revisionism, no to forgetting shared notions of social, historical and political accountability.

Partly as a result of the situation described by **Elleh**, the architecture created in the African continent has been banished historically, theoretically and visually from Western studies. This omission conveys the false message that it does not belong to the experience of modernity, despite the fact that many contemporary architects, such as **Femi Majekodunmi** and **Oliver-Clément Cacoub**, have executed major project in other continents.

At the end of the corridor, a model by **Yona Friedman**, *Bridge City*, 1963, defied the patterns characteristic of the late European colonialism of the continent, which was officially proclaimed in Germany during the Berlin Congo Conference of 1884/1885. As a permanent reference to discriminatory projects stands **Le Corbusier's** Tunisian "*Obus Plan*", whose aim was to separate the colonialist part from the colonized one. **Friedman's** *Spatial City*, 1958/1959, in contrast, was dreamt up amid the dunes of the Sahara Desert.

To the back of the concise architectural corridor, commencing the aforementioned interaction between the photographs of **Mthetwa** and **Goldblatt**, pioneer **Ousmane Sembènes'** short film titled *Borom Saret*, 1963, (the first in this genre to be financed by the French Ministry of Cooperation and award-winner at the Tours Film Festival) tells of the ups and downs of a street seller in Dakar. The city, still segregated after independence, with its modern blocks and apartments, is captured by **Sembènes'** social-realist lens, a reflection of the training he received at the Gorky Studios in the former Soviet Union.

In the rest of the rooms, a number of film productions were projected, The module by **William Kentridge**, located on the second floor, was a piece of camera obscura in which his emblematic film, *Ubu tells the truth*, 1977, was shown. The combination of his drawings and puppets explores the culture of violence, while its parody asks questions of the drama staged during the hearings of the Commission of Reconciliation and Truth in South Africa.

In **Kentridge's** painful satires, a central issue of this critical biography of the continent is outlined, namely: the examination of the links between independence movements and struggles for liberation as methods to attain both autonomy and awareness of cultural identity. Initially, these movements formed part of two different political programs, as **Okwui Enwezor** explains. On the one hand, strategies of non-violence were used, as was the case of Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast), whose leaders empowered themselves through editorial platforms, speeches, campaigns, strikes and trade union activism to unhinge the colonial economic machinery and undermine its legal authority. Nevertheless, this peaceful tactic was not exempt from outbursts of violence, such as the Mau Mau insurrection in Kenya, in 1952, with 50,000 local casualties against a mere 20 on the British colonial side. On the other hand, in Algeria, Mozambique, Angola and Zimbabwe, armed struggle was the last resort used to oppose the colonial intransigence which rejected any possibility of negotiation.

With the independence of Ghana, in 1957, a powerful psychological and ideological force paved the way for the most important political event of 1960, not only in the continent but on a global scale: **Kwame Nkrumah** declared the Decade of Independence during the First All-African Congress, held in Accra, in 1958. Two years later, not only 17 countries attain this but they would also be admitted *en bloc* into the United Nations.

Both the ideology of Negritude and Pan-Africanism were sources of inspiration for this decade of liberation. The former, nourished in Paris through the literature of Martinican, **Aimé Césaire**, of Senegalese, **Léopold Sédar Senghor**, who became his country's first president, governing from 1961 to 1980, and of **León Damas**, from French Guyana, went back to the fascist Europe of 1934. Pan-Africanism came into being during the post-war period. During the Manchester congress of 1945, soldiers from the Caribbean and the African continent, alongside students and trade union leaders demanded, among other things, independence and the right to self-determination of the African continent and Britain's colonies in the Caribbean. Hence Negritude would be a phenomenon associated with French-speakers, whereas Pan-Africanism aroused more sympathy among English-speaking activists, artists and students. The Pan-Arabism of **Gamal Abder Nasser** found its own sphere of influence in the Maghreb.

By way of eulogy of the Afro-Caribbean liberation tour de force, to the left of the entrance to **Kentridge's** module was found the work of an Antilles intellectual – the third to be included in the exhibition, together with **Aimé Césaire** and **Frantz Fanon** – *Lumumba, death of a prophet*, 1992, by Haitian filmmaker, **Raoul Peck**.

Outside the black-cloth module, at the back, the photographic installation by **Santu Mofokeng** projected a recovered archive of South African urban families, *Black photo album/Look at me 1980-1990*, 1998. The individual prints point to an unconstrained imagination whose historical relationship with social memory is rewritten through the retrieval of the

documents. Goldblatt's influence is noticeable in this perspective where the links between photography and identity constructions are arranged. The work, still in progress, goes beyond simple commemoration by means of touching up and copying. Instead of presenting it like a misplaced paradise in *Black History*, **Mofokeng** questions the motivations which led individuals to have their portraits taken and be recorded in documentary form; he ponders about how the colonized subject sees himself and what his identification patterns could be. The clothing, the solemn stance and the quasi-Victorian atmosphere of the backgrounds hold the key to these very questions which the artist leaves open to interpretation, although in some of his other forms of installation, such as the version in Villa Stuck, he uses texts intercalated with images. The texts are taken from extracts from magazines and comments by/on the person portrayed of her/his inheritors (3).

The fourth (anti-)rule prevailed in this piece: no to easy short-cuts, no to univocal answers; or, as **Enwezor** puts it: “That Africa was a staging ground for some of the most important questions of post-war politics and society and that these questions made a crucial impact in identity, modernity, freedom, subjectivity, ethics and culture can no longer be debated. The more salient question arising from this exhibition is: What is African and what is Africa to us? This is, of course, a question neither philosophy nor metaphysics can provide answers to. But suffice it to say that *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945-1995* represents an Africa of the imagination as much as it addresses Africa in the context of her lived experiences and realities (4).”

Just a few steps away, **Georges Adéagbo** drew on his characteristic bottomless pit of free association – an award-winner at the 47th Venice Biennial – to fill a cubicle with the ordinariness of a ubiquitous modernity: *Colonisation Belge en Afrique Noir*, 2000. Long-playing records and Bavarian liqueurs, European and African magazines and newspapers, kitsch books and sculptures from both continents, invited the viewer to decipher the method in its madness. Because it does have one. All that was needed was time and patience, two fundamental enzymes for the digestion and enjoyment of the sumptuous feat offered by this exhibition, which defied not only the visitor's capacity of assimilation but also the political will of her/his eyeballs, forced time and time again to align themselves in the “right” direction, overcoming the desire to take a quick look and move on to what is coming next, so close at hand, so compelling.

A mural by **Yinka Shonibare**, *One Hundred Years*, 2000; the sculptural installation by **Ghada Amer**, *Le Lit.*, 1997; and **Jane Alexander's** *Butcher Boys*, 1986, monstrous and neo-classical, left no room for doubt that the second and last floor was the realm of the contemporary. By way of a complement, a small side gallery contained **Touhami Ennadre's** early photographic works, where black light revealed the riches to be found in cutaneous self-designed scars, every keloide mark provoked a state of antagonism towards the irreverence of writer **Wole Soyinka**: “A tiger does not proclaim its tigritude.” The photographs seemed to be responding to him: “That's perhaps because liberation must first be named in order to be achieved.”

The Nigerian Nobel Prize winner forms part of the anthology as an ingredient added posthumously to the catalogue of almost 500 pages, in which two categories are covered: politics/ideology/ethics and culture. Other names to be found are: **Gamal Abdel Nasser**, **Kwame Anthony Appiah**, **Amílcar Cabral**, **Aimé Césaire**, **Alioune Diop**, **Ben Enwonwu**, **Frantz Fanon**, **Kwame Nkrumah**, **Patrice Lumumba**, **Nelson Mandela**, **Rajat Neogy**, **Njabulo Ndebele**, **Julius Nyerere**, **Jean Paul Sartre**, **Léopold Sédar Senghor** and **Sékou Touré**. The contributions on each of the themes represented in the exhibition belong to: **Okwui Enwezor** (Ed.), **Chinua Achebe**, **Ulli Beier**, **Wolfgang Bender**, **Rory Bester**, **Chinweizu**, **John Conteh-Morgan**, **Manthia Diawara**, **Nmandi Elleh**, **Laurie Firstenberg**, **Mahmood Mamdani**, **Marilyn Martin**, **Maishe Maponya**, **Valetin Y. Mudimbe**, **Mark Nash**, **Chika Okeke**, **John Picton**, **Obiora Udechukwu** and **Gwendolyn Wright**.

One of the most frequently quoted among the classics of a continental awareness is the Caribbean thinker and liberator of Argelia, **Frantz Fanon**, appraised in depth in the full-length feature film by **Isaac Julien** and **Mark Nash**, *Frantz Fanon: Black skin, white mask*, 1996. It was projected in video format in the small room described previously. Here too are works by **Willem Boshoff**, **Gavin Jantjes**, **Samuel Fosso** and, lastly, **Ghada Amer**, one of the eight women included among sixty participants.

A showcase on the ground floor displayed historical editions of **Sartre's** *Black Orpheus*, **Césaire's** *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*; a range of publications by the paradigmatic publishing house, *Présence Africaine* along with issues of *Life* magazine. On the spacious upper surface, there was a black and white portrait by **Seydou Keita**, a studio photographer and deft engineer of the performative circumstances of his teatre-like studio. The image succeeded in conveying the individual's trust in a new order, as someone who feels sure of her/his modernity. Here and on the first floor, the visual arts from the forties to the seventies displayed their graphic, pictorial and sculptural legacy: **Skunder Bhogossian**, **Ahmed Cherkaoui**, **Uzo Egonu**, **Ibrahim Mohamed El Salahi**, **Ben Enwonwu**, **Dumile Feni**, **Kamala Ishaq**, **Tshibumba Kanda Matulu**, **Gebre Kristos Desta**, **Vincent Kofi**, **Sydney Kumalo**, **Christian Lattier**, **Ernest Mancoba**, **John Ndevasi Muafangejo**, **Thomas Mukarobgwa**, **Iba Ndiaye**, **Malangatana Ngwenya**, **Demas Nwoko**, **Amir Nour**, **Uche Okeke**, **Erhabor Ogieva Emokpae**, **Ben Osawe**, **Twins Seven-Seven**, **Lucas Sithole**, **Gerard Sekoto** and **Gazbia Sirry**.

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There were also some *white* Europeans, such as English **Georgina Beier**, **Marion Kaplan** and **Cecil Skotnes**; Italian **Gillo Pontecorvo**, director of the legendary film, *The Battle of Algeria*, 1965; and French photographer **Marc Riboud**. The fifth and last anti-rule was revealed: no to retaliation; no to paying back colonial disdain of the African continent' modernity with the same coin.

The pungency of Nigerian academic **Chinweizu** produces harsh words to describe the relationship, by now discussed to satiation point, between European and African visual arts modernisms: *"Once upon a time, the Pan-European world claimed that Africa was the heart of darkness and that Black Africans were subhuman. Living Africans were exhibited in Europe's zoos (5), next to gorillas and lions; and African sculptures were dismissed as the crude products of primitives who wanted to work in naturalistic European styles but just didn't know how. That was before Picasso and Company drank from the fountain of Black African art and brought forth Cubism and other brands of [white] European modernism (6)".*

It seems unlikely that such a dramatic epistemic turn in the political economy of meaning, in the notion whereby colonialism is not a *"natural"* state of things, should have occurred in a mere quarter of a century; and it seems even more improbable that one word, Negritude, the cohesive epigram of penetrating, bitter-sweet connotations, should have baptized the rebirth of dignity not only in the African continent but also in colonized areas of the Asian continent and the Pacific, where the Oxonian definition of *Non-white* is used to refer to all of its peoples as a whole. *"The Short Century"* is a literary loan from the English historian, **Eric Hobsbawm**, who coined the term in his work, *Age of Extremes*. In **Enwezor's** vision (and it proves practically impossible to disagree with it), it gravitates towards the Age of Negritude; a utopia that took a last look at its close reflection before disappearing, devoured by the propaganda of failure and its apocalyptic dimensions.

For other reasons, the momentum could not be better synchronized. In addition to covering a significant segment of the international audience *"The Short Century"* included a synopsis of **Enwezor's** intended career just before the inauguration of the next **Documenta 11**. Furthermore, apart from this exceptional illustration of his approach to the relationship between art, its content and its container, there is the extremely valuable contribution of the catalogue or, should we say, the book, of the exhibition, a true masterpiece of publishing.

In the book, the tenuous borders, between reality and its interpretation and representation established, with a clarity which is both academic and accessible, their *"cross-territorial"* perimeter, as **Octavio Zaya**, one of the co-curators of **Documenta 11**, would say. Like all the rest, African modernity is the product of interaction with its counterparts elsewhere in the world. Anyone learning of it through *"The Short Century"* had at her/his disposal as many touchstones as her/his capacity, or propensity, for free association will allow. If seen from a Caribbean perspective, for instance, there were plenty of references from which to construct a building, or a poem, or a song. They key was sent in G major and its poetry is alive with the innermost sounds of Yoruba, Spanish, English and French, languages which, in the golden age of high life, flooded the dance floors of the Africa of the fifties, just before the continent invented its freedom with the word, Negritude ...

"There, where paths fade away, where silence ends, I invent desperation, the mind that conceives me, the hand that draws me, the eye that discovers me. I invent the friend who invents me, my fellow man; and woman, my opposite; a tower which I crown with flags, a wall climbed by my foam, a devastated city which is slowly reborn under the domination of my eyes. Against the silence and the hubbub, I invent the Word, freedom that invents itself and invents me each day".

Octavio Paz

Alanna Lockward is an author, critic and independent curator specialized in time-based undertakings. In 1988, she was appointed Director of International Affairs at Museo de Arte Moderno in Santo Domingo. She is the founding director of ArtLabour Archives, a cultural platform and agency responsible for producing situation-specific art events and exhibitions since 1997 in the US, the Caribbean, Europe and the African continent and is Chief Editor of VideoArtWorld online magazine.

Notes

1. "One almost unknown contribution of Germany to the global history of Apartheid is that the first Apartheid Laws were not introduced and implemented by the Boers in South Africa, but were already conceived and established by German colonialists, in 1907, in today's Namibia, (formerly German South-West Africa)."
Lockward, Alanna, 2010: *Diaspora*. In: Nduka-Agwu/Hornscheidt (Hg.) 2010: *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch*. Frankfurt a. M.: Brandes & Apsel.

2. Elleh, Nnamdi: *Architecture and Nationalism in Africa, 1945-1994*. Catalogue, p. 236-237.

3. Firstenberg, Laurie: *Postcoloniality, Performance and Photographic Portraiture*. Catalogue. p. 117.

4. Enwezor, Okwui: *An Introduction*. Catalogue p.15.

5. In Germany the "tradition" of showcasing nations of the continent is still framed on the context of Zoos. In spite of the continuous protests by activists, this practice is not perceived by the white majority as particularly racist. The most recent episode is the celebration of independence of the former German colony of Namibia at the Berlin Zoo, in 2010. Racism is a taboo theme in white German society at large. For more information: www.derbraunemob.org

6. Chinweizu: *The weapon of culture: Negritude literature and the making of neocolonial Africa*. Catalogue. p. 320.

Curator:

Okwui Enwezor

Co-Curators:

Rory Bester

Lauri Firstenberg

Chika Okeke

Mark Nash

Museum Villa Stuck, Munich

15 Feb. – 22 April 2001

Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin

18 May – 29 July 2001

Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

8 Sept. – 30 Dec. 2001

P.S.1 and Museum of Modern Art, New York

10 Feb. – 5 May 2002

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