

C&

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PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL ART
FROM AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES



CURRICULUM OF CONNECTIONS FOCUS: EDUCATION

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Pedagogies based on artistic inquiry and experimentation form the backbone of initiatives

connected to ArtsEverywhere.ca,

an online platform that considers art in

relation to systems of oppression, forms of

struggle, and celebrations of difference

The lines of inquiry that shape ArtsEverywhere

are extended from initiatives such as these

Free Home University is a pedagogical and artistic experiment focused on generating new ways of sharing and creating knowledge

by experiencing life in common. Full Albert Santana Ballroom Freedom & Free

immersion into a collective experience and School brings together public intellectuals

design of a coalitional approach to defining and ballroom “organic intellectuals” to

and constructing the inquiry are considered develop political literacies on liberation efforts

fundamental values in this open-ended, concerned with sexuality, gender, race, and

research-based, artist-led experiment in class oppressions, based in a celebration of and

alternative education. dialogue with the Ballroom scene’s history.

ArtistSafety.net is a hybrid consultancy and Lanchonete.org is an artist-led progressive

volunteer network supporting artists on the cultural platform focused on how people live

frontlines of social change. The “Safe Haven and work in, share and survive the contemporary

Operating Procedures (S.H.O.P.) Talk” training city with the Center of São Paulo as its outlook

Series includes civil society spaces and actors It gets its name from the ubiquitous lunch

from both the arts and human rights spanning counters — convivial, fluorescent-lit, open

six continents, walled, laborious, points of commerce — that

populate almost every street corner. The Queer

Graphic Laboratory is a group that, in the

context of Queer City (a 10-month collective

curatorial process), joined to investigate and test

the limits and possibilities of the language to talk

about queer, and express things that doesn’t fit

our conservative binary categorization.

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Musagetes is an international philanthropic arts organization based in Canada. It is committed to making the arts more central and meaningful in peoples’ lives, in our communities and societies.

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EDITORS' NOTE

After four years of producing our magazine *Contemporary And (C&)*, we know our readers are focused on and interested in features, essays, and interviews with young voices as well as old masters or trailblazing curators from African perspectives, be they in São Paulo, New Jersey, or Lubumbashi.

At the same time, our global readers are not only consuming all the insights gathered on C&, they are also avidly dedicated to constantly furthering their own professional growth, to broadening their skills and practices. How do we know that? Because the C& section “opportunities” – featuring residencies, calls for applications, workshops, conferences etc. – consistently has click figures in the thousands.

What might seem less challenging from a journalistic perspective in comparison to our features, exclusive interviews, and essays is in fact a substantial area of our work: the aspect of education, providing information among young artists and curators in Africa and the Diaspora. This is also strongly reflected in our practice beyond the magazine: our third C& Critical Writing Workshop just ended in Lubumbashi; plans for the upcoming workshop in Harare in September are underway; and the C& Mentoring Program with young writers from Nairobi, Kigali, and Addis Ababa are in full swing.

This print issue is therefore solely dedicated to education in the arts. Interviews and guest contributions bring together ideas, experiences, tools, and learning spaces/formats in the fields of art,

critical education, theory, and everyday practices. They engage with such questions as: What discourses, formal, and informal activities are emerging in the field of art education? What are the links between art, education, and global power relations? What innovative and alternative forms of art education have been applied in the past and today?

From Aida Muluneh’s photography festival (Addis Foto Fest and the associated master classes to Souleymane Bachir Diagne’s views on knowledge production and philosophy to the recent #feesmustfall protest movement in South Africa through the mediation of art history in Yaoundé, this issue presents perspectives and possible strategies by players in the field of cultural mediation.

The publication of this issue coincides with documenta 14 in Kassel, curated by Adam Szymczyk and his curatorial team, including curator-at-large Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung. To mark the occasion, we interviewed participating artists from African perspectives such as Pélagie Gbaguidi and Akinbode Akinbiyi about their interest in the mediation of artistic knowledge.

Finally, we are glad to feature in this issue leading players involved in the upcoming conference “Under the Mango tree – Ulterior Sites of Learning” taking place on 18–19 July 2017 in Kassel, hosted by the ifa and in cooperation with documenta 14.

The **C&** team

CAMERAWORK NOW

By **RAHIMA GAMBO**

New technologies have helped and hindered the development of photography on the continent, photographer **AKINBODE AKINBIYI** tells **RAHIMA GAMBO**

opposite Akinbode Akinbiyi,
Passageways, Involuntary Narratives, and the Sound of Crowded Spaces, 2015–2017.
Inkjet print. Courtesy of the artist.





The first time I saw Akinbode Akinbiyi was in a little digital square. It was a documentary about his practice and he was peering down through his Rollei at a Johannesburg street. Then I met him at the LagosPhoto Festival where we exchanged few words, but instant recognition. Years later, he was my assigned mentor for the Goethe Institut Johannesburg photographer's master class. His advice has always been poetic and lyrical with a crystalline core of unflinching honesty, just like his images.

RAHIMA GAMBO When and how did your journey into photography begin?

AKINBODE AKINBIYI It started in an uncertain, still-colonized Lagos of the 1950s. My parents were forging a path into what was then an uncertain future. This uncertainty made us, their four children, aware of our surroundings, looking, listening, trying to understand. My practice as a photographer started in the pages of *National Geographic*, the West African edition of *Drum Magazine*, and the *Black Photographers Annual*. After university, I took up photography as a hobby but soon grew much more serious. It was very much a learning-by-doing process. I soon discovered the powerful work of Japanese post-Second World War photographers and then Latin American photographers. The photographers who struck me most deeply were those from the continent: David Goldblatt, Ernest Cole, J.D. 'Okheji Ojeikere, Peter Obey, and, somewhat later, Seydou Keïta, Malick Sidibé.

RG Your projects seem mostly to dwell on urban Africa, yet you live in Berlin, Germany. Does geographical proximity matter in your practice and mentorship activities?

AA Proximity does matter, but it need not necessarily be physically close. What matters is being sincere and aware of the inner impulses that course through us all when making images. It is not the environment that determines the approach, but rather how you stand in relation to yourself and what you want to say, to see, to create. My approach to mentoring is to gently urge younger colleagues to hear their inner voices, see their inner eye, and take it from there. The location of teaching is of little importance.

RG Can you describe the photography (education) landscape in Africa in the beginning of your career and how it compares to today?

AA In the early 1970s, there were few if any institutions devoted to photography. Art institutions focused on drawing, painting, and sculpture. Those who wanted to learn photography usually assisted established photographers or went abroad to recognized institutions. The Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg, founded by David Goldblatt in the late 1980s, was one of the first photographic learning institutions on the continent and an influential one that has brought forth a wealth of articulate and incisive photographers ever since. Hence, one finds that South Africa, the leading economy on the continent, has a relative wealth of art institutions that today promote and teach photography. Internationally recognized South African photographers have had a synergic effect on their country and further afield. Other regions too have brought forth talent, such that today North, West, East, and Central Africa are on the map as much as South Africa, though oftentimes not in the number of recognized photographers. This is due to the uneven development in photography education and the many serious problems that beset many countries in Africa.

The powerful surge of the digitally mobile age has encouraged a willingness to photograph and record ubiquitous happenings, subsequently uploaded to various Internet sites. This has led to a kind of facile regard towards photography and being a photographer.

This one development, the easy access to photographic equipment and its even easier dissemination, has helped, and at the same time hindered, the development of photography on the continent. Helped, in that photography has become even more democratic, even more widespread than ever before. Hindered in the almost insurmountable number of images now produced, downloaded, viewed. A careful scroll through these archives of downloaded visual data makes very apparent the superficiality of much that is produced. Clichéd images from a sensibility dulled by extreme overkill. However, a few resonate, give evidence of aspiring talent in the jungle of unending visualizations.

RG Why did you begin to focus on developing photography education and mentorship in Africa?

AA One workshop led to the next until I was actively involved in establishing a network of teaching centers called "Centres of Learning for Photography in Africa" across the continent. The role model was the Market Photo Workshop institute in Johannesburg. The Goethe Instituts in Lagos, Khartoum, and especially Johannesburg have been critical in this development. Johannesburg provided seed funding to get the whole program of Centres of Learning for Photography in Africa off the ground. The intention was to encourage young practitioners to get a formal photographic education based on a set curriculum and with the intention of becoming professionals.

RG Can you describe your photography education and mentorship work in Sudan? How has it impacted the photography scene there?

AA Khartoum, Sudan, is a secret almost too precious to be mentioned. The city at the confluence of the two Niles, the White and the Blue Nile, is a like a jewel hidden in the tales of woe that so often come out of our continent. Due to the years of economic and in many ways cultural embargo, photography in Sudan was not particularly developed. In 2013, I took part in a series of workshops where participants were eager to learn. Their enthusiasm was a joy to experience, and in a very short time, the quality of work by these young aspirants leapt forward. Their work was exhibited at the 2016 Mugran Photo Week and in two rooms at the National Museum.

RG What is the future for young African emerging photographers?

AA The future is bright. Still, a major challenge is avoiding the pitfalls of being too attuned to the Internet, to the ready-made images that constantly flood screens and social media sites. Too many of these images are like a visual version of highly toxic fast food. The same Internet does however afford an insight into serious photography, if used and applied with a sense of purpose. This brings up the vexed question of how many have this diligence and sense of purpose, how many are so passionate about photography

as to want to seek out past masters and their techniques and motivations. Opportunities are few and the Centres of Learning for Photography in Africa are still in the early stages. Some participants cannot afford the low fees being charged and workshops are infrequent. One constant weakness I see is the lack of research so many emerging photographers bring to their chosen subject matter. Almost as if they enter blindly into the foray of going out there and taking, making images.

RG Can you tell us a little bit about your work at documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel?

AA The work is very much about spirituality, how it manifests physically in our daily wanderings and doings, so quietly and often unnoticed, that we are often surprised when it gently comes through.

“My approach to mentoring is to gently urge younger colleagues to hear their inner voices, see their inner eye, and take it from there.”

Akinbode Akinbiyi is a participating artist at documenta 14 in Athens and Kassel.

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This article is part of a series produced in collaboration with *Aperture* magazine, coinciding with *Aperture*'s summer 2017 issue, “Platform Africa.”



above and below Akinbode Akinbiyi,
Passageways, Involuntary Narratives, and the Sound of Crowded Spaces, 2015–2017.
Inkjet prints. Courtesy of the artist.

MAKE DO

By **DAVID CHIRWA**



Baba Jakeh and Ngamanya Banda, Rockston Studio workshop,
Tasitha, Light Industrial Area, Lusaka, Zambia. Courtesy of David Chirwa.

Rockston Studio is an artist-led project in the Zambian capital of Lusaka whose ethos of self-sustenance is a model of innovation, writes **DAVID CHIRWA**

“The idea of Rockston is as vibrant as ever. It is neither a place nor an institution. It is a principle of delivering skills, knowledge, and conscious discussion around art.”

The first Rockston artist, Lutanda Mwamba, trained himself through exposure to other artists and their works while he had a job as a gallery assistant in 1985. After about a year of experimenting with mainly lino and woodcut printmaking, he decided to hold a exhibition and urged me, his friend and assistant, to take up stone carving. Without any art background, I thought it impossible and completely out of the question. I had never dreamed of becoming an artist. Following up on his prodding, Lutanda came home from work one evening with a set of chisels and threw them onto my lap. “I want to work on a lino and woodcut exhibition,” he said. “I will cover the walls of the gallery with the prints, and you will fill the gallery floor with stone carvings.” “You are kidding, right?” I responded. “I have never even made a single linocut print or a decent drawing. How do you expect me to carve in stone?” “I will help you,” he mused, smiling. “You have never even made a single stone carving!” I said to him. “I will guide you,” Lutanda insisted. “Just believe.” “OK, what the hell,” I thought. We started off with Lutanda working on one half of the sculpture, then I would copy it to make the other half.

Two years later we had our first exhibition. The stone carving pulled me in and an artist was born, as well as the idea of Rockston. If I could learn through this apprenticeship, it became very clear to us that a lot others could and should, especially in the absence of any formal art schools at the time. While I was working on my sculpture from sunrise to sunset, young people from the neighborhood got drawn to the madness and energy emanating from the studio. Quite soon after the exhibition, I participated in the Triangle Network of artist workshops called Mbile. And this opened a new window of exposure for me through workshops and residencies. When young people from the compound saw sculpture taking me to Namibia, Zimbabwe, London, and New York, and even buying a wreck of a car, their interest solidified: a small group of youngsters

gradually gathered around to learn. With the exposure from traveling for workshops and residencies, the awareness or need to move away from figurative and object-oriented work became increasingly pressing. I soon realized that an artist’s income is highly irregular, especially when moving towards abstract and conceptual art, hence the need to devise a way to create an income besides the one from art. The purpose for buying the car wreck was never to enhance my personal comfort or status, but to create an income by employing a driver to use it as a make-shift taxi while I was carving. The little income from the car greatly helped me and the small group to focus on work, facilitate food, transport, tools, and other necessities. This is the cornerstone of the Rockston concept: self-sustenance, not relying on external funding to operate and develop, but facilitating and developing each other. Rockston has produced successful, self-reliant artists, maturing to conquer the globe artistically. With a simple method of sharing knowledge and experience, a new generation of artists emerged. They progressed from an informal platform of learning to take on formal degrees abroad, which eventually led to the first Zambian

artist, Anawana Haloba Hobøl, participating in the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009. The culture of waiting for the Messiah or donor community to intervene is overwhelming. Waiting for a cosmic or foreign will to change things, we are stubbornly refusing to realize it is our own will and hard work that can set us on a path to homegrown innovation. What alternative education can ignite a change in attitude and infuse a strong desire to create an African civilization at par or even better than the dominant Western and Eastern societies? The idea of Rockston is as vibrant as ever. It is neither a place nor an institution. It is a principle of delivering skills, knowledge, and conscious discussion around art. It is a philosophy of competitive, sustainable existence. It is an experimental unit of thoughts and actions, passing through different phases, until a method of shaping is carved out that should produce world-class artists and people: where sharpened iron continues to sharpen iron, and students are challenged to be better than their masters at reaching new heights. Rockston Studio 1985 is only active when this responsibility is taken on by the trained artists.



Kaleb De Groot (Dutch resident artist at Rockstone Sculpture Park), *Zig/Zag Proxy*, 2008. Cement blocks, plaster, explosives, marble, and iron oxide/wax, 4 x 7 x 3.5m, Lusaka, Zambia. Courtesy of the artist.

LESSONS IN IMPROPRIETY

By

FERDIANSYAH THAJIB

Born out of a collective of Indonesian student-press activists,
KUNCI Cultural Studies Center has grown into an experimental
vehicle for creative practice



**“We are not sure yet about what can be learned in this school.
But we are sure about not starting from the premises on
what needs to be learned or not.”**

above Taman Siswa “school time” under Suwardi Suryaningrat.
Courtesy of Taman Siswa.

In October 2016, KUNCI initiated the School of Improper Education (SIE).

The call for participants describes the proposed school as: an experiment on the sustainability of both the material and immaterial economies of the organization. We want to test the idea of a school as a garden of ideas, a laboratory of affects, and a space where new ideas clash and coalesce. We are not sure yet about what can be learned in this school. But we are sure about not starting from premises that stipulate what needs to be learned or not. We want to study together, while interrogating the meaning of togetherness. I would like to dissect this description by giving meaning retrospectively to these clusters of concepts and how they interrelate through the lens of practice.

How does a school operate while questioning its own reasons to exist? How can a school – scaffolded by the connections between historical remnants filled with violence, shifting spatio-temporal orientations, and engagement with affective formations – carve out its alternative way of being? And what would such an alternative look like?

FLIPPING THROUGH HISTORIES

To name some of the historical junctures that gave birth to this initiative, one direct lineage can be drawn from the model of national education that was inherited from the past repressive political regime under Suharto. School in this model is preserved in the popular imagination as an effective instrument of social control towards achieving the state's developmentalist agenda.

Another historical model for SIE is the proto-institution of learning during Indonesian colonial times formulated by Suwardi Suryaningrat in 1922, namely the Taman Siswa (literally “Garden of Students”) system. As an attempt to counter the infantilizing moorings of Dutch education in the colony, Suryaningrat, who was born as a nobleman in Yogyakarta (and in 1928 took the name of Ki Hajar Dewantara), advanced Javanese indigenous values as modalities of resistance by collapsing the temporal boundaries between “school time” and “family time.” This model assigns parental roles to teachers, who were to “nurture” the students as their children. At this latter point, our school parts ways

with the example of Taman Siswa, especially if we are to take into account how Suwardi's proposal of family-based education was appropriated by the Indonesian New Order regime. Family in this model is established as the reproductive site in normalizing citizenship through patriarchy, heteronormativity, and a social hierarchy based on gender, age, and class.

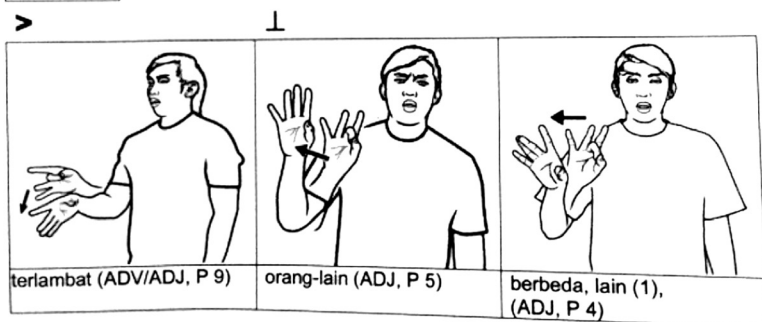
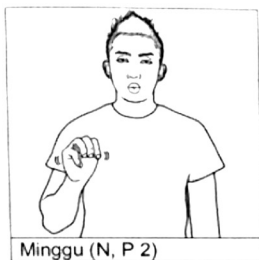
KUNCI's own existential trajectory and habit, since its foundation in 1999, has been in questioning (or sometimes confounding) our own modes of being together, from our beginning as a publishing initiative by several student-press activists and our coming-of-age as a more formalized research center to our later decision to work collectively and non-hierarchically while persistently refusing to be defined by the specific forms or content we have produced. Years of spending time together and working together have taught us what study can mean outside the normative models of school and family. The challenge is how to replicate and sustain what we have discovered to be valuable experience, in and beyond our extended environment.

LEARNING THROUGH UNKNOWING

As I write this article, the school is almost at the end of its “first semester.” A total of twenty-one people have joined the school. While we can also trace the biography of each school participant by subjecting them to categorizations based on their diverse professional backgrounds – housewife, artist, teacher, community activist, unemployed person, freelancer, and so on – they can also be located in multiple practical institutions that are intersecting and exhaustive.

Interpreting our memberships otherwise, during a discussion in one of the school sessions in early February 2017, Brigitta Isabella from KUNCI expressed that it has become “a refuge for people who do not know what they want to do.” This is perhaps reminiscent of Jacques Rancière's description in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987), which is also one of the many models that we also looked into during the research phase prior to the SIE. Soon enough, we realized that the story of Joseph Jacotot recounted by Rancière is not without its limitations, since, in this approach, the normative role of the family as a site for pedagogical transformation remains intractable. Nonetheless, there are indeed some shared genealogies with

“The shared volition among the participants to learn sign language emerged as an attempt to expand notions of collective study as a thought experiment on horizontalizing knowledge circulation... towards operationalizing different modes of being together.”



One exercise page in Indonesian community sign language.

Courtesy of KUNCI.

Jacotot's demand for equality rather than hierarchy in an educational process. On the one hand, instead of framing study as a unified platform, different positionalities, such as the roles of KUNCI members as hosts and school participants, are relationally considered as the process unfolds. On the other hand, we also feel the need to collectively engage with the unknown as a way of redistributing the work of power through knowledge practices. This is reflected by the consensus among the school participants as they agreed on learning community-based sign language. The shared volition among the participants to learn sign language emerged as an attempt to expand notions of collective study as a thought experiment on horizontalizing knowledge circulation (not only by collapsing the rigged teacher-student relationship, but also demystifying the role of the book as a sacred container of knowledge) towards operationalizing different modes of being together. Some may see this attempt as a means of embodying empathy. Others expect that this experience would allow them to expand communicative horizons beyond verbal languages. Or maybe this is just one of those moments where people try to make use of their unfolding, yet fleeting, togetherness. In this instance, the school can be understood as a community of its constituent singularities, just as Giorgio Agamben has suggested in *The Coming Community* (1993). As the school's first phase draws to a close, both the school's hosts and participants are moving further into the unknown. Apparently, questions regarding what will happen in the extended present are staggered. If knowing is doing, and knowledge is something that has been done and could be done differently, then how should we frame the little that we know so far and represent it without either agonizing over "end results" or hiding behind the overused statement "this is still an ongoing process"? What exists in between these spectra of being? And which way do we go from here? What else can we learn and to what ends? No one seems to know.



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Flavio Cerqueira, *I told you...*, 2016. Bronze and books. Variable dimensions. Courtesy of the artist and Goodman Gallery.

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HOW DO YOU TEACH **DECOLONIAL** IN A POST- **METHODS** EVERYTHING WORLD?

C& asked **M. NEELIKA JAYAWARDANE**,
SHARLENE KHAN, and **FELWINE SARR** about teaching students
new vocabularies and perspectives

An open dialogue with **M. NEELIKA JAYAWARDANE**, a writer and Associate Professor of English at the State University of New York-Oswego, in the US; **SHARLENE KHAN**, a visual artist, writer, and Senior Lecturer in Art History and Visual Culture at Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa; and **FELWINE SARR**, a musician, writer, and Professor of Economics at the Université Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis, Senegal. Speaking from their own specific contexts, they share their views on the links between art, education, and decoloniality.

“One of the challenges is to deconstruct all the implicit or explicit tactics of domination that exist even in forms of knowledge and speech and in languages.”

CONTEMPORARY AND (C&) All of you teach in higher education and are also artists and writers in your own right. How do you combine these worlds? To what extent do they inform one another?

SHARLENE KHAN Art historians often tend to teach context and objectivity. When you are an artist sitting in your studio and looking at your work all the time, waiting for it to speak back to you, this is never something an art historian can speak about. They don't validate this kind of process because they basically don't have these experiences of making creative work. Discussions about such aspects of creativity don't happen often, and when they do, they quickly get misinterpreted. So how to balance that theoretically? I have personally grown attached to the idea bell hooks expresses as “critical play and pleasure.” It is hard to find a balance between criticality and playfulness – to experience pleasure and be entertained, but with a level of criticality that challenges us as individuals and as a society. For me, these concepts encompass the idea of “creative theorization”: my artwork informs my theorization, which informs my creative practice. The balance between theory and praxis, self-reflection and criticality, is now coming more through my practice as a teacher, as I attempt to bridge these gaps for my students.

M. NEELIKA JAYAWARDANE I had to learn how to set very clear boundaries in my personal and professional life. First, I had to learn what “boundaries” were. By that, I mean that I had to contemplate carefully and identify what was important to me. What was necessary for me to maintain my dignity, my self-respect? What was the moral universe I wished to construct as my guide for building integrity? Along with that important set of decisions – and the daily work that goes into maintaining the psychic and emotional structures that are essential for upholding one's integrity – I knew that if I did not maintain a life as a writer and have communion with art, I would not have a very rich or fulfilling life.

FELWINE SARR When I first arrived in France in 1992, I put together a band while I was studying. I was the singer and we did various tours and albums. It seemed natural to me to have an intensive artistic project while I was also writing literature. In fact, I don't see them as different vehicles. They're ways of relating to a sensibility, to oneself and to others – of being able to commune with people. In a band, you transmit an idea, an emotion, a sensibility from one heart to another. Musical language touches its recipients directly. And when you write literature, a play or something else, it's ultimately the same. You are setting out to find others. At the university, we set out to find specific symbols for the mind. As I see it, each of these practices arises from the same desire to transmit and to be relational.

C& Being relational... That leads to a quote by bell hooks from her book *Teaching to Transgress*: To begin, the professor must genuinely value everyone's presence. There must be an ongoing recognition that everyone influences the classroom dynamic, that everyone contributes.

These contributions are resources. Does this resonate with your teaching/mentoring work?

FS I think bell hooks puts her finger on something essential that we in the field of education and transmission tend to forget: the idea of accounting for the space that we jointly construct with others.

MNJ Absolutely. But that egalitarian principle has to be managed with an understanding of the difference between being authoritarian and being an authoritative director of conversation in a classroom, studio, or wherever you are called to be the mentor or guide. As a literature professor teaching narratives that depict immigrant experiences, or what is widely called “post 9/11 literature,” I have to challenge students' limited worldviews. For example, some have no clue that the US does not just hand out free passes to immigrants or that the US is bombing other countries. So I inform them and challenge this. To do that, I had better be prepared and set expectations for my students to be prepared. To encourage informed discussion, I even post notes and specific questions we will cover in each class period – critical questions involving the text. One cannot underestimate the fierce loyalty with which we sometimes hold onto very limited and limiting views. The only way I can combat some of that is by expanding the scope of what I and my students imagine as “authoritative texts.” Their Yahoo page cannot be the first and only source of information. Or their social media pages. Or even the *New York Times*. Fiction, visual art, conversation, and journalism from other locations – other voices – help challenge those closed worldviews.

SK Black feminism has given us the idea of “safe spaces.” For me, a very important task is to create such safe spaces. You can say whatever you want as long as it is respectful and accountable to the people around you. The classroom is about getting as much open articulation as possible. What we are teaching students are new vocabularies and perspectives. But primary to all of this is an understanding that race has been imposed upon all of us and that we need to actively divest from white supremacy. Even white kids have to understand they have been colonized as well. For them, it means learning the language of how to engage with people of color and their extensive histories. At the same time, students of color need spaces to be articulate about their own lives and their engagement with whiteness in ways where they know that the teacher “has their back.” I believe they understand that we use the classroom as our laboratory. In addition, visual arts are always an excuse to speak about a range of other subjects. In other words, I teach them tools for life and not necessarily about how to get into the art world.

C& How do you consider the role of the curriculum in education? In which ways can it lead to change? In which ways can it not?

FS In 2011, we established a Faculty of Civilizations and Religions at Gaston Berger University in Saint-Louis. Besides that, we have a department of African languages where we teach Wolof and Fula along with the literature and the civilizations of those languages and

C& REVIEW

Jessica Aimufua took a closer look at the exhibition on German colonialism in Berlin.

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“As a literature professor teaching narratives that depict immigrant experiences, or what is widely called ‘post 9/11 literature,’ I have to challenge students’ limited worldviews. For example, some have no clue that the US does not just hand out free passes to immigrants or that the US is bombing other countries. So I inform them and challenge this. To do that, I had better be prepared and set expectations for my students to be prepared.”

their inherent worlds, including mythologies, philosophies, wisdoms, etc. And it is going very well. There is a huge demand: more than a thousand students at six departments with twenty-five professors. There is a great ambition to integrate endogenous cultural resources into the curriculum.

MNJ I have doubts, at this point, about institutions, curricula, and other institutional products. One of my closest friends in the US, Philip White, who helped me understand how to “immigrate” into academia, once told me that institutions, by nature, are “conservative” – that is, they are built to maintain, remain, stabilize. They resist change. They look at the radical with suspicion. They will smooth over like an auntie who soothes you even as she sees a glaring injustice; and will ruthlessly eject anyone who would threaten her household and her ascendancy within the world she knows. The only time that one can expect an institution – and its curricula – to reflect anything transformative and radical is if an institution has been recently and publicly shamed. That means the greater public also has to come to an agreement that a set of ideas is harmful and cannot support them any longer. Only then will powerful people who help buttress these institutions be forced to agree to change something – at least nominally and cosmetically.

C& How would you define decolonial methodologies and practices in education?

SK For me, due to the particularities of my own education and personal history, it has always been about an appreciation of multiple cultures from Africa, Asia, and Latin America and not have one dominant over the other. When you grow up like this, I don’t think you ever want to stop learning about a variety of forms of knowledge, as opposed to essentializing knowledge production. That is inherent to decolonial methodologies. I also think that what Black feminist perspective and race and decolonial aesthetic perspectives have been doing for a couple decades now is making us aware of the sheer plurality of creative practices across the world – many of which do

not enter academia because they are not “fine art” or “art-historical” productions. So the creative productions of “Others” (people of color, women) remain outside official, canonized knowledge, as does visual culture that does not fit into “fine or high art” criteria (a.k.a. “popular culture”). Part of decolonizing arts and art history curricula is to extend (or preferably) eradicate the boundaries of the elitist, exclusive fine art and art history fields and to fundamentally include the creative practices of people from across the world. Contemporary visual culture classes must deal with the popular – not as a phenomenon of the masses, but as the arts of today. That is because, fundamentally, these media reflect the aspirations, desires, and prejudices of people, which need to be tackled and decolonized as well, even as we examine and celebrate new forms of creative engagement. Visual culture is the battleground for the hearts and minds of people today, so it’s a damn shame academics don’t take this any more seriously.

FS First, let’s remember that most African states gained independence in the 1960s. But independence is different from decoloniality. Decolonization means realizing that the processes of domination and asymmetry have not changed so much and that they are now organized through economic and political relationships. One of the challenges is to deconstruct all the implicit or explicit tactics of domination that exist even in forms of knowledge and speech and in languages. At the same time, we forget that all societies persist over time by transmitting their intellectual and cultural capital, or else, logically, they would not survive. In other words, societies possess endogenous knowledge that they have transmitted to succeeding generations. We cannot neglect these forms of knowledge under the simple pretext that the academy fails to acknowledge them. We are missing something fundamental in our theory of global knowledge, which is too strongly shaped by Northern and Westernized epistemologies and therefore accords much too little space to epistemologies of the South, of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. In our epistemology of today, we must come to see these forms of knowledge as resources.

IF YOU'RE RUNNING FROM HISTORY, IT WILL EVENTUALLY CATCH UP WITH YOU

PÉLAGIE GBAGUIDI, a Dakar-born artist appearing in documenta 14, tells C& about a career-changing 2004 visit to the Loire river in France



Pélagie Gbaguidi, *The Missing Link: Dicolonisation Education by Mrs Smiling Stone*, Installation with 80 roller paper panels, 30cm x 400cm each, and school desks.
Photo: Dr. Peter Magubane. Courtesy of the artist.

CONTEMPORARY AND (C&) Can you describe your path into art? How did it all start?

PÉLAGIE GBAGUIDI I remember a particular day very clearly. I was four years old, my brother and I were in the house, and we saw a chameleon. We stayed nearby and observed it, and then something happened. The chameleon changed its color to match my brother's jacket. I was fascinated! To me, these kind of astonishing moments are what open the doors of creativity.

It seems to me that sensitivity is a type of "chameleonic skin" from which we can understand the world. I think that the predispositions of becoming an artist are the extension of a body, a living process. This process is made up of encounters, intuition, determination, and infinite hazard. Art opens doors that never close.

C& You describe yourself as a contemporary version of a griot, a person who transmits a culture's knowledge and thus becomes a keeper of that nation's history. Could you describe that approach? And why did you feel the need to inherit that role?

PG I define myself more as a "contemporary griot" than a visual artist. This is part of the traditional form of storytelling in Africa. Around the year 2000, I decided to appropriate this heritage myself and it became my statement: The "griot" questions the individual as he or she moves through life by absorbing the words of the ancients and modeling them like a ball of fat that they place in the stomach of each passerby with the ingredients of the day. In the practical sense, they break the commonplace rhythm by inserting subtle incidents integrating their part of eternity. My artistic engagement led me to face identity issues, such as the history of Black people and their relationship with the world throughout time. These historical events also helped me to better understand contemporary cultural and economic issues. For a long time, I was caught up in "the primordial rape of Africa" that has been going on over the last 400 years. I was caught up by the destruction of an imaginary, by this "accident" that was slavery in the evolution of civilizations. Can we then speak of a clash of civilizations? Then, in 2004, I went to the Loire river in France, which was a turning point in my career. I participated in a residency project linked to the



all images Pélégie Gbaguidi, *The Impossible Drawing, A Tribute*, 2016 (detail). 80 roller paper panels, 30cm x 400cm each. Lipstick, earth from Nirox karite, and colored pencil (drawings from the archives of Apartheid Museum Johannesburg/Baileys African History Archive Johannesburg/ Nirox Foundation). Photo: Dr. Peter Magubane. Courtesy of the artist.

“What is the place of orality in the contemporary sphere? Is orality an architecture of language? How is it transmitted today through the digital revolution? Is this important for the survival of the human species? A lure? A fiction.”

Dakar Biennale. During my stay, I rediscovered *Le Code Noir*; it was on a display at a book fair. It was a revelation for me, a sepulchral place in France testifying to the tragedy of the slave trade. I learned a powerful lesson there: If you're running from history, it will eventually catch up with you.

C& And how does the griot intervene?

PG As a griot, I bring historic events from the past to the present in a kind of timeless syncretism where the future is perpetually remodeled by our past actions. There ensues a questioning quest for new aesthetic forms of orality: What is the place of orality in the contemporary sphere? Is orality an architecture of language? How is it transmitted today through the digital revolution? Is this important for the survival of the human species? A lure? A fiction? I also challenge “collective amnesia,” which becomes an issue in reconstructing an intelligible world and in preserving a field of knowledge through the archives. It would be interesting if the information from all the archives circulated, if it was analyzed, redesigned, and rewritten for the sake of moving forward in history. My vision as a griot is a commitment addressed to the community by speaking through different media, by creating a bridge between the traditional and the contemporary. My work revolves around the idea of seeing speech and image as signs that need to be deciphered and transmitted.

C& You often reflect on the theme of “downfall” in your work. Through the paper boats in your *Boomerang* exhibition, for example, and through intense drawings that show humans falling down, falling apart. What draws you to this theme?

PG My approach to downfall was forged by the encounter with historical archives and places of remembrance. This established an entire creative process and a research into new icons to create a visual database of contemporary trauma. The idea is to make trauma visible and to work towards its acceptance. In a way, this helps us to learn from the mistakes of the past and link them to a better understanding of today's society. Humanity's downfall is possible, both at a symbolic individual level and at a global one. To me, all genocides have the same root. So, why should we separate them? Just to decorate libraries? The *Boomerang* installation of 2009 raised questions about immigration and awakened in me the fact that there were historical backwards and forwards to reflect on. We can see how the exploitation of resources and all kinds of predations on the African continent perpetrated during the seventeenth century are still alive today with the deregulation of products. Not to mention the violence that they continue to generate. The title *Boomerang* came to evoke, in a way, the image of the conquest of the world by Western civilizations in the sixteenth century and the superpositions we find today with the massive influx of immigration to Western countries.

C& Can you tell us a little bit about your work at documenta 14?

PG My contribution to documenta 14 will be part of my most recent research on the visibility of trauma in visual art. My project was conceived in South Africa. The encounter with this country was an emotional and spiritual breakthrough. The project is called *The Missing Link: Dicolonization Education by Mrs Smiling Stone*. It has taken root around the collision between the Cradle of Humankind near Johannesburg, different sources of documentation on apartheid, and my visits to memorial sites.

My encounter with the archives of Soweto, especially the Hector Pieterse Memorial and Museum, triggered a radical awareness of the involution of mentalities on the chessboard of the world: the increased racial discrimination, sexual discrimination, xenophobia, and dehumanization by economic superpowers. Today, the transmission of knowledge deserves a wider and deeper debate. At the heart of UNESCO's mission, there is the will to transform lives through education, to build peace, to eradicate poverty, and to promote sustainable development. However, one could also add “the eradication of the ideology of race, the living species on the earth” (Bruno Latour) or “the circulation of world archives” (Achille Mbembe).

How can we hold onto the tragedy of Soweto? The sacrifice of these children, who carry an ideal for all of us? This is the moment in which we learn from the past. With all this process of research and reflection, I created a statement for documenta 14 that synthesizes my thoughts and my work:

**How might education contribute to
purge from consciousness that there exist no
under-beings but that the birth of a
life is a value in itself.
That every human has a right to a
cradle**

The installation is composed of: school desks, photographs, glassine paper sheets, drawings made with colored pencils, earth, lipstick on transparent paper, and a video called *Relink*.

The artist would like to express her deepest gratitude and thank the following people who have made this project possible:

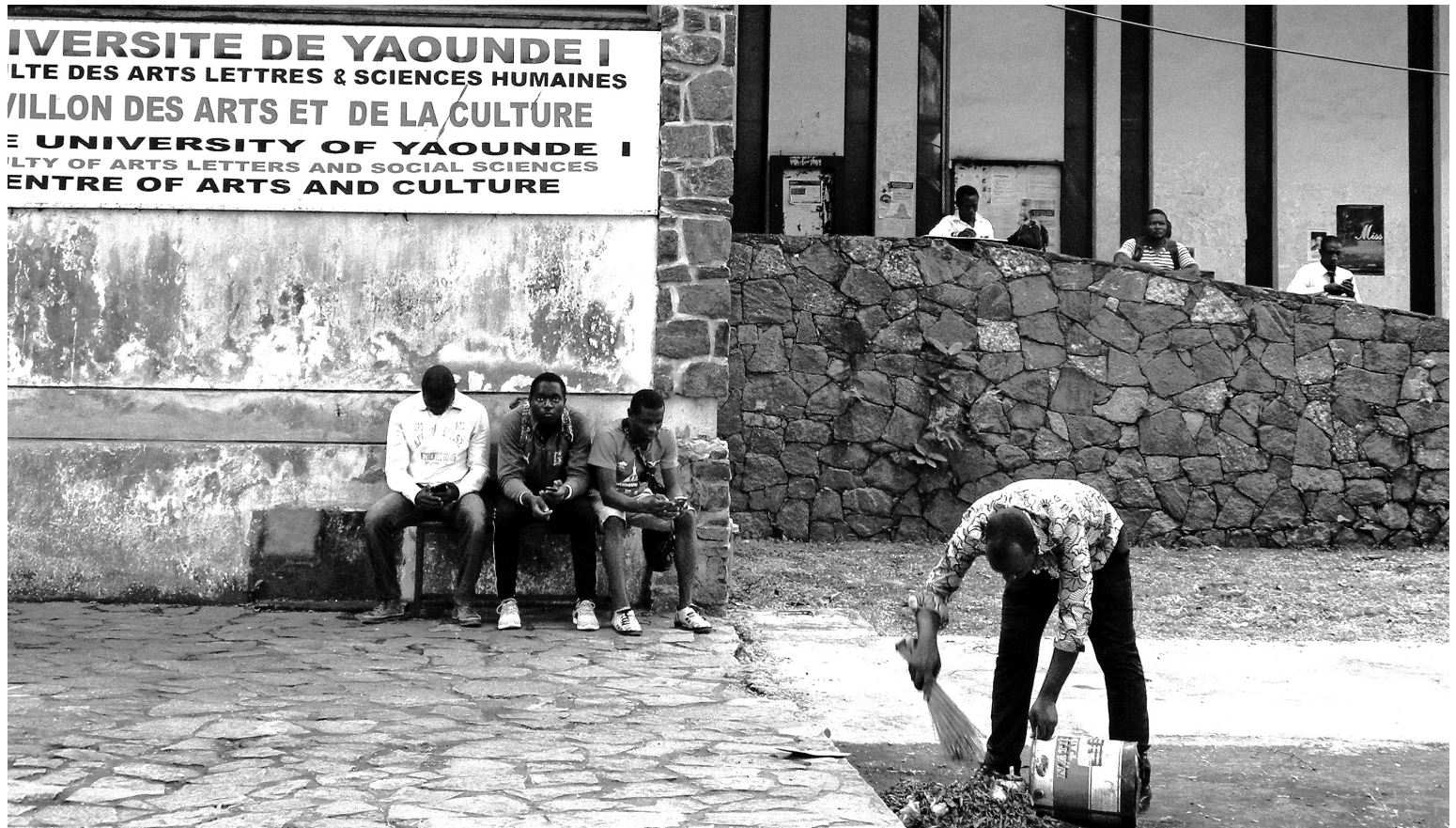
Khwezi Gule, Tau Skosana, Mpho Kumeke, Dr Peter Magubane, Dave Meyergollan, Nirox Foundation, Bongsi Maswanganyi, Tamzin Lovell Miller, Christian Sulger-Buel, Adam Szymczyk, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Apostolos Vassilopoulos, Julia Martha Mueller, Fabrizia Vecchione, Nikolas Arnis, Lydia Antoniou, Clara Guixer Borrell, Sofia Dati, and all the people who are not named but always support me.

TROUBLING CATEGORIES

Indifferent African states have enabled Western elites to define
the continent's artistic production, says Cameroonian art
historian **PAUL-HENRI S. ASSAKO ASSAKO**



above and opposite Students in front of the University of Yaoundé.
Courtesy of Paul-Henri S. Assako Assako.



“In short, it’s about broadening one’s culture in terms of the historical and everyday currency of artistic experience by examining the professional and the academic realities.”

CONTEMPORARY AND (C&) How would you describe your professional path in terms of your interest in artistic expression?

PAUL-HENRI S. ASSOKO ASSOKO My interest in art, particularly visual arts, was born out of an opportunity the late Sister Anne-Marie Hamon gave me in 1995: to practice drawing and painting during vacations and on the weekends. That interest progressively strengthened over the course of my schooling beginning in 1997, when I decided to enroll in the Institut de Formation Artistique (IFA, the Institute of Artistic Education) at Mbalmayo, which is still the only high school for artistic education in Cameroon. After obtaining my AF2 baccalaureate (in painting) at the Institute, I studied visual art and art history at the University of Yaoundé I. It was at the same university’s Section of Visual Arts and Art History of the Department of Arts and Archeology that I completed my PhD in art history. [Thinking back to the IFA,] I remember a few essential elements that motivated me: first, my admiration for one of my art history teachers, an Italian architect with whom, in our first year, we conducted a research project about artistic production in Cameroon; and second, my disappointment on realizing that our program at IFA did not provide any courses about art in Africa.

C& As a professor, researcher, and Head of the Art History and Fine Art Section at the University of Yaoundé I, how do you foresee the educational program’s future? To what extent do you plan to revise it?

PHSAA The contents of the section’s educational programming are fairly open, allowing students to grasp art from different complementary viewpoints: those of history, critical theory, anthropology, philosophy, biography, practice, and experimentation, among others. It provides knowledge of the arts worldwide, the arts in Africa, and (prehistoric and contemporary) art in Cameroon. However, bearing in mind that the visual arts’ frame of reference is in perpetual flux, the section’s program must take up those transformations and ask new educational and research questions. That is the perspective I envision, which could be considered a revision of the program. It is more about encouraging my colleagues and the students not to become isolated in an exclusively academic reality, but to take a transverse approach to artistic expression: learning to explore various alternative programs of production and dissemination – the market, the biennales, and academic research – and to integrate them into teaching. In short, it’s about broadening one’s culture in terms of the historical and everyday currency of artistic experience by examining the professional and the academic realities.

C& What sorts of approaches and systems (educational, theoretical, artistic, and otherwise) are you planning for your students?

PHSAA The idea I’m excited about is turning the section into a real incubator for visual art professionals, drawing on theoretical research and bold, original, and creative experiments that the students and

“The idea I’m excited about is turning the section into a real incubator for visual art professionals, drawing on theoretical research and bold, original, and creative experiments that the students and teachers are urged to carry out.”

teachers are urged to carry out. That is how the section, the students, and the teachers can become part of a network of local and global artistic professionals. That said, in an environment without material and financial resources and with few specialized teachers, the main approach seeks to reinforce the students’ and teachers’ capabilities by inviting the experienced input of professionals from the art world in our programs’ development. That means opening up the section to types of partnerships that will allow our colleagues to organize their teaching by incorporating applications in the form of professional projects that can gradually introduce our students to the world of professional art.

C& The world of contemporary art in African contexts has been receiving a great deal of popularity and visibility in the West. When you hear the phrase “global art and education,” what does that bring to mind, particularly in relation to artists’ training and careers?

PHSAA The visibility of art by artists of African origin and its appreciation in the West ought to be taken as an opportunity, not only for artists but also for governments in Africa. It testifies to the many incentives those governments have for creating policies of subsidizing cultural activities in general and specific players in that realm. One of the major changes brought about the artistic reformation of the latter half of the twentieth century in the West is that it has removed Western cultural inhibitions towards foreign aesthetics and revealed their relevance. The notion of global art, in contrast, does not seem to fit such a reading. The majority of what is today called “African contemporary art” on the “global” stage has been selected as such, directly or indirectly, by a certain Western elite in the face of many African countries’ indifference to art. The global context is open to exchanging experiences and having lateral cultural encounters. On that basis, it poses multiple advantages in terms of references that may serve as critical, methodological, and experimental bases for artistic education, but also in terms of professional profiles and the potential academic curricula in this area.

C& And how do you see the role of the diasporas as conduits of communication between local and global realities?

PHSAA In my opinion, the diasporas bear a great responsibility. By the nature of the positions they occupy in respect to their varying countries of origin, they have a considerable effect on peoples’ perception of artistic practice in African countries. The relevance of the diasporas lies in the nature of the interventions they create and in their capacity to take actions inspired by local necessities and consistent with international ones. However, the risk posed by the diasporas is of literally taking home the Western position to their original context or of confining that context to stereotypical references while glossing over new dynamics that are evident there...

C& How do you view the role of independent spaces in artists’ informal training in Cameroon? Can you give us some examples along the lines of Doual’art and Art Bakery?

PHSAA Independent spaces such as Doual’art, Art Bakery, and various others have played and continue to play a very important role in the life of the arts in Cameroon, even more so in artistic training and education. These spaces originated as artistic initiatives – such as exhibitions, artist residencies, festivals such as the Salon Urbain de Douala, SUD, and conferences, to name a few examples – that allowed people to discover and get to know artists from Cameroon and abroad and established a number of exchanges between the different players of the Cameroonian art world and their international counterparts. For a long time, these spaces have also been the primary channels of mediation, dissemination, and mobility for Cameroonian artists and their work.

SOWETO UPRISING

SOWETO STORY

By KHWEZI GULE



Will South African university students demanding free and decolonized education be lionized like the high school students who participated in the 1976 Soweto Uprising?

above Sharon Zwi, *Soweto Pietà* (1980–92). Screen print on paper.

Courtesy of the artist.



AUG. 9th

26th ANNIVERSARY OF S.A. WOMEN'S DAY

THE
FIGHTERS WHO
RAISE
TEACH AND
NURTURE THE CREAM
OF OUR STRUGGLE
STILL FIGHT
ON-

**FORWARD
WITH
UNITY!**

MEDU ART ENSEMBLE

C& INTERVIEW

Emory Douglas, former Minister of Culture for the Black Panther Party, on art, activism, and collective self-determination.

READ THE INTERVIEW ON
CONTEMPORARYAND.COM

above Medu Arts Ensemble, *Forward to Unity* (c. 1980–85). Screen print on paper.
Courtesy of Medu Arts Ensemble.

**“Victims, martyrs, and perpetrators.
These are three ways in which the students who participated
in the 1976 Soweto Uprising have been historicized.”**

Victims, martyrs, and perpetrators. These are three ways in which the students who participated in the 1976 Soweto Uprising have been historicized. In a nutshell, the Soweto Uprising took place in 1976, when the apartheid regime introduced the Afrikaans language as a medium of instruction in Black schools. Most narratives of the Soweto Uprising begin with the march by students on 16 June 1976. On that day, students from a number of schools in Soweto organized a march through Soweto in protest. The march started peacefully, but at some time that morning, police opened fire on the students, killing many, including twelve-year-old Hector Pieterse. The students retaliated by burning and destroying property and facilities that they associated with the apartheid regime. The violence quickly spread to other parts of the country as thousands of students rose in defiance of the apartheid regime. By the end of December 1976, close to 600 mostly Black youth had been killed, thousands had been arrested, and others had gone into exile and joined the liberation movements and their military operations.

Following media reports of the uprising students, they almost immediately became symbols. Accompanying the images of pain and anguish, there was a tendency to frame the students in religious terms. Words such as martyrdom and sacrifice have been periodically used. Perhaps the idea of redemptive suffering was important to make needless deaths seem more heroic and to galvanize resistance against the state. However, I think it is important to remember that although some of those students had consciously planned and took part in the protests, many others were killed indiscriminately. To my mind at least, the idea that the students were a necessary sacrifice in order to attain freedom speaks more to the battle of religious ideologies

than to the students' understanding at the time of what their actions were supposed to achieve.

There were also excesses such as the killing of Dr. Edelstein on the same day. Several liquor stores were destroyed that day and looting took place. The justification for this action has generally been that liquor had become an opiate of the oppressed that prevented Black people from resisting apartheid and confined Black people to accepting their fate. But we must also think about what is implied in the act of not just looting liquor stores but attacking other delivery vehicles. Was this just simple criminality, as some – including Black people – would have argued in those days? Or was it a kind of rudimentary economic warfare? Images of looting do not sit comfortably with narratives of heroism and sacrifice and generally get left out and ignored. But I think these images should be resuscitated – not to demonize the students, but to enable a more complete understanding of the repertoires of struggle. Neither deifying nor demonizing properly locates the actions and thinking of struggling subjects in historical, political, and everyday realities, where strategy and contingencies cannot be separated into neat categories. And ethical boundaries are not always clear, especially when dealing with a regime that is impervious to more peaceful means of resistance. Its symbolic power exceeds the limits of the images which represent it.

Now that history has vindicated the students of the events now known as the Soweto Uprising, it is easy to forget that at the time of the Soweto Uprising, many people found the students' actions scandalous or highly inappropriate. As many observers have argued, the events of the Soweto Uprising were significant in several ways. But one way is that this was the first time that students, youth, or children – depending on your

outlook – were thrust into the forefront of the anti-apartheid struggle. The state's brutality towards children was shocking, but the students' violent reaction also came as a shock. It must be remembered that although certainly youth culture had begun to emerge as a force in Black communities, the prevailing ethos was deference to one's elders. It would be extremely tempting to draw parallels between the students of 1976 and the current Fees Must Fall and Rhodes Must Fall Movements. The two situations are hardly comparable, if for no other reason than the fact that the Fees Must Fall Movement, unlike the student uprising of 1976, is taking place in a democratic dispensation.

The present-day student movement is able to invoke the memory of the 1976 generation precisely because of its symbolic power. At the same time, it has been remarkable how large sections of society, many of whom might have participated in the student movement of yesteryear, have condemned the Fees Must Fall protests – in part due to their irreverent stance towards authority. And so the language that characterizes students as thugs and criminals has returned to the everyday lexicon. Some have gone as far as to claim that students are under the sway of foreign agents seeking to destabilize the state. Although history seems to have vindicated the generation of the 1976 uprising, these tropes have survived to the present day. Indeed, large sections of the South African public are very divided over how to characterize the current student movement. In all these versions of who and what the students were, the overriding factor seems to rely on archetypal images mobilized by the different sides of the discourse to different political ends. And in the contest to win over public opinion, the contingencies in the arena of struggle will always exceed the symbols that only serve as convenient but limiting ways of understanding historical contexts and processes.

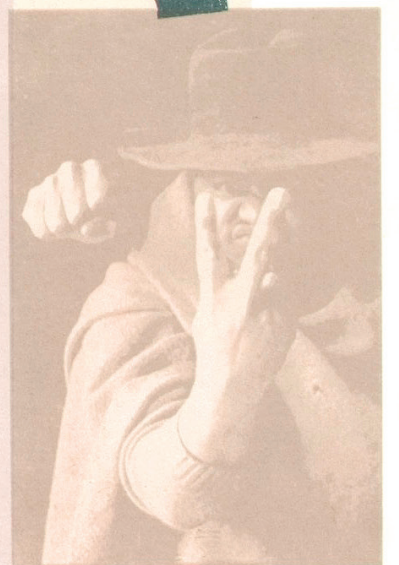
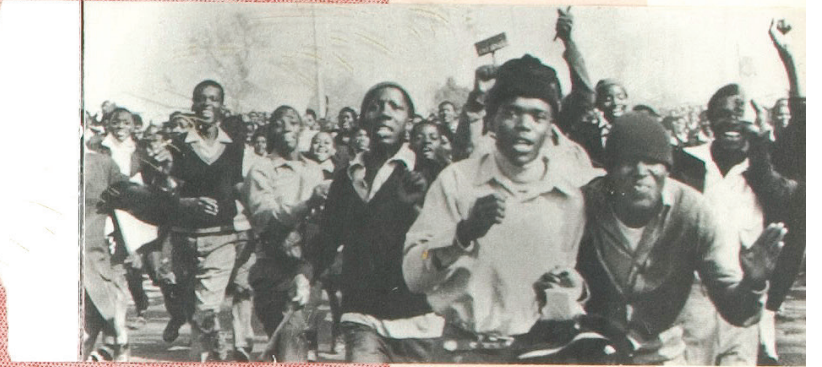


Gavin Jantjes, *A South African Colouring Book* (1981). Screen print on paper.
Courtesy of the artist.

SOWETO UPRISING

Freedom
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Gavin P. Jones

AFTER ORIENTALISM

By **FATIMA-ZAHRA LAKRISSA**
and **SALMA LAHLOU**



Mohammed Melehi, *Sans titre*, 1963. Acrylic on canvas, 153 x 127 cm.
Courtesy of the artist.

The Group of Casablanca pioneered innovative teaching and exhibiting strategies that rejected the Western academic legacy of easel painting, write **FATIMA-ZAHRA LAKRISSA** and **SALMA LAHLOU**

“Individual or collective practices for integrating artworks into public space sought the direct involvement of the public without any intellectual prerequisites.”

CASABLANCA MUNICIPAL SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS

Created in 1950 at the initiative of French Protectorate (1912–56) officials, the Casablanca Municipal School of Fine Arts constituted an active tool of colonial policy. At the school, the colonial authorities established a teaching system whose underlying approaches to cultural heritage aimed at preserving artisanal crafts. The focus of Moroccan students’ professional instruction was placed on applied arts: carpentry, architectural drafting, and other disciplines directly linked to useful skills for developing new towns and cities. As far as painting was concerned, Late Orientalism was the enforced academic model. The purpose of the new institution was to expose students to an iconography that was both attractive and reassuring for a country on the road to civilization – which the students were then to reproduce. In 1962, when the artist Farid Belkahia (1934–2014) was appointed director, Morocco had been independent for six years but the colonial vision had endured.

GROUP OF CASABLANCA

Beginning in 1964, Farid Belkahia assembled a teaching staff consisting of the artists Mohammed Chabâa (1935–2013) and Mohammed Melehi (b. 1936), the art historian and anthropologist Toni Maraini (b. 1941), and Bert Flint (b. 1931), a fervent researcher of popular arts and rural traditions. Their project of artistic and social reform was supported by a multidisciplinary educational program based on the complementary value of theoretical lessons and formal experimentation. The program emphasized studying and re-appropriating popular

and traditional artistic heritage as well as rehabilitating the figure of the artist-artisan in keeping with both the national artistic tradition and Bauhaus principles. This reform led to the inclusion of previously nonexistent content in the curriculum. In 1965, the program grew, adding its first course of art history directed by Toni Maraini along with painting and sculpture studios directed by Mohammed Melehi, who was also entrusted with a photographic research. In 1966, Mohammed Chabâa opened a graphic arts studio. Alongside their dedication at the school, that same year, Belkahia, Chabâa, and Melehi presented their recent work – complemented by Mariani’s writings – at a collective exhibition in Mohamed V Theater in Rabat. This exhibition marked the birth of the “Group of Casablanca.” Under Farid Belkahia’s leadership (1962–74), the Group of Casablanca developed a reputation for its innovative teaching that rejected the Western academic legacy of easel painting in favor of an abstract artistic vocabulary, an approach that subscribed neither to the formalist tradition nor indeed to any preexisting movement. The foundation of their pedagogy lay in the necessity of reformulating the revolutionary radicality of historical avant-gardes while remaining aware of the cultural and historical traditions of Morocco and its Berber, Arab-African, and Mediterranean components.

TRADITION

The policy of preserving craftsmanship pursued by the administration of the French Protectorate in Morocco was based on a selective identification of heritage – methods

of taking inventory of and categorizing traditional artistic practices – that had impoverished appreciation for these practices’ use and erased the social framework of collective memory contained within them. Opposing the notion of craftsmanship, which is anchored in concepts of indigenism and aboriginality, the Group of Casablanca advocated the use of a more concrete and less ambiguous term – popular arts, rural and urban – whose dynamism and innate expressive power they revealed in order to affirm their role in elaborating an artistic modernity that maintains its ties with the past. The term popular arts, rural and urban, designates a wide spectrum of artistic production – basketry, carpet weaving, textiles, and jewelry – produced by a set of manual skills that, by the mid-twentieth century, were disappearing. The magazine *Maghreb Art*, edited by the Group of Casablanca, Toni Maraini, and Bert Flint, devoted three editions highlighting their historical, aesthetic, and semantic foundations.

COLLECTIVE VISUAL EDUCATION

The rise of civic awareness and the emerging notion of public liberties after Moroccan independence had an impact on artists, their social function and their presence in the public sphere. The artist became the producer of a social and cultural project, in which art was expected to become a space of shared knowledge. This project was founded in a strategy of collective visual education that called for re-appropriating collective heritage by seeking suitable forms for conveying local artistic sensibilities and universal content,

assigning value to the functionalism of the national artistic tradition, and integrating art into architecture and public space. Hence, collective visual education aimed at emancipating viewers and encouraging their contribution in the democratization of culture.

ART AND PUBLIC SPACE

Individual or collective practices for integrating artworks into public space sought the direct involvement of the public without any intellectual prerequisites. These new practices signaled artists' presence on the street and attested to their desire to conquer a territory liberated from the norms of museums and the dictates of the art market, which still reflected the bourgeois taste for Late Orientalism. Public space was to become the analogue of modern artistic creation that would break with all exclusions, whether traditionalist, institutional, or commercial. Public space was claimed because it had the greatest reach, but also because it represented a territory of liberty. It made reference to two types of spacial entities: 1) A physical territory – a wall along a street – that became a site for inscribing interventionist practices. The most memorable act remains the “manifest exhibition” of 1969 in Jamaâ El-Fna Square in Marrakesh, which was followed by another event organized in 16 November Square in Casablanca. 2) A symbolic territory – editorial space – which is a territory of action and discourse where artists can assert their theoretical, artistic, and political positions. From 1966 to 1971, the Group of Casablanca contributed with Abdellatif Laâbi, Mustapha Nissaboury, and Mohammed Khaïr-Eddine to the renewal of and the dialogue between literary and artistic practices in the left-wing cultural review *Souffles*.



Anonymous of Zemmour, Houddarane village, Middle Atlas, ca. 1940.

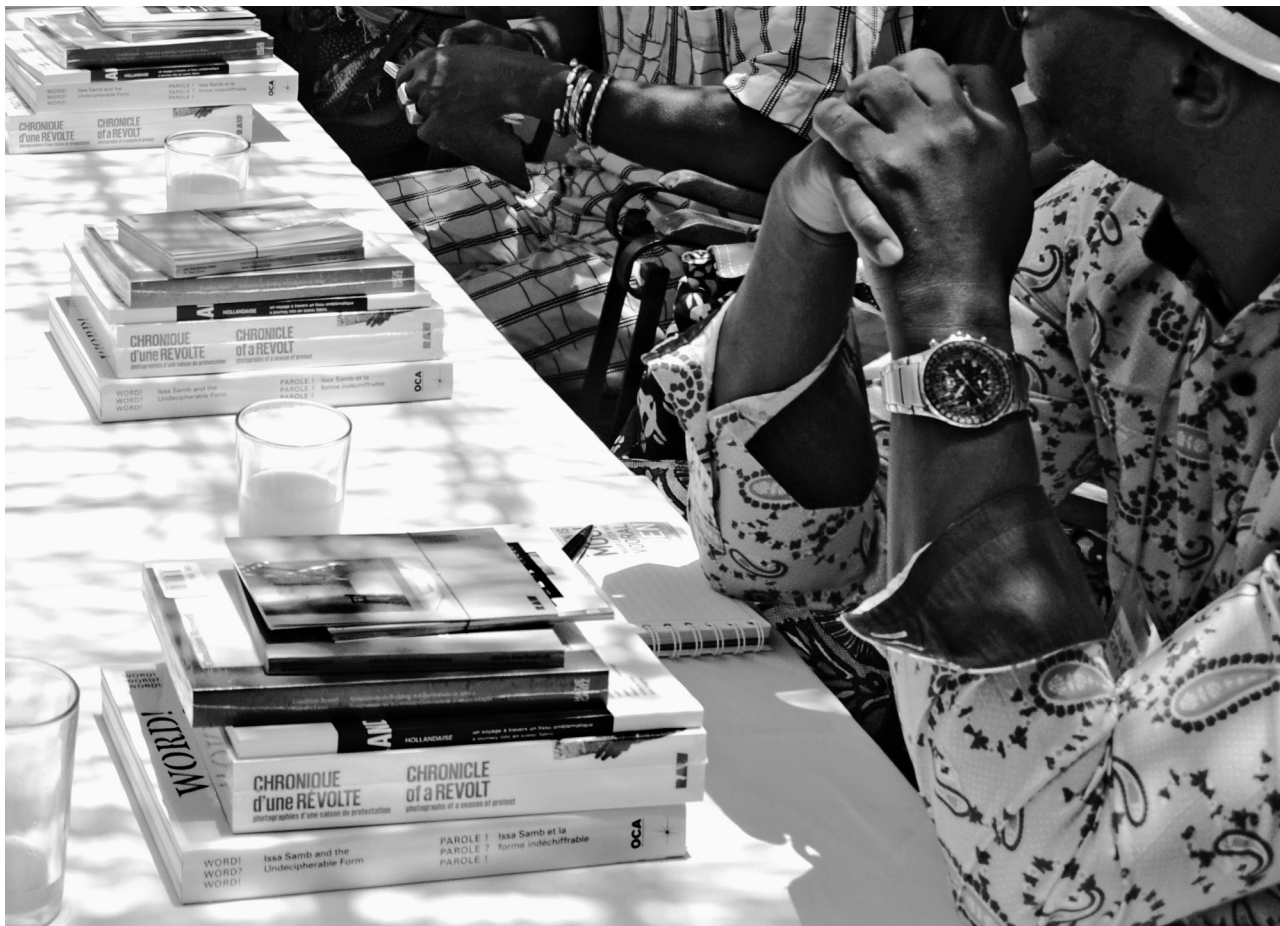
Hanbel rug in natural wool and cotton, 175 x 111 cm.

Courtesy of Collection Rabii Alouani Bibi.

ÀSÌKÒ DIARIES

By STEPHANIE BAPTIST

MIMI CHERONO NG'OK, VICTORIA UDONDIAN, and DANA WHABIRA talk about their participation in Àsìkò, a roving educational platform founded by Bisi Silva in 2010



Àsìkò Dakar participants at Raw Material Company, 2014, Dakar.

Photo by and courtesy of Erin Rice.

Àsìkò, an alternative art school, is the brainchild of **BISI SILVA**, the Founding Director of the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA, Lagos). Initiated as a curatorial and experimental platform, Àsìkò operated from 2010 to 2016 and bridged many gaps found in art educational programs across the continent. With Lagos as its home base, the program traveled to Accra, Dakar, Maputo, and Addis Ababa and invited lecturers from around the world to critically engage with emerging curators, artists, and cultural producers from the continent. In speaking with three artists about their Àsìkò experience, we recognize the importance of the program's discourse and legacy.



above and below Participants of Àsìkò Art School 2014.
Courtesy of Erin Rice.

Mimi Cheron Ng'ok is a visual artist based in Nairobi and works predominantly in photography. She was a participant in *Àsikò Accra 2013 – The Archive: Static, Embodied, Practiced* and a facilitator of *Àsikò Maputo 2015 – A History of Contemporary Art Mozambique*. **Victoria Udondian** is an interdisciplinary artist from Nigeria who trained as a tailor and fashion designer and has recently received an MFA in Sculpture. Udondian was a participant in *Àsikò Accra 2013*. Lastly, **Dana Whabira** is a research-based spatial artist with a background in architecture who participated in *Àsikò Dakar 2014 – A History of Contemporary Art in Senegal* and is now representing Zimbabwe at the 57th Venice Biennale.

STEPHANIE BAPTIST What was it like to interact and learn with the same group of individuals over five weeks?

VICTORIA UDONDIAN *Àsikò* was challenging and interesting. It was an intense five-week program and a rare opportunity to be among peers from different parts of the continent. The pedagogical model of the program was also a way to familiarize ourselves with what graduate school would be like, especially given some of the seminar sessions and texts we were engaging with. I didn't read a lot of this material in my undergraduate studies in Nigeria. It was great to have so much discourse in contemporary art practices on global and individual scales. Most artists came from different stages of their careers so it was fascinating to be with those people. Everyone was going through a mutual learning process, and all these different experiences being brought to the table were invaluable for me. The facilitators also had different backgrounds, which was very illuminating. We had a seminar on the archive from facilitators from different parts of the world, who were engaging and critical on many levels. This was also beneficial, beyond being amongst my peers.

MIMI CHERONO NG'OK It was interesting. I think I learned the most when I was in Accra. There were certain things I took for granted. Because of art school, I had already experienced the format for readings that facilitators utilized. In Accra, I got to understand that not everyone felt comfortable reading texts as part of visual discourse and speaking about them. One of my roommates started a reading group for all of us to discuss the assigned texts before going to seminars. It helped me understand other people's perspectives better and realize that not everyone started with the same references as me or was as comfortable engaging. I made so many valuable friendships in those five weeks. It was intensive and challenging, but worth it.

DANA WHABIRA At *Àsikò*, we got to meet and work with artists based in countries all over the continent. I see *Àsikò* as a Pan-Africanist concept in this sense, and I got to experience firsthand the program's ability to close any physical, geographical, and intellectual distances between us. Naturally, there were many similarities and differences between us as individuals, but I was also able to learn from them. The ties between myself and many of the individuals that I met at *Àsikò* go beyond just the five weeks of the program; the conversations have extended and developed into future projects. The human connection is often overlooked when assessing educational courses and networks. I find that I made lifelong friendships at *Àsikò*. I was fortunate to meet Igo Diarra, Director of Galerie Medina in Bamako, who invited Njelele Art Station to cooperate on the Symposium d'Art au Mali (SAM), which took place as part of

the Recontres Bamako 2015 program. That forged a collaborative working partnership between these two spaces. Language was quite a challenge in Dakar. Igo became pivotal not only in connecting us as arts professionals but also in assisting with our navigation of the city and its rich cultural heritage.

SB Mimi, can you tell me a bit about your experience as a resident in 2013 and then as a facilitator in 2015?

MCN I felt that being a participant was easier. There is more emotional labor involved as a facilitator. When you show facilitators your work, it is a lot for them to interact and engage. It is intensive, as you're doing it for ten to twelve people. I appreciate what facilitators bring to the process. As a participant, I was able to focus on myself. As a facilitator, my role was much bigger than my own work, as I had to meet residents where they were. I was interacting critically with other people who were just learning and didn't yet have the language to present their work. I learned a lot from other facilitators in the program how to do this. In art school, I had very hard critiques, so I thought that is how it should be. You have so many critiques that you get used to the methodology and you learn how to respond and discuss. However, interacting with fellow facilitators Nontsikelelo Mutiti and Zoe Whitley, who each took different approaches, taught me how to be the type of facilitator who meets people halfway and allows them to find their own way of interacting with texts and engaging with the public. What I loved most was the access Bisi gave to people you don't normally get to meet. It was great to meet artists in a local context, as well as artists like Leo Asemota, which was incredible. This impacted me very deeply.

SB Dana, you run Njelele Art Station, an urban art laboratory in Harare. What are your thoughts on artistic education in Zimbabwe?

DW This is an exciting time for the Zimbabwean art scene with the global spotlight on many of our incredible artists, many of whom were trained or educated locally. It was recently announced that art will form a critical component of the new national school curriculum. Currently, there are quite a few tertiary institutions involved in arts education. In addition, there are numerous small independent spaces that generate alternative forms of knowledge production, such as Njelele Art Station. Furthermore, there is the Zimbabwe Association of Art Critics (ZAAC), which has made a significant contribution. We must not forget, however, that in art, there is a predisposition among artists to educate themselves, to further develop their own creative skills, to unlearn much of what they have picked up in educational institutions, and to bend and break every rule in the creative's handbook.

SB How can artistic residencies like *Àsikò* help African artists advance in the art world?

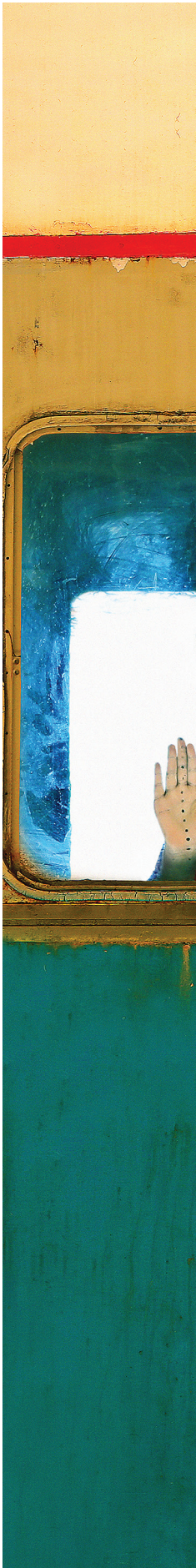
VU Nigeria and perhaps other African countries still need to reevaluate antiquated traditional modes of teaching art, which emphasize skill development with limited pedagogy on implementing a conceptual framework. Programs like *Àsikò* create alternative platforms that attempt to fill in these gaps, consequently helping young artists in Africa find their niches while developing their intellectual depths.

LEARNING FROM ADDIS ABABA

By BRENDAN WATTENBERG

The Addis Foto Fest is a forum connecting African photographers. Ethiopian photographer **AIDA MULUNEH** chats with **BRENDAN WATTENBERG** about her early mentors, and how education plays a central role in the photo festival she founded

When **AIDA MULUNEH** started the *Addis Foto Fest* in 2010, she had a vision. “I didn’t want to do an ‘African’ festival,” she told me earlier this year. “The important thing is cultural exchange through images.” Born in Ethiopia, Muluneh was raised in Yemen and Canada. She attended Howard University in Washington, DC, worked as a photojournalist for the *Washington Post*, and pursued fine art photography. Back in Addis she established the arts consulting firm DESTA for Africa (DFA) to support the festival and initiated ambitious educational workshops for local photographers. Her festival has a considerable international scope. In 2016, it welcomed 126 photographers from forty countries and urged all of them to seek or provide mentorship and to find new audiences for their work.





Aida Muluneh, *Departure*, 2016.
Courtesy of the artist and David Krut Projects.

BRENDAN WATTENBERG Education is integral to your work in Ethiopia with DFA and the Addis Foto Fest. You've said that your own photographic education began when you were a teenager. What were the experiences that made you want to learn about photography?

AIDA MULUNEH In high school, in Calgary, we had an art department and a darkroom that no one was really using. A group of us, I think four students, asked if we could use it. When I saw my first print, I became obsessed with that.

BW Do you remember the picture?

AM Of course. It was a blooming flower! In black and white.

BW Did you do a history of photography course in high school?

AM We didn't do any of that. Basically, we learned how to use a camera, and then we'd go out and shoot. The idea was just to get the feel of the darkroom process. But I don't think our teacher realized the impact it would have and the gift he gave me of seeing an image come to life on paper.

BW At the time, were you looking at newsmagazines or photo books?

AM My mother used to buy me different kinds of books and publications, so photos were something I was always interested in. When I realized the process of printing a photo, that's when it all came together. I did shoot here and there, but I didn't take things too seriously until I saw Chester Higgins Jr.'s photographs at Howard.

I've always been interested in black-and-white photography. When I was in the States, I used to go to bookstores and look at books by photographers like Richard Avedon. But it was seeing Chester's book, the caliber of his work, and eventually meeting him, that made a difference for me. Gordon Parks also played a role. He was not only a photographer. He was a Renaissance man.

BW Did you discover Chester Higgins Jr. on your own or through a professor?

AM On my own. I remember I was in the library, and there was one book of his, *Feeling the Spirit* (1994). My whole thing, ever since I picked up a camera, has been trying to address misrepresentation. And here was a photographer who addressed that beautifully in a collection of images.

BW When you were studying at Howard, and later when you were working as a photojournalist, were you ever a collector of photo books?

AM At that time, I couldn't afford many of the books. So most of my time was spent between the library and the bookstore. In the bookstore, you obviously don't see a lot on Africa – outside of anthropological or *National Geographic* kinds of sentiments. That's why Chester's book spoke to me: he photographed across Africa, and he has done extensive work in Ethiopia. Otherwise, my mentors are predominantly African American photographers.

BW Such as?

AM Dudley Brooks was a longtime mentor. He played a big role in my journalistic life – he's the one who got me a job at the Washington Post. I have a great deal of admiration for Stanley Greene and his way of working. And there was a commercial photographer named Harley Little, who I interned with from 1996–98 in Washington, DC.

BW You participated in the Bamako Biennale in 2007, and that's when you had the idea to start the Addis Foto Fest. Was education part of your concept for the festival from the beginning?

AM Yes, of course. The festival is not just for photographers; it's for the general public to learn about photography in its different forms. A lot of my educational sentiments come from the mentors that I've had, who have gone out of their way to teach me. So I thought it was only right that I teach others what I've learned so far.

BW When you started AFF, what kind of educational opportunities were available for photographers in Addis?

AM I returned to Addis in 2007. I started giving small workshops in Addis Ababa University School of Fine Art and Design because I realized that there were a lot of young people who wanted to learn photography, who were passionate about it, but they weren't able to learn it in a proper way. For example, there are two commercial schools here, but all they're teaching is wedding and studio photography. Nothing against that – it earns you money – but one of the things that we teach students is that it's their responsibility to be the witnesses of the changing face of Ethiopia. They have to engage with it, and share their perspectives with the world. It's not just about the commercial benefits. Most of the good photographers in Addis have come through our system in one form or another. We're the first ones in that sense to open their minds. With photography, it's not just the technical; it's showing them how to tell a story that they feel passionate about.

BW How do you teach at DFA, besides the technical aspect?

AM A lot of our teaching is pulling images from online, putting together presentations. I want students to look at photographers from the continent. It's not just about European or American photographers; they first have to learn who's here on the ground and to see what other countries are producing. Often when I go to different festivals, I take photos of the exhibitions, and I introduce these in the presentation. And then the students are able to follow the photographers on Instagram and create networks.

BW One of the other initiatives with DFA is to bring in photographers for master classes.

AM Exactly. There's a Kenyan studio photographer named Osborne Macharia who we've invited to Addis twice. When he came to speak about lighting, basically the whole landscape of photography here changed, just from those four days of classes. I follow a lot of the students on social media, and I see how their work changes.

BW Looking ahead to the next edition of Addis Foto Fest, in 2018, how do you see education shaping your activities in the off year?



Abdo Shanan, *Untitled (Algiers)*. From the series *Diary: Exile*, 2014–16.
Courtesy of the artist and Collective 220.



Sarah Waiswa, *Seeing But Not Seen*, 2016.
From the series *Stranger in a Familiar Land*.
Courtesy of the artist.

AM A lot of the education comes from having partnerships with photographers in Africa and those in other parts of the world who understand our long-term goals and objectives. We can only do the workshops when we have access to photographers who are willing to do it for free, or when we're able to find a budget. We're thinking about how we can build a school that will make financial sense so that we're not always dependent on outside funding for all our activities.

BW There's also an educational component with the portfolio reviews for young photographers and the Addis Foto Fest Award, which began last year.

AM We've had the portfolio reviews since 2010, so that's an integral part of the festival. Through the reviews, we're getting feedback from the global photography community on where exactly the photographers are. This is essential. The photographers here need to be able to compete globally.

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This article is part of a series produced in collaboration with *Aperture* magazine, coinciding with *Aperture*'s summer 2017 issue, "Platform Africa."

HOST PROTOCOL

SEPAKE ANGIAMA, Head of Education at documenta 14, and
ELKE AUS DEM MOORE, Head of the Visual Arts Department at the ifa – Institute for
International Cultural Relations talk about shifting educational approaches in art,
new curricula, and the conference Under the Mango Tree on these subjects.



**“Unlearning means considering forms of knowledge
that have been suppressed and excluded from the ‘canon’.”**

**UNDER THE MANGO TREE:
ULTERIOR SITES OF LEARNING**

The conference takes place
on 18 and 19 July 2017 at the
Kunsthochschule and other sites
in Kassel.

“Formal art education in the Western context is reaching its limits. Showcasing historical examples and especially current alternative strategies and methodologies can open up the process of rethinking art education in general.”

CONTEMPORARY AND (C&) For you, what is the key issue behind the theme “Learning from Athens”?

SEPAKA ANGIAMA “Learning from Athens” was never meant literally. In geographical terms, it initially refers to the center’s “willful estrangement” from a location that is considered on the edge of Europe but is almost a central connection between Europe and other geographies, between Europe and its shared histories with the Middle East and Africa. The magazine hosting documenta 14, *South as a State of Mind*, also points to a way of thinking or an attitude that is not dialectically opposed to the North but creates another position from which to speak.

ELKE AUS DEM MOORE To me “Learning from Athens” echoed the ideas of “solidarity” and “learning from crisis.” Evolution would be inconceivable without crisis. And crisis allows and affords another manner of thinking, an alternative way of doing, acting, and learning. We are in the midst of a crisis of the Western model of universalism, and the known and formal models of knowledge production and educational systems are showing their limitations and exclusions. Many artists are launching initiatives that question and problematize this hierarchy and the homogenization of educational systems, in their place creating new forms of collective learning.

C& Discussion of learning is commonplace these days, but we also hear about unlearning in current debates around the decolonization of education. Some even say that the word “learning” itself is no longer appropriate. What is your perspective? And what does the “decolonization” of education mean to you?

SA Yes, there has been a lot of debate about learning and of course unlearning. For example, we decided to call documenta 14’s education department “aneducation.” The prefix “an-” refers to undoing something. Learning for me is about shifting positions, being able to see something from another point of view. Learning is also about recognizing how you give form to knowledge and how you connect to it, recognizing narratives other than the ones you have received. Why, for example, was I taught at school about Ancient Greek civilization but not about the Kingdom of Benin? Our systems and institutions of education reinforce forms of knowledge considered

“established,” which creates social systems of oppression. Learning in this way is also then about unlearning. About challenging what is labeled as “known” and deepening our complexity of understanding to form altering perspectives. Unlearning means considering forms of knowledge that have been suppressed and excluded from the “canon.” In order to decolonize education, you have to recognize that education has been colonized. Again, this is in relation to systems of knowledge, and the recognition of what can be considered valuable knowledge. It is much more than inserting a perspective or conducting research to add elements that were not previously included. The process of colonizing education was a violent and brutal obliteration of indigenous cultures, traditions, and language. The process of decolonization will bear the fruits of a painful process of recognition, repatriation, and reconciliation. But first it requires acceptance and acknowledgement of wrongdoing.

EADM On the one hand, decolonizing education means rethinking and speaking about learning structures, power systems, and hierarchies. Who is allowed to teach and what knowledge is being taught? On the other hand, the term reflects the urgent need to develop new curricula. The new program at the ifa gallery focuses on questions of coloniality. One of our aims is to bring awareness to the fact that the history of German colonialism is rarely found in German school textbooks. The ifa therefore plans to cooperate with schools to write an alternative curriculum on the subject. The seminar we host is devoted to the study of schoolbooks and school materials with regard to their pervasive social, temporal, and political natures. The main questions this research will address are these: What visual and linguistic policies prevail when and in which contexts? How we can learn to recognize the colonial, racializing, or segregational aspects of representations? Indigenous perspectives need to be acknowledged in formal education systems as well. To that end, new curricula must be created that value this knowledge and offer multifaceted and layered narratives, alongside alternative ways of collaborative teaching and learning that break with traditional structures.

C& You are both spearheading the conference Under the Mango Tree, initiated by ifa and documenta 14. What are your aims for the conference?

SA We recognized that there was a general lack in our understanding of alternative forms of education. We placed a specific emphasis on the Global South but also indigenous practices, which have been developing discourses through building up structures outside of the academy or formal art schools. Many of the schools are artist-led and we wanted to understand why they were established, how they sustain themselves, and what could be shared or learned from their experiences.

EADM Formal art education in the Western context is reaching its limits. Showcasing historical examples and especially current alternative strategies and methodologies can open up the process of rethinking art education in general. With the conference, we are creating a space of mutual dialogue and learning. We aim to open a space for collective imaginaries and reverie.

C& Where does the title of the conference come from?

EADM The motto of our conference is a quote by Paulo Freire from his book *Pedagogy of the Heart*: “To come under the shade of this mango tree with such deliberateness and to experience the fulfillment of solitude emphasize my need for communion. While I am physically alone proves that I understand the essentiality of to be with.” We are also referring to the mango tree’s seductive smell. The mango tree is a site of learning that allows us to activate all our senses for learning from and with each other.

SA Also, Adam Szymczyk took a research trip to Santiniketan, India. He shared some photographs of gathering spaces. Small low stumps in a circle directly under the mango tree with one, slightly taller, stump for the teacher to sit on. This got me thinking about forms of education outside of the formal structures of a classroom. Since then, whenever we mention the title, someone always wants to send us a photograph. Elke even took a photo in Bahia of a gathering space made by Lina Bo Bardi that is also in the shade of a mango tree.

C& Can you give us one or two examples of “educational” systems, collectives, or other structures that have figured out new forms of knowledge production?

SA When people think of alternative forms of art schools, Black Mountain College is always mentioned as an example of a model that arose after the dissolution of the Bauhaus. People also mention the controversy around Rollins College, where a number of tutors and professors left Rollins College and decided to form a new school. However, there are a number of contemporary models, which I felt also needed to be addressed.

EADM One initiative we’ve worked with is KUNCI, a collective from Yogyakarta, founded in 1999. They are dedicated to critical knowledge production and sharing through different media, encounters, artistic interventions, and vernacular education within and across community spaces. They recently started the School of Improper Education and initiated a new school as “a garden of ideas, a laboratory of affects, and a space where new ideas clash and coalesce.”

C& In your opinions, how can art institutions and events contribute sustainably to new systems of knowledge production?

SA This is a difficult question to answer. Large-scale projects like documenta are of course opportunities to create a platform where practices can find a confluence but also divergence of thinking. I recognize their power to transmit ideas that might ricochet and create new forms of knowledge that can resonate beyond the site of learning.

EADM This is indeed a difficult question but also the most urgent one of our time. I think there is so much potential in artistic research, in the discourses within art contexts. And yet, although we have fantastic initiatives in Germany, we still lack ways to carry over this kind of knowledge to the formal educational sector. There’s also a lack of transcultural education, which can activate different perspectives as potential sources of progress. With our conference, we plan to bring people together and create new networks on this subject. We hope to plant seeds of inspiration.

DEPARTMENT OF NOW

The teaching methods at Ghana's
KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
have cultivated a new generation of innovative artists



School of Engineering at KNUST (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology),
Kumasi (Ghana), built in 1956. Photo: James Cubitt. Courtesy of Alexia Webster.

C& spoke with the curatorial team of the Department of Painting and Sculpture at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) about the development of their institution and art teaching in Ghana. The team includes artistic directors **KARİ'KACHÄ SEID'OU**, **KWAKU BOAFO KISSIEDU**, and **GEORGE AMPRATWUM**, and curators **ROBIN RISKIN**, **SELOM KUDJIE**, **PATRICK OKANTA ANKRAH**, **MAVIS TETTEH-OCLOO**. This interview was conducted in July/August 2015 on the occasion of the multifaceted exhibition *the Gown must go to Town...*, reflecting KNUST's own history. Since then, the department has held *Cornfields* in Accra (June – August 2016), an expansive exhibition of 80 artists which took its theme from Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo's poem.



Emmanuel Opoku Manu, *Fantasy Town* (detail).
Photo: Derrick Owusu Bempah. Courtesy of KNUST.

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CONTEMPORARY AND (C&) When and how was your department founded?

KNUST TEAM KNUST was established in 1961, succeeding the colonial Kumasi College of Technology, which was set up in 1952. However, the College of Art has a longer history than KNUST itself. It began in colonial Gold Coast as a small art department in Achimota (Prince of Wales) College in Accra in the period between the two World Wars where Kwame Nkrumah, who was later to become the first president of Ghana, was among the students of the first art master, G. A. Stevens.¹ Before Stevens, there was a vocationalist curriculum called “Hand and Eye Work”, which was introduced around 1909. It was an outgrowth of Scandinavian *Slöjd*, the German *Gewerbeschule*, and the Somerset House-South Kensington drawing-by-rote system of the Victorian era. Stevens, inspired by his mentor Roger Fry, had repudiated it in no uncertain terms. Stevens and Meyerowitz were among the most influential art teachers in late-colonial Achimota. The Meyerowitz School’s Malinowski-inspired instruction and art practice were instructive in fostering national pride in students like Kofi Antubam, E. V. Asihene, and J. C. Okyere, who became influential artists and teachers in the early post-independence era. Meyerowitz’s instigation was key to the “creative anachronism” which became an important feature of the official art of Ghana nationalists and of Nkrumah’s African Personality regime. However, in its depoliticized and commodified form in the neo-liberal 1980s and 1990s, this feature became a placeholder for a new hegemony of touristy paintings, sculptures, and artifacts in Ghanaian art schools and galleries. By the turn of the century, the *South meets West* exhibition in the Accra Museum had exposed the Kumasi College of Art as unprepared for the critical issues raised in contemporary art communities.

C& And what are the developments in the department today? What do you envision to help shape the contemporary Ghanaian art scene?

KT The College of Art at KNUST saw a small revolution in 1996. Students like Kwamivi Zewuze Adzraku, Papa Essel, qarĩ’kachā seid’ou, and Caterina Niklaus tested the boundaries of art practice and exhibition making, with works that at the time confronted the department’s official notions of what art could be – unannounced performances, silent happenings, textual paintings, poetic bricolage, exhibitions on trees, publicly posted political cartoons, etc. After this class graduated, a lapse, or silence, settled in, and radical ideas were quickly censored or tamed.

On his appointment as faculty of KNUST in 2003, the artist qarĩ’kachā seid’ou inaugurated an interventionist teaching project that he called *Emancipatory Art Teaching*, which had this component of a Foucault-inspired archaeology of the city. Each student had to curate his or her own show in a guerrilla-type end-of-year project. Exhibitions were held in uncompleted buildings, tro-tro cars, chop bars, hair salons, workshops and garages, hotels, physical and virtual social networks, markets and shops, on public bridges and streets. The innovations which have resulted from this intervention in more recent years can be understood as resurrections of the unrealized revolutions of the pioneer MFA class of 1996 and their kindred spirits. In the mid-2000s, qarĩ’kachā seid’ou found congenial collaborators among the younger faculty; namely, Kwaku Boafo Kissiedu (Castro) and George Ampratwum (Buma). With this team of collaborators,

he set up a loose network of artists and art professionals practicing outside the continent.

In order to sustain such an ethos of radical experimentation and transform them into long-term practice and collective movement,² we believe that the contemporary Ghanaian art scene needs a stronger infrastructure. This is why we’ve started blaxTARLINES KUMASI, a new project space for contemporary art. We aim to build upon and open up avenues for artistic and critical exploration, while probing and deepening modes and bases of knowledge.

C& How do you engage with the students? To which extent are they encouraged to experiment with different media?

KT Indeed the tag “Department of Painting and Sculpture” is a misnomer. As the exhibition *the Gown must go to Town...* shows, our BFA students have been experimenting with photography and video, digital art and new media, performance, sound, and smell. Most importantly, they are attuned and sensitive to the materials and spaces of the environments that inform their work. Experiments tested in the city of Kumasi oftentimes develop into deeper projects, and have been a great force in pushing students to make critical decisions on aspects of material, space, display, and exhibition-making.

C& There seem to be strong ties between alumni students – like the artist Ibrahim Mahama – and KNUST. How would you describe the relationship with your alumni? And what kind of support system do you provide for graduating students?

KT Our doors are always open to our past students, and many of them frequently come by the college to visit, chat on the notorious MFA block steps, or sit in on qarĩ’kachā seid’ou’s legendary lectures. Every year, we are able to keep a few of our promising BFA graduates as teaching assistants (TAs). The new MFA course in curating has opened up avenues toward ongoing dialogue with current and past students. We also keep connected through the annual OfKob Residency, started in 2013. In our exhibitions this year – both *the Gown must go to Town...* in Accra and *Silence between the Lines* in Kumasi – we made a point of including alumni at different stages in their practice: final-years, TAs, and 2014 graduates alongside lecturers and internationally established artists.³

C& Tell us a bit more about the end-of-the-year exhibition *the Gown must go to Town...* that was shown in 2015.

KT Holding the exhibition at the Museum of Science and Technology in Accra provided us with an entryway to re-open past and present questions – in a monumental building launched under Kwame Nkrumah’s presidency but still under construction fifty years later. We made use of all these in-between spaces and corners in our curatorial tactics – sounds emanating from rafters, cloths overhanging exposed wooden beams, bicycle wheels tucked inside ceiling joints. And so *the Gown must go to Town...* may be a birth of many beginnings, or it could be a return – to new turns led by past generations of KNUST artists and students whose work is silently present in these resurrected revolutions. Its spirit can be understood through qarĩ’kachā seid’ou’s re-conceptualization of the Ghanaian Sank fa legend (meaning “go back for it”) at *Silence between the Lines*: instead of a mythical bird who

returns to a nostalgic idea of a forgotten past, rather a looking back toward “futures yet to come.”

C& What do you think of decolonial pedagogy and alternative forms of knowledge production and participation?

KT As we’ve recounted, for decades the curriculum in the College of Art was premised on decontextualized and unexamined assumptions, some of which date back to the British “hand and eye” training on the Gold Coast.⁴ We try as much as possible not to flog dead horses. In recent years, we have had to reinvent our modes of learning and frames of reference, in order to stay in tune with radical shifts and transformations in discourses of art and knowledge. The question is not so much whether our pedagogy is decolonial or alternative, but how to get students to critically think and grow.

C& To which extent does Kwame Nkrumah’s philosophy come into play in the curriculum and your activities?

KT Kwame Nkrumah’s concepts on African modernity certainly come into play in some of our curriculum’s modules and activities. But Nkrumah was a man of his time, so some of his ideas will definitely not work today. However, events of the 21st century demonstrate to which extent he was on point in affirming his absolute commitment to modernity, to the struggle against the privatization of commons, to international liberation struggles, to the Non-Aligned Movement, and to the possibility of authentic revolutions in the face of a capitalist status quo. His concept of philosophical consciencism is a transcendental materialist philosophy which attempts a dialectical synthesis of pre-technical African humanist principles on the one hand and modern innovations on the other. He grounds this in Kant’s axioms of universal freedom and the “public use of reason,” which together form a theoretical underpinning for *the Gown must go to Town....*



—
1

In the early 1920s, George A. Stevens was a student of Slade Professor Henry Tonks, the English post-Impressionist artist. His art department in Achimota is, arguably, the oldest in sub-Saharan Africa. Stevens mentored a number of colonial teachers in Africa. They include Kenneth Murray of Nigeria, Margaret Trowell of Makerere, Uganda, and H. V. Meyerowitz.

2

See Walter Benjamin’s “The Author as Producer.” See also Okwui Enwezor’s productivist and Benjaminian thesis in his “The Artist as Producer in times of Crisis,” in which he argues for a collectivist imaginary which, when actualized, disrupts and transforms “traditional mechanisms and activities of artistic production.”

3

Alumni often find themselves working together on exhibitions. For instance, Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Jeremiah Quarshie, and Dorothy Amenuke exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum’s 2012 exhibition *Time, Trade & Travel*, and Ibrahim Mahama and Akoi-Jackson are showing at the upcoming exhibition *Material Effects* at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum in Michigan this November.

4

seid’ou, qarí’kächä. (2006). *Theoretical Foundations of the KNUST Painting Programme: A Philosophical Inquiry and its Contextual Relevance in Ghanaian Culture* [Ph.D. Thesis]. Kumasi: Department of General Art Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.

SOULEYMANE BACHIR DIAGNE

TRUMP TROUBLES



Senegalese philosopher **SOULEYMANE BACHIR DIAGNE** chats with C& about post-Trump America and Africa after Pan-Africanism

Souleymane Bachir Diagne, 2013.

© Antoine Tempé.

“For years, textbooks have taught that philosophy began in Greece with the Greek Miracle, moved to [Roman] Antiquity, to Medieval writers in Latin, and then into the modern and contemporary era.”

SOULEYMANE BACHIR DIAGNE

CONTEMPORARY AND (C&) When in your life did you develop your interest in philosophy? Did you have philosophical influences as a child?

SOULEYMANE BACHIR DIAGNE Philosophy has always been there. When I was growing up, my father was a civil servant, an inspector, by profession but his real life was as a theologian. He had an education in the humanities and theology. So I grew up with him and his books. But the decision to pursue philosophy came fairly late. Throughout school, I planned to be an engineer. I was in the scientific track at Lycée CJC. Until my senior year of high school, I saw myself becoming an engineer. I was admitted to the *classes préparatoires* [Higher School Preparatory Classes] in France for the *Grandes Écoles* [elite universities] in humanities and philosophy, but I was also accepted to engineering school at the National Institute of Applied Sciences of Lyon. I opted for the preparatory classes and therefore philosophy. And sure enough, I found myself!

C& Living in New York as a Professor of French Studies at Columbia University, how do you view Donald Trump's rise to power and what has unfolded in recent months, especially in regard to immigration laws?

SBD Like everyone, this election came as a huge surprise to me, essentially as I saw what's known as populism, nationalism, developing around the world. Here we have the election of President Trump, but there are similar movements taking shape in Europe. However, in terms of New York City and state overall, the Democratic Party is in power. The situation you describe doesn't affect me personally in my own life, but I do have responsibility for the Senegalese community living here. For example, I'm president of DECENA [Délégation extérieure de la commission électorale nationale autonome], which supervises [Senegalese] elections in the US, so I see many people from the community. The community is very troubled by the measures that have been taken. The press has reported widely on the recent deportation of fellow Senegalese citizens.

C& I recently watched the film *Kemtiyu: Cheikh Anta*, directed by Ousmane William Mbaye. If you've seen it, what do you think about the film and the thinker Cheikh Anta Diop's vision of pan-African emancipation?

SBD Yes, the film is one way of presenting the life of Cheikh Anta Diop through the power of images. It brings back Pan-Africanism. It's true that we've lost sight a bit of that pan-African generosity that should be the engine of our continent's development. Obviously, the vision of Pan-Africanism has evolved. We are in a different era from when Cheikh Anta Diop was advocating Pan-Africanism. So it's essential that we adapt things to the new reality we inhabit. I was just talking about the Senegalese elections we organize here. The ID card for ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] is a good start. That's a measure with a lot of symbolic power. It shows that, despite everything, West African citizenship is on its way. The torch of Pan-Africanism needs to be taken up again. And that film comes as a reminder of that.

C& In October 2016, you participated in Ateliers de la pensée (Thinking Workshops), a project initiated by Achille Mbembe and Felwine Sarr. What are your thoughts on this intellectual and cultural exchange project?

SBD That's precisely in line with what we were just talking about with Pan-Africanism, essentially proposing a reflection on the future of Africa. Which is what we set out to do with those Ateliers de la pensée, organized in Dakar and Saint-Louis [in Senegal]. Right now, the idea is to repeat this exercise, to make it into an annual meeting assembling a number of African intellectuals who will try to think collectively at workshops alternating with events with the broader public. The idea is to create a synergy, to foster communal reflection.

C& Is the initiative very Francophone? How would it compare, for example, to other models from Anglophone perspectives? Do you see parallels or contradictions?

SBD By necessity, the meeting was among French-speakers. Nevertheless, there is no reason it needs to remain Francophone in the future. The workshop's mission is to expand and embrace plenty of people and perspectives. For example, CODESRIA, headquartered in Dakar, is the pan-African body devoted to social science research on the continent. And it's offering a space for expanding the workshop to Anglophone and Lusophone people.

C& Right now, the notion of decolonizing thought and body is widely discussed. How do you see that as applied to philosophy? How can it be decolonized?

SBD First and foremost, we have to decolonize the history of philosophy. For years, textbooks have taught that philosophy began in Greece with the Greek Miracle, moved to [Roman] Antiquity, to Medieval writers in Latin, and then into the modern and contemporary era. This made philosophy into something uniquely and strictly European. To decolonize the history of philosophy, we must restore complexity to that history. Ultimately, the transmission of philosophical knowledge was not strictly linear or unilateral from Athens to Rome and from Rome to the Latin, Christian West. The story of philosophy is also the passage of Greek philosophy and knowledge to Baghdad, to Fez, to Timbuktu, etc. Greek science and philosophy took many roundabout journeys and detours that need to be explained. Philosophy today is plural in people's thinking around the world.

C& What are your thoughts about contemporary art coming from African perspectives? Can you name an example of artistic practices that you see as relevant?

SBD I find the approach of Kader Attia, for instance, very inspiring. His work, which is both global and centered on Africa, raises questions that are not strictly African. In my view, that illustrates what art on our continent should be like today. Not self-contained and self-referential, but embracing global questions. In terms of artistic realization, Kader Attia's work is going in the same direction we're aiming for with Ateliers de la pensée.

AOJE

**CADRE DE PROMOTION POUR LA FORMATION
EN PHOTOGRAPHIE (CFP)**

**CENTRES OF LEARNING FOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN
AFRICA (CLPA)**

CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN ETHIOPIA (CPE)

CONTEMPORARY IMAGE COLLECTIVE (CIC)

DURBAN CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY (DCP)

ESPACE PHOTO PARTAGE EPP

MARKET PHOTO WORKSHOP (MPW)

MICHAELIS SCHOOL OF FINE ART

THE NLELE INSTITUTE

NUKU STUDIO

PHOTO:

Seventeen associations, collectives, schools and workshops
dedicated to photography from African perspectives

PHOTOGARAGE

SUDANESE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GROUP (SPG)

UGANDA PRESS PHOTO AWARD

WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS (WSOA)

**ZIMBABWE ASSOCIATION OF FEMALE
PHOTOGRAPHERS (ZAFP)**

AOJE

Cabo Verde

AOJE is a photography organization dedicated to the dissemination of photography in Cabo Verde as a means for cultural, artistic, and social development.

AOJE oversees the creation and organization of the Cabo Verde International Photography Festival (FIFCV) through an ambitious program focusing on the expectations of training and visibility offered to the local and international participant photographers. AOJE has also developed a series of workshops, artist residencies, and exhibitions, through having involved many photographers and artists in educational activities, with particular reference to the Catchupa Factory – New Photographers initiative.

CADRE DE PROMOTION POUR LA FORMATION EN PHOTOGRAPHIE (CFP)

Bamako, Mali

Cadre de Promotion pour la Formation en Photographie (Photography Training Center, CFP) trains young and professional photographers and promotes photography.

Located in Bamako, Mali, CFP is a two-year photography training program based on a new concept centered on conceptual and commercial photography. The objective of the course is to develop photographers who are able to live from their work by being integrated in the world photography market.

CENTRES OF LEARNING FOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN AFRICA (CLPA)

Bamako, Mali

Centres of Learning for Photography in Africa is a growing network of independent photography training structures.

Its aim is to promote and facilitate exchange, especially in the fields of curriculum development, teaching methods, and contemporary photography discourse. The CLPA collective consists of representatives from across the continent and the African Diaspora, including Egypt, Ethiopia, Mali, Senegal, Sudan, Nigeria, South Africa, and Germany. The Goethe-Institut's role as an incubator for CLPA entails providing financial, intellectual, and infrastructural support during the first project phase.

CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN ETHIOPIA (CPE)

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

CPE is dedicated to providing a learning and training platform for Ethiopian photographers through critical discussions and photography practice.

The organization aims to develop critical discussions and dialogues between Ethiopian photographers through different photography workshops and public community programs that will contribute to nurturing the photography industry in the country.

CONTEMPORARY IMAGE COLLECTIVE (CIC)

Cairo, Egypt

This Cairo-based contemporary art institution has a specific interest in contemporary image practices and related critical reflections, including a photography school.

It aims to raise awareness for contemporary art practices that address and actively engage in socially relevant topics and to make related materials and resources accessible to the public. Through long-term research projects and smaller-scale discursive events and educational activities such as workshops, exhibitions, screenings, discussions, and symposia, CIC creates a space for experimentation, knowledge exchange, showing and discussing works of art, artistic production, and discursive engagement.

DURBAN CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY (DCP)

Durban, South Africa

DCP serves as a space for photographic collective learning, where professional photographers mentor from behind their own work.

The center largely focuses on social documentary photography, placing priority on narrative development about and by citizens of the African continent. Contextualized by the lived realities of past and present South Africa, the DCP strongly emphasizes the pursuit of a new burgeoning Africanness, exploring its dynamism, re-shaping aesthetics, and informing self-reflection.

ESPACE PHOTO PARTAGE (EPP)

Bamako, Mali

EPP is a photography learning space that conducts workshops throughout the year where people can freely learn photography and share their knowledge.

EPP seeks to train Mali's younger photography generation by providing photography knowledge and techniques, depending on students' interest, with a tendency towards artistic and conceptual photography. The space organizes participatory training workshops where photographers meet to share their skills and experiences. Its objectives are to raise awareness and to teach and promote photography.

ABOUT THE LIST

This list comprises a carefully selected number of institutions and initiatives that offer photography education in African contexts. It was kindly provided to us by the platform Photo: – initiated by John Fleetwood, former head of the Market Photo Workshop in Johannesburg – based on its survey and interactive digital map for photography training and learning initiatives on the African continent. The map/survey, initially commissioned by the Goethe-Institut, South Africa, as part of the initiative, Centres of Learning for Photography in Africa, is an ongoing project. By presenting this list, we want to put the emphasis on two critical aspects: the significant role of informal education and the growing presence of photography learning practices. This mapping shows how these platforms have acted as leading channels of activity, exchange, dissemination, and mobility for photographers, practitioners, and scholars from African perspectives.

MARKET PHOTO WORKSHOP (MPW)

Johannesburg, South Africa

MPW is a photography school, gallery, and project space offering a range of courses in photography and visual literacy, as well as multi-layered projects.

The Advanced Program in Photography, the Photojournalism program, the Documentary Photography program, and the Photography Incubator program are all notable for developing critical and practical skills.

MICHAELIS SCHOOL OF FINE ART

Cape Town, South Africa

The Michaelis School of Fine Art is the Fine Arts department of the University of Cape Town.

Michaelis offers a mix of Fine Art study with courses in Studiowork, Foundation, Discourse of Art, Theory and Practice of Art, and a range of Humanities electives. Studiowork majors include Painting, Sculpture, Printmaking, Photography, and New Media, developing conceptual, critical, and creative thinking about contemporary art practice.

THE NLELE INSTITUTE

Lagos, Nigeria

The Nlele Institute is an eclectic model, comprising both an informal approach to learning and efforts towards a defined photography curriculum.

Its program is aimed developing young photographers through workshops and seminars. It also aims to cultivate diversity and provide versatile photography training. The Nlele is strongly motivated by the need to raise awareness of the lack of infrastructure, human resources, and financial means for developing and promoting photography training in Nigeria.

NUKU STUDIO

Accra, Ghana

Nuku Studio is a hybrid platform undertaking photography projects in Accra that support photographic research, conservation programs, and the development of photography in Ghana.

It offers a place of formality where photographers can learn, update their skills, and move towards artistic and commercial viability. It aims to offer project development and project support services through a broader educational program reaching children dealing with issues in the school system.

PHOTO:

Johannesburg, South Africa

Initiated by John Fleetwood, Photo: is a platform that develops photography projects around socially relevant and contemporary issues with a particular focus on South Africa, Africa at large, and emerging photographers.

Through longer-term, mentorship-based exhibitions and exchange projects, Photo: works with photographers from the region and continent to develop relevant new and existing bodies of work and build further critical and integrated skills. Project processes are based on collective support and field engagement towards knowledge exchange to elucidate current social and political concerns.

PHOTOGARAGE

Durban, South Africa

Photogage is an innovative experiential learning concept.

A part-time operation aiming to address the need to promote photography as a medium in South Africa by emphasizing training on visual literacy, the culture of photography, and significant past and contemporary photographers, Photogage imparts knowledge of photography through stimulating debates and creativity among students.

SUDANESE PHOTOGRAPHERS' GROUP (SPG)

Khartoum, Sudan

Sudanese Photographers' Group brings together photographers in Sudan who are interested in photography as a creative and critical practice.

The aim of the institution is to promote photography and to provide a photography platform in Sudan through capacity building for photographers, enabling them to think about subjects and situations critically before photographing them – and producing images that relate to the Sudanese context and reflect how Sudanese see their place in the world.

UGANDA PRESS PHOTO AWARD

Kampala, Uganda

The Uganda Press Photo Award is a platform for people interested in photography and seeking to record the visual history of Uganda.

It is foremost a competition, but during the year's program there is a greater focus on education. The award aims to promote the best of today's photojournalism in Uganda as well as encouraging a new generation of photographers. It also seeks to remind the viewing public of the importance of a vibrant press for democratic development.

WITS SCHOOL OF ARTS (WSOA), DIVISION OF FINE ARTS; UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND (WITS)

Johannesburg, South Africa

Wits School of Arts (WSOA) is vibrantly interdisciplinary, combining technical training in artistic production with high levels of conceptual and creative thinking.

The school seeks to engage in critical practice across various disciplines and media. By getting students to adopt a critical viewpoint towards socio-economic issues and towards their own projects, WSOA combines critical inquiry with artistic practice in ways that engage transformatively with our contemporary urban, African, and global contexts.

ZIMBABWE ASSOCIATION OF FEMALE PHOTOGRAPHERS (ZAFP)

Harare, Zimbabwe

The ZAFP is a platform and network for female photographers in Zimbabwe intended to encourage professional development among women photographers.

It helps woman photographers network, improve their skills, become more visible in the industry – and get jobs. By posting work opportunities, ZAFP alerts members to competitions and courses and gives advice on pricing, licensing issues, and any other matters that its members might be struggling with.

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