

# C&

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PLATFORM FOR INTERNATIONAL ART  
FROM AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES



## THE INTERVIEW ISSUE

AN ONLINE ART MAGAZINE  
PRINT EDITION NO. 5

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 Dineo Seshee Bopape  
 Meleko Mokgosi

in conversation with  
 Hansi Momodu-Gordon

**9 WEEKS**

**WE NEED TO TALK ...**

Welcome to our Interview Issue. On 48 pages, the 5th edition of our biannual print magazine reflects what we at **Contemporary And (C&)** do most of the time: discuss and connect – with artists, curators, critics, academics, directors, and cultural entrepreneurs.

In this issue, Brooklyn-based artist ruby onyinyechi amanze explains why she won't be making art about where she's from. Sean O'Toole meets the emerging South African curators Nomusa Makhubu, Nkule Mabaso, and Amy Watson to talk about the theory and practice of exhibition making. This year's curator of the 6th Marrakech Biennale, Reem Fadda, points out the necessity of solidarity and empowerment in a turbulent world. And Los Angeles-based Martine Syms tells us how Sol LeWitt's thoughts ("The idea becomes the machine that makes the art") influenced her practice.

Once again we look back, this time on a beautiful conversation between Yvette Mutumba, Ciraj Rassool,

and the legendary South African artist Peter Clarke, shortly before his death in 2014. And Senga Nengudi, one of the core members of the 1970s African-American avant-garde – which included artists such as David Hammons – remembers hanging out at happenings with Claes Oldenburg and Robert Rauschenberg.

So there are many ways to network and cultivate dialogue. With the 2016 Armory Show in New York coinciding with the launching of our print issue in March, we'll have the opportunity to elaborate on what it means to talk global. We are happy to curate the show's *Focus: African Perspectives*, which spotlights a broad range of young artists from African perspectives. Presenting them together for the first time, we intend to kick-start a busy, four-day conversation.

We would like to thank the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for generously supporting this print issue.

Ok, so let's start the conversation!

- Kapwani Kiwanga*  
**4 I AM NO LONGER A PURIST**  
 A conversation with the artist Kapwani Kiwanga about her diverse practice from video and installation to lecture-performance
- Lerato Bereng*  
**7 WHAT IS URGENT TO YOU?**  
 Morija, a town in western Lesotho, is the staging ground for an ongoing series of dialogues about art and culture organized by curator Lerato Bereng
- Martine Syms*  
**10 FIELD NOTES OF A CONCEPTUAL ENTREPRENEUR**  
 LA-based Martine Syms investigates the making and reception of meaning in contemporary America through publishing, video, and performance
- Dan Halter*  
**13 PATTERNS OF MIGRATION**  
 Cape Town-based Zimbabwean Dan Halter produces labor-intensive works using woven paper and fabric that comment on life in southern Africa
- ruby onyinyechi amanze*  
**16 VISIBILITY IS IMPORTANT, BUT SO IS INCLUSION**  
 New York-based ruby onyinyechi amanze was born in Nigeria. She says she is exactly where she's supposed to be and won't be making art about where she's from
- Senga Nengudi*  
**19 THERE WAS JUST THIS PARTICULAR ENERGY IN L.A. AT THE TIME**  
 American artist Senga Nengudi, born 1943, is regarded as a core member of the African-American avant-garde. Here she talks to Naomi Beckwith
- Terence Nance*  
**24 THE PURITY OF THE IMPULSE**  
 Praised for his mingling of art and feeling, filmmaker Terence Nance talks about his creative process and the invisibility of the Black body in Washington
- Peter Clarke*  
**28 SOME OF THE MANY SIDES OF PETER CLARKE**  
 Shortly before his death in 2014, legendary South African artist Peter Clarke chatted with Yvette Mutumba and Ciraj Rassool about making work and seeing himself in the mirror at an exhibition
- Nomusa Makhubu, Nkule Mabaso, Amy Watson*  
**30 WE DO NOT SEEK TO SPEAK IN PLACE OF THE ARTISTS**  
 Emerging South African curators Nomusa Makhubu, Nkule Mabaso, and Amy Watson speak about the theory and practice of making exhibitions
- O Menelick 2° Ato*  
**35 AN AFRO-BRAZILIAN ART HISTORY**  
 Afro-Brazilian art is often overlooked in Brazil. The magazine *O Menelick 2° Ato* aims to correct this distortion while also highlighting the cultures of Black Africa's broader Diaspora
- Addis Fine Art*  
**38 A NEW GALLERY CATERS TO GROWING INTEREST IN ETHIOPIAN ART**  
 An interview with the gallerists behind Addis Fine Art
- Marrakech Biennale*  
**41 MARRAKECH BIENNALE CELEBRATES AFRO-ASIAN UNITY**  
 The focus of the current sixth edition of the Marrakech Biennale is not the past or the future, but the urgent present. Guest curator Reem Fadda explains why
- Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom*  
**44 REMIXING AND REMAKING THE PAST**  
 The artist Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom speaks with Hansi Momodu-Gordon about his multimedia installations, Michael Jackson, and the influence of John Akomfrah

# I AM NO LONGER A PURIST

MAGNUS ROSENGARTEN met artist KAPWANI KIWANGA for a conversation in Berlin.

Kapwani Kiwanga's artistic career began with regular documentary filmmaking in the early 2000s. Works like *Bon Voyage* (2004) portray the lives of black migrant workers in Paris in highly aesthetic filmic language. Subsequently, she broke with film for a while and opened up to new forms: installation, sculpture, and narrative. Kiwanga has since established herself as a lecture-performer determined to entertain, educate, and challenge her audience with a mélange of academic rigorousness, imagination, and humor.

**MAGNUS ROSENGARTEN** I think the use of the word "performance" is inflationary these days. That doesn't have to be a bad thing. But how do you define it?

**KAPWANI KIWANGA** I feel like an impostor somehow because I don't consider myself a performer. Sometimes I consider myself an artist and that is a term I struggle with too. I guess I am someone who likes to transmit ideas and thoughts, to propose new forms. When I do performances, I create a story that people can reflect on. I don't really feel proprietary about the form of performance. It happened by accident. Someone had invited me to do a performance and I had never done one. I had previously conducted all this research and created a "lecture-performance" based on that research.

**MR** Tell me more about what it feels like to have your body live on stage, inevitably transmitting information to an audience.

**KK** This is very interesting because my body isn't very present. It's more my voice. I don't work with my body in the space very much. This is something that is slowly



Kapwani Kiwanga, *A Memory Palace* (Red Salon), 2015. 4-channel sound installation, inkjet prints, montage of Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Mirror* (1975). Installation view at Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin



Kapwani Kiwanga, *Afrolactica: A brief history of the future*, 2012 – ongoing. Performance: live reading with video projection at Maxim Gorki Theater, Berlin. Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin



clockwise from top left  
Kapwani Kiwanga, *Flowers for Africa*, 2012 – ongoing, Uganda, 2014. Real flowers.  
Kapwani Kiwanga, *Kinjekitile Suite*, South London Gallery, London, 2015. Magazine.  
Kapwani Kiwanga, *Flowers for Africa*, 2012 – ongoing, Nigeria, 2014. Real flowers.  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin

developing the more performances I do. I think I never deny the different power dynamics that happen among various bodies on stage. For me, being a female body of mixed ancestry, I am always aware of how that can be read in different spaces.

**MR** Let's go back to your voice then. How and what do you use it for?

**KK** I play with the voice of authority. Being the conservator at a museum, being an anthropologist from the future, someone with some kind of power. That is always to undermine the whole voice of power. Also the authority of [physical] stance: I am often sitting at a desk, the rigidity of my entire body, the constrained movements I make. And all the gestural codes you find at a lot of conferences.

**MR** But how do you create new forms, different narratives, without becoming too rational or too academic?

**KK** I always include this slight moment of "Is this really reality?" These are moments where you actually have a textual shift. The element of humor is quite important. My goal is always to unsettle hegemonic narratives and give voice to fantastic, false, or marginal ones.

**MR** You are a trained anthropologist. How does the expertise influence your art practice? I imagine it is a problematic field.

**KK** Yes, it is. Anthropology, like every other cultural artifact, is contaminated by histories of oppression and power. I am no longer a purist in terms of rejecting these things. I think we have to work with the things that are problematic. We don't have to be afraid of it but we can reuse it as another cultural product to appropriate. Going back to performance, it is a question of appropriation and incorporation. Everything is filtered through my body and my mind and any idea is then incorporated by me and transmitted in a different form. Anthropology is very present in my practice in terms of methodology. I read a lot of social science texts as well as "hard science" texts. The methods employed by social science – being in the field, on the ground, observing – are quite important to me.

**MR** How do you think the works, lives, and complex identities of the Diaspora can be made more visible?

**KK** I think what is key is to be sincere about yourself and your experiences. And believing in what you have to say is important and should be part of a larger conversation. The multiplicity is important. When I create a piece, it is often something I myself would like to see, and if people are going to ask questions like, "Is this really going to be an African piece?" it is someone else's problem. It's not mine. I don't always have to intellectualize it. It is about the multivocality, because we should all be sitting at this table. Some have more power. And I think things are changing slowly. In France, where I live, I saw very few female artists having solo exhibitions ten years ago and I see more of that now.

**Kapwani Kiwanga is the 2016 Commissioned Artist of The Armory Show in New York, 3–6 March 2016.**

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**MAGNUS ROSENGARTEN**  
is a filmmaker, writer, and journalist  
who lives between Berlin and New York.



Kapwani Kiwanga, *Kinjiketile Suite*, South London Gallery, London, 2015. Mixed media.  
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Tanja Wagner, Berlin

## WHAT IS URGENT TO YOU?

Morija, a town in western Lesotho, is the staging ground for an ongoing series of dialogues about art and culture organized by Johannesburg-based curator **LERATO BERENG**. She explains the motivations for her project.



above *Conversations at Morija #1*, 2013. Lerato Bereng, curator, with Ntate Lazarus, a local craftsman from Morija. Photo: Zachary Rosen, Ba Re e Ne Re Literature Festival  
below *Conversations at Morija #2*, 2015. Photo: Meri Hyöky

**MAGNUS ROSENGARTEN** What is the relevance of *Conversations at Morija*?

**LERATO BERENG** *Conversations at Morija* was started as an attempt to create a platform for engagement with Lesotho's creative community. The first of these conversations focused on opening a dialogue between the Morija Museum & Archives, visitors to the Morija Arts and Culture Festival, and the country's Diaspora. Owing to what has been termed "the national brain drain," the question of Diaspora seemed pertinent in order to understand the reasons for such a large percentage of creatives operating outside of the country's borders. It also permitted further possibilities for exploring a more fluid exchange between what is happening within the country and outside of it.

**MR** You also seek an audience that isn't necessarily the typical art crowd.

**LB** When conceptualizing the project, I knew that a static exhibition would not work, and what was important for me was for people to speak. So I created a set of simple interventions: instructions on the wall inviting people to enter the space, grab a drink, sit in front of a computer screen, and either read from a cue card with suggestions of questions that would initiate the conversation, or for those more confident, direct a question of their own to one of the speakers. I knew that I didn't

want the format to be like a Skype panel discussion where I am the interviewer directing the conversations. I wanted the people themselves to engage. I set up a few computers with their own Skype addresses in the same room and got them all on a group chat. I wanted people to feel as though they were having one-on-one conversations with the speaker on the other end.

**MR** Dialogue, conversation, and the idea of storytelling seem to be crucial components of *Conversations at Morija*. Who is telling the stories? And what kinds of stories?

**LB** The second *Conversations at Morija* (2015) took storytelling as its point of departure. This was a result of me asking the Morija Museum and the festival team what they would benefit from discussing. It became clear to me that, after the first event, there needed to be more direct engagement with the local community and showcasing of what is happening locally in relation to presentations by artists from outside the country. The stories that were shared were those created by Morija and Maseru artists. The visiting artists that I invited to take part in the project shared stories about stories and storytelling: videos, photographic archives, and how to tell stories with little means.

**MR** *Conversations* focuses on the visual arts. What content do you see portrayed in the works presented at the recent festival?

**LB** There was an interesting array of topics presented. Simon Gush's, Kemang Wa Lehulere's, and Penny Siopis's talks addressed storytelling through film, looking at histories, different versions of the same story, and the question of fictions and re-imagining them. Ruth Sacks's presentation focused on a body of work around text, combining design, language and bookmaking in the form of a work of visual art. George Mahashe told us a story about a fictional character who occupies his creative process. Kabelo Malatsi spoke about telling a story in the form of curatorial processes that require zero budget – ways to work with no capital. Local filmmakers including Patrick Rorke, who runs the Linotsing Animation Studio in Morija, presented short experimental animations to a large audience for the first time.

**MR** You are from Lesotho. How would you describe your upbringing and coming of age there as a person invested in the arts? Did you have sufficient access to knowledge and support?

**LB** I grew up surrounded by a creative family. My uncle is one of the country's most celebrated authors, so I was fortunate to be surrounded by creatives. The Sesotho language is laden with some of the most poetic and expressive figures of speech. The Basotho people speak in songs, puns, and idioms. Expression and storytelling are key to our culture in a nation formed

on creativity and diplomacy. A Mosotho architect, Mphethi Morojele, who I invited to Skype in for *Conversations at Morija #1*, once told me about how growing up in Lesotho impacted his creative growth. He spoke of the mountainous landscape of the country and how it taught him and other architect peers to understand space, curvatures, and lines. There is something to be said about growing up in one of the smallest kingdoms in the world that has managed to survive against all odds.

**MR** The fact that there is no access to higher education in the arts forces many artists and creative people to leave and study abroad (in South Africa, for example). What impact does this have on the artists' working process and creativity? Do you see any connection?

**LB** I, too, was sent to boarding school in South Africa, and can say that this was the first time I considered art as not just something I was good at, but a real interest to take seriously. I completed my tertiary education in South Africa with a Masters in Fine Art. I think it is an interesting position to be in. Having unknowingly birthed my creative perspective in Lesotho and only being able to develop it outside of

Lesotho makes for an unexpected approach to artmaking and curating. Personally, my curatorial obsession is with space, the absence of it, carving these spaces, and accessibility through language – verbosity bores me. This can all be attributed to what I would term my un-severed umbilical cord to Lesotho. My approach to writing, speaking, curating always starts from a conversation with my extra-art-world parents. If they get it, it works.

**MR** What did your event teach you about the relationship between arts and politics? How do artists keep their sovereignty?

**LB** Well, this year's project was inspired by Hans-Ulrich Obrist's question at his "Brutally Early Club" in Johannesburg this year: "What is urgent to you?" After thinking about it for a while, I spoke of the political situation in Lesotho, which resulted in the cancellation of last year's (2014) festival and thus the absence of a *Conversations in Morija* that year. Financially, the festival was unable to happen last year and this year owing to the political instability in Lesotho and the government pulling the base funding for the event. Locally there are no avenues for funding creative projects, and it is only with the support of a few corporations

locally and institutions across the border that things are able to happen. Obrist's question was pertinent to me because I realized that I don't have to wait for major funding for the festival platform. The conversations only need an audience and content, and that was a great success this year. It happened on a no-budget plan: I invited a few artists to drive down to Lesotho, my parents accommodated us all, equipment was kindly loaned to us by The Hub, and the Morija Museum and Archives team spread the word far and wide through an existing network and provided refreshments for everyone.

**MR** Where do you see *Conversations* in five to ten years?

**LB** My hope is that in five to ten years, *Conversations at Morija* will be only one of a myriad of events in Lesotho for this kind of dialogue. More and more it is becoming important for the conversations to steer themselves into whatever they are meant to become and for every person involved to take ownership of the project. Maybe in a few years we will start looking at guest curatorship, connecting Morija not only with South Africa but the rest of the world.



*Conversations at Morija #2*, 2015. Photo: Meri Hyöky



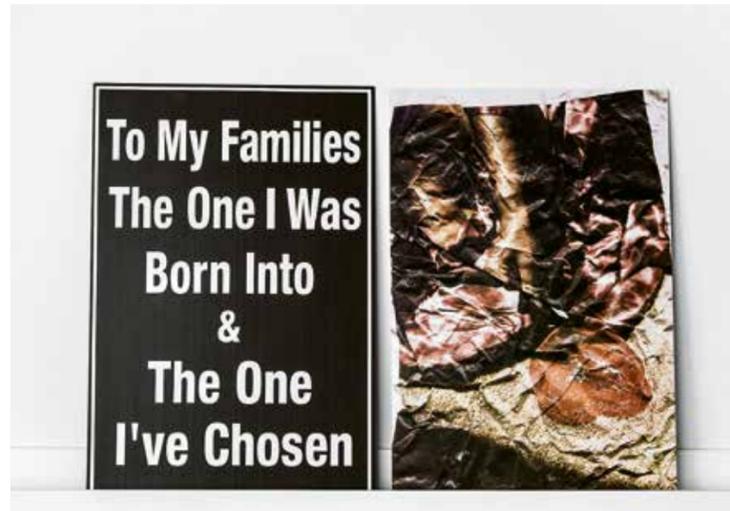
*Conversations at Morija #1*, 2013. Photo: Meri Hyöky



*Conversations at Morija #1*, 2013. Lerato Bereng, curator, in a Skype conversation with Kojo Baffoe, poet, writer, and then-editor of *Destiny Nam* magazine. Photo: Zachary Rosen, Ba Re e Ne Re Literature Festival

# POST-INTERNET WHAT?

Los Angeles-based **MARTINE SYMS** has been called a net artist, graphic designer, and publisher, but prefers the term conceptual entrepreneur to explain what she does.



above Martine Syms, *The Queen's English*, 2014. Exhibition and reading room, installation.

below Martine Syms, *Lessons I-XXX*, 2014. Video.

Courtesy of the artist



Martine Syms, *St : Et*, installation, 2015 Triennial: Surround Audience, New Museum, New York, 2015.

Photo: Benoit Pailley. Courtesy of the artist

**CONTEMPORARY AND (C&)** You define yourself as a conceptual entrepreneur. How do you combine business and art with a critical stance?

**MARTINE SYMS** I own a business. My philosophy around entrepreneurship is inspired by the stories in *Our Band Could Be Your Life*, point three of the Black Panther Party's TEN-POINT PROGRAM,<sup>1</sup> and the idea that value is an abstraction. Oh yeah, also Sol Lewitt's *Sentences on Conceptual Art*.<sup>2</sup> But mostly the part where he says that the idea becomes the machine that makes the art.

**C&** In one of your latest works, *Notes on Gesture*, you explore physical movement and identity creation. Tell us a bit about this great video piece. What is behind the idea of looping/repeating gestures (as forms of language)?

**MS** *Notes on Gesture* is a video comparing authentic and dramatic gestures. The piece alternates between title cards proposing hypothetical situations and short, looping clips that respond. The actor uses her body to quote famous, infamous, and unknown women. I asked Diamond Stingily (who stars in the piece) to embody different women, family members, celebrities, friends of ours, etc. Gordon Hall, who is an amazing artist based in New York, did a lecture performance about the history of lecture performances titled *Read me that part again, where I disinherit everybody*. At one point in the lecture Gordon says, "Politics is something you do with your body." This line got stuck in my head. I was also thinking about Black women appearing in animated GIFs and reaction images that ended up being used by everyone. These images circulate meaning, behavior, and bodies. I wondered what they meant.

**C&** In a recent interview, you said, “I think less about myself as a Black artist than I do about making work for a Black viewer.” How do you mean this?

**MS** I like to assume that the person encountering my work is Black.

**C&** What do you think of today’s trending term of “post-Internet art”? Do you identify with this concept?

**MS** I identify with the concept of post-Internet art as much as I identify with the term post-race, which is to say, not at all. Karen Archey has also written some provocative texts around the idea. I enjoyed reading Gene McHugh’s blog *Post-Internet* [which was published as a book in 2011]. I assigned it to my class this fall. But the term itself is not very useful to me.

**C&** You are publishing as well. Are you interested in being defined as an artist, a publisher, an entrepreneur? Or do you find that tendency to define a creative working person to be a bit outdated?

**MS** I find it extremely old-fashioned, but it’s good for marketing. If I’m trying to package myself, I only use one descriptor. I prefer to identify as a storyteller. Just kidding – DJ is my favorite.

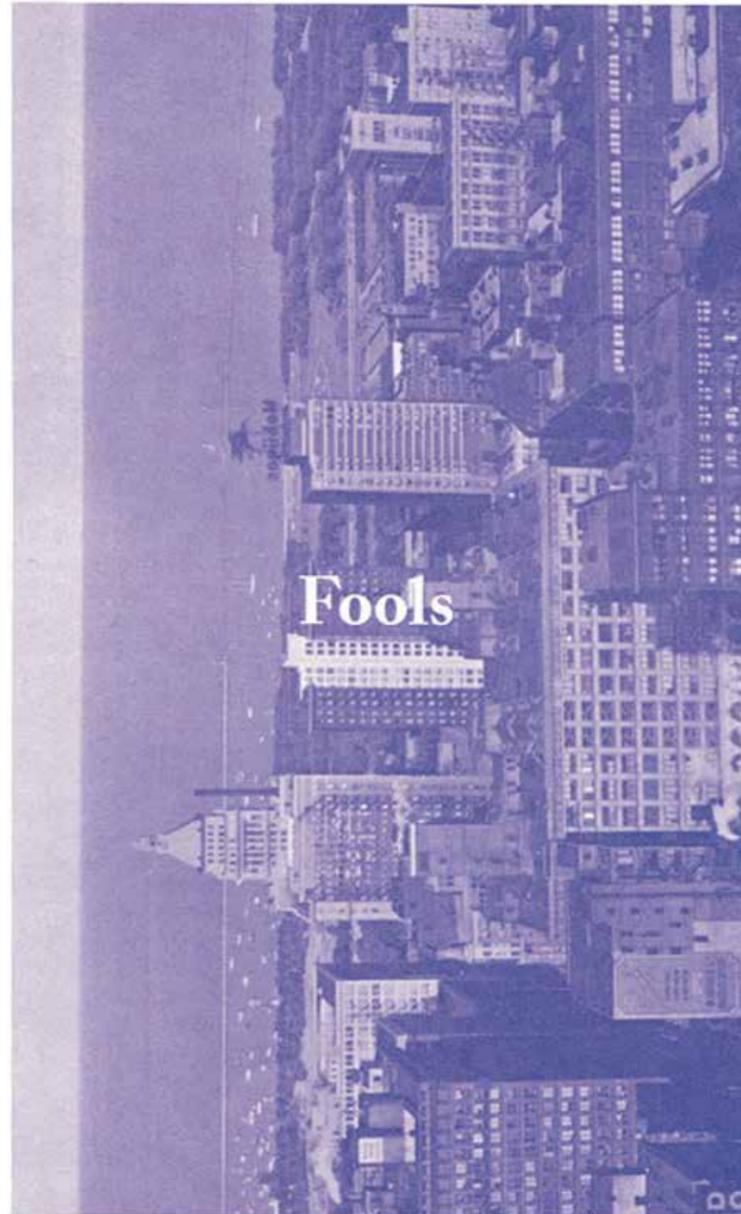
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1  
Point three of the Black Panther Party’s Ten-Point Program:

**“We Want An End To The Robbery By The Capitalists Of Our Black Community.** We believe that this racist government has robbed us, and now we are demanding the overdue debt of forty acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The Germans are now aiding the Jews in Israel for the genocide of the Jewish people. The Germans murdered six million Jews. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over fifty million Black people; therefore, we feel that this is a modest demand that we make.”

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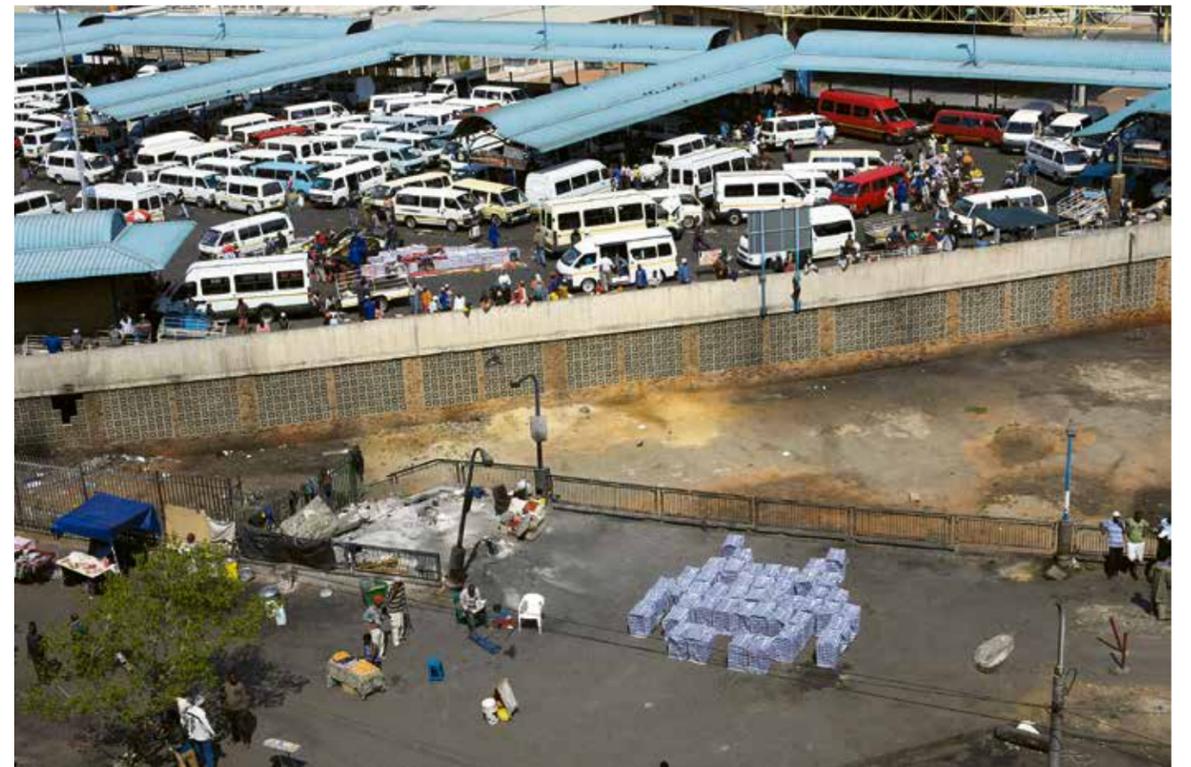
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*Sentences on Conceptual Art* by Sol Lewitt:  
[altx.com/vizarts/conceptual.html](http://altx.com/vizarts/conceptual.html)



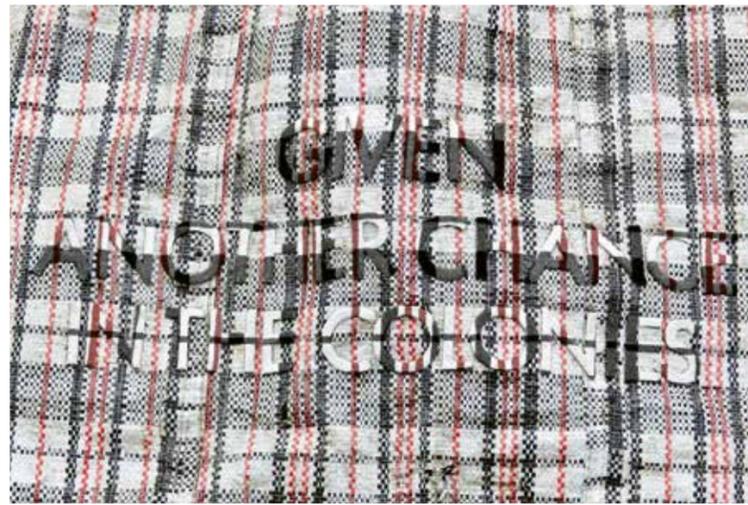
Martine Syms, *Fools*, 2012. Book.  
Courtesy of the artist and Dominica publishing

# THE WARP AND WEFT OF EXPERIENCE

Pop culture and contemporary politics converge in Cape Town-based Zimbabwean **DAN HALTER’S** labor-intensive works, which elegantly riff on his immigrant identity.



Dan Halter, *Space Invader* (Johannesburg taxi rank), 2009.  
Photographic Lamda print.  
Courtesy of the artist and WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery



Dan Halter, *Given Another Chance In The Colonies* (detail), 2014.  
Found plastic weave bag with custom-woven tartan fabric.  
Courtesy of the artist and WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery

**CONTEMPORARY AND (C&)** You are a Zimbabwean living in South Africa. How would you describe your personal journey moving from one country to the other?

**DAN HALTER** In Zimbabwe it was not possible to study art at tertiary level. Having Swiss heritage, I moved to Switzerland to further my art education. There I found myself quite culture-shocked and homesick and so I relocated to South Africa. Since then, government policies in Zimbabwe have caused its economy to suffer, and this has caused a mass exodus of people, especially into neighboring South Africa.

**C&** How do you see the creative and political interchange and connections between Zimbabwe and South Africa?

**DH** Zimbabwe's independence and transition to majority rule took place more than a decade before the same thing happened in South Africa. So, in many ways, South Africa looks to learn lessons from Zimbabwe and is reluctant to criticize or intervene in the situation there. There is a vibrant art scene in both countries, although in Zimbabwe there are limits to one's freedom of expression.

**C&** Tell us a bit more about your work *Space Invader*, in which you use woven plastic bags. You call them immigrant bags....

**DH** The bags are cheap Chinese-made woven plastic bags that have become stereotypically synonymous with migrants all over the world. Called *bianzhidai* in China, these bags have taken on different monikers around the world reflecting the immigrant demographics in different regions in a negative way.

The Space Invader characters were designed by Tomohiro Nishikado in 1978 and are simple 8-bit graphics that represent alien life forms. I have appropriated these minimalist icons as a metaphor for immigrants or aliens. Made up of about 50 pixels per character, these symbols are easy to create out of immigrant bags.

**C&** In your artist statement, you use "fabric" and "fabrication" to define your body of work. Why?

**DH** In my art the process of weaving is a form of fabrication and the end result can be described as a fabric. However, to fabricate can also mean to counterfeit and I like this dichotomy. The word illustrates my creative method and absolves me of the fiction of my work.

**C&** To what extent is your artistic practice political?

**DH** In a way all art is political. My work may look overtly political but it is also deeply personal. The issues I deal with resonate deeply with me and I feel a strong desire to convey these matters to an audience. My art is political because of where I was born and where I have lived. Political concerns play a defining role in the life of the average citizen in southern Africa, probably more so than in more developed nations. It informs our culture.

**DAN HALTER** (WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery) will show his work at the **Armory Show Focus: African Perspectives in New York, 3 – 6 March 2016.**



Dan Halter, *Patterns of Migration*, 2015.  
Found plastic weave bags, custom-made tartan fabric,  
mannequin legs, and Adidas CLOT ZX Flux.  
Courtesy of the artist and WHATIFTHEWORLD Gallery



Find out at  
[CONTEMPORARYAND.COM](http://CONTEMPORARYAND.COM)

# I'M NOT INTERESTED IN MAKING ART ABOUT WHERE I'M FROM

Well-known for her drawings and works on paper, Nigerian-born artist **ruby onyinyechi amanze** talks about developing new narratives that respond to her growth as an artist living in the US.

**CONTEMPORARY AND (C&)** What brought you to drawing?

**ruby onyinyechi amanze** I came into art through drawing – it was my first love. In school I studied photography and textiles, but my interest in both came down to the analogous process of working with layers. At the time, I didn't have the language to think of drawing outside of its traditional parameters, but essentially many of my photographs and textile works were, in some ways, drawings. I returned to paper in grad school and have stayed engrossed in it ever since.

**C&** A central theme of your practice is the notion of place / displacement. Where does this focus stem from?

**roa** I'm interested in space because of how malleable and limitless it is. How I can hold space between my hands, how I can stretch it or turn it upside down, play with the tension. Place is far less fluid. It's a fixed notion and also quite arbitrary and stale in its design. My work isn't about a definite nation or geography. I'm not interested in making art about where I'm from. I'm from everywhere and nowhere. And I often wonder why it is even important...

As for displacement, that used to be my story, but it outstretched its purpose along with other growing pains a while ago. When I identified with the word, it was a woe-is-me victim story of being uprooted or of searching for something that was lost or taken from me. I've found a new language now that doesn't carry the negative undertone of being displaced. I've lived in England, the US, and Nigeria and will live in many more places to come, but I haven't lost a thing and I'm certainly not broken. Yes, my connections to and memory of each place are compiled of bits and pieces, but that's just what the story is at this point, and I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be.

**C&** In your body of work, you use a range of figures and characters that have futuristic elements. Can you tell us a bit about this aesthetic choice and process?

**roa** I think of it in two parts: I incorporate certain motifs or compositional choices that suggest a fourth dimension – a shifting of time and space. I'm intrigued by how simply this can happen, for example by flying over the ocean and losing or gaining an entire day. The second part is that it's all in the present moment and less about the future.

Being able to leave Earth for another world can actually happen physically or metaphysically. I've walked down streets in Brooklyn and everything other than my body has been walking down streets in Lagos. People have gone to the moon, had a conversation out there, and a week later, they were back in their homes on earth. Many indigenous peoples all over the world have, for centuries, been able to manipulate other dimensions of being. I'm interested in all of these things as they relate to the present moment.

**C&** You move between Nigeria, the UK, and the US. How have you experienced the conversations and links between Black artists in the Diasporas and African artists on the continent?

**roa** I'm not sure that I've really experienced concrete conversations or links. And I think it's dangerous territory that these "groups" even exist. I think for many Black artists working in the Diaspora or in Africa, there could potentially be that same number of conversations. The similarity of skin color (possibly) and, of course, the global and historic ways in which others have responded (and sometimes still do) to brown-skinned peoples are in some ways the only connection these two groups have (other than just being human). Even amongst "themselves" – for example, a Kenyan artist working in Kenya and a Moroccan artist working in Morocco – there has rarely existed an automatic shared experience by virtue of being on the same continent. Their day-to-day lives may be as different as those of a Scot and a Turk, who also happen to share a continent. Despite this, there will always be parallel conversations happening because many artists, regardless of race, ethnicity, or geography, are thinking of similar things.

I think when it comes to visibility, the Diaspora has perhaps afforded Black artists (including those of direct African descent who have lived in the Diaspora for a long period) an entry into global art platforms – though by no means am I suggesting that we as a society have reached any form of equality when it comes to visibility for non-white artists. I think there is an excitement about what Black and African artists are doing right now, but only in separation from what everyone is doing. It's tricky, because visibility is important, but so is inclusion.

**ruby onyinyechi amanze (Mariane Ibrahim Gallery)**  
will show her work at the **Armory Show Focus: African Perspectives** in New York, 3–6 March 2016.

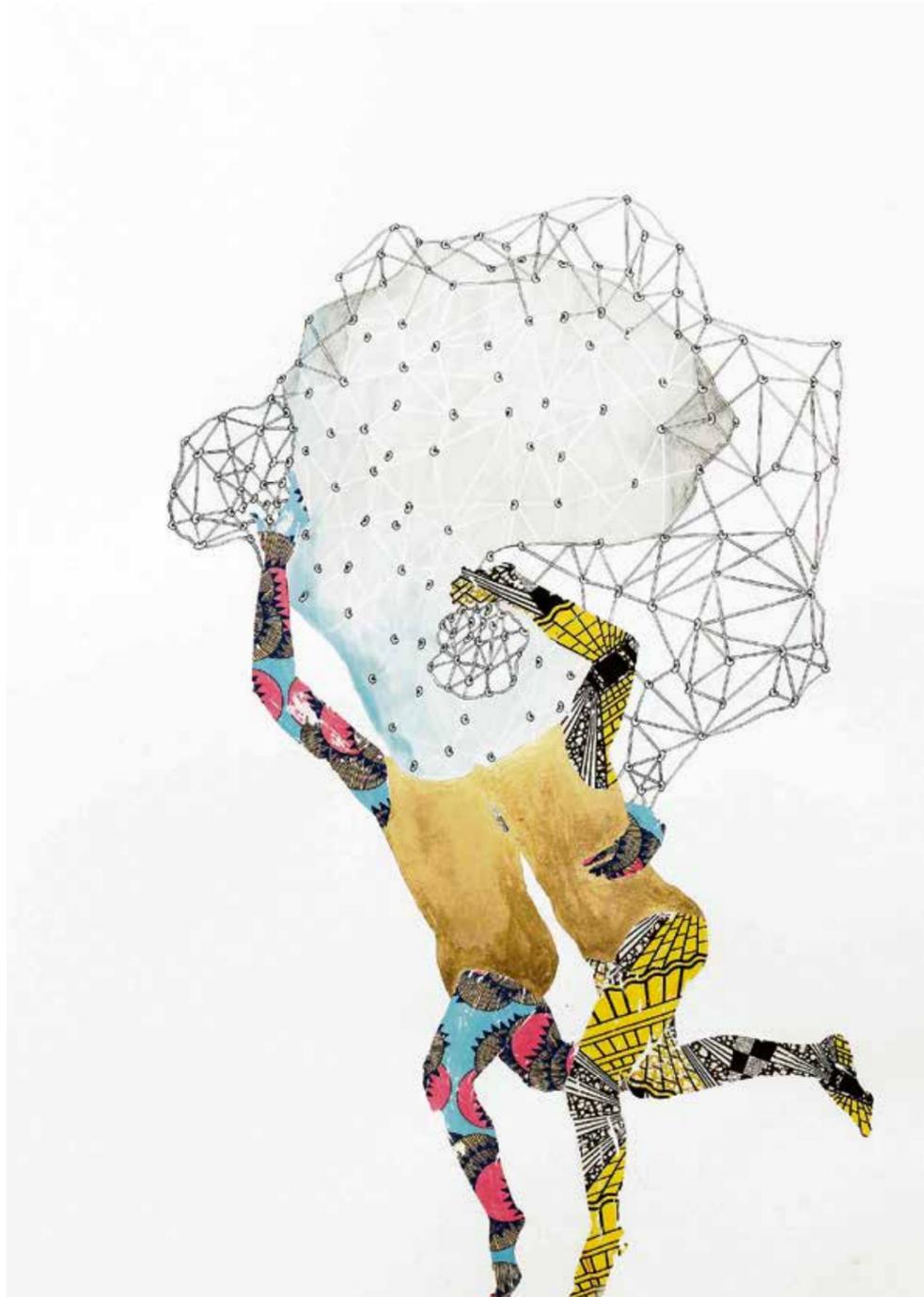


ruby onyinyechi amanze, *Audre's Sweetest Dream*, 2015. Drawing.  
Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery

**SENGA NENGUDI**, born 1943, is renowned for her performance-based sculptures and installations exploring aspects of the human body in relation to ritual, philosophy, and spirituality. Nengudi is regarded as a core member of the African-American avant-garde – along with artists such as David Hammons and Maren Hassinger.

## THERE WAS JUST THIS PARTICULAR ENERGY IN L.A. AT THE TIME

**SENGA NENGUDI** talks to **NAOMI BECKWITH**, curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, about her artistic developments.



ruby onyinyechi amanze, *carrying a cloud is easy, if you know how*, 2015. Drawing.  
Courtesy of the artist and Mariane Ibrahim Gallery



**NAOMI BECKWITH** Your most famous public performance is *Ceremony for Freeway Fets*. It was developed in the 1970s. How did it come about back then?

**SENGA NENGUDI** There was just this particular energy in LA at the time. Many Black artists at Brockmann Gallery were very interested in Sun Ra. We loosely formed this collective called **STUDIO Z** where we worked and played together. Everyone was generous to come together to do this thing. It was African and Kabuki-like at the same time. I wanted to link these two things that seemed to have nothing in common and the linkage was the importance of ritual. In Japanese and in African culture, like oral history, things have to be very specific. The performance also had to be a total experience – it incorporated elements like dance, music, costumes. There was just no separation between forms; all of it worked together.

**NB** How did you choreograph it?

**SN** It was 100 percent improvisation. I created the costumes, though David Hammons made his own stuff, and I created a public artwork as the setting. The performance was the opening ceremony, the

consecration of the public artwork and space. The seventies were such a difficult time for male/female relationships in the Black community. So I brought these elements together. I was the spirit that united male and female. It was a healing. I also created these masks out of pantyhose. I had never really had an experience like that before: when I put on the mask, I totally became another entity and I began to understand these ritual forms of becoming something else.

**NB** There was a lot of general interest in Africa at the time. How did you personally conceive of Africa?

**SN** When I was in college, there was barely any instruction on African art, though I had been interested in it since high school. I took French because every time I did research, I found that the only books of any consequence were in French. But it brought tears to my eyes to read the awful way they wrote about the people. I once visited the Museum of Man in France and saw the body of Saartje Baartman. I thought: how could they do that to a human being? Put them in a case like that? Then one day – long after that – I was in the kitchen and I heard something on TV. There was a lot of talking. It sounded like New York. I turned toward the TV and it was African people!

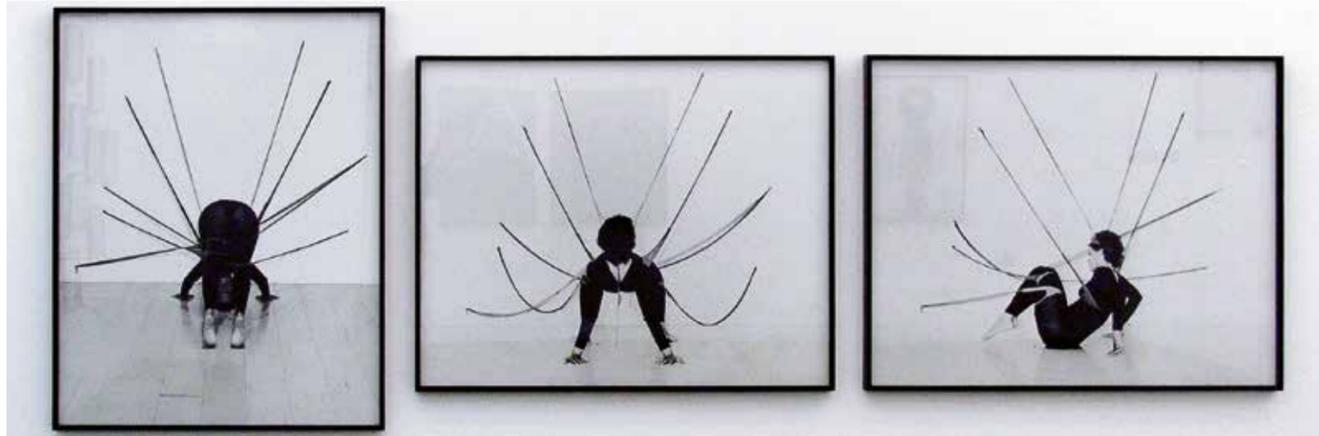


previous and facing pages  
Senga Nengudi, *Ceremony for Freeway Fets*, 1978. C-print, edition of 5. Documentation of performance and installation piece. Photos: Roderick "Quaku" Young

p. 22  
Senga Nengudi, *Performance Piece*, 1978. Silver gelatin print, triptych, edition of 5. Nylon mesh, Senga Nengudi, Maren Hassinger. Pearl C. Woods Gallery, Los Angeles. Photo: Harmon Outlaw

p. 23  
Senga Nengudi, *Rapunzel*, 1981. Silver gelatin print, edition of 5. Nylon mesh, human hair on wire. Arlington Avenue and Pico Boulevard, Los Angeles. Photo: Barbara McCullough

all images  
Courtesy of the artist and Thomas Erben Gallery



They had the same tone and rhythm that I've heard on 125th Street. Anywhere in this world, the Diaspora is. When I looked at books and museums, I found "their" view of us but I did not find the truth. I found the real deal in myself. The real deal is looking at the old traditional African dance, as well as dance on any Diasporic city street, and seeing how the new looks like the old.

**NB** A couple of years ago, you re-performed your famous piece *RSVP* at Contemporary Art Museum Houston (CAMH). How did that relate to your experiences from before, how was it for you?

**SN** Very difficult. My pieces are fairly simple so you would think it would have been easier but obviously I'm not in that same space anymore. Although I do find that *RSVP* still has legs because some of the issues it dealt with are more intense now than when the work originated in the 1970s. It was about things related to feminist issues, to a sense of body, how body issues related to self-esteem and self-acceptance. It was also about entanglements – being entangled by one's stuff and stretching oneself beyond the limits. Having that sense of elasticity is still very important, as is using the same materials. No one really wears panty hose anymore but people still read it as being about restriction. I was pleased at the emotional responses at CAMH, especially from women who said that they felt like their story was being told. Those comments were very special to me.

**NB** *RSVP* was visionary in that it was an ephemeral performance and it made an object – did you think of that consciously at the time?

**SN** You know, people talk about Richard Pryor and how his comedy was true stuff: whatever he was feeling, he gave to the audience with no buffer. In a sense, this was me laying my guts on the line. I was going through a lot of stress and wanting to express it. I was experimenting with materials like resin or glue and I didn't know where this was going but I had to try it. I knew I had three interests: working with material, working with space, and working with emotions. And I always get back to a relationship to the body. When I was growing up in LA, there was this place downtown called Clifton's Cafeteria. The owner may have been religious because there were these little nooks and crannies that looked like Roman catacombs or grottoes on each floor of the café. I'll never forget this: you had to go down to the basement for the bathroom. At the bottom of the stairs was a giant Jesus statue and you could sit on his lap! I related to that when I wanted to be a sculptor. I want people to touch things.

**NB** You don't just want to make an object in space but an object with a relation to the viewer's body.

**SN** Yes, I was once in a dance class where we were told to hug ourselves. And I realized that we go through the world without touching ourselves or others.

**NB** It seems these objects aren't really abstract; they are about a body's relationship to another one, which can be very political.

**SN** Exactly. These objects were related to performance and also to rituals that define those relationships.

**NB** Such as?

**SN** When I worked with dance, I was interested in basic movement issues such as: how is this guy going to lift me? I was also at the Watts Towers Arts Center and the Pasadena Museum [of California Art], which were both very experimental. There were Happenings, and [Claes] Oldenburg and [Robert] Rauschenberg came to visit. In those places, I could move how I wanted to move, do what I wanted to do visually. Then I went to Japan, where I sought out Gutai. In Japan there is a ritual for everything – even for how you talk on the phone – and you can't veer from that or it becomes something different. I thought: how does this involve my own culture? How does this look like African culture? All these elements blended into my performance practice, but I wasn't aware of it until much later on. It wasn't until I started thinking about Dada that I realized that even way before Dada, way before our people hit the shores of America, there was ritual, improvisation, and performance. But in America, it was about survival as a way of getting through the day. Our African-American history was about how the way we are in the world is already a performance, where sometimes even the way we use language has a double meaning.

**NB** One of your most recent shows, *Lov u*, has an even more personal approach. It deals with various forms of relationships. What inspired you?

**SN** I have this kind of voyeuristic way of overhearing snippets of conversation (like when I'm on the New York subway). When people talk, when you get off the phone, for instance, it always ends in "love you." And this phrase isn't obligatory; it comes from a real place. From there I started thinking of the people I love and examining true love.



I started gathering definitions from friends of what love means to them. I worked with students. I created a photo book. I got the local community involved and had them and the students take pictures with things they love. People were pleased to have to think about love and not just in a romantic way. And that's what I wanted: for the exhibition to be a place for conversation about how love functions in your life. I also wanted to use materials like masking tape. I work with the materials and then figure out the message as I finish. Some people accuse me of being too cerebral, but I was just doing things, making my art, and I realized many people I feel deeply about were no longer on this plane. They are symbolically represented in this work; they are always with me.

**NB** It's also a very multimedia work.

**SN** I knew I wanted it to be multimedia but it had to be low-tech. Things that were available felt right for the situation. I also wanted a soundtrack to go along with the visual, putting you in the mood, so to speak. Some of the sounds are very abstract, like Cecil Taylor, and some are literal music, like Nancy Wilson and Isaac Hayes. I noticed that there's rarely any sound in galleries, but in our community there's always sounds. In Cuba music is everywhere; in Harlem that's true too. I could not tolerate the idea of not having sound in the show. At the last hour of the last day of the show, I changed the soundtrack to an "om" chant – it was a way of clearing the energy and purifying the space.

**NAOMI BECKWITH**  
is the Marilyn and Larry Fields Curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. Prior to joining the MCA, Beckwith was Associate Curator at The Studio Museum in Harlem where she also managed the Artists-in-Residence program. She holds an MA with Distinction from the Courtauld Institute of Art in London and was a Critical Studies Fellow at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program.

# C&

Contemporary And (C&) is an online art magazine and a dynamic space for the reflection on and linking together of ideas, discourse, and information on contemporary art practice from diverse African perspectives.

## CONTEMPORARYAND.COM

The C& print issues are published by Contemporary And (C&)

### CONCEPT

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### COMMUNICATIONS

Markus Müller, Bureau Mueller

### PRINTING

BVZ Berliner Zeitungsdruck GmbH, Berlin

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### FRONT COVER

Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom, *Tum Tum Telephone*, 2012. Video still. Courtesy of the artist

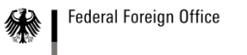
### BACK COVER

Martine Syms, *For Nights Like These*, 1979, 2014. Archival pigment print. Courtesy of the artist

C& IS PUBLISHED BY



C& IS FUNDED BY



C& would like to thank the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for their kind support of this print issue:



# ART PRACTICE IS A BODILY FUNCTION

Dallas-born, Brooklyn-based filmmaker **TERENCE NANCE** doesn't self-subscribe to any descriptions but, he tells **MISA DAYSON**, is more of an Afrosurrealist than an Afrofuturist.



Terence Nance, *Swimming in Your Skin Again*, 2015.  
Video stills. Courtesy of the artist



Terence Nance, *Frenel*, 2013.  
Video still. Courtesy of the artist

I recently had the pleasure of meeting with filmmaker and visual artist, Terence Nance, who first garnered attention for his 2012 critically acclaimed debut feature film, *An Oversimplification of Her Beauty*. On a cold January day, before Nance headed to the Sundance Film Festival to screen his newest work, *Swimming in Your Skin Again*, we enjoyed lunch at a Haitian restaurant in Brooklyn while discussing artistic impulses, cultural labeling, and politics.

**MISA DAYSON** For an audience who might not be familiar with your work and your films, how would you describe yourself as an artist?

**TERENCE NANCE** I make stuff that is trying to follow my impulses in a really pure way. I try to create from my subconscious without filtering through my conscious mind any ideas about propriety, identity, or culture. For me, at the end of the day, the most important thing is the sanctity and the rhythm of a process. That includes the day-to-day process of waking up, meditating, hugging my wife, seeing stuff, watching people. Trying to build a sustainable process of being is the first step in my process of making anything. Usually that comes out in film-related work, things that use motion picture and sound.

**MD** So your process doesn't necessarily start from a specific idea? It's more about moving through your day, seeing what comes up from just existing in the present moment, and guiding yourself toward what story wants to be told?

**TN** I do have a concrete concept. I would say that 0.05% percent of what comes up in my mind actually gets made and gets out of my mind (laughs). There is obviously some sort of filtering process.

But for me that is the biggest struggle, that's where most of the time gets wasted. I also try to avoid questions like: "How much will this cost?", "Will people like it?", or "Will people be offended by it?" and "Will it be hard for me to make?" I try to strip away all of that and the creative process becomes more about being, like a bodily function. Like breathing, inhaling and exhaling, eating, metabolizing, or defecating. For me, culturally and personally, I think that's what a contemporary art practice is: a bodily function. It's just something that must happen. So what I end up making, hopefully, is the thing that just needs to come out.

**MD** How did you know you wanted to be a filmmaker?

**TN** I didn't really have that moment. I still don't really identify as a filmmaker per se. I identify as an artist generally. My mom is an actress and directs plays. My dad is a photographer. I think I was always around the tools. I just didn't know what a director or producer was until well after I had finished my first short film. After that I was making a feature film and still didn't know what to call myself. So, I never had that moment. I just think about what I want to make next.

**MD** Some people define you as an Afrofuturist artist. Do you identify with that term?

**TN** I don't self-subscribe to anything. Like Miles Davis said: "I just make the shit up and let y'all figure out what to call it" (laughs). But if I was just another viewer watching my work, I'd probably use the word Afrosurrealist before Afrofuturist. I think there is work that is representational of a lived experience; experiences that we all participate in and objectively think of as "real."

Then there is work that is representational of everything else, all other experience. The surreal or the spiritual or the meta, the super-real or the hyper-real. I think a lot of my work is portraiture or representational of that other parallel thing that is happening to all existence. So, I think of my work as, obviously, African, Black, and then surreal.

I think Afrofuturism is a brand. It sounds really cool and it's a sort of genre description now for understanding that everybody's Black (laughs). We obviously have a presence in the past. That presence has to be carried forward in representations of the future as sort of an assertion of our marginalization; an assertion that is in reaction to our marginalization. I don't really think of railing against it so much. So, I think Afrofuturism as a concept, as a brand, is on some level about railing against, fighting against, that process of marginalization that is sort of the machination of white supremacy. For me, the brand of Afro futurism that I think is evolving and more interesting is what Martine [Syms] put in the "Mundane Afrofuturist Manifesto." Because the future is then and now, tomorrow, whatever. And that doesn't necessarily rock with the brand that most people know, but I think that actually because of Martine, almost specifically, it's starting to be the brand. What she put forth in that document with the work she's making.

**MD** What projects are you working on now?

**TN** I am co-directing a film on skin-bleaching creams with Chanelle Aponte Pearson. It basically follows one subject in different regions across the world where people bleach their skin. It's strictly observational and intercuts between a few stories. It talks about the psychological state that results in somebody deciding to change their skin cosmetically and artificially. It's culturally specific, not like, "everybody wants to be French-looking." Its not that simple. So, we

try to find as much nuance as we can in observing people. I am also working on a film script. It's about the absurdity of the political process, the legislative process, the American political theater. About the invisibility of the Black body, the Black female body, and the elderly Black body, in the minds and hearts of Washington, D.C. And really, all political bodies. A lot of stuff is on their minds, but we're not it. It's like that last frontier of invisibility.

**MD** What is the role of politics in art? Do artists have a responsibility to address what's happening in the contemporary moment when it comes to Black life?

**TN** No. I don't think any artist has a responsibility to participate in any conversation with their work. I do think that as a Black person, I was raised to feel responsible to feed the culture that birthed me. To make sure it's around, to make sure that it is moving. That I have a say in where it goes because I was raised that way. I was raised, in general, to know that if you don't tend to something it's gonna die (laughs). If you don't water that plant it's gonna die. But I don't think that has anything to do with me being an artist. Sometimes this sort of colors what I do with the responsibility that I feel everybody should have. I think that's just a human thing. There are probably cultural nihilists who'd say these things don't mean anything, and that's valid too. But I was taught that there is stuff that resulted in me being here, and that had value. That stuff is worth keeping around.

**MISA DAYSON**  
was born and raised in Harlem. She is a writer, filmmaker, and Ph.D. candidate in Anthropology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Watch Terence Nance's acclaimed films here

*Frenel* [vimeo.com/71172383](https://vimeo.com/71172383)

*You and I and You* [vimeo.com/120861824](https://vimeo.com/120861824)



*Frenel*



*You and I and You*



Find out at  
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Terence Nance, *You and I and You*, 2015.  
Video stills. Courtesy of the artist

Shortly before his death in 2014, legendary South African artist **PETER CLARKE** chatted with **YVETTE MUTUMBA** and **CIRAJ RASSOOL** about making work and seeing himself in the mirror at an exhibition.

## IT'S ALL ABOUT SHARING KNOWLEDGE



To reach Ocean View, we followed the beautiful False Bay coastline for about an hour. I was being driven by Ciraj Rassool, who had set up this meeting with Peter Clarke, one of the leading South African artists of his generation. When Ciraj asked Peter for directions, the answer was: “Up the street five glimpses behind an olive tree.” A rather poetic description, though not one that made it easy to find his house. We got there in the end, but of course we had no way of knowing this would be our last chance to talk to Peter. Sadly, he passed away just a few weeks later. Peter had lived in this house since 1972, and no amount of fame or fortune ever made him want to leave. Yet he had not moved there voluntarily. Peter and his family had been living in Simon’s Town, but under the Group Areas Act the entire community was forced to move to Ocean View, a township in Cape Town. Unlike Simon’s Town, Ocean View is far from the coast, its name a bitter irony. But it was precisely this traumatic experience that made Peter decide to continue living in a location that was a constant reminder of what the apartheid regime had done. We entered the small house through the front door, walking directly into a living room packed with books and art.

above Ocean View, Cape Town, South Africa, 1986.  
Photo: Hans Blum. Courtesy of Weltkulturen Museum

It was a wonderful place full of memories, knowledge, poetry, and anecdotes. We sat on Peter’s sofa looking through the images of his works and those of his peers in the Weltkulturen Museum’s collection in Frankfurt. For decades Peter had not given a thought to the German pastor Hans Blum, who came to Cape Town on behalf of the museum ready to buy everything he could lay his hands on.

**YVETTE MUTUMBA** What was it like for you when Hans Blum came to Cape Town to collect artworks?

**PETER CLARKE** In later years it made me think of a white explorer wearing a pith helmet travelling to Africa saying, “I will take that, that, that, that, and that.” Somewhere in the book I’m reading right now, it talks about these two Americans who came out to collect in Africa, and they collected with such enthusiasm that they kept people busy for years producing work. I’m glad you showed me what Blum collected in South Africa, as there were works by a number of artists I knew. He used to ask: “Do you know of anybody...?” so I told him about all the other people I knew, gave him their names and addresses, and off he went.

**YM** The works Hans Blum collected for the museum have given us a very special archive – a wide range of different works from a specific time and context, all produced by Black artists. That’s why I think it’s important to exhibit them again and to show how collecting in the 1970s and 1980s was very different from today. Blum actually used to live and work near Rorke’s Drift, which explains his direct connection to the art world. But when he came back in 1986, Bongi Dhlomo-Mautloa acted as his mediator. It was a different age, not like today when you can do a Google search before you come here to figure out who and where people are. This is an important

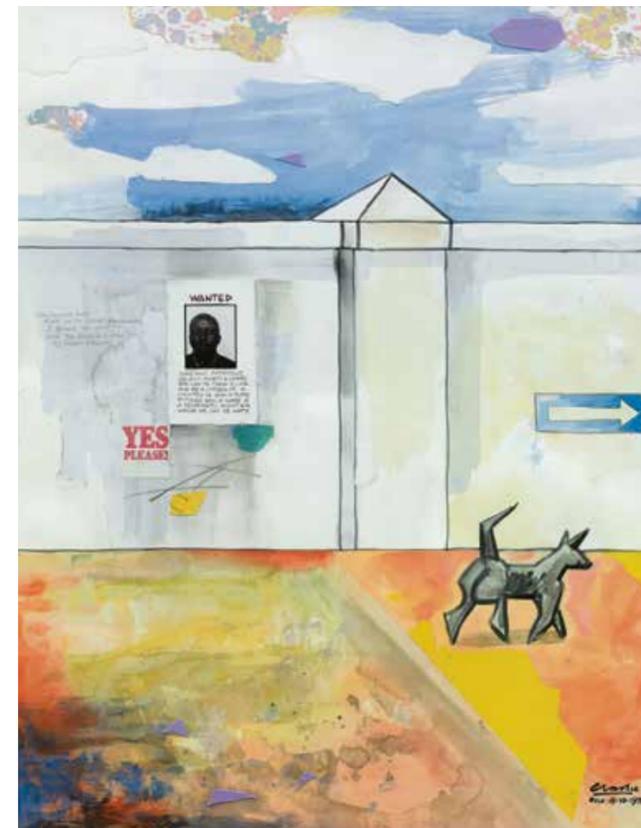
aspect, since today curators from whatever big museum or biennale tend to fly in, pick out some artworks, and fly back. They see what they’re doing as a good thing – which in a way it is. They feel proud of themselves for looking beyond the “West,” but this has a similar kind of feel to those ethnographic collecting expeditions from 100 years ago when Europeans would visit, stay a few days, take objects back, and that was it.

**CIRAJ RASSOOL** Express collecting.

**YM** Yes. So, what I like about Hans Blum is his very real passion for this work – and that he lived here, knows the people, and has kept up this continuous dialogue from the late 1970s. Looked at from the perspective of our history, the museum’s history, it makes the collection very specific. It has the story of Hans behind it, as well as the stories of other people. Our museum’s collection has another similar yet different example of 900 works from Uganda. They were collected by a man called Jochen Schneider. He was also German and lived in Uganda in the 1960s and 1970s. He mostly collected works by students from the School of Industrial and Fine Arts at Kampala’s Makerere University. When I went there in 2013, they told me that Schneider used to come to the college every Saturday. The house technician would let him in and sell off works. Most of the students never found out their works had been sold. I showed images of the works to lecturers at the college, among them former students, and some said, “Oh, my God, that’s what happened to my work!”

**CR** What’s your relationship with the works that leave you? How do you let go and how do you reconnect?

**PC** It’s quite difficult... Of course, artists don’t remember everything they’ve let go of. I’ve often thought that an artist’s works are very much like children. So at times when I



above Peter Clarke, *Solitary Confident*, 1980. Mixed media.  
left Peter Clarke, *Wanted*, 1978. Mixed media.  
Courtesy of Weltkulturen Museum

remembered specific works, I wondered – are they being taken care of? Most owners of works develop a very particular attachment, as is only too obvious when you try and find works for a long-term event such as a retrospective. You always have to go down on very good knees to get works from people. It’s like one woman I met who asked me, “But how long will it be away?” She couldn’t make up her mind. She said, “You know, my husband and I bought this from you when we were still very young. He has since passed away, and I thought a great work of art is living proof that you have lived.”

**YM** That personal attachment to artworks is an interesting aspect, and it raises the question of what are often very personal interpretations of artworks.

**PC** Interpretations are always fascinating. I have a picture of who I am, just as I’m aware of the fact that I am a certain height. But only when I see myself in a photograph next to other people do I really see how big or how small I am. Yesterday I went to this Leonardo da Vinci exhibition where one of the exhibits

is a mirrored cubicle. Eight sides, eight mirrors. So when you step into this space, you see yourself reflected from all angles. It’s a strange kind of experience, almost weird. You are not just one person; you’ve become eight different people seen from different yet familiar angles. But it is strange when you read what other people write about your work. You don’t always agree with it, of course, and sometimes you are taken by surprise.

**YM** But isn’t it interesting if someone is seeing something totally different from what you intended, coming from a different perspective?

**PC** It is – because it’s something that you didn’t expect. There are times when you look at works of mine and it’s got nothing to do with politics or anything, but there are birds flying or something like that. That’s related to my travels, since when you travel you look at things, and to look at things is to gain knowledge. When I come back, I especially like to engage with other younger artists, as it’s also all about sharing knowledge.

**Peter Clarke is part of the show A LABOUR OF LOVE at the Weltkulturenmuseum in Frankfurt, 3 December 2015 - 24 July 2016.**

This interview is an edited excerpt from the book *A Labour of Love*, edited by Yvette Mutumba and Gabi Ngcobo, Bielefeld, Germany, 2015.

**YVETTE MUTUMBA** is curator at the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt, and co-founder of C&. Mutumba studied Art History and holds a PhD from Birkbeck, University of London. She has published numerous texts and comprehensive catalogues concerning visual arts from African perspectives.

**CIRAJ RASSOOL** directs the University of the Western Cape’s African Program in Museum and Heritage Studies, managed in partnership with Robben Island Museum. He has written widely on public history, visual history, and resistance historiography. He is a trustee of the District Six Museum, which he co-founded in 1994, and a councilor of Iziko Museums of Cape Town.

## WE DO NOT SEEK TO SPEAK IN PLACE OF THE ARTISTS

Emerging South African curators **NOMUSA MAKHUBU, NKULE MABASO**, and **AMY WATSON** speak about the theory and practice of making exhibitions.

The opportunities for freelance curators in South Africa are, at face value, dismal. Public institutions are teetering. The country's robust retail galleries chiefly sponsor stable-focused group exhibitions. The indie scene (non-profit galleries, project spaces, open studios) is middling. And yet, almost in spite of all this, 2015 saw independent curators – amongst them **NATASHA BECKER, TEGAN BRISTOW**, and **CAROLYN H. DRAKE** – stage insightful and exploratory multi-artist showcases at a host of venues. Two independently curated shows – *Fantastic*, curated by **NOMUSA MAKHUBU** and **NKULE MABASO** at Cape Town's Michaelis Galleries, and **AMY WATSON's** *Sightings* at the KZNSA Gallery in Durban – stood out amongst the bunch. The curators spoke to **SEAN O' TOOLE** about their exhibitions.



Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin,  
*People in Trouble Laughing Pushed to the Ground*, 2011. Fiber-based prints.  
Courtesy of the artists and Goodman Gallery



Bianca Baldi, *Zero Latitude*, 2014.  
HD video stills, color, silent.  
Courtesy of the artist



Uriel Orlow, *Yellow Limbo*, 2011. HD video still, color, sound.  
Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London

**SEAN O'TOOLE** The forms in which art is spoken for and about vary greatly: from the unseen conversations between artist and curator to the various ventriloquism acts like wall text, guided walk, catalogue essay, symposium presentation, and press interview. Given that you've probably been involved with all, which is your preferred way of speaking around and about art?

**NOMUSA MAKHUBU** We approached *Fantastic* as academics. It came out of my doctoral thesis, which was titled *The Fantastic Subject*. The exhibition was in a university space. Students were involved in the installation. The aim was not only about showing but the processes of showing. I wouldn't call the discursive platforms ensuing from the exhibition (catalogue essays, symposia, and interviews) ventriloquist acts. We do not seek to speak in place of the artists but recognize that as researchers we can also evoke theoretical material in relation to artworks. Artists remain important in all of those processes.

**NKULE MABASO** Works of art have a life and presence that goes beyond themselves. This transcendence allows the works to be placed in different conversations in relation to themes and other works.

**AMY WATSON** The conversations that are primary to me are the ongoing ones with

artists. It isn't always possible to make these entirely evident in exhibition making. I would like to think a strong exhibition does in fact begin to demonstrate these conversations. I prefer, wherever possible, speaking to audiences directly and, even better, artists discussing their works themselves. This isn't always possible given budgetary constraints. It perhaps goes without saying that the forms of speaking around and about work can and should shift depending on the content and context. At best a text about artworks shines a light on practice; at worst it's reductive. The risks of not communicating include alienating audiences.

**O'TOOLE** Why a group show? We know the pitfalls – curatorial ego and concept versus artistic agency and the autonomy of a work of art, flighty sampling versus deep immersion. But what are the potentialities of a group show?

**MAKHUBU** I don't call myself a curator; I am an art historian and curating is one of the ways in which I realize research. The exhibition is not about artists we like or don't like. Works were selected based on how well they open up questions and enable debates about the concept of the fantastic and biopolitics. I engaged with some of the artists for my doctoral thesis way before we even thought about the possibility of an exhibition.

**MABASO** Group shows tend to have many pitfalls, but if the integrity of the artwork is kept intact and not laboriously forced to entertain new meanings, then there is the possibility to encounter the artwork anew within the questions proposed by the group staging. The works alter with the telling and the showing. However, they remain integrally themselves, yet offer responses to the thesis being propagated. We have been very conscious of not using the works as examples in any fashion. The works are read as inscriptions, which, with new settings or contexts, can illuminate or provide help with deciphering questions.

**WATSON** Any conceptions I may have are in some form, whether latent or explicit, derived from and developed in response to an artist's practice. Working with artists operating in and across different contexts and different generations through an exhibition allows for the conditions for their respective practices to be placed in conversation, and in tension, with each other. It has the potential to be generative. New knowledge can be produced; conversely, received knowledge can also be critiqued.

**MAKHUBU** As a practicing artist, I think whether one's work is included in group shows that are either flighty sampling or deep immersions – those conversations (deep or shallow) are important. If one only

had to see work as solo... that would be like being confined to having conversations with oneself. It's healthy for a work to exist socially.

**O'TOOLE** What prompted you to show US artist and filmmaker Terence Nance's *You and I and You* in the *Fantastic* exhibition?

**MAKHUBU** He's brilliant! For us, this work articulates the relationship between the power of imagination and politics. The interest in this theme began with an interest in film, so the interrelation between photography, video art, and film was key. I personally like how Nance's work cannot easily be explained away. The same can be said for all artworks, I suppose. With Nance there's an intriguing intersection of many readings, others related to textured narratives that locate the reproductive heteronormative family within broader

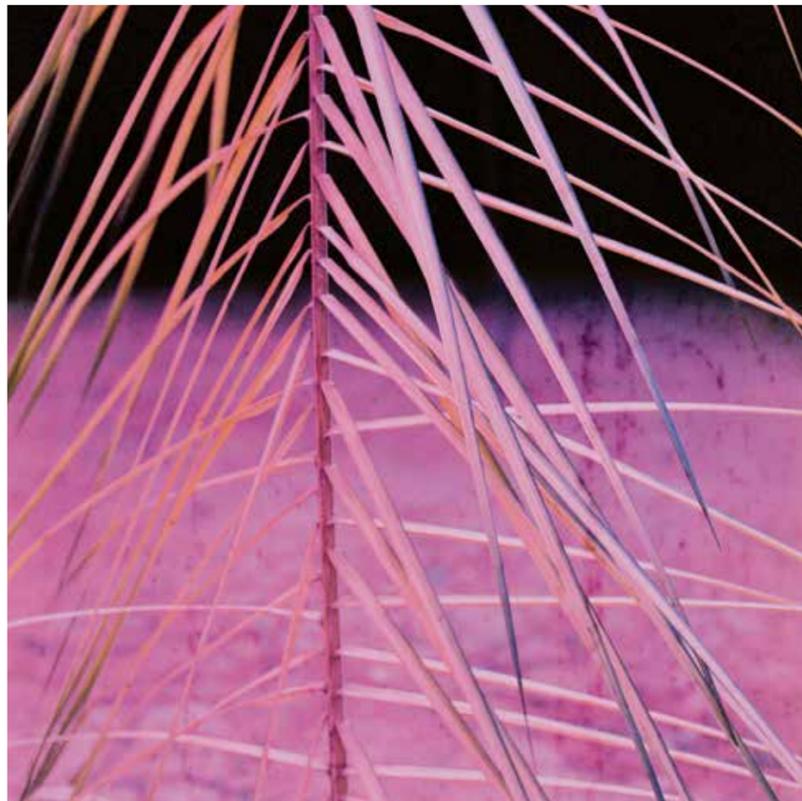
ideological systems, intergenerational crisis, the horrendous disregard for Black life in America, particularly for Black men. The road is a wonderful metaphor. Also, we started to see an inter-reading between Nance's *You and I and You* and Jelili Atiku's performance *Eleniyan* (2012). For Atiku, drawing from *egungun* [Yoruba masquerade] is a decolonization process. The masked dancers in Nance's work are similarly an intricate allegory.

**O'TOOLE** Who are your favorite curators right now?

**MAKHUBU** Bisi Silva, Gabi Ngcobo, and Elvira Dyangani Ose. They've brilliantly shown that art is process, a socio-political phenomenon, and an inclusive ongoing intellectual exercise without being confined by conventions, institutions, and market trends.

**WATSON** Maria Lind, particularly her sustained work around rethinking the potentials of art institutions. Closer to home, Mika Conradie's ongoing research into institutional rhythms is of particular interest, especially given the current lack of independent arts organizations in South Africa. I'm interested in Nontobeko Ntombela's practice too, in particular her exhibition *A Fragile Archive* (2012), which re-examined the positioning and practice of artist Gladys Mgudlandlu through a restaging of Mgudlandlu's first solo exhibition.

*Based in Cape Town, SEAN O'TOOLE is a writer, an associate editor of C&, and co-editor of Cityscapes, a critical journal for urban inquiry.*



Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, *Kodak Ektachrome 34 1978 frame 4, To Photograph the Details of a Dark Horse in Low Light*, 2012. C-type print.  
Courtesy of the artists and Goodman Gallery

## THE ART OF THE BLACK ATLANTIC



Priscila Rezende, *Brombril*, 2010. C-Print. Courtesy of the artist

Afro-Brazilian art is often overlooked in appraisals of contemporary Brazil. The magazine **O MENELICK 2° ATO** aims to correct this distortion while also highlighting the cultures of Africa's broader Diaspora.

**CONTEMPORARY AND (C&)** Can you please tell us about the publication *O Menelick*?

**RENATA FELINTO** Our publication's name is actually different from the famous King Menelik of Ethiopia – it is called *O Menelick 2º Ato*. On our website we explain that this is an independent editorial project for thinking about and endorsing artistic production of the African Diaspora, as well as the urban and vernacular cultural output from the Black West, with a special focus on Brazil. We launched the project in 2007 as a blog: [omenelicksegundoato.blogspot.com](http://omenelicksegundoato.blogspot.com). In May 2010 the first printed version was published, after four years of research trying to find the right editorial and graphic blend to investigate the contemporary urban Black subject in relation to its ancestral roots – an issue that still informs cultural identity today. The magazine is published on a quarterly basis and distributed free of charge at cultural events, art galleries, stores, public libraries, and neighborhoods of social and political conflict in São Paulo.

**C&** How would you describe the artistic landscape in Brazil?

**RF** This question is quite generic and broad so I'll try to be specific. In terms of visual arts I see a desperate attempt to continue the work of Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Hélio Oiticica. In other words, an attempt on the part of Brazilians to inscribe themselves in a history

of art that is universal, general, and official. These three artists – all of them white – launched the Movimento Neoconcreto (Neoconcrete Movement), that proposed a reconciliation between art and life and challenged the concept of “the Eye” that perceived art according to Clement Greenberg's ideas. However, this art that claims to be reconciled with life creates no space for discussing life as experienced by so-called minority groups such as Afro-Brazilians (who are a minority in terms of political power, though not numerically). And so, to answer your question, the artistic landscape in Brazil is quite arid.

**C&** What are the challenges for Afro-Brazilian artists in the contemporary art scene? To what extent is the lack of representation linked with the history of Brazil itself, especially with its history of slavery?

**RF** There are many different challenges. Artists have to be able to live with dignity, have access to housing, food, clothing, education, and health care. Not all of us have that. Once we get to that point, we could focus more on the creative process. Also, scholars and academics in Brazil can't seem to understand why we [Afro-Brazilian artists] need to create visual works informed by certain issues and histories. It would be a great step forward to be able to engage freely with themes that are relevant to us while in academia, and to have

our production accepted by professors. The historical context is fully related to our present situation. Our present reality is not the result of inability, but it is a result of the racist structure in place. And this structure is so efficient that Black people believe they are somehow responsible for the scarcity and oppression in which they live. Slavery is very present in our current social relations.

**C&** Can you tell us about some Afro-Brazilian artists and projects that you find inspiring? Where are they mainly based? Which alternative means and spaces are important for their work, and how do they empower themselves and achieve success?

**RF** Afro-Brazilian artists with some visibility are mainly located in the southeast region, especially in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, and to some extent in Bahia. There are many names I would like to mention, but I will focus on the ones that have been important to my own practice as a visual artist: Rosana Paulino, Yêdamaria, Michelle Mattiuzzi, Moisés Patrício, Janaina Barros, Priscila Rezende, Sidney Amaral, Tiago Gualberto, Marcelo D'Saete, Jaime Lauriano, Olyvia Bynum. All of them attended university. Rosana Paulino has a PhD in visual art, the first Afro-Brazilian artist to achieve this in Brazil. Note the gap we have: the first Black artist to receive a PhD in visual arts in the USA was Jeff Donaldson in 1974; Rosana Paulino received her PhD in 2010. Many of these artists are very focused on having gallery representation, but some are taking advantage of public grants and have been successful.<sup>1</sup> This has also worked well for me.

**C&** How do you collaborate with other Black artists or artists of African descent whose networks are in the Americas and on the African continent?

**RF** It is a huge challenge to know what is going on in the visual arts from the African Diaspora in different countries. *O Menelick 2° Ato* is our small but unique contribution to this challenge by publishing articles about, and interviews with, artists from other parts of the world. Sometimes we only introduce an image and the artist's name. It is enough to rouse the readers' curiosity.

**C&** What is your vision in terms of making Afro-Brazilian art and voices visible?

**RF** My research focuses on Afro-Brazilian artists but I don't think we need a label such as "Afro-Brazilian art." We should demand that the art that speaks about us and to us, as well as to others, is just called art. And this art will reflect our history, our anguish, our dreams, our myths, our images, and our desires, just as the art of white artists does. If a Black artist doesn't want to address any of these themes, it is up to him or her. However, I see it as the product of a process of identity alienation, one that has been imposed on us since birth, and it is incredibly efficient.



Renata Felinto, *White Face, Blonde Hair*, 2013.  
C-Print. Courtesy of the artist

*This interview is part of our online C& series taking a closer look at Afro-Brazilian presence and cultural production.*

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Brazil has a specific system: the federal, state and city governments offer certain grants/awards every year. These grants end up being an alternative to artists who don't have gallery representation and don't sell their work. Besides having a day job (many of them are educators/professors) they apply for these grants/awards. Once selected, they have funds to realize book projects or exhibition projects that they wouldn't have otherwise.

**RENATA APARECIDA FELINTO DOS SANTOS** is a São Paulo-based visual artist, scholar, and educator. She is a doctoral candidate at UNESP Art Institute and holds bachelor's and master's degrees in visual arts from the same institution. Felinto is a professor of African Art and Culture in the Art History, Theory, and Criticism Graduate Course at Centro Belas Arts. She is a member of the editorial board of the publication *O Menelick 2° Ato*.



Renata Felinto, *White Face, Blonde Hair*, 2013.  
C-print. Courtesy of the artist

**ADDIS FINE ART** is a new gallery space in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa that was established to cater to the growing public interest and participation in the country's visual arts.

## A NEW GALLERY CATERS TO GROWING INTEREST IN ETHIOPIAN ART

**CONTEMPORARY AND (C&)** Congratulations on launching the gallery Addis Fine Art in January 2016. How would you describe AFA?

**ADDIS FINE ART** The gallery is the culmination of work we started in 2013, providing curatorial and advisory services related to Ethiopian modern and contemporary art to our clients. AFA started in response to an increasing demand for engagement with and information related to art from this region. Since most of the requests came from private collectors, international institutions, and galleries, we quickly realized that Ethiopian art lacked cohesive local and international representation, despite an increase in independent art institutions across Africa. It's with this mission in mind that we decided to open a gallery emerging from a local space in the heart of Ethiopia's capital, showcasing modern and contemporary art from Ethiopia and its Diaspora and simultaneously engaging Ethiopian artists and the global art market.

**C&** Bringing together artistic practices and perspectives from Ethiopia and its Diaspora is at the core of your project. How do you see these connections, especially in terms of collaboration and access?

**AFA** Our primary aim is to provide a local space and an international platform for artistic expression from Ethiopia and its Diaspora, to champion the most critical, thought-provoking, and cutting-edge output. However, the fact that the artists we work with are of Ethiopian origin is only a point of departure, not the whole story. Some artists challenge the assumed "African" aesthetic and some use the rich tapestry of their cultural heritage as an integral

part of their work. Regardless of how their art is expressed, the artists we work with are determined to convey their personal narratives and develop their creative practices in an increasingly interconnected world. We are particularly excited by a new generation of artists from this region such as Dawit Abebe, Emanuel Tegene, Leikun Nahusenay, Tamrat Gezahegne, Robel Temesgen, Aida Muluneh, and many more, who are influenced not only by their local contexts, but also use the exchange of international information and ideas as part of the creative process. AFA aims to be part of the local creative network by helping to bring new talent to a wider audience, whilst strengthening the presence of Ethiopian art within the global arena.

**C&** Tell us a bit more about your inaugural show *Addis Calling*, featuring painting, photography, and mixed media. Who are the artists showing and what are the links between them?

**AFA** *Addis Calling* celebrates the breadth and depth of artistic practice in Ethiopia through the presentation of works by seven contemporary artists who live and work in Addis Ababa. We wanted to showcase the variety of artistic expression that can be found in this city. The exhibition is a vibrant mix of painting, photography, and mixed media and reflects the city's dynamic perspectives. *Addis Calling* presents four painters: Dawit Abebe's new series *Rank and Providence* explores the relationship between society and those in positions of authority. His work is concerned with the visible imbalances of power in modern life. Yosef Lule explores the impact of urbanization on traditions, religions, and lifestyles in Addis Ababa. Tamrat Gezahegne is known for his



Dawit Abebe, *Rank & Providence II*, 2015.  
Acrylic on canvas & mixed media.  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art



Dawit Abebe, *Rank & Providence I*, 2015.  
Acrylic on canvas & mixed media.  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art

bold use of color and the repetition of motifs, but his practice also extends to installation and performance art. Emanuel Tegene is regarded as an emerging talent who started his career as a cartoonist at *Saloon Ethiopia*. Tegene's pieces explore changing cultural dynamics in local society and are deeply rooted in his own personal encounters. We are also pleased to be representing Emanuel in this year's Armory Focus in New York. Mixed-media artist Workneh Bezu draws inspiration for many of his compositions from his own dreams. Figures in Bezu's paintings are often immersed in a supernatural world. Bezu's practice extends to animation film, puppet making and sculpture. Experimental works in fine art photography complete the group show. Leikun Nahusenay's recognition as a fine-art photographer is steadily growing. Using double-exposure photography, Nahusenay documents the daily life and cultural motifs in Jijiga, the capital of the Somali region of Ethiopia. Fine-art photographer Michael Tsegaye documents his surroundings. Series such as *Future Memories* display the artist's grasp of change and the shifting topography of the city. Tsegaye's work has been featured in the exhibition *Snap Judgments: New Directions in African Photography* (2007) and in the *New York Times*. Despite their various



Emanuel Tegene, *Black Chicken & Somali Tea*, 2015.  
Acrylic on canvas.  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art

mediums, these artists are linked by the city of Addis Ababa.

**C&** Addis Ababa seems to be slowly emerging as a thriving, creative hub. How do you perceive the reactions to this and who is the possible audience?

**AFA** The future of the creative scene looks very promising as Addis Ababa is second to Geneva regarding its number of international offices and NGOs, which makes the city very important politically. The presence of this large, transient expatriate community lends support to the local art scene. The number of local artists invited to participate in art fairs and to show their work in prominent galleries and museums around the world is unprecedented. International collectors are noticing and buying, whilst local collectors are also spending significant amounts on artwork, which was unthinkable just a decade ago. The growing public participation in art-related events is also very encouraging. The youth of the city, in particular, are the most visible participants, and the most receptive to new forms of expression that challenge traditional norms.

**C&** Where do you see AFA in 5 years?

**AFA** Since Addis Ababa has become the political capital of Africa, our hope is that AFA will be a significant contributor to making it an influential cultural hub as well. In order to accomplish this, we plan to execute an innovative program of exhibitions, talks, and events in our main local exhibition space. We intend to enrich our program by initiating collaborations and dialogues with artists, curators, and practitioners from the continent, while increasing our presence at international art fairs and developing international pop-up spaces. Furthermore, we are planning to expand our physical presence in one or more cities outside of Africa.

*Addis Fine Art* presents EMANUEL TEGENE at the 2016 Armory Show Focus: African Perspectives in New York, 3–6 March 2016.



Tamrat Gezahegne, *Indigenous Sky III*, 2015.  
Acrylic on canvas.  
Courtesy of the artist and Addis Fine Art

## FOCUS ON NOW, NOT TOMORROW

Curator **REEM FADDA**, who is directing the sixth edition of the **MARRAKECH BIENNALE**, speaks about the necessity of solidarity, action, collectivity, and empowerment in a turbulent world.



Khaled Malas, *Windmill in Arbin, Eastern Ghouta*, 2015. Windmill.  
Photo: Yaseen al-Bushy. Courtesy of the artist and the Marrakech Biennale

**CONTEMPORARY AND (C&)** The Marrakech Biennale is presenting its 6th edition this year. How did it all start?

**REEM FADDA** The Biennale started six editions ago through the initiative of Vanessa Branson to counter stereotypical images emanating from the region in a post-9/11 world. It has grown to become a larger international platform of arts and is fully embraced by the Moroccan community. I was invited to curate this year's edition by members of the board, among them Curt Marcus and Vanessa Branson. The deal was sealed when I met with the director Amine Kabbaj and the team and we decided to make a venture out of this.

**C&** The Bamako Encounters regained their impetus last year and Dak'Art will present its 12th edition this year. How do you see the cultural and social role of biennales on the continent?

**RF** Biennales are a great vehicle, especially for places and cities without the standardized art infrastructure to host art and artists. They provide a break from the institutionalized and market-driven models of artmaking. In many ways, they allow a space, a tabula rasa for art to return to its rudimentary roots, to start to investigate the real motives for art. This brings art back to people and society in terms of subject matter, relatedness, and accessibility. Somehow this art becomes less taboo and more approachable, especially in relation

to how it should be exhibited and regarded. Biennales ultimately make art more democratic.

**C&** The Biennale's title Not New Now is quite refreshing – there is an underlying tone of resistance. What does the title mean? And how does it fit into the curatorial program of the Biennale?

**RF** The title for the 6th Marrakech Biennale, Not New Now, was meant to be a provocation and is quite broad with many angles and focuses, which was intentional because it allowed me to develop a framework for art that has to inhabit a city. I have been debating some of the core ideas and strategies for many years. This came as a great opportunity to present them all on a grand scale, and in a way that not just inhabits a gallery space but envelops a city like Marrakech.

The starting point for me was to focus on the place. Basically I'm presenting art that comes mostly from a regional source that spans the Afro-Asian area and its Diaspora. This is about solidarity as a train of thought. I believe that in this turbulent world, solidarity, action, collectivity, and empowerment are essential. Europe is no longer just European but has in many ways also become African. So what does it mean to see art from Africa and the Arab world and particularly to see it in its place? The title incorporates a lot of time concepts. It is quite complex and at the same time rather simple. I want to focus on the present. Not the past or the future. The title

## PERFORMANCES AT THE SCHOMBURG CENTER FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK CULTURE

From riveting film screenings to show-stopping jazz performances, the Schomburg Center is bringing the house down this Winter 2016 season.



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Al Loving, *Untitled*, c. 1975. Mixed media.  
 Courtesy of the Estate of Al Loving; Garth Greenan Gallery, New York and the Marrakech Biennale

embodies the urgency of focussing on the present as the time of social action, and the need to look at what is defined as “living art,” rather than contemporary art – a kind of art that is continually evolving and responsive to society and life. Ultimately I am interested in art that is political, but I’m also invested in presenting a formula of art that harnesses politics and action plus poetics and contemplation. You will also see a show that presents living histories. So yes, in essence this title also encapsulates resistance.

**C&** The filmmaker/documentarian Jihan El Tahri said during the 1:54 forum in London in 2015: “This notion of North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa separated by this belt of nothingness that is the Sahara is a fabricated concept. The Sahara has traditionally been a space of cultural exchange, of trade, of all sorts of exchange.” What do you think of this statement, and how do you see the interchanges between North Africa and the space called “Sub-Saharan Africa?”

**RF** Of course these geographical divisions are imaginary. I think Morocco is a country that proves through its diversity, coexistence, and fluidity of cultures, that these borders and boundaries are just imagined. It is also important to remember that Morocco in fact conjoins the Sahara desert in its very terrain and geographical and demographic fabric. Statements that claim nothingness of the Sahara are colonial in their very nature and are excuses for

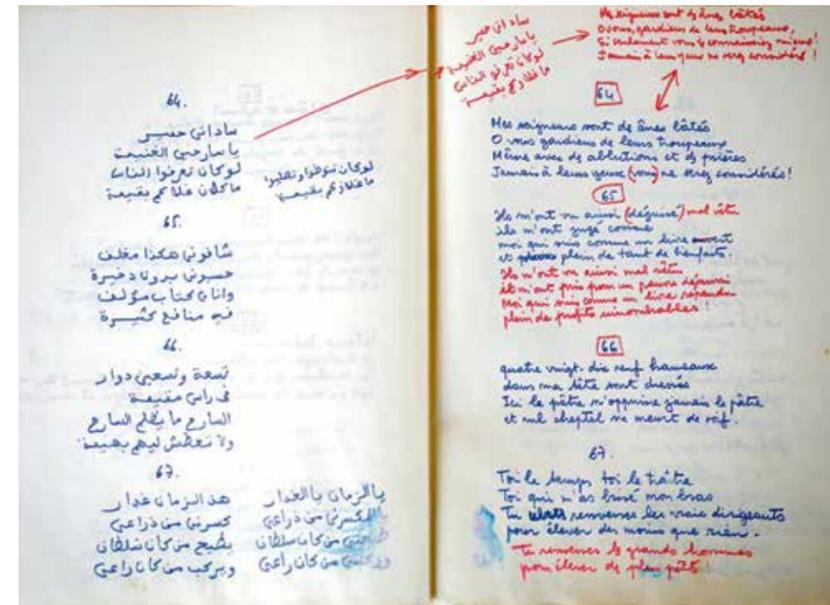
separation and, ultimately, domination. This immediately reminds me of the claims made around the founding of the State of Israel that Palestine was a land empty of people and culture. I think it is important to remind ourselves of the richness of culture, wherever it is, and the ultimate possibilities of learning from it when rejecting hierarchical claims.

**C&** The Biennale Jogja in Indonesia collaborated with Nigeria in 2015. You also focus on Afro-Asian connections and solidarity. Please tell us a bit more about these interesting aspects and perspectives.

**RF** The curatorial project will acknowledge the contributions of key historical experiences of the second half of the twentieth century – such as Pan-Afro-Asian unity – which generated a transnational, activist, and intellectual collectivity. The biennale will present art that embodies the political, the aesthetic, and the poetic at the same time. This curatorial perspective will challenge the concept of the new, while at the same time highlighting shared elements and tropes of the artistic and cultural landscape of the region. And while looking at the era of decolonization, it will explore the failure of these resistance projects and the legacies that remain, to help us understand better the current situation we are facing.

The 6th Marrakech Biennale takes place 24 February – 8 May 2016.

**BEHIND EVERY MAP**  
 PHILIPPE REKACEWICZ'S maps show how the phenomenon of migration relates to the issue of political borders.  
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Ahmed Bouanani, *French translation of poems by Abderrahman Al Majdoub* (unpublished, 1976-77). Pen on paper.  
 Courtesy of the artist and the Marrakech Biennale



Bouchra Khalili, *Speeches – Chapter 3: Living Labour*, 2013. Digital film from *The Speeches Series*, a video trilogy. View of the installation at *Living Labour*, solo exhibition, PAMM, Miami, 2013. Courtesy of the artist; Galerie Polaris, Paris; and the Marrakech Biennale

# THERE ISN'T ONE WAY OF DOING THINGS

London multimedia artist **APPAU JUNIOR BOAKYE-YIADOM** draws on various inspirations for his work. He talks about Michael Jackson, MF Doom, and John Akomfrah with **HANSI MOMODU-GORDON**.



Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom, *4 mins and 6 of Conversation*, 2014. Installation image. Courtesy of the artist



Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom, *Untitled (Language Research)*, 2015. Video still. Courtesy of the artist



Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom, *Carmine Lake*, 2015. From *Baste on Narration* series (2014-). Video still. Courtesy of the artist

The free, expressive language of rhythm dancing connects Yorkshire clogs to West African steps. Pigments, introduced via trade routes, drawn from fantastical early Flemish painting, connect plantain to malachite and to an unstable idea of the exotic: Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom's layered practice is concerned with the possibilities that arise through slight gestures and incongruous pairings. Spanning still images and found objects, videos assembled with archival footage, and installations ignited by live actions, Boakye-Yiadom's works are a refusal of singular narrative, a celebration of multiplicity.

**HANSI MOMODU-GORDON** *P.Y.T.* (2009) uses found objects and subtle gestures, as a pair of black penny loafers are held on tiptoes by a cloud of colorful balloons touching the ceiling. I am interested to know what the title stands for, but also in the role found objects play in your earlier works and how this is shifting in your more recent practice.

**APPAU JUNIOR BOAKYE-YIADOM** It's that Michael Jackson stance. I was trying to somehow encapsulate this iconic image and insert myself into that narrative. The title is from Michael Jackson's song "Pretty Young Thing," which relates to the work's formal situation

as well. The balloons can't last forever and eventually the piece diminishes, so it was a reflection on that. I was very much aware of the space itself when making this piece, and that it spans from the floor to the ceiling. In more recent works, using video has meant moving away from objects and I just naturally started appropriating other found things. Whether it's an iconic image or an object, I am attracted to things that already exist in the world. I still have that same approach, but with different material.

**HMG** Your ongoing series *Baste on Narration* (2014-) brings together references to Flemish painter Hieronymus Bosch, Russ Meyer's 1976 sexploitation film *Up!*, and music from Travis Biggs's 1976 rendition of the Steve Miller Band's track "Fly Like an Eagle." Can you describe how the installation comes together in a space, what led you to these source materials, and how they inform the work?

**AJBY** There are two monitors, one on top of the other. The top one shows a clip taken from *Up!*, this black screen that unzips, so you are revealed and you've got somebody looking down at you. There is something about Russ Meyer's cinematography that I find quite compelling. The monitor on the bottom displays a sequence of colors

that were used in Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1503-1515). In a voice-over I am narrating the colors of his palette to the backing track of "Fly Like an Eagle" by Travis Biggs. Color was at the core of this piece. I was looking at *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and thinking about how it reflects early Flemish exploration, travel, and trade outside of Europe. The time it was created was quite an optimistic time. Everything was exotic: the food, the animals. It's likely that Bosch himself wouldn't have seen all these things firsthand, but he still depicts them in his painting. There are fantastical fruits and animals, and the people enjoying these earthly delights are of various ethnicities. I have used a still from the "unzip" scene in *Up!* in recent prints. The woman's identity is quite ambiguous, and challenges the idea of the exotic. Most of the vegetables I collage her with were taken from East Street Market in London. Sweet potato, Scotch bonnet, plantain, okra: all these things are perishable goods grown outside of Europe and they all represent a color from Hieronymus Bosch's palette. So there's malachite, copper resinate, etc. Pigment was also introduced through trade and I was thinking about the new colors that would have been introduced during Bosch's time.

**HMG** *4 minutes 6 of Conversation* (2015) brings together your approach to archival research, process, and materials, using references from across different geographies. What was the evolution of this piece?

**AJBY** I wanted to make a work reflecting 1960s male soul groups and their synchronized routines. I thought it was interesting how the gestures are always really slight and soft; it's never too much. I knew I wanted to use a tambourine beat, which is a particularly 1960s soul sound, as I was so keen on incorporating sound right from the beginning. I searched through a lot of archival material and started looking at *No Maps on My Taps* (1979), featuring three tap dancers from the heyday – Chuck Green, Bunny Briggs and Sandman Sims – who in 1979 are looking back, saying, "Nobody's interested in this now, things have moved on." This was one of the first times I incorporated archival material in my work and I wanted to make it my own. I was initially interested in finding footage of different dance traditions and looking at how they evolve within the language of that dance. However, I realized I had to think about other ways of talking about the Black transatlantic performer, because that is what the piece came to represent. The research led me from Yorkshire clog dancing to Harlem, New York, to West Africa.



Appau Junior Boakye-Yiadom, P.Y.T., 2009. Installation image. " Courtesy of the artist

**HANSI MOMODU-GORDON**

is an independent curator, writer, and producer with recent projects at Autograph ABP and The Showroom (2015). Her book of artist interviews *9 Weeks* is published by Stevenson (2016). She has held curatorial positions at the Tate Modern (2011-15), Turner Contemporary (2009-11), and the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (2008-09), and published writing on contemporary art with *The Walther Collection*, *Rencontres de Bamako 10th edition*, *Contemporary And (C&)*, *Frieze*, and elsewhere.

All of this is connected, part of a non-linguistic story. I'm interested in how non-literary forms are used for storytelling and the continuation of cultural heritage. The online availability of visual and moving image archives adds a new layer to this, with the possibility of appropriating stories and re-presenting them to new audiences. In certain cultures, you have dances that are passed down to different generations and slightly changed so as to keep them relevant. I was very interested in that particular history of sound and dance music.

**HMG** Among your influences you have referenced The Black Audio Film Collective and in particular the works of John Akomfrah as well as Haim Steinbach's shelf pieces. What is it about these practitioners that you feel an affinity with?

**AJBY** I really like seeing a Steinbach. It's just a reminder of how doing very little can be very effective. He creates this democratic plane that just holds as one. As for John Akomfrah, I've heard him talk about this idea of multiplicity and that's what I am really interested in. Both artists manage to unify seemingly incongruous objects or ideas and to bring in different references, so that in a way their work becomes a truer reflection of society. Musically, the person/album I listen to and who reflects what I want to do with my art is MF Doom "Mm.. Food." The way he samples things, it's this cut-and-paste that's really appealing.

**HMG** What ideas are you exploring at the moment?

**AJBY** I have been working on a few things around language, bringing together the New Year's greeting "this time next year" in Twi, the Ghanaian language, with *Only Fools and Horses* and Del Boy's one-liner "This time next year, we'll be millionaires." I'm also starting to bring in more performance, narrations with visuals, and making that live. I feel that as an artist I want to show that there is not one single way, there is just multiplicity.

National Gallery of Zimbabwe Harare, Zimbabwe February 4 – April 4, 2016  
 Makerere Art Gallery Kampala, Uganda April 14 – June 12, 2016  
 Städtische Galerie Bremen, Germany September 24 – December 11, 2016

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 PHOTOGRAPHIC PROCESS, C PRINT ON FABRIANO  
 100% COTTON PAPER, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Funded by the TURN Fund of the  
 German Federal Cultural Foundation

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