

Condition Report 3: Symposium on Art History in Africa

20 - 22 September 2018

Thursday 20 September: **Art History and Africa**

Venue: Musée des Civilisations Noires

08:30 – 09:30 Registration and coffee

09:30 – 10:00 Welcome remarks & General orientation

- Abdoulatif Coulibaly, Minister of Culture, Senegal
- Thomas Wixler, Deputy Chief of Mission at German Embassy Dakar
- Koyo Kouoh, Founding Artistic Director RAW Material Company
- Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi, Curator, Cleveland Museum of Art

10:00 – 11:00

KEYNOTE

In and Out of Africa: African Art History as a Paradox!

Salah Hassan, Cornell University

This keynote lecture hopes to address the need for an innovative framework that is capable of critically unpacking the paradoxes of current and historical African art history, and to offer a critical analysis of not only contemporary African and African diasporic artistic production, but also the discipline of African art history in and out of Africa. In doing so, the importance of movement, mobility, and transiency will be asserted in addressing issues of contemporary African artistic, cultural and consequently knowledge production.

11:00 - 13:00

SESSION 1: 1992 – 2018 : Dak'art Biennale and bending the arc of art history

The opening session considers an arc of art history in which Dak'art plays a central role. During the twentieth century, Western interests in African art expanded, and exhibitions became the primary site of exchange for negotiating the value of African art. Scholars have suggested that the crystallization of contemporary art at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s resulted in a seismic change in the way in which art constitutes and addresses its viewer, and finds a parallel with other contemporary hegemonic configurations such as globalization and neo-liberalism. As the preeminent exhibitionary platform in Africa,

Dak'Art provides a context to map the changes in the topography of contemporary African art since the 1990s. Its emancipatory vision and postcolonial discourse can serve as useful frameworks in writing a global art history from the continent's perspective.

1. Toward a Canon of Contemporary [African] Art : Dak'art and History Making
Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi, Curator, Cleveland Museum of Art
2. A History of the Main Complaint
Sean O'Toole, journalist, art critic and editor
3. Entangled Accounts
Dominique Malaquais, Institut des Mondes Africains

Moderated by Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi

13:00 – 14:15 Lunch break

14:15 - 16:30

SESSION 2: LOCALIZING ART HISTORIES

The second session considers art histories that take into account national boundaries and sovereignty as frames of reference and locus of inquiry. The aim is to think beyond the meta-narrative or broad rubric that African art history suggests and to consider forms of art historical narratives that carry within them local memories and cultural experiences and national consciousness. In this regard, the panel examines specific trajectories of artistic production focusing on the countries of Nigeria, Ethiopia and Angola.

1. Narrating a Visual History of Benin: The Benin1897.com Project
Peju Layiwola, University of Lagos
2. Art in Ethiopia during the Derg (1974-1991)
Elizabeth Giorgis, Addis Ababa University

3. Art and culture in a complex geopolitical context in Angola; The political contexts of current and past Angolan art

Susana Souza, ISCTE-University Institut of Lisbon

Moderated by Ruth Simbao, Professor of Fine Arts at Rhodes University

17:30 - 19:00

SESSION 3: PENC, A SENEGALESE ART HISTORY

Venue: Village des Arts

Building on the previous session, this panel focuses on local Senegalese art history dominated by sweeping narratives of the institutionalized Negritude-inspired Ecole de Dakar and the iconoclastic Laboratoire Agit'Art that challenged it. Arguably, the two strands form the basis on which Senegalese art is canonized and written into art history. This panel thus asks: what are the other contending or competing narratives that are either ignored or suppressed? How might they better provide a fuller or more compelling picture of Senegalese artistic modernism and contemporaneity?

Abdou Ba, Babacar Mbaye Diop, Zulu Mbaye, Abdou Sylla, Sylvain Sankale & artists of Village des Arts

Moderated by Massamba Mbaye, art critic

Friday 21 September: **Old and New; Praxis and Contexts**

Venue: Musée des Civilisations Noires

9:00 – 09:30 Registration & Coffee

9:30 - 11:30

SESSION 4: HISTORY OF AFRICAN ART HISTORY

The challenges and best practice for African art historical research have been hotly debated on the pages of academic journals such as African Arts, yet methodologies and epistemological frameworks for scholarship have yet to shed their historical West-centric frames of reference. This panel examines the development of the field of African art history, tracing its colonial

origins at the turn of the twentieth century, highlighting the various forces that have shaped it in more than a century, and examining the various criticisms that have plagued it as a field of knowledge that to all intents and purposes is yet to depart from its Western roots.

1. The Creation of the gaze: Presentation and Consequences of the Reception of African Arts in the West at the Beginning of the 20th Century
Yaëlle Biro, Metropolitan Museum
2. Shattering Single Stories in the Teaching of Historical Arts of Africa
Susan Elizabeth Gagliardi, Emory University
3. The Anxieties and Stalemates Surrounding the History(ies) of Modern and Contemporary Global and African Art - The Case of the DRC
Emi Koide, Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB)

Moderated by Dominique Malaquais

12:00 - 13:00

KEYNOTE 2: *Korabra*: Reflections on “returning”, curating and transnational African art histories

Paul Goodwin, Professor of Contemporary Art and Urbanism and Director of TrAIN Research Centre (Transnational Art, Identity and Nation), University of the Arts London

This paper will describe and analyse the curatorial intervention I led as part of the Black Artists and Modernism (BAM) project in re-presenting four of the original seven works by Gavin Jantjes’ *Korabra* series in an exhibition at the Herbert Gallery in Coventry in 2016. In particular the paper will discuss the notion of return embedded in the very idea of “*Korabra*” and in the works themselves. In thinking about this curatorial and research intervention as series of “returns” - to the art object, to the fundamentals of curating and to transnational art histories linking Africa and the diaspora - the paper will reflect on the opportunities and perils that can be identified as part of the process of returning. How do we return to the work of art? And what are the implications of this return for creating radical and “recalcitrant” forms of curatorial and art historical practice?

Respondent Dulcie Abrahams Altass, Curatorial Assistant RAW Material Company

13:00 – 14:15 Lunch break

14:30 to 16:30

SESSION 5: Modalities of Art Historical Production

This panel session considers activities and platforms that are generating art historical content and theoretical frameworks that center Africa. It is the case that Africa is approached as a space of anomie to be studied and researched using analytical tools that are often forged elsewhere. This session thus examines independent initiatives upending or expanding conventional praxis of art history through methodologies and modalities that carry grounded experiences from around the continent as well as those that assume pan-African, intercontinental and international ramifications.

1. Many Stories Matter: RAW Material Company and the RAW Académie
RAW Material Company, Eva Barois De Caevel
2. Now, What Next : On Asiko Curatorial Platform
Center for Contemporary Art, Iheanyi Onwuegbucha
3. Art of the Stateless
Chimurenga, Ntone Edjabe
4. Man Weh E Get Ear Make E Hear: Eleven Anecdotes On An Impossible
Sonohisteriography
Savvy Contemporary, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

Moderated by Koyo Kouoh

17:00 – 18:00

Musée des Civilisations Noires and Art History

Conversation between Hamady Bocoum and *El Hadj Malick Ndiaye*

Saturday 22 September: **Perspectives on Knowledge Making**

09:00 – 10:30

SESSION 6: The IFAN MUSEUM and Senegalese art history

Venue: Musée de l'IFAN

A visit with curator El Hadj Malick Ndiaye

11:00 - 13:00

SESSION 7: Situating Africa as the Legitimizing Site of Knowledge Making

Venue: Musée des Civilisations Noires

The 1962 International Congress of African Cultures at the then Rhodes National Gallery (now the National Gallery of Zimbabwe), signaled a radical departure from the colonial style of representing African art as the spoils of the European conquerors, exemplified in colonial expositions which thrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is arguable that the successes of ICAC and subsequent pan-African festivals and other cultural events in the early postcolonial period in situating Africa as a site of its own knowledge production and affirmation have not been sustained or replicated decades later. Yet, with the emergence of a fresh wave decolonial turn in the last few years globally, what are the emerging strategies that can help to best situate Africa as a legitimizing site for its own art historical knowledge production?

1. Geopolitics and the Arts of Africa: A Walk with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o
Ruth Simbao, Rhodes University

2. Future Histories
Nana Oforiatta Ayim, ANO, Accra, Ghana

Moderated by Paul Goodwin, Professor of Contemporary Art and Urbanism and Director of TrAIN Research Centre (Transnational Art, Identity and Nation), University of the Arts London

13:30 – 15:00 Lunch

15:00 – 17:00

SESSION 8: PLENARY

This session will recap the high points of debates and discourses that have emerged during the run of the symposium

- Paul Goodwin
- Salah Hassan
- Koyo Kouoh
- Peju Layiwola
- Ugochukwu-Smooth Nzewi