

When things fall apart
Critical voices on the radars

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Critical Voices

N'Goné Fall

*The one who has learnt without understanding,
The one who has understood without learning,
The one who has neither learnt, nor understood,
These three will, one day, cause the destruction of humanity.*
Fulani proverb from Fouta Djallon, West Africa.

Has the world really changed since the old Europe “discovered new worlds”? The globalization of trade, establishment of new commercial routes, the virtual opening of borders, the access to foreign cultures and knowledge systems, accelerated speed of travel and means of communication, all these facts make us believe that the world has radically changed for the better since the end of the 15th century. However, the Epic of the Great Explorers, full of panache and seeking glory, often keeps under a modest veil the structural, economic, social and cultural upheavals it generated. If, thanks to the reports of Arab travellers, Asia and Africa were not a revelation, the Americas and Pacific islands were great surprises. These voyages, which were not motivated by a desire for the Other but by the lure of profit, gave rise to the most improbable fantasies and fuelled irrational expectations of infinite wealth. With the benevolent and self-interested blessing of the church, royal courts and states financed expeditions that, in the name of God, pillaged, slaughtered and converted by force. All these encounters, which involved brutal or insidious confrontations, were based on the arrogant assumption that the so-called great European civilization had the right to take over foreign lands and subjugate their people in order to prosperously grow.

Throughout the centuries, right up to the end of the Second World War, there was a persistent status quo: to never question the legitimacy of the European conquest and occupation of territories with “backward or inferior, or even non-existent civilizations”. A legitimacy based on an unwavering conviction of superiority and impunity that sent Great Explorers to take hold of overseas wealth and bearers of a civilizing mission to rescue indigenous souls from damnation. An unlikely legitimacy still denying to this day that these encounters led to destruction and genocide in the occupied territories as well as to the regeneration of western civilization. For there is no encounter without “cultural contamination”. Culture is a living organ in continuous mutation, which reinvents itself by passing through the phases of decline, loss of direction and renewal, as determined by its external contacts. Indeed, while travelling, people carry with them a conception of the world that is transmitted and adjusted through contact with other peoples. No society of sound mind would claim the absolute purity of its culture, but rather a culture of diversity founded on multiple borrowings that arise from migrations sparked by exploration, conquest, war and natural disasters. 20th century technological progress has generated an increase in physical and virtual travels, leading to a radical change in our perception of space and time, thus questioning the borders of countries, who we are, where we come from, the nature of our identities and social values. Resisting the inevitable cultural contamination will simply make it a long and painful process. All contemporary cultures, whether popular or intellectual, arise from the ashes of battles between antagonistic civilizations that fought for survival or ascendancy. This is the paradox of our contemporary societies which, although born of a global

"bastard" culture, continue to deny one of their progenitors. The endless consequences of the encounter of civilizations, which is itself linked to the Explorers' journey, can be summed up as a parricidal power game saga that had different episodes with two well defined recurrent actors: the Western Predator and the Non-Western Victim.

In *Things Fall Apart*, published in 1958, Nigerian author Chinua Achebe masterfully portrayed these two generic characters confronted with changing worlds and obstinately resisting the collapse of secular certitudes. In this groundbreaking novel, written in English and translated into more than fifty languages, the protagonists, who on the face of it seem to have nothing in common, both undergo the painful experience of power play. Through the fabric of the novel run the threads of manipulation and lying, pride and insecurity, lack of understanding from either one's own or the opposing camp, rejection and opprobrium, injustice and frustration, lack of support and solidarity, as well as the despair arising from powerlessness to cope with a complex situation. *Things fall apart* addresses the denial of the Other because of his difference; autocratic regimes blighting society; resistance to change and the inability to adapt to a world inexorably changing for the better and the worse. The tragic destiny of Okwonko, the main character in the novel, is due to his obstinate refusal to accept the ineluctable evolution of his universe. A mutation he struggles to accept because he cannot conceive it, does not perceive it and does not understand it. And this refusal will lead to his ruin, to his being the powerless witness of what he thinks is the decline of his age-old society, which, far from disappearing, is only undergoing metamorphosis and regeneration. Although the

story describes a 19th century context, the world hasn't really changed since the British civilization encountered the Ibo one. For the power game saga portrayed by Achebe – with the desire for domination and subjugation – seems to be endless. In fact, our contemporary societies always naively imagine that they are unique, and still define themselves in opposition to others whom they consider as vital external threats to eradicate. And in spite of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ratified by 193 nations on all continents, recent geo-political events reveal a world-wide increase in intolerance and extremism, as well as an unbelievable lack of empathy and international solidarity. This disturbing context, based on hostility and ostracism, leads many of us to the conclusion that the Other is not our brother or sister, has never been and never will be; it is an enemy to neutralize or destroy so as to maintain our own system of values alive and intact. And it matters little if this murder necessitates our own loss.

The exhibition *When things fall apart, Critical voices on the radars* is a metaphor of Achebe's novel. But rather than staging the dichotomy of a hostile geopolitical, economic, socio-cultural and religious relationship based on "us" versus "them", it transcends our relations with others by analyzing contextual similarities between *Things fall apart* and our own time. As indeed, in our contemporary era the values of the Age of Enlightenment are no longer anything but a romantic memory gathering dust in old history books. The world of today has buried the concept of a universal moral code based on a common human condition. Societies, increasingly build on groups sharing the same land, the same skin color, the same religion, the same social values and the same cultural

references, withdraw themselves behind solid concrete and barbed wire borders reckoned to be impregnable. Physical travel has become a potentially dangerous act since the collective consciousness decreed that foreign territories – whether a neighboring town or another continent – had been invaded by hordes of vindictive barbarians and terrorists of all kinds with improbable demands and unacceptable actions. The encounter with the Other now happens through the reassuring screen of a computer or a cell phone that serves as a benevolent protective wall. For the Other is potentially interesting, funny, relevant and inspiring on condition that he remains at home, at a distance, and contents himself with posting videos, photographs and short texts on his well-regulated little life so similar to our own. These new virtual communities, borrowing the codes of the clan, share the same aesthetic and socio-cultural references as well as the same jargon. This new tendency of dehumanized contact scarcely conceals the inability of human beings to positively challenge encounter and to embrace their fears, whether real or phantasmagorical. For this stranger in the mirror, on the other side of the screen or the frontier, who is considered malevolent because different, has become the reflection of our own anxieties. Almost sixty years after the first publication of his novel Achebe is undoubtedly a visionary mind to urgently revisit, as the context of *Things fall apart* and Okonkwo's trajectory have ironic echoes that seem to ridicule the world of today. For the (re)-discovery of all the lands of the earth during past centuries, like the abolition of frontiers made virtually possible thanks to the internet today, has, instead of opening up an infinite realm of inspiring interactions, created a vast intersection of fratricidal conflict. For however much this might displease the narrow-minded, these are always

fratricidal conflicts, as there is only one race: the human race. Achebe's novel acts as an implacable warning reminding us that the little we have retained of History could be the reason why societies, throughout the entire world, create their own Nemesis by living in a constant state of intolerance, rejection and fear. The desire of encounter is just an illusion; the promise of fruitful and inspiring cultural exchanges a pipe dream. It is to believe that the cultural contamination we all inherited has been stroke by an irrevocable amnesia. As the genes of spiritual values and of socio-cultural blending dating back centuries that each of us carries seem to be a taboo subject that hardly anyone dares to proclaim openly to avoid any public condemnation. The world today has put aside the great humanist ideas that extolled the notions of liberty, independence, freedom of choice, tolerance, justice, open-mindedness, curiosity and solidarity. In spite of technological progress and the appearance of material prosperity, our world, like that of Okonkwo in the 19th century, is falling apart because the general tendency to withdrawal into oneself is the first step towards obscurantism and death. In *Things fall apart*, as in all his other literary works, Chinua Achebe refuses to come out in favor of any of the extremists, and emphasizes the vital necessity to overcome our dissimilarities in order to establish dialogue and sharing, for the survival of the community is at stake, for the survival of humanity is at stake. Today, like yesterday, human beings, the architects of their past and their present, behave as tragic gravediggers of their own destiny.

When things fall apart, Critical Voices on the radars is an exhibition directing a critical gaze at a world that is drifting because it is adopting as guiding principles the denial of

difference and change, manipulation of masses and of historical facts, as well as withdrawal into oneself. Through the prism of art, twelve critical voices from Africa, South East Asia, the Middle East and Central America take a stand against societies suffering a chronic pathological deficiency of Equal Justice, Social Change and Empathy.

*There is no witness so dreadful, no accuser so terrible as the conscience that dwells in the heart of every man.**

Pascal Marthine Tayou has an almost visceral aversion to hypocrisy, pretense and conservative social codes that destroy all freedom of thought and action. At the end of the eighties, Jean Apollinaire gave up his law studies, changed his first names to Pascale Marthine in honor of his parents, and started creating installations. He was convinced that law was not an appropriate vehicle for jolting the nation into awareness and having an impact on society. Defining himself as a producer of reflections on the state of the world, his work as an artist entails a process of critical analysis of socio-political contexts. *Things fall apart*, a direct reference to Chinua Achebe's novel, evokes a contemporary world that is collapsing, deaf and blind to all signs of economic, environmental, social and political degradation. With this huge installation hanging from the ceiling, Tayou makes us believe that the entropy of the world is reaching its maximum, like a joyful apocalypse that we welcome with open arms in irresponsible thoughtlessness. And this uncontrolled sclerosis

* Polybe. Greek historian, military and political strategist, 2nd century BC.

is, with meticulous care, digging the trench of incomprehension dividing human beings.

ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE BORN FREE AND EQUAL IN DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 sounds today like a tired old song that is utopian and obsolete. Can one claim without any reasonable doubt that people, individually or collectively, really have all the same rights, irrespective of their gender, their nationality, the color of their skin, their sexual orientation, their religion and their age?

In response to how can a voice be revolutionary? four critical voices analyze the concept of Equal Justice by exploring issues related to Gender, Race and Sexuality.

Milumbe Haimbe believes that women are misrepresented or objectified in the popular media. According to her, even if current audiences' perceptions are shaped by a variety of background knowledge and cultural references, many mainstream media still portray a narrow-minded view. Haimbe is of a school of thought believing that popular culture provides the symbols, myths and resources through which we develop our sense of selfhood and constitute a common culture. The danger of stereotyping women or excluding cultural minorities from popular media is that this paints a constrained picture of what we should look like and how we should behave and live, thus denying the reality of alternative experiences. Her graphic novel *Ananiya, the Revolutionist* is centered on the story of a bold, young, black female. The artist sees her project as contributing to more justice and

equality. She believes that art has a responsibility to help introduce a radical interpretation of self-awareness that is engineered by circumstances, particularly for non-Caucasian people. By casting a minority, Haimbe tackles race, gender and sexuality, advocating acceptance of a more inclusive society. For it seems that communities do not accept difference, that an ogre is meticulously anaesthetizing our intellectual and emotional capacity to have a more diversified vision of the world. Addressing openness of mind and awareness, the work of **Arahmaiani Feisal** has been mapping the evolving meditations of an artist whose prolific life of activism and artistic practice has been steadfast in its relentless probing of social and political issues. Since 2010, a particular focus of her work has been on environmental issues in the Tibetan plateau region, where she has been actively collaborating with local monks and villagers to foster environmental preservation. In *Do not prevent the fertility of the mind* she explores questions concerning brainwashing, gender, and the inequality of human beings. It is at once a warning against the quasi irremovable system of patriarchy, a questioning of the place of women in contemporary societies and a denunciation of the way the masses are manipulated. This work, following the traditional approach of feminist artistic productions, appropriates social clichés and visual symbols to suggest that women will be the salvation of the principle of freedom of choice. **Rehema Chachage** also approaches the issue of the condition of women through a criticism of discrimination from the point of view of the stranger, the outsider, the other, the alien and the often voiceless. Of late, she has been using rituals to read into social norms and tensions, social relations and subversion. In many African countries, women have been using cultural and spiritual rituals

as mediums for molding, resisting and subverting the status quo. In her works, ritual performances are a tool to question class and identity construction. *The Flower* is a tribute to the bravery of women, their struggles and their strength. It celebrates generations of women who faced hardship due to discriminatory social, economic, and political systems. The video installation uses the motif of ritual performances to unfold nuances in gender, womanhood, generation, and sexuality. Sexual minorities are an endless source of inspiration for **Barbirye Leilah** to explore injustice, exclusion and human rights. Openly lesbian, she uses the public domain to demonstrate for her rights as well as to present her work. Her sculptures undergo a metamorphosis through the process of burning, nailing and reassembling. By reworking these found objects, she allows herself the freedom to re-imagine her world. Her working process is fuelled by a need to find a language to respond to the anti-homosexuality bill, as well as to address the increasing intolerance of her society. Her performances become metaphors of her social context when she buries a fire. This act is a symbol of the experience of the LGBT community in her country: underground but not silent. For Leilah, art and activism go hand in hand; they are her weapons for denouncing the attitude of all the politicians dangerously flirting with racism and xenophobia. For the artist, being alive and jailed will always be better than any silence that will be synonymous with death.

IF YOU DON'T STAND FOR SOMETHING, YOU WILL FALL FOR ANYTHING.

This declaration by Malcolm X, American politician and civil rights activist, seems exaggerated and outmoded in a 21st

century considering itself mature and which has been predicted to be spiritual in nature. But the history of the 20th century and the upheavals of this new millennium remind us that people should take a stand as individuals as well as collectively to defend and preserve their rights. Policies, ideologies and rules supposedly protecting the people are more often than not designed to split communities, increase the power of political leaders and abolish human progress.

In response to what would a radical change look like? four critical voices analyze the concept of Social Change by exploring issues related to Politics, Democracy and Human Development.

Zen Marie explores urbanity, politics, leadership, human development and nationalism. Coming from a nation where successive politicians have made use of communitarianism, questions of race and exclusion as foundations for the Apartheid regime, he follows the tradition of artists who have used art as a weapon of cultural and political resistance. *The Perfect Leader* is a video that borrows social and dress codes as well as physical features from the collective unconscious to question the concept of the leader. As indeed it takes a great dose of arrogance or unconsciousness to lead people while making them believe that we are the only one that can drive them towards a better future. Drawing from the popular imagination, Marie derides authority and all forms of power, whether it be religious, economic, social or political. The neutral presentation of the perfect leader is just a subterfuge to emphasize all his weaknesses. From pride to pretension, though narcissism and vanity, Marie mocks the appetite of leaders for flattery. Whereas Marie adopts a light-hearted, almost affectionate tone to ridicule politicians, **Regina José**

Galindo sees them as the public enemy number one. She has dedicated her artistic research and production to denouncing their crimes against humanity and hopefully take them all down. Coming from a country that experienced 36 years of the bloodiest civil wars, left more than 200,000 dead and countless victims of physical and psychological traumas, Galindo is a radical performance artist who uses art to address politics, democracy and injustice. Taking a public stand for the indigenous people, for over a decade she has been condemning the rape of women and children, torture, massacres, the scorched earth strategy, violence, persecution and other inhuman tactics commonly practiced by the army during the dark days. The 1996 peace agreement signed between the state and the guerrillas granted amnesty for the majority of serious crimes. This was the wake-up call for Galindo, who went down into the streets and performed her disgust before the passers-by. She always involves her body in her performances, a body she injures in public as if this process would heal the wounds of a society violently coerced into denial. When the collective memory wobbles under the assault of deliberate mass manipulation caused by a perversion of established facts, History becomes an outrageous fairy tale. A society defines itself by glorifying its exploits, remaining silent about its shameful actions, and relying on the heritage of the generations of leaders that preceded it. Taking African history as matrix of her projects, **Wambui Kamiru** examines politics, history and social engagement. As a citizen, she takes responsibility for the past, the present and the future of her continent. Art is her tool for having a public conversation with people and rethinking the role and legacy of political leaders and revolutionaries. Art is also a strategy used to rewrite African history and to envision

a revolution where knowledge about the continent comes from Africans. This is, she believes, the road for people to take back ownership of their own destiny. Her video installation *Harambee63* takes 1963 – the year Kenya became independent – as a key marker of the global movement against the oppression of Black and Colored people to demonstrate that the struggle for freedom was universal and cyclical. It raises questions about the legitimacy of official history, the role of key figures and their impact on societies, as well as the general perception of the nature of a leader. These questions concerning leadership, the role of heroes and executioners, the way history is told and disseminated by political authorities, are also the dominant concern of **Thái Tuấn Nguyễn**. His series *Black Paintings* is a re-reading of history through an analysis of the impact of communism and war on his country. Colonial buildings in ruins and anonymous characters represent traces of this painful past, which is evident in the morals imposed by a regime using history as a propaganda weapon. The deterioration of cultural values, the exacerbation of religious antagonisms, the absence of justice and democracy are toxic ingredients on which the structure of the society is based. Fear, the unspoken, and denial have engendered an invisible and imperious monster that feeds psychic tensions, suppresses freedom of choice and perpetuates aberrant forms of behavior characterized by distrust and lies. No layer of society is spared by this insidious pandemic that drives one to withdrawal into an intoxicating schizophrenia feeding on the most improbable fantasies. Between the lines, the artist is urging for a nation wide therapy as the ghosts of the past can only be vanquished by confronting them squarely.

FORGETTING IS NOT AN OPTION.

In this statement, Malaika Brooke-Smith-Lowe, director and co-founder of the social action collective Groundation Grenada in the Caribbean, is referring to the 1983 American invasion of Grenada. This national trauma impacted the entire region and reminded small as well as developing countries that they were on their own, with very few allies on their side. Because solidarity and consciousness often shy away when real politics are involved, the international community has a moral debt towards all the victims of humanitarian crises and wars that have been forgotten or ignored throughout history.

In response to why would you care about your neighbor? three critical voices analyze the concept of Empathy by exploring issues related to Otherness, Solidarity and Hope.

How to live one's everyday life when the past and history have irremediably mortgaged the future? How to retain the will to act and to think long term when living locked up in an open-air prison? How to find the light in a maze of alleyways cluttered with rubble, with social theories from another era and freedom-denying political decisions? **Nidaa Badwan's** response to all these questions is through creativity. Out of step with the moral and religious conservatism of her society, powerless in the face of a latent state of warfare that shackles the dreams of a disillusioned youth, revolted by the cycle of blockades imposed, disenchanted when confronted with the violations of all the peace treaties, she has decided to create an alternative reality, another world. The photographic series *One hundred days of solitude* is at once an act of peaceful resistance and an expression of revolt. By transforming her room into a sanctuary protected against the suffering and

violence of the outside world, the artist puts herself onto the stage and invents lives in order to rediscover, between four walls, a kind of liberty and internal peace. These vividly colored self-portraits express a feeling of otherness, solitude and hope that smothers the cacophony of bombs raining down and of political rhetoric. By transcending her everyday experience through art, Badwan sublimates otherness, a concept that certain artists embrace by making the fate of war victims their life's project. **Tiffany Chung and Dinh Q. Lê** both fled their country by boat in the 70s. By basing their artistic production on their personal stories, their work as an artist constitutes both a witness and a vibrant tribute to all the victims of conflict. Empathy and solidarity are central to their respective approaches. With regard to her installation *Scratching the walls of memory* **Tiffany Chung** explains:

Over fifty years after the 1945 nuclear destruction, part of the old Fukuromachi Elementary School in Hiroshima was opened to public as a peace museum. During the renovation, hidden messages inscribed on blackened walls began to be revealed as the classroom blackboards were being removed and layers of old paint scraped off. This school was one of the closest ones to ground zero and thus a temporary shelter for the Hibakusha. Its black burnt wall became the message board for finding these burnt victims' loved ones. Watching this story unfold I thought a lot about walls that divide people and nations, physical and intangible walls. About my mother waiting in vain near the 17th Parallel. About my father not being allowed to cross the river and reunite with her then and there. On each side of any wall, whether visible or invisible, there is a silent space standing in between historical and personal memories. In Haiku and Eastern culture, 'ma' is the silent space in which we are supposed to read between the

lines. Sometimes that space gets lost between the lines people read in history books. In any traumatic conflict, there are countless untold stories of pain. As time passes, history and its data of statistics get recorded in books, on memorials and through packaged tours. But stories like my mother's are the micro histories that have been lost in the whirlwind of the twentieth century's conflicts and tragedies. Stories that Cambodian refugees or Vietnamese boat people tend to share on their online community forums are those of tragic deaths and inhumane treatments of their fellow refugees, as witnessed by the survivors. A common experience the survivors often share is the feeling of being indebted to those who didn't make it; and that living with such horrific experience makes them feel as though they were just walking ghosts.

Whereas Chung re-transcribes testimonies of survivors and is currently mapping Syrian refugee camps to transform them into installations and drawings, **Din Q. Lê** draws on family photo albums and photographs that he buys from antique shops. He has been basing many of his projects on his impressive personal photography collection.

Collecting began as a very personal act. When my family escaped Southern Vietnam in 1978, we left everything behind, including our identity as Vietnamese. When I returned to Vietnam to live in the mid-1990s, collecting, and learning the cultural histories that are embedded in the objects I found, was a way of reclaiming my heritage, my identity. If you know a history, you own it. An individual with no knowledge of his or her history is an individual without an identity. The continued systematic erasure of the history of Southern Vietnam by the current government led us to know very little about either who we were or who we are. There is an urgent need for expressions of collective memory freed from restraint. Many

people are actively engaged in building these narratives and I chose to do so through art. One cannot live responsibly in Vietnam, with all its problems and complexities, without engaging with society.

In the video installation *Erasure*, Lê ties Australia's strict immigration laws to his personal story. The work captures the trauma and dislocation of the immigrant journey. The video of a burning 18th century vessel on a shore refers to the colonial past of Australia, comparing the European migrants to "boat people". Thousands of forsaken photographs chaotically lying on the floor represent the lives of refugees who perished at sea during their desperate journey to freedom. These anonymous silent faces contrast with the sound of the impact of waves and flames consuming the boat. Both Lê and Chung urge us to believe that we are, and will always be, the Others. They conceptually interlace layers of historical accounts with current social and political issues to redeem the sins linked to our collective lack of solidarity.

*Our moral responsibility is not to stop the future, but to shape it, to channel our destiny in humane directions and to ease the trauma of transition.***

When things fall apart, Critical voices on the radars is a platform for artists who are taking a stand for a radical and salutary change of mind-set and attitude. It probes how their positions and voices are acting as a critique and a warning mirroring societies in turbulent times. Whether they claim it or not, all the twelve artists in this exhibition are activists and

** Alvin Toffler. 20th century American writer and sociologist.

critical voices that use art as a vehicle to talk about life, to transcend human adventure, as well as to have a dialogue with their own society and with the world. If some of them are demanding Equal Justice and Social Change by addressing gender, race, sexuality, politics, democracy and human development issues, others are embracing a humanitarian cause which has a global resonance with an Empathy that will uplift humanity, redefine otherness, rehabilitate solidarity, and lead us to believe that the best is yet to come.

Translated from French by Adré Marshall.

Pascale Marthine Tayou

Cameroon

He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby becomes a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you.

Friedrich Nietzsche. German poet and philosopher, 19th century.

Things fall apart addresses philosophical, political, social and environmental issues. By this direct reference to Chinua Achebe's novel, Tayou is saying: *the world is collapsing, but do we realize it? And what are we doing to reverse the process? This work is the house of dogmas, of joy, of respite, of fears, of frustrations, of unhappiness, of happiness. We, the human race, are this work, hanged from the ceiling like trophies.* This spectacular up side down installation is a pessimistic and uncanny point of view and should be read as a warning: Are we aware that the world is collapsing? The hundreds of objects hanging from the ceiling represent the fall of political and social systems, the fall of certitudes, the fall of ideologies. The wood masks are the human beings. The schoolbooks are the political, economic and spiritual theories and ideologies. The plastic chains and balls are all the physical and mental restrictions hindering people's free will. The woodpiles are harmful weapons – real and symbolic ones such as words and attitudes – hurting human beings. The driftwood pieces are adrift societies and the African brushes represent the tools needed to clean all the chaos around the world. The work invites us to think about individual and collective responsibilities, about our incapacity to agree on the

direction to take. The artist believes that human beings are the source of all the problems they create. Racism, misogyny, exclusion, appetite for power to subvert a group by using authoritarianism and mass manipulation, the lack of solidarity towards other communities, are all the ingredients that will destroy societies and the world. *Things fall apart* is an injunction to the world demanding justice for all, progressive social changes and better camaraderie amongst people.

N. F.



Things fall apart. 2014

Installation

150 African masks, 20 school books, 12 plastic balls and chain, 100 wood piles, 41 drift wood pieces , 800 African brushes.

10 m x 6 m x 2,6 m (L x W x H).

Courtesy: the artist, Bildrecht Wien and Kunsthau Bregenz

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.**

* Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.

About Equal Justice...

Why does this statement (the U. N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights) remain a principle today rather than a statement of fact? Or to rephrase it in the terms of the Jamaican theorist Sylvia Wynter, why does 'human being' remain only a verb today and not a noun? What Wynter means is that if the efforts to be human persist, nonetheless 'human being' as a universal category has never yet been achieved. Take the struggles of the West Papuans against the Indonesian military and against multinational corporate rule for instance, where Papuans are born today un-free, unequal, and with their dignity and rights crushed daily. Take the disappearance of hundreds of young First Nations women in Canada in recent decades. Take the 'shoot first' policies of the police forces in the urban streets of the United States, where young black men and women die without dignity or rights every day. Some will say these are flaws in a system that needs to be corrected. They will point to progress in the pursuit of dignity and rights. While anti-Apartheid struggles, feminist, queer, and civil rights movements have created more formal equality and more claims to dignity, many countries face epidemics of violence against women and transgender people despite increased claims made for the dignity of all the sexes. Britain, to take one example, has a plague of sexual assaults on its university campuses. Patriarchal violence operates with impunity, beyond mere rights or dignities. It seems that human being remains a verb, while human being as the fact of a universal species endowed with rights and dignity – and living in equality and freedom – remains beyond our reach. Moreover there is good reason to question whether this human project is truly making progress, or simply producing, perhaps despite itself, new conditions that drive the human being as fact further into the future. It is perhaps little

wonder that some have questioned not the act of being human but the methods and terms used to measure the human. These methods and terms always seem to produce not just the human, but the less than human, either absolutely as in the evisceration of indigenous people, or relatively as in the spread or the gap of today's 'rights' and 'dignity' differently across gender, race, and power. A good example is Michel Foucault, a French theorist who practiced the project of being human, calling for prison rights, but questioned the terms and methods of what it would mean to be human, and therefore was sceptical of human rights as an already existing and knowable set of categories. He wanted to leave open the question of what was human. Partly because historically that question has been so persistently answered and defined by those who had the power to respond. And partly because he thought that, as a species, we were capable of becoming more than we could yet know, more than what we could currently conceive as human, though not necessarily more than what some of us might already be practicing – a new human method.

Stefano Harney

Professor of Strategic Management Education at the Singapore Management University and co-founder of the School for Study, an ensemble teaching project.

Arahmaiani Feisal

Indonesia

Men are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt. 32nd President of the USA.

One of the pioneers in the field of performance art in Southeast Asia, Arahmaiani Feisal, sometimes uses humor and role-playing to explore social issues and womanhood. The photography installation *Do not prevent the fertility of the mind* is a critique of patriarchal monopoly and mass manipulation of minds. In this installation, a photographic mural deals with equality and intellectual authority to raise issues related to leadership, people's rights, as well as the role and place of women in societies. The dozens of feminine napkins can be read as a wall separating people, societies, and cultural or religious groups. The fact that the wall is made of feminine napkins indicates that it is easy to take it down. It is also an invitation to think that women could be the ultimate solution to break down all the physical and mental barriers enabling human beings to live in harmony. The self-portrait in the center of the work is any woman, and at the same time all the women – silent or visible female leaders – who have the capacity to change the world. Dressed as a nurse, holding metallic scissors and a red rope turned into a question mark, the female character is ready to undertake the necessary surgery that will cure humanity. The red liquid in the glass vial is the new fresh blood representing the future generation of wise human beings, or perhaps the inevitable blood transfusion required to revitalize contemporary societies. This

work, in the vein of some of her previous artistic productions, is again a provocative commentary about the state of the humanity. It raises and questions gender, power, leadership, brainwashing and inequality of human beings to suggest that perhaps womanhood could cure society.

N. F.



Do not prevent the fertility of the mind. 1997 – 2014

Photography & 250 wingless maxi feminine napkins, 12 fluorescent lights, with stool, glass vial with red liquid, with tulle fabric.

3,6 m x 3 m.

Courtesy: the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art Gallery New York.

Milumbe Haimbe

Zambia

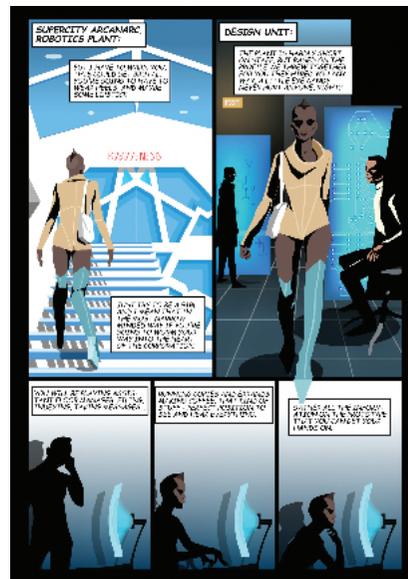
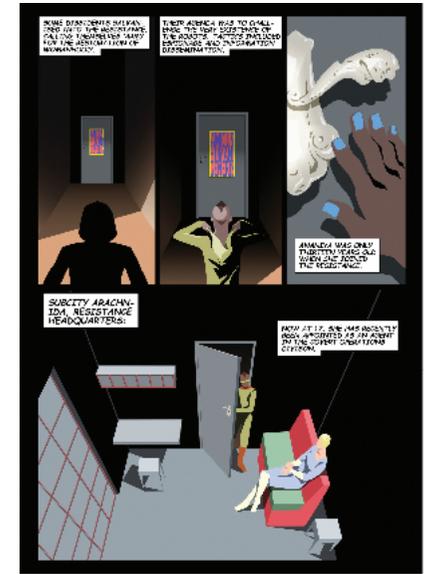
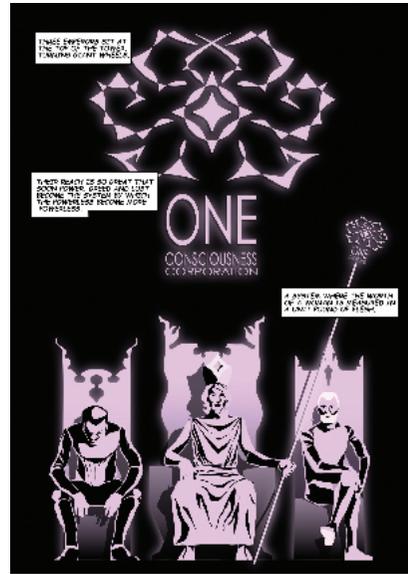
The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for the good men to do nothing.

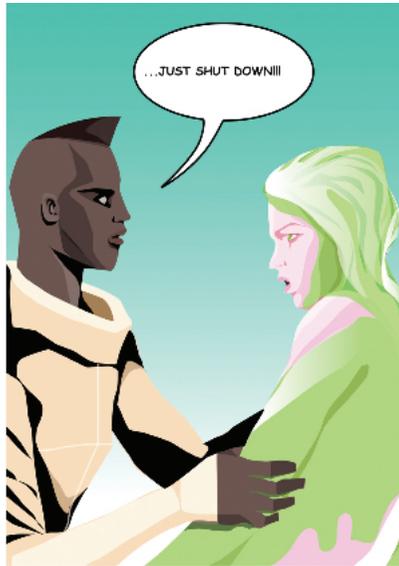
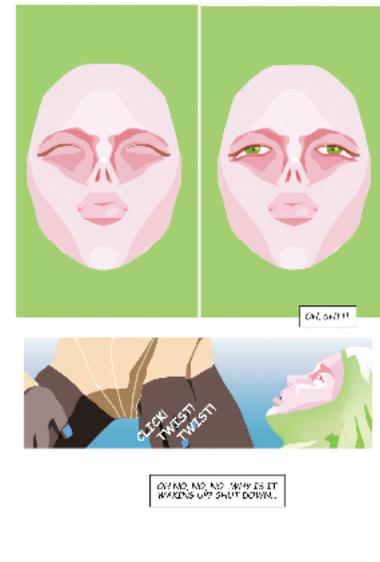
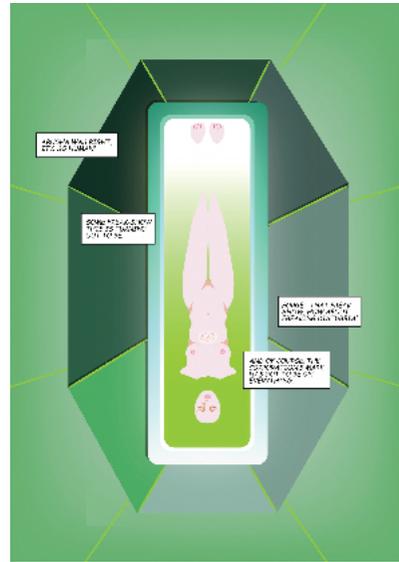
Edmund Burke. Irish politician and philosopher, 18th century.

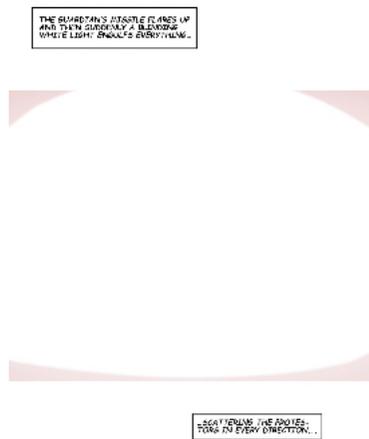
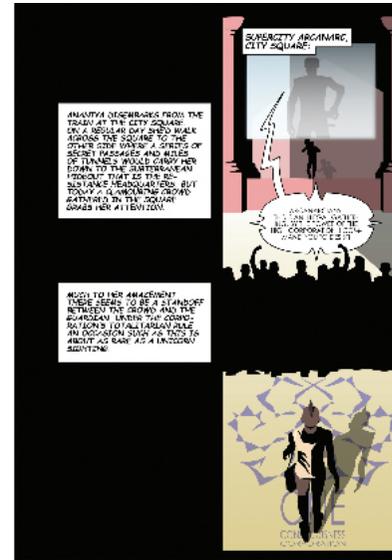
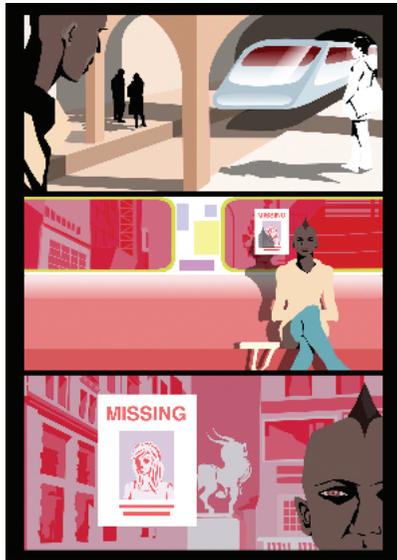
Ananiya the Revolutionist is set in the near future, on a satellite colony located off the orbit of Earth. This saga, simultaneous dark yet optimistic, is centered on a teenager fighting a patriarchal mega conglomerate called *The One Conscious Corporation*. Social conformity in the interest of the collective is subliminally reinforced through symbolism, while the economy is purely corporate-driven. Exploitations of humans by humans and robots by humans give rise to the resistance. Curfews, police raids, censorship and propaganda characterize Ananiya's world. She was only 13 years old when she joined the resistance. Now at 17, she has recently been appointed as an agent of the Covert Operations Division. In the ensuing standoff where the Corporation increasingly maintains control with an ironclad fist it is not long before the resistance galvanizes into a full-blown revolution. In this series, Haimbe describes a world that is both like, and at the same time very much unlike, our own. As a young, black female, Ananiya, is the most unlikely hero for the revolution. It would be accurate to read her as the antithesis of the typical hero who more often than not is male, white, straight and privileged. *Ananiya, the Revolutionist* is related to intercultural issues, with a focus on the forms of representation of cultural minorities within the context of popular media. While the digital

series explores cultural minority as a term encompassing many aspects of being and identifying within a cultural as well as socio-political context, the emphasis is on gender and sexuality. Haimbe is stating that one can be young, be a woman, be black and yet be a leader. One can be from a racial, sexual or social minority group and be a hero. With this work, the artist is asking for more equality by raising issues related to race, gender, sexuality, commitment, bravery and citizen hood.

N. F.







Ananiya the Revolutionist. 2013

23 digital drawings.
29,7 cm x 42 cm each.
Courtesy: the artist.

Babirye Leilah

Uganda

We are for difference: for respecting difference, for allowing difference, for encouraging difference, until difference no longer makes a difference.

Johnnetta Betsch Cole. American anthropologist, educator and director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington DC, USA.

Babirye Leilah exposes situations created by politics, social stigma, injustice, exclusion and economic discrimination. Her performances and mural sculptures address sexual minorities' lack of an equal justice as well as the increasing intolerance they face in their daily lives. The chains and locked padlocks she often uses in her sculptures represent the lack of freedom of speech, the denial of the right to chose a non conservative sexual orientation, and the harsh social conditions the gay community faces.

In *Chain of love*, the circles are two people of the same sex. The chain is a unifier as well as a denial of their right to love one another.

Universal education is a metaphor of the anti anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda. It is also a reference to the education system and knowledge. Burning a book, as if burning the bill, and chaining it is a way to deny that law as well as to point the lack of freedom it generated.

Paint of love is a homage to White gays living in Uganda who showed empathy for the local LGBT cause and felt threatened as foreign homosexuals and lesbians when the anti gay bill was voted.

Church in the dark is a critique of the Christian religion. The artist realized that the church, preaching to love one another, yet discriminates the sexual minorities that God created. The dirty cross shows that even in the church, the believers are sinners as they reject difference, thus insulting the Holly Book. *Safe here* is a reference to the general feeling of the local LGBT community. When the anti gay bill passed many people, who have been imprisoned for being gay, felt safer in prison instead of being assaulted and killed by mob justice in the street. By exploring human rights issues, Leilah always wonders if rights designed and implemented for the people are really for every body.

N. F.



Chain of love
100 cm x 30 cm. Courtesy: Rocca Gutteridge.



Church in the dark
60 cm x 40 cm
Courtesy: the artist.



Paint of love
30 cm x 20 cm
Courtesy: the artist.



Safe here
30 cm x 65 cm
Courtesy: the artist.



Universal Education
30 cm x 20 cm
Courtesy: the artist.

Rehema Chachage

Tanzania

Woman is not the victim of a mysterious fatality: one should not conclude that her ovaries condemn her to eternally live down on her knees.

Simone de Beauvoir. French philosopher, novelist and essayist. 20th century.

*Pleasing to the eye your veiled familiar rendered unbeknown;
A blanket of color so snugly hugging as if it were your second skin;*

Beautifully patterns traced on your limbs akin to the blooming of a creeping vine;

Garbed as a sensuous wrapper of modesty to which you are partially beholden;

To the ritual of pleasing, a wedge for thriving in a woman's station.

Demere Kitunga

The Flower, a general critique of discriminations, explores woman's identity, motherhood, gender relations and the right for subversion against a supposed superiority of men. In this video installation, Rehema Chachage uses henna ritual, a female ceremony consisting of adorning the body of a bride-to-be with leafy and floral designs. The body thus embellished is considered an offering to the future husband. Henna's other rituals are tied with rituals about circumcision, pregnancy, birth, protection from evil eye, female camaraderie and beauty. The video features a woman standing in a white dress. A white fabric upon which floral designs progressively

appear veils her body. The drawings invade the screen until the body becomes completely invisible. The woman's voice is chanting the story of the pain she experiences, the fear she feels, and her need for her mother's support while giving birth alone. The video projected onto a veil bears a poem written the artist's mother. This intergenerational dialogue has become an important element in the making of her artworks. *The Flower* points a finger at religious and cultural rituals that contribute to the persistence of patriarchal oppression that reduces women's bodies into a colonized territory, as if the female body was just a trophy. The floral designs obstruct the woman's body and identity. However, as the chant persists, the designs begin to disappear; the flower vanishes and the body reappears free of any exterior marking.

N. F.



The Flower. 2014

Video installation. 5' 36"
Cotton fabric with text by Demere Kitunga.
1,2 m x 1 m x 5 m (L x D x H).
Courtesy: the artist.

*If you don't stand for something, you will fall for anything.**

* Malcom X.

About Social Change...

How can we take a stand today? The British theorist and poet David Marriott asks us to think not just about how we can take a stand, but how we might take a leap. He notes that the persistent problem for the Martinican Frantz Fanon – in reference to the Algerian revolution and independence war – was how could one make a new world with old people, how could existing terms bring forward something truly new. In other words, how to imagine a different future? Marriott's answer is by a leap in the dark. Only a break with the terms of what we think we want, only such a leap has the chance to keep us from falling back into falling for the same old terms of the human being. Because these terms may be responsible for the perpetual divisions of the human being into the less than human. The Trinidadian philosopher C. L. R. James said that the Haitian and Russian revolutions were not the result of two sides clashing with one overcoming the other to make a universal position, but that instead a leap occurred. In a collective act of refusing to be what you are said to be – including not only all the terms that structure you as less than human but all the terms that let you live – you leap together. You come to stand somewhere else, as someone else, collectively. This leap is like being hurled out of the terms upon which we have tried to define the human being without success. But where today could we look for such leaps when we have so many examples of falling back into the same antagonisms around the world? The answer may be found in the other word Fanon used for leap in order to take a new stand: invention. This is perhaps where we see such leaps around us today. The Italian feminist theorist Leopoldina Fortunati asks us to consider home, the place where for centuries women have traditionally had to 'make things work' under conditions of patriarchy, that is under someone else's

rule. In this context, women developed strategies that took shape amidst the care of the home and the care for others. Today, she suggests, under someone else's rule, capitalism's for instance, we are seeing the emergence of a new invention: a maker's society. Fortunati invites us to look at DIY (Do It Yourself) communities who are held together by an ethics of care that she calls *metis*. By *metis* she means working under someone else's constraint and yet making a practical, tangible world of our own inside this other world, as women, slaves, and colonised peoples have often had to do, bringing extraordinary capacities of care and *metis* into these other worlds to keep them alive. Today however, because the maker's society has access to abundant available information and logistical infrastructure, whole new communities can be started and sustained inside this rule of the other, fostering a new way of being together, and perhaps a new way of human being. This invention, this leap, may yet give birth to another society standing in our midst.

Stefano Harney

Professor of Strategic Management Education at the Singapore Management University and co-founder of the School for Study, an ensemble teaching project.

Zen Marie

South Africa

Men are more ready to repay an injury than a benefit, because gratitude is a burden and revenge a pleasure.

Tacite. Roman senator and historian, 1st century.

The relationship between power and subversion of power is the binding link between Zen Marie's various areas of focus. *The Perfect Leader*, a short film he produced in collaboration with the media specialist Jessica Gregory, questions political leadership and addresses the controversial dynamics of the leader as a human being with dreams, desires and faults. The film is a homage to Jorgen Leth's *The Perfect Human*¹, a surreal and subtly cynical look at idea of a perfect human. The work updates Leth's original and uses it as a vehicle to pose questions about the cult of the individual, vanity, narcissism and ego. Taking both formal as well as conceptual cues from this iconic film, the work addresses leadership as an ambiguous and problematic space, dissects the physical body of the leader as it asks the audience to reconsider what leadership means and how to identify a great leader. The deliberate simplicity of the work is a way to mock authoritarian political regimes, the paranoia of leaders, their self-centered behavior, as well as their poor lack of vision. The video is about politics, leadership and human development in relation

to the responsibility of leaders in history making. The perfect leader is a man, a woman, a White or a Black person. The gender and race do not matter. The key point is that a perfect leader is a generic title for a dictator, for a person holding responsibilities but lacking vision, for a guide that has no idea as where to go. The film is a thought-provoking meditation on leadership as a space that is contradictorily both private and public.

N. F.

¹ *The Perfect Human* (Danish: *Det perfekte menneske*) is a 1967 short film by Jørgen Leth lasting 13 minutes. It depicts a man and a woman, both labeled 'the perfect human' in a detached manner, 'functioning' in a white boundless room, as though they were subjects in a zoo.



The Perfect Leader. 2009

Video. 4' 31"
Courtesy: the artist.

Regina José Galindo

Guatemala

The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil, but by those who watch them without doing anything.

Albert Einstein. Swiss American physician, 20th century.

One of the most acclaimed, prolific and radical performance artist of her generation, Regina José Galindo's artistic practice situates her own body in a public dimension in a way that can be identified by anybody who has witnessed the violence and sadism of political events as well as personal disgrace. *Who can erase the traces?* is a public performance in which the artist takes a long walk from the Constitutional Court to the National Palace of Guatemala, leaving a trail of footsteps made with human blood. During this almost 40 minutes walk, the artist does not say a single word, nor does she look at anything or anyone around her. These traces of blood, printed on the sidewalks and streets, are all the erased and denied cases. They are the soul of all the victims of decades of the civil war. This public work was performed in Guatemala City, the capital, in memory of the people who suffered and died during the armed conflict in Guatemala. The performance is also in rejection of the presidential candidacy of the military and former coup supporter Efraín Ríos Montt. The artist is an activist who uses art performances as a weapon and as an act of protest. This performance, as well as her entire body of work, explores injustice, dictatorship and undemocratic political regimes. Galindo always raises harsh issues that weaken the social structure of her society and is perceived as one of the strongest voice for the voiceless in Guatemala. Her

own body is fundamental in her performances. Her acts of injuring it is a way to put in the public domain the endless wounds and traumas of her society. This body, used as a platform to demonstrate and denounce all the forms of prejudice, is her strategy to have a deep conversation about personal and collective responsibilities. Her motivation is unswerving and there is no doubt that her art serves a specific agenda when she says: *no matter that they try so hard to shut us up. The truth is there, no one can silence it.*

N. F.



Who can erase the traces? 2003

Performance. 37'28" (video by Damilo Montenegro)
Courtesy: the artist.

Thái Tuấn Nguyễn

Vietnam

We are each our own devil, and we make this world our hell.

Oscar Wilde. Irish writer, 19th century.

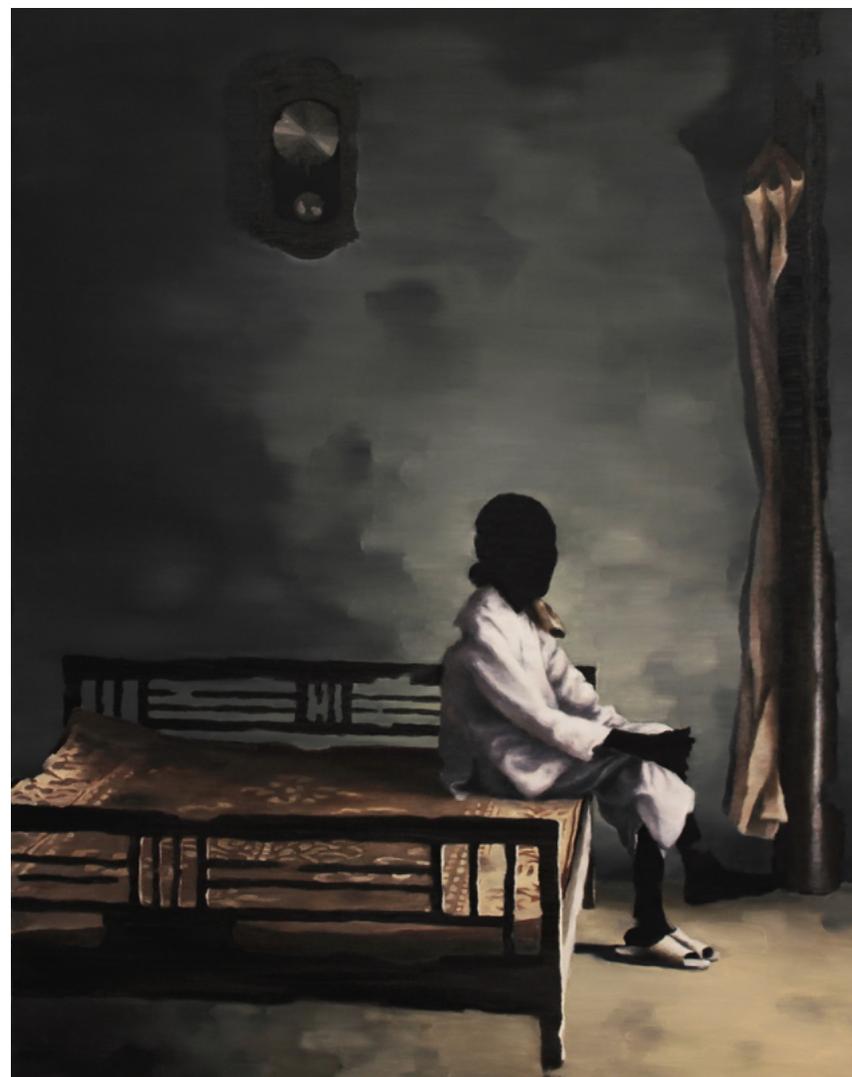
Thái Tuấn Nguyễn grew up near the demilitarized zone between North and South Vietnam and an American base in an area devastated by some of the heaviest fighting of the conflict. Memories and traumas of the war are the common thread of his entire body of work. The paintings carry a feeling of solitude and unease. They feature ruins of buildings symbolically referring to the decay and decadence of political ideologies; bodies without heads as if the identities, lives and dreams of the victims do not matter; and people who often look as if they are experiencing a mental break down, or as if they are being tortured or detained. Violence and destruction as well as the sense of invisibility and loss are very palpable. Beyond the Vietnam War, his work echoes the fate of people who lost their limbs or mind through bombings, napalm and landmines. To avoid the censorship of an authoritarian regime, the artist never gives a precise title to his paintings. The issues he addresses in a subtle way are not easy things to say in a country that has a very tight control on what can be said and shown, and certain voices are not heard. Nguyễn raises questions about collateral damages, fratricide battles and genocides generated by unilateral decisions and wrong political strategies. Between the lines of the paintings, he highlights history and memory, official and unofficial stories and records. By addressing politics, injustice and human

development in danger, his series is also a reference to the absurd journey of his country on the hard road to equality for all and the promises of social change. The paintings also question the meaning of time, asking the viewer to wonder when do scars of conflict heal as the country's history ironically carries the same narrative. As time loops, the story always has the same ending: the average person cannot fulfill his dreams, he remains faceless and voiceless decade after decade.

N. F.



Black Painting #112. 2015
Oil on canvas. 100 cm x 130 cm.
Courtesy: the artist.



Untitled. 2015.
Oil on canvas. 120 cm x 150 cm.
Courtesy: the artist.



Untitled. 2014.

Oil on canvas.
200 cm x 150 cm.
Courtesy: the artist.



Untitled. 2013.

Oil on canvas.
200 cm x 150 cm.
Courtesy: the artist.

Wambui Kamiru

Kenya

Fairy tales do not tell children that dragons exist. Children already know that dragons exist. Fairy tales tell children that dragons can be killed.

Gilbert Keith Chesterton. English writer, early 20th century.

Harambee63 explores history, politics and social issues. It calls into question ideas we hold about our individual roles and capacities in times where bravery and action is required. According to Kamiru, all the so-called revolutionaries are ordinary people who changed the world. By taking something as ordinary as gumboots, which have a history in wars and social protest in Southern Africa, Kamiru is saying that we all have the capacity to change the world. The installation raises questions about whom we consider revolutionaries touching on Africa's history (1884 – 1963) from Gandhi and Shaka Zulu to modern day “heroes” in Kenya. The installation time period stops at 1963 the year that Kenya got its independence. 1963 is also a year that witnessed other major political shifts around the world. The video installation stages a 1960s cheap Kenyan bar. Back in the colonial days, bars were utilized as a transition points for weaponry. They were – just like churches – a place where Kenyans could congregate without raising much suspicion on their activities. The gumboots are the army of people that created the theories behind Pan-Africanism and raised revolutions. The red and black laces at the top of each boot respectively represent figures that led bloody revolutions and theorists. These people include Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi, Jomo Kenyatta, Robert Mugabe, Thomas Sankara,

etc. The general's boots facing the army of gumboots are anyone taking the chance to be a leader and use history to change the society. A red pair of kid's gumboots in a corner of the bar is the symbol of a future generation that will have the possibly to raise new revolutions. The video shows key speeches that form the common thread of Pan Africanism as a global movement: John F. Kennedy on Black Civil Rights, Miriam Makeba on her music as a tool for political resistance, a clip of Ousmane Sembene's film *La Noire de...* about a female Senegalese labor immigrant's journey in France, etc. The video installation raises questions about who we consider as revolutionaries, who is a hero and who is a terrorist, depending on who is telling the story. Through a simulated experience, people are invited to sit at a table, look at the gumboots on the floor and at the posters on the walls, watch the video, listen to the speeches and process the messages, discuss politics over a drink and perhaps find ways to change their own world.

N. F.

Faces on the Gumboots

Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Aimé Césaire, Albert Memmi, Albertina Sisulu, Amilcar Cabral, Angela Davis, Booker T Washington, Che Guevera, Cheikh Anta Diop, C. L. R. James, Fidel Castro, Frantz Fanon, Frederick Douglass, Funmilayo Ransome Kuti, Gamal Abdel Nasser Hussein, Haile Selassie, John F. Kennedy, Josephine Baker, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sédar Senghor, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., Miriam Makeba, Mouammar Kadhafi, Ousmane Sembène, Paulette Nardal, Robert Mugabe, Samora Machel, Stokely Carmichael, Thomas Sankara, W. E. B. Du Bois.

Speeches in the 90' video (in order of appearance)

Kenya National Anthem

Kwame Nkrumah, Jomo Kenyatta

Gumboot Dance

Angela Davies, Frantz Fanon, Edward Saïd, Jean-Paul Sartre,

Josephine Baker, Malcolm X, Miriam Makeba, Nelson

Mandela, Aimé Césaire, Malcom X, Samora Machel,

Ousmane Sembène (La Noire De)

Gumboot Dance

Malcolm X, John F. Kennedy, Ousmane Sembène (La Noire

De), Samora Machel, Miriam Makeba, Che Guevara

Nkosi Sikelel 'Iafrika

Patrice Lumumba, Gandhi, Aimé Césaire

Kenya National Anthem



Harambee63, installation detail (the army). 2013



Harambee63, installation detail (general's gumboots). 2013



Harambee63, installation detail (kid's gumboots: the next generation). 2013



Harambee63. 2013

Video installation. 90'
Single channel video, 63
pairs of gumboots, 2
tables, 2 tablecloths, 8
chairs, 1 beer crate,
machetes, posters, 1
bar counter.
Dimensions variable
(ap. 8 m x 12 m).
Courtesy: the artist.

*Forgetting is not an option.**

* Malaika Brooke-Smith-Lowe, director and co-founder of the social action collective Groundation Grenada in the Caribbean.

About Empathy...

If we come from the middle class or if we live in a developed country, we will be asked not to forget the other, as if our remembering, our solidarity will be enough. But how can we do this without enacting the power to decide that others need our help or our solidarity? The American theorist Fred Moten and myself have called it *hapticality* – another way of being with others through our senses, through the way our senses have collected together in common historical experiences. This *hapticality* is increasingly the subject today in both science and popular culture. In physics, Einstein's theory of 'spooky actions at a distance' has been confirmed. This discovery about elements far away from each other in the universe being able to affect each other has prompted more speculation about what the brain may be able to feel or affect, including other brains. Meanwhile in popular culture, the Wachowskis siblings – known for their *Matrix* films – have made *Sense8*, a new series that explores an 'evolution' in the human: the development of the capacity to sense what others, on the other side of the globe, can sense and to feel, touch, and smell with them. For Hortense Spillers, an American literary critic and scholar, empathy exists as a result of a cleavage between flesh and body, one that historically reached its most violent moments in African chattel slavery. What Spillers means is that in slavery, but also for women historically, bodies were not respected, had no sovereignty and therefore no rights. And flesh was often taken without consent and abused. Spillers says that this history produced common experiences amongst these people that must be called empathy, a new way of being together through sharing senses and developing senses together. This might mean that we should not look at places where flesh is still abused to see how we can remember the other. Instead we might look at

these places for examples of already historically developed forms of empathy. Today one is struck by how much every movement around the globe has to teach about empathy and how many of us must come to be in a position, first and foremost, to learn from these movements. Take for instance Occupy, whether in New York or London. This movement demanded to occupy, to be somewhere together differently, to invent and demonstrate a new form of living together, however precarious. In Oaxaca, a group of forty-four students who went to a college known for its activism 'disappeared'. The solidarity of the search for answers about the disappearance has transformed Mexico as so many Mexicans have felt through the senses these students. These were students who already lived in a heightened ability to sense each other in struggle and in joy. They, and those like them around the globe, can teach all of us different ways of being with each other, of sensing each other. They teach us all about empathy. It is a lesson we should not forget. It is a gift we should accept.

Stefano Harney

Professor of Strategic Management Education at the Singapore Management University and co-founder of the School for Study, an ensemble teaching project.

Nidaa Badwan

Palestine

When I let go of what I am, I become what I might be.

Lao Tseu. Chinese philosopher, 6th/5th century BC.

One hundred days of solitude is both a reference to and a metaphor of *One hundred years of solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez. The photography series is the result of a self-imposed retreat. Being a young female in a conservative society which considers Western clothes as evil mimicking, as well as being a Palestinian incarcerated in an open-air prison with the denial to travel, is the life and burden of Nidaa Badwan. As a result of this alienating situation, she refused to leave her bedroom for months and used art as her armed response to both societies. *One hundred days of solitude* is the fruit of a personal experience. *The moment I started to feel that my simplest rights were snatched away from me in Gaza, the besieged city I live in, I decided to abandon the world to create my own.* In December 2013, she decided to stay alone to create, while bombs were raining down on her neighborhood in Gaza City. With a camera, she captured her universe, revisited classic still life paintings and invented characters she performed using makeshift materials and items scavenged in her home: the vegetables her mother brought back from the market, a stool that turns into shelves or into a swing, barbed wire rolls becoming interior decoration, or a chicken privileged to witness a solo guitar play. Weeks after weeks, she directed herself as in a play: singing, exercising classical ballet, sewing, putting on makeup, meditating,

working or taking a nap. The artist deliberately composed densely colorful photographs in contrast with the world outside: *I want to return its colors to Gaza, which knows neither colors nor peace.* By this chosen imprisonment, she distanced herself from the local violence, refusing to be a victim of the war or of her conservative society, and used her own imagination to transcend the ugly reality. Raising issues of otherness, solitude and hope, *One hundred days of solitude* is a poetic and humorous ode to life.

N. F.



One hundred days of solitude. 2014

Photographs.

Courtesy: the artist and the French Institute in Jerusalem.





Tiffany Chung

Vietnam

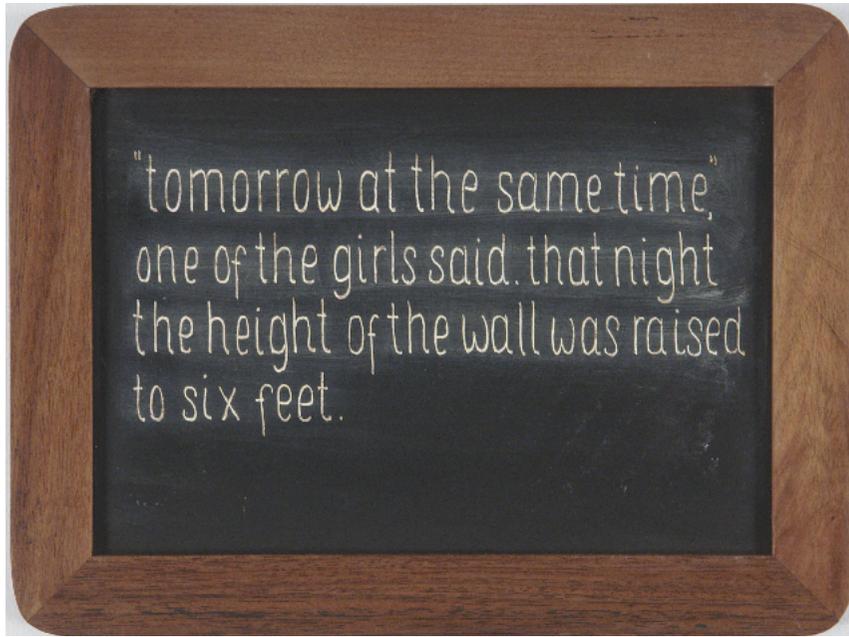
What really raises one's indignation against suffering is not suffering intrinsically, but the senselessness of suffering.

Friedrich Nietzsche. German poet and philosopher, 19th century.

While addressing issues related to empathy and solidarity, *Scratching the walls of memory* explores populations that have been traumatized by war, human destruction or natural disaster. Incorporating anonymous testimonies, it remaps memories that were denied in official records. The installation is inspired by the Fukuomachi elementary school peace museum, a former school in Hiroshima in nearest proximity to the 1945 atomic bomb blast site. Using it as a temporary shelter for the injured, bombing survivors also turned its burned walls into a message board to communicate with lost loved ones. These messages were uncovered in 2002, excavated from layers of paint. In Chung's installation, an elementary school children's wooden desk set, common during the Cold War almost everywhere around the world, is cornered in front of two walls. The walls display hand stitched embroidered sachets made of old army tents and hand made children's chalkboards with recycled wood. On both objects are written and hand stitched messages from those who lived the creation and destruction of various political walls and boundaries. Testimonies relate to World War I and II, to the Vietnam War, to independence wars, to civil wars, to genocides and military coups around the world. The

testimonies do not tell the name of the victims, nor do they indicate the time and place of the events. These survivor's recollections, while giving personal insight about official stories, also demonstrate Chung's sense of decency in presenting a universal facet of pain and suffering. The work, with its school desk set, is an invitation to sit down, to read, to think and to learn how to embrace a foreign humanitarian cause. It is an invitation to take action for the sake of humanity. It is also an invitation to rethink our relationship with official history and to ask ourselves how societies can move forward if they consider that personal stories are a mere detail of human adventure.

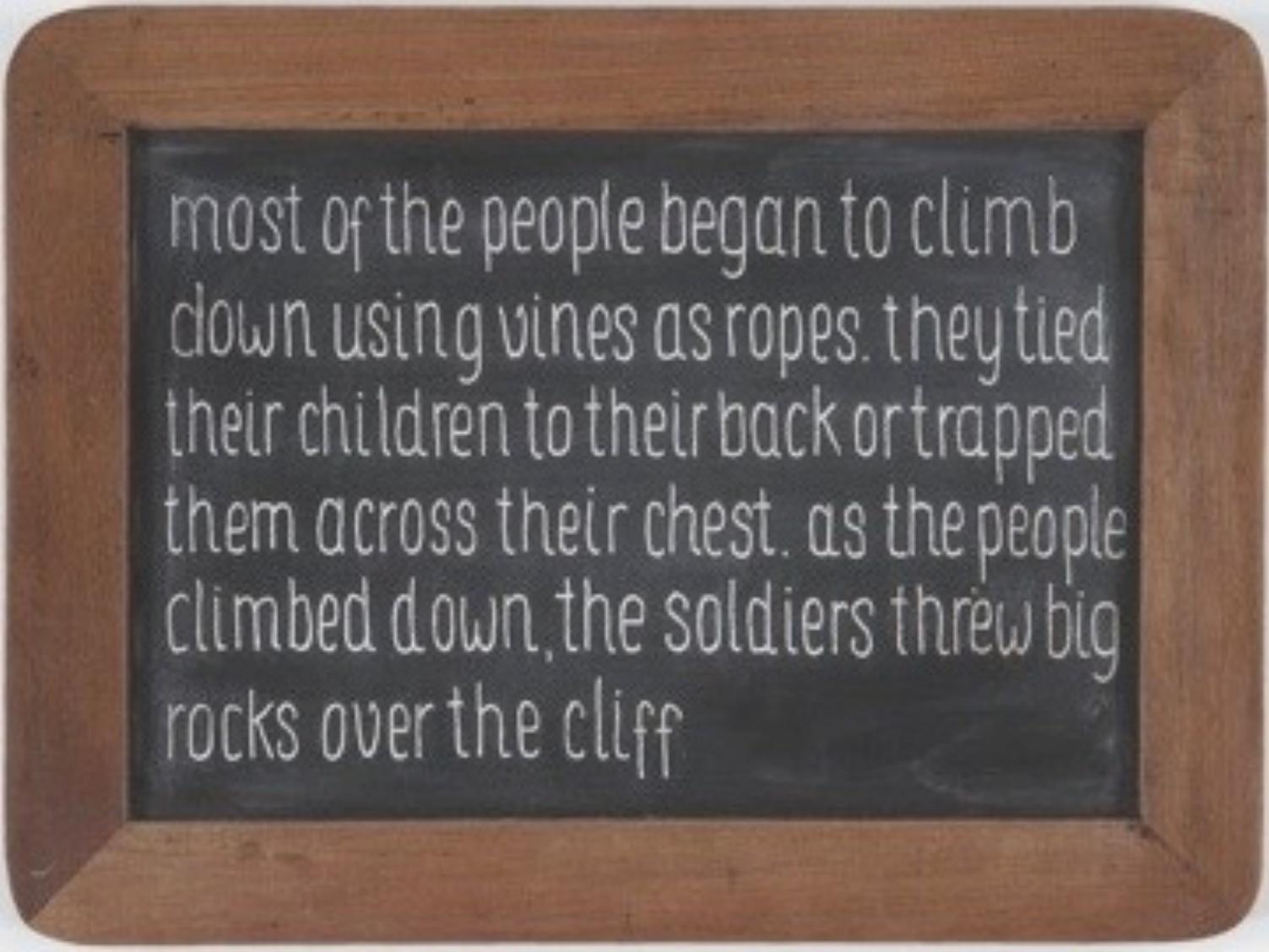
N. F.



Scratching the walls of memory, details. 2010

Installation: 24 hand stitched embroidered sachets made of old army tents, 38 hand made children's chalkboards with recycled wood, old children's desk set.
Ap. 3 m x 3 m.
Courtesy: the artist and Tyler Rollins Fine Art Gallery New York.





most of the people began to climb
down using vines as ropes. they tied
their children to their back or trapped
them across their chest. as the people
climbed down, the soldiers threw big
rocks over the cliff



Dinh Q. Lê

Vietnam

We are all brothers under the skin, and I, for one, would be willing to skin humanity to prove it.

Ayn Rand. Russian American philosopher, novelist and, play writer. 20th century.

Erasure is an interactive video installation that draws on current international debates concerning refugees and asylum seekers. From Australia and the Yellow sea, Europe and the Mediterranean sea, USA and the Mexican boarder, it questions the ownership of territories, recalling that the history of Western countries is based on centuries of immigrations. In this video installation, Dinh Q. Lê raises issues related to empathy, solidarity and hope to question the legitimacy of nation building based on ethnicity. The installation is an abandoned shore on which a makeshift boat washed up in bygone days, out of reach of human's memory. Thousands of black and white photographs, some as small as a thumb, cover the floor with the image facing down. Like an ocean of sand squeezed by rocks, they recall the innumerable lost journeys on the road to expectancy. These silver-gelatin photographs, a fundamental component of this artwork, are meant to keep alive the countless memories of enforced exile across the globe. Found in antique stores in Ho Chi Minh City, they most likely belonged to the thousands of Vietnamese boat people who took the sea in fear for their lives as a result of the Vietnam War. During the course of the exhibition, the audience is invited to pick up the photographs, to scan them and uploaded them to a purpose built website, allowing people

to browse through this collection of lost souls. The artist's wish is that this online archive calls for a larger, collective historical memory of the world's innumerable borders of violence. Overlooking the photographs, a large floor-to-ceiling film shows an 18th century wooden ship leaning beached on an isolated coastline, its hull and sails slowly consumed by flames. The burning hull moves between substance and shadow while the ship slowly collapses on itself, seeming to desperately ask us what the value of a life is.

N. F.



Erasure. 2011

Video installation. 7'

Single-channel video, found photographs, stones, wooden boat fragments, wood walkway, desk and chair, computer, scanner, internet connection to access the dedicated website (erasurearchive.net). Dimensions variable (minimum 5 m x 12 m). Commissioned by Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney, 2011. Supported by Nicholas and Angela Curtis. © Photo: Nagare Satoshi. Courtesy: the artist.

*There is no question of handing over the world to murderers of dawn.**

* Aimé Césaire (1913 – 2008). Poet, activist, politician and Mayor of Fort-de-France, Martinique, French Caribbean.



Pascale Marthine Tayou

(b. 1966), Cameroon

Lives in Ghent, Belgium. Works between Ghent and Yaoundé, Cameroon.

Major exhibitions include: Kwangju Biennale, Korea (1995 & 1997); Dakar biennale, Senegal (1996); Havana Biennale, Cuba (1997 & 2006); Johannesburg Biennale, South Africa (1997); Sydney Biennale, Australia (1998); Liverpool Biennale, UK (1999); Lyon biennale, France (2000); Documenta 11, Germany (2002); Sao Paulo biennale, Brazil (2002); Istanbul Biennale, Turkey (2003); Venice biennale, Italy (2005 & 2009); Tate Triennial, London (2009); Sharjah Biennale, UAE (2013).

Arahmaiani Feisal

(b. 1961), Indonesia

Lives and works in Bandung, Indonesia.

Arahmaiani's work has been exhibited widely in museums and biennials throughout the world, including: *Traditions/Tensions* (Asia Society New York); *Global Feminisms*, (Brooklyn Museum, New York); *Suspended Histories* (Museum Van Loon in Amsterdam, the Netherlands); *Women in Between: Asian Women Artists 1984-2012* (Mie Prefectural Art Museum, Japan), the Venice Biennale (2003); Biennale of the Moving Image, Geneva (2003); Gwangju Biennale (2002); Biennale de São Paulo (2002); Performance Biennale, Israel (2001); Biennale de Lyon (2000); Werkleitz Biennale (2000); Havana biennale (1997); Asia Pacific Triennial (1996); Yogyia Biennale, (1994); Jakarta Biennale (2015).

Milumbe Haimbe

(b. 1974), Zambia

Lives and works in Lusaka, Zambia.

Milumbe Haimbe has a Bachelor's Degree in Architecture (Copperbelt University), and a Master in Fine Arts (Oslo National Academy of the Arts). She has exhibited locally and internationally, including FOCUS 10 – Art Basel in Switzerland, and the Dakar biennale of contemporary African art (Senegal, 2014).

Babirye Leilah

(b. 1985), Uganda

Lives and works in Kampala, Uganda.

Babirye Leilah graduated with a BA Industrial Fine Art & Design from MTSIFA at Makerere University, Uganda in 2010, having majored in sculpture. She has since undertaken residencies at 32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust (Uganda, 2014), Kuona Art Trust (Kenya, 2014), Nafasi Art Space (Tanzania, 2013) and Hospital Field (Scotland, 2012). Her work has been exhibited in the Kampala Art Biennale (Uganda, 2014) and KLA ART 014 (Kampala Contemporary Art Festival, Uganda).

Rehema Chachage

(b. 1987), Tanzania

Lives and works in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Rehema Chachage graduated from the Michaelis School of Fine Art, University of Cape Town, South Africa where she received a Bachelors of Arts in Fine Art degree. Group shows

include: *African Odysseys* (Brass, Belgium); *Where we're at! Other voices on gender* (Bozar, Belgium); *!Kauru: Rerouting Dialogue 1994-2014* (UNISA, South Africa); *Still Fighting Ignorance & Intellectual Perfidy: Video Art from Africa* (Ben Uri Museum, London & Malmo Konsthall, Sweden); *18th Festival VIDEOBRASIL* (Brazil); *VIDEOFORMES*, (France); *Story on Story* (Akiyoshidai International Art Village, Japan); Dakar biennale of contemporary African art (Senegal, 2012).

Zen Marie

(b. 1980), South Africa

Lives and works in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Zen Marie holds a MA in Cultural Analysis, from the University of Amsterdam (The Netherlands) and a B.A. in Fine Art from the University of Cape Town (South Africa). He also studied at De Ateliers in Amsterdam from 2001 to 2003 and at the National School of the Arts, distinctions in painting and photography (Johannesburg, South Africa). He has exhibited in Africa, Europe, USA and Australia.

Regina José Galindo

(b. 1974), Guatemala

Lives and works in Guatemala City, Guatemala.

Since 1999, Regina José Galindo has presented her work in numerous international exhibitions including the 49th Venice Biennale, the Istanbul, Prague and Tirane biennales, as well as in international institutions such as Pac in Milan, Tate London, Guggenheim New York, PS1 New York and Le

Plateau in Paris. Her work is also present in private and public collections, such as the Pompidou Center in Paris, Guggenheim museum in New York, Rivoli Museum in Torino, the Miami Art Museum and Cisneros Fontanals Collection in Miami. She received the Golden Lion for best artist under 35 years old during the 51st Venice Biennale.

Thái Tuấn Nguyễn

(b. 1965), Vietnam

Lives and works in Da Lat, Vietnam.

Thái Tuấn Nguyễn graduated from the Hue Fine Arts College in Vietnam in 1987. His work has been included in exhibitions in Asia, Europe, New York, and the Asia Pacific triennial in Australia.

Wambui Kamiru

(b. 1982), Kenya

Lives and works in Nairobi, Kenya.

Wambui Kamiru holds a MSc. in African Studies with a focus on Kenyan History from the University of Oxford, UK. Her dissertation focused on the attempt to create collective memory around Kenya's Mau Mau War and the family of Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi. She has exhibited in Kenya and South Africa.

Nidaa Badwan

(b. 1987), Palestine

Lives and works in Gaza, Palestine.

Nidaa Badwan completed her undergraduate studies in 2009 from the Faculty of Fine Arts Department of decoration. She set up the first exhibition of plastic on the ruins of the Red Crescent Theater titled *Silicon* in 2009. She worked as a trainer for the Performing Arts and the plastic in the institutions of civil society from 2009 to 2012. She participated in several group exhibitions and festivals outside Gaza in 2012 and 2013. Her first solo exhibition *One hundred days of solitude* was held in Jerusalem and displayed in most of the West Bank cities through the French Institute in partnership with the Palestinian art court Al-Hoash in 2015.

Tiffany Chung

(b. 1969), Vietnam

Lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Tiffany Chung holds an MFA from University of California, Santa Barbara (2000) and a BFA from California State University, Long Beach (1998). Museum exhibitions and biennials include: Venice Biennale, Italy (2015); *Residual: Disrupted* Choreographies, Carré d'Art, France (2014); *THREADS*, Museum Arnhem, Netherlands (2014); Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah, UAE (2013); Asia Pacific Triennial, Australia (2012); *Six Lines of Flight*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, USA (2012); Kuandu Biennale, Taiwan (2012); Singapore Biennale (2011); Incheon International Women Artists' Biennale, Korea (2009); Fukuoka Triennial, Japan (2005). She was awarded the Sharjah Biennial Artist Prize in 2013.

Dinh Q. Lê

(b. 1968), Vietnam

Lives and works in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Dinh Q. Lê holds a 1992 MFA in Photography, from the School of Visual Arts in New York (1992) and a BA in Fine Arts from the University of California (1989). He is the most renowned artist from Vietnam and had been exhibiting worldwide since 1990. Institutions include: Kochi Biennale, India (2014); Documenta 13, Germany (2012); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2011); Curitiba Biennial, Brazil (2011); Mercosul Biennial, Brazil (2011); MoMA New York (2010); Busan Biennale, Korea (2010); Nanjing Biennale, China (2010); Fukuoka Asian Art Triennial, Japan (2009); South African National Gallery (2009), Singapore Biennale (2008 & 2006); Biennale de Lyon, France (2007); Gwangju Biennial, Korea (2006); Venice biennale (2003).

