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C&
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**C& CRITICAL WRITING
WORKSHOP AND
MENTORING PROGRAM
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A MOMENTUM OF EVENTS

Since 2016, C& has hosted four workshops and nine editions of its mentoring program with the support of the Ford Foundation. The C& Mentoring Program invites writers with new, developing, or emerging practices to establish a mentor-mentee relationship with senior arts writers. We aim to support art writers and critics in evolving their experiences and reflexive explorations over an extended period. Our intention with both the workshops and mentoring program has been to expand a network of writers and offer participants opportunities for exchange across different areas of cultural practice. It has also been about broadening the basis for discussion, through contributions to C& as well as to other outlets. As such we acknowledge the mentors, mentees, and C& team whose time and work has made all this possible.

Mentors

Sean O'Toole, Hannah Pool, Thom Ogonga, Dagara Dakin, Patrick Mudekereza, Obidike Okafor, Lara Longle, Paula Nascimento, Jota Mombaça, Diane Lima, Ali Al-Adawy, Ramiro Camelo, Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Syham Weigant, Fadzai Muchemwa, Enos Nyamor, Miriane Peregrino, Costa Tshinzam

Mentees

Lukorito Jones, Sarah Abdu Bushra, Andrew Kazimbwe, Don Handa, Rosie Olang, Ronjey Francis, Celpa Diakiese Nsungua, Mariusca Rhitty Moueme Moukengue, Moimi Wezam Mushamalirwa, Costa Tshinzam, Zaza Muchemwa, Nyadzombe Nyampenza, Rutendo Chabikwa, Nadine Morais, Yola Balanga, Luamba Muinga, Marcos Jinguba, Miriane Peregrino, Jessica Melo, Tila Likunzi, Marwa Elsayyed, Nicolas Sanchez, Adjo Kisser, Mavis Tetteh-Ocloo, Yasmine Mechbal, Marilyn Mushakwe, Bwanga Kapumpa, Lorna Telma Zita, Gloria Mpanga

This print issue is a celebration and commemoration of the work that has been produced through the mentoring program. It brings together a selection of ten texts written between 2017 and 2022 around art, exhibitions, and curatorial practices from the contexts in which the writers live or work. Rather than reflecting a single preoccupation with legibility or translation, the texts give indication of what shapes the organization and distribution of local or contextual art practices, including, among many other things, language, infrastructure, and individual affinities.

“

If we think of this set of differences beyond an evaluative model that upholds a standard for what is sufficiently, good, – away from international standard – we achieve other forms of appreciation and communion. We might, instead, have a chance to consider the differences in how people produce knowledge and to recognise that it is virtually impossible to reproduce it for immediate consumption in some other location.

Irit Rogoff

Adjo Kisser situates us in a time capsule of iconic images from the period marking Ghana's post-independence. The idea of “time-preciseness” comes our way through **Tila Likunzi's** view of Délio Jasse's exhibition *Fragility of Time*. Both writers, the artist, the photographic archive, and exhibition produce multiple relations to time and place. In an interview with **Merilyn Mushakwe**, Helena Uambembe asks the artist about the creation of her installation work *What you see is not what you remember*, a recreation of living moments that encapsulate points in time within history. And what time is it?

Luamba Muinga writes, “it is the time of Black emergence from colonialism to self-affirmation, before a time that ages these issues, given the volatility of discourses, making them ghosts of reflection.” Reiterating that urgency, **Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez** calls attention to strategies for repositioning Black bodies in the (re)production of images on the history of people of African descent. **Gloria Mpanga** brings us back to the question of power in the use people make of other people's land, approaching colonial histories by looking at a residency project linking works of artists from cities with very different contexts of production, language, and experience. Language continually saturates the living being as well as illustrating conditions of production. **Marwa Elsayed** shows how the cookbook is a form of resistance through which Marwa Benhalim casts a view on issues of power and language. Elsayyed highlights collaboration and other strategies Benhalim used to respond to the COVID-19 shutdown.

The roundtable with **Bwanga Kapumpa**, **Enos Nyamor**, **Miriane Peregrino**, and **Lorna Telma Zita** focuses on why the participants write, their practices in recent years, and the state of art writing. **Nyadzombe Nyampenza** looks at an exhibition that reflects Paul Wade's unstoppable interest in making art and his ongoing influence on the country's contemporary art scene. **Mavis Tetteh-Ocloo** creates a portrait of Theresa Ankoma's fiber-based art and weaving practices as well as her interest in object biographies. **Costa Tshinzam** writes about experimentation in FM Gustave Giresse's work, witnessing the power that new technologies have to revolutionize contemporary artistic practices.

Together these writers position art and writing as practice, theory, vigilance, responsibility, poetry, and life – re-invented in each instance.

The C& Team

SIMPLY ICONIC!



A member of the public posing in the studio set installed as part of the exhibition, 2020.
Image courtesy of Bernard Akoi-Jackson

ADJO KISSER situates us in a time capsule of iconic images portraying social life in Ghana from the 1950s through to the 1970s.

The exhibition *Simply Iconic! Vintage Images off the Beaten Path*, which was curated by Bernard Akoi-Jackson and ran at the Museum of Science and Technology (MST) in Accra from 12 March to 16 April 2021, brought together an impressive assortment of photographs from the 1950s to the 1970s. As the curatorial statement pointed out, the photographs were of “ordinary Ghanaians engaged in their day-to-day activities” in the years immediately after Ghana’s independence from Great Britain.

While it is characteristic of so-called vintage photographs to show some wear and tear, these were mostly still in great condition. According to the statement, they had been chosen from a larger pool of images submitted to the Heritage Photo Lab at the Kwabena Nketiah Archives in the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana, Legon by “custodians of significant photographic archives in the country.” The Kwabena Nketiah Archives are said to have digitized all the images. Within the exhibition, the photographer and artist Frederick Botchway was invited to make an artistic intervention. The result was a series of large-scale paintings on paper that made use of archival photographs from the post-independence era. Botchway’s paintings played with scale and physical pixelation in such a way that viewers became very aware of themselves in the space.

The exhibition also included quite a number of posters for films, theater plays, and concert parties from this period, sourced from the Bokoor African Popular Music Archives Foundation, as well as my personal favorite element, a photo studio handled by Malik Adjetey and Vera Obeng, who took photos of visitors to the exhibition.

“These photographs were either taken a little before or after Ghana’s independence in 1957, so it is understandable that the general mood was one of joy, hope, and optimism”

The studio was replete with checkered faux-linoleum floor, a now-defunct brown Sanyo-branded cathode ray television set, and a wine-and-beige floral spring-loaded sofa with four short wooden legs. It gave a sense of the kinds of photographic studios that would have been found in the country in the post-independence years. In that small music-filled studio set, my partner and I had the time of our lives laughing as we imitated some of the poses we had just seen on the walls of the exhibition. We also tried to re-enact some from our own dusty family albums.

Our visit to the Museum of Science and Technology was on 26 March 2021, and it was as though we had just walked into a time-capsule. A lot of the people in the vintage black-and-white photos wore afro updos with conspicuous side and center parts. Their clothes were elegant: some women wore the puffy-sleeved kaba (a wax print blouse) and the complementary ankle-length skirt known as the “slit”; some wore European-style dresses with pristine white gloves, stockings, and decorative hats; some men donned stiff British suits or overly starched khaki safari uniforms with matching helmet hats. A noticeable feature too were the wide smiles that were on a lot of the people’s faces.

As we walked past the images mounted on white panels that formed quite an interesting labyrinthine space for the entire exhibition experience, I examined each of

the photographs so closely that I almost felt I could smell the starch in the well-pressed clothes. It was everything I imagined my parents would have grown up surrounded by – mammy wagons, early afternoon parties over the weekends, and all that. The closest thing I could think of when I tried summarizing the mood of the photographs was the smell of Christmas.

These photographs were either taken a little before or after Ghana’s independence in 1957, so it is understandable that the general mood was one of joy, hope, and optimism – not forgetting the unrelenting sense of duty and pride decipherable on the faces of the traders and workers as they went about their obligations or posed for group pictures. Unlike the popular photographs of the political elite, which curator Akoi-Jackson had been sure to stay clear of, the pictures exhibited seemed to be of ordinary people performing ordinary tasks or simply celebrating their new sense of independence.

One such photo was of a policewoman dressed in what looked like a very practical uniform considering the warmth in these tropical regions. Another was of a scantily clad child receiving some form of vaccination to his right arm from a white medical officer, as another looked on. A photograph of some two cheerful men in dark suits posed on a motorcycle on a sunny afternoon stood out to me. In some photographs, women embraced a dainty appearance with slender silhouettes, decorative hats, and short white gloves, like something out of Audrey Hepburn’s closet. Others opted for the understated elegance of then-Princess Elizabeth’s 1950 dresses that “didn’t frighten the horses,” as Hardie Amies, who trained as tailor and designed Elizabeth’s dresses for a tour of Canada in 1950, is said to have put it. In another photograph, I thought I recognized an elevated view of part of Accra’s bustling central business area, Tudu.

Infrastructurally, I was surprised to note that not much has changed since those days. If anything, Accra has only gotten more populated, our public transport system less efficient, and our style of dress more

casual. Other than that, most of the colonial buildings with their characteristic jalousie windows are still being used as official spaces today. Historic schools like Achimota School have continued to maintain their colonial façade and a lot of the lanes in Osu, a neighborhood in central Accra known for its busy commercial activities and rich nightlife, are still narrow despite an increase in the number of cars per household.

As I paced through the exhibition, I was continually drawn to my favorite feature of the show: the photo studio set. It was tucked in a corner at the very end of the exhibition space and serenaded by highlife music from the 1950s to 1970s. I found the intervention to be a delightful surprise. It took me months to realize that all the photographs we took during our visit were stained with a marker of our very strange times – the face mask – despite everyone’s attempt to relive the past. ■

—
ADJO KISSER is an Ghana-based artist whose interest in narratives and the archival form has resulted in recent investigations into sound, collectivity, and the cultural initiatives of liberation movements across the continent of Africa. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, she participated as a mentee in the six-month C& Critical Writing Workshop and Mentoring Program in Ghana.



“It took me months to realize that all the photographs we took during our visit were stained with a marker of our very strange times – the face mask – despite everyone’s attempt to relive the past.”

above A member of the public interacting with the photographs installed. Note the contrast between the black-and-white image and the pristine white panels, as well as between the black-and-white past and the colored present. 2020. Image courtesy of Bernard Akoi-Jackson

FRAGILITY OF TIME



Délio Jasse, *Fragility of Time*, 2020.
Courtesy of Jahmek Contemporary Art. Installation view at ICTAF



TILA LIKUNZI looks into multiple time narratives connecting image-making, archival practices, and memory in **DELIO JASSE'S** work.

both images Délio Jasse, *Fragility of Time*, 2020.
Courtesy of Jahmek Contemporary Art. Installation view at ICTAF

The photographic record of an Italian couple's successful life together is thrown away. An Angolan photographer, informal archivist, and historiographer living in Milan comes across it in a doorway, in a box of discarded records. He retrieves it, rewrites the narrative, giving their memory new life – the time you now see.

Time. A curious concept with many interpretations related to different aims in life. Some attach no concept of unilinear historical progress to time, marking it by their experience of memorable events. Others measure it by the clock and the calendar as an irreversible timeline spanning the past through the present to the future. Most of us have felt time in flux: at one time, for the time being, time after time, in good time.

Délio Jasse's sense of time follows another idea of narrating time: emotional preciseness. What emotional preciseness connects the artist's time to the time depicted in the discarded 1990s holiday photos of an anonymous Italian couple in sensual abandon in Morocco, Tunisia, and Cuba?

Fragility of Time comes from the initial narrative of how these photographs (and other documental evidence) were found by the artist, when the record of a fortunate life was deemed to be no longer of value. Moved at the invalidation of these records from a chronological time not so far from our own, he salvaged them, incorporating their time narrative into his own: the events that have marked his life – migration, uprooting, loss, dispersion of family ties, travel. These are places that enable the artist to connect with the anonymous subjects of his work, regardless of their origin. This fusion of time narratives roots him in the emotional landscapes of his journey, giving his work a haunting and poignant quality that transcends the time portrayed in the photographs, transforming them into non-linear historical records that link time to spaces, circumstances, and emotions.

Délio Jasse's treatment of photography dwells outside the instant digital image. His use of analogue processes to re(ad)dress his subjects emulates the period in which the records were made. That, allied to the artist's ability to sense time with emotional preciseness and the fact that he does not view photography as immortalized time or subscribe to the production of the self-image as a projection of oneself into a universally aspiring future, denotes Délio Jasse's concern with the current debates on the proliferation of images, "which, according to Fredric Jameson, amounts to both a 'dehumanizing' or 'derealizing' process and a 'cannibalizing' of culture."

What is the artist's purpose in reworking these records? Building other forms of archive, of memorializing (hi)stories, participating in the growing call for the production of new historiographies. There's an urgency to that call and it is not that time is running out. It is a call to a time imbued with other meanings, where our perception of events does not submit to a chronological order but is broadened to multiple time narratives. In the words of Saint Augustine, "a time present of things past; a time present of things present; and a time present of things future." ■

—
TILA LIKUNZI (B. 1982) is an independent art curator from Angola, living and working between Luanda and Bonn, active since 2017. In 2018, she participated in the C&C Critical Writing Workshop and Mentoring Program in Luanda, which launched her career as a curator. Her practice is process- and research-based, focused on shareabilities between contemporary art, critical theory, and decoloniality. Besides writing, she pursues sound, orality, video, photography, and film as artistic and curatorial languages.

WHAT YOU SEE IS *NOT* WHAT YOU REMEMBER



In a conversation with the writer **MERILYN MUSHAKWE**, the artist **HELENA UAMBEMBE** discusses the creation of a recent installation in which she explores narratives surrounding history and place, interweaving connected symbols and archival data.

both images Installation view of *What you see is not what you remember* by Helena Uambembe at Jahmek Contemporary, 2022. Photo: Nicolas Gysin. Courtesy of Jahmek Contemporary and the artist



Installation view of *What you see is not what you remember* by Helena Uambembe at Jahmek Contemporary, 2022. Photo: Nicolas Gysin. Courtesy of Jahmek Contemporary and the artist

Angolan artist Helena Uambembe brings together her own narrative with those of others to retell a traumatic story. Born in Pomfret in 1994, Uambembe's parents had fled the Angolan Civil War. Her father was a soldier in the 32 Battalion, a military unit within the South African Defence Force made up primarily of Black Angolan men. The 32 Battalion, the community of Pomfret, and her Angolan heritage are dominant themes in Uambembe's work, in which she explores narratives surrounding history and place, interweaving connected symbols and archival data.

The artist navigates shifting attitudes not towards war itself, but towards the gatekeepers of information and narratives on war. She states, "Given the space that I work in and the nature of the industry, you often have to reflect a lot on what you are doing. I am more of a storyteller and a story keeper. A lot of the stories are my own, and many more belong to others. I keep and share those stories, and I try to do so as authentically and as honestly as possible. I try to tell people the truth."

In a conversation with the writer Marilyn Mushakwe, Uambembe discusses the creation of her installation which recently won the twenty-third Baloise Art Prize, associated with Art Basel Switzerland, alongside a work by US filmmaker and writer Tourmaline.

MERILYN MUSHAKWE Could you tell us about the installation *What you see is not what you remember*?

HELENA UAMBEMBE It consisted of furniture – a table, armchairs, a cabinet, small trinkets made out of ceramic, a vase, plates, a teacup set and a teapot, a TV and a TV room, as well as things that I remember being in my mother's home. It was an attempt to recreate a space that captured the memory of a home. The work played on the idea of nostalgia and how we replace things to remember things.

MM That's a profound statement. Could you expand more on it?

HU I really wanted to engage with memory and the recreation of living moments. I wanted to make a commentary on how certain instants were not as they appeared. There are things within the home that encapsulate points in time within history. The things that we are looking at right now are not the way they are supposed to be. The lives that we have lived, that our parents lived, could have gone in other directions – they could have been better in some sense.

The work is also a look at history, especially the history of colonialism. Our reality as Africans should not include some of the things that are now considered norms. Maybe history is playing tricks on us, not just our memories.

MM How did you approach the individual objects that make up the installation?

HU Every piece that I created at Basel, I did myself. Some of them with the help of technicians and manufacturers, such as with

“I am more of a storyteller and a story keeper. A lot of the stories are my own, and many more belong to others. I keep and share those stories, and I try to do so authentically and as honestly as possible. I try to tell people the truth.”

the shadowbox, which is not something that I could create on my own. Each piece and each title has a personal narrative and a story.

The ceramic objects were things that we would not actually use at home. I believe this happens in a many African households: certain items are set aside for special visitors. Though I understood this, I would invade those ceramics with my own thoughts and words. I would play with them knowing that I was not allowed to. I wrote on them and drew pictures on them. In the installation, I titled the ceramic vases *Cara de maninha* – “bad attitude” or “girl with an attitude” – because I saw them as love pots, as keepers of women’s secrets. The poses on them were not the norm for women, especially in a household setting. This idea is something that I am playing with and expanding on.

The letters that I wrote, *Dear someone somewhere out there*, speak of the many people in my community, and to most refugees who have had to flee home. Particularly before social media, they would write letters through the Red Cross and all they could put as the reference was the village they came from or a church or landmark. They would write letters trying to find their families. When they got a response, they sent a photo as proof of life and proof of remembrance – a photo of their family, partner, their house, or their dog.

MM How do you marry personal memories of that kind with those of others?

HU When I started the project, I read books, written mainly by white male authors, about the 32 Battalion and the Pomfret community. They wrote about how fascinating it was. That frustrated me; it omitted my community and my people’s voices. It omitted a lot of the violence imposed on my people. My community was so often written in as footnotes and side notes, not as main voices. In order to fill in those gaps, my research most often relied on oral storytelling. I went on a field trip interviewing people in the community. A lot of the stories corroborated – they made sense and they matched up. Moments, names, and

experiences matched up. Things that there had been a collective attempt to forget. It made me realize that sometimes it is in the forgetting that we make up memory.

MM Did any moments stand out for you at Art Basel?

HU I wanted to create a sense of familiarity and comfort, the warmth and safety of the living room in the space in Basel, a European city in Switzerland. I found that a lot of people from all over the world felt comfortable enough to sit down, to feel warm. That was profoundly important. That act of familiarity spoke to the collective memory.

MM Your work suggests the fleeting, lost moments contained within personal objects.

HU For me fleeting, lost moments are what make up the wholeness of things. Growing up in Pomfret, I observed certain things that I did not understand, but I do now. The world has left me jaded, having given me knowledge but also stolen my innocence. I now much better understand those moments. I try and understand them with more empathy and sympathy, with more understanding and love than the moments in which certain stories and memories actually occurred.

MM What did you consider in your preservation process?

HU Everyone’s story is worth preserving. Everyone’s life is worth preserving. I consider the telling of a story as a sign of life – whether it be through writing, photography, journalism, or any other artistic process. I attempted to encapsulate objects and moments within my community which I believe are of great importance. Moments are just as important as dates and times – preserving moments of shared connections and continuity is vital. It speaks to a grander narrative.

MM You sometimes take an archival approach to creating the narrative.

HU I have relied on archival material in some of my artworks. I have attempted to subvert the story, positioning myself and my thoughts within it. Archives can be one-sided, and sometimes a personal archive preserves more than public national archives, which usually tell a story from one grand perspective. Within my community, a lot of the archival material, such as documents and photographs (including those of the military), are in private hands. So I need to fill in the gaps to create a new narrative. It is not always my personal tale – it is me filling the gaps with other people’s memories that they were kind enough to share with me.

MM Do you consider archiving as activism?

HU From the perspective of Africa, due to our history, yes. The archive needs to be accessible to everyone. It should not be a struggle to access it. How crazy is it that the biggest archive of Angolan history is in Basel? Even as a person who often interrogates archives, I did not know this. It is ridiculous to imagine that my history, the history of my country, the history of other countries that I share great intimacy with, is in Europe. To access it, I have to jump through several hoops: I have to apply for a visa, pay for an expensive ticket, and fly for over eight hours. It is absurd.

And we ought to make the archives we do have here in Africa accessible to everyone. A big question is: if we are keeping people’s stories as well as our own, how do we let everyone else know about them? How do we give other people the platform to consume and share archival material? They may well have pertinent knowledge that they could add. ■

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MERILYN MUSHAKWE is a curator, researcher, and arts administrator. She holds a BA in fine arts from the University of the Witwatersrand. She is currently part of the curatorial team for Ozange, the 1st Biennial of African Photography in Spain. Merilyn was a participant of the C& Critical Writing Workshop from June to November 2022 in Harare.



“It was an attempt to recreate a space that captured the memory of a home. The work played on the idea of nostalgia and how we replace things to remember things.”

above Installation view of *What you see is not what you remember* by Helena Uambembe at Jahmek Contemporary, 2022. Photo: Nicolas Gysin. Courtesy of Jahmek Contemporary and the artist

O TEMPO ENVELHECE

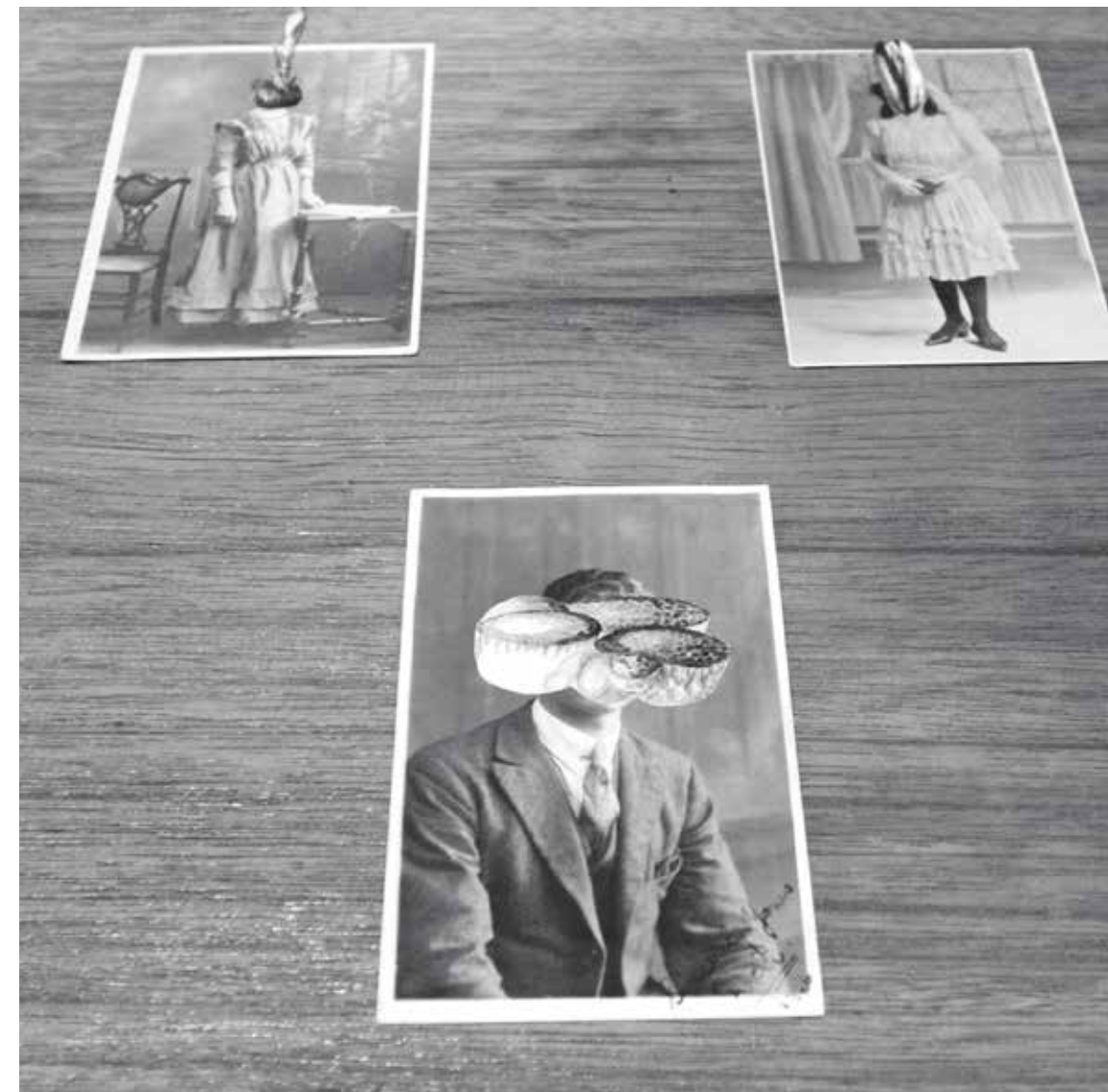
LUAMBA MUINGA olha de perto *Taxidermia do Futuro*, mostra com curadoria de **PAULA NASCIMENTO** e **BRUNO LEITÃO**, realizada em Luanda, no Salão Internacional de Exposições do Museu de História Natural.

DEPRESSA



acima Helena Uambembe, *A Luta Continua. Até Quando?*, 2019. Fotografia, Impressão em papel Fine Art
do lado oposto Alida Rodrigues, *The Secret History of Plants*, 2019. Colagem mix-media
ambas as imagens Fotos de Ngoi Salucombo, fornecidas por Paula Nascimento & Bruno Leitão

above Helena Uambembe, *A Luta Continua. Até Quando?*, 2019. Photography on fine art paper
opposite Alida Rodrigues, *The Secret History of Plants*, 2019. Collage of mixed-media
both images Photo by Ngoi Salucombo, provided by Paula Nascimento & Bruno Leitão



TIME AGES

LUAMBA MUINGA takes a closer look at *Taxidermy of the Future* curated by **PAULA NASCIMENTO** and **BRUNO LEITÃO** and presented in Luanda, at the International Exhibition Hall of the Museum of Natural History.

FAST

“Se trata também de uma tentativa de delinear identidades, com as suas resistências e volatilidades, contra um tempo que se qu”

O tempo envelhece depressa. A frase é título da colecção de contos de Antonio Tabucchi, um livro onde o escritor italiano narra sobre vidas de personagens que “parecem estar empenhadas numa confrontação com o tempo”. Não longe, a mostra colectiva *Taxidermia do Futuro*, com a curadoria de Paula Nascimento e Bruno Leitão, vem trazer-nos esta declaração por vezes irreversível.

O conceito apresentado em Luanda, no Salão Internacional de Exposição do Museu de História Natural, já foi explorado na 6ª Edição da Bienal de Lubumbashi e traz o trabalho de artistas angolanos e diaspóricos: Keyezua, Januário Jano, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Mónica de Miranda, Grada Kilomba, Helena Uambembe, Alida Rodrigues e Teresa Firmino.

O statement curatorial repete-se desde a primeira apresentação, em novembro deste ano, dizendo-nos que se trata de uma investigação sobre “o passado e diferentes temporalidades, para reflectirem sobre o futuro”. Mas não seria exagero adicionar-lhe que se trata também de uma tentativa de delinear identidades, com as suas resistências e volatilidades, contra um tempo que se quer acelerar, mas que ainda carece de alguma clarificação.

E não podíamos deixar de mencionar, em primeiro, a este respeito, a obra *A Luta Continua. Até quando?*, de Helena Uambembe, onde a artista vai contra um slogan político que se popularizou na história política angolana. Dentro da ideia de que a luta é permanente e infinita, ela própria inscreve-se através da imposição da sua silhueta em fotografias onde encaramos figuras ou momentos da guerra, do qual demarca ela traços de suas lutas em espelho às anteriores. Esta “Luta continua” não é tão sua mas adopta-a como sua, quer pela responsabilidade de esclarecê-la, quer por suas consequências permanentes; daí a artista impor o “até quando?” para questioná-las.

Uma outra forma de guerra e questionamento está no trabalho de Teresa Firmino, *Disclosed Narrative e Restrained History*, onde, acima da sua pretensão de espelhar uma narrativa/história em busca de se revelar depois da repressão colonial, apresenta corpos negros como elementos de diversão contra o entediamento do colono. Atrevemo-nos a sair dessa taxidermia para chamar ao facto de que estas duas obras pertençam a série *Children of a lesser god*, que também é possível ver em Luanda, no contexto da exposição *Intersections Within The Global South*, na Galeria do Banco Económico, onde se complementa o sentido delas.

Nesta mesma linha, Alida Rodrigues apresenta-nos uma tentativa de absorção da identidade colonial através da natureza, com a imposição de raridades botânicas sobre os rostos, e consequentemente a história, de pessoas brancas. No entanto, a origem das plantas e flores usadas apresentam características europeias e tornam a proposta do trabalho mais eurocêntrica ainda, pois em poucos momentos estamos diante de uma afirmação negra.

A questão é sempre negra e o colonialismo deve ser o ponto de partida para se ver essa tão necessitada questão negra, seja buscando adereços mitológicos não-negros/africanos, como é o caso de *Ilusões, Vol II. Édipo*, de Grada Kilomba, vídeo-instalação a partir de uma leitura onde a artista postula a relação de poder com uma excessiva preocupação narrativa e poética, sem muita preocupação estético-visual.



Grada Kilomba, *Illusions, Vol II. Oedipus*.
Instalação Vídeo em dois canais, 2018.
Installation video on two channels, 2018.

Fotos de Ngoi Salucombo, fornecidas por Paula Nascimento & Bruno Leitão.
Photo by Ngoi Salucombo, provided by Paula Nascimento & Bruno Leitão

Sobre despreocupação, a mostra tem também aspectos menos “ambicioso” no sentido de refinamento da obra. Acontece com a plasticidade excessiva nos trabalhos fotográficos da Keyezua, embora as componentes performativas das obras conseguissem espelhar a ascensão do “poder” feminino em *Royal Generation I, II e III*. Já em *Beleza* e Gémeos, de Mónica de Miranda, a avaliação toma um caminho diferente, as fotografias e o vídeo-instalação possuem um tratamento que se poderia julgar próprias de Instagram, o que não invalida de estar no medium-galeria, pois se a exposição pretende reservar a textura destes tempos insólitos e retumbantes da vida pós-moderna, ela consegue nas suas subtilidades.

A exposição *Taxidermia do Futuro* trabalha sobre o tempo. Mas não um tempo qualquer, é o tempo das urgências negras, do colonialismo à autoafirmação, diante um tempo que envelhece estas questões, dada a volatilidade dos discursos, tornando-os fantasmas da reflexão. A questão que se impõe é: como frear e reflectir? ■

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LUAMBA MUINGA trabalha em curadoria, pesquisa cultural, e escrita. A sua prática está centrada no reexame da História e a permanência da memória, e processos/modelos de apropriação do passado para localizá-lo no presente. Coordena o LabCC - Laboratório de Crítica e Curadoria, uma plataforma de arte que dinamiza projectos multidisciplinares dentro de estruturas culturais, como facilitador da prática de jovens curadores e educadores de arte em Luanda. Muinga é vencedor do Prémio Imprensa Nacional para Literatura em 2022 e co-autor da publicação “Are we not makers of history?” (Bag Factory, Jorburg, 2020). Luamba fez parte do Workshop C& Critical Writing e do programa C& Mentoring em Luanda, 2018-2019.

“It is also an attempt to delineate identities, with their resistance and volatility, against atime that is accelerating, but which still lacks some clarification.”

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Time ages in a hurry. That sentence is the title of a collection of short stories by Antonio Tabucchi, a book in which the Italian writer narrates the lives of characters who “appear to be engaged in a confrontation with time.” The collective exhibition *Taxidermia do Futuro* (Taxidermy of the Future), curated by Paula Nascimento and Bruno Leitão, brings us this sometimes irreversible statement.

The show on display in Luanda in the International Exhibition Hall of the Museum of Natural History, has already been exhibited at the 6th Edition of the Lubumbashi Biennial and brings together works by Angolan and diasporic artists: Keyezua, Januário Jano, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Mónica de Miranda, Grada Kilomba, Helena Uambembe, Alida Rodrigues, and Teresa Firmino.

The curatorial statement tells us the exhibition looks into “the past and different temporalities to reflect on the future.” It would be no exaggeration to add it is also an attempt to delineate identities, with their resistance and volatility, against a time that is accelerating, but which still lacks some clarification.

We should consider in this respect, Helena Uambembe’s work *A Luta Continua. Até quando?* (The Struggle Continues. Until When?), with which the artist challenges a political slogan which became popular in Angolan history. With the idea that the struggle is permanent and infinite, she inserts herself into the work by superimposing her silhouette onto photographs of figures or instances of war, inscribing her own struggles through mirroring. This “continuous struggle” is not hers, but she adopts it as such, either to dutifully make it explicit, or to elucidate its permanent consequences. That is how the artist asks, “until when?”

Another kind of war and questioning is found in Teresa Firmino’s work, *Disclosed Narrative/Restrained History*, where beyond her pretense of mirroring the narrative manifest after colonial repression, Black bodies are presented as elements of entertainment in contrast to the boredom of the settler. These two works belong to the series *Children of a Lesser God*, which can also be seen elsewhere in Luanda, in the context of the exhibition *Intersections Within the Global South*, at the Gallery of the Economic Bank, which complements their meaning.

Along similar lines, Alida Rodrigues attempts to absorb colonial identity through nature by superimposing botanical rarities onto faces, and, consequently, onto the history of white people. However, the plants and flowers used present European characteristics and make the approach to the work even more Eurocentric; after a few moments we are confronted with a Black affirmation.

The issue is that Blackness and colonialism should always be the starting point for this much-needed Black questioning. Grada Kilomba’s *Illusions, Vol II. Oedipous* is a video installation looking for non-Black/African mythological ornaments. The artist posits power relations with excessive narrative and poetic concern, without much aesthetic-visual concern.

The exhibition does not require the artworks to be especially refined in an aesthetic sense. This is evident in the excessive plasticity in Keyezua’s photographic works, although their performative components mirror the rise of female power in *Royal Generation I, II and III*. In Mónica de Miranda’s *Beleza* (Beauty) and *Gémeos* (Twins), the evaluation already takes a different path; the photographs and video installation are arranged in a way that could be considered typical of Instagram, which did not detract from the gallery setting because if the exhibition intends to present the texture of unusual and dramatic post-modern life, it does so in its subtleties.

The exhibition *Taxidermia do Futuro* is a work about time. But not just any time. It is the time of Black urgencies, from colonialism to self-affirmation, in the face of a time that ages these issues, given the volatility of discourses, turning them into ghosts of reflection, eliciting the question: How do we slow down and reflect?

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LUAMBA MUINGA works in curation, cultural research, and writing. His practice centers on re-examining history and the permanence of memory, on how we appropriate the past, extracting its context, to locate it in the present. He coordinates LabCC - Laboratório de Crítica e Curadoria, an art platform that facilitates the practice of young curators and art educators in Luanda. Muinga won the Angolan National Press Prize for Literature in 2022 and co-authored the publication Are we not makers of history? (Bag Factory, Jorburg, 2020). Muinga was part of the C& Critical Writing Workshop and C& Mentoring Program in Luanda, 2018-2019.

Translation: Sara Hanaburgh

QUILOMBO

– OU COMMENT QUESTIONNER LE COLONIALISME VERT



– OR QUESTIONING GREEN COLONIALISM

en haut Vue d’installation de *Quilombo* à City SALTS à Bâle, Suisse, 2021. Sculpture en verre représentant trois niveaux de map (en bas, le map monde puis au milieu la cartographie des parcs nationaux du Congo et enfin au dessus le village Jalera situés entre deux parcs nationaux entourés des carrés miniers importants. Photo : Nicolas Gysin

above Installation view of *Quilombo* at City SALTS in Basel, Switzerland, 2021. Glass sculpture representing three levels of maps: at the bottom, the world map then in the middle the cartography of the national parks of Congo and finally above the village Jalera located between two national parks surrounded by important mining squares. Photo: Nicolas Gysin

GLORIA MPANGA écrit au sujet du projet de résidences lors duquel des artistes ont questionné les crises écologiques et les pratiques du colonialisme vert – **STÉPHANE KABILA, JOSEPH KASAU, MAYA QUILOLO, PAULO NAZARETH, WISRAH VILLEFORT, CAROLINA BRUNELLI.**

Les centres d’art Waza (Lubumbashi, Congo-Kinshasa) et SALTS (Suisse) ont organisé une série de résidences de création pour artistes d’août à octobre 2021. Lors des travaux de ce projet tricontinental, « Quilombo », se sont côtoyés des artistes brésiliens, suisses et congolais. Il s’est déroulé à Bâle et à Lugano, questionnant les pratiques du colonialisme vert qui lient les trois continents à partir des travaux d’artistes de ces villes aux réalités bien différentes. Si les deux premières sont suisses, elles s’opposent néanmoins par leur densité et les langues parlées par leurs populations respectives. Bâle, troisième ville la plus peuplée de Suisse après Zurich et Genève, a l’allemand comme langue officielle, tandis que Lugano, la neuvième ville du pays située au sud, parle l’italien. Lubumbashi, par sa position d’avant-dernière ville francophone dans le Sud-Est de la RDC, subit quant à elle de plein fouet l’influence linguistique de nombre de pays d’Afrique australe qui y viennent pour les affaires, avec leur « no English no job ».

Le quilombo, en tant que communauté formée par des esclaves marrons du Brésil, rappelle quelques modèles de civilisation imposés ou voulus en Afrique, où l’on cherche toujours à s’accaparer des terres. Freetown et Libreville n’ont-elles pas été imaginées sur le même modèle ? Freetown – « la ville libre » en français –, capitale et plus grande ville sierra-léonaise, fut construite par les descendants d’esclaves libérés par les abolitionnistes britanniques en 1787. C’est bien avant que l’Obai (roi) Naimbanna II du royaume Koya ne rende cela possible, en offrant du travail et des terres aux Afrodescendants affranchis, pour leur retour en Afrique. Créée pour accueillir les esclaves vilis libérés du navire négrier brésilien nommé l’Elizia, arraisonné au large des côtes de Loango alors que la traite négrière fortement interdite depuis 1848 se poursuivait dans le Golfe de Guinée, Libreville n’a fait que répondre au même schéma. Aujourd’hui encore, l’accord controversé conclu par Londres et Kigali, qui veut que, désormais, toute personne entrant illégalement au Royaume-Uni soit « relocalisée » au Rwanda, nous ramène à la question de l’usage que l’on fait de ses terres ou des terres des autres – au colonialisme vert donc. Il est vrai que pareille façon de procéder s’accompagne de son lot de problèmes : si pour les migrants – d’où qu’ils viennent – cela ajouterait 6 000 kilomètres (6 000 kilomètres séparent les deux pays) à ceux déjà parcourus pour entrer au Royaume-Uni, on voit aussi cela d’un mauvais œil en RDC. Les relations pas toujours glamour entre Kigali et Kinshasa risqueraient d’en sortir écornées. La raison ? « Le Rwanda, qui ne dispose pas d’un vaste territoire et qui réprime ses propres ressortissants, déverserait toutes ces personnes aux frontières congolaises, pays qu’il convoite pour ses richesses minières, pour le déstabiliser davantage, comme il le fait si bien en soutenant les rebelles du M23 (Mouvement du 23 mars) au vu et au su de la même communauté internationale qui ne dit mot, comme pour consentir », pensent nombre d’intellectuels congolais.

C’est peut-être ce que montre la Française Céline Raimbert, docteure en géographie de l’université Paris 3 dans sa thèse de doctorat, quand elle associe d’autres marginaux aux mêmes réalités que les quilombolas. Voici ce qu’elle dit : « Plus précisément, les quilombos consistent en des lieux de refuge où se réunissent les esclaves marrons fuyant le dur labeur et les mauvais traitements des plantations en tous genres, mais aussi de la domesticité urbaine. Ils peuvent également compter dans leurs rangs toutes autres sortes de marginaux qui, à l’instar de ces esclaves fugitifs, s’en remettent à la clandestinité : Amérindiens et métis, paysans sans terre et déserteurs, et même quelques criminels, selon certaines sources. »¹ Stéphane Kabila et Joseph Kasau, respectivement curateur et artiste visuel congolais ayant pris part au projet Quilombo, ont fondé la plateforme NidjeKonnexion. C’est une manière pour eux de traiter de problèmes qui touchent leur communauté et de voir comment y remédier par ce qu’ils savent faire : l’art ! Joseph Kasau mélange la photographie, la vidéo et l’écriture créative, alors que Stéphane Kabila s’intéresse aux questions des mythes et de la violence dans la culture humaine. La Brésilienne Maya Quilolo est elle-même native d’un quilombo. Son travail mêle les arts visuels et de la scène, associés à une diversité culturelle (pivo.org.br/blog/maya-quilolo-ori-de-cobra-e-misterio-do-mundo/, mars 2021). Paulo Nazareth, autre artiste brésilien participant à ces travaux, est un voyageur passionné. Il montre les résultats de ses multiples voyages à travers ses œuvres. Des Suisses ont aussi fait partie de l’équipe : Wisrah Villefort, qui centre son travail sur les relations humaines et non humaines, et Carolina Brunelli, qui s’intéresse aux questions inédites d’oppression et de résistance des minorités au Brésil.

Cette série de résidences a abouti à une installation artistique en octobre 2021 : une projection vidéo en lien avec la sculpture, présentant des cartes imprimées sur vitres, disposées sur trois niveaux et soutenues par 26 verres. Elle se veut symboliser la COP26, « Cup26 » qui a suivi les résidences de Bâle et de Lugano. De la notion de « colonialisme vert » est né le concept de l’installation Le Geste de Dieu, un travail inspiré des relations entre l’Afrique, l’Amérique et l’Europe. Puisqu’il s’agit de questions d’identité et de revendications de reconnaissance sociale, la République démocratique du Congo, par ses artistes, a établi des liens entre le quilombo et Kalera, un village situé entre les parcs nationaux Kundelungu et Upemba, en RDC, où les habitants sont confrontés au même type de problème que les quilombolas : le sentiment d’être étranger à leur propre terre. Comme dans les quilombos, à Kalera, nombre d’habitants vivent encore sous la menace de se retrouver dépossédés de leurs terres.

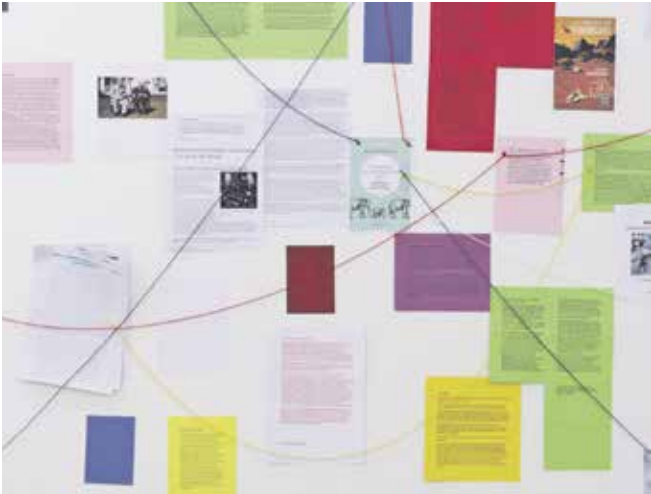
Le Geste de Dieu aborde aussi des questions environnementales qui touchent directement le Congo, réserve mondiale de ressources naturelles, de par ses multiples richesses, telles que la forêt équatoriale. Faut-il rappeler que la RDC a été présentée comme « pays solution » au changement climatique lors de la COP26 (Glasgow, Écosse) ? Que la Central African Forest Initiative compte sur elle pour protéger ses forêts alors même que les pays industrialisés, gros pollueurs, ont tout épuisé ? L’Amérique latine ne vit-elle pas la même situation avec l’Amazonie ? Comme à l’ère du commerce triangulaire, ces questions ne lient-elles pas les trois continents ?

¹ Céline Raimbert, “Quilombos ou l’affirmation de la diversité territoriale au Brésil: Une réflexion autour de la durabilité rurale et de l’action collective territorialisée,” PhD diss. Université Sorbonne Paris (2016), 42.

Vous l’aurez compris en effet, tout ce travail repose sur le livre *L’Invention du colonialisme vert. Pour en finir avec le mythe de l’Eden africain de Guillaume Blanc* (Flammarion, 2020). L’auteur aborde des questions liées à la crise environnementale que connaît le monde aujourd’hui. Cette crise qui semble à la base de l’exclusion des populations de Kalera au Congo, le village pris pour illustrer la situation de la RDC dans un monde en plein bouleversement. L’installation qui sanctionne ces résidences aura le mérite de sensibiliser sur des cas de colonialisme vert qui font se sentir étranger à ses terres. C’est ici l’occasion de montrer à la face du monde et à travers l’art, les conséquences du colonialisme vert sur les peuples « marginaux » pour qu’arrive, peut-être, le temps où les puissants se rendront compte que, sans la stabilité de ceux qu’ils regardent de haut, ils seront toujours aussi vulnérables ! ■

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GLORIA MPANGA *est une journaliste et blogueuse de la communauté Habari RDC. Elle a participé au programme de mentorat Autour de l’écriture critique de C& 2022 à Lubumbashi, où elle vit et travaille.*



Installation view of *Quilombo* at City SALTS in Basel, Switzerland, 2021. Discussions transcribed between several people on green colonialism and the relationship to the land. With wires that create a sort of performative tracing of speech accompanied by sound in the headphones. Photo: Nicolas Gysin

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Vue d’installation de *Quilombo* à City SALTS à Bâle, Suisse, 2021. Discussions retranscrite entre plusieurs personnes sur le colonialisme vert et la relation à la terre. Avec des fils qui créent une sorte de tracé performatif de la parole accompagné d’un son dans les écouteurs. Photo: Nicolas Gysin

GLORIA MPANGA writes about a residency project interrogating ecological crises and colonialism from the perspective of artists – **STÉPHANE KABILA, JOSEPH KASAU, MAYA QUILOLO, PAULO NAZARETH, WISRAH VILLEFORT, and CAROLINA BRUNELLI.**

Centre d’art Waza in Lubumbashi, DRC, and the SALTS art salon in Switzerland organized a series of creative residencies for artists that ran from August to October 2021. Based in Basel and Lugano, the Quilombo project spanned three continents, bringing together artists from Brazil, Switzerland, and Congo-Kinshasa to work together side by side. Taking as its starting point the work of artists from cities with very different realities, it focused on the practices of green colonialism that are a common link between the three continents. While the two main cities involved are Swiss, they nevertheless present a contrast in terms of urban density and the languages spoken by their respective inhabitants. Basel is the third most heavily populated city in Switzerland after Zurich and Geneva and has German as its language, while Lugano, the country’s ninth largest city, is located in the south, where Italian is spoken. Lubumbashi, as the DRC’s second largest French-speaking city, located in the southeast of the country, is fully exposed to the linguistic influence of a number of southern African countries whose people come there for business, with their “no English, no job” approach.

Quilombo refers to a community formed by runaway slaves from Brazil, a reminder that some models of civilization in Africa, whether imposed or striven for, are still predicated on the monopolization of land. Was this not the idea on which Freetown and Libreville were modeled? Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone and its largest city, was built by the descendants of slaves who had been freed in 1787 by British abolitionists. This was well before Obai (King) Naimbanna II of the Kingdom of Koya enabled the return of the descendants of emancipated African slaves by offering them work and land. Libreville (which is French for Freetown) followed the same pattern – it was built to accommodate Vili slaves freed from the Brazilian slave ship *L’Elizia*, which was intercepted off the coast of Loango at a time when the slave trade was still being plied in the Gulf of Guinea, despite having been strictly forbidden since 1848.

Today, the controversial agreement concluded between London and Kigali, stipulating that from now on anyone who enters the UK illegally can be “relocated” to Rwanda, brings us back to the question of the use that is made of the land or other people’s land and to the issue of green colonialism. This kind of approach comes with its share of problems: for the migrants, regardless of where they come from, this would add 6,000 kilometers (the distance separating the two countries) to the journey they have already endured in order to enter the UK. Meanwhile people in the DRC also view it with unease, as it would risk denting relations between Kigali and Kinshasa, which are still not very rosy. Why is that? Rwanda does not have a huge amount of territory at its disposal and its own nationals are facing a crackdown. The country would shift all these migrants to the borders with Congo-Kinshasa, whose mineral wealth it covets, and further destabilize it – something it excels at – by brazenly supporting the M23 rebel group (the March 23 Movement) in full

view of the international community, whose silence on the matter is regarded by many Congolese intellectuals as tacit consent.

This may be what Céline Raimbert, a doctor of geography at Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris, is pointing to in her doctoral dissertation when she brackets the *quilombolas* together with other marginalized groups, whom she sees as sharing the same reality: “More precisely, the *quilombos* are places of refuge, where runaway slaves could gather having fled the toil and abuses not only of the plantations, of whatever kind, but also of urban servitude. They may also include in their ranks other kinds of marginalized people who, following the example of these runaway slaves, relied on concealment: Amerindians and people of mixed race, landless peasants and deserters, and even, according to some sources, a number of criminals.”¹

Taking part in the project were Congolese curator Stéphane Kabila and visual artist Joseph Kasau, co-founders of the platform NidjeKonnexion. It is a way for them to address the problems that affect their community and look at how to remedy them by applying their know-how and doing what they do best: art! Kasau works with photography, video, and creative writing, while Kabila is interested in myths and violence in human culture. Brazilian Maya Quilolo was herself born in a *quilombo*. Her work is a blend of performative and visual arts and privileges cultural diversity (pivo.org.br/blog/maya-quilolo-ori-de-cobra-e-misterio-do-mundo/, March 2021). Paulo Nazareth, another Brazilian artist involved in the project, is passionate about travel. His work is a record of his multiple



Vue d’installation de *Quilombo* à City SALTS à Bâle, Suisse, 2021. Vidéos geste des dieux placée dans un miroir pour que le public interagisse avec. Photo : Nicolas Gysin

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Installation view of *Quilombo* at City SALTS in Basel, Switzerland, 2021. Gesture videos of the gods placed in a mirror for the audience to interact with. Photo: Nicolas Gysin

journeys and what has come out of them. The team also included Swiss artists: Wisrah Villefort, whose work centers on human and nonhuman relationships, and Carolina Brunelli, who is interested in the oppression of minorities in Brazil and their resistance to this – an issue that has remained out of the public eye.

The series of residencies culminated in an art installation in October 2021. A video projection was staged that tied in with a sculpture presenting maps printed on windowpanes arranged on three levels with twenty-six glass supports. The work, *Cup26*, was intended as a symbol of COP26, which followed the residencies in Basel and Lugano. The concept of green colonialism gave rise to the installation *Le geste de Dieu* (The Gesture of God), inspired by the relationship between Africa, America, and Europe. Dealing with questions of identity and demands for social recognition, the work of the Congolese artists established links in the DRC between *quilombos* and the village of Kalera, which is situated between the country’s Kundelungu and Upemba national parks. The village’s inhabitants are faced with the same kind of problems as the *quilombolas*: the feeling of being alienated from their own land. This is an issue that reaches beyond quilombos and Kalera, with many people still living with the threat of having their land taken from them.

Le geste de Dieu also takes an aesthetic approach to the environmental issues that have a direct impact on the Congo, which is a global reserve given its wealth of resources including the equatorial forest. It should be remembered that at COP26 in Glasgow (Scotland) the DRC was presented as a “solution country” when it comes to climate change, and that the Central African Forest Initiative is counting on it to protect its forests, while the industrialized countries and big polluters have bled everything dry. Isn’t Latin America facing the same situation with the Amazon? In an era of triangular trade, these issues surely create a link between the three continents.

As you will doubtless have realized, all the work is based on the book *L’invention du colonialisme vert: Pour en finir avec le mythe de l’Eden africain* (The Invention of Green Colonialism: Debunking the Myth of an African Eden) by Guillaume Blanc (Paris: Flammarion, 2020). The author deals with issues relating to the environmental crisis the world is experiencing today. This crisis seems to be behind the exclusion of the people of Kalera in Congo-Kinshasa. The village is used to illustrate the country’s situation in a world in total upheaval. The installation has the merit of raising awareness of cases of green colonialism which make people feel alienated from their own lands. This is an opportunity to show the world, through the medium of art, the effects of green colonialism on “marginal” peoples, so that the time may come when those in power realize that unless there is some stability for those they look down upon, they will be just as vulnerable. ■

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GLORIA MPANGA *is a journalist and blogger from the Habari DRC community. She participated in the C& Critical Writing Workshop in Lubumbashi, where she lives and works, in 2022.*

Translation: Simon Cowper

¹ Céline Raimbert, “Quilombos ou l’affirmation de la diversité territoriale au Brésil: Une réflexion autour de la durabilité rurale et de l’action collective territorialisée,” PhD diss. Université Sorbonne Paris (2016), 42.

RE-GENERATION

LIFE!

BROADENING
AND ENHANCING
CRITICAL ART WRITING



above Photo: C&

In the roundtable mentees and mentors from the C& Critical Writing Workshops and Mentoring Program, **BWANGA KAPUMPA**, **ENOS NYAMOR**, **MIRIANE PEREGRINO** and **LORNA TELMA ZITA** speak to **ROSE JEPKORIR** about why they write, their motivations and practice in recent years.

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As art writers we are not going to solve any famine or discover cures for diseases... But we can enrich our communities by articulating, affirming, or even negating aesthetic standards.

Enos Nyamor

CONTEMPORARY AND (C&) What prompted you to go into writing about art and culture?

BWANGA KAPUMPA I'm from Zambia and there aren't many writers or artists committed to critical art discourses and writing. My goal is to intervene in this in my own way. I have been working as a professional writer for over a decade, mainly writing advertising copy and short fiction. In 2020, I expanded my work to include visual art practice – writing about art and culture also seemed like a natural career progression.

ENOS NYAMOR When I began writing professionally, my interests gravitated towards culture, which the mainstream media in Kenya had neglected. Much attention focused on political narratives. Yet I found myself in situations where I related to isolated artistic expressions and was deeply moved by them. It is a ripple effect – one thing leads to another. In the end, most of my writing is constantly a reaction to an object or event, but mainly to other expressions.

MIRIANE PEREGRINO I like to read and reading is an important antecedent for those who want to be a writer or journalist. I was always curious to know the context in which culture is produced, so that aroused my interest in researching and writing about that aspect. Today I write mainly about literature, but I started in 2014 when the community museum where I worked in Rio de Janeiro was undergoing an eviction action. I started by researching what was happening to other community museums during the huge sporting events in Brazil. The situation made me produce a series of reports on this subject, and to this day I keep an interest in writing about expressions of memory and resistance in several languages.

LORNA TELMA ZITA Art is a way in which we express our emotions and approach our history and culture through aesthetic values. In writing about it, I'm taking it to a larger

audience, showing what we value most in and outside our communities. Writing plays an important role for me today because it is through it that I take stand on certain issues related to cultural events and formulate a point of view on what has been done by different artists.

C& Would you say that critical writing is a powerful tool for you? Why?

EN I invariably grapple with the question of criticism that aspires towards literature, and this shapes my approach to our craft. If literature is a powerful tool, so is criticism. Why do critics choose to write about specific aspects of a show? I believe it begins with the urge to express something, and then to find the most fulfilling form for it. As art writers we are not going to solve any famine or discover cures for diseases. A critic's work is likely to mostly concern a handful of critics and cultural producers. But we can enrich our communities by articulating, affirming, or even negating aesthetic standards. Critics also provoke and articulate new concepts, and therefore extend conversations and narratives beyond traditional spaces, such as galleries and classrooms.

MP It sure is! Critical writing leads me to research and build arguments, not just to present a collection, works, or pieces of art. During the liberation struggle the writer Antonio Jacinto said, "It is by poetry that everything will begin." I believe that critical writing, that writing itself, has this powerful role of spreading ideas, values, instigating those who write, sharpening the curiosity of those who read, and mobilizing art agents.

LTZ Yes, critical writing has the function of making an interpretive analysis, exposing personal considerations about artists' works and practice. It allows us to better know the positive and negative aspects, expand on the vision, and understand the approach of the author. I believe it is important because

it allows us to understand what we are analyzing and give value judgments.

BK Writing allows me to explain my own work in ways the observer might appreciate. Secondly, it gives me another set of skills on my utility belt. I find satisfaction in creating my own artwork and writing, but I can also find joy in contributing to much-needed discourse in Zambian and African art through critical writing. More writers like me writing about art with well-informed, thought-out, and contextual contributions is powerful. It also doesn't hurt that I could make a little extra money from having this range of skills!

C& In view of the changing contexts in which you work, has your sense of responsibility as a writer changed? Has your perception of your audience changed? In which directions is your work now moving?

EN I came to New York City and the pandemic happened. Then, during the antiracist uprisings, I found ways to participate in culture. Shows and performances were scarce. But I think a writer is like a nurse whose services are always in demand. Political context and material conditions might have changed, but the human condition is universal. Like the Zimbabwean-born writer Dambudzo Marechera, I believe there is no writer for a specific nation or race. However, I find myself not only a stranger but also part of a minority group, and so face everyday life struggles. I have wrangled with the balance between the social and technological aspects of constant movement. For this reason I have increasingly focused on the archival aspects of art writing. I figured out that if I was to dedicate the next decade to archiving, collecting work by our generation of Black writers, then it would be possible to set up a framework for nurturing Afrocentric narratives.



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Critical writing has the function of making an interpretive analysis, exposing personal considerations about artists' works and practice. It allows us to better know the positive and negative aspects, expand on the vision, and understand the approach of the author.

Lorna Telma Zita

above Critical Writing Workshop Harare, 2017.
Photo: Sherman Baloyi

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I believe that critical writing, that writing itself, has this powerful role of spreading ideas, values, instigating those who write, sharpening the curiosity of those who read, and mobilizing art agents.

Miriane Peregrino



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Late 1990s to late 2000s hip hop has always played a role in the lyricism and wordplay of my work.

Bwanga Kapumpa

above Critical Writing Workshop Participant in Lubumbashi, 2017.
Photo: Mustache Muhanya

MP It was in cultural and popular journalism that my critical writing began, but a few years ago I turned more to the relationship between performance, literature, and visual arts. In 2018, I did the C& writing workshop in Angola and this contributed to my changing perceptions of critical writing and the public. I was very pleased with the invitation to participate as a student of the Mentoring Program in 2019, and now, in 2022, as a mentor to a young Mozambican writer. For me, this whole process deepens my responsibility as a woman who writes, who investigates. Writing always requires an investigation process. It also sews the fabric of relationships that I have been building between Angola, Brazil, and Mozambique in recent years. Currently I am continuing to develop research on performance and literature, but looking at the productions of Guinea Bissau and Cape Verde, countries in which I have recently been.

BK I’m quite new to art practice. My first foray was in early 2020 and later that year I was part of a group exhibition. Earlier this year (2022), I was part of another group exhibition. Both were with the Livingstone Office for Contemporary Art. Writing is my principal medium, and I like to include elements of text and storytelling in my artwork. I’m also trying to step out of my comfort zone and experiment with sound and other mediums. I’m carrying out ongoing research on traditional healing, “witchcraft,” and allied religious practices in Zambia. I’ve only dipped my big toe into this vast body of history and culture. I’ve had to put it on hold because I’m currently in Scotland for a year, but I’m hoping to see if I can find links between Zambian and Scottish mysticism while I’m here.

LTZ I have improved my writing, and now I am very selective about what I write and what kind of material I want to present to my audience. I am planning to release a book this year and I hope to continue with my current trajectory in art criticism.

C& Could you tell us of books, music, or other works that have been important to you?

EN The writings of Marcel Proust constantly torment me. I covet his descriptions, often rendered in a leisurely fashion. Long paragraphs of lush statements and sprawling inferences. Reading Proust is like combing through a thicket of art writing and cultural criticism. I have read only two volumes of *In Search of Lost Time* (1913–29), and I find great solace in his work, especially as someone interested in writing about social interactions, creative expression, and performance.

MP I highlight the book *Palavras que andam / Walking Words* (2021) by Mozambican Sónia Sultuane and the Angolan anthology *É de gênero?* (2015), but much of what I have researched has no written record – although sometimes there are audiovisuals since many performances are recorded and made available on social networks. Because of this it is so important to move to places of cultural action, to experience and understand the dynamics of spaces of cultural production.

BK I really enjoyed Stephen King and other genre fiction when I got into college. Hunter S. Thompson’s essays really influenced the non-fiction articles I wrote after that. Ta-Nehisi Coates’ articles and Chinua Achebe’s essays helped me think more deeply about what I write now. And late 1990s to late 2000s hip hop has always played a role in the lyricism and wordplay of my work.

LTZ One of the books that has most impressed me is *Viagem* (1939) by Cecilia Meireles. The themes are eclectic and sometimes quite simple, but it captured my attention. It is interesting how the author creates space at the intersection between music, nature, and cultural issues for the reader to build memories through their reading. The other book is from Mozambican writer Marcelo Panguana: *Como um louco ao fim da tarde* (2009).

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BWANGA ‘BENNY BLOW’ KAPUMPA is a writer and artist from Lusaka, Zambia. He participated in the C& Mentoring Program in 2022 and was guided by Enos Nyamor from Kenya.

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ENOS NYAMOR is an East African writer from Nairobi and presently based in New York and Seattle, USA, where he lives and works. He earned an MFA in Art Writing and Criticism from the School of Visual Arts, NYC, and is also a past participant of the C& Critical Writing Workshop in 2016 and a mentor for the C& Mentoring Program in 2022.

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MIRIANE PEREGRINO has a doctorate in literature from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and studied abroad at Agostinho Neto University, in Angola. In 2018, she was part of the C& Critical Writing Workshop in Angola and became a mentee in 2019. Now, in 2022, she is mentoring a young Mozambican writer.

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LORNA TELMA ZITA is writer, spoken word poet, and cultural project manager based in Mozambique, with different collaborations in the United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Brazil. She is a woman who finds in art the refuge and freedom to speak freely; in her writing she gives voice to the voiceless. Lorna sums up her participation in the C& Mentoring Program in two words: wonderful and unique. It is an experience that I will carry with me forever, as it placed me with different artists and helped me to see critical art from other angles.

HACIENDO EL AUSENTE PRESENTE

MAKING THE ABSENT PRESENT



NICOLÁS VIZCAÍNO SÁNCHEZ takes a critical look at the (re)production of images from the history of people of African descent, signaling the path to producing a different story that decolonizes the eurocentric imprint of our identity reports.

arriba Kerry James Marshall, *Scipio Moorhead, Retrato de sí mismo, 1776* (imagen de la izquierda), 2007.
Vista de la exposición de Kerry James Marshall: Mastry, del 12 de marzo al 3 de julio de 2017 en MOCA Grand Avenue.
Cortesía del Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MOCA). Foto: Brian Forrest

above Kerry James Marshall, *Scipio Moorhead, Portrait of himself, 1776* (left image), 2007.
Installation view of Kerry James Marshall: Mastry, March 12–July 3, 2017 at MOCA Grand Avenue.
Courtesy of The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA). Photo by Brian Forrest

NICOLÁS VIZCAÍNO SÁNCHEZ ofrece una mirada crítica a la (re)producción de imágenes sobre la historia de los afrodescendientes, señalando el camino para encontrar relatos que combatan la impronta eurocéntrica de nuestros informes de identidad.

Phillis Wheatley, una mujer raptada de su natal Gambia a los 7 años, esclavizada en Boston por John Wheatley, publicó en Londres en 1773, de la mano de abolitionistas británicos como Granville Sharp, su primer libro de poesía *Poems on various Subjects, Religious and moral*. El frontispicio de la edición tiene un grabado, cuya imagen original se atribuye a un retrato que de la poetisa realizó un pintor afrodescendiente del que no se sabe mucho: su nombre, Scipio, su apellido, Moorhead.

El artista obtuvo este apellido del reverendo esclavista John Moorhead, cuya esposa Sarah se dice fue quien le enseñó a dibujar y pintar en Boston. Ante la falta de otros registros, Kerry James Marshall, el gran maestro afroamericano de la pintura, quizás el máximo referente de la representación de la negritud en el arte contemporáneo, pintó *Scipio Moorhead, Portrait of himself, 1776* (2007), como un retrato ficcional de este pintor de quien realmente sabemos por el poema que Phillis Wheatley le dedicó: “To S.M. A Young African Painter, on Seeing his Work”. La escena, en la que se recrea una sesión de retrato entre el pintor y la poetisa, está compuesta según la tradición europea del retrato de pintor trabajando, que pretende otorgarle un lugar a este artista que está por fuera del récord de la historia del arte, lo que en la retórica pictórica de Kerry James Marshall significa trabajar simultáneamente entre su propia ausencia y presencia. En el concepto tradicional de representación, pese a que estas dos dimensiones están en juego, la ausencia está dada y es indiscutible: se re-presenta lo que no está ya presente, el problema está entonces en el asunto de la presencia: ¿Cómo hacer presente lo ausente? Para Marshall, formado artísticamente en la línea de artistas afroamericanos como Charles White, Betye Saar o Romare Bearden, en pleno auge de la lucha por los derechos civiles en Estados Unidos, la pregunta se ensancha y se contrae, inevitablemente va y vuelve, se trata de saber también, desde la experiencia afrodiaspórica ¿Cómo es posible que lo presente este ausente?

La decidida figuración de cuerpos negros, pintados literalmente con pigmentos ébano, marte y carbón, es una declaración de principios, una forma de “reducir las complejas variaciones tonales a una dimensión retórica: negrura [Blackness]”*, con la que además de repensar las estrategias de autorepresentación, Kerry James Marshall se está insertando formalmente en la discusión de la vanguardia pictórica post-impresionista: entre el constructivismo soviético y el neo-expresionismo norteamericano. Con pinturas incónicas como *A portrait of the artist as a shadow of his former self* (1980) – su primera y más destacada pintura figurativa–, *Two Invisible Men Naked* (1985), *Invisible Man* (1986), y la magistral *Black Painting* (2003), Marshall fabrica objetos pictóricos, dispositivos con los que se apropia y distorsiona el canon clásico de la pintura occidental para representar a los descendientes de africanas, subrepresentados en la historia del arte, “tomando [su] ausencia y ampliándola hasta que el vacío es ineludible”**.

En una conversación con el artista Arthur Jafa en 1999, Kerry James Marshall afirmó que si bien su estrategia pictórica “está de cierto modo estereotipando [a la gente negra], sus figuras nunca son risibles”***. La línea ética que aquí se traza necesariamente lleva a pensar en las representaciones racistas que sí lo son. Para el caso colombiano la caricatura “Nieves” de la dibujante Consuelo Lago, publicada desde 1968 en un periódico local, es un claro ejemplo de estereotipia e inferiorización burlona de una mujer de piel negra que comenzó siendo una sirvienda doméstica y solo hasta 1997, por medio de una demanda en contra de la dibujante, se convirtió en una estudiante universitaria. Internacionalmente basta con revisar varias imágenes producidas recientemente en el contexto de las artes, la moda y el diseño, e incluso la panadería, donde un pastel llamado “Mamadou”, dibuja un rostro caricaturizado sobre una tradicional receta francesa “tête de negre”. Da la casualidad de que Moorhead, Moor head, más allá de ser el apellido del esclavista de Scipio, es lo que en la tradición heráldica medieval europea se ha llamado también Testa di Moro, Tête de Maure, Cabeza de Moro. Estas expresiones contienen una larga, contradictoria e intrincada historia de representación eurocéntrica de gente norte africana. El símbolo, que aparece en blasones pintados y forjados en España, Italia, Francia y Alemania se trata, en la mayoría de los casos, de decapitaciones de africanos de piel oscura. En contra de la tradición visual de subrepresentación afrodescendiente, urge en las artes afrolatinoamericanas y caribeñas prestar atención a estrategias como la empleada por Kerry James Marshall para desmontar sistemáticamente los artilugios estructurales de cosificación e invisibilización, reposicionar los cuerpos negros en los primeros planos y ensanchar el espacio negativo de figuración hasta hacer obvia nuestra ausencia en los relatos históricos blanqueados. ■

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NICOLÁS VIZCAÍNO SÁNCHEZ (1991-) es un artista-etc. radicado entre Bogotá y Quibdó, Colombia, cuyo trabajo abarca instalaciones multimedia, escritura crítica, práctica editorial y proyectos curatoriales socialmente comprometidos, sobre las memorias y contranarrativas que distorsionan y combaten las estructuras hegemónicas de poder. Su participación en el programa de mentoría C& 2020, en su capítulo de Colombia, contó con las generosas conversaciones con el curador de Ramiro Camelo.

* Marshall, K. J., Sultan, T., & Jafa, A. (2000).
Kerry James Marshall (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), p. 90

** Tattersall, Lanka. (2016). “Black Lives, Matter” en Marshall, K. J., In Molesworth, H., Alteveer, I., Roelstraete, D., Tattersall, L., Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, Ill.), Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.), Museum of Contemporary Art (Los Angeles, CA.) (2016). Kerry James Marshall: Mastry. (New York: Rizzoli), p. 64

*** Marshall, K. J., Sultan, T., & Jafa, A. (2000).
Kerry James Marshall (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000), p. 90

Phillis Wheatley, a woman who was kidnapped from her native Gambia at the age of seven, then enslaved in Boston by John Wheatley, published her first book of poetry, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* in London in 1773 with the help of British abolitionists such as Granville Sharp. The frontispiece of the edition has an engraving whose original image is described as a portrait of the poet by an Afro-descendant painter about whom little is known: his name, Scipio, and surname, Moorhead.

He got his surname from the slave owner Reverend John Moorhead, whose wife, Sarah, it is said, taught the artist to draw and paint in Boston. In the absence of other records, Kerry James Marshall, the great African American painter, perhaps the most renowned artist when it comes to the representation of Blackness in contemporary art, painted *Scipio Moorhead, Portrait of himself, 1776* (2007), as a fictional portrait of this painter whom we know from the poem that Phillis Wheatley dedicated to him: “To S.M. A Young African Painter, on Seeing his Work.” The scene, in which a portrait session between the painter and the poet is recreated, is composed according to the European tradition of the portrait of a painter working, giving a place to this artist who is excluded from the canon of art history, which in Marshall’s pictorial rhetoric means working simultaneously between his own absence and presence. In the traditional concept of representation these two dimensions are at play, but absence is a given: what is represented is what is not yet present; the problem then is how to make what is absent present. For Marshall, artistically trained in the line of African American artists such as Charles White, Betye Saar, and Romare Bearden, at the height of the struggle for civil rights in the United States, the question broadens then contracts, inevitably comes and goes, and is also about knowing based on the experience of the African Diaspora: how is it possible that presence is absence?

The decisive figuration of Black bodies, literally painted with ebony, charcoal, and Mars black pigments, is a declaration of principles, a way of “reducing the complex tonal variations to a rhetorical dimension: Blackness,”*** with which, in addition to rethinking strategies of self-representation, Marshall is formally inserting himself in the discussion of the post-impressionist pictorial avant-garde: between Soviet constructivism and North American neo-expressionism. With iconic paintings like *A Portrait of the Artist as a Shadow of his Former Self* (1980), *Two Invisible Men Naked* (1985), *Invisible Man* (1986), and the masterful *Black Painting* (2003), Marshall produces pictorial objects, devices with which he appropriates and distorts the classic canon of Western painting to represent the descendants of African women, underrepresented in art history, “taking their absence and expanding it until the void is unavoidable.”**

In a conversation with the artist Arthur Jafa in 1999, Marshall stated that although his pictorial strategy “is in some way stereotyping [Black people], his figures are never laughable.”*** The ethical line that is drawn here necessarily leads us to think about racist representations that exist. In the Colombian case, the cartoon “Nieves” by cartoonist Consuelo Lago, published since 1968 in a local newspaper, is a clear example of stereotyping and derisive inferiorization of a woman with Black skin who started out as a domestic servant and only in 1997, by means of a lawsuit against the cartoonist, became a university student. Internationally, suffice it to

mention several recently produced images in the context of the arts, fashion, design, and even the bakery, where a cake called “Mamadou” depicts a caricatured face based on a traditional French recipe, “tête de negre.” It just so happens that Moorhead, beyond being the surname of the slave owner, is what in the European medieval heraldic tradition has also been called: Testa di Moro, Tête de Maure, or Cabeza de Moro (moor’s head). These expressions contain within them a long, contradictory, and intricate history of Eurocentric representation of North African people. The symbol, which appears on painted and forged coats of arms in Spain, Italy, France, and Germany, depicts, in most cases, decapitations of dark-skinned Africans. Contrary to the visual tradition of the underrepresentation of Afro-descendants, there is an urgent need in Afro-Latin American and Caribbean arts to pay attention to strategies such as the one Marshall has used to systematically dismantle the structural devices of objectification and invisibility, to reposition Black bodies in the foreground and expand the negative space of figuration to the point where our absence in the whitewashed historical accounts is made obvious. ■

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NICOLÁS VIZCAÍNO SÁNCHEZ (1991-) is an artist-etc. based between Bogotá and Quibdó, Colombia, whose work spans multimedia installations, critical writing, editorial practice, and curatorial/socially engaged projects on the memories and counternarratives that distort and fight hegemonic power structures. His participation in the Colombia C& Mentoring Program 2020 included generous conversations with the curator Ramiro Camelo.

Translation: Sara Hanaburgh



Republic of Edible Ideas Presents Dinner, Single Channel Video.
Marwa Benhalim in Collaboration with Natasha Yonan – 00:46:00
(Video Screen Shot)

جمهورية الأفكار للأكل تقدم العشاء - فيديو - مروة بن حليم
بالتعاون مع ناتاشا يونان

ALL THE CODES OF THE COOKING UNIVERSE

MARWA ELSAYED looks at historicity of the cookbook to highlight censorship and issues of power and language.

جاءت الأعمال الخمسة داخل المعرض تعيث كل منهم بمكونات الخطاب السياسي، حيث عملت بن حليم على جمع وتحليل الخطابات السياسية من مصر والشرق الأوسط والتلاعب بمفرداتها، بالحذف والإضافة، واستبدال بعض مكوناتها بجمل أكثر هزلية وأكثر سيربالية، تسعى من خلالها إلى نقد تلك الخطابات ولكن بنوع من اللوابة. في الدول القمعية، تلجأ المجتمعات إلى خلق لغة بديلة تمكنهم من التعبير والتعقيب على الأحداث الجارية دون إعلان ذلك صراحة، خشية بطش السلطة، في رأيها (بن حليم) كان ذلك سببًا لظهور الأمثال الشعبية، تلخيص حكمة ما، أو الإشارة إلى شيء دون التحدث عنه. فكانت الاستعانة بالأمثال الشعبية وحكمة العامة مدخل للتلاعب باللغة داخل أعمالها، أو مدخل لـ التحدث عن شيء دون التحدث عنه

في وصفات الشيطان، بالتعاون مع الفنانة الفزويلية أندريا نونيس، نسمع صوت معلق جاد يقرأ علينا تقرير لاجتماع إتحاد الحاصل، يدين فيه حرثًا سريالية يقودها الجزر، وهجرة الدقيق بحثًا عن شمس المسوبة، داخل قاعة معتمة، فيديو هولوغرام، بينما نشاهد يدها وهي تعد البصل للطبخ. يسمح الفراغ حول العمل بمحاولة اكتشافه، محاولة الكشف عن مصدر الصوت، والبحث حول تركيبة، ما يسمح بنزع السحر عنه

في القاعة الجاورة ثلاثة أعمال يُكَمِّل كل منهما الآخر، لوحتان خشبيتان أشبه بمسودة لخطاب سياسي، جرى عليها بعض التعديلات، بالحذف والكشط وإضافة جمل ساخرة/ أمثال شعبية/ وأجزاء من وصفات للطبخ بدلًا منها، في اقتراح خطاب آخر بديل

في العمل الثالث جمهورية الأفكار للأكلة تقدم العشاء اختارت بن حليم محاكاة برامج الطبخ التلفزيونية الطويلة، عبر فيديو 45 دقيقة، بالتعاون مع الفنانة العراقية ناتاشا يونان قدمتا من خلاله تخيل لجمهورية متكاملة، لها تلفزيونها الخاص، التي تروج من خلاله أفكارها وخطابها وكذلك بعض المنتجات والسلع التي تحمل نفس الاسم (العشاء) عبر برامج الطبخ، والتي تمثل سيطرة الدولة على أدق التفاصيل. طرحت خلاله بعض الإسقاطات الرمزية للخطابات السياسية على لسان سيدتان/ مقدمتا البرنامج. يرتبط الخطاب السياسي في الأذهان بصورة الرجل، ولكن للرائتان في العمل هما إشارة من بن حليم إلى الفيديو الأول عن الطبخ واللغة والرمز لـ مارثا روزلر في محاولة للتأكيد على هدم الصورة النمطية للأدوار الاجتماعية

الكلمات هي محور الحياة السياسية، وجميع السياسيون يعلمون جيدًا أن عليهم محاولة التحكم في اللغة، لذا تميل أغلب الخطابات السياسية إلى تكرار بعض المفردات، لتثبيت سلطة ما، أو لضمان التأثير على الجمهور. لا تستعرض تلك الأعمال وصفات الطبخ، ولا أدواته، ولكنها تسعى لنقد لغة الخطابات السياسية، وكيف تتلاعب بالجمهور، عبر مزج كل تلك التراهاات مع مجموعة الأمثال الشعبية والنكات الساخرة في حوار ينتقل بسلاسة بين الفصحى والعامية، لا يخلو من الجمل الاعتراضية.. يستعرض فساد ما يمرر إلينا يوميًا من خطابات بمزج الفضلات مع الطعام

توقف العرض بعد أيام قليلة من إطلاقه، ضمن توقف النشاط الفني والثقافي كأولى الإجراءات الاحترازية من انتشار الوباء العالمي كوفيد ١٩، إلا أن بن حليم نجحت بالتعاون مع موزة الماتروشي في استكمال مشروعها الفني عبر مجموعة من اللقاءات الحية تحمل عنوان تحري ووصفات أبلة نظيرة. تستضيف خلالها الفنانتان إحدى الباحثين في واحد من المجالات، وتعيدان معه قراءة الوصفات وتطبيقها بصورة حيّة

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مره السيد، مديرة ثقافية مُستقلة وباحثة في مجال الفنون البصرية، تهتم بتّبع أثر العلاقات الإجتماعية على الحركة الفنية. كانت جزء من البرنامج التوجيهي للكتاب من مصر وكولومبيا في الفترة بين ديسمبر 2019 ومايو 2020 بتوجيه من أ. على العدوي

*إقتباس من النص للمصاحب للمعرض- كتبها القيم الفني للمعرض الفنان أحمدشوقي

القاهرة، إبريل 2020
اشتهرت كتب الطبخ حول العالم بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية، وحققت نجاح كبيرًا، احتلت أعلى قوائم المبيعات في معارض الكتب واحدًا تلو الآخر، تبعها تطور كبير في الاهتمام بالطبخ وكتبه التي باتت واحدة من أدوات التعبير الثقافي عن الهوية؛ ف الطبخ يمزج بين احتياجات الإنسان الأساسية مع المعارف والعلوم الإنسانية والظروف الإقتصادية والسياسية كذلك. في مصر، منذ سنوات، كان كتاب (أبله نظيرة) هو الأشهر، تمتلكه أغلب النساء. تبعه تصاعد في برامج الطبخ، من فقرة أسبوعية، إلى برنامج خاص، إلى أن أطلقت له عدد من القنوات الفضائية. في مارس، في مدرار، قدمت الفنانة المصرية للبيبة مروة بن حليم كتاب الطبخ الخاص بها من خلال معرضها الفردي الأول، بالتعاون مع مجموعة من الفنانين وبدعم من المورد الثقافي

استعارت بن حليم عالم الطبخ، وصفاته وبرامجه وكتبه، قالبًا تمرر من خلاله رؤيتها حول قضايا السلطة واللغة. بحثت حول الضحك كأداة للمقاومة، اللغة والتلاعب بالنصوص للكتابة، وبنية الخطابات السياسية التي تشبه بشكل ما الطبخ، الذي يتألف من مكونات مختلفة تُمزج معًا لصنع شيء آخر جديد، كذلك هي الكلمات مكون أساسي في الخطاب السياسي. عبر وصفات تعطي إطار محدد للسلطة

Cairo, April 2020

In the aftermath of World War II, cookbooks rose to fame around the world, achieving immense success and continuously topping all book sales lists. Cooking and its literature have since become one of the tools for the expression of cultural identity. Cooking combines basic human needs with knowledge-sharing and the humanities as well as economic and political conditions. In mid-twentieth-century Egypt, the cookbook of Abla Nazira was very prominent, and most women had a copy. What followed was a proliferation of cooking shows, from weekly TV programming to the launch of multiple cooking-themed satellite channels. In March, the Libyan-Egyptian artist Marwa Benhalim, supported by Culture Resource (Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafi) and in collaboration with a group of artists, presented her own cookbook through her first solo exhibition in Medrar.

Benhalim adopted all the codes of the cooking universe, its characteristics, shows, and books, as a mold through which she casts her vision on issues of power and language. She researched comedy as a resistance tool, language and text manipulation, and the structure of political texts which resembles cooking as different ingredients are mixed to create something new. Words are an essential component of political discourse through formulas and recipes that give a specific framework for power.

Each of the five works in the exhibition tampered with these components as the artist collected and analyzed political discourses from Egypt and the Middle East to manipulate their terminology through addition and subtraction, substituting certain elements with more comedic or surreal sentences to criticize them in an equivocal manner. In oppressive countries, societies resort to creating alternative languages that enable them to express their opinions and comment on current events implicitly. Benhalim believes that

this dynamic leads to the emergence of popular sayings or idioms, summarizing proverbs, or referring to things without talking about them. The use of popular sayings and common wisdom was a way for Benhalim to talk about something without talking about it.

In *The Devil's Recipes*, a work made in collaboration with the Venezuelan artist Andrea Nunes, viewers hear a commentator solemnly reading a report of a Grains Alliance meeting, condemning an uncanny war waged by carrots, and announcing the migration of flour in search of a stolen sun. In a dark room, the video of a hologram reveals its hands cutting onions, the emptiness surrounding the work allowing audiences to try to unravel the source of the sound, and to look around for what might break the spell.

In the adjoining room two wooden boards resemble the revised draft of a political speech, with certain words or segments deleted, and ironic sentences, and recipes fragments added, to proffer an alternative political discourse.

In her third work, *Republic of Edible Ideas Presents Dinner*, Benhalim chose to mimic long-form TV cooking through a 45-minute video in collaboration with Iraqi artist Natasha Yonan. They fully conceptualized the representation of an integrated republic, with its own TV channel, through which it promotes its ideas and discourse, as well as a range of eponymous products and merchandise bearing the same name, Dinner. Here, cooking programs are a vehicle for tightening state control over the smallest details. The work makes multiple symbolic projections of political speeches stated by two women as the TV show's presenters. Political discourse is often associated with men in popular consciousness; these two women are Benhalim's reference to Martha Rosler's first video on cooking, language, and logos to dismantle the stereotypes around social roles.



The Republic of Edible Ideas Present Dinner (single channel video), Marwa Benhalim in collaboration with Natasha Yonan - 00:46:00 (screenshot). All production was made possible through a grant from Culture Resource Production Awards Program.

جمهورية الأفكار للأكلة تقدم العشاء - فيديو - مروة بن حليم بالتعاون مع ناتاشا يونان

Words are at the core of political life and all politicians know that they must strive to control language. This is why most political discourses repeat certain words and verbalisms, to establish authority or ensure public influence. Rather than reviewing culinary recipes or tools, the works in this exhibition attempt to critique the language of political discourse and how it manipulates audiences, mixing nonsensical rambling with a selection of popular proverbs and satirical wit, in a dialogue that smoothly vacillates between classical and colloquial Arabic. The exchange is not devoid of objectionable sentences, examining the corruption passed to us daily, by mixing excrement with food.

The exhibition ended days after its opening in the shutdown of all artistic and cultural events as a first precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, in cooperation with Moza El Matroushi, Benhalim completed her artistic project through a series of live meetings called Investigating the Recipes of Abla Nazeera, during which the two artists hosted researchers fields, read out the recipes, and tried them out live. ■

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MARWA ELSAYED is an independent cultural manager and researcher in visual arts focusing on the influence of social relations on artistic movements. She was part of the C& Mentoring Program for writers from Colombia and Egypt from December 2019 to May 2020, supervised by Ali Al-Adawi.

Translation: Imen Zarrouk

* A quote from the exhibition's accompanying text – written by the curator, artist Ahmed Shawky.

AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF ZIMBABWE, THE RETROSPECTIVE OF PAUL WADE MARKS ANOTHER MILESTONE



NYADZOMBE NYAMPENZA visits the exhibition that reflects Wade’s unstoppable interest in making art and his ongoing influence on the country’s contemporary art scene.

above Paul Wade, *Shelter I, II, III*, 157cmx170cm, 169cmx175cm, 179cmx153cm © Nyadzombe Nyampenza

With forty-nine paintings spanning the past sixteen years, *Cryptic Mark* at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in Harare reasserts Paul Wade as one of the country’s major artists. Put together by Fadzai Veronica Muchemwa, recently appointed curator for contemporary art at the National Gallery, the retrospective comes at a time when sixty-seven-year-old Wade has been curiously absent from public discourse and mainstream activities. Excitement about the show has refocused the conversation on his influence over multiple generations of Zimbabwean artists.

Chikonzero Chazunguza, founder of Dzimbahete Arts Interactions (DAI) and the artist who represented Zimbabwe at the 2015 Venice Biennale, recalls Wade as his first formal art teacher at the National Gallery’s former BAT Workshop. Chazunguza says Wade had an exceptional ability to cultivate talent among his students, recalling several who went on to become successful artists, such as Luis Meque, George Churu, Munya Victor Madzima, Agnes Nyanhongo, and Colleen Madamombe. Those who were taught by Wade went on to teach many others in turn. Chazunguza saw Wade’s influence come out in the works of those he himself has mentored at DAI.

Wade was born in 1955 in the United Kingdom to a mother from the UK and father from Bermuda. He came to Harare in 1981 with his Zimbabwean wife Emmie. “She wasn’t my wife then,” he tells me during a studio visit in September 2022, followed by gruff laughter that might recall the heady days of their courtship. The couple got married in Zimbabwe and raised two sons who are now adults. Wade holds a BA from Liverpool University, and has lectured at the Liverpool Foundation College in Ormskirk, the Teachers’ College in Gweru, and Seke Teachers’ College in Chitungwiza, as well as at the BAT Workshop, founded by the National Gallery in 1981. He was its first full-time instructor, and became head of education services there for several years. He has had several solo exhibitions in Zimbabwe and his work is included in the National Gallery’s permanent collection and many private collections.

For someone working in a non-representational style, Wade’s titles also paint vivid pictures. Lines such as *Fallen Crucifix*, *Sign on the Dotted Line*, and *Highways and Byways* project a clear mental image on the viewer’s mind. *Black on Black* and *Essence of Black* cannot be entirely seen as descriptions of color. Through predominantly thick

layers of paint in various shades of black, luminescent marks in blue, green, orange, yellow, pink, and other pastels peek between cracks in the brushstrokes, betraying a layered background much like the artist’s mixed heritage. Wade says the pieces were about eliminating color, and created at a time when he was not feeling well. Eventually it was a relief to bring back color in his work, he has said, and this coincided with his improved wellbeing. Two other paintings in the exhibition have a technically similar yet opposite look. *A Little Itch* and *A Bigger Itch* are predominantly white without making whiteness the subject.

A triptych titled *Avenues* has grid lines that indicate unique blocks in contrasting colors. In Harare “avenues” does not just describe tree-lined streets. It also refers to an area just outside the city center, where Wade lived at one time. The *Avenues* is associated with nightlife, and the sex workers who try to seduce the revelers there. Wade’s artworks celebrate the area with profusion of colors that might relate to its blooms and foliage, girded into blocks overlaid with spontaneous scrawls. In his style some may see traces of Willem de Kooning, Mark Rothko, or Cy Twombly, but his personal experiences together with local landscapes, social, economic, and political issues resonate through the work.

Wade was available for a discussion hosted by the National Gallery under the topic “Consciousness and Art Practice.” In conversation with multidisciplinary artist David Chinyama, he was asked to explain the meaning of his work, and his responses, like the marks on the canvases, didn’t give away much: “The answer is there... You just gotta work it out... If you look at it long enough...”

A disclaimer in the current show’s curatorial statement reads that the retrospective is “not a very retrospective one” because the focus is on work that is quite recent. Wade has worked in diverse styles and media, such as in tapestry and with figuration, and some of these could have been included for an exhibition fully representing his career. But space and logistics were constraining factors for a bigger show, says Fadzai Veronica Muchemwa.

Wade belongs to a group of mature painters who continue to create relevant work that challenges perceptions. Records of their important contributions and exhibitions are mostly bound up in erudite publications safely stored away on library shelves, where few bring them down to

“The retrospective comes at a time when sixty-seven-year-old Wade has been curiously absent from public discourse and mainstream activities.”

blow the dust away and peruse the pages. Meanwhile history continues to be written, biased in favor of the tech savvy and the “Instafamous” generation whose activities and accomplishments are continuously broadcast.

Harare does not treat its stars very well. It is a place where legends are turned into myth, from great musicians to talented athletes and actors that were once household names. How can a prolific artist who is held in high esteem and has contributed so much to the culture not become a perennial part of the conversation? Chikonzero Chazunguza argues that part of the reason is that upcoming artists eager to be seen as original fail to give credit to those who came before them. He adds that older artists can get isolated when fewer of their peers remain in practice: they mostly step back from competing with upcoming colleagues, so they end up only being called in as adjudicators. And the situation is compounded by a lack of institutions and a robust local market.

Back at Wade’s studio above the multistoried house he and his wife built in an affluent northern suburb of Harare, he shows no signs of slowing down. Why does he continue to create more work? “It’s the beauty of the mark, and the color,” Wade answers. “You know what I mean?” ■

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NYADZOMBE NYAMPENZA is a photographer and conceptual artist. His work is based on exploring his city, Harare, through documenting activities and spaces. Part of his work involves telling urban stories with staged narratives, and self-portraits. He participated in the C& Critical Writing Workshop in Harare at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe in September 2017, and the C& Mentoring Program beginning in March 2018.

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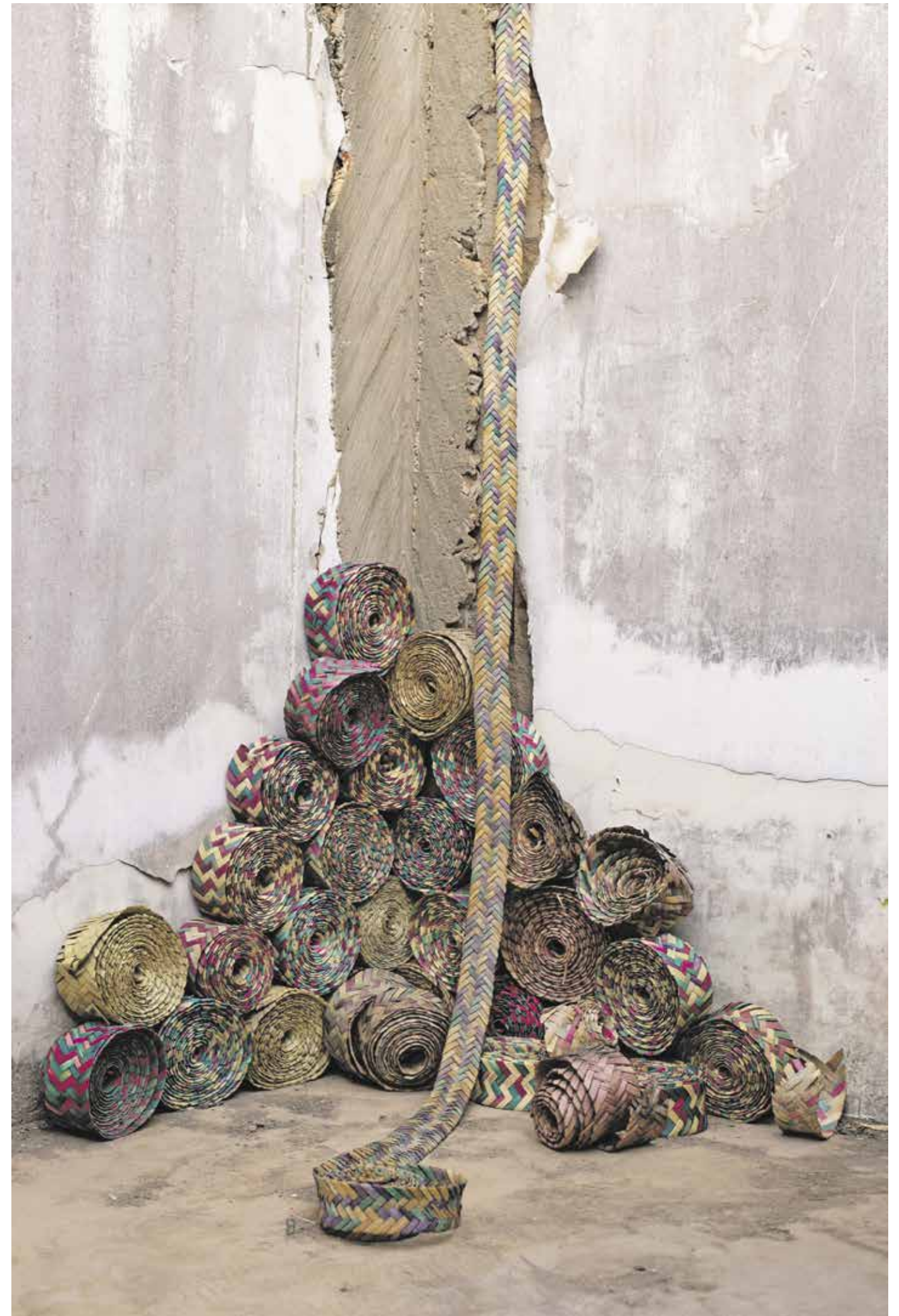
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ENTERING THE MULTIPERSPECTIVE WORK OF

THERESAH ANKOMAH

MAVIS TETTEH-OCLOO reflects on the sum of relationality constituting a fiber-based art and weaving practice.

opposite Theresah Ankomah, *Ruins of Time*, 2021. Woven palm leafs. Courtesy of the artist



“Ankomah is fascinated by the complexities of the craft and how it can be utilized for non-functional objects, extending beyond craft to open up discourses on trade, geopolitics, identity, and capitalism.”

She was trained as a sculptor, and woven objects have been an integral part of Theresah Ankomah’s life, from engaging with the baskets collected by her mother for storage purposes to becoming a collector of kenaf onion containers herself. An interest in the history of kenaf-fiber baskets, normally used to cover sacks of onions in their transport from farms into urban areas, was awakened when she first encountered them at the Anloga Onion Market in Kumasi. Ankomah’s conversations with onion traders led to her acquiring the baskets for her art practice.

Her work is informed by the journeys, trade relations, and exchanges that take place between people and nations before onions reach consumers. In her studio, the baskets are taken through processes of dyeing, splitting, cutting, (re-)weaving, and/or reshaping into different forms. The results explore the intricacies of weaving and re-weaving. Ankomah is fascinated by the complexities of the craft and how it can be utilized for non-functional objects, extending beyond craft to open up discourses on trade, geopolitics, identity, and capitalism. She often creates immersive installations using natural fibers, including palm leaves, rattan, jute rope, and repurposed kenaf baskets.

In her installation *Rebirth* (2016), hundreds of multicolored dyed kenaf baskets rose from the ground in a spiral form connecting to the branch of a large tree. It became a reflection on the seemingly endless nature of life cycles. After a period of time the kenaf baskets lost their bright colors and disintegrated into a sort of compost that eventually fed the plant from which the fiber was originally derived. Ankomah takes an interest in how the weather and micro-organisms engage and transform her work, adding to the art-making process.

Untitled #2 (2017) took the kenaf baskets back to the spaces where Ankomah sourced them in Kumasi, at the Anloga Onion Market. Having received a revamping in the artist’s studio, brightly dyed in yellow, green, purple, and red colors, the baskets re-assumed their previous function as onion carriers and lids to sacks of onion. Displayed alongside their untouched counterparts, which still wore their natural pale brown colors, they brought life, adding value to the space and enticing customers to buy more.

In *A walk through intimacy* (2021), kenaf baskets were dyed, cut, reshaped, and suspended at various levels from the ceiling of the foyer of the Nubuke Foundation gallery in East Legon, Accra, as part of *Look at We*, a two-person exhibition with Lois Arde-Acquah.

Lights were randomly installed in some of them, creating the feeling of chandelier with the baskets serving as lampshades. At night an aura of coziness filled the space, created by the variety of colored lights spilling through the holes in the baskets coupled with the cool weather. Either by night or by day, members of the audience were invited to take a meditative walk through the installation, reflecting on their lives and the atmosphere created within the space or the crises befalling the globe as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ruins of time (2021), shown at the exhibition *Ruins, Space and Expression of the Ruins of our Self*, held at Notre Galerie in Accra in May 2021, consisted of strips of intricately woven fan palm leaves, mimicking plain-woven kente weaving in Ghana. The strips came in different zigzag patterns from the twill-weaving of single palm leaves carefully dyed, twisted, and woven together; for the sake of longevity, Ankomah intervened into their deterioration with a chemical spray. Commenting on the proliferation of cheap textiles imported from China into Ghana, which has negatively affected the local textile industry, the woven strips occupied a building from which the roof had been blown off due to adverse weather conditions. They were also suspended from the sides of the walls; they crossed and intertwined each other. Rolled strips peered through broken windows and partially rolled ones hung suspended from the open doors and side walls of the dilapidated building, which was still exposed to the weather and life forms like lizards, ants, and termites. ■

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MAVIS TETTEH-OCLOO is an art educator and independent curator. She has worked on curatorial projects with blaxTARLINES-Kumasi and ARoS Museum and Colleg, both in Denmark. She participated in the C& Mentoring Program held in Ghana from September 2020 to February 2021.



above Theresah Ankomah, *A walk through intimacy*, 2021.

Dyed kenaf onion baskets. Image courtesy Nii Odzenma

below Theresah Ankoamh, *Untitled II*, 2016. Anloga Onion Market, Kumasi. Courtesy of the artist

DE L'EXPÉRIMENTATION À L'ART VIDÉO

Depuis que l'artiste congolais **FUNDI MWAMBA (FM) GUSTAVE GIRESE** a découvert le médium de la vidéo, il n'y a plus eu de limites à ses explorations avec la caméra. **COSTA TSHINZAM** explique l'évolution de l'artiste du dessin animé à la réalisation de vidéos.

FM GUSTAVE GIRESE

FROM EXPERIMENTATION TO VIDEO ART

Since Congolese artist **FUNDI MWAMBA (FM) GUSTAVE GIRESE** discovered the medium of video, there have been no limitations in his explorations with the camera. **COSTA TSHINZAM** explains the artist's evolution from drawing cartoons to directing video.



en haut Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse, *Robot*, performance avec Michael Disanka, artiste fondateur du Collectif Dartdart, Kinshasa, 2015. Photo : Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse

en bas Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse, *Ubatizo*, la genèse du mal (photo du film), 2022. Photo : Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse

above Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse, *Robot*, performance featuring Michael Disanka, founding artist of the Collective Dartdart, Kinshasa, 2015. Photo: Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse

below Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse, *Ubatizo*, *the Genesis of Evil* (film still), 2022. Photo: Fundi Mwamba Gustave Giresse

“L’art vidéo en tant que « télévision faite par des artistes » est une discipline ayant la capacité de mobiliser les autres domaines du sensible, fusionner les arts en vue de rendre tangibles les utopies de l’art contemporain.”

À Lubumbashi, ville du Sud-Est de la République démocratique du Congo, il existe un savoir-faire artistique qui s’ignore ou, comme c’est souvent le cas, n’est pas apprécié à sa juste valeur. Le travail de Fundi Mwamba (FM) Gustave Giresse en est l’illustration assez éloquente. Passionné d’histoires à raconter, ce jeune artiste se lance dans la bande dessinée et bien d’autres médias encore, avant de s’essayer « de la manière la plus inattendue, à la vidéo, et par ricochet, à l’art vidéo ¹ ». Comment, à partir d’une simple volonté de raconter des histoires au travers de personnages qui performant, arrive-t-on à atteindre des buts esthétiques communs à d’autres formes d’art contemporain ?

L’art vidéo en tant que « télévision faite par des artistes » est une discipline ayant la capacité de mobiliser les autres domaines du sensible, fusionner les arts en vue de rendre tangibles les utopies de l’art contemporain. Ainsi, le jeune artiste profite de ce savoir-faire pour interroger, établir des rapports, remettre en question, initier des dialogues entre son œuvre et le public qui la consomme. Avec dans chacune des vidéos un personnage qui performe, des textes quoique différents par les thèmes qu’ils abordent, dits ou mimés par le personnage, l’envie de montrer une curiosité, un savoir-faire, résultat d’une analyse réfléchie sur les structures propres à la vidéo, est présente. Ces histoires racontées ici sous forme d’une vidéo préalablement enregistrée, font remonter à la surface la critique des débuts de l’art vidéo par Nam June Paik (1960), de cette pratique artistique qui cherchait à savoir « si la technologie électronique révolutionnera la pratique de l’art contemporain ou si l’art “moderniste” ne fera qu’absorber la vidéo comme un support de plus, pour la réflexion esthétique ».

Par le protagoniste qui apparaît pieds nus et face masquée de boue, gesticulant entre quatre lampes allumées et un seau en plastique rempli d’eau, *Chronique...* (2016) ne serait-elle pas une démonstration de la flexibilité, de la malléabilité des arts contemporains, au point de les modeler sur d’autres formes, sans forcément dénaturer leur esthétique ? Suivant une chorégraphie synchrone avec le texte qu’il dit, le personnage mime, balbutie, bégaye les maux qui gangrènent un monde qu’il peint comme en « perte de vitesse, suite aux quantités de sang versées ». Un monde dans lequel les gens ont « le cerveau à l’endroit du cœur, le cœur à l’endroit du cul, le cul à l’endroit de la bouche et les couilles à l’endroit du cerveau ». Le cadrage met l’accent sur le texte dit, une action, des onomatopées et des bruitages. On sent le personnage recommander même de « se montrer tête face au mal du monde qui, systématiquement, diminue tout le monde à l’état zéro ». Il trempe sa tête masquée dans l’eau que contient le seau en plastique pour d’abord se débarrasser du masque, qui tombe tel un sortilège et, ensuite, tendre vers son « illumination » ! De cette ablution, le protagoniste semble signer la fin d’un rite, d’un deuil duquel il sort aguerri, affirmant son existence au cri de « J’existe... ».

Cette mise en scène visiblement attachante marque les esprits et décomplexe le fond, face à la forme et le traitement que propose

le réalisateur. *Robot* (2015), une vidéo sans son de 5 minutes 48 secondes, illustre à sa manière ce savoir-faire : elle met en scène un robot régulant la circulation tantôt seul, tantôt au côté d’un jeune homme s’exprimant en langage des sourds. Est-ce pour montrer une cacophonie qui existerait entre les deux manières de faire, celle d’une police de roulage humaine et celle qui serait constituée uniquement de machines ?

L’expérimentation du jeune réalisateur se veut sans limite en adaptant à la vidéo des scènes d’horreur. *Ubatizo, la genèse du mal* (2018) (ubatizo signifiant baptême en kiswahili) part d’une fiction inspirée de faits réels pour fustiger l’exploitation irresponsable et, loin d’être pragmatique, des richesses minières. Ici, FM se met lui-même en scène, dénonce l’exploitation désordonnée des minerais qui, selon lui, plonge le village Bofwa dans la « monstrification », pour parler des malformations congénitales ayant fait suite à ce qu’il appelle la « profanation de la rivière sacrée du village ». Les images des malformations montrées sont choquantes. Elles interpellent sur des pratiques qui détruisent la vie humaine. Et c’est un problème de taille dans un pays dit « scandale géologique » comme le sien.

Quelle que soit l’idée de départ pour la réalisation de ce travail, on peut remarquer que de l’expérimentation des pratiques artistiques, des talents peuvent être révélés et orientés vers de nouvelles manières de raconter des histoires. Qu’ils se meuvent ou qu’ils soient figés, les plans de ce travail lui confèrent une profondeur, une dynamique, une énergie qui s’emballe en « chorégraphie » pour se fondre dans les décors, au travers des textes dits ou mimés. Témoin du pouvoir qu’ont les nouvelles technologies à révolutionner la pratique contemporaine de l’art. ■

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COSTA TSHINZAM est un écrivain, médecin, critique d’art et blogueur membre de Habari RDC. En 2017, il prend part à l’atelier d’écriture critique C& à Lubumbashi. A l’issue de cet atelier, il est sélectionné pour le Programme de Mentorat C&. Auteur de « Comment la culture au Congo peut progresser en tirant les leçons du passé », il tient un blog personnel intitulé « Kikongwani », pour rendre compte de la part congolaise dans l’art global, depuis Lubumbashi, sa ville natale. Coach au Programme de Mentorat C& 2022, il est en même temps, rédacteur en chef à la 7^e Biennale de Lubumbashi.

“As ‘television made by artists,’ video art is a discipline capable of mobilizing other perceptual realms, merging the arts in order to give tangible form to the utopian dreams of contemporary art.”

In Lubumbashi, a city in the southeast of DR Congo, there is an artistic expertise that is unacknowledged or, as is often the case, not fully appreciated. The work of Fundi Mwamba (FM) Gustave Giresse is an eloquent illustration of it. A passionate story-teller, this young artist launched himself in cartoons and various other media before trying his hand, “in the most unexpected ways, at video and, indirectly, at video art.”¹ Starting from a simple wish to tell stories through performing characters, how can one achieve aesthetic goals shared by other forms of contemporary art?

As “television made by artists,” video art is a discipline capable of mobilizing other perceptual realms, merging the arts in order to give tangible form to the utopian dreams of contemporary art. FM takes advantage of this to consult, establish relationships, ask questions, and initiate dialogues between his work and the public that consumes it. The videos, which feature a character who performs together with texts – diverse in terms of the themes they address – that it speaks or mimes, set out to reveal a curiosity, an expertise, the result of a thoughtful analysis of the structures that are specific to video. The stories told here in the form of a previously recorded video evoke Nam June Paik’s (1960) critique of the beginnings of video art – an enquiry that asked “if electronic technology would revolutionize the practice of contemporary art or if ‘modernist’ art would simply absorb video as another medium for aesthetic reflection.”

In *Chronique ...* (2016), a video by FM, who appears barefoot with his face caked in mud, we see the protagonist gesticulating as he moves between five lamps and a plastic bucket filled with water. Might this be a demonstration of the flexibility and malleability of contemporary arts, to the extent that it can be modelled on other forms and appropriate their aesthetics? Following a choreography that takes place in synchrony with the text that he speaks, the character mimes, babbles, and stammers about the ills plaguing a world, which he portrays as “losing momentum as a consequence of vast quantities of spilt blood.” A world in which people have “their brain where their heart should be, their heart where their ass should be, their ass where their mouth should be, and their balls where their brain should be.” The framing emphasizes the spoken text, action, instances of onomatopoeia, and sound effects. You can really feel the character recommending “being stubborn in the face of the evils of the world, which systematically reduce everyone to zero.” He dunks his masked head in the water in the plastic bucket in order to first remove the mask, which falls from him like a charm, before reaching toward his “illumination”! With this ablution, the protagonist seems to mark the end of a ritual, of a loss from which he emerges toughened, affirming his being with the cry of “I exist.”

This staging with its evident appeal makes a strong impression and bolsters the content vis-à-vis the form and treatment put forward by the director. *Robot* (2015), a silent video with a running time of 5 minutes 48 seconds, illustrates this approach in its own way: it depicts a robot directing traffic, sometimes alone and sometimes alongside a young man expressing himself in sign language. Is it

to show the confusion between these two ways of doing things: a human policing traffic and a police consisting entirely of machines?

The young director’s experiments seek to go further by adapting scenes of horror for video. *Ubatizo, la genèse du mal* (Ubatizo – which means “baptism” in Swahili – the Origin of Evil, 2018) takes as its starting point a fictional story inspired by real events as a means to condemn the irresponsible and far from pragmatic exploitation of mineral resources. Here, FM puts himself on screen – denouncing the messy exploitation of minerals, which, according to him, plunges the village of Bofwa into “monstrification” – to talk about the congenital disabilities that follow on from what he calls the “desecration of the village’s sacred river.” The images of people with deformities shown in the video are shocking. They call into question the practices that are destroying human life, a sizable problem in a country that is generally agreed to be a geological scandal.

Whatever idea might have been the starting point for producing this work, it is clear that experimenting with artistic practices can be a revelation of talent and provide it with new ways of telling stories. Whether moving or static, the shots in this work give it a depth, a dynamism, an energy that packs itself into a choreography in order to merge into the settings through spoken or mimed texts. A witness to the power that new technologies still have to revolutionize the contemporary practice of art. ■

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COSTA TSHINZAM is a writer, doctor, art critic, and blogger member of Habari RDC. In 2017, he took part in the C& Critical Writing Workshop in Lubumbashi. At the end of the workshop, he was selected for the C& Mentoring Program. He maintains a personal blog entitled “Kikongwani” to report from his hometown of Lubumbashi on Congolese art. He was a mentor on the 2022 C& Mentoring Program and editor-in-chief at the 7th Biennale of Lubumbashi.

Translation: Simon Cowper

¹ Propos recueillis par moi-même lors d’un entretien accordé par l’artiste en personne le 22 mai 2018.

¹ Remarks recorded by the author during an interview conducted with the artist on May 22, 2018.

WE WANNA THANK YOU!

For your participation, contribution, and time in the C& Critical writing workshops and mentoring program from Nairobi, Harare, Lubumbashi, Luanda, Morocco, Mozambique, Zambia, Ghana, Egypt, Colombia, Brazil, and its Diasporas.

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