

A WEEKLONG EVENT DEDICATED TO THE ART OF PERFORMANCE IN AFRICA AND THE DIASPORA

INTRODUCING AFRICA ACTS

by Dominique Malaquais and Caroline Roussy

Horror-prone and exotic, a continent in waiting, defenseless, where everything remains to be done: Africa as accounted for by the “North” is in a sad state. Or, yet again, is in the midst of an unfettered economic boom. A tale of extremes prevails, lacking all nuance.

The artists around whom AFRICA ACTS revolves work resolutely outside the box. They share a refusal of easy choices and a dedication to forms of expression that push the boundaries of their respective disciplines. Their practices speak truth to power, rejecting in manifold ways the social, political

In these settings, audiences are invited to become active participants in the making of performances both original and radical.

AFRICA ACTS is deployed in dialogue with the European Conference on African Studies (ECAS). Held every two years in a European capital, in 2015 ECAS brings to the Sorbonne some 2000 scholars around one central theme, which AFRICA ACTS celebrates and embodies: “Collective Mobilizations in Africa”.

WHY PERFORMANCE?

by Dominique Malaquais

“Collective Mobilizations in Africa: Contestation, Resistance, Revolt”. ECAS’ theme for 2015 is a subject of interest to scholars and policy-makers alike. It is also a key concern for artists.

The performing arts, in particular, offer a powerful platform for thinking about issues of collective mobilization. Across the world, and across eras, music, dance and theatre have played significant roles in articulating the desire for social, political and economic change and in bringing such change to pass.

Other accounts are needed: Africa’s own, unmediated by the simplifying gaze of the self-anointed center.

AFRICA ACTS aims to highlight such accounts.

Over the course of a week, from 5 to 12 July, twelve performance artists and dancers, musicians, poets, film and video makers, DJs and VJs come together in a series of carte blanche events. In the mix as well, a film series dedicated to performance as engaged social practice.

and economic violence of our contemporary world and seeking, simultaneously, to transcend it. Theirs is art that re-enchants the social order, thinking it through the prism of imaginaries that stand on their heads clichés and ready-made ideas.

A first in France, AFRICA ACTS takes place in a range of spaces across Paris: museums and contemporary art centers, jazz clubs, university lecture halls, streets and plazas.

IN DIALOGUE
WITH THE
EUROPEAN
CONFERENCE
ON AFRICAN
STUDIES (ECAS).
LA SORBONNE
FROM 8 TO 10
JULY 2015.

While a few of the performances require special ECAS passes (see www.ecas2015.fr for information on how and where to acquire these), most are open to all publics.

Some events are free; the cost of others ranges from 6 to 18€.

Updates, images and video links can be found on both our website: africaacts.ecas2015.fr and Facebook page (Africa Acts).

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ecas.africaacts@gmail.com*

In the second decade of the 21st century, few places can boast the performance energy of cities the likes of Lagos, Kinshasa, Johannesburg or Cairo.

Building upon this history, in the 20th century, street art, hip-hop practices and performance art proper emerged as forms of expression developed explicitly to call for and implement social transformation.

Drawing on a rich legacy of artistic production elaborated in response to violent inequity visited on Africa and its peoples in the context of the slave trade, of colonialism and in the face of political and economic regimes foreign and local, artists of the African world today are exploring aesthetic and ethical territory that positions them at the very cusp of contemporary practice. This in turn puts them at the heart of highly cosmopolitan debates regarding the significance and the potential of art as engagement.

The central place of performance as engagement in the contemporary African world requires contextualization, also, within the broader history of Africa art. Oral and written histories and literatures, linguistic data, archaeological discoveries and the analysis of key architectural sites underscore the depth, the complexity and the shifting, location- and time-specific nature of intersections between art and politics across the continent. Instrumentalized,

AFRICA ACTS is an initiative of Institut des Mondes Africains and Les Afriques dans le Monde, with logistical support from l'agence à paris. It is made possible by funding from Total, ACASA, Bétonsalon, Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain, Fondation Kadist, Institut Français d'Afrique du Sud, La Maison Rouge, M.U.R. and private donors, as well as by generous in-kind support from Centre Barbara FGO, Fondation Lucien Paye, Théâtre de l'Atelier, le Lavoir Moderne Parisien, Musée Dapper and Le New Morning.

here as elsewhere, as tools in the construction of power, creative practices were also, in the past, deployed to limit, re-shape or overturn such power. This is reflected in an extraordinary wealth of formal, lexical and gestural vocabularies, which speak to intimate ties between practices of mobilization on the one hand and artistic production on the other.

AFRICA ACTS is a celebration and an interrogation of, a dialogue with and a reflection upon the complexity and the vitality of these ties, past, present and future.

PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

AFRICA ACTS highlights the work of twelve artists and collectives, in partnership with institutions both public and private.

In the pages of this gazette, readers will find brief introductions to the artists and a detailed program of their performances, as well as directions to the venues where these will be taking place. Also included are short articles, position pieces and interviews teasing out issues outlined above.

*Immense thanks and respect to :
Jelili Atiku, Jean-Pierre Bekolo, Jean-Paul Delore and Alexandre Meyer, Alioune Diagne, Em'kal Eyongakpa, Anne Historical, Serge Kakudji, Kapwani Kiwanga, Neo Muyanga, Ntone Edjabe, Qudus Onikeku, Brice Wassy and Kelin-Kelin' Orchestra, and Breeze Yoko.*

Many thanks too to Nicolas Catherin, Salomé Cheval, Jacques Kupa, Véronique Lautier, Léonie Marin and Fabrice Melka.



Qudus Onikeku
©Antoine Tempé



PROGRAMME

05 July

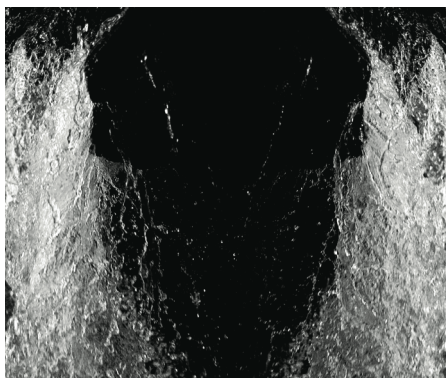
18:00
Free

Centre Musical Barbara
Fleury Goutte d'Or, 1 rue de
Fleury 75018.
Métro 2 and 4,
Barbès-Rochecouart,
RER B Gare du Nord.

Em'kal Eyongakpa

Em'kal Eyongakpa approaches lived experience, the unknown and collective histories through a ritual use of repetition and transformation. He works with photography, video, sculpture, text, sound and performance. His installations blur distinctions between media and seek to distort notions of reality and illusion.

For AFRICA ACTS, Em'kal Eyongakpa invites audiences to a sensorial experience. His performance follows on the project *fullmoons later/letters from etokobarek*, initiated in 2013 in Amsterdam. This new chapter, titled *wata kulture II*, highlights links between the sound of water and the suspended rhythmic structure present in certain traditional and contemporary forms of music. The artist draws here on jazz (John Coltrane, *Africa/Brass*, 1961), beat poetry (Amiri Baraka, *Why's/wise*, 2009) and traditional Etokobi rhythms. He connects all of this with contemporary crises in the Mediterranean.



Em'kal Eyongakpa
©YAM

06 July

18:00 - 20:00
By invitation only

Dentons, 5 boulevard
Malesherbes 75008.
Métro 8, 12 and 14,
Madeleine.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo

In both his aesthetic and his ethical takes, Jean-Pierre Bekolo is a deeply engaged filmmaker. Often oneiric and futuristic, and profoundly critical of situations he deems unacceptable in Africa and beyond, his films and video installations speak merciless truth to political power.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo's masterpiece, *Les Saignantes* (2005), part sci-fi flick, part political broadside and Afrofuturist manifesto, sets the stage for AFRICA ACTS: one swift kick in the pants to clichés and ready-made ideas about the African world.

07 July

20:00 - 21:00
Free, booking required
tel. 01 45 00 91 75
reservation@dapper.fr

Musée Dapper, 35 bis rue
Paul Valéry 75116.
Métro 2, Victor Hugo,
and 6, Kléber.

Serge Kakudji

Counter-tenor Serge Kakudji is the co-composer of the first Swahili language opera. His practice mixes and melds Baroque music, Congolese rumba, pop, rock and jazz. As a child, in his hometown of Lubumbashi (eastern Democratic Republic of Congo), through records and audio cassettes, he discovered and fell in love with opera. His passion led him first to Zimbabwe and then to Europe, to study music formally. The many venues in which he has performed include the Paris and Montpellier operas, the château de Versailles and the Comédie Française theatre, the Avignon festival and the Royal Flemish Theatre.

For AFRICA ACTS, Serge Kakudji offers a Baroque music recital in the heart of the Dapper Museum.

©Serge Kakudji



08 July

19:00 - 20:00
ECAS participants only

Amphithéâtre Richelieu,
Université Paris 1 Panthéon-
Sorbonne
1 rue Victor Cousin 75005.
Métro 10, Cluny-la-Sorbonne.



Neo Muyanga

A composer, librettist and musician, Neo Muyanga creates sonic spaces and installations that meld opera, cantatas, electronic and chamber music, madrigals and revolutionary songs. Following studies in Trieste in the 1990s, he returned to South Africa where he co-founded the renowned acoustic-pop duo Blk Sunshine with fellow musician Masauko Chipembere. The creator of multiple compositions, operas and orchestral pieces, he performs alone and in multi-instrument formations.

For AFRICA ACTS, Neo Muyanga performs *Revolting Songs: A Brief Survey of the Music that Liberated South Africa*. This performance is an antiphonal response to the archive of protest music, hymns and laments that populate South Africa's colonial and apartheid-era memoir – the sound that accompanied the armed struggle. These are the chants and dirges of war formerly given voice by angry students on the streets of Soweto, and which now become reconstituted as melodies and texts that presage a possible new struggle to locate love within revolution.

Neo Muyanga
©Retha Ferguson

09 July

20:30
Full price, 10 € / reduced price
(Afro Parisian Network), 7 € /
free (ECAS participants)

Collège des Bernardins,
20 rue de Poissy 75005.
Métro 10, Cluny-la-Sorbonne and
Maubert Mutualité.

Qudus Onikeku

“An incredible presence” (*Inrocks*), “explosive” (*Danser*), Qudus Onikeku defies gravity. Ludic, spiritual and poetic, his practice weds performance and dance, acrobatics and meditation. From street to stage, he shatters clichés to cast an unexpected and richly nuanced gaze on contemporary society. In 2009, he graduated from France's National School of Circus Arts. Since then he has been appearing in solo, in his own works, and in those of renowned choreographers the world over. A visiting professor at the University of California, he makes his home in Lagos, where he is the founder and director of the QDance Company.

For AFRICA ACTS, Qudus Onikeku presents *Africaman Original*. “Part-dance, part-performance, stand up and dance class, this performance highlights the work of a most charismatic dancer, perfectly at ease on the stage and expressing himself fluently in both English and French. Qudus Onikeku takes us on a voyage through a unique universe. Video clips of African dance rub shoulders with film stock of Brazilian and Afro-American performance. Running in loops, these images create a choreography of their own, in perfect synch with the music. Onikeku raises fundamental questions – about our



09 July

19:00 - 20:00
Full price, 9 € /Reduced price
(ECAS participants), 6 €. Ticket
grants access to the exhibition
My Buenos Aires open till
21:00

Booking required: reservation@
lamaisonrouge.org

Maison Rouge, 10 boulevard de la
Bastille 75012.

Métro 5, Quai de la Rapée.

Kapwani Kiwanga

Kapwani Kiwanga's practice revolves around research in anthropology and literature, as well as archive work. Her films, installations and performances focus, notably, on Afrofuturism, a literary, musical and more broadly cultural aesthetic born in North America that weds Afrocentric gazes, science fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, magical realism and non-European systems of thought in order to (re)think the experiences, past and present, of peoples hailing from the African diaspora. For AFRICA ACTS, the artist presents *Afrogalactica: A Short History of the Future*.

In this performance, the first part of her *Afrogalactica* trilogy, Kapwani Kiwanga poses as an anthropologist from the future. Kiwanga reflects on some major themes taken from her research on Afrofuturism and its role in the development of the yet-to-be-created United States of Africa Space Agency. Plunging into the past to retrieve archives of popular culture, she uses science fiction to make projections about the future.

Kapwani Kiwanga
©Emma Haugh

Qudus Onikeku
©Antoine Tempé



10 July

12:30 - 14:30
Free

Place de la Sorbonne 75005.
Métro 10, Cluny-la-Sorbonne and
RER B, Luxembourg.



Jelili Atiku

It is often said that performance art is an elite practice. Jelili Atiku, founder and director of Africa's first performance biennale, proves otherwise. From Lagos to Casablanca, Vancouver and Tokyo, he takes over public space, taking to task and rending asunder inequalities and injustices inherent to our late capitalist times.

On the occasion of AFRICA ACTS, Jelili Atiku offers *Earth with Trees and Water I Am (Alaaragbo VIII)*. This performance occurs in public space, on place de la Sorbonne, and inside as well, within the Sorbonne. The focus is the environment and the urgency of respecting nature in our age of greenhouse gasses.

A related performance, *Ewedabira (Alaaragbo IV)* will take place on the place de la République - 12 July from 12:00 to 14:30. Métro 3, 5, 8, 9, 11, République.

Jelili Atiku
©Kane
Cunningham

10 July

0:00 - 2:00
Free

New Morning, 7-9 rue des Petites
Écuries 75010.
Métro 4, Château-d'Eau

Ntone Edjabe
©Internaz



Ntone Edjabe

Ntone Edjabe is the founder, among many other initiatives, of the off-the-charts brilliant *Chimurenga Magazine* and the Pan-African Space Station (PASS), an Internet radio platform streamed live across the African world. His practice as a DJ weds musical erudition and explicit political engagement centered on Africa's place in the world.

In the words he publishes and the beats he sounds, Ntone is deeply influenced by Fela Anikulapo Kuti. Of the man, he has this to say: "Fela's Nietzschean stance against power of all sorts was an inspiration for artists and activists. He stands out among musicians as one who walked his talk – whether one agrees with the talk or not. He expanded our vocabulary of resistance: the musician was no longer simply an entertainer."

11 July

All day
Free

Le MUR, 107 rue Oberkampf 75011.
Métro 3, Parmentier and
Rue Saint-Maur.

Breeze Yoko
©Mario Macilau



Breeze Yoko

Breeze Yoko is a street artist renowned for the use he makes of graffiti to radically engage with the urban landscape and the status quo it reflects. He is also a filmmaker, an actor and a producer.

AFRICA ACTS takes place in parallel with the European Conference on African Studies, a colloquium that brings together some 2 000 scholars, many of them European, to discuss matters relating to the African continent. Breeze Yoko responds with a piece, part-graffiti, part-mural on the streets of Paris: his take on the study of Africa by non-Africans.



11 July

16:00
Free

Bétonsalon, 9 esplanade Pierre
Vidal-Naquet 75013.
Métro 14 and RER C,
Bibliothèque François
Mitterrand

Anne Historical
©Bettina
Malcomess

Anne Historical

In performance lectures that bring to bear a complex mix of theoretical and artistic practices, Anne Historical stands on their heads preconceived notions of what art and scholarship are meant to do. The two, here, become one and, in the process, with both humor and a dead-serious gaze, lay bare the dirty underbelly of coloniality.

For AFRICA ACTS, Anne Historical presents *Competitors Leave at Dawn*. This performance forms part of a larger project, titled *Memories of Others*, a series of appearances working with voice, gesture and moving image. The piece draws on newsreel footage of the *Great African Air Race* (1936), from the United Kingdom to South Africa. With only one plane actually finishing and three fatal accidents en route, the race was a failure. The narrator of the performance is a character afflicted with the ability to remember the memories of others. This is not unlike the mechanism of film: a receptacle for memories never experienced. Working with the narrative of a journey never witnessed, the piece reflects on the colonial imagination of the continent as a single territory.

11 July

21:00 - 0:00

18 €

New Morning, 7-9 rue des Petites

Écuries 75010.

Métro 4, Château-d'Eau.

*Brice Wassy
& Kelin-Kelin'
Orchestra
©Kelin-Kelin'
Orchestra*

Brice Wassy & Kelin-Kelin' Orchestra

Virtuoso composer Brice Wassy is known as «the king of 6/8 rhythm», a reference to his mastery of the most complex rhythmic arrangements. In the words of Fela Anikulapo Kuti, «he opened our minds with the militancy of his message and our hearts to the rhythms of Afrobeat». Kelin-Kelin', his twelve-man big band, sets AFRICA ACTS on fire.

Kelin-Kelin' Orchestra: a new method and a new genre in the musical landscape of Africa. Inspired by Cameroonian music, the Orchestra revisits traditional sounds to craft contemporary inventions. Creative and cosmopolitan, the band (keys, brass, bass and more) takes us on a fantastic, festive ride. Running the show: Brice and his magical beats, alongside his longtime friend and colleague, the amazing Jean-Jacques Elangué.



12 July

16:00

Free

Lavoir Moderne Parisien,

35 rue Léon 75018.

Métro 4, Château Rouge

and 12, Marx Dormoy

Jean-Paul Delore & Alexandre Meyer

For AFRICA ACTS, comedian Jean-Paul Delore and musician Alexandre Meyer propose a performance in homage to the great Congolese poet and playwright Sony Labou Tansi (1947-1995) and to others who followed in his footsteps. 2015 is the anniversary of Sony's passing. Throughout the year, from Avignon to Brazzaville, Berlin and Paris, performances and publications celebrate his “luminous words, impatient and violent, fueled by an anger in whose way nothing can stand” (Greta Rodriguez-Antoniotti, literary critic).

For the past twenty years, on stages far and wide and with musicians hailing from across the world, actor/director Jean-Paul Delore has been playing with radical flows of words and sounds drawn from the oeuvre of contemporary African writers. To seek roots in one's country, one's culture, one's condition, in others and in oneself, and simultaneously to rip these roots asunder: such is the quest of the poet voyagers whose work he explores. For AFRICA ACTS, he has invited master musician Alexandre Meyer to join him in a soul- and soundful event. On the program: Sony Labou Tansi, Dambudzo Marechera, Mia Couto and others.

12 July

20:00

Full price, 16,10 € /reduced price,

10 € (ECAS participants and under

26)

Booking required:

www.theatre-atelier.com

Tel. 01 46 06 49 24

Théâtre de l'Atelier

1 Place Charles Dullin 75018.

Métro 2, Anvers.

Alioune Diagne

Choreographer and dancer Alioune Diagne is the founder of the Diagn'Art dance company, as well as the founder and director of the Duo Solo contemporary dance festival in Saint Louis, Senegal. His practice is rooted neither in classical nor in jazz dance, but in a politically charged engagement with African dance, which he studied with the greatest in Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and Japan.

In 1922, Battling Siki (Louis Mbarick Fall) was the first African boxer to be crowned world champion. His fight, however, extended far beyond the ring, into the world of racism so typical of his era. In a solo titled *Siki*, Alioune Diagne tells the story of this remarkable man, remembered with awe from Saint Louis, his hometown, to Harlem, where he died in a hail of bullets at the young age of 28.



*Alioune Diagne
©Antoine Tempé*

Know this: everything begins in Africa. When people today talk about performance art, what exactly do they mean? Performance art isn't just about performing.

A performance in the contemporary art world sense of the term is much more than a simple spectacle.

It's not about a tour de force, a Houdini-like trick that leaves viewers slack-jawed. Performance art is first and foremost about interaction. Audiences in this setting are never passive. What they experience is akin to what the philosopher Jacques Rancière calls "the distribution of the sensible". Where there is no such distribution – an altruistic sharing of moments and emotions – there can be no performance; only vanity and narcissism remain. Further, in such a setting, the artist can never claim to be the absolute master of the proceedings.

I have always thought of traditional ceremonies in Africa and elsewhere as works of performance art. This is so whether the subject is liturgical ceremonies of the type that so moved Léopold Sédar Senghor or rites of passage. In all instances what is at hand is a space and a time that exceeds the dimensions of space and time and that provokes among the actors involved (there is no such thing as a spectator here) a sense of communion – of harmony and compassion – with the masters of the ceremony. For what

occurs in such theatres of experience far exceeds the vision of a solitary individual, even if the individual in question is a genius. In performance art, the one becomes the many, much as when one enters a trance and ceases to recognize who is who. The officiator is no longer the wielder of a (hypothetical) truth to be conferred upon others.

The exchange does not occur on an intellectual level, but on an emotional, or dare I say a spiritual plane. For this reason, the rite is not necessarily about fireworks, all colors and pizzazz,

belonging to the realm of what Jean Baudrillard calls the simulacrum: sleight-of-hand deployed to hide an absence of substance.

Performance art is, in its very essence a form of asceticism. It is a language that allows its user to bypass words, drawing, painting – indeed, discourse altogether – to say what cannot be said. To paraphrase Henri Delacroix, it is a way of transforming the chaotic world of sensations into a world of form and representation. A successful work of performance art brings together, around heterotopia such as Michel Foucault defined it, forms of heterology and heterochtony⁽¹⁾ that are the stuff magic is made of: the kind of magic, be it "white" or "black", of which Africa retains an absolute mastery.

©Simon Njami

1.Heterotopia: “A concept developed by Michel Foucault, heterotopia is a physical localization of utopia. Heterotopias are concrete spaces that harbor the imaginary, “like a child’s playhouse or a theatre’. They are thus places within a society that constitute its negative, or at any rate exist on its margins. Examples: gardens, prisons, convents, cemeteries...”

Heterology: Heterology, a fairly widespread concept in the social sciences today, as defined by Foucault is both discourse about the Other and discourse by the Other. Fundamental to the practice of ethnology, it is “the art of playing on two fronts’, a way of evaluating in a given space what is lacking in another. Heterology makes way for an intermediary space, a reversible stage of sorts, where the final word does not necessary lie with the primary subject of

discourse and the speaker is open to critique. A space of experimentation, heterology is open to the risk of free speech and to its possible boomerang effects. Examples of heterological discourses: paradoxes, declamations, ironic devices, and imaginary or parodying geographies.

Heterochtony : As defined by Foucault, a rupture in real time, integral to heterotopia.

paris-sorbonne.fr/IMG/pdf/Semin_Lestri_2011-12.pdf

Simon Njami is a writer and independent curator, a lecturer, art critic and essayist. When not on a plane, he makes his home in Paris.

PERFORMANCE AS A SPACE

OF SENSATION(S)

by Lucie Touya

“Between the Idea and Experience”: with this evocative title and programming both rich and engaged, the 12th Havana Biennale (22 May-22 June 2015) shined a spotlight on performance art. The plan – an all-around success – was to take over public space more radically, even, than in previous editions. Multiple installations filled the Malecon and, from the old city center to spots far and wide, dozens of performances were staged.

At the Escuela Nacional de Artes, we witnessed a moment of grace orchestrated by MwangiHutter: a collaboration between the artist duo, a husband-and-wife team who work as one, and a cluster of young dancers. Within a colonnade designed in the 1950s, under darkening skies, silhouettes covered in white cloth appeared, moaning gently. A storm was brewing and the audience fell silent. A woman, her face hidden, lay on the ground, laughing a child’s crystalline laugh. Then came a ghostlike figure, hunched over, passing out containers of black paint. On one woman’s body, words were written; on another’s, wet hands left dark traces. All of this lasted a long while. Time stopped, then dragged on. We were expecting something to happen. When the end came, it was barely perceptible. The performers simply walked away, cloaked, still, in their white – now stained – robes. We clapped.

This performance by MwangiHutter was a combination of the elements, of an iconic architectural site and an audience – us – moving about, waiting. That and the artists themselves, Ingrid and Robert, moving about as well, by turns smiling and serious, filming and issuing silent orders to structure the timing of the performance.

Performance is a total art form, much like opera is, within the closed, artificial and fictional space of the theatre. Still, it can never be wholly controlled, for it chooses explicitly to eschew predetermined frames. Randomness is possible. It needs to be accounted for, but cannot be anticipated. Performance art requires staging and an intimate understanding of the rhythms that articulate an audience’s sense of time and emotion. Why do we insist on a climax? Is

it a function of our nature or of our narrative culture to demand a revelation and, in so doing, an unfolding? What do we expect of a performer like Jelili Atiku, as he ambles through the streets of Lagos? What outcome do we expect as, resembling an alien, wrapped in cloth and balloons, he boards a boat on a trash-littered lagoon? Will he disembark? A priori, in a performance nothing is hidden from us. There is no behind-the-scenes action, for there is no fiction at hand. What we see is what we get. We were unable to see the faces or the bodies of the Cuban dancers at the heart of the MwangiHutter performance. They never unveiled themselves. As she waits for something to happen, drawing on references of her choice, the viewer at such an event is free to imagine what is to follow. Randomness is of the essence. There are no rules.

Performance is a grab bag of a term. It prepares us to witness, and ideally to participate, in an experience that cannot be confined within the parameters of a single discipline. It encourages us to unmoor ourselves from what we know, to break away from the history of art. It blows our references wide open and carves a breach in the uniformity of time.

© Lucie Touya

PERFORMANCE AS RADICAL OPENNESS

by Jean-Christophe Lanquetin

In the term “performative” two fundamental notions rub shoulders: performance and performativity:

“If performance constitutes forms of cultural staging – conscious, heightened, reflexive, framed, contained – within a limited time span of action from plays to carnivals, from poetry to prose, from weddings to funerals, from jokes to storytelling, and more; if performativity marks identity through the habitus of repetitive enactments, reiteration of stylized forms, and inherited gestual conventions from the way we sit, stand, speak dress, dance, play, eat, hold a pencil and more; [then] the performative is the culmination of both in that it does something to make a material physical, and situational difference⁽¹⁾.”

The experiential dimension is central here – in particular its intensity. The experience involved is that of the here and now: a spatial and discursive context and a relational

one as well, that takes into consideration the viewer and the co-presence s/he represents in order to produce a situation that is active and impactful, that interrogates and helps translate complex states of affairs. Scenography doesn’t really enter the picture (even if there are some links), because stages in the classical sense of the term are mostly absent here. Performance art looks to a far broader and more experimental set of spaces. (Contemporary dance, notably, has explored tensions between the stage and the arts of performance).

One often hears that, potentially, everything is performance, particularly in the realm of contemporary art:

“There is no performative artwork because there is no nonperformative artwork⁽²⁾.”

The heart of the matter, though, is that those elements that most fundamentally constitute performance art make it possible to shift coded nuances and to question conventions and forms of power. Because this is so, performance offers a particularly rich platform for reflection and action in key contexts: where matters of the postcolony and notions of Blackness are addressed, in arts outside the ambit of the “North”, where gender, identity, urban lives and interactions with the micro-world of quotidian practices are primary concerns, and more broadly where there is a focus on inventing new ways of seeing and participating. Performance art opens up a field in which a wide range of individuals, artists and collectives can seek to invent their own criteria and practices without being squeezed into a particular frame. It is a space of the possible.

© Jean-Christophe Lanquetin

1. Thomas DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez, eds. *Black Performance Theory* (2014) – foreword.

2. Dorothea von Hantelmann. “The Experiential Turn.” In *On Performativity*, Elizabeth Carpenter, ed. (2014).

Lucie Touya is co-founder of l’agence à paris. facebook.com/lagenceaparis.

Jean Christophe Lanquetin is a scenographer and professor at Haute Ecole des Arts du Rhin in Strasbourg.

ARTIST: JELILI ATIKU

by Contemporary And

Contemporary And: “Tell us a bit about your artistic voyage. When and how did it start?”

Jelili Atiku: “I was trained at the magnificent Zairia Art School – Ahmadou Bello University, in Northern Nigeria. I studied sculpture there and I was awarded an M.A. in visual arts at University of Lagos. It’s during this time that I first experienced the need to use my body as a means of expression. That’s when I started experimenting with performance. That was in 2005.”

C&: “What was your first performance?”

JA: “It was at the University of Lagos. The performance was titled *Ewawo – The Prisoner* (in the Yoruba language ewawo means “come and see”). At the time, I was conducting research into the state of prisons and the penal system in Nigeria. In this performance, I sought to reproduce the prison situation in Nigeria by using materials from the university, such as metal bed frames with which I built a kind of cell. In 1998, during my military service, I visited a prison. This experience left me revolted and led me to mount a campaign for prison reform in Nigeria.”

C&: “Why do you think performance art plays an important role in African art?”

JA: “If you consider the history of Africa, artistic culture on the continent is a history of performance.

All sculptures and other cultural productions: they were created for performance. This ceased during the colonial period. Material culture became divorced from performance. In time, Africans lost the confidence required to stand up against this state of affairs. Modern artists still lack this confidence. They don’t consider performance to be an art form, when, in fact, they have become divorced from it. Our biennial seeks to reactivate this art form.” [Jelili Atiku is the founder of Africa’s first performance biennial, AFIRIperFOMA. The first edition took place in 2013 in Harare].

C&: “How would you describe your approach to performance?”

JA: “In most of my performances, I use the Egungun method. Egungun is commonly described as a masquerade, but this translation doesn’t account for all of the complexities of Egungun. In this method, the body is essential. Many objects are worn on or bundled around the body. There is a lot of action. This can happen against a theatrical or a musical background, in a wide variety of contexts. Actually, Egungun performance has no limits. It can extend to literature, theatre or any other domain. It is a type of performance that emerged among the Yoruba and related peoples”.

C&: “So your goal is to revive it – in your own words, to reactivate it?”

JA: “It is still widely practiced! I’m just saying that performance art is deeply rooted in our culture. And yet, many African artists eschew it.”

C&: “When did you decide to reactivate the art of performance in the context of a biennial?”

JA: “Last year, I traveled around the continent extensively. I try to show my performances in most of the cities I visit in Africa. I observed people’s reactions: “You work like a European; that’s a European practice!” That surprised me. I explained

that this type of work exists in their own cultures. It’s just a way of reinterpreting our own visual language. I decided that now was the perfect time to create a space where some fifty performance artists could meet at one time in Africa. This will allow us to have an impact on the arts scene. I hope people will come to the understanding soon that performance is a part of us.”

C&: “When did you come upon this idea?”

JA: “At RAVY (Rencontre des Arts Visuels de Yaoundé) in Cameroon, in 2011. It was during that event that we really started talking about it. I did a performances there. Other African artists were present as well.

Following my performance some of them started asking questions and a real debate ensued. One person, for instance, said that the performance looked like a ritual and that it was similar to what his people did in the countryside. “What is it about art that is ritual?”, I asked. He didn’t know what to answer. That’s how the idea of a biennial was born, a biennial where artists and performers would be able to challenge preconceived ideas and the status quo.”

C&: “And why did you opt for a biennial rather than a festival, for example?”

JA: “We settled on a biennial because we wanted to hold the event on a regular basis, every two years. It will move around the continent. For the first edition, Harare, in Zimbabwe; then other countries. A two year interval is necessary to prepare. Also, lots of time needs to be dedicated to documenting, since performance art is ephemeral and lives in people’s memories.”

C&: “You’ve said that you would be filming the performances. It’s extremely important to constitute archives, isn’t it?”

JA: “It is, yes. We have a video and an editing team, so that everything is documented. Documentation is hard to come by in Africa. We don’t want to repeat this error.”

C&: “Do you share the ideas of the artists included in the first edition of the biennial?”

JA: “I relied completely on my network. Everyone involved shares an enthusiasm for Africa. Despite our lack of funding, they want to be here. I received many emails from people who wanted to participate, even if they hadn’t been invited. We are totally open and don’t have a selection process. We decided to offer to artists who couldn’t afford to participate to show films of their work or to present via Skype.”

C&: “Does the first edition have a theme?”

JA: “We gave no directives to the performers. They are free to work according to the most diverse perspectives. My own performance, for instance, focuses on immigration legislation in Africa, on all the hoops an African has to jump through to get a visa to travel within the continent, despite the existence of the African Union. That is my focus. The biennial does have a title, though: “Mnemonic”. The title should be understood as an allegory for the powerful and hugely varied history, past and present, of the continent.”

C&: “What are your hopes for the kinds of changes that the biennial will be able to effect on the African arts scene?”

JA: “The dream is to get the idea across that the practice of performance art is a fundamental part of our heritage and that we should be proud of this. In most institutions of higher learning in Africa, performance art is not part of the curriculum. In fact, this art form comes from Africa and we should try to appreciate it and give it a new impetus.”

©Contemporary And

Jelili Atiku, “Earth with Trees and Water I am (Alaaragbo VIII)”

10 July, 12:30 - 14:30.
Free.

Place de la Sorbonne, 75005.
Métro 10, Cluny-la-Sorbonne
and RER B, Luxembourg.

Jelili Atiku, “Ewedabira (Alaaragbo IV)”

12 July, 12:30 - 14:30.
Free.

Place de la République, 75011.
Métro 3, 5, 8, 9, and 11, République.

ARTIST: JEAN-PIERRE BEKOLO

by Olivier Barlet

At first glance, you wonder if Jean-Pierre Bekolo's film (*Les Saignantes*) is a pedantic fantasy or if it even makes any sense. But then you look closer and its originality explodes. It's not one of those flicks that's just a reprise of its slick trailer. Quite the contrary. This surprising, provoking, insolent, rollicking and totally paranoid film makes poetry out of codes readily recognized by global imagery's most savvy connoisseurs: youth. Poetry because its aesthetic rewrites these codes. Poetry also because it renews, or better still rebuilds, representations of Africa and the African city.

Majolie and Chouchou, the two bloodettes, wielding sex and death like nobody's business, aren't just hot because they're dressed to kill and they know how to strut their stuff. They're gorgeous, but there's more to it than that: every meeting between them is choreography, every adventure is a synergy, every glance an exchange. They make a hellacious couple indomitable in its mastery of its own fate. At the root of their power is Mevungu.

Among the Beti people of Cameroon, Mevungu is both an initiation association and a rite. Centered on purification and repair and reserved to women, it involves admitting to thefts and adultery. A secret society closed to men, Mevungu bonds women around a moral contract. The leader is known for her strong *evu*, a mystical organ located deep in the stomach that women develop through practices of "awakening" and that is associated with magic and an ability to see what others cannot. The association's ambiguous power, melding sorcery and clairvoyance, is symbolized by the image of a vagina that plays an important role in key ceremonies⁽¹⁾.

Throughout *The Bloodettes*, a discrete off-screen voice evokes the existence of Mevungu. While elements of ritual suffuse Bekolo's staging of the film, notably in the sexual games invented by the two protagonists, he shows very little of the association itself. When "Mevungu invites itself", the only thing we see is the moon. The film is set in 2025. Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon, lives by night and, in the dark, "Mevungu beckons us into the dance". Majolie offers her body to a politician in exchange for a favor, but their kinky sex does him in. The only way to get rid of the damaged body is to cut it into pieces. Still, a funeral needs to take place. The women convince a crooked undertaker to attach the politician's severed head to another man's body. No one, save possibly his widow,

will notice the switch. At the funeral, the two women approach another dignitary, hoping to extract a favor from him as well. He, however, will prove to be more complicated bait.

There is something of the Japanese director Takeshi Kitano in Bekolo's work: a simultaneously ravaging and cold burlesque deployed to make light of death.

Bekolo strings together ellipses and systematically fragments images to impose a rhythm all his own, slows and then jerks things up, breaks and alternates the flow of his account, playing with the ambivalence of semi-nude, voguing bodies, inventing ways of illuminating the night with colors akin to stained glass, playing with perspective and, in the process, with the viewer's expectations. The screen morphs into an abstract composition, closer to the aesthetics of a graphic novel than to reality. And yet it's very much reality that he reinvents: the reality of Yaounde by night, a world of corruption and DIY, in which women avenge themselves of men in an attempt to define their own futures.

Nothing is easy for the Bloodettes, least of all the commerce they make of their own bodies. Still, they find ways to wreak justice upon their world in the OK Coral of a city they inhabit. Guns blazing, fast cars and karate: all kinds of genres are called upon, from cop flicks to fantasy, but subtitles that show up from time to time point to the difficulty of the task. "How do you make a film about the near future in a country that has no future?" asks one such subtitle. "How do you make a murder mystery in a country where nothing can be investigated?" The questions are double edged. It's about Cameroon and it's about film as well, for without art it is impossible to dream and in the absence of utopia no future can be envisaged.

But how do you make a genre film within a context – African filmmaking – that is itself commonly (and reductively) taken to be a genre unto itself? *The Bloodettes*, for Bekolo, is a part of a larger project intimately linked to this question: that of creating films that are both African and global. *Quartier Mozart* (1992) was a first foray in this regard, followed with success in 1996 by *Aristotle's Plot*. In *The*

Bloodettes, in particular, the bizarre comes to the fore as a new norm and strangeness as a new breviary; graphic novel looks constitute a novel aesthetic. The unconscious is ever-pre-

sent and desire acts like rocket fuel. All of this might well smack of bricolage, were it not for the director's masterful engagement with a continent at odds with itself. It's not the film that's off, it's reality: so goes Bekolo's argument.

It is in this context that Majolie and Chouchou strike out to exist. Within them burns an *evu* so red-hot that it is dangerous, but that allows them to trust in the power of dancing and dreaming. There will be much need for such utopia to escape the clutches of the beast – those of a country reminiscent of the one depicted by Brecht in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, whose bowels brim with horror. The averred purpose is to speak of the future, but the story told is one explicitly of our early 21st century world. The focus on repetition and a multiplication of signs and effects that Bekolo brings into play is an exercise in breaking through to the other side. The film is a kind of formal fireworks, part-graphic novel, part-manga: a work of undeniable beauty whose integrity lies less in the humanity it expresses (though this of course is key) than in the determination to effect change that it so powerfully evinces.

©Africultures

1. See Jeanne-Françoise Vincent, *Femmes beti entre deux mondes – Entretiens dans la forêt du Cameroun*, (Karthala 2001) and the synopsis of this text published by Sophie Blanchy in *L'Homme* (no. 163, 2002, pp. 257-259).

Olivier Barlet is a cinema critic, essayist, translator and publisher whose work focuses on contemporary African cultural production.

Jean-Pierre Bekolo "Les Saignantes"

06 July, 18:00 - 20:00.
By invitation only.

Dentons, 5 boulevard Malesherbes 75008.
Métro 8, 12 and 14, Madeleine.

ARTIST: SONY LABOU TANSI THOUGHT BY JEAN-PAUL DELORE AND ALEXANDRE MEYER

by Greta Rodriguez-Antoniotti

“Why are you so afraid to find out we exist? I tell you: we exist. If you’re afraid, it’s because you’re in catastrophe’s camp. It’s because you flee life and that’s not enough to fail to exist.”

“It will never be me, wholly, who speaks, but rather the beast within me. And it will never be you, wholly, who sits across from me, but rather a monster asleep within you. A monster I awake intentionally in a veritable mess of identity. In other words, you’ll only see clearly if you’re firmly afoot in your humanity. I disgust. It’s my job.”

“We will go the way of the dinosaurs. As long as our common world is tragically divided between, on the one hand, the haves who have everything of everything and, on the other, the laughing stock on the periphery whose very blood is wanting, cannon fodder for terrorists, forbidden to take part in the inner workings of humanity – as long as this is so, progress will be ill. Many (most?) human beings will stagnate in the mud bog of uncertainty and desperation, becoming, so goes desperation, producers of commodities and acts of terrorism.”

“I fear that the 21st century will become an apogee of terrorism, of botching and mediocrity.”

(Excerpted from Encre, sueur, salive et sang. Textes critiques, by Sony Labou Tansi. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 3 September 2015. Greta Rodriguez-Antoniotti, ed.; preface by Kossi Efoui).

Playwright, novelist, poet and essayist Sony Labou Tansi passed away in 1995 at the age of 48 in Congo-Brazzaville. His is one of the most disturbing and unfettered voices to have cried out against the “shameful state” of the world and the contemporary tragedy of those forced to their knees in Africa and beyond. Twenty years after his death, his ways of seeing and saying remain visiona-

ry in cardinal respects. The powder keg of a planet we inhabit is proof perfect of this, as is the marketplace of misery and destitution that surrounds us. In the North and South alike, we are awash in spaces of shame and humiliation, abject solitude and indifference. In this cannibalistic order, entire swaths of humanity seek, against all odds, to “keep alive as much as possible”, gripped by ever-greater anger and a diffuse sense of “the capital waste of our looming future”.

Sony, “a man who goes [and] sees far on the road of men”, obstinately attests to the fact that we are (still) alive. His is a radical anger that brooks no obstacles. A pure “exercise in lucidity”, his thought hits hard *here and now*. It is a lucidity that is about fighting back, about riposte in word and deed. In order to retrieve the human animal from the clutches of its contemporary disfiguration, Sony senses and intimately knows: one must not “resign from one’s job as a human being”; one must sketch a cartography of new solidarities, beyond race, beyond class, beyond history, and respect “this delicious way [we all have] of going wrong in life”. And so, in the face of all the “failed snouts” and “half-baked men”, he calls on the Godless insane and the outraged, on the “ideological outcasts” and “those who know no compromise”, on “those whose way of life has prepared them for change”: on poets and artists, so that they might invent “ways of thinking and acting that are new, wise, human”. To create is to resist “for all of humanity – against the fools”.

© Greta Rodriguez-Antoniotti

Greta Rodriguez-Antoniotti is a writer, thinker and cultural activist based in France. She is one of the foremost specialists of Sony Labou Tansi’s œuvre.

Jean-Paul Delore & Alexandre Meyer

12 July, 16:00.
Free.

Lavoir Moderne Parisien, 35 rue Léon 75018.
Métro 4, Château Rouge and 12, Marx Dormoy.

ARTIST: ALIOUNE DIAGNE

by Wakh'Art (excerpts)

Wakh'Art: "How long have you been dancing?"

Alioune Diagne: "In the late 1990s, I started attending theatre groups and participating in sports and cultural associations in my neighborhood. One day, in high school, I met the members of a dance troupe who had come to rehearse. I started visiting them every day. And every day they turned me away. But I wanted in. For months, I kept on coming back. Over and over, they said "No, go back to school. This is a place for professionals". Then, I met the troupe's choreographer, Ciré Beye. He warned me that contemporary dance is hard work. I had no idea what I was getting into... He took me on for a trial period. Within a few weeks, I was a regular. There were two groups: one for adults, the other for girls age 7 to 14. As I was a novice, they put me with the girls. I stayed there for six months. I was like a giraffe among goats, but I never felt uncomfortable. It was what I wanted to do. This went on until the troupe came to need a male dancer.

For the next five years, I worked with this troupe, the first contemporary dance outfit in Saint Louis. In parallel, Ciré was working with the famous choreographer Germaine Acogny and, so, at times he wasn't in town. In 2006, I started choreographing solos. After 12th grade, I decided to stay with what I loved to do. I went to Dakar, but I wasn't convinced by the quality of some of the dance schools I found there. Then I came across an advertisement for a competition to enter the Academy of Fine Arts. I entered and came in fourth. I spent a year at the Academy in the visual arts section and then I went to Bamako for a dance residency. This was followed by a move to Ouagadougou to study with an internationally acclaimed choreographer."

WA: "How did the Duo Solo festival come about?"

AD: "When I returned to Saint Louis, I created an association called Diagn'art. It's the structure behind Duo Solo. The idea, initially, was to start a week of artistic gatherings in the city, inviting dancers, painters, actors, musicians and so on. Quickly, though, I realized that that would be incredibly expensive and so I concentrated on what I know: dance. In that field, I could organize auditions and also choreograph some of the performances myself. Beyond that, I wanted the world to cast a novel gaze on Saint Louis."

WA: "Why duos and solos?"

AD: "Because you have to work with what you have. A solo or a duo costs less than a five-dancer piece. In the beginning, I had nothing. Only the French Institute was backing me. Today, the festival has other partners. And every year more and more people attend. It's important to start from what's available and then to grow. Also, a solo leaves more room for the artist. It allows you to ask, as an individual, what do you want to talk about? What do you want to say through your practice? What does your presence bring in terms of exchange and reflection?"

WA: "Where do you see yourself in the next five years?"

AD: "I'd like Duo Solo to move beyond the walls of the French Institute. We've already started organizing workshops in various neighborhoods.

could welcome people from all over to discover what we are doing. We do have a space now, but we don't own it. We've been there for three years. We hold workshops there, as well as dance classes. It's where I created my latest pieces."

WA: "Anything that pisses you off?"

AD: "I'm ashamed that on my posters and flyers you only see the logos of foreign partners. Sometimes I'm really ashamed. We have a ministry of culture in Senegal, but for the past seven years we haven't heard from them at all. Nothing. Not even a word about what we're doing. We've knocked on every door. Nothing. It hurts. They're not doing any work. They receive a monthly salary, but they don't do anything. They sit in their offices and wait for the end of the month. They should have a schedule of events and they should support what we're doing."

© Wakh'Art

I'd like to have a

large space on place Faidherbe [in the center of Saint Louis]: an outdoor platform. People would come from across the city to attend events.

In the beginning, we had trouble filling the Institut français venue; now we have to put down mats so people can sit and watch.

I'd also like to have my own space. A place where we could organize artist residencies. To have a contemporary dance space that

Alioune Diagne, Siki

12 July, 20:00.

Full price, 16,10 € / reduced price, 10 € (ECAS participants and under 26).
Booking required: www.theatre-atelier.com or tel. 01 46 06 49 24

Théâtre de l'Atelier, 1 Place Charles Dullin 75018.
Métro 2, Anvers.

ARTIST: EM'KAL EYONGAKPA

by Amal Alhaag

Walking, I pass a street in the neighborhood of Château Rouge in 2013. Street vendors negotiating with their clients leave me with a feeling of displacement and nostalgia—a sense of familiar sounds struggling in a Parisian architectural setting. The rhythmic currency, negotiation codes to product names, all peculiar to open markets and public spaces across central and west Africa and the nuances in between:

« Fumbua ! carton à 10 euros, bobolo !
3 pour 2 euros, safou, 8 à 5 euros,
ceintures, arachide frais... »

Hello Douala meet Paris! Oi Paris meet Douala! This is not an introduction, but an attempt to re-familiarize two old acquaintances that meet briefly on street corners and markets: forest spices of Cameroon in France or the perfume of France in Cameroon. Whose negotiation is this? Where is the deal? Was it made in 1916 when a joint Anglo-French alliance governed the city of Douala, Cameroon? Or do the century long and strained negotiations summarize the perilous long-distance relationship between the two cities? For 6637 km, the Sahara desert and the Mediterranean Sea could not separate this bond violently forged during colonization and re-shaped by the era of the globalized urban commodity, where as long as the price is right, everything is for sale.

In the sound installation *negotiations, chapter 1-i* by Em'kal Eyongakpa, currently at Fondation Kadist, Paris and Douala are (un) comfortably situated as two special guests in orchestrated field recordings from Château Rouge, an African neighborhood in Paris, and the heart and lungs of Douala, the informal markets of Nkoululu and Marché central. Created during a residency at Kadist, *chapter, 1-i* negotiates linguistic, geopolitical, cultural and spatial currencies which blend these distinctive urban jungles into a sonic cocktail that elongates and collapses time to facilitate a prelude to a series of work that reflects on the ongoing fragmented and distraught socio-economic interrelationships between France and “its” Africa. This experimental sonic dialogue between these two cities reflects on migration, capitalism, language politics, and so-

cial cultural correlation between the inhabitants of the two cities, constantly evolving environments and the continents of Europe and Africa. Vendors chant the symbolic currencies of both cities, constantly echoing relics of #FortEU⁽¹⁾ and French colonial imperialism. These alien currencies are recognizable but equally estranging because they potentially distort our existential and spatial understanding. Is this Douala or Pa-

ris speaking? Periodically this question alters geographical boundaries.

negotiations, chapter 1-i offers a cacophony of vendors singing in pidgin French with a dash of some English lingo merging with a muezzin call to prayer that interjects lord savior Christ praise songs, while commuters sell themselves to smooth taxi chauffeurs and muffled voices promise you the future for 100 francs CFA. The ears could burst from contradictions, but it is the consistent meditative rhythm of the anthrophonic whirlwind. To process what one is hearing, the composition almost forces the listener to apply the rules of creolization, to expand language and incorporate the non-existing concept of “cinematophony”: the science or art of moving visual sounds.

The power of all these coded fragments lies within the language, dauntingly creole, that cultural theorist David Punter describes as “a language that is not ‘owned’, that is not one’s own”⁽²⁾. In observing the fireworks of sounds, the installation deliberately highlights Eyongakpa’s ability to encompass what he documents. It is not surprising that his work constructs references that deal with friction between languages, humans and nature, insiders and outsiders, sound and silence, binaries that do not meet on opposite ends but face to face, ear to ear.

The market in Douala is where language is negotiated daily: a linguistic factory. It is a birthing place of creole, in a country where creole as informal lingua franca is the product of a range of tensions, pluralities and

interactions that can be traced back to the colonial presence and the formation of the nation-state. If the market is the linguistic factory, then music is the place of rebirth, where young Cameroonians bend french, indigenous languages and big city jargon to stretch and translate the collective imagination. The installation’s relation to the rich music traditions of Bikutsi⁽³⁾, Assiko⁽⁴⁾ and others also solidifies the political union of creole and music in a country with more than 230 indigenous languages. So, it’s only instinctive that creole words and sounds tour various politically charged corners of Cameroon to arrive disguised as sonic chaos at the Kadist space.

In his own words, Eyongakpa describes the second room in the exhibition as “a window space to collect free-flowing sounds while accentuating references such as water/border politics, recorded phone calls, lyrics excerpted from the rap song *waka waka waka* (2007) by Cameroonian musician, producer and rap artist Edwin Nyambi, as well as isolated vocals from the unreleased *Hustler Philosophy* (2007) by Cameroonian soul-reggae sensation Daddy Black.”

In Eyongakpa’s case the artistic process entails intermingling voices without directly quoting, skipping time, borrowing and shopping from the source to create audio landscapes that are coded like a hip hop beat. In this installation, the compositions continuously switch positions, voices and rhythms – strip layers of sound to punctuate the suspension of music. Here, the imagination expresses itself through the materiality of sound. Eyongakpa’s process resonates with what jazz musician and composer John Coltrane summarized as a work method in which he “starts in the middle of a sentence and moves in both directions at once.”⁽⁵⁾ #to-becontinued

©Amal Alhaag

Em'kal Eyongakpa “Wata kulture II”

5 July, 18:00.
Free.

Centre musical Barbara Fleury Goutte
d'Or, 1 rue de Fleury 75018.
Métro 2 and 4, Barbes-Rochechouart,
RER B Gare du Nord.

1. See twitter hashtag #FortEU to explore the real-time discussion on migration.

2. See David Punter, *Postcolonial Imaginings: Fictions of a New World Order*, Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

3. Bikutsi is a popular musical genre from Cameroon. It derives from music traditions of the Beti and Ewondo, peoples who live around the city of Yaoundé.

4. Assiko is a music genre and rhythmic dance style of the Bassa people from Southern Cameroon. Since the early 20th, century the music and dance has been popular across Cameroon

5. John Coltrane traded this riddle with fellow saxophonist Wayne Shorter ca. 1960.

Amal Alhaag is a curator and writer based in Amsterdam. She often collaborates with Em'kal Eyongakpa. Their last collaborative project was his artist book *Be-side(s) work*, which was published in 2014.

Em'kal Eyongakpa “negociations - chapter 1-i: dualaland-Paris”

Until 26 July.
Thursday to Saturday, 14:00 - 19:00.

Fondation Kadist, 21 rue des Trois Frères 75018.
Métro 2, Anvers and 12, Abesses.
www.kadist.org

ARTIST: BETTINA MALCOMESS /AKA ANNE HISTORICAL
a short portrait of the Artist

Bettina Malcomess works across disciplines as a writer, curator and artist. She is based in Johannesburg, currently teaching at Wits School of Arts. Her work is performative, interdisciplinary and collaborative. Her curatorial and performance work engages with public space and site-specificity, both within and outside of art structures. Malcomess's projects always employ collaboration and a mixture of installation, research and process driven practice, along with performance to produce a series of situations that evolve and shift throughout each project's duration. Their intention is to set up conversations between artists and the contexts in which they work so as to explore social codes and histories that remain mostly invisible. Malcomess does performance work under the name Anne Historical.

She co-curated the group show *us* with Simon Njami at the Johannesburg Art Gallery (2009) and the South African National Gallery (2010). She conceptualized and set

up the Keleketla! Library with Ra Hlasane at the Drill Hall in inner city Johannesburg, an ongoing project engaging inner city youth. Malcomess is a member of the collective *Doing it for Daddy* (winners of Spier Contemporary 2007). She has also worked collaboratively with theatrical performers, doing a fellowship with Peter Van Heerden at the Gordon Institute for Performing and Creative Arts (GIPCA) to produce a site-specific performance, *Monument* (2011), outside the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town. Since 2010, Malcomess has been producing *Millennium Bar*: a temporary structure consisting of modular units re-configured as different sites. The *Millennium Bar* collection consists of fragments collected from demolition sites and scrap yards, starting from 2007. Malcomess is the author, with Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, of *Not No Place: Johannesburg, Fragments of Spaces and Times* (2013). Most recently, she took part in the *Johannesburg Pavillion* project at the 56th Venice Biennale.
© Bettina Malcomess

Anne Historical

11 July, 16:00.
Free.

Bétonsalon, 9 esplanade Pierre Vidal-Naquet 75013.

Métro 14 and RER C, Bibliothèque François Mitterrand

ARTIST: SERGE KAKUDJI, AN INTIMATE
by Caroline Roussy

An internationally acclaimed countertenor, Serge Kakudji is known as a “syncretic” lyrical singer, whose practice melds baroque opera and Swahili compositions. He tells Africa Acts about himself.

Serge Kakudji remembers. He was seven years old, in Lubumbashi. While channel surfing, he came across an opera. The moment was akin to a revelation. “Even though I couldn’t understand the language, the music made sense to me. It enveloped me like a dream”. In retrospect, he recalls a baritone’s voice. Moved, he asked his parents if he could join their church choir. His first experiences there were hard: people didn’t like his voice. But he persevered: “The sensation was so strong, the feeling so good, that I just kept going”. Despite a total absence of formal training, he learned to control his voice – to make it match the strength of his emotions and his desire to communicate with an audience. Shortly, choirs across Congo began calling on him. After a while, he was traveling so much throughout the country that people started referring to him “the vagabond singer”. In 2006, he represented DRC at the first edition of *The Voice* in Harare, an event organized by a group of French cultural institutions. There, he caught the attention of his countryman, star choreographer and producer Faustin Linyekula, who cast him in his now iconic work, *Dinozord*. (Kakudji would go on to star in *Dinozord I, II and III* in Brussels, Avignon and Lisbon).

Then came another fateful meeting, with North American opera singer Laura Clycomb. It happened at the Royal Flemish Theatre in Brussels. Clycomb had dropped in to watch rehearsals for *Dinozord* and was awestruck by Kakudji's vocal prowess. She recommended he go professional. Kakudji was still very young; his adult voice had not yet kicked in. He met with a speech therapist to establish what range he should aim for. Countertenor, he was told. Armed with this information, at the age of 17, he entered the prestigious Superior Institute for Music and Pedagogy in Naumur, Belgium.

Leaving Congo wasn't easy. Kakudji was certain of his choice, but saddened by his parents' doubts: they would have preferred for him to study engineering or medicine.

“In Congo, they don't take musicians all that seriously. They associate the profession with a sinful lifestyle”.

At one point, he remembers, he was even forbidden from attending choir practice.

After three years in Naumur, he returned to Congo. This proved difficult as well. People looked at him differently. His concerts were

well received, but he sensed a distance, a certain obsequiousness on the part of friends and family, as if his stay in Europe had somehow made him into a different person. “I wanted to scream: “I'm the same guy! It's me, Serge!” In an attempt to shift people's perceptions, he began developing links between his European training and Congolese roots. With two organ players, Louis Lumbala and Pascal Kaboo, “dream weavers just like me,” he says, he embarked on an improbable adventure: creating the first Swahili language opera, *Likembe opéra*.

After successfully staging *Likembe opéra*, in 2010 Kakudji started work on a still more ambitious project: telling the story of his life in a mix of choreography, lyrical opera and traditional instruments – djembes, acoustic

and bass guitars. The baroque opera CDs he played for his Congolese collaborators in the project proved to be a revelation. Everybody felt a bond with the music. “There were links, flashes, resemblances between that music and ours. We were all amazed”.

And, so “it became necessary to harness this Baroque music by giving it an imprint of our own”. “It involved a kind of métissage that wasn't easy to execute. We had to create compositions with instruments whose tonalities were totally different. For instance, a violin's sounds go crescendo and a likembe (or thumb harp)'s do the exact opposite”. To mitigate the asymmetry, a third set of sounds needed to be found: something that would create a bridge without making a mess of things, something simple, pure and direct. That thing was Kakudji's crystalline voice.

All of this work, with assistance from director Alain Platel, led to the development of an opera titled *Coup Fatal* (“*Fatal Blow*”). For months, now, the end product has been drawing rave reviews across Europe. Kakudji smiles: “In the popular imaginary, Africa needs Europe. Look at everything that goes on with visas, with calls for military intervention...” With *Coup Fatal*, it's a whole other story we're hearing: “Europe needs Africa's energy”. Kakudji is that energy writ large.

©Caroline Roussy

Serge Kakudji, Baroque music recital

7 July, 20:00 - 21:00.
Free, booking required, tel. 01 45 00 91 75
or email: reservation@dapper.fr

Musée Dapper, 35 bis rue Paul Valéry 75116.
Métro 2, Victor Hugo and 6, Kléber.

ARTIST: KAPWANI KIWANGA

by Carole Diop (excerpts)

Carole Diop: “What route did you follow to become an artist?”

Kapwani Kiwanga: “I was born in Canada, in the small working class city of Hamilton, South-West of Toronto. I studied anthropology and comparative religion at McGill University in Montréal. While in college, I came to the realization that I didn’t want to stay in academia because it is an environment that is too restrictive, not democratic enough and very elitist. I focused instead on documentary filmmaking. I left for Europe, where I started out freelancing for BBC and ITV in Scotland. At that point in my career, I came to the conclusion that TV was far too restrictive a medium for me. I wanted to explore new formats. So, in 2005, I came to Paris to take part in a research program (the “Seine” program of the National School of Fine Arts). It’s at that point that I first began thinking about becoming an artist. It took me three years of reflection and research to progressively begin moving away from the documentary genre. Though I didn’t abandon it entirely, I started exploring other forms of expression (installation, performance...). Documentary filmmaking, today, is one of many areas of research for me.”

CD: “Why Paris?”

KK: “A succession of opportunities led me to Paris. The “Seine” program, which no longer exists, was the beginning of my Parisian adventure.”

CD: “You use different media (video, installation, performance). Do you have a preference?”

KK: “It depends on the moment. Currently, performance, video and projects based on notions I studied in the past (in the social sciences and anthropology) are most prominent in my work.”

CD: “Afrofuturism was a source of inspiration in your docu-fiction piece *The Sun Ra Repatriation Project*. Tell us more about the project.”

KK: “ *The Sun Ra Repatriation Project* is a “video document” that is part of a larger ensemble including sound installation, texts and video. In this film, I try to develop a form of contemporary ritual, a way of paying homage to Sun Ra, the mystical artist who claimed to come from Saturn. His legend has been a source of inspiration not only for me, but also for a whole community of people. What better way to honor his memory than by sending him back to his native land - not

Birmingham, Alabama, where it’s said he was born, but to Saturn, his “true” home? This project resulted from a long period of reflection, which involved research in astrophysics and radio-astronomy, so as to be able to communicate with Saturn. I began by collecting testimonies by musicians who knew Sun Ra and, drawing on these testimonies, I had a composite sketch made of him by the Lille police department. Surprisingly, the composite sketch didn’t at all resemble Sun Ra. I could have shown the police a photograph or a video of Sun Ra; that would have produced a better likeness. But what I’m interested in is orality, the way in which information is transmitted, the difference between our perception – what we remember – and reality. I wanted to know who Sun Ra really was and to remain faithful to the memory of people who were close to him. The composite sketch was then translated into binary code so that it could be beamed to Saturn in the form of radio waves on May 16, 2009. People from different walks of life came together around this project (musicians, scientists...).

Bringing together people whom everything would appear to oppose is very important in my work.

CD: “Why Sun Ra?”

KK: “I chose to work on Sun Ra because I am interested in contemporary myths. I discovered Sun Ra while working on another project. I was struck by his charisma. By creating his own myth, he developed a very particular way of talking about the experiences of the Black community in the United States. He encouraged people to believe in the impossible, to look beyond their present circumstances to imagine a future full of promise.”

CD: “In 2011, you created *Afrogalactica: A Brief Survey of the Future*. This is also an Afrofuturist performance.”

KK: “For this 45 minute performative lecture that takes the form of a conference, I take on the role of an anthropologist from the future. I have created my own “bio-mythology”, in which life comes from a distant future. In this performance, I “recompose” our present, but also our past. I worked with archives. All of the events I evoke are factual, except, of course, projections into the future, which belong to the speculative fiction I have created.

Afrogalactica is a multiple chapter creation. The first, essentially, was an introduction in which I explored the concept of Afrofuturism. At the moment, I’m working on the second chapter, in which I explore questions of gender, sexuality and reproduction. In the first lecture, I didn’t have occasion to address these subjects, even though they play an important role in science fiction.

I wanted these performative lectures to look like simple academic conferences in which I read from my notes. Meanwhile, though, it’s far less “serious” than it appears. There is a lot of humor and derision involved. The archives I use stem from popular funk imagery and Afrofuturism, but also from various 20th century political movements.

The *Afrogalactica* series is a way of interrogating the production of knowledge. Who creates knowledge? Who spreads it? Who has authority to speak for it? How is it transmitted? These are the questions that move me.”

CD: “What do you think of the Afrofuturist movement?”

KK: “I don’t think you can call Afrofuturism a movement. From my perspective, it is rather a mix of eclectic personalities working in different domains but who share a certain aesthetic.”

CD: “Science fiction is also an influence for you. What is your favorite sci-fi film?”

KK: “My work is actually more influenced by historical facts than by science fiction. What I like about science fiction is that it is a format that allows you to revisit history and the

present and to imagine the future in a totally free way. I am a big fan of science fiction films and books. I’ve read a lot of Octavia Butler, an American writer who recently passed away. On occasion, I also like a good old vampire or zombie flick. For me, they are contemporary tales or myths.”

CD: “Has your work been shown in Africa?”

KK: “My films have been shown in Rwanda, Tanzania and Algeria. My visual artwork, on the other hand, has only been shown in Dakar, in a group show by the On the Roof collective.”

CD: “In 2009, you sent a composite sketch of Sun Ra to Saturn. If you could do the same again today, what would you send?”

KK: “If it proved possible one day, I’d like to go into space myself and create a work of art there.”

©Afrikadaa

Carole Diop is a founding member of Afrikadaa, an interactive contemporary art journal published online in French and English.

Kapwani Kiwanga “Afrogalactica, un abrégé du futur”

9 July, 19:00 - 20:00.
Full price: 9 € / Reduced price (ECAS participants) : 6 €. Ticket grants access to the exhibition *My Buenos Aires*, open till 21:00.
Booking required: reservation@lamaisonrouge.org

Maison Rouge, 10 boulevard de la Bastille 75012.
Métro 5, Quai de la Rapée.

ARTIST: NEO MUYANGA

by J. Brooks Spector (excerpts)

Neo Muyanga grew up in Soweto in the midst of the years of student unrest, rebellions and protest, and he narrowly escaped the fates of so many others from that period – the arrests, incarcerations, beatings and the rest. His parents packed him off to Bloemfontein; then it was Botswana. He then moved on to the United World College of Italy in Trieste to study philosophy and physics, but music eventually got its hooks into him and he fell in love with, wait for it, Renaissance madrigals. He explains that, for him, their intricate four-part harmonies were an echo of traditional South African vernacular singing styles. And it was love. But the twentieth century exerted its pull on him as well. Jan Sweelinck, Jimi Hendrix, John Adams and Frank Zappa – all wound up together – with an electric guitar twist.

[Muyanga has been commissioned to compose an opera about Nelson Mandela]. Unlike much of what has been done to bring the Mandela story to stage and screen so far, Muyanga’s upcoming opera will not be a straight chronological narrative of a great man gazing off into the distance at a heroic future. “My quest is to find windows into the soul of what it means to go through that; then we’re finding the meaning, not just of Mandela, but of the people he sacrificed on behalf of”, he adds. “I’ve been working [concurrently] on a film score, *Letter to Mandela*, and in a sense that has been an interesting window into the different perceptions, joys, veneration of people who think of him as almost saintly and of others who wonder what was sacrificed”.

There have already been two operas about Mandela, *The Mandela Trilogy* and *Winnie*, plus a growing number of movies (including the big one, *Long Walk to Freedom*). All of them basically seem to take the brave, heroic posture as their starting point. “Yes, a single-handed heroic, iconic tale”, Muyanga says. “But that is not the core of the tale I want to tell”.

To immerse himself in the challenge, Muyanga read Mandela’s speeches and letters and listen[ed] to recordings of his speeches. Moreover, Muyanga reminds that he was a working broadcast journalist at the time Mandela came out of prison. As a result, he uncovered the unfolding Mandela saga in the early 1990s with a first-hand, close-up look as part of his work. Certainly useful background, but just as certainly rather unusual, esoteric training for an operatic composer.

Talking more directly about his own music, he says he does pop and classical (he was also a popular performer in the acoustic duo Blk Sonshine), but deep down inside, he really sees himself as a 14th century composer who just happens to be living in the 21st century. For Muyanga, it is those clean melodic lines and the harmonies – they’re antiphonal, yes, but they are crisp and clean and can be heard beautifully. And the local South African vocal traditions are inspirations that, for him, make a connection to that earlier European musical tradition. These vocal traditions that influenced him also extend to the FRELIMO songs, the ZANU-PF songs of the liberation tradition, in addition to South African local music. All of these serve him as inspirations to draw upon for larger orchestral textures.

Muyanga’s face lights up when he says it is marvelous to live now and be able to burrow into the entire wealth of the world’s musical resources, including transcriptions of traditional music – like the famous Hugh Tracey collections as well as releases from SABC’s Radio Bantu transcriptions. “I reference that music all the time”.

Thinking more about South Africa’s traditional music, Muyanga says he has now realized South Africa’s national instrument is the voice. As a result, his work on the opera about Mandela is guided by his desire to take this tradition and articulate its sensibilities for the orchestra. “I am excited about this. All of my work – the operetta work, the

chamber music and storytelling work – has been building up to this particular project. It is leading up to clarifying where the voice sits and leads, and defines the timbre of the orchestra.”

Conversation turns to the actual creative process. Does he work from a textual story line or does he start with musical ideas and then figure out where that music might go in a story? Muyanga says he can actually go either way, in part because he has a significant amount of live theatre background – including several years with a theatre group in Nottingham in Britain. As a result, as he reads a text – specially if it is a metered one of Shakespeare’s plays – he can already hear important musical ideas and textures. “I can’t actually explain where that comes from”, he admits. But with a work like [the Mandela opera], he knows he has to start with the overture. “The big questions is: what am I hearing? I have to see the lights; the smoke; is it convincing? Is it dramatically convincing?”

And what kind of orchestration is Muyanga working with for the Mandela opera? He says he is working to put the music in a largely standard orchestra, along with some South African traditional bows. This will allow the work to be able to be performed anywhere in the world by any orchestra. There may be slight variations in technique to encompass traditional Xhosa or Zulu Masakandi music, as well as some electric mbira sounds – but, so far at least, no electric guitar – although this writer has cunningly planted the seed that such an instrument belongs in the work as well. Unabashed, the writer has also asked to be allowed to be a spear bearer in the actual production. Muyanga laughs and agrees it is something that might be arranged. Excellent.

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Neo Muyanga, Revolting Songs: A Brief Survey of the Music that Liberated South Africa

8 July, 19:00 – 20:00.
ECAS participants only.

Amphithéâtre Richelieu, Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne
1 rue Victor Cousin 75005.
Métro 10, Cluny-la-Sorbonne.

ARTIST: NTONE EDJABE

by Moses März (excerpts)

A DJ with an encyclopedic knowledge of music, Ntone Edjabe is also the founder of the Panafrican journal *Chimurenga Magazine*, based in Cape Town. In this 2011 interview, he talks about the early days of *Chimurenga* and about the ideals that propel it a decade later.

Moses März: “The first edition of *Chimurenga* was published in 2002. Approaching your 10th anniversary as a literary magazine, what are some of the changes and continuities characterizing the *Chimurenga* publication?”

Ntone Edjabe: “There was no clear strategy behind the project in the beginning, and I think that is perhaps one of the reasons why we are still here. Initially, *Chimurenga* was conceived as a single book. I was working as a journalist and together with a couple of journalist friends I was producing a lot of material without having a platform to print it. In print, there was simply no space for longer features, more analytical and more reflective writing. Since I was and still am very involved in music, I asked some of my friends as well as some of my favorite writers in the music scene to submit texts that related to music and politics. The nexus of a lot of my work is where politics and popular culture intersect. In that sense *Chimurenga* is essentially about music and politics.

At first it was a completely personal initiative. I collected the texts and put them together. We called it *Chimurenga – Music and Politics. Music is the Weapon*. However, because there was no clear strategy behind it, everybody received it differently and some people thought it would be the first edition of a magazine. Since I distributed *Chimurenga* myself, at concerts and in a couple of bookshops, many people started sending their own writing, saying “I want to be in the next *Chimurenga*!” By the time we ran out of copies of the first collection we already had enough material from readers for a second edition, *Chimurenga Volume 2*. Back then, the strongest piece of writing related to the idea of self-anthropology: re-discovering home and re-examining ones’ own home base, so we chose *Dis-covering Home* as the title.

By that time we started to realize that we couldn’t always wait for people to respond to our publication so that we could in turn respond to them. We therefore decided to plan four editions in advance and although

we were practically functioning like a magazine for the first two to three years we did not consider *Chimurenga* to be a magazine in a strict sense. This approach set the tone for how the publication was and still is. It was very organic from the beginning. Now, after doing it for ten years, it has clearly become a strategy and a philosophy. We however always tried to remain as reflective as possible, to still be able to see what’s working and what’s not working, what’s important and what’s not.”

MM: “In 2011 you launched a project called *The Chimurenga Chronicle*, conceptualized as a newspaper set in May 2008. For a newspaper it was quite heavy in size. Comprising close to 300 pages it appeared more like a manifesto. Did you want to work with the medium of the newspaper to deconstruct it?”

NE: “The newspaper is one of the aspects. The other aspect is our relationship with time. Whether time is perceived as linear or circular, depending on whatever philosophy one adheres to – my own sense is that we seem to be caught in these perspectives and that we don’t engage with them enough. We wanted to play with the idea of time travelling, and we wanted to use the tool that is specifically invented to mark time and space, the newspaper, to then use that very tool to deconstruct both, the tool and our sense of time.

Although we created a newspaper which was set in 2008 and released in October 2011, we decided that we were not going to do a retrospective. We were saying instead, “It is 2008, we are physically in 2008 and today we are producing the news of 2008 to engage with the colonial project of the newspaper”. Our sense of history, our sense of what is important and our sense of record are all marked by that medium. So yes, the project is partially to deconstruct the newspaper but not exclusively.

It is also about language. Newspapers contribute so much to the invention of language. For example, how we speak about a lot of issues is already predetermined by what newspapers decide to make an issue in the first place. Another aspect that we wanted to engage with is the crisis of May 2008 which spread across the African continent. For me, this event was much more significant compared to how it was being reported or analyzed.”

MM: “The statistics of the pogroms in May 2008, initially targeting Zimbabwean refugees in Alexandra, Johannesburg, and then spreading rapidly, are rather well known. About 60 people died and 100 000 were displaced in the course of very few days. On the other hand, the reasons usually offered for the outbreak of violence at the time appeared to be obscure. Which new perspective did the *Chimurenga Chronicle* seek to offer in this regard?”

NE: “We wanted to go back into the moment to report and analyze not just the events themselves, but everything that was going on around the world which in some way contributed to what happened in South Africa. In this sense we didn’t want it to be a South African newspaper. Creating a South African newspaper would trap us again in South African parochialism. We wanted to create a newspaper which dislocated itself, whereas most newspapers tend to locate themselves. The *Cape Times* is the *Cape Times*, the *New York Times* is the *New York Times*. They see everything from Cape Town or from New York. We wanted to create a newspaper which looks at everything from an analytical place, an ideological place and a philosophical place – not a physical place. This is in itself very contradictory because newspapers are in their foundation made to mark time.

Because our newspaper aimed at both dislocating time and space, we decided that it should have at least three different bases. Not in the sense of having correspondents but in the sense that the newspaper should be as relevant in Lagos and in Nairobi as it in Johannesburg or in Cape Town. That is why we had an editorial room in Lagos as well as an editorial room in Nairobi. In the end, how the newspaper was going to be read here and how they were going to read it there, especially concerning aspects like slang and referencing, was going to be challenging but that was the challenge of the project. I, nevertheless, think that 20 years into the era of the Internet we should be better equipped intellectually to deal with ideas outside of the trap of place and time.”

MM: “While some commentators have called the events of 2008 a watershed moment for post-apartheid South Africa, others emphasize the persistence of everyday violence. How could the *Chimuren-*

***ga Chronicle* keep the balance between emphasizing the exceptional and the structural nature of what happened in 2008 and now?”**

NE: “That is precisely what we were trying to do. If I can sum it up, for me, the *Chimurenga* project is about embracing complexity as opposed to the drag that is required of African thinkers, intellectuals and producers of knowledge to simplify things. The relationship with knowledge produced by Africans is always somehow towards simplicity because we are trapped in a logic of emergency. When there is always famine, misery and war it is impossible to think about going to the moon. As a matter of fact you can’t think at all. Essentially, what *Chimurenga* is trying to do is to liberate us from this shut hole of relevance. But how can you do that when you also exist in that very demanding place? Because the crisis is not fictional, there is indeed famine and war. But there is also life. There is also innovation, thinking, dreams, all the things that make life. It’s complex and our project is to articulate this complexity.

Now, it’s probably difficult to articulate complexity without coming out obscure. I do however find courage in the work of people like Edouard Glissant. He spoke of the right to opacity and to me that is a very liberating idea ... We started to embrace opacity, not running away from it. We do not always try to overexplain, overclarify and always justify our existence and say “Well, the reason why we do this is because we are trying to liberate the mind” – No! Not that this would be a bad thing, but there is no absolute necessity for us to know why we are doing what we are doing. We are doing it primarily because we are alive. That was a very liberatory idea for us and it kind of canalized the ideas behind the design and the writings we take on. It made us better understand this kind of semi-obscure, our

Ntone Edjabe, DJ set

10 July, 0:00 – 2:00.
Free.

New Morning, 7-9 rue des Petites Écuries, 75010.
Métro 4, Château-d’Eau.

ARTIST: QUDUS ONIKEKU

by Nike Campbell-Fatoki (excerpts)

market strategy and our reluctance to be visible and not to be invisible either – because it's not about being invisible.”

MM: “Up until today South Africa’s history is often told as a story apart from the rest of the African continent. Is the *Chimurenga Chronicle* intended as a statement against this narrative?”

NE: “For me, the event of 2008 was South Africa’s official entry into the postcolonial. That is what this newspaper attempts to mark, essentially. The argument of South African exceptionalism has absolutely no basis any longer... We want to record the moment South Africa officially became an African country. Later we can argue about that, but we have to be able to mark this moment and to mark it strongly enough so that we can have broader conversations.

We are not trying to do another body count or to show how bad South Africans are. As far as I am concerned they are not any worse than anyone else. What we continually try to say to South Africa is, “Give up your super-human status, you are not super-human! The world convinced you that you are different from anyone else and now you got this image of yourself, but a super-human? No you are not!” After 2008 people asked themselves, “How could it happen here?” I say “it will happen here because you are part of the world, because it is happening everywhere!”

© *Africavenir*

Moses März is a writer based in Cape Town.

Nike Campbell-Fatoki: “Tell us about your journey.”

Qudus Onikeku: “My journey is such a long one. I’ve never been able to completely narrate it: because it is irrelevant to recount the past when there is still a lot to be done in the present; because the damn journey is so long that I fear I might bore people; because it is incredibly complex even for me to make proper sense of it, at least for now. That said, I’ll just say I started with acrobatics at the age of five, which led me to dance at the age of 13. That discovery messed me up and is still messing me up till now.

I left high school as a disgruntled science student at 16. I quickly began a career that had gone international a year later, but the pressure at home to go to school began to heat up and so I decided to get “serious” even if I knew for sure that I was only writing a love letter to depression. At 20, I was admitted to University of Lagos to study mathematics and statistics, yeah I did, on a merit list. Simultaneously I got a long-term contract with a dance company in France. Dilemma: to go or not to go. Yes, it might seem very obvious now, but I had a tough time deciding whether to continue schooling or pursue my career in dance. Anyway, I stepped out of school, and went for the contract, with one ambition in mind – “find your school in France”.

After three years of working, touring, discovering, and finding out what I wanted for myself, I decided that I would be doing myself a great deal of damage going to a dance school in France, so I chose to attend a circus arts school instead. I know, circus sounds weird, but it’s a contemporary circus, at least that’s what it’s called – no monkeys, lions or elephants. My three years in school were as difficult as hell, because I was already untamable and unschoolable, but in the end it was a great exercise. I left that school at 25, attempted relocating to go change the world from Lagos, but Lagos made a mockery of my claims. Yes I had amazing ideas, but incredibly inexperienced, I was immediately spit out of Lagos. Hence my return to France, for a time, with a different status – an exile. That was to be the beginning of my artistic journey as a man at the border. Everything after that has been where the journey is right now.”

NCF: “What have you learned along the way?”

QO: “Defiance. Bold disobedience, because life is a bitch. Society discourages radical existence, but those rascal radicals who succeed, eventually become the society’s heroes. We must continuously reinvent the wheel with our will. Negation: history is full of lies and make believe. To combat those lies, we need new stories and new names. We need to create parallel make believes. More than history I’ve learnt to trust in my body memories. My intuitions.

Courage. Fear rules everywhere and there are millions out there who want to make you believe they have you in mind when they try to convince you, but they only speak of their fear-ridden conditioned mind. I’ve learnt that to live is to eliminate fear. When there is fear, you are not.

Trust. I’ve also learnt to trust myself first, which leads to trust in my intuition and eventually trust for fellow humans. No matter how much it hurts over and over again, there is always a chance for change and advancement.”

NCF: “What or who inspires you?”

QO: “Everything. Because the inspiration is not in the what or the who. I can do nothing but open up, my pores, my brain, my heart and my entire being, to get at this impeccable sensation, as though the outer layer of my flesh is continuously being peeled off my skin, as though I no longer have a barrier between me and the world, as though I am the world, and the world is me, as though I am a fetus in complete unison with the cosmos, as though I am the dog that waits patiently all day, the long lasting aged tree that keeps the memories of space in time, as though I am every collateral damage, every child soldier, every woman raped in

war or peace time, as though I am Gaza, as though I am Kabul, Baga, Kivu, Chibok and every other distressed corner of the earth, as though I am the tiny red fish swimming in the ocean of sensations. In there, everything inspires you to dance, to write, to sing, to scream, to yell, to want to believe in your powers to change the entire world.”

@nikecfatoki

*Nike Campbell-Fatoki is the author of *Thread of Gold Beads*, a historical fiction novel adapted into a play in Washington DC, in 2014. The French translation - *Un Fil de Perles D’Or* is set to be published in August 2015. She is presently completing a collection of contemporary short stories. She lives in the Washington, DC area.*

nikecfatoki.com
nikecfatoki.com/blog

Qudus Onikeku, “Africaman Original”

9 July, 20:30.

Full price: 10 € / Reduced price (Afro-Parisian Network): 7 € / Free for ECAS participants.

Collège des Bernardins, 20 rue de Poissy, 75005.
Métro 10, Cluny-la-Sorbonne et Maubert-Mutualité.

a brief presentation

The music born of this meeting is smooth and ardent. Densely authentic, it vibrates with powerful rhythms subtly infused by traditional African soundscapes reinvented by the musicians, by novel imaginaries, exaltation and pure joie de vivre.

The project is rooted in Africa (and in particular central Africa), but is wide open to meetings, mixings and meldings, echoing Brice Wassy's stance in virtually all of his undertakings.

Brice Wassy & Kélin-Kélin' Orchestra

11 July, 21:00 – 0:00.
18 €
New Morning, 7-9 rue des Petites Écuries 75010.
Métro 4, Château-d'Eau.

The upshot is an explosive cocktail of kizomba, bikutsi, afrobeat, makossa, biguine, calypso, funk, salsa and more, a mix in which each genre rings out true and strong, giving rise to a totally out-of-the-box whole.

Breeze Yoko

11 July, all day.
Free.

Le MUR, 107 rue
Chateaubriand, 67000

Breeze Yoko

11 July, all day.
Free.

Le MUR, 107 rue Oberkampf 75011.

Métro 3, Parmentier
and Rue Saint-Maur.

In an ideal world, AFRICA ACTS would have lasted a whole month and included many more of the performance artists we love. Rosalie van Deursen highlights two artists we would have been keen to welcome: Miriam Syowia Kyambi and Helen Zuru.

MIRIAM SYOWIA KYAMBI AND
HELEN ZURU: ADDRESSING THE NOTION
OF DISPLACEMENT THROUGH
ART PERFORMANCE
by Rosalie van Deursen

Many rites of passage on the African continent are traditionally performed with the human body playing a pivotal role and it is striking to see how contemporary African artists are adopting and adapting this mode of expression.

Two female visual artists, Miriam Syowia Kyambi from Nairobi and Helen Zuru from Addis Ababa, express current social issues in many different ways but often through using their bodies in performances. In their work, both artists address notions such as displacement, memories, vulnerability and confusion which are recognisable in their rapidly changing African societies. Nairobi and Addis Ababa are both undergoing profound changes; they are modernizing at lightning speed, causing alienation between inhabitants and their sense of belonging. Both artists explore these upheavals and their consequences. They use intimate

stories and their experiences of their immediate environment as inspiration for themes which are simultaneously personal and universal.

Displacement shows people's relationship and attachment to their values and past and raises questions such as: what is identity in relation to place, history and self-acceptance?

As an artist-in-residence in Kampala (2014), Helen worked on the theme of displacement and interviewed Eritrean refugees in the refugee camps. As part of a vivid performance piece she moved a tree from the countryside in Uganda to the capital Kampala as a metaphor for what happens to refugees. She wanted to find out if the roots would grow again where the soil might be different. "If somebody has lived their whole life in one place and you move them, what will happen? Will they be uprooted forever or will they find their way back into the soil again, even though the soil might be of a different composition?" This dilemma of being uprooted applies just as much to people during the process of gentrification when they are moved out of their homes and into new condominiums, a process which is currently taking place in Addis Ababa.

History and its effects on the present also play a very important role in one of the works of Miriam Syowia Kyambi. Her notion of displacement and being uprooted is multi-layered: "I want to share a story with

many stories within it, that's how I think life is." In the installation and physical performance entitled *Fracture (I)* (2011), she uses Rose as the main character, a woman who is tormented by doubt. She no longer knows where she belongs and is unable to cope with herself either within the context of the rural Kenyan tradition or urban modernity. Violence in the performance stands for destruction of culture and traditional life in Kenya but also self-destruction. During the performance Rose tries to lead the perfect modern life. She gets ready for her working day but she keeps breaking down. She mourns the past and tries to reassemble broken pots and vases that represent lost culture, practice and people. She stumbles over the remains of her past destruction and her dilemma is only resolved when she finally faces her loss and gives up the role she has created for herself. Miriam explains: "Part of the work has to do with colonial history and recognising its violence and part of it with self-violence and accepting the situation as it is. Acknowledging destruction is a very important step in the healing process. If you understand your history, then you understand the present day relationships and circumstances better."

Miriam and Helen's vibrant treatment of personal and universal issues rooted in a contemporary African context aim to confront, confuse and thus create dialogue and awareness.

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Rosalie van Deursen is an art historian and contributor to IAM – Intense Art Magazine, a journal dedicated to art, women and Africa. This text was edited by Philippa Collin.

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Musical, sartorial and contemporary art performances, live, on-the-street Occupy-style interventions and more: a six-film cycle at Fondation Lucien Paye explores intersections between the arts of performance and refusal of the status quo. Entrance: free.

7 July	18:00	Calypso Rose: The Lionness of the Jungle (2011) Pascale Obolo, 85 min. English	<i>Calypso Rose is the uncontested diva of Calypso music. With more than 800 recorded songs, she continues to be a pioneer and a champion of women's rights, as she travels the world making music. In a very personal journey, filmmaker Pascale Obolo spent four years with Calypso Rose, traveling from Paris to New York, Trinidad and Tobago, and her ancestral home in Africa.</i>
8 July	18:00	Shield and Spear (2014) Peter Ringbom, 89 min. English	<i>An artist paints a caricature of South African president Jacob Zuma that provokes a lawsuit, death threats and a massive street protest. Around this incident, Shield and Spear explores a constellation of stories about identity, art, race, and freedom of expression in South Africa, twenty years after the fall of apartheid regime.</i>
9 July	18:00	Senegal: Ready for Change (2015) Nusrat Durrani, 19 min. English / French / Wolof	<i>Part of an ongoing series titled Rebel Music, Senegal: Ready for Change chronicles political resistance through Hip Hop in Senegal. Rappers Kilifeu and Thiat of the Hip Hop group Keur Gui, social media activist Denise Safiatou Sow, academic M. Ousmane Traoré and others speak of the rise of political resistance through music in the country. The focus is Y'en a marre (Fed up), a movement of Senegalese rappers and journalists founded in January 2011 to protest ineffective government and register youth to vote.</i>
	18:00	Fuelling Poverty (2012) Ishaya Bako, 28 min. English	<i>The film narrates the activities of the Occupy Nigeria movement when it was at its climax in early 2012. The oil subsidy placed on petroleum products by the Nigerian government was meant to improve the life of the poorest citizens of this rich country, but about seven billion dollars were stolen from the program in one year.</i>
11 July	18:00	Ghetto Millionnaires (2010) Gilles Remiche, 52 min. French	<i>Sapeurs are Congolese jet setters and performers extraordinaire. Dressed in designer labels and elegant in the extreme, they thrive on being noticed and avidly compete with one another for the public's attention. Sapeurs embody success and access to the riches of the North. Yet, often, they live in poverty. Ghetto Millionnaires throws us into a world of make-believe, where dreams of notoriety built up in Europe through artifice and sacrifice come into conflict with often difficult returns to Kinshasa.</i>
12 July	18:00	Fela Kuti: Music is the Weapon / La musique au poing (1982) Jean-Jacques Flori & Stéphane Tchal-Gadjieff, 54 min. English / French	<i>Fela Kuti, musical visionary, incendiary political activist and Afrobeat progenitor is chronicled in this fascinating documentary. The film documents all-night politically charged performances at Fela's Shrine nightclub, intimate takes from inside his Kalakuta Republic compound, and scenes of street culture from early 1980s Lagos.</i>
Fondation Lucien Paye Cité Universitaire Internationale 47 boulevard Jourdan 75014 Tramway T3 Montsouris / RER B Cité universitaire			<i>Also at Fondation Lucien Paye: Usakos. Photography Beyond Ruins, a photographic exhibit that explores uses made by a Namibian town to mobilize – in quiet but powerful ways – against violent removals orchestrated by the apartheid regime.</i>



Breeze Yoko
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5 July	18:00	Centre Musical Barbara F.G.O. (75018)	Em’kal Eyongakpa	Free
6 July	18:00 - 20:00	Dentons (75008)	Jean-Pierre Bekolo	By invitation only
7 July	20:00 - 21:00	Musée Dapper (75116)	Serge Kakudji	Free, booking required: tel. 01 45 00 91 75 or reservation@dapper.fr
8 July	19:00 - 20:00	Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (75005)	Neo Muyanga	ECAS participants only
9 July	19:00 - 20:00	Maison Rouge (75012)	Kapwani Kiwanga	9 €/ 6 € (ECAS participants), booking required: reservation@lamaisonrouge.org
	20:30	Collège des Bernardins (75005)	Qudus Onikeku	10 € / 7 € (Afro Parisian Network) / Free (ECAS participants)
10 July	12:30 - 14:30	Place de la Sorbonne (75005)	Jelili Atiku	Free
	0:00 - 2:00	New Morning (75010)	Ntone Edjabe	Free
11 July	All day	Le MUR (75011)	Breeze Yoko	Free
	16:00	Bétonsalon (75013)	Anne Historical	Free
	21:00 - 0:00	New Morning (75010)	Brice Wassy & Kelin-Kelin’ Orchestra	18 €
12 July	12:30 - 14:30	Place de la République	Jelili Atiku	Free
	16:00	Le Lavoir Moderne Parisien	Jean-Paul Delore & Alexandre Meyer	Free
	20:00	Théâtre de l’Atelier	Alioune Diagne	16,10€/ 10 € (ECAS participants and under 26), booking required: www.theatre-atelier.com ; tel. 01 46 06 49 24



Conception: Dominique Malaquais and Caroline Roussy
Translation: Dominique Malaquais
Graphic design: Nicolas Catherin

