

CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ARTS

MAPPING PERCEPTIONS, INSIGHTS AND UK-AFRICA COLLABORATIONS





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Cover: Africa Nouveau - Nairobi, Kenya. Credit: Wanjira Gateri.

This page: Nyege Nyege Festival - Jinja, Uganda. Credit: Papashotit, commissioned by East Africa Arts.

1/ KEY FINDINGS

We conducted surveys to find out about people's perceptions and knowledge of contemporary African arts and culture, how they currently engage and what prevents them from engaging. The first poll was conducted by YouGov through their daily online Omnibus survey of a nationally representative sample of 2,000 adults. The second (referred to as Audience Poll) was conducted by us through an online campaign and included 308 adults, mostly London-based and from the African diaspora.

The general British public has limited knowledge and awareness of contemporary African arts and culture.

| Evidence from YouGov & Audience Polls | Conclusions |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only 13% of YouGov respondents and 60% of Audience respondents could name a specific example of contemporary African arts and culture, which aligned with the stated definition. - Common answers by YouGov respondents were 'about' Africa rather than 'from' Africa (eg. Hollywood produced films rather than films made by Africans). - Amongst YouGov respondents, many examples were related to African literature, visual arts and music. - Repeat examples mentioned by YouGov respondents included El Anatsui at the Royal Academy and the 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a huge opportunity to programme a much wider range of contemporary African arts and culture in the UK, deepening the British public's understanding of Africa and its creative diversity. - Programming must be contextualised, connecting to the cultural, socio-economic and political environments of the arts represented. - African Literature, music and visual arts can be leveraged to reach wide audiences, becoming gateways into to other lesser known art forms. - High-profile exhibitions and events can have a lasting impact on public perceptions of contemporary African arts. |

Current engagement with contemporary African arts and culture differs significantly between members of the African diaspora and the wider British public.

| Evidence from YouGov & Audience Polls | Conclusions |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 44% of YouGov respondents said they never engaged with any form of contemporary African arts and culture, 22% engaged less often than once a year and 16% said they didn't know. Very few people (5%) in this sample engaged regularly (i.e. once a month or more). - By contrast, the majority (76%) of our Audience poll respondents said they engaged regularly, with 55% engaging once a week or more. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The British public's limited knowledge of contemporary African arts and culture results in a lack of engagement with the latter, and vice versa. This cycle of disengagement can only be broken by bringing African arts to a wider number of audiences. - African diaspora audiences are drawn to contemporary African arts programmes that are representative of their cultural experiences and interests. |

Lack of awareness, opportunities and time are the main barriers to people engaging more with contemporary African arts and culture.

Evidence from YouGov & Audience Polls

- From the YouGov sample, 21% of respondents said they weren't interested, 20% said there were not enough venues showcasing African arts and culture where they live and 16% didn't know of any examples of contemporary African arts and culture.
- Lack of opportunities and awareness were the main reasons given by Audience respondents: 49% said there were not enough opportunities to engage and 21% said they wouldn't know where to find more African arts and culture.

Conclusions

- The common barriers of lack of awareness and opportunities demonstrate the clear need and demand for increased programming of contemporary African arts in the UK, alongside audience development.
- Lack of interest can only be tackled by sparking the public's curiosity around contemporary African arts and culture, which reinforces the above-mentioned need for increased programming.

A significant proportion of the British public believes in the value of contemporary African arts and culture.

Evidence from YouGov & Audience Polls

- Over half of the YouGov respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statements 'It is important and helps us to see diverse perspectives on Africa' (57%) and 'There should be more opportunities for everyone in the UK to experience contemporary African arts and culture' (50%).
- On the other hand, an overwhelming majority of our Audience survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the same statements (97% for both).

Conclusions

- A significant proportion of the British public believes in the importance and value of contemporary African arts and culture, once again highlighting the opportunity for increased programming and audience engagement.
- Those who already engage, especially members of the African diaspora, strongly believe that contemporary African arts can contribute positively to cultural life in the UK.

Contemporary African arts and culture are "not just for Africans or people of African descent".

Evidence from YouGov & Audience Polls

- 63% of YouGov respondents agreed with this statement.
- 88% of Audience respondents also agreed with this statement, including 59% who strongly agreed.
- However, 10% of Audience respondents also disagreed with this statement, which could be interpreted as highlighting issues around cultural ownership and appropriation.

Conclusions

- There is a clear opportunity for building more contemporary African arts programmes for all audiences – not just for African diaspora audiences.
- The 10% of respondents who were in disagreement with this position remind us of the importance of having a nuanced understanding of the historical and current global power dynamics when programming contemporary African work.

2/ FOREWORD

The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. We work with over 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Founded in 1934, we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body.

Our Africa arts strategy is focused on developing stronger African creative sectors that are better connected to the UK. We do this through sharing the best of arts and culture in the Africa and the UK; building audiences for the arts through the development of new networks; and communicating the work of the creative sectors. We work through our partners (artists, arts professionals, arts organisations, collectives and hubs) in the creative sectors of Africa and the UK to stimulate new ways of engaging with each other. One of our key aims is to see more connections between the UK creative sectors and young creative professionals in Africa.

As well as building connections, we aim to expand the knowledge of contemporary African art in the UK with a view to increase work from Africa being seen and experienced by UK audiences. The British Council is therefore delighted to have contributed to the development and dissemination of this publication which we hope will be a useful tool for those already engaged in African culture or those looking to start exploring the innovative, diverse and ground-breaking artistic works young Africans are creating at present.

Nadine Patel

Senior Programme Manager

Sub Saharan Africa Arts

British Council

East Africa Nights of Tolerance Production 2018





3/ INTRODUCTION

The offer of contemporary African arts and culture currently presented in the UK is limited, but there is a clear openness and appetite amongst audiences for more. This report presents original research on present-day public perceptions and audience engagement with contemporary African arts and culture and explores the untapped opportunity to expand and improve the existing offer for the UK's increasingly diverse audiences.

Featuring specially-commissioned essays and 16 exclusive interviews with leading contemporary African arts professionals, the report provides new insight and inspiration on best practice programming, successful Africa-UK collaborations and audience development strategies. It also maps some of the most exciting contemporary African arts festivals and initiatives taking place in Africa and the UK, across the arts spectrum, including Visual Arts, Literature, Film, Architecture, Fashion and Design, Performance and Dance, and Music.

WHY DO THIS REPORT?

As a membership organisation that works to amplify African voices and interests in academia, business, politics, the arts and education, we at the Royal African Society believe that contemporary African arts and culture ought to be front and centre of the international contemporary arts scene, contributing fresh perspectives and ideas to global conversations and expanding our sense of humanity.

Both the British Council and the Royal African Society have shared missions of promoting knowledge and understanding between the peoples of the UK, Africa and the wider world. This report feeds into our strategic aim of connecting leading African creatives and thought leaders with diverse audiences and arts practitioners in the UK, fostering mutuality and stronger collaborative relations. We also wanted to take stock and gauge perceptions and current levels of engagement with contemporary African arts by UK audiences to set some baselines and have sound evidence from which to work.

“
This report is a clear call to action to present more audience-led contemporary African arts programmes in the UK.
”

KEY FINDINGS & INSIGHTS

In our polling of over 2,300 people, including a nationwide Omnibus survey conducted by YouGov and a survey of our own audiences, we focused on the following three questions:

- Public perceptions and knowledge about contemporary African arts and culture
- Frequency of engagement with contemporary African arts and culture
- Barriers to engagement with contemporary African arts and culture

The results of our YouGov and audience surveys indicate that there is considerable scope to increase awareness and engagement for contemporary African arts in the UK, as there is both a lack of offer and an appetite for more.

The key take away is that, regardless of current engagement, over half of YouGov respondents and



Nakhane performing at Film Africa 2017 - London, UK. Credit: Amos Ruiz.

97% of our audience respondents value the importance of contemporary African arts and culture. The majority (63% and 88% for YouGov and audience respondents respectively) also agree that contemporary African arts and culture are not just for Africans or people of African descent.

This is an encouraging finding for us to continue the work we are doing. It also confirms our belief that there is an opportunity for building contemporary African arts programmes for all audiences – not just for the African diaspora, though the latter will always be a key interested audience.

Conversely, it can be argued that there is an opportunity for building African diaspora and other underrepresented audiences for all contemporary arts programmes. This would mean moving to a more inclusive and diverse arts programming landscape, which – accompanied by innovative audience development strategies – would attract similarly diverse audiences.

We appreciate this is not a simple task, especially for

those arts programmers who may not be so familiar with contemporary African work. That is why we have devoted the second part of this report to sharing insights and reflections by experienced arts practitioners – the majority of whom are African – which we hope will serve as a useful starting point.

CONTEXT: THE CASE FOR DIVERSIFYING THE UK'S CULTURAL OFFER

It has been widely documented that lack of access, diversity and representation are key issues facing the UK's cultural and creative industries today and that inequalities persist throughout British society. Research by the Arts Council shows that individuals from BAME communities and lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to engage with arts and culture than those from wealthier, white backgrounds.¹

People of colour also continue to be underrepresented in the cultural sector. In publishing, for example, only 8% of people in the industry are from a BAME

¹ Next ten-year strategy: Evidence Review, Arts Council England, 2018.

background² compared to the 16% percentage of the total working age population of England.³ With the long-term trend towards greater ethnic diversity in the UK, there is an urgent need to increase and improve the representation of different communities in our cultural programming and to expand access for everyone.

WHAT WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE

We hope this report will support UK-based programmers in their endeavour to navigate the African creative sectors and will ultimately lead to a greater quality and quantity of African artists being able to share their work with UK audiences. We also hope it will support Africa-based programmers and creatives by shining a light on opportunities for collaboration and connection, both within the continent and internationally. More broadly, we hope the report will prove useful to anyone interested in African arts and culture, sparking conversations and generating further interest amongst the wider public.

The findings and insights from this research will serve as an evidence base for the continuation of the Royal African Society's cultural work through Africa Writes and Film Africa, informing the development of both these festivals into wider arts programmes.

CALL TO ACTION

The results of our research are a clear call to action to present more audience-led contemporary African arts programmes in the UK, based on strong collaborations with artists and programmers on the continent. Arts venues, programmers and curators can and should do more on this front and we hope this report serves as a useful resource and enabler for this positive cultural shift.

Sheila Ruiz
Deputy Director
Royal African Society

² Writing the Future, Spread the Word, 2015.

³ Annual Population Survey 2017/18, Office of National Statistics.

How you can help and get involved

The Royal African Society welcomes your comments and feedback on this report, as well as ideas for collaborative partnerships around our cultural and education programmes. We are a small charity pursuing a mission of promoting Africa in the UK, providing opportunities for people to connect, celebrate and engage critically with a wide range of topics and ideas from and about the continent, spanning history and politics through to business, arts and culture.

We can only continue our work with the support of our members, partners and funders. If you are an individual or company interested in Africa, we would love for you to become a member. We offer individual, student and corporate membership packages. We also welcome partnerships with organisations in the UK, Africa and internationally which share our values and objectives. Through our partnerships we aim to increase the impact of our work and that of our partners' whilst achieving mutually beneficial objectives. We would especially welcome business support through our corporate partnerships. If you might like to join our membership or support us in any way, please get in touch.

4/ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

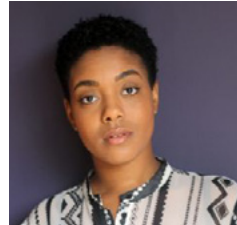
This report was researched and compiled by Sheila Ruiz, Caitlin Pearson and Marcelle Mateki Akita of the Royal African Society, with substantial input from senior members of the British Council's Sub Saharan Arts team. Our most appreciative thanks to all our interviewees and essay contributors, to those who took part in our consultative workshop and those who contributed to this report in other ways: Baff Akoto, Debo Amon, Sammy Awami, Sharmilla Beezmohun, Heather Benson, Thomas Joshua Brooke Bullard, Joanna Brown, Nadia Denton, Touria El Glaoui, Carolyne Hill, Evan Ifekoya, Nike Jonah, Wanuri Kahiu, Mabel Kebirungi, Molemo Moiloa, Yemisi Mokuolu, Linda Mukangoga, Fredrick Molin, Zaahida Nabagereka, Mercy Nabirye, Muthoni Ndonga, Nana Ocran, Lizzie Orekoya, Nadine Patel, Olumide Popoola, Tom Porter, Adam Rodgers Johns, Wesley Ruzibiza, Patrick Sam, Lola Shoneyin, Nolan Stevens, Shayne Tshabalala, Kenneth Ulumuyiwa Tharp, Kate Wallis and James Wan. Design by D237.



Sheila Ruiz
Deputy Director



Caitlin Pearson
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Marcelle Mateki Akita
Project Co-ordinator

Source by Daniela Yohannes. Image courtesy of the artist



5/ METHODOLOGY

RESEARCH METHODS

We employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods in preparation for this report, including surveys, interviews, commissioned essays and desk-based research.

SURVEYS

The statistical audience data presented in this report was the result of an analysis of two public surveys conducted between October 2018 and January 2019. We conducted surveys with two main groups to find out about people's perceptions and knowledge of contemporary African arts and culture, how they currently engage, and what prevents them from engaging.

The first survey was conducted by YouGov Plc through their daily Omnibus online survey of a nationally representative sample of 2,000 British adults. The total sample size was 2036 adults. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all British adults aged 18+. The second survey was conducted by ourselves and data partners Survey54 through an online campaign. It included 308 adults, the majority of whom were based in London. Given the significant variation in sample sizes and demographics, the comparison should be taken as indicative rather than representative. However a comparative analysis does yield useful insights. You may read more on our research findings on pages 16–21.

If you would like to access our research data, please email ras@soas.ac.uk.

INTERVIEWS & CONSULTATION

We conducted interviews with 16 cultural leaders who kindly shared their expertise and insights on the three key areas of focus – programming, collaborations and audience development. Interviewees also provided us with their views on the future direction of contemporary African arts and culture, highlighting challenges and opportunities, emerging talent and trends to watch,

allowing us to build a substantial body of knowledge on the subject.

We held a consultative workshop with 15 London-based arts practitioners to working on contemporary African arts to present some of our initial findings and gather more insight, which fed into the overall report. The majority of contributors were African or of African heritage and they represented the following countries: Germany, Ghana, DRC, Kenya, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda and the UK.

ESSAYS

The report includes three commissioned essays to enhance and reflect on our research findings, including an essay on audience development in the UK, a case study of contemporary arts festivals in Senegal, and reflections on Black Europe by an 'Afropean'.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

We conducted desk-based research on existing publications relating to our research areas, some of which are included as resources for further reading. The research on contemporary African arts festivals and initiatives was based on existing knowledge of both organisations and supplemented by the British Council.

SCOPE & LIMITATIONS

DEFINING 'CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ARTS AND CULTURE'

Contemporary African arts and culture may mean different things to different people. We understand the terms are contested, both individually and collectively, and have been interrogated by artists and academics



Jalada Africa workshop, 2017 - Musanze, Rwanda. Credit: Caitlin Pearson.

alike for decades. We tried to arrive at a broad and inclusive definition, which was also clear and time-bound, so that our survey respondents and report contributors understood we were concerned with the present-day cultural production of African and African diaspora creatives. The definition we used was as follows:

By 'contemporary African arts and culture' we mean the creative works, such as film, literature, music, dance, theatre, visual arts, fashion, architecture and design, originating from Africa within the last 50 years (i.e. since 1968).

We also asked each interviewee to give their own definition of the term (see pages 14–15). Some said it was not useful or applicable to their work and some queried it as a term constructed through a binary Western lens, based on the seeming dichotomy of 'traditional' vs 'contemporary' and 'arts' vs 'crafts'. The definition of 'diaspora' was also contested – especially with regards to the distinction between 'originating from Africa' and 'diaspora'. Today's mobility and migration flows mean that the concept of diaspora is much more fluid, which makes a clear distinction harder to sustain.

SURVEY GROUPS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Our research focuses on the ethnic and cultural diversity of the existing audiences for contemporary African arts and culture. Our survey respondents were segmented by their self-identified ethnicity based on current terminology set by the Office of National Statistics. Correlations and intersections between ethnicity, social class, gender, age, disability and sexual orientation are not explored in this report and warrant further investigation.

CONTENT AND CONTRIBUTORS

This report is not intended as a comprehensive review of all contemporary African arts programmes and artistic collaborations taking place between the UK and Africa today. The insights offered by the contributors on best practice programming, successful international collaborations and audience development strategies offer a snap shot of current thinking on the subject. Though the report covers the spectrum of contemporary African arts, the research does not cover sector specific questions. Lastly, it must be noted that our range of contacts comes from our joint networks, which are large but not exhaustive, and there is a major focus on London, the location of the Royal African Society's primary network.

6/ WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ARTS AND CULTURE?

Contemporary African arts and culture may mean different things to different people. We understand the terms are contested, both individually and collectively, and have been interrogated by artists and academics alike for decades. We asked each interviewee to give their own definition of the term and below are some of the responses we received.

"I define it in the same way I would define contemporary art. For me, contemporary African art is just any African art made by African people, whether the diaspora or not. There is no particular topic that they should be talking about or just responding to."

DEBO AMON

"It doesn't resonate in terms of my individual practice but it does on a wider conversational level, in terms of being in dialogue with practices on the continent which is something I am interested in. I'm a London based artist and even though I am of the diaspora – my family are Nigerian, Yoruba specifically, and I was born in Nigeria – I'm also aware that I'm operating in this context and I'm aware that this particular landscape impacts the practice."

EVAN IFEKOYA

I always wonder what the difference is between contemporary African art and contemporary art that's created in Africa. In South Africa we look to the outside world for cues on to what we're supposed to do within the arts realm. I want to reverse that old status-quo. Contemporary African art would be us saying 'this is who we are and this is what we're about', not in a way that's asking for permission."

NOLAN STEVENS

"Every time you try and define culture as a static thing it does a disservice to the new artists, voices and ideas. So 'contemporary African arts' is future-looking: all kinds of art that there are currently and are yet to be explored, that are created by Africans and people of African descent either living on the continent or outside of it. It's a shape-shifting thing that will continuously change."

WANURI KAHU

"Contemporary African art is anything that authentically narrates the multiplicity of African stories."

PATRICK SAM

"Creative practice that is engaged with questions of contemporary African life and negotiates contemporary African urgencies in different ways."

MOLEMO MOILOA

"I don't feel like the phrase contemporary African arts was invented by us - it's an 'other' word, usually applied in the west to describe art from Africa by those who wish to describe what they consider to be non-traditional/modern art from Africa."

MUTHONI NDONGA

"Contemporary is something which is 'of the now', it is ever evolving, African arts are ever evolving. So it's not about diluting it, we have to know the pillars that combine and hold the African nuance."

MERCY NABIRYE

"To take a critical look at this, traditional African identity is in question. I find that exciting. There is more openness to cultures and traditions evolving and changing. That's what I think is most contemporary; engaging with the past but also looking at it through the present"

OLUMIDE POPOOLA

"In my view 'contemporary' would be content that is on a par with similar international work. Contemporary African film would be content that pushes the boundaries of what Africa is, that rightfully grants African filmmakers a place at the table of world cinema and shows something different that we perhaps have not seen before."

NADIA DENTON

7/ HOW DO UK AUDIENCES ENGAGE?

SURVEY GROUPS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

We conducted surveys with two main groups to find out about people's perceptions and knowledge of contemporary African arts and culture, how they currently engage, and what prevents them from engaging. The first survey was conducted by YouGov Plc through their daily Omnibus online survey of a nationally representative sample of 2,000 British adults. The second survey was conducted by ourselves and data partners Survey54 through an online campaign. It included 308 adults, mostly London-based and from the African diaspora. Given the significant variation in sample sizes and demographics, this comparison should be taken as indicative rather than representative. However a comparative analysis does yield useful insights.

YUOGOV POLL

- National representative sample of 2036 British adults
- 52% women and 49% men
- 40% aged 55+, 17% aged 45-54, 17% aged 35-44, 15% aged 25-34, 11% aged 18-24
- 84% identified as White British; only 5% identified as BAME

AUDIENCE POLL

- Ethnically diverse group of 308 respondents, mainly based in London
- 75% women and 25% men
- 12% aged 55+, 11% aged 45-54, 15% aged 35-44, 47% aged 25-34, 12% aged 18-24
- 45% identified as Black African/British/Caribbean or Mixed, followed by White British (15%) and White Other (10%)

What do we mean by 'contemporary African arts & culture'?

This term is contested, but for the purpose of polling, we gave the definition:

'Creative works such as film, literature, music, dance, theatre, visual arts, fashion, architecture and design, originating from Africa within the last 50 years (i.e. since 1968).'

PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE AND PERSPECTIVES

The results of our polling surveys demonstrate that public knowledge of contemporary African arts and culture is limited, but there is a clear openness to learn and engage more. A significant proportion (57%) of the British public and the majority (97%) of our Audience respondents believe in the importance and value of contemporary African arts and culture.

This means there is a huge opportunity to programme a much wider range of contemporary African arts and culture in the UK, increasing awareness and deepening the British public's understanding of Africa and its rich creative diversity.

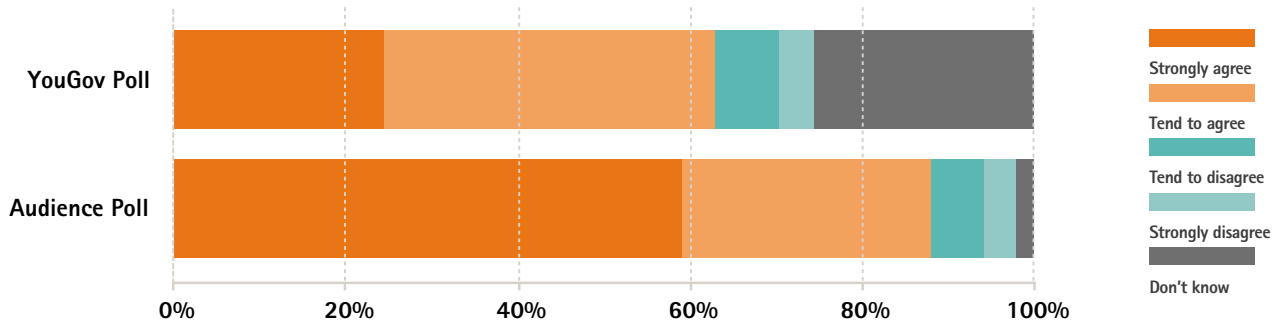
Major exhibitions and events, such as the annual 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair and El Anatsui at the Royal Academy, and high profile contemporary thinkers like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie can have a lasting impact on public perceptions. Contemporary African literature, visual arts and music seem to have filtered into the mainstream more than other art forms. These popular art forms can be leveraged to reach wide audiences, becoming gateways into to other lesser known art forms.

Because of the current lack of public knowledge and understanding, it is imperative that programming of contemporary African arts and culture is contextualised, linking to the cultural, socio-economic and political environments of the arts represented. Our survey respondents also remind us of the importance of having a nuanced understanding of the historical and current global power dynamics when programming contemporary African work.



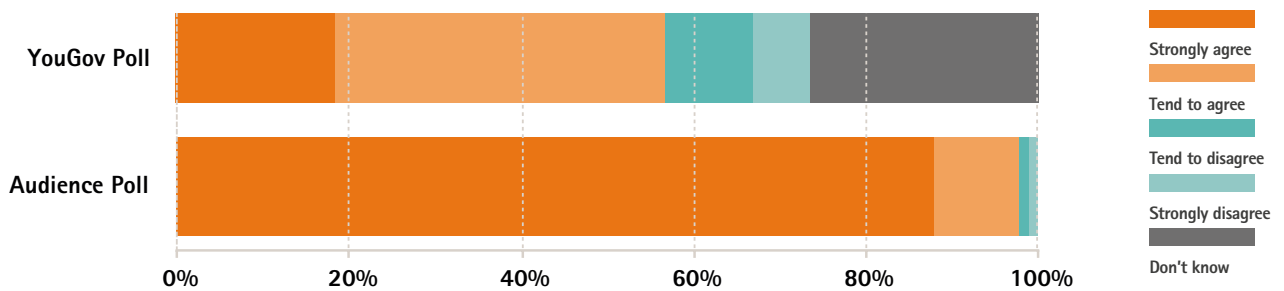
“It is not just for Africans, or people of African descent”.

Both groups broadly agreed with this statement, including 63% of YouGov respondents and 88% of Audience respondents. More than half (59%) of Audience respondents strongly agreed, but 10% also disagreed, which could be interpreted as highlighting issues around ownership and appropriation of African arts and culture.



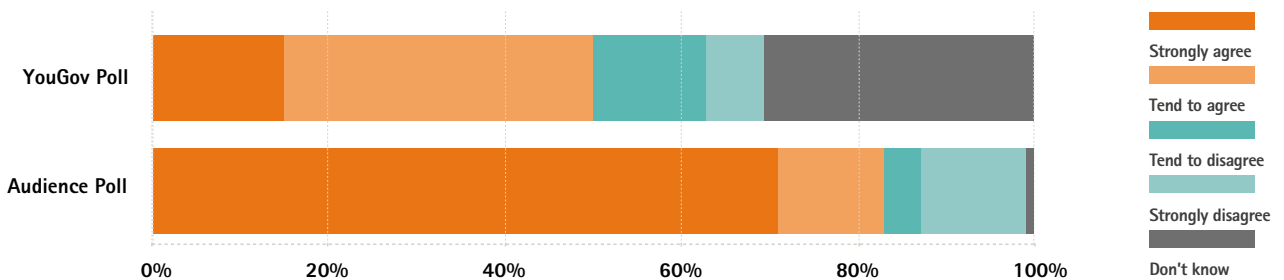
“It is important and helps us to see diverse perspectives on Africa.”

Over half (57%) of YouGov respondents and the majority (97%) of Audience respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.



“There should be more opportunities for everyone in the UK to experience contemporary African arts and culture”

The vast majority (97%) of Audience respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. A significant proportion (50%) of YouGov respondents also agreed, while 19% disagreed and 31% said they didn't know.



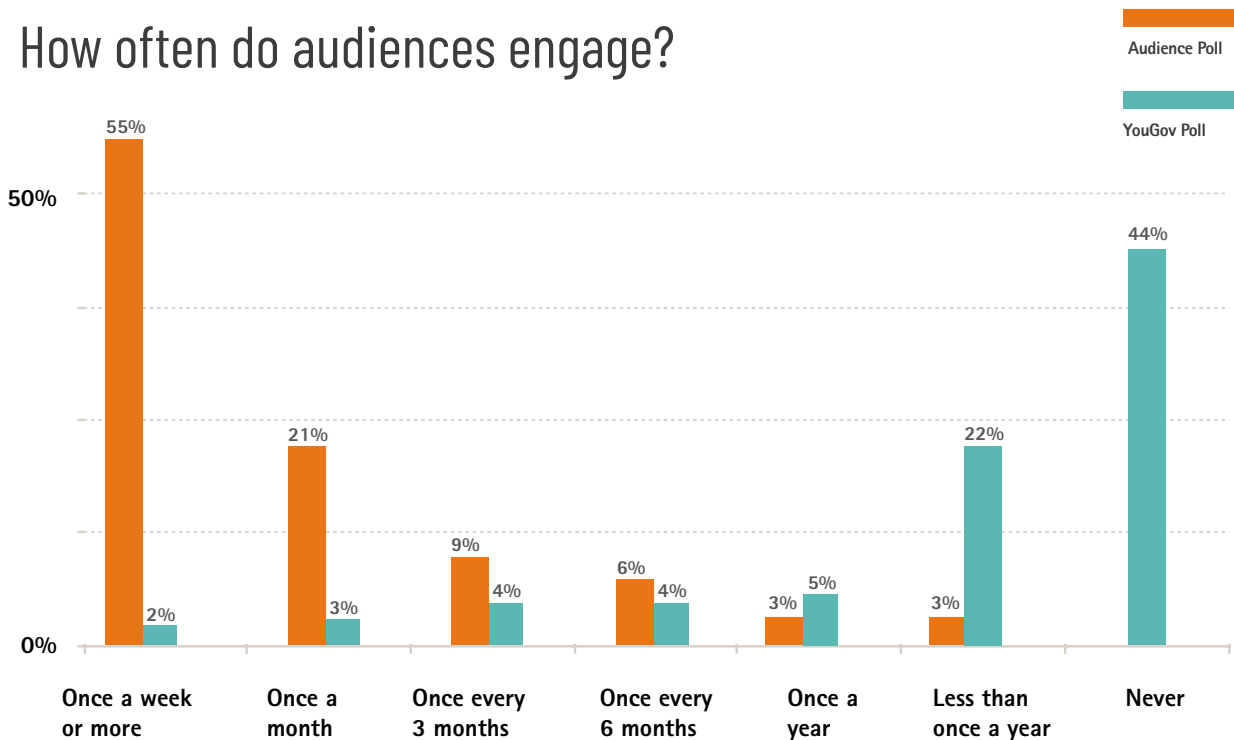
ENGAGEMENT AND BARRIERS

Our polling results demonstrate that current engagement with contemporary African arts and culture differs significantly between members of the African diaspora and the wider British public. Very few (5%) of the YouGov respondents engaged and a large proportion (66%) said they never engaged or engaged less often than once a year. By contrast, the majority (76%) of the Audience poll respondents said they engaged regularly, with 55% engaging once a week or more.

Lack of opportunities, interest, awareness/knowledge and time were cited as the main barriers to engagement. 20% of YouGov and 49% of YouGov respondents said there were not enough opportunities to engage. Interestingly, 30% of YouGov and 40% of audience respondents said that nothing in particular was preventing them from engaging. This is up for interpretation, but we suspect it links to the question of awareness and access.

The common barriers of lack of awareness and opportunities demonstrate the clear need and demand for increased programming of contemporary African arts in the UK, alongside culturally specific audience development strategies. Lack of interest can only be tackled by sparking the public's curiosity around contemporary African arts and culture, which reinforces the above-mentioned need for increased programming.

How often do audiences engage?



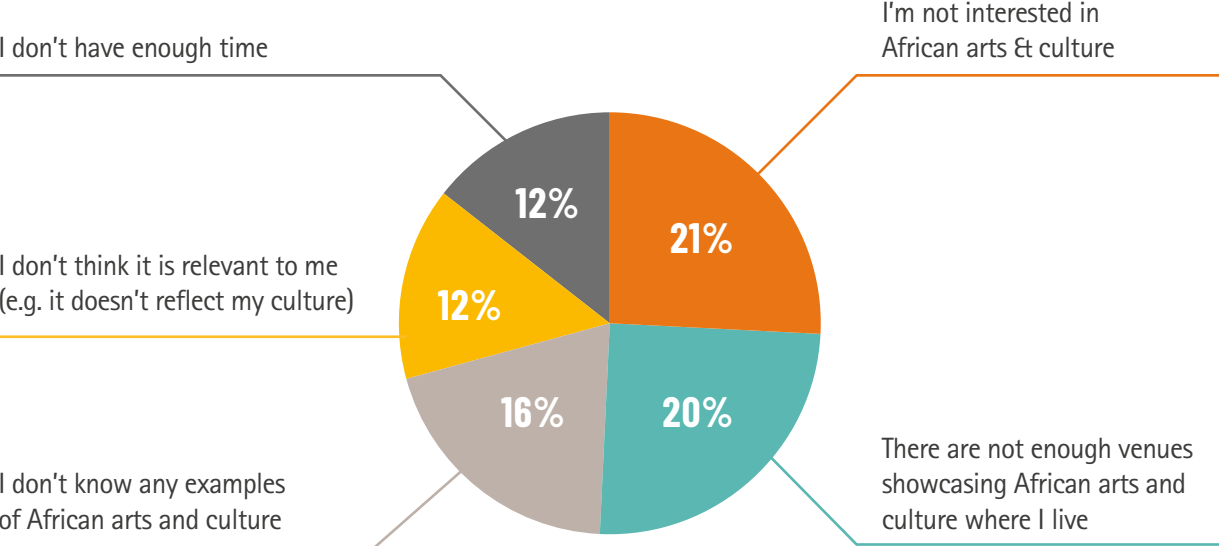
High-quality outlets on the rise, but still underfunded. More PR needed too.

I'd never even thought about it, it's never crossed my mind.

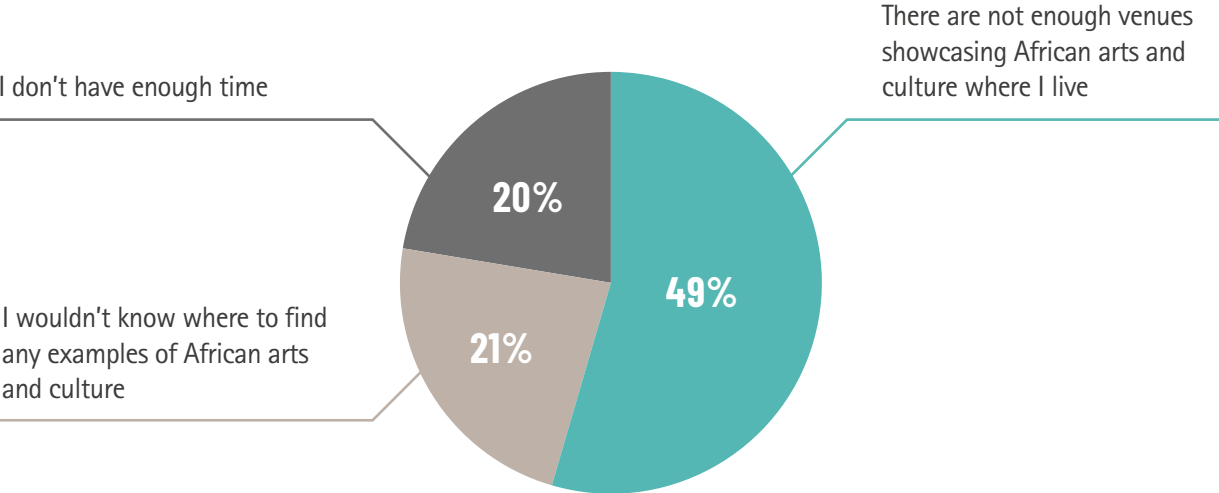
It's hard knowing where to find venues and events taking place.

What prevents audiences from engaging?

YOUNGOV POLL - MOST COMMON BARRIERS



AUDIENCE POLL - MOST COMMON BARRIERS



■■ The west country isn't a very diverse area, especially in the countryside. I've only been able to access this kind of culture via the internet. ■■

■■ I haven't seen much opportunity locally, and travel to London is expensive and time-consuming. ■■

8/ **ESSAY**: OLD ROUTES, NEW PATHWAYS

MEL LARSEN

As shown on the previous pages, the recent surveys conducted by RAS indicate that there is considerable scope to increase awareness and engagement for contemporary arts that originate from the African continent.

The YouGov survey group of over two thousand predominantly white British adults spread across the regions, found that although just over a fifth say they are 'not interested', just over a quarter say there are not enough venues showcasing African arts and culture locally or that they don't know where to find examples of African arts and culture. Just under a third say 'nothing in particular' is preventing them from engaging and the majority of respondents were unable to name a specific example of contemporary African arts. Since the majority (63%) also agree that the work, 'is not just for Africans, or people of African descent' and half agree, 'There should be more opportunities for everyone in the UK to experience contemporary African arts and culture', we might reasonably assume there is some scope to develop awareness, interest and opportunities for this segment.

By contrast, a survey of a much smaller group of existing audiences for RAS programmes, of over 300 predominantly younger, BAME attenders shows they are engaging regularly with contemporary arts of African origin. Over a third of these respondents say they engage with contemporary African art or culture more than once a week, but even in this active group, mostly based in London, a significant number say they lack the opportunity to do so.

The missed market opportunities suggested by these findings come as no surprise at all. Several studies have indicated the lack of awareness about African arts and lack of access to African arts in the UK over the last 30 years and are echoed in my own experiences and observations and those of my professional peers.

I've spent a good part of my career helping a wide range of cultural organisations to diversify their audiences. Early on I worked for the ground-breaking and enduring Talawa Theatre Company who brought classics from the African continent to a wider audience. I've also worked on national projects such as the Africa Beyond programme, the Centre Stage report for the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation and Open Up: Museums for Everyone.

I'm currently a mentor on the Audience Diversity Academy for the Arts Marketing Association, helping individuals move equality, diversity and inclusion practice forward in their organisations. Over the last three decades I've seen the same key areas of challenge arise again and again for cultural providers, venues, programmers and promoters. These challenges inter-link and overlap:

AWARENESS

Perceiving new BAME audiences as an add-on to the existing 'real, core audience' is a common assumption made unconsciously by venues. An awareness of individual and organisational bias is vital even for the most educated and experienced. An understanding of how the arts sector came to be institutionally biased is where real and lasting change begins. Knowing about and understanding the history of systems of oppression shines light on how and why we are all involved in this strange dance of power and subjugation.

When we begin to ask, why are things the way they are, then we start to uncover the history of old well-trodden routes that we must begin to transform into new pathways of respect, equity and creation. For example, the music promoter Paul Fordham of the agency Way Art West in South West England asked, why is it that a publicly-funded venue can be based in a catchment area with a huge Somali population,



Africa Writes 2018 audience members. Credit: Ivan Gonzalez.

yet never programmes Somali work or actively targets that community as an audience? Seeing a missed opportunity, he then went on to produce sold-out gigs by Somali stars across the country.

MARKETING

Many established cultural organisations find attracting and retaining new audiences, who differ from their typical white middle-class audience, initially challenging. This is partly because very often new programming is required to be part of the mix and there is a common concern that 'Black work' will impact negatively on brand identity and box office.

Attracting new audiences often requires new marketing approaches to messaging, images and promotional channels. None of this requires rocket-science levels of sophistication but it can disrupt comfort zones. Within the four quadrants of the Ansoff Matrix, a classic marketing strategy tool, the strategic option of taking 'new product to new audiences' is known to be the most risky and costly for any business to adopt. It requires understanding new audiences, being

“

Perceiving new BAME audiences as an add-on to the existing 'real, core audience' is a common assumption made unconsciously by venues.

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clear about where to find them and knowing what might catch and retain their attention. This very often requires research and relationship building. This is standard marketing groundwork, but again modifying or changing all these areas of operation can disrupt habitual ways of thinking.

However, the 'financial risk' argument that is often bandied about in relation to programming 'Black' work per se, (most usually anything that is non-musical) is disproved as box office successes (i.e. the Eclipse

tour of 'Black Men Walking' in 2018) continue to be reported across genres. While it is not true that African audiences will only want to see African work, such work will likely reflect stories and voices that have a resonance, and this type of relevance is a proven draw. Such new programming also welcomes new audiences



“

Once their own awareness has been raised, leaders of cultural organisations must begin turning around a juggernaut of psychological and practical tradition.

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into a cultural space previously perceived as 'white', colonial' or 'exclusive'.

With 1 in 5 people in the UK predicted to be 'from an ethnic minority' by 2051, the market has a clear, encouraging message for us all. However, the super-diversity of our society, (and the demands of GDPR) also bring the complexities of segmentation to the fore. Good

market research requires investigation, categorising and labelling. The term 'African' is too broad, too varied, too debated and too crude to be of real use in a marketing sense in the same way that using the term 'European' would be. However, making a start is better than nothing until better market intelligence becomes available. Targeting individuals psychographically based on interests, themes and behaviours is preferable and more effective.

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Real, lasting change is virtually impossible if a venue CEO is not leading from an inspired and compelling vision of inclusion. When this is missing, the rest of the team know that the bar has been set low at lip-service. Once their own awareness has been raised, leaders of cultural organisations must begin turning around a juggernaut of psychological and practical tradition. Transformation - a key aspect of the leadership role in today's arts sector - is exciting but can be resisted by those staff who enjoy the old default and familiar culture.

If the opportunity for building African audiences for all programmes and, building programmes of contemporary African arts for all audiences (and any other combinations in-between) is to be taken seriously, it must begin with an understanding of history, a strong vision for change led from the top, and a decent budget. The audiences and makers are out there and there's never been a better time to reach out to them.



MEL LARSEN



Mel's 30 year career includes working with pioneering touring companies Black Mime Theatre, Talawa Theatre Company and consulting firm A.R.T.S. As an in-demand independent audience development consultant, her clients have included Arts Council England, Australian Arts Council, The British Council and The Arts Marketing Association. Her work has taken her around globe including, Russia, South Africa, the Caribbean, Scandinavia and the Netherlands. She is also a successful small Business Coach.

9/ CASE STUDIES: AFRICA WRITES & FILM AFRICA

Established in 2011 and 2012 respectively, Film Africa and Africa Writes were set up by the Royal African Society to celebrate the best contemporary African cinema and literature, showcasing work that would otherwise remain unknown to UK audiences.

Although things are slowly changing, the majority of African films still do not get theatrical distribution in the UK and the publishing industry has also demonstrated a lack of diversity and inclusive representation. Film Africa and Africa Writes aim to bridge that gap.

As audience festivals, we provide opportunities for diverse audiences to connect with the plethora of contemporary stories arising from the continent and its diaspora. Over the last eight years, Film Africa and Africa Writes have jointly welcomed almost 40,000 people, with a growing percentage (over 60% in 2018) of young audiences (20-30) who identify as Black African, Black British or Black Caribbean.

Our long-term goal is to mainstream African film and writing in the UK, contributing to a positive shift in the British public's perception and understanding of Africa, as well as in the creative sector, which we believe ought to reflect our population's increasing diversity.



Author Ayesha Harruna Attah at Africa Writes 2018. Credit: Ivan Gonzalez.

OUR PROGRAMMING APPROACH

We take pride in Film Africa and Africa Writes being festivals of discovery that present new creative voices emerging from Africa and its diaspora. As such, we run an open submissions system ahead of each festival edition. For Film Africa, we put out a call for submissions via film submissions platform FilmFreeway and for Africa Writes, we put out a call for ideas to be submitted via google forms.

Film Africa counts with the help of a small team of submission advisors who watch all of the submitted films and then pass a long list on to the festival programmers for final selection. Most of the shorts included in Film Africa, as well as a handful of documentary and narrative features, come to us through the submissions process. Africa Writes also includes some of the ideas pitched via our open call in the final programme, mainly in the form of workshops and panel discussions.

In addition to considering submissions, our festival programmers actively search for new and exciting content, as well as tapping into the community of filmmakers and writers we have built over the years. Attendance to other film and literary festivals showcasing African work is key in this regard and our programmers will travel to at least one or two festivals as part of their research, looking for new work and talent. Suggestions and recommendations by industry colleagues are another very valuable source of curatorial content for our festivals.

Our festival programmes are further developed through partnerships, which range from one-off collaborations to ongoing strategic partnerships. For Film Africa, we

have a programme partnership with the National Film & Television School whereby students on the MA in Film Studies, Programming & Curation watch all the submitted shorts to arrive at a long list for our Film Africa Baobab Award for Best Short Film. This partnership is aimed at encouraging an appreciation and knowledge of African cinema in the next generation of film programmers. We also have a strategic partnership with the rest of the UK African film festivals, which aims to raise the profile of African cinema nationally. For Africa Writes, our principal and longest-standing partners are the British Library and The Caine Prize for African Writing, but new partnerships are forged every year.

The selection criteria for both festivals focuses on choosing high-quality work across a range of African countries and film/literary genres. We also select work by non-African directors or writers, but the emphasis is on work by African and African diaspora creatives. Once we have a final list of films, books and ideas, we have many conversations around which will make it into the festival programme. This is informed by the thematic strands we may have identified for the year; the imperative of having a wide range of African countries represented in the programme; how topical and current the film, book or idea might be; and whether we might get an exclusive book launch or film premiere. We will always prioritise work that is innovative and may not have been screened or showcased in London or the UK before. As audience festivals, we are very much focused on audience development and always think of potential audiences when making programming decisions.

OUR AUDIENCES

As audience festivals, which are primarily London-based where currently 40% of the population is from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds,¹ we have always worked to attract diverse audiences for both Film Africa and Africa Writes.

Our primary target audience has been the African diaspora. Young people, the LGBTQ+ community and, more recently, Deaf audiences, have been other target audience groups. More generally, we have sought to engage individuals interested in world cinema and literature, as well as members of the wider British public looking for an alternative to the mainstream. Since setting up our arts education programmes, Film Africa Young Audiences and Africa Writes Young Voices, we have also engaged over 3,000 students working with more than 30 primary and secondary schools.

Our audience development has been closely linked to the audience priorities of our main public funders – the BFI for Film Africa and Arts Council England for Africa Writes. Far from being restrictive, these external priorities have enabled us to keep widening our reach and access to under-served communities, which has been a key driver of our festivals' overall success.

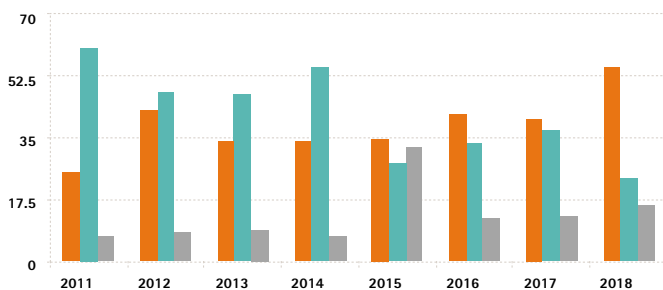
FILM AFRICA

Film Africa has seen a steady (though not straight-forward) upward trend in the percentage of Black African/British/Caribbean audiences, rising from 25% in 2011 to 55% in 2018. The inaugural edition attracted an older, white demographic generally associated with world cinema, but as a result of our partnership with venues based in areas with high African diaspora communities and grass-roots marketing strategies, the festival has attracted an increasing number of African diaspora audiences.

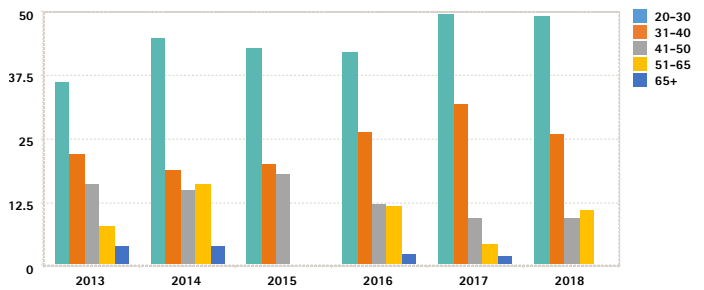
AFRICA WRITES

In contrast to Film Africa, Africa Writes attracted a high percentage (over 60%) of African diaspora audiences from the very beginning. However, the festival saw a clear upward trend in the number of young audiences. The percentage of attendees aged 20-30 rose from 36% in 2013 to 50% in 2018. This is a reflection of the festival's responsive programming approach, including headline events and speakers that specifically cater to younger audiences.

FILM AFRICA AUDIENCE BREAKDOWN BY ETHNICITY 2011-2018

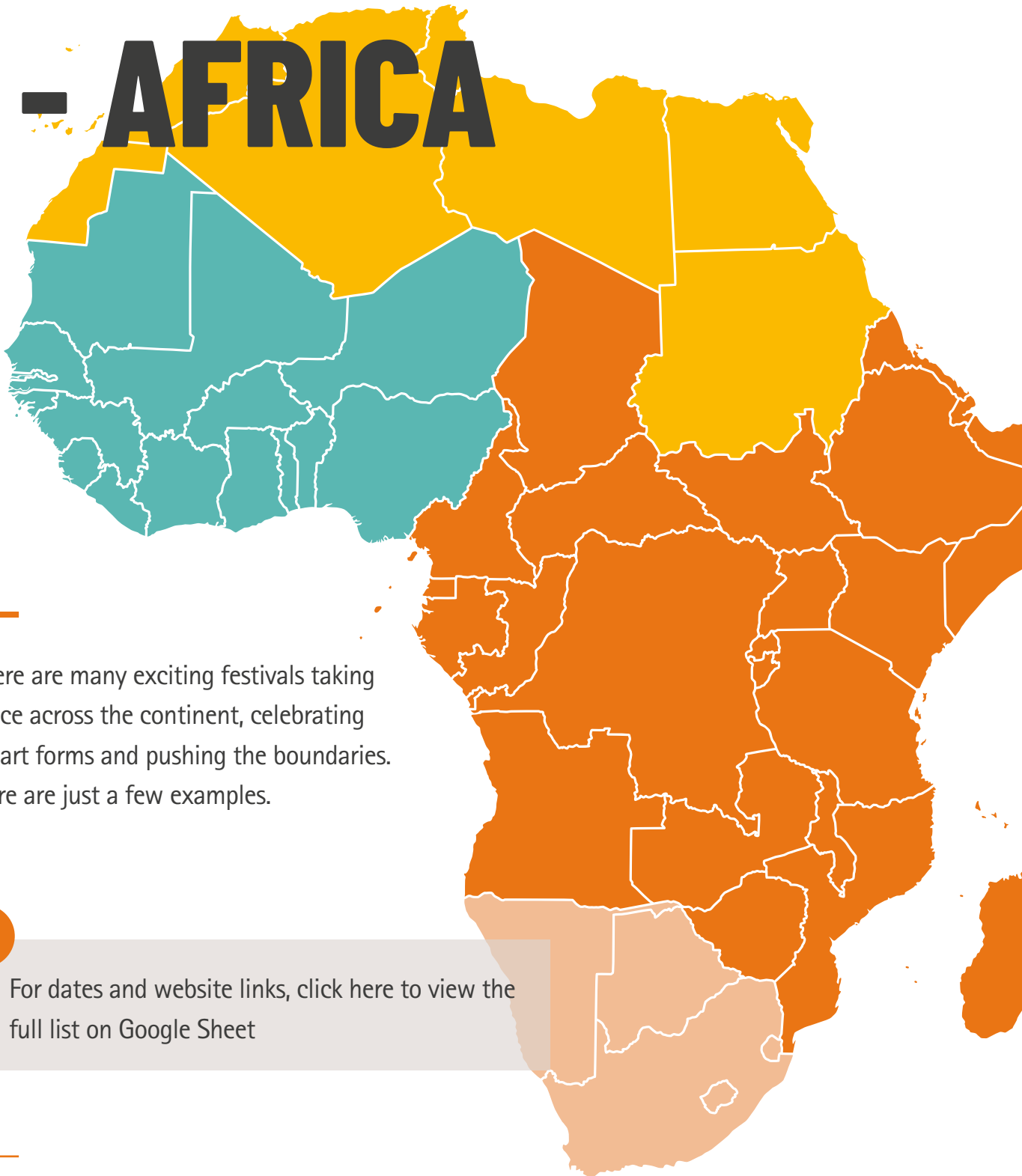


AFRICA WRITES AUDIENCE BREAKDOWN BY AGE 2013-2018



¹ Economic Evidence Base for London, GLA Economics (2016).

10/ MAPPING FESTIVALS - AFRICA



There are many exciting festivals taking place across the continent, celebrating all art forms and pushing the boundaries. Here are just a few examples.



For dates and website links, click here to view the full list on Google Sheet



Africa Nouveau - Nairobi, Kenya. Credit: Wanjira Gateri.

NORTH

- D – Caf, Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival (Multi-arts Egypt)
- Mawjoudin Queer Film Festival (Film, Tunisia)
- 1-54 Art Fair (Visual Arts, Morocco)

EAST & CENTRAL

- Addis Photo Festival (Visual Arts, Ethiopia)
- Bayimba Festival (Multi-arts, Uganda)
- Writivism Festival (Literature, Uganda)
- Karmakol festival (Fashion, Sudan)
- Sudan Independent Film Festival (Film, Sudan)
- Sauti za Busara (Music, Zanzibar)
- CollectiveRWFashion Week (Fashion, Rwanda)
- Africa Nouveau (Multi-arts, Kenya)
- Nairobi Design Week (Design Kenya)

SOUTH

- Comexposed CONVERGE (Zimbabwe)
- Design Indaba (South Africa)
- Fak'ugesi (South Africa)
- Maputo Fast Forward (Mozambique)
- Lusaka International Film Fest (Zambia)

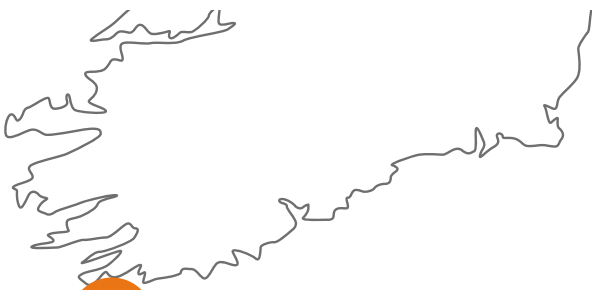
WEST

- AFRIFF (Film, Nigeria)
- Lagos Theatre Festival (Performance, Nigeria)
- Ake Book Festival (Literature, Nigeria)
- Art X Lagos (Visual Arts, Nigeria)
- Lagos Photo Festival (Visual Arts, Nigeria)
- Chale Wote (Multi-arts, Ghana)
- Asa Baako (Music, Ghana)
- Dakar Biennale (Visual Arts, Senegal)
- Freetown Music Festival (Music, Sierra Leone)

11/ MAPPING FESTIVALS - UK



Several festivals across the UK are programming contemporary African arts. Here we highlight a few, and hope others will start to programme more!



For dates and website links, click here to view the full list on Google Sheet



Africa Utopia People's Catwalk – London, UK. Image courtesy of Southbank Centre.

NORTH, MIDLANDS & SOUTH EAST

- Africa Oyé (Music, Liverpool)
- Let's Dance International Frontiers (Dance, Leicester)
- Cambridge African Film Festival (Film, Cambridge)

SOUTH WEST & WALES

- Afrika Eye (Film, Bristol)
- Africa Writes (Literature, Bristol)
- Watch Africa (Film, across Wales)

SCOTLAND

- Edinburgh Book Festival (Literature, Edinburgh)
- Celtic Connections (Music, Glasgow)
- Take Me Somewhere (Performance, Glasgow)
- Glasgow International (Visual Arts, Glasgow)
- Africa in Motion (Film, Edinburgh & Glasgow)

LONDON

- Africa Utopia (Multi-arts)
- Film Africa (Film)
- Africa Writes (Literature)
- Shubbak (Multi-arts)
- LIFT (Performance)
- Africa Centre Summer Festival (Multi-arts)

12/ ESSAY: CONTEMPORARY FESTIVALS IN SENEGAL

ESTRELLA SENDRA

Senegal has played a central role in the history of festivals in Africa and is today home to over a hundred cultural festivals and arts biennials.

Most contemporary festivals are led by individuals in Senegal who are continuously seeking formulas to ensure their sustainability where long-term institutional support is limited. A large number of festivals struggle to take place annually, whilst some fade out over time. This essay aims to explore the different factors that characterise contemporary festivals that have managed to achieve certain regularity, financial support, adequate infrastructure and popular recognition.

FESTIVALS AMONG FESTIVITIES

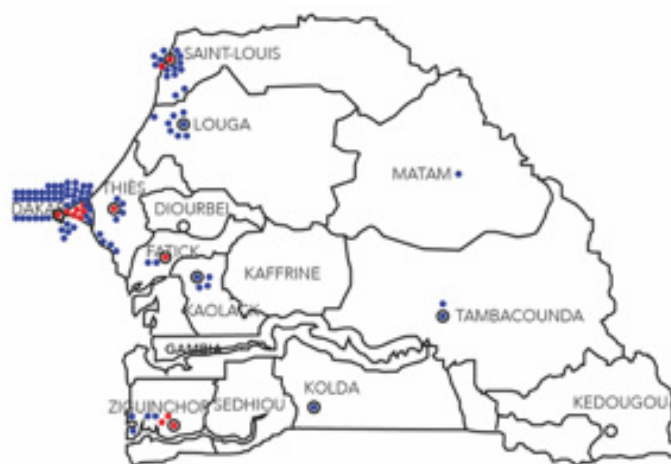
Senegal has a long history of festivities, including religious gatherings (such as the Gamou, Maggal, Korité, Tamxarit and Tabaski), navétanes (activities run by sports and cultural associations), and rituals. People often refer to the latter as “traditional festivities” (fêtes traditionnelles). Traditional festivities, which date back to pre-colonial times, are still practised today. They are intangible heritage to be preserved, known as *ada* and *cosaan*, the Wolof words for tradition. They differ from festivals in a variety of ways. For instance, most rituals involve the celebration of a transitional period for human beings or nature. By contrast, festivals showcase different forms of culture for different economic, social and cultural purposes.

Festival organisers suggest that festivals differ from traditional festivities in that the former are “modern” and involve different audience dynamics. However, a study of festivals in Senegal needs to acknowledge their historical roots especially as a large number of festivals are explicitly programmed around the idea of tradition; rituals are performed for local and international audiences in the context of festivals.

Traditional festivities can also shape the programming of festival activities and the spaces in which they are hosted. In contemporary festivals, there are often open-air spaces with performances for people living in the outskirts. Here, organisers arrange the space in a similar way to that of a *sabar taniber*, an evening of celebration accompanied by percussion. The familiarity with this spatial set-up encourages people to attend the wider festival activities.

PRE-2000 AND POST-2000 FESTIVALS: DIFFERENCES & CONTINUITY

Senegal's history of festivals can be divided in two periods: before and after the year 2000. Fieldwork and archival research helped identify the emergence of 14 festivals in Senegal from 1966 to 1999. From 2000 onwards, over 80 festivals have seen the light. Pre-2000 festivals, particularly in the first decades, were mainly the result of political initiatives. After 2000, there was a shift in the nature of programmers to



Map of the location of festivals in Senegal before and after 2000. Source: Elaborated by Estrella Sendra from data collection. Published in her thesis (2018, page 138).





Dancer from the Troupe Communale de Louga in Touba Seras during the 14th FESFOP in Louga. Credit: Estrella Sendra, 2014.

mainly cultural actors. This shift also led to a change in the festival locations. Pre-2000, festivals were mainly concentrated in the former colonial capitals of French West Africa, Saint-Louis and Dakar. Post-2000, festivals extend beyond these capitals towards different rural and urban regions. Dakar and Saint-Louis, however, remain home to some of the most renowned festivals in the country, as the map below shows.

The pre-2000 festival period is marked by an initial nationalism and pan-Africanism shaped by the independence movements of Senegal and other African countries. By contrast, post-2000 festivals are increasingly framed as international events, which are, at the same time, locally rooted becoming identifiers of the regions where they are hosted.

There is, nonetheless, certain continuity between the two periods. The First World Festival of Negro Arts held in 1966 – the first cultural event to self-define as a ‘festival’ in Senegal – has become a leitmotif continuously evoked in speeches at contemporary festivals. It was a historic international event that generated an unprecedented festiveness in the country,

a window to African culture programmed for the rest of the world. The First World Festival of Negro Arts, showcasing a wide range of arts both in cultural infrastructures and the streets, set the grounds for later festivalisation.

The inclusion of indoor and outdoor spaces was an early programming technique pre-2000. The distinction between an ‘IN’ and ‘OFF’ festival programme sought to widen access and spread the festiveness across a range of spaces. However, this decentralisation is much higher post-2000. This became evident in 2010, when Senegal hosted its Third World Festival of Negro Arts (FESMAN). In contrast to the 1966 edition, only celebrated in Dakar, FESMAN extended its “centre” to Saint-Louis and partnered with a wide range of other festivals in Senegal through a system of “labellisation” (labelling) to spread its reach.

There is also certain continuity pre-2000 and post-2000 in terms of boosting tourism and establishing international links. Whereas with pre-2000 festivals, this was mainly a political aim and the economic impact would be reflected mainly in Dakar, post-2000

festivals are often programmed with the aim of seeking both a cultural and economic impact for regions that are often disregarded by public institutions. With this historic context in mind, how does programming in contemporary festivals work? And what techniques are adopted by organisers to achieve continuity over time?

CREATIVE PROGRAMMING TECHNIQUES TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY

The long trajectory of a considerable number of festivals in Senegal helps us to identify some of the versatile and creative programming techniques adopted in search of sustainability. Some of the most remarkable techniques are: decentralisation, cross-arts programming, internationalisation as a fundraising strategy, charismatic directors and cross-collaboration.

DECENTRALISATION OF THE FESTIVAL PROGRAMME

In the 21st century, an increasing number of festivals have started to distinguish between an 'IN' and an 'OFF' festival programme. This is the case, for instance, with the Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain (Dak'Art), founded in 1990 as a state initiative, and the Festival Saint-Louis Jazz, founded in 1993 by a group of jazz aficionados, which have been increasingly decentralising their activities across a range of venues and outdoor spaces post-2000.

The 'IN' programme tends to be associated with a central location. This is often the space where the opening of the festival is hosted and where institutions, partners and politicians are seen. It is also the space that tends to see a larger international audience. Much of the local population, however, is unable to reach this space in part due to limitations with public transport particularly at night. In order to widen access, organisers produce the 'OFF' programme. Instead of making people travel to the festival, the festival travels to people. The outdoor 'OFF' spaces can be pop-up stages or large plastic surfaces covering the sandy floor, or smaller-scale infrastructures such as galleries, schools, cultural centres or museums. These vary significantly depending on whether festivals are located in urban or local areas.

Sometimes the 'IN' programme also implies an entry fee, which either disappears or decreases significantly in 'OFF' spaces.

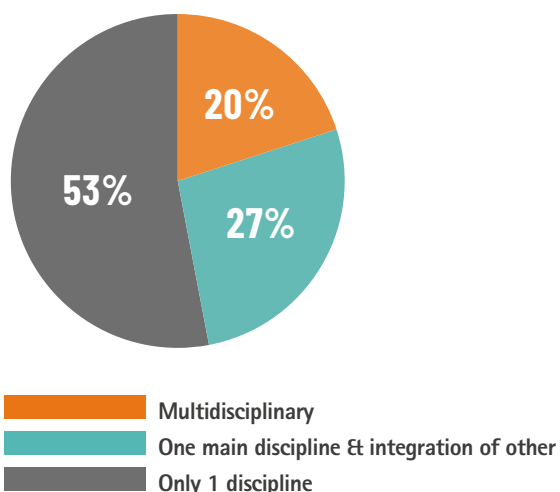
The festival programme varies in both spaces. The 'IN' tends to host international and renowned Senegalese artists such as musicians Marcus Miller, Cheikh Lô and Baaba Maal. The 'OFF' offers a platform for local talent encouraging the appropriation of the festival by local artists. This is evident in places like Louga, home to the Festival International de Folklore et de Percussion (FESFOP) founded in 2000. Whilst there are a large number of artists there, many have not had access to different art forms from other places. The festival then becomes an opportunity to experience live performances by unseen artists.

The audience dynamics also differ in these two spaces, even if they are not identified as 'IN' and 'OFF'. In the evening performances, the audience tends to be seated or quietly watching. In the afternoon performances in the neighbourhoods, there is a higher degree of interaction, while spontaneous dancing or different forms of engagement are welcomed. These performances rely on a certain degree of spontaneity, which is a key component of the environment.

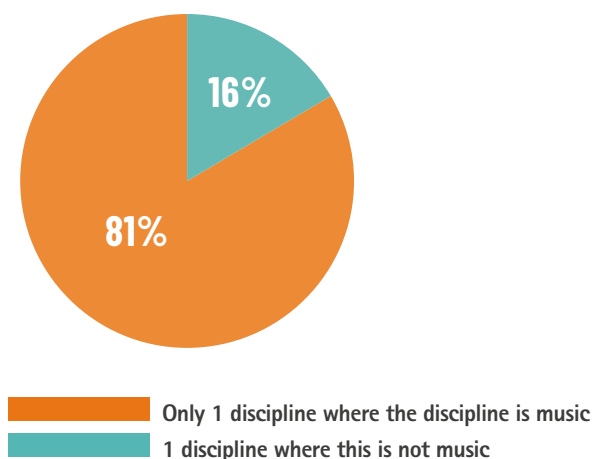
MULTI-DISCIPLINARITY AND CROSS-ARTS PROGRAMMING

Music is the main art form in festivals. It is considered the most popular form, able to gather large audiences. 81% of festivals with a single art form are music festivals. Other prominent art forms include dance (Festival Kaay Fecc, Festival Duo Solo Danse, among others); film (Festival International du Film de Quartier, Festival Image et Vie, Festival Moussa Invite, African Women Film Festival, Festival du Film Documentaire de Saint-Louis, Banlieue Film Festival, RECIDAK, among others); and theatre (Festival International Théâtre pour la Paix, Festival du Théâtre et du Rire, Festival des "danses sacrées", Festival Kaddu Yaraax, among others). When festivals are not music-based, music is often included in the programme to engage wider audiences.

FESTIVALS BY TYPOLOGY



UNI-DISCIPLINARY FESTIVALS



Estimated percentage of different kinds of festivals in Senegal.

Source: Elaborated by Luis Sendra with data collected by Estrella Sendra from April 2015 to September 2016.

Published in Estrella Sendra's thesis (2018, page 183).

INTERNATIONALISATION AS A FUNDRAISING STRATEGY

Irregular national institutional support has forced festival organisers in Senegal to find alternative funding sources. Current sources include private funders, mainly Senegalese artists with established international careers, international NGOs and cultural institutions or embassies such as the Institut Français (France), Aula Cervantes (Spain), Goethe Institut (Germany) and the British Council (UK). This latter support is, however, still quite limited and dependent on the economic situation of the country in question.

Funding from international sources has contributed to the increasing internationalisation of festivals in Senegal. It is thus the norm to see "international" attached to a festival's name. This does not necessarily mean audiences or artists in the programme are international. It rather reflects an aspiration to become international and secure funding. In Senegal, most festivals that have achieved sustainability and success are those conceived both locally and internationally. The local dimension is necessary to gain the support of the local population and become an identifier and source of pride for the hosting region. The international is strategically used to target funds and attract the

attention of international artists.

The international dimension is also seen as part of the "professionalisation" of festivals in Senegal. This is a resounding term among organisers who strive to be on a par with international festivals around the world. In Senegal, the internationalisation of artists is also considered a crucial factor for the professionalisation of one's art – that is, to be able to live as a full-time artist. This understanding of the international in relation to the professional shapes a festival's programme, which will often include professional workshops, colloquium events and other spaces for debate, networking and capacity-building.

The majority of festivals in Senegal are not just conceived of as cultural events but as projects for local development. This can be explicitly acknowledged in the festival name or aim such as in the Festival Image et Vie, the first film festival in Senegal, launched in 2001, with the remit of contributing to the "promotion of culture and sustainable development" for the well-being of the population; or it can be reflected through the inclusion of an activity, be it a workshop or forum on development.

The development framework often involves a focus on

tradition and heritage. Beyond fostering visibility to such tradition, and hence encouraging the claiming of a local identity, this focus serves to achieve endorsement by local and international political institutions whose agendas are concerned with heritage. Programming around the idea of heritage tends to be more predominant in rural regions. Some examples of these are FESFOP and the Festival International de Ziguinchor (Zig'Fest). This programming approach tends to be complemented

Festival 72H de hip-hop was founded by rapper Didier Awadi, who also co-organises the Festival de Film Ciné Droit Libre; FESTA 2H is organised by Amadou Fall Bâ and Matador. These directors are often from the local community but have international experience that is embodied in the festival conception.

Mamadou Konté (1948-2007) was born in Mali, but raised in Dakar. After three decades in Paris, he returned to Senegal. He launched Africa Fête in Paris in 1978,



Troupe Communale de Louga during the Opening of the 15th Festival International de Folklore et de Percussion (FESFOP) in Louga.
Credit: Estrella Sendra

by an understanding of 'the international' as a way of marketing the region as a tourist destination.

CHARISMATIC DIRECTORS

Since 2000, individuals have taken the lead in running festivals. Most long-lasting festivals are directed by inspirational leaders supported by local communities. They are often artists themselves, who have been involved in local youth movements and civil society organisations. FESFOP is directed by Babacar Sarr, who was involved in youth movements for decades;

which he then hosted annually in Senegal from 2001. Africa Fête, now managed by Rokhaya Daba Sarr, one of the women he trained, remains among Senegal's most popular music festivals. Similarly, filmmaker Abdel Aziz Boye (1953-2017), trained as a filmmaker for over two decades in Paris before returning to Dakar to start the first film school in the university and in the outskirts. He founded the Banlieue Film Festival to showcase work by the young people he trained as well as work by established filmmakers. Another example is internationally-acclaimed musician Baaba Maal, who

founded the Festival Blues du Fleuve in his native region of Podor (in Saint-Louis) in 2006.

CROSS-COLLABORATIONS

An important way for festivals to achieve sustainability is by establishing connections and collaboration with other festivals. Cross-collaboration allows festivals to share human and technical resources. More importantly, forging connections emphasises the militant dimension of culture, that is, the collective engagement with culture as a tool for social transformation and as a form of claiming power. The degree of cross-collaboration in the Senegalese festival scene is remarkable. Two of the most common kinds are the participation of festival actors (presenters, programmers, organisers, artists, photographers) in different festivals and the establishment of links with other Senegalese festivals or those abroad showcasing the same art form.

One of the most illustrative examples is FESTA 2H, marketed as an international festival of hip-hop and urban culture. Celebrated annually since 2006, FESTA 2H is held across different venues, populated by local and international audiences, and showcases Senegalese and international artists. It is managed by Amadou Fall Bâ and the Africulturban association, based in Pikine on the outskirts of Dakar, and led by rapper Matador. During the festival, the community of rappers and hip-hop aficionados gather. Cultural actors from different festivals are seen at FESTA 2H, such as actress Mamyto Nakamura, who is often a presenter in urban cultural

festivals, Hamedine Fall, co-founder of the Festival Njaambur Hip-Hop, and Ina Thiam, director of African Women Week. FESTA 2H also engages in international cross-collaboration through a partner festival based in Mauritania named Assalamalekoum.

In rural areas, collaboration is almost a prerequisite for smaller festivals, which need the endorsement from larger festivals to be sustainable. Since FESFOP's inception, for example, an increasing number of festivals have been launched in the same region. They operate as partners of FESFOP, such as the Festival du Théâtre Scolaire et Primaire en Français (FESTEPP), the Festival Njaambur Hip Hop, and FIRPI. Smaller-scale festivals detached from FESFOP find it more difficult to reach large audiences.

The festival scene in Senegal is as rich as it is dynamic and uncertain. This is precisely what leads to innovative and creative programming techniques, all of which contribute to the sustainability of festivals that are both supported or seeking the support of local, national and international communities.

**This article stems from research for the PhD thesis 'Two-tier festivals in Senegal between the local and the international'. Research conducted from October 2015 to September 2016 involved fieldwork, ethnography and archival research as well as 58 formal interviews and 20 semi-informal interviews with festival organisers, cultural actors, artists, journalists and audiences.*



ESTRELLA SENDRA

Dr Estrella Sendra completed her PhD in the Department of African Languages and Cultures at SOAS, University of London, in 2018. She works as Teaching Fellow in Global Media Industries at Winchester School of Art (University of Southampton).



Heather Benson and Nadia Denton at consultative workshop for this report – London, UK. Credit: Caitlin Pearson.

13/ WHAT MAKES A SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION?

We asked our interviewees, leading arts professionals and creatives, for their top tips for successful international collaborations. The key themes that arose were communication, mutuality, transparency, building trust and understanding, and recognising boundaries. You can read their full interviews (linked on page 48) to find out more about how these people have actioned their advice in collaborative projects. Think about what your own checklist would include when developing an international collaboration.

DEBO AMON

- Understand why you're doing it and what you're trying to get out of it.
- Know what is it you want to achieve, and what everyone involved is happy to work towards.
- Establish how you are going to do it, the budget and time commitment.

LINDA MUKANGOGA

- You all have to be committed to the overall goal and it should be something you do naturally.
- The project has to be bigger than you, you can't be selfish: you have to want everyone to win.

NADIA DENTON

- Holistic Relationship Building: form a relationship with the artist/s beyond simply showcasing their work.
- Setting Agreed Expectations: all parties need to be transparent about their respective contributions and expectations to avoid disappointment.
- Creating Win-Win Scenarios: trying to ensure at all times that all parties can benefit in equal measure.

WANURI KAHIU

- Trust the person you're working with, and respect them as an artist
- Listen and be open. It doesn't hurt to be silent, to truly just listen and hear everything with an open mind
- Document the early stages of the creation process, i.e. ownership and responsibilities.

AIDA HOLLY-NAMBI

- Active listening. If someone is pitching an idea, I want to say it back to them so I can make sure I heard what they said
- Memorandums of understanding and collaboration. Write things down and sign them off. We are human and we can get things wrong and end up in a mess if there is no clarity.

LOLA SHONEYIN

- Say what you can contribute and what you can give, if your message is lost then you're screwed
- Develop a mutual understanding that you can build on
- Brace yourself. Some things may go wrong, but you must still be able to operate and deliver the project

OLUMIDE POPOOLA

- Trust your instincts
- Be really upfront about what you want, what you're willing and not willing to do. Not just workload, but also in terms of political questions, and who you're willing to work with.

NOLAN STEVENS

- Human-to-human research: To bridge gaps in international collaborations, you must really get to know the artists you are collaborating with to get a holistic idea of who they are and understand their lived realities, looking at the work behind the art work.

KATE WALLIS

- Talk on Skype about expectations, drivers and ambitions. Regular dialogue is essential for productive long-distance working relationships.
- Think innovatively in using shared modes of communication like online project management tools of Whatsapp.
- Understand and allow for the economic realities of your partners to avoid damaging assumptions about giving time, splitting costs and making payments.

MOLEMO MOILOA

- Select artists very specifically for what the project and collaborators need.
- Work with more Brits of Colour, this really shifts the assumptions and stereotypes that South Africans have of the UK.

TOURIA EL GLAOUI

- Being open-minded, prepared to learn and support in capacities you may not have anticipated so you can be successfully adaptable, responsive and sustainable.

14/ PROGRAMMING BEST PRACTICE

Arts programming and curation is an art in itself. From audience-led programming to curating from an original piece or idea, there are a myriad of ways in which to present contemporary African work and these need not be mutually exclusive. We asked our interviewees about their different curatorial processes and approaches to bring to life high quality contemporary African arts and culture programmes in the UK, Africa and Europe. Below are a few of their insightful quotes, which exemplify best practice programming of contemporary African arts and culture. You may read the full interviews from page 48.

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It's important to ask questions like - is there a group of artists or bodies of work from different artists that are kindred spirits? How does an artist's work sit with the other artists being considered? Will this help to open a mental space? By programming this, what are we able to make possible or available to the audiences and to the creators?

MUTHONI NDONGA
Co-founder, Africa Nouveau Festival,
Nairobi, Kenya

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I really push the artists I work with to look at the socio-political impact of the work they're making.

NOLAN STEVENS
Artist & Curator, South Africa

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“

In the mainstream, African artists often get forgotten or get put on identity panels. For the festival it was very important that people could talk about their art form, their process, their actual work and not just identity politics. Underrepresentation is still an issue and that's why we have to do these initiatives. African artists need to be highlighted.

OLUMIDE POPOOLA
2018 Curator, Writing in Migration
literature festival, Berlin, Germany

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LITERATURE FESTIVALS IN THE UK

Making sure programming represents the diversity of African arts - across languages, geographies, gender and sexuality. Making sure the programme represents contemporary African arts which is being valued and produced from the continent itself - not just by UK publishers or by African diaspora artists. In particular, ensuring writers published by Africa-based publishers are visible and celebrated.

KATE WALLIS
Programmer, UK

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“

I am interested in conversations that really take on questions of our time and contribute to the debate in ways that are localised but have a wider relevance.

MOLEMO MOILOA

Director, Johannesburg Contemporary Art Foundation, South Africa

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“

We look at what is currently going on and being talked about in the zeitgeist and on social media. We look at what is happening on the continent, but also in the wider world to see if particular themes are coming up. From there, we decide what we want to focus on and decide on a theme and narrative for the festival to bring coherence to the programme. Coherence is something that you need to tell the story of a festival, especially where it is cross-art form and across several days.

DEBO AMON

Programmer, Africa Utopia,
Southbank Centre, London, UK

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I'm keen to feature contemporary creators but I think it's important to support people in developing a sense of history, it's important to take the audience on the journey.

LOLA SHONEYIN

Founder, Aké Arts and Book Festival
Abeokuta, Nigeria

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As director of East African Nights of Tolerance festival, I want to programme original plays that people can understand and connect to. I look for original, locally inspired pieces with a contemporary format.

WESLEY RUZIBIZA

Founding Director, East African Nights
of Tolerance, Contemporary Dance
Showcase in Kigali, Rwanda

”

“

We have a very experienced selection committee that analyses every proposal. Principal to our criteria is of course quality, but equally, are the galleries and Special Projects responsive to their present conditions? Do they operate beyond their direct locality? These are important to us because we want to encourage the development of critical discourse. We want the fair to be a space where there is insightful and sincere engagement, rather than a space focused solely on the selling of work.

TOURIA EL GLAUI

Founding Director
1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair
London, New York, Marrakech

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Barbés Rochechouart – Paris, France. Credit: Johny Pitts.

15/ **ESSAY:** HOW TO WATER A CONCRETE ROSE

JOHNY PITTS

In 1948, the same year he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, T.S. Eliot penned his influential work of nonfiction, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*, in which he asserted:

“What is culture? Culture may be described simply as that which makes life worth living. And it is what justifies other peoples and other generations in saying, when they contemplate the remains and the influence of an extinct civilisation, that it was worthwhile for that civilisation to have existed.”

Eliot encompassed a view – suffused with colonial patrimony – that much of the West believed to be true at that time. That culture was conjured at the top of society and that it was the noble duty of the upper classes, the rich and the wealthy, to extol and disseminate its virtues to the lowly masses, the poor

and uncultured.

And yet TS Eliot’s own definition of culture – that culture is something that makes life worth living and is evidence of a worthwhile people – didn’t emerge from the top, for me, and was defined more by the likes of Tupac Shakur than TS Eliot. Shakur took part in the long African American tradition that explores the beauty of a culture that emerges from the crevices. We can see it in a lineage spanning Ben E King’s ‘A Rose in Spanish Harlem’, through Aretha Franklin’s ‘A Rose is still a Rose’ and Shakur’s poem ‘The Rose that Grew from Concrete’ – that is, the paying of attention to and elevating of moments of creative expression, wisdom and beauty that manage to bloom despite the worst conditions. Even if the form is imperfect, and the result is ephemeral, this African American narrative asks us to marvel at the tenacity of the concrete rose, in the

same way Japanese tea masters praise imperfections with their philosophy Wabi Sabi – beauty in transience and imperfection.

The landscape – full of concrete roses – that sustained my childhood as someone born black, northern and working class in Margaret Thatcher's Britain was constructed by what academics might call 'subaltern geographical knowledges', or what I've come to describe as 'The B-Side'. In 90s British urban music culture ('urban' here neither pejorative nor reductive, but geographically accurate) very often underground heads would buy (or bootleg) "12 LPs for the unofficial remixes or 'dubs' offered as the B-side of a release rather than their official radio-friendly A-side selected by the label.

This notion of the unofficial, un-promoted, but often more interesting and enriching alternative to the official, is something that can be applied to the urban geography that surrounded the music – high-rise estates doubling as pirate radio stations and concrete canvases for graffiti artists, barbershops selling bootleg mixtapes, terrace houses as blues party venues, hinterland topographies setting the stage for illegal street parties. These were the spaces that contained the pulse of black life in Sheffield, the city where I was born and raised, where you could find the type of unglamorous multicultural solidarity that was antithetical to the pretty, co-opted, corporate multiculti of New Labour; organic, clandestine meeting spaces for those of us living on the B-side of Britain with little chance of ever being documented properly, or looked at as being of cultural value. Unless, of course, we integrated and disappeared into a system that subjugated us, or presented ourselves as harmless subjects to be commodified.¹

By the time I'd turned twenty five there were no 'remains' of this culture for me left to contemplate, the civilisation I'd taken part in already seemed extinct, because the landscape of my childhood had vanished – my first youth club, housed in a brutalist estate, the first club I'd ever danced in, my first place of work, the

building that housed my lifelong barbers, the market where I have some of the earliest memories of my grandma, the street that was used for a local, unofficial street carnival and the building that housed the shebeen where my mother and father met – it had all been vanquished by the city council or property developers, with scant evidence that it had ever existed. No blue plaque memorials, awarding winning photo essays or prize winning works of fiction scribed it into national mythology or the annals of history, and it resulted in a splintering of the black community and a spate of devastating inter-area post-code wars. These battles for territory weren't always drug related, but often ended in a murder.

Landscapes are embedded with lived experiences, cities are stone books and when physical geographies are razed, the memories attached to them dissipate, black knowledge in danger of being lost with every generation, leaving younger members of the community with the impression that black Europe is a place without history, geography or networks.

It became very clear to me that black culture and the physical relics that held it were, especially in Europe, as ephemeral as the fading graffiti tags on the walls of council estates, crushed by neoliberal capitalism or destroyed by assimilation (as an example I'm thinking here about how the BBC's Black music station 1xtra took the energy and DJs of pirate radio stations – the B-side – and neutered them with official BBC playlists and middle class executives).

I began to realise that my great great great grandkids, unless something truly catastrophic were to happen and perhaps, as we've seen with the Notre Dame Cathedral, even then, will be able to stand on Waterloo Bridge and look at the same Saint Paul's Cathedral or Houses of Parliament and be bombarded with all they suggest, a certain cultural landscape that will be preserved forever. If my own psychic landscape was disappearing, I began to wonder about other histories – both working class and

¹ Paul Gilroy speaks of leaving the UK to lecture in the US for five years in the 90s, returning to New Labour's Britain and noticing how 'A whole generation of activists – my generation – seem to be management consultants!' Petra Tournay-Theodotou, *Coming unmoored: Old and new ways of belonging* in Caryl Phillips's *In the Falling Snow*, *Journal of postcolonial writing*, volume 52, 2016



Images left to right: Brixton - London, UK; Patrice Lumumba University - Moscow, Russia; Cova da Moura - Lisbon, Portugal. Credit: Johnny Pitts.

black, and how they might be unearthed outside of the official discourse of formal education, or the authorised methodologies of the academy, or the hegemony of the powerful African American narrative. Unlike America, Europe never had a large-scale Civil Rights movement, so black communities haven't collectively woven themselves into the mythology of the continent in the same way Africa Americans have in North America. There is also the complexity of colonisation, and across the entire continent I found the legacy of the white gaze was often still embedded in the cultural disjuncture among black communities. As Walter Rodney once wrote; "When an African abuses an Indian he repeats all that the white men said about Indian indentured "coolies": and in turn the Indian has borrowed from the whites the stereotype of the "lazy nigger" to apply to the African beside him. It is as though no black man can see another black man except by looking through a white person". Martinicans have traditionally considered themselves more French because they are 'Caribbeans', and those from Cape Verde were traditionally favoured by Salazar so often feel closer to Portugal than, say, Angolans. But as Aimé Césaire, Leon Damas and Leopold Senghor did with 'Negritude', blackness can play the role

of a connective bond operating outside of old colonial hierarchies. This is why I find solace in the notion of 'blackness' as a construct - as a potential linkage that transcends cultures yet connects oppressed groups.

I wanted to find a way to arrive at this black Europe from the street up - engage with and document knowledges and histories from equally ephemeral landscapes as the one I grew up in, and present a dialogue between disparate communities grappling with similar issues. It was through this one word, Afropean, that I found my portal.

Here was a liminal, connective space in Europe, through which there was an opportunity for a translocal network of knowledge to emerge; the survivors of the Bijlmer disaster in Amsterdam in the 90s, in which a number of 'undocumented immigrants' were killed when a plane careered into a tower block, had much to speak about with the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire in London, for instance. It wasn't necessarily the buildings, but the narratives and experiences that could be preserved, and much of my work has involved an attempt at finding a terrain between officialdom and local networks, to respect the organic, discrete nature



of the network whilst attempting to document and sustain it. I originally set out looking for landscapes, but then I found locals, the map of Black Europe constantly shifting as it was defined rather by casual encounters or informal hook-ups than recognised organisations and institutions that are reliant on government subsidies and thus have their political and cultural goals framed and staged by an official body, sometimes resulting in the reduction of black culture into trite celebrations of saris, samosas and steel drums.

This is what Frantz Fanon was addressing when he wrote that Europe had "woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes [and] stories . . ." The key wasn't simply to try to get Europe to officially recognise the myriad lives and experiences of black Europeans, but to get black Europeans to recognise each other's.

When that immediate environment is constantly under threat, a metaphysical geography or locality must be constructed. Some of the places I visited on my itinerary for my book are already defunct; Rico's Records in Amsterdam's Biljmer is gone, so is Cafe MultiKulti in Stockholm, and Gallerie Lumieres D'Afrique in Brussels, and James Baldwin's house in Saint Paul de Vence, already derelict when I visited, is being redeveloped

into private luxury apartments. In some cases entire areas have been demolished, such as the 'baracca' Santa Filomena in Lisbon. The Afropean Now Festival in Austria is no more, neither is the Afropean festival in Italy or Music in the Sun in Sheffield. It was important for me to preserve the legacy of these places and use the book format as a way to present black Europe's myriad communities in a kind of disparate dialogue, which will serve into a larger ecosystem for black communities to engage with and build upon, providing a moveable topography, a metaphysical map and an entrance into black European history outside of the academy, lurking in the details of everyday life.

The next phase of my project is the development of a user generated online digital map, where community organisers, artists and individuals can input information and GPS data into a format that can change as the black community does, and which will be embedded with podcasts in each city sharing oral histories, so that whether or not the physical geography of black Europe is crushed, there will always be a connective space online. A place where black people can be anchored to friendships, shared histories and communities if not to land or nations - the things that often swallow them up or utterly rejected them.

I found that the most successful and long lasting organisations were those already attempting to respect the local whilst making external connections, keeping one foot inside and one foot outside of the area. When I visited the Black Archives in Amsterdam, for instance, they had begun producing information in English in order to find solidarity with other groups, and were piecing together evidence of the use of Gollywogs across Europe in order to combat the local issue of 'Black Pete', a diminutive character attached to Dutch Folklore and based on a North African servant. They are housed in Ons Suriname, the oldest black organisation in the Netherlands, which has survived because it doesn't overly rely upon government subsidies.

YAAM (Young African Artist's Market) in Berlin, perhaps the most important multicultural hub in Germany, is constantly under threat of closure and has been relocated a number of times, surviving due to volunteers and the respect it has earned from the local community, whilst German chancellor Angela Merkel went on record to state that 'multiculturalism has utterly failed'. In Paris, money circulates The African market hub of Matongé locally 12 times before leaving, so it too is self-sustaining. In Cova da Moura, a 'baracca' on the hinterlands of Lisbon, the Associao Cultural de Juventude, an award-winning community centre and organisation set up by locals in the 1980s originally as a library for children and a centre for women's rights, has over the years produced a local gazette, secured funds

for a dedicated building, founded a kindergarten for working parents, a citizen's advice bureau, a recording studio and used what it called 'participatory citizenship' to improve and maintain sanitary infrastructure. The journalist Doug Saunders has called places such as Cova da Moura 'Arrival Cities'; immigrant enclaves on the edges of big cities and states. If left to its own devices, and deprived of access to the larger political system, the arrival city will generate a defensive politics of its own. In Brazil, it took the shape of the drug gang. In Mumbai, it is Hindu nationalism...The arrival city wants to be normal, wants to be included. If it is given the resources to do so, it will flourish; without them, it is likely to explode. The arrival city is not a static, fixed place. Rather, it is a dynamic location headed on a trajectory. It is within our power to decide where that trajectory leads". The trajectory cannot be led from outside. The organisations I mentioned are in many ways mini arrival cities, liminal spaces of transition on the front line of the promotion of goodwill among races and cultures across the continent - crucial if Europe wants fully functional societies.

If funding is granted, it must not be used to supplant the metaphorical 'concrete rose' for something prettier or in line with traditional 'authorised' top-down standards, but rather to nurture, enrich and empower the form and logic of what has already grown heroically and organically from its own roots.



JOHNY PITTS

Johnny Pitts is a writer, photographer, and broadcast journalist. He has received various awards for his work exploring Afro-European identity, including a Decibel Penguin Prize and an ENAR (European Network Against Racism) award. Johnny founded and curates the online journal Afropean.com and is the author of Afropean: Notes from Black Europe (Allen Lane, 2019).

Courtyard Commission by Ibrahim El Salahi for 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair, London, UK, 2018.



16/ INTERVIEWS



AIDA HOLLY-NAMBI
Director of Arts & Culture,
None on Record



DEBO AMON
Programmer, Southbank Centre



EVAN IFEKOYA
Artist



KATE WALLIS
Lecturer in Global Literatures,
University of Exeter



LINDA MUKANGOGA
Founder & Creative Director,
Haute Baso



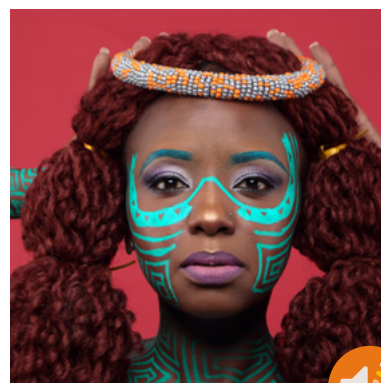
LOLA SHONEYIN
Writer & Artistic Director,
Aké Arts and Book Festival



MERCY NABIRYE
Head of Dance of the African
Diaspora (DAD), One Dance UK



MOLEMO MOILOA
Deputy Director, Johannesburg
Contemporary Art Foundation



MUTHONI NDONGA
Artist & Co-Founder,
Africa Nouveau



NADIA DENTON
Writer & Curator



NOLAN STEVENS
Artist & Writer



OLUMIDE POPOOLA
Writer & Curator, Writing in Migration Festival 2018



PATRICK SAM
Chair, The National Arts Council of Namibia



TOURIA EL GLAOU
Founding Director, 1-54 African Art Fair



WANURI KAHU
Filmmaker



WESLEY RUZIBIZA
Founding Director, East African Nights of Tolerance

AIDA HOLLY-NAMBI

DIRECTOR OF ARTS & CULTURE, NONE ON RECORD

Interviewed in person by Caitlin Pearson



1. Please introduce yourself, what is your background working in the arts? What is your motivation?

I am the director of arts and culture for an Africa-wide LGBT digital media organisation called None on Record. In that capacity, I programme and support working conversations around LGBT African artistic expressions. That means putting on concerts, film screenings and producing a podcast. That is one hat that I wear. My background is that I come from the world of theatre. I was a theatre director, an actress and producer for a little while, mostly during my student days. I have a PhD in theatre performance studies. My dissertation was on the 60's and 70's East African and African American cultural politics performance.

I am Ugandan but I was born and raised in Nairobi, Kenya. After I concluded my PHD in the States in 2013, I moved to Uganda and there I wore various hats. I became part of the Salooni collective – a multidisciplinary art project. I was the curator of a multi-disciplinary space called Maisha Garden which is the brainchild and project of a film maker called Mira Nair who also founded the Maisha film lab, a film school project in Uganda. I was programming events there, then moved to Kenya to work for Docubox an East African Documentary Film Fund. I was working as an outreach director for an event they had called Good Pitch Kenya, which introduced me to a fabulous group of people based in the UK, from an organisation called Doc Society. I then went to London to work for them as outreach director for Good Pitch Europe 2017. When I finished that project, I came back and started working for name None on Record.

My motivation changes all the time. I would say however, that it is very important for me to find ways to support impactful work and to support the work of creative Africans wherever in the world they are doing it. 'Impact' is subjective, but I think all of us on the planet are aspiring toward some version of being free. If there are Africans working toward the freeing of other people, that is exactly what I am trying to support.

2. What does 'contemporary African arts' mean to you?

It means Africans who are making stuff happen now.

3. Why is programming contemporary African arts important?

I think that the whole world is stuck in a brain jam when it comes to thinking about Africa. People are trying to keep it African arts stuck and stagnant in old ideas, in a sort of old mythical way. It is rarely framed in a contemporary context that encompasses the people and the culture of the moment. It is critical to have voices of creativity that are pushing boundaries today, that are going to be a true representation, provide greater insight and tap into the expression and the genius and talent of African artists.

4. Why was it important to be a part of the [AfroQueer podcast](#)?

I feel like None on Record (that produces the podcast) is an organisation that is pushing the boundaries. It is freeing up people and is creating spaces, images and representations that I wish I had when I was growing up. It is so important for there to be more than just the voices of dissent, especially when it comes to representations of queerness in Africa. There is a global discourse that gives lot of airtime to voices of bigotry and homophobia, yet there are people making, doing, thinking, living, breathing and thriving inside this space that is completely to the left of the nay-sayers.

The podcast was one of the things we came up with together and we felt like it was one of the best forms to give access to African queer stories safely and anonymously, in order to reach audiences across the continent. It is much harder to put on screenings or concerts for example.

Podcasts are so beautiful because you can do other things whilst you listen; it is a kind of half commitment. You can commit your brain but you can also drive and cook. And audio can really bring you close. If you have a visual, you can almost imagine a distance between you and the person you are seeing, especially if you do not look like them. There is something about hearing someone's voice that can bring them closer to you better than seeing them on screen would.

5. Could you share your process in sourcing stories that document the hopes, struggles, joy and challenges of LGBTQI+ Africa?

For the production, we have quite an intricate process from pitch to production of each episode. When a person comes up with an idea for an episode, they do the initial research. We then call for an editorial story meeting where it is then pitched to the group. We meet, and bring up ideas and angles they could take and they go way and do more research. They then get the chance to come back and pitch again. We then decide if it is a good story or if it should be cut.

If it is a good story, we then compile a research document where we list all the sources and all the angles. We then identify people to be interviewed and then set these up, conduct and transcribe them. The producer reports back with the first draft of the story, and it is edited by the group and checked for clarity. After the final script, it goes to a sound edit to arrange the sections and clarify anything that needs more explanation. It takes weeks and weeks until there is anything to listen to.

What makes a story compelling is if its goes somewhere, if there's a journey or something surprising or unexpected. It's compelling if it reveals something nuance and very human, about the queer African experience.

Whether its African tabloids or pity party news from the west, representation of queer Africans is a mess. It is important for us that we when we tell stories, that as much as possible it is narrative-driven, it is driven by the characters - their experience, perspectives and voice - and not through the lens of someone's gaze over their lives.

6. Can you speak about the kind of stories featured in the AfroQueer podcast?

We want to have a range of issues and a range of tone. There is some difficult stuff, but it is also important that there is joy and overcoming of adversity. We have geographical ambitions and a lot of listeners in West Africa, South Africa and the diaspora. We want to cover different stories across Africa and the diaspora, not just Kenya.

We are curious and gain inspiration from amazing work in different countries, and the diaspora (because that is important too). I am Kenyan, Ugandan, Senegalese, American...our lives are not restricted, and our universe of creative expression exists in many different places. Some people had to flee for reasons that made sense to them, and there are people who have just gone and found freedom and survival somewhere else. That is fine, they are Africans who have stories that still need telling.

7. What was the motivation for providing the following definition on the podcast's website? 'AFRO: AFRICAN. OF/OR CONNECTED WITH AFRICA' and 'QUEER: REJECTION OF NORMATIVE DEFINITIONS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY'

Queer is not a word that everybody knows in Kenya, for example. Some activists might know the term and its use, however everyone has their own way of referring to 'queerness' and to the spectrum of identities that are possible. We like 'queer' because it is all-encompassing and non-exclusive in its ambitions as a word, especially with the way that it has been reclaimed in the past decade.

8. What have been your audience development strategies? What worked and what didn't?

We do get a lot of interaction from social media. Our social media manager, Rachel Wamoto talks to people all the time and people comment on our posts. We also like to be a trusted platform where people go to hear about different things: not just thing we are producing but also things we are fans of.

We are going to start doing collaborations, it is in the works and I cannot reveal who they are at this time. We will be cross-posting episodes to encourage audiences to learn about each different platform.

9. What three things would you recommend when going into a collaborative project?

- Listening is very important, active listening could also be useful. If someone is pitching an idea for example, I want to say it back to them so I can make sure I heard what they said.
- Memorandums of understanding and collaboration, it is key to have clear terms of expectations in writing as a reference point. We are human and we can get things wrong and end up in a mess with no clarity. It is key to write things down and have them signed off.
- When walking into collaboration it is key to know what you are bringing to the table, and have a sense of what you want other people to bring to the table. This means then you can be confident, and know when you can speak up when you know you have something to offer. It also means you can be persistent when you know someone has a skills set so you can harness and put it toward the collaboration.

10. 1. What contemporary African artists are you most inspired by and why?

Amizero – the Kigali based contemporary dance company directed by Wesley Ruzibiza

In Nairobi: The Nest Collective, Muthoni Drummer Queen and To Revolutionary Type Love

Ugandan contemporary visual artists like Xenson and Ian Mwesiga

DEBO AMON

PROGRAMMER, SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Interviewed in person by Marcelle Mateki Akita



1. Please introduce yourself

I'm a literature programmer at the Southbank Centre. I work on general, year-round literature programme, and also on our talks and debates programmes for festivals like WoW (Women of the World), London Literature Festival, Bold Festival and Africa Utopia.

2. Tell us about Africa Utopia and your involvement in the annual cross-arts festival, held at Southbank Centre in London.

Africa Utopia started in 2012, and since then it has brought African artists, ideas and concerns to the UK public. My involvement in 2018 was in the literature programme, which has always been an important strand in the festival. Ranging from fiction, prose, and poetry. Conversations ranging from China's involvement in Africa and 'lighter' topics like like what does African love look like? or envisioning queer futures in life and in literature. The idea is about giving a megaphone to African people.

3. How would you define 'contemporary African arts'?

I would define it in the same way I would define contemporary art. Contemporary art is just art that responds or is concerned with the now. For me, contemporary African art is just any African art made by African people, whether the diaspora or not. There is no particular topic that they should be talking about or just responding to.

4. Is programming contemporary African arts important?

Yes, I do think it's important. I think art works in two ways: it connects with people, and it shows us what the artists is thinking or feeling. Artists can channel something beyond themselves; they can channel the zeitgeist, where culture is and where it's going, what a wider group may be experiencing.

The artistic landscape would be poorer if it did not have the perspective of Africans. Art also has particular value relating to the way in which we tell history: beyond the factual dates to moods and sentiments, how people loved at a certain point.

Contemporary African art happening in Africa is always going to happen, but programming it outside, in the UK is important. I think it's a dangerous thing when people become insular and don't see other people and see themselves in other people. Not to have contemporary African art here would make the artistic landscape poorer. We need to see the

influences of Western art on African art, and African art on Western art, which has happened since time immemorial and it continues to. Not being able to see this influence makes the artistic discourse insular. In terms of channelling the views of other people it is also important, the humanity of other people is important. If we're going to programme African art it has to be a plethora rather than monolithic, and this only happens by showing a lot of different artists of African heritage.

5. Going from your definition of 'contemporary African arts', then what criteria and factors come into play when programming?

With Africa Utopia, Hannah (Poole) and I talked about what is currently going on, what we have previously seen done before, and being talked about in the zeitgeist and on social media. We look at what is happening on the continent but also in the wider world to see if particular themes are coming up.

From there we decide what we want to focus on: what would make sense and be coherent. Coherence is something that you need to tell the story of a festival, especially where it is cross-art form and across several days. We come up with a theme and narrative for the festival. This year we decided to look at PanAfricanism which seems to be having a revival in recent years. I guess this year it felt right because of Black Panther, the vision of the alternative history and world reaching such a huge audience, of an African country that was able to form and progress without colonialism.

A larger part was talking about Afrofuturism and re-contextualising the idea of futurism. Who are the writers and speakers currently tackling that? Black Panther was made by an African American writer and director within the Hollywood stable, but there are many African artists on the continent, film makers specifically, that are also making work with a similar sensibility but also who speak for themselves.

We invited Wanuri Kahiu who has directed a film called Rafiki, which did really well at Cannes festival, actually the first Kenyan film at that festival. She's part of a collective or movement called Afrobubblegum, which is all about a positive future for Africans - in films specifically but also arts in general. Afrobubblegum has its own test, in terms of whether the film can be seen as passable representation for women and African people. With this test in mind, it's an interesting way to watch and rethink about this motif that we keep seeing but that really isn't positive about Africa. It's about not using Hollywood or a particular type of blackness, but allowing people to speak for themselves.

6. Are there other Africa focused or inspired events/festivals in the UK and/or in Africa that you draw inspiration from when programming for Africa Utopia?

Africa Writes is definitely one. It's great to see what books are currently out and it's encouraging to see that's grown and to show there's an appetite. Writivism in Uganda. Afropunk is interesting. It's a music festival but it's still interesting to look at at the type of artist they programme. It tries to mould itself to the cities it's in. In general, happening in the music is quite a good gauge of where popular culture is, outside of arts intelligentsia. Solange's album and music and Lemonade, they came before Black Panther and are engaging in a lot of the conversations about what it means to be part of the black diaspora.

7. Are there specific challenges have you encountered in programming contemporary African arts in the UK? Have you experienced issues with visa applications?

Yes, visas are always an issue for two reasons. It's both the risk of "will they get a visa or will it be denied?" but it's also just the expense of the application. The cost of bringing someone over, the cost of accommodation. It always factors in.

Another issue is levels of exposure, which with music is interesting. One of the biggest things for PanAfricanism is Afrobeats. That travels quicker, faster and wider than anything else. Books aren't quite the same, you have the translation issue for instance. Also, someone can write something really big in one location but it does not necessarily travel as easily in another. Also, when you're taking art out of the African context, does it translate? That's always something to be considered. Sometimes it becomes an issue, sometimes it doesn't. Different countries are at different stages of conversations. For example, Rafiki was the first Kenyan film selected for the Cannes film festival, but it was banned in Kenya.

8. From your experience, what are some of the opportunities and challenges for UK-Africa arts collaborations?

The challenge is the cost of collaboration. Once you can get past that hurdle, things open up. Another is translation. If something isn't written into English, there is even less translated into English from Africa compared to other areas of the world.

I do think there are many more opportunities than challenges. The world is so connected at the moment and artists are so connected with one another. There has always been interesting work coming from Africa but now it is so much easier for artists to respond to one another.

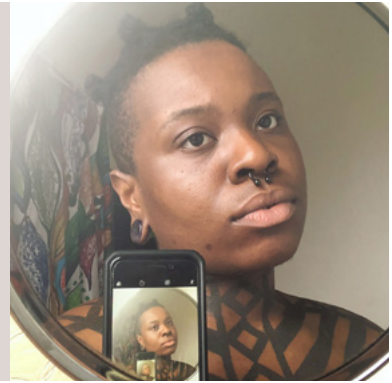
9. Where do you see programming contemporary African arts going, particularly within the UK?

Music is often ahead of any other art-form. In the UK we're probably going to see more contemporary African arts being programmed by Africans who live on the continent or them doing it themselves or in collaboration. The first time I went to the Afrobeats festival was in 2014 – there are a lot of African artists have good connections to the UK and work with promoters here. People are putting on their own thing. If Wizkid wants to perform in the UK, he doesn't need to come via the Southbank Centre. He can book out the O2 on his own. I think that's great - taking that ownership going forward and still working on collaboration. Just because he can do that, doesn't mean he has to. A lot of the artists on the continent can do that but they also want to reach different audiences that they may not do on their own. That would be the value of collaborating with venues like ours and the Barbican, for example.

EVAN IFEKOYA

ARTIST

Interviewed via phone by Marcelle Mateki Akita



1. Please introduce yourself, what is your background working in the arts? What is your motivation?

I am a London based, Nigerian-British artist working in video, performance, installation; I work a lot with people. I'm really interested in a whole of different things: gender, sexuality, race, the body, movement, desire, and things like that. I also teach on the joint honours BA Fine Art and History of Art course at Goldsmiths.

2. Can you tell us about your latest work *Ritual Without Belief* exhibited at Gasworks gallery in London from 5 July – 2 September?

The show was called *Ritual Without Belief* and the without was struck through – it feels quite important to address that. The starting point for the show was the question: what would it mean to start from a place of abundance? I was at a point in my practise where I was feeling pretty undernourished [and] I realise this is something that had been happening to a lot of artists like me: black artists, artists of colour, queer artists. As artists who occupy various marginal positions we are often in a place where we take on opportunities that don't necessarily always pay well or pay properly or pay at all. Often we're put into a position where we are tokenised and that really takes a toll. The show was about me centring my mental health, my own belief system and trying to establishing what that belief system actually is: how do I want to move through the world? How do I want to be in dialogue and conversation with other people, be that friends, lovers or the people I work with? That was really the starting point.

3. In relation to *Ritual Without Belief*, you describe the exhibition as a work 'on a black queer algorithm across generations, locations and political affiliations'. Could you elaborate on this further?

The show was comprised of many different elements but the 'black queer algorithm' is specifically in relation to the six hour sound work that I produced; all of this manifests as voice-notes, as music, as extracts from films. I refer to it as an algorithm because ultimately what I had to do was create an organising principle for gathering the material. It exists within seven areas of interest for me that overlap and coalesce. It was me acknowledging that our brains are computers and algorithms in their own right.

The section called 'Revolutionary Mothering' [draws from] researchers and thinkers such as Alexis Pauline Gumbs exploring the idea of ritual mothering but also the idea of mothering as a radical act, as a community act, as a way of acknowledging our connections, be that blood or otherwise. It was also talking about how we are in community with each other in the present moment. 'Weight of Blackness' draws on people like Claudia Rankine [and her] book *Citizen* where she's talking through the daily micro-aggressions people of colour experience. There's 'My Body, My Desire' and 'Cultivating Abundance' that talks concretely about the different practises that I've put into play. There's also a section

on London specifically thinking about where we are right now. I looked back to 1980s film *Twilight City* by Black Audio Film Collective which looked at the impact of the housing crisis in Thatcherite London. I looked at that in relation to what's happened recently with [incidents] like Grenfell.

4. Have you been involved in collaborative work with visual and sound artists who are based in Africa? If so what worked well with these collaborations?

There's an on-going arts education research project called *Another Roadmap* and there are groups in lots of different contexts. I'm part of the London group and there are groups in Johannesburg, Nairobi, Cairo and Germany. We meet a couple of times a year to talk through the intersection of arts and education. I didn't know about these artists' work before I got involved in the project. It was through a curator I've worked with on projects in London who introduced me and some other London based artists to *Another Roadmap*. I've been involved for two or three years now but to different degrees of intensity depending on what else has been going on.

5. From your experience, what are some of the opportunities and challenges for UK-Africa arts collaborations?

Even knowing about each other can be a challenge. It's very easy in London and other contexts to know what's going on in your small art scene but it's quite hard to get out of that. Finding ways to connect is quite difficult. I don't necessarily hear about opportunities over there so I wouldn't even know where to begin with developing those relationships. I'd really like to spend more time in Nigeria and learn about some techniques and practises, and it not necessarily be about producing an exhibition, but just about researching and learning more about heritage and how that intersects with the work. That would be more interesting for me than finding ways to be part of the art market – I'm not super interested in that.

6. Are there any challenging collaborations you've been involved in? If so, what issues arose and how were they resolved (if they were resolved)? There's no need to say specifics if you would rather not.

There have been many challenges. Sometimes what's available is not made transparent. People need to know exactly what is on offer to decide how they then participate.

7. Where do you see programming contemporary African arts going?

We're in a moment where there's a lot of attention on this idea of contemporary African art which I think is wonderful – but I'm also nervous/cautious of what the long term impacts of that are, more so for artists themselves. I'd love to see more artists taking ownership and control of what it means for their work to be presented as [contemporary African art] on a wider scale. I'd love to see artists unionising. I know that's a conversation that some artists are having in the UK – making sure that the rates of pay that we're getting, what's on offer, contracts are really transparent. In an ideal utopian world I'd love to see stuff like that but I have no idea if that's even on the cards.

8. What contemporary African artists are you most inspired by and why?

There's a lot happening in Johannesburg. There's a group called *Faka* that I really rate and respect: great visuals and aesthetics along with the music. *Angel-Ho* is another person. There's a lot of really interesting things happening in the relationship between art and music that I'm following and paying attention to.

KATE WALLIS

LECTURER IN GLOBAL LITERATURES, UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

Interviewed via email by Caitlin Pearson



Kate Wallis is Lecturer in World Literatures in the Department of English and Film at the University of Exeter and co-producer of Africa Writes–Bristol 2019. She is currently working on a monograph exploring pan-African literary networks post-2000 building on her doctoral research on Kwani Trust, Farafina and Cassava Republic Press. Her work has been published in Wasafiri, Research in African Literatures and the Routledge Handbook of African Literature. She is a Director for Kigali-based publishing company Huza Press, a co-founder and editor of www.africanwords.com, and was Producer of the Africa Writes festival in London in 2015.

1. Why is programming contemporary African arts important?

My starting point is that I believe arts and culture more broadly is something that enriches lives; it can bring meaning and purpose, a sense of wellbeing, create empathy between people, challenge us to think more critically and just bring pleasure! I'm passionate about programming contemporary African arts and particularly about programming contemporary African literature firstly and most importantly because I think this is where some of the most exciting and innovative contemporary literary and artistic production is happening. But I also think this work has a greater urgency because of the structural legacy of the violence and racism of British colonialism and its capitalist afterlives which continue to perpetuate inequalities that very often mean Africa-based artists and writers have to work with scarcer and less reliable resources, and there are fewer opportunities to sustain careers in arts and culture. Related to this, in particular I think the structural inequalities in UK publishing industry in particular and the underrepresentation African / African diaspora voices both working in the publishing industry and being published, has a damaging impact on UK cultural life.

2. From your perception, has the programming of contemporary African literature in the UK changed during the period of your career? In what ways?

I think the launch of Africa Writes in 2012, the opening of the Cassava Republic Press office in the UK in 2016, and the growing number of UK-based African literary blogs and podcasts from BookShy to NABP, has made contemporary African literature more visible and built a stronger community around it. However, alongside this I would like to see African writers more visible in broader literary festival and events programming across the UK and I think the shift here has been more minimal.

3. In programming contemporary African literature and presenting this to a UK audience, are there any particular challenges related to the field of literature?

One challenge is perhaps programmers of literary events and festivals not being in touch with the best work coming out of the African continent.

Another challenge is visas which are depressingly frequently rejected for African writers and literary producers who like many creatives across the world often work on a freelance basis even where a publicly-funded institution has issued a letter of invitation. This creates a significant barrier.

Research by the Arts Council shows those from BAME communities in the UK are less likely to engage with arts and culture. This is a systemic issue as often programming is being done by white middle class curators / producers and therefore making decisions about programme, timing, venues that exclude other audiences. There needs to be more diversity in those people who are making decisions about literature programming in the UK.

4. What tips would you give from your own experience for programming contemporary African arts?

Visa applications need to be made as early as possible to allow time for re-application where visas aren't granted first time.

The economic daily realities of life on the African continent and the difficulties building a sustainable career in the arts, mean that writers need to be fairly paid for their time and should not be expected to be out of pocket or pay upfront for expenses associated with travel to a literary event. Credit cards aren't widely available in many countries on the African continent so claiming back expenses after an event isn't often a viable option. Programmers can often end up putting artists in embarrassing or stressful situations by not realising they are making assumptions about available disposable income or by suggesting that a writer is benefiting in kind by getting to travel to the UK and so doesn't need payment on top of this.

I've found the best way of working is to collaborate as closely as possible on curation and programming with Africa-based or African diaspora literary institutions.

5. Tell us about an example of a collaboration you think worked well.

RadioBook Rwanda is a new multimedia literary imprint developed out of a collaboration between Bristol-based No Bindings, Nairobi-based Kwani Trust and Kigali-based Huza Press. I think this collaboration worked well because it was clear from the outset who was bringing what to the project. The idea was to develop a new imprint for publishing Rwandan writers in both English and Kinyarwanda and so Huza Press would be primarily drawing on their networks to find writers and stories to publish, as well as taking the lead on production in Kinyarwanda from editing to proofreading. No Bindings was a community publisher who had developed an innovative model for building new engaged audiences by publishing in print and sound, combining artwork and text and so they were taking the lead on design and production, but working closely with Huza Press to create an imprint that worked for a primary audience of Rwandan readers. And Kwani Trust had in part provided the inspiration for publishing short stories in beautiful small format editions through their Kwanini series and was taking the lead on editing the stories in English.

Having assigned parts of the project each of us was responsible for but for which we needed input and dialogue with the other two publishers on as part of this process ended up working really well.

6. What three things would you recommend when going into a collaborative project?

Spending time talking on Skype about expectations, drivers and ambitions – and establishing ways of working and project plans. Establishing productive working relationships without face-to-face meetings is hard (even though we do so much of it) and so the more dialogue initially the better I think.

Thinking innovatively about how best to find shared modes of communication – particularly where projects involve working across time zones with quite different working days. We started trying to use an online project management tool called Asana but ended up getting everything done through our shared Whats App group. Also not putting up barriers to communication like only speaking if a meeting has been set up.

Make sure you understand and allow for the economic realities of the partners you are working with. I've seen even in very good working relationships coming under stress when damaging assumptions are made by UK partners about what is possible for Africa-based partners in terms of giving time in kind or splitting costs that haven't been previously discussed or initiating work ahead of payments being made.

7. Where do you see programming contemporary African arts going in the future?

I hope even stronger networks and partnerships will develop between UK-based arts programmers and Africa-based arts institutions. There are signs this is starting to happen – for example Bristol's Festival of Ideas has recently put partnership agreements in place with Ake Arts and Books Festival and Hargeysa International Book Fair. I think there is lots of potential in particular for better using technology to support the showcasing of arts and culture produced on the African continent to UK audiences. It would also be great to see more Africa-based producers being asked to guest curate events or exhibitions in the UK.

I also hope we will see more programming of contemporary African arts happening across the UK, not just in London, and that alongside more Africa-focused festivals that African artists and writers become a more visible part of contemporary arts and literature programming in the UK more broadly.

8. What contemporary African artists are you most inspired by?

Bibi Bakare-Yusuf – for building one of Africa's most exciting publishing houses which produces great books and functions as a business, and that as she says herself works towards building the archive of the future.

Irenosen Okojie – for her brilliant short stories, for publishing her short stories in Kwani? and always being hugely generous with her time to support other African writers based in the UK and on the continent.

Chinelo Okparanta, Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, Nadifa Mohamed – all again for their beautiful writing but also for making hidden histories visible.

Doreen Baingana – for her commitment to her writing and to her building Mawazo Africa Writing Institute based in Uganda to support the growth and production of new book-length work from writers based on the African continent.

Otieno Owino – Nairobi-based editor who worked on Safe House, Kwani? Manuscript Project, RadioBook Rwanda for his commitment to the value and craft of editing.

Ntone Edjabe – for the innovations and ideas of Chimurenga and the network of contributors he has built, for producing content that challenges me to think differently about how knowledge on and from Africa is constructed.

LINDA MUKANGOGA

FOUNDER & CREATIVE DIRECTOR, HAUTE BASO

Interviewed via phone by Marcelle Mateki Akita.



1. Please introduce yourself. What is your background working in the arts? What is your motivation?

I am the founder and creative director of Haute Baso and one of the founding members of Collective RW. We produce and design items made in Rwanda in collaboration with artisans around the country. To date we work with 272 artisans and our network is growing. We work with cooperatives – independent groups of ladies with similar skillsets – to produce our items and each artisan is paid upon completion of each piece. We then retail them via our local space and we also stock some international stores.

2. Please speak about collaborations you have been involved in with Haute Baso.

Each co-op we work with has different skillsets – it could be needlework, embroidery, wickery (basket production), tailoring, finery, etc. Tailoring is definitely our biggest push. A brand called Ibaba Rwanda had been perfecting hand embroidery, so our 2016 collection was produced in collaboration with that particular co-op. We like the fact that they are independent and self-managed, which means that they are able to allow other designers to produce with them. That way, they are not solely dependent on Haute Baso for providing all the different job opportunities.

3. Can you tell us about the beginnings of Collective RW and what makes the fashion collective special?

Initially we were meeting informally. Rwanda's creative sector is pretty small, so we all know each other. When we were designing we realised that we were all having similar challenges and that is really what brought us together. After meeting informally, we decided to formalise our collective to explore whether other designers and creatives were experiencing the same challenges we were. We also thought that by coming together we could have greater impact and share best practice.

After we realised there was no platform to showcase our finished product in Rwanda, we leveraged our mutual connections to put on our first fashion show. We were open to any creative [being] able to apply. We wanted to [formalise the] structure, so we could reap the benefits of [putting] our heads together. It has been enjoyable thus far and I foresee it getting even bigger in the future.

4. What does 'contemporary African arts' mean to you?

I have never referred to it in that manner, but I would say it means respecting the already existing African art and finding ways to make it more functional. The inkongoro (wooden milk jugs) and imigongo (cow dung) designs are

good examples where some producers have been inspired to [employ] younger people to learn [the craft]. Prior to that, [younger people] had no motivation to produce these items except for special functions. Now it can be something that is sustainable in the long term, as people are more likely to train someone else to produce these items once they are earning.

5. Why is showcasing contemporary African arts – or specifically in this case, fashion / design – important?

It is very easy to fall under a general blanket of what African fashion is. Without us making a very deliberate effort to showcase our different cultures and creativity, these will stay under that blanket. So for me it is important to show the different modes of creativity we have to move beyond being represented by a print that is not even 'African' per se.

6. Going from your definition of 'contemporary African arts', then what criteria and factors come into play when designing?

We are always thinking about how we can get as many partners or hands touching our design pieces. The next question is: how can we respect the aesthetic of the design if it's something which has been pre-existing, but increase the quality so it lasts longer? For example, traditionally imigongo is made of ash and cow-dung, which meant that people would have to go to have their piece re-done every so often. But if you mix it with a bit of varnish, it [lasts]. You capture the colour and the mould stays there. It's finding ways to preserve the pieces and thinking about how to incorporate some of the newer materials without affecting the external aesthetic.

7. On Haute Baso's website the words 'Empower', 'Collaboration' and 'Craftsmanship' are highlighted to define the brand's mission and vision. Could you explain why these three words were chosen specifically and how they feed into how the ethical brand operates?

'Empower' speaks to how we work with the producers. Some design brands choose to do everything in house, so everything is in a controlled space, but we really wanted to have the different co-ops and producers maintain their personalities. For us it was more 'this is a design that we've produced together and we do a sample together' and then producers decide the price point at which they want to produce and the terms of the contract. We then go into an agreement for each design.

It's 'Collaboration', not just in design and production, but also in the business case. We are really trying to get producers to think like business people. That is one of the missing links within this market in Rwanda. There are a lot of talented people, but the business aspect or access to market is really young right now. Having them negotiate means when they approach different designers and producers, they can use the experience with us as a guideline and really think independently.

'Craftsmanship' is the culture we're producing. The milk jugs are traditionally for weddings and special occasions or gifts. But finding ways to make them relevant right now – they could be a water vase and still be a gift – so finding existing, beautiful objects but finding multi-purpose ways to market them.

8. When starting Haute Baso did you have a clear idea of who you were creating and designing for? If so, who were they and why? And has the customer demographic changed since the brand's inception?

When we started we didn't have a physical store space – we were operating out of my living room and selling on Instagram – and our target market was mostly expats and tourists.

Within two years, we realised that our customer base was mostly middle income diaspora and local Rwandans who now serve 60% of our market. These customers are paying attention to social media and they want access to trends and products. It surprised us – we did not anticipate that the local market would be interested. One characteristic of local consumers is that they're repeat buyers. Tourists come and go. We have not really done too much with marketing. Our business has grown on referral and we've used that as a gauge to figuring out whether we are doing stuff right.

9. Tell us why the collaborative nature of Collective RW works so well?

They are really cool people, each and every one. Everyone has a different strength and we are all committed because we have seen actual results from acting together as a collective. We are taken more seriously as a set up. Initially, when we started, [being] a designer or a producer was seen as just a hobby but now our peers are sitting up and watching. It's cool to be a designer now. Creatives are stereotypically not perceived as a business or professional, "we don't deliver on time" and so on. So it's important to show we can be together in one space and actually deliver. It is more than just putting together a fashion show. We also have workshops that are open to the public. We are trying to figure out the impact of us meeting and encouraging more people to work together. I don't think Rwanda's creative industry will grow if people are hiding, if each design is secret. If we put it all together, it is going to be that much more impactful for at least everyone that is watching us.

10. Can you speak about the workshop Collective RW ran for designers with disabilities in collaboration with the British Council?

It was a really interesting experience, specifically when you are talking about designing for bodies which is [typically designed for] body types seen in images. It provoked a lot of thought for each of the designers. There is also a business component to it – that it is an underserved market. The workshop sparked some interesting conversations and I believe that two collections are coming out this year as a result.

11. From your experience, what are some of the opportunities and challenges for UK–Africa arts collaborations?

Accessing the right [connections] is important – i.e. identifying the needs here on the ground and participants willing to collaborate on the other side. It's hugely beneficial that British Council team members are thinking "Oh, I think this would be the best designer to bring to support this particular program". It's having that guidance to say "OK I want to collaborate with a creative in the UK", and having someone give you that third point of view.

12. Where do you see contemporary African arts within the fashion and design sectors going?

It is really growing and becoming a lot more professionalised. More designers, curators and people who appreciate African art are choosing to tell their stories themselves and not waiting for [others] to do this. How this is articulated is super important. One thing I know from Haute Baso is we are working on how to articulate better what we are doing here so that anyone reading or buying is able to understand how we work, or how Rwandan culture informs how we work.

13. How do you see your work/practice developing in the next five years?

In five years, I hope to see five better Haute Basos that are not necessarily rooted in me, but people who are more encouraged to see why they should work with local talent.

14. Is there anything else you might like to share/add?

I hope that our work encourages people to come and check what five to ten designers are doing in Rwanda. It should not just be about Haute Baso – we're all complimenting each other right now, and it really is a matter of choice. It won't take away from Haute Baso the fact you are purchasing from a neighbour. The fact that you're coming to Rwanda is enough of a win.



LOLA SHONEYIN

WRITER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, AKÉ ARTS AND BOOK FESTIVAL

Interviewed in person by Marcelle Mateki Akita and Caitlin Pearson



1. Please introduce yourself.

My name is Lola Shoneyin. I'm a writer. I write fiction and poetry, I write children's books [and] I run the Book Buzz Foundation which supports library development in schools. We curate and organise two festivals in Nigeria: Kaduna Books and Arts festival and Aké Arts and Book Festival. I run Ouida Books publishing house and that's also been an exciting journey.

2. Tell us about your journey in working in the arts, and what has been your motivation.

My novel *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives* came out in 2010 and I was invited to Europe and America to talk about the novel. Of course when you're speaking in Europe or America, you're largely talking to a white audience. As a speaker and as a writer I was constantly having internal conversations with myself; "these things I am saying now, I should be saying it in Nigeria to Nigerians". Nigerians are the ones who really need to hear these thoughts that I have or this perspective. As an African writer inevitably you're touching on issues and the best place to engage in these issues is on the continent.

People in Africa have the least access to book festivals and book stores. My motivation was developing my festivals; I decided I wanted to do something that pulled together all the elements that are important to me as a human being: education, history, culture and writing. There's that aspect to me which makes it very fulfilling and then there's the wonderful quality of the writers on the continent, the last bastion of truth on the continent.

Lastly I should add that, I think it's sad when people talk about brain-drain that's exclusive to "our doctors and lawyers are leaving". The truth is that it's happening to the authors and creative people, naturally some university in the UK or the US is going to snap you up and ask you to come and teach. These festivals bring all these people together where they sit in one space and talk about their work. They do workshops and classes for writers. Over the years we have developed this system where people who want to give something back come, and those on the ground benefit from that. That is cross-fertilisation. Many of these writers are hugely inspired by those on the ground, by their style and ideas. I've never been short of that motivation, that opportunity to network is critical and it needs to happen more on the continent.

3. Would you consider yourself literate in fundraising? What have been your greatest takeaways in fundraising for Aké Arts and Book Festival and Kaduna Book and Arts Festival (Kabafest)?

You start from the premise that nobody owes you anything. Then you start by becoming someone that people owe something to. You've got to present your product as an impressive product and yourself as an impressive person. It's by being so impressive that people want to associate with you. If I go into a space, give me a microphone and I'm just going to kick ass. I don't have a fundraising team I do all the fundraising myself. Unfortunately, at the end of the day it's really about who you know, opportunities come through contacts. You've also got to learn to be an unbearable opportunist. Being able to think on your feet is also very important. When you're going into different areas you've got to ask yourself what potential funders are impressed by. I'm not saying this is the only way but this is what worked for me. The Nigerian landscape is quite different; being aggressive can be seen as strength.

4. Did you have an audience in mind when you were curating the programme? Could you speak first about Aké festival and then about Kabafest?

Unfortunately until you've actually done one you really don't know. In terms of demographics and age it's gotten younger every year, the average age is about 24 or 25. Once you know that, you can programme events interesting for them. For instance, for our panel called "Black Panther: The Phenomenon" every young person would love to go and listen. We also had a panel called "Fear of Queer". Kabafest is a safe space and I'm interested in bringing in engagement. The anti-gay laws in Nigeria show a lack of curiosity in humanity, science and society. We have very heated sessions but it's important that we do that. We don't do that enough. There is a neglect of history and intellectual engagement, the level of discourse is just so low sometimes. When you get people excited about an idea, it is amazing for me.

5. If you could say one thing to programmers based in the UK who are interested in contemporary African art, what would it be?

Don't always go for the obvious choice. They are so blinded by celebrity and I think in that process they lose so much. There are so many incredibly talented people. Just don't go for the obvious, try and do something different. I think they'll have a better experience and it would be less expensive.

6. Where do you see programming contemporary African arts going?

It's always difficult to predict but I'm hoping for more structured and flexibility with cross-collaboration across the continent. There are still some dark spots where there is very little creative activity. Who's going to show them? It's got to be other Africans. It's critical that we're thinking about other muses and creative spaces that we, ourselves, create sometimes. But also if there's anything I would like to see it has to be an effort to promote, develop and celebrate African art and it has to come from Africans. I consider that to be my calling but it's not something I'm ever going to be able to do on my own. Everything I do achieve is with a hardworking team.

7. How do you see your work/practice developing in the next five years?

In the next five years, I would love to support people who are interested in supporting and creating new spaces and festivals. Deep down I will always see myself as a teacher, and that's how I would like to see my work: to be seen as a resource person that people can ask for support. It would be nice to have finished my book in the next five years. I deserve to do at least one commercial venture in my life! I'm very focused on how to make Ouida Books a successful venture.

MERCY NABIRYE

HEAD OF DANCE OF THE AFRICAN DIASPORA (DAD), ONE DANCE UK

Interviewed via phone by Caitlin Pearson



1. Please introduce yourself and your background in the arts.

I'm head of dance of the African diaspora at One Dance UK, a national sector support organisation working across different regions in the UK. Prior to that I was the director of the Association of Dance of the African Diaspora (ADA), which has now merged with three other organisations to form One Dance UK. I have dual nationality – I was born in Uganda and now live in the UK. I have worked in performing arts for many years as well as in film, video production and literature, both in front of and behind the scenes. My motivation is the passion I have for the arts across different specialisms, particularly for arts rooted in the African diaspora.

2. What criteria and factors come into play when programming contemporary African work?

Acknowledging where you're taking the form from, or where your inspiration is coming from, always. People forget to do that, and forget the original aesthetics of the form. That's how we're losing those that we should actually be holding on to. With contemporary African arts, you have to make sure that when you're negotiating with partners, they have to respect why you're doing certain things in the way you are doing them.

3. In programming contemporary African work, what are the particular challenges related to dance?

Although we have really pushed dance to a certain level, dance is still looked at as a poorer cousin to the other art forms. We do not get enough money for presenting the work, and dancers don't get equivalent recognition to other artists. A lot of people think 'dance is dance' and they don't understand the professionalism. On the other side, people can perceive it as elitist.

Among the African diaspora in the UK, there are so many different countries to consider. So when you're thinking about contemporary African art there is such a wide perspective and variety to choose from. This can be a drawback in some senses, because when you think about South Asian dance for instance, they took a few specific dance styles like kathak and baranatiyam, and those are the ones fronted and put on the education curriculum. But for contemporary African work, which ones do you choose?

4. Do you have target audiences for your project The Bloom Festival/ National Festival of Dance of the African Diaspora? If so, who are they and why?

It started in 2010 as a two-day event at the Southbank, showcasing different dance styles from across the

continent on stage and also engaging people in workshops. It continued annually until 2017 when we truly made it a national affair with different partners and venues up and down the country. One of the successes that we had was working with the Horniman Museum and Gardens in 2015, presenting work during their African Summer festival. It was good because we took work to audiences that would not otherwise come and see contemporary African dance. It was such a great setting, and audiences of all ages attended, with a footfall of about 8000 people.

5. Can you speak about the approach of holding a festival within another festival?

It can be an effective way of attracting audiences which wouldn't otherwise attend. There have been occasions where a festival does not have enough diversity so there is then an opportunity to bring a strong programme to the table to supplement it. But it depends on the venues and partners you are working with. Sometimes there is not enough money offered so the artists are not paid enough, and you can't commission work.

Another issue we've had in the past is that some of the venues don't know how to market the work. They don't know what marketing images to use to make it effective for people to come and see the work. As long as they present something 'black' they say, ok that will do. But they don't really think about what the work is all about. Some venues would consult with us but others wouldn't. Where we didn't have conversations at the start, we failed to create what we wanted to. Often their promotion would create a buzz, but in terms of pushing the agenda forward, it wasn't a priority. They would say, oh you know, we've done that last year and we're going to do South Asian this time [laughs].

6. For some venues, would you say they were aiming to fill a diversity quota, but they weren't interested in a deeper engagement with the work?

Yes, it still happens actually. I hope it does change, not just for dance but for all art forms.

7. Tell us about an example of a collaboration you think worked well.

The partnership behind the Re:generations Conference, a biannual artistic and academic event established in 2010, including Ivy Dance Theatre, State of Emergency, De Montfort University, The Place, Pavillion Dance and others. This partnership is governed by a memorandum of understanding, with partners putting in cash as well as in-kind support. We've also connected with international partners who have come to present and be part of the delivery as well as delegates, from the US, Canada and the African continent.

I think it worked really well because we bring academia and practitioners under one roof to shape the practice, delivering workshops, panels and also performances in the evening. In 2014 when we worked with Pavillion Dance, we co-commissioned Jonzi D (currently associated artist at Sadler's Wells who runs Breakin' Convention) to go to Uganda and work with the hip-hop dance theatre company Thabo Flow for a month. Then they came back and opened the conference – it was amazing. Thabo Flow have now gone on to become really big in their field – the exposure we enabled has now taken them to New York, Canada, Germany and many other places. The project was a joint effort of so many different groups which had the one goal of providing a platform for artists that are very talented but have not yet got the exposure they need.

8. And where do you see programming contemporary African arts going in the future?

It's going to be huge. Where I see it happening most is on the continent – there is so much open space and potential to make things that are different and new. We can make things happen if we are daring and clever. Thinking about the diaspora, I'm not as certain, because I've seen trends come and go. In order to grow, it has to be grounded and to have roots from the continent.

9. What contemporary African artists are you most inspired by at and why?

At the moment, I'm inspired by these artists working in dance:

Gregory Maqoma (Vuyani Dance Theatre, South Africa) He is one of the great dancers. He has been around for a while but always manages to keep relevant.

HomeBros – (UK) they are working in Afrobeats which is a big trend at the moment. I hope they and others like them can keep focus, go back to the form and the origins to be able to keep relevant and continue beyond trends that come and go.

Alesandra Seutin – (Vocab Dance, UK) She's the only certified artist in the UK to train in the Germaine Acogny technique. She recently performed with Julie Cunningham at Sadler's Wells.

Vicki Igbokwe (Uchenna Dance, UK) She's ground-breaking and inspiring, doing work like The Head Wrap Diaries which transcends dance and incorporates fashion, culture, theatre, connecting with both young and old.

10. Is there anything else you might like to share/add?

This research is a welcome thing, we need to document and collate information because without our history we wouldn't be a people. To provide baselines and criteria for future practice is very important. I acknowledge and appreciate what you are doing and I very much want to be a part of on-going conversations.

MOLEMO MOILOA

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

JOHANNESBURG CONTEMPORARY ART FOUNDATION

Interviewed via email by Sheila Ruiz



1. Please tell us briefly about your time as Director of VANSAs and your work as part of the artist collaborative MADEYOULOOK.

I was Director of VANSAs from Jan 2014 – June 2018. I was very young and inexperienced, given an opportunity that few my age would have. The role was very challenging but also incredibly rewarding. VANSAs is effectively the national arts association for visual arts in South Africa. Our mandate was therefore national. I worked on developing a stronger decentralised and accessible framework for VANSAs particularly for people from smaller towns and rural areas, and those who may not be educated in the fine arts or have very little access to its central spaces. I was very lucky that we were part of a network of majority world organisations and a network of African arts organisations, so we could connect to and work with some incredible organisations around the world which really impacted our way of working and our agenda. The primary challenge at VANSAs was cash flow for organisational costs, as well as skills retention and people management, which ultimately took the greatest toll on my time there.

MADEYOULOOK is an artist collaboration between myself and Nare Mokgotho. We began working together at art school in 2009. We work on a range of projects that explore ideas of knowledge production, working from ordinary everyday experiences and imaginaries of black South African life to explore key issues. We are both in full-time jobs so our creative production has largely been an area of exploration and slow engagement focused on our interests and what areas we enjoy working in. We are generally working on two or three projects at a time, largely self-funded though we are increasingly receiving commissions and seeking out funding for our work.

2. What criteria and factors come into play when you programme/curate contemporary African work?

I am interested in conversations that take on questions of our time and contribute to the debate in ways that are localised but have a wider relevance. In particular there are epistemologies of other places that have in many ways [exhausted] their gamut, running dry in the process. We are looking for solutions, ideas and innovations that respond to our contemporary world, and this requires entirely new (and potentially relatively untapped) ways of imagining the world. Africans – and others of the majority world – understand our time in very nuanced ways and have much to contribute to where we go next.

3. Do you have an audience in mind when you are curating contemporary African art or producing your own work? If so, who are they and why?

With MADEYOULOOK we have considered this question a lot and have written about it a bit. Our [current] primary interest is in defining 'our' knowledges as knowledges for 'ourselves'. What I mean by this is that due to historical undermining, Africans in many ways haven't had the practice or space to define and understand our own epistemes. And what they might contribute. We need to define this and we need to do this in practice. This means we do not work for European or US audiences. We have explored the complexities of translation for audiences we wish not to talk with. This said, we are also very committed to not isolating ourselves, or not considering and understanding our epistemes through others. I think we are committed to thinking through our humanness also through and with other humans. In slightly different ways this is relevant for my work at VANSAs too.

4. What audience development strategies have you employed in the past? What worked and what didn't?

I will speak to VANSAs work here as its probably most apt for this research, and we have explored audience development strategies in various ways. One of these been partnerships – working with community groups, rural groups, working with artists or groups that attract certain kinds of interest. We made significant decisions towards their accommodation – this was complex but important – to ensure certain groups of people were more dominant and present in a space. We incorporated affirmative audience policies on certain projects, for example we had a quota for black South African participants for some of our winter schools, and limited the white participants on the basis that we found our white audiences were often better educated, wealthier and therefore found it easier to attend events, more confident to ask questions and therefore dominated spaces. It became important that we work on ways to balance this out a bit. We also worked quite hard to have a mixture of speakers – some were academic but many were accessible – who emphasised a different kind of participation and encouraged a different epistemological hierarchy.

5. Please tell us more about the MADEYOULOOK inter-disciplinary artist collaborative between yourself and Nare Mokgotho. Why did you set this up as a collaborative project and how does the collaboration work?

As students we were two of very few black students in our class. We were both interested in exploring practice outside of the university walls, South African universities are highly securitised so do not form part of their context very much. We started by collaborating on a project to challenge lecturers to give university level public lectures on trains that travel from the townships into the city. This questioned knowledge hierarchies and the idea of the 'public' lecture. It also questioned the value of university knowledge production outside of university walls. We continued to collaborate on projects after that. Largely it's been a space of creative exploration with no particular pressure because neither of us needed to make any money off it. It has been kind of a play space for ideas that don't fit into other parts of our professional lives.

6. Have you been involved in other collaborative work with artists or programmers who were either based in the UK or other locations internationally? If so, what worked well with these collaborations?

There have been a number, largely with the British Council (with VANSAs). One specific project that comes to mind is Thati Cover Orchestra – we invited a British artist and musician from London to collaborate with a great programme here in Johannesburg. The artist – Hannah Catherine Jones – was really well suited to the group,

is of Barbadian descent and so had some similar musical traditions and though very involved in the conceptual process, played quite a background role in the final performance (which is unusual for these sorts of projects). The overall production would not have been possible without British support and was incredibly important and is still considered a key moment in Joburg alternative music.

7. Looking to the future, what would you consider to be the main challenges and opportunities for African artists and curators?

Ongoing and sustainable financing of work, projects and programmes to enable adequate evaluation and improvement over time. We struggle to actively, systematically grow and improve at an institutional, infrastructural level because so much is once off and project based.

8. How do you see African visual arts, both as an art form and an industry, developing in the next five years?

I think there will be increasing commercialisation for sustainability sake. Which will significantly impact the range of creative outputs currently possible. You already see this in the South African visual art scene – as the commercial sector has gone from strength to strength (which is good from a creative economies and livelihoods perspective), however artworks, artists, spaces and projects that do not have commercial potential have practically disappeared. Even though there probably isn't less funding now than there was 10 years ago for non-commercial work – it's just that market inherently swallows everything. You might say the same for Nigerian film and music for example.



MUTHONI NDONGA (AKA MUTHONI DRUMMER QUEEN)

ARTIST & CO-FOUNDER, AFRICA NOUVEAU

Interviewed via phone by Marcelle Mateki Akita.



1. Please introduce yourself, what is your background working in the arts? What is your motivation?

My name is Muthoni Drummer Queen. I'm a singer, rapper and drummer. I've been a performing and recording artist for ten years now. I'm also the founder and creative director of two music festivals here in East Africa. One is called Blankets and Wine which is a marrying of music, afternoon into night picnic style family friendly music festival. And the other one is Africa Nouveau, which is an annual three-days-and-three-nights arts festival including music, film, fashion, technology and virtual reality.

2. Can you tell us about the beginnings of Africa Nouveau and what makes the music and arts festival special?

Africa Nouveau is grounded in the idea of bringing Africans together - bringing Africans to Kenya, the cradle of mankind - and in fostering collaboration between artists across the disciplines. We call ourselves a congregation of creators and then curators - the people who connect artists to audiences and fans. We allow creators to connect, showcase, be seen and heard. We share audiences and increase chances of commercial success for a creator's work. I think as a multi-genre arts festival, there's nothing like it in East Africa - a space where you can have a lot of really great music, visual art, film, new technology like VR and the development of visual concepts through fashion and photography.

Our aim is for Africans to see themselves. Africa Nouveau is deeply rooted in identity and operates in a time spectrum that we invented for ourselves. It's called 'Ancient future'. We think that African traditional knowledge and wisdom is still relevant and necessary for our society today, so we use the arts to connect us back with our heritage, and then to imagine futures.

Each year we have a theme - last year it was Afrobubblegum: fun, fierce fantastical art created just for the joy of it. When you are working across the disciplines, one theme can help to organise the conversation. It gives everyone one solid concept and then every artist and every discipline interprets it and expresses it in their own way. I think having the theme is something that makes Africa Nouveau remarkably different from many festivals.

3. What does 'contemporary African arts' mean to you?

I don't know the meaning of that word. It's not a word I use. That's a word I see when I travel abroad, and I guess it's an attempt to distinguish traditional African art from urban African art and expression. This is my assumption. To be quite honest that's not a definition that I have ever used.

First, the use of the word makes me think that this is something that's steeped in academia. I don't feel that is a word, which was invented by us – and by us, I mean Africans. It's a word to describe art from Africa by others, usually the West. It's an 'other' word.

I think it's really crucial that you've brought that up – the question of the language that we use to identify particular arts and regions. So let's use the term 'modern' meaning 'non-traditional' African art and things that are happening now – why is it important to programme this work?

Because it's now, right? If you're in now, if you live in now, you have to tell the stories of now. As far as Africa is concerned, what's important is to programme really unique, intellectually stimulating and forward-looking work. Work that is ethnic and primal in its roots but then very global in its themes and appeal. The late Bodys Isek Kingelez, a visionary artist from the Congo, epitomises the kind of art that Africa Nouveau seeks to programme – something that is completely rooted, fantastical and futuristic.

4. Going from your definition of 'contemporary African arts', then what criteria and factors come into play when programming?

To start with, at Africa Nouveau, we have our guiding principles: 'Creativity, Innovation, Connection, Sustainability and Pan-Africanism'. We came up with those ideas by discussing and negotiating with the team and deciding what our identity is. That's the DNA of Africa Nouveau, so that tells us how we work internally, and sets for us the criteria for topics and artistic selection. Substantively, the way this translates in bookings is that we ask questions about authenticity, availability of the artist and collaborators, the way an artist's work correlates with the other stuff we want to program. Questions like – is there a group of artists or a body of work by different artists that is kindred spirit/s? How does one artist's work sit with the other artists work? Will the work help to open a mental space? By programming this, what are we able to make possible/available to the audiences or to other creators? Also money, the logistics of travel and the storytelling opportunities on the artist's platform – who gives us greatest mileage and who helps us (Africa Nouveau) to be seen and to be heard?

5. Tell us about an example of a collaboration you think worked well.

The collaboration with British Council in 2018. We worked with them around the Afrobubblegum theme using fashion and set design.

For Fashion, we put on a fashion workshop with designers, stylists and photographers from Ethiopia, Uganda, the UK and Kenya to share experiences around the design and presentation of shoots, thinking about moving concepts from paper to actual clothes on a rack, and the process of profitably – getting the designs to market. We then took the theme and represented it through a creative set design.

For the second part, we had the photographers, set designers and stylists from the UK, Kenya and Ethiopia collaborating with one another to develop concepts for the photography sets at the festival as well as the concept of the shoots (also executed at the festival). All the clothes, homeware, décor and accessories from the vendors exhibiting at the festival were incorporated into the shoots, so it was a really nice way to create something with everybody's input. It was a real spectacle.

6. From your experience, what are some of the opportunities and challenges for UK–Africa arts collaborations, for example your recent collaboration with Africa Utopia?

The British Council facilitated a relationship with two “sister” festivals in 2017/2018 – Nyege Nyege in Uganda and Africa Utopia in the UK. The producer of the look-book production came from Africa Utopia and it was incredibly dope to learn from her. It was nice having peers to be able to get on the phone to talk with.

There’s a lot more support for the arts on that side (UK) than there is on this side (Kenya) and there’s a real opportunity there. As an artist here in Kenya, I can say I’m going to collaborate with an artist from the UK to apply for a grant to make a virtual reality music video and showcase at our festival. That’s something totally cool and I want more cross-cultural collaboration to happen.

One of the challenges is the cost of things. When we come to the UK our Kenyan shilling loses so much value – it’s quite expensive to be in the UK – so it’s difficult to produce as many outputs. If you are trying to shoot a film, it’s much harder than trying to make a song, just from a production/cost perspective. It’s different if it’s two visual artists who like each other’s style and could possibly work remotely through a combination of Skype, Whatsapp and Wetransfer.

7. Which contemporary African artists are you most inspired by and why?

Wanuri Kahiu – writer & filmmaker, Kenya (also a collaborator on Africa Nouveau)

Bodys Isek Kingelez – visual artist, DRC

Osborne Macharia – digital artist, Kenya

Manthe Ribane – music and fashion, South Africa

Laduma Ngxokolo – fashion designer, South Africa

Laetitia Ky – visual artist, Ivory Coast

Michael Soi – visual artist, Kenya

Selly Raby – fashion designer, Senegal

All the team and designers for Africa Nouveau

8. Is there anything else you might like to share/add?

When you do know what contemporary African art is, I’d be curious to hear!

NADIA DENTON

WRITER & CURATOR

Interviewed via email by Sheila Ruiz.



1. Please introduce yourself. What is your background working in film? And what is your motivation?

I am a Film Curator and Author. I have been working in the industry for 15 years. I started out producing bfm Film Club, a showcase for Black World Cinema at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). My remit was to attract a more diverse audience to the venue which I did for 7 years. I have similarly curated in association with other leading film venues across London including BFI Southbank and Rich Mix.

I have written two books which include *The Black British Filmmaker's Guide* (2011) and *The Nigeria Filmmaker's Guide to Success: Beyond Nollywood* (2014). I wrote both books out of a realization that many of the filmmakers I work with are unable to maximize the success of their productions and releases due to critical knowledge gaps about how the industry works. As a result of my years of working with diverse audiences I was also interested in exploring what a cultural specific film guide could look like.

Film is the most powerful of art forms. It is exciting, ever moving and dynamic. There is a magic that is created when the image, sound and a great artistic vision are presented on the big screen. Film motivates and inspires people. It can change them in ways they never knew possible. I am dedicated to supporting independent, grassroots filmmakers in finding their voice and locating their audience.

2. Can you tell us about your latest work BEYOND NOLLYWOOD?

BEYOND NOLLYWOOD is a term I coined to describe new wave cinema from Nigeria, short films, art house, animation, documentary, experimental, music videos, etc. I am interested in content being made by filmmakers based in Nigeria, in its diaspora and non-Nigerians who have made films about Nigeria. BEYOND NOLLYWOOD in short describes a new creative aesthetic emerging from Nigeria that varies considerably from the traditional Nollywood and in my view will cross over internationally and be enjoyed as world cinema.

The term is also the subtitle of my book *The Nigerian Filmmaker's Guide to Success: Beyond Nollywood*. The contents give a survey of where the Nigerian film industry is heading over the next decade including interviews with over 70 film industry practitioners. It doubles up as a practical film reference guide with advice and guidance in areas of finance, marketing, training, exhibition and distribution.

BEYOND NOLLYWOOD additionally is an event and a loose collective of filmmakers. So far BEYOND NOLLYWOOD has been exhibited at Rotterdam International Film Festival, Encounters Short Film Festival and the BFI Southbank. My aim is to establish the presence of BEYOND NOLLYWOOD filmmakers on the international film festival circuit.

3. Why is exhibiting contemporary African film and arts important and how is BEYOND NOLLYWOOD contributing to this effort?

African artists and content creators deserve to be part of wider global conversations about humanity. The exhibition of contemporary African film and arts means we can do this. It gives a more balanced picture to how we see ourselves as a human race. Likewise, international audiences crave new immersive experiences. The truth is that the world has not yet come to terms with the complexity of the African continent and the arts have a role to play in creating a new world view – not just in how the world sees the continent but how Africans see themselves.

Through BEYOND NOLLYWOOD there is an attempt to provide audiences with narratives that they may have never seen or heard before. To widen their world view and to enable them to travel to West Africa and experience its culture without even going there. BEYOND NOLLYWOOD reflects nuances within Nigerian culture that show the richness and complexity of the human experience.

4. What would you consider to be the common challenges African and Diaspora filmmakers currently face in terms of having their work programmed and exhibited?

There are a number of challenges. At times there can be a lack of cultural awareness by international curators. International film festivals may view that there are no audiences for the content or that it is too much work to reach them.

In terms of my own work in the Nigerian film space, I set BEYOND NOLLYWOOD content out as distinct from Nollywood because I realised that the wider international film community were largely unaware of the existence of Nigerian filmmakers trying to subvert a Nollywood style of filmmaking.

One of the biggest challenges however is a lack of engagement on the part of filmmakers. Many of them do not consistently submit their films to international film festivals and are unclear about how they can engage and what this can do for their career. Even at times when they are engaged the level of interaction often may be such that it does not give them the results they hoped for.

Across parts of the African continent, there is also a lack of support on the ground in the form of film bodies or organisations who can give objective support and advice to filmmakers.

5. How do you see contemporary African film, both as an art form and industry, developing in the next five years? What are the main opportunities for programmers of African cinema?

- I see more cinemas being built. There will also be a rise in the pop-up and/or travelling cinema. This in turn will bring more programming opportunities.
- I feel that there will be an increased number and variation of film festivals, which may be part of wider large scale cross arts events. Programmers will curate across art forms.
- I believe that there will be the development of a significant film market where films can be sold and distribution deals done.
- I also see more cross platform work emerging i.e. meshing of the worlds of film and gaming etc

6. A major focus of your programming work has been developing audiences for African and Diaspora Cinema. What are the main audience development strategies you have employed and who have been your main target audiences?

Over the course of my film career my main target audience has typically been individuals of African descent, those interested in world cinema and individuals with wider interest in African cultural art forms.

The main audience development strategy I have used is grassroots canvassing. This is literally meeting people face-to-face at events and informing them about a forthcoming programme. It is labour intensive and means in reality your work never stops but I have found individuals appreciate the fact that you are engaging with them in a more meaningful way than more remote marketing efforts.

Another technique is to create highly personal communication and marketing materials. So for example, with my BEYOND NOLLYWOOD events I typically use pidgin English and/or Nigerian English vernacular as programme titles because I know this will have an immediate resonance with my core audience.

I see my audience as gold and so always try to survey them whether informally socially or more formally through feedback forms at my events. In their feedback and comments there tend to be unexpected nuggets of wisdom that can help inform the development of subsequent audience engagement strategies.

7. How have audiences engaged with and responded to your books and curatorial work both here in the UK and in Nigeria?

In Nigeria, emerging filmmakers feel that they have been offered an alternative by way of BEYOND NOLLYWOOD through the program. It has given them a sense of hope in the midst of a very closed, commercially driven and competitive Nollywood film space. It has allowed them to re-imagine their industry and create space for the alternative work they are making.

With my BEYOND NOLLYWOOD events UK audiences have expressed excitement about the quality of the content. Feedback has indicated that they felt they were discovering something new that they were previously unaware even existed.

There has largely been enthusiasm about my books mainly I sense because there is no other such content like it. The filmmaking community they were written for and about have embraced them as a reflection of their practice.

8. A large part of your work involves working collaboratively with filmmakers who are based on the continent, specifically Nigeria. Please tell us what has worked best in terms of these collaborations?

Communicating and having a relationship with the filmmakers even outside of their artistic practice. Being interested in who they are apart from their work and understanding what cultural, social, political context they are working in. As a non-Nigerian, I have attempted to more deeply understand the culture (through reading, attendance to events, etc), which has meant that I can engage with the filmmakers at a more meaningful level than if I were a mere 'cultural tourist'.

9. From your experience, what are the key opportunities and challenges for UK-Africa arts collaborations?

The key opportunity in my view is the offer of fresh, unseen, novel content to UK audiences. Art that they simply may not have seen before or are unlikely to have access to. These arts collaborations also allow us to have all-encompassing conversations about the challenges we currently face as a human race that are not presented through the Western lens.

The challenges in the main are cultural differences in approach and how things are done. These can only be worked out and talked through when they arise. We must also deal with illusions. In the UK we may have fanciful pictures of how African creatives work and they also may have their own misconceptions that Europe is awash with grant money.

10. What contemporary African and Diaspora filmmakers and artists are you most inspired by and why?

Of the group of BEYOND NOLLYWOOD filmmakers that I have worked with:

Abba Makama is one of the leading art house directors of his generation. In his hands history, politics and art are all one. He has an admirable ability to present the human experience through a colourful kaleidoscope that often has an endearing touch of satire.

Clarence Peters is Nigeria's leading music video director. His name is synonymous with high level cinematography. Clarence has a vast following of fans who eagerly consume his videos and are invested in his output. His constituency is far beyond that of your average African politician. Through the image he holds admirable power.

Jibril Mailafia was one of the few socially conscious animators of his generation, making work to educate and impact his viewer. Jibril's work brilliantly interpreted complex day-to-day situations in a powerful fable-like way and appealed both to southern (Christian) and northern (Hausa) audiences.

Adeola Osunkojo is a determined force of nature who I have no doubt will rapidly ascend the Nigerian film space. So far Adeola has focused on short form content with comedy as her expression of choice. Adeola possesses the passion and commitment that true filmmakers are made of. She is one to watch.

Mike Omonua is an unapologetic art house director whose influences range from Ray, Ozu and Bresson to French New Wave Cinema. Mike is the kind of director that Nigeria does not know it has in its midst. He presents the Nigerian condition in a way that is universal and can transcend audiences.

11. Is there anything else you might like to share/add?

BEYOND NOLLYWOOD reflects a trend developing in the Nigerian film space, much of which will continue to be driven by demographics. Africa is the youth continent and Nigeria has a huge young person population, which some quote as being 65% of current estimated 200 million people. In the mix of Nigeria's popular culture explosion – where we have seen Afrobeats, ankara inspired fashions and indigenous arts crossing over – I predict BEYOND NOLLYWOOD filmmakers will also make an impact.

NOLAN STEVENS

ARTIST & WRITER

Interviewed via phone by Marcelle Mateki Akita.



1. Please introduce yourself – what is your background working in the arts?

I'm 35 years old and I have been involved in the arts for most of my life. I come from a very artistic family. My mother's a writer, my father's a musician and my older brothers are also involved in the arts. From a very young age I had a very romantic idea of being an artist and that slowly developed into me actually going to art high school and then university. At university, I started studying graphic design, but that created challenges for my lecturers with my disability, so I moved onto fine art and then onto multi-media design. After my studies, I had a solo exhibition and I started getting into group shows and curating. I then began writing about the arts, not only about visual arts but the whole arts spectrum. Steadily my scope has broadened – the older I get the more exposure I get.

2. Can you speak about your recent collaboration with UNLIMITED?

This actually came about very serendipitously. I was speaking to a friend of mine about my disability and a month or so later he shared a Facebook post about the UNLIMITED International Placement encouraging me to apply. I had always been a bit apprehensive about travelling because of my disability, but I took the plunge since it was a disability-led organisation and I figured they would understand the challenges and fears I had. That is how I got into it and the experience incredibly opened up my world view, particularly in how I see myself. Prior to going to UNLIMITED, I always had a very negative perception of myself regarding my disability. In South Africa, disability isn't at the forefront of any conversations, let alone artistic conversations. I last made work around my disability when I was in my final year of university and since then I had not engaged with disability at all. To go to UNLIMITED and to see the different conversations that were happening really broadened my scope and opened up a new world of possibilities for me.

3. Is programming contemporary African arts important?

I definitely think so. Unfortunately, a lot of the work that is pushed to the forefront tends not to deal with the many political, socio-economic issues that I feel contemporary African art should deal with. I reckon that is because of the political dynamics of South Africa as a country. I would definitely say that much more programming needs to be put in place as there are not enough platforms for black artists to say what they want to say in their creative pursuits.

For example, I approached a mentor of mine with an idea I had for a group exhibition using only black artists and having them engage with their blackness. I presented this idea to my mentor and former lecturer who is a white guy and I said to him 'I have this idea for an exhibition. What do you think of this?' hoping that he would give me

some direction and he responded 'How would you feel if I made an exhibition that was completely constructed and made out of white people?' I wanted to say 'that's kind of the situation right now', but I didn't want to offend him.

Even when black artists are exhibited they are generally being dictated to, which is quite problematic. It's in a very sly, indirect way with comments such as 'I think you should consider speaking about this' or 'this is coming across too strongly - maybe you should water it down'. Because a lot of the industry is run by white folk, to get black South African artists or other African artists to actually say what they need to say in exhibitions seems to be an uphill battle. That's what I try to fight with my creative projects. I feel art needs to speak about the environment we are in and push us to have those conversations that are not being had.

4. Can you please explain your disability and how, if at all, it influences the work you create?

I have a disability described as hemiplegia, which means the left side of my body is partially paralysed. My left arm is completely paralysed, I walk with a limp and I can't see through my left eye. This is the result of a freak accident that happened to me when I was nine years old. I was roller-blading and somebody threw a beer bottle out of a nine-story building, which hit me on my head and caused me to have two brain operations and be in a coma for the better part of a year. After learning to walk, talk and everything else, I got straight into an art high school, then university to pursue my artistic pursuits.

When I was in university, I dealt with disability as my theme simply because the lecturers thought I couldn't do it. My theme was feeling as if I was trapped within my body and I made sculptures – casts of my arm in wax – but since then I haven't sculpted at all. I have moved from drawing as a base medium to digital art. I guess subconsciously that has a lot to do with my disability – it is much easier for disabled artists to create works on a computer or on a two-dimensional surface. I haven't really thought a lot about my disability since university because it is not part of the conversations that are happening in South Africa right now. I was exposed to many of those conversations when I went to UNLIMITED, but I have pushed those ideas away from my artistic practice even though disability is a part of my everyday life.

5. Do you have an audience in mind when you are creating work? If so, who are they and why?

When I was in university there really wasn't a target audience for the art I was creating. But since then, arts audiences have broadened and my target audience now tends to be 20-30 something black people because they are more inclined to understand the questions that I'm trying to address with the work I create.

6. As an artist, are you aware of the audiences for the exhibitions or festivals you are invited to work with? Does this have an impact on the work you create?

That is always at the forefront of my thinking while I am creating work as a lot of the arts is inhabited by people who are not my target audience. To put it bluntly, many of the artists in South Africa nowadays are black, but the power is not in black hands. I often look at the type of work created by those artists, knowing that they need to sell work to this particular audience. Many a time it's work that will not offend, 'nice' work that will sell because one does not want to offend their buyer.

However, I do think there is a shift in how artists engage with their audiences, particularly in theatre and music. There is a mind-set of 'this is who we are, accept us for who we are' and people are becoming a lot more brazen in terms of what they want to say with their art. A lot of the black work that's being created in theatre now is

not in indigenous South African languages, there is still a viewpoint of these languages being seen as less than English. These are the effects that linger on from our colonial and Apartheid pasts, which also dictate how we engage with our audiences as creatives in this country.

7. Tell us about a collaboration you've been involved in that you've been excited about.

In South Africa collaboration is a big part of artistic practice and I think that's largely because of the infancy of our art scene. When I was in the UK it did not seem that collaboration was as much at the forefront as it is in South Africa. I think a lot of the conversations that happen, particularly in visual arts, are around collaboration. This is also why I have chosen to curate themed group exhibitions because I like the conversations that come out of collaborating with people from all walks of life.

8. From your experience, what are some of the opportunities and challenges for UK-Africa arts collaborations?

A major challenge that I had with regards to UNLIMITED, and something I spoke about at length while I was still in London, was the idea of getting all this very useful information in the UK and then coming back to a South African context that did not have the infrastructure to support all the knowledge I had gained.

More generally, I think there is an issue in the way that we still treat each arts sector in a very insular way in South Africa. It is very rare to find a cross-pollination collaboration happening. A lot of South African artists are self-taught and hence lack the knowledge required to create a project based on collaborations across art forms. I think that hampers our collaborative projects, which are vastly different from the collaborations that happen in the UK.

I also think South Africans tend to be embarrassed by what they do not have, particularly when speaking to people who are not from the continent. It's hard to overcome that other than by the visiting artist really trying to immerse themselves, not only in the work that the South African artists are creating but in the work behind that work – the thought processes, conceptualisation and motivation behind that. I think if we can get to a level where that gets given as much platform as the finished product, then collaborations would be in a much stronger position.

9. Where do you see contemporary African arts going?

Ultimately I would love the term to go away completely, in the same way that we don't use the term contemporary American art. The ultimate goal would be to see it just as art. Until that point I hope that artists will continue to create questioning work that looks at the political, social and economic dynamics that relate to the past, present and future.

10. What contemporary African artists are you most inspired by and why?

I really love Yinka Shonibare's work simply because he is commenting on a lot of issues that I tend to comment on in my work. We have had similar experiences in terms of how we have gone into the arts and how we speak about 'Africanness' through our practice. There is also this South African artist named Vivian Kohler whom I've had the privilege of working with. He started off making very realistic paintings of figures lying on cardboard boxes – figures that looked like very impoverished rough sleepers or street people. Vivian speaks about the different socio-economic dynamics at play on the continent and I think he is really exciting.

OLUMIDE POPOOLA

WRITER & CURATOR, WRITING IN MIGRATION FESTIVAL 2018

Interviewed in person by Marcelle Mateki Akita & Caitlin Pearson



Olumide Popoola is a London-based Nigerian German writer and speaker who presents internationally. Her novel *When We Speak of Nothing* was published in the UK and Nigeria in 2017 (Cassava Republic, 2016). Her other publications include *this is not about sadness* (Unrast Verlag, 2010), *Also by Mail* (by Witnessed (edition assemblage), 2013) by Witnessed (edition assemblage) *breach* (Peirene Press). The scope of her work concerns critical investigation into the 'in-between' of culture, language and public space where a, sometimes uncomfortable, look at complexity is needed. Olumide lectures in creative writing, and holds a PhD in Creative Writing, a MA in Creative Writing and a BSc in Ayurvedic Medicine. In 2004 she won the May Ayim Award in the category Poetry. She has received grants, fellowships and residencies from Grants for the Arts/Arts Council England, UEL, Djerassi, Künstlerdorf Schöppingen and Hedgebrook, amongst others. In 2018 she curated the Writing in Migration literature festival in Berlin, produced by InterKontinental.

1. How did the collaboration with InterKontinental for the 2018 Writing in Migration literature festival come about?

InterKontinental is a bookshop in Berlin, and the agency for African literature in German speaking countries. The co-directors Stefanie Hirsbrunner and Karla Kutzner decided to hold a literature festival, and invited me to curate the inaugural edition in 2018. In the beginning I thought, could I really do this? Do I know enough about the field? I felt I didn't know enough about different African literature from different regions and that I was very heavy on certain regions. I checked this with Stefanie and they said that was ok, I could source from what I know. So the 2018 event was focussed on Nigerian literature.

2. What was your motivation for agreeing to do it?

I felt the organisers knew what they were doing, and it was a challenge I could rise to. I was initially nervous, but I think it's always a bit good to feel nervous or uncomfortable because that's where you're growing.

3. What does 'contemporary African arts' mean to you?

To take a critical look at this, the notion of 'traditional African identity' is in question. I find that exciting. There is more openness to cultures and traditions evolving and changing. That's what I think is most contemporary; engaging with the past but also looking at it through the present.

4. Why is programming contemporary African arts important?

Because we often get forgotten or get put on identity panels rather than invited to talk about our art form. At this festival, it very important that people could talk about their art form, their process, their actual work and

not just identity politics. However, underrepresentation is still an issue, and that's why we have to have these initiatives. African artists need to be highlighted.

5. In your keynote, you addressed some of these questions of identity and art. You said that people had asked you "why an African literature festival?" and you posed the question, "is this not a contradiction where I put these writers in a box that I might want to escape from?". Why is this 'box' of contemporary African arts useful or necessary? Why identify with it in your role as a curator?

One of reasons, especially in a German context, is lack of knowledge of the writers. Many of those invited are super accomplished and well recognised, there weren't many newcomers in the programme. So there is a good proportion of ignorance from the German readership about just how exciting literature from the African context could be. There are reasons to do with language and translation, but ultimately we needed the festival to raise awareness of African writers, and the goal is definitely to bring this more into the mainstream. There is nothing wrong with highlighting particular regions and what they've done – think of festivals or French or Scandinavian cinema for example.

Indeed, it is a contradiction, and ultimately it would probably have been better if I had been invited to curate an event like the Berlin literature festival.

6. Did you have an audience in mind when curating the programme for Writing in Migration 2018?

I have really deep roots in the German Black community so I think that was the initial audience I had in mind. I knew they would be interested and it could be an important exchange both ways – for writers visiting Berlin and also for the German Black community to meet the writers.

The producers InterKontinental definitely wanted an inclusive audience, so it was good to work with them to make sure everyone is catered for. The first draft of my programme that was very community-based (and those people did come), but the producers then suggested some more high-profile TV journalists, which shifted the programme to make it much bigger and more mainstream. I think that's why it's good to have collaboration.

7. What three things would you recommend when going into a collaborative project?

So this is what I've learned: to trust my instincts. If you're very sure of yourself this is not the tip for you but for me to trust myself as a writer. Ask around everybody you know what they are interested in, you can't just do your own thing.

Be really upfront about what you want, what you're willing to do and what you're not willing to do. There might be times when you need to say 'no' to protect the quality of your work. And not just in terms of workload, but also in terms of political questions, and who you're willing to work with. Be clear what you want to get out of it.

8. Where do you see programming contemporary arts going?

I see it in young hands. I think there is already a trend to invite people in their 20s to curate or at least co-curate and bring in their vision. That's important – we need more co-collaboration between the established and new people.

PATRICK SAM

CHAIR, THE NATIONAL ARTS COUNCIL OF NAMIBIA

Interviewed in person by Marcelle Mateki Akita, 5 February 2019



1. Please introduce yourself.

My name is Patrick Sam. I'm from Katutura, a township in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia. I grew up in this particular location called Damara. It's a place which is down and out, violence is high, but the kind of relationship that people have with one another as a community is beautiful. It's this intersect where harm and beauty exist within the same space.

I happened to start grade one the year that Namibia got its independence, so I went to a formerly all-white school. School was a very contrasting experience to my domestic environment. I was exposed to deprivation and privilege on a daily basis, so I've lived a life of duality that not a lot of people have. From very early on, I realised that my dual experience gave me insights into the spectrum of human behaviour that most people don't have at 12-13. I'm a boy that's from this disadvantaged background but who has gotten a lot of privilege. Boys from where I come from don't go to schools in the US, graduate from an Ivy League college and come back into it.

2. What is your background working in the arts? And what is your motivation?

My artistic background is mainly as a poet. I am currently the Chairman of the National Arts Council of Namibia. I also do some comedy stunts – I was nominated by the comedy and spoken word club in Namibia and elected to be the chairperson of the council for the last three years.

I don't distinguish and isolate the arts within the context of human development. For me culture is, first and foremost, a way of life and, secondly, an expression of a way of life. The reason I put this framework is because my involvement in the arts is precisely that. The arts don't live outside of me. They are very much entrenched in who I am as a person.

Enhancing human development is my primary purpose and passion. Humans have a dual aspect – as much as we have the ability to create, we also have the ability to destroy. Looking at the planet, people and prosperity, we have to ask ourselves: are we going to feed actions, institutions and structures that support the creation of what's beautiful about us or the destruction? The agency is with us.

As a poet I write a lot about trauma precisely because of this context of growing up in these two worlds. What does it mean when you are a black boy going to an all-white school and you're shamed for speaking an indigenous language? You try in the space of apparent integration, but all that is happening is assimilation. Questioning power, questioning the allocation of resources and lived experience is at the cornerstone of my poetry.

When it comes to the work of the Arts Council, we are looking at how we create opportunities of access and mobility for young people. Even if you are born in poverty, how can you not end up there? How can we have an experience that transforms that starting place? My passion is human development and how we can use arts to leapfrog, confound and accelerate this idea of human development.

People think the arts is on the periphery of our society, of our schools, when we know it's ultimately the essence of human development. Today we are prioritising a greater hegemony around one form of learning and one pedagogical approach, so we have to promote this idea of multiple literacies. We have to look at how we bring back the arts – how do we create a human development scheme around things that are essential to us, so taking care of the planet, deconstructing ideas around the accumulation of money, etc? You have to bring back the arts because they bring us compassion, empathy and love.

3. What does 'contemporary African arts' mean to you?

Let me start with what being an African means to me. What I embrace about being an African is being many things. I can [starts speaking in multiple African languages], the complexity of multiplicity. I love the fact that people will sit here and be like 'how do you even speak 4/5 languages?' That is almost incomprehensible in a European Western context. Africa is many things, African people are many things and African narratives are many. Ultimately, there is a multiplicity on the African continent. I want to use that same sense of multiplicity and bring it into the arts. For me, contemporary African arts is anything that authentically narrates the multiplicity of African stories.

4. Going from your definition of 'contemporary African arts', would you consider your artistic practice to be in this category?

Definitely because I'm rooted in the African experience. It's important that we create critical and collective consciousness around deconstructing and decolonising hegemony. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie spoke about this years ago – the danger of the single story. It's one thing to think things and another to live it. One thing outsiders don't get is how Africans survive on less than a dollar day, how we feel in the midst of conflict and war. As much as people are migrating and leaving the continent and there are many challenges, there are many other stories that need to be told. This idea that humanity needs to have one way is lazy. One way of thinking about somebody is ignorant. You need to put in the time, the work, the love, the spirit and that's the distinguishing factor. It's part of the many narratives.

5. What criteria and factors come into play when you select artistic projects to be supported by the National Arts Fund?

We have a multiple strategy where we are looking at organisations that are already doing the work without our support. We are also looking at how these organisations are going to ensure their development, so their long-term impact. In addition we are looking at one off projects that are not necessarily run by institutions. We're looking at bursaries and sponsoring internships for people who want to go into the industry as arts educators. Ultimately when we're looking at funding we're looking at three things: how we can enhance the industry, how we can strengthen artists and then how we can ensure that the arts educators have an enabling environment, so that the art lovers are able to embrace that kind of deepening of the stories that come out of this creation.

6. Do you have an audience in mind when you are curating/programming contemporary African art or producing your own work?

Initially when I write I think about what I am creating and then I will think about who it is tailored for. If it's a corporate gig and people aren't really art lovers then I'll take that body of work and make it move because it's

also many things – it doesn't just exist in the form it was created in, it moulds, it shapes, it gets broken up, so it lives its own life. I don't change who I am as a person but based on my environment I will adapt.

People need to be cognisant of the power of art for themselves and within their friends, household, community, country, continent and the world – it's layered and you need to understand how that permeates through every level. That is what is beneficial about living in cultures that are multi-cultural, diverse and different – you get a greater experience on the spectrum of how different people's lives are.

7. What audience development strategies have you employed in the past? What worked and what didn't?

The music, comedy and poetry scene has grown tremendously since we started Spoken Word Namibia 12 years ago, so audiences have grown. The art produced is authentic and that has worked, but people need to understand the business aspect. What hasn't worked has been the monetising of the arts and becoming part of global value chains. Kids who could be brilliant don't come into the arts because their parents don't believe in the potential of art for socio-economic mobility. You must be part of a certain network and it's also highly competitive. You also compete at a global level (not just local/national) because art is transnational. We are now looking at how African artists can ensure upward mobility for themselves.

8. How have audiences engaged and responded to your curatorial and creative work thus far?

I used to perform a lot more but then I spent time developing the artists. In Namibia in my time art was on the periphery, so it wasn't about you as an individual artist. The art was about developing the art. We had to create the environment and we prioritised the development of the discipline in the country over our personal development as artists. But you see that changing now with the millennials because they're not concerned about anybody else they're able to propel their careers faster because the environment is more enabling.

9. Have you been involved in collaborations with artists or programmers who were either based in the UK or other locations internationally? If so, what worked well with these collaborations?

I helped the British Council with their 'five cities in Africa' internal report, which looks primarily at partnerships. We have partnered with a lot of American artists – writer MK Asante came through the US embassy programme and we've had support from the US embassy for workshops. The most recent project, in partnership with Goethe, was about redefining public space and we had a six week local and international exhibition and programming at the same time as part of an international tour. We've had artists who have partnered with the Spanish and Portuguese embassies. We've seen a Namibian artist who has sung for the Indian high commissioner. A lot of international collaborations but not with the UK – that's something we would like to see happen. That's why I'm here – I've been running around London making that happen!

10. Looking to the future, what would you consider to be the main challenges and opportunities for African artists and curators?

Let me start with the opportunities. In Africa, you can never run out of content. The issue historically has been the lack of visibility. But what Africa has done well is we have maintained being spirited. I think Africa is at the forefront of teaching the world how to deal with bad leaders, yet having a population that is amazing. When looking at fashion, it is important that the world becomes more colourful. Not just in terms of what it does for your sensory experience, but in terms of those textiles and fashion are embedded in terms of ownership. The opportunity is in the people of Africa, because we have a young population, and the cultural and creative industries provide the cheapest per capita employment opportunity and intervention. The final opportunity is that of identity, post-colonial identities, post-apartheid identities, millennial identities and the intersectionality

of these identities. There is an opportunity in this myriad of versions of the African story. Afro-futurism and how that looks like, science and sci-fi and a range of other things.

The challenge is embedded in the institutions that we have and how they cannot absorb young people and create opportunities for them. This will create further instability and can enhance violence on the continent. There is also the issue of elite capture. There are also societal issues that must be addressed, such as gender-based violence, the killing of minorities such as people living with albinism, how we talk about marginalized communities, how we ensure orphans are taken care of, how we enhance the intangible cultural heritage embedded in indigenous communities, and so on. What we do in the next ten years is going to give us the opportunity to create or destroy the African continent.

11. How do you see African contemporary arts and culture and the creative industries developing in the next five years?

I make the argument that arts are going to become a cornerstone of economic and trade strategies. From the economic side, we will see a change in trade strategies from regional bodies such as SADC, ECOWAS and COMESA. We will see a lot of private equity investment and infrastructural development, moving from roads and basic needs to theatres, cinema and fashion, taking local fashion designers to scale because they know they can produce for a large global value chain. The danger there also is the opportunity for exploitation, because people who are exploitative can smell out opportunity so again we have to make sure that Africans own things.

On the social front, I think art is going to penetrate places it has never been before and that's going to change the conversation at a community, national and international level. People will see themselves in spaces that they did not see themselves before. You will see African writers taking the fore-front because they are able to deal with complexity. The world is only dealing with complexity now and this is going to make it go haywire. From an identity perspective, even now it is cooler to wear lot of African clothes. Identity-wise, it's going to help people come into themselves. 30 -40 years ago people struggled with being called African, it was a term of insult. These days you see the penetration of Afrobeats star Davido making the USA top 40 for the first time for an African artist. Africa will take its rightful place.

12. What contemporary African and African diaspora artists are you most inspired by and why?

I have a problem with the question because it promotes tokenism. I prefer that we look at it from a 'We' perspective rather than an 'I' perspective. Picking favourites feels counter-intuitive to my spirit because at this point we need to realise that there are many who are writers, artists and arts managers. It takes a village to raise a child and it's been the cumulative effort of a lot of these artists that I have met and the people that manage them, which inspires me.

13. Is there anything else you might like to share/add?

Development takes place a various levels and one is focusing on spiritual, intellectual and emotional development. It is important to know about our own abilities and our own inabilities and fuel the ones that work for us, if you have a car but you don't have fuel you won't get anywhere. And fuel for a large part is the spirit. How do we mainstream that and take it to scale? How do we sustain human development? We need to start talking about issues such as digital dementia and how the overuse leads to and overproduction of hormones in your brain and how we are not regulating it like we do drugs and alcohol? We should learn a lot about the opportunity cost of things that we are promoting.

TOURIA EL GLAOUI

FOUNDING DIRECTOR, 1-54 AFRICAN ART FAIR

Interviewed via email by Sheila Ruiz



1. Please introduce yourself, what is your background working in the arts? What is your motivation?

I was surrounded by art and artists from a very young age as my father, Hassan El Glaoui was a painter. His work was a consistent part of my childhood, I distinctly remember taking family photographs in his studio and alongside work hung in our home in Morocco. My father provided me with an art history education that instilled in me a consistent interest in the arts. I also helped my father put together an exhibition at Leighton House, in the UK. While doing so, I realised how important connections and the availability of platforms was to the success of his work in the international market. This all happened alongside my travelling across Africa for my career in telecoms. When I travelled for work I was also visiting galleries and artist studios and realising there were very few platforms open to the work, or specifically for work from Africa beyond its geographic borders. This frustrated me and motivated me to start 1-54 Contemporary African Art Fair.

The art fair started in London in 2013 and we now have editions in New York and Marrakech. It is a space and platform for galleries from across the world to show work by artists from Africa and its diaspora. Alongside the galleries, we have 1-54 FORUM, a talks programme of cross-disciplinary and intergenerational discussions. With every fair there is also a series of Special Projects, which supports gallery and not-for-profit collaboration for the realisation of significant projects with selected artists.

2. How would you describe the current visual arts scene in Africa and its diaspora?

There have always been vibrant art scenes in Africa and its diaspora, however, until now they have had very little recognition from the international contemporary art scene in Europe and the US. Reasons for this include archaic narratives and strict ideas about what an art scene or market should or should not be like. Of course, art scenes across the continent have grown and flourished regardless, with artists producing exceptional and high-quality work.

Important to note, the question insinuates that there is a single visual arts scene in Africa and the diaspora, but there are numerous scenes. Africa is made up of 54 countries all with their own milieus and a multiplicity of voices, and even within each country there are multiple, interconnected and dynamic art scenes with numerous voices, this is of course the same in the diaspora.

3. Can you tell us about the beginnings of 1–54 Contemporary African Art Fair? What were your inspirations?

I first envisioned 1–54 as an itinerant fair that would be held in a different country on the continent annually. As I worked on my idea, I realised that there were too many variables for it to be a successful platform for visibility and that getting to know each scene and being in a place to support it as those in it would want us to, was not realistic. I also began to realise the importance of a large and existing collector base to provide the work, artists and galleries with support. These collector bases are primarily in Europe and the US which is partly why our first edition in 2013 was held in Somerset House, London.

4. In your TED Talk, you speak about the power of art as a 'transformative narrative device' Could you expand on this further and its significance to Africa?

The narratives surrounding Africa, in Europe and the US more specifically, are full of pre-conceived notions that homogenise the nuanced and multifaceted diversity of the continent. The most dynamic way of confronting and changing this is if new narratives are told and they are told by people from the continent and the diaspora. Art can present realities, themes and knowledge in a way nothing else can quite achieve, which is why I think it such a strong means to counter old narratives and foster new ones.

5. What criteria and factors come into play when selecting and curating pieces for exhibition?

From our perspective, as an art fair, we ask every gallery to submit a proposal. We have a very experienced selection committee that analyses every proposal. Principal to our criteria is of course quality, but equally, are the galleries and Special Projects responsive to their present conditions? Do they operate beyond their direct locality? These are important to us because we want to encourage the development of critical discourse. We want the fair to be a space where there is insightful and sincere engagement, rather than a space focused solely on the selling of work.

6. What would you consider to be the common challenges faced by curators of African arts?

The biggest challenge comes from the discourse surrounding contemporary African and diasporic art, which is still in its infancy compared to the Western canon. There are inequalities and repressive notions that are put upon work from the continent and diaspora, whether relevant or not to the work. Although curators want to converse with these issues, they often get pressured into curating about them from institutions who cannot see beyond them. This is frustrating for curators and artists as these discourses can and often detract viewers from looking at the work as pieces of art first and foremost.

7. What contemporary African artists or projects are you most inspired by?

RAW Material Company, Senegal

Zeitz MOCAA, South Africa

MACAAL, Morocco

Yinka Shonibare's Guest Projects Lagos

8. Could you provide examples of your collaborative work with artists and galleries on the African continent? What worked well in these collaborations?

Collaboration is essential to 1-54's success. As we are a small fair every edition is unique and speaks to the location's history and relationship to the continent. This is vital for an atmosphere that encourages the growth of critical discourse. In order to speak to the location's history and relationship to the continent, we work with existing spaces and projects conversing with this discourse around the time of the fair in the city we are preparing for.

From the beginning we have worked and collaborated with artists and galleries from the continent. As a fair that focuses on providing visibility for galleries and artists from Africa and its diaspora, this is intrinsic to us. This has ranged from supporting funding applications, to establishing connections between galleries based in Europe or the US to those based in Africa or the diaspora in order for them to exchange their spaces and connections. For example, a gallery in Addis collaborating with a gallery in London to make use of their London space.

Collaboration is a particular focus of our Special Projects which runs alongside every edition and promotes the involvement of not-for-profit art spaces. A collaboration has gone well if it goes beyond the space of the fair and continues once the edition of the fair has finished. For example, we connect Somerset House with an artist from the continent to orchestrate an exhibition that opens during the fair and stays up for the following three months. This collaboration provides more regular support and visibility for artists beyond the fair and the exhibitions have proven to be very successful for Somerset House in terms of audience and visitors. This is exciting because it shows there is an audience that wants to see the work even when we are not there, a more popular audience who is not coming to specifically see a fair or an African artist. This year, the collaboration culminated in Athi-Patra Ruga's first major UK solo-exhibition, 'Of Gods, Rainbows and Omissions.'

WANURI KAHIU

FILMMAKER

Interviewed via phone by Caitlin Pearson.



1. Please introduce yourself. What is your background working in the arts, what is your motivation?

I'm a filmmaker, I began by going to film school. I knew that I wanted to be a director so I did internships and anything that allowed me to be part of that industry.

2. How did the idea of 'Afrobubblegum' come about?

I've always wanted to represent the Africa that I know, so my work has always been 'Afrobubblegum' – fun, fierce and frivolous. Firstly it was borne from imagination, and it always had fun at the centre. I've always looked for joy at the centre of people's experiences, that's something I am naturally drawn to. I've never been drawn to devastation or despair. Well...there is some dark stuff I have loved in my past, but as far the creation of my own work, I knew I wanted to focus on Afrobubblegum.

3. Could you speak about your involvement with the Africa Nouveau festival?

I work as a curator for them, and I help to imagine different ways of doing the festival. They have adopted Afrobubblegum as their ethos, the basic concept of the way they want to run their festival moving forward. We work as a group – music, fashion, food, film, art. Once the leaders of the festival have set an agenda, the curators come in to add our thoughts and build the world of the festival.

It's one of the most fascinating collaboration processes because it's a group, and everyone involved is open to listening and adopting ideas. Meetings include the architects, the design people, the organisers, programmers, vendors, and together we speak about the vision and how to implement it. It's a cross-cultural collaboration that works really well.

4. Why did you feel it was important to be involved?

Before they asked me, I absolutely loved what they were doing and fully supported them. The founders were co-collaborators of the idea and the genre of Afrobubblegum, so it's always been simple to be involved with them because I believe in what they do and how they do it.

5. Why is programming contemporary African arts important?

It's curating now-ness of what Africa is and what it can be.

6. What criteria and factors come into play when programming contemporary African work? Thinking about Africa Nouveau particularly

We curate according to the theme and look for art that is reflective of that theme. It does not only include contemporary art, but it's important to include art that has been created in the past but still speaks to the theme. Because for art, especially on this continent, time has never been a restraint. It takes from the past, it uses incredibly current methods and then changes and mesomorphs in various ways.

7. Is the concept of 'Afrobubblegum' part of an artistic context in which you exist? Can you speak about some of the other artists that have fed into this / are working in this way?

The moment we started to think about Afrobubblegum as a genre we started to see other artists who aligned with this, and even more, other artists who define their work in this way. As it evolves it is continuously being influenced by new work. Some examples are

Dennis Osedebe, Nigerian mixed-media artist

Laetitia Ky, Ivorian hair braids sculptor

Muthoni Drummer Queen, Kenyan musician and founder & CEO of Blankets & Wine festival

hajooj kuka, Sudanese filmmaker (Akasha, Beats of the Antananov)

African Film, A Nigerian photo comics magazine, published between 1968 and 1972

8. When you're thinking about audiences as a curator, rather than a filmmaker, does it shift your mind-set? In your curatorial group for Africa Nouveau are you discussing the audiences?

When we have those meetings, there's at least 10 or 15 of us. We all listen to the same music, all our friends and all of their friends listen to the same music. So, we are truly creating for ourselves and know people will enjoy it. You can never predict who will come to enjoy themselves at the event. I think we were constantly surprised by the people who showed up.

For festivals you're also curating for people who can afford to go. Unless it's public art, curation definitely implies some amount of privilege.

9. Tell us about an example of a collaboration you think worked well?

My favourite co-collaborator is Nnedi Okorafor. I love the way we work and bounce ideas off of each other. I love the ways we're able to push each other, and find new ways of dissecting the same thing.

We always have different perspectives on things but we both resonate. If one of us comes up with a good story

idea, we become attached to that, to the point where we're not even sure who originated the idea. There's a beautiful dance of putting project above ego. And it always creates a stronger story in the end.

10. What three things would you recommend when going into a collaborative project?

- Trust the person you're working with, and respect them as an artist.
- Listen and be open. It doesn't hurt to be silent, to truly just listen and hear everything with an open mind.
- Document the early stages of the creation process, i.e. ownership and responsibilities.

11. Where do you see the programming of contemporary African arts going?

There is such a want to hold Africa in a static sense. We have a habit of referring to the past over the present, even when there's such a 'now-ness' and progression in Africa. So even where spaces like museums hold past work, these same spaces need to hold reflections of who we are now. It is important to acknowledge the evolution of Africa in art and culture, as much as we preserve the past.

12. What contemporary African artists are you most inspired by and why?

I can't say 'most' because it's always changing, but some of them at the moment are:

Osborne Macharia – revolutionary digital artist, Kenya. I love the way he thinks and he pushes limits

Nnedi Okorafor – continuously imaging spaces and let go of past concepts of what Africa is or can be

Jim Chuchu – filmmaker, The Nest Collective, Kenya

13. How do you see your work/practice developing in the next five years?

As an Afrobubblegum curator I want to discover more and create those links between art and people within the continent. As a filmmaker I want to continue to make good work that is Afrobubblegum; that is a joyous experience of people of colour – that's my role.

WESLEY RUZIBIZA

FOUNDING DIRECTOR, EAST AFRICAN NIGHTS OF TOLERANCE

Interviewed in person by Marcelle Mateki Akita.



1. Please introduce yourself, what is your background working in the arts? What is your current motivation?

My name is Ruzibiza Wesley. I am Rwandese. I live in Kigali but was born in the Congo and grew up between the East African countries. I started doing arts as a past time in university, taking theatre classes and having fun with my friends. I also used to do art back in the secondary school, but how I decided to do art as a professional artist in general, is totally another story.

During my time at University of Rwanda, I used to go to the Centre for Arts and Drama which was created after the genocide for the purpose of enhancing and promoting Rwandan arts. The centre hosted art workshops including dance training, theatre, painting and audio visual. It was pretty much the pioneer of [fostering] Rwandan art post-genocide. The centre was created by Chadian writer Koulsy Lamko with the former rector of National University of Rwanda Dr Emile Rwamasirabo.

When I definitely moved back to Rwanda in 1999, I was still conflicted about the history of genocide and did not want to engage with the reality of what had happened. I [struggled to] relate with my own country so art re-acquainted me with this place that was full of sorrow, yet also full of hope and youth. The centre filled the knowledge gaps [both in] books and the news in telling Rwanda's story.

I started seeing the changes art was making in my community and began dancing professionally in 2004. You asked earlier about my motivation, and it was to be part of the change. Growing up as a refugee in many countries and has given me a different viewpoint of the world. I wanted to be the bridge to many cultures and [contribute towards] creating a loving, more tolerant society, to prevent the disasters of the past.

2. What does 'contemporary African arts' mean to you?

We live in a continent that is recreating itself every day. Within that is the heritage that we have from the colonial era, the struggle for independence, and contemporary African art shows what Africa is today. Art that is open to technology and development. Contemporary dance is a dance of today. It recreates itself from our culture and what's outside our continent. It also represents your ideas of today, of now and of the world. Just like the word contemporary, it means the ideas of today.

3. Why is programming contemporary African arts important to you?

It is important that Africans see and appreciate contemporary dance on the continent. As it stands, contemporary African arts is consumed more abroad than it is in Africa. I am a perfect example of that. I perform 80% of my shows in Europe and not in Rwanda. Yet this work is inspired by my culture and this part of the world. It is imperative that we inspire a public that is interested and inspired by what we have here.

Unfortunately there are many challenges, such as funding, and contemporary art has to compete with many other economic priorities in our society thus contemporary art remains to be the poor kid of the family. But it should be prioritised because without art life would be bland. Art can be an investment; it can boost economic growth and be a tool for conflict resolution. Contemporary artists should feel like their work is valued here at home and not just abroad by foreigners.

4. Going from your definition of 'contemporary African arts', what criteria and factors come into play when programming?

As director of East African Nights of Tolerance (EANT) festival, I want to programme original plays that people can understand and connect to. I look for original, locally inspired pieces with a contemporary format. For instance, Germaine Acogny in Senegal pioneered new techniques of ballet using traditional inspiration. The core was ballet with aspects related to the African body. Those kinds of work are more interesting and original. You can look outside for inspiration, but make it your own so that you can be the best at it. Avoid mere imitation. Europe also draws inspiration from Africa. Reliability and originality is my main criteria. I am happy to mix cultures. I am only against simply copying the work of others.

5. The theme for East African Nights of Tolerance (EANT) 2018 was 'POLITICAL BODY'. What were you hoping the festival achieve by choosing this theme?

Dance is a universal language. You can construct what you want to see in this world through dance. A lot is happening in East African politics, including war and elections, and young people are not involved. We wanted to give young people a platform and freedom to politically speak with their bodies through dance. Dance is a common language. English and French are not our languages and sometimes our local languages are not commonly used.

We had performances focused on women empowerment and critiquing corruption in Congo where everyone benefits, but the Congolese. We had a piece focused on identity as a source of conflict in Burundi. There were also pieces advocating ethnic diversity. We have international and regional teams coming together and language becomes less important, they are unified by dance.

6. Tell us about the Wakisha dance group featured at EANT in 2018. What was the significance of their inclusion and the training programme provided?

In the West there are a lot of women who dance professionally, but that is not the case in Africa. For many women who get married the husband no longer wants to see them on stage. We had amazing Rwandan women

dancers who were adamant to create a group and that's how we started a dancing coaching programme specifically for women.

We brought Katarina from Uganda, who came with her experience and put together a piece about queens and women empowerment. They became 'Wakisha', the first women's dance group. It was successful and Katrina coached the dancers whose age ranges from 19 to 23. We wanted to empower women to see dance as a career choice and not just as a hobby. It went really well and brought a lot of energy with it. It was a small project with limited funds but they all fought to make it happen. They are still in the field and they are still pushing the dance piece. Two of the dancers are in training and the other two are in the School Awareness Dance programme.

7. Did you have an audience in mind for EANT? If so, who are they and why?

It has been a long journey and we are content with where we are. From 200 to 1500 people coming every night. When we started in 2012 we had a very limited audience. For the first show we only had European and African-American expats in the room, so we took the festival to universities, public spaces and orphanages. We wanted to build future audiences. When we started people did not understand what we were doing, but people are beginning to see the impact of the festival and the workshops. Now 80% of our audience is local. The challenge will be to see if people will stay if we charge a fee.

We have built a new community of professional and semi-professional dancers. All styles of dance, hip hop, street dance and traditional dance are all part of our network. We have 8 instructors across the country teaching people in urban and in remote areas.

We are creating a new base of future artists. We have a link between East African countries with our audience growing in the region. I created a program to establish dialogue between Congo and Rwanda and we started working with young people in the DRC. We are very proud that our former trainee, Faraja Batumike, set up the Goma Dance festival. We have a dance school in Tanzania and a dance festival in Uganda. There are many challenges but we are making connections in the region and finding new audiences. We want our platform to represent East Africa and present it to the world. This year EANT will be happening in Congo – depending on funding, we hope the event will be a success.

8. What have been your audience development strategies? What worked and what didn't?

Our audience development aim was to expose, as much contemporary dance to the public as possible. It is believed to be elitist and that regular people will not understand it. So the idea was to dispel the stereotypes and incorporate post-show talks and interactive sessions to allow audiences the chance to ask questions and connect with the art form. The other strategy is to host workshops for practitioners to understand how to produce professional art. This training is critical because we don't have dance or theatre schools here. The more we expose future artists to workshops and training, the more we prepare them for future audiences.

We also wanted to get into schools and prisons, but there is a lot of bureaucracy when it comes to presenting in those spaces. It took us seven years to start working in schools. We are now asking schools to include dance into the curriculum and also have a dance club. Our plans are to create a contemporary dance interschool competition.

9. You announced a new formula for the festival in 2018. The format moving from a performance platform showcasing contemporary African dance, from the East and Central regions of the continent, to a training oriented and capacity building programme. What does this entail? Was the decision inspired by audience feedback or was this a gap you and the team identified as needing to be addressed?

It's actually both. We received feedback from people requesting the festival happens more than once a year and asked us to make more things happen. Funders mentioned they want to see impact in other areas and it was our desire to channel funds into the community. A lot of money went towards travel for international artists, so creating shorter inexpensive programs would strengthen our presence in the local community. From the small budget we have, 90% will stay in the local community and make it more accessible.

Our funding has not increased and the last reason was to save the festival. We are working with less and less funding. The challenge is to find new sources of funding. We are focused on creating a strong community of local artists, capacity building and providing opportunities to regional artists. Capacity building gives people the right tools. In the next ten years I am hoping to retire from programming, and I want programs to be readily available and locally made. Funders will see the impact and outreach from their support.

10. What contemporary African artists are you most inspired by and why?

I am inspired by Germaine Acogny, former director of L'Ecole des Sables, who set up one of the biggest dance training centres in Senegal with very limited resources. I did most of my training in her school. She was adamant that all artists learn for free.

I also love reading. I love Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, I love the way she writes about tradition. In Rwanda I love Odile Gakire Katese, former director of the University Centre for Arts and Drama, she opened doors for all of us and showed us the way. Also, theatre director and performer Dorcy Ingeli Rugamba. I love his work. There are many young people looking to make a change, not looking for fame or fortune, but those who want to change the image of Africa. I am also inspired by them.

17/ RESOURCES

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

[Creating an Effective Audience Development Plan](#)

The Audience Agency

[The 'R' Word](#)

Eclipse Theatre's Report on Audience Development & UK Programming (2018)

[Open Up – Museums for Everyone](#)

Association of Independent Museums, Museums Association, Arts Council England, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Division of the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland, National Museums Northern Ireland, and the Heritage Lottery Fund. (2018)

COLLABORATIONS

[International Collaborations Toolkit for Young People Report](#)

Makeshift Ensemble (July 2016)

DIVERSITY

[Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case: A Data Report, 2017-2018](#)

Arts Council England (2019)

[Permission to Stare – Arts and Disability](#)

International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts and British Council (2017)

[Writing the Future](#)

Spread the Word (2015)

FUNDING

[An online cultural mobility funding guide for Africa](#)

Art Moves Africa, the British Council, On the Move (2018)

MAPPING

[Art Connects Us: Sub-Saharan Africa Arts & the UK](#)

British Council (2018)

[British Council's Sub-Saharan Africa Arts programme](#)

[Mapping Dance of the African Diaspora in the UK](#)

One Dance UK (2018)

with

[HOTFOOT- Dance of the African Diaspora](#)

One Dance UK (2018)

[Understanding the Festival Scene in Nigeria](#)

British Council (2016)

[Best Practice Guide for the Visual Arts in South Africa](#)

Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA) (2016)

[Scoping the East African Arts Sector](#)

British Council (2014-2018)

[Cultural Skills research summary – Sub-Saharan Africa](#)

British Council (2018)

VISAS

[Applying for a UK visa in Africa – Frequently Asked Questions](#)

UK Visas & Immigration (2018)

[Key findings from parliamentary meeting on UK Visa refusals for African visitors](#)

The Royal African Society (2019)

ABOUT THE ROYAL AFRICAN SOCIETY

The Royal African Society is a membership organisation that provides opportunities for people to connect, celebrate and engage critically with a wide range of topics and ideas about Africa today. Through events, publications and digital channels it shares insight, instigates debate and facilitates mutual understanding between the UK and Africa. The society amplifies African voices and interests in academia, business, politics, the arts and education, reaching a network of more than one million people globally.



Royal African Society

www.royalafriansociety.org

ABOUT THE BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.



www.britishcouncil.org/arts/partner/sub-saharan-africa