



# Rethinking Cosmopolitanism

## Africa in Europe | Europe in Africa

An International Symposium  
Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz, Berlin, Germany  
February 2/3, 2013 | 10-19H | Free admission

In English | Simultaneous  
translation English/German

The two day conference “Rethinking Cosmopolitanism: Africa in Europe | Europe in Africa” will revisit the intersection of modernity and decolonization.

Decolonization has led to the rise of a new international order, which in turn continues to challenge and expose the insufficiency of classic concepts and definitions of modernity, culture, art and politics. Focusing on the reconfiguration of these concepts within the notion of cosmopolitanism, the conference will consider the consequences of the historical, cultural, and artistic entanglement of Africa and Europe.

The conference will revisit mid-Twentieth century debates through this prism of cosmopolitanism, invoking its potential as a notion that implies the possibilities of mutual co-existence and living with difference. Cosmopolitanism is conceived here to indicate the need for members of any community to imagine entities other than their own locales or national boundaries that will be more inclusive on a global scale.

Hence, cosmopolitanism is perceived as a metaphor for mobility, migrancy, and co-existence with difference, in opposition to parochialism, xenophobia, fixity, and limited notions of sovereignty. In that sense, the focus will be on the anti-hegemonic and anti-

homogenizing potential of cosmopolitanism, in opposition to power as it has been associated with western imperial tendencies, transnational capital, and its corollary neoliberal economic policies. Cosmopolitanism is also perceived as a pursuit of peace through developing a strong sense of ethics and moral obligation towards other human beings everywhere.

An important focus of the conference will be the practice of artists who can no longer be classified and located either inside or outside the ‘west,’ or as occupying an in-between space. In that sense, the conference seeks to establish a platform for knowledge production to fill in the glaring gaps in understanding the cultural and political dynamics of a world in motion, and to focus on unearthing the root causes and consequences of new migrations in Africa and Europe.

Finally, in re-conceptualizing cosmopolitanism, as articulated above, even the apparently adequate conceptual ideas of ‘European,’ ‘Western’ or ‘African’ art may no longer be helpful. Perhaps these terms need to be dismissed, in order to open up a space of debate. This conference will consider more adequate definitions of current art practices and their respective ways of envisaging and defining their relationship to distinct, but unevenly connected worlds.

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**Rethinking Cosmopolitanism**  
**Africa in Europe | Europe in Africa**

An International Symposium | Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz 4 | Berlin, Germany  
February 2/3, 2013 | 10-19H | Free admission | In English | Simultaneous translation English/German  
Symposium Coordinator: Salah M. Hassan | Co-Coordinators: Joachim Bernauer, Jürgen Bock  
Organization: Goethe-Institut (Lisbon) | Collaborating Institutions: Akademie der Künste (Berlin),  
Maumaus School of Visual Arts (Lisbon), Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM) Cornell University |  
Supported by: Allianz Cultural Foundation

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**Program**

**Saturday | February 2, 2013**

**Rethinking Cosmopolitanism and the Entanglement of Africa and Europe**  
**Theoretical and Historical Implications****10:00 Opening Session**

*Johannes Odenthal* Welcoming Remarks  
*Joachim Bernauer* Welcoming Remarks  
*Salah M. Hassan* Introductory Remarks

**10:30 Europe/Africa, and Universal History**

*Susan Buck-Morss* Hegel, Haiti and Universal History: A Response to the Critics  
*Siegfried Zielinski* »Means & Seas«  
Discussants *Tejumola Olaniyan, Manuela Ribeiro Sanches*

**12:30 Artist Talk (I)**

*Bahia Shehab* Practicing Art in Revolutionary Times

13:00 Lunch Break

**14:30 Dislocating Africa and Europe**

*Achille Mbembe* Provincializing France?  
*Manuela Ribeiro Sanches* Decolonizing Post-National Europe: Some Thoughts on Nationalism and  
Cosmopolitanism  
Discussants *Fatima El Tayeb, Jeanette S. Jouili*

16:30 Coffee Break

**17:00 Europe: From Modernism to Postcolonialism**

*Hans Belting* When was Modern Art? The Museum of Modern Art and the History of  
Modernism  
*Fatima El Tayeb* European Others: Whiteness and Racial Violence in Colorblind Europe  
Discussants *Susan Buck-Morss, Achille Mbembe*

Sunday | February 3, 2013

**Africa in Europe | Europe in Africa**  
**Cultural and Artistic Practices and the Politics of Representation**

10:30 **Rethinking Cosmopolitanism: Cultural and Artistic Practices**

*Sandy Prita Meier* East African Cosmopolitanism as the Space Between  
*Tejumola Olaniyan* Cosmopolitan Interest Rates: An Itinerary  
Discussants *Elisabeth Giorgis, Salah Hassan*

12:30 **Artist Talk (II)**

*Berni Searle* On Cosmopolitanism, Xenophobia and Migration: An Artist's Journey

13:00 Lunch break

14:30 **Rethinking Cosmopolitanism: Visual and Performing Arts**

*Salah Hassan* Rethinking Cosmopolitanism: Is 'Afropolitan' The Answer?  
*Jeanette S. Jouili* Fashioning cosmopolitan citizens in Britain: Islam and Urban culture after  
Multiculturalism  
Discussants *Leonhard Emmerling, Peter Weibel*

16:30 Coffee break

17:00 **Curating Africa in Europe/Europe in Africa**

*Selene Wendt* Africa in Oslo: Bringing Afropolitanism to the Polar Circle  
*Elisabeth Giorgis* Re-thinking Ethiopian Modernism  
Discussants *Jürgen Bock, Elvira Dyangani Ose*

19:00 **Closing Session**

*Salah Hassan*

- subject to change -

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**Abstracts**

*Hans Belting*

**When was Modern Art? The Museum of Modern Art and the History of Modernism**

It is my intention to reconstruct the creation of the discourse of Modernism in the art world and prove that the MoMA in New York was most instrumental for establishing the myth of Modernism which at the same time, in the 1930s, was about to be abolished by the political situation in Europe. Thus, paradoxically, Europe received its own myth of modern art, back from a US institution, which was created for this purpose. It is important to acknowledge the fabrication of Modernism at a time when usually Western Modernism is seen as a given to be bypassed in the meanwhile by other modernities.

*Susan Buck-Morss*

**Hegel, Haiti and Universal History: A Response to the Critics**

Universal History is a method, a practice of theorizing, not an ontological claim. The fact that the Haitian Revolution inspired Hegel's dialectic of master and slave allows us to think the historical logic of freedom differently. The point is not just to provide a less Eurocentric narrative of the past but rather, to transform our own historical imagination. It argues that keeping cultures intact cannot be the *sine qua non* of political ethics. The abolition of slavery is a gift that the slaves of Saint-Domingue bequeathed, intentionally, to all of humanity. This model suggests a communist mode of inheriting the past that has the capacity to alter the structure of collective memory.

*Fatima El Tayeb*

### **European Others. Whiteness and Racial Violence in Colorblind Europe**

This talk aims at deconstructing the narrative of “raceblindness” at the center of Europe’s post-World War II self-image. I argue that this image not only defines how Europe envisions its place in the contemporary world, but also shapes narratives of Europe’s past, in particular of colonialism, which is largely perceived as having no lasting impact on the continent itself. This externalization of “race” from Europe also means that racialized (i.e. non-white/non-Christian) Europeans are positioned as not belonging, as permanently “just arriving” (as expressed in terms like “3rd generation migrant” commonly used across the continent). I propose that the reappropriation of postcolonial and African diaspora discourse by European artists and activists of color successfully challenges these narratives of exclusion and that it is particularly important to recognize the political potential in this vernacular art and activism that originates in the very same urban communities that have become the prime target of the latest stage of Europe’s clash with its Others.

*Elizabeth Giorgis*

### **Re-thinking Ethiopian Modernism**

The debates and parameters of the last two decades in African modernism have given us a critical paradigm with which we can interrogate how the history and culture of Africa engaged the larger context of modernism. Complex aesthetic, political and philosophical questions continue to dominate discussions of African modernity and modernism navigating the specific complexities of the legacy of colonialism. Certainly, the intervention of these debates has deployed African modernism as a distinct category that took on the task of clarifying the complex and contradictory relationship of colonialism and modernity. What are contentious are that those ideas which articulate the experiences of coloniality have also frequently overshadowed the significance of distinct and variegated narratives of the experiences of coloniality. The riches of interiority ultimately call for a new kind of intellectual enterprise to consider the immeasurable archives that have structured disparate experiences, intellectual trajectories as well as contrasting social and cultural practices. The agency of change is located within the postcolony’s critical insights and discursive space of class, gender and political structure, as well as the economic and psychological degradation infected by new and different forms of coloniality, which ultimately convey the complexities of knowledge positioned in the postcolony. It is within this framework of interiority that I also want to decode the social and political thought of Ethiopian modernism.

*Salah Hassan*

### **Rethinking Cosmopolitanism: Is ‘Afropolitan’ The Answer?**

The field of contemporary African and African Diaspora art and culture is currently riddled by two paradoxes: On the one hand, in Africa and its diaspora we are witnessing a burgeoning of creative energy and an increasing visibility of artists in the international arenas. Yet such energy and visibility has not been matched with a parallel regime of art criticism that lives up to their levels. On the other hand, we find a rising interest in exhibiting and collecting works by contemporary African and Diaspora artists among western

museums, private and public collections. However, such interest has been taking place within a xenophobic environment of anti-immigration legislations and closing of borders in the west. This paper addresses the need for an innovative framework to provide the critical unpacking of such paradoxes, and to offer a critical analysis of contemporary African and African diaspora artistic production. In doing so, the paper asserts the importance of movement, mobility, and transiency in addressing issues of contemporary African artistic and cultural production. The paper focuses on the use of the term “Afropolitan,” which has made its way into African artistic and literary criticism as a crossover from the fashion and popular culture arena. In thinking about the usefulness of “Afropolitanism”, the paper revisits the notion of “cosmopolitanism” in relationship to the entanglement of Africa and the West and its reconfiguration at the intersection of modernity and postcoloniality.

*Jeanette S. Jouli*

### **Fashioning cosmopolitan citizens in Britain: Islam and Urban culture after Multiculturalism**

After the attacks of 9/11 and 7/7, multiculturalism in Europe has come increasingly under attack for not sufficiently addressing integration or social cohesion, implying that multiculturalism has implicitly enabled the growth of Islamic extremism within Western Europe. Several European intellectuals have voiced similar assessments. The different debates triggered by these critiques center notably on the question of the legitimate limits of cultural difference within liberal democratic societies and the call for the necessity of some shared values. In the academic circles, this has led to a recent (re-) flourishing of conceptualizations of cosmopolitanism. Among national governments, it has resulted in more assertive affirmations of the necessity to defend liberal values that migrant communities need to endorse. This presentation will look at the specific case of recent governmental techniques in the UK that seek to shape a new generation of young, cosmopolitan and moderate Muslims through culture and the arts.

*Achille Mbembe*

### **Provincializing France?**

In the rest of the world, the “postcolonial turn” in the social sciences and humanities took place nearly a quarter century ago. Since then, the method or style of critique associated with that movement has influenced myriad political, epistemological, institutional, and disciplinary debates in the United States, the United Kingdom, and regions across the Southern Hemisphere (South America, Australia, New Zealand, the Indian subcontinent, and South Africa). From its inception, postcolonial studies has been interpreted in extremely diverse ways; over time, it has spawned robust waves of polemic and controversy, not to mention the many objections, each contradicting the previous, that continue today. It has also given rise to an abundance of profoundly rich and tremendously divergent intellectual, political, and aesthetic practices – so much so that one might earnestly ask where the unity of “postcolonial studies” lies. But despite this logic of segmentation, one can assert that, at its core, the object of postcolonial critique is best described in terms of *the interlacing of histories and the concatenation of distinct worlds*. Given that slavery and especially colonization (but also migrations, the ordering of sex and sexuality, and the circulation of forms, imaginaries,

goods, ideas, and people) played such decisive roles in this process of human collision and entanglement, it is logical that postcolonial studies has made them the privileged objects of its inquiry.

*Sandy Prita Meier*

### **East African Cosmopolitanism as the Space Between**

In established studies of African modernity, the deployment of Western image-making technologies such as photography is often narrated as the “localization” of a “global” form. But I suggest the very interpretative framework of modernity cannot fully account for the ways coastal cultures of east Africa co-created ways of being that are today celebrated as an expression of a “local” modernity. I contend that the Swahili ideal of living in a “cosmopolis” was not formed in the crucible of European imperialism, global capitalism, or even decolonization. Rather, residents of east Africa’s principal Indian Ocean port cities have long constructed their world as a nexus of multiple ways of being, where objects and spaces of the “elsewhere” converge. In order to move beyond the “localization” model in the study of modernity, I consider how the instant popularity of portrait photography in Zanzibar, Lamu and Mombasa in the late nineteenth century was in fact the reification of ancient mercantile cultures that privileged the ability to mirror and master fragments of the “foreign.” This paper therefore does not focus so much on how “global” forms were “localized,” but rather questions what happens when Swahili practices of appropriation meet the appropriative systems of the North Atlantic world.

*Tejumola Olaniyan*

### **Cosmopolitan Interest Rates: An Itinerary**

A historical and critical inquiry into the intersections of cosmopolitanism in thinking and practice, and interests and rates of interest. An insistence on the necessity of this kind of task as precondition for any proposition or hope of cosmopolitanism as anything but conserving and entrenching of what already exists.

*Manuela Ribeiro Sanches*

### **Decolonizing Post-National Europe. Some Thoughts on Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism**

The economic crisis which is traversing Europe and the way in which poverty predominantly located in the South is expanding into the peripheral zones of ‘the old continent,’ introduces new challenges and conflicts that risk jeopardizing the European ‘cosmopolitan’ project. New forms of ethnic absolutism and racism are emerging in the areas subject to structural adjustments and neoliberal policies, a situation that theories of hybridity and multiculturalism seem to be unable to deal with. Speaking from a Portuguese perspective, my paper proposes a rereading of two anti-colonial authors – Franz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral – to test the way in which their nationalist and pan-African utopias may help decolonize Europe and dislocate the ways in which it defines itself at the level of its nation-states as well as its Eurocentric cosmopolitan project. In other words, can the crisis contribute to a renewed understanding of Europe and its histories, namely its colonial pasts? What can one learn from anti-colonial thinking in post-colonial times?

*Berni Searle*

### **On Cosmopolitanism, Xenophobia and Migration: An Artist's Journey**

This presentation will look at various bodies of my work, travelling from Spain, to the The Canary Islands and South Africa that can be seen to be in dialogue with each other and in dialogue with the focus of this conference. These bodies of works address the complexities of what borders might signify in different contexts, but also acknowledges that wherever one might be located, the tendency and need for people to ceaselessly seek sites of refuge is shared.

*Bahia Shehab*

### **Practicing Art in Revolutionary Times**

The rise of the Egyptian revolution and the Arab citizen’s democratic uprising-known as the Arab Spring- has ushered a new path in all arenas of creativity and public life including the visual arts. Artists, like other sectors of society in Egypt, have played a significant role not only in political mobilization, but also in opening up new possibilities of artistic practices. Yet, two years into the Egyptian revolution, people are still being shot at, tear gassed, and brutally beaten on the streets. Despite the façade of a democratic election that brought the first post revolution president, activists are still targeted, corruption is still rampant in most government institutions. In this brief presentation, I hope to reflect on my own artistic practice in the context of a changing society and in revolutionary times. I will offer a perspective on how my own work has been transformed by the revolution and new forms of public interventions and genres such as graffiti and collective work I resorted to in my own unfolding practice.

*Selene Wendt*

### **Africa in Oslo: Bringing Afropolitanism to the Polar Circle**

*Africa in Oslo* was the title of the largest exhibition of African contemporary art ever presented in Norway, providing a natural starting point for a short presentation of some of the more significant exhibitions of African contemporary art that have taken place in Oslo. The curatorial approach to *Africa in Oslo* will be discussed in detail, while the politics, and inherent limitations and possibilities associated with contemporary African artistic and curatorial practice in Europe will also be addressed. I will investigate the significance of these exhibitions at the time they were presented, while also considering the subsequent success of many of the participating artists’ internationally. This will include an analysis of some of the similarities and differences between the African and African Diaspora artists whose careers have skyrocketed internationally, with a focus on artists who exemplify the notion of cosmopolitanism as it relates to contemporary African art practice. Naturally, the topic of cosmopolitanism and the prospect of imagining an entity outside of one’s own locale or national boundaries will be highlighted. As the artists and exhibitions included in this presentation illustrate, cosmopolitanism as a metaphor for mobility and migrancy, and the notion of co-existence and difference as unifying and defining factors, are perhaps the most essential aspects of the most interesting international contemporary art anywhere today, whether in Africa or Asia, Europe or Latin America.

*Siegfried Zielinski*

»Means & Seas«

Hegel's *Philosophy of World History* is a mental construction based on territory. Édouard Glissant's *Poetics of Relation*, however, was developed with a view to the (oceanic) sea. The concept of the German philosopher is imperialistic in a more profound sense of the word. The Poetry philosopher from Martinique celebrates the heterogenic and the

heresy; he abhors all universal. In Hegel's concept, means of transport need wheels; Glissant evokes ships and boats and the capacity to navigate... By understanding territories and the sea as mediating instances, as media in the direct sense, I seek to discuss, on a media theory level, the question of quality of cultural values and relationships from a variantological perspective.

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## List of Participants

**Hans Belting** was cofounder of the Karlsruhe University for Arts and Design (HfG) in Karlsruhe, Germany (1992), and Professor of Art History and Media Theory (until 2002). From 2004 to 2007, he was director of the International Center for Cultural Science (IFK) in Vienna, Austria.

**Jürgen Bock** is an author and curator, and the Director of Maumaus School of Visual Arts in Lisbon, Portugal.

**Susan Buck-Morss** is Distinguished Professor of Political Science, Graduate Center, CUNY, New York. Until recently, she held the Jan Rock Zubrow '77 Professorship in Government at Cornell University, USA.

**Elvira Dyangani Ose** is Curator, International Art, supported by Guaranty Trust Bank at Tate Modern, London, UK.

**Fatima El Tayeb** is Associate Professor in the Departments of Ethnic Studies and Literature and Associate Director Critical Gender Studies at the University of California in San Diego, USA.

**Leonhard Emmerling** is a curator and Head of the Visual Arts division at the Head Office of the Goethe-Institut in Munich, Germany.

**Elizabeth Wolde Giorgis** is the Director of the Modern Art Museum and Gebre Kristos Desta Center and Professor of Art Theory and Criticism at the College of Performing and Visual Art, University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

**Salah M. Hassan** is the Goldwin Smith Professor and Director of the Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM), and Professor in Africana Studies and Research Center, and Department of History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell University, USA.

**Jeanette S. Jouili**, a post-doctoral fellow at the Women's Studies Program at Duke University, USA. She received her PhD jointly from the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences

Sociales in Paris, France, and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder, Germany.

**Achille Mbembe** is Visiting Professor in the Romance Studies Department and The Franklin Humanities Institute at Duke University, USA, and Research Professor in History and Politics at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

**Sandy Prita Meier** is Assistant Professor of African art at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA.

**Tejumola Olaniyan** is Louise Durham Mead Professor of English and African Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA, where he is also Senior Fellow of the Institute for Research in the Humanities.

**Manuela Ribeiro Sanches** is Assistant Professor with aggregation, Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, Portugal.

**Berni Searle** is a South African artist and Associate Professor at the Michaelis School of Fine Art at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

**Bahia Shehab** is a Lebanese-Egyptian artist, designer and Islamic art historian, and Associate Professor of Practice at the American University in Cairo, and Creative Director with MI7-Cairo, Egypt.

**Peter Weibel** is an artist, curator and theorist, and the Chairman and CEO of the ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany.

**Selene Wendt** is an art historian, curator, and writer, and the Director of The Stenersen Museum in Oslo, Norway.

**Siegfried Zielinski** is Michel Foucault Chair at the European Graduate School EGS. He is also the Chair of Media Theory at the Institute for Time Based Media at the Berlin University of Arts, Germany.

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## Information

Address: Akademie der Künste | Pariser Platz 4 | 10117 Berlin  
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Please RSVP by email or phone | Email [ticket@adk.de](mailto:ticket@adk.de) | Tel. +49 30 20057-1000  
[www.goethe.de/cosmo](http://www.goethe.de/cosmo) | [www.adk.de](http://www.adk.de)

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## Related Program

### Exhibition

NOTHING TO DECLARE? - WORLD MAPS OF ART SINCE '89  
Curators: Andrea Buddensieg, Peter Weibel, Johannes Odenthal, and Hans Belting (advisor)  
Akademie der Künste, Pariser Platz 4  
Feb. 1 - Mar. 24, 2013 | Tuesdays to Sundays | 11 am - 7 pm  
Entrance €6/4 | up to 18 years of age and on the 1st Sunday of the month free entrance

### Performance

LA BEAUTE DU DIABLE [THE DEVIL'S BEAUTY]  
Solo dance piece by and with Koffi Kôkô  
Akademie der Künste, Hanseatenweg 10  
Feb. 1, 2013 | Friday | 7 pm  
Entrance €15/12

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## Credits

### Organization



### Cooperation

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### Support

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Bahia Shehab, Street Graffiti full wall, 2012, Cairo-Egypt