



MODERNITIES IN THE MAKING

International Conference

Dakar, Senegal

5.-7.12.2011

Coordinator: Manthia Diawara | Co-Coordinators: Joachim Bernauer, Jürgen Bock, Oumar Ndao

Production and Organization: Goethe-Institut | Co-Production: Maumaus School of Visual Arts, Lisbon • The Institute of African American Affairs at New York University | Cooperation: Maison de la Culture Doua Seck, Dakar • DEC Ville de Dakar • Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar • Dak'Art Biennale des Arts de Dakar • Marseille-Provence 2013 Capitale Européenne de la Culture • Centre d'Études Africaines de l'EHESS, Paris • AFRICA.CONT / Câmara Municipal de Lisboa • Akademie der Künste, Berlin

Conference Location: Maison de la Culture Doua Seck
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Conference Reception 5.12.2011, 20 h: Goethe-Institut Senegal
Rue de Diourbel x Piscine Olympique | Point E | 12524 Dakar
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Simultaneous translation French/English

Introduction

The primary objective motivating this conference is to cast a critical eye on Africa's place in modernity and its role in the making of the complex and evolving identities of Europe today. Our ambition is to look at the challenges to a monolithic European definition of modernity, which has implications in our definitions of culture, aesthetics, and the current debates around Europe, immigration, and the global financial and economic crisis. If debating alternative modernities has become one of the possible outcomes of globalization, this turn also calls for the rethinking of the ways in which contemporary art is classified, practiced, and exhibited, both in Africa and Europe, considering the complex system of exchanges, circulations, and overlapping appropriations.

Our interest goes beyond contesting the once prevalent perception of Africa and the people of African descent in Europe as passive agents of modernity, merely colonized or discriminated against. The outcome of an impressive array of historical and literary studies in the last three decades shows that transnational and diasporic African theorists, such as Leopold Sedar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, and Édouard Glissant, had actively sought to and succeeded in ruffling and shaping the “incomplete project of modernity” in Europe and elsewhere by their literary, philosophical and sociological studies.

To look at Europe through the prisms of African theorists is also to look at how distinct forms and readings of modernity have emerged in Africa itself, and how they have shaped, and may still shape, alternative modernities in Europe. Whereas for some scholars these interventions amount to no more than a sideshow, our conference is committed to an alternative vision, through which we labor to compose suitable and productive genealogies for the ubiquitous phenomena of “Africa in Europe” today. To look at Europe through Africa is to consider the possibility that these African “rhizomes” have enriched Europeanness, without destroying or obstructing its distinctive trait and heritage. It seems therefore appropriate to reexamine here the notions of cultural symbiosis, *metisage* and creolization, as well as other forms of identification in a Europe that is still (and will always be) in the making, like any other continent.

Furthermore, the conference commits itself to the analysis of the distinctive challenges Africa poses to modern cognitive systems and rationalities that authorize and sustain the central political ideas and ideologies of Europe, such as secularism, liberal democracy, transparency and human rights. We intend to debate how modern Europe is coming to grips with massive immigration, the roles played by European minorities in the formation of new public spheres, and the relations between minorities and majorities around such key phenomena as assimilation, multiculturalism, and diversity.

The three-day-conference is composed by three keynote lectures and four panels that are meant to instigate controversy and discussion. The first day with its topic, “Redefining Europe in Modernity,” encourages the rethinking and reimagining of Europe by rereading the texts of some of Africa’s most important intellectuals. The often unexpected originality of their theories might yield a visionary understanding of the current crisis besieging the economies and identities of Europe. The topic of the second day, “Redefining Africa in Modernity”, leads to the critical reexamination of modernities in Africa by juxtaposing different and conflicting concepts and experiences of modernity, and their impact on democracy, migration, and identities. Ultimately, the aim of this conference is to discuss the questions of modernities in order to refresh the current theoretical and curatorial approaches to contemporary art. Thus, on the third day with its topic “Africa in Europe, Europe in Africa”, the debate will be focused around the need, if there is any, to reconsider definitions of art in an interconnected world, in times of uneven globalization and its intricate impact on curatorial practices.

The idea for this conference in Dakar was developed by a transnational research group on “Modernities in the Making – Contemporary Art in Africa and Europe” during its first meeting at the Goethe-Institut and the Escola Maumaus in Lisbon, Portugal, in March 2011. It shall be complemented by a second conference in the midst of 2012 in Berlin, Germany, focusing on art based on still and moving images in Africa and Europe today.

REDEFINING EUROPE IN MODERNITY

Day 1 | Monday, 5.12.2011

09:30 Registration

10:00 Welcoming Remarks

10:30 Film* 1st Part

10:45 **SENGHOR AND THE «CIVILISATION DE L'UNIVERSEL»**

Postcolonial Europe and Africa

Keynote by Hans Belting, Karlsruhe, Germany

Respondent: Awam Amkpa, New York University, New York, USA

Moderator: Manthia Diawara

12:30 Lunch Break

14:00 **EUROPE SEEN BY SENGHOR AND CÉSAIRE**

1st Panel Discussion, Moderator: Jean-Paul Colleyn

- **The School of Senghor and Césaire, or: For a renewal of the project to emancipate black people, a foundation of democracy**

Penda Mbow, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Senegal

- **Cultural Encounters in the Modern World - The African Experience**

Abiola Irele, Kwara State University, Nigeria

- **Becoming African: Aimé Césaire Between Poetics and Statistics**

Akin Adesokan, Indiana University, Bloomington, USA

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 **EUROPE SEEN BY FANON, CABRAL, GLISSANT**

2nd Panel Discussion, Moderator: Oumar Ndao

- **Frantz Fanon, James Baldwin and Édouard Glissant and the European ideal**

Françoise Vergès, CPMHE, Paris, France

- **Amílcar Cabral's (In)Complete Project Of Modernity Identity, Citizenship, and Decolonization in Postcolonial Europe**

Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

- **Glissant and the archipelagic Europe**

François Noudelmann, Université Paris VIII, France

18:30 End

REDEFINING AFRICA IN MODERNITY

Day 2 | Tuesday, 6.12.2011

10:00 Film* 2nd Part

10:15 **DEMOCRACY AND POLITICAL IDENTITY**

Keynote by Charles Taylor, Montréal, Canada

Respondent: François Noudelmann, Université Paris VIII, France

Moderator: Oumar Ndao

12:00 Lunch Break

14:00 **ALTERNATIVE MODERNITIES**

3rd Panel Discussion, Moderator: Awam Ampka

- **Modernity and Modernization Ideologies and practices in postcolonial Guinea**
Télivel Bailo Diallo, Conakry, Guinea
- **Inculturing Modernity**
Felwine Sarr, Université Gaston Berger, Saint-Louis, Senegal
- **Modernity and the Politics of Disorder**
Dilip Gaonkar, Northwestern University, Evanston, USA

16:00 Coffee Break

16:30 Film* 3rd Part

16:45 **YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR PLACE HERE IN EUROPE**

Keynote by Aminata Dramane Traoré, Bamako, Mali

Respondent: Télivel Bailo Diallo, Conakry, Guinea

Moderator: Manthia Diawara and Dilip Gaonkar

18:30 End

AFRICA IN EUROPE, EUROPE IN AFRICA

Day 3 | Wednesday, 7.12.2011

10:00 **CURATING MODERINITIES**

4th Panel Discussion, Moderator: Ousseynou Wade

- **Double Sided Modernities**
Ângela Ferreira, Lisboa, Portugal
- **Finding Art Where It Is. Reflections on the displacement of people and works**
Jean-Paul Colleyn, EHESS, Paris, France
- **Africa Exposed - Africa and Self Fashioning**
Lydie Diakhaté, Paris/New York, France/USA
- **Curating Contemporary African Art in a Global World**
N'Goné Fall, Paris/Dakar, France/Senegal

12:00 Coffee Break

12:30 **CLOSING REMARKS**

Manthia Diawara

13:00 End

*The Film consists of an Interview with Wole Soyinka, directed by Manthia Diawara [Nov. 2011]