

PRESENCE OF
THE COLONIAL
PAST
AFRIKA
AUF EUROPAS
BÜHNEN

a reader on the focus of the Theaterformen Festival Braunschweig 2010

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EDITORIAL

An international festival always represents a certain way of seeing the world. This requires us to occasionally scrutinize our intentions and perspectives, as the way we look at things is never neutral. The rather cumbersome bilingual title, *Presence of the Colonial Past – Afrika auf Europas Bühnen*, which was given to the focus of the Theaterformen Festival 2010 in Braunschweig, reveals a certain lack of ease. The festival was not meant to simply have an 'African' focus. On the contrary, we wanted to put the spotlight on the European view of the African continent. Put bluntly, the focus was primarily on white heads, not black bodies. However, in an area where the fundamentals and vocabulary are lacking, it is difficult to phrase and communicate with precision.

After all, what a minefield! The heading 'Africa' throws up mainly starry-eyed idealism or cynical indifference alongside abundant misconceptions, ignorance and prejudice. Academic insiders feel that the postcolonial discourse has already 'been done' whereas the average German (myself including) cannot even list all the former German colonies in Africa. In television films or on stage shows, an amnesic desire for the exotic is amply cultivated and in the avant-garde sector, projects 'involving Africa' are certainly en vogue. But the debate, if any takes place at all, is mostly sentimental, generalized and cursory. Over 50 countries, in which up to a billion people live, are lumped together and outlined as a vague entity of something between adversity and exoticism. An awareness of our long, mutual history is absent. Respect, precision and realism are missing. Sometimes simple admission to the fact that we do not understand certain things is missing. No other continent is approached with the same ignorance as is Africa. But why? Why is that so? The focus of *Presence of the Colonial Past*, which embraces a series of films *Archiv möglicher Zukunft – Archive of a*

Possible Future, four theatre productions, a thematic weekend *Die Gegenwart des Anderswo im Jetzt – The Present of the Elsewhere Now* and finally this reader, have essentially explored this question in the most divergent formats.

The short duration of German colonial history for example does not mean that it had no consequences in Germany: the ways in which various fantasies of supremacy and mythical self-aggrandisement can be historically mighty powers was clearly illustrated in Kien Nghi Ha's lecture *Decolonizing Germany*, the opener for the thematic weekend *Die Gegenwart des Anderswo im Jetzt*. The fact that racism is an ideological construct, based on pseudo-scientific research that is carried out specifically in the interests of exploitative colonial power politics – this insight was driven home with rare emotional force in Brett Bailey's theatrical installation *Exhibit A*. And that we see what we expect to see, that was pointed out by Faustin Linyekula when in his performance *Le Cargo* he says: "I am an African dancer! I have exotic stories to sell! Which one do you want to hear today?" The colonial past is still very much part of the present and obstructs our view. So: let's decolonize the white heads!

The reader at hand is a collection of material: perhaps an impetus, possibly a start. We owe thanks to the artists, scientists and authors who have given us access to their work and thoughts; and of course, the Kulturstiftung des Bundes (Federal Cultural Foundation) whose sponsorship made the entire project possible in the first place.

Anja Dirks for the Festival Theaterformen

FILM SERIES

ARCHIVE
OF A POSSIBLE
FUTURE

ARCHIVE OF A POSSIBLE FUTURE NOTES ON A FILM SERIES

Nanna Heidenreich

“Seeing is gluttonous. The things we see are not so much trophies of its triumphs but rather they mark the limits that are set its extension”.

(Michel de Certeau, *GlaubensSchwachheit*)

A series of film evenings curated by Nanna Heidenreich took place on six Wednesday evenings in April and May 2010 at the Universum cinema in Braunschweig. The feature films, documentary films and short films thematised the resonance of the colonial past in the present and future from a variety of perspectives. On each of the evenings there was an introductory talk as well as a lecture and/or follow-up discussion.

Memories of one's own colonial past and its resonance in the present remain weak in modern Germany; its colonial past is considered to be marginal or a footnote to a story that not only happened elsewhere, but whose significant parts were written by others. This contemporary myth of negligibility that is told above all as a story of “briefness” and “late arrival” is extended by the older myth of the Germans as “good” colonists in a perfect example of the Freudian “kettle” logic (a story that he weaves into *The Interpretation of Dreams*): a man is accused by his neighbour of giving back a borrowed kettle in a damaged condition. He contests this: first of all, he brought back the kettle undamaged and secondly, the kettle was already damaged and thirdly, he never borrowed the kettle in the first place. Therefore: We have never been there; when we were there, everything was in perfect order (this is the famous myth of the German as “best coloniser and cultivator”, as Henry Simonsfeld put it in 1884) and finally, we have never had anything to do with the atrocities, the current problems and the former constellations. This type of repression remains politically explosive even today, as it is instrumental in refusing to meet the Herero's demands for reparation, which they have tried to claim since Namibia declared its independence in 1990. When, for instance, former SPD Development Minister Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul admitted to “our historical, political, moral and ethnic responsibility, and the guilt that the German took upon themselves at the time” in 2004, 100 years after the genocide of the Herero by the German colonial powers in Okakarara near the Waterberg, and even went on to say that the “former atrocities (...) (were) a genocide that would be brought to trial today”, she was heavily criticised. Her speech was condemned as an “expensive emotional outburst” that could mark a turning point “to Germany's disadvantage” in the dispute over reparation demands. Even in 2003, the Green Party Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer dismissed the question of why the German Federal Republic could not apologize for its colonial crimes by saying that he “could not make any statement relevant to compensation”.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida noted in his book *Archive Fever* that repression is also a form of archiving, there is a historic coincidence between the genesis of the cinema and colonialism. This makes cinema an important site to activate the memory of colonial history and to investigate the colonial past along with the present and the virulence of colonial fantasies (as investigated by Susanne Zantop). What also belongs to this historic coincidence is psychoanalysis.

And as Ranjana Khanna argues in *Dark Continents*, it is this connecting line that makes psychoanalysis so significant as a “colonial discipline”, especially with regards to post-colonialism and de-colonialism. Interestingly, she refers to Heidegger (also such a symptom!) and the twist in my argument is here – besides another tip for a book worth reading – quite simply: cinema ‘symptomises’. It brings everything to light as a symptom that should actually be repressed: cinema cannot help but remember. And so, cinema is not only a site of mediating and updating history in the present through its visualisation - cinema always projects as the present – but it also shows (and brings about) in such kitsch films as *Die Weisse Massai* (Germany, 2005, Dir: Hermine Huntgeburth), just to name a recent example, that German modern day society continues to spin its colonial past as a part of its cultural imagination.

However, cinema is not only the symptom machine of an archive of repression. Its own temporality always creates a possible future. The way in which cinema lends a voice to the past also creates a space for the present, to borrow Michel de Certeau's phrase: “to ‘characterize’ a past. This means to allow the dead a space but also to redistribute the space of possibilities” (*The Writing of History*). Its history is precisely one of the anti-colonial liberation movements and is closely connected to post-colonial imagination. But even the cinema of colonial symptoms constantly makes something else visible too: cinema is always recalcitrant, always different, always somewhere else and excessive. It is part of the “gluttony of seeing” and always reaches far beyond the borders “of the limits of its extension”; it is multi-sensory, consisting not only of images but also of sound. It is in space and in time; it challenges and demands to have something in common and throws the spectator back on his/her own coordinates, to summon him/her to abandon them in order to step into a different, planned path, one of the “small paths” for example such as those described by Brigitta Kuster and Madeline Bernstoff as “connecting routes pointing to interconnections that are not reflected in representative stories. Paths are not constructions; they are created on foot, as practicable short cuts, acquirements or secret ways shared with others. When one enters the cinema, they belong to the evocative, not to the explaining part”.

Cinema is in this sense connected to stories of resistance; it demarcates cinema as a “blast of the possible” (Angela Melitopoulos)

and it is exactly in this direction that I want to guide the steps that lead to the cinema (and in this case, the Universum Filmtheater in Braunschweig's city centre): not the recapitulation of a colonial past stands at the centre but its resonance in the present and the reaching out of this critical view to something that possibly already is (but is not seen) or that will be: a possibility, an in progress.

Quotations from:

Sigmund Freud: *Die Traumdeutung* (The Interpretation of Dreams), Boston: Elibron, 2005

Michel De Certeau: *Das Schreiben der Geschichte* (The Writing of History), Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1991

Michel De Certeau: *GlaubensSchwachheit* (The Weakness of Believing), Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2009

Jacques Derrida: *Dem Archiv verschrieben* (Archive Fever), Berlin: Brinkmann & Bose, 1997

Ranjana Khanna: *Dark Continents. Psychoanalysis and Colonialism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003

Brigitta Kuster: „Tarzan and the Scream of Modernity. On the Postcolonial in

Mohamed Osfour's Cinematic Works“ in: Marion von Osten, Serhat Karakayali, Tom

Avermaete (eds.): *Colonial Modernity*, London: Black Dog Publishing (to be published)

Angela Melitopoulos: „Möglichkeitsraum“ (Blast of the Possible), in Hila Peleg und Bert

Rebhandl (eds.): *Berlin Documentary Forum 1*, Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2010

Jasmin Rietdorf: „Rechnung noch nicht beglichen. Deutsche Kolonialverbrechen in Namibia“ (Outstanding bill: German colonial crimes in Namibia), in: taz, 05.01.2008

Susanne Zantop: *Kolonialphantasien im vorkolonialen Deutschland (1770-1870)* (Colonial fantasies in pre-colonial Germany 1770-1870), Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 1999

FILM SERIES: AN ARCHIVE OF POSSIBLE FUTURE

21.04. – 26.05.2010 in the **Universum cinema**

21.04. Programme 1

THE STAR OF AFRICA

Alfred Weidenmann, FRG 1957

99 min, starring Hansjörg Felmy, Horst Frank, Roberto Blanco

This West German film from the 1950s is a vehicle for conveying the founding myths of the young West Germany and also reveals the persistence of colonial fantasies in the aftermath of actual colonial rule.

Critical introduction and discussion with Maja Figge (Humboldt Universität Berlin)

28.04. Programme 2

LIVED MEMORIES AND COLLECTIVE ACTION

58 Rue Tousseau, Paris France

Raphaël Grisey / Bouba Touré, France 2008

29 min, original language version with English subtitles

Cooperative

Raphaël Grisey, France 2008

76 min, double projection, French with English subtitles

Two films resulting from the cooperation of the film-maker Raphaël Grisey and the photographer and former projectionist Bouba Touré: the first film is about personal memories and the political battles of the last 50 years, while *Cooperative* is about the village Somandiki Coura, an agricultural cooperative in Senegal.

Special guests: Raphaël Grisey und Bouba Touré

05.5. Programme 3

THE HALFMOON FILES

Philip Scheffner, Germany 2007

87 min.

The documentary film by Philip Scheffner follows the trail of old audio recordings to the location where they were recorded: a prisoner of war camp in Wünsdorf near Berlin. The voices of colonial soldiers from the First World War were recorded with phonographs for a language archive.

Special guest: Philip Scheffner

Featuring a talk by Aischa Ahmed (Freie Universität Berlin) on Arab history in Berlin and Brandenburg.

12.05. Programme 4

BAMAKO

Abderrahmane Sissako, Mali / France 2006

115 min. in French and Bambara with German subtitles

Starring Aissa Maiga, Hélène Traoré, Haméye Mahalmadane, William Burdon, Danny Glover

Representatives of African civil society take legal action against the activities of the IMF and the development policy of the World Bank. But in this brilliant feature film by Abderrahmane Sissako, the trial takes place in the back yard of a house in Bamako, and between testimonials by witnesses and legal speeches, life in the house continues as normal.

With an introductory talk by Nanna Heidenreich

19.05. Programme 5

NORTH? SOUTH? ACTION!

Clichy (Scopitone)

Mohamed Mazouni, France

5 min. in Arabic

In Focus: Mohamed Osfour

A selection of works by Mohamed Osfour (1925-2005)

VHS Kahloucha

Nejib Belkadhi, Tunisia 2006

80 min, in Arabic with English subtitles

A programme about the "inventors" of North African cinema, including Mohamed Osfour, who made films with amateur actors and invented numerous film-making techniques; and Moncef Kahloucha, the passionate hobby film-maker who involved his entire neighbourhood in Sousse, Tunisia in his projects.

Special guest: Brigitta Kuster

26.05. Programme 6

NOLLYWOOD SPECIAL

Nigeria's film industry has become one of the world's most productive and is enjoying increasing popularity. With a presentation of selected productions, the film critic and curator Julien Enoka-Ayemba pays tribute to this "other cinema".

Special guest: Julien Enoka-Ayemba



BAMAKO

VHS KAHLOUCHA





THEATRE
PRODUCTIONS

MISSIE
MISSION



MISSIE MISSION

A Belgian missionary talks about the almost fifty years that he has lived in the Congo. He reports about his calling at the age of 17, about his stations in the Congo, and about the tasks he has been given. He talks about belief, the community and the various tribes in the Congo. He talks about the Eucharist, God, but also about getting stuck in mud, wars, stinking wounds and the muzzle of a gun being pressed against his head. He describes a country that is completely destroyed and its breathtakingly beautiful landscape.

The young Belgian author David van Reybrouck wrote Missie after numerous interviews with Belgian missionaries in the Congo. For an hour and a half, the outstanding Flemish actor Bruno vanden Broecke, being in his mid-thirties, embodies a man of over seventy who barely moves away from his lectern during the entire performance. For this, he needs neither make-up nor artificial grey hair. He carries the story merely by means of his presence.

Although you may not always agree with the contents of his speech, you follow it, spellbound. It is not always about Africa in the actual sense but about what it means to dedicate yourself to something completely, to orientate your life towards one thing. What does it mean to leave your own, familiar world and to place yourself in a completely different reality? And how is each individual involved in this world?

More and more, the insistent monologue is pervaded by a powerlessness and desperation in the face of war and its brutality. Doubts and the question of morality surface until the speech finally leads to the scream for God and a violent thunder clap, and ends in a cloud-burst.



director **Raven Ruëll** With **Bruno vanden Broecke** text **David van Reybrouck** translation into German **Rosemarie Still** dramaturgy **Ivo Kuyt** stage design **Leo de Nijs** lighting concept **Johan Vonk** stage manager **Lieven Symmaeys** lighting **Margareta Andersen** touring and tour management **Nicole Petit** production **Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg**



»A MOSQUITO NET, MATERIALS USED IN MASS AND A PAIR OF PLIERS TO PULL TEETH«

An interview with David van Reybrouck on his play, *Missie*

by Ivo Kuyl

There is no doubt whatsoever that the author David Van Reybrouck is strongly attracted to Africa. With Josse de Pauw, he has created *Die Siel van die Mier*, a monologue unwinding mostly in Africa. David Van Reybrouck has been involved in the KVS Congo trip in different ways: The newspaper "Der Morgen" has published articles about his trips to the Congo, both for KVS and other purposes. David plans to write a book about the history of the Congo and is preparing to write *Missie*, a play about missionaries.

This interview was carried out with David just after his return from a deeply moving six-week period in Africa, during which he interviewed missionaries to gain material for his play.

Ivo Kuyl: Missionaries. A heavy subject. When people hear the word, they often associate it with "soul catchers". Even today, when the majority of European countries have lost their old colonies, people continue to see past and present-day missions as an outpost of Western imperialism.

David Van Reybrouck: For the last 15 years, people have got into the habit of questioning all forms of implication and commitment – love of your neighbour, in the case of missionaries – and they suppose that there is always another plan, or a hidden agenda. It's a systematic mistrust of conviction, however noble it may be. Love of your charity is therefore perceived as a pretext used to impose Western, Catholic values and to colonize spirits and bodies, or is even seen as some kind of compensation for a deprived sex life. This attitude unfortunately means throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It is of course essential to keep a critical mind, but we should avoid making this criticism our main aim. Most of the missionaries I spoke to have completely understood this post-colonial criticism. It would therefore be a total error to judge the work accomplished by missionaries in 2007 using documents about missionary methods used between 1900 and 1950.

And this is exactly what happens all the time, so most criticism is anachronistic.

And easy, too. I listened to these people, and was impressed by their quest, and by the serenity they show despite the fact that they are constantly confronted by suffering and sorrow. The missionaries I spoke to have great modesty and patience, which we ourselves can hardly boast given our results-oriented way of thinking. Certain missionaries said: "We haven't got there yet, but maybe in five hundred years' time, we will succeed". Having faith in a 500-year deadline, any little stumble along the way can only be met with calm. When ten or fifteen years of your life seem worthless, there is in fact no reason to despair.

Where did you go, and who did you meet?

I spoke to around fifteen people from different Catholic orders: Jesuits, the White Fathers, the Scheut Fathers, the Oblats, the Capuchins, the Franciscans, the Salesians, etc. I met them throughout the Congo: in Kinshasa, Kikwit, Bukavu, Goma, Kalima, Kamina, Lubumbashi and Likasi. But my most crucial interviews were in the East – not a coincidence – in Bukavu and Goma, the territory between North and South Kivu which suffered the most during the last war and still has a wartime atmosphere. This context was crucial for me: I did not want to hear the experiences of a missionary in a rest home here, but that of someone living locally, who had experienced the war and was still struggling with the suffering it causes. However, neither the war, nor the Congolese historical context over the last 15 years, was my priority. These elements helped me nonetheless in my aim to understand the missionaries' commitment. How is it possible to think about God when you have seen someone walk past carrying a bucket full of human eyeballs? Or continue to believe in human kindness, when you have already been thrown flat on the ground several times in front of the mission and screamed "So what are you waiting for? Shoot!"

'Commitment' is a key word for you then.

I wanted this play to probe the conditions leading to commitment in this day and age. Not just religious, but also artistic. And for me, the missionary is a kind of measuring stick: someone who has decided to live according to his convictions and who is ready to accept the sometimes shattering consequences of the choice he has made.

Nowadays it's not so easy to take the Catholic faith seriously, or to understand how this faith could be such fertile ground for commitment.

That's simply the way it is, from this point of view, the writing of this play is a battle: a battle with the heritage of the Catholic faith. After an in-depth meeting with Catholicism, I consciously became an atheist at quite a young age. For me, this project is a kind of new contact with Catholicism, and at the same time it is a final goodbye. Certain basic starting points of the Catholic faith have become unacceptable for me. They are very essential axioms, such as the existence of God, of life after death and the sense of suffering. At the same time, I was very impressed by many of these missionaries and I know that my admiration for these people and the work they accomplish cannot disregard their faith. Camus said: "One has to be a saint without God". The question is whether it is possible to be "a missionary without God". Even for an ar-

tist, it is extremely difficult to build commitment if it isn't linked to some kind of faith, even if it is only faith in some kind of human dignity.

Do you believe that artists today should return to committed literature or art, like in the 60's and 70's?

I don't think that art should necessarily be a tool for the communication of an ideological position. Such an attitude results in art which is too superficial, art which tries to communicate a message that could be passed on otherwise outside of this artistic expression. Art has the strength of saying things that cannot be formulated in any other way. This formal ambition should remain that way. I think that's why in a play, for example, we can go much further and produce something much more nuanced than certain social position taking.

I am always committed. It's how I do it that differs. I distribute my different writing efforts according to different genres. A chronicle in a journal or a non-fiction book involves much more direct political action. And I have recently published a book with Geert Buelens and Jan Goossens about political developments and possible future scenarios in Belgium following my discontent about separatist movements in Flanders. A poem, a novel or a play always shows a much higher degree of introspection and psychology. No, *Missie* will not be a political play. On the other hand, I am definitely seeking to write a text that does not simply adhere to its historical and political context. For me, people are always my priority, and how they behave in such a context.

What was the profile of the missionaries you met?

All the missionaries were very different. There isn't a 'prototype'. However, I did notice that many of them had already been members of youth movements like the KSA (a Catholic student organisation), where they had already learned how to get by in life. I first interviewed very old missionaries, who - particularly in the case of the Jesuits - are die-hards, the *Al Quaida* of Catholicism so to say. From a dramaturgic point of view, I don't find them that interesting because their system of faith remains intact whatever happens: "How did you feel when seven nuns in your congregation died from the ebola virus, or were raped and then murdered?" "Ah, it was divine providence." No hint of revolt, rebellion, or putting up a fight. The most interesting conversations were those I had with slightly younger missionaries (yet still over the age of 65) who had been confronted one way or another with the choice they had made 30 or 40 years ago. And in the meantime, their faith had been tried by suffering, but they continued the same path in life.

And what do these missionaries do?

They often work in schools, or are chaplains in prisons, whilst others work in the bush sectors, the famous “bushmen”... They also often work in the paramedical sector. For example, near Kikwit they take care of victims of sickle cell anemia, a terrible hereditary illness characterized by defects in the red blood cells and which can cause intense pain. The incredible creativity of these missionaries is striking: they learn how to make prostheses or wheelchairs without any help. And they are constantly and relentlessly hunting for funding, in particular to build an eye-care clinic. In fact, being a missionary means improvising 90% of the time. They arrive somewhere on Tuesday evening, and on Wednesday morning they are already giving the first lesson in a small seminary in Bongolo, for example. One of them told me that he had to teach all subjects – French, Economics, History, Theology... but not Dutch, because he was from west Flanders and had an accent. But he could teach Greek. Another missionary said: “You should never forget three important things: your mosquito net, materials used in mass and a pair of pliers to pull teeth”.

[I imagine that the missionaries work in unbelievable conditions?](#)

To give you an idea: in Lubumbashi, I met Baudouin Waterkeyn, whose brother was the architect for the Atomium. Baudouin left for the Congo in 1958, his brother's moment of glory. It was the day before celebrating his 50th year of preaching when he showed me around Lubumbashi hospital, where he is a chaplain. That is how you see the total despair of a country like the Congo. The building hadn't seen a drop of water in four years. A trip to the toilet involved walking through 6 cm of urine and excrement. As a generous gesture, the new governor of Katanga once gave them a hearse and two refrigerators for corpses, but no water. A handsome young man came into the chapel, in a wheelchair: no hands, no feet, just stumps. He had been caught stealing electrical wiring. In the Congo, official justice barely exists. They had poured petrol on his hands and feet then set light to it. He had one thumb left. I have heard so many upsetting stories. I also met a Swiss nun who took care of female rape victims near Bukavu: thousands and thousands of women over a three-year period. There are also cases like Jo Deneckere who is in Lubumbashi, but who experienced the war between the Hema and Lendu tribes in the Ituri territory. In a bid to make him flee, they emptied the magazines of their Kalashnikovs right next to his head, resulting in a hearing impairment. Despite this experience, he stayed faithful to his post in extremely difficult conditions. He went to the places the MONUSCO or the UN no longer visited. He told me about the area where peace had started to reign once again, but where there were still regular patrols. From his car, he saw a person stumbling along the road: an ordinary citizen. The man had nine bullets in his body,

and was dying. Jo stopped, put him in his car, and took him to hospital for care.

[You mentioned that Congolese bishops wrote a letter describing moral decline as the major problem in their country. Do you share this opinion?](#)

I agree with the bishops. At the outset, this Congolese crisis was an economic, political and democratic crisis. But now it has also become a real moral crisis. The decline in this country is now encrusted on the very fibres of practically every Congolese citizen. The idea that there is a real feeling in Africa for community and for solidarity is totally false. The Congo is not a country which is limping slowly behind in the neo-liberal world order; it is the most extreme example of how neo-liberalism can break a country, with more often than not a pathetic and distressing consequence: extreme selfishness and individualistic urges. There are more and more institutions, everyone wants to be a director. There are more officers than soldiers in the army. There is very little sense of civic responsibility. People in the Congo no longer live together; they survive as a community. From time to time we luckily manage to meet very good people who are a source of hope. With their faith, many missionaries try to emancipate people, to give them a sense of civic responsibility, to heal the wounds caused by the past.

[Do you already have some kind of idea of how are you going to organize all this material?](#)

One or two interviews will be used for the main structure, but they will be enriched by the descriptions I heard of many different people's experiences. A great number of these stories are overwhelming. I will express this in the style of the text. On the one hand, I find it difficult to do so now in a conversation, on the other hand, in a certain way I feel incapable of doing so due to a sense of propriety, emotion, fear of bad taste or being sensational. It may seem surprising to learn after everything I've just said that humour will of course be part of this play. I also laughed a lot with the missionaries.

published in *KVS_Express* magazine, November - December 2007



EXCERPT FROM MISSIE BY DAVID VAN REYBROUCK

They used to say that a missionary didn't need much. A pith helmet, a mosquito net, materials used in Mass and a pair of pliers to pull teeth. It's still true. In the end you don't need much.

Most important is that you have time. To really learn to live together with the people. You have to be there for them, and show them you are available to help. In the old days, missionaries spent 3 years just learning the language. Now, people from NGO's like Doctors Without Borders or Action Against Hunger come there for three months, or six, maybe if you're lucky. It's tourism, that's what it is! And they dare to tell us: "Yes, sir," because they address us with sir, not Father, "What you do is not really humanitarian work."

That makes me...! I studied Braille because there were blind people in our parish! In the Larousse, for every letter it indicates what it looks like in Braille. One afternoon I spent copying the alphabet at the library of our seminary in Bukavu. Every evening I studied by the light of my little lamp so I could explain to those poor people. And one fine day, I will never forget it, it was Easter, I let one of my blind people read out the Epistle. You should have seen it! The church exploded! A blind man who could read! They didn't believe it, they thought that he'd learned the evangel by heart! And I said: Choose a page. And then the boy read that page too.

Or in Solá! I knew a boy who walked on all fours. He always came to Mass on his brother's back. During the Holy Communion, I placed the

bread of Christ in the hands he used to walk on. And I thought, if only I could give him one of those little wheelchairs. And then I actually found one, in Burundi, for 80 dollars. The next day, of course ten of them came to my door. And we searched. And then four students from the Catholic school in Kortrijk visited. With bits of reinforcing steel and wood and leather we constructed little devices. And we helped more than 200 people! "What you do is not really humanitarian work..."

In Kirungu, I had a confrère who was almost eighty. He delivered babies. More than 4000 deliveries he'd delivered! He was a veritable mid-Father! He had a lot of experience. Looking through the microscope, making a diagnosis, using those enormous dictionaries. One night, in the room next to mine, he had delivered six babies, in one night. He put them down in shoeboxes, like that. I have pictures. Six shoeboxes in a row, with ribbons: blue, red, green, to remember who's who. 4000 kids and file cards for all of them. And he made a little dress for each baby he delivered. He could sew too. Hensberge was his name. He was from Boom.

You need time, a lot of time. Sometimes journalists who've walked around for 14 days think they understand everything. But when you've lived there for 48 years, you understand less and less.

THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

EXHIBIT A:
DEUTSCH-
SÜDWESTAFRIKA

EXHIBIT A: DEUTSCH-SÜDWESTAFRIKA

Brett Bailey developed a site-specific, theatrical installation in which he cited the format of the 'human zoos' and 'ethnographic exhibitions' that were in fashion at the end of 19th-century Europe. At the time, so-called 'natives' or 'savages' were presented in exotic exhibitions in the guise of anthropological research and were made objects of inquisitive observation. Brett Bailey, however, thematises in *Exhibit A* the genocide carried out against the Herero and Nama by German colonialists in Namibia. He thereby intended to sensitise our modern view of Africa: "Throughout the last half millennium Africa has been plundered and colonized; its societies, social structures and cultures dismantled; and its people made to see themselves through the eyes of those who gaze coldly on them." With incisive images, participants from Namibia and South Africa illustrated how the history of colonisation continues to take effect today.

A museum attendant received the audience members and led them down to an underground waiting room. The audience were given numbers: when they came up, each individual visitor took a walk through a series of sinister rooms in the former ice cellar, accompanied by atmospheric ambient noise, past half-naked people in display cabinets, and a Namibian choir that appeared to consist merely of heads. From inscription similar to those in museums, you could learn about human experiments, torture and rape in the concentration camps of the former German colony. Finally, Bailey bridged the gap from the past to the present and to our everyday life by putting asylum seekers on plinths made of euro pallets and thereby displaying modern deportation practices in Germany.

What made Bailey's installation so moving and powerful was that these human 'exhibits' were not only looked at but that they looked back, serious and unyielding. The observer had to find his/her own way of meeting these stares. The audience was not freed until near the end on the way out. On a landing, you met a friendly hat-maker sitting among various boxes on a stool, wearing the traditional headdress of the Herero women, and singing their songs. At this moment, the otherwise mute actors had a voice. Next to their photos, you could read brief statements about their participation in this visually powerful production.



production, concept and art direction **Brett Bailey** with **Steven Stefanus Afrikaner, Gregory Destin, Francis Fasanya, Mathilda Joseph, Thereza Kahorongo, Melanie Kassel, Anna Louw, Miriam Mukosho, Christof Muondjo, Chris Christiaan Nekongo, Avril Nuyoma, Abiodun Olayinka, Collins Omorogbe, Laurencia Reinhold, Chuma Sopotela, Marcellinus Swartbooi, Lamin Touray, Josef Petrus van der Westhuizen**

technical management **Iain North** choir arrangements **Marcellinus Swartbooi** company management **Paula Kingwill** management Third World Bunfight **Barbara Mathers** music **Jodt Hengua und Menesia Puriza** (by courtesy of **Namibian Broadcasting Corporation**) and **Franz Schubert**, sang by **Christa Ludwig** arrangement **Brett Bailey** soundscapes in **Trophies of Eden** and **Civilizing the Natives von James Webb** co-production **Third World Bunfight, Captown, Festival Theaterformen Hannover/Braunschweig, Wiener Festwochen** tour management international **UK Arts International** team Theaterformen **Sylvia Franzmann, Lena Breiffuss, Sandra Ludwig, Benny Hauser, Cord Hladun, Michael Foellner, Dennis Grasekamp**



Anna Louw (Namibia) – actress and mother
“I am ashamed of my German ancestry.”

THE SPECTATORS COULD READ THESE STATEMENTS BY CAST MEMBERS OF EXHIBIT A: DEUTSCH-SÜDWESTAFRIKA ON THEIR WAY OUT.



Chris Nekongo (Namibia) – Student of classical music
“I am proud to have this opportunity to open the eyes of the young people to the way that their forefathers thought about black people.”



Christoph 'Vevangwa' Muondjo (Namibia) – Singer and hatter
“I am so happy that we tell this part of my people’s history. Forgiveness is very important in any kind of wrongdoing.”



Lamin Toury (Gambia/Germany) – storekeeper
“Racism is still here. When you are a black guy, you are nothing. People only see you as a drug dealer.”



Gregory Destin (Haiti/Germany) – asylum seeker
“Black and white: the same blood flows through our veins.”



Miriam Mukosho (Namibia) – actress and grandmother
“It hurts. It feels like a wound that has been re-opened.”



Mathilda 'Ruby' Joseph (Namibia) – theatre-maker
“One guy looked at me as if he thought this has nothing to do with him. It made me so angry.”



Steven Afrikaner (Namibia) – Performer

“Standing here I feel very powerful because I represent the history of my people.”



Laurencia Reinhold (Namibia/Germany) – immigrant

“I watched one woman crying, and I thought maybe she understood what it's like for us: suffering in Africa, and suffering again here.”



Marcellinus Swartbooi (Namibia) – Composer and conductor

“Looking at the woman waiting to be raped by the German officer, I think about the fact that she could have been my grandmother, my mother or my sister. Truly degrading.”



Avril Nuuyoma (Namibia) – singer and control panel operator

“I am glad we are doing this project, so that people here really know what has been done to the people of Namibia.”



Collins Omorogbe (Nigeria/Germany) – asylum seeker

“This is how it is. This is the reality.”



Josef 'Patrick' van der Westhuizen (Namibia) – Student of theology

“What do I do with the anger that comes up inside?”



Thereza Kahorongo (Namibia) – tourist guide, consultant and mother

“I see this as a healing experience.”



Chuma Sopotela (South Africa) – Performance artist

“I think about what they must be thinking when they look at me. It scares me.”



South African theatre directors in conversation

THE PAST THAT NEVER ENDS

Frankfurter Rundschau, 18 May, 2010

Interview: Rolf C. Hemke



What is the current atmosphere in South Africa at the moment – beyond the football World Cup?

Bailey: In the last half year, racist tensions in South Africa have boiled over. The assassination of the right-wing extremist and pro-apartheid campaigner Eugene Terre'Blanche and the populist speeches by Julius Malema, the president of the youth organisation of the ANC, brought the situation to a head. Many people suddenly had the feeling that there was about to be an explosion.

Grootboom: This charged atmosphere is the result of seething racism in everyday life. I meet such problems in my everyday work. In the eyes of some employees at the State Theatre in Pretoria I am just the boy from the townships. I am automatically stereotyped as having had an inferior education and consequently, having lesser abilities. You only need to remember the State Theatre's past: it was the central temple of apartheid theatre. This is still to be felt everywhere. For example there are still many older theatre technicians from this time, who are not necessarily racist, but behave differently towards us than they do towards white directors. Whether you like it or not – this is what happens. It often makes it very, very difficult to work here.

How do you handle the situation?

Grootboom: I confront it. But what good does it do? As a black person you simply don't have the same opportunities as a white person. This is of course due to the past, but it has never ended, which for me, is a problem. If my productions tour under the label "State Theatre Pretoria" here in South Africa or overseas, I always have the feeling that my name and my identity are being linked to the history of this theatre. I don't really want that.

Bailey: To this day, theatre in South Africa is primarily entertainment for the white middle classes and thereby part of the country's social polarisation. How can artists free themselves from this? The past and the present are part of us. This is expressed in our art as well as in the behaviour of every individual.

Grootboom: This is exactly what I thematise in my shows - even if I end up exposing them to accusations of racism.



How does this climate affect your work with actors with different skin colours?

Grootboom: This is still a political issue. Take the events surrounding my production *Interracial* in 2007. The piece was written by me, for a mixed-race cast, but I couldn't find any white actors for it in South Africa. It was very strange. During the process, I spoke to many white actors, but they always had reservations. In the end, my black actors had to play the roles of the white characters, too. I then wrote a monologue for the end of the piece, in which the director expresses his frustration about the situation in the new South Africa, because he cannot find any white actors. In this monologue it says "fuck the whites".

And what were the reactions?

Grootboom: They thought it was a tirade of hate. But actually it was just an honest description of the situation between the people of this country. Since then I have been barred from the official programme of the "National Arts Festival" of Grahamstown. I am still accused of racism against white South Africans, and many critics still boycott my shows. If I think about it too much, it can make me feel bitter.

Do you also deal with issues of racism in your works, Mr Bailey?

Bailey: Of course. In recent years I have acquired a taste for site-specific installations. I deal with the dynamics, the politics and the specific meaning of a location. Last year in July at the festival in Grahamstown I presented my project *Blood diamonds (final stop)*, which got under the skin of the local community, which is very polarised. On one side of the river that runs through the town, the affluent white people live, and on the other side are the bitterly poor townships. In this project I dealt with the historical reasons for this situation and with the peculiar urban geography.

Your current work is now being performed in Austria and Germany.

Bailey: The project for the Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival) and the Braunschweig Theaterformen festival is called *Exhibit A : Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. I have tried to link together very divergent themes: the German colonisation of German South-West Africa, today Namibia, and the genocide of the Herero and Nama between 1904 and 1908, in which more than 70 000 people were murdered. But the project

also deals with the history of racism in central Europe. For example, I thematise the exhibition of humans that were common in ethnological museums in central Europe from the middle of the 19th century. In these exhibitions, people from colonised areas were exhibited as savages and barbarians. I also dealt with the fate of a Nigerian asylum seeker, who was killed in 1999 by the Vienna police.

What form did you choose for this project?

Bailey: The form of the piece is based on these ethnographic exhibitions. Imagine a collection of dioramas with real people, ten performers from Namibia, one South African and 16 African immigrants from Germany and Austria. The project takes place in a historic environment – the ethnological museum of the former Imperial Palace. At the beginning of June we will then show the exhibition at the "Theaterformen" in Braunschweig.

Grootboom: I work very differently. My projects have a very emotional basis. The text is very important to me, I am simply a writer, and ultimately my projects depend on things that I can write about. I stage my pieces for the conventional spectator. This is also more in line with the expectations of the audiences for whom I make theatre. A European director would probably not make such a blatant assertion, but the theatre situation in South Africa is simply different. It is lucky that at the moment, my productions at least attract quite a young and new audience from the townships. They are coming to the theatre for the first time. I always work in the knowledge that my audiences are more used to films. So I try to stay in the framework of a particular realistic convention. My audience may not know the theatre, but they know feelings. So that is what I focus on. And when they start to feel something in the theatre, the performance starts to become a part of them.

So is it just about audience success?

Grootboom: No, I connect it with a didactic moment. For example, I would like to encourage the audience to think about violence. If I then show a very long and violent fight on the stage – stretching out scenes is a stylistic device that I often use – the audience often asks me at the end: Why was that scene so long? Why did we have to watch such a brutal scene for so long? Then it suddenly stops being routine and the audience also does not experience it as realistic. I push the boundaries.



Do white people also come to your performances?

Grootboom: I only have a mixed audience at the premiere. Usually the audience divides itself according to the skin colour of the director. I don't like it, but that's the way it is. It is a problem that is rarely spoken about. And if you bring it up in public, you are quickly accused of racism.

Bailey: Paul is talking about the province of Gauteng, and how difficult it is there, but there is still far more integration there than on the Cape where the society is incredibly polarised. The bizarre, old apartheid distinction between white, coloured and black is here still a sad reality in the minds of the people. In Cape Town it is mostly white people who work in theatre, and therefore the theatre audiences are white too. There are also a few coloured theatre directors and a small coloured audience. But there is practically no black theatre, and as a result no black audience.

Do you have an idea how everyone could be reached?

Bailey: I organise a festival in the centre of Cape Town called "Infecting the City". We take theatre out into the city. The festival runs for a week with site-specific installations by international artists. The aim is to be really politically provocative. The shows are put on in the streets for the general public and they are designed to provoke discussion – particularly among people who don't normally have access to theatre. Another aspect is the fact that the South African public have had it up to here with politics and the discussion surrounding apartheid trauma. They don't want to see anything like that in the theatre anymore. But if you confront them with such questions on the street, they suddenly really open up.

Grootboom: But this past is still always present! You cannot live in a township without constantly having to deal with this past. From his point of view, Brett may be right when he talks about integration in Johannesburg and segregation in Cape Town. But I see it differently. We were oppressed under apartheid, we were kept poor and uneducated. If you look at the way many people live today, it is impossible not to come to the same conclusion: to this day we are still – at least economically – being oppressed. Systematically.

Do you think the football World Cup will have some kind of effect?

Bailey: An Austrian friend of mine recently said: the football World Cup is fantastic for South Africa, because you will be seen as a world wonder after your long, dark history. To which I can only answer: In the last 15 years our society has changed far too little. Resentment and disappointment, economic and political inequality prevail.

Grootboom: The World Cup will make the rich a little richer. It will improve the infrastructure in the vicinity of the stadiums, and otherwise? The artists have to struggle just as they did before.

Paul Grootboom and Brett Bailey are two celebrated exponents of new South African theatre. Although the young black director and author from Pretoria and the white theatre-maker from Cape Town know one another well, they had never given an interview together.

Welcome to Rocksburg, Grootboom's playful comic whodunit from the State Theatre in Pretoria was performed at the Theater der Welt 2010 in Mülheim and Essen.

Brett Bailey's installation *Exhibit A – Deutsch Südwestafrika* could be seen during the Wiener Festwochen and the Braunschweig Theaterformen in 2010.

The book *Theater südlich der Sahara (Theatre south of the Sahara)*, edited by Rolf C. Hemke and featuring portraits of Grootboom and Bailey, was published by Verlag Theater der Zeit in June 2010.

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A blurred photograph of a person playing a guitar on a stage. The person is in the center, wearing a light-colored shirt and dark pants. In the background, there are other figures, including a person in a white dress with arms raised and another person in a white shirt. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting a stage performance.

THEATRE PRODUCTIONS

INFLUX CONTROLS



INFLUX CONTROLS

Part 1: I WANNA BE WANNA BE

Part 2: ON THE 12TH NIGHT OF NEVER,
I WILL NOT BE HELD BLACK

Influx controls was the name of laws passed in 1923 in South Africa that prohibited the black population from settling in the cities, which meant that they were also cut off from culture, education, economy and power. These laws were repealed with the end of apartheid in South Africa. But they are still practiced in a kind of franchise system worldwide – this is the idea behind Boyzie Cekwana's trilogy about artistic identity, apartheid and global colonialism.

The first part of the trilogy, *I wanna be wanna be*, was produced in 2009. "With all things equal, I wouldn't do my make-up on stage in front of you and pretend it is good art," says Boyzie Cekwana, as he paints his face black. With his quiet monologue he begins to play subtly with the expectations of the audience. Seemingly ironic, with quietly suppressed anger, he expresses his despair about the never-ending persistence of the principle of apartheid. He relentlessly takes apart clichés and prejudices, and dextrously reassembles them into a clever, surprising and touching piece about identity – his own, and society's as a whole. With a "bomb" strapped to his stomach and wearing a black suit, Cekwana grins at the audience. It is quiet, and the dancer runs faster and faster on the spot. Later, after putting on a ballet skirt, he lays a crown of thorns made of wire on his head, puts on some sunglasses, and starts to do work-out exercises to funky music – before literally throwing himself at the audience. He is accompanied by his nephew Lungile Cekwana, who ironically comments on what's going on with cardboard signs held over his head. The performance ends impressi-

vely with a song in Zulu, performed by a choir from Braunschweig, the members of which were sitting unnoticed amongst the audience for the whole of the performance.

Part 2, *On the 12th night of never, I will not be held black*, was produced in the spring of 2010, partly during a two-week stay in Braunschweig, and made its debut in Paris. This time made up with a white face and wearing a blonde wig, Boyzie Cekwana appears as a kind of showmaster in a lurid outfit. With devil's horns on his head, he introduces the buxom singer Pinkie Mtshali. Like a pimp, he touts her to the audience with words, while she touts herself with provocative gestures and her body in a tight, white wedding dress. At the same time she warbles opera arias and Zulu songs. Wearing a white suit, Lungiloe Cekwana for a long time balanced on an oil barrel with his back to the audience. On another occasion he positions small cardboard figures of ballerinas and superheroes on the stage, which keep falling down due to the movements of the other two. For example during Boyzie Cekwana's allusion to the football World Cup, during which he keeps kicking a little white ball into the audience. Pinkie Mtshali then crowns herself "Miss Soweto" and sweating, takes a seat in the audience. Meanwhile, in a poetic and sarcastic way, Cekwana disseminates beauty ideals and ideas about identity based on skin colour and cultural origins. On behalf of Mtshali, he prays to the "god of all things beautiful" and asks "If you can't make me thin, please make all my friends fat."



Part 1 I wanna be wanna be

choreography **Boyzie Cekwana** with **Boyzie Cekwana, Lungile Cekwana** lighting design **Eric Wurtz** dramaturgy **Guillaume Bernardi** stage design **Lungile Cekwana** production **Zürcher Theaterspektakel, Pro Helvetia Captown, Swiss Arts Council, Panorama Festival Residency Program** management **Thérèse Barbanel / Les Artscéniques**

Part 2 On the 12th night of never, I will not be held black

director and choreographer **Boyzie Cekwana** with **Boyzie Cekwana, Pinkie Mtshali, Lungile Cekwana** music **Jacques Poulin-Denis** stage design **Lungile Cekwana** lighting design **Eric Wurtz** production **Floating Outfit Project (Durban)** co-production **Kunstenfestivaldesarts, Rencontres chorégraphiques internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis, Festival Theaterspektakel Zürich, Springdance Festival Utrecht, Festival Theaterformen Braunschweig** management **Thérèse Barbanel / Les Artscéniques** with the support of **Afrique en Création, Culturesfrance**

»AFRICAS SPIRIT WAS TRAMPLED DOWN«

Boyzie Cekwana rehearses at the invitation of "Theaterformen"
in Braunschweig

Braunschweiger Zeitung, 14 April, 2010

by Heidi Liedke

A moment ago the rehearsal room resounded with laughter. Suddenly there is absolute silence, and Boyzie Cekwana is fully concentrated. The choreographer from South Africa is rehearsing the second part of his trilogy *Influx Controls* in the Staatstheater. It is the first phase of rehearsals, and every step is measured and deliberate, as if this were a dance on egg shells.

The atmosphere is eerie, as the faces of the three actors are masked in white. "We don't want people to judge us by the colour of our skin. Ultimately we are all the same, we are all humans."

The enormous singer Pinkie Mtshali is wearing a wedding dress and is being hawked, as if at a market, by Cekwana in a blonde wig and fish-net tights. "Ladies and gentlemen, see here, the last of her kind! She's sweet, hot, and happy to be here. Nobody wants her where she comes from. All she wants is a white man. Who'll have her?"

The lost-looking black bride in a white dress symbolises what Cekwana calls loss of African identity. "We need to be more aware of what colonisation did to us. I don't mean abstract concepts like culture. My piece is about me, about my feelings. The people of my country feel spiritually trampled down, nullified, devalued. We have lost our sense of self-worth."

This subject is central to Cekwana's current work. On stage he calls out at one point: "I've lost my trousers! How can I go on stage without my trousers?" The loss of the trousers symbolises the loss of self-assurance. "Standing here without trousers, how humiliating is that? I want to show that we've lost our pride, I don't want to preach."

Religion makes him furious. It is stultifying, above all in developing countries. There, people cling to religion as if it were the last straw. For Cekwana, religion simply represses the truth. "It poisons people's sense of reality. It really scares me."

Angry words! But for Cekwana it is also important to lark about. He laughs a lot. On stage there is lots of dancing and singing. The singer Mtshali scares everyone when she pretends that she is hyperventilating and then collapses – only then to break out into raucous laughter.

The piece that is having its German premiere in June at the Braunschweig "Theaterformen" festival is called *On the 12th night of never, I will not be held black*. "For me, Twelfth Night means never. People will never see me as anything more than black. I get scared when I see how the media propagates this stereotyped way of thinking. It is like a regression to the past"

As a child, Cekwana experienced the Soweto uprising in 1976 against the apartheid regime. The images of the hysteria have been imprinted on his mind. That's why Cekwana won't stop raising his finger.

PERFORMANCE WONDER

Kultiversum.de, 10 May, 2010-10-14

by Thomas Hahn

The seminal figure in the current Rencontres chorégraphiques internationales de Seine-Saint-Denis comes from South Africa. He is not called Robyn Orlin, but Boyzie Cekwana. As the only choreographer at the Recontres, two of his pieces feature in the programme – his two latest of course. They form the basis of a trilogy that is now waiting to be completed. Cekwana already raised his own bar to a dizzying height, seemingly without effort. With the premiere of *On the 12th night of never, I will not be held black*, he is currently confirming at the Recontres what was already clear when – after three years' absence from Europe – he made a spectacular comeback with *Influx controls : I wanna be wanna be*. He has now overcome his experimental phase, in the same way that apartheid has been overcome. Which of course does not mean that for someone like him there is nothing left to fight for. Justice, equality, identity, skin colour and politics of the body are issues that Boyzie now frequently addresses.

It is on stage that he transforms into a "comedy guerrilla". Take his latest show for example: what is Shakespeare's Twelfth Night doing here? (...) Boyzie as a clown, as a horned devil, as a showmaster, next to a corpulent black opera singer who belts out Zulu melodies along with Verdi and Mozart; who puts on a sheep's mask and sexually provokes the audience? It's all here! "Don't think I'm a serious artist – I'm not", he says. In the same breath he explains why he never prays, above all not to this "god of all things beautiful, of women without cellulite and men with big dicks, of friendly policemen, of lawful guns and golf courses."

It is hard to believe one's ears and eyes. En passant he deconstructs capitalism, elegantly and ironically. Every sentence hits the mark... Poetry! Cekwana is a lateral and free thinker, who allows himself everything on stage that serves his purpose, but who also avoids anything superfluous. In a playful way he completes Robyn Orlin's deconstruction of dance. His nephew Lungile Cekwana places little cardboard figures of ballerinas on the stage. And Boyzie puts into words what Orlin only dared to express in images. It all revolves around the weal and woe of society, around the misfortune of being born in a poor part of the world with the "wrong" skin colour. How lovely it would be on a fluffy white cloud...

Cekwana's political statements ought to seem passé, or didactic or whining, if not embarrassing. But he bristles with honesty, freshness and simplicity, with sensitivity and self-irony. For him, the stage is a playing field, onto which he invites members of the audience, so that he can literally throw balls at them. During this time he leaves Lungile with his back to stage, submissively bowed on an oil barrel, so that he is the only one not to see the show. At the same time, the spunky singer Pinkie Mtshali seems to step out of a painting by Botero and a film by Fellini. Again and again, people appear who ought not to be here. There is more than enough here for Cekwana to create an unrelenting visual and performative tour de force. Because he choreographs far more than movements. Today he is proving that he has matured into a dextrous artist, and probably into the artist of the year.



Influx Controls – a South African panorama of social disruption

MISS SOWETO AND THE GOD OF DAVID BECKHAM

Nachtkritik.de, 10 June, 2010

by André Mumot

Braunschweig, 9 June 2010. It would now be easy to beat around the bush in a polite central European way, and say something like: the woman, around whom everything here revolves, is rather full figured. But that would be ridiculous, because Pinkie Mtshali is simply fat: an enormous black bride from South Africa, wearing bright red Chucks, a veil and a tight white dress, which accentuates every curve. She has come here, explains her escort, Boyzie Cekwana, to find a groom. A groom who does not suffer from “women phobia, fat phobia or fuck phobia”. Someone who is man enough for her. Yes, she proffers herself, allows a man from the audience to flirtatiously stroke the white glove from her fingers – and doesn’t say a word throughout. But she sings – in an amazing voice. Songs that probably only very few people here in the theatre tent in Braunschweig understand, because unlike the accompanying commentary, the song texts are not in English but in Mtshali’s African mother tongue. This already establishes a disjunction – and a theme.

The present erects new social barriers

Presence of the Colonial Past is the theme of this year’s Theaterformen, which is why director and performer Boyzie Cekwana proves to be an ideal guest. *On the 12th Night of Never, I Will Not Be Held Black* is the second part of the *Influx Controls* trilogy. (The first part is also being performed at the festival). The name of the trilogy refers to laws in the 1920s that denied the black population access to the white-controlled cities and their participation in white society. With the end of apartheid, all this should be history, but we know that in contemporary South Africa new social barriers have been erected. South Africa today: very soon it will be associated with football – the World

Cup. Having a good time. That’s why Cekwana kicks a small ball into the audience. But this is just a passing moment in a show in which Cekwana’s gestures, poses and songs only slowly build up to form a coherent message: “What is an identity that is not defined by skin, geography or geometry?” is the explicit question posed by a projection on the back wall, thereby conveying the key question.

“At least make my friends fat”

Boyzie Cekwana himself appears as an intermediate being: his black skin is covered in light, silver shimmering make-up, on his head is a gold angel’s wig and red devil’s horns, he dances through an obstacle course of small cardboard figures, which his second-in-command (Lungile Cekwana) has set up on stage: traditional African figures next to European silhouettes of men in top hats and lounging models. Between these stereotypical human images, there is singing to quiet and loud beats, lascivious gesturing and finally praying. Wich means: rather spiteful words are addressed to “the god of friendly policemen and not-corrupt officials, to the god of Tiger Woods and David Beckham, to the god of the Swiss banks and the 3GS iPhones”. On behalf of the singing bride, Cekwana asks “Hey God, if you can’t make me slim, can you at least make my friends fat?” The panorama of social disunity is tangible, but Cekwana never falls back on clichéd appeals or griping. What is really good about this show, which recently had its debut in Paris, is its tireless sarcasm, which culminates with Cekwana mockingly describing the afterlife: “In heaven everything is white, the food and the clouds, and you will be white then too. And you’ll only hear Christmas carols. I hope you like Christmas carols.”

Being thin is a waste

Pinkie Mtshali appears to be oblivious to all this. She has meanwhile elected herself “Miss Soweto”, is wearing a little crown and a pig’s mask, and sings a few whimsical coloraturas of the Queen of the Night. She has thereby become the ultimate symbol of a performance that uses garish costumes to address cultural inequalities and racist stereotypes and which disintegrates into a defiant theatre of movement, music and mockery. A brazen recklessness becomes more and more apparent, and delights the audience as much as Pinkie Mtshali. At the end she grins imperiously, and on a sign that she has hung around her neck we can read “Thin is Waste”.



WITH ALL THINGS EQUAL

from *Influx Controls: I wanna be wanna be*

text: Boyzie Cekwana

With all things equal, I would say, "ugqirha ufune ukuqonda ukuba izinyo liqale nini ukuqaqamba 'de ligqabhuke nje" and you would say, Ja! Then we would all get up and go home, happy and satisfied that we did our good deed for the day. With all things equal, I wouldn't do my make up on stage in front of you and pretend it is good art. With all things equal, I would say, Ladies and Gentlemen: I welcome you to my spectacle. Normally, I would call it a performance, but for reasons you may understand later, if you stay long enough, you might appreciate why I call it a spectacle. With all things equal, I would not have every word I say translated by an impersonal machine that does not even know to pronounce my name.

With all things equal, I would have a name I wouldn't have to repeat a few times, slowly for the entertainment of others. With all things equal, at this moment we wouldn't be in the North, as there would be no South. With all things equal, we would have no language hanging in the space between me and you. With all things equal, we would not have a first language, or a third or a tenth or eleventh.

With all things equal, I would be apologising for speaking when I should be dancing. With all things equal, I would be apologising not for speaking, but because I am so polite. With all things equal, I would be polite not because I apologise, but because I was well brought up.

With all things equal, I wouldn't have to be well brought up to be polite. With all things equal, I would be me without rules. With all things equal, I wouldn't have to follow rules I did not make. With all things equal, I would have no rules but an open mind. With all things equal, I would have a mind I could own and a heart I could trust.

With all things equal, I would be trusted like a man and allowed my freedom like a white child. I would be in control without being controlled. With all things equal, I would be free to move in the world without a paper and a number. With all things equal, I would be less a numerical or racial profile and more a human.

With all things equal, I would count as a man and not be counted as an ox. I would stand among men and not run like a fox. I would be visible, finally and walk with you as we rename the world. With all things equal, there would be more than just the one saviour of mankind, and their eyes would reflect more colours than just the supreme blue. With all things equal, the populous masses of the world would become part of the world. And not just servants of one particular race.

With all things equal, I wouldn't still have to pay for the aftermath of the Berlin Conference, or the Paris Conference. With all things equal, human atrocities would not form the backbone of privilege. And convenient, collective and selective amnesia would die with the past. With all things equal, I would be sweet, not to please you, but because I am.


PINKIES PRAYER

from *Influx Controls:*
on the 12th night of *Never*
I will not be held black

text: Boyzie Cekwana

Dear god
God of all things
God of all things beautiful
God of sunny days and colourful flowers
God of tanned skins and blue eyes
God of everything young and pretty
God of beautiful people and fast cars
God of thin women and tall, dark strangers
God of women with no cellulite and men with large dicks
God of the Lotto Jackpot winners
God of healthy food and plastic water
God of friendly policemen and smiling civil servants
God of functioning Government and incorrupt officials
God of rich men and young girls
God of the French Riviera
God of old men and Viagra
God of the Swiss Alps and Private Golf Estates
God of Tiger Woods and David Beckham
God of righteous bullets and free men
God of flowing rivers and clean dollars
God of honest men and present fathers
God of Swiss Bank accounts
God of Bill Gates
God of the iPhone 3G(S)
And the Blackberry Curve
Dear god, you god, any god, all gods
Hey god, please god
Listen:
If you can't make me thin
Please make all my friends fat





THEATRE
PRODUCTIONS

POUR EN FINIR
AVEC BÉRÉNICE
AN END
TO BÉRÉNICE



POUR EN FINIR AVEC BÉRÉNICE AN END TO BÉRÉNICE

Bérénice is a tragedy by Jean Racine in five acts, consisting of 1506 Alexandrine verses, which was premiered on 21st November 1670 in the Hôtel de Bourgogne and was dedicated to Colbert. The story is about the Roman Emperor and the Queen of Palestine: Because Rome opposes the marriage of the Emperor to a foreigner, Titus is forced to send Bérénice back to her home country. Racine elevates this rather banal anecdote about a Roman and his mistress to a story of an unconditional and tragic love. Faustin Linyekula directed *Bérénice* in March 2009 at the Comédie Française. The theatre, which was founded in 1680, carries Molière's traditions and French classicism into present day.

"From the beginning of this project, I felt it was necessary to take *Bérénice* back to my territory, to the Congo and to Kisangani; perhaps to put an end to her once and for all, to put this text, like a closed space with its own rules and logic, into the reality of the modern day Congo, and to observe how this reality can infiltrate and contaminate *Bérénice*.

Don't we live in Racinian times in the Congo, where the great and powerful can make decisions about life and death? I was struck by Racine's inscription to Monsieur Colbert, to whom he signs off as "your deeply devoted and obedient servant". In a country in which freedom of opinion is more narrowly defined each day, how should you deal with the powerful without paying them court? How should you express yourself without risking everything that you have created?

Isn't the tragedy of *Bérénice* one that can be recognized in these troubled times? Nations with whom one shares a long history and memories can easily become estranged; during political unrest, our neighbour or childhood friend can become a stranger in a matter of days.

From Uganda to Angola, Rwanda to Sudan, our country is burning at every border because our own blood, our connections, and our debts are not acknowledged..." Faustin Linyekula

Pour en finir avec Bérénice begins with sound recordings of an angry speech by Patrice Lumumba, given at the ceremony that celebrated the Congo's independence. The actors account their search for clues in a production of *Bérénice* by a white teacher at a Belgian school in 1960. Just like Bérénice, the Congo's independence meant that he became a stranger in the country that he felt was his own. The school hall in Stanleyville, in which the performance took place, is today a dilapidated cultural centre in Kisangani. The striving towards independence died a wretched death in a mire of corruption and civil war. It remains unchanged, however, that from the beginnings of tragedy, a scapegoat is always sought after, used and killed – and who is better suited for this role than someone who has been turned into a stranger?

director **Faustin Linyekula** with **Innocent Bolunda, Madeleine Bomendje BIAC, Daddy Kamono Moanda, Joseph Pitshou Kikukama, Véronique Aka Kwadeba, Pasco Losanganya Pie XIII, Faustin Linyekula** directorial assistance **Robain Lomandé Moïse** music **Flamme Kapaya** lighting & stagemanager **Virginie Galas** production **Studios Kabako / Virginie Dupray** assisted by **Jean-Louis Mwandika, Eddy Mbalanga** co-production **Festival d'Avignon, CNDC Centre national de danse contemporaine Angers, Nouveau Théâtre d'Angers-Centre dramatique national Pays de la Loire, Théâtre national de Chaillot, Festival Theaterformen Braunschweig** with support from **Alliance Franco-Congolaise in Kisangani**



BÉRÉNICE AND THE CONGO: THE TRAGEDY REMAINS

Braunschweiger Zeitung, 10 June 2010

by Andreas Berge

The stage, dusted with ground coffee, smells of colonial times. The Studios Kabako company from the Congo are performing Jean Racine's *Bérénice*. It is an evening dedicated to the word; to a dialogue about the play, about performing theatre and about the situation in Africa.

The performers wear wigs and their faces are painted white, drawing reference to the classical performance of the tragedy in France. Now and again the director calls figures on to the stage where they assume affected poses. At a blocking rehearsal, the end is read aloud from a piece of paper.

When the Congo gained independence, a white man, Mr Van Keulman, chose the play for his elite pupils. Overnight he had become a stranger in a country where he felt at home and in which his children

were born. Like *Bérénice* who, as a foreigner, was banished by Titus although he loved her.

And yet the play was never finished. Faustin Linyekula has attempted here -*Pour en finir avec Bérénice* - to put an end to it, as it were. But how could there ever be an appropriate end to this play that describes an inherently tragic moment in our human existence - love versus reason (of state). When an actress speaks out the lament of *Bérénice* in a natural tone of voice, the onlooker keenly feels the impact of her words.

She refutes the other question posed by the play, that is, whether one may perform tragedy in a land like the Congo which has been devastated by civil war and tragedy is an everyday occurrence. The actors, at least, can free themselves from their colonial past – washing the colour from their faces. But the children in the Congo still learn the fables of La Fontaine in French with their pronounced local drawl. While the discussions and performance are taking place, a dancer presents to us the suffering of Africa in a series of contorted movements. Do we always need a victim like the group confronts us with in the form of this dancer? Racine ends tragically, but without any dead: everyone goes their own way. "Woe betide us", the actors lament and clear the stage. Life goes on. The tragedy remains.

MY ONLY TRUE COUNTRY IS MY BODY

by David Van Reybrouck

1. Clad in a sheet of newspaper, this is how I first saw him dance. I was watching a dvd of his choreography *Spectacularly empty*. A faint lightbulb left the stage in a state of penumbra. Faustin Linyekula moved across the stage, his body sinewy and sinuous as that of a contortionist. His movements were gracile and bird-like. He was naked, but for a loincloth of newspaper. This mixture of physical vulnerability and the fine-print language of power provided an unsettling imagery that has stayed with me.

It made me think of an essay written by Marianne Van Kerkhoven, a cardinal dramaturgist and intellectual in the Flemish theatre scene in Belgium. Her words were originally written to reflect on the high-voltage tension in Flanders between the political theatre of the 1970s (with its clear social statements) and the postmodern experiments of the 1980s (with its not-so-clear ideological deconstructions and its eulogy of art's sovereignty). She wrote: "Searching for an organic merging of political commitment and artistic autonomy seems to me of crucial importance. Politics are personal and the personal is political: a process of truly interiorising the social options is for the 'political artist' probably the most important artistic deed."

Her creed was a forceful, programmatic statement, yet honesty compels us to admit it was only rarely realized on the stages of Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp. In Kinshasa, however, Faustin Linyekula walked across the stage, almost naked, clad merely in a sheet of newspaper. The body every inch political, and politics overtly physical.

2. The physicality of politics must have been frustratingly obvious to anyone born in Kisangani, the city in eastern Congo where in a previous century Belgian colonizers and Arab slave-traders forged a painful coalition to suppress local African groups. They were also frustratingly clear to someone like Faustin who fled his native Kisangani to seek refuge in Nairobi, Kenya, where he lived as a clandestine migrant before he got kicked out of the country. Power made itself felt in Rwanda again where, six months after the genocide, he tried to set up a *Hamlet*-production with the American staff of the International Court of Justice. Once more he got kicked out of an African country.

Yet Faustin danced, he danced in Kenya and Angola, in South Africa and Slovenia, in Austria and America, in Belgium and in France. He was well on his way to become one of these international dancers, one of those people for whom the globe has become a second home, albeit a home mostly filled with international festivals, hotel rooms, and waiting areas at airports. He chose not to. He went back to the Congo, to Kinshasa, if only to tell his grandmother: "I have been on the road for

such a long time. My only true country is my body. I tried to survive like some music that was never written."

3. The body can be tattooed, tortured, kicked out and kissed. Yet the body is also a site of revolt, of refusal, of rebellion. The body is a country, not a secret garden, it's a republic of contest and comfort. Faustin says: "I am a dancer. I am an African. Yet I am not an African dancer."

A contortionist, indeed.

4. There is something deeply urban about the work of Faustin Linyekula. The received idea that the third world is predominantly the universe of emerald rainforests and ochre savannahs, sparsely dotted with cosy mud houses, is readily surpassed by today's figures of the radical urbanization taking place in South East Asia, South-America and sub-saharan Africa. Happening at a speed and a scale unseen in the West before, in Africa it results in bustling, humongous cities like Lagos, Cairo, Gauteng (the agglomeration of Johannesburg and Pretoria) and Kinshasa.

This urban context is rendered visible in Faustin Linyekula's set designs. Among his favourite props are neon lights and sheets of corrugated iron, reminiscent of the shantytowns of Africa's brutal urban sprawl. In his *Festival des mensonges*, three dancers performed what looked like a courtship display with the bleak, bluish light of a pair of city lanterns. Kinshasa is, among many things, the thin and slightly depressing glow of its suburban neon lights. As if they were not there to cast the dark away, but simply to dot the night.

Yet his vision on African-style urbanization is not pitiful or naïve. He accepts the urban condition as a given. His attitude is in line with what Vincent Lombume, Kinshasa's most exciting novelist, has recently written: "One shouldn't spit on the city. The city is a womb. My city has produced me. From its clouds of dust I was born. One should take the city as it is." And he added: "There are cities and cities. There are cities which you kill in silence, cities that you love and cities that you give birth to every day. There is the city which you carry within, there is the city that you dream of, there are imaginary cities that unfurl for us in the imaginary world."

5. Faustin opted for Kinshasa. He based his private dance company Studios Kabako in Kinshasa. He once took me to his rehearsal area. It was quite a ride in a jeep through the dusty neighbourhoods of



Kinshasa where chickens fluttered away as we passed by. During the shaky ride, Faustin told us he was rehearsing a choreography that was soon going to be performed in Paris and Berlin. In front of a concrete wall and an iron gate, the vehicle halted. "Here we are", he said as we entered. Two young men stood on a lawn without grass. A sandpit without kids, eight meters by eight. They switched of the cassette player. There was no light, no stage, no mirror, no bar, nothing. Not even a strip of shade. Only dust. And yet, here it is, I realized, that a passionate choreographer traces his artistic urge by developing shows that are going to be performed in the lofty theatre halls of the European capitals.

6. If Kinshasa is the city where Faustin Linyekula modelled his *Studios Kabako*, Kisangani is the city which he carries within. Much smaller and less vibrant than Kin, the place now licks its wounds after four years of civil war and human atrocities that defy the imagination. For the New Crowned Hope Festival in Vienna, Faustin decided to go back to his native Kisangani, fully realizing that the city he carries within has become a city he can only dream of. The once magnificent Hotel Zaire Palace where he and his friends phantasized about as kids, is now the home of innumerable squatters. On the first floor rooms are still for rent, not per night, but per month. The tariff is twenty dollars.

Faustin re-enters his native town and wonders what has become haunted: Kisangani or his body. His town no longer exists, his group of friends has fallen apart. What has been left of Kisangani once the friends are gone? Perhaps their words.

Kabako, the one after whom the dance company was named, died close to the Ugandese border of a disease that seemed to have become historical: the bubonic plague. Some of his writings occur in the new production. Kabako died in a small village without cemetery, as normally everyone gets buried on his or her plot of land. A villager who

had lost all his siblings and peers took care of the young and unknown body: Kabako was buried under a coffee tree. The body, even the corpse, is a locus of pity and oblivion. Yet for his friends, his far-away tomb is an uneasy thought.

Faustin's other friend, Vumi (Antoine Vumilia Muhindo), is one of the thirty citizens that were sentenced to death for their presumed part in the killing of president Laurent-Désiré Kabila. The process that condemned him is considered be a show trial. He was a poet, he still is a poet, but a poet that was seen as a spy. His text, *Un monologue du chien* (A dog's soliloquy), forms the literary backbone of Faustin's new performance. If the poet has long been regarded as the king's jester, the spy is most certainly the king's dog.

7. Seven people are on stage, four dancers, one actor, one counter-tenor and one technician. They start from the dreams held by the inhabitants of Kisangani. And they end with Dinozord, the 21-year old Congolese breakdancer whose nickname is French phonetic for 'dinosaure'. An appropriate nom de plume for he considers himself to be last man of his race for whom the body, even when mutilated and fallen to disease, is still sacred. His final solo is essentially a duet with Serge Kakudji, the 17-year old, but remarkably mature opera singer from Lubumbashi. For the last word, says Faustin Linyekula, should be given to the youngest members of the group.

The choreography is not a nostalgic return of a now established dancer to his roots, not a predictable trip down memory lane by someone who has succeeded. It is an exploration of a city that grieves and a hope that might be rekindled. "For me," says Faustin, "it is a matter of coming home before setting off again, a matter of turning this page, while starting a new one. It is as if Mozart would have written his Requiem before his Magic Flute."



THE STUDIOS KABAKO

The theatre-maker and dancer Faustin Linyekula from Kisangani

DEUTSCHLANDFUNK Radio play / Background Culture

Tuesday, 24.08.2010

editor: Karin Beindorff

a feature by Lorenz Rollhäuser

“I am an African dancer. I sell exotic stories! Which one would you like today?”

A huge, empty hall, almost dark. A little daylight seeps in through some cracks at the top of the wall. At the back of the hall, shoved into a corner, a pile of junk covered in a thick layer of dust. Three women and three men circle the only piece of furniture in the room, a long wooden table with six chairs. With tattered scripts in their hand, they are all busily reciting old French verse.

**“Give me time to bethink, Arsace,
Titus has laid everything that he loves in my hands!
You Gods, can I believe what I just heard?
And if I can believe it, shall I rejoice?”**

Rehearsals have just begun for the new Studios Kabako production. In the spring of 2009, Faustin Linyekula put on a production of *Bérénice* at the Comédie Française, one of the foremost – and conservative – theatres in Paris. He was the first African director to take on the French classic *Bérénice* by Jean Racine, a tragedy from the 17th century.

“For me it was as if I were visiting a pygmy village. In a way, I turned ethnography on its head. At the end of the 19th century the Europeans came to study us as wild, strange animals. At the beginning of the 21st century I decided to study the strange behaviour of a French tribe. The last Gauls. The last Gallic village is to be found in the heart of Paris and is called Comédie Française.”

And now a *Bérénice* à la congolaise. Instead of classically trained French actors, it is now Congolese actors, who have never before done battle with Alexandrine verses in old French. Instead of Paris, Kisangani; instead of elegant boulevards, pot-holed roads – and colonial relicts.

“The airport of Simi Simi. The first airport here, built by the Belgians, now out of service. It is a base for the Congolese air force.”

I got to know Faustin Linyekula last year in Europe. He staged a wild musical swansong called *more more more... future* about the situation in the Congo. Now I am sitting with him in his small Japanese car, which is ready for the scrap heap, while he deftly curves around the pot-holes. Not far from his house is the old airport, which is now occasionally used by aid organisations. A plane wreck and the small tower are the only reminders of another era.

“Until two years ago, the army still owned two or three jet fighters,

which were stationed here. But when the head of state came to Kisangani for the Independence Day celebrations, and the pilots were supposed to put on a flight show for the population, one of them crashed into a residential area just behind the airport. Local residents as well as the pilot were killed. The other fighter pilot was shot down by Laurent Nkunda's troops during the war in the east. Now there are still a few members of the air force stationed here, but they don't have any planes.”

A side street just behind the airport; a deserted, fenced-in area, around 60 by 80 metres. A rusty tin sign alludes to the fact that this is the resting place of the victims of the bloody clashes between Rwandan and Ugandan troops in Kisangani at the beginning of the millennium; clashes that cost thousands of civilians their lives.

“Right next to the airport are the general hospital and the university clinics... These buildings also date back to the colonial era. When I was a child there were specialists here who could deal even with complicated cases. If people are brought here today, having been in an accident, it is a miracle if they come out alive. Because there isn't even aspirin.”

The rehearsals continue. Linyekula has engaged three actors from Kisangani, two from the capital Kinshasa, and an old associate who has lived in France for a long time. In three rehearsal phases, each lasting several weeks, this classic tragedy about power and love is to be completely newly interpreted:

“Bérénice is a story of a foreign queen who is expelled from Rome by her Roman lover the moment he becomes Emperor. Simply because she is a foreigner. As it says in the text: Rome, by unchanging law, will have no foreign blood mixed with her blood...”

Linyekula, a gentle-looking, slim man in his mid-thirties with a friendly face, his hair knotted in short plaits, is sitting some way off and concentrating on the way in which the actors are interpreting his instructions. He hardly notices as a chicken flaps its way in through a narrow slit to look for something to eat in the shade. He hasn't come here with a finished piece. Instead, he is using Racine's tragedy as a starting point. He is leaving the rest to his intuition and isn't afraid of developing ideas and then abandoning them the next day. Pasco Losangany is working with Linyekula for the second time:

“It took some getting used to at first. But I have very good powers of observation, and so I adapted to what I saw. But it was

difficult at first. He can seem strict at first, it is important never to be late for rehearsals. But he has given us ideas about how to approach the piece, in terms of its content, which I never would have thought of. I thought: good, we need this and that result – why should we take detours when we know what we need? Only later did I understand that he likes to try out different approaches and then chooses what works best.”

It is not only Linyekula’s way of working, it is also the play itself which posed particular difficulties for the actors. Even for French people, Racine’s *Alexandrine* verses are almost like a foreign language. But for the Congolese it is almost absurd to get to grips with a French classic, written in the language of the country’s former colonial rulers, a language which only about 20% of the population can speak. It brings back memories of primary school. The obvious efforts of the actors to understand his approach, their broken French, and on top of that an antiquated drama about a Palestinian queen and the Emperor of Rome, who chooses power over love – all this seems to appeal to Linyekula. And again and again it leads to digressions that sometimes last for one or two hours:

“This raises a question that really interests me: What makes somebody a foreigner? Why does somebody remain a foreigner? Despite a divided history. Is blood enough of a reason for one person to belong here and another not?”

This question is relevant to the Congolese in relation to the former colonial power Belgium, whose architectural legacies they are confronted with on a daily basis.

“Belgium is part of us and the way we understand the world. And when a Congolese person first comes to Europe, he thinks that the Congo plays just as important a role in the daily life of Belgians. But then he arrives and notices that this is not the case. This shared history does not have the same significance for both sides.”

But Linyekula also poses this question against the background of the conflicts that have taken place here in the last fifteen years involving Uganda and Rwanda. Who is Congolese and who isn’t, was – and still is – a burning question. In particular it affects the Banyamulenge, who are related to the Rwandan Tutsis and are therefore often denounced as the “fifth column” of the Rwandans and as foreigners:

“I grew up in this city together with Tutsi boys and girls. We were all Zairen, but I know that they were attacked when the war broke out here. The Rwandan government sent troops who committed

atrocities and looted, and then suddenly people were saying: his ancestors were from Rwanda, he deserves a burning tyre around his neck. These are questions with which I want to work: What makes somebody Congolese? What makes somebody a foreigner, an outsider? And can this question be posed, without fear, in public?”

In the evening, the city centre with its couple of shopping streets is plunged in darkness. There has been yet another power cut. Only the headlamps of the car and the Chinese mopeds, which serve as taxis here, cast some flickering light.

“We are in the heart of the city. This big building in front of us, shrouded in darkness, was once the luxury hotel. At the time it was called Zaire Palace, today it is called Congo Palace. Now it is a ruin. The war has left its traces, as has the lack of maintenance, because it belonged to the state. Some of the rooms on the first floor are still rented out. In better days a room cost 150 dollars a night, today a room costs 50 dollars a month. All of the other floors are occupied by members of the armed forces. Because they could not be accommodated in barracks or elsewhere, they simply quartered themselves here.”

The Congo Palace is Kisangani’s highest building. With its windows shattered by gunfire it symbolises the condition of the city, in which destruction and dereliction are omnipresent. Where far and wide there is no state in sight which would take care of restoring the infrastructure. The power cuts are symptomatic of this: of the three turbines that the Belgian colonial rulers installed here at the waterfalls of the Tschopo river, which ends here in the Congo, only one is still running, and only at half power. As we stop in front of a shop, a couple of street kids approach us out of the darkness. Torn clothing, dirty faces, bright eyes. Faustin, you haven’t been here for a long time, they say, but he contradicts them: I was here only last week. Then they see the microphone, and of course they want to talk into it. Preferably dirty things: “Mzungu, huoko maneno mbye...” When Linyekula comes back, he hands them two dollars so that they can buy themselves something to eat, and they walk off satisfied. We drive past Linyekula’s old secondary school. In this part of town the power supply is working. At the time, the school was called Collège Sacré Coeur and was run by Catholic priests from Belgium. Here the young Faustin received a humanist education based on a European model. Directly opposite the school is the current headquarters of the Studios Kabako. We drive into a walled yard, in which a big mango tree provides some shade during the day. Behind it is a house, also built by the Belgians. The right half has its own small entrance and is occupied by a family. Studios Kabako has rented the left part of the building. The spacious entrance room at the front, just

behind the little veranda, is used as a rehearsal space. The band fronted by the singer Patient Mufatula is Studios Kabako's own band. Currently, Studios Kabako is less of a concrete place, and more of a collective of dancers, musicians and actors brought together by Linyekula when he returned to the Congo. By now there are fifteen people involved, some of whom also develop their own projects with the help of Studios Kabako. This openness is part of the concept.

“The Studios Kabako are perhaps one thing above all: an attempt not to be alone.”

It is the attempt by a creative community of dancers, musicians, filmmakers and other artists to form a collective, a community which Linyekula and his friend Kabako dreamed of in the 1980s. At the time, Kisangani's young intellectuals and artists met in the French cultural centre and wanted to revolutionise African literature and African theatre. Kabako later died of the plague, but the dream of the collective has remained.

“Before I returned to the Congo in 2001, I had been gone for eight years. First I was in Kenya, then in other African countries. Then I worked in Europe, in Slovenia, France and Austria, but in 2001 it became clear to me that I had to return to the Congo. Perhaps because I had begun to realise what I was really interested in was to tell stories. And in exile I could not find the stories that increasingly interested me. So I said to myself: If I want to continue telling stories, and if I am sure, deep down, that I cannot find them in exile, then I have to return. And I'll go from there.”

Together with his wife, Linyekula first returned to the capital city Kinshasa. But Kinshasa is difficult, overcrowded, everyday life is hectic, and living costs are high. And in 2006 the situation in Kisangani had calmed down to such an extent that it was possible to imagine a life there, also with children. Virginie Dupray recalls:

“When I came here for the first time I immediately felt something in my heart, something about this place appealed to me, the rhythm of the city, the way the people related to one another, and also the way the city opened out to the forest and the river, the mighty Tempo – for all these reasons I immediately liked it here.”

Virginie is Faustin's wife. Without her Studios Kabako would be unimaginable. In her little office behind the rehearsal room she takes care of all the administrative jobs. She deals with the finances, organises appearances at festivals throughout the world, organises the trips, submits applications to the major cultural foundations and invites guest artists to Kisangani, who regularly run workshops for the local young artists.

“I am fully aware that I am a foreigner, that I am white. But every time when I return it feels like coming home. Studios Kabako quickly turned into a working project, then a life project, which we hope will have an impact on Kisangani.”

A project, that wants to use culture to change this city. Kisangani lies almost on the equator. Even at night I am bathed in sweat. Virginie has offered me a room in the house that she rents for the three external actors. A 1950s bungalow, also built by Belgians, with four rooms, a spacious living room and a balcony. A powerful spring gushes on the slope just below, where women and children from the neighbourhood collect water in big buckets. In the mornings and evenings, you see young men there, washing and brushing their teeth. Looking out between two palm trees, there is a wonderful view from the terrace of the river, which flows about two hundred metres away beyond luxuriant foliage. A quiet river. Almost uncannily quiet. Early in the morning, dug-out canoes are steered silently up the river by one or two men. Standing up in the canoes, they thrust the paddles directly onto the riverbed close to the banks. Towards the evening they move into the middle of the current, which is around five hundred metres wide here, and float back downstream. Once a day, at most, a Balenière can be heard, one of the bulbous, roofed-over wooden boats, which, powered by one or two small outboardmotors, can accommodate over a hundred people, in addition to sacks containing textiles, medicine, spare parts for bicycles, which travelling salesmen still transport to the most remote areas by bicycle. It is now the fourth day without electricity in the house. I am starting to get used to candles and torches – and to broken sinks, toilets without flushes and showering with a bucket. But this morning unfamiliar shouting can be heard in the distance. Apparently students have erected barricades on the streets and aren't letting anybody through. I am curious, and walk up the sandy path to the road. There is no traffic, and in the distance I can see tree trunks and groups of people at the next crossroads. As I pass the barricades near the main entrance of the university, I am advised by a young man to take a stone. I won't get through without a stone. Now another man approaches me, and begins to thrash a branch on the ground in front of me. Aggressively, he orders me to pick up a stone. Now I'm no longer sure whether this is still a bit of fun or getting serious. A few people are still laughing, but the mood quickly changes. More young men approach, surround me, want to know what nationality I am, want to see my visa, now discover the microphone, which exposes me as a potential spy. I'm told to turn it off right away, which of course I do, yes, yes, right away. I am told to scarp, I am told that journalists are not wanted here. I don't wait to be told this twice. But suddenly I am surrounded by a whole gang, which starts to move with me. Jeering, they walk the three hundred metres back along the road with me, until we get to the little track that leads to the house, then they finally leave me alone. Later, gunfire can be heard in the

distance. Apparently the police are firing warning shots in order to disperse the students and to prevent them from looting in the city centre. The next morning the electricity is back. The protest was successful, if only for this part of Kisangani. But now there is no running water. Everyday life in the Congo.

Like an uprising against these conditions, in 2009 Linyekula created a spectacular music show with the name *more more more... future-* together with the musician Flamme Kapaya, one of the Congo's most famous pop guitarists. The texts are by Antoine Vumilia Muhindo, an old friend of Linyekula. He was involved in the overthrow of Mobuto, subsequently rose up the ranks under the new president Laurent Désiré Kabila, and after the president's assassination in 2001 was sentenced to life-long imprisonment as a co-conspirator.

**“We deserve more than unreal promises,
More than Catholic compassion,
More than generosity, we deserve justice,
More than money, give us back our dignity,
Give us a future.”**

Rehearsal for *Bérénice*. Linyekula has given the actors the task of exploring the room, of familiarising themselves with the space. Over the loudspeakers the guitar of Flamme Kapaya can be heard, which is to be part of the performance. Suddenly loud Arabic music resounds from the room next door. Under the direction of Hafiz Dhaou, a Franco-Tunisian dancer, a dance workshop for young musicians and dancers is taking place, also organised by Studios Kabako.

Three of the actors carry on unperturbed. Linyekula is not happy:

“What does it mean to you at this moment?”

The actor explains that he had simply ignored the music.

“It had no effect on you. But can we really allow ourselves to ignore the things that are happening around us – the burning tyres, the barricades, the tear-gas grenades? It's still possible to get on with things, to continue, but to ignore what's going on – isn't that a little suicidal?”

I don't just want to go deep inside myself. My approach relies much more on what's going on around me. Because I think that life is richer than me alone. Greater than me alone. And if you listen to yourself and to everything going on around you, things begin to happen that you never expected. And that is what's most important. What interests me: to be with you. What do you give me? What does the room give us, how can we work with it?”

But during the rehearsals the actors show little initiative. When Linyekula asks them to try things out, they are intimidated and freeze up. In

their experience, theatre means learning a role and playing it as well as possible, in short: carrying out a task. Precisely what Linyekula doesn't want.

“In the eight years that I travelled through the world on my own and could only count on myself, I forgot how to be simply a shadow, a number. I grew up in a dictatorship, and in a dictatorship the individual does not exist. Because there is only one individual, the dictator, everyone else is the mass that follows him. By becoming an outsider, I forgot this and learnt how to think for myself.”

No wonder that Linyekula finds it so important to be able to speak for oneself, to articulate oneself:

“I try to put the individual back at the centre of things. But an individual who negotiates his relationship with the community.”

Suddenly there is another power cut. It is therefore impossible to continue working with music. Linyekula lets everyone have a break. But when the power cut continues and one of the actors doesn't reappear because – as he explains the next day – he had something urgent to take care of, the mood changes:

“On days like this I ask myself: What's the point of it all? Too many problems for nothing. It is tiring. Straining. You need this energy for other things. You can feel very, very lonely here. Because there is nobody who shares your view of the world. It is impossible to live like this.”

Virginie has driven out of the town with me and a New York theatre agent to show us a plot of land on which Studios Kabako wants to build its headquarters, as a tangible manifestation of the dream of a creative centre. Linyekula has been able to get the Viennese architect Bärbel Müller on board for the project. She is developing her designs in close cooperation with Linyekula. Virginie tells us:

“Here there will be a dance and theatre space, and on the other side three buildings are planned, one for sound editing, also a rehearsal room, a recording studio and maybe a mastering studio, then a cutting room for videos. And up here a building for the kitchen, for meetings and so on; and probably three small houses each with two apartments for guests. We want to build some of the buildings in the traditional clay style – clay is very good for sound. Keep moving, we've got ants here!... But we are planning a strong architectural statement with the entrance – quite high, and we can't build it out of clay in the traditional local way, because it rains too much.”

Studios Kabako has bought another small plot of land in the middle of town, so that they can perform their work there. The plan is to add a third plot of land on the other side of the river. The ambitious goal is to provide culture for the whole of Kisangani. But Linyekula is not Christoph Schlingensiefel, whose African opera village is being realised in a short space of time with the help of generous investors. Studios Kabako is progressing much less spectacularly, and so far only part of the necessary money has been secured. But they are pressing ahead with the project nonetheless. And they believe in Kisangani. And they are not the only ones. President Kabila has bought a huge plot of land a little further along the river, as has the governor. Prices are rising, and in the city itself there are a few building projects underway. Since the road going east, to Uganda and Kenya, has been rebuilt and can be used by lorries, Kisangani is positioning itself once again as a trading centre on the river.

Down by the river: this is where Kisangani came into being. Kisangani means "on the island" in Swahili. The name was given to the town by the slave traders from Zanzibar, whose sphere of influence stretched as far as here, where they settled on the island beside the cataracts.

At the harbour of the state-run shipping company, rusting cranes serve as a reminder of the lively activity of years gone by. A bit further upstream, directly in front of the cathedral, there are motorised dug-out canoes, which head for the other side of the river as soon as around thirty people are squeezed in. Even further down is the harbour of the Balenières, the roofed-over wooden boats which reach the nearest biggest towns in one or two days' journey. Right beside this is the harbour of the barges, which transport the majority of goods between Kisangani and the capital Kinshasa. There are neither quays nor cranes here, so the loading and unloading is done by carriers, who drag the heavy loads on their shoulders across small planks to the nearest lorries. But after years during which the motorboats were out of service due to the uncertain political situation, the river is now at least busy again, and Kisangani is once again a transshipment point between east and west.

If a stranger appears at the harbour, he can be sure of being stopped almost right away by some official: police, soldiers, immigration officials, security people. Often they are just after a bit of money, but when a camera or microphone are involved, it gets more complicated. The man says:

"How can we know if you're really a journalist? We are afraid of white skin like yours, it makes us afraid. And a criminal also doesn't write on his forehead: I am a criminal. Who can prove to us that you are really working as a journalist?"

I show him my accreditation and am relieved that after he has studied it he seems satisfied. But he tells me I have to understand – there are simply too many criminals. And he has something else to say to the white man:

"You enjoy too many liberties here in our country. Because we are too hospitable. Especially compared to the way that we are treated in Europe."

A concert in the Grande Poste: For days the rehearsal room and the offices have been a hive of activity. The Parnas concert is due to take place tomorrow, the band of the singer and rapper Patient Mafutala. The place: open air in front of the Grande Poste. Concerts like this are an important part of what Linyekula wanted to achieve with Studios Kabako:

"At some point I began to ask myself how to get beyond this small core of artists with whom I work; and how I could maybe organise an event that would impact the whole city."

The main post office in Kisangani is a historic location. This is where Patrice Lumumba worked before he became president of the newly independent Congo. And until recently the wide set of steps with the square in front of it was reserved for the great and powerful: the head of state, when he comes to visit, or the most important Congolese musicians. Now this location is being used for the first time by local artists. And there is no doubt that people want to see them perform: over 5000 young people gradually stream in. Linyekula himself stands at the mixing desk, and everyone on stage now feels the weight of responsibility, because normally the right to speak in public in the Congo is reserved only for the powerful elite. And now Patient Mafutala sings here:

**"I saw people dancing and then being buried,
Laughing and then crying,
Partying and then mourning,
But what is happening in my country?
On the one side the elegant people, their hands in their pockets,
On the other side the poor people,
Ground down by drudgery.
The usual policies – thunderous applause for stupid speeches,
The whole population close to death,
And we keep on dancing
A macabre dance..."**

He says: **"In my texts I talk about the things that surround us, about daily life, about the things that I see, hear and experience. Overall it is a chronicle of our society. But the words need to be selected carefully. We don't want to die as martyrs."** And Faustin adds: **"How is it possible to rise to speak in a country where freedom of speech does not exist?"**

It is always about testing boundaries. But the affected person will only find out if he has gone too far when it is too late.

“I know that I cannot count on our government. And I know that our politicians can be very deconstructive. If something bothers them, they are capable of destroying everything. So it is necessary to find strategies that will not provoke them.”

At some point everyone rushes forward towards the stage, suddenly I am crushed in the middle of this moving mass of people. Nobody seems to care that they can hardly hear the music on stage. The concert is a huge success. Singer Patient refers to Linyekula's work:

“Faustin Linyekula is like a big brother to me. And also a kind of teacher, who turned up at exactly the right moment. Faustin opened up another perspective for us, put us in contact with certain people from whom we could learn how to work on ourselves in order to get ahead. He is the motor, because through our work with him other young people are also starting to do something, and above all to believe in themselves.”

On the following evening there is a debriefing. After general praise of the concert and its organisation, Linyekula makes some critical comments – about responsibilities, about agreements that weren't always stuck to, in short: about professionalism. And again this reaction: silence. You don't disagree with the boss. The spirit of cooperation that Linyekula desires is only making tentative progress:

“Right from the start, this work had an enormous pedagogical dimension. At first I was of course seen as the boss, because I am the employer. Which means a lot in a country where there is hardly any work, . Now the pedagogical task is to bring the artists and all the other employees to a point where they have the attitude: even here, in an environment as difficult as the Congo, it's possible to create something, to make something of oneself without oppressing others.”

Precisely because it is so different from what is the norm in the Congo, it could take a long time until Linyekula's dream of a creative community comes true. Linyekula knows this, he knows the despair and he knows the loneliness that comes with it.

“When I analyse the situation objectively I ask myself: what am I actually doing here? Why don't I just leave? But I don't have a choice, I want to be here, so I am here, in the knowledge that it could all end from one day to the next. Perhaps it is precisely because it could be the last one that every step is so important. Knowing that it could all be over tomorrow makes me appreciate

what I am doing today even more.”

Linyekula is tough. He won't easily give up on his idea of turning his home town into a cultural centre. The alternative, to live in Europe, is not one that he is considering at the moment. Even if everything there seems to be much easier: he is an outsider there too, a foreigner. In his performance *Cargo*, he puts it like this:

“For some years now I have felt increasingly uncomfortable in the places where I work, these “creative locations”, contemporary creative locations. And do you know why I feel uncomfortable there? When I walk through the streets I see people of all skin colours. But why do those who look exactly like me not come here? Maybe they don't feel comfortable here? And what does that say about me, because after all I feel kind of at home in these places? Am I a coconut? Dark outside, white inside? I feel ill at ease, but I also don't want to leave. Because I am an African dancer. And I need money. So I stay and sweat out my stories. Stories about the emaciated faces of hungry children; about massacres in the Congolese forests; stories about – I am an African dancer, I sell exotic stories.”

If not otherwise indicated, all quotations are by Faustin Linyekula.



THEMATIC WEEKEND

PRESENCE
OF ELSEWHERE
IN THE
HERE AND NOW

PRESENCE OF ELSEWHERE IN THE HERE AND NOW

Thematic weekend with performances, lectures, videos and installations

Over two days, around 25 artists and actors – each with a personal perspective on his or her background and cultural history – came together in the foyers of the Staatstheater in Braunschweig. Performances, video installations, textual works, lectures, a radio feature and a photo project addressed the questions: To what extent is the perception of every individual shaped by his or her origins and personal experiences? And: How – and above all where – do global history and personal histories overlap?

Because when the political theorist Achille Mbembe asks “Who is African?”, any answer is inseparable from the question posed by Fred Wilson: “What is European?” Question and answer are inextricably intertwined and are mutually dependent on one another. The cultures of the world cannot be regarded as independent entities – they are bound together by historical events and above all by colonial history. German society, too, has to confront and deal with post-colonial realities; the social, economic and political impact of colonialism is still reverberating to this day, not only in the colonised countries but also in Germany.

The Presence of the Elsewhere Here and Now exhibited a wide variety of genres, formats and media, and provided a forum for reflection and discussion.

PROGRAMME

PERFORMANCES, LECTURES AND TALKS

Kien Nghi Ha, Berlin

DECOLONIALIZING GERMANY – ON THE NEED FOR A POSTCOLONIAL SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

Followed by Kien Nghi Ha in conversation with Christine Regus

Departing from the convention of focusing on far-off colonies, in his lecture the political scientist Kien Nghi Ha analyses inner colonialisation in Europe and Germany.

Lecture text on page 56

Esther Mugambi, Amsterdam

HYBRID EYES

Solo video performance

What would Esther Mugambi’s life have been like if she had stayed in Kenya? In her solo performance *Hybrid Eyes*, Mugambi imagines this other life. Inspired by African VJs, who translate American and European films into their own language in a highly subjective way, Mugambi mediates the visual imagery through rapping and story-telling.

Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, Yaoundé

INTERCULTURAL AND POLITICAL DIALOGUE BASIC PRINCIPLES FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Lecture

How independent is Africa today? How should Europe and Africa be working together to overcome the colonial past? The Cameroonian philosopher and theologian Fabien Eboussi Boulaga reflects on decolonisation from both sides.

Asta Gröting, Berlin

THE INNER VOICE: I AM BIG

With Buddy Big Mountain, New York, Text: Deborah Levy, London

A dialogue between the Native American ventriloquist Buddy Big Mountain and a puppet created by Asta Gröting, a professor at the University of Art in Braunschweig: the topic being discussed is personal identity, but who is talking here?

Grada Kilomba, Berlin

PLANTATION MEMORIES

Reading and discussion

The author and psychologist Grada Kilomba reads from her book *Plantation Memories*, which deals with a variety of themes – from the question of “Where are you from?” to the n-word, and the political significance of hair. By combining postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis and poetic story-telling in the form of short stories, Kilomba offers a new and inspiring interpretation of everyday racism, memory, trauma and decolonisation.

Faustin Linyekula/Studios Kabako, Kisangani

LE CARGO

Performance

In *Le Cargo*, the Congolese theatre-maker Faustin Linyekula reflects on his part in the art business of the „North“ and questions the achievements of a so called post-colonial society.

More on Faustin Linyekula from page 36

Gabriele Genge, Essen

THEATER AND STAGING IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART

Followed by Gabriele Genge in conversation with Alma-Elisa Kittner

Since their “discovery”, colonial artefacts have been brought to Europe and displayed in museums. How are these objects treated today, and how are they perceived? The art historian Gabriele Genge presents works by African artists that deal with the continuities and changes in the way in which the continent, its culture and its art are perceived.

Otobong Nkanga, Antwerpen/Paris

BAGGAGE (1972 – 2007/08), PRESENTATION 2010

A happening by Allan Kaprow, re-invented by Otobong Nkanga

The Nigerian artist Otobong Nkanga reinterprets *Baggage*, a score by the American performance artist Allan Kaprow from 1972. In her version, Nkanga travels from the Netherlands to Nigeria with Dutch sand in her rucksack.

See also page 66

CONSULTING ROOM

Visitors in conversation with different hosts

Henning Hues, doctoral student at the Georg-Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research

Curriculum of Reconciliation? The teaching of History in South Africa after Apartheid.

Prof. Dr. h.c. Gerd Biegel, Director of the Institute for Braunschweig Regional History at the TU Braunschweig

Anton Wilhelm Amo (c. 1703-1753 in what is today Ghana), the first professor (philosopher and legal scholar) of African origin in Germany (Braunschweig, Halle)

Rolf C. Hemke, dramaturg for Public Relations and Marketing at the Theater an der Ruhr

The Boundaries of Language, Life and Thought – the Effects of the Colonial Languages on Theatre in Africa

Prof. Dr. Ulrike Bergermann, Media Studies professor at the Braunschweig University of Art

The Invisibility of the Colour White. Stories about Normality

Buddy Big Mountain, artist and ventriloquist; Southampton, New York

The heritage as an American Indian Mohawk

Prof. Dr. h.c. Gerd Biegel, Director of the Institute for Braunschweig Regional History at the TU Braunschweig

The colonial monument in Braunschweig

Esther Mugambi, performer and singer, Amsterdam

The influence of communication technology in everyday life in Europe and Kenya

Christine Regus, Press Officer at the Goethe Institute, Berlin

The work and role of the Goethe Institute in Africa



VIDEOS & INSTALLATIONS

David Zink Yi, Berlin

DEDICATED TO YI YEN WU

Single-channel video installation, 2000, 23'30 min

In Spanish, three people talk about the culinary cultures of their childhoods and their personal experiences that cross national borders. They come from immigrant families of diverse origins.

Seydou Boro, Ouagadougou/Paris

LE CHEVAL

Dance Video, 2004, 7'20 min,

ON S'EN FOU

Dance Video, 2004, 7'29 min,

LA FISSURE

Dance Video, 2004, 7'10 min, Loop

While working in Cameroon, the well-known Burkina-Fasoan choreographer Seydou Boro made numerous short films of dancing bodies in a variety of everyday situations.

Jörg Laue, Berlin

DYNAMIC BAKERY

Video, 7'16 min / Audio, 58 min, 2008, Loop

CHRISTMAS BEACH WALK

Video, 2008/09, 9'30 min, Loop

Two videos made by Jörg Laue during a three-month stay in South Africa, which atmospherically reflect the contrasting living conditions he encountered.

Ntando Cele, Amsterdam

A FAN APART

Video, 2009, 1'50 min, Loop

She stands apart from the rituals of a white society that celebrates itself: a fan apart. In her works, the young South African performance artist Ntando Cele reflects on her sadness about so-called post-apartheid in South Africa – and in Europe.

Fred Wilson, New York

WHEN EUROPE SLEPT, IT DREAMT OF THE WORLD

Text

In: *Unpacking Europe*, ed. Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi (Rotterdam: Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, 2001)

Tulips from Amsterdam, potatoes from Germany and tomatoes from Italy. All of them originally come from outside of Europe. The Afro-American artist Fred Wilson focuses on things that he once thought of as absolutely European.

Brigitta Kuster, Berlin and Moise Merlin Mabouna, Berlin

2006 – 1892 = 114 JAHRE

DV, 2006, 7 min, Loop

À TRAVERS L'ENCOCHE DANS VOYAGE DANS LA BIBLIOTHEQUE COLONIALE NOTES PITTORESQUES

DV, 2009, 25 min

Brigitta Kuster, Berlin

NOTE D'INTENTION

Text, 2006

The Swiss artist and author Brigitta Kuster and the Cameroonian filmmaker Moise Merlin Mabouna present two video works from a long-term documentary-experimental film research project. Taking as its starting point the story of Mabouna's great-grandfather, who died in the fight against 'the whites', this work reveals contrasting cultural dynamics of remembering and forgetting.

See also page 69

Evelyn Annuß, Berlin

STAGINGS MADE IN NAMIBIA

Photos, 2009

Evelyn Annuß provided over 100 Namibian citizens with cameras, so that they could capture their own views of the colonial era in German Southwest Africa. But the photographers transformed the idea and instead created a personal documentation of their everyday lives.

See also page 72

Miguel Pereira, Lissabon

DOO

Audio text for the dance piece DOO, 2008/10, 8 min, MP3 player

Until the age of seven, the choreographer and performer Miguel Perreira grew up in Mozambique, which at the time was a Portuguese colony. It was only many years later, while working together with artists from Africa, that he uncovered the colonial-political aspects of his – until then – innocent childhood memories.



Christoph Spittler, Berlin

THE SPIRIT OF THE MISSIONARY

Radio feature 55 min, RBB/WDR/MDR 2007, MP3 player

Following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, Christoph Spittler travels to Africa. The missionary Ernst Friedrich Gottschling left his family of five in order to remain in South Africa for good. Accompanied by an African pastor, he encounters the 'spirit of the missionary'.



Jeanne Faust, Hamburg

RECONSTRUCTING DAMON ALBARN IN KINSHASA

Super 16 on HDTV, 2010, 9 min, Loop

In this work, the artist Jeanne Faust shows the reconstruction of a photo. The picture of the musician Damon Albarn during his stay in Kinshasa is the point of reference, but the actual subject is never to be seen. The appropriation of another person's identity that remains concealed from the viewer.



Esther Mugambi, Amsterdam

HOMERUN

Video, 2009, 1'40 min, Loop

KENYA NO BORDERS ONLINE

Video, 2008, 6'30 min, Loop

A journey by plane from Amsterdam to Nairobi with two enormous shopping bags in a minute and forty seconds; and a video that explores the opportunity of virtual travel to "realise" the adventure of a lifetime between Europe and Africa: in an entertaining and thought-provoking way, Esther Mugambi connects her life in Amsterdam with a country from which she has become estranged – Kenya.

curator **Silke Bake** in cooperation with the **Team von Theaterformen** with the assistance of **Kathrin Vesper, Sylvia Franzmann** in cooperation with **Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig (HBK), Universität Hildesheim – Institut für Medien und Theater, Forschungskolleg Verflechtung von Theaterkulturen an der FU Berlin, Haus der Wissenschaft Braunschweig, AfricAvenir International e.V.**

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DECOLONIALIZING GERMANY – ON THE NEED FOR A POSTCOLONIAL SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE*

Kien Nghi Ha (Berlin)

Prof. Dr. Esiaba Irobi was due to be here today to hold a lecture on the problems of post-colonial theory from an African, diasporic and postcolonial perspective. I deeply regret that Esiaba Irobi can no longer share his arguments and ideas with us personally and that his knowledge, and the personal experiences which informed this knowledge, can no longer be presented by him in person. My heartfelt sympathy goes out, above all, to his family and friends.

The news of his death came to me as a complete surprise and plunged me into a state of mourning. I was personally all the more shocked, as I had had the opportunity meeting Esiaba Irobi in April at a conference at the Freie Universität in Berlin, where he presented a lecture about the representation and marginalisation of Black culture in the White¹ Anglo-American imagination. I was deeply impressed by his brilliant intellect and his passionate contribution to the issue of the pervasive legacies of European colonialism. His wonderful voice and personality – which combined astute critical faculties with personal responsibility and political engagement in an exemplary way – and his insights, which were characterised by a deep universal humanity, will be greatly missed in critical discourse. Those who had the good fortune and privilege to meet Esiaba Irobi, even briefly, will remember him as an intelligent, passionate and open-minded intellectual, who drew attention to the less obvious sides of racism and other social inequalities.

It is of course absolutely impossible for me to represent the positions of Esiaba Irobi or to replace him in any way. And yet, although I am approaching the subject from the opposite direction, my lecture – which discusses colonial traditions in Germany's political culture – is nonetheless connected with the post-colonial (i.e. historical rather than theoretical) decentring of Africa beyond the colonial mantra, which was to be the subject of Esiaba Irobi's lecture. The one-dimensional reduction of Africa to the colonial experience may appear – particularly from an African perspective – to be a form of continued historical and intellectual impoverishment and cultural (re)colonialization; yet on the other hand we are often confronted by perspectives in which the European modernity appears to be only loosely and randomly connected with the century-old history of colonial conquest, which has lasted to the

present day. This externalisation of the colonial dimension from social and national identity and, correspondingly, its one-sided outsourcing from the collective canon of knowledge, is significant for the power of the colonial present. In this lecture I am concerned not only with reappraising the past; I also want to suggest that the diminishing of the colonial dimension from Western cultural and social history results in a social myth that fosters an irrational treatment of racism and colonial practices aimed effectively at ideological suppression. This maxim, that something does not exist, or at least is unacceptable in the context of the carefully maintained political culture of Western "enlightenment", with its implicit claim of superiority, is particularly widespread in Germany. It leads to a selective self-image based on historical suppression and a political disavowal of reality. As a result, it is impossible to initiate social changes and to seriously engage in a critical, self-reflective dialogue in a global context.

In Germany, colonialism – as soon as it is used as a critical analytical category and not, as is the norm, as a form of ideological authority – is an inaccessible, truly uncanny term. Its unfathomable depths seem so illusory, that this unspeakable word is carefully avoided and shunned. Like criticism of racism, it reminds us of colonial oppression by White Germans and triggers the need for immediate distancing. Usually, such deviation tactics are reflected in the yearning to forget the past once and for all. The refusal of the dominating White German society to deal with and to address the colonial roots of its own cultural history and political identity has far-reaching consequences. It reflects a process in which neither the subjugation of the Other nor the colonial construction of the German nation are discussed. What's more, the continued power effects of this suppression on the current state of German society is also not discussed. This issue becomes all the more dangerous and intolerable as we look at the troubling and ambiguous relationship between the past and the present, at the connection of outer and inner coercions, in short at the unresolved actuality of German colonial culture. Up to now, the political silence, the concealment, the hushing up² has to a large extent suppressed what needs to be said. Silence is a deliberate form of amnesia, and amnesia is a political expression of the collective memory. That is why consensual silence is a dominant articulation of power, which actively resists the reappraisal and visualisation of imperial practices and images through deliberate acts of non-remembering³, and that can only be pried open with counter-narratives. In its totalising dimensions, the power of collective forgetting can consolidate into a secondary colonialization. Secondary colonialization is not a blank space – it is a social dynamic that is established again and again through a set of constructions and practices of power. As a result of secondary colonialization, it is not only the continuities, transitions and gaps of colonial ways of thought, but also the actual history of the

colonialization of the German society itself that is continually smothered by a White veil of silence. On the other hand, Black subjects, who often resisted while being made victims, are once again victimised as a result of the “perpetrator worship” in the hegemonic discourses. Since the discursive means for describing realities coloured by colonialism are taboo or undeveloped, the social power structures and infrastructures of every colonial presence are concealed. Through this historical and political whitewashing, a comfortable delusional world was established and stabilised for White people. The imprints of colonialism - which have not only affected the reality of the European modernity but also been fundamental for the formation of German cultural and identity right up to the present - are rarely dealt with.

In former West Germany, the reappraisal of the country's colonial history was badly neglected over a long period of time⁴. Strangely enough, West German historians only began to deal with this epoch at the end of the 1960s. Equally significant is that despite the political responsibility resulting from the colonial past, interest in this area of research considerably declined already in the mid 1970s (Smith 1996: 431f). The more recent impulses for an academic review of German imperialism, therefore, came initially not from German academia but from Black (German) scholars and activists from the fields of transatlantic Black Diaspora Studies, Anglo-American German Studies and transnational postcolonial criticism.⁵ The number of academic and popular works about this subject has noticeably increased in recent years in Germany. However, the growing discursive interest is the result of a “catching up” movement in a country where critical accounts of German colonialism were socially undesirable and marginalised in academia over a long period of time. Owing to this scenario, a considerable need to make up for this deficit has emerged in academia, politics and society, and has resulted in an enormous backlog in basic research.

Two further constraints have also been exposed as structure-forming and trend-setting within this historiographic production of knowledge. The bulk of colonial-historical research deals with the colonialization of areas outside of Europe, whereby the reciprocal and dialectic process of outer colonialization of the Other and inner colonialization of the White Self are segregated and the production of boundary-less spaces in the process of colonialization is given scant attention.⁶ It is true

that there is an increasing number of publications, which besides the colonies also explore the effects of imperialist expansion in Germany itself during the Wilhelminian era.⁷ But these approaches remain limited to historical research and interpretation of the period from 1884 up to 1918 and in a few cases up to 1945. Studies that analyse the continuity and transformation of colonial ways of thinking, images and structures right up to the present day in Germany are still fairly rare and are usually found within the field of cultural studies or media analysis.

As long as the interaction of merging temporal and social sediments is not discussed, and academic reviews remain purely historical, the impact of colonialism on the racist conditions of German society today cannot be analysed or understood. Without understanding history as an open and dynamic field, it is impossible to raise the question of colonial presences.⁸ Up to now, even in critically-intended German research about racism, the colonial roots and elements of racist forms of dominance and violence are not taken fully into consideration or incorporated into the analysis. To overlook the historic materiality and entanglement of colonial-racist power and exploitation practices results in the rejection of opportunities for a deeper understanding of today's conflict situations. In fact, it is precisely the interconnection of different temporalities and the overlapping of spatial interaction processes that lead to new insights and political starting points for intervention. A ground-breaking concept for academic research into postcolonial German Studies was laid by Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox and Susanne Zantop with *The Imperialist Imagination. German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (1998), which paved the way for other works.⁹ In contrast to the usual historiography or other social and cultural-historical approaches, colonial history is here seen as the starting point for a more far-reaching development that is not temporally self-contained and that does not view colonialism as an one-way street from the perspective of the European “motherland”.

I would now like to turn my attention to the contradictory interaction of Space – Dream – Trauma¹⁰ as starting conditions for colonial policy, and thereby to outline, above all, how the colonialization process affected the political culture in Germany. I would like to highlight that colonialism created numerous cultural artefacts and practices whose meanings have been incorporated into the imaginative expanses of the German cultural, memorial and academic landscape. For example, traces of colonialism are still to be found in the urban environment of Berlin and in the political topography of Germany.¹¹ The long shadow of internal colonialization is by no means only kept alive in the colonial view on Black people or timeworn Africa clichés (Melber 1992). We are still confronted by a historic situation characterised by practices of discrimination and an absence of experience of internal decolonialization.

We also need to recognise that the scale and specific orientation of today's racist power relationships cannot be separated from the

colonial experience. There is little doubt, that the enthusiastically received colonial policy contributed to a structural, cultural and not least administrative anchoring of the potential for aggression against and devaluation of People of Colour.¹² The everyday occurrence of racist relationships is apparent not only in scandalous experiences of violence and discrimination – e.g. in dealing with German authorities and laws –, but also in representative and epistemological forms. For this and other reasons, we need to deal with the continued effects of colonial racism and the normalising practice of racialisation, which constructed “racial” identity as inherent to human nature and thereby unavoidable. The idea that people have an indisputable, innate “racial” identity and affiliation is of course a colonial invention; however, it is not recognised as such. Its unbroken power in terms to categorise human individuals makes this construction one of the most fundamental and far-reaching legacies of the Colonial Era, one that can be experienced on a daily basis. A long series of German philosophers and academics such as Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel – to name just the most famous masterminds – made significant contributions to the formation and promotion of racial theories in Western general knowledge in the name of European Enlightenment and rationality¹³. One thread of this pseudo-academic development resulted in the German theory of “racial hygiene”, a theory that was already being formed at universities during the colonial German Empire and which found its most loyal supporters among the educated middle classes and the social elite. During the Nazi era, “racial hygiene” played a significant role in the industrialised policy of extermination, since it involved the development of bio-political techniques for the identification, selection and concentration of the population groups to be exterminated, proving to be an ideologically reliable instrument of the German Nazis (Ha 2010: 129-178).

The German contribution to global colonialization takes place in the context of a world wide political destruction and transformation process that has lasted over several centuries. I am interested in how colonial spaces and practices, through the colonialization of the

Western metropolis themselves, came into existence and how they have been passed down to the present day, in the context of colonialism without colonies. Colonialization not only had a devastating effect on people and societies in the newly created colonies; it also created a lasting change in German society, in which everyday life and institutions became extensively aligned with the modern requirements of a colonising state. The colonies were used not only as raw material suppliers, settlement areas, and as business and capital markets, but also as laboratories of modernity and schools of the nation. Accordingly, the effects of self-colonialization on the military, political, cultural, ideological, economic, academic, technological and urban spheres of the Wilhelminian society were highly visible and dramatic.

Here is a good point to consider the epic significance of the Berlin Africa Conference in 1884-85, during which, at the invitation of the Reich Chancellor Bismarck, 14 mainly European colonial powers divided up an entire continent amongst themselves with complete disregard for the interests of the people who lived there. During this negotiation marathon, nothing less was established than the future formation and the rules of the European occupation of Africa. The contractually agreed geopolitical new formation of the continent enabled a systematically applied colonial project on a massive scale, which based on the borders drawn up at the conference gave birth to a new era and completely artificial societies. The global-political significance of this event is hard to overestimate, since the “race for Africa”, which was already underway, was now multilaterally organised, and developed in the direction of a temporary and fragile balance of power among the interested European empires, which lasted until the First World War.

It can be asserted without exaggeration that the geopolitical origins of today’s Africa as well as the basic structures of its current cartography were shaped in the German capital. As a result of its dominion over the so-called protectorates “German East Africa”, “German South-West Africa”, “German Cameroon” and “Togoland”, Germany became a major colonial power with schizophrenic claims to global leadership, manifested in its expansive and multiple division into cultural and political Doppelgänger. In terms of its political and cultural origins, however, the colonial design project “Africa” is a product intellectually “Made in Germany” right from the beginning. Seen in this light, colonial and postcolonial Africa was never a distant, unknown “dark” continent at the origins of time, but the result of European projections, wishful thinking and compromises of power, which resulted, in part, from the diplomacy of the German host at the conference. Berlin in particular, had no interest in the fact that some of the major powers competing with Germany, such as France and England, were exploiting the huge area of the Congo Basin with its manifold resources and economic opportunities, and impeding Germany’s rise to world power. The fact that, as a compromise solution, the Congo was handed over to the private ownership of the Belgian King Leopold II (who established a

particularly brutal regime of exploitation and terror, in which half of the population – up to 10 million Africans¹⁴ – was killed within a little over 20 years and a large number of forced labourers, including children, were mutilated as a form of punishment or deterrence) is also a result of the German negotiation strategy. Despite these and other atrocities, which also include the usual degradations and heteronomy of colonialization, Africa was, in the colonial imagination, the step-child of European parents who were separated and, as in a marital battle, sometimes argued over about parental rights, vanities and assets.

Although the Africa Conference in Berlin represented a prominent milestone on the road to the imperialist era, symbolically as well as pragmatically, in (West) Germany a fiction was established that denied the country's significant involvement. This fiction was also represented for a long time both linguistically and in terms of cultural memory. This event – which today could be described as a political mega-event – was treated as if it had never taken place in Berlin. In Germany, the term “Congo Conference” is preferred to the internationally prevalent term “Berlin Conference (1884)”. Similarly, the resulting multilateral act that resulted from the conference, which is internationally referred to as the “General Act of the Berlin Conference”, is conveniently abridged to the “Kongoakte” (Congo Act) in Germany. It is only in recent years, in the course of new accounts of Germany's colonial history, that the term “Berliner Afrika-Konferenz” (Berlin Africa Conference) has been used more frequently. This special linguistic development is an interesting example of how colonial practices have been separated from German history and German culture. In this way, not only is an important place of origin and starting point of European and German colonialism obliterated, but also ways of remembering denied. This example illustrates how colonial structures, dimensions and traditions are expressed not only in the explicit defence of racist values and colonial images, but also in non-recognition and processes of covering up and externalisation. Therefore it is fundamental to ask what role the imprints of colonialism play in German culture and national identity.

In this text, I only have the opportunity to briefly outline the anatomy of German colonial society. Due to the division of labour in society as a whole, many sectors of society in Germany became part of a colonial infrastructure through the colonialization of non-European

countries. Consequently, the colonial moment came into being as a socially organising power. A chain of colonial locations and production facilities arose in Germany, organised and aligned according to imperial interests. Germany's rise to a globally active imperial power necessarily went hand in hand with the creation of a colonial administrative apparatus. Particularly in Berlin, the capital of Imperial Germany, a new centre of power came into being. Berlin became the starting point of a colonial world empire, which tried to rule over its non-European territories and their inhabitants through a variety of government bodies such as the Reichstag, the Reichskolonialamt (Imperial Colonial Office) and the Supreme Command of the Colonial Troops. There was little opposition to colonial policy in German society and in the Reichstag; not even the Social Democratic faction was united in its repudiation. A significant number of Social Democrats regarded the creation of colonies as a necessary civilising “cultural deed” and demanded a “better” form of colonialism.¹⁵ Among the middle classes and the elite, enthusiasm for colonialism was almost unanimous (Wehler 1985: 464-485). They were intoxicated by the idea of German world power and relished their role as “imperial masters.”. The colonial movement gathered in mass organisations such as the influential “Deutsche Kolonialgesellschaft” (German Colonial Society) and the “Alldeutscher Verband” (All-German Association) (cf. Chickering 1984). Besides extensive lobby work and propaganda, these organisations tried to advance the Germanisation of the occupied overseas territories through settlement emigration. On the other hand, the forced association brought about by colonialism led to a stronger presence of Black people in German cities. Over time, the presence of Black people increasingly stirred up immigration and biopolitical debates about the possibility or impossibility of acculturation and settlement (Grosse 2000; El-Tayeb 2001). Particularly when it came to issues of “inter-racial” sexuality and marriages, these debates took on an unforgiving tone. Besides colonial emigration, diverse material, cultural and consumer products made their way to Germany via transcontinental trade routes in the import and export business. The economic webs between the periphery and the centre resulted in an extensive economic network and an infrastructure for colonial goods of every kind. The show-places of this colonial economy, its factories, trading houses and showrooms, became part of the urban environment and the everyday world of the Germans. Economic interests also facilitated the development of a German colonial culture and cultural industry that served the consumer demand for exoticism and racial stereotyping.¹⁶ Travel novels, exhibitions of “natives”, newspaper reports, photographs, later also films, advertising posters, and other media of popular culture made colonial fantasies accessible to the masses. In these practices of representing the Other, colonialism was turned into an everyday consumer good, and at the same time emphasised hierarchical structures. These representational spaces connected the symbolic and the real world into imaginary projections that were defined by the gaze of

the White subject and which were loaded with colonial pedagogy. The colonial experience with its images that are still circulating in Germany to this day, strongly affected the construction of Whiteness and Otherness. The possibility of open-minded encounters was negated by colonial attributions and racist processes of power inequality. Under these circumstances, images of the Self and Other were racially defined and forced into a rigid relationship of belonging and foreignness, of domination and subordination. Such contorted views of the world emphasised social Darwinist perspectives, feelings of superiority as well as missionary and colonial-educationist zeal. In this process, the academic production of knowledge often played neither an enlightening nor an emancipating role. Rather than being critical, academic disciplines such as botany, tropical medicine, geography, anthropology and linguistics often served as willing proponents of colonial theory.¹⁷

Between nostalgia, revisionism, virtual colonies and megalomania

At the end of the self-ignited First World War, Germany's imperialist plans for expansion collapsed. At the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was forced to give up its colonial territories. With this formal last act, Germany's colonial era seemed to be over. In fact, German colonial policy simply moved into to a new, revisionist-inspired phase. This colonialism without colonies was achieved in a virtual reality. As nostalgic and glorified memories of the colonial era it inspired future plans for the renewed appropriation of non-European territories as the fantasy always threatened to turn into a reality. Memories of the "good old days" intensified the wish to restore this state of affairs as soon as possible, in order to return the German nation to its former power and glory. Already in May 1919, in the official response to the Treaty of Versailles, the loss of the colonial territories was lamented:

"As a strong, civilised nation, the German people have the right and the duty to contribute to the scientific exploration of the world and

the education of underdeveloped races as a shared task of civilised humanity [...] The German administration brought peace and order to the country [the colony] [...] The opening up of the country through roads and railways for global traffic and trade and the advancement of the existing and introduction of new cultures has improved the economic life of the natives." (cit. Laak 2003: 74)

The loss of the "protectorates" was generally experienced as a painful amputation. It hurt the national sense of self to the core, and upset Germany's yearning for international standing. Colonial revisionist discourses drew on widespread political engagement among the population: besides rallies in many cities, in 1919 more than 3.8 million Germans signed a petition to protest against "the robbery of the colonies" (Rogowski 2003: 244f.). The denouncement of the "colonial guilt lie" plays an important role to this day.

"For many Germans, their indignation regarding the outcome of the war was strongest with regard to the colonies [...] In 1919, there was hardly any issue that Germans were more sensitive about than the Allies' claim that Germany had proven itself to be inept as a colonial power." (Laak 2003: 71, 74)

To process this German trauma – a failed dream – publications appear to this day that proclaim the alleged blessings of German colonialization and that paint a picture of grateful colonial subjects looking up full of amazement at the achievements of German civilisation. A popular topos in colonial romanticism focused on the glorification of German pioneers and engineers as true heroes (Timm 1991: 67f.; Laak 2003), who cultivated the "wilderness". Particularly in this elevation of Western "civilisation", Whiteness becomes loaded with political meaning, whereby a global and inter-societal hierarchy is established and reproduced.

But there were also other ways of compensation for the German colonial trauma. During the colonial era, a monument to German imperialism was created in the form of an urban landscape with colonial street names, thus imprinting Germany's global influence on the collective memory. The centre of this symbolic geo-political appropriation in the Berlin district of Wedding is the "African Quarter", which is complemented by the names of German occupations in the Pacific and China. An important impulse for this "colonial quarter", which was created between 1899 and 1958, was provided by the notorious Hamburg entrepreneur Carl Hagenbeck, who ran a thriving business in animal trading and human zoos. As the Colonial Exhibition in 1896 proved, so-called "anthropological exhibitions" could attract huge audiences (cf. Heyden 2003), and Hagenbeck planned to establish a permanent exhibition with wild animals and exotically presented people in the nearby Rehberge park (Honold 2003). The historic background of this street topography demonstrates how this city quarter was also intended as

a consumable colonial urban landscape. In the end, the dream of an amusement park and zoo with colonial attractions stayed virtual. Nevertheless, this story has not only left behind its historical traces, but also a real and visible district of colonial "artefacts". To me, this interrelation of different levels of reality and time is significant for the colonial/postcolonial constellation in Germany.

Since the plans for the erection of a permanent colonial scenery in the Berlin could not be realised, the idea of an inner colony was fulfilled by other means. Besides museums and exhibitions, the new forms of media, above all, provided opportunities to propagate colonialism without colonies. For the monumental filming of the novel *Die Herrin der Welt* (The Mistress of the World) by Karl Figdor, a large area of land between Woltersdorf, Kalkberge and Rüdersdorf near Berlin was transformed into a variety of "exotic" landscapes. In the film, several hundred Black extras – who were housed in barracks behind barbed wire – adorned the kraal, the imaginary "native village", the Baal temple, the crocodile pond, the temple hill, the slave wheel, and many other monumental images that symbolised Africa in German popular culture. In addition, seventy-three Chinese people were imported from other parts of Europe to liven up the colonial scenery. After the colonies were lost, a huge amount of resources was invested in this project in order to bring back to life the colonial world on German soil (Struck 2003: 270). Through cinematic techniques, this reality was staged and immortalised on celluloid. In the process, the boundaries between fiction and reality became blurred, since these imaginary worlds were brought to life not only by the imagination but also by the production conditions itself. In this context, cinematic and scenic images of colonial settings represent re-enactments that compensated – emotionally and ideologically – for the loss of imperial greatness.

The need for colonial ownership was not only apparent in popular culture, it was also expressed in the political culture of the Weimar Republic. Only the Communist Party distanced itself from this national consensus. In an act that stubbornly replaced reality with a pipe dream, the Reichskolonialamt (Imperial Colonial Office) was first changed to the Reichskolonialministerium (Imperial Colonial Ministry) in 1919 and a year later to the Reichsministerium für Wiederaufbau (Imperial Ministry for Redevelopment) (cf. Rüger 1991).

In the following years, Germany was ready to reengage on the global stage with the further development of tropical medicine and colonial technology. In colonial-political guidelines and in plans for improving economic mobility, the penetration of the former colonies with doctors, pioneers and engineers was encouraged in the name of development. Germany was still striving for a "place in the sun". There were fantasies of turning the Sahara green and using it for agriculture. This colonial utopia was only outdone by the unprecedented Atlantropa project. Out of the wish for African possessions, the idea of draining the Mediterranean and to unite into a pan-German continent called "Eurafrica" was born (cf. Gall 1998; Voigt 1998).

Colonial discourses in (West) Germany

Among the greatest admirers of this manic mega-project was the colonial movement. Since its sphere of influence reached far beyond its own members, the colonial movement remained an important political factor in the Weimar Republic. The majority of these colonial societies joined together in 1922 to form the "Koloniale Reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft" (Colonial Reich Working Community). One of its vice-presidents was Konrad Adenauer (Laak 2003: 73; Rogowski 2003: 244f.). After the Second World War, Adenauer was one of the co-founders of the Christian Democratic Union, the first Chancellor of West Germany from 1949 to 1963, and presided over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 1951 to 1955. On 12 December 1974, the Bundestag passed a "law about dissolving, concluding and extinguishing colonial societies". At this time there were still around 20 colonial societies in West Germany, which had set themselves the goal of "developing the German protectorates". It was argued in the legal initiative that this bill was necessary due to increasing revisionist aspirations. "In recent years [there have been] noticeable tendencies to reactivate old colonial societies" (Entwicklungspolitische Korrespondenz 1991: back cover).

After the end of the Nazi era, colonial patterns of thinking and arguing remained virulent in West Germany, despite all societal changes. The former German president Heinrich Lübke, on a state visit to Africa, is said to have greeted his hosts as "Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Negroes". Although it is nowadays doubted whether these words were really spoken by Lübke, it is still astonishing that a political culture could emerge that expected such a manner of speaking from its president.¹⁸ However, it is proven that on a state visit to Madagascar, Lübke paternally advised the local people: "The people really need to learn to make themselves clean" (Drösser 2002). Such a slip of the tongue, which reflects a colonial habitus in Germany's political culture, is dismissed by many White Germans as simply a funny anecdote, but points to the socialisation of Lübke's generation in colonial times. The hierarchisation and constructed "race pyramids" which enable such discourses in the first place, are symptomatic of the problematic German relationship with its former colonies. The concerns expressed in Germany, in poli-

tics and in the media, about the latest land reform plans in Namibia in favour of the big landowners with German roots, create the impression of a “protecting power” working for its German colony and fellow countrymen. It should also be remembered that during the apartheid era in South Africa there was not only a strong Franz-Josef Strauß connection, but also a widespread effort to protect the interests of the 120,000 settlers with German roots. Colonial heritage and nationalist thinking are also still topical on the domestic front. Germany's resistance to confronting its own colonial activities, is expressed not least in the continued colonial discourses – for example, as recently as 2002, when the right-wing speaker of the union faction Norbert Geis blithely corroborated the warning by the then Bavarian prime minister and later Chancellor candidate Edmund Stoiber of a “durchrasste Gesellschaft” (mongrelised society) in 1998 (Feddersen 2002: 13 and Jäger 1998).

Furthermore, Lübke's paternalistic tone points to the far-reaching controversies that are today centred on buzzwords like “modernisation theory”, “development policy” and “new world order”, which in the past were fought out with reference to the “koloniale Schuldlüge” (colonial guilt lie). This conflict is centred on struggles for the power of definition that shape our understanding of history. The future development of German society, its role in the world and the direction of its foreign policy depend on who asserts which perspective on history. The evaluation and effects of German colonial history and the legitimacy of colonial practices is still a controversial issue in Germany today. For example,

Rudolf von Albertini, one of the most renowned German historians working on this issue, wrote in 1982:

“Despite the risk of coming across as an apologist for imperialism, I remain convinced that the colonial era signified a phase of modernisation for the colonised countries. The establishment of peace, i.e. the prevention of inter-tribal wars [...], the establishment of greater territorial units, modern administrations, communication systems and economic *mise en valeur* are just as important as schools and medical services.”¹⁹

Another strategy to shed the “White Man's Burden” is to suggest its meaninglessness and to rewrite the era of colonial terror as a virtue. Thus the Potsdam professor of history Manfred Görtemaker calls the “extent and the significance of Germany's colonial possessions as modest”. He concludes that:

“Seen in the clear light of day, everything was pretty modest. Nowhere an India, an Indochina or a Congo. And no riches, no treasures. Just a little copper and a few diamonds in South-West Africa. Nothing that could have stimulated the German economy at home, if it had needed it. What remained were big words.” (Görtemaker 1989: 355)

This account becomes even more dubious when in his benevolent portraits of the colonial “greats”, such as the notorious Carl Peters, he consistently calls them “Africa explorers”, or when he describes General Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck as a colonial World War hero. The colonial subjects, on the other hand, are not worth a mention either as people or victims. Not even the Herero and Nama genocide is mentioned. Nonetheless, this book was generously sponsored by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (Federal Office for Political Education) with special editions, and reached its fifth edition in 1995. Such views of history do not seem to provoke any objection, but were and still are embraced by official culture. Ultimately, the aim is to suggest that German colonial practices belong to a concluded period, that even then they had hardly any social relevance, and are actually sensible when applied in the “right” way. As intellectual products of the cultural and academic life of the Federal Republic, such perspectives say a lot about the ideological legacies and the condition of this society. They tell us that colonial viewpoints are still prevalent.

I would like to illustrate the form that this unresolved German colonial culture takes, based on the example of Heinz-Dietrich Ortlieb. Up to his retirement, Mr Ortlieb was Professor of Economics at the University of Hamburg and until 1978 also the director of the renowned Hamburg Institute for Economic Research. From the security of retirement, he could reveal his true beliefs in a pertinent publication without having to take official administrative bodies into consideration. Alone the title of

the commemorative publication *Hundert Jahre Afrika und die Deutschen* (A hundred years of Africa and the Germans) (Höpker 1984) suggests that Africa only entered world history with the “heroic” deed of colonialism, and was published in 1984 to coincide with the centenary of the Deutsche Afrika Stiftung (German Africa Foundation). In the book, Ortlieb wrote:

“Exploitation, oppression and other crimes, on which modern-day critics like to linger, were even in the most extreme cases no worse than what black tribes continually did to each other. The actual problem of European colonial rule lies far more in its positive but uncompleted achievements [...] The actual failure of the colonisers [was to] uproot races with foreign cultures from the ecological balance of their traditional ways of life, and to then leave them to their own devices.”²⁰

In his article, which unswervingly defends the civilising achievements of colonialization, the 19th-century social-Darwinist images and patterns of argumentation are still very active. We find a bizarre mixture of racial biologism and blatant colonial racism, which operates with images of inferior, primitive and savage indigenous people, who have not got beyond the developmental stage of children. In light of the Herero and Nama genocide as well as the brutal suppression of the Maji-Maji uprising in “German East Africa”, during which up to 300,000 Africans lost their lives between 1905 and 1907, the evocation of incomplete achievements by the colonial rulers seems inhuman. Ortlieb’s concept for the organisation of international relations recommend: “In order to actuate a realistic global and development policy, which also always involves power politics”, the West should depart from an “egalitarian world ideology” and introduce a “mentality transformation” in Africa²¹, in order to achieve greater work-discipline.

Finally, I would like to substantiate and pointedly illustrate the central issue of the continued presence of colonialism, which I have already looked at from a variety of perspectives in this lecture. For many people today, German colonialism seems to be only a historic event, and neo-colonialism is seen as just a relict from the happily buried era of 1968. But have the dangers of Eurocentric discourses and the self-referential logic of power, which also includes the primacy of national interests,

really been banished? Does the German striving for “a place in the sun”, which in the 19th century was accelerated to a great extent by such driving forces, belong to an irrevocably concluded era? Reassuring as this assumption may be, it makes more sense to face up to a reality in which despite changed in domestic and global conditions, it is still possible to continue developing colonial-like dominance relationships and to reshape the world according to the requirements of the global “West”. Without a doubt, the reunited Germany is an important actor on the world stage both historically and in the present day.

Critical cultural studies and academia, in particular, which in the best-case scenario fulfil seismographic and corrective functions for society, need to point out the farce or tragedy of the quiet return of colonial paradigms, for example in today’s immigration and integration policies, and consistently go against the grain of social conventions and illusions (Ha 2004). With regard to this, some political episodes reveal an astonishing complacency and political tendencies, which raise unanswered questions regarding further development.

It appears that the military and power-political components of German foreign policy were revitalised in the 1992 and 2003 “defence policy guidelines” of the Federal government, which predict a global protection of national interests.²² Meanwhile, the Bundeswehr, as a global player, is also prepared to “defend the security of Germany in Hindu Kush” – in the words of the then Social Democrat minister of defence Struck on 05.12.2002. At the end of May 2010 the now resigned German President Horst Köhler expressed his view on the flight back from a military visit to Afghanistan, that an export-oriented and export-reliant country like Germany “must also understand that in certain cases, in an emergency, military operations are necessary to protect our interests”, citing as examples “maintaining free trade routes and settling regional instability that surely have a negative impact on Germany’s trade, jobs and income. All this should be discussed, and I believe, we are on the right track to do so.”²³ His resignation is said to have been due to the unfortunate and clumsy formulation of his views, which were for a short period of time criticised by the political opposition as a case for unconstitutional economic warfare; but ultimately, many opinion leaders from politics and the media were agreed that his resignation was objectively unfounded and that Köhler’s main mistake was that he did not show enough grit and persistence. Some even judged Köhler’s resignation as a betrayal of Germany at a time of crisis. Often it was claimed that the real blame lay with the unjustified and exorbitant criticism of his political opponents, who exploited a series of misunderstandings against him. The biggest misunderstanding of Köhler’s position, it was argued, was that with his statement he actually wanted to justify the Bundeswehr’s deployment in Somalia. Strangely it was suggested in the discussion that Köhler’s grounds for military deployments on the African continent were self-explanatory even without a substantial correction of his statement, and corresponded to the normal conventions of the foreign policy

debates. However, why this discussion culture and the current state of the debate would not be worth further discussion, is completely unclear and leads, in my eyes, to a bizarre political culture. According to current planning, Africa, above all, will in future be regarded as a target area of German war deployments, which are officially described as “peace-enforcing missions in every area of the world”.²⁴ With the enforcement of Western military force, there is an increased danger that through geopolitical interventions a world order will be (re)established, which revitalises a cycle of domination and victimisation, in which the interconnected categories of Space – Dream – Trauma will once again become linked together in a colonial production chain.

Kien Nghi Ha holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies (University of Bremen) and has a diploma degree in Political Science (Free University Berlin). In 2009 he was a visiting scholar at the Asian/Pacific/American Institute (New York University) and then a Research Fellow at Heidelberg University. Currently he is curating the discursive programme *Vietnamese Diaspora and Beyond* at the Hebbel am Ufer Theater in Berlin in November 2010. His research interests are related to Postcolonial Studies, racism and Asian Diasporic Studies. As an author and editor he has published several books including *Ethnizität und Migration Reloaded* (1999/2004), *re/visionen. Postkoloniale Perspektiven von People of Color auf Rassismus, Kulturpolitik und Widerstand in Deutschland* (2007) and *Unrein und vermischt. Postkoloniale Grenzgänge durch die Kulturgeschichte der Hybridität und der kolonialen “Rassenbastarde”* (2010).



* Part of this text was published in Kien Nghi Ha (2010): *Unrein und vermischt. Postkoloniale Grenzgänge durch die Kulturgeschichte der Hybridität und der kolonialen "Rassenbastarde"*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2010.

¹ Contrary to common understanding, "Black" and "White" do not designate any physiognomic characteristics or natural differences between different groups. But like terms such as "the Other" or "People of Colour" they reflect modern power configurations, which are defined above all by the overlapping of social, ethnic, visible, they will be capitalised like the "Others".

² In German: *das gesellschaftliche Schweigen, das Verschweigen, das Totschweigen*.

³ In German: *Enttinnerung*.

⁴ Although the social sciences in the GDR were considered to be ideologically deluded in western institutions, East German historians addressed these suppressed issues two decades earlier. Despite political instrumentalisation, some GDR historians produced "numerous original analyses" (Schmidt 1985: 132), which like some of the essays in Helmuth Stoecker's *Drang nach Afrika* (1977) were judged as "excellent" also by US colleagues (Smith 1996: 453; Chickering 1996: 501).

⁵ Cf. e.g. Oguntoye/Opitz [Ayim]/Schultz 1992; Noyes 1992; Berman 1996; Zantop 1997; Friedrichsmeyer/Lennox/Zantop 1998; Grosse 2000; El-Tayeb 2001; Conrad/Randeria 2002.

⁶ Recent publications include e.g. Gründer 2004; Diedrich/Gründer/Graichen 2005 and Speitkamp 2005.

⁷ See e.g. Kundrus 2003; Bechhaus-Gerst/Klein-Arendt 2003; Conrad/Osterhammel 2004; Dreesbach 2005.

⁸ Several starting points for an exemplary analysis of colonial structures and affinities, which reach from the Wilhelminian German Empire to current debates, can be found in my essay *Die kolonialen Muster deutscher Arbeitsmigrationspolitik* (2003: 56-107).

⁹ Cf. e.g. Heyden/Zeller 2002; Laak 2005; Heyden/Zeller 2008.

¹⁰ In German: *Raum – Traum – Trauma*.

¹¹ See the contributions in *Kolonialmetropole Berlin* (Heyden/Zeller 2002). Despite the intended critical reappraisal of colonial history, the collected essays, with just one exception, represent only White perspectives. This marginalisation is also reflected by the fact that some important preliminary work from the Black German community was ignored. So for example *Farbe bekennen* by Oguntoye/Opitz [Ayim]/Schultz (1986) does not even appear in the footnotes of this anthology.

¹² Cf. with the history of concepts and the political-theoretical discussion in the German context; Ha (2007)

¹³ See also Sabine Broeck (2006) for a general analysis of the relationship between colonial discourse and liberal Western enlightenment theory.

¹⁴ Cf. "Congo Free State" in: *Encyclopædia Britannica from Encyclopædia Britannica 2007 Ultimate Reference Suite* DVD. See also the article *Congo Free State*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congo_Free_State, 15.06.2010.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. Schwarz 1999. Because of its uncritical analysis, this work can unfortunately mainly be recommended as a collection of source material.

¹⁶ See the richly illustrated essay by Ciarlo (2003), which gives a good impression of the extent of colonial tropes in everyday German culture.

¹⁷ An overview of the subject can be found in the articles on "kolonialdeutsche Wissenschaften" (Colonial German Sciences) in Heyden/Zeller 2002: 97-134.

¹⁸ "Everyone knows the quote, and most people believed that Lübke could have said it; it is even precisely dated to a state visit to Liberia in 1962 – but there is no hard evidence!" (Drösser 2002).

¹⁹ Albertini 1982: 601 quoted in Börries 1987: 158.

²⁰ Ortlieb 1984: 51 quoted in Nestvogel/Tetzlaff 1987b: 9.

²¹ Ortlieb 1984: 49 quoted in Nestvogel/Tetzlaff 1987b: 10-11.

²² In the press release of the German Peace Association – United Opponents of War (DFG-VK) from 21.05.2003, the Federal spokesman Jürgen Grässlin analysed: "The defence policy guidelines that Minister Struck presented today represent the most aggressive German military programme since the Second World War."

²³ "You are doing great things under incredibly difficult conditions." German President Köhler after his visit in Afghanistan. Horst Köhler in conversation with Christopher Ricke, Deutschlandfunk and Deutschlandradio Kultur, 22.05.2010. <http://www.dradio.de/aktuell/1191138/> (23.06.2010).

²⁴ Struck drew up this initiative on the occasion of the celebrations for the 50-year anniversary of the Bundeswehr. cf. Berliner Morgenpost, 6.6.2005, p. 3. Building upon this guideline, the current defence minister Guttenberg wants to expand the spontaneous military capacity to intervene abroad by massively stepping up the crisis intervention capacity, despite the significant reduction of the army in the course of budget cuts (cf. Blechschmidt 2010).

Otobong Nkanga

BAGGAGE (1972–2007/8), PRESENTATION 2010

A Happening by Allan Kaprow re-vented by Otobong Nkanga
Live-Installation and Lecture-Talk



The Nigerian artist Otobong Nkanga reinterprets *Baggage*, a score written by the American performance artist Allan Kaprow in 1972. In her version, Nkanga travels from The Netherlands to Nigeria with Dutch sand in her rucksack. She empties the rucksack in Nigeria, fills it with new sand and sends it by post back to The Netherlands. With her reinterpretation of Kaprow's happening, she wants to draw attention, among other things, to the idea of human migration and displacement to create a discursive space, where these political, legal and social matters are activated.

It lies in the nature of the time- and performance-related work of American artist Allan Kaprow that, in principle, a repetition of a happening or an 'activity', as he called his work later on, is impossible – and also not desired by the artist. Nevertheless, Kaprow himself re-enacted a large number of pieces on several occasions. In Dortmund in the eighties, he made the first 're-inventions' and he talked about his exhibition as „A fantasy of Allan Kaprow for the moment“. His travelling exhibition in North America in the late eighties (The Carter University for Contemporary Art, University of Texas in Arlington) provided a framework for re-inventing happenings – often with surprising changes to ingredients and outcomes. According to Kaprow, activities and happenings do not grow old over the years; it is not nostalgic to repeat works but rather a challenge to adapt them to the moment, to the issues, the themes, maybe even the fashion of today. As long as the ‚central metaphor‘, as he called it, was maintained, there was no problem. Thus, the works stay contemporary, comparable to the transmission of content in oral history.

Baggage was one of several scores for happenings written by Allan Kaprow that evoked the aspect of displacement of goods from one place to another; also worth noting in this context are *Drag, Transfer, Moving, Round Trip, The Perfect Bed, Trading Dirt*, and, last but not least, *Refills* (1967-68). For *Refills*, which resonates in *Baggage*, bulldozers had to excavate trenches six feet deep, seven wide and a quarter mile long in six different places in the United States. The soil from the excavated trenches was then transported by freight trains. The trenches were refilled and their surfaces levelled by hand. In his score, Kaprow mentions the differences in soil colour across the country, which would probably appear in strong contrast to the surroundings once the trenches were refilled with different soil.

In Kaprow's score for *Baggage*, this reference to the landscape disappeared.

However, in conversation with Otobong Nkanga it became clear that when she would 're-invent' *Baggage*, the return of the (art-historical)

notion of 'landscape' would take up an importance that was hardly implicit in Kaprow's original version. By taking Dutch sand to the dramatically changing landscape of Nigeria, a country rich in oil deposits, she adds to *Baggage* a strong emphasis on the notion of displacement between both continents.

As she brings packaged Dutch sand to Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, and in turn sends back to The Netherlands sand from Lagos, Otobong Nkanga "re-politicizes" Allan Kaprow's original. Although it is self-evident that the context of air travel for people and the transport of goods changed dramatically between 1972 and today, the artist - of Nigerian background and working in Europe - did not want to delve directly or too explicitly into the obvious political issues raised when displacing commodities today. Rather, she wanted to render a changing landscape around which a discursive horizon of these identifiable stakes is activated, hardly visible in the world today where products are transported from one continent to another and where the origins of products (raw materials) have undergone different transformations.

The artist explained that she thinks this work could be a metaphor for a situation wherein we can look upon 'displacement' quite broadly, to refer not only to the movement of goods, but also to human displacement, and accompanying activities and ideas around the world.

Otobong Nkanga was born in 1974 in Kano, Nigeria. She lives and works in Paris and Antwerp. Performer and visual artist, Otobong Nkanga works in a broad spectrum of media, including performance, installations, photography, drawing and sculpture. According to Nkanga, the various media she employs "interrogate our mental and physical identities in varied environments and contexts." Thus, drawing inspiration from her surroundings, especially architecture, the artist creates works that can be placed in disparate environments and are often fragments of a multimedia work in progress.

Nkanga began her art studies at the Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria, and later continued them in Paris at the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts. She has been an artist-in-residence at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam and she is currently finishing her Masters program at DasArts, Amsterdam. She exhibited widely internationally. Recent shows include: *Flow*, Studio Museum Harlem, New York; *Africa Remix*, touring Paris, Düsseldorf, Tokyo, Johannesburg and Stockholm; *Snap Judgements: New Positions in African Contemporary Photography*, touring New York and Miami; and over the course of the last five years, she participated in the Sarjah, Taipei, Dakar, São Paulo and Havana Biennials.

Philippe Pirotte, is a Belgian art historian, critic and curator. Since 2005, he is the director of the Kunsthalle Bern.

BAGGAGE

driving to airport
with suitcases of packaged sand
(tagged with owner's name)
loading them
on airport underground train
waiting
until train returns
removing suitcases
stacking them together
taking them at random
driving to the shore
there emptying sand
refilling suitcases with beach sand
driving them to city United Parcel Service
for delivery to owners

Original score written by Allan Kaprow in 1972

Jeanne Faust

RECONSTRUCTING DAMON ALBARN IN KINSHASA

Super 16 on HDTV, 2010, 9 min, Loop
Courtesy: Meyer Riegger, Berlin

Film and photography are media that permeate a connection of the concrete and the fictive image within Jeanne Faust's artistic work. A preexistent condition or event that stands apart from the portrayed situation is reconstructed as a narrative, its corpus often constituted by image, text, and action fragments. However, the subject that is paraphrased this way is not necessarily visible in the work, it often exists as a reference to a reality that lies outside of the image. Conceptual forms of image analysis – literary, verbalized or visual descriptions of an image – also form the topos of Jeanne Faust's work, which illuminates the engagement with images. Revealing a staged act thereby becomes a stylistic element of her work: The follow-up of an alleged situation denotes authenticity and imitation, and the visual revelation of a discrepancy makes theater the subject of her cinematic visual worlds. This critical juxtaposition of originality and imitation, and linked to this, questioning an attempt to approximate an ideal image is the theme of the visual analysis in Jeanne Faust's new work. Pursuing the question of how a viewer looks at a picture, and which forms of media finally are possible is also a subject of analysis in our exhibition – through film and photography.

The film *Reconstructing Damon Albarn in Kinshasa* is the focal point of the exhibition. The film is based on a press photograph showing the British musician and singer Damon Albarn performing a pop concert in Kinshasa. However, the photograph itself is not visible in the film: In fact this image circulates as a scenically verbalized and visualized paraphrase, staged by the two protagonists in an almost grotesque four-scene sequence of acts.

The set is a room, it's front side a glass facade of square windows. The view of the interior shows a table with props, to the left and right of which the actors Jean-Christophe Folly and Lou Castel are seated. A casual dialogue discerns that these apparently acquainted figures are waiting, the viewer deduces their plan in the course of a successive climactic escalation within the plot, which is accompanied by a shift in their roles. Making reference to the previously mentioned photograph, which is described by one of the film's performers, the two protagonists imitate the photographic reproduction of Damon Albarn and a Congolese musician, reconstructing it as a reenactment.

Jeanne Faust showcases the simulation of an image in expounding the re-narration and reenactment of an image. Here mimesis, its functions described as travesty, disguise and intimidation by the French philosopher Roger Caillois, is evident in the mimetic behavior of the film's actors, ensuing both in the fictive recounting and the physical emulation of a prototype. The space in which the protagonists act exists as a stage and as a mask, a depiction of both the setting and the mise-en-scene that happens within it, both implicated as acting in the negative image. It is especially the farce inherent to the picture staged in the film that Jeanne Faust makes visible in *Reconstructing Damon Albarn in Kinshasa*: The artist generates a self-reflective moment through the

action of her protagonists - in the film a still is made of the demonstrated situation via self-timer. This testimony of action describes a process of convergency between copy and original, but also dissipates as a reconstruction in alignment with the template. Through the interpenetration of film and photography, which is also realized in the gallery space through the juxtaposition of both media, and the manner of speech of the older of the two protagonists – aimed outside, beyond the film – the viewer of the images Jeanne Faust has created becomes a fictive party to the work, in whom the extended dimension of the cinematic viewpoint becomes manifest.

Christina Irrgang studied Science of Art and Media Theory at the HfG Karlsruhe and works as a freelance art critic and curator.

Brigitta Kuster und Moise Merlin Mabouna

2006 – 1892 = 114 YEARS

DV, 2006, 7 min, Loop

A TRAVERS L'ENCOCHE DANS VOYAGE DANS LA BIBLIOTHEQUE COLONIALE NOTES PITTORESQUES

DV, 2009, 25 min

The Swiss artist and author Brigitta Kuster and the Cameroonian filmmaker Moise Merlin Mabouna presented two experimental documentary films from a long-term research project. Based on the story of Mabouna's great grandfather, who died in the fight against "the Whites", the expedition shows dynamics of remembering and forgetting, which are culturally distinct: The recording of history and its blackouts. The images move between the centuries, between Africa and Europe, and elude a definite positioning. Brigitta Kuster's text *Note d'intention* was available at the venue.



Brigitta Kuster

NOTE D'INTENTION

In 2002, while working on our film *rien ne vaut que la vie, mais la vie même ne vaut rien*, Moise Merlin Mabouna wrote the name of his paternal great-grandfather, Amatagana Bisselé Joseph, in my notebook. Looking back, the image of the noted-down name seems to indicate that already at this time, we shared a kind of understanding about the importance and appreciation of everything that this name entailed but that its significance and scope were still rather vague. In the landscape of Saxony-Anhalt, caught up in the German asylum system, Moise remembered that his great grandfather was apparently killed in a conflict between local people and German colonialists which is supposed to have taken place in Balamba (Cameroon).

When I look at the note today, I am amused by my ignorance and clumsiness, expressed in the bracketed remark "village" behind the word "Balamba", and I recall my excitement at the time, not least because this name directly confronted me with how the history of colonialism, particularly in relation to Germany and Switzerland, had been almost entirely absent from my understanding of the world.

In the course of our ongoing research on the history of the colonial war in the Balamba region, we also went to libraries and archives in Berlin and Yaoundé that keep those documents that are considered to be authentic and valid testimonials of the colonial period. Contemporary records – mostly reports on so-called "expeditions" and the conditions at colonial stations – as well as maps¹ reflect the experiences of the German colonisers, and from a present-day perspective assume the character of hegemonic narratives about a "continent without history" (Hegel) or the opening up of a *terra nullius*.

As we became aware of the Eurocentric way in which these colonial sources were organised, particularly those from the "early" period that concerned us most in our research, we encountered the notion of a "contact zone" as suggested by Mary Louise Pratt. The term "contact zone" was coined to challenge the myth of a "first contact" and the "natives" that were constructed as a result, and seeks to articulate those "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Mary Louise Pratt: *Imperial Eyes*, 1992, page 7). From this perspective and in historical retrospective, the records that deal with the Balamba region at the time when it was opened up by the German colonial project can be interpreted differently from the unilaterally determined moments of a process of the "discovery" and the incorporation of the region into the "history" of the colonisers they describe: the roles of the "colonised" and the "colonisers" are not simply predetermined but result from the interactions that take place in the contact zones and develop into what can be described as a colonial relationship.

A contact zone mobilises the body; although it is not free from power it is (still) an open relationship, even if it is already moving towards closure. It implies ambivalences such as misunderstanding, disorientation and loss of control and signification. It leads to uncertainty on both sides of an encounter. How can one side make sense of the unintelligible intentions of the other without losing its own identity? The "pathlessness" of a contact zone can only be comprehended and

narrated by using translation tricks: as a representation, a transfer process into a particular signification system. Regarded as a product of such a transaction process, it is possible to inscribe from a present perspective to a certain degree, traces of diffusivity, breaks or obvious differences, for example into the itinerary of Ramsay.

So, firstly, in our research we can attempt to read the colonial documents of the 1890s “backwards”, “in an opposite direction” or – if you like – “deconstructively”, by using the concept of the contact zone. Secondly, the concept of the contact zone suggests another perhaps decisive thought which refers to our own, politically intended but also randomly occurring constructions of meaning and the way in which we transfer past events into our own interested present – i.e. the question of who, since the “notebook contact zone” of 2002 in Saxony-Anhalt, has attempted for what reasons and in what way to understand what happened in Balamba in 1892:

Starting with the idea of the contact zone, can we develop a concept for our own research and our own constructions of meaning, that does not inevitably consolidate or level out the differences between us, in whom this undertaking itself is embedded, thereby also producing these differences? Or, if we consider the idea of a common subject of research even further: is it possible to traverse the colonial discourse with its authoritarian claim to represent the historical truth – effective to the present day – to such an extent that the ambivalences and uncertainties of a contact zone become visible?

These thoughts led to the idea of searching for such an opportunity by tracing the locations for the representation and discussion of the events of 1892 – which in Switzerland or Germany in particular, firmly belong to the concluded and historicised field of colonial history – within the configurations of the unsettling present. These locations are situated where we live but they constitute a fabric of different forms of knowledge and images of the past, in which the plausibility of many representations immediately raises the question of contextualisation and (self-)positioning.

Insofar as this is an attempt to explore the way in which historical events have been transcribed into the present and thereby to pursue a kind of translocation of our positions, this intention was also influenced from another side:

For there is another perspective on the events of 1892, which differs from the one found in the archives and writings; a perspective based on oral history (oralité). Moise’s inquiries in Balamba not only brought to light the date of the war in March 1892 that corresponded to the German documents, but also the precise location of the events in today’s depopulated Mamba. According to oral tradition, the leading figure of the resistance movement against the white invaders, chief Bisselé Akaba, son of Akaba and great-grandfather of Moise Merlin Mabouna, was captured and carried off to Yoko, 317 km away, where he was tortured and executed. Moreover, a direct witness of these events appeared: the now long-dead Amanab wa Mangoag who today would be 148 years old – at least for me a very mysterious age. His age as a contemporary eye witness is calculated from the sum of 34 – his age when he started working for the chief Bisselé Akaba – and the 114 years that

have passed since the events he testifies, till now, 2006. What does his appearance indicate?

Since independence and the nationalist liberation movements of the 1960s, oralité has been the subject of a charged and controversial methodological debate on the historiography of the African continent. Discussions focused on the question to which extent oralité could be used to write a history of Africans that would be different from the history of Europeans in Africa, that would employ an “African perspective” and challenge the view of colonial sources in which the agency of Africans and their (anti-colonial) resistance was made invisible. The debate includes countless works but also classics that have become part of the Euro-American academic canon, like Jan Vansina’s *De la tradition orale*, published in 1959 and the groundbreaking *Histoire de l’Afrique noire* by Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the first African professor of history at the Sorbonne in Paris, which was published in 1978. It is in Ki-Zerbo’s book where I discover a kind of basic rule of oral tradition²:

“En 1960 un vieillard de 80 ans peut témoigner sur des événements survenus vers 1830, s’il a pu écouter, à l’âge de 15 ans, en 1895, des récits de son grand père né en 1815”, as he writes in 1961. (“In 1960, a person that is 80 years old can bear witness to events that happened around 1830, if this person has listened at the age of fifteen, i.e. in 1895, to the stories of his or her grandfather who was born in 1815.”)

I am beginning to understand how oralité works, from Moise Merlin Mabouna, with whom I listen to the narrative of his father Jean-Pierre Mabouna, who, in turn, relies on information that came from his father Amatagana Bisselé and goes back to the eyewitness Amanaba wa Mangoag. Other than written texts with their static and often decontextualised content, this chain of transmission makes the events of 1892 evident and links them to the present social relationship between narrator and listener.

What does all this mean? Should this knowledge – or, to be more precise, an audience of this kind – not be treated differently than as a mere supplement to archival research³? And if so, how should we deal with it? Should we value the “African authenticity” of this tradition of knowledge? What would this imply for my and Moise’s respective positions? Perhaps it is precisely our attempt at cooperation which reveals that referring to some “African authenticity” entails an ambivalence which in a way disguises the European face of this “authenticity”. Thus, the philosopher V. Y. Mudimbe demands that we should be sensitive to the way in which definitions of “Africa” still rely on Western thought: “Cela suppose de savoir, dans ce qui nous permet de penser contre l’Occident, ce qui est encore occidental; et de mesurer en quoi notre recours contre lui est encore peut-être une ruse qu’il nous oppose et au terme de laquelle il nous attend, immobile et ailleurs.” (“This requires a knowledge about what is still Western in those lines of thought that allow us to be anti-Western; and an ability to judge in which way our critique of the West is perhaps still a trick it employs to counter our efforts and to wait at the other end, unshaken and in another place.” – V.Y. Mudimbe: *L’Odeur du père*, zit. nach Boubakary Diakité.) At the same time Mudimbe warns against decontextualising the oral tradition and transferring it to a European language and into a European conceptual frame. Rather than being referred to according to its own existence and meaning, it could be made subject to a theoretical system

in which it would merely serve an illustrative function. He criticises an approach to oral tradition that is limited to trying to combine different concepts into one methodology and inspired by the belief that an empirical reality can be reconstructed more efficiently if this methodology is applied in the right way. Instead he points to the greater problem of the interpretive principles of academic and philosophical models:

“How can one reconcile the demands of an identity and the credibility of a piece of knowledge with the process of refounding and reassuming an interrupted historicity within representations? Moreover, could one not hypothesize that, despite the cleverness of discourses and the competency of authors, they do not necessarily reveal la chose du texte, that which is out there in African traditions, insistent and discrete, determining the traditions yet independent from them? Colonialism and its trappings, particularly applied in anthropology and Christianity tried to silence this. African discourses today, by the very epistemological distance which makes them possible, explicit, and credible as scientific or philosophical utterances, might just be commenting upon rather than unveiling la chose du texte. This notion, which belongs to hermeneutics, and which according to Ricoeur’s proposition calls for an obedience to the text in order to unfold its meaning, could be a key to the understanding of African gnosis.”
(V.Y. Mudimbe: *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy, and the Order of Knowledge*, 1988)

Perhaps our first video project *2006 – 1892 = 114 ans / jahre* was an attempt to suggest a way in which we could do justice to the text that goes back to Amanaba wa Mangoag, a strategy that has to be succeeded by others:

Following the rules of oral tradition mentioned by Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the video goes back along the route of the Manguiers Allemands⁴ – against the oblivion into which the colonial project has passed – to the first place of its re-presence, where we put down our “wrong” note in 2002. Meanwhile, a memorial landscape is emerging right there, at the side of the tree-lined road from Brandenburg to Dessau, far away from the essences of Eurocentrism or Anti-Eurocentrism, according to Jacques Derrida both symptoms of a missionary and colonial culture, a memorial landscape that oscillates between Brandenburg, Germany and Balamba/Mamba, Cameroon. Here in the migration, perspectives exist, which undermine and cross continental and national borders: they are characterised by a conflictual mobility of bodies and signs. But perhaps they also promise a future which will be postcolonial because they transcontinentalise the voice of history and “create a hinge between the construction of here and elsewhere”, as Achille Mbembe explained in a text which was published in May 2006 in *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Under the heading “Afropolitanism”, he there outlined an approach which bids farewell to the paradigms of anticolonial nationalism, “African” socialism and the various forms of Pan-Africanism, instead turning to a history and future of mobility – “immersion” and “reconfiguration” – by asking the question: “Who is an African – and who is not?” The Video *2006 – 1892 = 114 ans / jahre* not only defines the position of a spatial hinge – between “Africa” and “Germany” – but also a temporal hinge between two absences – 2006 and 1892. And without knowing its destination route in detail it mainly attempts one thing: to escape the places of these hinges.

¹ For technical and climatic reasons, photographs from the early 1890s are rare and mostly refer to events in areas nearer the coast.

² It appears symptomatic that the orality which this text attempts to grasp and to continue in writing is transferred to a written text which acts as some kind of chain and prevents this orality from being articulated.

³ For example, this aspect is stressed by Alpert Pascal Temgoua who writes: „Ces dernières [les sources orales], il faut bien le dire, ont le mérite de présenter une vision du dedans, et se posent comme un impératif catégorique dans la recherche historique en Afrique. (...) Elles peuvent merveilleusement compléter bien des sources allemandes tout en facilitant la critique.” (“It should be emphasised that the latter [the oral sources] have the merit to present a view from inside and appear as a categorical imperative of historical research in Africa. (...) They can supplement the German sources in an almost miraculous way, at the same time making critique possible.”) A. P. Temgoua: «Souvenir de l’époque coloniale allemande», in: Michels/Temgoua (eds.), *La politique de la mémoire coloniale en Allemagne et au Cameroun – The politics of colonial memory in Germany and Cameroon*, Münster: 2005.

⁴ In Cameroon, “Manguiers Allemands” is the name for mango trees that were planted by the Germans at the turn of the century in avenue style along the routes on which they were travelling. An avenue of this kind still exists in the city center of Yaoundé, near the ministry of finance, the location of the former German “Station”. The mango originated from India and was only introduced to Africa during the 19th century.



Evelyn Annuß

STAGINGS MADE IN NAMIBIA

Photographic Exhibition

In cooperation with more than 100 Namibian residents, the theatre and literature professor Evelyn Annuß realised a photography project at the interface of art and photo politics. Annuß supplied the participants with cameras, asking them to document their own views on the German colonial history in the former German Southwest Africa. But the photographers rededicated the original idea and created an independent point of view on their everyday life.

This collective experiment has gathered together staged photographs of everyday life from Namibia and was already shown in the former chapel of the Berlin Bethanien and in the Windhoek National Art Gallery in 2009. It is part of the overall project Made in Namibia initiated by Annuß and the performance artist Barbara Loreck. In Berlin the exhibition made an impact due to the colonial-historical background and the staged character of the photos; in Namibia it was the contrast with typical tourist perspectives that caused a stir. A selection of mainly portrait photos from the 250 photos was displayed in Braunschweig.

Photographers Afrikaner, Elton • Amadhila, Justina • Amuthitu, Toini • Andreas, Ester • Anonymous • Anonymous • Awala, Festus • Balzer, Sandra • Basson, Alexandrie • Basson, Rocker • Benito, Felix • Benjamin, Cesilie • Biwa, Memory • Bothas, Domingos • Callard, Laura • David, Emily • Dax, Maikuan Nicolene • Dutoit, Tera • Förtsch, Steffi • Glubi, Marcella Meiki • Gabriel, Sanny • Garbade, Claudia • Garises, Megan • Geria, Sonner • Govagwe, Jack • Graig, Augetto • Gühring, Joachim • Haragaes, Clemensia • Hashingola, Patrick Lapitaominda • Hashingola, Yola • Hatutale, Martha • Haufiku, Joanna • Hifikwa, Gabriel • Hifikwa, Shokonale • Hipikuruka, Tjireya Neuville • Horn, Morné • lipinge, Gabriel • Illing, Christopher • Isaacs, Frans Bobo • Jakobs, Paulus • Job, Romanda • John, Alisa • Junius, Iris • Junius, Tracey Lee • Kafuro, Chipisa Kepis • Kahsay, Menghis • Kairimuti, Moses • Kami-

yo, Swabi • Kangandjera, Bertha • Kapenda, Eroys • Kaujama, Uejavi • Kavandje, Boetietjie • Kavita, Marama • Khaagub, Bernhard • Xaima Kaverekua • Khoi-Aos, Dantago • Khoi-Aos, Denise • Kooper, Shouline • Kotungondo, Immanuel • Kroll, Witta • Krüger, Gertrud • Langmaak, Anke • Majiedt, Donovan • Majiedt, Natasha • Marenga, George • Mautu, Frans • Mautu, Mavis • Mayundu, William • Meyer, Denver • Mootseng, Gerhardus • Munyima, Reino • Mushavanga, David • Mwandingi, Emmy • Mwandingi, Festus • Naidjala, Annelie • Nalusha, Andreas • Nalusha, David • Nalusha, Ester • Nalusha, Rachel • Namaseb, Sebastian • Namconde, Elina • Nanghama, Sevelia Pinky • Nangolo, Aksel • Nanyala, Jacobina • Nashinge, Imms • Ndjalo, Winnie • Ndungula, Borro • Negonga, Nekulilo • Negonga, Tuapewa • Ngaripue, Frans • Noabeb, Thea • Noanda, Vistorina • Ouchurub, George • Pack, Arno • Paulus, Pombili • Paulus, Tuli • Pieters, Dickson Khaba • Pieters, Myra • Ponhele, Mecki • Rijatua, Fransina • Rijatua, Hinakumuesa • Rijatua, Newman Tjirero • Rossler, Rene • Schwarting, Almuth • Sell, Ami • Sell, Marc • Shetekela, Rosalia • Shigweda, Esther N.T. • Shikela, Rauna • Shikongo, Moses • Shikongo, Shilongo Josia • Shiweda, Beata • Shiweda, Napandulwe • Stanley • Syvertsen, Nicole • Tjirimuje, Malaika • Tjuma, Rauha • Totsi • Tsame, Frida Ama-Ai • Tshilonga, Ndatyoonawa • Tsibes, Natasha • Ulenga, Ché • Unandapo, Claudia • Voigts, Dorita • Werner, Nick

Media and cooperation partners AfricAvenir International e.V., Archives of Anti-Colonial Resistance and the Liberation Struggle Windhoek, Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry (ICI), Botschaft der Republik Namibia, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Internationales Theaterinstitut, Katutura Community Radio, Kunstraum Kreuzberg/Bethanien, Namibia Tourism Board, National Archives of Namibia; National Art Gallery of Namibia, Wild Cinema Windhoek International Film Festival

CATALOGUE REVIEW BY MELANIE ULZ AND KEA WIENAND

Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft 3/2010

The catalogue *Stagings Made in Namibia* claims in its subtitle to show “postcolonial photography” – and the photos can be described as such with good reason. The exhibited photos from Namibia do not conform to the stereotyped and clichéd representations of the former German colony that have been prevalent in Germany in recent years. While here in Germany, TV productions about Namibia use the country as an exotic backdrop for voyages of self-discovery by white women or for the heroic deeds of white men¹, the photos in this catalogue can be described as a riposte to such a (neo)colonial way of seeing.

(...) In the introductory text to the catalogue, Annuß describes the starting perspective of the project as one which incorporates the colonial-historical medium of photography as well as the obfuscating tactics of modern photography, which suppress memories of the colonial past and impede their rehabilitation. The resulting question of how to escape a colonial way of seeing, or rather how to confront it, has frequently been addressed, above all by African artists, and in the last 20 years or so has finally also been incorporated into the fields of academia, art and culture in Europe.² The approach of the initiators is not “new” (as they admit themselves): they distributed 120 disposable and 40 reusable cameras among 120 (amateur) photographers in Namibia. The photographers were not selected in a targeted way; rather, the cameras were distributed among different social and age groups in a kind of snowball effect. (...) The medium of photography promises to be democratic, yet at the same time claims to produce evidence. But what opportunities does it provide for a contemporary representation of Namibia by its inhabitants? How can the after-effects of a colonial-racist way of seeing be counteracted? Who is speaking, or photographing? According to Annuß, the aim is neither to understand the photos as particularly “authentic”, nor to conceal the creative process or the involvement of the organisers. But insofar as the project is a public experiment, it emphasises the need to reflect on one’s own “white” way of seeing and making it available to scrutiny. Before the start of the project it was already clear that those who are described as “other” or “subaltern” from a white, western perspective, are not incapable of acting on their own account. In a sympathetic way, Annuß describes how the project became independent and started to inform the theory, and how, despite the well-meant starting intentions, the project took its own course. The participants of the project were given the task of “focusing attention on the aftermath of the colonial era”. The idea was to see to what extent different images of “being German in Namibia” would come about. In the catalogue text, Annuß reflects that in retrospect this task was “sourced-out navel-gazing”. The photographers ultimately selected motifs and people that they regarded as important in the context of their own lives and the current political and social situation. As a result, the photos show a far more heterogeneous image of Namibia than the representations of the African country usually circulated in Europe. The European viewers of the photos are always thrown back on their own viewing position and thus stalled into reappraising their position and questioning it. And ultimately the photos do reveal the after-effects of colonialism. But they also reflect the way in which this past is dealt with



and reveal the public as well as private relicts of this past. (...)

Again and again (...) the way in which the subjects interact with the viewer, how they show themselves and pose for the camera plays a central role. When the initiators of the project analyse the photos as a particular form of staging and analyse their theatricality, then they do so from a self-defined perspective, which does not purport to filter out the “truth” from these photos, but attempts an interpretation. (...)

Melanie Ulz has a PhD in history of art. Her work focuses on postcolonial history, gender studies as well as history of art and culture in the 18th-21st centuries.

Kea Wienand is an expert in aesthetics and art history, with the emphasis on gender and postcolonial studies.

¹ e.g. the ARD made-for-TV movie *Folge Deinem Herzen* (Follow your Heart) (2005), in which a German pharmaceutical representative Katrin reencounters her first love Max, who is running a “development project” in Namibia.

² However, the articulation of such an opposing viewpoint is marginal nowadays, since it is mainly “small” institutions that provide space for this in a western artistic and cultural context.

PRESENCE OF
THE COLONIAL
PAST
AFRIKA
AUF EUROPAS
BUHNNEN

RESONANCE

ABOUT THE FOCUS

»PRESENCE OF THE COLONIAL PAST«

THEATERFORMEN 2010

Christine Regus

Thirty-five years ago Rustom Bharucha sat in a Paris theatre and had a pivotal experience: the Indian theatre-maker and theoretician saw "The Ik", the legendary staging by Peter Brook about the semi-nomadic people of Uganda's mountain regions. Bharucha stumbled upon a note in the programme. Here, the production team noted in an aside that, as far as anyone knew, the Ik ethnic group still existed. Bharucha was provoked by the lapidary note: "As far as anyone knows? I mean, here we were, invited to feel compassion and horror in their plight, but nobody in the production had even bothered to find out whether they still existed." (R. Bharucha 2000: *The Politics of Cultural Practice. Thinking Through Theatre in an Age of Globalization*. Hanover, N.H., pg. 2). Moreover, he found the representation of the Ik on stage derogatory: "(...) the primitivization of African 'natives' will surely go down in intercultural theatre history as a paradigmatic example of primordializing the Other as an anthropological object" (ibid.)

From this point on, Bharucha began to pursue the issue of the ethics of representing the Other in the theatre: cultural "exchange" was not always two-sided, it could also be one-sided and in the worst case scenario, a form of (neo-)colonial appropriation and an exercise of power – regardless of the possibly harmless or even good intentions of the producers, festival organisers or cultural politicians.

Bharucha's sharp criticism marked a turning point in the 1980s in the staging and reception of cultural exchange in the theatre. A change in perspective took place, as "intercultural theatre" was no longer simply associated with liberal openness and exciting new aesthetics, but was used decisively for critical post-colonial discourse, particularly following Edward Said's 1979 book *Orientalism*. Said convincingly argued that the West had also established and stabilised its colonial rule through the use of discourses, for example by exploring the so-called "Other" in seemingly objective disciplines, particularly in anthropology. This discourse was a system of knowledge and representation that not only defined identity but also created asymmetrical power relationships. On the one hand it had to use the spectacular nature of the Other, on the other hand it had to keep it under control.

Said – albeit in a completely different field – had thus also thought about who observes whom and how, whether the observed has the possibility of returning the gaze or of creating his own image of himself, to achieve a sense of distance from his role – questions that play a central role in theatre, the location of observation and representations per se. And so it is hardly surprising that Said assigned a high degree of theatricality to orientalism, as a specific form of representation of the Other. "The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. On this stage will appear figures whose role it is to represent the large whole from which they emanate. The Orient then seems to be not an unlimited extension beyond the familiar European world, but rather a closed field, a theatrical stage affixed to Europe." (E. Said 1978: *Orientalism*. New York, pg. 63)

At the time, Bharucha's ideas met with little interest or sympathy. Europe and the USA had recently become interested in foreign theatre, the avant-garde of the 60s and 70s intensively studied the Japanese Nô theatre, Kathakali from India and dancing and music from Africa. International theatre festivals sprung up all over Europe and America. The belief – which contradicted Bharucha's – was that cultural exchange served the promotion of understanding among nations; the apex of this bright, naïve multi-cultural way of thinking was yet to come. Today there is far greater sensitivity towards the issue; there is a consensus that cultural exchange takes place in a highly complex political context, which is still burdened by colonial history. Many artists and curators are aware that stereotyping, de- and re-contextualisation, omissions, accentuations and ethnic stereotyping are types of representation that strongly affect the way we perceive the Other and are closely linked with structures of dominance. Anja Dirk's festival theme, *Presence of the Colonial Past*, was, in this context, a resolute and programmatic decision to accompany her role as the head of an international theatre festival in a self-reflexive way. This may sound academic, boring and unpleasantly politically correct. But it wasn't. Just one Saturday afternoon at the festival was packed with aesthetic experiences that made it possible to feel the power of being the object of scrutiny oneself.

The afternoon began with *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwest Afrika*, a controversial theatrical installation, in which Brett Bailey (South Africa) re-staged an "anthropological exhibition" of real people. At the end of the 19th century, exotic, "scientific" exhibitions of people from Africa, Asia and America were extremely popular in Europe. They were regarded as educational; their official role was to promote knowledge of the world and its people, and unofficially to promote imperialist ideology. The non-western person thus became an object, and was robbed of the possibility of returning the gaze of the (white, male) spectators. In catacombs under the streets of Braunschweig, Bailey put visitors in the embarrassing situation of being confronted by perfectly arranged tableaux vivants of real-life bare-breasted Namibian women and half-naked men carrying Herero spears and wearing loincloths. Most of the spectators did not know where to look and sought refuge by pretending to avidly study the informational displays of racial-scientific measurements of African children's skulls – which were hardly any better. There was no way of averting the gaze, no possibility of being an innocent onlooker.

As we came back up into the squeaky-clean, sunny city, we argued about whether it was legitimate to stage Africans in the role of the victim, and to force modern spectators into the role of the perpetrator. We did not reach a conclusion and were glad when we came to the location of the next show: a simple little cinema that the Dutch artist Dries Verhoeven had erected for his production *The Big Movement* on the market square. After our uncomfortable experience in the catacombs, we were relieved to be seeing something "fun from

Holland" – this is the way the piece had been described to us by other festival visitors.

The light went out, and we could hear a wonderfully soft woman's voice lulling us in Chinese. Luckily there were subtitles and so we understood that the film was about strange creatures living on earth: about so-called "humans" who, at the beginning of the 20th century, assiduously spent their days moving around their cities and conurbations – mostly alone, but also in pairs, sometimes in groups, almost always carrying briefcases or shopping bags. Cleverly alienated, we saw on the screen Braunschweig's shopping streets, the market square – the area in which we had just been ourselves. And there! There we were! In a bizarre formation, piling into the cinema like ants. Funny, bustling, looking distinctly unintelligent. The apparently scientific explanations by the Chinese research team from the future seemed to us foreign and absurd; the facts and figures being presented certainly had nothing to do with us. The effect was immediate, the audience laughed, so did we. Then we remembered the anthropological research findings from the previous exhibition. And the laughter stuck in our throats.

Christine Regus is a theatre scholar and the current press officer of the Goethe Institute. Her book *Interkulturelles Theater zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts* (Intercultural Theatre at the Beginning of the 21st Century) was published by transcript in 2008. She was an adviser to the Team Theaterformen with regards to the thematic emphasis on *Presence of the Colonial Past*.



THE PRESENCE OF THE ELSEWHERE

0) "We are faced with the great task of an intercultural alphabetization. And in the process, we are all learning a new language."¹

1) Points to consider

The acknowledgement of a "presence of the elsewhere", i.e. of a coeval Other, immediately brings us face to face with an absolutely fundamental question: how to speak and write in order to make explicit from which perspective, given which background (my) speaking and writing occur? Is it at all necessary to disclose „perspective“? Does this not automatically foreordain a certain "tendency"? How can generalizations and affronts be avoided? If I acknowledge that my counterpart has come here from an "elsewhere", then our encounter, as a process of convergence, is a mutual challenge. Acknowledging the "elsewhere" pledges one to hesitation, to caution; it pledges one to the avowal that, from the perspective of the respective "elsewhere", each pronouncement can and may, indeed maybe must, appear questionable.

2) Mission

The one performance at the "Theaterformen" festival that most impressed me – full and immediate disclosure – was *Mission*, presented by Bruno Vanden Broecke. Not only was I favored with a magnificent acting performance. Not only – from my perspective – is this text by David van Reybrouck (translated by Rosemarie Still and also played in German specially for the Braunschweig performance) an admirably complex piece of literature. What takes place in these more than one and a half hours has by now become so rare in theatre that it deserves special mention: it is an actor's simple address to and facing of the audience, the ability to transfer spectators into a rare state of concentration, to take them along into a space of thought and images that mutually question one another. Vanden Broecke, alias "a missionary", tells of a life between Africa and Europe, between poor and rich, between God and men, between town and country, between the highly technologized Western world and the necessity to make one's best with and from what is available.

In this mental to and fro, his speech very gradually creates in spectators themselves an interspace – possible only in theatre? –, a site that makes it possible to perceive and discern that this figure onstage can only speak this way because his encounter with various worlds and realities has made him relinquish all (apparent) certitudes. Yet it would be mistaken and careless to file the evening away under the heading „tales from a missionary's life“. The very quality of this work (the text, the acting, the successful final coup de théâtre) is in fact to uncouple the notion of "mission" from the activity of a missionary and ask earnestly, i.e. without a trace of embarrassment, to what purpose we find ourselves here on this planet, with what mission – in the sense of a task – we have made the place homely – or by now sometimes unearthly – for ourselves. When, at the end, Vanden Broecke looks upwards and asks (I quote from memory) "What can I still ask of you? Give me your tears. At least give me a sigh. God!", his subsequent long and haunting scream for "God!" is more expression of despair than invocation and certainty that this imploration could ever be heard. When, at the end, the stage

opens up to the back and the gaze falls into a space that can only be described as desolate and (god)forsaken, what is communicated is an avowal of human failure, a lack of any "mission" that would care equally about the well-being of man and nature.

3) Reverberation of the scream

Some weeks later at the HAU 1 in Berlin, on the "Ars moriendi" stage. The actors present on stage are preparing for their "last walk", more concretely they are all repairing to their awaiting coffins. Before one of the actresses closes the lid of her coffin for good, she briefly makes a reappearance and says (I quote from memory): "Maybe the death of God is a mistake. It has not yet been proven."

I wonder: is theatre making serious talk about "God" possible again? In the humanities, at any rate, a renewed turn to theological issues seems to be taking place: Berlin's Center for Research in Literature (Zentrum für Literaturforschung) points to the most recent publication on the religious implications in the work of Walter Benjamin, which considers and recognizes in their relevance for contemporary reflection some of the author's notions and concepts that had long been only reluctantly accepted – such as creation, law, guilt and life.²

4) Yet more importantly

However, what currently seems to me more important for the debate on theatre in postcolonial spaces is the abovementioned creation of an interspace. What Vanden Broecke/the "missionary" practices/provokes, is an enduring irritation of certitudes; he allows the spectator to dwell in dubiety. One could also say: with his narration of episodes and interspersed questions, he holds everything in such suspension that at the end, all that is left is an inescapable and uncomfortable question, which is: what am I here for? What am I doing here? What are we humans doing here on this planet? Each separately and all of us together?

Whither do we go with this question once the performance has come to an end? How do we leave the interspace and where to? Where can possibilities of an answer be found? Or, in a first step, could it be more meaningful to let ourselves be led by the irritation and grant it further space? Thus, at least for a while, to be without certitudes and in flux? Should we rather stall, stutter, come to a halt, stand still? Have we become interspaces ourselves?

With a view both to the current basic principles of performing arts and the state of the world, André Lepecki writes in the foreword to "Planes of Composition", edited jointly with Jenn Joy: "[O]ur current condition, where a hyper-mobilization of the planet is under way, primarily fuelled by well-tested colonialist and capitalist policies and dynamics, demands the creation of a political phenomenology of heterogeneities – a theory that acknowledges the reality of the irregular, the proliferation of dynamic eccentricities, and thus challenges the very

notion of centre upon which colonial and postcolonial melancholic and neo-liberal kineticism gain their organizational and hegemonic force.⁴³ Lepecki explicitly references the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk who, in volume 3 of "Spheres"⁴⁴, attempts to unfold the state of the world starting from the notion of "foam". Sloterdijk writes: "Almost nothing and yet not nothing. A something, if only a web of hollow spaces and subtle walls. A real actuality, yet a contact-shy formation, which at the slightest touch cedes and bursts. This is foam as it manifests itself in everyday experience. Through the whipping in of air, something liquid, something solid, loses its density; what appeared self-contained, homogenous, stable, morphs into loosened structures. (...) How should a first definition of foam thus read? Air in unexpected places? (...) In foam, buoyancy forces come to bear that trouble upholders of established conditions."⁴⁵ According to this, theatre – and more particularly this performance of *Mission* – could be characterized as an exemplary site of the generation of foam, understood in the positive sense.

5) Another kind of interspace

The missionary's questioning and reflecting is linked with "home leave". He leaves his mission post, goes to his family and at the same time enters confinement. His arrival "home" is – at least to begin with – marked by abstinence from any news from the outside world. Rather, his gaze turns inwards, to his own inner space. "Home leave" as defined by the missionary thus proves a useful notion in the attempt to differentiate interspaces. It denotes a respite – the missionary takes time to reflect, to take a breath – and at the same time the remoteness from all places believed to be safe – it creates distance in all directions. What thus occurs is, in coming home, the removal from a place called "home". In this case, "home leave" thus goes hand in hand with the feeling of "homelessness", of non-belonging. Rather, what happens in the „home-land" and within family gradually becomes foreign and questionable itself. And: coming home – so we learn – is not necessarily tied to a place.

Maybe what we carry away from the theatre can best be called a positively valenced foam formation. It is a fragile awareness of something that is yet to find shape. Retaining this image, the performance also grants us a type of foam-wrapped „home leave". We could transport the interspace out of the theatre and extend it into our daily life – provided we ourselves have become more porous.

If we give credence to Mark Terkessidis' considerations on the topic of "interculture", then our survival in a feverishly evolving world requires a new awareness which, referencing architect Aldo van Eyck, he calls "in-between-awareness".⁶ As spectators touched, moved and frothed up by theatre, we could play our part in shaping this new awareness, at least for a while.

6) Reverting to *Mission*, pausing at language

The festival's program leaflet stressed that Bruno Vanden Broecke would present the play in German specially for its guest performance in Braunschweig. With an unmistakably foreign accent, he did indeed proceed to weave his way into and through his hosts' language with great virtuosity. The very fact that the actor was not expressing himself in his native tongue contributed to the particular attention his speech was granted. Halting and brittle, it gave the well-known a new sound. In addition, his special effort garnered him further admiration. Yet what about the dancers, performers and speakers who had traveled from South Africa? Were they equally invited to take part in shaping the interspace? As far as I remember, no headsets had been provided with which to simultaneously listen to the theatrical address in a second language. The festival thus presented itself with an ambivalent gesture: on the one hand it successfully invited guests from South Africa to take part in the event, on the other hand these very guests were excluded from following the perspective of a „colonizer" – as which the missionary is also to be seen. Yet if theatre aims to contribute to cutting across discursive boundaries, it must become multilingual, and issues of translation and translatability are part of its (new?) tasks. Otherwise, it only practices a further form of exclusion.

7) Repeatedly demanded sensitization for one's own speech

Authors such as Grada Kilomba – in her talk on Sunday 6 June 2010 in Braunschweig and in her most recent book *Plantation Memories* – or also Mark Terkessidis in the previously mentioned Suhrkamp publication *Interkultur* again and again point to the fact that seemingly simple questions such as "Where are you from?" can carry racist connotations.

That the question "Where are you from?" could be formulated in an offensive manner may at first seem strange. Why should I not be allowed to ask where you come from? What should the conversation between us start with, when we meet for the first time? The question of a traveler to the person he meets on the way – is it not all too natural? First we ask where from, then where to, in order to gain first indications as to who the other is. Could we settle with asking only "where to"? Would it suffice to know that a common stretch lies ahead? Do we need to know where we are going in order to communicate? What does the very notion of a route imply? Can we imagine an encounter that would not immediately question the other? That would not interrogate him, but acknowledge him without question?

8) All this for what?

In the best of senses, in order to not take one's own position on the world's large stage too seriously or too importantly. But also: in order to think about what purpose on earth theatre could serve, what we need it for. Do we really need it? At the end of *The Thrill of It All*



– Forced Entertainment’s most recent work – one could think that the show must go on precisely because there is no alternative. The thought of really not playing tomorrow, of lying down in the street in refusal, as put by one of the young actresses in *Night Witch*⁷ – would that thought really be entertained in earnest by a company such as Forced Entertainment? Are we, are the players prisoners in our own system?

9) Almost reassurance

Perusing the programs of current theatre festivals, one could almost feel reassured as to the state of the world: „Theaterformen“ in Braunschweig, „Theater der Welt“ in the Ruhr-Region – a brightly colored mix, a true orgy of interweavings, which leads us to think: all is well.

One of the first newsletters sent out by „Theater der Welt“ stated: „The Theater der Welt artists come from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and Oceania. They live in mega-cities, come from emerging nations, natural paradises and crisis regions. They work alone or in a collective as directors, choreographers, performers, dancers or musicians. Some are well-known greats, others are performing for the first time in Europe. Even if they are very different, they all have one thing in common, they share with us the time we live in.“

The history of the Aztecs is at last being addressed in Mexico, Nijinsky has finally reached Thailand, township dramas equal Chekhov’s and Ibsen’s swan songs to the family in tragic content (a questionable notion), former Moroccan nightclub singers show us that there are also combative women in Arabic countries – nothing is lost.

One could come to the conclusion that we are a world community of „artists of life“, that we are all playing theatre and that it is what unites us. The baroque topos of the world as stage has only one catch: we lack the belief in a God who settles everything in our best interests. The gods/directors who stage and take responsibility for the overall spectacle are highly earthbound. This is due not least to the fact that we have the necessary financial means (and thus also the power) to afford this way of thinking. Could shared time really be the lowest common denominator we can agree on? No, we are not all equally equal at the same time. Even dwelling in interspaces, viewed from other perspectives, seems no more than a self-indulgent game. Unless from it arises the insight into new exigencies.

Christel Weiler is the deputy director and programme director of the International Research Center *Interweaving Performance Cultures* (Institut Verflechtungen von Theaterkulturen) at the Freie Universität Berlin. The Institute was a cooperation partner to Festival Theaterformen with regards to the thematic emphasis on *Presence of the Colonial Past*.

¹ Mark Terkessidis, *Interkultur*, edition suhrkamp 2010, p.10 (transl. Maud Capelle)

² Daniel Weidner, (Hg.): *Profanes Leben. Walter Benjamins Dialektik der Säkularisierung*. Berlin: suhrkamp taschenbuch wissenschaft 2010

³ André Lepecki, Jenn Joy (eds.), *Planes of Composition*, Seagull Books 2009, p. VIII

⁴ Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären. Plurale Sphärologie: Band III: Schäume*, Frankfurt 2004

⁵ *ibid.* p. 27/29

⁶ Terkessidis, *Interkultur*, p. 219

⁷ *The Night Witch* is the title of Tamer Yigit and Branka Prlc’s new work, premiering at the HAU 3 in Berlin on 25 June 2010.



Katarina Eckold, Silke zum Eschenhoff, Lisa Grossmann, Marlen Fuhrmann, Annemarie Matzke, Jannikhe Möller, Andrea Nolden, Wibke Schmitt, Leif Winterkemper

ON THE LANDING

I have left my apartment, I left the key in the lock inside – I am on the landing and can not go back. I have left my apartment with its clear hierarchy, its orderliness and familiar objects and I have entered a room that has no clear order, only gradations and movement. But now I am standing in this interspace and trying to orient myself. How does this interspace help me?

Homi K. Bhabha considers the landing to be a threshold between definitions of identity that are set in motion. For the participants of the seminar on post-colonialism and theatre at the University of Hildesheim, the Theaterformen Festival became exactly this kind of in-between space. In the beginning, questions and insecurities came up that remained to the very end.

Post-colonialism is a term that immediately conjures up images in your mind's eye, triggering off never-ending associations. Post-colonialism sounds like work.

The aim was to apply oneself to this work – work that has been neglected in recent years in German theatre studies. It is astonishing that for a long time, the discourse of post-colonial theories had no space in theatre studies – neither in research nor in teaching. Performances from Japan, South Africa, Morocco or Argentina are discussed with students; however, their own perspectives in dealing with stereotypes of foreigners are omitted.

What is my 'definatory power'? How do I look at the artists and their work, and what prejudices do I have regarding Africa? Who or what is African? The Festival Theaterformen provoked permanent self-inquiry where there did not appear to be easy answers. Doubting one's own behaviour towards the 'strange(r)' or feelings of insecurity remained unresolved so that I, as a member of the audience, was mostly left in that state.

Not so much the academic discourse – although the discussion of theories by Said, Spivak and Bhabha were important and controversial – but rather the experiences of performances and the reflection of one's own position as a spectator were thematised. At the centre of the discussion were three performances: *Influx Control* by Boyzie Cekwana, *Mission*, performed by the actor Bruno Vanden Broecke, written by David Reybrouck and directed by Raven Ruëll, and above all, constantly, the installation *Exhibit A* by Brett Bailey.

The state Exhibit A put me into is hard to describe in words, but being put into a state seems to accurately describe the essential situation. A feeling of paralysis creeps over me – helplessness, hopelessness, discouragement: and an (absurd) feeling of guilt to have been born where I was born, to have been given the life I have – things I can do nothing about. The question of what this has to do with me, what I or we (who is this 'we' – Germany, Europe the Western world?) can or could actually do? Where where to start and how?

I enter a room with a large vaulted ceiling. I see the back of a female figure on a plinth. She is wearing trousers and arm rings, otherwise she is naked. The room is dimly lit, some spotlights illuminate the plinth with a cold, whitish-blue light. The atmosphere is oppressive and I don't know where I should go. The figure is being revolved on the plinth: she herself does not move. When her face finally turns in my direction, her stare fixes on me. I am terrified. In the darkness of the room, the whites of her eyes stand out strikingly. I feel penetrated by her gaze. My impulse is to leave the room quickly and go on. But as I am the only one in the room, I feel it's my responsibility to stay. She is only standing on the plinth for me and I have the feeling that I have to confront this situation. However, I feel extremely uncomfortable looking at her. I cannot bear her penetrating, piercing stare and hope that I have redeemed at least some of my responsibility by making eye contact. Her gaze has something accusatory, or so it seems. I can hardly put one foot in front of the other to go to the next room. My stomach starts hurting because both me and my reactions have become an object of scrutiny for her too.

The "disturbance of your voyeuristic gaze", writes Bhabha, "is based on the complexity and contradictoriness of your wish to fix cultural 'difference' to a limitable, visible object or see it as a natural state of affairs." By comparing different theatre plays, their allocation and assumption of different observer points-of-view, and addressing the issue of one's own gaze, new questions arise.

*My dilemma after seeing Exhibit A is articulated by Boyzie Cekwana in his performance *Influx Controls I*: I wanna be wanna be. "With all things equal, I would be sweet, not to please you, but because I am." I wouldn't have to explain myself or apologise but instead I could freely communicate with others. In his performance, the focus is on our behaviour towards each other: How do we interact with one another? What do we do with the other person? These are precisely*

the ques-tions that are articulated in the performance in Cekwana's never-ending transformation – through costume, plot and text.

The art form of theatre itself becomes the subject in this performance: playing with the performance situation, taking on roles and focussing on the audience all create a space that makes another form of reflection possible.

In Mission, the actor amusingly narrates in the role of a missionary: how he became what he is, the ups and downs of his everyday life in Africa, "a completely ruined country with a breathtakingly beautiful landscape". As a European, he comes from the audience's country; as a missionary, he has committed himself to a foreign world. There have been sacrifices: a love he had to give up, the absence of his family and even immediate danger from war and unrest. He acts as a mediator between two worlds. This missionary sometimes appears scatterbrained and unworldly when he is going full throttle with his anecdotes about alcohol, and sometimes wise and close to people's needs: "If someone cannot walk, then I don't present him with Jesus" The audience laughed a lot during the premiere in Braunschweig. Was this due to the way he talks, his accent or his apparently unplanned mixing up of words that were promptly corrected by the audience? Or is the reality of poverty and terror being made to appear harmless? Do we learn something about everyday Africa or are our Eurocentric views of the world merely confirmed? The missionary figure stays centred – no member of the audience is accused or called to take on responsibility. To what extent could one individual change the discourse on post-colonialism?

After the thematic weekend of the Festival, the discussions about the performances continued. It was not possible to come to a final conclusion. What remains is the feeling of not knowing enough about one's own colonial history.

Every Festival visitor, whether artist or audience member, is a product of his or her history – in other words, the colonial past is here and now. It is the present.

In the Third Space that I entered, there are no structures yet: no right, no wrong, no up and no down. How am I supposed to fit myself into this? I am stuck in a liminal sphere – and perhaps that is a good thing.

The seminar *Postkolonialität und Theater* (post-colonialism and theatre) at the University of Hildesheim was focused on the thematic emphasis of the Theaterformen Festival. The students visited performances and events within the scope of *Presence of the Colonial Past – Afrika auf Europas Bühnen*. This collectively written text captures their experiences and analyses.



THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS POST-COLONIALISM

Festival Theaterformen in Braunschweig – Thematic weekend:
The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now

On the dimly lit stage inside the theatre tent in front of the Staatstheater Braunschweig, a dark-skinned man is running in slow motion on the same spot. His face is covered in black paint. Facing towards the audience, he swings his arms forwards and backwards with exaggeration and distorts his oversized and red-painted mouth to a wide grin. A belt of explosives is strapped around his chest throughout the whole performance. The running turns into the banter of a bodybuilder, into the scuttling of a boxer, into a faster run, into a flight. Wearing a white tutu, a pair of dark sunglasses and a metal crown of thorns on his head, he will later climb through and over the rows of seats in the auditorium, push his body past the spectators, press himself against them, stroke their heads.

I am a member of this audience. I know that this is theatre, highly reflective theatre. Without mercy, it uncovers stereotypes that still prevail in many people's minds. I am hardly ever scared in the theatre and I consider myself a person who has a firm grip on her prejudices. But it got me. Completely against reason, my heartbeat picks up. The black menace, the suicide bomber, the religious fanatic, the eyes that I cannot see and therefore guess what is going on behind them, all pose a danger to me.

What if the performer, here and now, truly blows himself up? What if this theatre event were to turn utterly wrong... what if all this had been planned ahead, in order to score off those reflective theatergoers, those politically correct intellectuals, just for once? To blow oneself up and set an example?

Apparently, despite my attempts at openness and tolerance, my subconscious prejudices and lively imagination have temporarily taken over...

The great achievement of *Influx Controls: I wanna be wanna be* by South African Boyzie Cekwana, in my view, was that it toyed with great virtuosity within my subconscious fears, thereby revealing how susceptible I am – against all my efforts – to predominant prejudices regarding appearance and behavior of people from other cultural contexts. For a few minutes, a highly artificial art event turned into a horror trip that not only said something about the artist's situation but also about myself.

This aesthetic experience vividly reflects the achievements of *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now* lectures as well as the performances that were part of the thematic weekend during the Theaterformen Festival in Braunschweig. They encouraged many spectators and listeners to question their own points of view, to open themselves up to other perspectives, which were sometimes difficult to be reconciled with one's own self-conception and therefore unhinged one's ego. The series of lectures started with the political scientist Kien Nghi Ha from Berlin, who gave a detailed and informative survey about the collective self-defense mechanism Germans have developed concerning their colonial past.

With reference to statements by contemporary politicians (e.g.

Horst Köhler, Peter Struck), he confirmed his alarming thesis about "the silent return of colonial discourses in Germany".

Philosopher and theologian Fabien Eboussi Boulaga from Cameroon proposed a lecture about "Intercultural and Political Dialogue" between Africa and Europe. However, he began his lecture by calling this title "daring" and went on by explaining that the subject of intercontinental dialogue, regarding the difficult process of the decolonization of Africa, was too complex to be treated in half an hour.

Grada Kilomba from Berlin filled in on short notice for Nasser Al-Sheik. She read from her book, *Plantation Memories – Episodes of Everyday Racism*. This brief lecture inspired a discussion about the attitude towards people of dark skin people of colour? in Germany who, on a daily basis, have to struggle with the presumption that they do not come from Germany - or rather with the issue?: when will they return to their own country. She quoted from Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin White Masks*: „If people like me, it's in spite of my color. If they don't like me, it's not because of my color." This statement captures the dilemma of apparent tolerance and simultaneous denial.

Ever since I saw the performance of Congolese dancer Faustin Linyekula, *Le Cargo*, one sentence has stuck to my mind: „I dance for you to send money to my family." This simple phrase points a basic problem underlying any artistic preoccupation with formerly colonized countries, a point also critical to Postcolonial Theory. The preoccupation with these topics may degenerate into a label, which can be commercially exploited as an artistic as well as academic fashion – fading into comparative insignificance after a few years. The artists in turn are driven by existential needs and concerns. The presentations and speeches of this weekend have made it clear that an unbiased dialogue between the cultures of formerly colonized and colonizing countries is yet in its infancy - and that it is necessary to alert to this state of affairs over and over again.

The organizers of this weekend have met this challenge in a stimulating way by bringing together artists and scholars of different backgrounds and thereby encouraging a productive artistic as well as academic exchange. I am convinced that many visitors will remember this weekend - and the fact that some performances were still passionately discussed many days later in my tutorial makes me wish for further productively disturbing weekends.

Ann-Christine Simke is currently studying in the Master Programme for Theatre Studies at Free University of Berlin.

JOURNEY TO ELSEWHERE

(...)

The race for a "place in the sun" is how imperialism in Africa has become trivialised in popular jargon. But the colonial era has still not been properly dealt with or reappraised. The political scientist Kien Nghi Ha gives an interesting lecture on the subject. Ha, an expert in Cultural Studies, looks back at the Berlin Africa Conference of 1884-85, during which the colonial powers of the time divided up the continent between them – boundaries that still define Africa's cartography to this day. And he links it to racist episodes in the recent past, from the legendary slip of the tongue by the German President Lübke or the Stoiber faux-pas about Germany's "mongrolised society". Christine Regus, the Goethe Institute's public relations officer, then tells the story of how generous funds were made available by the German government for cultural projects in Africa, and of the accompanying logo that politicians came up with: the Continent in Black-Red-Gold. The festival will continue its focus on Africa beyond the thematic weekend. Besides productions from Japan and Argentina, the director Fautin Linyekula is presenting his reinterpretation of Racine's *Bérénice* with Congolese actors. And the South African dancer and choreographer Boyzie Cekwana deals with the effects of apartheid in the first two parts of his *Influx Controls* trilogy – named after a law passed in 1923 that prohibited black Africans from settling in the cities – resulting in apartheid. Theaterformen at the cutting edge: shortly before the football World Cup in South Africa, it seems more fitting than ever to get an inside view of the country and to question the paternalistic attitude of the West. Not to mention that of the FIFA.

(...)

by Patrick Wildermann
Tagesspiegel, 07.06.2010

MISSION POSSIBLE

(...)

The "Theaterformen" festival, which this year is being held in Braunschweig, has been curated with an African focus by festival director Anja Dirks. Besides a symposium on the subject of colonialism, which on the first day was dominated by rhetoric and banalities, the opening weekend included two eye-opening perspectives on the complicated relationship of the two continents. In reference to the "human zoos" which Carl Hagenbeck and others organised in the 19th century with Nubians, Eskimos, Mohicans, Kalmyks and Ethiopians, Brett Bailey has created a "human installation" focused on German South-West Africa. In the former cellars of the National-Jürgens brewery, the tableaux with black performers – who do nothing except stare at the visitors – are reminders of the atrocities of German rule in Namibia. Among others, there is a Herero warrior, a sex slave of the white colonial "protection" forces, and a concentration camp inmate beneath a crucifix.

Accompanied by testimonies of the massacres and humiliations carried out by "respectable" Germans far away from home, Bailey leads visitors through a labyrinth of horror to the present day. The final tab-

leau depicts the German deportation of an asylum seeker wearing a motorcycle helmet and tied to the seat of an aircraft with masking tape.

Bailey deliberately shows the total degradation of human beings as objects who have to be stared at by visitors, making it impossible for the "audience" to walk through the dark vaults without a deep sense of humiliation. In light of most Germans' ignorance regarding the Herero genocide and the unbridled brutality of Germany's colonial endeavours, this emotional assault is an appropriate way of raising awareness. Especially as at the end of the route, the performers themselves have their say: next to their photos on the wall, visitors can read texts in which they confess that they still feel like second- or third-class human beings in modern German society.

In contrast, the actor Bruno Vanden Broecke quietly, subtly and humorously embodies a catholic missionary in David van Reybrouck's play *Mission*. Van Reybrouck interviewed numerous Belgian missionaries in the Congo and turned these into a lecture which, without pointing the finger, describes the gruelling inner battle between personal conscience and external demands. The character in the play worked for 51 years in the Congo, a country still traumatised by Belgium's colonial sadism. The résumé is a requiem to well-intentioned principles and an oratory of misgivings. For two hours, this sometimes boorish, sometimes charming, but always honest white minister tells of his experiences with his parish, about the wars, about devotion and murder, deprivation and passion. It is a confession during which one waits a long time for the condemnatory punch-line, until one finally realises that it will not come. Because *Mission* is not about the hushed-up crimes of the Catholic church, but about the conflicting nature of an impossible task: to remain human and moderate in a country where it seems impossible for violence to be tamed.

(...)

by Till Briegleb
Süddeutsche Zeitung, 09.06.2010

GOOSE PIMPLES IN THE ICE CELLAR

Alone through the „human zoo“

(...)

Silent and visibly shaken, many of the audience members left the strongest (and the most elaborate) production in the festival: *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, a staged installation by South African director Brett Bailey. In the spacious vaults of a former ice cellar, he set up nothing but tableaux vivants of a "human zoo". Similarly to the "anthropological-zoological exhibitions" of the past century, living exhibits are on display. The audience is sent one by one through the exhibition. The path leads past half-naked women standing on pedestals, and scenes re-created from life in Africa in the 19th century. The Africans exhibited stand there defencelessly, exposed to the spectator, but the person watching is also defenceless, wandering alone through the cellar rooms. The exhibits look back – serious, rigid, mute. It is cold in the former ice cellar. You can escape by reading the text displayed

on boards. Here, the audience is given information on the genocide that the Germans committed against the Herero and the Nama people: you can read about concentration camps and the export of skulls to German universities.

At the end of the tour, you come across modern asylum seekers on display and an installation dedicated to the Sudanese refugee Aamir Ageeb, who suffocated while being deported from Germany in an aeroplane. The actor, sitting on an aeroplane seat, is wearing a helmet like Ageeb and his arms and feet are tied. It is confusing that Bailey presents old "ethnographic exhibition" tableaux in the same way as the tableau vivant of the contemporary, tied-up Aamir Ageeb.

The interlacing of views – old colonial and new, critical – nevertheless shows that an unbiased view of Africa is no longer possible. We step outside one by one. Next to the door, there is a woman on a bench. She is crying.

by Roland Meyer-Art

In THEATERHEUTE 8/9 2010

»AFRICA« FOCUS AT THE BRAUNSCHWEIG »THEATERFORMEN« FESTIVAL

As part of an exhibition of young African art titled *Who knows tomorrow*, the flags of 41 African states – 17 of which have been independent for 50 years – are flying outside Berlin's Neue Nationalgalerie. The Braunschweig "Theaterformen" festival has also chosen "Africa" as this year's focus, and is presenting four theatre productions from sub-Saharan Africa, as well as a thematic weekend with performances, videos and lectures under the title *Die Gegenwart des Anderswo im Jetzt* and a series of films about colonial history as an *Archive of the possible future*. Not surprisingly, such a comprehensive programme cannot simply be about "African theatre" per se; rather, it provides fascinating insights and food for thought:

Festival organiser Anja Dirks invited two productions from South Africa, one from the Congo and one from Belgium: *Missie* is the name of the Belgian production, in which a Belgian missionary tells of his 50 years of missionary work in the Congo while on holiday back in Belgium. He doesn't seem to be a racist, but rather somebody who wants to do good. Irritated by the consumer society in Europe, he tells of the difficulties of his work in the Congo with tranquillity and a quiet humour:

"I sat with the people, I spent the night with the people. It must have been like that with the farmers in Flanders a hundred years ago: the pot of food placed in the middle, two pots in fact, one for the meat, the other for the manioc, and afterwards everyone washes their hands in a vat of water. Luckily I was always the first to be able to wash my hands because manioc is very sticky!"

Because the white Belgian actor Bruno Vanden Broek had prepared for this role of a man torn between two cultures in German, his speech

often seems very slow and deliberate. The missionary's despair at the end of the piece is thus even more intense, as he is torn between moral certainty and memories of his dreadful experiences of violence and genocide:

"Don't be afraid of loneliness, because you are always alone. But where are your tears, God. I beg you, at least give us one sigh. How can I speak to you, God?

(Scream:) God!... (thunder and lightning)"

The Africa focus began with the Belgian production *Missie* and ends today with a Congolese production of the French classic *Bérénice* from 1670, in which love for a foreign woman is sacrificed to the reason of state. *Pour en finir avec bérénice* is the name given by Faustin Linyekula to his Congolese version of the play about tradition, history and power, the original version of which he already staged at the Comédie Française.

In the installation by Brett Bailey, *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*, visitors are admitted, one by one, into a long underground vault. Here they are confronted by German colonial history, because on display are African "savages", exhibited in the same way as they were in the popular ethnographic exhibitions of the late 19th century in Europe. Hunting trophies; animal and human skulls; the lodging of an officer of the German colonial protection force, in which cosiness and violence are equally present; a shackled, half-naked black woman sitting in a camp beneath a Virgin Mary; and above all, everywhere real black people exhibited as "black meat", and modern-day asylum seekers – beside them a placard with their personal details – standing behind barbed wire – all this gives an oppressive picture of racism. The displays are hauntingly contrasted with romantic occidental music, while in rooms containing photos of murdered Hereros can be heard their wonderful sorrowful songs:

Influx Controls: this was the name of the 1923 laws which banned the black South African population from settling in the cities. It is also the name of performance by the black South African Boyzie Cekwana, a performance in which the actor paints himself black on stage and then proceeds to play with the clichés and prejudices of the audience, by dressing up or disguising himself with a bomb strapped to his chest, in a fur coat or white skirt and falling into "black" poses. Meanwhile he quietly reflects on how things would be "if all things were equal".

The Africa focus at the Braunschweig Theaterformen festival is, overall, not spectacular, but it takes the public on a journey of the senses and self-reflection.

by Hartmut Krug

Deutschlandradio Kultur, *Fazit. Kultur vom Tage* 07.06.2010



FESTIVAL GRANT

PRESENCE OF THE COLONIAL PAST



THE GRANT PROGRAMME OF THE THEATERFORMEN FESTIVAL 2010 IN BRAUNSCHWEIG

Young theatre-makers at the start of their career need two things above all: to see lots of theatre and to get to know people who can be role models, inspiration, networkers and multipliers for them. In order to enable this for young artists, the Theaterformen Festival 2010 invited eleven artists, theatre-makers and performers from Australia, South Africa, Togo, the Congo, Mozambique, Turkey, England, Latvia and Brazil to Braunschweig. During informal discussions they presented their work to one another and met the international artists performing at the festival. They also got to know local cultural facilities and institutions such as the Kunstverein Braunschweig (Braunschweig Art Association) and the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst (University of Fine Arts).

All of the grant holders could use the time as they wished: to establish long-term networks, to find additional impetus and inspiration for their own work, and to discover new points of view and artistic positions in order to be able to view their own work from new, unfamiliar perspectives.

THEATRE CAN SAY THE UNSPEAKABLE

Eleven grant holders from all over the world accompany the Braunschweig Festival – On the after-effects of colonialism

Braunschweiger Zeitung, 10.06.2010
by Martin Jasper

This doesn't happen to a journalist every day. You are plodding through a heated discussion, led by young people from all over the world, when suddenly, one of the charismatic Africans at the lectern in front wearing an exotic white robe, asks you what Angela Merkel could do to balance out the differences between the worlds. Heavens above, right – what could she do? It is hot in the Theaterformen Festival centre in Braunschweig. The African persists: he wants to know now. Luckily, the other debaters join the discussion. These are grant holders from all over the world, from Brazil to Australia, Latvia to Africa, young theatre-makers and artists, who are looking around the Festival, seeking inspiration for their own work and taking part in endless discussions. This lunchtime, for example, they are discussing with choreographer, actor and university professor Nasser Al-Sheik from Sudan.

Africa's wounds

The eleven grant holders, who, with support from the Bundeskulturstiftung (Federal Cultural Foundation), were funded by the Festival to come here, were selected by partners in their respective countries such as the Goethe Institute or artists participating in the Festival. They all come from countries that are more or less affected by colonialism and its aftermath. Placing this problem at the centre of a cultural festival here in Germany is an absolute necessity – for the grant holders themselves too. "Back home in the Congo, news coverage in the media is not determined by truth but by political interests," says Papy Mbwiti. "Theatre can say all the things that are kept secret there and with such an emotional force that it can even get under the skin of spectators who have become deadened to the media." Stony-faced Jean-Frédéric Batassé from Togo calls colonialism a "great loss for humankind" in both political and cultural terms. Batassé does not accept that it belongs to a past era. "Its effects are still being felt." And he poses the bleak question: "Must Africa continue to hold this position so that Europe can remain as it is?" This phenomenon, so much is made clear by all grant holders, is not yet a thing of the past: it festers in these formerly oppressed societies. This is why they were all so overwhelmed by the performance *Exhibit A* in the Rebenpark. "That era becomes the sinister present once again in this piece."

Europe's indifference

Haminder Judge, an Englishman with Indian roots, complains that the performance was not given much attention at first and only received broad interest once the reviews had appeared in the newspapers. "Europeans have to show an interest in this subject", he says insistently. "If they don't, they make a dangerous mistake."



DIOGO BO, BRAZIL

Utopia or give me your hand!

What am I supposed to do? What should I say? I was lost. I wasn't there in the common way. I wasn't there 'to do things', I mean, I wasn't there to show myself as an artist, I wasn't there to be original. I went there to watch. I went there to be on the other side of the stage. No, actually, I came there to be "with", with others like me. We were invited to come just to meet "what's up". We were guests from outside. But don't think it was an easy task. It wasn't, and it still isn't. We are accustomed to be called to being something. Somehow our jobs are about making the invisible visible and to share the materiality of this presence. Our work is to create something that is more than we are, something which is on some level independent from us. We did that, but in another way. And this was the big difference here; this was responsible for the strange feeling that came to us, in the first moment; that we should be doing something more. But what? We didn't know what "mask" to wear and they weren't asking anything from us and this was the "beginning of". Because we were in that hole, in that "nonsense" context, we started to call ourselves PEOPLE FROM EVERYWHERE. So it started. The only thing that we recognized at the time was that each one of us came from everywhere. We could find the difference between us and it was that what made us become one. With that name we realized that we were people from everywhere, who had come together in Braunschweig. In those days in Germany, viewed from outside, we were like the difference put together. We were the same, inside of the dissimilarity. Twenty-two eyes were looking for the images of themselves. Twenty-two hands were touching the surface of that incident. Eleven people were materializing that utopia. The utopia of being "everywhere" somewhere for a while. The utopia of becoming closer to the strange "outside you", which is the same as you. The utopia of being watched by the other as yourself. I was myself and that was my job there. It was about an opportunity to meet the other that is you far away from home. It was a gift. And I made friends. Thank you!

Diogo Bo is a Brazilian performer who lives on a farm next to São Paulo. His work is about "how to live and to build together in different environments". He has built two houses, one at the farm another one in Amazon. Now he invites people from all over the world to live in these places for a while, to build public spaces together.



HLENGIWE LUSHABA, SOUTH AFRICA

The Presence of the Colonial Past

This opportunity came at a very crucial time in my life both professionally and personally. I had just lost my best friend and professionally I was at a crossroads, as I wasn't sure whether this whole art scene was really worth it anymore, so this festival found me extremely tired and, to put it bluntly, quite fed up, until Professor Nasser Al'Sheikh reminded me of why I first decided to do what I do, which was to express myself to humanity and to my Creator the best way I know how to.

I came to Braunschweig with armor and all as I wasn't sure what to expect but somehow I knew it was going to be a rollercoaster ride as the theme *Presence of the Colonial Past* is one very close to my heart. What a cathartic experience, I was shaken to the core of my existence. This festival made me remember who I was and my responsibility as an artist towards mankind especially towards my dearest Africa, a place I love with all my heart. The words of Bob Marley "emancipate yourself from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds", echoed louder and became my hope throughout this experience. I was constantly faced with the truth of who I was, where I was coming from and going to, with every show and installation I saw. It was so ironic that all these truths about my reality were realized thousand of miles away from my reality, which is Africa.

I met amazing people, "young people of Germany", as I often referred to them, who showed me that Germany might be on the road to recovery as it has a generation that is willing to identify the past and maybe do their bit to rectify some of the mistakes that their forefathers made. This gave me strength and hope for my own future in Africa.

I met other young people from the world who made me realize that the world is actually a tiny place where there is no space for big egos, we laughed, cried, shared and laughed some more, we formed a bond that I will always cherish and remember.

My journey to Braunschweig was a rather spiritual one. I walked away from it extremely enriched in every way. The gospel that was planted in my heart is what I have been and will be sharing with my fellow brothers and sisters of the world for some time to come, whether it is through my work or simply through my own humanity and existence.

Festival Theaterformen, I thank you for this great opportunity. To my teachers I met in Braunschweig: be it the wonderful man I call Zuzi we met on the streets and shared wine and peanuts with, to the young art students we danced and sang with, all the way to the most educated art practitioners from around the world, I thank you all.

Yes I might be tired of World Politics but it comforts me knowing that there is a reason as to why I am tired. I believe that it is only through the acknowledgement of *The Presence of the Colonial Past* that the world not only for me in Africa but for all life that lives in it will become a better place.

Hlengiwe Lushaba studied Drama Studies at DUT formerly known as Technikon Natal in South Africa specializing in theatre, dance, singing and acting.

As a Performance Artist, she has produced several works, her first work being *Sacrament* created for the Jomba festival in 2001. In 2002 she created *Its not over until the Fit Phat Fat lady sings*, which was originally created for the EDGE programme under Siwela Sonke Theatre Dance Company. Since 2002 this dance piece has been showcased at



the CND in France, at the Festival Liege in Belgium and at the Afrique Noir Festival in Bern Switzerland. Other works include *Is this Africa? put a cross on the appropriate woman* which was presented at the Indian Ocean Choreographic Competition in Paris. In 2006 she received the Standard Bank Award for Dance and presented *Ziyakhipha! Come Dance with Us* at the Grahamstown Festival. This Dance piece also won the Gauteng MEC Choreographic Award for most outstanding presentation of an original work. Her latest work *Lest we Forget* was created in 2007 and was showcased at the Dance Umbrella in Johannesburg.

When not producing dance works, she focuses on acting and singing. She has appeared in a number of stage productions, some of them including: *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Hairspray the Musical*, *African Queens*, *And the Girls in their Sunday Dresses* and *Touch my Blood*. Hlengiwe is also a television and film actress recently appearing in the Film *District 9*.



FRANK MAINOO, AUSTRALIA

A history, which I am a product of

As tears began to stream down my face, I realised that I no longer am viewing *Exhibit A* as a spectator. I realised my perception had shifted from an audience member to being the subject matter. I had become one of the people, who are refused entry to European countries and deported back to the country, which they 'belong'. I had become one of the people who were taken away from their environment to be examined in a science laboratory in Europe. I had become one of the Herero people who were massacred, tortured and had their heads cut off to be examined, because they were seen as a primitive being who had not yet evolved to a modern human being. I had become one of the sisters who had to clean the flesh of their siblings' skull in order to be examined for scientific research. I had become an African. I began to feel guilty. I felt guilty of the crime caused by the colonialist who invaded my country and wiped out my people, I felt guilty for neglecting to educate myself about the events that occurred during the colonial era to my people my homeland. I felt guilty because as I viewed the actors in their respective areas I became the observer, a representative of the European colonial power, an examiner.

As the performers gawked in confusion, uncertainty and bewilderment, we the audience began to feel uncomfortable, uneasy and uncertain of the relationship established. It was almost like a voyeuristic interplay within the work, which perhaps was a comment on the ideology of perception or perhaps the fear of the unknown and the other. Meanwhile, amongst this confusion, a resonance of sound filling the space with utter desolation from heads being displayed on plinths as museum artefacts.

What have I got myself into? What is this strange feeling that has come upon me? Never have I been affected by a piece of work like the way I felt during *Exhibit A*. *Exhibit A* was physically, emotionally and psychologically challenging. When I came out of the building, I felt emotionally exhausted and the tears would not stop.

From then on I felt the weight of the colonial history not just of Africa but also all around the world including Australia. I began to question myself.

What is my role in this? I am indeed a victim of the colonial past, how can I tell my story? Do I need to tell my story? Is my story worth telling?

I began to rethink my artistic endeavour, approach and knowledge. I began to revisit what I was running away from for a long time. It's always easier to ignore things than to accept them I sometimes say, but that's no longer the case, I now accept that there is a history which I am a product of and that history needs to be exploited to its full capacity.

Ghanaian-Australian artist **Frank Mainoo** was born in 1985. In his interdisciplinary performances he addresses themes related to his life, to society, to the environment, incorporating the process of producing into the performances: The boundaries between technical elements and art are blurring. Mainoo searches for visual tension and aesthetic challenge, exploring the notions of time and space as well as the relationship between performer and spectator.

Completing his performance degree in 2008 at the University of Wollongong, Mainoo has performed, devised and collaborated with artist and companies across Sydney, such as Team MESS' *Killing Don: Evolution of a Memory* presented by Performance Space 2009, Jeff Stein, Ashley Dyer and Janie Gibson for a creative development of *The Secret Name with Legs on the wall* 2009 and Jane Grimley's *The Birds* 2008. Alongside these collaborations, Frank has created solo works such as, *Confine Me*, Merrigong Theatre Company 2008, mentored by Jeff Stein and *Hit Me* premiering in Adelaide Fringe Festival 2010.

Being technically astute, Frank has further been employed by key organizations and companies in Sydney since 2007, such as Belvoir Street Theatre Company, Urban Theatre Projects, Performance Space, ICE (Information and Cultural Exchange), PACT Theatre and Version 1.0.

PAPY MBWITI, KONGO

Looking for certain a kind of humanity in Germany

Braunschweig: the word seems impossible to pronounce. Nobody around me has ever thought of the place. It has never been on my list of places to visit some day. For me, Germany means Berlin, Cologne, Dortmund and Frankfurt, as they are by far the closest to my personal reality: Berlin, for its historic wall, of which I found a piece in Braunschweig; Cologne for its perfumed water (I love smelling nice); the other places I like because of the connection to football. When I arrive in this mini-region, I find one of the most eloquent festivals for the current contemporary art scene, which is extraordinarily rich in its programme, its guest list of artists, the quality of the people there, the quality of human exchanges and above all, its great open-mindedness.

On my arrival at this year's festival, dedicated to colonial heritage or post-colonial presence, I was worried above all that I would be faced with a politically formalistic set for artists, where the black grandson of yesteryear's colonial slave would deliver an exotic speech to the grandson of yesteryear's colonial master, and that the latter would look at him with an expression of pity usually reserved for the sight of undernourished children of UNICEF or the FAO: unacceptable for me!

Well, no. Luckily, instead I had fabulous and life-enhancing interactions with artists who wanted to understand their experiences and their relationships to history, whether short- or long-term, in a life for which you initially sign up alone but which has a real universal echo as current problems still remain those related to humanity.

Humanity! This is the only word I retained after my trip to Braunschweig. I was like a fish in the water with the privileged status of «grant holder», which gave me the possibility to see all the elements of the festival, get to know the town and its history and meet artists from all over the world, each with a different universe but with the same heart beating for art. They all showed the same yearning, the same desire to express humanity, their humanity, differently: whether it is by revisiting *Bérénice* in the case of Faustin Linyekula, *Missie* by David van Reybrouck, or *Influx Controls* by Boyzie Cekwana: everyone wanted to hear, see and say something different even *The Big Dwarf!* Oh, yes. *You can speak, you are an animal.* The biggest shock I had was *Exhibit A!* Which was the most eloquent silent speeches I have ever heard: honestly, how brave! Well done, you guys!

This experience has been enriching for me, and has added so many things to my artistic universe: a great deal of rationality and madness, audacity, life, approaches, contacts, figures, styles, shapes, backgrounds, tears, smiles, faces, nationalities, music and - above all - a lot of love. In Braunschweig, pedalling along the winding roads of the town centre towards the "Theaterformen", I saw through the windows the desire to find a certain humanity once again: "We are people from everywhere".

Papy Maurice Mbwiti (Nzete ya Mbila)
The King of Africa

Papy Mbwiti, Kongo

Born in Kinshasa on the 7th of December 1978, Papy Mbwiti has a degree in International Relations. He is an actor, director and dramaturge, and is also coordinator for the Les Bèjarts Theatre Company in Kinshasa, as well as several theatre companies in Africa and Europe. He regularly works in France and Belgium.

He recently acted in *A l'attente du livre d'or*, directed by Johan Dehollander, a KVS Brussels production, which showed at the Nederlandse Theater Festival, in Faustin Linyekula's *Dinozord* at the Festival d'Avignon 2007, *La Fratrie Errante* by Bibish Mumbu, also directed by Faustin Linyekula, and Ousmane Aledji's *Cadavre mon bel amant*, directed by Astrid e Mamina. In 2006 Mbwiti directed Dominique Mpundu's *Le rêve des autres* and *Qui suis-je after au déla du voile* by Slimane Benaissa for ccfm Maputo, Mozambique. His texts include *A travers ma ville*, *Respiration*, as well as *Oethelek* (play in progress) and *Correspondances boyomaises*.





JEAN-FRÉDÉRIC BATASSÉ, TOGO

FUTUROO

During my stay in Braunschweig I was able to sense a humanism I had believed was extinct. From Frankfurt, Berlin to Braunschweig, I smiled as I said: "Here, man and nature become one... And man worked and worked, relentlessly..." And when I returned to Togo (a small country in West Africa) I offered up two prayers:

- God bless and give very long life to the Theaterformen Festival and to all the people who have enabled me to take part in this festival,
- Please let me gain German citizenship (laughter).

I studied dramatic art at the Ecole Studio Théâtre d'Art in Lomé (2006-2009) and also studied visual art, with several exhibitions in Togo. The Festival was a door of opportunity that opened for me. What I saw and experienced there inspired my concept of artistic performance. It is called the FUTUROO, and intertwines Nature, Man and the Absurd at a mad pace, all sprinkled with a mixture of opposites. I made a little film about this that I show in cultural centres. At the moment, I am working on a project in German with other young people and I'm planning some performances in the Goethe Institute in Lomé.

DILEK ALTUNTAS, TURKEY

Dilek Altuntas was born in 1981 in Istanbul, Turkey. After graduating from the St. Georg Austrian High School in Istanbul, she has studied German Language and Literature as well as Theatre Theory and Dramaturgy at the University of Istanbul. She has translated three plays, namely Biljana Srbjanovic's Supermarket, Vassily Sigarev's Plasticine and Rodrigo Garcia's After Sun and several articles about theatre and cinema from German to Turkish. In the summer of 2005, she was invited to *Last Call for Scheherazade: Workshop and Symposium* during the festival Theater der Welt 2005 in Stuttgart and gave a speech at the 2nd International Design and Cinema Conference, which was held at the Istanbul Technical University in 2005. The speech entitled "Hotel as a Double Metaphor: Space, Representation, Reality and Beyond" was later published in *Design and Cinema: Form Follows Film*. In 2007 she was invited to the International Forum of the festival Theatertreffen in Berlin. She has worked as an assistant director for the Istanbul based theatre company VeDST (And Other Things Theatre Group) and as a project coordinator for the project Yeni Metin Yeni Tiyatro (New Text New Theatre) organised by VeDST (2006-2009). In 2008 she co-organised the project *X Daireler* (X Wohnungen) together with Sven Heier and Patrick Wymann. The project was a part of the 16th International Istanbul Theatre Festival, financed by the Goethe Institute Istanbul and Pro Helvetia. Currently she is working as a freelance theatre maker, writer and translator. She works as international production manager for the free theatre company oyun deposu and has been touring with them to (amongst other cities) Bern, Zurich, Basel, Vienna, Berlin, Graz and Wiesbaden since 2008.



ELINA CERPA, LATVIA

Elina Cerpa is interested in the process when a person's creative action opens up other mental dimensions. It is possible to call Elina Cerpa a theatre director although those two words make her shake as hard as a dog after experiencing strong rain. The word "director" arouses associations of cigarette ashes and loneliness but the word "theatre" is a place where people pretend a bit more than usual. Her childhood and youth she spent in Valmiera, a town in East of Latvia surrounded tightly by coniferous trees. They left a deep impact on her artistic development and life in general. So did three abstractions of men in the form of photos and their invisible presence - Leonid Breznev, her dead grandfather and Konstantin Stanislavski. Cerpa studied film directing and created four performances for The New Riga Theatre.

For the last two years she has been living in Holland, studying at DasArts, where she is looking for the similar effectiveness, the way of thinking and intensity of concentration that a surgeon has during an operation. Currently she is working on the performance and installation *Sensitive Surface* with 13 photographers from North Holland.



EDNA JAIME, MOZAMBIQUE

Edna Jaime is a Mozambican independent dancer and choreographer born in 1984 in Maputo, Mozambique. Since 2003 she has travelled extensively with various productions in Africa and Europe. In 2010 she presented her work at the Out The Box Festival of Puppetry and Visual Arts in Cape Town, South Africa. Edna Jaime is currently involved in a cultural project named *Arts on the Street*, which aims at creating accessibility for contemporary art in the communities and in sub-urban areas in Maputo province. She fosters her relation to traditional dance in as a collaborating choreographer of the Milorho Association of dance and singing.



HARMINDER JUDGE, UNITED KINGDOM

Harminder Judge creates interdisciplinary artwork that explores the enduring appeal of spirituality and the space it inhabits, both physical and metaphorical, in a post-modern and largely secular society. An interest in the marketing techniques that drives religious theory into mainstream consciousness mixed with a love of contemporary pop culture makes for a diverse yet centred starting point for the creation of visual and performance based artworks and projects.

Judge has created and shown work for Art, Lifestyle & Globalisation at Tate Modern London, Arnolfini Bristol, the European Performance Art Festival at the Centre for Contemporary Art Warsaw Poland, Ikon Gallery Birmingham and the National Review of Live Art at Tramway Glasgow. He has had solo exhibitions at New Art Exchange Nottingham and 198 Contemporary Arts in London.

In 2010 he launched the multi-faceted national touring project *The Modes of Al-Ikseer* with producer Simon Poulter. This performance installation takes its starting point from an ancient Hindu myth concerning the creation of Amrit, the holy nectar of life, and Judge's love of 80's electro pop music, namely Depeche Mode's Personal Jesus. He is also the co-founder of Grand Union, an artist studio complex and project space with an ambitious public programme, which launched in March 2010.



PRINCESS ZINZI MHLONGO, SOUTH AFRICA

Princess Zinzi Mhlongo was born in eMalahleni, Witbank Mpumalanga, and matriculated in 2003. She completed her Bachelors Degree in Drama at The Tshwane University of Technology in 2007. She is the founder of Tick Tock Productions, a dynamic entertainment company that lives by the slogan "There's a time for everything". Mhlongo directed *Naked Goddess*, *So What's New?*, *Crocodiles*, *4.48 Psychosis*, amongst others. She directed her professional debut *And The Girls in Their Sunday Dresses* at the State Theatre in 2008.

NURGÜL ÖZTÜRK, TURKEY

Nurgül Öztürk is born in 1983. She studied Psychology, Political Philosophy and History of Art. Recently she has been working for the *Apartment Project*, an artist initiative in Istanbul, developed video performances and dedicated herself to photography. She is also an activist for LGBTT rights. Her interests are Body Arts, Politics, Psychoanalysis, Gender Studies, Queer Theory, Literature and Philosophy, Contemporary Performing Arts, Dance, Video and Photography.



NASSER AL-SHEIK, SUDAN

Nasser Al-Sheik was born in 1949 and is a professor at the Peace Research Institute of the faculty of Performing Arts at the Nilein University in Khartoum, Sudan. He presented the university's theatre work in his lecture for grant holders in Braunschweig. The Peace Research Institute was founded by students at the end of the 1990s and is the only one of its kind in the Sudan. As an advisor for the grant programme, Professor Al-Sheik was on hand throughout the festival as a contact partner for the visiting young theatre-makers. Al-Sheik completed a degree in Theatre Studies in England and alongside his teaching also works as a choreographer and actor.

GLOSSARY

Steven Stefanus Afrikaner, performer from Namibia, one of the performers in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Aischa Ahmed, lecturer in History and Cultural Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. She gave a lecture about Arabic History in Berlin and Brandenburg during the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Nasser Al-Sheik, professor at the Peace Research Institute of the faculty of Performing Arts at the Al-Neelain University in Khartoum, Sudan. He gave a lecture for the grant holders in Braunschweig about his university's theatre work.

Dilek Altuntas, theatre-maker and dramaturg from Istanbul, Turkey. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Evelyn Annuß, theatre and literature scholar. Together with Barbara Loreck she initiated the project *Made in Namibia*. The project included the photo exhibition *Stagings Made in Namibia*, which was shown during the theme weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Brett Bailey, theatre director from South Africa. He created *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika* especially for the Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival) and the Theaterformen festival 2010 in Braunschweig.

Silke Bake, curator and dramaturg, who has worked in Tanzquartier Vienna and at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin, amongst other places. She curated the program of the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Jean-Frederic Batassé, performance artist, actor and visual artist from Togo. Grand holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Nejib Belkadi, Tunisian film-maker. His documentary film *VHS Kahloucha* about Moncef Kahloucha was shown as part of the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Ulrike Bergermann, Media Studies professor at the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst (University of Art) in Braunschweig. She was one of the "consulting room" hosts during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now* and spoke on the subject of *The Invisibility of the Colour White. Stories about Normality*.

Prof. Dr. h.c. Gerd Biegel, director of the Institute for Regional History at the TU Braunschweig. He helped the Theaterformen team with their research into connections between Braunschweig and Namibia. The host of two "consulting rooms" during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*, he spoke about the life of Anton Wilhelm Amo and about the colonial monument in Braunschweig.

Buddy Big Mountain, ventriloquist from New York. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now* he appeared in *The Inner Voice: I AM BIG*, and spoke about his *Heritage as an American Indian Mohawk* during one of the "consulting rooms".

Diogo Bo, Brazilian performer. He is part of an artists' collective near São Paulo. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Seydou Boro, choreographer at the *Compagnie Salia ni Seydou* in Burkina Faso. Three of his video works were shown during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Bruno Vanden Broecke, Flemish actor. He played the Belgian missionary in *Missie (Mission)*.

Lou Castel, one of the two actors in Jeanne Faust's video work *Reconstructing Damon Albarn in Kinshasa*. The Swedish-Italian actor has previously worked with directors such as Wim Wenders and Claude Chabrol.

Boyzie Cekwana, dancer and choreographer from South Africa. In the spring of 2010 he was an artist in residence in Braunschweig. During the Theaterformen festival he presented parts 1 and 2 of his trilogy *Influx Controls*. Part 3 is planned for 2012.

Lungile Cekwana, performer from South Africa. Actor and set designer for *Influx Controls I & II*.

Ntando Cele, South African performance artist. Her video *A Fan Apart* could be seen during the thematic weekend *The Presence of the Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Elina Cerpa, theatre-maker from Latvia. She is studying since two years at the DasArts in Amsterdam. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Gregory Destin, asylum-seeker, was one of the performers in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. He comes from Haiti and lives in Braunschweig.

Anja Dirks, artistic director of the Theaterformen festival since 2009. Previously she worked at the Wiener Festwochen (Vienna Festival), at the Theaterhaus Gessnerallee in Zürich and at Theater der Welt 2002, amongst other places.

Virginie Dupray, production manager of Studios Kabako in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of the Congo. She was responsible for the production of *Pour en finir avec Bérénice*.

Fabien Eboussi Boulaga, philosopher and theologian from Cameroon. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*, he gave a lecture on *Intercultural and Political Dialogue – Basic principles from an African perspective*.

Julien Enoke-Ayemba, film critic and curator. As part of the film series *Archive of Possible Future*, he presented selected productions from "Nollywood", Nigeria's film industry.

Caroline Farke, artistic assistant and dramaturg at the Theaterformen festival since 2010.

Francis Fasanya, performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. He comes from Nigeria and lives in Braunschweig.

Jeanne Faust, visual artist. She works mainly with the media of film and photography. Her video work *Reconstructing Damon Albarn in Kinshasa* was shown as part of the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Jean-Christophe Folly, theatre and film actor from France. Can be seen in Jeanne Faust's video *Reconstructing Damon Albarn in Kinshasa* alongside Lou Castel.

Maja Figge, lecturer in Cultural Studies at the Humboldt Universität in Berlin. She provided a critical introduction to the film *Stern von Afrika (Star of Africa)* during the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Sylvia Franzmann, artistic associate at the Theaterformen festival 2010 for the thematic focus *Presence of the Colonial Past – Africa on European Stages*. She was a "Meisterschüler" (postgraduate student) of Candice Breitz at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste (University of Art) in Braunschweig.

Gabriele Genge, art historian at the University of Duisburg-Essen. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*, she gave a lecture on the subject of *Theatre and Staging in Contemporary African Art*.

Jan Goossens, since 1999, artistic director of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (KVS) in Brussels, where he previously worked as a dramaturg.

Raphaël Grisey, French film-maker. He was a guest during the film series *Archive of Possible Future*, presenting his collaborative work with Bouba Touré and the films *58 Rue Trousseau*, *Paris France* and *Cooperative*.

Paul Grootboom, South African director who works at the state theatre in Pretoria as a resident director and development officer.

Asta Gröting, visual artist and professor of Fine Arts at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste (University of Art) in Braunschweig. Her work *The Inner Voice: I AM BIG* with the ventriloquist Buddy Big Mountain could be seen during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Kien Nghi Ha, completed his doctorate in Cultural Studies and graduated in Political Science. He gave his lecture *Decolonialising Germany* during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Nanna Heidenreich, Media Studies scholar. She curated the film series *Archive of Possible Future*, which ran from April to May 2010 every Wednesday evening in the Universum cinema. She is project manager at arsenal experimental in Berlin, a platform for experimental films, video art and installations.

Rolf C. Hemke, dramaturg for marketing and public relations, and administration manager at the Theater an der Ruhr in Mülheim. In the "consulting room" of the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*, he spoke about the effects of the colonial languages on theatre in Africa.

Henning Hues, PhD student at the Georg Eckert Institute in Braunschweig. In a "consulting room" during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*, he spoke about *Curriculum of reconciliation? The teaching of history in South Africa after apartheid*.

Esiaba Irobi, Nigerian author and theatre scholar died on 4 May 2010. His lecture *The trouble with colonial theory* was going to inaugurate the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Christina Irgang, studied art and media theory at the HfG Karlsruhe and is a freelance art critic and curator.

Edna Jaime, choreographer and dancer from Mozambique. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Mathilda 'Ruby' Joseph, theatre-maker from Namibia. Performed in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Harminder Singh Judge, artist and performer from England. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Thereza Kahorongo, tour guide and consultant from Namibia. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Allan Kaprow (1927-2006), American performance artist. He coined the term "Happening".

Melanie Kassel, Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. She comes from Kenya and lives in Braunschweig.

Silke Kaufmann, intern at Theaterformen festival in August and September 2010. She is a student of Media Studies at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste (University of Art) in Braunschweig.

Grada Kilomba, author. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now* she read from her book *Plantation Memories*. Her work moves between an academic style and lyrical storytelling.

Alma-Elisa Kittner, research assistant at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste (University of Art) in Braunschweig. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now* she talked about colonial artefacts in the European cultural sphere with Gabriele Genge.

Felicitas Kotzias, intern at Festival Theaterformen since October 2010. She studies Philosophy, Arts and Media at the University of Hildesheim.

Hartmut Krug, freelance critic for various theatre magazines, daily newspapers and for the radio, like Deutschlandfunk and Deutschlandradio Kultur.

Brigitta Kuster, artist and author from Switzerland. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now* she presented two video works. She was also a guest during the film series *Archive of Possible Future*, where she presented works by Mohamed Osfour.

Ivo Kuyil, dramaturg and member of the management collective of the Koninklijke Vlaamse Schouwburg (KVS) in Brussels.

Jörg Laue, artist from Berlin. His videos *Dynamic Bakery* and *Christmas Beach Walk* were part of the exhibition of the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Deborah Levy, British author, who wrote the text for Asta Gröting's performance work *The Inner Voice: I AM BIG*, which could be seen during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Faustin Linyekula, theatre-maker and choreographer from Kisangani in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. He is the founder and head of the Studios Kabako in Kisangani. At Theaterformen 2010 he presented his production *Pour en finir avec Bérénice*, while his performance *Le Cargo* could be seen during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Anna Louw, actor from Namibia. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Hlengiwe Lushaba, South African singer and actor. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Moise Merlin Mabouna, film-maker from Cameroon. Together with Brigitta Kuster, he presented two video works during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Frank Mainoo, performer and theatre-maker from Australia. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Annemarie Matzke, professor at the institute for Media and Theater Studies at the University of Hildesheim and member of the performance collective She She Pop. She headed a seminar on the subject of post-colonialism and theatre.

Mohamed Mazouni, singer of Algerian descent, who began his career in the 1960's in France. One of his scopitone music videos was shown during the film series *Archive of Possible Future*. A scopitone is a type of jukebox from the early 1960's containing a 16mm music video.

Achille Mbembe, philosopher and political scientist from Cameroon. He is one of the most important theoreticians in the area of Postcolonial Studies today.

Papy Maurice Mbwiti, actor, director and dramaturg from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Princess Zinzi Mholongo, theatre-maker from South Africa, where she founded her production company Tick Tock Productions. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Pinkie Mtshali, singer from South Africa. Performer in *Influx Controls II: On the 12th night of never I will not be held black*.

Esther Mugambi, interdisciplinary performer from Amsterdam. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*, she presented her solo video performance *Hybrid Eyes*, hosted a "consulting room" and showed two of her videos.

Miriam Mukosho, actress from Namibia. She was a performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Christof 'Vevangwa' Muondjo, singer and hatter from Namibia. He performed in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Chris Nekongo, classical music student from Namibia. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*

Otobong Nkanga, visual artist and performer from Nigeria. During the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*, she presented her happening *Baggage* inspired by Allan Kaprow.

Avril Nuuyoma, singer from Namibia. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Nurgül Öztürk, Turkish performance artist, dancer, video-maker and photographer. Grant holder at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Abiodun Olayinka, building technician, comes from Nigeria and lives in Hanover. He performed in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika* and helped the Theaterformen team in the search for performers in Braunschweig.

Collins Omorogbe, asylum seeker. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. He comes from Nigeria and lives in Hanover.

Mohamed Osfour (1925-2005), is regarded as the founding father of Moroccan cinema. Brigitta Kuster presented his works during the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Miguel Pereira, choreographer and performer from Portugal. The sound recording of his text *DOO* could be heard in the exhibition of the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Philippe Pirotte, art historian, critic and curator from Belgium. He has been the director of the Kunsthalle Bern since 2005.

Christine Regus, theatre expert, press officer of the Goethe Institute. Her book *Interkulturelles Theater zu Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts (Intercultural Theatre at the Beginning of the 21st Century)*, was published by transcript-Verlag in 2008. She advised the Theaterformen team on the festival's thematic focus *Presence of the Colonial Past*.

Laurencia Reinhold, immigrant. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. She comes from Namibia and lives in Hanover.

David van Reybrouck, author and journalist from Flanders. His play *Missie (Mission)* could be seen at the Theaterformen festival 2010.

Lorenz Rollhäuser, radio script-writer. Mainly writes features and radio plays, including for ARD.

Raven Ruëll, author and director. He directed the KVS production *Missie (Mission)*.

Philip Scheffner, film-maker. He presented his multi-award-winning documentary film *The Halfmoon Files* as part of the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Ann-Christine Simke, Masters student in Theatre Studies at the Freie Universität Berlin. She wrote a text about the festival's thematic focus *Presence of the Colonial Past*.

Abderrahmane Sissako, director from Mali. His film *Bamako* featured in the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Chuma Sopotela, performance artist from South Africa. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*

Christoph Spittler, author of the radio feature *Der Geist des Missionars (The spirit of the Missionary)*, which could be heard in the exhibition of the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Marcellinus Swartboo, composer and conductor from Namibia. Performer and choirmaster for *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Tamikrest, band composed of members from Mali, Niger and Algeria. *Tamikrest* launched the music programme in the festival centre Gartenhaus Haeckel.

Lamin Touray, warehouse worker. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*. He comes from the Gambia and lives in Braunschweig.

Bouba Touré, Senegalese photographer, former film projectionist and one of the founders of the cooperative *Somankidi Coura*, the subject of Raphaël Grisey's film *Cooperative*, which he presented as part of the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Melanie Ulz, art historian. Her work focuses on the areas of Postcolonial Theory, Masculinity, as well as Art and Cultural History from the 18th to the 21st century. Since April 2010 she has been a junior professor of Art History at the University of Osnabrück.

Alfred Weidenmann (1918-2000), director. His film *Stern von Afrika (Star of Africa)* from 1957 was screened as part of the film series *Archive of Possible Future*.

Christel Weiler, deputy director and programme manager at the International Research Centre Interweaving Performance Cultures at the Freie Universität in Berlin.

Josef 'Patrick' van der Westhuizen, theology student from Namibia. Performer in *Exhibit A: Deutsch-Südwestafrika*.

Kea Wienand, art historian and art mediator. Her areas of expertise include Gender Studies and Postcolonial Studies. Since 2009 she has been a research associate in the faculty of Art, Art History and Art Education at the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg.

Fred Wilson, Afro-American visual artist. His text *When Europe slept, it dreamt of the world* was part of the exhibition during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

Kathrin Vesper, curator at HAU Berlin. From 2008 to 2010 artistic assistant and dramaturg at the Theaterformen festival.

David Zink Yi, Peruvian artist. His video installation *Dedicated to Yi Yen Wu* could be seen during the thematic weekend *The Presence of Elsewhere in the Here and Now*.

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Contact
welcome@theaterformen.de
www.theaterformen.de
Telefon +49 (0)511 9999 2500

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