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RESISTANCE

Reimagining Power, Memory, and Freedom

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This issue presents the outcome of a dedicated group of students from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, guided by Dr. Polly Savage.

Cover artwork: *The Paradise Edict,* Michael Armitage, 2019, oil on lubugo bark cloth; photograph courtesy of The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection, White Cube

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Editorial Introduction

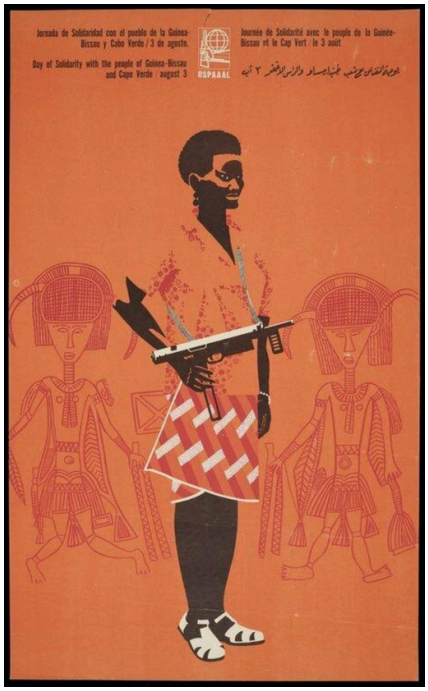
C.J. Dinius, Valentina Scazzola, and Zamzam Ibrahim

This journal builds on the foundations of previous issues, which have explored the intersections of art and politics in Africa. This issue turns decisively toward resistance, not as a theme to be observed, but as a force to be confronted, unsettled, and reimagined. Bringing together essays spanning regions, historical moments, and mediums, the journal refuses a singular narrative, instead insisting on the multiplicity of resistance as imagined, embodied, and contested practice.

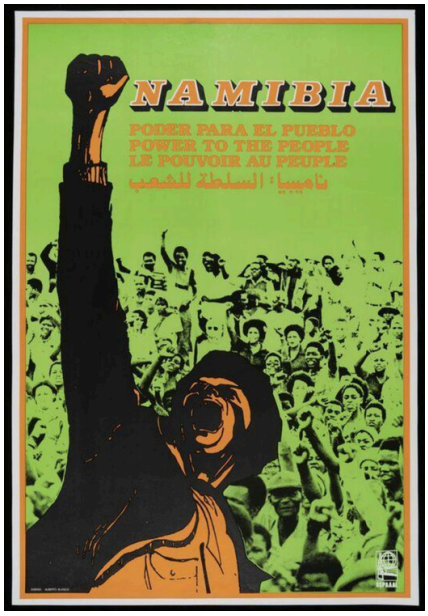
Resistance is neither singular nor fixed, but plural, evolving, and deeply contextual. Often understood as acts of defiance against domination, injustice, or constraint, resistance shifts in the context of African art and thought, extending beyond direct confrontation to cultural reclamation. It thus operates not only through protest or revolution, but also through imagination, memory, and the production of alternative ways of seeing and being.

Resistance is central to the African experience, particularly in response to colonialism and its enduring consequences. Evolving through anti-colonial struggles and cultural movements such as Négritude, it encompasses contemporary artistic practices that interrogate neo-colonial structures and global inequalities. In African art and thought, resistance resides in what has been denied legitimacy: memory, imagination, and the quiet refusalto see the world through colonial frames. This resistance is cultural, epistemic, and deeply political, the act of reclaiming ways of knowing, being, and creating that colonialism sought to erase.

While earlier forms emphasized reclaiming identity amid cultural erasure, more recent practices question the temporal, spatial, and epistemological frameworks through which Africa has been understood.



Guinea and Cape Verde Solidarity OSPAAL poster
Berta Abelenda Fernandez, c. 1974, offset lithograph poster for the Organization in Solidarity with the people of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAL)



Namibia, Power to the People OSPAAL poster
Alberto Blanco, 1981, offset lithograph poster for OSPAAL

As bell hooks reminds us, “there must be a revolution in the way we see.”[1] Through this project, we have created multiple windows for readers to engage with the diverse ways resistance is enacted, enabled, and articulated.

The journal is organized into sections that reflect different yet interconnected approaches to resistance. While spanning a range of media, including sculptural practices (3D), digital and mixed-media works, painting and works on paper, and written forms, all the essays grapple with a common question: what do we resist, and how is that resistance articulated? No matter the gaze or approach adopted, resistance emerges as a form of self-determination toward freedom, the freedom to think independently, to imagine the future, and to reconsider the past beyond pre-constructed narratives.

Resistance is insurgent, flexible, shapeshifting, and impossible to contain. It adapts to and destabilizes structures, seeping into everyday life while bending and reassembling the systems that seek to discipline it.

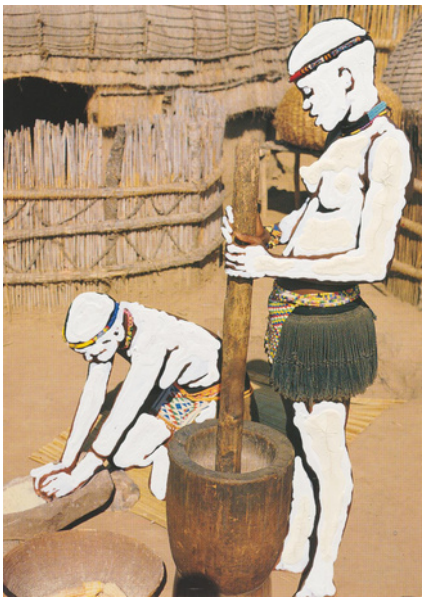
These reflections take shape across different sites, among which the human body and its relationship to the land are particularly significant, revealing resistance not only in political critique but also in acts of reconfiguration. From speculative futures challenging the colonial, to photographic practices centering local subjectivity, to revolutionary poetry mobilizing collective action, these articles demonstrate that resistance isabout reimagining possibilities and opposing structures of power. Furthermore, refusal emerges as a shared stance against Eurocentric impositions. It unfolds either through attempts to reconstruct new forms of meaningfrom the enduring structures of colonialism or through practices that move beyond such frameworks altogether.

Resistance is insurgent, flexible, shapeshifting, and impossible to contain. It adapts to and destabilizes structures, seeping into everyday life while bending and reassembling the systems that seek to discipline it. In doing so, it creates a contested terrain where paradoxes are continually reproduced and transformed. Within this space, reality and imagination operate simultaneously as tools of survival and refusal. Contradictions are not resolved but intensified, and under such pressure, linearity begins to dissolve. Afrofuturism demonstrates how resistance challenges dominant constructions of temporality and geography. Time is no longer understood as a colonial straight line of progress, but as layered, cyclical, and reclaimed.

[1] bell hooks, Art on My Mind: Visual Politics (New York: The New Press, 1995), 4

Space likewise resists imposed borders: what was mapped, partitioned, and controlled becomes reimagined, unsettled, and repossessed. If colonialviolence functioned through the ordering of time and space, resistance responds by disrupting that order and rejecting its logic. A further dimension of resistance lies in exposing what has been hidden, internalized, and naturalized under colonial rule. It brings to the surface forms of violence rendered invisible through familiarity and repetition. Its power, therefore, resides in making the familiar strange, revealing what had beennormalized, and refusing its continued concealment.

In artistic practice, visibility is therefore crucial; at the same time, opacity operates as a refusal of essentialisation and as something that should not be made fully legible to dominant audiences. Particular attention is paid to how artists resist colonial and extractive views of land, portraying it as lived, relational, and intimately connected to human experience and memory. Contributions focusing on the body and representation further explore how artists disrupt colonial classification systems by reimagining the body as fluid, hybrid, and resistant to fixed definitions. This perspective exposes histories of violence and expresses alternative identities. Across the contributions, politics, ideology, and forms of cultural and epistemic production emerge as deeply embedded and entangled rather than separate domains. Together, they show how resistance can take shape through the documentation and celebration of everyday practices, rejecting preconceptions that frame African life as crisis-driven or absent.



Ghost Series #1
Candace Breitz, 1994-96
Correction fluid on postcard

Each section approaches resistance from different angles, and are united in the same refusal: to accept power as fixed, natural, or inevitable. What emerges is not a set of neatly contained themes but a set of tensions that show how power is produced, how it mutates, and how it can be contested, disrupted, and refashioned. The boundaries between these sections are intentionally permeable, reflecting their interconnected realities. This journal insists that resistance is not simply reactive but rather generative and future-making. It is a sustained practice embedded in the everyday creation, negotiation, and imagination. The essays collected here do more than document resistance across artistic practices and theoretical frameworks. They examine and expand it by pushing us to reconsider what resistance is, where it is, and what makes it possible, particularly in relation to the limits imposed on it.

Painting and Works on Paper

Ruben Bay Kirin

This section explores paintings and drawings as methods of resistance. Reclaiming lost space, challenging conventions and critically engaging with established methods of producing art are among the demonstrated methods of utilising this form of material process, explored through these articles in a variety of formats.

To be Chosen and Not Known
from *A Countervailing Theory*
(2019-20)

Futural Imaginings and Resistance in Toyin Ojih Odutola: *A Countervailing Theory*

Anna Ferguson

Introduction

Running from August 2020 to January 2021 at the Barbican Centre in London, *Toyin Ojih Odutola: A Countervailing Theory* was a major site-specific exhibition commissioned for the institution's Curve gallery.[1] Consisting of 40 drawings executed in pastel, charcoal, and chalk on a black ground and accompanied by a sound installation composed by Peter Adjaye, the exhibition presented an immersive speculative narrative that unfolded along the distinctive curved wall of the gallery.[2] Subsequently shown at the Kunsten Museum of Modern Art in Denmark and the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington DC, *A Countervailing Theory* constituted a critical intervention, challenging Western historiography and hegemonic understandings of time, space, and authority.

Figure 1: Mating Ritual *(2019)* from A Countervailing Theory, *charcoal, pastel, and chalk on linen over Dibond panel; photo courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery*

The exhibition presented 40 individual works which collectively formed a narrative that unfolded as a parable. The narrative centered on an ancient civilization in which women warriors, known as the Eshu, rule over a underclass of male humanoids, known as the Koba. Society is strictly segregated, with both Eshu and Koba prohibited from having emotional or physical relationships outside of their caste and gender.[3] The narrative focuses on the forbidden

[1] Toyin Ojih Odutola: A Countervailing Theory." Barbican Centre. Accessed February 25, 2026. https://www.barbican.org.uk/our-story/press-room/toyin-ojih-odutola-a-countervailing-theory.
[2] Ibid.

romance between Akanke, an Eshu warrior, and Aldo, a Koba, whose intimacy threatens the legitimacy of the social order. Set among the rock formations of Jos Plateau in central Nigeria, the drawings are presented as scans of stone tablets discovered on a fictitious archeological dig led by Ojih Odutola. In the context of this framing device, the drawings blur the boundaries between myth, historical evidence, and speculative fiction, and invite viewers to question the authority of archaeological and historiographical narratives.

Through the combination of narrative and visual storytelling, *A Countervailing Theory* presents an alternative history that subtly yet compellingly resists Eurocentric historical narrative. The West is completely decentered in *A Countervailing Theory*. No direct mention or allusion is made to the West or legacies of colonialism. Instead, the narrative and visuals engage with themes of power, authority, and knowledge production to challenge viewers' perceptions of historical order across past, present, and future. Ojih-Odutola offers viewers' an opportunity to engage with the liberatory power of imagination and speculation, providing a model for visionary thinking that engages with yet transcends legacies of colonialism and Eurocentric historical and political paradigms.

Speculative Futures and Afrofuturism

Ojih Odutola's work operates within the broader cultural framework of Afrofuturism, a speculative mode that reimagines the past and future of people of African descent. Mark Dery, the originator of the term Afrofuturism, argues that science fiction as a genre is uniquely suited to convey the concerns of African American artists and writers.[4] For Dery, many familiar science fiction plot points evoke the histories and experiences of black Americans: alien abduction, the weaponization of technology against black bodies, and the erasure of subaltern experience through official histories. Moreover, Dery suggests that the "sub-legitimate" position of science fiction as a genre mirrors the subaltern status of black people in the United States.[5] Afrofuturism can therefore be understood as a medium through which to process, critique, and disrupt hegemonic power structures through the reimagination of the past, present, and future.

Notably, Afrofuturism as a term has not gone uncontested. In her critical response to the term Afrofuturism, Nigerian-American writer Nnedi Okorafor coined the term Africanfuturism. Okorafor defines Africanfuturism in a blog post,

[3] Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. "Toyin Ojih Odutola: A Countervailing Theory." Accessed February 28, 2026. https://hirshhorn.si.edu/exhibitions/toyin-ojih-odutola-a-countervailing-theory/.
[4] Dery, Mark. "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose," in Dery, Mark (ed.) *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture.* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004): 180.
[5] Ibid.

saying “Africanfuturism is specifically and more directly rooted in African culture, history, mythology and point-of-view as it then branches into the Black Diaspora, and it does not privilege or center the West.”[6] For Okorafor, then, Afrofuturism is rooted in African-American experience and tradition and therefore cannot capture the perspectives of artists coming from the African continent. Africanfuturism, as a companion to Afrofuturism, offers a paradigm that more specifically responds to the concerns of communities on the African continent and, by extension, goes further to decenter the West in its speculative imaginings.

Figure 2: A Pull at the Back of the Mind *(2019) from* A Countervailing Theory, *charcoal, pastel, and chalk on linen over Dibond panel, 2019; photo courtesy of Jack Shainman Gallery*

The visual strategy consistent throughout *A Countervailing Theory* evokes Okorafor’s conception of Africanfuturism by drawing a compelling connection between body and landscape. In many of the drawings within *A Countervailing Theory*, figures are seen engaging closely with the landscape, weaving in and out of rock formations and demonstrating a deep knowledge and engagement with the landscape of Jos Plateau. Ojih Odutola’s distinctive representation of skin also evokes the stratified layers of rock, collapsing the distinction between human bodies and landscape. In the context of larger narrative, these visual parallels disrupt Eurocentric notions of linear time and progress by demonstrating the ways in which meaning, identity, and social norms and legitimacy are continuously produced through long-term processes of accumulation, erosion, and rupture.

[6] Okorafor, Nnedi. “Africanfuturism Defined,” *Nnedi’s Wahala Zone Blog,* October 19, 2019. http://nnedi.blogspot.com/2019/10/africanfuturism-defined.html

Resistant Past, Present, Future in A Countervailing Theory

Afro and Africanfuturist experimentation with space and time is directly connected to the movements' investment in the deconstruction of power structures. In *A Countervailing Theory*, Ojih Odutola's engagement with time and space works to destabilize hegemonic and Eurocentric historiographies. Instead of situating the speculative civilization in the future, the artist sets the story of a futuristic, woman-led society in the distant past in rural Nigeria. In doing so, she directly confronts hegemonic notions of temporality centered around Eurocentric conceptions of modernity, progress, and civilization. This inversion disrupts the conventional relationship between futurity and technological progress that often underpins both science fiction narratives and Eurocentric notions of linearized time tied to modernity.

In an interview with the Guardian, Ojih Odutola cites two primary sources of inspiration for the exhibition: an article focused on rock formations in central Nigeria and the role of an ancient civilization arranging the rock formations and an incident discussed on a podcast involving an early 20th Century German archeologist.[7] Upon finding an ancient sculpture from the Kingdom of Benin, the German archeologist attributed the sculpture to the lost Greek city of Atlantis on the assumption that no West African artist or craftsperson would be capable of creating a sculpture of such high quality. These sources speak to the artist's interest in the unstable relationship between object, landscape, and interpretation. By utilizing the geological formations of Jos Plateau as the setting of an imagined civilisation, Ojih Odutola demonstrates how easily speculative storytelling can inhabit the gaps within historical knowledge.

Timothy Mitchell argues that Eurocentric temporality reconfigures time and space around the West and imposes a homogenous notion of time which allows for no interruptions from the non-West.[8] In this configuration, the world is organized around a single center, Europe, and time is constructed as the history of the West. The non-West is rendered as a non-place that exists outside of time until the temporal break of modernity brings it into Western history. The exhibition's fictional archaeological framework gestures toward the history of Western colonial "exploration" on the African continent and its role in constructing and reinforcing Eurocentric historiography. Through her invented archeological discovery, Ojih Odutola critiques the epistemological authority granted to Western institutions that framed Africa through narratives of discovery, absence, or primitivism by inverting the colonial power dynamic.

[7] Fox, Killian. "Artist Toyin Ojih Odutola: 'Through Drawing, I Can Cope with Racism, Sexism, Cultural Friction.'" *The Guardian,* August 1, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/aug/01/artist-toyin-ojih-odutola-through-drawing-i-can-cope-with-racism-sexism-cultural-friction

[8] Mitchell, Timothy. "The Stage of Modernity." In *Questions of Modernity,* edited by Timothy Mitchell, 1–34. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

The narrative sees a Nigerian archeologist discover an ancient, futuristic, women-led society that utterly subverts the conventional expectations of Western patriarchal societies. In doing so, the exhibition does not simply invent an alternative, liberatory history; it interrogates the very mechanisms through which histories are produced, legitimated, and disseminated.

Conclusion

Through its combined use of speculative narrative, visual symbolism, and de-/postcolonial theory, *A Countervailing Theory* offers a powerful critique of Eurocentric historical frameworks and futural imaginings. By politicizing the relationship between gendered and racialized bodies and their surroundings while simultaneously reframing hegemonic historical narratives, *A Countervailing Theory* shines a light on the assumptions and biases that underpin Eurocentric past and futural imaginings.

The imagined civilization of Jos Plateau in *A Countervailing Theory* disrupts Eurocentric narratives that position Africa outside modernity by depicting a futuristic society in the deep past. Additionally, alongside the critique of Eurocentrism and colonial dynamics, Ojih Odutola cautions against the uncritical application of idealistic utopianism in her portrayal of a woman-run society as authoritarian and oppressive. The hierarchical power structures that forbid the romance between Akanke and Aldo within the narrative of the exhibition complicates any straightforward interpretation of the Eshu society as a feminist utopia, revealing how systems of power can reproduce exclusion in new forms. Ojih Odutola thus simultaneously critiques both utopian futurisms that recreate hegemonic power dynamics as well as historiographies that perpetuate the marginalization of Africa.

A Countervailing Theory serves as a critical intervention that challenges audiences to examine contemporary power structures and consider the historical imaginings and narratives that underpin them. The exhibition exemplifies the chronopolitical potential of Africanfuturist practice. As cultural theorist Kodwo Eshun argues, speculative reconfigurations of history generate “revisionist historicities” that disrupt dominant temporal narratives and introduce competing visions of the future. Ojih Odutola’s work operates within this temporal field of contestation by collapsing the boundaries between past and future, “scientific discovery” and culturally contingent interpretation. In this way, the exhibition transforms time itself into a medium of resistance by reconfiguring hegemonic timescapes to demonstrate ways in which power acts to warp collective understandings of the past, present, and future. The result is a powerful reminder that the histories we are taught and the futures we imagine are neither fixed nor objective, but always open to revision and reinterpretation.

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Visibility and Opacity as Resistance: Nubian Imagery in Modern Egyptian Art

Nour El Khazindar

This essay examines how artists use Nubian imagery as a form of resistance in modern Egyptian art by contrasting the practices of Hussein Bicar, who uses humanist representation of Nubians, and Fathi Hassan, whose work is opaque and intentionally hard to read. This essay argues that visibility only works insofar as viewers are aware of the issues these communities face. In the absence of this context, viewers may only appreciate the art aesthetically. Rather, "opacity," as defined by Edourd Glissant, refers to visual strategies that resist immediate interpretation through abstraction, fragmented language, or symbolic imagery and operates as a right to illegibility. In this essay, visibility refers to artistic strategies that present recognizable imagery and accessible representations of Nubian culture, allowing audiences to easily identify subjects and themes. Firstly, the essay will provide a brief history of Nubia and its relationship with Egypt. Then, the works of Hussien Bicar and Fathi Hassan will be assessed separately before comparing their resistance strategies. The essay concludes that, in the case of Nubian resistance, both the representational art of Bicar and the opacity of Hassan's works are significant forms of Nubian resistance, especially in the absence of this community's political agency and the cultural erosion they face.

Nubia was located in modern-day South Egypt and North Sudan along the Nile, and its history is among the oldest and richest in Africa. Today, much of the indigenous Nubian territory is submerged, and its people are displaced and separated as a result of flooding caused by the Aswan High Dam from the 1920s to the 1960s and the creation of the nation-states of Egypt and Sudan.[1] Nubian territories that were not flooded were mostly redistributed. As recently as 2014, President Sisi designated a large tract of land, including Nubian territories, as a military zone under Decree 444.[2]

Despite governmental actions that displace and ignore Nubians' demands, the significance of Nubia's rich history and aesthetic to Egypt's national narrative is crucial, allowing Egypt to boast its diversity and cultural richness. For example, Nubian villages are often depicted in tourism campaigns and in folkloric depictions. In tandem with this, the state's treatment of Nubian people and culture in the twentieth century has been complicated. They have been visible; however, they have been forced to assimilate into the Arabized culture of Lower Egypt, while their language is only used in domestic spaces.

[1] Menna Agha, "Recognizing Nubian Displacibility," *The Funambulist Magazine,* June 29, 2020, https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/reparations/recognizing-nubian-displacibility-menna-agha.
[2] Mohamed El Dahshan, "Nubians, the Egyptian State, and the Right of Return," *TIMEP*, October 19, 2017.

Figure 1: Hussein Bicar, Nubia is Drowning, *1987, acrylic on panel, source: Christie's lot*

Figure 2: Hussein Bicar, A Nubian Dance, *1990, acrylic on panel, source: Tallenge Store*

Politically, Nubians are marginalized, and their demands for land rights remain an unresolved issue today.[3]

Many Egyptian artists from both Lower and Upper Egypt find inspiration in Nubian visuals, especially in the aftermath of Nubian displacement caused by the Aswan High Dam. One such artist is Hussien Bicar, an Alexandrian artist born in 1912 and died in 2002. He worked in Cairo and Qena as an art teacher and was deeply influenced by rural life in Upper Egypt, which he often depicted in his works.[4] One such work is titled *Nubia is drowning* (Fig.1), in which the use of dark red water and an isolated figure evokes the loss and displacement associated with the Aswan Dam. Bicar portrays the Nubians in a humanist way, which can sometimes be seen as aesthetic and romanticized, but his works also insist on Nubian presence, dignity, and continuity in modernity. We can see this in paintings such as *A Nubian Dance*, 1990, which depicts a woman dancing and two musicians playing the kissar and the tablah, traditional Nubian instruments (Fig.2). His paintings offer highly recognizable imagery that represents Nubians and Nubian culture, with a humanized and skilful mastery of his craft. His smooth brushstrokes and clear compositions have a pleasing, easy quality that can be taken as simply aesthetic.

[3] Minority Rights Group International, *Egypt's Nubians: Cultural Survival and Human Rights,* 2023, 7
[4] Wafa Roz, "Hussein Bicar." *DAF Beirut*. https://dafbeirut.org/artists/hussein-bicar.

Bicar being Alexandrian and not Nubian raises questions about the positionality of his representations. His humanist and accessible depictions of Nubian life may reflect an outsider perspective that translates Nubian culture into a form legible to a broader Egyptian audience.

As an Egyptian who was mostly unaware of the historical displacement of Nubian communities prior to this research, my initial reading of such images was shaped by their aesthetic and romantic qualities rather than their political context. My research for this essay completely changed my readings of these works. Thus, underscoring that the strength of visibility is not inherent in the image itself but is activated through historical awareness and modes of spectatorship. Nonetheless, scholars such as Stuart Hall would argue that even simplified humanist visibility helps construct a positive cultural imagery for marginalised communities, which disrupts harmful stereotypes and can lead to change within public discourse.[5] Politically, this form of visibility asserts Nubian life and presence within a national visual culture that has marginalised it, making Nubian identity legible within dominant Egyptian narratives.

An artist producing an opaquer portrayal of Nubia through symbols, imagery, and text is Fathi Hassan. This Nubian artist was born in 1957 in Cairo, not in his family's Nubian village, due to flooding from the Aswan Dam in 1952 and the creation of Lake Nubia (known to most Egyptians as Lake Nasser). The artist lived in Cairo until his twenties, then moved to Italy, where he studied at the Naples Art School. He is now based in Edinburgh.[6] Hassan's works often feature Arabic text, combining legible Arabic with pseudo-writing that resists semantic meaning.

An example of this is his painting titled *Ancestral Reality* (Fig.3). This mixed-media artwork is complex and highly unreadable, literally. The pseudo-writing and Arabic words resist full legibility and can be read in several ways, one of which alludes to the lost languages due to the "Arabization" of Nubia and Upper Egypt. A more detailed inspection reveals certain drawings in the blue area (which seems to symbolize water), including a small rowing boat, a hand that appears to belong to a drowning person, and a Nubian house. Additionally, some of the texts here are slightly legible. The number 57 in Arabic can be identified, which could allude to his birth year. Also, the Arabic "S" is repeated, which is a common letterization in his works that symbolizes the hissing noises made by men in Egypt's big cities in the North who harass Nubian women on the streets.[7] His take here is critical, and we see themes such as home, suffering, and heritage depicted in a much more nuanced way.

[5] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference,* ed. Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), 225.
[6] Zainab Mehdi, "Fathi Hassan: Shifting Sands," *The New Arab*, June 5, 2024.
[7] Kate Abbott, "Nubian Artist Fathi Hassan Paints a Land in Words," *The Berkshire Eagle*, February 4, 2015, https://btwberkshires.com/arts/visual-arts/nubian-artist-fathi-hassan/.

Hassan's artistic strategy can be understood through Édouard Glissant's concept of the "right to opacity."[8] This concept, by Glissant, states that marginalized cultures should not be required to make themselves fully legible to dominant audiences. By resisting full readability, Hassan's work protects Nubian cultural memory and transforms opacity itself into a form of resistance.

Figure 3: Fathi Hassan, Ancestral Reality, *2024, mixed media on paper. Source: Nil Gallery*

The works of Bicar and Hassan demonstrate two distinct visual strategies through which Nubian imagery can function as cultural resistance. In fact, there is a large role for art to play in the case of Nubian resistance since the plight of this community is not often addressed by state discourse.[9] Nubian language and history remain largely absent from the national education system, contributing to the gradual erosion of cultural knowledge among younger generations.[10] As Jacques Rancière writes, art can "reconfigure the distribution of the sensible," making visible experiences and histories that remain excluded from dominant political discourse.[11]

Art can therefore be a means of conveying knowledge, imagery, aesthetics, and feelings to people in a more coded way. Art does not substitute for political representation, but it plays an important cultural and sociohistorical role in preserving memory and identity.

[8] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation,* trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 189.
[9] Minority Rights Group International, *Egypt's Nubians: Cultural Survival and Human Rights*, 2023, 7.
[10] Amnesty International, "Egypt: Release 24 Nubian Activists Detained After Protest Calling for Respect of Their Cultural Rights," press release, September 12, 2017, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2017/09/egypt-release-24-nubian-activists-detained-after-protest-calling-for-respect-of-their-cultural-rights/.
[11] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. Gabriel Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2004), 12–13.

Readable and humanist art like that of Bicar allows Nubian culture to enter the visual field of a broader Egyptian public, presenting Nubian subjects with dignity and empathy, challenging reductive stereotypes while remaining legible to viewers with little prior knowledge of Nubian history. Through recognisable imagery such as houses, landscapes, and everyday life, Bicar's work humanises Nubian communities and quietly introduces their presence and cultural value into the national imagination. In parallel, Hassan's works adopt a more opaque, symbolic visual language, incorporating fragments of Arabic and Nubian script, pseudo-writing, layers, and ancestral references that resist immediate interpretation. His work depicts cultural memory and linguistic identity in ways that prioritise internal knowledge and diasporic belonging, and it is not easily read by the non-Nubian community.

In analysing their function as Nubian resistance, both stylistic approaches act as forms of resistance: Bicar's accessible imagery expands public recognition of Nubian presence, while Hassan's coded visual language protects and reasserts cultural specificity. In places where political recognition remains limited, the use of these strategies may be particularly powerful, as visibility can foster awareness while opacity can preserve depth, memory, and self-determination within the representation of Nubian identity.

In conclusion, artistic visibility can challenge marginalisation by asserting cultural presence, however, opacity may hold significant power in contexts where historical knowledge is limited, as it resists simplification and encourages deeper engagement with Nubian histories of displacement and identity.

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The Approaches to Resistance in Michael Armitage's *Paradise Edict*

Ruben Bay Kirin

Resistance has long been a central concern in the discourse surrounding contemporary African art, where artists have used visual practice to confront the lingering legacies of colonialism and the numerous symptoms that insidiously persist today. Michael Armitage's series *Paradise Edict* is a particularly compelling example of this engagement. Drawing on Kenyan political events and mythological imagery while using the materiality of a Ugandan bark cloth called *lubugo*, Armitage constructs complex scenes of resistance which oscillate between reality and the imagination, whilst testifying to a visual culture that Armitage negotiates between his education at the Slade and his Kenyan heritage and lived experiences in Nairobi. Using references to European art traditions whilst inserting East African subjects and narratives, the scenes depicted are often simultaneously confrontational and grotesque, whilst also utopian and luscious. This is of course best represented by the title of the series and titular work (*The Paradise Edict, figure 1*) which highlights this paradox. Armitage's approaches to resistance in *Paradise Edict* therefore feel inherent, but it is worth exploring this series closer to fully understand the nuances. Indeed, Armitage has experienced a meteoric rise through the international art market, with this series being displayed at the Haus der Kunst in Munich and the Royal Academy in London in 2021. Therefore, on what terms does Paradise Edict engage with and approach resistance and how does its placement in the art world enhance or undermine this position?

Figure 1: Michael Armitage, The Paradise Edict *from* Paradise Edict, *2019, oil on lumbago bark cloth; Photograph: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection, White Cube*

Resistance in the Use of Lubugo Bark Cloth

The most foundational place to examine resistance in *Paradise Edict* is with its distinctive use of *lubugo* bark cloth. Immediately formulating a break from the aesthetic purity of the standard Western canvas, Armitage provides a distinguishable East African context for the work and consequently creates a space for the series to discuss its resistance without the purposeful cultivation of Western visual culture. In this way, the canvas sits within a Western museum and gallery culture that Pierre Bourdieu describes as having 'prohibition against touching the objects, the religious silence that is forced upon visitors, the puritan asceticism of the facilities, always scarce and uncomfortable.'[1] This examination of the condition of the Western museum or gallery is one which directly undermines an East African approach to visual culture. Susan Vogel states that 'In Africa, objects we call art are often made to be used rather than contemplated. They belong to a broader realm of experience that includes performance, ritual, music, and community participation.'[2] This link with art and function, commune and experience, is lost when displaying East African art in the Western context, and the canvas, tied to ideals of technical mastery, permanence, and purity, is a foundational part of this visual culture, directly resisted by Armitage's use of *lubugo*. Within the material, Armitage embraces visible seams where pieces are stitched together *(figure 2)*, tears and holes, an uneven, porous surface, and an organic irregularity which the canvas seeks to eliminate.

Figure 2: Close up to show holes and stitching in lubugo bark cloth. Michael Armitage, Baboon, *2016, from* Paradise Edict, *oil on lubugo bark cloth; Photograph: The Joyner Giuffrida Collection, White Cube*

Simultaneously, the work can subsequently be viewed through a distinctly East African lens, in a visual culture that embraces indigenous material practices and resists the Western theories and concepts of modernity that are unapplicable to East African perspectives and tradition. Resistance is not only attributable to the use of lubugo in a material sense, however, as using it purposefully is in itself a manifestation of indigenous knowledge, which colonialism was ubiquitous with attempting to eradicate.

[1] Bourdieu, P. (1993) *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature.* Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 237.

[2] Vogel, S. (1988) *Art/Artifact: African Art in Anthropology Collections*. New York: Center for African Art.

Resistance in the Imagery of Paradise Edict

After Kenya won independence in 1964, the subjugation of the transmission of indigenous knowledge persisted.[3] Striving for economic success and social recognition went hand in hand with the promotion of European values and the refusal to adequately dismantle colonial structures. The dichotomy between achieving independence and yet seeming to delve deeper into the Western ecosystem is a prime example of Armitage's paradoxical title,*Paradise Edict*, which was predominantly inspired by the Kenyan elections of 2017, some 63 years after independence. Armitage describes hearing the opposition leader at a rally calling out, 'I am going to lead you to Canaan, the Promised Land',[4] blurring lines between political rhetoric and myth. This conflation of the promise of the imminent prospect of achieving paradise as the ultimate state of being becomes central to *Paradise Edict*, which constructs scenes of crowds gathering in ambiguous landscapes where jubilation, ritual, and violence appear to happen simultaneously. The imagery exists in a liminal space between the blurred lines of myth and reality, which presents Kenyan political life as allegorical, exposing the enduring structures of power that prohibit Kenyan political life from becoming truly decolonised. The very instability, contradiction, and incoherent narrative of national progress that is presented is therefore the resistance of Paradise Edict.

Figure 3: Michael Armitage, Numbers (Mau Mau)*, 2016, from* Paradise Edict*, Oil on lubugo bark cloth. Photograph: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection, White Cuber.*

It is not only contemporary events that permeate Paradise Edict; however, the painting Numbers (Mau Mau) (Figure 3) also represents resistance. John Newsinger most chillingly describes the Mau Mau rebellion in the decade before independence as 'portrayed by the British authorities as a barbaric tribal response to the pressures of modernisation, as a reversion to primitive superstition and blood-crazed savagery caused by the inability of the Africans to cope with the modern world.'[5]

[3] Armitage, M. (2020) *Michael Armitage: Paradise Edict.* Munich: Walther König / Haus der Kunst, 21.
[4] Ibid.: 55.
[5] Newsinger, J. (1981) 'Revolt and Repression in Kenya: The "Mau Mau" Rebellion, 1952–1960', *Science & Society,* 45(2), pp. 159–185.

In actuality, the uprising was an anticolonial one that was met with catastrophic repression by the British, including tens of thousands of deaths, forced labour, detainment camps, and village resettlement programmes. *Numbers* is a visual representation of one of the methods of control, with prisoners being allocated numbers in an effort to 'expediate the supposedly fair legal process.'[6] Armitage represents this with numbers which seem at once connected and disassociated from the bodies to which they are meant to be attributed. This abstraction is a physical representation of the blurred lines of the colonial interpretation of humanity and number, recalling the mechanisms which reduced individuals to administrative units and stripped them of agency. The abstraction that Armitage introduces serves to highlight this act of cruelty, whilst also removing the apparatus of logic which the British used. Detaching and subsequently presenting this as the colonial cover for mass horror is formulaic of Armitage's resistance throughout *Paradise Edict*, where abstraction and surreality expose the concealment of political repression and colonial violence.

Resistance From Within the Global Art Market

Paradise Edict was massively successful upon its release and exhibition in London and Munich and situated Armitage in a unique place for an artist discussing East African topics in the UK art market. Represented by the White Cube, his work sits within the archetypal Modernist institution whose white walls, artificial light, and neutral aesthetic suspend the art in a clinical atmosphere based on the ideas imagined by Western Modernist thinkers like Clement Greenberg. Isolating the art in this way makes the art self-referential and free from contextual distraction, while the removal from the everyday world gives the art a sacralised effect. For some, Armitage's insertion into this world is paradoxical to themes previously discussed in this essay, especially in relation to the White Cube, such as the resistance profoundly demonstrated by using *lubugo* bark cloth to give his work a clear East African context away from the Western Modernist lens. This tension, however, reflects a broader paradox within contemporary art where artists seeking to critique historical frameworks do so from within those same institutions.

This can be understood to some as a strategic site to articulate such criticisms, and as Kobena Mercer argues, contemporary artists working within the Black diaspora often engage in a 'critical dialogue' with the institutions that frame their work. For Mercer, allowing resistance to be articulated through the same structures that historically marginalised African artists and the stories that they wished to represent does not undermine the resistance present in the work. For others, *Paradise Edict* starts and ends with a paradox.[7]

[6] Armitage, M. (2020) *Michael Armitage: Paradise Edict.* Munich: Walther König / Haus der Kunst, p. 22.

[7] Mercer, K. (2016) *Travel & See: Black Diaspora Art Practices Since the 1980s*. Durham: Duke University Press.

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Digital Media

Valentina Scazzola

Across digital collage, film, and photography, resistance is articulated as refusal: a refusal of imposed temporalities associated with a dominant idea of progress, and of spatial violence as constructed and represented through maps. It also entails a rejection of the fetishizing external gaze. In the contributions gathered in this section, resistance responds to Western preconceptions that have been historically naturalized and presented as neutral, despite their cultural production. It operates by making visible that which lives, persists, and reproduces itself precisely because it is taken for granted. Through these media, the articles engage critically with resistance in African art, opening upalternative ways of seeing, inhabiting, and understanding.

Wangechi Mutu, Backlash Blues, 2004
Ink, acrylic, photocollage, contactpaper, on mylar

Beyond Black Dispossession: The Worlds of Santu Mofokeng and MADEYOULOOK

Teesa Bahana

How to imagine a future beyond violent dispossession? What possibilities emerge from an approach that is not as concerned with the future, but uses place as the point from which to explore how daily life amidst dispossession holds certain strategies, approaches and worldviews that make room for other ways of being? To explore these questions I look to South Africa, at artists Santu Mofokeng and MADEYOULOOK, in conversation with Katherine McKittrick's writing on Plantation Futures, as their work has many examples of centering Black life formed but not bound by oppression, that resists the status quo through glimpses of a world beyond Black dispossession.

Santu Mofokeng was a photographer and writer, who began working as a photojournalist in the 1970s before having a lengthy career as a photographer until his passing in 2020. MADEYOULOOK is an interdisciplinary collaborative between Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho who met as students disenchanted with their arts school experience, thereafter forming their collective in 2009. While their careers overlapped, with MADEYOULOOK as keen admirers of Mofokeng's work, Mofokeng was active from the 80s, during apartheid South

Fig. 1 Santu Mofakeng, A Roadside in Tshwane, Marabdastad/ Hammanskral c.2008 printed 2011, from the series Billboards 1991-2009

Africa's increased political violence and brutality while MADEYOULOOK operates in a post-Apartheid South Africa, their work imbued with Mofokeng's legacy and all the hopes and subsequent disappointments of the 'rainbow nation'.

Their oeuvres share a preoccupation with everyday Black life, that allows for an illumination of life beyond popular imaginings of the violence of apartheid, of strategies of survival, while not shying away from the realities of life and potential marred by a political system of disenfranchisement and dispossession.

Katherine McKittrick's essay on Plantation Futures builds on Beckford's arguments on Plantation logics, which looks at the plantation as a site for interlocking points of oppression and resistance. While McKittrick is specifically speaking about the plantations in the Americas, and the legacies of transatlantic slavery, her thoughts map on to apartheid South Africa in ways that Santu Mofokeng and MADEYOULOOK starkly illustrate. While Plantation Futures is not as concerned with speculative fiction and imaginative technologies as Afrofutures and Black Futures, they all offer ways of imagining Black life and Black worlds, yet all too often leave the African continent outside of their frames. But McKittrick offers a discussion of plantation futures to serve as a "meaningful conceptual palimpsest to contemporary cityscapes that continue to harbor the lives of the most marginalized."[1] The frame of the plantation can be overlaid on apartheid townships, to look at how Black life was and is lived amidst dispossession and racial violence, and also to be able to witness what kinds of resistance emerges from the everyday, from the different geographies that Black South Africans were forced into and built lives from.

In images and installations Mofokeng and MADEYOULOOK's work brings other worlds to the fore, worlds impacted by racial violence yet full of bearers of their own narrative and lives that uncover other modes of being human, "sustaining alternative worldviews and challenges practices of dehumanisation."[2] Mofokeng's archival projects, as well as his own photography offers possibilities of resistance by showcasing life "within the context of a violence that cannot wholly define future human agency"[3] laying the groundwork for future artists like MADEYOULOOK to take up and further define and elevate the agency and power of Black Life.

The Black Photo Album / Look at Me: 1890–1950 is an archive of images that black working- and middle-class families commissioned during the period 1890 to 1950, images that Mofokeng sought out as part of an oral history research project. He compiled, retouched and enhanced the images, and recontextualised them through researching their provenance, although for some of the images no

[1] McKittrick, Katherine. "Plantation Futures." *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1 Nov. 2013, p4 https://doi.org/10.1215/07990537-2378892.
[2] Ibid. p11.
[3] Ibid.

information was available. These images were often met with surprise; "some thought the pictures must be of foreigners because the clothing and bearing seemed so strange."[4] One of the many ills of apartheid was an erasure of historical narratives of Black South African life before apartheid, and efforts to portray Black South Africans as natives, the anthropological other.[5] Preserving and exhibiting these images was a work of resistance in itself. Mofokeng, in describing this project makes this intention clear, "it should be pointed out that, beginning at the turn of the twentieth century and even earlier, there were black people who spurned, questioned, or challenged the government's racist policies."[6] Part of the power of *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890-1950* is to say there were black people in the past, real people, not the Native subject fit to be ruled.

One of MADEYOULOOK's first projects, Ejaradini also used archival images that centered Black subjects, particularly Black South Africans gardening. These images explored how Black South Africans reconfigured their relationship to the land in urban areas, at a time when they had been displaced from their ancestral land while also highlighting a less represented mode of Black life. In describing Ejaradini, MADEYOULOOK suggested that "Black gardening might serve as a framework from which one might claim models of belonging, of place making and of value, out of and in spite of the cultural frameworks of historical colonial control."[7] Place making and reconfiguring an understanding of value is a continuous thread in the work of both MADEYOULOOK and Mofokeng. For Mofokeng this is perhaps more subtle and not as explicitly offering an alternative framework that resists coloniality as MADEYOULOOK, yet how he uses and speaks of place, is a necessary precondition for this framework.

Mofokeng often spoke of his interests being centered around his own life, not with him as subject, but his world at the center. His view is worth quoting in full:

> I was never into victimology – I decided to do a project that is kind of a fictional biography or metaphorical biography, about looking at my life without necessarily ... to try and show what life is like in the township, for me. I go to shebeens, I play football, not necessarily as a kind of lack but to show it for what it is. Not to say we don't have swimming pools, not to say we don't have, not in the negative, just by looking at life as it is found in the township.[8]

Mofokeng's work, his very human work that can only be of Soweto, if not literally

[4] Peffer, John. *Art and the End of Apartheid.* Minneapolis (Mn) ; London, University Of Minnesota Press, 2009. p. 278

[5] The Black Photo Album/ Look at Me: 1890 - 1950." Santu Mofokeng Foundation, santumofokengfoundation.com/santu-mofokeng-photography-black-photo-album

[6] Ibid.

[7] MADEYOULOOK "Ejaradini ." MADEYOULOOK, 2014, ww.made-you-look.net/ejaradini-1.

[8] MADEYOULOOK. "TRACKS." MADEYOULOOK, 7 July 2011 www.made-you-look.net/writing/2016/7/7/sermon-on-the-train. Accessed 2 Mar. 2026.

but metaphorically grounded in his Soweto formation, shows how everyday life in South Africa illuminated worldviews that were not sealed off from reality, or produced in opposition to the realities of dispossession, but were both intimately linked and yet not defined by apartheid, not enclosed by it.

From *Billboards* to his stirring photos of sermons on the train in his series *Train Church*, Mofokeng sought to document the familiar, but not mundane. Black South African preachers adding to the cacophony of daily commutes showed a slice of life immediately familiar. *Train Church* was the beginning of Mofokeng's interest in spirituality showing up in his photography. This focus on the spiritual is a kind of aliveness that cannot be contained by apartheid's violence and yet is also part and parcelof it. Sermons on the train only exist as a phenomenon because of Black commuters taking the early train into the city for work as apartheid separated Black South Africans from economic opportunity. Mofokeng's images transform this fact into poetry. The images in *Train Church*, and in other series such as Chasing Shadows, showcase his masterful chiaroscuro with patches or flares of bright white against shadow creating a vivid, moving, alive, spiritual image. In one of the images in Chasing Shadows, two white goats traditionally used for sacrifice, are framed as if one is balancing on the other. The first goat stark against a black background, its head looking back towards its body, its curved horns on display. The second goat, nonchalant, looking forward. It's an eerie image, almost otherworldly. Mofokeng says he was trying to capture magic (Fig.2).[9]

Fig. 2 Santu Mofokeng, Sacral Animals, Motouleng Cave, Clarens, 2004
© Santu Mofokeng Foundation and courtesy Lunetta Bartz, MAKER, Johannesburg, and Steidl, Göttingen, Germany

[9]O'Toole, Sean. "Santu Mofokeng's Pensive Visions of Land and Ritual." *Aperture*, 11 Dec. 2019, aperture.org/editorial/santu-mofokengs-sean-otoole/.

This work, and *Train Church*, and others, has this effect of something that can't quite be grasped immediately, if at all. There is an inaccessibility that works to guard something, that is somehow both banal and mystical. It is the life outside of the life constructed by apartheid.

MADEYOULOOK is made up of Molemo Moiloa and Nare Mokgotho. Formed in 2009, the duo has curated, collaborated, exhibited, workshopped, screened, dialogued, and looked at everyday Black Life in South Africa. In describing their work, they offer, "to live in the post-colony, and to be dedicated to a decolonising process, is to be burned by the question of what to do with one's colonial inheritances."[10] Echoes of McKittrick's Plantation Futures follow here, as South Africa's status itself is questioned, not as a nation but as post-colony, full of McKittrick's uneven racial geographies.

Mofokeng is a clear inspiration for the duo, one can see his influence in their illumination of everyday and otherworldly Black Life, their interdisciplinary modes of working, and the importance they place on writing about their own work. More explicitly, he was the basis for one of their first projects, Sermon on the Train, which built on his images in the *Train Church* series. MADEYOULOOK takes Mofokeng's illumination of worlds that were rendered lifeless, and the inhabitants of those worlds, and asks what other kinds of futures can emerge when made to look at what these worlds contain.

Dinokana (Fig.3) is an installation commissioned for South Africa's pavilion for the 60th Venice Biennale with carved plywood to mimic the landscape of the Bokoni hills. *Dinokana* is a work about land, about restitution, about the possibilities or impossibilities of repair after dispossession. It asks what relationship to land can look like after "the majority of the people and its livestock (were) compressed onto 13% of the country in 1913"[11] and urges a commitment to resistance and repair because the land and the spirits who roam it call for it. *Dinokana* speaks of the stories of the BaKoni and the BaHurutse who sought to bring back life to the land after every cycle of violence, leaving behind lessons to those who look and "envision possibilities otherwise."[12]

Fig. 3 Installation view showing MADEYOULOOK, Dinokana (2024). Commissioned by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture for La Biennale di Venezia 2024. (Graham De Lacy)

[20] MADEYOULOOK "Ejaradini ." MADEYOULOOK, 2014, ww.made-you-look.net/ejaradini-1.
[11] MADEYOULOOK "Quiet Ground ." MADEYOULOOK, 20126 https://www.made-you-look.net/writing/2026/2/17/quiet-ground-catalogue
[12] Ibid.

It is a project that is part of 7 years of research in the northern part of South Africa. Mafolofolo, produced for Documenta 15, shown in 2023, also comes out of that same research. For both of these works, shown at the largest art events in the world, MADEYOULOOK's primary interest is not in creating work easily sellable, or easily palatable. Their interests are in practices, traditional, indigenous, shaped by colonialism, in spiritual life and grief, and questions of repair. Both works are spiritual, withthe sonic foregrounded over the visual, with compositions that can be felt but not always understood by everyone. The work is layered in such a way that echoes survival strategy, that some ways of being and existing had to remain hidden from view.

To return to Ejaradini, MADEYOULOOK speaks of "nature's ability to create life, directly out of ruination and rot."[13] Places set apart for ruin still hold life and create life in the future, not by dismissing ruination, not by overcoming rot, by inviting other ways of looking at history. In choices of image and subject, use of archive, and looking more closely at the everyday, Mofokeng and MADEYOULOOK show Black Life in ways that allow for glimpses of alternate worlds, worlds that are shaped by violence but exist beyond.

[13] MADEYOULOOK "Ejaradini ." MADEYOULOOK, 2014, ww.made-you-look.net/ejaradini-1.

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Decolonizing the Map: Resistance Cartography, Visual Sovereignty, and Malala Andrialavidrazana's *Figures*

C.J. Dinius

Introduction

In the nineteenth century, maps functioned not merely as descriptive instruments but also as political technologies of empire. This colonial cartography produced territorial sovereignty, racial classification, and extractive control across Africa by rendering land legible to imperial administration. This is distinctly visible in Madagascar, which was formally annexed by France in 1896, where mapping practices reorganized land, authority, and identity under colonial rule.

Contemporary Malagasy artist Malala Andrialavidrazana confronts this history through her ongoing *Figures* series (2015 – current), which are monumental digital collages that fragment and reassemble nineteenth-century maps, banknotes, and ethnographic imagery. Through layering, juxtaposition, and archival disruption, Andrialavidrazana destabilizes the apparent neutrality of colonial cartography and transforms instruments of imperial control into a decolonial counter-archive. Her work enacts what may be understood as resistance cartography: a visual practice that exposes the violence embedded in mapping and reimagines the map as a site of epistemic contestation rather than conquest.

This article will examine colonial cartography as a violent political technology of empire and analyze how Malala Andrialavidrazana's *Figures* series responds to it by destabilizing and reconfiguring these cartographic practices through a decolonial visual language.

Cartography as Political Technology

Recent scholarship has decisively rejected the notion of maps as neutral representations. As Matthew Edney argues, cartography must be understood as a historically specific "mode of knowledge production" embedded within administrative and military infrastructures rather than detached from them.[1] Maps did not simply describe territory; they operationalized it by abstracting land into measurable grids and coordinates, rendering space legible to bureaucratic power.

Additionally, Jordan Branch extends this argument by demonstrating that mapping practices were central to the formation of modern sovereign state systems.[2] Sovereignty came to be imagined territorially: bounded, fixed, and made exclusive through the visualization of space on maps. This is furthered by Thomas Bassett's work on nineteenth-century West Africa, which shows that

[1] Edney, "Theory and the History of Cartography," 187.
[2] Branch, "Mapping the Sovereign State," 4.

mapping was integral to imperial expansion, enabling cadastral surveys, taxation regimes, and plantation economies.[3] Mapping was thus a prerequisite for resource extraction.

Together, these scholars establish a crucial principle: that maps do not reflect territory; they produce it. Colonial maps simplified complex landscapes into legible grids and bordered units, cultivating what Camilo Leslie calls "map-mindedness," a territorial imagination that privileges bordered space as the fundamental unit of political order.[4] This is expanded by Emmanuel Amadife and James Warhola, who demonstrate how colonial boundary-making in Africa often disregarded pre-existing social and spatial formations, yet those borders endure within postcolonial state structures.[5] And thus cartography achieved temporal durability.

Furthermore, Éloi Ficquet has argued that Africa itself has frequently been reduced cartographically to a pictogram; its outline functioning as shorthand for a homogenized and abstracted continent.[6] Such abstraction strips territory of lived specificity, transforming geography into a visual symbol of difference. Colonial cartography thus operated simultaneously as a territorial instrument and a racializing discourse.

Madagascar and Cartographic Violence

Madagascar provides a compelling case study of cartographic violence. Before French colonization, the island was home to complex political formations, including the Merina Kingdom, whose spatial organization did not conform to European territorial logic. Authority often operated through networks of allegiance and layered sovereignties rather than rigidly demarcated borders, aligning with Monica L. Smith's distinction between networked and territorial forms of political organization.[7]

Then, in 1896, French military intervention culminated in formal annexation. This was when colonial administrators subsequently imposed new administrative boundaries, taxation systems, and infrastructural mapping to facilitate economic extraction.[8] Military surveys charted ports, mineral resources, agricultural zones, and trade routes, reorganizing land into taxable and exploitable units. Zbigniew Bialas's question, "Whose Madagascar?" captures the epistemic dispossession that accompanied annexation.[9] This cartographic reimagining not only erased indigenous spatial knowledge and sovereignty but also legitimized

[3] Bassett, "Cartography and Empire Building in Nineteenth-Century West Africa," 320.
[4] Leslie, "Territoriality, Map-Mindedness, and the Politics of Place," 175.
[5] Amadife and Warhola, "Africa's Political Boundaries," 540.
[6] Ficquet, "L'Afrique Comme Pictogramme," 409.
[7] Smith, "Networks, Territories, and the Cartography of Ancient States," 835.
[8] Bialas, "Whose Madagascar," 18.
[9] Ibid.

colonial authority by presenting French control as objective, scientific, and inevitable. Through the practice of mapping, Madagascar was strategically repositioned within the confines of imperial geography, rendered and claimed as a French territory.

Colonial cartography did not merely divide land; it categorized bodies and reinforced existing power structures. Ethnographic atlases and anthropometric diagrams meticulously mapped racial typologies onto the territory, producing hierarchies that justified domination and exploitation. This intersection of geography and anthropology fostered a narrative that not only shaped perceptions of place but also influenced the wider societal understanding of identity, race, and power dynamics during the colonial era. Tamara Bellone describes mapping as a tacit representation of the colonial gaze, embedding asymmetrical power relations into visual form.[10] Furthermore, Martial Belinga's call for "decolonizing history" through epistemic transformation underscores the need to dismantle such visual regimes.[11]

Thus, colonial maps projected rational coherence and clean borders, while concealing coercion and violence. As Michel Agier and Martin Lamotte observe, spatial pacification often masks structural domination.[12] The map's surface occludes the violence required to produce it.

Malala Andrialavidrazana and the *Figures* Series

Born in Antananarivo in 1971 and trained as an architect in Paris, Andrialavidrazana developed a multidisciplinary practice centered on photography, archives, and global histories.[13] Her architectural background informs her sensitivity to spatial construction. Since 2015, her *Figures* series has assembled fragments of historical maps, banknotes, stamps, and printed imagery into large-scale digital collages, as illustrated in *Figures 1853*.[14] These works have been exhibited internationally, including at the Palais de Tokyo and Tate Modern.[15]

In the Tate exhibition guide, Andrialavidrazana states that "cartography was among the most powerful political and ideological tools during the 19th century."[16] This declaration directly situates her practice within a critical framework that challenges the conventions of imperial mapping. Figures stages a powerful visual confrontation between the prescribed cartographic boundaries

[10] Bellone et al., "Mapping as Tacit Representations of the Colonial Gaze," 21.
[11] Belinga, "Decolonizing History."
[12] Agier and Lamotte, "Les Pacifications," 10.
[13] Andrialavidrazana, in *Artist and Empire*, 78–79.
[14] Andrialavidrazana, Malala. *Figures 1853,* Kolonien in Afrika und in der Süd-See. 2016. Digital Collage, UltraChrome Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Ultra Smooth. 110x151.5 cm. https://awarewomenartists.com/en/artiste_prixaware/malala-andrialavidrazana/.
[15] Palais de Tokyo, "Malala Andrialavidrazana: Figures."
[16] Andrialavidrazana, quoted in A*rtist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Pastpeople.*

and the inhabitants, as shown in *Figures 1856, Leading Races of Man.*[17] Through this juxtaposition, the work invites viewers to reflect on the impacts of colonialism and on how maps can shape perception.

Close Visual Analysis: *Figures*

At first glance, *Figures 1816* resembles a map.[18] Yet, its coherence quickly dissolves as cartographic fragments are subjected to various manipulations, including enlargement, cropping, rotation, and layering, thereby deliberately disrupting geographic legibility. This transformation makes traditional map reading challenging, as the familiar lines of latitude and longitude intersect in uneven, unexpected ways. At the same time, borders that typically define sovereign territories appear fragmented and disjointed. The conventional grid system loses its stability and coherence, prompting viewers to reconsider the reliability of maps as representations of reality.

In *Figures 1862,* there is a thought-provoking twist, as engravings found on banknotes are interwoven into the cartographic field, creating a substantial link between monetary sovereignty and territorial domination.[19] The historical relationship between currency and cartography is profound; both have functioned as parallel instruments of imperial authority, directly impacting power and control across different landscapes. By juxtaposing these two elements: currency and cartography, Andrialavidrazana compellingly exposes their intricate entanglement. This interplay illuminates how maps and money are not just tools of navigation and exchange but also tools of political influence and economic power, revealing the underlying dynamics of colonialism and imperial expansion. Thus, the work invites us to reflect on how cartography perpetuates systems of domination and shapes our understanding of geography and sovereignty in a contemporary context.

Most significant in *Figures 1856* is the reinsertion of the human figure, as colonial maps often depicted territory as empty or abstract - a terra nullis, which is a justification of land acquisition through occupation - thereby erasing embodied presence.[20] In *Figures 1856,* portraits, historical and anonymous, interrupt the grid, and these bodies refuse to be contained within territorial abstraction. Leslie's "politics of place" clarifies how spatial representation

[18] Andrialavidrazana, Malala. *Figures 1816*, Der Südliche Gestirnte Himmel vs Planiglob der Antipoden. 2015. Digital Collage, UltraChrome Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Ultra Smooth. https://www.artsy.net/artwork/malala-andrialavidrazana-figure-1826-der-sudliche-gestirne-himmel-vs-planiglob-der-antipoden.

[19] Andrialavidrazana, Malala. *Figures 1862,* Le Monde Principales Découvertes. 2015. Digital Collage, UltraChrome Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Ultra Smooth. 110x163 cm. https://www.artsy.net/artwork/malala-andrialavidrazana-figures-1862-le-monde-principales-decouvertes-1.

[20] Andrialavidrazana, Malala. *Figures 1856, Leading races of man.* 2016. Digital Collage, UltraChrome Pigment Print on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Ultra Smooth. 110x43 cm. https://www.artsy.net/artwork/malala-andrialavidrazana-figures-1856-leading-races-of-man-1.

shapes belonging, highlighting the constructs of race and nation as Western-imposed categories systematized through colonial governance.[21] These categories were then used to classify, control, and hierarchize populations.[22] *Figures 1856* functions as an act of resistance, unsettling those imposed identities and reclaiming space for more fluid, self-determined forms of belonging. By layering multiple identities across mapped territory, Andrialavidrazana destabilizes fixed categories of race and nation.

Nanna Verhoeff's concept of "performative cartography," where maps are seen as dynamic processes that transmute reality through interaction, further illuminates this strategy.[23] Maps enact spatial relations; they structure how viewers experience space. Installed at a monumental scale, the *Figures* imagery engulfs the viewer, repositioning the body within the map rather than outside it as a detached observer.

Counter-Archive and Digital Reassembly

Importantly, Andrialavidrazana does not erase colonial documents; she recontextualizes them. This is concisely explained with Enric Bou's notion of "cartographies of disappearance," which suggests that maps can register absence and loss as much as presence.[24] In *Figures*, the seams of imperial authority become visible; the archive is not destroyed, it is exposed.

This strategy aligns with contemporary critiques of informational power. As Mark Graham and Martin Dittus argue, digital mapping technologies reproduce inequalities through data asymmetry and platform dominance.[25] Though working with historical materials, Andrialavidrazana employs digital collage and needlepoint, situating her practice within ongoing struggles over visualization and authority.

If nineteenth-century maps extracted value from territory, *Figures 1862* symbolically reverses extraction. It extracts fragments from imperial documents to reveal their violence and authority.

Conclusion: Reimagining Visual Sovereignty

Nineteenth-century cartography functioned as a political technology of empire, facilitating sovereignty, classification, and extraction through visual abstraction. In Madagascar, French annexation relied upon mapping practices that reorganized land and authority. Andrialavidrazana's *Figures* series confronts this history not by redrawing borders but by dismantling the visual tools that sustained them.

[21] Leslie, "Territoriality," 175.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Verhoeff, "Performative Cartography," 140.
[24] Bou, Cartographies of Disappearance, 59.
[25] Graham and Dittus, "Information Power and Inequality," 124.

Through fragmentation, layering, and monumental scale, she exposes the ideological violence embedded in colonial maps and reconstitutes their archival remnants into a counter-archive of resistance. Her practice demonstrates that decolonization is not only territorial or institutional but also visual and epistemic. The map, once an instrument of conquest, becomes a contested terrain in which sovereignty can be visually reclaimed.

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Against the Colonial Clock: Afrofuturism, Ecology , and the Reclaiming of Futurity in Kenyan Art

Zamzam Ibrahim

One of the most enduring legacies of colonialism is that it reorganized not only land, labour, and governance, but time itself. European imperial rule established its own trajectory of modernity as the universal measure of progress, while positioning colonized societies as temporally delayed. In this framework, Africa was imagined as moving along the same path as Europe but at an earlier stage. Johannes Fabian (1983)[1] describes this as the *denial of coevalness*, where colonized societies are represented as existing in another historical time altogether. Through this framing, Africa is not presented simply behind but positioned as existing behind a timeline of progress defined elsewhere.

This essay examines how Afrofuturist art by Kenyan artists challenges these temporal hierarchies focusing on Wanuri Kahiu's film *Pumzi* (2009)[2] and the work of visual artist Wangechi Mutu. It explores how speculative aesthetics can operate as a form of resistance to narratives that position Africa outside the future. Rather than attempting to demonstrate that African societies must catch up to Western modernity, these works question the timeline itself. In doing so, they reclaim futurity as something that can be imagined and authored from within Kenyan historical and cultural experience.

Understanding the significance of this artistic intervention requires recognising how persistent these colonial ideas about time remain. Political independence did not dismantle the structures that once positioned Africa as delayed or incomplete. Instead, many of the same narratives continue to circulate through development discourse, humanitarian governance, and global media. African countries are frequently described as 'emerging', developing' or 'reforming' terms that appear neutral yet subtly suggest movement toward a future already defined elsewhere (Escobar, 1995; Mbembe, 2001).[3] In this sense, the colonial clock never truly stopped ticking; it merely continues to measure African societies against standards that were never historically or culturally their own.

These temporal frameworks also shape how African art is interpreted and circulated, as Oguibe and Enwezor (1999)4 observe, African artists have often been expected to produce work that documents social struggle, represents

[1] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 31

[2] Wanuri Kahiu, *Pumzi,* film (Nairobi: Focus Features Africa First Program, 2009

[3] Arturo Escobar, Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 44; Achille Mbembe, On the Postcolony (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 8.

[4] Olu Oguibe and Okwui Enwezor, eds., Reading the Contemporary: African Art from Theory to the Marketplace (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 1999), 12.

cultural authenticity, or provides political testimony. Within this framework, realism becomes a disciplinary expectation. African art is often required to explain poverty, illustrate crisis, or authenticate tradition, while speculative or futuristic aesthetics are sometimes dismissed as detached from reality.

Kodwo Eshun (2003)[5] describes Afrofuturism as a "chronopolitical intervention", an artistic strategy that reclaims the future from narratives that historically excluded Black life from it. Within the Kenyan context, this intervention becomes particularly significant because it confronts both racial exclusion and developmental temporality. Afrofuturist aesthetics refuse the premise that Kenya must first achieve Western modernity before imagining its future.

Wanuri Kahiu's *Pumzi* offers one of the clearest examples of this refusal. The film is set in a future East Africa following ecological collapse, yet its visual language deliberately avoids the spectacular imagery typical of Western science fiction. The interior habitat where the characters live is muted, metallic, and tightly controlled, with water rationed, bodily movement monitored, and survival appearing bureaucratically regulated. Rather than presenting technological advancement as the defining feature of the future, Kahiu constructs a world defined by scarcity and restraint. This aesthetic choice is politically significant as Western science fiction frequently imagines the future through technological abundance and industrial power, but *Pumzi* rejects this visual grammar. Technology appears improvised and recycled, suggesting a futurity grounded in survival rather than dominance

Figure 1. Wanuri Kahiu, Pumzi, 2009. Film still. Source: Kahiu (2009).

[5] Kodwo Eshun, "Further Considerations on Afrofuturism," CR: The New Centennial Review 3, no. 2 (2003): 293.

The discovery of the seed marks an important turning point in the film. The organic seed contrasts sharply with the sterile, metallic environment of the habitat, where survival is tightly controlled through monitored systems and rationed resources. When Asha carries the seed outside and plants it in the dry soil, the act becomes deeply physical. It is not shown as a technological solution, but as an act of labour, risk, and belief. The film refuses a clear ending, as the viewer never learns whether the seed will grow. This uncertainty matters as in many climate narratives; East Africa is portrayed as a place destined for environmental catastrophe. Pumzi challenges this idea by presenting land not as doomed, but as a space where regeneration remains possible.

If Pumzi reclaims land as a site of speculative renewal, Wangechi Mutu's *The End of Eating Everything* reclaims the body as a terrain where ecological crisis and survival become visible. The work begins with a woman's face suspended in a dark sky as a flock of black birds passes across the frame. A voice speaks: "I never meant to leave. I needed to escape... we've always been hungry, alone and together." This opening introduces themes of displacement and entanglement before the body itself appears. As the figure emerges, it begins to expand and mutate, drifting through a polluted atmosphere while consuming birds and debris in its path. The body becomes increasingly unstable, merging flesh with mechanical and organic fragments until it resists clear boundaries between human, animal, and environment.

Figure 1. Wanuri Kahiu, Pumzi, 2009. Film still. Source: Kahiu (2009)

This instability challenges the colonial visual archive that historically classified African bodies through rigid racial and ethnographic categories. Mutu disrupts these systems by creating a figure that cannot be easily defined or contained. In this sense, the work resonates with Édouard Glissant's concept of opacity, which defends the right of identities and cultures to remain irreducible within dominant systems of knowledge (Glissant, 1997).[6] At the same time, the figure's endless consumption introduces an ecological critique. As the body grows larger through what it consumes, it reflects the extractive systems that have shaped environmental destruction, relocating the crisis of overconsumption onto the body itself.

At the same time, the endless act of consumption that structures the work introduces a powerful ecological critique. The figure devours everything in its

[6] Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 189–90.

path, growing larger as it consumes birds, debris, and fragments of the surrounding environment. Its expanding body suggests an excessive, difficult-to-control appetite. This visual excess can be read as an allegory of global systems of extraction and overconsumption that shaped colonial economies and continue to structure contemporary capitalism. Rather than representing environmental destruction only through damaged landscapes, Mutu relocates ecological crisis onto the body itself. The immense scale of the figure visualises a system that survives through constant consumption of land, labour, and resources.

Placed alongside *Pumzi*, Mutu's work offers an important counterpoint in the way Afrofuturist aesthetics engage ecology and futurity. While Kahiu's film imagines regeneration through land and planting, Mutu exposes the destructive logic that has produced ecological collapse in the first place. In *Pumzi*, the seed interrupts a closed technological system and introduces the possibility of renewal. In *The End of Eating Everything,* the consuming body reveals the violent appetite of the global systems that have depleted the environment. Both works, therefore, engage with the environmental crisis, yet they approach it from different aesthetic perspectives. Kahiu focuses on the relationship between body and land, emphasizing embodied labour and fragile regeneration, while Mutu reveals the grotesque scale of extractive consumption through the body itself.

The fact that both artists work within the Kenyan diaspora also shapes how these futures are imagined. Wanuri Kahiu, although born and raised in Nairobi, has studied and worked internationally, particularly in the United States, while Wangechi Mutu has spent much of her career working within American art institutions. Their diasporic positions allow Kenyan perspectives to circulate within global artistic networks while also creating critical distance from the institutions that shape them. Diaspora therefore becomes both a vantage point and a site of critique, enabling Kahiu and Mutu to challenge the narratives through which African futures are often framed.

Despite their different visual languages, both artists deploy Afrofuturism to disrupt temporal narratives that position Africa as either belated or doomed. In *Pumzi*, resistance unfolds through land as the barren landscape that initially signals ecological collapse becomes a site where life might begin again, as Asha's act of planting transforms the soil from exhaustion into possibility. In Mutu's work, resistance unfolds through the body as the hybrid figure refuses the anatomical stability through which colonial science once categorised African life, embracing mutation and fragmentation instead. Land and body therefore emerge as parallel terrains through which Afrofuturist aesthetics challenge colonial systems of classification and control.

Read together, these works confront the temporal order established through colonial rule. Empire reorganised both territory and bodies through mapping, categorisation, and extraction, producing hierarchies that positioned Africa as a

space awaiting development or rescue. In the Kenyan context specifically, this reorganisation was enforced through violent means, as Anderson's account of Britain's colonial campaign in Kenya makes clear.[7] *Pumzi* and *The End of Eating Everything* reclaim these very terrains. Kahiu reimagines land as a fragile site of ecological regeneration, while Mutu exposes the destructive appetites that have shaped systems of extraction and environmental collapse.

In doing so, both artists operate against the colonial clock. Their work interrupts the timelines that have long framed Africa as permanently behind or inevitably doomed. Rather than accepting futures defined through development metrics or climate vulnerability projections, Afrofuturist aesthetics reclaim futurity as a space of imagination, resistance, and possibility. To stand against the colonial clock is therefore to refuse the authority that measures African futures from the outside and to insist that they can be imagined, narrated, and transformed from within.

[7] David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain's Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire.* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), 1–5.

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Landscapes and People in the Photography of Pierrot Men

Ellie Villano

Beautifully mundane street photography and majestic landscapes, Pierrot Men captures it all, but his gift is in blending the two. He shows the natural beauty of Madagascar as part of everyday life. In his photography, Men explores the symbiotic relationship between land and people.[1] The people in his photographs are interacting with the land, sailing on boats or wading in a river. He photographs kids playing on the beach. (Fig. 1) One boy jumps from the top of a bent-over palm tree, as another walks up, likely to do the same, with other kids nearby. This is an image of their experience, their lives as Malagasy people as they interact with the land around them, climbing up trees. Men captures the locals' subjectivity. His images depict people's home, presenting an opposition to an outsider's gaze that defines unfamiliar landscapes as exotic and empty.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Madagascar's beloved photographer, Pierrot Men, creates photographs rich in passion. His camera is a tool of intimacy, capturing the connection between him and the Malagasy people and their land. In a deep connection and exploration of his country, he photographs the relationships of everyday life with admiration. Domestic life is framed with the natural beauty of Madagascar. Women on the shore wave at people in boats against the coastline. (Fig. 2) Men shoots from inside the crowd. They appear excited to greet who or what is returning on the boats, or maybe proudand encouraging as they wave them goodbye. Here, daily life is celebrated, and a sense of pride is visually communicated.

[1] "Finalist 2024: Pierrot Men" Fondation Louis Roederer, accessed February 24, 2026, https://www.fondation-louisroederer.com/en/finalist/pierrot-men/.

A woman bends over the water underneath a dramatic mountain face. (Fig. 3) The scene is perhaps striking and exotic to a Western audience. However, the woman is washing something, performing a domestic chore. This scene is likely part of her daily routine. While most people will regard the mountain as beautiful, the photograph suggests that it is beautiful to her in a different way than it might be beautiful to a tourist or an outsider. It raises intriguing questions about the gaze. The reality that is depicted is hers, not the outsiders'.

Figure 3

Figure 4

A man sits tall in front of a rice terrace. (Fig. 4) He is spotlighted by the shade of his umbrella as he looks over the field and perhaps to the people in the distance. Men aims to show the Malagasy people's relationship to land as "a source of life," as he has stated. It is something they are deeply connected to, not just a resource.[2] He illustrates how the land has long been sculpted by their effort, with miles of rice terraces.[3] A very common subject in his work, rice terraces are an integral facet of people's lives and culture.

At the top of the hill, the man appears comfortable there, with his makeshift umbrella stand and staff. He has sat there before; there is the suggestion of a relationship and history to this place. The man sits foregrounded in the image, as in closest to the camera and as in the most prominent feature, the composition of Men's photographs compose a relationship; the fields are viewed within the context of the people who tend to them. This interaction within the landscape presents agency. It is their experience and vision of Madagascar. Rich in experience and subjectivity, Men shoots humanistic landscapes.

Pierrot Men was born in 1954 in Midongy-du-Sud, in the south-east of Madagascar, to a French-Malagasy mother and a Chinese father fleeing the

[2] Ibid, Pierrot Men in "About the Series" for the Fondation Louis Roederer.
[3] Ibid.

Pierrot Men was born in 1954 in Midongy-du-Sud, in the south-east of Madagascar, to a French-Malagasy mother and a Chinese father fleeing the Sino-Japanese conflict.[4] Today he lives and works in Fianarantsoa. His photography practice began with reference photos for his paintings. A blunt friend told him the reference photos were better than the paintings, and he devoted himself to the camera.[5] He set off for Antananarivo for his artistic career before returning home to work in the family grocery store due to the 1972 political protests and unrest. In 1974, he opened his first photo lab, supporting himself by shooting identity photos and weddings.

Men has a distinctly humanistic style, as he poetically documents the go-ons of daily life. This is the strength of many of his landscape photos. Landscape photography often does not recognize or is void of human presence. The idea of a "pure" or "untouched" landscape has a history in the colonial expansion and seizure of land.[6] It constructed a misbelief that land was unused and available. The French colonial government encouraged photographing much of the island, but unlike Men, it was in the interest of mapping the land and managing infrastructure.[7] The landscape of Madagascar, as captured by Men, is presented as belonging to the people and with a sentimental and romantic air, unlike the cold institutional images of colonial photography.

Figure 5

His start as a painter could explain his photography's often atmospheric and dreamy qualities. (Fig. 5 & 6) It could also be a manifestation of his deep love for Madagascar; as he has said, "each of my photos is a declaration of love for my country and its people."8 His photography acts as an expression of love to the Malagasy spirit, not just its scenic beauty. The natural environment is not fetishized as an exotic landscape. The beauty he finds with his camera is in the daily life of Madagascar. While his dramatic and moody black and white photos could be read as romantic, the

[4] "Pierrot Men," Street Photographers Foundation, accessed February 24, 2026, https://streetphotographersfoundation.com/pierrot-men/.
[5] Franck Remy, "Biographie," Pierrot Men, accessed February 24, 2026, https://www.pierrotmen.com/index.php/pierrot-men/biographie.
[6] Gisela Parak, "Seeing the 'Other'? Pictorial Practices of a Colonial Appropriation of Space," *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 11, 1-4 (2023), 1.
[7] Pascal Martin Saint Léon, N'Goné Fall, and Frédérique Chapuis, eds., *Anthology of African and Indian Ocean Photography,* trans. Bas Angelis (Paris: Revue Noire, 1999), 328.

Figure 6

focus is on Malagasy life, in conjunction with the environment.

Men captures the silhouette of a young boy through a translucent coat as he enjoys the beach. (Fig. 5) He faces the water with his arms spread wide, as if enjoying a moment of wind, turning his coat into a sail. The use of light gives a poetic and ldreamy quality to the hazy silhouette, as the image centers the young boy as the recipient of this landscape. Perhaps, this is an image of the beach's physical, experiential beauty, of an ocean breeze, rather than a visual and scenic aesthetic. In this photograph, the romantic and atmospheric qualities manipulate the gaze away from scenic novelty and towards an understanding of Malagasy pride and experience.

Photography should not be understood as an objective view, but as a construction and staging that validates the conceptions of its handler. Men's photography shows his understanding of Madagascar as being in a relationship between land and people. His humanistic landscapes do not trivialize or essentialize the experience of the Malagasy people in favor of the landscape, and the people are in an active relationship with the scene and environment around them. His photographic practice centers around connection and communication. He is immersed in the lives of the people he photographs.9 And in turn, his photos are true to the vibrancy of life. Through centering local subjectivities, he resists an outsider's gaze and shoots from the vantage point of the Malagasy people. He resists scenic emphasis and novelty, and resists the colonial logic of the detached gaze, where landscapes are represented as empty, as a manageable resource or exotic wilderness– opting to highlight people within the landscape.

Pierrot Men's photography is not a plain visual archive of Madagascar: it's a deeply personal affirmation of Malagasy life. In his humanistic landscapes, he diffuses the boundary between people and place, presenting the land not as an exotic spectacle for foreigners, but as a lived, worked, and loved environment. By centering local subjectivity, Men reframes landscape photography as relational rather than possessive. His photos assert that Madagascar is not empty land to be consumed, but a homeland shaped by memory, labor, joy, and history. Each photograph becomes what Men himself describes as a declaration of love, an insistence that the beauty of Madagascar lies not only in its scenery, but in the everyday lives and agency of the Malagasy people.

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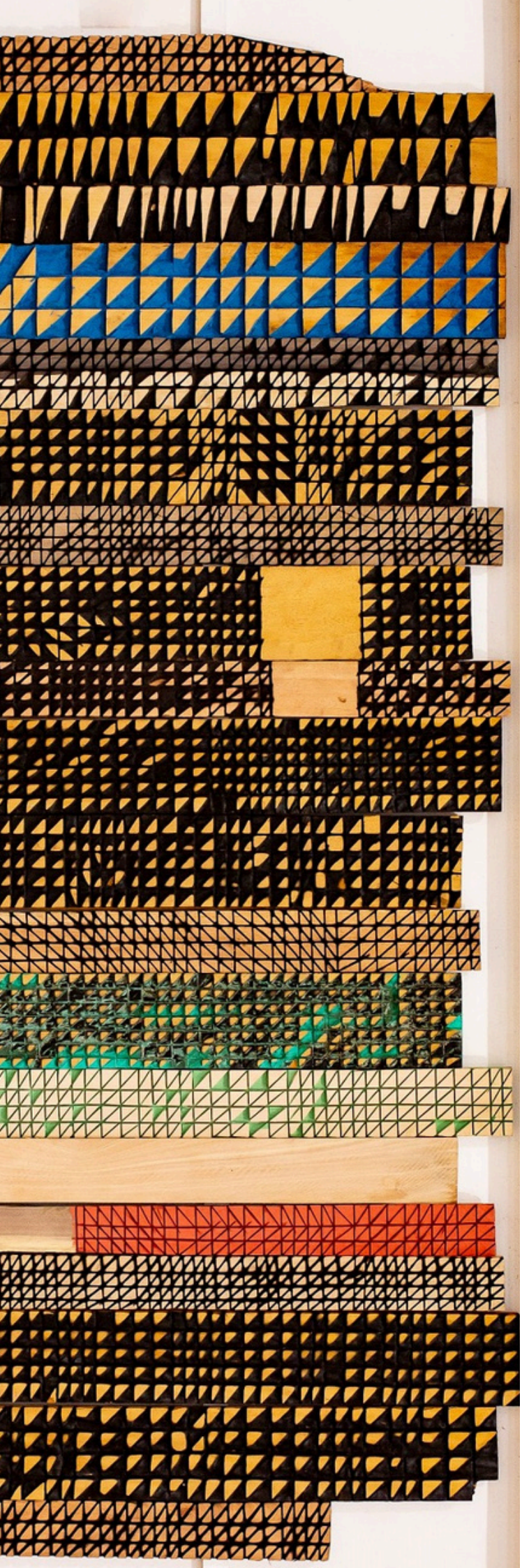


Alternative Media

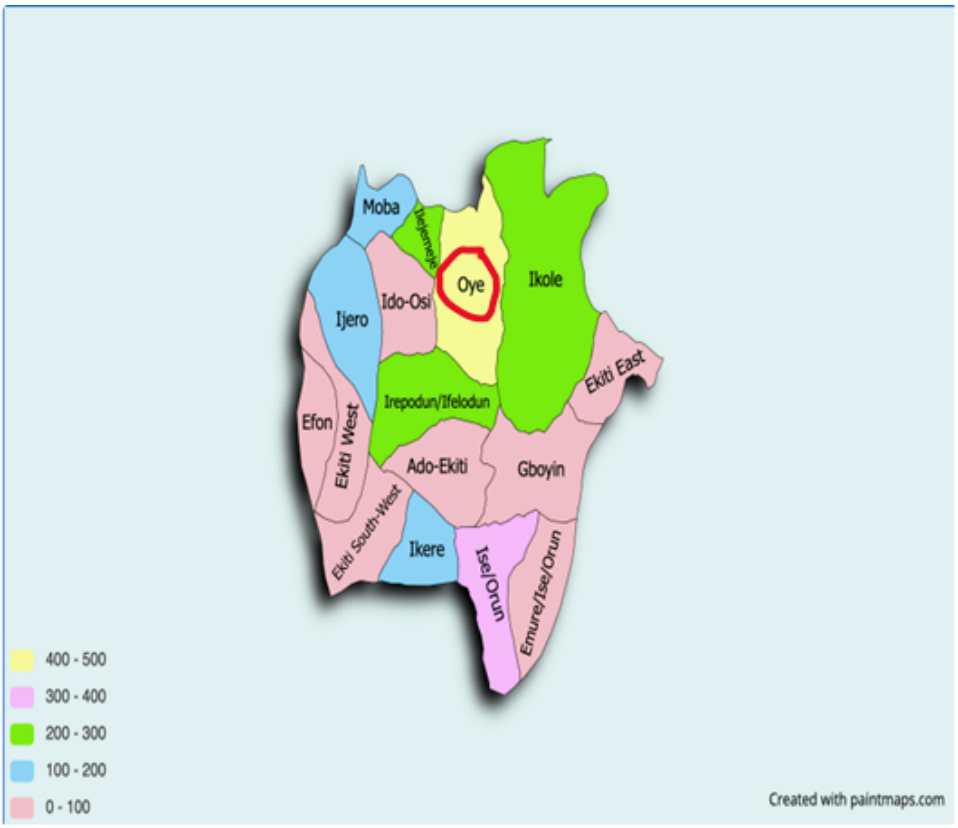
Ebubechukwu Nwafor and Sarah-Jane Looker

Across Africa, state ideologies have often set the parameters for the kinds of works artists have been permitted, or heavily encouraged, to produce. From Senegalese Négritude to the revolutionary policies of socialist-era Mozambique, artists have worked for, around, and against the state and dominant political movements to produce works that exemplify the popular aspirations of their emerging nations. This section explores the varying ideological tendencies artists have engaged in their nation-building exercises by interrogating sculpture, installation, interdisciplinary performance art, and poetry as vehicles for creative resistance. From different perspectives, they delineate how art practice challenges and disrupts colonial hegemonies, narratives, and legacies, as well as essentialisms of African identity. Through community-embedded art, cultural identity is redefined and reclaimed as dynamic, adaptive, and agentive.

El Anatsui, DNA, 2021
Tempera on wood, wall hanging

Bridging Beliefs as Resistance: Syncretism and Identity of Yoruba Christian Sculptures in Nigeria.

Catherine Chibuzo Anyanwu



Map of Ekiti State, South-West Nigeria. Source: Nigeria Gakllteria

This study analyzes the syncretic art that emerged from the Oye-Ekiti workshop in mid-twentieth century Nigeria. It represents a sophisticated form of political resistance and social change in Nigeria's religious movements. Rather than a mere submission to colonial religious norms, the works of artists like George Bandele and his father, Areogun, functions through "strategic essentialism," utilizing indigenous Yoruba aesthetics to reclaim agency and dismantle Eurocentric dominance.[1] By situating Christian narratives within Yoruba imagery, these artists challenged colonial erasure of indigenous traditions, asserting that African identity is not a static relic of the past but a dynamic force capable of negotiating and reshaping foreign ideologies.

The case study is a visual analysis of two works: *Baptismal Font* (1965) by George Bandele and *The Three Kings* by Areogun of Osi-Illorin. The process includes cataloguing religious iconography, reviewing the blend of African and imported motifs, and interpreting their symbolism through postcolonial theory, which

[1] Cynthia R. Neison, "Frantz Fanon and the Nègritude Movement: How Strategic Essentialism Subverts Manichean Binaries," *Collaloo*, 36 no.2 (2013): 345-52.

questions power dynamics, identity, and resistance, and semiotics, to decode how meaning is constructed through signs and symbols. This method clarifies how artistic choices communicate political resistance and shape identity.

The historical movement of the Oye-Ekiti workshop provides a nuanced lens through which to understand political resistance, suggesting that it is not always characterized by overt rebellion but often functions through the reclamation of cultural agency and identity within oppressive structures. By blending indigenous Yoruba traditions with colonial religious frameworks, this movement illustrates that resistance can be a sophisticated process of negotiation and subversion.[2]

Historical and Artistic Context

The emergence of neo-traditional sculpture in Nigeria was directly tied to the shifting socio-political landscape of the late colonial era. As Christianization spread, traditional Yoruba artists faced a sharp decline in patronage for work destined for indigenous shrines and local nobility.[3] George Bandele (1905–1995), a traditionally trained carver and son of the renowned Areogun of Osi-Ilorin, experienced this transition firsthand as his sculptural confidence initially waned due to diminishing demand.[4]

Areogun of Osi-Illorin (1880-1954), Bandele's father, was a non-Christian and one of the great premodern master sculptors introduced to Kevin Carroll by his son Bandele. He eventually collaborated with the workshop to carry out a Yoruba-Christian project with a Christmas nativity set of *The Three Kings*, which he completed two years before his death.[5]

The Oye-Ekiti workshop, established in 1947 by Father Kevin Carroll, emerged as a response to diminishing demand for Christian art due to colonial religious domination.[6] It is critical to recognize that this was not simply an appeal to a "new audience," but rather a reaction to a local population whose own religious beliefs and attitudes were in flux. Carroll encouraged the artistic blend of Yoruba imagery with Christian iconography, a move that allowed artists like Bandele to maintain ties with their communities, the ultimate source of their inspiration,

[2] Nicholas, J. Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art,* The Society of African Missions Irish Province, (2012) p.36.

[3] John, Picton, "Art, Identity and Identification: A commentary on Yoruba Art Historical Studies." *The Yoruba Artist,* ed. Rowland Abiodun, Henry John Drewal, and John Pemberton III, Smithsonian Institutional Press, (1994) pp 1-34.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Nicholas, J. Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art,* The Society of African Missions Irish Province, (2012) p.36.

[6] John, Picton, "Neo-Traditional Sculpture in Nigeria," *Anthology of African Art: The Twentieth Century,* ed. N'Gone Falls and Jean Loup Pivin, (2002) p.100

while adapting to a changing religious environment.[7] This synthesis allowed for the greater acceptance of Christianity by enabling local communities to view the new faith through a lens that valued, rather than erased, their indigenous culture. The fusion of Yoruba and Christian visual elements illustrates Fanon's concept of strategic essentialism, a conscious approach cited as adopting essentialized cultural narratives as a means of affirming community empowerment. This deliberate, temporary strategy enables artists and communities to assert agency within the constraints of colonial power structures. By foregrounding Yoruba motifs in Christian contexts, the Oye-Ekiti artists enacted a form of resistance that both reclaims cultural heritage and negotiates new identities.[8]

Analysis of the Works

The works of the Oye-Ekiti workshop demonstrate how artistic resistance is enacted through the subversion of religious symbols. George Bandele's *Baptismal Font* (Figure 1) adapts the design of the large agba drum (Figure 2), a traditional instrument carved for the Yoruba Ogboni society, to create a Christian ritual object. This specific inspiration was made possible by Bandele's unique position; although he identified as Christian, he also led his local Ogboni society, allowing him to intuitively merge Yoruba forms with Christian themes. The baptismal font incorporates the element of structural adaptation as it influenced other baptismal fonts created by other artists at the workshop.[9]

By depicting a Black risen Christ of the font, shown with hands raised to display nail scars and the pierced sides, it incorporates the element of iconographic localization.

Figure 1: George Bandele, Yoruba Christian Baptismal font*, 1965. Wooden Sculpture, Photograph: Art & Theology, Collection: St. Pauls Church Ibadan.*

Figure 2: George Bandele, Ogboni drum*, Mid-20th Century, wooden sculpture, Location: Osi-Illorin, Opin, Nigeria.*

[7] Nicholas, J. Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art,* The Society of African Missions Irish Province, (2012) p.36.

[8] Carroll Kevin, "Yoruba Sacred Carving," Typed draft article. Kevin Carroll Collection, Archive, Irish Province of the Society of African Missions, (1978).

[9] Nicholas, J. Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art,* The Society of African Missions Irish Province, (2012) p.63.

Through this synthesis, Bandele ensures indigenous cultural preservation by localizing the Christian ritual tool, preserving the dignity of Yoruba forms within a new religious context.[10] This adaptation is viewed as a form of "strategic essentialism," where the artist deliberately used essentialized cultural narratives like those of the Ogboni society to affirm community empowerment and negotiate identity within colonial power structure.[11]

Similarly, *The Three Kings* nativity set by Areogun (1952) portrays two of the kings as Yoruba rulers (*obas*) (Figures 3 and 4), while the third figure (Figure 5) incorporates iconographic traits of the deity Eshu. This inclusion of the Eshu figure, devil in Christian interpretation and trickster in Yoruba interpretation, introduces a layer of resistance and humor into the nativity. This intentionally blurs the lines between Christian and Yoruba identities.[12] Eshu's role as a message of resistance can be described by blurring identities; by modelling one of the biblical kings after a Yoruba *orisha* known for trickery, the artist intentionally obscures the lines between Christian and Yoruba spiritual identities. This synthesis shows that indigenous spiritual forces are not incompatible with the new faith, but rather important components of a localized African Christianity. Furthermore, by placing a traditional deity at the heart of the nativity set dismantles dichotomies used by colonialism to separate the "pagan" from the "Christian" or the "civilized" from the "primitive."

Figure 3: (left) Areogun-Osi Three Kings *for a Nativity Set, 1952. Wooden Sculpture, current whereabouts unknown. Photograph: Father Carroll 1954.*

Figure 4: (right) Areogun-Osi Three Kings *for a Nativity Set, 1952. Wooden Sculpture, current whereabouts unknown. Photograph: Father Carroll 1954.*

[10] Nicholas, J. Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art,* The Society of African Missions Irish Province, (2012) p.63.
[11] Cynthia R. Neison, "Frantz Fanon and the Nègritude Movement: How Strategic Essentialism Subverts Manichean Binaries," *Collaloo*, 36 no.2 (2013): 345-52.
[12] Nicholas, J. Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art,* The Society of African Missions Irish Province, (2012) p.37

Cultural agency is asserted by Areogun, proving that Yoruba traditions can actively engage with and reshape mainstream colonial narratives. These choices are not merely decorative; they are acts of self-determination that challenge the expansionist view of Christianity, which idealized European culture as the "universal" standard.[13]

Critical Responses and Theoretical Frameworks

The neo-traditional art produced by George Bandele and the Oye-Ekiti workshop faced criticism from some Yoruba Catholics who viewed this fusion as a regression towards paganism and preferred traditional European religious art, which was considered more appropriate for worship. Notably, such negative reactions did not extend to other cultural elements. Compared to Yoruba-inspired sculptures, the blending of Yoruba language, music, and textile embroidery in church services was broadly accepted and even celebrated, indicating selective openness to cultural integration within the religious setting.[14]

Figure 5: Areogun-Osi Three Kings *for a Nativity Set, 1952. Wooden Sculpture, current whereabouts unknown. Photograph: Father Carroll 1954.*

This deeply contested "neo-traditional" style reflects broader debates about African identity. Ulli Beier expressed skepticism, arguing that traditional technique could not be separated from its "pagan" roots and feared that such fusion risked undermining the "authenticity" of both traditions.[15] Conversely, Uche Okeke championed the concept of "natural synthesis," arguing that artists should draw confidently from their lived experiences, both indigenous and modern, to champion the cause of negritude.[16] These local debates mirror a continental resistance movement. By centering Yoruba aesthetics, these artists participated in a broader **Pan-African solidarity** aimed at celebrating Black identity and dismantling Eurocentric hegemony.

[13] Brian, Stanley, *Introduction to Christianity and the End of Empire*. Cambridge: B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, (2003).
[14] Nicholas, J. Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art,* The Society of African Missions Irish Province, (2012) p.81.
[15] Ulli, Beier, *Sacred Wood Carvings.* Lagos: Special Publication, Nigeria Magazine, (1957).
[16] Uche, Okeke, "The quest: from Zaria to Nsukka," in Delis c et all, Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa, (1995):38-75.

This move travelled across the continent by inspiring cross-cultural dialogue and affirming the legitimacy of indigenous traditions in contemporary practice, echoing the goals of movements that seek to decolonize African expressive traditions.

Beyond the Workshop: Sculpting Sovereignty

The influence of the Oye-Ekiti workshop on modern Nigerian sculpture can be understood through the lens of **political resistance**, viewing these artistic developments not merely as aesthetic shifts but as deliberate acts of dismantling colonial hegemony and reclaiming cultural agency. Political self-determination through natural synthesis with the blend of indigenous and contemporary forms provides a blueprint for Uche Okeke's "natural synthesis." This is inherently political as it demands intellectual independence, urging artists to think for themselves and rely on their own lived experience. This rejects the colonial dynamic where European expectations define African identity, asserting a form of sovereignty over their individual spiritual and creative narratives.

The movement dismantles imperialist hegemony, vital to decolonization of expressive traditions. By challenging aspects of Christian expansionism that idealized European cultures as the universal vehicle for faith, which served as justification for colonialism. Asserting Yoruba forms as equally valid, the movement functioned as a political subversion of the narrative that European culture was universal or superior.

It is important to note that while the ideological and cultural impact is emphasized in this analysis, specific physical or logistical development of how these works and ideas travelled throughout the continent remains a point for further scholarly discussion and research.

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1. *A Yoruba- Christian baptismal font*, George Bandele 1965. Source:https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=9464614426899994&set=pcb.1215530336181848

2. *Large agba (drum) carved for Yoruba Ogboni society*, George Bandele
Source: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/524205

3. *(left) Three Kings for a Nativity* set carved by Areogun, 1952. This mounted king is presented as an oba, or traditional Yoruba ruler, as often seen on epa masks.
Photo Source: Own photo from Bridger, J. Nicholas, *Africanizing Christian Art*, The Society of African Missions Irish Province, 2012 pg.38.

4. *(Right)* Second king in the form of a mounted oba with a broad-brimmed crown. It's current whereabouts unknown.
Photo Source: Own photo from Bridger, J. Nicholas, *Africanizing Christian Art*, The Society of African Missions Irish Province, 2012 pg. 38.

5. The third king displays some iconographic characteristics of the Yoruba orisha Eshu. Photo Source: Own photo from Bridger, J. Nicholas, *Africanizing Christian Art*, The Society of African Missions Irish Province, 2012 pg.39.

Was Négritude a liberatory cultural project or a state ideology constrained by neo-colonial structures?

Mwai Githinji

Introduction

Direct colonial rule operated in more dimensions than just the political or economic subjugation of colonized peoples; it also manifested through sustained cultural domination that depicted the colonized as lacking history. The 1930s Négritude movement, pioneered by Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Léon-Gontran Damas, acted as a direct intellectual opposition to this oppression, utilizing poetry and philosophy as instruments for the restoration of African dignity. After independence, Senghor aimed to institutionalise Négritude through the Senegalese state as a national cultural policy. This transition of the ideology from an intellectual movement to state policy has invited scrutiny. The works of thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Amílcar Cabral, who question the possibility of liberation within structures shaped by colonial institutions and sustained through neo-colonialism, enable a critical analysis of the effectiveness of this transition.

Ultimately, Négritude's evolution raises a crucial debate: was it a successful project of cultural liberation, or merely a nationalist ideology constrained by the structural contradictions of the postcolonial state?

Colonial Cultural Domination

Colonialism in Africa was multi-layered, deliberately targeting the subjugation of culture to reinforce a perception of dominance. Imperial ideology functions on the constructed notion of African cultural inferiority, portraying indigenous communities as primitive and simple in contrast to the metropole's supposed complexity and rationality. This devaluation legitimised colonial rule by framing it as a "civilising mission" necessary to bring "light" to an alleged "void" in world history.[1] Cabral presents the idea that imperialist rule requires cultural oppression for its own security. Subsequently within this framework he states: "Thus one sees that if imperialist domination necessarily practices cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture."[2] In retaliation from the colonised towards a "return to the upward paths" of their own culture, psychological and social structures of imperialist control are challenged.[3] It is the erasure of culture imposed by the imperialist system that necessitated Négritude as an intellectual weapon against colonial ideology.

Mor Faye, Adam et Eve, 1983, gouache and india ink on paper, ca. 20 × 26".

Négritude as Intellectual Resistance

Négritude became a prominent idea in the 1930s, formed to intellectually oppose the "tabula rasa" theory colonialists used to justify dependence.[4] The intellectual

[1] Sylvia Washington Ba, *The Concept of Négritude in the Poetry of Léopold Sédar Senghor* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973); F. Bart Miller, *Rethinking Négritude through Léon-Gontran Damas* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).

[2] Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," *UCLA Journal of African Studies* (1974), 13.

[3] Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," UCLA Journal of African Studies (1974), 13–14

[4] F. Bart Miller, Rethinking Négritude through Léon-Gontran Damas (2014), pg 12.

movement was spearheaded by Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, and Léon-Gontran Damas acting as a form of revolt against the systematic erasure of African history.

Césaire coined the term in his work, describing Négritude not as a rigid state but as a living phenomenon, rooted in African soil, lived experiences, and the history of Black people. The founders considered poetry a primary political and cultural weapon used to "divest ourselves of our borrowed attire, that of assimilation, and assert our being."[5] Senghor's philosophy, as described by Sylvia Washington Ba (1973), was rooted in "Black African ontology" and the concept of "vital force," positioning the African experience as an interconnected network of dynamic energies. While remaining a unified movement, Négritude contained variant strands; for example, Damas's more radical "protest and revolution"-based approach and Senghor's vision of a "Civilization of the Universal." Fanon argues that earlier phases of resistance, regardless of their outcomes, are necessary for continued resistance. He states that intellectuals "fought as best they could with the weapons they possessed at the time."[6] Ultimately, Négritude was a direct counter-narrative with which the colonised could align to challenge the psychological grip of imperialism.

From Philosophy to State Ideology

Senegal's independence in 1960 saw a

shift in Négritude from an intellectual movement to formalised policy. President Léopold Sédar Senghor looked to institutionalise the movement's philosophical premise, making it part of the "cultural constitution" of the new state.[7] This process of institutionalisation, as analysed by Ima Ebong (1999) was rooted in the mass expansion of cultural infrastructure including generous state patronage for artists and the founding of the École de Dakar. Senghor proved his commitment devoting up to 25% of the state budget to education and culture.

The Dakar World Festival of Negro Arts (FESMAN) in 1966 provided a platform to display this state-sponsored aesthetic, showcasing the retrieval of identity and Africans in a dignified light to a global audience. In this context, art served as a tool of "national identity construction" and was more functional

[5]Sylvia Washington Ba, *The Concept of Négritude* (1973).
[6]Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), "On National Culture."
[7]Ima Ebong, "Negritude: Between Mask and Flag – Senegalese Cultural Ideology and the Ecole de Dakar," *African Arts* 32, no. 2 (1999): 130.

than expressive, demonstrating the "Negro-African conception of modern social life."[8] This created an overlap of cultural liberation and state ideology, provoking tension between genuine decolonisation and the structural constraints of a top-down, state-managed narrative.

Senghor's Cultural Strategy and Pragmatism

Post independence the Senegalese state was confronted with a strategic dilemma due to the structural and economic constraints of the postcolonial era. Rather than the complete break from the metropole, Senghor attempted partial alignment with France, sustaining diplomatic engagement, economic ties, and cultural exchange.

This decision presents conflicting principles. Intended as a pragmatic strategy for the maintenance of national stability and securing the necessary infrastructure for the new nation, it limited the decolonisation process in positioning the future of the new nation with the self-serving interests of the metropole.

Cabral comments on this dichotomy, suggesting cultural freedom is the recapturing of "the commanding heights" of one's own culture a return to their own "upward paths."[9] Senghor's navigation of this was positioning Négritude as a means to cultivate cultural reconciliation while utilizing foreign contributions to achieve a "Civilisation of the Universal." From this lens, Senghor's cultural program was an attempt at rebuilding national identity within existing global constraints. Through the institutionalization of culture he sought to perform what Cabral called the "act of culture", necessary for liberation, while simultaneously engaging in a landscape stifled by neo-colonial interests.[10]

Structural Contradictions of the Postcolonial State

Senghor's re-framing of Négritude to form a national image, while entangled in structural contradictions, was a situation familiar to several newly independent states—nominally free but economically dependent on the metropole and administratively structured to emulate it.

[8]Ima Ebong, "Negritude: Between Mask and Flag – Senegalese Cultural Ideology and the Ecole de Dakar," *African Arts* 32, no. 2 (1999): 130.
[9]Amílcar Cabral, "National Liberation and Culture," *UCLA Journal of African Studies* (1974), 13.
[10]Ibid.

Fanon opposes this dependence entirely, arguing that the colonial system is fundamentally incapable of providing the material conditions necessary for the achievement of genuine dignity.[11] He proposes a radical shift in the economic and political foundations of society; without this, national consciousness risks becoming a “crude, empty, fragile shell,” a camouflage for regression into tribalism and elite profiteering.[12] This outlines the contradiction of Senghor’s institutionalization of Négritude: is cultural liberation genuine when operating under the constraints of the global power structures of the former coloniser? Despite the heavy flow of monetary resources into arts and education, neocolonial structures rendered this a symbolic victory, disconnected from the material liberation of the broader population.

Critiques and Alternative Cultural Politics

A core challenge of state-led cultural projects is the heterogeneity of the population. Cabral provides a framework, stating that while culture may possess "mass character" it cannot be uniform across a society. Rather “culture” is stratified across different socio-economic and ethnic groups or "horizontal and vertical distribution", constructed by class, ethnicity, generational difference, and rural versus urban populations. Consequently, for a national liberation movement to be effective it must be conceived with profound knowledge of these various levels of culture across all aforementioned social categories.[13] When considering this in reference to the Négritude project in Senegal the discrepancy becomes visible. The state's position as the sole distributor of culture shifted Négritude towards a state-curated cultural narrative. Epitomised in the showcase at the École de Dakar, critics suggest this event served as a tool for the nationalist bourgeoisie to legitimise its own power. A state-defined identity that is not fully encompassing all sectors of society risks becoming a symbolic facade that strays from the material and cultural realities of the people it seeks to lead.


[14]

[11] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), “Concerning Violence” and “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness.”
[12] Ibid.
[13] Amílcar Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture,” *UCLA Journal of African Studies* (1974), 14.
[14] Ibid.

The Unresolved Tension

The trajectory of the institutionalization of Négritude reveals a paradox: its revolutionary origins contrast with its eventual role as a “state-curated cultural ideology.” At its inception, it acted as intellectual opposition and a vital point of resonance for African cultural dignity.

By affirming indigenous values, the movement offered a foundation for the retrieval of identity. However, through the dissemination of this ideology by constrained postcolonial states, Négritude was ultimately tethered to the metropole in post independent Senegal. Fanon and Cabral demonstrate that cultural liberation is precarious when economic dependency remains, creating the disconnect seen in the lived realities of the masses. Ultimately, Négritude should be understood as a necessary foundation for continued resistance. Earlier generations fought "as best they could with the weapons they possessed at the time.”[15] Rather than being viewed as a success or failure, the movement exemplifies the complex and unresolved relationship between culture, politics, and the ongoing journey towards genuine liberation in Africa.

[15] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), “Concerning Violence” and “The Pitfalls of National Consciousness.”

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Image 1 - Papa Ibra Tall Vin Noir **1964**
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Image 2 - SAINT MOR FAYE Adam et Eve 1963
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Image 3 -
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Image 4 – Negritude slides (Lecture week 3)

Image 5 – Mor Faye
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Image 6 - Serigne Ibrahima Dieye
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Okrika Reclaimed: Creative Resistance and Resilience in Kantamanto Market

Sarah-Jane Looker

Depictions of the waste crisis in the Global South perpetuate representations of Africa as the 'place of absolute dystopia,' the hopeless continent.'[1] Images of rubbish mountains, polluted rivers and seas, people living amongst and picking through refuse and dirty streets, argues political theorist Francois Verges, 'contribute to the creation of a naturalised division,' between the clean Global North and the dirty Global South.[2] This normalisation of 'inferior standards', passivity, and inaction compounds notions of backwardness, helplessness, and an innate inability of Africans to manage waste. Rehearsals of colonial narratives and constructions of Africa premise its dependency on Western intervention. These narratives, however, fail to acknowledge waste colonialism and the Global North's culpability for creating this waste crisis. The Global North's fast fashion industry externalizes its disposal of vast amounts of second-hand textile waste by exporting it under the guise of recycling and humanitarian aid.[3] Monetized exports, often of poor quality and unusable, become the recipient country's waste problem, inflicting significant ecological damage. Colonial legacies and logics perpetuate inequalities in wealth, infrastructure, and power relations, impeding local and national governance strategies. Efforts to reduce textile waste inflows in 2016, for example, were impeded by the threat of import penalties on African goods to the USA, the largest exporter (600,000 tons in 2022).[4;5] Absent too are the voices of Africans living in these spaces and recognition of their actions, activism, and expertise.

[1]Cajeta Iheka, *African Ecomedia: Network Forms, Planetary Politics.* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2021), 26.
[2]Francois, Vergès, "Capitalocene, waste, race, and gender." *e-flux Journal*, 100 (2019):5, www.e-flux.com/journal/100/269165/capitalocene-waste-race-and-gender/.
[3]Andrew Brooks. *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes.* (London: Zed Books, 2015)
[4]Emil A.Wolff, "The global politics of African industrial policy: the case of the used clothing ban in Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda." *Review of International Political Economy 28*, no. 5 (2021):1308. https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2020.1751240
[5]Judit Kiss, "The Dichotomy of Second-Hand-Clothing Industry: The Case of Kenya." *HUN-REN Centre for Economic and Regional Studies, Institute of World Economics.* Working Paper Nr. 273 (2024): 18. https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep58742.

I argue that Nigerian interdisciplinary artist Victoria-Idongesit Udondian reshapes and subverts these narratives through her site-specific environmental art project *Okrika Reclaimed* (2025). She resists discourses apportioning blame to Africa for textile waste mismanagement through her exposition of the global networks and cultural flows connecting local sites receiving waste with global sites of production in a critique of neoliberal consumerism and fast fashion. She renders visible the creative resistance, resilience, and adaptability of those working and living at these local sites through activism, innovation, and regenerative practices extant in Kantamanto Market in Accra, Ghana, through her community engagement and collaboration.

Every week, 15 million garments enter Kantamanto, the largest second-hand market in West Africa.[6] Textile bales arrive in containers mainly from the UK and often via nonprofits like Oxfam.[7] Traders buy bales with unseen content. 40% are *'borla'*, unusable and discarded. Despite the environmental impact and local textile production diminishment, the market is a cultural hub and important source of income, supporting 39,000 workers.[8] Udondian situates *Okrika Reclaimed* at its heart, creating artwork through installation, costume design, performance, and digital content engaging the market community and waste spaces. She uses waste aesthetics and textiles to encode a critique of excess consumerism and 'the redemptive potential of waste.'[9]

Before completing a BA in Painting at the University of Uyo, an MFA in Sculpture/New Genres at Columbia University, and studying painting and sculpture at Showgen, Udondian, now an associate professor at the University at Buffalo, was a tailor and designer. Using textiles in her practice was a natural progression. Her use of second-hand textiles was inspired by the internationally acclaimed Ghanaian contemporary artist El Anatsui. His signature works of huge, shimmering, intricate, and sublimely beautiful sculptures created from liquor bottle tops and copper wire embody abstracted resonances of colonial histories, memory, and transformation. His artistry in giving value and new life to immediately available and accessible discarded everyday objects prompted Udondian to consider the materiality and historicity of used clothing, *Okrika*, a resource in abundance in Nigeria. For the past decade, her art has interrogated the global dynamics of the second-hand textile industry.

Okrika Reclaimed is the finale of Udondian's wider projects, exhibited in New York

[6] James Mensah, "The Global South as a Wasteland for Global North's Fast Fashion: Ghana in Focus." *American Journal of Biological and Environmental Statistics 9,* no. 3 (2023): 37. https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajbes.20230903.12.
[7] Alberta St John James & Anthony Kent, "Clothing Sustainability and Upcycling in Ghana." *Fashion Practice 11*, no. 3 (2019): 383. DOI: 10.1080/17569370.2019.1661601.
[8] St.John James, "Clothing Sustainabilty", 378.
[9] Iheka, *African Ecomedia*, 28.

(*How Can I Be Nobody* (2022/26), England (*Ofong Ufok*, 2023), and Italy (*Okrika Bale*, 2011), delineating and scrutinizing origins and flows of second-hand textiles culminating in the space of disposal, Ghana. These spatial and material connections are reiterated in *Okrika Reclaimed.*

Figure 1: Red carpet/runway, Kantamanto market, 12.7.25. Victoria Udondian.

The red carpet/runway constructed from market sourced, discarded textiles runs through Kantamanto's center. It recreates and recontextualizes the glamour of Western haute couture catwalks, the blueprint for high street fast fashion, and the prestige, wealth, success, and royalty symbolized by the red carpet. Caroline Evans, a fashion theorist, notes that runways have become theatrical spectacles that produce cultural and economic value in the Global North while obscuring environmental and social costs that are displaced elsewhere.[10] Here, the red carpet places the fashion industry and Global North wealth in relation to the results and end destination of its overproduction. The performance parade, a compered event watched by market traders and shoppers, replicates the theatricality of the catwalk.

Figure 2: Red carpet performance parade. Kantamanto market. 12.7.25. Image courtesy of Victoria-Idongesit Udondian.

[10] Caroline Evans, *Fashion at the Edge: Spectacle, Modernity and Deathliness.* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003).

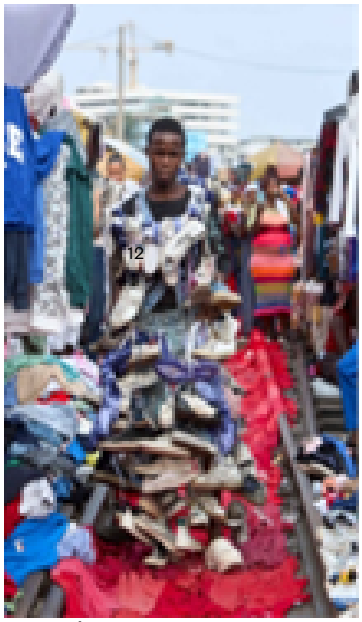

Figure 3a&b: costumes created from textile waste. Kantamanto market. 12.07.25. Udondian. https://okrikareclaimed.victoriaudondian.com/

An Oba and his Okyeame (advisor) lead the procession of models, many Kaya Yei, showcasing beautiful woven costumes and regalia, designed by Udondian and created from repurposed cast-off clothing. In Ghana, the equivalent Akan term for the Nigerian Okrika is *Obroni wawu,* translating as 'dead white man's clothing.'[11] According to sociologist Miriam Dzah, this phrase subverts the colonial narrative of 'Global South inhabitants as passive recipients of western waste ...[calling] attention to those responsible for the waste ... [and] with the power to overconsume.'[12] The term implies that the owner must have died to discard so much clothing. Figures 3a & b underscore this premise, conveying the absurdity of owning and wearing so many clothes.

Each cumbersome costume consists of countless unpaired shoes and bags of subpar quality, cascading over each wearer's body. The intended function of the items is rendered obsolete whilst excess and overconsumption is critiqued. In figures 4a, b, & c, the artist's photos spotlight some of the many labels, embedded in the carpet, of corporate brands using capitalist linear economic models of production that prioritize profit over sustainability.

Figure 4a, b&c: Brand labels embedded in the red carpet. Kantamanto market. 12.07.25 Udondian. https://okrikareclaimed.victoriaudondian.com/

[11] Kiss, "The Dichotomy of Second-Hand Clothing Industry.", 5.
[12] Miriam Emefa Dzah, "Toxic threads: Ghana confronts the fallout of the Global North's fast fashion habit" [Online], The Sociological Review Magazine. (2024). https://doi.org/10.51428/tsr.rukz7176.

Figure 5: Old Fadama settlement. Kaya Yei en route to dumpsite. 12.07.25. Udondian. https://okrikareclaimed.victoriaudondian.com/

Figure 6 a&b: Kaya Yei at Old Fadama dumpsite. 12.07.25. Udondian. https://okrikareclaimed.victoriaudondian.com/

The Kaya Yei, female head porters, continue the performance. Their magnificent sculptural headdresses represent the heavy used textile bales they carry through the market on their heads, a metaphor for the burden of waste textiles on the country. Walking from the red carpet at Kantamanto they plot the flow of discarded textiles produced in the Global North to sites of pollution bringing into focus and confronting the realities of waste colonialism and western disposal culture. Video footage following the route to the Old Fadama dumpsite captures its vastness and proximity to living spaces, inhabited by 100,000 people. The dump has devastating and long-term environmental impacts on the community

The burning of synthetic fabrics creates toxic fumes.[13] The clogging of water and drainage systems causes flooding, displacement, and disease whilst vital ecosystems are damaged, and soil fertility degraded.[14;15;16] Footage of Udondian (fig.7) wearing cloaks of sewn-together branded t-shirts, trying to extricate textile 'tentacles' from Jamestown beach as textile-laden waves roll in, signifies the exhausting and seemingly futile task of clearing waste and the endless inflows of waste coming from overseas.

[13] Brian K Gullett et al. "PCDD/F, PBDD/F, and PBDE Emissions from Open Burning of a Residential Waste Dump." *Environmental Science & Technology 44*, no. 1 (2009): 394–99.
[14] Adu-Boahen et al. "Waste Management Practices in Ghana: Challenges and Prospect, Jukwa Central Region." International Journal of Development and Sustainability 3, no. 3 (2014): 530–46;
[15] Rachel Bick, Erika Halsey, and Christine C. Ekenga. "The Global Environmental Injustice of Fast Fashion." *Environmental Health 17*, no. 1 (2018);
[16] Shadia Moazzem, Lijing Wang, Fugen Daver, and Enda Crossin. "Environmental Impact of Discarded Apparel Landfilling and Recycling." *Resources, Conservation and Recycling 166* (2021): 105338.

Figure 7: Self portrait of artist at Jamestown beach. 12.07.25. Udondian. https://okrikareclaimed.victoriaudondian.com/

Udondian resists and shifts narratives of blame to Western consumer culture by juxtaposing the materiality of Western excess and representations of the fashion industry, the locations of waste production, with the market and the mountainous dumpsite. This registers environmental impacts on lived experiences in sites where the outsourcing of the Global North's waste problem occurs. The project, through its community engagement and social practice, also gives space to the voices and actions of Ghanaians in the market.

Figure 8: Preparing Kaya Yei headdresses. Kantamanto market. July 25. Udondian. https://okrikareclaimed.victoriaudondian.com/

The spectacle of the red carpet serves as a stage to elevate and celebrate the Kaya Yei and showcase local creativity, expertise, and innovation. Contrary to other artists engaging with the excesses of global consumption, like Fabrice Monteiro, who omit a focus on waste workers, Udondian views this as critical.[17] In an earlier work within her overarching project, *Nsinam me ke ndi Owo - How can I be nobody* (New York 2024/26), Udondian sought to valorise and make visible immigrant women's unseen labour in the global textile industry and its gendered oppression.[18] Using recorded interviews and collaboratively creating sculptures and art, she highlighted their precarious positions in the fast fashion industry. She continues to highlight intersectionality of gender, race, and the global textile industry through her Kaya Yei collaboration. Together they created headdresses reflecting their stories and how the impact of the industry lies heavy on the bodies of women. Taking to the red carpet as star attractions, the women and their vital role in Kantamanto are given space, status, and rendered visible and valuable. Costumes on the runway demonstrate creativity in repurposing

[17] Iheka, *African Ecomedia*, 58.
[18] Okwunodu Ogbechie, Sylvester, Ayanna Dozier, Akil Kumarasamy, Moyo Okediji, and Rachel Vera Steinberg, *How Can I Be Nobody: Victoria-Idongesit Udondian*, (Munich: Hirmer Publishers, 2024), 7.

second-hand clothes, featuring hybrid creations using discarded and traditional textiles, like batik, foregrounding local textile production. Traditional craft techniques such as weaving, dyeing, 'threading', and braiding are used to transform discarded fabrics into powerful art and fashion. Working from Kantamanto, Udondian accomplishes this by utilizing the skills, ingenuity, and creativity of market workers.

Okrika Reclaimed engages directly with the local people and community-led initiatives and innovations through Udondian's partnership with Revival, a Kantamanto nonprofit. Revival is a community driven fashion initiative with a focus on education and job creation, aiming to 'create a resilient, sustainable fashion ecosystem...addressing the global impact of waste' and 'shifting the narrative of fashion waste from pollution to possibility.'[19] Its community initiatives include organising waste clean ups and workshops, promoting regenerative practices and providing spaces for skill acquisition in upcycling textiles for locals, artisans, and artists creating saleable art and fashion from textile waste. The circularity lab transforms textiles into new forms of production. A circular economy model, is central to Revival's ethos and encompassed in Udondian's art practice. The production of locally generated economic paradigms resonates with anthropologist and western development critic Arturo Escobar's concept of the 'pluriverse', a de-globalised, place-centered economic model driven by and evolving from communities and cultural knowledge that he envisions as critical to a sustainable future.[20] *Okrika Reclaimed* brings into view this vision of the future in its collaboration and centering of Kantamanto's

Figure 9: Costume made from batik cloth and woven/braided and dyed textile waste. Kantomanta market. 12.07.25

Figure 10 a&b: Community collaboration utilising skills of market workers. Kantamanto market. June 25. Udonidian.

[19] The Revival. https://www.therevival.earth/about.
[20] Arturo Escobar, "Sustainability: Design for the pluriverse", *Development* 54, no. 2, (2011): 138.

evolving ecosystem. Many more successful collectives and enterprises creating original art and fashion from waste contribute to this grassroots system, demonstrating agency, empowerment, and adaptability.

Analysis of Udondian's *Okrika Reclaimed* explicates how she holds power to account, exposing the hypocrisies and inequalities of waste colonialism whilst centering the activism of communities who demonstrate versatility, imagination, and dynamism in exploiting the potential of waste. Ghanaian communities are developing sustainable, culturally specific, locally evolved ecosystems that offer equality, alternatives to the excesses of capitalism, and a blueprint for the future of Africa and beyond.

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Militant-cum-Poet: Josina Machel's Poetry as Tools of Revolutionary Politicisation in Mozambique

Ebubechukwu Nwafor

Like her revolutionary contemporaries who weaponised poetry in the service of national liberation, Josina Machel's (1945-1971) poems were calls to arms, tools fashioned to mobilise the Mozambican populationduring the anti-colonial war. Fought for a decade, between 1964 and 1974, the Mozambican war for independence against Portuguese colonisation was a critical moment in the country's history which ushered in a socialist republic led by FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique or the Mozambique Liberation Front). Remembered popularly as a guerrilla fighter whose contributions to Mozambique's national liberation efforts were largely confined to the realm of armed struggle, Josina Machel must also be recognised as a poet whose writings served as didactic tools of revolutionary political mobilisation. I argue, here, that, through her poetry, Josina[1] demonstrates an unrelenting commitment to resistance. Her poems served to illustrate the context in which the anti-colonial struggle developed and reiterate its necessity, while also providing FRELIMO with an exemplar image of the New Mozambican Woman, wholly committed to the project of national liberation and post-independence nation-building.

I look at two poems here: "Essa é a Hora" (see appendix A) and "Poema sem Título" (see appendix B). "This is the Time" and "Untitled Poem" in English, respectively. These poems were written by Josina during the armed struggle and are republished in the book, *A Mulher Moçambicana na Revolução* by TraduAgindo in 2021. An English translation of "This is the Time" was published in 1974 in the English version of the book entitled *The Mozambican Woman in the Revolution*, produced by Canada-based solidarity organisation, Liberation Support Movement (see appendix C). The translator of the poem is not specified. Additionally, I did not find an English translation of "Untitled Poem", so I will largely rely on self-translations and Portuguese-language sources to form my analysis.

Reflecting FRELIMO's socialist politics at her time of writing, Josina adopts a militant inflection in her poetry that contributes to positioning her as a symbol of what FRELIMO came to term "A Mulher Moçambicana", or the "New Mozambican Woman."[2] FRELIMO's conception of the "Mulher Moçambicana" accompanied its construction of the "Homem Novo" (New Man), the ideal of the self-sacrificial patriot who is eager to contribute positively to socialist national construction.[3]

[1] I refer, here, to Josina Machel as Josina as this is how she is affectionately remembered by the Mozambican people.

[2] Josilene Silva Campos, "Literatura e Revolução: O Pensamento Político Da Frente de Libertação de Moçambique a Partir Dos Poemas de Combate (1962-1980)" (dissertation, 2022), 219.

[3] Morten Nielsen, "The Negativity of Times. Collapsed Futures in Maputo, Mozambique," *Social Anthropology* 22, no. 2 (May 2014): 213–26, https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12071, 214.

Writing at a time when FRELIMO began to marry the project of national liberation to the necessity of women's liberation,[4] Josina's poetry reflects FRELIMO's attempt to incorporate women into its anti-colonial war efforts. As explained by Josilene Campos, in Mozambican nationalist poetry, Josina is always heralded as the "personification of the New Mozambican Woman who will be born in the revolution and represents the intelligence and capacity of the Mozambican Woman."[5] This portrayal of Josina as the exemplar Mozambican Woman is partly the result of her role as one of the founders of the *Destacamento Feminino* (Women's Detachment; DF) among other leadership appointments within FRELIMO.[6]

In the first stanza of "This is the Time", Josina writes, "Our guns are light in our hands/ the reasons and aims/ of the struggle/ clear in our minds."[7] Typical of Josina's writing, devised to politicise, this literal diction leaves little room for misinterpretation. In alignment with FRELIMO's policy against individual authorship of artistic works during the revolutionary period until 2002,[8] Josina's deindividualisation is an attempt to centre the collective struggle and position herself as merely another militant and Mozambican. In employing the first-person plural, Josina harmonises her interests with those of the Mozambican masses and affirms a collective desire for liberation. Though there are many accounts by women veterans of the DF describing the weight of the guns they carried, among other challenges they faced during the armed struggle,[9] the image created here by Josina is one of ease. In this stanza, she constructs an image of a collective resignation to the necessity and responsibility to revolt.

This collective responsibility is emphasised in stanza two where Josina writes, "The blood shed by our heroes/ makes us sad but resolute./It is the price of our freedom."[10] Here, Josina presciently historicises her role within the armed struggle, ongoing at her time of writing, and the losses incurred during the war. Now considered a national hero and martyr of the revolution whose memory is

[4] Jonna Katto, *Women's Lived Landscapes of War and Liberation in Mozambique: Bodily Memory and the Gendered Aesthetics of Belonging* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), 48.
[5] Campos (2022), 219.
[6] *A Mulher Moçambicana Na Revolução,* TraduAgindo (TraduAgindo, 2021), https://traduagindo.com/2021/12/26/a-mulher-mocambicana-na-revolucao-pdf/, 57.
[7] *The Mozambican Woman in the Revolution (*Richmond, B.C., Canada: Liberation Support Movement, 1974), 27.
[8] Marco Roque de Freitas, "'In Heavy Rotation': Uncovering the Phonographic Industry and the 'NGOMA National Label' in Socialist Mozambique (1978–1990)," *Ethnomusicology Forum* 32, no. 1 (January 2, 2023): 73–96, https://doi.org/10.1080/17411912.2023.2168287, 81.
[9] For personal accounts of former DF during the liberation war, see Jonna Katto and João Figueiredo, 'A Avó Foi Guerrilheira' / 'Grandma Was a Guerrilla Fighter': Memórias de Vida Das Mulheres Que Lutaram Pela Independência de Moçambique No Norte Do Niassa / Women Who Fought for Mozambique's Independence in Northern Niassa, Jonna Katto (Helsinki: Jonna Katto, 2018), https://jonnakatto.com/grandmawasaguerrillafighter/.
[10] *The Mozambican Woman in the Revolution,* 27.

constantly invoked as a symbol of resistance, Josina's grappling with the memory of loss during struggle provides the masses with a language and logic with and through which to cope with her own loss and the loss of many other combatants in the anti-colonial war. This allusion to anonymous heroes whose sacrifices served to advance the struggle for national liberation is pervasive across the poetry produced by FRELIMO between 1966 and 1974.[11] The anonymous national hero is invoked to provide hope and revolutionary optimism for the masses as well as Josina's fellow guerrillas who were in the thick of the brutal armed struggle. As Campos writes, the construction of the "altruistic guerrilla" who gave their life for national liberation is a common trope across FRELIMO's revolutionary poetry.[12]

Further, throughout "This is the Time", Josina adopts a sober yet optimistic tone, alerting the masses about the challenges ahead, but affirming her vision of a guaranteed final victory. In the third stanza, she writes, "Ahead of us we see bitter hardships./ But we see also/ our children running free/ our country plundered no more."[13] Josina's resignation to the demands of the armed struggle marks her as the ideal candidate for glorification. FRELIMO's construction of the New Mozambican Woman, who sees submission to the revolution as a virtue and self-sacrifice as necessity often hinges on the memory and image of Josina, who is imagined as the defender of the liberation of Mozambican women.[14] Whether this image is at all liberating for the Mozambican woman is rarely interrogated, though it is noteworthy that this trope of the self-sacrificing guerrilla is not often explicitly gendered.

A contrast between this submissiveness to the revolution and submission to the Portuguese colonial regime is visible in "Untitled Poem". In this poem, Josina's tone is melancholic yet determined. In stanza one, she writes, "So many years of misery I live/ So many years of oppression I endure/ Torture and abuse I see/ And with nothing I can do, I remain silent."[15] Silence in the face of the naked violence of colonisation is characterised here as a condition imposed by force, which contrasts with the self-sacrificing that a militant imposes on herself as a requirement of the liberation struggle.

In this poem, Josina contextualises the armed struggle and defends its necessity by listing the many ways in which exploitation and oppression at the hands of the Portuguese manifested. Speaking directly to the Portuguese colonial system, she writes in stanza three,

[11] Campos (2022), 157.
[12] Ibid., 158.
[13] *The Mozambican Woman in the Revolution,* 27.
[14] Campos (2022), 158.
[15] *A Mulher Moçambicana Na Revolução,* TraduAgindo (TraduAgindo, 2021), https://traduagindo.com/2021/12/26/a-mulher-mocambicana-na-revolucao-pdf/, 49. (My translation).

"I have been your servant for centuries/ I suffer, I satisfy your desires, in short/ You make me a meek lamb/ And I endure this horror." Josina's use of "you" and "I" here serves to humanise the speaker, who could be any Mozambican who has lived under the iron fist of Portuguese colonial domination. Diverging from the collective voice employed in "This is the Time" that centres the masses rather than an individual, Josina's use of personal pronouns in "Untitled Poem" achieves the same anonymity while suggesting a personal hurt.

In the last stanza of "Untitled Poem", Josina writes, "You always try to chain me/ In my grass hut/ But the day will soon come/ When this nightmare will end." Here, Josina's conviction of not only the righteousness of her struggle, but also the guarantee of its victory is made clear. Her characterisation of the proverbial grass hut as a locale of imprisonment and underdevelopment in which she is chained, rather than a symbol of African culture as is often celebrated by Négritudists,[16] is emblematic of FRELIMO's revolutionary socialist politics which advanced the view that culture is not a static manifestation of an African essence, but a result of the development of the forces of production at a given time. For Josina, the nightmare is not only the chain, which is a clear symbol of oppression, but also the hut, which, in a settler colony like Mozambique, stands in stark contrast to the brick homes built by the Portuguese and is evidence of structural violence and dispossession.

Though Josina was one of the leaders of the *Destacamento Feminino* and worked closely with women militants during the armed struggle, her poems remain ungendered and do not address the particular concerns of Mozambican women under Portuguese colonial rule or during the war for liberation. Read generously, this is an attempt to deindividualise her poetry to allow for any Mozambican or colonised person to resonate with the themes she explores. However, Josina's omission of women's issues and her broad discussion of oppression and humiliation suffered by the masses give weight to the accusation that FRELIMO did not seek the emancipation of women through the recognition of women's unique struggles, but rather through the masculinisation of women.[17] This attempt to frame the struggle for women's emancipation as a finished job is central to how some FRELIMO officials continued to characterise Josina's contributions following her death.[18]

[16] Nduta Waweru, "Remembering Leopold Sedar Senghor on His Death Anniversary," *This is Africa*, December 20, 2017, https://thisisafrica.me/politics-and-society/remembering-leopold-sedar-senghor/#:~:text=Greetings%20Africa%20on%20the%20day,his%20political%20and%20literary%20lives.

[17] Sonia Nhantumbo and Maria Paula Meneses, "Inventário Das Actividades Com Abordagem de Género Em Cursos Realizados Na UEM Nos Últimos 25 Anos," *Estudos Moçambicanos,* no. 21 (2005): 105–29, 112.

[18] Maria Tavares, "Karingana Wa Karingana: Representations of the Heroic Female in Mozambique," *Gender, Empire and Postcolony: Luso-Afro-Brazilian Intersections,* 2014, 175–90, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137340993.0018, 5.

Josina's poems, nevertheless, were nationalist weapons which complemented the guns carried by FRELIMO guerrillas during the armed struggle. Like the guns, wielded with the intention of inflicting reparative harm on the colonial system to bring its vicious exploitation to an end, Josina's poetry served to correct the damage inflicted on the Mozambican psyche and mobilise the population for revolution. Thus, Josina's militant poems helped to buttress the dominant image advanced by FRELIMO which portrayed her as the New Mozambican Woman par excellence.

Appendix A: "Essa é a Hora"

Poemas de Josina Machel

Essa é a Hora

Josina Machel

Essa é a hora
nós estávamos todos esperando
nossas armas são leves em nossas mãos
as razões e objetivos
da luta
são claros em nossas mentes

O sangue derramado por nossos heróis
nos deixa tristes, mas decididos
É o preço da nossa liberdade
Nós os mantemos perto de nossos corações
do seu exemplo novas gerações
-- gerações revolucionárias --
já estão nascendo

À nossa frente, vemos dificuldades amargas
Mas nós vemos também
nossas crianças correndo livres
nosso país não mais saqueado

Esta é a hora de estarmos prontos
e firmes
A hora para nos entregarmos
para a revolução

Appendix B: “Poema sem título”

Poema sem título

Josina Machel

Tantos anos de miséria vivo
Tantos anos de opressão aturo
Torturas e maus tratos vejo
E sem nada poder fazer, me calo.

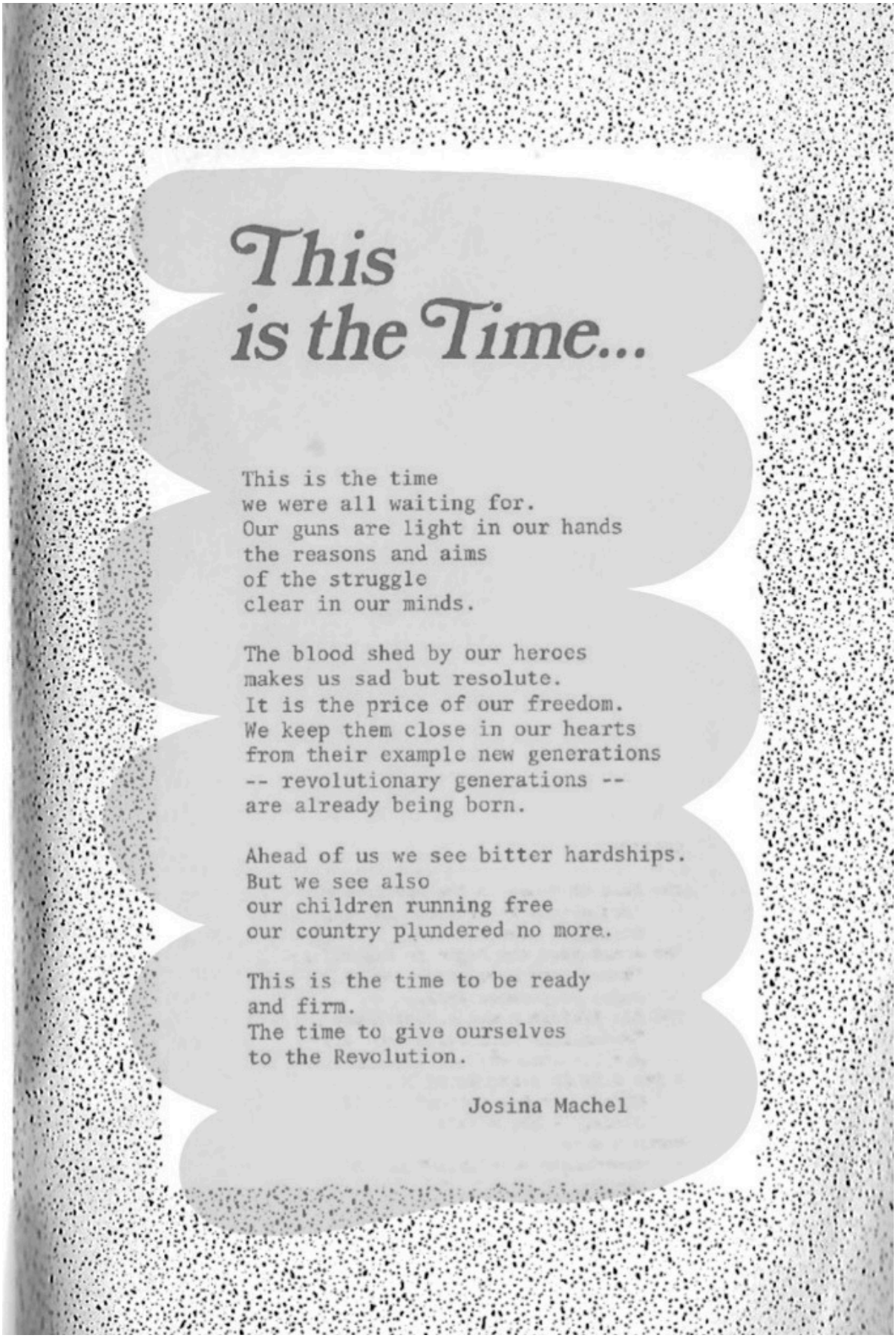
De toda a maneira sou explorado
Escravizado e oprimido também
Apesar de tudo isto me ensinas
A ouvir, ver e dizer: Obrigado!

Sou de há séculos teu servidor
Sofro, satisfaço, teus desejos, em fim
Fazes de mim um cordeiro manso
E eu paciento este horror.

Sou preso, algemado
Meu sacrificio é doloroso
E nem te arrepias sequer
Do teu cinismo maldoso.

Procuras sempre acorrentar-me
Na minha palhota de capim
Mas o dia não tardará a chegar
Em que este pesadelo terá fim.

Appendix C: "This is the Time"



This is the Time...

This is the time
we were all waiting for.
Our guns are light in our hands
the reasons and aims
of the struggle
clear in our minds.

The blood shed by our heroes
makes us sad but resolute.
It is the price of our freedom.
We keep them close in our hearts
from their example new generations
-- revolutionary generations --
are already being born.

Ahead of us we see bitter hardships.
But we see also
our children running free
our country plundered no more.

This is the time to be ready
and firm.
The time to give ourselves
to the Revolution.

Josina Machel

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