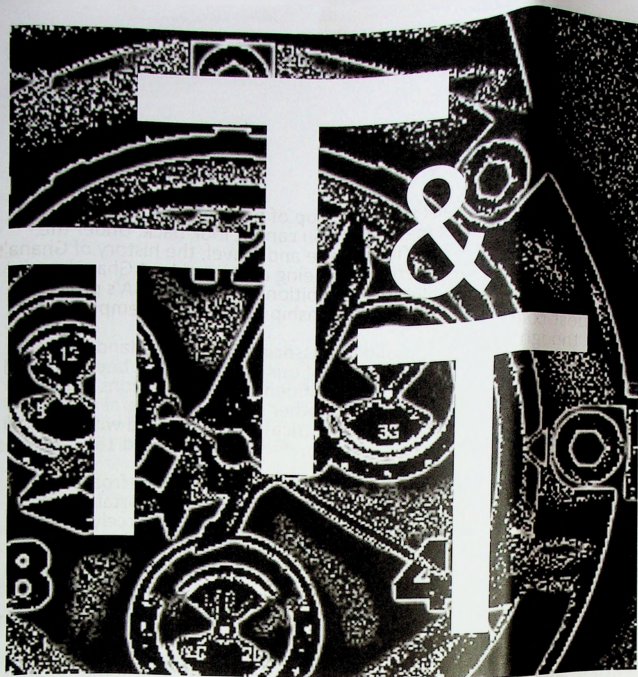




Bernard Akoi-Jackson
Dorothy Akpene Amenuke
Serge Clottey
Zachary Formwalt
Iris Kensmil
Aukje Koks
Navid Nuur
Jeremiah Quarshie
Katarina Zdjelar

TIME, TRADE AND TRAVEL

AN EXHIBITION OF GHANAIAN AND DUTCH ARTISTS

24 NOVEMBER 2012- 10 FEBRUARY 2013

NUBUKE FOUNDATION, 7 ADAMAFIO CLOSE, EAST LEGON, ACCRA

Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday 10:30 am – 5:30pm
Sunday 12 noon – 4:00pm

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ORY

Time, trade and Travel

There is no turning back when a group of people encounter another, however this does not mean that you cannot look back. Under the broad umbrella of a title-Time, Trade and Travel, the history of Ghana's encounter with the Netherlands is being examined by 4 Ghanaian and 5 Dutch artists. In particular, this exhibition is part of SMBA's project 1975 – an exploration of the relationship between contemporary art and post-colonialism.

Even though Ghanaians would not associate the Netherlands directly with our colonial past, a large part of our way of life has been affected and still continues to be indirectly influenced by the actions of the Netherlands as a colonial power in other countries. Several norms, cultural practices and identity are intricately intertwined with items of trade brought in by the trading companies in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The artists have examined the concept of the exhibition from diverse angles- the legacy of institutions which now sit uncomfortably with each other, the question of identity which oversteps fiercely guarded national borders with several challenges thrown to the viewer to ponder on what is deemed to be the 'status quo'.

Nubuke Foundation is especially keen that young artists and students learn about curatorial practice and research based approach to working as was employed by the 9 artists- Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Dorothy Akpene Amenuke, Serge Clottey, Zachary Formwalt, Iris Kensmil, Aukje Koks, Navid Nuur, Jeremiah Quarshie, Katarina Zdjelar. In this regard, the exhibition will open with an Art Talk forum providing the platform for an exchange of ideas with the artists and curators.

Curators Jelle Bouwhuis, Kerstin Winking from SMBA, Amsterdam and Kofi Setordji and Odile Tevie, Nubuke Foundation, Accra



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Texts: Jelle Bouwhuis, kerstin Winking,
Odile Tevie, Kofi Setordji

Photo Credits: Gert-Jan van Rooij

TIME, TRADE & TRAVEL

25 August - 21 October 2012
Opening: Saturday 25 August, 5 – 7 p.m.

With: Bernard Akoi-Jackson, Dorothy Akpene Amenuke, Serge Clottey, Zachary Formwalt, Iris Kensmil, Aukje Koks, Navid Nuur, Jeremiah Quarshie, *kari'kachã seid'ou*, Katarina Zdjelar.
In collaboration with the Nubuke Foundation, Accra, Ghana

'Time, Trade & Travel' is an exhibition resulting from the collaboration between Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam and the Nubuke Foundation in Accra. The collaboration included research trips to Ghana and The Netherlands by the respective curatorial teams and artists who were invited to participate in the exhibition. The exchange gave all participants the opportunity to get an impression of each other's practices, the circumstances in which we work and our art infrastructures, as well as the cultural, economic, social and historical contexts. It also gave us the opportunity to learn from the very process of such an exchange and the discussions that come with it, as well as from the obstacles that needed to be overcome. The exhibition is a way of presenting this process to our audiences both in The Netherlands and Ghana, as it will travel to the Nubuke Foundation in Accra right after the exhibition in Amsterdam closes.

Grouping the works under the sweeping exhibition title 'Time, Trade & Travel' is a curatorial decision that points to the collaboration's extended focus on the complexities of global exchange fostered by capitalism and its effects on life and art. 'Time, Trade and Travel' launched the participating artists on a quest into the historical encounters between Europeans and Africans, a quest in which trading and the concomitant cultural exchange receive particular attention. From their various individual perspectives the artists examined the ways in which the economic and cultural relations of the past are continuing to have an effect in the present. The exhibition functions as a platform for the presentation of their artistic inquiries into pre-colonial trade and colonial legacies and their traces in continuing imperialistic relations. As a starting point we rely in part on the age-old trading relations between what is present-day Ghana and The Netherlands, a relationship that was officially affirmed by the cities of Amsterdam and Accra in a mutual 'agreement on cooperation' in 2004.

More concretely, Ghana's long-standing relation with Europe is manifested through the forts located along the country's coastline. Many of these edifices can be visited today, but they also appear in drawings and writings made centuries ago, for instance in a book by Pieter de Marees about his year-long journey to West Africa and the *Gout Koninkrijk van Gunee* (Gold Kingdom of Guinea) that was published in 1602 in Amsterdam. Apart from a range of sociological and anthropological studies of the people living along the Gold Coast, the publication includes a study of the economy. That was of special interest to De Marees, as he in fact accompanied a mercantile expedition. Many of the forts mentioned by De Marees still exist, and appear as site features in some of the works made for 'Time, Trade & Travel'. The forts symbolize the commercial spirit that brought Europeans to West Africa, and De Marees's book gives a good impression of the European activities in that area. However, 'Time, Trade & Travel' does not cover a specific period or theme, but deals with a multitude of subjects resulting from the long-term contact between the peoples from these different geographical areas. It does not shy away from looking at the harrowing aspects of these relations, but does not focus solely on them. In the works by Iris Kensmil and Bernard Akoi-Jackson for instance, the practice of slavery is consciously touched upon from an accentuated temporal distance.

Again, it is not the exhibition's intention to scrutinize in detail the long relations between Ghana and The Netherlands as professional historians would do, and already have done. The exhibition rather provides us with the possibility of engaging with the contemporary economic relations that connect Europeans and Africans and the cultural consequences following from them. Just like Kensmil and Akoi-Jackson, who indirectly deal with the legacy of slavery in divergent ways, Serge Clottey and Jeremiah Quarshie, the youngest participants in this exhibition, touch upon the issue of slavery as a present-day phenomenon. They presuppose that forms of slavery continue to take place in form of dubious employment contracts from which the one party profits more than the other, and under which people are evaluated differently on the basis of

their descent. In this sense, the colonial system that divided people into civilized and uncivilized continues to exist, albeit in altered, contemporary forms.

The legacy of British colonial rule is also still concretely present in Ghana. Zachary Formwalt directs attention to a railroad that in many ways sums up an exploitative colonial past and the more recent history of the decline of this mode of transportation in Ghana, and in a way glances toward a more prospective future based on recent oil discoveries off the country's shores. Both Formwalt and Katarina Zdjelar had the opportunity to produce their work on the spot while travelling through Ghana as part of the exchange program. Zdjelar became specifically aware of the role of national cultural institutions in Ghana: as early and proud manifestations of post-independence Ghana, they never seemed to have functioned like their counterparts in Europe, where the institutionalization of culture has functioned as an important instrument for the formation of a national consciousness.

The only participant who calls the nature of an exchange project like 'Time, Trade and Travel' into question is Dorothy Akpene Amenuke. Exchanges have always been present, everywhere. They are part of life. What then would we gain from this specific exchange if it would not be another attempt to dominate something? As such, each exchange has a soft side and a hard edge, inside and outside.

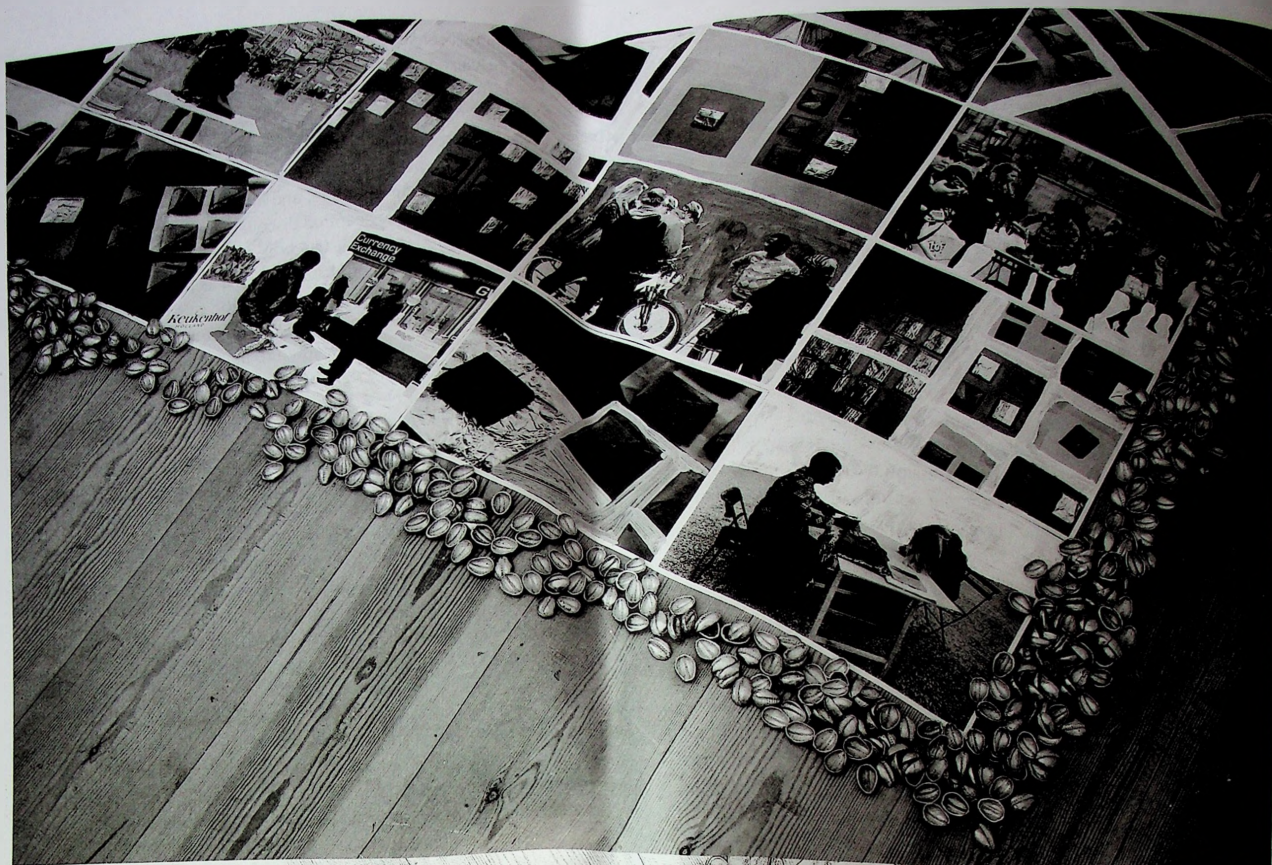
Besides the more detailed descriptions of each artist's work, this Newsletter includes an article about *kari'kachã seid'ou*, an art tutor and (former) artist living and working in Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city and the old kingdom's capital. From his work and attitude it becomes clear that one needs to stand up against the art academy, which in Ghana means an apparently late-colonial restriction to painting and sculpture only, and create a notion of an expanded art field. Since he fulfills the function of a tutor at the College of Art he is able to deeply criticize his working environment, up to a level that this tutorship is practiced on the university campus rather than at the college itself. *kari-kacha seid'ou* is himself perhaps the most radical embodiment of his teachings. One of his students is Bernard Akoi-Jackson, whose contribution for 'Time, Trade and Travel' is distributed over various institutional locations, taking *seid'ou*'s notion of the expanded field to heart. Another element of his presentation is a recording of a performance at Ussher Fort in Accra, but Jackson also tried to set up an informal, temporary chocolate trading station on both Amsterdam's Dam and Museum Square.

As a matter of fact, the Nubuke Foundation itself is shaped by ideas akin to those of *kari'kachã seid'ou*. It is this privately-run institute's aim to foster and exhibit practices that offer alternatives to stiff traditions in Ghana – not only academic traditions, but also versatile craft traditions that face the danger of becoming either extinct or tourist clichés under the logic of globalization, in the form of cheap industrial imports from abroad. The works of Aukje Koks and especially Navid Nuur in this exhibition are examples of creative emulations of indigenous material culture in Ghana. This brings us to the stake that SMBA has in this exchange project. As an institute dedicated to prospective artists living in The Netherlands, and specifically Amsterdam, and offering them a context that can measure up to international standards, it is always a challenge to define precisely what internationalism means, and how it might be redefined under the changing conditions of globalization. The art world and its morals are inextricably linked to economic systems and thus reflect the uneven distribution of capital around the globe. But there is no reason whatsoever why aesthetic judgment would have to follow that itinerary; on the contrary. It should be said here that none of the participating artists from The Netherlands, who in fact have different national backgrounds, had ever set foot on African soil (whereas all of the Ghanaians in fact had been in Europe at least once before). That simple observation already signifies a break with what we could now call the not-so-standard paradigm anymore.

Jelle Bouwhuis and Kerstin Winking (Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam)
Kofi Setordji and Odile Tevie (Nubuke Foundation)

'Time, Trade and Travel' is to be seen at the Nubuke Foundation, Accra, from 25 November 2012 to 3 February 2013.
www.nubukefoundation.org

For overviews and more background information of the exhibition, see
<http://project1975.smba.nl>



Bernard Akoi-Jackson uses a wide range of media and working methods. He produces paintings, poetry, murals, photography and video works, installations, and dances. His profound treatment of subjects, varying from the effects of globalisation in Ghana to post-colonial African identities, is usually infused with his sense of humour and understanding of our complex reality.

His work for 'Time, Trade & Travel' alludes to the lost wax process used in textile and indigenous brass casting industries and deals with the legacies of the post-colonialist enterprise. Playing with this loss, Akoi-Jackson argues that something may be lost in one culture but may be gained in another. In the same vein, he proposes that identities may not be entirely lost when dominated by another. He presents banners with, in his own words, "Fantasy" figures, fashioned out of a range of symbolic, fictive, historical objects, which he names Blueman, Goldman, Dutchman and Greyman. Each 'constructed' figure seems to refer to different historical characters in colonial and post-colonial discourse with tongue-in-cheek allusions to history. Although it is difficult to associate Blueman with any European colonizer in the 17th or 18th century, there is the inkling of the referral of Dutch colonizers to the Indonesians as 'Blumen'. Indonesians were dyeing fabric and literally looked blue upon contact with the Dutch traders of bygone centuries. All of these characters wear, hold, drape or use the wax print referred to on the Ghanaian market as 'Akyikydie ekyi'. This implies a shared ownership of an object wherefore none of the characters can actually claim to be the exclusive owner of the 'Dutch wax'. In a way his work stimulates us to see identity as an ambivalent construct; an infinite process; one cannot position oneself comfortably because neither society nor history are static. The banners are a reminder that identities have been developed via the intermingling of cultures through travel, trade and time. This particular perspective on identity is reinforced by the way his photos are presented: the banners are inspired by the fashion advertisements of the Dutch wax print company Vlisco, and they represent a similar constructed dream world or the colourful and paradisiacal hyper-reality that can be seen in the Vlisco ads. Their

Bernard Akoi-Jackson

transparency also presents a sort of unnerving take on the haziness of our shared histories. Moreover, Akoi-Jackson uses Ussher Fort, a manifestation of European involvement with West Africa, as a site for production. The fort was built by the Dutch in 1649, functioned as a bastion, police station and is currently being restored by UNESCO and the European Union to become a museum since it is a World Heritage site. By choosing this location Akoi-Jackson engages with this history that continues to haunt and taunt this collective project of SMBA and the Nubuke Foundation to a large extent. To emphasize the ways in which his artwork is part of the process of exchange, not only between the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam and the Nubuke Foundation, between Amsterdam and Accra, but also in a greater, globalized cultural context, Akoi-Jackson additionally presents his banners in other cultural institutions and locations in Amsterdam and in Accra.

Bernard Akoi-Jackson (1979, Accra, Ghana) graduated from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with an MFA in 2006. Bernard's several solo exhibitions included 'Work and Happiness' (2006) at the Goethe Institut in Accra, 'Agoo: Topologies of Ghana' (2007) at the Arte Hotel-Restaurant in Weinheim, Germany. Other group shows are 'On Dilettantism' (2011) at the Galerie ACC in Weimar, Germany, and 'The Beautiful Ones are not yet born' (2012) at the Goethe Institut in Accra.



Dorothy Akpene Amenuke

How Far How Near by Dorothy Akpene Amenuke is comprised of pieces of fabric such as Dutch Wax and jute sacks, among other things, which Amenuke conceptually loads with historical and symbolic meaning. "It has been noted that in the 15th and 16th century textiles represented the most important category of imports to Africa, about 50.6 %," the artist explains. "Textiles have since been an important point of exchange and interaction between West Africa, and for that matter Ghana, and the Netherlands. With time, other countries have joined in this textile import, in exchange for the gold, timber, cocoa and other commodities from Ghana." For *How Far How Near* Amenuke combines raw yarns and kente strips with other textiles and wax, and in so doing she reclaims the country's cultural and natural resources for her own ends.

Apart from textiles, *How Far How Near* consists of parts and symbols of the items that Ghana exchanges with other countries, such as mirrors and sugar, guns and ivory. In Amenuke's view various identities have been created, as such items have been attributed to certain people, whether they made them or not (think of the jute sacks, or Dutch Wax, that is often seen as typically African). With *How Far How Near*, Amenuke seeks to employ the 'Time, Trade & Travel' exhibition as a podium for her explorations of these cultural, social and economic exchanges. She also emulates artistic identities such as an expressive, mask-like face, colour compositions which resemble Matisse's late work, and an abstract-geometric composition in orange, the symbolic colour of The Netherlands. In an artistic as well as economic sense, *How Far How Near* is like any kind of identity: a patchwork and the ephemeral result of exchanges.

Amenuke re-conquers spaces that are conventionally reserved for people of certain identities, traditionally determined by economics, religion, or social status. She questions and challenges the possibility of such flatly fixed identities and undermines their conceptual validity through her art. As is the case in 'Time, Trade & Travel', her work is site-specifically conceptualized, in so far as it reacts to the context in which it is shown. The use of fabric is a recurring feature of the artist's works. They encourage interactions with the audience that go beyond the curiosity of a bystander, and urge viewers to engage with them in various ways: they are invited to walk around and sometimes also to sit and lay down on them. Touch might be as important as sight and smell - in fact these are all essential to the experience and understanding of her works.

Dorothy Akpene Amenuke (1968) lives and works in Kumasi, Ghana. She is a graduate of Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and has MFA in sculpture. She was in residency at the Apexart program in New York in 2007, the Art Omi International in 2009, and participated in workshops by the Kuona Trust in Kenya, Dwayers workshop in Egypt and Minnesota, USA, and has just finished a mixed media workshop at Haystack School, Maine, USA, as a recipient of the Howard Kestenbaum/Vijay Paramsothy International Fellowship. Currently she is a lecturer in the sculpture department of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana.



My lifetime (Malaika) by Katarina Zdjelar

During her stay in Accra, Katarina Zdjelar attended and recorded rehearsals of Ghana's National Symphony Orchestra in the National Theatre. The players are performing *Malaika*, a cheerful and empowering composition that was famously performed by musicians like Miriam Makeba, Harry Belafonte, Boney M. and many others.

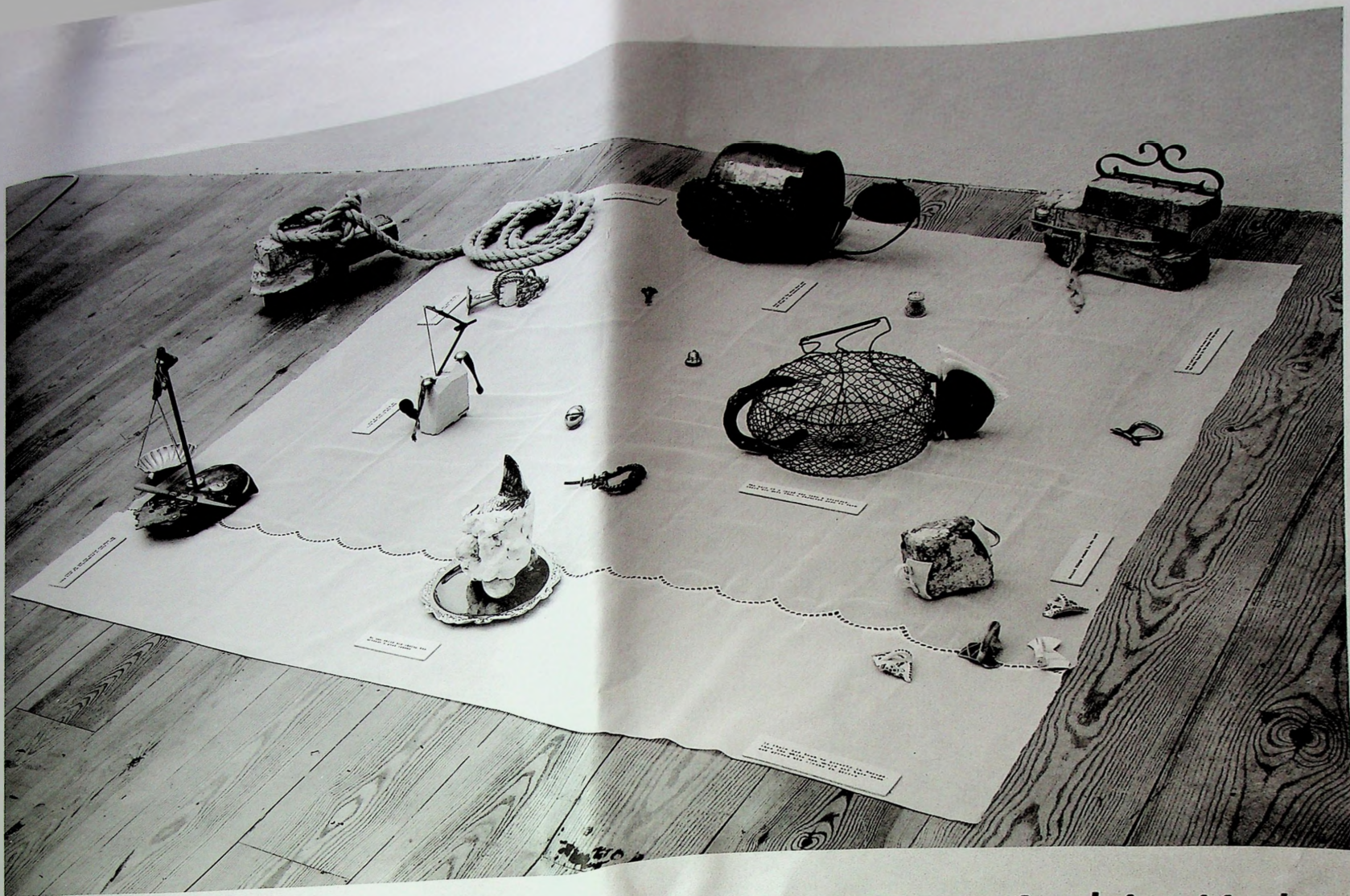
Zdjelar's *My lifetime (Malaika)* video directs attention to the discrepancy between the fact that, on the one hand, the Western musical tradition has never fully become part of Ghanaian culture and, on the other, the fact that the Ghanaian state continues sponsoring a national symphony orchestra. The orchestra originates from the late 1950s when Ghana, under the leadership of Kwame Nkrumah, had become independent from the United Kingdom. Back then, Nkrumah's government introduced new cultural structures in order to establish and enforce national consciousness and make the shift from colonial rule to an independent country which related to the ideas of the middle course, in accordance with the states in the Developing World. However, to establish new institutions of culture also means to introduce a new attitude. Traditional culture and music is functional and participatory, hence a gap between the audience and performers was created, dividing an on-stage body of doers and an off-stage body of spectators. This reorganization of spatial and behavioral conditioning suggested the formation of a new citizen who appreciates rather than only participates in music, and therefore changes traditional applications and functions of music and its presence in the public domain.

Being part of the political and cultural legacy of its founder Nkrumah, the national orchestra today has become an institution which cannot be abolished without provoking political turmoil, but which at the same time is too insignificant in contemporary Ghanaian society to be supported financially; thus, the orchestra's existence simply remains ambiguous. The indetermination that seems to resonate through the instruments, which are ideologically connected to the stereotypical image of the ever-so-civilized European colonialist, reflects the lack of being embedded in traditional and local values. It is telling that the players have to negotiate their time, and shift between different social roles, as they need to have additional jobs to be able to support themselves and, because of that, are unable to attend, late for or tired during the rehearsals.

My lifetime (Malaika) is neither a portrait of the musicians, nor is it a documentary about the National Symphony Orchestra of Ghana. With great sensitivity Zdjelar rather deploys the orchestra in order to draw a aural and visual sketch of a complicated state of affairs in which grand ideas and the mechanism of a nation state project takes root in and affects individuals. In so doing, she touches upon a discussion that is very relevant to many young Ghanaian artists and intellectuals, which concerns the degree to which they should adopt or draw on cultural traditions brought into the country by the historical colonial powers and their successors. The difficulties these artists face are grounded in the fact that colonial and local structures have become intermingled in such complicated ways that at times it is impossible to distinguish them from each other.

Katarina Zdjelar (Belgrade, 1979) is based in Rotterdam, where she studied at the Piet Zwart Institute from 2004 to 2006. In 2010 and 2011 she was a resident at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Her work has been exhibited internationally in solo exhibitions, in venues such as TENT, Rotterdam (2009), the Centre d'Art Contemporain, Fribourg (2010) and the Serbian Pavilion at the 53rd Venice Biennial (2009), and in group exhibitions in, among others, the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo (2010); Art Sheffield (2010); the 57th October Salon, Belgrade (2011); Muzeum Sztuki, Łódź (2012) and The Power Plant Contemporary Art Gallery, Toronto (2012).





Aukje Koks

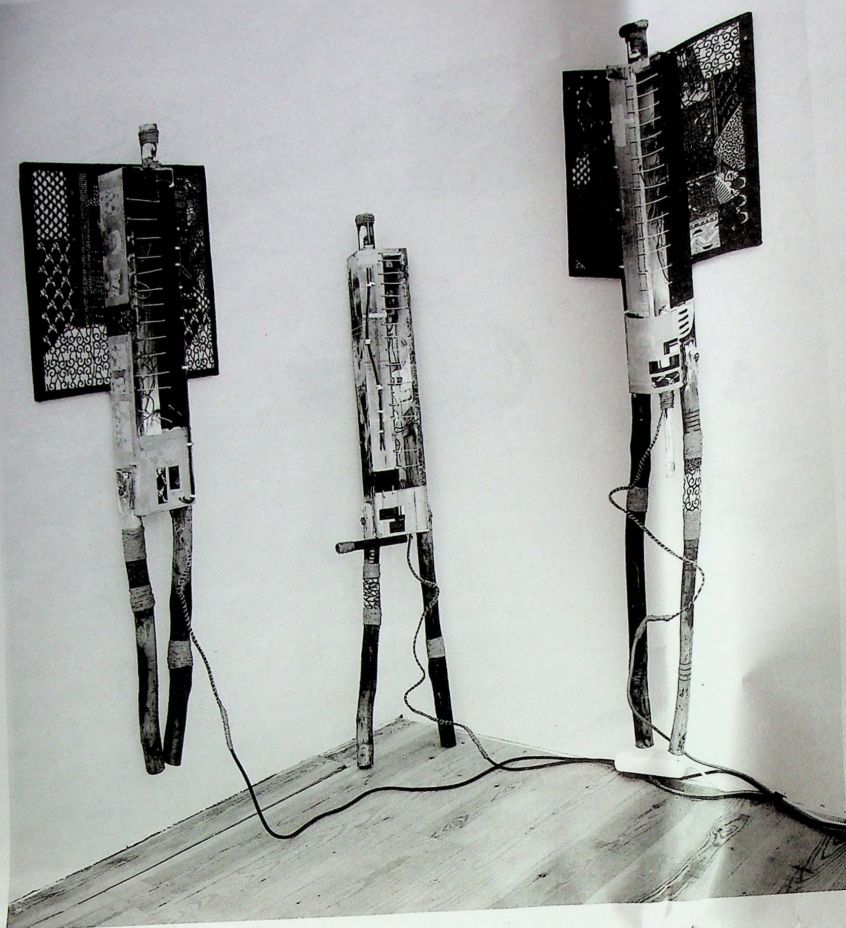
In the framework of 'Time, Trade & Travel', Aukje Koks presents an installation of objects including a copper pan, a rope, a strainer and a knife, which she bought at flea markets in The Netherlands or Belgium. Her selection is based on historical accounts such as Pieter de Marees' 1602 book, which mentions objects brought to West Africa by Dutch travelers. When reading such accounts, Koks was intrigued by how the African people treated the Dutch objects. Small metalwork such as keys and padlocks were partly copied and sometimes used for purposes other than in Europe. What fascinates her is that the historic accounts state that many European things received a different, perhaps even a symbolic meaning in Ghana and, more important, how the Dutch took advantage of this by attempting to adapt their merchandise to Ghanaian symbolic 'jargon'.

While in everyday life in the Netherlands these things were functional, in West Africa some objects received a new meaning. Koks however does not try to illustrate or explain this process to us. Instead the work testifies to the artist's attempts to create a comparable new symbolic meaning by using objects similar to those that were once exported to the Gold Coast. She does so with the help of Ashanti proverbs. In Koks' contribution the proverbs function – not unlike religious stories in Northern Renaissance painting – as points of reference or anecdotal evidence for the reading and interpretation of the artwork. Her main literary resource is Robert Sutherland Rattray's *Ashanti Proverbs*, published in England in 1916.

Koks chose to work with Rattray's book because the proverbs tell about the everyday life and culture of the Ashanti, as well as about the encounter with Westerners. "If there had been no poverty in Europe," one of the Ashanti proverbs goes, "then the white man would not have come and spread his cloths in Africa." From this proverb Koks extracts the gesture of presenting things on a piece of cloth spread on the ground, ostensibly like stuff found at street markets. Another proverb says, "When you eat the white man's pay, you fight at the cannon's mouth." This one inspired the copper pan "cannon" arranged on the same cloth. Of course, not all Ashanti proverbs speak of relations between Europeans and Africans. "The ears of a chieftain are like a strainer; there are more than a thousand ways to them" is connected to the traditional chieftaincy system that is still effective in contemporary Ghana. It obviously inspired Koks's strainer object.

Through her work Roks examines whether it is possible to understand a culture by using a symbolic system that was shaped by another culture. Although an artist employs a kind of idiosyncratic language, her arrangements nevertheless trigger the search of meaning, in which misunderstandings are preprogrammed. The objects she arranges become points of reference or anecdotal evidence on the basis of which (his) stories are constructed.

Julie van Goyen (b. 1977) studied at the AKV/St. Joost Academy of Art and Design in Breda in the Netherlands. In 2005 she was awarded the Dutch Royal Award for Painting. She completed a residency at the Rijksakademie voor beeldende kunst in Amsterdam in 2008 and a residency at Wiels in Brussels in 2011, which was followed by a solo exhibition there. Other recent solo exhibitions were to be seen at the Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam (2012) and Galerie Diana Stigter, Amsterdam (2011).



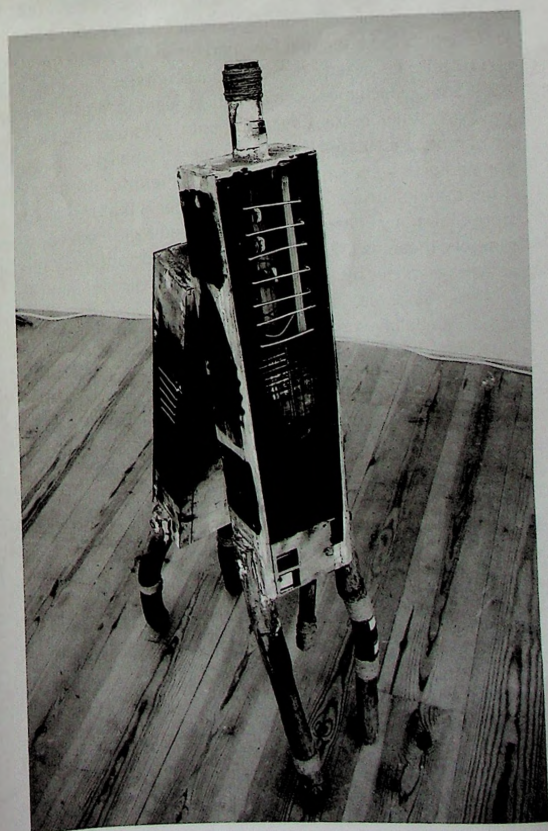
Serge Clottey

Inside Serge Clottey's studio are a plethora of found objects, giving an insight to what motivates this passionate young artist whose concern about heedless inaction in society always drives him into action – or rather, reaction. By using waste materials he protests the lack of concern for the environment, and the materials as well. Recently objects like plastic jerry cans imported from Turkey, which are found in many Ghanaian cities and villages being used for water storage, have found their way into his works.

These brightly coloured yellow containers are eye-piercing reminders of the things which spur on Clottey's creativity, such as the imbalances of economic empowerment in this 'free' world, and lack of access to potable water. He uses his artwork to illustrate just how, even in their main cities, Ghanaians are still struggling for the basic amenities of life. The jerry cans represent more than that to him though. He uses them in his sketch for the Nubuke Foundation's '631957632012' exhibition, which took a critical look at Ghana's independence celebrations. On this occasion, Clottey engaged audiences in the streets and in 'formal' working environments by carrying his own jerry can. By this action he made a statement about how very essential his jerry can was for accessing water, even for the well-heeled.

In his work for 'Time, Trade & Travel' Clottey looks at the ways in which Ghanaians try to distance themselves from those social practices that have traditionally been associated with foreign slave traders, and points the finger back to the way veiled 'slavery' practices still exist today. Embedded in his work are hidden stories of slavery, prostitution and inhumane working conditions, with sculpture bearing the marks and scars of branding employing Ghanaian symbolism, whilst at the same time baring the inner workings of people's minds. The green rectangular bottles of Henkes' *schnapps* are one of those objects with manifold cultural symbolic meanings, as it is the 'drink of Kings' that to this day is used for many ceremonies from birth to death. However this liquor, first brought to Ghana by Dutch merchants in the beginning of the 18th century as part of the trade in gold, ivory, wax prints (and eventually used cars), accompanied the trade in human beings as well. Clottey's work *Seen in a different light* brings this equivocal status of *schnapps* and its history to mind.

Serge Attukwei Clottey (1985, Accra, Ghana) lives and works in Accra. He is a graduate of Escola Guignard University of Arts in Belo Horizonte, Brazil and Ghanatta College of Arts and Design in Accra. Clottey has participated in group exhibitions including 'Un/tying the Human Spirit' (2008), 'Cultures in Confluence' (2011), and 'The Beautiful Ones are not yet born' (2012) in the Goethe Institut in Accra, as well as the 'Alternative Independence Day Celebration' (2012) at the Nubuke Foundation in Accra.





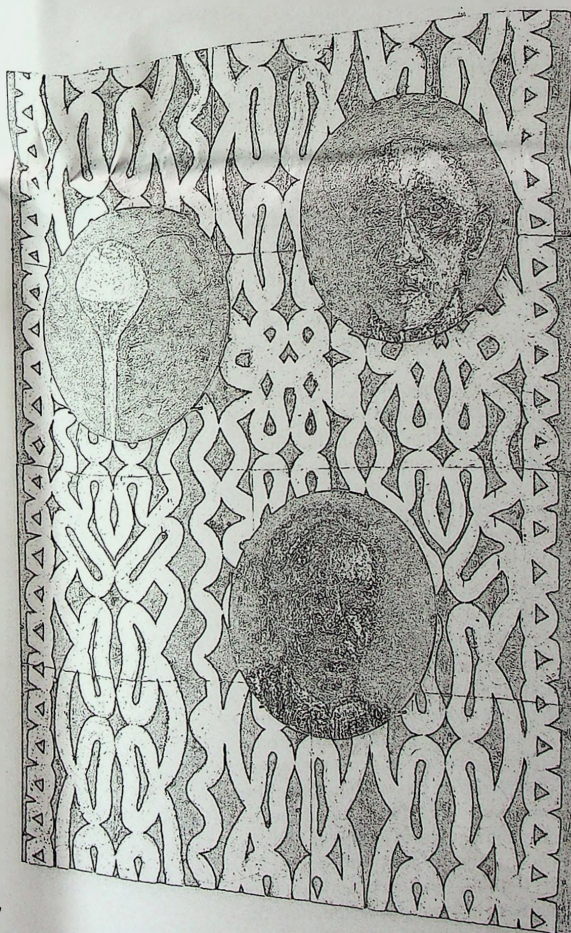
Iris Kensmil

Iris Kensmil's contribution to 'Time, Trade & Travel' consists of a series of works produced by means of different techniques. Apart from the diptych composed of *Saramacca Door* and *Akan Chief*, two panels processed with wax, oil sticks, pigments and other materials, Kensmil made silkscreen prints of photographs showing W.E.B. Dubois, and the video *Three Ghanaians*.

During her visit to Ghana, Kensmil was struck by the many resemblances between Ghana and Surinam: the people, the light, the handicrafts and the chief tradition, which directly inspired *Saramacca Door* and *Akan Chief*. While in Ghana chieftaincy is part of the relations between (former) tribes and land as property, in Surinam the old form of chieftaincy took on a new meaning for the maroons, who consider it constituting a self-conscious attitude towards the central (colonial) state. The subject of chieftaincy has inspired earlier works by Kensmil, who explores the history and actuality of black people's emancipation. This interest also brought her to the W.E.B. Du Bois Memorial Centre For Pan African Culture in Accra, where she interviewed people about their visions of Ghana's future. The focus is not so much on individual interests, but rather on collective, multicultural societal aspects.

The resulting *Three Ghanaians* video contains fragments of an interview with Esi Sutherland-Addy, who is a research fellow and head of the language, literature and drama section of the Institute of African Studies at the University of Ghana. Sutherland-Addy also is the daughter of the Ghanaian theatre pioneer Efua Theodora Sutherland and William Sutherland, a central figure in the pan-African movement. Other parts of the video involve Kensmil's talks with Adebayo Adeyemi, the research officer and activities coordinator at the Du Bois Memorial Centre, and with the musician Richie Mensah. The ideas of the African-American sociologist and activist Du Bois still play a significant role for many intellectuals and politicians in Ghana and elsewhere. His vision on pan-Africanism is based on his research into the American "reconstruction" and related to his struggle for black integration and equal civil rights. For Kwame Nkrumah, the first Ghanaian president, Du Bois was an important source of inspiration, and so the philosopher was invited to celebrate his 95th birthday with a visit to Nkrumah in Ghana.

Kensmil builds her body of work on the conviction that only if we consistently ask ourselves how the present might become future, will we be able to contribute to the future's past. But if we do not consider the past as a moment of the present, then it quickly becomes nostalgia or an ironic alternative for the present, a safe haven for nihilism or missed social positions. Through her work, she explores her own self-image as well as the self-perception of other "black Europeans". Being conscious of the fact that as a "coloured" person she or he has only recently been able to claim an equal position in European culture, Kensmil aims at the enrichment of the canon of European history with new figures to identify with.

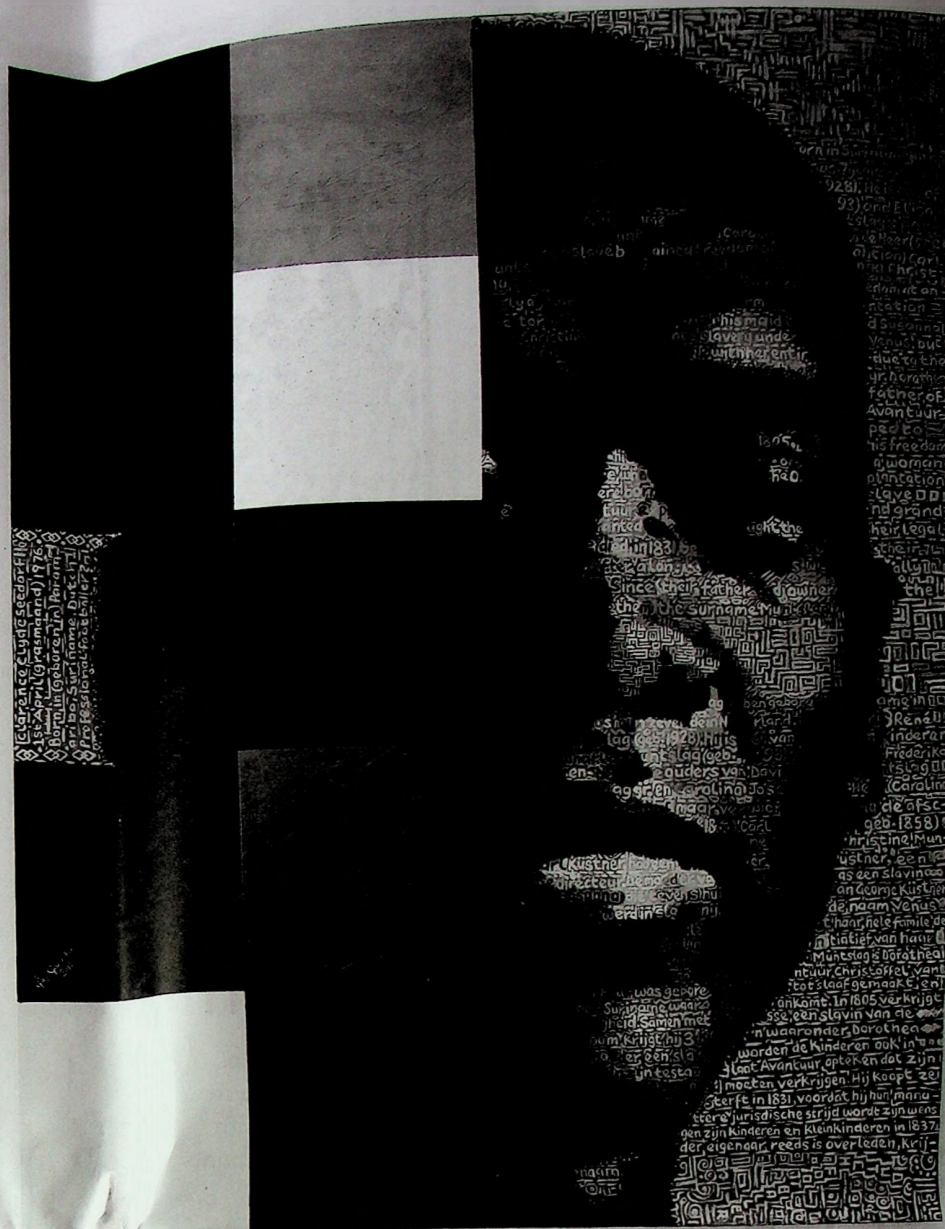


Iris Kensmil (Amsterdam, 1970) lives and works in Amsterdam. Kensmil graduated from the Minerva Academy in Groningen in 1997. She received the Wim Izaks Prize in 2004. In 2009/2010 she was a resident at the ISCP in New York. Among her solo exhibitions was an appearance at the Jan Cunen Museum, Oss (2008), and she has participated in group exhibitions such as 'Respect! Forms of community, Contemporary art from the Netherlands', Musée Dar Si Saïd & Palais el-Badi, Marrakech (2005) and 'Monumentalism' in Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2010).

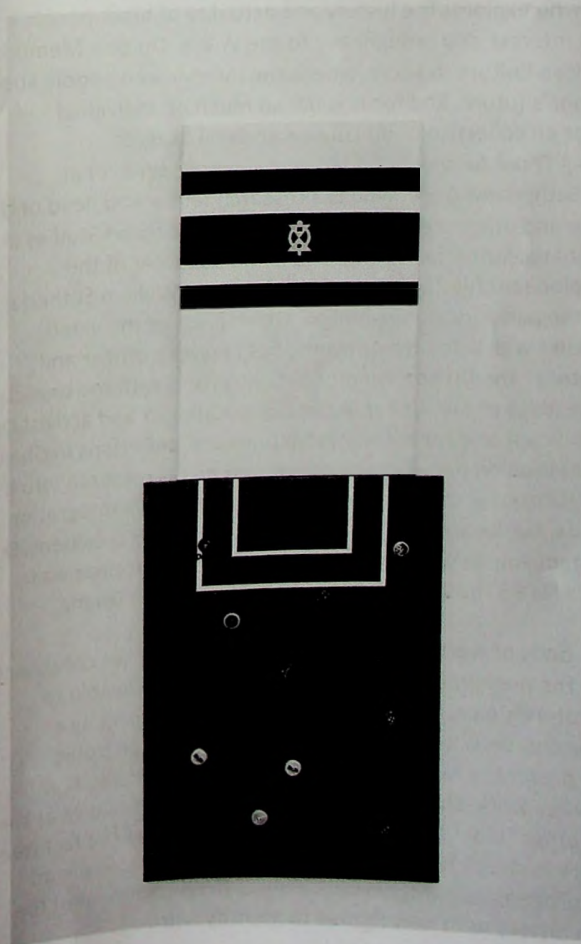
As part of his work, Jeremiah Quarshie takes a closer look at his environment and then portrays everyday life in Ghana, oftentimes in a photorealistic style. Next to that he has paid attention to historically important figures from the Black Atlantic history like Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, whose ideas play a great role in much of the intellectual activity going on in Ghana. For 'Time, Trade & Travel', Quarshie produced three paintings with a slightly different subject, since his works points to the artist's interest in the historical and contemporary affairs that connect people in Ghana, the Netherlands and Suriname.

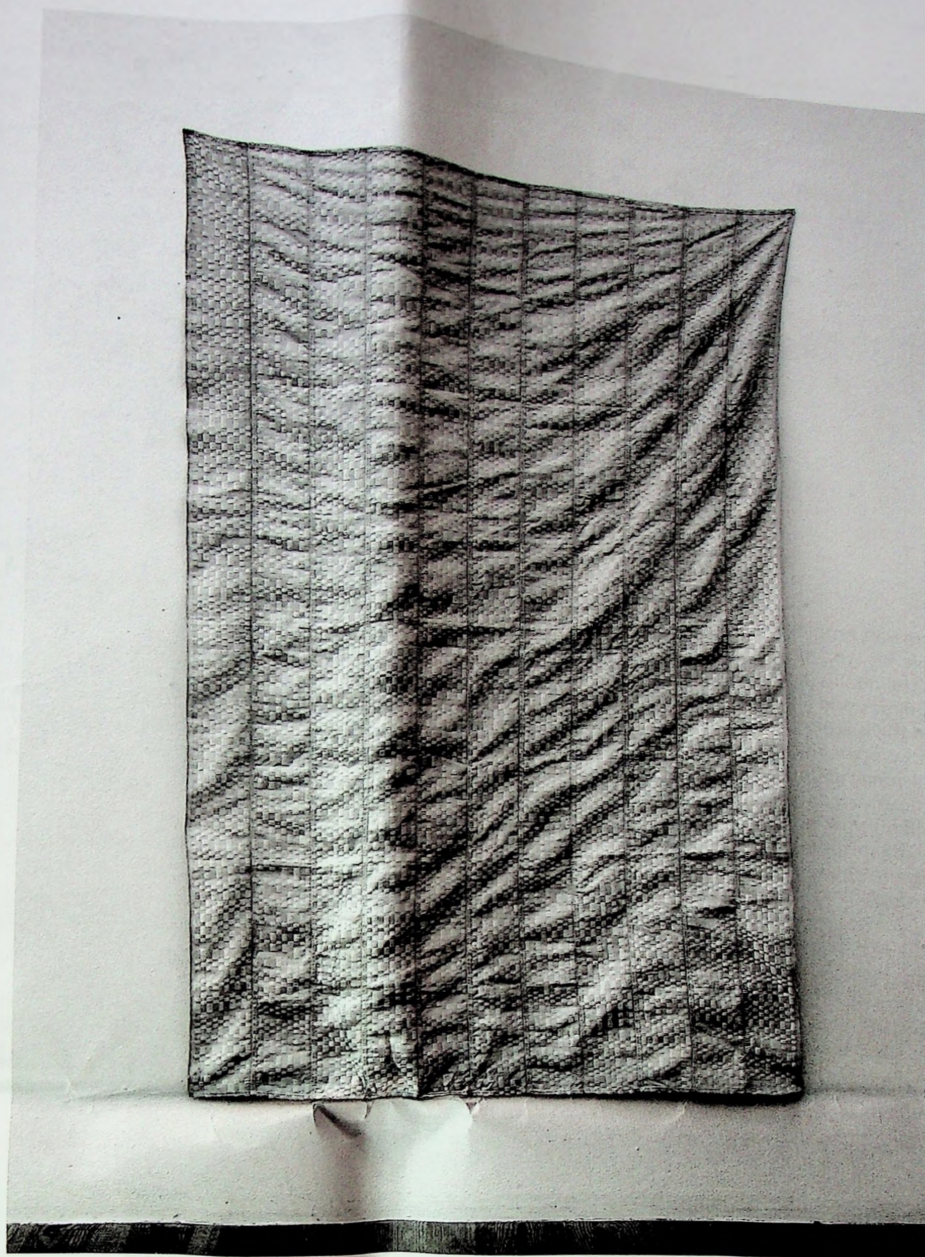
The starting points for his work *This is who I am?* is to be found in the shared historical connections between Ghana and the Netherlands. Although Ghana and the Netherlands celebrated their 300 years of diplomatic relationship in 2002, one is rather overpowered by the dark side of the common heritage, the forced migration of thousands of Ghanaians. Quarshie reminds us about the history of slavery and human trafficking, not to blame and shame but to look at the outcomes. He hints at the 87 soccer games in which Clarence Seedorf represented the Netherlands as one of the results. His work functions as a commentary, literally and metaphorically, on the ancestry of this world-famous soccer player. The ancestry of the Dutch star from Surinamese descent can be traced along the slave route back to West Africa. In this way Quarshie shows us that the current geopolitical figuration of the world in nation-states overwrites identities and cannot accommodate the genealogy of people. Where once the territories of Ghana, Suriname and the Netherlands were in some way linked, now the shared connections are politically separated. The portrayal of Seedorf clearly refers to the post-colonial situation of all of these countries.

Jeremiah Quarshie (1985, Accra, Ghana) lives and work in Accra. He studied painting and graduated at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Jeremiah has exhibited his works in the 'Ghana at 50 - Students Portrait Exhibition' (2007) in the National Museum, Ghana and the 'Pan African Festival Exhibition of Art and Crafts' in Cape Coast, Ghana (2007).



Jeremiah Quarshie





Navid Nuur

Navid Nuur describes his works with the term 'Interimodules', which points to its process-based character as well as the provisional place that each work has within the larger logical and intuitive system that he creates. With every work Nuur develops his artistic journey of intellectual and sensory discoveries, occupying a temporal position within that larger framework of a personal quest: 'My often transitory process-based works both represent and evolve out of a series of subjective conditions and rules, which I intuitively establish through careful consideration of a particular space, substance or immaterial phenomenon.'

Thresholder is an example of this ongoing evolution. From 2007 through 2010 Nuur created several versions of this work in several places, installing temporary walls or building architectural interventions by piling up florists' dark green foam blocks. For every edition, or interimodule, the green foam brick walls varied in size, height, and thickness. Some concealed a pillar, while others divided a room, and a number of them were conceived as autonomous sculptures. In addition to a spatial sensitivity, Nuur made use of the material qualities of the foam, shaping it by hand. His sense for both the specificity of the exhibition space and the material is the result of his idiosyncratic quest, guided by intuition and intellect.

For 'Time, Trade & Travel' Nuur employed the traditional technique that is used to weave cloth by the Akan and Ewe people in the West African countries of Ghana, Ivory Coast and Togo, kente or nwentoma. Every colour of this woven cloth has a particular symbolic meaning, such as serenity, joy, harmony or love. The patterns in which cloth is woven, which have been invented over the years, are linked to other concepts, for instance democratic rule, creativity and knowledge. Therefore every cloth can be read or deciphered. The technique forms a symbolic language that might present aspects of people's knowledge, fundamental beliefs,

elements of their history, or their principles regarding the organization of society. Nuur has employed the kente technique, but distorted the symbolic language by choosing an unknown pattern and without dyeing the cotton. No meaning has yet been ascribed to the beige colour of the thread and the pattern of little white cubes that Nuur designed has not been woven before. Nuur might have created new symbolic meanings with his own combination of patterns and colour. Or one could say that the cloth, which has been produced by a local weaver in Ghana, has no symbolic meaning at all, since it comes closer to gibberish than to a decipherable language. Perhaps the weaver was assigned to write a binary code with this traditional technique?

Navid Nuur (1976, Tehran, Iran) studied at the Utrecht School of Arts, Piet Zwart Institute in Rotterdam, and at Plymouth University. He has participated in numerous exhibitions, such as the 54th Venice Biennale and the exhibition 'Invisible Shadows' at the MARTa Herford Museum in 2010. In 2009 and 2010 his travelling solo exhibition 'The Value of Void' was to be seen at S.M.A.K. in Ghent, the Kunsthalle Fredericianum in Kassel, and De Hallen Museum in Haarlem.



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Provincial Commissioner's Office,
Sekondi,

Gold Coast Colony Zachary Formwalt

Zachary Formwalt employs photography and film to investigate economic and social history. While his works cast light on historical events, at the same time they are an inquiry into the quality and origins of still and moving images. One can become aware of the possibilities and limitations of media, which then raises questions about the medium and the history that is represented by film or photography. A recurrent concern in Formwalt's work is that material outcomes of economic and social processes, such as architectural constructions, can be captured and visualized, while the very economic processes underlying this outcome remain elusive. The movement of capital is perhaps the most evident process that is difficult for photography and film to record. Although the material organization that is needed for the circulation of funds can be documented, the actual movement of capital itself is intangible. In some ways similar to such economic transactions, Formwalt demonstrates that history appears to be insubstantial, almost transparent, despite the fact that various consequences can be observed through the lens.

Formwalt's video *In Place of Capital* (2009) brings this twofold inquiry about representation of history to the fore. On the one hand, the film deals with the limitations of the technology of photography, taking four pictures of the Royal Exchange in London made by William Henry Fox Talbot in 1845 as its starting point. Photography was unable, at this stage in its history, to show the flow of people at the Royal Exchange, although the building itself is a symbol of Britain's dominance, as well as the result of flows of capital accumulated and traded in it.



For this exhibition in Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam Formwalt investigated the history of a railway that connects the Ghanaian coast with the inland gold mines. His film is an exploration of two railroad tracks in Ghana, a territory that was previously known as the Gold Coast, which are remnants of British colonial history. In the late 19th century Britain built this railway from Sekondi to a gold mine in Tarkwa, to transport gold to the coast and thus create a connection with the worldwide market. As a technological invention the railway creates a specific phenomenological experience that was not known before its arrival. As the train glides over the surface of the earth, one moves through the landscape at a speed which had no precedent in the 19th century. This experience altered the way one thought about the relation to the surrounding landscape, being unable at such a speed to focus on that which is close at hand. In addition to this, the mobility of the train influences thinking about territory. This specific way of looking at landscape and territory can be found in the various documents that describe the construction of the railway and its later relocation to the harbor of Takoradi. The film can be seen as a visual analysis of this particular, perhaps industrial, way of thinking, experiencing and ordering space.

Zachary Formwalt (1979, Georgia, United States) studied at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. In 2008 and 2009 he was a resident at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam. He has had solo exhibitions at the Kunsthalle in Basel (2009) and ar/ge kunst Galerie Museum in Bolzano (2011). He has participated in group exhibitions such as 'Monumentalism' at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (2010), 'End of Money' in Witte de With, Rotterdam (2011), and 'Homo Economicus' at Cabinet Gallery, London (2012).