

Akinosho, A. O. (AKAO)

From: Lorna Ferguson[SMTP:ferguson@icon.co.za]
Sent: Friday, June 26, 1998 12:53 AM
To: Akinosho, A. O. (AKAO); Obi Nwakanma
Subject: Re: Sao Paulo



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Dear Toyin & Jahman & Obi,

I'm sending you the write up of my project so that you can look up the "Reading Room". It is a joint project by my curator friends Thomas & Joseph from SA and Benin.

Joseph is actually a very successful film set designer and Thomas was my assistant on the 1st Johannesburg Biennale. The project now has a name - "Polychrome Wood Sculpture" (1998) - and is an intellectual pun.

The project is an art work itself. It is "set" which is a library of books on and for and by Africans on contemporary culture. The set and library which also incorporates the internet "reading room" i.e. a library within a library will all be set up in the exhibition space as part of the Africa exhibition. (Wild hey!)

The title "Polychrome Wood Sculpture" refers to the books which have coloured covers and a wood base (paper is made of wood pulp.) As described in the write up - foreigners collect(ed) African polychrome wood sculpture (masks, fetishes etc.) and removed them from their context and either attributed them with decontextualised meaning or lost their meaning altogether.

It's a great project guys. This is the place that I want you to write.

I'm sick and tired of African Americans (I mean just get a load of that name for starters - are Brazilians African- Americans and if not why not? Because the people from the US have are such neo-colonists that they've appropriated the title "American" for themselves...) assuming that they can speak for Africans. It's time African spoke for themselves, and this internet space is designed for that. This is the place where on a daily basis contemporary Africans can post information about their cultural opinions without having others presume to put words in our mouths... it's a place to have fun, be serious, start arguments etc. etc. etc. but sure as nuts we've got to have Africans speaking otherwise the the US people will talk for Africans.

So here is the project as a whole - for info - (actually it's the fund raising document so any ideas on funders would be gratefully received) - so look up the Reading Room and start spreading the word Babes...

Thomas is in France at the moment - his e:mail address is

mulcaire@ibm.net

Happy brain burn

Regards
Lorna

Introduction to the General Theme of the XXIV Sao Paulo Bienal 2 October - 13 December 1998

The Bienal is divided into three inter-related but distinct sections, the *Nucleo Historico*, *Roteiros*, and national representations. These three sections all respond in different ways to the central theme which is Anthropofagia (cannibalism). Anthropofagia in this context is understood to be a modernist process formulated in Brazil, in which artists and writers attempted to understand the configuration of Brazilian identity amongst its forming cultures (African, Indian and Portuguese) which cultivated a symbolic practice - cannibalism - of incorporating the Other's value to construct its own. The *Manifesto Anthropofago* by the Brazilian writer Osvaldo de Andrade, written in 1928, proclaimed anthropofagia as a process of absorption and blending of other cultures. In Brazil, anthropofagia is a trans-historical concept of art which challenges and goes beyond the Eurocentric conception of art history.

The exhibition which I have been asked to curate forms part of the *Roteiros* section of the Bienal in which the world has been divided into seven geographic regions, of which Africa is one. Each regional curator has been asked to respond and seek specific resonances with de Andrade's *Manifesto* and the concept of anthropofagia, underlining parallels, similarities, areas of dialogue, clash and friction, thus integrating the entire segment globally.

Africa responds to this conceit

For the purposes of this exhibition "Africa is the subject of its own contemporary history". In other words the exhibition would seek to respond to a widespread phenomenon of self-consciousness throughout Africa, predicated on an autocritical awareness of Africa's position in the world, economically, politically and culturally. Contemporary history in the context of this exhibition begins with the development of ideas around Negritude in the burgeoning drive towards independence and takes us to the present. This can be seen as a general move towards definition from within rather than as an imposition from without, wresting ownership of the past, present and future identity / destiny of Africa away from alien hegemonic powers and into the orbit of Africans.

On a cultural level, the history of this move towards self definition can be seen in the proliferation of events aimed at establishing discourse on Africa by Africans - the Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Negres in Senegal 1966, the Premier Festival Culturel Panafricain in Algeria, 1969, FESTAC, the second World Black Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos, Nigeria, 1977 (which involved over 17,000 participants from 56 countries) and then more recently the establishment and concretisation of important Biennales of contemporary art in Dakar and Johannesburg.

Within the rubric of anthropofagia, these movements towards internalised acculturation could be termed autofagic. That is to say that the procedures of subjectivity are focused on Africa as the prime source and generator of meaning before consumptive cannibalism begins abroad.

Anthropophagia and the broader context of the Afro-Brazilian relationship

This is important if we are to consider cannibalism in its fullest sense, as a reciprocal process. Cannibalism can be described as the assimilative devouring and subsequent transformation of foreign influences. If we take the act of devouring as a metaphor for the process of identification then we can speculate that cannibal artists are no longer a part of the periphery, but have become what they have eaten, denaturalising the binary relation between margin and centre, other and self.

Historically and culturally Africa and Brazil were forcibly linked through the violence of the Slave Trade but in the present, these links are being continually teased out through structures such as Biennales, the Non-aligned Movement Conferences and even specific Ministerial Work Groups in Brasilia on Afro-Brazilian Population.

Artists selected to exteriorise anthropofagic/ autofagic positions in the contemporary

A section exploring the work of 4 Malians is being researched and developed by my assistant (new young curator - Mali), Awa Meite who lives in Bamako. They are **Abdoulaye Konaté** represented by an installation entitled "Genocide"; and three generations of Malian photographers **Seydou Keita**, **Malick Sidibe** and **Makki Kante**. Two photographers all dealing in different ways with interrogating the African identity (and in the case of Kante who is dealing with the abuse of military power) are to be exhibited on display devices attached to the African Reading Room (see immediately below) in close association with the (French / Brazilian) photographer **Pierre Verger**.

Moshekwa Langa (South Africa) is engaged in projects which seek to constantly dislocate the assumed centres of power from within. Through the use of his own mapping devices of erasure, annotation and recordings, Langa inscribes the cartography of his own identity on to that which previously sought to control through definition. Yet he resists the idea that one can possess one's own identity. For this exhibition, Langa will be presenting three new video works in which he resists pursuing the idea of himself as an either/or, positing himself instead as a cornucopia, a horn of plenty. The only thread which could establish an idea of Moshekwa Langa would be the autocritical employment of the devices within his immediate grasp - drawing, photography, video - not necessarily to focus on himself exclusively but rather as a means with which to force a reflection of himself through others.

Langa is one of the most talented of South Africa's young generation artists and as such is being widely sought after as a young post-modernist. He works in a poetic and sophisticated manner to challenge outmoded, stereotypical modes of classification.

Langa writes of his project: " My intention in Sao Paulo is to invent an accomplice (working name: John Ruskin). Because Moshekwa has to answer stupid questions most of the time - 'Where is Africa in your work?' - we will both be able to answer and I think having this personage might go a long way to deflecting confining thinking. My/our work will be seen in an altered state and not within the limits of simply "African Art". I am very keen to make this kind of confusion - whose work is which? - which work is more authentically "African"? In other words I want to show that there are multiple forms of influence and that I and other African artists meander and incorporate different forms"

William Kentridge (South Africa) will be presenting his most recent projection project *Ulisse*, gathered from material produced for his re-interpretation of Monteverdi's Opera: *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse*. The new video for Sao Paulo is based on the drawings for the opera's recent premier at the Opera Bruxelles. The production is set in the late 20th century world of South Africa. Ulisse lies not on the beach of Ithaca as in the original opera but in a Johannesburg hospital bed, hanging onto life in a feverish state of dreams and visions. Associations are constantly set up between the South African theatre of life where brutal and inhuman acts were/ are committed and the anatomical theatre of modern medicine. The images to be used range from landscape images, historical anatomical drawings and a range of contemporary body imaging techniques, CAT-scans, magnetic resonance imaging, sonar, angiogram, echo-cardiograms, x-ray images.

Georges Adeagbo (Benin) will be researching and developing a project over a three week period in Salvador d'Bahia on the theme of cannibalism, which he interprets within the broader framework of racism, expressed as a devouring destructive energy. For Adeagbo, history has to be rewritten, particularly the history of slavery. The twin and future histories of Brazil and Africa play themselves out on a daily basis in the streets of Salvador. It is hoped that a period spent by Adeagbo in Salvador will allow him to add in Brazil to his chosen assemblages of found material from Benin. These will form an index - pliant traces of each chosen object's previous cultural, religious, economic and political meaning - and contain within this new sub-structure their various present potentials.

Soly Cissé (Senegal) works with two dimensional representation in oil and gauche and installation using social classifications of identity including gender, poverty and health, overlaid with formal artistic elements, numerological and typological systems, for example bar-codes, as indicators of the increasing homogenisation of subjectivity in the contemporary. Personality traits of social order or disruption are incorporated with traditional medical remedies either to maintain or restore order.

Cissé is a very young artist who has never exhibited outside West Africa but shows extraordinary capabilities in capacity to experiment. He has been working with installation. Cissé will be collaborating with the Brazilian artist Marepe on a project in Salvador which will seek to give form to previously untranslated Afro-Brazilian communications.

Candice Breitz (South Africa) will be presenting her *Rainbow Series* (1996). The images are a conglomeration of body parts of women gleaned from porn magazines and ethnographic tourist postcards. The works can be seen specifically as a response to the post-apartheid metaphor of a South African "rainbow nation", a metaphor which tends to elide significant cultural difference in favour of the construction of a homogeneous and cohesive national subject. However the images have an important echo when considering the spread of sexual tourism where cannibalism takes on a different meaning and the bodies of women of different ethnicities or perceived exotic cultures are commodified. Breitz insists that feminist discussions around pornography and exploitation must be extended to other struggles around identity, e.g. race, class and ethnicity to have any power or efficacy.

Breitz is currently doing her Doctorate at Columbia University (NY) and is one of few African women from the continent confronting the double-edged sword of both racial and gender discrimination which she does with candour, courage and complexity. Her work is confrontational and combative and she is the only artist on the Roteiros exhibition (of 50 artists) whose work speaks about these aspects of the identity debate.

Fernando Alvim (Angola) extrapolates on the effects of war on the psyche of the individual and landscape. This exploration is centred primarily on the Angolan Civil War in which at one lingering stage South Africa, Cuba, Russia and the United States were the principal protagonists. In Alvim's work the battlefield hospital becomes the site of multiple incisions, sutures and amputations of the traumatised subject. He is concerned with the difficulty of giving expression to national trauma so extreme and yet so proximate that it appears to exceed representation. He mediates on the phantoms left behind after the defining historical mutilations. Within Alvim's project, the film editing by South African Thomas Barry of images of South African Defence Force soldiers in Angola are included as well as collaborative inclusions by Cuban artist Carlos Garacoa

Touhami Ennadre (Morocco) The thread of death which underpins Ennadre's work places him within the rambling art historical tradition of memento mori and Vanitas. His photographic interrogations of skin, birth and still birth, carcasses and seafood, ecriture, religions and historical sites such as Auschwitz, Herculaneum and Assisi are all redirected towards examining the only truly universal concept - life which is cannibalised by death. A Moroccan Muslim by birth Ennadre's ubiquitous range of subject matter, including also Judaic-Christian iconography, places him within the ambit of a truly all encompassing African commentator.

Thomas Mulcaire (South Africa) and **Joseph Kpobly** (Benin) are working jointly on this project and will be constructing a "set" in the style of a reading room containing texts (discourse) on Africa by Africans, dealing in varying depths and degrees of inscription with the expectation, production and reception of African art. The selected books, (in English, French and Portuguese) which will be available to viewers, (who can seat themselves in the space and consult the texts) will at one level present a complex and rhythmical arrangement of colours and line (reflecting the symbolic presence of their allied African art forms - polychrome wood sculpture) - but in this case the texts speak for themselves.

The reading room can be seen as an analogy of the colonial habit of appropriating polychrome wood sculpture as meaningful in its own right, which in effect only serves to remove those objects from the context of their functional role in the enactment of social or communicative processes. The work should be seen as an attempt to disrupt the value and reverse the procedures of patination in Africa.

The intention is for visitors to the Bienal to play an active part in the shifting aesthetics of this art work and to engage with contemporary African theory.

Associated with the Reading Room this will be a **cyber archive** of submissions on-line, available on a PC in the space. Several prominent African theorists will be invited to

submit material to structure the initial discussions and the daily input will be moderated either from Africa or Brazil before being read on-line.

Funding is required to allow Mulcaire to visit Kpobly (a distinguished African film set designer) in Benin to plan the "set". An additional amount is needed to purchase books on African art, African museum and art gallery catalogues and monographs on African artists for the 'library / archive'.

New Curators' Project to build trans Atlantic and inter African cultural bridges

Based on the success of the trainee curator programme on the inaugural 1995 Johannesburg Biennale, (of which I was the Art Director) and also the frustration expressed by many West African artists at the paucity of curatorial activity in the region, I have decided to introduce four young West African people to the curatorial process of this exhibition. This is to be seen as a way of creating an opportunity for capable and interested cultural workers in West Africa to observe and participate in the shaping and conceptualisation of this exhibition and its attendant themes in practice. The young curators will essentially have a hands on involvement because they will also advise and conduct projects to assist me in my curatorial role.

The regions for the selection of the young curators have been identified as Mali, Benin, Ghana and Burkina Faso. The young curator for Mali (Awa Meite) was chosen by myself and she is currently working on a special section of artists and photographers in Mali. (See below) The specific choice of who will be selected from the other 3 countries has been delegated within the regions (e.g. Prof. Joe Nkrumah from the National Museum, Accra) in order for locally directed and wise choices to be made. It is intended for the selected curators from the four countries to fly to Johannesburg in early September 1998 for a period of research and discussion around the exhibition and will involve contact with artists and institutions in South Africa.

Most importantly, these four young people will meet the four young curators who were the success stories of the trainee curators programme which we ran during the 1st Johannesburg Biennale.

- Clive Kellner - who became Okwui Enwesor's (2nd Biennale Art Director) Assistant
- Rufus Matibe - who became a Director in the Dept. of Art and Culture
- Abrie Fourie - who is currently a free lance curator and working on an international project funded by the Danes
- Tumelo Mosaka - who is working as a free lance curator and has just won a place at Bard College to do Curatorial Studies

The young curators will spend 10 days in South Africa

- 3 days learning to write curatorial proposals and budgets
- 4 days visiting residence studios, art museums, community art centres and meeting young artists in Johannesburg
- 3 days visiting art museums, community art centres and meeting young artists in Cape Town

It is envisaged that this period of contact will additionally facilitate projects between West and Southern Africa.

Immediately following this initial phase the new young West African curators and I will fly to Brazil to begin the installation of the exhibition.

Each young curator will be supplied with a film-tape and will have the opportunity to film on a Super Hi-8 video camera. The tape will then be transcribed onto VHS format. This video can then be used to enhance communication with their respective art communities on the young curators' return home in order to assist with the sharing of the experience with their art communities and artist colleagues, conveying the size and wonder of such an unimaginably huge and otherwise indescribable exhibition which words and slides just could not convey. It is hoped that this short experience will assist with the better conceptualisation of future possible projects - e.g. the African photographic Biennale in Bamako, Mali.

Budget

The budget has been calculated to allow for the production and realisation of each project and for the artists and curators involved to be able to install the works in situ and attend the vernissage, as these are all integral elements of the exhibition process.

As can be seen the amount of **US \$ 40 000 given by the Sao Paulo Bienal** will only cover part of this project as conceptualised. An additional US \$ 103 718 needs to be found in order for this project to be presented in its entirety.

The budget itemises the following (in US \$):

- Artists' production: \$ 49 568
- Air tickets \$ 32 690
- Accommodation \$ 32 690
- Per diem \$ 17 380

Specific artists' total costs:

- Kentridge (South Africa) \$ 4 330
- Ennadre (Morocco) \$ 15 368
- Alvim (Angola) \$ 8 550
- Adeagbo (Benin) \$ 9 830
- Langa (South Africa) \$ 12 060
- Breitz (South Africa) \$ 11 700
- Konate (Mali) \$ 6 200
- Cisse (Senegal) \$ 8 830
- Kpobly/ Mulcaire (Benin/ SA) \$ 22 650
- Keita (Mali) \$ 1 350
- Sidibe (Mali) \$ 1 350
- Kante (Mali) \$ 5 100

- The amount of US \$ 36 400 is budgeted for the trainee / young west African curators programme
 - Young curator Mali \$ 9 600
 - Young curator, Benin \$ 8 850
 - Young curator, Ghana \$ 8 850
 - Young curator, Burkina Faso \$ 8 850

For specific breakdowns see attached Spread Sheet

Curriculum Vitae

PERSONAL DETAILS

NAME	Lorna Ferguson
BUSINESS ADDRESS	34, 4 th Avenue, Parktown North, 2193 Johannesburg, Gauteng.
POSTAL ADDRESS	P O Box 1212, PARKLANDS, 2121 Johannesburg,
TELEPHONES	(+ 27 11) or national 011 - 880 5185 (+27 82) or national 082 - 601 2578
FAX	011 - 788 9749
NATIONALITY	South African
ID NUMBER	5201260065080
LANGUAGES	Home language: English Conversational: Afrikaans, Zulu, German Read: French
BUSINESS STATUS	Sole member, Ferguson Fine Art (Consulting) CC

ACADEMIC RECORD:

1998	Post-Graduate Diploma in Business Marketing Management
1997	University of South Africa. (To be completed 1998) Arts & Culture Management Programme Graduate School for Public & Development Management University of the Witwatersrand
1997	Sub-editor's programme, The Institute for the Advancement of Journalism University of the Witwatersrand
1986 - 1990	Research towards MA, History of Art. (Incomplete)
1979 - 1980	Post - Graduate Diploma in Museum Studies Victoria University, Manchester, UK
1974	University Education Diploma University of Natal (PMB)
1973	Bachelor of Arts (Honours), English Literature University of Natal (PMB)
1970 - 1972	Bachelor of Arts Majors: English & Fine Art with History of Art University of Natal (PMB)

ART MUSEUM INTERNSHIPS (U.K.):

1980	The National Gallery, London
1978 - 1979	Leicestershire Museums & Art Galleries, Leicester

Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow

AWARDS:

1998	Institut Français d' Afrique du Sud Language Bursary
1996	Goethe Institute Language Bursary, Bonn
1978 - 1980	British Council Scholarship

WORK EXPERIENCE:

1997 - present	Curator for Africa, São Paulo Bienal, Brazil
1995 - present	Independent curator & art collection manager and advisor
1997 - 1998	Sub-editor: City Press and free-lance art
correspondent	
1996 - 1997	Lectured at Foreign Service Institute of the Department of Foreign Affairs on Contemporary South African Art History
1992 - 1995	Art Director and Co - ordinator, Africus: First Johannesburg Biennale
1992	Proposal to the Johannesburg City Council for the first Johannesburg Biennale
1992	Established Ferguson Fine Art CC, Fine Art Dealership
1989	Co-ordinator, Artists for Human Rights Exhibition, Durban
1974 - 1992	Director, Tatham Art Gallery, Pietermaritzburg Municipality

RELEVANT COMMITTEES, BOARDS AND PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:

1991 - 1992	The Mohandas Gandhi Centennial Advisory Committee.
1989	Initiator & joint co-ordinator, Artists for Human Rights, national exhibition
1989 - 1992	Regional Representative: National Monuments Council.
1980 - present	Many various art selection and organisational committees e.g. South African Association of Arts, South African Potters Association National Awards, University of Zululand Festival Committee etc.
1987 - 1991	Organising Committee Member, Cape Town Triennial.
1981 - 1991	One of Founder Board Members - Natal Provincial Museums Advisory Board.
1980 - present	South African Museums Association, Life Member.
1977	One of Founder Members, Pietermaritzburg Society.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION & PAPERS:

1997	" <i>Cultural Converters: Biennales as Commodifiers.</i> " 2 nd Johannesburg Biennale, Johannesburg
1995	" <i>A Political Model: Africus the First South African Biennale.</i> " Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt, Berlin, Germany.
1994	" <i>The re-integration of South Africa into the International Cultural Arena and the Role of the First Johannesburg Biennale.</i> " São Paulo Biennale Conference, Brazil.

1990

*"Procedures for Legal Accreditation : Tax Deduction for
Donors to South African Museums".*
Southern African Museums Association.

PUBLICATIONS: VARIOUS INCLUDING:

City Press	<i>Trekking to art's 'Trade Routes'</i> October 97 <i>The tragedy of closure</i> , December 97
Flash Art:	<i>Aperto Johannesburg: 7 Contemporary Artists</i> Milan, 1996.
Saturday Star	<i>Art at the crossroads</i> , October 97
The Star	<i>Culture counts: It turned out to be a right-hand turn</i> Johannesburg, Jan 30, 1998
The Sunday Independent:	<i>The Princeburg Sales</i> , March 96 -An Interview with Okwui Enwesor: <i>The Second Art Director of the Johannesburg Biennale</i> , March 96 -South Africa's second Biennale, a world away from the first, October 97
The Sunday Times	<i>SA slumbers as artist wakes the world</i> , Feb, 98
Third Text:	<i>The Johannesburg Biennale: An Interview</i> London, 1995.
The Flying Springbok:	<i>The Wrapping of Berlin's Reichstag: Christo & Jeanne - Claude</i> . Johannesburg, December, 1995.
S.A.A.Art Bulletin:	<i>The Gaining of Tax Deduction Benefits for South African Museum Donors</i> , Cape Town, 1991.
Architectural Review: Planning:	<i>The Collections of Tatham Art Gallery</i> , Johannesburg, 1990.
Pietermaritzburg 1838 - 1988:	<i>A New Portrait of an African City: The Tatham Art Gallery</i> (Chapter 13) UNP, Pietermaritzburg, 1988

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