

Arts Council of the African Studies Association

Panels Seeking Participants

ACASA members, please submit papers to
panel chairs by January 31, 2017

17th Triennial Symposium on African Art

University of Ghana, Legon Campus
Institute of African Studies

August 8-13, 2017

www.acasaonline.org

PANEL TITLE: Sustainability and Art in Africa

Art that reflects sustainability includes not only the repurposing of refuse to create fashionable garments, innovative sculptures and decorative arts, but also the building of awareness of eco-tourism through successful business practices. One example is the repurposing of plastic water sachet bags into jackets, umbrellas, purses and more by the non-governmental organization (NGO) Trashy Bags, based in Accra (<http://www.trashybags.org/>). In another example, Ghanaian sculptor El Anatsui has incorporated refuse in his sculptural work to mine the history of colonialism by connecting consumption, waste and the environment. Art produced with a focus on sustainability by individual artists, community programs and NGOs stimulate the local economy and recycle waste, improving the natural and urban environment. For a few, like El Anatsui, it brings international acclaim. This panel welcomes papers that explore the gamut of sustainable practices in art in Africa. Panelists may consider the recent trend of environmental awareness in art, how social cohesion and community health are realized, or how global collaborations are devised through sustainability.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: The Politics of Abstract and Conceptual African and African Diasporic Art

This panel seeks to reconsider the political potentials afforded by abstract and conceptual artistic practices. Papers are welcomed that reassess what might be (or have been) dismissed as trivial artistic exercises in times of crises. Of interest is how modern and contemporary African and African diasporic artists have folded social or political criticisms into their creative experimentation with materials, forms, and concepts. Are abstract and conceptual practices mere luxuries during a time of social and political upheaval, as some have argued, or do they offer a viable way of producing criticism? When and why have artists turned to abstraction or pushed against established modes of representation as a means through which to address the political, and how might such artistic endeavors critique the “carnivalization of politics”? In the interest of generating a compelling discussion, this panel also welcomes papers that argue the contrary—for the inappropriateness of abstract or conceptual art work in times of turmoil. Ultimately at stake is our understanding of the type of critical work abstract and conceptual art can, or can not, do in the African context.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Photography and Mass Media in Africa

Since the publication of the first major studies of African photography in the 1990s, portraiture has occupied a dominant position. Scholars have researched its early pioneers, the interpersonal relation between photographer and sitter, the interaction between this new technology and preexisting media, and the significance of the portrait as recently exemplified in *Portraiture and Photography in Africa* (Peffer and Cameron, 2013). While scholars of Western photography have long delved into the historical connection between the photographic still and other reproducible artforms, Africanists have only begun to consider the mass media dimension of photography. This panel encourages papers that examine the dialogic relation between photography and popular media production and viewing. For instance, what were the uses of photography in periodicals such as *Bingo* or *Drum*? Or what was the impact of the film industry on the photographic language? Possible topics may include studies of these and other mass media during the colonial and postcolonial eras across the continent. Eventually this panel seeks to trace these interpenetrations and detect how photography's incursions into other popular media have shaped its aesthetic and social evolution. When African photography confronts the printed page, cinema, or other public imaging, what does it reveal about itself?

Chairs:

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Giulia Paoletti
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PANEL TITLE: Power Play: Black Women's Bodies in Contemporary Projects

This panel seeks to engage scholars around the question of the black female body as the subject of contemporary art projects. As older theories of the gaze, feminism and gender are supplemented with strategies from transnationalism, intersectionality, sampling and popular culture, the black female body is emerging as the most dominant visual image being used to recharge international understanding of feminism, sexuality, power and freedom in visual culture across all media. Papers contributing to a robust discussion of the significance of this trend in art are actively solicited.

Seeking 4 participants for 20 min presentations followed by discussion led by panel organizer.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Ethiopian Christian Art: Defining Styles, Defying Definitions

Since Jules Leroy coined the term “Gondarene painting” in 1967, style has become intrinsically tied to place in Christian Ethiopian art history. But as recent research demonstrates, the “Gondärine” style emerged before the foundation of the eponymous city of Gondär. Given the formation of this style *avant la cité*, as it were, historians of Ethiopian art must now more than ever examine the parameters used to define style within their field. Interrogating the utility of such geographically-determined classifications, this panel seeks to present new research in the study of style in Ethiopian Orthodox Christian art.

A second concern is how discussions of style in Ethiopian art history relate to those on the rest of the continent. While Sidney Kasfir disputed sub-Saharan African art history’s homogeneous paradigm of “One Tribe, One Style” in 1984, the impact of this discussion has been applied unevenly to Ethiopian art history. How do we address the continued contrast between terminology used by museum professionals and scholars to stylistically classify the same works? How do prevailing definitions of style work within the diachronic study of Ethiopian Christian art, and where do they fail? Equally, how do geo-religious classification systems support or undermine formalist efforts to identify masterhands or workshops, a tactic used by scholars of both sub-Saharan Africa and medieval Europe?

Papers in this panel may analyze style via object-based case studies, museum-based examples, theoretical or historiographical studies, or propose new forms of classifying or defining style in Ethiopian Christian art.

Chair:

Dr. Kristen Windmuller-Luna

PANEL TITLE: Aesthetic Reforms Across Social Boundaries

This panel explores how various kinds of institutions try to reform marginalized populations by promoting or discouraging particular aesthetic practices. From colonial governments to state institutions like ministries of culture or education, from foreign and local development NGOs to private corporations, institutions across the continent have often targeted aesthetic practices as a key site through which certain groups of people may be uplifted, corrected, and transformed. Such practices – including making arts and crafts, wearing jewelry and clothing, styling one’s hair, building and decorating homes, dancing, reciting poetry, making music, and comporting one’s body – are thereby connected to political projects of identity construction, national population management, and the creation of markets. One sees this process particularly across social hierarchies of class, status, age, gender, geography, and race/ethnicity.

This panel seeks to highlight and analyze the importance of such projects across the continent by asking a set of key questions. What role did aesthetic reforms play in the civilizing missions of colonial powers? How might these earlier colonial attempts to shape aesthetic practices resonate in state and non-state projects today? What aesthetic practices of which groups were targeted for reform by institutions in new postcolonial nation-states, and how did these groups receive these state projects? How has the intensification of international development, and capitalism, created new imperatives to either rehabilitate or tame the aesthetics of certain groups? And how might such projects be manipulated by targeted groups towards their own, perhaps anti-institutional, ends?

Chairs:

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PANEL TITLE: Indigenous, Imported and Innovated Heraldry in Africa

African and European heraldic traditions of representing individuals, statuses and memberships have relied on defined iconographic systems. During the colonial period, European heraldry was imposed while indigenous heraldic traditions were either recognized and documented or were ignored, unrecognized or suppressed. Half a century of independence has seen the evolution, modification and eclectic innovation in the heraldic systems of nation states through adoption, rejection, inclusion and exclusion of a variety of iconographic and symbolic elements. There is a need for scholars to examine and elucidate the interaction of esthetic and iconographic systems in heraldry as they exist now and as they evolve. Papers are invited that document, describe and/or analyze the

1. recognition, history and development of African heraldry and heraldic iconography
2. the processes of integration of African and non-African heraldic systems and symbols
3. the emergence of integrated and/or non-integrated heraldic systems in Africa

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Shattering Single Stories in the Labeling and Presentation of Historical Arts of Africa

In her famous 2009 TED Talk, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie alerts listeners to “the danger of the single story.” In museums and academic settings, attributing artistic creation and knowledge to discrete cultural or ethnic groups creates single stories, concealing complexity and implying sameness among art makers, audiences, and patrons. This panel extends a conversation initiated through an ACASA-sponsored panel at the 2016 African Studies Association Annual Meeting. Bringing new voices to the discussion and deepening engagement with the topic, it will examine longstanding challenges in and fresh possibilities for labeling and analyzing historical arts of Africa to disparate audiences.

Chairs:

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Yaëlle Biro
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PANEL TITLE: The Art of Attire in Africa

This panel will explore African dress practice as a creative medium that encompasses clothing as well as hairstyles, cosmetics, and other forms of adornment. We welcome proposals on all aspects of African dress innovation, from the designer-branded clothing that has its roots in the West, to forms of personal adornment that are embedded in pre-colonial dress cultures yet that are also subject to transformation in the hands of creative practitioners. We seek papers on personal adornment in African histories, dress creativity rooted in local and regional precedents, as well as the work of designers whose methods and markets reflect global fashion conventions. What of personal adornment in African pre-colonial histories, as part of Indian Ocean and other diasporas, and dress creativity that does not intersect with Western markets and models? We also invite papers on the reception and the study of African dress creativity, and the presentation of this subject in the context of exhibitions and museum collections. The innovations addressed by panelists may be manifestations of individual creative actors such as designers, or they may emerge out of broad, cultural transformations. Proposals on all aspects of African body adornment and dress are encouraged. This panel is one element of an effort to create a research network on the study and curation of African dress practices.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: African Art: Philosophy Made Visual

African societies have often been characterized as lacking in formal and critical enquiry as well as rigorous epistemological interrogation akin to Western philosophical approaches. However, African philosophy, unlike written Western forms, can be derived from material culture and visible aspects of performance. These are immanent in the symbolism of the objects and arts themselves, nuanced by the context of community values surrounding them. This panel seeks to explore how African art portrays African philosophy via a word-image relationship using selected dance, textile or sculptural forms that serve as philosophical statements of a worldview.

Chair:

Professor John Ogene, PhD
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PANEL TITLE: The Coronation of Ewuare II, the 40th Oba of Benin

The coronation of the Edaiken of Uselu or Crown Prince (Ambassador) Eheneden Erediauwa as Oba of Benin (Ewuare II) took place on October 20, 2016 after a long period of ritual and ceremony. The panel proposes an overview of the coronation and activities by individuals who followed the coronation and who documented some essential aspect of the coronation here in Benin City.

Chair:

Prince Kennedy Eweka, PhD
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PANEL TITLE: African Arts and the Community: Exhibition and Outreach Strategies in the USA and Africa

This panel aims to foreground the role of community in exhibition and outreach strategies of African arts spaces. Through diverse case studies, explorations of select venues in Africa and the United States reveal the dynamics of exhibition initiatives and related community liaisons. Each of these organizations illustrates innovative and dynamic methodologies in their dissemination of African art focused on community activism. Distinct practices including workshops, mentoring programs, and public programming involve extensive ranges of sponsorship, formats, and venues. Central to this investigation is our desire to contextualize a wide view of varied arts spaces, illustrating how they benefit community: nearby, through local grassroots connections, and globally, through virtual links.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Fieldwork vs. the Archive: African Art History's Methodological Past, Present, and Future Abstract

Historically, African art history grew at the crux of art history and anthropology, among other fields. In this panel we ask scholars to meditate on two pillars of African art history's past, present, and future: archival research and fieldwork. We hope to explore the role of these two methodologies: their limitations and benefits, potential innovations, and cross-fertilizations. We seek to critically reexamine the lingering perspective that these methodologies are somehow at odds with each other. Furthermore, we hope to interrogate the location of African art historical research, challenging notions that the archive is in Europe and fieldwork is in Africa. As our field moves further into the twenty-first-century, it is imperative that we, as scholars, continue to critically examine our methodology, address the limitations of our current praxis, and begin charting directions for the growth of African art history. In this panel, we ask participants to work through these issues from individual and more broad disciplinary perspectives. When thinking about this topic, we want scholars to define the term "archive" as broadly or as literally as they so choose. Possible questions include: how results from fieldwork are interred in archives and new archival technologies, what does and does not get archived, the role of historical figures in the creation of archival and museum collections, the possibilities for collaboration in fieldwork and in archives, and consideration of the archive as a space of fieldwork.

Chairs:

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PANEL TITLE: Art for Development Sake against Art for Art Sake: Current Economic Realities in Nigeria

The Department of Fine Arts in the Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology, Zaria was established as the premier art school in Nigeria. The school drew its initial staff from the Goldsmith College, London, as such, the taught material as regards content and style was a reflection of the mother school. The graduates of the school have graduated to found other schools throughout Nigeria. Currently, Nigeria, a third world nation is in recession; what number of the populace can afford art for art sake? Does the current art curriculum in our art schools prepare their products for this economic reality?

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Art and articulation: The entanglement of artistic practice and social articulation in Africa

Art articulates experiences, thoughts, values or sociopolitical claims in aesthetic ways. Therefore, artists often occupy liminal positions in their societies; as representatives of the social on the one hand and as critical ‘outsiders’ on the other. They link societal milieus, often adopting the position of mediators and critics between conflicting cultural world-views, social values and political agendas. They are crucial in all meanings of the term ‘articulation’: Acting as ‘hinges’ that separate but also connect different parts of society, they trigger social communication and debate, and they are themselves part and parcel of social, political and economic dynamics.

Chairs:

Till Förster and Fiona Siegenthaler
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PANEL TITLE: Photography and Cosmopolitanism in Africa

Photographs produced in Africa have long circulated within cosmopolitan networks of exchange. Practitioners and consumers have used photography to display worldliness, convene transnational communities of practice and forge identities that were simultaneously local, regional and international. Furthermore, the cosmopolitanism of photography has intersected with local patterns of leisure and consumption, and has been used to challenge local hierarchies and the imposition of parochial identities by various institutions. By attending to these practices, this panel will bring previously elided spaces of visual exchange into view, and consider the methodological challenges and opportunities involved in researching African photography in a transnational context.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Showing Sounds: African Audio-Visual Encounters

Our panel seeks proposals for historical papers and artist performances that engage sound archives and aural histories in creative ways. Papers and performances on this panel might take up the philosophical implication of deconstructing the archive through historiographic practices; or they might employ the visual aspects of sound, or the sonic dimensions of the visual as performance or writing strategies; or they might address modern sound artists' history of engagement with topics such as sourcing, origins, archive, spatiality, or synesthesia; or they might consider the inter-medial aspects of the aural/visual nexus often characteristic of traditional arts. Contributions might also direct our attention to important figures in the sound art scene such as Spoek Mathambo, or the late Ahmed Basyony. We also encourage papers and performances that address the longer history of sound art in Africa against the ocular-centrist legacy from colonialism. We are especially interested in approaches to sound in Africa, by artists and historians, that make use of critical and creative nontraditional approaches to historical and archival material, to subvert them, to make new meanings from them, to speak history differently.

Chairs:

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Delinda Collier
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PANEL TITLE: Handling/Manipulating Photographs in Africa: New Perspectives in Photography History

Throughout its social life, a photographic image, be it on film or digitally rendered, is manipulated by various people. Often an untold aspect, the focus of this panel will be on the gestures, visible or not, which allow the appearance or the re-emergence of photographs at certain times and contexts under particular shapes: how do they affect the way we understand these images and the events they highlight? And what are the cultural, political, economic and social stakes underlying them?

All types of "post-production" gestures – from the editing process to those necessary for image conservation or even a photograph's destruction – are concerned by this call, which supposes to move away from the general perspective which puts much emphasis on the image producer – the photographer – at the expense of all the stakeholders who routinely and physically handle the photographic object – by selecting, pasting, framing, exhibiting, printing, digitizing, conserving it (or not) –, thus highly contributing to enrich its polysemy.

Chairs:

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Érika Nimis
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PANEL TITLE: Art and the Mechanical Landscape

In the 19th century, Dahomean artists in what is now the Republic of Benin worked with railway metal to create an iconic statue of Gu. In his 2016 project with Filip de Boeck, *Suturing the City*, Sammy Baloji captured the pulsing vitality of cars, construction and mechanical chaos in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Africa's industrial landscapes have inspired tremendous creativity in the arts and provide particularly rich comparative studies with which to understand and reevaluate narratives of modernization, nationalism, and colonization and post-colonialism, as well as to engage with cutting edge theoretical framings regarding production, infrastructure, and decay. This panel seeks to address the under-recognized history of industrialization and technology in Africa, the impact of machinery and industrial materials on the arts, the socio-economic effects of industrialization on diverse African lives, the interplay between industrialization and politics, the broader theoretical implications of industrialization in Africa in relation to production, infrastructure, and obsolescence or deterioration, and the particular visualities of technological innovation on this vast continent. Contexts of exploration might include, but are not limited to: transportation networks, communication technologies, resource extraction, textile production, weaponry, the space race, and current innovation laboratories.

Chair:

Karen E. Milbourne, Curator
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PANEL TITLE: Ethics/Access: Photo/filmic futures

Photo/filmic global practices have been increasingly theorised, addressing aporias in colonial, national, and international terrain around Africa. As the current wave of scholarship, research and curatorial work progress, we draw attention to dramatic changes in the nature of access. New concerns around accessing analogue and digital photography, film, televisual and related archives, including continuing destruction, obsolescence, and fragile archives in private, public/civic and state hands, and increasing privatisation and centralized control over these materials. We invite established and new scholars to address what these subjects mean for audiences? What are possibilities for future deployment, for the ethics of access, and to new directions in theorising these world collections now?

Chairs:

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PANEL TITLE: Fictions

This panel explores the uses of fiction in the art histories of Africa and the African diaspora. Fiction is defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “something invented by the imagination or feigned; specifically: an invented story” and “an assumption of a possibility as a fact irrespective of the question of its truth...a useful illusion or pretense.” Contributors to the panel engage the different meanings and methodologies of fiction to interrogate how the history of art constructs its truths or “useful illusions.” Fiction here is a means to render legible the contours of what is imaginable and “thinkable,” in Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s phrasing. Fiction assesses what Jacques Rancière calls the distribution of the sensible: the system of inclusions and exclusions that determine what can be sensed, seen, and said. The panel seeks participants who use different, emergent, and transdisciplinary approaches to fiction or other strategies including critical fabulation, storying, parafiction, or the counterfactual to explore African and African diasporic art histories that might not come to light through more conventional methods, narratives, or archives. What is the role of stories, oral histories, gossip, urban myths, speculation, or unverifiable archival remains in art history? What types of objects, archives, museum displays or modes of knowledge transmission might come to visibility through forms of fiction and other types of truth? How might fiction highlight precisely what is beyond our knowing and how might art historians engage this terrain?

Chair:

Krista Thompson
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PANEL TITLE: Thinking About Slavery in African Visual Culture

How do visual representations actively produce slavery's practice, history, and memory? While over the past twenty years much thinking on this question has taken place through images of Atlantic slave ships and American plantations, this panel seeks to ask what new perspectives on the visual culture of slavery emerge from a concerted focus on African case studies, definitions, and artistic practices. While African perspectives are arguably central to the study of the visual culture of slavery, they remain under-utilized as both case studies and theoretical models. This lacuna is especially problematic given that enslaved Africans would have understood their own circumstances through African worldviews often quite distinct from those outside the continent.

Taking up this problem as a point of productive departure, this panel proposes an exploration of how African arts imagine the intersections and contested definitions of slavery and visual culture on the African continent. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, arts produced by Africans in response to internal, trans-Saharan, Atlantic, and Indian Ocean trades; visual and performative metaphors of servitude in African religions; the role of witchcraft and spiritual forces in navigating the memory of slavery; and visual media's relationship to contemporary forms of slavery. In all cases, we seek proposals that explore and explode prevailing definitions of both slavery and visual representation.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Islamic Architecture and Contested Cultural Heritage in Africa

This panel explores historic Islamic architecture in Africa through the lens of contested contemporary culture and politics. How do definitions of Islamic architectural heritage in the eyes of global organizations compare to the way particular states value or devalue these sites in their own agendas? What constitutes Islamic architectural heritage in the eyes of community members? How do these definitions differ from the way scholars view such heritage? By analyzing how these forms are conceptualized by multiple stakeholders, the panel advocates for context-specific approaches to Islamic architecture and heritage management in the face of increasingly global cultural and political landscapes.

Note: This panel is the third in a series of panels on this theme organized by the co-chairs for the African Studies Association Annual Meetings (December 2016) and the College Art Association Annual Meetings (February 2017).

Current Panelists:

Mahmoud Malik Saako

Ghana Museums and Monuments Board

“Islamic Architecture in Northern Ghana, Ownership and Control”

Nii-Adziri Wellington

Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, University of Ghana-Legon

“Crises in Contesting Identities in Islamic Sacral Architecture: A Reflection on the ‘Hagia Sophia’ in Accra, Ghana”

Michelle Apotsos

Williams College

"Whose Heritage? Unpacking the Reality of Larabanga's Ancient Mosque"

Panel seeking participants, please submit the following information by January 16, 2017:

Name

Affiliation

Email address

Phone and fax numbers

Title of Paper

Abstract of no more than 250 words describing theme and scope of paper and short abstract of no more than 100 words

Chairs:

Barbara Frank (Barbara.Frank@Stonybrook.edu)

Michelle Apotsos (michelle.apotsos@williams.edu)

PANEL TITLE: Gender Metaphor in Africa and its Diaspora

The depiction of male and female elements (separately or together) in Africa and its Diaspora conveys much more than meets the eye. This panel invites papers on different aspects of the phenomenon in ancient and contemporary artistic expressions, most especially its association with gender complementarity and binary opposition (among others) in nature and culture.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: New perspectives on feminism and gender studies in Africa

Studies in which there is a focus on gender and which are directed at practitioners from the past and present in the West have been complemented by work on artists from other geographies, including Africa. Yet while it is generally acknowledged that concerns with gender have had a ‘global’ impact on art, the ways in which such concerns have manifested themselves in individual African countries is sometimes limited or partial for art historians who are not themselves from the countries concerned or who have not done research on those specific geographies. In a move to address this gap in art historical discourse, papers are invited which, through selected examples, explore the implications of what feminism, queer theory or gender studies may have meant (or mean) in the context of art histories and art-making practices in different parts of Africa (or for diaspora artists in the West).

Chairs:

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PANEL TITLE: Our "Bon Vivant": The Life and Impact of Scholar Marilyn Houlberg

To honor the memory of Marilyn Houlberg (1939-2012), we will invite scholars and artists to come together and reflect on the impact of her contributions to the fields of African art and arts of the African Diaspora. Marilyn's long career spanned the worlds of scholarship, collecting, and curating, but above all she was a teacher and mentor. Marilyn's complex position as a woman and mother doing fieldwork in Nigeria shaped her methodological approach and presaged trends in self-reflexive and feminist ethnography. The kinds of relationships she formed in the field shaped her eye as a collector and curator and guided her scholarship on popular aesthetics and visual arts. An early scholar of Nigerian hair, Haitian Studio photography, and the arts of Vodou, Marilyn's research always stayed close to the lives of her interlocutors. Her scholarship can be found in influential text such as Sacred Arts of Haitian Vodou, Mami Wata and the journal of African Arts. Marilyn also influenced scholarship through unconventional pedagogical methods that often led to lifelong relationships with her students.

Paper presentation topics can include: reflections on Marilyn's relationships to the market and the academy; her role as an early self-reflexive researcher; the impact of her research on approaches to Black Atlantic arts; motherhood as both a research topic and methodological position; and her commitment to mentoring and befriending a range of scholars.

Chairs:

Emilie Boone
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New York City College of Technology

Katherine Smith
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PANEL TITLE: Where to from here with historical African art museum collections?

The museum as institution has always served as a window onto places and eras far removed in time and space from those of their audiences. Today museums are burdened by the collections assembled in past centuries and the narratives to which they have been put. Museums have for some time sought ways to justify their historical collections through exhibitions that rethink narratives about art and Africa with a critical eye to the past. Yet, as in the example of the ROM's 'Into the Heart of Africa,' revisionist and reflective exhibitions may in fact reinforced biases, as the ROM itself attested to in its recent apology to the African-Canadian community. This panel invites papers that navigate the complexities of historical African art collections in the present. What place do objects with contested provenances, or mediums such as ivory, for example, have in current discourse on Africa, art and the museum as institution? What are the different stories that museums can tell, ones that rethink historical and contemporary representations of Africa? Papers may examine past or present museum collection, education or exhibition policies, narratives or theory.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Creative Welded Metal Art as a Means to Financial Sustainability

Creative welded metal art is a global profession from the ancient to contemporary time. Exposure of the modern means of working metal creatively started in Europe in 1930 and later spread to other parts of the world. This act, since its emergence in Nigeria has not being explore as it was the case with the traditional metal approach particularly among the academically trained artists (sculptors). This paper aimed at bringing to fore importance of formerly trained artist in the act of creative welded metal art (work) particularly as it regards utilitarian objects (such as chairs, console, curtain poles and tie-back etc). Data for the study is gathered from both primary and secondary sources. It was observed that creative welded metal art is highly accepted in the society and many academically trained sculptors are found wanting in the trade. Therefore, the paper will conclude by encouraging art schools and their products in the act of creative welded metal work as a means to self-financial sustainability.

Chairs:

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PANEL TITLE: “Sacrosanct Objects” and Early Colonial Field Collections

Early field collections were often documented with associated tales rather than dispassionate notes alone, sometimes (Frobenius!) echoing the contemporaneous taste for popular fiction of a “Ripping Yarns” direction. The collectors frequently constructed myths of themselves as adventurous heroes braving peril, whether they were colonial officers, missionaries, or even commercial agents. Some of their accounts were published to the interest of a non-scholarly audience, such as the Mission Dakar-Djibouti, while others received little or no publicity at the time or since. We tend to esteem items from their collections, even though scholars such as Schildkrout and Keim have demonstrated that pre-WWII field collections do not necessarily form some artistic baseline free of “Western contamination.” We nonetheless accord their objects considerable value in part because they predate crass art market considerations, in part because they have associated field data, and in part because they were hand-picked before mass culling of African art took place. Autobiographical information supplied by the field collectors adds to the objects’ aura of romance, as does scholarly analysis of their multiple agendas, not all of which were innocent. Some of these nascent ethnographers employed less-than-scrupulous collection practices, or parlayed their field experiences into careers as exotica-related showmen or merchants. While historiographers have reevaluated the impetus, purpose, and contributions of numerous early field collectors, such studies have not been exhausted. Papers are sought that explore the intersections of the motivations, methods, and attitudes of these early collectors and the art objects they returned with.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: African Art and Visual Culture on Social Platforms

In the twenty-first century, social platforms—Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and others—are important tools for visual and performing artists, designers, marketers, and bloggers seeking to establish a presence in the digital world. Social platforms in Africa, increasingly accessed through mobile phones, have become a central means for communicating on a national, transnational, and global scale. This panel seeks to explore ways that social media have enabled African artists and individuals to communicate, and achieve continental and global recognition and success. Papers submitted for this panel should address the roles of social media platforms in African art and visual culture.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Walking: Pace, Protest and Artistic Practice

In recent years there has been a revived interest in walking as a creative and corporeally mindful practice in the visual and performing arts. While the contemporary art world celebrates the fast-paced movement of the mobility turn, walking has a long history of deliberately slow movement that connects bodies and places in intimate ways. In pilgrimage, pain and mindfulness generate spiritual connections with land or site; in carnivals, stilted characters ‘walk tall, tall, tall’ as they recall the history of slavery, and in many rituals the tactility of each footfall and the opening up of each pathway hold efficacious potential. This panel seeks papers that draw from African walking practices and African-based philosophies of walking in contemporary art, performance art, masquerade and protest.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: Design Histories / Practices in Africa and beyond

Design Histories and practices in Africa and its Diaspora are a hitherto neglected field of research within African art history. This is surprising given the currently blooming, broadening and diversified scenes of fashion, textile and product design in African cities - a development that seems to be closely connected to the (temporary) (re-)migrations of designers and architects. Being inspired by older “traditions” and also by forms and techniques of everyday Gestaltung, extremely prolific and innovative circles have thus emerged through the exchange with designers and artists working on the continent. Our aim is to incite research and gain insight in this new field of research.

We ask for contributions which examine design histories and practices in Africa and its Diaspora under various angles: Presentations could tackle the interwoven and contested histories between objects from Africa and the search for new forms in the context of the mainly British Arts and Crafts Movement, the French Art Deco or the German Werkbund. Papers shedding light on the importance of design and design practices during the independence era (Forms of Freedom) are equally welcomed as well as discussions on the role of technology (fab labs. e.g.) and speculative and conceptual forms in the context of ‘future making’. We also encourage contribution which focus on the work and practice of individual designers as well as on the political and social dimension of form and design practices.

Chairs:

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PANEL TITLE: Nostalgia

The power of nostalgia is becoming more pervasive and pointed in contemporary culture. From the nationalistic sloganeering captured in ‘Make America Great Again’ to Brexit evoking nostalgia for empire, there seems to be an allure for a return. South Africa’s, rainbow nationalism is an instance of a nostalgia at its prospective; a sentimental yearning for a future that never came. This panel seeks papers that engage the aesthetics of nostalgia in contemporary art and visual practice. This includes artistic activity that centres temporality, for instance; the pursuit of African, black and queer temporalities that are strategically activated by artists in order to “assemble counter-memories and counter-futures that contest the colonial archive” in the words of Kodwo Eshun (2003) in *Further Considerations on Afrofuturism*. Nostalgia is considered in its retrospective and prospective dimensions as laid out by Svetlana Boym (2001) in the *Future of Nostalgia*. Panelists may consider the aesthetics of temporality evident in the current visual return to Afrofuturism. On the other hand panelists may explore the question of imperial violence at the heart of nostalgia’s aesthetics. Why is nostalgic sentimentality making a comeback? In the words of Svetlana Boym (2001) should it be engaged as an “ethical and aesthetic failure”? How is art practice used as a regressive conduit for returns and repetitions? Other angles and approaches to this topic are also welcome.

Chair:

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PANEL TITLE: New Narratives of Art and Technology in Africa

From Arnold Rubin's comparison of art to a "system of tools and techniques by means of which people relate to their environment" (1991) to Alfred Gell's idea of art as "a technology of enchantment" (1998), the study of African and non-Western art has proven fertile ground for art historical approaches using technology as metaphor for art as a mode of action in the world. The ideas of technology at play, however, most closely resemble techné, a term deriving from Ancient Greece to refer to the value-laden craft practice of pre-industrial societies, in which specialists serve functional needs while also conforming to society's broader ethical and aesthetic values. Currently prevailing concepts of technology, however, in Africa as elsewhere, differ sharply. Technology as controlling, alienating, and disruptive coexists with notions of technology as liberator, economic salve, or 'start-up innovation'; digital sound, 3D printing, cheap electronics and the Internet have opened up new semantic and aesthetic possibilities; while pioneering African technologies, such as M-Pesa and Frontline SMS, have transformed the terms of ordinary, everyday commercial and community engagement. What are the politics and poetics of new technological appropriations in African art (and art history)? How are artists responding to, or shaping, new socio-technical imaginaries? How do the discourses of Afrofuturism, speculative design, and 'critical making' (among others) inform artistic practice relating to Africa? Is technology 'raced'? And if so, can it be 'decolonized'? How might we theorize anew relations among art, technology, and cultures of creativity? We invite submissions probing these and all related questions.

Chairs:

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PANEL TITLE: From STEM to STEAM: Recent projects using science-based collaboration to understand African Art

In recent years, advances in scientific testing such as Carbon-14 bomb peak analysis and x-ray imaging techniques have created new possibilities in understanding and evaluating African art. This panel introduces current science-based projects using public and private African art collections. It will look at questions being explored through the African object. In doing so, it will introduce the potentials as well as limitations of scientific testing, and will also detail collaborative processes between scientists and Africanists.

Chair:

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