

Arts Council of the African Studies Association

Roundtables Seeking Participants

ACASA members, please submit papers
to roundtable 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

ROUNDTABLE TITLE: Women and Contemporary Nigerian Art: reception, support, and patronage

Contemporary art in Nigeria is fascinating due in no small part to women. This roundtable looks at the work and the history of Nigeria's female artists. Collette Omogbai, Clara Ugbodaga-Ngu and Afie Ekong are pioneering firsts: each influenced Nigerian modernism. Omogbai was the first woman to receive an arts education; Ugbodaga-Ngu during the 1950s was the only Nigerian faculty member at Zaria's Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology (NCAST), and, Ekong wielded considerable influence on the 1960s Lagos art scene.

Today, Nike Okundaye, and Peju Alatise, are perhaps two of Nigeria's best-known advocates for gender equity. Often working without the safety net of conventionality, each with laser focus, exposes particular problems within Nigeria. Through the use of Yoruba folklore, they have shown spotlights on forced marriage, misogyny, and, tradition. Eschewing the feminist label, both have boldly chosen their own path. They are the continuum of the work of Nigeria's first women artists. Neither ascribe to western labels, instead they rewrite the ways in which the contemporary arts of Nigeria are to be received on the global stage. Both demand that the work is accepted for what it is rather from whence it hails.

This roundtable shall look at the ways in which women impact Nigeria today through their art and advocacy. The questions that we ask will include: how does one become a successful contemporary female artist in Nigeria? Does advocacy mean that their art remains gendered? How does gender affect reception, patronage, and the global art market?

Chair:

Francine Kola-Bankole
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Confirmed Presenters:

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ROUNDTABLE TITLE: Focus on Studio Practice at the University of Benin, Department of Fine Arts, Ekehuan Campus, Benin City, Nigeria

This roundtable is meant to allow practicing artists a way to participate in the Triennial by briefly presenting several of their works in powerpoint slides.

Chair:

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ROUNDTABLE TITLE: Africa's Photographic Futures

At a recent symposium at Columbia University, Chika Okeke-Agulu observed that the 1990s constituted a period of historical recuperation, of African photography's 20th century roots in portraiture and photojournalism. The first decades of this century have, in turn, marked a deepening and broadening of scholarship and criticism on the photography of artists from Africa and its diasporas. But what of Africa's photographic future? Is it still the vital and democratic medium that it was during the early postcolonial decades? Has the absorption of photography more broadly into the global art market blunted its capacity to be a generative and critical medium in contemporary African art? Do problems of exoticism and afro-pessimism necessarily compromise photographic representations of Africa? Has photography been displaced by more conventional media or newer platforms as interest in African art continues to grow? This roundtable seeks artists, critics, and scholars to offer fresh theories of photography's horizon in African art for the foreseeable future. *Africa's Photographic Futures* is less an opportunity to report on monographic scholarship and is, instead, a place to hypothesize about the role of photography in light of newer digital platforms, the advent of nomadic and post-studio practices, and an increase in opportunities more generally for artists of Africa and its diasporas. While case studies might provide useful starting points, the roundtable seeks to be theoretically generative and open-ended, with an eye towards publication in a condensed format.

Chair:

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ROUNDTABLE TITLE: Fabric Dyeing Batik Designs: An Inspiraation from the Akwete Woven Symbols of Igbo Woevn Art in Southeastern Nigeria

Africans have distinguished themselves through their indigenous textiles. The symbolic motifs and patterns on African fabrics, tell stories about its' culture and history. African textiles in today's world often combine tradition and contemporary influence to showcase artistic expression of various communities. Wearing of African designs convey lots of messages through the symbolic motifs used to decorate the fabrics. Through this, the African heritage is brought into limelight. Akwete woven art is part of it and practiced in the southeastern part of Nigeria. The weavers which are only females, used various symbolic motifs to decorate their woven fabrics and these have not been really showcased in today's fashion. Primary because of its weight and peoples preference for western clothes. Therefore, this research reveals that if these symbolic motifs that depict Igbo culture are transferred to cotton fabrics using the batik technique of dyeing, it will go a long way in preserving and sustaining these cultural values of the Igbo.

Chair:

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ROUNDTABLE TITLE: Oshogbo Art: How it All Began

The 1960's saw Africa emerge from the domination of colonial powers. The development of a grassroots movement known as "Oshogbo art" was an expression of renewed freedom and creativity following Nigerian independence. A group of young people in the southwestern town of Oshogbo created a unique style grounded in Yoruba tradition and incorporating the Western ideal of individual expression. Briefly, this is how it came about:

In the 1950's, a German linguist named Ulli Beier was teaching at the University of Ibadan. He was impressed with the creativity he recognized in local people; he determined help give it expression. He settled on Oshogbo for his project because it had relatively little contact with Western education and culture. He posted flyers around town calling for participants in workshops held in a pub owned by local theater director Duro Ladipo.

Among the young people who responded were Twins Seven Seven, Rufus Ogundele, Adebisi Fabunmi, Muraina Oyelami, and Jimoh Buraimoh. Beier's wife, Austrian artist Suzanne Wenger, became interested in Yoruba religion and the worship of the spirit of the Oshun River. Artists influenced by Wenger included Ashiru Olatunde, Jinadu Oladepo, and Buraimoh Gbadamosi. Today, fifty years later, many of the original Oshogbo artists are internationally recognized and still working; some have passed on. They developed an apprenticeship system that produced a second and third generation of artists. I propose bringing together surviving founders of the Movement in a Roundtable discussion to recount how it began.

Chair:

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ROUNDTABLE TOPIC: The Art Scene in Lagos, Nigeria

There is an explosion of artistic activity happening in Accra, Kumasi, and Lagos-Nigeria that is very exciting. Our colleagues from the University of Florida (Nagy and Cooksey) are proposing a roundtable that focuses on the art scene in Accra and Kumasi. We propose a parallel session focusing on Lagos-Nigeria and plan to invite participants from different perspectives – patrons, artists, critics, scholars, audiences – all those who have been shaping and contributing to the vibrant arts landscape of Lagos.

[NOTE: We intend to have about 6-8 presenters (10-15 mins each) and open discussion. If we get a larger response, we might hold a session II, same format.]

Potential participants:

Kavita Chellaram: Patron, Collector, Founder of ArtHouse and Arthouse Foundation
Peju Alatise: Artist, architect, activist, Founder of Alter Native
Bisi Silva: Curator, founder of CCA and Asiko, Creative director of Art X
Fernanda Villarroel: Scholar, PhD student at UW-Madison and co-organizer
Frank Ugiomoh: Critic/scholar, Editor of the *Journal of African Art* (TOJA)

Other suggestions:

Nike Davis: Artist and founder of Nike Art Gallery
Peju Layiwola: Artist and Professor of Visual Art at University of Lagos
Caline Chaghouri: Founder of Art 21
Oliver Enwonwu: Director of the Society of Nigerian Artist and founder of Omenka gallery and magazine
Azubuike Nwagbogu: Founder of African Artist Foundation and Lagos Photo

Chairs:

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ROUNDTABLE TITLE: New Pedagogies and New Resources? Textbooks and their Alternatives for University Teaching

As the authors of *A History of Art in Africa* consider options for a new edition of the textbook, one that would be affordable, accessible and relevant in the college classroom, they seek to gather feedback from instructors in Africa and elsewhere. Is there still a place for printed materials in university teaching, or do students expect to obtain all required reading material online? Many American universities provide students access to scholarly articles via databases such as JSTOR, and new collections of images are available on ARTSTOR, but these resources are quite expensive for African institutions. Are there enough images, videos, blogs and web-based essays currently available online to supplement classroom instruction on art from Africa, and can they be effectively integrated into a college level course? If not, are students willing to pay for specialized online content? Are syntheses of broad historical developments or overviews of regional interactions still of interest to beginning students of African art history, or do they now prefer more focused introductions to individual artworks and artists? Most of all, is a coherent narrative, whether in a lecture, or a chapter in a textbook, at all useful in a 21st century course? This roundtable will ask for short presentations drawn from the personal experiences of faculty who teach courses on African art. We invite instructors from all backgrounds and all disciplinary orientations to participate in this roundtable, but are particularly interested in participation by those who began to teach courses on African art history at the college level in the post-digital age.

Chair:

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