

CLPA NEWS 2019 #02

CENTRES OF **LEARNING**
FOR **PHOTOGRAPHY**
IN **AFRICA**



CENTRES DE **FORMATION**
EN **PHOTOGRAPHIE**
EN **AFRIQUE**

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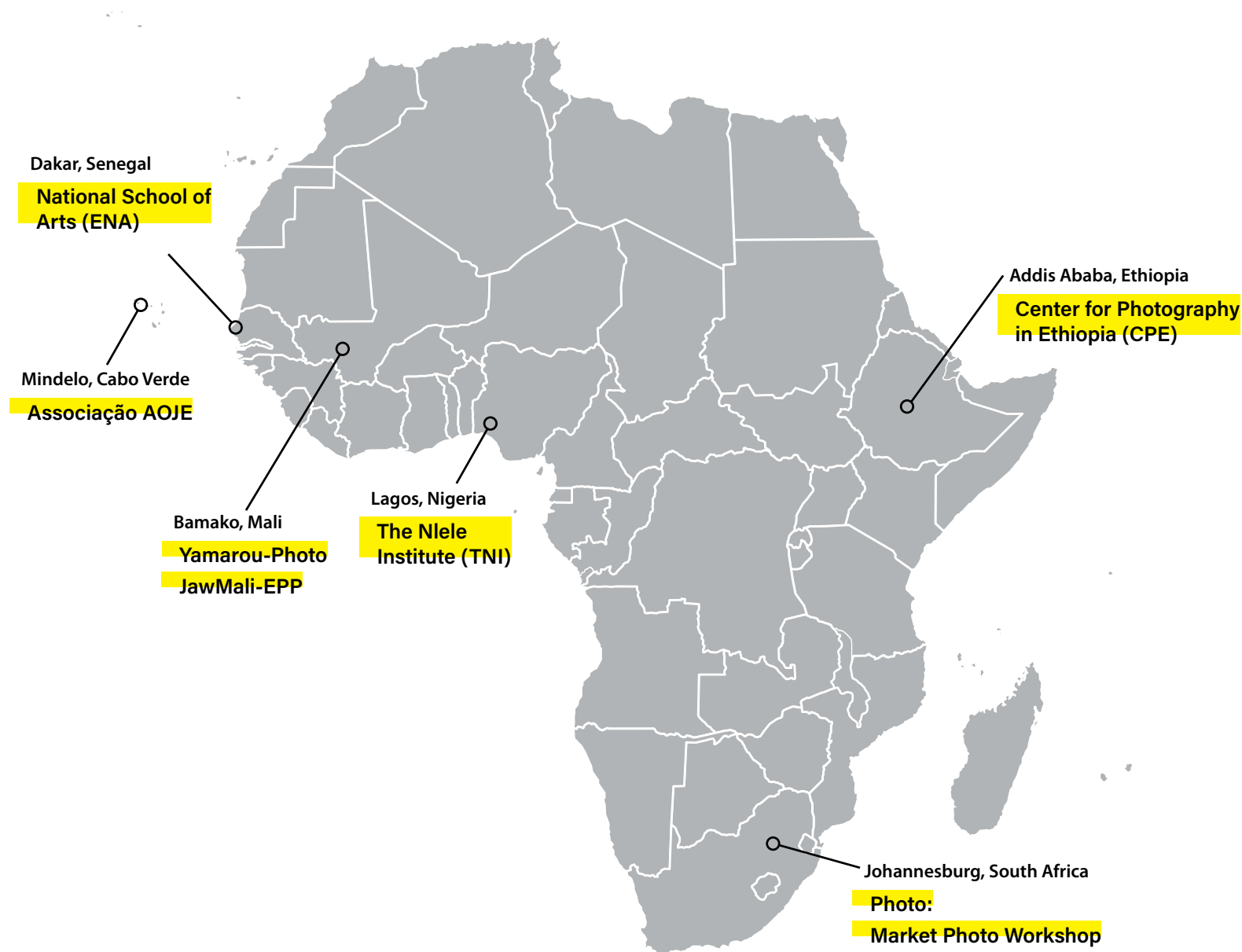


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JULY 2019

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Co-founded and funded by the
Goethe-Institut South Africa

CLPA News is a newsletter made up from
contributions of the CLPA members. The
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Gender binaries in African photography

By Aude Mgba

Addressing the issue of gender through the lens of photography can be a delicate exercise when one knows that the look of an image may vary according to the viewer. The debate on gender is a major topic of discussion in the world today, but on the continent, it still seems preliminary even though Africa is home to several formerly matrilineal societies.

As a result, there have been various movements by the so-called “feminine” gender to fight for equality and justice in a world that has become more and more patriarchal and capitalist since colonization. In 2004, the writer and musician Koppo released the hit *Emma*, that talks about his adventures in the city of Yaoundé as he decided to flirt with someone who appeared to be a very attractive lady. Bringing her back home at night, he discovered that the beautiful Emma was in fact intersex: she had a woman’s body with male genitalia. This was a situation that the society in which I grew up was not used to talking about because it appeared obvious that an individual’s identity was defined by their sex: you were either a man or a woman. The conscious or subconscious notion of what makes a man and woman determines the modes of behaviours, lifestyles, as well as ways of dressing. This specific structure that only recognizes these two genders has had consequences in the distribution of social roles, often reflected in photographic practice.

Leo, very spiritual ►
and passionate
about astrology, has
in her place a fortress
of memories where
it is protected by a
guard and pebbles.
Everything in her
body and her room
has a meaning.
©Kitty Blunt



Before the 50s and 60s, although photography was practiced by a good number of artists on the continent, it was mainly influenced by the Western view of society: an exoticized, anthropological and touristic gaze. Naked women in groups often accompanied by children would pose in front of huts or in the kitchen, while men with bare torsos and pronounced muscles would have tools of labour. After independence studio photography was born and was particularly dominated by portraits, which facilitated the reading and decoding of pictures. Gender roles were constructed and made easily perceptible through composition. Women would portray the role of mother, girl, future wife, or bride. Even accessories informed the clear division that existed between men and women. Necklaces, bracelets, earrings and large dresses usually completely covered the bodies of women, unlike the lightness and openness of clothing for men. Moreover, the sets and backgrounds were generally saturated for women. The work by Malick Sidibé, *Déjà Futurs Amoureux* (1976), portrays two children, a boy and a girl, and how their genders play a central role in defining their individual futures in society. The closed studio space also became a place of intimacy between the model and photographer. Although this was rare, some models offered themselves the freedom to break social norms. The of full-length portrait by Sidibé of two young women dressed in pants and posing with cigarettes in hand is a good example.

In the 70s and 80s, when photography was also expressed outside the studio, several photographers' work presented

a radical change in this split between man and woman and all the stereotypes attributed to them. Artists distorted the heteronormative gaze by playing with cultural codes through composition, set design, the models' poses and clothes. In society, we find evidence of contradictory representations of gender where boys wear skirts or dresses in the same contexts that favour gender division, such as church. Simultaneously, photographers are taking a stand on such issues through self-portraits and composite imaging. The photo series by Samuel Fosso, often called the "Man of a Thousand Faces", plays a lot with traditional paradigms of identity as predefined by societal constructions of gender. Through his self-portraits, he explores the instability of identity by demonstrating the constant transformation of gender and sexuality. In his photo, *La Bourgeoise* (1997), Samuel plays with his own body, by presenting himself in the body of a 'woman' who took possession of his male body with a beauty so striking represented by attire, accessories, makeup and posture. 🌀

Aude Christel Mgba is an independent curator based in Amsterdam, recently a participant of the curatorial programme De Appel 2018/19. In 2017, Aude assisted Cécile Bourne-Farrell for SUD2017, an international triennial of public art organized by Doual'art for the city of Douala. Perpetuate the links between the contemporary and the past through collaborations between artists, researchers, writers and craftsmen, she reevaluates the "decolonial thoughts" of the contemporary world. Very attached to ancestral values that have sprung from geographical antipodes, she tends to create connections between past, present and future.

Before the 50s and 60s, although photography was practiced by a good number of artists on the continent, it was mainly influenced by the Western view of society: an exoticized, anthropological and touristic gaze.

Reflections on identity

ASSOCIAÇÃO AOJE

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

We haven't approached identity or representation of identity explicitly in our learning programs (except maybe when showing references or examples of photography work to students). By this, I mean we're not imposing on anyone to work on the subject if they are not comfortable to do so. But what is crucial is the way we engage students and/or guide them into exploring issues of contemporary relevance through photography. The important thing is to lead young photographers into thinking about their own environment which will eventually create awareness on contemporary issues. They can thereafter explore the things that matter to them as active and curious citizens.

How can photographing notions of identity act as a way to address systematic exclusions of certain identities in our histories?

Photography acts both on the visible as well as on the invisible level. What is not seen through photography will continue to be rendered as invisible. Photography has the power to bring subjects to the forefront, although there are always very important considerations and concerns to be taken into account when doing so. In this regard, context is crucial, and it is up to the photographer to ensure that the viewer is provided with necessary or tangible information.

For whom are we photographing identity?

For everyone willing to take a deep, critical and lingering gaze at photographs.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

This can be achieved through the understanding of the role and place of photography (and visual culture) in our societies. We can educate young practitioners to take the best photography has to offer and to use it for the benefit of future generations.

CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN ETHIOPIA (CPE)

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

CPE supports photographers to work on projects that are important to them. We approach identity through elements such as history, memory, archives and current experiences. Photographers use self-portraiture, documentary or conceptual forms as a tool to navigate through the identity questions they want to raise or present.

How can photographing notions of identity act as a way to address systematic exclusions of certain identities in our histories?

When photographing notions of identity, we speak about systematic exclusion and the idea of identity becomes much more vocal and political. Photography can be the medium to identify, question and even resist or act against an unjust system.

For whom are we photographing identity?

I understand that it is specific to the photographer and the context within or wherein the photographer negotiates their space. The identity issues and representation in Kenya may or may not resonate with that of Ethiopia even though both are located in East Africa. Or the identity we refer to as being African might be a notion that is shared with many on the continent. I would like to think the first audience for photographing identity would be the community. That is the focal point by which all the meanings and the contexts gravitates to make sense to both the photographer and the viewing public.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

An effective curriculum can breakdown the complexity of identity and improve critical thinking among students. It provides students with insight and understandings of identity, what forms it and what continues to emanate from it. It goes beyond the photograph and explores a diverse, large amount of knowledge.

PHOTO:

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

Identity and representation of identity is always inherent in photography or acts of photography. It is the rudimentary principle on how photographers position themselves and others. So, through learning photography, the question of who we are unfolds slowly, continuously and moulds the ideas of identity through listening to what others say about the photographer's work. In some cases, the kind of photographs that we make and the protocols that we select reveal who we are.

How can photographing notions of identity act as a way to address systematic exclusions of certain identities in our histories?

I think we should look at how photography produces uncertainty as much as it attempts to create knowledge. Undoubtedly so, the visibility of identity has increased over the years which has much to do with technology. But with this increase in visibility, there can be a flattening of ideas of identity which can easily reproduce stereotypes. Photography is not evidence of who we are, it is an expression.

For whom are we photographing identity?

Perhaps we are not photographing identity as much as it is revealed in photographs. There is a complicated market of consumption that can at times manipulate the context of how these images create meaning.

However, ideally, photographing identity would be for everyone who is interested in the world.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

Understanding visual culture can help photographers to navigate issues of identity and how it is revealed and consumed, but also how it can be manipulated. Much of the work needed in an effective curriculum is how we read identities around us to understand ourselves.



MARKET PHOTO WORKSHOP (MPW)

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

Our photography teaching is based on themes and topics of self-identity and expression through visual representation. In one of our short courses we have assignments that require students to investigate and interrogate the notion of home (or the familiar) and the practice of self-portraits. The theme of home is explored as a short visual story and self-portraiture presented as either a depiction of the real self or an expression of the ideal self.

How can photographing notions of identity act as a way to address systematic exclusions of certain identities in our histories?

Visual histories of identities, African identities in particular, have never been excluded. They have always been included but atrociously misrepresented. It has always been seductive to photograph Africans in Africa.

For whom are we photographing identity?

African photographers tend to photograph identity as a form of self-expression, preservation and protest. It is a presumption to question 'for whom', as though if there weren't an audience, photographers would not be engaged in the activity of photographing identity. Nevertheless, we photograph our heterogeneous identities because we can and most importantly are liberated to do so. We unapologetically dictate and propagate how we want to be seen and viewed.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

We need to continuously develop a fluid curriculum that is Afrocentric; A curriculum that is fundamentally informed by the visual content produced by African photographers in Africa and

the diaspora. We require a teaching material that restores and reaffirms the dignity of a person, an object and a place that bears the indigenous and current African identities. This would be a decolonised curriculum which ethically promotes the principles and values of Ubuntu which in photography would mean "I sincerely respect and protect who, what and where I am photographing."

JAWMALI-EPP

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

To photograph is to stop time and it is the best method to testify to identity and representation of society and the individual. At JawMali-EPP, we place particular emphasis on this aspect of photography.

How can photographing notions of identity act as a way to address systematic exclusions of certain identities in our histories?

The photographer's point of view is very important in investigating the notion of identity with reference to the subject (the people photographed). Emphasizing identity with a framing that takes into account sensitive aspects by displaying photographs in a positive way provides accessible storytelling to all.

For whom are we photographing identity?

The photographer's work on identity opens a window for the photographer, the subject and the public to have a better understanding of contexts and meanings in history/past events. This understanding provides the platform whereby current events can be juxtaposed with references from the past in an effort to navigate the sensitive issues on the subject of identity and representation. This can then be disseminated through exhibitions, the media and curricula to various communities in society.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

Given that photography is a strong tool in visual literacy, an important language in contemporary art and the best way to investigate the representation of identity, it must be taught through a proactive approach. The requirement of an effective curriculum becomes necessary for both the formal and informal art education spaces. An effective curriculum can go a long way to inspire the passion and determination of young learners/ students to develop their knowledge base and build capacity to a critical level in understanding the notion of identity and representation made possible by the power of photography.

YAMAROU-PHOTO

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

We have been working on the question of identity for the past few months through a project called "Guité". The project aims to address the feud and terrorism between ethnicities, war in Mali and how to confront these problems.

How can photographing notions of identity act as a way to address systematic exclusions of certain identities in our histories?

We approach this subject differently. Photography is visual and at the same time sociological. We are interested in questioning identity as a notion in itself. If we talk about identity, we are able to talk about our environment, our history and all the experiences we share together. Today, young Malian photographers are confronted with the problem of identity as many established photographers were mostly portraitists. If a young Malian photographer is working on portraits, he is immediately criticized for having imitated Malick Sidibé

or Seydou Keita. This is the foundation of photography in our country and it is now being questioned by the emerging generation of photographers today with reference to originality and ownership of identity.

For whom are we photographing identity?

Each photographer is the witness of their time and the reflection of his/her generation; thus, we only photograph for ourselves and I think that the act of photographing is a self-portrait in itself.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

The curriculum should be the major tool of all training structures in photography. It is important students be engaged daily in understanding the subject of identity and representation through training in photography with the aid of an effective curriculum.

THE NLELE INSTITUTE (TNI)

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

Quite a number of photographers in Lagos focus on the subject of identity and representation in their creative/artistic practices. The study of identity can be approached from a position of reflection on one's own history, culture and tradition. If students are unable to reflect on their histories and cultures with the aid of a well-structured curriculum or a dedicated pedagogical and research tool, they would not have the critical foundation to articulate and produce works that border on the notions of identity and representation.

How can photographing notions of identity act as a way to address systematic exclusions of certain identities in our histories?

Visual literacy should be an important element in the teaching of history both in formal and informal educational systems. Through the understanding of our visual histories, we know the travails of those that came before us, notable events of oppression and subjugation during previous centuries in Africa and questions of identity across ethnic nationalities. Thus, in trying to find ways to subvert parochial notions that arose after slavery, colonization and apartheid which have led to the systemic exclusion of identities as "the other", photographers and other artists engage themselves in projects that address issues of identity and representation. Through this, they stand in the gap as change agents for marginal groups, deviant communities and ethnic nationalities seen as "the other". Photographing notions of identity provides the platform for questions to be asked (whether there are answers or not) and for us to avert the repetition of histories and events of the past that haunt us.

For whom are we photographing identity?

The target should be the local and global audience. A narrow audience reduces the essence of questioning exclusion. The notion of identity is a global subject which touches everyone and all nationalities. If a photographer produces work with reference to identity and representation, I think that work should be seen globally.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

A primary focus is infrastructural stability for the individual and different platforms of training in photography. People need spaces where they can go to, to engage with others on different

subjects whether they are dealing with national, political, social, economic, religious or artistic issues. When all these are incorporated in a well drafted curriculum, it becomes vital in the understanding of the subject of identity even in an informal platform. Photography students are able to find direction in addressing various societal issues in a more effective and understandable approach as provided by a curriculum.

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ARTS (ENA)

Many photographers are working on notions of identity and representation of identity. How do you approach and navigate these ideas in photography learning?

This is a notion that we have not yet systematically integrated into our teachings (curriculum) but has been mentioned in discussions on major themes in photography.

How can an effective photography curriculum (and photography training institutions) in various African countries promote the teaching and understanding of the subject of identity and representation?

It would be necessary to fully grasp an understanding of the ethnographic forms of identity and representation within Africa first before it is integrated and implemented into a study program or curriculum. Many photographers, especially the young ones, are often in a hurry to photograph and do not take the time needed to research the notion of identity before beginning their practice.

Any policy or study program in photography, especially in Africa, must take into account the rigorous research and knowledge exchange needed to develop such a program.

If you take the example of scarification in Africa, a multitude of signs reveal multiple different identities and interpretations depending on the country you visit. It is the same regarding the use of makeup applied within each country. 🌐

LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF ARTS (ENA)

RECENT ACTIVITIES

DAP (Department of Fine Arts)



The third year DAP students engaged in a series of sessions on the concept of depth of field in photography that took place over a duration of 100 hours within the last 6 months (Jan-Jun 2019).

DFFACR (Training Department of Cultural Animation and Research Trainers)

The annual refresher sessions for third year students in the Fine Arts department of the DFFACR was initiated in 2018 and took place this year over a duration of 50 hours within the last 6 months (Jan-Jun 2019). The training course concentrated on research with focus on thematic topics in photography such as portraiture, landscape, still life, nude etc. A total of 15 students worked within affinity groups with slide-show presentations on their selected topic.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Masterclass in documentary photography

From 22-26 Jul 2019, Sup'Imax, Higher Institute of Arts and Crafts, hosted a masterclass in documentary photography which included students from ENA, Sup'Imax and photojournalists. The masterclass aimed to support the emergence and visibility of young Senegalese photographers. The purpose of this masterclass was to strengthen the student's individual skills. The five-day masterclass was led by Gaël Turine (Photographer), Massimo Berruti (Photographer), MAPS Agency in Belgium, and Behan Touré (Senegalese Photographer and Trainer), with the financial support of

the Wallonia Brussels International Delegation.

A second workshop will take place at the end of the year, led by the trainers and Chiqui Garcia (Graphic Designer) of MAPS to develop the students' ability to collaborate with experts operating in complementary fields (web design, video and journalism) resulting in quality content creation and income opportunities.

CENTER FOR PHOTOGRAPHY IN ETHIOPIA (CPE)

ONGOING

Collaborative Photography Project

The ongoing project involves a group of 5 photographers who have since Mar 2019 aimed to address the challenges, culture and everyday life of Addis Ababa's urban society through a series of critical debates, engagements with personal or public photography collections and peer reviews held every two weeks.

Through visual means, each participant will be able to articulate what, why and how Addis Ababa adds to or subtracts from various aspects of their lives. Through this, they instigate new conversations with the broader public through an exhibition. The project is proposed to conclude in Sept 2019.



▲ ©Tibeb be Adebabay, Collaborative Photography Project.

MARKET PHOTO WORKSHOP (MPW)

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Kwepie public programme



On 18 May 2019, students from MPW's Advanced Programme and the Nthetlelo Foundation Photography Outreach Project hosted a day-long visual research public project that aimed to translate the Queer bodies focused exhibition titled *Kwepie: Daughter of District Six*, in partnership with GALA Queer Archives at WITS University. As a research and visual narrative production exercise, students conceptualised and produced collaborative photographic work to reflect on this archive

Yeoville Pan African Market

This project has been an opportunity for students of MPW to work together on assignments that focus on different modes of photography. It was realised within an environment to which they would not have often had access. It also enabled engagement with their subjects and encouraged many students to step out of their comfort zone. A publication and exhibition was launched at the Yeoville Market on 29 May 2019. The programme will run each quarter at MPW for the rest of the year.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Bulawayo photography training

MPW, in collaboration with the Lupane State University in Zimbabwe, hosted a two-week photography masterclass from 4 Jul 2019 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. The masterclass involved practicing photographers in need of further developing their skill set in the discipline.

Santu Mofokeng Fellowship

MPW and the Santu Mofokeng Estate have partnered to establish a photographic educational research fellowship to honour Santu Mofokeng's legacy. The fellowship will be anchored in the values that perpetuate Mofokeng's embedded love, respect and contribution to the practice of photography in Africa and the world. Providing researchers, curators, students, archivists and any other persons identified by MPW with infrastructural support and access to photography archives to develop new narratives, content, publications, multimedia art works and texts. The fellowship will be launched in August 2019.

Daniele Tamagni Scholarship Grant

An international photography grant designed to sponsor young and emerging photographers with funding for year-long higher photography training at MPW. The selected candidate will live in Johannesburg for the duration of the grant which is set to begin in 2020. The grant is supported by the Daniele Tamagni Estate, which aims to promote the dissemination of African culture, its creativity, the impact of its visual aesthetics on the continent and the diaspora, and an in-depth exploration of photography media.

LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES (CONTINUED)

THE NLELE INSTITUTE (TNI)

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Mentorship Programme



As part of the five-year mentoring programme initiated in Feb 2018 to identify, train and promote a new crop of young photographers in Nigeria, TNI held a two-day photography training session from 20-21 May 2019 with 25 participants at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Lagos. The session titled “Where my strength lies and how to potentiate it”, included facilitators Yves Chatap (French-Cameroonian curator) and Nduwhite Nduhuisi Ahanonu, the curator and founder of IICD Centre in Abuja, Nigeria.

Live-In Desires workshop

The Live-In Desires workshop and exhibition is a collaborative project between the Nlele Institute and the Goethe-Institut Nigeria. The workshop took place from 18-24 Oct 2018. The 12 participants approached the project from diverse perspectives, examining different elements of the concept which included the subjective, surreal and the pragmatic. They attempted to explore and analyse the identities of their locales and spaces as exemplified in the paradoxes tangible within the routines of the city’s (Lagos) daily life. They also discussed identities (through their individual works) and the evolution of neighbourhoods brought about by radical shifts in policies and perspectives.

The idea was to fuse human desires with visual interpretation of the abstract and hopefully to arrive or agree on a viable structure by considering the unique personalities and characteristics of our spaces (neighbourhoods) and their inherent identities. And cross reference these visual interpretations with existing social, economic, political, cultural, and religious and even gender related factors elements that impact our well-being and influence the way we perceive the world.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Mentorship Programme

TNI hosted a two-day session from 15-16 Jul 2019 titled “Defining the Process”. The participants began preparation for long-term idea development around this theme/title. The TNI faculty assisted the students develop their individual projects and plan for an exhibition at a later stage.

ASSOCIAÇÃO AOJE

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Catchupa Factory Residency



From 30 May - 20 Jun 2019, AOJE ran the 4th edition of the Catchupa Factory - New Photographers Residency in Mindelo, São Vicente Island. The project is an artistic and educational platform supported by Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. 8 photographers from Cape Verde, Angola and Mozambique took part in the residency. This year’s residency included an innovative programme. Similar to previous editions, 2 weeks were dedicated to project development aimed to support artistic creation led by Michelle Loukidis (South Africa) and Diogo Bento (Cape Verde). An additional week was allowed for photographers to engage in the process of producing and installing the exhibition led by John Fleetwood (South Africa).

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Photo Tour

AOJE is organising a Photo Tour to Santo Antão Island from 3 - 4 Aug and is open to all emerging and experienced photographers. The main aim is to encourage interaction between participants through the exchange of knowledge and experience, and to reflect on their photography practice while touring the Island’s scenic routes.

PHOTO:

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Portfolio Review

Photo: collaborated with the Centro Cultural Franco-Moçambicano (CCFM) to produce portfolio reviews and workshop presentations for photographers from Maputo. Hosted at the CCFM Gallery on 7 Feb 2019, 10 participants engaged in a dedicated encounter and exchange between photography experts, in order for photographers to get valuable feedback on their work and open up thinking on opportunities to develop their careers. Respondents included Mauro Pinto (Mozambique), Filipe Branquinho (Mozambique), John Fleetwood (South Africa), Mauro Vombe (Mozambique) and Jabulani Dhlamini (South Africa).

Photography Workshops



In addition to the Portfolio Review, Photo: presented 2 workshops on 8 Feb 2019 that 22 participants attended. The first workshop titled: "Shifting Realities: Photography in Southern Africa and Africa", looked at trends in photography in Southern Africa and how the context has shifted for reading and understanding photography in the region. The second session was titled: "How to use Photography Platforms & Institutions in Africa to build your career." The workshop looked at opportunities for photographers in terms of awards and platforms of learning, as a way to build networks and become part of a community of photographers.

Mentorship Programme

Photo: continues with its mentorship programme: an informal mentorship working with ten emerging photographers from Africa including Jansen van Staden (South Africa), who recently was a winner of the 2019 CAP Prize. Most of the sessions are one-to-one or on Skype.

YAMAROU-PHOTO

RECENT ACTIVITIES

Masterclass with Ludovic Fadaïro



On 2 Jul 2019, Yamarou-Photo organized a masterclass at the Medina Gallery in Bamako led by contemporary artist/painter Ludovic Fadaïro from Zinvié, Benin. The exchange focused on Ludovic's documentary film "Word Without Words" which has been screened internationally. In addition to his film, the masterclass included discussions on identity through questioning the notion of contemporary African art, and on how to interpret spirituality in creative works. Yamaristes, "members of Yamarou", and many young painters and artists were participants in the class.

JAWMALI-EPP

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Encounters in Bamako



The 12th edition of the Encounters in Bamako is moving ahead. The JawMali-EPP will soon launch the activities of its' OFF-exhibition programme.

Encounters themed project

The project, set to take place on 2-10 Oct 2019, will encourage students to embrace the creative dimensions of this type of artistic production, and introduce them to art photography in particular. The Encounters themed project is also about creating a new generation of photographers and making them aware of their predecessors' work. It will also raise the questions of how to make the local authorities of Mali think about places in need of continuous development, how to show them the importance of photography, and how to nurture local talent.

Cercle Culturel Germano-Malien Exhibition

The workshop leading up to the exhibition will place the basic concepts of photography already acquired by the students into practice and encourage them to think about photography conceptualization. The aim is to help students gain an understanding of photography as a means of expression, both philosophically and artistically. The selection will be done by the trainers of the Cercle Culturel Germano-Malien and JawMali-EPP

Neighbourhood Photo Festival

This project seeks to anchor photography and therefore centralise The Bamako Encounters at the heart of the Bamako community. The festival will open at the public square of Bamako and will include performers from other art mediums (music, theatre, etc.) as well as a traveling exhibition, showcasing a hundred printed kakemonos (hanging scrolls). The Festival seeks to create an ongoing interest in photography and result in a recurring neighbourhood photography celebration. The project will change its location every two weeks and be displayed in different neighbourhoods within and surrounding the capital city. The aim is to show photographers the impact of their work, create awareness among their parents of the viability of this talent and remind the public in general of the social dimension of photography

Conference debate: What is retirement for a Malian photographer?

For the generation of photographers in their fifties, this question becomes crucial as there are many difficulties in keeping up to date with the growing complexity of social values experienced by the Malian youth. The generation of photographers who are no longer able to contribute or adapt to social change, and who are self-employed begin to question the process of retirement as a photographer. The debate aims to address the concerns of those whose life's work is based in a different era, and whose future income is limited to the archives. Panellists include art historians and well-known photographers including Emmanuel Daou. 🌐

Diogo Bento

By Uche Okpa-Iroha

Can you give a brief insight on what AOJE stands for and how you have been able to propagate your ideas to the art community in Cape Verde?

AOJE is a local association dedicated to the promotion of photography as an artistic practice. AOJE is the word for “today” in Capeverdean Creole, reinforcing our commitment to looking at the world now (something very particular in photography), understanding where we stand and where photography lies.

What is the interest level for photography in Cape Verde and the level of youth and community participation?

Photography is a very seductive means of expression everywhere, and more and more people in Cape Verde (especially the younger generation) are practicing photography as a means of expression and profession. There is many commercial photography and videography practitioners, mostly in fashion, portraiture, music and events, although the earnings are relatively low. There is also a selected number of people interested in and practicing documentary/artistic photography.

There must be challenges for a young photography education platform. What are they and how have you been able to mitigate it?

I guess funding is always the first obstacle to overcome and, although we've been successful with the Catchupa Factory residency and the former International Festival of Photography, we've just had a few opportunities outside of these initiatives.

After 5 years, AOJE finally has been able to find an affordable space for a small office and a public library specialising in photography. At the moment, we've secured around 60 very good photography-related books and magazines. This space will also make it easier for photographers to meet and collaborate.

Diogo Bento (b. 1984), lives and works in Mindelo, Cabo Verde.

Bento has been involved in several artistic and educational projects as a photographer, trainer, curator and founding member of AOJE, an organization dedicated to the promotion of photography. Bento studied Photography at Ar.Co, in Lisbon, and completed his postgraduate studies in Photography and Contemporary Art at IPA/Atelier de Lisboa. His artistic practice is focussed on an understanding of the landscape as a space of cultural embodiment, a place where natural, physical and symbolic dimensions interact and collide.



Catchupa Factory ►
Residency 2018



Do you think there is positive awareness for photography in Cape Verde as opposed to the traditional art forms?

My sense is that photography is not taken as seriously as the traditional art forms. Literature has a long tradition in Cape Verde and has had a big impact in the emancipation of the community. While painting has had a stronger presence since independence. And music is running in a reign of its own. I guess photography is still regarded as an “easier” artistic form, lacking depth and labour.

What are the social protocols that evolved over time in Cape Verde with regards to the country’s visual history and how have they been reported through photography?

As far as I’ve researched there’s not many historical photography available from foreign photographers about the country; thus, most photography was not directed at the epistemological other but to the self. Nowadays, there is a significant amount of historical photography, from mostly local studios available on the internet (although low quality files), while the physical negatives and plates are restricted from public access.

The other day, I stumbled upon a photograph by Wolfgang Tillmans on the internet, photographed in Santo Antão island, in Cape Verde, titled “Most Beautiful Place I’ve Ever Been”!

The Catchupa Residency sounds very interesting. Can you give some insight on what the objectives are? How long has it been in operation?

We’ve just completed the 4th edition of the Catchupa Factory residency last month, operating annually since 2016. We’re mainly dealing with emerging photographers from Portuguese-speaking African countries, because we believe this common language ultimately hinders access to photography development opportunities. On the other hand, it creates a comfort zone that fosters a network and community of practitioners. The idea of the residency is to allow between 8-12 emerging photographers to develop a photography project, with mentoring and input from up to 5 educators and curators along the process. In the end, an exhibition and public presentation is produced by everyone involved in the residency and presented to the city. We’ve had really interesting results along the year’s, and I consider the initiative to be a success.

In terms of exclusion, what is the gender dynamics and how do you through AOJE intend to balance off any shortcomings?

It’s a permanent concern for us, not just about gender, but also race, economic background, age, etc. All our actions are carried out with social justice in mind. 🌐

