

# Everything Passes Except the Past Digital Festival

**11am:** Introduction by the organisers: Aloña Elizalde, Irene Calderoni, Jana J. Haeckel

**11.15am:** Keynote lecture by Bénédicte Savoy

## **Amnesia. 40 Years' Debate on African Cultural Heritage in European Museums:**

In her lecture Bénédicte Savoy will speak about a little known chapter in European history: Europe was already discussing the restitution of colonial collections to Africa forty years ago but the negotiations came to nothing. They have been forgotten, or rather, successfully made forgotten. This is one of the most political lessons learned from the debate on restitution in Europe over the past 3 years. Not only in Paris and Berlin, but also in Lagos, Dakar and in Nairobi, are files in administrative, press archives and legacies stored which prove that the debate on colonial collections in European museums already took place. The debate reached fever peak between 1978 and 1982.

## **12pm: Panel 1 "New Museum Practices: On the Ethics and Politics of Return":**

Bénédicte Savoy, Didier Houénou, Christian Greco, moderated by Ayoko

Mensah It has been almost three years since President Macron's announcement in Ouagadougou. France pledged to implement within five years „temporary or permanent restitutions of African heritage in Africa“. One year later, in November 2018, Benedicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr submitted their Report on the Restitution of African Heritage to President Macron. In it, they recalled the historical precedence of this issue, issued concrete recommendations and called for „a new relational ethic“ between Europe and Africa. Since then, a variety of reactions and strategies have emanated from the European museums concerned. Many speeches have been made, but few of them have yet led to concrete restitution actions. This discussion aims on the one hand to analyse the main obstacles to the work, and on the other hand to see to what extent successful restitutions can guide and inspire others.

## **2.30 pm: Panel 2: "Critical Museology: Revisiting Colonial Collections through artistic and curatorial perspectives":** Carolina Orsini, Simona Berhe, Grace Ndiritu, Bianca Baldi

The panel will discuss the theme of ‚shame‘ when addressing colonial issues in the museums and deal with the ‚danger‘ of nostalgia when exhibiting colonial objects. Some of the main questions to be asked are: What is an ethical way to display colonial objects? How we can collaborate with artists and diaspora communities for a critical curatorial work with the museum experts?

## **4 pm: Panel 3 "A Difficult Heritage: Rethinking Representations of Italy's Colonial Past**

": Rosa Anna Di Lella, Alessandra Ferrini, Angelica Pesarini, moderated by Liliana Ellena

In the Italian context, the colonial past is grounds for continuous shifts, in which the relationship between Italy's colonialism, history and cultural identity is rendered invisible and neutralized in the public debate. Starting from a comparison of research experiences, museographic projects and artistic practices, the panel aims to reflect on the need for a radical reinterpretation of Italian colonialism, and of the ways its imprint continues to inhabit present-day dynamics.

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5.30 pm: **Panel 4 “All Statues Must Fall? Conflicts and Iconoclasm in Public Space”**:  
Daniela Ortiz, Yann Le Gall (Berlin Postkolonial), moderated by Tania Adam

If we ask the question ‘Must All Statues Fall?’ to Daniela Ortiz and Yann Le Gall, the participants of this panel, they will surely answer in the affirmative and without any consideration or conditioning regarding the act of vandalising or collapsing the statues. But this is a tricky question, not only because it highlights the desire of those who believe that these statues, which depict men who committed crimes in slavery or during colonial conquest and colonisation, should be removed from the public sphere, in an iconoclastic gesture of historical reparation; but also because this desire comes into direct conflict with that of the heirs of these colonial traditions, those who hold power and control the institutions. Likewise, this conflict, which has moved from the academy to other spheres, is taking place in the midst of an essentially emotional and tense public debate, which accuses those who call for revision and reparations of wanting to “erase history”. But do they understand that this is actually a battle against the whitening of history? Since the murder of George Floyd, and the beginning of the worldwide anti-racism wave and iconoclasm against the figures who promote the colonial order and modernity in the West, the public debate has intensified to the point of criminalising and threatening activists who defend iconoclastic positions. So, a few more questions would be raised from these events: Has this been a turning point? Who has the right to demand revisions of history? What do we do in the face of the violence that activists are subjected to?

## **PARTICIPANTS’ BIOS**

**Bénédicte Savoy** is professor of Modern Art History at the Technical University of Berlin and holds the International Chair for “Cultural History of Artistic Heritage in Europe, 18th – 20th Century” at the Collège de France in Paris. Her research is mainly focused on forced transfer of artworks in times of war and during the colonial era. She is a leading voice in the current public debates on the history of collecting under imperial and colonial circumstances and issues of restitution. She has also been part of many commissions of trust including the Scientific Advisory Board for the German Tentative List of UNESCO-World Heritage Sites (2013-2014), the conseil scientifique du Musée du Louvre (2015-present) and the German Lost Art Foundation (2015-present).

**Didier Houénoudé** is a professor of Art History at university Abomey-Calavi in Benin. His field of interest covers, among others, African contemporary art, patrimonial issues, urbanism and development of African cities. He was chief assistant of the department of History and Archaeology at the Social Sciences Faculty of the University of Abomey and counsellor to the Minister of Culture of Benin. He was director of the Cultural heritage of Benin, in charge of the heritage policy and of the Museums. Didier Houénoudé is currently director of the National Institute of Art, Archaeology and Culture Professions at University Abomey-Calavi. He wrote several articles about contemporary art in Benin and about Beninese cultural heritage.

**Christian Greco** is an Egyptologist with vast experience working in museums. He has been director of the Museo Egizio in Turin since 2014. He managed a refurbishment of the museum building and a renovation of its galleries, completed on March 2015. While at the head of the Museo Egizio, he has set up important international collaborations with museums, universities and research institutes all around the world. Greco’s published record includes many scholarly essays and writings for the non-specialist public in several languages. He has also been a keynote speaker at a number of Egyptology and museology international conferences.

**Ayoko Mensah** is a cultural expert and artistic programmer. Since 2016, she has been working for the Centre for Fine Arts (BOZAR) in Brussels. Of Togolese heritage, born in France in 1968, Mensah graduated in cultural management, literature and journalism in France. She has worked as an expert for several international organisations and cultural institutions (including UNESCO, the European Commission, the Africa Caribbean Pacific Group, Africa Museum, Tervuren). Mensah coordinated with Malick Ndiaye the issue of *Africultures* magazine devoted to museums. She has also written more than a hundred articles and co-authored several books.

**Carolina Orsini** is an archaeologist and conservator of the Archaeological and Ethnographic Collections of Mudec - The Museum of Cultures in Milan, of which she curated the reorganization, the permanent exhibition and the catalogue. Since 1998 she has carried out field research in Peru and Argentina, with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, collaborating with numerous local research institutes. She works with the Armed Forces, as well as with several Italian courts to combat and prevent the illegal trafficking of American archaeological goods in Italy. She is the author of several Andean-themed monographs, including two volumes on the Incas, two on the populations of central and northern Peru and numerous scientific articles.

**Simona Berhe** obtained a degree in History from the University of Milan and a diploma in Arabic language and culture from ISIAO. She received her PhD in History and Comparison of European political and legal institutions from the University of Messina. She was a research fellow at University of Bergamo and at the Germanic Historical Institute of Rome. Currently research fellow at the Department of Historical Studies of the University of Milan, she teaches History of Political Institutions and collaborates with the chair of History of Colonialism and Decolonisation. Her central theme is the colonial history but also the history of human migration and its identification. In 2015, she published the monograph *Notabili Libici e funzionari italiani: l'amministrazione coloniale in Tripolitania (1912-1919)*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino.

**Bianca Baldi** (born 1985 in Johannesburg, based in Brussels) is a South African artist who deals with hidden infrastructures and narratives in her films, installations, photographs and images. Evoking the histories of film, studio photography and Trompe-l'œil, she positions carefully chosen objects and images revealing complex webs of political, economic and cultural influences. Her work has been featured in large international exhibitions such as the 11th Rencontres de Bamako (Mali), 11th Shanghai Biennale (China), the 8th Berlin Biennale (Germany) and group exhibitions at Kunsthalle Bern (Switzerland), Extra City Kunsthall, Antwerp (Belgium), Kunstverein Braunschweig and Kunstverein Frankfurt (Germany).

**Grace Ndiritu** is a British-Kenyan artist whose artworks are connected with the transformation of our contemporary world, including the impact of globalisation and environmental justice, through her films, photography, paintings and social practice projects with refugees, migrants and indigenous groups. Works like *The Ark: Center for Interdisciplinary Experimentation*; *COVERSLUT© fashion* and economic project; and shamanic performance art series *Healing The Museum* have been shown all around the world. Recent exhibitions include Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool (2019), S.M.A.K. & M.S.K., Belgium (2019), Eastside Projects, Birmingham (2018), CAG Vancouver (2018), Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona (2017), Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Paris (2016), Glasgow School of Art (2015), Museum Modern of Art, Warsaw (2014), Musée Chasse & Nature and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2013). Ndiritu has been featured in *Phaidon: The 21st Century Art Book* (2014), *Art Monthly* and her work is also housed in museum collections such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The British Council, UK; Modern Art Museum, Warsaw and private collections such as the King Mohammed VI, Morocco and Walther Collection, New York and Germany. <http://www.gracendiritu.com>

**Angelica Pesarini** was awarded a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Leeds. She is currently a Lecturer in Social and Cultural Analysis at NYU-Florence where she teaches *Black Italia*, a course dedicated to the intersectional analysis of racial identity in Italy. She previously worked at Lancaster University as a Lecturer in Gender, Race and Sexuality. Her current work investigates dynamics of race performativity with a focus on colonial and postcolonial Italy and she is also working on the racialization of the Italian political discourse on immigration. Pesarini has previously conducted research on gender roles and the development of economic activities within some Roma communities in Italy and she has analysed strategies of survival, risks and opportunities associated with male prostitution in Rome. She has been published in a number of journals and edited volumes.

**Rosa Anna Di Lella** is an Italian cultural anthropologist specialised in Museum Studies and North African Collection. She has been collaborating with several public and private institutions on museographic collaborative projects. She is curator at the Museo Italo Africano, the new section of the Museo delle Civiltà dedicated to the legacy of the Italian colonialism and to post-colonial issues. She is also a researcher at the Istituto Centrale per il Patrimonio Immateriale (MiBACT) where she is carrying out the project "Italia dalla molte culture", focused on contemporary migrations.

**Alessandra Ferrini** is a London-based artist, researcher and educator. She is a PhD candidate at the University of the Arts London and is affiliated with InteRGRace, the Interdisciplinary Group on Race and Racisms. Her practice is rooted in lens-based media, anti-colonial and memory studies, historiographical and archival practices. Experimenting with the expansion and hybridization of the documentary film, she is interested in the way historical narratives are produced and how their implied ideologies create subjects - be they individuals or societies. Her research investigates Italian foreign and racial politics, notions of resistance, positionality and reflexivity. In particular, it is preoccupied with questioning the legacies of Italian colonialism and fascism with a specific interest in the past and present relations between Italy and the African continent. Her work spans across moving image, installation and dialogic formats, as well as writing, publishing and collaboration.

**Liliana Ellena** is a historian and has taught women's and gender history at the University of Turin. Situated in the fields of postcolonial, gender and cultural studies, her research interests focus on the sexual politics of imperial and post-imperial visibility in Italy and on the transnational history of women's and feminist's movements. She has been involved in several international collaborative projects and European research networks. Most recently she has been Research Fellow on the ERC project 'Bodies Across Borders' based at the European University Institute (Fiesole, Italy). Her current research deals with the lost film *Eva Nera* (1954) and explores the role of unconventional archival practices in reactivating the relationship between Italian decolonization, sexuality and contemporary migrations.

**Daniela Ortiz** is a Peruvian artist, who through her work aims to generate visual narratives where the concepts of nationality, racialization, social class and gender are critically understood in order to analyse colonial, capitalist and patriarchal power. Her recent projects and research address the European migration control system, its link to colonialism, and the legal mechanisms created by European institutions to exert violence against migrant and racialized populations. Her artistic work has recently returned to focus on the visual and manual, making works in ceramics, collage, drawing and formats such as children's books with the intention of moving away from Eurocentric conceptual aesthetics.

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**Yann LeGall** has been a member of Berlin Postkolonial since 2015, an organisation committed to a reappraisal of German colonialism and the historical origins of racism within German society and in the Berlin-Brandenburg region. He has participated in activist research for this organisation, compiling lists of human remains of former colonized people in the custody of Berlin institutions and organising a yearly festival for the renaming of streets with colonial names. His PhD project at the University of Potsdam examined how human remains repatriation and restitution claims have stimulated a transnational memory of colonial violence. With the initiative Postcolonial Potsdam, he leads tours on traces of colonial and Afro-European history in the Park Sanssouci, and has newly developed an audio-guide-app of colonial traces in the city of Potsdam.

**Tania Adam** is a journalist and cultural producer. Founder and editor of *Radio Africa Magazine*, she works as a presenter on *Radio Africa Betevé* (91.0 FM) and is a contributor to *La Directa*, *Africa is a Country* and *Ctxt*, among others. She has presented the interview programme *Terrícoles* on Betevé and *African Bubblegum Music* on *Ràdio Primavera Sound*. Her work focuses on analysis and thought generated around the world's black diasporas, with special emphasis on African music and women. She has also curated public programmes such as „Microhistories of the Diaspora. Embodied Experiences of Female Dispersion“ (La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, 2018-2019) and the exhibition „Making Africa“ (CCCB/ICUB, 2016). She is currently researching the possible decolonisation of futures.