

2018 **CONTEMPORARY**  
**AFRICAN ART ECOLOGY**  
A DECADE OF CURATING



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co.

COVER: MARY SIBANDE, *HER MAJESTY QUEEN*  
*SOPHIE* (2010)  
image courtesy SMAC gallery

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A DECADE OF CURATING**

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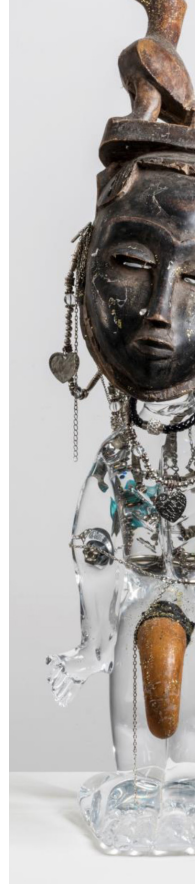
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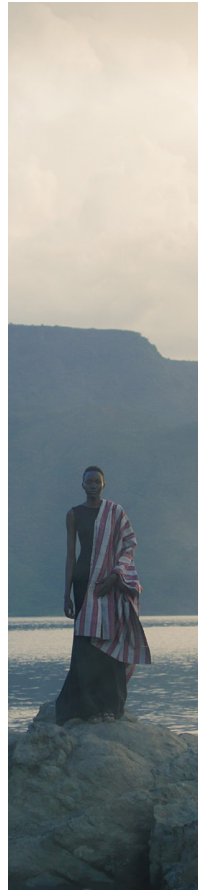
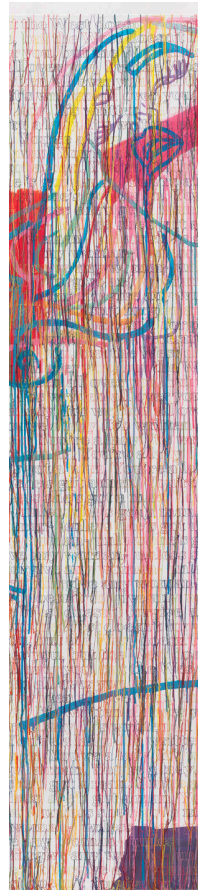
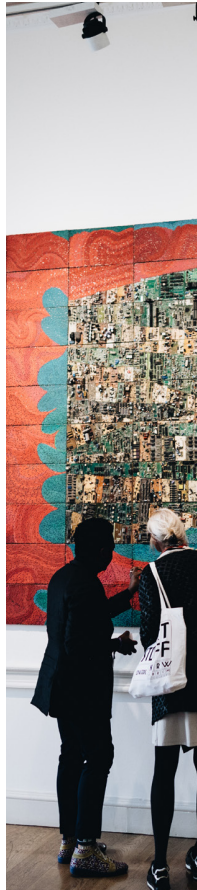
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# INTRODUCTION

Not one person polled for this report disputed the fact that the interest in, visibility, and production of art in a category commonly labelled as ‘Contemporary African Art’ has increased exponentially in the last decade.

The rise in value and awareness of art from and on the continent, and on prominent international stages, has been widely reported in the press, citing numerous markers confirming its ascent.





MALICK SIDIBE, NUIT DE NOEL (HAPPY CLUB) (1963)  
Image courtesy Wedge Collection

This includes the increase of art fairs on the continent, participation of galleries dedicated to selling art from Africa at fairs in western art centres, and fairs (1:54, AKA) limited to this category in London, New York and Paris. This has been matched by the increase of auction houses on the continent, and some in Europe – such as Bonhams and Sotheby's in London, and Piasa in Paris – tailoring contemporary auctions to advance the value of the category further. Exhibitions featuring African artists, curated by Africans, and indeed with 'Africa' in the title are more frequent than ever before.

There is no denying these are all important indicators of a flourishing market. Why is African art gaining prominence now? Where and through which people, places or types of institutions has this taken place? Through the lens of curating, which has played a crucial role in raising visibility and creating platforms for conversations about contemporary African art, this report (and others to follow) traces the events, conditions that have contributed towards this expanding realm of art. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately (see Chapter 6), 'African art' remains a geographically defined category. This report doesn't undo this naming trend, as it is a precedent that has been set firmly already.

Each 'art capital' on and off the African continent is at a different stage of its evolution and follows a different path given its regional specificities and socio-political dynamics. It would therefore be impossible to contain these multiple contexts in a single document. Many will, however, be addressed over a series of upcoming reports.

In order to derive insight into the rise of contemporary African art, it is necessary, if not expedient, to group activities relating to it in order to grasp the attitudes, conditions and contexts that have perpetuated or bear down on this geographical (and still racially defined) art category. As such, 'African contemporary art' has operated in and become part of its own idiosyncratic art ecosystem. Corrigan & Co is committed to deconstructing and understanding each 'element' of this 'ecosystem' through an art report mode that we have evolved (and will continue to craft) so that complex, dense information, opinions and insights from the top end to the bottom can be considered and distilled for all those committed to growing this category to better understand the territory.

AS THIS IS OUR FIRST FORAY INTO MAPPING THIS ECOSYSTEM, IT SEEMED FITTING TO BEGIN WITH A DECADE-LONG OVERVIEW THAT:

**Analyses exhibitions staged from 2007 to 2017**



**Identifies and focuses on high-profile curators** active during this period



**Asks experts in the field** to reflect on changes they have observed over this period



**Gathers retrospective views** from our on-the-ground writers in different art capitals



**Researches and collates** this information in the context of and **in relation to larger shifts in the broader international contemporary art world.**

This overview has allowed us to dispel some of the myths regarding the much-hyped 'rise of African art', untangling some of the general ideological, social and political changes over the last decade that have allowed the developments and expansion of this category to occur.

Existing art reports rely on auction results (the most accessible fixed data) and/or tracing the artists whose work fetches the highest sums. However, in this category of art we are cognisant of the fact that the full value has largely (albeit with a few exceptions) not yet fully been realised in the secondary market, and therefore data relating to it does not, at this point, provide a solid foundation in isolation of other information, opinions and research from which to build a first report.

Curators are rarely the prism through which insights into the art market are derived. However, in this category, the limitations – namely, an absence of platforms on the continent where this work is presented, and sustained institutional resistance to it in most western art centres – have driven this niche group of individuals to generate platforms, adapt them, and take the first bold steps in advancing this category, mediating and asserting conversations about its relevance to local and international audiences.

Beginning with a focus on curating and the work of the 'Top 20' African curators, this report offers insights into a spectrum of conversations that have and continue to be taking place about African art, focusing on: who is talking; where these curators are staging such 'dialogues'; how the curators are deploying art; what art is being prized by them; and what influence their choices and opinions may be having on perceptions, value and the production of art. In short, establishing the curator's position/role within this discrete ecosystem.

METHODOLOGY

# BRIDGING FACT AND OPINION TO ARRIVE AT 'SOMETHING ELSE'

5

*"Normally we think a person should have only one standpoint, but when you build a bridge, you must have two – one which is balanced and another which is less stable". This bridge is always dangerous, but ... the notion of the bridge creates the possibility of opening up something new.'*

(**HUANG YONG PING** QUOTED IN  
**HANS-ULRICH OBRIST**, *FLASHART*, OCT, 2009)

We are keen to 'open up' and explore what we think we know about contemporary African art and test this against factual data. This inaugural report is the product of constructing a 'bridge' between researched facts, opinion and insight. This has depended on the bridging of traditional (academic and journalistic), visual (graphs and infographics) and new technological epistemological tools to gather and digest large amounts of complex information.

The hard irrefutable data surrounding exhibitions – dates, biographical and geographical data – form the fixed balanced quantities that ground the report and our insights, while providing the veritable bridge to the less stable factors, such as the opinions of the experts we've interviewed and our on-the-ground reporters.



THIS REPORT IS THE RESULT  
OF THE FOLLOWING:

**INTENSIVE DATA GATHERING**

ON THE

**'TOP 20'**  
AFRICAN ART CURATORS

**DATA AND ANALYSIS**

OF OVER

**200** EXHIBITIONS

**COMPREHENSIVE INTERVIEWS**

WITH

**30** INDUSTRY LEADERS

**INTERPRETATION**

OF DATA VIA MULTIPLE  
SOFTWARE PROGRAMMES

**VISUALISATION**

OF DATA

**IN-DEPTH ACADEMIC RESEARCH**

**DIRECT INPUT AND REPORTS**

FROM

**6** ON-THE-GROUND  
REPORTERS AND  
RESEARCH ANALYSTS  
AROUND THE CONTINENT.



**YINKA SHONIBARE, *CHAMPAGNE KID (FALLEN)* (2013)**

image courtesy Goodman Gallery

DESPITE ALL OUR EFFORTS TO PRODUCE A BALANCED REPORT THAT JUXTAPOSES  
FLATTENED DATA WITH NUANCED INSIGHTS AND DIFFERING OPINIONS,  
**THERE ARE IN-BUILT LIMITATIONS:**

- As our main source data is derived from a study of the exhibitions produced by the 'Top 20' curators, the insights tend to reflect what is occurring in the most visible and prominent art hubs on the continent and in the world.
- Limited time and resources have meant that we did not interview everyone we would have liked to, nor study every significant exhibition.
- Some curators and individuals in the industry refused interviews and/or were unwilling to share information and/or opinions.
- Factual information on the exhibitions in this study was not always reliable or available.
- NOT ALL exhibitions are curated – this is particularly the case on the continent.
- As visibility for curators inevitably entails staging exhibitions in Western art centres, there was an over-emphasis on what occurred in these destinations/platforms.
- Data gathering forces the researcher to flatten complexities and as such carries a level of subjectivity that the term 'data' denies.
- We have yet to establish on-the-ground reporters in each art capital – writing on, observing, reporting on art is a difficult pursuit, and in some cities we have been unable, as yet, to find, engage or establish a relationship with a suitable reporter.

**TO MITIGATE SOME OF THESE LIMITATIONS WE HAVE:**

- Supplemented our data analysis with opinions from experts around the continent and the world so as to introduce nuances that cannot be contained in it.
- Relied on our on-the-ground reporters who intimately know the developments in their respective cities.
- Offer a list of curators that our on-the-ground reporters felt had made a substantial contribution on their home territory, despite not enjoying any 'star' status.
- Committed to updating this report and study annually to keep covering new ground and overcoming the absences, gaps and limitations in this inaugural study.





**RICHARD MUDARIKI, *THE TRICK* (2016)**

image courtesy Sanlam Art Museum/Barnard Gallery



# THE PERTINENT QUESTIONS?

n1

How is the ART ECOSYSTEM for contemporary African art structured?

n2

Where are the 'WEAKNESSES', 'BREAKS' or 'GAPS' in the chain?

n6

What DISCURSIVE, INDUSTRY-RELATED, STRUCTURAL AND/OR INSTITUTIONAL PATTERNS can be derived through studying exhibitions?

n7

How have curators in Africa, from Africa and from Europe SHAPED PERCEPTIONS OF ART from the African continent?

n8

Is there a city or platform that has become the ULTIMATE TOUCHSTONE for expression, narratives and ideas on contemporary art from the continent?

11

Have African curators succeeded in what Simon Njami terms the 'UNDOING OF THE IMAGE WE HAVE OF OURSELVES' – if we take that to be an objective that curators have pursued?

12

Are artists and curators from the continent preoccupied with PARTICULAR THEMES and, if so, have these SHIFTED OVER THE LAST DECADE?

13

Are there discernible conditions, trends, structural changes that have IMPACTED ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ART on the continent?

The value of a report of this nature depends not only on the questions that are posed to industry experts, but on the questions that naturally arise when you consider or set out to compile a comprehensive review about a category that has not been the subject of one previously. Some of the questions below guided the structure of the report, and are answered from various positions, while others remain rhetorical, simply guiding and revealing the particularities of the subject matter.

THE GROWING LIST OF WEIGHTY PREOCCUPATIONS INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:

n3

How does this differ from a WESTERN or CHINESE MODE?

n4

What CONDITIONS, EVENTS or IDEOLOGIES have contributed towards increased recognition and visibility of contemporary African art?

n5

Which of those conditions are STABLE or, conversely, IN FLUX?

n9

How is art from the continent 'VALIDATED', and through whom?

1n

DOES IT REMAIN USEFUL to artists and the art community on the continent for Africa's production to be grouped together in isolation of contemporary art from another continent/s?

14

Are there conditions or patterns that allow us to better understand WHAT WE CAN EXPECT in this field in future?

15

What makes FOR FERTILE GROUND in curating?

16

How could the development of African art and perceptions of it be BOLSTERED TO ADVANCE IT FURTHER?

## CURATORS: ●

### N'GONE FALL

SENEGAL/PARIS/NIGERIA  
*Curator, Academic, Editor (Revue Noir)*

### BISI SILVA

NIGERIA  
*Founder CCA Lagos*

### PAULA NASCIMENTO

LUANDA/PORTUGAL  
*Curator, Winner Golden Lion Award at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013)*

### RAPHAEL CHIKUKWA

ZIMBABWE  
*Curator, Director, National Gallery, Zimbabwe*

### JEANNE MERCIER

FRANCE/MALI/PORTUGAL  
*Curator, MACAAL, Marrakesh, opening exhibition 'Africa is no Island'*

### KAREN MILBOURNE

USA  
*Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington DC*

### VIOLET NANTUME

KAMPALA/BERLIN

### ALICIA KNOCK

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*Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris*

### JOSEPH GERGEL

LAGOS  
*Arthouse auction house and residency*

### CHRISTA CLARKE

USA  
*Newark Museum, New York*  
*Co-author: Representing Africa in American Art Museums: A Century of Collecting and Display (2010)*

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# ART SPECIALISTS WE CONSULTED

## ON-THE-GROUND-REPORTERS ●

These are individuals we identified in different art capitals who have been consistently reporting on the visual arts in those capitals, or have been embedded in them.

### DOMINIC MUWANGUZI

KAMPALA, UGANDA

### AYODEJI ROTINWA

LAGOS, NIGERIA

### TRACY MURINIK

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

### JOHN WOO

ACCRA, GHANA

### JEPKORIR ROSE

MBUTHIA MAINA

BETHUEL MUTHEE

(THE NAIJOGRAPHIA COLLECTIVE)  
NAIROBI, KENYA

### MARY CORRIGALL

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA





## OTHERS:●

### DAUDI KARUNGI

UGANDA

*Founder, director, Kampala Biennale  
Gallery director of Afriart*

### MARILYN MARTIN

SOUTH AFRICA

*Former director, Iziko South African  
National Art Gallery, Cape Town*

### HANNAH O'LEARY

UNITED KINGDOM

*Director Modern & Contemporary  
African Art, Sotheby's, London*

### VICTORIA MANN

FRANCE

*Founder, director AKAA: Also Known As  
Africa art fair, Paris*

### PASCALE MARTHINE TAYOU

FRANCE/CAMAROO

*Artist*

### ATHI-PATRA RUGA

SOUTH AFRICA

*Artist, Cape Town*

### KUDZANAI CHIURAI

ZIMBABWE

*Artist*

### ADENRELE SONARIWO

NIGERIA

*Curator, gallerist,  
Rele Gallery, Lagos*

### ROCCO ORLACCHIO

MOROCCO

*Gallery director,  
Voice Gallery, Marrakesh*

### ASHLEIGH MCCLEAN

SOUTH AFRICA

*Gallery director,  
Whatiftheworld, Cape Town*

### EMMA MENNELL

UNITED KINGDOM

*Founder, director,  
Tyburn Gallery, London*

### AIME NYATIKA

BELGIUM

*Artist*

### KENNETH MONTAGUE

CANADA

*Art collector, curator,  
Wedge Curatorial Projects, Toronto, and  
board member, Tate Modern African Art  
Acquisitions*

### NYAMBURA M. WARUINGI

KENYA

*Curator, filmmaker*

### MOUNIR FATMI

PARIS/MARRAKESH

*Artist*

# DEFINITIONS

## [ ecosystem ]

This term is more often used in relation to 'a group of interconnected elements, formed by the interaction of a community of organisms' in a natural environment or in the sphere of business.

As awareness around the creative economy has grown, and its impact on society, employment opportunities, growth of cities and economies is being quantified, it has become important to understand how the art 'system' is structured, operates. On the African continent, where ecosystems are in their nascence, the term pertains to the network that has evolved to support and professionalise the visual arts industry. In art market analyses focused on European and US art markets, the term has been employed in a process to better 'understand how economic value originates for contemporary art' (Petterson 2014: 67). We plot the path/journey or process of validation of art but it is not our primary focus.

Mapping an art ecosystem involves not only understanding each part, its structure, community of players, or the different tiers of institutions, but also how these relate to each other and the power dynamics underpinning their interactions. Curators play a pivotal role in the system, and a unique one in the African art context, though their role, like curators operating anywhere in the world, lies in securing institutional validation through staging exhibitions in museums and other settings.

Based on the data, interviews and on-the-ground reports from the continent, this report will present two models. In Chapter 11, we propose a model of what the ecosystem generally looked like before 2007 and compare it with one reflecting the changes and developments that have occurred in the past decade.

As this study is focused on the position(s) the curators occupy in the ecosystem, and their role in evolving it, our proposed models are mapped from this perspective.

Corrigall & Co will continue to revise these models and advance multiple ones plotting the idiosyncratic differences in each art capital on the continent.

## [ curating ]

Curating was once an activity limited to professionals working in museums who were concerned with the preservation of collections and staging exhibitions.

The term is no longer limited to museums or exhibitions, but instead includes all forms of programming at any kind of venue (Smith 2012: 17). It is indeed the rise, fixation with and slippery nature of contemporary art that has compelled redefinitions of the term. In an attempt to settle on an all-encompassing definition for the curator of contemporary art, Australian art historian Terry Smith (2012: 20) advances the following:

Curating is caring for the culture, above all by enabling its artistic or creative transformers to pursue their work. This facilitation is done, preferably with empathy, insight, effectively with some style.

On the African continent there are few post-graduate university courses dedicated to the practice of curating. Many of its 'star' curators have pursued studies elsewhere, or have cut their teeth assisting or learning under more experienced curators. This being the case, the act of curating, for many on the continent, has been a largely administrative one that entails selecting artists based on proposals, rather than framing a conversation or driving a narrative or idea.

As will become clear in Chapters 5 and 6, the absence of platforms and museums, or the reality of institutional bias has meant that many African curators tend to be less driven to make statements, or expose or come to grips with contemporary practice, than they are to establish available platforms for art. As Abdellah Karroum (2016) observes, curating intrinsically involves creating spaces for art.

# [ contemporary art ]

This is one of the most commonly used art terms and, as a result, is perhaps the most debatable and ambiguous.

It has taken some time for the Western world to accept and appreciate that African art could even claim to be 'contemporary', as much of the focus of collecting and museum exhibitions up until the 1980s or early '90s had associated visual expression from the continent with traditional material culture only. As such, the term 'contemporary' as a prefix to African art has often been used to distinguish supposed 'traditional ritualistic objects' from 'art' ones.

As the Sudanese curator and art historian Salah Hassan (1999: 218) suggests, perceptions governing contemporary African art have been very prescriptive.

Contemporary art was (and is) a category reserved for the works of those African artists who are mostly urban-based, produce work according to the norms of Western modern art and exhibit in galleries, museums or foreign cultural centres ... Works produced by this category of artists are classified as "elite", "fine"; or "high" as opposed to other forms referred to as "traditional", "tourist", "commercial" or "popular".

Rachida Triki (2007: 48), a curator from Tunisia, agrees that the term is Western-centric and limiting when you consider the nature of contemporary being defined as 'being with one's time, the whole problem is to know which temporality is concerned. Is it the globalised present that imposes a formal conformity or is it the local present that also imposes blind conformity but a more specific one? The question therefore consists in how to "be with" and what present is involved'.

The intervening years between the dates of Triki and Hassan's observations might explain their differing perceptions of what is 'expected' from contemporary African art; however, it also serves to illustrate how attitudes keep shifting over time and from different positions.

Art philosopher theorists, such as the late Arthur Danto, may have arrived at the conclusion that a new kind of art dubbed 'contemporary' only became

obvious in the '70s and '80s. However, given that the term 'postmodern' was invented to demarcate the line between modernism and what came after it and we now find a new strain of modernism back in play, the term 'contemporary' has sort of been left hanging without a recognisable 'style' or set period attached to it.

Ever looking for hard and fast figures, auction houses tend to define 'contemporary' as art made after 1945: Sotheby's defines it as encompassing 'schools from early Abstract Expressionism through to the present day'. However, as art at this auction house has carved out separate sales and departments to cater for art from the African continent, this may not strictly apply for this category.

The bulk of the exhibitions in this study generally show artworks made after the late '80s and early '90s (with the exception of Hassan's exhibitions charting Egyptian surrealism and modernism in Sudan). However, as is revealed in Chapter 11, one of the dominant thematic strands that runs through to current day pertains to artists engaging with history and the archives. In this regard contemporary African art could ironically be defined by a focus on the past and not the present.

Fortunately, this study does not need to resolve this inner contradiction as it is focused instead on how curators implicitly, and sometimes explicitly, define the contemporary – a burden they carried particularly in the early- to mid-2000s as they introduced 'contemporary African art' to audiences on and off the continent.

# [ african ]

Another loaded label with no easy definition, and certainly one that many curators from the continent continue to challenge, is of what constitutes 'African'.

As the public intellectual Achille Mbembe outlines in the 2007 catalogue for Simon Njami's touring exhibition, *Africa Remix*, claiming African citizenship is not solely geographically or racially defined, given that population movements over centuries from colonisation, slavery and forced migration saw Europeans settle on the African continent, and saw millions of people of African origin deposited across various countries across the world.

Two of the star 'Top 20' 'African' curators included in this report were born outside of the continent; and many of the artists, gallerists, and other experts we interviewed were born in one place, studied in another, and now operate between multiple cities within and across continents.







CHAPTER 02 /

# MAIN FINDINGS



THE AFRICA PAVILION AND SUBSEQUENT NATIONAL PAVILIONS AT THE **VENICE BIENNALE** **PROVED A GAME CHANGER** FOR THE VISIBILITY AND RISE OF AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY ART



**ESTABLISHING 'VISIBILITY'** OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART **WAS** THE MAIN MOTIVATING FACTOR FOR CURATORS



**DAK'ART BIENNALE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT AFRICAN ART EVENT**



**THE VALIDATION** OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART **TAKES PLACE IN EUROPE'S ART CAPITALS**



**AFRICA'S 'TOP 20' CURATORS** STAGED MORE EXHIBITIONS IN EUROPE THAN ON THE CONTINENT OVER THE PAST DECADE



**'DECOLONISATION'** IS THE UNITING THEMATIC STRAND OF THE 'TOP 20' AFRICAN CURATORS



IN THE LAST DECADE THE **COMMERCIAL GALLERY SEGMENT** ON THE CONTINENT EXPERIENCED THE **MOST GROWTH OF ALL ART SECTORS**



IN THE LAST DECADE, BIENNALES HAVE OUTRIGHT BEEN THE **MOST POPULAR ART PLATFORM** TYPE FOR AFRICA'S 'TOP 20' CURATORS

# MAIN FINDINGS



95%  
OF AFRICAN  
CURATORS **STUDIED  
OUTSIDE OF THE  
CONTINENT**



65%  
OF AFRICA'S TOP  
CURATORS **SETTLED  
OUTSIDE OF THEIR  
COUNTRY OF  
ORIGIN**



CURATING OF AFRICAN  
ART IS **DOMINATED  
BY WOMEN** – BOTH  
THE TOP CURATORS  
AND THOSE BASED ON  
THE CONTINENT



60%  
OF AFRICA'S 'MOST  
VALIDATED' ARTISTS  
**LIVE IN AFRICA**



**ZANELE MUHOLI**  
IS THE 'MOST  
VALIDATED'  
AFRICAN ARTIST



40%  
OF THE 'TOP 20'  
CURATORS **SET UP  
THEIR OWN ART  
PLATFORMS/  
VENUES OR  
EVENTS**



45%  
OF THE **OTHER  
CURATORS** ON THE  
CONTINENT SET UP  
THEIR OWN ART  
PLATFORMS/VENUES  
OR EVENTS



IN THE LAST DECADE  
THE SECONDARY  
MARKET,  
CONTEMPORARY ART  
MUSEUMS AND  
FOUNDATIONS, AND  
ART FAIRS HAVE BEEN  
**NEW ADDITIONS  
TO THE AFRICAN  
ART ECOSYSTEM**



AS THE COMMERCIAL  
SECTORS OF THE  
ECOSYSTEM HAVE  
GROWN,  
**CURATORS' IMPORTANCE**  
AND ROLE IN TERMS  
OF MAKING AFRICAN  
ART VISIBLE **HAS  
LESSENERD**



THE GENERAL  
PERCEPTION IS THAT  
THERE ARE **STILL  
TOO FEW AFRICAN  
ART COLLECTORS**



THE MAJOR AFRICAN  
ART CAPITALS ON THE  
CONTINENT ARE IN  
**SOUTH AFRICA,  
NIGERIA AND  
MOROCCO**



SOUTH AFRICA HAS  
THE **MOST  
EVOLVED ART  
ECOSYSTEM,**  
THOUGH IT HAS NO  
BIENNALE





ZEITZ MOCCAA, CAPE TOWN  
Image : Iwan Baan



CHAPTER 03 /

# THE TIMELINE 2007 – 2017

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‘Impact is something hard to measure in the visual arts. However, it doesn’t mean it’s not there. It only means that time can only be the measure.’

TUMELO MOSAKA (2013), SOUTH AFRICAN CURATOR AND  
DIRECTOR OF THE INVESTEC CAPE TOWN ART FAIR

## THE VALUE OF A RETROSPECTIVE VIEW:

‘Presentism’ makes it difficult coming to grips with contemporary art itself.’  
Terry Smith (2012: 366).



You need distance in order not to take contemporary art ‘at its own word’.



This decade saw the biggest increase of art production, art commerce and the visibility of African visual expression.



This past decade has therefore set the foundations for further advancement.



It gives us insight into the future.



It offers contextual grounding for upcoming art reports generated by Corrigall & Co.

### PLEASE NOTE:

- MANY important art events or benchmarks occurred preceding the decade in focus, that continue to be felt.
- This is an abbreviated list to give a sense of the heightened activity over this decade.
- Practical reasons have shaped the focus of this report.
- Its pan-African approach means we have concentrated on events and curators that have impacted on the continent as a whole.
- There is an interrelationship between key developments on the continent and those in Western art centres. For example, the establishment of art fairs specialising in contemporary art from the African continent in London, New York and Paris are unthinkable without the establishment of the first fair in Johannesburg in 2007; similarly, the Art X Lagos and others elsewhere on the continent are not unrelated to AKA or 1:54.







# 2007

The first African Pavilion at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007 was a vital step in visibility and recognition that artists from Africa were producing 'contemporary art'. It also highlighted the necessity for curatorial intervention to bring depth and complexity to the notion of 'African art'.

'The notion of one pavilion that could function as a platform for a continent was guaranteed to satisfy no one and to displease everyone.'

(Frieze, 2007)



FIRST AFRICA PAVILION at the Venice Biennale.

MALICK SIDIBÉ (1936-2016) from Mali becomes the first photographer in the history of the Venice Biennale to receive a Golden Lion Lifetime Achievement Award.

EL ANASTUI participates in Venice Biennale

SIMON NJAMI'S AFRICA REMIX shows in Johannesburg, South Africa.

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART LAGOS, Nigeria opens.

ARTHOUSE CONTEMPORARY AUCTION HOUSE, Nigeria opens.

'The reality is contemporary art has gone through different stages – it was rejected and defined by the anthropologists and ethnographers, so we have that generation in the '80s. Then it was defined by Africans in the diaspora, by (Simon) Njami, and now we are moving to another phase: people working on the continent.'

**BISI SILVA**, CURATOR, FOUNDER  
AND DIRECTOR OF CCA LAGOS, NIGERIA.

IMAGES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

**MALICK SIDIBÉ WINS THE GOLDEN LION AT VENICE BIENNALE, 2007** photo: Michele Gregolin /  
**EGYPTIAN PAVILION, VENICE BIENNALE, 2009** photo: Giorgio Zucchiatti  
**ÀSÌKÒ COVER, 2010**

'From the last ten years it's been a wild, exponential growth in terms of interest, value, the amount of galleries and artists involved.'

**KENNETH MONTAGUE**, COLLECTOR, CURATOR, FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF WEDGE CURATORIAL PROJECTS, TORONTO, CANADA, AND BOARD MEMBER OF TATE AFRICAN ART ACQUISITIONS.



2008

**RAW MATERIAL COMPANY** is established by Koyo Kouoh, as a centre for art, knowledge and society in Dakar, Senegal.

**FIRST LUBUMBASHI BIENNALE**, DRC.

**SPIER CONTEMPORARY ART AWARDS**, South Africa, is launched, open also to 'live art' and collectives.

Bonhams auction house in London creates a dedicated sale for African art titled 'AFRICA NOW'.

**NAIROBI NATIONAL MUSEUM** (established in 1930, previously the Natural History Museum) is re-launched with a dedicated contemporary art department.

**FIRST JOBURG ART FAIR** is launched in South Africa, proclaiming to be the first art fair on the continent, and one specifically dedicated to advancing Contemporary African Art.

2009

**EGYPT HOSTS A NATIONAL PAVILION** at the Venice Biennale, featuring Adel El Siwi and Ahmad Askalany, curated by Adel El Siwi.

**GABON PARTICIPATES** in the Venice Biennale for the first time.

**THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA ACQUISITIONS COMMITTEE** is established at Tate, London.

**LAGOSPHOTO INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL** of photography launches in Lagos, Nigeria.

**32° EAST**, Ugandan Arts Trust – a centre for the creation and exploration of contemporary Ugandan art is established in Kampala, Uganda.

**BISI SILVA LAUNCHES ÀSÌKÒ**, an itinerant pedagogical project aimed at curators and artists.

'I think the importance of African art has been highlighted by all of this. Biennials, museums, festivals, galleries, the art market, and of course the mainstream press, have followed this phenomenon and it has inspired the public to discover the creations of the artists.'

**MOUNIR FATMI**, ARTIST, MOROCCO/FRANCE

ÀSÌKÒ  
 On the  
 Future of  
 Artistic and  
 Curatorial  
 Pedagogies  
 in Africa

2010

# 2011

'I would say from 2012 or thereabouts is when the cultural explosion happened in Kampala – galleries and festivals – everything has kind of grown. Most of these events were very small and insignificant, but they did lead to something greater because of the exposure that lacked at the time.'

DAUDI KARUNGI, ARTIST, GALLERY OWNER OF AFRIART, AND FOUNDER OF THE KAMPALA BIENNALE, UGANDA



2011



2012

LAUNCH OF AN AFRICAN ACQUISITIONS COMMITTEE at Tate London, led by curator Kerry Greenberg.

Paris Photo fair devotes a section to AFRICAN PHOTOGRAPHY.

SOUTH AFRICA RETURNS to the Venice Biennale with artists Mary Sibande, Siemon Allen and Lyndi Sales, with curator Thembinkosi Goniwe at the helm.

ZIMBABWE RETURNS to the Venice Biennale with a pavilion showing the work of Tapfuma Gutsa, Misheck Masamvu, Berry Bickle and Calvin Dondo. Commissioned by Doreen Sibanda, and curated by Raphael Chikukwa.

BENIN BIENNALE ESTABLISHED.

Tate Modern shows an extensive work that it has recently acquired by the artist Meschac Gaba, from Benin TITLED MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART 1997-2002.

CAPE TOWN ART FAIR established.

WITS ART MUSEUM opens its new gallery in Johannesburg, South Africa.



IMAGES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

MARY SIBANDE, *IN THE MIDST OF CHAOS, THERE IS OPPORTUNITY* (2017) image courtesy Zeitz MOCAA / MESCHAC GABA IN CAPE TOWN, 2012 image courtesy Stevenson Gallery / SOMERSET HOUSE, THE VENUE FOR 1:54 CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART FAIR image: Katrina Sorrentino / WILLIAM KENTRIDGE, *DRAWING OF SOHO AND COFFEE PLUNGER* from *MINE* (1991) image courtesy Aspire Art Auction/ ANGOLA'S PAVILION AT VENICE BIENNALE, 2015, image courtesy Venice Biennale

THE VENICE BIENNALE AWARDS THE LEONE D'ORO FOR BEST PAVILION to **Stefano Rabolli Pantera and Paula Nascimento** for the Angolan pavilion.

THE INAUGURAL 1:54 CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART FAIR is held in **London**.

Circle Art Agency's EAST AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY ART AUCTION takes place in **Nairobi, Kenya**.

FOUNDATION ZINSOU open in **Benin**.

Julie Mehretu's (Ethiopia/US), *Retopistics: A Renegade Excavation* (2001), SELLS FOR US\$4,6-million at Christies, New York

'The first conversation about contemporary African art happened in 2005 and we had to wait for 2014/2015 for it to actually take. So it's slow-moving, it's a lot of work. It's a lot of investment.'

**VICTORIA MANN**, FOUNDER, DIRECTOR OF AKAA, PARIS, FRANCE



SOGAL AUCTION HOUSE, **Lagos, Nigeria** is established (a 2017 art report looking at Nigerian auction records cites that 93% of the works sold on auction there are contemporary (Castellote, 2017)).

Elikem Nutifafa Kuenyehia establishes KUENYEHIA PRIZE for Contemporary Ghanaian Art in **Accra, Ghana**.

**El Anatsui's** *Paths to the Okro Farm* (2006) SELLS FOR US\$1,445,000 (including fees) on May 15 at Sotheby's, New York, US.

KAMPALA ART BIENNALE is founded.

**Otobong Nkanga** (Nigeria/Belgium) is included as part of the 14 ROOMS PROJECT AT ART BASEL, curated by Klaus Biesenbach and Hans Ulrich Obrist.

William Kentridge's (South Africa) work, *Procession* (1999-2000) SELLS FOR US\$1,538,500 at Sotheby's, New York, US.

FIRST KENYA ART FAIR takes place at Sarit Centre, **Nairobi, Kenya**.

2013



'I think what's been really important is that you have art stars [from Africa]. Ten years ago you didn't have work that was reaching a million pounds being associated with the continent.'

**EMMA MENNELL**, FOUNDER, OWNER, TYBURN GALLERY, LONDON, UK

IMAGES FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

EL ANATSUI RECEIVES THE GOLDEN LION AT VENICE BIENNALE, 2015 image courtesy Venice Biennale /  
MARY SIBANDE AND GHADA AMER TAKE THE HONOURS AT THE SMITHSONIAN ART AWARD, 2017 /  
ZEITZ MOCCAA OPENS, 2017 photo: Iwan Baan

‘We must admit in the last ten last years the changes have been very impressive; there were few spaces in Western Africa. Festivals and biennales have grown in the ten years. It is important to stop focusing on the artworks and take a wider look; things have changed – in Africa and things in the art world.’

MARIE CECILE ZINSOU, ART HISTORIAN AND PRESIDENT OF THE FONDATION ZINSOU,  
COTONOU, BENIN (BASEL, 2015)



The Venice Biennale awards the LEONE D'ORO FOR LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT to artist El Anatsui (Ghana).

Okwui Enwezor becomes the FIRST AFRICAN DIRECTOR of the Venice Biennale.

Julie Mehretu's (Ethiopia/US) artwork, Looking Back to a Bright New Future, SELLS FOR GBP2,2-MILLION at Christies, London, UK.



‘There’s always an exhibition opening – there’s one every weekend now. I think it’s grown a lot and it’s a lot more interesting now than when I started.’

ADENRELE SONARIWO, RELE GALLERY, LAGOS



2016

ART X LAGOS fair begins, Lagos, Nigeria.

PIASA – PARIS-BASED AUCTION HOUSE, begins to specialise in African Contemporary art.

Sotheby's Auction house in London establishes a MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART DIVISION.

ASPIRE AUCTION HOUSE, JOHANNESBURG/ CAPETOWN is established, with a stated focus on contemporary work.

THE MUSEUM OF AFRICAN CONTEMPORARY ART AL MAADEN (MACAAL) opens in Marrakesh, Morocco.

Smithsonian African Art Museum establishes the AFRICAN ART AWARD FOR CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART.

Royal Academy of Arts in London HONOURS YINKA SHONIBARE MBE for his contribution to the visual arts.

Njideka Akunyili Crosby's work, Drown, SELLS FOR US\$1,092,500 at Sotheby's contemporary auction, London, UK.

AKAA - ALSO KNOWN AS AFRICA ART FAIR, established by Victoria Mann in Paris, France.

2017

2017

LAGOS BIENNALE inaugurated, Lagos, Nigeria.

ZEITZ MOCAA opens, Cape Town, South Africa.

DINEO BOPAPE (SOUTH AFRICA) WINS the Future Generation Art Prize.

The Venice Biennale awards the LEONE D'ARGENTO FOR THE BEST YOUNG ARTIST to Hassan Khan (Egypt).

ANOTHER COUNTRY, CURATED BY JIMMY OGONGA is staged at the Kenyan Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

'The art space has expanded so much since 2007 such that exhibitions are not put on by just galleries anymore. Independent curators, art dealers, creative hubs and art collectives, such as 16 by 16, cultural institutes such as British Council, Goethe Institut, and even artists themselves (alone in their studios or gathering together as a group) stage exhibitions such that on any given month an average of three exhibitions will open.'

AYODEJI RONTINWA REPORTS FROM LAGOS.



CHAPTER 04 /

# MAJOR DRIVERS IMPACTING ON CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN ART

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*‘Changes wrought by transition to new forms of governmentality and institutionality, new domains of living and belonging as people and citizens, cultures and communities, these define the postcolonial matrix that shapes the ethics of subjectivity and creativity today.’*

**OKWUI ENWEZOR. (2008: 208)**

Art produced by Africans is enjoying more visibility than ever before. That we are able to identify 20 African curators operating at the highest level of the international art world proves there is a hunger and interest in expression on and about the continent. Why now? Why didn't this occur in the '80s when multiculturalism and pluralism were buzz words and when the majority of African countries were independent and asserting their own cultural identities? In an effort to understand the context allowing for the growth of this 'category' and therefore the forces shaping its (multiple) ecosystem we have gathered the conditions, drivers and shifts that have contributed towards its development.

**In configuring a chart mapping conditions influencing the rise of art from Africa we relied on:**

**Interviews with our 30 experts.**



Information from **our team of on-the-ground reporters.**



**Supported by research** into African politics, economies, social movements on/off the continent, global art movements and shifts elsewhere.



As always, **we welcome reader's feedback**, which will feed into future iterations of this map. If you feel we have left out a vital 'force' please let us know. [info@corrigall.org](mailto:info@corrigall.org)



**Not all the forces listed in this chart are felt with equal weight** in every country or every community. Not all Africans have access to the Internet or are able to travel freely across borders on the continent. Not all people in the US or Europe attend art fairs or are right wing or, conversely, liberal.

**RICHARD MUDARIKI, *THE PASSOVER* (2011)**

Image courtesy Barnard Gallery/Sanlam Art Museum







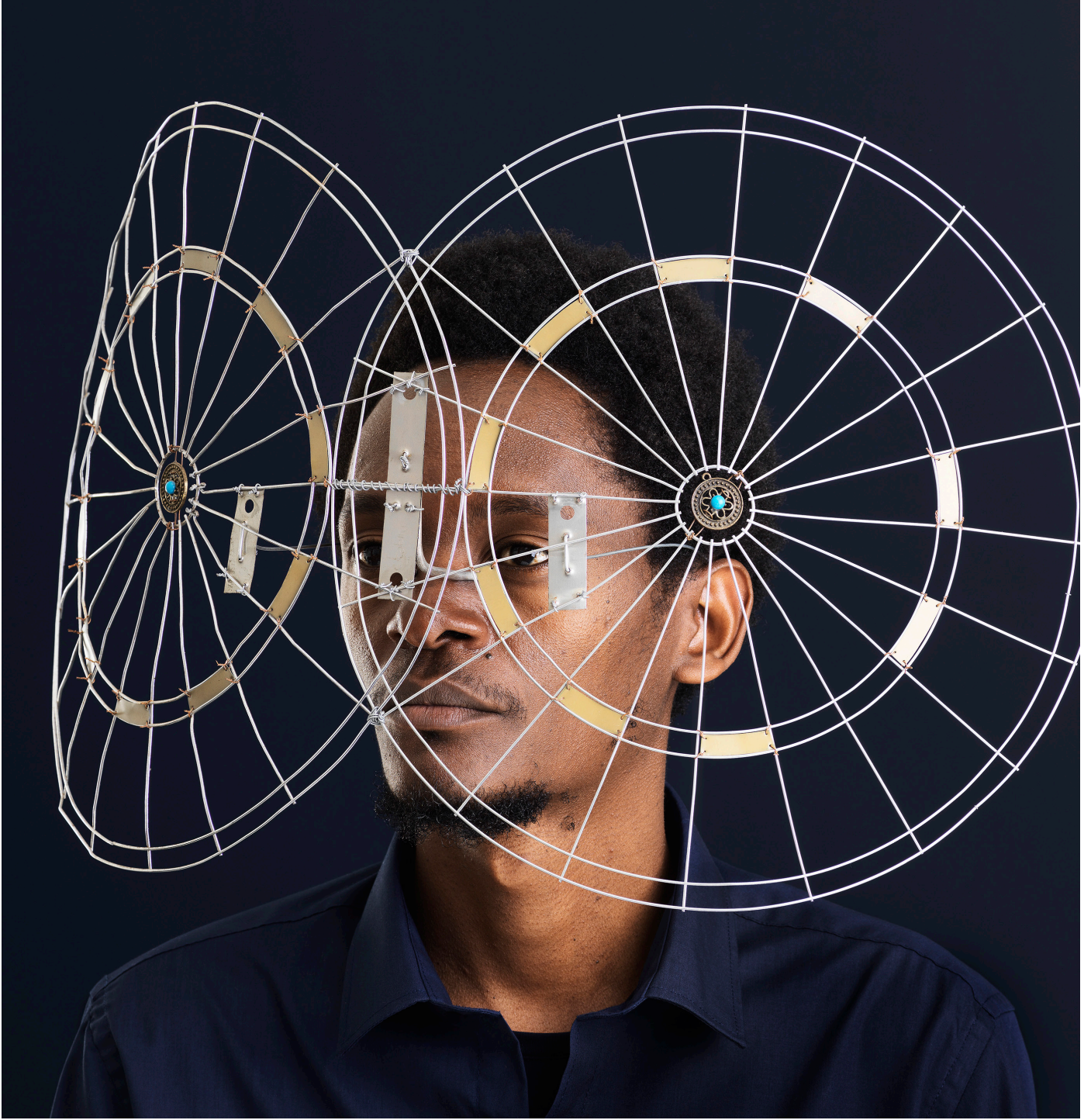


CHAPTER 12 /

FOCUSED  
INSIGHTS/  
FUTURE  
OUTLOOK

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In this chapter are some of the recommendations and observations borne from our research, analysis of the data, interviews and recurring opinions from experts and our on-the-ground reporters.





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