

THE CITY ON A BRIGHT SUNNY DAY

THE LARGEST BIENNALE OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT PROPOSES A DISCUSSION ON THE HEAVY INHERITANCE OF ITS COLONIZATION AND CHALLENGES PARADIGMS OF THINKING ABOUT AFRICAN ART AND CULTURE IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

BY FABIANA LOPES

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE AFRICAN DIASPORA, Brazil is a country that immediately comes to mind. Brazil is often considered to have the largest African population outside of the continent of Africa. Between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, Brazil received around 3.6 million people from the continent in what was part of an involuntary Diaspora. Nowadays, African (here used as an umbrella term) immigrant groups in Brazil are mainly made up of people from Haiti, Angola, Nigeria and Senegal.

Both voluntary and involuntary migratory movements can be topics of controversy and often discomfort. Indeed, immigrant history forms a difficult chapter of Brazil's past, one on which many Brazilians prefer not to dwell because of the pain, resentment, guilt or fear it might raise. Yet it is worth remembering that one of the ramifications of these movements is the assimilation of diverse ways of being and living that enriches Brazil's culture. In this sense at least there is a kind of Africa on both sides of the ocean: an Africa both here and there.

This concept of universal, various Africas is explored in the 12th Biennale of Contemporary African Art in Dakar, entitled "La cite dans a jour bleu" (The city in a blue day). The latest May 2016 edition is produced with the artistic direction of Simon Njami,

THE SERIES OF PHOTOGRAPHS *ACEITA? (TAKE IT?)* BY MOISÉS PATRÍCIO WILL BE EXHIBITED AT THE DAKAR BIENNALE. FOR OVER TWO YEARS, THE ARTIST HAS POSTED ONE PICTURE A DAY ON INSTAGRAM. THE ROLL OF PHOTOS ON HIS ALBUM DISPLAY HIS OPEN HAND SHOWING OBJECTS HE OCCASIONALLY FINDS ON THE STREETS, AS IF THESE OBJECTS WERE BEING OFFERED. HENCE THE TITLE OF HIS SERIES - *ACEITA?* - WHICH IS PART OF PATRÍCIO'S ART PROJECT TO GENERATE QUESTIONS ON ISSUES RELATED TO RACISM AND RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN BRAZIL. PATRÍCIO SET UP A CROWDFUNDING CAMPAIGN TO RAISE FUNDS FOR HIS TRAVEL TO THE BIENNALE





BARBARA BALACLAVA (2016), DIRECTION, SCRIPT AND PAINTINGS: THIAGO MARTINS DE MELO, SOUNDTRACK AND EDITION: GUILHERME FOGAGNOLI

Cameroonian curator and co-Founder and Editor-In-Chief of the magazine *Revue Noir*. The Biennale's title, taken from one of the poems of former Senegalese President, Léopold Sédar Senghor, evokes the dream of universal brotherhood. Senghor imagined an anti-colonial utopia that Njami believes ought to be rekindled when we consider our current global condition, our "heavy inheritance of colonization" and the way this influences our consciousness. In this edition, the Dak'Art, as it is also known, presents the work of 66 African artists, 11 of whom are living in other continents, including the USA, France, Italy, Portugal and Bahamas. The exhibition also brings to the fore projects organized by six curators from four different continents.

Various artists have been called upon to represent our Africa there, or the different ways of thinking about the effects of colonization, in Brazil and Africa. Curator Solange Farkas, founder and CEO of the Cultural Videobrasil Association, has invited artists Daniel Lima, Moisés Patrício, Paulo Nazareth, Sonia Gomes and Thiago Martins de Melo to participate. Farkas notes that while all these artists coincide in their portrayal of the "close relationship with African identity", each takes a distinct approach to this relationship in his or her work.

Moisés Patrício exhibits 100 pieces from his *Aceita?*

(*Take it?*) series (2013-2016). In this work, the artist uses autobiographical traces that articulate elements of his spiritual and social universe in a bid to question notions of disposability and our relationship with urban space. The display of Patrício's work also includes video installation and the performance *Palmatória*, both as yet unseen.

Paulo Nazareth, whose work creates a permanent dialogue between the 'Africas' inside and outside the African continent, exhibits four videos which make up a performance entitled *L'arbre D'oublier* (Tree of forgetfulness). Here the artist is seen performing the ritual of circling a tree several times, walking backwards. Nazareth explains that the performance explores the ritual of oblivion would-be slaves were obliged to perform before being shipped off to their destinies, acting out these motions in reverse. The performance has taken place in the cities of Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Maputo (Mozambique) and Ouidah (Benin). By moving backwards, a motif frequently used in Nazareth's oeuvre, the artist symbolically undoes the effects of colonial heritage, thus resetting History.

The largest Biennale of the African continent, Dak'Art promises to activate contemporary spaces with numerous art events, infusing the city with a new energy, creativity and momentum.