

Lagos Film Review



iREP 2016 Daily Coverage Vol. 1



Is Change In The Air?

iREP 2016 has started and I'm tempted to say "Same procedure as last year!". The festival will again present a very interesting and stimulating program, many new films are being shown, international guests are giving lectures, master classes, presentations, the audience will be watching and interacting with them and their films; Freedom Park will again be full of film conversations. But some things are different.

I want to commemorate a close colleague that recently lost her

life in a barbaric attack by terrorists in Cote d'Ivoire. Henrike Grohs was director of Goethe-Institut Abidjan and not only a close friend of mine, but also a close friend of the Lagos cultural scene. She has visited iREP several times and had many friends as well in Lagos. She is no longer with us, but her memories and her presence will remain a strong guide for the intercultural dialogue that we want to engage with.

Some other things have changed as well. The Lagos Film Society

has been established in the past years to create a platform for arthouse films, for discussions and presentations of cinema topics and screenings of films that are not the mainstream. iREP festival has asked LFS to curate a two-day program for this edition, you will find the program of screenings and panel discussions in the brochure and flyers around the festival.

This newsletter is again a collaboration with iREP, LFS and Goethe-Institut Nigeria. I'm happy to say that this is now the 5th edition of it, and believe that it will contribute to strengthening

the quality of film criticism and the discussions about films in Nigeria.

A big "thank you" goes out to the coordinators and editors, Aderinsola Ajao and Didi Cheeka, and to all the contributors, many of whom have been with us from the start.

I hope that you will find this publication interesting, informative and I want to wish you a great festival!

Marc-André Schmachtel
Director,
Goethe-Institut Nigeria.

Lessons from a Killing

By Oris Aigbokhaevbolo



Impunity Reigns for Now

By Dare Dan

KENYA: A GUIDE BOOK TO IMPUNITY is not so much about impunity as an act attributed to individuals but about how a people and their leaders have, in recent times, thrived in it. This film has been so titled, I believe, to stress acts of injustice inflicted overtly on a people and how these inhumanities are fast becoming a norm and partly forming a culture in a burgeoning African society. With little or no aesthetics, the director Lucy Hannan strikes poignantly and deftly into the present state of African politics using Kenya as a case study.

To confront impunity, Maina Kiai, a Kenyan human rights defender and civil society leader says, “The people need to be fearless”. Kiai is central to the making of this film, which appropriately uses voice-over, reportages and interviews where necessary.

In the wake of the 2013 Kenyan general elections, Uhuru Kenyatta, son of Jomo Kenyatta, the country’s first President, emerges winner. In one scene, the younger Kenyatta stands on a dais giving one of his harangues. There is a huge crowd. It is a close shot. His election victory barely surpasses half of the percentage of votes cast. This is, at least, what the world is told before the revolts and subsequent annihilations.

Civil rights societies say the electioneering process has been sabotaged, and that its computerization is set up to fail. Political opponents call for total cancelation of results.

Something or everything, in this case, must have gone wrong. A GUIDE BOOK TO IMPUNITY takes us from the grassroots to the apex of how things went down through the eyes of locals, rape victims, and those who lost limbs, property and loved ones.

The search for truth goes beyond the borders with testimonies from international prosecutors, foreign diplomats and election observers.

Important questions about the role of international observers in electioneering processes in Africa pop up. Dr. Nic Cheesman, an Oxford University specialist in electoral systems, democratization and governance, after admitting facilities to protect the electoral process failed, could not justify his role as an observer because, according to him, he must not compromise the domestic process. What are the implications of the international trips by African leaders to the double-faced international community that arraigns you for crime and then does business with you afterwards?

After all is said and done, the International Criminal Court prosecutor Fatou Bensouda gives up the challenge. “Impunity reigns for now,” she says.

Kiai though, like few other conscious minds in Africa, will not stop calling out injustice.

A voice says “they just killed this nigger” in the opening scene of Carla Usher’s *FERGUSON DOCUMENTED (IN 36 HOURS)*. The accompanying visual shows a body on a road and blood, blurry, on the asphalt. The body is Michael Brown’s. If you have social media, you probably know the name which became emblematic of police brutality in the US. There were other names as well, including Eric Garner, whose name is briefly shown in this 15-minute documentary. The viewer probably knows both names as representative of the several black bodies appropriated by the police in the USA.

It is a telling moment when the camera shows a cross section of all-white police. The framing is not one of the people versus the state. It is about black versus white. Using versus is a little strong given that it is not exactly an even match-up. Onscreen, an interviewed lady makes the point about the system needing change. It is a relevant point and one that comes with associations. Case in point, the recent Oscars controversy. The trouble isn’t the publicised episodes. The issue is more insidious. Who makes up the Oscars’ Academy? Who decides who gets into the police?

A documentary structured around interviews of mostly black folk, *FERGUSON DOCUMENTED* makes its own mistake by proclaiming the victimhood of black America. Importantly, it barely humanises the direct victims of the police killings. We are shown Brown’s killer in uniform smiling—much more than we get of Brown, who is seen in that opening scene as a bulk on the ground.

Considering the subject, it is perhaps indelicate to ask, but a series of questions are in order: Is a victim defined by his victimhood? Is a race defined by its anger? Might a smiling Michael Brown topple the case of a community? Might some complexity destroy the straightforward intentions of the filmmaker?

Full schedule for LFS screenings at IREP 2016

With support from Goethe-Institut Nigeria and the Nigerian Film Corporation, Lagos Film Society is organising a 2-day programme of screenings and discussions on Friday, March 25 and Saturday, March 26, 2016. The LFS programme is a satellite event of the IREP International Documentary Film Festival, and will take place daily at the **Nigerian Film Corporation, beside Voice of Nigeria, Obalende Rd., Ikoyi, Lagos. Entry is free and all films are in English or with English subtitles.**

PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, 25 MARCH, 2016

Film Screening

AUDRE LORDE - THE BERLIN YEARS 1984 TO 1992 (D: Dagmar Schultz, Germany, 2012, 79mins)

Time: 12:30pm

Audre Lorde, the highly influential, award-winning African-American lesbian intellectual and professor came to live in West-Berlin in the 1980s. During her stay as a visiting professor, she was the mentor and catalyst who ignited the Afro-German movement. Lorde also had a decisive impact on white women, challenging them to acknowledge the significance of their white privilege and learning to deal with difference in constructive ways.

[NB: Post-screening conversation will focus on the encounter between white and black feminism]

SATURDAY, 26 MARCH 2016

Panel discussion

IS THERE A FUTURE FOR [NIGERIAN] FILM CRITICISM?

Time: 11AM

Good movie criticism can take you out of the confusion you're left with when the lights come back on; it can make you care about movies, make you aware of the possibilities of movies. This panel confronts the question: Is there a future for [Nigerian] film criticism? Featured panelists include Oris Aigbokhaevbolo (Music In Africa) and Espera Donouvossi (Federation of African Cinema Critics). A keynote address will be delivered by Steve Ayorinde, Hon. Commissioner for Information and Strategy, Lagos State.

Panel discussion

CROSSING BORDERS: AFRICAN SCREEN NETWORK

Time: 2.15PM

Across Africa, we're beginning to see the emergence of a range of filmmakers wanting to make a renewed African contribution to World Cinema. But, for the most part, these films hardly get to be seen beyond borders across the continent. How do we get African films to be seen across the African continent? Featured panelists are Steven Markowitz (Big World Cinema), Chike Maduegbuna (Afrinolly), Chuka Ejorh (FILMSundays), AfieBrimoh (AFRIFF/ScreenCiti), Moses Babatope (FilmOne Distribution) and Ugoma Adegoke (The LifeHouse/Lights, Camera, AFRICA!).

SATURDAY, 26 MARCH 2016

Film screening

STATUES ALSO DIE (D: Alain Resnais, Chris Marker, Ghislain Cloquet, France, 1953, 30mins)

Time: 1PM

Statues Also Die traces the devastating impact of French colonialism on African art. This film was banned in France for 12 years.

BLACK MARKET MASQUERADE (D: Peter Heller, Germany, 2016, 53min).

The market for traditional African art is flourishing globally. In the past months, single objects have been auctioned off for millions. The film follows the tracks from the poorest carvers in West Africa to the posh trade fair for gallery owners in Brussels and to Paris, where the prices for the art market are made.

Film screening

KIKI (D: Sara Jordanö, Twiggy Pucci Garçon, Sweden/US, 2016, 95mins)

Venue: Nigerian Film Corporation (beside Voice Of Nigeria), Ikoyi rd., Obalende.

Time: 4pm

Entry Is Free!

A dynamic coming of age story about agency, resilience and the transformative art form that is Voguing, KIKI offers riveting and complex insight into the daily lives of a group of LGBTQ youth-of-color who comprise the "Kiki" scene, a vibrant, safe space for performance created and governed by these activists. Following members of the scene as they prepare for and perform at exuberant Kiki balls in New York City, KIKI highlights the infectious joy of these performances, while also foregrounding the scene's urgent social function as an alternative family structure.

[NB: Post-screening conversation will confront the questions - Is sexuality a construct, and is gender performative?]

SATURDAY, 26 MARCH 2016

Presentation and Panel discussion

RECLAIMING HISTORY, UNVEILING MEMORY

Time: 3PM

(A public presentation of an archive project of Lagos Film society, in cooperation with Goethe-Institut Nigeria and British Council Nigeria)

RECLAIMING HISTORY, UNVEILING MEMORY is an invitation to the uncomfortable, but nonetheless exciting journey of reclamation and negotiation through restoration and projection. It is a look back - to the future. In the sense that it seems to place archiving - beyond restoration and digitization - in a curatorial context, in relation to the present and the future.

The presentation will be followed by a discussion panel comprising artists Kelani Abass and Uche Uzorka; Kayode Samuel; filmmaker Didi Cheeka; Ivorian artist Ananias Leki Dago, and curator Bisi Silva of the Centre for Contemporary Art Lagos.

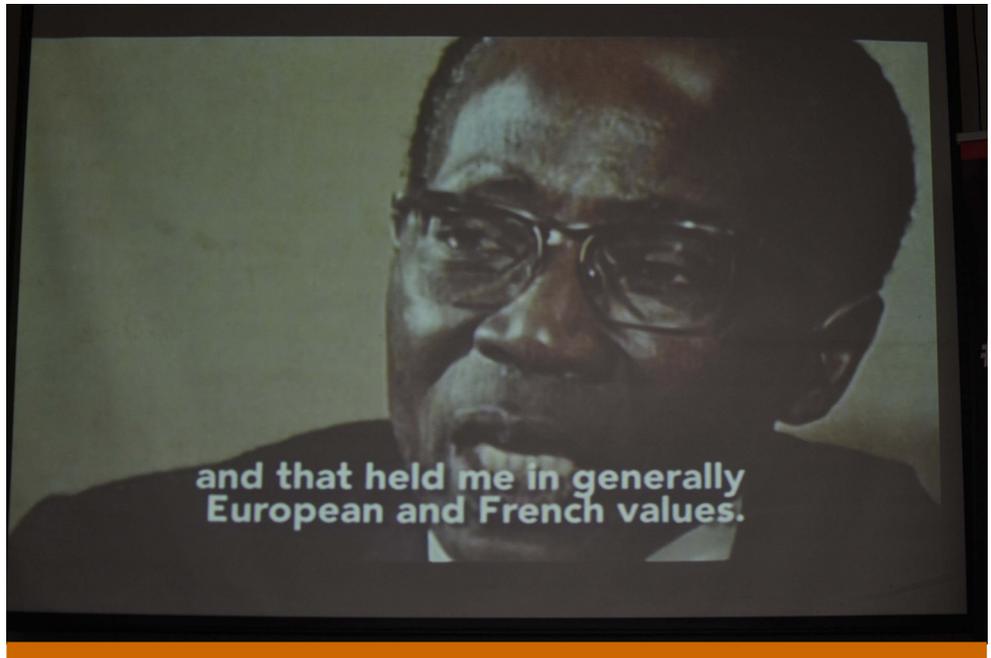
REVISITING "CINEMA CALABASH?"

By Didi Cheeka

Even if scholarly intentions are all that a movie-goer demands of a filmmaker, Manthia Diawara's *NEGRITUDE: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN SENGHOR & SOYINKA* stands on shaky grounds. And when it attempts to cross the Mediterranean, it sinks. Diawara, as evidenced in his book *African Film: New Forms of Aesthetics and Politics*, holds a strenuous attitude towards scholarly conscientiousness. The impression you get in his film is scholastic, as against cinematic. In this sense: Diawara brings nothing new, no critical insight to the age-old debate on Negritude. There is, of course, a legitimate basis to say that, to an extent, only to an extent, Negritude, within the context of American and European cultural imperialism, was a valid response.

To argue, however, that Africa possessed its own culture before colonialism is really not saying a great deal. Every period, ever since humans produced the first stone tools, has had its own culture. It is correct to say that, within the context of colonialism, the colonised culture has been denigrated while the colonizing culture has been exaggerated. It is within this context that the irrigation systems and the rich culture of Islamic Al-Andalus, the cultures of the Aztecs and Incas were destroyed in northern Spain by the Christians who felt themselves superior.

The systematic enslavement of the peoples of Africa, Asia and the Pacific falls within this context - using Christian missionaries to rob people of their cultural identity. (There's something terribly misleading in this film: Diawara, more-or-less consciously, reduces colonialism in Africa to the British and French. Like many blacks in America, is the filmmaker unaware of the destructive effects of the trans-Saharan slave route and Islamic colonization of Africa?) Diawara seeks, through Senghor, to provide validation for African culture by uncritically citing Picasso's comments about savages. Well, Picasso's intentions, much like Diawara's, may be laudable but, in the context the filmmaker and Senghor uses it, the premise is wrong.



Has there been no artistic progress since our forefathers made the earliest stone tools? This need to prove that African culture, pre-colonial, stood on a higher pedestal than the colonizing culture finds expression in Soyinka's assertion that African religion is morally superior to the colonizing one. In fighting against a pernicious idea - the notion that Africa has contributed nothing to human culture -, it is necessary to avoid going to the extreme.

African culture appears here as seemingly meaningless and inexplicable: to understand it, we are told, is to become as a child, to see with the eyes of children. To try to understand it, to rationalise it, is, therefore, a pointless exercise. Senghor says this, but does Diawara accept this? Can this equally be said of European art? Present in this statement is the idea that culture is fixed for all time, immutable. African culture appears here in a one-sided, even unreal manner. It seems to me that the essential weakness of Manthia Diawara's film is that it ignores the fact that, for the most part, Negritude was pioneered by capable, intelligent men who just had nothing to say. To attempt to cinematically resurrect it, uncritically, seems to say the same of this filmmaker.

Lagos Film Review Newsroom

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