

THE COURIER

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ACP CULTURE- DEVELOPMENT

Fashion. Profitable
Cinema. Professional
Music. Cosmopolitan

Cultural assumptions



As G20 leaders met in London to work out strategies to ward off the gathering global financial crisis, a myriad of artists and other key figures from the cultural scenes of Africa, the Caribbean and the European Union came together in Brussels 1-3 April. They pored over proposals to promote integrated cultural and economic development in ACP countries. Senior politicians in the same conference room awaited their recommendations. Louis Michel, EU Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, spoke of the need of states present to follow-up on the Forum's proposals.

Rather than simple appeals, recommendations of the 'Brussels Declaration', drawn up by artists and cultural professionals, were both practical and inspiring. Louis Michel was also on hand to champion cooperation between ACP countries and the EU. And to quote Amartya Sen, the economist-philosopher who won the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998: "Diversity cannot be eliminated by imagined cultural taboos or assumptions imposed by civilisations..."

Alphadi, one of the most brilliant African designers, lashes out at this tendency to make assumptions, celebrating diversity in the hope that the coming together of designers and other creators will tap into this well of vision, assets and material well-being for the African continent.

The awareness of Africa's contribution, which is played down and underestimated in the cold light of evaluation instruments and methodolo-

gies or simply crude prejudice, is vital for the arts and other areas of creativity because the self-confidence of a continent and its diaspora – Caribbean and elsewhere – hinges on it.

Focused on culture and economic development, this special edition wants to put the record straight and show how Africa and the whole of the ACP region have fired the imagination in the world of music, the visual arts and stage, while showing on a cultural and economic front, the continent's potential to sell its cultural assets. It evokes avenues that could be explored to produce a long-term and sustainable development strategy.

We have to address prejudices. It only makes good economic sense. This is all to do with public perception. Investors from every sector supposedly choose markets solely on the rationality of high return for their investment. This is just not true! The European baby boomers who rushed in the nineties to the United States, viewed as the land of hope and glory, were probably more inspired by their seventies nostalgia for jazz, Coca-Cola and Miles Davis' swinging rhythms than by the ups and downs of Wall Street.

When Rome wanted to invade a country, it dispatched perfumes, elixirs, cloths and herbs ahead of its centurions. Until one day, a conquered Greece culturally conquered Rome, with a more subtle culture.

Hegel Goutier
Editor-in-Chief



Hegel Goutier

CULTURE in the ECONOMY. Not the icing, but a large slice of the cake

Not so many years ago, when posing the question as to what is the leading export product of the world's richest nation, the United States, there would be some surprise on hearing that it was culture. Today, the incredulity is less. The doubts today relate rather to the ability of poor countries to base their development on trade in cultural assets and to recognise that these too are trading products. What is surprising is that the economic players, and above all those who finance these countries, remain reluctant to invest in this sector. As a result, it is often the creative artists themselves who become businessmen to fill this gap. Such is the case of the Nigerien couturier, Alphadi, and the musicians, Youssou N'Dour, from Senegal or, in his day, Bob Marley of Jamaica.



The culture industries are increasingly important to economies of developed countries. The figures for 2005 show that they represent 7 per cent of global GDP, that in the United States the figure is over 5 per cent, and that in Canada and Europe the proportion is 3.5 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. What is more, these figures are based on a restrictive definition of what constitutes a cultural product.

If the creative products and exports of the rich nations are understood in a wider sense, the figures are much more impressive and highlight even more cruelly the isolation of poor countries. So much so that it is possible to establish a one-to-one correspondence between exports of these products and economic development. The cultural sector employs 5 per cent of the Canadian population and a much greater proportion in the United States.

In 2002, Bruce Lehman, president of the International Intellectual Property Institute, asked jokingly what American workers did, as only 14 per cent (18 million out of 134 million) of them were employed in the manufacturing industries. He provided the answer, namely that most of them are in some way engaged in the production of intellectual and intangible goods, whether computer software and video games, fiction films, Internet protocols, genetic engineering or the design for a Boeing fuselage. The US film industry employs more workers than the megalomaniac defence industry. As for international trade in cultural products, Alexandre Wolff estimates this increased by 40 per cent during the 20 years prior to 2000 to reach US\$400bn in 1998 compared with US\$100bn in 1980.

► Those who are doing well

In recent years, the so-called intermediate economies made a breakthrough on the market in cultural products. Here too the link with economic development is present, although it is not necessarily the case that they developed first, having learned to sell their cultural products. In most of these countries, the development of culture industries preceded the economic boom, acting as a catalyst. That is certainly the case of India where the success of Bollywood advertised its economic success well before it really came to the attention of the world. Brazil started by controlling its audiovisual

Creative Africa

With the global financial crisis, the renown of Africa and of other developing countries seems to be growing in the face of the failures of those who would preach to them. Africa had long suffered from a lack of images, which was not without its effects on the way in which its art was viewed.

There are also the recurrent prejudices of colonisation. Since knowledge in Africa was largely communicated orally, its contribution to world knowledge was long denied or neglected, especially technical knowledge. In reality, Africa has made many valuable contributions in various fields, including mathematics, metallurgy, and pharmacopoeia. In particular, the research carried out by Houtondji on the continent's 'endogenous knowledge' has helped disqualify such prejudices. In music, the contribution and inventiveness of Africa is recognised. Everybody is aware of its influence on most of the great musical genres of the 20th century. Jazz, Afro-Cuban music, rock and hip-hop all have their origins in Africa. Yet, its influence on certain other kinds of music was long refuted, for instance on the Argentinean tango. Thankfully, Argentinean researcher Juan Carlos Cáceres helped rectify that situation.

production before becoming an important emerging country. Today, it is the world's seventh biggest exporter in the music sector and above all controls 90 per cent of its domestic music market.

That said, the developing countries are achieving growing success. The situation of the audiovisual industry in Jamaica is legendary, for example. The music of these countries also sells well. So-called 'world' music is a successful export product, from Ayo to Amadou and Maryam, from Mercedes Sosa to Lila Down and from Cesaria Evora to Youssou N'Dour. The latter has many albums that have topped more than a million in sales, *The Guide* selling three million! The musician produces his albums himself, his company employs between 200 and 300 people and, very importantly, he reinvests his earnings in his own country, Senegal, and in other African countries too. His BIRIMA project for micro credit launched in February 2005 is another example of artists committed to the management of the cultural economy, as is his AMPA or 'Association of African Professional Musicians' that defends the interests of Africa's musicians. Youssou N'Dour invests his earnings in Africa.

It is in fact the absence of the private sector in their countries or regions that enabled many of these artists to become businessmen. One such example is Alphadi**, the

founder of FIMA (International Festival of African Fashion) and FAC (Federation of African Fashion Designers) who, with his fashion caravan that travels Africa and the Caribbean, supports young designers and contributes hugely to the growing reputation of African fashion.

Youssou N'Dour made the switch from artist to artist-businessman after realising that his album *The Guide*, which sold over 3 million copies in 1994, earned a great deal of money for Sony, and not for Senegal or Africa. ■

* See interview in this issue.

For more information, please visit: www.culture-dev.eu where you will find, inter alia, the paper "Potentialities and issues at stake in creation and culture towards development" by Francisco Ayi J. D'Almeida, Director of *Culture et Développement - France Association Fashion*.

On page 2: Dominique Zinkpé, *Partage de Territoires*, Exhibition Bénin 2009, Fondation Zinsou, 28th September-4th January 2009. Photo by Léo Falk

Keywords

Africa; culture; Youssou N'Dour, Bob Marley; Alphadi; cultural products; Ayo; Amadou and Maryam; Mercedes Sosa; Lila Down; Cesaria Evora.



FASHION. Africa has what it takes to make BILLIONS

An interview with Alphadi, icon of African fashion

By Hegel Goutier

Alphadi is probably the best known African fashion designer. This is the man behind the huge fashion shows at the feet of the pyramids in Egypt. Designers from around the world flock to admire his creations. He also campaigns to promote African fashion and founded the African Federation of Fashion Designers 25 years ago and the International Festival of African Fashion 10 years ago, attracting more than 10,000 people each year and 50 to 60 designers from all over the world.



Alphadi immediately points out that fashion does not just cover couture, but also jewellery, leather goods, visual arts and interior design, all of which have a cultural impact, generating revenues and creating lots of jobs in Africa. Many are undeclared, but he is convinced that fashion has more resources than other creative sectors.

We have 54 countries in which to work to show that a cultural offensive can lead to development and create employment. Today, the situation is changing because Africans are starting to take responsibility, to wear African clothes, to eat African food and to decorate their homes with African paintings.

This is a good time for your offensive then?

Yes, but like all cultural offensives, you need finance and managers, something that Africa is often in need of. We want our

work to go beyond our continent. We want it to be appreciated elsewhere, in Europe and in America. We want to establish franchises, licences and points of sale throughout the world. If Yves St-Laurent and Pierre Berger had not had financial backers like the LVMH Group, they would not have created the empire that they have left behind. Though we may have become major designers, we cannot grow in any other way. At the moment, we have to do everything ourselves – design, financing and distribution. Europe is not going to do it for us.

It is a case of casting the first stone?

Absolutely not! Our problems are our own. We don't buy our own products, either from the Diaspora or from Africa itself. Since Obama's rise to prominence, people are starting to realise that black people are capable, and that mixing races is something remarkable. This is something we under-

stood 30 years ago. If we help each other in Africa, we will succeed, but the Diaspora does not have finance except in the USA. All cultural sectors are buoyant, in particular areas connected to fashion and beauty, such as textiles, couture, leather goods, jewellery, cosmetics and perfumes. Billions of dollars could be made in Africa, and goods could be exported as well.

Why do the economic and political powers show such reticence towards the cultural economy in poor countries, particularly Africa?

The people in power in our countries do not always have high standards. Some think of their own pockets. Even if those at the top are voluntarist, they are not necessarily well surrounded, and those working with them do not always have the public interest at heart. Africa is in a bad state today because many leading political and economic figures do not really believe in its true values. While fashion, cinema and culture make up 40 per cent of exports in the USA, Africa could achieve the same or even more because it is a continent where every city, region and country has a thousand ways of creating fashion and derived products. It is simply a matter of adapting them to today's fashion, modernising techniques and creating industries to generate billions of dollars from within Africa. But those responsible for promoting African fashion are not doing their jobs. Our leaders generally wear western clothing in ministerial conferences, and when they wear traditional dress, they seem to see it as being part of folklore. I personally believe that African presidents and ministers should wear African dress when attending important meetings to set an example of dynamism. They go looking for money elsewhere, and it's been right under their noses the whole time.

The offensive has already been won in Morocco, an African country which spares no effort in ensuring that the textiles and fashion industries are a reality. Algeria and Tunisia are getting there too. These are countries that have seen what Europe has achieved.

You have always linked northern and southern Africa. This rapprochement now seems to be making progress, as the crowning of North African filmmaking showed in the



last Fespaco Film Festival in a clean break with the past.

Only because the south of the continent did not see the rest as belonging to Africa. But also because northern Africa considered itself to be European for a while. They even wanted to become part of the European Union. The Maghreb region must understand that it is part of Africa. They have been successful in their offensive, covering cinema, fashion and tourism. Today, they have to lead the way. Lots of our young

people go to these countries to train because it has become difficult to go to Europe. The Maghreb is Africa's gateway in terms of sustainable development. And the cultural offensive must go beyond politics.

Dresses by Alphadi.
© Revue Noir

Keywords

Alphadi; fashion; textiles; derived products; Maghreb; Africa; Morocco; Algeria; Niger; Tunisia.

FASHION. The African Advantage

Dresses by Chris Seydou.
Photo by Nabil Zorkot.

© Revue Noir



Ever since Chris Seydou, that genius from Mali, who seems to have started it all, African fashion has established its true pedigree with big name designers, managers and communicators like Alphadi or Claire Kane, who have made this industry (together with music) one of the biggest export earners in Africa, as well as the number one employer in 'culture' based work. Now, a new generation is following in their footsteps, both on the African continent and amongst the Diaspora settled in Europe and the Caribbean. Elsewhere, the Pacific too is rapidly gaining renown for its fashion. In 2006 the first ACP culture festival was held in Santo Domingo and served to boost the reputations of fashion designers such as Anggy Haif, Leslie Nérette and Marion Cecilia Kali Howard. Designer Anggy Haif from the Cameroon draws on raffia, roots, lianas and other natural things to

lend refinement and sensuality to his creations, but he also combines them with the most modern fabrics. A skilled manager, organiser and communicator, he has headed the BISE model agency since 2001 and was a driving force behind the creation of the Association of Young Cameroon Fashion Designers, the Cameroon Fashion and Hairdressing Festival, and the 'Made in Kamer', or Kamerly, fashion show. Leslie Nérette, although still very young, is an all-round creative genius, expressing herself in the plastic art, graphics, fashion and other fields. Since the Santo Domingo festival, where she created a very real sensation, her career has gathered momentum, confirmed by her huge success at the CulturElles Festival (Port-au-Prince, April 2008). Of the same generation, the couturier and designer, Marion Cecilia Kali Howard, from the Cook Islands, has created her own range of fabrics inspired both by nature and

the culture of her native Pacific homeland. As Africa has its International Festival of African *Fashion* (FIMA) and other major festivals, so the Caribbean has Caribbean Fashion Week that makes the headlines in the world's media such as *The New York Times*. Last year's festival, held in June, was a dazzling affair that showcased many talents from the sub-continent.

Three of the many names that marked the FIMA are:

The duo Zaad & Eastman, from Trinidad. A mix of white and colour, of forms and fabric, with an ever-present sensuality that borders on the torrid. A marriage of streaks of colour and lace, organdie, taffeta, silks, whites and frills. Voluptuous streaked sheath dresses with the rich bronze tints reminiscent of the Caribbean Sea. The transparency of black tulle on flowing skirts of the same jet black so warm that it seems to radiate the most vivid of colours.

Keneea Linton, Jamaica. Each garment, each costume is a graphic game. Distinction seems to be her leitmotif. White and black dominate - the lines, streaks, rosettes and other forms displaying a purity that magnifies the beauty of the body. A beauty accentuated even more by such original thoughts. In particular, Linton's hats are of amazing originality.

Europe's African diaspora is also part of the picture, and the breakthrough of Louise Assomo is testimony to that. This genius of Cameroonian origin, now based in Brussels, has followed a brilliant path since she won the Cristal d'or in Paris soon after completing her studies and staging her first major show in Brussels just three years ago. Today, Louise Assomo is the darling of the Belgian fashion world as well as a hard-working businesswoman, with boutiques in Brussels, Antwerp and Tel Aviv.

H.G. ■

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Chris Seydou; Alphadi; Claire Kane; Anggy Haif; Leslie Nérette and Marion Cecilia Kali Howard; Kamerly; FIMA; Caribbean Fashion Week. Zaad & Eastman; Keneea Linton; Louise Assomo.



Clément Tapsoba*

Economic stakes and CHALLENGES of African and Caribbean CINEMA

From 28 February to 7 March 2009, the 21st edition of the bi-yearly Panafrican Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (Fespaco) respected its long lasting tradition by presenting the very best of African, Caribbean and Diaspora cinematographic and audiovisual work. Created in 1969, the Fespaco celebrated its fortieth birthday. The theme of this edition was African Cinema, Tourism and Cultural Heritage. Let us go over the new challenges facing African and Caribbean cinema.

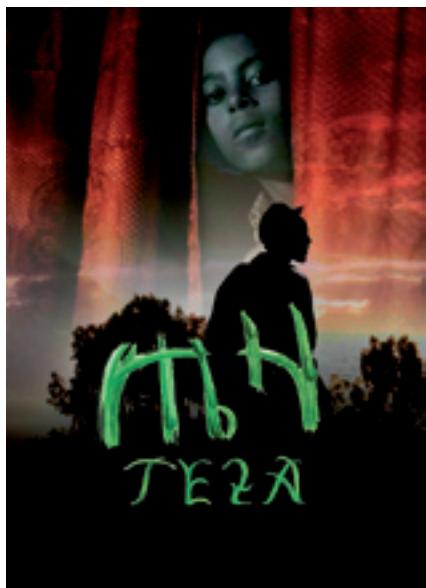
In many respects, the challenges facing African and Caribbean cinema on the occasion of the Fespaco were the economic stakes of the cinema and the audiovisual, which were more than ever at the heart of debates to find solutions to recurring questions that had been evoked repeatedly, from one edition to another, through the seminars, panels and workshops organised by the Fespaco or partners of African and Caribbean film-making.

► Questions without answers

A look back to the themes approached in past editions of the festival was enough to be persuaded. It is enough to look back to the previous editions' themes instituted with the support of the Federation of African Film-makers (FEPACI) to debate on the current preoccupations of African and Caribbean cinema: how to organise the national audiovisual market in the sense of creating financing that encourages national cinematographic and audiovisual production and distribution? (Production and distribution issues – Fespaco 1981). What film for what audience? How can the African filmmaker go to meet his audience? How do we truly integrate African films in the commercial distribution networks that are so sorely lacking (Fespaco 1999)?

Despite these calls for thought and action, and in spite of a seemingly flattering harvest of films listed for the 21st edition (664 films in all categories from 75 countries), the crisis of African and





Caribbean cinema is a permanent feature. No need to boast production-wise either. In most African and Caribbean countries, where all social and economic indicators go anticlockwise and suffer the consequences of the tightening of external subsidies, film production stagnates when it is not purely non-existent. Film-makers are the first consecrated victims on the list of economic priorities and emergencies and films are underfinanced, when political authorities do not purely and simply give up. At the 2009 Fespaco, out of the 18 films competing for the Golden Stallion of Yennenga – the

supreme consecration – 11 originated from the ACP. Among the leading runners of the ACP countries presenting more than one film in the official competitions, we find three South African films, followed by the host country (Burkina Faso) and its two contributions. These countries – with the exception of Morocco and Tunisia in the Maghreb – maintain a film-making support policy that pays off. This does not seem to be the case for West African countries, whose strong film-making tradition somewhat wilted from one Fespaco edition to the next.

> Closing time!

From the point of view of distribution and theatres, the crisis is even more blatant. The distribution networks set up in the 1970s and 1980s have disappeared following the privatisation/liquidation of national production and distribution companies (Sonacib in Burkina, Sidec in Senegal, Onaci in the Congo...). It is much easier to watch an African film in Europe than it is in Africa. The figurehead movie theatres of African capitals have either been destroyed or closed down, like the *Paris* in Dakar (Senegal), Abidjan's *Studios* (Ivory Coast) and Porto-Novo's *Rex* (Benin). More recently, last January, Cameroon joined the sad list of countries deprived of cinemas with the last

of its eight movie theatres closing down, Yaoundé's *Cinéma théâtre Abbia*. On the occasion of the roundtable organised at the opening of Canal France International's (CFI) on the theme of *Circulation and economic outcome for African audiovisual work*, the situations described find their origins in several factors: the lack of recent films to supply existing movie theatres and the strong competition of film pirating, compact disks and satellite dishes are all factors contributing to accelerate the degradation of the broadcasting conditions of African films. Another handicapping factor: African cinema is underfinanced and heavily depends on external aid. African cinema is absent on its own soil (*Ezra* by Nigerian Newton Aduaka – 2007 Golden Stallion of Yennenga – reaped wider audiences in Europe than in Africa since it won in Ouagadougou) and is confined to an art house network or to European festivals, attracting very little attention from the Asian or American networks. ■

* Film critic and vice president of the African Federation of Film Critics (AFFC).

| On top: Poster of Teza

Keywords

Cinema; Fespaco; Ouagadougou; Burkina Faso; crisis; theatres; Golden Stallion of Yennenga.

A magnificent poem of disillusionment celebrated at Fespaco

The Golden Stallion of Yenenga 2009 went to 'Teza' by Ethiopian director Hailé Guéríma.

Audiences may not fall in love with 'Teza' – the slow rhythm and ethereal allusions at the start of the film – but few people failed to applaud the unanimous decision of the jury at the 21st Fespaco Film Festival to award the Golden Stallion of Yenenga to this poetic, historical and philosophical portrait by Ethiopian director, Hailé Guéríma.

Guéríma has produced an epic song of disenchantment, a plaintive melody about the youth that digs its own grave with its dreams and the derision of history. The drama is set in the years of despair at the end of the Negus reign and during the period of violence under Mengistu in the 1970s and 1980s with its outbreaks of terror.

The militancy of Anberber and Tesfaye, two brilliant young men who have come to study to fight against the impenetrable dictatorship of the Negus and who, running from the rain, fall into the river, pre-empting Mengistu's coup, to which they would soon become hostages. Their lives, hopes, intelligence and charisma disintegrate. When the crushed Anberber returns to Germany, he is beaten up by a small group of neo-Nazi bullies.

Guéríma's plaintive cries spare no one, especially not the West. But who will be spared? Childhood, to some extent.

This film miraculously evokes beauty and sadness. In fact, it is more beautiful than sad. Hence the Golden Stallion and all the other awards, such as the prize of the African critics given out in Ouagadougou, the jury's Special Prize, and the award for best screenplay at the 2008 Venice Film Festival. H.G. ■



CONTEMPORARY DANCE - astonishing, irresistible and tantalising

A football pitch was the stage for a performance by Burkina Faso choreographer Irène Tassembédo at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Ouagadougou film festival on 28 February and 6 March in front of an audience of at least 20,000. It was an incredible spectacle which left knowledgeable spectators and those less familiar with contemporary dance moved and in awe.

This choreographer from Burkina Faso has created a style, which is primarily pictorial. Dialogue between peoples is dramatised through the adaptation of Burkina Faso folklore, featuring scenes with acrobats, giant puppeteers and a wave of drummers – a dreamlike vehicle of cultural dialogue and African unity. Absolutely, but instead of seeing scenes, it is more like looking at a painting. The women unfurl huge sheets to dry out on the stadium's turf at the beginning of the performance which turn into moving waves where the women, the wind and the fabric are as one, evoking Cassavetes' 'Love stream'. The rest of the performance has the same fluid dynamism too, Irène Tassembédo's trademark. She could be criticised for some vague synchronisation, but what matters is that the choreography sweeps along full of nostalgia, enchantment and reverie.

Irène Tassembédo is in greater and greater demand abroad as are many other choreographers from Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The first festival of culture for these three regions held in Santo Domingo at the end of 2006 has already attracted attention for its inventiveness and audacity.

For example, the 'Compagnie 1er temps' from Congo and Senegal in a performance such as 'Impro-Visé 2' present a kind of dual comic strip, the jerky movements of which produce a tragic, solemn atmosphere with a great crescendo like Ravel's Bolero or Oscar Lorenzo Fernandez's Batuque.

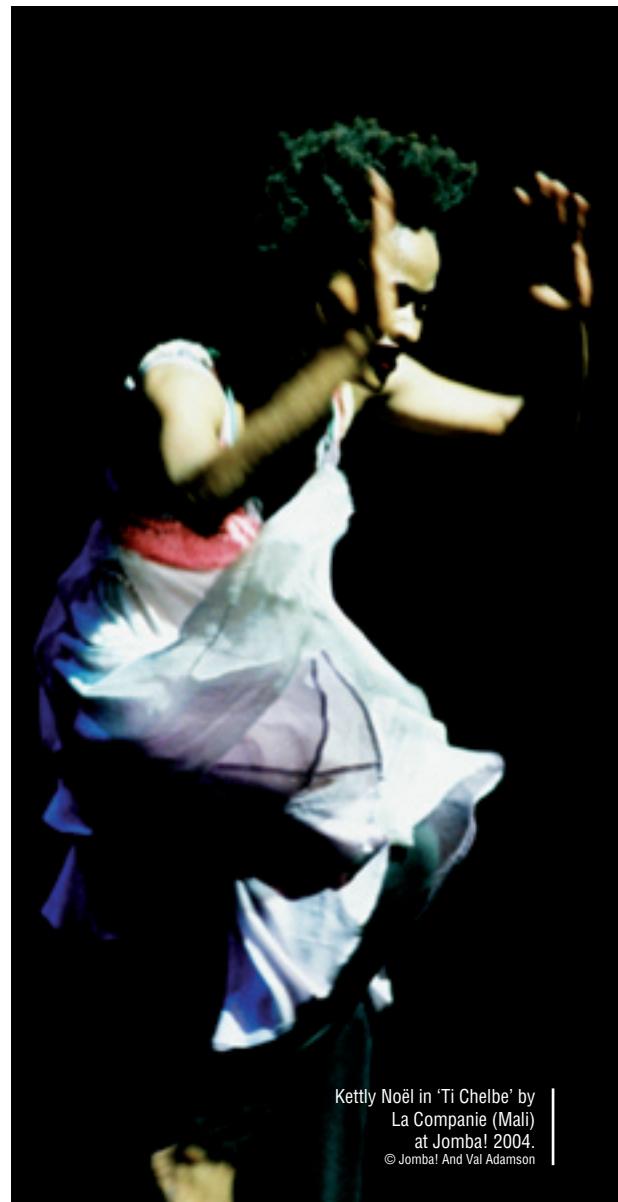
The 'Errance' performance by Kettly Noël, a choreographer from Haiti who developed her work in Mali, sculptures silence, stylises isolation and madness and examines the smallest manifestations of fear and the dread hidden away in all of us without indulgence or morbidity, nor any desire to seduce or shock. Of course, the audience is always petrified!

Also worthy of mention is the Akiyo dance from Haiti taking inspiration from the voodoo dances seen as fortification of the body and spirit, and a stylisation of the balance between gentleness and strength. It is a dance syncopated with shadow and light in forms, movements and spirit, astonishing, overwhelming and tantalising the audience.

The quartet of Rako dancers from Fiji whose dance is a soundless, suave and sensual poem, gliding felt-like and elastically, uses well interspersed percussion to give rhythm to the silence. With the percussion, each beat gently awaits the next, and the swaying walk is modulated in the same way. **H.G.**

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Irène Tassembédo; Compagnie 1^{er} temps; Kettly Noël; Akiyo dance; Rako; choreography, contemporary dance; Africa; Caribbean; Pacific.



Kettly Noël in 'Ti Chelbe' by La Companie (Mali) at Jomba! 2004.
© Jomba! And Val Adamson



Nago Seck and Sylvie Clerfeuille

AFRICA: the PULSE of the world

| So Kamery on scene.
© Afrisson



During the past century or more, music with its origins on the African continent has spread out across the world. Whether lively, improvised, festive or melancholic, African music is at the beating heart of the world, as musicians across the globe constantly turn to it for inspiration.

› Jazzmen and rockers: a passion for Africa

Gospel, jazz, funk, rap, rumba, R&B, rock, reggae, dancehall, cumbia, tango... so many musical genres of the 20th and 21st centuries have their origins on the African continent, a major reference for contemporary musicians. Recently, following in the footsteps of countless jazzmen, three artists

have released albums inspired by this infinite heritage: Randy Weston, with his love of the Gnawa rhythms of Morocco that have their origins in the Niger Loop; the Texan blues man Johnny Copeland who draws his inspiration from Congolese and Ivorian music; and Hank Jones, a man fascinated by the music of the Mandinka. This interest in Africa is shared by rock musicians who acknowledge the direct influence of African

music in the crossover between black R&B and white country music: stressed or shouted lyrics, the faculty for improvisation, a pulsating rhythm and fragmented choral singing. Peter Gabriel, founder of the Realworld label that launched many African artists onto the international stage (Youssou N'Dour, Geoffrey Oryema, Remmy Ongala, Papa Wemba, etc.), is perhaps the most illustrious example. He is so fascinated with

Africa and its contemporary creations that he has brought his Womad festival to locations all over the world (Japan, Australia, Hong-Kong, and more recently Indonesia).

› Africa and Asia: a recent love story

Previously confined to Europe and the United States, since the 1990s the influence of African music has spread to Asia. Doudou N'Diaye Rose has conducted Korean and Japanese tambourine players. Youssou N'Dour has worked with the jazzman Ryuichi Sakamoto, originally from Japan, a country that is home to a growing number of Congolese rumba and Mande music groups, including that of the Malian Mamadou Doumbia made up entirely of Japanese musicians. Papa Wemba has also been invited to Japan on many occasions and Abeti Masikini, who toured China in 1989, saw his repertoire adopted by Scu Mi In, one of the stars of the Beijing music scene, nicknamed 'the Chinese Abeti'.

› Latin America: Argentina and Peru finally acknowledge their African roots

Nowhere more than in Latin America and the Caribbean has Africa's influence been felt so directly, a region where it remains

very present and widely acknowledged. A marriage of Bantu rhythms and Argentinean expressionism, today – after many years of denial – the tango is officially recognised as a genre with African roots. Brazil, a country with more than 40 million inhabitants of African origin that has experienced two major influences – Yoruba and Kongolese-Angolan – is expressed musically in many genres of African origin: batuque, lundu, jogo, capoeira, samba. More recently, thanks to the work of Susana Baca – a collector of Afro-Peruvian music and songs who, in 1992, founded of the Institute Negrocontinuo (Black Continuum Institute) – Peru has recognised the African dimension to its culture and awarded the rightful social status to the Afro-Peruvians who for too long remained on the sidelines of mainstream society. But it is Cuba that defends its African heritage most actively with the rumba that has been known worldwide since the 1920s. Almost a century later, the dialogue continues most notably with the pan-African group Africando who work regularly with Cuban musicians.

› Bob Brozman: the link between Africa and the Pacific

The Pacific is the only region that has had few cultural links with Africa. Relations are practically non-existent, with the excep-

tion of Hawaii that has become known for its famous guitar technique*, with its laid-back rhythms, a style that influenced many Central African guitarists from the 1950s, such as Jimi Banguioso. A fan of the Hawaiian guitar and music from the Caribbean and Africa, the American blues man Bob Brozman, who has worked with artists from Africa and the Indian Ocean (René Lacaille from Réunion on *Dig Dig* and Djely Moussa Diawara from Mali on *Ocean blues*), seems to be one of the few to favour meetings between the cultures of the Pacific and Africa.

Nevertheless, Australia and the music of the aborigines in particular are today arousing the interest of a number of African artists. So Kalmery, for example, has studied the technique of the didgeridoo that features on his recent album, *Brakka System*. The door is therefore open to a dialogue that should be promising. ■

For further information: www.afrisson.com, www.saraaba.fr

* Pacific people are known for pan-pipe music as well. It's common in Melanesia.

Keywords

Music; Africa; Pacific; Asia; Caribbean.

LATIN AMERICA – a history denied

Juan Carlos Cáceres from Argentina and Susana Baca from Peru are two South American artists engaged in a constant battle for recognition of the African contribution to the region's culture. Both gained widespread support. Susana Baca has practically won her battle for Peru. Cáceres* is a pianist, trombonist, singer, composer, and the founder of the groups Malón and Gotán. He is also a painter, professor of art history, a lecturer and revived forgotten forms of the tango, such as the murga, cancombe and pasarotus. Rather than a forgotten history, Cáceres speaks of a history denied or 'La historia negada'.

In the text that goes with 'Murga argentina', he explains that Buenos Aires was previously a slave port and one third of its population was black. He writes: "Giving African heritage the place it deserves in Argentinian culture would be righting a wrong... The fact is that this slow process of transculturalisation coincides with the changes taking place in Argentinian society and with its gradual whitening... This wilful forgetting is a product both of the racism prevalent in a society that looks towards Europe and of self-censorship on the part of the African community."

Susana Baca** was a key figure at the

National Institute of Culture, Afro Peru. She started singing in 1970, and in 1987 became a goodwill ambassador for Unesco. In 1992, the Universal Expo in Seville, where she represented her country, provided the opportunity to raise the profile of her struggle. Afro Peru festivals have since been held in her native country and in other cities of the world. H.G. ■

* His albums include 'Murga argentina' 2005, www.mananamusic.com and 'Tango negro' 2005 Celluloid France Mélodie.

** Her albums include 'Del fuego y del agua' 1999, 'Espíritu Vivo' 2003 Luaka Bop; 'Eco de Sombras' 2005 www.luakabop.com



Gotson Pierre*

HAITI: Investing in theatre

More than a hundred applications from young companies have already been received by the Fondation Connaissance et Libertés (FOKAL), organisers of the sixth Quatre chemins theatre festival, to be held in September 2009 in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince. They are keen to take part in an event that has become a focal point for Haitian theatre.

At every festival, "one of two new theatre companies are discovered", says Michèle Lemoine, organiser for FOKAL, who works in cooperation with Belgium's French-speaking Community in Haiti, the theatre company, 'La Charge du Rhinocéros' and the French Institute in Haïti.

"Creativity is apparent in the diversity of the groups and the multiplicity of the expressions", she says, stressing that the companies are becoming more professional year-on-year. The fifth edition of these festival, held last September, was inaugurated with a "rainbow parade" that saw actors, directors, choreographers, dancers and puppeteers fill the streets of the capital to the sounds of the traditional Rara music in a spirit of total theatre.

Michèle Lemoine explains that the festival's approach is to promote a "citizen's theatre" aiming to "generate awareness" in society and at the same time letting talent loose. Thanks to this 'Nous Théâtre Association' received public recognition a few years ago. This theatre, which is not based on dialogue from written text, won over an audience in the street which itself became the stage on which scenes from everyday life were enacted.

Relating his experience, one of this company's principal founders, the dramatist Guy Regis Junior, believes that in the Haitian context, theatre can help combat insecurity by, for example, encouraging people to get out onto the streets in the

evening. As well as the theatre performance itself, he believes it is crucial to "encourage meetings" that make it possible to mobilise energies to achieve progress in society.

In the same spirit, the Haiti National Theatre is seeking to become part of the fabric of its immediate environment - the slums of the capital's 'Cité de Dieu' neighbourhood long since deserted by the public. Director Frantz Jacob speaks of the "theatre-forum" formula that makes it possible to create an interactive game with the public. As well as being entertaining, in this case theatre helps identify and solve problems on stage as a means of resolving them in everyday life.

"In a violent environment, it has been proven that theatre, a healthy leisure activity that acts on the intellect and promotes awareness, is a means of calming the situation", says Frantz Jacob. The actor and director, Daniel Marcelin, is of the same opinion. He believes that theatre is able to "contribute to the development of the individual" helping him to "become aware of himself and to find his place in society".

This ideal of theatre has been expressed through experiences such as that of the famous director Hervé Denis (died 2002), to whom Daniel Marcelin replied in *The tragedy of King Christophe* by the Martinican writer Aimé Césaire (died 2008). In the tradition of the great playwright Félix Morisseau-Leroy (died 1998), author of the Creole adaptation of the classical Greek play *Antigone*, Hervé Denis shed "important light on the theatre in Haiti

in regard to ethnodrama" (incorporating Voodoo mysticism). Head of Department at the Petit Conservatoire, which trains young people in the dramatic arts, Daniel Marcelin welcomes the cooperation with France and Belgium enabling teachers from both countries to spend periods at his drama school. Unfortunately, given present conditions in Haiti, theatre is not an "economically viable" activity, regrets Marcelin because, he says, "we spend three months rehearsing a play for just two or three performances". One exception to this is street theatre, *Jesifra*, which is beating all box office and tour records with sketches that have audiences in stitches.

Theatre is expensive due to the heavy investments, the company being obliged to bear all the costs relating to production. Marcelin believes that one of the major problems is the closing of so many theatres. Today, the last remaining large theatre in Port-au-Prince, the Rex Theatre, is under threat. Marcelin calls for government subsidies for the dramatic arts, seeing them as "a kind of investment, the return on which will come later".

* Journalist, editor of the on-line press agency www.alterpresse.org, radio broadcaster and correspondent for foreign media in Haiti.

Keywords

Haiti; theatre; Caribbean; Quatre chemins theatre festival; Fondation Connaissance et Libertés (FOKAL) ; Michèle Lemoine ; Guy Regis Junior ; Daniel Marcelin.



Does ANCIENT AFRICA have a SCIENTIFIC HERITAGE?

While Africa's cultural heritage is no longer in dispute, its scientific contribution to world heritage is still overlooked. For some time, researchers have been systematically challenging this last bastion. They include Paulin Hountondji, under whose leadership the memorable 'Endogenous Knowledge' was published.

Paulin Hountondji attempted to explain the marginalisation of Africa in the field of science. He identified two major reasons for this. Firstly, the slave trade at a time when the emergence of printing would proliferate knowledge. It deprived Africans with traditional knowledge of their incubator environment by also removing all freedom of association and organisation. The second reason, which is related to the first, is colonisation, which resulted in a distribution of roles and production that would assimilate Africa as a reserve of raw materials, as well as physical, scientific and intellectual resources.

➤ Scientific tourism

Anyone can draw from this reserve of raw scientific data. It is an experimental laboratory which sometimes uses local staff, even of high level, but to produce results for external usage. This process of production of scientific information has been controlled by the northern countries, and has contributed to what Hountondji saw as "scientific tourism", going hand-in-hand with the African consumption of scientific goods produced abroad. The fact that prominent African researchers have advanced their careers and that laboratories of major foreign institutes have been set up in Africa does not change the direction of the research carried out there.

Goudjinou P. Metinhoue* emphasises that Africa is penalised by the methodology of

historical research which favours written sources over oral ones, and in fact overlooks endogenous knowledge. Methods for critical analysis of oral sources need to be adopted.

➤ Fire and rain

Everywhere around the world, technological development has been connected to the use of fire. Alexis Adandé* highlights Africa's contribution to a key technological discovery, extractive iron metallurgy using low-shaft furnaces; in other words without smelting. It was known to have existed in various African societies for a long time. However, the theory was surreptitiously put forward that this knowledge probably came from Europe via the Middle East. The precise dating of archaeological findings from ancient Nigeria put an end to this tendentious speculation. They proved that the first iron working in vast regions of Africa definitely dated back to the middle of the 7th century BC and probably up to the beginning of the Christian period.

Abel Afouda* has examined a form of traditional African knowledge which is more difficult to put under the umbrella of science on the face of it – the rainmakers. However, he presents a scientific explanatory theory of the procedure used which holds ground, at least as a working hypothesis. With regard to the classification of animals by Linné in the 18th century, the starting point for modern zoology, J. D. Pénel* underlines that it was simply based

on characteristics visible to the naked eye, and demonstrates that the Hausa people produced a counterpart system.

➤ Digits and letters

In his "Universal History of Numbers"***, Georges Ifrah refers to the studies of C. Zaslavsky on numeration, which show that the Yoruba people invented a vigesimal system (base 20) in ancient times, using a double system of addition and subtraction, with the advantage that the digits were short. Incidentally, the English expressions, one score, two score, as well as many others from various cultures are based on this. Bienvenu Akoha* highlights various forms of writing: the "récades"*** of the Dahomey kings, the signs of the Fa and more elaborate forms in the Ashanti culture. Without mentioning Egyptian hieroglyphics except to cast doubt on the African-negro character of ancient Egypt. **H.G.**

* "Les savoirs endogènes. Pistes pour une recherche" (Endogenous Knowledge – Research Trails) under the direction of Paulin Hountondji, Karthala, France.

**Georges Ifrah, "Histoire naturelle des chiffres" (A Universal History of Numbers), Editions Robert Laffont, collections Bouquins.

*** Royal sceptres.

Keywords

Hegel Goutier; Paulin Hountondji; Goudjinou P. Metinhoue; Alexis Adandé; Abel Afouda; J. D. Pénel; Georges Ifrah; Bienvenu Akoha; endogenous knowledge; Hausa.



Sandra Federici

AFRICA opens its eyes to its ART

After almost two decades characterised by the intense effort to fight the invisibility of African art in the contemporary scene – through big pan African exhibitions, important publications and participation in biennials – now the most appealing trend in African contemporary art is the involvement of the African public together with the participation of local governments, museums and sponsors.

In recent years we observed the birth of some extremely interesting initiatives in several African countries, led by curators and artists firmly convinced that it is necessary to bridge the huge divide between African artists (cultivated, recognized worldwide, and with international relations) and African citizens living in widely different conditions. These initiatives move from the assumption that all people have the right to access the knowledge and input that contemporary art can give them. They have the right to be educated in art interpretation, and to experience its richness and aesthetic pleasure that it can give. They have the right to visit a contemporary art gallery and enjoy it. Africa must open its eyes to its artistic production.

A contemporary African art gallery was opened in 2005 by the Zinsou Foundation in Cotonou (Republic of Benin), a private foundation set up by a retired Beninese banker (www.fondationzinsounews.org). The foundation, led by the young Marie-Cécile Zinsou, daughter of the principal sponsor Lionel Zinsou, aims at promoting contemporary African artists, art exchanges, wider access to contemporary arts, and a universal appreciation of African art. The gallery holds exhibitions and children's art workshops. The Foundation became an incontestable cultural point in Cotonou. From its opening it was visited by three million mostly young people, thanks to free entrance and

to partnerships with several schools in the city. The artistic programme started with the Beninese artist Romuald Hazoumé, and continued with celebrated painter Jean-Michael Basquiat; born in New York from a Haitian father and a Puerto Rican mother; an exhibition about voodoo and one of the Beninese king Béhanzin d'Abomey (1844-1906). But these initiatives do not consider exclusively African works but look outside the borders of the continent as stated by Sindika Dokolo, the Congolese patron that decided to create in Luanda "an African collection of contemporary art rather than a collection of contemporary African art" (www.sindikadokolofoundation.org). In 2007, involved by the dynamic Angolan artist Fernando Alvim, Dokolo lent the principal group of works to the African pavilion at the Venice biennale. He insists that the contemporary African art world should discontinue its "dependence" on external aid – namely collectors, promoters, and financial support – that somehow distorts its African origin. He also denounces the fact that Africans are not in control of their own cultural domain and this affects the content of their artistic production. He regards "access to art to be a human right, just as basic and legitimate as access to education, drinking water and health".

Furthermore, the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (www.ccalagos.org), an independent non-profit organisation set up in December 2007 with the curatorship of

Bisi Silva, insists on the involvement of the African public and on the development and professionalisation of artistic production and curatorial practice in Nigeria and the West African region. It presents a programme of workshops, talks, seminars, performances, movie screenings and exhibitions such as the currently running 'The World is Flat', an international collaboration with Danish curator Johanne Loegstrup. Bisi Silva also curated the exhibition 'In the Light of Play' at the Joburg Art Fair.

Doual'art is a contemporary art centre created in 1991 in Cameroon by Marilyn Douala Bell and Didier Schaub. The centre is carrying out an important job for the involvement of the local public, fostering cultural projects and site-specific art interventions within the city of Douala. (www.doualart.org)

We have mentioned just some examples, but it seems that in the 21st century, the African contribution to the history of world-art can be important and can involve both artists and public – including the Government, education, museums, galleries, Academies of Fine Art and collectors – in telling the world of the high level and diversity of African art. ■

Keywords

African contemporary art; Lionel Zinsou Foundation; Marie-Cécile Zinsou; Sindika Dokolo; Bisi Silva; Centre for Contemporary Art in Lagos; Joburg Art Fair; Doual'art.



Andrea Marchesini Reggiani

CULTURE and CREATIVITY. Vectors for development

In African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries cultural industries still struggle to reach stability, which is a crucial factor for valuing the richness of talent. Louis Michel, European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, and Ján Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, wished to promote three working days, inviting more than 150 cultural professionals from both European Union (EU) and ACP countries, with the aim of highlighting the importance of the link between culture and development.

Many artistic protagonists from ACP, such as the art curator Yacouba Konate, the writer Véronique Tadjo, the dancer and choreographer Germaine Acogny, the sing-

er Rokia Traoré, and many other editors, directors, painters, musicians, fashion stylists, and managers, were given the chance to report and share their job experiences made of achievements as well as obstacles, and were encouraged to express all of their needs and prompt concrete suggestions.

"We consider culture not as a static factor to be protected, but as an economic and political activity in evolution", stated Stefano Manservisi, European Commission Director General for Development, in his welcome speech: "we consider these professional workshops extremely important to understand how the Commission can best do its federating job, drawing on all the experiences which exist in the European territory and linking them with what is cur-

rently produced in the ACP countries in order to establish a more systematic political action and reach a real cooperation."

Five workshops took place on the first day, in relation to the performing arts (theatre, dance and street art), visual arts (painting, sculpture, photography, fashion design), audiovisual (cinema and television), literature and music. During the second day, five common and parallel workshops were organised: the themes were cultural communication, training, legal frameworks and access to financing, creation and production, distribution and circulation in the cultural market.

The workshop on the audiovisual theme, coordinated by Charles Mensah, Chairman of the Pan-African Film-makers Federation,





and Toussaint Tiendreabogo, film producer, analysed the film-making sector in Africa. There is a strong demand from the population for images and stories that can reflect their daily life and their personal vision of the world. But there are also obstacles such as the lack of efficient public cultural policies, the absence of national financing, the weakness of local production that doesn't help to acknowledge the savoir-faire and new talent, the lack of respect for copyright due to piracy and the absence of appropriate fiscal and custom policies.

The literature and comics workshop, directed by Beatrice Lalison (Ruisseaux edition, Bénin), suggested promoting exchanges between all editors, in addition to writing workshops, local literature competitions, and educational initiatives on reading; the delegates claimed the necessity of forcing governments to respect the Florence Agreement* which requires the abolishment of tax on cultural products, although in many customs regimes 1 kg of comics is taxed as much as 1 kg of coal.

Cultural operators across all sectors underlined a few common needs, for example a special 'cultural visa', and some common problems such as the weak insight of ACP governments that often don't propose (as it is the commission that finalises these docs) culture in their national and regional plans (NIP and RIP), which excludes the possibility of receiving EU financing. Furthermore, the operators often lamented the excessive and complex bureaucracy of the European call for proposals, even for little amounts of money, and, above all, the difficulty in managing this financing due to strict rules which kill the creativity and flexibility of cultural production.

The opening ceremony of the Colloquium was then held on the afternoon of 2 April, with many ministers of culture from ACP countries taking part. The president of Mali, Amadou Toumani Touré, underlined the awareness and commitment of his government in Mali in defending their national heritage, recognising that their land is "a rich heritage of myths, legends and extremely beautiful cities. A richness which is a national cohesive factor and an attraction for cultural tourism". Commissioner Louis Michel hinted at many projects and cultural events in different ACP countries which have been financed by the Commission and claimed that "culture is an effective antidote against the indifference

and intolerance which lead to cultural conflicts" especially in this historical period in which "crisis may cause the worst attitudes of exclusion, racism and egoism".

The conference concluded with the reading of the Brussels declaration** by artists and cultural professionals and entrepreneurs, which starts with a lament: "After so many conferences where clear diagnoses were established and specific recommendations were made but not pursued; after so many resolutions, programmes and action plans rarely put into practice, it is with a mixture of scepticism and hope that we have come to participate in this Colloquium."

We quote just two recommendations, the ones that cultural operators have put in the first line: "to local, national and regional authorities: include culture as a priority, taking into account the NIPs and RIPs on cooperation and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers" and "to the European Union: support local, national and government authorities in the implementation of the actions mentioned above and in particular encourage them to integrate culture in NIPs and RIPs."

Looking ahead, it is very clear who needs to make the next move. ■



* The Florence Agreement is an international agreement facilitating the free flow of books, publications and educational, scientific and cultural materials signed in Florence (Italy) in 1950.

http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=12074&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

** To find the full text of the declaration : <http://www.culture-dev.eu/website.php?rub=documents-colloque&lang=en>

Rokia Traoré.
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International Colloquium Culture and creativity - Vectors for development, Brussels, 2-3 April 2009.

From top:

SEM Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General of La Francophonie - Former President of Senegal;

Louis Michel, European Commissioner for

Development and Humanitarian Aid, and SEM Amadou

Toumani Touré, President of the Republic of Mali;

Lupwishi Mbuyamba, Executive Director - Observatory

of cultural policies in Africa (OCPA), Mozambique;

Germaine Acogny, Dancer and Choreographer -

Director of the Ecole des Sables, Senegal.

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Keywords

Culture; creativity; Bruxelles; colloque; Louis Michel; Jan Figel; Amadou Toumani Touré; Stefano Manservisi; Germaine Acogny; Beatrice Lalison; Charles Mensah; Toussaint Tiendreabogo.