

WIR SIND ALLE BERLINER: 1884–2014

A Commemoration of the Berlin Conference

DISCURSIVE PROGRAMME

In the framework of the eponymous exhibition at SAVVY Contemporary

17 Feb & 26 Feb–01 Mar 2015



Photo:
Filipa César
The Embassy
2011

By **SAVVY Contemporary**

In Cooperation with **ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry** and **Labor Kritische Europäisierungsforschung** am **Institut für Europäische Ethnologie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin**
Exhibition Concept:

Simon Njami

Symposium Concept:

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung with
Elena Agudio, Anna Jäger, Saskia Köbschall

For interview inquiries and further details please get in touch with us:

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The discursive programme WIR SIND ALLE BERLINER: 1884–2014 commemorates 130 years of the Berlin Conference and proposes a space for deliberation on the repercussions of this crucial conference, offering thereby an occasion to analyse the ideological, economic, political, and humanitarian justifications that underlay colonialism and still frame the asymmetric relations between the West and the non-West today. The accompanying programme to the eponymous exhibition will consist of keynote lectures, roundtable talks, screenings and workshops with students, as well as performances and concerts. Outstanding thinkers and artists will deliberate on the history of the Berlin Conference, as well as reflect on strategies of (non-) remembering.

SAVVY THE LABORATORY
OF FORM-IDEAS
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Gefördert
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November 2014 marked the 130th anniversary of the Berlin Conference and the official partitioning of Africa by Western (European, North American and Ottoman) colonial forces – in absence of African representatives. Against this backdrop, the exhibition WIR SIND ALLE BERLINER: 1884–2014 recalls this determining moment in world history and its severe and ongoing repercussions, as well as it reflects upon Berlin's historical and contemporary bond to Africa.

The exhibition and the accompanying discursive programme offer a critical knowledge sharing platform on the Berlin Conference, on past and current socio-political and economic phenomena in a Europe of flourishing nationalism and racism, as it deals with issues like migration flow or border and identity politics.

The symposium as well as the workshops will address the political, cultural, economical and psychological consequences of this event of systematized colonialism, which still echo in various forms in our contemporary.

ADDRESSES

ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

Christinenstraße 18–19
10119 Berlin

KuLe Theater

Auguststraße 10
10117 Berlin

Peninsula

Kremmener Straße 9–11 / Wolliner Straße 18–19
10435 Berlin

SAVVY Contemporary

Richardstraße 20
12043 Berlin

SCHEDULE

17 FEB 2015 (TUES)

AT ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

18:00 KEYNOTE LECTURE Simon Njami

19:00 KEYNOTE LECTURE Ann L. Stoler
INTRODUCTION Regina Römheld

26 FEB 2015 (THURS)

AT SAVVY CONTEMPORARY

10:00 GUIDED TOUR OF THE EXHIBITION

AT PENINSULA

13:00 WORKSHOPS

AT KULE THEATER

19:00 DANCE PERFORMANCES (8/6 EUR)

Ahmed Soura, Qudus Onikeku

20:30 ESSAY CONCERT (8/6 EUR)

Charles Sammons, Kelvin Sholar,
Eric Vaughn

27 FEB 2015 (FRI)

AT ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

10:30 WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

11:00 PANEL I

15:00 PANEL II

18:00 KEYNOTE LECTURE Manthia Diawara

19:30 MEDIA MINERALS: A SPOKEN-WORD
AND SOUND LECTURE

Biters (Larry Achiampong & David
Blandy) with notes by Zasha Colah

AT KULE THEATER

22:00 SCREENING Coz ov Moni (3 EUR)

TALK WITH FOKN BOIS

28 FEB 2015 (SAT)

AT ICI Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry

11:00 PANEL III

14:00 PANEL IV

17:00 PANEL V

1 MAR (SUN)

AT KULE THEATER (Day ticket 10 EUR)

12:00 FILM SCREENING I (3 EUR)

13:00 FILM SCREENING II (3 EUR)

15:00 FILM SCREENING III (3 EUR)

16:30 FILM SCREENING IV (3 EUR)

18:00 FILM SCREENING V (3 EUR)

WORKSHOPS

26 FEB 2015 13:00–16:00
AT PENINSULA

The discursive programme will open with two workshops on German colonial history and politics of remembrance which are designed for:

- **Pupils (13–18 years old)**

By Saraya Gomis and Adam Bahar

- **Students and others interested**
COUNTER NARRATIVES AND SELF-ORGANISED RESISTANCE

By Jamie Schearer (ISD Bund e.V.)

The workshop will explore the relevance of self-organized struggles. We will especially focus on alliances and their relevance of speaking from the margins. We will pay attention to the European Network Meetings for People of African Descent which are highlighting Black realities throughout Europe and thereby bringing together grassroots initiatives as well as European and international lobbying approaches. We will also look into how this Network is related to the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 and its aftermath.

To register for students' workshop and for more information please contact:

contact@savvy-contemporary.com

PERFORMANCES CONCERTS

Larry Achiampong, David Blandy, Qudus Onikeku, Ahmed Soura, Charles Sammons, Kelvin Sholar, Eric Vaughn

SCREENINGS

Filipa César, Theo Eshetu, Bodil Furu, FOKN Bois, Dagmawi Yimer

PANELISTS

Nana Adusei-Poku, Vanessa Agard-Jones, Akinbode Akinbiyi, Kader Attia, Bilgin Ayata, Bili Bidjocka, Friedrich von Bose, Silvy Chakkalal, Imara Limon, Sarah Mazouz, Renée Mussai, Kien Nghi Ha, Peggy Piesche, Anupama Rao, Dierk Schmidt, Alessandro Triulzi, Françoise Vergès

PANEL I

UNSILENCING (COLONIAL) HISTORIES
27 FEB 2015 (FRI) 11:00 AT ICI

If the seduction of North Atlantic universals has to do with their power to silence their own history, then our most immediate task is the unearthing of such silences. Only after bringing such silences to the fore will we know if and when claims to universal relevance and descriptive objectivity vanish into thin air.¹

(Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *The Otherwise Modern – Caribbean Lessons from the Savage Slot*)

PANELISTS Bili Bidjocka, Bilgin Ayata, Alessandro Triulzi

A forgotten or rather silenced page in German history, like the history of many other Western powers in varying degrees, is the history of colonialism. A fact made clear by the blind spots in school curricula and the amnesia in public memory. With Germanic colonial encounters that pre-date the Berlin Conference of 1884 e.g. Brandenburg in Groß Friedrichsburg (today Ghana), 1683–1717, and spreading their tentacles into the Pacific and Americas, as well as Germany's involvement in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, one could argue that these entangled histories lay an undeniable foundation to the German nation state. They constitute a crucial part of its history that has been

rendered trivial in favour of the occurrences in World War I and II, as well as the Berlin wall/ in the Cold War.

Looking beyond Germany, this panel will reflect on concepts of trivialisation of histories, through the prism of what Michel-Rolph Trouillot calls “‘silence of significance’ through a procedure of banalization.”² The panel will discuss examples and strategies of ‘silencing the past’, but also embark on strategies of “unearthing of such silences”³ to scrutinise them for their relevance, but also to rehabilitate the histories. Of utmost importance will be the role arts and culture can play in the unsilencing, unearthing or unmasking of histories.

PANEL II

CONTESTED GEOPOLITICS – BEFORE AND AFTER THE SCRAMBLE

27 FEB 2015 (FRI) 15:00 AT ICI

PANELISTS Dierk Schmidt, Kien Nghi Ha, Vanessa Agard-Jones

Relations and geopolitics between the West and the Non-West before and after the Berlin Conference, the political and economical effects of colonialism on the colonies and colonised will take centre stage in this panel. Starting from the production of borders, contested territories, the imposition of concepts of the nation-state, the Panelists are invited to exchange positions and knowledge on what Taylor and Overton described saying “geography is a social institution – it is made by human beings in social contexts – and as such its nature will always be contested.”⁴

But how did the creation of these territories shape the geopolitics of the West and the concomitant development of the global markets? How does this invention of such fictional social institutions still influence the geopolitics of the formerly colonised countries and the plantation territories? This panel sets off on a conceptual

journey of territory management and their moving from the colonial trade to the development industry and from the emergence of welfare systems to the fortification and militarization of Europe’s external borders, i.e. the panel will put a spotlight on the histories, politics, and economies of colonial geographies.

PANEL III

L’INTRUS – ON ENACTING AND ENACTED CITIZENSHIPS

28 FEB 2015 (SAT) 11:00 AT ICI

Once he has arrived, if he remains foreign, and for as long as he does so – rather than simply ‘becoming naturalized’ – his coming will not cease; nor will it cease being in some respect an intrusion: that is to say, being without right, familiarity, accustomedness, or habit, the stranger’s coming will not cease being a disturbance and perturbation of intimacy.⁵

(Jean Luc Nancy, *L’Intrus*)

PANELISTS Nana Adusei-Poku, Akinbode Akinbiyi, Peggy Piesche, Sarah Mazouz, Alessandro Triulzi

In a Europe of flourishing nationalism and racism, as it deals with issues like migration flow or border and identity politics, the necessity to understand concepts of citizenship is of increased importance. How elastic is the contemporary understanding of citizenship, especially in the context of various generations and waves of migrants and migration? Looking at the state of refugeeness, in order not to be in a constant state of limbo or a constant state of (be)coming, and especially with fears of being deported at any time, how can one talk about the “ethics of identity” of which Kwame Anthony Appiah speaks⁶? How can citizenship be performed, claimed, acted? How can we enable people to construct and live out an identity in

political systems, which have shaped people in the name of the better selves they might become and in the name of what Isaiah Berlin calls the dangerous ideal of “positive liberty”⁷?

This panel will get granular on the notion of citizenship by stretching, pluralizing, and re-humanising the concept of citizenship. From a performance point of view the Panelists will reflect on possibilities and methods of invoking, enacting citizenship or living (with) an enacted citizenship. Furthermore, drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy’s idea of “The Intruder” (which he uses to describe his transplanted heart as an intruder in his body that shifts the perception of his identity), the panel will analyse the construction and perceptions of the Other within society.

In me there is the intruder, and I become foreign to myself. If the rejection is very strong, I must receive treatments that will make me resist the human defense system mechanisms that produce it (...) But becoming foreign to myself does not reconcile me with the intruder. Rather, it would seem that a general law of intrusion is exhibited: there has never been only one. As soon as intrusion occurs, it multiplies, making itself known through its continually renewed internal differences.⁸

PANEL IV

L’INTRUS – THE OUTWARD TRAPPINGS OF SOVEREIGNTY

28 FEB 2015 (SAT) 14:00 AT ICI

The essence of neo-colonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.⁹

(Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of imperialism*, 1965)

PANELISTS Kader Attia, Anupama Rao, Françoise Vergès

Nkrumah starts his 1965 seminal critique with the claim that “neo-colonialism of today represents imperialism in its final and perhaps its most dangerous stage.” He was right about the ‘danger’ and wrong about the ‘final’, as imperialism and neo-colonialism have mutated into conjoined twins.

The last decade has seen an increase in political or economical intrusions by Western countries in Africa – often executed under the pretext of democratic liberation through ‘revolutions’ or economical collaboration. Efforts aimed at toppling inconvenient governments and to secure exclusive access to the continent’s resources. Even the ‘outward trappings of international sovereignty’ have been trampled upon, as it was the case with the French-led “Operation Harmattan” in Libya supported by the international community, in Ivory Coast, Central African Republic or Mali, or the case of Israel in Palestine. A new wave of a scramble to ‘get a place in the sun’ is on the move.

This panel will focus on the poetics of intrusion not only from a socio-economical perspective but also from a cultural one, reflecting on the role of culture in both combating and perpetrating imperialism and neo-colonialism in African nations. As Kenyan novelist and cultural theorist Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o stressed in his collection of essays about African language and literature “Decolonising the Mind” (and hitherto was Fanon’s idea of rejection of the colonizers’ linguistic and cultural forms as a precondition for achieving “true” freedom), the resistance to neo-colonial mentality and to colonial alienation pass also through cultural, artistic and linguistic self determination and independence, through practices of mental decolonisation.

PANEL V

HOW TO READ BETWEEN THE LINES OR A BRIEF HISTORY OF THINGS THAT ARE NOT MINE – ON COLONIALISM AND ETHNOLOGIC COLLECTIONS 28 FEB 2015 (SAT) 17:00 AT ICI

PANELISTS Renée Mussai, Silvy Chakkalakai,
Imara Limon, Friedrich von Bose

It should be common knowledge that most of Western ethnology as a discipline and ethnological museum owe their establishment to the colonial ambitions and structures set up in the colonised worlds. This panel will explore the museums attempt to resolve problems around representation of non-western cultures and the relationship, the consequences and future of colonial collections in ethnological museums in the West.

The maintaining of art and artefacts in archives, collections and museums in the 21st century poses an immense challenge: Recent debates on restitution and provenance research are shedding light on the explosive topic of looted art during the holocaust and Second World War. Negotiations between Germany, Poland, Russia and others about the repatriation of looted art are ongoing. What about objects 'bought', 'borrowed' or plundered during colonial rule? Which are the prevalent recent political and social discourses on restitution? How can the epistemic drainage that results from the 'appropriation' of these objects be mapped and theorised? How can we address counter-narratives of ethnologic objects and how can we resist the display of otherness that ethnological museums perform?

In this context the panel will address cultural large-scale projects like the Humboldt-Forum, asking why and how old structures as well as objects are uncritically adopted and moved outside of their respective contexts, and how "transforming museum practice and active

intervention in the framing, the interpretation, and the ownership of cultural heritage is crucial for dealing with the colonial past in the present"¹⁰. A spotlight will be put on alternative existing and future art and culture models that propose a counter-discourse or counter-structure to existing ethnologic museum curatorial practices.

- ¹ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *The Otherwise Modern – Caribbean Lessons from the Savage Slot*, in: Bruce M. Knauft. 2002. *Critically Modern: Alternatives, Alterities, Anthropologies*, Indiana University Press (pp.220–237).
- ² ibid
- ³ ibid
- ⁴ Taylor, P.J. and M. Overton. 1991. *Further Thoughts on Geography and GIS: A Preemptive Strike?* in: *Environment and Planning* 23/8 (pp.1087–1094).
- ⁵ Jean-Luc Nancy. 2000. *L'Intrus*, Paris: Galilée (trans. by Susan Hanson *L'Intrus*, in: CR: *The new centennial review* 2002, Vol. 2/3 (pp.1–15).
- ⁶ Kwame Anthony Appiah, 2005. *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton, University Press.
- ⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *Two Concepts of Liberty* in *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969, 118–72.
- ⁸ ibid
- ⁹ Kwame Nkrumah. 1965. *Neo-Colonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*, London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd.
- ¹⁰ Imara Limon, *Owning, Framing, Claiming: An Intervention in the Practice of Ethnological Museums*.

SCREENINGS

FILM SCREENING I

Filipa Cesar: *Cacheu* (2012) 10:14min

Conakry (2013)10:43

Followed by a discussion with the artist

FILM SCREENING II

Dagmawi Yimer: *Va' Pensiero Itinerant stories*

(2013) 55:37min

FILM SCREENING III

Theo Eshetu: *Africanized* (2002), 28:49min

Followed by a discussion with the artist

FILM SCREENING VI

Bodil Furu: *Code Miners* (2014), 45:24min

Followed by a discussion with the artist

FILM SCREENING V

FOKN Bois: *Coz Ov Moni 2 (FOKN revenge)* (2013), 63:00min