

CONTEXT

2010 and 2011 mark the 50th anniversary of the independence of 22 African countries. To commemorate this anniversary and to mark the occasion of the third EU-Africa Summit, the European Commission and the Palais des Beaux Arts (Centre for Fine Arts), in collaboration with the African Union, launched a multi-disciplinary and itinerant cultural project: "Visionary Africa: Art at Work". This initiative is the extension and the development in Africa of the "Visionary Africa" festival held in Brussels (Summer 2010). This project focuses on the importance of culture and creativity as development tools and is directly in line with the Brussels Declaration by Artists and Cultural Professionals. It includes an itinerant urban exhibition of contemporary African artistic practices, artists' residencies and workshops.

The exhibition was previewed in Tripoli (Libya) in conjunction with the European Union-Africa Summit (November 29, 2010). It began to travel to different African capitals at the start of 2011, beginning with Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), followed by Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). It features some 30 reproductions of works of art created by contemporary African artists, taken from the works presented in the exhibitions of the "Visionary Africa" festival in the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels. The idea for this project was put forward during the international colloquium "Culture and Creativity as Vectors for Development", organized by the European Commission in April 2009.



Muse Nxumalo, *Alternative-kidz*.
Bongani Msiza, Durban, 2008



Jodi Bieber, *Come hang out with us*, c.
1996. © Jodi Bieber, courtesy Goodman
Gallery



Zineb Sedira, *The lovers*, 2008.
© Zineb Sedira, courtesy galerie
Kamel Mennour

ART AT WORK: WHAT IS IT?

My concept for these pavilions is based on the notion that they represent a molecular unit for the design of an art space. Each pavilion is intended to be self-sufficient (they could not be rendered simpler without becoming ineffective), and each provides a very direct way of intervening in the public realm to make new art accessible to a wider audience. The reason for working at this level is that it is between the state, which provides institutional spaces, and the commercial market with its private galleries. For the state, art is a political project, focused on issues of culture and identity, while for galleries, art is about money and value: in either case, art practice is restricted. Our idea is to talk about art and work, with the intention of supporting civil society in a wide range of locations.

David Adjaye,
co-curator of the exhibition and designer of the pavilion

What we plan to show within this structure, this tool, are moments. One moment will be called yesterday, a second today, and a third tomorrow. It goes without saying that these moments blend into one another. For a formal description, yesterday is a space composed of photographs. What better to situate, with the illusion they give of reality, those stated moments? A black and white photograph calls the 1960s to mind, and you are immediately transported elsewhere. I am thinking, for example, of the amazing photo of Nelson Mandela sparring on a rooftop. This image can be a symbol for all sorts of things: of Mandela's fights, or of Africa's many struggles, many bouts. There will also be the spaces for the local communities to intervene and bring their contribution to the project.

Simon Njami,
co-curator of the exhibition and moderator of the workshops

Face2face: Ethiopian Contemporary Arts

Ethiopian section, presented by guest-curator Leo Lefort (the Atelier, Addis Ababa).

Facing Each Other
Opposite Each other
Across from Each Other

Artists: Tewodros Hagos, Tamrat Gezahagne, Michael Tsegaye, Mulugeta Tafesse, Behailu Bezabih, Ermias Kifleyessus, Mulugeta Gebrekidan.

VISIONARY AFRICA

ART *at* WORK

CONTEMPORARY ART IS ABOUT FREEDOM,
CRITICAL GAZE AND SOCIAL INVENTION

