

FALL 2023 - SPRING 2024

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THE AFRICA INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

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جامعة
الدراسات
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GLOBAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER
FALL 2023 - SPRING 2024
SHARJAH, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Located in Sharjah, UAE, Global Studies University (GSU), established by Emiri Decree in 2023 under His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah.



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PRESIDENT & CHANCELLOR



Hoor Al Qasimi

Hoor Al Qasimi is President of Global Studies University and has been instrumental in shaping its vision, beginning with the establishment of The Africa Institute in 2018. Her leadership builds on a legacy of Afro-Arab intellectual exchange in Sharjah and reflects her commitment to fostering global academic and cultural dialogue. Following the founding of Global Studies University in 2023, she was appointed President, underscoring her role in guiding the institution's academic direction.

In addition to her work in education, Al Qasimi is President and founding Director of Sharjah Art Foundation, President and Director of the Sharjah Architecture Triennial, and head of the newly established Sharjah Creative Quarter. An artist and curator, she has played a central role in positioning Sharjah as a hub for contemporary art and is currently appointed as the Artistic Director for the 2026 edition of the Biennale of Sydney. In 2024, she was named the most influential figure in contemporary art by *ArtReview* magazine's prestigious Power 100, an accolade that recognizes her visionary leadership and significant contributions to the global cultural and creative sectors.



Salah M. Hassan

Salah M. Hassan is the Chancellor of Global Studies University (GSU) and Dean of The Africa Institute (GSU), Sharjah, where he also teaches as Professor of African Art History and Visual Studies. He has served as Director of The Africa Institute since its founding in 2018.

Additionally, Hassan is Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences in Africana Studies, Director of the Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM), and Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at Cornell University, USA.

An acclaimed art critic, curator, and editor, Hassan is co-founder of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* and has curated major international exhibitions, including retrospectives of Gavin Jantjes and Kamala Ibrahim Ishag. His scholarly publications span African modernism, diaspora, and Islamic visual cultures. A recipient of numerous fellowships and honors—including the College Art Association's Distinguished Professor Award in 2021—Hassan continues to shape global conversations around African and African diasporic art and intellectual production.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

INSTITUTIONAL AND ACADEMIC ANNOUNCEMENTS

SHARJAH RULER ISSUES DECREE ESTABLISHING GLOBAL STUDIES UNIVERSITY, INCLUDING THE AFRICA INSTITUTE

On September 17, 2023, His Highness Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah issued an Emiri decree to establish the “Global Studies University” in Sharjah. This non-profit academic institution aims to expand interdisciplinary education.

Under the decree, The Africa Institute, an interdisciplinary academic research think-tank dedicated to the study, research, and documentation of Africa and the African diaspora, will operate under the umbrella of Global Studies University. This decree will amplify the institute’s global reach and impact.

The decree stipulated that the Global Studies University would be headed by Her Excellency Sheikha Hoor Bint Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qasimi who is currently the President of Global Studies University, Sharjah.

According to the decree, Global Studies University will comprise specialized academic institutes. It currently includes The Africa Institute, established in 2018, and will soon establish the Asia Institute. Additional institutes focusing on the Americas, Europe, and Oceania are planned for future development.

This move underscores Sharjah’s commitment to academic excellence and cross-cultural dialogue, fostering a deeper understanding of global issues and connections.

HOOR AL-QASIMI APPOINTED AS THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF THE 25TH BIENNALE OF SYDNEY



Photograph: Daniel Boud

In a significant development for the global art scene, Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, President of The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, has been appointed as the Artistic Director of the prestigious 25th Biennale of Sydney, scheduled to take place from 7 March to 8 June 2026. Al Qasimi will collaborate with local communities, artists and academics, whilst drawing on her international network, to develop and realize the concept of the Biennale.

‘It is an honor and privilege to be nominated and then selected to be the Artistic Director of the 25th Biennale of Sydney, which I have been visiting for over a decade now. Sydney has a multicultural community at its core, with people from different cultures from across the world choosing and calling this vibrant city as their home. I’m interested in exploring the multifaceted cultures and perspectives within this city, working with local artists and communities, as well as bringing new voices to the Biennale... I have seen the developments over the years, including the amplification of Indigenous voices both local and global, which has made it an essential platform for rewriting art history;’ said Hoor Al-Qasimi.

Al Qasimi’s curatorial approach centres on the histories of each place and multidisciplinary programming, with a collaborative approach and emphasis on supporting experimentation and innovation in the arts. Over the past 20+ years, she has worked extensively with various mediums including film, music, dance, talks, publications and more, to bring together all forms of art in conversation. For the 25th Biennale of Sydney (2026), Al Qasimi will collaborate with local communities, artists and academics, whilst drawing on her own international network, to develop and realise the concept for the 2026 edition.

Barbara Moore, Chief Executive Officer, Biennale of Sydney said, “We are thrilled to welcome Hoor Al Qasimi as the Artistic Director for our 25th edition. Al Qasimi’s profound dedication to fostering international artistic and cultural exchange and her visionary approach to curatorial practice make her the perfect fit to lead the artistic direction of the Biennale of Sydney. Her commitment to amplifying diverse voices and engaging with local communities aligns seamlessly with our mission to create a platform where art brings people together to connect and learn from each other in meaningful ways.”

The Biennale of Sydney is a leading international contemporary art event. It plays an indispensable role in Australia’s engagement with the world, and a meaningful role in the life of the nation. For almost 50 years, the Biennale has been a unifying force in the Australian arts sector, embedding boldly creative art exhibitions and experiences in the everyday life of Sydney and putting the artistic excellence of Australia front and centre on the world stage.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE HOSTS A WORKSHOP TO REVIEW TEXTBOOKS FOR AFRICAN LANGUAGES



The Africa Institute, an interdisciplinary research institute based in Sharjah, UAE, held a two-day workshop on November 22-23, 2023 to review the draft textbooks for Amharic and Hausa languages.

The workshop was part of the institute's initiative to develop professionally designed, contextually relevant textbooks for African languages, especially Amharic and Hausa, which are currently lacking in the market. The institute's African Languages and Translation program, which offers courses in Arabic, Amharic, Hausa, and Kiswahili, has been testing the draft textbooks in its ongoing classes.

The African Languages and Translation program started in 2022 with pilot courses in Arabic, Amharic, Hausa, and Kiswahili. Since mid-October 2023, the program has been offering an 8-week course open to the public. The first cohort enrolled over 25 students and is open to resuming courses mid-February 2024. The Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) has licensed the program to conduct these courses and prospective students can choose between in-person and online classes.

Understanding the pivotal role of quality textbooks in language education, the Institute took the initiative to develop materials for these languages. A specialized reviewer for each language was featured in the workshop: Prof. Baye Yimam, Professor of Linguistics at Addis Ababa University for Amharic, and Dr. Abdulrahman Ado, Associate Professor of Hausa at Umaru Musa Yar'adua University for Hausa.

The main objectives of the workshop were to evaluate the progress, tackle the challenges, and plan for the creation of the subsequent 30 hours of content for both languages. The draft textbooks currently cover the beginner-level content for approximately 30 hours of instruction. Binyam Sisay Mendisu, Associate Director of The Africa Institute and Associate Professor of African Languages and Linguistics, organized the workshop and also led the Amharic textbook project in collaboration with Prof. Moges Yigezu of Addis Ababa University. Aliyu Mustapha Lawal, Lecturer of Hausa and Arabic in the African Languages and Translation program, spearheaded the Hausa textbook project.

Various faculty members from the institute, such as Bilal Al-Omar, Senior Lecturer of Arabic; Meg Arenberg, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature in the Department of Humanities and the African Languages and Translation Program also participated in the workshop and provided their valuable input. The workshop showcased the institute's commitment to advancing the study and teaching of African languages and cultures. It also reflected the institute's vision to serve as a think-tank and a postgraduate center that cultivates a new generation of thinkers in the humanities and social sciences.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE LAUNCHES FOUR LANGUAGE COURSES FOR BEGINNERS



In 2023, The Africa Institute proudly launched immersive language courses in Amharic, Hausa, Arabic, and Kiswahili, designed for non-native speakers. Offered through the African Languages and Translation Program and licensed by the Sharjah Private Education Authority, these eight-week courses began in mid-October 2023.

Admissions opened in September 2023 for beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. The courses provide learners with a deep understanding of less-commonly taught African languages and the diverse cultural landscapes of the UAE and Africa. Both virtual and in-person classes accommodate working professionals with flexible late afternoon schedules.

Associate Director Binyam Sisay Mendisu highlighted the program's focus on communicative competence through a Communicative Language Teaching approach, fostering cross-cultural understanding and linguistic proficiency. The courses are taught by experienced native or near-native instructors holding at least an MA degree in language education.

The four languages offered are:

- **Amharic:** Spoken by over 40 million in Ethiopia, vital for diplomats, scholars, and development professionals.
- **Arabic:** A global language essential for diplomacy and cultural studies across the Arab world.
- **Hausa:** A key West African language important for research and communication in West and Central Africa.
- **Kiswahili:** The lingua franca of East and Central Africa and an official African Union language.

The Africa Institute campus offers a modern learning environment with classrooms, a library, and event spaces, supporting its mission to nurture critical thinkers in African studies.

For more information, contact: languages@theafricainstitute.org

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE RECEIVES CAA APPROVAL TO LAUNCH INAUGURAL MA PROGRAM

The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU) in Sharjah, is pleased to announce that it has received confirmation from the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) in the UAE to start advertising its inaugural Master's (MA) program in Global African Studies. Scheduled to launch in January 2025, the program aims to cultivate a new generation of critical thinkers and professionals in African and African diaspora studies.

Our curriculum, the first of its kind in the UAE and the broader Gulf region, addresses crucial questions in Global Africa across humanities and social sciences, emphasizing a global perspective that transcends geographical and disciplinary boundaries.

The MA curriculum offers three specialized tracks: 1) Museum and Critical Heritage Studies; 2) Afro-Arab Relations; and 3) Diplomacy and Africa's International Relations.

Our interdisciplinary approach encompasses intellectual thought, the Indian Ocean world, the Muslim world, gender studies, feminist futures, and diaspora studies. The Africa Institute has assembled a faculty with the right expertise and diverse experiences, along with the agility to collaborate within, between, and across disciplines. Additionally, the program has successfully partnered with prominent scholars and US-based institutions such as Rutgers University and Cornell University.

Students will also have the unique opportunity to complete three language-learning semesters in their chosen African language, earning a certificate licensed by the Sharjah Private Education Authority upon completion.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE APPOINTS ADVISORY BOARD

The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, Sharjah, announces its Advisory Board, comprising internationally renowned scholars and leaders in their fields. This distinguished cohort will play a pivotal role in shaping the institute's strategic vision and fostering excellence in the study of Africa and its diaspora.

Advisory Board Members:



Ousseina D. Alidou

Distinguished Professor of Humane Letters in the School of Arts and Science, Rutgers University-New Brunswick



Naminata Diabate

Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, Cornell University, USA



Mamadou Diouf

Leitner Professor of African Studies, Columbia University, USA



Pamela Maseko

Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, Nelson Mandela University, South Africa



Eve M. Troutt Powell

Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of History, University of Pennsylvania, USA



Paul Tiyambe Zeleza

Senior Advisor for Strategic Initiatives, Howard University, USA



Dagmawi Woubshet

Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Endowed Term Associate Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania, US

Visit our website or scan the QR code to view full profiles of our Advisory Board members.



FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

As part of our ongoing commitment to academic excellence and global engagement, The Africa Institute has appointed a group of leading scholars for the 2024–2025 academic year. Their presence will expand our capacity to foster critical scholarship in African and African diaspora studies.



Grieve Chelwa

Associate Professor of Political Economy

Before joining The Africa Institute, Chelwa served as Director of Research at the Institute on Race, Power, and Political Economy at The New School. He was also a Senior Lecturer in Economics at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, where he directed the MBA program. His academic journey includes being the inaugural postdoctoral fellow at the Center for African Studies at Harvard University and a visiting postdoctoral fellow at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) at the University of the Witwatersrand. In addition, he is a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

Chelwa earned his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Cape Town, where he focused on the economics of tobacco control in Africa. His academic journey includes a Master's degree in Economics from the University of Cape Town and a Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Zambia.

Chelwa's research focuses on political economy, particularly its implications on the prospects for African economic development.

His scholarly contributions have appeared in prestigious journals, including the *Journal of Economic Literature*, *Applied Economics Letters*, *Social Science & Medicine*, *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, *Economy and Society*, *PLOS ONE*, *British Medical Journal*, *Energy Policy*, and the *South African Journal of Economics*, among others. His research has received support from notable foundations, including the Carnegie Foundation, the Gates Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, and the Open Society Foundations. He is a prolific commentator on African economic matters, with his insights published in prominent media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Bloomberg*, *CGTN*, *BBC*, *Mail & Guardian*, *People's Dispatch*, *Lusaka Times*, and *Business Day*.



Zaynab El Bernoussi

Associate Professor of Political Science

Zaynab El Bernoussi is a distinguished scholar specializing in dignity politics, international relations, and the international political economy. She holds a Master in Finance (MiF) from Instituto de Empresa, a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences from the Catholic University of Louvain.

She has held several academic roles, including Visiting Assistant Professor of Social Research and Public Policy at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD). She also served as Assistant Professor and Program Director at Al Akhawayn University and Sciences Po Rabat. Additionally, she conducted research as a visiting scholar at renowned institutions such as Smith College and Harvard University.

El Bernoussi is an active contributor to academia and international relations. She currently serves as the Vice-Chair of the Global South Caucus of International Studies at the International Studies Association (ISA) and is a founding member of the Security in Context network. She is also affiliated with the Rabat Social Studies Institute (RSSI). Her contributions have been recognized through prestigious grants, including Fulbright awards in 2009-2011 and 2017, as well as Carnegie awards in 2014 and 2022. In 2015, El Bernoussi received the Arab Prize from the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) for her article titled "Postcolonial Politics of Dignity: From the 1956 Suez Canal Nationalization to the 2011 Revolution in Egypt." She also holds editorial board positions in *African Security* and *PS: Political Science & Politics* journals. Her book, *Dignity in the Egyptian Revolution*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2021. El Bernoussi's international experiences have taken her to various countries, including Morocco, the US, Spain, Italy, and China, enriching her insights in the field.

Her research concentrates on the politicization of dignity demands within the political evolution of the global South, with a specific focus on North Africa and the Middle East.

PROFESSORS-AT-LARGE

The Africa Institute appoints Professors-at-Large, a cadre of globally recognized intellectuals from institutions such as Brown University, Stellenbosch University, and Addis Ababa University. They will contribute through periodic engagements in teaching, seminars, and collaborative research endeavors.

Professors-at-Large:



Barrymore Anthony Bogues

Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and Africana Studies, Brown University, USA



Margo Natalie Crawford

Department Chair and Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania, USA



Matthew S. Hopper

Professor of History, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, USA

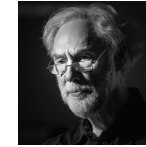


Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela

Professor and South African National Research Foundation's Research Chair in Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma; Director of the Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest (AVReQ), Stellenbosch University, South Africa



Fouad Makki, Director of the Polson Institute for Global Development; Associate Professor in the Department of Global Development, Cornell University, USA



Terence Smith, Emeritus Professor of Art History, University of Sydney; Andrew W. Mellon Emeritus Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory, University of Pittsburgh



Moges Yigezu Woube, Associate Professor of Linguistics, Department of Linguistics and Philology, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia



Munther Younes, Reis Senior Lecturer in Arabic Language and Linguistics; Director of the Arabic program in the Department of Near Eastern Studies, Cornell University, USA

Visit our website or scan the QR code to view full profiles of our Professors-at-large



FACULTY NEWS

PUMLA GOBODO-MADIKIZELA, THE AFRICA INSTITUTE'S PROFESSOR-AT- LARGE, WINS 2024 TEMPLETON PRIZE

Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, Professor-at-Large at The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, received the 2024 Templeton Prize in recognition of her pioneering work on trauma and forgiveness in post-apartheid South Africa. Her influential model of social healing, known as "the reparative quest," offers significant insights into reconciliation and human transformation after conflict.

As the South African National Research Foundation Chair in Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma, and Director of the Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest at Stellenbosch University, Professor Gobodo-Madikizela's research has shaped global discourse on social justice and healing. Her acclaimed publications include *A Human Being Died that Night* and *Memory, Narrative, and Forgiveness*.

Reflecting on her journey, Professor Gobodo-Madikizela emphasizes the transformative potential inherent in human experiences. "My research is based on the possibility of human transformation, on probing deeper to understand the conditions necessary to restore the values of what it means to be human—to want to preserve the dignity and life of the other," she states.

The Templeton Prize, established in 1972 by Sir John Templeton, celebrates breakthroughs in understanding religion, spirituality, and human purpose. Professor Gobodo-Madikizela's award affirms her standing as a leading voice in fostering healing and reconciliation worldwide.

The Africa Institute congratulates Professor Gobodo-Madikizela on this prestigious honor and looks forward to her continued contributions to scholarship and society.

MEG ARENBERG WINS PRESTIGIOUS TRANSLATION AWARD FOR ZANZIBARI NOVEL



In a notable achievement for African literature, Meg Arenberg, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), has been selected as one of the top ten recipients of the 2024 PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant. Arenberg's expertise lies in African languages and translation. She has been recognized for her ongoing translation project of Zanzibari novelist Ali Hilal Ali's Kiswahili masterpiece, *Mmeza Fupa*, which was awarded the Safal-Cornell Kiswahili Prize for African Literature in 2017. The English rendition of the novel, titled *Swallower of Secrets*, is poised to offer English-speaking audiences a window into the rich literary landscape of East Africa.

Mmeza Fupa holds a distinguished place in Kiswahili literature, having been listed among the 23 Notable Kiswahili Novels by Brittle Paper in 2020. Arenberg's translation promises to capture the essence of Ali Hilal Ali's narrative, delving into themes of friendship, kinship, migration, and the evolving dynamics of modern life in East Africa. The judges of the PEN/Heim Translation Fund Grant commended Arenberg for her adept portrayal of the characters and the vibrant setting of the fictional East African city depicted in the novel.

Arenberg and novelist Ali Hilal Ali had the opportunity to showcase their work at the Zanzibar Book Fair in 2023, where they read excerpts from *Mmeza Fupa* and its English translation, *Swallower of Secrets*, further highlighting the significance of their collaboration in bridging linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Arenberg's translation efforts highlight the value of cultural exchange and linguistic representation. They also prompt introspection regarding the role of literary institutions in navigating complex geopolitical realities.

SURAFEL W. ABEBE CO-EDITS FIRST VOLUME OF 'THE IMAGINED NEW' (OR WHAT HAPPENS WHEN HISTORY IS A CATASTROPHE?)

Surafel W. Abebe, Assistant Professor of Performance Studies and Theory at The Africa Institute, has played a key role in co-editing the publication *The Imagined New: What Happens When History is a Catastrophe?* In addition to his editorial work, Abebe contributed a chapter titled "Re-excavating the Present: Inserting Embodied Stories in Ethiopia's Transitional Time-Space."

This collaborative endeavor, edited by Surafel Wondimu Abebe alongside Anthony Bogues, Leora Farber, and Zamansele Nsele, represents a partnership between the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice (CSSJ) at Brown University and the Visual Identities in Art and Design Research Centre (VIAD) at the University of Johannesburg (UJ).

The Imagined New | Working through Alternative Archives is envisioned as a three-volume, open-access publication in which African and African diasporic art practices are framed as an alternative set of archives—spaces where intersecting histories, presents, and possible futures are (re)conceived, embodied, and performed as radical claims to Black life.

GRIEVE CHELWA JOINS 65 GLOBAL LEADERS IN URGING NEW YORK TO ADDRESS DEBT CRISIS

Grieve Chelwa, Associate Professor of Political Economy at The Africa Institute, joined 65 global leaders—including Gordon Brown, Winnie Byanyima, and Mark Ruffalo—in calling on the New York State Legislature to pass the Sovereign Debt Stability Act. The proposed legislation seeks to reform debt restructuring for low- and middle-income countries by curbing predatory creditor practices and introducing fairer mechanisms.

“I am proud to join 65 leaders, including former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, head of UNAIDS Winnie Byanyima, actor Mark Ruffalo and former presidents and prime ministers in signing this letter urging the state of New York to pass the Sovereign Debt Stability Act. A big chunk of sovereign debt, including Zambia’s, is governed by New York Law and the current law makes it easy for private creditors to exploit poor countries during debt restructuring,” said Professor Chelwa.

“The Sovereign Debt Stability Act, if passed, will restore balance and provide for orderly, timely, fair, and just debt restructuring processes, especially for the poorest countries who also tend to have the least amount of power in the global financial system,” adds Professor Chelwa.

The proposed Act seeks to curb the predatory practices of ‘vulture funds’ and ensure fair debt restructuring. It has garnered support from diverse sectors, including climate advocates like Christiana Figueres and Bill McKibben, who recognize the interconnectedness of sovereign debt and climate crises.

FORMER FELLOW AND ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER NAMINATA DIABATE NAMED AMONG TOP AFRICAN SCHOLARS

Naminata Diabate, a former Ali A. Mazrui Senior Fellow and current advisory board member at The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), has been named one of the “10 African scholars to watch in 2024” by The Africa Report, a leading publication on African affairs.

Diabate’s recognition speaks to her continued impact as a scholar, both regionally and globally. During her time as a senior fellow, she contributed to The Africa Institute’s vibrant intellectual community and continues to shape its scholarly mission through her role on the advisory board. As The Africa Report notes, “From Accra to Tokyo, Harare to Washington, the continent’s pool of research experts, lecturers and other scholars have been making life-changing decisions that help change the world every day.”

Currently Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Cornell University, Diabate is a prominent scholar of gender, sexuality, race, biopolitics, and neoliberalism in African and African diaspora literatures, cultures, and media.

Her research spans novels, oral traditions, social and digital media, journalism, and visual culture, engaging African, Black American, Afro-Hispanic, and Caribbean contexts. Her most recent work on erotic pleasure, queer expression, and defiant disrobing has appeared in African Studies Review, Research in African Literatures, Interventions, Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art, and other publications.

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY PROGRAMMING

SEMINARS

The Africa Institute hosts a series of public seminars featuring faculty, scholars, fellows, and more.

Through these lectures and workshops, the Institute reaffirms its mission as a center for the study and research of Africa and its diaspora—and its commitment to training a new generation of critical thinkers in African and African Diaspora studies.

GENRES OF CAPTIVITY: GENDER, PUNISHMENT AND HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE AFRICAN POST COLONY

Tuesday, September 19, 2023

Faculty: Hannah Elsis, Assistant Professor of History and Gender Studies, New York University, Abu Dhabi, and is a Senior Research Fellow, King's College in the Department of Political Economy

Moderator: Faisal Garba Muhammed, Associate Professor of Sociology, Migration, and Mobility, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

Accounts of modern African and Middle East history are filled with power struggles, sovereignty disputes, and freedom movements. Prisons play a central role in these narratives. Postcolonial history often includes 'large waves of arrests,' 'imprisoned intellectuals,' and 'repression campaigns,' but what happens next is rarely explored.

Power contests continue beyond arrests; life doesn't stop at prison gates. That is, prisons do not spell the death of politics or, even necessarily, of bodies. If anything, the space of the prison was a pivotal site of subject formation, power contestation, and cultural production in Egypt and across postcolonial Africa and the Middle East. Prisons, then, might be reconstrued alongside such spaces as the market, the coffeehouse, and the mosque as spatial anchors of African and Middle East history. So, what do prisons do? What kind of social and political order do they produce and reproduce?

Much is made and unmade in prison: political subjectivities, networks and organizations, cultural production, disciplinary regimes, hegemonic orders, and normative genders. Carcerality is productive: of self, society, and state. Of history, too; epistemological captivity cannot be parsed out from these processes. What is to be gained by imputing postcolonial technologies of governance, often coercive, to wholesale importation

by colonial administrators, or ‘aping’ adaptation by modernizing elites? How do the broader categories of captivity and confinement change our origin stories of penal history, and therefore necessarily of global state and subject formation? Can a new carceral historiography drive postcolonial politics of life and freedom?

Speaker

Professor Elsis is a historian specializing in North Africa and Southwest Asia, with a particular focus on the *Global Mangrove Archipelago*. Her research explores global histories of power, mobility, and subjectivity within capitalist, carceral, racialized, and gendered regimes. She currently serves as an Assistant Professor of History and Gender Studies at New York University Abu Dhabi and is a Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Political Economy at King’s College London.

From 2020 to 2022, Professor Elsis was a Junior Research Fellow at Pembroke College, University of Cambridge. She now serves as a Distinguished Scholar, Bye-Fellow, and affiliate Lecturer in the History Faculty there and is an Advisory Board Member of the Centre for Gender Studies. Previously, she was an Assistant Professor in Middle East History at King’s College London from 2018 to 2020 while completing her doctorate.

Professor Elsis earned her Ph.D. in History from Merton College, Oxford University, in 2020. Her thesis was honored with the Malcolm Kerr and Leigh Douglas awards for best dissertation in Middle East Studies from the Middle East Studies Association of North America (MESA) and the British Society for Middle East Studies (BRISMES).

Her upcoming projects include two books set for release in 2024: *Lovers in the Citadel: Prisons, Gender, and Other Architectures of Subjection in Egypt* (Stanford University Press) and *Behind the Sun: Prison Writing and Abolition in an Egyptian Century* (Verso). She is also developing a multifaceted project featuring a documentary film (*Mangle*), a compilation album (*African Intelligence*), an exhibition (*Mangue Bit*), and a global history book titled *Chromesthesia: Sonic Rights, Labour, and Technology in the Global Mangrove Archipelago*.



CONTESTING PRECARIETY FROM THE MARGINS: THE POLITICS OF DIGNITY AND CITIZENSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA AND MOROCCO

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Faculty: Zaynab El Bernoussi, Visiting Professor, New York University Abu Dhabi

Moderator: Emery Kalema, Assistant Professor of History, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

This seminar will scrutinize the politics of dignity and citizenship in two contrasting postcolonial African contexts. Drawing from the cases of Tighza, Morocco, and Limpopo, South Africa, the presentation will highlight how concerns related to dignity and citizenship become catalysts for mobilization among marginalized populations. Despite the existence of social welfare and assistance programs, the lecture argues that authorities tend to undermine or dismiss the dignity and citizenship concerns of

the poor, leading to varying forms of resistance and engagement. The presentation will showcase how this dismissal often triggers alternative forms of governmentality, where the youth accentuate and perform these neglected concerns, thereby underscoring the limitations of conventional political mechanisms, especially in advanced economies of the South.

Speaker

Zaynab El Bernoussi is a distinguished scholar specializing in dignity politics, international relations, and the international political economy. Her research concentrates on the politicization of dignity demands within the political evolution of the global South, with a specific focus on North Africa and the Middle East. She holds a Master in Finance (MiF) from Instituto de Empresa, a Master of Public Administration (MPA) from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences from the Catholic University of Louvain.

Before her tenure at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD), El Bernoussi held roles as an Assistant Professor and Program Director at Al Akhawayn University and Sciences Po Rabat. She also conducted research as a visiting scholar at esteemed institutions like Smith College and Harvard University. In 2021, El Bernoussi published her first book, *“Dignity in the Egyptian Revolution: Protest and Demand during the Arab Uprisings,”* through Cambridge University Press. El Bernoussi actively contributes to academia and international relations. She serves as the Vice-Chair of the Global South Caucus of International Studies at the International Studies Association (ISA) and is a founding member of the Security in Context network. She is affiliated with the Rabat Social Studies Institute (RSSI). Her contributions have been recognized through prestigious grants including Fulbright (2009-2011 and 2017) and Carnegie (2014 and 2022) awards. In 2015, El Bernoussi received the Arab Prize from the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS) for her article titled *“Postcolonial Politics of Dignity: From the 1956 Suez Canal Nationalization to the 2011 Revolution in Egypt.”* She also holds editorial board positions in African Security and PS: Political Science & Politics journals. El Bernoussi has resided in Morocco, the US, Spain, Italy, and China, adding to the depth of her international insights.

“SHE SPEAKS OUR LANGUAGE”: TONI MORRISON’S DIASPORIC RESONANCE

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Faculty: Philathia Bolton, Toni Morrison Senior Fellow in African Diaspora Literature and Cultural Studies at The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Moderator: Elizabeth W. Giorgis, Professor of Art History, Theory, and Criticism, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

This lecture, based on two works in progress, examines how Toni Morrison’s literature has resonated across the diaspora, particularly among marginalized communities. The phrase ‘she speaks our language,’ borrowed from Philathia Bolton’s forthcoming chapter in *‘African-American Literature and Culture in Transition’* (Cambridge University Press), originated from a comment made by David Carrasco about an audience in México preparing to hear Toni Morrison. Faced with language barriers, the audience was asked if they desired an interpreter. Their adamant response was a shout from their seats toward the stage: ‘She speaks our language.’

Bolton argues that the visibility Morrison offers to marginalized communities, along with the sense of intimacy she creates in the reader’s interaction with her work, materializes a common diasporic and cultural sensibility. This sensibility parallels the experience of Black people in the U.S. when reading Morrison. The lecture delves into how Morrison achieves this effect and what it is about her storytelling that allows for multiple interpretations and engagement.

Central to the quest to ‘read’ Morrison is her vernacular disposition — her deliberate choice to speak from a racialized perspective with a sovereign, authorial voice that denies the white gaze. ‘She Speaks Our Language’ ultimately encourages the audience to contemplate how Morrison’s global resonance illustrates much of what she articulated in her Nobel Lecture: ‘[Language’s] vitality...lies in its ability to depict the actual, imagined, and potential lives of its speakers, readers, and writers.

Although it sometimes displaces experience, it is not a substitute for it. It reaches toward the place where meaning may reside.' Morrison's works evoke diverse responses from readers, affirming that storytelling creates its own 'language,' where meaning can be discovered among seemingly disparate groups who find common ground.

Speaker

Philathia Bolton, the inaugural Toni Morrison Senior Fellow in African Diaspora Literature and Cultural Studies at The Africa Institute, is an Associate Professor of English at The University of Akron in Ohio. Her research focuses on 20th-century African-American literature, the U.S. civil rights movement, and critical race studies.

EDGES OF EGYPT, INTERIORS OF AFRICA

Tuesday, November 7, 2023

Faculty: Hanan Kholoussy, Associate Professor of History at The American University in Cairo

Moderator: John Thabiti Willis, Associate Professor of African History, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

This seminar presents Kholoussy's preliminary research on the history of the production and consumption of the modern beach in Egypt. In this context, beach tourism has surpassed cultural tourism in the land of the pyramids. The stark strips of sand along the Red and Mediterranean Seas have been transformed into microcosms of the nation, where power and resistance play out more freely, fluidly, and forcefully beyond the gaze and grasp of the centralized modern state and its urban centers. For both Egypt's local and foreign populations, the beach has become a significant space for cultural, sociopolitical, and economic interactions from the nineteenth century to the present day.

The seminar aims to trace the history of this process, exploring how, when, and why Egypt's beach development occurred. It also raises the question of how our understanding of the modern nation changes when viewed in relation to its coastal edges. Given the public debates

about 'Afrocentricism' in contemporary Egyptian popular discourse, Kholoussy's objective is to examine the importance of situating Egypt as part of Africa and highlighting its close ties and shared heritage.

Speaker

Hanan Kholoussy earned a joint Ph.D. with distinction in History and Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies from New York University, as well as a joint B.S./M.A. with honors in Foreign Service and Arab Studies from Georgetown University.

She is the author of *For Better, For Worse: The Marriage Crisis That Made Modern Egypt* (Stanford University Press, 2010) and co-editor of *Domestic Tensions, National Anxieties: Global Perspectives on Marriage, Crisis, and Nation* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

Her published work includes several articles on marriage, gender, Islamic law, and Egyptian history. She is also a frequent media commentator on Egypt's marriage crisis.



STATE CYNICISM, VIOLENCE, DEATHS AND THE (IM)POSSIBILITY OF POLITICS IN A ZIMBABWEAN MINING TOWN

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

Faculty: Melusi Nkomo is an Associate Research Scholar at the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS), Princeton University in the USA

Moderator: Grieve Chelwa, Associate Professor of Political Economy, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

In the mines around the impoverished townships of Zimbabwe's gold-mining city and district of Kwekwe in the country's centre, the general population, and the youth in particular, face regular untimely deaths or near-death experiences. Several factors, including orchestrated or opportunistic violence/thuggery, decrepit and damaged infrastructure, mudslides, explosions, mining shaft collapses, pandemics of alcohol and drugs, poisoning, and the general fragility of life owing to illnesses, can be blamed for this. The origins, symptoms, and repercussions of precarious existence in these townships are always terrible, yet no longer surprising. This seminar examines the relationship between the state and society in areas characterized by regular loss of life and immense social suffering. It contends that these experiences create an environment that fosters a particularly cynical approach to politics by the state, as well as the occasional opportunistic exercise of state sovereignty. Equally, these experiences mediate the impossibility of a collective politics that can change the situation for the better for the largely impoverished and politically dejected poor communities. The seminar is based on a working paper on an ongoing ethnography of politics in Zimbabwe's artisanal and small-scale mining regions.

Speaker

Melusi Nkomo is an Associate Research Scholar at the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies (PIIRS) at Princeton University, USA. An anthropologist, his research focuses on African politics, the African state, labor and work, and their intersections with cultural and social activities, particularly in extractive mining environments.

From 2019 to 2023, he held a postdoctoral fellowship in Political Geography at the University of Zürich. He was also a Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)-supported Visiting Doctoral Fellow at Harvard University's Center for African Studies.

Dr. Nkomo earned his Ph.D. in Anthropology and Sociology from The Geneva Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in 2018, an MA in Political Science from the University of Osnabrück, Germany, in 2012, and a BSc in Social Work from the University of Zimbabwe in 2008.

LIBERATED AFRICANS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WORLD, 1808-1897

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

Faculty: Yonas Ashine Demisse, Assistant Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Addis Ababa University

Moderator: John Thabiti Willis, Associate Professor of African History, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

Between 1808 and 1897, the British Royal Navy captured more than 1,500 slave ships and removed over 200,000 enslaved Africans from vessels in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean. At least 22,000 of these Africans were captured aboard slave ships in the Indian Ocean. British officials referred to these captives as "liberated Africans," but they were neither returned to their homes nor released near their place of capture. Instead, they were transported to the nearest court of adjudication where the slave ships were condemned, naval officers were awarded "prize money," and the captives could be placed into contracts for indenture in British

colonies. Although the Act of Abolition (1807) envisioned indenture as a method to provide training in marketable skills, in reality, most liberated Africans were placed into menial positions as agricultural laborers or domestic servants for up to 14 years.

In this new book project, Professor Hopper explores the lives of African captives removed from slave ships in the Indian Ocean. He examines the collective experience of formerly enslaved people who lived through the trauma of enslavement, dislocation, and an oceanic journey, only to have that journey interrupted and transferred to another foreign ship, carrying them to another foreign destination. Liberated Africans experienced traumas of extraordinary scale, and survivors demonstrated extraordinary resilience. In the Indian Ocean, liberated Africans were transported to places such as Cape Town, Mauritius, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Aden, the Seychelles, and Bombay, where their labor was in demand.

This presentation provides an overview of the book project, which explores the daily lives, labor, education, mobility, cultural expressions, family lives, and deaths of liberated Africans. It delves into the ways they found measures of freedom and carved out independent spaces within a colonial environment to resist domination and make their own way in these Indian Ocean colonies. Building on his earlier work on globalization and the slave trade from East Africa to Arabia in the nineteenth century, in this new book project, Professor Hopper explores the lives of liberated Africans to demonstrate the complexities and paradoxes of British imperial policy toward liberation in the nineteenth century. Professor Hopper illustrates how, despite the intentions of abolitionists, the lives of freed slaves on these missions, in many ways, mirrored the lives of enslaved Africans elsewhere in the region. The project, therefore, offers lessons for contemporary humanitarian intervention.

Speaker

Matthew S. Hopper is a Professor of History at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. His research focuses on slavery and abolition in the Indian Ocean world. He is currently Ali Mazrui Senior Fellow in Global Africa Studies at The Africa Institute, Sharjah.



ABOLITION AND MANUMISSION IN EARLY 20TH CENTURY ETHIOPIA

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Faculty: Yonas Ashine Demisse, Assistant Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Addis Ababa University.

Moderator: Matthew S. Hopper, Ali A. Mazrui Senior Fellow in Global African Studies, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

The seminar explores the interaction between traditional manumission practices and modern international abolitionist approaches in early 20th-century Ethiopia. It shows that older normative attitudes to manumission, which were compatible with legal slave ownership, did not disappear when international pressures to abolish slavery stimulated the development of anti-slavery policies and legal reforms. Rather, the rationale of manumission was co-opted to serve a new abolitionist agenda expanding the already plural praxis of abolitionism in the region. The seminar will further deconstruct the argument in two parts.

Firstly, the research differentiates between the suppression of domestic slavery and the suppression of the slave trade, both deeply embedded

in the state's functioning. The traditional approach to manumission, rooted in the Law of Kings, didn't sever relations between the freed and their former masters. As Ethiopia faced the choice of aligning with international abolitionist norms or colonial occupation in the early 20th century, a campaign for new anti-slavery measures ensued. The second part focuses on this campaign, asserting that Ethiopian abolitionists appealed to nationalist sentiments, tying the freedom, survival, and sovereignty of modern Ethiopia to the liberation of household slaves. Household manumissions were encouraged to safeguard the nation's freedom from foreign dominance.

Despite firm laws against the slave trade and slavery, the persistent reliance on traditional manumission logic implied that pre-abolitionist social hierarchies endured until at least the 1970s. The research is grounded in a critical examination of the medieval legal source, the Law of Kings, and the 1924 abolitionist decree. It closely analyzes the writings of Ethiopian activists contributing to the Berhanenna Selam newspaper in the 1920s and 1930s. These activists were associated with the national antislavery NGO, Love and Service Association, advocating for abolition and domestic slave manumission.

In conclusion, the research argues that the abolition process in Ethiopia followed a unique path. International abolitionist ideas had to be negotiated with premodern methods of freeing slaves, aimed at advancing civilization and preserving the country's independence. In negotiating abolitionism as part of Ethiopia's political modernity, the slave trade and slave raiding were deemed aberrations and crimes, while household slave-owning persisted, provided that masters progressively manumitted slaves and adopted alternative forms of servitude. This conservative approach not only facilitated a gradual abolition process but also contributed to the suppression of slavery and its legacies in official discourse.

Speaker

Yonas Ashine Demisse is an Assistant Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Addis Ababa University. He is the author of *Slaves of State and Intellectuals of Development: A Genealogy of Development in Ethiopia* (Makerere Institute of Social Research, MISR Reviews, Kampala, Uganda, 2022) and co-author of the article

“Implications of Protest and Reform for Domestic Governance in Ethiopia,” published in the *Journal of Asian and African Studies*.

His research interests include political theory as well as the historical and comparative politics of state-society relations in and from Africa. Currently, he serves as Chairperson of the Department of Political Science and International Relations.

THE GENDERED DYNAMICS OF INTERNAL AFRICAN DIASPORAS IN MOROCCO

Thursday, April 4, 2024

Faculty: Maha Marouan, African feminist scholar, writer, and documentarian

Moderator: Faisal Garba Muhammed, Associate Professor of Sociology, Migration, and Mobility, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

Over the past thirty years, the global securitization of borders has transformed Morocco from a transit country into a host country for a significant number of documented and undocumented migrant women from West and Central Africa. The confluence of oppressive border control policies, the patriarchal nature of national and international legislation, along with the lack of access to safe housing, job security, and reproductive health, leaves migrant women vulnerable to a high risk of sexual violence, social and racial marginalization, trafficking, and disappearance.

Marouan's talk will focus on the gendered dynamics of internal African migration, exploring the subjectivities of West and Central African migrant women who are actively seeking autonomy, yet must negotiate oppressive migration policies and social and cultural practices that threaten their autonomy. She will examine the different forms of inequality they face, aiming to shed light on their daily lives, where they are often positioned in an ambiguous space between alienation and belonging, criminality and lawfulness. Marouan will utilize an Africanist

feminist lens to examine the racialization of migrant women, directly linked to the history of slavery and the stigmatization of blackness in Northern Africa. Simultaneously, she will employ a transnational feminist critique of global capitalism to scrutinize the exploitation of African migrant and refugee women as cheap labor. Her examination of migrant women's relationship with legislative and judicial systems of power also prompts an investigation into notions of legality versus illegality, forming the foundation of immigration law. She argues that the definition of a legal, law-abiding citizen with rights necessitates the creation of a category of people who are illegal, lawless, and without rights, resulting in a logic of disposability that renders many migrant women unworthy of rights.

Speaker

Maha Marouan is an African feminist scholar, writer, and documentarian. She is an Associate Professor of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, African American Studies, and African Studies at Pennsylvania State University, where she co-directs the African Feminist Initiative.

Her published works include *Witches, Goddesses, and Angry Spirits: The Politics of Spiritual Liberation in African Diaspora Women's Fiction* (Ohio University Press, 2013); the co-edited volume *Race and Displacement: Nation, Migration, and Identity in the Twenty-First Century* (University of Alabama Press, 2013); and the documentary *Voices of Muslim Women in the U.S. South* (Women Make Movies, 2015). Her short story "Shame," published in *Boston Review*, was nominated for the 2020 PEN America Award.

Her most recent publication is *Contemporary Notions of Race in Morocco: Blackness, Migration, and the Legacy of Slavery* (Jadaliyya, 2023). She is currently co-editing a special issue of *Feminist Formations* titled "Writing African Feminist Subjectivities" (forthcoming 2024).

Maha works extensively with the United Nations on Mediterranean migration and disappearances. She was a resident fellow at Harvard University's Weatherhead Center (2022–2023) and is currently a resident fellow at the New Institute program on Black Feminism in Hamburg, Germany.

AFRICAN TALE OF ANIMATION

Thursday, April 4, 2024

Faculty: Boukary Sawadogo, Associate Professor of Cinema Studies, City University of New York

Moderator: Idrissou Mora-Kpai, Okwui Enewzor fellow in Visual Culture, Performance Studies, and Critical Humanities, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

Recent animated media productions have brought global attention to animation in Africa. The Iwaju animated series was released this year to popular acclaim. Less than a year ago, the world of animation was swept by Kizazi Moto: Generation Fire, an anthology of ten afro-futurist episodes featuring Africa's talents in animation from several countries. Set in the neo-futuristic city of Lusaka, Zambia, around four secondary school superhero girls, Super Team 4 animated series was released by Netflix in 2023. The world is only now discovering African animation which has been steadily growing since the start of the twenty-first century, with the advent of digital technologies, allowing the animation medium, specifically computer animation to be appropriated by more storytellers. Even more significantly, the history of animation in Africa goes back to the 1910s when South Africa, United States, Europe, Japan, Argentina, and Australia were the early big players. An Artist's Dream (1915), a draw-toon by Harold Shaw, was the first animated short to be locally made in Africa. In addition to South Africa, other countries such as Egypt, Belgian Congo (Zaire, later renamed Democratic Republic of Congo), and Niger have been active in the history of African animation from the 1930s through the 1970s. The presentation aims to underline a longstanding history of animation on the continent against the backdrop of both the dearth of attention to Africa in animation studies and the marginalization of African film and media in the larger field of film and media studies globally.

The understudied history of animation in Africa must be engaged as a way to open lines of inquiry which could subsequently lead either to the emergence of a field of African animation studies or to the development of a subfield of African animation studies. Beyond

disciplinary considerations, the study of African animation provides new critical interventions into Africa's richly textured performance and visual cultures, the continent's encounters with the world, questions of racial and minority representations, and dialogues with Asian cultural productions. The lecture draws on the research of Boukary's current book project on African animation (History, Aesthetics, Theory, and Industry) and his own experiences in curating the Harlem African Animation Festival for years now.

Speaker

Boukary Sawadogo is an Associate Professor of Cinema Studies at the City University of New York's City College (Department of Media and Communication Arts) and the CUNY Graduate Center (French doctoral program and Certificate Program in Film and Media Cultures).

As a scholar of African cinema, he has authored five books, including two editions of his undergraduate textbook *African Film Studies: An Introduction* (2018 and 2022), *West African Screen Media: Comedy, TV Series, and Transnationalization* (Michigan State University Press, 2019), and *Les Cinémas Francophones Ouest Africains (1990–2005)* (Harmattan, 2013). He is currently working on a monograph on African animated film.

His research and teaching interests in African diasporas have also inspired audiovisual media productions such as the short documentary *Salut Y'all: African Teachers on the Bayou* (2013), which explores the personal and professional experiences of African teachers of French in Louisiana, and the web series *Aventure Africaine à New York* (African Adventures in New York), produced from 2016 to 2018. In addition, he authored *Africans in Harlem: The Untold New York Story* (Fordham University Press, 2022), a book examining historical and contemporary encounters between Africans and New York City's historically Black neighborhood of Harlem.



SOVEREIGNTY OUT OF SELF IN AFRO-DYSTOPIA

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Faculty: Joseph Tonda, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Omar Bongo University in Libreville, Gabon

Moderator: Emery Kalema, Assistant Professor of History, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

In this lecture, Joseph Tonda will develop the idea that Afro dystopia is the concept of “Black continent”, which is more than Africa or the “African continent”. It is a psychic reality, invisible on world maps, but whose reality is unquestioned by anyone. Its sovereignty is, from this perspective, “out of self” because it is the sovereignty of all those who do not doubt its reality and who have created it. To carry out his reflections, he will rely on several empirical examples, which come from his field research, but also from theoretical work.

Speaker

Joseph Tonda is Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Omar Bongo University in Libreville, Gabon. He is the author of several articles and books, including *Afrodystopie: la vie dans le rêve d'autrui* (Karthala, 2021), *The Modern Sovereign: The Body of Power in Central Africa* (Congo, Gabon) (Karthala 2005 / Seagull Books 2020), and *La Guérison divine en Afrique Centrale* (Congo, Gabon) (Karthala 2003).

SITES OF MATTERING IN JOHANNESBURG, KINSHASA, AND LAGOS

Wednesday, May 1, 2024, 2024

Faculty: Ruth Sacks, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Art, Design, and Architecture, University of Johannesburg

Moderator: Emery Kalema, Assistant Professor of History, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU)

Abstract

In this seminar, Ruth Sacks introduces her research practice as an artist and academic in Johannesburg, Kinshasa, and Lagos. She will reflect on the contributions of a visual arts perspective to interdisciplinary cultural studies, focusing on the politics of form and theories of materiality. Sacks discusses her work on postcolonial and colonial modernism through key sites and objects featured in her publications and exhibition practice, notably her recent monograph, *Congo Style* (2023), and artist book, *The Remaindering* (2022). A small selection of pivotal buildings and artworks from her recent and ongoing projects will be presented to illustrate the potential of experiential approaches in engaging with African visual culture. Drawing on examples from three major African metropolises, Sacks argues for the continued relevance of the African independence era in shaping responses to the challenges of living on a damaged planet.

Speaker

Ruth Sacks is an interdisciplinary scholar and artist whose first monograph, *Congo Style: From Belgian Art Nouveau to African Independence*, was published by Michigan University Press in 2023. She is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Johannesburg's Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture (FADA), Visual Art Department, and a Research Associate at the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WiSER). Sacks has exhibited widely as an artist, with recent exhibitions including *Style Congo* at CIVA Museum & Archive, Brussels.



FILM SCREENING + TALK

Film Screening + Talk showcases African and African diaspora films, programs and conversations with filmmakers, critics, scholars, and other experts.



TONI MORRISON FELLOWSHIP INAUGURATION PROGRAM

The Africa Institute hosted a two-day program celebrating the life and legacy of literary icon Toni Morrison on February 28–29, 2024, at The Africa Hall, Sharjah.

The event marked the inauguration of the Toni Morrison Senior Fellowship in African Diaspora Literature and Cultural Studies, and featured powerful film screenings and thought-provoking discussions.

Toni Morrison (1931–2019), a Nobel Prize-winning author, was a literary trailblazer whose profound works redefined American literature and explored themes of identity, race, and the human experience with unparalleled depth. Her legacy continues to resonate as a powerful voice for social justice and cultural understanding.

Inauguration of the Toni Morrison Senior Fellowship

The program highlighted The Africa Institute's launch of the prestigious Senior Fellowship in honor of Toni Morrison. The fellowship supports established scholars and independent thinkers who have made significant contributions to African and African Diaspora literature and cultural studies. The inaugural recipient of this fellowship is Philathia Bolton, Associate Professor of English at The University of Akron, Ohio.

“My being selected as the first scholar to have her research supported by the Toni Morrison Senior Fellowship brings me great joy and feels highly significant,” said Professor Bolton. “I will be a U.S. scholar from her home state of Ohio in a different cultural context of writing, researching, and speaking about her, this iconic person whose works resonated across the globe. I am humbled by this and feel most honored.”

Symposium and Film Screenings

The program spotlighted Morrison's artistic genius through the screening of two acclaimed documentaries:

Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am (2019 | 120 minutes)

Directed by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, this documentary offered an intimate exploration of Morrison's life and work, featuring interviews with Hilton Als, Angela Davis, Oprah Winfrey, and others.

The Foreigner's Home (2018 | 57 minutes)

Directed by Rian Brown and Geoff Pingree and produced by Ford Morrison, Toni Morrison's son, this film delved into her 2006 Louvre exhibition using exclusive footage and archival material to illuminate her insights on race, identity, and the transformative power of art.

Each screening was followed by discussions with invited scholars and critics, who reflected on Morrison's artistic vision and enduring influence.

Keynote Address

Farah Jasmine Griffin, William B. Ransford Professor of English and Comparative Literature and African American Studies, Columbia University

Speakers

Ford Morrison, Architect, Plasma Physics Laboratory, Princeton University

Margo Crawford, Edmund J. and Louise W. Kahn Professor of English, University of Pennsylvania

Riché Richardson, Professor of African American Literature, Cornell University

Manthia Diawara, University Professor of Comparative Literature and Cinema Studies, New York University

Philathia Bolton, Associate Professor of English, The University of Akron, Ohio, and Inaugural Toni Morrison Senior Fellow, The Africa Institute

The program offered an opportunity to revisit Morrison's timeless themes, engage in meaningful dialogue, and honor a literary figure whose work continues to inspire generations.

SCHOLARLY CONFERENCES

The Africa Institute hosts a dynamic set of annual and seasonal inter-disciplinary scholarly conferences and forums dedicated to the study, research, and documentation of Africa, its people, and its cultures.



REIMAGINING WATER MUSEUMS: TOWARDS RESILIENT HYDRO TRAJECTORIES

The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, in partnership with SciCommX, hosted the inaugural event *Reimagining Water Museums: Towards Resilient Hydro Trajectories* on February 6, 2024, at The Africa Institute Auditorium.

As the first public event of the AQUAMUSE project, the symposium featured roundtable discussions with researchers and museum experts on climate risks in river basins, decolonizing museum collections, community memory, and the role of the arts in visualizing just and sustainable water futures. Funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Water and Development Partnership Programme, AQUAMUSE explores museum-making in three river basins: the Blue Nile, the Volta in Burkina Faso, and the Sunderbans/Ganga in India.

The project envisions water museums—both physical and digital—as spaces that preserve liquid heritage while reconnecting marginalized communities to water in all its dimensions. The event offered a platform to exchange ideas and explore inclusive approaches to shaping resilient water futures.

‘COLORFUL THREADS’ SYMPOSIUM: BRIDGING OCEANS THROUGH ARTISTIC NARRATIVES OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM

In the culmination of scholarly depth and cultural vibrancy, The Africa Institute recently concluded its third symposium as part of its four-part series dedicated to Africa’s Indian Ocean rim, titled “Colorful Threads: The Interwoven Worlds of Art and Culture in the Western Indian Ocean.” The symposium, held from 14-16 December 2023 in Sharjah, UAE, explored diverse facets, from feminism and cinema to artmaking, echoing the dynamic complexities of the Indian Ocean rim.

This four-part series falls under the theme, “*Thinking the Archipelago: Africa’s Indian Ocean Islands*,” which is part of The Africa Institute’s year-round initiative, “Country-Focused Season,” dedicated to developing and supporting original scholarship and programming that expands understanding of African and African diaspora studies among the academic community and the broader public.

Following successful seasons focused on Ethiopia and Ghana in 2019 and 2022, respectively, the Indian Ocean region was chosen for its role as the ‘cradle of globalization’ and ‘center stage’ in the contemporary multipolar world. The Indian Ocean season thus far has completed two successful iterations dedicated to Africa’s Indian Ocean rim with themes on “*Reimagining Mobilities/Immobilities in the Indian Ocea*”, which took place in December 2022 in Sharjah, UAE, followed by “*Legacies of Race and Slavery in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans*”, held in June 2023 in Zanzibar.

“Bounded by the continents of Africa, Asia, and Australia, the Indian Ocean has been a critical route for centuries bearing witness to remarkable circularities. With this season’s focus, diverse scholars highlight the multitudinous forces shaping Africa’s Indian Ocean islands, enabling us to interpret Africa’s history, understand its present, and imagine its future,” said Dr. Salah M Hassan, Director, The Africa Institute, Sharjah.

Organized by The Africa Institute in collaboration with leading scholars Jeremy Prestholdt, Professor of History at the University of California, San Diego; Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, Professor of Anthropology at Georgetown University in Qatar; and Uday Chandra, Assistant Professor of Government at Georgetown University in Qatar, this symposium is co-organized by Prita Meier, Associate Professor of Art History at New York University, and Laura Fair, Professor of African History in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University.

As the Country-Focused Season progresses, the symposium, “Colorful Threads,” celebrates the Islands of the Western Indian Ocean, emphasizing their historical, socio-cultural, and economic significance. Scholars, writers, artists, and activists engaged in four-

panel discussions, covering Women, Feminism, and the Indian Ocean; Material Connections and Rupture; Cinema and Placemaking; and Representations and Imaginaries.

“These themes deserve consideration not only in comparison with other world regions but also because, unlike its Atlantic and Mediterranean counterparts, the Indian Ocean’s unique nexus of trans-local relationships has never received the attention it merits,” said co-convenor Professor Prestholdt.

Co-organizer Prita Meier, Associate Professor of Art History at New York University, shared in her opening address, “This symposium brings scholars together from diverse fields and disciplines to reposition the Indian Ocean world at the center of global art history. Their contributions address pressing issues regarding the cultural dimensions of globalization by foregrounding the significance of oceans and maritime environments in shaping our world. Individual papers thematize such diverse topics as the oceanic mobility of photography, the transcultural reach of island architecture, and cinematic representations of archipelagic life worlds.”

Looking Ahead: The Final Act of the Country-Focused Season

As the curtain falls on “Colorful Threads,” it provides a poignant segue into the final act of the series, titled “Intertwined Ecologies and Interconnected Histories: The Indian Ocean Rim,” scheduled for Mauritius in 2024. The symposium hosts environmental historians, anthropologists, climate scientists, and marine biologists who will continue to bridge gaps, foster dialogue, and shape a narrative that emphasizes the environmental challenges and cultural richness of the Indian Ocean Rim.

FELLOWSHIPS

OPEN SOCIETY GRANT: THE AFRICA INSTITUTE RECEIVES MAJOR MULTI-YEAR FUNDING FOR AFRICAN CULTURAL HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP

The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU) in Sharjah, UAE, has been awarded a \$180,000 multi-year grant from the Open Society Foundations, a leading global funder of justice, human rights, and democratic governance initiatives. This funding will support a new fellowship program running through September 2026 that addresses critical debates around African cultural heritage restitution and repatriation.



“We are incredibly grateful for the generous support of the Open Society Foundations,” said Her Excellency Sheikha Hoor Al Qasimi, President of Global Studies University. “This grant will enable us to launch a vital fellowship program that brings together scholars and practitioners to explore complex issues surrounding cultural restitution and reparation, specifically related to African art and artifacts.”

The restitution and repatriation of artifacts looted during colonial occupation remain contentious, with progress slow and often symbolic. Salah M. Hassan, Chancellor of Global Studies University and Dean of The Africa Institute said, “The Fellowship will help enhance and refocus the debate on restitution and repatriation which seems to have stalled despite the limited progress in repatriation’s gestures by several Western-based museums. It will help move the discourse beyond appeals by political groups into a much critically grounded scholarship and public engagement.”

The fellowship, titled “Restitution and Reparation: Africa and the Post-Colonial Condition,” will convene scholars and practitioners dedicated to advancing research and dialogue on returning looted African cultural heritage. It aligns with The Africa Institute’s mission to foster critical engagement with African and African diaspora studies.

The first cohort will begin in September 2026, with fellowship applications opening in Spring 2025.

Further details regarding eligibility, application procedures, and deadlines are available on our website.



SENIOR AND POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM



The Africa Institute annually invites applications to its Research Fellowships Program, which supports distinguished and emerging scholars engaged in advanced research in African and African diaspora studies. The program comprises four prestigious named fellowships: two senior fellowships honoring the legacies of Toni Morrison, the celebrated author and scholar, and Ali A. Mazrui, the eminent political scientist; and two postdoctoral fellowships named in recognition of Okwui Enwezor, the influential curator and critic, and Fatema Mernissi, the renowned Moroccan sociologist and writer.

These fellowships provide scholars with the opportunity to pursue independent research while actively contributing to the vibrant academic community at The Africa Institute during their residency.

Further details regarding eligibility, application procedures, and deadlines are available on our website.



The awardees for the 2023 Senior and Post-doctoral Fellows are:

Okwui Enwezor Postdoctoral Fellow in Visual Culture, Performance Studies, and Critical Humanities



Idrissou Mora-Kpai is an award-winning Beninese filmmaker, recipient of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship and Prince Claus award, committed, for the past 25 years, to produce not only artistically compelling, but also socially relevant work that tells the stories of people underrepresented in mainstream productions. Idrissou's filmography includes works such as his early narrative shorts, *"Fugace"* (1996), *"Fake Soldiers"* (1999), pioneers in showcasing Black German life, as well as his documentary features, *"Si-Gueriki, The Queen Mother"* (2002), *"Arlit, The Second Paris"* (2005), *"Indochina Traces of a Mother"* (2011) and *"America Street"* (2019).

Mora-Kpai's films have been screened world-wide at numerous prestigious festivals, such as Berlin, Rotterdam, Vienna, Milano, Busan, Marseille, Sheffield. His works have garnered many international accolades, including the Best Documentary Award, TV5 Award; 20th Namur International Festival of French-Speaking Film Festival, Namur, Belgium; Best Documentary Award, 15th African, Asian and Latin American Film Festival, Milan, Italia.

He has served as a visiting artist at Cornell University, a visiting professor at Duke University and the University of Pittsburgh and currently teaches Film Production at Ithaca College. During his time at The Africa Institute, Mora-Kpai plans to work on two projects. He wants to pursue his work on a feature-length documentary *"Border Life,"* a creative documentary on Seme, the bustling border town between Nigeria and Benin, a place deeply intertwined with the lives of peddlers, smugglers, and travelers, thereby revealing a window into the localization of global economic exchanges. He also wants to work on the revision of his script for *"Corporal Ganda,"* a feature drama that tells the story of African colonial soldiers during the Indochina war.

Ali A. Mazrui Senior Fellows in Global African Studies



Matthew S. Hopper is a Professor of History at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo. His research focuses on slavery and abolition in the Indian Ocean world.

His book, *Slaves of One Master: Globalization and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (Yale University Press, 2015), which focuses on the history of the African diaspora in Arabia and the Gulf, was a finalist for the Frederick Douglass Book Prize in 2016. He received a Ph.D. in History from UCLA, a M.A. in African Studies from UCLA and a M.A. in History from Temple University. He has held postdoctoral and visiting fellowships at the Gilder Lehrman Center at Yale University, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, the University of Cambridge, and King's College London. His work has been supported by the Social Science Research Council, Fulbright-Hays, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the British Academy; and his writing has been published in *Annales*, *Itinerario*, and the *Journal of African Development*.

During his time at the Africa Institute, he will be working on a book on the history of liberated Africans in the Indian Ocean world. This follow-up project to his first book explores the lives of enslaved Africans who were captured aboard slave ships by the British Royal Navy in the Indian Ocean between 1808 and 1897. Called "liberated Africans" by British officials, these recaptives were resettled in places such as Cape Town, Mauritius, Zanzibar, Mombasa, Aden, Bombay and the Seychelles, where they were indentured for periods of 14 years and often made to perform manual agricultural and domestic labor that resembled slavery. The book explores the paradoxes of antislavery and abolition in the nineteenth-century Indian Ocean.



Jeanette S. Jouili is an Associate Professor of Religion at Syracuse University. As an anthropologist of religion, she is interested in the intersections between contemporary expressions of Islamic practice, secular governance, and processes of racialization, especially in a political context defined by the Global War on Terror.

Over the past twenty years, she has conducted ethnographic research in France, Germany and the UK among different Muslim communities. She has published articles in various peer-reviewed journals, such as *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *Anthropological Quarterly*, *Feminist Review*, or *French Politics, Culture & Society*. She is the author of *Pious Practice and Secular Constraints: Women in the Islamic Revival in Europe* (Stanford, 2015) and co-editor of the volume *Embodying Black Religion in Africa and its Diasporas: Memory, Movement and Belonging through the Body*, (Duke 2021). During her time in Sharjah, she will complete a book manuscript that explores a British Muslim popular culture scene spearheaded by Afro-Diasporic Muslims, in a context where Muslim youth cultures have become sites of intervention for various security-oriented government policies.

Furthermore, Jouili will begin to work on a new project, an ethnographic study of the Zitouna University, the historical institution of Islamic higher learning in Tunisia that attracts local students as well as international students, especially from West Africa. In this project, she seeks to explore the complex and deep-seated secular-religious divisions in the country, as well as the socio-economic and epistemological inequalities that these divisions obscure, while paying attention to how questions around class, race, and gender give life to, reconfigure, undo, or reinforce these divisions.

Toni Morrison Senior Fellow in African Diaspora Literature and Cultural Studies



Philathia Bolton, an Associate Professor of English at The University of Akron in Ohio, is inaugurating the Toni Morrison Senior Fellowship as its first recipient. She also serves on advisory committees for the Pan-African Studies Program and the Women's Studies Program, and is the English Department's honors advisor. Her research interests include 20th-century African-American literature, the U.S. civil rights movement, and critical race studies.

Bolton has lectured on subjects in these fields, locally, and has presented her research at national and international conferences, namely at the American Studies Association and the College Language Association conferences. In 2019, she participated in a thematic residence program for writers at Faberlull in Spain. There she collaborated with scholars from various parts of the world on an edited collection of essays that examines the continued significance of gender disparities. Bolton's essay looks at the consequential, historical significance of colorism in the U.S. from a literary perspective, taking as primary texts of consideration Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of An Ex-Colored Man* (1912). Her forthcoming chapter on a volume devoted to Zora Neale Hurston makes an argument for how authors such as James Baldwin and Toni Morrison can be read in a Hurstonian tradition when considering both their vernacular, and cultural dispositions for writing. While at the Africa Institute, Bolton will continue her research and writing on Morrison by revisiting her work on the novelist that connects the metaphoric significance of Macon Dead from *Song of Solomon* to certain novels by Black women writers of the 1970s and 1980s.

Bolton is a resident of Toni Morrison's home state. She has involved herself in the community as an educator beyond her traditional classroom and as a supporter of the Arts, namely, teaching for the Upward Bound Program, presenting at book clubs for retirees, and recently serving as a board member of city and state-wide Arts organizations. Bolton is an alumna of Spelman College, where she graduated summa cum laude with a Bachelor's degree in English and with membership in Phi Beta Kappa. Her master's and doctor of philosophy degrees are in American Studies from Purdue University-West Lafayette.

Continuing Fellows-in-Residence

Fatema Mernissi Postdoctoral Fellow in Social and Cultural Studies



Semeneh Ayalew Asfaw is a Lecturer and Researcher at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, Addis Ababa University, and a continuing Resident Fellow at The Africa Institute since 2022. He holds a Ph.D. in Political Studies from the University of Cape Town. His dissertation, *The Young and the Urban in Addis Ababa: Towards a Popular History of the 1974 Ethiopian Revolution, c. the 1950s-1974*, explores the intersections of socio-cultural processes, subject formation, and political change in Ethiopia.

Asfaw's research and publications engage with themes including social and cultural history, political consciousness, revolutionary terminology, youth subject formation, city-making, and urbanism in 20th-century Ethiopia.

During his fellowship at The Africa Institute, he continues to investigate the relationship between cultural processes and subject formation. His current project examines everyday youth life in Addis Ababa from the 1950s to 1974, using alternative "archives"—such as musical and literary texts—to challenge conventional narratives of the Ethiopian Revolution, which often center solely on student activism.

In addition to his academic work, Asfaw is an active public intellectual with years of experience contributing opinion pieces to popular newspapers on Ethiopian politics and history, as well as participating in radio and television programs.

Okwui Enwezor Postdoctoral Fellow in Visual Culture, Performance Studies, and Critical Humanities



Mohamed Faroug A. Ali is an Assistant Professor of Archaeology at the International University of Africa, Sudan, and a continuing Resident Fellow at The Africa Institute since 2022. He completed his undergraduate studies at Dongola University in Sudan and earned both his MA and Ph.D. from the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB).

Faroug is the co-founder and CEO of the American Sudanese Archaeological Research Center (AmSARC) and serves as the Executive Director of the Sudanese Archaeologists Union. He has directed and participated in numerous archaeological projects in Sudan. His research focuses on the formation, political economy, collapse, and regeneration of ancient states in sub-Saharan Africa, the cultural landscape of ancient ironworking, and patterns of cultural contact.

His work has received support from institutions including the British Museum, the National Science Foundation, and UCSB. He has also served as a media consultant on several documentary films, such as *Queens of Kush*, *ZDF Expedition*, *Terra X: Kleopatras Schwarze Schwestern* (2008), and *The Fourth Cataract of the Nile - An Archaeological Salvage Project*, which aired on the French-German TV channel Arte in 2007.

For additional information about the Senior and Postdoctoral Fellowship and the application process



GLOBAL AFRICA TRANSLATION FELLOWSHIP

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE

Global Africa Translation Fellowship

The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), Sharjah is delighted to announce the recipients of the Global Africa Translation Fellowship for the 2024 – 2025 academic year. This marks the fourth cohort of this non-residential fellowship, which provides grants annually to support the translation of important works from the African continent and its diaspora into Arabic and/or English. The selected projects may include retranslations of classic texts, previously untranslated works, poetry collections, novels, prose, or critical theory. These projects can be works-in-progress or new endeavors feasible within the grant's timeframe.

Meet the 2023 Global Africa Translation Fellowship Awardees



Bethlehem Attfield is currently an Amharic literary translator and is a Ph.D. candidate researching Translating African Literature at the University of Birmingham. She holds a Masters degree in Gender, Culture, and Society from Birkbeck University, London. Attfield has pursued diverse professional interests across civil society support, gender, and human rights advocacy with different institutions such as the UN, and NGOs, as well as running private business enterprises in Asia and Africa. Her first novel translation, *The Lost Spell* is published by Henningham Family Press (UK) and is shortlisted for the 2022 TA First Translation Prize by Society of Authors. She hosts a YouTube podcast Journey to Ethiopia with Story to promote the translation of Amharic literature. During her residency, she will work on the translation of Ethiopian writer Adam Reta's selected Amharic short stories into English. This project hopes to be made available as a resource to global-South literary practitioners to carry out a comparative literature analysis using Reta's Histinawinet theory. Histinawinet theory can transform the way African literature addresses important research questions.



Ida Hadjivayanis is currently Senior Lecturer in Swahili Studies at School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London where she convenes main Africa-focused programmes: MA African Studies and BA Africa and Black Diaspora. She is also a Fellow of Higher Education in the United Kingdom. She holds a Ph.D. in Swahili Translation from SOAS. Her research interest lies at the intersection of Translation, African Studies, Swahili studies and Trans-oceanic encounters on the Indian ocean in East Africa. She has recently translated Tanzanian-born British novelist and academic Abdulrazak Gurnah's *'Paradise'* into Swahili - Peponi published by Mkuki na Nyota. During her residency, Hadjivayanis will work on the translation of *Kasri ya Mwinyi Fuad* (1978) novel from Swahili to English using the foreignizing strategy where an international audience will get a glimpse into one perspective of life in Zanzibar before the revolution.



Mohamed Bashir is an Assistant Professor of Archeology at the Department of Archaeology, University of Khartoum. He received his B.A. (2011), M.A. (2015), and Ph.D. (2018) from the University of Khartoum. His PhD. dissertation was entitled *"Meroitic Urban Centers: A Comparative Archaeological Study Between Kedurma and Hamadab"*. He has completed his dissertation under a DAAD-region scholarship and completed a six-month research stay at the Institute of Egyptology and Coptology, University of Münster, Germany. He has extensive field research experience including serving as Field Director for the Meroe Northern Environs Archeological Project, the Mahas Survey Project *'The Historical Town of Nauri'*, and excavations at Kedurma. He has presented this work at numerous international conferences. Currently, he is also a NGS Explorer for the project entitled *"A Paleo-genomic Study of the Meroitic Peoples of Kedurma (350 BCE-350 CE) in Sudanese Nubia"*. During his residency, Mohamed will produce an Arabic translation of one of the most important written sources of the Middle Nile region during the Medieval time carried by British archaeologist O. G. S. Crawford during the British Academy Expedition in 1951-1952 that explored the ancient sites on both banks of the Nile between Atbara and Abu Hamed.

Visit our website or scan to learn more about the Global Africa Translation Fellowship and application process.



TEJUMOLA OLANIYAN CREATIVE WRITERS-IN- RESIDENCE FELLOWSHIP



The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), Sharjah, has announced the awardees for the third cohort of the Tejumola Olaniyan Creative Writers-in-Residence Fellowship starting this fall 2024.

Established in honor of the late Nigerian Professor Tejumola Olaniyan and his contributions to African literature and critical theory, the fellowship supports exceptional writers from Africa and the diaspora with a three-month residency to develop their creative projects.

The selection process for this year's cohort was highly competitive, with the fellowship committee evaluating a multitude of applications based on the quality and feasibility of proposed projects.

Meet the 2023 Tejumola Olaniyan Creative Writers-in-Residence Awardees



Mamdouh Hebeshy, an Egyptian writer, filmmaker, and critic, brings a wealth of experience in literature and folk culture. With published works including a collection of short stories and a book on independent Egyptian cinema, Hebeshy's expertise extends to directing award-winning films and producing feature-length documentaries.



Mubanga Kalimamukwento, a Zambian storyteller and lawyer, is an award-winning author known for her work *"The Mourning Bird."* Her remarkable writing has garnered prestigious recognition and has been published in esteemed literary outlets. Kalimamukwento also contributes to the literary community as a fiction editor and mentor.



Jamal Mahjoub, a distinguished Sudanese-English novelist who also writes as Parker Bilal, is celebrated for his significant exploration of cultural identity and human connections in his literary work. Raised in both London and Khartoum, he has since lived in Denmark, Cairo, Spain, and The Netherlands. His diverse heritage profoundly shapes his storytelling. Under the name Parker Bilal, he skillfully crafts gripping crime fiction set in Cairo, Egypt, featuring the enigmatic detective Makana, expanding his literary repertoire. Mahjoub's accolades include the Guardian African Short Story Prize in 1991 for *"The Cartographer's Angel"*, The Premio Mario Vargas Llosa for *"Carrer Princesa"* in 2006, and the esteemed French Prix de L'Astrolabe in 2004 for *"Traveling With Djinn."* His impact spans borders, with several of his English novels translated into a number of languages, including Arabic. His 2018 travel memoir, *"A Line in the River: Khartoum, City of Memory,"* meticulously documents his return to Sudan, framing the country's fervent quest for identity with the changing face of the capital where the author grew up. Mahjoub's latest novel, *"The Fugitives"* (Canongate Books, 2021), adds to his legacy, furthering his exploration of cultural intricacies and the human experience, captivating a global audience, and leaving an enduring and significant mark on the world of literature.

Visit our website or scan to learn more about the Tejumola Olaniyan Creative Writers-in-Residence Fellowship and application process.



PUBLICATIONS

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE'S PUBLICATIONS

The Africa Institute's publications highlight the rich history and culture of Africa and its diaspora. With a particular emphasis on works written by African and Africanist writers, the institute aims to promote diverse perspectives and shape the discourse around African studies bringing greater awareness to the region's unique and significant contributions to the world. Our publications cover a diverse range of topics not limited to history, politics, economics, and the arts, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of Africa's past, present, and future.

Visit our website or scan the QR code to view the full list of publications available at Meroe, The Africa Institute's bookshop.



01 THE OTTOMAN SCRAMBLE FOR AFRICA

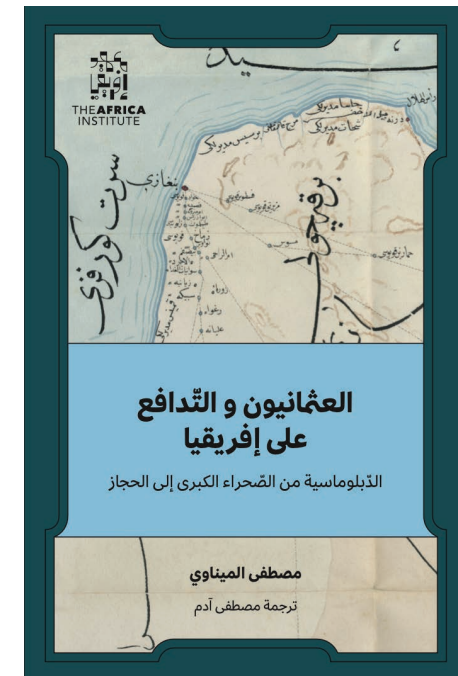
Author: Mostafa Minawi

Translator: Mustafa Adam

Translator: The Africa Institute (Sharjah, UAE)

Language: Arabic

Year: 2023



The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz is the first book to tell the story of the Ottoman Empire's expansionist efforts during the age of high imperialism. Following key representatives of the sultan on their travels across Europe, Africa, and Arabia at the close of the nineteenth century, it takes the reader from Istanbul to Berlin, from Benghazi to Lake Chad Basin to the Hijaz, and then back to Istanbul. It turns the spotlight on the Ottoman Empire's expansionist strategies in Africa and its increasingly vulnerable African and Arabian frontiers.

Drawing on previously untapped Ottoman archival evidence, Mostafa Minawi examines how the Ottoman participation in the Conference of Berlin and involvement in an aggressive competition for colonial possessions in Africa were part of the self-reimagining of this once powerful global empire. In so doing, Minawi redefines the parameters of agency in late-nineteenth-century colonialism to include the Ottoman Empire and turns the typical framework of a European colonizer and a non-European colonized on its head. Most importantly, Minawi offers a radical revision of nineteenth-century Middle East history by providing a counter narrative to the "Sick Man of Europe" trope, challenging the idea that the Ottomans were passive observers of the great European powers' negotiations over solutions to the so-called Eastern Question.

About the Author

Mostafa Minawi is a historian of the modern Middle East. His work lies at the intersection of the study of imperialism, race, and diplomacy in Africa and the Ottoman metropole, Istanbul. He is currently an Associate Professor of History and the Director of Critical Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Studies initiative at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. His first book, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* was published by Stanford University Press in 2016 which has been translated to Arabic by The Africa Institute in 2023. His second book, *Losing Istanbul: Arab-Ottoman Imperialist and the End of Empire* was published by Stanford University Press in late 2022

About the Translator

Mustafa Adam has worked as a lecturer in English Language at several Sudanese universities and in the United Arab Emirates, and he is also an editor and translator to and from English. He has many contributions in academic and literary translation from Arabic and English. Over the years, Adam has translated a wide range of poems and short stories by Sudanese writers and poets and others, including the epic poem: "*The Return to Sinner*" by Mohamed Abdel-Hay and the poetry of modernist poets in Sudan such as Mohammed al-Makki Ibrahim and Ali Abdelgayyoum and the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. In addition to co-translating "Al-Salahi: Prison Memoirs" with Adel Babiker, commissioned by the Sharjah Art Foundation, he translated several chapters in several books on art and literature. His translations from English into Arabic include poems by Edwin Muir, Dylan Thomas, W. B. Yeats, and Soyinka. His published translations have appeared in *Arablit Quarterly* and the *South Atlantic Quarterly*. Adam holds an MA in English Literature, on the theatre of Harold Pinter, University of Khartoum and an MA in Linguistics, University of Manchester. He currently works as an editor/translator at The Africa Institute, Sharjah.

02 THE HISTORIAN: YUSUF FADL HASAN

Author: Mostafa Minawi

Translator: Mustafa Adam

Translator: The Africa Institute (Sharjah, UAE)

Language: Arabic

Year: 2023



This book embraces a breathtaking approach to writing about Yusuf, the historian, who is himself a history. So, its author opted for a unique discursive approach. Whenever anything, related to Yousuf and Yusuf's history, is mentioned throughout the book narrative: be it a social incubator/ community; a village or town/city; a school or university; a teacher or a colleague; chairmanship of a department or deanship of a faculty; vice chancellery of a university, the author would dwell on interspersing its separate histories in both the main text and the footnotes/ annotations, to the degree of exhaustion. Hence, this book evolved into a sort of chronicle of Yusuf the historian, and Yusuf the cumulative history, by creatively engaging the biographies of the said incubators that brought him up and shaped his unfaltering mettle. And discursiveness is like cholesterol, either benign or malignant. And the book's discursiveness is, indeed, very benign. You will never get weary of it; it digresses and takes you away from the main narrative into the separate, yet interrelated, histories of Yusuf's world; that is the above-mentioned incubators. Rather, you will applaud the fascinating smooth flow of such digressions because it makes you more knowledgeable of Yusuf and the worlds which have nurtured him and from which he emerged a full-fledged history and an indubitable blessing to us.

Dr. Abdullahi Ali Ibrahim, Professor Emeritus of African and Islamic History, History Department, University of Missouri

This rich and scholarly biography, which Abu Shouk presented in the best possible way, reveals that we are beholding a naturally disposed historian, who's endowed with a captivating historical imagination and who succeeded in establishing distinguished scholarly traditions that strived to bridge communication with the rest of the world. It is characterized by rigor and prudence in arriving at conclusions and issuing judgments, as well as scholarly fervency... To my mind, this biography has scrupulously and eloquently expressed that the chronicle of Yusuf cannot be separated from the history of higher education and its trajectory in Sudan, nor can it be read in isolation from the development of historical studies in Sudan.

Dr. Abdalla al-Faki al-Basheer, Sudanese writer, researcher, and academic

About the Author

Abu Shouk is a Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, and Associate Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, at Qatar University. He received his doctorate in history at the University of Bergen, Norway (1998). Before joining Qatar University in 2012, he worked as a researcher at the Center for Middle East and Islamic World Studies at the University of Bergen (1995-1999), then as a professor in the Department of History and Civilization (1999-2012) at the International Islamic University in Malaysia. He also worked as a researcher and visiting professor at the Center for Modern Middle East Studies in Berlin (2010-2012-2016); the American University of Pittsburgh (2015) and the American University of Wisconsin (2017). He authored more than twenty books and seventy scholarly papers, published in both Arabic and English and in peer-reviewed scientific journals; published in regional and international publishing houses.

03

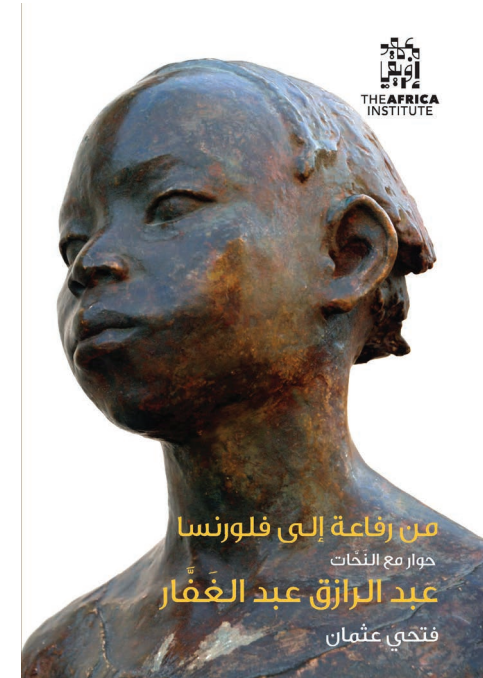
FROM RUFA'A TO FLORENCE: CONVERSATIONS WITH SCULPTOR ABDULRAZIQ ABDULGHAFAR AHMAD

Author: Fathi Othman

Publisher: The Africa Institute, GSU (Sharjah, UAE)

Language: Arabic

Year: 2023



Sudanese sculptor Abdulraziq Abdulghafar Ahmad's works are distinguished by the diversity of their subjects, media, and implementation methods, which range from realism and expressionism to abstraction. It is noted that his choices in the three methods were determined by a clear vision of what he wanted to express. In his works of portraiture, he tended to adopt realism as a method to express what he sought to reflect in sculpture, in terms of expressions and features, such as *"The Face of Jibril Tiyyah"* and *"The Face of Bakheita,"* both of which were completed after his return from his study course at the Camberwell Institute. These works were realized in an academic spirit, without being stringent, and we notice the aptness of his choice of models.

In the other two works, *"A Woman Caressing Her Child"* and *"A Reader,"* we clearly perceive his transition to expressing general human themes and other issues, such as the relationship between man and the book, i.e., the relationship between reason and knowledge. Here, he moved away from the strict rules of the academic approach and gave himself more freedom to express his chosen themes, in addition to choosing the media that suited the subject and method of treatment. This allowed him to realize what he wanted to express easily and deftly. In his work *"Two Pigeons,"* he was more inclined towards abstraction, reducing the details into two three-dimensional forms which neatly and fluently expressed what was in his mind in an unobtrusive simplification, a difficult endeavor in the field of three-dimensional form treatment.

In his later works, Ahmad ventured deep into the realms of abstraction, though with a careful and calculated approach to abstraction, based on coherent logic backed by deep experience and logical transitions from realism, in all its details, to reasoned and thoughtful simplification with an insightful eye and an adept hand that realizes the potential of his media and what it can be turned into in its final becoming.

About the Author

Fathi Othman is a visual artist and writer. He graduated at the College of Fine and Applied Arts in Khartoum, then he pursued postgraduate studies at the Hungarian Academy of Arts and obtained his Ph.D. from Otvös Laurent University in Budapest. He worked in the field of graphic design and in the Arab press in London during the nineties of the last century. Among his publications is the seminal book: *"The House of al-Jack: A Dialogue with Ibrahim El-Salahi"* and two illustrated books, published by the French publishing house Grandier.

JOURNALS

The Africa Institute is dedicated to advancing African and African diaspora studies through its research and publications. In service of that, the institute plans to publish a number of academic journals in various fields. Our first journal is titled *Monsoon: Journal of the Indian Ocean Rim* and is published in collaboration with Duke University Press.

To explore all past and current issues, and for an open call for book reviews and essays, scan the QR code. Submission guidelines are available on our website.



MONSOON: JOURNAL OF THE INDIAN OCEAN RIM

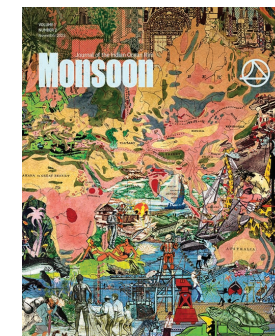
Monsoon aims to elevate the study of Indian Ocean rim societies by addressing gaps in existing literature and highlighting regions often overlooked, including African and Gulf societies.

The journal is co-edited by Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf, Professor of Anthropology, at Georgetown University in Qatar, and Jeremy Prestholdt, Professor of History, University of California, San Diego.

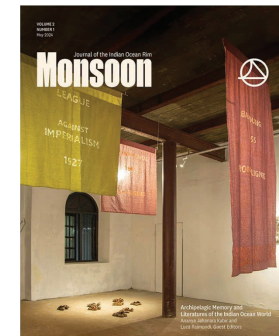
To explore all past and current issues, and for an open call for book reviews and essays, scan the QR code. Submission guidelines are available on our website.

Publisher: Duke University Press and The Africa Institute, GSU (Sharjah, UAE)
Language: English
Year: 2024

Volume 1, Issue 2



Volume 2, Issue 1



EXHIBITIONS

GAVIN JANTJES: TO BE FREE! A RETROSPECTIVE 1970-2023

November 18, 2023 – March 10, 2024

Sharjah Art Foundation

The Africa Institute presents a program of exhibitions featuring the work of artists dedicated to Africa and the African diaspora.

Visit our website or scan the QR code to learn more.



The Africa Institute, in collaboration with the Sharjah Art Foundation, presented *Gavin Jantjes: To Be Free! A Retrospective 1970–2023*, a major exhibition tracing the multifaceted journey of artist Gavin Jantjes. The retrospective celebrated his wide-ranging roles as a painter, printmaker, writer, curator, and activist.

Shaped by his formative years in Cape Town during the early decades of apartheid (1948–1994), Jantjes' life and work reflected a relentless pursuit of artistic emancipation—one unbound by the Eurocentric gaze or limited expectations of Black creativity. His journey unfolded through decades of exile and creative transformation, manifesting across multiple careers and geographies.

Organized in chapters spanning 1970 to the present, *To Be Free!* spotlighted key phases of Jantjes' life—from his anti-apartheid activism in the 1970s and 1980s to his transformative leadership in art institutions across the UK, Germany, and Norway. The exhibition featured his compelling figurative portrayals of the global Black struggle for freedom, alongside more recent explorations in non-figurative painting.

The retrospective also highlighted Jantjes' significant curatorial work, written contributions, and advocacy, underscoring his deep influence on both African and African diaspora art and global contemporary art. Over five decades, his work has transcended national and temporal boundaries, asserting the relevance of African art in global cultural discourse.

About the Artist

Gavin Jantjes born in Cape Town during apartheid, Gavin Jantjes is an internationally recognized artist, activist, and curator. His life in exile and professional journey across England, Germany, Norway, and South Africa reflect a dynamic engagement with the arts—from creative production to institutional leadership, policy-making, and education.

Regarded as one of South Africa's most influential artists, his work has been exhibited globally and is held in major public collections. During his time with the Arts Council of Great Britain, he contributed to shaping the UK's cultural diversity policy. In addition to curating over thirty exhibitions and publishing widely, Jantjes has been a committed advocate for cultural inclusion and continues to leave a lasting mark on the art world.

About the Curator

Salah M. Hassan is the Chancellor of Global Studies University (GSU), and Dean of The Africa Institute (GSU), Sharjah. He is the Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences in Africana Studies, Director of the Institute for Comparative Modernities (ICM), and Professor of Art History and Visual Culture in the Africana Studies and Research Center, and the Department of History of Art and Visual Studies, Cornell University.



Gavin Jantjes: To Be Free! A Retrospective 1970–2023, 2023. Installation view: Al Mureijah Art Spaces, Sharjah. Image courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Shanavas Jamaluddin

HENOK MELKAMZER: TELSEM SYMBOLS AND IMAGERY

February 24 – June 16, 2024

Sharjah Art Museum

The Africa Institute, in collaboration with the Sharjah Art Foundation and the Sharjah Museums Authority, presented the exhibition *Henok Melkamzer: Telsem Symbols and Imagery* at the Sharjah Art Museum in the Arts Area, Al Shuweiheh, from February 24 to June 16, 2024.

The exhibition explored the Ethiopian art form of *telsem*, which draws from astrology, religion, and spirituality to create intricate works interwoven with symbols, texts, and drawings of spiritual and philosophical depth. Deeply shaped by Ethiopia's sociopolitical and cultural histories, *telsem* continues to address critical contemporary issues such as climate disasters, war, and poverty.

Though still actively practiced, *telsem* has often been mischaracterized in Western contexts as “healing” or “talisman” art—a reductive view that sidelines it from conversations around modernism. This exhibition challenged such interpretations, presenting instead one of Ethiopia's most compelling modernist art practices through the largest solo presentation of Henok Melkamzer's work to date.

Over 100 canvases were on view, showcasing Melkamzer's vivid compositions of vines, symbols, numbers, and texts rendered in acrylic and traditional natural pigments. His dynamic use of color and layered iconography provided audiences with a rare opportunity to engage with the complexity and vitality of *telsem* in contemporary art.

About the Artist

Henok Melkamzer studied *telsem* for 16 years in a monastery in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia, and learned the practice from his father and grandfather, both of whom were *telsem* healers. Deeply committed to preserving this heritage, Melkamzer has introduced *telsem* to wider audiences through numerous exhibitions. His solo exhibition *Men Neber* (2018) was presented at the Modern Art Museum in Addis Ababa, and he was a commissioned artist at the Second Lahore Biennial (2020). He also participated in the 2022 conference *Ethiopia: Modern Nation – Ancient Roots* at The Africa Institute, Sharjah.

About the Curator

Elizabeth Giorgis The exhibition was curated by Elizabeth Giorgis, Professor of Art History, Theory, and Criticism at The Africa Institute, with Amal Al Ali, Curatorial Assistant at Sharjah Art Foundation. It was organized by the Sharjah Art Foundation in collaboration with The Africa Institute and the Sharjah Museums Authority.



Henok Melkamzer: *Telsem Symbols and Imagery*. Installation view: Sharjah Art Museum, 2024. Image courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Motaz Mawid

GAVIN JANTJES: TO BE FREE! A RETROSPECTIVE 1970-2023

June 12 – September 1, 2024
Whitechapel Gallery, London

Following its debut in Sharjah in 2023, *Gavin Jantjes: To Be Free! A Retrospective 1970–2023* opened at Whitechapel Gallery, London, marking the artist's largest solo presentation in the United Kingdom to date. The retrospective brought together over 100 prints, drawings, and paintings—many exhibited in the UK for the first time.

The exhibition traced Gavin Jantjes' evolution as a painter, printmaker, writer, and curator, while foregrounding his influential role in shaping discourses around Africa and its diasporas. Significantly, the presentation coincided with the 30th anniversary of South Africa's first democratic elections, offering timely reflection on Jantjes' political exile and lifelong engagement with anti-apartheid activism.

To Be Free! explored key chapters in the artist's career, from his groundbreaking print series *A South African Colouring Book* (1974–75) to his compelling figurative portrayals of Black liberation struggles, and his more recent transition to non-figurative painting. The exhibition also spotlighted Jantjes' curatorial leadership at major institutions in the UK, Germany, and Norway, and his long-standing influence on London's cultural landscape—most notably through his co-curation of *From Two Worlds* (1986) at Whitechapel Gallery.

Presented across Whitechapel Gallery's main exhibition spaces, the show was structured in thematic chapters that guided visitors through Jantjes' early print and painting experiments during exile, his critical reflections on colonialism and the African diaspora, and his large-scale series from the 1980s onward. These included *Korabra*, exploring the legacy of the European slave trade, and *Zulu*, which marked a shift toward allegory, metaphor, and poetic abstraction.

The final chapter unveiled a selection of his recent and previously unseen works—including the *Exogenic* series (2017), *Witney* (2020), *Sharjah* (2022), and *Kirstenbosch* (2023)—which emphasized artistic freedom and resisted reductive expectations of African contemporary art. These non-figurative works offered open-ended visual experiences and invited audiences to reimagine their relationship with painting in a globalized world.

Despite a distinguished international career, *To Be Free!* marked the first major institutional survey of Jantjes' work in the UK, offering overdue recognition of his radical impact as an artist, activist, and cultural thinker.

A new publication accompanied the exhibition, featuring a foreword by Hoor Al Qasimi and essays by curator Salah M. Hassan, Allison Young, Kendell Geers, Lars Elton, Dag Erik Elgin, and Premesh Lalu. A 45-minute documentary, *To Be Free*, directed by Paul Jantjes and produced by Studio 3 Oslo, was also screened throughout the exhibition period.

About the Artist

Gavin Jantjes (b. 1948, Cape Town, South Africa) is an internationally acclaimed artist, writer, and curator. His life and work reflect a deep commitment to human rights, freedom of expression, and cultural understanding. Jantjes' art has been exhibited worldwide and is held in major public collections including Tate (London), MoMA (New York), and the South African National Gallery (Cape Town). He has served as artistic director of the Henie Onstad Art Center in Norway and senior curator at the National Museum, Oslo. His many publications include *A Fruitful Incoherence* (Iniva, 1998) and *Visual Century: South African Art in Context 1907–2007* (Wits University Press, 2010).

About the Curator

The exhibition was curated by Salah M. Hassan and organized by Whitechapel Gallery and Sharjah Art Foundation in collaboration with The Africa Institute, Sharjah. The London presentation was curated in collaboration with Gilane Tawadros and Cameron Foote.

Salah M. Hassan is the Chancellor of Global Studies University (GSU), and Dean of The Africa Institute (GSU), Sharjah as well as Distinguished Professor of Arts and Sciences in Africana Studies, Professor of Art History and Visual Culture at Cornell University.



Gavin Jantjes: *To Be Free! A Retrospective 1970 – 2023*, installation view, Whitechapel Gallery, 2024. Courtesy Whitechapel Gallery. Photo: Damian Griffiths



Gavin Jantjes, Untitled, 1989. From 'Zulu', c. 1984–1990. Installation view: Gavin Jantjes: To Be Free! A Retrospective 1970–2023, Al Mureijah Art Spaces, Sharjah, 2023. Image courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Motaz Mawid

COMMUNITY

INDUSTRY AND INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the academic year, we are committed to building inclusive, informed, and connected communities—both locally and globally. This section highlights key outreach activities and collaborative efforts that promote cultural exchange, social impact, and academic engagement.

Our initiatives embody the Institute's broader mission to contribute meaningfully to public discourse, support interdisciplinary scholarship, and foster lasting partnerships.

Visit our website or scan the QR code to explore our latest stories and announcements.



MEG ARENBERG PARTICIPATES IN “ACHEBE AND THE POLITICS OF CANONICITY” PANEL AT PRINCETON SYMPOSIUM



Meg Arenberg, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature in the Department of Humanities and the African Languages and Translation Program at The Africa Institute, participated in a panel discussion titled “*Achebe and the Politics of Canonicity*” during the Chinua Achebe Symposium and Memorial Celebration held at Princeton University on September 29, 2023.

The symposium was organized by the Africa World Initiative and the Program in African Studies, in collaboration with the Christie and Chinua Achebe Foundation, and took place at Princeton's Arthur Lewis Auditorium in Robertson Hall.

The panel was part of a broader symposium reflecting on the conditions shaping Chinua Achebe's canonicity and their relevance in today's literary landscape. Dr. Arenberg joined distinguished panelists including Dr. Simon Gikandi (Princeton University), Dr. Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi (NC State University), Dr. Ranka Primorac (University of Southampton), and discussant Dr. Terri Ochiagha (University of Edinburgh). They examined the factors contributing to Achebe's

canonical status, exploring how it both aligns with and challenges simplified or exoticized readings of his work. The discussion also interrogated the enduring label of Achebe as the “father of modern African literature” and addressed the complexities of African texts and readerships that exist beyond Western literary canons.

The symposium featured a welcome address by Chika Okeke-Agulu, Director of the Africa World Initiative and Program in African Studies, and Christie Achebe from the Christie and Chinua Achebe Foundation. His Excellency Peter Obi, former Governor of Anambra State, Nigeria, delivered the keynote address, enriching the two-day event with his insights.

NYU ABU DHABI HOSTS OKWUI ENWEZOR FELLOW IDRISOU MORA-KPAI FOR DIALOGUE ON FILM AND CREATIVE PRACTICE



In November 2023, acclaimed Beninese filmmaker and Okwui Enwezor Fellow at The Africa Institute, Idrissou Mora-Kpai, engaged in a multi-day visit to New York University’s Abu Dhabi campus. Hosted by the MFA Program in Arts and Media and facilitated by Professors Dale Hudson and Terri Geis, the visit provided an in-depth forum for dialogue on artistic process, film, and global creative exchange.

Over the course of the three-day program, Mora-Kpai interacted closely with students working across painting, photography, sculpture, and video. He praised their awareness of global issues and their nuanced understanding of political and cultural contexts shaping artistic production.

A key focus of the visit was a discussion of Mora-Kpai’s documentary *Indochina: Traces of a Mother*, which examines the story of African soldiers conscripted into the French colonial army during the Vietnam War and the children left behind. The screening of the film set the stage for a broader conversation on archival research, ethics in documentary filmmaking, and navigating funding and collaboration across cultural lines.

“It was heartening to witness the students’ interest in the research process behind creative work, and their thoughtful engagement with its complexities,” said Mora-Kpai.

His visit to NYU Abu Dhabi reflects The Africa Institute’s commitment to fostering international dialogue and supporting critical, cross-disciplinary engagement in the arts.

BARD COLLEGE HOSTS A CONVERSATION WITH OKWUI ENEWZOR FELLOW IDRISOU MORA-KPAI

On December 10, 2023, Bard College hosted a virtual conversation titled “*On France, Niger, Uranium, and Nuclear Power*,” featuring award-winning filmmaker and Okwui Enwezor Fellow Idrissou Mora-Kpai, in dialogue with historian Carina Ray. The session explored the historical and political dynamics of France–Niger relations, with a focus on uranium mining and nuclear power.

Mora-Kpai, a Guggenheim Fellow and current faculty member at Ithaca College, is renowned for his documentary work addressing underrepresented histories. His film *Arlit: Deuxième Paris* (2005), which formed the basis of the conversation, examines the environmental and social consequences of uranium extraction in Niger’s Sahara Desert. Ray, the A.M. and H.P. Bentley Chair in African History at the University of Michigan and co-convenor of The Africa Institute’s Global Ghana program, provided historical context and insight into the geopolitical implications of uranium and nuclear power.

Moderated by Professor Tabetta Ewing of Bard’s Historical Studies Program, the event was co-organized by multiple Bard entities, including the Center for Civic Engagement, the Center for Human Rights and the Arts, the Dean of the College, and several academic programs. Students, faculty, and members of the public participated in an engaging Q&A session on topics ranging from environmental justice to colonial legacies and the ethics of nuclear energy.

This collaboration reflects The Africa Institute’s commitment to fostering critical global conversations through scholarly exchange and public engagement.

MEG ARENBEG AND TRANSLATION FELLOW IDA HADJIVAYANIS LEAD THE TRANSLATION WORKSHOP AT THE ZANZIBAR BOOK FAIR



Organized by the Zanzibar Renaissance Literary Society, this annual event was the first of its kind, serving as a meeting place for local and global writers to exchange ideas, gain inspiration, and peruse thousands of books.

Leading a translation workshop were The Africa Institute’s Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, Meg Arenberg, and Global Africa Translation Fellow, Ida Hadjivayanis (Senior Lecturer in Swahili Studies at SOAS, University of London), on October 22, 2023. Additionally, Arenberg represented The Africa Institute at a booth, showcasing our publications, language programs, and more.

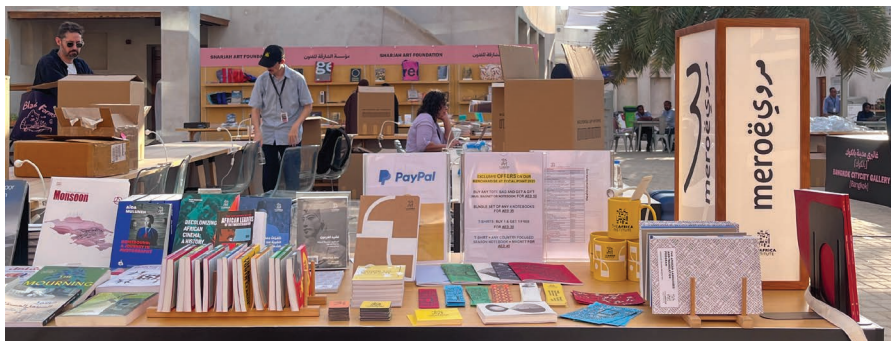
RAMADAN ELKHOULY EXPLORES ARCHIVAL SOURCES AT SHARJAH INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR 2023

Dr. Ramadan Elkhoully, Senior Researcher and Archivist at The Africa Institute, delivered a talk titled “Sources of Knowledge: Scholarly Research in Sciences and Humanities” at the Sharjah International Book

Fair 2023. He examined the relationship between historical archives, society, and technology, highlighting Egypt's 1907 and 1917 census data to illustrate shifts in women's labor classification due to wartime policies and social changes.

Dr. Elkhoully emphasized the importance of primary sources like archives, oral narratives, and folklore, advocating for contextualizing historical documents and cross-referencing sources for accuracy. He also discussed the role of AI tools like ChatGPT in humanities research, cautioning against overreliance and stressing their use as aids rather than replacements for critical analysis.

FOCAL POINT 2024



The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, Sharjah participated in the sixth edition of Sharjah Art Foundation's Focal Point art book fair, held from 24 to 26 November 2023 at Bait Obaid Al Shamsi, a heritage site in Sharjah's historical quarter.

Sharjah Art Foundation's annual art book fair showcased independent bookmaking from around the world, with a spotlight on publishers from the region. A critical space for knowledge-sharing and community building, the fair featured a compelling selection of printed material by artists' presses, bookmakers, self-publishers, and non-commercial cultural producers who expand and experiment with the medium of publishing. The program also included talks, workshops, book launches, and signings.

Our booth offered a range of our publications alongside key works by African and African diaspora publishers, all available for purchase. Exclusive merchandise was also on offer. Visitors were encouraged to engage in conversation and learn more about our academic programs, scholarly conferences, and upcoming events.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE PARTNERS WITH AL MULTAQQA TO LAUNCH AFRICA MUSIC PROGRAM IN SHARJAH

In November 2023, The Africa Institute at Global Studies University, Sharjah, partnered with Al Multaqa, a music, arts, and cultural academy based in Africa Hall, to launch the Africa Music Program. This initiative offers fully funded opportunities for over 100 disadvantaged African students to study music in Sharjah over three years, promoting Afro-Arab heritage through training in at least 15 traditional instruments, vocal techniques, and dance.

"Al Multaqa is a great initiative and a very much needed one. Culture and the performing arts, including music, are fundamental to our mission as an institute for research, documentation, and post-graduate studies in the humanities and social sciences," said Salah M. Hassan, Director of The Africa Institute. "The richness and diversity of African musical styles and traditions, and their contributions to global culture, are very well documented. The future of Africa lies in the hands of its youth, hence our confidence in Al Multaqa's vision as one that carries on such a mission in these difficult times."

"This program is not just about teaching music; it's about fostering a sense of belonging, self-expression, and cultural pride among our students," said Khalda Ibrahim, CEO & Co-founder, Al Multaqa. "Through music, we aim to heal wounds, bridge divides, and empower young Africans to become ambassadors of harmony and creativity."

"Our gratitude extends to The Africa Institute, as without their support, this initiative would not have been possible. Especially considering the significant challenges DAL Group faced in the aftermath of the current conflict in Sudan. Over the years, DAL Group has remained committed

to cultural initiatives through the DAL Cultural Forum. Therefore, we deeply value the opportunity to continue this legacy in the UAE, alongside our current partners. We also look forward to welcoming future collaborators who share our vision, allowing us to uphold our dedication to education and the preservation of cultural heritage,” said Ihab Daoud, Chairman & Founder, Al Multaqa.

The program prioritizes students of African and Arab descent from conflict areas, refugees, or internally displaced persons (IDPs). The first cohort includes Sudanese musicians impacted by the ongoing conflict, with a focus on preserving their musical education and contributions. This partnership supports The Africa Institute’s mission to expand public understanding of Afro-Arab cultural exchange in Sharjah, the region, and beyond.

For more information, visit www.visitalmultaqa.com.

WORLD ARABIC LANGUAGE DAY

In celebration of World Arabic Language Day, The Africa Institute hosted a virtual program on Wednesday, December 13, 2023.

Observed annually on December 18, World Arabic Language Day was established by UNESCO in 2012 to promote multilingualism and cultural diversity. The 2023 edition also marked the 50th anniversary of Arabic being designated one of the six official UN languages.

The program included a lecture, poetry reading, and a short film screening, each exploring the richness and continued relevance of the Arabic language. Dr. Fuad Abdul Muttaleb, Professor of English Literature and Criticism at Jerash University, Jordan, opened the event with a lecture on the history and current challenges of Arabic—emphasizing its role in Arab identity, cultural unity, and the balance between heritage and global influences.

Sudanese-Austrian writer, political scientist, and translator Dr. Ishraga Hamid followed with a powerful reading of poetry in both Arabic and

English, offering moving reflections on personal and collective human experiences through the lens of Arabic poetic traditions.

The final segment featured the screening of *Less than an Hour* (13 minutes), a short film by Egyptian writer, filmmaker, and critic Mamdouh Hebeshy. The film offered a narrative exploration of the emotional impact of parental separation on children in Egyptian society.

The session was moderated by Bilal Al-Omar, Senior Lecturer of Arabic in the African Languages and Translation Program at The Africa Institute.

The program served as a platform to reflect on the Arabic language’s enduring influence on shaping knowledge, fostering cultural diversity, and facilitating intercultural dialogue. The 2023 edition emphasized the role of language in enabling constructive global conversations, shaping perceptions, and cultivating understanding amid an increasingly uncertain world.

Speakers

Dr. Fuad Abdul Muttaleb is a Professor of English Literature and Criticism at Jerash University, Jordan. With a Ph.D. from the University of Essex, UK, his extensive academic career includes teaching across the Arab world and research in comparative studies and drama. His scholarly work spans books, articles, and translations in both Arabic and English.

Dr. Ishraga Hamid is a writer, translator, and political scientist based in Austria. She is known for her activism, literary work, and advocacy for migrants and Arabic literature. Her publications include more than ten books and multiple translations. In recognition of her contributions, she received the Golden Decoration of Merit from the State of Vienna.

Mamdouh Hebeshy is an Egyptian writer, filmmaker, and critic. He has published works on Egyptian cinema and folk culture, and his films have been recognized at international festivals. Hebeshy was also the 2023 Tejumola Olaniyan Creative Writers-in-Residence Fellow at The Africa Institute.

Moderator

Bilal Al-Omar is a Senior Lecturer of Arabic at The Africa Institute. He previously taught at Cornell University and Jerash University, and his teaching covers a broad range of Arabic literature, media, and language courses.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE AT THE 66TH ASA ANNUAL MEETING, SAN FRANCISCO

The Africa Institute, Sharjah, participated in the 66th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association (ASA), held in San Francisco, California, from November 30 to December 2, 2023. Themed “*African Presences: Envisioning Africa in Text and Deed*,” the conference brought together scholars, institutions, and researchers from around the world. The Africa Institute’s presence aimed to further its mission of encouraging the production and dissemination of knowledge between Africa and the Arab world.

As part of its participation, The Africa Institute hosted a specially curated roundtable titled “*Pedagogy of African Languages Teaching and the Question of Translation*,” which explored the intellectual and practical dimensions of teaching African languages and translation studies. The panel examined the complex roles that language, translation, and pedagogy play in engaging Africa’s vast linguistic and literary heritage—especially in academic contexts that go beyond the European language frameworks commonly used in African Studies.

The roundtable was chaired by **Binyam Sisay Mendisu**, Associate Professor of African Languages and Linguistics and Associate Director of The Africa Institute. Panelists included:

Ousseina Alidou, Professor, Rutgers University

Meg Arenberg, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature, The Africa Institute

Alamin Mazrui, Professor, Rutgers University
Naminata Diabate, Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, Cornell University

The panel also provided insights into The Africa Institute’s forthcoming African Languages Program, which will offer Arabic, Amharic, Hausa, and Kiswahili instruction as part of its interdisciplinary MA and Ph.D. offerings. A highlight of the session was the discussion on the development of new instructional materials and textbooks for under-resourced African languages, reaffirming the Institute’s commitment to advancing language pedagogy through both theory and practice.

Alongside the panel, The Africa Institute exhibited at Booth #413 throughout the three-day conference, where attendees engaged with representatives to learn more about the Institute’s academic programs, research fellowships, publications, and ongoing initiatives across the arts, humanities, and social sciences.

Founded in 1957, the African Studies Association is a leading scholarly organization based in the United States, with nearly 2,000 members worldwide. The ASA fosters interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Africa, encompassing its political, economic, social, cultural, and artistic contexts.

ALIYU LAWAL MODERATES ‘HAUSA ACROSS THE WORLD’: THE AFRICA INSTITUTE PARTNERS WITH HIBAF

The Africa Institute collaborated with the Hausa International Book and Arts Festival (HIBAF) in a joint effort to promote cultural diversity and language appreciation. The festival was blended with virtual and physical events from December 14 to 16, 2023, in Kano, Nigeria.

On December 14, 2023, Aliyu Mustapha Lawal, Lecturer of Hausa at The Africa Institute, assumed the role of moderator for the panel discussion “Hausa Across the World” at the festival. Initiated by Open Arts, HIBAF gathered African creatives from Europe, West and East Africa, exploring

the intersection of arts and language. The festival's third edition focused on 'Hausa Diaspora,' initiating discussions on the Hausa language's history, music, arts, and global presence.

Lawal led discussions with speakers from China, the Arab world, Europe, and the Americas, exploring the historical, musical, and artistic facets of the Hausa language. His insights seamlessly contributed to the global discourse on the language's impact.

This collaboration underscores The Africa Institute and HIBAF's joint commitment to cross-cultural understanding and linguistic diversity. 'Hausa Diaspora' examined the nuances of Hausa identity, diaspora, and cultural resilience, aligning with efforts to promote The Africa Institute's newly launched language courses in Amharic, Hausa, Arabic, and Kiswahili through its Language and Translation program. This reinforces its dedication to preserving Africa's linguistic richness on a global stage.

Sada Malumfashi, Curator of the festival, remarked, "Since the fourteenth century, many categories of people left Hausaland and ventured into various parts of West Africa, some returning, some settling. In the 18th and 19th centuries, Hausa diasporas scattered across continents in their Zangos – settlements. Hausa-speaking communities or individuals exist from the Atlantic Ocean to the Indian Ocean; from the Caribbeans to the Americas; from the Guinea Coast to Europe; across the African continent – from Sierra Leone to Sudan, Chad, and Cameroon – but also in the Maghreb and the Muslim world from Tunis and Tripoli to Cairo, Jerusalem, and Makkah. Hausa people have traveled and settled around the world."

WORLD ARABIC LANGUAGE DAY: IN CONVERSATION WITH PULSE 95 FM ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARABIC

On December 18, 2023, in celebration of UNESCO's World Arabic Language Day, Bilal Al Omar, Senior Lecturer of Arabic at The Africa Institute, joined hosts Abdul Karim Hanif and Rania Saadi on Morning Majlis (Pulse 95 FM, Sharjah Broadcasting Authority) to discuss the significance and impact of the Arabic language in the contemporary world.

During the interview, Al Omar emphasized the intrinsic beauty and historical importance of Arabic. He described it not merely as a means of communication, but as a language of poetry, philosophy, and record-keeping that has played a pivotal role in human history.

A key point of discussion was Arabic's far-reaching linguistic influence. Al Omar noted the presence of Arabic-origin words in several global languages, including English, Portuguese, and French, underscoring the interconnectedness of cultures and Arabic's role in shaping global linguistic landscapes.

The conversation also highlighted the rich legacy of Arabic literature and its enduring impact on world literature—from classical poetry to modern novels and short stories. Al Omar spoke to the growing interest among non-native speakers in learning Arabic, pointing to the language's cultural value and the importance of reviving Arabic learning to preserve identity.

He also discussed recent initiatives by The Africa Institute's African Languages and Translation department to promote Arabic through innovative pedagogical approaches. These include a blend of traditional instruction with interactive and contemporary techniques designed to make Arabic learning more engaging and effective.

Scan the QR Code to listen to the full interview:



A NIGHT OF VERSE: ALIYU LAWAL AT “THE NEW HORIZON OF METAPHOR” IN SAUDI ARABIA



On February 18, 2024, Aliyu Mustapha Lawal, Lecturer of Hausa at The Africa Institute, Sharjah participated in the “*The New Horizon of Metaphor*” poetry event organized by Oraib Library in Madina Almunawwara, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Aligned with the “Literary Partner” initiative by the Ministry of Culture, Saudi Arabia, Lawal presented his poetry and discussed related research conducted at various universities. Moderated by Muhammad Al Ansari, the event offered insights into Lawal’s Arabic language journey and his evolution as a poet.

Lecturer Lawal recited four poems in Arabic during the event: “*The Radiant Moon*,” “*The Dwellers in the Soul*,” “*What Smells from the Cave*,” and “*My Trip Through Your Eyes*.”

“I believe in the enduring power of language to connect cultures and enrich the human experience. Poetry, to me, goes beyond words on a page—it’s a deep exploration of emotions, a journey through the intricate landscapes of language. My heartfelt thanks to Oraib Library and the organizers for the opportunity to share this connection. In every verse, there’s the potential to foster understanding and forge connections that transcend borders, highlighting the vital link between language, poetry, and the preservation of our diverse cultures,” said Lawal.

EL ANATSUI’S VINYL LEGACY: SATAAN AL-HASSAN AND KWAME MINTAH EXPLORE THE INTERSECTION OF MUSIC AND ART AT EFIE GALLERY

The Efie Gallery in Dubai recently concluded its inaugural presentation in the Rekord Gallery Collections series with the exhibition “*El Anatsui: Music, Change and Re-Invention*.” This showcase provided an overview of El Anatsui’s personal vinyl record collection.

El Anatsui, a Ghanaian sculptor based in Nigeria and Ghana, is known for his large-scale sculptures made from recycled materials. His work often incorporates repurposed items like bottle caps and cassava graters and is characterized by its flexible, transformative forms. El-Anatsui’s art addresses themes of reuse, colonial history, and environmental issues.

The exhibition included over 70 vinyl records from artists such as Johnson Adjan & His Opiri Group, Aretha Franklin, Guy Warren, Vicky ‘Manze Onuba, and Fela Kuti. The collection aimed to illustrate the musical influences on Anatsui’s art. Additionally, the exhibition featured some of Anatsui’s early sketches and writings.

On February 27, 2024, the exhibition concluded with a discussion led by Kwame Mintah, Co-Founder of Efie Gallery, and Sataan Al-Hassan, Director of Administration & Operations at The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, Sharjah. Al-Hassan’s expertise in mass communication, film studies, and political theory contributed to the exploration of how Anatsui’s musical interests intersect with his visual art.

The discussion focused on the cultural and historical significance of the records and their impact on Anatsui’s work.

Efie Gallery, established in 2021 and located in Al Khayat Art Avenue, is a contemporary art space in Dubai that features artists of African origin from both the continent and its diaspora. The gallery supports cross-cultural exchange through its exhibitions and residency program, which collaborates with local artists and institutions.

SURAFEL WONDIMU ABEBE AND IDRISOU MORA-KPAI AT ART DUBAI MODERN TALKS



Surafel Wondimu Abebe, Assistant Professor of Performance Studies and Theory and Okwui Enwezor Fellow Idrissou Mora-Kpai took part in the Art Dubai Modern Talks on March 2-3, 2024. The event provided a platform for intellectual exchange and critical dialogue, focusing on the intersections of art, history, and global cultural exchange.

On March 2, Assistant Professor Surafel Wondimu Abebe joined a panel discussion alongside Daudi Karungi, Director and Founder of Afriart Gallery, Kampala, and Mila Askarova, Owner of Gazelli Art House, Baku/London, moderated by Christianna Bonin, Assistant Professor, American University of Sharjah. The conversation centered on the historical and contemporary connections between East Europe and East Africa's vibrant art scenes, exploring the challenges and opportunities of navigating cultural exchange in today's global art landscape.

The following day, on March 3, Idrissou Mora-Kpai participated in a screening and discussion session, along with Independent Journalist Samya Ayish. The event, also moderated by Dr. Christianna Bonin, showcased early and rarely seen short films by Arab and African directors, examining the enduring influence of Soviet cinema studies on African and Arab filmmaking in the late twentieth century.

The Art Dubai Modern Talks provided a platform for intellectual exchange and critical dialogue, reaffirming the importance of cultural engagement and artistic exploration in shaping our understanding of the world. Surafel Wondimu Abebe and Idrissou Mora-Kpai's participation underscored The Africa Institute's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and advancing creative scholarship on a global stage.

GRIEVE CHELWA SPEAKS ON AFRICAN DEBT CRISIS AT ACCRA CONFERENCE

Grieve Chelwa, Associate Professor of Political Economy at The Africa Institute, took part in the International Conference on African Debt Crisis and the International Financial Architecture in Accra, Ghana on March 27–29, 2024. The conference was convened by IDEAS, a global network of economists advocating for alternative economic policies focused on social justice and sustainable development, especially in developing countries.

The event addressed Africa's growing debt crisis worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. On a panel about obstacles to debt restructuring, Chelwa joined experts including Godwin Murunga (CODESRIA), Hanan Morsy (UNECA), and Jomo Kwame Sundaram (Khazanah Research Institute). Chelwa highlighted the need for unified action and called for more inclusive negotiation platforms, questioning why creditor groups dominate while borrower voices remain unheard.

IDEAS' social media quoted Chelwa invoking Thomas Sankara: "Why only a Paris club, a London club — of creditors? Where is the Accra club, the Lusaka club — of borrowers?"

The conference stressed the urgent need for reforms in Africa's debt restructuring processes.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE HOSTS AFRO-ARAB POETRY GATHERING IN CELEBRATION OF WORLD POETRY DAY

On March 21, 2024, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), Sharjah, hosted a virtual gathering of Afro-Arab poets and translators to mark World Poetry Day. Held from 8:00 PM to 10:00 PM GST, the event celebrated the power of poetry in English, Arabic, Amharic, Hausa, and Kiswahili—languages taught and studied at the Institute—and highlighted poetry’s enduring role in the communities where these languages are spoken.

The program featured poets from across Africa and its diaspora who shared their work alongside literary translators who have brought their voices to English-speaking audiences. The evening unfolded as a rich conversation on poetry and the art of translation, offering insights into linguistic and cultural expression.

Established by UNESCO in 1999, World Poetry Day promotes linguistic diversity and encourages the preservation of endangered languages through poetic expression. Poetry evokes deep emotional resonance and embodies a shared humanity across languages and cultures.

The Africa Institute (GSU) was honored to welcome distinguished poets Alhan Islam, Abdilatif Abdalla, Husam Alshdaifat, and Mihret Kebede. They were joined by acclaimed translators Dr. Annmarie Drury (Queens College, CUNY), Dr. Aliyu Falalu Sani (Al-Azhar University), Carmen McCain (SOAS, University of London), and Semeneh Ayalew Asfaw (Fatema Mernissi Postdoctoral Fellow at The Africa Institute). The event was moderated by Meg Arenberg, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at The Africa Institute.

Together, they created an evening celebrating not only poetry’s artistic power but also its ability to bridge languages, cultures, and geographies—offering a moving tribute to World Poetry Day.

CARLETON COLLEGE STUDENTS’ VISIT TO THE AFRICA INSTITUTE: BRIDGING GLOBAL AFRICAN STUDIES



A group of twenty undergraduate students from Carleton College, a private liberal arts institution in Northfield, Minnesota, USA, visited The Africa Institute, Global Studies University between March 23 and April 4, 2024. This educational excursion, the second since March 2022, emphasized the commitment to fostering knowledge about the global African experience.

During their stay, the Carleton students participated in activities designed to deepen their understanding of African and African diaspora studies.

The visit began with an orientation session outlining The Africa Institute’s academic goals, research projects, and expectations. The students attended lectures by The Africa Institute’s professors and resident fellows, offering insights into various aspects of African studies.

Elizabeth W. Giorgis, Professor of Art History, Theory, & Criticism at The Africa Institute, delivered a lecture on “*Why Art Matters in the Study of Africa and the African Diaspora*,” drawing from her research on Ethiopian modernism and highlighting the significance of artistic practices in Africa and their impact on the Gulf region.

Professor Matthew S. Hopper, Ali Mazrui Senior Fellow at The Africa Institute, provided a historical perspective on “*Slavery and Race in the Gulf*,” discussing the complex interplay between African and Gulf societies. This was complemented by a workshop on the Sharjah Biennial’s Archive of African and other Black artists, emphasizing the importance of art in documenting and understanding the African experience.

Meg Arenberg, Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at The Africa Institute, discussed “*The Gulf and the Swahili Coast: Cultural and Linguistic Contact Zones along the Indian Ocean Rim*.” This session explored the relationships between Arabic and Kiswahili languages and their cultural interactions, challenging students to consider African studies beyond the traditional Atlantic paradigm.

The visit also included a tour of the Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Muhammad Al Qasimi Centre for Gulf Studies, where students explored historical documents, maps, and manuscripts related to Gulf history and culture. This tour highlighted the deep-rooted connections between the Gulf and Africa.

The visit culminated in student presentations on April 4, where they shared their insights and research findings with faculty and fellows of The Africa Institute. These presentations, based on their engagement with the Sharjah Biennial’s Archive and other academic activities, were followed by the Institute’s annual iftar, providing a moment of cultural exchange and reflection.

The Carleton College students’ visit to The Africa Institute enhanced their understanding of African and Gulf studies and strengthened the academic link between the two institutions. The collaboration highlights the value of international exchanges in advancing knowledge of the global African experience and the complexities of the African diaspora.

OUR FACULTY SHAPE NEW PERSPECTIVES IN AFRICAN STUDIES AT UCT PANEL

The Africa Institute faculty members Elizabeth Giorgis, Professor of Art History, Theory and Criticism, and Grieve Chelwa, Associate Professor of Political Economy, participated in a virtual panel discussion titled “Studying Africa between Universality and Particularity: Rethinking the Confines of Area Studies,” hosted by the Centre of African Studies, University of Cape Town, on Wednesday, April 10, 2024.

The seminar explored nuanced questions regarding the scope of African scholarship, particularly whether scholars should focus exclusively on African-centric issues or adopt a broader perspective informed by an African viewpoint when decolonizing the study of Africa.

The conversation also included Richard Sambaiga from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Dar es Salaam, and Natasha Shivji from the Department of Historical Studies, University of Cape Town, who examined the complex dynamics of knowledge production within the African context. This seminar was part of the Centre for African Studies’ larger series, “Predicaments of Our Times,” which aims to facilitate critical discussions on contemporary African studies.

The participation of The Africa Institute’s faculty contributes meaningfully to ongoing discourse on decolonizing African scholarship, promoting inclusivity and broader perspectives in academic dialogue.

ALIYU LAWAL PRESENTS AT FIRST SHARJAH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ARABIC LANGUAGE

Aliyu Lawal, a Lecturer at The Africa Institute, showcased his research at the inaugural “*First Sharjah International Conference on the Arabic Language*,” held at the University of Sharjah from April 24 to 25, 2024. The conference, themed ‘Prospects of digital transformation and sustainability,’ provided a platform for academic discourse on the evolving landscape of the Arabic language.

Lawal’s presentation, titled “*Manifestations of Mauritanian historical cities in the poetry of Sheikh Would Belamash: Significances of vision and stylistic elements*,” focused on the depiction of historical Mauritanian cities in the poetry of Sheikh Would Belamash. His analysis highlighted the poet’s use of aesthetic elements and their influence on literary expression.

BINYAM SISAY MENDISU CHAMPIONS INCLUSIVE SCIENCE ADVOCACY AT INGSA2024



Binyam Sisay Mendisu, Associate Director of The Africa Institute and Professor of African Languages and Linguistics, participated in the International Network for Governmental Science Advice (INGSA) fifth international conference, ‘*The Transformation Imperative*,’ held in Kigali, Rwanda, from April 30 to May 2, 2024.

The conference brought together experts from academia, policy, diplomacy, and the private sector to address challenges in science advice for policymaking, emphasizing inclusion and diversity.

As a Governing Board member and Vice President for Capacity Development at INGSA, Prof. Mendisu spoke and moderated panels focusing on reshaping capability development for science advice, highlighting Global South perspectives.

His engagement reflects Africa’s vital role in advancing inclusive, evidence-based policymaking globally.

This participation aligns with The Africa Institute’s mission to promote evidence-based policymaking and inclusive knowledge exchange across Africa and beyond.

ALIYU LAWAL MODERATES PANEL AT SHARJAH CHILDREN’S READING FESTIVAL 2024



Aliyu Lawal, a Lecturer of Hausa at The Africa Institute, moderated a panel titled “*The Role of Family Guidance in Modifying the Behavior of Children and Adolescents*” at the 15th session of the Sharjah Children’s Reading Festival held on May 3, 2024.

The panel included educational and family consultant Hamsa Younis and psychologist Dr. Ahmed Bassiouni.

The conversation emphasized the importance of family guidance in modifying the behavior of children and adolescents, highlighting

its implications for acquiring sound parenting skills and preventing problems before they occur. They explained that sometimes problems arise between couples because of children, despite the problems being unrelated to the children. This necessitates consulting a family counselor to obtain sound information that guarantees family stability.

During the session, the two speakers stressed the importance of family counseling in modifying the behavior of children and adolescents, due to its implications for acquiring sound parenting skills and preventing problems before they occur.

The Sharjah Children's Reading Festival 2024 was themed '*Once Upon a Hero*,' featuring a diverse array of over 1,500 cultural, creative, and edutainment activities led by 265 esteemed guests representing 25 countries, alongside the participation of 186 publishers from 20 nations. The 12-day festival hosted a number of inspiring speeches with industry leaders focused on the publishing sector, especially within children's literature, with the aim of fostering reading habits and addressing the various obstacles faced by the regional and global book industry.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE AND UNIVERSITY OF SHARJAH SIGN MOU FOR ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH COLLABORATION

On May 14, 2024, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), and the University of Sharjah (UoS) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), marking a significant step towards enhanced academic and research collaboration. This partnership aims to foster joint initiatives in teaching, research, and cultural exchange, leveraging the strengths of both institutions to address global and regional challenges.

The MoU was signed by His Excellency Prof. Hamid M.K. Al Naimiy, Chancellor of UoS, and Prof. Salah M. Hassan, Chancellor of GSU and Dean of the Africa Institute. During the signing, the UoS Chancellor welcomed the GSU Chancellor, Dean of the Africa Institute, and their academic delegation, conveying the greetings of His Highness Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed Al Qasimi, Deputy Ruler of Sharjah and President of UoS.

The UoS Chancellor emphasized the importance of the MoU, reflecting the University's commitment to enhancing cooperation with various academic and research institutions, thereby strengthening its standing as a leading academic institution in teaching, learning excellence, and research advancements.

According to the agreement, the universities will cooperate in the exchange of faculty members and researchers, promote joint supervision of Master's and Ph.D. students, organize joint research activities, international workshops, conferences, and seminars, establish joint/dual academic degrees, and conduct joint grants applications. The MoU also focuses on collaborating in e-learning programs, training, teaching, curriculum development, exchange of academic and scientific materials, and promoting joint usage and access of library resources.

The signing was attended by Prof. Youssef Al Haik, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Prof. Abdelaziz Soufyane, Director of the Office of International Relations, and several college deans. From Global Studies University and The Africa Institute, attendees included Binyam Sisay Mendisu, Associate Dean and Professor of African Languages and Linguistics, Grieve Chelwa, Associate Professor of Political Economy, Sara Majdi, Associate Director for Academic Affairs, and Sataan Al Hassan, Associate Director for Administration and Operations. Officials and academicians from both universities highlighted their commitment to fostering deeper academic ties and advancing global studies and communication.

"The University of Sharjah and The Africa Institute signed an agreement of collaboration. We have been working with them already and look forward to engaging in teaching and research," tweeted Jairo Lugo-Ocando, UoS's Dean of the College of Communication.

This agreement formalizes ongoing cooperation between the two institutions, promising a future of enriched educational opportunities and innovative research endeavors that will benefit students, faculty, and the broader academic community.

LECTURER ALIYU LAWAL JUDGES ‘PRINCE OF POETS CHALLENGE’ FOR YOUNG ARABIC LEARNERS

Aliyu Lawal, a Lecturer of Hausa at The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, Sharjah, recently served as a judge in The Aquila School, Dubai’s ‘*Prince of Poets Challenge*’ on June 27, 2024. The event featured young pupils from primary and secondary schools showcasing their talent in reciting classic Arabic poetry.

Accompanied by Emirati poet Dr. Hassan Najjar and Arabic teacher and published poet Musab Beiruotia, Lawal played a pivotal role in evaluating the performances of the participants. Together, the judges emphasized the importance of fostering language proficiency and appreciation for literature among students from a young age.

“The competition aimed to train young poets in memorizing and reciting Arabic poetry, while also deepening their understanding and appreciation of the Arabic language and its rich literary traditions,” Lawal said.

Lawal’s academic background and active participation in cultural events underscore his commitment to promoting Arabic poetry and fostering linguistic development among students.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE AT THE FIRST TONI MORRISON SOCIETY SUMMER SYMPOSIUM IN MARTINIQUE



The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), participated in the inaugural Toni Morrison The Africa Institute, Global Studies University (GSU), recently supported the Toni Morrison Society’s inaugural Summer Symposium held from June 24 – June 27, 2024, at the Aimé Césaire Theater in Fort-de-France, Martinique. Themed “*Diasporic Vision and Legacies*,” the Symposium convened global experts to explore the lasting impact of American novelist, essayist, and librettist Toni Morrison and Martiniquais poet, playwright, and political leader Aimé Césaire.

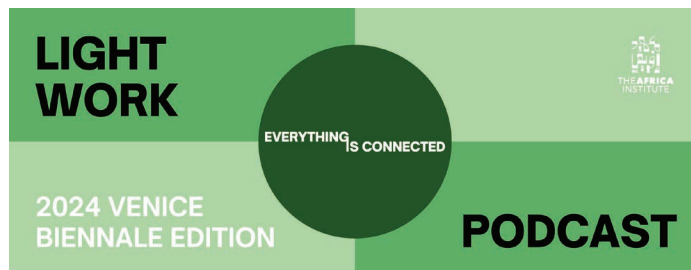
On June 26, Professors Surafel Wondimu Abebe and Philathia Bolton represented The Africa Institute (GSU) in a roundtable discussion titled “*The Future of Connections in the African Diaspora*.” Alongside sixty-five scholars, readers, and artists from the US, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and the Caribbean, they engaged in panels and discussions addressing fundamental inquiries: What defined Morrison and Césaire’s diasporic vision, and how did it shape their artistic and political endeavors? Furthermore, they explored the influence of Morrison and Césaire on other African Diasporic writers, as well as the contemporary benefits and challenges of maintaining cultural connections within the Diaspora.

Surafel Wondimu Abebe, Assistant Professor of Performance Studies and Theory at The Africa Institute (GSU), UAE presented his research on *“Imagining Multiple Futures: Reconfiguring Africa in African Diaspora Studies.”* Abebe, holding a Ph.D. in Performance Historiography, brings extensive expertise in exploring the intersections of performance, culture, and identity within African contexts.

Philathia Bolton, Inaugural Toni Morrison Senior Fellow at The Africa Institute (GSU), UAE, and Associate Professor of English at The University of Akron, Ohio, shared insights on *“The Role of Humanities Research Opportunities and Institutional Alliances in Building Connections in the African Diaspora.”* Bolton’s work focuses on 20th-century African-American literature and critical race studies, highlighting Morrison’s significant influence on cultural discourse.

The three-day symposium also featured keynote speakers Edwidge Danticat, Haitian American novelist and Morrison scholar, and Daniel Maximin, Guadeloupean novelist, poet, and Césaire scholar. Additionally, three Martiniquais artists presented during the event: Poet Marie Line Ampigny, mask maker Sylviane Eneleda, and sculptor Laurent Valère. Another highlight was the rededication of the “Bench by the Road,” originally placed by the Toni Morrison Society in honor of Césaire’s 100th Birthday in 2013.

THE AFRICA INSTITUTE CO-LAUNCHED “EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED” PODCAST WITH LIGHT WORK, SPOTLIGHTING AFRICAN ARTISTS AND CURATORS AT THE 60TH VENICE BIENNALE



In July 2024, The Africa Institute, Global Studies University, Sharjah, in collaboration with Light Work, launched a limited podcast series titled *Everything is Connected: African Artists and Curators in the 60th edition of the Venice Biennale*. The six-part series, hosted by New York-based writer and curator Folasade Ologundudu, was released across major platforms including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and Amazon Music.

Produced in the lead-up to and during the opening of the Biennale, the podcast featured in-depth conversations with artists and curators from across the African continent and diaspora. Guests included Aindrea Emelife (Nigeria), Azu Nwagbogu (Republic of Benin), the South African collective MADEYOULOOK, and Wael Shawky (Egypt), among others.

The series explored the creative strategies and societal contexts that shaped the work of participants at the 60th Venice Biennale, which saw the largest representation of African countries in the Biennale’s history. Through these conversations, the podcast addressed key themes including African modernism, indigenous knowledge systems, historical revision through art, and postcolonial identity.

The podcast was part of The Africa Institute’s wider efforts to engage with contemporary African and diaspora cultural production through research, programming, and public scholarship.

Scan the QR code to listen to episodes



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VISIT US

Our campus is located in
Al Manakh, Sharjah.
Open Monday to Thursday,
8:30 am - 5:30 pm

Location map



