



Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

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AFRO
FUTURES
FASHION x HAIR x DESIGN

Re-Coding African Fashion and Hairstyles **Screening, Presentations, Performances, and Discussions**

The event presents artistic and academic approaches that critically question African fashion and hairstyles as well as the related discourses from a contemporary and historical perspective. With discussions and Q & A from the audience.

Friday, October 18, 2019

16.00–17.30h

Welcome

Mwangi Hutter (artists, Ludwigshafen): Video screening “This Contemplated Self”

Carol Tulloch (Chelsea College of Arts, London): “Back to the Future: Natural Hair in the 21st Century”

18.00–19.30h

Elke Gaugele (Academy of Fine Arts Vienna): “Fashion and Postcolonial Critique”

Noliwe Rooks (Africana Studies & Research Center, Cornell University): “Playing with Race, Battling Aesthetics”

20.00–21.30h

Tamar Clarke-Brown, Isaac Kariuki (artists, London/Nairobi): “CBT & coding for (in)visibility”

Maseho (artist/voice performer, Hamburg), Saliou Cissokho (musician, Hamburg): “It’s a Brand – not just a Continent – Storytelling about textile design made in Africa through the ages”; performance

Moderated by Cornelia Lund

Concept: Cornelia Lund

Event in English

Meeting point: Vortragssaal, Kunstgewerbemuseum

Project partners: Goethe Zentrum Kampala,
32° East Ugandan Arts Trust (Kampala), Wakh’Art (Dakar),
fluctuating images (Berlin), Fashion Africa Now (Hamburg)

Funded by the TURN Fund of the



Re-Coding African Fashion and Hairstyles

Abstracts:

Carol Tulloch:

Back to the Future: Natural Hair in the 21st Century

Natural hair is part of the DNA of black people. To do what is natural and to wear one's hair in the texture one was born with has, and continues to be, a complex issue, for example as a focus of degradation during the periods of slavery and colonialism or a style activist tool for black agency and freedom during the 1960s and 1970s, which included styles from Africa that indicated traditions and cultural heritage. In the 21st century it is a growing form of female liberation, across the African Diaspora, from the dictates of what some believe to be a sign of enhanced black femininity, relaxed hair. Through historical and contemporary references, and personal experience I want to explore the meaning of natural hairstyles for black women now.

Carol Tulloch, writer and curator, is Professor of Dress, Diaspora and Transnationalism at the University of the Arts London based at Chelsea College of Arts. She is also an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Her recent work includes 'Style Activism: The Everyday Activist Wardrobe of the Black panther Party and Rock Against Racism Movement' in *Fashion and Politics* (2019), co-editor of *The Persistence of Taste: Art, Museums and Everyday Life After Bourdieu* (2018), the exhibition *Jessica Ogden: Still* (2017), the monograph *The Birth of Cool: Style Narratives of the African Diaspora* (2016), the book and exhibition *Syd Shelton: Rock Against Racism* (2015). <http://professorcaroltulloch.com/>

Elke Gaugele:

Fashion and Postcolonial Critique

How to shift contemporary fashion research practices towards decolonizing and decentering perspectives that take into account postcolonial points of view? Elke Gaugele, Professor for Fashion and Styles at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, outlines a framework for critical global fashion research from a decolonizing perspective. *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique* (Sternberg 2019; ed. Elke Gaugele and Monica Tilton) makes a programmatic intervention into contemporary fashion theory and challenges the received categories and orders of fashion and design. It provides a significant overview on the different articulations of contemporary postcolonial fashion critique and analyses fashion as a cultural, historical, social and political phenomenon involved in and affected by histories of colonial domination, anti-colonial resistance, processes of decolonization, migration and globalization. From de-colonial counter archives up to the postcolonial imaginaries of contemporary fashion media it also highlights practical art and design-based modes of decolonization and globalization critique in the journalistic, photographic and artistic work of fashion practitioners.

Elke Gaugele is professor for Fashion and Styles at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. As a cultural anthropologist, writer, curator, and researcher she works internationally on postcolonial fashion critique, practice based fashion theory, and the ethics and global politics of fashion. She is project leader of the Austrian Center for Fashion Research (ACfFR) and a researcher of the DFG-Network "Entangled Histories of Art and Migration: Forms, Visibilities, Agents" (2018-2021). She has been awarded a Lise Meitner habilitation scholarship (2005/06) and a Maria-Goeppert-Mayer Professorship (2004). Publications include: *Fashion as Politics: Dressing Dissent*. Special Issue of *Fashion Theory – The Journal of Dress, Body and Culture* Vol. 23, 2019 (co-ed. with Monica Tilton); *Fashion and Postcolonial Critique* (Sternberg 2019) co-ed. with Monica Tilton; *Critical Studies. Kultur- und Sozialtheorie im Kunstfeld* (VS 2016) co-ed. with Jens Kastner; *Aesthetic Politics in Fashion* (Sternberg 2014).

Maseho and Saliou Cissokho:

It's a Brand – not just a Continent – Storytelling about textile design made in Africa through the ages

Whether she laments the destruction of the textile industry in cotton blues or demands copyright protection through ethno branding, Maseho's storytelling weaves together different aspects of the meaning of clothing from different African countries in an amusing but also thought-provoking way – like threads on a loom, in order to clothe the audience mentally into a robe of memory and vision of the future. How a quarrel between two kings gave rise to Adinkra, how a white pleated skirt became a symbol of resistance for a people. How Africans disempowered colonial fashion paternalism by simply subordinating it to their aesthetics and transforming it into new “traditional” clothing. The extremely profitable benefits of the almost inexhaustible African creativity have long been enjoyed by the fashion industry on other continents – will this change?

Maseho may not have the solution, but she shares a vision of the future, accompanied musically by the Kora virtuoso Saliou Cissokho, a Senegalese musician and music teacher from a Griot family. He is a master of classical compositions from the historical time of the kings as well as of fusion with other contemporary musical styles such as rock, jazz or blues.

Mwangi Hutter:

This Contemplated Self

Video screening: Neger, 4:15 min; Wildlife, 1:30 min; Headskin, 6 min; Nothing Solid, 6 min; This Contemplated Self, 6 min; Touching Color in Dark, 9 min

Mwangi Hutter utilizes their last names to create a new, shared persona. This revised identity has enabled the artists to push the boundaries of what it means to work collaboratively, what it means to be a two-bodied artist in today's culture. According to Mwangi Hutter, they function as a responsive social body; they consciously “use themselves as the sounding board to reflect on changing societal realities, creating an aesthetics of self-knowledge and interrelationship.” The artist often uses the body to “deal with the subjects of border-crossing and finding identity, which both can be understood in a political, as well as a very personal, intimate sense oscillating between violence, nature, dualism, individuality, and love.

In early works such as ‘Neger’ Mwangi Hutter sardonically performed, exploited, and problematized modes of institutionalized racism generated by majority white Germans, the perceived norm of whiteness, and the historically unchallenged European mythologies of the “primal” associated with Africanness. This generation of work drew on what Senegalese architect, art critic, and curator N’Goné Fall calls “the colonial legacy”: “[It] is like a thorn in the flesh for both sides. Colonialism brought in its wake a host of other ‘isms’: primitivism, exoticism, racism, imperialism, and totalitarianism. Moving beyond the isms is the challenge that the new generation of female artists is taking up.” Repositioning all early works as a product of Mwangi Hutter, not simply Mwangi, reinforces the necessity to see and critique racism and discrimination in contemporary Germany as a topic for all Germans, despite race, gender, or cultural backgrounds. In this way, Mwangi Hutter's larger body of work functions beyond the finite biographical history of either artist, reinforcing the idea of oneness that embraces white/black, male/female, German/African, husband/wife, father/mother; the artist Mwangi Hutter is all of the above.

If the first decade of Mwangi Hutter's work actively resisted forms of political and social oppression based on race and gender, the more recent work such as “This immutable self” and “Touching Color in Dark” has pursued the theme of connectedness. This might in part have to do with the importance of Mwangi Hutter's family, particularly their four children and the role that they play as a new generation living in Germany with a transcontinental cultural heritage. The evolving and prolific work of Mwangi Hutter has mirrored the growth of their family and their conscious decision to actively balance work and career, atypical in many ways for artists of their stature playing today on a global art stage. In this sense, the visionary power of Mwangi Hutter is their collaborative effort to become more socially and politically engaged as they operate in a transnational world, thinking critically as to how people might work better together across differences.

The sound element of these video works reinforce this content: “A feeling of loneliness brought me here, or why have I come to this place? To be near. My voice in your ear, your meaning in my expression; there is a deep longing to commune.” For certain, Mwangi Hutter’s strategy of the one artist/two body construct radically disrupts and resists fixed notions of race, gender, age, and cultural background in infinite ways. Their work has also come to emphasize philosophical ideas around oneness and existence— just what the world needs now, perhaps more than ever.

— Brett M. Van Hoesen, “The Politics and Poetics of Mwangi Hutter’s One Artist / Two Body Construct.” *Nka – Journal of Contemporary African Art*, v. 44 (Spring 2019), 108–119.

Brett M. Van Hoesen is an associate professor of art history and a faculty associate in the Gender, Race, and Identity Program at the University of Nevada, Reno

Noliwe Rooks:

Playing with Race, Battling Aesthetics will offer a few vignettes and examples of how race and capitalism complicate the “looking relations” involved with Black hair, creativity and fashion. The vignettes will show that there have long been consequences both within and outside side of Black communities in the African diaspora for wearing one’s race wrong, and hairstyles are often the means others use to determine whether we are wearing a right, or wrong, racial identity. The presentation will end by offering tips for how to play with adornment on the battlefield of racial capital.

Noliwe Rooks is an interdisciplinary scholar whose work explores how race and gender impact and are impacted by civic culture, social history, and political life in the United States. She is the author of *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture and African American Women* and other books. Currently, she is Director of American Studies at Cornell University, where she is a professor of Africana Studies and Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Tamar Clarke-Brown and Isaac Kariuki:

CBT & coding for (in)visibility

Join us for an open session where we’ll share research and influences crucial to the development of the project ‘CBT:Pull Requests’. ‘CBT’ is a fake digital startup and performance installation combining the practices of braiding and computer coding, an experiment in cybersecurity. Recognising hair braiding as both a historical and cultural tradition that has spread throughout the African Diaspora, and also an ancient, constructive technology, the project speculates the emancipatory potential of braiding in a time of intimate digital surveillance. We’ll discuss the duelling histories of privacy and surveillance, it’s ubiquity in popular culture and how we can use everyday practices and vocabularies like braiding to alleviate, not reproduce our anxieties.

Navigating through affective ecosystems and sites of hope, Tamar Clarke-Brown is a London based artist, writer, and curator. Her interdisciplinary work focuses on experimental futurisms, intimate choreographies, and diasporic practices. Tamar has worked with institutions including the Serpentine Galleries and Autograph ABP and presented at the ICA, South London Gallery, Tate Galleries, Kadist (Paris), and Bard College Berlin. She contributes to platforms such as i-D, gal-dem, and AQNB.

Isaac Kariuki is a visual artist and writer living between Nairobi and London. His work centers on surveillance and Internet culture as it relates to the Global South. He has exhibited at the Tate Modern, Kadist (Paris), and Kampala Art Biennale, among others. His writing has appeared in publications including *Dazed Magazine* and *New York Magazine*.