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WHAT'S NEWS

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

Alyssa K. Barry

Dear Readers,

For this new issue, we travel from Mali to Kenya, via Tunisia, Benin, Botswana, Tanzania, Cameroon and Senegal, to give voice once again to African youth but also to one of our elders: *Souayibou Varissou*, Executive Director of the African World Heritage Fund.

Launched in 2016, this intergovernmental institution aims to address the challenges faced by African countries in the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, in particular the under-representation of African sites on the World Heritage List and the needs in terms of conservation and management of these sites.

In a few years, the African World Heritage Fund has been able to establish itself as one of the main actors in the capacity building of experts from our continent, including youth, notably through activities such as the African World Heritage Youth Forum in which several of us have had the chance to participate in the past.

And because finally, as the African proverb says: "*Alone we go faster; together we go further*", we would like to thank through this issue all the institutions that are working to ensure the future of African heritage on a daily basis by involving more of the continent's emerging professionals and by creating opportunities dedicated to them.

Enjoy your reading!

5 QUESTIONS TO ABDOULAYE CISSE

interviewed by Alyssa K. Barry

From the Ecole Supérieure d'Ingénierie, d'Architecture et d'Urbanisme de Bamako to the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Grenoble... Who is Abdoulaye Cisse?

Abdoulaye Cissé is an Architect who graduated from the École Supérieure d'Ingénierie, d'Architecture, et d'Urbanisme (ESIAU) in 2012. Passionate about earthen architecture and heritage, UNESCO's programme for the rehabilitation of destroyed cultural heritage and the safeguarding of ancient manuscripts in northern Mali was a great opportunity for me to participate in several training workshops on traditional earthen architecture conservation techniques and the special training of Malian experts at CRAterre on heritage reconstruction strategy during 14 days in July 2014. My stay in Timbuktu for the technical supervision of the rehabilitation works of mausoleums, manuscript libraries and old houses in the medina reinforced my capacity on the knowledge of the earth material, local building cultures, knowledge and know-how on the conservation of architectural heritage from February to November 2015. My collaboration with Mr. Mamadou KONE, architect, expert in heritage at AUDEX SARL Agency, also contributed to my training in this profession and motivated my enrolment in the Diploma of specialization in earthen architecture and heritage at CRAterre-ENSAG.

Why did you choose to specialize in earthen architecture?

My participation in the activities of the programme for the rehabilitation of the destroyed heritage in the north of Mali facilitated my approach to the International Centre for Earthen Construction (CRAterre), with whom I contributed to the writing of the Timbuktu Construction Guide and to several cultural heritage conservation activities in Mali. To make my dream of becoming a heritage expert a reality, I enrolled in the DSA Architecture de terre et Patrimoine (2016-2018). This adventure was a great opportunity to meet and network professionally which enriched my address book.



I was able to carry out several diagnostic and evaluation missions of World Heritage sites in Mali, Niger, Benin and then collaborate with several international organizations such as UNESCO, AIMF, ALIPH, Luxembourg Red Cross, etc. My love for this profession allowed me to participate in professional trainings and international conferences such as TERRA 2016, TERRA EDUCATION 2018, the Scientific Symposium at the ICOMOS General Assembly (GA) in New Delhi in 2017. I have proposed several scientific papers in these conferences and publication of a few books on earthen architecture and heritage. I am a member of ICOMOS MALI since 2015 and currently the deputy secretary general of the committee, member of several international scientific committees (ISCEAH, PRERICO, Climate Change Working Group) and of the Emerging Professionals Working Group (EPWG) created in 2017 at the GA in New Delhi.

What is the situation of earthen architectural heritage in Mali today?

Mali has 4 sites inscribed on the World Heritage List: the ancient cities of Timbuktu and Djenné, the Bandiagara cliff, and the Tomb of the Askia, essentially cultural sites. Mali's heritage is defined by its remarkable earthen architecture as evidenced by the emblematic mosques erected in Timbuktu, Djenné, Gao, Niono, etc. Dwelling houses, mausoleums, granaries, altars, and towns entirely built and maintained for centuries until today thanks to the courage of traditional masons and communities.

Since 2012, Mali has been facing a multi-secular crisis that threatens its heritage with the occupation of its northern part by the Great Sahara Islamic State, which has destroyed 12 of the 16 mausoleums on the World Heritage List. Thanks to the efforts of UNESCO and the international community, actions have been undertaken to safeguard the heritage and revitalize the socio-economic fabric. As a professional in this field, I have participated in several missions for architectural diagnosis and needs assessment; training of masons; and monitoring of conservation works on the 4 World Heritage sites and several national heritage sites. Despite its efforts, Mali has 3 sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

You are a member of FACT sahel+. Can you tell us more about this network of earthen construction experts?

FACT SAHEL+ is a network of actors specialized in earthen construction in the Sahel and beyond. This network is made up of builders, masons, architects, craftsmen, teachers, artists, students, civil servants, engineers, urban planners, producers, contractors, NGOs, etc. They are implementing a participatory method of building with earth. They are setting up a participatory method of promotion and communication that allows earth construction enthusiasts and actors to dialogue and share the knowledge and know-how of this practice. It serves as a platform for disseminating and promoting the constructive cultures and materials used in earthen construction. This network has enabled the organization of several festivals on the traditional decoration of masons in Siby, the organization of the earthen construction prize (TERRA Award Sahel +) in 2019, and the publication of the book "Building with earthen materials in the Sahel".

A message for African Youth?

I strongly encourage African youth to work for the valorisation of their very rich and varied culture for the development of the continent. The objective of this network of emerging professionals is to help African youth to own their history and culture. All the cultural wealth of Africa is found in its tangible and intangible heritage. Indeed, the natural and cultural variety of the continent raises questions about the contribution of African civilisations to cultural evolution. The challenges related to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage are enormous, Africa remains the continent least represented on the World Heritage List with 8% of its properties inscribed and 25% of its properties on the List in Danger. I propose a synergy of action for the conservation of cultural values and the promotion of tourism in the face of the challenges of climate change, illicit trafficking of goods, armed conflicts, etc.



SENIORS' VOICE

interviewed by Avenir G. Meikengang

Of Beninese nationality, Souayibou Varissou, is an archaeologist and heritage manager, graduated from the University of Abomey-Calavi (Benin) and Senghor University in Alexandria (Egypt). He began his career as a teacher at the University of Abomey-Calavi and at the School of African Heritage, while also serving as curator of the Jardin des Plantes et de la Nature in Porto-Novo from 1998 to 2005. In 2006, he joined the Delegation of the European Union in Cotonou where he was deputy coordinator of the Support Programme for Decentralized Cultural Initiatives (PSICD). In 2009, he joined the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) as Head of Programmes and then Head of Partnerships before being appointed Executive Director in 2018.



- **With a dual role of researcher and professional, what are the reasons that motivated your professional orientations?**

My professional choice is dictated by three main reasons. First, the inspiration instilled in the young high school student and then in the student that I was by model teachers. Allow me to name the late Jean-Pierre Koukoui, my high school history and geography teacher whose professionalism steered me towards this sector after my baccalaureate. I would also like to quote Dr Alexis Adandé, an archaeologist whose rigor and leadership have awakened in me this unquenchable thirst to serve the development of Africa and more generally the development of disadvantaged groups by contributing to the restoration of their bruised identities. Heritage has therefore naturally positioned itself as the best discipline and angle of expression of my natural mission.

Then, I deeply believe that young people constitute the spearhead of all societies, particularly those in Africa. I believe that a youth aware of its identity markers will chart its own path to salvation. Therefore, it is important to identify with young people the opportunities that only self-sacrifice at work and participatory commitment can bring to fruition. In an Africa where despair rubs shoulders daily with the most impressive successes, in an Africa where the dirtiest ignorance rubs shoulders with the most dazzling lights on every street corner, it is important to find the strategic levers which, within a tumultuous youth, are likely to reinforce our reasons for smiling together as a winning community.

My third source of motivation is rather the opportunity presented by Africa 2009, a building conservation Program in sub-Saharan Africa that has trained hundreds of professionals. The vision of the program's leaders and the opportunities given to young participants such as yours truly, who have risen to positions of increasing responsibility, have boosted my commitment to African heritage. It is a sacred duty to quote inspiring seniors such as Joseph King and Webber Nodoro (then in charge of the Program at ICCROM), George Abungu (then Chairman of the Board) and Alain Godonou (then Director of the School of African Heritage).

I must confess that it was the combination of these sources and elements that motivated my relatively reckless decision to join the African World Heritage Fund in a then unfamiliar country in February 2009 on a 6-month renewable contract when I had a rather comfortable salary and status in my country.

- What have been the main challenges and lessons learned?


The biggest challenge in my career has been the imperative to achieve goals in contexts where no one does not hold all the keys. Circumstances and collaborations are important variables that one often has to play with in order not to lose one's bearings. In particular, the field of culture and heritage is very sensitive as it touches on aspects of identity, pride, recognition and social cohesion. Culture and heritage are therefore permanently exposed to the risk of appropriation or even manipulation, while the sustain resources are not always available. This dichotomy between the sometimes-disproportionate expectations of the actors/beneficiaries in relation to the budgets allocated to the culture and heritage sector constitutes a permanent challenge, and this gives even more favour to the achievements of the various actors who fight on a daily basis for cultural and heritage expressions. This is not an easy task, as the expectations of stakeholders are generally high, which increases the tension at the level of administrators and managers. I have experienced these tensions at all stages of my professional life, where the imperative to work in a healthy environment has always been challenged by the plural and sometimes contradictory decisions of the stakeholders involved, including sometimes those who are likely to play a strategic role on the Board.

The biggest lesson is that consistent and honest work never betrays. It takes a little humility and a dose of perseverance to achieve one's mission and succeed in one's mandate. It is also important that the well-being of communities is the ultimate goal of any development project through culture or heritage. Any emphasis on the "me" will fade in the long run. This is even more true in the field of World Heritage, which introduces a requirement for excellence both in terms of conservation and protection mechanisms and in terms of empowering stakeholders, including local communities.

- The FMFA is now one of the largest intergovernmental institutions in Africa with a large number of Programs in favor of young people, academics, World Heritage site managers, etc. What are the main issues and outcomes of the flagship Programs?

You are right to identify the AWHF as a key institution in the culture and heritage sector in Africa. I recall that the Fund was launched in 2006 in South Africa with the aim of providing technical and financial assistance to the member countries of the African Union in their efforts to meet the challenges imposed by the implementation of the World Heritage Convention on our continent. These include the under-representation of African sites on the World Heritage List and shortcomings in the conservation and management of these sites. The AWHF was launched in South Africa through a concerted effort by UNESCO and the African Union. The vision that remains is as follows: "Through investment and effective management, African World Heritage sites will be a catalyst in transforming the image of the continent and a vehicle to drive socio-economic growth and sustainable development for the benefit of the people." In addition to its mission to protect African heritage in accordance with the World Heritage Convention, the Fund must therefore work for the integral development of the continent, which makes it a player in the African Union's Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

The AWHF's Programs include professional capacity building of African institutions and managers for the benefit of communities. Our training and grants are geared towards new inscriptions of African properties on the World Heritage List, better conservation and management of sites and the generation of resources by and for communities. Among the flagship actions that have produced convincing results, I would like to highlight the course on the preparation of properties for the World Heritage List and the actions in favour of young people.



Personally, I dream of an African heritage managed by its own children and whose determinants are appropriated by Africans themselves working beyond political borders and language barriers.

As for the course, which is a Program initiated in 2008, its success cannot be measured only by the still insufficient number of African properties enrolled, but also by the capacity of Africans to initiate and conduct enrolment projects themselves. The task is not easy in our administrative and economic context, but several countries are already distinguishing themselves in this sense, including Kenya, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon. I can only encourage African institutions and professionals to take more responsibility for World Heritage processes on the continent. I call for the cooperation of all institutions to contribute to the establishment of a critical mass to consolidate the achievements and build the future.

Concerning actions in favour of young people, the Fund makes available the Moses Mapesa Educational Grant, which, since 2016, has already enabled some twenty young Africans to complete their Masters and PhD training in the field of World Heritage. I cannot forget the Youth Forums and the gradual insertion of young beneficiaries into the Fund's Programs in a perspective of continuous capacity building. The annual Youth Forum has become a flagship project bringing together some 40 young Africans selected on the basis of their commitment to African heritage. Reflections are underway to strengthen the pedagogical content of the forum in the sense of a real acquisition of knowledge and know-how in the field of conservation and promotion of World Heritage in the African context.

- The year 2023 marks the beginning of the pledges made by African States for the next 50 years of World Heritage. What is your vision as Director General of the FPMA?

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Convention in Africa was marked by several events that produced a series of declarations during meetings held in 2022, including May in Cape Town (South Africa), October in Yaoundé (Cameroon), November in Saint-Louis (Senegal) and December in Arusha (Tanzania). These declarations insist on the aspects of representation of African heritage, better protection in contexts sometimes weakened by conflicts and economic and health crises, gender equity and the role of young generations, etc.

Personally, I dream of an African heritage managed by its own children and whose determinants are appropriated by Africans themselves working beyond political borders and language barriers. I dream of an Africa that establishes its autonomous system of heritage recognition by taking into account the aspects of protection and integration. I dream of an Africa without borders, sharing common references and constituting a critical engine in the dynamics of thought and action at the double continental and global level. I also dream of an Africa that cares about its youth and is therefore significantly involved in the appropriation and processes of World Heritage so that the Africa we want is deeply rooted in its heritage foundations.

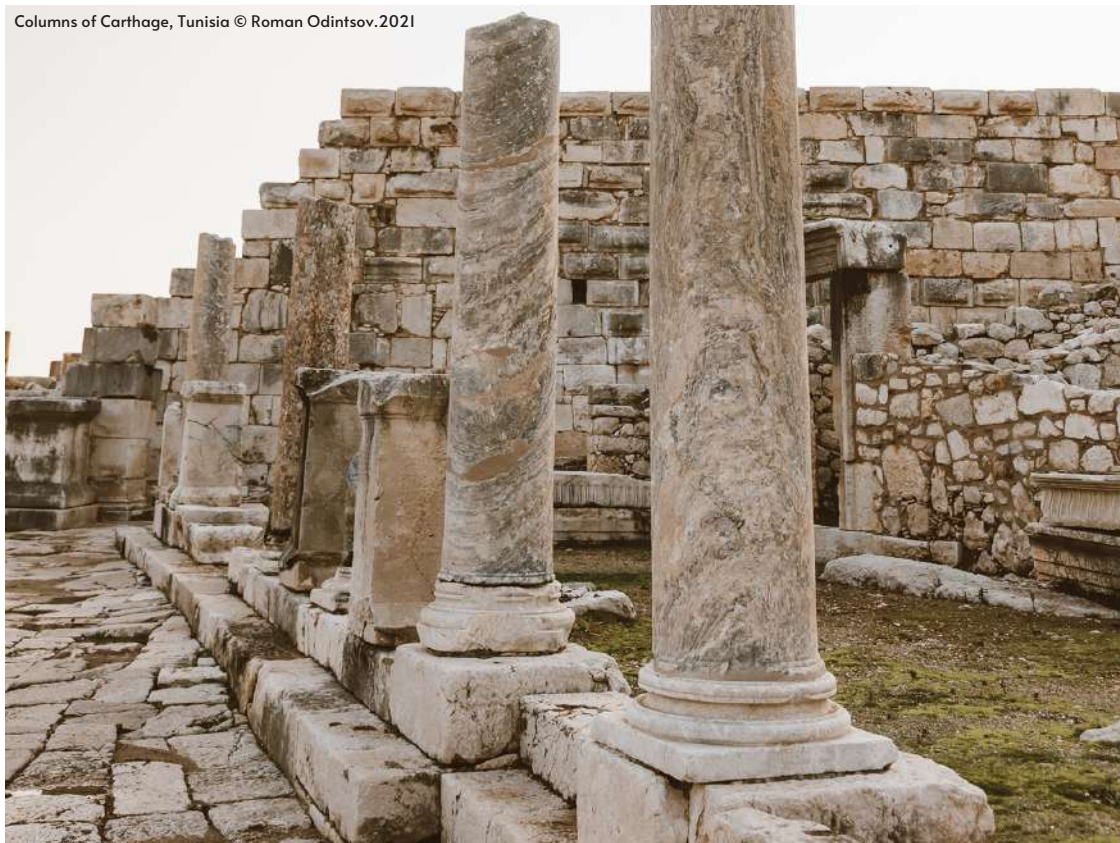
- A message for African youth?

The satisfaction of the service rendered is commensurate with the responsibility occupied. I have realized this on my own journey and I wish that the most deserving among the young people benefit from the grace to grow in responsibility. Hope and perseverance at work never betray. As you are the majority and the spearhead of our continent, it is important that you take your responsibilities in African and global leadership including in the heritage sector. Isn't it rightly said that nothing is impossible with a valiant heart ?



DID YOU KNOW? THE COLUMNS OF CARTHAGE

Jean-Paul Lawson



Located on the archaeological site of Carthage in Tunisia, scientists date the existence of the columns to the Roman period (antiquity). The monument, which stands on Juno Hill in Carthage, consists of a set of twin columns topped by Corinthian capitals that divide a vast rectangular hall into three naves.

For many archaeologists, the function of this building is still unknown. Many existing hypotheses equate it with a thermal bath or a civil basilica (a place that in ancient times was used for judicial or public hearings). It was only in 1921-1922 that the team of the Antiquities Department of the Tunisian National Heritage Institute, under the supervision of the French archaeologist Louis Poinssot, cleared the building and had the ruins classified as a historical monument.

Intrinsically linked to the "Mosaic of the Horses", the group of columns is part, with 19 other elements including the Amphitheatre, the Punic necropolises, the merchant port and the Baths of Antoninus, of the archaeological complex of Carthage inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1979 as a cultural site under criteria (ii), (iii) and (vi). An important collection of archaeological objects taken from the whole archaeological site is today exhibited in the National Museum of Bardo in Tunisia.



HIGHLIGHTS ON THE YOUTH MUSEUM FORUM "DIGITIZATION & ONLINE PRESENCE"

Alyssa K. Barry

WEBINAIRE

NUMÉRISATION ET PRÉSENCE EN LIGNE

DIGITALIZATION AND ONLINE PRESENCE

27 Janvier 2023 / 27th January 2023
14h30- 16h00

SCAN QR CODE
ID de réunion : 892 0321 6573
Code secret : 71052068

SPEAKERS / PANÉLISTES

TIÉNO JOSEYE
Ingénieur Culturel
Cultural Engineer

CHAO TAVIANA MAINA
Spécialiste du patrimoine numérique
Specialist in digital heritage

DAVID GAGNEUR
Spécialiste de l'ingénierie documentaire et numérisation des fonds iconographiques
Specialist in documentary engineering and digitization of iconographic collections

YOUTH MUSEUM FORUM

We are now in the digital age, almost everything is now online. Digitalization of museums is a welcome development because the artifact or the museum objects will be safe from damage or stealing since the visitor can only see them either online or through digital devices. The chance of visiting museums will be easier since you can access them online, this will therefore help museums to know the real number of visitors both online and onsite.



Shehu Ahmad Abba



Mtenguzi Zuhura

I think museum digitization is crucial in preserving and conserving the collections that are found in our museums. For example, objects, archives, libraries, can all be protected for future generations. We are now in a globalized world so we automatically entered in a modern digital era. Technology now makes our life easier, and museums are one of the institutions which benefit from it. Digitization in museums not only reduces people's difficulties in accessing information but it also saves valuable time. However, there are some African places where digital technologies are not being fully utilized. Therefore, digital literacy should be sensitized and promoted not only among educated persons but also in the general public because its importance will increase day by day. Digitization offers a flexible and interactive access to museums collections and prevents them from damaging by handling or other means.



Tscholofelo Kenathetswe

Digitization has revolutionized many industries and it has made service provision very convenient to the public. For this, I would say digitizing museum collections brings convenience to the public as it brings in various communications tools that can be used by the diverse communities, young, old and those living with disabilities. This further supports that digitization of the collections can reach even far areas, even those remote at any time needed for access by the general public without them taking long and expensive travels to museum centres. Public enquiries on museum collections can also be efficiently done through the advanced digital tools, hence the convenience of digitization.

However, this digitisation does not only have positive effects. Although it offers a very wide availability of artefacts, it also offers a hyper-choice to the consumer which can be a double-edged sword. Indeed, the consumers can find themselves in a "digital museum noise", i.e. too many objects in which they can no longer find their way around, not knowing exactly which work to be interested in. They could therefore drown. It would therefore be important to personalize the user's experience in relation to the content they generally consult. Knowing that digital users are very impatient and demanding in terms of the immediacy of the information they seek, there is a great deal of work to be done in selecting the objects to be digitized, and in knowing how to index them in a language that is easily understandable and retrievable by the user in order to satisfy them in terms of time and quality of the offer.



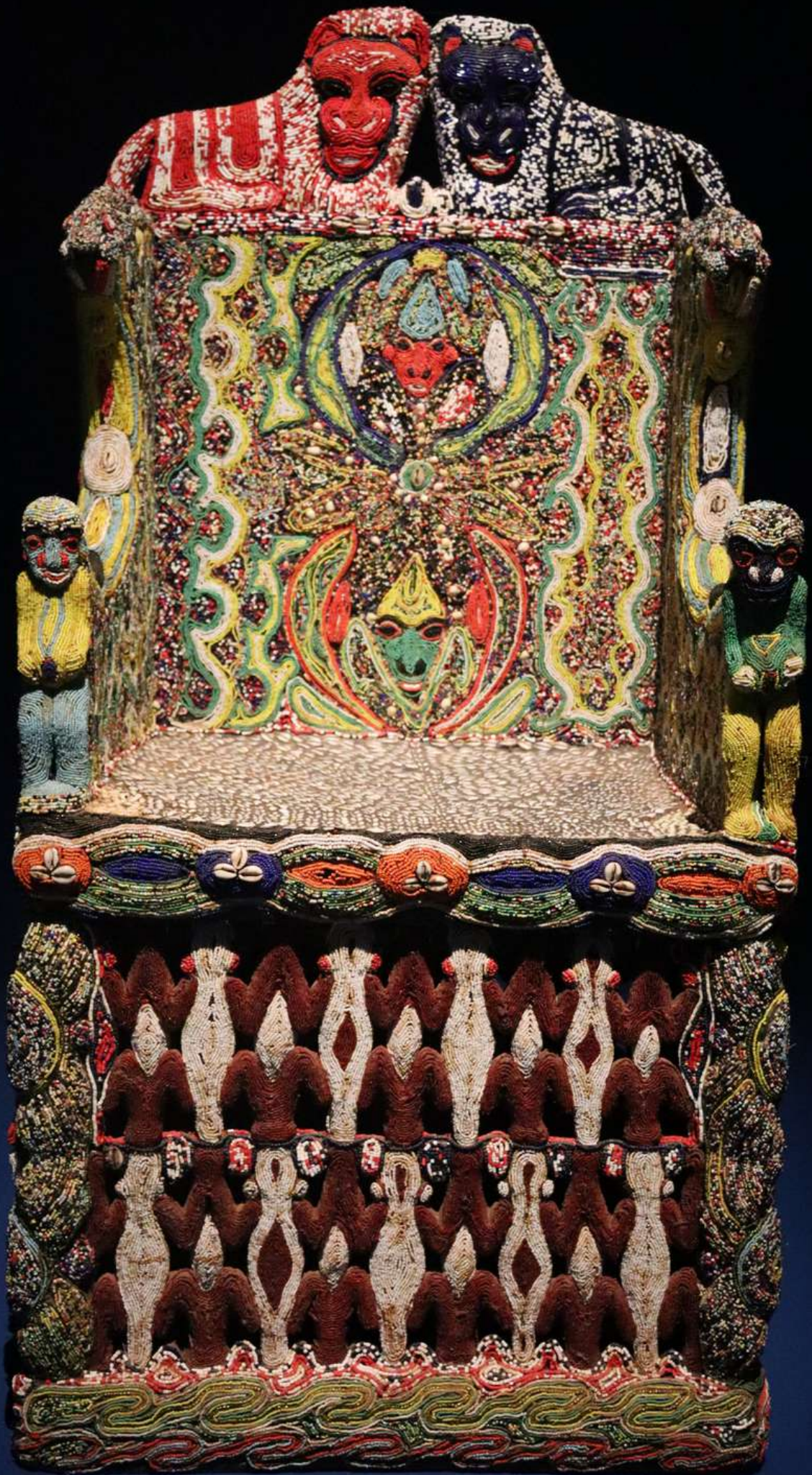
Maeva D. Pimo



Moustapha Dieye

There is a growing number of young African entrepreneurs who have created start-up companies bringing innovative inventions to the digital market. Most African museums have limited economic resources and disconnected staff. Thus, start-ups can be strategic and sustainable partners of African museums in their new missions of conservation and digital valorisation of collections. At the IFAN Théodore Monod Museum, we are currently working with a young Senegalese entrepreneur as part of a cultural and educational partnership that has enabled us to digitize part of the permanent exhibition.





INITIATIVE OF THE MONTH : SOUNDS OF FREEDOM

Florentine Okoni



The African Fiction Academy (AFA) is an organization that promotes and supports a diverse range of art forms inspired by Africa and its diaspora. Founded in 2018, AFA brings together creatives from all over the world to learn, create, and be inspired by Africa's rich cultural heritage.

The Sounds of Freedom Project

One of the main ways that AFA supports creatives is through its audio film series project called "Sounds of Freedom". The Sounds of Freedom is a story inspired by the lives and experiences of the young men and women who fought for Kenya's independence. Through this story, AFA hopes to bring Kenyans closer to their history by welcoming them to immersive experiences that allow them to come face to face with the realities of what it took to liberate Kenya from British imperialism. This project is an opportunity for creatives to collaborate with AFA and create works of art inspired by the fight for freedom, specifically the lives and experiences of the young men and women who fought for Kenya's independence. It's open to creatives of all experience levels, providing an opportunity for emerging creatives to gain recognition and exposure for their work. The AFA is unique in its focus on art inspired by African cultural heritage and its efforts to support African art and culture. African Fiction Academy is an essential platform for emerging and established creatives and the organization is a great way to meet other creatives, get feedback on their work, and learn about the cultural and creative industries in Africa.

Objectives:

- To promote and support a diverse range of art forms inspired by Africa and its diaspora.
- To provide an opportunity for artists to collaborate and create works of art inspired by the fight for freedom through its "Sounds of Freedom" project.
- To make Africa's cultural heritage more accessible and understandable to a wider audience through digital art.
- To encourage the use of digital art to preserve and promote Africa's rich cultural heritage.

Activities:

20/10/2021: Launched the Sounds of Freedom Project and premiered Episode 1

9/4/2022: Exhibited at the Nairobi Design Week 2022 and released Episode 2

1/6/2022: Launched the 'First Patriots' Paintball Experience based on the series.

Our Mission: Freedom Festival

From Black History Month all February to the Madaraka celebrations on June 1st (When Kenya gained internal self rule), and from Heroes Day on October 20th to Independence Day on December 12th, we want to invite people from all walks of life to re-discover the Sounds of Freedom experience all year round!

Our Vision: We want to introduce the Freedom Festival to all African countries, and work with creatives to recreate their independence stories through digital arts.

Contact us on Instagram: [@Soundsoffreedom_Africa](https://www.instagram.com/Soundsoffreedom_Africa)

Mutana Wanjira,

Founder and Creative Producer, African Fiction Academy

DIARY OF THE MONTH

Workshop: 3rd session on 9 February - Online Seminar Series 2022-2023 "Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development".

The Unesco Chair "Intangible Heritage and Sustainable Development" is organising the 3rd session of its seminar series on the theme: "Context is important. And so is CGI, respect, safeguarding ICH, the triple P, doing good, emotions and we". Read more about this event, [click here](#).

Webinar series Heritage and S



Monthly meeting of the ICOMOS working group of the "Our Common Dignity" Initiative - Rights-based approaches within ICOMOS

It will take place on 27 Février 2023 starting at 3pm GMT+1. To join, <https://tinyurl.com/4sebnew7>.

LATEST OPPORTUNITIES

- **Financial support for participation in the GA 2023 in Sydney: Deadline extended**

The International Secretariat has extended the application deadline for members wishing to apply for financial assistance to attend the 21st ICOMOS Triennial General Assembly in Sydney, Australia, from 31 August to 8 September 2023. The new deadline is 12 February 2023.

- **Scholarships and research contracts of the musée du quai Branly - Jacques Chirac**

Every year, the Quai Branly - Jacques Chirac Museum offers doctoral grants and postdoctoral contracts to help doctoral students and young doctors carry out original and innovative research projects. For more information on the conditions and application procedures, [click here](#). Deadline: 03 April 2023.

MASTHEAD

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