

3rd Sept. 2021
3 p.m. (CET)
10 a.m. (São Paulo)
1 p.m. (Senegal)

Ruptured Histories

*Critical Exchanges on
Issues of Decolonisation*

Part 1
Decolonisation in the Museum:
Interrogating the History of Slavery

AICA online webinar open to members and non-members worldwide

RUPTURED HISTORIES: CRITICAL EXCHANGES ON ISSUES OF DECOLONISATION

A series of Web Symposiums presented by AICA International, The Association of International Art Critics on the initiative of the Fellowship Fund Committee

Ruptured Histories Project hopes to bring together a multiplicity of stands of the global debate of Decolonisation to enable us to investigate it from different geographical and cultural vantage points.

PART 1 Decolonisation in the Museum: Interrogating the History of Slavery

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FELLOWSHIP
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Friday 3rd Sep. '21
3 PM (CET)
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AICA online webinar open to members
and non-members worldwide

DECOLONISATION IN THE MUSEUM: INTERROGATING THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY

AICA International's Fellowship Fund Committee launches the first in a series of webinars on the complex history and legacy of colonisation and current policies of decolonisation in art criticism, exhibiting and collecting.

Decolonisation in the Museum: Interrogating the History of Slavery revolves around two topical exhibitions: the 2018 exhibition *Afro-Atlantic Histories* at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo/MASP and the 2021 Slavery exhibition at the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam.

The curators of these two exhibitions **Adriano Pedrosa** (MASP) and **Valika Smeulders** (Rijksmuseum) will elaborate on the choices being made. Which audience is addressed? How to tell stories of people who had been deprived of everything, including the right to their own name? What is the role of contemporary art in the exhibition? And what was the impact on the audiences, what was the critic's response?

Two experts on the topic, **Anthony Bogues** (Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University) and **Babacar Mbaye Diop** (chair AICA Senegal, director 11th Dakar Biennale), will present their perspective on the subject. The floor will be open for a response and questions from the international audience.

The moderator will be **Karen von Veh** (University of Johannesburg), conjoint with other international members of the Fellowship Fund Committee of AICA International.

Concept Joke de Wolf and Robert-Jan Muller

[CLICK HERE FOR THE MORE DETAILED CONCEPT →](#)

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Decolonising has been defined as the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies, attitudes, mechanisms of power, of superiority, privilege of Western thought and approach. The awareness created by activist critiques of Post-Colonial debates and Subaltern Studies has today evolved into proactive Decolonisation to address a range of issues. In this context it's important to understand that Decolonisation has a history beyond the 21st Century academic discourse and critical practice as it has long been an integral part of the anti-colonial resistance and a vital part of the national consciousness of post-colonial nations.

Concept Niilofur Farrukh and Anselmo Villata

ABSTRACTS AND BACKGROUNDS: THE SPEAKER'S CONTRIBUTIONS

VALIKA SMEULDERS ON 'SLAVERY' IN RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM

Between the 17th and the 19th century, in the area around the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, under Dutch rule, people were forced into slavery. This past is looked upon from differing standpoints. In the media we see that for part of the Netherlands, it is a past that is foreign and long ago. For others it is a past that is very much alive, a past they feel it is necessary and urgent to learn more about. The Rijksmuseum was well aware of this discrepancy when head director Taco Dibbits announced in 2017 that the museum would present an exhibition on slavery. This is history that can be seen as divisive, but it is also history that can be used as an instrument to unite, to build social cohesion.

The Rijksmuseum knew that to organise this exhibition, it was imperative to bring in multiple voices. To start out, the museum saw to it that the team of curators that would bring together the exhibition, would be diverse in both their professional and personal background. In this way, we could complement each other's knowledge, and we could also question each other. We organised a think tank, again, with an array of specialties. In addition, we invested in conversations with many individual contacts, people who contributed to our work with their academic research, varying from historical to anthropological and even biological. Or expertise in genealogical research, oral history, or religion.

FOR FURTHER READING, CLICK HERE →

AFRO-ATLANTIC HISTORIES, CURATED BY ADRIANO PEDROSA

in collaboration with Ayrson Heráclito, curator; Hélio Menezes, curator; Lília Moritz Schwarcz, adjunct-curator of Histories, MASP; Tomás Toledo, curator, MASP.

The exhibition *Afro-Atlantic Histories*, on view between 29 June and 31 October 2018 at the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and at Instituto Tomie Ohtake, presented a selection of 450 works by 214 artists ranging from the 16th to 21st centuries and centered on the “ebbs and flows” among Africa, Americas, Caribbean and also Europe, to borrow the famous phrase by Pierre Verger, the French ethnologist, photographer and babalô priest who made Bahia his home.

Brazil is a central territory in the Afro-Atlantic histories, having received about 46% of the roughly 11 million Africans brought against their will to this side of the ocean throughout more than 300 years. The country was also the last to end the slave trade with the so called Golden Law of 1888, which perversely did not include any social integration plan, setting the stage for enduring economic, political and racial inequalities. On the other hand, Brazil’s leading role in those histories also sowed here a rich and lasting legacy from African cultures.

Afro-Atlantic Histories was motivated by the desire and need to draw parallels, frictions and dialogues around the visual cultures of Afro-Atlantic territories — their experiences, creations, worshipping and philosophy. The so-called Black Atlantic, to use the term coined by Paul Gilroy, is geography lacking precise borders, a fluid field where African experiences invade and occupy other nations, territories and cultures.

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ANTHONY BOGUES: HISTORY AS CATASTROPHE – HISTORICAL, MEMORY AND ARCHIVE

Racial slavery and European colonial empires shaped the modern world. As entwined social systems/assemblages, they articulated a historical process which continues in myriad of ways to shape contemporary life. Some writers and thinkers have argued that the afterlives of these forms of human domination generated by violence constitutes the wake which we inhabit. Yet when a historical process is catastrophic what can it mean to live in the wake of it? And critically can both the catastrophe and the wake be represented since both are embedded in forms of violence and negation? And within this wake what forms of art are produced? How is history understood, felt and represented? What is the relationship between living history, memory, the past and present?

Posing these questions this talk will attempt to navigate a response to these issues through an examination of the work of the Haitian American artist Edouard Duval Carrie. It will also comment on two recent major exhibitions: *Afro-Atlantic Histories* and the Slavery exhibition at the Rijksmuseum.

BABACAR MBAYE DIOP: GORÉE, THE ISLAND OF MEMORY

The island of Gorée, located 3km to the east off the coast of Dakar, found its way into European history when the Portuguese arrived in 1444 and made it a stopover on the route to the Indies. The Dutch settled there around 1627 and erected two forts for the slave trade. The French, in turn, occupied it in 1677. Gorée then became a warehouse for slaves and the merchandise of European companies; and the doorway to hell for millions of Africans. In the 18th century – the most intense period of the trade – the French and English fought over possession of the island. This continued until the beginning of the 19th century when Gorée lost all its interest for the English following the abolition of slavery. This means that, without respite, for more than three centuries – from the start of Portuguese slavery in 1536 until 1848, the date of abolition by France – 15 to 20 million Africans from all over the west of the continent were hunted down, torn away from their native land under torture, to be deported to the Americas to work on the cotton, coffee, tobacco, and sugar plantations. All of the houses on the seashore were once slaveries; there were 28 of them. The last and most famous, which is now called the House of Slaves, was erected in 1776. My intervention will focus on this building.

ABOUT SPEAKERS AND MODERATOR



Adriano Pedrosa is artistic director of Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand – MASP since 2014. Prior to that he was adjunct/co-curator of the Bienal de São Paulo (1998 and 2006), curator of exhibitions and collections for diverse institutions, last co-curator of the 12th Istanbul Biennial, and curator of the São Paulo pavilion at the 9th

Shanghai Biennale (2012). At MASP Pedrosa has organized many exhibitions, including the ongoing series dedicated to different Histories: Histories of Childhood (2016), Histories of Sexuality (2017), Afro Atlantic Histories (2018), Women’s Histories, Feminist Histories (2019), and Histories of Dance (2020).



Valika Smeulders is head of the Department of History of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. She specializes in the colonial past and its representation, museums and museum audiences. She has published on the Dutch slavery past in the Netherlands, Curaçao, Suriname, Sint Maarten, Ghana and South Africa and on Caribbean heritage in Dutch museums.

She was a member of the Dutch Commission on Colonial Collections, of the UNESCO Memory of the World Committee in the Netherlands, gave the sixth Rudolf van Lier lecture at the University of Leiden and received the Black Achievement Award in the category Education and Science.

Anthony Bogues is the Asa Messer Professor of Humanities and Critical Theory and the inaugural director of the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice at Brown University as well as visiting professor and curator at the University of Johannesburg. The author/ editor of eight books in the fields of intellectual history, political theory and art, he is currently working on two book projects, one titled *Black Critique* and the other on radical dub intellectuals and Dread history. He is the co-convenor of the exhibition project *Slavery, Colonialism and the Making of the Modern World* with the National African American Museum of History and Culture. He is a regular columnist for the South African Newspaper *Mail & Guardian* and his articles have also appeared in the *Financial Times*.



Babacar Mbaye Diop holds a doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Rouen in France. He is currently Associate Professor of Philosophy at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar. He is the author of numerous books and articles on African arts. Former secretary general of the Biennale of Contemporary African Art in Dakar (Dak'Art), he is a member of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) and is an independent curator.





Karen von Veh, moderator of this panel, is Professor of Art History and Theory in the Visual Art Department, University of Johannesburg. Her areas of research include transgressive religious iconography, gender, and post-colonial studies. Recent publications include: “Transgressive Martyrs in Diane Victor’s Wise and Foolish Virgins” In B.

Schmahmann (ed.). *Iconic Works of Art by Feminists and Gender Activists*. New York: Routledge, 2021; “The Material of Mourning: Paul Emmanuel’s Lost Men series as counter-memorials.” *Image & Text*. Vol. 34. Nov 2020; “Classical Mythology as Satire: The Realities of a ‘New’ South Africa in Diane Victor’s Birth of a Nation Series.” *IKON*. Vol.13. June 2020; “Where have all the young men gone?” In K. von Veh (Ed.). *Paul Emmanuel*. Johannesburg: WAM 2020. Concept and organisation: FFC and in particular

ABOUT THE ORGANIZERS



Joke de Wolf is an art historian and full time freelance art critic based in Amsterdam. She writes on art and exhibitions for the Dutch newspaper Trouw, the weekly magazine De Groene Amsterdammer and several other news media. Since 2019 she is president of AICA Netherlands, and member of the AICA Fellowship Fund Committee.

Robert-Jan Muller is an art historian and art critic based in Amsterdam and publishes on modern and contemporary art and design. He is a regular contributor for a widely read Dutch art magazine. In 2013 he organized a public debate on Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg and Russian anti-gay laws. In 2017 Muller published his article on the oppression of artists in Cuba. For nine years Muller has been president of AICA Netherlands and is a former member of the AICA Committee on Censorship and Freedom of Expression, and current member of AICA's Fellowship Fund Committee.



Danièle Perrier, Chair of the Fellowship Fund Committee, is an art historian, founding director of the Ludwig Museum Koblenz and writer on modern and contemporary art. She is a regular contributor for different German art magazines and editor of numerous catalogues, the Yearbooks of Künstlerhaus Schloss Balmoral and the Proceedings of the 52nd International AICA Congress Art Criticism in Times of Populism and Nationalism, published online on arthistoricum.net in July 2021 and as BoD. She is president of AICA Germany, and member of the Committees on Censorship and Freedom of Expression, Congress and Publications and Languages of AICA International.



ABOUT THE TEAM

Ruptured Histories : Critical Exchanges on Issues of

Decolonisation is an initiative of AICA International Fellowship Fund Committee (chair Danièle Perrier), in particular of Niilofur Farrukh and Anselmo Villata, with Lisbeth Rebollo-Gonçalves (ex officio), Adriana Almada, Alfredo Cramerotti, Robert-Jan Muller, Karen von Veh, Joke de Wolf.

<https://aicainternational.news/fellowship-fund>

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

To subscribe to the Web Symposium send an e-mail to aicainternational.webinar@gmail.com and you will receive a link 24 hours before the event.

Friday 3 September 2021, 3 PM (CET) 10 AM (São Paulo),
1 PM (Senegal)

Duration of the Web Symposium: 2 hours

Decolonisation in the Museum: Interrogating the History of Slavery is the first of a series of AICA webinars titled *Ruptured Histories: Critical Exchanges on Issues of Decolonisation* and are held in 2021-2022. These webinars aim at encounters between (former) colonised and colonisers in order to open up dialogue.

The following topics are planned: Unsilencing Colour: Conversations of Empowerment; Ruptured Histories: Art Academia and Museum, The Street, Dynamic Decolonisation by the People. The final project will be a physical seminar in collaboration with Karachi Biennale November 2022.

Ruptured Histories: Critical Exchanges on Issues of Decolonisation aims to include art critics from all countries, especially from those usually not fully engaged through geography, economy and social circumstances; and hopes to inspire them to be further involved with AICA.

**FURTHER
READINGS →**

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The Fellowship Fund Commission of AICA International/
International Association of Art Critics

presents

DECOLONISATION IN THE MUSEUM: INTERROGATING THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY

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Afro-Atlantic Histories presented a selection of 450 works by 214 artists, ranging from the 16th to 21st centuries, divided into eight thematic sections: Maps and margins, Everyday lives, Rites and Rhythms, Portraits, Afro-Atlantic modernisms, Routes and trances: Africas, Jamaica and Bahia, Emancipations, and Resistances and activisms. The exhibition centered on the parallels, frictions and dialogues around the visual cultures of Afro-Atlantic territories, including Africa, Americas, Caribbean and also Europe. [<https://masp.org.br/en/exhibitions/afro-atlantic-histories>]

For the first time in international history, the *Slavery* exhibition in the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam focuses on slavery in the

Dutch colonial period, a period of 250 years, covering trans-Atlantic slavery in Suriname, Brazil and the Caribbean, and Dutch colonial slavery in South Africa and Asia. The exhibition tells ten true stories from people involved in slavery in one way or the other, showing items and paintings, and presenting oral sources, poems and music.

In the webinar, the curators of these two exhibitions will first elaborate on the choices being made. Which audience is addressed? How to tell stories of people who had been deprived of everything, including the right to their own name? What is the role of contemporary art in the exhibition? And what was the impact on the audiences, what do and did the critics say?

After this, Anthony Bogues and Babacar Diop will present their perspective on the topic. Then, the floor is open for a response by the curators and questions from the international audience.

We are proud to have secured the participation of highly engaged curators, art critics and art thinkers:

- **Valika Smeulders**, Rijksmuseum, Head of the History Department and curator of the *Slavery* exhibition
- **Adriano Pedrosa**, Artistic Director Museu de Arte de São Paulo, curator of the *Afro-Atlantic Histories* exhibition
- **Anthony Bogues**, director Center for the Study of Slavery & Justice, Brown University
- **Babacar Diop**, Chair AICA Senegal, author of numerous articles on African Art and director of the 11th Dakar Biennale

Moderation will be done by Karen von Veh, Professor of Art History and Theory, University of Johannesburg, and other international members of the Fellowship Fund Commission of AICA International.

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For participation you have to register under aicainternational.webinar@gmail.com until September 1st. Your participation will be confirmed and you will receive the link one day prior to the webinar.

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VALIKA SMEULDERS ON 'SLAVERY' IN RIJKSMUSEUM AMSTERDAM

Between the 17th and the 19th century, in the area around the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, under Dutch rule, people were forced into slavery. This past is looked upon from differing standpoints. In the media we see that for part of the Netherlands, it is a past that is foreign and long ago. For others it is a past that is very much alive, a past they feel it is necessary and urgent to learn more about. The Rijksmuseum was well aware of this discrepancy when head director Taco Dibbits announced in 2017 that the museum would present an exhibition on slavery. This is history that can be seen as divisive, but it is also history that can be used as an instrument to unite, to build social cohesion.

The Rijksmuseum knew that to organise this exhibition, it was imperative to bring in multiple voices. To start out, the museum saw to it that the team of curators that would bring together the exhibition, would be diverse in both their professional and personal background. In this way, we could complement each other's knowledge, and we could also question each other. We organised a think tank, again, with an array of specialties. In addition, we invested in conversations with many individual contacts, people who contributed to our work with their academic research, varying from historical to anthropological and even biological. Or expertise in genealogical research, oral history, or religion.

FURTHER READING →

It was a challenging assignment for all who worked on it, to construct an exhibition people could recognise themselves in, about an inconceivable system buried in the past. A system in which people were turned into objects, by law. It was the state that permitted human trafficking, from generation to generation. This was legitimised by otherising parts of the worlds humanity, by pointing towards differences in skin color, features, religion. This way, ideas were created that until this day still play a role in our actions, in our thinking. This, often subconscious, ongoing, legacy substantiates the reason and urgency of this exhibition. It also explains why it was so important to realise an exhibition centered on people, on human stories: historical figures and all of their courage, resilience and greatness, but also all of their fears, egoism and failures. Universal human traits all of us can relate to. What would you or I have done, when confronted with those circumstances?

This exhibition is about a period in which injustice was legalised. It is about those who profited from the system, those who suffered by it, and those who spoke out against it. In a sense you could say that it is about perpetrators and victims, but by adding the layers of individual lives, a human being becomes so much more than his circumstances. More than one facet of their identity. Their stories become universal.

The exhibition follows ten lives, all true stories. This individual approach speaks about individual roles within a larger system. What is the influence of a singular human being, what is needed to recognise injustice, and to fight it? The first five stories help understand how the system itself worked. The second five are all counter voices, people with different backgrounds who throughout the 250 years the system lasted, dared to be free, independent thinkers. The first story focuses on how people were dehumanised and taken away from their familiar surroundings and

network, following Joao from Africa to Brazil. The second introduces the plantation system, through the life of Wally in Suriname. The third and fourth stories bring us back to the Netherlands: first we see the life of the elite in Amsterdam through Oopjen Coppit. Then the life of Paulus, a young man from Africa who is legally free in the Netherlands, but who is otherised by the use of a metal collar. The fifth story, the story of Van Bengalen shows us how all of these characteristics of colonial slavery worked under the VOC, around the Indian Ocean.

The counter voices are from different parts of the world as well. Surapati in Indonesia fought to oust the VOC. Sapali fled slavery and became the founding mother of a new society in Suriname. Tula in Curaçao led a rebellion against the system. Dirk van Hogendorp wrote and spoke about abolition in Indonesia, but changed his mind when at the end of his career he started a plantation in Brazil. Lohkay inspired entire plantations in Saint Maarten to escape. So many fled, that the island's plantation owners had no choice but to end the system in 1848, 15 years before the abolition was finally legalised. These last five stories allow us to take a critical look at the process of abolition and, *finally*, the meaning of freedom.

In my presentation, I will speak about the use of historical objects, modern art and oral history. I will also speak about research into our collection that has led us to new insights.

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AFRO-ATLANTIC HISTORIES, CURATED BY ADRIANO PEDROSA

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Brazil is a central territory in the *Afro-Atlantic histories*, having received about 46% of the roughly 11 million Africans brought against their will to this side of the ocean throughout more than 300 years. The country was also the last to end the slave trade with the so called Golden Law of 1888, which perversely did not include any social integration plan, setting the stage for enduring economic, political and racial inequalities. On the other hand, Brazil’s leading role in those histories also sowed here a rich and lasting legacy from African cultures.

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FURTHER READING →

The plural and polyphonic quality of “histórias” is also of note; unlike the English “histories”, the word in Portuguese carries a double meaning that encompasses both fiction and non-fiction, personal, political, economic, cultural as well as mythological narratives. *Histórias* possesses a processual, open and speculative quality, as opposed to the more monolithic and definitive character of the grand narrative of traditional history. In this sense, the exhibition does not aim to exhaust such an extensive and complex subject but instead tries to encourage new debates and questions so that our *Afro-Atlantic histories* can be themselves reconsidered, revised and re-written.

The exhibition avoids a chronological or geographical organisation, instead being divided into eight thematic sections which gather works from different eras, territories and media, at both institutions co-organise the project. At MASP: Maps and margins, Everyday lives, Rites and rhythms, and Portraits (first floor), along with Afro-atlantic modernisms (first sublevel) and Routes and trances: Africa, Jamaica and Bahia (second sublevel). At Instituto Tomie Ohtake: Emancipations and Resistances and activisms.

At MASP, the program included an entire year of exhibitions, talks, courses, workshops, publications and screenings on *Afro-Atlantic histories*. The program started with solo exhibitions devoted to the work of Maria Auxiliadora, Aleijadinho and Emanuel Araujo, and continued with Melvin Edwards, Sonia Gomes, Rubem Valentim, Lucia Laguna and Pedro Figari. The Anthology was a key part of the program and gathers texts by 44 authors as a result of two international conferences in 2016 and 2017. The museum itself thus became a platform that is multiple and diverse, plural and polyphonic.

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