

“Le Cameroun c’est le Cameroun” is a famous formula invented by President Paul Biya to articulate a presumed pathological matrix in which the country has been caught throughout the postcolonial era. This proverb falsely suggests that Cameroon is only speakable through Cameroon – an exceptionalist discourse frequently used by dictatorial regimes across the world. Through this careful and timely study, Annette Schemmel reconnects the country’s own visual arts history to trends, discourses and inherent blind spots in the global art system from the second half of the 20th century onward. On her way, the author also slays the myth-monument of the “Autodidact African Artist”.

Ntone Edjabe
Founder and Editor
Chimurenga

Annette Schemmel provides a highly illuminating case study of the major actors, discourses and paradigm that shaped the history of visual arts in Cameroon during the second part of the 20th century. Her book meticulously reconstructs the multiple ways of artistic knowledge acquisition – from the consolidation of the “Système de Grands Frères” in the 1970s to the emergence of more discursively oriented small artists’ initiatives which responded to the growing NGO market of social practice art opportunities in the 2000s. Based on archival research, participant observation and in depth interviews with art practitioners in Douala and Yaoundé, this study is a must read for everyone who wants to better understand the vibrant artistic scenes in countries like Cameroon, which until today lack a proper state-funded infrastructure in the arts.

Tobias Wendl
Chair for the Arts of Africa
Free University Berlin

Finally a book on informal training, a phenomenon that has proven to be so important to 20th century visual art in Cameroon!

Paul-Henri S. Assako Assako
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Annette Schemmel is invested in Africa’s contemporary cultures as art historian, curator, and writer. She holds a degree in art pedagogy from Munich Art Academy besides her art-historical dissertation from Free University Berlin, which led to the book at hand.



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Visual Arts in Cameroon

Annette Schemmel

Visual Arts in Cameroon A Genealogy of Non-formal Training 1976-2014

Annette Schemmel



**Artistic Knowledge Sharing
A Historical Case Study
of the Non-formal Training of Visual Artists
in Yaoundé and Douala, Cameroon**

zur Erlangung des Doktorgrades eingereicht
am Fachbereich Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften
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A Genealogy of Non-formal Training 1976-2014

Annette Schemmel



Langa Research & Publishing CIG
Mankon, Bamenda

To my parents

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Table of Contents

Foreword	13
Chapter 1. Introduction	15
Important Terms and Theories	19
Dismantling the Myth of the Autodidact Artist	24
Scholarship to Date	28
Methodological Reflections	36
Organisation of Chapters	44
Chapter 2.	
Antecedents: The Emergence of	
Modern Art in Cameroon	47
Ibrahim Njoya and the Bamum Drawings	50
Engelbert Mveng, an Artist/Curator in Cassock	59
Learning Art the Non-formal Way in the 1950s:	
The Case of Martin Aboosso	72
Being an Art Academic After Independence:	
The Case of Gaspar Gomán	81
The Quest for an “Authentic” National Culture in the Public	
Discourse and its Impact on Visual Art	87
The Institutional Void	98
Chapter 3.	
Collective Action and Intergenerational	
Solidarity among Artists (1976-1991)	103
President Paul Biya is the New Amadou Ahidjo:	
The Political Context	105
A Shift in Agency:	
New Organisations by Art Amateurs and Artists	106
The Système de Grands Frères	117
A Mediator between Art and Academia:	
The Grand Frère Pascal Kenfack	119
The Bohemian Koko Komegné as Grand Frère	129

The Système de Grands Frères in Comparison with Apprentice Systems	141
The Système de Grands Frères in Comparison with Academic Art Education	145
The Système de Grands Frères in Comparison with Different Types of Workshop	148
Contextualisation: Cameroon's Art World in the 1980s	152

Chapter 4.

The 1990s: The Empowerment of a New Generation

of Artists through Non-formal Training	157
The Effects of the "Smouldering Years"	158
The Shortcomings of Families, General Schooling and Art Education in Fostering Artistic Talent	163
Formative Encounters with Art Professionals from the Diaspora and the Former Imperial Countries	168
Short-term Contact Zones: Ateliers with Foreign Artists	168
The NGO doual'art: Educating Artists with Development Funds	182
Revue Noire No. 13: Récup-Art as Title Story	193
Peter Anders at the Goethe-Institut: Studio Visits and Crossover-Projects	201
Discursive Agency: A Path to Artistic Self-Empowerment	204
Cultivating Discursive Agency through Reading	205
Artistic Self-Empowerment through Collectives	209
The Discursive Agency of the Trickster Pascale Marthine Tayou	211
The Effects of a Decade of Change	214

Chapter 5.

Becoming an Artist in a "Connexionist" Age	219
Internet and Studio Programmes: Tools for a New Generation	221
Artists' Grassroots Initiatives	225
The Collective Cercle Kapsiki and the Artist-Run Space K-Factory (2005-2011)	227
Incubating Visions: The Birth and Educational Impact of ArtBakery (2003-2013)	232

Artistic Knowledge Sharing through Projects	241
“Exit Tour: Le Douala-Dakar de l’art contemporain“	
(2006)	242
“DiARTgonale: Ouvrir les Portes de l’Imaginaire”	
(2007 – 2009)	246
Becoming a Contemporary Artist	252
Contemporary Art’s Origins in Africa	258
Contemporary Art in Cameroon:	
A Discourse Analysis	261
Being Connected, Flexible and Precarious	
in the Global Field of Art	284

Chapter 6.

Learning from Cameroon’s History	
of Non-formal Training	291
Consequences of State Neglect for Art/s Education	291
Tactic Communitality instead of Auto-Didacticism	294
The Dilemmas of Critical and Socially-Engaged Art	295
Non-formal Training of Visual Artists from the 1970s	
to the 2000s: An Assessment	299
Guiding the State’s New Interest in Visual Art	304
Notes	309
Bibliography	379
Table of Figures	397
Index	401
Visual Arts in Cameroon: The Genealogy as Scheme	406

Foreword

The idea for this thesis emerged in 2010 during my first visit to Douala, Cameroon. At that time, I was travelling as a curator with the founders of the Dutch arts initiative Enough Room for Space. Friends of friends and their projects had informed us about Douala's dynamic art scene and my brief was to develop a curatorial project involving both artists from Douala and colleagues from different European countries. (The outcome of this project is gathered in the magazine issues DiARTgonale Special Edition 1 (2012) and 2 (2013).) Considering our own organisational structure as an artist association, we found ourselves drawn to Douala's artist initiatives and their spaces. Our engagement with the arts community—which ranged from giving guest lectures, visiting studio visits, and attending numerous functions at privately run art spaces—sparked countless compelling conversations. Yet these encounters left us with some urgent questions. Namely, how do artists achieve this level of skilling and self-reflection in a context without art school or art-interested bourgeoisie? How does a lack of public funding and working under precarious conditions affect the artwork and discourse produced in Cameroon? The following text pursues these questions, notably in English so as to further open this predominantly Francophone art context to readers and academics beyond the Francophonie.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Visual art can inspire open-ended aesthetic processes for both the artist and the viewer. In the words of the Cameroon-born political scientist Achille Mbembe, art has the potential “to subsume and transcend the instant [and to] open horizons of the not-yet.”¹ This potential tends to scare off those in power who would prefer to preserve the status quo. Arguably, this is one reason why the Cameroonian government, which has been ruled by the same president for more than thirty years, has remained hesitant to institute art schools and to provide cultural education for decades. Since the political upheaval of the early 1990s, politics in this country have taken on dystopian qualities, mainly due to the so-called Politics of the Belly, a form of governance allowing for the personal enrichment of the ruling class.² The Cameroonian filmmaker Jean-Pierre Bekolo has portrayed this dystopia in his unsettling science fiction movie *Les Saignantes* (2005): repressed colonial traumas, continuous economic decay, corruption, and power abuse have come to distort relationships on all levels, a utilitarian rationale governs human contacts and a strident lack of sensitivity pervades daily life. In Bekolo’s eyes, the worst scenario is for the future to resemble the present.³

Like Bekolo, many visual artists and art-lovers from civil society also have mobilised against this status quo over the past decades with their means. Lacking the support of public institutions, they have opted to organise amongst themselves, for instance with regard to artist training and art education. This qualitative case study retraces the genesis of how various non-formal and non-academic means of artistic knowledge sharing have been imagined in the cities of Yaoundé and Douala since the late 1970s. In order to achieve a balanced account of such endeavours, the text will also shed critical light on of these grassroots initiatives. The study will situate the narrative historically, and contribute to Cameroon’s nascent national art history, by examining the contested entrenchment of modern art in this country, which coincided with the colonial period.

This book's topic relates to a number of discourses that apply to contexts beyond Cameroon, one of which concerns the reorganisation of art schools more broadly. In Europe, the emancipation of bourgeois culture has kindled a nuanced, institutionalised art system that extends back to the seventeenth century. As an integral part of this nexus of art institutions, academic training serves as a gateway for the artist's insertion into a professional sphere. Due to this system's autonomy, art schools have come to form a category that stands apart from most educational institutions at the university level.⁴ And yet, in Europe these schools differ considerably from one another in terms of degrees offered, admission regulations, separation of disciplines, and pedagogic concepts.⁵ These differences are felt on the regional, national, and international level. The Bologna Accord of 1999, which imposed the standardisation of tertiary education within the European Union, has sparked considerable debates about this diversity and the future of higher education on the continent. The subsequent introduction of bachelor, master, and doctoral course levels at many art schools has not only engendered institutional resistance against the subjection of art to academic, economic, and political benchmarks,⁶ but has also produced the novel academic discipline of artistic research. Aspiring artistic researchers are expected to "develop a heightened self-reflexivity about their artistic practice, to explicitly position their practice in relation to wider artistic discourses and to expand their knowledge bases into areas that fall outside of the realms of art discourse."⁷ Proponents of this discipline believe in its empowering effects on artists and consider it a chance for academia to "open up to forms of knowledge and understanding that are intertwined with artistic practices".⁸ Instead, critics fear a disciplinisation of visual art in favour of the market demands of cognitive capitalism, the increasingly dematerialised economy of the present,⁹ besides pointing to the persistence of a colonial logic in the production and control of artistic knowledge.¹⁰

This tendency to organise education for artists according to utilitarian, economic criteria is also characteristic of the latest developments on the African continent. In many African contexts, governmental policies regarding visual art have come to be oriented towards the supply of a well-trained workforce for the creative industries, as a comparison of recent communiqué and survey literature from the

continent has shown.¹¹ Furthermore, with their training programs for artists, some foreign cultural centres seem to intentionally anticipate the needs of creative industries like tourism, IT research, and cultural production that are ascribed a singular growth potential.¹² These industries generate or exploit knowledge and information and are therefore highly relevant for cognitive capitalism internationally—and Africa is no exception.¹³ Sociologists have criticised the political enthusiasm for the creative industries in the Global North arguing that the discourse surrounding them subjects cultural production to economic benchmarks and criteria of profitability.¹⁴ Furthermore, this enthusiasm is usually associated with a celebration of creative workers as role models for an increasingly deregulated labour market, which renders the precarity in these fields invisible and dismantles hard-won workers rights.¹⁵ While this critique cannot be directly transferred to the complexities of the commodification of artistic labour in African contexts, and regional studies have not yet taken up this issue, the growing relevance of the creative industries as a paradigm for training in the arts in Africa does form a critical backdrop to this book's argument.

The uncertain fates of the private art initiatives that have mushroomed across Africa since the late 1990s pose another issue. In fact, the civil society in African cities has come to assume more and more responsibility in the cultural sector and a growing number of mainly diaspora-trained cultural entrepreneurs are initiating dynamic art spaces, thus attempting to “fill the voids”¹⁶ of official cultural politics or putting into question governmental institutions. To quote a new publication on this phenomenon, as “critical nodes” such institutions “aim to create alternative models or platforms for negotiating art (and) histories, reflecting upon and archiving art, visual cultures and (cultural) histories”.¹⁷ The Douala-based, non-governmental organisation (NGO) *doual'art*¹⁸, which was established in 1991, is considered a pioneer amongst these art spaces that are commonly referred to as “independent”.¹⁹ While it is beyond dispute that spaces like *doual'art* have become indispensable points of reference for visual artists throughout Africa and act as motors for urban change and progressive debates that seek to trigger the imagination of the civil society at large, their appraised independence is *de facto* relative.²⁰ Likewise as artists, these organisations operate within “a situation

whereby government support is the exception to the rule and the funding landscape is dominated by Western institutions”.²¹ For the most part, these donor institutions accord budgets on a project-basis only, leaving it to the private initiators to find solutions to secure their maintenance in the long run.²² The curator Simon Njami, who has Cameroonian roots but is based in Paris, has therefore pointed to the paradox of these “spaces of counter power”:

These spaces claim their intellectual and moral independence, but are far from commanding the financial autonomy that would enable them to envisage programming over the long term. The paradox they face, and on which their survival and their sustainability depend, is that they cannot seriously envisage genuine freedom of action over the long term without the support of the states on whose territory they are located.²³

With regard to specific contexts like Mali, it has moreover been argued that the external project-based funding has obliterated the devastating dilapidation of African state patronage systems from the post-independence era, which occurred in the course of the neoliberal reforms of the late 1980s.²⁴ In this respect, the dependency of cultural NGOs on foreign donors resembles the situation engendered by development aid programs, let alone the increasing overlaps of these two sectors, to which I will come later.

My research furthermore underscores a point that Koyo Kouoh, the Cameroon-born director of the art space Raw Material Company in Dakar, has repeatedly made in her public talks: private initiatives depend strongly on the charisma, enthusiasm, and networks of their founders because they are structurally underfunded. Also, their operation is extremely labour intensive, especially due to the difficult political and administrative contexts in which they operate. Therefore, these initiatives risk falling apart once their founders can no longer assume their leadership function, which results in private initiatives that are unsustainable. While this diagnosis is regrettable, it makes it seem all the more important to study how the civil society supports cultural production in Africa in order to allow for future, ideally more permanent institutions to learn from them. The book at hand takes a step in this direction.

Other points of departure for my argument are contemporary art's blind spots. The notion of contemporaneity has become the most powerful paradigm of visual art and art that is contemporary is

expected to give expression to a shared experience of the global present.²⁵ This seemingly unconditional temporality is caught in suspense in an imagined place between the past and the future.²⁶ Not least due to this ahistoricity, Contemporary Art has an inclusive appeal causing many art professionals across the world to identify with it. However, a close reading of the academic debates around this term unveils its problematic incongruencies. In anticipation to my discussion of the state of this discourse in chapter five, the following, admittedly polemical, statement by the writer, filmmaker, and professor Hito Steyerl explains my cautious use of this catchword:

Contemporary art is a brand name without a brand, ready to be slapped onto almost anything, a quick face-lift touting the new creative imperative for places in need of an extreme makeover, (...) a licensed playground for a world confused and collapsed by dizzying deregulation. If contemporary art is the answer, the question is: How can capitalism be made more beautiful?²⁷

In the same argument, Steyerl points to the complicity of artists and curators working under this label with neoliberal forms of (self-)governance, as well as to the failure of Contemporary Art that is allegedly political to address the conditions of its production and display.

A critical stance towards the apparently neutral term Contemporary Art seems all the more mandatory in view of the postcolonial context that is in the focus here, as it is important not to gloss over the economic inequalities, the differences in mobility, and the epistemological dependencies of artists working in Cameroon that are due to power structures inherited from imperialism. In order to keep these ambiguities visible I have chosen to spell Contemporary Art with capital letters throughout this thesis and have sought to reduce its usage to a minimum. Taking a clue from the self-denominations of artists in Cameroon,²⁸ the more descriptive terms “visual art” and “visual artists” will be used wherever possible, instead.

Important Terms and Theories

In order to clarify my terminology I should briefly define the professional category of “visual artist” because the general opinion and

scholarly publications in Cameroon have often equated visual artists [“artistes plasticiens”] with artisans and crafts people [“artisans d’art” or simply “artisans”]. This conflation derives in part from the lack of arts education in Cameroon, but it is also an effect of the hegemonic discourses related to the process of nation building and identity production of the 1960s and 1970s, which I will analyse in chapter two. These discourses challenge core Western conventions of art appreciation: the contested concept of the autonomous artwork²⁹ made for contemplation only, the trope of the individual male artist genius and the avant-garde artist, whose role is to challenge the deadlocked perceptual habits of the bourgeois public. In opposition to these conventions, certain Cameroonian intellectuals only consider an object beautiful if it possesses functional value in practical, ritual, or sacral terms and hence evidences a harmonious relationship between the artist, his or her community, and its spiritual values.³⁰ According to this understanding, artefacts serve to reinforce the social order. This explains the appreciation of many Cameroonians for the artisans’ “traditional,” or better “iterational”,³¹ practices by which an artefact’s useful qualities can be reproduced—without notably foreclosing innovation.

It is necessary to draw a line between the realms of visual art and crafts here so as to demarcate the scope of my study and also because I agree that it should be recognised from today’s perspective that “these two types of creative processes operate in distinct discursive systems and circulate in different cultural economies”.³² This diagnosis holds also true for the urban centres in Cameroon. According to a master thesis by the cultural anthropologist Anschaire Aveved, artistic singularity is the predominant professional norm that reigns in galleries and art spaces in Douala and Yaoundé, the primary professional spaces frequented by visual artists. Aveved concludes from the importance that is accorded to artistic individuation and innovation there that these spaces are acculturated to Western standards of art appreciation.³³

These standards have been variously called into question. For instance, the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has paraphrased the collective belief in artist’s extraordinary creativity and transformative power of their creations as an “*illusio*”, a shared belief in the meaningfulness of the rules of a certain game, which constitutes a separate

social space. Bourdieu has especially criticised the *illusio* that artistic success is measured by an artist's singular creativity arguing that this focus obliterates the structural inequalities of different participants in the game of art, and with them the power structures regulating its larger context.³⁴ Although clearly disadvantaged players in the increasingly globalised game of art, visual artists from Yaoundé and Douala have come to enjoy a relative global mobility because they move in networks of spaces that adhere to the same norm or *illusio*. On the contrary, artisans working in the same cities market their products at the *Marché de Fleurs* in Douala, for instance. These spaces are structured by different value systems, different systems of patronage, training, display, and critical assessment. Yet the distinctions between the spaces of artists and artisans has only emerged over the past 50 years in Cameroon and it is not absolute, as I will show by repeatedly touching upon the grey zones of "airport art"³⁵ and "fine art."³⁶

The social life of art can be understood through various concepts and terms that address its structures and operations from different angles and disciplines. Notions such as the "art system," the "artworld", "art worlds", the "field of art," and the "global field of art" have all been instructive for this book and thus should be briefly introduced. For example, sociologist Niklas Luhmann defines the "art system" as a subsystem of society. Its function for society as a whole is to produce alternative, fictional realities in the form of artworks. This subsystem gains increasing autonomy from society by providing its actors with an internal value system based on self-referentiality and the paradigm of novelty to which each new art work is subordinated.³⁷ In Cameroon, the autonomy of the subsystem of art grew when artists and art professionals began to demarcate specific spaces for visual art ruled by the paradigm of novelty, or by singularity, to use Aveved's terminology.

Two different aspects of these societal subsystems are subsumed in the almost homonymous terms "artworld" and "art worlds". In his 1968 seminal article, the philosopher Arthur C. Danto defined the discursive space of visual art as artworld, construing artworks as visually mediated ideas that are consciously placed within "an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld".³⁸ Hence, Danto made that which passes as art in the institutional discourses of the artworld the decisive criterion of art.³⁹ This artworld

was limited to the art circuits in the metropolitan centres of the “Former West”⁴⁰ with their Eurocentric aesthetic value systems at the time of Danto’s writing, and admission to them depended on the newcomers’ awareness for this artworld’s history of discourses. Chapter four will prove that certain Cameroonian artists have developed the necessary discursive agency in the 1990s and that they have created work since that critically negotiates the terms of their peripheral position towards this ever-dominant artworld.

The sociologist Howard S. Becker elected instead to speak of “art worlds” in the plural, thus addressing the networks of agents who contribute to the production, the evaluation, and the distribution of specific types of artworks in different geographic contexts and within different artistic disciplines. According to Becker, an art world can emerge anywhere and includes “all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art”.⁴¹ Notably, Becker referred to the arts in general and gave mainly examples from music and film – domains in which the division of labour is of larger importance than in visual art.⁴² Nevertheless, this concept proved useful to demarcate the communities of visual art operating in Douala and Yaoundé.

In contrast to Becker’s rather collaborative understanding, Bourdieu’s concept of the field of art underscores the competition for artistic recognition and legitimisation amongst professionals within one art world. He used the field metaphor from physics to describe a space structured by competing forces. As mentioned before, Bourdieu has stressed the fact that art professionals operate with different levels of power, depending on their class and their education (cultural capital), their financial means (monetary capital), and their field-specific acknowledgement (symbolic capital) accumulated thus far.⁴³ Taking Bourdieu’s theory to the global level, the art sociologist Larissa Buchholz has conceptualized what she terms the global field of art. Buchholz argues that a general trend towards globalisation has manifested itself in a number of global interdependences engendered by networks that operate transnationally, such as contemporary biennales, which have engendered a global consciousness among art professionals. As a consequence, the struggles for artistic recognition and for the power to dispense cultural legitimacy have expanded beyond the borders of

Danto's artworld since 1989. According to Buchholz, the global field of art is constituted by globally spread subfields that are subject to the same rules. The fifth chapter of this book will identify the city of Douala as such a subfield of the global field of art, which operates according to *The Global Rules of Arts*.⁴⁴ The case of Douala will also evidence that the interdependences between the subfields in the global South and those in the metropolitan centres are marked by an uneven distribution of power, as the primordial centres of consecration for artistic careers remain concentrated in the North of the global field of art, as do the major funding organisations.⁴⁵

In order to theorise how visual artists in Cameroon have been negotiating these power hierarchies, I have adopted the literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt's idea of the artistic contact zone. Pratt defines as contact zones "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism".⁴⁶ Autoethnographic texts and processes of transculturation, as well as critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, and denunciation are said to be typical for the artistic output of contact zones. While Pratt has formulated this concept in view of the domain of literature and language, I will adopt it to analyse certain pedagogic situations and works of visual art made in Cameroon.

Pratt has termed the outcome of these creative engagements with the structural hierarchies as "unsolicited oppositional discourse[s]".⁴⁷ One of visual art's most noble purposes is to provoke new thinking. Thus, this book will also highlight the agency of artists, in particular their capacity to learn and to make creative choices despite structural constraints. Two notions have been inspirational in this respect: tactics and discursive agency. The philosopher Michel de Certeau has defined tactics as an "an art of the weak"⁴⁸ or an art of the everyday that feeds on the creative intelligence of relatively powerless individuals to make use of opportunities. Tactics differ from the strategies of institutionalised powers that structure social spaces, like those of art, because "strategies are able to produce, tabulate, and impose these spaces (...) whereas tactics can only use, manipulate, and divert these spaces".⁴⁹ Although de Certeau sought to thus highlight the agency of subjects of consumer capitalism in Western metropolises, his terminology has also proven useful for my description of the non-formal

and partly “surreptitious and guileful”⁵⁰ acquisition of professionally relevant knowledge by emergent artists in Cameroon.

A complementary term, by which I will grasp an important goal of the artistic skilling processes, is discursive agency. Initially, this term stems from political theory and describes an agent’s space of manoeuvre amongst the rules defined by the dominant order.⁵¹ According to Michel Foucault’s definition, dominant discourses regulate that which can be said about a given subject at a given moment within a certain social context and thus assure the persistence of this order. Such discourses are hence effects of objective power structures.⁵² The artworld has specific discourses to regulate individual agency.⁵³ Yet, the same set of discourses is not universally effective in all of the subfields of the global field of art and discourses change with time. As a consequence, artists showing work in different subfields need to develop their discursive agencies, i.e. their ability to meaningfully place their artwork with reference to these subtle changes in the sets of discourses. It has also been said that the “value of artistic talk”⁵⁴ has grown simultaneously with the increasing dematerialization of works of art that came with the shift towards Conceptualism since the 1960s. Additionally, artworks are more and more often presented outside of the museum and outside of the white cube.⁵⁵ This holds especially true in Douala where doual’art has commissioned numerous public art projects since the early 1990s. Together, these developments challenge artists to clarify the relationships of their artworks with the space where they are presented each time anew. When speaking of an artist’s discursive agency in the context of this text, I will therefore be referring to the awareness of different sets of dominant discourses and to the ability to work with or around them, which amounts to a conceptual and rhetorical agility.

Dismantling the Myth of the Autodidact Artist

This study intends to challenge certain terms that have thus far been associated with artists working in Africa and their educational trajectories. My primary target is the misleading discourse surrounding the “autodidact”,⁵⁶ the “self-trained”, or “self-taught”⁵⁷ artist. The

autodidact is a readily acknowledged figure that appears in exhibitions texts and survey publications across European languages. In the 1990s, this categorisation led to an “increasingly artificial division”⁵⁸ of academic and non-academic artists from Africa, a division that served the interests of powerful brokers, as the art historian Sidney Littlefield Kasfir has stressed:

Different critics and curators have identified the cultural production of one or another of these groups as the significant African Art of the 20th century, while relegating the other to secondary importance. Such arguments are caught up in both authenticity debates and the economics of the art market.⁵⁹

In Europe, the idealisation of the autodidact genius, who needs no teacher, has its origins in the artist legends of Greek antiquity and was taken up during Renaissance and beyond.⁶⁰ The anti-academism of the twentieth century reframed and updated this thinking insofar as modern art movements from Surrealism to Art Brut celebrated the unadulterated creativity of children or outsider artists. The European “patrons-cum-brokers”⁶¹ of the mid-twentieth century, who initiated workshops to train artists in various African countries or took posts as academic art teachers, have played an instrumental role in bringing this discourse to Africa and in promoting the myth of the autodidact African artist. It has been said that the protagonists of this workshop-movement were advocating the pedagogy, widespread since the late forties, of “not teaching” art. The teachers’ role was to facilitate self-discovery through the provision of workspace, supplies, and respect (or interest) rather than through instruction, apart from critical discussions of work.⁶² As a matter of fact, the utopian ideal of teaching art without influencing the learners had already swept from Europe to Africa in the 1920s. Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbachie has illustrated that British art teacher Kenneth Murray, who taught in Nigeria from 1927 onwards, brought with him the respective ideas by the Austrian art pedagogue Franz Cizek, an influential reformer of arts education in the Germanophone realm.⁶³ Accordingly, a guideline for art teachers published by the UNESCO warned in 1950:

Dans toutes ces activités, il faudra s’attacher tout particulièrement à ce que l’expression artistique individuelle et traditionnelle ne soit pas corrompue par des méthodes d’enseignement de caractère neutre ou d’inspiration étrangère au milieu.⁶⁴

When applied to African artists, the idea of leaving the learner untouched has uneasy resonances with the 18th century ideal of the noble savage and the “modernistic/ primitivistic/ Rousseauian conglomerate of discourses”⁶⁵ that has been criticised at last since the 1980.⁶⁶ It has been convincingly argued that European discrimination against the cultural other—whether found in the idealisations of philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau or in the derogatory writings of the nineteenth century race theorist Arthur de Gobineau—resonated in the Primitivism of European modernism in the twentieth century, which influenced modern art patronage in African countries.⁶⁷ The autodidact African artist is positively associated in the European imagination with the “raw energy and untutored immediacy of traditional art, the inspired primitivism”⁶⁸, which is thought to be free of all civilising interference. Yet this figure has also historically elicited the racist presupposition that he or she is “unable to construct themselves vis-à-vis their work”⁶⁹ and would be at risk of imitating European artists if exposed to European-style art academies and the art system.

Interestingly, Afrophile art teachers from Europe were not the only ones to essentialise indigenous creativity in the first half of the twentieth century. Léopold Sédar Senghor, one of the protagonists of the Négritude-movement that sought to infuse Africa and its diaspora with a new cultural pride,⁷⁰ also inscribed himself within this problematic discursive tradition. The art-savvy poet and later president of Senegal idealised the “âme africaine” i.e. the African spirit, and with it the genuine creativity and intuitive emotivity of African artists.⁷¹ I would therefore argue that Africa’s perception as Europe’s cultural other, the self-culturalisation of the Négritude movement and the universalisation of pedagogic reform ideas from Europe converged to nourish the myth of the autodidact African artist. Together, these discursive threads transformed the artistic autodidact into a pervasive discursive figure in the reception of twentieth century art from Africa.

Numerous scholars have alleged that categorising non-academic artists as autodidacts is a homogenising Western projection that obliterates the particularities of distinct training trajectories, ranging from craft apprenticeships to workshop participation.⁷² But old habits die hard. The book at hand seeks to dismantle the myth of the autodidact artist through empirical research. My field research has proven that artists who did not complete academic training or apprenticeships

have nevertheless acquired the majority of their skills through social interaction with more experienced peers. I will therefore argue that it is inaccurate to refer to these practitioners as self-taught, self-trained, or autodidactic. Rather, it is necessary to change this line of thought and its attendant vocabulary in order to decolonise our scholarly terminology.

The study at hand focuses on the educational trajectories of artists in Cameroon, who acknowledge vocational training as a necessity, but who had no access to appropriately equipped institutions. As a consequence, these artists resorted to non-formal training, which means that they engaged in individually structured learning processes with different tutors that did not culminate in an accredited diploma because they took place outside of academic or scholarly settings. The following chapters will outline typologies of non-formal training structures from a historical perspective. While my historical approach is singular as yet, the topic of non-formal training is not altogether unknown in the academic literature on African arts; Sidney Littlefield Kasfir referred to “informal learning”⁷³ in 1985 when describing processes of enculturation in relationship to certain crafts on that continent that are not organised through the form of apprenticeships. In 1995, the researcher Elsbeth Court spoke of “‘non-formal’ art education”⁷⁴ when listing the training possibilities provided by art collectives and art centres across Africa. In order to simplify cross-reading, I have adopted the wording from the newest and most detailed publication on this subject, the comparative case study *Creating Spaces* (2014). Its author, the historian and cultural scientist Nicola Lauré al-Samarai refers to the “non-formal vocational training of artists”,⁷⁵ thus implying that this type of training can be expected to lay the groundwork for a professional career as a visual artist. Like Lauré al-Samarai, I will use the term “arts education” when referring to the general cultural education of children and adults in formal and non-formal contexts, while the term “art/s education” will address the intersections of these two pedagogical fields.

My interviews have shown the notion of being professional means the ability to commit to an aesthetic practice on a full-time basis for artists in Douala. In order to do so, they need to be able to make a living with their art.⁷⁶ In contrast to this understandable interest, the demand for artistic professionalisation can be often heard amongst

agents of the funding market. According to an insightful critique of the New York-based artist and curator Anton Vidokle, the funding market needs “professional” cultural producers that are able and willing to adapt to its vocabulary in a professional, i.e. uncritical way. The disappearance of disobedient, bohemian artistic self-concepts is the ultimate effect of this development that tends to reduce artists to compliant “content providers for the art system”.⁷⁷

In view of this ambivalent nature of artistic professionalism and professionalisation, it appears all the more relevant to foreground tactical and discursive agency as formative goals for visual artists—and not only for those artists working from Africa. Together with the necessary practical skills, these qualities can enable practitioners to unfold their criticality, while still finding subsistence in the arts. Criticality “operates from an uncertain ground of actual embeddedness”, as philosopher Irit Rogoff has rightly argued, rather than from a position of critique that is “finding fault and exercising judgement according to a consensus of values”⁷⁸ from an external position.

Scholarship to Date

The state of research on my subject is nascent at best. Art education in Cameroon has not been academically scrutinised as yet, and broader research into art education in other African contexts and the history of art in twentieth century Cameroon are two adjacent fields of academic research that have been opened only recently. The following passages will provide an overview of survey literature and case studies on art education and artist training before turning towards Cameroon’s art history.

Some overview publications on African art in the twentieth century have attempted to summarise the disparate historical trajectories of artistic training institutions in Africa, a difficult if not impossible task.⁷⁹ The art-historical survey *African Art: The Years Since 1920* by Marshall W. Mount from 1973, for instance, categorises art schools according to their location in “Francophone Africa”, in “English-speaking East and Central Africa”, and in “English-speaking West Africa”.⁸⁰ Colonial demarcations seem to inform this

distinction rather than factual commonalities of the schools, and the categories are further blurred by the fact that Mount treats as schools also the aforementioned workshops by Europeans.⁸¹ Nevertheless, this volume indicates many details on single institutions that other authors have copied. Notably, Mount's section about artists that are "independent of African Art Schools" features as its earliest example the Cameroonian draughtsman Ibrahim Njoya, whom I will discuss in the second chapter.⁸²

The French art historian Pierre Gaudibert has also categorised artists according to their training trajectories, notably without systematically indicating his sources. His book *L'Art Africain Contemporain* (1991) is a prime example of the division that I have problematised earlier on, as it distinguishes between formally trained artists ["Formation Professionnelle Académique"] who are said to consciously and intentionally produce art ["art savant"], and their counterparts, the so-called popular autodidact artists ["Formation Populaire Autodidactique"]. Nevertheless, this book includes a useful chronology of art school foundations in "Sub-Saharan Africa"⁸³ between 1937 and 1969.⁸⁴ Unlike most other authors, Gaudibert has also written about certain artists from Cameroon, which has been especially helpful with regard to the early oeuvre of Pascal Kenfack.

A comprehensive collection of detailed data about training institutions on the African continent can be found in an appendix to the afore-cited catalogue *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* (1995).⁸⁵ Its author Elsbeth Court has introduced the thoughtful separation of "Art Colleges, Universities and Schools", from "Movements, Centres, Workshops and Collectives" and "International Workshops". She orders the information within these categories according to country, but information about Cameroon is notably missing from this overview.⁸⁶ The aforementioned publication *Contemporary African Art* by Sidney Littlefield Kasfir (1999) also does not consider the Cameroonian context, but does give numerous examples of different training trajectories that have prepared artists on the African continent to produce the art that we might consider "contemporary" today. For that matter, her book—especially the chapter "Transforming the Workshop"—has proven highly inspirational. A second book by this author is worth mentioning here too, namely the anthology *African Art and Agency in the Workshop* (2013) that she co-edited with the

anthropologist Till Förster. This volume attempts to bridge the gap between craftsmen, popular painters, and visual artists by shedding light on a communal space that all of these practitioners supposedly share: the workshop. The book's use of the term workshop not only denotes the simple spatial implication of a place to work, but is to be further understood as a social "institution that provides economic resources and shapes the imagination of its participants",⁸⁷ not least as a site for training. In Cameroon, I could only make out one collective workshop of this kind: namely, the *Atelier de l'Art Nègre*, which no longer exists.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, articles from this anthology on apprentice systems and on international workshops have provided useful comparative backdrops to phenomena observed in Douala and Yaoundé.

Finally, a German essay of 2011 by the art historian Bärbel Küster has been eye-opening. This essay discusses art schools in Nigeria, Senegal, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo as "visual contact zones" between Europe and Africa, where important trans-culturations of Western Modernism took place in the mid-twentieth century.⁸⁹ Especially relevant was Küster's clue that it is important to consider the physical sources and materials through which individual artists learn about art, as they are keys to their respective practices and self-conceptions. Küster has also referred to the "reciprocal imaginations between archaisms and universalisms",⁹⁰ which motivated certain, partly-African, artist teachers to promote European-style art, while other, partly-European teachers strove to preserve and further develop local aesthetics that were imagined as more authentic forms of expression.

In addition to these survey studies, some geographically more focused case studies on art education in specific African countries deserve mention here. With one exception, they focus on formal art/s education. General arts education and the formal training of artists in Nigeria are the subjects of an article from 1994 by a lecturer of the Zaria College, Chidum Onuchukwu.⁹¹ He retraces the history of curriculum development from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1970s in light of conflicts regarding the orientation of teaching towards "traditional" or "authentic" versus "contemporary" forms of art. The historian Hamid Irbouh has critically analysed the imperial manipulation in the domains of crafts and fine arts during the

French protectorate in Morocco, which lasted from 1912 to 1956. Irbouh could thus show that the formalisation of artistic and artisanal training in newly introduced schools was a tool of colonial power that enabled the colonisers to establish hierarchies between cultural producers, drive vernacular professional networks apart, and control the supply and demand of the respective products.⁹² The Dutch anthropologist Rhoda Woets has accomplished a national art history of Ghana that covers the period from the colonial encounter onwards. Woets illustrates that academic art discourses gained hegemony in Ghana's art system because formal art schools were instituted early, beginning with Achimota College (est. 1927).⁹³ In response to the hierarchies amongst artists that resulted from this situation, the Ghanaian artist and art historian Atta Kwami has recently attempted to bridge the gap between the differently trained artists working in the city of Kumasi by an alternative art history that he has placed under the inclusive heading "Kumasi Realism".⁹⁴ Art historian Elisabeth Harney has critically updated the rather propagandistic *Anthology of Contemporary Fine Arts in Senegal* (1989), which celebrated this country's exceptional public infrastructure for visual art.⁹⁵ Senegal's arts infrastructure was part and parcel of Senghor's Négritude philosophy and a constitutive element of his efforts to build a nation after independence. Under the title *In Senghor's Shadow*, Harney has scrutinised the cooptation of the cultural production during the Senghor era that manifested in the painting style of the École de Dakar.⁹⁶ Finally, anthropologist Jessica Winegar has shed light on the changing paradigms of formal artistic training under shifting political conditions in Egypt. A body of interviews conducted with artists in the early 2000s has enabled her to evaluate both art works and artistic identities in light of the country's transition from socialism after 1989.⁹⁷

There have also been a number of compelling comparative studies, such as the anthropologist Thomas Fillitz's analysis of the reflections of fourteen artists from Ivory Coast and Benin. While Ivory Coast has had an art school since 1966, Benin still does not have one. Fillitz's research addressed the respective social roles of artists in each country, as well as their choices of materials and symbols. His work stresses that many artists from Benin have remained without formal training for want of the respective academic infrastructure, rather than for ideological reasons.⁹⁸ Yet, although a degree may not mean

much according to a local perspective, an African artist's educational biography nonetheless plays an essential role in his or her acceptance in Europe and the United States, because certain curators and collectors continue to draw a line between differently trained artists, as Fillitz illustrated in another article in 2009.⁹⁹

An important new addendum to the comparative research on art education and artist training is the recent collection of articles on the distinct histories of formal art education in South Africa (Elizabeth Perrill), Tunisia (Jessica Gerschultz), Ghana (Catie Coe), Niger (Amanda Gilvin), Mali (Paul R. Davis), and Kenya (Odoch Pido). While focusing on singular contexts, these articles have also uncovered certain historical parallels such as the institutionalisation of gender norms through art schools, profiles of early art-and-craft schools for Blacks that travelled from the United States to the French colonies, or colonial inheritances in postcolonial curricula.¹⁰⁰

So far, the aforementioned volume *Creating Spaces* is the only case study that focuses exclusively on non-formal art/s education in African contexts. This study was commissioned by the Goethe-Institut in Johannesburg to the Institute for Art Education at the Zurich University for the Arts. The brief was to explore the pedagogical concepts, orientation, and financial terms of non-formal educational work in different African contexts and in different art disciplines from dance to photography, not least in order to substantiate future funding decisions. The historian and cultural scientist Nicola Lauré al-Samarai exemplified the overlap between non-formal arts education and non-formal artistic training and how colonial power structures continue to influence this work through case studies of five privately run organisations operating in the fields of dance, visual arts, and photography in South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, and Ethiopia. The author holds the interstitial positioning of their pedagogic work between the unstable categories of education, art, and culture responsible for their shadowy existence in scholarly writing. This in-between status also accounts for the difficulties in raising funds to support educational work. The survey's aforequoted analysis of the current state of discourse on keywords like education, art, and culture in official statements by African policymakers that appear in the press and in the scholarly literature from the continent is especially insightful.¹⁰¹ Insofar as my study focuses on the history of teaching

and learning cultures in a specific context, it fills a research lacuna identified by Lauré al-Samarai.¹⁰²

This brings us to the state of research regarding Cameroon. As mentioned before, a comprehensive national art history for Cameroon that extends to the present is yet to be written. That said, the ancient sculptural cultures from this territory have received extensive academic attention since the nineteenth century.¹⁰³ Anthropological research has also scrutinised the particular developments at the Bamum court in the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁴ However, art-historical research has only selectively explored the twentieth century, starting with the year 2000.¹⁰⁵ The authors of the respective studies did their research as graduate students at the University of Yaoundé, working under difficult conditions with regard to literature, tutelage, and means for field research.

Two master theses from the department of art history at the University of Yaoundé from the year 2005 retrace the artistic production in the capital city according to the academic categories of sculpture and painting. Ruth Afane Belinga has explored the history of painting in Yaoundé during the twentieth century through artist interviews and with reference to surveys on African art, namely that of Gaudibert. Due to her inclusive definition of painting as an aesthetic practice involving resolved pigments, Afane Belinga's thesis covers a wide field from ritual body painting to popular painting to paintings produced for the art system. This study is little detailed with regard to the first half of the twentieth century, when Yaoundé was a minor agglomeration. Nevertheless, Afane Belinga's artist biographies and the artworks that she has documented have importantly oriented my argument.¹⁰⁶ The second master thesis focuses on forms of sculptural expression in Yaoundé in the period from 1960 to 2005.¹⁰⁷ Its author, Paul-Henri Souvenir Assako Assako places furniture, craft objects for the tourist market, artistic assemblages, and national monuments on the same footing, which complicates his comparative analysis. Assako Assako's photographic inventory of sculptures has proved very useful, however, especially with regard to Engelbert Mveng's artistic practice. Both master theses also comment on Yaoundé's art market and refer to individual artists' training trajectories, in addition to offering interpretations of the phenomenon of Contemporary Art within the context of Cameroon.¹⁰⁸ Taking his approach further, Assako Assako

has edited a doctoral thesis on the transformation of artistic expressions in Cameroon's cities from the mid twentieth to the beginning of the twenty-first century with a focus on sculpture. Unfortunately, this thesis was published too late to be considered here.¹⁰⁹

A third master's thesis was important for my research, too, namely the afore-mentioned study by Anschaire Aveved. This study sheds light on the working conditions of artists in the cities of Yaoundé, Douala, and Mbalmayo. Although Aveved refers to a different population of artists than my study,¹¹⁰ his statistics made it possible to control certain hypotheses of mine, such as the near absence of women from the artistic population, the limited relevance of the so-called Institut de Formation Artistique (in fact a high school with an art focus) in terms of the training of professional artists, and visual artists' increasing orientation towards international spaces of distribution.¹¹¹ Furthermore, Aveved has identified a double-bind situation that he holds responsible for the weak position of visual artists within the Cameroonian society. This notion proved quite influential for my argument: namely that the artists' professional milieu pressures them to produce work that is measured by its singularity, whereas their lay public demands visual affirmations of clear-cut cultural identities from them—be they ethnic, national, or continental.¹¹² Aveved has further developed this important thought in an unpublished paper from 2011, which addresses the divergence of urban and rural dwellers in Cameroonian public opinion. This split is said to have led to the stigmatisation of visual artists working in the cities as deserters of supposedly more “authentic”, rural cultures.¹¹³ The book at hand sustains Aveved's argument from an (art-) historical perspective, thus also underlining Achille Mbembe's thesis that cultural authenticity has often been misused to police art in Africa in the second half of the twentieth century.¹¹⁴ Like Aveved and Mbembe, I defend the position that cultures are never pure and that cultural authenticity is a construct.

Furthermore, three monographs of varying degrees of detail devoted to the work of outstanding artists born in the first half of the twentieth century have provided a starting point for my study. The biography *Engelbert Mveng: La plume et le pinceau* by the historian Jean-Paul Messina alludes in parts to the artistic inclination of Reverend Mveng, who is famous for his theological, historiographical,

and political engagements in the first place. The portrait *Koko Komegné: Survivre et Frapper* has been edited by the late art historian Didier Schaub with the Centre Culturel Français in Douala on the occasion of a retrospective in 2006 and offers examples of Komegné's oeuvre and his journalistic writing, in addition to a detailed biography. The smallest publication of this type is the trilingual catalogue brochure *Gaspar Gomán* (2010), which is edited by Assako Assako with the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé. The numerous colour reproductions in these monographs have proven especially enlightening.

With regard to the developments of the early 1990s, a special issue on Cameroon by the Paris-based cultural magazine *Revue Noire* from 1994 provided a partial condition report. The fourth chapter analyses this issue's impact on the art scene in Yaoundé. The period of the turn of the millennium is roughly documented in a special edition of the review *Africultures* on Cameroon from 2004. The 39 short articles in this volume with the telling title *Cameroun: la culture sacrifiée* shed light at the struggle in which all domains of culture were caught due to the state's failure to patronise culture.

The rise of Douala's art scene from 2000 onwards is documented in the articles of two visitors, who have importantly promoted this context in their French, English and German texts. The German artist/curator Christian Hanussek wrote the first German article in 2000, which was translated in 2001 and subsequently titled "Cameroon: An Emerging Art Scene".¹¹⁵ This text pioneered the discourse surrounding a new trend of assemblages made from recycled items that goes by the name "la Récupération". Additionally, Hanussek has commented on public art projects in Douala in online publications relating to his exhibition-cum-symposium *Meanwhile in Africa...* in Germany (2005/2006).¹¹⁶ And in an article of 2009, Hanussek introduced Douala's most dynamic art venues to German readers.¹¹⁷ The second author writing about Douala's present art world is the French art historian and political scientist Dominique Malaquais. In 2006, Malaquais has analysed the violent reactions to the first public monument inaugurated in Douala after independence, Joseph Francis Sumegné's *Nouvelle Liberté* (1996). Malaquais illustrated how this artwork, which is appreciated as an iconic landmark today, challenged the audience in various ways and was politically instrumentalised to elicit suspicion amongst Douala tribalists, who feared

infiltration by the Bamiléké, Sumegné's ethnic group.¹¹⁸ In her next article, that was part of an anthology of aesthetics in different urban contexts of Africa, Malaquais revealed the impact of the affair raised by the statue on a younger generation of artists. These artists are said to confront conservative tastes within their society, as well as clichés of art institutions in Europe and the United States with regard to African art.¹¹⁹ Finally, Malaquais shed light on the artist-initiated festival "Scénographies Urbaines" in one of Douala's rougher neighbourhoods in 2002/03 with the text "Douala en habit de Festival".¹²⁰

Two books furthermore illustrate the context of artistic production in Cameroon in the 2000s from an essayistic perspective. The volume *Douala in Translation: A View of the City and its Creative Transforming Potentials* explores the nexus of social development, urbanism, politics, and art in Douala by means of a range of scholarly and poetic contributions. Giulia Paoletti's handy index of "Cultural and Artistic Initiatives in Douala" is included.¹²¹ Finally, the collection of essays entitled *L'Ivresse du Papillon* (2008) addresses the tactics certain artists in Cameroon use to tackle economic and political issues. The author of these literary reflections is Lionel Manga, who assumes various intellectual functions in Douala's art world. Although richly illustrated, this book is unfortunately short on precise data regarding the reproduced artworks.

Methodological Reflections

This qualitative study explores the conditionality of visual art in Cameroon in the twentieth century, a context with few institutional models for this form of aesthetic expression. Starting with the appropriation of modern art technologies in the early twentieth century, I will scrutinise the circulation of art knowledge under changing political conditions, within different discursive formations, and within expanding social and geographic spaces. Foucault's concept of a critical genealogy lends itself to this historiographic project in as far as this method allows an exploration of

the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, and so on, without having to make reference to a subject [like art] which is

either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.¹²²

In a recent re-reading, the genealogical critique in the Foucaultian tradition has been defined

as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying”, [so as to problematise and make intelligible] “that which contingently conditions our present.¹²³

Accordingly, I have attempted to understand the present artistic production in Cameroon’s major cities by uncovering the history of the knowledge that informs this production. In order to grasp the historical shifts that have affected the ways in which artistic knowledge has been shared in this context, I had to call upon analytical methods from the social sciences, from history, and art history. Only by means of this mixed set of tools was I able to analyse the eclectic body of source material at my disposal. The sources that have informed this basic research range from artworks to press archives, artist biographies, official statements, video documents, grey literature, and scholarly literature from different disciplines—yet most valuable was the empirical data that I generated during my field research.

Expert interviews constitute the core data for this study. During my first, ten-day research trip to Douala in December 2010 I interviewed thirteen artists aged between twenty-five and sixty about their vocational training. Nine of them were then residents of Douala and the neighbouring village Bonendale, while four more were based in other cities, namely in Yaoundé, Maroua, Mbalmayo, and in Ghent, Belgium. Only two of my interviewees were women, but this proportion exceeds the percentage of women artists working in Yaoundé and Douala anyway. I have addressed my interlocutors as experts of their professional biographies and have animated their narratives through questions. My interview guide covered four thematic clusters: the artist’s choice of profession, the educational trajectory and different skilling processes, the artist’s professional self-image, and finally his or her professional networks. Our conversation language was French, the lingua franca in wide parts of Cameroon, yet not my mother-tongue. My interlocutors speak French, as well as several vernacular languages, while English skills are rare. Most questions could be easily answered, except for the one concerning the artists’ conceptual-

intellectual skills, which had to be often redressed to become understandable. These interviews lasted between twenty minutes and two hours and mostly took place in the garden of doual'art. During this trip, I also recorded half-structured interviews with two curators, a writer, an art historian, and a graphic designer, each of whom is differently associated with the local art world. These interviews also focused on the particularities of non-formal artistic training in situ.

The second research trip, which lasted three weeks, led me to Yaoundé, Mbalmayo, Maroua, Douala, and Foumban in December 2011. During this trip, I focused on the institutional infrastructure framing the current production of visual art and on the history of twentieth century art in Cameroon's cities. With regard to the first aspect, I have recorded half-structured interviews with the responsible persons of the fundamental institutions for visual art. I relied on my interviews from 2010 to select these institutions. During this second trip, I also spoke with long-time observers of the local art circuit: an anthropologist, a journalist who specialises in art, and four art teachers—to name only a few of the relevant interviews. In terms of oral art history, I recorded the memories of three elder artists who were active in Douala and Yaoundé in the 1970s and 80s. After my return, I conducted complementary interviews from Berlin in person, by telephone, and via email. These interviews explore a specific sub-theme of this thesis: namely, the role of foreign art professionals in Cameroon in the 1990s.

I have differently processed these oral sources. Upon returning from my first research trip, I transcribed and summarised the eighteen interviews. Some questions that arose in this process could be clarified in conversations with three Cameroonian art professionals visiting the Netherlands in autumn 2011.¹²⁴ I did not transcribe the interviews from my second field trip, but produced written summaries upon my return. Likewise, I proceeded with the recordings from the Netherlands and the last set of interviews led from Berlin. I have also archived written summaries of the numerous partially-recorded conversations that I conducted via telephone and in person throughout this research process.

However, it is necessary to make a few critical remarks regarding the limits of these oral sources. First of all, it is important to note that the basic set of interviews for this thesis mixes the genres of the

expert interview and the autobiographical interview, as defined by the historian Gregor Spuhler, insofar as artists were interviewed on the basis of their own biographies and were considered experts.¹²⁵ As a consequence, my interlocutors' conscious and unconscious interpretations of their biographies played on the expertise that they were able to share. It is furthermore well known that the temporal distance from historical events accounts for certain distortions in the interviewees' narrations due to the selectivity of memory and the resulting memory gaps. Contradictory dates and conflicting assessments of the same events in the testimonies of different interviewees attest to this. However, when discussing the value of interviews as historical source, Spuhler has stressed that the problem of oral testimony lies less in the witnesses' subjectivity, for every source is subjective, than in the researcher's double function as producer and interpreter of the source.¹²⁶ Let me therefore critically consider my role in the interview setting in a next step.

A two-year preparation phase and a first short visit to Douala as a curator preceded my systematic data collection during the two mentioned research trips. In order to understand the implications of this first contact with the research context, the professional interdependence of curators and artists must be taken into account. Artists tend to associate travelling curators with professional opportunities because curators are brokers that can facilitate access to exhibitions, to institutional support, and to funding. I suppose that the respective assumptions made it easier for me to win artists as interview partners. Moreover, I took advantage for my data collection of the convivial atmosphere that characterised the waiting time and the informal gatherings of visiting artists, curators, art critics, and local art professionals during the public art triennale Salon Urbain de Douala in 2010. Yet, this setting might have also distorted certain artists' answers to my interview questions, for instance insofar as the artists could have felt compelled to reconfirm the unwritten Rules of Art¹²⁷ in order to demonstrate their professionalism in this professional context, while suppressing more critical opinions.

It is also noteworthy that my curatorial involvement had effects on the selection of the voices and artworks represented within this study. Prior to my scholarly engagement I had been looking for artistic positions that found my aesthetic approval as a curator. When

critically reflecting on his approach to art made in Cameroon, my colleague Christian Hanussek has rightly remarked that the mechanisms of our taste tend to privilege familiar aesthetics.¹²⁸ My aesthetic value judgements are influenced by my upbringing in Germany, my art studies at the Academy of Fine Art in Munich, and my curatorial studies in Amsterdam, rather than by an in-depth engagement with historical art from Africa. As a curator, I sought to build closer relationships with those art professionals in Douala whose work I liked, who showed interest in my curatorial approach, and who had been recommended by informed colleagues in Cameroon and in Europe, thus privileging confirmed artists that were already enmeshed in transnational networks. These professional relationships informed the selection of my interview partners for this study, also because the well-acquainted professionals were more easily reachable for additional questions. And these entanglements have affected the content and the width of the empirical data that I was able to evaluate, while also playing on my conclusions.

To sustain the information gathered by means of the interviews, I have searched for art-historically relevant archival material during my second field trip, such as art collections, exhibitions shots, press texts, artist interviews, and art history texts. Thus I learned that public collections of twentieth century visual art do not exist in Cameroon and that the condition of the national archive is not conducive to research.¹²⁹ The foreign cultural institutes in Yaoundé and in Douala do not maintain systematic archives either. Apparently, documentation about the programming prior to the 1990s at the Centres Culturels Français and the Goethe-Institut, the remaining cultural institutes, was lost over the course of relocations or destroyed by floods in the cellars where it was stocked.¹³⁰ Yet on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary celebration in 2012, the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé commissioned a press survey regarding the history of its programming. The researcher in charge of it, the German expatriate Joachim Oelsner-Adam, kindly allowed me to copy the larger digital archive from which he took the articles for the survey. Oelsner-Adam had collected and photographed the press coverage on culture, including articles on music, language, dance, theatre, crafts, visual art, and their respective festivals and institutions under the auspices of ARC Musica, his archival project on Cameroonian music of the twentieth century.

According to Oelsner-Adam, his archive comprises the full breadth of the cultural coverage in the Cameroonian press between 1961 and 2011. It is worth remarking however, that the state-owned newspaper *La Presse du Cameroon* (1961-1974) that continued as *Cameroon Tribune* in 1974 was the only official daily press in Cameroon until the constitutional reform of 1991. Accordingly, Oelsner-Adam's archive only includes articles from the private press from 1991 onwards.

As an invaluable historical source, this newspaper archive complemented my oral data in several important ways. First of all, the articles from the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s made it possible to precisely date many of the major art events throughout these decades, while also drawing my attention to practitioners that I would otherwise not have noticed because they were not addressed in my interviews. This holds especially true for the scene in Yaoundé, where I did less field research. Oelsner-Adam's archive also provided historical background information and reproductions of historical artworks that are not otherwise preserved.

And yet, the information conveyed by this press archive is variously mediated and selective in nature. It is firstly no secret that the journalists of the official daily were coopted by the regime and exercised self-censorship.¹³¹ Oelsner-Adam has furthermore observed that *Cameroon Tribune* has always privileged events in the capital Yaoundé where its editorial office is located. This focus is due to the centralist political order in Cameroon and to economic reasons. It is particularly noteworthy that the Anglophone region and Anglophone events were structurally underrepresented from the beginning of the newspaper's history. According to Oelsner-Adam's estimate, the density of the culture coverage and of specific types of culture also underwent changes with every managerial re-organisation of the newspaper.¹³² The press archive at my disposal therefore certainly does not document all cultural events since independence in Cameroon, not least because I noticed in one or two cases that articles referenced by other authors are indeed missing from Oelsner-Adam's digital archive.

With regard to the quality of the information in the articles, it is furthermore noteworthy that the journalists were not specifically prepared for the task to write about culture, let alone to speak of visual art. As a consequence, their aesthetic judgements are based on social norms rather than on formal analyses (which has been nevertheless

revealing). Also, details about artworks have been rarely documented, reproductions are of a poor quality and the respective technical information is unreliable, if mentioned at all. As a consequence, these articles appear as tertiary sources from an art-historical perspective, except for certain interviews with artists.

In addition to Oelsner-Adam's newspaper archive, I have consulted the first twenty-five editions of the cultural review *ABBIA* (1963-1971), which was edited in Yaoundé between 1963 and 1982. The selection in stock at the university library in Bayreuth was the most comprehensive collection of this review within my reach. I also had access to several private archives, such as Joseph Francis Sumegné's "press book", which the artist allowed me to photograph. In this folder, Sumegné has ordered award certificates, correspondence about exhibitions, and reviews concerning his career from 1980 onwards, as well as clippings from the foreign press. Furthermore, the founders of doual'art proved very supportive and gave me access to their comprehensive collection of analogous pictures reaching back to the NGO's foundation.¹³³ I was able to access further archival materials in Europe. Ruth Afane Belinga shared her digital photographs of archival material documenting colonial arts education in Cameroon, which she had found in the archive of the protestant organisation Mission 21 in Basel. The artist Angelika Thomas-Roper from Munich sent me her well-maintained collection of slides and program leaflets that she gathered during her two visits to Cameroon in 1997 and 1998. Finally, Christian Hanussek kindly gave me access to his video documentation of conversations with artists in Yaoundé and Douala from 2000 to 2007, as well as to relevant books that are out of print. These smaller archives proved highly relevant for this study, as they contained plenty of primary sources about artistic knowledge sharing in Cameroon as well as information about certain artworks from the 1990s that are not documented elsewhere.

On a less positive note, it may have already become clear that German positions are over-represented in the body of sources that have informed this study. There are several reasons for this. As mentioned before, the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé had engaged in a process of historical self-reflection prior to my visit, which was conducive to my enquiries. Also, once back in Berlin, information gathered during my fieldwork could be further pursued through additional interviews

with German art professionals like Thomas-Roper and Hanussek, who had been to Cameroon in the 1990s and 2000s, and who generously nourished my research with their memories and with their archival material. On the contrary, at the Centre Culturel Français in Douala and Yaoundé, I met a newly arrived director and his young staff, who had little insight into the history of their institute. My efforts at contacting former guests to the Centre Culturel Français and to doual'art after my return produced little response, too, probably because I lack the respective networks in France to reinforce my requests. The result is a German bias in my data, which importantly affected the orientation of my argument.

The study at hand relies to a large extent on my interviews and on the aforementioned archives. My empirical data and other first-hand sources, such as artist websites, have become more relevant with each chapter, the more my deliberations approach the present. Similarly, newspaper archives, grey literature, scholarly texts, and more popular articles have informed much of my writing about earlier periods. In response to the disparity of this corpus of sources and its shifting composition, the research methods had to be differently mixed for each chapter, as I will now briefly outline.

I have started to construe the major arguments of this text from the testimonies of the first set of eighteen interviews by way of the Grounded Theory Method. The Grounded Theory Method was initially developed for qualitative research in the social sciences to interpret qualitative data in a controlled way.¹³⁴ The successive steps of coding that are characteristic of this method help to identify subtexts of interview material. The preliminary open coding of my interviews revealed recurrent thematic motives beyond the themes addressed in my interview guide and the vertical comparison of these motives engendered new hypotheses. By means of additional interviews and scholarly texts from the fields of anthropology, history, sociology, political science, and art history, I was able to test the relevance of these topics and to contextualise and complement those that had proved pertinent. Additionally, the second and the fifth chapter feature critical discourse analyses, which comply to Foucault's aforementioned definition. In order to identify the hegemonic discourses within their historic context and to be able to thus draw conclusions about the effects of existing power structures on visual art, I have comparatively

analysed two ensembles of discursive events; namely, written sources of different types from the 1960s and 70s and oral testimonies that make sense of the developments of the 2000s.

In order to pay due respect to the artists' agency that manifests in their artworks first of all, my text is furthermore interspersed with contextualising interpretations of artworks that I deem representative of the different decades. I have sought to document each artwork's title, date of origin, medium or technique, its measurements, its location, and its state of preservation according to art-historical conventions (insofar as this was possible). However, it is important to note that I could only view a large part of the artworks I discuss as reproductions, especially those dating to the 1990s and earlier. My perception and descriptions may therefore be partial.

Organisation of Chapters

This book traverses the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century in a chronological order. The second, preliminary chapter spotlights four exemplary artists who witnessed and contributed to the settling in of modern notions of art in Cameroon between 1915 and 1976. The journalistic, political, and philosophical discourses of the years after independence construed these forms of aesthetic expression as Western import and promoted "authentic" aesthetics instead. According to this chapter's main argument, these discourses account for the absence of a public infrastructure for art in Cameroon.

The other three chapters are roughly structured according to three generations of artists who are linked by non-formal teacher-learner relationships. Interestingly, these artist generations correspond to major shifts in the organisation of artistic knowledge sharing. Different types of generational cohesion distinguish these generations. Only the middle generation, which I will call "generation of 1990", forms an actual group that shares a social location with the effect that its members have been "in a position to experience the same events and data [that] impinge upon a similarly "stratified" consciousness",¹³⁵ as Max Mannheim has stressed in his influential essay about the

sociological identification of generations.

The third chapter retraces the history of artistic self-organisation in Cameroon from the late 1970s onwards, starting with the formation of associations, collectives, and a union. A particularly sustainable intergenerational system of non-formal artistic training emerged during this period, too. This *Système de Grands Frères* will be theorised in distinction from apprenticeships, academic training, and two types of workshops. Taking two artists born in 1950 as examples, this chapter will also highlight the interrelation of personal didactic strategies of different *grands frères* with their biographies, their oeuvres, and their mentalities.

The reasons for the turn in Cameroon's art history in the early 1990s will be in the focus of the fourth chapter. Newly arrived art professionals with networks in France and Germany have then empowered a new generation of politicised artists, mainly by means of a new, short-termed training format: the so-called *ateliers*. Besides critically scrutinising the nature of the pedagogic interaction in the *ateliers* and introducing key-persons, this chapter shows how certain artists gained access to art knowledge through books or enhanced their discursive agency by exchanging expertise amongst each other. The geopolitical interests that moved Cameroon's art system closer to the artworld in the Former West form the backdrop to this chapter.

Medial revolutions have brought about a "connexionist"¹³⁶ age in the early 2000s and with them a new generation of highly mobile artists. The fifth chapter analyses four elaborate, yet relatively short-lived grassroots initiatives, by which elder artists facilitated new types of learning experiences for this emergent generation. In a second part, this chapter identifies local interpretations of Contemporary Art, both in terms of the discursive performance of art professionals working in Cameroon and in terms of the artworks they produce. Thus, I will shed light on analogies to debates and habitual orders in the artworld at large. The sixth chapter discusses the major findings of this study according to thematic lines that connect the previous chapters.

Chapter 2

Antecedents: The Emergence of Modern Art in Cameroon

As a political entity, Cameroon is a construct of the European imperial powers' infamous Scramble for Africa. A protectorate agreement of 1884 officially ascribed this territory to the German empire as a colony. As a consequence of Germany's defeat in WWI, which also entailed great losses of colonial soldiers, France and Great Britain obtained protectorate mandates from the League of Nations in 1922 for what temporarily became their portions of the land, namely French Cameroun and British Cameroons.¹ Yet contact with European merchants on the Atlantic coast and Islamic forces coming from the North-East was customary for centuries prior to German colonisation, not to mention cultural cross-pollination among the kingdoms on the shore and in the hinterland.²

Wood sculpting was the most highly valued art form in the region that this text analyses and has historically received the most academic attention.³ Other art supplies like paper, watercolours, oil paint, stencils, canvas, and photography took hold over the course of the colonial encounter, partly through mission schooling. Scholars agree that the spreading of the mission schools significantly contributed to the adoption of new techniques and materials by artists in the region. Not only were the missions largely responsible for the dissemination of drawing and painting on paper and other portable surfaces across the territory of the colony Kamerun,⁴ but these outposts were also important commissioners of pictures and artefacts.⁵ When the colony gained independence, a first generation of draughtsmen and painters had started to make a modest living from these newly introduced art forms by addressing different sets of clients.

The wide historical span from the colonial encounter to the post-independence years that I have sketched out here frames the argument of this preliminary chapter and it deserves some additional remarks. In African contexts, the independences or the "end of direct

colonisation”,⁶ to cite a more critical phrasing, are likely to appear as watershed moments in art-historical accounts because major political transformations have often engendered artistic turns.⁷ However, I shall argue that the case of Cameroon escapes this logic. Cameroon gained independence from the French and the British League of Nations mandates in 1960 and 1961 respectively, simultaneously with seventeen other African countries. Yet in 1955, as a condition for political autonomy, the De Gaulle government had required that the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC) be prohibited. This party had gathered Cameroon’s radically anti-colonial forces and, since the French government did not deem this position legitimate, the UPC leaders were violently murdered with French support—even after Ahmadou Ahidjo had taken office as first president of the Republic of Cameroon in 1960. It is because of this repressed war of resistance known as “maquis”⁸ that Cameroon’s independence has often been called a “sell-out to French interests”.⁹ Nevertheless, in 1961, the inhabitants of British Southern Cameroons chose to join the Francophone Republic of Cameroon by plebiscite. And thus, the Federal Republic of Cameroon came into being.¹⁰

The Cameroonian historian Yvette Monga offers a telling estimation of this new federation:

[It was a] mosaic of ethnic groups with different cultures, social structures, and systems of belief. Then, as today, the size and density of these groups were unequal, as were the distribution of natural resources, and the exposure to western education and ideas. As head of the new federal republic, Ahidjo faced the challenge of creating a country, and developing a new national consciousness among a group of peoples with different colonial experiences, political memories, and convictions.¹¹

President Ahidjo took measures to harmonise the groups’ respective interests by emphasising their cultural particularity. This strategy, known as “pluriculturalisme”, ultimately proved detrimental to the goal of unification however, as it raised ethnic awareness amongst the citizens in the long run.¹²

The contested legitimacy of the first postcolonial president, hesitant reunification, and ethnic tensions thus heavily affected public life in Cameroon in the period following independence. As a response, Ahidjo’s governance, which lasted until 1982, was repressive and did not acknowledge basic civil rights like the freedom of press and

expression. It can therefore be argued that the political atmosphere in the Postcolony (Mbembe) was little more conducive to an artistic florescence than the colonial situation. It is partly due to this argument and partly due to this book's main focus on artistic self-organisation in Cameroon, which took off only after 1976, that this preliminary chapter bridges both the colonial era and the immediate postcolonial years.

I will discuss this country's pioneering generation of modern artists by examining the work of four key artists in the first part of this chapter, namely Ibrahim Njoya, Gaspar Gomán, Martin Abossolo, and Engelbert Mveng. I have selected these cases because their respective educational biographies are typical for artists working in Cameroon in the mid-twentieth century. Moreover, in a region without comprehensive archives and written art histories, the artistic achievements of these artists have either been documented or were able to be reconstructed. I have been especially interested in the effects of their training on their practice and how each artist responded to the "highly asymmetrical relations of power"¹³ that characterised the realms in which they came into contact with new art media and genres. In the colonial mission schools, for instance, the asymmetry between the colonisers and the colonised was threefold as it thrived on racist clichés, the teacher-pupil hierarchy, and the imagined superiority of those who had the "right faith". Given these uneven power relations, my study will question how the emergent artists were able to develop their own styles. Which elements of the colonisers culture seemed relevant to them? Which local inspirations did they incorporate into their artwork?

The second part of this chapter looks at the place these artists were accorded in the shaping of a postcolonial, national cultural identity, because it has been said that

[m]odern African art functioned as a site for constructing a modern African identity during the colonial period. The historical condition of each cultural environment in its instance of modernisation confers a definable specificity on its interpretation of modernity. It also engenders historically specific concepts of modernity in cultural practice.¹⁴

Art historian Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie made this remark when reflecting on the historical role of artist Ben Enwonwu (1917-1994), who hails from neighbouring Nigeria. Like other African countries,

the years after independence in Cameroon were marked by the search for a national identity and debates about a properly Cameroonian, “authentic” culture. Yet, as I will argue in the coming pages, the specificity of the “instance of modernisation” in postcolonial Cameroon resulted in a national discourse on culture that proved largely adverse to modern-type aesthetics. By pursuing the reasons behind this adversity, this chapter will explain why the new Cameroonian government refrained from establishing art museums, art schools, and art education. Before developing this crucial element of the book’s argument, I will complement insights from anthropology and history with art-historical analyses of selected artworks by the aforementioned artists. These case studies will retrace the emergence of modern art in Cameroon in the first half of the twentieth century.

Ibrahim Njoya and the Bamum Drawings

The progressive King Njoya was in power in Foumban, the capital of the century-old Bamum kingdom 300 kilometres from the Wouri delta, when the German colonisers set out to conquer the hinterland of Cameroon.¹⁵ The first traders and missionaries arrived in Foumban as late as 1902, but the reputation that they weren’t easy to deal with preceded them. So as to prepare for this encounter, King Njoya had engaged in an exchange of diplomatic gifts with the German ceasar, the most important one being a famed pearl-covered throne.¹⁶ Njoya was an experienced ruler and had come up with many innovative solutions during his reign so as to live up to the complex politics of the period. Legend has it that in 1896 the king was inspired by a dream to commission a new writing system, the so-called “Shu Mom-script” (Fig 1). The palace elite invented 510 ideograms and pictograms for this script, which that were subsequently condensed into a syllabic and phonetic alphabet.¹⁷ The king had previously converted to Islam for political reasons and it is likely that the subsequent admission of Muslim traders to the local market had facilitated the access to paper and books within his territory.¹⁸

The first figurative drawings emerged shortly after the Shu Mom-script in Foumban, notably at a period when few indigenus

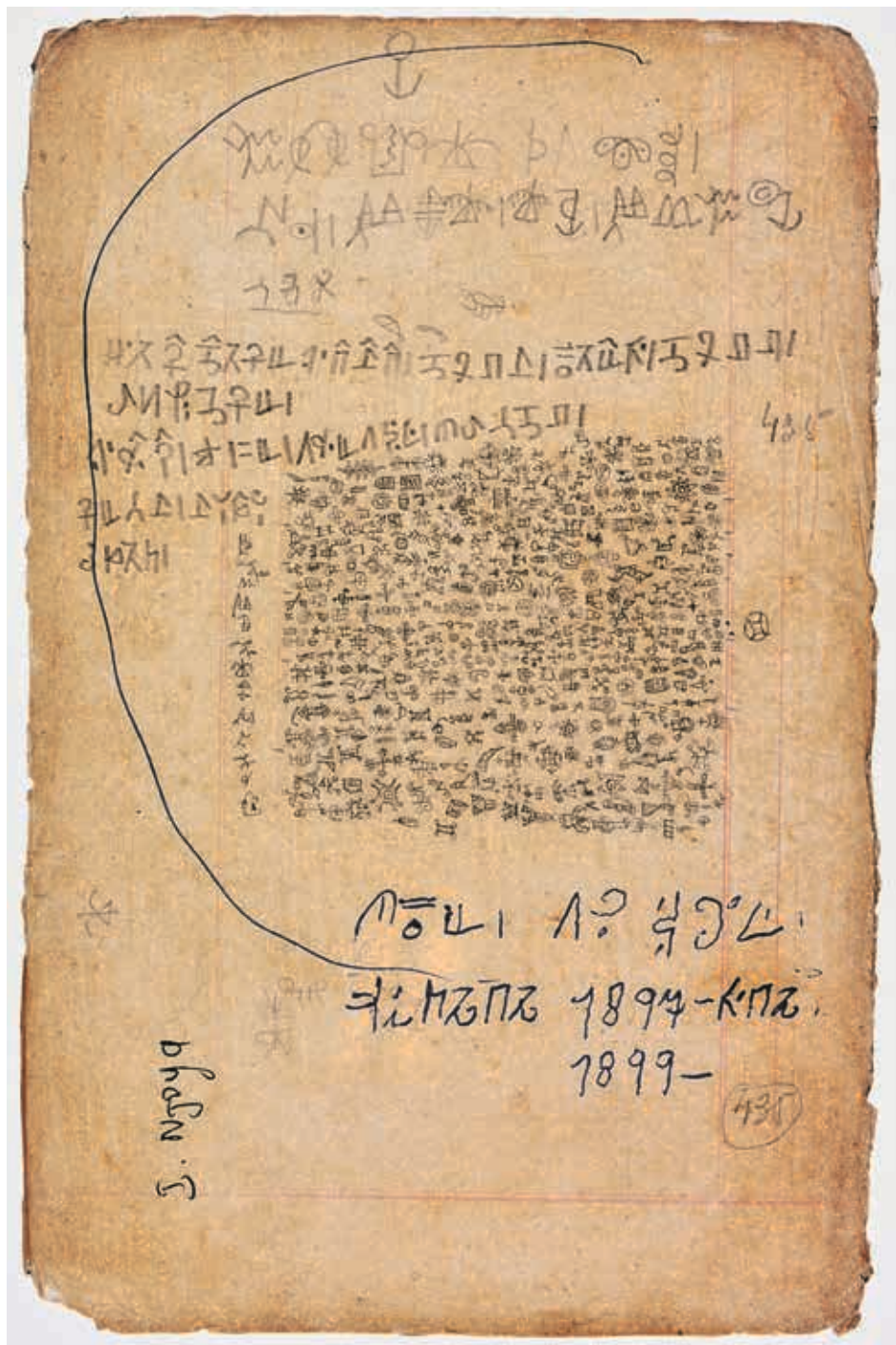


Fig 1
Ibrahim Njoya, *Première version de l'écriture shü-mom*, 1897, 19 x 12 cm
paper, graphite crayon. Collection of Nji Amidou Njoya, Foumban.

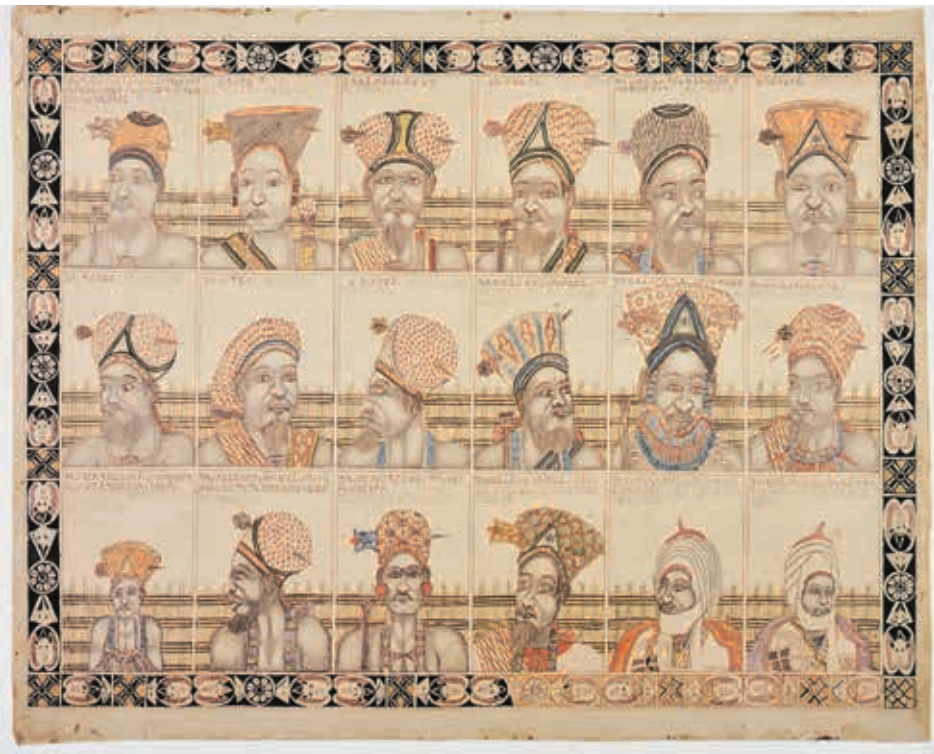


Fig 2
Ibrahim Tita Mbhou, *Portraits alignés de 18 rois bamum*, c. 1936, 54 x 67 cm
paper, ink, colour crayons, graphite crayon. Private collection.

draughtsmen practised on paper elsewhere in Central and Western Africa.¹⁹ It has been argued that it was the collective effort of the king and his notables to design the pictograms for the script, which contributed to the development of figurative drawing on paper and the distinctive style of the Bamum drawings.²⁰

Most Bamum drawings depict highlights of the history of the Bamum dynasty, such as decisive battles and events. So-called “king lists” with portraits of the royal lineage are another recurrent motif. (Fig 2) In terms of technique, the first Bamum draftsmen have shown a flexibility that is symptomatic of the transition period during which these drawings emerged. They worked on paper and soon started to use photo portraits as a reference, some of which were taken by King Njoya himself.²¹ Depending on the availability of art supplies, the draughtsmen used resolved ashes (outlines) and natural pigments (planes) or imported ink, crayons, watercolour, and gouaches.²²

Imports also formally influenced these drawings. They have been associated with Persian (Islamic) miniatures because the draughtsmen used to colour the characteristic black line drawings in a second step, because they deployed a hierarchical perspective, and surrounded their motifs by richly ornamented geometric frames.²³ Other authors have noticed that, with their assembled portraits, the king lists’ compositions resemble the photo memorabilia of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II and their characteristic arrangement in vignettes. King Njoya’s documented interest in Wilhelm II and his predilection for Prussian uniforms make this analogy seem intentional.²⁴ In light of these entanglements, it seems wise to follow the Bamum-expert Christraud Geary in her assertion that the Bamum drawings were a pictorial tool to affirm dynastic lineage and implement an official Bamum history at a moment of confrontation with the European intruders as well as internal power struggles.²⁵

This point can be clarified by the example of the first of the four key artistic figures to be introduced in this chapter, namely the draughtsman Ibrahim Njoya (ca. 1890²⁶ – 1962²⁷). Ibrahim Njoya was a direct cousin of King Njoya and hence involved into palace politics. Today, Ibrahim Njoya ranks as the most talented exponent of the Bamum drawing style due to his ability to elegantly visualise historic battle scenes and royal portraits, design architectural plans, illustrate fables, conceive of calendars and encyclopaedic panels, and

create maps.²⁸ Like every artist, Ibrahim Njoya was exposed to various influences, some of which are documented and importantly point to his training. As a child he excelled at sand-drawings and mural decoration and thus took up the task of simplifying the royal alphabet soon thereafter. As a pupil of the new Baptist mission school in Foumban, Ibrahim Njoya illustrated bibles with geometric motifs.²⁹ It is unclear whether he did so upon assignment, as part of religious instruction, or during specific drawing classes.³⁰ Judging from Ibrahim Njoya's later royal portraits he also trained by copying from photographs.

In 1908, Njoya was appointed head of the Palace School for Bamum writing and other elementary skills—a post that honoured his mastery at an early age. Christraud Geary has found reproductions of pencil drawings by palace school pupils depicting “Bamum men and women, very likely royals or members of the palace elite”³¹ in a book published by the German colonial painter Ernst Vollbehr in 1912, following his visit to the colony. It is possible that it was Njoya who had introduced drawing classes at this school. But even if he was made a master early on, Njoya seems to have extended his skills throughout his entire life, partly by way of contact with Europeans. For instance, the wife of a colonial administrator encouraged Njoya after WWII to modify the size of the persons depicted according to their positioning in the space suggested by the drawing. An architectural drawing of a palace driveway is proof of the artist's subsequent efforts to adopt linear perspective.³²

In the following passages, I shall scrutinise Ibrahim Njoya's experiments with composition, thus undertaking a first attempt at approaching his oeuvre with the tools of art history. By testing various constellations of text, illustration, and ornament, Ibrahim Njoya explored different modes of narration and experimented with different degrees of legibility. His graphic solutions for the front and the back cover pages of the illustrated folio *Histoire des Bamum* (ca. 1927 – 1930) are prime examples in this respect.³³ For the front cover (Fig 3), Njoya has combined the three typical elements of Bamum drawings in an experimental manner: linear figurative drawings, ornamentation, and typography. The draughtsman subordinated dynastic motifs, patterns, and letters to an abstract, graphic composition that is rich in contrasts and centres around the magnified, stylised typographic



Fig 3
Ibrahim Njoya, *Histoire des Bamoun*, cover, (not dated), 35 x 29 cm.
Private collection.

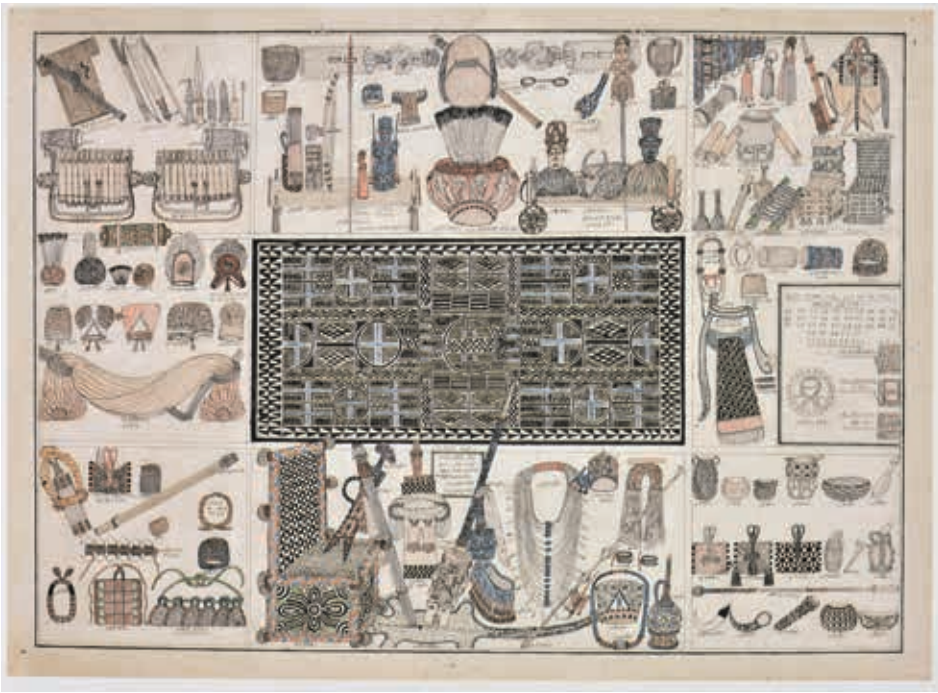


Fig 4
Ibrahim Njoya, *Planche des Objets*, c. 1932, 54,5 x 75 cm
paper, ink, coloured pencils, graphite pencil. Musée d'Ethnographie de Genève.

rendering of the book's title. A figurative detail makes the bottom of the composition more dynamic: a white flag caught in movement on a pole stands out from a cut-out piece of dark sky. This naturalist depiction betrays the logic of the rest of the composition, which is axe-symmetrical and consists of isolated, symbolic elements only. It is noteworthy that European modernist artists similarly experimented with typography as an autonomous pictorial element around that time. Examples are the cover by the Russian constructivist El Lissitzky for the book *Das entfesselte Theater* by Alexander Tairov or Kurt Schwitters' cover of the summer edition of the 1923 *Merz* journal.

Further examples of Njoya's innovative text-image constellations are his layouts for fables. In his depiction of the fable of the Leopard and the Chive, for instance, the text panel takes centre stage, surrounded by smaller drawings with ornamented frames.³⁴ Njoya tests different positions of text boxes in two variations of another fable. These text boxes feature alongside—or on top of—dozens of drawings that form a grid on a single sheet.³⁵ It is possible that comic books or cartoons were known in Foumban by the 1920s and served as inspiration. One can also draw clear compositional analogies between the fables and the king lists.

Njoya's "planches", or encyclopaedic panels, comprise his most interesting experiments with the relationship between text and image. Here, it seems like the draughtsman has tactically undercut the explanatory function of the text. In order to understand this point, it is necessary to briefly outline the politics that brought these panels into existence. King Njoya's power waned once Germany had lost the colony Kamerun in World War I because the incoming French administration repressed indigenous leaders who had been allies of the German empire. Now that the French administration bullied the king, his rival Mosé Yeyap seized the moment and arranged for the regalia from the palace to be transferred to the newly founded Musée des Arts et des Traditions Bamoun. Yeyap sought to destabilise the king's symbolic power by withdrawing the insignia of his authority from the palace to the museum. King Njoya's displacement from his court in Foumban followed in 1924 and he died in exile nine years later in Yaoundé.³⁶

Anthropologist Alexandra Loumpet-Galitzine believes that Mosé Yeyap may have commissioned these panels, or members of the

Mission Évangélique Française, who were involved in Yeyap's museum project. Loupet-Galitzine argues that both were interested in better understanding the palace, its politics, and related rituals.³⁷ Clearly, this interest went beyond their declared impetus to preserve the Bamum culture. As a matter of fact, the design of Ibrahim Njoya's panels catered to the different parties' desire for political influence in the old kingdom. For instance, *Planche des Objets* displays the complete range of King Njoya's objects on one large sheet of paper. (Fig 4) Like the illustration plates for the classic French encyclopaedia from the eighteenth century by Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, the panel's design suggests to the viewer completeness and a total vision.

According to Pratt's notion that contact zones tend to motivate indigenous artists to represent their cultural identity through their art, Njoya's panel can be interpreted as an auto-ethnographic rendering. Njoya's artwork is no single case in this respect: The artists Frédéric Bruly-Brouabré from Ivory Coast and Tshibumba Kanda Matulu from Congo have similarly cooperated with the European ethnographers Théodore Monod and Johannes Fabian respectively.³⁸ Like them, Ibrahim Njoya represented his own culture "in response to or in dialogue with (...) idioms of the metropolis", and in response to the pressures related to the colonial contact.³⁹ The idiom of the metropolis in question here is the pictorial type of the encyclopaedic panel.

However, in comparison to the illustration panels in the classic, French *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, Ibrahim Njoya's *Planche des Objets* bears a range of interesting inconsistencies. If we presume that Ibrahim Njoya was loyal to King Njoya, as the literature generally does, these inconsistencies even appear as tactical choices. For instance, Ibrahim Njoya allowed for certain hats or diagonally positioned spears to overlap the frames in order to add dynamism and liveliness to the plate's otherwise rigid composition. And although he was versed in the Latin alphabet, as we know from other works, the draughtsman restricted himself to the Shu Mom-script in this plate, most likely in an effort to limit the panel's legibility to a certain audience. Furthermore, Ibrahim Njoya positioned the royal fabric, a part of the majestic attire and an attribute of power that is closely associated with the king's body, in the centre

of the plate. This piece of fabric that dominates the composition is the only object that goes uncaptioned, causing its oscillation between an ornament and depicted object—an aesthetic choice that could easily be interpreted as a tactic to stage the power of the exiled king.

These observations suggest that the artistic originality of the *Planche des Objets* lies in Ibrahim Njoya's transculturation of the encyclopaedic genre. Njoya chose to frustrate his commissioners' desire for a panoptic vision of the court culture by means of a dose of opacity—a term used by the Martinican writer, poet, and critic Édouard Glissant to denote a tactic of resisting the imperialists' claim on the transparency of the subjected other.⁴⁰ Njoya's drawings appear therefore as a tool of self-assurance. This critical angle of Njoya's work has hardly been acknowledged and to date he has not seemed to play an important role in Cameroon's orally transmitted modern art history. Instead, Ibrahim Njoya's oeuvre has been replicated in an epigonic style in Foumban and beyond after his death.⁴¹ It seems like this afterlife has blurred the historical circumstances of the emergence of his work and pushed the Bamum drawings into the domain of folklore in the eyes of his compatriots.

Engelbert Mveng, an Artist/Curator in Cassock

In twentieth century Cameroon, the educated class emerged primarily from the mission schools, which enabled the missions to maintain their authority by forming the future elites. My second example from the first generation of modern artists in Cameroon, Reverend Father Engelbert Mveng, counts amongst these alumni. Born in 1930, Mveng trained as a Jesuit theologian and as a historian. His theology studies brought him to Congo in 1951, to Belgium between 1954 and 1957, and then to France. Having participated in some of the epoch-making reunions of Négritudinist African intellectuals and writers in Paris, he started publishing books on history and theology with the legendary Parisian edition house *Présence Africaine* and with *Éditions Clé*, the first Cameroonian publishing house.⁴² A biography by his former student Jean-Paul Messina sheds light on Cameroon's first Black Jesuit from the perspective of a brother in spirit. Rather than

giving a eulogist representation, Messina draws a complex picture of Mveng's personality and also points to the obscure circumstances of Mveng's violent death in 1995. However, this first biography devotes little attention to Mveng's side career as a curator and an artist.⁴³ My writing aims to work towards filling this lacuna since this art-loving facet of Mveng's productive life has proven to be of eminent importance within the context of my study, not only because this versatile intellectual has developed an original aesthetic vocabulary, but also because he is the only Cameroonian of his generation to both write about and to make art. In order to highlight the complex entanglement of Mveng's writing and artwork, I will analyse some of his texts on art alongside prominent examples of his own artistic practice. Furthermore, over the course of this chapter, I shall show that Mveng's multiple public engagements and his important international and Pan-African networks made his opinion on art carry a lot of weight in postcolonial Cameroon.

Mveng's talent as a draughtsman had attracted the attention of his teachers early on and got him involved in teaching younger pupils as a teenager at the catholic mission school in Minlaba, a town in Cameroon's south.⁴⁴ Later, while preparing for ordination to priesthood, Mveng used to spend his holidays in Bandjoun, Bafoussam, and Foumban—cities in Cameroon's West that are known for their rich cultural heritage. Apparently, the clergymen underwent initiation by Bamiléké and Bamum artisans there:

C'est au palais du sultan des Bamoun que Mveng est initié aux mystères de l'art traditionnel: l'intuition des formes et des lignes, les couleurs, les techniques de sculpture et de dessin, mais aussi et surtout la signification des symboles. Il subit la même initiation auprès des artistes bamiléké.⁴⁵

Based on these experiences, Mveng embarked on a life-long side-career as artist. His decorations of the chapel of Collège Libermann in Douala, where he taught between 1958 and 1960, are an early proof thereof. Messina's biography mentions an altar design showing Christ on the cross, as well as a way of the cross.⁴⁶

In 1963, right after independence, Mveng wrote an article on "L'Art Camerounais" for the new national cultural revue *ABBIA*.⁴⁷ In this article, which is richly illustrated with linear sketches of anonymous, undated artefacts yet lacks concrete examples, Mveng related

Cameroon's cultural heritage to that of the ancient Mediterranean cultures. The clergyman weeded out any fetishist, magical, or revolutionary aspects from art that he qualified as African or Cameroonian. Rather, this art ought to be a manifestation of "life's victory over death",⁴⁸ hence a manifestation of one of Mveng's dearest Christian credos. In the same vein, Mveng also conceptualised the artist as an effigy of the Creator.

When addressing the formal aspects of "L'Art Camerounais" in this article, Mveng detached the "pure" and "abstract" expressiveness of vernacular art from any "photographic" or "measuring type of art",⁴⁹ i.e. from the mimetic aesthetics of the colonisers. He identified red (for life), white (for death), ochre (for earth), black (for suffering) and to a lesser extent green as genuinely African colours,⁵⁰ and he introduced his "Universal Law of African Aesthetic Creation".⁵¹ This aesthetic theory presupposes that African artists—obviously an imagined entity—generally translate an object into a line, then into a motif, before integrating it into a larger composition. Schematisation therefore appears as the very core of artistic processes in Africa.⁵² While this thesis is all too global to be upheld, it can be said that schematisation was the principle guiding Mveng's own drawings and illustrations. Yet, while schematisation is a useful perceptual tool that helped Mveng to develop a modern artistic vocabulary, I will argue that it proved detrimental to Mveng's academic writing.

Mveng concluded this article for *ABBIA* by characterising Cameroonian art as an art "that has no history",⁵³ but rather is the result of a constant re-birthing ("Renaissance") of previous cultural expressions. While the historian probably intended to thus emphasise the survival of precolonial values and styles in postcolonial art,⁵⁴ it must be mentioned that this being-without-history paradoxically evokes one of Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel's highly problematic philosophical projections on Africa. Hegel writes:

What we properly understand by Africa, is the Unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.⁵⁵

Much of Africa's ongoing misconception as a realm that is exempt from the progression of history and caught in an infantile state is rooted in this idea that has also been used to legitimise colonialism as a

civilising mission.⁵⁶ It is surprising that Mveng, who knew this philosophical master narrative and also quoted Hegel in the same article,⁵⁷ would uncritically reproduce this cliché of ahistoricity. This is even more surprising in light of Mveng's cognisance of phenomena like the Bamum drawings, which were conditioned by historically singular events like Islamisation and the colonial encounter with the Germans rather than being the result of a self-contained renaissance.⁵⁸ In sum, it can be retained that Mveng's article on "L'Art Camerounais" projected a number of Christian beliefs as *raison d'être* onto art forms whose origins preceded Christianisation. Furthermore, it sought to impose the author's own questionable aesthetic norms on so-called Cameroonian art and uncritically picked up primitivising misconceptions of "African art".

Mveng joined his friend Senghor, another Catholic, in planning the first World Festival of Black Arts (French: FESMAN⁵⁹) soon after. This Pan-African mega-event was held in Dakar in 1966.⁶⁰ The festival's leitmotif was the aforementioned Négritude philosophy. Together with others, Mveng was put in charge of the festival's exhibition of historical art, entitled *L'Art Nègre: Sources. Evolution. Expansion*.⁶¹ This exhibition primarily displayed objects from Central and Western Africa, among them king lists from Foumban. In his catalogue introduction, Mveng stressed his ambition to retrace Africa's history by means of artworks. The latter are said to form a triumphant parade of "the final victory of Life over Death, of Love over Hate, of Liberty over Servitude, of Union over Division".⁶² Obviously, this parade celebrated Pan-Africanism and the Christian world-view in one go, thus synthesising Mveng's political and religious ideals.

Moreover, Mveng underlined that the artefacts in the exhibit had been selected for their artistic quality, rather than for ethnographic reasons. Hence, he ennobled these artefacts as works of art, despite the fact that some may have also been functional objects. This blurring of the lines between art and artisanal objects was part of a tactical argument that reoccurs also in Mveng's later writings, for instance in the treatise *L'Art et l'Artisanat Africains*. This handbook is in many ways a continuation of the ideas articulated in Dakar and at the occasion of later Pan-African festivals,⁶³ even if the text was published as late as 1980. Art's dimension as a historic document also constitutes the main thesis of this small book, which gathers vernacular signs,

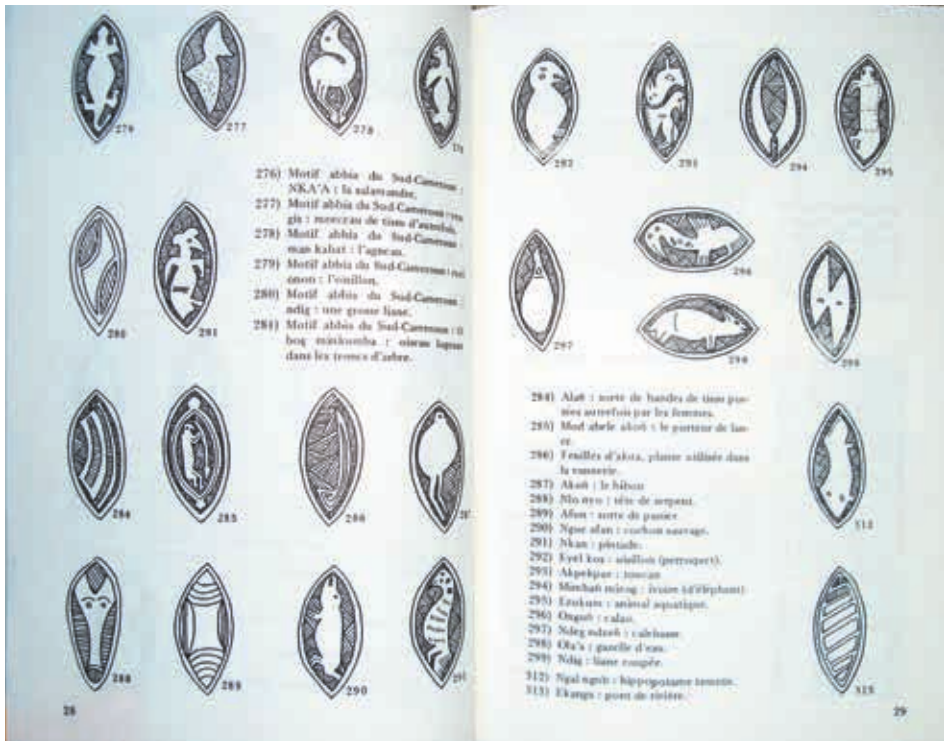


Fig 5
Abbia tokens in Mveng, *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains*.

symbols, and ornaments from various African contexts through texts, photos, and beautifully clear, linear illustrations.⁶⁴ (Fig 5) The author defined artisanal crafts here as the practices by which communities transform raw materials into useful and beautiful objects:

Par artisanat nous entendons l'ensemble des procédés par lesquels une population transforme les matériaux que lui procure la nature pour en faire des objets utiles et beaux.⁶⁵

According to Mveng, an artisanal object should be considered an artwork if its decorative value exceeds its use value.⁶⁶ Despite this differentiation, which he also highlighted in the volume's title, Mveng refused to draw a clear line between art and artisanal crafts throughout his book, instead arguing that the same practitioners assumed the role of both artisan and artist in Africa.⁶⁷ Accordingly, Mveng proposed to dismiss the modern division of labour in order to liberate the "creative African genius"⁶⁸ and to unleash Africa's ability to develop its own technologies and industries.⁶⁹ To further this utopia, *L'Art et l'Artisanat Africains* encouraged craftspeople and artists to draw on the engineering knowledge of pre-colonial crafts rather than on imported concepts of art, because Mveng deemed the "foreign academism"⁷⁰ the weakness of Africa's formal art schools. Consequently, he did not explain easel painting or drawing in *L'Art et l'Artisanat Africains*, whereas he devoted detailed attention to practical aspects of indigenous techniques like bronze sculpting, woodcarving, and basketry.

Mveng founded a workshop in Yaoundé in the mid-1960s to put these ideas into practice. Named Atelier de l'Art Nègre, the workshop operated through the 1970s—perhaps longer.⁷¹ The limited body of available source material suggests that the Atelier de l'Art Nègre was run by Mveng and frequented by "craftsmen and apprentices",⁷² who were partly draughtsmen.⁷³ I reckon that Mveng conceived of the designs and that the other members were responsible for the handiwork. According to Messina, Mveng set up the Atelier de l'Art Nègre as a typical craft workshop: a communal workspace that aimed to provide "a stable framework of communication and learning"⁷⁴ for differently specialised craftspeople. And in fact, there is at least one draughtsman who trained in this workshop between 1970 and 1978 and continued to work in the atelier thereafter.⁷⁵ In the long run, however, Mveng's multiple professional engagements made it impossible for him to

offer continuity to the atelier members, as Messina has testified, thus accounting for many changes in the team.⁷⁶

The prime task of Atelier de l'Art Nègre was to facilitate the inculturation⁷⁷ of Christian architecture, church furniture, liturgical objects and vestment, and to furnish African Christian churches with an aesthetic that was recognisably African.⁷⁸ Mveng had sketched out this project in a 1964 publication that analysed the sacral imagery of traditional African belief systems in order to translate these aesthetics into Christian decorations.⁷⁹ As a nucleus of practical and theoretical experimentation for inculturation, the workshop accepted church commissions throughout the continent and beyond. Examples reproduced in Messina's biography are the altarpiece *Le Christ crucifié, ressuscité et glorifié* (1979 or earlier)⁸⁰ at the Jesuit Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya, as well as the mosaic *Our Lady of Africa*. The latter decorates a sidewall of the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, Israel and is complete with a biblical inscription translated by Mveng from Latin to Ewondo, a Bantu language.⁸¹ A third example is the large altar mural at the Holy Angels Church in Chicago made in 1989. An ornament of rhombuses frames the eleven depictions of angelic deeds.⁸² While there are more works ascribed to Mveng to be found on the Internet, reliable inventories of the works produced by the Atelier de l'Art Nègre and those produced by Mveng himself are yet to be created.

I will now give some detailed attention to an artwork that Mveng created between 1977 and 1979 on the choir wall of the cathedral Notre Dame des Victoires of Yaoundé, possibly in collaboration with the Atelier de l'Art Nègre. (Fig 6) My intention is to analyse this artwork in relation to Mveng's theological training and writing. The welcoming Virgin Mary in this mosaic seems clearly inspired by canonical Immaculata iconography. Known from the seventeenth century onwards in Europe, this type of icon usually bore reference to the "Woman of the Apocalypse", as described in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 12:1):

And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.⁸³

However, Mveng has transculturated this motif in a particular way. At the cathedral in Yaoundé, the grown-up child, almost a smaller twin of the mother, accompanies the Virgin. Twelve stars frame the

two figures together, instead of forming the customary crown. Both Mary and Jesus stand on the canonical crescent with their arms wide spread, while a beaming cross/sun seems to emanate from the centre of the child. This linear design, which features stylised figuration, strong outlines, geometric patterns and a symmetrical composition, recalls one of Mveng's earlier illustrations. The dual motif of two axe-symmetrically superimposed human figures had already featured on the cover of his 1964 treatise on the aesthetics of African religiosity,⁸⁴ in which Mveng offered two interpretations of this motif. In addition to life's victory over death, Mveng represented the principle of fertility through the dualities of masculine-feminine, child-adult, and individual-social.⁸⁵ With regard to the mosaic's colouration, Mveng relied on his assertion from the article "L'Art Camerounais" that red, white, black, and ochre be the typical colours of the "African palette".

Another aspect of the altarpiece makes the link to Mveng's publications even more obvious; the faces of Mary and the child are split into a dark and a bright side. Formally, this is an effective means to suggest three-dimensionality in the strictly flat mosaic technique. However, Mveng did not invent the design of the split face anew. Rather, this design corresponds to an illustration reproduced in *L'Art et l'Artisanat Africains*, whose caption reads: "Dan Mask (Ivory Coast), used for ritual dances".⁸⁶ (Fig 6.3) This example evidences not only that Mveng's inculturated church decorations merged elements from Christian iconography with imagery from specific ritual contexts from across Africa, but also that his theological and anthropological writing, book illustrations, and Christian artwork all informed one another.

As the author of Cameroon's first national history,⁸⁷ a contributor to *ABBIA*, and a politician in Ahidjo's service,⁸⁸ Mveng enjoyed an excellent reputation among Cameroon's elites. His social standing also led to secular commissions—like the logo design for Cameroon's first university, which combines the characteristic oval shape of the "abbia" tokens with a symbol of wisdom: the tortoise shell.⁸⁹ (Fig 7) More often, however, these commissions seem to have concerned wooden bas-reliefs for doors, ceilings, or wall decorations.⁹⁰ According to Christraud Geary, such bas-reliefs were introduced in Cameroon in the first half of the twentieth century.⁹¹ One especially prestigious relief commission that the government awarded Mveng and



Fig 6
6.1 Engelbert Mveng with Atelier de l'Art Nègre (?), altar mosaic of the cathedral Notre Dame des Victoires of Yaoundé, (not dated).
6.2 The mosaic in the cathedral.
6.3 Illustration representing a Dan mask in Mveng, *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains*.



Fig 7
Logo of the University of Yaoundé I
ascribed to Engelbert Mveng.

the Atelier de l'Art Nègre was a series of pillar claddings that support the spiral of the *Monument of Reunification* (1974) in Yaoundé. The French architect Armand Salomon had conceived of this monumental ensemble for a park areal on Plateau d'Atmengue overlooking the capital.⁹² The ensemble comprises a figurative statue by the sculptor Gédéon Mpando⁹³ and an architectonic structure with two entangled staircases spiralling up in the form of a cone, made from concrete. The choice of this imported material, as well as the monument's spiral form, evokes icons of Modernity that celebrate technological progress, such as Vladimir Tatlin's world-famous constructivist model for the *Monument to the 3rd International* (1920).

Mveng and the Atelier de l'Art Nègre contributed the bas-reliefs that cover the spiral's pillars to the *Monument of Reunification*. Their pillar claddings are also made from cement⁹⁴ and consist of superimposed, rectangular image fields that form a rigid grid. The relief motifs on the rectangular fields range from elephant masks of a secret society of the Bamiléké in the Northwest,⁹⁵ to the iconic habitat forms of the polygamous farms in the North, to tokens of the abbia game from the South—to only speak of one of the pillars.⁹⁶ (Fig 8.1) Accordingly, I would argue that Mveng and the Atelier de l'Art Nègre have visualised a political leitmotif of the era—the aforementioned “pluriculturalisme”—by including icons from the most culturally distinct parts of the country in their composition. Symbolically speaking, the characteristics of the different cultures depicted in the pillar claddings form a support structure to carry the nation's lofty spiral of progress. (Fig 8.2)

The artworks, illustrations, and texts mentioned thus far demonstrate how Mveng's political and religious convictions translated into aesthetic form, and that his occupations as a writer, politician, clergyman, and artist actively sustained each other. In terms of symbolic capital, Mveng's involvement in secular cultural politics on a national and Pan-African level, not to mention his productivity as a writer of prose and poetry, augmented his reputation as an expert on aesthetics. Yet, Mveng was also an important proponent of the Liberation Theology movement, which cemented his reputation as an influential, if somewhat contested, figure in Catholic hierarchies up to the Vatican. This engagement increased his authority and opened access to alternative networks of power and ecclesiastical commissions.⁹⁷

As I was able to illustrate, these various occupations engendered reciprocal influences between Mveng's creative processes. Mveng did not hesitate to combine techniques, motifs, colours, and materials that he had identified as indigenous with distinctly modern ones, such as Christian iconographies or reliefs from wood or concrete. The creative liberty that he took to adopt influences from various origins in his artwork and to hybridise his multiple talents in their creation seems at odds with the often generalising, apodidictic, and essentialising tone in Mveng's writings. It is therefore all the more desirable that Mveng be scrutinised as an important artistic personality in the future, rather than as an authority on aesthetics, as has been the case so far.

Unfortunately, many art-historical questions concerning this talented friar must remain unanswered here. For instance, considering transcontinental transfers of artistic knowledge, it would be enlightening to know whether Mveng took inspiration from European post-war church architecture.⁹⁸ Furthermore, his Pan-African contacts should be studied in order to identify the craftsmen and artists that Mveng claims to have visited "throughout all of Black Africa"⁹⁹ during his travels. In this respect, it would be especially rewarding to compare Mveng's practice with a Nigeria-based precursor in the project of inculturation, namely the English-born Catholic Reverend Kevin Carroll, who initiated the Oye-Ekiti workshop in Nigeria (1947-1954). This comparison seems all the more promising since recent research on the Oye-Ekiti workshop has shown that this centre also excelled in bas-reliefs.¹⁰⁰ In-depth archival research in Mveng's estate—especially if his notebooks and sketch blocks are preserved—could answer these questions and help to work towards a catalogue raisonné.

An essential element of this project would include researching the *Atelier de l'Art Nègre*. Even if its members may have voluntarily abandoned their authorship in order to conform to the "traditionally African" ways of working that Mveng used to conjure up, it is relevant for future art-historical analysis to clarify who contributed to specific commissions,¹⁰¹ as well as who taught whom inside this workshop.¹⁰² Summarily speaking, there is plenty of reason to further scrutinise the "Père Engelbert Mveng" with art-historical means, as he was clearly a protagonist of Cameroon's art history of the twentieth century, even if his artistic career was only a side-career.



Fig 8

8.1 Pillar of the Monument of Reunification, 1974, concrete.

8.2 The ensemble of the monument on Plateau d'Atemengue, Yaoundé.

Learning Art the Non-formal Way in the 1950s: The Case of Martin Abossolo

Martin Abossolo and Gaspar Gomán were both contemporaries of Engelbert Mveng. A slightly more comprehensive record exists of their artistic careers because samples of their earlier works are documented in colour photographs and their oeuvres have been recently exhibited in retrospectives. These materials, combined with prior research undertaken by graduate students in art history, have provided me a number of sources to expand upon. While I will mainly focus on the differences in Abossolo's and Gomán's respective paths to visual art, let me stress some commonalities by way of introduction. Born in 1933 and 1928 respectively, Abossolo and Gomán belong to the first generation of canvas painters in Cameroon. Many of their paintings evoke a pre-colonial, rural idyll of lives between thatched huts, as well as hunting and fishing scenes, even if their works are formally differently articulated.

This commonality is worth closer scrutiny. In the past, writers and artists have often blamed the ubiquitous preponderance of village scenes¹⁰³ on the demand that tourists and expats place for iconic, kitschy souvenirs¹⁰⁴ and on the artists' poor education, naiveté, and simple commercial calculus.¹⁰⁵ In the same vein, indigenous Cameroonians' disinterest in this type of painting has been stressed and superficially evidenced by the fact that they have been rarely observed buying these works.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to this simplistic conclusion, the art historian Afane Belinga has termed this gamut of motifs a "return to the sources".¹⁰⁷ This ideal had been articulated at least since the 1930s in modern African poetry within the context of the Négritude movement, which sought to rehabilitate African values and ways of life that had been degraded by colonialism and uprooted by modernisation.¹⁰⁸ By making this link to an important ideal of Black culture, Afane Belinga has pointed to the *raison d'être* of this genre: a strong nostalgic longing for an untouched past. Obviously, indigenous Cameroonians were not exempt from this longing. Kasfir has come to the same conclusion when considering a broader geographic realm:

[T]he depiction of an idealized Africa undisturbed by change and epitomized in scenes of rural domestic life has had a wide currency with urban painters far beyond the borders of the Congo. Not only are such

subjects very popular with tourists and expatriates, but they are also equally common in the homes of the African middle classes.¹⁰⁹

And by way of explaining the appeal of the rural genre scenes, Kasfir has proposed different indigenous readings, ranging from

a collective social memory of an actual rural past (a recent experience for many urban dwellers), [to] nostalgia for “tradition” (a quite different reading requiring social, spatial or temporal distance on the part of the viewer), [to] a cultural ideal of harmony couched in a rural family idiom, [to] an escape fantasy driven by grinding urban poverty, or even [to] a symbolic rejection of anything Western.¹¹⁰

The following comparison of two painters, who differently established their careers in the 1960s and 70s, exemplifies two Cameroonian responses to this well-rooted demand for comforting representations of “Africa”.

Like most painters in Cameroon, Martin Abossolo was non-formally trained—yet, as was common among his peers, he is no autodidact.¹¹¹ According to my main source, the summary of an interview with the artist by Afane-Belinga, Martin Abossolo began to envision his artistic career in 1945. At the time, Abossolo had observed the slightly elder Rigobert Aimé Ndjeng—who is now considered the first oil painter in Cameroon’s written and oral history¹¹²—selling a painting to an American in his native town Ebolowa. His father’s work at the local American hospital brought this transaction to his attention. Thereafter, he enrolled in a correspondence program with a Paris-based private school. According to Afane Belinga, he engaged in this course at the age of fourteen, that is around 1947, after some basic general schooling.¹¹³

I have elaborated on this story because my research has revealed that also numerous artists born around 1950—namely Philippe Tchagang,¹¹⁴ Werewere Liking,¹¹⁵ Zara Mallon,¹¹⁶ Pascal Kenfack,¹¹⁷ and Etienne Djiegong¹¹⁸—have shared a similar experience. A newspaper article from 1975 in *Cameroon Tribune* even suggests that art courses by correspondence from Paris had become the educational standard for painters in Cameroon.¹¹⁹ While most of the above-mentioned artists had subscribed to the so-called École A.B.C., others joined the “Cours Grand Maître du Dessin”.¹²⁰ How did this trend come into being? Pascal Kenfack, for instance, found the respective advertisements in the foreign newspaper *Reader’s Digest*. He ordered

the private school's brochures by mail, sent back the completed assignments, and also received feedback by mail. Although this might seem simple, the process was actually quite arduous because postal services were slow and personal mailboxes were—and still are—uncommon in Cameroon. Thus, Kenfack had to make arrangements to use a family member's mailbox in order to participate in the course.¹²¹

Despite the adverse conditions, correspondence schools provided a viable opportunity for artists to pursue training because of the dearth of artschools in Cameroon. Foreign studies excluded all but a select few due to high tuition rates, educational pre-requisites, and merit-based admission qualifications. Such an experience was limited to those who received studio grants. The bar was set much lower by the correspondence schools: anyone could sign up in return for a small fee. These courses were certainly also attractive for aspiring artists in Cameroon because they offered a connection to Paris. Although this city had lost many of its most dynamic artists to New York over the course of WWII, Paris continued to enjoy a reputation as the world's art capital. Moreover, the centre of France's colonial empire also remained the primary intellectual point of reference on the international level for Francophone Cameroonians.

As commercial enterprises, the respective schools knew how to profit from this advantage in terms of location. On its letterhead, for instance, École A.B.C. presented itself as “the world's most important drawing school”¹²² because it offered correspondence courses since 1913. Considering that reputed art schools have existed in Paris since 1648,¹²³ this statement was a wild exaggeration. École A.B.C. also advertised its courses to be very time-efficient and promised to subscribers that “becoming an artist means having an easy life”.¹²⁴ (Fig 9) And yet, Ecole A.B.C. by no means specialised in art. Rather, historic advertisements show that this venture offered courses of all sorts, including foreign languages, typewriting, photography, and drawing.¹²⁵ Judging from a collection of École A.B.C.'s art brochures that I was able to locate in Paris, as well as my research online, it seems that these correspondence schools taught mainly amateur knowledge. Art courses included basic lessons on how to use different art supplies and some drawing tricks.¹²⁶ Future research should test this hypothesis and also explore the attendance of the Parisian correspondence courses by artists on the African continent beyond Cameroon.



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Fig 9
 9.1 Cropped ad for Ecole A.B.C., allegedly printed in *Paris Match* in February 1955.
 9.2 Advertisement flyer of Ecole A.B.C. from the 1960s or 70s.

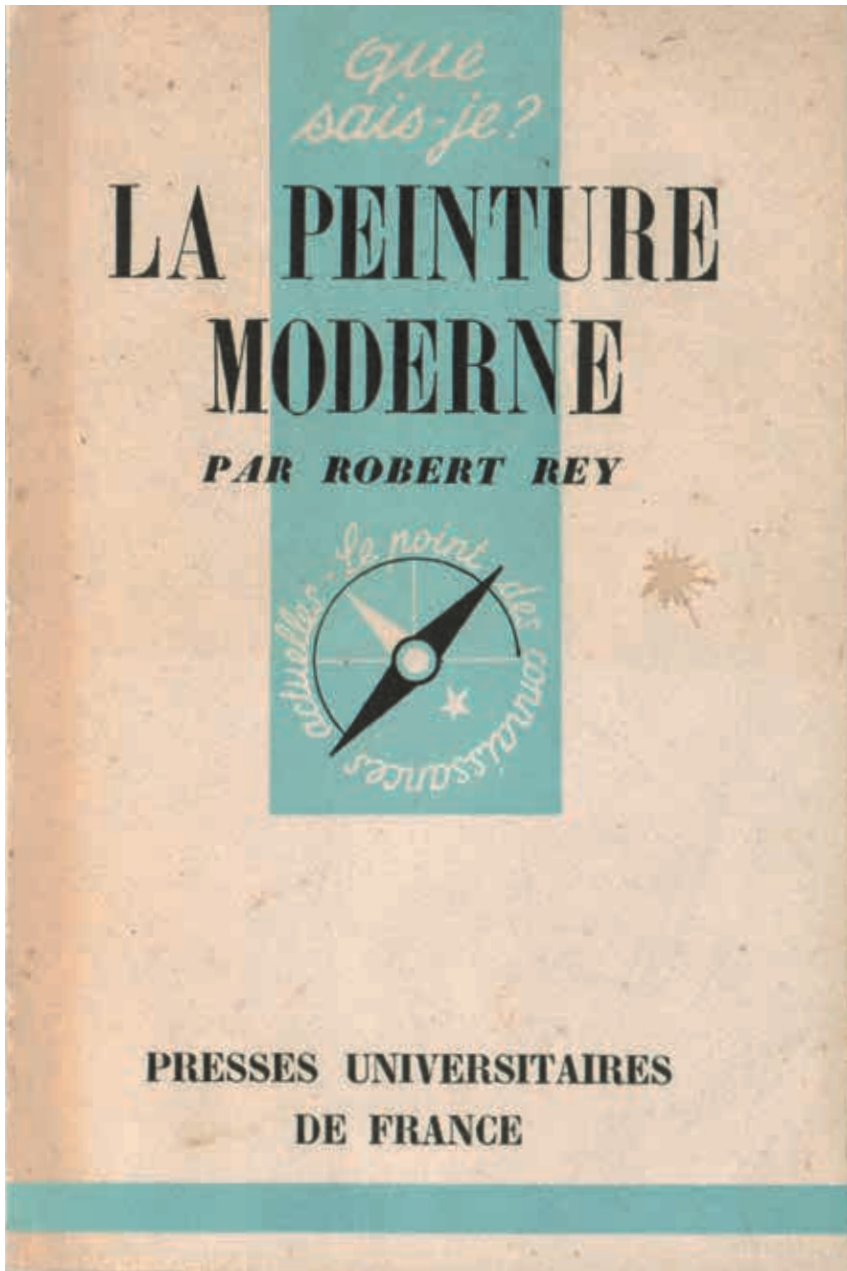


Fig 10

An introduction to modern painting from France without pictures.

Regardless of the quality of the instruction he received, Martin Abossolo eventually broke with École A.B.C. because he wanted to become a painter rather than a draughtsman.¹²⁷ When interviewed by Afane Belinga, Abossolo remembered having copied figures from his colonial reading book in the professional school that his father forced him to attend from 1951 onwards.¹²⁸ In 1958, upon his relocation to Yaoundé, the aspiring painter found the paperback book *La Peinture Moderne* from the French encyclopaedic series *Que sais-je?* in a bookstore.¹²⁹ (Fig 10) Although Abossolo claims in his interview with Belinga that he learned about Picasso and his contemporaries from Europe through this book,¹³⁰ I later discovered that this volume has no illustrations. Despite this surprising detail, this booklet's narration of the succession of the (French) avant-gardes seems to have taught Abossolo a credo of Modernism: innovation. Abossolo used this insight to distinguish himself from his peers, as the following statement unveils:

J'ai compris—contrairement aux autres peintres—que dans la peinture ce n'est pas l'exactitude qui compte, mais il faut faire quelque chose d'exceptionnelle.¹³¹

One sees this mindset reflected in a number of Abossolo's works, in particular three oil paintings from the 1960s that are preserved in the collection of the North American Harmon Foundation.¹³² Initially geared towards development aid in Africa, this organisation became the paramount point of reference for African artists in North America between 1940 and 1967, the year of its dissolution. The Harmon Foundation received countless artworks directly from African artists for further marketing.¹³³ If it is correct that Abossolo arranged what must have been a rather expensive mailing to the U.S. himself, it is safe to assume that he considered the canvases *Tom-Tom Player No 1*. and *Dancer No. 1* (both 1965) to be representative of his style at the height of his career.¹³⁴ These two paintings share a pointillist facture as well as a strong human presence dominating the composition. The ecstatic pose, the loincloth attire, and the instrument of the tom-tom player (Fig 11) evoke a performance in a village or during a folkloristic celebration. The same might hold true for *Dancer No. 1* (Fig 12.1). However, I was unable to identify the gender of this painting's protagonist due to the dancer's over-articulated physique and thus cannot pursue further interpretation along these lines. Abossolo may

have been inspired by figurines made by the Fang, an ethnic group that inhabits Southern Cameroon and other Central African countries. A typical reliquary figure by a Fang artist in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum shows similarly bulging muscles that contrast with its infantile head. (Fig 12.2) It is said in this context that it is a beauty ideal of the Fang to hold opposites of gender and age in equilibrium.¹³⁵ While this association with Fang aesthetics has to remain a hypothesis for the time being, it can be stated with certainty that Abossolo's paintings inscribe themselves into the register of the rural genre scenes. They did conjure up a pre-modern setting by the modern means of canvas painting.

Abossolo's awareness of the longing for an untouched past might well be one reason why his paintings enjoyed considerable attention between 1960 and 1970, from both the Cameroonian state and the foreign cultural institutes in Yaoundé.¹³⁶ And Abossolo's exhibition activities were not only limited to Africa. He showed his works several times in Paris, including at an exhibition at the Musée de l'Homme in 1965, and also had an exhibition in Philadelphia at the Commercial Museum in 1966. He withdrew from the scene around 1975 for health reasons, yet he did not abandon his career.¹³⁷ Today, Abossolo's legacy lives on in the oeuvre of one of his students, the prolific Yaoundé-based sculptor Joseph Francis Sumegné (born 1951), to whom we will return to later.

Abossolo's biography exemplifies how artists in Cameroon went about their training in the 1940s and 1950s. It seems that they readily accepted any possibility to learn, whether through subscribing to correspondence courses or by following the teachings of a random French art history book. The act of identifying and seizing learning opportunities can be considered a type of tactical agency. According to de Certeau, such tactical agency "must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power".¹³⁸ In Abossolo's case this power was twofold. He was both subject to the rules of the imperial culture, which indirectly imposed the norm of artistic innovation in the protectorate and in the Postcolony, and to the Négritudinist zeitgeist. Moreover, Abossolo's case is telling with regard to the myth of the autodidact artist mentioned in the introduction: in fact, Abossolo's learning was assisted, however distant his tutors were. Hence, he cannot be considered an autodidact, nor can



Fig 11
Martin Abossolo, *Tom Tom Player No. 1*, 1965, oil on canvas (?), (not measured).
Collection Harmon Foundation.



Fig 12

12.1 Martin Abooso, *Dancer No. 1*, 1965, oil on canvas (?), (not measured).
Collection Harmon Foundation.

12.2 Fang peoples; Gabon or Equatorial Guinea, *Figure from a Reliquary Ensemble: Seated Female*, 19th or early 20th century, 64 x 20 x 16, 5 cm, wood, metal.
Metropolitan Museum.

he be considered untouched by European influences. Rather, his originality is to be measured by the formal and thematic qualities of his artwork. For such a judgement to be made on a solid basis, further art-historical studies will need to produce an overview of Abossolo's oeuvre.

Being an Art Academic After Independence: The Case of Gaspar Gomán

While academic training is considered a prerequisite for an artistic career in many places, it did not guarantee a privileged position in Cameroon in the years after independence, as the following comparison of Abossolo's and Gaspar Gomán's biographies will demonstrate. Gaspar Gomán is one of the first Cameroonian artists to enjoy formal academic training abroad. Born in 1928 in the city of Santa Isabel (today Malabo, Equatorial Guinea), Gomán was the son of a Cameroonian, who had been forced to work on this island by the German colonial administration. From 1954 to 1960, Gomán studied visual art at the *Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes* in Barcelona with a stipend of the province of Fernando Poo. After returning to Equatorial Guinea he taught art and art history, exhibited his work, and decorated two churches¹³⁹ until the privilege of having studied in Spain landed him in prison under the dictatorship of Francisco Macías Nguema. A blog post written by a Spanish expat who interviewed Gomán suggests that the Cameroonian ambassador in Equatorial Guinea facilitated Gomán's emigration to Cameroon in 1972.¹⁴⁰

The information on the blog complements his scarce CV that appears in the trilingual monograph published to accompany Gomán's 2010 retrospective. Although this booklet features numerous full-colour images, it only contains a short general introduction. The earliest work reproduced here is a black and white ink drawing that dates to 1972 (Fig 13), while works from the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s are more plentiful. The reproduced works evidence Gomán's preference for working in oil on paper. A sovereign drawing ductus, anatomical skills, dense all-over compositions, and a skilful play with foreground and background distinguish this painter from his peers.

It is worthwhile to take a closer look at the works gathered in this little catalogue, as they unveil an interesting ambivalence in his imagery. Gomán's signature works show couples or groups of black individuals wearing little or no clothing in front of natural settings, oftentimes mountainous landscapes or savannahs that recall rural genre scenes. Yet, in contrast to this genre's pleasing, often impressionistic sceneries, Gomán's has heavily stylised the world he depicted. The people in his paintings have oversized faces, enhanced eyes, flat and broad noses and round, red-lipped mouths, thus evoking those stereotypes of Black anatomy for which the American minstrel shows of the nineteenth century have been criticised.¹⁴¹ The subjects' expressions—which are predominantly upset or concerned—contradict this clownish effect. Seen from a postcolonial perspective, it seems as if Gomán intended to distance the viewers by staging these exaggerated features to thus enforce reflections on representational politics.¹⁴²

Taking this thought further, I would like to argue that Gomán dealt with the violent ruptures engendered by colonialism in most of the works reproduced in the 2010 catalogue. His artistic engagement with these ruptures are not only indicated through his first-hand experiences with colonial violence and its aftermath, but also through the representative ambivalence outlined above and the melancholy attitude that seems to emanate from the individuals he depicts. Gomán's later oeuvre is even more explicit in this respect. From the 1990s onwards, Gomán has often represented troubled individuals that duck or hurry away from an unspecified threat. Many titles suggest that these individuals are caught during an "exodus", while other titles clarify that we are looking at defenceless African chiefs.¹⁴³ (Fig 14) I can therefore argue that Gomán conflated rural genre scenes with psychological allusions to the traumatic collective experience of colonialism, thus assuming a singularly critical position amongst twentieth century Cameroonian artists.

Paradoxically, though, Gomán's titles are kept in the universal tone of European modernism. These titles allude to the broader themes of mankind as addressed in classic drama (*War & Peace*, *The Rages*)¹⁴⁴ or more comforting experiences (*Palm Wine Drinkers*, *Les Princesses*, or *The Hunter*).¹⁴⁵ His timeless and (largely) contextless titles, drawing skills, and ability to render motifs in different styles can easily be attributed to the time he spent studying in Spain. The universalising



Fig 13
Gaspar Gomán, *Buveurs de vin de palme*, 1972, 64 x 48,5 cm, indian ink on paper.
Private collection.



Fig 14
Gaspar Gomán, *Chefs Africains (Exode)*, 2006, 38,5 x 54,5 cm, oil on paper.
Private collection.

humanism and the stylised naturalism of his paintings, which recall aspects of Socialist Realism, also correspond to the same context. In sum, these observations suggest that Gomán's oeuvre feeds on the experience of two conflicting worlds, namely that of the first generation of modern African artists seeking to create a new self-image from the ashes of colonial violence on one side, and that of modern European art, which mistook its own forms and subjects for expressions of a universal modernity on the other.

This complexity in Gomán's paintings did not match the demand for easy, comforting images and it did not advance his career. Upon his relocation to Yaoundé in 1972, Gomán taught Spanish at a college because there was no demand for art teachers in Cameroon without an infrastructure for institutionalised arts education.¹⁴⁶ Gomán took steps to introduce elements of arts education into students' curricula by taking the initiative to propose to the minister of education that his drawings be posted in secondary schools in order to raise the pupils' sensibility for art—a proposal that sadly was not granted.¹⁴⁷ Despite this refusal, which was symptomatic of the general disinterest in visual art in Cameroon and despite the lack of writing about his work in the daily press, Gomán was nonetheless on the brink of becoming one of Yaoundé's most visible artists in the 1970s. This change in fortune was sparked by his acquaintance with the French architect Armand Salomon in 1976. Salomon was not only the author of the master plan for Yaoundé (1958), and of the *Monument of Reunification*, but had also realised many of the government buildings in Cameroon's newly reunited capital.¹⁴⁸ With their extravagantly sculpted bodies, these buildings recall Le Corbusier's architecture for the regional government in Chandigarh, India, to only briefly characterise them here. In an interview from 2011 Gomán has described his collaboration with Salomon as follows:

[I]t was Salomon who got contracts from the Cameroon government and hired my services to produce the several art works today found in many public buildings in the ministries, public treasury buildings, council halls, Brasseries du Cameroon building in Douala, the Afriland Bank in Yaoundé and the BEAC building in Congo-Brazzaville and Cameroon.¹⁴⁹

Gomán mainly contributed façade mosaics to these buildings, many of which are documented in the 2010 monograph. The motifs of

these mosaics differently celebrate Africa's wealth in terms of culture, resources, and nature and can therefore be considered Négritudinist in spirit. This said, they were finished surprisingly late, namely in the 1980s and 1990s. According to first-hand information by Paul-Henri Assako Assako, this delay was due to high-ranking adversaries who envied Gomán's prestigious commissions and consequently arranged to temporarily relocate this teacher and civil servant to posts in remote parts of Cameroon, a manoeuvre that kept him from pursuing his artistic career and architectural commissions in the capital.¹⁵⁰ Despite the inimitable mark that he has made on public life Yaoundé, Gomán's relocation is partially to thank for his current reputation as an "abandoned talent" or "forgotten artist".¹⁵¹

Abossolo and Gomán's biographies shed light on two pathways in terms of artistic training, the non-formal and the academic. In comparison, it is obvious that their different training trajectories did not have a direct impact on their public reception. While Abossolo had more opportunities to exhibit in Cameroon and abroad, taught art courses, and has his place in the memory of the local art world, the academic Gomán only received a handful of commissions for art in architecture and was hardly ever referenced in my interviews. It seems like the academic networks of artists who studied abroad had no stronghold in Cameroon. On the contrary, if they had trained at art schools outside of Africa, as was most often the case,¹⁵² the graduates risked being sidelined upon their return to Cameroon. Engelbert Mveng's aforementioned scepticism regarding academic studies illustrates this point, but there are more examples of this kind: for instance, the painter and temporary opinion leader Isidore Zogo speculated in a 1975 newspaper interview that non-academic artists are superior to academically trained ones due to their (supposed) self-teaching and that artists trained in Europe are unable to depict the anatomy and physiology of Blacks.¹⁵³ Such anti-academic and Afrocentric sentiments, which found their outlet in the press, could easily outweigh the foreign consecration of the few academic artists practising in Cameroon. Hence, I can conclude that an academic training was no prerequisite for artistic success in Cameroon.

The Quest for an “Authentic” National Culture in the Public Discourse and its Impact on Visual Art

Public discourse on culture had an important effect on the artistic production in Cameroon. This point has already been made with regard to the predilection for everything that looked truly “African” and for rural genre scenes. The analysis of press and official communiqués in the following pages will add another dimension to my study of visual art’s reception in the first two decades after independence in Cameroon. My representative samples include the first twenty-five editions of the cultural review *ABBIA* (1963-1971), the culture coverage of the national daily *Cameroon Tribune* (1974-1976), and an official report on Cameroon’s culture politics to the UNESCO from 1975.¹⁵⁴ A comparative reading of these samples will support my hypothesis that visual art was marginalised in the public discourse after independence. The ubiquitous quest for an “authentic” national culture, which importantly oriented discourses on culture of the time, will be held accountable for this marginalisation.

The quarterly review *ABBIA* was founded in 1963, two years after independence, upon the initiative of Cameroonian intellectuals around the writers Bernard Fonlon and Eno Belinga. The “abbia” game from Cameroon’s South had inspired the name of this periodical that stood under the tutelage of president Amadou Ahidjo and received funding from the Ministry of Education. As a consequence, the editors were called upon to oppose “exaggerated criticism” and any form of “partisanism”. Instead, they were tasked to “preserve the particular aspects of the Cameroonian and the African culture within the new technical and modernist order”.¹⁵⁵ As a platform for a variety of domestic and foreign scientists and writers, *ABBIA* was to become the official stage for intellectual and academic debates in relation to the process of nation building, until it ceased being published in 1982, the year of the shift in presidency.¹⁵⁶

It is worthwhile to take a look at the semantics of this revue’s distinctly modern graphic cover design in order to introduce *ABBIA*’s coverage of the visual culture of the new republic. *ABBIA*’s covers were monochrome and changed their bright pastel tone with every new issue. (Fig 15.1) Their design was exclusively typographic: on top of a white text in a small Shu Mom-typeface¹⁵⁷ sat a massive capital

letter “A” made of seven stylised, oval-shaped “abbia”-tokens. A small scheme on the inside cover explained the meaning of each of the carved motifs.¹⁵⁸ These references to the Bamum writing system from the West and to the *abbia* game from the South rooted the review firmly in a visual repertoire that harmonised the cultural diversity of the new nation. Moreover, the simple layout grid, the reduced colour palette and modern typefaces inside the magazine linked *ABBIA*’s visual appearance to graphic styles developed in the interwar period in Europe. Comparable graphic designs like László Moholy-Nagy’s 1929 covers for the *Bauhausbücher* mirrored the ideal to reform all aspects of life by means of aesthetics.¹⁵⁹ *ABBIA*’s index table, with the underlined article titles bundled together by a vertical line to form a sort of chart (Fig 15.2), furthermore calls to mind the cover design of Kurt Schwitter’s and El Lissitzky’s joint issue of *Merz* magazine in 1924. We can thus conclude that *ABBIA*’s aesthetic not only alluded to Cameroon’s cultural heritage, but also articulated the new nation’s aspiration for a self-assured form of modernisation.

Despite this elaborate visual appearance I have found that the first twenty-five issues of *ABBIA* accorded surprisingly little space to modern aesthetics in its content. The explicit deprecation of *ABBIA*’s patrons for secular forms of art gives a first hint at the reasons for this choice. In the editorial they wrote:

[L]’art pour l’art (...) n’a pas de signification dans une Afrique qui doit se resacraliser pour devenir elle-même.¹⁶⁰

Accordingly, I could only discern four articles that dealt with visual art and visual culture at large. Engelbert Mveng’s aforementioned text “L’Art Camerounais” appeared in the journal’s pages, as did an article dedicated to Ibrahim Njoya written by Isaac Paré, a museologist who promoted Cameroon’s museums as a crucial tool for the building of national unity and for a new identity of the postcolonial nation.¹⁶¹ The latter article’s title translates as “A little-known Cameroonian artist: Ibrahim Njoya”, thus indicating that Njoya had yet to be acknowledged on the national level by 1964.¹⁶² And indeed, Paré pioneered the examination of Njoya’s biography and drawing style. Large black and white reproductions of Ibrahim Njoya’s drawings and a photo portrait accompany this homage to an “excellent patriot”.¹⁶³

The next article exudes the same nationalist spirit. But more importantly, it shows that visual art was not made part of Cameroon’s



N° 16 MARCH — MARS 1967

CONTENTS

SOCIOLOGIE — SOCIOLOGY	
5	Idea of Culture (I) by B. FONLON Le concept de culture (II) par B. FONLON
25	Dessins et écriture chez les Fall par J.-P. LEBEUF Drawing and Writing among the Fall by J.-P. LEBEUF
41	The University: Theology, Legend and History by P. ELLINGWORTH
49	L'Université : théologie, légende et histoire par P. ELLINGWORTH
POEMES — POETRY	
56	Five Movements from an Old Dance — Mousi Dance by F. QUINN
HISTOIRE — HISTORY	
59	Pour une histoire du Cameroun central : les traditions historiques des Voué ou « Bahoué » par E. MOHAMADOU For a History of Central Cameroon: Historical Traditions of the Voué or "Bahoué" by E. MOHAMADOU
129	L'installation des Arabes au sud du lac Tchad par J.-C. ZELTNER The Settling of the Arabs South of Lake Chad by J.-C. ZELTNER
DOCUMENTS	
155	Éléments de droit Boulo par JAEGER Elements of Bulu Law by JAEGER
171	Ont collaboré au N° 16 d'ABBLIA Contributors to the 16 Issue of ABBLIA

Fig 15

15.1 Cover of *ABBLIA* 16.

15.2 Index table of *ABBLIA* 16.

foreign representation at a prestigious Pan-African occasion, namely the aforementioned FESMAN in Dakar in 1966. This article was an extensive report about the state of the preparations for Cameroon's contribution to this festival written by the theologian and philosopher Jean-Baptiste Obama. Titled "Microcosme de la Négritude: Préparatifs au Cameroun du 1er Festival de Dakar",¹⁶⁴ the article quotes a speech that Senghor had given during an official visit to Cameroon in 1965 during which he referred to Cameroon as "Négritude's microcosm". Senghor's assessment articulates a Négritudinist rephrasing of a common description of Cameroon as miniature Africa, which the country earned due to its diverse landscapes, languages, and peoples.¹⁶⁵ Yet, despite Senghor's sympathy, Obama faced severe difficulties in representing his multi-ethnic country in front of the other African nations in an original way, as he asserted in the report.¹⁶⁶ The FESMAN appears therefore as a competitive challenge in his writing.

It is telling how the team under Obama tackled this challenge and how these decisions affected the place of visual art in Cameroon's self-image. Initially, visual art was one of the disciplines that were meant to champion for the nation. A committee presided over by the aforementioned Isaac Paré and the Benedictine friar R.P. Luitfrid Marfurt had been charged with the task to "bring together all those artworks of modern Cameroonian artists that deserve being considered for Dakar".¹⁶⁷ More concretely, they were to inventory the artists' national and foreign exhibitions and to report about their living and working conditions in order to spotlight the nation's potential in visual art. But the committee found itself faced with a series of challenges, such as the difficulty of distinguishing between artisanal work and artworks. In the eyes of the jury, those artefacts worthy of the status of art would have needed to reflect an African understanding of beauty distinguishable from the "greco-latin aesthetic of the European renaissance".¹⁶⁸ The committee presumed that this African aesthetic was manifest in artwork made in a Cubist style, arguing that "Picasso, Braque, and their fellows had borrowed this style from Africa".¹⁶⁹ But, as a matter of fact, the scouts had not been able to identify Cameroonian painters working in this style.

Had the committee failed to locate artists to fit its requirements or were there not any neo-Cubists in Cameroon at that time? De facto, many painters of the period that are known today seem to have

worked in an impressionist manner. But Impressionism commonly reigns as the French style par excellence, whereas the occasion of the FESMAN called for a detachment from the colonisers' cultural yoke! Clearly, the committee members were aware of this dilemma and they feared competition from those nations whose artists had more ostensibly adapted anti-colonial ideas like Pan-Africanism and the Négritude philosophy.

As a consequence, the committee decided to place artisanal work rather than visual art in the limelight during the FESMAN. Accordingly, illustrations to Obama's article show a furniture-designer from Douala and a scene in a workshop in Ebolowa with three men carving small statues. (Fig 16) And yet, the culture commission also distinguished between more and less "authentic" artisanal crafts. The report documents that artefacts from the Bamum and the Bamiléké region were favoured over those from the coast and the South because they were deemed less affected by foreign and colonial influences.¹⁷⁰ After all, the committee's recourse to these artisanal crafts and to dance was well received in Dakar, as coeval press articles evidence.¹⁷¹ In short, we can conclude from the documentation of FESMAN's preparations in the report for *ABBIA* that the Cameroonian intellectual and political elite refrained from including modern forms of visual art into the country's foreign representation at the FESMAN because its contemporary production in terms of visual art did not pass as "art nègre" and was not deemed authentic enough.¹⁷²

While photographs of woodcarvings and of carvers at work featured repeatedly as decorative inserts in *ABBIA*'s first twenty-five issues, only a single issue published in 1968 presented a series of paintings. I am referring to the seven black and white reproductions of canvases by the Congolese artist Philippe Ibara Ouassa (born ca. 1936).¹⁷³ Their motifs mainly include stylised silhouettes of birds, as well as a composition with several masks.¹⁷⁴ An interview that *ABBIA*'s editor Eno Belinga conducted with the artist accompanied these reproductions and is the fourth and last article on art in the sample under consideration. Thus we learn that Ibara Ouassa was born on a farm and spent a couple of years at a provincial mission school before starting to paint at the so-called "Poto-Poto workshop" in the suburbs of Brazzaville in 1950.¹⁷⁵ And in fact, resemblance with other personal styles from the Poto-Poto context can be found



Fig 16
Illustration of Obama, "Microcosme de la Négritude", *ABBLA* 12/13, 1966.

in the semi-abstract motifs, in the dominant black outlines that delimit the monochrome zones of the paintings and in their flatness.¹⁷⁶ The interviewer celebrated Ibara Ouassa as an example of modern African artistry due to his successful merging of a holistic world-view and a genuinely “African” imagery with Modernism’s universal ideals. Belinga supposed that it was this synthesis that also granted the artist success throughout Africa and a benevolent official reception in Cameroon—that is at the foreign cultural institutes where he exhibited repeatedly between 1966 and 1970.¹⁷⁷

Interestingly, Belinga has also asked Ibara Ouassa’s opinion on the situation of visual art in Cameroon. The Congolese artist expressed his concern about the lack of exchange amongst the local artists. He thought that they would need meeting places comparable to the Poto-Poto workshop. Since Ibara Ouassa answered from the well-informed perspective of an outside observer, his account can be valued as an objective estimation of the situation. And it is a telling confirmation of his point of view that Cameroonian artists from the post-colonial era were absent from the *ABBIA* issues that I have analysed.

While *ABBIA* was an intellectual read, Cameroon’s national daily was the only mass medium after independence.¹⁷⁸ Visual art was hardly ever mentioned in the paper, which was still named *La Presse du Cameroon* in the 1960s. However, exhibition reviews, interviews, and round-table conversations with artists began to be featured after the newspaper changed name and management in 1974. From this point onwards, *Cameroon Tribune* would cover exhibitions at the Centre Culturel Américain, the Goethe-Institut, the Centre Culturel Français, and the Délégation Générale au Tourisme, while at times also referring to events at the so-called “National Museum”.¹⁷⁹ It is due to this editorial shift that I focus on articles from the years between 1974 and 1976 here.

The press coverage during this two-year period reflects artists’ quest for an authentic national culture and also illustrates the tension between visual artists who sought to connect their practice to the European art-historical canon and those who adopted a more traditionalist approach. The aforementioned painter Zogo Isidore, who enjoyed particular recognition in the mid-70s, belonged to the first group. In an interview from 1975, Zogo promoted abstract painting, which was a novelty in Cameroon at that point, as a particularly liberating

form of expression. Zogo deemed abstraction especially timely because he (erroneously) thought that Dali and Picasso also worked in this style and that it was complementary to photography's naturalism. However, the press photos only document figurative, sometimes surrealist works by this artist.¹⁸⁰ Another progressive voice that was prominent in articles from that time was Werewere Liking (born ca. 1950, also referred to as Mme WeteWete or Mme Wére Wére). She was the earliest documented woman artist working in Cameroon's urban centres up to her emigration to the Ivory Coast in 1978.¹⁸¹ The articles in *Cameroon Tribune* indicate that both Zogo and Liking critically related to Apartheid and to poverty on the African continent in their motifs and titles,¹⁸² but visual evidence thereof is scarce. Those artists who tried to inscribe their practice into European art discourses also sought to distinguish their work from what they perceived as too conformist and commercial.¹⁸³ Their art-historical references are another tribute to imported art values, for example they are often quoted referencing Leonardo da Vinci as the master artist par excellence.¹⁸⁴

For their part, representatives of the traditionalist faction like the painter Amougou Bivina explicitly dismissed Western artistic influences as inspiration and pleaded for a return to "ancestral"¹⁸⁵ values and motifs. This second faction also included a number of male artists who confronted the trend towards women's emancipation and the liberal zeitgeist of the 1970s by partly staging polygamous lifestyles in their artwork.¹⁸⁶ Yet, even those traditionalists have mainly chosen easel painting as their medium, with the exception of some who expressed themselves in woodcarvings, often in the neo-traditional form of wood-reliefs.

All things considered, I can tell that *Cameroon Tribune* accorded space to visual artists' struggle for recognition as cultural producers regardless of the journalists' uncertainty how to position themselves in relation to this struggle. For instance, a series of articles investigating the marginal position of visual artists claimed that artists failed to garner attention and public favour because the average Cameroonian citizen felt that anybody could make modern art and that art is useless. According to the author, artists should assume their roles as "educators of the people"¹⁸⁷ rather than bemoaning their misery as misjudged geniuses and getting caught up in academic disputes.

A caricature published in 1976 captures this interested, yet sceptical attitude towards easel painting on one hand and the artists' Bohemian self-image on the other. (Fig 17) This drawing can therefore stand in for the ambivalent debates on art hosted by *Cameroon Tribune* between 1974 and 1976.

A short summary of a ninety page report on Cameroon's cultural politics from 1975 will conclude my analysis of the country's art discourse in the 60s and 70s. Titled *La politique culturelle en République réunie du Cameroun*, this report embodies the most rigid facet of art discourse in the post-independence period and evidences the pertinence of some discursive figures observed in other samples. As I shall argue, these figures did not fail to affect cultural politics. The report was commissioned as part of a UNESCO survey on the cultural policies of more than seventy nations. J. C. Bahoken and Engelbert Atangana, two university professors, edited the Cameroonian contribution. Their text is saturated with the rigid nationalism imposed by the one-party-system under Ahidjo and establishes the creation of national unity as the paramount goal of Cameroon's culture politics. "Pluriculturalisme" and bilingualism were identified as the tools of choice to achieve this goal, while education was construed as a means to nurture dignified and responsible personalities withstanding all temptations of "alienation".¹⁸⁸ One measure in this direction was the demand for university departments to undergo "Cameroonisation",¹⁸⁹ i.e. to replace foreign lecturers with Cameroonian staff.¹⁹⁰

The report also had sections on painting and sculpture. Already the introductory sentence to these sections made clear that art that would pass as Camerounian had to be useful in the eyes of the authors:

Les arts pratiqués au Cameroun sont destinés à un usage familial ou communautaire et ont essentiellement un caractère fonctionnel et économique.¹⁹¹

Non-functional art was thus sidelined right from the start, as in *AB-BIA's* editorial. But Bahoken and Atangana went further by moralising that it was an expression of "egoism and individualism" to claim authorship instead of bending like anonymous artisans to the ideals of "unity, brotherhood, and friendship".¹⁹² As a consequence, the section on painting features body painting, garment prints, ornaments on vessels, and the Bamum drawings—all ordered by ethnic groups—

while the painters from Yaoundé, who used to feature in *Cameroon Tribune*, were left out. When speaking about sculpture, Bahoken and Atangana copied a whole passage of Obama's aforementioned report, notably without crediting its author.¹⁹³ As representative Cameroonian sculptures they cited the list of objects exhibited during the FESMAN in Dakar, i.e. mainly masks, furniture, musical instruments, and pipes.¹⁹⁴ Those artefacts are distinguished from those treated under the heading "artisanal crafts" in the following paragraph, which shows that the line between art and crafts was again kept slippery, as in Mveng's texts. Like Obama, the report stigmatised the artistic production of the coastal region around Douala as "pretty poor" due to its exposure to continued foreign influences.¹⁹⁵ So much for the recycling of ideas from other texts.

Summarily speaking, authenticity as opposed to external inspiration or infiltration is an often-stressed value in this report. And in order to demarcate cultural expressions that are truly Cameroonian in their eyes, the authors collected, reassembled, and partly aggravated those arguments against visual art that I have isolated in the previous samples of the public discourse. If we presume that this official report reflects the governmental attitude around the time of its writing, as its title and purpose suggest, it is clear that the government's position towards culture was (or had become) rigidly conservative with regard to art genres. It can be considered a consequence of this attitude that visual art was no longer considered the subject of cultural politics.

At the outset of this chapter, I contended that independence from colonial dominion did not produce an artistic florescence in Cameroon because the political atmosphere was averse towards imported art forms such as modern visual art. My analysis of the public discourse on art from the period of 1963 to 1976 confirms this argument and evidences that the Cameroonian elites learned to privilege indigenous artisanal crafts, especially those from Cameroon's West, which appeared especially intact to them due to their distance from the contact zone of the ocean. Interestingly, there is reason to believe that this myth originated amongst German ethnographers during the colonial period. Michaela Oberhofer, the former curator of the Cameroon exhibit at Ethnologisches Museum Berlin, surmised that the preponderance of Bamum objects in this museum's collection was due to the fact that the hinterland was presumed less affected by modernisation.¹⁹⁶

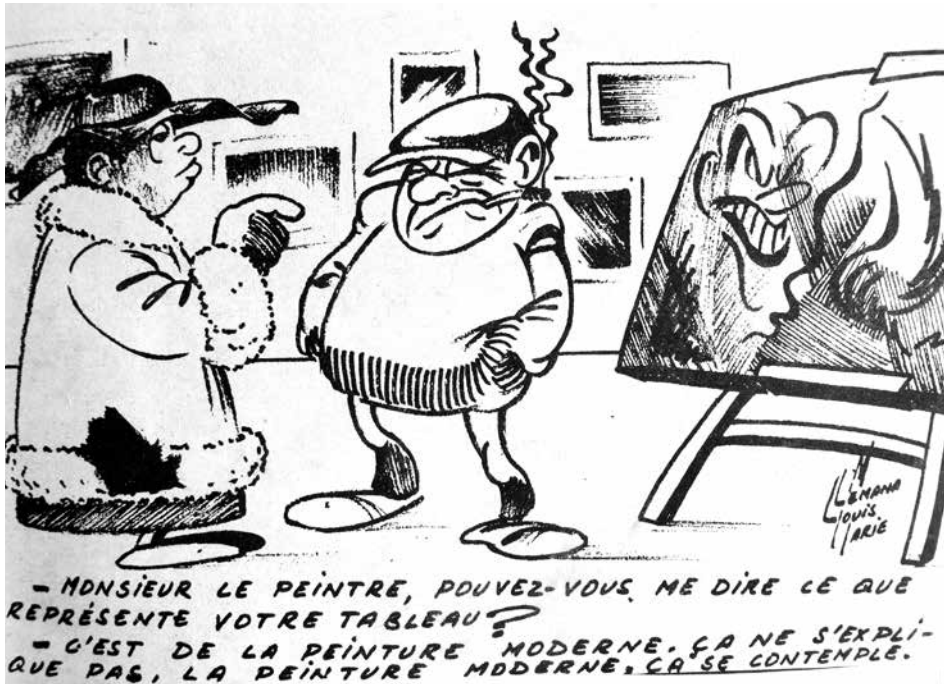


Fig 17

Louis-Marie Lemana, caricature published in *Cameroon Tribune*, March 15, 1977.

In sum, these choices boil down to a discursive dichotomisation of the cultural heritage and alien, modern forms of expression, which was widespread across postcolonial Africa, as Achille Mbembe has asserted:

[The d]iscussion of the possibility of an African modernity was reduced to an endless interrogation of the possibility, for the African subject, of achieving a balance between his/her total identification with “traditional” (in philosophies of authenticity) African life, and his/her merging with, and subsequent loss in, modernity (in the discourse of alienation).¹⁹⁷

Yet these quarrels were pointless in light of the factual processes of transculturation that had occurred on the African continent for centuries. Mbembe and the postcolonial sociologist Stuart Hall are only two of many experts maintaining this position, which contradicts Hegelian assumptions about a “static” Africa.¹⁹⁸

The Institutional Void

This preliminary chapter has roughly retraced the emergence of modern art in Cameroon, which accompanied the dramatically changing politics from the beginning of colonisation to the colonial years and through the first sixteen years of the postcolonial era. The conflation of these distinct periods into one chapter has enabled me to point to certain continuities of colonial power structures beyond Cameroon’s formal decolonisation. The lasting influence of the Christian clergy is especially noteworthy, which is not only expressed through instruction at the mission schools but also through the prominent roles that a number of their alumni played in national (cultural) politics. Artists’ continuous orientation towards Paris is another indicator of the role that Cameroon’s colonial legacy plays in the development of its arts infrastructure. Moreover, this chapter has demonstrated how non-utilitarian art forms, especially painting, fell into disgrace amongst policy makers and intellectuals in the period after independence. However, while advocates of the “total identification with the ‘traditional’”¹⁹⁹ certainly flourished in Cameroon’s public discourse, the outstanding artistic positions discussed in this chapter have

revealed that—in their aesthetic practice—Ibrahim Njoya, Engelbert Mveng, Gaspar Gomán, or the designers of *ABBIA* managed to differently enrich Cameroon's varied cultural heritages with modern aesthetics and imported philosophies during the same period.

I would now like to return to my thesis that public discourse significantly shapes national cultural politics, more concretely the building of national institutions for visual art. Historical sources show that the Cameroonian government did have plans to create an institutional framework for the production and the dissemination of visual art. For instance, there was talk of ambitious infrastructural projects by the government in a 1976 roundtable discussion hosted by *Cameroon Tribune*. These projects included a tertiary institute for the training of artists and poets, prizes and festivals for inter-regional exchange, further incentives for artists, copyright legislation, and cultural education within the framework of general schooling and festivals. Furthermore, ideas for a national artist organisation were raised, as well as the necessity for arts education to become part of school curricula.²⁰⁰

However, time has shown that many of these projects were abandoned, while others were implemented with immense delay and in a desultory fashion. The country's first university art department only opened in 1993, the copyright law came into being in 2001, the implementation of arts education in general schools was decreed as late as 2009, and the first tertiary institutes specialised in art education opened in 2010. Paul-Henri Assako Assako has blamed Cameroon's unstructured cultural policies on the regime change in 1982 and the advent of the economic crisis.²⁰¹ While the relevance of these economic factors cannot be denied, I would add that the conservative nature of the public discourse made it easy, if not opportune, for the government to remain passive regarding projects that could have advanced modern art and artists in Cameroon.

The hegemonic discourse generated an institutional void in terms of art education and exhibitions.²⁰² Hence, those artists aspiring to work in modern styles and with modern supplies resorted to commercial correspondence art courses and (rarely) to public art schools abroad, as I have illustrated in the preceding pages. Needless to say, the lack of training opportunities, exhibition venues, and meeting places had negative affects on artists who remained within the country

and on the circulation of art knowledge more broadly. In fact, contemporary witnesses suggest that the difficulty to show and to sell art has aggravated the competition amongst the professional artists and enhanced the secrecy amongst them. For instance, the aforementioned Joseph Francis Sumegn  recalled with reference to the context of Yaound  that his colleagues used to make up stories to keep him from their workplace and from seeing their latest work when he came by to visit. They were afraid to be copied and to thus lose their share of the market.²⁰³ The doyen of Douala's art world, Koko Komegn  has similarly described the situation in Douala during the 1960s and 70s. He summarised pointedly:

Chaqu'un  tait seul, seul, seul, seul!²⁰⁴

Artistic self-organisation turned out to be a means to tackle the issue of isolation in the following years, as the next chapter will illustrate. But for the time being, artists had to advance their practice without libraries, museums, and functional galleries instituted by the state. They worked around these limitations by employing tactics in the sense of de Certeau, i.e. by individually consulting imported artbooks, seeking to place their works in collections abroad, and striving for exhibitions at the foreign cultural centres. It shall not go unnoticed that both Yaound  and Douala also had their Centre Culturel Camerounais.²⁰⁵ However, according to the news archive, the only Cameroonian institutions to host art exhibitions every once in a while were the Tourist Office (D l gation au Tourisme) and the Mus e National in Yaound , which seem to have followed the foreign cultural institutes in their selection of artists.

As a consequence, the foreign cultural centres developed an important monopoly with regard to the consecration of artists in Cameroon. This observation prompts some remarks on these centres, which will also play an important role in the following chapters. In the early years after independence, the French, American, British, and German states installed their cultural centres in Yaound  as agencies of cultural diplomacy. Cultural diplomacy had become an important political tool to produce reserves of goodwill amongst foreign audiences that could eventually be mobilised in support of policies after WWII and during the Cold War.²⁰⁶ Due to this political *raison d' tre*, the foreign institutes would primarily focus on the positive representation of their mother countries through cultural events in the 1960s. Yet, over

the course of the next decade, the centres intensified their exhibition programs and invited Cameroonian artists for shows. Moreover, the American Cultural Center and the Centre Culturel Français opened additional establishments in Douala, thus giving rise to exhibitions and to the related social events also in this city.²⁰⁷

That said, *Cameroon Tribune's* press coverage confirms that the frequency and quality of art programming at these foreign centres fluctuated heavily depending on the temporary staff's preferences. With some exceptions, painting clearly predominated in their exhibitions, which were commercial exhibitions. The artworks' prices used to be publicly announced and were often subject to critique in the articles of the national daily because they were perceived as unaffordable for Cameroonians. Many of the Cameroonian artists who were featured were very young and many of them disappeared from the scene after having presented work at the different centres.²⁰⁸ The foreign centres' art programming as reflected in the press archive therefore appears somewhat random and unresponsive to its locale. However, it should not be omitted that these centres facilitated some important Pan-African contacts in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, the centres would invite artists to their Cameroonian branches who had excelled at Pan-African art events, like the aforementioned Philippe Ibara Ouassa or the Nigerian Bayo Ogundele. These invitations resulted in some aesthetic innovations in Cameroon, as the next chapter will show.

Chapter 3

Collective Action and Intergenerational Solidarity among Artists (1976-1991)

One last, long decennium separates us from the 1990s, a decade that started with major political turmoil and brought about a decisive turn in Cameroon's art history. This chapter covers the interim, in many ways a transition period, which coincided with the end of the Ahidjo era and the change of presidency in 1982, as well as with the advent of an economic crisis that affected Cameroon no less than its neighbours. The continent-wide depression of the 1980s followed shortly after the infamous Structural Adjustment Programs, which the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and aid-giving countries had imposed on their African debtors—yet the following chapter will illustrate that the art produced in Cameroon during this period forms an exception to certain generalisations about the effects of the Structural Adjustment Programs on visual art made in Africa after 1980.

From 1976 onwards, Cameroon witnessed the emergence of student groups with a focus on art, a trend that had a momentous influence on the non-formal sharing of artistic knowledge. Simultaneously, a new generation of artists emerged onto the scene: namely, Pascal Kenfack, Viking André Kanganyam, Koko Komegné, Spee Nzante, and Joseph Francis Sumegné—all born around 1950 in various parts of the country and all Francophone, with the exception of Spee Nzante (1953-2005) who hailed from the Anglophone part of Cameroon. Towards the end of the 1970s most of these artists had established their studio practice in Yaoundé and Douala and had begun exhibiting.¹ Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to speak of a proper generation in Karl Mannheim's sense of the term because these artists' lifestyles, political agendas, and conception of themselves as artists differed significantly. It is nonetheless noteworthy that they all witnessed the transition to independent statehood as teenagers, a background which "predispos[ed] them for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience and a characteristic type of historically

relevant action”.² Rooted in an exploration of the distinct biographies and artistic oeuvres, as well as the educative initiatives of Koko Komegné and Pascal Kenfack, the main part of this chapter will illuminate the emergence of an artist-driven, non-formal system of artistic training. This system that I have termed *Système de Grands Frères* is based on intergenerational solidarity.

Some might wonder if the late 1970s witnessed any changes regarding the institutionalisation of art/s education or the public infrastructure for visual art? A historical debate exemplifies the persistent reluctance of the Cameroonian government to engage in this direction; in 1980, a citizen of Yaoundé proposed that the state institute a national museum of painting. The freelance copyright lawyer Emmanuel Nana Kouanang published a plea in *Cameroon Tribune* that boldly and urgently argued to make current cultural production widely accessible. More concretely, he sought to encourage a broad appreciation of painting—not as a luxurious distraction but as a visual medium by which to educate the masses.³ Kouanang imagined painting (in addition to other modern art forms)⁴ as a useful communicative tool in development projects, thus seeking to foster responsible citizenship for a future “more humane” society and thus anticipating a contemporary, functionalist understanding of art. By protecting and promoting their works through a museum, Kouanang hoped to involve Cameroon’s artists in the collective effort towards the “progress” advocated by the government.

In his reply, Joseph Marie Essomba, the minister of cultural affairs swiftly dismissed Kouanang’s proposition, which was obviously perceived as undue meddling.⁵ The minister instead promoted the government’s long-standing vision of the future National Museum as a universal museum. To underscore his point, Essomba referenced the ancient polymath Claudius Ptolemy (resident in Alexandria, Egypt, between c. AD 90 – c. AD 168), the forefather of the concept of the universal museum. Essomba considered Ptolemy’s museum concept conducive to the task of “protecting Cameroon’s (and other African countries’) cultural heritage” rather than relying on borrowing from the “old Western system”⁶ of specialised museums. Since claims to the well-researched Egyptian antiquity had become customary in postcolonial historiography in Africa,⁷ this proved a well-calculated move. Ironically though, Claudius Ptolemy was born in Greece. In this

planned museum, the domain of art was meant to range from “painting” and “contemporary art” (as part of the permanent collections)⁸ to an outdoor market with artisans’ workshops of various types, as well as botanical gardens, sports facilities, a zoo, and reconstructions of traditional habitats.⁹ Essomba’s article was illustrated by an anonymous painting featuring thatched huts in a lush rural environment, which is not surprising considering my argument from the second chapter. However, this debate was in vain; after a period of inertia, a presidential decree in 1988 placed the National Museum in the former presidential palace, where it remained “closed for renovations” for much of the next twenty-five years.¹⁰

I have referred to this debate to show that the Cameroonian government continued to fail to articulate a clear strategy with regard to visual art and artisanal crafts in the years under consideration in this chapter. The first national Festival des Arts et de la Culture du Cameroun which was held in late 1988,¹¹ showed a similar ambivalence as it mixed crafts and visual arts in the same exhibition.¹² I presume that the authorities hoped to create a homogeneous national cultural identity by bridging the gap between two spaces that were considered irreconcilable, namely the village and the city.¹³ And what is more, sales platforms for artisanal goods promised much-needed economic gains.

President Paul Biya is the New Amadou Ahidjo: The Political Context

It is important to consider the era’s major historical transformations in order to contextualise this debate. During its final years, Ahidjo’s government continued efforts to double the national income, which still seemed possible in light of the oil boom that had benefited neighbouring Nigeria. Cameroon’s political life gained momentum with the appointment of Paul Biya as the new president in 1982. Although appointed without referendum, this new president raised expectations about a more democratic form of governance, primarily due to Biya’s New Deal-programme that he proposed during the Bamenda Congress of 1985. This programme explicitly promised political

participation and democratisation. The new president planned to infuse what he saw as the population's communalist mentality with the liberal values of individualism and entrepreneurship and to lead his people "from ethnic cultures to [a] national culture characterised by tolerance, freedom and sharing".¹⁴ However, power would ultimately remain concentrated in the hands of Biya's unitary party RDCP, especially after a failed coup d'état by followers of the previous president in 1984, which was used to legitimise a restrictive form of governance. At the same time, Cameroon's economic fortunes declined. By 1987, Biya's government admitted that the country was "economically threatened"¹⁵ and the neoliberal measures imposed by the Structural Adjustment Programs caused much hardship on the populace. Additionally, this period saw an increase in tribalist rivalries¹⁶ as well as the Anglophone minority's dissatisfaction with its role in national politics. From 1991 onwards, Biya's position underwent a stress test by waves of violent unrest. Considered one of the world's worst dictators by some, Biya has nonetheless remained in office since.

It should be noted that the 1980s witnessed a slow diversification of public media in Cameroon. In 1985, the national television started broadcasting, even if mainly joining *Cameroon Tribune* and the national radio in their task of promoting the governmental agenda. And despite the government's heavy censorship and the recurrent and harsh prosecution of journalists,¹⁷ some private newspapers did publish throughout the 1980s. Examples thereof are the aptly named weekly *Canard Libéré* (est. 1976), and the oppositional daily *Le Messager* (est. 1982), both of which were based in Douala.¹⁸ However, many citizens are said to have relied on foreign press during this period.¹⁹

A Shift in Agency: New Organisations by Art Amateurs and Artists

The previous chapter has shown that visual artists in Cameroon's urban centres had largely worked in isolation from one another throughout the first fifteen years post-independence, a strategy motivated not only by the lack of an art school or meeting places beyond the foreign

cultural centres, but also by a fear of plagiarism. This situation slowly changed towards the end of the 1970s, starting with the formation of a student circle for literature and art, the “Cercle d’Études Littéraires et Artistiques” (CELA), in the school year 1975/76.²⁰ The lecturer Polycarpe Oyié Ndzie had set up this circle at the École Normale Supérieure (ENS), which was the branch of the university that granted teaching degrees. The CELA comprised a group for painting and visual art, a photo and cinema club, a group for theatre, a traditional music group, and a research group. ENS lecturers tutored the monthly meeting of four of the five sections, except for the theatre and music group. Although arts education was in fact only decreed in 2009, CELA’s mission was to develop curricula for secondary schools. In preparation for didactic manuals, CELA students did research on “Negro-African” arts and literature, which was allegedly documented in a semi-annual scientific periodical, and they organised cultural events like theatre pieces, round table discussions, and exhibitions. Yet CELA’s activities were hampered by a general disinterest in the arts, which Oyié Ndzie had notably observed within both the general population and amongst diaspora intellectuals, as well as a lack of financial resources and competent faculty.²¹

Another amateur association, the “Section Art et Culture de Création Récente” was part of the humanities department of the University of Yaoundé (FALSH). Unfortunately, the historical newspaper article that documents this initiative does not convey the founding date of this group,²² nor does any other source confirm its persistence in the years to follow. A woman referred to in the article as Mme Ngu was in charge of this association. Ngu told the journalist that she sought to encourage “liberating forms of creative expression” and that she invited “poor but talented”²³ amateurs, notably ranging from academics to illiterates of all ages, to experiment with new techniques and tools and to exchange with artists. In June 1979, an exhibition by the Section at Yaoundé’s Tourist Office presented works by FALSH students alongside professional artists like Amougou Bivina and Isidore Zogo.

The “Club des Arts Plastiques” is the third and last artistic congregation at the university to be mentioned here and it would become the longest-running organisation of this type. The artist and dramaturge Priso Dickens initiated the Club des Arts Plastiques in 1976 as a collective studio space on the campus where students of

all disciplines could paint in their spare time and gather to discuss each other's work. According to an article from 1977, a core group of seven students worked with materials supplied by the university in the early years²⁴ and there is also evidence that the Club des Arts Plastiques rapidly garnered remarkable visibility after its foundation. The club members exhibited sixty-nine artworks at the American Cultural Center in 1977 and an equally large number of paintings were exhibited at the Goethe-Institut in 1978 and 1979. Reviews suggest that these amateur artists took a political stance and that many of the artworks produced in the early years dealt with issues that haunted the African continent, such as starvation and the class divide.²⁵ Yet the club members apparently started to devote much of their energy to producing greeting cards to earn extra money during the tense economic downturn in the late 1980s.²⁶ Nevertheless, as a retrospective statement by the artist Goddy Leye (1965-2011) suggests, the Club des Arts Plastiques continued to be an important refuge for many on campus:

Et pendant que je suis à l'université je m'inscris naturellement au Club des Arts Plastiques de l'université où tous ceux qui aimaient l'art, qui étaient à l'université, qui faisaient droit, science économique, sciences naturelles, biologie ou sciences physiques, se retrouvaient pour parler de l'art et faire de l'art. On avait un espace au sein de l'université où on travaillait tous les jours. Il était ouvert 24 heures sur 24. Donc entre deux cours, je venais à peindre, et puis je repartais au cours et je revenais.²⁷

For Leye, as well as many others, the Club des Arts Plastiques offered the starting point for a career as professional artist²⁸ and it continues to exist today.

Cameroon's first collective of professional painters was founded in Douala in 1979.²⁹ This group went by the name Cercle Maduta, "Maduta" meaning "image" in the vernacular language of Douala.³⁰ A photograph captures the circle's founding members, namely Viking André Kanganyam (president), Jean-Guy Atangua (deputy), Samuel-Abélé Mobitang (writer) and Koko Komegné.³¹ Apparently, the latter chose the designation "artistic advisor", since he disliked bureaucratic tasks.³² All of them used to make a living as advertisement painters for Douala's bars, restaurants, and nightclubs, while Komegné was also known as musician.³³ Komegné, who was my main source

for researching the collective's activities, recalls that members of Cercle Maduta used to invest profits from their commercial work into supplies for oil painting, a technique they preferred to employ because of its delicacy in their respective visual art practices. These supplies were available in different French-run boutiques and in the bookshops Librairie Sélection, Librairie Frères et Aînés, and Librairie Papétérie Camérounaise in Douala.³⁴

Komegné is said to have sold well and to have spent excessively in Douala's nightlife during the years of the oil boom.³⁵ Legend has it that he had to give his golden necklace to a restaurant owner in recompense for an exuberant celebration with fellow members of Cercle Maduta during their founding meeting.³⁶ It seems therefore safe to assume that the members of Cercle Maduta succeeded in combining the rebellious subcultural touch of avant-garde artists with their professional role as liberal-minded freelancers in the advertisement business. They can therefore be pictured as bohemian entrepreneurs. The following contiguity matches this identity; Komegné recalled that the idea to form a group had been inspired by the first corporate involvement in visual art in Cameroon, which was an advertisement coup in its own right.³⁷ In 1978, the Douala-based tobacco company Bastos had started to organise an annual salon for painting, the "Salon J. Bastos pour la Jeune Peinture Camerounaise" in collaboration with the Centres Culturels Français in Douala and in Yaoundé.³⁸ (Fig 18) The bestowal of a jury-awarded prize during the opening had been preceded by an open call and a pre-selection. Viking André Kanganyam, a founding member of Maduta, had won the first and the third prize during this prestigious social event.³⁹

In Komegné's retrospective account, the goals of Cercle Maduta were to jointly defend their artistic interests, support each other as professionals, and to cultivate debates about aesthetic questions:

Ce n'était pas un truc pour apprendre à peindre. Non! C'était un truc pour un bouillonnement d'idées, pour un bouillonnement esthétique. Comment faire pour imposer de la peinture dans ce pays? Comment faire pour que l'art soit accepté?⁴⁰

Komegné also saw Cercle Maduta as a "militant and dynamic association"⁴¹ that strove to mobilise an art audience in Cameroon without refraining from provocation.⁴² Moreover, the association was meant to alleviate the bureaucratic restrictions that artists faced in the late

1970s and 1980s. As a matter of fact, every exhibition at that time—even those held at the foreign cultural centres—depended on the formal approval of the Ministry of Culture and Information, which was dispensed on the basis of project descriptions. After the event, artists had to report on their expenses and income, as well as on the type of public, visitors' numbers, audience reactions, and possible incidents.⁴³ The artists in charge of issuing authorisations at the ministry qualified for such governmental employment with a university diploma. For instance, an authorisation letter from 1987 preserved in Sumeigné's press book bears the signatures of the academics René Tchébétchou and Pascal Kenfack. Komegné recalls that these "bureaucrat-artists"⁴⁴ were rather reluctant to support their colleagues from Douala, all the more so since Douala was considered a "cultural desert"⁴⁵ from the position of the capital. Apparently, these resentments repeatedly complicated and prolonged the process of applying for authorisation to exhibit.⁴⁶

Since Cercle Maduta ultimately could not outdo these formalities, members also began to exhibit in private venues like restaurants, bars, furniture stores, hotels, nightclubs, and cabarets in order to circumvent the authorities.⁴⁷ In 1980, Komegné used the furniture stores ETD and MUCAM Meubles as galleries, for instance. These stores featured ample space for the display of artworks and could keep exhibitions installed for longer periods than the foreign cultural centres.⁴⁸ While it was likely that the stores' clientele would consider acquiring exhibited artworks, Komegné also underscored how such exhibitions anticipated the public art projects that gained prominence in Douala in later years. He summarised:

Nous, on a apporté l'art partout! (...) Nous, on faisait de la politique! Ce n'était pas pour chercher à vendre des tableaux, mais on avait des choses à dire!⁴⁹

Unfortunately, I could not confirm Komegné's account of these exhibitions through photographic documentation, yet indirect insight into the Cercle's production during these years can be garnered from two reviews of a retrospective exhibition featuring works that Kanganyam, Atakoua, and Komegné made between 1976 and 1981.⁵⁰ The Centre Culturel Camerounais of Douala and the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé presented the show at the turn of 1981 and 1982.⁵¹ The reviews considered Kanganyam's paintings to be

Organisé par BASTOS

1^{er} grand prix de la jeune peinture camerounaise



Une vue générale de l'assistance lors du vernissage de l'exposition « Jeune Peinture Camerounaise »

C'était le 13 juin 1978 que le concours de la « Jeune peinture camerounaise » organisé par Bastos, devait trouver son apothéose. En effet malgré la pluie, c'est une foule d'ans qui vint au vernissage de l'exposition au Centre culturel français qui réunissait 50 œuvres sélectionnées parmi plus de 120 peintures présentées au jury. C'est dire que notre jeune peinture est attentive à tous les efforts déployés pour la faire connaître et apprécier de nos compatriotes.

HEUREUSE INITIATIVE CULTURELLE

Ce concours de peinture « Jeune peinture camerounaise » a été organisé à l'initiative de la Société Bastos. Nous ne pouvons que nous en féliciter. En effet, cela permet à beaucoup de jeunes peintres de se découvrir et aussi de se faire découvrir. Passer devant un jury composé de personnalités de culture soit devant le public voilà une épreuve qui n'est destinée à tout un chacun.

La sélection fut difficile entre tous certes mais tout à l'heure d'un jury intégré. On a justement pu remarquer que ce jury a exigé que toute signature soit cachée lors de la sélection et de la sélection permettant la distribution des prix. C'est ainsi que après totalisation des points on découvrit alors que l'on dévoile les noms, que le gagnant du premier prix représentait une tâche typiquement Douala « Mamy Makéla » est l'auteur également du 2^e prix avec un paysage du Nord.

CHAQUE ANNÉE... I

On concourt, nous ont de les responsables Bastos, aux lieux chaque année. Voilà de nous que notre travail mission, les jurés, nous d'ans d'ans le plaisir de nous réjouir à contempler ces œuvres variées, pittoresques et fort agréables dans l'ensemble.

ATTRIBUTION DES PRIX

Sur quels critères sont sélectionnées les œuvres ? A nos réunions elles sont regardées en 4 groupes : paysage, portrait, composition, scène de la vie nationale puis chaque membre du jury attribue indi-

- Le 1^{er} prix offert de A. Tekan David avait 73,35 points et gagnait 150 000 francs
- Le 2^e prix offert de M. A. Viking avait 71,71 points et gagnait 100 000 francs
- Le 3^e prix offert de M. Youssa Philippe 68,13 points et gagnait 75 000 francs
- Le 5^e prix offert de M. Mballia André avait 37,45 points et gagnait 50 000 francs.

Tous ces prix ont été remis aux heureux lauréats lors du vernissage en présence d'une assistance nom-

breuse et de leurs confrères en peinture. Néanmoins, ils ont aussi leur chance puisque 24 en organisant ce concours leur ont d'exposer, de se faire connaître et même de vendre ce qui n'est permis à n'importe qui.

Le succès remporté par le conc de la jeune peinture camerounaise organisé par Bastos, est tel que le Centre culturel français de Douala a décidé de prolonger l'exposition. Celle-ci afin de permettre à les amateurs de contempler ces œuvres originales et pittoresques est prolongée pour au moins quinze jours de plus. A venir d'ici le 20 juin de l'année prochaine.



Un administrateur devant la 1^{re} prix « Mamy Makéla » œuvre de A. Viking



M. Tekan David (1^{er} prix) et son œuvre



M. Nganchong reçoit au 2^e M. Tekan David son prix



Fig 18 Impressions of the first Salon J. Bastos pour la Jeune Peinture Camerounaise, 1978

surrealistic.⁵² For example, a purgatory scene, a depiction of a labyrinth, and a third canvas entitled *Message d'Amour* were described as “visualisations of internal processes”.⁵³ Atakoua’s paintings *Cauchemar* and *Apocalypse* were also said to be surrealistic, while his portraits of stars like the pop musician Francis Bebey passed as pointillistic.⁵⁴ Judging from the attention they attracted, Atakoua’s “elegant nudes”⁵⁵ may well have been the first depictions of the naked female body to be exhibited in Cameroon.⁵⁶ Apparently, the painter had rendered an Eve as virgin on a sofa (*Vierge*), besides showing a personification of the Bourgeoisie on a bed (*Bourgeoisie*), and a “mask of a polygamous man”⁵⁷ in the form of a naked woman. Komegné’s practice was discussed on its own in these reviews, due to his more abstract visual language that seemed to recall the stylised looks of African masks and woodcarving in general. The reviewer Ahanda saw “a lot of Christian influences” in them and criticised Komegné’s weak drawing skills, despite “a unique sense of colouration”.⁵⁸

These traces of early works by the Maduta artists are scarce and mediated, but they nonetheless support the hypothesis that the painters quite liberally blended styles and motifs from various origins in their early years. The cosmopolitan harbour city from which they worked, their mundane lifestyles, and their contact with well-travelled business partners might explain this eclecticism. Particularly noteworthy is Cercle Maduta’s interest in Surrealism, which also surfaced in their 1982 show entitled *Le Surréalisme* at the Centre Culturel Français in Douala.⁵⁹ Although the title does not appear terribly original, nor militant as such, it could be argued that the political edge of Cercle Maduta’s activities that Komegné has repeatedly underscored⁶⁰ lies precisely in the collective opposition to the culturalist appellations of the Ahidjo era. Considered in this light, the Maduta artists’ reference to Surrealism amounts to an “identitarian desertion”⁶¹ of traditionalist aesthetics.

In the capital, the artists’ isolation was also about to crumble—even beyond the university. “In order to gain strength, our painters should collaborate in groups”, read the headline of a 1975 interview of *Cameroon Tribune* with the Yaoundé-based artists Zénon Amenda, Werewere Liking, and Isidore Zogo.⁶² The year 1981 witnessed the foundation of the national artist union or Union des Artistes Plasticiens du Cameroun (UDAPCAM) in Yaoundé, whose early members

included the painters Rigobert Ndjeng, Philippe de Youmsi, Othéo (alias Théodor Ondigui Onana), Benyam, the sculptor Gédéon Mpando, carpet artist “Madame Temgoua”,⁶³ and the aforementioned Isidore Zogo.⁶⁴ The artist union organised two salons lasting two weeks in 1981, one in May and one in October, which seem to have closely resembled each other.⁶⁵ Press coverage of the latter event confirms that the one hundred exhibited works “highlighted Cameroon’s cultural heritage” by means of representing musical performances, magicians, dancers, and village scenes like the return from the field—as well as illustrations of governmental doctrines.⁶⁶

These superficial descriptions insufficiently represent the UDAP-CAM’s profile, not least because the commentators only referred to painting, despite a member list that also pointed towards three-dimensional practices. However, these articles nonetheless begin to convey an understanding of the union’s political self-positioning because they also featured several statements by UDAPCAM members. For instance, in his opening speech for the second salon, the union’s president Zogo affirmed the “attachment of the UDAPCAM to the person of the head of state”.⁶⁷ For his part, Gédéon Mpando asserted on the same occasion that the artists understood that only government authorities would be able to act as their patrons. It seems therefore as if the UDAPCAM sought a close alliance with the government right from its inception. Later articles in *Cameroon Tribune* suggest that the union kept this line and that it has received governmental support during certain periods.⁶⁸

My history of artistic self-organisation continues in Douala. In 1983, when Cercle Maduta had achieved a certain visibility, it underwent transformation; the founding members changed the collective’s name into “Cercle des Artistes Plasticiens du Littoral” (CAPLIT), thus claiming representation of all the artists of the Littoral, i.e. the coastal region of which Douala is the capital. According to Komegné, whose testimony I am once again restricted to here, more than thirty artists attended the inaugural meeting of CAPLIT at his centrally located studio in Douala-Bonadibong. (Fig 19) These artists confirmed Viking André Kanganyam as president and Komegné as artistic advisor of the widened circle.⁶⁹

It is noteworthy that the allusion to the Littoral in the new association’s name was quite provocative insofar as the Duala used to



Fig 19
At Koko Komegné's studio in Bonadibong in 1980.

form alliances with other coastal groups to oppose the central government.⁷⁰ Arguably, CAPLIT strove to become an alternative artist union.⁷¹ Komegné and Kangayam also introduced CAPLIT to local authorities in order to qualify for possible public support and to legitimise the group's role as lobby for the cultural production of the coastal region. However, this position remained contested, as the following anecdote shows. In 1983, the CAPLIT artists officially welcomed the newly appointed Minister of Information and Culture of Biya's government, who undertook his inaugural visit to Douala. To this end, the artists attached a painted banner on top of a principal road, reading:

Les artistes du CAPLIT souhaitent le bienvenu au nouvel Ministre de l'Information et de la Culture.⁷²

The delegation from the capital suspected this banner to be promotion for an illegitimate group and insisted for it to be taken down until Komegné threatened in return to take down the painting exhibition that was part of the visit's protocol. These tensions certainly had an effect on the group's inner cohesion: so as to prevent Komegné from causing further irritation, his CAPLIT colleagues secretly changed his draft for the inaugural speech to the art exhibition. Ultimately, the internal rivalry for posts, the political ambitions of some of the members, and the local authorities' meddling led to Komegné's resignation. CAPLIT's limited output in terms of exhibitions was another reason for his break with the organisation.⁷³

In the following years, a functionary of Cameroon's national airline and a part-time painter, who had trained with Kayangayam, is said to have served as CAPLIT's secretary. In 1987, this secretary organised the Festival d'Art et de Poésie in the hall of the Cultural Ministry in Yaoundé. Allegedly, CAPLIT's proposal to also bring this festival to Douala pushed the responsible minister to finally take the initiative to found a national art festival.⁷⁴ The fact that the first Festival des Arts et de la Culture du Cameroon was held in Douala was perceived as an encouragement by local artists, as their city used to be considered culturally irrelevant.⁷⁵

Thus far, I have illustrated that artist associations in Cameroon had a political dimension. Coming back to my hypothesis that these associations fostered the circulation of artistic knowledge, the educational achievements of Cercle Maduta, UDAPCAM, and CAPLIT

are of interest. All three of these professional artist organisations facilitated peer-to-peer exchange amongst their members. The preparations for collective exhibitions must have especially served as opportunities for artists to discuss and assess their work, receive feedback, and to learn about other artists' references and skills. Considering the previous isolation of the practitioners, this was a major step towards articulating self-organized artist networks in Cameroon. However, only one activity is documented in terms of group members' purposeful gestures towards skill-enhancement: a wood-printing workshop that UDAPCAM co-organised with the Swiss expat, artist, and graphic designer Gloria J. Umlauf⁷⁶ in 1988.⁷⁷ With the exception of this workshop and UDAPCAM's second salon, which involved two foreigners,⁷⁸ contact with artists or artist groups from abroad is not documented, nor are efforts of artist groups to engage in transnational networking or exhibiting. Both Cercle Maduta's and CAPLIT's activities did have pedagogic effects on national and local audiences, however. Besides exhibiting in unconventional spaces in Douala, and therefore also reaching non-art-audiences, these circles seem to have challenged and ultimately altered Douala's image as cultureless city on a national level.

While testimonies by UDAPCAM members might put some of my assessments into perspective in the future,⁷⁹ the previous paragraphs on Cercle Maduta, UDAPCAM, and CAPLIT support my estimation that the 1980s were a transitional period. At that time, artists in Douala and Yaoundé took up experiments with different forms of self-organisation in order to exchange amongst each other, to jointly exhibit, or to lobby for their professional interest. What is more, certain artists formed new alliances with the private sector and took on entrepreneurial double-roles as artists and commercial advertisement painters, while others were hired for administrative posts by the state. Important continuities were the position of the foreign cultural centres, which remained the predominant exhibition venues in Cameroon, and the predominance of the rural genre scenes in much of the art production.

The Système de Grands Frères

In the late 1970s and 1980s, the formation of associations, circles, and unions generated an increase in peer-to-peer exchange amongst artists, as I have illustrated thus far. Arguably, it was this development that also facilitated the emergence of another form of artistic self-help—a new type of art education—as it then became customary for younger artists to frequent the studios of elder artists in order to learn by observation and dialogue. The Yaoundé-based painter Martin Abossolo, introduced in chapter two, seems to have been one of the first artists to thus open his studio in the 1970s.⁸⁰ From 1976 onwards, Maduta-member Viking André Kanganyam also did so.⁸¹ Aspiring artists would irregularly visit the studios of elder artists, mostly over extended periods of time and apparently without engaging in any binding obligation. A memory of artist Hervé Youmbi (born 1973) of his college years in Douala is representative of many similar stories recorded in my interviews:

Pendant le weekend, le samedi par exemple - Hervé Yamguen et moi, on le faisait constamment - on pouvait marcher deux ou trois kilomètres à pied, pour arriver à l'atelier d'un grand frère, que ce soit Kanganyam Viking ou Koko Komégné. [On] essayait de le rencontrer, de le voir peindre, de discuter un peu avec lui et en suite [on] rentrait dans nos ateliers pour travailler. Voilà, c'est comme ça qu'on a commencé.⁸²

In this quote, Youmbi refers to the elder artists as his kin (his elder brothers), without there being any factual family ties between them. In similar ways, many artists have referred to their “grands frères” or “petits frères” during my interviews. Moreover, Koko Komégné said he felt like a father for his protégés⁸³ and Yamguen referred to an “aîné” when speaking of an artistic tutor.⁸⁴ All of these appellations imply hierarchies between men of different ages that call for a behaviour that is respectful or protective, respectively. It is worth noticing that these kinship metaphors are also common in daily life in Cameroon. People use these metaphors to casually establish relationships with strangers and to structure them, or by way of the age hierarchies that are implicit in certain appellations or by calling upon the solidarity of age peers. Kinship metaphors are also common in written form. For instance, a recent newspaper article about the Douala-based photographer Nicolas Eyidi introduced him as the “father of advertisement

photography”.⁸⁵ When used in this way, kinship metaphors highlight an individual’s belonging to a community, be it a community of advertising photographers, artists, or of neighbours, as well as stressing the intergenerational obligations that come with this belonging.⁸⁶

The curator Simon Njami, who has accompanied artists from Cameroon since the early 1990s, has jokingly referred to the entirety of the loose and non-formal pedagogic relationships that link the *petits frères* amongst the artists to the *grands frères* as “système de grands frères” in our interview.⁸⁷ Njami’s phrasing recalls the French term “Système Débrouille”, shorter “Système D”, by which Francophone Africans subsume the inventive tactics of improvisation, which became typical of the growing informal economic sectors in their cities in the 1980s.⁸⁸ The improvised, non-formal art education is certainly part of this historical development and hence it appears suitable to transfer Njami’s casual wording to theory. Obviously, it is a flaw of this neologism that it negates the possibility of female artists to engage as teachers and tends to perpetuate the dominant order of patriarchal hierarchies. As soon as female artists will adopt the role of *grandes soeurs* in Cameroon, the term should be extended to *Système de Grandes Soeurs et Frères*. However, according to my research, this is not yet the case today.

Each *grand frère* had to improvise in terms of didactics since guidelines did not exist. It is my hypothesis that their didactics corresponded closely to each *grand frère*’s educational trajectory and to his biography more generally. So as to highlight this correlation, the following text will draw upon autobiographic accounts of two *grands frères* who I interviewed: Pascal Kenfack and Koko Komegné. Although others did precede them or engaged in similar activities simultaneously, these two artists lend themselves as excellent examples because Kenfack and Komegné have both been referenced as eminent *grand frères* in my body of empirical sources and other art historians have started to document their careers.

Both Kenfack and Komegné took up their informal pedagogic practice in the second half of the 1980s in Yaoundé and in Douala, respectively. Yet their different backgrounds made them very different role models for the younger artist generation, as my comparison will unveil. Besides advancing the art-historical research on these two outstanding artists, my summary of their pedagogical reflections can also

help at filling a gap in research observed by Lauré al-Samarai, namely that “statements by artists talking in detail about their teaching activities, much less relating them to particular pedagogical concepts, are rarely to be found”.⁸⁹ The analysis of the conjunctions of biography, oeuvre, and didactics in the exemplary cases of Kenfack and Komegné will also prepare for the subsequent demarcation of the *Système de Grands Frères* from better-known forms of artistic training.

A Mediator between Art and Academia:
The *Grand Frère* Pascal Kenfack

Pascal Kenfack was born in 1950 in the small city of Dschang. He embarked on his artistic career as a high-school student in Yaoundé in the 1960s. Since art education was not part of his lessons, he signed up for the correspondence courses of *École A.B.C.* and for the “Cours Grand Maître de Dessin” in Paris.⁹⁰ The assignments in the brochures that he received by mail increased in complexity, while their texts covered the classic periods of the European art history, beginning with the Greek and the Roman antiquity. After three years of drawing assignments, Kenfack received a certificate.⁹¹ By that time he had found himself a mentor in Elmar Brandt, then director of the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé, and in 1967, at the early age of seventeen, Kenfack had his first solo exhibition at this institute. Kenfack’s fortune was meant to last: in 1971, upon a visit to Kenfack’s next show, a Cameroonian government member arranged a one-year study grant in France for him,⁹² more precisely a stipend for artisanal crafts (*Bourse d’Artisanat*) at *École Régionale des Arts Appliqués* in Besançon.⁹³ After completing his term in Besançon, Kenfack enrolled at *École Nationale Supérieure de Beaux Arts* in Paris where classes in aesthetics and art history accompanied his academic training as painter and sculptor.

Kenfack only returned to Cameroon in 1987, after completing a doctoral thesis at Université Paris 8 entitled “Expériences plastiques inspirées du culte des ancêtres chez les sédentaires en pays Bamiléké”, translatable as sculptural experiments inspired by the ancestor cult of Bamiléké settlers.⁹⁴ Although he submitted this thesis in the anthropology department, it was nonetheless an artist dissertation, comprising both his sculptural work and a written component. Childhood

memories of village life had inspired him to choose this subject, as he told me.⁹⁵ Kenfack's *petit frère* Goddy Leye later described this research project as "a doctoral thesis on the need and ways to draw inspiration from precolonial African Art in order to produce a contemporary art that is authentic".⁹⁶ This semi-academic approach would turn out to be Kenfack's way of dealing with the hegemonic discourse analysed in the second chapter.

Upon Kenfack's return to Cameroon, the University of Yaoundé hired him as an anthropologist.⁹⁷ He felt at this time that his academic skilling in sculpture and painting needed to adapt to the Cameroonian context. To this end, Kenfack chose to replace the plaster, marble, and stone used during his studies with material that was locally available and familiar according to his cultural heritage. Thus, he privileged wood as a sculptural material and chose to carve poles.⁹⁸ Gaudibert's survey volume shows a reproduction of Kenfack's man-sized pole *La Panthère* (1988).⁹⁹ (Fig 20.1) For this piece, Kenfack carved a number of superimposed and entangled creatures into a trunk, amongst them a panther, a royal symbol from Kenfack's native Western Cameroon.¹⁰⁰ The facture of the pole's surface is rough, leaving the chisel's impact visible, similar to Bamiléké carvings.¹⁰¹ The resulting contrast of light and shadow gives the pole an almost threatening expressiveness, even outdoors in broad daylight as documented in Gaudibert's photo. In a documentary from 1990, Kenfack mused about the ability of certain Bamiléké authorities to demonstrate their power by transforming into a panther.¹⁰² Presumably, it was the artist's fascination with this type of transformation that inspired this piece.

In order to root his painting practice in the local context, Kenfack opted to make his sketches without life models—in part because he feared causing a scandal in his "very prude"¹⁰³ home country, but also because he himself was embarrassed by sketching from nude models while in art school. For want of reproductions of earlier examples, two paintings from 1990, both reproduced in Gaudibert's volume, shall illustrate the effects of this reasoning. The portrait format *Laalebasse d'initiation*, which is only accessible in a black and white reproduction, shows a standing, naked man with his arms lifted to his head in a classic academic pose. (Fig 20.2) Shadows suggest three-dimensionality as in art students' anatomical drawings exercises. Yet the

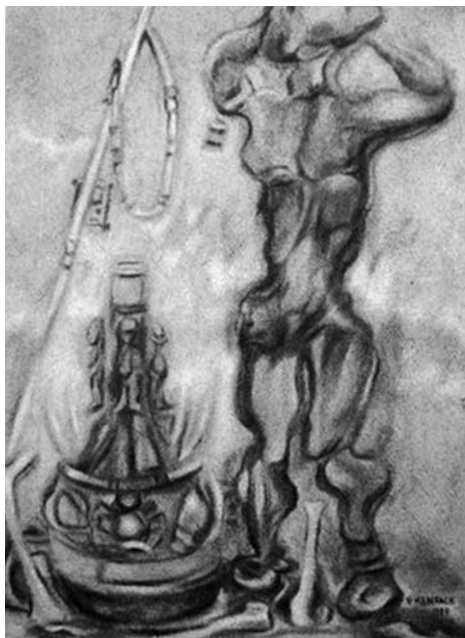


Fig 20

20.1 Pascal Kenfack, *La Panthère*, 1988, (not measured), wood.

20.2 Pascal Kenfack, *La calebasse d'initiation*, 1990, 106 x 88 cm, oil on jute.

20.3 Pascal Kenfack, *Masque*, c. 1990, (not measured), oil on canvas.

man's lack of individual features and artificially joined limbs suggest that this drawing was sketched from memory rather than in front of a life model. Due to the drawing's dynamically overlaid outlines, the man and his surroundings seem to be caught in a state of all-encompassing vibration, which might be representative of the anxiety of the young initiate. Notably, eminent French painters like Honoré Daumier and Vincent Van Gogh, to whom Kenfack was most certainly exposed during his studies, have used similar stylistic means to suggest an agitated state of mind.¹⁰⁴ My second example from the period of Kenfack's return to Cameroon is an oil painting bearing the title *Masque* (1990 or earlier).¹⁰⁵ (Fig 20.3) A man wearing a mask or a type of armour that conceals his head and torso sits on the floor with his legs crossed, thus entirely filling the axe-symmetrical composition of the square format. The man is handling a device in front of him, from which steam or smoke is ascending. A calm and concentrated ambiance emanates from this motif that seems to represent a meditation or a magical procedure. While the whole scene is rendered in earthy, warm tones, the device in the foreground is coloured in red, white and black, thus evoking Mveng's canonical "African" colours.

These examples show that Kenfack drew upon the expressive repertoire of modern French painting and combined it with motifs, titles, and colours that are distinctly coded as "African". This amounts to a process of transculturation in the sense of the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortíz's formulation of the term: a process by which aspects of the dominant, metropolitan culture undergo critical selection.¹⁰⁶ The embodiment of mysteries, symmetrical compositions, an earthy palette, and the soft colour transitions in his paintings became Kenfack's signature style and gained him national and international recognition at the end of the 1980s.¹⁰⁷ To Gaudibert, for instance, Pascal Kenfack was one of the most promising artists of Francophone Africa.¹⁰⁸ Besides underlining Kenfack's drawing and colouration skills and his perseverance in realising large series of work, Gaudibert placed particular emphasis on Kenfack's return to "ancestral" and "ritual" practices, as well as to magic and to founding myths. The author substantiated this claim by pointing to Kenfack's ritualistic preparations of the canvas with sawdust, glues, and fibre material and to the "dream-like activities"¹⁰⁹ by means of which Kenfack was said to communicate with spirits and with the dead. While Gaudibert might be

suspected of exoticising or unduly culturalising Kenfack's practice, it is noteworthy that Kenfack promoted this shamanic image of himself at that time, too, at least towards Europeans. In the aforementioned documentary film, Kenfack claimed that his sculptures could function as active mediators between the human and the animal realm if they were complemented with the appropriate potions and herbs. Apparently, this potency also caused some suspicion amongst his neighbours,¹¹⁰ especially since Kenfack felt that his paintings needed to be placed outdoors on his piece of land alongside their sculptural counterparts.¹¹¹ (Fig 21.1)

Together, these choices appear as steps towards an emancipation from academic art education and the contexts of Western art appreciation. In his own words, Kenfack has summarised this process as follows:

Je me suis retourné sur moi-même, dans nos traditions, mon enfance et je me suis détaché de ce que j'apprenais de l'Occident.¹¹²

At this time, Kenfack also felt compelled to share his academic skills with his *petits frères*, as he told me:

Je me suis dit, étant donné que j'ai beaucoup trimmé et que j'ai beaucoup appris aussi, il faut que je me mette maintenant à la disposition des petits frères qui sont au village, pardon, en ville.¹¹³

According to Afane Belinga, Kenfack even made a vow to find disciples.¹¹⁴ And since he was employed at the university, Kenfack would quite naturally approach the members of the aforementioned Club des Arts Plastiques to this end. In my interview he reproduced the messianic tone by which he challenged the students that he found busy painting greeting cards:

Ce n'est pas ça la voie! Si vous voulez, faisons ce que moi j'ai appris! (...) Venez pour qu'on commence à réfléchir sur les méthodes d'enseignement dont vous pouvez bénéficier!¹¹⁵

Goddy Leye, then a literature student, was one of those who would start to frequent Kenfack's home from 1987 onwards.¹¹⁶ Leye stayed as *petit frère* with Kenfack until 1991, when Kenfack felt that he had made of him "a true artist".¹¹⁷ In a text from the early 2000s, Leye has summarised Kenfack's teachings as follows:

Kenfack is convinced that the cultural past of Africa has not been properly studied and still has a lot to offer. The past in this case is a wonderful bank of useful information for the contemporary artist from the



Fig 21
21.1 Paintings by Pascal Kenfack on his land.
21.2 Pascal Kenfack's Musée-École.

continent. Anthropology provides him with the necessary tools to explore this rich source of inspiration.¹¹⁸

Kenfack's awareness for Africa's cultural heritage inspired Leye to include elements of Bamum drawings and symbols of the Fa oracle in his paintings.¹¹⁹ Leye wrote about this part of his work:

I would look for old signs and symbols, remove them from their initial settings, and place them in a totally new environment, thus providing room for the expansion of meaning. The signs and symbols were selected on the basis of their age but also and more so because of their beauty.¹²⁰

Among these symbols was the West African Sankofa motive, which Leye has also referenced in the titles of his first solo exhibitions.¹²¹ This bird with the backwards-bent head symbolises learning processes that are inspired by the past and thus corresponds to Kenfack's pedagogy.

It is worth stressing that Kenfack taught his *petits frères* for free, much to the disapproval of many colleagues.¹²² In order to alleviate their economic constraints, Kenfack also explained to aspiring artists how to make colour substitutes from cheap and partly organic material. He used to cut trees for his sculptures on his own land and mixed colours with fibres and sawdust. Afane Belinga considers this experimental approach to painting supplies the speciality of Kenfack's "school".¹²³

Kenfack's pedagogic ambition needed a fitting environment. By 1990 he had started to build his so-called "Musée-École" next to his studio and his home.¹²⁴ The Musée-École was operational from at least 1994 onwards.¹²⁵ Large numbers of partly unfinished wooden statues and easel paintings found a place in this brick-built hangar that was held by wooden pillars and covered by a roof of corrugated tin. (Fig 21.2) An article in *Revue Noire* suggests that the Musée-École was meant to function simultaneously as a studio, a meeting place, and a site for education "or confrontation".¹²⁶

This brings us to Kenfack's didactics, which different sources suggest were nuanced and changed over time. Goddy Leye remembered the time spent in Kenfack's studio as a period of free experimentation:

On allait dans son atelier, on avait des discussions, des échanges avec lui. Il venait avec la technique qu'il avait appris au Beaux-Arts et à l'université en France et donc, du coup, on travaillait de manière très

indépendante. Chaqu'un faisait son boulot, on discutait ce qu'on faisait et on avançait. Donc, pendant cinq ans – voilà – comment j'ai appris.¹²⁷ Afane Belinga, who studied with Kenfack after 1993 when he had started to lecture at the university, spoke of two didactic methods, the second of which only was applied in a formal setting.¹²⁸ Both methods were introduced to systematise the creative process and recall anthropological research methods. For the first method, which has been called "recherche documentaire"¹²⁹, students begin by inventoring as many objects of their surroundings as possible through rough sketches. Some of these objects are then studied in a more detailed way. In the next step, each student identifies the symbolic meaning of the objects of the repertoire they have generated within his or her native language. To this end, the students are encouraged to consult members of their ethnic group. Samples from the repertoire of motifs coded in this way can then be combined to give form to any theme, whether in painting or sculpture.

Kenfack's second method is allegedly a synthesis of two myths, namely the biblical Genesis and the legendary invention of the pictographic Bamum script.¹³⁰ In a first step, learners are requested to engage in a structured brain storming process around a given, abstract theme and to produce a list of four ideas in relation to it. The theme that Kenfack used when explaining this method to me was "mother". (Fig 22) The four associations (or rather clichés) raised in the example were nurture, fieldwork, peace, and reproduction. The students are then asked to individually associate expressions and metaphors from their native languages to these notions, again by means of field research, if necessary. In a following step, the students translate the thus coded notions into four linear drawings. In Kenfack's example these drawings represented a pot, a shovel, a plant, and a rabbit (sic). By way of what he calls a "hypothesis", pairs of these four drawings are superimposed to create two new drawings. The two new, superimposed drawings are vertically bisected, producing four halves that will be joined in all possible configurations to bring about four abstract motifs, each of which is matched from two halves of the "hypotheses". Following this "synthesis" comes a final phase, which Kenfack calls the "conclusion": a painted rendering of the motifs generated in the previous stages. In fact, students are encouraged to derive different water-coloured "conclusions" from a single sketching process.

THEME	TAKES	SIGNES	HYPOTHESE I	HYPOTHESE II				SYNTHES & DEFINITIV
LAMERE	maternité		A B					
	naissance							
	accipere		C B					
	procreantibus							
1 ^{re} PARTIE	ORIENTATION							
2 ^e PARTIE		CAUCASUS	PIRE	PIRE	PIRE	PIRE	PIRE	
DISCOURS		<p>Je suis la mère, la mamelle nourricière de l'humanité. On me reconnaît par mes formes, mes attributs, dans l'acte de donner la vie, dans les bras et le ventre de ma mère, je suis une force, toujours toujours au centre de tous les choses pour le développement de l'humanité.</p> <p>Je suis la mère, je suis une eau qui coule, je donne, je suis, je suis le souffle et qui fait de moi une conscience entre le ciel et la terre.</p>						
3 ^e PARTIE								



Fig 22
 Pascal Kenfack's second method:
 pupil's sketch sheets and watercolours on the topic "mother".

Notably, all the preparatory steps of the second method fit onto an A4 sheet—a requirement in view of the economic constrictions of his students, as Kenfack has stressed.¹³¹

Beyond these pragmatic considerations, it is worthwhile to also shed light on the historical background of Kenfack's methods. First of all, their subsequent steps of schematisation recall Mveng's aforementioned Universal Law of African Aesthetic Creation. These methods also foreground the different cultural backgrounds of Kenfack's students by encouraging each student to individually engage in an autoethnographic research process. This emphasis on cultural diversity corresponds to the aforementioned principle of "pluriculturalisme" that meant to generate national unity by valuing ethnic diversity.¹³² Kenfack's methods can also be compared to the use of historic artefacts and techniques in the didactic approaches of other art pedagogues working in Cameroon and other African countries in the second half of the twentieth century.¹³³ While Kenfack's pedagogy inscribes itself within their Négritudinist ideals, his semiotic approach towards unearthing the imagery embedded in his students' vernacular languages seems distinctively his own, however.

Returning to the hypothesis put forth at the outset of this section, I shall finally make sense of the pseudo-academic aspect of Kenfack's creative methods as it relates to his academic career. His dual background in anthropology and in art explains the (questionable) translation of epistemological conventions from science to art and art education. It comes as no surprise that some of my interlocutors criticised the over-codified aesthetics that result from these methods.¹³⁴ In fact, one of Kenfack's former students also commented on the rigidity of Kenfack's didactic approach in later years.¹³⁵ However although there is no comprehensive list of Kenfack's *petits frères* and his students, it is clear that he left an important mark on the following generation of artists working in Yaoundé. Rumour has it that even Pascale Marthine Tayou (born 1967), one of Cameroon's most successful artists internationally, counts amongst Kenfack's early *petits frères*.¹³⁶ Kenfack is fully aware of this impact, as the following statement evidences:

La jeune generation c'est moi, la peinture actuelle c'est mon impulsion!¹³⁷

The Bohemian Koko Komegné as *Grand Frère*

Unlike Kenfack, Koko Komegné became active as *grand frère* because the younger artists approached him. They asked Komegné's advice because he was the only one in Douala to practise visual art in the late 1980s and because he enjoyed a singular popularity in the press.¹³⁸ A monograph of 2006 gives a detailed résumé of Komegné's career as artist, but its authors failed to interpret Komegné's artwork as it relates to his way of life.¹³⁹ Since Komegné's attitude as *grand frère* is best understood in relation to his own life story, as is the case with Kenfack, I intend to fill this interpretive gap in the following pages by synthesising the state of research, certain newspaper articles, and my own interviews with Komegné.

(Gaston) Koko Komegné was born to a wealthy polygamous father, a farmer with a musical talent, in the village of Batoufam in 1950. Like Pascal Kenfack, who was born nearby in the same year, Komegné spent his school years in Yaoundé. However, he abandoned school already at the age of fourteen because he perceived this context as constricting:

À l'école là, on veut me formater et ce n'est pas ça que je veux être de ma vie! À l'école, j'ai appris les différences sociales. J'ai appris que je suis sur le même banc avec un enfant, mais son papa est ministre. Et on va toujours à la récréation ensemble, on partage les mêmes beignets, mais on n'a pas le même destin!¹⁴⁰

Komegné instead wanted to discover his ancestors' village. Yet despite his deep-felt appreciation of village life,¹⁴¹ the teenager turned his back on the village after two more years and, quite coincidentally, joined other relatives living in Douala in 1965. Komegné likes to talk about how he would chew down matches in those years to make brushes to copy pictures from *Elle*, *Jour de France* and *Vogue Magazine* in black enamel paint and watercolour. Among these pictures were reproductions of works by modern classics like Van Gogh, Giacometti, Matisse,¹⁴² and Picasso¹⁴³ as well as cartoons by the Frenchmen Jean Belux and the Armenian-Egyptian Kiraz.¹⁴⁴ The latter was famous for his humorous, erotic depictions of the elegant "Parisiennes" that featured in *Jours de France*, as well as in *Playboy*. This mundane and truly urban inspiration was going to resurface in Komegné's paintings later on.

During that same year of 1965, Komegné has also encountered the French advertisement painter Jean Sabatier in Douala, an acquaintance that left a deep mark on the teenager:

Tout de blanc vêtu, fumant d'une main une cigarette, tenant de l'autre un pinceau, il était en train d'inscrire 'Coca Cola' sur une plaque. J'ai été marqué par l'élégance de cet homme qui devait avoir un peu plus de soixante ans.¹⁴⁵

Komegné convinced Sabatier to take him on as his apprentice, an episode that he summed up as follows in an interview of 2006:

Je le regardais manier le pinceau dans le moindre détail, et je rentrais chez mon oncle le soir répéter ses gestes. Peu de temps après, j'avais ma première commande: la plaque publicitaire d'un coiffeur. De 1966 à 1990, j'ai fait essentiellement de la peinture publicitaire.¹⁴⁶

This professional background not only helped Komegné earn a living, but also inspired his painting style, as I will illustrate.

Yet, Komegné's contact with progressive political ideas was just as formative as the encounter with the advertisement painter, it seems. Around 1968, while working as a boy on a boat,¹⁴⁷ Komegné gained exposure to foreign sailors and to the existentialist and cosmopolitan zeitgeist.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, he read Léopold Sédar Senghor and Camara Laye and took notice of the 1966 FESMAN of Dakar, as well as of the Afro-American emancipation struggles and the Anti-Apartheid movement.¹⁴⁹ This political awakening had a great effect on Komegné, compelling him to change his Christian name Gaston to Koko and fostering a lasting ambition to create militant ["combatant"] art.¹⁵⁰ This background also explains his critical stance towards the circumstances of Cameroon's independence and the postcolonial state.¹⁵¹

After a period of parallel experimentation with painting, stage design, and music,¹⁵² Komegné met Faustin Kitsiba (born 1927 in what was then Zaire), who worked in copper reliefs. (Fig 23) Kitsiba had a thriving career and was known throughout the African continent and in France when he came to exhibit at Douala's Centre Culturel Français and at Yaoundé's American Cultural Center in 1976.¹⁵³ In 1979, he returned to show at the Centre Culturel Français of Yaoundé.¹⁵⁴ Presumably, the two artists met at one of these occasions. Kitsiba is said to have convinced Komegné to pursue a painter's career instead of a musical one.¹⁵⁵ And Komegné even raised Kitsiba to the

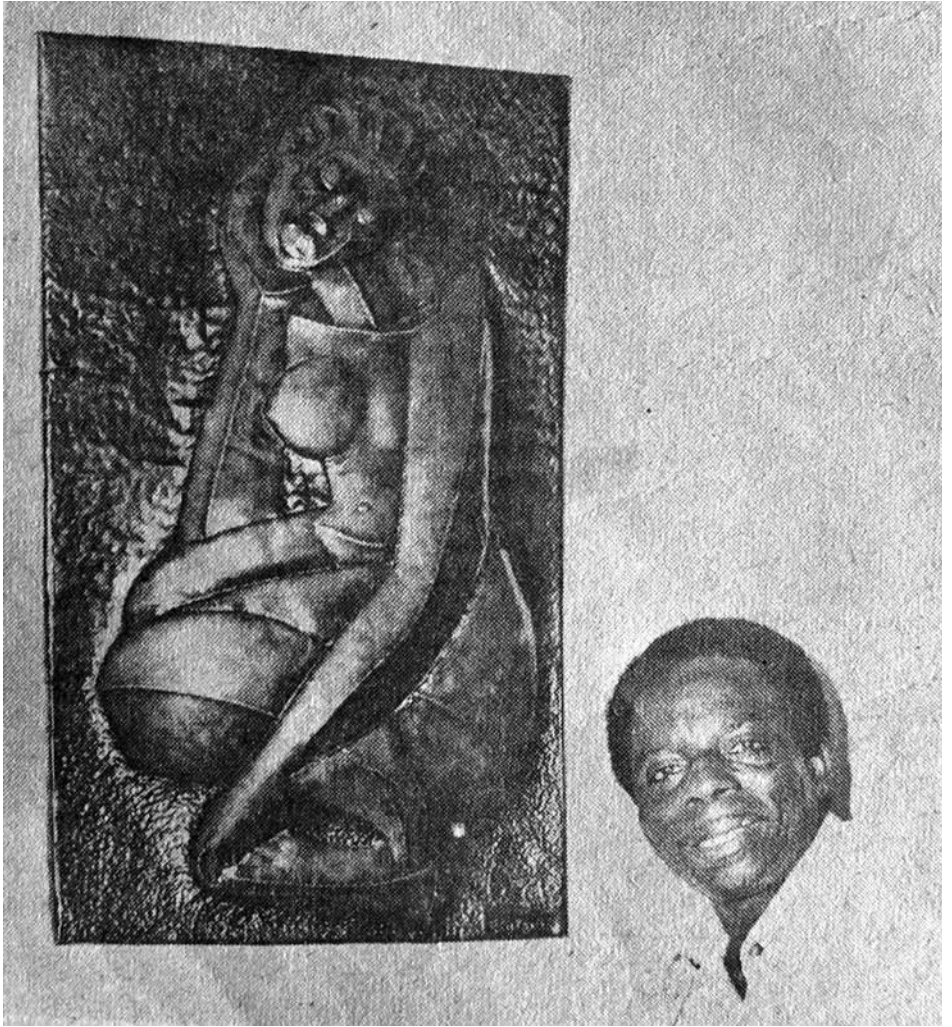


Fig 23
Faustin Kitsiba with one of his reliefs at the Centre Culturel Américain in 1976.



Fig 24

24.1 Philippe Ibara Ouassa, *The Bird and the Prayer*, 1955, 126 x 106 cm.
Musée National du Congo, Brazzaville, Congo.

24.2 Philippe Ibara Ouassa, *Toucan au repos*, 1987, 91 x 71 cm,
oil and earth on canvas.

status of one of his three masters in an article from the early 1990s, next to Pablo Picasso whom he admired for his fearless creativity and Henri Matisse, whose use of colour inspired him.¹⁵⁶ Komegné found Kitsiba's drawing and composition skills impressive, which he deemed typical of the style of the Poto Poto workshop in Brazzaville.¹⁵⁷ Judging from Komegné's predilection for strong, black outlines, there is a good chance that he also knew the aforementioned Congolese artist Ibara Ouassa, who also had exhibitions in Cameroon. (Fig 24) Whatever their exact nature, these links with the Poto-Poto workshop rank among the first documented between Cameroonian painters and contemporaries from other African contexts.

Komegné eventually combined influences like French magazine pictures, advertising painting, and encounters with other African artists in a personal aesthetic theory that he named "Direction Optique". First documented in 1982,¹⁵⁸ the "Direction Optique" combined "spiritual, moral and artistic values of the Black world",¹⁵⁹—such as harmony, balance, and anonymity—with aspects of Arabic, Judaic-Christian, and Greek-Roman philosophies.¹⁶⁰ Komegné synthesised this melange of influences with his signature militant edge. In 2006, Komegné summarised this theory as follows:

C'est un art au service de l'homme, un art qui introduit le visiteur tout en l'égarant. Le centre d'intérêt de cet art c'est l'homme dans la mesure où il cherche à atteindre le coeur, l'esprit et l'âme. La couleur devient accessoire. Ce qui compte, c'est la construction et l'émotion qui se dégagent de l'oeuvre, le dialogue silencieux qui s'instaure entre le visiteur et la toile.¹⁶¹

Within the Cameroonian context, the "Direction Optique" was an exceptionally universalist concept that relied on the belief in the disruptive power of individual aesthetic experiences.

And how did this theory play out in artwork? An early documented example of Komegné's mature style is the painting *Sans Titre* from 1982. (Fig 25) This work shows a dance scene, Komegné's favourite type of motif.¹⁶² It features two male musicians and a female dancer, all rendered anonymous by a heavily stylised depiction. Strong graphic lines in a dark teal tone have been swiftly placed on the white undercoat to demarcate the bodies and instruments. Sharp edges of stylised knees and hands alternate with swinging, round shapes of bellies, breasts, and thighs, thus suggesting quick changes of rhythms

and tunes. The white faces, limbs, and objects bear dark shadows, resulting in a strong graphic contrast as if the scene was spotlit from the right. Touches of fluorescent pink, blue, green, and dull violet-blue evoke the reflections of coloured neon lights in some parts of the composition. Like in certain paintings by Wassily Kandinsky or Paul Klee, these colours are placed outside of the motif's outline, thus betraying colour's traditional function as qualifier of an object.¹⁶³

Two interpretations of this motif are possible: while Komegné might have caught a spotlit musical gig in an urban nightclub, he could also be referring to a solemn performance in a village because the performers are pictured in loinclothes with a djembe drum, double gong, and carved stool. The motif's expressive contours are also ambivalent; they evoke the look of Grassland woodcarvings as well as urban graffiti.¹⁶⁴ This ambivalence also marks later works by Komegné that picture the ecstasy and the euphoria engendered by music and dance.¹⁶⁵ In all of them, the act of dancing is shown as a spiritual practice. Since music has the same potential in the village and in the city, it can be argued that the gamut of dance motifs helped to dissolve the discursive boundaries between binaries like "traditional" and "modern" or the rural and the urban realm—similar to American Jazz in the early twentieth century. The militant edge of these paintings therefore lies in how they reconcile what are typically framed as conflicting time frames and socio-geographic spaces in Cameroon.¹⁶⁶

Komegné's commissioners approved of this imagery's synthesis, it seems. A series of murals the artist undertook in 1985 at the Arcade Hotel in Douala was only one of several large-scale commissions in oil and acrylic that he realised in those years. Here, a millet-grinding farmwoman mingles with a frieze of musicians in jeans overlooking the modern dining room.¹⁶⁷ (Fig 26.1) The figures are all caught in motion and depicted with quick brush strokes in a simple, almost caricaturesque manner. Black and white still lifes of musical instruments, war, and hunting gear complement this frieze, as well as a depiction of two heads caught in the process of carving a caryatid motif. (Fig 26.2) These murals are exemplary of Komegné's light-hearted actualisations of "authentic" motifs and arguably also prove his awareness of the symbolic excess often accorded to "tradition" in Cameroon.¹⁶⁸ Komegné's background in advertising ultimately surfaced in his paintings as well, a prime example of this being his integration of



Fig 25
Koko Komegné, *Sans Titre*, 1982, 90 x 180 cm, oil on plywood.



Fig 26
26.1 View of the murals in the dining hall of the Arcade Hotel, Douala.
26.2 Detail with cryatide motif.

typographically rendered titles into his compositions.¹⁶⁹ In fact, the mix of reproductions in his 2006 monograph suggests that Komegné had abandoned any distinction between applied, commissioned paintings, and more autonomous work.

Komegné opened his studio for his *petits frères* in 1988. Yet despite the fact that Komegné's communicative talent had made him the spokesman of the artists of the Littoral, he was less vocal regarding the details of his pedagogical practice. In my interviews he said only:

Attends! Il suffisait que je peinds dans mon atelier (...). Je n'ai pas enseigné en tant que tel. (...) Les discours et ils voient comment je travaille... Eux-même, ils étaient des peintres. Mais il fallait l'idéologie, un sense, hein?¹⁷⁰

We may conclude that discussions and uncensored conversations about art's role formed the core of Komegné's teaching. The following statement underlines this estimate, too:

Notre vraie grande école: on a toujours les dialogues. Et c'est parce qu'on n'a pas (de) l'école! —The author: Alors vous diriez, s'il y aurait une école, la scène ici ne serait pas ce qu'elle est?—Komegné: Elle ne serait pas ce qu'elle est. C'est que l'état il devait gêner ça! L'état! Et nous, on a une doctrine: Rien avec l'état!¹⁷¹

Although this doctrine did not prevent Komegné from exhibiting in governmental institutions from time to time, his scepticism towards formalised schooling permeates his entire argument.

The young artists Joël Mpah Dooh (1956), Salifou Lindou (born 1965), Blaise Bang (born 1968), Hervé Yamguen (1971), Jules Wokam (born 1972), and Hervé Youmbi (born 1973) started to observe Komegné at work and to engage in discussions with him, thus comprising Komegné's first group of *petits frères*. Hervé Yamguen has given a detailed account of the time they spent together, during which he frequented Komegné's and Kayangayam's studio in Douala regularly alongside the compulsory vocational training in finance mandated by his father. At these occasions, Yamguen learned how to use oil colours and how to mix and to apply them. Composition was the second dimension of instruction. Thanks to the elders' oral art history, Yamguen could moreover gain a vague understanding of the genealogy of modern Cameroonian painters.¹⁷²

When reflecting on his role as *grand frère*, Komegné has described himself as a "door opener"¹⁷³ insofar as he immersed newcomers in

Douala's nascent art system. He took the *petits frères* along to art events, introduced them to other art professionals, and also systematically involved them in the group exhibitions that he organised in order to promote them.¹⁷⁴ The ability to harmoniously integrate seemingly contradictory life experiences, which I have already extrapolated when discussing Komegné's paintings, was also an integral part of his pedagogy. For example, the bon vivant and bohemian Komegné initiated the mission pupil Yamguen, who was spiritually and poetically inclined, to the pleasures of urban (night)life, yet he also drew Yamguen's attention to the "space of tradition in the contemporary realm".¹⁷⁵

Komegné also shared thoughts on the creative process with his *petits frères*. Once a student acquired a certain level of technical skill Komegné's encouraged them to take liberties and rely on their intuition.¹⁷⁶ This advice to the *petits frères* matches Komegné's ideals of "freedom" and "liberation", for which he sought to sensitise his viewers by means of aesthetic experiences, as the following quote evidences:

Je veux toucher les gens jusque dans leur chair, leur coeur, leur âme, leur esprit... Je voudrais y parvenir grâce à la peinture qui devient ainsi pour moi une arme libératoire, salvatrice.¹⁷⁷

Accordingly, when asked about his message to the younger generation, Komegné replied that he wanted the young artists to discover their freedom to work with any material:

Ce que j'ai apporté aux gars? Je les ai apporté la liberté! Oui! Je les ai dit que l'art c'est rien! Je les ai dit qu'on peut prendre ça là et on fait l'art avec. Je les ai dit que la peinture, si tu ne l'as pas, tu prends cette tôle là et tu tôles le tableau avec. Je les ai libéré, voilà!¹⁷⁸

Interestingly, this "liberation" from academic standards of painterly mastery and conventional expectations regarding which supplies an artist uses aligns with the post-modern, neo-expressionist tendencies that had variously surfaced in Europe by the 1980s, for instance in form of the artistic movements Transavanguardia, Libre Figuration, and Mühlheimer Freiheit. The insight that any object could become part of an artwork also points to the advent of the "récup-style" in Cameroon, a subject to which I will return later.

I will now compare my findings to support my claim that the *grands frères'* biography, oeuvre, and didactics are interrelated. This

argument will lay the groundwork for a definition of the *Système de Grands Frères*. Although Komegné's and Kenfack's learning biographies diverge—Kenfack seized all opportunities for scholarly training while Komegné preferred to learn and experience through practice—their respective artistic approaches nonetheless share commonalities. As contemporaries, they came into “fresh contact with an accumulated heritage”¹⁷⁹ of artistic themes, genres, and the roles of artists. For example, both have searched for a more reflective and less mimetic grip on the rural genre scenes. Kenfack did so by charging his practice with shamanic aspects, while Komegné started to depict the shifting spaces of musical traditions. A further commonality is their resourcefulness and entrepreneurialism, manifest in Kenfack's accomplishment at the Musée-École and Komegné's exploration of alternative exhibition venues, not to mention the crucial role he played in several art collectives.

However, these *grands frères* adopted different approaches in terms of didactics. Kenfack felt a strong sense of purpose as an art teacher and remained an academic throughout his professional career, although he actively transculturated his European academic training and the context of his teaching was at times non-formal. One sees his penchant for the academic in the fact that he recruited his *petits frères* amongst university students and underscored his academic legitimacy in relation to them. Kenfack furthermore regularly sustained himself through university jobs and later developed academically structured methods to guide the learners' creative processes. By contrast, Komegné took an anti-academic stance. As a freelancer, he adopted a bohemian lifestyle after spending a short time studying. He developed an oppositional political position that also inspired his journalistic writing for the private press in the 1990s. And as a consequence, Komegné had no access to an academic career in Cameroon¹⁸⁰ and feared any sort of institutional or political limitations on his approach to knowledge sharing. He proceeded intuitively as a teacher, bothering little with didactics, and strove for his training to achieve a liberating effect for his students. Together, these differences in Kenfack's and Komegné's life-stories demonstrate the intricate link between the educational biographies, oeuvres, and resulting didactic choices.

The examples of Kenfack and Komegné have shown that there are many ways to interpret the social role of the *grand frère*. The

characteristics of the *System de Grands Frères* need therefore to be found beyond the level of the individual artist. One of those characteristics seems to concern the locale of the encounter between *grands* and *petits frères*, namely the studio. Insofar as the elder artists started to turn their studios into meeting places and spaces for knowledge exchange, their initiatives can be understood as processes of space-making and as an anticipation of a more recent trend, which I will examine in chapter five.

Another characteristic of the *Système de Grands Frères* is the type of learning it facilitates. Since training by the *grands frères* is not structured by a curriculum, it is best described as the sum of open-ended learning experiences, which occur at an individualised, irregular pace and over extended periods of time. This implies that the learners have to assume the responsibility for their progress themselves. This type of learning can also be conceptualised as enculturation, a process by which individuals learn the requirements of their surrounding culture and acquire values and behaviours appropriate or necessary in that culture.¹⁸¹ If we agree that the art system is a culture in itself, the concept of enculturation unveils two complementary learning effects of the *Système de Grands Frères*. As the examples of Kenfack and Komegné show, *grands frères* firstly familiarise younger artists with practical skills and a means to overcome material constraints, while simultaneously mediating approved self-conceptions of the artist that correspond to dominant discourses and the rules of the local art world. This duality implies that the teaching accomplished within the framework of the *Système de Grands Frères* extends far beyond the mere transmission of technical skills. Rather, the *grands frères* open up access to different levels of professionally relevant knowledge—from discursive agency to entrepreneurial concerns.

This training is free of charge and does not require certified secondary training, which makes it very inclusive. However, despite its low threshold and the broad range of knowledge that it brings into circulation, this system also has its shortcomings. In order to identify them, and to clarify how the *Système de Grands Frères* functions, I will now contrast this system with three better-known learning typologies in twentieth century Africa: the apprentice system, academic courses, and two kinds of workshops.

The *Système de Grands Frères* in Comparison with Apprentices Systems

I should briefly introduce statements from my interviews to begin to distinguish some of the differences between apprenticeships and the *Système de Grands Frères*. The aforementioned artists Hervé Yamguen, Goddy Leye, and Justine Gaga—who apprenticed in a silk-screen workshop—have all spoken to difference between their relationships with their respective *grands frères* and their experiences with apprenticeships. As Yamguen and Gaga have noted, young artists were not obliged towards their *grands frères* as they would have been with masters. Leye underscores some of the differences between the two systems further by stating that he was treated like a student rather than an apprentice.¹⁸² Starting from these statements, I shall hypothesise that the teacher-learner relationship in the *Système de Grands Frères* is less formalised and less hierarchical than the apprentice system.

Due to my focus on Yaoundé and Douala it makes sense to compare the *Système de Grands Frères* to apprenticeships in urban settings, despite the fact that the teaching of artisanal crafts in rural Africa enjoys more popularity among researchers. The large body of literature concerning rural apprenticeships confirms the coexistence of differently formalised apprenticeships for certain crafts with enculturation in other crafts and proves that these forms of training change over time.¹⁸³ Generalisations about craft training in Africa, such as those documented in Engelbert Mveng's book *L'Art et l'Artisanat Africains*, are therefore scientifically untenable. For want of studies referring to Douala or Yaoundé, I will henceforth rely on two recently published anthropological studies that touch upon apprenticeships in the domain of applied arts in Bamenda, the capital of Anglophone Cameroon.

The first, a comparative article by Till Förster sheds light on the vocational training amongst popular painters in Bamenda, i.e. painters who make different types of advertisements and portraits.¹⁸⁴ According to the state of research, there is neither an official system of recruiting, contracting, teaching, or certifying apprentices within this context, nor are there prerequisites regarding the apprentices' social background or previous qualifications, besides literacy. Nevertheless, Förster could discern a set of "habitual conventions and standards"¹⁸⁵

for apprenticeships with popular painters that frame this relationship—which in itself is a kind of formalisation. The anthropologist stresses that aspiring popular painters choose masters according to their specialisation and reputation. The strong competition for clients is said to make the masters secretive about their professional skills. Therefore apprentices have to commit to a single master and pay an apprentice premium for learning a specific master's metier, the price of which varies according to previously acquired abilities and to the time to be spent in the workshop. Interestingly, longer apprenticeships could be less expensive because the apprentice would potentially invest more labour in the workshop. Förster has also noted that apprentices have a low position in the workshop hierarchy. They start by doing humble labour like cleaning, buying material, or executing preparatory work on the painting surfaces. An apprentice remains at the bottom of the workshop's hierarchy until a younger apprentice joins the team. The apprentices develop the ability to approach increasingly difficult tasks by means of observing the master and thanks to the master's sporadic intentional teaching. The latter takes the form of demonstration rather than that of verbal instruction or teaching by means of books. Apprentices thus qualify subsequently for all jobs in the workshop, except for the negotiation of prices, which remains the master's domain, according to Förster. Once they have embodied the skills of their master, apprentices are compelled to open their own workshops, sometimes with the master's support and other times in direct competition.¹⁸⁶

The organisation of the photography metier in Bamenda is the focus of the second study that I reference here, a PhD thesis by a student of Förster named René Egloff. Egloff's study tells us that it has become rather uncommon for photographers in Bamenda to professionalise through apprenticeships, a change apparently engendered by the proliferation of cheap and easy-to-handle digital photography. Egloff therefore had to rely on the elder photographers' accounts of their time as apprentices.¹⁸⁷ Like Förster, Egloff found a similar model with photographic workshops, which included premium fees for apprenticeship, social hierarchies within the workshop, and a learning model predicated on learning through observation and the gradual assignment of increasingly complex tasks. Photography apprentices used to be contracted upon a test phase of one to two months only.¹⁸⁸

During that test phase, an apprentice's irregular attendance would be punished by dismissal and newcomers were expected to treat other workshop members to food and drink in order to express their wish of belonging to the workshop. Professional secrecy was also paramount in the photographers' apprenticeships. According to the oral testimonies Egloff recorded, many master photographers withheld crucial knowledge regarding laboratory work and photo development until the very end of an apprenticeship, which could last between one and five years, in order to thus assure the apprentices' enduring commitment to them. A ceremony in the presence of the other professionals of the city would formally conclude an apprenticeship as photographer.

Förster and Egloff's observations in Bamenda show certain commonalities with the *Système de Grands Frères* in that admission is not restricted by one's kinship, social background, or level of schooling. Moreover, the relationships between teachers and learners are structured by age hierarchies in both cases and learners acquire their competences by observation and practice rather than by theoretical instruction. Nonetheless, there are also substantial differences between the two models. Unlike apprentices, *petits frères* do not exclusively commit to one teacher, nor are they required to focus on their training on a full-time basis. Furthermore, their training is not contingent upon paying an apprentice premium or executing legal contracts. In return, the elder artist is not obliged to assume responsibilities towards the *petit frère*. In sum, we may retain that the formal conventions of the apprenticeships find no correspondence in the *Système de Grands Frères*.

It is worthwhile to acknowledge that the formalisation of apprenticeships serves an end. The anthropologist Nicolas Argenti has summarised a body of literature that describes apprenticeships as a social institution that regulates the supply of a specifically skilled labour force in accordance to the demands of a specific society. The conventions structuring the access to professional know-how protect skill sets that correspond to specific labour markets. A distinct labour market for artists has never existed in Cameroon, however, and innovation and artistic singularity had become the key value in artist studios as early as the 1960s. Arguably, this new value reduced the fear of imitation because it became customary that each aspiring artist

had to embark upon a personal quest in terms of medium, technique, style, subject, and discourse instead of being required to incorporate a ready-made skill set. The secrecy regarding specific ways of doing and making thus became obsolete, as it was not an option for the *petits frères* to work in an identical fashion as their *grands frères*. I would therefore argue that the introduction of the *Système de Grands Frères* marks a detachment from the logic of secrecy that structures apprenticeships and the interactions of earlier painters, as I mentioned in preceding pages. However, this detachment was not absolute, as the following testimony shows. As a young artist living in Douala in the 1990s, Achille Komguem had difficulties finding *grands frères* to teach him:

Chaque fois que j'entrais dans l'atelier d'un artiste, on commençait la discussion. Et du coup il se rend compte que je n'ai pas appris des choses, alors (...) les portes se ferment. Parce que à l'époque les artistes fonctionnaient un peu comme s'ils avaient un secret et comme s'il ne fallait pas transmettre ce secret à n'importe qui.¹⁸⁹

Summarily speaking, my initial hypothesis can be upheld: the training through the *Système de Grands Frères* is less formalised, i.e. less obliging in terms of time, money, and labour than an apprentice's training. On the other hand, the *Système de Grands Frères* does not prepare aspiring professionals for a specific market by means of building a specific skill set, thus it cannot reduce their economic risk. While the *grands frères* were selective about whom they taught, it can be said that the learner's transgression of the teacher's practical and intellectual abilities was more easily possible in the framework of the *Système de Grands Frères* than in the apprentice system, because several *grands frères* could be frequented at the same time and *grands frères* like Komegné valued the dialogue with their protégés. In this sense, the hierarchies amongst *petit frère* and *grand frère* appear less strict than those between apprentice and master or elder apprentices.

By way of concluding this comparison, it is necessary to point towards a gap in my data. Although my interlocutors unilaterally denied that *petits frères* were in any way beholden to their *grands frères* in return for their teaching, besides assisting them occasionally on setting up exhibitions and other similar tasks, there might nonetheless be other, discrete obligations that were not considered worthwhile sharing with me. Narrations about conflicts amongst *grands* and *petits*

frères might be indicative of these conventions, but further field research and interviews would be required in order to pursue this point.

The *Système de Grands Frères* in Comparison with Academic Art Education

In many countries, aspiring artists find support in their quest to develop personal forms of creative expression in institutional frameworks such as art academies, art schools, *Écoles de Beaux Arts*, or universities' art departments. These tertiary educational institutions can be publicly or privately funded. In order to dissect the functioning of the *Système de Grands Frères* more fully, it seems useful to compare this system to forms of academic art education elsewhere on the African continent. In certain African countries, academic art courses have been available since the nineteenth century. Survey research on this topic is minimal, as yet, although some authors have undertaken steps in this direction. Gaudibert, for instance has published an annotated chronology of the foundation of tertiary art schools and workshops on the continent,¹⁹⁰ but this chronology is incomplete.¹⁹¹ Fillitz has added a small, non-annotated list of "early art academies" to his introduction to the volume *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Afrika: 14 Künstler aus Côte d'Ivoire und Bénin*, but he relies entirely on the studies of Marshall Mount (1989), Jean Kennedy (1992), and Elsbeth Court (1995).¹⁹²

Due to this study's focus on non-formal and non-academic art education in Cameroon, I cannot engage in the vast project of filling this research lacuna. I can formulate a hypothesis with regard to future studies, however; namely, that there is no such a thing as a standard of academic art education in Africa, not even within those regions that were former British or French colonies. This argument is based on the observation that the founding dates and circumstances surrounding the foundation of these schools were historically too distinct to result in similar orientations and curricula. For example, the *École de Dessin* in Algiers (est. 1843) and later *École Nationale des Beaux-arts d'Alger* emerged within a context of French settler colonialism rooted in an orientalist mentality.¹⁹³ English settlers in South Africa privately initiated the art schools of Capetown, Durban, and Grahamstown from 1880 onwards, apparently in order to mirror

their commercial success by means of art patronage.¹⁹⁴ Nationalist, anti-British forces rallied for the foundation of the School of Fine Arts in Cairo in 1908.¹⁹⁵ Another North African institution, the Casablanca School of Fine Arts, was set up to serve French imperial interest in 1919,¹⁹⁶ while an escapist English lady institutionalised what she perceived as vernacular cultures since 1937 at the art department of Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda.¹⁹⁷ Other art schools like the *École des Arts* in Dakar were put in place over the course of postcolonial nation-building after 1960.¹⁹⁸ The Apartheid politics of Southern Africa engendered yet another branch of this history: a private foundation with a progressive curriculum that welcomed Black students, namely the Johannesburg Art Foundation, operated like a public art school from 1972 onwards and thus challenged the Apartheid order.¹⁹⁹ Although most of these cases await detailed study, the state of research suffices to support the assumption that the disparate political backdrops that led to the foundation of these schools played out in their curricula, the range of disciplines that were taught, and the regulations of student admission. Also, although for the most part European-trained, the ideas held by the founders of these schools regarding art/s education in the (former) colonies differed heavily. Some sought to transfer late nineteenth century European academic standards to Africa, as did Aina Onabolu in Nigeria,²⁰⁰ others tried to “develop” local craft skills, as was the case with Meyerowitz in Ghana,²⁰¹ many turned to the regional aesthetics as an orientation for their teaching,²⁰² while a last group believed in European Modernism’s universal relevance.²⁰³ The teachers’ didactic approaches varied considerably as a consequence, partly causing internal dissensions within the same art schools.²⁰⁴

This complexity of the history of art education on the African continent forbids generalisations, but the aforementioned art schools, art departments, and art academies have important features in common that are neither specific to Africa, nor to artistic training, but are typical of institutional tertiary education. Universities usually work with specialised staff, regulate student admission, establish class schedules, and provide equipment and various types of spaces for different kinds of learning on campus, in addition to granting degrees under specific conditions. Obviously, the *Système de Grands Frères* lacks any of these institutional assets. The teaching is not paid and the training is

neither limited to a fixed period of time, nor differentiated into courses of complementary subjects. Students also do not have a right to regular instruction. I should add that the learners' achievements are not certified, which bars their access to teaching positions, university careers, or to any job requiring a university degree. Another distinction concerns the knowledge that is put at the learners' disposal; the *Système de Grands Frères* operates without the collectively approved curricula of university courses and without any pedagogic preparation or control on the part of the teachers. The *grands frères* are neither compelled to measure against the skills, methods, and opinions with other qualified teachers, as is common in schools, nor do they count the rate of dropouts or check the learning success of the *petits frères*. Although there is evidence that some *grands frères* put art books at their *petits frères*' disposal,²⁰⁵ they cannot give access to specialised libraries, as tertiary educational institutions commonly do.

A third set of distinctions between the *Système de Grands Frères* and formal artistic training is more indirect. It concerns questions of gender. While modern educational institutions in Cameroon and elsewhere are expected to treat women and men alike, both in terms of teachers and students, the *Système de Grands Frères* has barely proven conducive to women artists' careers. According to my empirical data, hardly any women artists in Cameroon have learned their profession through the *Système de Grands Frères*. I also didn't come across artists with a LGBTI identity during my field research. However, it seems like the reasons for this are not peculiar to the *Système de Grands Frères* as such, but rather that these tacit exclusions result from the dominant gender order in Cameroon. Artist studios are considered male spaces—in other words a space dominated by heterosexual men in a society with rather distinct and conservatively profiled gender roles. To my knowledge, comparable spaces that are coded as artistic-and-female do not exist in the realms of visual art in Cameroon, nor do role models for female or LGBTI artists. Various interlocutors have moreover pointed to the low social esteem of visual artists in Cameroonian society, which I historically explored in chapter two, as a potential ground for this inequity.²⁰⁶ While it is a mark of social prestige in Cameroon to facilitate university studies for one's children, this bad image of visual artists explains that families are unlikely to allow for their talented girls to frequent one or several

grands frères, even more so since artist circles are associated with loose lifestyles that are deemed more consequential for young women than for young men.²⁰⁷ These aspects mark the shortcomings of the *Système de Grands Frères* in comparison to a well functioning institution of tertiary training, however rare this type might actually be in Central and Western Africa.²⁰⁸

The *Système de Grands Frères* in Comparison with Different Types of Workshop

It is finally necessary to delineate the *Système de Grands Frères* from learning situations in workshops. Three different meanings of the term workshop are known in the context of African art history. According to the oldest definition, a workshop is the space where artists and artisans gather for their daily work in order to share tools, split labour tasks, exchange with clients, and train apprentices.²⁰⁹ This meaning scarcely proved relevant for the artists under consideration, who for the most part used individual studios. The second conception of the term—which refers to late-colonial art workshops initiated by Europeans like the Poto-Poto workshop—was introduced in the first chapter. A Cameroonian variant of this typology might be the involvement of the Frenchman Raymond Lecoq, who intervened in craft cooperatives in the French protectorate as a deputy of the French Direction de l'Enseignement from 1945 to 1950. The scarce documentation available suggests that Lecoq sought to implement European standards of individualised artistic work amongst craftspeople accustomed to a communal working process, while at the same time trying not to influence them.²¹⁰ The interest in vernacular arts and their educational application was a further concern, which Lecoq shared with other European workshop leaders or art teachers like Pierre Romain-Defossés, Pierre Lods, Kenneth Murray, Herbert Meyerowitz, or Margaret Trowell.²¹¹

The *Système de Grands Frères* differs clearly from this historical workshop movement insofar as it primarily involves indigenous artists. Moreover, unlike the workshops established by Europeans, the *grands frères'* studios were improvised settings, financed with scarce, locally raised funds, as Goddy Leye has underscored:

90, c'est quoi? C'est très souvent un couloir entre deux immeubles. [...] Il y a un artiste qui met un tôle là parce qu'il ne peut pas payer, louer un vrai espace. Et c'est là, son atelier. Il travaille là. Il accueille d'autres jeunes là, qui viennent à apprendre leur métier dans ce cadre là.²¹²

And while the *grands frères* of the 1970s and 80s worked locally for the most part, many of the European workshop initiators had far-reaching networks in other African and European metropolises, which granted some artists that trained with them considerable visibility abroad.

The 1980s saw the emergence of yet another form of workshop in Africa: a grassroots movement initiated by artists for other artists who had already completed their training. Its function was to “stimulate creativity and encourage experimentation”²¹³, “to learn from each other through the exchange of ideas and practice”²¹⁴, and to network transnationally beyond academic structures and regardless of the mechanisms of the art market.²¹⁵ The model for this third type of workshop was an initiative of the British modernist sculptor Sir Anthony Caro and art collector and entrepreneur Robert Loder, the founders of the Triangle Arts Trust. The first Triangle workshop was held in 1982 in upstate New York and combined aspects of a retreat with peer discussions and visiting critics. Caro paraphrased this workshop as a “pressure cooker for new art”²¹⁶, thus choosing a similar domestic metaphor as Komegné when describing Cercle Maduta. The enthusiasm for this workshop model amongst the participating artists bred a worldwide network that operates without centralised organisational structure. Members of this network share the ideal of a global community of visual artists and subscribe to some guiding principles, which can be traced back to Caro and Loder:

Triangle is a sustainable enterprise founded on the premise of artists teaching artists through the creative process. Thus, the network was, and has always been, informally fuelled by travelling artists bringing their experiences from abroad back home, in tangled multi-directional flows that challenge the boundaries of centre and periphery.²¹⁷

The first workshop of the Triangle type held in Africa was the Thupelo Workshop in Capetown and Johannesburg of 1985. “Thupelo” means “to teach by example” in Sotho.²¹⁸ Since then, a variety of similar events have taken place across the African continent. They have been characterised as follows:

[These workshops] last for just two or sometimes three weeks, and are held if possible in a remote location to contain the energy of the occasion and remove day-to-day distractions. They are for committed, mid-career artists, not students; usually about 20 artists work together, without any formal teacher-student relationships. At the close, an exhibition of works in process involves the public.²¹⁹

A recent article by Namubiru Rose Kirumira and Sidney Littlefield Kasfir adds that Triangle-type workshops aim to create a temporary, egalitarian space of interaction for a group of artists who differ in age, nationality, and educational backgrounds. Participants in previous workshops appoint future ones based on their track records. Organisers select the location of each workshop in such a way that all artists have to travel, since travelling is seen as a source of inspiration. In most cases, workshops begin without an advertised theme. Rather, participants are invited to interrogate their practice by means of discussions with peers and to produce new work in an unfamiliar context, often with limited supplies. A part of the artworks produced during the workshop are handed over to local sponsors in return for their contributions to the workshop's overhead and the participants' travel costs. Due to its Anglo-American founders, English has always been the participants' predominant language, presumably one reason why the Triangle workshops were more readily adopted in Anglophone countries than in Francophone Africa.²²⁰

In 1995, Elsbeth Court considered such "international workshops" the "most significant innovation in contemporary African art (in contrast for example to biennales and blockbuster exhibitions)".²²¹ And in 2009, Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu saw the international workshops reinstating, "with greater vigour, the sort of intra-continental exchanges that had occurred briefly among the immediate post-independence generation of artists in the 1960s".²²² Even if it might falsely suggest the involvement of different national organisations, the wording "international workshops" is useful because it helps to distinguish these workshops from the top-down mid-century workshops and it also encompasses workshops in Francophone Africa that did not emerge from the Triangle-network.²²³ But as a matter of fact, this trend was not exhaustively adopted throughout Africa. Cameroon, for instance, still has not hosted such an international workshop to date.

Returning to my comparison, I shall argue that the *Système de Grands Frères* stands apart from the international workshops, although it is also artist-run. Unlike international workshops, the *Système de Grands Frères* operates without formalised selection processes, external funders, and temporal limitations on the exchange between artists. Contact with foreign artists and critics are also not a priority for the *grands frères*. Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that the *Système de Grands Frères* lacks the egalitarian ideal of the international workshops. Rather, it functions on the basis of age hierarchies and the patronising attitudes of elder artists.

In sum, comparing this system with apprenticeships in urban crafts, artistic training in universities, the workshop movement, and international workshops confirms my hypothesis that the *Système de Grands Frères* forms its own distinct category. In fact, the learning experiences that the *grands frères* have facilitated since the 1970s in Yaoundé and Douala are less structured than any known type of tutored skilling in the realm of art. This training was (and is) free of charge, takes place under precarious circumstances—secluded from Cameroonian mainstream society and from global artistic trends. These might be some of the reasons why the *Système de Grands Frères* has so far been invisible in the literature, although conversations with the artists Mansour Cissé from Senegal and Rafiy Okefolahan from Benin suggest this approach is not a Cameroonian speciality: elder artists obviously also train younger ones on the basis of kinship metaphors in other African countries and also in countries with profiled art schools.

The inconspicuous interaction of the *grands* and *petits frères* could also be understood as a tactic in de Certeau's sense, as a pedagogic "art of the weak" that makes use of "intellectual creativity".²²⁴ As a tactic, the *Système de Grands Frères* proved highly efficient since it counterbalanced the deficient public infrastructure for artists and it proved sustainable because former *petits frères* also felt compelled to pass on their teachings once they had established their careers. As a matter of fact, this has been the case until the time of writing. This continuity is crucial since it multiplies the choices for *petits frères*. And as the name giver Njami has stressed, it takes many *grands frères* (and ideally also *grandes soeurs*) working in the same city at the same time for the *Système de Grands Frères* to function in a satisfactory way:

[P]lus il y grands frères, mieux c'est! Parce que tout d'un coup on sort de la vision monolithique du truc et on laisse à l'artiste d'aller recueillir le plus d'informations possibles, et d'en faire ce qu'il veut.²²⁵

This optimism notwithstanding, flaws in the *Système de Grands Frères* persist: its patriarchal structure, its limitations in terms of pedagogic and art-historical knowledge, and its seclusion from formal training careers and transnational artistic networks.

Contextualisation: Cameroon's Art World in the 1980s

Throughout this third chapter I have focused on the tactics by which visual artists in Yaoundé and Douala began to shape their professional field between the years 1976 and 1991. As novelties of this period, I have highlighted the new collectives of amateurs and artists and the self-investment of certain entrepreneurial artists, which also brought about the *Système de Grands Frères*. These developments eradicated the artists' previous isolation and, as I have argued, laid the groundwork for the formation of an autonomous art system within Cameroon. That said, they have also produced a disparate and uneven professional field that was structured by the administrative dependence from the capital and by resentments between artists from Douala and Yaoundé. Artists with different biographical backgrounds and with roles ranging from bohemian to artist-cum-entrepreneur to artist-cum-functionary²²⁶ began to claim their stakes in this field.

But an art world consists not only of artists, as we know from Howard Becker's definition. Theoreticians, commissioners, audiences, and everybody else involved in the production of works accepted as (visual) art also play their part. I shall hence conclude this chapter by shedding light on the activities of the non-artists who contributed to this emergent art world in the late 1970s and 1980s. While the state remained inactive, certain civil organisations and corporations stepped onto the scene during this period. Some of them awarded grants, such as the aforementioned tobacco company Bastos or the Italian educational NGO Fondazione Centro Orientamento Educativo, which maintains several schools in Cameroon to this day.²²⁷

(CASAD), an association supporting visual art and theatre founded by art lovers in Douala also became active.²²⁸ Other groups facilitated temporary art exhibitions, like the Rotary Club that ceremonially inaugurated its Galerie Rotary Estuaire in the landmark palace of the Duala martyr Rudolph Douala Manga Bell in 1987.²²⁹ Since Douala was the economic capital of the country, the majority of the private initiatives emerged from this city, thus vitalising the local art scene and the cultural life of Douala's urban elites.

This said the foreign cultural institutes retained their monopoly in terms of cultural education throughout the transition period of the 1980s, a status that started to worry some journalists of *Cameroon Tribune*.²³⁰ These centres were offering aesthetic education to children in the form of afternoon courses,²³¹ while adults could join a class for ceramics.²³² Travelling experts gave talks, such as M. Warren Robbins, the founder of the Museum of African Art in Washington, who lectured about Picasso's fascination for Africa at the Centre Culturel Américain.²³³ Another expert, the German Ulli Beier (1922-2011) gave a two-day conference at the Goethe-Institut on the Yoruba culture and on the Oshogbo workshop that he had initiated in Nigeria.²³⁴ At the same time, cultural diplomacy remained high on the agenda of the foreign cultural centres and new alliances were forged to this end—like the exhibition of contemporary Greek prints at the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé²³⁵ or the show about the Museo del Prado at the Goethe-Institut, which was organised by the Spanish embassy.²³⁶

While indigenous artists like Isidore Zogo and René Tchébétchou continued to exhibit at the foreign cultural centres, it is remarkable that the number of their exhibitions dwindled at the onset of the 1980s—if one can trust the press coverage. This development might be accorded to two subsequent directors at the Goethe-Institut who placed an emphasis on music, film, and TV rather than on visual art.²³⁷ Yet a more pertinent explanation is the strategic repositioning of the foreign cultural centres; in 1982, the Goethe-Institut's branches in Africa reoriented their programming.²³⁸ The Centres Culturels Français also saw a transformation towards the end of the 1980s. Although the pedagogic staff deployed by the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale had administered these centres until then, the respective teams were now hiring French professionals from the cultural

domain. Apparently, this change in policy engendered an improvement in their cultural programming.²³⁹ Rather than organising exhibitions, the centres would now start to explicitly stipulate cooperation in the domains of culture and education. The most important manifestation of this new focus was a new educational format that simultaneously emerged at the Centre Culturel Français and at the Goethe-Institut, namely the “ateliers” also known as “séminaires-ateliers” or “ateliers de formation”. The next chapter will accord ample space to this topic because these *ateliers* would revolutionise non-formal artistic learning in Cameroon.

At the outset of this chapter I have placed the assumption of a congruous development of the art histories on the African continent in the 1980s into question, a point to which I would now like to return. I was then referring to a survey by Okwui Enwezor and Chica Okeke-Agulu. These prominent North-American experts on contemporary African art have argued that the watershed implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programmes around 1983 put an end to the “utopian” period of the 1960s and 1970s, which was “a time of great experimentation with the idea of national culture, nation state, citizenship, civil society, social models, and political institutions”.²⁴⁰ In their estimate, the Structural Adjustment Programmes are held accountable for the artists’ disillusion and for their growing scepticism towards the postcolonial governments. As a consequence, African artists are said to have taken a confrontational stance in the 1980s:

The illegitimacy of the rule of “big men”—autocrats and plutocrats—who choked cultural and political expression, forced artists to devote more attention to fashioning serious critiques of the depredations and abuses of power that were happening internally. The target was the corrupt postcolonial state apparatus and its neoliberal Western-backed sponsors.²⁴¹

And what is more, Enwezor and Agulu associate this disillusionment with a continent-wide stylistic turn:

The dire situation in which African societies found themselves was beginning to unveil a new sense of realism, not only in the subjects, but also in the images and forms emerging in works of art, revealing situations generated by the austerity measures that had transformed the postcolonial economy into a state of profound crisis.²⁴²

And consequently, “Postcolonial realism”²⁴³ appears as the distinct artistic trend of the 1980s in Enwezor’s and Okeke-Agulu’s writing.

My perception of the Cameroonian situation does not match this larger picture. Artists in Cameroon did not generally change their attitudes towards the state in the 1980s, in my view. Rather, their political positions seem to have depended on where they resided within the country. More concretely, my data suggests that many of the Yaoundé-based artists were loyal to the Biya regime throughout the 1980s, not least because many of them were national employees. Artists like Komegné, who were more sceptical towards the state authorities opted for self-organisation, as I have emphasised, but they did not turn to Realism in formal terms. Only Spee Nzante's satirical painting style might pass as this new "postcolonial realism". However, Spee held a singular position as an Anglophone artist academically trained in Ivory Coast and Nigeria (the reference context of Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu), and he practiced in Bamenda, far from Yaoundé and Douala.

Moreover, the search for "authentic" aesthetics that was typical of the post-independence years did not come to an abrupt end in Cameroon in the early 1980s either. Eminent Cameroonian artists continued to deal with these questions, as I was able to demonstrate through the case of Pascal Kenfack. Cameroon's art history appears therefore asynchronous with the narrative put forth by Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu. This disaccord could be explained by the fact that the Cameroonian state had sidelined visual artists during the years after independence, rather than coopting them for political ends like the Ghanaian or the Nigerian government. Artists working in Cameroon therefore did not feel the need to emancipate themselves to the same degree as their colleagues.²⁴⁴ Yet, this situation was bound to change a few years later, as the next chapter will show.

Chapter 4

The 1990s: The Empowerment of a New Artist Generation through Non-formal Training

The early 1990s are unanimously perceived as a turning point in the history of visual art in Cameroon. This is clear from the oral art history shared by historically informed interlocutors during my field research, as well as from the rare art-historical studies accomplished thus far.¹ In fact, from 1990 onwards, visual artists in Yaoundé and Douala started to explore a range of new media and to address previously unheard of topics. When I inquired about the reasons behind this turn, my interview partners noted the effect that the end of the Cold War had on Africa's political climate,² as well as the national upheaval in Cameroon that began in 1991.³ Others referred to the artists' growing exposure to foreign art and their contact with a range of foreign art professionals⁴—or simply to globalisation tout court.⁵

Indeed, an art-historical turn has been observed globally since around 1990. The British art historian and art critic Claire Bishop identified 1989 as the last of three important turning points in twentieth century art history in general,⁶ while the political scientist Lotte Arndt asserts that the end of the Cold War led to a reorganisation of the cultural field in Africa. Like Senegalese curator Ngoné Fall and Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, Arndt discerned a growing interest in African visual culture outside of Africa around that time. This new attention sparked numerous exhibitions and publications in Europe and the U.S. made by cultural producers who sought to create a more nuanced image of Africa in the world, thus shaping the new professional field of "Contemporary African Art".⁷

Powerful geopolitical interests supported these developments, as Arndt's critical analysis of French cultural politics shows; the former imperial state of France used the leitmotifs of democracy and development to solidify geopolitical zones of influence at a moment of global realignments by engaging in cooperation with the former colonies on the level of symbolic production. Arndt is particularly referring to the "Conférence des Chefs d'États d'Afrique et de France," which

François Mitterand presided over in June 1990. This conference officially promoted a new political investment on the African continent by means of cultural politics and cultural exchange. Apparently, the subsequent foundation of the organisation “Afrique en Créations” made substantial funds available for projects that represented African culture within France and vice versa.⁸ While this congruence with global developments should dispel any doubts about the importance my interlocutors ascribe to the year 1990, their different explanations remain to be tested. After sketching out the major political events on a national level, the following chapter will do so.

The Effects of the “Smouldering Years”

The “Smouldering Years”⁹ comprised the most momentous shift in Cameroon’s history post-independence. During this time citizens expressed their dissent against President Paul Biya’s single-party regime in an extended countrywide upheaval. This political unrest can be linked to the worldwide Wind of Change engendered by the fall of the Berlin Wall and to the crumbling of Apartheid that led to Namibia’s independence in 1990. The arrest of Douala-based lawyer Yondo Manengue Black kick-started the Smouldering Years in February 1990.¹⁰ Manengue Black had co-authored a political call with the telling title “National Coordination for Democracy and a Multiparty System”. Although the national information service prevented this paper’s publication, the word was out. The Social Democratic Front in Bamenda rallied in favour of greater autonomy and federal self-governance for the Anglophone part of the country, which fuelled unrest and further contributed to the government’s destabilisation. By the end of 1990 these agitations had been brutally sanctioned, but they pressured the president to approve the multi-party system, as well as grant basic civil rights, such as the freedom of speech, the freedom of association, and the freedom of mass communication.¹¹

However, the Smouldering Years were not yet over; as if testing these new rights, the economist Célestin Monga criticised the head of state for his economic and political failures in a now famous open letter that he published in a privately owned newspaper in the last

days of 1990.¹² Monga's subsequent conviction to trial sparked further intense public protests, first in Douala and then in various cities across the country.¹³ A few months later, a two-day general strike called "Operation Ghost Town" paralysed Cameroon's Western and Northern cities in an attempt to further challenge Biya's government. With the help of Jean Fochive, a much-dreaded official of Ahidjo's secret service, the authorities succeeded in pacifying the rebellious regions and brought them under the control of two generals.¹⁴ Such were the tense conditions in 1991 when the first elections for a multi-party parliament were held in Yaoundé. Although formally operative, this parliament "remain[ed] a weak and ineffectual rubber stamp, following carefully the dictates of the president and his ruling clique", as American historians assessed in 2010.¹⁵ The "stalled democratic transition"¹⁶ produced a climate of political instability in the country, which was used to legitimate a form of governance that has been called a "virtual dictatorship".¹⁷

These political developments followed shortly after the severe economic crisis that gripped Cameroon in 1987. Several heavy salary-cuts on the part of national employees and the privatisation or closure of various public corporations and institutions resulted in a loss of seventy percent of spending power in the early 1990s. The crisis was at its peak when the Franc CFA was devalued by fifty percent in 1994.¹⁸ The majority of the urban population faced unemployment and poverty at this point, causing many to resort to the informal sector. As the Cameroon-born writer and poet Patrice Nganang has remarked, the combined effect of the Smouldering Years and the economic crisis deepened the friction between Cameroon's government and its citizens because the population's experience of powerlessness revitalised earlier political traumas, ranging from colonisation in 1884 to the externally controlled transmission of colonial power from Germany to France and Great Britain in 1916, to the "palace revolution" of 1960 that propelled Ahmadou Ahidjo into office, and finally Paul Biya's silent enthronement as president in 1982.¹⁹

Artworks from the 1990s address this friction, as the following example shows. Goddy Leye's *Barbelés (The B. Wall)* (1998) is one of the first multi-media installations made in Cameroon. (Fig 27) A small colour TV set displays a version of photographer Peter Leibing's press image *Berliner Mauerspringer*.²⁰ This photograph documents the



Fig 27
Goddy Leye, *Barbelés (The B. Wall)*, 1998, 57 x 51 x 55 cm,
video, monitor, barbed wire.

daring jump of the East-German policeman Conrad Schuman across the barbed wire that provisionally separated East and West Berlin in August 1961, while the Berlin Wall was being built. A West-German icon of liberation, this picture represents an individual's escape from the reach of a government that was about to fence in its citizens. Leye has effectually inverted this picture's meaning by entangling the entire monitor with the standard issue barbed wire ("barbelés" in French) that Schuman had jumped across.

It is noteworthy that this artwork was first exhibited in Germany, namely at the 1998 edition of the *Triennale der Kleinplastik* in Stuttgart, in the West of reunited Germany.²¹ The author of the 1998 catalogue text interprets Leye's inversion of the icon self-consciously as a cheeky gesture by which Leye is said to mock the misrepresentation of African artefacts and icons in ethnographic museums in Europe.²² However, *Barbelés (The B. Wall)* has further layers that demand attention. Schuman's jump, and the division of Germany, coincided with a period of nation-building in Cameroon: in October 1961 the former British Southern Cameroons joined the Cameroun Republic to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The "reunification" of Cameroon in May 1972 ended this federation in favour of a centralised regime.²³ These reverse historical developments in Germany and in Cameroon similarly led to revolutions in late 1989 and early 1990. Therefore it seems apt to associate a Cameroonian artist's détournement of this German photo icon with Cameroonian politics and certain missed chances at establishing democracy during the years after independence. The stagnation of the political reform process of the 1990s appears as yet another subtext of Leye's installation because it must have been clear to such a critical observer that the Smouldering Years had not resulted in a democratic order at the time this artwork was created. President Biya held on to power and corruption was on a continuous rise: the government rigged elections, repressed the rights of minorities, and violated the liberty of press.

It is also worth noting that television had only been introduced in Cameroon in 1985 and that it was Leye's intention to question the ambivalent power of television with artworks like the one under discussion, much like video pioneers from Germany and the U.S. had done before him.²⁴ *Barbelés (The B. Wall)* can therefore also be considered a comment on the fragile freedom of press in Cameroon. The

criticality of this artwork and its subtle allusion to national politics was a novelty in the Cameroonian context, as should be clear from the previous chapters. Over the course of the chapter at hand I will retrace the formative experiences that enabled artworks like this one.

Goddy Leye belonged to a new generation of artists who started to become visible in the early 1990s; Leye and Pascale Marthine Tayou (born 1967) were working from Yaoundé, while Salifou Lindou (born 1965), Hervé Yamguen (born 1971), Hervé Youmbi (born 1974), and Achille Komguem (born 1974) were based in Douala. Their only female colleague, Justine Gaga (born 1974) fully embarked on her artistic career as late as 2007,²⁵ but she will be considered throughout this chapter nonetheless because she started as a *petite soeur* of Viking André Kanganyam during the 1990s and is therefore another important contemporary witness of artistic knowledge sharing during this period.

It makes sense to speak about these artists as a generation “in its full actuality”²⁶ because they were in contact in the 1990s and all of them passed through the *Système de Grands Frères*.²⁷ Moreover, as young urbanites they all lived through the economic crisis and the Smouldering Years, even if these events manifested differently in the country’s two largest cities. In Yaoundé, the university remained closed for almost two years due to strikes after 1991, and the subsequent university reform of 1993 deprived students of their stipends, which especially affected those artists who had enrolled prior to the Smouldering Years, among them Leye and Tayou.²⁸ But it was Douala that stood out as the opposition’s nerve-centre. Youths violently took control of the city during Operation Ghost Town and in the aftermath of these events a large part of the newly founded independent press editors chose Douala as their base, thus reinforcing Douala’s oppositional image.

I have only scarce second-hand information regarding the artists’ actual involvement in the riots; Koko Komegné mentioned in our interview that his *petits frères* mobilised for the cause of civil rights and other liberties due to the ideas that circulated at the colleges and university around 1990.²⁹ And Dominique Malaquais has asserted that Goddy Leye was active in the student protests in Yaoundé.³⁰ Nevertheless, I consider it safe to assume that the struggle for democratisation was the “drama of the youth”³¹ of the 1990 generation.

These experiences seem to have also pushed the antagonism between the artists of Yaoundé and Douala to the background. In fact, these young artists travelled frequently between Yaoundé and Douala in order to partake in exhibitions and educational programs throughout the 1990s, and some of them even moved from one city to the other.³²

I will now focus on this 1990 generation, more concretely on the artists Leye, Tayou, and Lindou, who established their careers throughout this decade. By 2000 all three of them had had solo exhibitions at each one of the most important exhibition venues in Cameroon, namely at the Centre Culturel Français and the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé, as well as at doual'art in Douala.³³ It is my hypothesis that non-formal encounters with art professionals from the diaspora and from the former colonial centres were paramount in shaping these artists' careers. Additionally, I focus on the artists' own efforts at enhancing their discursive agency in the last part of this chapter. I shall argue that the sum of the competences acquired in these ways have empowered the artists of the 1990 generation to define their positions within a Cameroonian art world that was extending its boundaries at a rapid pace. But before getting to these main points, I will explain why other educational models, such as families, general schooling, and formal artistic training appear less important in retrospect.

The Shortcomings of Families, General Schooling and Art Education in Fostering Artistic Talent

Artists active around 1990 recalled their families' scepticism, if not downright antagonism, towards their interest in the arts during my interviews. Many of my interviewees thought this was due to the low estimation of visual art in Cameroonian public opinion.³⁴ As a consequence, artistic talent received little support from families. Yet there were also exceptions. Salifou Lindou, for instance had his first contact with art, more concretely with Bamum artefacts, at his grandmother's home:

[J]e me souviens, dans la maison de ma grand-mère, il y avait sur les murs des lances et des sortes de tabliers qui contenaient des machettes,

qui servaient d'apparat lors des danses traditionnelles. Ma grand-mère, étant princesse bamoun, dansait devant le roi. (Il n'y avait que les filles du roi qui faisaient ça). Et donc je ne regardais pas ça comme un objet usuel, je regardais effectivement ça avec beaucoup de discernement et j'appréciais les formes, les motifs qui sont dessus.³⁵

As an adolescent, Lindou would also paint cultural events from the Fouban region in oil because Lindou's parents used to give him art manuals and art supplies as birthday gifts to acknowledge and encourage his talent.³⁶ In fact, Lindou's family is exceptional: they are well educated (his father was a medical doctor) and an offspring of a royal court in the Grassland. The other artists discussed here are mainly second-generation migrants to Douala and Yaoundé whose families belong to the lower urban middle class.³⁷ These families were at best indifferent towards visual art, a form of culture that was celebrated at upscale clubs and restaurants, and at the foreign cultural centres, which were strongholds of the White population.³⁸ Museum visits were not on the agenda of these families either. Although certain regional museums technically did exist, as did the building for the national museum in Yaoundé, even Salifou Lindou underscored in our interview that there weren't any museums in Cameroon during his childhood "and not even now".³⁹ Lindou's assessment speaks volumes about how accessible and popular these museums actually were.

Secondary schools did not balance this deficit. With the exception of certain private schools, arts education was still absent from the curricula in the 1990s.⁴⁰ Certain interviewees nevertheless did remember encounters with art within the context of formal education; some recalled happy moments in Kindergarten with pencil drawing and watercolours. Others received special attention from their teachers and classmates because of their exceptional drawing talents⁴¹ or found reproductions of famous artworks illustrating historical events or pieces of world literature in schoolbooks. Hervé Yamguem, for instance, told me:

Dans les livres d'histoire—non, plus dans les livres de littérature—il y avait des photographies liées à l'art. Disons que j'ai pris un livre qui parlait de la littérature du vingtième siècle et c'est là que j'ai connu, par exemple, le courant surréaliste.⁴²

Most importantly, the artists-to-be found likeminded peers in schools, as is clear from this passage by Achille Komguem:

[A]u secondaire j'ai rencontré Yamguen. On était au collège St. Michel ensemble et c'est quelqu'un qui était aussi un peu un fou dans son travail. Moi, j'étais toujours à copier des affiches, à faire des paysages, à faire des cartes de voeux, mais lui, il était déjà dans les travaux un peu surréalistes et tout. Et c'était aussi un poète. Et c'est lui qui a apporté une autre dimension à mon travail, et beaucoup de richesse. On a beaucoup discuté, et étant au collège on exposait ensemble.⁴³

Similarly, Leye has referred to the "Club Dessin et Peinture" at his highschool in Mbouda where he met schoolmates who were also enthusiastic about visual art.⁴⁴ Despite these anecdotes, it is safe to say that public primary and secondary schools failed to systematically foster artistic talent.

In 1992 and 1993 respectively, Cameroon witnessed the inauguration of two institutional branches that promised to henceforth provide specialised education in visual art, namely the aforementioned Institut de Formation Artistique (IFA), a privately run secondary school with an art focus, and the Fine Arts and Art History Section (APHA) at the humanities department of the University of Yaoundé.⁴⁵

The IFA was an extension of an existing college in Mbalmayo, a small town south of Yaoundé. A Christian NGO from Italy with a worldwide reach, the aforementioned Centro Orientamento Educativo (COE), had set up this technical college in 1982. In the 1990s, the COE introduced art classes and endowed this boarding school with a centre for applied arts, complete with a workshop and exhibition spaces for alumni who specialise in ceramics. Alongside regular courses preparing for the entrance qualification to higher education, the IFA pupils were made to attend classes in painting, sculpture, ceramics, and art history. Interestingly, the IFA's art history curriculum combines European and African art history. Lessons in African art history start with the Egyptian antiquity and continue to pre-colonial art styles from Western Africa (arts of the Sao, of the Cameroon Grassland, of Cameroon's South, of the kingdom of Congo, of the Tikar, the Myamwezi, Mijikenda, Maconde, and the Masai), to those of Central and East Africa (arts of the Dogons, Bambara, Baule, Senoufo, Ashanti, and Akan as well as arts from Nok, Ife, and Benin), besides touching upon the art that emerged in the course of the European-African encounters in the sixteenth century. I've been told that

Contemporary African Art has recently also been included in this curriculum.⁴⁶ However, only the youngest artists of the generation examined here could consider enrolling in the IFA in the 1990s, as the others were too old. Those who did, namely Achille Komeguem and Hervé Youmbi, had already obtained their “baccalauréat” at other schools. They decided to repeat the last three years of secondary school in order to extend their art skills at the IFA.⁴⁷

The courses of the second new training facility, the APHA at the University of Yaoundé, led and still lead up to the French-style, dual master degree, as well as providing teaching degrees. It was only possible to specialise in art history, aesthetics, and the anthropology of art. Studio art is only taught on the undergraduate level.⁴⁸ The Paris-trained Pascal Kenfack, whose remarkable approach to art didactics have already been discussed in the previous chapter, led most of these practical courses in the 1990s while Jean Paul Notué (1954-2011) was in charge of the theory classes at that time. Notué’s PhD in history of African art from Université Paris I qualified him to tutor master and doctoral theses with a focus on the history of African art and its aesthetics.⁴⁹

When assessing these training facilities, the majority of my interview partners considered the formal training provided by the IFA and the APHA to be an insufficient basis for a professional artistic career, regardless of whether they were alumni or external observers.⁵⁰ They have repeatedly stressed that the IFA does not provide university-level art education, but is rather a secondary school that offers general education.⁵¹ Accordingly, the aforementioned anthropologist Anshaire Aveved, who graduated from the IFA himself in the 1990s, found out that only ten percent of three hundred IFA pupils had opted for art-related careers, thus concluding that IFA alumni do not have professional advantages over artists who train in non-formal ways.⁵²

APHA received criticism for the prevalence of theoretical teachings,⁵³ which pushed advanced students into theory rather than into practice. This tendency is likely because the art department is part of the humanities department, and because Kenfack lacked the diploma to tutor master students in the visual arts.⁵⁴ Goddy Leye, who had considered continuing his studies in this department in 1993, but was not admitted due to his literature degree, saw further flaws in the APHA’s poor equipment and small staff:

Le problème c'est qu'il manque cruellement des enseignants, il manque des salles de classe pour des ateliers, il manque de bibliothèque, il manque donc d'équipement pédagogique pour que les étudiants peuvent avancer. Par exemple, un département comme celui-là, n'a pas un abonnement d'une revue d'art. Pour moi c'est grave! (...) [A]vec ces conditions là, on ne forme pas de grands artistes!⁵⁵

Achille Komguem, the only one amongst my interview partners to attend the IFA and to obtain all the diplomas available in the university's art section, also blamed the APHA's insufficient staff:

C'était une formation lâche parce qu'on n'avait pas des spécialistes. Les seules par là bas, c'étaient Jean Paul Notué et Pascal Kenfack.⁵⁶

My visit to the Fine Arts and Art History Section of the University of Yaoundé in 2011 largely confirmed the judgements of my interlocutors. Although I encountered an engaged teaching staff, the facilities were poor. The pavilion that once served as the students' studio on the campus was now heavily dilapidated and seemed on the brink of sliding down the hillside. Practical classes were therefore held in the humanities' main building, which was hardly equipped for this purpose. Unfortunately, the situation at the University of Yaoundé is no exception, since formal artistic training is also in a precarious state elsewhere on the African continent, as Lauré al-Samarai has noted:

[S]evere inadequacies characterize education generally and formal art/s education specifically: material resources are virtually absent; authoritarian educational systems often bear the hallmarks of colonialism; teaching staff are poorly trained; there are insufficient teaching materials; the state is disinterested;⁵⁷

Simon Njami, who has visited many art schools across Africa, has reached a similar conclusion.⁵⁸

It is therefore not surprising that the majority of my interviewees from the 1990 generation did not engage in formal artistic education within Cameroon. The financial burden of yearly enrolment fees and the cost of student accommodation outside of the family home were further deterrents.⁵⁹ However, two exceptions are worth mentioning. Formal education proved worthwhile for those who needed the respective degrees for teaching positions.⁶⁰ The careers of two women artists also owe a lot to the IFA and the APHA: artist Ginette Daleu (born 1977) and the art historian Ruth Afane Belinga (born 1976). Daleu attended the IFA and built a successful practice as a painter

in Mbalmayo.⁶¹ The family of Ruth Afane Belinga only allowed her to specialise in art because formal university studies had become available.⁶² Both testimonies support my hypothesis from the previous chapter that women can more easily access careers in the Cameroonian art world through formal education, provided that they can afford the school term and have the qualification that is needed for admission.⁶³ Despite these exceptions, it has been upheld that formal education mattered little for the professional development of artists in the 1990s, as did artists' families and general schooling. For this reason I will henceforth focus new types of non-formal training, which efficiently complemented the *Système de Grands Frères*.

Formative Encounters with Art Professionals from the Diaspora and the Former Imperial Countries

Visitors to Yaoundé in the 1990s were astonished by the eloquence of artists who had not studied. Leye remembered their questions:

‘Comment se fait-il qu’on ait des artistes qui s’expriment comme ça, qui parlent de l’art contemporain comme ça?’ Ils ne comprenaient pas.⁶⁴

In our interview, Leye attributed the artists' increasing discursive agency and their growing manual, technological, entrepreneurial, art-historical, and conceptual skilling to a range of piecemeal, one-off encounters with “experts”, i.e. academically trained artists or art professionals from abroad. Ruth Afane Belinga, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Achille Komguem, and Salifou Lindou have made similar arguments. Such formative encounters took place over the course of projects at doual’art, during the Paris-based cultural review *Revue Noire*'s preparations for a special edition of Cameroon, through conversations with the art-loving director of the Goethe-Institut, and within the framework of the aforementioned *ateliers*—a new teaching format that will be my next topic.

Short-term Contact Zones: *Ateliers* with Foreign Artists

The term “atelier” has two meanings amongst art professionals in Yaoundé and Douala. Besides denominating an artist's workplace or

studio, the term also designates purposefully organised group tutorials of limited duration. *Ateliers* of the latter sort are held en bloc and are commonly led by practising artists, but they differ in lengths and intensity and are open to various forms of instructional interaction. For instance, an *atelier* can consist of an artist talk, a guest artist's presentation of his or her working method followed by a discussion, or it can be a week-long introduction to a specific artistic technique given by experienced practitioners. An *atelier* can also take the form of a collaboratively realised artwork or an exhibition project. In general, *ateliers* foster exchange amongst the participants and privilege practical over theoretical forms of mediation.⁶⁵ For the sake of clarity, I will here focus on those *ateliers* involving a number of visual artists from Cameroon and one or two visiting artists from abroad.⁶⁶ The organisers of these *ateliers* departed from the assumption of an uneven distribution of skilling amongst the local and the foreign artists and hence they would finance the foreigners' visits and pay them a fee in return for their readiness to share their skills.

The *ateliers* were introduced in the late 1980s in Cameroon. Antecedents were the so-called "cours", i.e. periodic afternoon classes taught by artists at the foreign cultural centres. Articles in *Cameroon Tribune* suggest that the participants in these "cours" used to pursue art as a leisure activity. At the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé, the turn towards professional training accompanied a policy change. In 1983, the institute began to organise seminars taught by visiting professionals from Germany, which at first would only address journalists and media professionals. In the official communication, this novel engagement in professional skill-enhancement was presented as a strategy to establish reciprocal collaboration between Cameroon and Germany in domains of "shared interest", namely in the fields of medicine, energy, law, sport, urbanism, ecology, and journalism. The learning experiences engendered in this way were meant to "serve both sides".⁶⁷ The artist *ateliers* also seem to inscribe themselves into this political logic. In fact, the first *atelier* at the Goethe-Institut was organised in 1988 on the occasion of the agreement for enhanced cultural collaboration between Cameroon and Germany—also known as "Deutsch-Kamerunisches Kulturabkommen".⁶⁸ The following article gives an idea about this agreement:

L'Allemagne fédérale a abandonné l'idée de propager seulement la

culture allemande. La nouvelle orientation, c'est la promotion d'un esprit de dialogue sincère, dans une perspective de découverte mutuelle. C'est dire la portée de l'accord, qui aura un effet stimulateur sur l'enseignement supérieur et les bourses, les stages de perfectionnement, la recherche, les tournées artistiques, les expositions, avec possibilités d'extension sur la télévision et les autres échanges a caractère culturel.⁶⁹

In the framework of this first *atelier*, twelve emerging and established artists from Yaoundé were invited to the Goethe-Institut to explore the medium of xylography under the tutelage of Gloria Umlauf. Notably, their results were exhibited at the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, rather than in an art museum.⁷⁰ The next *atelier* took place in 1990⁷¹ and many more were to follow.

According to my knowledge, no comparable systematic export of professional expertise from Cameroon to Germany has taken place—whether in art or any other professional field. It could therefore be maintained that the introduction of professional training at the Goethe-Institut restored the unilateral epistemological flows from Germany to Cameroon that had been typical of colonial education and of development aid.⁷² Arguably, this neo-colonial touch in the new strategies of cultural diplomacy matched European nations' concerns to secure political spheres of interest on the African continent after the end of the Cold War and at a moment of shifting global alliances, as I mentioned earlier regarding France's foreign politics. The fact that the Centre Culturel Français started to implement similar programmes at the same time further sustains this hypothesis.⁷³

The political motives behind the introduction of the *ateliers* will remain of interest throughout this section, but the reception of the *ateliers* by local artists is even more relevant for my argument. Despite criticism about their selective nature, it is evident from an article published in 1990 that the Cameroonian participants welcomed this new didactic format early on and that they even fostered hopes that the foreign cultural centres would provide permanent art classes.⁷⁴ In 2010, my field research proved that artists in Yaoundé and Douala continued to value the *ateliers* because they efficiently helped artists gain exposure to foreign art knowledge and to new genres. When looking back on the 1990s during my interview, Leye summarised:

Dans les années 1990, la plupart des connaissances des artistes viennent des ateliers, des séminaires[.]⁷⁵

And what is more, these *ateliers* also helped to build transnational networks and to extend the professional reach of artists beyond Cameroon, as Ruth Afane Belinga has stressed:

[C]'est comme ça que beaucoup ont gardé des contacts avec ces professionnels, qui parlaient aussi de nous à l'étranger, c'est comme ça que beaucoup ont commencé à travailler.⁷⁶

The *atelier* tutors were foreigners, indeed, but almost all of those that I could identify were Frenchmen and Germans, a fact that hints at an unsettling persistence of colonial patterns in the roles of teachers and learners in the *ateliers*. Due to this observation it appears fruitful to operate once more with Pratt's concept of the contact zones so as to explore how the asymmetric power structures affected communication and learning in the *ateliers*. Due to the importance that my Cameroonian interlocutors accorded to these encounters, I have tried to reconstruct a chronicle of the *ateliers* of the 1990s, complete with the organisational and financial alliances that facilitated each of the them. However, the archival situation thwarted this plan.⁷⁷ In the end, I could only accomplish an incomplete list of *ateliers* of the 1990s, which privileges the programmes of the Goethe-Institut and thus mirrors the German bias in my database. The selection of *ateliers* that will be discussed in detail in the following pages makes no attempt to hide this bias.

In 1994, a recommendation by German curator Udo Kittelmann prompted the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé to extend an invitation to the emerging German artist Tobias Rehberger (born 1966), who had graduated from the art academy in Frankfurt in 1992. Rehberger chose to develop new artwork based on his onsite impressions during the fourteen days of his stay—notably his first trip to Africa. In order to support him, the Goethe-Institute asked Pascale Marthine Tayou, who was the same age, to accompany Rehberger and develop an exhibition with him.⁷⁸ In this exhibition, Tayou presented “a number of assemblages with Western puppets that he had Africanized”,⁷⁹ as Rehberger put it, which I will return to later, while the German visitor conceived of a series of six chair-like sculptural objects that has since become a well-known part of his oeuvre.⁸⁰

In order to understand the dynamics of this *atelier*, it is worthwhile to retrace the creative process that resulted in *Sechs Stühle*. Rehberger told me that he began by making sketches from memory

of six iconic design chairs.⁸¹ Tayou then introduced Rehberger to various craftsmen in Yaoundé who built the chairs according to the artist's sketches within a week with the means at hand. Rehberger hoped to visualise the dynamics of cultural translation and to "make misunderstandings productive"⁸² through this collaborative, process-oriented approach. As expected, the remakes differed considerably from their far-away models due to the three-fold translation process: Rehberger's drafting from memory, Tayou's mediation, and manual fabrication by craftsmen to whom these design classics meant little. An installation shot shows the chair sculptures casually positioned in a half circle at the Goethe-Institut. (Fig 28.1) According to Rehberger, many visitors mistook them for furniture and sat on them in order to view Tayou's work. This was an unanticipated misunderstanding that matched Rehberger's growing interest for the intersections of art and design.⁸³

The Goethe-Institut scheduled an encounter between Rehberger and a number of local artists for the day following the opening, an *atelier* moderated by the institute's director Peter Anders.⁸⁴ The language barrier and Rehberger's escalating typhus and malaria infections explain why the German artist recalls little of the respective discussion, except that it was dominated by a theatre piece that had monopolised the attention of his Cameroonian colleagues at that time. Although the *atelier* was not necessarily memorable for Rehberger for the reasons outlined above, he has remained in touch with Tayou.⁸⁵ Peter Anders considered Rehberger's visit inspirational, arguing that

[Rehberger] addressed the issue of tradition and its translation into the here and now, while also questioning notions of 'craft'.⁸⁶

Indeed, Rehberger's *Sechs Stühle* addressed the veneration of design classics as a tradition that is unstable and particular to a certain context, namely to European and U.S. Modernism. To Rehberger, this cultural heritage is a resource whose authority can be questioned by means of art. Anders deemed this approach instructional because he had observed that artists in Yaoundé and Douala were looking for ways how to "translate traditions into an updated alphabet"⁸⁷ around that time. And it might be attributed to Rehberger's visit, as well as other encounters with the postmodernist zeitgeist, that certain Cameroonian artists started to manipulate and reinterpret the meanings of historically charged artefacts and found images in similar ways in



Fig 28

28.1 Tobias Rehberger, *Sechs Stühle*, 1994, various dimensions, various materials, Goethe-Institut, Yaoundé (1994).

28.2 Tobias Rehberger, *Sechs Stühle*, 1994, Zentrum für Gegenwartskunst im Glaspalast, Augsburg (2006).

the years that followed. Leye's aforementioned installation points in this direction. Arguably, the encounter in the contact zone proved reciprocally rewarding in the case of Rehberger's *atelier* because it addressed the twists of translation and the relative authority of the heritage of the imperial cultures.

The ghosts of colonialism haunted the next *atelier* I will discuss. Despite his characteristic wit and long career as an academic tutor, working in the contact zone proved to be a challenge rather than an inspiration for the German Neo-Dadaist Timm Ulrichs (born 1940).⁸⁸ Ulrichs stayed in Yaoundé for a week in July 1995, acting as a mediator for a travelling exhibition about the historical Dada movement organised by the German foreign educational program Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen.⁸⁹ According to Timm Ulrichs, the historical artworks were poorly reproduced for this show in the first place and had been damaged over the course of their long world tour, which began in the 1960s. For instance, Man Ray's legendary *Object to be Destroyed* (1923) was lacking the only artistic add-on to the ready-made metronome when it arrived in Yaoundé: a cut-out photograph of an eye belonging to Man Ray's girlfriend. As a connoisseur of the Dada movement, Ulrichs disapproved strongly of the show's dilapidated state, all the more so since presenting this shabby cultural export to African viewers amounted to a chauvinist gesture in his view.⁹⁰

This reflection motivated Ulrichs to take a critical stance towards the Dada exhibition and to start his introductory speech with a reference to the ridiculing perception of African languages in Hugo Ball's sound poem "Karawane" (1916). In fact, Ulrichs also remembered having done so in order to prevent local artists from "simply appropriating" Dada art without acknowledging its colonialist, racist bias. A local theatre group's performance of Schwitters's "Ursonate" (1922-32) during the opening might have fuelled this concern of the visitor,⁹¹ but a typical prejudice resonates in this reasoning of the German artist, too; namely, that of African artists' uncritical epigonism of Modern Art. Evelyn Nicodemus is one of the authors who have criticised the racist implications of this prejudice.⁹² Ulrichs' judgement about the studios he visited in Yaoundé points in the same direction. He could only make out "deplorably syncretic" imitations of European artworks, such as "Cubist paintings on the cloth of used

coffee sacks”, and artistic references to what he considered “an almost forgotten tribal art”.⁹³ Tayou’s assemblages were “artistically not impressive” to Ulrichs either, “because Schwitters had done this already in the 1920s”.⁹⁴ This derogatory stance unveils Ulrichs’ uncritical attachment to the linear narration of Western art history and its canon. Obviously, his belief in Modernism’s universality and in the imperative for artists to innovate within its narrow confinements prevented Ulrichs from taking a deeper look at the work in the studios.

Although he had to communicate tooth and nail, and with the help of a translator,⁹⁵ Ulrichs also presented his own practice during two evening events at the Goethe-Institut through a slide presentation. And despite the tactful concern of the Goethe-Institut’s staff, he also opted to show his series *Kunst und Leben* (1978-91)—a collection of thirty found pornographic images featuring sex scenes in interiors decorated with classics of Modern Art. Ulrichs takes an ironic stance on Modern Art’s elitism in this photo series, thus assuming a criticality towards a canon of which he obviously considered the local artists incapable. And because he had underestimated his audience, he was surprised and relieved when a lively discussion followed at the end of this *atelier*.⁹⁶

This underestimation of his audience had yet another origin; Ulrichs felt uncomfortable about the sharp economic inequality between the local artists and himself. By splitting the fee that the Goethe-Institut had accorded to him amongst the participants in his *atelier*, Ulrichs sought to counterbalance his financial superiority as a Westerner with a tenured position in Germany.⁹⁷ But he continued to feel over-privileged upon noticing, for example, that the local artists hesitated to accept his dinner invitation at the restaurant in the hotel that the Goethe-Institut had booked for him, which was the best hotel in town.⁹⁸ Summarily speaking, the dynamics of the contact zone hampered Ulrichs’ communication with his colleagues in Yaoundé considerably.⁹⁹ And my data suggests that Ulrichs was not the only one to be challenged. Like him, the majority of the atelier tutors that I could identify were travelling to Africa for the first time.¹⁰⁰ They were affected by the hot climate, if not suffering from infections, as well as by incidents of criminal aggression and police repression.¹⁰¹ Moreover, they were poorly prepared to meet their colleagues, as there was hardly any information about Cameroon’s or Africa’s coeval

culture available in Europe at that time. It must be retained that these shortcomings importantly reduced the foreigners' capacity to intervene in meaningful ways.

According to Pratt's theory encounters in the contact zones tend to engender forms of autoethnographic narrations. By means of these narrations "people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them"¹⁰². The *ateliers* were no exception in this respect, as my next and last example will show. In 1996, the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé hosted Georg Jappe (1936-2007), an art critic and teacher of aesthetics at the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg. In 1989, Jappe had curated the travelling exhibition *Ressource Kunst: Die Elemente neu gesehen*.¹⁰³ This exhibition documented artistic reflections on the earth's finite resources, which coincided with the emergence of the environmental movement in the Germanophone realm in the 1980s. Artistic engagements with natural processes, so-called "Naturallianzen", were recurrent amongst the works in Jappe's selection, besides better-known works from Land Art, Arte Povera, and performance art.¹⁰⁴ At the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé, Jappe displayed documentation of this show through annotated, large-scale photographic reproductions. The curator also held a four-day "seminar on contemporary art"¹⁰⁵ for artists in order to introduce them to the exhibition topic.

The German sculptor and performer Angelika Thomas (born 1955) accompanied Jappe to Yaoundé in order to head an *atelier* within the framework of *Resource Art in Cameroon*. She had been involved in *Ressource Kunst* as part of an artist collective. The artists Mpah Dooh, Leye, Lindou, Kenfack, and Sumegné participated in Thomas' *atelier* and were particularly interested in the installation genre. However, rather than taking the lead, Thomas arranged for ten days of joint discussions and working sessions. These gatherings were geared towards realising new artworks in the spirit of *Ressource Kunst*.¹⁰⁶ The results featured alongside Jappe's photo panels and were presented in the institute's yard, which the technician, playwright, and light artist Richard Pipa had illuminated for the opening night. Leye, for instance, had burnt a number of videotapes and 16 mm film reels and had arranged their amorphous leftovers in such a way that they formed the Egyptian ankh symbol on the ground. (Fig 29) The artist statement on the handout suggests that Leye's untitled installation



Fig 29
Goddy Leye installing *Sans Titre*, 1996,
for *Resource Art in Cameroon* (1996), Goethe-Institut, Yaoundé.



Fig 30
Salifou Lindou, *La Vitrine*, 1997, various dimensions,
various materials. Presented in *L'Art entre la Tradition
et la Globalisation*, Goethe-Institut, Yaoundé.

sought to establish a link to the realm of the ancestors by means of transformed technology.¹⁰⁷ Next to Leye's work, Pascal Kenfack presented the installation *Dernier Cri & Voyage sans Retour*, a group of humanoid sculptures made of logs, calabashes, and metal chains that referenced the pan-African experience of the slave trade.¹⁰⁸ In the latter, Thomas found a generous informant with regard to what she calls animist traditions. Apparently, these conversations inspired Thomas' adaptation of wooden mortars as legs for large steel plates that she decorated with vernacular symbols. She inaugurated her installation with a "ritual fire".¹⁰⁹ While none of these artworks are preserved, a video documentary of the festive opening of *Resource Art Cameroon* conveys a sense of the astonishment of the audience in view of this dramatically staged and spiritually imbued celebration of the aesthetic afterlife of recycled items.¹¹⁰

One year later, in February 1997, Thomas continued the collaboration with almost the same group of artists, this time accompanying the seminar "L'art entre la Tradition et la Globalisation" by the German art historian Lydia Haustein. A program leaflet suggests that Haustein intended to think through the relationships of tradition, religiosity, and modernity with the artists, as well as through their attitude towards the globalising art market, while Thomas' *atelier* was dedicated to the development of artworks on the seminar's topics.¹¹¹ In the conclusive exhibition at the Goethe-Institut, Thomas presented an installative performance that placed her body in the centre of attention,¹¹² while Leye, Kenfack, Lindou, Sumegn , and  mile Youmbi (born 1969) each realised indoor installations.¹¹³

Leaving aside Leye's documentation of his first interventions in public space,¹¹⁴ I will discuss the performative installation *La Vitrine* by Salifou Lindou (Fig 30) in detail because this example demonstrates best how a Cameroonian artist visualised the powers at play in the contact zone of Thomas' *atelier*. For this installation, Lindou has put together two rough wooden tables and added a worn-out parasol in a niche thus referencing the minimal equipment needed for a market stand in Cameroon. A scrap of wood mounted on the front of the table bore the English inscription "Way In" in bold white letters. The signage evoked the spatial setting of a shop, although viewers could only approach the installation from the front. The counter displayed a painted wooden mask and two differently sized wood-carved statues,

as well as several portable kerosene lamps, all of them objects that Lindou had collected or purchased for this installation. An expressive abstract charcoal drawing leaned against the parasol's handle. Lindou's performance was to silently pose on a camping chair behind the counter with one of the lamps lit.¹¹⁵ Despite the title's suggestion, the installation did not include a glass cabinet to protect and highlight the exhibited objects.

When I inquired about interpretations of *La Vitrine* in 2013, Lindou suggested that he had wanted to experimentally reduce the gallery to a simple market stand in order to criticise the "speculative apparatus by means of which the ancestral culture is globally marketed".¹¹⁶ As stand-ins of this culture, the artist had placed the mask and the wooden statues on a rough table like any other merchandise. Together, these elements suggest a reading of the installation as a critique of the indifference of Cameroonian politics and society towards the objects of the cultural heritage, which causes these objects to fall prey to corrupt salesmen. Yet it is noteworthy that it was the artist himself who performed as the trader—and I shall maintain that Lindou has reflected on his own biased role as a cultural broker by doing so. Lindou's following remark supports this argument:

[C'était] une période où comme tout autre artiste africain, je m'interrogeais beaucoup sur l'apport et la place qui est la mienne sur le marché de l'art global.¹¹⁷

Considering installation art's distinct ability to reflect on the specificity of its context,¹¹⁸ it could be argued that *La Vitrine* drew attention to the Goethe-Institut as site of exchange. In this light, Lindou's performance appears as a self-critical and ambivalent reflection on the relationship of his own artistic practice to historical artefacts belonging to his cultural heritage on one hand and with the art of the foreign *atelier* tutors on the other.

In sum, the traces of the shows made under Thomas' tutorship suggest that Thomas encouraged participants in her *atelier* to address aspects of their cultural heritage. Arguably, the shamanic interest manifest in Thomas' art practice also played out in her tutorship and the theoreticians who accompanied her similarly promoted a return to nature and to their cultural origins. Hence, it seems as if the preferences and paradigms that the German visitors projected onto the Cameroonian context motivated some of the autoethnographic

approaches that resulted in the artistic evocations of the slave trade, of the ancestor cult, or historical artefacts. It remains to be said that the ways in which the Cameroonian artists adopted installation, performance, and performative installation¹¹⁹ also point to a process of transculturation. In fact, the *atelier* participants appropriated only those aspects of these genres that appeared useful and socially acceptable to them. They did not embrace performance art's potential to address body politics, as far as I know, although Thomas' performance had introduced them to this type of work. Religious convictions might have also played a role here.¹²⁰

Summarily speaking, the preceding examples prove that the *ateliers* offered Cameroonian artists access to new artistic genres and to transmedial, conceptual approaches, from which they selected what was useful to them. This access was granted by artist talks, by collaborative working processes and exhibitions with European artists at the foreign cultural centres, and complemented by studio visits, joint city tours, and collective meals. As contact zones, the *ateliers* gave way to processes of transculturation and to the creation of autoethnographic work. It has also been addressed that language issues, misunderstandings, and prejudices complicated the cross-continental artistic exchange in the *ateliers*, as much as economic inequalities. Since the artists from the North only made short-term visits, which for the most part were not repeated,¹²¹ most visitors were confined to a superficial perception of the context. Continued exchange with Cameroonian colleagues occurred rarely, all the more so since the latter had no personal steady telephone lines or mailboxes, which hampered the transcontinental communication in addition to the language gap.

When compared to other types of art education, the selective nature of the *ateliers* appears as their predominant shortcoming. Yet this characteristic also made the *ateliers* complementary to the *Système de Grands Frères*, as the *grands frères* provided a continuously available resource of advice to the emerging generation. In fact, both Kenfack and Komegné are said to have been supportive of their *petits frères*' exposure to the advice of external experts.¹²² Before we move on, it remains to be mentioned that the Cameroonian participants in the *ateliers* used to receive remuneration for their travel expense and accommodation, as well as small per diems to encourage their attendance.¹²³ This aspect differentiates the *ateliers* from formal

education and from the international workshops, both of which require the learners' financial investment, and reminds us that the *ateliers* had originated in the framework of cultural diplomacy and development cooperation. The next section will show that the foreign cultural centres were not the only ones to provide such programs.

The NGO doual'art:

Educating Artists with Development Funds

As mentioned in the first chapter, the Smouldering Years also saw the emergence of a nonprofit organisation in Douala that has since risen to international acclaim: doual'art. While doual'art's fame is primarily due to its long-term investment in improving the quality of life in the city of Douala through public art, I shall focus on the organisation's important role in training artists in the 1990s, as well as the role played by European politics—namely insofar as doual'art relied on development resources for this facet of its programming.

Doual'art's founders are Marilyn Douala Bell (born 1957), the granddaughter of King Rudolph Manga Bell (1873-1914), who is famous for leading the resistance against the German resettlement plans for the Duala, and her Alsace-born husband Didier Schaub (1952-2014). Douala Bell and Schaub met in Paris while studying socio-economy (Douala Bell) and art history, philosophy, and economy (Schaub).¹²⁴ In 1986, they took up residence in Douala Bell's hometown. The couple worked for several years for an agricultural NGO¹²⁵ and the marketing department of the country's leading brewery, respectively, and volunteered for the aforementioned association CASAD. In 1991, the very year of the constitutional reform that granted the right to associate, they registered doual'art with Yves-Jacques Cabassot, who was then director of the Centre Culturel Français.¹²⁶ The primary goal of doual'art was to foster "new urban practices in African cities"¹²⁷ as an agent in development cooperation. An early funding partner was the Institut Régional de la Coopération Décentralisés (IRCOD), an Alsace-based association coordinating European, French, regional, and communal organisations' development activities in a decentralised way.¹²⁸ Doual'art has since maintained and specified its development focus.¹²⁹ Douala Bell also works as a consultant with international organisations like the

European Union or the World Bank in this respect, partly to help financing doual'art.¹³⁰ We need to retain that the funders' European education, their ties to a preeminent family in Douala, as well as their transnational professional networks were important seeded assets for doual'art, which was set up during a period when "the NGOs became a growth industry, on a continent where most economic sectors were in decline".¹³¹

Doual'art worked without a fixed venue at first, and subsequently from a small office in Akwa, Douala's central business neighbourhood. During its early years, the NGO organised outdoor concerts and theatre performances and installed billboards that raised historical awareness.¹³² Yet the founders soon identified visual art as a useful tool to pursue the NGO's development mission, all the more so since it fit Schaub's academic background. But in order to incorporate visual art into its programming, the NGO saw fit to provide the local artists with training because they lacked exposure to art, as Schaub recalled in my interview:

Les artistes n'avaient pas vu beaucoup d'oeuvres d'art. Ils avaient vu très, très peu. Celles de leurs collègues, les trucs qu'on voit un peu partout, reproduits dans les magazines ou autres. Mais ils n'avaient aucune possibilité de se situer dans ce qui se fait aujourd'hui, en Afrique ou ailleurs.¹³³

According to Douala Bell and Schaub, Douala's artists were mainly busy painting vistas of the Wouri pont and of Mount Cameroun when doual'art was founded, as well as fabricating portraits and depictions of what Schaub has called the "glorified village".¹³⁴ Koko Komegné was an exception, as he pursued an art practice for its own sake rather than being after quick sales.¹³⁵ Under Schaub's guidance as artistic director, the NGO started to take measures to "break the hegemony of airport art, to encourage artists to become active outside of their studios, since they did not know each other, nor did the local public know them" and to thus "compensate for the absence of an art school".¹³⁶

Although a close collaborator of doual'art from the beginning, Komegné has vividly confronted this description of Douala's artists in my interviews. Instead, he pointed to their collective activities during the 1980s and to the murals with which he had decorated the Centre Universitaire de Dschang in 1987. With regard to the latter, he

argued that public art was not introduced in Cameroon by doual'art:

On n'a pas commencé de peindre des murs avec doual'art! On a fait des fresques avant, aussi dans l'espace public!¹³⁷

This objection is worth considering because the talk of an “empty space”¹³⁸ seems to be a founding myth of doual'art. This tabula-rasa story might have also taken hold because it helped to legitimate the NGO's art projects in terms of fundraising. The funding competition amongst so-called independent organisations operating in the culture sector is notorious, also in the literature on culture in Africa.¹³⁹ On the other hand, Komegné has stated that all of his companions from the 1980s had abandoned their visual art practice in favour of commercial careers in advertising by 1990.¹⁴⁰ Presumably, the artist networks from the 1980s had loosened by the time doual'art was founded.

Doual'art's activities with regard to the skill enhancement of artists can be roughly split into two strands: practical training and art-historical study. *Ateliers* with foreigners were amongst them, such as the new-media *atelier* “L'art et l'informatique s'affichent en ville” of 1992. Its tutor Etienne Delacroix was interested in access to consumer technology in developing countries¹⁴¹ and assisted Koko Komegné and Joël Mpah Dooh (born 1956) in realising large colourful panels for Douala's public space by means of computer graphics. After the *atelier*, Komegné's panel with the title *Musiki* was installed on Douala's highly frequented roundabout IV (Fig 31), while Joël Mpah Dooh's work found a place in Bonanjo.¹⁴² The *atelier* “La Chaise” followed in 1994, which was led by Robert Stephan and Jean-Luc Tallinger, two artists from Alsace working with assemblages and installations.¹⁴³

Doual'art also organised *ateliers* without foreigners in order to enhance exchange amongst Cameroonian artists and to provide them with a source of income, as they had not been spared from the crass devaluation of the currency in 1994. For instance, in 1993, doual'art commissioned a group of artists to paint 150 meters of murals onto an outside wall of the popular market Marché Madagascar.¹⁴⁴ Komegné is considered the artistic director of this *atelier*, which became known as “Doual'art Pop” and in which he involved apprentices of local advertisement studios.¹⁴⁵ Other participants included the academically trained artist René Tchébétchou from Yaoundé, as well as Kouo Eyango, Joël Mpah Dooh, and Aimé Tallo.¹⁴⁶ Another measure to



Fig 31
Koko Komegné, *Musiki*, 1992, adhesive plastic
covered by plexiglas. Carrefour IV, Douala.



Fig 32
Joseph Sumeigné, *La Nouvelle Liberté*, 1996, steel sceleton, duroplastic plastics, copper wire, iron, caoutchouc, aluminium, mirrors, bottles, pots, 12 m x 5 m (diameter of socle). Rond Point de Deido, Douala.

alleviate the effects of the economic crisis was the foundation of a purchasing association for artist supplies, which Doual'art initiated between 1994 and 1996 because artist supplies were no longer affordable and local dealers only offered watercolours.¹⁴⁷

Doual'art's best-known public commission was also realised during the same period. In 1996, Joseph Francis Sumegn e finalised his monumental statue assembled from industrial products, *La Nouvelle Libert e*. (Fig 32) As the political impact and appearance of this iconic artwork have been thoroughly discussed elsewhere,¹⁴⁸ it suffices to mention here that Doual'art arranged free accommodation and monthly remuneration for Sumegn e's two-year long working period in Douala and that the NGO thus established standards in the production of major art projects in Cameroon, in addition to developing a singular position as private patron for art with a social or critical dimension.¹⁴⁹ Considering the scale of *La Nouvelle Libert e* and the ambition that was needed to privately finance this work, Patrice Nganang has also spoken of this statue as a symbol of the victory of private initiatives in the field of culture, which the state had abandoned.¹⁵⁰

In addition to facilitating practical learning and organising commissions, a second strand of Doual'art's training programme endeavoured to familiarise artists with art history and to expose them to recent artwork made beyond Cameroon's frontiers. These educational measures occurred in the period after 1995, when Doual'art had relocated to Place du Gouvernement in Douala's historic centre. The designer and architect Dani le Diwouta-Kotto had helped to outfit an ample exhibition space with a cafeteria and a loft into a renovated building situated in a lush garden next to the former palace of Rudolf Douala Manga Bell.¹⁵¹ This venue was baptised Espace Doual'Art. (Fig 33) Since then Espace Doual'art has hosted the most experimental exhibition projects in Cameroon and played a pivotal role in introducing new media work in this country, such as the video installation *Away* (1994-95) by the then emerging German artist Pietro Sanguineti (born 1965).¹⁵² (Fig 34) This installation was part of the group exhibition *Around and Around* that was presented at Espace Doual'art in 1995 and curated by two Germans, the artist, composer, and gallerist Achim Kubinski and gallerist Peter Herrmann.¹⁵³ *Around and Around* combined recent work by European and American

artists like Haim Steinbach, Joseph Kosuth, Martin Kippenberger, and Pietro Sanguineti—all represented by Galerie Kubinski—with artwork from the stocks of Galerie Peter Herrmann. Herrmann's gallery, which specialises in art from Africa, contributed works by contemporaries like the Nigeria-born sculptor Sokari Douglas Camp, the painter Chéri Samba from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Cameroonian Spee Nzante, alongside historical work by anonymous masters, such as a Nimba mask from Guinea.¹⁵⁴ By juxtaposing the creations of artists from different generations and continents, the curators conjured a new era of “cross-continental fertilisation”¹⁵⁵, and because the list of participants was meant to grow with each station of the travelling exhibition, Doual'art could arrange for Pascale Marthine Tayou and for Danièle Diwouta-Kotto to be included.¹⁵⁶ Besides introducing Tayou (and indirectly Leye) to their later gallerist Peter Herrmann, the exhibition *Around and Around* is said to have familiarised Cameroonian artists of the emergent generation with the diversity of artistic expression in Contemporary Art.¹⁵⁷

Due to such events, Espace Doual'art became the primary point of reference in Douala for young artists. They were not only welcome to present their first shows in the NGO's generous exhibition space, but they would also find important infrastructural means at the new venue like a mailbox and a steady telephone line. Doual'art's garden café provided a comfortable meeting place¹⁵⁸ and the organisation's founders also offered access to their art books. Today officially named Bibliothèque-médiathèque de l'Espace Doual'art, this special library resides in a loft on top of the exhibition space and is accessible for registered readers only. Based on the documents that were gathered there by the mid-1990s, Schaub offered periodic art history lectures for a time, so-called “cycles d'initiation”. He made sure to treat Western-style art history from antiquity onwards on an equal footing with the history of African art, and to place special emphasis on Africa's contribution to global art history when preparing these lectures.¹⁵⁹ Apparently, Schaub also edited handouts for the lectures, which circulated amongst the artists. After receiving photocopies of these documents from a friend who had attended the lectures, Justine Gaga, for instance, learned that Espace Doual'art was a place where she could enhance her skills.¹⁶⁰ Another periodic educational program for artists was introduced at Espace Doual'art in 1996,¹⁶¹ namely weekly



Fig 33

33.1 Espace Doual'art, garden façade in 2010.

33.2 Espace Doual'art, exhibition hall.



Fig 34
Pietro Sanguinetti, *Away*, 1994/1995, 4 VHS videotapes
(2:30 to 3:10 min), four monitors,
two installation shots of *Around and Around*, 1995,
Espace Doual'art.

screening sessions of video documentaries and art videos. Schaub has characterised the so-called “Vidéos de Jeudi” as follows:

[C]haque jeudi après-midi on visionait des vidéos, portraits d’artistes ou des vidéos de création, et on se donnait un temps de parole pour discuter sur ce que nous venions de voir d’une bonne heure, voire plus quelque fois.¹⁶²

The “Vidéos de Jeudi” continued for almost two years until other projects pushed them off doual’art’s agenda.¹⁶³ Notably, this programme emerged at a time when the economic crisis had forced all the cinemas to close down.¹⁶⁴ Summarily speaking, doual’art granted young artists exposure to new genres like public art and video art and access to critically assessed art-historical knowledge, while also involving them into art projects as young professionals. The diversity of the learning experiences that doual’art made possible is unparalleled.

In fact, doual’art was a forerunner in combining development concerns with culture on the African continent. According to Lauré al-Samarai, UNESCO had started to promote this idea in the 1980s, but it only became a ruling paradigm of its funding policies regarding culture in Africa after 2001. The same author has underlined that “new concentrated dependencies” of African cultural actors from “Western spheres of influence”¹⁶⁵ have resulted of this alignment of culture to development goals. And Lauré al-Samarai has also addressed the colonisation of the norms that define African culture policies. The anthropologist and art critic Iolanda Pensa has furthermore stressed that art created within the boundaries of the development paradigm was henceforth measured by its problem-solving capacities rather than by its aesthetic values.¹⁶⁶ Achille Mbembe has taken this argument further:

Most Western donor agencies come to Africa with a simplistic idea of what ‘development’ is all about. They consider Africa to be a zone of emergency, a fertile ground for humanitarian interventions. The future is not part of their theory of Africa when such a theory exists. Africa is the land of never-ending present and instant, where today and now matter more than tomorrow, let alone the distant future.¹⁶⁷

Mbembe considers this shortsighted attitude incommensurate with the potential of art, as his continuation shows:

The function of art is to subsume and transcend the instant; to open horizons for the not-yet.¹⁶⁸

So how does this argument play out in the NGO we're looking at? Certainly, doual'art had to comply with the structural logic of the development field in order to qualify for support, for instance by operating in the form of short-termed projects, by commissioning artworks in response to pragmatic needs, and by orienting its projects towards the development goals that its partners in Europe had defined. However, the detournement of these development resources towards projects that facilitate artistic training could also be considered exceptionally productive in terms of the goal to "open horizons for the not-yet" in a sustainable way.

While doual'art's place in the context of my subject must be valued as outstanding, I would risk creating another tabula-rasa myth if I didn't note a gap in my research here. In order to give a full picture of the role that private initiatives played in building artistic careers in the 1990s, it is necessary to mention at least two more initiatives: Galérie MAM and Africréa. Marème Malong, a Senegalese expatriate married to a Cameroonian, is Galérie MAM's founder. In 1995, for instance, this gallery hosted the exhibition *Tele Miso* ("open your eyes" in the Duala language), which was curated by Komegné.¹⁶⁹ *Tèle Miso* included works by Mpah Doo, Bang, Lindou, Youmbi, and Yamguen and thus helped to introduce the new generation of artists in Douala. However, time-constraints and this gallery's reorientation during the period of my field trips made it impossible to conduct research with the necessary historical depth at this venue.¹⁷⁰ The second noteworthy private initiative has its base in Yaoundé. In 1988, Maljam Njami opened his gallery-cum-residence Africréa,¹⁷¹ where he bolstered the career of Alioum Moussa (born 1977), among other artists.¹⁷² Maljam Njami's family is originally from the Littoral region, but he grew up in Paris.¹⁷³ In the late 1990s he left the diaspora to counter "a lack of possibilities for Africa to look at itself",¹⁷⁴ as he put it. It is remarkable that Malong and Njami were also new to their respective art scenes when they took up their work in the 1990s, just like the founders of doual'art. Another commonality that links these organisations is how their founders each fuelled their commitment with their personal networks, skills, and financial resources. The ensemble of these private initiatives sustains Nganang's diagnosis of the "final victory of the individual enterprise"¹⁷⁵ in the 1990s and the defeat of government-funded cultural politics.

Revue Noire No. 13: Récup-Art as Title Story

An issue of a foreign magazine provided an important addition to the learning occasions facilitated by doual'art and by the *ateliers* in the mid-1990s: the special edition on Cameroon's recent art and culture by *Revue Noire* that came out in summer 1994. While *Revue Noire's* editorial board was based in Paris, one of the four editors has Cameroonian roots and was therefore well positioned to expand the arts dialogue in favour of a new generation of artists. His name is Simon Njami and I have cited him in the previous chapter regarding the *Système de Grands Frères*. He is also the younger brother of the above-mentioned Maljam Njami and was the main editor responsible for the Cameroon issue.

As an "international magazine for contemporary African art" published regularly between 1991 and 2000, the editorial remit of *Revue Noire* was to "challenge reductive exotic and ethnographic approaches to African culture"¹⁷⁶ by presenting aspects of contemporary urban cultures in Africa on the pages of a glossy, large-sized, richly illustrated magazine designed in a distinctly Parisian style. The editors consciously chose to abandon antiquated dichotomies like distinguishing between autodidacts and formally trained artists, as well as the contrasting representation of those cultural producers living on the continent and those in the diaspora.¹⁷⁷ Instead, the quarterly commented on a wide range of cultural topics with changing national, regional, and urban foci in English and French.

Lotte Arndt has analysed *Revue Noire* in comparison to other Paris-based periodicals with an Africa focus from the second half of the twentieth century. She focused on the decolonising effects of different periodicals and this perspective produced important insights into *Revue Noire's* powerful position within the Parisian establishment. Arndt has unveiled the revue's close collaboration with the French cultural diplomacy, as well as its dependence on state funding that was dedicated to restoring relationships with the African continent by means of cultural collaboration.¹⁷⁸ These networks are said to have enhanced *Revue Noire's* impact on shaping the profile of Contemporary African Art throughout the 1990s, thus endowing the editors with a powerful position.¹⁷⁹ However, rather than critically contextualising Africa's recent cultural production, their texts were subjective

and literary in style.¹⁸⁰ My study complements Arndt's analysis by scrutinising the impact of a particular special edition on a local art scene, as well as its effects on the global level.

Revue Noire's special issue on Cameroon was the first attempt to present the current cultural production of Cameroon's urban centres to audiences abroad. With an eighteen euro price tag the luxurious edition was too expensive for the Cameroonian market anyway. The launch took place at the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé, alongside an exhibition of works by artists whom Njami had encountered during his research trip to Cameroon some months earlier.¹⁸¹ However, when the visitors to this soirée discovered the review they were "shocked".¹⁸² A photographic reproduction of an artwork by the twenty-seven-year-old, informally trained artist Pascale Marthine Tayou featured on the cover. This artwork entitled *Fight against AIDS* was one of a series of assemblages that were made from cut-up plastic bottles, limbs of puppets, condoms, pacifiers, pieces of wood, melted plastic bags, snail shells, and discarded sandals.¹⁸³ (Fig 35.1) Tayou had mounted these banal objects on wooden stretchers stripped bare of their canvas and arranged them into humanoid configurations with an unsettling, if not uncanny aura.

This artistic use of recuperated objects for art was a novelty in Cameroon. This said, Tayou's elder colleague Sumegné had developed his own, more intricate method of sewing found objects together around that time, examples of which also featured in *Revue Noire* no. 13.¹⁸⁴ Both approaches inscribe themselves within a trend that arose in other African contexts at the same time—discarded objects had also surfaced in the works of the Beninois artists Georges Adéagbo (born 1942)¹⁸⁵ and Romuald Hazoumé (born 1962),¹⁸⁶ as well as in the installations of the Angolan artist António Ole (born 1951).¹⁸⁷ These artworks are referred to as "récup-art"¹⁸⁸ or as "la Récupération"¹⁸⁹ even by Germanophone or Anglophone authors.¹⁹⁰

Récup-art remains under-theorised, so it seems worthwhile to take a brief excursus to outline two theories that explain this trend; in the existent literature récup-art is partly construed as the result of art-historically informed, conceptual choices and partly deemed a pragmatic artistic reaction to the shortage engendered by the economic crises of the 1980s and 90s in Africa. Both arguments are relevant for Tayou's case. Those authors arguing in favour of the first



Text from the magazine spread, likely describing the artwork and the artist's work.

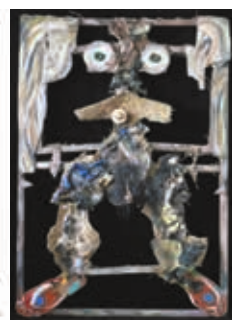
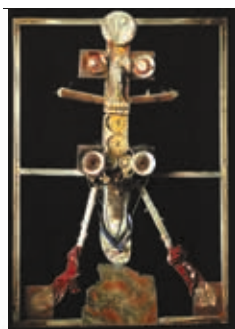


Fig 35

35.1 Cover of *Revue Noire* no. 13 (1994), featuring Pascale Marthine Tayou, *Fight against AIDS 5, 1994 (1/4)*.

35.2 Spread with two more pieces of the series (2/4 and 3/4).

35.3 Spread with verso of cover piece (1/4 and 4/4).

Collections of *Revue Noire* and of Didier Schaub.

hypothesis place récup-art within the tradition of the European and North American avant-gardes, who sought to challenge academic art forms in order to unite life and art.¹⁹¹ These authors point to the fact that recuperated objects alias objets trouvés, are part of artworks ascribed to Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Arte Povera, Pop Art, or Nouveau Réalisme—to only name a few movements.¹⁹² Despite Ulrichs' unfortunate comparison, the Dada-artist Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) shall be cited as useful example here, because Schwitters started to use discarded objects in the middle of a major crisis, like Tayou, namely during WWI. Schwitters argued accordingly:

In the war, things were in terrible turmoil. What I had learned at the academy was of no use to me and the useful new ideas were still unready... Everything had broken down and new things had to be made out of the fragments; and this is Merz. It was like a revolution within me, not as it was, but as it should have been.¹⁹³

Schwitter's use of broken-down things and fragments was hence a conceptually motivated expression of his desire for a new order of thought. In a similarly philosophical vein, Christian Hanussek theorised la Récupération in relation to postmodern ideas of deconstruction and re-definition. Hence, Hanussek interpreted this artistic trend as a cultural technique by which artists in Africa bestow the endless streams of discarded consumer goods that flood African countries and markets "with new meaning".¹⁹⁴

Arguing on a more pragmatic note, other authors have explained the Récupération trend in relation to the culture of improvisation that flourished as a consequence of economic and political crises. Considering the Senegalese context, the artist and researcher Momar Seck has linked the emergence of récup-art to "Set Setal", a citizen movement that cleaned up certain Senegalese cities between 1990 and 1992 for want of public services.¹⁹⁵ Seck has furthermore observed that practitioners at the École de Arts in Dakar adopted recuperated objects as material in the early 1990s, once the government no longer granted the free provision of art supplies.¹⁹⁶ Taking a more critical stance, Okwui Enwezor's read on the same trend connotes "spectacle and excess".¹⁹⁷ He blamed the ascent of récup-art on misguided development work amidst the economic crisis and criticised the "preponderance of support for an aesthetic of recycling [that privileged]

make-do, makeshift, and bricolage [over] invention, sophistication, and technologically sound transfer of knowledge”.¹⁹⁸ Consequently, récup-art appears to Enwezor as a fashion that gained momentum due to the primitivising projections of foreigners. Apparently, this aspect of la Récupération was an issue during the Dak’Art Biennale of 1996.¹⁹⁹ Romuald Hazoumé is said to have then systematically and consciously used the recognisable récup look to satisfy expectations that an urban art from Africa would suggest contemporariness while also appearing “authentically African”.²⁰⁰

Coming back to *Revue Noire*’s special edition, these divergent interpretations of récup-art in the literature help to interpret the “shocking” work by Tayou in a more nuanced manner. I shall argue that the use of recuperated materials enabled this young artist to make a virtue out of various necessities: namely, coping with insufficient financial means for expensive production, detaching himself from his *grands frères* by means of a new style, and being rebellious in order to reinforce his position.²⁰¹ I am here relying on Dominique Malaquais’s argument, who construed récup-art in Cameroon as an art-historically informed choice that allowed younger artists to turn away from the Négritude concept that had informed much of the elder generation’s work.²⁰² Accordingly, Hanussek has reported that this “break with tradition was looked upon as a betrayal” in Cameroon.²⁰³ Speaking of rebellion and betrayal against aesthetic norms, it is also noteworthy that Tayou mounted his shabby objects with visible nails, rather than elaborately joining together small machine parts and plastic jewels to form surprisingly decorative surfaces, as Sumegné used to do. And besides the dingy appeal, Tayou’s title *Fight against AIDS* pointed to an unpleasant subject—for a good reason, as I will show later on. It was this disregard for art’s supposed beautifying, affirmative function and Tayou’s outsider status and neglect of market demands²⁰⁴ that motivated the editors of *Revue Noire* to place him in the spotlight, as Njami told me in retrospect.²⁰⁵ However, the 1994 edition did not explain this editorial decision.

The inner organisation of the magazine also went against certain established values in Yaoundé’s art world without justifying this choice. Three more pieces from Tayou’s cover series featured in two full spreads in lieu of other artists.²⁰⁶ (Fig 35.2, 35.3) Moreover, many of the artists represented in full spreads were based in the French

diaspora. Instead, the doyen Pascal Kenfack was accorded only one page, which featured his Musée-École rather than his own artwork. Kenfack was also positioned behind younger and non-formally trained artists. Similarly, René Tchébétchou and Kouam Tawadje, who had respectively trained at arts schools in France and China, were relegated to the “Panorama” section, which only accorded a small fragment of a page to each artist. (Fig 36) According to eye-witnesses at the soirée, certain elder artists perceived this placement as an affront.²⁰⁷ It is noteworthy that artists from Douala featured in the “Panorama”, too, next to doual’art.²⁰⁸ This marginal treatment of Douala’s art scene corresponded to the general perception of Douala’s secondary position behind Yaoundé in cultural terms.²⁰⁹

So far I have shown that the representation of Cameroon’s visual art production in *Revue Noire* no. 13 was in conflict with certain tacitly accepted age- and education-based hierarchies amongst art producers in Yaoundé and challenged confirmed aesthetics. This issue also introduced diasporic figures that had not been considered part of the country’s art scene prior to 1994. Many artists and arts professionals, especially those from Douala, consider this external intervention by *Revue Noire* refreshing in retrospect.²¹⁰ Yet the lack of transparency regarding the arguments behind the editorial decisions caused certain judgements to remain unquestioned and engendered frictions amongst some artists. When reflecting on *Revue Noire*’s editorial politics, Arndt has criticised this intentionally subjective, anecdotal nature of *Revue Noire*’s journalism for yet another reason; she has argued that this revue has distorted the perception of certain African regions in the artworld’s international centres in the 1990s because *Revue Noire*’s edition were often mistaken for systematic condition reports, for lack of comparable publications.²¹¹

Although not transparent, the editors’ choice of Pascale Marthine Tayou as cover artist gained him his first transnational attention. In the year following the launch of *Revue Noire*, Tayou partook in important international biennales, such as the first biennale in Gwangju, South Korea, and the Dakar biennale. In 1996, he also showed work in a number of museums throughout Japan²¹² and in high-profile nonprofit spaces in Europe.²¹³ Contributions to group exhibitions in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Switzerland, as well as participation in the sixth Havannah Biennale, the second Santa Fe Biennale,



Fig 36
 "Panorama", *Revue Noire* no. 13 (1994).

the second Gwangju Biennale, and the second Johannesburg Biennale followed in 1997.²¹⁴ It is therefore obvious that Tayou emerged on the global stage simultaneously with and on the platforms of the exploding number of globally spread art biennales, right after having featured on the *Revue Noire* cover.²¹⁵

Tayou's increasing mobility also coincided with the emergence of the new prototype of the "nomad artist",²¹⁶ who constantly travels the expanding transnational artworld for projects. And as he spent more and more time in Europe, he also became part of the inner circle of artists at the Parisian headquarters of *Revue Noire*. This context gained him credibility and access to further networks, for instance, by distributing the newest issues of *Revue Noire* to galleries in Johannesburg, besides exhibiting work in the Johannesburg Biennale.²¹⁷ Additionally, Njami has also supported the emerging artist through writing catalogue texts for several of his exhibitions in Europe.²¹⁸ However, while landing the cover of *Revue Noire* gave Tayou's career an obvious boost, closer scrutiny contradicts mono-causal explanations of his rise to fame. Tayou was also in good contact with the founders of doual'art, the director of the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé, and also collaborated closely with the director of the Goethe-Institut in those years.²¹⁹ His first solo exhibitions took place between 1994 and 1999 at the foreign cultural centres in Cameroon and at doual'art, rather than elsewhere. It appears therefore prudent to ascribe Tayou's emergence as Contemporary African Artist—a label that he has always fought, by the way²²⁰—to the intertwining of different legitimating authorities on the national and on the global level.

In sum, my interlocutors unanimously agreed that *Revue Noire's* intervention and acknowledgement of Tayou was beneficial for young artists in Cameroon in general. The founders of doual'art experienced the special issue as a confirmation of their own approval of the younger generation, especially of those young artists gathered around Koko Komegné. The review also apparently caused Mpah Dooh to reconsider his practice, in addition to strengthening Tayou and Sumegné in their *récup* approach and besides fostering the "emergence of politicised work"²²¹ in general. Simon Njami argued that through emphasising the liberties Tayou took in his work, the review opened new pathways for individual agency because Tayou's success transformed

him into a role model.²²² And the poet in Njami has summarised the transformation engendered by the special edition as follows:

La statue du maître est tombée au sol.²²³

This metaphor points to a generational turn amongst the leading artists, but it also implies that technical mastery had lost much of its status as a professional goal for artists in Yaoundé and Douala by the mid 1990s as ideas had started to take their place.

Peter Anders at the Goethe-Institut:
Studio Visits and Crossover-Projects

Another foreign art professional arrived in Yaoundé at the end of 1994: Peter Anders. The incoming director of the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé contributed to the breakthroughs of several young artists, although his fascination for contemporary art is said to have “destabilised everybody”²²⁴ in the first place. Anders was appointed the new director after being in charge of visual art projects at the institute’s headquarters in Munich. The “Afrika-Iwalewa” issue of the then leading German art-review *Kunstforum International*²²⁵ had convinced Anders that visual art in African contexts was particularly receptive to new impulses from postcolonial theory, a framework that he aimed to implement while in Yaoundé. He felt that his position at the German cultural centre enjoyed credibility in this respect, while cultural producers in Cameroon tended to associate the Centre Culturel Français with the Biya-friendly politics of the French state.²²⁶

In order to illustrate this newcomer’s impact on the local scene, I will first concentrate on his studio visits. While in office in Yaoundé from 1994 to 1999, Anders would scout new talent by visiting artist studios in Yaoundé and in Douala. Richard Pipa drove the institute’s van on these occasions and is therefore an important witness for my account. Apparently, Anders was fascinated by the modest contexts in which the young artists produced artwork.²²⁷ As I mentioned earlier, a chamber, a corner of the family home, or a corridor between houses generally stood in for studios in the 1990s—therefore a visit from Anders often meant hectic preparations. Salifou Lindou, for instance, only rented a studio because Anders had seen his very first sculpture in a group show and wanted to come for a studio visit because he imagined an ample stock of similar work behind the artist’s first

mature work. Lindou remembered in my interview:

Ça me faisait peur parce que je n'avais pas d'atelier, je ne gagnais pas assez d'argent. J'avais juste une petite chambre où je dormais. Je rentrais de mon travail d'infographe et je dormais. Et donc je me suis battu pour avoir un espace et j'ai travaillé durement pour monter une exposition et je l'ai invité. Il a vu, il a programmé directement, dans la semaine qui suivait, ma toute première exposition.²²⁸

Lindou considered Anders' studio visit, and the subsequent solo show at the Goethe-Institut, as crucial motivating factors that led to him fully committing to his artistic practice. Achille Komguem is another artist who Anders encouraged to concentrate on his artwork and critically reflect on his practice:

[J]e trouvais ça très curieux (...) de voir comment est-ce qu'ici, on pouvait nous aussi actualiser nos créations, on pouvait nous aussi être très contemporain, faire des travaux assez osés et qui bousculent.²²⁹

Anders also deemed it necessary to raise awareness for the "alienating aspect" of catering to expatriates' expectations amongst the artists, as he considered airport art inadequate to capture the complex reality of life in Cameroon.²³⁰ He thus motivated artists whose work he expected would evolve to collaborate in groups on the basis of subjects they defined themselves before offering them exhibitions at the Goethe-Institut.²³¹

Like *Revue Noire* no. 13, Anders' studio visits were a possibility for emerging artists in Yaoundé and Douala to learn about values that structure the artworld art large, such as the belief in artists' criticality and in art's autonomy from market demands. However, considering Anders' powerful position as director of the Goethe-Institut, it could be argued that his advocacy for the imported Rules of Art left little choice for his protégés but to adapt if they wanted to show their work at the Goethe-Institut. This bias contradicts Anders' postcolonial awareness.

In order to assess the effects of Anders' directorship in Yaoundé more generally, it is worth mentioning that this director's expertise in the field of art was new to the foreign cultural institutes in Cameroon. The invitations Anders extended to a number of high-profile German artists improved the institut's programming and he also enhanced the institute's exhibition facilities by having the dark wood-panels of the exhibition space whitewashed.²³² Moreover, the Goethe-Institut in

Yaoundé started to contribute to the production of art projects under Anders' guidance, rather than only organising exhibitions—a timely decision because the art project became popular in Europe at the time too.²³³

Work organisation in the form of projects—that is in specifically constituted teams that accomplish particular tasks under time constraints—must have also been familiar to Anders from his academic background in the performative arts. In fact, he holds a degree in theatre, film, and media studies. And so he used his term at Yaoundé's Goethe-Institut particularly to foster what he called “crossover-projects”²³⁴, i.e. performance-based productions eroding the boundaries between visual art, video art, and theatre. An example thereof is Pascale Marthine Tayou's performance entitled *LOooBHY*. *LOooBHY* involved actors and other theatre artists and was presented at the Goethe-Institut in 1995.²³⁵ In a similar vein, the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé helped to produce the theatre piece *Days in Black Satin* by the Swiss performer Marc Degeller²³⁶ and hosted a globally touring speech performance by the German musician-performer Blixa Bargeld,²³⁷ as well as a visit of the late artist-director Christoph Schlingensief.²³⁸ It is furthermore worth remarking here that the Goethe-Institut put its technical equipment, more concretely a VHS video camera, at the disposal of Goddy Leye for his first experiments with this medium.²³⁹ A performative touch also invaded more static genres presented at the Goethe-Institut at that time: a video showing the artist speed-painting contextualised an exhibition of drawings and paintings by Koko Komegné in 1995. Komegné named this performance “show plastique”.²⁴⁰

Anders' interest in transdisciplinary, performative formats and the respective media is also understandable considering the interest in new time-based media in Europe in the 1990s.²⁴¹ A child of his time, Anders saw to it that the Goethe-Institut opened access to transdisciplinary experiments for young art practitioners in Cameroon. These endeavours also familiarised them with the challenges of project management because such artists are obliged to develop managerial skills in order to satisfy institutional partners, tackle conceptual and economic planning, and one-off fund-raising. Anders must therefore be credited with professionally advancing artists of the young generation in at least two ways: in form of one-to-one conversations during

studio visits and as a patron of transdisciplinary projects.

In the previous sections on the *ateliers* with foreign artists, doual'art, and Peter Anders, I have discussed non-formal learning situations generated by encounters with foreign art professionals. In addition to critically pointing to the neo-colonial implications of these interventions and the financial and epistemic hierarchies that have differently affected the pedagogic settings, I could also show that the contacts with artists, curators, editors, and art historians from France and Germany, as well as their *ateliers*, exhibitions, art-historical lectures, thematic seminars, and video screenings enabled artists in Yaoundé and Douala to discover installation art, performance, public art, video art, as well as transdisciplinary approaches to art. As artistic genres, these were new to the Cameroonian art context and partly new to visual art in general. Thus, idea-based, conceptual working modes found their way to Cameroon. And what is more, the foreigners would also encourage Cameroonian artists to start exploring these genres and the necessary technologies themselves, while tackling the dynamics of translation and shifting aesthetics with more or less success. The artists of the 1990 generation, as well as some of their *grands frères* have thus gained access to ways of doing, thinking, and exhibiting art that had emerged in the old centres of the artworld in the second half of the twentieth century. And the role of *Revue Noire's* special edition in this process of exposure was to create a new role model of artistic success in the persona of Pascale Marthine Tayou and to spread the news about this art scene in Europe.

Discursive Agency: A Path to Artistic Self-Empowerment

In the last part of this chapter I will point to a discrete development that was complementary to the interventions of the foreigners. I have found that artists in Yaoundé and Douala imagined various tactics to empower themselves and each other throughout the 1990s, such as observing foreigners, seeking access to art books, and organising gatherings with their peers. These strategies were pursued as means for artists to develop their practical toolkit and discursive agency. The discursive agency of an artist is based on his or her awareness of the

changing discourses that regulate the professional field of art and for the variations that occur in its different geographic subfields. As I have mentioned in the introduction, these discourses are not stable, not even within one place. In the case of Cameroon, for instance, the authenticity discourse made space for the development paradigm of the 1990s. Discursive agency enables artists to frame new artworks in relation to these discourses and ideally provides them with the criticality to manipulate these discourses through their work.²⁴²

Arguably, visual artists in Cameroon depend even more on this skill than artists from countries with an academic art system and a long tradition of art appreciation. Visual art is not a cultural practice accepted by convention in Cameroon and thus requires special legitimation each time it goes public—for example, the protocol of exhibition openings in Yaoundé and Douala prescribes that artists give a speech to introduce the audience to their work.²⁴³ The cultural journalist Stéphane Tchakam has pointed out that this habit is more than a formality. With reference to the scandal around Sumegné's aforementioned monument *La Nouvelle Liberté*, he has explained that such speeches are also important in diverting the audience's suspicion of the artwork's possible magical capacities:

[O]n est dans une société où on ne fait rien pour rien, parce que si on rentre dans nos traditions, les masques, les tenues rituelles, ça a toujours une signification. Alors, vous ne pouvez pas, comme Sumegné a fait, poser une grande statue sur un rond-point et dire que ça ne signifie rien! Parce que chaque fois qu'on sculpte quelque chose, il y a un langage. [Et alors on se pose la question:] Est-ce que c'est pour des besoins religieux, est-ce que c'est pour entrer en contact avec les ancêtres, est-ce que c'est pour faire de la sorcellerie? [...] Et si, dans une exposition, quelqu'un n'arrive pas à comprendre, il faut qu'on lui explique afin qu'il ne se méfie.²⁴⁴

The following passages highlight ways in which artists in Yaoundé and Douala have cultivated their discursive agency in the 1990s.

Cultivating Discursive Agency through Reading

Besides observing how role models like the *grands frères* and the *atelier* tutors contextualised their work, artists of the 1990 generation also learned to verbalise their reflections through art books, even if it was

difficult for them to access such resources. Since art books had disappeared from bookstores during the economic crisis,²⁴⁵ aspiring artists resorted to hawkers and kiosks that offered imported second-hand books and magazines, which came in part from discarded stocks of French libraries.²⁴⁶ What these salesmen put aside for their art-loving clients heavily influenced the young artists' reading, practice, and discussions, as the following anecdote by Hervé Youmbi suggests:

[E]n 1990 on est en pleine période de la célébration du centenaire du décès de Vincent Van Gogh. Donc, dans les journaux comme Paris Match ou VSD on parle beaucoup de l'Impressionisme. À travers ces journaux nous avons découvert le courant impressionniste. On découvre ses techniques de peinture, ses sujets comme la nature morte, les paysages, les portraits. (...) Donc, le premier courant que j'ai vraiment embrassé dans ma peinture, c'était la manière des Impressionnistes.²⁴⁷

Certain libraries like the one belonging to the Centre Culturel Français also had art books, although they didn't specialise in art.²⁴⁸ Finding libraries with such books was not always easy for artists, partly because they were not used to visiting them or did not expect to find anything interesting there. Hervé Yamguen, for instance experienced "an enormous shock" when he first entered "a real library"²⁴⁹ and found art books there. This happened at the cloister that Yamguen frequented around 1990 with the idea of joining the fraternity. The friar in charge of accompanying Yamguen had pointed out a van Gogh monograph and books on orthodox icons to him.²⁵⁰ Similarly, if for a different reason, the discovery of a stock of art books in the general library at the University of Yaoundé appeared like a revelation to Goddy Leye around 1990:

Et comme c'était une vraie passion, j'ai eu une chance une nuit: À la bibliothèque de l'université il y avait très peu de boucains. Je faisais les lettres et il y avait très peu de boucains de langues, de grammaire, de littérature, parce que c'était une bibliothèque qui était déjà vieille et tout les premiers livres qu'ils y avaient achetés étaient foutus, étaient vieux, avaient été déchirés et tout ça. Mais [j'ai trouvé qu']il y avait des livres des arts plastiques qui avaient été achetés dans les années 1960 et 70, et qui étaient en bonne forme! Comme il n'y avait jamais eu de formation en art plastique et en histoire de l'art, personne n'avait utilisé ces livres. Donc je suis pratiquement le seul à lire ces boucains, et j'en profite!²⁵¹

206 At the university library, Leye was able to kindle his ongoing interest

in Picasso and to read about Modern Art more generally.²⁵² To his surprise, Leye found also single issues of *Art in America* and the French review *Art Presse* here, as well as the volume *State of the Arts: Ideas and images in the 1980s* by the British curator Alexander Robert Nairne. This critical survey had been edited in 1987 following a much-acclaimed documentary series of the British TV station Channel 4. Besides portraying twenty-six visual artists from Europe, the U.S., and Australia, *State of the Arts* also explained certain increasingly important discourses of the 1990s, ranging from gender roles and institutional critique to identity politics and art market mechanisms.²⁵³

Even if not very up to date, the *grands frères*' bookshelves were also an important point of reference for the young artists, as Justine Gaga remembers from her experiences with Viking André Kanganyam:

Dans son atelier de publicité il y avait des livres sur Van Gogh, sur Picasso, il y en avait sur plein d'artistes ! Et donc j'étais passionnée, je m'arrêtais là bas premièrement pour lire et je lisais tout. Et puis il me racontait de l'histoire de l'art et on discutait et on échangeait.²⁵⁴

Since current art books remained a rarity in Yaoundé and Douala, emerging artists were forced to read what was available rather than being able to follow their own interests—a consequence of this constraint being that non-academic artists would reference books on European art history rather than on domestic or African art history when I asked them about their reading. Upon closer scrutiny, it is clear that my conversation partners conspicuously privileged movements of early Modern Art from Europe whenever referring to art history, starting with Impressionism. In terms of eminent artists, Vincent Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso were constantly brought up, while single artworks rarely came into the focus of our conversations. Interestingly, Christian Hanussek had already recognised a similar tendency ten years earlier, in the year 2000:

In many Cameroonian artists' works one observes a particularly strong relation to art movements of the first half of the twentieth century, from the *École de Paris* and *Art Brut* to abstract expressionism, which is not seen in this form in the international context. Access to information on art movement[s] outside Cameroon is limited. Sources on artistic currents of the first half of the twentieth century are available, and this has influenced the development of the artists as well as the public

understanding of modern art. The second half of the century, with its movements such as pop art, Fluxus, minimal, and conceptual art has had little or no impact in Cameroon.²⁵⁵

Congruently, the artist Marcel Odenbach, who visited Cameroon in 1998 to head an *atelier* and to realise a video film, stated in a catalogue on African video art of the year 2000 that he had observed a blind spot towards Action Painting, Fluxus, and performance art in the different art scenes of West and Central Africa that he had visited.²⁵⁶

It is worthwhile to briefly reflect on the reasons for these analogous observations by Hanussek, Odenbach, and myself. It is well known that during WWII many avant-garde artists left Europe in favour of New York, thus causing Paris to lose its leading position in Modern Art. As a consequence, post-war movements like Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, Fluxus, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, and performance art emerged in the U.S., predestining the respective literature to be written in English rather than in French. Yet despite Cameroon's official bi-lingualism, the language skills of the artists living in Yaoundé and Douala were largely limited to French and the intellectual elites in Cameroon also remained oriented towards Paris. Hence, artists were more likely to consume French publications. At the same time, shipments of second hand books from France were less likely to contain academic books than popular publications. These books were generally overview volumes on Modern Art or coffee table books that tended to cater to the popular tastes of a specific language community and to feature domestic, confirmed art movements rather than the newest avant-garde developments. They also privileged painting over time-based or three-dimensional art forms, partly because these latter genres are more difficult to represent in reproductions. My hypothesis that the available publications dealt predominantly with French, confirmed, easy-to-reproduce modern painting explains the bias I have observed in the artistic references of many artists working in Cameroon.

However, there are also notable exceptions like the participants in the *atelier* "La Chaise" (1994), who discovered the oeuvre of the Afro-American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat in a book that the tutors had brought along from France.²⁵⁷ Basquiat remained an important reference for many.²⁵⁸ And in contrast to what was said before, the specialised collections at the IFA and of doual'art libraries that

were instituted in the 1990s followed their own logic.²⁵⁹ Moreover, it would be wrong to assume strictly causal interdependence of available books and artists' art-historical culture because the founders of doual'art and Leye agreed on an anti-academic tendency amongst many artists in my interviews. If one is to trust Leye, he was "almost the only one"²⁶⁰ in his generation to systematically read books on art. Moreover, he read both in English and in French due to his Francophone parents' origin from the Anglophone part of Cameroon and his studies of bilingual literature. Considering the eclectic selection of art books that was available in Cameroon and the predominance of English as lingua franca in the artworld beyond Cameroon, Leye's bilingualism appears as a tremendous advantage with regard to his acquisition of discursive agency.

Artistic Self-Empowerment through Collectives

Besides viewing and reading art books, the non-formally trained artists of the 1990 generation also knew another strategy of self-empowerment; much like the previous generation they formed art collectives to exchange amongst each other. An example is the collective Prim'Art, a group founded by Goddy Leye, Émile Youmbi, Louis Epée, Gaston Kenfack, and Idrissou Njoya in 1993.²⁶¹ These young painters met for the sake of collective critique sessions on a weekly basis, as the following quote suggests:

C'est à dire que chaque semaine on se retrouve dans un atelier et l'un des membres présente son travail aux autres comme s'ils étaient des étrangers. Il dit, voilà c'est ce que je fais, c'est ce que je cherche. Et les autres critiquent ce travail là, sans détruire, mais seulement critiquer pour que les points deviennent plus clairs.²⁶²

The emphasis on presenting to one another "as if they were strangers" hints at the ambition to communicate professionally about their work, which apparently greatly enhanced the participating artists' capacity for self-reflection.²⁶³ Leye had possibly observed similarly structured sessions during his residencies at art schools in Angers and Grenoble in the early 1990s, because critique sessions are central to the academic training of artists everywhere.²⁶⁴ As a very effective learning-tool, they also matter for non-formal art/s education as Lauré al-Samarai has observed in other African contexts:

Feedback and criticism are designed not only to improve [the young artists'] perceptions of themselves as artists (and as people) or help them to understand differentiated, sometimes contradictory perceptual contexts, but also to exercise interpersonal communication based on negotiation. Students thus find themselves challenged to lay bare their work as artists with all its intentions, meanings, and inherent positionings.²⁶⁵ Leye and his colleagues had also understood that the critical evaluation of new work through peers was a means to train their discursive agency.

Another peer-to-peer exchange took place in Cameroon in the year 1996, namely the self-organised gathering of artists from Douala and Yaoundé that came to be known as “Iconoclast Masters”. Under this somewhat misleading title, the members of Prim’Art invited the members of the Douala-based art collective Club Khéops²⁶⁶ to Yaoundé for a workshop with the purpose of sharing skills regarding the “use of earth and natural pigments to make contemporary art”.²⁶⁷ In a catalogue text, the Cameroon-born economist and art aficionado Nicolas Bissek has suggested that it was Leye who introduced his peers to these materials.²⁶⁸ Leye probably learned these techniques from Kenfack and from the Mallorcan painter and West Africa-fan Miguel Barcelò. Barcelò experimented abundantly with different textures, as well as organic and inorganic materials in the 1990s and Leye is said to have stayed in residence in Barcelò’s Parisian studio in 1993.²⁶⁹ In light of the *récup-art* discourse, it is worthwhile to consider whether artists used these natural materials in reaction to the shortage of art supplies during the years following the devaluation of the Franc CFA, as Bissek argues, or if they sought to localise their painterly practice by returning to autochthonous materials, as Kenfack or Hazoumé had done.²⁷⁰ Leye’s interest in the cultural heritage of Africa makes it seem probable that the second point holds true, but it is safe to assume that economic considerations also importantly contributed to the spreading of DIY-supplies in Cameroon.

Although they are not exhaustive in terms of the activities of arts collectives of the 1990s, my examples demonstrate how artists enhanced their intellectual and practical skills by means of self-organisation. During their gatherings, artists cultivated their discursive agency and shared observations that some privileged members of the group had made abroad. These gatherings were purposefully set up

in order to share skills. Hence, the art collectives of the 1990s can be distinguished from artist groups of the precedent decade by their new, educational impetus.

The Discursive Agency of the Trickster Pascale Marthine Tayou

The example of Pascale Marthine Tayou lends itself to a small case study on the development of a single artist's discursive agency in the course of the 1990s, by which I will conclude this section. Tayou stands out amongst his peers because he is exceptionally savvy in foregrounding, disrupting, or using the dominant discourses in his practice, as I will show. Tayou's early career is also particularly well documented due to the recognition he enjoyed from 1994 onwards after the launch of *Revue Noire*. It is therefore possible to roughly retrace the development of his conceptual thinking in the 1990s.

The cover piece *Fight against AIDS* had already been the centrepiece of Tayou's first solo exhibition held at the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé—tellingly titled *Transgression*—some months prior to *Revue Noire*'s launch. Like the title of the exhibition, the respective review in *Cameroon Tribune* of 1994 asserts that Tayou did not naively create representations of humans by means of roughly assembled trash, but that his intention was to provoke.²⁷¹ Subtitled “the wrath of a painter”, the review is based on an interview with Tayou and claims that he sought to push established values and confirmed ways of art making “off their pedestal”.²⁷² Moreover, the journalist makes clear that the artist had used trash as material to give expression to his critique of the mentality of his contemporaries since his explicit intention was to address “the slum inside of man” [“le taudis interne de l'homme”]. Note well that Tayou has since then continued to use the label “Taudisme” for his practice in general, for instance in interviews and on his website. Although refraining from giving a single definition of Taudisme, Tayou seems to advocate for the acknowledgement of the fallibility of humans by means of this -ism:

Le ‘Taudisme’ est une lecture sociale, ce n'est pas une doctrine mais l'idée que l'essentiel est la rencontre de l'autre dans son dépotoir, dans son gîte le plus abject.²⁷³

Back in 1994, Tayou furthermore told the bewildered reviewer that he had tactically deployed the highly mediatised catchword AIDS in

the title of the series. It was Tayou's intention to use AIDS as a Trojan horse for his "call for change" rather than wanting to point to the ubiquitous disease, as his quote in the article suggests:

Ce n'est sans doute pas le mal le plus ravageur en Afrique, retorque l'artiste, mais c'est un thème tellement médiatisé que j'ai voulu m'en servir pour passer mon message: l'appel au changement.²⁷⁴

This move might as well be considered a form of artistic trickery. Furthermore, the article of 1994 unveils that the male artist behind the show had feminised his name from Pascal Martin to Pascale Marthine with good reason. Although artist names were no novelty in Cameroon, Tayou's decision to adopt a drag identity was new and amounted to a serious transgression within a hetero-normative and homophobic society that forbids homosexuality by law.²⁷⁵ Tayou's changed gender identity must therefore be considered a part of this artist's tactic to shake up norms and conventions affirmed by the dominant discourses. In the eyes of the curator Nicolas Bourriaud, this gender bending was also an expression of Tayou's refusal to accept identitarian interpellations to his persona and was hence another trickster gesture.²⁷⁶

On the other hand, it can be argued that these feints enabled Tayou to cater to a set of discourses that mattered for his international career; namely, to those discourses underpinning the artworld. His rebellious attitude matched the model of the avant-garde artist, as did his mocking of art-historical -isms.²⁷⁷ Moreover, Tayou's title *Fight Against AIDS* tactically referenced a topic that enjoyed worldwide attention in the first half of the 1990s, and was also a particularly important issue in the North American part of the artworld. The U.S. government's repressive politics in the face of the AIDS crisis had mobilised many art professionals to take a position in the late 1980s and early 1990s, for instance within the framework of the critical AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP).²⁷⁸ Interestingly, AIDS had also been one of *Revue Noire's* thematic focal points since its inception,²⁷⁹ which might be a less obvious reason why the series *Fight against AIDS* had seemed attractive to the journal's editors. Furthermore, AIDS ranked high on the agenda of development organisations, thus doual'art promptly commissioned Tayou to realise more work of this kind after the launch of *Revue Noire*.²⁸⁰ The sum of this evidence points to the fact that Tayou skilfully framed his practice early on, even if he prefers to offer a more passive image of himself,

as in my interview:

C'est des gens qui m'ont sorti de mon lieu. J'étais vu. Vous savez, on fait un travail une fois, on est repéré... c'est comme vous, il est venu vers moi, ce n'est pas à moi de le faire!²⁸¹

An artist talk in early 2000 was another occasion for Tayou to perform his discursive agency. Tayou's talk was part of an *atelier* by Christian Hanussek at the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé. Once he had introduced his practice, Hanussek invited the participants to present their work and to also share their conceptual considerations.²⁸² Tayou's talk and the subsequent discussion stood out amongst these presentations because Tayou made of it a rhetoric match, "un jeu"²⁸³, by which he challenged his fellow artists. So as to preserve a relatively immediate trace of this noteworthy event, Hanussek has later edited the video recording of this talk. (Fig 37.1) Right from the talk's beginning, Tayou underlined that he produced "nothing", that he refused to be defined as an artist or something else and that his reflections and proceedings "when doing nothing" in institutional settings are mainly guided by commissioners' assumptions about his practice. This rhetorical manoeuvre evokes the Dadaists' refusal to acknowledge a higher morale beyond their practice and to subordinate their work to current -isms.²⁸⁴ By refusing to give concrete examples of his practice, Tayou chose to frustrate the expectations of artists in the audience who were eager to grasp the secret of Tayou's international success—as is clear from their respectful, yet pertinent questions, as well as from their informed references to Tayou's earlier work. Tayou instead used his talk to strip bare his colleagues' expectations, and by doing so he also exemplified the deconstructive method that often seems to guide his creative process.

A closer look at Tayou's installation *La vieille neuve* (*The New Old One*) from the same year explains this method. The work was produced for curator Jean-Hubert Martin's iteration of the Biennale de Lyon in 2000, entitled *Sharing Exoticisms*. (Fig 37.2) *La vieille neuve* can be understood as a rebuttal to the curator's brief insofar as this artwork points to transcontinental "sharing" in an ironic manner. Covered by a layer of red, supposedly African dust, the installation features a conventional car: an olive-green Toyota from the 1980s. The only exotic facet in the eyes of a European viewer is the car's state of disrepair. The open driver's door, an extra wheel, and an oil

can next to the vehicle suggest that the owner has just left before giving this “bush-taxi” another tune-up.²⁸⁵ Tayou’s tongue-in-cheek contribution to the biennale was to share this car that he had found in Cameroon with the place where it might have come from.

I would argue that Tayou thus refused to cater to exoticist desires and to the longing for the spectacle of curiosity in a European exhibition.²⁸⁶ A prudent reflection on the production of identities seems to have inspired this artwork, which exemplifies Tayou’s creative method of pinpointing and confronting his counterparts’ expectations. Tayou’s talk at the Goethe-Institut took place after his first five years as a nomad artist. By staging the discursive agency he had developed during these years, Tayou has also staged his struggle to preserve his own space of agency amidst an expanding artworld known to feed on artists from its margins.²⁸⁷ In this respect, his talk could also be considered a lesson to his peers to critically reflect on the terms of their visibility in the global field of art.

The Effects of a Decade of Change

This chapter has retraced the empowerment of a new generation of artists by non-formal means. A number of emerging artists found complementary strategies to develop their careers in the 1990s, as I have illustrated. The artworks by Goddy Leye, Salifou Lindou, and Pascale Marthine Tayou that I have discussed prove that self-organised knowledge exchange, formative encounters with foreign practitioners, and the recent experience of the political crisis of the Smouldering Years had sharpened the artists’ awareness of pressing contemporary issues and endowed them with a considerable level of criticality and agency. Considering my focus on artistic reading, skill-enhancement in arts collectives, and Tayou’s discursive tactics, it comes as no surprise that Leye and Tayou soon inhabited leading positions amongst their colleagues. Their advances in reading and travelling and their increasing understanding of the mechanisms that order the artworld at large would soon gain them the status of *grands frères* amongst their contemporaries. It is striking to observe, however, that aspiring young women artists seem to have profited little from non-formal

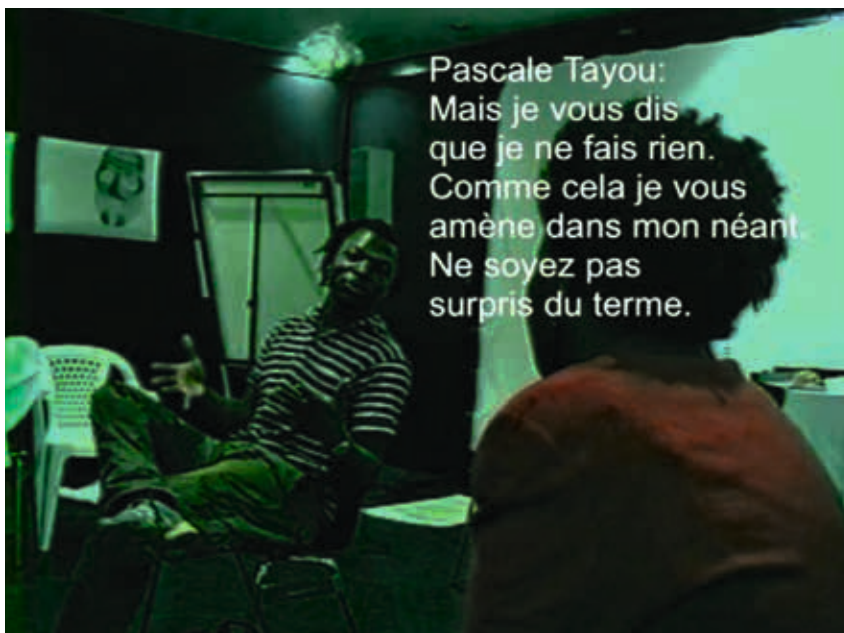


Fig 37

37.1 Artist talk of Pascale Marthine Tayou at the Goethe-Institut, Yaoundé, 2000.

37.2 Pascale Marthine Tayou, *La Vieille Neuve*, 2000, car, monitor, dust, spare tyre, oil can, various dimensions, installation shot at Biennale de Lyon 5.

training in the same period. With the exception of Justine Gaga, no woman artist of the 1990 generation persisted on the scene, although some of them partook in the *ateliers* led by Odenbach and Hanussek. Despite this grave gender inequality, it cannot be denied that the artistic production in Yaoundé and in Douala diversified significantly in terms of genres and themes in those years, which confirms the initial assumption that the early 1990s are a watershed moment in Cameroon's art history.

This chapter has also confirmed certain hypotheses to explain this turn. The democratisation movement and the artists' growing exposure to practitioners and artworks from other parts of the world were indeed crucial motors of change. Schaub, Njami, Anders, and certain *atelier* tutors had become the primary nodes of an emergent transnational network of 1990 generation artists. These acquaintances enabled young artists from Yaoundé and Douala—as well as some elder ones—to travel and exhibit their work abroad, which produced new professional possibilities: all the more so since the visiting artists and curators recommended the Cameroonian artists to colleagues in other countries, too.

However, the artists' newfound mobility was certainly conditional. Artists depended on the goodwill of their contacts, but professionals from the old centres could here act as brokers, an engagement which promised to result in a gain in their symbolic capital".²⁸⁸ Furthermore, travelling required institutional money from abroad to cover travel expenses and legal guarantees from foreign partners to obtain visitor visas to their countries. Considering these heavy constraints, pronouncing the "globalisation" of Cameroon's art system in the 1990s is problematic, all the more so if we understand by the term an intensification of reciprocal interdependences between places across the globe, as leading theorists do.²⁸⁹ I would argue that rather than granting a position in a network of reciprocal exchanges to Cameroonian art professionals, these new relationships were characterised by "asymmetrical interdependences".²⁹⁰ One could also speak of a one-sided dependence on the part of the artists in Yaoundé and Douala. Such "uneven flows of exchange and influence" threaten to make artists at the periphery of the global field of art "receivers rather than managers of meaning",²⁹¹ as the art historian Charlotte Bydler has put it. The next chapter will explore how the artists of the 1990

generation and their *petits frères* learned to deal with the position they had started to inhabit over the course of the decade's transformations.

Chapter 5

Becoming an Artist in a “Connexionist” Age

This chapter examines important developments in terms of the non-formal training of artists and shifts in visual arts discourse in Cameroon that occurred during the first decade of the new millennium. Obviously, our proximity to this period poses some problems, as it is challenging to discern events of historical importance without much temporal distance. My recent professional involvement in Douala further complicates the attempt at an academic assessment. Yet these challenges seem to be familiar to all of those involved in the new discipline that is the history of Contemporary Art and although we do indeed move in a “space of radical uncertainty”¹, a historical proximity can also be conducive to serious inquiry, as American art historian Joshua Shannon has emphasised. Shannon considers it a great “opportunity for scholarship on contemporary art” to “embrace the artist’s archive, daily newspaper histories, and the geographic specifics of artistic practice”.²

Such materials are certainly excellent sources in an understudied art-historical context like Cameroon, which furthermore lacks institutional archives. Additionally, my research incorporated oral history, an approach that greatly aided my attempts to construct a picture of the last decade, as my interlocutors explicitly referenced events from this period that were still fresh in their memories. The last decade has also been documented on the Internet, which provides access to a range of news articles, Wikipedia pages³ and specialised reviews by a growing number of authors from various backgrounds and geographic origins. Moreover, the advent of digital printing technologies and digital photography sparked a surge in lower cost printing, enabling institutions, collectives, and individuals to produce more books, folders, flyers and special newspapers—also in Cameroon. A combination of oral evidence, online sources and my own archive of invitation cards, exhibition brochures, artists’ CVs, and portfolios have chiefly informed the following argument, which I will introduce by outlining certain commonalities of a new generation of artists who

have gained visibility as young professionals between 2000 and 2010. They were the first to be affected by a range of attempts made by their elder colleagues to reorganise the training of artists throughout this decade. I will focus here on two artist-run spaces, a tour undertaken by a group of artists, and an artist newspaper.

These attempts at taking the non-formal training into artists' hands appear all the more relevant in light of the fact that other organisations that were active in the 1990s reduced their level of engagement in the subsequent decade. In the case of doual'art this was due to an expansion of the NGO's activities, which led to the establishment of transnational networks in Central Africa and beyond. Under these circumstances, the NGO's measures geared at artists' skill enhancement receded to the background,⁴ all the more so since the artists of the 1990 generation had professionalised their practice considerably in the previous years and were now full-grown partners for the NGO. Meanwhile, Anders had left Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé, and the new director Andrea Jacob-Sow was less interested in visual art than Anders.⁵ Each Goethe-Institut's spending had also become more strictly regulated by regional and global benchmarks by the early 2000s, impeding local directors from focusing on their favourite disciplines.⁶ That said, neither doual'art nor the Goethe-Institut abandoned their respective programmes altogether and the Centre Culturel Français continued to organise *ateliers* in the 2000s, in addition to hosting exhibitions of Contemporary Art from France.⁷

The second part of this chapter is dedicated to a discourse analysis. As foreshadowed in the previous chapters, informally taught artists in Cameroon have increasingly oriented their practice towards the professional field called Contemporary Art—or “art contemporain”—in the past two decades. While this brand name is ubiquitous and economically powerful, the phenomenon of Contemporary Art remains strikingly underdetermined in theory. This finding triggered my interest in the characteristics of the discourse on Contemporary Art in Cameroon. My empirical material enabled me to analyse the interpretations of Contemporary Art by artists and art professionals from Douala and Yaoundé in comparison with those disparate notions and conventions regulating the global field of art. It is my hypothesis that the emergent artists had to come to terms with these paradigms in order to gain international exposure and mobility.

Internet and Studio Programmes: Tools for a New Generation

The early 2000s saw the emergence of a number of new artists on the scene: Ginette Daleu (born 1976), Alioum Moussa (born 1977), Boris Nzébo (born 1979), Landry Mbassi (born 1979), Guy Wouete (born 1980), LucFoster Diop alias Lucas Fotsing Takou (born 1980), Em’kal Eyongakpa (born 1981), and Patrick Wokmeni (born 1986). Justine Gaga (born 1974) can be considered amongst this group, too, due to her late start as full-time artist. Some of them are former students of the University of Yaoundé like Em’kal Eyongakpa, who holds a master degree in botany and ecology,⁸ and LucFoster Diop who has a bachelor from the art department.⁹ Landry Mbassi was enrolled for some semesters in the section Arts du Spectacle¹⁰ and Ginette Daleu is an alumna of the IFA in Mbalmayo.¹¹ Others have accomplished craft trainings: Boris Nzébo¹² and Justine Gaga¹³ apprenticed with advertisement painters in Douala, while Alioum Moussa was the apprentice of a portraitist from Tchad who received commissions from politicians in Maroua.¹⁴ Patrick Wokmeni and Guy Wouete, on the other hand, have acquired their skills in entirely non-formal ways through *ateliers* and the *Système de Grands Frères*.¹⁵ Besides the differences in education, these artists do not share a political experience as strong as the Smouldering Years, although the 2000s also saw moments of political unrest, such as the resistance to the bloodshed of the governmental anti-crime unit “Commandement Opérationnel” in Douala in 2001¹⁶ or the so-called “Emeutes de 2008”.¹⁷ These artists therefore do not form a generation in Mannheim’s sense.

Three distinctive features seem to nevertheless be common among the artists born around 1980: access to new communicative tools, the experience of studio programmes (also known as artist-in-residence-programmes), and the orientation towards Douala. Unlike their predecessors, these artists had access to new means of communication early on in their careers. Although private landlines continued to be rare¹⁸ most Cameroonians had their own cellphone by the year 2000 and the Internet became accessible around the same time. It is noteworthy that Cameroon is one of the African countries with relatively good online connectivity, according to surveys,¹⁹ but the Internet was used by only three percent of the Cameroonian population in 2005²⁰ and by five to nine percent in 2014.²¹ For freelancing artists,

the Internet offers great potential insofar as it facilitates international communication and allows them to market their practice regardless of where they are geographically located.²² Furthermore, access to online information resources, such as open calls can gain artists far-reaching autonomy in organising their careers, which is likely why doual'art allowed artists to access email accounts through the NGO's facilities as early as the late 1990s.²³ By the time I conducted my interviews, almost all of the above listed artists considered mobile phones and the Internet their most important communication tools.

However, it is worth briefly examining the artists' user habits because they had to adapt to various challenges. By the year 2010, some of my interviewees had personal computers (second-hand laptops in many cases), but due to the expense and technical impediments hardly any of them had private Internet access before the rise of smart phones.²⁴ The artists were therefore dependent on renting computers at costly Internet cafés where they could access the Internet at rather low bit rates.²⁵ If they used these desktop computers to manipulate photos and portfolios, they risked losing data with every new power blackout. Despite these difficulties, many artists had become accustomed to sending summaries of exhibitions to far-away contacts by e-mail²⁶ and they tried to stay informed about their colleagues' projects through Facebook.²⁷ Some also said that they surfed the net to learn about art history.²⁸

Unlike many metropolitan artists or those living in the diaspora,²⁹ none of the artists permanently based in Cameroon had a personal website by 2010. This comes as no surprise considering that renting webspace, programming code, and designing websites tends to be expensive, especially in African contexts. An alternative possibility to upload CVs, artistic statements, and portfolios is the free webspace by providers, who finance their services with advertisements. The passionate computer user Leye seems to have been a pioneer in this respect. From the early 2000s onwards, Leye has variously uploaded images and text on commercial sites in order to showcase and advertise his work and the reasoning around it.³⁰ His credo was to remain based in Africa while contributing work to the global art circuit by means of the Internet.³¹ Unfortunately, this comprehensive documentation barely proved sustainable since these sites are taken offline as soon as ad clients decline.³² In sum, these observations suggest that

mobile phones, access to computers, and the Internet revolutionised the communication habits of visual artists in Cameroon and made it easier for artists to reach out for professional partners and audiences beyond their country. Yet financial constraints and other site-specific impediments clearly disadvantage these users in comparison to their colleagues working on the other side of the digital divide. As a consequence, my interlocutors showed varying levels of enthusiasm for these technologies, depending on their patience and tech savviness.

Artists born around 1980 also share the experience of studio programmes. Such working stipends, which often end in an exhibition, are generally awarded upon a portfolio-based selection process. They offer artists the opportunity to spend a fixed period of time (ranging from several weeks up to two years) in an appropriately equipped setting in order to focus on their practice while also discovering the new surroundings. Accommodation, travel costs, and a basic allowance are normally included in the stipend. For artists from Yaoundé and Douala, studio programmes were and remain a possibility to overcome the administrative and financial obstructions associated with international travels, while simultaneously gaining career-relevant visibility outside of their domestic context. This said, in structural terms, artist-in-residence programmes deserve to be criticised for a number of reasons. Charlotte Bydler has stressed that such programmes are commonly positioned in the artworld’s centres and that they disadvantage artists from poorer countries because “states usually only extend grants for studio programmes for citizens”,³³ while states like Cameroon do not invest in their artists in this way. And British philosopher Peter Osborne claims that nomadic artists from the periphery are made to embody a “market utopia of free movement” because art is “a kind of passport”³⁴ to them. Artists are said to enjoy this privilege only because they circulate as a form of variable capital, namely as art labour. I would add that many studio programmes exacerbate the economic precarity of visual artists due to their short duration and the working conditions they impose, while at the same time being a cheap form of city marketing because creativity has become a highly valued location factor.

It is clear from their CVs that many of the artists discussed in this chapter were headed for artist-in-residence programmes in European countries like Italy, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands

in the 2000s—as well as profiting from new studio programmes within Cameroon. The institutions that hosted them ranged from small artist-run venues, like ArtBakery in Bonendale near Douala, or Hotel Maria Kapel in the Netherlands, to well-funded institutions like Internationales Austausch- und Atelierprogramm Region Basel in Switzerland or the exclusive Royal Academy of Visual Arts in Amsterdam, better known as Rijksakademie.³⁵ The primary function of these institutions is to “present artists with opportunities of meeting international colleagues, gallerists, critics, and curators”,³⁶ according to Bydler. Whether an institution lives up to this expectation depends on its geographic location, its financial means, its networks, and other factors. The participation in studio programmes distinguishes the artists of this age group from elder generations, for whom similar mobility was still exceptional, yet like the case of the Internet, these programmes did not establish a concrete bond in Mannheim’s sense amongst them.

The professional focus on the city of Douala is the third and last commonality that links these artists. Readers may recall that Cameroon’s art scene was centred in Yaoundé’s foreign cultural institutes since the 1960s, while Douala was long considered a cultural desert. Artists who studied abroad would choose to move to Yaoundé upon their return in the 1970s and 80s, partly to make use of job opportunities provided by the government, while the emerging community of non-academic artists in Douala liked to imagine itself in opposition to the political capital. The shift of the centre of Cameroon’s art system to Douala came around the turn of the millennium thanks to the dynamism of local organisations like *doual’art* and Galérie MAM. Furthermore, the departure of Peter Anders—the aforementioned art loving director of the Goethe-Institut’s branch in Yaoundé—made the capital less attractive for artists.³⁷ The proximity of the national authorities in Yaoundé also proved less and less beneficial for artists, as the state did not invest in visual art. Rather, the increasing corruption motivated many artists to turn their back towards the capital in favour of Douala.³⁸ The harbour city’s fame as a place of transnational business in the gulf of Guinea—as well as its oppositional heritage—gained Douala a reputation as the liberal-minded metropolis of Cameroon, a perception that a journalist voiced as follows in my interview:

[C]’est ici où tout se passe! À Yaoundé c’est d’avantage la politique, les intrigues politiques, tout le monde est en situation d’attente de ce que le président va décider. À Douala les gens se battent pour eux-mêmes, (...) à Douala les gens sont libres dans la tête!³⁹

Due to this common perception—not to mention Douala’s ever more ambitious programming and its new triennale—Douala became a regional art hub with extensive transnational networks over the course of the 2000s.⁴⁰ The artist initiatives that began to operate there in the early 2000s provided further reasons for emerging artists to orient themselves towards Douala.

Artists’ Grassroots Initiatives

The role of art collectives and artist-run spaces in African contexts has not yet been academically investigated, but European sociologists have shown that European visual artists working under neoliberal auspices have myriad reasons to form groups. The Austrian sociologist Bernadette Loacker, for instance, argues with reference to the French sociologist Pierre-Michel Menger that artists in Europe resort to collectivism and self-organisation as a reaction to their typical economic precarity and to the complexity of their occupation. It is said that the “artist-market” pushes artists to remain up-to-date, flexible, and mobile—an effort that requires a high level of motivation despite little economic reward. As freelancers in a field with a surplus of labour, visual artists are furthermore exposed to a high professional risk, which they carry alone. Self-organisation can help to alleviate this pressure by sharing professionally relevant information and enabling the formation of work teams.⁴¹

Many art collectives also pool resources in order to initiate artist-run spaces. Although associated with all sorts of liabilities, such venues are a means of self-empowerment if we follow de Certeau’s claim that tactical agents become strategic agents by delimiting their own place and that the demarcation of the proper allows “to capitalize acquired advantages, to prepare future expansions, and to thus give oneself a certain independence with respect to the variability of circumstances”.⁴² Artist-run spaces facilitate exchange with peers and

with various audiences. Moreover, they enable artists to exhibit and to sell work independently from institutions, to share equipment or ideas, to host guests, and to raise funds for projects through events. Space-making is also an important goal in itself for representatives of the civil society in Africa. The author of the book *Creating Spaces* has confirmed this point on the basis of her case studies amongst art initiatives in different African countries:

Space-making forms an important basis for the direction taken by their work. The immense significance they all attach to establishing liberating artistic, cultural, social, cognitive, and professional spaces not only indicates the complexity of constrained and constraining framework conditions. It also points to a social will to create alternative options for orientation and action in the respective local working fields. This will is founded on the principle of interrelationality[.]⁴³

Viking Kanganyam and Koko Komegné pioneered the push to claim new spaces for art in Douala in the 1980s, as I was able to previously illustrate, and these artists continued to enrich non-art spaces with exhibitions and workshops in the 2000s.⁴⁴ While their temporary uses of such spaces lasted only for a few weeks, the portraits of the two artist-run spaces that follow will show that their *petits frères* took their work a step further by assuming para-institutional responsibilities on longer terms.

Before we get to the examples it is important to note two aspects of art collectives and artist-run-spaces that are particular to the context under consideration. Firstly, forming a group amounts to a political gesture in Cameroon because the right to associate was only formally acknowledged in 1991 and associations have proven instrumental in protecting engaged citizens from political prosecution even after that date.⁴⁵ Secondly, the deficiency of viable degree-granting institutions to train artists enhanced the relevance of the artist-run spaces in terms of art education. I will argue accordingly that the initiators of the artist-run spaces K-Factory and ArtBakery rethought and updated the *Système de Grands Frères* in the 2000s.

The Collective Cercle Kapsiki and the Artist-Run Space K-Factory (2005-2011)

One of Cameroon’s most durable art collectives is Cercle Kapsiki, which was founded by Koko Komegné’s former *petits frères* Blaise Bang, Salifou Lindou, Jules Wokam, Hervé Yamguen, and Hervé Youmbi. They were in their late twenties and early thirties when they registered their nonprofit artist association in 1998 and undertook their first interventions in the public space of Douala.⁴⁶ Together, they hoped to be powerful and transformative like Mount Kapsiki, a picturesque phallic peak in Cameroon’s North, as the following passage from one of my interviews underlines:

On dit en art plastique chaque personne est indépendant. (...) Mais nous, on se rend compte des difficultés qui sont les nôtres, que seuls nous pouvons rien! Ensemble on peut faire des choses, ensemble nous sommes une personnalité morale et ça change tout!⁴⁷

The artist and stage designer Jean-Christophe Lanquetin, a former *atelier* tutor, arranged for the Kapsiki members to spend a year at the École Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Strasbourg in 2000, which was their first contact with a university-level art school. Lanquetin expected the guests from Douala to inspire his French students with their talent for improvisation, thus creating a unique occasion for Cameroonian expertise to enrich European art students.⁴⁸ After their term, Blaise Bang remained in Strasbourg.

Upon the return of the other four, Cercle Kapsiki began to enrich the public space of New Bell, Douala’s most densely populated and poverty-stricken neighbourhood, by means of easily accessible art projects.⁴⁹ In 2003, for instance, the artist group co-organised a three-day festival with Lanquetin’s association Scur&°k, which they called *Scénographies Urbaines*, during which twenty artists from Europe and Africa realised installations and performances in the public space of New Bell.⁵⁰ In doing so, the Kapsiki artists succeeded in proving to their immediate neighbours that they made art for everybody, which was an urgent concern to them.⁵¹

So as to host their guests, the members of the collective used a modest, one-storey home near Hervé Yamguen’s family home during the first years. From 2005 onwards, they rented a two-storey high street shop in the same neighbourhood, which they named

K-Factory.⁵² This venue had a small exhibition space on the ground floor and a stockroom for artwork on the first floor. As the centre of Cercle Kapsiki's activities, K-Factory hosted video nights, as well as exhibitions of the founders and artists-in-residence. (Fig 38.1) In the first years, the latter were mainly foreigners who came with their own funding.⁵³

The most relevant activity for this book's argument is the fact that Cercle Kapsiki embarked on a two-fold educational mission from within K-Factory. By taking their activities to the street, the collective succeeded in winning the local youth for their cause. According to Hervé Youmbi, some young inhabitants of New Bell even attended exhibition openings of doual'art in the city's historic centre after having enjoyed the continuous presence of artists at work in their neighbourhood for almost a decade.⁵⁴ This lowering of art's social threshold also appeared politically relevant to the members of Cercle Kapsiki insofar as they expected youths who were exposed to art to become more sensitive adults:

Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui seront les dirigeants de demain. Et (...) dans le cadre de notre collectif nous essayons, nous aujourd'hui, de contribuer à faire naître des responsables sensibles de demain. Parce que nous trouvons que nos responsables d'aujourd'hui ne sont pas sensibles. S'ils étaient sensibles, ils comprendraient mieux de quoi il s'agit quand on parle d'art. Et si demain les responsables peuvent être sensibles, c'est le pays qui aura gagné!⁵⁵

The teachings of doual'art resonate in this mindset and the organisation remained an important stronghold for the artists of Cercle Kapsiki, also with regard to their individual exhibitions.

However, raising underprivileged citizens' awareness of art was not the only educational project undertaken by the members of Cercle Kapsiki. By the time I did my field research, their studio programme made a particular effort to reach out to aspiring artist residents of New Bell. With this programme, K-Factory offered support to both women and men artists, as well as to emerging creatives with applied practices like photography, fashion, and graphic design. This was made possible not least by the fact that Kapsiki member Jules Wokam had meanwhile built up a thriving career as a fashion designer.⁵⁶ According to each resident's orientation, a specific founding member of the Cercle Kapsiki volunteered to train the novice for a



Fig 38

38.1 Screening of artist videos at K-Factory, 2010.

38.2 Hervé Yamguen introducing the participants of K-Factory's studio programme, 2010.



Fig 39
Patrick Wokmeni, *Les Belles de New Bell*, 2006
digital photography, slide show or printed on dibond, series of twenty.

couple of months. These residencies ended with public presentations of the resulting work at K-Factory. Different one-off sponsors took on some of the cost thereof.⁵⁷ In 2010, I attended the opening of such an exhibition. Hervé Yamguen introduced the audience to the newcomers’ projects and acknowledged their achievements before having them speak individually, an empowering gesture. (Fig 38.2)

The career of Patrick Wokmeni, a native of New Bell who only completed primary school, exemplifies the conflation of the two educational strands that Cercle Kapsiki pursued. Wokmeni’s very first contact with visual artists took place in New Bell over the course of *Scénographies Urbaines*, as he testified:

J’ai rencontré une vidéaste française, qui était à Douala pour une scénographie. C’était en 2002, 2003. On me l’a présentée et je l’ai accompagnée dans les quartiers de la ville. Suite à cela j’ai connu l’artiste Hervé Yamguen au quartier, puis Philippe Niorthe, un photographe français, venu pour une résidence avec le collectif Kapsiki. Il m’a prêté sa caméra pour faire quelques images dans le quartier.⁵⁸

Wokmeni also met the French Magnum photographer Antoine d’Agata, who inspired him to do night shoots, within the framework of *Scénographies Urbaines*.⁵⁹ Wokmeni’s photo series *Les Belles de New Bell* (2006) is an early example of the personal style he has developed since. (Fig 39) This series pictures the ambivalence of the local nightlife, depicting scenes that hover between amusement and occasional prostitution. In 2008, Wokmeni was invited to the K-Factory residence and in the same year he captured rioting pupils in New Bell, thus creating a series that is known as *Émeute de la Faim*. Wokmeni continued his non-formal training with photography *ateliers* at the Centre Culturel Français and during a residency tutored by Joël Mpah Dooh in Bonendale, which was arranged by Galerie MAM in cooperation with MTM Foundation in 2009.⁶⁰ Together, these experiences prepared him for an international career as an artist specialised in photography, starting with his participation in The Bamako Encounters - The African Biennale of Photography in 2009. Wokmeni works in exile today in Belgium.⁶¹

According to Salifou Lindou, the idea for K-Factory’s studio programme for locals grew from his own experiences and those of his colleagues. Having become *grands frères* themselves, the Kapsikis sought to address the lack of galleries and art schools by creating space for

young artists to gain visibility while meeting and exchanging with peers.⁶² It is noteworthy that the Kapsiki artists also continued to be available for their *petits frères* in their respective studios, like their predecessors in the 1980s and 1990s. Boris Nzébo, for instance, said that he received coaching from Hervé Yamguen independently of K-Factory in the mid 2000s, as well as from Koko Komegné.⁶³ The Kapsiki artists have persisted on the scene as individual *grands frères* beyond 2011, the year when the collective was dissolved and the artist-run space K-Factory was abandoned. The growing individual obligations of the founding members motivated this decision. By way of conclusion, it is important to acknowledge how this collective's radically localised approach to the training of artists challenged the social, spatial, and intellectual exclusivity of Contemporary Art.

Incubating Visions: The Birth and Educational Impact of ArtBakery (2003-2013)

The following section is dedicated to another artist-run space with a great educational impact, ArtBakery. The arts collective "Dreamers" alias "Les Rêveurs du Kamer" helped to incubate this project and shall therefore be briefly introduced here. Unlike Cercle Kapsiki, the Dreamers collective gathered in Yaoundé and involved artists of different ages, origins, educational backgrounds, and levels of establishment. Members included the well-travelled academic Goddy Leye; Armand Meko (born 1969), who taught at the IFA from 1992 onwards before leaving for studies at l'Ecole Supérieure d'Art Contemporain in Lyon in 2002; the Belgium Stephaan Dheedene (born 1975);⁶⁴ Jean-Marc Siangue (born 1975), who was enrolled at the APHA and later abandoned art for a career as a graphic designer; Siangue's fellow student Achille Komguem, who was interested in video art and followed Goddy Leye as a *petit frère*; and Simon Soha, who was native of Cotonou.

Like Cercle Kapsiki, the Dreamers wanted to make visual art more inclusive, as the following retrospective description suggests:

On était un certain nombre et on voulait faire des travaux les plus osés au Cameroun! Et intéresser le public le plus banal, le plus commun, le plus simple, pas faire un travail osé pour intéresser un public de spécialistes!⁶⁵

Yet beyond this joint ambition, members had different expectations from the collective: the younger artists needed support establishing themselves in the local and transnational art circuit through exhibiting at venues like doual’art, whereas Goddy Leye wanted to surround himself by inspiring peers in order to make it worthwhile for him to stay in Cameroon.⁶⁶ During their inaugural meeting that took place in 1999,⁶⁷ the Dreamers therefore came to a remarkably pragmatic agreement about the function and duration of their collective:

Le plan était de travailler ensemble deux ans et qu’au bout de deux ans chaqu’un ait un projet. (...) [P]arce qu’on avait discuté et on s’était rendu compte que l’expérience disait qu’un groupe ici reste en moyen trois ans. Après trois ans on commence à s’ennuyer, et c’étaient des tensions, on ne pouvait plus faire grande chose.⁶⁸

Considering the fates of historical arts collectives in Cameroon, the Dreamers decided to act as an incubator for those “iconoclast and innovative”⁶⁹ long-term projects that each of them wanted to carry on individually after the collective’s dissolution. Goddy Leye’s ArtBakery was one of the ideas that took shape in the meetings of the Dreamers.

During his residency at the Rijksakademie between January 2001 and December 2002, Leye continued to nurture the dream to create an artist-run space in Douala to share his professional experience. His idea fell on fertile ground in Amsterdam because the Rijksakademie sustains R.A.I.N., “a network of (visual) artists’ initiatives from countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America”. This network supports former residents of the Rijksakademie in creating “an alternative—not yet existing—place in their countries for (young) artists to discuss, produce, and/or present their work”,⁷⁰ while encouraging these initiators to take into account the peculiar logic of creative processes and the socio-political context in their countries. Artist initiatives that are situated in the periphery of the artworld can thus access Dutch funding, as well as connect to a ready-made global network of peers. R.A.I.N. could bolster Leye’s goal “to help birth[ing] a veritable local arts scene”.⁷¹

Upon his return from Amsterdam in 2003, Leye chose the village of Bonendale on the banks of the Wouri River outside of Douala as his new base. The majority of Bonendale’s brick houses stems from the German colonial period. (Fig 40.1, 40.2) Bonendale had developed into a middle class holiday resort between the optimistic

post-independence years and the economic crisis, but its infrastructure has since fallen into decay. Its rural pace made this village attractive to artists, despite the bumpy motorcycle ride that leads to a chronically overcrowded highway, the only connection into town. Joël Mpah Dooh had first settled there in the 1990s and then convinced Goddy Leye to join him. Justine Gaga and Louis Epée followed, as did a number of artists-to-be and artisans that cater to the city's tourist market, hence Bonendale's reputation as an artist village.

In this village, Leye rented a small, whitewashed bungalow with simple facilities positioned on a lush lawn on a street corner close to the river and named it ArtBakery. (Fig 40.3) Two bedrooms were reserved for Leye and his sister Estella Mbuli and the third one became the guest room. In addition to housing a makeshift kitchen comprising a gas cooker and water canisters, plus a large shelf with Leye's collection of imported art books, the small hall could also be equipped to host performances, discussions, artist talks, seminars, and visitors' presentations. Meals and conversations took place on the shaded, airy veranda that opened to the street corner. It seems as if the bungalow's accessible layout helped to make ArtBakery a crossroads for artists from Bonendale and beyond,⁷² which was precisely what Leye had hoped for. Leye even symbolically inscribed the Bonendale station within the network of metropolitan destinations by borrowing the characteristic roundel logo of the London subway for a print multiple that he created in 2009. (Fig 41)

The programme that Leye outlines on ArtBakery's website in 2005 sheds light on the strictly pedagogic impetus behind this artist-run-space.⁷³ It is noteworthy that Leye drew upon the language of development rhetoric in his descriptions of the major lines of the programme, which were partly supported by Dutch funding partners. Leye's descriptions also make clear that ArtBakery reached out to various social groups, even if it couldn't implement all of the ideas. For instance, journalists were meant to qualify as future art critics within a year through participating in a series of two-week modules entitled "ArtDaily" that were to be carried out in collaboration with doual'art. A second line of programming, the "Nursery" also remained unrealised, although Leye had here devised a full-fledged bottom-up tactic to democratise art education in Cameroon, beginning with Bonendale's primary school.⁷⁴ Instead, artists associated with ArtBakery



Fig 40

40.1 Colonial remnants in Bonendale.

40.2 The shore of the Wouri river in Bonendale.

40.3 ArtBakery in March 2010.



Fig 41
Goddy Leye, *Bonendale*, 2009, digital print.
Peter Herrmann Galerie, Berlin.

offered free summer courses for approximately fifty village kids each year from 2005 onwards. These courses encouraged experiments with drawing, painting, sculpture, clay work, literature, and moving images. Each course closed with a public ceremony during which the children exhibited their results and were awarded diplomas in order to enhance the parents’ appreciation of their artistic education.⁷⁵ Teenagers in Bonendale also began to express interest in an artistic career after witnessing the coming and going of foreigners at the artists’ studios, which prompted ArtBakery to begin offering courses on video shooting and simple video editing (VCD format). Their instruction at ArtBakery was in line with Leye’s explicit concern that teenagers receive a realistic impression of artistic professionalism.⁷⁶

Most importantly, ArtBakery offered diverse learning opportunities to emerging artists. To begin with, the “Bakery” was “a small production unit allowing the development of multimedia works of art. It [provided] artists with tec[h]nical assistance, advice and follow-up in their media-arts related projects”, as Leye wrote.⁷⁷ According to the website announcement, the Bakery’s technical equipment included cameras, audio recording kits, lighting hardware, computers, and software. This infrastructure was meant to encourage artists to engage with new technologies and it did—Alioum Moussa’s exhibition *Retouches du Mémoire* in 2003 was a clear example thereof. For this show, Moussa had digitalised photographs from photo albums of families in Bonendale and then reworked them using Photoshop.⁷⁸ Leye’s own enthusiasm for video art and computer technology certainly inspired this part of the programme.

The ArtBakery also offered what they called the “Portfolio Program” or “mini-residency project”, which invited young artists “to develop a new body of work and to develop a more professional approach to one’s presentation, so as to enable them to smoothly get into the art world”.⁷⁹ It is noteworthy that Leye chose the Portfolio Program’s participants without regard to their geographic origins and without formal selection process. Their invitation was based solely upon his own assessment of their ambition and the basis of his networks in Cameroon and beyond.⁸⁰ These guests were required to find the means to travel to Bonendale themselves, while accommodation and food was provided whenever the funding situation allowed.⁸¹ The primary function of the Portfolio Program was to give space to artists

because Leye had observed that the tiny spaces that aspiring artists inhabited at home limited their self-realisation, as did their parents' disapproval of their artistic inclination.⁸² ArtBakery could provide both physical and mental space to its residents, as Leye explained:

C'est un espace physique, parce qu'il y a vraiment d'espace là bas, à Bonendale. C'est [en plus] l'espace mental parce qu'ils sont en sécurité et ils peuvent explorer des choses qu'ils n'oseraient pas de faire chez eux, y compris les sujets qui peuvent paraître tabou.⁸³

Leye pointed to generational hierarchies, the representation of the naked body, women's professional ambitions, and to ugliness as examples of such taboos—issues with which ArtBakery residents were encouraged to engage in a subtle way.⁸⁴ Ginette Daleu, for instance, recalled in my interview that Leye had emboldened her to leave behind her taste for the decorative and to explore the aesthetics of places as imperfect as Douala's neighbourhood Bessengué City. The respective collages and photographs eventually became Daleu's signature style.⁸⁵

Furthermore, Leye insisted that artists hosted at ArtBakery spend considerable time critically rethinking their practice and reading. Boris Nzébo, for instance, discovered his predecessors in the historical Pop Art movement by means of ArtBakery's bookshelf. This reading taught the emerging artist how to take art history into account in his practice:

[Ma lecture de l'histoire de l'art] m'a permis de savoir comment m'orienter dans ma direction, pour ne pas être en train de copier ce que d'autres ont fait. Puisque tout a déjà été fait.⁸⁶

ArtBakery residents were also sent to doual'art with the task to read. It was here that Justine Gaga encountered an English volume of E. H. Gombrich's *Story of Art*, a standard narrative of Western art history, and also took inspiration from the biographies of Piet Mondrian, Andy Warhol, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and William Kentridge. Gaga had saved money to spend almost a year in residence at the ArtBakery between 2005 and 2006, a period during which she was also able to identify her main subject—social isolation—and to explore video and photo as expressive tools to address it.⁸⁷ By means of this reading policy, Leye wanted to enhance the resident artists' discursive agency and to counter the anti-academic tendency that he despised, as the following quote suggests:

[Les artistes] ne lisent pas, ils ne vont pas voir les expositions dans les galeries, en prétendant qu'ils sont des artistes naturellement. Ça c'est faux! Ça n'a jamais existé, ni ici, ni ailleurs. Moi, je crois pas en ça! Moi, je crois qu'un artiste c'est quelqu'un qui est curieux, qui se forme en permanence, qui cherche à comprendre, qui comprend des choses qui dépassent ce qu'il vient de comprendre pour aller toujours plus loin.⁸⁸

Hence, ArtBakery was also a tool to mold residents according to Leye's ideal of the artist as an intellectual.

Two week “MasterClasses” complemented ArtBakery's production unit and studio programme. These courses consisted of “seminars, workshops, talks and conferences”⁸⁹ and resembled the *ateliers*, with the exception that ArtBakery worked with “masters” from the global South whenever possible. An example is the Indian artist Sonia Khurana (born in 1968), a graduate of the Delhi College of Art, of the Royal College of Art in London, and a fellow alumna of the Rijksakademie.⁹⁰ Khurana taught a two-part MasterClass on video in 2006. Interestingly, it was part and parcel of Leye's conception of the MasterClasses that the learners could challenge the master and engage in “a questioning of his [or her] traditional practice in an environment where experiment reigns supreme”.⁹¹ This emphasis on the legitimacy of criticality towards the authority of a teacher or a *grand frère* was radically new, as was the astute glocal synthesis that informed ArtBakery's programme in general.

In fact, when conceiving of the didactics for ArtBakery, Leye blended the best of the hierarchical *Système de Grands Frères*, of Prim'Art's and the Dreamers' peer-to-peer sessions, and infrastructures and formats that are typical of art schools and studio programmes in Europe and the U.S., as the following quote evidences:

Et donc j'ai pris tout ces expériences là, pour dire à un moment où je m'installe (...) à Bonendale: ArtBakery va fonctionner sur ce principe là, en le rendant encore plus professionnel! Pas nécessairement en ayant une grande salle avec le microphone et le professeur qui est de l'autre côté, parce que ça ne marche pas forcément, mais dans des échanges informelles. Si c'est bien organisé, [ArtBakery] peut assurer un complément de formation et faire en sorte que les gens soient de plus en plus professionnelles.⁹²

This quote furthermore implies that Leye consciously opted to structure artistic learning at ArtBakery in a non-formal manner. It is

noteworthy that this choice also corresponds to his belief in the equality of learners and teachers, of children and adults, and of younger and elder artists. This conviction amounts to a political statement in Cameroon, a context that is structured by age hierarchies.⁹³

In place of a summary I shall point to a number of further reasons why ArtBakery must be considered a space of innovation that did indeed open “horizons of the not-yet”.⁹⁴ First of all, ArtBakery was meant to become a stronghold against the brain drain in the artistic domain in Africa. Leye demonstrated with ArtBakery that it was possible to be based in Cameroon, even in a village, and to remain connected to the artworld at large, thus opposing this dangerous trend.⁹⁵ What is more, Leye could facilitate access to institutions far away from Bonendale for his *petits frères* and *soeurs*. Regarding my earlier comments concerning *petites soeurs*, it is noteworthy that Leye placed particular emphasis on involving women in the running of ArtBakery because he was well aware of the conservative notions of gender that restricted women to the domestic realm and prevented them from professionalising as artists, or pushed them into pursuing their practice as amateurs.⁹⁶ He involved a number of women as resident artists, curators, MasterClass participants, and tutors for children’s workshops. A selected overview of participants includes practitioners from different parts of Africa and Europe: the artists Ginette Daleu (Cameroon), Justine Gaga (Cameroon), Dunja Herzog (Switzerland), Bill Kouélany (Congo), as well as the art historians Ruth Afane Belinga (Cameroon) and Adeline Chapelle (France). Leye’s sister and Justine Gaga, who had taken up residence in the neighbourhood, oversaw the day-to-day management of ArtBakery, especially when Leye was travelling. Yet despite these efforts to place ArtBakery’s fortune on numerous shoulders, Leye’s singular bilingualism, his transnational network, and his charisma kept him in the position of the sole mastermind behind this initiative. It seems as if this dependence on Leye’s persona made it impossible to sustain ArtBakery after his sudden death in 2011. Leye’s attempt to build a well-connected and sustainable structure for artists’ non-formal training at the periphery of the artworld must therefore ultimately be considered a failure.

The previous passages on K-Factory and ArtBakery have introduced two artist-run spaces operating in and around Douala that adjusted the terms of the non-formal training of artists to the

requirements of the 2000s. Both initiatives grew from art collectives whose members belong to the 1990 generation, who had travelled and were well connected within and beyond Cameroon, even if ArtBakery’s bilingual setup opened it up to larger networks. These transnational networks were important in providing both moral support and selective financial support to maintain these artist-run spaces for a while. It is worthwhile to note that their orientation towards diversified audiences also fit a trend in the European and American artworld that the art historian Claire Bishop has summarised as the Social Turn, a topic I will return to later.⁹⁷

The studio programmes of K-Factory and ArtBakery were of crucial importance for the careers of those artists born around 1980, as the quotes from my interviews have illustrated—an understandable assessment considering that these programmes placed young artists at sites where other colleagues circulated, thus creating occasions for exchange between peers as well as granting the concentrated attention of several *grands frères* (and temporary *grandes soeurs*) over extended periods of time. These residencies gave form to the reciprocal engagement of elder artists with younger ones, while the final exhibitions permitted for the outcome of this exchange to become visible and assessable. These findings sustain the thesis that artist-run spaces like K-Factory and ArtBakery subtly formalised and updated the *Système de Grands Frères*.

Artistic Knowledge Sharing through Projects

I will now briefly consider two collaborative artistic projects, a collective trip and an artist newspaper. These projects tested new medial solutions that fit their subequatorial context in order to respond to the growing importance of access to information, mobility, and networking—and thus contributed to the training of the new artist generation. The project as an artistic format requires an introductory remark. In this chapter, I follow Claire Bishop’s definition of an art project as an “open-ended, post-studio, research-based, social process [that is] extending over time and [is] mutable in form”.⁹⁸ According to Bishop, the rise of the project format in the U.S. and Europe was

intrinsically linked to the Social Turn in art, which inspired many artists to turn away from the production of finite objects for the white cube in favour of collaborative, process-oriented forms of working. Moreover, the general flexibilisation of labour made the project format “a survival strategy for creative individuals under the uncertain labour conditions of neoliberalism”.⁹⁹

In the context of Africa, the rise of the project era is furthermore related to specific structural conditions, as Iolanda Pensa has pointed out. Pensa holds the institutions that fund culture in Africa responsible for entrenching the project format as the default means to organise cultural production since the 1990s on this continent. For these funding bodies, which are usually installed outside the African continent and are said to follow the model of the World Bank, the most important development funder, the project format generated the convenience to control the orientation of artistic work by means of the design of their calls for proposals. These calls are said to privilege projects oriented towards the development paradigms defined by the UN’s Millennium Goals.¹⁰⁰ Although not independent of material constraints, I will show that the initiators of the projects *Exit Tour* and *DiARTgonale* were able to circumvent this dominant ideological framing that comes with certain funds because they operated with very small, patchworked budgets.

“*Exit Tour*: Le Douala-Dakar de l’art contemporain” (2006)

The project *Exit Tour* was a collective voyage from Douala to Dakar that took place from March 13th to May 28th, 2006. Participants were Ginette Daleu, Justine Gaga, Alioum Moussa, LucFoster Diop, Achille Komguem, Dunja Herzog (born 1976),¹⁰¹ and Goddy Leye.¹⁰² This trip, which was planned at ArtBakery, was undertaken without a communal project budget and thus escaped the logic described by Pensa. Some of the participants were able to obtain funds from the foundation Art Moves Africa, while those who had not submitted their applications in time travelled with their own savings.¹⁰³ Dunja Herzog was the only member of the group who was able to obtain European funding, which she did through the Futurum Stiftung and Kunstkredit Basel Stadt.¹⁰⁴ The trip’s ultimate destination was the opening of the seventh Biennale de Dakar on May 5th, 2006.

Rather than considering *Exit Tour* in relation to a strand of Conceptual Art that took the form of artist travels since the 1980s or analysing the trip as an artistic performance, as other authors have done,¹⁰⁵ I shall instead present this project as a “dialogical artwork” or a “conversation piece”, following the writing of the US-American art historian Grant Kester who has importantly shaped the discourse on the Social Turn. This theoretical framing enables me to highlight how *Exit Tour* formed the participants’ subjectivities within a durational setup “through a cumulative process of exchange and dialogue”,¹⁰⁶ to use Kester’s words, as well as affecting various other communities of viewers.

It is noteworthy that the artists chose to travel with buses and risky boats rather than airplanes for *Exit Tour*, a choice that was motivated less by economic concerns than by conceptual considerations. The many stops of this slow mode of travel created occasions “to meet other artists, who live in a similar socio-cultural context, and to thus set up an artist network in Western Africa”, as the initiators put it.¹⁰⁷ The idea was to overcome the artistic isolation experienced in Cameroon and to engage in discussions with representatives of West African art scenes by means of workshops and small exhibitions at art centres and artist-run spaces positioned along the travel route to Dakar.¹⁰⁸ Similar occasions for African artists to systematically meet their colleagues on the continent are rare, as analysis of the art and infrastructure of the region has noted.¹⁰⁹

Major stops of *Exit Tour* were Espace Queen Arlette in Cotonou, Benin, a restaurant and hotel willing to host the members of *Exit Tour* and their roundtables, performances and an exhibition; the Centre Culturel Denyigba in Lomé, Togo, where Dunja Herzog directed a performance workshop; the Contemporary Art Foundation in Accra, Ghana; Fondation Olorun in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and the Conservatoire des Arts, Metiers et Multimedia in Bamako, Mali, to only name a few. At these venues and beyond the participants of *Exit Tour* organised small exhibitions and engaged in discussions with local colleagues by means of workshops.¹¹⁰

The setup of *Exit Tour* matches Grant Kester’s understanding of dialogical artworks as practices that are “concerned with collaborative, and potentially emancipating forms of dialogue and conversation”¹¹¹ insofar as the encounters en route facilitated exchange regarding

artistic forms of expression like performance and the challenges of maintaining artist-run spaces in Africa. Yet, unlike Kester's examples of conversation pieces in which artists have involved marginalised communities, the parties that profited from the exchange engendered by *Exit Tour* were the visual artists themselves. Take for example the case of Alioum Moussa, who understood that works of visual art could be entirely immaterial over the course of *Exit Tour*:

[O]n s'est rendu compte que depuis qu'on a démarré ce voyage-là jusqu'à l'arrivée, on n'a pas peint. On n'a peint aucune toile, on n'a pas vraiment fait une oeuvre palpable. Donc on s'est rendu compte que l'oeuvre ce n'est pas forcément ce qu'on touche, ou bien ce qu'on voit, mais c'est aussi la matière grise, la réflexion. Et c'est comme ça qu'on commence maintenant à conceptualiser.¹¹²

In retrospect, Justine Gaga also considers *Exit Tour* to be a personal "turning point" of "capital importance" because she gained a new sense of belonging through the trip:

Je crois qu'*Exit Tour* a beaucoup apporté pour ma carrière [d']aujourd'hui parce que j'ai eu l'impression d'avoir fait le tour de beaucoup, beaucoup de pays en Afrique et maintenant je comprends que les problèmes que je pouvais avoir restent les mêmes que ceux des artistes d'ailleurs. Aussi le fait d'échanger, de voir dans quels contextes ils travaillent et comment ils vivent... Beaucoup ne vivent pas de l'art, certainement, parce que c'est vraiment pénible.¹¹³

Hence, *Exit Tour* put Gaga's own precarious economic situation as an artist into perspective, which she had tackled successfully through her first job as a house painter. Gaga's testimony furthermore suggests that her participation in *Exit Tour* led her to positively identify as an artist working in Africa. Kester frames this experience as an "empathetic insight" that enables individuals to "know and feel their connectedness with others".¹¹⁴ Moreover, the relationships that the travelling artists built with other artists working in Benin, Togo, and Mali deepened in the following years when these acquaintances from *Exit Tour* visited Cameroon, for instance in order to participate in a video MasterClass at ArtBakery that Gaga organised in 2013. The "provisional sense of collectivity" (Kester), that *Exit Tour* had symbolically established, thus turned into a sustainable network.

Exit Tour would be a less interesting artwork had it not also affected other communities of viewers. In keeping with the processual



Fig 42

42.1 The *Exit Tour* logo on the website <http://exitour.netfirms.com>.

42.2 *Exit Tour* stickers on a wall of Les dépôts de Bamako, Bamako, Mali.

42.3 Alioum Moussa with an *Exit Tour* merchandising bag.

nature of their project, the participants repeatedly updated the project's website along their way in order to announce their next stops and events, thus potentially addressing audiences everywhere.¹¹⁵ Additionally, *Exit Tour* also left various physical traces in a variety of media in the cities that the artists traversed. In an effort to raise additional funds for their trip and awareness for their project, the design-savvy Moussa and some other participants decided to produce merchandising items along their way. T-shirts, cotton bags, posters, and stickers promoted the project's weblink next to the characteristic logo with the silhouettes of the seven artists with their luggage, lined up as a caravan. (Fig 42) A set of these traces is preserved in Dominique Malaquais' private collection in Paris and awaits more detailed aesthetic analysis at a later point.

An unforeseen hindrance towards the end of *Exit Tour* made the restricted mobility of African artists strikingly visible. Due to bureaucratic impediments at the Senegalese border, the travelling artists ended up missing the biennale's opening, except for Dunja Herzog, who had a Swiss passport. While the Cameroonian artists from the group waited at the border for an official invitation to the biennale to be issued, which came three days too late for the opening, Herzog represented the project in Dakar with merchandising items and "Wanted" posters.¹¹⁶ These interventions highlighted the Swiss artist's privileged position with regard to funding, transnational mobility, and access to important networking occasions. Obviously, the opening of the Dakar biennale was the most suitable platform to publicise this issue. It can therefore be assumed that this appearance of *Exit Tour* in Dakar engendered "a more complex understanding of, and empathy for that community [i.e. African visual artists] among a broader public",¹¹⁷ which is the primary function of discursive artworks, according to Kester. As an exemplary project of artistic self-empowerment, *Exit Tour* has also been featured in the exhibition *The Global Contemporary* (2011) at the ZKM in Karlsruhe, Germany, which I will return to later.

"*DiARTgonale: Ouvrir les Portes de l'Imaginaire*" (2007 – 2009)

In Cameroon, the freedom of press is a democratic achievement of the early 1990s. Although still threatened by governmental censorship,

the print editions of private newspapers have remained an important information medium since. This context begins to explain the importance of the Francophone quarterly *DiARTgonale*, which was the first Cameroonian newspaper that specialised in art, and on culture more generally. The artist Achille Komguem developed this “Pan-African, educational journal of opinion and reflection on art”¹¹⁸ in 2002 with the support of the Dreamers, but *DiARTgonale* only went to print in January 2007. Alioum Moussa gave *DiARTgonale* its pragmatic look, which is similar to that of other newspapers produced by means of digital desktop publishing. (Fig 43) The eight to twelve pages of each issue were printed in an edition of 1000 or 2000 on a twice folded, non-stapled A2 format of recycled paper. The issues were printed either in black or two colours, therefore they were rather cheap to produce and could be sold for the relatively low price of 500 CFA per copy. Of the four issues of *DiARTgonale* that I have in my archive, two were financed exclusively by money collected amongst artists in Cameroon.¹¹⁹ The other two received support from two *grands frères* in the Diaspora, namely the Swiss-based journalist Lamia Meddeb and the Belgium-based artist Pascale Marthine Tayou, as well as from the French Fondation Blachere.¹²⁰

Like *Exit Tour*, also *DiARTgonale* was intended as an artwork by its initiator Komguem, but was retrospectively perceived as a failure in this respect:

[J]’avais aussi l’envie de faire de ça pas un journal, mais un projet personnel, une sorte d’oeuvre, un truc, un projet. (...) [J]’ai fonctionné pendant deux ans, sans véritablement avoir le sentiment que j’avançais comme je voulais et j’ai décidé d’arrêter à un moment.¹²¹

Hence, *DiARTgonale* went out of regular print in 2009.¹²² Rather than foregrounding *DiARTgonale’s* artistic value, I will now focus on two aspects of this edition project that are of particular importance regarding my investigation of the circulation of artistic knowledge. Of foremost importance is *DiARTgonale’s* role in disseminating career-relevant information amongst peers, and secondly its success in establishing a written discourse on art and art history in Cameroon, which involves academic and non-academic artists, as well as art historians.

Loacker has stressed that the access to information is crucial for artists’ individual careers since the field of art has become highly



Fig 43
DiARTgonale 01 (2007): cover recto and verso.

competitive.¹²³ *DiARTgonale* provided information on national and transnational calls for residencies, exhibitions, and projects in a rubric called “vitrine”, precisely because artists in Cameroon’s cities started to feel this pressure as well in the 2000s. The resulting tensions had chiefly motivated Achille Komguem to edit *DiARTgonale*, as the following anecdote shows. By 2004, Komguem had managed to build a career as an artist. He travelled regularly, took part in the Dakar biennale and was awarded with the first prize of the UNESCO Visual Arts Award, for instance.¹²⁴ As a consequence, less successful colleagues started to suspect him of illegitimate tricks, as Komguem recalled:

C’étaient des attaques déjà: ‘C’est pas normal! Qu’est-ce qui se passe que ce soit toujours lui? Comment ça se passe?’¹²⁵

Komguem reacted to what he perceived as a lack of information by explaining the system of open calls for studio programmes, biennales, and *ateliers* to his colleagues. Apparently, Komguem also systematically informed his peers about the respective deadlines, both by word of mouth and by means of posts in the mentioned artist-run spaces.¹²⁶

Interestingly, Komguem was not the only one to note the difficulties that some artists had in keeping up with the pace of technological and professional innovation around the turn of the Millennium. In 2008, Lionel Manga has similarly stressed the considerable professional commitment and the diverse skills that are required from artists in order to succeed in partaking in studio programs abroad. Artists have to pass a “conceptual filter” according to Manga; they need to be able to frame their practice discursively and to formulate a project that matches the expectations of the respective far-away founders. Further obstacles to overcome are the Internet as a skill-intensive tool with its site-specific flaws of low bit rates and high cost, as well as Cameroon’s obsolete and corrupt bureaucracy that can complicate transnational travel considerably.¹²⁷ Hence, *DiARTgonale* was a much-needed means to share information and to alleviate those challenges associated with access to the emergent global field of art and the digital revolution. It is noteworthy that this journal also sought to democratise certain computer skills by means of short, illustrated tutorials on the use of artistically relevant digital tools like the programme *Illustrator*.¹²⁸

In terms of discourse, it was the explicit intention of *DiARTgonale*’s editor to “confirm the legitimacy of the success of some artists” and

to engage in a “very critical reflection on the art scene as a whole”.¹²⁹ *DiARTgonale*’s pioneering role as a Cameroonian platform for written debates on art and artistic quality is my second topic here. The rotating contributors to the six regular issues of *DiARTgonale* reflected on current debates in Cameroon’s art system, such as the new copyright law. These issues also portrayed individual artists from Yaoundé, Douala, and from the diaspora by means of interviews, reports of studio visits, or by their answers to a questionnaire that reoccurred in every issue. Additionally, *DiARTgonale* published reviews of exhibitions and biennales, artists’ reports of sojourns in studio programmes abroad, critical reflections on the economic struggles of Cameroonian artists, and articles on the national art history. On these pages, emerging visual artists could gain an understanding about the complexity of their professional endeavour.

It is important to mention that *DiARTgonale* has also created a link between practitioners and theoreticians. The editor’s familiarity with both the communities of the informally taught and the university trained-art professionals made this possible. Aside from texts and essays by Yamguem, Leye and Manga, the alumni of the university department for visual art covered art-historical topics in a more academic style, often struggling to establish connections between historical artworks, modern-style monuments of the post-independence years, and manifestations of the récup-trend of the 1990s.¹³⁰ For many art historians, these short articles were their first publications beyond the university level. Hence, we can retain that *DiARTgonale* has also bolstered the emergent discipline of Cameroonian art history.

DiARTgonale stands out within the context of my research as a singular artistic attempt at formalising the flow of professionally relevant information, knowledge, and know-how in written form—establishing a medium of peer-evaluation for artistic quality and providing access to a national art history in a context without operative museums and comparable publications. Unfortunately, *DiARTgonale* ceased producing regular editions relatively quickly, which demonstrates once more that such under-financed and privately run projects depend on the enthusiasm of their founders, regardless of the collective and collaborative efforts that are needed to make them possible.¹³¹

When assessing the impact of K-Factory, Dreamers, ArtBakery, *Exit Tour*, and *DiARTgonale* in 2010, Goddy Leye has summarised:

[T]hese collectives developed projects that extended beyond the realm of simple exhibitions into that of engaged reflection.¹³²

My research has furthermore shown that these “reflections” brought about new solutions to promote visual art amongst the urban population, in primary schools, and in a village, in addition to reforming the non-formal vocational training of artists. The initiators of these projects took the rich local history of non-academic training into account in their educational programming, including the *Système de Grands Frères*, the *ateliers*, art history seminars, and a panoply of projects from the 1990s and early 2000s that facilitated learning-by-doing, while also adopting the principle of the studio programmes that some had observed abroad. Thus, the grassroots initiatives helped to ease professional challenges with regard to the supply of training, information, and new technologies and imagined viable ways to better connect with other practitioners on all geographic levels. Some of them also understood that the new transnational networks and increasing mobility engendered a need for more discursive agency amongst young artists and they acted accordingly by encouraging young artists to read, write, and travel. The sum of these aspects undergirds Leye’s assessment that these initiatives were important innovators with regard to the non-formal training of artists in Cameroon.

Let me close here with one more remark: the artist-run spaces and projects that I have discussed have often been referred to as artworks. It would therefore be worthwhile to consider all of them as types of socially engaged art, an art form whose medium are social relations.¹³³ Socially engaged art is a wide field of practice and discourse that also includes “new genre public art”¹³⁴, conversation, and other participatory practices,¹³⁵ as well as the so-called Relational Aesthetics.¹³⁶ Due to my focus on artistic training, I have only pointed to the potential of interpreting these projects as art in the case of *Exit Tour*. So as to engage in this kind of interpretation in a meaningful way, future analyses of these and further coeval artistic endeavours like the project *Bessengué City* (2002)¹³⁷ should follow a postulate of Bishop¹³⁸ and evaluate the specific aesthetic experiences that these artworks have generated, rather than only reinforcing their initiators’ ethical considerations.

So far, this chapter has given little attention to finite art works. But in fact, the aesthetic production of Cameroonian artists has once

more diversified in the 2000s. The medial complexity of these artworks started to challenge the boundaries of conventional genres like painting, photography, video, installation, sculpture, and performance and moved towards what Osborne has called a “transcategorical ontology of materializations”.¹³⁹ Doual’art remained the primary location for the presentation of these aesthetic experiments throughout the 2000s, but K-Factory, ArtBakery, and Galérie MAM/MTN Foundation were also important permanent exhibition spaces, as well as temporary spaces initiated by other artists mentioned earlier in the chapter. Select artworks that were shown at these venues will conclude the second part of this chapter, which is dedicated to local interpretations of Contemporary Art.

Becoming a Contemporary Artist

The following section discusses what Contemporary Art means to different people. I would like to begin by drawing attention to a gap between the use of this label in the day-to-day life of cultural producers and in the academic discourse. In daily parlance, Contemporary Art is an all-encompassing keyword that translates harmoniously from one language to another, as I have experienced myself. Before engaging in my research on Cameroon, I used to work as a curator at the Fonds Régional de l’Art Contemporain in the French city Dunkerque and prior to that I participated in a curatorial training in Amsterdam, at an international institution for Contemporary Art, or “hedendaagse kunst”. In this context I visited public institutions, private collections, galleries, curators, and artists in Belgium, England, Romania, and India. Although these professionals promoted very diverse types of art, they univocally referred to them as Contemporary Art. Back in Germany “zeitgenössische Kunst” was used synonymously with the elder term “Bildende Kunst” when I finished my art studies in 2005.

In fact, when I arrived in Douala in 2010, nobody challenged me on this terminology either. Rather, I found doual’art, a “centre d’art contemporain”¹⁴⁰ on site. Wherever I went it was indeed as if “no one [was] proud to be contemporary, and no one [was] ashamed”¹⁴¹, as some opinion leaders from the professional field of Contemporary

Art have put it. Yet my reading of the academic debates on Contemporary Art made clear that this everyday usage conceals certain incongruities. In fact, there is no theoretical common ground to Contemporary Art, not even amongst experts from the same place or region. The following survey is evidence thereof, as well as of various efforts to tackle Contemporary Art’s penchant for a belated universalism.¹⁴²

Theoretical debates on the term Contemporary Art have taken place for some twenty-five years now at the interstices of art history, art criticism, anthropology, and curatorial studies. Diverse authors have since attempted to grasp this phenomenon through exhibitions, symposia, and books. For pragmatic reasons I will only briefly summarise some survey publications here. The first of two contrasting positions from the late 1980s and 1990s that I shall introduce is the often reprinted edition *L’Art Contemporain en France* (1987), a book that is also read in Cameroon. Its author, the French art historian Catherine Millet, has equated Contemporary Art with the art of the neo-avantgardes that were said to continue the anti-bourgeois project of the historical avantgardes after WWII. This art-historical periodisation corresponds with that of the major Anglophone collecting institutions, by the way.¹⁴³ In 1997, the US-American philosopher Arthur C. Danto took a very different approach, arguing that Contemporary Art unfolds “after the end of art” (and after the end of History, one might add, in view of then powerful concept of “Posthistoire”)¹⁴⁴. Danto thought that art history’s grand narrative had started with Giorgio Vasari’s famous biographies and ended with American Pop Art in the 1960s.¹⁴⁵ Accordingly, Danto saw Contemporary Art as disconnected from earlier aesthetics, afloat in a space where anything goes.

Ten years later, when museums, university departments, art fairs, curators, and artists around the world had adopted the label Contemporary Art—and when the financial crisis of 2007 and 2008 threatened to deflate the market for recent art—the literature on Contemporary Art multiplied. Interestingly, no theory rose to a hegemonic position, however, and many authors refused to engage in generalisations. In 2009, the reputed American East coast art magazine *October* undertook a query amongst thirty-two art professionals, mainly academic staff from art history, all of them exclusively from Europe and

the U.S. The answers to this “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary’” proved that there was no academic consensus about the historical origin or the ideological dimension of what is commonly addressed as Contemporary Art. The German art historian and critic Isabelle Graw, for instance, located the emergence of Contemporary Art in the 1980s, arguing that auction houses like Christie’s had then discovered the powerful label Contemporary Art that links an idealist notion of art, which implies a claim for “transhistorical truth and disinterestedness” (Graw), with that which is hip, up-to-date, or contemporary. Insofar as Graw considered this labelling a marketing trick, she refused to accept the legitimacy of the theoretical category of Contemporary Art.¹⁴⁶ The German philosopher Juliane Rebentisch takes another approach, placing Contemporary Art’s emergence in the 1960s instead. Rebentisch has optimistically credited Contemporary Art with the dismantling of high modernist convictions, such as the teleological narrative of art history or the myth about the art object’s self-contented autonomy—and has consequently dubbed Contemporary Art a “movement of aesthetic enlightenment.”¹⁴⁷ Other authors like the Nigerian-born, U.S.-educated curator Okwui Enwezor or the London-based art historian T.J. Demos highlighted how Contemporary Art intersects with a postcolonial, post-imperialist era.¹⁴⁸ This position considers the space of contemporary art to be a crucial forum for the visualisation of global inequalities, as in the radically democratic way that French philosopher Chantal Mouffe has theorised as Agonistic Pluralism.¹⁴⁹ Tate-curator Mark Godfrey stressed the emergence of more nuanced artistic relationships with time in general, and with the present in particular, in his answer to the questionnaire. Godfrey also justified the openness of the term Contemporary Art with the argument that theoreticians should no longer “assume a totalising explanatory power”, as this would “be akin to a hubristic, neo-colonial move”.¹⁵⁰

If there was a common concern shared by these authors it was the desire to demarcate Contemporary Art historically in order to be able to grasp the phenomenon with art-historical tools or possibly with the means of a future comparative art history (Miwon Kwon). Many answers to the *October* questionnaire agreed that this historicisation would also be conditional for unleashing Contemporary Art’s critical potential.

In Chicago, the Australian art historian and academic lecturer Terry Smith has simultaneously published his compilation *What is Contemporary Art?* Smith made of “[c]ontemporaneity the most evident attribute of the current world picture”, and explained this assessment with the homogenising drive of globalisation and a spectacular image economy. He furthermore claimed that the paradigm of Contemporary Art has been operative since the 1980s and consists of three “world currents”.¹⁵¹ Smith deemed one of these currents complicit with neoliberalism’s spectacle society. The second was said to be indebted to the postcolonial turn in theory and to its critique of universal concepts of time and place. The rather vaguely conceptualised third strand summed up the mass of small-scale, subjective, localised artistic practices, collaborations, and networks that Smith interpreted as challenges to the status quo. (One might think of the previously discussed grassroots movements in Cameroon here.) As is clear from this short summary, Smith’s book provides many, partly contradictory explanations rather than an answer to the question in its title.

A homonymous reader published by the e-flux journal came out shortly after Smith’s book and it assembled thirteen authorial positions from the U.S., Europe, India, China, and Mexico.¹⁵² These authors each approached the phantom of Contemporary Art differently: by examining the etymology of the word “contemporary” (Groys); by bestowing this term with critical meaning (Obrist); or by criticising it for its arbitrary opportunism in adjusting itself to the most contradictory settings (Medina).

Furthermore, in 2011, the Asia Art Archive reacted to the *October* questionnaire by editing an “An Expanded Questionnaire on the Contemporary”. This new condition report sought to foreground an Asian perspective on Contemporary Art’s relationship with (Western) institutions, with folk art and visual culture in general.¹⁵³ While the editors seemed to suggest that Contemporary Art is a potential threat to politically engaged art, the forty-four answers to this questionnaire differed strongly in content, as they corresponded to the specific situation in the authors’ respective Asian countries of origin—to their distinct art-historical trajectories and institutional histories. From this overview it should be clear that universally valid definitions of Contemporary Art are hardly tenable any longer.

Despite the obviously growing complexity of aesthetic production

in an ever-expanding field of art, some cultural producers and academics have nevertheless attempted to satisfy the desire for an easy, all-encompassing theory of Contemporary Art. The construct of Global Art, for instance, emerged in Germany in the late 2000s, simultaneously with the quoted Anglophone literature. As a term, Global Art takes up a phrasing from the profiles of certain art fairs in the Middle East. As a theory, it is said to be a critical continuation of early twentieth century notions of World Art. The masterminds behind Global Art are the art historians Hans Belting and Andrea Buddensieg.¹⁵⁴ Although they have underscored the wish to challenge the exclusive linearity of the conventional Eurocentric art history, they seem to be driven by a desire for interpretative authority themselves. This is evident from the fact that Belting and Buddensieg have sought to canonise a timeline of exhibitions and publications starting with the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* in 1989 as the definitive genealogy of what they call the Global Contemporary. This hegemonic impetus is also manifest in the—paradoxically quite modernist—tone of their writing, of which the following quotation offers a glimpse:

Twenty years after its first manifestations, the time has come to discuss the nature and purpose of global art that emerged (...) like a phoenix from the ashes, from modern art at the end of the twentieth century and opposed modernity's cherished ideals of progress and hegemony. Contemporary art[,] a term long used to designate the most recent art, assumed an entirely new meaning when art production, following the turn of world politics and world trade in 1989, expanded across the globe. The results of this unprecedented expansion challenged the continuity of any Eurocentric view of "art". Global art is no longer synonymous with modern art. It is by definition contemporary, not just in a chronological but also, as we will see, in a symbolic or even ideological sense.¹⁵⁵

The recent catalogue *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of the New Art Worlds* by the same authors documented the homonymous exhibitions at ZKM Karlsruhe and at Berlin's Akademie der Künste, thus firmly entrenching the notion of Global Art.¹⁵⁶ Yet visitors to these exhibitions were quick to discover that there is ultimately no common denominator to the countless artworks that were chosen to stand in for the "global contemporary". Hence, I would argue that this universalising label tends to negate the economic and geopolitical

disparities of today’s art production, which the literature quoted above has brought to the surface.

I shall now introduce two pertinent critiques of Contemporary Art’s universalism. The first argument is part of the afore-cited case study on *The Atlas Group* by Peter Osborne. Osborne has effectually deconstructed the fundament of fictions on which the supposed global contemporaneity of Contemporary Art relies, by drawing attention to the fact that the present has no duration and is therefore a mere idea in the Kantian sense rather than an objective temporality. Osborne further argues that the universalisation of the idea of the contemporary negates the fact that the beginning of the present is dated differently in different regions of the world and that a single subject-position to experience this multi-sited present does not exist. Rather, the talk about Contemporary Art “projects a non-existent unity onto the disjunctive relations between coeval times”.¹⁵⁷ As mentioned before, Osborne has also stressed that the supposedly free global circulation of artists on a matrix of interrelated institutions and biennales conceals the main characteristic of capitalist globalisation, i.e. to allow for variable capital only to cross borders freely. He has concluded that the artworld helps to make of the problematic symbolic construct of the transnational global a historical narrative.

I shall secondly briefly outline a theory that captures the artworld’s penchant for universalisms in two different ways. The Egyptian Bassam El Baroni has recently curated a number of biennales and presented the theory that I am about to address at various symposia in Europe. On one hand, Baroni focuses on Contemporary Art’s complicity with a specific form of universalism that he calls “paradoxical multiculturalism”, which appears to him as “one of the main engines behind the collective unconscious of the contemporary art industry”.¹⁵⁸ I have argued earlier, with reference to Bydler, that the professional field of Contemporary Art feeds on newcomers from “exotic” contexts and celebrates cultural diversity. The distinguished artist and writer Rasheed Araeen also has highlighted this point in his answer to the questionnaire of Asia Art Archive.¹⁵⁹ According to Baroni, beneath this multicultural surface hides a universalist spirit, because curators, galleries, and art fairs are used to subjecting individual positions to preconfigured and often culturalist identities and particularities in order to match categories like “African”, “Iranian”,

“Chinese” and “postcolonial”, before admitting them to the multicultural spectacle of Contemporary Art. Cultural difference is hence reduced to a set of identities that fits the clichés by which the art world represents the world as a whole to itself. Therefore, Baroni considers this multiculturalism paradoxical and actually universalist.

This “paradoxical multiculturalism” of Contemporary Art is clearly distinguishable from the modernist universalism or “Old-School European Universalism” of the aesthetic production that Baroni has termed Fine Art. Baroni argues that Fine Art relies on universalised tropes like the myth of the individual artist or the art-historical canonisation of certain artists as stand-ins for specific periods of (European) history. He explains:

For Fine Art, Art History is a catalogue or some sort of script (...) of artist characters, methods, styles, symbols, and socio-political indicators.¹⁶⁰

According to Baroni, Fine Art is taught in art schools with out-dated curricula. These schools are said to encourage artists “to reincarnate previous knowledge, all through the necessity of perceiving Art History as a catalogue”.¹⁶¹ Interestingly for my subject, Baroni has located such art schools in Alexandria in Egypt, as well as in the U.S.-American province, thus challenging the virtual map of East-West divides. Baroni presumes that artists who are doing Contemporary Art are instead making a sovereign and distanced use of canonical art history. To them, art history is as good as any another archive and bears no authority. Although Baroni’s theory is not yet elaborated, his argument is nonetheless important because it points to the exclusionary mechanisms of Contemporary Art by theorising Fine Art as Contemporary Art’s “other”. This aspect of his argument will become helpful in dissecting two strands of coeval aesthetic production in Cameroon at a later point.

Contemporary Art’s Origins in Africa

Like Osborne, the Slovenian philosopher and artist Marina Gržinić has argued that Contemporary Art’s relationship with capitalism “conceals the difference between the centre and the margin, making it almost impossible to take any kind of critical position, as everyone is implicated and/or entangled, and as a result the margins are produced

as heterogeneity, as style”.¹⁶² This shifting position of the margins is also manifest in a pertinent theory that claims that the term Contemporary Art has first been applied to African and other non-European arts, before taking centre stage in the artworld. In the mid-twentieth century, the adjective “contemporary” was used for phenomena of visual art that were new in one way or another, but did not easily match the dominant concepts of Modernism. African examples of this early use of the term are to be found in the denomination of an Egyptian arts collective, namely The Contemporary Art Group (est. 1946),¹⁶³ in the Commission des Arts Contemporains for the 1966 FESMAN in Dakar, or in the title of Uli Beier’s publication *Contemporary Art in Africa* (1968).¹⁶⁴ The art market started to make sense of this development on its own, as Terry Smith suggests with reference to an article of 1970:

The first frequent usage of the term “contemporary” in the titles of catalogs occurs during the 1960s, in connection with sales of “primitive”, specifically African, art. Typically, it was allied with and distinguished from the term “traditional”. It denoted art by African artists that, while perhaps derived from traditional motifs and themes, was produced recently and currently, often hybridizing Western mediums and modes. The word “modern” was rarely employed for this art.¹⁶⁵

This observation interestingly complements Isabelle Graw’s critique of the marketing origin of Contemporary Art, while also underlining Contemporary Art’s quality as Modern Art’s “other”. And it points to a discreet pre-history of the crystallisation of the professional field of Contemporary African Art prior to the 1990s.

Whereas the professional field of Contemporary African Art is de facto an important labour market and an art market label, the contours of Contemporary African Art are as blurry in theory as those of Contemporary Art in general. The Senegalese curator Ngoné Fall has recently spotlighted this fact:

I have no idea how to define contemporary African art and by the way please define contemporary European art for me.¹⁶⁶

Yet even if they differ, claims have long been made regarding this label. *Revue Noire*, which Ngoné Fall co-edited, began publishing a magazine for African Contemporary Art in 1991. The Dakar biennale was renamed “Dak’art - Biennale de l’Art Africain Contemporain” in 1996, whereas Kasfir published the aforementioned handbook

Contemporary African Art in 1999, which is a geographically and historically differentiated study that offers an extremely condensed introduction to the art made in Africa from the 1950s onwards. By choosing to begin with this watershed decade, Kasfir selects a time marked by the transition from colonialism to political statehood for many African countries as the start of the present in this part of the world. Yet Kasfir also inscribes the recent art within an earlier historical trajectory, insofar as she conceptualises Contemporary African Art as the result of a “process of ‘bricolage’ upon the already existing structures and scenarios on which the older, pre-colonial and colonial genres of African art were made”.¹⁶⁷

Okwui Enwezor and Chica Okeke-Agulu have picked up the thread by publishing the aforementioned survey volume *Contemporary African Art* since 1980. These authors define a canon of artists and delineate “the decade of [economic and politic] crisis of the 1980s” as the beginning of the contemporary period in Africa, which was followed by “the mass migration of the 1990s, and the globalization of the present era”.¹⁶⁸ Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu define the term Contemporary African Art as follows:

[C]ontemporary African art denotes a field of complex artistic production, research, interpretation, and a repository of rich intellectual discovery at the intersection of the shifting models of cultural, political, social, and epistemological analyses in which Africa is meaningfully interpellated.¹⁶⁹

It is worth briefly lingering on Enwezor’s and Okeke-Agulu’s emphasis on research and interdisciplinary knowledge production in visual art, which has prompted critique from practitioners on the African continent.¹⁷⁰ By privileging a conceptual, if not academically informed type of art, these authors implicitly push aside century-old clichés of the intuitive creativity of Africans, an argument that often came along with an affirmation of autodidacticism. In this respect, Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu share Goddy Leye’s point of view, which brings us to the place of Cameroonian artists in *Contemporary African Art since 1980*. Enwezor’s and Okeke-Agulu’s list of outstanding African artists of the 1980s does not include a single Cameroonian artist. Yet both Pascale Marthine Tayou and Billy Bidjocka are considered representative for the 1990s, which points to the birth of Cameroonian artists’ transnational networks during this decade. Three artists born in Cameroon

feature in the list from the 2000s: Joël Mpah Dooh, Tayou, and Barthélémy Togou. Three out of these four Cameroonians that Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu have deemed worthy of inclusion lived in the European diaspora by the time the survey was published, while the fourth, Joël Mpah Dooh had galleries representing him in South Africa, Africa’s most dynamic art market. This find matches Bydler’s point that artists need to be present in the artworld’s metropolitan centres in order to become visible in the dominant system of distribution.¹⁷¹ Buchholz has substantiated this observation on the basis of her quantitative sociological study, as the following quote suggests:

In the contemporary visual arts, the closer one moves to the intellectual pole of autonomous artists, the more the cycle of consecration is dominated by Western centres[.]¹⁷²

Leaving behind what some centrally positioned agents might consider Cameroonian Contemporary Art, I will now return to my empirically generated data with the aim to document discursive perspectives that are often overlooked, despite the fact that they illuminate the agency of practitioners working from the periphery. By thus dissecting the local value systems associated with Contemporary Art, I also hope to provide critical tools for future art-historical research in the Cameroonian context.

Contemporary Art in Cameroon: A Discourse Analysis

The following section investigates how the notion of contemporary art appears throughout my interviews as a means to glean an understanding of how Cameroonian cultural producers—primarily those based in Douala—understand Contemporary Art.¹⁷³ Visual artists in Cameroon likely had to come to terms with Contemporary Art in order to tactically position themselves within a geographically expanding professional field that has increasingly organised itself around this label over the past decades. I assumed that these artists and art professionals developed an understanding of the phenomenon of Contemporary Art by making what they consider Contemporary Art rather than through adherence to a specific school of thought. This assumption is based on my own training as an artist, as well as on the absence of a hegemonic theory of Contemporary Art and on the dominance of non-academic learning in the context under scrutiny.

In order to test the ground of these hypotheses it seemed important to first to gain an understanding of the importance of the notion of Contemporary Art in Douala. I therefore asked my interlocutors how they conceived of themselves as artists, inquiring how they introduce themselves as professionals and how they characterise their occupation. I sought to avoid all composite terms with the adjective contemporary unless my conversation partner would mention one of them. In my interviews, Koko Komegné asserted “je suis peintre” and “je suis artiste”.¹⁷⁴ Justine Gaga also spoke of herself simply as “artiste”,¹⁷⁵ while Landry Mbassi saw himself as “photographe, installationiste, vidéaste”.¹⁷⁶ Boris Nzébo presented himself as “artiste plasticien”¹⁷⁷ instead, as did Salifou Lindou.¹⁷⁸ Hervé Yamguen referred to himself as “poète plasticien”¹⁷⁹ and Hervé Youmbi called himself “artiste multi-média”. Patrick Wokmeni emphasised that he identifies as an artist rather than a photographer or a photojournalist, arguing that artists engage more profoundly with images and with their topics.¹⁸⁰ Alioum Moussa has stated instead:

[M]ême sur mes papiers officiels je suis créateur simplement et je n’ai pas une discipline fixe. Donc je suis créateur, c’est d’abord l’idée, c’est d’abord l’intelligence, la transformation, l’intelligence humaine vis à vis d’une situation.¹⁸¹

It is noteworthy here that doual’art also privileges the open denomination “créateur” in its communication.¹⁸²

This individualism in professional identities notwithstanding, the artists listed here are involved with institutions, projects, and events in Cameroon and abroad that distinguish themselves by means of the label Contemporary Art, such as doual’art, the Dakar biennale, or *Exit Tour*. It is therefore not surprising that six of thirteen artists eventually brought up the term Contemporary Art themselves during our talk. In two more cases I erroneously introduced the term and my interlocutor picked it up, whereas the remaining five did not touch upon the subject of Contemporary Art or any related term. From these observations I can preliminarily conclude that Contemporary Art is not the one and only discursive keyword regulating Douala’s art scene but that it is used as an important point of reference by practitioners regardless of their age, at least in conversations with foreigners like me. I could not make out any comparable technical term that is as frequently used for recent art.

A number of explanations about how this term migrated to Cameroon have come to my attention. With reference to Cathérine Millet, Ruth Afane Belinga has argued that Pascal Kenfack introduced “la peinture contemporaine” after his return from France in the late 1980s, while the founders of doual’art considered Koko Komegné the first Contemporary Artist. Further occasions for this buzz-word to spread in Cameroon might have been the decision to distinguish Espace Doual’art by means of the annex “d’art contemporain”,¹⁸³ the arrival of *Revue Noire* in Yaoundé in 1994, or Peter Anders’ references to this notion,¹⁸⁴ not to mention the many other contact zones that visual artists have frequented in the 1990s. It is therefore safe to assume that art world professionals in Douala and Yaoundé had embraced the term Contemporary Art by the onset of the new millennium at the latest.

By means of a three-step discourse analysis I will now firstly explore interpretations of Contemporary Art in spoken parlance, before secondly identifying certain exclusionary mechanisms associated with Contemporary Art in Yaoundé and Douala. As mentioned in the introduction to this book, I have selected my interview partners based on my professional network as a curator for Contemporary Art, causing the perspectives of those artists that do not want to belong or are excluded from the field of Contemporary Art to be underrepresented in my data. So as to counterbalance this one-sidedness, I will also shed light on the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion to the professional field of Contemporary Art in Douala on the basis of the testimonies that I have recorded. A third step will discuss certain interlocutors’ critical reflections on the paradigm of Contemporary Art and the chapter will end with an interpretation of a number of artworks made in Douala.

Artists, curators, writers, and art historians have differently interpreted Contemporary Art when dialoguing with me. Their explicit definitions—and those offhand comments that imply definitions—will be the first subject of analysis here. When reflecting on the Dakar biennale, the artist Alioum Moussa introduced the term Contemporary Art to our conversation as follows:

Des débats contradictoires sur l’art Africaine, sur l’art contemporain, l’histoire de l’ici et d’ailleurs et le fait que je sois entre deux scènes m’ont permis de comprendre.¹⁸⁵

This statement underscores Moussa's awareness that he is referring to a contested field with uncertain geographic demarcations and suggests that he wasn't sure whether the term Contemporary Art provides a sufficient framework to grasp current artistic production in Yaoundé and Douala—or if the African context also needs to be specifically taken into account. His colleague Achille Komguem replied differently, perhaps because I had asked him explicitly for a definition of Contemporary Art:

[J]e comprends [par] l'art contemporain ce qui se fait maintenant.¹⁸⁶

His response thus reproduces the most widespread and strictly temporal understanding of the term, which is based on the assumption of a globally shared present. When speaking of the Dreamers, Komguem has furthermore put forward Contemporary Art's *avantgarde* character. To this artist, "being very contemporary" means to make the "most daring artworks that jolt a large audience".¹⁸⁷ Komguem furthermore distinguished Contemporary Art with respect to a multiplication of techniques and media and to the transgression of disciplinary divides.

When I interviewed Justine Gaga about her role as Contemporary Artist she answered:

C'est de contribuer au développement de mon pays, au développement du monde, puisque mon art n'est pas seulement un art de mon pays, mais c'est un art qui s'adresse à tout le monde. Je crois que c'est sensibiliser à travers mes peintures, à travers mes installations, parce que je dis des choses comme je pense, comme je les vois et comme je les sens.¹⁸⁸

In this passage, Gaga has underlined the instrumentality of Contemporary Art, as well as her ambition to reach audiences on the national and on the global level. Gaga also stressed her subjective criticality. Her statements, as well as Komguem's, match the universalist understanding of art that Goddy Leye used to defend, for instance with regard to ArtBakery. Leye's following statement is exemplary in this respect:

To my mind, art is a universal quest and people, wherever they are, should be able to talk about it. Things may change from place to place—how art is presented and made—but, in the final analysis, it is the same thing everywhere.¹⁸⁹

It seems like this idealism was a driving force behind Leye's practice and since he had travelled widely throughout Africa, the U.S.,

Europe, the Middle East, and Asia by the time we talked, there is reason to assume that this thinking corresponded to his experiences in the global art field.

It is finally noteworthy that my interlocutors who historicised Contemporary Art described it as an art-historical period following Modern Art, like Millet and Danto, rather than stressing the postcolonial condition as T.J. Demos, Kasfir or Enwezor, and Okeke-Agulu have done.¹⁹⁰ This periodisation in accordance with mainstream art history rather than critical, context-specific historiographies might be due to the socialisation of these non-academic artists in contact with Europeans, as well as their predominantly practical training.

Definitions of Contemporary Art proffered by curators, writers, and art historians—i.e. those professionals who tend to significantly influence the discourse on art through texts and public speeches—will be next. I have discerned three dominant arguments from my conversations: namely, Contemporary Art’s critical reflection on a specific locale, Contemporary Art’s conflicted relationship with the state, and the conceptual penchant of contemporary art. Simon Njami, an influential visitor to Douala’s art scene has stated with regard to the first argument that Contemporary Art is always bound to a specific context rather than bearing a universal meaning:

La contemporanéité c’est la relation avec son temps. Et le temps pour moi, c’est un contexte. (...) Contemporain, ce n’est pas partout le même, parce que le moyen contemporain du Camerounais n’est pas nécessairement le moyen contemporain du Japonais. (...) Et ce qui fait qu’il y a des artistes différents et des trends différents, c’est parce qu’il y a des environnements et des matériaux, et des conditionnements et donc des réflexions par rapport à ‘all these contemporary issues’, qui sont différents d’un endroit à l’autre, avec des points de vue différents.¹⁹¹

The late artistic director of Douala’s art, cultural manager and art historian Didier Schaub, answered analogously to my (admittedly all too narrow) question about Contemporary Artists’ role in society:

Je pense que les artistes contemporains sont là pour essayer avec des moyens contemporains, des moyens lisibles aujourd’hui en tout cas, de porter un autre regard sur des lieux des choses, sur des idées, des situations. Ah, voilà: De dire qu’on peut aussi faire comme ça, voilà, c’est peut-être ça, le rôle...¹⁹²

The writer Lionel Manga took a similar stance when arguing that the

decision to become a painter or a video artist in Cameroon requires a critical relationship towards societal norms, since these occupations enjoy little social esteem and imply many risks. As a consequence, Contemporary Artists appeared to Manga as “witnesses of the contradictions structuring the society around them”.¹⁹³ In sum, it can be said that Njami, Schaub, and Manga have congruently pictured Contemporary Artists as commentators on the time and on the locale that they inhabit.

The second discursive topos that I could identify is Contemporary Art’s tense relationship with the state. Simon Njami underlined that in African contexts, Contemporary Art is first of all a thing of the civil society:

Des lieux d’art contemporains sont des lieux politiques et donc ce sont les endroits où les gens doivent se prendre en charge. C’est la société civile qui se débrouille pour faire les choses.¹⁹⁴

By underlining that this type of art flourishes especially in countries without governmental infrastructures for visual art, Njami has reinforced his argument. Ruth Afane Belinga has indirectly confirmed this estimate when remarking that “very contemporary” artists—those open to foreign ideas and familiar with art history, as she specified—circulate among Douala’s artist initiatives nowadays. In contrast, Yaoundé’s artists are more likely to obtain state commissions, which makes them stand closer to the government and thus less contemporary in Afane Belinga’s eyes.¹⁹⁵

Afane Belinga also addressed the third topos that reoccurred in my conversations with non-artists, namely Contemporary Art’s penchant for the theoretically abstract and the conceptual:

Aujourd’hui, comme dans tous les pays, c’est beaucoup plus le concept qui compte. Comment l’artiste matérialise son idée. L’art veut dire, forcément, quelque chose. Donc on regarde le concept développé par l’artiste et la façon dont il a matérialisé son idée. Si ça concorde: alors c’est bien.¹⁹⁶

Belinga thus highlights the prevalence of intellectual categories of evaluation for Contemporary Art rather than craft-related or spiritual ones. Lionel Manga has similarly distinguished Douala’s Contemporary Art scene by an “intellectual approach”¹⁹⁷ to art. These topoi from my conversations with theoreticians of different profiles, ages, and geographic contexts—they are based in cities as different as

Foumban, Douala, and Paris—complement the artists’ statements. Together, these utterances constitute a sketch of an unwritten local value system related to Contemporary Art.

This value system has also produced unwritten rules regulating how one would be included or excluded from the professional field of Contemporary Art in Cameroon. These rules can be called this discursive field’s “regime of truth”,¹⁹⁸ with reference to Michel Foucault. In my interview, Simon Njami has compared this “regime of truth” to a language apart, which those who want to belong, need to learn:

[L]’art est un langage et on ne peut pas parler, on ne peut pas bien s’exprimer dans une langue étrangère.¹⁹⁹

Indeed, a grammar of a priori ideas underpins Douala’s Contemporary Art scene. I have found that the visual artists that I interviewed are well aware of this grammar, even if more habitually than intellectually. This grammar is largely analogous to the (global) Rules of Art identified by Bourdieu and Buchholz,²⁰⁰ as my next hypothesis will outline.

One of Bourdieu’s Rules of Art implies that avant-garde artists entertain a troubled relationship with the field of power or strive for autonomy from it. Acknowledgement by “heteronomous powers”, i.e. forces that are external to the field of art is frowned upon in all avant-garde circles, according to Bourdieu.²⁰¹ This explains the aforementioned statements about Contemporary Art’s conflictual relationship with the state. Koko Komegné’s doctrine “Rien avec l’état!” is also representative of this attitude. Yet Cameroon’s specific context has affected this rule. I have shown that many artists oppose the Cameroonian government for (different) political reasons and that this government has also become more and more irrelevant for artists in terms of positions and commissions, which are local rather than structural reasons for the artists to distance themselves from the government. It is also interesting to note that the foreign cultural institutes do not seem to fall under this Rule of Art in Cameroon. Although the Centres Culturels Français and the Goethe-Institut are governmental agencies that are moreover able to be associated with colonialism, artists tend to readily accept their invitations for exhibitions and projects. I assume that these centres are valued for their historically important role in shaping Cameroon’s art world and that artists have to be pragmatic with regard to these financially strong

and stable professional partners. Koko Komegné has said accordingly:

Si on est dans le trou, on ne regarde pas la couleur de la main qui vient te sauver!²⁰²

The same seems to hold true for foreign funding organisations that finance projects with foreign governmental funds.

This brings us to money, another force that is external to the artworld's own value system. Bourdieu articulates a striking particularity of the artworld: that it is “an economic world turned upside down” in which “the artist cannot triumph on the symbolic terrain except by losing on the economic terrain (at least in the short run), and vice versa (at least in the long run)”.²⁰³ Larissa Buchholz has recently analysed the transnational careers of 180 artists and could thus show that this inverted logic also regulates much of today's global artworld. Buchholz writes summarily:

[H]igher transnational economic success goes along with lower transnational prestige, while higher transnational prestige is associated with lower economic success.²⁰⁴

Artists in Cameroon acknowledge this Rule of Art to a certain extent, as I have found. Lionel Manga, for instance, has observed that those artists who work in a decorative manner and pursue quick sales are excluded from the circle of Contemporary Artists:

[I]l y a plus de peintres (...) mais qui ne s'incrinvent pas dans cette, on va dire, dans cette démarche intellectuelle de l'artiste. Qui font de la peinture pour vendre ou même sur les murs un peu, de la décoration.²⁰⁵

Most artists working in the field of Contemporary Art were eager to confirm this rule or truth during my interviews. When asked about their understanding of professional success, they conspicuously valued visibility and symbolic acknowledgement over monetary success. Salifou Lindou, for instance, answered that he considers affective attention as a marker of success:

[J]e mesurais le succès d'un artiste à la quantité d'émotions convoquée aux gens. Si un artiste est excellent, ça veut dire qu'il est sollicité. Et si les gens ont envie de voir son travail c'est parce qu'il réussit à captiver l'attention d'un certain nombre, d'un certain grand nombre de personnes autour de son travail.²⁰⁶

To Boris Nzébo being famous means being successful, too:

Succès, c'est ce que mon travail soit partout vu et accepté. Que les gens savent: oui, il y a quelqu'un qui travaille sur tel, sur tel, sur tel, quoi.²⁰⁷

And Justine Gaga emphasised the importance of her own satisfaction with her practice:

[P]our moi le succès artistique c'est de savoir que j'avance au quotidien. Que tous les jours j'améliore, je fais des pas, en fait que je grandis professionnellement. Pour moi c'est ça, le succès.²⁰⁸

In a similar manner, the notion of artistic professionalism that Goddy Leye outlined during our interview values the exclusive devotion of a practitioner to his or her craft over economic success.²⁰⁹

The naïve embodiment of this inverted economy makes artists accomplices in their own precarity, as the political scientist Isabelle Lorey has underscored.²¹⁰ In a country like Cameroon, which has been economically and politically unstable for twenty-five years and lacks a public welfare system, artists cannot subject themselves to this snobby logic. Artists in Douala happen to starve at times, struggle to pay the doctor's fees for their children's Malaria treatments, or refrain from procreation all together for economic reasons. If a European collecting institution does choose to purchase their work, as was the case with the French Fonds National de l'Art Contemporain in 2010, artists have to shoulder debts to pre-finance the packaging, insurance, and transport according to metropolitan standards.²¹¹ A consequential indifference towards economic concerns is impossible under these circumstances.

It is therefore no surprise that a financially strong patron could become influential in the 2000s, as an anecdote by Achille Komguem suggests. An expatriate sales manager of a department store in Douala used to buy artworks for himself or sold them to professional contacts over a bottle of champagne. Apparently, this patron succeeded in selling up to ten of Komguem's paintings per week during a period of two years, which enabled the artist to purchase a house in Yaoundé. This sales manager also organised a major charity auction of artwork to benefit the organisation Médecins sans Frontières before leaving Douala. Each of the eight participating artists made several thousand Euros while Médecins sans Frontières received the other half.²¹² Although I did not have the opportunity to see the work sold in this manner, it is highly probable that the taste of this merchant and his clients influenced the artists' production. In fact, many artists working in the realm of Contemporary Art in Douala do pursue a more commercial line of work parallel to their project-based practice.

Paintings by Hervé Yamguen, for instance, are on sale in hotel lobbies in Douala, as I have witnessed, and expatriates remain important clients of Contemporary Artists in Cameroon in general. For instance, exhibitions at the office of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Yaoundé are usually sold out after the opening, as the officer in charge told me. Although many of my interlocutors have exhibited there, they addressed these contexts rather cautiously in our conversations.²¹³

Interestingly, some artists have also developed mature tactics to circumvent the imperative to be economically disinterested. The artists of the Dreamers collective chose to reinforce the more autonomous strand of their artistic practice with their commercial production in the year 2000—which required they split their portfolios. These artists agreed to show Contemporary Art “beyond financial restraints and the need to sell”²¹⁴ at those art venues that had a non-for-profit profile, namely at doual’art and at the foreign cultural centres, since they had understood that the symbolic acknowledgement that they would thus accumulate would allow them to raise the prices of their more decorative, commercial artwork:

Stratégiquement on voulait vendre dans les ateliers et faire des expositions qui n’ont rien avoir à vendre dans les centres. On voulait, à travers des propositions fortes monter nos prix, avoir un côté un peu plus intéressant et vendre [à partir de] maintenant, quand on le veut, dans l’atelier, en arrière boutique.²¹⁵

Hence, the Dreamers enhanced their agency by reacting to the fact that the art system’s spaces for symbolic and for monetary gains are neatly separated on the surface, albeit being de facto interdependent. Notably, these backroom sales were also more lucrative to the artists because they did not need to cede a percentage as commission to their institutional partners or galleries.²¹⁶ And this tactic enabled the Dreamers to reinvest the full gains from commercial work into expensive material, electronics, and props for their installations at the non-for-profit venues, thus causing much surprise amongst their colleagues.²¹⁷ These examples make clear that the artworld norm of artists’ economic disinterestedness is a matter of distinction in Douala’s Contemporary art world, as it is elsewhere. However, the local artists found clever solutions to circumvent this rule, if necessary.

Bourdieu called the “logic of change”.²¹⁸ This rule implies that the actualities of the wider discourse of Contemporary Art change with time as new discursive trends emerge and as newly successful practitioners and theoreticians push the discourse their way. Artists that want to partake in the field of Contemporary Art have to be aware of these changes in order to remain up-to-date and to be able to successfully postulate for residencies or to qualify for participation in exhibitions and biennales, as I’ve claimed earlier in this text. As a consequence, Goddy Leye encouraged his *petits frères* and *soeurs* to engage in life-long learning by reading and by partaking in ateliers.²¹⁹ It is clear from my interviews with Alioum Moussa and Achille Komguem that the increasing transnational mobility of the artists also sensitised them to these shifting discourses. The following passage from my interview with Moussa is telling in this respect:

[J]’ai eu la chance d’aller en 2006 à Bâle [pour une résidence à Internationales Austausch- und Atelierprogramm Region Basel (IAAB)], où je rencontre donc pas mal de personnes. Je commence à me rendre compte de mon statut de professionnel, de comment faire mon dossier, comment faire mon CV, comment présenter mon travail en tant qu’artiste. [...] Et c’est comme ça que je deviens donc vigilant sur certains points de l’art. Je rencontre des curateurs, des commissaires d’exposition, je vais dans des conférences à Bâle et l’année qui suit, j’ai été boursier de Culture France. J’ai gagné une bourse de 5000 € qui m’a permis d’aller à Paris et à Rennes pour créer pendant six mois. Et donc, pendant six mois je n’ai fait que rencontrer des professionnels de l’art contemporain, aussi à Paris et à Bruxelles. Et voilà donc, je suis rentré et ça m’a aidé de mûrir mon truc. (...) La biennale de Dakar y a beaucoup, beaucoup joué aussi.²²⁰

Moussa’s report demonstrates that emerging artists importantly learned to prove their awareness of Contemporary Art discourse—and its temporary and geographic shifts—through travelling and participating in studio programmes. This awareness can be considered another exclusionary factor of Douala’s world of Contemporary Art.

In the previous passages I have tested the efficiency of certain Rules of Art as exclusionary mechanisms in the professional field of Contemporary Art in Douala. The discursive performance of my interviewees proves that they are conscious of these rules and largely behave accordingly. I would argue that different instances of non-formal

learning raised their awareness and enabled artists to process these experiences in different social constellations. Additionally, role models like Tayou, Leye, or Mpah Dooh have demonstrated to newcomers that by submitting to this field's "regime of truth" they might qualify for social and transnational mobility and make ends meet, while also enjoying a cosmopolitan air.

Yet I have also found that practitioners in Douala have variously transculturated Bourdieu's Rules of Art to match their reality. And so as to conclude this point, the role of institutions in regulating this process of transculturation remains to be noted. To qualify for visibility in the field of Contemporary Art at large, visual artists in Cameroon need to strive for consecration by local institutions that exhibit Contemporary Art. Since these institutions inscribe themselves into a transnational (labour) market associated with Contemporary Art, the Rules of Art undergird their programming and policies.²²¹ In order to maintain their consecrating authority, these institutions police any violation of the Rules of Art. To give an example, artists' undercutting their Contemporary Art prices seems to be a common type of violation in Douala because Contemporary Art from Cameroon is priced in proportion to Contemporary Art elsewhere and therefore relatively expensive for compatriots, yet artists who try to make some quick money by selling work for less put their partnership with the Contemporary Art institutions at risk.²²² I can therefore conclude that the institutions dealing with Contemporary Art restrain the transculturation of the Rules of Art to assure compatibility with Contemporary Art institutions beyond Cameroon.

The third section of this chapter will discuss critical remarks about Contemporary Art that I have recorded during my field research so as to explore the limits of the validity of the notion of Contemporary Art. In one of our conversations, the art historian Assako Assako has mentioned that invitations to participate in biennales, events, and exhibitions that qualify as Contemporary tend to be limited to artists working with new media in the Cameroonian context. Assako Assako argued that even mature artists like Koko Komegné and Joseph Sumegné felt therefore compelled to work with video art or performance.²²³ A statement by Simon Njami puts into question the general pertinence of this critique that addresses the power of curators and decision makers of the art circuit:

Qu’importe le médium, tant que le médium est contemporain! C’est à dire: les gens qui veulent faire de la statuaire africaine, comme il y a trois siècles, ils ne m’intéressent pas, parce que le monde a changé depuis. Mais le bois est un matériel contemporain, la toile reste un matériel contemporain...²²⁴

Hence, to Njami, a medium or material is contemporary when it is used to address those “contemporary issues” (Njami) that are specific to a locale. While I do not deny that it is problematic that metropolitan curators define what these “contemporary issues” are, it has to be acknowledged that artworks made from seemingly old-fashioned materials are indeed considered as Contemporary Art in the exhibitions of doual’art or Galerie MAM, such as Hervé Yamguen’s pearl-covered wood sculptures that make use of an old technique.²²⁵ It goes without saying that, once they are placed in spaces for Contemporary Art, these artefacts tend to be valued with regard to their unexpected allusions to aspects of the present rather than for their evocation of certain “traditions” or the skills involved in their making.

This leads up to yet another criticism. With reference to the opinion of a painter he befriended in Yaoundé, Lionel Manga has bemoaned a lack of technical skills amongst artists that work under the “label of contemporary art”.²²⁶ Apparently, Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu have come across this reproach as well, especially from the sides of traditionalists and conservative historians of African art. Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu replied by means of an analogy to early modern artists in Europe, who sought to detach themselves from the deadlocked academism of the late nineteenth century at their time:

One could argue therefore that the root of contemporary art, outside of postcolonial temporality, lies in its attempt to separate itself from the skilled competence of the traditional artist/craftsman in a self-conscious process of deskilling.²²⁷

To Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, this process of deskilling is the essence of artistic modernity, one predicated on individual expression and inspiration over collective production and canonical orthodoxy.²²⁸

On another note, it would be just as pertinent to counter this criticism of Manga’s friend with respect to the factual medial versatility that is observable amongst artists working in Douala. None of them limits their practice to a single medium or genre any longer, but they

are switching between video, painting, print making, installation, sculpture, or performance at will or freely combine these and other genres. This ability does not make the artists less skilled, though, just less specialised, in my eyes. The following examples substantiate this thought; Koko Komegné's reflections on the clash of the consumer society with rural ways of life in the city of Douala can find expression in paintings, assemblages, or trompe-l'oeuil paintings of assemblages (Fig 44). Justine Gaga's iconic "loner", a slim, stylised anonymous figure can take the form of graffiti on a tree trunk, but she also creates large-scale installations from everyday materials, like chicken wire or gas bottles.²²⁹ (Fig 45) Hervé Youmbi is versed in realistic painting,²³⁰ but he is also known for creating installations like *Totems* (2010), a critical reflection on global mobility.²³¹ (Fig 46) Salifou Lindou, my last example, switches between paintings, performances, sculptures, and installations in public space. His installation entitled *Face à l'eau* (2010) (Fig 47) accentuates conflicting uses of a spot at the inner-city shoreline of the river Wouri, which serves as public bath, as banana filed and as trash dump at the same time.²³²

We may retain from these examples that artists that identify as Contemporary Artists in Douala pursue distinguishable practices in a variety of techniques and media by which they address diverse audiences in various spaces of the city. While it is thus obvious that the récup-style is no longer predominant, this versatility of choosing from different media and genres to give form to a specific idea, subject, or exhibition context also corresponds to the conceptual paradigm that was identified as one of the characteristics of Contemporary Art.

A final criticism that I overheard is the lack of commonly accepted, clearly defined quality criteria with regard to Contemporary Art.²³³ This reproach comes as no surprise in light of Contemporary Art's multifaceted appearances and the contradictions that reside within the more general theories on Contemporary Art and on Contemporary African Art. However, some criteria by which practitioners in Douala distinguish Contemporary Art can be singled out nevertheless. Firstly, there seems to be a tacit agreement that works that are labelled as Contemporary Art should explicitly reference issues that are specific to the present, and more concretely to the present experienced in the major cities. Also, to many artists practising in Douala, a choice of expressive media appears better suited for this job than



Fig 44

44.1 Koko Komegné, *Supplice*, 1998, 50 x 25 x 20 cm, wood, paint.

44.2 Koko Komegné, *Cabaret La Dolce Vita*, 2010, 100 x 100 cm, acrylic on canvas. Collection Christian Hanussek, Berlin.



Fig 45
45.1 Justine Gaga, *Loner*, c. 2009, paint on tree trunk in the garden of ArtBakery.
45.2 Justine Gaga, *Indignation*, 2012, gas bottles, paint, various dimensions, installation view at Espace Doual'art.



Fig 46
Hervé Youmbi, *Totems (Ces totems qui hantent la mémoire des fils de Mamadou)*, 2010, multi-media installation, variable dimensions, installation view at Axis Gallery, New York.



Fig 47
Salifou Lindou, *Paravents*, 2010, wood, corrugated polyester sheets, panels, 370 to 440 x 97 cm.
The staircase was built with youths from the neighborhood, installation view *Salon Urbain de Douala*, 2010.

specialisation on one, which is a second criterion of Contemporary Art made here. Thirdly, many practitioners agree that a work of Contemporary Art is the result of an intellectual process rather than that of an intuitive creative act. And this category of art seems to be fourthly closely associated with the engagement of the civil society in Cameroon. My documentation of the grassroots initiatives and my earlier chapters substantiate this proposition from a historical perspective. And finally, the relative validity of certain Rules of Art amongst my interviewees points to the fact that artists affirm their belonging to the field of Contemporary Art through their habitus and through a certain code of conduct rather than through their self-denomination or by privileging specific media or genres in their work.

It needs to be said, however, that the criteria I have just summarised should not be mistaken for a viable theory of Contemporary Art in Cameroon. Rather, they reflect the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the spoken discourse of this professional field at a specific moment in time. So as to show how these mechanisms affect art production, I will now shed light on certain artworks made in Douala that can be considered works of Contemporary Art with respect to Bassam el Baroni’s theory. In contrast, it will become clear that the artists’ more commercial production perspicuously matches Baroni’s understanding of Fine Art. According to my observations it seems like visual artists in Cameroon have started to consciously make this distinction over the course of the 2000s.

As mentioned before, it is Baroni’s thesis that Contemporary Artists no longer acknowledge the narratives of the canonical Eurocentric art history as the ultimate set of references from which to draw artistic self-concepts and ideological positions. To put it in Baroni’s own words:

For contemporary art, [art] history is seen as yet another archive of images, facts, subjectivities, social and political agendas, and notions.²³⁴ Many artists working in Douala indeed make liberal use of art-historical references, like Boris Nzébo. This artist, whose favourite motifs are hairstyles, clearly established a link between the American Pop Art movement and his own oeuvre in my interview. Nzébo feels connected to this historical movement because many of the most eminent American Pop artists of the 1960s and 70s also had a background in advertisement painting.²³⁵ Occasionally, Nzébo even modulates the

same motifs in various colours for paperwork series as Andy Warhol did so successfully with his Marilyn silk-screens.²³⁶ And yet, he is far from emulating historical Pop Art. Rather than celebrating metropolitan glamour in an attempt at democratising visual art like his American predecessors did, Nzébo makes a situated use of this and other visual archives, such as anonymous hair salon posters or the famous photo series *Hairstyles* (1968-2014) by the Nigerian photographer J.D. 'Okhai Ojeikere.²³⁷ And for his signature works, such as *Crêpe Rasée I* (2010) (Fig 48), Nzébo has mixed the flat graphic style and the easy to handle acrylic paint of the advertisement paintings with graphically reduced vistas of informal housing in Douala. It can therefore be argued that Nzébo's paintings foreground the small realm that residents of the popular neighbourhoods are able to style, i.e. their body and primarily their hairdo. By staging extravagant body cultures, Nzébo sheds light on both the precarious state of beauty and on social problems in the subequatorial metropolis Douala.²³⁸

Pascale Marthine Tayou, who has meanwhile settled in Ghent, Belgium, and returns to Cameroon occasionally, works with a similarly broad set of references. For *Colonne Pascale* (2010), for instance, Tayou has quoted a famous modernist sculpture, namely Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column*. A monumental version of the *Endless Column* was erected in 1938 in Târgu Jiu, Romania, in homage to the Romanian victims of WWI in the fight against Germany. In Tayou's sculpture from 2010, dozens of the same ordinary pots took the place of the crystalline shapes that are "endlessly" superimposed in Brancusi's version. (Fig 49.1) Tayou dedicated his column, which was commissioned by doual'art and installed on a roundabout in New Bell, to the daily fight for survival undertaken by Douala's female residents—the owners of such pots.²³⁹ (Fig 49.2) Interestingly, his precedent had also referenced popular aesthetics with his sculpture, namely the shapes of funeral columns in the South of Romania.²⁴⁰ Moreover, Brancusi was inspired by the problematic Primitivism of some of his European artist colleagues, who had appropriated styles of the Cameroonian Grassland, amongst others.²⁴¹ These links suffice to demonstrate the stunning circle of references that connects the two monuments. By forging these links, Tayou has prompted a postcolonial reading of Brancusi's modern classic, without excluding viewers with other sets of references from an aesthetic experience of his

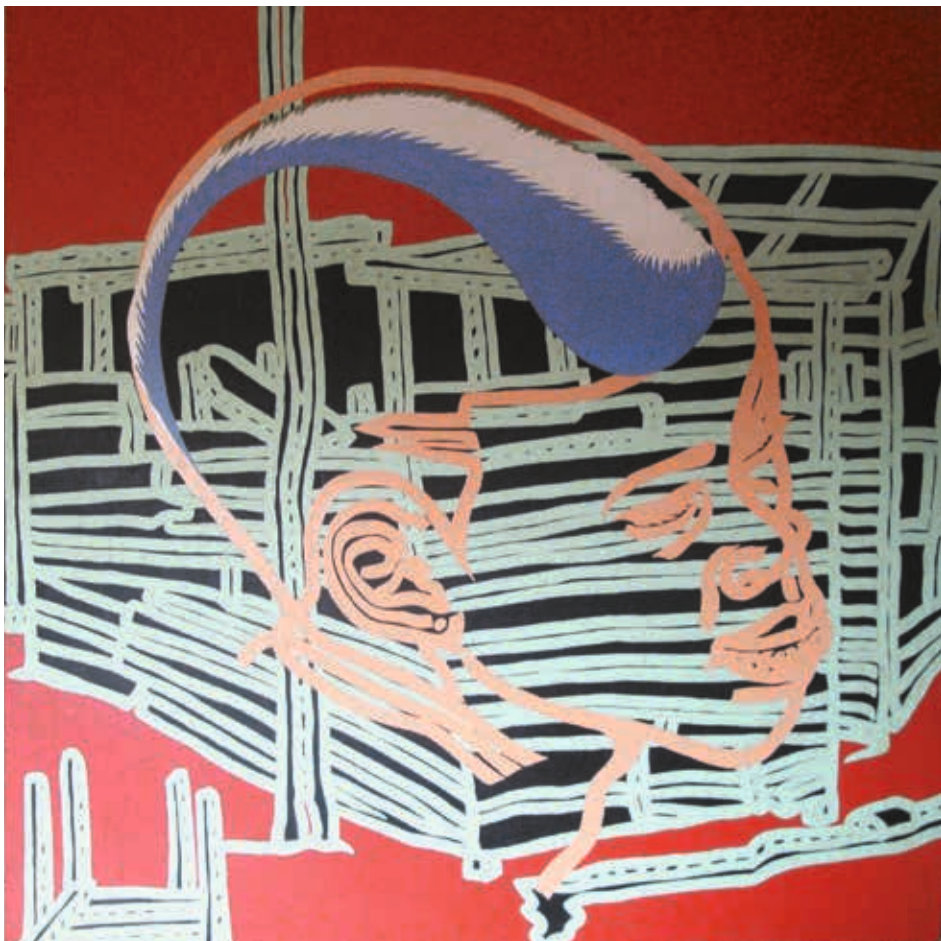


Fig 48
Boris Nzébo, *Crêpe Rasé I*, 2011, 120 x 120 cm, acrylic
on canvas. Collection Claude Meier-Blunski, Zurich.



Fig 49

49.1 Pascale Marthine Tayou, *Colonne Pascale*, 2010, 74 superimposed household pots, pole, *Salon Urbain de Douala* 2010.

49.2 Inauguration speech of Pascale Marthine Tayou.

Colonne Pascale. Humourist readings seem to be particularly welcome in as far as the title of the column pokes fun at the earliest type of public art; heroic monuments. Prior to Douala’s investment in this genre, Douala had only public monuments celebrating questionable heroes from the colonial period.

Hervé Yamguen, on the other hand, likes to express his vision of an animated nature by means of lyric watercolours and canvases in conjunction with poetic writing, as well as intervening in public space.²⁴² Nature, love, and the erotic are recurrent themes amongst the topics Yamguen addresses. Hanussek has therefore made the connection to Picasso and the aesthetics of the *École de Paris* when discussing Yamguen’s oeuvre in the early 2000s.²⁴³ Yet, in 2010 Yamguen started to integrate vernacular craft techniques into his creative process. The series *Masques Oiseaux* was the first of many works for which he asked professional carvers from Douala to remodel figurative motifs from his coloured drawings in wood. (Fig 50) Specialised craftswomen from Western Cameroon enchase each of these objects in a pearl coating, using the same technique by which King Njoya’s famous thrones have also been decorated.²⁴⁴ The technical constraints of carving and pearl coating are importantly transforming Yamguen’s motifs and thanks to this transformation they are effectively “connect[ing] the contemporary with the past”.²⁴⁵ And rather than falling for a simple exploitation of folk art, which can be a pitfall of similar attempts, as Araeen has stressed,²⁴⁶ Yamguen demonstrates that the interlinking of various aesthetic repertoires and his personal gamut of motifs generates a dynamic, hybrid formal language.

This list of examples of multi-referential artworks could be extended in various ways, for instance by Goddy Leye’s *détournements* of icons from mass culture, like the video *We Are the World* (2006). (Fig 51) For the latter video, Leye filmed himself on his bed from a bird’s eye perspective while munching on exotic fruit and humming along with the homonymous song by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, thus poking fun at the victimising projections that are inherent to this charity hit. Together, these examples show that artists in Douala are used to taking a playful and critical stance towards the canon of art history and that they like to merge this repertoire with other aesthetic archives, like those of regional craft styles or different aspects of mass culture. The resulting artworks correspond to Baroni’s

characterisation of Contemporary Art. For their more commercial work, the artists instead seem to draw on a narrower set of references. Certain recognisable styles, such as Art Brut, Informel, Abstraction, or clichéd forms of Afro-Modernism continue to dominate in these works, as Christian Hanusseck also observed in 2000. The work sold on the website *ken'art* offers a prime example. (Fig 52) Pascal Kenfack set up this bilingual online sales platform with the help of his daughter, who is based in Canada. This webshop offers high quality photographic reproductions of “African art” by artists such as Goddy Leye and Justine Gaga. These works are categorised according to their style as “Fine Art”, “Decorative Art”, “Urban Art”, or “Folk Art” and ordered according to colours and to the domestic spaces that they might fit in.²⁴⁷ By thus supplying works that recall Baroni’s concept of Fine Art, the artists seem to anticipate the expectations of their clients. Regardless of whether they are Cameroonians, Western expatriates, or diaspora Africans, these clients demand for decorative products that “easily match their sofa”²⁴⁸ and correspond to their vague understanding of Modern Art, as well as to their often diffuse ideas of African aesthetics. I can summarise now that Baroni’s distinction of Contemporary Art and Fine Art proved useful to distinguish two types of artwork that I came across in the field. However, the two-fold practice of many artists that I have interviewed challenges this curator’s dichotomisation of Fine Artists and Contemporary Artists. Instead, I was able to identify a number of Fine-and-Contemporary Artists.

Being Connected, Flexible and Precarious in the Global Field of Art

Throughout this chapter I have maintained the thesis that the bulk of professionally relevant knowledge for visual artists continued to be informally passed on in Cameroon’s urban centres in the 2000s. However, the forms of mediation and the discourse on art changed in accordance with the rise of the Internet and with the artists’ increasing mobility. A new age group of artists, those born around 1980 grew up within a “‘connexionist’ world in which fluidity and mobility



Fig 50
Hervé Yanguen, object from the series *Oiseaux Masques*,
2012, glass beads, cotton, wood, stones.



Fig 51

Goddy Leye, *We Are the World*, 2006, digital video, 5 min,
projection at Peter Herrmann Galerie, Berlin.

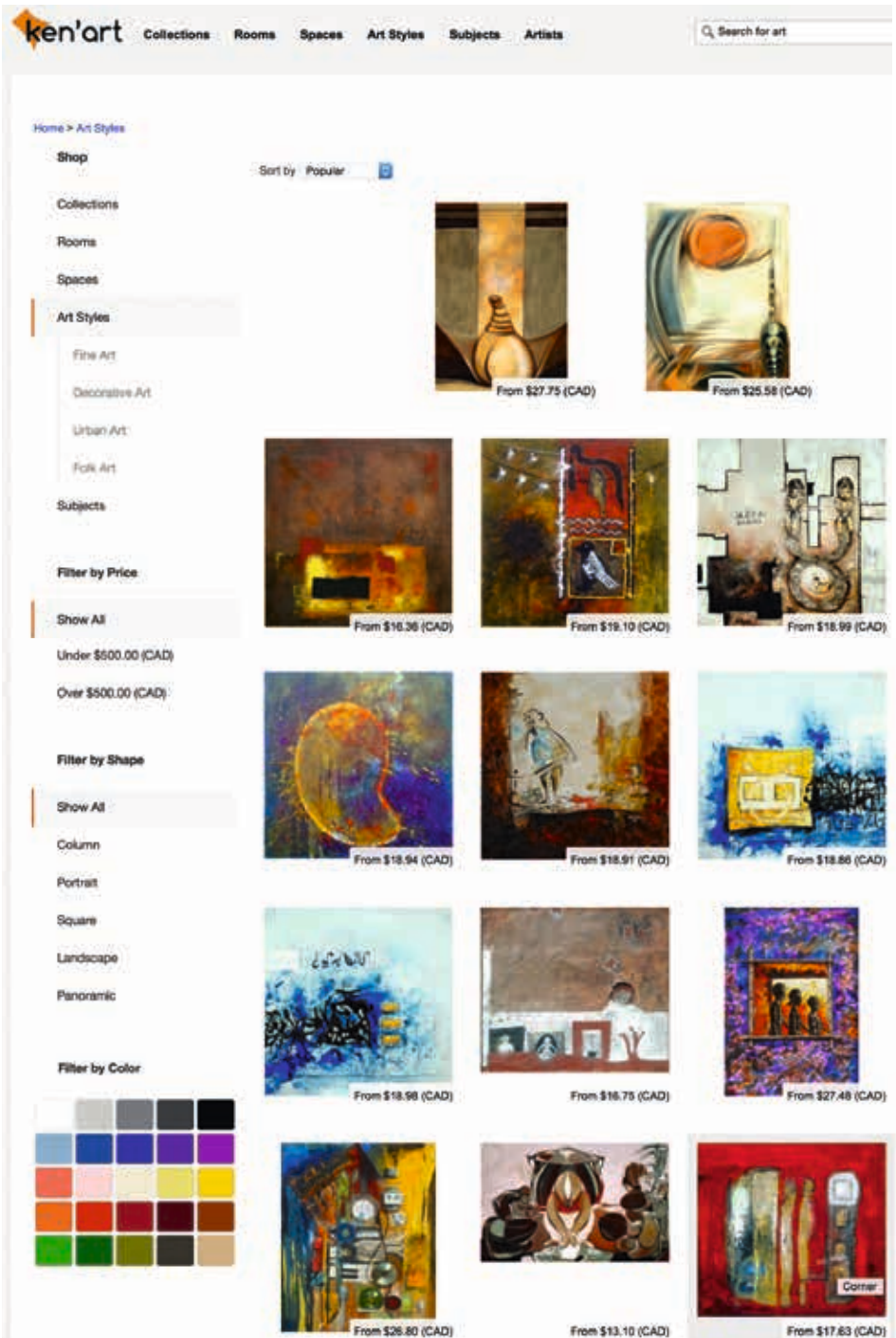


Fig 52
The webshop *Ken'art*.

are the most esteemed values".²⁴⁹ Arguably, these values have eroded the age hierarchies between artists working in Cameroon's urban centres to a certain extent because the younger artists were quicker to adopt the new communication technologies. Although some artists born around 1950 have also started to partake in certain foreign biennales and studio programmes, and do use the Internet to a certain extent, they nonetheless proved more resistant to the project market's demand to be flexible and mobile.²⁵⁰ Komegné, for instance, stated in this respect:

[J]e ne veux pas faire de l'art pour le tourisme! Non. Je ne veux pas être toujours derrière le montant pour les résidences. Non. Moi, je suis artiste!²⁵¹

I could then show that a number of grassroots initiatives undertaken by representatives of the 1990 generation of artists and the civil society helped at shifting Cameroon's art scene to Douala. By means of case studies I have accentuated these initiatives' important role in non-formal art/s education during the 2000s. The differently structured studio programmes, an artist travel and a newspaper project exemplified innovative bottom-up approaches to tackle these instructional tasks. These approaches took inspiration from knowledge that certain artists brought back from stays abroad, from the input of visiting artists, as well as from the local history of artistic self-organisation. The conscious merging of these different strands of experiences and knowledges points to the strong self-awareness and the good (intergenerational) connectivity of the non-academic artists working in Douala, as well as to their increasing transnational exposure, including exchanges with peers from the Global South. Thus, the grassroots initiatives became important sites of artistic learning and they are one reason why the artists were able to produce work that is varied and layered and that taps into countless different aesthetic archives.

However, I have also found that these grassroots initiatives could not be kept up in the long run. Many private art initiatives in Africa share this problem, as mentioned in the introduction. K-Factory, Art-Bakery and *DiARTgonale* had abandoned or paused their activities by the time of writing, while *Exit Tour* was meant to be a singular and temporary undertaking in the first place. Albeit organised in collectives and enmeshed in transnational networks, the artists who initiated them have ultimately failed to generate sustainable structures to

organise the non-formal training of artists according to their ideals. This fragility could be attributed to the dependence of the grassroots initiatives on single charismatic founders, to their economic precarity as non-for-profit enterprises by agents from lower social stratas with little economic backing, as well as to the general difficulties in making long-term commitments in a geographic context with a low level of planning security.

In contrast, doual’art has become an example in pertinence. Even if less dynamic and outgoing, also Africréa and Galérie MAM have persisted. In fact, private initiatives that are more institutionalised work with larger groups of staff and clearly distinguished job profiles seem to have also proved more sustainable elsewhere; the Market Photo Shop in Johannesburg, South Africa, the École des Sables in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal, and the Studios Kabako in Kisangani, Democratic Republic of Congo, have recently been credited of developing innovative forms of modular training that give extended access to knowledge and exposure to their students, besides facilitating multi-directional relationships. While their existence is not secured, either, these initiatives seem to have developed tactics to confront their own funding insecurity and to share this expertise with their artist students.²⁵²

The discourse analysis by which I have then scrutinised the terms of becoming a Contemporary Artist in Douala has substantiated my thesis that this local field of art can be considered a subfield of the global field of art. I could firstly show that the local discourse reflects the contradictory debates about Contemporary Art at large, for instance the tension between universalistic notions and their critique. Furthermore, I found out that those artists that I interviewed adhere or pretend to adhere to the same rules that reign at the symbolic pole of the global field of art, even if these rules underwent some important adaptations to the local context.

Chapter 6

Learning from Cameroon's History of Non-formal Training

The concluding chapter discusses the primary results of this study, while also pointing to its limitations and to new research questions that I was able to generate. In terms of methodology, it proved worthwhile to pursue the history of artistic knowledge sharing in Cameroon's major cities through a critical genealogy. This Foucauldian approach helped to excavate the knowledge that constitutes our present and to lay bare the epistemological layers that reigned at certain moments in the past. Lacking written archives to consult for basic research, I turned towards a combination of research tools from sociology, history, and art history that allowed me to consider diverse bodies of sources. While it cannot be stressed often enough that my analysis reflects a foreigner's limited insight into the geographic, social, and artistic context of Cameroon, it can be said that these multiple sources enable my study to contain the input of diverse voices. Furthermore, my agent-focused research perspective values the agency of the visual artists in terms of their studio practice, their roles as learners and teachers, and their entrepreneurial tactics—while also spotlighting the dependence of these agencies on historical processes on the local, national, and global level.

Consequences of State Neglect for Art/s Education

When comparing the results of my analysis of the public discourse on culture in post-independence Cameroon with the state of visual arts in the country today, the influence that culture politics have on the perception and appreciation of visual art becomes strikingly evident. In order to highlight this correlation, I'd like to return to certain lines of thought that I have unfolded throughout this text. In the second chapter I argued that the newly independent Cameroonian state abandoned plans to institutionalise education in the artistic domain

in the 1970s in response to a widespread desire to celebrate cultural continuity despite the colonial rupture. Well-mediated discourses would then privilege crafts that evoke the regional cultural heritages of the multi-cultural conglomerate of the United Republic of Cameroon—especially those of supposedly more authentic regions—over forms of modern visual art. As a consequence, aspiring painters and sculptors had to orient towards institutions in the diaspora for training. Many of them relied on the questionable teachings of commercial correspondence courses located in the former imperial capital of Paris. These private schools and their curricula should be academically scrutinised further in the future, not least because it seems likely that these schools also had students in other former colonies. By retracing these schools’ networks across the Francophonie and beyond it might be possible to uncover an entirely new type of pseudo-academic “visual contact zone” (Küster) that was driven by commercial interests and nurtured by the epistemological dependencies created by colonialism.

Arguably, the Cameroonian government’s inertia regarding cultural education is also reflected in the public perception of visual art today. In recent interviews recorded in Douala, art professionals have bemoaned a general disinterest in visual art.¹ Artists are at best perceived as curious animals,² at worst as rogues³ who do not assume their responsibility toward their families and society—or even as thieves.⁴ These perceptions sharply contrast with the active socio-political engagement of many practitioners that I have introduced over the course of this book. Numerous private art initiatives have struggled to alleviate these prejudices since the 1990s,⁵ but the anthropologist Aveved has nevertheless observed that visual artists in Cameroon continue to face the reproach of “cultural desertion”.⁶ According to Aveved, this reproach originates with the public conception of culture as something associated with “traditional”, ancestral and rural ways of life that are distinguishable according to autochthonous ethnicities. In sharp contrast, the public imagination is said to picture the cities as the countryside’s “other”, as culturally diluted ethnic melting pots that were further affected by the alienating programming of the foreign cultural institutes and appear therefore as “acultural”⁷ spaces. Obviously, the widespread deprecation for urban cultures that Aveved has diagnosed especially affects those cultural

producers whose artistic subject is life in the city. These prejudices in the public opinion are easily recognisable as reverberations of the aforementioned polemics of the 1960s and 70s.

Another hypothesis reaches even further back in history to unravel the disdain for visual art. Malaquais has argued that the French co-optation of Cameroon's independence inhibited an intellectual rupture from the conservative tastes of the *petit-bourgeoisie* that constituted the French colonial elite in Cameroon. The aesthetic judgement of this newly powerful class in the colony was simple:

*Le beau, c'est l'ordre.*⁸

Indeed, arts education would have been a means to prevent such colonial value schemes from persisting amongst the newly independent Cameroonians. And there is apparently yet another implication of the culture-political conservatism that hampered the country's decolonisation: the Ahidjo government left the largest part of the public commissions for the new nation's representative buildings and monuments to a former colonial administrator, the French city planner and architect Armand Salomon. Future studies should analyse Salomon's architectonic designs for Yaoundé in view of their alleged evocation of vernacular building traditions and in relation to the bulk of recent academic research that addresses the use of the colonies as testing ground for Modernism's most daring experiments.⁹

A final consequence of this politically enforced disinterest for visual art to be mentioned here is the embryonic state of the academic study of Cameroon's twentieth century art. In order to elaborate a repertoire of art-historical references that could be inspirational for future artistic work and a necessary basis for art education, future monographic research should focus on the diversely socialised Cameroonian artists who have imagined modern or postcolonial aesthetic vocabularies beyond the village cliché. Ibrahim Njoya, Engelbert Mveng, Gaspar Gomán, Pascal Kenfack, Koko Komegné, Joseph Francis Sumegné, and Goddy Leye have created excellent artwork that reflects on the entanglements of past and present, as I have pointed out.¹⁰ The wide range of aesthetic references that inspired these oeuvres shows that these artists bother(ed) little with notions of cultural purity in their aesthetic practice.

Tactic Community instead of Auto-Didacticism

Thanks to the multiple sources that have informed this study, I was able to gain an understanding of the pivotal role of artist associations in Cameroon's art history since the late 1970s, both in Yaoundé and in Douala. Outstanding examples of artists working collectively include Cercle Maduta (1979-1983), the UDAPCAM (since 1981), CAPLIT (1983-?), Prim'Art (c. 1993-1997), Club Khéops (1994-?), the Dreamers (c. 1999 to 2004), Cercle Kapsiki (1998-2011), and formations of the late 2000s like OnomARTopée or Les Cocoricos.¹¹ The Atelier de l'Art Nègre preceded all of these groups, yet it cannot be clearly categorised as yet. The poor state of existing research suggests that this enterprise that produced collaboratively was a hierarchically structured workshop rather than a collective of individual artists. In general, I have construed artistic self-organisation as a tactic to enhance the artists' visibility in terms of exhibitions and media coverage and to empower individual artists to prevail in an adversarial social context. Some of these collectives also proved to be highly innovative. They exhibited in non-art spaces and lobbied for the appreciation of their metier amongst diverse communities and politicians.¹² And in the 1990s, collectives began to systematically facilitate the dissemination of professional knowledge.

This historical continuity of arts collectives in Cameroon disarms the criticism against the supposed over-individuation of visual artists, which representatives of the government claimed conflicted with what they purported to be the typical Cameroonian value of communality.¹³ The intergenerational solidarity of artists further destabilises this argument. This solidarity manifests itself from the 1970s onwards in the *Système de Grands Frères*, in which elder artists mentor younger ones on the basis of kinship metaphors. Almost all of my interlocutors could share experiences of informally teaching other artists, children, or youths. Supporting younger or less successful peers was generally deemed a priority, despite the pressure to market highly individualised artistic positions in an increasingly competitive professional context. Further proof of the artists' communal orientation is the impulse towards artistic space-making, which has been discernible in Cameroon since the 1980s.

conclusions. I can firstly support the postulate raised by sociologists and by researchers from the field of visual studies that we need to acknowledge the communal context of artistic production rather than perpetuating art history's celebration of the individual (White, male) artist genius¹⁴—a case in point being the growing number of works made in Cameroon that result from collaborations between artists and artisanal craftspeople.¹⁵ Finally, this history of artistic self-organisation accounts for the communal nature of almost all the learning situations that I could identify throughout this thesis. On the firm basis of my empirical research I can therefore dismiss the idea of the autodidact, self-taught, or self-trained artist that has often been applied to non-academic artists working in Africa.¹⁶ In fact, all of the non-formally trained artists that I observed in Cameroon had nonetheless learned their skills from others—however informal the contact—rather than in self-contained ways.

The Dilemmas of Critical and Socially-Engaged Art

My discussion of exemplary artworks and artists' statements illustrated how many visual artists explicitly and critically engaged with Cameroon's social and political reality in the 1990s. During this decade, visual art became visible outside of the spatially and socially secluded art circles in Yaoundé and in Douala, appearing in the streets of densely populated neighbourhoods, restaurants, shops, and Internet cafés. An ambition to reach out to new audiences fuelled this movement—the same ambition that brought about the Social Turn in Europe and the United States. While it is well known that doual'art made the deterritorialization of art its prime objective by focusing on public art, my text foregrounded that initiatives by artists like Pascal Kenfack and Alioum Moussa, as well as collectives like Cercle Maduta and ArtBakery were equally important for this development—and some even preceded doual'art's foundation.

Furthermore, I have found that many artists working in Yaoundé and Douala started to use new genres like assemblages, installations, performances, interventions in public space, video installations, and photo series for their critical work after 1990, but not without adapting

these genres to their context. It seems like the artists sought to engage their viewers more intensively by turning to new genres that facilitate physical, durational experiences and can draw attention to the space of encounter. The documentary quality of media like video and photography have given way to the most explicit artworks, of which certain ones have alarmed the authorities.¹⁷ It would be rewarding to analyse these genres more closely in the future, especially considering that Goddy Leye's role as an African video pioneer of the 1990s is still awaiting academic attention, and that photography seems to have a distinct, provocative potential in the context of Cameroon.¹⁸ The emergence of critical and socially engaged works of art is clearly a novelty in Cameroon's art history of the twentieth century. Its emergence relegated painting, the previously predominant medium, to the background. Insofar as all of these new works bore witness to genuinely urban experiences, they complemented the oftentimes nostalgic and affirmative evocations of rural ways of life in the paintings of earlier decades.

Many of my interviewees suggested that these politicised practices should be considered Contemporary Art because they engage intellectually and aesthetically with issues of the present. Following Peter Osborne's thinking about the contemporary, the political turning point of the Smouldering Years could be considered the beginning of the present and hence of the Contemporary era in Cameroon, which would synchronise the local art history with prominent historicisations of Contemporary Art in relation to the turn in global politics of 1989. However, considering the contradictory discourses on Contemporary Art that I have summarised, the critiques of this label's obliterating effects, and my focus on artistic learning processes, I prefer to take this conclusion as an occasion to problematise this paradigm further on the basis of my case study.

The book's fourth chapter explored the role that art professionals from the former colonial empires played in introducing the above-mentioned artistic genres in Cameroon and in establishing a new funding market for art projects. I was able to show that many of these newly arrived NGO-founders, curators, editors, and cultural managers operated with budgets from the sphere of development politics and cultural diplomacy—budgets that were meant to engender political transformation on site in sync with the agendas of European

foreign politics. Further research should explore to what extent the guiding paradigms of democracy, civil rights, and development that shaped this project market were connected to the enforcement of Germany's and France's other geopolitical interests in Cameroon after 1989. The pursuit of this question would require in-depth historical research in the archives of the central offices of the Goethe-Institut¹⁹ and the Institut Français, as well as in the foreign ministry offices—a task that went beyond the focus of this book.

The current politics of the German foreign institute in Africa provide some preliminary insight in this respect. The German minister of foreign affairs has doubled the annual culture budget for the Goethe-Institute south of the Sahara since 2008. An official statement suggests that this step was taken in order “to position Germany on a continent that was about to be usurped by the Chinese”—read: access to raw materials. It was also said that “Germany ought to be part”²⁰ of the (cultural) dynamism of the continent, as well as of the new South-to-South networks that are expected to grow from there in the coming years. I shall therefore maintain the hypothesis that the historical turn towards Contemporary Art in Cameroon was likewise fostered by external political interests, rather than being merely the result of a civil emancipation process and the local artists' wish to reflect on their present by means of new media.

Since the production of Contemporary Art closely relates to the project market in Cameroon, visual artists face a number of conflicting priorities. They subsist from this market because the state does not provide programs to support them, nor does it supply social security. Furthermore, the local art market is weak. The resulting urgent practical priority to earn a livelihood from art conflicts with the global Rules of Art that structure the project market, more concretely with the ideal of the economically disinterested, autonomous artist that reigns at the symbolic pole of the field of art.²¹ The artistic pursuit of idiosyncratic, subcultural, or Afrocentric concerns might have caused conflicts with the political and ethical values that structure this market that is controlled by Western funding. The project market therefore functions like a filter. However, as I could illuminate in chapter four, certain artists in Yaoundé and Douala have found ways to work around this dilemma by means of their growing discursive agency. Others have succeeded in discreetly pursuing complementary

tracks by splitting their practice into non-for profit Contemporary Art and saleable Fine Art.²²

Another dilemma concerns geographic location. In order to remain up-to-date, to qualify for participation in the labour market of Contemporary Art, and to make a living as a professional visual artist, it seems mandatory for practitioners to at least temporarily leave Cameroon.²³ The two most visible and economically most successful artists from Cameroon—Barthélémy Togo and Pascale Marthine Tayou—have relocated to the European diaspora at early points in their careers, as did Blaise Bang, Guy Wouéte, and LucFoster Diop in the 2000s. Others took on nomadic lifestyles in order to advance their careers by means of residencies, exhibitions, and biennales abroad and have scrapped together a living from the modest stipends associated with their participation—as well as occasional sales. The careers of Goddy Leye, Alioum Moussa, and Justine Gaga are exemplary in this respect. At the same time, the art world has a high demand for cultural difference and for “exotic” positions of artists: qualities that are often associated with peripheral places of residence. What is more, the imperative to take residence in the North or to remain mobile and flexible in between the centre and the periphery is in conflict with the artists’ family life, with their ambition to counter the notorious brain drain, and to contribute to cultural life at home in sustainable ways. The instalment of the ArtBakery in a village outside of Douala was an open challenge to this logic, as was Barthélémy Togo’s Bandjoun Station, which is located at 250km from Douala and Yaoundé and has become more dynamic since I started my research.²⁴

These economic and geographical dilemmas substantiate the scholarly arguments about the “asymmetric dependencies” (Buchholz) of cultural producers from the periphery in the supposedly inclusive global labour market of Contemporary Art.²⁵ Therefore, my study confirms Osborne’s assertion that the idea of the global Contemporary is at best a naive utopia, at worst a dangerously apolitical fiction that conceals the blatant inequalities of the current capitalist global order and the continuities of colonial power structures. That said, there is plenty of evidence that these dilemmas did not paralyse artists in Cameroon. Rather, their most interesting artworks visualise the asynchronicity and the conditionality to which their cultural production is subject.

Non-formal Training of Visual Artists from the 1970s to the 2000s: An Assessment

This book's main objective was to give a nuanced assessment of the non-academic art education that has been the condition of possibility for the art made in Cameroon in the twentieth and early twenty-first century. To this end, I have analysed a composite and fluctuating cluster of uncertified forms of training that emerged from the late 1970s onwards. This cluster's more steady features were the *Système de Grands Frères*, the *ateliers*, doual'art's seminars, and projects, Art-Bakery's MasterClasses and the studio programmes of the artist-run spaces. The artists' terms at art schools and studio programmes outside of Cameroon and their participation in exhibitions and biennales abroad must also be counted amongst these non-formal learning opportunities.

This non-academic training has proved beneficial for artists in a number of ways. Unlike the mainly theoretical instructions available at the University of Yaoundé from 1993 onwards, the non-formal learning took place within the professional field and amidst experienced artists. Much to their advantage, emerging artists could thus discover pragmatic solutions to tackle the complexities associated with artistic careers in Yaoundé or Douala—by exploring substitutes for artist supplies, for instance. Early bonding with key figures in the field also laid the groundwork for the artists' later professional networks. Moreover, this informal context enabled artists to keep a safe distance from the national government that actually did not implement freedom of expression, despite the constitutional reform of 1991.²⁶ Notably, visual artists have also imagined critical alternatives to governmental educational programmes under similar circumstances in other geographic contexts. Distinctive examples from the 1970s and 80s are the Laboratoire Agit-Art in Dakar that challenged the norms of the Senghorian *École de Dakar*²⁷, the MEDU Art Ensemble in Botswana²⁸ that was part of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, and the Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage²⁹ in Rio de Janeiro that escaped the reach of the authoritarian military government in Brazil.

In Cameroon, the non-formal training has also proved socially inclusive in various ways. Almost all the artists that I interviewed

stem from the lower and middle urban classes. Many of them are children of first-generation urbanites. The composition of the backgrounds of artists in Douala therefore mirrors the social composition of Cameroon's cities. This is not self-evident since children of social elites generally tend to dominate amongst professional artists in other places because their cultural, social, and economic capital makes them more resistant to the notorious risks that are associated with this profession.³⁰ The ethnic diversity of the composition of Yaoundé's and Douala's art world is also worthy of special mention, since Cameroon is known for its tribalist tendencies.³¹

It is another plus of the non-formal training that its educational threshold is low. As a consequence, it is possible to laterally enter the art world from other careers. Starting with Viking André Kanganyam and Koko Komegné, a number of advertisement painters like Boris Nzébo, house painters like Justine Gaga, and portrait painters like Alioum Moussa were able to embark on careers as visual artists. School money, credentials, and certificates were not necessary for the former apprentices to attain upward social mobility and international mobility, as well as the rewards of media attention and self-realisation. Today, artists with primary school certificates and master graduates enjoy similar chances in the domestic art world and beyond. It is safe to assume that their technical and entrepreneurial skills in terms of budgeting, pitching, and self-initiative from the field of advertisement were also helpful in the project market of visual art. My curatorial project has assured me of the capacity of non-academic artists from Cameroon to collaborate with foreign, academically trained artists on equal footing. The only hindrances here are the digital divide and being limited by the French language.

I shall point to the aforementioned diversification of artistic genres and media that occurred during the 1990s to illustrate a final, positive effect of non-formal training. My results suggest that the contacts with foreign art and artists experienced over the course of *ateliers*, projects, residencies, and MasterClasses enabled this development. This diversification was beneficial because it generated distinct artistic oeuvres that could coexist within a narrow market, thus reducing the professional competition amongst artists and actually enhancing the attractiveness of the local art scene for travelling art professionals. In sum, these arguments suggest that the cluster of

non-formal artistic training in Yaoundé and Douala of the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s proved quite efficient.

And yet I have also come across important structural shortcomings associated with non-certified training, which must not be overlooked. First of all, self-help systems like the *Système de Grands Frères* and educational initiatives like the artist-run spaces tend to exacerbate the economic precariousness of artists, insofar as the expertise and the time invested in teaching is not remunerated. This is all the more problematic in light of the fact that building this expertise is associated with high professional risks—and it is particularly labour-intensive to keep this professional artistic expertise up-to-date. Moreover, non-formally trained artists cannot access regular teaching positions in Cameroon's educational system because these positions require a French-style teacher diploma that presupposes a degree of a secondary school and a regular course of study.³² The new “Instituts de Beaux Arts” that have been established in Maroua, Nkongsamba, and Foumban since 2010 have therefore employed graduates from general history as teaching staff for want of specialised academically trained candidates,³³ while the IFA and the APHA rejuvenate their teams with their own alumni. The result of this exclusive employment policy is a vicious circle of self-exploitation on the non-formal side and of poorly qualified teachers in formal education on the other side.

Another negative effect related to the non-formality of artistic training seems to be the minority position of women artists and the invisibility of LGBTI artists amongst the cultural practitioners working in Douala and in Yaoundé, as I have stressed in the second and fourth chapters. Several interviewees confirmed that it is considered indecent and particularly risky for young women to become a professional artist and that the social and economic marginalisation of visual art motivated certain families' attempts at inhibiting their daughters to follow their vocation, let alone to train in non-formal ways. On another note, the curator and writer Simon Njami has hypothesised that the striking gender gap in Cameroonian art is due to the lack of role models or *grandes soeurs* in Cameroon.³⁴ The history of non-formal artistic training that I have surveyed did not produce satisfactory ideas to tackle these issues, besides the purposeful inclusion of female cultural producers by ArtBakery and K-Factory. Yet,

as a matter of fact, the problem might be more deeply rooted. The curator Clémentine Deliss wrote in 1995:

The preponderance of male artists in Africa is undeniable... [But] education and professional development are only two of the complex sets of circumstances that affect the ability of women to become full-time practicing artists. There is no single answer to their presence or their absence.³⁵

An observation by the South African urbanist Zayd Minti points to societal hierarchies that generally disadvantage women in Cameroon, even in Douala, which is allegedly the country's most open-minded city:

Traditional ways of life, although not legislated in the political system, still hold sway in the lived experiences of the country and in Douala. These define relationships, especially in respect to age and gender, with youth and women having a lesser status in a number of contexts.³⁶

A statement by Lionel Manga supports Minti's point:

[D]éjà de s'émanciper [en tant que femme] simplement c'est une chose compliquée et de s'émanciper au point de devenir une artiste, alors là, ce n'est pas évident! C'est pour ça qu'on en n'a pas beaucoup.³⁷

It can therefore be concluded that it takes particular political and educational efforts in terms of gender mainstreaming to challenge the heterosexual predominance that accounts for the women artists' marginality and for much of the homophobia in Cameroon.

In her article on the accessibility of knowledge resources to support the production and the reception of art in African contexts, the artist Ato Malinda has rightly underscored that culture can only strive through knowledge.³⁸ Considering a conversation about the lack of access to feminist literature with the young artist Edvige Ndjeng in Douala and an NGO's estimate about the slow acceptance of gender equality and feminism in Cameroon,³⁹ I would like to take Malinda's position a step further. In order to understand the structural reasons of their marginality and to efficiently go about this issue, aspiring women artists in Cameroon should be given access to knowledge about the latest state of the gender debate and its regional branches,⁴⁰ as well as to publications about the history of feminist art in Africa and beyond.⁴¹ The respective books are still missing in the art libraries in Yaoundé, Mbalmayo, and Douala, and it is hence not surprising that feminist writing and aesthetic approaches are still embryonic

in Cameroon.⁴² Any form of future artistic training in Cameroon should try to tackle this shortcoming because to undo the invisibility of women artists is as important as the struggle for the freedom of expression, as the Cameroon-born curator Christine Eyene has rightly stressed.⁴³

The largest flaw of non-formal artistic training in Yaoundé and in Douala after the turn of the millennium was its lack of sustainability. The cluster that I have identified could only emerge thanks to a specific historical constellation after 1989, when the interests of foreign cultural politics, the NGO-Boom, artistic politicisation, and subsequent self-organisation coalesced in a way that was fortuitous for young artists. New political priorities after 9/11, the NGO disillusionment, and the severe cuts in European culture budgets in recent years unveiled this cluster's genuinely evanescent nature. A new type of labour organisation further exacerbated this fragility. From the late 1980s onwards, informal education in Cameroon was increasingly organised in the form of projects, i.e. as temporally limited, selective intervention with a specified horizon of expectation. If funded at all, project budgets were limited and offered little flexibility to adjust the project over the course of its realisation or to repeat it. This also holds true for the *ateliers* and for doual'art's seminars and projects in public space. This reorganisation of artistic and art-related labour coincided with the rise of the economic crisis in Cameroon, which was linked to the Structural Adjustment Programs that were one effect of the rise of neoliberal politics in general. Notably, project paradigm's emphasis on the temporary—and by extension the temporarily financed—also matched the hype of the contemporary as in Contemporary Art.

Artists also adapted to the project paradigm, as the Dreamers' concern for elaborate, long-term projects exemplifies. Interestingly, there were even attempts to reorganise the *Système de Grands Frères* into project-based formats in the 2000s. Let me summarise this system's history in order to make this point clear. From the 1970s onwards, certain *grands frères* started to admit younger artists to their studio, allowing them to use their tools and their books. The elder artists also commented on the younger ones' aesthetic experiments and offered help in terms of access to exhibitions. In the 1990s, both *petits* and *grands frères* participated in the *ateliers*. With increasing access to the global field of art, certain *petits frères* became *grands frères* themselves.

In the 2000s, the new *grands frères* that were the founders of K-Factory and ArtBakery attempted to formalise and improve the *Système de Grands Frères* by means of their studio programmes, as I could show. The studio programmes took on the form of projects insofar as the tutorship was temporally limited, goals were defined in advance, and the results became measurable through final exhibitions. Accordingly, the grassroots initiatives could make attempts at covering some of the cost of these programmes by means of fundraising and sponsoring. Yet after the closure of K-Factory and the suspension of activities at ArtBakery, different generations of *grands frères* have continued to tutor their *petits frères* individually in their studios. Hence, it seems as if the *Système de Grands Frères* has ultimately remained unaffected by the project paradigm and continues as a low-threshold self-help system with all the advantages and flaws addressed in chapter three.

The history of the *Système de Grands Frères* exemplifies that the project paradigm has produced only short-term solutions for structural problems in the realm of artistic training in Cameroon. At the same time, cultural producers became more and more dependent on foreign funding and on its related politics. The deprecation of visual art in Cameroonian society has also prevailed. Without structural solutions at the level of domestic politics, access to cultural heritage through museums remains difficult. This deficit also affects visual artists in their attempts to reference this heritage and forecloses the shaping of a more nuanced, updated cultural identity on the part of citizens. By way of conclusion I shall therefore value the cluster of non-formal training occasions as a provisional stand-in for more structured forms of cultural education and cultural politics in Cameroon.

Guiding the State's New Interest in Visual Art

Interestingly enough, the Cameroonian government has recently started to invest itself in the domain of art/s education, as seen in the 2009 decree to implement arts education in public schools and the instalment of three new Instituts de Beaux Arts since 2010.

304 One reason thereof might be the growing pressure by international

organisations. In fact, cultural education was elevated to human rights status during two UNESCO world conferences in 2006 and 2010.⁴⁴ It is thus likely that cultural education was made a prerogative for development funds to continue to flow into Cameroon. Another reason might be the wide acceptance of the creative industries discourse as a leitmotif of cultural policies and debates on culture amongst policy-makers and journalists in Africa.⁴⁵ Nobody promotes this discourse in Cameroon more than the World Bank, an organisation that is often associated with neoliberalism's most devastating effects. An official of this bank has repeated the mantra of the creative industries during an exhibition opening in 2007, as we learn from an article in *DiARTgonale*. He said:

La peinture, les arts plastiques et plus globalement les industries culturelles représentent aujourd'hui une source considérable de richesse, d'opportunités d'emplois, une vitrine pour un pays avec des externalités positives sur des secteurs comme le tourisme et les services en general... A l'instar d'autres pays, les industries culturelles au Cameroun peuvent ainsi contribuer au moins à 6% de la richesse nationale et 3% de l'emploi.⁴⁶

The promise of the creative industries apparently also affects the orientation of the new art departments. The institutes' focuses on tourism and fashion studies, as well as an insider's perspective on the syllabi used at the Institut de Beaux Arts at the University of Maroua, have informed my opinions on this subject.⁴⁷

It goes beyond this study's concern to give detailed recommendations for the government's new culture politics, especially since I have not inquired into the Cameroonian educational system more broadly. Yet I would like to gesture in this direction nonetheless and echo the claim of Achille Komguem that artists ought to be thinkers in the first place and not only cultural entrepreneurs.⁴⁸ In fact, artistic criticality appears to be particularly indispensable in an undemocratic and corrupt context like Cameroon. Justine Gaga has therefore recently taken up a statement by the French Situationist Guy Débord when describing her self-positioning:

Nous n'appartenons pas, nous, à la mafia bureaucratique et politicienne, ni à celle des banquiers et des financiers, ni à celle des millionnaires, ni à la mafia des grands contrats frauduleux, à celle des monopoles ou à celle du pétrole, ni à celle des grands moyens de communication.⁴⁹

Artists therefore do have a particular potential to strengthen Cameroon's civil society, although they are actually involved in power games and tend to embody certain external political interests.

The history of the artistic struggle for acceptance and the emergence of a truly dynamic current art scene in Douala are proof enough of that fact that artists are public intellectuals of a particularly visionary and persistent type that can indeed "open horizons for the not-yet" (Mbembe). An acknowledgement of these extraordinary capacities would also imply that the history of artists' innovative ideas to organise their training be taken into account when setting up and orienting new university departments, and that artists rather than functionaries be given the lead in conceptualising arts education as a part of general education in Cameroon.

Notes of Chapter 1.

Introduction

1 Vivian Paulissen, “Art and the Constraints of Development. Interview with Achille Mbembe”, *Power of Culture*, September 2009, accessed April 3, 2014, www.powerofculture.nl/en/specials/zam/mbembe.

2 See Jean-François Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993).

3 *Les Saignantes*, directed by Jean-Pierre Békolo (2005; Paris: Quartier Mozart Films, 2005), DVD. See also Matthias de Groof, Nav Haq, Marjolijn Dijkman and Annette Schemmel, “If the Image is the Problem, the Image is the Answer, too: A Conversation on Science Fiction in the African Context”, *DiARTgonale Special Edition 1* (2012): 61-63.

4 Wolfgang Ruppert, “Die Ausbildung zum Maler: Die Kunstakademie als legitime Ausbildungsinstitution der Professionalisierung”, in *Der Moderne Künstler: Zur Sozial- und Kulturgeschichte der kreativen Individualität in der kulturellen Moderne im 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998).

5 For a sketch of a history of studio art education see James Elkins, “What do Artists Know? A Preliminary Report”, *maHkuzine 8* (2010): 27-30.

6 For instance, the transnational exhibition-cum-symposium “Academy” was a platform for these critiques. (Bart De Baere, Yilmaz Dziewor, Charles Esche, Kerstin Niemann, Angelika Nollert and Grant Watson, “Academy”, in *Academy*, ed. Angelika Nollert et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2006), 7-12.

7 Lucy Cotter and Aimée Zito Lema, “About the Master Artistic Research. Profile”, in *MARCHIVE 3* (Den Haag:

Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten, 2013), 1.

8 Henk Borgdorff, introduction to *The Conflict of the Faculties. Perspectives on Artistic Research and Academia* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2012), 4, <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/18704/The%20Conflict%20of%20the%20Faculties%20-%20proefschrift%20Borgdorff.pdf?sequence=20>. See also the EU website “Overview of publications and conferences about research in the arts”, Share Network, accessed May, 25, 2014, www.sharenetwork.eu/about-share.

9 Hito Steyerl, “Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict”, *maHkuzine 8* (2010): 31-37. For an introduction to cognitive capitalism consider Yann Moulier-Boutang, *Le capitalisme cognitif: La nouvelle grande transformation* (Paris: Éditions Amsterdam, 2007). For Moulier-Boutang’s take on visual art’s submission to the logic of cognitive capitalism consider “Die Hochzeitsnacht des kognitiven Kapitalismus und der Kunst. Kunst in der Ökonomie der Innovation”, in *Kritik der Kreativität*, ed. Gerald Raunig et al. (Wien: Turia + Kant, 2007).

10 Therese Kaufmann, “Kunst und Wissen: Ansätze für eine dekoloniale Perspektive”, *eicpc*, accessed January 7, 2015, <http://eicpc.net/transversal/0311/kaufmann/de/print>.

11 Nicola Lauré al-Samarai, “Art/s Education within the Context of Creative Industries”, *Creating Spaces. Non-formal Arts Education and Vocational Training for Artists in Africa Between Cultural Policies and Cultural Funding* (Nairobi: Contact Zones NRB Text (Goethe-Institut Kenya and Native Intelligence, Kenya), 2014), 37-54.

12 See the statements of the former director of all the branches of the Goethe-Institut in Sub-Saharan Africa, Katharina von Ruckteschell, “We want to take part”, in *Condition Report*, ed. Koyo Kouoh (Ostfildern:

Hatje-Cantz, 2013), 97. The curator Juan A. Gaitán has argued that the foreign cultural centres invest in the professionalization of artists in order to be able to export the cultural production of Africa in return for symbolic capital. (Juan A. Gaitán, “Conditioned Networks”, *ibid.*, 90.)

13 Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

14 For a history of the genesis of the discourse on the creative industries and its “totalitarian tendency” to subject art to the exclusive criterion of productivity, see Bernadette Loacker, *Kreativ prekär: Künstlerische Arbeit und Subjektivität im Postfordismus* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), 87–124 and 128–43.

15 Exemplary texts in this respect are Angela McRobbie, *Be Creative; Making a Living in the New Culture Industries* (London: Polity Press, 2012), Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *Le Nouvel Esprit du Capitalisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999), Pierre Michel Menger, *Profession d'Artiste. Extension du Domaine de la Création* (Paris: Textuel, 2005), Ulf Wuggenig and Gerald Raunig, *Kritik der Kreativität* (Wien: Turia + Kant, 2007).

16 Kouoh, “Filling the Voids”, in *Condition Report*, 15.

17 Kerstin Pinther and Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, “On Building New Spaces For Negotiating Art (and) Histories in Africa: An Introduction”, in *New Spaces for Negotiating Art (and) Histories in Africa*, ed. Kerstin Pinther et al. (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2015), 11.

18 Note well that doual’art used to spell its name with capitals as in “Espace Doual’Art” in the early years.

19 See for instance Chica Okeke-Agulu, *nka Roundtable IV: Independent Art Centres*

in Africa, September 11, 2011, accessed April 2, 2012, <http://nkajournal.wordpress.com/>.

20 This has been variously stressed. See for instance publications by doual’art like *Making Douala 2007-2013*, ed. Xandra Nibbeling et al. (Rotterdam: ICU Art Projects, 2010), or Pinther and Nzewi, “On Building New Spaces For Negotiating Art (and) Histories in Africa: An Introduction”, 9–10.

21 Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 25.

22 See Iolanda Pensa, “Vendre la Culture sous forme de projet”, in “La Biennale de Dakar comme projet de coopération et de développement” (PhD diss., École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales Paris and Politecnico di Milano, 2011). For the effects of this limitation to project funding on educational programmes see Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 131.

23 Simon Njami, “Imagined Communities”, in *Condition Report*, ed. Koyo Kouoh, 24.

24 Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 45.

25 See Terry Smith, “Introduction: Contemporary Art Inside Out”, in *What is Contemporary Art?* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

26 Peter Osborne, “The Fiction of the Contemporary: Speculative Collectivity and the Global Transnational”, in *Aesthetics and Contemporary Art*, ed. Armen Avanessian et al. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2011).

27 Hito Steyerl, “Politics of Art: Contemporary Art and the Transition to Post-Democracy”, *e-flux Journal* 21 (2010), accessed July 17, 2014, www.e-flux.com/journal/politics-of-art-contemporary-art-and-the-transition-to-post-democracy.

- 28 See the discourse analysis on the term Contemporary Art in chapter 5.
- 29 For a sociological critique see Pierre Bourdieu, “The Historical Genesis of the Pure Aesthetic”, in *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 285-309. For a summary of anthropological critiques see Jessica Winegar, introduction to *Creative Reckonings: The Politics of Art and Culture in Contemporary Egypt* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 12-14. Within the European art discourse, the philosopher Juliane Rebentisch is one of the authors who have advocated for a less object-centred notion of art. (Juliane Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012)).
- 30 See Engelbert Mveng, *L’Art et L’Artisanat Africains* (Yaoundé: Éditions Clé, 1980), 44.
- 31 According to Sidney Littlefield Kasfir and Till Förster, the qualifier “traditional” is suspect of essentialising pre-existing tradition. Instead, the adjective “iterational” is said to draw attention to artists’ “intentional activation of practical capabilities” that were realised and observed in previous work. (Sidney Littlefield Kasfir and Till Förster, introduction to *African Art and Agency in the Workshop* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 17.)
- 32 Okwui Enwezor and Chica Okeke Agulu, “Situating Contemporary African Art: Introduction”, in *Contemporary African Art since 1980* (Bologna: Damiani Grafiche, 2009), 12.)
- 33 Anshaire Aveved, “Artistes plasticiens et espaces d’art en milieu urbain camerounais. L’Impératif professionnel de singularité et l’exigence d’affirmation identitaire” (master thesis, Catholic University of Central Africa, 2005), 105, 107, 111.
- 34 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods”, in *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993).
- 35 Marshall W. Mount, *African Art: The years since 1920* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), 3-73.
- 36 Hassan Khan, “Interview with Bassam el Baroni by Hassan Khan (Part 1)”, *Artterritories*, April 25, 2011, accessed September 27, 2013, www.artterritories.net/?page_id=2088.
- 37 Niklas Luhmann, “Weltkunst”, in *Soziologie der Kunst. Produzenten, Vermittler und Rezipienten*, ed. Jürgen Gerhards (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 55-99.
- 38 Arthur C. Danto, “The Artworld”, *Journal of Philosophy* 61 (1968): 580.
- 39 Arthur C. Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1981).
- 40 This term addresses the shifts in the notion of the West engendered by the fall of the Berlin wall. (See “Former West. About”, *Former West*, accessed June 2, 2014, www.formerwest.org/About).
- 41 Howard S. Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 34.
- 42 Ibid., 378.
- 43 Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*.
- 44 Larissa Buchholz, “The Global Rules of Art: The Emergence and Structure of a Global World Economy” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012).
- 45 Several authors have come to this conclusion in global surveys. See Charlotte Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc.: On the Globalization of Contemporary Art* (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2004) and Thomas Fillitz, “Contemporary African Art:

- Coevalness in a Global World”, in *The Global Art World. Audiences, Markets and Museums*, ed. Hans Belting et al. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009).
- 46 Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”, *Profession* (1991): 34.
- 47 Ibid., 39.
- 48 Michel de Certeau, ““Making Do”: Uses and Tactics”, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 37.
- 49 Ibid., 30.
- 50 Ibid., 34.
- 51 For different interpretations of this agency in theory consider Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power”, *Critical Inquiry* 8 (1982): 777-795, or Judith Butler, “Subjection, Resistance, Resignification”, in *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 83-106. For a discussion of the limits of discursive agency see Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997).
- 52 Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 48–78.
- 53 Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*.
- 54 Simon Sheik, “Talk Value: Cultural Industry and Knowledge Economy”, in *On Knowledge Production. A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*, ed. Binna Choi et al. (Utrecht: Basis voor actuele Kunst, 2008), 182-197.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Pierre Gaudibert, *L'art Africain Contemporain* (Paris: Editions Cercle d'Art, 1991), index.
- 57 Mount, *African Art*, 160.
- 58 Clémentine Deliss, “7+7=1: Seven Stories, Seven Stages, One Exhibition”, in *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa* (Paris, New York: Flammarion, 1995), 15.
- 59 Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1999), 48.
- 60 See Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, “The Heroization of the Artist in Biography”, in *Legend, Myth, and Magic in the Image of the Artist: A Historical Experiment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 13-60.
- 61 Phibion Kangai and Joseph George Mupondi, “Africa Digests the West: A Review of Modernism and the Influence of Patrons-Cum Brokers on the Style and Form of Southern Eastern and Central African Art”, *Academic Research International, Part I: Social Sciences and Humanities* 4 (2013): 193–200. Kasfir has reminded us not to homogenise this movement all too easily, as the Weltanschauungen of these European art teachers differed strongly. (Kasfir, “Transforming the Workshop”, in *Contemporary African Art*, 58-63.)
- 62 Elsbeth Court, “Notes. Movements, Centres, Workshop and Collectives”, in *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, 294.
- 63 Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbechie, “Murray’s Pedagogy: Non-Interference with Native Inspiration” (38-41) and “Murray’s Teaching Philosophy: Modern Art and Native Identity” (42-64), in Ogbechie, *Ben Enwonwu*. See also Rolf Laven, *Franz Cizek und die Wiener Jugendkunst* (Vienna: Schriften der Akademie der bildenden Künste Wien, 2006).
- 64 “Éducation de Base”, UNESCO, 1950, quoted in Howlett, “Interview de Jacques Howlett”, 19-20, in *Les Bamiléké. Une civilisation africaine*, edited by Raymond Lecoq (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1953).

- 65 Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 61. See similar critiques in Evelyn Nicodemus, “Inside. Outside”, in *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*, 35, as well as in Phibion and Mupondi, “Africa Digests the West”, 193–200.
- 66 See for instance Hal Foster, “The “Primitive” Subconscious of Modern Art”, *October* 34 (1985).
- 67 Elizabeth Harney, *In Senghor’s Shadow: Art, Politics, and the Avant-Garde in Senegal, 1960-1995* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 69.
- 68 This is how Sylvester Okwunodu Ogbegie has summarised the position of German art patron Ulli Beier, who played an important role in Nigeria’s Art History from the 1960s onwards. (*Ben Enwonwu: The Making of an African Modernist* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press 2008), 50.)
- 69 Deliss, “7+7=1”, 16.
- 70 Senghor had started to formulate the Négritude philosophy in 1934, together with the Martinican Aimé Césaire and the Guyanese Léon Gontran Damas in Paris. Roughly summarised, this philosophy foresaw a cultural self-affirmation of Africans on the continent and in the diaspora by means of new and revisited cultural practices that celebrated the values of all Black civilisations. For a quick introduction to this philosophy and its history see Souleymane Bachir Diagne, “Négritude”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, spring 2014 edition, accessed May 13, 2014, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/negritude/>.
- 71 For a critical reading of Senghor’s identification with nineteenth century race theories and Primitivism see Harney, *In Senghor’s Shadow*, 40–44.
- 72 See for instance Thomas Fillitz, “Einleitung: Zur Geschichte der Gegenwartskunst in Afrika”, in *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Afrika: 14 Künstler aus Côte d’Ivoire und Bénin* (Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2002), 20. Despite this insight, Fillitz has worked with the category of autodidacts at a later point in the same text (25), thus unwillingly exemplifying how difficult it is to abandon belated notions.
- 73 Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, “Apprentices and Entrepreneurs: The Workshop and Style Uniformity in Sub-Sahara Africa”, 1985, reprinted in *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*.
- 74 Court, “Notes”, 297.
- 75 Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 17.
- 76 Boris Nzébo, interview by the author, Douala, December 2, 2010, Patrick Wokmeni, interview by the author, December 8, 2010, Alioum Moussa, interview by the author, Douala, December 10, 2010, Goddy Leye, interview by the author, Douala, December 11, 2010.
- 77 Anton Vidokle, “Art Without Education”, in *Condition Report*, ed. Koyo Kouoh, 106.
- 78 Irit Rogoff, “Academy as Potentiality”, in *Academy*, 17.
- 79 For a discussion of this point see chapter 3.
- 80 Mount, “Contents”, *African Art*.
- 81 Fillitz has first commented on this point. (Fillitz, *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Afrika*, 11–19).
- 82 Mount, *African Art*, 161.
- 83 I am spelling “Sub-Saharan Africa” in quotation marks and will avoid this term in the following because it has been pointed out that this geographic categorisation is obliterating present-day and historical differences amongst the contexts thus

- summarised. Also, Lauré al-Samarai has rightly argued that this term is often used synonymously for “Black Africa” or the “Africa inhabited by Blacks” and thus also “triggers a chain of associations that, while less evident linguistically, is nevertheless comparably colonial in character” to notions like “White Africa” or “Afrique Occidentale”. (Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 17).
- 84 Gaudibert, *L'Art africain contemporain*, 32-35.
- 85 Court, “Notes”, 289-308.
- 86 See “Bibliography for Art Education in Kenya, East Africa.”, *SOAS. University of London*, accessed May 23, 2014, www.soas.ac.uk/cas/members/researchassociates/. Court’s forthcoming anthology entitled “Artists and Art Education in Africa” will shed light at historical and institutional backgrounds of artist training in East Africa by means of case studies.
- 87 Kasfir and Förster, introduction to *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*, 4.
- 88 See chapter 2.
- 89 Bärbel Küster, “Visuelle Kontaktzonen in der bildenden Kunst, Europa – Afrika”, in *Die Kunst der Migration: Aktuelle Positionen zum europäisch-afrikanischen Diskurs: Material-Gestaltung-Kritik*, ed. Marie-Hélène Gutberlet et al. (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011).
- 90 Küster, “Visuelle Kontaktzonen in der bildenden Kunst”, 202.
- 91 Chidum Onuchukwu, “Art Education in Nigeria”, *Art Education* 47 (1994): 54-60.
- 92 Hamid Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism: French Art Education in Morocco, 1912-1956* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005).
- 93 Rhoda Woets, “What is This? Framing Ghanaian Art from the Colonial Encounter” (PhD diss., Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2011).
- 94 Atta Kwami, *Kumasi Realism, 1951-2007* (London: Hurst Publishers, 2013).
- 95 Friedrich Axt and El Hadji Moussa Babacar, *Bildende Kunst der Gegenwart in Senegal/ Anthologie des arts plastiques contemporains au Sénégal/ Anthology of Contemporary Fine Arts in Senegal* (Frankfurt am Main: Museum für Völkerkunde, 1989).
- 96 Harney, *In Senghor’s Shadow*.
- 97 Winegar, *Creative Reckonings*.
- 98 Fillitz, *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Afrika*, 251-2.
- 99 Fillitz has juxtaposed the curatorial strategy of Salah Hassan and Olu Oguibe for the exhibition *Authentic/Ex-Centric: Africa. In and Out of Africa* at the Venice Biennale 2001, which favoured conceptual artists trained in North-American and European art schools, with the collecting policy behind the Pigozzi Collection that is reserved to “self-taught African artists”. (Fillitz, “Contemporary Art in Africa”, 118, 122.)
- 100 Amanda Gilvin, ed., “Converging Pedagogies in African Art Education: Colonial Legacies and Post-independence Aspirations”. *Critical Interventions: Journal of African Art History and Visual Culture* 8, Issue 1, 2014.
- 101 Lauré al-Samarai, “Discursive Locating: Framing the Field of Art/s Education and Vocational Artistic Training and Professionalization”, in *Creating Spaces*, 28-87.
- 102 *Ibid.*, 67-8.
- 103 A recent contribution to this field of research is a series of four books by the art historians Jean-Paul Notué and Bianca Triaca that inventory the collections of four royal museums in Cameroon. *Bandjoun: Trésors Royaux du Cameroun. Collections du Musée de Bandjoun; Baham: Arts, Mémoire et Pouvoir dans le Royaume de Baham*.

Collections du Musée de Baham; Mankon: Heritage and Culture from Mankom Heritage and Babungo: Treasures of the Sculptor Kings in Cameroon. Collections du Musée de Babungo (Milano: 5 Continent Editions, 2006).

104 Most relevant for my thesis were the following publications; Isaac Paré, “Un artiste camerounais peu connu: Ibrahim Njoya”, *ABBIA* 6 (1964), Claude Tardits, “Un grand dessinateur: Ibrahim Njoya”, in *Les dessins bamum* (Marseille: Musée d’Arts Africains, Océanics, Amérindiens, 1997), Alexandra Loumpet-Galtzine, “Ibrahim Njoya, Master of Bamoun Drawing”, in *An Anthology of African Art. The Twentieth Century*, ed. N’Goné Fall et al. (Paris: Editions Revue Noire, 2002), as well as Christraud Geary, “The Past in the Present: Photographic Portraiture and the Evocation of Multiple Histories in the Bamum Kingdom of Cameroon”, in *Portraiture and Photography in Africa*, ed. Elisabeth Cameron et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

105 Paul-Henri Souvenir Assako Assako, interview by the author, Yaoundé, December 4, 2011. See also Joachim Oelsner-Adam, *Le Tour du Cameroun à travers les Mémoires et Thèses de la Faculté des Arts, Lettres et Sciences Humaines de l’Université de Yaoundé* (Paris: Harmattan, 2000).

106 Ruth Afane Belinga, “Evolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé: Approche historique et esthétique” (master thesis, University of Yaoundé I, 2005).

107 Paul-Henri Souvenir Assako Assako, “L’Expression sculpturale à Yaoundé: De 1960 à 2005” (master thesis, University of Yaoundé I, 2005).

108 While Afane Belinga follows the argument of the French art historian Millet (Afane Belinga, “Evolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 90), Assako Assako gives his own definition of Contemporary Art. He refers to the dissolution of the artwork, to its independence from canonic

concepts, as well as to its criticality towards society, towards the public and towards its own modes of expression. (Assako Assako, “L’Expression sculpturale”, 92-93.)

109 Paul-Henri Souvenir Assako Assako, “Art au Cameroun du 20e au début du 21e siècle: Étude des expressions sculpturales en milieu urbain” (PhD diss., Université de Yaoundé I, 2014).

110 Aveved has evaluated 53 questionnaires and 32 interviews in total. He has mainly interviewed artists associated with the national artist union (UDAPCAM) in Yaoundé, as well as alumni from the Institut de Formation Artistique. This institute’s curriculum is also reflected in Aveved’s disputable categorisation of the artists into painters, sculptors and ceramists. His data from Douala represents painters only.

111 Aveved, “Artistes Plasticiens et Espaces d’Art en Milieu Urbain Camerounais”, 33, 113, 58.

112 Ibid., 20.

113 Anschaire Aveved, “L’Art Plastique au Cameroun: Marché, Lieux, Economie et Acteurs” (paper presented at the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé on October 19, 2011). An essay by the historian Yvette Monga complements this position. (Yvette Monga, ‘Au village!’ : la production du local dans la politique camerounaise”, in *Cahiers d’Études Africaines* 160 (2000): 723-750.)

114 Achille Mbembe, “Introduction: Time on the Move”, in *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 12.

115 Christian Hanussek, “Zeitgenössische Afrikanische Kunst: Eine Perspektive”, *Magazin für Theologie und Ästhetik* 8 (2000), accessed July 14, 2014, www.theomag.de/08/ch1.htm. English translation published as “Cameroon: An Emerging Art Scene”, *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art* 13/14 (2001): 100-105.

- 116 Christian Hanussek, "Gleichzeitig in Afrika... Ausstellung und Symposium", *Kunstaspekte*, accessed May 24, 2014, www.kunstaspekte.de/christian-hanussek-dis/. See also Christian Hanussek, "Gleichzeitig in Afrika... Doual'art, Douala (Kamerun). E-Mail Interview mit Marilyn Douala-Bell, Oktober 2005", and Christian Hanussek, "Gleichzeitig in Afrika... Cercle Kapsiki, Douala (Kamerun)", *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, January 15, 2007, www.bpb.de/internationales/afrika/afrika/59164/ausstellung-gleichzeitig-in-afrika?p=6.
- 117 Christian Hanussek, "Im Café von Doual'art", *afrikapost.de* 4 (2009): 14-16.
- 118 Dominique Malaquais, "Une nouvelle liberté? Arts urbains à Douala", *Afrique et Histoire* 5 (2006). Hanussek has taken a similarly contextualising perspective on this statue in an article of 2007 that was printed in English and in German. (Christian Hanussek, "La Nouvelle Liberté, or: Le Nju-Nju du Rond-Point. A Field Study on Art in Public Space in Africa", *Springerin* 4 (2007), accessed Juli 17, 2014, www.springerin.at/dyn/heft_text.php?textid=2001&lang=en.)
- 119 Dominique Malaquais, "Quelle Liberté! Art, Beauty and the Grammars of Resistance in Douala", in *Beautiful/Ugly: African and Diaspora Aesthetics*, ed. Sarah Nuttal (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 122-63.
- 120 Dominique Malaquais, "Douala en habit de festival", *Africultures* 73 (2008).
- 121 Lucia Babina and Marilyn Douala Bell, *Douala in Translation: A View of the City and its Creative Transforming Potentials* (Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007).
- 122 Michel Foucault, *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (New York: The New Press, 2003), 306.
- 123 Colin Koopman, "Introduction. What do Genealogies Do?", in *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 21.
- 124 Those visitors were Ruth Afane Belinga, Salifou Lindou and LucFoster Diop.
- 125 For an "ideal-typical" comparison of the two types of interviews see Gregor Spuhler, "Das Interview als Quelle historischer Erkenntnis: Methodische Bemerkungen zur Oral History", in *Interviews: Oral History in Kunstwissenschaft und Kunst*, ed. Dora Imhof et al. (München: Verlag Silke Schreiber, 2010), 16.
- 126 Ibid., 23.
- 127 I am here once more referring to the Rules of Art, which Pierre Bourdieu has identified in view of the avant-garde literary circles of nineteenth century France.
- 128 Hanussek, "Zeitgenössische Afrikanische Kunst".
- 129 According to firsthand experiences with this archive of my colleagues Marjolijn Dijkman, Joachim Oelsner-Adam, and Ruth Afane Belinga.
- 130 Richard Pipa (technician of the Goethe-Institut, former employee of the Centre Culturel Français), interview by the author, Yaoundé, December 3, 2011.
- 131 Patrice Nganang, "Le silence de la poésie. La poésie camerounaise de 1990 et d'après", and René Dassi, "La presse en crise", both in *Africultures* 60 (2004): 60, 151-5.
- 132 Joachim Oelsner-Adam, e-mails to the author of June 29 and of August 28, 2012.
- 133 This archive that goes back to 1991 is yet unstructured and awaits digitalisation.
- 134 A. L. Strauss and J. Corbin, *Grounded Theory: Grundlagen Qualitativer Sozialforschung* (Weinheim: Beltz, 1996).

135 Karl Mannheim, “The Problem of Generations“, in *Karl Mannheim: Essays*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London: Routledge, 1972), 297.

136 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), 215.



Notes of Chapter 2.

Antecedents: The Emergence of Modern Art in Cameroon

1 For the implications of this shift in colonial-type administration see Madeleine Ndobo, “Les musées publics et privés au Cameroun”, *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 39 (1999): 796, accessed September 4, 2012, www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/cea_0008_0055_1999_num_39_155_1778.

2 For an introduction to the pre-colonial merchant networks on the Wouri river and to the internal conflicts leading up to the protectorate agreement see Ralph A. Austen and Jonathan Derrick, *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers: The Duala and their Hinterland, ca. 1600 to 1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

3 This is clear from the representation of Cameroonian art in foreign collections, but also widely believed within Cameroon. For an overview of the sculptural diversity to be found in this territory see Louis Perrois and Jean-Paul Notué, “Contribution à l'étude des arts plastiques au Cameroun”, *Muntu. Revue Scientifique et Culturelle du CICI-BA* 4,5 (1986): 166-222, and Paul-Henri Souvenir Assako Assako, “Art au Cameroun du 20e au début du 21e siècle: Étude des expressions sculpturales en milieu urbain” (PhD diss., Université de Yaoundé I, 2014).

4 See Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 32, and Assako Assako, interview, December 4, 2011. Some of the missions had already arrived prior to the colonial administrators and had started to disseminate their stations across the territory of the later colony Kamerun (German spelling), notably in competition with one another. Apparently, stations of the Catholic Pallotines and the

Protestant Baptist Mission eventually outnumbered those of the other mission organisations. (Paul Messina, *Engelbert Mveng: La plume et le pinceau: Un message pour l'Afrique du IIIème millénaire, 1930-1995* (Yaoundé: UCAC, Presses de l'université catholique d'Afrique centrale, 2003), 21.)

5 Examples of mission-inspired art from the colony Kamerun are an expressive crucifix carved by Peter Wewesi (born ca. 1900) and wall paintings in a church nearby Yaoundé by Max Mitsa and his wife Marie Mango. (Franz Joseph Thiel and Heinz Helf, *Christliche Kunst in Afrika* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1984), 203, 205.) Both artworks deserve further study.

6 Mbembe, *On the Postcolony*, 16.

7 For instance, Kasfir posits the independences an art-historical turning point in her volume *Contemporary African Art*. Elizabeth Harney's book *In Senghor's Shadow* follows the same logic. And for the case of Cameroon, Assako Assako also does so by considering only the postcolonial period from 1960 onwards in his aforementioned master thesis.

8 See Achille Mbembé, *La Naissance du maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun, 1920-1960: Histoire des usages de la raison en colonie* (Paris: Karthala, 1996).

9 Monga, “« Au village ! »”: 725. The Cameroonian writer Mongo Béti has pursued this topic in his seminal counter-history *Main Basse sur le Cameroun: Autopsie d'une décolonisation* (Paris: La Découverte, 1972), which was censored in France, as well as in his journal *Peuples Noirs, Peuples Africains*. (See Arndt, “PNPA rompe le silence médiatique sur les liens coloniaux” in “Chantiers du devenir en des espaces contraints. Négociations postcoloniales dans les revues culturelles parisiennes portant sur l'Afrique (1947 à 2012)” (PhD diss., Humboldt Universität, 2013), 71-80.

- 10 Mark Dike DeLancey, Rebecca Mbuh and Mark W. DeLancey, "Reunification", in *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2010), 326-327. For a critical perspective see Martin Z. Njeuma, "Reunification and Political Opportunism in the Making of Cameroon's Independence", *Paideuma. Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde* 41 (1995), accessed May 24, 2012, <http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/chilver/paideuma/paideuma-REUNIFI.html>.
- 11 Monga, "« Au village ! »": 725.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone", 35.
- 14 Okwunodu Ogbechie, *Ben Enwonwu*, 8.
- 15 King Njoya reigned from 1886 to 1924.
- 16 This throne was at the time a much desired collectable and is today part of the collections of Ethnologisches Museum Berlin. See Christraud M. Geary, *The Voyage of King Njoya's Gift: A Beaded Sculpture from the Bamum Kingdom, Cameroon* (Washington, D.C.: National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1994) and Michaela Oberhofer, "The Appropriation of the Other: Following a Royal Throne from Bamum to Berlin", *DiARTgonale Special Edition* 1 (2012): 32-39.
- 17 Tardits, "Un grand dessinateur", 54. See also Alfred Schmitt, *Die Bamun-Schrift* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1965).
- 18 Geary mentions the Haussa markets in the North of the kingdom as trading places for imported merchandise. (Christraud Geary, *The Things of the Palace: A Catalogue of the Bamum Palace Museum in Fomban (Cameroon)* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984), 149.) According to Christian Hanussek, access to imports like paper must have become easier upon Njoya's alignment with the Islamic Fulbe. (Christian Hanussek in a conversation with the author, Berlin, March 2012).
- 19 See Mount, *African Art*, 187.
- 20 Alain Nicolas and Marianne Sourrieu, "Présentation" in *Les dessins bamum*, 17-18. This catalogue accompanied the synonymous show at Musée d'Arts Africains, Océanics, Amérindiens in Marseille in 1997.
- 21 Photography was known at least since the 1890s in Fomban. African leaders in general quickly started to use photographic portraits as a means to enhance their power. (See Christraud Geary, "Portraiture, Authorship, and the Inscription of History: Photographic Practice in the Bamum Kingdom, Cameroon (1902-1980)" in *Getting Pictures Right: Context and Interpretation*, ed. Michael Albrecht et al. (Cologne: Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, 2004), 143-4. See also Geary, *In and out of Focus: Images from Central Africa 1885-1960* (London: National Museum of African Art/Smithsonian Institution, Philip Wilson Publishers, 2002).) Based on the observation that the Bamum word "fitu" for drawings, paintings, and photos is derived from the German word "photo", Geary has even argued that photography preceded the introduction of drawings in Fomban (Geary, "The Past in the Present", 226.)
- 22 Tardits, "Un grand dessinateur", 55.
- 23 Mount, *African Art*, 165.
- 24 See Lorenz Homberger, *Kamerun. Kunst der Könige* (Zürich: Museum Rietberg, 2008), 64-65.) See also portraits of Njoya in uniforms reproduced alongside of Oberhofer's text "The Appropriation of the Other".
- 25 Geary, "The Past in the Present", 223, 226.
- 26 This approximate year of birth is transmitted by Tardits, who interviewed Ibrahim Njoya in 1960 or 1961 (Tardits, "Un grand

dessinateur”, 53.). The Cameroonian museologist Issac Paré dates his birth differently to 1896. (Paré, “Un artiste peu connu”, 173) This seems very late with regard to the responsibilities that Njoya is said to have assumed already in the first years of the twentieth century and in view of a first text sheet ascribed to this artist that is dated to 1897.

27 Paré has dated Ibrahim Njoya’s death to August 9, 1962. (Paré, “Un artiste peu connu”: 173). Alexandra Loumpet-Galitzine has differently dated Njoya’s obit to August 9, 1966. (Loumpet-Galitzine, “Ibrahim Njoya, master of Bamoun drawing”, 104.) Loumpet-Galitzine’s probably erroneous date appears also in Homberger’s aforementioned catalogue from 2008 (65). The reason for me to confirm the earlier date is simple; if Njoya had died as late as 1966, why would Paré have written about his death in 1964?

28 Mount, *African Art*, 161-5.

29 Tardits, “Un grand dessinateur”, 55.

30 Drawings and notebooks by pupils from the eras of the German colony Kamerun and of the English protectorate evidence that some mission schools also dispensed proper drawing classes. The German archives of the “Missionspallottinerinnen”, the women’s branch of the Pallottines, preserves two notebooks with drawing exercises by pupils trained in Mvolé and Douala. (Schwester Clementia (archivar at Provinzialat der Missionspallottinerinnen, Limburg, Germany) in a telephone conversation with the author, December 2013.) Moreover, a whole portfolio with drawings from the years 1908 to 1931 by pupils of the Infant Vernacular School of the Basel Mission in the town Buéa is stocked in the archive of the protestant organisation Mission 21 in Basel. (Archives of Mission 21, Basel, archive box E-10.25. “Mission 21” is the current name of the protestant organisation that started to train Dutch and English missionaries as “German Missionary Society” in

1816, was active since 1886 in Cameroon as “Basel Evangelical Missionary Society”, and was named “Basel Mission” until 2001.) This portfolio gives insight into the drawing instructions for differently aged pupils. Six year-olds illustrated fables with wax crayons and did pencil drawings after pressed flowers and cotton fruits. Elder pupils also designed charts with fish, birds and plants by pencil and created floral ornaments with the help of stencils, similarly as in German drawing classes of the time.

31 Geary, “The Past in the Present”, 226-7.

32 See Tardits, “Un grand dessinateur”, 57, and the respective illustration.

33 Ibrahim Njoya, *Histoire des Bamoum*, 35 x 29 cm, private collection, and *Fin de l’Histoire des Bamoum*, 35 x 29 cm, private collection. (*Les dessins bamoum*, 132-3).

34 Ibrahim Njoya, *Conte du léopard et de la civette*, ca. 1932, paper, ink, colouring pencil, 48 x 31 cm, Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève, inventory number: 14730.

35 *Conte de la rate et ses quatre petits* (not dated), paper, ink, colouring pencil, graphite pencil, 50 x 70 cm, Musée National des Arts d’Afrique et d’Océanie (today Musée Quai Branly), Paris, inventory number: AF 12073 and *Conte de la rate et ses quatre ratons*, (not dated), paper, ink, colouring pencil, 54 x 74 cm, Musée Royal de Fouvban, Fouvban. (*Les dessins bamoum*, 136-43).

36 Alexandra Loumpet-Galitzine in an e-mail to the author, October 3, 2012. See also Loumpet-Galitzine, *Njoya et le Royaume bamoun. Les archives de la Société des missions évangéliques de Paris, 1917-1937* (Paris: Karthala, 2006).

37 Presumbaly, there were several commissioners since Njoya executed several copies of the panels, some of which were gifted by the missionary Jean Rusillon to the Musée d’Ethnographie de Genève in

- 1966 and others are preserved in collections in Foumban. (Loumpet-Galitzine, e-mail, October 3, 2012.)
- 38 Théodore Monod documented Bruly-Brouabré's work in 1958. (Théodore Monod, "Un nouvel alphabet africain. Le bété", *Bulletin IFAN*, 3-4 (1958): 432-40.) During the 1970s, Tshibumba Kanda Matulu painted the history of what was then Zaire upon encouragement by Johannes Fabian. (Johannes Fabian, *Remembering the Present: Painting and Popular History in Zaire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
- 39 Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone", 35.
- 40 Édouard Glissant, "Opacity and Transparency", in *Poetics of Relation*, Betsy Wing (trans.) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 111-120.
- 41 One of his successors was Raymond Njoya who has repeatedly exhibited in the foreign cultural centres in Yaoundé in the late 1970s. (Oum Michel, "Exposition au centre culturel américain. Un jeune peintre retrace l'histoire et la tradition bamoun", *Cameroon Tribune*, May 31, 1978.)
- 42 Éditions Clé was founded by Protestant missionaries in 1963 in Yaoundé and is operative until today.
- 43 Messina has included a large section of full-colour images of Mveng's sacral artwork, commented with the exact biblical references of the motifs, but has refrained from art-historical interpretations and the respective documentation.
- 44 Messina, *Engelbert Mveng*, 37.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 37-8.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 47 Engelbert Mveng, "L'Art Camerounais", *ABBLA* 3 (1963): 3-24.
- 48 *Ibid.*, 20.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 50 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 24.
- 54 Mveng has more explicitly stressed this thought in his "Avant-Propos" to *L'Art et l'Artisanat africains*", 7.
- 55 This quote was part of Hegel's 1822/23 "Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte". Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, J. Sirbee (trans.) (New York: Dover, 1956), 99.
- 56 See for instance Falko Schnicke "Doppelstruktur des Hegemonialen: Intersektionale Perspektiven auf die historiografische Differenzproduktion des 19. Jahrhunderts", in *Perspektive, Medium, Macht: Zur kulturellen Codierung neuzeitlicher Geschlechterdispositionen*, ed. Ann-Kristin Düber et al. (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2010), 35.
- 57 Mveng, "L'Art Camerounais": 13.
- 58 Only three years later, in 1966, Mveng exhibited some of these drawings at the FESMAN in Dakar.
- 59 Since Senegal is a Francophone country, this festival is commonly referred to by its French name, Festival Mondial de l'Art Nègre, or by the initials FESMAN.
- 60 The idea for this festival was brought up during the Conference of Black Writers in Rome in 1956, which was organised by the Senegalese director of the edition house Présence Africaine in Paris, Alioune Diop. Also the Paris-based poet Léopold Sédar Senghor had attended. When Senghor was

elected president of the Republic of Senegal in 1960, he decided for Dakar to host this festival and instituted Alioune Diop as its artistic director.

61 Mveng was also listed as “President of the Arts Commission of the Société Africaine de Culture (Présence Africaine)” and as an “expert of the UNESCO” in the catalogue *L’Art Nègre. Sources, évolution, expansion. Exposition organisée au Musée Dynamique à Dakar par le Commissariat du Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres et au Grand Palais à Paris par la Réunion des Musées Nationaux* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux Français, 1966).

62 Ibid., xxvi.

63 Mveng was also Cameroon’s deputy during the Panafrican Festival of Algiers (1969) and involved in the planning of the World Festival of Black Arts in Lagos of 1977. Notably, he jeopardised his close rapport with Alioune Diop by supporting the line of the artistic director of the Lagos festival, the Cameroonian Ambroise Mbia. Mbia excluded all intellectuals opposing President Ahidjo from the event. (Messina, *Engelbert Mveng*, 83-6.)

64 For a discussion of these illustrations and their possible relevance for Mveng’s artistic process see Annette Schemmel, “Engelbert Mveng, an artist/curator in cassock”, in *Kevin Carrol Conference on African Christian Art 2012*, ed. John Picton et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, t.b.p.). It would be rewarding to scrutinise the drafts for these illustrations in case they are preserved in order to distinguish Mveng’s own drawings from those of collaborators, since it has been suggested that artists like Emmanuel Etolo-Eya have also contributed drawings to Mveng’s books. (Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 70).

65 Mveng, *L’Art et L’Artisanat Africains*, 44.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid, 46.

69 Ibid., 152.

70 Mveng, “L’Art Nègre d’Aujourd’hui”, in *L’Art et L’Artisanat Africains*, 20-21.

71 In the introduction to *L’Art et L’Artisanat Africains* that is dated to 1977, Mveng writes that the *Atelier de l’Art Nègre* had been operative for almost fifteen years, implying that it was founded around 1963. Assako Assako defines 1968 as the founding year of the *Atelier de l’Art Nègre*, instead. (Assako Assako, “L’Expression sculpturale à Yaoundé de 1960 à 2005”, 23). Also for the date of its dissolution there is no information other than that it was still existent by 1980 when *L’Art et l’Artisanat Africains* was published. It is possible that this workshop persisted throughout the 1980s and maybe even until Mveng’s death.

72 Mveng, “Avant-Propos” in *L’Art et L’Artisanat Africains*, 7.

73 Assako Assako, “L’Expression Sculpturale à Yaoundé de 1960 à 2005”, 41.

74 Kasfir and Förster, introduction to *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*, 1.

75 Assako Assako, “L’Expression Sculpturale à Yaoundé de 1960 à 2005”, 41. See also Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 70.

76 Paul Messina in a conversation with the author, Yaoundé, October 2014.

77 Mveng used the French term “acculturation”. Besides “inculturation”, the term’s English equivalents are “indigenization” and “adaptation”. (See Nicholas Bridger, “H-AfrArts: PUB: Africanizing Christian Art”, *H-Net Humanities and Social Sciences online*, May 24, 2013, <http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl?trx=vx&list=H-AfrArts&month=1305&week=d&msg=B5ETL-5U1aTOYphy14DcmsA>).

78 Mveng, *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains*, 143.

79 Engelbert Mveng, *L'Art d'Afrique noire: Liturgie cosmique et langage religieux* (Paris: Mame, 1964).

80 This work is reproduced in Hans-Ruedi Weber, *On a Friday Noon. Meditations under the Cross* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1979). See also Messina, *Engelbert Mveng*, fourth colour plate following page 96.

81 Ibid., third colour plate following page 96.

82 Ibid., first colour plate following page 96.

83 Werner Telesko, "Unbefleckte Empfängnis Mariens", *Lexikon der Kunst* (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann Verlag, 1994) and Gerhard Walter, "Maria", *Lexikon der Kunst* (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann Verlag, 1992). Also Messina confirms this artwork's reference to the passage of the Apocalypse. (Messina, *Engelbert Mveng*, fifth colour plate after page 96).

84 See cover of Mveng, *L'Art d'Afrique noire*. See also the analogous illustration in "L'Art Camerounais": 18.

85 Ibid., 76.

86 Mveng, *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains*, 90.

87 Engelbert Mveng, *Histoire du Cameroun* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963).

88 Apparently, Ahidjo honoured Mveng with a leading position in his Ministry of National Education, Youth, and Culture after the FESMAN 1966. Mveng resigned in 1974. (Messina, *Engelbert Mveng*, 81.)

89 Ibid.

90 Mveng refers repeatedly to commissions of that type in *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains*.

Assako Assako has photographed and analyzed those reliefs realised in the mid 1970s for Mount Fébé Hotel for his master thesis, generally ascribing these works to Engelbert Mveng together with the Atelier de l'Art Nègre. (Assako Assako, "L'Expression Sculpturale à Yaoundé de 1960 à 2005", 54-87.)

91 Geary ascribes this innovation to the sculptor Mfunsie from Foumban. Mfunsie had found that this decorative form lent itself to historicist depictions in a rustic style and that it sold well to tourists. Geary assumes that Mfunsie developed these reliefs from the smaller carvings that decorated the feet of wooden beds and dinking horns. (Geary, *The Things of the Palace*, 84.)

92 Assako Assako, interview, December 4, 2011.

93 Mpando's statue represents an oversized seated old man with a torch in his right hand. Five children are crawling all over him. The statue has been interpreted with regard to the guiding role of the elder generation in achieving liberation from colonial dominion. (Laurain Assipolo, "Le vieillard du Plateau Atamengue. Un symbole du Cameroun réuni", *Mosaïques. Arts et Culture du Cameroun*, 10 (2011): 6.)

94 Assako Assako, "L'Expression Sculpturale à Yaoundé de 1960 à 2005", 83.

95 See Homberger, *Kamerun. Kunst der Könige*, 185-6.

96 I am here referring to the one clearly visible pillar in a photograph that illustrates Assako Assako's thesis. I was unable to take pictures myself, as the monument is fenced in and a special permit is required to enter and to take pictures.

97 Messina gives detailed accounts of Mveng's ecclesiopolitical engagements throughout his biography.

98 Le Corbusier's chapel of Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamp, completed in 1954, is the most famous French specimen of this

- prolific phenomenon. For German examples of this new Christian architecture see Barbara Kahle, *Deutsche Kirchenbaukunst des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1990.)
- 99 Mveng, “Avant-Propos”, in *L’Art et L’Artisanat Africains*, 7.
- 100 Nicholas Bridger, *Africanizing Christian Art. Kevin Carroll and Yoruba Christian Art in Nigeria* (Cork: Society of African Missions), 2013.
- 101 Taking a step towards answering this question, Afane Belinga has asserted that Etolo Eya was in charge of the decorations and the glass mosaics on the floors and on the walls of the *Monument of Reunification*. (Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXIème siècle à Yaoundé”, 70.)
- 102 Mveng mentions the names of the members Angélo Turini, François Bivina, Michel Ntonga, Emmanuel Etolo-Eya, and Etienne Lemdjou (Mveng, “Avant-Propos”, in *L’Art et L’Artisanat Africains*, 7). Two of them are today in prominent positions in Yaoundé’s art world, one as the head of the artist union UDAPCAM, the other as the head of the copy right association SOCAP-DAM. (Assako Assako in a conversation with the author, January 2014).
- 103 Those motives predominate in the paintings reproduced in Afane Belinga’s thesis and in press photos by *Cameroon Tribune*. (See for example Tchagang’s village scenes (reproduction alongside the article by P. Nyano, “Artiste polyvalent, M. Philippe Tchagang expose au Musée National”, *Cameroon Tribune*, December 31, 1974). Amougou Bivina is another example (L.-C. Boyomo Assala, “Le peintre Amougou Bivina: Une restitution de la voix ancestrale”, *Cameroon Tribune*, April 28, 1975). Comparable is also the work and the argument of Zara Mallon from Douala (Mouelle Bissi, “Zara Mallon. Un peintre enraciné dans son terroir ancestral”, *Cameroon Tribune*, November 24, 1975).
- 104 Compare Wére-Wére Liking’s statement in Jean-Vincent Tchiénehom, “Pour s’affirmer nos artistes devraient travailler en groupe. C’est ce qui ressort d’un entretien à bâtons rompus entre trois artistes et ‘Cameroon Tribune’”, *Cameroon Tribune*, July 30, 1975.
- 105 See Essombe Mouange, “Les arts plastiques au Cameroun, pour un espace d’expression viable”, *Africultures* 60 (2004): 84.
- 106 See Martin Jombe quoted by Mouange in “Les arts plastiques au Cameroun”: 84. Komegné has similarly commented on the predominance of foreign buyers for this type of artworks. (Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.)
- 107 Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 42-7.
- 108 See for instance Aimé Césaire’s appeal to African ways of life that are imagined as genuine and natural in his poem “Cahier d’un retour au pays natal”, *Volonté* 20 (1939).
- 109 Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*, 29-30.
- 110 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 111 Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 65-8.
- 112 See Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 35; Gaudibert, *L’Art Africain Contemporain*, 29; Assako Assako, interview, December 4, 2011; Didier Schaub, “Peintures et dessins de Rigobert Ndjeng, exposition du 15/09 au 01/10/2012”, doual’art, accessed on January 14, 2014, www.doualart.org/spip.php?article570; Nicolas Bissek, *Couleurs et Toiles* (Paris: Éditions Karthala, 2006), 62.) Ndjeng was born in 1927 in the village of Messondo and has deceased in 2011. Already at an early age, he started to copy the murals depicting the stories of Jesus and Mary that he had seen in the local Catholic

- mission chapel during Sunday service. Yet, it was a Frenchman who is said to have encouraged Ndjeng to pursue a career as painter in the 1940s. This Frenchman fancied Ndjeng's drawings of current political events. (N.N., "A 79 ans, un grand peintre camerounais continue son aventure: Interview avec Rigobert Ndjeng", Inter Press Service News Agency, May 23, 2007, accessed April 23, 2012, http://ipsinternational.org/fr/_note.asp?idnews=3653.) In later years, Ndjeng became known for his depictions of the forest landscapes of his home region in Cameroon's South. And in 2012 his oeuvre was honoured with a retrospective at doual'art.
- 113 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 65.
- 114 Priso S. Mouasso, "Le peintre Philippe Tchagang ou le fructueux retour aux ressources", *Cameroon Tribune*, July 11, 1974. Tchagang is said to have followed courses of École A.B.C. during six years.
- 115 Eugène Letenou, "33 tableaux de Mme Wete Wete exposés au musée de Yaoundé", *Cameroon Tribune*, November 11, 1974.
- 116 N.N., "Le peintre Zara Mallon expose au C.C.F. de Yaoundé", *Cameroon Tribune*, February 7, 1976.
- 117 Pascal Kenfack, interview by the author, Foumban, December 18, 2011.
- 118 Assako Assako, "L'expression sculpturale à Yaoundé de 1960 à 2005", 41.
- 119 Boyomo Assala, "Peinture et Sculpture. Une enquête de Boyomo Assala. 2. Le public comme objectif", in *Cameroon Tribune*, September 25, 1975.
- 120 Afane Belinga specifies that the Cours Grand Maître du Dessin had its office in the sixth arrondissement, while École A.B.C. was located in the eighth arrondissement.
- 121 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011.
- 122 Founding date and slogan (translated from the letterhead of an undated, hand-typed letter to a student, signed by Jean Frugereux, "Directeur de l'Enseignement". (Letter sold in an online sale on *PriceMinister*, accessed June 5, 2011, www.priceminister.com/image?action=slideshow&images).
- 123 See Horst Waldemar Janson, *History of Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995), 629.
- 124 Translated quote from an undated advertisement brochure of École A.B.C. (Brochure sold in an online sale on *Delcampe*, accessed December 2, 2011, www.delcampe.net).
- 125 Ibid.
- 126 The Institut National de l'Histoire de l'Art (INHA), Paris, has a significant but incomplete stock of art brochures by Ecole A.B.C. issued between 1930 and the 1980s. They make clear that this school's programme was structured into series for professional training (Programme de Formation Professionnelle), leisure-time artists (Programme de Formation Générale), and children's courses—at least between 1948 and 1981. Yet, with regard to the 1940s, the period when Abossolo is said to have followed the course, the INHA only has children's manuals, each headed "L'A.B.C. du dessin pour les enfants". These courses were focused on animal or flower drawings, light and shadow effects, figurative drawing, colouration, or decorative techniques. The adult brochures that are preserved at the INHA were edited in later years. They focused on painting or drawing as such, fashion drawing, typography, landscape depictions or nude drawings.
- 127 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 65.
- 128 Afane Belinga quotes Abossolo mentioning a book called "Grand Mamadou".

- (Ibid.) Presumably, Aboosolo was referring to the colonial school manuals by the French teacher André Davesne (1898-1978, in service in Dakar, Brazzaville and Bamako. See for instance André Davesne and J. Gouin, *Mamadou et Bineta sont devenus Grands!: Livre de Français à l'usage des Cours Moyens et Supérieurs des Écoles de L'Afrique Noire* (Paris: Strasbourg Istra, 1939)). Davesne's books remained in use in African schools even after the end of colonisation.
- 129 Robert Rey, *Que sais-je? Peinture Moderne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941).
- 130 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 65.
- 131 Ibid., 67.
- 132 The Harmon Foundation has meanwhile been incorporated into the U.S. National Archive. Unfortunately, the respective online database does not provide details on the collectables, such as measurements. Presumably, the brownish tones of the reproductions are not reliable as ageing colour photos can take on this tone for chemical reasons. ("Contemporary African Art from the Harmon Foundation", *National Archives*, accessed July 30, 2012, <http://www.archives.gov/research/african-art/index.html>.)
- 133 Ibid.
- 134 A reproduction of a newer painting by Aboosolo ("La Danseuse", 1982, oil on paper, 29, 7 x 42 cm) in Afane Belinga's thesis (46) suggests that Aboosolo kept his preference for format-filling portraits and a pointillist style.
- 135 "Reliquary Figure [Fang peoples; Gabon]". Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, (1978.412.441). www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1978.412.441. October 2006. Accessed July 17, 2014. See also information panel of the Metropolitan Museum on the Fang.
- 136 Aboosolo participated in the Semaine Camerounaise in Dakar (1967) and received four national distinctions and nominations and he had exhibitions at the Centre Culturel Français in 1963 and at the American Cultural Center in 1968. (Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 66). In 1969, the Goethe-Institut hired Aboosolo to teach a weekly drawing and painting course. (David Ndachi Tagne, "Peinture. Sumegné et Aboosolo exposent à l'Institut Goethe de Yaoundé", *Cameroon Tribune*, May 9, 1984.)
- 137 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 68.
- 138 De Certeau, "'Making Do': Uses and Tactics", 37.
- 139 "Biographie de Gaspar Gomán, un artiste camerounais oublié" in *Gaspar Gomán*, ed. Paul-Henri Souvenir Assako Assako et al. (Yaoundé: The French Cultural Centre François Villon of Yaoundé, the Spanish Embassy in Cameroon and S.T. Muna Foundation, 2010), 2.
- 140 Vanessa Coquey, "Gaspar Gomán", *Blogspot*, November 22, 2010, accessed January 23, 2014, <http://coqueyvannessa.blogspot.de/2010/11/gaspar-goman.html>.
- 141 See David R. Roediger, "White Skins, Black Masks. Minstrelsy and White Working Class Formation before the Civil War", in *The Wages of Whiteness* (London: Verso, 1991).
- 142 In works from the late 1980s, Gomán started to represent the human body and also facial features as if they were reconstructed from their parts, similarly as on the didactic butcher charts that distinguish the different meat qualities of the same animal. This appears as a development of his tactic to distance the viewer.
- 143 See for instance Gaspar Gomán, *Surprise of the African Chiefs (Exodus)*, 2001, oil on paper, 48 x 33,5 cm, or *African Chiefs*

(*Exodus*), 2006, oil on canvas, 38,4 x 54,5 cm (Assako Assako and Maheux, *Gaspar Gomán*, 20-21).

144 Gaspar Gomán, *War & Peace*, 1982, oil on paper, 37,5 x 27 cm, and *The Rages*, 1997-2000, oil on paper, 64,5 x 49,5 cm. (Assako Assako and Maheux, *Gaspar Gomán*, 10-11).

145 Gaspar Gomán, *Palm Wine drinkers*, 1972, Indian ink on paper, 64 x 48,5 cm, Gaspar Gomán *The Hunter*, 1988, oil on canvas, 87 x 45 cm (Ibid., 28, 39).

146 Assako Assako and Maheux, "Biographie de Gaspar Gomán, un artiste camerounais oublié", 2.

147 Elias Ntungwe Ngalame, "Cameroon. Redeeming Abandoned Artistic Talent", *Africanews*, March 17, 2011, accessed May 24, 2012, www.africanews.com/site/list_message/33683.

148 This topic awaits scientific attention as yet, too. Salomon's authorship could only be confirmed with regard to the Chancellerie de l'Ambassade de France in Yaoundé (1972-75). (Marlène Ghorayeb and Bénédicte Bouyx-Colas, "Fonds Michel ÉCOCHARD (1905-1985), 61 IFA", (Paris: Institut français d'architecture, Centre d'archives d'architecture du XXe siècle, 1993), 16, *Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine*, accessed June 8, 2014, http://architecture.citechaillot.fr/pdf/asso/FRAPN02_ECOMI_REPERAGE.pdf.) Various not verifiable online sources furthermore refer to Salomon as architect of the National Assembly, of various ministries and the university, as well as the landmark building Ministère des Postes et des Telecommunications in Yaoundé.

149 Ntungwe Ngalame, "Cameroon. Redeeming Abandoned Artistic Talent".

150 Assako Assako in a conversation with the author, January 2014.

151 Ntungwe Ngalame, "Cameroon. Redeeming Abandoned Artistic Talent" and Assako Assako and Maheux, "Biographie de Gaspar Gomán, un artiste camerounais oublié".

152 Gomán studied in Barcelona, Pascal Kenfack and René Tchébétchou in Paris, Kouam Tawadje in Beijing. An early exception is Spee Nzante who studied in Nigeria from 1976 and continued his studies in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire until 1982 (S. Spee Nzante, "Biography", *Speeart*, accessed January 23, 2014, www.speeart.com/biography.htm).

153 Nana Mvogo, "Considérations sur l'art abstrait avec Zogo Isidore", *Cameroon Tribune*, January 7, 1975.

154 These sources are written in French throughout. Wherever I quote them in English I have translated the respective passages.

155 W. Eteki-Mboumoua (then minister of education), "Preface", in *ABBLA* 1 (1963): 7-10.

156 *ABBLA*'s last issue was a special issue of June 1982 consistent of the numbers 38, 39, and 40.

157 The limitation to black, white, and one more variable colour allowed for the differentiation of the issues while keeping the printing cost at bay.

158 Engelbert Mveng or one of his collaborators could be the designer of these motifs because *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains* gives an overview of common abbia designs in a very similar graphic rendering (26-9).

159 Christopher Wilk, *Modernism 1914-1939. Designing a New World* (London: V&A Publications, 2006), 199.

160 Eteki-Mboumoua, "Preface": 7.

- 161 Isaac Paré, "La place et le rôle des musées dans le Plan du Développement Economique et Social de l'Afrique", *ABBIA* 7 (1964): 49-65.
- 162 Paré, "Un artiste camerounais peu connu": 173-85.
- 163 *Ibid.*, 175.
- 164 Jean-Baptiste Obama, "Microcosme de la Négritude: Préparatifs au Cameroun du 1er Festival de Dakar", *ABBIA* 12/13 (1966): 13-69.
- 165 See for instance Mveng, "L'Art Camerounais": 4.
- 166 Obama, "Microcosme de la Négritude": 14.
- 167 *Ibid.*, 25.
- 168 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 169 *Ibid.*
- 170 *Ibid.* 29-34. An official publication of 1975 contains a list of the objects exhibited in Dakar, partly ordered by cities (Foumban), partly by ethnic groups. (J. C. Bahoken and Engelbert Atangana, *La politique culturelle en République réunie du Cameroun*, (Paris: Les Presses de l'UNESCO, 1975), 72.)
- 171 Cameroon was lauded for its "extraordinary folklore" in a review illustrated with a photo of masked performers. ("N.N., M. Suleymane Sidibé établissant le premier bilan du Festival Mondial. Le monde entier rentendra encore longtemps des échos de cette rencontre de la Négritude" in *Dakar Matin*, April 25, 1966, accessed June 3, 2012, www.atalaku.net/wsuc/?p=5879.)
- 172 "Art nègre" was used as umbrella term. (Obama, "Microcosme de la Négritude": 35.
- 173 M.S. Eno Belinga, "Philippe Ibara Ouassa", *ABBIA* 19 (1968): 137-49.
- 174 Their titles read "The toucan at rest", "The furious toucan", "The toucans' danse", "Praying bird", "War of the toucans" and "Awumba masks". Allegedly, all of them are inspired by dreams. For a colour reproduction of similar work that is preserved in the Musée National du Congo see N'Goné Fall and Jean Loup Pivin, *Anthologie de l'art africain du XXe siècle* (Paris: Revue Noire, 2001), 178.
- 175 For an introduction to the Poto-Poto workshop see Marie-Pierre Le Quellec, "La peinture et la gravure congolaises à travers l'école de Poto-Poto de Brazzaville", *Dossiers et recherches sur l'Afrique* 3 (1994): 87-140.
- 176 See for instance works by Zigoma in Mount, *African Art*, Fig 36 and 37.
- 177 Articles in *Cameroon Tribune* suggest that Ibara Ouassa had first come to Yaoundé for an exhibition at the Centre Culturel Français in 1966. He also gave classes at the Goethe-Institut in 1967 and exhibited there in 1970.
- 178 See source criticism in the introduction.
- 179 This place is identical with the "Musée Camerounais" and the "Musée de Yaoundé".
- 180 Mvogo, "Considérations sur l'art abstrait avec Zogo Isidore". Also other artists made more or less well-informed allusions to European avant-garde styles. Philippe-Débonnaire Youmsi, for instance, named his signature curvy painting style "cubi-courbisme". (L.-C. Boyomo Assala, "Le peintre Philippe-Débonnaire Youmsi. Un univers mystérieux et inquiétant", *Cameroon Tribune*, January 26, 1976.)
- 181 Werewere Liking has continued to work as a writer, playwright and performer from Abidjan, Ivory Coast, where she set up the Ki-Yi Mbock theatre troupe.

- 182 Eugène Letenou, “33 tableaux de Mme Wete Wete exposés au musée de Yaoundé”, *Cameroon Tribune*, November 11, 1974.
- 183 Liking, for instance, explicitly distanced her work from airport art [“l’art de l’aéroport”]. (Tchiénehom, “Pour s’affirmer nos artistes devraient travailler en groupe”.)
- 184 See for instance P. Nyano, “Artiste polyvalent, M. Philippe Tchagang expose au Musée National”, *Cameroon Tribune*, December 31, 1974, Mvogo, “Considérations sur l’art abstrait avec Zogo Isidore”, and “Mme Wete Wete confie à C.T. Je communique grace à la peinture”, *Cameroon Tribune*, September 15, 1975.
- 185 L.-C. Boyomo Assala, “Le peintre Amougou Bivina: Une restitution de la voix ancestrale”, *Cameroon Tribune*, April 28, 1975. However, Bivina’s interviewer remarked with a criticality that is exceptional in the pages of *Cameroon Tribune* that his counterpart might risk getting caught up in another, no less deplorable copy-ism, namely that of tradition.
- 186 See comments in “Le peintre Youmsi a exposé au C.C.F.”, *Cameroon Tribune*, January 15, 1976.
- 187 These arguments are brought forward in a trilogy of articles entitled “Peinture et Sculpture. Une enquête de Boyomo Assala. 1. Vocation ou éxutoire?”, in *Cameroon Tribune*, September 24, 1975, “Peinture et Sculpture. Une enquête de Boyomo Assala. 2. Le public comme objectif”, in *Cameroon Tribune*, September 25, 1975, and “Peinture et Sculpture. Une enquête de Boyomo Assala. 3. Réhabiliter notre Culture”, in *Cameroon Tribune*, September 27, 1975.
- 188 Bahoken and Atangana are here quoting Ahidjo’s “Message du chef de l’Etat à la jeunesse”, in *Bulletin quotidien d’informations* of l’Agence Camerounaise de Presse, no 34, February 10, 1974, 4.
- 189 Bahoken and Atangana, *La politique culturelle en République réunie du Cameroun*, 37-8.
- 190 *Ibid.*, 84. The authors are here quoting from a text by the president A. Ahidjo, “Nation et développement dans l’unité et la justice” (Paris: *Présence Africaine*, 1969), 17.
- 191 Bahoken and Atangana, “Peinture et sculpture”, *La politique culturelle en République réunie du Cameroun*, 70.
- 192 *Ibid.*, 77.
- 193 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 194 *Ibid.*, 70-3.
- 195 *Ibid.*, 72.
- 196 Michaela Oberhofer in a telephone conversation with the author, January 2013.
- 197 Mbembe, “Introduction: Time on the Move”, in *On the Postcolony*, 12.
- 198 See for instance Stuart Hall, “Creolization, Diaspora, and Hybridity in the Context of Globalisation”, in *Fault Lines: Contemporary African Art and Shifting Landscape*, ed. Sarah Campbell et al. (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, Forum for African Arts, Prince Claus Fund Library, 2003), 191.
- 199 Mbembe, “Introduction: Time on the Move”, in *On the Postcolony*, 12.
- 200 Fame Ndongo, “Un second souffle pour nos arts plastiques”, *Cameroon Tribune*, September 15, 1976. Participants were MM. Abanda Ndengué (writer), Joseph-Maria Essomba (historian, archeologist), Didier Etaba Otoa (art teacher), Louis-Marie Lemana (draughtsman), Zogo (painter), Gédéon Mpando (sculptor) and Momo Zebaze Bavoua (painter).
- 201 Assako Assako, interview, December 4, 2011.

- 202 Museums could be found across Cameroon by the mid-1960s but those did not consider modern-type art part of their concern. Obama's 1966 report lists the palace museum in Foumban (Musée des Arts et Traditions Bamoun), the "Musée de Bamenda" and the "Musée de Douala". (Obama, "Microcosme de la Négritude", 31-2.) For a history of private and public museums in Cameroon read Ndobo, "Les musées publics et privés au Cameroun".
- 203 Joseph Francis Sumegné, interview by the author, Yaoundé, December 3, 2011.
- 204 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 205 Apparently, these venues lacked popularity amongst artists as well as audiences, not least because they were underfunded and poorly equipped to host cultural events. By the mid 2000s, the CCCs had been for decades in a state of total stagnation (See Claude-Bernard Kingué, "Renc'Art. Perle", *Mutations*, October 13, 2005, and Venant Mboua, "L'Ensemble national : misère et oisiveté", *Africultures* 60 (2004): 80-83.).
- 206 See John Lenczowski, "Cultural Diplomacy, Political Influence, and Integrated Strategy", in *Strategic Influence: Public Diplomacy, Counterpropaganda, and Political Warfare*, ed. Michael J. Waller (Washington: Institute of World Politics Press, 2009). For further reading consult Mary N. Maack, "Books and Libraries as Instruments of Cultural Diplomacy in Francophone Africa during the Cold War", *Libraries & Culture* 36 (2001): 58-86.
- 207 The first art exhibition outside of Yaoundé covered by *Cameroon Tribune* took place in 1975. The French amateur Roger Morin exhibited then at the Centre Culturel Français in Douala. (N.N., "Insolites tableaux à Douala", *Cameroon Tribune*, June 7, 1975.)
- 208 This development can be concluded from their subsequent disappearance from the press and from their absence from my interview partners' accounts.

Notes of Chapter 3. Collective Action and Intergenerational Solidarity among Artists (1976-1991)

1 Komegné had his first exhibition in 1976 at the restaurant Quartier Latin in Douala after having painted for ten years. According to Komegné, his colleagues André Viking Kangayam, and Jean-Guy Atagua also started to exhibit around 1975 (Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011). Sumegné also had his first exhibition in 1975 in Yaoundé (Sumegné, interview, December 3, 2011). Since they attended university, Kenfack's and Spee's careers differ slightly: Kenfack started exhibiting already as a teenager in 1967 in Yaoundé, but was absent from Cameroon until 1988 (Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011), while Spee Nzante returned to Bamenda in 1982 after concluding his studies (S. Spee Nzante, "Biography", *Speeart*, accessed January 23, 2014, www.speeart.com/biography.htm).

2 Mannheim, *The Problem of Generations*, 291.

3 Emmanuel Nana Kouanang, "Conservation de notre patrimoine culturel. La création d'un musée national de la peinture – une nécessité", in *Cameroon Tribune*, August 3, 1980. According to the introduction to the article, Emmanuel Nana Kouanang was also a member of the Pan-African Organisation of Industrial Property (OAPI).

4 To Kouanang, painting was on an equal footing with music, cinema, choreography and architecture. Interestingly though, he consequently avoided references to crafts.

5 Joseph Marie Essomba, "La Création d'un Musée National préoccupe nos responsables", *Cameroon Tribune*, August 22, 1980.

6 Essomba, "La Création d'un Musée National préoccupe nos responsables".

7 The primary promoter of Africa's cultural rooting in Egyptian antiquity was the Senegalese historian Cheik Anta Diop. (Cheik Anta Diop, *African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1974)).

8 The permanent collections were meant to house sections with archeological, historical, ethnographic and artistic collections. (Essomba, "La Création d'un Musée National préoccupe nos responsables".)

9 This "village d'artistes" was also meant to link the museum to an Institut des Arts that was never realised.

10 See Yvette Monga, "Le patrimoine camerounais se meurt", in *Africultures. Cameroon: la culture sacrifiée* 60 (2004): 96-99. For a detailed, critical evaluation of the political reasons for the stagnations of the plans for an official National Museum in Yaoundé see Ndobu, "Les musées publics et privés au Cameroun".

11 Hilda Madiba "L'art plastique au Cameroun aura des lendemains meilleurs", *Cameroon Tribune*, February 8, 1989.

12 Koko Komegné, interview by the author, Doula, December 20, 2011.

13 See Aveved, "L'Art Plastique au Cameroun" and chapter V.

14 DeLancey, Mbuh and DeLancey, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*, 107.

15 *Ibid.*, 13.

16 For an in-depth-analysis of the growing importance of belonging to a specific soil in the 1990s in Cameroon consult Peter Geschiere, *The Perils of Belonging. Autochthony, Citizenship and Exclusion in Africa and Europe* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

- 17 For a brief history of the private press in the 1980s consult Christophe Cassiau-Haurie, “L’histoire de la bande dessinée au Cameroun (1/3)”, December 30, 2011, accessed July 14, 2013, www.africultures.com/php/index.php?nav=article&no=10556.
- 18 DeLancey, Mbuh and DeLancey, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*, xxxiv.
- 19 Paul Foanyi Nkemayang, “The role of the media in Cameroon”, paper presented at the Union College, Schenectady, New York, July 7, 2007, accessed October 9, 2012, public.unionky.edu/fulbright/files/2009/.../cameroonmedia.
- 20 N.N., “Cercle Littéraire et Artistique (CELA). ‘La gestation a été longue et difficile’, affirme M. Oyié Ndzie, directeur du cercle”, *Cameroon Tribune*, January 16, 1979.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Mvola Bitá, “Exposition au Tourisme. Richesse de la couleur, variété de tous”, *Cameroon Tribune*, June 14, 1979.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Honoré de Sumo, “Exposition au Centre Culturel Américain: Le club d’art plastique de l’université – des peintres engagés”, *Cameroon Tribune*, June 14, 1977.
- 25 Ibid., Ayissi Ekani, “Exposition de Peinture à l’Institut Goethe: 74 tableaux de l’université présentés au public – l’Art en ‘Franc-Tireur’”, *Cameroon Tribune*, July 11, 1978; and Mvola Bitá, “Exposition à l’Institut Goethe. Ascension à l’inconnu”, *Cameroon Tribune*, May 17, 1979.
- 26 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011, and Ginette Daleu, interview by the author, Douala, December 6, 2010.
- 27 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 28 Emile Youmbi, Nyemb Popoli, Guy Bolivar, Achillekà Komguem, and Landry Mbassi are former club members of different generations, who also became artists or professionals in related fields. (W.V. Kegne, “Le club des arts plastiques à l’Université de Yaoundé I: La Renaissance?”, *DiARTgonale* 4 (2008): 7.)
- 29 The following sources agree on this point: Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011; Marilyn Douala Bell and Didier Schaub (directors of doual’art), interview by the author, Douala, December 12, 2011; Kathleen Lapie, “Biographie de Koko Komegné” in Didier Schaub, *Koko Komegné. Survivre et Frapper* (Douala: Editions du Centre Culturel Français Blaise Cendrars, 2006), 89; Aveved, “Artistes plasticiens et espaces d’art en milieu d’art urbain camerounais”, 43.
- 30 “Koko Komegné”, Wikipedia, accessed June 13, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koko_Komegn%C3%A9.
- 31 Schaub, *Koko Komegné*, 91.
- 32 Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 33 Lapie, “Biographie de Koko Komegné”, 89.
- 34 They used acrylic paint for advertisements, as this paint was easier to handle. (Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.)
- 35 Lionel Manga, *L’Ivresse du Papillon* (Servoz: Edimontagne, 2008), 109.
- 36 Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 The Centres Culturels Français in Douala and in Yaoundé hosted this salon in turns in the following years.

- 39 E.Y., "Concours de peinture à Bastos. André Viking enlève les 1er et 3e prix", *Cameroon Tribune*, June 28, 1978. Komegné won in 1984. Apparently, his winning piece was the first abstract painting to be awarded a prize. (Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010).
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 For instance, the American ambassador is said to have complained about the anti-American edge of some works by Cercle Maduta members after a show at the American Cultural Center in Douala. (Ibid.)
- 43 Sumeigné, interview, December 3, 2011.
- 44 Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 45 For critiques of this perception of Douala see Jean-Marie Ahanda "Kanganyam, Komegné et Atakoua au C.C.F. de Yaoundé jusqu'au 28 juillet", *Cameroon Tribune*, July 7, 1982, and Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 46 Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Lapie, "Biographie de Koko Komegné", 89.
- 49 Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 50 Lapie, "Biographie de Koko Komegné", 89.
- 51 The authors of these reviews were Hilda Madiba and Jean-Marie Ahanda. The latter was a painter who repeatedly wrote art critiques for *Cameroon Tribune* at that time.
- 52 Jean-Marie Ahanda, "Kanganyam, Komegné et Atakoua au C.C.F. de Yaoundé jusqu'au 28 juillet", *Cameroon Tribune*, July 7, 1982.
- 53 Hilda Madiba, "Exposition de tableaux d'Atakoua, de Viking et Koko Komegné. La peinture à trois dimensions", *Cameroon Tribune*, February 3, 1982.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ahanda, "Kanganyam, Komegné et Atakoua au C.C.F. de Yaoundé jusqu'au 28 juillet".
- 56 At least they are the first nudes discussed in the articles collected in the archive of *Cameroon Tribune* at my disposal.
- 57 Madiba, "Exposition de tableaux d'Atakoua, de Viking et Koko Komegné. La peinture à trois dimensions".
- 58 Ahanda, "Kanganyam, Komegné et Atakoua au C.C.F. de Yaoundé jusqu'au 28 juillet".
- 59 Lapie, "Biographie de Koko Komegné", 89.
- 60 Komegné has underlined the militant quality of his practice and of Cercle Maduta's joint projects at all times, for instance in an interview by Hilda Madiba "L'art plastique au Cameroun aura des lendemains meilleurs", *Cameroon Tribune*, February 8, 1989, in an interview of 2006 (Yvonne Monkam, "Komegné fête quarante années d'arts plastiques. Entretien d'Yvonne Monkam avec Koko Komégné, Douala, April 2006". August 3, 2006, *Africultures*, www.africultures.com/php/index.php?nav=article&no=4547), as well as in my 2010 and 2011 interviews.
- 61 Aveved, "Café-Débat: L'Art Plastique au Cameroun: Marché, Lieux, Economie et Acteurs".

- 62 Jean-Vincent Tchiénehom, “Pour s’affirmer nos artistes devraient travailler en groupe. C’est ce qui ressort d’un entretien à bâtons rompus entre trois artistes et ‘Cameroon Tribune’”, *Cameroon Tribune*, July 30, 1975.
- 63 Member list condensed from Jean Marie Ahanda, “Zogo B. Isidore à l’Institut Goethe: À l’aube d’un renouveau”, in *Cameroon Tribune*, November 17, 1982, and Adah Joseph Tsala, “Peinture. Le 2e salon de l’Udapcam est un succès”, *Cameroon Tribune*, September 28, 1981.
- 64 Ahanda, “Zogo B. Isidore à l’Institut Goethe: À l’aube d’un renouveau”.
- 65 Jean-Marie Ahanda, “Peinture. Les problèmes ne sont pas de freins”, *Cameroon Tribune*, January 15, 1982.
- 66 Tsala, “Peinture. Le 2e salon de l’Udapcam est un succès”.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Jean Marie Ahanda, “Peinture. L’Udapcam expose et fête le 20 mai’ au CCF jusqu’au 21 mai prochain”, *Cameroon Tribune*, May 18, 1983.) In October 1984, Zogo Isidore’s work was praised in an article of a government member as a contribution to the national cultural policy of the Renouveau culturel. (Mbonji Edjenguele, “Exposition de Zogo Isidore à l’Institut Goethe. La peinture de la loi du pendule”, *Cameroon Tribune*, November 30, 1984.) See also Eboumbou Fritz E. (Essti): “Réunion des artistes plasticiens au musée national. L’UDAPCAM, vers un nouveau souffle?”, *Cameroon Tribune*, June 27, 1988. Concerning the state funding see Aveded, “Artistes plasticiens et espaces d’art en milieu d’art urbain camerounais”, 43.
- 69 Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 70 See Austen and Derrick, “Between Colonialism and Radical Nationalism: Middlemen in the Era of Decolonization, c. 1941-c. 1960”, in *Middlemen of the Cameroons Rivers*, 176-90.
- 71 Komegné considered CAPLIT’s activities as a sort of “syndicalism”. (Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.)
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 CAPLIT had only organised two exhibitions by the time Komegné withdrew. (Ibid.)
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Hilda Madiba, “L’art plastique au Cameroun aura des lendemains meilleurs”, *Cameroon Tribune*, February 8, 1989.
- 76 Umlauf had spent three and a half years as a volunteer teacher in Cameroon and had tried to set up a university department for art teachers. In 1972, one of Umlauf’s pupils had won a prize for a poster design made with linocut in the competition of the Olympic games in Munich, an event that made some news in Cameroon. Umlauf’s pedagogic reasoning in the 1970s strongly resembled that of Raymond Lecoq from the 1940s and other workshop initiators, as is clear from Gloria J. Umlauf, “Schülerarbeiten aus Kamerun. Gedanken zur Sonderausstellung im Hamburgischen Museum für Völkerkunde”, in *Schülerarbeiten aus Kamerun* (Hamburg: Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde, 1974). Umlauf still spends parts of the year in Foumban.
- 77 “Goethe Institut. Atelier de peinture dès demain”, *Cameroon Tribune*, May 16, 1988, “Exposition des résultats de l’Atelier technique de la gravure en bois.” *Cameroon Tribune*, May 27, 1988.
- 78 Tsala, “Peinture. Le 2e salon de l’Udapcam est un succès”.
- 79 My representation of Cercle Maduta and of CAPLIT relies on Koko Komegné’s memories only. In as far as he was a

protagonist of these associations, he was a well informed, but little objective interviewee, all the more so because he explicitly intended to raise awareness for the agency and the achievements of Douala's artists before the 1990s in my 2011 interview with him. My account might be biased because I failed to obtain similar first-hand-information on the UDAPCAM's early years during my field research.

80 Sumegn , interview, December 3, 2010, and Cath rine Pittet, "Quelques dates qui ont marqu e l'histoire de la peinture au Cameroun", in *The Last Pictures Show*.

81 Guilia Paoletti, "Cultural and artistic initiatives in Douala", in *Douala in Translation*, 244.

82 Herv  Youmbi, interview by the author, Douala, December 5, 2010.

83 Komegn , interview, December 11, 2010.

84 Herv  Yamguen, interview by the author, Douala, December 7, 2010.

85 Elodie Mbopda, "P re de la photo publicitaire", *Comnews*, March 11, 2011, accessed October 1, 2011, www.comnews.cm/component/content/article/750.

For more information on the history of photography in Cameroon and Nicolas Eyidi's place in it consult Samy Nja Kwa, "La photographie victime de son image", in *Cameroun: la culture sacrifi e*, 141-5, and Marjolijn Dijkman, "Hard to Catch: Rose and Nicolas Eyidi", *DiARTgonale Special Edition 2* (2013): 60-6.

86 Interestingly, in the 1990s, these customary age hierarchies were used to govern immigrant youths in Europe in a quasi-informal way. In Paris' most notorious banlieus, the communal authorities deployed twenty-to-thirty-year-olds from the blocks, so-called *grands fr res*, as mediators between male migrant adolescents on one side and parents, schools and the state's agents on the

other, thus profiting from the authority that is quite naturally accorded to elder males within patriarchal milieux. This system came under critique because it weakens the position of professionally trained social workers and left parents under the impression that they could delegate their educational obligations. For a discussion of this matter see Pascal Duret, "Entre don, dette et professionnalisation : le cas des 'grands fr res'", *Agora - D bats / Jeunesses 4* (1996): 11-20. (www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/agora_1268-5666_1996_num_4_1_1063, accessed January 3, 2013).

87 Simon Njami, interview by the author, Douala, December 9, 2010.

88 Robert Neuwirth, "Grade A, Plan B, Middle C, System D, Vitamin E", in *Stealth of Nations: The Global Rise of the Informal Economy* (New York: Pantheon, 2011), 17-28.

89 Laur  al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 67.

90 Afane Belinga, "Le peintre Pascal KENFACK", in " volution de la peinture due XXe si cle   Yaound ", 73-5. For the circumstance of Kenfack's subscription see chapter 2.

91 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011.

92 Apparently, the Minist re du Transport transferred Kenfack's portfolio to the Minist re du Travail that facilitated the stipend. (Ibid.)

93 Notably, this is the sole incidence of a government official's engagement for an artist in the body of sources at my disposal.

94 Ibid. I was not able to consult this thesis because I could not extend my research to Paris and to the respective university archive.

95 Ibid.

- 96 Goddy Leye, “The story behind my work”, *Africanartists. Unseen Art Scene*, copied posthumously from www.god-dyleye.lecktronix.net/about.html, posted February 18, 2011, accessed December 19, 2012, http://africanartists.blogspot.de/2011_02_01_archive.html.
- 97 This engagement is similarly documented in Gaudibert, *L'Art Contemporain Africain*, 63, in Nicole Guez, *L'art contemporain africain: Guide* (Paris: Éditions Dialogue Entre Cultures, 1992), 237 and in newer sources.
- 98 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011.
- 99 Further polls by Kenfack that are documented in a later publication vary from ca. 60 cm to ca. 3 m in heights (*Revue Noire* 13 (1994): 25).
- 100 Gaudibert, *L'Art Africain Contemporain*, 64.
- 101 See Lecoq, “La sculpture culturelle”, in *Les Bamileké*, 115-74.
- 102 Pascal Kenfack, *Arrêt Culture*, directed by Thierry Bexon (1990; Paris/Yaoundé: Centre Culturel Français Yaoundé), digitalised video, accessed December 10, 2012, www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjszLTSUyA.
- 103 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011.
- 104 See Honoré Daumier, “Don Quijote and Sancho Panza”, ca. 1868, oil on canvas, 51 x 32 cm, Neue Pinakothek München. In that case, the horse and the rider merge into a lonely unity at the centre of an endless desert-like landscape. And a similar effect can be observed in Vincent Van Gogh, “Starry Night”, 1898, oil on canvas, 73,7 x 92,1 cm, Museum of Modern Art. Van Gogh's dynamic overall structure of parallel brushstrokes animates the landscape in this painting.
- 105 The colour reproduction of this painting is not dated in Gaudibert's 1991 volume, but it features in Bexon's aforementioned documentary of 1990.
- 106 For a current reading of Ortíz's ideas see Nadja Gernazick and Gabriele Pisz-Ramirez, *Transmediality and Transculturality* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003).
- 107 Afane Belinga reports Kenfack's participation in the “Olympiad of Art” of 1988 in Seoul and in the Havannah Biennale (no year). On the national level, Kenfack had an exhibition at Yaoundé's city hall in 1989 and his works were on permanent display at several ministries. (Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 74.) The library of doual'art preserves a photo album with fading colour photos of a large exhibit of works by Kenfack. This show is set in one of the modern representative buildings of Yaoundé, possibly in the city hall.
- 108 Gaudibert, *L'Art Africain Contemporain*, 63.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Kenfack stated that he tends to be marginalised since he is suspected of magic due to his ability to create visual reproductions of the world. He assured that his intentions are non manipulative, although claiming that his sculptures may be activated in favour of beneficial social goals. (Kenfack, *Arrêt Culture*).
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 73.
- 113 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011.
- 114 Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 75.

- 115 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011.
- 116 Goddy Leye, "The story behind my work".
- 117 Kenfack, interview, December 18, 2011.
- 118 Goddy Leye, "About my work", *Lecktronix.net*, accessed September 5, 2011, <http://goddyleye.lecktronix.net/about.htm>.
- 119 Leye's gallerist Peter Herrmann has a number of these paintings from the years of 1995 to 2008 in his stock.
- 120 Leye, "About my work".
- 121 Leye presented *Sankofa Vide Ooh* at the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé and *Sankofa* at the Centre Culturel Français in Douala in 1997. In 1998 followed *Sankofa River* at Espace Doual'Art. ("Godly Leye", in *Blick-Wechsel: Afrikanische Videokunst*, ed. Beate Eckstein et al. (Stuttgart: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 2000), 45.)
- 122 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 48.
- 123 Ibid., 76.
- 124 Kenfack is filmed on the respective land and refers to the buildings under construction in *Arrêt Culture*.
- 125 *Revue Noire* 13 (1994): 25.
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 128 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 49.
- 129 Ibid.
- 130 Pascal Kenfack, interview by the author, Foumban, December 19, 2011.
- 131 Ibid.
- 132 Monga, "« Au village ! »": 723.
- 133 The Frenchman Lecoq had done so in the 1940s in Cameroon and Gloria Umlauf from Switzerland followed on this path in the 1970s. Note also the parallels to the Natural Synthesis movement that Uche Ukeke (born 1933) institutionalised at the University of Nigeria in Nsukka in the 1970s. (For an introduction read Chika Okeke, "The Quest: From Zaria to Nsukka", in *Seven Stories About Modern Art in Africa*, 41-75.)
- 134 Sumegné, interview, December 3, 2011.
- 135 Achille Komguem, interview by the author, Douala, December 9, 2010.
- 136 Pascale Marthine Tayou refused to name his *grands frères* in my interview. (Pascale Marthine Tayou, interview by the author, Douala, December 9, 2010).
- 137 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 75.
- 138 Different sources substantiate this estimate; Marilyn Douala Bell and Didier Schaub, interview by the author, Douala, December 13, 2011, Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 139 Lapie "Biographie de Koko Komegné", 86-94.
- 140 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 141 Ibid.
- 142 Yvonne Monkam, "Koko Komégné fête 40 années d'arts plastiques. Entretien d'Yvonne Monkam avec Koko Komégné, Douala Avril 2006", *Africultures*, August 3, 2006. accessed August 12, 2011, www.africultures.com/php/index.php?nav=article&no=4547.

- 143 Lapie, “Biographie de Koko Komegné”, 87.
- 144 Ahanda, “Exposition: Kanganyam, Komegné et Atakoua au C.C.F. de Yaoundé jusqu’au 28 juillet”.
- 145 Monkam, “Koko Komégné fête 40 années d’arts plastiques”.
- 146 Ibid.
- 147 Lapie, “Biographie de Koko Komegné”, 88.
- 148 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010. In a text of 1993, Komegné confirmed his commitment to Existentialism. (See Komegné’s article for *Sentinelle* reproduced in Schaub, *Koko Komegné*, 46).
- 149 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 150 See Monkam, “Koko Komégné fête 40 années d’arts plastiques”.
- 151 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 152 Lapie mentions Komegné’s contribution as “decorateur” to the film *Pousse Pousse* (1974) by Daniel Kamwa, who lived in the diaspora in Paris. (Lapie, “Biographie de Koko Komegné”, 88).
- 153 Henry Paul Bolap, “Exposition au Centre culturel français: Kitsila [sic] fils d’Afrique”, *Cameroon Tribune*, April 13, 1976, “Une exposition de tableaux en cuivre repoussée et batiks au centre culturel américain”, *Cameroon Tribune*, June, 2, 1976, “Exposition de cuivres repoussées au Centre Culturel Français”, in *Cameroon Tribune*, October 24, 1979.
- 154 An exhibition review frames Kitsiba as inspired by Picasso and yet a “true son of Africa”. Supposedly, he showed village scenes, pictorial celebrations of motherhood mixed with references to various art styles from across West-Africa, especially masks, and subjects of actuality like famine and changes in the moral fabric. (“Exposition de cuivres repoussées au Centre Culturel Français”, *Cameroon Tribune*, October 24, 1979.)
- 155 Ahanda, “Exposition: Kanganyam, Komegné et Atakoua au C.C.F. de Yaoundé jusqu’au 28 juillet”.
- 156 Komegné’s article for *Le Messager* of 1992, reproduced in Schaub, Koko Komegné, 40.
- 157 Komegné mistook the Poto-Poto workshop for a regular art school. (Komegné’s article for *Le Messager* of 1992.) Interestingly, Faustin Kitsiba has also been identified as a disciple of Gaspard de Mouko, curiously a Cameroonian who practiced like Lods in Brazzaville in the 1940s and was famous for his portraits of de Gaulle and Jean Felix Tchicaya, as well as for his painted postcards, especially amongst expats. (Nora Gréani, “Art sous influences: Une approche anthropologique de la créativité contemporaine au Congo-Brazzaville” (PhD diss., Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales de Paris, 2013), 25-28). Arguably, Kitsiba frequented both de Mouko and Lods.
- 158 Ahanda, “Exposition: Kanganyam, Komegné et Atakoua au C.C.F. de Yaoundé jusqu’au 28 juillet”.
- 159 Monkam, “Koko Komégné fête 40 années d’arts plastiques”.
- 160 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 161 Monkam, “Koko Komégné fête 40 années d’arts plastiques”.
- 162 Komegné’s article for *Le Messager* of 1992.
- 163 Wassily Kandinsky has similarly exhibited the means of painting, i.e. paint and graphical elements, in *Komposition IV*,

- 1911, oil on canvas, 160 x 250 cm, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf. A comparable example by Paul Klee is *Schlamm Assel Fisch*, 1940, coloured paste and grease crayon on newspaper on cardboard, 34 x 53,5 cm, Fondation Beyeler, Basel.
- 164 A North-American contemporary, who was also inspired by graffiti and whose style resembles Komegné's in terms of graphics is Keith Haring. Haring also painted club scenes at that time and partly placed them in public space. His *Carmine Street Mural* (1987), for instance, is adorning the side of the Carmine Street Swimming Pool in New York.
- 165 See *La Renaissance*, 1995, oil on canvas, 80 x 200 cm, and "Meditation", 1998, acrylic and mixed media on canvas, 120 x 150 cm.
- 166 Christian Hanussek has also interpreted these paintings as a mocking reflection of popular, Afrophile clichés of the ever rhythmic, musical African. (Christian Hanussek, interview by the author, Berlin, March 13, 2012.)
- 167 Schaub, *Koko Komegné*, 80-1.
- 168 See Fig 54.bis in Schaub, *Koko Komégné*, 80, and Mveng, *L'Art et l'Artisanat Africains*, 36. The historian Andreas Eckert has discussed the essentialisation of tradition with regard to the heritage politics of the Duala and the Ngondo-Festival. (Andreas Eckert, *Grundbesitz, Landkonflikte und kolonialer Wandel: Douala 1880-1960* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999), 194-8.)
- 169 See the reproductions of *Ballets*, 1985, and *Jazz Evolution*, 1993, in Schaub, *Koko Komégné*, 29 and 56-7.
- 170 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 171 Ibid.
- 172 Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 173 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 174 For instance, Komegné presented work of this *petits frères* as curator of the FESTAC of 1993 in Douala. (Lapie, "Biographie de Koko Komegné", 93).
- 175 Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 176 Ibid.
- 177 Komegné's article for *Cameroon Tribune*, November 27, 1986, reproduced in Schaub, Koko Komegné, 68.
- 178 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 179 Mannheim, *The Problem of Generations*, 293.
- 180 Interestingly, hardly any of Komegné's *petits frères* attended university, either.
- 181 See Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research* (New York: Guilford Press, 2007), 547.
- 182 Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010, and Leye, interview, December 11, 2010, and Justine Gaga, interview by the author, Douala, December 8, 2010.
- 183 The nine case studies in the conference volume *The Traditional Artist in African Society* edited by d'Azevedo in 1973 highlight the diversity of craft trainings on the continent, yet without referring to Cameroon. Summarily speaking, this volume demonstrates that the same craft profession can inhabit very different ranks within different ethnic groups, which also affects the organisation of the respective trainings. These training forms range from mere observation to initiation rituals and to

- very exclusive master-apprentice relationships. Accordingly, the training can take from one month to seven or more years and can be provided by kinsmen, acquainted professionals, commissioned teachers or accomplished masters. In a comparative study of 12 African contexts from 1985, Sidney Kasfir compared the skilling within a single type of craft, i.e. woodcarving. (Kasfir, "Apprentices and Entrepreneurs"). The same researcher has recently evaluated the continuities and changes in this context. (Kasfir, "Coda. Apprentices and Entrepreneurs Revisited. Twenty Years of Workshop Changes 1987-2007", in *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*). The knowledge transmission in a Cameroonian region, the Bamum kingdom, is treated in Christraud Geary's chapter "Craftsmen and Artists: Their Techniques and Media" (Geary, *The Things of the Palace*). For a critical discussion of the contested role of carvers-cum-blacksmiths' apprenticeships in another court society nearby Foumban see Nicolas Argenti, "People of the Chisel: Apprenticeship, Youth, and Elites in Oku (Cameroon)", *American Ethnologist* 29 (2002): 497-533.
- 184 Till Förster, "Work and Workshop: The Iteration of Style and Genre in Two Workshop Settings, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon", in *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*, 325-59. Interestingly, Förster also points to this scene's intersections with Douala's visual art world and with the "international art world". (Ibid., 341-52.)
- 185 Ibid., 342.
- 186 Ibid., 342-5.
- 187 René Egloff, "Fotografie in Bamenda: Eine ethnographische Untersuchung in einer kamerunischen Stadt" (PhD diss., Philosophisch-Historische Fakultät der Universität Basel, 2013), 122-9.
- 188 Egloff does not specify what was agreed upon in such contracts.
- 189 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 190 Gaudibert, *L'Art Africain Contemporain*, 32-5.
- 191 This is clear from comparison with the catalogue *Seven Stories about Modern Art in Africa*. (Court, "Notes. Art Colleges, Universities and Schools", 291-6).
- 192 Fillitz, *Zeitgenössische Kunst aus Afrika*, 28.
- 193 "École Supérieure de Beaux Arts d'Alger", *Wikipedia*, accessed June 14, 2014, http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%89cole_sup%C3%A9rieure_des_beaux-arts_d%27Alger. The term "orientalism" summarises European cultural prejudices towards "the orient", which legitimised colonial and imperial endeavours. (Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003)).
- 194 Court, "Notes. Art Colleges, Universities and Schools", 294.
- 195 Chika Okeke, "Modern African Art", in *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994*, ed. Okwui Enwezor (Munich: Prestel, 2001), 29.
- 196 Irbouh, *Art in the Service of Colonialism*.
- 197 Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*, 141-7. For a critical reading of Trowell's didactics see Emma Wolukau-Wanambwa, "How do I keep the children's work really African? On Margaret Trowell and the 'Invention' of East African 'Art'", paper read at Kunsthistorisches Institut, FU Berlin, January 28, 2014.
- 198 Harney, "The École de Dakar: Pan-Africanism in Paint and Textile", in *In Senghor's Shadow*, 49-104.
- 199 Court, "Notes. Art Colleges, Universities and Schools", 294.

- 200 Onobolu pioneered in establishing art education in a school in Lagos. (See Court, “Notes”, 292).
- 201 See H.V. Meyerowitz, “The Institute of West African Arts, Industries and Social Sciences”, *Man* 43 (1943): 113.
- 202 I am here alluding to Margaret Trowell (See Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*, 142) and to Papa Ibra Tall (See Harney, “The École de Dakar: Pan-Africanism in Paint and Textile”, 56).
- 203 An example hereof is Iba N’Diaye. (Harney, “The École de Dakar: Pan-Africanism in Paint and Textile”, 64).
- 204 Harney gives a vivid example of the discontinuity of academic art education and the internal conflicts within a single art academy as well as of its non-institutional opposition (“The École de Dakar: Pan-Africanism in Paint and Textile”, 56-66, 106).
- 205 Justine Gaga has reported reading art books about Vincent Van Gogh and Pablo Picasso in Viking Kayangayam’s studio in the 1990s (Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010).
- 206 Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010, Salifou Lindou, interview by the author, Douala, December 7, 2010 and Marème Malong, unpublished interview by Marta Puciarelli and Bathilde Maestracchi, Douala, December 2012.
- 207 Dominique Malaquais has initially raised this hypothesis. (Dominique Malaquais, conversation with the author, Paris, November 2010). Amongst my interlocutors, Simon Njami, Achille Komguem, Ruth Afane Belinga, Ginette Daleu and Hervé Youmbi have confirmed this point.
- 208 For a critical assessment of the challenges faced by institutions providing formal artistic training and art education in Africa in general see Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 35. For a critical assessment of the Cameroonian formal training system see chapter 4.
- 209 Kasfir and Förster, introduction to *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*, 3-5.
- 210 Lecoq’s initial mission was to turn a craft cooperative in the city of Ebolowa into a school for artisans. The cooperative housed 120 carpenters, basket makers, blacksmiths, or sculptors, i.e. wood and ivory carvers. Since he was put on this post without further instructions, Lecoq began by restructuring the labour process of the carvers, who used to produce sellable decorative objects for foreign clients, such as statues of the Virgin Mary and elephant groups. While pupils prepared the woodblocks, more experienced workers accomplished the carving. Since Lecoq despised this serial production and the division of labour as alienating, he insisted for carvers of all skill levels to start producing sculptures individually, hoping to thus foster the artisans’ creativity. Lecoq’s next official brief was to set up a new craft school in the city of Bafoussam, an important crossroads of the Cameroonian West. By means of preparation, he would undertake research tours throughout a number of chiefdoms in 1946. During this trip, he hired Bamum craftspeople as teachers and also gathered historical artefacts – to serve as inspiration for the craftsmen at the Bafoussam cooperative, not as models to be copied, as he emphasised. (Howlett, “Interview de Jacques Howlett”, in *Les Bamiléké. Une civilisation africaine*, ed. Raymond Lecoq (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1953), 11-21.)
- 211 With regard to Pierre Romain-Defossés and Pierre Lods see Mount, *African Art*, 74-94. With regard to Margaret Trowell see Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*, 141-9. With regard to Meyerowitz see Woets, “Herbert Meyerowitz: Adapting “traditional” art for the benefit of a new society” in What is this? Framing Ghanaian art from the colonial encounter to the present, 98-105.
- 212 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

- 213 Court, “Notes”, 296.
- 214 Loder quoted in Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art since 1980*, 341.
- 215 Court, “Notes”, 296.
- 216 Ibid.
- 217 Miriam Aronowicz, “The Triangle Network: Context and Collaborations”, *The Triangle Network Blog*, September 11, 2011, accessed February 22, 2014, www.thetriangleconference.org/archives/tag/miriam-aronowicz.
- 218 Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art since 1980*, 341.
- 219 Court, “Notes”, 296.
- 220 Namubiru Rose Kirumira and Sidney Littlefield Kasfir, “An Artist’s Notes on the Triangle Workshops, Zambia and South Africa”, in *African Art and Agency in the Workshop*, ed. Kasfir et al., 111-22.
- 221 Court, “Notes”, 296.
- 222 Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art since 1980*, 341.
- 223 Court also refers to the workshops “Ouag’Art” and “Taxi Couleurs” that she describes as “more comprehensive and more structured than the Triangle model”. (Ibid., 297.)
- 224 De Certeau, ““Making Do”: Uses and Tactics”, 38.
- 225 Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 226 The cases of Komegné and Kenfack show that professional identities could also shift.
- 227 The Centro Orientamento Educativo awarded art prizes to Cameroonian artists since 1988 at least, as is clear from an award that is documented in Joseph Francis Sumegné’s “pressbook”.
- 228 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 229 Kamje Téguia, “Inauguration de la galerie des arts de Douala. Un don du Rotary Club”, *Cameroon Tribune*, February 22, 1987. In 1988, the Galerie Rotary Estuaire hosted “Regard Pluriel”, an exhibit of 1200 (sic) paintings realised by Cameroonian artists like Koko Komegné and painters from other African countries. (Victor Mounanga, “Exposition à Douala. 1200 Tableaux de peinture”, *Cameroon Tribune*, April 18, 1988.)
- 230 See for instance I.E.E., “En vue de la rentrée culturelle 1980, les Centres culturels ont réouvert leurs portes”, *Cameroon Tribune*, October 9, 1980.
- 231 David Ndachi Tagne, “Atelier créatif de l’Institut Goethe. Développer chez l’enfant l’esprit d’innovation”, *Cameroon Tribune*, November 5, 1982 and I.E.E., “En vue de la rentrée culturelle 1980, les Centres culturels ont réouvert leurs portes”, *Cameroon Tribune*, October 9, 1980.
- 232 Maketa, an artist trained at the École de Beaux Arts de Kinshasa tutored this three-months class. (“Cours de céramique artistique au Goethe Institut”, *Cameroon Tribune*, March 15, 1981.)
- 233 Jean-Marie Ahanda, “Peinture: Picasso l’africain. M. Warren Robbins dégage l’africanité du grand peintre contemporain”, *Cameroon Tribune*, January 9, 1982.
- 234 David Ndachi Tagne, “Films et Conférences à l’Institut Goethe. Le Dr. Ulli Beier présente ce soir et demain la vie culturelle des Yoruba”, *Cameroon Tribune*, March 2, 1983, and Tagne, “Conférences du Docteur Ulli Beier à l’Institut Goethe: L’univers culturel Yoruba: riche et dynamique”, *Cameroon Tribune*, March 3 (concluding from its content, Oelsner-

- Adam's dating of this article to March 2 must be is erroneous), 1983. Beier had already been introduced in an article of 1975. (Michel Oum, "Exposition de Bayo Ogundele à l'Institut Goethe. Une inspiration de la mythologie Yoruba", *Cameroon Tribune*, November 11, 1975.)
- 235 Atouga Mongo Faustin, "Exposition au Ccf. Gravures de la Grèce antique et contemporaine", *Cameroon Tribune*, May 24, 1980.
- 236 "Du 18 au 25 mars 1986 à l'Institut Goethe. Une exposition didactique sur le musée du Prado", *Cameroon Tribune*, March 20, 1986.
- 237 Louis-Marie Lemana, "Institut Goethe de Yaoundé. L'ancien directeur M. Diethar Koster est rentré en Allemagne", *Cameroon Tribune*, October 2, 1983, David Ndachi Tagne, "Le directeur de l'Institut Goethe en fin de séjour. Au revoir, M. Joachim Helbig", *Cameroon Tribune*, February 28, 1989. These two directors promoted the international festival for Jazz, Jazz sous les Manguiers.
- 238 Joseph Tsala Adah, "Nouveaux Objectifs pour les instituts Goethe", *Cameroon Tribune*, May 7, 1982. See also "59 ans de Goethe-Institut au Cameroun", *Goethe*, accessed March 9, 2013, www.goethe.de/ins/cm/yao/uun/50j/ges/frindex.htm.
- 239 Yves Ollivier (director), interview by the author, Yaoundé, December 6, 2011, and Raphaëlle Masure (PR), interview by the author, Yaoundé, December 6, 2011. See Raphaëlle Masure, "Les centres culturels français d'Afrique francophone, des structures légitimes entre développement et influence, qui peinent à trouver un second souffle" (seminar paper, Université de Lyon II, Institut d'Études Politiques de Lyon, 2009).
- 240 Enwezor and Okeke Agulu, "Forms of Reference", in *Contemporary African Art since 1980* (Bologna: Damiani, 2009), 18.
- 241 Ibid., 19.
- 242 Ibid.
- 243 Ibid.
- 244 I owe this and many other thoughts to my tutor Tobias Wendl. (Wendl, e-mail message to author, February 25, 2013.)

Notes of Chapter 4. The 1990s: The Empowerment of a New Artist Generation through Non-formal Training

1 Lionel Manga, interview by the author, December 3, 2010; Assako Assako, interview, December 4, 2011; Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011; Stéphane Tchakam (journalist), interview by the author, Douala, December 15, 2011; and Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 121.

2 Pius Bejeng Soh (Cameroonian sociologist) in a conversation with the author, Berlin, December 2011.

3 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.

4 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

5 Afane Belinga, “Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé”, 121.

6 Claire Bishop, “Former West: Art as Project in the Early 1990s”, in *Artificial Hells*, 193.

7 Lotte Arndt, “Tournant historique autour de 1990”, in “Chantiers du devenir en des espaces contraints”, 81-5, 90, 127. For a similar assessment see also N’goné Fall, “The Repositioning of Contemporary Art from Africa on the Map”, *Global Art and the Museum/ZKM Karlsruhe*, April 2011, accessed April 2, 2012, www.globalartmuseum.de/site/guest_author/302. Kasfir has critically summarised the major events and the dynamics of this crystallisation of the new professional field. (Kasfir, “Inclusion and exclusion: the authority of collector and curator”, in *Contemporary African Art*, 135-6.)

8 Arndt, “Chantiers du devenir en des espaces contraints”, 83-4.

9 I am borrowing this term from the political scientist Dibussi Tande. (Dibussi Tande, “Memory Lane (May 6, 1991): Bloody Crackdown on the University of Yaounde Student Movement”, *Scribbles from the Den-Blog*, May 6, 2011, accessed on July 17, 2014, www.dibussi.com/2011/05/memory-lane-may-6-1991-bloody-crackdown-on-the-university-of-yaounde-student-movement.html.) “Années de Braise” is the common term in Francophone Cameroon. (Pierre Ngayap, *L’Opposition au Cameroun: Les Années de Braise*, (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2000)).

10 DeLancey, Mbuh and DeLancey, “Chronology”, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*, xxxv.

11 Francis B. Nyamnjoh, *Mass Media and Democratisation in Cameroon in the Early 1990s* (Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2011), 53.

12 Célestin Monga, “La démocratie truquée”, *Le Messager*, December 27, 1990.

13 For further reading see Nyamnjoh, *Mass Media and Democratisation*, and Célestin Monga, *The Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Pub, 1996).

14 Dibussi Tande, “Memory Lane (May 16 – 17, 1991): Opposition Parties Launch Operation Ghost Town”, *Scribbles from the Den-Blog*, May 15, 2011, accessed February 15, 2014, www.dibussi.com/2011/05/memory-lane-may-16-17-1991-opposition-parties-launch-operation-ghost-town.html.

15 DeLancey, Mbuh and DeLancey, introduction to *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*, 9.

16 Dibussi Tande, preface to *Scribbles from the Den: Essays on Politics and Collective Memory in Cameroon* (Bamenda: Langaa RPCIG, 2009), xii.

- 17 Zayd Minty, "The freedom to dream? Urban transformations through cultural practices in Douala", in *Douala in Translation*, 167-8.
- 18 DeLancey, Mbuh and DeLancey, *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*, 354-5.
- 19 Patrice Nganang, "Le Cameroun qui se réinvente", *Africultures* 60 (2004), 9.
- 20 See Kai Diekmann, *Die Mauer. Fakten, Bilder, Schicksale*, (München: Piper Verlag, 2011), 45.
- 21 7. *Triennale der Kleinplastik: Europa Afrika. Zeitgenössische Skulptur aus Europa und Afrika*, ed. Trägerverein der Triennale Kleinplastik e.V. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1998), 170-1. Apparently, the deceased collector Hans Bogatzke purchased the installation after the triennale. (Peter Herrmann (gallerist) in a telephone conversation with the author, March 2012).
- 22 Peter Anders, "Goddy Leye", in 7. *Triennale der Kleinplastik*, 170.
- 23 DeLancey, Mbuh and DeLancey, "Chronology", in *Historical Dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*, xxxiii. For a commented account see Ndobo, "Les musées publics et privés au Cameroun", 798.
- 24 Marcel Odenbach (German video artist) in a telephone conversation with the author, May 2013. Leye also occasionally referred to his "bitter TV criticism" himself. (Goddy Leye, "About my work".) As a matter of fact, Marcel Odenbach has equally used this press image for the videowork *Immer auf dem Sprung sein* in 1993. (Slavko Kacunko, *Marcel Odenbach: Konzept, Performance, Video, Installation 1975 - 1998: Marcel Odenbach als Modell einer künstlerischen Entwicklung im Umgang mit dem Medium Video und seine Rolle und Bedeutung für die Eingliederung der zeitgebundenen Kunstformen in den kunsthistorischen Kontext*, (Mainz: Chorus Verlag, 1999), 345.) Leye might have found the footage in Odenbach's archive in Cologne, where he worked repeatedly in the late 1990s. (Odenbach, telephone conversation, May 2013.)
- 25 Gaga only had her first solo exhibition in 2007. (Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.)
- 26 Mannheim, *The Problem of Generations*, 303.
- 27 See chapter 3.
- 28 Dibussi Tande, "Memory Lane (May 6, 1991): Bloody Crackdown on the University of Yaounde Student Movement", *Scribbles from the Den-Blog*, May 6, 2011, accessed February 15, 2014, www.dibussi.com/2011/05/memory-lane-may-16-17-1991-opposition-parties-launch-operation-ghost-town.html. By installing several new campuses across the country, the government decentralised tertiary education from 1993 onwards and admitted privately run universities. The stipends that had so long been accorded to almost all enrolled students were abolished. Instead, students had to pay nominal registration fees from then on. (Joachim Oelsner-Adam (former DAAD lecturer at Yaounde University) in discussion with the author, June 2013. See also Emmanuel T. Nwaimah, "Cameroon: New university part of tertiary reforms", *University World News*, October 12, 2008, accessed June 26, 2013, www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20081010091141564).
- 29 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 30 Dominique Malaquais in a conversation with the author, New York, March 2014.
- 31 Mannheim, *The Problem of Generations*, 301.
- 32 Doual'art repeatedly invited Tayou to Douala from 1994 onwards. (Didier Schaub

- in a telephone conversation with the author, April 2013). Leye also began collaborating with doual'art and relocated to Douala in the late 1990s, while Salifou Lindou moved temporarily to Yaoundé. (Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.)
- 33 Tayou's solo exhibition at the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé in 1994 was entitled *Transgressions*. In 1997 he showed the performance *LOooBHY* at Espace Doual'Art (Pier Luigi Tazzi and Nicolas Bourriaud, *Pascale Marthine Tayou: Le grand sorcier de l'utopie*, (Pistoia: Gli Ori, 2009), 266.) Salifou Lindou's solo exhibition *Regards de l'intérieur* travelled from the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé to Espace Doual'Art to the Institut de Formation Artistique in Mbalmayo in 1996. In 1998, Lindou presented the performance *Mont-Q* at the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé (artist CV of January 2011). Leye showed the solo exhibition *Sankofa Vide Ooh* at the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé and *Sankofa* at the Centre Culturel Français in Douala in 1997. In 1998, Leye's solo exhibition *Sankofa River* followed at Espace Doual'Art. ("Goddy Leye", in *Blick-Wechsel*, 45.)
- 34 Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010, Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010, Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 35 Lindou, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 38 For a critique of the predominance of "White culture" in the foreign cultural centres, see the documentary *Afrique, je te plumerai*, directed by Jean-Marie Teno (Paris: Les Films du Raphia/ Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, 1992), DVD.
- 39 Lindou, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 40 The children of the urban elite that frequented the private Jesuit college in Douala, for instance, were taken to exhibitions at the foreign cultural centres. (Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.)
- 41 Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010, and Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010.
- 42 Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 43 Komguem, interview, December 12, 2012.
- 44 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 45 This new section was instituted over the course of the mentioned reform of the university system in 1993, as part of the newly founded Faculté des Arts, Lettres et Sciences Humaines (FALSH) that also has a theatre and an archeology section. (Aveved, "Artistes plasticiens et espaces d'art en milieu d'art urbain camerounais", 69).
- 46 Colins Dibangtchou, interview by the author, Mbalmayo, December 5, 2011. My reading of parts of the curricula confirmed these explanations.
- 47 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010, Youmbi, December 5, 2010. It is noteworthy that the IFA was not entitled to grant a university-entrance diploma in the early years of its existence. Their art-historical instruction did not extend beyond European art history because the curriculum for the final three years forseees a repetition of the art history parcours, not least because pupils from other schools often only join the IFA for these final years and often have not yet been introduced to art history. (Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010).
- 48 Official university information sheet entitled "Courses offered in the first year of the undergraduate (1st degree) level for the 2008-2009 academic year".
- 49 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.

50 I am referring here to statements in the aforesaid interviews with Goddy Leye, Pascale Marthine Tayou, Hervé Youmbi, Achille Komguem, Joseph Francis Sumegné, and with Landry Mbassi, interview by the author, Douala, December 10, 2010.

51 N.N. “Progetti-Dettaglio Progetto. Collège Technique Nina Gianetti – IFA-Institut de Formation Artistique”, *COE*, accessed March 10, 2014, www.coeweb.org/index.php?txt=dettaglio_prg&id_prg=8.

52 Aveved, “L’Art plastique au Cameroun”.

53 See for instance Mbassi, interview, December 10, 2010.

54 Ruth Afane Belinga, interview by the author, Douala, December 12, 2010.

55 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

56 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.

57 Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 35.

58 Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.

59 Landry Mbassi, interview, December 10, 2010. Like some others amongst my interviewees, Hervé Youmbi had to finance his term at the IFA through selling his artworks (Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010.)

60 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

61 Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010.

62 Afane Belinga, interview, December 12, 2010.

63 Non-formal training systems are also held responsible for the exclusion of women artists in other African context. See Suzana Sousa, “The art world in Luanda is young and vibrant with a political impact that is yet to be understood”, *Contemporary&*, accessed July 3, 2015, www.contemporary

and/blog/magazines/the-art-world-in-luanda-is-young-and-vibrant-with-a-political-impact-that-is-yet-to-be-understood/.

64 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

65 The term “workshop” might therefore appear as the appropriate English translation. However, I will insist on the French wording because it allows for the distinction from the mid-century workshop-movement and from the international workshops that have been discussed in the previous chapter.

66 The term atelier also applies to short-termed learning situations with kids or other non-artists, and to gatherings without clear hierarchies of learners and teachers. Examples are an atelier of Pascale Marthine Tayou with an HIV-positive woman in 1994 (Schaub, telephone conversation, April 2013) and the atelier called “Iconoclast Masters” of 1996 (Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.).

67 Tsala Adah, “Nouveaux Objectifs pour les Instituts Goethe”, 1982.

68 The atelier’s connection to the political events is clear from Dieter Döllken, “R.F.A. – Cameroun. Des sculptures sur bois des Camerounais présentées en République Fédérale d’Allemagne”, *Cameroon Tribune*, May 5, 1989. The journalist Döllken erroneously referred to wooden sculptures instead of woodprint in his headline, as is clear from the article “Exposition des résultats de l’Atelier technique de la gravure en bois”, *Cameroon Tribune*, May 27, 1988.

69 Ndongo Ondua, “Cameroon – RFA: Un coup de fouet à la coopération culturelle et scientifique. Le Cameroun et la Rfa sont, depuis hier matin, liés par un accord de coopération culturelle et scientifique”, *Cameroon Tribune*, June 28, 1988.

70 Döllken, “R.F.A. – Cameroun. Des sculptures sur bois des Camerounais présentées en République Fédérale d’Allemagne”.

- 71 The German artist Hartmut Wiesner taught monotype to ten Cameroonian artists at the time. Together, they explored the theme “life in the city” in an open-air studio in the court of the Goethe-Institut. (Marie-Claire Nnana, “Vernissage d’une exposition au Goethe Institut: La ville, espace d’oppression”, *Cameroon Tribune*, March 4, 1990. Judging from the institutions where Hartmut Wiesner had exhibited, his career had not carried him beyond Western Germany by that time.)
- 72 For a historical analysis of development aid’s genuinely one-sided knowledge transfers from the former West to the Global South see Philipp H. Lepenies, “Lernen vom Besserwisser: Wissenstransfer in der ‘Entwicklungshilfe’ aus historischer Perspektive”, in *Entwicklungswelten: Globalgeschichte der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit*, ed. Hubertus Büschel et al. (Campus: Frankfurt am Main, 2009), 34-56.
- 73 In fact, according to the press archive, the first art *atelier* ever held in Cameroon took place at the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé in 1986. (David Ndachi Tagne, “René Tchebetshou expose à l’Institut Goëthe: L’art camerounais a besoin d’écoles, de galeries et de managers”. *Cameroon Tribune*, December 18, 1986. The French artist Hélène Delprat tutored this three-week painting tutorial. Delprat works in various media until today and has exhibited internationally, see *Hélène Delprat*, accessed March 8, 2013, www.helenedelprat.com). The next atelier at the Centre Culturel Français followed in 1992.
- 74 Marie-Claire Nnana, “Les peintres à l’école allemande”, *Cameroon Tribune*, February 2, 1990.
- 75 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 76 Afane Belinga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 77 My interviews produced the names and locations of some *ateliers*, as well as certain tutors’ names, but the memories were elusive. The press archive helped to confirm certain dates, but the press had started to accorded less attention to culture over the course of the financial crisis of the early 1990s and the new private newspapers showed even less enthusiasm for culture than *Cameroon Tribune*. (See Nganang, “Le silence de la poésie: La poésie camerounaise de 1990 et d’après”, 60.) After all, the *ateliers* were of limited interest for the newspapers readership, since they admitted professionals upon invitation only. The Goethe-Institut, the Centre Culturel Français and doual’art also could not provide systematic access to primary historical data.
- 78 Tobias Rehberger, telephone conversation with the author, May 2013.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 This series was shown at Zentrum für Gegenwartskunst im Glaspalast in Augsburg in 2006 and was part of Rehberger’s 2008 retrospective exhibition *The-chicken-and-egg-no-problem-wallpainting* shown at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam and at Museum Ludwig, Cologne.
- 81 Rehberger’s titles for these sculptures point to his sources of inspiration; *Ohne Titel (Breuer)*, *Ohne Titel (Judd)*, *Ohne Titel (Breuer)*, *Ohne Titel (Aalto)*, *Ohne Titel (Berliner Werkstätten)*, *Ohne Titel (Rietveld)*.
- 82 Rehberger, telephone conversation, May 2013.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Ibid. See also the 1994 exhibition *Tobias Rehberger (with Pascale Marthine Tayou)* at Galerie & Edition Artelier, Graz, that is documented in Rehberger’s CV.
- 86 Peter Anders, e-mail to the author, March 3, 2012.

- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Between 1972 and 2005 Ulrichs held the chair for “Totalkunst” at the art academy of Münster.
- 89 He stayed from June 25 to July 2, 1995. (Timm Ulrichs in a telephone conversation with the author, February 2012.)
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Nicodemus, “Inside. Outside”, 29-36.
- 93 Ulrichs, telephone conversation, February 2012.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 An intercultural misunderstanding might explain this incident. In Cameroon the person suggesting to eat at a restaurant generally covers the bill. On the contrary, Germans tend to split bills exactly, according to each participant’s consumption. While Ulrichs was willing to take on the whole bill, his Cameroonian colleagues might have doubted the implications of his proposal due to previous experiences with German visitors.
- 99 Ulrichs’ visit may have left an important mark on certain artists nevertheless. It has been said that the performance project *LOooBhy* by Pascale Marthine Tayou took inspiration from Timm Ulrichs’ visit. (Pipa, interview, December 3, 2011).
- 100 This was the case for Robert Stephan and Jean-Luc Tallinger (F), Timm Ulrichs (D), Angelika Thomas-Roper (D), Tobias Rehberger (D), and Rainer Görß (D), for instance. Exceptions were Christian Hanussek (D) and Marcel Odenbach (D).
- 101 Rehberger told me about a holdup. (Rehberger, telephone conversation, May 2013.) When visiting for an *atelier* in 2000, national security forces detained the Berlin artist Rainer Görß for videotaping Yaoundé’s main boulevard out of his hotel window, where President Biya holds his parades once a year. (Rainer Görß in a telephone conversation with the author, June 2006.)
- 102 Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone”, 35.
- 103 Georg Jappe, *Ressource Kunst: Die Elemente neu gesehen* (Köln: DuMont Buchverlag, 1989). The exhibition started at Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin.
- 104 See the section “Pioniere” in Jappe, *Ressource Kunst*.
- 105 February 10-13, 1996, according to a program leaflet of the Goethe-Institut (private archive of Angelika Thomas-Roper).
- 106 Angelika Thomas-Roper in a telephone conversation with the author, May 2013.
- 107 Double-sided exhibition handout of 1996 (private archive of Angelika Thomas-Roper).
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Thomas-Roper, telephone conversation, May 2013.
- 110 VHS cassette from 1996, directed and edited by a staff member of the Goethe-Institut. (Private archive of Angelika Thomas-Roper).
- 111 February 17-21, 1997, according to the 1997 February/March/April program leaflet of the Goethe-Institut (private archive of Angelika Thomas-Roper). Unfortunately, my requests for an interview with Lydia Haustein remained unanswered.
- 112 For *Le chemin*, Thomas first liberated herself from a standing sarcophag made from welded metal sheets by means of a

hacksaw, before walking off in a body-hugging red evening dress. The sarcophag remained in the exhibition as prop, alongside with carefully staged documentary photos of Thomas' preceding collaboration with local metal craftsmen and a video of the performance on a TV monitor. A VHS recording was made of the performance and statements from members of the audience in 1997. (Private archive of Angelika Thomas-Roper).

113 Installation shots (private archive of Angelika Thomas-Roper).

114 Around that time, Leye also filmed himself covering a wooden statue with nails on Yaoundé's market. A single video still documents this action that is dated to 1998. (*Blick-Wechsel*, 20). Thomas-Roper suggested that Leye's performance preceded her second atelier. (Thomas-Roper, telephone conversation, May 2013.) If both sources are correct, this performance took place in January or early February 1998.

115 Salifou Lindou, e-mail to the author, June 29, 2013.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 Juliane Rebentisch, for instance, defines installations as three-dimensional, transmedial, and often site-specific artworks that instill open-ended aesthetic experiences beyond the viewing process. (Rebentisch, *Aesthetics of Installation Art*).

119 This genre had become popular in the late 1990s and early 2000s in the Germanophone realm. See Angelika Nollert, *Performative Installation* (Köln: Snoeck Verlagsgesellschaft, 2003).

120 Kenfack is a Christian, while Lindou is a Muslim.

121 The visits lasted for two weeks on average. Angelika Thomas was the only tutor to

return for a second *atelier* to my knowledge. Odenbach and Hanussek were the only ones to stay for several weeks in Cameroon, partly on their own means.

122 For the case of Kenfack, see Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 52, and Leye, interview, December 11, 2010. For the case of Komegné see Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.

123 Soleima Arabi (in charge of PR at the CCF Yaoundé) in a conversation with the author, December 2011. Richard Pipa suggested that artists from Douala often stayed with friends to save the money for accommodation. (Pipa, interview, December 3, 2011)

124 Schaub, interview, December 12, 2010. Douala Bell's master thesis in development studies is entitled "La crise structurelle des économies minières africaines: les enseignements des années 70", University of Sussex, 1984.

125 From 1988 to 1993, Douala Bell has been a delegate and executive manager for the Central Africa Region of APICA (Association pour la Promotion des Initiatives Communautaires Africaines), a pan-African NGO based in Douala. ("Marilyn Douala Bell", *Wikipedia*, accessed April 19, 2013, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marilyn_Douala_Bell)

126 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.

127 "doual'art", *Wikipedia*, accessed April 19, 2013.

128 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011. "IRCOD Alsace - Institut Régional de Coopération - Développement", *Strasbourg l'européenne. Centre d'Information sur les Institutions Européennes*, accessed April 19, 2013, [www.strasbourg-europe.eu/?module=eurodirectory&action=ViewDetail&eurodirectoryParam\[cmpref\]=6560&lang=fr](http://www.strasbourg-europe.eu/?module=eurodirectory&action=ViewDetail&eurodirectoryParam[cmpref]=6560&lang=fr).

- 129 Marilyn Douala Bell, "A Celebration of Art in the City of Douala", in *Douala in Translation*, 122. April 24, 2013, http://filefestival.org/site_2007/filescript_pop.asp?id=2&cd_pagina=311&cd_materia=240.
- 130 Ibid., 124. See also Christian Hanussek, "E-Mail Interview mit Marilyn Douala-Bell, Oktober 2005".
- 131 Jim Igoe and Tim Kelsall, "Introduction: Between a Rock and a hard place", in *Between a Rock and a Hard Place: African NGOs, Donors and the State*, (Durham: Carolina Academic Press, 2005), 1.
- 132 Douala Bell, "A Celebration of Art in the City of Douala", 120-2.
- 133 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 134 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 135 Ibid.
- 136 Hanussek, "E-Mail Interview mit Marilyn Douala-Bell".
- 137 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 138 Simon Njami spoke of a "space that was empty in the beginning" when doual'art took up its work. (Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.)
- 139 See Lauré al-Samarai, "Art/s Education within the Context of 'Culture and Development' as an Evolving Field of Action", in *Creating Spaces*, 42-6. Concerning the "rat race" for funding resources amongst cultural organisations in general see the Loacker, "BE CREATIVE. Künstler und Kulturorganisationen als 'Vorreiter' deregulierter Arbeits- und Lebenswelten?", *re-creating*, accessed March 14, 2014, www.re-creating.org/cms/images/be%20creative%20-%20loacker.pdf.
- 140 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 141 Etienne Delacroix, "Art and Inclusion" and "Biography", *File Festival*, accessed
- 142 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 143 Ibid.
- 144 Ibid.
- 145 Ibid.
- 146 "doual'art Pop'93", *doual'art*, accessed March 31, 2014, www.doualart.org/spip.php?article89.
- 147 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 148 Malaquais, "Une Nouvelle liberté?" and Hanussek, "La Nouvelle Liberté".
- 149 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010 and Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 150 Nganang, "Le Cameroun qui se réinvente". 7.
- 151 Iolanda Pensa, "Princess", in *Douala in Translation*, 113.
- 152 The four video-tapes of *Away* combined short sequences of found footage from movies in which actors run away or towards an unspecified point outside the picture. (Pietro Sanguineti, e-mail message to the author, April 1, 2014.)
- 153 Apparently, *Around and Around* was the first exhibition of non-African art in Sub-Saharan Africa that was curated independently of the foreign cultural institutes. It was also the first exhibition ever to be advertised and documented online (see "old-timer website" *Around and Around: Stuttgart - Douala - Berlin, Galerie Peter Herrmann*, accessed March 10, 2014, www.galerie-herrmann.de/arts/art2/around_and_around/index.htm). This exhibition project received

- support from the German Federal Office through its agency IFA, as well as from the Cameroonian ministry of culture, as a result of the founding session of the pan-African organisation UNAFAS in Cameroon. (Herrmann, "Rede anlässlich der Ausstellung Around & Around in Stuttgart 1999", *Galerie Peter Herrmann*.)
- 154 Note well that Peter Herrmann also trades in "authentic, ancient art from West and Central Africa" (*Galerie Peter Herrmann*).
- 155 *Around and Around* was shown in different constellations at Galerie Achim Kubinski in Stuttgart in 1994, at Espace Doual'art in 1995, at Galerie Peter Herrmann in Stuttgart and at Galerie Achim Kubinski in Berlin in 1999. For the full curatorial argument see Herrmann, "Exhibition Concept: Around and Around: 1994, 1995, 1999", *Galerie Peter Herrmann*.
- 156 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview of December 13, 2011. The Cameroon-born Barthélémy Togo was also meant to contribute artwork to this exhibition, but his large-scale wooden installations were ultimately too costly to be transported from his studio in Switzerland. Herrmann chose to keep him on the participants' list nevertheless. (Herrmann, conversation, March 2012).
- 157 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011, and Herrmann, conversation, March 2012. Tayou only collaborated temporarily with Herrmann (solo exhibition *Elferpfad* in 1999), while Leye stayed with this gallery until the end of his life.
- 158 Lindou, interview, December 7, 2010, and Hanussek, "Zeitgenössische Afrikanische Kunst".
- 159 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 160 Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 161 Unfortunately, I do not have information about who participated in these regular meetings, nor about the videos that were screened.
- 162 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 163 Ibid.
- 164 Jean-Maire Mollo Olinga, "Le cinéma camerounais, en lumières et ombres", *Af-ricultures* 60 (2004), 115-8.
- 165 Lauré al-Samarai, "Art/s Education within the Context of "Culture and Development" as an Evolving Field of Action", 44.
- 166 Pensa, "Résoudre les Problèmes", in "La Biennale comme Projet de Coopération et de Développement", 267-77.
- 167 Paulissen, "Art and the Constraints of Development".
- 168 Ibid.
- 169 Lapie, "Biographie de Koko Komegné", 93.
- 170 Malong, interview, December 2012, and Guy Bolivar Djoya (administrator of Galérie MAM), interview by the author, December 15, 2011.
- 171 For a short chronology of the activities of Africréa since its opening see "AFRIC-REA. Lieu conçu pour l'art au Cameroun", *Journal du Cameroun*, November 4, 2008, accessed April 4, 2014, www.journalducameroun.com/article.php?aid=213. Note well that Maljam Njami also goes by the names François Malet ma Njami and Malet ma Njami Maljam.
- 172 Maljam Njami encountered Moussa during the Salon International de l'Artisanat in Yaoundé in 1998. Njami is the artistic director of this salon and Moussa was representing his Northern region at the time. (Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.)

- 173 Maljam Njami is the son of the Baptist pastor Simon Bolivar Njami Nwandi from the Littoral region. Njami Nwandi holds doctor titles in several disciplines and was an adherent of the opposition during the Ahidjo era before becoming a minister in President Biya's cabinet. See David Axel Bayiga, "Simon Bolivar Njami-Nwandi: Jubilé pour une évangéliste indocile", *L'Actu*, May 2, 2012, accessed April 29, 2013, www.journallactu.com/ITINERAIRE/simon-bolivar-njami-nwandi-jubi-le-pour-un-evangeliste-indocile.html.
- 174 Maljam Njami, interview by the author, Yaoundé, Dezember 4, 2011. See also Sabine Vogel, "Wir sind so reich: François Malet ma Njami leitet ein Kunstzentrum in Kamerun", *Berliner Zeitung*, August 17, 2007.
- 175 Nganang, "Le Cameroun qui se réinvente", 7.
- 176 "Revue Noire: Description", *Chimurenga*, accessed on April 29, 2013, <http://chimurengalibrary.co.za/revue-noire>.
- 177 Arndt, "Chantiers du devenir en des espaces contraints", 93-4.
- 178 Arndt shows that one quarter of *Revue Noire's* budget came from the state agency Coopération Culturelle Française. Another fourth stemmed from sales. A large part of the subscribers were libraries on the African continent working with funds from yet another state agency, namely the Agence de coopération culturelle et technique. The third fourth of the budget was raised by means of publicity, mainly from major French corporations with branches in Africa, such as Shell, Total, and Air France. Apparently, the editors financed the rest through private means and donations. Moreover, the Coopération Culturelle Française was as a production partner in many editions and was repeatedly accorded ample space to represent its projects. (Arndt, "Chantiers du devenir en des espaces contraints", 125).
- 179 Ibid., 170.
- 180 Like Arndt, the French curator André Magnin has criticised the "romatico-idéalico-poético" style of *Revue Noire's* texts as a missed opportunity in the TV documentary *Revue Noire: Der Andere Blick/Avec d'autres yeux*, directed by Martina Dase (1998; Paris: ARTE), DVD.
- 181 Pipa, interview, December 3, 2011.
- 182 Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 183 Pipa, interview, December 3, 2011.
- 184 *Revue Noire* 13 (1994): 16, 17. See also Gérald Arnaud, "Sumegné (Sculpteur, Cameroun). Un virtuose du mystère", *La Lettre des musiques et des arts africains* (1994, 1995, 1996), 15.
- 185 Adéagbo had been making installations from found objects "for many years" in his parents' backyard by the time he first encountered a European curator in 1991. (Kerstin Schankweiler, *Die Mobilisierung der Dinge: Ortsspezifität und Kulturtransfer in den Installationen von Georges Adéagbo* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 13.)
- 186 Hazoumés first *Masques Bidons* made from canisters date to early 1989. (Daniela Roth, *Romuald Hazoumé: Mister Kanister oder die orale Postmoderne* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2013), 50, 53.)
- 187 António Ole exhibited the first of his famous *Township Walls* at the Johannesburg Biennale of 1995. (Nadine Siegert, "Fundstücke und Momentaufnahmen: António Ole's Kunst", in *Reportagen, Bilder, Gespräche. Das Magazin des Goethe-Instituts* 1 (2012), 21.)
- 188 Schankweiler, "Die Mobilisierung der Dinge", 158-64.
- 189 Hanussek, "Zeitgenössische Afrikanische Kunst: Eine Perspektive".

- 190 While this trend is characteristic of the 1990s, some artists have taken it to new heights in the 2000s. The Ghanaian El Anatsui (born 1944), for instance, started to fabricate large-scale installations made of bottle tops in 2001. (Jane Ure-Smith, "Full metal façade", *Jack Shainman (Financial Times)*, May 24, 2013), accessed March 14, 2014, www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/2/8d0c4e86-c2f4-11e2-bbbd-001444feab7de.html.
- 191 See Schankweiler, "Objektkunst", in *Die Mobilisierung der Dinge*, 155-8.
- 192 Lea Vergine, *Quand les déchets deviennent art: Trash, rubbish, mingo* (Milan: Edition Skira, 2007).
- 193 Dorothea Dietrich, *The Collages of Kurt Schwitters: Tradition and Innovation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6-7.
- 194 Hanussek, "Cameroon: An Emerging Art Scene", 101.
- 195 Momar Seck, "Appropriation d'objets et de matériaux de récupération dans l'art sénégalais contemporain" (PhD Diss., Université de Strasbourg, 2012), 54-60.
- 196 *Ibid.*, 65.
- 197 Okwui Enwezor, "The Production of Social Space as Artwork", in *The Art of Social Imagination after 1945: Collectivism after Modernism*, ed. Blake Stimson et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 246.
- 198 *Ibid.*
- 199 Seck, "Appropriation d'objets et de matériaux de récupération dans l'art sénégalais contemporain", 51-2.
- 200 Roth, "Müll. Ding. Récupération", in *Romuald Hazoumé*, 56-9.
- 201 Tayou used to work as a street vendor in the early 1990s to make a living (Pascale Marthine Tayou in a conversation with the author, Ghent, May 2010).
- 202 Malaquais, "Une nouvelle Liberté?", 123.
- 203 Hanussek has here quoted Marilyn Douala Bell. (Hanussek "Cameroon: An Emerging Art Scene". 101.)
- 204 As a matter of fact, Tayou had been participating in group shows and ateliers in Douala and Yaoundé since at least 1993, and had a solo exhibition at the CCF in Yaoundé in April 1994, prior to the launch of *Revue Noire*. ("Pascale Marthine Tayou", *CAACart*, accessed April 3, 2014, www.caacart.com/pigozzi-artist.php?i=Tayou-Pascale-Marthine&bio=en&m=65)
- 205 Njami, interview, December 12, 2010.
- 206 Four works from this series were featured in *Revue Noire* no. 13, three of which were purchased by *Revue Noire* and one by Didier Schaub. (Schaub, telephone conversation, April 2013). The photographic reproductions are not separately titled in *Revue Noire* (except for *Fight against AIDS 5*, the assemblage on the cover). The two photos on page eight show two sides of the same object and page ten features the backside of cover piece.
- 207 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010, Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011, and Njami, interview, December 12, 2010.
- 208 These were Komegné, Mpah Dooh, and Yamguem.
- 209 In his short introduction to doual'art, Schaub portrayed Douala accordingly. (Didier Schaub, "Doual'Art", *Revue Noire* 13 (1994), 27.)
- 210 Komegné spoke of a "blissful moment". (Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010)

- 211 Arndt, “Entre inventaire et invention”, in “Chantiers du devenir en des espaces contraints”, 175-180.
- 212 The group exhibition *An Inside Story: African Art of our Time* was shown at Setagaya Art Museum and at Tokushima Modern Art Museum, both in Tokyo; Himeji City Museum of Art, Himeji; Koriyama City Museum of Art, Koriyama; Marugame Inokuma-Genichiro Museum of Contemporary Art, Marugame; and at the Museum of Fine Arts, Gifu.
- 213 Galérie du Jour Agnès B., Paris, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo Per l'Arte, Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna Contemporanea, Turin, and Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.
- 214 “Pascale Marthine Tayou”, *CAACart*, accessed April 3, 2014, www.caacart.com/pigozzi-artist.php?i=Tayou-Pascale-Marthine&bio=en&m=65, and Tazzi and Bourriaud, *Pascale Marthine Tayou*, 268.
- 215 I have not endeavoured to reconstruct the details of Tayou's invitations to each of these biennales, but the following case seems to be exemplary. While preparing the 1999 Liverpool Biennale, the curator called his friend Njami to inquire about Tayou in reaction to the cover feature on *Revue Noire* no. 13. (Njami, interview, December 12, 2010.)
- 216 Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc.*, 179.
- 217 See Dase, *Revue Noire: Avec d'autres yeux*.
- 218 By way of example see Simon Njami, “Pascale Marthine Tayou”, in *7. Triennale der Kleinplastik*, 218.
- 219 See Tayou's statements in Adeline Chapelle, “Trois questions à Pascale Marthine Tayou”, *DiARTgonale* 2 (2007): 7.
- 220 See for instance Dominique Vernis, “Décalages Identitaires. Traversée des frontières”, *Territoires de Cirque*, accessed March 9, 2014, www.territoiresdecirque.com/site.php?rub=6&cid=204&fiche_alias=mouvement.
- 221 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 222 Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 223 Ibid.
- 224 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 225 Paolo Bianchi, *Africa Iwalewa: Kunstforum International* 122 (1993). Although deploying a slightly colonial terminology when speaking of the “discovery” of the art of Africa and the “otherness” of the artists practising in Africa, editor Bianchi did assume a self-reflective perspective and explicitly aimed to avoid romanticising takes on Africa.
- 226 Anders, e-mail, March 11, 2012.
- 227 Pipa, interview, December 3, 2011. See also Anders, e-mail, March 11, 2012.
- 228 Lindou, interview, December, 2010.
- 229 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 230 Anders, e-mail, March 11, 2012.
- 231 “The street” was one of the focus themes. (Pipa, interview, December 3, 2011.)
- 232 Oelsner-Adam, conversation, June 2013.
- 233 Claire Bishop, “Former West: Art as Project in the Early 1990s”, in *Artificial Hells*, 194.
- 234 Anders, e-mail, March 11, 2012.
- 235 Like *Days in Black Satin*, *LOooBHY* involved the actress Hélène Belek, the

- designer Eshu, and the aforementioned light artist Richard Pipa, among others. The title *LOooBHY* is an adaptation of a vernacular word for excrements. (Pipa, interview, December 3, 2011.) Unfortunately, I was unable to find documentation of this important, oft-mentioned piece. Apparently Tayou continued to work under the *LOooBHY* label in varying constellations, for instance for the TV broadcast *LOooBHY*, directed by Didier Schaub (Paris: ARTE, 1998), DVD. This playful 42 minutes documentation is kept in the animated, youthful style of MTV. In the role of a moderator or a griot, Tayou comments on film sequences about the street-life in Yaoundé and in Douala. These scenes alternate with portraits of those Cameroonian artists that engaged with urban life like Tayou. Among them are an evangelist diffusing his idiosyncractic gospel on a street corner by means of painted signs and a professional photo portraitist, but also Yamguen, Lindou, Bang, and Youmbi, as well as the elder artists Mpah Dooh, Komegné, and Sumegné. Kenfack's Musée-École is also briefly featured.
- 236 Andin Tegen, "Makossa mit Cola-Flaschen: Tanzperformance 'Days in Black Satin' im Monsun Theater", *Hamburger Morgenpost*, February 7, 2000, accessed March 10, 2014, www.mopo.de/news/tanzperformance--days-in-black-satin--im-monsun-theater-makossa-mit-cola-flaschen,5066732,6260634.html.)
- 237 "Brief Description", *blixa-bargeld.com*, accessed March 14, 2014, www.blixa-bargeld.com/blixa-bargeld-en-projects-02.html.
- 238 Anders, e-mail, March 11, 2012.
- 239 Herrmann, conversation, March 2012.
- 240 Atanga, "Réalisme et Symbolisme de Koko Komegné au 'Goethe Institut'", *Génération*, March 7, 1995.
- 241 Built evidences of this trend are the research institute for media art ZKM | Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe in Germany (est. 1989), and the post-graduate centre for transdisciplinary experiments Le Fresnoy in Tourcoing, France (est. 1997).
- 242 See also introduction.
- 243 Theoreticians tend to assume this role in European contexts.
- 244 Stéphane Tchakam, interview by the author, Douala, December 15, 2011. See also Malaquais, "Une nouvelle Liberté?".
- 245 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 246 Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010
- 247 Ibid.
- 248 Teno, *Afrique, je te plumerai*. When I visited in 2011, the Centre Culturel Français had a substantial collection of artbooks and survey publications on African art, such as *Les Arts de l'Afrique Noire* by Jean Laude (1966), *L'Art et l'artisanat africains* (1980) by Engelbert Mveng, and some recent catalogues, such as *Africa Remix* (2004) besides newer surveys on regional art styles from across Africa and on vernacular art forms from Cameroon. The library included both imported volumes and those that were edited in Cameroon. Note well that the Goethe-Institut transferred most of its art books to the Centre Culturel Français when relocating to a smaller venue in the early 2000s, thus the art section of the Goethe-Institut's library is tiny today.
- 249 Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 250 Yamguen painted icons during this period. (Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010.)
- 251 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

252 When I visited the university library in 2011, the section “Beaux Arts” was small and its books largely dated, but I found some publications on the early modern period (Jean Luc Daval, *Journal de l’art Moderne 1884-1914*, 1973) and very few books on newer tendencies, such as Anna Moszynska, *Abstract Art*, 1990, next to one or two compendia on photography and one manual on the technique of video cut.

253 See John Albert Walker, “Beyond the Pundit Series: State of the Art”, in *Arts TV: A History of Arts Television in Britain* (London: John Libbey, 1993), 155-9.

254 Gaga regularly frequented Viking Kanganyam between 1997 and 98. (“Justine Gaga”, in *L’Art au Féminin: Approches Contemporaines, Africultures Dossier 85* (2009), 82, and Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.)

255 Hanussek, “Cameroon: An Emerging Art Scene”, 102-3. Later in the same text, Hanussek ascribes the African roots of European Avantgardism, especially those of Cubism, as one reason for its popularity in Cameroon.

256 Marcel Odenbach, “Auf persönlichen Umwegen zum Thema kommen: Eine polemische Erklärung”, *Blick-Wechsel*, 41.

257 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.

258 Both Mpah Dooh and Salifou Lindou, for instance, named Jean-Michel Basquiat as their favourite artist in 2007 (“Confidences. Goddy Leye, Mpah Dooh: Intimité partagée”, *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007), 2. And “Confidences. Hervé Youmbi, Salifou Lindou: Intimité partagée”, *DiARTgonale* 01 (2007), 2).

259 At the library of the IFA, I have found a predominance of Italian publications, which is due to its Italian funders, such as the encyclopaedic series *L’Arte Moderna* (1967) by Fratelli Fabbri Editori, staples

of Italian schoolbooks for art education and manuals on pottery, besides a number of contemporary publications and artist monographs on Marina Abramovic and Ilya Kabakov, for instance. Doual’art’s Bibliothèque-Médiathèque started with the personal collection of books of the founders of doual’art. This resource centre grew by means of donations from the Parisian publishers Revue Noire and l’Association Afrique en Créations and from cultural institutions, arts centres, museums and artists that used to be project partners of doual’art. The library grew further by transfers of the art stocks of the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé and the Centre Culturel Français in Douala. The Bibliothèque-Médiathèque totals today approximately 1500 books, some 1000 periodicals and around 150 videos. (Annette Schemmel, “Quote, Unquote”, *DiARTgonale Special Edition 2* (2013), 24.)

260 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

261 Besides the members mentioned by Leye in my interview, there was also Ahmadou Njoya. (Manuel Okala, “Peinture. Prim’Art et Babil 2 à l’assaut de Douala”, *Génération*, February 24, 1997.)

262 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.

263 Ibid.

264 Leye has not specified the exact dates of these residencies in my interview. He only spoke of the early 1990s. He also did not name the art schools that he visited. His CV in the catalogue *Blick-Wechsel* of 2001 lists a stay as “Artist in Residence” at the “School of Fine Art, Angers, Grenoble, Schweiz” in 1993. However, Angers and Grenoble are two different cities in France. Leye’s CV on his Wikipedia-site mentions the exhibition *Taxi-couleurs* at the École régionale des Beaux-Arts Angers in the year 1995. I presume therefore that he went to Grenoble in 1993 and to Angers in 1995. These sojourns were also opportunities for him to purchase large amounts of artbooks (Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.)

- 265 Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 168.
- 266 Apparently, Koko Komegné founded Club Khéops in 1994 upon the requests of the younger artists of Douala. The collective had ten members. The club's name alludes to the Pyramid of Kheops and stresses the "immense task of making the place of painting known in Cameroon". (Lapie, "Biographie de Koko Komegné", 92.) Joël Mpah Dooh and Koko Komegné are said to have presided over Club Kheops. Apparently, this collective was not very productive. (Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011, and Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010.)
- 267 Schemmel, "Interview with Goddy Leye (Dec. 2010)", 17.
- 268 Bissek, *Les Peintres de l'Estuaire*, 87.
- 269 Afane Belinga, "Évolution de la peinture du XXe siècle à Yaoundé", 52.
- 270 Romoual Hazoumé started to use earth collected in various West-African countries around 1995 for his depictions of the Fa oracle. (Roth, *Romouald Hazoumé*, 83 and 101.)
- 271 Marie-Claire Nnana, "Pascale Marthine expose au Centre culturel français de Yaoundé: Les colères d'un peintre", *Cameroon Tribune*, April 28, 1994.
- 272 Ibid.
- 273 Quote of Tayou in Vernis, "Décalages Identitaires. Traversée des frontières".
- 274 Nnana, "Pascale Marthine expose au Centre culturel français de Yaoundé".
- 275 See "LGBT rights in Cameroon", *Wikipedia*, accessed April 4, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Cameroon.
- 276 Bourriaud, "The exodus of Pascale Marthine Tayou", 11.
- 277 Tayou conceded once that his Taudisme was a way to "appear smart". (Pascale Marthine Tayou, *Discussion entre Pascale Marthine Tayou et d'autres artistes camerounais, qui s'est tenu au Goethe-Institut de Yaoundé le 22 février 2000*, directed by Christian Hanussek, (Berlin: Christian Hanussek, 2000), DVD).
- 278 See James Davidson Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Control the Family, Art, Education, Law and Politics in America*, (New York: Basic Books, 1991).
- 279 Arndt, "Chantiers du devenir en des espaces contraints", 95. "Les artistes africains et le SIDA" was the title of *Revue Noire* 19 (1995).
- 280 Doual'art commissioned Pascale Marthine Tayou to work with an HIV-positive woman and the medical team that treated her under the title "Émotions profondes avec Titi" in 1994. The resulting sculpture was a mannequin covered with condoms and other every-day objects which is preserved in a slightly dilapidated state at Didier Schaub's and Marilyn Douala Bell's private home (Schaub, telephone conversation, April 2013.)
- 281 Tayou, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 282 Joseph Francis Sumegnè, Elisa Kameni, Armand Mékoa, Salifou Lindou, Hervé Youmbi, Hervé Yamguen, Goddy Leye, and Achille Komeguem were amongst the participants.
- 283 Tayou, *Discussion entre Pascale Marthine Tayou et d'autres artistes camerounais*.
- 284 For a comparison see Tristan Tzara, "Manifest Dada 1918", in *Manifeste und Proklamationen der europäischen Avantgarde* (1909-1938), ed. Wolfgang Asholt et al. (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1995), 149-155.
- 285 Laurence Barbier, *5eme Biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon: Partage d'Exotismes*

Vol. II (Lyon: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 2000), 96-7.

286 Jean-Hubert Martin is also the mastermind of the seminal exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre*, which was contested precisely because of its exoticisation of non-European artists. (Okwui Enwezor and Olu Oguibe, introduction to *Reading the Contemporary* (London: Institute of International Visual Arts, 1999), 8.)

287 Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc.*, 35.

288 Ibid.

289 For a summary of the theories of Anthony Giddens, Roland Robertson, and Arjun Appadurai, among others, see Larissa Buchholz, "Feldtheorie und Globalisierung", 218.

290 Ibid.

291 Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc.*, 52.

Notes on Chapter 5. Becoming an Artist in a “Connexionist” Age

- 1 Julia Bryan-Wilson, “Questionnaire on “The Contemporary””, *October* 130 (2009): 4.
- 2 Joshua Shannon, *Ibid.*, 16.
- 3 The Italian anthropologist Iolanda Pensa has authored many of them.
- 4 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2010.
- 5 Joachim Oelsner-Adam in a conversation with the author, Yaoundé, December 2010.
- 6 Dr. Irene Bark (director of the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé), interview by the author, Yaoundé, December 6, 2011.
- 7 For instance, the Goethe-Institut organised the atelier “Esthétique de la forme réduite”. (Hans Endelmann, *Esthétique de la forme réduite* (Berlin: Trigger, 2001)) and doual’art facilitated an atelier with the Moroccan artist Faouzi Laatiris in December 2006. (Achille Komguem, “Faouzi Laatiris”, *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007): 6). An example from the Centre Culturel Français in Douala is the 2006 photography atelier with Bruno Boudjelala and Bill Akwa Betote. This centre also exhibited video work produced at Le Fresnoy (programme leaflet of the Centre Culturel Français in Douala, Mars Avril 2008), while doual’art, the Centre Culturel Français in Yaoundé, and Bandjoun Station in Bandjoun held parallel exhibitions with works from the Fonds National d’Art Contemporain (programme leaflet of the Centre Culturel Français in Douala, Mars Avril 2010).
- 8 “Emkal Eyongakpa”, *Rijksakademie van beeldende Kunsten*, accessed March 14, 2014, www.rijksakademie.nl/NL/resident/emkal-eyongakpa.
- 9 LucFoster Diop, “LucFoster Diop. Videos Portfolio”, *Blogspot*, accessed March 14, 2014, <http://lucfosterdiop.blogspot.de>.
- 10 Mbassi, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 11 Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010.
- 12 Nzébo, interview, December 2, 2010.
- 13 Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 14 Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 15 “Guy Wouété”, *Fondation Jean-Paul Blachere, Art actuel et contemporain d’Afrique et d’ailleurs*, accessed March 14, 2014, www.fondationblachere.org/archives0408/popup/Bamako2007v/Wouete.html, and Wokmeni, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 16 Christophe Champin, “Les disparus de Douala”, *rfi*, March 22, 2001, accessed March 10, 2014, www1.rfi.fr/actu/fr/articles/015/article_7134.asp.
- 17 The “Emeutes de 2008” were an upheaval of the urban poor in several cities in Cameroon. (Yves Alexandre Chouala, “Cameroun: un mouvement social sans société civile”, *Alternatives Sud* 17 (2010), 29-34, accessed March 20, 2014, www.cetri.be/IMG/pdf/Cameroun.pdf).
- 18 Dominique Malaquais in a conversation with the author, Berlin, May 2014.
- 19 Denis Kapuku Mukuna, “Kamerun”, in *Internet und Afrika: Die Bedeutung der neuen Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien für das frankophone Schwarzafrika am Beispiel des Internets*, (Bergisch Gladbach: Edwin Fenger Verlag, 2000), 169-171, as well as the map in “The World Wide Web at 25: how Africa connects”, *E-learning Africa*, March 12, 2014, accessed March 15, 2014, www.elearning-africa.com/eLA_Newsportal/the-world-wide-web-at-25-how-africa-connects.

- 20 Christopher Coenen and Ulrich Riehm, *Entwicklung durch Vernetzung: Informations- und Kommunikationstechnologien in Afrika* (Berlin: Edition Sigma, 2008), 12.
- 21 “The World Wide Web at 25: How Africa Connects”.
- 22 Coenen and Riehm, *Entwicklung durch Vernetzung*, 17.
- 23 Hanussek made this observation in the year 2000. (Hanussek, “Zeitgenössische Afrikanische Kunst. Eine Perspektive”.)
- 24 Manga, “Pixels”, in *L'Ivresse du papillon*, 138.
- 25 An Internet café in Douala also became the site of a curatorial experiment by Alioum Moussa around 2004 when he used the screensavers of the lined-up PCs for an exhibition of photo collages. (Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.)
- 26 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 27 Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010, and Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 28 Mbassi, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 29 See www.pascalemarthinetayou.com and www.barthelemytogo.com.
- 30 Goddy Leye, “Goddy Leye. New Works”, *Wix.com*, updated November 2010, accessed March 18, 2014, <http://goddyleye.wix.com/networks>.
- 31 In 2007, Leye’s favourite occupation was “working with the computer” (“Confidences. Goddy Leye, Mpah Dooh. Intimité partagée”, *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007): 2). For Leye’s credo see “Pixels”, Manga’s chapter on Leye in *L'Ivresse du papillon*, 139.
- 32 The content of Leye’s earlier website on *lecktronix* is no longer accessible. Some of it is preserved on “African Painters, Goddy Leye, Cameroon/Netherlands”, *Blogspot*, November 25, 2006, accessed March 20, 2014, <http://africanpainters.blogspot.de/2006/11/goddy-leye-camerounnetherlands.html>.
- 33 Bydler, “Studio Programmes”, in *The Global Art World Inc.*, 55.
- 34 Osborne, “The Fiction of the Contemporary”, 114.
- 35 In 2001/02, Goddy Leye was the first Cameroonian to be accepted to the latter institution, which has reorganised its programmes into a residence programme. Diop and Wouete followed in 2009/10 and Eyongakpa in 2012/13.
- 36 Bydler, “Studio Programmes”, 53.
- 37 Salifou Lindou in an artist talk at the art space NEST, Den Haag, September 20, 2011, and Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.
- 38 In 2001, the president allocated a yearly fund [“Compte d’affectation spéciale”] of approximately 150.000 € to benefit all artistic disciplines, including the more popular musical sector. This sum was to be spent nationwide (decree n°2001/389 of December 5, 2001). However, amongst my interlocutors only Sumegné has ever received money from this resource and he received less than the formally accorded sum. (Sumegné, interview, December 7, 2011.) Other artists refrained from applying in the first place due to the corrupt handling of these funds (Yombi, interview, December 5, 2010.) Incidents with corrupt police officers seem to occur more often in Yaoundé, too.
- 39 Stéphane Tchakam, interview by the author, Douala, December 15, 2011.
- 40 The Salon Urbain de Douala has so far been held in 2007, 2010, and 2013. See also Schemmel, “Main discourses of the 2nd Salon Urbain de Douala (SUD) in Cameroon

- seen by an Indian Runner Duck”, *Savvy Art Journal* 2 (2011): 72-9, accessed November 19, 2013, www.savvy-journal.com/savvy_edition1/index.html.)
- 41 Loacker, “BE CREATIVE”, 369.
- 42 De Certeau, ““Making Do”: Uses and Tactics”, 36.
- 43 Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 145.
- 44 With regard to *Squat Art I* (2001) and *Squat Art II* (2002) see Giulia Paoletti, “Cultural and artistic initiatives in Douala”, in *Douala in Translation*, 224.) For a documentary of *Squat Art I* see the twenty-five minute documentary *Cameroon Connection-Le Film*, video, directed by Yann Quiennec (2001; Paris: Yann Quiennec, 2001), *Dailymotion*, www.dailymotion.com/video/x6ic_cameroon-connection-le-film_news.
- 45 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010, and Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010. See also Messina, “Engelbert Mveng. La plume et le pinceau”, 101.
- 46 For the project “Hors les Murs” (1998), for instance, Cercle Kapsiki built temporary sculptures together with street children in sensitive spots in Douala’s public space. (Christian Hanussek, “Gleichzeitig in Afrika.... Cercle Kapsiki, Douala (Kamerun)”, *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, January 15, 2007, accessed June 26, 2014, www.bpb.de/internationales/afrika/afrika/59164/ausstellung-gleichzeitig-in-afrika?p=7.)
- 47 Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010. See also Hervé Yamguen and Hervé Youmbi, “Cercle Kapsiki”, *Scur&°. Scénographies Urbaines, c.2003*, accessed October 1, 2013, www.eternalnetwork.org/scenographiesurbaines/index.php?cat=doualacollectif.
- 48 Lindou, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 49 For a list of Cercle Kapsiki’s early projects see Yamguen and Youmbi, “Cercle Kapsiki”, 50 “List of Cameroonian Artists”, *Wikipedia*, accessed April 20, 2014, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Cameroonian_artists. The Kapsiki artists handled the project budget that the scenographer Christophe Lanquetin had raised in France. (Malaquais, “Douala en habit de festival”: 85.) Christian Hanussek also did some fundraising to benefit Cercle Kapsiki from Germany in the early 2000s. (Hanussek, conversation, May 2013.) The latter reflects on the difficulties to raise funds in Germany in Christian Hanussek, “Ohne Titel”, *Afrikapost.de* 3 (2007): 54.
- 51 Yamguen and Youmbi, “Cercle Kapsiki”.
- 52 Dunja Herzog (artist and former resident of Cercle Kapsiki), in a conversation with the author, Berlin, April 2014.
- 53 For a list of resident artists see Yamguen and Youmbi, “Cercle Kapsiki”.
- 54 Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 See Michaela Oberhofer, “Fashioning African Cities: The Case of Johannesburg, Lagos and Douala”, *Streetnotes: Fashioning the Global City* 20 (2012): 65-89.
- 57 For example, sponsors of an exhibition in December 2010 included the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation, the Spanish Embassy, and an advertisement company.
- 58 Marjolijn Dijkman, “Hard to Catch: Patrick Wokmeni”, *DiARTgonale Special Edition 2* (2013): 67-72.
- 59 CV Patrick Wokmeni of 2010.
- 60 Ibid. See also the exhibition brochure *MTN Foundation Residencies Retro One, Exposition rétrospective de 2007 à 2009: Luc Fosther Diop, Brunot T. Nseke, Patrick Wokmeni* (Douala: MTN Foundation, December 2010), not numbered.

- 61 Wokmeni chose not to return to Cameroon after a sojourn in Spain that was related to an exhibition. Thanks to the pleas of his numerous professional contacts in Europe and the help of the founders of Enough Room for Space in Brussels he was accorded the status of political refugee in Belgium and could attend the exclusive postgraduate programme at the Higher Institut for Fine Arts (HISK) in Ghent.
- 62 Lindou, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 63 Nzébo, interview, December 2, 2010.
- 64 Dheedene was an art graduate of Sint-Lucasinstituut in Ghent, who had come to Cameroon in order to accompany his partner on a humanitarian mission.
- 65 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 66 The Dreamers had at least one collective exhibition at doual'art, namely in November 1999. ("Avant 2002", *doual'art*, accessed May 1, 2014, www.doualart.org/spip.php?article190.) See also Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 67 The idea for the formation of a group came up amongst the members of Prim'Art in 1998 in the context of the exhibition *Evé'ela* at Carrefour Obili, Yaoundé, but the Dreamers only organised their first collective exhibitions in 1999, notably at the IFA and at doual'art. (Achille Komguem, e-mail to the author, July 10, 2014).
- 68 Komguem, interview, December 10, 2011.
- 69 Komguem, editorial to *DiARTgonale Special Edition* 1 (2012).
- 70 "Rain Artists' Initiatives Network", *R.A.I.N.*, accessed April 14, 2014, www.r-a-i-n.net.
- 71 Schemmel, "Interview with Goddy Leye (Dec. 2010)": 17.
- 72 Apparently, Leye declined some funders' offer to build a more representative venue in order to remain largely independent of fundraising. (Lucia Babina, Dunja Herzog and Dominique Malaquais, "Losing Goddy. Goddy Leye 1966–2011", *African Arts* 44 (2011): 12.)
- 73 Goddy Leye, "ArtBakery – Oasis de Créativité", *adude.free*, 2004, accessed March 15, 2014, <http://adude.free.fr/home-Francais.htm>.
- 74 Leye had planned that artists associated with ArtBakery would start teaching art at the local school in Bonendale in the presence of the regularly trained teachers. Thus, the artists were meant to accumulate pedagogic skills in return for sharing their artistic know-how with the other teachers. Manuals made by Abdellah Karroum at the arts initiative Appartement 22 in Morocco were to be used for classes until ArtBakery could edit proper teaching kits for the Cameroonian context. These kits were meant to then take the experiment to schools beyond Bonendale and to serve as a guide to teachers and pupils alike. Apparently, the reluctance of a headmaster of the local school prevented "Nursery" from being implemented. (Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.)
- 75 Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010, and Goddy Leye, "ArtBakery Project", *Wix.com*.
- 76 Goddy Leye, *First impressions on Douala: Goddy Leye—first part*, directed by Christian Hanussek (2007; Berlin: Christian Hanussek), YouTube, May 2007, accessed May 8, 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=b3Dg387Lru4.
- 77 Leye, "ArtBakery – Oasis de Créativité".
- 78 Notably, Moussa already mastered the program Photoshop prior to his stay at ArtBakery in 2003. (Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010).

- 79 Leye, “ArtBakery – Oasis de Créativité”.
- 80 The ArtBakery website lists Ginette Daleu, Alioum Moussa, and Luc Foster-Diop as the 2003 guests. Guy Wouete and the Dreamers collective followed in 2004. Justine Gaga, Boris Nzébo, and Ruth Afane Belinga have furthermore told me about their residency terms in my interviews.
- 81 Leye, “ArtBakery – Oasis de Créativité”.
- 82 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid.
- 85 Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010.
- 86 Nzébo, interview, December 2, 2010.
- 87 Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 88 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 89 Leye, “ArtBakery–Oasis de Créativité”.
- 90 “ART Bakery (Cameroon)”, *R.A.I.N.*, accessed April 14, 2014, www.r-a-i-n.net.
- 91 Leye, “ArtBakery–Oasis de Créativité”.
- 92 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Paulissen, “Art and the Constraints of Development. Interview with Achille Mbembe”.
- 95 See for instance Bydler, *The Global Art World Inc.*, 154, and Simon Njami, “Chaos and Metamorphosis”, in *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2005), 18.
- 96 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 97 Bishop, “Former West: Art as Project in the Early 1990s”, 205, 215.
- 98 Ibid., 194.
- 99 Ibid, 216. Bishop is here referencing Boltanski and Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*.
- 100 Pensa, “Le Projet”, in “La Biennale de Dakar comme projet de coopération et de développement”, 271-87.
- 101 Dunja Herzog spent part of her childhood in Cameroon before moving back to Switzerland. Herzog has thoroughly documented *Exitour* on her website, especially in a subjective travel diary. (Dunja Herzog, Reisetagebuch, reisetagebuch_Dunja Herzog.pdf). This diary reflects also on Herzog’s role among a group of Cameroonian artists and on conflicts, financial, and organisational problems that arose on the way.
- 102 Goddy Leye, Justine Gaga, and LucFoster Diop, “document_de_presentation_Exitour_2006.pdf”, *Chooseone*, 2006, accessed November 5, 2013, www.chooseone.org/IMG/pdf/Document_de_presentation_Exitour.pdf.
- 103 Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010, and Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 104 Herzog, “Reisetagebuch”.
- 105 *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007): 1.
- 106 Grant Kester, “Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially-Engaged Art”, in *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985*, ed. Zoya Kocur et al. (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 153-65.
- 107 Leye et al., “document_de_presentation_Exitour_2006.pdf”.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 See for instance Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 164.

- 110 Herzog, "Reisetagebuch".
- 111 Kester, "Conversation Pieces", 155.
- 112 Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 113 Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 114 Kester, "Conversation Pieces", 160.
- 115 "Exit Tour, Le Douala-Dakar de l'art contemporain", *Netfirms*, 2006, <http://exitour.netfirms.com>.
- 116 Herzog "Exitour Affaire Politique", in "Reisetagebuch", 55-9.
- 117 Kester, "Conversation Pieces", 162.
- 118 Komguem, editorial to *DiARTgonale Special Edition 1* (2012).
- 119 The funds for printing were raised by means of the specially created association ARTCE (Art pour la Conscientisation et l'Education).
- 120 "Colophone", *DiARTgonale* 00, 01, 02 and 04.
- 121 Komguem, interview, December 12, 2010.
- 122 Ibid.
- 123 Loacker, "BE CREATIVE", 367.
- 124 See Komguem's CV of 2011 and the website "2004 Visual Arts Laureates", UNESCO, accessed March 14, 2014, portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=24263&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html.
- 125 Komguem, interview, December 12, 2010.
- 126 Ibid.
- 127 Manga, *L'Yvesse du Papillon*, 115-9.
- 128 Willy Valdès Kengne, "S'initier au dessin assisté par ordinateur", *DiARTgonale* 01 (2007): 11.
- 129 Komguem, interview, December 12, 2010.
- 130 See Edgard Fortuné Begono, "Le Monument de la Réunification", *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007): 7, for instance, or Juliette Ntsama, "Abbia", *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007): 7. On the next page of the same issue, a reflection by Manga on "La Nouvelle Liberté" neighbors Dufflot Tatuebou's article about Bangwa statues of the nineteenth century.
- 131 That said, Komguem has since entrusted *DiARTgonale* to foreign editorial teams. Also, a new privately run newspaper has started to cover cultural matters in Cameroon since *DiARTgonale* quit editions. This magazine is called *Mosaïques: Magazine for Contemporary Art & Culture in Subsahara Africa*. *Mosaïques* is less specialised and addresses broader audiences. Unlike *DiARTgonale*, this new medium operates with a team of journalists rather than with cultural producers and depends on corporate and foreign funding. (*Mosaïques Africa*, <http://mosaiquesafrica.com/index.php?lang=en>.)
- 132 Schemmel, "Interview with Goddy Leye (Dec. 2010)": 16.
- 133 Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents", *Artforum* (2006), 178.
- 134 Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", *October* 110 (2004): 77.
- 135 Grant Kester, *The One and The Many. Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
- 136 Nicolas Bourriaud, *L'Esthétique relationnelle* (Dijon: Les presses du réel, 1998).
- 137 For differently oriented introductions to this project consult "Goddy Leye 2003",

- IoPensa. Quaderna di Appunti di Iolanda Pensa*, November 24, 2003, accessed May 2, 2014, <http://io.pensa.it/node/79>, as well as Adeline Chapelle and Bill Kouélany, “Fiction is a Serious Matter”, in *Condition Report*, ed. Koyo Kouoh, 61, and the comparison by Elvira Dyangani Ose of the Bessengué City project with Chimurenga Library, “The Poetics of the Infra-Ordinary: The Aesthetic of Recognition in Contemporary Art”, in *Condition Report*, ed. Koyo Kouoh, 111-4.
- 138 Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents”, in *Artificial Hells*, 11-40.
- 139 Osborne, “The Fiction of the Contemporary”, 116.
- 140 See the self-description on *doual’art*, accessed June 25, 2014, www.doualart.org.
- 141 Julieta Aranda, Brian Kuan Wood, and Anton Vidokle, *What is Contemporary Art? e-flux journal* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010), back cover.
- 142 I owe the impulse to engage with this literature to my thesis tutor, the cultural anthropologist Tobias Wendl.
- 143 Cathérine Millet, *L’Art Contemporain en France* (Paris: Flammarion, 1998). The MOCA, Los Angeles and Tate Modern, London, also place the starting point of the era of Contemporary Art in the 1940s and collect accordingly. (See Cuauthémoc Medina, “Contemp(t)orary: Eleven Theses”, in *What is Contemporary Art? e-flux journal*, 11.) The same holds true for the MOMA in New York. (Terry Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?*, 27).
- 144 For a critical reading see Lutz Niethammer, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?* (London: Verso, 1992).
- 145 Arthur C. Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).
- 146 Isabelle Graw, “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary’”, *October* 130 (2009): 119–20.
- 147 Juliane Rebentisch, “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary’”, *October* 130 (2009): 101.
- 148 Enwezor linked the emergence of Contemporary Art to Duchamp’s ready-mades in 1917. (Enwezor, “The production of Social Space as Artwork”, 226.)
- 149 T.J. Demos, “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary’”, *October* 130 (2009): 79-83.
- 150 Mark Godfrey, “Questionnaire on ‘The Contemporary’”, *October* 130 (2009): 30-2.
- 151 Terry Smith, “Introduction: Contemporary Art Inside Out” (5-7), as well as “World Currents” (264-71), in *What is Contemporary Art?*
- 152 Aranda, Kuan Wood and Vidokle, *What is Contemporary Art?, e-flux journal*.
- 153 “An Expanded Questionnaire on the Contemporary”, *Asia Art Archive: Field Notes* 01, September 19, 2011, accessed March 21, 2014, www.aaa.org.hk/FieldNotes/Details/1167.
- 154 Hans Belting, “Contemporary Art as Global Art: A Critical Estimate”, in *The Global Art World: Audiences, Markets and Museums*, ed. Hans Belting et al. (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 10.
- 155 Belting, “Contemporary Art as Global Art”, 2.
- 156 Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel, *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of the New Art Worlds* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013).
- 157 Osborne, “The Fiction of the Contemporary”, 110.

- 158 Khan, "Interview with Bassam el Baroni by Hassan Khan (Part 1)".
- 159 Rasheed Araeen, "Art Institutions, Visual Culture and Territoriality and their Roles in Defining and Legitimizing the Contemporary", *Asia Art Archive*.
- 160 Khan, "Interview with Bassam el Baroni by Hassan Khan (Part 1)".
- 161 Ibid.
- 162 Marina Gržinić, "From Biopolitics to Necropolitics: Marina Gržinić in Conversation with Maja and Reuben Fowkes", *ART-Margins Online*, October 9, 2012, accessed September 20, 2013, www.artmargins.com/index.php/5-interviews/692-from-biopolitics-to-necropolitics-marina-grzini-in-conversation-with-maja-and-reuben-fowkes.
- 163 "Egyptian Modern Art", *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History/The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, accessed December 11, 2013, www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/egma/hd_egma.htm.
- 164 Uli Beier, *Contemporary Art in Africa* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968).
- 165 Smith, *What is Contemporary Art?*, 120-1, with reference to Daniel Crowley, "The Contemporary-Traditional Market in Africa", *African Arts* 1 (1970): 43-9.
- 166 Ngoné Fall, "The Repositioning of Contemporary Art from Africa on the Map".
- 167 Kasfir, *Contemporary African Art*, 9.
- 168 Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, introduction to *Contemporary African Art since 1980*, 6.
- 169 Ibid., 11.
- 170 The Ghanaian artist and writer Rikki Wemega-Kwawu charges these authors and curators of reproducing the prevalent North-South power disbalance by privileging diaspora artists. (Rikki Wemega-Kwawu, "The Politics of Exclusion: The Undue Fixation of Western-based African Curators on Contemporary African Diaspora Artists", *Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam*, December 2011, accessed September 20, 2013, <http://project1975.smba.nl/en/tag/rikki-wemega-kwawu>). See also Filitz, "Contemporary Art of Africa".
- 171 Bydler, *The Global Artworld Inc.*, 55.
- 172 Buchholz, *The Global Rules of Art*, 360.
- 173 I am here referring to those thirteen conversations led with artists in December 2010.
- 174 Komegné, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 175 Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 176 Mbassi, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 177 Nzébo, interview, December 2, 2010.
- 178 Lindou, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 179 Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 180 Wokmeni, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 181 Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 182 Bathilde Maestracci (former intern of doual'art in charge of text editing) in a conversation with the author, October 2013.
- 183 Douala Bell and Schaub, interview, December 13, 2011.
- 184 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.

- 185 Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 186 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 187 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 188 Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 189 Schemmel, “Interview with Goddy Leye (Dec. 2010)”: 17.
- 190 I am here referring to Yamguen, interview, December 7, 2010; Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010; Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010; and Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010.
- 191 Njami, interview, December 12, 2010.
- 192 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 193 Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.
- 194 Njami, interview, December 12, 2010.
- 195 Afane Belinga in the Q&A following an artist talk at NEST, Den Haag, the Netherlands, September 20, 2011.
- 196 Afane Belinga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 197 Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.
- 198 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin Books, 1977/1994).
- 199 Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 200 See introduction.
- 201 Bourdieu, “The Literary Field in the Field of Power”, in *The Rules of Art*, 215-22.
- 202 Komegné, interview, December 20, 2011.
- 203 Bourdieu, “An economic world turned upside down” in *The Rules of Art*, 83.
- 204 For Buchholz’s account of the “autonomous” pole of the global field of art see Buchholz, *The Global Rules of Art*, 360.
- 205 Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.
- 206 Lindou, interview, December 7, 2010.
- 207 Nzébo, interview, December 2, 2010.
- 208 Gaga, interview, December 8, 2010.
- 209 Leye, interview, December 11, 2010.
- 210 Isabelle Lorey, “Vom immanenten Widerspruch zur hegemonialen Funktion: Biopolitische Gouvernementalität und Selbst-Prekarisierung von KulturproduzentenInnen”, in *Kritik der Kreativität*, 124-6.
- 211 These observations were shared off the record.
- 212 Komguem, interview by the author, Maroua, December 10, 2011.
- 213 Regine Johnson (head of administration at the *GIZ*) in a conversation with the author, Yaoundé, December 2011.
- 214 Komguem, interview, December 10, 2011.
- 215 Ibid.
- 216 Doual’art normally keeps 30% of sales (Komguem, interview, December 10, 2011), which is less than the international standard of 50%. It seems like the gallerist Malong did not operate according to a strictly commercial interest either, but had different agreements with different artists. Joël Mpah Dooh, for instance, had an exclusive contract with Galérie MAM for several years, according to which he received a fixed monthly honorarium regardless of the rare sales of his work. (Malong, unpublished interview, December 2012).

- 217 Komguem, interview, December 10, 2011.
- 218 Bourdieu, "The logic of change" in *The Rules of Art*, 159-61.
- 219 See also Goddy Leye, "Sur-vivre de l'art au Kamer", *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007): 3.
- 220 Moussa, interview, December 10, 2010.
- 221 Doual'art participated in Art Dubai in 2013, for instance. (See Christine Eyene, "Art Dubai's Marker 2013: A Barometer for the African Art Market?", *Contemporary And*, accessed June 26, 2014. www.contemporaryand.com/blog/magazines/art-dubais-marker-2013-a-barometer-for-the-african-art-market).
- 222 Bathilde Maestracci in conversation with the author, August 2013, and Malong, interview, December 2012.
- 223 Assako Assako, interview, December 4, 2011.
- 224 Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 225 See Hervé Yamguen, *Oiseaux Masques*, *DiARTgonale Special Edition* 2 (2012): 15-18.
- 226 Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.
- 227 Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu, *Contemporary African Art since 1980*, 14.
- 228 Ibid., 15.
- 229 The installation *Indignation* has received a prize at the 2014 Dakar biennale.
- 230 See some of his paintings alongside Malaquais' article in Nuttal, *Beautiful/Ugly*, 124-63.
- 231 See "About Totems", *Sparck: Space for Panafrikan Research Creation and Knowledge*, accessed November 19, 2013, www.sparck.org/about-totems.
- 232 See Schemmel, "Main discourses of the 2nd Salon Urbain de Douala".
- 233 Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.
- 234 Khan, "Interview with Bassam el Baroni".
- 235 See Nzébo, interview, December 2, 2010.
- 236 See *Untitled* from the series *Marilyn Monroe (Marilyn)* (1967), 91,5 x 91,5 cm ("Collection. Andy Warhol (American), 1928-1987", *MOMA*, accessed March 20, 2014, www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=61239).
- 237 See Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, "I Got Geometries in my Head: On the Work of Boris Nzébo", in *Stardust in a Nutshell*, ed. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung et al. (Berlin: Savvy Contemporary, 2010), 37.
- 238 See the artist statement in "Programme. Centre Culturel François Villon de Yaoundé: Mai/June 2011", accessed June 24, 2015, www.ambafrance-cm.org/IMG/pdf/PROG_MAI-JUIN_2011_CCF02.pdf.
- 239 The artist made this clear during his inaugural speech, 2010.
- 240 See Alexandra Parigoris, "Brâncuși and his Return to Romania", in *Brâncuși's Endless Column Ensemble*, ed. Ernest Beck (London: Scala Publishers, 2007), 12-29.
- 241 Brancusi was represented in the exhibition *Primitivism in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, MOMA, New York, 1985. For a psychoanalytically informed critique of Primitivism's "imperialist precondition" (47), and its function as remedy to the "crisis of the phallogocentric culture" (46) see Foster, "The 'Primitive' Unconscious of Modern Art". See also Lorenz Homberger and Lucius Griesebach, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner und die Kunst Kameruns* (Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 2008).

242 For examples see the illustrations in Manga, *L'Yvesse du Papillon*, 66, 68, 73, 74, 76, 78, unfortunately all undated and untitled.

243 See Christian Hanussek, “Zeitgenössische Afrikanische Kunst. Eine Perspektive”.

244 See Hervé Yamguen’s series *Oiseaux Masques* (2012) with his text “Like some of these Days”, *DiARTgonale Special Edition 2* (2013): 14-7.

245 Araeen, “Art Institutions, Visual Culture and Territoriality”.

246 Ibid.

247 *Ken’art*, accessed May 6, 2014, www.ken-art.com/shop/9/fine-art.

248 Schaub, interview, December 8, 2010.

249 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 215.

250 Sumegné is a good example in this respect. He joined the 1998 Dakar biennale, spent a while in a residency of Fondation Blachere in Southern France in 2006, and partook in the public art exhibition *Grandeur in Sonsbek*, Netherlands, in 2008.

251 Komegné, interview, December 11, 2010.

252 Lauré al Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 163.

Notes on Chapter 6. Learning from Cameroon's History of Non-formal Training

1 Youmbi, interview, December 5, 2010; Leye, interview, December 11, 2010; Malong, interview, December 2012.

2 Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.

3 Daleu, interview, December 6, 2010.

4 Malong, interview, December 2012.

5 Ibid.

6 Aveved, "L'Art Plastique au Cameroun".

7 Ibid.

8 Malaquais, "Nouvelle Liberté", 126. See also Malaquais, "Quelle Liberté!".

9 The following scholarly studies and exhibition catalogues give an idea of this research topic: Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Zeynep Celik, *Urban Forms and Colonial Confrontation: Algiers under French Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten, *In der Wüste der Moderne: Koloniale Planung und Danach* (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt, 2008).

10 Of course, this list does not claim to be complete. A recent encyclopedia of African artists lists numerous Cameroonian artists that I have not touched upon (Achim Gottberg, *Lexikon afrikanischer bildender Künstler südlich der Sahara*, (Leipzig: author's edition, 2009)), and so do Afane Belinga and Assako Assako.

11 OnomARTopée is an artist group founded by Landry Mbassi in Yaoundé. (Mbassi, interview, December 10, 2010.) Young artists have started to do projects in Douala under the name "Les Cocoricos." (Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.)

12 The political lobbying of the UDAP-CAM has engendered a specialised copyright organisation for visual art in 2002, the SOCADAP (Société civile de droit d'auteur et droits voisins des Arts Plastiques et Graphiques). (See Aveved, "Le cadre juridique de la création artistique", in "Artistes Plasticiens et espaces d'art en milieu urbain camerounais", 10-11.) The criticisms of the 2007 elections of the SOCADAP suggest that this organisation does not always live up to democratic standards and the artists' expectations, however. (See Achille Komguem, "Elections à la SOCADAP: Société civile de droit d'auteur et droits voisins des Arts Plastiques et Graphiques", *DiARTgonale* 01 (2007): 10).

13 Bahoken and Atangana, *La politique culturelle en République réunie du Cameroun*, 77.

14 Exemplary authors arguing in this direction are the sociologist Howard S. Becker in his seminal book *Art Worlds*, as well as researchers from visual studies (See Sigrid Schade and Silke Wenk, "Einleitung", in *Studien zur visuellen Kultur: Einführung in ein transdisziplinäres Forschungsfeld* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2011), 11.)

15 See Michael Petry, *The Art of Not Making: The New Artist / Artisan Relationship* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2012).

16 See introduction.

17 To give but one example, the reproduction of Patrick Wokmeni's photo series *Les Belles de New Bell* (2006) in a catalogue that I have edited in Germany caught the attention of the National Security Service during a control of foreign postal mailings. The depicted women's nudity was considered a

provocative misrepresentation of Cameroon abroad. Ultimately, the officers dropped the case in return for bribes.

18 See Dijkman, *Hard to Catch*.

19 The archive of the Office of Foreign Affairs in Berlin only allows access to data that is older than thirty years old.

20 Rucktshell, “We want to take part”, 95-9.

21 See chapter 5.

22 Ibid.

23 See for instance, Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.

24 The art centre Bandjoun Station in the Western province of Cameroon is the attempt of an artist who emigrated to reintegrate with his home region. The complex of Bandjoun Station includes an art space and large living spaces and also comprises an agricultural project with ecological aims. (*Bandjoun Station: Museum of Contemporary Art*, accessed May 13, 2014, www.bandjounstation.com/events/events.html.)

25 See introduction.

26 See Minty, “The freedom to dream?”, 167-8

27 See Elisabeth Harney, “Laboratories of Avant-Gardism”, in *In Senghor’s Shadow*, 105-48.

28 See Clive Kellner and Sergio-Albio González, *Thami Mnyele + Medu Art Ensemble Retrospective* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2010.)

29 In the late 1970s, an old villa in a park of Rio de Janeiro became a meeting place of dissident artists and eventually an informal art school. (Cyriaco Lopez, Brazilian artist and art lecturer at the City University of New York) in a conversation with the

author, New York, March 2014). See also “Histórico”, *Governo do Rio de Janeiro*, accessed May 14, 2014, www.eavparquelage.rj.gov.br/eavText.asp?sMenu=ESCO&cs-Sume=PHIST. Concerning the critical function of current art collectives that build on this tradition in Brazil see Suely Rolnik, “Geopolitik der Zuhälterei”, in *Kritik der Kreativität*).

30 See Bourdieu, “The Habitus and the Possibilities”, in *The Rules of Art*, 261, 262.

31 Apparently, the struggle for social cohesion and the creation of intercultural spaces in the city was one of Douala’s explicit goals early on. (See Minty, “The Freedom to dream?”, 168.)

32 Assako Assako, conversation, January 2014.

33 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.

34 It was partly in reaction to this observation that Njami invited the successful women artists Ato Malinda from Kenya and Tracey Rose from South Africa to Douala to join the SUD 2010. (Njami, interview, December 9, 2010.)

35 Deliss, “7+7=1”, 26.

36 Minty, “The Freedom to dream?”, 167.

37 Manga, interview, December 3, 2010.

38 Ato Malinda, “Building a Culture of Knowledge”, in *An Ideal Library: A Publication on Theory that Influences Art Practice*, ed. Koyo Kouoh et al. (Dakar: Raw Material Company, 2012).

39 Ngwentah Berlyne Ngwalem, “Cameroon: Exploring Men’s Attitudes Towards Feminism”, *Safeworld Field Partners*, accessed May 15, 2014, www.asafeworldforwomen.org/fp-cam/wfacc/wc-news/4033-attitudes-to-feminism.html

- 40 See for instance the *Africultures* edition by Tanella Boni, Philomène-Nicole Carton and Melissa Thackway, *Feminism(s) in Africa and in the Diaspora* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2008); Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997); Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *African Women & Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003); and Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí, *African Gender Studies: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave, 2005).
- 41 Some relevant publications in this respect are the *Africultures* edition by Christine Eyene, *L'Art au Féminin: Approches Contemporaines*, (Paris, l'Harmattan, 2011); the catalogue by Michael Stevenson and Fredericca Angelucci, *Faces and Phases: Zanele Mubohi* (Munich: Prestel, 2010); and Frédérique Bergholtz, *Feminist Legacies and Potentials in Contemporary Art Practice (2006-2008)* (Berlin: Revolver, 2011). See also the scholarly publications by John Bowles, Adrian Piper: *Race, Gender and Embodiment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) and Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, *Reclaiming Female Agency: Feminist Art History After Postmodernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
- 42 The only written source on this subject that I could find is Afane Belinga's article "La femme et l'art au Cameroun", *DiARTgonale* 01 (2007): 5.
- 43 Christine Eyene, "Rejoindre les Rangs de la Lutte Invisible", in *L'Art au Féminin*, 18.
- 44 I am referring to the UNESCO World Conference Lisboa 2006 that was titled "Road Map for Arts Education: Building Creative Capacities for the 21st century", and to the UNESCO 2nd World Conference on Arts Education of 2010 in Seoul, whose motto was "Arts for Society, Education for Creativity". Lauré al-Samarai has underlined that policy-makers in Africa are restricted to a "re-active" behaviour with regard to such universal guidelines as a consequence of globalized power imbalances (Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 22, 31).
- 45 See introduction.
- 46 Capet Youmbi, "Coup de Pouce de la Banque Mondiale aux Plasticiens Camerounais", *DiARTgonale* 00 (2007): 6.
- 47 Komguem, interview, December 9, 2010.
- 48 Ibid. For a criticism of the contradictions of cultural entrepreneurship in African contexts see also Lauré al-Samarai, *Creating Spaces*, 46-7.
- 49 Guy Débord, "Commentaires sur la Société de Spectacle" (Paris: Éditions Gérard Lébovici, 1988), in Beate Engl and Justine Gaga, "Echo", *DiARTgonale Special Edition* 2 (2013): 19.

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Table of Figures

- Fig 1 *Les Dessins Bamum*, 64, photo Gérard Bonnet
- Fig 2 *Les Dessins Bamum*, 80, photo Gérard Bonnet
- Fig 3 *Les Dessins Bamum*, 132, photo Gérard Bonnet
- Fig 4 *Les Dessins Bamum*, 101, photo Gérard Bonnet
- Fig 5 *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains*, 28, 29
- Fig 6.1-2 the author
- Fig 6.3 *L'Art et L'Artisanat Africains*, 90
- Fig 7 Université de Yaoundé I,
www.preinscriptionsuy1.uninet.cm/index.php?lang=en
- Fig 8.1 “L’expression sculpturale à Yaoundé”, 59, photo Paul-Henri Assako
- Fig 8.2 Google pictures
- Fig 9.1 Mes Années 50, www.mes-annees-50.com/index.htm
- Fig 9.2 Le Super Blog d’LN,
<http://lnbd.over-blog.com/article-depliant-64963996.html>
- Fig 10 *La Peinture Moderne*, cover
- Fig 11 National archives photo no. 1 (Contemporary African Art from the Harmon Collection), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration,
www.archives.gov/research/african-art/select-list-001.html
- Fig 12.1 National archives photo no. 3 (Contemporary African Art from the Harmon Collection), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration,
www.archives.gov/research/african-art/select-list-003.html
- Fig 12.2 Accession number 1978.412.441, The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
The Collection Online,
www.metmuseum.org/collection/the-collection-online/search/310870
- Fig 13 *Gaspar Gomán*, 28, photo Albert Masias
- Fig 14 *Gaspar Gomán*, 21, photo Albert Masias
- Fig 15.1-2 *ABBLA* 16 (1967): cover
- Fig 16 *ABBLA* 12-13 (1966): 38, photo by „Cameroun – photo“
- Fig 17 Louis-Marie Lemana (Joachim Oelsner-Adam)
- Fig 18 anonymous press photographer (Joachim Oelsner-Adam)
- Fig 19 *Koko Komegné*, 92, photo by Guillaume Astaix,
Nicolas Eyidi or Didier Schaub
- Fig 20.1-3 *L'Art Africain Contemporain*, 69, 64, 143
- Fig 21.1 *Arrêt Culture*, video still by Thierry Bexon
- Fig 21.2 *Revue Noire* 13 (1994): 25
- Fig 22 the author
- Fig 23 anonymous press photographer (Joachim Oelsner-Adam)
- Fig 24.1 *Anthologie de l'art africain du XXe siècle*, 178
- Fig 24.2 Tiscali. Arte Africana, http://web.tiscali.it/arte_africana/arte_pitt14.htm
- Fig 25 *Koko Komegné*, 72, photo by Guillaume Astaix, Nicolas Eyidi or Didier Schaub (cropped in the source)
- Fig 26.1-2 *Koko Komegné*, 81, 80, photo by Guillaume Astaix, Nicolas Eyidi or Didier Schaub
- Fig 27.7. *Triennale der Kleinplastik: Europa Afrika*, 171
- Fig 28.1-2 Courtesy Galerie Neugerriemschneider
- Fig 29 Angelika Thomas-Roper
- Fig 30 Angelika Thomas-Roper

- Fig 31 Courtesy doual'art
Fig 32 Christian Hanussek
Fig 33.1-2 Marjolijn Dijkman
Fig 34.1-2 Pietro Sanguineti
Fig 35.1-3 *Revue Noire* 13 (1994): cover, 8, 9,10, 11
Fig 36 *Revue Noire* 13 (1994): 26, 37
Fig 37.1 Christian Hanussek
Fig 37.2 *Partage d'Exotismes. Cinquième biennale d'art contemporain de Lyon, 279*
Fig 38.1 Marjolijn Dijkman
Fig 38.2 the author
Fig 39 Patrick Wokmeni
Fig 40.1-3 Marjolijn Dijkman
Fig 41 the author
Fig 42.1-3 Dunja Herzog
Fig 43 DiARTgonale 01 (2007): cover
Fig 44.1 Koko Komégné, 49, photo by Gauillaume Astaix, Nicolas Eyidi or Didier Schaub
Fig 44.2 Christian Hanussek
Fig 45.1 Marjolijn Dijkman
Fig 45.2 courtesy Justine Gaga
Fig 46 Hervé Youmbi
Fig 47 Salifou Lindou (first installation site, 2010)
Fig 48 the author
Fig 49.1-2 the author
Fig 50 Hervé Yamguen
Fig 51 video still by Goddy Leye, photo by Marjolijn Dijkman
Fig 52 www.ken-art.com

Index

- 1990 Generation:
44, 162, 209, 214, 241
- ABBIA:
63, 66, 87
- Abossolo, Martin:
73, 86, 117
- Academic Training:
16, 25, 64, 82, 110, 119, 139, 145
- Advertisement Painting:
108, 130, 141, 184, 221, 279, 300
- Aesthetics:
39, 61, 88, 109, 119, 128,
133, 146, 196, 283, 293
- Africréa:
192, 289
- Airport Art:
21, 183, 202
- Apprenticeships:
26, 64, 130, 141, 184, 221, 300
- Archives:
40, 42, 219, 258, 279
- Art History:
28, 54, 59, 78, 119, 137, 155, 165,
175, 187, 207, 222, 238, 250, 253,
265, 279, 294
- Art System:
16, 21, 138, 140, 152, 216, 224, 270
- Art Worlds:
22, 35, 140, 152, 237, 256, 298, 300
- ArtBakery:
224, 232, 242, 264, 295, 298, 304
- Artisan:
20, 60, 62, 90, 95, 105,
119, 141, 148, 295
- Artistic Self-Concepts:
28, 61, 140, 212, 239, 279
- Artists' Grassroots Initiative/
Artist-run Space:
149, 225, 232, 243, 251,
255, 279, 288, 299, 304
- Arts Education:
25, 27, 30, 42, 85, 99, 107, 117,
123, 145, 164, 234, 293, 304
- Artworld:
21, 198, 202, 209, 212, 223,
240, 257, 259, 261, 268
- Asymmetric Dependencies:
22, 23, 49, 98, 171, 202, 216
- Atelier de l'Art Nègre:
64, 294
- Atelier:
154, 168, 184, 208, 213, 216,
220, 224, 231, 299, 303
- Authenticity:
30, 34, 87, 120, 134, 155, 197
- Auto-Ethnography:
23, 58, 128, 176, 180
- Autodidact:
24, 73, 78, 193, 260, 295
- Autonomous Art:
20, 152, 261, 297
- Bamenda:
105, 141, 155, 158
- Bamum Drawings:
50, 62, 94, 125
- Berlin Wall:
158, 161
- Biennale, Triennale:
22, 39, 197, 198, 213, 231, 161,
246, 249, 259, 263, 271, 288, 298
- Bonendale:
37, 224, 231, 233
- Cameroon Tribune:
41, 93, 106, 211
- Centres Culturels Camerounais:
100, 110
- Centres Culturels Français:
43, 93, 101, 112, 154, 201, 206, 220
- Cercle d'Études Littéraires et Artistiques:
107, 406
- Cercle des Artistes Plasticiens
du Littoral (CAPLIT):
113, 115, 294, 406
- Cercle Kapsiki:
227, 294, 406
- Cercle Maduta:
108, 294, 406
- Civil Society:
17, 226, 266, 279, 306
- Club des Arts Plastiques:
107, 123, 406
- Club Khéops:
210, 294, 406

- Collective:
29, 103, 108, 152, 209, 225, 227,
232, 251, 270, 288, 294, 406
- Colonialism:
23, 61, 72, 82, 145, 167,
174, 260, 267, 292
- Computer:
184, 222, 237, 249
- Contact Zone:
23, 30, 58, 96, 168, 263, 292
- Contemporary Art:
18, 105, 120, 176, 188, 201,
220, 252, 258, 261, 296, 303
- Correspondence Courses:
74, 119, 292
- Craft:
20, 27, 64, 70, 91, 96, 105,
119, 141, 148, 172, 221,
266, 273, 283, 292, 295
- Creative Industries:
16, 305
- Criticality:
28, 162, 175, 202, 205,
214, 239, 264, 305
- Critique Sessions:
209
- Cultural Diplomacy:
100, 153, 170, 182, 193, 296
- Cultural Heritage:
60, 88, 98, 104, 113, 120, 125,
172, 180, 210, 292, 304
- Cultural Politics: 1
7, 69, 95, 99, 157, 192, 303
- Curator:
19, 32, 38, 59, 157, 188, 204,
213, 224, 252, 263, 272
- Dada:
174, 196, 213
- Dakar Biennale:
198, 246, 249, 259, 263, 271
- Development:
77, 104, 157, 170, 182, 191, 196,
205, 212, 234, 242, 297, 305
- DiARTgonale:
246, 288, 305, 406
- Diaspora:
17, 107, 169, 192, 197, 247,
250, 261, 284, 292, 298
- Didactics:
118, 125, 138, 239
- Discursive Agency:
24, 28, 140, 168, 204, 201,
211, 238, 251, 297
- Donor Institutions:
18, 23, 28, 182, 191, 233,
242, 268, 296, 304
- Doual'art:
17, 17, 38, 42, 182, 198, 200, 208,
212, 222, 224, 228, 233, 252, 262,
270, 283, 289, 295, 303, 406
- Drawing:
47, 50, 61, 74, 81, 95, 119, 126,
133, 164, 180, 203, 237, 283
- Dreamers:
232, 247, 270, 294, 303, 406
- Economic Precarity:
17, 223, 225, 269, 289
- Enculturation:
27, 140
- Entrepreneur:
17, 106, 109, 140, 152, 168, 300, 305
- Epistemological Dependency:
19, 170, 192
- Exit Tour:
242, 251, 406
- Exposure:
48, 96, 130, 170, 181,
191, 204, 220, 288
- Festival des Arts et de la Cul-
ture du Cameroun:
105, 115
- Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres:
62, 90, 96, 130, 259
- Field of Art:
22, 202, 214, 216, 247, 249,
256, 267, 284, 297, 303
- Fine Arts and Art History Section
(APHA), University of Yaoundé:
165, 232, 301
- Foreign Cultural Centres:
17, 100, 110, 116, 153, 164,
169, 200, 270, 406
- Funding:
18, 23, 28, 32, 87, 182, 191,
193, 228, 233, 242, 246,
268, 289, 296, 304
- Galérie MAM:
192, 224, 231, 252, 289, 406
- Gender:
32, 37, 77, 94, 147, 167,
207, 212, 214, 240, 301

- Genealogy:
26, 291
- Generation:
44, 49, 103, 117, 162, 201,
216, 219, 288, 294, 604
- Globalisation:
21, 149, 157, 179, 200, 216, 222,
254, 257, 264, 284, 294, 298
- Goethe-Institut:
40, 93, 108, 119, 153, 168,
201, 220, 267, 297, 406
- Gomán, Gaspar:
35, 49, 72, 81, 293
- Grand Frère:
117, 119, 129, 141, 145, 148,
181, 207, 214, 226, 231, 239,
241, 247, 294, 301, 303, 406
- Graphic Design:
64, 87, 116, 228, 246
- Harmon Collection:
77
- Identity Production:
20, 49, 88, 105, 212
- Impressionism:
91, 206
- Inculturation:
65, 67
- Independent Art Spaces:
17, 184, 240, 288
- Installation:
159, 172, 176, 184, 187, 213,
227, 252, 262, 270, 274, 295
- International Workshop:
29, 150, 182
- Internet:
219, 220, 249, 284, 288, 406
- K-Factory:
227, 240, 250, 288, 301, 304, 406
- Kanganyam, Viking, André:
103, 108, 117, 162, 207, 226, 300
- Kenfack, Pascal:
29, 73, 103, 110, 119, 139, 166,
176, 198, 263, 284, 293, 295
- Kitsiba, Faustin:
130
- Komegné, Koko:
35, 100, 103, 108, 113, 117,
129, 155, 183, 192, 203, 263,
268, 274, 288, 293, 300
- Komguem, Achille aka Achillekà:
144, 162, 202, 232, 242,
247, 264, 269, 305
- Language:
37, 90, 108, 126, 150, 181,
208, 234, 252, 267, 300
- Leye, Goddy:
108, 123, 141, 159, 165, 168, 176,
203, 206, 209, 214, 222, 232,
242, 250, 264, 271, 283, 296
- Liberty of Expression/Civil Rights:
48, 158, 161, 182, 226, 297, 303
- Liking, Werewere:
73, 94, 112
- Lindou, Salifou:
137, 163, 176, 179, 201,
227, 268, 274
- Mission Schools:
42, 47, 49, 54, 57, 59, 91, 138
- Modern Art:
25, 29, 47, 59, 94, 174,
207, 259, 265, 284
- Mveng, Engelbert:
33, 59, 99, 122, 128, 141, 293
- National Museum:
88, 93, 104, 164, 250, 304
- Négritude:
26, 31, 59, 72, 78, 84, 90, 128, 197
- Neo-Colonialism:
170, 254, 297
- NGO:
17, 152, 165, 182, 220,
222, 296, 302, 303
- Njami, Simon:
18, 118, 151, 193, 216, 265, 272, 301
- Njoya, Ibrahim:
49, 50, 88, 99, 283, 293
- Non-formal Training:
27, 157, 168, 220, 231, 240,
250, 271, 299, 304, 406
- Oral History:
38, 41, 59, 73, 137, 157, 219
- Ouassa, Ibara:
91, 101, 132
- Painting:
33, 47, 64, 72, 81, 90, 93,
98, 104, 107, 120, 129, 141,
155, 165, 184, 203, 208, 209,
237, 269, 274, 279, 296
- Pan-Africanism:
62, 90, 101, 247

- Pedagogy:
 25, 125, 137, 147, 151,
 166, 204, 228, 234
- Performance:
 77, 113, 134, 174, 176, 179, 203,
 208, 227, 234, 243, 272, 295
- Petit Frère:
 117, 123, 128, 137, 143,
 151, 181, 227, 240, 303
- Photography:
 47, 118, 142, 228, 231, 252, 296
- Picasso, Pablo:
 77, 90, 94, 129, 133, 153, 207, 283
- Pluriculturalisme:
 48, 69, 95, 128
- Postcolony:
 49, 78
- Prim'Art:
 209, 239, 294, 406
- Project:
 18, 110, 169, 187, 192, 203, 241,
 242, 246, 268, 288, 296, 303
- Public Art:
 24, 35, 110, 182, 204, 283
- Reading:
 73, 77, 130, 188, 205, 238, 253
- Récup-Art, Récupération:
 35, 138, 193, 250, 274
- Revue Noire:
 193, 204, 211, 259, 406
- Rijksakademie:
 224, 233, 239
- Role Model:
 17, 118, 147, 201, 272, 301
- Rules of Art:
 23, 39, 202, 267, 279, 297
- Salomon, Armand:
 69, 85, 293
- Schaub, Didier:
 35, 182, 216, 265
- Secrecy:
 100, 115, 142, 249
- Section Art et Culture de Création Récente:
 107, 406
- Self-Empowerment:
 204, 209, 214, 225, 246, 294
- Self-Organisation:
 15, 49, 100, 107, 113, 116, 155,
 210, 225, 243, 288, 294, 303
- Senghor, Léopold Sédar:
 26, 31, 62, 90, 130, 299
- Smouldering Years:
 158, 214, 221, 296
- Social Turn:
 241, 242, 295
- Solidarity:
 104, 117, 294
- Space-making:
 140, 226, 294
- Studio Programme/Artist Residencies:
 221, 228, 239, 249, 271,
 288, 299, 304, 406
- Studio Visit:
 117, 125, 137, 140, 174, 181,
 201, 232, 235, 250, 303, 406
- Sumegné, Joseph Francis:
 35, 42, 78, 100, 103, 176,
 187, 194, 197, 205, 293
- Surrealism:
 25, 94, 112, 164, 196
- Sustainability:
 18, 149, 151, 192, 222, 240,
 244, 288, 298, 303
- Système de Grands Frères:
 104, 117, 139, 141, 145, 148,
 162, 181, 221, 226, 239,
 294, 299, 301, 304, 406
- Tactic:
 23, 28, 57, 62, 78, 100, 118, 151, 204,
 211, 225, 234, 261, 270, 289, 294
- Tayou:
 128, 162, 171, 175, 188, 194, 203,
 211, 214, 247, 260, 280, 298
- Tradition:
 20, 25, 30, 60, 70, 73, 94, 98,
 112, 123, 134, 138, 172, 197,
 205, 259, 273, 292, 302
- Transculturation:
 23, 30, 59, 98, 122, 181, 272
- UDAPCAM:
 112, 294, 406
- Universal Law of African Aesthetic Creation:
 61, 128
- Universalism:
 26, 30, 82, 93, 133, 146,
 175, 264, 255
- Urban Cultures:
 17, 20, 34, 129, 153, 182,
 193, 284, 292, 296
- Van Gogh, Vincent:
 122, 129, 206

Video:

161, 176, 179, 187, 191, 203,
208, 213, 228, 232, 237, 238,
244, 252, 274, 283, 296

Village Scene/Rural Genre Scenes:

72, 82, 105, 113, 139, 183, 293

Women Artists:

37, 94, 147, 162, 167, 188,
207, 214, 221, 234, 238, 240,
242, 264, 274, 284, 300, 305

Workshop-movement:

25, 29, 133, 93, 148, 153

Workshop:

29, 64, 70, 91, 104, 116, 133,
141, 142, 149, 165, 182, 210,
226, 239, 240, 243, 294

Yanguen, Hervé:

117, 137, 141, 165, 206,
227, 270, 273, 283

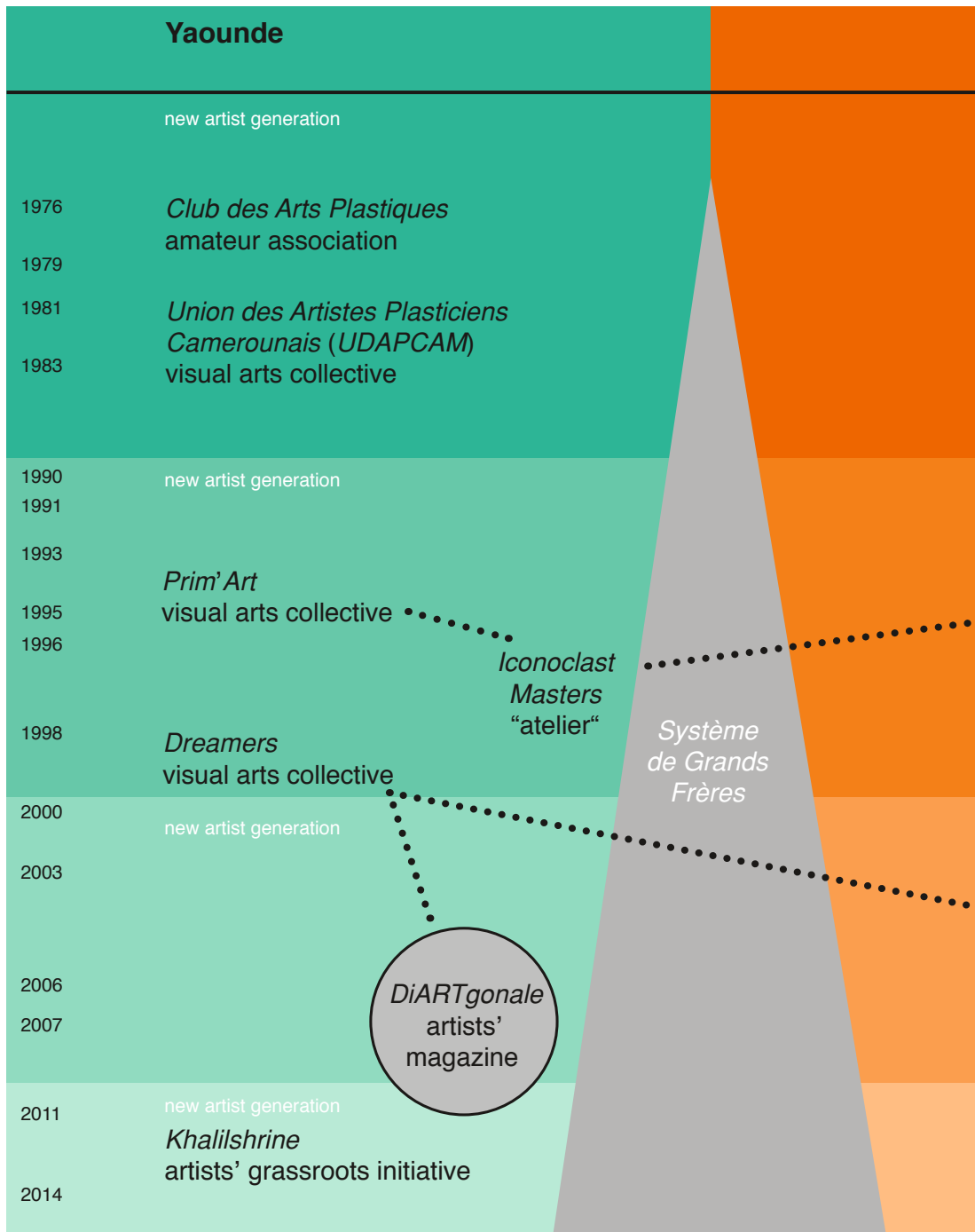
Youmbi, Hervé:

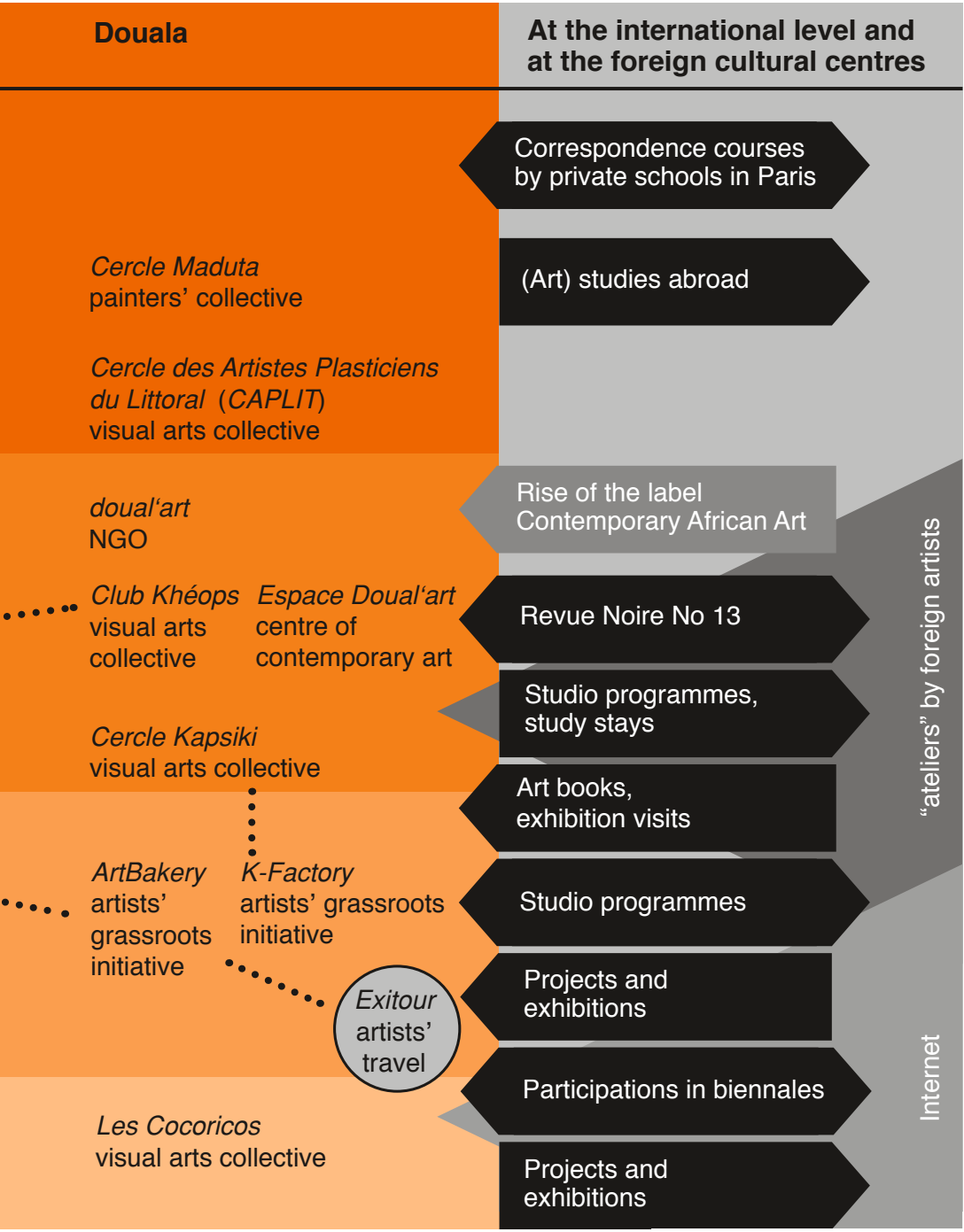
117, 137, 162, 166, 206, 227, 274

Zogo, Isidore:

86, 93, 107, 112, 153

The Genealogy as Scheme





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