

THE BLACK ARTIST WHO SAID “NO”

COLONIAL PARIS AND THE ART OF WILSON TIBERIO

Daniel Horn

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL
#3-2021, pp. 3–37

<https://doi.org/10.11588/xxi.2021.3.83378>

ABSTRACT

The Brazilian Wilson Tiberio (ca. 1925–2005) was one of several artists of African descent who returned or first relocated to Paris after 1945. Traveling French West Africa on a bursary from the Musée de l’Homme in 1947/48, Tiberio would witness a region thoroughly imprinted by a late-stage colonial system. Recording the remaining visual culture of Vodun religion in Dahomey (Benin) and the forced labor operating the industrial limestone quarries in Senegal, Tiberio would return to Paris around 1948 to produce canvases on which he rerouted Western modernist pictorial tropes toward a contemporary depiction of colonized black subjectivity and environment. In doing so, this essay argues, Tiberio situated hitherto obscured subjects squarely within the visual representation of the Union Française.

KEYWORDS

Modernisms after 1945; Wilson Tiberio; French Union; *Présence Africaine*; Decoloniality; “Les statues meurent aussi”.

71.1941.13.10 is a number assigned to a striking presence. Gleaming darkly, due to the prolonged absorption of a copal, powdered charcoal and palm oil varnish having permeated the highly prized wood over the course of time, the artifact has maintained its sensual, skin-like surface. The eyes, a pair of dirty-golden brass nails, radiate forth a metallic stare. A vertical cleft in the wood running down the left-hand side of the “face” cuts right through its right eye like a charismatic scar or an expressionistic tear. This exactly formalized head is carved from *Alstonia boonei*, a large and leafy tree native to West Africa where it is also known as *Onyame dua* – God’s tree – because of the ethnobotanical properties of its bark, a proven natural analgesic and alleged sedative, antipsychotic, and aphrodisiac.¹

71.1941.13.10 identifies a reliquary ancestral head dated to the 19th century – a *byeri* – roughly meaning guardian/protector, created by the Betsi group of the Fang people in Gabon, equatorial West Africa. The *byeri* was customarily attached atop the actual wooden reliquary holding ancestral bones, which are considered sacred by the group. Depending on taste and connoisseurship, both personal and acquired, the *byeri* has been perceived as one of the “great classics of African art”² or, conversely as “vulgar” and “hideous” by the French missionaries upon their first encounter with this unknown object at the later end of the 19th century.³

The provenance of 71.1941.13.10 is “first-rate”. Having once been in the possession of Paul Guillaume, the art dealer who made West African artifacts a must in Paris’ fashionable circles during the early interwar period, it would later enter the collections of the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro, considered the cradle of proto-cubism. Were the object to part from the institution that has housed it since – the Musée du quai Branly in Paris – it may fetch anywhere between five to eight million dollars.⁴ A modest lot, still, compared to the breathtaking, hundred-fold sums invested globally in Renaissance, classic modernist, and even contemporary idols that headline recent auction records.

For all the extensive, transcontinental history that has come to inhere in the *byeri*, it represents but a split second amidst the

1

John Prosper Kwaku Adotey, Genevieve Etornam Adukpo, Yaw Opoku Boahen, and Frederick Ato Armah, A Review of the Ethnobotany and Pharmacological Importance of *Alstonia boonei* De Wild (Apocynaceae), in: *ISRN Pharmacology* 587160, 2012, DOI: [10.5402/2012/587160](https://doi.org/10.5402/2012/587160) (20.04.2020).

2

Robert Goldwater, *The Great Bieri* (exh. cat. New York, Museum of Primitive Art), New York, NY 1962, 2, <https://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16028coll15/id/917> (21.07.2021).

3

Cf. Louis Perrois, The Western Historiography of African Reliquary Sculpture, in: *Eternal Ancestors. The Art of the Central African Reliquary* (exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum), ed. by Alisa LaGamma, New York/New Haven, CT 2007, 68.

4

A *byeri* of comparable provenance recently sold at Christies’s in Paris for nearly 8 million euros: <https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6323798> (21.07. 2021).

onslaught of frames vitally of and about *blackness* that forcefully swell into *APEX*, the video work, now almost a decade old, by the American artist Arthur Jafa [Fig. 1].

In a conversation about his mostly moving-image work, Jafa has discussed racialized spectatorship as a point of institutional re-enquiry, speaking from within a decade that has seen a return of related discourses which had already been formulated in view of their specific historical and political contexts nearly a century ago. In 1925 Alain LeRoy Locke, the foremost critic and scholar of the Harlem Renaissance, would proclaim that “no great art will impose *alien* canons upon its subject matter”.⁵

This was in line with Locke’s explicitly racialized conception of a rejuvenated African-American contemporary art deserving of that designation. Aware of the, by then, evidently established tradition of Western modernist pioneers to adapt and recombine occidental pictorial standards with the seemingly counterintuitive formalisms that had originated from what was then overseas colonized space, Locke had a case in point. Modernist artistic revolution by and large did not involve any meaningful representation of the alien African subject whose artifacts Western inspiration had been feeding on in the first place.

So as to conceive of a novel visuality that would adequately benefit and vitalize African-American subjectivity in the 1920s, Locke recommended diligent study of the ancestral artifacts of the colonized homeland, the “sophisticated”, “abstract”, even “rigid” and “heavily conventionalized” qualities of which to him proved notably contrapuntal to the aesthetic that had historically emerged out of the black experience of racially segregated North America.⁶ Locke referred to that latter constituency and culture as “Afrimerican”, defined by a distinct style that was impactful as a vernacular like the blues – as much as such Afrimericanism was, however, lacking the potential of progress: sentimental and naïve, and certainly effective in that register, it also signified the marred aesthetics of lasting subservience, oppression, and black grievance; a hopeless escapism sprung forth from the economy and experience of the transatlantic slave trade. The language of Locke’s criticism already performs this new hard-edged style purged of any acquiescent sentimentality and would later inform the militant discourse and tough aesthetic of the Black Panther Party.

Advising a generation of Afrimerican artists to come, Locke warned that, in spite of the obvious international success story of Western modernism ironically catalyzed by colonial imports such

5

All following quotes from Alain Locke, *Legacy of the Ancestral Arts*, in: id. (ed.), *The New Negro. An Interpretation*, New York 1925. Reprinted in Jack Flam and Miriam Deutch (eds.), *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art*, Berkeley, CA 2003, 197, 199–200 (emphasis mine).

6

This kind of classification of Western African artifacts by Locke would remain intact in authoritative postwar European scholarship of African art. Cf. William Fagg, long-time Keeper at the British Museum, *Ancient Arts and Modern Parodies*, in: *Nature* 163, 1949, 146.



[Fig. 1]

Arthur Jafa, *APEX*, 2013, still from a color video with sound, 8.22 min.
© Arthur Jafa. Courtesy the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.

as the *byeri* – the 1920s proved a high point in metropolitan Europe for what had been termed *art nègre*, and later *black deco* – black Americans would do better not to pay attention to others’ aesthetic innovation. Instead, they should directly reengage with precisely those artifacts once hoarded in royal curiosity cabinets and later put on display in Europe’s rivaling anthropological collections and haute-bourgeois salons. In doing so, contemporary black artists on their part would not risk “[sharing] the conventional blindness of the Caucasian eye with respect to racial material at their immediate disposal”.

Such “blindness” – historical, systemic, and, inevitably, internalized or neural – as much as “racial material”, continues to inform contemporary discussions, as the work and reception of a widely exhibited and reviewed artist like Jafa confirms. Speaking to Fred Moten about his 2017 international breakthrough traveling exhibition *A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions*, Jafa states:⁷

The opposition of ‘improbable and extraordinary’ is intentional and characteristic [of] a certain sort of inability or unwillingness of the white imaginary to accept the black being [...].

And this refusal of black being is inextricably bound up with our so-called invisibility which is in fact their blindness [...] Black being as chimera or [a] dragon [...].⁸

Or, literally more down to earth, black being as “insects” – a frequently quoted retort leveled at the pioneering ethnographic film director Jean Rouch by his colleague, the Senegalese writer and filmmaker Ousmane Sembène. This was in view of Rouch’s first African documentaries that depict circumcision rites of the Songhay people in rural Niger and the graphic Hauka performances practiced by the colonized working-class denizens of Accra, in *Les maîtres fous* from 1951. The exchange between these two directors occurred in 1962, at which time, to quote Sembène, the only “films of value” – that is, those adequately framing modern black African

7

These are of a dual nature comprising the film *Love Is the Message, the Message Is Death* (2016) and the body of work exhibited as *A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions*, both of which have been traveling widely to major art institutions in Europe and the US since 2016. Interestingly enough for this discussion, Jafa was educated at Howard University, the historically black college in Washington DC where Locke had once taught as the chair of its philosophy department.

8

Jafa quoted in: Fred Moten, *Black Topological Existence*, in: *A Series of Utterly Improbable, Yet Extraordinary Renditions* (exh. cat. London, Serpentine Galleries), ed. by Amira Gad and Joseph Constable, London 2018, 19. The chimerical aspect of blackness is front and center in Jafa’s work, notably in the video work *APEX* (2013) that consists of a fast-paced montage of imagery, including film stills from the movie *Alien*, and reproductions of African artifacts, specifically the Fang reliquary guardian head from Gabon discussed here. Another famous exemplar, known as the *Great Bieri*, is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum and was also once owned by Paul Guillaume and later Nelson Rockefeller. It features in the film *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953). Cf. *Ode au grand art africain* (exh. cat. Paris, Monnaie de Paris), ed. by Elena Martinez-Jacquet, Paris 2010, 149.

subjectivity contingent on coloniality⁹ – comprised, altogether, a mere three films: *Moi, un noir* (1958), a later and more well-received film by Rouch; its American counter-model of ethno-fiction, *Come Back, Africa* (1959) by the director Lionel Rogosin; and the slightly earlier documentary essay film *Les statues meurent aussi* (1953).¹⁰

Sembène’s discriminating selection of celluloid blackness proved virtually timeless, as the latter film, written and directed by French auteur luminaries Chris Marker and Alain Resnais and produced by the Parisian publishing house *Présence Africaine*, remains a point of reference in global contemporary art discourse, in postcolonial and decolonial studies, and even in pop culture with regard to the Marvel 2017 blockbuster *Black Panther*.¹¹

With regard to the genesis of *Les statues meurent aussi* ambiguity remains as to who approached and consulted whom, when, and how in the commissioning of this film around the year 1950. This obscurity, in and of itself, is in fact more material to the discussion than any definite proof of who moved first, providing, as it does, a telling snapshot of the web of interests, agendas, and attitudes that would shape the final form of *Les statues*....

Moreover, this behind-the-scenes subplot sheds light on the intellectual and artistic milieu of immediate postwar Paris, that is, the interrelations between its prewar cultural elites and the city’s new vanguard of colonial inquiry as represented by the journal and publishing house *Présence Africaine* (1947–today). The genesis of *Les statues*... involved the motivations of the city’s most eminent collector and dealer of non-Western art, Charles Ratton; the young sociologist, Africanist, and *Présence Africaine* editorial member Georges Balandier; the reinstated director of the Musée de l’Homme Paul Rivet; and, last but not least, the journal’s founder and actual client to this film, Alioune Diop.

9

Throughout this text the term coloniality is primarily understood in the modus of Walter Mignolo’s and others’ ongoing expansion of the term as discussed by Anibal Quijano in 1992/2000. That is, coloniality conceived not only as a historical but as a metamorphosing contemporary condition, inextricably twinned with a specific conceptualization of modernity first instituted by Western European thought and policymaking in the late 15th century. Cf. Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality. Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Durham, NC 2018.

10

The interview appeared in *France Nouvelle* 857, March 21, 1962. Reprinted in Annett Busch and Max Annas (eds.), *Ousmane Sembène. Interviews*, Jackson, MS 2008, 4. *Les statues meurent aussi* was officially censored in its uncut version until 1964, yet sporadically screened, notably on the occasion of the *First Congress of Black Writers and Artists* in Paris in 1956 where Sembène first saw the film. Cf. Sembène in: Raymond Bellour, Jean-Michel Frodon and Christine Van Assche (eds.), *Chris Marker*, Paris 2018. It had its theatrical release in its fully revised and reconstituted version only in 1968. For the most definitive timeline of the film’s censorship history see François Fronty <http://www.grecirea.net/textes/06TexteFF08.html> (15.05.2020).

11

For example, in the work of artists Candice Lin and Sami Beloji respectively. The mask in *Black Panther*, depicted in the film’s early scene of the anti-hero Erik Killmonger’s visit to the fictional “Museum of Great Britain” (i.e. the British Museum), is a hybrid object blending a horned *Kru* mask from Ivory Coast – of the kind Picasso acquired around 1912 – with a tribal sci-fi aesthetic. Thanks to Hannah Baader for pointing out Lin’s work in this context.

The fact is, Diop – the Senegalese politician, writer, educator, and media entrepreneur – hardly chose Resnais and Marker for any specific expertise on African artifacts, despite the stated initial brief, in 1950, for a “film about African sculpture”.¹² Neither was the commission due to any particular anti-colonialist commitments or insight on the part of Resnais and Marker, but to the cachet that at least Resnais’ rising fame would bring to the project and Diop’s young enterprise as a whole.

The film, screened in closed session at the Cannes Film Festival 1953, received awards in France at the time, and has variously been hailed as an enduring forerunner to a decolonial cinema. While these praises are all valid, they continue to footnote the decisive role of *Présence Africaine* which, as a client, essentially had to point and guide the budding auteurs toward the then everyday historical reality of colonialism with which the cineastes were by their own admission curiously unfamiliar.

Resnais would later “insist” that he not only “knew nothing about the question of colonialism”, but that it was a “notion practically unbeknownst” to him in 1950.¹³ At a time when Marker transitioned from being a film critic to becoming a maker, he, according to Resnais, at least “knew a little” about said colonial question.

One can easily imagine Marker’s contemporaneous first engagement with West African art as having been spurned on and literally informed by the concurrent production of *Les statues...*, principally advised as it was by the expertise of Ratton, the critic and art historian Madeleine Rousseau, and presumably by the research and attitudes of Balandier toward the fraught treatment of African cultural heritage under the French colonial empire.¹⁴

Writing in the 1951 volume *L’Afrique noire*, part of the broad-audience encyclopedia *Le monde en couleurs*, Marker declares the reason for the historically varying Western “fetishism” around so-called *art nègre* to be rather “simple”. He argues that primitivism – not merely a style, but an ostensibly objective and verifiable judgment of the object in question – had served as the material evidence and thus “moral alibi” for the actual primitivizing of the colonized subject.

In the essay Marker upends said alibi to expose the underlying hypocrisy it seeks to veil: “the blacks are not enslaved due to their inferiority but this inferiority is the result of their enslavement

¹²

François Fronty, *Cinéma d’Afrique: l’anticolonialisme des années 1950–1960*, in: *Cahiers de RECITS* 9, 2013, 43.

¹³

Alain Resnais, *Les statues meurent aussi et les ciseaux d’Anastasia*, in: *Téléciné* 175, 1972, 33–34.

¹⁴

On Balandier’s and others’ import see also Sarah Frioux-Salgas, *Les statues meurent aussi ...*, in: *Martinez-Jacquet, Ode au grand art*, 44–49.

instead”.¹⁵ If anything this would have sufficed as the *a priori* which Resnais considered to be lacking at the outset of the commission, which was initially to be titled and accordingly pitched as *L’Art Nègre*.

Since production on the film already started in London in 1950 (presumably to film the Benin bronzes in the British Museum), the film was actually produced in parallel consultation with the editorial work that went into the special issue “Art Nègre” published by *Présence Africaine* in 1951.¹⁶ The issue already mentions the future production of a film on black art, which is of course the film that had already been underway.

With regard to the founding period of *Présence Africaine* and the role this film would play in disseminating its concerns, it is worth bearing in mind that the initial idea for a film was supposed to be a celebration not just of black ancestral art but of contemporary black creativity, so as to counter the persisting myth in postwar France of a culturally inferior race. Proof of this is not least Diop’s groundbreaking envisioning of a multidisciplinary black culture festival, a “jamboree” as he called it when he pitched it to Paul Rivet, to be staged at the Musée de l’Homme in 1948 – too far ahead of his time and environment, it would turn out, and thus to no avail.¹⁷

Had it been for Diop, an enthusiastic cinephile according to his contemporaries, this planned film would thus not necessarily have to communicate a specifically topical, anti-colonial message which *Les statues...* continues to be claimed to deliver.

Instead, such a film could have been the portrait of black ingenuity as embodied by Cameroonian “dancer, nightclub owner, and man about town”,¹⁸ Vincent Eyoum-Moudio, in a picture possibly to be titled “Bongo”.¹⁹ As his proactive collaborations with contem-

15

Chris Marker, *Art Noir*, in: Doré Ogrizek (ed.), *L’Afrique noire*, Paris 1951, 30.

16

Marker quoted in Samuel Douhaire and Annick Rivoire, *Rare Marker*, in: *Libération*, March 5, 2003 (https://www.liberation.fr/cinema/2003/03/05/rare-marker_457649/; 11.08.2021).

17

Letter from Diop to Paul Rivet dated April 3, 1948, Fonds Paul Rivet (2 AP 1 C6d), Muséum national d’histoire naturelle Paris. Diop would have to wait another eight years until the inauguration of the First Congress of Black Artists and Writers and close to twenty for the unprecedented Premier festival Mondial des Arts Nègres in Dakar 1966.

18

Cf. Elizabeth Foster, *African Catholic. Decolonization and the Transformation of the Church*, Cambridge, MA 2019, 65, which also contains informative biographic details on Diop’s life before arriving in Paris in the mid-1930s. This characterization of Eyoum-Moudio can further be found in Buata B. Malele, *Les écrivains afro-antillais à Paris (1920–1960). Stratégies et postures identités*, Paris 2008. Eyoum-Moudio is also included in the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of African Thought*, Oxford 2010, 305.

19

Iwiyè Kala-Lobe, Alioune Diop et le cinéma africain, in: *Présence Africaine* 125, 1983, 329. This very much makes sense since for Diop any rehabilitation of an (West) African aesthetic and art would only prove relevant if it were to equally concern traditional heritage as well as cutting-edge positions in performing and visual arts.

poraneous “French culture brokers”²⁰ such as Sartre, Ratton, Leiris, Rivet, and André Gide evince, Diop – whom Resnais remembers to exude an “extremely seductive personality” while James Baldwin thought him reminiscent of an “old-time Baptist minister”²¹ – was fully aware that the emerging postwar marketplace of knowledge production and consumption depended not least on select authorship in successfully launching and advancing both content and cause.

With regard to the film’s more than decade-long censorship enforced by the French Film Board it has frequently been pointed out, not least by Marker himself, that this relentless bureaucratic obstructionism was above all due to a handful of sequences that only appear in the last third of the film. These briefly capture various representatives of the French government and thus of the country’s colonial regime, notably a young François Mitterrand who decades later would become president.

“All that was pretext for works of art is replaced, be it clothing, symbolic gestures, intrigues, or talking”, the film’s growingly urgent commentary states over images showing Mitterrand being received in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire in his function as *Ministre de la France d’outre mer*, followed by shots of the newly declared *citoyens* being instructed in the French art of bureaucracy.

These sequences thus suggest a persistent status quo of disempowering subservience and toxic assimilation that marked the colonial power relations of the Union Française (1946–1958). This sets up the following clash with the next shot, a detail of a painting showing a black figure breaking a pair of shackles in two. The sequence shows a serious-looking black painter working on this canvas in a studio. This artist is introduced and further personified principally as a negation: as “the black artist who says ‘no’”, who in the context of the preceding sequences and the voice-over thus primarily acts as a stand-in, signifying protest of colonial exploitation and servitude [Fig. 2].

More specifically, this novel, contemporary character “black artist” enacts resistance to the eradication of “black art and culture”, both at the hands of the colonizers as much as through self-sabotage; African art’s socio-religious context, according to the film, having been irrevocably vanquished through the new dependence of the black *citoyens* on not just imported services and goods but furthermore imported taste. The camera then pans to another canvas picturing a scene of hard labor: semi-abstracted elongated black figures at work in a quarry of some kind, balancing large rocks quadruple the size of their minuscule heads [Fig. 3].

20

Bennetta Jules-Rosette, *Conjugating Cultural Realities: Présence Africaine*, in: V. Y. Mudimbe (ed.), *The Surreptitious Speech. Présence Africaine and the Politics of Otherness 1947–1987*, Chicago and London 1992, 14–44, 14.

21

James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket*, New York 1985, 42. His is an interesting account of the First Congress in 1956 from an African-American perspective outside the realm of *Présence Africaine*.



[Fig. 2]

Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, *Les statues meurent aussi*, 1953, still from a black and white 16mm film transferred to digital video, 30 min. © Présence Africaine.



[Fig. 3]
Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, *Les statues meurent aussi*, 1953, still from a black and white 16mm film transferred to digital video, 30 min. © Présence Africaine.

This representation then transitions into the motif’s indexical counterpart: footage of an actual quarry where presumably indentured and almost entirely unclothed blacks are toiling away with pickaxes. These scenes are captioned stating that in the painting we just saw “the problem of the subject is not posed” [Figs. 4 and 5]. Rather, the “subject is this naturally ungrateful earth, this troublesome climate” and the “rhythm of the factory”, which here is not equivalent with the regime of mass culture as per Frankfurt School critique of Western enlightenment but, in contrast, with the “rhythm of nature”. “Ford meets Tarzan” – like Godard’s “Marx and Coca Cola” – the voice-over acerbically concludes, which, considering Tarzan’s Caucasian ethnicity, would seem somewhat of a non-sequitur.²²

With the shot of a large basket containing cotton, missing black subjectivity returns to the screen, albeit reduced to “the black man mutilated from his culture” and “without contact with our culture”, while, adding insult to injury, “his work is able to provide neither spiritual nor social sustenance”. And neither does the aforementioned black artist’s painting, according to the film, since his art is not really art in and of – not to mention for the sake of – itself. Rather this art’s function is that of a document, not of any particular style let alone aesthetic autonomy, but of socio-political and historical “transition”. Art of that kind, realist yet eccentric in manner, is, according to *Les statues...*, above all “provisional”. That is, an art made and perceived not in order “to last” but “to witness”, which are here presented as irreconcilables, though French realism had essentially claimed and fulfilled that dual ambition a century earlier, most famously perhaps in Gustave Courbet’s ironically later lost painting *The Stonebreakers*.

It is difficult to ascertain which, if any, contemporaneous anti-colonial positions Marker might have drawn on for this peculiar argument. Neither his aforementioned art-historical essay nor the film’s commentary contains bibliographic references or sources as such. The critical voices in France at the time on this subject were communist(-leaning) intellectuals: Sartre, the ethnographer Marcel Griaule, his student, the sociologist Georges Balandier, and the critic and writer Michel Leiris, specifically in their publications on race and colonialism for UNESCO shortly after its founding.²³ As were of course the critical triumvirate of the negritude movement that had already formed in Paris during the mid-1930s to early 1940s: Aimé Césaire, Leopold Senghor, and Léon-Gontran Damas of French Guyana, soon to be joined by the émigré African-American writer Richard Wright and the historian Cheikh Anta Diop.

²²

On Tarzan and racialized spectatorship also see Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, New York 2008 [1952], 131 ff5.

²³

Cf. the UNESCO publications by Marcel Griaule, *Enquête sur les relations entre les cultures*, Paris 1949 and Michel Leiris, *Race et civilisation*, Paris 1951.



[Fig. 4]

Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, *Les statues meurent aussi*, 1953, still from a black and white 16mm film transferred to digital video, 30 min. © Présence Africaine.



[Fig. 5]

Chris Marker and Alain Resnais, *Les statues meurent aussi*, 1953, still from a black and white 16mm film transferred to digital video, 30 min. © Présence Africaine.

Early in the film, Marker speaks of a kind of crisis of disenchantment befalling the creation and reception of African art, essentially all while a Western audience had been seeking out precisely these objects to re-enchant an industrialized everyday, going all the way back to the first decade of the 20th century: to Matisse, Derain, de Vlaminck, and most famously to Picasso's visit to the Trocadéro and his subsequent acquisition of African artifacts. "Black art, we look at it as if it had its reason for being in the pleasure it gives us. The intentions of the black who created it, the emotions of the black who looks at it, all of that escapes us", speculates the film's off-screen narrator.

Why Marker and Resnais, and by extension *Présence Africaine*, decided to continue to withhold the identity, or at least name, of "the artist who says 'no'" – before specifying any further intentions and emotions of this figure – remains unclear and unaddressed in the extensive literature on both the film and its genesis. Perhaps the artist who said "no" likewise said "no" to any exposure and publicity, unlike conspicuously virtually anyone else remotely connected to this production as evidenced in the credits. Consultation with researchers, curators and archivists at various institutions opened no further leads as to the identity of this work and the artist who made it, both featuring in a film to which an entire exhibition and publication – an *Ode* – has been devoted.²⁴ Neither the stills I pulled from the film showing this artist nor those of the actual works could be identified. Was he an actor hired to play the silent role of "the artist who says 'no'"? An extra, even?

Solving this lacuna is an initial three-page *Résumé* from 1951 that forms part of the film's original script and correspondence. This document is appended to a communication by the film's production company Tadié-Cinéma and authored by Marker and Resnais, and was submitted to the Director General of the Centre National du Cinéma in February 1955 as part of a screening visa request. This is the sole historical document, held at the CNC Archives, I know to exist from which we learn the artist's name: Wilson (Barcelos) Tiberio.²⁵

Tiberio appears in the third chapter of this treatment, which is titled *Palingénésie*, in this case meant to evoke the idea of a renaissance of genuine African art making in light of the "death" of the traditional customs and aesthetics. Causes for this death are defined there as the disappearance of African art's ritualistic and social dimension such as the waning powers of tribal chiefs but also the stated subversion of African art by the dominant Christian art canon as well as Islam; the cheapening of art into souvenir items

²⁴

Martinez-Jacquet, *Ode au grand art*. The catalogue includes a detailed list of biographies of individuals that were variously involved with the production, including painters Hans Hartung and Jacob Epstein, Colonel Pitt-Rivers, Helena Rubinstein, and Tristan Tzara.

²⁵

This seems to be the artist's full legal name according to a profile by Rivadavia de Souza, Wilson Tiberio ..., in: *A Noite Ilustrada*, April 16, 1940, 12–13. He seems to have soon preferred to go by simply Tiberio as his artist's name.

for export; and lastly the contempt for the folkloric or traditional art by *évoluées* – black Africans and Antillaises educated in France directly exposed to Western culture and thus to differing standards of beauty, aura, and taste. Tiberio’s art is introduced here as a “case study” of “new forms”, breaking away from any folkloric context, instead modern in its direct dealing with political issues.

According to this palingenesis, the plight of the proletariat is to be “interlocked” with the image of the black subject as a taxonomy of oppression. Work – that is, forced labor – here infers both the manifestation of systemic oppression and artistic labor conceived as a possible action to overthrow the former. Marker and Resnais at this point thus still ally and equate the distinct subjecthoods of colonialism with those of capitalist exploitation generally to the ends of a universally consolidated proletarian force overthrowing the system, much as Sartre had claimed in his 1948 *Orphée noir* introduction to Senghor’s poetry, which was reprinted and, shortly after, heavily criticized in *Présence Africaine* by Diop and Frantz Fanon.

In fact, the one part of Marker’s original script contained in the Centre National du Cinéma file that bears significant differences to the film’s final voice-over text is the rather brief section that introduces Tiberio, who there exemplifies the colonial process by which, according to Marker, “the black creator and inventor has been made into a proletarian” by the colonizers (“Du Noir créateur et inventeur, nous avons fait un prolétaire”). This problematic assessment was later edited from the voice-over, as was the following short commentary on Tiberio’s agency as “the black artist who says ‘no’”: “This civilization that he has not chosen, he at least wants to choose its liberating aspect. And in order to fight for this freedom, he accepts that his art submits to the duties of combat and refuses the picturesque so as to simply testify to the condition of his people”,²⁶ which again are not really Tiberio’s “people” or his “condition” per se, except on the basis of *race*, but rather represent his works’ subject matter documenting the colonized West Africa of the Union Française.

The 2010 exhibition devoted to the film and to treating the objects therein virtually as actors (in the Latourian sense) meanwhile makes no reference to Tiberio; nor do most contemporary critical analyses of Marker’s oeuvre generally. The film theorist Nora Alter credits Marker’s overall “intellectual project” with “recuperating names, events, and individuals from the dustbin of history”, “offering them a second chance in the world” which rings true if one thinks of his *Le Joli Mai* (1963), yet would somehow not apply to the treatment of virtually the only living black artist making an appearance in *Les statues*....²⁷

²⁶

“Cela c’est l’artiste noir qui le dit. Et afin de combattre pour cette liberté, il accepte que son art se soumette aux devoirs du combat et refuse le pittoresque pour témoigner simplement de la condition de son peuple.” Passage from original script held at the Centre National du Cinéma.

²⁷

Nora M. Alter, *Chris Marker*, Urbana-Champaign, IL 2006, 57.

“The juxtaposition of images of art (which Marker rediscovers in the movements of a black athlete or the rhythms of a jazz drummer) with images of severe colonial exploitation (and instrumentalization of the African body), shows powerfully the fight of art against destiny, the resistance against mutilation of culture”, is how another millennial discussion of the film summarizes the scene. Here, the actual images of art – Tiberio’s paintings – despite being front and center, remain yet again ignored, unnamed.²⁸

In this conclusion, the new black art rising from the ashes of commodification and mutilation is supposed to be one of “hybridity”, a postmodernist criterion in the way it is applied to – what and whom exactly? Is this consistent treatment of Tiberio – or rather the lack thereof – simply another case of Manet’s *Laure*, the obscuration of whom the art historian Denise Murrell has blamed on – cue Jafa – “ideological blindness” and “institutional silence”?²⁹ “Silence and blindness”, according to Murrell, “renders depictions of blacks ... as unimportant.” Thus, by not seeing *Laure*, or Tiberio, or any other minor(itarian) history “the figure, in the absence of narratives that animate viewer curiosity and interest, becomes invisible even while in plain view”.³⁰

An exception to this oversight is a recent article by the film theorist Sam di Iorio in which he mentions the appearance of Tiberio in Marker’s film, briefly noting the absence of any further identification – and thus contextualization – of the artist and of the archival footage that precedes and follows him. Di Iorio states that any of this content must have appeared “indecipherable at the time” – and ostensibly has by and large remained so since.³¹ Di Iorio’s claim, in this connection, that “[j]ust like the statues at the start of the film, the characters who appear in this final reel signify less by their singular presence than by their capacity to present black culture as a unified field” – that is, united by “a history of exploitation and persecution” – however, fails to consider that the film and this contemporary reading of it thereby also risks perpetuating the much older conception of black subjectivity as “fundamentally unrepresentable”, as Achille Mbembe (and others before him) has highlighted it in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

28

Matthias De Groof, *Statues also Die – But Their Death Is not the Final Word*, in: Peter Kravanja (ed.), *Chris Marker*, special issue of *Image [&] Narrative* 11, 2010, 39.

29

Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity*, New Haven, CT 2018, 2. Murrell relates the notion of blindness to T.J. Clark’s own admission of just such a predisposition with regard to French modernist painting.

30

Ibid., 3.

31

Sam di Iorio, *Les vivants et les morts*. Marker, Resnais et Les statues meurent aussi, in: *Trafic* 108, 2018, 54 (translation mine). Di Iorio first mentioned Tiberio’s appearance in an earlier article, *The Fragile Present: Statues Also Die with Night and Fog*, in: *South Central Review* 33, 2016, 15–29. The French essay represents a revised and thematically divergent continuation of that essay while neither text draws on the original film script and attendant correspondence.

Since Tiberio’s art is, according to the film’s commentary, not afforded an aesthetic agency or “singular presence” in and of itself, the argument further renders Tiberio’s presence indeed statue-like; albeit again in the sense Mbembe paraphrases Hegel: “[...] as statues without language or awareness of themselves, human entities incapable of ridding themselves definitely of the animal presence with which they were mixed”, thus “unconscious of their universality”.³²

Much like the film’s treatment of the complex linking cultural heritage to colonialism must have built on the consultation between the directors and *Présence Africaine*, this casting of Tiberio as the sole black contemporary artist in *Les statues...* might have come as a referral by the journal, which had discussed his work as early as 1948, that is, shortly after Tiberio’s arrival in Paris. Literature on Tiberio’s life and work is largely anecdotal, and his work has not received much exposure, neither in his native Brazil nor in France, where the artist died in 2005 after a rather extraordinary biography that brought him from Porto Alegre in the very south of Brazil, to Salvador, Rio de Janeiro, and ultimately, in his mid-twenties, to the declining epicenter of mid-century modernism and a colonial empire alike – liberated Paris.³³

Tiberio, having been born between 1920 and 1925, grew up in the last decade of the República Velha giving way to the dictatorial regime under Gétúlio Vargas, who claimed power in the course of the coup d’état of 1930. While Brazil had already become a sovereign nation by the end of the 19th century, it was nevertheless a society crucially defined by the historical, religious, and social ramifications of *race*. As such it was only logical that the *Black Atlantic* as it manifested itself in Latin America would be of concern to *Présence Africaine*. Writing in its sixth issue in 1949, the author D[...] Loys Moulin paints a picture of Brazilian heterogenous society significantly less fraught by racism and oppression than the United States but also postwar France.

Moulin observes everyday instances of interracial “fraternity”, in the countryside as much as on the Copacabana, while latent stratification along class and race, however, persist. (Moulin qualifies this stage as “a racism which seems reduced to formulas and to have lost its bite”.) Interesting for the discussion of Tiberio’s departure is Moulin’s impression of this vast nation’s rather small art scene contending with the kind of provincialisms that trigger “artists’ fight above all against a fairly generalized academicism and against an audience which limits its aspirations to known and accepted forms

³²

Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, Durham, NC 2017, 11–12.

³³

A primary source is a website dedicated to the artist created by his daughter (who could not be reached at the time of writing), the contents of which are for the most part undated and difficult to verify: <http://wilsontiberio.free.fr/> (26.08.2021). Carlos Roberto Saraiva da Costa Leite, Wilson Tiberio: a negritude de um gênio das artes plásticas, <https://www.geledes.org.br/wilson-tiberio-a-negritude-de-um-genio-das-artes-plasticas/> (26.08.2021) and Francielly Dossin, Primeras Notas Biograficas Sobre “O Negro mago do pincel”, in: *Encontro da ANPAP* 24, 2015, 239–254, provide concise biographic accounts.



A NOITE

16-4-940

Wilson TIBERIO,

CRONICA DE Rivadavia DE SOUZA



O ideal de CONFORTO através dos tempos

O automovel

Foi em 1765 que um official francez, Nicolau Cugnot, fez rodar deante do duque de Choiseul o primeiro automovel. Era um vehiculo a vapor, pesado e lento, de aspecto bizarro.

Ficou desde logo patente não ser o vapor o meio de propulsaõ adequado ao automovel. Assim, a iniciativa de Cugnot permaneceu estacionaria até fins do seculo passado, quando surgiu o motor de explosão, potente e leve. Desde então, a industria automobilistica jámais cessou de progredir. Ver-

dadeira maravilha da mecanica, o automovel, encurtando as distancias, deu ao homem contemporaneo uma noção nova do que seja rapidez e conforto.

Esse novo rythmo accelerado de vida exigiu a criação de Gillette. O homem moderno não podia continuar na dependencia dos antigos e morosos processos de barbear. Em Gillette elle encontrou o mais simples e pratico aparelho de fazer a barba. Siga o progresso! Barbeie-se em casa, diariamente, com Gillette.



Gillette
Caixa Postal 1797 - Rio de Janeiro



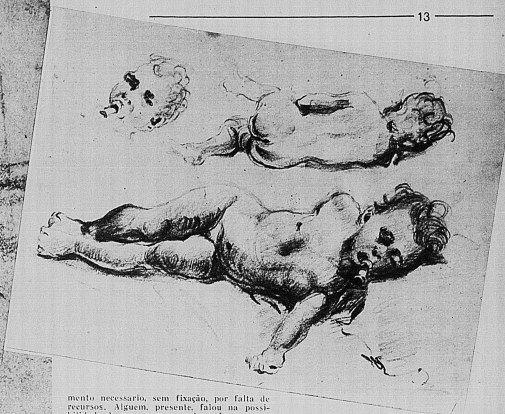
O artista que NÃO SABE SE COMPRAR UM LAPIS ou TOMAR UMA MEDIA com PÃO E MANTEIGA...

NASCER o pobre mas nasceu artista. Essa ansia de criação, que não obedece a acuratos calculculos, que não obedece ao papel, sem insistencia. Muitos dos seus trabalhos, que não foram fixados, por falta de recursos, caíram esquecidos, perdendo a forma, desaparecendo no fundo da sua mente que não tem paciencia. Nunca lhe ofereceram um "atelier" para trabalhar. Nunca lhe deram uma oportunidade para que ele pudesse alargar de frente a sua propria visao. Porque o caso desse estranho artista que o Rio desconhece tem o seu lado tragico: sua visao, vindo do limbo, quasi se perde no meio de uma serie de dificuldades materiais. Aluno da Escola de Belas Artes, muitas vezes ele deita de tomar a sua pobre media com pão e manteiga para comprar lapis. E outras vezes, ele se afira, com alma, a um trabalho qualquer. Stilla, que reza, seu tempo inicial se immobiliza. O trabalho ia em meio. Mas o material acabava-se. Nem tinta, nem lapis, nem tela.

O artista, então, desce até onde se encontram os frangalhos da sub-humanidade. São homens de pessima catadura, hehehehe hehehe das baratas. São mulheres que mergulham definitivamente no grande oceano da miseria, cujas ondas balançaem-lhes o corpo pesando, ora contraindo a longuetas horizontaes desconhecidas e helos, ora arretrando-as violentamente sobre os contrarios da margem oposta, nas revoltas vazalhas de resaca... Wilson Tiberio Tiberio - ass. 1

[Fig. 6a]

Rivadavia de Souza, Wilson Tiberio, o artista que não sabe se compra um lapis ..., in: A Noite Ilustrada, April 16, 1940, 12.



mento necessário, sem fixação, por falta de recursos. Alguns, presentes, fazem na possibilidade de uma pequena subvenção por parte do governo do Rio Grande do Sul. Todos acharam ótima a ideia. Mas isso, é claro, não resolve. De ideias vitimas o mundo está cheio e a situação do mundo encontra-se assim como o leitor vê.

Wilson Barcelos Tiberio, para aproveitar uma expressão que tanto tem de usual como de vaga é um artista de cor. Sua vocação revela-se logo, espontânea e forte. Os críticos, naturalmente, descobrem sua personalidade, localizam seu temperamento, marcam os rumos da sua arte. Ao reporter, porém, cabe

apresentar o lado real da questão: Tiberio precisa estudar. E não é justo que se permita a interferência do destino em assunto tão objetivo, mesmo porque o destino não tem nada com isso. Os amantes da arte, as estruturas inteligentes, os que ainda possuem sensibilidade, esses, sim, estão convocados a auxiliar Wilson Tiberio, o artista que se debate nas agudas pontas deste dilema: ou compra um lapis ou toma uma medla com pio e mateia...

o artista desconhecido — sentase a um café do bar mal frequentado. Arranja, como pode, um lapis e um pedaço de papel. E assim, sem prancheta, sem cavalete, sem o cuidado, o polimento dos profissionais, vai compondo seus tipos, omargos e amarguradas tipos, no alívio da tolerância e da sensibilidade do artista.

Tiberio — digamos assim: Tiberio, para não o nome argentino do imperador — é gaúcho. Nacera em plena capital dos Pampeiros, isto é, no Rio de Janeiro, da Silva, vive o lirismo de Petreles, comunicando ao ritmo urbano todos os encontros de estado que vive nele.

Wilson Barcelos Tiberio, limido, modesto, humilde, esteve na redação de "A NOITE" Ilustrada, trazido pelo braço de outro. Mostrando seus trabalhos, tirados de dentro de uma pilha de pasta de cartão, amarrada com barbante. E no lago nos dizendo que não era um artista, não desejava expor os seus trabalhos. Quería só estudar. Quería que alguém se interessasse pela sua situação. E falou, finalmente, sem rebuços, ali estavam alguns desenhos, vários estudos e muitas manchas apenas "manchadas", sem o acal-

As gravuras mostram, o conter do esquerdo para a direita, "Maternidade"; "Wilson Tiberio trabalhando em seu atelier"; auto-retrato e (estudo) "Crianças".

Para manter o cabelo bem penteado

POMADA e LIQUIDO

Stacomb

Carmen Miranda

escreve de NOVA YORK

"...aqui, onde tenho optimos productos, não deixo de, com verdadeira saudade, lembrar-me do Creme dental e do sabonete EUCALOL que tanto me agradavam pelas suas qualidades insuperáveis e que eram usados por mim diariamente, neste meu querido e longínquo Brasil..."

Carmen Miranda

Eucalol

BRASIL

[Fig. 6b]

Rivadavia de Souza, Wilson Tiberio, o artista que não sabe se compra um lapis ..., in: A Noite Ilustrada, April 16, 1940, 13.

since a long time”. When the author ponders the possibilities and limitations that come with being black and poor in rural Brazil – the very situation in which Tiberio grew up – his profile of the young Brazilian of color whose “desire to learn and to raise oneself appears at the present time so strong in so many young people that the poorest sons of peasants sometimes devote their free evenings to study”, reads as if the author explicitly modeled this hopeful image on none other than Tiberio himself.³⁴

In fact, Tiberio seems to have enjoyed a rather astonishing rise as a contemporary artist in his home country – his drawings, his image, and a stylized self-portrait as the quintessential smart bohemian artist who “doesn’t know whether to buy a pen or half a loaf of bread with butter” featured in a double-spread in 1940 of the popular tabloid *A Noite Ilustrada* [Fig. 6a and b].³⁵

The reason and possibility for Tiberio’s rather unlikely relocation to France was apparently thanks to an attaché at Rio’s French Embassy who had seen an exhibition of Tiberio’s work in Rio in 1947 and recommended the artist for a bursary to study mural painting in Paris.

I want to invoke biographic details of Tiberio’s life, including his many travels and his global exhibition activity, where they seem consequential to the treatment of coloniality in his work, predominantly in painting. In so doing, I also seek to make the argument that Tiberio’s work of the 1950s – working in a capital as much as in a waning empire marked not merely by the aftermath of World War II but by the corrosive buildup of colonialism – represents the most challenging and transformative of his career in that it performs a systematic (dis)engagement with a Western modernist legacy in which the artist himself had partly been trained.

From Brazilian newspaper clippings we learn that Tiberio began his art education in his hometown Porto Alegre and subsequently studied at the country’s foremost art academy, Rio’s Escola de Belas Artes whose faculty included émigré artists who had likely been trained in European modernist curricula (an article from 1945 mentions a “Professor Hermann”).³⁶ He moved in various avant-garde and communist circles in Rio, most interestingly as a founding member, in 1944, of Abdias do Nascimento’s pioneering Teatro Experimental do Negro (*TEN*).³⁷

34

D. Loys Moulin, *Le Nègre dans le monde: Le Brésil et le problème noir*, in: *Présence Africaine* 6, 1949, 61–69 (translation mine).

35

De Souza, Wilson Tiberio Tiberio would continue to be featured in various Brazilian newspapers and magazines between 1940 until 1946, attesting not only his relative broad exposure in Brazil’s cultural scene but also its presumably rather small scene of progressive artists during that period.

36

Cf. Um pintor humilde: Wilson Tibério e sua arte, in: *Fon Fon*, November 17, 1945, 8.

37

Cf. Abdias do Nascimento, Teatro experimental do negro: trajetória e reflexões, in: *Estudos Avançados* 18, São Paulo 2004, 209–224, here 210.

His artistic activism is reflected in the body of work Tiberio had come to be known for in the Brazilian press, which centered on his impressions of the city’s favelas and on depicting distinct Afro-Brazilian social settings of Candomblé culture – the syncretic religious tradition whose origins draw on West African rites of Yoruba and related cultures that slaves had held onto upon their arrival in the New World [Figs. 7 and 8]. Tiberio’s style, chosen to capture the exuberance of these congregations, had become increasingly fluid and nimble, helped by his use of warmly hued water-based pigments, moving away from his earlier individuated and dramatized portraits. According to another newspaper article Tiberio would officially join the country’s Communist Party in 1946, shortly before his departure for Paris.³⁸

1947, the year of Tiberio’s arrival in Paris, has variously been considered a “turning point” in the aftermath of the liberated capital, and, by extension, the state of both the French Communist Party (PCF) and the city’s art world(s). It was “a year of division and of a state of *‘incivisme’*”, a crisis of communality following the *épuration* – France’s version of de-nazification – manifesting in an eroded sense of civic responsibility.³⁹ The art historian Laurence Bertrand Dorléac speaks of a “negative turning point of the French art scene”,⁴⁰ negative not least for the reigning prewar style – that is, the various abstractionist movements sometimes indiscriminately grouped into a singular *École de Paris*.

Conversely, the year further represented “a turning point in the promotion of Socialist Realism”, which would come to thrive as “*Nouveau Réalisme*”.⁴¹ The rehabilitated and emerging second-wave avant-garde traditionally associated with leftist politics would soon be vilified by Louis Aragon and others of the PCF, as the corrupt bourgeois aesthetic disconnected from a postwar *reality*, which, factions of the Party claimed, only a mimetic – yet often highly staged – socialist realist style could adequately give image to.

What kind of specifically racially coded postwar reality are we actually referring to in this historical discussion? Differently put, if Paris in 1947 marked a moment of ideological polarization with regard to abstraction and realism, why or how would such a dispute affect a painter with a colonial background, migrating to France to further push his academicist practice, while eager to explore a

³⁸

O pintor Wilson Tiberio ingressa no Partido Comunista do Brasil, in: *Tribuna Popular*, December 18, 1946, 3.

³⁹

See Natalie Adamson, *Painting, Politics and the Struggle for the École de Paris, 1944–1964*, London/New York 2009, 115.

⁴⁰

Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *Nach der Befreiung*, Berlin 2016, 139 (translation mine).

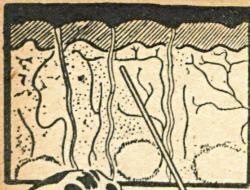
⁴¹

Cécile Pichon-Bonin and Lucia Piccioni, Art and Communism in Postwar France: The Impossible Task of Defining a French Socialist Realism, in: Catherine Dossin (ed.), *France and the Visual Arts since 1945*, London/New York 2019, 23–38, here 23.



[Fig. 7]

Ney Machado, As 'Baianas' Estão Se Acabando ..., in: *Revista da Semana* 30, July 26, 1947, 9. Caption: "O pintor Wilson Tibério prepara o modelo para um dos seus quadros sobre tipos de Bahia" (The painter Wilson Tibério arranges a model for one of his typical Bahian paintings [translation mine]).



QUANDO FALA A SCIENTIA

Cumpra ouvir-lhe á advertência. A pelle flacida, sem viço, e começo de velhice precoce. O uso do Creme Rugól, em massagens diárias, fortalece os tecidos, envigora a epiderme, porque Rugól se infiltra até ás camadas sub-cutâneas, agindo como revitalizador. Com Rugól a pelle se conserva sadia, sem cravos, espinhas, manchas e rugas.

Creme
RUGÓL
ALVIM & FREITAS, LTDA S. PAULO

Desperte a Bilis do seu Fígado

e saltará da cama disposto para tudo

Seu fígado deve produzir diariamente um litro de bilis. Si a bilis não corre livremente, os alimentos não são digeridos e apodrecem. Os gases incham o estômago. Sobrevem a prisão de ventre. Você se sente abatido e como que envenenado. Tudo é amargo e a vida é um martírio.

Uma simples evacuação não eliminará o causa. Neste caso, as Pilulas Carters para o Fígado são extraordinariamente eficazes. Fazem correr esse litro de bilis e você se sente disposto para tudo. São suaves e, contudo, especialmente indicadas para fazer a bilis correr livremente. Peça as Pilulas Carters para o fígado. Não aceite outro produto. Preço Cr\$ 3,00



"Praça Onze", de Wilson Tibério

Um pintor humilde — Wilson Tibério e sua arte

WILSON Tibério é um artista negro que honra a sua raça e eleva o nome de seu país, Brasileiro, filho do Rio Grande do Sul, onde começou a estudar desenho, quando tinha apenas treze anos, esse pintor silencioso e modesto, cujo talento define uma legítima vocação artística, veio, com dezesseis anos, para o Rio de Janeiro, e aqui continuou a cultivar os seus pendores, e a aperfeiçoar-se na técnica da paleta para satisfazer ao grande soanhador interior de sua vida.

ram pelo preto genial cujas dificuldades decorrem, sem dúvida, de sua condição humilde e de suas origens étnicas.

Seus quadros revelam um pintor de traços firmes, de técnica segura e de marcante personalidade. Tudo isso lhe dá um valor que ninguém, vendo-lhe as telas, ou co-

(Conclue na página 74)



"Súplica", de Wilson Tibério

Seu gênero é a pintura a óleo fixando motivos afro-brasileiros, em que é, negavelmente, um mestre sutil, um impressionista da boa escola. Entretanto, durante muito tempo, Wilson Tibério, que tem lutado amarga e duramente, na terra carioca, para ser compreendido e para vencer, viveu pintando retratos, e nesse sentido produziu obras que muito o distinguiram entre os artistas do gênero.

Tibério teve como iniciadores da sua formação artística o professor Hermann, de Porto Alegre, e o saudoso artista Bruno Lechowski; que vivamente se interessa-

[Fig. 8]

Um pintor humilde – Wilson Tiberio e sua arte, in: *Fon-Fon*, November 17, 1945, 8. Newspaper clipping showing two undated works by Tiberio.

phantasmic Africa as the pivotal yet colonized place of personal artistic identification and projection? Not much is known about the circumstances that led to the newcomer Tiberio gaining the opportunity for a solo show “with Brazilian themes” at the then up and coming Galerie Arc-en-ciel in 1947 as well as a grant to travel the A.O.F. (Afrique-Occidentale française) territories sponsored by the recently reopened Musée de l’Homme in 1948.⁴²

Both developments suggest he quickly engaged with the circle of *Présence Africaine*, which was also founded in 1947, and whose link to the Musée de l’Homme was most strongly established by way of its director Paul Rivet, Marcel Griaule, and Balandier. Tiberio is said to have attended lectures on “ethnology-sociology” at the Musée’s research labs. While Tiberio was traveling West Africa, his Paris debut was reviewed in the journal in 1948 by Jean Caillens, a little-known writer yet essentially the principal art critic of the publication throughout its founding decade, who also worked at the gallery and bookstore La Porte Latine.⁴³

Titled *Aller et retour* the text is a two-person review that contrasts the painter Hubert Kponton with Tiberio’s Brazil work.⁴⁴ Kponton’s – “Togo’s foremost black painter” – work was noted for a placid style devoid of historical and thus colonial markers, consequently deemed “African folklore” by Caillens.⁴⁵ Tiberio’s work, in turn, he considered to represent a counter-model to Kponton. A timely representation of tricontinental black subjectivity, the work seemed informed by a transatlantic, and in this case, personal history of enslavement and its ramifications for a black working class of the New World. Tiberio’s art is thus highly praised by Caillens.

Rather arbitrarily though, he situates these geo-historically specific works within a Western modernist canon, rattling off Picasso’s famous “Blue Period” beginning in 1900, Matisse, and even Van Gogh as critical paradigms. Even more arbitrary, yet also more significant to this discussion, is Caillens’ assertion that Tiberio’s “interest in abstraction goes only so far in that he doesn’t systematize it”. And how could he, given that the “voice of his blood”

42

Information on this gallery is scant. Arc-en-Ciel seems to have been an intimate exhibition and artist’s meeting space run by a certain Vicomtesse de Gaigneron, wife of the bourgeois painter Jean de Gaigneron, located on rue de Sèvres, in the heart of existentialist St. Germain de Près. The space predominantly showed up and coming abstractionists such as Soulages, Hartung, and Atlan throughout the late 1940s to 1950s. Cf. Albin Michel, *Michel Ragon. Journal d’un critique d’art desabusé*, Paris 2013, 37.

43

According to sources mentioned, regions visited in 1947/48 include Senegal, Soudan Français (today Mali), and Dahomey (today Benin).

44

Jean Caillens, *Aller et retour. Deux peintres*, in: *Présence Africaine* 5, 1948, 859–860 (translation mine).

45

Kponton would go on to found the Musée Historique et Artistique Kponton in Lomé, Togo, which today is part of the Musée National Togolais:
https://collections.si.edu/search/detail/edanmdm:siris_sil_529062?q=record_ID%3Asiris_sil_529062&record=1&hlterm=record_ID%3Asiris_sil_529062 (10.03.2020).

(i.e., his *race*) “appears to protect him from all [foreign] influences”, so Caillens reasons.

As unremarkably (positively) racist – considering the time and place, colonial France in 1948 – as this criticism may seem, it is crucially demonstrative of the slow changing attitudes and opinions determining the Western discourse by the avant-garde-ethnographic milieu of the postwar years vis-à-vis the art of the colonies and their contemporary entries to the rather heterogenous art scenes of liberated Paris. As such, this reception recalls the aforementioned Alain Locke, in his call for black aesthetic autonomy achieved by de-Westernization. What exactly did (not) systematizing (Western) abstraction – this visual shift turned style, but also in postwar Paris, a highly political and polarizing issue – mean to and for an artist of color from the New World, arriving in an arguably *postwar* colonialist Paris, having just been expelled from Senegal by the French government?⁴⁶

Tiberio’s painting briefly glimpsed in *Les statues...* – notably the thinning elongation of the human figure suggesting both simplification and malnourishment – conspicuously evokes the fractured figurative return in the arts occurring in the immediate aftermath of the liberation (and to some degree also the style ostensibly uninformed by Western aesthetics: the *Poto-Poto School* founded in 1951 in Brazzaville, notably the work of Ossali and Albert Bandila).

With regard to postwar artistic representation of human anatomy, the pronounced emaciation and deterioration has frequently been remarked upon. The European body (politic) variously idealized and fetishized from antiquity through the Renaissance to fascist high art à la Breker emerged severely damaged after 1945. And how could it not, considering food shortages and economic devastation, not to mention the then emerging photographs evincing the dehumanization of the concentration camp, its representative human figure being that of the living dead. To speak, as Dorléac does, of “postwar skepticism toward the human figure” is putting it mildly.⁴⁷ Be it Giacometti’s or Richier’s acclaimed twig-like, coarse torsos or their realist counterparts in the *ugly* paintings of Francis Gruber or Bernard Buffet, the body was cause not for celebration, projection, or titillation but for mourning, shame, and horror. From it emerged an entire genre in postwar Paris that has been labeled a second-wave *miserabilism*. (Michel Leiris considered this shift toward the miserable simply as the engagement with a “real present” while the existentialist poet François Ponge spoke

⁴⁶

Throughout this essay, the notion of postwar is understood by way of Hannah Feldman’s often cited revision of this historiographically problematic term in light of the Indochine Wars, the Algeria Crisis, and the various colonial military conflicts that persisted well into the *Trente Glorieuses* (1945–1975). In her book dealing with “Decolonizing art and representation in France between 1945–1962”, art(ists) and intellectual history from a French-colonial context – including the very concept of *négritude* – are virtually absent, save for brief mentions of Frantz Fanon. Cf. Hannah Feldman, *From a Nation Torn. Decolonizing Art and Representation in France between 1945–1962*, Durham, NC 2014.

⁴⁷

Dorléac, *Nach der Befreiung*, 118.

of “the human, threadbare, in the demise and misery of the world, departing from nothing ...”.⁴⁸)

Whether and in how far that undeniable current had an effect on Tiberio’s drastic re-conception of the human body upon his involuntary return from the A.O.F. is subject to speculation. Though when Maker and Resnais would enthusiastically draw on Tiberio as their example of research into black “nouvelles formes” in the film’s aforementioned synopsis, there is little doubt as to the recognition of his figuration as positively contemporary. In this regard, the problematic transience allotted to Tiberio’s art would even meet Baudelaire’s by then largely obsolescent definition of modernity.

Critically though, Tiberio would expand this abovementioned cast of historical and modern postwar bodies by a hitherto unseen actor: the no less modern body of late colonial subjugation and terror. Stated Tiberio:

I was embarrassed by the large plantations around Dakar and was shocked by the existing slavery regime. One afternoon, while painting the workers of a quarry (hundreds of blacks carrying huge stones on their heads), I saw a white foreman hustling the men to get moving. I dropped the palette knife and gave the foreman a thorough and wordless beating [...] a week later, the French commissioner expelled me from the territory as an agitator and subversive element.⁴⁹

While his depictions of mining laborers are not dated, Tiberio must have produced the canvases back in Paris on the basis of on-site sketches, around 1949/50 when *Les statues...* was commissioned. The labor depicted exhibits a country marked by the exploitation of natural resources, to this day industrial limestone and phosphate. In fact, Tiberio may have witnessed the implementing of the very first cement plant by the Dakar-based company SOCOCIM in 1948, and certainly the industrial limestone quarries in the Thiès region 30 kilometers inland from Dakar.⁵⁰ The workers in the painting are rendered softer in the foreground yet become mere stick figures in the background, whose twig-like extremities clash with the robust polyhedral stones, quadruple in scale to their pin-sized heads.

Shock and, to a lesser degree, embarrassment as the affective catalysts toward giving visual testimony to exploitation and suffering would further comport with the artist’s function as per (social)

⁴⁸

Cf. *Paris–Paris 1937–1957* (exh. cat. Paris, Centre Pompidou), ed. by Germain Viatte, Paris 1981, 130–131. Also see *Paris Postwar. Art and Existentialism 1945–55* (exh. cat. London, Tate Gallery), ed. by Frances Morris, London 1994.

⁴⁹

This quote is attributed to Tiberio, quoted in *Negros Pintores* (exh. cat. São Paulo, Museu Afro Brasil), São Paulo 2008, 58 (translation mine).

⁵⁰

Cf. <http://cmdseneal.com/chambre-des-mines-le-calcaire/> (12.11.2020).

realism proper. Specifically in view of the increasing conception of art, at the time, as the effective vehicle of *témoignage* (testimony)⁵¹ but furthermore by way of the legacy of 19th-century realism.⁵²

Tiberio’s painting in *Les statues...* seems a study or precursor toward the later oil canvas *Les forçats* (Forced Labor), likely painted in the early 1950s.⁵³ *Les forçats* was reproduced and discussed in a 1961 profile on Tiberio by literary scholar Gerald Moore in Ulli Beier’s Nigerian art journal *Black Orpheus* [Fig. 9].⁵⁴ Moore – similarly to Caillens a decade earlier – also deploys an essentialist racialized critique or what we might call positive racism. He admonishes the purported criticism of “critics in the big cities or the coast [who] accused Tiberio of racialism”, that is, the reception of his pre-emigration work back in São Paulo, Rio, and Salvador.

The accusation of his art being “racialist” had been due to Tiberio’s allegedly exclusive incorporation of black subjectivity in his work, which, however, is not quite accurate as early portraits evince.⁵⁵ Moore introduces the discussion on cubism by writing that in Tiberio’s work there may well be “borrowings from cubism”. However, such clearly negatively inflected “borrowings” on the part of Tiberio – because they here either risk or lack authenticity? – are for Moore “always subordinate to the humanism and compassion of his art”, as if form and content were irreconcilable, a style like cubism specifically being incapable of communicating concepts as large as “humanism”.⁵⁶

51

The group L’Homme témoin formed and first exhibited in Paris January 1948 at the Galerie du Bac. The year 1951 saw the first themed exhibitions with the title *Les peintres témoins de leur temps*, then held at the Musée d’art moderne, coinciding with Marker’s and Resnais’ commission for *Les statues...*

52

Recall Courbet’s reaction to happening upon the real-life *Stonebreakers* in 1849: “[N]ear Masnières I stopped to consider two men breaking stones on the highway. It’s rare to meet the most complete expression of poverty [orig.: misère], so an idea for a painting came to me on the spot. I made an appointment with them at my studio for the next day.” Quoted in Michael Fried, *Courbet’s Realism*, Chicago, IL 1990, 99–100.

53

A 1957 second solo exhibition in Paris at Galerie Marcel Bernheim appears to have consisted of more serene and archetypal themes such as the nude and mother with child scenes. See Jean Caillens, Tiberio, in: *Présence Africaine* 16, 1957, 190–191.

54

Gerald Moore, Tiberio, in: *Black Orpheus* 9, 1961, 62–63, with unpaginated image spread.

55

In this regard we might consider the reception of works by painters like Romare Bearden, Kerry James Marshall, Henry Taylor, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye to name discrete positions known for a pronounced focus on black subjectivity or what Moten refers to as the “refusal to pay attention to the white gaze/imaginary...”, the work “eradicating” it by “practising their absence”. Moten, *Black Topological*, 20.

56

Chika Okeke-Agulu briefly discusses this review where the work is translated as *The Convicts*. (The website dedicated to Tiberio titles the work *Hard Labour*.) Cf. Chika Okeke-Agulu, *Postcolonial Modernism. Art and Decolonization in Twentieth-Century Nigeria*, Durham, NC 2015, 160. However, the original French title denotes the historical reality of forced labor, one of the principal reasons for the migration movements of French colonial subjects into British territory. Also see A.I. Asiwaju, *Migrations as Revolt. The Example of the Ivory Coast and the Upper Volta before 1945*, in: *Journal of African History* 17, 1976, 580. Okeke-Agulu writes: “Adamantly against abstraction, which he [Tiberio] called ‘intellectual

In *Les forçats*, more so than the abovementioned precursor, figuration and abstraction are conspicuously merging, first and foremost through mimicry – or rather, through *extraction*. The rocks carried by the forced laborers appear as only slightly more contrast-heavy and rougher polyhedrons than the geology that makes up the *cubistic* background as such. Reproductions of *Les forçats* are solely retrievable in black and white yet we have to assume, in view of other works from the 1950s, that the actual painting is composed in variously colored yet earthy, muted shades of ochres, reds, and possibly blues. Cubistic space here becomes interlocked with natural resource.

This is particularly pronounced in the figure in the left corner. The native's tensile arms, extremities here serving a specific manual operation, become quasi-human, or what Aimé Césaire in 1950 had perceived as an "instrument of production". The seemingly negative space references, and is contingent on, the polyhedral shape of the extracted commodity, a glyph of a colonial system. The prismatic – or in view of Robert Delauney's formally corresponding *Fenêtre* paintings – orphic background here subtend a colonial scene of labor, in the course of which the historical avant-garde pathway to the *non-objective*⁵⁷ risks being rerouted or checked. Cue Césaire's equation: "Colonization = Thingification".⁵⁸

Les forçats thus suggests an inverse analysis by Tiberio of his respective *Everything* lifeworld, that awesome sphere Picasso apparently infinitely drew on.⁵⁹ That is, an inversion of analytic cubism, which we might thus consider to perform an instance of *de-modernism*. From the received cubistic landscape – no longer deduced from Cézanne's Mont Sainte-Victoire laying in the distance but from the new quarries outside Dakar – materializes both, exploited subject and resource.

There surely is no routine necessity to discuss a historical practice like Tiberio's through juxtaposition with a master signified like *Picasso* in order to legitimize and rank the art-historical place of any such position. This is all the more the case considering the troubling tradition of the aforementioned one-way *inspiration* that

masturbation', his painting, even after moving to Paris in 1950 [?], remained faithful to a modernist realist tradition." However, Tiberio is quoted by Moore to have mentioned "aesthetic masturbation", which, instead of conventional polemic, acquires criticality in that he disclaims Cubism's non-objective (here in the sense of non-generative) aspect, by meeting it with context.

57

"Ohne jede Gegenständlichkeit" (devoid of any thingness), as Blauer Reiter artist Franz Marc would report in 1912 to Kandinsky in Munich after having seen Delauney's *Fenêtre* paintings in Paris. Delauney considered these works to transmit the concept of "reality".

58

"Aucun contact humain, mais des rapports de domination et de soumission qui transforment l'homme colonisateur en pion, en adjudant, en garde-chiourme, en chicote et l'homme indigène en instrument de production. À mon tour de poser une équation : *colonisation = chosification*." In: Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme*, Paris 1955, 22.

59

In André Malraux, *La tête d'obsidienne*, Paris 1974, 17–19. Quoted in Flam and Deutch, *Primitivism*, 34. Picasso is said to have made this observation in connection with his first encounter of African art at the Musée Trocadéro, 1906/07. The original conversation between Picasso and Malraux is dated to 1937.



[Fig. 9]
Wilson Tiberio, *Les forçats* (Forced Labor), early 1950s (exact date, medium and location unknown), reproduced in *Black Orpheus* 9, 1961, 62–63 (captioned there as “Les Forlats” [sic]).

commenced in Paris (and elsewhere in Europe) at the beginning of the 20th century, yet was still very much an issue during the time Tiberio – like many other artists of color – returned to Paris as the increasingly contested epicenter of modernism after 1945.

And yet, in Tiberio's case such comparative readings are not only apposite due to Tiberio's historization as the "African Picasso" within the very pages of *Présence Africaine*;⁶⁰ but moreover to grasp how a concept of demodernism can be imagined to have unfolded in this practice, situated as it was in the strained reality of the French Union in the late 1940s.

In 1948 *Présence Africaine* published Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler's influential essay "L'art nègre et le cubisme" discussing the Kru (or Grebo, Ivory Coast) masks' influence on Picasso's first *Guitar* wall assemblages (1912) made from paper and later sheet metal, now on permanent display at MoMA. (This added cultural value is frequently highlighted in the auctioning of such masks.) Discussing Picasso's engagement with the masks, possibly as early as 1907 but certainly around 1912, Kahnweiler seeks to differentiate between a mere mimetic "influence" of this alien aesthetic on a work like the *Demoiselles* and contemporaries like Matisse, de Vlaminck et al., and the, in his words, "conceptual" transposition of the masks' construction toward Picasso's re-conceiving a profane object world.⁶¹

Such a conceptual approach he considers a "phenomenon usually at the beginning of a break with the existing tradition" (he mentions the Renaissance drawing on Mediterranean antiquity, impressionism, and its fondness for Japanese art). Tiberio, employing a by then historical cubist style, was simultaneously concerned with revising the trained aesthetic of his Brazil works. Yet *Les forçats* is neither impressionistic intimation at landscape as a genre, nor does it endeavor the cubists' formal quest to fold subject and object so as to break (into) Western space and perspective.

When Kahnweiler singled out the masks from Ivory Coast, whose extremely geometric conception of a (human?) face instructed – "corroborated", even – Picasso's novel application of negative space in the *Guitars*, the provenance and fraught history of these artifacts found no mention. According to an article by a Polish journalist of the magazine *Kontynenty*, who interviewed Tiberio in Abidjan in the early 1960s, Tiberio had an epiphanic moment – a "shock" – upon encountering the artifacts of his ancestral Africa

60

Réfugié Politique, Daniel Guérin, Iwiyé Kala-Lobé, Frank Niger, Charlyne Valensin, Emile Saint-Lot, and Jacques Maquet. Palabre, in: *Présence Africaine* 50, 1964, 252. Tiberio actually showed in the anti-Franco exhibition *Hispano-Americaine* organized by Picasso at the Parisian Galerie Henri Tronche in 1951. The work exhibited there is subject to speculation, but given the work he painted from real life colonialism on account of his travels to A.O.F at the time, it must have been related to the work shown in *Les statues*....

61

Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, L'art nègre et le cubisme, in: *Présence Africaine* 3, 1948, 367–377. Reprinted in Flam and Deutch, *Primitivism*, 284–291.

during a first visit to the Musée de l’Homme in 1947.⁶² Famously, Picasso similarly remembered his first encounter with that collection, although forty years prior, producing a sensation of awe as much as depression, apparently due to the state of neglect of the earlier Trocadéro.⁶³

Tiberio’s visceral reaction was probably less due to the exhibits’ compelling aesthetic counter-models for figuration, volume, architecture, and so forth, although it may well have been. But given Tiberio’s alleged outspokenness against the colonial politics of his day, such consternation may have also been in the face of what Marker and Resnais had shown to be the severely compromised condition of these objects: Sacred. Removed. Alien. Exposed. *Exhibited*.⁶⁴ And effectively appropriated by “modern art”, which in *Les statues...* is visually represented by a Dan mask from Ivory Coast, then in the collection of Ratton. This is a mask similar to a degree in effect to Picasso’s abovementioned Kru mask, whose convex cylinders for eyes optically suggest depth – concavity – when looked at up front while actual holes in turn produce the impression of protuberances.⁶⁵

When Kahnweiler writes about these specific types of West African mask, he seeks to perform in writing the sculptural system enacted by these objects which, with a minimum of sculptural means, produced this revolutionary neural shift of cognition in the (white) viewer. In so doing, Kahnweiler conjures an entire system, an ontology which he calls “reality”, one that through the way a facial system (mask) is conceived by the black artisan – through perceptive modulations of holing and elevation, positive and negative – becomes “signified in the spectator’s imagination”. What kind of spectator and whose imagination we might wonder, in conjunction with Tiberio’s encounter with these objects?

As Walter Mignolo and others have argued, there’s no modernity without coloniality and vice versa since the two precondition

62

Władysław Śliwka-Szczerbic, *The Return of a Great Son of Africa*, most likely published in 1965 in the journal *Kontynenty* (*Continents*, 1964–1989), the year the author was the magazine’s editor.

63

“When I went for the first time, at Derain’s urging, to the Trocadéro museum, the smell of dampness and rot there stuck in my throat. It depressed me so much I wanted to get out fast, but I stayed and studied”, as Picasso is quoted saying in 1946. Françoise Gilot and Carlton Lake, *Life with Picasso*, New York 1964, 226, cited in Flam and Deutch, *Primitivism*, 425.

64

One of the crucial scenes in *Les statues...* in fact sees a young female museum-goer of color inspecting the transplanted objects/trophies displayed before her, visibly confounded or at least directed to act that way.

65

This Ur-episode of analytic cubism has been widely discussed since Kahnweiler’s essay. For detailed accounts among many see Yve-Alain Bois, Kahnweiler’s Lesson, in: *Representations* 18, 1987, 33–68; Christopher Green, *Picasso. Architecture and Vertigo*, New Haven, CT 2007; and more recently Joshua Cohen, *The Black Art Renaissance*, Oakland, CA 2020. For a recent study focusing on the formal, cultural, and ritualistic specificities of these objects see Mary Nooter Roberts, *The Inner Eye. Vision and Transcendence in African Arts*, in: *African Arts Spring* 50, 2017, 60–79.

each other not as antagonism but as correlation – an accursed share. “If there is no modernity without coloniality, if coloniality is constitutive of modernity [...] decoloniality proposes the undoing of modernity. That is, decoloniality implies demodernity.”⁶⁶ I would argue that a demodernist strategy such as employed by Tiberio is aligned with demodernity as a specific historical subset (the artistic, colonially networked 20th century). From this we might deduce that the demodernism of Tiberio and other artists of this time may be conceptualized and expanded on in relation to a specific historiography such as cubism’s.

As the curator and art historian Charles Esche notes: “The demodern is not a return to pre-modern sensibilities, nor a disavowal of the influence of the modern, but rather an attempt to *extract* art and ideas out of a context that limits the capacity of the imagination to propose new possibilities. The demodern is closer to an emancipatory spirit that has been captured and disciplined by what modernity has become.”⁶⁷ Esche is addressing the degree to which the contemporary global art circuit and its discourse continues to be framed and communicated by means of an episteme such as Western modernism.

If, as the film historian Mark Nash and others have argued, “Africa” seemingly skipped modernity in the course of colonialism – with independence (1960) giving way to the periodizations post-modernity and globalization⁶⁸ – appropriation and inversion of a modernist formal legacy as carried out by Tiberio would signal not a lag, but something we might consider as proto-postmodern, or again, as demodernist.⁶⁹ That is, cubist elements in Tiberio’s and other artists’ works from the period might be considered self-reflexive commentary to interrogate the actuality, value, exploitation, and entanglement of such avant-garde style-turned-convention, in a specific 1940s and 1950s context of anti-colonial positions. Such an approach, as I have tried to show, thus inverts cubism’s canonized agenda. Rather than pursuing modernist abstraction as

66

Walter Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality*, 139.

67

Esche quoted in Nikos Papastergiadis, *Museums of the Commons. L’Internationale and the Crisis of Europe*, London/New York 2020, 138 f5, quote dated to email from October 2, 2017 (emphasis mine).

68

“As we look at the distinction between modernity and postmodernity we can be tempted to view many African societies and African cinemas as postmodern without having gone through the modern phase.” Mark Nash, in *The Short Century. Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa, 1945–1994* (exh. cat. Munich, Villa Stuck), ed. by Okwui Enwezor, Munich 2001, 339.

69

Such a demodernist gesture further relates to the kind of *reverse appropriation* Olu Oguibe sees at work in the practices of other artists of color from the modern period of the 19th century onward, e.g. Aina Onabulu, Gerard Sekoto, and Ernest Mancoba. Olu Oguibe, *Reverse Appropriation as Nationalism in Modern African Art*, in: Rasheed Araeen, Sean Bubitt, and Ziauddin Sardar (eds.), *The Third Text Reader on Art, Culture and Theory*, London 2005, 36–46.

such, by abstracting resource from shape the artist meets ostensibly signified-freed representation with colonial matter.

Daniel Horn (d.horn@fu-berlin.de) is a researcher and lecturer in the Art History – Arts of Africa Department at Freie Universität Berlin where he is conducting the DFG project “Demodernisms – Art and Coloniality in France 1945–1966”. He previously was a researcher at the German Center for Art History – DFK Paris and Art Histories Fellow at Forum Transregionale Studien Berlin – Max-Planck-Institute. His writing has been published in *Texte zur Kunst*, *MAY Revue*, on Art Agenda / e-flux, and in *Artforum Magazine*, where he is a contributor. Research for this article benefited from a DAAD-Maison des Sciences de l’Homme postdoctoral fellowship hosted at the DFK Paris in 2019 and 2020 / 21.