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A Commemoration of the Berlin Congo Conference

15th November 2014 – 28th February 2015

Artists | Kader Attia, Sammy Baloji, Bili Bidjocka, Filipa César, Mansour Ciss, Theo Eshetu, Satch Hoyt, Cyrill Lachauer, Nadia Kaabi Linke, Henrike Nauman, Thabiso Sekgala, Katarina Zdjelar

Curator | Simon Njami

Artistic directors | Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung & Elena Agudio (SAVVY Contemporary)

Artistic coordination | Lucie Touya (L'Agence à Paris)

November 2014 marked the 130th anniversary of the Berlin Congo Conference and the official partitioning of Africa by Western (European, North American and Ottoman) colonial forces – in absence of African representatives. Against this backdrop, the exhibition **WIR SIND ALLE BERLINER: 1884-2014** recalls this determining moment in world history and its severe and ongoing repercussions, as well as reflects upon Berlin's historical and contemporary bond to Africa.

The exhibition proposes a space for deliberation on the repercussions of this conference, on past and current socio-political and economic phenomena in a Europe of flourishing nationalism and racism, as it deals with issues like migration flow or border and identity politics.

The exhibition title "Wir sind alle Berliner" can be read as a humanistic statement following Kennedy's "Ich bin ein Berliner", a reminder of a shared history or a call to overcome purported differences.

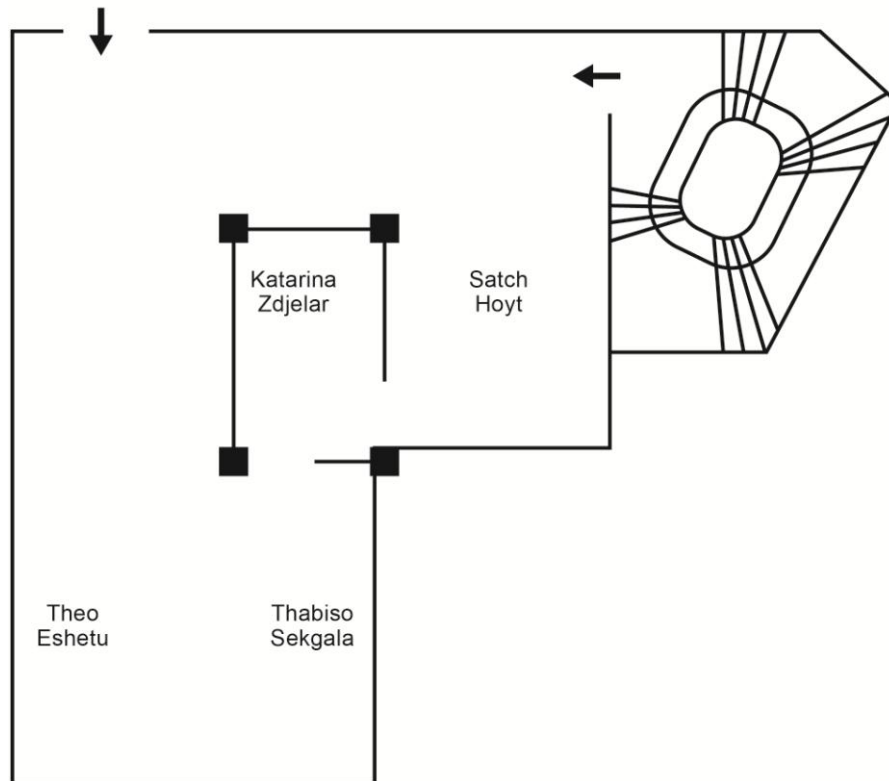
SAVVY Contemporary is also pleased to present on this occasion Colonial Neighbours, its participatory research and archive project on Germany's colonial history.

WIR SIND ALLE BERLINER is supported by:

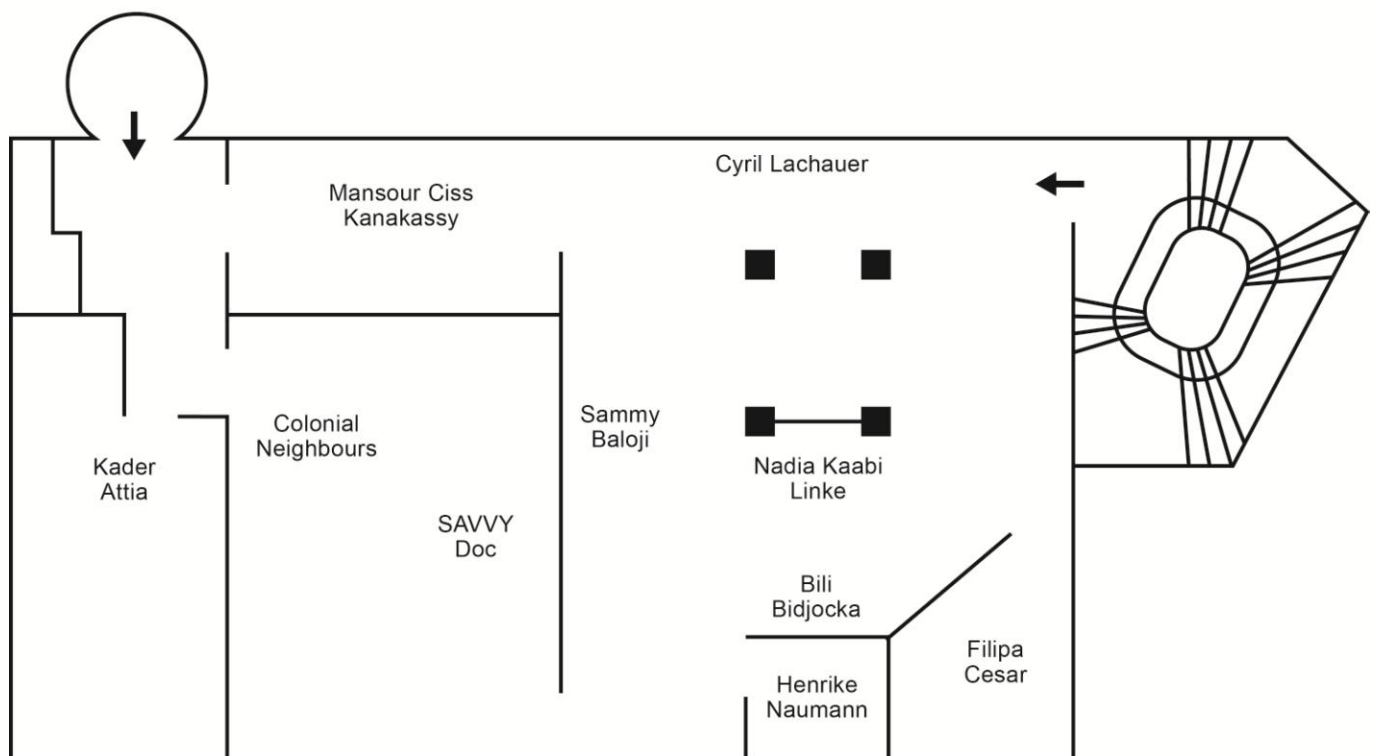
and our Media Partner Contemporary And:



Ground Floor



First Floor



Kader Attia

Oil and Sugar #2 | 2007 | Video, color, sound, 4:30 min. | Courtesy: The artist, collection Boston ICA, collection Tate, private collection and Galerie Nagel Draxler

Born in 1970 in Dugny, France, Kader Attia spent most of his life travelling between his family there and the neighbourhood of Bab el Oued in Algeria. This process of constant cultural translation served as a starting point for his development as an artist. Attia has spent the last 20 years working across various media in an ongoing exploration of 'the Other' in Western culture. His work was shown at various Biennales including in Venice (2003); Lyon (2005); Documenta in Kassel (2012); Moscow (2011); as well as in shows at New York's Museum of Modern Art (2012); the Centre Pompidou and Palais de Tokyo in Paris; London's Tate Modern; the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead; Boston's Institute for Contemporary Art; Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe; as well as several solo exhibitions, including at Kunst-Werke Berlin.

Attia's hypnotic video *Oil and Sugar #2* shows oil being poured onto a cube of sugar stacked on a silver platter. As the white solid absorbs the black liquid, it crumbles and pools as a glistening viscous mass, rife with open-ended metaphors; exploring the relationship between art, money, religion and power with simple means. Like Attia's previous work, *Oil and Sugar #2* harnesses complexly layered meanings through the marriage of simple and familiar materials. "I am interested in the evocation of something through its contrary," says the artist. Blackness and whiteness, solid and liquid, enact a convergence and slow destruction. Recalling the spatial and architectural similarities between cubes of sugar and the cubic form of Islam's most sacred shrine, the Kaaba, the work recalls the deep symbolic significance of oil for Western interests in the North African and Middle Eastern world and the deceptive sweetness and colonial memory of sugar.

Sammy Baloji

Mémoire | 2006 | Archival digital photographs on satin matte paper | Courtesy: The artist and Prince Claus Foundation

Sammy Baloji was born in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he graduated in Computer and Information Sciences and Communication. After working as a cartoonist, he studied photography and video in Strasbourg. Baloji has been awarded the Prix Afrique en Création, the Prix pour l'image at the African Photography Encounters in Bamako, Mali, in 2007; the Prince Claus Award in the Netherlands in 2008; and currently the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. His work has been shown at the Musée

du Quai Branly in Paris; the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren; the MuZee in Oostende; the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt; the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art in Washington D.C; the Museum for African Art, New York; and the Fowler Museum at UCLA, California.

In *Mémoire*, Baloji creates photomontages of found black and white colonial photographs of the mines of Union Minière du Haut Katanga in Lubumbashi, merged with contemporary pictures of the mines and devastated landscapes as they exist today; thereby linking the industrial landscape to slavery and the exploitative hierarchies of the colonial past. *Mémoire* shows both the heritage of Belgian colonial times and at the same time points towards the huge economic gain colonial masters reaped from the mines; challenging us to rethink the consequences of the "development" of resource extraction areas and the rights of the affected communities to freely dispose of their wealth and resources.

As the artist himself states: "To some extent, my current works have a direct connection with the colonial past [...]. The essence of my question lies in the daily life of Congolese people. They are traces of the recent past, which is also present."

Bili Bidjocka

Dis-ambiguation (Do Not Take It, Do Not Eat It, This Is Not My Body...) | 2012 | Installation: printed ceramic plates, writing | Courtesy: The artist

Bili Bidjocka was born in Cameroon and has lived in France since the age of 12. He has exhibited his work at several Biennales, including Johannesburg (1997); Havana (1997); Dakar (2000); Taipei (2004) and Venice (2007), as well as at the New Museum of Contemporary Art (New York), Museum Kunst Palast (Düsseldorf), the Hayward Gallery (London), the Centre Georges Pompidou (Paris), the Mori Art Museum (Tokyo), and at stageBACK Gallery (Shanghai). He is also the founder and director the Matrix Art Project in Brussels.

Dis-ambiguation (Do Not Take It, Do Not Eat It, This Is Not My Body...) is something of an anti-Last Supper: A secular gathering in which God, in his Judeo-Christian guise, is absent. Bidjocka's restaging of this well known theme is a wholly secular affair, which succinctly describes the two assertions of Christianity: firstly, that spirituality is as much about the divine as it is the mortal; and secondly, that holiness relies on absent concepts, a void that we do or do not fill. Bili Bidjocka works have always leaned towards absence and immateriality, which is stressed in this piece the thirteen body parts printed on ceramic plates. By incarnating Christ and its Twelve Apostles, his inner reality dissolves in detail. He is no longer there. Vanished and gone.

Filipa César

The Embassy | 2011 | Video Full HD, colour, sound, 27 min. | Courtesy: The artist and Cristina Guerra Contemporary, Lisbon

Filipa César is an artist and filmmaker whose work reflects on the porous nature of the relationship between the moving image and its public reception. She was born in Porto, Portugal and studied Fine Arts in Porto, Lisbon, Munich and Berlin. César has exhibited, among other places, at the Istanbul Biennial (2003); Kunsthalle Wien (2004); the Locarno International Film Festival (2005); the Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2006); the Tate Modern (2007); St. Gallen Museum (2007); the International Triennale of Contemporary Art in Prague (2008); the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2009); the Architecture Biennial in Venice (2010); the São Paulo Biennial (2010); and Manifesta 8 in Cartagena (2010).

The Embassy deals with the representation codes of the former Portuguese colonial law over the West-African country Guinea-Bissau and with modes of memory production. It shows a photo album depicting the perspective of the Portuguese colonist, who photographed in astonishment and with documentary diligence landscapes, people, architecture and monuments in Guinea-Bissau in the 40s and 50s. At the same time the photographs' display - being grabbed, flipped through and re-framed by the hands of the Guinean archivist Armando Lona - is the departure point for a multi-layered narration on the history of these two countries.

Mansour Ciss

Laboratoire Déberlinisation | 2001-2014 | Mixed Media | Courtesy: The artist

Mansour Ciss was born in Senegal where he studied sculpture. Since 1993, he has lived and worked in Berlin, where he says his work has become politicised in a form of second initiation. Ciss has exhibited at numerous museums and biennales worldwide, including DAK'ART in 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002; Musée National du Mali, Bamako; the Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst and the Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; and the Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt am Main.

Together with Baruch Gottlieb and Christian Hanussek, Ciss founded the **Laboratoire Déberlinisation** in 2001 as an artistic project with the aim of fostering dialogue between North and South and to problematize the borders drawn up at the Berliner Kongokonferenz in 1884 and 1885; the ramifications of which extend to today. Utilising what Leopold Sédar Senghor called "métissage culturel et biologique", *Laboratoire Déberlinisation* produces a physical real-world manifestations of

the utopian visions of an Africa prosperous and at peace; with sovereignty over its resources and its future. With the launch of the AFRO, the prototype for a pan-African currency, the AFRO Express Card and the Global Pass, the artist wishes to invite reflection on the right to financial and political self-determination as well as on the value of contemporary art.

Theo Eshetu

The Moving Museum (Act 1) | 2014 | Video | Courtesy: The artist

Theo Eshetu has worked in media art since 1982, creating installations, video art works, and documentaries. As a videomaker, he explores the expressive capabilities of the medium and the manipulation of the language of television. Exploring themes and imagery from anthropology and art history, he attempts to define how electronic media shapes identity and perception. World cultures, particularly the relationship of African and European cultures, often inform Eshetu's work. His work was shown among other places in the International Centre for Photography in New York, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the Brooklyn Academy of Music; as well as at the Baltimore Museum of Art; the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art, Washington, the Venice Biennale; the BOZAR in Brussels, the Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin; the Tate Britain, London; and at numerous film and video festivals.

The Moving Museum (Act 1) is a first step in a long process that will look at the move of the Ethnographic Museum from its current location in Dahlem to the Humboldt Forum, which is scheduled for 2019. Through a series of video interventions, under the general title *The Moving Museum*, the complex web of ideas around the themes of intercultural relations and identity building will be expressed to explore changes from a global perspective.

Satch Hoyt

How The West Was Won | 2011 | Porcelain, steel, audio components, sound-scape | Courtesy: The artist

Satch Hoyt was born in London and now lives in Berlin. He makes sculptures and installations accompanied with sound as well as paintings and drawings. His works embody a reflection on the African Diaspora and its multifold consequences. The sculptural trope in his work addresses the facts of black experience, while the drawings tap into a spirit of fantasy, refuge, and transcendence —vehicles for an imaginative journey beyond the obduracy and oppressiveness of history. Hoyt draws deeply on his background as musician and

composer, as he has made musicality and auralty a base chord of his visual practice.

How The West Was Won attempts to narrate one of the many chapters in European colonial pursuits by investigating the colonial invasions of North America: from the onslaught of Christopher Columbus' "discovery" in 1492 to the invasions in 1652 by the Dutch and British colonial powers. This multi-layered work is constructed from readymade objects acquired in the state of New York. The piece is accompanied by a soundscape composed by the artist, which includes an excerpt from the theme of the Hollywood movie "How the West Was Won".

Cyrill Lachauer

Three Things | 2014 | Video with sound

Die Abend-Vorstellung ist genau dieselbe wie Nachmittag | 2014 | Postcards, Postcardstand

Land's End (Bartolomeu Dias) | 2012 | Barytprint

Captain America | 2013 | Redwood, brass, stone

Horses, Manillas and the Smallpox Blankets | 2013 | Blankets, brandings

Courtesy: The artist

Born in Rosenheim, **Cyrill Lachauer** lives in Berlin where he works as an artist, author and film maker. He is currently writing his PhD thesis "*Shark Islands and Impossibles*" on appropriations and visualizations of the sea in the transnational Big Wave Surfer Community. In his artworks, Lachauer links critical discourses of representation within Eurocentric historiography with cultural anthropological approaches. He examines questions of power and legitimacy with a direct connection to post-colonial and post-structuralist discourses.

Three Things works with video footage from 1894. "Sioux Ghost Dance" pretends to show a "real" ritual dance by Native Americans but it was entirely staged by performers of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. **Die Abend-Vorstellung ist genau dieselbe wie Nachmittag** shows hundreds of postcards of Buffalo Bill together with "his Indians" in Venice – maybe the same performers we see in the video? At the most Southern tip of Africa **Land's End (Bartolomeu Dias)** was taken. The "discovery" of the cape by the first European, Bartolomeu Dias, paved the way for the brutal colonization of Southern Africa. **Captain America** confronts a baseball bat of true American Redwood with a stone from Nevada which resembles a baseball. These stones were used as a hunting tool by Native Americans. **Horses, Manillas and the Smallpox Blankets** consists of blankets which when given out to Native Americans were often infected with smallpox. In the piece they are branded with horseshoes, the symbol of luck and

the Wild West, and with Manillas, a token used during the slave trade in Africa.

Nadia Kaabi-Linke

Meinstein | 2014 | Basalt, granite, quartzite, greywacke, glass | Commissioned by the City of Berlin | Courtesy: The artist

Nadia Kaabi-Linke was born in Tunis to a Ukrainian mother and a Tunisian father. Her installations, objects and pictorial works are embedded in urban contexts; intertwined with memory and geographically and politically constructed identities. Her solo exhibitions include "Stranded" (2014) in Lisbon; "No One Harms Me" (2013) in Kolkata and "Black is the New White" (2012) in Dubai. She has participated in group exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York City; the Nam June Paik Art Center at Seoul and 54th Venice Biennial in Italy.

Meinstein is an interactive, participatory artwork in Neukölln. A public square which was developed by the unconscious influence of participating neighbours emerged as a metaphor for community life within a highly mixed ethnic urban space. The inhabitants thereby shaped the borough without control or awareness of the process. **Meinstein** is a public art intervention about memory and the notion of home and origin. Given that one associates home with a wider meaning of childhood, language and people, the project delves into what it means to integrate a remnant of your past into a new environment and how it eventually merges with its new surroundings and coexists with several others of such relics. **Meinstein** deals with ideas of migration, of what we take with us and what we leave behind.

Henrike Naumann

Triangular Stories | 2012 | VHS | Courtesy: The artists

Henrike Nauman was born 1984 in Zwickau, then in the German Democratic Republic. She was six years old at the time of the German Reunification and experienced right-wing extremism as a form of youth culture. She studied stage and costume design in Dresden and scenography in Potsdam-Babelsberg. The artist says about her artistic approach: „In my videos and installations I want to make political and social questions tangible while I am trying to answer them aesthetically.“ Henrike Neumann lives and works in Berlin-Neukölln.

1992: Both home videos have the same date. Both videos in *Triangular Stories* reveal intimate things from the life of three teenagers. While some of them can't wait to take Ecstasy for the first time, for others there is no world beyond Jena's "Platte". Henrike Naumann comes from Zwickau where members of the Nazi Organisation

NSU lived in bourgeois underground and planned to murder migrants. This work is a very personal approach to dealing with the fascist tendencies prevalent in her home area as well as with the hedonistic self-optimizing drive of her generation. The obsolescence of the medium VHS (Video Home System) serves hereby as a mirror for said generation.

and animal life. In December 2013 the museum closed its doors for renovation. The film registers the museum's obsolete forms of historical and cultural narration and thus marks the end of an era.

Thabiso Sekgala

Paradise | 2014 | Photo Prints | Courtesy: Goodman Gallery South Africa

Thabiso Sekgala was born in Johannesburg where he studied at the Market Photo Workshop. He has had solo exhibitions in Johannesburg, Berlin and Brussels and showed in group shows internationally. In 2013 he had residencies at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin, and at HIWAR/Durant Al Funun, Jordan. His work explores themes of abandonment, memory, spatial politics and concept of home. The artist notes that "In photography, I am inspired by looking at human experiences whether lived or imagined", describing his work as "the culmination of the exploration of memory, place and interrelated self-imagining."

In ***Paradise***, Sekgala questions the notion of the West as a perceived paradise. The series was produced in Berlin and Istanbul and shows Sekgala's individual reflections on "paradise", a concept linked to the similar positive associations in very different cultural spheres. Sekgala plays with the reverse viewpoint as an African in "paradise": with an irony that is never cruel. Rather, his way of capturing people and objects allows us to recognize the artist's precise empathy, the driving force behind his artistic production

This exhibition is dedicated to Thabiso Sekgala
(1981-2014).

Katarina Zdjelar

Into the Interior (The last day of permanent exhibition) | 2014 | Video | Courtesy: The artist

Katarina Zdjelar was born in Belgrade and currently lives in Rotterdam. She has exhibited at the Venice Biennial (2009); Artium Museum, Vitoria-Gasteiz (2013), the International Film Festival, Rotterdam (2013) and the Marrakech Biennial (2014). Voice, identity, and community are central lines of inquiry in her work. Her practice encompasses sound pieces, publications, and platforms creating different spaces for speculation, knowledge building and exchange.

Into the interior (The last day of the permanent exhibition) centres around the collection and display of the last remaining colonial museum, The Royal Museum for Central Africa in Belgium. Focusing on dioramas, animal trophies, travelogues and archival material, the work addresses the building of Empire through hunting