

Back to the Future

Contemporary art and creative clothing practices in Africa and the Diaspora

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Artists who work on the material and symbolic transformations of the body that arise from clothing practices can offer an important glimpse into the transformations taking place in Africa and the Diaspora. Clothing through the interplay of compositions and decompositions, combinations and contrasts, the new and the old, allows you to prefigure and experiment with new and different lifestyles in a context which is becoming increasingly mobile and precarious. In this way, artists can be seen as “cultural mediators” who imaginatively and creatively capture in their works the most widely spread lifestyles and cultural sensibilities.

An outfit is often the projection of desire, possible and impossible self-experimentations, which forms part of the script of one’s life. Outfits are disguises and masks that follow the ephemeral temporality of fashion or that try to imagine a future, leaving behind the past or recapturing it in a different light.

Clothing practices in contemporary art, in fashion and in the aesthetics of everyday life are spaces in which one becomes visible, one negotiates and one imposes oneself, remodelling the shapes of one's body and one's field of action. Claimed or experienced, clothing is a place and instrument of identity pride, of discrimination and social exclusion, of exchanges, appropriations and border crossings.

Contemporary artists are actively engaged in this field through their experimentation with new ways of creating individual and collective bodies and alternative relationship models.

On this basis, we invite artists, photographers, designers, stylists, fashion creators, activists and scholars to participate with texts and visual contributions that tell of their experiences, professional activities and research. Among the topics of reflection that we suggest are:

- The daily aesthetics of clothing in Africa and the diaspora.
- Clothing as a place and tool for the transformation of the body, as a place for memory, desire, experimentation and self-invention.
- Clothing as a place of construction and deconstruction of individual, cultural, "racial" and gender identities.
- Contemporary Africa and colonial wardrobe: artists, stylists and those who uncover and source family, community and national stories whose images tell of body and clothing practices as signs of subordination, assimilation, but also of dissent and of the emancipation from previous generations.
- Clothing as a political stance.
- Clothing as a symbol of suffered violence and as a form of resistance.
- The ways in which the Black Lives Matter movement has brought racialised bodies back onto the public stage, also by casting attention on clothing practices.
- Reinvention of tradition in the re-modelling of local cultural heritage and within the currents of globalisation, between nostalgia, ironic and disenchanting uses of the past and projections into the future.
- Art and fashion as a space of encounters and clashes, exchanges and appropriations.

The editors

Paul-Henri Souvenir Assako Assako - PhD, senior lecturer, head of the Art History and Fine Arts Department at the University of Yaoundé I in Cameroon, and Director of Libre Académie des Beaux-arts (LABA) Douala. He has been working with experts from Munich since 2010, exploring possibilities for cultural and artistic cooperation. Support was provided by the Goethe-Institut in Yaoundé, the Italian Foreign Ministry and the Dutch Mondriaan Stichting. His academic research focuses on the transformation of visual art in the 20th century in Africa. His research takes the form of writing, curated exhibitions, and symposiums which he has organised with several partners and the Italian NGO COE, the Goethe-Institut, Doual'art, Enough Room for Space.

Ivan Bargna - Professor at the University of Milan-Bicocca where he teaches Aesthetic Anthropology and Media Anthropology. He is the director of studies for the undergraduate course in Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences and the postgraduate course in Museum and Art Anthropology. He is also a professor of Cultural Anthropology at Bocconi University. Since 2001 he has been conducting his ethnographic research in Cameroon where he deals with artistic practices and visual culture. He collaborates with artists and contemporary art curators in the implementation of interdisciplinary projects based on ethnographic practice. He is a member of the scientific committee of the Museo delle Culture in Milan and curator of exhibitions.

Giovanna Parodi da Passano - Professor of Africanist Anthropology on the Master's degree course in "Historical Sciences" of DAFIST, University of Genoa. Africanist by training, she has mainly conducted her ethnographic research in West Africa, in the Akan and Yoruba cultural areas. Her current research focuses on the creative practices of clothing and contemporary artists in Africa and in African diasporas that use fabrics and the construction and deconstruction of the dressed body. In regards to these topics, she has curated exhibitions, participated in international conferences and published studies including *African Power Dressing* (2015, edited by).

Gabi Scardi - Gabi Scardi is an art historian, curator of contemporary art and teacher. Her research focuses on the latest artistic trends and on the relationships between art and neighbouring areas related to living and cohabitation, to urban and intercultural dynamics. She is interested in cultural politics. Among other things, she has curated numerous public projects. She has worked with museums and institutions in Italy and abroad. The following are some of her exhibitions on the relationship between art and clothing: *miAbito* (Francesco Bertelé, Francesca Marconi, Margherita Morgantini, Wurmkos), Milan 2018-19; *Emilio Fantin, Ultrapelle*, Farmacia Wurmkos, Milan 2018; *Fashion as Social Energy*, Palazzo Morando, Milan 2015; *Aware: Art Fashion Identity*, GSK Contemporary, Royal Academy, London 2010.

Deadlines

The proposals (title, abstract of max. 400 words, author and a short biography) must be submitted no later than ****June 15th 2021**** to the following addresses s.federici@africaemediterraneo.it and s.saleri@laimomo.it. The proposals will be judged by the editors. If the proposal is accepted, the full article (including abstract and biography) must be submitted by ****September 15th 2021****. The articles and the proposals can be submitted in the following languages: Italian, English and French, but articles in English and French will be given priority. *Africa e Mediterraneo* is a peer reviewed journal.