The 'othering' of Africa and its diasporas in Western museum practices

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Abstract

This thesis examines how curatorial approaches to the display and interpretation of artworks and cultural objects from the African continent, as well as works by diasporan artists of African descent, have changed over time in Western museums and galleries – focusing on histories and geographies of acquisition, collection development, exhibition assemblage, narrative interpretation and other curatorial practices. With particular reference to the culture sectors in Britain and France it investigates how and why exhibits with African provenance have been 'othered' in both ethnographic and fine art contexts, drawing on fieldwork undertaken at four case study institutions: the British Museum, Tate, the Musée du Quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Through the application of qualitative research methods – including walk-through reviews of permanent holdings on display, archive-based surveys of past exhibitions, visual analysis of selected exhibits, and semi-structured interviews with curators and other creative professionals – questions are addressed in relation to the nature and extent of othering, the impacts of Self/Other binarism, and amelioration strategies to improve museum and gallery experiences for more diverse audiences.

As prior scholarship in this field has tended to concentrate on colonial-era constructions of selfhood and otherness, primarily articulated and exhibited via ethnographic collections, this discursive investigation also examines postcolonial manifestations and legacies of othering observed in 21st century, post-modern displays of fine art. The theoretical perspectives of selected black feminist scholars provide the framework for adopting a *non*-adjunctive position of resistance from which to read '*against* (as well as along) the grain' of established Western canons of knowledge and prevailing curatorial orthodoxy.

By tracing the historical palimpsests and contemporary networks that connect artists, curators, objects and audiences over time and space, the inherent tensions, instabilities paradoxes and limitations of Self/Other binarism are exposed – opening up opportunities to consider alternative, more conceptually nuanced, inclusive and internationally dialogical museum practices in the West informed by the dynamics of transnationalism, diaspora formation and globalisation.

Acknowledgements

Notes

"West" and "Western" are referred to throughout the text using an upper-case "W" to denote a specific grouping of nation-states that are primarily located in Western Europe and North America. This study considers the West as a socio-economic, political and ideological construction as much as a geographical grouping of places. In line with Eduard Glissant's statement, *"L'Occident n'est pas à l'Ouest, ce n'est pas un lieu, c'est un projet"* ["The West is not in the West, it is a project, not a place"] (Glissant 1981: 12), there is an acknowledgement that so-called Western nations have historically operated together as an international collective of industrialised countries to maintain similarly hegemonic positions of power, wealth and influence on the global stage (see also Hall 1992: 185-9, 2000: 225, Bonnett 2004: 4-7).

The term "diasporas" is used throughout this document in preference to the more conventional usage of "diaspora" to specifically denote the complex pluralities and heterogeneities of Africans located in all parts of the world as a result of centuries of forced and voluntary migrations and movements. Unless otherwise stated, "diasporan" refers to members of the black African diasporas.

Within the UK the identity descriptors "black," "brown," "Black and Minority Ethnic" (BME), "Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic" (BAME), and "people of colour" are used to refer to individuals and groups of people with African, Asian, Caribbean and/or Middle Eastern heritage, as well as those who identify with certain socio-political issues, aspects of cultural expression and shared lived experiences of these visibly minoritized communities. In France, the term "black" [*"noir/noire"*] is similarly used in reference to people with African, Antillean, Arabic/Middle Eastern and/or Asian heritage. Quotations from French sources cited and discussed in this thesis may also feature more narrowly defined references to people of African descent – and, consequently, use "black" in conjunction with (and distinct from) references to Maghrebi/North African or (more colloquially) *"Beur(ette)"* cultural identities. All these terms are mentioned and discussed as identity descriptors within this thesis, and my usage of them only varies to retain and respect the personal preferences of quoted individuals, or the specific form of words to denote ethnic diversity categorisations listed in formal reports, statistical surveys and other published documentation.

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Introduction

Many museologists and art historians have researched and documented examples from the past where museums and galleries in the West have interpreted and exhibited artworks created by African artists as 'exotic,' 'primitive,' 'naïve,' and lacking in the aesthetic qualities attributed to art from areas of Western Europe and North America (see, for example, Shelton 1997a, Stoller 2003, DeRoo 2006, Barringer, Quilley, and Fordham 2007, Price 2007). This practice of displaying artworks from Africa as 'Other' is said to have originated in the colonial era when, in response to Enlightenment discourses, Western imperialists promoted the hierarchical categorisation and separation of cultures and communities, and privileged the narratives of the colonisers (Memmi 1990, Nederveen Pieterse 1992, Hall 2000, Hardt and Negri 2000).

In the wake of mid-20th-century decolonisation one might have expected perceptions of an African Other to decrease in significance, and the resulting problematic exhibiting practices to disappear. However, the arts and culture sectors of Western nations during this period effectively became arenas through which colonial power hierarchies, structures of oppression, "rhetorics of racism" and systems of exploitation continued to exist[1] – with museums serving as "three dimensional imperial archives" for preserving memories of a colonial past (Barringer and Flynn 1998: 11). A form of "differentialist racism" emerged, where cultural reference points were utilised to justify the continued separation and dissimilar treatment of artworks and (by association) their creators (Balibar and Wallerstein 1991: 22).

Instead of exploring postcolonial cultural similitudes worldwide, a desire to 'celebrate' difference became prevalent in 20th century museum pedagogies and practices in several Western nations, with some curators seemingly going out of their way to spotlight and compartmentalise all that was considered unique and particular to specific cultural groups in the name of multiculturalism (Coombes 1998 [1992]: 490, Brah and Coombes 2000: 2,

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[1] The term "rhetorics of racism" is taken from Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak's research on discriminatory discourse, and specifically refers to the way racism, ethnicism and anti-Semitism have been (and continue to be) produced and reproduced discursively. Within the context of their linguistic and rhetorical analysis they identify and examine the etymological and historical context to a wide range of terms and phrases that are used to communicate ideologies of exclusion, intentional actions and negative judgements that impact on some social groups, as well as the socio-political, economic and cultural consequences of those discriminations. Reisigl and Wodak also discuss this term in reference to "differentialist racism" (or "culturalist racism") whereby "an inferiorisation of the cultures of 'others' is always presupposed by the social, economic and political inequality between members of the 'own' culture and members of the 'other' culture(s)" (Reisigl and Wodak 2001: 10).

Siebert 2015: 30). Sometimes even the most trivial and inconsequential characteristics of artworks and cultural objects were foregrounded in preference to exhibiting aspects of the universal human condition common to the arts and crafts of all cultures. In this way, the notion of separate, asymmetric cultural identities became "museumised," fixed and bounded (Macdonald 2003: 7).

In this thesis I argue that – far from being confined to the colonial past – the 'othering' of Africa continues today, and is as observable in the exhibition spaces, interpretation narratives and formal publications of the most recently founded 21st century cultural institutions as in the collections and displays of the longest-established museums and galleries dating back to the 18th century.

Through the discipline of cultural geography the nature and extent of the othering of Africa is examined within Western museums and galleries via both ethnographic and aesthetic frameworks, acknowledging the inevitable ambivalences, tensions, paradoxes and contradictions that arise when seeking to define what constitutes the 'West' as opposed to the 'non-West', African and European art, modernity in contrast with tradition, the centre in relation to the margins, the Self and the Other.

In the chapters that follow, I look closely at how the complexities and paradoxes of othering connect with wider aspects of cultural and creative discourse to influence the planning, curation and staging of exhibitions. Notions of "otherness" are discussed as being imbricated within a network of broader, inter-related issues of cultural identity impacting on contemporary curating and exhibiting practices worldwide, as illustrated in Figure 1.

In Anne Ring Petersen's *Third Text* journal article on art and identity, from which the "cluster of concepts" illustration in Figure 1 was sourced, she identifies five key "nodal points" (specifically, "culture, ethnicity, migration, globalisation and multiculturalism") from which a set of 20 additional "conceptual contexts and sub-clusters" emerge to exemplify the range of cultural identity issues, thematic dialogues, concepts, processes and communication flows circulating throughout the art world (see Petersen 2012: 199-200). Although my analysis is less structurally prescriptive about how these featured elements connect together – preferring to discuss the nodal issues and their spatio-temporal connections as more organically linked, in *non*-linear, rhizomatic ways – the diagram, nevertheless, still serves a very useful function of visualising at-a-glance how notions of otherness form part of a wider landscape of concepts, processes, tensions, and flows operating together.

The discursive content in each of the chapters that follow extends beyond this introductory framework to examine – visually, textually and spatially – how specific discourses about the histories and geographies of othering in relation to Africa and its diasporas not only come together within exhibition spaces, and through the assembled objects of Western museums and galleries, but also overlap, intersect, reproduce, conflict and hybridise via published interpretation narratives, archival documentation, ICT-based virtual galleries, interactive website content and social media platforms in a dynamic state of continuous flux.
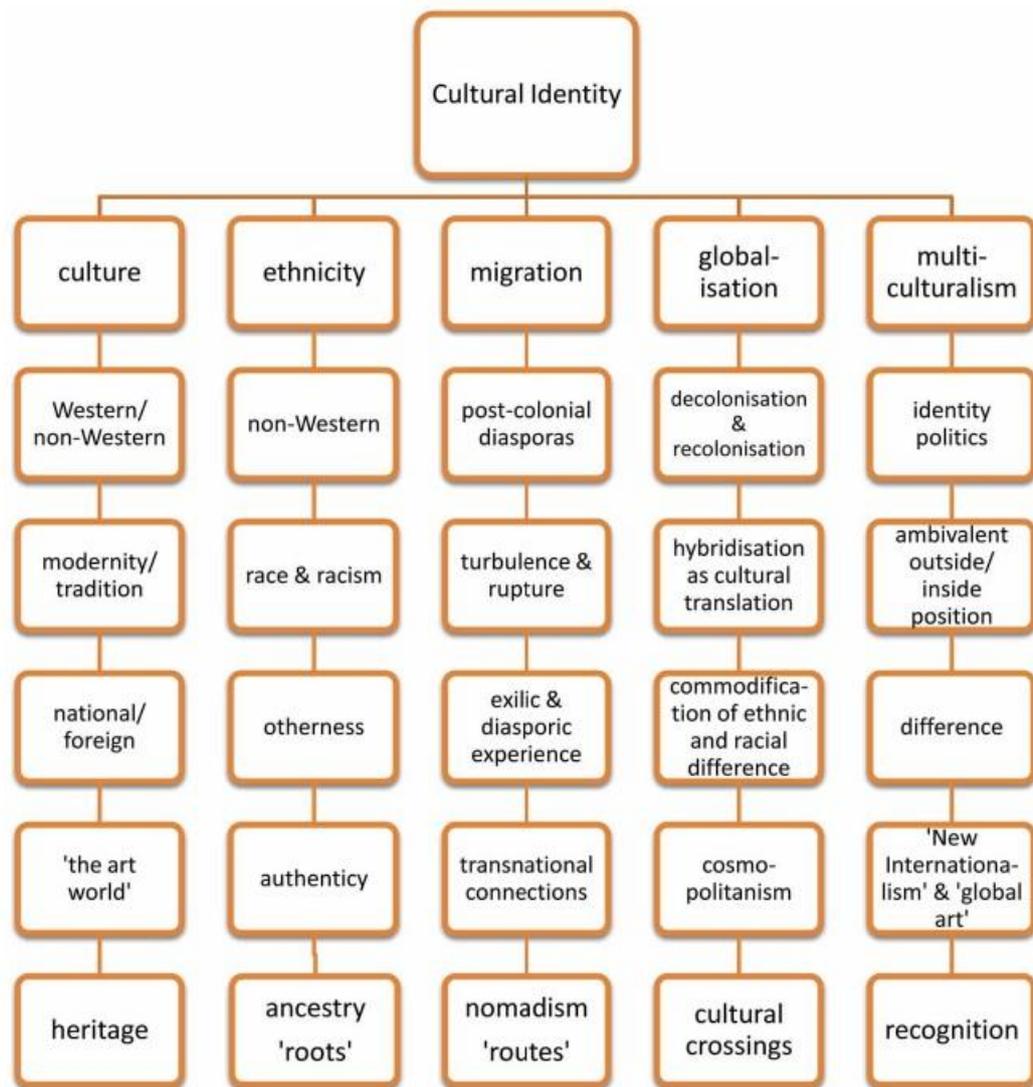
Figure 1: A "cluster of concepts" about cultural identity influencing global artistic discourse, compiled by Anne Ring Petersen (Source: Petersen 2012: 199)

Chapter 1 – "*Self/Other binaries: social constructions with real consequences*" – sets out some of the historical, socio-political and legislative context to the way discourses about selfhood and otherness have functioned and continue to feature within Western museums and galleries. The chapter opens with a working definition of othering, followed by a theoretical examination of how this term has been conceptualised, applied, represented and contested via museum collections and international fine art assemblages.

As this study focuses closely on the culture sectors of the UK and France, Chapter 1 references the scholarship of museologists, art historians, cultural theorists and other creative professionals with first-hand experience of curating and researching exhibitions staged in these countries, as well as those offering more general, philosophical insights on the dynamics of othering that are applicable worldwide. Enabled by the analytical techniques and scholarship of selected cultural geographers – from Katherine McKittrick's "Black Atlantic" and feminist perspectives on the geographies of racism,[2] through to Divya Tolia-Kelly's research on "affective geographies" intersected with wider issues about the politics and poetics of diaspora identities – important questions are raised about why such a binary conception of sameness and difference was ever presumed and deployed in the West to define blackness as *de*-normalised otherness, and how this has continued to impact negatively on contemporary curatorial thinking and exhibiting practices today (see, for example, McKittrick 2006, Tolia-Kelly 2006, 2007, McKittrick and Woods 2007).

Chapter 2 features a discussion of the literature reviewed throughout the conceptualisation, structuring and writing up phases of the thesis – organised into three distinctive areas of wide reading and synthesis of knowledge:

- Literature on issues of race, racism and postcolonial theory
- Prior scholarship that provides a definition of museum geographies, and situates the various types of museums and galleries located in the former imperial cities of Western Europe as sites for critical examination and analysis of internationally

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[2] "Black Atlantic" refers specifically to the diverse histories, geographies, lived experiences and expressive cultures of people of African descent in (and in relation to) Africa, Europe and the Americas. Both Katherine McKittrick and I use the term in reference to Paul Gilroy's definition and conceptualisation detailed in his book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). In this text, Gilroy writes about the "black Atlantic world" as having emerged as a result of major transnational structures – most significantly the Transatlantic Slave Trade, systems of plantation enslavement in the Americas, European imperialism and expansionism, and their myriad legacies in the post-enslavement, postcolonial era (see Gilroy 1993: 80). The complexities and tensions inherent to what Gilroy terms the "fragile psychological, emotional and cultural correspondences which connect diaspora populations in spite of their manifest differences" account today for the plurality of artistic and cultural expressions, identity constructions, communications and flows that rely on (and are governed by) "the concept of diaspora and its logic of unity and differentiation" (Gilroy 1993: 81 and 120).

sourced collections of cultural objects, their material and representational properties, and the associated 'political aesthetics' of exhibiting such items within ethnographic 'World Museum' spaces or fine art gallery-based settings.

- Secondary sources documenting and discussing the various issues of embodiment and corporeality pertinent to the development of an understanding about how people's situated identities as 'raced,' 'gendered,' 'classed,' 'marked' and 'differenced' individuals can influence the types of experiences and relative levels of mobility encountered within Western museums and galleries at all stages of institution-based production, consumption and regulation of exhibitions.

The qualitative research techniques used throughout the study are discussed in Chapter 3 – *Methodology* – featuring data collection techniques and analytical frameworks structured around the following five research methods: (1) walk-through reviews and photographic tours of permanent collections and temporary exhibitions on display; (2) archive-based research; (3) individual object selection and analysis; (4) semi-structured curatorial interviews; (5) the compilation of field notes.

Through the use of a jazz ensemble metaphor, information is conveyed about how these techniques combine to achieve a working definition of othering capable of being applied and interrogated across different research sites – accommodating the nuances of how othering manifests differently over time and space. Like the various musical elements that are brought together to produce a recognisable – yet always unique – live performance of a jazz standard, the methodological layering of these five approaches is deliberately semi-structured to achieve a healthy ratio of some partially predictable outcomes contrasted with a far greater proportion of unexpected observations, encounters and dialogues.

The next four chapters (Chapters 4 through to 7) present and analyse empirical findings arising from on-site fieldwork undertaken at case study institutions located in London and Paris, specifically: the British Museum, Tate's two London galleries (Tate Britain and Tate Modern), the Musée du Quai Branly[3] and the Centre Georges Pompidou. Preparatory research and post-fieldwork reviews of relevant secondary literature associated with these featured museums and galleries is factored into the case study analysis, and underpinned by practitioner-sourced content drawn from the afore-mentioned interviews with curators and museum directors. This work is also informed throughout by my own,

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[3] In June 2016, the Quai Branly Museum in Paris was re-branded "*Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac*" to mark ten years since it was inaugurated by the former President of the French Republic. However, as the case study research relating to this institution was undertaken over a three-year period prior to this official name change, the museum's title is referred to and capitalized throughout this thesis as Musée du Quai Branly, or abbreviated to the initials MQB.

first-hand experiences of working as an educator and development manager within the UK arts, culture and heritage sectors, who has also reviewed curatorial practices in France from visitor-based and education-related research perspectives over several decades.[4]

The analysis of research undertaken at the British Museum commences with a poetic prelude, narrated in the first person to introduce some of the key themes to be covered about conversations and encounters in museum space (see Chapter 4). The African Galleries located on the lower-ground floor of the Sainsbury Wing serve as a departure point and initial viewing location from which to simultaneously look back in time, and geographically towards the Global South, to examine the British Museum's changing approach to acquiring cultural objects, drafting catalogue descriptions, curating assemblages, and animating exhibition narratives through interpretation devices

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[4] My research interests in the arts, museums and visual cultures primarily stem from the completion of subsidiary modules in Philosophical Aesthetics as part of an undergraduate degree course at Lancaster University (BA(Hons) Geography, 1988). After training to teach (PGCE Secondary Geography, University of Sheffield, 1990) and moving to London in the 1990s, these initial insights into the philosophy of art, aesthetics and international art histories and geographies were further consolidated through visits to museums, galleries and other art institutes to study contemporary fine art sculptures, paintings, mixed-media collage and installation work – particularly via the portfolios and biographies of African, Caribbean and black British diasporan artists whose works were displayed at national, community-based and internationally outward-facing cultural venues across the capital: E.g. Africa Centre (Covent Garden); Black Cultural Archives; Commonwealth Institute; Whitechapel Gallery; and Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA). Further training and employment in Higher Education – including working as a researcher and development officer for the CASBAH project (Caribbean Studies; Black and Asian History) at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies (School of Advanced Study, University of London) during the early 2000s – supported the acquisition of additional information and knowledge management skills and qualifications to progress to professional project management work in the UK culture sector – firstly, at the London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA, 2003-2005) and then the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA London, 2005-2007). As MLA London's Regional Development Manager for Learning and Skills a core element of this role involved researching and supporting the design and delivery of informal learning and teaching programmes and initiatives for children, young people, families and life-long learners via the capital's museums, galleries, libraries and archives. This peripatetic advisory work on improving culture sector pedagogies and practices also led to participation in a number of regional and national strategies to specifically address issues of diversity and inclusion in the arts and heritage – E.g. contributing to the education outputs for the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage (MCAAH, 2005) and the associated report, *Delivering Shared Heritage* (Barrow, Prescod, and Qureshi 2005). Following high-profile national education project management positions at Talawa Theatre Company, the Royal Geographical Society(with IBG), and Arts Council England – as well as the completion of a Master of Arts degree (MA (with Distinction) in Cultural Studies, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2011) I have, since 2011, completed freelance consultancy work for arts and heritage organisations and community-based education charities – including designing and publishing creative teaching and learning resources and exhibition projects about African and Caribbean diasporic social histories and heritage that prominently feature archival documents, visual arts sources, music, poetry, plays and other literary narratives. This timeline of employment experiences, project portfolios, and publications – as well as ongoing involvement in arts activism in the UK, and internationally – combine to form the foundation and context to this doctoral research examining the histories and geographies of othering within Western museum practices. For further information – as well as access to unpublished papers and blog posts on anti-racist arts activism – see the blog, *Museum Geographies* (authored by Carol Dixon), at https://museumgeographies.wordpress.com/.

developed over more than 250 years. By combining visual analysis of selected exhibits, textual analysis of panel descriptions and archive-based enquiries – utilising techniques espoused by (among others) Gillian Rose (2012), Ruth Phillips (2007) and Ann Laura Stoler (2009), respectively – the changing nature of the othering of Africa is traced and examined through images, objects, structures, texts and other media.

Contested and controversial notions about the 'ownership' of cultural objects as 'property', issues of provenance, the restitution (or, 'repatriation') of items to African sites of origin, as well as associated debates about the continuing custodianship of items acquired by the British Museum during the colonial era, are also considered with specific reference to disputed collections such as the Benin Bronzes.

Similarly to the structure of the preceding case study about collections of ethnography at the British Museum, Chapter 5 – *"Observations and Encounters at the Musée du Quai Branly"* – commences with a poetic prelude. However, in this case, the first-person narrative is framed as a critique of the immersive, audio-visual contemporary artwork that I encountered during my inaugural journey along the museum's spiral walkway leading up into the main collection area. The multi-sensory experience of this kinetic ramp installation – significantly titled, *"L'Autre Marche"* ["The Other Walk"] (2006) by the artists Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jean-Paul Bourdier – foregrounds and paves the way for spatial, historical and metaphorical examinations of the Musée du Quai Branly's real and imaginative museal landscapes. The structuring of the chapter into five sections, each corresponding with specific locations inside and outside the museum where photographic tours and object reviews were completed, enables a number of associated binaries *beyond* the Self and the Other to be analysed and unpacked, including: notions about the (in-)authenticity of cultural objects; the relative presence or absence of an 'aura' for original works opposed to reproductions; contrasts between the organic and inorganic exhibitions staged in the MQB's gardens and interior spaces; and ongoing debates about "Art versus Artefact" within the setting of displayed collections of ethnography.

Thoughts on the legacies of colonialism and contemporary geo-politics are catalysed within this Parisian museum space through the work of contemporary conceptual artists – whose guest-curated temporary displays and commissioned installation pieces serve as creative catalysts for debates about the 'decolonisation' of the museum, as well as the changing state of France's postcolonial international relations with other nations and regions of the world in the 21st century. Commissioned works by African and diasporan artists – most notably, the MQB's inaugural Garden Gallery installation, *La Bouche du Roi*

[The King's Mouth] (2006) by Beninese artist Romuald Hazoumé, and the immersive exhibition *Jardin d'Amour* [Garden of Love] (2007) co-curated by British-Nigerian conceptualist Yinka Shonibare MBE, French curator Germain Viatte and anthropologist and curator Bernard Müller – feature prominently within this chapter to prompt reflection on the role of Parisian museums (and the MQB in particular) within debates about the legacies of French imperialism, diasporic histories and geographies of the Black Atlantic, and contemporary 'Eurafrican' political relations.5

Content from recorded interviews with Paris-based curators, academics and cultural commentators with experience of staging exhibitions at the Musée du Quai Branly – namely, anthropologist and curator Bernard Müller, political scientist and curator Françoise Vergès, and historian Pascal Blanchard – also offer first-hand perspectives on the institution's changing museographic practices in response to the various '*glocalizing*' cultural dynamics of the 21st century. The MQB's exhibition portfolio to date, as well as its overarching ambition to be the place "where cultures converse" – as articulated in its mission statement, *"Là où dialoguent les cultures"* – comes under close scrutiny with reference to scholarly reviews and critical analysis by Sarah Amato, Sally Price, Herman Lebovics and Dominic Thomas (see, for example, Amato 2006, Price 2007, 2008, Thomas 2008, Lebovics 2010, 2014).

The prelude to Chapter 6 – "*Remixing narratives at the Pompidou in Paris*" – commences with visual analysis of Congolese pop artist Chéri Samba's triptych, *Quel avenir pour notre art?* [What future for our art?] (1997). Through a critique of this trio of comic-strip-style painted panels, which on first sight appear quite benign, Samba's corporealised depiction of his changing relationship with the Pompidou and (by association) the work of artist Pablo Picasso, is advanced as a complex and multi-layered visual allegory about the changing nature of collective relations between African visual artists and contemporary fine art institutions in the West – enframed (pictorially, textually and metaphorically) by references to questions about the future of "our" art. As the Pompidou's iconic architecture and striking presence in the Parisian cityscape feature centrally in the triptych's final panel – along with the year 1989, which corresponds with the date of the international

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5 'Eurafrican' is a portmanteau term combining European with African and is used in relation to the various international and cross-cultural links between the nations and peoples of these continents. The word is included here in single quotation marks to denote that it is a highly contested term that is sometimes used in reference to past and present relations of exploitation between Europe and Africa, particularly with regard to histories and legacies of enslavement, colonialism, economic trading inequalities and migration. For a discussion of how the term 'Eurafrican' (and equivalent terms within the francophone context, such as 'Eurafrique') features in cultural discourse, see Chapter 4 in Dominic Thomas' book *Africa and France* (Thomas 2013: 89-105).

mega-show *Magiciens de la Terre* [Magicians of the Earth] (Paris, 1989) – the artwork is cited as a representation of the Pompidou's hegemonic significance within the contemporary art world.

Othering practices operating at the site of individual artists and curators – where otherness can sometimes be inscribed onto and performed through the body – are examined as a dominant theme, deconstructing the changing role of the artist-curator as *auteur* in French and francophone cultural contexts via a selection of the most significant Pompidou exhibitions to feature works by African and diasporan contemporary artists, namely: *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989), *Africa Remix* (2005) and "*Modernités plurielles de 1905 à 1970"* ["Multiple Modernities, 1905-1970"] (2013-15). From Chéri Samba's symbolic depiction of Pablo Picasso as the embodiment of Western artistic modernity in his triptych, to my on-site visual analysis of Michel Leiris' collection of African figural sculptures, displayed at the Pompidou in 2014 as part of the *Multiple Modernities* exhibition, the impacts of Western artistic modernists on the othering of Africa are revealed through the coupling of myths about an exclusively elite, white and masculinist avant-gardism, with simultaneous revelations about past exclusions and erasures of black African and diasporan modernists with differenced class and gender identities beyond the established international fine art canon. Integrated analysis of exhibition floorplans also enables othering to be considered as a form of spatial as well as socio-economic marginalisation of African and diasporan artists in the West, and provokes discussion about the pluralisation of alternative, de-centred art-historical discourses to challenge the formerly singularised and Western-centric timeline of artistic modernism.

Just as use of the phrase "remixing narratives" signals my research at the Pompidou as an appraisal of exhibiting practices in a state of constant revision, the next case study proceeds along the same vein to examine changing demonstrations and articulations of internationalism, diversity and inclusive practice via Tate's London sites in response to historical and ongoing structural forms of othering. The prelude to Chapter 7 – *''Tate for all'? Discussing diversity and internationalism"* – centres on an oil painting from Tate's British Art Collection that depicts two black women co-navigating a boat through turbulent waters, titled *"Between the two my heart is balanced"* (1991) by Tanzanian-born British artist-curator and art historian Lubaina Himid. The centralisation of women of African descent as the key protagonists within this geographically-themed image of journey-making aptly illustrates an ambition of this chapter, and the thesis as a whole, to *de*-centre the historical Western norm of valorising elite, white male perspectives on art history, geographies of international art, and wider global cultural politics.

Tate's position as Britain's largest and most high-profile institution for showcasing modern and contemporary fine arts – founded in 1897 in London, with national and international collections now displayed across two sites in the capital (Tate Britain and Tate Modern, respectively), as well as in Liverpool and St Ives – makes it an appropriate case study through which to trace histories and geographies of the othering of Africa.

Divided into four sections, this spatio-temporal analysis of Tate's exhibiting practices commences with an initial focus on the changing architectural and interior design features of its Tate Britain site (formerly known as Tate Gallery), followed by reviews of past exhibitions, symposia and other events to signal the institution's changing perspectives on African and diasporan artists' modern and contemporary arts practices. The inauguration of Tate Modern in 2000 is also cited and sited as a pivotal point from which notions of "internationalism" are redefined for the 21st century.

Information sourced from recorded curatorial interviews is used to inject first-hand perspectives on Tate's strategic, intellectual and creative contributions to global artistic discourse – situating two former Curators of Cross-Cultural Programmes at Tate (namely, Mike Phillips and Paul Goodwin), and two external artist-curators and academics with works in the British Art Collection (specifically, Lubaina Himid and Eddie Chambers) as conduits through which black British perspectives on othering and strategies for its amelioration are brought into dialogue with Tate's institutional policies and other formalised strategic plans.

As with the other case studies, the paradoxes of othering and Self/Other binarism are brought to the fore through the use of selected artworks and past exhibitions from the institution's portfolio as analytical 'optics' (see also Appendix 2). The recent acquisition and exhibition of Beninese conceptual artist Meschac Gaba's 12-room installation, *"The Museum of Contemporary African Art 1997–2002"* (2013) at Tate Modern, as well as Lubaina Himid and Paul Goodwin's co-curation of the one-room display *Thin Black Lines(s)* (2011-2012) at Tate Britain, are just two examples of the artistic assemblages and interventions foregrounded in this chapter as successful, creative and radical counter-discourses to the ongoing marginalisation of African and diasporan contemporary artists in the West.

The role of the curator has been pivotal to this analysis of changing museographic practices, so Chapter 8 examines some of the specific strategies for ameliorating and eradicating othering that have featured in the portfolios of curators, artist-curators and museum directors interviewed during this research study. A selection of the featured

techniques and approaches relate directly to experimental creative practices developed and applied within individual institutional settings, while others extend beyond the museum and gallery sector to embrace external creative expertise, cultural knowledge and insights about pluralising curatorial narratives drawn from a wider pool of consultees, prospective partners and publics. In the latter sections of the chapter attention turns towards discussing progressive changes to the staffing and governance structures of museums and galleries in the West – especially in relation to the employment of more representative workforces to better reflect the socio-cultural demographics and ethnic diversity of the population at large across all echelons of employment in the sector. This is followed by a wider discussion about dialogical and *poly*-vocal approaches to ameliorating othering that involve international collaborations between institutions and trans-continental consortia of contributors from within and beyond the global arts and heritage sectors.

As will be evidenced throughout this thesis, my interest in this topic is simultaneously academic *and* personal because, after more than 20 years of researching and visiting museums and galleries in Western Europe, I have yet to experience a mainstream museal space or fine arts venue where my presence – whether as a visiting education practitioner, academic researcher or leisure visitor – automatically and consistently signifies belonging (or, at the very least, benign ordinariness), instead of habitually coming up against a particular kind of inquisitive and sneering hyper-scrutiny (by some of the staff, as well as some fellow visitors) that marks me out somehow as an unwelcome, subaltern body "out of place" (see, for example, Puwar 2004: 144, McKittrick 2006: xv).[6] Therefore, my hopes in relation to how this study might be utilised in the future to ameliorate the othering of Africa and its diasporas within Western museum practices are unapologetically pedagogical *and* political.

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[6] Use of the term "subaltern" in this context relates to Gayatri Spivak's observations about people in historically imperialist and capitalist societies who are hierarchically positioned as 'non-elite'/'non-dominant' according to various socio-economic structures, divisions of labour and mechanisms of power (see Spivak 1988: 280-287). With particular reference to the political agency, "voice-consciousness" and social mobility of women, Spivak suggests that a latent and ongoing impact of European colonialism in the postcolonial period has been Western intellectuals being "complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self's shadow" (*Ibid*, p. 280); and that "the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (*Ibid*, p. 287). Later, taking into account intersections of race, gender, class, and geographic location, Spivak makes further remarks about the complexities of subalterneity within an international, postcolonial context, writing: "Clearly, if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways. If, however, this formulation is moved from the first-world context into the postcolonial (which is not identical with the third-world) context, the description 'black' or 'of color' loses persuasive significance" (Spivak 1988: 294).

Chapter 1: Self/Other binaries: social constructions with real consequences

Prelude: H. K. Bhabha's review of *"Black Male"* (1994) at the Whitney

> The strategy of the stereotype, as a form of (mis)recognition, depends on staging the encounter with 'otherness' in an airless space of fixed coordinates. No mutual movement is possible in that space, because relationships there are largely predictable or reactive: the discriminated subject is reduced to a projection, an overdetermined instance, while the perpetrator of the stereotype acts out only narcissistic anxiety and political paranoia. As I walked around 'Black Male,' seeing so many images of isolated black men staring fixedly at me, I felt that despite the irony and the inversions, something of the rigor mortis of the stereotype had seeped into the show itself. Without quite knowing it, I too had been participating in the stereotype's *danse macabre*.

> Homi K. Bhabha, at the Whitney Museum
> of American Art (New York, 1994)[7]

1.1   Introduction

To refer to someone or something as "Other" involves making a distinction between people or between objects according to specific criteria. On the surface, this act of bifurcation gives an impression of an equal and neutral division. However, in practice, it seldom results in equivalent outcomes and benign consequences for all concerned – especially if the separation is enacted hierarchically and leads to asymmetric binaries being established to distinguish better from worse, positive from negative, central from marginal, an assumed norm from whomever or whatever is deemed 'abnormal,' insider from outsider, and so on.

Within the context of this thesis, use of the term 'othering' refers to the way Africa, Africans, people from the wider African diasporas, and also artistic and cultural outputs categorised as 'African art,' are positioned in alterity to the artists, the art-historical canon and the collective cultural heritage of the West – irrespective of whether particular artworks or cultural objects were produced on the African continent or in the West.

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[7] Extract from an essay titled *"Black Male"* by Homi K. Bhabha, first published in 1994 (cited by Huddart 2006: 32-33). The exhibition to which Bhabha refers in this quote – *"Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American* Art" (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 10 November 1994-5 March 1995)– was curated by Thelma Golden and featured 70 contemporary works by 29 artists (men and women, from diverse ethnic backgrounds) each addressing themes relating to the racialized stereotypes constructed about black men that have existed throughout the history of the USA. A digital version of the exhibition catalogue is viewable online at https://archive.org/details/blackmalebrochur2123unse [accessed April 2016].

Such practices have historically featured negative categorisations of Africa and Africans as different from assumed Western norms, deliberately constructed as deficient, deviant or lacking in some way, with that inferiorisation continuously reproduced and reinforced to ultimately treat any perceived differences as aberrations.

With regard to the particular histories, geographies, encounters and interactions that have had significant impacts on the construction of Africa and Africans as Other, geographer Katherine McKittrick cites and sites the so-called 'New World' cultural encounters of the 15th century in the Americas as one of the earliest and most pivotal moments of global cultural alteration and destabilisation catalysed by Western European explorers, writing:

> The geographical dichotomy, *after* 1492, unravelled into New World cultural exchanges that settled into a rigorous nonhomogeneous human model. Humanness became a classificatory text, distinguishing white, native (non-white), African (native/Other/nigger) from one another and identifying subtypes of human Otherness, such as class, gender, sexuality. (McKittrick 2006: 130)

Othering, as an ideology of difference and as an apparatus of power emerged and was reinforced over centuries of Western European exploration, imperialist expansionism and colonial appropriation of territories throughout the Global South – achieving its peak in the so-called 'Enlightenment' era through the espousal of European notions of universalism and supremacy to differentially position bodies according to gender and phenotype (see, for example, Bonnett 1997, Ahmed 2000a, Saldanha 2006, 2010). This also had negative impacts on the "affective capacities" of those designated as Other, and permanently skewed the many "power geometries that shape our social world" in the West's favour (Tolia-Kelly 2006: 213). As Stuart Hall observes, issues of race, class and gender were part and parcel of Europe's Enlightenment narratives concerning the history, geography and socio-cultural dynamics of modernity formation:

> The Enlightenment was a very European affair. European society, it assumed, was the most advanced type of society on Earth, European man *(sic)* the pinnacle of human achievement. It treated the West as the result of forces largely *internal* to Europe's history and formation. (Hall 1992: 278)

Despite the instability of these hierarchical Self/Other constructions imposed by the West – which philosopher Julia Kristeva defines as "ambiguous" and simultaneously "vigorous but pervious, violent but uncertain" (Kristeva 1982: 7) – the very real physical, socio-economic, geo-political, spatial, corporeal and ontological impacts of othering have resulted in the emergence of highly fluid theoretical discourses of Self/Other binarism,

pursued through a wide range of subject disciplines, expressed from different philosophical standpoints, and challenged from diverse positionalities.

Given that identity constructions of class, race, gender and sexuality are – as Katherine McKittrick notes – "overtly attached to public space" (McKittrick 2006: 144), institutions such as museums, galleries and other sites for displaying aspects of artistic and cultural heritage in the West have historically been constructed and normalised as 'white spaces'[8] – not only in terms of the people presiding over their governance, the acquisition of collections and curatorial decision-making, but also in relation to the communities being represented and served as artistic subjects, and as audiences (Duncan 1995: 9, Berger 2005: 101-2, Cooks 2011: 12). Because the 19th century was the peak period for museum building in Western Europe – seen as its "Golden Age," and characterised by the development of institutions like Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris, the Africa Museum in Tervuren (Brussels), the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, and the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin [Ethnological Museum of Berlin], that were built to house items appropriated during the colonial era – elite, white, Western, heterosexual masculinities assumed the most privileged distinction of normalcy and occupied the primary gazing perspective within museal space (see, for example, Barringer and Flynn 1998: 1-2, Aldrich 2006: 106, 2010a: 15-17, Thomas 2013: 20-23). Black Africans, according to the racialized conclusions reached about a '*non*-homogeneous humanity' under European 'scientific racism' at that time, were contrasted, essentialised and 'marked' as the ultimate Other – leading also to a particular objectification of black female bodies as subjects for public spectacle in the ways that Kaila Adia Story outlines (below) in her art-historical analysis of intertextually racist-sexist imagery produced throughout the colonial period:

> African or black women soon turned into public spectacle and "scientific discovery" and came not only to embody the invention but also, in fact, their bodies came to serve as the "master texts" or example of it. This (European) Western projection of "hypersexuality", "immodesty" and "inhumanity" onto the black or African female body served two essential needs for Europe. The first is that this invention allowed and continues to allow (European) Western man to serve as the pinnacle of humanity… Second, it established an ideological perception of the black female body that made these scripts inherent to what blackness and femaleness meant and mean. (Story 2010: 40-41)

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[8] The notion of institutionally "white spaces" within the socio-political and cultural context of the UK is discussed by (among others) sociologists Nirmal Puwar and Sara Ahmed, who write about black and brown bodies standing out – or being seen as "out of place" – within certain public spaces historically normalised as white, ultimately leading to the "hypervisibility" of blackness contrasted with "invisible" white bodies that pass through those spaces without any scrutiny or challenge (see Puwar 2004: 113, Ahmed 2006: 135).

It is this historical racialization and gendering of Western museum spaces in which whiteness and heterosexual male spectatorial perspectives are assumed normal that the chapter's opening quotation from Homi K. Bhabha's review of the Whitney Museum's controversial exhibition *"Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art"* (New York, 1994) exposes so powerfully and poignantly.[9] The "inversions" Bhabha refers to in the latter section of the quote constitute a wide variety of reversals and reversed dichotomies operating across all aspects of the "circuit of culture," illustrated in Figure 2 (see also Du Gay et al. 1997: 3), specifically: at the sites of cultural production, identity and representation, through artists' images of black male bodies being centrally positioned as aesthetic subjects, instead of the conventional, 'classical' Western portraiture depicting white, female nudes; at the site of regulation, through the Whitney Museum's institutional and authorial decision-making about this exhibition being led by an African-American woman (curator Thelma Golden); and also at the site of consumption, through Bhabha's alternative viewing perspectives on art about anti-black and homophobic stereotyping pursued as a philosopher and literary arts scholar of Indian heritage undertaking a review of contemporary visual art in the USA.

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[9] One of the many reasons why the "*Black Male*" exhibition was (and continues to be) seen as controversial was precisely because mainstream museums in the USA – as in the West more broadly – have traditionally served to validate and exhibit works of fine art created by white (and predominantly male) artists, and also to privilege the perspectives of white audiences. Consequently, as Bridget Cooks notes, the likelihood that the Whitney Museum of American Art would be incapable of successfully and sensitively mediating visual images featuring problematic representations of black men without further reinscribing caricatures as opposed to challenging stereotypes of black masculinity was extremely high – particularly amongst African-American communities. In Chapter 4 of her book *"Exhibiting Blackness"* Cooks critiques the content and curation of the exhibition and writes: "Because there was no good-faith relationship or trust between Black America and the art museum, the Whitney's position as the author of the exhibition influenced a reading of the artworks as uncritical representations of stereotypes. Further, the perception of the museum as an ambivalent producer of images of Black men was as troubling as one that promoted stereotypes" (Cooks 2011: 113).
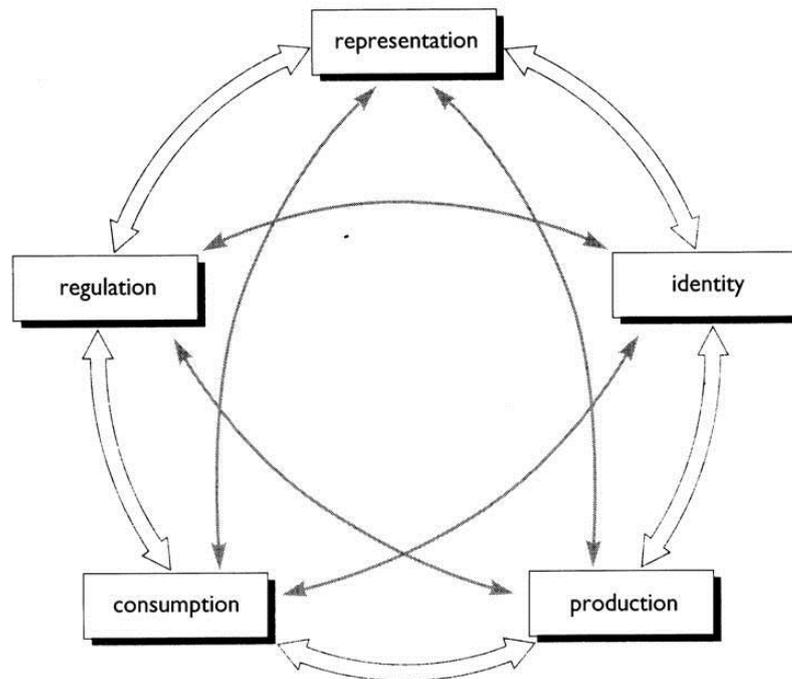
Figure 2: Paul Du Gay and Stuart Hall's "Circuit of Culture" (Du Gay *et al.* 1997: 3)

Like Homi K. Bhabha's walk-through critique of the exhibition spaces at the Whitney Museum in 1994, my investigation into othering combines critical and experiential responses to the *"danse macabre"* of shifting Self/Other stereotypes, transposed from New York in the 1990s to selected museal settings in London and Paris several decades later. Crucially, my application of black feminist theory, and an embodied understanding of a diasporic, black "absent-presence" within the context of Western European exhibiting spaces and practices is *not* simply about critiquing the *status quo*, but rather about actively resisting and challenging denigrations of blackness through the (re-)appraisal and (re-)presentation of artworks, curation and poetics to revise, reform and 'decolonise' repositories of problematic images, assemblages and texts.10 Consequently, rather than an

10 My use of the term "absent-presence" in this context follows on from the work of Canadian art historian Charmaine Nelson (who, in turn, also references Jacques Derrida's earlier theoretical work on representation). In her visual analysis of images of the South African woman Saartjie Baartman (1789-1815) – historically referred to in the West as "The Hottentot Venus" – she contrasts representations of Baartman's black body to those of white female nudes within classical Western portraiture, seen as the idealized image of beauty. Nelson argues that, within any relationship constructed as "dichotomous" there is always an interdependence and, therefore, the identity of the white female subject in Western art is typically reinforced through the presence of her assumed "Other" – physically characterised as a black African woman – even when her image is not actually pictorially represented in the artwork itself (Nelson 2010: 129). In other words, as she summarises in later notes, "the black body *declares* the white" (*Ibid.* p. 224). This phenomenon of a black female "absent-presence" is also discussed by other black feminist scholars – most notably bell hooks, in her writing on black female spectatorship and the "Oppositional Gaze" (hooks 1992:

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unwitting participation in "the stereotype's "*danse macabre*" (*op. cit.*, 1994), the active, affective/emotional aspect of my research should be more appropriately characterised as "a delicate and challenging dance of redemption" (Henderson 2010a: 7) – which, as Carol E. Henderson further explains, "is not only salve for the wounded black female body, but also a mechanism that restabilises the integrity of the black female self in our literary and public spaces" (*Ibid.*, p.7).

In this way, my contribution to challenging essentialist and reductive notions about blackness, stereotyped Africanity, and the devaluing of African heritage through the cultural fictions of Self/Other binarism continues the important work espoused by black feminist theorists such as (among others) bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, Lupe Davidson and the afore-mentioned Carol E. Henderson, to critically 'recover' African and diasporic voices and perspectives from the margins and (re-)position them at the centre of museographic and art-historical discourse. This thesis, therefore, becomes an act of "talking back" – something bell hooks considers as "a necessary requirement for claiming a self" as one moves from object to subject, and towards self-representation (hooks 1989: 9). It also exposes oppressive repositories of "controlling images," racialized stereotypes, and Western mechanisms of power that have historically served to de-normalise blackness – and, in particular, difference black female bodies as the embodiment of exotic otherness, deviance, abnormality and sub-humanity (see, for example, Collins 2000: 69-72, Nelson 2010: 4, Davidson 2010: 193-195); un-masks and counter-narrates the prevailing "mythical norms" of whiteness and heterosexual masculinity (Lorde 2007 [1984]: 116); and discusses the amelioration of othering through the application of *alternative* museographic practices that have the potential to positively transform collective cultural imaginaries and museal materialiities relating to Africa and Africans in the West.

1.2   Histories and legacies of othering in British and French exhibiting contexts

Edward Said's analysis of the binary rhetorics of power that developed as part of the West's imperialist and orientalist ideologies, explains the nature of colonialist thinking during the so-called 'Age of Enlightenment' (see Said 2003 [1978]: 46): specifically, that it was considered appropriate in the 18th and 19th centuries for art objects from the Global South – vast regions of which were (then) colonies, territories and dominions of European

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115-131), but also Janell Hobson who discusses artistic recovery of the "un-mirrored" black female body through creative reimagining of historical images like those of Saartjie Baartman in the work of contemporary black women visual artists (see Hobson 2003: 87).

imperial powers – to be taken from their places and communities of origin and relocated to the cultural capitals of Western Europe (see, also, Said 1993: xviii-xix). Within the context of the two most expansive occidental empires during that period of history, London and Paris were respectively positioned as centres for the reception, classification display and consumption of African, American, Asian and Oceanic artworks and artefacts in ways that were not considered acts of hegemonic cultural appropriation and theft, but rather seen as relocating what already 'belonged' to Britain and France to their most prestigious scientific and cultural institutes sited at the "heart of empire" and the imperial *métropole*, (see, respectively, Barringer 1998: 11, and Aldrich 2014: 439-40). As Said notes:

> If you were British or French in the 1860s you saw, and you felt, India and North Africa with a combination of familiarity and distance, but never with a sense of their separate sovereignty. In your narratives, histories, travel tales and explorations your consciousness was represented as the principal authority, an active point of energy that made sense not just of colonizing activities but of exotic geographies and peoples. (Said 1993: xxiv)

Such attitudes were also demonstrated far beyond references to inanimate objects so that, from a broader consumption perspective aligned to colonial systems of domination, not only artworks and artefacts were served up to satisfy European appetites for 'distant' and 'exotic' things, but the communities of people associated with the making of these items – themselves perceived as Other – were also subjected to what bell hooks describes as being "offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palette" (hooks 1992: 39).

Contemporary anthropologists, museologists, and cultural theorists who have critiqued othering and alterisation as a Western-centric framing device for museum and gallery practices have drawn on Said's theories (primarily developed within the context of literary criticism) and transposed them into museal and visual art settings to help examine a range of institutions whose exhibiting practices over the centuries illustrate the structural embedding of Self/Other binarism and, in turn, the ongoing reproduction of the othering of Africa via ethnographic, encyclopaedic and aesthetic object displays (see, for example, Coombes 1994, Shelton 1997a, Lebovics 2004, Thomas 2010).

Anthony Shelton specifically notes the ground-breaking impact of Edward Said's theorisation of the West's orientalist desires to "control, contain and otherwise govern... the Other" (Said 2003 [1978]: 48) in helping to steer many curators towards a museology of the late-1980s and 1990s that started to address imperialism's "threatening and uncomfortable spectres" of Self/Other binarism (Shelton 1997a: 41-42 and 57). Said's

book *Orientalism* (1978) is cited alongside more recent, postcolonial writing and "methodological correctives" on issues of cultural identity, diversity, diaspora and hybridity discussed by (among others) Stuart Hall (1987), Homi K. Bhabha (2004 [1994])and Anne McClintock (1995). In reference to ethnographic museum displays that Shelton observed in the UK, Belgium, Germany and Portugal during the 1990s, he writes:

> No longer can museum ethnography lay uncontested claim to a privileged position through which it effects the classification of those within and outside the boundaries it tries so rigorously to draw. Once the distinct ontological status of the western subject 'I' is dissolved, there is no comparable term with which to oppose and define 'otherness'. The series of differences collapses in on itself. (Shelton 1997a: 43-44)

However, while some scholars of French colonial history, anthropology and museology, such as Robert Aldrich, also cite Said's *Orientalism* (1978) as "crucial" and "revolutionary" in assisting with closer critical scrutiny of "imperial encounters" via museum and gallery displays (Aldrich 2010b: 8), he and others also cite and historicise as equally significant the work of Frantz Fanon (2008 [1952]) and Albert Memmi (1990 [1957]) on decolonisation struggles in the 1950s; the application of Michel Foucault's work on "regimes of truth" from the 1970s, discussed in terms of the colonial "apparatus of power" (see Chapter 6 on "Truth and Power" in Foucault and Gordon 1980: 131-133) ; and Pierre Bourdieu's research on the elitism of fine art museums in France during the 1980s-1990s (see, for example, Bourdieu and Nice 1984, Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1991) that similarly contributed to a shifting away from Self/Other binarism towards more hybrid and pluralist museographic practices (*op. cit.*, 2010b, p. 14).

Within the broader history of exhibiting practices *beyond* museums, another significant arena of display that impacted on the articulation and legitimisation of the othering of Africa in Western Europe was the staging of World's Fairs (or colonial expositions) during the mid-19th to early 20th centuries. Although exhibitions celebrating agricultural, industrial and artistic developments within nation states had been staged in Western Europe since the late-18th century, the first large-scale event presented as an "all nations" display of imperialist expansionism was Britain's Great Exhibition of 1851 (Crystal Palace, London). A similar event was also staged in France for the first time four years later – "*Exposition Universelle des produits de l'Agriculture, de l'Industrie et des Beaux-Arts*" (Jardins des Champs-Élysées, Paris), 1855.

These two capitals played host to World's Fairs on a further 20 occasions in London and seven in Paris throughout the peak period of occidental expansionism, from the 1860s to

the outbreak of World War 2 in 1939 – including the most grandiose and elaborate showcases during the late-1880s, staged in the immediate wake of the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885, when much of the world beyond Europe was seen as reducible and open to quite reductive, ocularcentric interpretation along the lines of the Heideggerian notion of the 'world *as* a picture' (see, for example, Mitchell 1991, Lebovics 1992, Luckhurst 2012).[11]

In Timothy Mitchell's book *Colonizing Egypt* (1991) he documents the growing popularity in Europe of representing the world as a picture – initially in the form of cabinets of curiosity, dioramas, and three-dimensional panoramic models, then later (largely as a result of the exhibiting techniques used for the Great Exhibition in London in 1851) as life-size, walk-through reconstructed villages and bazaars. Noting the way the World's Fair was actively promoted to visitors as though they could experience a simultaneous collapse of time and geographical distance as part of the spectacle, he writes:

> Spectacles like the world exhibition and the Orientalist congress set up the world as a picture. They ordered it up before an audience as an object on display, to be viewed, experienced and investigated. The Great Exhibition of 1851 in London claimed to present to its six million visitors a 'living picture' of the development of mankind. Orientalism, it was claimed in the same way at the inauguration of the Ninth International Congress in London in1892 had 'displayed before us the historical development of the human race.' (Mitchell 1991: 6)

Herman Lebovics also discusses how the later *'Expositions colonials'* in Paris were increasingly used as geo-political as well as aesthetic displays to sway national public opinion in favour of further French colonial expansion throughout the Global South at the turn of the 20th century and, in particular, the extension of trading networks across North and West Africa and South-East Asia.

A range of archival materials, photographs, film clips and printed sources dating from this period illustrate and document differing public attitudes towards World's Fairs. Despite the destruction of exhibits by some political activists in Europe opposed to the ideologies and socio-economic impacts of mass capitalism and imperialism, as well as protests by members of philanthropic societies concerned about the treatment of colonised people forced to perform as 'live exhibits' (see, for example, Pred 1995: 76-79, Britton 2010: 68-78), the broad historicisation of the phenomena shows that mainstream audiences were

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[11] The Berlin Conference (also known as the "Congo Conference") was convened and hosted by the German Chancellor Otto von Bismark between 15 November 1884 and 26 February 1885. In later years this conference was dubbed the "Scramble for Africa" because of the way the European heads of state, political leaders and ambassadors competed to claim regions of the African continent as additional colonial territories within their emerging and expanding empires. Further details about the Conference's impacts on collecting and exhibiting practices at the British Museum are covered in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

seduced by attempts to 'spectacularise' empire through three dimensional displays. Research undertaken by (among others) Timothy Mitchell and Loren Kruger (researching the British Empire context), and Herman Lebovics and Dana Hale (in relation to French colonialism), shows how increasingly more elaborate and expansive constructions of large-scale pavilions, exhibition palaces, monuments, arcades and other architectural structures for the shows in London and Paris proved highly effective as political propaganda and as commerce-related promotional devices. Their sheer size and scale were intended to 'spectacularise' the global reach, commodity wealth and hegemonic power of imperialism to the respective national populations within Britain and the Hexagon of metropolitan France (see Mitchell 1991: 5-7, Lebovics 1992: 62-71, Kruger 2007: 27-29, Hale 2008: 13-20).

From a 21st century perspective it is often difficult to imagine the visual and emotional impact of seeing and interacting with large-scale reconstructions of sites from around the world, and demonstrations of cultural practices by people of African, Asian, Indonesian, Middle Eastern, First Nation American and Australasian descent presented as 'authentic' representations of lived experiences in other continents, on the scale of the World's Fairs. However, literary and visual analysis of archives, photographs and early newsreel footage from the late-19th and early 20th centuries does help contextualise how and why such seemingly elaborate fictions and falsehoods could be so readily and consistently presented as facts and truths – within the framing of colonialist "regimes of truth" – to a populace who seldom travelled beyond very spatially and socio-economically confined, localised existences. In particular, Lebovics' visual analysis and reproduction of Parisian posters, illustrations and photographs – many only showing exoticised and theatrically-staged images of colonialism for the benefit of domestic audiences – reveal how the opportunity to picture empire and physically touch it through the commodity culture of a "new Greater France" – successfully distracted many French people from the routines and banalities of their daily lives (Lebovics 1992: 62).

For Lebovics, a key section of the speech made at the launch of the Paris Colonial Exposition on 6 May 1931 by the visiting Italian Minister for the Colonies, Prince Lanza di Scalea, epitomizes prevailing subordinating attitudes towards the 'colonised Other' through the way the exhibition was interpreted and narrated as demonstrating white racial supremacy and spatial hegemony, as illustrated by the following statement: "the Homeric Odyssey of the white race, which, having now reached every corner of the world, has transformed, or is in the process of transforming, barbaric continents into civilized regions" (Prince Lanza di Scalea, cited in Lebovics 1992: 64).

A change in the aforementioned racist attitudes towards greater mainstream acknowledgement of the violent, exploitative and dehumanising impacts of British and French imperialism worldwide did not occur within the nations' populations located in Europe for several decades. Significant catalysts for the eventual change came in the form of four UNESCO declarations on 'race' and cultural equivalence (1950-1967) – published over two decades in the immediate post-war period at a time when a large areas of the Global South were actively engaged in decolonisation struggles to secure their independence.12 However, within the Hexagon – even after the violent conflicts of the Algerian War of Independence, 1954-1962 – some within metropolitan France *still* adhered to positive expressions of French cultural superiority to justify past colonial expansion, and those attitudes continued to manifest in political and media discourses about *laïcité*, assimilationism, and the desire to retain dependencies as 'DOM-TOMs.'13

The notion of France's colonial *'mission civilisatrice,'* as articulated in Jules Ferry's notorious speech to the French Chamber of Deputies on 28 March 1884 – in which he spoke about the "higher races" of Europe having a "duty to civilize the inferior races," out of a fear that France might (in his words) "sink from the first rank to the third and fourth" within a perceived global hierarchy of civilisations14 – has also continued to be actively debated since it was first pronounced more than a century ago. However, far from being cited for the purposes of challenge and contestation, what is most worrying is how echoes of Ferry's speech have continued to recur with surprising regularity in France's formal political discourse of the current era – most recently resurfacing in a public statement made on 4 February 2012 by former French Minister of the Interior Claude Guéant, who remarked: "*Toutes les civilisations, toutes les pratiques, toutes les cultures, au regard de nos principes républicains, ne se valent pas*" ["In view of our republican principles, not all civilisations, practices or cultures are equal"].15

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12 The four statements on 'race' and issues of racial prejudice published by UNESCO to help combat racism and discrimination worldwide were: 'Statement on Race, Paris, 18 July 1950'; 'Statement on the Nature of Race and Race Differences, Paris, July 1951'; 'Proposals on the Biological Aspects of Race, Moscow, August 1964'; 'Statement on Race and Racial Prejudice, Paris, September 1967'. In: UNESCO (1969) *Four statements on the race question*. COM.69/II.27/A. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001229/122962eo.pdf [accessed December 2013].
13 The acronym DOM-TOM is an abbreviation of the French phrase, *"Les Départements et les Territoires d'Outre Mer"* [French Overseas Departments and Territories].
14 Extracts taken from *Discours et Opinions de Jules Ferry,* ed. Paul Robiquet (Paris: Armand Colin & Cie., 1893) Translated from French by Ruth Kleinman for the Modern History Sourcebook, Fordham University http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1884ferry.asp [accessed March 2014].
15 The Le Monde article about Guéant's speech states that the Minister continued with the following remarks: « *Celles qui défendent l'humanité nous paraissent plus avancées que celles qui la nient. Celles qui défendent la liberté, l'égalité et la fraternité nous paraissent supérieures à celles qui acceptent la tyrannie, la minorité des femmes, la haine sociale ou ethnique. En tout état de cause, nous*

Given that the histories and legacies of imperialism retain a capacity to cause ongoing tensions, conflicts and heated debates – both within individual institutions, as well as collectively and structurally across many different sites used as spaces of display for aspects of art and cultural heritage within contemporary society – it is not surprising that the museum and gallery sectors of former European imperial nations have introduced specific legislation to regulate the management and development of object-based collections, conservation and storage issues for artworks and archives, and forms of public access. The final section of this chapter discusses the history and efficacy of legislation within the British and French cultural context to examine its most recent impacts on the presence and amelioration of Self/Other binarism and the othering of Africa.

1.3   Museum legislation in the UK and France

It has been more than two decades since sector-specific legislation was passed to transform the way museums and galleries are structured and governed in the UK – via the Museums and Galleries Act of 1992. Nevertheless, significant improvements have continued to take place as a result of adherence to the anti-discrimination articles of broader, non-sector-specific equalities legislation – most recently detailed in the Race Relations (Amendment) Act of 2000, the Disability Discrimination Act of 2005, and the Equality Act of 2010. In contrast, France's museum and gallery sector has only experienced one major change in the law that directly affects how state-funded arts and heritage institutions are managed – namely, the "Museums of France" Law of 4 January 2002. The main purpose of this legislation was to establish a new certification scheme to better regulate the designation and management of museum collections, and also ensure their accessibility to the widest possible audiences. Additional articles related to the enhancement of collection conservation and storage procedures and facilities, and the development and implementation of educational and cultural information dissemination policies to ensure equal access to culture for all.

Prior to the 2002 certification law, French cultural institutions were largely autonomous organisations responsible for establishing their own benchmarks as regards collection development standards, exhibition and event content and audience targets. Government oversight of the sector was (and continues to be) administered via the Ministry of Cultural Affairs – first established in France in 1959, with the politician and French intellectual

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devons protéger notre civilisation. » ["Those who defend humanity seem more advanced than those who deny it. Those who defend freedom, equality and brotherhood seem superior to those who accept the tyranny of minority women, social or ethnic hatred. In any event, we must protect our civilization."]. (LeMonde.fr/AFP 2012) [accessed March 2014].

André Malraux appointed by Général de Gaulle as the first Minister of Culture. Since its inception, the founding decree of the ministry announced its primary role as "making available capital works from humanity, and initially from France, to the greatest possible number of French people, ensuring the largest audience for [French] cultural heritage, and supporting the creation of the spirit and works of art which enrich it" (Decree n° 59-889, 24 July 1959). For decades this decree has served as the mission statement underpinning all the key pronouncements and policy initiatives announced, championed and eventually implemented via a succession of ministers of culture. However, because of the lack of any legal requirement to make substantial structural and strategic changes to the way any of the core functions and services of museums and galleries have been delivered prior to 2002, the entire sector has appeared to be quite conservative and slow-paced in comparison to major transformations in the UK culture sector over the same time period.

UK national and local authority museums and galleries have worked hard to exceed the minimum access and inclusion standards documented in the afore-mentioned UK acts of parliament out of recognition that some minoritized groups experience discrimination, exclusion and barriers to access. Their efforts are most visibly evident in the major architectural (re-)developments that have taken place to make public buildings accessible to disabled visitors, but are also noticeable in exhibition and event programmes that are now more responsive to and reflective of the UK's multi-ethnic and multi-faith populations.

Comparatively, the articles of the Museums of France Law of 2002 only encourage diversification of service provision on the grounds that any changes are universally beneficial to everyone, without any acknowledgement that inequalities (felt as immediate impacts, and via latent legacies) exist as a lived reality, thus obfuscating any need for applying differentiated and/or differentialist approaches to service provision to address normalised, unmeasured and unaccounted for discriminations. For this reason grassroots political campaign groups, anti-racism education organisations and research collectives such as *Mouvement des Indigènes de la République*, *Foundation Lilian Thuram* (FLT): *Education Contre le Racisme* and ACHAC Research Group (*Association pour la Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine),* respectively, are working with museums and galleries to raise awareness about and demonstrate effective innovations focused on minoritized groups on the basis that what serves to benefit an excluded minority will ultimately also benefit a sizeable majority (see also Chapter 5 of this thesis for further information).

Aedin Mac Devitt's analysis on how museum laws are implemented, managed, monitored and upheld around the world suggests that there are increasing trends towards greater democratisation and decentralisation of services in nation-states within Western Europe and South America, as observed via the International Council on Museums (ICOM) legal affairs committee case study reports from Brazil, Switzerland and Germany. She summarises:

> Legislation governing art and cultural property has become a source of heated debate, not only for museum professionals, but also on the worldwide media stage…Part of the reason for this interest is that museums have become central meeting places in their communities, they are offering wider programming and the internet has made them increasingly accessible to the general public…Museums are increasingly facing challenges that are closely related to their social, political and ecological environment, and today's museum professionals have the role of protecting and caring for tangible and intangible heritage. The result is that the amount and type of legislation affecting museums today are growing at a rapid pace. (Mac Devitt 2010: 10)

This wider perspective suggests that although the Museums of France Law of 2002 represents legislation that (has moved, and) is moving France's museums and galleries towards more inclusive and pluralist practices, the nation's governance structures may not yet be sufficiently flexible to be responsive to and accommodate the size or pace of the challenges presented by France's increasingly diverse communities in constant transition.

Clearly, it is important to have legislation which not only sets out strategic agendas and standards of service delivery for institutions in the culture sector, but also provides laws that enable the service offer to diverse publics to be monitored and evaluated. Without the possibility of government incentives and/or sanctions relating to the levels of (non-)compliance with cultural legislation, institutions are often quite slow to address the types of structural inequalities that only register as exclusions for a statistical minority of the population overall. It could be argued, therefore, that for any legislation to be effective it needs to be periodically reviewed and updated in order to be responsive to local, national and international changes over time. The campaigns and lobbying undertaken by – or on behalf of – excluded groups agitating from the margins can help to provide the evidence and catalysts for change, as it is often their data-gathering activities that help to expose whether existing legislative benchmarks and parameters actually serve to enable (or disable) participation within – and eventual contributions as an integral part of – the collective mainstream of a nation's cultural heritage.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Prelude: Constructed selves and their imagined others: some thoughts on identity, (in)visibility and 'un/marked' bodies

> "The fact is 'black' has never been just there... It has always been an unstable identity, psychically, culturally and politically. It, too, is a narrative, a story, a history. Something constructed, told, spoken, not simply found."
>
> Stuart Hall – "Minimal Selves" (1987: 45)

> "[T]he centrality of otherness is associated with a prevalence of the debate on the relationship between race and nation, racism and nationalism, more generally racism as a 'normal' or 'pathological' development of institutional community-feelings which discriminate between the 'us' and the 'them', or the 'self' and the 'others', at different levels, national and supranational..."
>
> Étienne Balibar – "Difference, Otherness, Exclusion," *Parallax*, Vol. 11, Issue 1 (2005: 20)

> "When a body is emptied of its gender or race, this is a mark of how its position is the privileged norm. Its power emanates from its ability to be seen as just normal, to be without corporeality."
>
> Nirmal Puwar – "Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place" (2004: 57)

2.1   Introduction

Cultural theory underpins a substantial proportion of this examination of the 'othering' of Africa and its diasporas, primarily because the institutional settings of Western museums and galleries – in addition to the study's historical and geographical focus on changing exhibiting practices over time and space – encourage in-depth critical reflections on the meaning and nature of difference, the dialectics of sameness in relation to otherness, notions of proximity and distance, and issues of dialogism in relation to culture, aesthetics and the arts. These themes and issues feature prominently in the work of many scholars – including (but not limited to) Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Emmanuel Lévinas, Gilles Deleuze and Etienne Balibar (see, for example, Derrida 1978, Foucault and Gordon 1980, Bakhtin 1981, Derrida, Bennington, and McLeod 1987, Lévinas 1987, Deleuze and Patton 2004, Balibar 2005). However, as this thesis is concerned with the construction and practice of an otherness that relates directly to hierarchical and racialized differentiations – falsely constructed to negatively discriminate against people with African heritage, and treat *as* 'Other' the artistic and cultural outputs of black people

from the global African diasporas – then the range of theoretical perspectives that are most pertinent (and have necessarily been foregrounded throughout this research project) concern expressions of postcolonialist and diasporic perspectives on difference, and contestations of otherness, espoused by scholars 'of colour'.

Some of the most notable of the theorists who have interrogated the cultural politics of race and racism in their writing about histories of imperialism and the legacies of colonialism – framed as a discourse on the internationally pluralist dynamics of cross-culturalism and 'dialogic relations' – include: Frantz Fanon, James Smalls and Tyler Stovall writing primarily within the context of France and the global francophonie (see, for example, Fanon 1952 Smalls 2003, Fanon 2004, Stovall 2006); Stuart Hall, Avtar Brah, and Kobena Mercer discussing Britain and its formerly imperialist power relations within an international 'Commonwealth' of nations (see Hall 1992, Brah 1993, Mercer 1999); and also scholars such as Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha offering perspectives on the global impacts of occidental expansionism by Western European nations, and a neo-imperialist USA, in relation to the wider expanse of regions throughout the Global South (see, in particular, Said 1978 Spivak 1988, 2013 [1989], Bhabha 2004). Reading this more nuanced discourse on the histories and geographies of imperialism, past and present – which foregrounds interrogations of what Avtar Brah describes as the "processes of conquest, colonisation and empire formation" within contexts "inscribed by racialized matrices of power" (Brah 1993: 11-12) – was vital to help shift the philosophical discourse away from the traditional (but wholly inadequate) conventions within the Euro-American academy of commencing examinations of difference from Eurocentric (or '*Western*-centric') standpoints (Clayton 2003: 363). Such perspectives have historically positioned Europe as the "brain of the earth's body," and everywhere else as either "etymologically, 'thrown-behind'" (Preziosi and Lamoureux 2006: 65), or perpetually cast "as the Self's shadow" (Spivak 1988: 280).

In view of the above, the main bodies of literature that have been most insightful for establishing the foundations of this examination of othering can be categorised into three areas of scholarship. The first concerns postcolonial theoretical research related to issues of race and racism in the arts. The second focuses on literature discussing histories of imperialism and 'decolonial' perspectives within the fields of historical, cultural and museum-related geographies. The third centres on cultural commentary about the embodiment and corporealisation of otherness – particularly scholarship that discusses the differencing of black bodies in general, and African-descended black women's bodies in particular – and the resulting levels of agency, mobility and freedom of these variously

'differenced' individuals (and communities of people) to contribute towards the production, consumption, and regulation of artistic and cultural outputs in the West.

A review of the literature that underpins these three areas of scholarship is briefly outlined and discussed below, and also continued and extended later in the thesis as an integral element of the four empirical case study chapters (see Chapters 4 to 7).

2.2 Race, racism and postcolonial theory

When deciding to concentrate on an examination of othering practices evidenced in Western museums, the initial texts consulted to gain an understanding of the meaning and the historical manifestations of othering were works by Edward Said. His theories about European colonizers and colonialists' simultaneous designation and disavowal of peoples and cultural outputs from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Oceania and regions of Central and South America as 'Other' – defined as an integral aspect of an 'Orientalist' discourse – laid a solid foundation for understanding how othering, and notions of otherness, were founded on elaborate and imaginative falsehoods that developed and proliferated over centuries into what Said describes as "theses of Oriental backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality," complete with (in reference to Michel Foucault's writing on *"Truth and Power"*) their own in-built "regimes of truth" (see, for example, Said 1978 [2003]: 206-7; and see also Foucault and Gordon 1980: 133).

Edward Said's book *Orientalism* is rightly credited by many scholars working within arts and social science disciplines today as a "founding text of contemporary postcolonial criticism" (Driver 2001: 7). This is primarily because Said was one of the first scholars to explain the historical and cultural contexts underpinning the myths, fictions and fantasies of an Orientalist 'non-Western', '*non*-white' Other. However, it must also be noted that this work is not approached (nor simply accepted) uncritically, because – as many feminist scholars have documented – this particular writing about Orientalism seldom addresses in any detail how black and brown women's experiences of being 'orientalised' differed quite markedly to the narratives documented by Said about men, especially within what Jane Jacobs appropriately refers to as the "masculinist project of empire building," and the invariable positioning of women as "peripheral to the privileged spheres of knowledge and action associated with empire building" (Jacobs 2003: 348).[16]

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[16] For further critical perspectives on Edward Said's work, see also Rosalind O'Hanlon and David Washbrook's essay, *After Orientalism: Culture, Criticism and Politics in the Third World* (2006 [1992]), and – specifically in relation to feminist discourses and *Orientalism* – Reina Lewis' book, *Gendering Orientalism: Race, Femininity and Representation* (1996).

The depth and breadth of Orientalist thinking about the '*non*-West' – particularly during the era of Enlightenment, when scientific racism was also at its peak throughout Europe – led to divisions being established for every conceivable characteristic of human life to create a racialized, geographical and socio-cultural hierarchy separating people, and societies around the world, according to a fictitious "advanced/backward binarism" (Said 1978 [2003]: 207). This process emerged in such a way to confirm the peoples of Western Europe as "civilized" and all 'others' as variously "uncivilized" so that any land on which the latter resided could be annexed or occupied by the (so called) "advanced powers" (Said, *op. cit.*). Moreover, regarding 'dialogic relations' between Western Europeans and those designated as Oriental – and, thus, 'Other' – Said further observes:

> Along with all other peoples variously designated as backward, degenerate, uncivilized and retarded, the Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at: they were seen though, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined or – as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory – taken over. (Said 1978 [2003]: 207).

Once this theoretical foundation for othering was established as the departure point for this study, it was possible thereafter to search and retrieve a wider body of literature from within the subject fields of geography, museology, art history, cultural studies, and selected other disciplines. This enabled an expansion and further contextualisation of Said's ideas about the orientalised Other to specifically exemplify how such constructions – positioned in diametric opposition to a Western 'Self,' typically normalised and embodied as an elite, white, European male – manifested as an integral aspect of the 'spectacularisation' and 'exoticisation' of empire (see, for example, Mitchell 1991, Karp and Wilson 1996, Shelton 1997a, Hall 1997, Barringer and Flynn 1998).

Through their documentation of curatorial practices featuring collections of ethnography sourced from continental Africa, museologists such as Anthony Shelton and Annie Coombes (writing within the context of British imperial histories), and historians such as James Smalls, Herman Lebovics and Pascal Blanchard (writing specifically about the "persuasive power of the spectacle" in relation to France's colonial expositions throughout the mid-to-late-19th and early-20th centuries), have all exemplified the problematic interpretive context to the development of 'scientific' and 'encyclopaedic' collections of ethnography sourced from continental Africa – of which some of the earliest exhibits were initially acquired for display in public museums from once privately owned "cabinets of curiosity" collected by members of the European aristocracy (see, for example, Coombes

1994, Shelton 1997b, and (specifically re. French imperialist propaganda) Smalls 2003, Blanchard et al. 2008, Lebovics 2014). These fundamentally paradoxical and contradictory constructions of a mythical Other – as well as the associated practices in museums that have historically transformed such falsehoods into representationalist narratives made tangible through the presence of object collections – are exposed as unstable by Shelton when he writes:

> Museum ethnography, like anthropology itself, is based on the premises of division and difference: the division between consciousness and some sort of external reality; the division between subject and object; and the whole series of differences that such divisions engender between the individual and society and the 'I' and the 'other'. The basis on which this 'other' has been constructed has been subject to increasing scepticism; the very term, 'other', proving remarkably elusive and phantasmagoric until finally, in the works of some contemporary theorists, it has redoubled its trajectory back onto our own fragmented consciousnesses to make us 'other' to ourselves. (Shelton 1997b: 33)

This aforementioned discussion of the 'phantasmogoric,' illusory and shifting nature of othering by Shelton is also referenced by Herman Lebovics in relation to France and the history of its exhibiting practices. Throughout his writing on the emergence of French museums of ethnography, he notes how "flagrant techniques of seduction" developed in the era of World's Fairs and 19th century colonial expositions – including the juxtapositioning of (what he terms) "the fabulous" alongside the more mundane, less spectacularised representations of the colonial project – were later transposed into museum spaces to enable collections of objects to function with a heightened element of "persuasive power" (as a result of their tangibility), but without any consideration that such techniques were part and parcel of the propaganda that sought to 'romanticise' and present Empire as an elaborate "fable" for the benefit of 19th century French publics who never travelled beyond the borders of the Hexagon to know the brutal and exploitative realities of colonialism (Lebovics 2008: 371). As a consequence, even the most recently established museal spaces in France for exhibiting "World Museum" collections – such as the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris – continue to problematically 'spectacularise' France's imperial past such that exhibits sourced from formerly colonised nations of the Global South are transformed within museal space into what Lebovics describes as "one grand horizon-filling persuasion-image" that is becoming increasingly less convincing to diverse 21st century visiting publics, many of whom are coming to a realisation of the potential for display objects to have a plethora of "untold stor[ies] behind the striking work standing alone in the well-lit display case" (Lebovics 2007: 8-9).

The difficulties encountered when approaching the phenomenon of othering via an academic discipline like museology, and also examining its geographical implications (which will be further discussed in the section on *Museum Geographies* that follows below), is that the most high-profile contributors to published scholarship in this field (*still* most often white, European men) regularly compartmentalise and document the forms of racial discrimination they observe in highly abstract, falsely bounded ways, so that their writing about race and ethnicity as social constructions render the various other signifiers of identity (such as gender, class, religion and sexualities) as neutral, when they are not.

As intersections of race, gender, class, sexuality and religion are seldom addressed in holistic and connected ways, which belies their complexities and multiplicities, the research of critical race theorists, feminist scholars and LGBTQ theorists 'of colour' (such as Hazel Carby, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins, in relation to black feminism(s), and Audre Lorde, with regarded to intersected LGBTQ agendas) should also be acknowledged (see, for example, Carby 1982, hooks 1989, Collins 2000, Lorde 2007 [1984]). This work on intersectional discourses on othering and alterisation from wider subject disciplines has, therefore, also been consulted to add additional, more varied and pluralist perspectives on these issues to help facilitate what Avtar Brah describes as a wider "recognition of heterogeneity and cultural difference" (Brah 1993: 9).

2.3   Museum geographies

Examining othering within Western museums through the discipline of human geography encourages an interrogation of scholarship that critiques the changing socio-political and spatial dynamics of exhibition spaces – and the collecting and display activities pursued within them – historically as well as in the present day. Of the geographers who have pursued this type of research – including, for example, Felix Driver, Gillian Rose, Mike Crang, Divya Tolia-Kelly, Caroline Bressey and Harriet Hawkins – many of their discussions about the historical, cultural, and political geographies of museums and galleries have tended to focus on this observation of museal spaces operating as 'sites of privilege' (and, thus, as 'spaces of exclusion') particularly within the context of nation-building exercises, and (in the specific cases of Britain and France) Western European nations' extensive involvement in empire formations far beyond the immediate borders of their nation states (see, for example, Driver 1994, Rose and Blunt 1994, Driver 2001, Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010, Bressey and Wareham 2010, Hawkins 2010).

Whilst an art historian might concentrate on detailed examinations of the compositional aspects of art objects and artworks, geographers have been more concerned with what Gillian Rose refers to as their "social modalities" (within a broader "tri-modal" analytical framework that combines considerations about an object's social, technological and compositional properties): including details about how the art objects and artefacts were created, who produced them, why they were made, how they got into museum spaces, why they were assembled in a particular alongside other exhibits, and the changing cultural politics of the institutions where they are housed (Rose 2012: 20-21).

Harriet Hawkins, a specialist in geography-art engagements, provides important insights into treating museums and galleries as spaces into which you take your whole body to be used as a research instrument, not just places for reacting to the exhibits through the gaze alone, where vision is privileged above all the other senses (Hawkins 2010: 324). Reading her work gives licence to express more holistic, emotional, multi-sensory (including 'haptic') responses to being in museums, whereby a researcher is able to document their visceral reactions to how the exhibits, the accompanying interpretation narratives, and the assemblages of such texts and objects operating in concert, make one feel. This scholar's feminist approach differs from the more traditional (and masculinist) work of geographers who have tended to approach the discourse on space and place in more dispassionate and distanced ways (see, for example, Livingstone 1992). Hawkins' more affective, multi-sensory approach to museum geographies – and museums as "perambulatory spaces" – is also discussed in the work of Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly who have written similar research accounts about *affective/emotional* responses to places that go "*beyond* the ocular" (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012: 3).

During the cultural 'turn' of the late-1980s museum and gallery curators in the West began to engage more critically in self-reflection, historicisation and theorisation about the value and relevance of their exhibitions for diverse audiences, not just the description and display of objects in an isolated way. This was part of the discourse of "new museology," as discussed by Peter Vergo, Mieke Bal, Sharon Macdonald, and others (see, for example, Vergo 1989, Bal 1996, Macdonald and Fyfe 1996, Macdonald and Basu 2007; and also Chapter 4, Section 4.2.4, of this thesis). Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu, in particular, have written about this turn towards an ideas-based (as opposed to object-centred) museology and how it has opened up a new opportunity for more 'experimental' curating that no longer concentrates on presenting ethnographic displays of cultures from around the world in discrete, fixed and bounded ways, but instead takes into account the "affective syntax" of displays (Macdonald and Basu 2007: 7-8). What they, and other exponents of

new museology, have argued is that – far from being discrete and bounded – cultures share many similarities, and are also influenced by constant cross-culturalisation: characterised by hybridity, fluidity, dialogue and dynamism. In their curatorial and pedagogic practice they stress the need to incorporate exhibiting techniques that demonstrate this dynamism and movement within the museum space to animate displays and make them more multi-sensory, and pluralise the voices of people invited to impart knowledge: for example, using techniques such as the inclusion of filmed narratives and other multi-media devices (Macdonald and Basu 2007, *op. cit.*; and see, also, further details about examples of Paul Basu's curatorial work – in practice – for the exhibition *Sowei Mask: Spirit of Sierra Leone* (2013) at the British Museum, listed in Appendix 2).

As a museum educator I value the way in which scholars such as Sharon Macdonald and Paul Basu centralise audiences, and the pedagogic impacts of exhibiting practices, as much as a focus on the materialities and provenance of objects. Like them, I believe strongly that curating is about catalysing conversations, and democratising creative spaces for curation to influence what is on display, allowing different audiences to experience diverse – but equally valid – responses and reactions. The view that before an item is displayed you can consult with audiences so that multiple interpretations, and a greater diversity of perspectives, can be incorporated into the narratives that accompany the exhibits is an approach that I wholeheartedly endorse, and discuss at length in this thesis with reference to wider conversations about 'multivocality'/'poly-vocality' within curatorship (see, in particular, Chapters 4, 5 and 8).

2.4   Issues of embodiment and corporeality

Many studies about museum spaces in the West have traditionally followed the conventions of Western art-historical research, which tends to look at the form, composition, materials and genres of artworks *as* objects within a particularly Euro-American canonical context. However, my encounters with artworks in these spaces are not quite so formalist. Instead, I approach them in a deeply embodied way because I recognise that – unlike white European scholars or (indeed) white publics encountering art in the West more broadly – my encounters in Western museum spaces are never neutral.

Past scholarship that discusses embodiment within academic geography has included research by Alison Blunt, Gillian Rose, Harriet Hawkins and other feminist geographers. Their scholarship is very useful as an initial starting point for examining corporeality.

However, this work seldom acknowledges that a black scholar undertaking cultural geography research will necessarily have very different embodied experiences within Western cultural institutions (and wider public spaces) that are conventionally normalised as white – such as, in the case of my research domain, museums and galleries in Britain and France.

This normalising of whiteness (and its perceived neutrality) is something that has preoccupied the thinking of many sociologists and cultural studies scholars – having to unpack, expose and counter-narrate a discourse in which whiteness is (and has historically been) constructed to "naturalize its visibility and omnipresence" (Dia Holloway 2016: 89 , cf. Dyer 1997, Bonnett 2000). Observing these phenomena in practice also exposes the hegemonic 'white heterosexual male gaze' as the privileged viewing perspective within Western, ocularcentric fine art and ethnographic exhibiting contexts (Berger 1972, Yancy 2008, Finzsch 2008).

As a black feminist geographer I have often consulted the research of fellow black feminists working within this discipline as the preliminary texts for helping to inform my own critical thinking and structure appropriate initial research responses that factor in and foreground embodiment issues from the raced and gendered perspective of a 'minoritized' woman in the West. Katherine McKittrick is a good example of one of these key scholars 'of colour,' who specifically writes about how being a black Canadian geographer necessitates having to revise geographical narratives, and read '*against* the grain' of archival materials featuring content about geographies of imperialism, colonialism and post-colonialism, and underlying discourses on geographies of race and racism, etc. from a black feminist perspective. In particular, she brings a 'black Atlanticist' and African diasporic perspective to bear on her understanding of Western spaces that have historically been normalised as exclusionary 'white spaces' (see, for example, McKittrick 2006, McKittrick and Woods 2007).

Caroline Bressey also writes about issues of race and racism within the context of studying the historical geographies of culture, heritage and the arts in the UK. As a feminist geographer 'of colour' she, too, is acutely aware of the absence, erasure and marginalisation of blackness when she enters museums, galleries and archives to research the histories and geographies of these institutions, and their 'raced' practices (see, for example, Dwyer and Bressey 2008, Bressey and Wareham 2010, Bressey 2012). However, because there are so few black women geographers in the West writing from this type of embodied and situated perspective of blackness, it is necessary to step outside the

discipline to interrogate wider literature on critical race theory that discusses embodiment and corporeality.

Internationally renowned African-American feminist scholars of critical race theory in the USA – such as bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins and Carol E. Henderson – offer more in-depth and nuanced perspectives of othering, differentialist racism(s), and wider discriminations – recognising black bodies as "marked" and also problematized (hooks 1992, Collins 2000, Henderson 2010a).

Specifically within a British context, cultural studies scholar Hazel Carby, and the sociologists Nirmal Puwar and Sara Ahmed (among others) have also written extensively on how black and brown people are perceived within institutions and environments normalised as 'white spaces' in the West in ways that render our bodies as "out of place" (Carby 1992: 193, Puwar 2004: 113, Ahmed 2006: 135) – or, what Puwar refers to as being made to feel like "space invaders" (Puwar 2004: 7). This echoes my own direct experience of visiting and researching museum and galleries where my 'hyper-visible' blackness is persistently alterised in stark contrast to an unmarked, 'invisible' whiteness (*Ibid*, p. 57), which enables white bodies to pass through those spaces without any scrutiny or challenge in ways I cannot.

The contrasting situation of varying levels of (in)visibility for different (and *differenced*) bodies is further outlined by Nirmal Puwar in relation to power when she explains:

> When a body is emptied of its gender or race, this is a mark of how its position is the privileged norm. Its power emanates from its ability to be seen as just normal, to be without corporeality. Its own gender or race remains invisible: a non-issue. With 'whiteness' 'defined as an absence of colour'…whiteness exists as an unmarked normative position. Similarly the male body is invisible as a sexed entity… Left unnamed and unseen, invisibility in this context is clearly a place of power. (Puwar 2004: 57-58)

It is for reasons such as these that, for me, comparative critical discourses on blackness *vis-à-vis* whiteness must necessarily be foregrounded as central to any examinations of issues of embodiment – and the corporealisation of othering practices – because the very presence of my black female body (or any other similarly 'marked' and 'othered' bodies) in Western cultural institutions demarcated *as* white disrupts, unsettles and destabilises such spaces to expose them as having *always* been sites of exclusion.

It is through my engagement with the scholarship outlined above that I have found ways to challenge the imposition of universalised and normalised whiteness in the West – and the historical privileging of white male viewing perspectives within the context of Western

museums and galleries – so as to use my research discussed throughout this thesis to cast an "oppositional gaze"(and adopt a similarly oppositional research position), that is resistant of established power hierarchies, reads '*against* the grain' of established orthodoxies within the Euro-American academy, and actively "politicises 'looking' relations" (hooks 1992: 116).

Throughout the case studies that follow (Chapters 4 to 7), the above-mentioned literatures and discourses relating to the construction of an African Other within the setting of museums and galleries, and the associated hegemonic positioning of continental Africa as Europe's antithetical "South" are continued and considered in more detail. Specifically:

- Chapter 4 – *Conversations and encounters at the British Museum* – reflects on the museum geographies detailed within archival material and catalogue descriptions about the histories of acquisition, object interpretation and display for (often controversial) colonially sourced artefacts and artworks appropriated from Britain's former colonial territories and brought to London to feature in the British Museum's exhibition spaces situated at the 'Heart of Empire.'
- Chapter 5 – *Observations and encounters at the Musée du Quai Branly* – further examines observations on Paris's historic role (and contemporary legacies) as a former imperial city, positioned in the Hexagon as the geo-political nucleus of 'Greater France' and the *de facto* site of validation for any artistic and cultural outputs to be considered worthy of canonical inclusion within assessments of cultural excellence throughout the francophonie.
- Chapter 6 – *Remixing narratives at the Pompidou in Paris* – looks at the institution's entire history of showcasing modern and contemporary art, with a particular focus on the conceptualisation, curation and narrative interpretation of group exhibitions, 'mega-shows' and the thematic re-hangs of selected holdings within collections that constitute the *Musée national d'art moderne* (MNAM).
- Chapter 7 – *"Tate for all ?" Discussing diversity and internationalism* –investigates the 'differenced' experiences of African and diasporan artists, curators, educators and other professionals 'of colour', compared to the culture sector experiences of actants with white European ethnic backgrounds (routinely normalised as constituting the 'mainstream') as they navigate and negotiate their ways through the established structures and conventions for determining what constitutes modern and contemporary fine art 'excellence' worthy of inclusion, canonisation and display as part of Tate's national and international collections.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1   Introduction

The methodological framework for investigating the othering of Africa, its changing characteristics, and strategies for its amelioration was structured around the following three research questions:

1. To what extent are artworks and artefacts created by African and African diaspora artists exhibited in alterity to Western European art in British and French museums and galleries?
2. How have othering processes in relation to Africa and its diasporas changed over time?
3. What strategies might be employed to ameliorate othering processes and practices?

These questions emerged heuristically from personal concerns and unease about the way cultural objects, artworks and interpretation narratives pertaining to Africa have conventionally been presented in Western exhibition spaces. Their content, and the nature of the data likely to be put under examination, necessitated that the project was pursued as a qualitative enquiry – incorporating and adapting data collection and analytical techniques from several academic subject disciplines – including geography, art history, philosophical aesthetics and cultural studies aligned with practice-based museological approaches.

Although the overall scope of the project addressed historical and contemporary representations in the West of the African continent and diasporans of African descent, Britain and France featured most prominently because these two European nations were most heavily involved in empire building and colonial expansion throughout Africa during the 19th and early-20th centuries. On a practical level, the cultural institutions based in these nations' capitals were also the most familiar and accessible to me as a London-based British researcher with experience of working as an educator and development manager in the UK arts, culture and heritage sectors – who has previously also completed Masters-level research in a number of Parisian museums.[17]

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[17] Dixon, Carol Ann (2011) *The politics and poetics of representing African diasporic cultures and heritage in Parisian museums and galleries.* Unpublished MA dissertation. Goldsmiths College, University of London.

In a similar way to Edward Said's use of British and French canonical literature from the colonial era to examine orientalist othering – seen, for example, in his critique of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (Said 1993: 22-30), and Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* (Said 2003 [1978]: 185) – selected state-funded museums and galleries in London and Paris were the key sites for investigating how systems of subordination, rhetorics of power and other asymmetrical othering relations between Europe and Africa have been (and continue to be) mediated and reproduced via collecting, archiving and exhibiting practices. This approach went beyond a discursive reading of curators' interpretation narratives and theories about the textuality of museum and gallery displays to consider the immersive, multi-sensory nature of exhibitions – where objects, texts and visiting audiences interact in complex three-dimensional spaces.

As with Said's utilisation of the "archives of Orientalism" as a foundation for his postcolonial critiques on colonial othering (Said 2003 [1978]: 165), institutional archives were an integral aspect of this investigation. The fragmented, inconsistent and partial nature of these archives – largely established during the colonial era – were not simply taken at face value and accepted uncritically as complete, coherent and accurate records about each museum's past. Instead, as Clive Barnett suggests, they were acknowledged as incomplete, selective (and, at times, theatrically subjective) constructions "made up of the traces of extensive exercises in improvisation" (Barnett 2006: 152).

Questioning the "extent" of othering might have initially suggested conducting statistical audits and audience-focused evaluations of exhibitions as appropriate research tools. However, as outlined by Odile Paulus (2003), quantitative approaches tend to be less effective when seeking to examine and explain the complexities and mutability of Self/Other constructions in different museum and gallery settings.[18] Moreover, given that difference tends to be constructed and articulated in highly feminised terms within the West's patriarchal social structures – so that, as Simone de Beauvoir notes, a society where historically "He is the Subject" tends to establish as its correlative that "She is the Other"

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[18] Odile Paulus discusses a range of performance measurements regularly used by museums and galleries to assess their impact and outputs: ranging from quantitative analysis of visitor statistics, ticket sales and merchandise revenues, through to more "quasi-quantitative" customer satisfaction surveys. Her findings suggest that although these performance indicators can provide some useful insights about an institution's economic impact and efficiency, they are less suitable when seeking to evaluate and improve on social factors, such as qualitative educational outcomes for different audience groups and issues of race equality, which are much more difficult to measure. Regarding the limitations of quantitative evaluation Paulus concludes, "Unless the objectives have been well defined, evaluation is a dangerous exercise. It can provide a distorted view of the museum and foster unwanted behaviour. For example, if museum personnel are aware of being evaluated, they will do everything possible to ensure that the evaluation is positive. In addition, the evaluation process risks neglecting factors that may be important in a museum" (Paulus 2003: 62).

(Beauvoir 2009 [1949]: 6) – it was necessary to apply feminist theoretical perspectives to the structuring of the methodology, framed as *non*-positivist and *non*-masculinist (see, also, Rose 1993: 10-11 and 41-43, Bondi and Davidson 2003: 330).

What follows in this chapter is an overview of the qualitative techniques applied across the four high-profile, state-funded national museums and galleries that were selected as the case study institutions. For the museums, the two institutions with extensive, long-established ethnographic collections from Africa were the British Museum in London and the Musée du Quai Branly in Paris. Both were identified as appropriate sites through which to investigate the othering of Africa because their collections spanned the period from the "golden age" of Western museology in the 19th century (Alexander and Alexander 2008: 32), through to the postcolonial and post-modern era of "new museology" extending from the late 1980s to the present day (Vergo 1989: 3-4). In addition, these two institutions provided contrasting architectural structures for exploring the spatial politics of exhibiting practices – with the British Museum's Bloomsbury site representing the more traditional 18th- and 19th century museal setting of a palatial temple of knowledge designed in a classical Greek Revival style, contrasted with the 21st century, glass-panelled, contemporary structure of the Musée du Quai Branly inaugurated in 2006 (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3: The British Museum, London, designed by Sir Robert Smirke in 1823.
Image source: *The Telegraph* (AP) c/o http://www.telegraph.co.uk

Figure 4: Musée du Quai Branly, Paris, designed by Jean Nouvel c. 1999-2004.
Photo: © Nicolas Borel. Image source: Slash/Paris, http://slash-paris.com

The two state-funded galleries housing extensive national and international collections of modern and contemporary visual artworks selected as case studies were the Tate's London sites (Tate Britain and Tate Modern) and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. These organisations were chosen because they have established track-records of hosting large-scale international exhibitions, 'mega-shows', conferences and symposia featuring

work by artists and curators from continental Africa and the African diasporas worldwide. Consequently, their archives about past exhibitions – ranging from the Pompidou's seminal international exposition *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989), to the Tate's more recent acquisition and exhibition of Meschac Gaba's 12-room installation, *Museum of Contemporary African Art 1997–2002* (Tate Modern, 2013) – were also seen as important sources for interrogating the politics of othering, past and present.

3.2   Justifications for combining the five chosen research methods

Given the three research questions, listed above in the introduction to this chapter (Section 3.1), the thesis required a combination of archival, observational and interview-based methods, the rationale for which is provided in this section. A range of different research methods and data collection techniques were researched, compared and contrasted to identify a suite of approaches through which to elicit relevant and comprehensive information about the presence and extent of othering practices, and strategies for their amelioration – particularly methodological tools that allowed for significant changes to be observed in the way othering as a phenomenon has manifested over time in different museal settings in the West.

The literature consulted fell into three broad categories of instructional material and guidance documentation on conducting qualitative research:

- Firstly, methods for interrogating archival documents, collections of ethnography and fine art works amassed and retained as permanent holdings within cultural institutions
- Secondly, methods literature on ways to conduct interviews and incorporate data retrieved from conversations with key actants involved in researching and developing exhibitions, mainly so as to be in a position to better understand the decision-making processes and practices underpinning what goes on display, and what audiences ultimately experience as the aesthetic and pedagogic outputs of museums and galleries
- Thirdly, reviews of past scholarship – including doctoral theses and dissertations – addressing race-based positionalities within the arts and culture sectors of the West. This literature included (but was not limited to) research within cultural geography, art history and museology examining issues of race and racism, difference and exclusion.

Initial reading of the research methods literature identified some useful exemplars about effective ways to conduct social research working with archival records and other sources of historical data. Texts read to support this strand of the project's research design began with a review of sociological techniques discussed by (among others) Jennifer Mason, Angela Dale and Mike Savage. These were used to recognise and take account of the types of knowledge claims that are detailed within archival records that might not be able to be verified or substantiated using contemporary data triangulation approaches – often because the passage of time has rendered this type of documentary content too fragmented, disparate, or limited in scope from which to extract sufficient comprehensive and viable information (see, for example, Mason and Dale 2011, Savage 2011). Within this category of methods literature guidance on the effective use of biographical narratives within qualitative studies was also similarly helpful in offering a way to incorporate personal, reflexive, autobiographical accounts about past visits to museum and gallery exhibitions that could sit alongside other types of (more formal) data collected from institutional policy documentation and archived material about collection management processes linked to the acquisition, classification, cataloguing and interpretation of art objects and cultural artefacts (see also Thompson 2011, Bold 2012).

As Rachel Thompson rightly observes in her assessments about the usefulness of such approaches, it is necessary for researchers to recognise and address their own subjectivities in order to transition from simply recounting and documenting anecdotal and localised experiential information into generating broader discourses about a wider public problem or issue that could be aligned and contrasted with other people's narratives – acknowledging that "[t]he transition from private story to the generation of a public problem involves struggle and recognition of subjecthood" (Thompson 2011: 68).

Beyond the afore-mentioned literature about ways to devise and conduct a suitable archive-based research strategy, this developing methodological approach was also further informed by the insights of specific postcolonial scholars of museology, art history, histories of empire and the historical geographies of imperialism – most notably Annie Coombes, Ann McClintock, Felix Driver and Ann Laura Stoler. These scholars have all documented effective approaches to reading '*against* the grain' of archival records to take into account the prevalence of racialized and (masculinist) gendered subjectivities, omissions and deliberate erasures relating to the lived experiences of oppressed, 'feminised' and formerly colonised communities of people historically defined as 'Other' within Western-centric historical accounts about the impacts and legacies of European

colonial expansion in Africa and the wider Global South (see, for example, Coombes 1994, McClintock 1995, Driver and Gilbert 1999, Stoler 2009).

In Ann Laura Stoler's book, *Along the Archival Grain* (2009), she specifically cautions her readers about the need to examine "archiving-as-process" just as much as interrogating "archives-as-things" (Stoler 2009: 20). This proved very helpful for ensuring that my initial searches to select the archival records to be examined at each case study institution featured in this doctoral study did not just accept and treat the processes by which such records came into being as benign and objective ones, but rather saw them as a series of actions arising from historical policy-making decisions that themselves needed to be scrutinised for the presence of racialized thinking, racist language and racially biased, negatively discriminatory decision-making practices.

The second strand of instructional literature consulted to inform the methodology featured guidance on conducting elite interviews within geography and other social science disciplines. This appraisal of suitable interview techniques and approaches was not only seen as important for improving the likelihood of gaining access to appropriately senior interviewees with experience of working in the upper echelons of museums and galleries to contribute to this research project. It was also seen as necessary for developing a better understanding of some of the key ethical considerations and common challenges implicit within the pursuit of an approach sometimes referred to (in hierarchical terms) as "studying 'up'" or "researching 'up'" with respect to the differing social, political, and identity-related power relations between prospective high-profile interviewees (seen as key strategic thinkers, decision-makers, leaders and/or experts within their field) and the doctoral researcher approaching these 'elites' as someone with comparatively less cultural capital to use as leverage within the relational dynamics being established between the researcher and the research respondents (see, for example, Smith 2006: 644, Neal and McLaughlin 2009: 695, Darbi and Hall 2014: 833). As someone with past experience of researching, curating and providing interpretative literature for exhibitions, and also working as a strategic development manager within the UK museums sector at a senior level, a considerable advantage was to already have direct access to a list of former work colleagues and associates who could introduce me to some of the most important curators on my list of prospective interviewees – not simply being introduced by them as a doctoral researcher, but instead being presented as a peer (and fellow sector practitioner) with an existing portfolio of my own successful projects. In particular, having already established a prior professional association with Chris Spring (Curator of the African Galleries at the British Museum) when working for the Windrush Foundation on the exhibition *Making*

Freedom: Riots, Rebellions and Revolutions (2013), this enabled me to be granted an interview with him that was then used as the template for drafting the semi-structured question schedules used to conduct similar conversations later down the line with other curators I did not know personally, and to whom I had not yet been formerly introduced. Being granted permission by Chris Spring to mention his name when requesting future interviews with the other curators I had identified and decided to approach was very helpful in securing their cooperation. Once I was able to say that I had completed a number of interviews with some highly respected and influential professionals in this field, it then became easier to establish contact with the remainder and to be granted subsequent interviews.

Thirdly, a selection of doctoral theses specifically written by black British scholars with African and Caribbean heritage working within the fields of art history and cultural geography were also read to get a better understanding of how the 'raced' positionalities of minoritized scholars within the British academy – and UK cultural institutions more broadly – might impact on the effective pursuit of investigations involving critical observations about issues of race and racism in museums, galleries and other exhibition spaces in the West (see, for example, Chambers 1998, Noxolo 1999). Eddie Chambers' doctoral thesis – titled, *The Emergence and Development of Black Visual Arts Activity in England Between 1981 and 1986: Press and Public Responses* (1998) – was particularly insightful in demonstrating how a chronology of exhibiting practices identifiable via the dispersed archival records authored and maintained by individual black artists, and collectives of artists, could be brought together and examined alongside what is more commonly accepted in the West as the 'mainstream' literature of art criticism published in broadsheet newspapers, established arts journals and other culture sector periodicals. These art reviews were (and to a large extent *still* remain) critiques predominantly written by a network of white of arts journalists, critics and cultural commentators working in the West. He showed how to construct a multi-layered narrative about black African and diasporan experiences of racism, and marginalisation – whilst simultaneously drafting a commentary alongside that positioned him, as a black scholar, as the *counter*-narrator of an historical record documented (problematically, for the most part) by elite, white, male Western observers of the arts who differenced the art on account of the artists' blackness (and their stereotyped perspectives on blackness) instead of giving an aesthetic appraisal of the artworks *as* art. Although Chambers drew on alternative documentary sources to mine – primarily derived from published newspaper articles and exhibition reviews in arts periodicals, rather than the use of face-to-face interviews and

the other data collection techniques that I used – his approach to the structuring of a multi-layered narrative that foregrounded these aesthetic and art-historical discourses about changing expressions of black cultural identities in the West (specifically via the British Black Art Movement of the 1980s) from differently 'raced' positionalities, overlaid and intertwined with a political and sociological contextualisation of race and racism in Britain at that time, legitimised my similarly multi-layered approach to centralising changing exhibiting practices as the lead narrative in discourses on race and representation in Western Europe.

After reading the above-mentioned literature, the following five methods were devised and aligned to the three research questions: (1) walk-through reviews and photographic tours of permanent collections and temporary exhibitions on display; (2) individual object selection and analysis; (3) archive-based research; (4) semi-structured curatorial interviews; (5) the compilation of field notes.

Firstly, the decision to conduct initial walk-through reviews and undertake photographic tours of each of the display spaces within the case study institutions was combined with the second technique (individual object selection and analysis), drawing on a range of existing analytical tools and approaches for conducting object-text analysis and incorporated into an action plan for addressing Research Question 1. This plan drew heavily on the research methods espoused by geographer Harriet Hawkins, whose portfolio of work on geography-art engagements features techniques for critiquing art exhibitions, installations and assemblages whereby a researcher's whole body becomes a research instrument and a conduit through which to feel and respond (physically, immersively and corporeally) to the "visual rhetorics" of all the aesthetic and sensory content presented on display in museums, art galleries and other exhibition sites (Hawkins 2010: 324). Utilising such an approach was all about finding ways to critique exhibiting practice, past and present, that went *beyond* visuality – and the conventional focus on interrogating artworks and object collections through the gaze – to instead (in Derridean terms) bring more "hapto-centric" experiences related to the significance of touch to bear on this interrogative approach to researching the spatial, cultural and social dynamics of othering within museums and galleries (see also Derrida 2005: 203-204, Hawkins 2010: 331, and Hawkins 2012: 61).

Thirdly, the literature on pursuing archive-based research was used to devise an appropriate research strategy to respond to Research Question 2 – specifically concerning how othering practices have changed over time in the West. Of significant importance here

was the need to devise appropriate sampling techniques when searching through archival records and collection catalogues that took into account differences in the number of years each case study institutions' archival repositories had been in existence and, therefore, the contrasting volume and scope of the records about art objects within the permanent holdings, and extent of documentation (in the form of archival materials, photographs, published catalogues, essays and news cuttings of review articles, etc.) recording past exhibitions.

Fourthly, museum directors, curators, and academic scholars with a prior portfolio of curating exhibitions and publishing critiques of exhibiting practices were identified as important actants who could be approached as prospective interviewees to reflect on and respond to all three research questions. However, the planning and structuring of a select number of targeted interviews with 'elites' working at the highest levels of decision-making and governance within Western museums and galleries was seen as being of most use for addressing Research Question 3 about strategies for ameliorating othering. This was primarily because these senior managers and experienced culture sector professionals were felt to be in a very strong position to draw on an extensive body of examples of good practice from their own portfolios of work, in addition to signposting me to examples of effective past exhibiting practice observed in other institutions that had been successfully developed by their peers and associates around the world.

Finally, the compilation of field notes throughout the research process (drafted and maintained in the form of a research diary/journal of ideas and observations) was also seen as a way of ensuring that my own critical reflections on – and immediate personal responses to – the policies and practices of the case study institutions, and the artworks and object assemblages they exhibited, were incorporated into the study to sit alongside the more formally recorded and transcribed perspectives of the aforementioned elite interviewees, and (similarly to the above) made use of to inform the outcomes relating to Research Question 3.

Taking each of these five research methods in turn, the following sections set out in more detail exactly how each technique was applied within the different case study contexts, concluding with some further reflections on the efficacy, strengths and associated challenges of each approach. As will be shown in each sub-section, envisioning each of the five methods as being important as individual research components within the study, but also as elements that could be brought together to (metaphorically speaking) function '*in concert*' like the distinctive sections of a jazz ensemble – combining to achieve a

harmonious and melodic whole, much greater than the sum of the five individual parts – was one way of ensuring that each of the five applied research methods not only combined to achieve a rounded and comprehensive critique of othering and its amelioration, but also provided new and unexpected research insights to add fresh perspectives to this growing area of interdisciplinary scholarship on the geographies of race and racism in museums and galleries.

(1) Walk-through reviews and photographic tours

The initial walk-through reviews of the permanent galleries were always designated as the first on-site task at each institution. This activity served the same function as the chordal section of a jazz ensemble because, just as each chord formation adds volume to a tune, walking through the permanent collections identified key lines of enquiry for more in-depth follow-up during the archive-based research, the object analysis, and curators' interviews. Furthermore, because the process of assembling a chord requires more than one note – blended together to create harmonies of whole tones and semitones, instantly recognisable as major or minor – the appraisal of cultural objects positioned alongside other exhibits, text labels and interpretation panels, viewed as whole assemblages, was seen as an important way of foregrounding the extent to which the spatial arrangement of items within exhibitions might signify othering just as much as the subject matter, provenance or curatorial interpretation of individual pieces.

Integral to the walking approach was the need to document engagement with displays and exhibitions as "post-Cartesian," embodied experiences (Kinsella 2015: 246). This immersive way of thinking *with* the body was preferred to more conventional ocularcentric research methods because it recognised museums and galleries as complex spaces – where encounters with objects are often multi-sensory, sometimes also multi-media and interactive, and almost always experienced in the presence of other visitors (see, also, Hawkins 2012: 62-64). In this context the body itself was envisaged as a research instrument, and the exhibition spaces – particularly those featuring contemporary art installations and multi-media technologies – were recognised as places of "mutual permeability," where curators, artists and installationists often only see their works as complete when audiences are present (Hawkins 2010: 324). Such inter-corporeal relations and subjective experiences also lead to what Harriet Hawkins describes as an enfolding of the self and the world and, ultimately, "the mutual creation of self and other" (*Ibid*, p. 324).

Depending on the scale and layout of the collections, the walk-through reviews lasted between 2-3 hours each and were often repeated several times over the course of a few days – initially focusing on objects, artworks and photographic images during the first circuit, followed by closer scrutiny of text labels, information panels, audio-visual resources and other interpretation facilities on the second and subsequent tours around the designated research areas. The photographs were later used to select specific objects which stood out as requiring more in-depth visual analysis of their different compositional, technological, and social modalities (Rose 2012: 20-21).[19]

In relation to texts, the photographs also catalysed detailed narrative analysis of curatorial interpretation literature (Henderson 2010b: 13) – either because the choice of vocabulary and forms of expression appeared to illustrate different types of othering, or (conversely) because the content signified positive interventions to challenge and redress negative stereotyping and colonialist myth-making about Africa that had occurred in the past.

The first of several walk-through review sessions in the British Museum's African Galleries took place in October 2013, during which photographs recorded the self-directed route through to the lower ground floor of the Sainsbury Wing, the descent into the basement where the Africa collections are permanently displayed in Room 25, and the charting of several pathways through the various themed sections and exhibits presented in its central, east and west wings (see Figures 11 and 52). Approximately 40 photographs of cultural objects, artworks, and assemblages were taken, from which a smaller selection were short-listed for further in-depth analysis of their acquisition details, display histories, catalogue entries and interpretation information (see, for example, Figure 14 of the "*Otobo*" [Hippo] (1995) sculpture by Sokari Douglas Camp in Chapter 4).

The Africa section at the Musée du Quai Branly was reviewed in April 2014 (see Chapter 5). The research tours took place in several stages over two days – initially as a self-directed walk through the entire museum site: which started at the glass-walled entrance

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[19] Gillian Rose's approach to image analysis involves an examination of three "sites of meaning": the site of production, concerning where an image is made; the site of the image itself, relating to its visual content; and the site of audiencing, referring to the encounter between the image and its spectators or users (Rose 2012: 19). Each of these sites also has three additional aspects (referred to as "modalities") categorised as compositional, technological and social (Rose 2012: 20-21). This 'tri-modal' analytical technique was used throughout the project to identify and highlight aspects of othering observed in paintings, photographs, cultural objects and installations from the case study sites. The framework was particularly useful when interpreting exhibition poster artwork – such as the Musée du Quai Branly's reproduction of a 19th century photograph of Khoisan performers from London's controversial Royal Aquarium exposition of 1884 (titled, "Pigmy Earthmen at the Royal Aquarium") to promote its temporary exhibition "*Human Zoos: L'Invention du Sauvage*" (2011-2012), (Quai Branly image ref: PP0199866), discussed in Chapter 5.

to the grounds, progressed through the botanical gardens, then spiralled up from the museum's entrance foyer along an internal ramp directly into the permanent galleries. Taking photographs of the gardens and the multi-media ramp installation projected onto the walls and floors was an important element of the review process because of the way the museum had been designed so that the grounds and interstitial spaces surrounding and adjoining the main galleries form part of an extensive, seamless, dynamic exhibition space constructed in accordance with French architect Jean Nouvel's concept of "dematerialisation."[20] The reviews of the Africa section were combined with photographic tours of two related temporary displays featuring objects, artworks and archival documents from the Quai Branly's permanent collections – *Bois Sacré: Initiation dans les forêts guinéennes [Sacred Wood: Initiation in the Guinean Forests]* (4 March - 18 May, 2014) curated by Aurélien Gaborit (Head of the Africa collections), and *« L'Atlantique noir » de Nancy Cunard: Negro Anthology, 1931-1934* (4 March - 18 May, 2014) curated by Sarah Frioux-Salgas (Head of collections, documentation and archives).

Reviews of the Level 4 and Level 5 permanent galleries of the Musée National d'Art Moderne (MNAM) at the Pompidou Centre in Paris took place in November 2014. During that month more than 1000 items by c. 400 artists from 47 countries represented in the permanent collections were restructured into a thematic and geographically arranged display, titled "*Modernités plurielles de 1905 à 1970" [Multiple Modernities, 1905-1970]* (23 October 2013 - 26 January 2015), curated by Catherine Grenier (Deputy Director, MNAM). As this display featured work by modern artists from North and South America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa, presented alongside European modernists, the entire showcase was incorporated into the photographic tour – focusing on the rooms/sections (referred to as "micro-exhibitions"), artistic movements, and individual works specifically illustrative of "African Modernities," as well as the various interactions and exchanges in modern art practices between Europe and Africa that signified shared histories and hybrid developments throughout this period (see, for example, Figure 36 in Chapter 6 showing details of an assemblage from the exhibition section *"Croisements"* ["Crossings" or "Crossovers"]).

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[20] Jean Nouvel's architectural philosophy examines dematerialisation as "an interplay of light and materiality." As part of his approach he advocates the extensive use of glass panels positioned at different angles to help create tricks of the eye and imagination, allowing the surfaces of solid facades to be transformed, or even disappear, as they are glimpsed in reflection in order to provoke questions about where interiors and exteriors begin and end. His thematic analysis of dematerialisation within the context of the Quai Branly museum project is detailed online in the text, *"Quai Branly Museum, Paris, France, 1999-2006: Presence-Absence or Selective Dematerialisation"* http://www.jeannouvel.com [accessed January 2014].

On-site research at the Tate's London galleries took place between June and October 2014 and primarily focused on identifying and taking photographs of artworks by black British artists displayed as part of the British Art Collection at the Milbank site, as well as African and diasporan artists' works in Tate Modern's contemporary international art collections. Here, the works provided illustrations of the various social, political and cultural influences impacting on Tate's changing acquisition policies and exhibiting practices since its inception in 1897 (see Chapter 7).

All these layered and immersive reviews were the catalysts for selecting individual objects and artworks from each case study site for closer analysis, as outlined in the next section.

(2) Object selection and analysis

As it was not feasible to undertake a comprehensive survey and analysis of all the items of African import held by each case study institution (which for the British Museum totalled more than 200,000 objects – of which c. 600 were on permanent display in the African Galleries; and for the Musée du Quai Branly more than 70,000 objects – of which c. 800 were displayed in the *Afrique* zone of the permanent collections area), a small selection of holdings were shortlisted for use as optics through which different issues of othering could be examined and documented. Although it was difficult to predict the range and relevance of items that might be selected in advance, an attempt was made to spotlight a variety of different object types and media across the four sites: including ethnographic artefacts, photography, paintings, sculptural pieces, textiles, installations, film and other audio-visual materials, exhibition poster artwork, text panels and gallery floorplans. The majority of these items were shortlisted during the walk-through reviews of permanent displays and temporary exhibitions, supplemented by additional notable findings arising from archive-based research and keyword searches of digitized collection catalogues, press releases and other publicity materials used to promote exhibitions to the general public. Like the snippets of melodies played during interpretations of jazz standards to remind listeners of familiar tunes, my choice of optics served as snapshots to help identify and exemplify the range of othering practices that can occur within the context of Western museums and galleries.

For example, one of the most striking exhibits identified for object analysis in the British Museum's African Galleries was the aforementioned metalwork sculpture *Otobo (Hippo) Masquerade* (1995) by Nigerian-British contemporary artist Sokari Douglas Camp (British Museum collection reference: Af1996,08.3), shown in Figure 14. This artwork was initially selected because its design, dimensions and materials provided a marked contrast to the

majority of other, smaller figural sculptures, masks and garments displayed in the masquerade-themed section of Room 25. It was particularly notable because the curatorial narrative featured on the text panel mentioned the ongoing rarity of primary contributions by women as leading artists or central characters in long-established West African ceremonies. By combining visual analysis of the *Otobo*'s compositional features with narrative analysis of its curatorial interpretation, several issues were highlighted concerning whether the curators' intentional juxtapositioning of a contemporary commissioned sculpture alongside more conventional displays of older African masks in glass cabinets served to amplify or challenge the othering of Africa. An additional question about the curatorship was whether use of the present tense on the information panel (see Figure 5) might be illustrative of the exhibition's 21st century relevance and topicality or rather, as observed by museologist Ruth Phillips, signalled the continued problematic use of the "ethnographic present" as "an ahistorical discursive convention that freezes the anthropological subject in a fictive past time of unacculturated authenticity" (Phillips 2007: 91).

Beyond the permanent displays in the African Galleries, one of the first African acquisitions retrieved during the archive-based research was the image and catalogue entry for a "*Bracelet (with rattles) made from ivory*" (British Museum collection reference: Af,SLMisc.590), bequeathed by the Museum's founder Sir Hans Sloane in 1753 (see Figure 13). Although not on display during the research period, the item proved an invaluable optic within this case study because of its rarity and importance as one of only 29 items of African origin in the institution's founding collections. From the initial entry in Sloane's 18th century manuscripts that described it as "A bracelet with rattles to it cut out of the elephant's tooth, worn upon the arms in Guinea" (Sir Hans Sloane, cited in Braunholtz 1970: 15 [Plate 6]) (see Figure 13), through to more recent descriptions by successive keepers and curators remarking on how such objects changed from being seen as "curios: pieces whose main attraction was their exotic origin or startling or unusual form" to being contemplated as beautiful works of fine art (McLeod 1984: 30), insights were revealed about the changing vocabulary and discourse of othering from the colonial to the postcolonial era, as well as attempts at its amelioration over time. Further details about the objects, texts and archival documents used as optics throughout the British Museum case study research are discussed in Chapter 4, and also summarised in Appendix 2.

MASQUERADE

Masquerade is an art of transformation. Masquerades often occur at the changes of the seasons and rites of passage, such as initiation and death. They often maintain and express the secret knowledge of insider groups and only certain persons may be permitted to see them. With a few exceptions, the actual performing is a male activity, and masks representing women are worn by men. Local traditions often relate that masquerades originally belonged to women but were taken away from them and can now be made and performed by men alone.

Masquerade uses many different materials and techniques. Masks can be made of cloth, metal, basketry, leaves, plastic, resin, calabash and clay as well as wood. Some masks are so powerful that they cannot actually be worn but are used to protect the masks that can. Although museums have valued the artistry of the static, carved, wooden forms, masquerade is a complex performance, involving not simply the face but body-costume, dance, dialogue and music. In performance, the actual headpiece is often obscured by secondary decoration and paint, or is invisible as the performance is at night, or is worn flat on top of the head and pointing upwards. At the end of a performance the masks may even be thrown away or burned while the decorations are carefully preserved for re-use.

Figure 5: The Masquerade information panel in the African Galleries. Photo: Carol Dixon

At the Musée du Quai Branly one of the first objects selected for detailed analysis during the reviews undertaken in April 2014 was a 19th century wood and metal ceremonial throne, *Trône du roi Ghézo [King Ghezo's Throne]* (Quai Branly collection reference: 71.1895.16.8). This item was positioned near the entrance to the Africa section and described on its label as a "gift" from French general Alfred Dodds, even though it had been acquired during the violent colonial siege of Dahomey (today's southern Benin), 1892-1894, and might more accurately be listed as colonial "booty" (see Figure 6). The large, ornate and imposing regal throne contrasted with smaller, more discretely displayed items observed and photographed in the temporary display spaces – such as an image of a late-19th/early-20th century Mendé mask from Sierra Leone (Quai Branly collection reference: 71.1948.8.3 D) featured in the themed assemblage *Bois Sacré* (2014) – and also photographic stills of more ephemeral contemporary works, such as the dynamic, multi-media ramp installation *The River* (2010-2016) by the Finland-based British contemporary artist Charles Sandison (see Figures 7 and 8). Again, the accompanying curatorial interpretation on information panels and labels was documented

to illustrate differences in the way historical artefacts and contemporary pieces were presented and described in different areas of the same museum.

Figure 6: 19th century *Trône du roi Ghézo* [King Ghezo's Throne] on display in the *Afrique* section of the MQB permanent collection area (MQB ref: 71.1895.16.8). Photo: Carol Dixon

As can be seen from the photographs featured throughout this methodology, and in the chapters that follow, the varied levels of natural and artificial light, the choices of colours and textures on walls and floors, as well as the amount of descriptive context provided in different display spaces on information panels and more interactive interpretation devices all had the potential to impact on the ambiance of the display setting, and thus contribute to how the various items from the collections were experienced, perceived and interpreted by audiences. This suggested, therefore, that the display settings, as well as the objects themselves, *and* their relationships to one another within museal spaces could all be factors contributing to the signification of the othering of Africa – not least through the (witting or unwitting) physical reinforcement of historically colonialist myths and stereotypes about Africa as "The Dark Continent" simply by display galleries being illuminated with subdued lighting, or the use of dark colour-palettes on walls and floor surfaces – as contrasted in Figures 7 and 8 (see, also, the theoretical discussions on display settings featured in Hutcheon 1995: 11-13, Elliott 2007: 32).

Figure 7: Mendé mask (Ref: 71.1948.8.3 D), featured in the temporary display, *Bois Sacré* [Sacred Wood] (2014). Photo: Carol Dixon

Figure 8: *The River* (2010) by Charles Sandison. Image © ADAGP, Paris. (MQB ref: 15-538265) Source: www.photo.rmn.fr/

The artwork selection at Tate Britain included items observed during reviews of the chronologically arranged British Art Collection. These ranged from early modernist pieces by black African and Caribbean artists resident in Britain during the colonial era – such as *Johanaan* (1936) by Jamaican-British sculptor Ronald Moody (Tate collection reference: T06591) – through to more recent works by black British contemporary artists who have referenced the othering of Africa and its diasporas as themes in their work, such as Sonia Boyce and Chris Ofili.[21]

Artworks by continental African artists and African diasporans resident outside Europe were also selected from Tate Modern's collections, often using the digitized catalogues to supplement the walk-through reviews undertaken in June 2014. This identified founding pieces in the international collection sourced beyond Europe: such as the cubist painting *Ibaye* (1950) by Cuban artist Wifredo Lam, purchased by Tate in 1952 (Tate ref: N06073); as well as some of the more recent acquisitions from continental Africa – including Beninese conceptual artist Meschac Gaba's 12-room installation, *"The Museum of*

[21] Two examples of the contemporary works selected as optics at Tate through which artistic critiques on issues of self-identity and representations of black British lived experiences were considered were: the celebrated mixed-media artwork "*From Tarzan to Rambo: English Born 'Native' Considers her Relationship to the Constructed/Self Image and her Roots in Reconstruction*" (1987) by contemporary artist Sonia Boyce (Tate ref: T05021); and, the collage "No Woman, No Cry" (1998) by Chris Ofili (Tate ref: T07502) – which featured as part of the artist's Turner Prize winning presentation at the Tate Gallery in 1998. This painting is described in Tate's published interpretation literature as Ofili's poignant response to "the public inquiry into the racist murder of a south London teenager, Stephen Lawrence, in 1993," and the artist's moving tribute to Stephen's mother, portraying "the way in which Doreen Lawrence's overwhelming silent grief at her son's tragic death became transformed: with each successive media interview she became even stronger in spirit and emboldened to speak with great dignity" (Nesbitt et al. 2010: 16).

Contemporary African Art, 1997-2002", purchased and displayed at Tate Modern in 2013 (Tate ref: L03225-L03236).
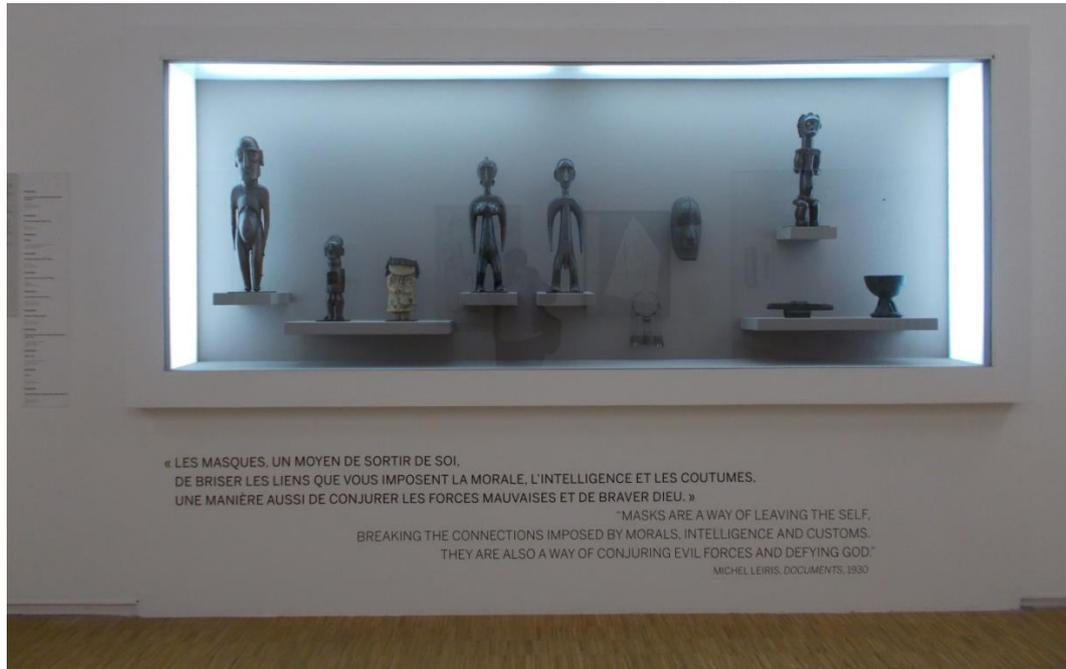
Figure 9: Dogon sculptures from the Michel Leiris art collection,
displayed at the Pompidou in 2014 as part of the exhibition *Modernités Plurielles*
[Multiple Modernities] (2013-15). Photo: Carol Dixon

At the Pompidou Centre in Paris the walk-through reviews of the permanent collections displayed in *Modernités Plurielles de 1905 à 1970* (2013-2015) spotlighted relevant assemblages grouped into the following sub-sections: *"Primitivismes;" "Afrique photographiée;" "Afrique(s) moderne(s);"* and "*Leiris l'homme intégral"* – named after the French surrealist writer and ethnology enthusiast Michel Leiris (1901-1990), who donated a featured collection of Dogon masks and sculptures to the Pompidou in 1984 (see Figure 9). However, the most insightful optics for this case study were archival documents and images concerning the Pompidou's two largest international exhibitions that have featured works by contemporary African and African Diaspora artists: *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) and *Africa Remix: l'art contemporain d'un continent* (2005). These included the gallery floorplans and documentary photographs from the Pompidou and La Grande Halle de la Villette in 1989 (Archive document ref: DP-1995036)[22] which provoked

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[22] Archives Centre Pompidou. Document ref: DP-1995036. *Magiciens de la Terre: Une exposition, deux lieux du 18 Mai au 14 Août 1989. Communiqué de Presse* [dated January 1989, 48 pages]. Plan de l'exposition à La Grande Halle La Villette (p. 31); Suite de l'exposition au Centre Pompidou (p. 32). Box file: BVCTOF MNAM

interesting questions about the relative positioning and prominence of works by European and African artists in the exhibition spaces. For *Africa Remix* (2005), the politics of othering and alterity were examined through artworks such as *Le chef (qui a vendu l'Afrique aux colons)* (Tati Series, 1997) by Cameroonian conceptual artist Samuel Fosso (Inventory number: AM 2004-110) – which featured prominently in promotions for the exposition whilst displayed at the Pompidou in 2005 as well as throughout its international tour to other venues in Europe, Africa and Asia between 2004 and 2007.

Artworks like *Le Chef* that were reproduced as exhibition posters also served as a visual record of the case study institutions' changing marketing practices to attract more diverse publics. These images were particularly useful when considering how contentious historical photographs from the colonial era (which might also have been repurposed for use in contemporary artworks) might be received by online audiences worldwide – including when used as digital images in virtual versions of exhibitions for online viewers. For example, the poster designed by the Musée du Quai Branly for its temporary exhibition *Human Zoos* (2011-2012) features an anonymous 19th century studio portrait taken in London in 1884 that is visually illustrative of the othering of Africans (Figure 10). The image raises an infinite number of questions about the relative power relations between the named, fully clothed European figure standing in the centre of the group and the unnamed, semi-naked Africans positioned below him. It also provokes questions about the past motives of the studio photographer and these sitters at the time when the portrait was posed, and contemporary museological queries about how the remediation of this image resonates with different audiences in the 21st century setting of a museum exhibition specifically marketed as an anti-racist critique on the past racisms of human zoos, World's Fairs and other colonial expositions (see also Appendix 2).

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https://www.centrepompidou.fr/media/imgcoll/Collection/DOC/M5050/M5050_A/M5050_ARCV 001_DP-1995036.pdf [accessed November 2014].
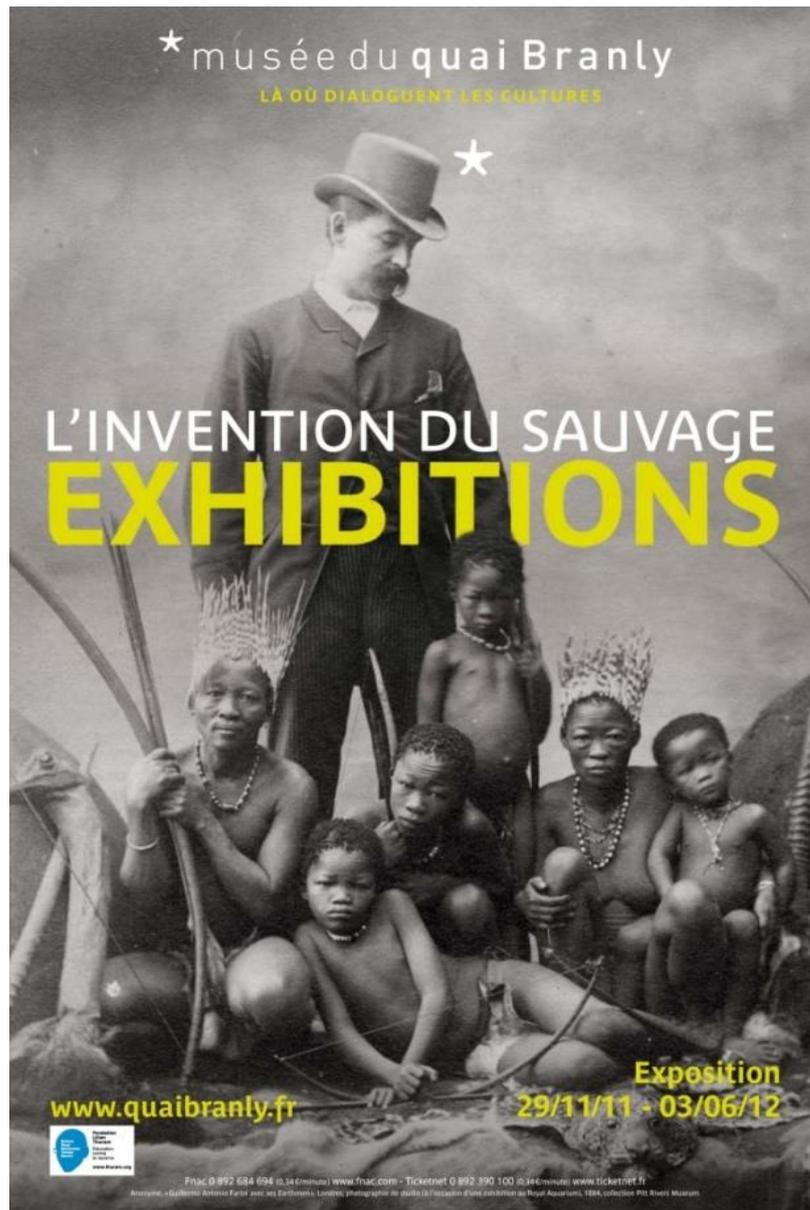
Figure 10: 19th century image used to promote the exhibition *"Human Zoos"* (29 November 2011 - 3 June 2012) at the MQB (Ref: PP0199866). The original photograph, titled: "Guillermo Antonio Farini and his Earthmen. London, shot in studio (exhibition at the Royal Aquarium), 1884," is from the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (UK).
Image source: Musée du Quai Branly [online] http://www.quaibranly.fr.

(3) Archive-based research

Interrogating archives was fundamental for tracking changes in museum and gallery practices over time. Using archival records to establish a baseline for the case studies mimicked the role of the rhythm section within a jazz ensemble – with the sourcing of documents about past exhibitions akin to a drummer setting the tempo on which other compositional elements of a musical performance are overlaid. The structures of the institutional archives were scrutinised for information on their founding principles and

how they were arranged as much as for their documentation – particularly in relation to colonial taxonomies historically used to classify museum and gallery collections in Britain and France (see, for example, Geoghegan 2010: 1462-3, Sauvage 2010: 103). This two-fold examination of "archives-as-process" and "archives-as-things" (Stoler 2009: 20) was important in helping to understand what Ann Laura Stoler describes as the "colonial stagecraft" and the "racialized regimes" of the 19th century that enabled European colonizers to maintain distance from, and assume control over, the colonised Other (Stoler 2008: 359-361).

A variety of printed materials and multi-media resources were consulted, ranging from accession lists and inventory records for African acquisitions in the museums, through to curators' correspondence files, catalogue essays, gallery floor plans, documentary photographs and film footage of past exhibitions. Initial keyword searches of online collection databases helped to identify relevant objects by place of origin, type and provenance (using search strings featuring the word "Africa" (and its derivations), named countries and regions of the African continent, and linguistic and cultural groupings such as "Fulani", "Kuba", "Mende", "Yoruba", etc.), while reviews of the interpretation narratives featured in handbooks and guides to the collections spotlighted textual information pertinent to discourses on the othering of Africa. Although it was always understood from the outset that neither the archives nor their arrangement would necessarily reveal *why* past decisions were taken to document or display objects and artworks in the ways they were publicly exhibited, an inductive enquiry process allowed scope to consult primary records and contextualise prevailing attitudes and "structures of feeling" towards visual art and cultural artefacts from Africa exhibited in Britain and France at particularly pivotal moments in world history (Williams 1977: 132).

The majority of the data collection took place over the course of 16 months, commencing with archival research at the British Museum in September 2013 and concluding with the Pompidou fieldwork in November 2014. On average c. 3-4 months were spent exploring each archive, with a greater proportion of that time spent on site at the British Museum's Anthropology Library and Research Centre and at the Tate Library and Archive (Millbank) than at the Paris-based repositories – where a week of intensive research at the Musée du Quai Branly (28 April-2 May 2014) and also at the Pompidou (16-21 November 2014) was supplemented by follow-up correspondence with curators and archivists, and remote searches of online digitized collections and catalogue records publicly available via the institutes' web sites on return to the UK.

At the British Museum, early published handbooks about the ethnographic collections (see, for example, Joyce, Dalton, and Read 1910, Joyce and Braunholtz 1925), electronic indexes of exhibitions curated by the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (and its predecessors) c.1970-2003[23], and online records for the most recent decades were used to identify those displays that specifically referenced African holdings as a thematic or geographical area of focus. As several of the colonial era exhibitions were titled using the names of individuals who had gifted or bequeathed collections – such as the Christy Collection of antiquities and ethnography accepted in c.1868 (Franks 1868), and the Webster Plass Collection of African Art bequeathed in 1953 (Fagg 1953) – the research relating to museography during this period was reliant on secondary sources to appraise the scope, content and layout of these presentations.

Archival research for the Paris sites was largely dependent on the availability of translated full-text documents and bilingual French-English summaries of interpretation materials originally written in French, as well as digital records that could be electronically translated into English. This was also supplemented by use of documentary photograph collections, audio-visual resources and subtitled film footage from recordings about past exhibitions, consulted via the Quai Branly Médiathèque and the Pompidou's Bibliothèque Kandinsky.

Drawing on prior knowledge about each institution's exhibition timelines – primarily sourced from their websites, event press releases, external reviews and journal articles – the main resources consulted on issues of othering and its amelioration at the Musée du Quai Branly covered details about its inauguration, and specifically centred on controversies over use of terms such as *"arts premiers"/"arts primitifs"* ["first/primitive arts"] when narrating art histories from Africa and other regions of the Global South in exhibition interpretation literature, as well as attempts at a resolution of othering through the presentation of explicitly anti-racist temporary exhibitions. These included the inaugural single-artist installation *La Bouche du Roi* (12 September – 13 November 2006) by Beninese artist Romuald Hazoumé, and the commissioned artwork *Jardin d'Amour* (2 April – 8 July 2007) by Nigerian-British artist Yinka Shonibare MBE, which both foregrounded enslavement histories, the legacies of colonialism and contemporary

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[23] Electronic indexes to the exhibition archives of the Museum of Mankind and Department of Ethnography (as predecessors of the Department of Africa Oceania and the Americas) were accessed via computer terminals at the British Museum's Anthropology Library and Research Centre. Spreadsheet filename: "EXH.ARCHIVES," via file path H:\exh.archives\Index\index. The indexes list 187 exhibition titles, dated from 1970 to 2003, of which 40 were specific to the Africa holdings and a further 29 were listed as "Mixed" to indicate thematic or global content from more than one of the continents represented in the departmental collections.

racisms. More recently, it also embraced large-scale collaborative exhibition projects –
such as *Human Zoos: L'Invention du Sauvage* (29 November 2011 – 3 June 2012),
developed in partnership with the anti-racist education organisation FLT (*Foundation
Lilian Thuram: Education Contre le Racisme)* and the research group ACHAC *(Association
pour la Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine).*

At the Pompidou, the archive research focused primarily on the aforementioned *Magiciens
de la Terre* (1989) – utilising content recently re-displayed as part of the 25th anniversary
retrospective, *Magiciens de la terre, retour sur une exposition légendaire (*2 July 2014 - 15
September 2014). This was contrasted with documentation about *Africa Remix :
Contemporary Art of a Continent* (2005) to consider differing interpretations, and
(respective) curatorial responses to the Pompidou's stated view of *"l'altérité et l'échange
comme éléments constitutifs moteurs de la creation"* ["otherness and exchange as
fundamental components of creativity"].24

Although the Tate-based research largely focused on the acquisition and display histories
of works by black Britons in the British Art Collection, documents arising from selected
conferences and past displays were also identified as central to considerations of how the
institution has engaged with discourses about difference and alterity through their
collecting and curatorial practices: including papers from the influential Iniva symposium
A New Internationalism (Tate Gallery, 27-28 April 1994) ; photographic and documentary
archives for the display *Thin Black Line(s)* (Tate Britain, 22 August 2011 – 23 April 2012);
and the curator's commentary on "New Diasporic Voices" (Goodwin 2012) which featured
in the exhibition *Migrations: Journeys into British Art* (Tate Britain, 31 January – 12 August
2012).

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24 This statement appears in the exhibition summary published by the Pompidou Centre to promote
the 25th anniversary commemorative exhibition, *Magiciens de la terre, retour sur une exposition
légendaire* (2 July 2014 - 15 September 2014) curated by Annie Cohen-Solal, in collaboration with
Jean-Hubert Martin. Source: https://www.centrepompidou.fr/ [accessed November 2014].

(4) Curators' interviews

Interviews were undertaken to seek perspectives on othering and its amelioration from scholars and practitioners with experience of displaying museum-based African artefact collections, or curatorship of international and cross-cultural art exhibitions. Curators (currently or formerly) affiliated to the case study institutions, as well as academics, artist-curators and museum directors with long-established curatorial and research careers working in Western European museums and the Euro-American academy, were target participants for the study. Like the role of a band leader creating playlists and arranging the scores within a jazz ensemble, these contacts were the people who determined the selection, settings and other display criteria for the works within their exhibitions to convey a particular thematic concept, or exhibition narrative. Their contributions were always envisaged as the most important element of the data collection process, and were scheduled towards the end of the time spent at each case study site in order to have a solid knowledge base about the institutional history of the collections and their related archives against which to compare and contrast their responses.

Twenty curators were approached as prospective interviewees, with the aim of securing ten participants with diverse and contrasting portfolios and responsibilities within the culture sector – ranging from in-house directors and salaried curators in European museums, to international freelancers and academics commissioned as guest curators or external advisors for exhibitions (see Table 1). One of the most important aspects of the selection and invitation process was securing contributions from an ethnically diverse group of men and women, in order to contrast attitudes towards othering and alterity informed by different personal perspectives on race and racism, gender politics and other issues of identity. In addition, the referencing of four national institutions – each with high-profile collections and exhibition histories fully documented and accessible in the public domain – meant that it was always intended for the contributing curators to be named within the study. Their lack of anonymity became an important factor in the formal ethical review process undertaken and, in turn, informed the wording used in subsequent correspondence sent to prospective contributors, as well as the criteria detailed on each participant's consent form (see Appendix 3 and 4).

The interview invitations, indicative question schedules, and consent forms for the Paris-based participants were translated and distributed bilingually in English and French, with the option of conducting face-to-face interviews in French assisted by a professional interpreter. This decision to employ an English>French translator allowed for all the documentation to have the same level of detail as my original English texts. It also

presented a professional first impression to prospective contributors – all internationally renowned figures in the fields of art history, curating and museology – but, more importantly, ensured that the project overview and provisional interview questions translated into French were as accurate as possible, with all the nuance, precision and sensitivity concerning how terms such as "othering" and "alterity" were being applied in this context left fully intact (see Appendix 3). When drafting the expression of interest correspondence to appoint the interpreter the documentation specified English as the first language, with French as the target language in order to be in a position to have several preliminary telephone conversations about the focus of the research, discuss the question sequence and meeting format in advance of the appointment, and also have a detailed de-briefing session to clarify any impromptu matters that arose during the course of the interview. Prior preparation allowed all the Paris-based interviews to progress with fluency, and also helped each interviewee feel confident that their perspectives on the complexities of othering, issues of race and racism, and discussions about the impacts of colonialism on museum practices (whether conveyed in French, or when speaking in English as an additional language) were not being misinterpreted.

As a result of the responses received from the interviewees, only one of the three recorded interviews with Parisian contacts was conducted in French, assisted by an interpreter (see Table 1), with the other two French-speaking curators electing to respond to questions in English. The only telephone interview – with the Frankfurt-based curator, Dr Clémentine Deliss – was also conducted in English, with a later, un-recorded face-to-face discussion taking place in a follow-up meeting in Germany on 12 June 2015 that helped to consolidate and clarify some of the earlier points raised during the shorter phone-based conversation.

Table 1: List of curatorial interviews conducted between February 2014 and June 2015

First Name	Last Name	Job Title / Role	Date	Location	Duration (mins.)	Interview Format
Pascal	BLANCHARD	Historian and Director of ACHAC, Paris (*Assoc. pour la Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine*)	20 Nov 2014	Paris, France	45	Semi-structured in French, assisted by an English> French interpreter
Eddie	CHAMBERS	Associate Professor of Art History, University of Texas at Austin	2 July 2014	Birmingham, UK	75	Semi-structured
Clémentine	DELISS	Curator and former Director of the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt	2 Dec 2014 & 12 June 2015	Initially, via telephone – with a follow-up meeting in Frankfurt, Germany	35 & 60	Semi-structured via telephone – with an unrecorded follow-up meeting
Paul	GOODWIN	Chair of Black Art & Design, University of the Arts London	29 Oct 2014	London, UK	105	Semi-structured
Lubaina	HIMID	Professor of Contemporary Art, University of Central Lancashire	11 Nov 2014	Preston, UK	135	Semi-structured
Michael	MCMILLAN	Independent Curator & Lecturer at the University of the Arts London	16 Sept 2014	London, UK	70	Semi-structured
Bernard	MÜLLER	Anthropologist, EHESS (*École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*), Paris	29 April 2014	Paris, France	55	Semi-structured
Mike	PHILLIPS	Writer, historian and former Curator of Cross-Cultural Programmes (Tate Britain)	10 April 2014	London, UK	78	Semi-structured
Chris	SPRING	Curator of the African Galleries, British Museum	11 Feb 2014	London, UK	77	Semi-structured
Françoise	VERGÈS	Chair - Global South(s), *Collège d'Études Mondiales*, Paris	30 April 2014	Paris, France	120	Semi-structured

(5) Field notes

In the same way Mike Crang encourages scholars to question whether there is ever simply "one researcher, with an unchanging and knowable identity, and one project, with a singular unwavering aim" (Crang 2002: 652), compiling field notes at particular moments in the research process enabled me to reflect on and record transformations in my own understanding of othering as my awareness developed through exhibition reviews, archival research, and conversations with curators. In doing so, there was no pretence of attempting to position myself as "an all-seeing and all-knowing researcher" and, instead, I sought to constantly examine my own positionality and agency through what Gillian Rose describes as "transparent reflexivity," and its limits (Rose 1997: 311, see also Smith 2006: 645).

Keeping a research diary to record my thoughts about the collections observed and the consultations undertaken proved to be a cathartic experience, in that I was able to document personal (and sometimes poetic) counter-narratives in response to viewing historical records and hearing about past colonial acquisition and collection practices that were largely derogatory, stereotyped and demeaning of black people from continental Africa and the African diasporas worldwide. The journal entries formed part of a broader process of reflexivity and self-discovery, which allowed for reinterpretation of prevailing discourses on othering and alterity within Western museums and galleries that (especially in relation to 19th century fieldwork records, catalogue entries and other archival documents written by (or citing) anthropologists, art collectors and dealers) are still overwhelmingly mediated from elite, white, male, European situated perspectives.

Deeply resonant within the body of my field notes – like the underlying bass notes of a jazz composition – was my determination to foreground the comparatively under-represented standpoint of a black, female researcher of African descent simultaneously and immersively situated as the primary investigator, author-narrator, and first audience for this study. Similar to Patricia Noxolo's method of writing a research journal in order to reflect on issues of corporeality and the "embodied politics of writing" when undertaking geographical investigations that pertain to issues of postcoloniality (see, for example, Noxolo 2009: 60-61), these notes allowed me to be continuously mindful of the need to "include the personal and not just what is seen as impersonal," and "include the body and not just the mind, to meditate upon the effects of theory" (see also Noxolo 1999: 35-36).

Documenting my walks through the case study museums and galleries situated me as an accidental *flâneuse,* using objects and artworks as catalysts for initiating a reflexive

dialogue with myself about spaces of (un)welcome, relative levels of (in)visibility, notions of (un)belonging, insider/outsider status, and conflicted feelings about being "at home" with or alienated from display content. There was also a sensation of being in transition, from an initial position as a spectator and consumer of material culture to becoming a researcher who presents more analytical responses to exhibits, exhibition narratives, their display environs. Repeated circuits through the case study sites also helped me become more reflexively immersed in the display spaces – using the note-taking process to pose questions to myself (and, later, to the curatorial interviewees) about the complexities of othering.

Retrospectively, the field notes allowed for deeper reflection on the outcomes of the curators' interviews – written in stages immediately after the recorded conversations and then also during the completion of the typed interview transcripts, to assist with recollection of non-verbal responses, unrecorded preliminary discussions, follow-up correspondence, and notes on next steps in the research process to aid analysis of the interview data. This was also the point at which quotes from relevant secondary literature were inserted into the margins of notebooks and interview transcripts to relate the personalised and anecdotal content to broader theoretical ideas about difference, representation, and Self/Other binarism.

3.3   Concluding thoughts on research methods and data analysis

Scholarly literature on cultural theory was continuously used as a prompt to pursue further, in-depth examinations of the four target institutions – especially through a process of repeated returns to the "circuit of culture" to ensure that any data being collected was considered and analysed from a range of different standpoints (see Figure 2). Looking back repetitively over the researched content allowed a (re)appraisal of whether (and, if so), where, when and how othering featured as a factor of artistic production and the curatorial assemblage process; what it revealed in relation to issue of representation and identity; how it featured within the regulatory infrastructure of institutions; and its impacts on audience engagement practices (see also Du Gay et al. 1997: 3). With specific regard to the latter, a decision was taken *not* to design a new audience study focused primarily on public consumption of African art collections and exhibitions by black diasporan artists in the West in a way that meant artificially constructing focus groups of current museum-going and non-museum-going publics from diverse communities to critique available displays *in situ* in London and Paris. This decision was primarily taken because a significant proportion of the research concerned

evidencing past histories of othering that have changed over a long period of time, so there would always have been practical issues and difficulties in accessing *any* audiences (and, more importantly, sufficient *non*-museum-going publics from previous eras *and* with diverse backgrounds) for exhibitions and displays that occurred or changed some time ago. Moreover, as a substantial body of research already exists in relation to evidencing the continuing lack of social and ethnic diversity amongst regular museum-going audiences in the West (see, for example, Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1991, Esmel-Pamies 2009, Hooper-Greenhill 2012) – in addition to the general institution-based audience outreach and visitor segmentation studies, periodically undertaken via strategic authorities and associations (such as Arts Council England and the National Museum Directors' Council) and commissioned data research analysts (notably, Morris Hargreaves McIntyre in the UK context) (see also Falk 2016: 53-54) – the decision to concentrate on collecting and analysing qualitative details about (and from) curatorial professionals who currently have the greatest potential to make immediate and sustainable improvements to ameliorate othering was an important outcome of the literature review process. Katherine Smith's commentary on the value of pursuing qualitative social sciences research that prominently includes interviews with decision-making elites as much as consultations with general audiences, was also apposite within this cultural context – particularly her view that "it is just as important to study those who influence important decisions as it is to research the lives of those affected by these decisions" (Smith 2006: 645). However, this guidance on methods was followed while all the time remaining mindful of Mike Crang's observations about not relying *solely* on data sought from elite informants because, as he rightly concludes, "even relatively powerful actors do not have perfect access to information, even should they wish to share it" (Crang 2002: 649).

Regarding the selection of objects observed in the walk-through gallery reviews, and the examination of related catalogue records retrieved via the online databases and archives, visual and textual information was collated about each object's date of creation (where known) and acquisition, place of origin, provenance, and other features and characteristics pertaining to genre, media, form and dimensions. By limiting the number of optics to less than ten per case study, it was possible to undertake close reading and narrative analysis of relevant texts, archival sources, and catalogue-based interpretation literature about each object's display and exhibition history. The application of Mary Nooter Roberts' museum-related qualitative research techniques, combined with approaches to visual analysis espoused by geographer Gillian Rose, proved particularly helpful: specifically, the former's categorisation and evaluation of artworks and art objects *as* "object-texts" via an

enquiry method featuring aspects of picture theory and semiotics (see Nooter Roberts 2008: 171);[25] and the latter's afore-mentioned 'tri-modal' analytical focus on the compositional, technological and social modalities of visual images and objects (*op. cit.*, 2012).

Writing specifically in reference to assemblages of African artworks in ethnographic museum displays, Mary Nooter Roberts suggests that each time objects are placed into a succession of different contexts (and handled by a chain of different custodians and curators) a process of "translation" and re-interpretation necessarily ensues because of the way each individual person handling these items operates within the structures of his or her own culturally-prescribed way of understanding the world (Nooter Roberts 2008: 174-175). With this in mind, Nooter Robert's approaches were aligned with further insights from Kobena Mercer's theorisation on the "iconology of the diaspora artwork" (Mercer 2005: 55) – factoring in the additional aesthetic, socio-political and geographical complexities of diaspora objecthood to *avoid* the conventional pitfall of over-determining content about an artist's biographical identity, when (what Mercer terms) "deeper structures of diaspora subjectivity" related to an art object's trajectories of movement over space, its transportation between institutions, and its 'survival' over time (in archives and collections) are equally important analytical considerations (*Ibid.,* p. 55).

In addition to using cultural objects as research optics, the poetic preludes and reflective prefaces written at the start of all four case study chapters provide contrasting examples of my adoption of the aforementioned, 'tri-modal' visual analysis techniques (Rose 2012: 20-21). They are transposed into this poetic setting to specifically examine the modalities and contexts underpinning four key objects that convey significant details about the institutional politics of the case study sites, specifically: an anthropological image from a colonially sourced documentary photograph collection on display at the British Museum (see Figure 12 and the prelude to Chapter 4); an audio-visual digital installation projected onto the walls and walkways inside the Musée du Quai Branly (see Figure 15 and Chapter 5); a pop art triptych from the 1990s by Congolese artist Chéri Samba featuring a

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[25] Mary Nooter Roberts' commentary on museums and picture theory is specifically discussed in reference to the work of Walter Benjamin, who wrote about art objects having linguistic properties that required "translation" in order to be understood (Benjamin 1999 [1955]: 72). Her work is also influenced by more recent studies undertaken by (among others) Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, who describe material objects as having "careers," "biographies," and "social histories" (Appadurai 1986: 41, Kopytoff 1986: 66). Mary Nooter Roberts transposes all these theories directly into ethnographic museum collection settings to suggest that every ethnographic exhibition is an "arena for translation" because of the way objects change in use and identity, and add to their "life stories" as they move from the original setting (or "habitat") where they were first created to be eventually relocated into museum space (see Nooter Roberts 2008: 171-175).

representation of the Pompidou in 1989 (see Figures 27 to 29 and Chapter 6) and a contemporary figurative painting by artist-curator Lubaina Himid from Tate's British Art Collection picturing two black women at the centre of a maritime seascape (see Figure 40 and Chapter 7).

Like the preludes, the chapter titles and sub-headings for all the sections that follow contribute to the framing of this doctoral thesis as a series of conversations, observed and embodied encounters, narrative-based dialogues, and both physical and metaphorical perambulations through museal space. The modes, media and methods of communication, like the institutions and informants through which these dialogues were pursued, were deliberately diverse. The titles also serve as linguistic pointers to how the research approaches and analytical processes varied between the case studies – depending on the relative levels of access to specific curators, the size and scale of institutional collections and ease of access to archives and other record repositories.

Regarding the ten formal interviews with the curators, art historians, and other culture sector professionals listed in Table 1, each was conducted as a semi-structured, audio-recorded conversation. They were later analysed in two stages: firstly by compiling a full-text transcription and narrative summary of the salient issues covered; secondly, by under-taking further close reading, coding and tabulation of the key discussion points. This latter process enabled me to collate an at-a-glance summary of the most commonly raised topics and concerns, listed by each curator's name, and cross-referenced against the research questions to signify relevance to the three core themes on histories of othering, changes over time in different museal contexts, and strategies for its amelioration (see Appendix 5). In keeping with the guidance of a number of social scientists, all the elite interviews were scheduled after the bulk of the on-site fieldwork in each case study institution had already been conducted in order to be fully aware and appraised – in advance – of important details about the collection contexts and exhibition themes relevant to the interviewees' past project portfolios and published accounts of curatorial practice (see, for example, Mullings 1999, Smith 2006, Neal and McLaughlin 2009, Harvey 2014).

Chapter 4: Conversations and encounters at the British Museum
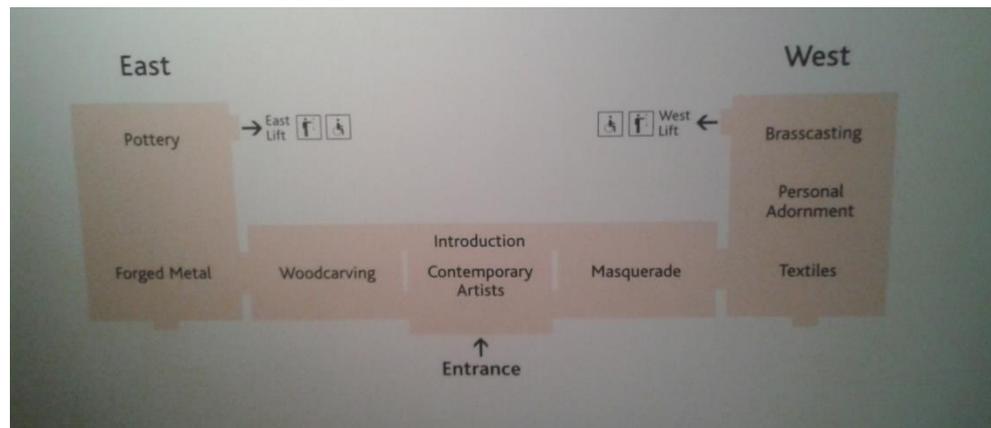
Figure 11: Panel illustrating the layout of the British Museum's African Galleries. Photo: Carol Dixon

Prelude: Two encounters in the African Galleries

Pottery Section – East Wing

In a corner of Room 25 a young woman is staring though a pane of glass illuminated by spotlights.

She catches my attention, primarily because she shares my skin tone in a crowded place where we are few in number.

Motionless and expressionless, her eyes stare out in my direction as though aware of my gaze.

I move forward and imagine initiating a conversation because I'm curious to know more: Who is she? What is her name? Where is she from? When did she arrive? Why is she here?

In reality, my questions remain unspoken as I stand and stare in silence at a two-dimensional black and white photographic image, enframed and fixed in time and space.

We face each other – separated by more than a century, thousands of miles and the hyphen of post-colonialism.

New questions emerge that labels fail to answer: Why is she naked from the waist up? Who incised those carefully designed striations on the surface of her skin? Where was this photograph taken? What (if anything) was said between sitter and photographer?

I feel drawn to her, and our similarities – not our differences – encourage me to call her sister.

Woodcarving Section – East Wing

In a corner of Room 25 a young man is staring though a pane of glass illuminated by spotlights.

I'm aware of him in my peripheral vision but he does not hold my attention, primarily because there are many with his skin tone in this crowded place.

He does not notice as I glance over my shoulder in his direction to survey the scene and visualise a clear path before stepping back to frame and capture my photograph of the Tree of Life.

I move backwards, but stop as I feel a hand push against my lower back.

I gasp and stare at the man seated on a folding chair – reluctant to initiate a conversation, but curious to know more: Who is he? How long has he been here? What is he doing? Why did he touch me?

He looks beyond me, points towards the object of his attention and declares, "I'm sketching!"
We face each other – separated by 'race' and gender

I shudder and walk away in silence, incensed by a touch and tone of voice that have disturbed my calm and corporeality.

I feel different and distant. Nothing about this encounter encourages me to call him brother.

4.1   Introduction: a conversation with 'my sister'

Both of the encounters discussed above occurred on the same day (4th October 2013) during a visit to the British Museum at the start of my research in the African Galleries. Presented together as poetic narratives, they exemplify ways that the othering of Africa (in terms of positioning people, places and cultural objects associated with the continent in negative alterity to assumed European norms) endures as an integral aspect of Western museum and gallery practices.

The first part of the prelude recounts my initial response to seeing an early-20th century black and white photograph of a semi-naked woman from the historical Kuba Kingdom of Central Africa, taken by Hungarian anthropologist Emil Torday (1875-1931) during a series of expeditions to what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1900 and 1909 (Figure 12). Integrated into a typed label, and positioned at the base of a tall glass display cabinet in the pottery section, the photograph's caption reads:

> Scars incised on a woman's stomach, Kuba people, Democratic Republic of
> Congo. Photograph: E. Torday.

Figure 12: Label showing an un-named Kuba woman photographed by Emil Torday.
Photo: Carol Dixon

On first glance the positioning of this documentary photograph in front of a small 19th century Congolese pot[26] and larger 20th century Berber storage vessel[27] appears quite benign and is intended to illustrate visual similarities between incisions carved into decorative clay pots and body scarification practiced by Kuba tribeswomen during this period of history. However, closer reading of this assemblage of objects, text and image raises questions about the legitimacy and appropriateness of the juxtaposition that are not formally articulated within the contemporary architectural setting of this 21st century display space (neither on other display labels nor interpretation panels positioned elsewhere) – even though the photograph uses a dated, racialized anthropological convention from the colonial era of portraying a (semi-)naked black or brown female body in a stylised frontal pose, as if exhibiting an exotic spectacle or typological specimen for scientific display (see, for example, Bernier 2008: 15, Story 2010: 40).

The image illustrates what Hortense Spillers refers to as the 'atomization' of this woman's (captive) black body (Spillers 2003: 208). Transposition of Spillers' observations about the history of racialized images of the black female body (originally written in reference to USA enslavement histories) in this context suggests that Emil Torday's photographic capture of this unnamed Congolese woman's naked torso has objectified her as the Other, and exposed her image to the cumulative gaze of Western museum spectators for as long as the picture remains viewable via the display cases and archives. The added emphasis on scarification also suggests that – in line with research on late-19th and early-20th century images by Coco Fusco (in relation to visual cultures in the USA), and Anne McClintock's visual analysis of colonial advertising illustrations (re. British Empire histories) – Torday's lens is also being used to frame and inscribe the black female body as a consumable commodity for audiences assumed to be white, Western and male (McClintock 1995: 223, Fusco and Wallis 2003: 267). Writing specifically about representations of race within the 'disciplining structures' of colonialist photography, Fusco asserts:

> Race has often been visualised in "high" and popular culture as a display of difference, as natural beauty and style, and as an eroticised encounter with alterity. Photography renders and delivers interracial encounters that might be dangerous, forbidden and unattainable as safe and consumable experiences. (Fusco and Wallis 2003: 20)

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[26] The caption for the Congolese pot (Figure 12) reads: "Pot with incised motifs, Kuba people, Democratic Republic of Congo, 19th century. The same motifs are used in scarifying the female body. Ethno 1908 Ty.371."

[27] The caption for the Berber storage vessel (Figure 12) reads: "Large, dip-painted storage vessel with raised decoration. Berber people, Kabyle, Algeria, 20th century. Similar designs are painted on women's bodies. Ethno 1974 AF20.71."

This notion about the commodification and consumption of an exploited black female body comes through even more forcefully if one considers that Torday's photograph might have only been positioned in the display case to draw attention to the quality of the carving techniques on the two decorative pots. If so, this further relegates the Kuba woman to a marginal position below that of clay vessels and subordinates her image to a position that Jacques Derrida might define in Kantian terms as a "parergon" (or framing device) for the objects (Derrida, Bennington, and McLeod 1987: 53).[28]

It is also illustrative of Anne McClintock's observations about the iconography of Victorian and Edwardian racisms where colonial images of African men and women "[figure] not as historical agents but as frames for the commodity, valued for *exhibition* alone" (McClintock 1995: 223).

Additional related information sourced via the British Museum's archives and Anthropology Library reinforces the suggestion that this photographic image exemplifies multiple, unseen and underlying instances of othering related to its acquisition and provenance. For example, the curator's catalogue essays about a 1990 British Museum display, *Images of Africa: Emil Torday and the Art of the Congo, 1900-1909* (Mack 1990) – comprising more than 3000 Congolese objects curated by John Mack (Keeper of Ethnography, 1990-2004) and displayed within the Ethnography department at the former Museum of Mankind – not only presents a descriptive survey of the arts of the Congo region, but also provides a biographical review of Emil Torday's life and work which celebrates his contributions to the development of documentary ethnographic fieldwork techniques at the turn of the 20th century. The range of exhibits in Mack's display included wooden figural sculptures, masks and other ceremonial and religious artworks from the Kwilu and Kasai sub-regions, ancient antiquities from the Kuba Kingdom, and documentary photographs from Torday's three Congolese expeditions arranged into five thematic sections: Peoples of the Kwilu River, The Lele and Wongo

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[28] The term "parergon" (cited in reference to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790)) is defined by Jacques Derrida as anything which serves as an adjunct, embellishment or support structure to help frame something considered to be of primary or central importance (referred to as the "ergon"). However, even though the parergon is assigned a secondary position, the importance of its support role (and its inextricable interdependence with the ergon) is acknowledged. Like Kant, Derrida suggests that the concept of the parergon can be used to discuss frames of reference in a number of other situations and contexts, from the arts and philosophy through to politics and religion. His description of the parergon as having "two grounds" (or "fonds") – i.e. in the way that a picture frame is simultaneously distinct from the artwork and also the wall on which the painting hangs – resonates with the way, for example, a curator's interpretation panel in a museum exhibition is distinct from the artefact it describes and its position within the wider institution, making it an appropriate tool for exploring the way that museums, galleries and other cultural institutions frame artworks and objects (Derrida, Bennington, and McLeod 1987: 53).

Peoples, The Kuba Provinces, The Kuba Royal Court, and The People of the Sankuru River. Although ostensibly about artworks and artefacts sourced from Central Africa during the early 1900s, the narrative written in the exhibition catalogue indicates Mack's curatorial tendency to valorise Emil Torday's exploits without any explicit, postcolonial critique of the imperialist politics and practices underpinning how such acquisitions were made on behalf of the British Museum. It also reveals how Mack reiterated phrases from Torday's field notes (and the original museum catalogue entries compiled in partnership with Thomas Athol Joyce, an earlier Keeper of Ethnography), without qualification throughout his exhibition narrative, even though the written descriptions contained very dated and contentious terminology that referred to artworks by Congolese people as "*bushcraft*" (Mack 1990: 11-16). Furthermore, although the catalogue illustrations suggest that the settings for Torday's photographs were (in all probability) posed and framed in very stylised ways common to documentary photography of that period, the visual othering evident in these images remained unexplored and under-explained in the 1990 exhibition. This re-using of Torday's image of the Kuba woman within the postcolonial, post-modern era of "new museology"[29] without providing contextual explanations about the politics of race and racism in colonial photographic practices renders it out of place, out of time and problematic within the contemporary setting of the African Galleries today.

Furthermore, in relation to intersectional issues of gender and race, Patricia Hill Collins' feminist discourse on the prevalence of "controlling images" (Collins 2000: 69-72) – that accumulate and become normalised within mainstream Euro-American visual cultures so that black women are predominantly seen through the lens of certain stereotypes and archetypes representing the entirety of all black female experiences – also helps to explain why an image like that of the Kuba woman is assumed to be legitimate and appropriate as an interpretation device within Western ethnographic museum spaces. A photographic image of a similarly posed, semi-naked white European woman would appear incongruous in this setting, because the latter have not been regularly displayed throughout history in this way so as to make it a familiar and commonly accepted 'norm'. Paradoxically, the hyper-visibility of this type of controlling image of the black female body in Euro-American visual cultures also makes the Kuba woman – her image, the exposure of her

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[29] The term "new museology" refers to the period since the late-1980s when museums and galleries in the West began to engage more critically in self-reflection, historicisation and theorisation about the value and relevance of their exhibitions for diverse audiences. The new approach to museology saw an increased focus on the political and ideological contexts to exhibitions, with a shift away from object-centred practices towards ideas-centred "museal discourse" featuring discussions about nationhood, class, race, gender, sexuality, etc. (Bal 1996: 153). For this reason, the era of new museology is also referred to as the "museological turn". For detailed definitions and analysis see *The New Museology* (Vergo 1989), or Mieke Bal's essay on *The Discourse of the Museum* (Bal 1996).

naked corporeality, and her humanity – invisible to some visitors who walk through the African Galleries at the British Museum.

4.2   Conversations with the institution

Cultural objects from the African continent have been acquired by the British Museum since its inception more than 250 years ago, when Sir Hans Sloane's founding collections were bequeathed to the nation in 1753 and the institution was established by Act of Parliament.[30]

From the earliest records of 29 African "miscellanies"[31] to more than 200,000 African holdings within the wider Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas today, the British Museum's collections from continental Africa are among the most extensive and long-established of any located in a European cultural institution.

A substantial quantity of archives and printed sources charting the development of these collections provides a unique research resource for exploring the nature and extent of the othering of Africa documented in institutional records and their associated exhibition interpretation narratives.

Due to the volume of documentation the research strategy commenced with a review of published departmental handbooks to help devise a workable approach to sourcing relevant information from the searchable digitized datasets and physical archives that would best exemplify pivotal institutional changes over several hundred years.

As an interview with the current curator of the African Galleries was already scheduled, the decision was taken to research essays, articles, books, reports and policy documents written by directors and senior departmental managers to represent the British Museum's changing institution-wide perspectives on Africa. Thus, a simulated conversation with the 'institutional voice' of the Museum follows below using a sample of six quotations. The

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[30] The British Museum Act was passed on 7 June 1753 (and remained in force until 1963). The legislation enabled the Government at that time to purchase Sir Hans Sloane's collections for the nation for the sum of £20,000 and also helped the Trustees to acquire a site for the new museum (Montague House) in 1755. Source: The British Museum Act of 1753 (26 Geo. II cap. XXII) [Online] http://www.britishmuseum.org/ [accessed 18 May 2015].

[31] The original handwritten catalogues of Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), compiled between the 1680s and 1740s, record a total of 350 "ethnographica" within a wider listing of 2111 "Miscellanies" of which 29 entries have connections to Africa (Braunholtz 1970: 19). Twenty of these pieces were described as from "Guinea", two from the "Hottentots," and the remainder had labels suggesting they had been crafted by Africans enslaved in the Americas – including an 18th century drum listed as "Indian…from Virginia", which was later re-labelled to acknowledge a resemblance to instruments of Ashanti (Ghanaian) origin – Item 1368, *Miscellanies* Catalogue. (Braunholtz 1970: 27 [Plate 17]).

first represents one of the earliest references to Africa detailed in Sir Hans Sloane's original manuscripts, followed by selected statements from successive "keepers"/managers of the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (and its predecessors).[32] The section concludes with a quotation from the former director, Neil MacGregor,[33] which featured in the British Museum's most recently-published strategic plans for the decade up to the year 2020 (British Museum 2013).

The dates of the selected statements correspond with periods of time when historians and museologists have identified significant conceptual shifts (or 'museological turns') as regards changing perspectives on cataloguing, interpretation and display of African cultural objects in response to wider geo-political, technological and socio-economic events worldwide (see, for example, Coombes 1994, Mudimbe 1994, Phillips 2007).

There is a recognition that the archives and printed sources featured in this analysis are themselves a product of "regimes of domination" and racialized institutional bias inherent in departmental records amassed over three centuries (Stoler 2009: 19). This is especially true of the British Museum's archives about the African collections comprising a large quantity of material and correspondence pertaining to imperialist expeditions, collecting by colonial administrators, and anthropological studies pursued by people from the elite echelons of British society during the colonial era. The study acknowledges that the selection of just six quotations only represents a synoptic survey and spotlight critique of an extensive body of under-researched primary sources that deserve to be the subject of lengthier future analysis (see also concluding comments in Chapter 9).

4.2.1   Institutional beginnings: Sir Hans Sloane's 18th century catalogues

In the foreword to the British Museum's publication on *Sir Hans Sloane and Ethnography* (Braunholtz 1970), the writer – William Fagg (former Keeper of Ethnography, 1969-1974) – summarises Sloane's views as being very liberal, unprejudiced and enlightened for that time during the 18th century. Superficial reading of catalogue entries about the founding collection of African objects appears to confirm this, as each listing mainly features a date of acquisition, place of origin, details about physical characteristics and function, as seen in

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[32] The British Museum was first structured into departments in 1866. The current Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (managed by Lissant Bolton) has undergone seven name changes since the first Keeper of British and Medieval Antiquities (Augustus Wollaston Franks) was appointed and took charge of ethnography in the 1860s. Source: http://www.britishmuseum.org/ [accessed May 2015].

[33] (Robert) Neil MacGregor was Director of the British Museum 2002-2016, and was succeeded by Dr Hartwig Fischer in Spring 2016.

Figure 13 about one of two ivory bracelets from Sloane's *Miscellanies* catalogue, numbered "591":

> A bracelet with rattles to it cut out of the elephant's tooth,
> worn upon the arms in Guinea.[34]

Figure 13: Catalogue image of an ivory bracelet with rattles.
Source: British Museum [Online Catalogue]. Ref: Af,SLMisc.591

Reading *against* the grain of the archive, however, reveals early evidence of the othering of Africa which challenges the British Museum's official interpretation of Sloane's early writings published in the 1970s and 1980s. Firstly, the way Sloane's *Miscellanies* catalogue is labelled, as well as his choice of descriptive vocabulary (such as "exotica" and "curios") suggests that items from continental Africa were primarily collected and prized for their distant, exotic origins and the curiosity value of their appearance (McLeod 1984: 30). In addition, given that biographical research about the source of Sir Hans Sloane's wealth as a physician and landowner reveals substantial income streams from sugar plantations and land investments in Jamaica, and records his own travels to the island as catalytic in sparking his interest in collecting cultural objects from around the world, there is evidence

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[34] The contemporary description of this object listed in the British Museum's online catalogue is "Flat ivory bracelet/armlet/rattle. Museum number Af,SLMisc.591. Source: http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/search.aspx [accessed 18 May 2015]. See also Plate 6 in the publication *Sir Hans Sloane and Ethnography* (Braunholtz 1970: 15).

to show Sloane was financially implicated in – and directly witnessed – African enslavement in the Caribbean. Use elsewhere of comments about "negroes" being a "very perverse generation of people" further counter-balance the tone of the original institutional narrative (Sloane, Natural History, 1: lvii, cited in Delbourgo 2007: 12-13). In addition, the human remains of enslaved Africans that he collected – classified and catalogued as "Humana" in his *Natural History* manuscripts (Delbourgo 2007: 11) provoke far less flattering and benign interpretations of Sloane's perspectives on Africa, Africans and the wider diaspora in the Caribbean.

So, whilst these early primary records are interpreted by successive keepers of the British Museum's ethnographic collections as evidence of progressive enlightenment on the part of the institution's founding father (and initial cataloguer), further context-building reveals alternative interpretations that suggest the first recorded utterances about African cultural objects and their creators were inextricably steeped in negative othering discourses about African alterity compiled by 18th century European elites at a time before the parliamentary abolition of the British Slave Trade in 1807.

4.2.2   Handbooks to the collections during the colonial era

The British Museum's first *Handbook to the Ethnographical Collections*, published in 1910 (Joyce, Dalton, and Read 1910) and later revised in 1925 (Joyce and Braunholtz 1925), notes that the scope and extent of the collections (then, and still now to some degree) reflected the historical and geo-political influences of the British Empire. It documents an exponential increase in the size of the African collections from the late-19th century to the turn of the 20th following major donations by imperialist explorers and colonial administrators travelling throughout areas of the continent that are now part of Nigeria, Malawi, Kenya and Uganda. The initial stimulus for this growth in holdings can largely be explained by the corresponding outcomes of the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 – commonly dubbed Europe's "Scramble for Africa."[35]

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[35] A significant number of acquisitions during this late-19th century colonial period came from explorers and administrators such as Sir John Kirk (relating to 'Buganda' [today south-central Uganda], 1888), Captain E. C. Hore (East Africa, 1877-1888), and Sir Henry 'Harry' Hamilton Johnston (Nigeria, 1888-1891; 'Nyasaland' [Malawi], 1893; and coastal East Africa [Uganda], 1899-1901). It was also the time when an extensive collection of Benin antiquities resulting from punitive expeditions by the British military forces in West Africa (today's southern Nigeria) during 1897 were controversially acquired by the British Museum. More than 200 of the c.900 items taken from the royal palaces of Benin (including the celebrated collection of leaded brass plaques referred to as the 'Benin Bronzes') are still held in the African collections, with the remainder believed to be dispersed in a number of other major museums throughout continental Europe and the USA. Further details are documented by Hermann Braunholtz in the British Museum's publication, *Sir*

Compilation of the first edition represented the first comprehensive and systematic audit of the African holdings, and its completion prompted concerns to be expressed about the importance of achieving a more balanced coverage of cultural artefacts from regions of the continent beyond British colonial rule. These issues were initially addressed through the purchase of over 3000 objects from the Hungarian anthropologist Emil Torday's expeditions in Central Africa between 1900 and 1909 (primarily sourced from what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo), and the transactions resulted in a life-long friendship between Torday and the *Handbook*'s primary author, Thomas Athol Joyce – who was Assistant to the Department of Ethnography at the time, and later became Keeper of the collections for the period 1932-1938.

In the preface to the 1910 edition Charles Read (Keeper of Medieval Antiquities and Ethnography, 1908-1921) writes about the institution's role in collecting the ethnographic objects as vital to the conservation of historical material culture as well as the preservation of pre-colonial cultural practices, as if to illustrate that the work of the British Museum not only reflected the influence of Empire but even made its acquisition and custodianship of objects from other continents seem altruistic .

The othering of Africa is noticeable in the way Read defines pre-colonial African societies as "primitive" and under threat of obsolescence in light of what he contrasts as the "new conditions" of Western modernity:

> At no period in the world's history has any one nation exercised control over so many primitive races as our own at the present time, and yet there is no institution in Great Britain where this fact is adequately brought before the public in a concrete form. Meanwhile civilization is spreading over the earth, and the beliefs, customs, and products of practically all aboriginal peoples are becoming obsolete under new conditions which, though interesting from an economic point of view, have only a secondary importance for the ethnologist. (Preface by Charles H. Read, in Joyce, Dalton, and Read 1910: vi)

The rhetoric of othering becomes even more pronounced in the main sections on Africa authored by Joyce. His representation of the institution's voice in the following extract – which illustrates the types of racial stereotypes and racist viewpoints held at that time – is further amplified by the fact that Joyce never travelled to Africa at any time prior to this publication, or during his subsequent period as Keeper of Ethnography:

Hans Sloane and Ethnography (Braunholtz 1970: 37-46). For more recent, external analysis of continuing political and ethical debates about the Benin Bronzes over issues of contested custodianship and restitution see articles by Emily Duthie (2011) and Paul Wood (2012).

> The mind of primitive man is wayward and seldom capable of continuous attention. His thoughts are not quickly collected, so that he is bewildered in an emergency; and he is so much the creature of habit that unfamiliar influences such as those which white men introduce into his country disturb his mental balance…Thus he does not distinguish between similarity and identity, between names and things, between the events which occur in dreams and real events, between the sequence of ideas in his mind and of things in the outer world to which they correspond. (Joyce, Dalton, and Read 1910: 31)

Joyce's othering of Africans derives from what Edward Said refers to as "textual attitude": whereby in the absence of any empirical evidence or direct experience gleaned from actual encounters and travels beyond the West, the Other is invented using the preferred "schematic authority of a text" (or an accumulation of several reinforcing texts) instead of having to risk the "disorientations of direct encounters with the human" and the "uncertainties of travel in strange parts" (Said 2003 [1978]: 92-93).

4.2.3   Post-war postcolonial conversations

Another major conceptual shift in thinking about the status and value of the African collections occurs immediately after the 2nd World War at the time when c. 160 items from the recently-bequeathed Webster Plass Collection[36] are presented in a memorial exhibition curated by William Fagg (then Assistant Keeper of Anthropology, and later Keeper of Ethnography 1969-1974) and displayed in the British Museum's King Edward VII Gallery during 1953-1954.

Documentation sourced from minute books, special reports and correspondence of the British Museum Trustees for 1950-1952, along with details from the exhibition catalogue (Fagg 1953), reveal a period of significant metamorphosis when the Department of Ethnography fully acknowledges the fine art qualities, and aesthetic "aura" of cultural objects from continental Africa.[37]

Fagg's institutional voice from the late-1940s appears avant-garde in comparison to others within the Department of Ethnography in the way he unambiguously acknowledges the artwork of West African objects from the Webster Plass bequest, while others are continuing to place quotation marks around the word "art" in related departmental minutes and other institutional records about the collection of (mainly) figural sculptures,

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[36] The Webster Plass Collection comprised c. 160 artworks collected in the years 1945-1952 by Webster Plass from more than 40 different communities across Nigeria, Ghana, Cameroon, Congo and Cote d'Ivoire.

[37] The term "aura" is used in this context in reference to Walter Benjamin's theories about the auratic aesthetic characteristics of cultural objects that concern originality, singularity, authority and authenticity. Source: *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Benjamin 1999 [1936]: 217).

masks, brass castings and carved ivories.[38] Moreover, his published writing also reflects an awareness of – and alignment with – the international debates on race and cultural equivalence formalised in UNESCO's declarations of 1950 and 1951,[39] as illustrated in this extract from the Webster Plass exhibition catalogue:

> It may not occur to us, standing before the art of our own culture, that it expresses a philosophy, for that philosophy forms a part of our own fully absorbed collective representations; but when, in a sufficiently receptive frame of mind, we are confronted by the art of some exotic people, we can hardly fail to recognise the presence of an alien habit of thought, even though it may not occur to us to use the word philosophy. (Fagg 1953: 7)

From a collection once said to carry "the contemptuous nickname of the 'rag-and-bone Department'" (Braunholtz 1970: 45) – also characterised as a place for the "casual dumping" of "unwanted items obtained by European travellers in Africa as mementoes, gifts or even booty" (McLeod 1984: 32-33) – the Department of Ethnography in the decades after William Fagg furthered his embrace of artistic displays and extended his approach by also incorporating contemporary postcolonial geo-politics and postmodern conceptualisms into exhibiting practices. This dramatic transformation was signalled spatially and lexically by re-locating and rebranding the department as the Museum of Mankind at the newly designated Burlington Gardens site.

In the 1970s and 1980s the primary articulation of the Department's institutional voice came through Malcolm McLeod who, in addition to facilitating the ongoing "Art/Artefact Debate" (McLeod 1984: 30-32) also responded to shifts in thinking about the British Museum's continuing custodial relationship with cultural objects from African countries that were by then fully established as self-governing independent states in their own right. This provoked political and ethical postcolonial questions about ownership, display techniques, and the restitution of cultural objects such as the controversial 'Benin Bronzes' (see, for example, Coombes 1994: 7-28, Phillips 2007: 87-89), as Malcolm McLeod notes:

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[38] The avant-garde nature of William Fagg's practice is acknowledged by African and European scholars of African art history. For example, Nigerian Yoruba arts specialist Rowland Abiodun writes, "Bill Fagg was clearly ahead of his generation of scholars. He anticipated culturally based studies in aesthetics and art criticism – which took the meaning as well as the form of African art, and which would make full use of the philosophies of African people" (Abiodun 1995: 16).

[39] The four statements on race and issues of racial prejudice published by UNESCO to help combat racism and discrimination worldwide were: 'Statement on Race, Paris, 18 July 1950'; 'Statement on the Nature of Race and Race Differences, Paris, July 1951'; 'Proposals on the Biological Aspects of Race, Moscow, August 1964'; 'Statement on Race and Racial Prejudice, Paris, September 1967'. In: UNESCO (1969) Four statements on the race question. COM.69/II.27/A. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001229/122962eo.pdf [accessed December 2013]. William Fagg is also listed as an attendee and presenter at the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) World Congress of 1952 in Vienna, organised under the auspices of UNESCO.

All collecting, and especially the European tradition of collecting from exotic societies, is very closely linked to the political and economic circumstances in which it occurs. By the 1970s the context of collecting was changing dramatically. By then the majority of colonised countries had regained their independence or were well on the way to doing so. In many countries, at or just before independence, laws had been passed to control the export of antiquities and artifacts of cultural and historical importance.
(McLeod 1994: 16)

4.2.4 The era of "new museology"

The key challenge for John Mack as Keeper of the Museum of Mankind 1990-1998[40] was to be responsive to the challenges of the entire Department recognising the role of museums as sites for *both* intangible and tangible heritage. This shows though very poignantly in the 1990s era of new museology via Mack's poetic descriptions of the Museum of Mankind as (simultaneously) a "Theatre of Memory" (Mack 2008: 22) and "communal dream space in which objects are reunited with stories of the past" (Mack 2003: 19).

The eventual return of the ethnographic collections to the main Bloomsbury site in 1998 coincided with the architectural developments of the Great Court and Sainsbury Wing. The re-building enabled a new thematic arrangement of the African holdings to be presented from 2001 onwards in the British Museum's redesigned Sainsbury African Galleries. Once again, the spatial and architectural changes prompted new articulations of the institutional voice that sought to convey – with varying degrees of success – a sense of cross-cultural collaborative exhibiting practice and multivocality in gallery interpretation narratives, as evidenced in some aspects of the curatorial narrative and display techniques of the African Galleries (see, for example, Spring, Barley, and Hudson 2001, Spring 2006, ; cf. Phillips 2007).

Despite efforts on the part of the curators to consult with more than 50 contemporary artists from the African continent – in order to, in Chris Spring's words, "illuminate and reinterpret for the museum's public some of the long-standing traditions displayed there – and, of course, show that African art is alive and well, not just in Africa but all over the world" (Spring 2006: 162-163) – some problematic display techniques still exist. These include the aforementioned uncomfortable juxtapositioning of Torday's photograph of the Kuba woman as illustrative material for the pottery display (Figure 12), but also text-based problems that Ruth Phillips highlights concerning ongoing use of the "ethnographic present" tense as an *ahistorical* discursive convention on certain gallery interpretation

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[40] John Mack held departmental responsibilities for ethnography at the British Museum from 1990 to 2004, first as Keeper of the Museum of Mankind (1990-1998), then Keeper of Ethnography (1998-2004).

panels (specifically noted by her in the section of Room 25 themed around "Masquerade") to such an extent that it has the unintended consequence of freezing cultural practices for the museum visitor in what she describes as a "fictive past time of unacculturated authenticity" (Phillips 2007: 91).

So, despite an overarching institutional narrative that seeks to present the departments and galleries as spaces of enlightenment and learning at all points in the British Museum's history, the othering (and thus, the devaluing) of Africa has been structurally embedded since the foundational principles of its approach to collecting and curatorship were first demonstrated via Sir Hans Sloane's manuscript catalogues and 'cabinets of curiosities'.[41] Reading the parallel narratives documented in the Museum's archives reveals its institutional voice and corresponding museographic practices to be largely in keeping with those of other long-established 'encyclopaedic' museums in Europe – also self-defined today as 'universal' or 'World Museums'. Continuing attempts to re-invent, re-purpose and re-display these ethnographic collections also simultaneously memorialises past and present othering practices via displays of objects whose histories are inextricably the products of colonial exploitation. Furthermore, simply by using the English language to compile catalogue records and interpretation narratives – as Toni Morrison acknowledges in relation to her own storytelling about African diaspora enslavement histories written in English – "can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority and 'othering' of people and language which are by no means marginal or already and completely known and knowable…" (Morrison 1992: x-xi).[42]

The British Museum has recognised it can no longer articulate a traditionally singular, authoritative institutional and curatorial voice, and is aware that its increasingly diverse audiences demand greater plurality from it as a 'World Museum.' In the strategic plan for 2020, authored by the director and Trustees, the vision statement said:

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[41] The term "cabinet of curiosity" was widely used to refer to objects acquired by aristocratic European collectors in the 17th and 18th centuries, who also referred to them as 'artificial curiosities', 'exotica' and (in the case of Sir Hans Sloane) 'miscellanies' (Arnold, 2006: 13).
[42] In James Baldwin's commentary on the history of African visual arts published in the 1980s, he makes very similar points to Toni Morrison's concerning the challenges African and diasporan writers experience trying to express counter-perspectives to dominant Western narratives about African art using the English language – defined by Baldwin as "the language of the West"(see Baldwin 1987: 122). In reference to a late-19th/early-20th century figurative piece, titled "Chokwe Hero Chief" by an anonymous Angolan sculptor [n.d.], Baldwin suggests that black visual artists are well placed to create new pieces of fine art (which can also draw on, 'excavate' and 'honour' techniques from the from the past) that have the "eloquence" *and* non-malevolent "power" to serve as authoritative correctives and artistic confrontations to the vast body of negative art criticism about Africa, historically conveyed in "the language of the West" (*Ibid.*, p 121-123).

> For the first time in history it is now possible, thanks to changes in transport and technology, to be a museum for the whole world. The British Museum can achieve its founding purpose only through partnerships and exchanges with sister institutions. Building that network has already begun. Extending it is a high priority… This global community of museums provides the ideal context for the shared study and display of the British Museum's collections, allowing joint research programmes, the circulation of exhibitions, and the exchange of people and skills. (British Museum 2013: 8)

In order for such a visionary aspiration to be achieved there has to be much clearer, unambiguous evidence that Self/Other binarism – described by Kwame Appiah as the last of the "shibboleths" used to difference and exclude Africa and Africans from the West (Appiah 1991: 354) – has been confined to history so that the desired partnerships and exchanges (or *conversations*) with sister museums all over the world are conducted in a spirit of equality and reciprocity.

4.3   Conversations with the curator of the African Galleries

The series of conversations moves from a critique of the British Museum's changing institutional voice, expressed via documents and printed sources, onto recorded and transcribed dialogue with the curator of the African Galleries, Chris Spring – one of the most influential people in recent decades to have shaped the development and display of the African holdings.

During a c.75-minute semi-structured interview – held at the British Museum in February 2014 – Spring discussed some of the key achievements and significant challenges encountered curating temporary and permanent displays since his appointment in 1987. Selected extracts from the interview serve as snapshots of a wide-ranging conversation on changing curatorial and exhibiting practices. His spoken commentary is interspersed with contextualising information from his own scholarship, and the publications of other museologists external to the British Museum who have critiqued the African Galleries.

Chris Spring's overarching ethos was self-defined as being respectful of, and responsive to, "the whole idea of emotional curating – and political curating,"[43] – demonstrated by his willingness to embrace diverse scholarly and *non*-academic perspectives (including audience feedback), as well as pursue approaches informed by the work of predecessors and peers within the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas. When asked about his perception of any tensions or contradictions between representing the institution and expressing his own viewpoints on curatorship, he said:

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[43] Chris Spring (Curator of the African Galleries, British Museum), interviewed by Carol Dixon, 11 February 2014, transcript, p. 14.

I think I should represent the institution. We are here in the British Museum. The Africa Galleries should kind of work with all the other galleries. It should be a place where lots of discussions are germinated, that go out from these galleries – initially perhaps – into the others…There is no gallery in the entire Museum that does not have African objects in it, one way or another. [44]

This stance was summarized as "steer[ing] a middle course" between being responsive to the British Museum's past history and traditions, whilst also looking forward to include and embrace contemporary ideas and critical thinking about Africa as a global and diasporic phenomenon.[45]

The main site for his curatorship was referred to as "the most modern gallery in the museum" – in part because of his early and ongoing use of multi-media techniques and film-based displays to animate the exhibits, but primarily because of his innovative collaborations with contemporary artists from Africa and the wider African diasporas.

The Department's return to the main Bloomsbury site from the Museum of Mankind at Burlington Gardens in 1998 coincided with the major architectural developments of the Great Court and Sainsbury Wing which, in turn, paved the way for a new thematic arrangement of c.600 exhibits (out of a total of c. 200,000 African objects) presented in the African Galleries from 2001 onwards. His commitment to internationally collaborative practice meant that this curatorial project for the new millennium involved consultations with more than 50 artists, curators and other African and diasporan creative practitioners. The results of these multiple dialogues are still evident visually, textually and on film through recently commissioned contemporary artworks and installations by some of these artists displayed throughout the Galleries, as summarised in Chris Spring's published reflections about the Museum's *Africa 05* (2005) cultural programme:

Oxford Man was one of the important additions to the contemporary section of the African galleries during 'Africa 05', another being works by the Algerian artist Rachid Koraichi that formed part of his installation entitled Path of Roses…This was one of a number of collaborations between the British Museum and contemporary African artists to see how the latter's work could be included in the African galleries in order to illuminate and reinterpret for the museum's public some of the long-standing traditions displayed there – and, of course, show that African art is alive and well, not just in Africa but all over the world. (Spring 2006: 162-163)

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44 *Ibid.* p. 14.
45 *Ibid*. p. 15.

The significance of this type of collaboration is also borne out in earlier internal departmental reports about the development of the African Galleries where Spring writes about the inclusion of a selection of contemporary pieces alongside older pieces and antiquities to show how new works have been "informed by – if not directly inspired by – the types of object which the visitor will encounter elsewhere in the galleries." [46]

His commitment to representing and amplifying the voices of contemporary artists has not only been done for aesthetic reasons, but also as a way of posing challenging questions concerning the British Museum's collecting history in Africa, and initiating post-modern debates about intersected issues of identity as regards race, gender and social class.[47] This approach to conversations between the institution, the cultural objects and visiting audiences being mediated by contemporary conceptual artists aligns very closely with the types of curatorial innovations that have defined new museology since the 1990s,[48] as illustrated in the following interview extract about early work with the Nigerian-British sculptor Sokari Douglas-Camp and the Kenyan-British ceramicist Magdalene Odundo:

> So, in 1995, for the first time, we started working with artists of African heritage: particularly Sokari Douglas Camp… and we also did a small exhibition of Magdalene Odundo's work. Both of them have been present in the Africa Galleries ever since they opened in 2001. In fact, Sokari's work was commissioned for an exhibition in 1995 at the Museum of Mankind, and I commissioned a piece by Magdalene for the first displays in the Africa Galleries when they opened here at the BM in 2001... As soon as I started working with contemporary artists I could see how it really introduced an element of real dynamism, another point of view – and a kind of mediation of the space by an African artist, so that the curatorial view took a back seat, in a sense.[49]

Later in the same section of the interview, Spring indicates that giving prominence to women artists was also a way of redressing a history of erasures of African artists' names and past artistic achievements from the British Museum's archives and display spaces

[46] Chris Spring (2000) *Sainsbury African Galleries* [Unpublished departmental report, dated July 2000], p. 3. Source: Seven-page electronic document [Word file] stored in the British Museum's digital archive for the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas [accessed 28 October 2013].
[47] Related debates concerning the British Museum's commissioning of contemporary artists from New Zealand to pursue creative projects and research residencies associated with Maori and Polynesian heritage – prior to refreshing the Oceanic galleries in 2009 – have also been discussed by geographers Mike Crang and Divya Tolia-Kelly in their article on *"Nation, race and affect"* (see Crang and Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2322-24). A particularly notable similarity with Chris Spring's curatorial approach concerned artists collaborating with museum staff on producing alternative display narratives – including articulations through embodied performances –to transform the interpretation away from distorted, distanced imperialist texts about "know[ing] 'other worlds, peoples and places,'" towards creative expressions of shared knowledge and sensitivities about what these collections, histories and museal spaces mean to diverse audiences (*Ibid*, p. 2323).
[48] *Op. cit.* 1996, p. 153.
[49] Spring, 2014, *op. cit.,* p. 7.

throughout the colonial era. Commenting specifically about artistic mediation in reference to Sokari Douglas-Camp's *Otobo* figure purchased in 1996 (see Figure 14), he states:

> [A]nd then there was Sokari making metal versions of these masquerades that told you about masquerade as a multi-media phenomenon – not just the masks that the Europeans liked to collect, and the avant-garde artists like Picasso liked to draw and misinterpret. But she is an artist creating something out of metal, and a masquerade figure – and these are male domains in the society she was portraying – she was crossing those domains in a very interesting way. So it became a dynamic thing. It was a way of exploding this idea of the 'ethnographic present'.[50]

Figure 14: *Otobo (Hippo) Masquerade* (1995) by Sokari Douglas-Camp on permanent display in the British Museum's African Galleries. Photo: Carol Dixon

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[50] *Ibid.* p. 7.

During the interview the types of othering Chris Spring mentioned he'd observed since joining the staff team as a researcher in the RAI's Anthropology Library during the 1970s, and later as a curator, can be grouped in three categories: othering by annexation of the African collections; linguistic othering; and othering arising from (a lack of effective) field-based research.

Issues of annexation arose specifically in relation to the changing spatial location of the African holdings within the institution. Firstly, the conventional structural separation of certain North African countries (particularly Egypt) from sub-Saharan Africa that has regularly occurred in the West was considered a form of departmental annexation because of the way the Egyptian antiquities and scholarly work on Egyptology have often been valorised and prioritised throughout much of the British Museum's history – with six large galleries still devoted solely to Ancient Egypt and set apart from the current African Galleries. Secondly, the physical annexation of the former Department of Ethnography off site as the Museum of Mankind at Burlington Gardens (1970-1998) was also seen as a form of othering, despite the practical benefits of additional display and storage space it provided.

Thirdly, the more recently-observed architectural annexation of the African Galleries in the lower-ground floor area of the Sainsbury Wing was also considered problematic (and referred to by Spring as being "still stuck with that business of descending into a tomb"[51]) because – although beautifully minimalist in appearance – the basement location had presented (and continues to present) challenges for curators and audiences alike because of the way the African Galleries are perceived as hidden away in a windowless, tomb-like space. Speaking about some of the intersected spatial and sociological implications of the annexation, Spring explains:

> [T]here is that kind of plunge down into a basement – and that is the greatest criticism of the Galleries. It is not what is in them, or how it is displayed, but where they are – in the basement, with no natural light. It is much better though that, from the point of view of othering, it is in here at the British Museum, rather than in another part of London: even though, in the Museum of Mankind, there were lots more galleries, and it was much easier to do changing exhibitions. To me that was, unconsciously, an act of othering.[52]

Past keepers not travelling to Africa to pursue field-based research – as in the afore-mentioned case of Thomas Athol Joyce – was acknowledged as having contributed to the historical othering of the continent. However, this was felt to have been addressed and

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[51] *Ibid*. p. 13.
[52] *Ibid*. p. 13.

substantially improved by successive keepers since that era (such as William Fagg, Malcolm McLeod and John Mack, etc.) whose practice echoed McLeod's view that "In the future the Department would have little credibility unless it became directly and closely involved in field-based research" (McLeod 1994: 20). In his own case Chris Spring mentioned that he had always undertaken extensive fieldwork as an integral aspect of his museographic practice and his research for publications to help with the "destruction of stereotypes", awareness-raising of the diversity throughout the continent, a more nuanced understanding of "global Africa", and also to develop meaningful collaborations with artists, curators and directors in different countries, as detailed below:

> But, actually, working in North Africa – in Egypt in particular, and then I went on to work in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and so on – I got that really strong feeling of what happened long before Europeans appeared. These trans-Saharan caravan routes – backwards and forwards, conveying obviously goods but also culture, in a sense. And then, as far as Egypt was concerned that great artery of the Nile going down, right down into central Africa. So, that was a good thing for me because it got me thinking about the whole continent, and also I think about global Africa.[53]

Previously examined issues about the continued use of contested anthropological linguistic conventions in display narratives – such as the "ethnographic present" tense, and vocabulary that fixes African cultural objects in a "fictive past" (Phillips 2007: 91) – were reflected on in relation to the current displays in the African Galleries. Chris Spring felt that his work with contemporary artists was continuing to address these issues, but acknowledged that more work needed to be done to respond to past controversies. In particular, the current way that the interpretative text panels for the Benin Bronzes use phrasing that has (wittingly or unwittingly) 'neutralised' the institution's involvement in the racialized violence of colonialism for contemporary visiting audiences is an issue museologists have critiqued for decades (Coombes 1994, Phillips 2007). For example, Ruth Phillips' observations from 2007 are still prescient when she notes:

> In this narrative the "victims" are white, the soldiers are guiltless, the Victorian rationale for the sale and dispersal of the kingdom's treasures is repeated uncritically, and the tropes of wonder and curiosity are exploited. Although the panel concludes with a statement about modern Benin and the restoration of court ritual, it makes no reference to compelling recent art-historical research on the objects' entanglement in histories of violence, colonial power, and racist discourses about art – or the British Museum's own central role in these histories. (Phillips 2007: 88)

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[53] *Ibid.* p. 4-5.

As one possible way forward, Chris Spring outlined his interest in working more experimentally on artistic mediation – suggesting that performance art might provide a very challenging form of non-linear counter-narrative for interpreting exhibits whose legitimacy in the British Museum's collections remain a contested issue and the subject of intense ongoing international debate. In the following extract he discusses work that he hopes to pursue in the near future with the Nigerian-born British conceptual artist Leo Asemota specifically in relation to the Benin Bronzes. His proposal builds on previous projects the artist devised and performed during the inauguration of the Great Court in which audiences were invited to engage kinaesthetically with objects from the African collections:

> [P]eople circulate the Great Court holding these precious objects – that are symbolically significant in Benin, but also drove the Industrial Revolution in Britain. He [Leo Asemota] sees this looting of Benin as part and parcel of a kind of driving together of two empires, in a sense, on a collision course through these materials that were very significant in both empires. And that is one of my next missions – to get his work into that section of the gallery. Because he is actually dealing with materials in the way that the gallery tries to deal with materials and look at their significance: whether it be wood, or brass, or iron, or cloth, or whatever. And working with him has been very, very interesting. So we need to push the boundaries all the time, with more and more radical artworks, I think, and let them go out from the [African] Galleries to the galleries of the museums around the country, and around the world. How can that be done? It can be done through film, through publications, through touring exhibitions, all sorts of things.[54]

The interview indicates that Chris Spring's interventions to date have certainly helped to address many of the overt forms of Self/Other binarism previously observed in the archives for the Department of Africa, Oceania and the Americas (and its predecessors). It was also evident that he was personally responsible for successfully introducing and embedding a more collaborative and creative curatorial approach that foregrounds the role of contemporary African and diasporan artists as co-curators and occasionally counter-narrators of the interpretation presented in the thematic displays. As a result of this, exoticised representations of Africa and Africans – and processes Kwame Appiah defines as the "manufacture of Otherness" (Appiah 1991: 356)– are continuing to be ameliorated. However, implementing more nuanced approaches to the successful reduction and eventual elimination of othering practices in such a vast and long-established institution as the British Museum remains part of an ongoing process and a continuing conversation.

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[54] *Ibid.* p. 14-15.

4.4 Embodied encounters

As indicated in the poetic prelude to this chapter, my personal level of engagement with the objects and narratives presented in the African Galleries is strongly influenced by subjective responses to the displays. These vary according to the different 'auratic' qualities of individual pieces, the ambiance of the gallery setting as a whole, and by the presence and proximity of other visitors. My appraisal of particular objects generally begins with a consideration of surface properties – such as size, form and composition – followed by an interest in the historical and geographical trajectories that led to their presence in the collection. Deeper engagement is determined by a perceived personal connection to the objects, or the themes to which they relate.

Regarding Emil Torday's photograph of the Kuba woman, my spectator's gaze progressed in stages from what Roland Barthes describes as a consideration of its superficial "studium" elements – the properties of the image that can be taken in at a glance and are immediately obvious – through to the more subjective "punctum" elements that trigger private emotions and memories with the poignancy and power to prick and bruise one's conscience (Barthes 1982: 25-27). The scarring and cicatrisation on the woman's semi-naked torso prompted recollections of seeing early photographic images of wounds inflicted on enslaved or colonially oppressed black bodies. This accumulation of "controlling images" featuring historically 'marked', disciplined and damaged black bodies in pain leads to their continued and accepted presence in ethnographic museum displays – especially in relation to black women of African descent, who are regularly positioned in binary opposition as the "ultimate other" to the dominant white Western male gaze represented in anthropological scholarship, museography and the visual arts (Collins 2000: 69-72, Davidson 2010: 193, Noel 2014: 169).

The absence of any contextualising interpretation narratives about the colonial racism inherent within Torday's 1908 photograph compels me to formulate my own critical response to serve as a corrective reinterpretation and cathartic reinstating of the Kuba woman's black female subjecthood – elevating her image from its parergonal, and seemingly subordinated, position as the illustrative labelling for a pottery display to a more central place where her corporeality has equal status to anyone else's.

My analysis of the historical silencing of this particular black female voice exposes and challenges the erasure of her identity, and her un-named absent-presence within this assemblage. The observations also present – in microcosm – evidence of further absences

and marginalisation of black female and feminist perspectives within Western museum practices – also noted as erasures from archival records about the development of museum collections. There is potential, therefore, for the publication of this account to serve as a mechanism for reinstating and re-inscribing what Carol E. Henderson refers to as "the integrity of the black female self" within this public space (Henderson 2010a: 6-7).

Part of this process of exploring and critiquing representations of black womanhood within Western ethnographic museum contexts necessitates a return to considerations about my physical encounter with the sketcher in the *Woodcarving* section of the African Galleries. A particularly ironic aspect of this situation was this stranger's decision to touch my back in a place packed full of unique, fragile, delicate and irreplaceable ethnographic objects and artworks – many encased behind protective glass panes and physically cordoned off from the public – where visitors are socialised in the West to look but not touch, and these rules and conventions are often reinforced on signs. The presence of "Please do not touch!" notices seep into other aspects of audience behaviour so that we walk in more careful and measured ways to avoid physical contact with other visitors as well, even when a museum is at its most crowded. Therefore, the thought of a male stranger pushing a female stranger in her back before first asking a question, uttering a sound, or even making a hand gesture to attract her attention suggests several gendered and racialized assumptions were influencing the relative balance of power and authority within the space.

For the sketcher to position himself near enough to the object of his attention, but place his folding chair at the side of the main pathway to avoid obstructing the flow of visitors passing through this section implies a prior awareness and expectation that other visitors might occasionally cross (and temporarily obscure) his sightline. However, his push evidenced a certain unwillingness to accommodate even a momentary interruption. Being unaware of the man's reactions to other visitors before or after my encounter with him makes it difficult to know whether he routinely touched everyone else who inadvertently obscured his view, but the casual way he pushed me implied a certain act of authority and entitlement to usher someone out of the way and privilege his own viewing position within that shared public gallery. An imagined line of sight became a cordon I unwittingly breached to encroach into territory over which he assumed ownership. Even if not consciously done in a possessive way, the push implied that the space could not be shared with me – not even for a moment – and led to his use of physical and verbal force to expel and admonish me for having trespassed onto his seemingly exclusive and self-demarcated sketching area.

The visible contrasts between his white male body and my black female body transformed at that moment of contact into differences of privilege and power, where his touch simultaneously rendered my position in the gallery marginal and subordinated. His perceived right to an uninterrupted gaze was reminiscent of scenarios described by bell hooks in *Black Looks* (1992), where the historically white male touristic gaze on the Other, as represented in advertising images about Egypt, revealed power differences where:

> In most of the snapshots, all carefully selected and posed, there is no mutual looking. One desires contact with the other even as one wishes boundaries to remain intact. When bodies contact one another, touch, it is almost always a white hand doing the touching, white hands that rest on the bodies of coloured people, unless the Other is a child. (hooks 1992: 29)

Just as Torday's photograph punctuated and arrested my act of looking, the sketcher's push triggered an equally arresting response to his unexpected act of touching that was bruising to my sense of self. In Barthesian terms, the sketcher's hand represented the *punctum* element of a photograph that "rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (Barthes 1982: 26).

Subjective responses are what transform all spectators into active participants in the meaning-making that takes place in museum space and prevent looking – like touching – from ever being considered a passive form of engagement, as observed by museologist Henrietta Lidchi:

> In exhibitions, the materiality (the collection) and the aura of objectivity (the experience brought to bear) may encourage visitors to believe they are simply witnesses, ambling through galleries, passively viewing and reading what is laid out before them. However, both critical perspectives – poetical and political – deny that this can be the case. The visitor always has a more active role because s/he has to apprehend meaning and adopt modes of looking. (Lidchi 2006: 95)

For this reason, all the encounters in the British Museum described throughout this chapter are collectively referred to as conversations – irrespective of whether they are positive or negative, political or a-political, or a spectrum of multiple alternatives between and beyond these parameters – in which visitors like myself, the sketcher, and everyone else, have undeniably active roles to play.

Moreover, as our conversations become increasingly diverse and globalised, curators and institutions must respond accordingly by acknowledging and reflecting the cross-cultural, hybrid and unbounded complexity of museum objects and cultural narratives in ways that illustrate their "connective tissue" (Bhabha 2004: 5). For the British Museum's African Galleries this responsiveness to 21st century audiences also needs to illustrate much less

ambiguously how those once objectified as the ultimate Other are now looking back to challenge and reciprocate the conventional white, male Western gaze, initiate conversations as integral members of a chorus of diasporic voices in the West, and participate in new forms of critical museography. These inclusive approaches to ameliorating othering and engaging audiences have been championed for some time by museologists such as Anthony Shelton, who argues:

> Ethnographic museums and those with important non-western collections must, more than any others, chart their way through the political complexities and ethical compromises that globalization is unleashing, before they can, in all sincerity, understand and answer audiences that are increasingly made up of people they once considered part of their object. (Shelton 2001: 222)

4.5   Conclusion

For the British Museum's African Galleries to serve as a democratic space for cross-cultural conversations then more dialogical and poly-vocal approaches to curatorship need to be pursued. Commissioning a continental African or diasporan artist to produce or perform an individual artwork, installation or exhibition is a very positive intervention. So, too, is the inclusion of documentary film footage featuring contemporary African self-representation of cultural practices. However, if presented in isolation of more strategic and holistic efforts to ameliorate othering, these creative techniques seldom trouble historically racist institutional hegemonies to leave their prevailing power and value regimes intact.

Change processes need to incorporate fundamental questioning and rethinking about Western norms relating to cultural property, notions of ownership, provenance and definitions of custodianship. Dialogical approaches to curatorship should, therefore, also include reappraisals of the way an institution responds to challenges about the acquisition, cataloguing, interpretation, display and storage of objects to ensure greater institution-wide awareness that holdings do not *belong* to a museum, but always remain, in some sense, "in the hands of the original owners" (Yoshida 2008: 162). For the British Museum this would open up more meaningful postcolonial and geo-political dialogues about the potential restitution of contested cultural objects to countries of origin, instead of the current obfuscation and closing down of such debates.

At the site of display a more reflexive approach to exhibiting ethnographic collections could be employed in ways that allow for more experimentation with "reverse anthropology", whereby curators critique Western conventions using the same cognitive tools and gaze directed at people and places perceived to be Other, recognise difference

without exoticism, and view selfhood as otherness (Nederveen Pieterse 2007: 131 and 143). In this way, corrective curatorship as well as new hybrid collaborations will emerge. Instead of new creative partnerships between curators, artists and audiences involving a superficial, top-down delegation of some responsibilities to external interlocutors so that they are only responsible for curating a section of the whole, or developing a sub-theme within an overarching narrative, the creative developments require more collaboration from initial conceptualisation through to final outcomes.

A successful example of this type of collaborative and experimental approach recently took place at the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt. Internationally renowned Senegalese conceptual artist-curator and arts activist El Hadji Sy worked with curators for over a year as a researcher and artist-in-residence. His work involved the facilitation of laboratories, workshops and public events during which he invited the museum director, in-house curators, external scholars and the general public to work together to re-examine the museum's ethnographic collections. This research was later combined with the curating of a selection of contemporary Senegalese artworks, archival documents and audio-visual materials about El Hadji Sy's artistic career, arts activism and 30-year association with the Weltkulturen Museum, and the creation of new artworks inspired by the research process. The project resulted in the presentation of a large-scale retrospective about El Hadji Sy's artwork - *El Hadji Sy: Painting, Performance, Politics* (Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt, 5th March 2015 – 18th October 2015) – drawing on the history of the Weltkulturen's collections as a contextualising framing device for the contemporary artworks on display. El Hadji Sy's voice served as a contemporary complement to the historical perspectives of the late education scholar and art patron Friedrich Axt, with whom he had collaborated decades earlier on an anthology of Senegalese art practices (Axt and Sy 1989), and also augmented the aesthetic and museographic perspectives of present-day essayists featured in the published exhibition catalogue (Deliss and Mutumba 2015). This exemplary practice, and other case studies of effective dialogical approaches to curatorship that eschew classical single-author interpretation narratives, will be examined in more detail in Chapters 7 and 8 of the thesis.

Chapter 5: Observations and encounters at the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris

Prelude: *L'Autre Marche* (2006) by Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jean-Paul Bourdier

Figure 15: *L'Autre Marche* (2006) by Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jean-Paul Bourdier, displayed at the MQB 2006-2009. Photo: Nicolas Borel. © Musée du Quai Branly.

When the Musée du Quai Branly was inaugurated in 2006 its founding president, Stéphane Martin, invited visitors on a "journey of discovery" that promised more immersive and intuitive engagement with the arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas.[55] Curvaceous pathways designed as transversal routes throughout the site supported the prospect of innovative cross-cultural encounters – including walks through multi-media artworks projected along the central ramp spiralling up from the entrance foyer into the permanent collections area.

On my first visit to the museum in 2008 the opening ramp installation was *L'Autre Marche* [The Other Walk] (2006-2009) by Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jean-Paul Bourdier.[56] This thought-provoking montage of lights, sounds, film clips and text projections animated the walls and floor surfaces to symbolise the diverse rhythms of life flowing worldwide.

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[55] See the President's foreword by Stéphane Martin, in Musée du Quai Branly (2006) *Museum guide book.* Paris: Musée du Quai Branly/Réunion des musées nationaux. p 8.
[56] The installation comprised 19 digital video sequences, 3 auditory sequences and 19 aphorisms/proverbs from different countries projected onto screens, the floor and the walls leading from the entrance hall up into the permanent galleries at the Musée du Quai Branly. Source: http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/musee/areas/the-ramp/the-other-walk.html.

Taking a stroll through the artists' carefully curated visual, auditory and textual sequences was described in the official interpretation narrative as an *"initiation walk"* to achieve an awareness of *"[myself], the Other and the World in the space between."* 57

Despite these poetic pronouncements, my journey on *L'Autre Marche* evoked different responses.

Each step along this seemingly benign surface did not provide *"[a]ccess to another world."* Instead, my movements became more tentative and staccato out of increasing discomfort seeing people's faces projected on the ground beneath my feet. Moreover, a sense of the collective spectatorial gaze of Western museum-going publics leisurely looking down on images of labouring black and brown bodies from the Global South did nothing to suggest this artwork fostered a neutral way of seeing.

Formerly panoramic surveys of the scenography gradually narrowed to a fixed stare, with my eyes permanently downcast to avoid inadvertently stepping directly on top of the emotive life stories pictured underfoot.

Regrettably, an exhibition path designed to "*bring the world closer to us,*" and stimulate positive acts of *flânerie,* merely re-inscribed the positioning of lives lived differently as subordinated otherness.

5.1   Introduction

Every walk through the grounds and galleries of the Musée du Quai Branly (MQB) since my first visit in 2008 has evoked a sense of awe and wonder about the diversity and beauty of exhibits on display, followed soon after by equal measures of antagonism and a sense of alienation. Although the latter responses tend to build more gradually than those experienced at first sight, they characterise the emotions that linger in the memory long after the original visual stimuli have faded from view.

These types of conflicting responses returned in sharp focus during fieldwork completed at the MQB in 2014, when the museum became the second of four institutions selected as case studies for investigating the othering of Africa and its diasporas in Western museum practices. During these more in-depth visits a range of qualitative research techniques were used to document the process of observing and capturing responses to the artworks

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57 The italicised statements presented in double quotation marks throughout the prelude form part of the interpretation summary for the art installation, detailed on the Musée du Quai Brany's website: www.quaibranly.fr/en/musee/areas/the-ramp/the-other-walk.html [accessed October 2015].

and cultural objects as a way of better understanding why this institution – one of Paris' newest and most popular visitor attractions for both national and international audiences – is capable of inducing such paradoxical sensations.

5.2   Spaces for display

This chapter about the MQB is structured into five sections, with sub-headings that correspond with five distinctive spaces used to showcase its collections and exhibitions: (1) The *Pavillon des Sessions* – an off-site permanent exhibition space located in the south-west wing of the Louvre; (2) The botanical gardens on site at the Musée du Quai Branly; (3) The Ramp – an interior walkway connecting the main entrance foyer and the museum's permanent galleries; (4) The Africa section of the permanent collections area; (5) The temporary exhibition spaces of the Garden Gallery and Mezzanine wings of the main building.

Each location provides opportunities to consider the extent to which the museum has successfully achieved its founding ambition to celebrate the arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas and, in the words of former French President Jacques Chirac, encouraged visitors to "look from different angles to see the unfolding sequence of exhibits as a testimony to the constantly evolving artistic genius of non-European civilisations" (Jacques Chirac, in Martin et al. 2006: 7) – using these spaces as departure points for reflection on the issues of othering that lie at the heart of this thesis. The museum's planning and conceptualisation phase, its collection developments, exhibiting practices, and approaches to audiencing and outreach are examined from spatial and temporal perspectives, with each of the five locations demarcating a physical site of investigation as well as signifying a moment in time from which to look back over past decisions and activities that have shaped the institution to date, and face forwards to contemplate its future prospects.

The photographs included throughout the chapter serve as illustrations of my pathway through the display spaces, along with descriptive captions from the photo essay and field notes originally compiled *en route* during visits to the museum in April 2014. In many ways, the text and images are reflections of my attempt to articulate alternative ways of seeing and interpreting the museum from the perspective of a black *flâneuse* whose experiences and observations suggest that not only am I part of a consistently under-represented ethnic group within this institution's current audiences but, more worryingly still, I remain an unexpected visitor.

5.2.1   The *Pavillon des Sessions* at the Louvre

The original impetus to establish a new national museum in the heart of Paris where the arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas could be presented in dialogue with one another came from the ideas of international art dealer Jacques Kerchache, who was a personal friend of former French president Jacques Chirac. On 15 March 1990 Kerchache published a full-page statement in the national news journal *Libération*, titled *"Pour que les chefs-d'œuvre du monde entier naissent libres et égaux"* ["For the masterpieces of the whole world to be born free and equal"] (Kerchache 1990). The text proposed that an eighth section of the Louvre be opened up and devoted to displays of "masterpieces" of fine art from continents other than Europe. The statement was written as a manifesto for the arts and supported by c.150 high-profile artists, public intellectuals and academic signatories from the fields of art history, anthropology, and philosophy. The proposal also received political support from Jacques Chirac (initially while serving as Mayor of Paris, 1977-1995, and later as President of the French Republic, 1995-2007) who – following a convention established by presidential predecessors such as Georges Pompidou and François Mitterand to create major landmark projects during their term in office (known collectively as *les grands travaux présidentiels*) – was keen to champion a new cultural initiative of his own that would eventually serve as a symbol of his legacy for the nation. By calling for the setting aside of a wing in France's most prestigious cultural institution where artworks and cultural objects from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas could be displayed and celebrated on an equal footing with Western arts, Kerchache and Chirac felt they were spearheading a revolution in the arts founded on principles of anti-racism and equality, cross-cultural artistic dialogues, and notions of aesthetic "universalism" (Price 2007: 38, Alivizatou 2012: 161).

In 1996 a series of planning committees were set up to realise Chirac and Kerchache's vision to display what they controversially referred to as *"Arts Premiers"* ["First Arts"] in the Louvre,[58] bringing together an initial selection of exhibits from three existing

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[58] Use of the term *"arts premiers"* ["first arts"] has been highly controversial in France, and elsewhere, for several decades, and references to it within the context of the Louvre's *Pavillon des Sessions* exhibition and the inauguration of the Musée du Quai Branly were widely criticised by art critics and cultural commentators serving both mainstream and more specialised readerships (see, for example, Price 2007: 37). At the time, some felt that the term was merely a more politically correct version of earlier problematic terms such as *"arts primitifs"* [primitive arts] or *"arts lointains"* ["distant arts"], and its use retained the historically hierarchical assumptions about European art being somehow more sophisticated and advanced in terms of the artistic techniques used and the overall appearance of the finished artworks (Noce 2000). The term also featured in national and international debates about whether it was more appropriate to classify, interpret and display objects displayed in the *Pavillon des Sessions* exhibition as ethnographic artefacts, or as works of fine art (a discourse often referred to as the "art/artefact debate"), and thus raised

institutions: the ethnographic collections of the Musée de l'Homme that were formerly housed at the Trocadéro site used for the 1937 Paris colonial exposition *[Exposition Internationale des Arts et des Techniques de 1937];* artworks from the Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (MAAO), previously displayed at the Palais de la Porte Dorée in the south of Paris; selected Asiatic "folk art" collections from the Musée Guimet that were formerly displayed at its site in the east of Paris. The planning culminated four years later with the opening of the *Pavillon des Sessions* as a permanent exhibition in the Louvre's south-west wing on 13th April 2000, and the establishment of a new national committee (the *Mission de Préfiguration du Musée de l'Homme, des Arts et des Civilisations,* later re-named the *Commission de Préfiguration de l'établissement public pour le futur musée du quai Branly*) to see through the development of a larger museum construction project, amalgamating the three aforementioned collections into the MQB.

During my visit to the *Pavillon des Sessions* in 2014 the selection and layout of the 108 exhibits was very similar to Jacques Kerchache's original arrangement, presented in the minimalist contemporary setting of high-ceilinged, white-walled galleries designed by French architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte (see Figure 16).

Kerchache's intention was for the works to be displayed as "sculptural masterpieces" – with most positioned in sparsely filled or individualised glass cases and vitrines, and the largest pieces centralised on plinths or grouped as trios positioned against the walls. The use of directional spotlights and concealed or transparent holding frames added mystery and theatricality to the setting and gave the objects an ethereal appearance as if they were suspended in the air. Only the very briefest labelling denoting each item's title, date, place of origin, dimensions and materials was placed alongside the exhibits, with all the other catalogue details about the acquisition history, provenance and cultural context of the pieces presented separately in a multi-media interpretation area.

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questions about how much contextual information should be displayed about the colonial history and provenance of many items in the Louvre's selection of c.100 exhibits, as well as the founding collections of the Musée du Quai Branly more broadly. See, for example, articles by James Clifford, Nélia Dias, Benoît de l'Estoile, Susan Vogel and others in the 2007 special issue of the journal *Le Débat* (Martin et al. 2007).

Figure 16: Exhibition view of the *Pavillon des Sessions* Africa section in the Louvre.

Finely crafted wood and metal figural sculptures and masks dominated the African section, with the majority of pieces dating back to the colonial era (see Figure 17 and Figure 18). In the absence of any detailed interpretation narratives to contextualise the exhibition, my observations provoked many questions about how Kerchache and his colleagues involved in the *Mission de Préfiguration* committee had selected these particular items – out of thousands of others – as appropriate for inclusion in this special collection designated as masterpieces. As Jan Nederveen Pieterse notes, the Western museographic convention of presenting problematically sourced items as "Treasures of" or "Splendour of" exhibits, is one that invites the public to "luxuriate in the aura of power, moonstruck by the accumulated glitter of palaces and temples turned inside out" without any concern (or sense of obligation to provide educational context) about the histories, geographies and ethics surrounding their acquisition – including potential acts of theft, looting and physical violence in the colonial past, or ongoing postcolonial issues of restitution continuing through to the present day (Nederveen Pieterse 2007: 146).

MQB catalogue details:

Title: *Tête anthropomorphe* (Benin)

Inventory number: 73.1997.14.1

Dates: Late 14th – early 16th century

Materials: Iron

Dimensions: 21 x 15,5 x 13,5 cm

Description (translated from French): Head modelled with naturalistic facial features, wearing a headdress of thin layered tresses, with four keloid scars at the site of the eyebrows and vertical marks on the forehead. These heads were made as trophies of war representing portraits of defeated enemy monarchs identifiable from their facial scars.

Display location: MQB, *Pavillon des Sessions*, Afrique 02, Vitrine PS-AF020.

Figure 17: Anthropomorphic head (Benin, c. 14th -16th century). Photo: Carol Dixon

MQB catalogue details:

Title: *Masque* (Gabon)

Inventory number: 71.1965.104.1

Dates: 19th century

Description (translated from French): Long wooden mask face, painted with kaolin. Attributed to the "ngil" society / Fang ethnic group in central Africa.

Materials: Wood, kaolin, brass nails

Dimensions : 69 x 28 x 25 cm

Display location: MQB, *Pavillon des Sessions*, Afrique 02, Vitrine murale PS-AF029.

Figure 18: Mask (Gabon, 19th century). Photo: Carol Dixon

Alongside these questions, the image that returned to my mind was a photograph of Jacques Kerchache seated around a table in conversation with other committee members drawn from the upper echelons of France's arts and culture sector, specifically: anthropologist Maurice Godelier; architect Jean-Michel Wilmotte (aforementioned as the designer of the *Pavillon Des Sessions*); curator and art historian Germain Viatte (who was later appointed as the Quai Branly's lead curator and scientific adviser); and Stéphane Martin, a senior figure within the directorate of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, who was formerly director of France's Musée de l'Homme, des Arts et des Civilisations, and appointed as the inaugural (and current) president-director of the Musée du Quai Branly. The photograph, first published in 2000 in the magazine *Le Figaro* (see also, Price 2007: 49), was captioned, "The five sorcerers of the Chirac museum" (see Figure 19).

Figure 19: *"The five sorcerers of the Chirac museum"* (2000). Original image: © Le Figaro Magazine. Photo: Véronique Prat/Figaro Magazine, courtesy of the Musée du Quai Branly (reproduced in Price 2007: 49)

Even without the provocative caption, the over-riding response to seeing five, white French men – all educated at similar élite schools and universities – sitting together in Paris to determine the aesthetic quality and worth of cultural objects from regions of the world with which none had direct prior associations (such as by ancestry, length of residency, periods of academic research or work experience, and so on), was concern about the socially exclusive, gendered and racialized nature of the decision-making processes underpinning this ambitious museum project.

Moreover, standing in this refurbished wing of the original Palais du Louvre – pondering the history of a building re-designated after the French Revolution as the first national "Museum of the Republic," and later dubbed "The People's Palace" (Black 2000: 9) – left a sense that the development of the *Pavillon des Sessions* was completely at odds with the expressed egalitarian ideals and civic values of France. How could it be considered appropriate for these five men – geographically and culturally situated in Paris – to determine what should be celebrated as masterpieces of fine art acquired from regions and continents beyond Europe that collectively represent more than three-quarters of the world? Why weren't the perspectives of curators, art historians and other scholars based in the countries from which these artworks and cultural objects were originally sourced incorporated into the planning process? More importantly still, as this committee's promotion of their 21st century museum initiative has given prominence to the motto and strap line *"Là où dialoguent les cultures"* ["Where cultures converse"], it is ironic and paradoxical that more diverse and diasporic cross-cultural dialogues on curatorship and audiencing in relation to the arts of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas were not seen as an essential component of this crucial phase in the MQB's genesis.

The group photograph of Chirac's planning committee making executive decisions about displays of international art in Paris at the start of the new millennium resonated visually with the content and subject matter of a contemporary conceptual artwork that I also recalled during my walk-through review of the *Pavillon des Sessions*: the installation *"Scramble for Africa"* (2003) by Nigerian-British artist Yinka Shonibare MBE (see Figure 20). This large-scale, mixed-media work comprises 14 life-sized, headless mannequins dressed in 19th century-style gentlemen's attire, seated around a mahogany dining table with a map of Africa illustrated on its surface. The clothing made from Dutch wax printed textiles, the posed figures shaped as if suddenly frozen at the pivotal moment of an animated discussion, and the centralised map of Africa suggest – as Shonibare's title also confirms – that the scene is an artistic representation of the historic Berlin Conference of 1884-85, organised by the then German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to settle European colonial claims on African territories.

So, even as the photographic image of aesthetic judgements being made about world art by Chirac's "five sorcerers" at the turn of the 21st century bears a resemblance to Shonibare's artistic capture of the devastating geo-political decisions made by 19th century European imperialists about the wealth and worth of African nations, it is unfortunate that visual similarities are not the only parallels that exist between these scenes. The deliberate decision to aestheticize the *Pavillon des Sessions*, by minimising and

marginalising to the point of erasure any traces of France's colonial past, should not have been attributed to sorcery, but rather defined as a form of othering. By wilfully separating aesthetics from ethnography, distancing objects from their historical context, and illuminating the scene using multiple spotlights and reflective surfaces, Kerchache and his colleagues were (wittingly or unwittingly) 'sanitizing' the exhibition space. Their design choices created echoes back to colonialist advertising imagery of the 19th century in which, as Anne McClintock notes, the recurring presence of light, white and mirrored surfaces symbolised "the sanitized image of white, male, imperial hygiene" as well as significations of "scientific rationality and spiritual advance" (McClintock 1995: 31). In turn, this deliberate erasure and cleaning up of France's colonial misdeeds, along with the absence of any interpretation narratives by people from the source communities most closely connected to the objects, has curtailed opportunities for visiting audiences to fully engage with these collections in all their complexity as opposed to only admiring the physical beauty of their surface characteristics.

It is for these reasons that the opening up of the *Pavillon des Sessions* cannot be accepted on face value as a wholly egalitarian gesture of largesse, welcome and global artistic inclusion by the Louvre. The exclusive composition of the planning committee, their Eurocentric approaches to evaluating world art, and the refashioning of France's historical relationship with Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas as somehow benign and uncomplicated – just like the table pictured in the "five sorcerers" photograph, and the one placed in the centre of Shonibare's poignant installation "Scramble for Africa" (2003) – render the exhibition a site for the gratuitous consumption of world art as artifice: or, as bell hooks might say, for "eating the Other" (hooks 1992: 39).

Regarding the colonial collecting legacies associated with several of the *Pavillon des Sessions* exhibits, Gretchen Henderson's description of the exhibition space as a "crime scene" – whereby (taking a line from Susan Sontag's *The Volcano Lover: A Romance* (1992)) "every collector is potentially (if not actually) a thief" (Henderson 2010b: 13) – should also be borne in mind as an appropriate descriptor for this display, as any museographic annexation of imperial history to avoid the challenges of presenting difficult knowledge is tantamount to tampering with evidence.

The academic and curator Professor Françoise Vergès – interviewed by me in April 2014 about past exhibitions and research projects completed at both the Louvre and the MQB – remarked on the importance of connecting and illustrating colonial history within the context of museum exhibitions as follows:

For me, this question of de-nationalising colonial history – showing that it is always a geopolitical history, and it is a story of connected global powers working together, of also consolidating the North-South axis, and so on – is always to be shown ... and I do think that a lot of the exhibitions – even the ones about migrants in France today – are not doing that.[59]

The challenge of this study is to identify why fantasies of otherness that are falsely located in Africa, projected onto black bodies, and/or presented as inherent characteristics of cultural objects created by African artists, should recur and be recycled with such consistency within contemporary Western museum spaces. As Françoise Vergès rightly observed, France's reluctance to connect its national narratives to wider global realities – and the uncomfortable legacies of its imperial past – is a key reason why romantic notions about blackness as 'primitive' can be so easily (re-)packaged and consumed as aestheticized and decontextualized exhibitions.

Figure 20: "*Scramble for Africa*" (2003) by Yinka Shonibare MBE. The installation comprises 14 life-size fiberglass mannequins, 14 chairs, table, Dutch wax printed cotton. Dimensions (overall): 132 x 488 x 280 cm. Image source: http://africa.si.edu.

[59] Françoise Vergès (Chair, Global South(s), Collège d'Études Mondiales), interviewed by Carol Dixon, 30 April 2014, transcript, p. 18 (position in the 120-minute recording: c. 52 minutes).

5.2.2 The botanical gardens at the Musée du Quai Branly

The 18,000 square metres of landscaped gardens on the site of the Musée du Quai Branly are presented as integral to the museum's function as a "space of transplantation" (Jean Nouvel, in Copans 2006: 46 mins.) – where tours around the grounds and the interior exhibition spaces are said to transport visitors into excitingly different worlds far beyond the realities of the museum's urban setting in the heart of Paris. The angular blocks that form the top level of the main museum building were deliberately designed by architect Jean Nouvel to enable large sections of the permanent galleries to extend out over the green spaces and provide spectacular views above the upper canopy of the tallest trees. Huge panes of glass built into these exterior walls, juxtaposed with diagonally slatted coverings along some of the lengths, regulate the amount of natural light entering the space and allow areas of the dense foliage outside to appear seamlessly connected to the dark, earth-coloured interior galleries (see Figure 21). This linking of the organic with the inorganic reflects Nouvel's architectural philosophy of "dematerialisation" – where design features like the pathways winding around the grounds are reproduced inside the museum in the form of a spiral ramp and curvaceous central walkway referred to as "The Serpent" flowing through the collections of grouped exhibits to create the illusion of an amorphous track gradually materialising into solid, hand-crafted cultural objects and artworks to provoke questions about where the exteriors and interiors, as well as the natural and the artificial forms of display, begin and end.[60]
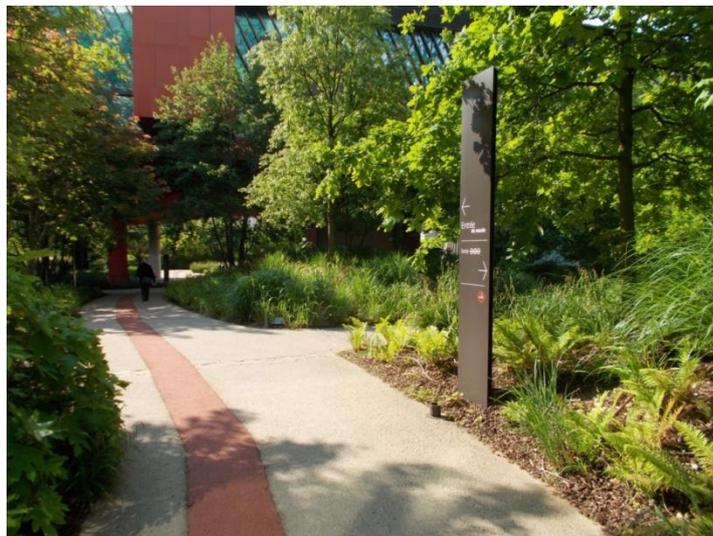
Figure 21: Pathway from the quai Branly entrance through the gardens. Photo: Carol Dixon

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[60] Jean Nouvel's use of "dematerialisation" techniques during the design and construction of the Musée du Quai Branly is documented online in the text, *"Quai Branly Museum, Paris, France, 1999-2006: Presence-Absence or Selective Dematerialisation"* (2006) http://www.jeannouvel.com [accessed January 2014].

Jean Nouvel's vision for the site during its earliest planning stages in the late-1990s conceptualised a place where "the Parisian garden becomes a sacred wood, with a museum dissolving in its depths."[61] Later commentary on the design also included references to visitors communing with "sacred objects" as though the collections had innate spiritual properties, with Nouvel stating:

> It is a loaded place haunted with dialogues between the ancestral spirits of men, who, in discovering their human condition, invented gods and beliefs. It is a place that is unique and strange, poetic and unsettling.[62]

This expression of spiritual and religious descriptive language suggests that Nouvel imagined the site as a mysterious and mythical paradise – which, given the serpentine shaping of the central path, might have been perceived as the Garden of Eden. When construction work was close to completion in 2006 these articulations about a sacred forest were amplified by claims that the museum's focus on "non-Western" cultures and collections had encouraged a museographic approach that eschewed the conventions of classificatory order and formality typically associated with Western exhibiting practices. This is evidenced during Jean Nouvel's interview for the documentary film *Quai Branly: Birth of a Museum* (Copans 2006) when he declares:

> I absolutely didn't want a clinical, Western space, where all these things have been labelled and made prisoners. The idea was to create a house for them, and to create spaces that are ambiguous, spaces that are a bit haphazard, too. (Jean Nouvel, in Copans 2006: 46 mins.)

Like the geographically themed layout of the permanent collections inside the museum the outdoor spaces were also divided into thematic zones – each centred around a distinctive feature created by the landscape architect Giles Clément, who worked closely with Nouvel and a specialist team of botanists, artists and researchers to transform the grounds into a complex, biodiverse exterior display area. In total, 169 trees, 886 shrubs and 74,200 ferns and grasses representing more than 150 different plant species were incorporated into the garden landscape, along with a selection of large-scale sculptural works and installations (see, for example, Figure 22).

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[61] This quotation (translated from French) is taken directly from architect Jean Nouvel's covering letter, which formed part of the museum competition proposal documentation, *Lettre d'intention de Jean Nouvel pour le concours international d'architecture* (1999), reprinted on p.3 of the Musée du Quai Branly brochure about its architectural and interior design features: *Un musée composite: une architecture conçue autour des collections* (2007) http://www.quaibranly.fr/uploads/media/L_architecture_du_Musée_FR_07.pdf [accessed 23 January 2014].
[62] See the online article, "Quai Branly Museum, Paris, France, 1999-2006: Presence-Absence or Selective Dematerialisation" (2006) Source: http://www.jeannouvel.com [accessed November 2015].

Figure 22: Giant Olmec head, Moulding no. 8 (2002) by Ignacio Pérez Solano. Photo: Carol Dixon

To this day, the expansive vertical garden wall – *Le Mur végétal* – created by the French botanist Patrick Blanc remains the most visually spectacular and innovative of the eight themed zones.[63] The vertical supports onto which the plants are interwoven extend across the front of the administrative building along the quai Branly to create an organic façade covering c. 800 square meters of wall space and comprising over 15,000 plants sourced from China, Japan, the USA and Central Europe.

In a similar way to the *Pavillon des Sessions* exhibition the limited labelling of the different varieties of flora on display – coupled with minimal signage along the labyrinthine pathways – reinforces the character of the landscape as a site of mystery. When combined with promotional literature that focuses primarily on the aesthetic qualities of the herbaceous arrangements, rather than discussing the place of origin, genus and species of the various plants, this mystical aspect is further emphasised. The introductory paragraph of the published guide to the gardens invites visitors to "explore a new world" – highlighting the other-worldliness of the so-called "non-Western," "savannah" landscape. The area marked as *La clairière du Candi* [The Glade of Candi] is presented as a meditative space, readers and visitors are encouraged to "discover the magical properties" of the

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[63] The eight garden features within the grounds surrounding the Musée du Quai Branly are described in the leaflet *"Guide d'Exploration du Jardin"* [n. d.] and labelled on a plan of the site (p. 3-4) as: (1) Le Mur végétal; (2) Le Théâtre de verdure; (3) Le jardin des Mousses; (4) L'ombrière des Vigaines; (5) La terrasse des Roses-Lianes; (6) Le jardin de la Cistude, (7) La clairière du Candi ; (8) Les bassins. Source: http://www.quaibranly.fr [accessed November 2015].

luminescent installations created by light sculptor Yann Kersalé, and poetic connections with Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas are evoked through the inclusion of ancient myths about forest-dwelling creatures – most notably the tortoise legends (*"Histoires de tortue"*) sourced from Indonesia, the Comcáac cultures of North America, and the Mbam of Cameroon.[64] At no point is anything mentioned about the historical and cultural significance of botanical gardens in relation to France's imperial past – especially the way botanical research was widely used to exploit and impoverish former colonial territories converted into plantation economies.

This omission of important details about botany and imperialism from the museum's interpretation literature is something that was discussed at length with the curator and political scientist Professor Françoise Vergès. In her recorded interview with me, she contrasted the MQB's botanical display with an earlier exhibition she developed for the 2012 Paris Triennale at Galerie Bétonsalon – titled, *Tropicomania: La Vie Sociale des Plantes.*[65] This exhibition looked at the historical and political significance of tropical products such as pineapples, bananas, rubber trees, and other flora imported into France from its former colonies since the 17th century, and which have featured prominently within French visual culture ever since as a result of the symbolic associations made between these commodified resources, people's wealth and social status, and issues of gender, race and power. In contrast to the MQB, the geo-political and cultural trajectories of the plants featured in *Tropicomania* were mapped and discussed within the project's exhibition narratives – looking at the changing relationships between science, exoticism and commerce spanning several centuries, and using artworks, scientific illustrations and archival documents to (re-)present the complex environmental history of colonialism, international trade links (including enslavement histories) and the later development of global agri-business within the multi-media displays. This representation of the political and economic inequalities evident in the past and the present exemplifies an exhibiting practice that Françoise Vergès described as achieving the "political aesthetic."[66]

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[64] *Guide d'Exploration du Jardin, op. cit.* p. 5-6.

[65] The images, text labels and catalogue essays for the exhibition *Tropicomania: La Vie Sociale des Plantes* (Galerie Bétonsalon, Paris, 20 April – 21 July, 2012) were researched and written by Françoise Vergès (as the Commissaire scientifique/Scientific curator), working alongside co-curator Serge Volper (historian and agronomist from *Bibliothèque Historique du Cirad: Le Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement* (CIRAD) [Historical Library of Cirad: Centre for International Co-operation in Agronomic Research for Development], and Galerie Bétonsalon staff members: director Melanie Bouleloup (Commissaire d'exposition/Curator), assistant director Anna Colin and communications co-ordinator Flora Katz. The press release is available via Bétonsalon online: http://betonsalon.net [accessed June 2014].

[66] Françoise Vergès (Chair, Global South(s), Collège d'Études Mondiales), interviewed by Carol Dixon, 30 April 2014, transcript, p. 7.

Regrettably, the beauty of the landscaping at the MQB, the close attention given to issues of ecological balance and sustainability throughout the site, and the inventive use of artistic and organic installations, do not compensate for leaving out significant political and scientific content from the interpretation narrative about the museum's gardens. The deliberate privileging of aesthetics over and above historical context has resulted in the creation of an environment where othering by omission, distortion and decontextualisation problematize the outdoor displays. It is precisely because of such foundational absences that Jean Nouvel's capricious imaginings about the sacred forest continue to dominate published visitor information about the site. When aligned with Jacques Chirac and Jacques Kerchache's equally questionable references to *"Arts Premiers"* it is no surprise that distinguished academics and cultural commentators publicly challenge the MQB's claims to be the place *"Là où dialoguent les cultures"* ["Where cultures converse"] (Price 2008, Thomas 2010, Lebovics 2010). Consider, for example, the following critique from the French historian Herman Lebovics:

> A President's pride to monumentalize himself as someone who values the art of the peoples of the developing world, the need for tourists' dollars, a strategy of French foreign policy to court the South in the face of the threat of US-driven globalization, and the cultural ignorance of a world-famous architect, as well as his embrace of a doubtful aesthetic manoeuver which once again links modernism with the primitive to represent visually France's relationship with its formerly colonized in the old paternalistic way – none of these forces shaping the MQB bring France any closer to postcoloniality (Lebovics 2010: 111).

I agree with Lebovics' observations, and go further to conclude that the MQB's site – from its earliest conceptualisation through to its present-day design and layout – symbolises, in microcosm, what bell hooks refers to as the white West's "romantic fantasy of the 'primitive'" and its nostalgic desire to reinvent the "fantasy of Otherness" (hooks 1992: 27). Also, like Lebovics and several other researchers who have examined and critiqued the MQB over the past decade from outside the discipline of museology, I note troubling continuities throughout this museum site with Joseph Conrad's late-19th century construction of a *"Heart of Darkness"* fictional narrative, and his associated colonialist notions of a 'Dark Continent' (see Lebovics and Viguier 2006: 97, Lebovics 2007: 4, 2010: 106).[67]

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[67] This statement refers specifically to Joseph Conrad's novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), which about European colonial visions of the African continent constructed as a place of "savagery" and "primitivism". Other scholars, beyond Lebovics, who have noted this type of 'Dark Continent' colonialist thinking within critiques of the MQB's exhibiting practices include: Michael Kimmelman, (2006), Sara Wajid (2007), and Kwame Opoku (2016). See, also, my additional comments (below)

5.2.3   The Ramp

The route taken from the museum's entrance foyer to undertake reviews of the permanent collections and temporary exhibitions displayed on the upper floors was along The Ramp – Jean Nouvel's Guggenheim-*esque* spiral that was constructed as a central access walkway around the MQB's cylindrical tower of musical instruments to give visitors a dramatic panorama of the interior space (see Figure 23). At the time of my research trips during April-May 2014 the featured ramp installation was *The River* (2010)*,* by British artist Charles Sandison.

Figure 23: The ground floor foyer of the MQB showing the Ramp entrance. Photo: Carol Dixon

Described online as "a linguistic 'hydrological cycle'" *The River* featured computer-generated projections of thousands of words moving rapidly along the sloping surface as if to simulate flowing water. The speed and density of the textual graphics – regulated by a specially designed software package, and accompanied by audio clips of natural water flows – varied along the length of the walkway to give visitors a different and unique experience of the installation with each step taken. In total, 16,597 names were projected onto the surface – each one representing the communities and geographic locations featured in the MQB's permanent collections. For Sandison the words symbolised the

in Section 5.2.4, and Chapter 6 (Section 6.3) in relation to the art exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* (Paris, 1989).

museum's "living thesaurus," presented as a kinetic and immersive artwork to enable visitors to be captivated by the "flood of language" flowing beneath their feet (Figure 24). His intended outcomes for audiences were described on the museum's website as follows:

> By the time the viewer has climbed and descended the ramp they will have unconsciously encountered the entire literal content of the collection as it flows around them. From beginning to end, the journey introduces the visitor to the objects and ideas they will encounter in the space beyond.[68]

Figure 24: Ramp installation, *The River* (2010-2016) by Charles Sandison. Photo: Carol Dixon

Perhaps because the installation did not feature emotive close-ups and film clips of people's faces projected on the floor, my experience of this artwork was extremely positive and I was quite transfixed by the innovative conceptualisation of an illuminated "liquid language" flowing out from the permanent collections. There was a sense that the space was being utilised far more effectively as an introduction to the museum's permanent galleries than had been achieved with the preceding commission, *L'Autre Marche* (2006), and that *The River* was a complementary illustration of the Musée du Quai Branly's stated ambitions to celebrate the cultural diversity, hybridity and connectedness of the world regions and communities featured in its collections.

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[68] Artist's foreword, outlining the concepts underpinning the MQB's commissioned installation, *The River* (2010-2016) by Charles Sandison (dated 2nd November 2009). Source: http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/musee/areas/the-ramp.html [accessed November 2014].

My only criticism of this exhibition space is that the Ramp has not yet featured an installation by a contemporary artist from continental Africa or the wider African diasporas. I am aware from my discussions with the anthropologist Bernard Müller – who co-curated the MQB's temporary exhibition *Jardin d'Amour* (2007),[69] in partnership with Nigerian-British artist Yinka Shonibare, and the head of museology Germain Viatte – that Shonibare initially planned to either utilise the existing Ramp or create an entirely new bridging structure to connect his installation displayed in the Garden Gallery to the permanent collections on the floor above. However, as Bernard Müller indicates below, this proposal did not materialise because there has always been a preference for artists' commissions to be treated as physically separate entities and confined to their allotted temporary locations with no direct and tangible linkage to the permanent collections:

> When Yinka was drawing his first sketches of the exhibition [Jardin d'Amour (2007)] he was trying out this ramp, and he had this pathway going up to the first level on his sketch. It had a curve and he created a kind of spiral with his pencil – finishing the spiral as if there were some stairs in the permanent exhibition going down from there into Yinka's project. I think his dream would have been to have this in his project, and he would have preferred not to be apart. He wanted it to be somewhere in-between the Oceanian and African masks, for instance. Suddenly, there would be a gateway that opened into a garden, and you could go up from the garden into the exhibition. But, no, it had to be the artist's own proposition, and this seemed to be getting too close to the permanent galleries.[70]

Not featuring any African artists' work on the Ramp to date – an area designed and defined as the museum's most innovative contemporary exhibition setting – gives an impression that their ideas and outputs are somehow less suited to being shown in a minimalist, white-walled, post-modern display space, dependent on the use of advanced ICT and multi-media presentation techniques, than their aforementioned Western counterparts (specifically, Vietnamese-American and French film-makers Trinh T. Minh-ha and Jean-Paul Bourdier, and the Finland-based British visual artist Charles Sandison). What better way to showcase contemporary perspectives on the arts and cultures of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, and a commitment to fostering global, cross-cultural dialogues, than to commission and feature new ramp installations by artists from all these continents and regions of the world just as regularly as those by European and USA-based artists?

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[69] More details about the exhibition *Jardin d'Amour* (2007) are discussed in Section 5.2.5 of this chapter.
[70] Dr Bernard Müller (Anthropologist, EHESS: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), interviewed by Carol Dixon, 29 April 2014, transcript, p. 10.

5.2.4   The *Afrique* section of the permanent collections area

The museum's permanent holdings consist of over 300,000 objects sourced from its three founding collections, and also incorporate c. 8200 recent acquisitions purchased between 1998-2006 via the €22 million budget granted by the French government during the development phase of the project (Viatte 2006: 5). At any time the permanent collections area displays c.3500 cultural objects relating to Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas, and a further 1000 musical instruments from these world regions encased in the four-storey cylindrical glass display tower positioned in the centre of the main building (Musée du Quai Branly 2013: 26-27).

Each of the geographically themed sections contains large glass display cases within which selected items linked by type, function, or place of origin are positioned on platforms and suspended using almost invisible wires to create an ethereal and theatrical display of floating objects illuminated by spotlights. Sporadically, flat-screened TVs, computer touch screens and audio booths are embedded into partition walls, or set within alcoves, to offer more background information about the exhibits – with several playing looped clips from the ethnographic film archive, photographic slideshows and sound recordings from the museum's Médiathèque collections to help animate the static displays.[71]

Regarding the African collections the museum's director, Stéphane Martin, and the *Commission de Préfiguration* committee's curatorial team liaised closely with established advisors – specifically, Jacques Kerchache, Claude Vérité (a collector and art dealer with an extensive collection of archaeological artefacts and antiques from Africa), and Jean-Paul Barbier (a major donor of Nigerian art) – to establish a formal collecting policy, drawing heavily on practices in place at the predecessor site of the Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (MAAO) before it closed in 2003. Consultations also took place with internationally renowned contemporary art curators with past experience of staging large survey exhibitions of African art – including Jean-Hubert Martin (curator of the Pompidou's contemporary art mega-show *Magiciens de la Terre*, 1989), and Hélène Joubert and Manuel Valentin (co-curators of the MAAO exhibition on South African art, *Ubuntu, Arts et cultures d'Afrique du Sud*, 2002). Clearly there was an attempt at this early stage to implement a vision of Musée du Quai Branly as an international arts space much

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[71] The MQB website lists 150 multi-media screens and 20 interactive terminals positioned throughout the display space for the permanent collections (distributed over 4750 sq. metres). See: *The Musée du Quai Branly in Figures* - http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/the-public-institution/the-Musée-du-quai-branly-in-figures.html [accessed January 2014].

more than as a scientific institution for presenting objects representative of its anthropological and ethnographic research portfolio.

The first detailed guide to the museum's acquisitions, published in 2006, featured a selection of continental African items as diverse as 15th century processional bronze crosses from Ethiopia, late-19th century Moroccan rugs, ornately carved 19th century Congolese wooden sceptres, figural sculptures from the ancient Kingdom of Benin, Egyptian torques from the early 1900s, and mid-20th century Ndebele beadwork aprons from southern Africa. Collectively, the sample was deemed to be representative of the wider array of traditional pieces dominating the Africa section, with close attention given to listing the names of specific art dealers from whom pieces were purchased or received as gifts (Viatte 2006: 118 - 155).

However, much less attention was given to researching and acknowledging the names of individual artists, collectives or art ateliers responsible for creating the objects – even for postcolonial pieces produced in the mid-to-late 20th century that replicated techniques developed centuries earlier. Only the scantest details describing the form, materials, dimensions, approximate date, geographical location and cultural names of the communities where works were traditionally produced appeared in the published guide under the general title *"Tu fais peur, tu émerveilles"* ["You're scary, you amaze/you're wonderful"] (2006), and similarly brief text labels were displayed throughout the galleries. This approach using minimal amounts of text echoed the aestheticization established for the *Pavillon des Sessions* (2000) at the Louvre, and – as Herman Lebovics observed two years before the opening of the MQB – was part of a deliberate strategy introduced by the *Commission de Préfiguration* to exclude difficult information about appropriation by colonial looting from the interpretation literature for its most celebrated objects:

> [T]he museum they are building will close the colonial era for France by means of aesthetic modernism. Showing beautiful creations of gifted artists, and showing them without history, without social context, and without evidence of the relations of power that they embody – in a word, without the layers – has been now for over a century and a half the classic exhibition strategy for eliding the human reality from which the art emerged and about which it speaks. It remains today the West's oldest and most honored way of occulting a terrible past. (Lebovics 2004: 174-175)

It is Herman Lebovics who also highlights several other problematic conventions of Western museography relating to Africa that are evident in the MQB's permanent galleries when he questions how such a seemingly random collection of objects can be assembled

and said to represent the artistic and cultural heritage of an entire continent over several centuries in a physical display space totalling less than 1200 square metres.[72]

In the following extract from an insightful essay about the museum published four years after it opened to the public Lebovics questions how French museum-goers might react if similarly reductive techniques were applied to the display of selected artworks and cultural objects deemed representative of French national culture as a whole, let alone the entire European continent:

> Imagine this: we visit a new museum called something like 'The Museum of French Culture,' where, in a darkened space dotted with islands of dramatically-lit showcases we are shown the thirteenth-century statues of the benighted Synagoga and of the triumphant Ecclesia from the South Portal of Strasbourg Cathedral, a well-made sword such as d'Artagnan might have worn, a group of old Burgundy bottles each shaped somewhat differently, a ceramic mustard pot in the shape of a toilet, Leonardo's 'La Giaconde', David's 'Oath of Horatii', and one of Monet's paintings of his garden... Or, consider this: we are invited to see an exhibition of impressionist paintings called simply 'France.' That is what the fuss is about. In the first instance, by appearing to be representative of aspects of French life, and presenting visual specimens out of social context, outside of history, and isolated, without nuanced aesthetic framing, we are being told these serve as faithful indices of the larger world announced at the entrance. And note, the most modern object is probably the mustard pot. There is perhaps nearly a century more of French life and art that remains untold. (Lebovics 2010: 101)

Through this hypothetical scenario about the 'Museum of French Culture' many flaws in the Musée du Quai Branly's approach to presenting ahistorical, depoliticised and decontextualized permanent collections are exposed. The overarching curatorial narrative about the *Afrique* section, which confidently foregrounds what is described as a "vast array of pre-1900 utilitarian objects, ornaments, weapons, and musical instruments that represent Europe's first contact with the material culture of societies considered at the time to be 'primitive'" is revealing in the way that European "first contact" is articulated as the primary point of reference, and the false binary of an assumed African 'primitivism' contrasted with European modernity is reiterated to fix the former as the ultimate Other.[73] When such narratives are allied with Jean Nouvel's architectural concept of the sacred forest – featuring dim spotlighting set against an earthy colour palette of purples, browns,

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[72] As the *Afrique* section is one of four world regions featured in the MQB's permanent galleries, the figure of 1200 square metres approximates one quarter of the 4750 square metres for the permanent collections area as a whole. Source: *The Musée du Quai Branly in Figures* [Online] http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/the-public-institution/the-musee-du-quai-branly-in-figures.html [accessed November 2015].

[73] The statement in quotation marks was taken from the translated transcript of an interview with Hélène Joubert, former curator of the Africa section, which appeared in the museum's June 2006 supplement, *"Quai Branly Museum Interviews"* (p. xii-xiii) – Médiathèque document ref: N-Z 743 [accessed April 2014].

and dark greens – the museal equivalent of Conrad's fictional vision of Africa as the "*Heart of Darkness*" is complete.[74]

5.2.5   The temporary exhibition spaces of the Garden Gallery and Mezzanine

For many purpose-built national museums in the West – especially those constructed in the 21st century – dedicated temporary exhibition spaces are provided to showcase single exhibits or whole collections on loan from other institutions, newly commissioned works by artists and curators not directly affiliated to the host museum, and themed exhibitions developed in partnership with charitable organisations, media networks and other corporate sponsors. The Musée du Quai Branly is no exception to this practice and has the ground floor Garden Gallery, the Mezzanine wings (also referred to as the "suspended galleries") above the permanent collections area, and the outdoor spaces surrounding the museum as sites for presenting a rolling programme of temporary displays.

Since the MQB opened in 2006 there have been more than 70 non-permanent exhibitions and installations. The most high-profile of these have included: large-scale thematic and area-based international blockbusters, such as *Maya* (2011) and *Dogon* (2011);[75] the biennial international photography showcase '*PHOTOQUAI,*' first established in 2007;[76] populist exhibitions to attract new audiences, from the controversial cinematic and comic-

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[74] For further discussion about the literary stereotypes and negative imagery about Africa and Africans featured in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), see Chinua Achebe's essay *"An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness"* (Achebe 1988: 1-20).

[75] The exhibition *Maya, de l'Aube au Crépuscule: Collections Nationales du Guatemala* (2011) was curated by Juan-Carlos Melendez (director of the National Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in Guatemala City) and featured over 160 items on loan from the National collections of Guatemala. The exhibition traced the development and decline of Maya culture in the era up to the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in 1524 C.E., arranged chronologically into the pre-classical, classical, and post-classical periods. In terms of visitor numbers it is one of the Quai Branly's most successful temporary exhibitions to date, attracting an audience of 219 315 visitors during the period from 6th June to 2nd October 2011. The exhibition *Dogon* (2011) that featured over 350 Malian sculptural figures, masks and sacred objects dating from the 10th century, as well as some 20th century paintings also attracted an audience of 195 042 between 5th April to 24th July 2011. Both of these exhibitions contributed to a 10% increase in the average annual visitor numbers from c.1.35 million in the period 2006-2010 to 1.46 million in 2011. Source: *Rapport d'activitié* [Annual Report] 2011 (p. 4-5)
www.quaibranly.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/presse/rapports_activites/RA_MQB_2011.pdf [accessed January 2014].

[76] 'PHOTOQUAI' is the name of a biennial photography showcase established in 2007 to present the work of non-Western photographers whose portfolios have not previously been shown in Europe at a series of open air sites and cultural institutions along the banks of the River Seine in Paris. Quai Branly is one of the founding partner institutions that provide a temporary space in its galleries and gardens from September to November every two years to stage the event, and also hosts a programme of debates, discussions, and audiences with the participating photographers, film-makers and curators in its lecture theatre. Further information about past biennials is available online at the website 'PHOTOQUAI: Biennale des Images du Monde, Paris'
http://www.photoquai.fr/en/home.html [accessed January 2014].

book-based presentation about the myth of *TARZAN! ou Rousseau chez les Waziri* (2009), to more nuanced showcases about the history of jazz (*Le Siècle du Jazz*, 2009), or tattooing and body art (*Tatoueurs, Tatoués*, 2014-2015); and commissioned contemporary installations by individual artists, such as the Nigerian-British conceptual artist Yinka Shonibare, and portrait photographer Greg Semu from New Zealand.

In addition, anthropological displays based around the MQB's permanent collections are also regularly presented in the Mezzanine galleries and have addressed issues such as corporeality, cultural hybridity, and how representations of the human image have varied over time and across cultures (see, for example, *Qu'est-ce qu'un corps? (*2007), *Planète Métisse: to mix or not to mix?* (2008-2009), and *La Fabrique des Images* (2010-2011), respectively).77 Lastly, unique archival documents and rare books formed the basis of the displays *Présence Africaine: une Tribune, un Mouvement, un Réseau* (2009-2010) about the famous journal and publishing house established in Paris in the 1940s by the Senegalese intellectual Alioune Diop, and « *L'Atlantique Noir » de Nancy Cunard: Negro Anthology, 1931-1934* (2014) themed around a first edition of the 1930s anthology held in the MQB archives which celebrates African and diasporan artists and writers from that era.78

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77 A full listing of all the past exhibitions at the MQB is available online at http://www.quaibranly.fr/en/programmation/exhibitions/last-exhibitions.html [accessed November 2015].
78 Considering this archive-focused display for 2014 was titled "*« L'Atlantique noir » de Nancy Cunard,*" and curated with Cunard's editorship of the book "*Negro Anthology"* (1934) as the most central and prominent voice within the exhibition, this unfortunately meant that (by design) the presentation overall lacked varied and diverse critical reflections on how political, economic and social justice-related inequalities impacted on levels of education, employment, well-being and quality of life for the majority of Africans and diasporans across the transcontinental 'Black Atlantic' world in the late-1920s and 1930s. Consequently, the small selection of headline political campaigns that Nancy Cunard had been personally and financially involved with – such as the trial and defence campaign for the Scottsboro Boys in the USA (1931-1937) – falsely distorted and misdirected much of the political and intellectual agency away from black-led campaign organisations, transnational collectives of black intellectuals, grassroots black liberation groups, and 'racial uplift' societies (including the work of the international Pan African Congress, "New Negro" movements, UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) and African Communities League, etc.) towards white Euro-American elites, scholars and avant-gardists in Nancy Cunard's immediate social circle. Furthermore, with regard to gender, it was also concerning to observe how this elevation of Cunard's personal agency and influence almost obliterated details about the lives and achievements of any other women – especially (given the titular reference to the 'Black Atlantic') the work of black, African-descended women activists, artists, entrepreneurs and scholars during the early 20th century and jazz-age period. During my walk-through review and analysis of this e exhibition on 29 April 2014, I only noted a trio of prominent textual and visual references to black female protagonists, by name and represented in solo portraits, specifically three African-American women: Harlem Renaissance writer Zora Neale Hurston; *chanteuse*, dancer and icon of French cinema and music hall, Josephine Baker; and the silent movie actress Eslanda Goode Robeson. The exhibition displayed a tendency towards what I consider to be problematically 'ventriloquist' representations of Africans and diasporans as Other– with elite white scholars (via authorship of archival documents, and also in the form of the MQB's in-house curatorial team for this exhibition – led by Sarah Frioux-Salgas) speaking *for* and about diasporic cultural histories,

While it is not possible to evaluate the entire temporary programme here, a selection of exhibitions are discussed below and used as optics through which particular issues of othering are appraised. Firstly, the experiences of African and diasporan contemporary artists are examined through the installations *La Bouche du Roi, 1997-2005* (2006) by Romuald Hazoumé, and *"Jardin d'Amour" de Yinka Shonibare, MBE* (2007). Secondly, a critique is presented about a landmark exhibition at the MQB where Self/Other binarism featured as its most prominent discursive theme: namely, the temporary exhibition, *Zoos Humains: L'Invention du Sauvage* (2011-2012).

La Bouche du Roi, c. 1997-2005 (2006), by Romuald Hazoumé

The inaugural temporary exhibit by an individual artist that was shown in the Garden Gallery, was the installation *La Bouche du Roi, 1997-2005* (12 September – 13 November 2006), by Beninese conceptual artist Romuald Hazoumé. Translated in English as "The King's Mouth", the artwork comprised 304 'masks' made from unwashed black plastic petrol cans, carefully arranged in overlapping lines along the floor into an oval shape that evokes the harrowing 18th century illustration of the Brookes slave ship,[79] positioned with a small collection of empty green-glass bottles, bowls of shells, bundles of tobacco, Yoruba-style figural wooden carvings, a scattering of red feathers, and a gun-shaped object placed at one end of the installation next to two crowned cans: a black one sporting a yellow-

black lived experiences and black expressive identities without themselves having the required levels of awareness, sensitivity to, or personal lived experiences of the negative impacts and legacies of racialisation and racism – past or present. Another example of how this ventriloquism manifested in the exhibition was also demonstrated in the way historically racist, derogatory and dated terminology from the period – which featured in the title, throughout the text of *Negro Anthology* and in other featured primary sources – should be handled within the exhibition itself. Although the curator's introductory panel stated that "expert" advice had been sought about whether, or not, to retain terms such as "*négre*," "negro," and "coloured" as they appeared within quoted extracts, this information was neither reinforced or repeated anywhere else in the display when they were used – nor reiterated in the printed information leaflet – so any visitors who did not read the first panel, or who entered the exhibition from a different entrance, were unlikely to be immediately aware that such decision-making had even been a consideration during the production of the exhibition's interpretation literature. I found this low-key curatorial intervention regarding the handling of overtly racist material *in*sensitive, and the unqualified (and largely unmediated and unfiltered) use of oppressive and de-humanising historical texts and images an emotionally disturbing experience. For a theoretical discussion about the affective/emotional impacts of encountering violent, racist, stereotyped and caricatured historical images see, for example, Patricia Hill Collin's work on "controlling images" discussed in *Black Feminist Thought* (Collins 2000: 69-96).

[79] The ship 'Brookes' was built in Liverpool in the 1780s and carried over 600 enslaved Africans on two Atlantic crossings in 1783. The illustration of the Brookes was commissioned in the 1780s and later used by the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson in the campaign to pass the 1788 Regulated Slave Trade Act of Parliament that limited the number of enslaved Africans transported on British slave ships. A copy of the illustration appears in Thomas Clarkson's parliamentary report, *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament* (London, 1808), vol. 2, pp. 110-111.

spotted leather head-dress, and a yellow one sporting a white-haired wig and zig-zag-shaped crown. A looping seven-minute film clip documenting information about the lived experiences of motorcycle couriers who transport petrol containers between Benin and Nigeria under very difficult and life-threatening circumstances, as well as audio clips of voices – quietly reciting what the interpretation narrative referred to as "a litany of slaves' names, songs and lamentations" expressed as prayers offered to Yoruba deities for the souls of the enslaved – played continuously within the exhibition space to complete the multi-media arrangement.

Figure 25: Beninese artist Romuald Hazoumé pictured with his installation, *La Bouche du Roi* [The King's Mouth], c. 1997-2007 (Kassel, 2007). Photo: Benedict Johnson

The museum's decision to select this work by a francophone artist from Benin as its first temporary exhibit suggests there was a conscious effort to make artwork by contemporary African artists very prominent within the MQB's emerging institutional narrative. However, there is little evidence to indicate that by locating a very political, conceptual piece about histories of exploitative global trade relations and enslavement in the Garden Gallery – an artwork not specially commissioned by the MQB, but rather hired in as a ready-made project previously displayed (with minor variations) at museums in Cotonou, Benin (1999) and Texas, USA (2005) – would necessarily provoke the director or curators to feel they needed to present the museum's permanent collections any differently on the floor above. Moreover, the emphasis on using lengthy extracts from an interview with the artist, and stills from Hazoumé's own photographic archive as the bulk of the installation's interpretation information suggests there was never a formal public

endorsement of the artist's perspectives as necessarily being synonymous with and representative of the museum's own. Regrettably, then, little exists (neither in print, nor online) to indicate that the MQB proved to be anything other than a physical holding and viewing space in which to place this deeply poignant touring installation. Its location in the Garden Gallery (physically separate from the permanent collections) suggests that the underlying vision, values and day-to-day practices of the institution have largely been unaffected by its arrival or departure.[80]

Jardin d'Amour, par Yinka Shonibare MBE (2007) – a site-specific art installation

A more high-profile, site-specific installation that was commissioned by the MQB and created specifically for the Garden Gallery followed the aforementioned inaugural presentation – titled, *Jardin d'Amour [Garden of Love]* (2007) and created by Yinka Shonibare. This large-scale, immersive artwork consisted of a labyrinthine, Rococo-styled, ornamental French garden, with a series of paths for visitors to walk along, and three high-walled, secluded enclosures where different thematic tableaux were staged. Each of the three main display areas were separated by shrub-covered trellis, tightly-bound reed-screen fences, privets, climbing plants and artificial rose bushes that served as foliage-covered boundary walls around the entire exhibition. The trio of interiors comprised groups of Shonibare's signature life-sized headless mannequins, dressed in Dutch wax, patterned textiles, and with beige tinted limbs – perhaps so as to make the ethnic origin of the 18th century-styled characters they represented ambiguous and undeterminable: neither African, American, Asian, Australasian, nor European, but perhaps instead an intentionally hybrid representation of all humankind.

From the titles given to each tableau – *« La poursuite »* ["The Pursuit"], *« L'amant couronné »* ["The Crowned Lover"] , and *« Les lettres d'amour »* ["Love Letters"] – the installation evoked and re-interpreted similar settings featured in three 18th century oil paintings by the French artist Jean Honoré Fragonard, collectively titled *Les Progrès de l'amour* [The Progress of Love], and painted between 1771 and 1773 (Figure 26).

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[80] Following its exhibition in Paris *La Bouche du Roi* was exhibited at Documenta 12 in Kassel and at the British Museum in London (2007), later touring a number of maritime and city museums in Liverpool, Bristol and Hull (c. 2007-2009) as part of a programme of commemorative events in the UK about enslavement and Transatlantic Slave Trade histories that marked the bicentenary of the 1807 Abolition Act. Source: Institute of Historical Research project website '1807 Commemorated' at http://www.history.ac.uk/1807commemorated/ [accessed February 2014].

Figure 26: *Progress of Love* (1771) by Jean Honoré Fragonard, shown alongside
a still of the installation *Jardin d'Amour* (2007) by Yinka Shonibare MBE.
Source: Musée du Quai Branly [online]. Images: © Frick Collection New York,
and © Patrick Gries for the Musée du Quai Branly.

In publications about the installation the co-curator of *Jardin d'Amour,* Bernard Müller, has described Yinka Shonibare as *"un maître de l'artifice"* ["a master of artifice"] and someone who operates best in cultural spaces like MQB founded on the "illusion of otherness" (Müller 2007b: para. 19). This perspective was also reinforced by the artist himself who, in interviews with Müller, acknowledged the challenges of having to juxtapose his contemporary artwork with historically and politically complex cultural objects within that particular setting, remarking:

> It's a very complicated issue. I certainly will not say, as an artist, that all ethnographic museums in Europe should be abolished. And in a way I also feel a contradiction. I don't like the way the objects were acquired politically. Quite a number of these objects were indeed looted and as such they are symbols of conquest. But culturally, I am happy that some of the objects are there and I can see them. The question arises of course whether they are preserved in the right context or in the right way. (Yinka Shonibare, in Müller 2007a: 20)

Co-curator, and former head of museology Germain Viatte also confirmed that Yinka Shonibare's installation was designed to specifically emphasise the "paradox of otherness" (Viatte 2007: 7). He felt that the artist embodied this as both an insider and an outsider within the context of the European museum space: noting how Shonibare's background, as the son of a lawyer and an artist educated at two of Britain's most elite fine art colleges, makes him typical of aesthetes and arts professionals in Western Europe; while his Yoruba heritage, and thus his blackness, make him (in Viatte's words) "for whites – irrevocably 'other'" (Viatte 2007: 8).

Throughout its run Bernard Müller monitored the written audience feedback about *Jardin d'Amour* in the comment books and found that it had been perceived by many of the visitors (primarily respondents drawn from established French museum-going audiences) as a confusing exhibition. For example, several visitors expressed surprise about the contemporary installation being displayed in a museum openly dedicated to what they variously termed the "First Arts," "non-Western" cultural traditions, or "the arts and civilizations of Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas" (Müller 2007b: para. 18). In one particular case, the links being made between the commission and the permanent collections were seen as "sacrilege" (Müller 2007b: para. 19). Perhaps the reality was that many visitors were simply unused to – and, perhaps still, not quite yet ready for – the Other (in the form of Shonibare) 'speaking back' to them via such a powerful communication tool as his politically and historically layered artistic installation, as Müller concludes:

> And now the "other" speaks directly to the visitor, by means of this superb communication device that is the artistic installation ... Yoruba speaks, showing that he knows our culture just as well if not better than we do. Behold, Yinka Shonibare has reversed the rules of the game, turning into a specialist of the West. (Müller 2007b: para. 36)

Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage **(2011-2012)**

One of the museum's most significant exhibitions to have openly considered issues of othering was *"Zoos Humains: L'Invention du Sauvage"* ["Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage"] (29 November 2011 – 3 June 2012) staged in the suspended galleries of the West Mezzanine – hereafter, *Human Zoos*. Although it wasn't the MQB's first attempt at addressing this subject – which featured prominently in the earlier display *D'un Regard l'Autre* (2006-2007), curated in-house by Yves Le Fur, and focussed on artistic expression of the "European gaze" on the cultures and communities of Africa, Oceania and the Americas, from the Renaissance era to the present day – *Human Zoos* was a more collaborative historical and political project involving a team of three, high-profile co-curators: Lilian Thuram, founder of the anti-racism education charity *Foundation Lilian Thuram: Education Contre Le Racisme* (FLT) who was the guest *Commissaire general* for the exhibition; anthropologist Nanette Jacomijn Snoep, the exhibition's scientific curator and the former head of the MQB's Historical Collections; and historian Pascal Blanchard, director of the *Groupe de recherche ACHAC (Association pour la Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine).*

The exhibition showed more than 600 items sourced from 20 international museums, galleries and archives, grouped into three chronological sequences: (1) *1492-1814: The era of discovery, representing the other*; (2) *1815-1889: The era of classification and categorisation*; (3) *1890-1940: 50 years of exhibitions*. Some of the objects on display included: 15th century figural stone sculptures produced in response to manuscripts by European explorers describing encounters with people from other regions of the world; objects sourced from European "cabinets of curiosity" dating from the 17th to early 18th centuries; posters, event handbills and postcards advertising the range of colonial and technological expositions and World's Fairs presented throughout Europe, North America and Japan between the 1850s and the 1930s; newspaper illustrations and cartoons presenting caricatures of people from Africa Asia, South America and Australasia; photography and films of circuses and outdoor exhibitions staged in zoological and botanical gardens during the late 19th and early 20th century that became known as "human zoos."

Thematically, the interpretation narrative was presented in four "acts" – each with a number of sub-themed "scenes," as if staging a theatre performance about the history of othering. Act 1 ("Discovering the other: reporting, collecting, displaying") discussed the impacts and legacies from 15th century European voyages to the Americas. Act 2 ("Monsters' and 'exotic beings': to observe, classify, categorise") critiqued illustrations, portraits and sculptures of named individuals historically characterised in the West as "exotics", "primitives", "freaks" and "savages"– including caricatures of the South African woman Saartjie Baartman, dubbed "The Hottentot Venus" in early 19th century exhibitions around Europe. Some of these exhibits were concealed behind curtains with warning notices to alert visitors in advance about the severity of the racist imagery. Act 3 ("The spectacle of difference: to recruit, exhibit, diffuse") covered the emergence of "scientific racism," eugenics and the hierarchical classifications of humans into different "racial types" in the period from the 1870s to the 1920s. Act 4 ("Racial and colonial stage sets: to exhibit, measure, produce") concentrated on the public display of groups of people brought to Europe to perform in colonial expositions and World Fairs – particularly those staged in Paris between 1877 and 1937. Discussions about the visual history of racism were very prominent in the display narrative, and the curators did not shy away from presenting examples of the systemic and institutionalised colonial violence and exploitation that occurred throughout the formerly colonised regions of the Global South. Detailed historical information was carefully and sensitively aligned with diverse cultural artefacts and pluralist contemporary perspectives about issues of race and racism,

otherness and alterity to make the exhibition politically and aesthetically coherent, engaging and challenging.

Many of the academics, arts correspondents and other cultural commentators who reviewed *Human Zoos* commented favourably on the range of exhibits, the comprehensive curatorial narrative and the quality of the scenography (see, for example, Schofield 2011, Hird 2012, Thomas 2013). Having seen the exhibition myself I largely support these positive perspectives and feel that one of its most effective aspects (both visually and pedagogically) was the strategic positioning of different types of mirrors and lenses along the entirety of the exhibition pathway (using a combination of flat panes of mirrored glass, deliberately concave or convex structures, fractured mirror shards, peep-hole apertures, and various other irregularly shaped and framed lenses). The mirrors created multiple distortions that encouraged self-reflexivity on our own ways of seeing – as well as more general reflection on how "specular imagery" impacts on perceptions of the self in relation to others (see, for example, Lacan and Fink 2007: 40).

In contrast, less favourable reviews of *Human Zoos* expressed the opinion that it featured repetitive, over-simplified and one-dimensional assemblages (see, for example, Iacub 2011, Arndt 2012). In particular, the cultural studies scholar Lotte Arndt commented on too many exhibits of a similar type and content, thus preventing audiences from progressing beyond the initial shock of seeing a large volume of disturbing images depicting racial violence and exploitation (Arndt 2012: 123). She also argued that the exhibition would have benefitted from a more nuanced approach, similar to the techniques pioneered by African-American conceptual artist and curator Fred Wilson (Arndt 2012: 126),[81] and that more could have been said about forms of resistance against these exhibiting practices (especially by performers who staged strikes to improve their pay and conditions) as well as the later role of anti-racism and human rights campaigners opposed to colonial expositions (Arndt 2012: 129).

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[81] Fred Wilson's art installations and curatorial work often gives prominence to the hidden and peripheralised histories of African diasporans in Western museum exhibitions through practices such as juxtapositioning instruments of torture from the enslavement era with expensive and ornately decorated items purchased by white European and North American elites from the profits of the Transatlantic Slave Trade and plantation slavery in the Americas; or by displaying text labels and interpretation panels that make explicit the integral socio-economic and cultural contributions of Africans and diasporans to Western history and prosperity that are often omitted from so-called 'mainstream' historical narratives. These techniques were first illustrated in his celebrated project *Mining the Museum* (1992), commissioned by the Maryland Historical Society (see, for example, Corrin 2011), and have also featured in more expansive, commissioned public art sculptures, memorials and monuments questioning deliberately distorted, stereotyped and denigrated representations of African-Americans' experiences of racism in the USA (see also Labode 2012).

These criticisms were raised directly with Pascal Blanchard during my interview with him in Paris in November 2014.[82] At that meeting he strongly defended the curatorial approach taken, suggesting that it would have been unwise to have adopted Fred Wilson's techniques within a cultural context where mainstream French audiences know very little about the colonial history of 19th-and early-20th century human zoos. He mentioned that, through *Human Zoos*, he was addressing two distinctive audiences: regular museum-visiting publics already familiar with the Quai Branly's collections but not necessarily conversant with the subject of the exhibition; and people who were visiting the museum for the first time as a direct result of having seen the press and publicity material – representing c. 35-40% of the total attendance. For both sets of audiences he felt that this introduction into the history of human zoos needed to prioritise the provision of unambiguously clear details over and above the subtleties of Wilson-style museography, stating:

> We have seen that, even today, the public are very divided on this subject. So what we had to do was to be very pedagogical in our approach. We featured lots of texts in the exhibition to explain how it happened, as well as the personal accounts of people who had actually been on show at the time… We also listed the actual names of over 130 people who had been on show – such as Ota Benga – because our main concern was to rehumanize the 'savage' who had been dehumanized…So pedagogy was at the root of it all. [83]

Moreover, Blanchard felt that to have followed Fred Wilson's approach might have resulted in the unintended consequence of somehow singling out French colonial racism as "a special case" of inflicted trauma on formerly colonised nations and communities when (in his view) it existed alongside similar cases of racialized violence perpetrated by other Western powers throughout world history. He added:

> I wanted to position this subject on the same level as colonial history, the history of racism, the Holocaust and the history of the 2nd World War…I did not want to cosmeticize it in any way… I wanted to present a classical exhibition and to be as classical as possible on the subject… It is a subject that has to be placed alongside all the classical subjects featured in museums. What is most important is the effect that it has. But it is just another subject.[84]

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[82] Dr Pascal Blanchard, Director of the Research Group ACHAC (*Association pour la Connaissance de l'Histoire de l'Afrique Contemporaine*), interviewed by Carol Dixon. Paris, 20 November 2014. (translated from French by Sean Sheahan).
[83] Pascal Blanchard 2014, *op. cit.* c. 22:20 – 23:15 minutes (translated from French).
[84] Pascal Blanchard 2014, *op. cit.* c. 28:14 – 29:00 minutes (translated from French).

The MQB's decision to work in partnership with respected external curators and advisors involved in academic research and anti-racist education campaigns enabled the narrative to be underpinned by the principles of equality and diversity and a commitment to pro-sociality. Their poly-vocal approach to curatorship – led by Lilian Thuram, a former French footballer of Guadeloupian heritage turned anti-racism advocate, who is regarded as a national hero in France – also demonstrated the museum's desire to engage younger and more diverse audiences alongside its existing visitor base. While there is considerable merit in Lotte Arndt's commentary about the lack of nuance, as well as the omission of important resistance and resilience narratives about past performers, *Human Zoos* represents a decisive step forward in introducing content and scenography to openly challenge othering.

In coming to the end of this section I return to the final gallery of the *Human Zoos* exhibition, which featured an immersive, multi-media presentation designed by video installation artist Vincent Elka. Three walls of this 20 sq. metre area were covered from floor to ceiling by large film projections picturing individual men and women – diverse by age, ethnicity, physical (dis)ability, linguistic heritage, sexuality, religious or spiritual perspective, political persuasion, nationality, and so on – reciting monologues to camera (and, thus, directly to exhibition visitors) about their personal thoughts on identity, corporeality and othering. The transitioning images were overlaid with audio clips reciting a number of questions: "Who are our others today?"; "How do they live on a daily basis?"; "How do they position themselves compared to others?" and "Do they feel 'other'?" (Martin et al. 2011: 15). It was fitting that the exhibition concluded in this way, using a contemporary installation to highlight issues of othering as an ongoing and present-day phenomenon, perhaps as significant in the 21st century as in the context of past imperialist practices.

5.3   Conclusion

This review and analysis of the MQB's exhibiting practices highlights the need for the museum to embark on a progressive reconfiguration of its permanent collections area to reflect postcolonial and post-modern expectations that exhibits sourced during the colonial era should feature previously untold and hidden narratives of colonisation – abandoning singular, Eurocentric discourses in favour of the historical plurality that is essential to serving increasingly globalised and multicultural museum audiences.

For a museum whose very existence is attributable to the political interventions of Jacques Chirac it is quite ironic that there still appears to be a reticence and conservatism towards addressing political issues and sensitivities around race, racism, difference and identity within the context of the permanent collections. This is a consequence of a continuing over-reliance on in-house curators (who are almost always white, French and educated at the same elite institutions) to interpret and provide narration for permanent exhibits without bringing in external expertise and contemporary scholarship directly from the world regions in focus.

Furthermore, it isn't that the politics and sociologies of race, racism and othering are completely excluded from the MQB altogether, but these discussions always seem to take place away from the permanent collections – in the Garden Gallery, along the Ramp, on the Mezzanine wings, and also during conferences held in the Jacques Kerchache Lecture Theatre – so that 'ownership' of the issues are vested in (and remain with) temporary guest curators, commissioned installationists or visiting speakers, and the museum does not have to take on full and ongoing responsibility for managing and negotiating any difficult knowledge. Ultimately, there is no long-term progression towards all areas of the MQB being consistently seen as a legitimate or welcoming place for remembering, interpreting and displaying the heterogeneous and interlinked histories of Africa, Asia, Oceania, the Americas *and* Europe.

MQB represents a classic manifestation of what historian Tyler Stovall has observed about the French nation as a whole: in that, despite France's republican expression of *Liberté, égalité, fraternité,* collective national identity has historically required (and, to some extent, still requires) its "others" within and without the Hexagon to be defined as culturally subordinate in some way. His interpretation of public pronouncements about equal citizenship throughout France and its DOM-TOMs – where freedom is associated with whiteness, blackness with subjecthood, and notions of nationality remain "colour-blind in theory, racially coded in practice" – makes it clear that "to be French often means to posit a particular relationship to an Other defined as primitive, a relationship that seemingly remains a key factor in French identity" (Stovall 2006: 211). In terms of art and culture, this materialises within French and other Western museum spaces as the habit of "iconicising the 'primitive'" (Langton 2003: 117).

Chapter 6: Remixing narratives at the Pompidou in Paris

Prelude: *Quel avenir pour notre art?* (1997) by Chéri Samba
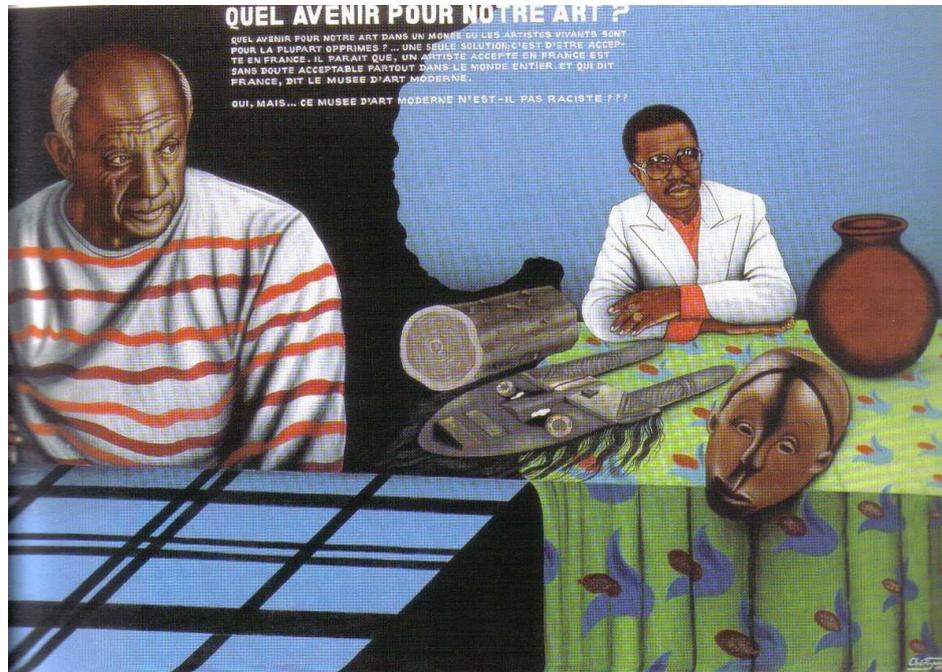
Figure 27: *Quel avenir pour notre art?* (1997) by Chéri Samba (No. 1 of 3).
Acrylic on canvas and glitter. 131 x 195 cm. Image © CAAC - Pigozzi Collection, Geneva.
Source: http://www.caacart.com.

In Chéri Samba's triptych *"Quel avenir pour notre art?* [What future for our art?]" (1997) the Congolese pop artist represents himself in three imagined settings: firstly, seated at a table of objects with a Doisneau-inspired portrait of Pablo Picasso in the foreground; [85] secondly, walking side-by-side with Picasso, each carrying similar paintings towards the "*Musée d'art moderne"*; thirdly, standing in a crowd outside the familiar glass façade of the Pompidou holding a canvas, labelled *"Peinture pop de Chéri Samba"* on its reverse side, while a speech bubble coming out from the galleries overhead declares *"Bravo l'occidental! Bravo le cubisme! Notre musée est tien!"* [Bravo the West! Bravo Cubism! Our museum is yours!]

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[85] An English translation of the text on panel 1 of the triptych reads as follows: "What future for our art in a world where living artists are, for the most part, oppressed… The only solution is to be accepted in France. They say that an artist accepted in France is, without doubt, acceptable all over the world… And who speaks for France, the Museum of Modern Art…Yes, but… isn't this Museum of Modern Art racist???"; Panel 3 features a combination of French and Lingala, in which the artist questions the paradoxical practices of modern art museums in the West, observed throughout his 22-year career up to that point – particularly the absence of African artists in major exhibitions. Samba concludes his statement by reiterating the question « *…le musée d'art moderne, est-il raciste?* » ["…is the Museum of Modern Art racist?"].
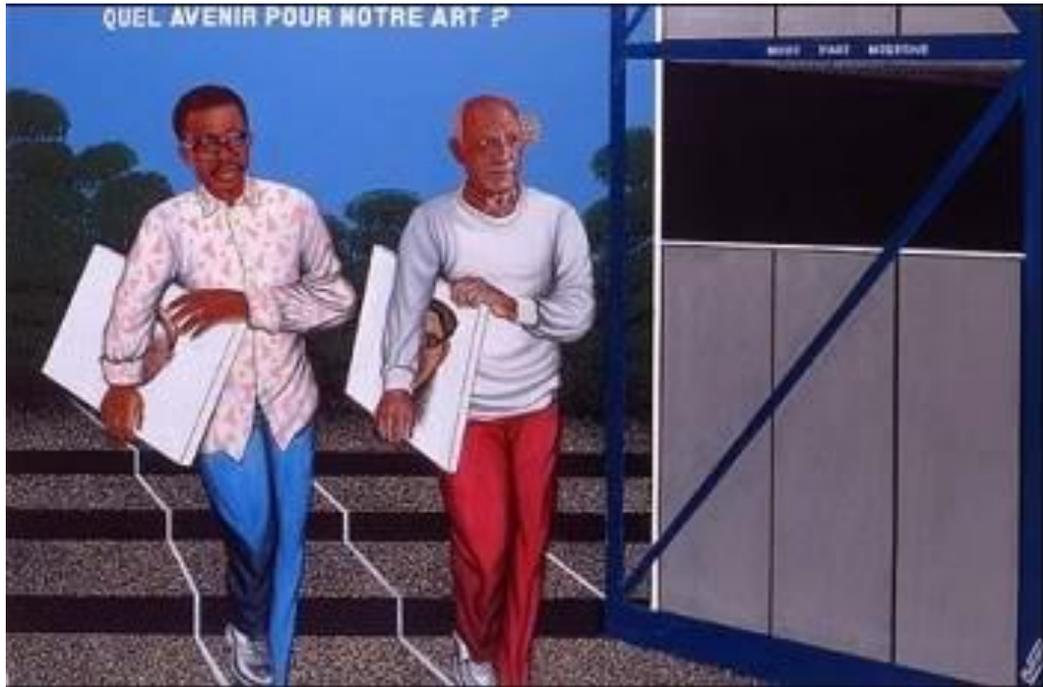
Figure 28: *Quel avenir pour notre art?* (1997) by Chéri Samba (No. 2 of 3).
Acrylic on canvas and glitter. 131 x 195 cm. Image © CAAC - Pigozzi Collection, Geneva.
Source: http://www.caacart.com.

This three-framed, multi-layered contemporary artwork – which includes text as well as images– addresses a number of complex issues and themes concerning the politics of art, globalisation and identity by combining visual allegories with coded statements on modernism and modernity, issues of race and racism, and other socio-political and cultural agendas. By including the cartographic outline of West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea behind his own image in the first painting, representations of Pablo Picasso in two out of the three scenes, the Pompidou's iconic architecture alongside the date 1989 in the third, and a titular reference to the possessive adjective *"notre"* to complicate who is being referred to when asked to consider the future of "our" art, Samba expands far beyond an autobiographical representation of his own experiences as a black, francophone African contemporary artist exhibiting work in France, and transforms the triptych into a broader and more critical analysis of African artists' collective relationship with the West.[86]

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[86] It should be noted that Chéri Samba (b. 1956) is not an artistic contemporary of Pablo Picasso (1881-1973). One of the reasons why images of the latter feature so prominently is probably because Picasso serves as an instantly recognisable, embodied visual analogy – or trope – for 20th century modern art in the West within the triptych's overall visual allegory.
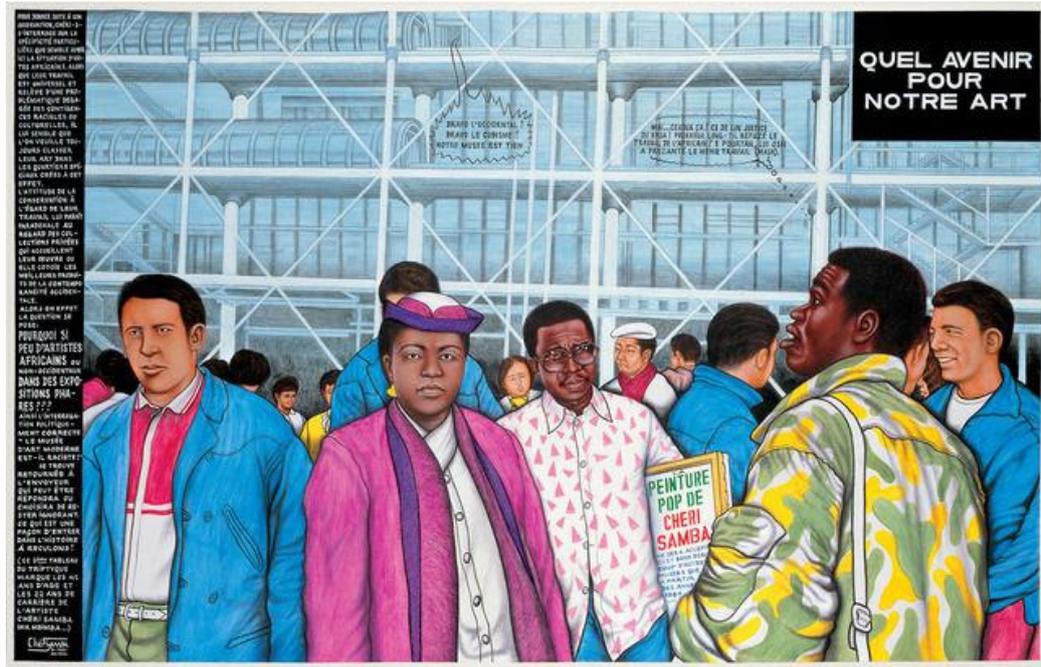
Figure 29: *Quel avenir pour notre art?* (1997) by Chéri Samba (No. 3 of 3).
Acrylic on canvas and glitter. 130 x 201 cm. Image © CAAC - Pigozzi Collection, Geneva.
Source: http://www.caacart.com.

Closer scrutiny of the social modalities underpinning this piece reveal that Chéri Samba has always used his art as a vehicle for social criticism, as philosopher Ben-Ami Scharfstein observes:

> Chéri Samba and others like him have painted in accord with two implicit rules, the first to give pleasure, visual and emotional, and the second, to tell as much as they dare the social and political truth. (Scharfstein 2009: 353)

It is no coincidence that Pablo Picasso features in this work as the embodiment of the Western art establishment – initially shown contemplating a wooden log, two African masks and a ceramic pot on the table close to Samba's own image, whose physical size is comparatively diminished by the perspective and the positioning. This scene is illustrative of Picasso's "African-influenced period" c.1906-1909 (historically dubbed the "*Époque Nègre*"), believed to have been inspired by a visit to the African masks and sculpture collections at Paris' former Musée d'Ethnographie du Trocadéro (despite Picasso's refusal to admit this association for most of his lifetime), and later adjudged in the West as a key trigger for the emergence of "Primitivism" as an artistic movement (Lemke 1998: 33-37). The second scene – of both artists walking in perfect unison towards the modern art museum – presents Picasso and Samba as equal in stature, holding almost identical

paintings, and is reflective of Scharfstein's view that "Samba is a Kinshasan who is ready to put himself on equal terms with any contemporary"(Scharfstein 2009: 353).

By the third scene Picasso has become a disembodied presence, only represented via the speech bubble text emanating from inside the Pompidou's upper galleries in celebration of Cubism, as Samba stands outside almost hidden amongst the ethnically diverse crowd. These contrasting positions – separated by the liminality of the Pompidou – symbolise Chéri Samba's critique of the problematic art world divisions traditionally established between the West and the so-called '*non*-Western rest,' European modernism distanced from African 'primitive art', artistic innovation pitted against tradition or 'derivative art', and ultimately the centrally placed Self opposed to its marginalised others. Referencing 1989 in this frame – the year when the Pompidou's mega-show *Magiciens de la Terre* gave Samba and a number of his African peers international recognition within the Western-centric contemporary art market for the first time – introduces further ambiguity concerning the Pompidou's role and future potential as a "dialogic" space[87], or even a "Third Space"[88], for negotiating relationships between artists, curators and audiences that challenge the conventions of Self/Other binarism. For all these reasons, Samba's deceptively uncomplicated, coded, comic-strip imagery, combined with his concluding rhetorical question *"Le musée d'art moderne, est-il raciste?"* ["Is the museum of modern art racist?"], make *Quel avenir pour notre art?* a fitting prelude from which to launch this exploration of the Pompidou's exhibiting practices.

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[87] The term "dialogic" space is used in reference to Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin's perspectives on dialogism within the literary arts (Bakhtin 1981). Just as Bakhtin argues literary discourse involves constant interactions between one's own and others' words, which all have the potential to affect and "interanimate" each other (Bakhtin 1981: 354), the same could be said of artistic discourses that take place between artists, curators and their audiences within the context of contemporary art galleries.

[88] "Third Space" relates to Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory of culture, where culture operates within an indeterminate space characterised by hybridity, flux, instability and competing tensions. In *The Location of Culture* (2004) Bhabha argues that "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity," so should never be perceived in simple, dualistic binaries such as I to You, or Self to Other (Bhabha 2004: 55). By exploring and conceptualising the meaning of culture in terms of "Third Space" individuals are better able to engage with any perceived differences as equivalences – a process which Bhabha refers to as "elud[ing] the politics of polarity" to "emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha 2004: 56).

6.1   Introduction

The othering of Africa discussed so far has tended to concentrate on exhibiting practices that first emerged during the peak period of Western imperialism. This high point of colonial collecting established false binary distinctions and normatively asymmetric relationships between artworks and cultural objects defined as European in origin and those from the Global South. While the visual appearance and descriptive narratives of these exhibitions have varied over time and in different institutional contexts – experiencing surface transformations whilst simultaneously retaining an underlying 'grammar' of racism through practices such as exoticisation of all things African, the omission of African and diasporan artists' names from collection descriptions, and the designation of African-sourced cultural objects as 'primitive art'– these de-normalising displays continued long into the 20th century. Typically, within the context of scientific institutions and natural history museums throughout Europe and North America exhibitions during this era showcased implicitly racialized "habitat dioramas" (see, for example, Kohlstedt 2005),[89] while curators of larger-scale colonial exhibitions or World's Fairs invented the spectacle of "native villages" (see, for example, Mitchell 1991, Luckhurst 2012) – often incorporating the aforementioned live performance installations dubbed as "human zoos" (Blanchard et al. 2008). Some museologists reference archival documentation about these overtly racist displays in an attempt to illustrate (and celebrate) just how far the sector has since progressed towards more pluralist and anti-racist showcasing of scientific and cultural achievements from around the world as an integral aspect of post-war, postcolonial curating (Karp and Lavine 1991, Macdonald 1998, Teslow 1998). While this historicisation goes some way towards explaining the decline in overt forms of othering within science-focused and encyclopaedic museum settings, what tends to be less well documented is a parallel assessment of what was also taking place more subtly within fine art exhibiting contexts over the same time period and also later.

This chapter, therefore, presents the Pompidou as an institutional framework through which to look at specific turning points and moments of significant change that have

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[89] Sally Gregory Kohlstedt's research about the history of North American museums discusses the history of the habitat dioramas constructed for the *Hall of Africa* exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), New York. With reference to Donna Haraway's primatology research, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Routledge, 1989), she identifies an inherent racism and sexism in the way the original 19th century curators inscribed and normalised elite, white, male viewing perspectives on to the terrain of these dioramas, and specifically documents how the installations for gorillas' habitats served as social and cultural "mini dramas" for representing racialized and gendered stereotypes about human behaviour via the zoological displays (Kohlstedt 2005: 597).

transformed the way African art and artists have been represented within the context of fine art museums and galleries in the West. Through this case study of France's most high-profile contemporary art space – coupled with observations in the parallel chapter about the UK's Tate galleries – a departure point is established in order to consider and substantiate a number of emerging themes about the nature and changing manifestations of othering.

Just as Chéri Samba poses several questions in the final text panel of his triptych "*Quel avenir pour notre art?*" about the paradoxical practices of Western contemporary art institutions observed and experienced by him throughout his 22-year career up to that moment in 1989 – ultimately concluding, *"[L]e musée d'art moderne, est-il raciste?"* ["[I]s the museum of modern art racist?"] – this chapter also considers the impacts of othering on individual African and diasporan artists and curators through further interrogation of the spatial geometry of exhibitions, the narratives that contextualise the exhibits on display, and ongoing issues about African exclusions from the artistic canon that foreground othering as a corporeal phenomenon.

6.2   The birth of the Pompidou

The vast post-modern structure of the Pompidou opened on the Beaubourg plateau of Paris' 4th *arrondissement* in 1977 and quickly became the institutional prototype for many of the large-scale, purpose-built museums and galleries constructed in the West during the years that followed. Taking its name from former French President Georges Pompidou – who first announced his plans to create a new centre for modern art within one year of the capital's May 1968 uprisings – its avant-garde design by the architectural partnership of Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers had a dramatic impact on both the Parisian cityscape and the capital's culture sector because of its marked contrast with the more classical, temple-like buildings housing prestigious fine art collections in France at that time, as Rebecca DeRoo describes:

> The building that housed the new museum was unlike anything in Paris: glass walls created a transparent sheath that opened up the interior to viewers on the street, while escalators and brightly coloured pipes wound around the exterior as if the structure had been turned inside out. Its exhibition spaces, too, marked a break with conventions of museum display; moveable walls and panels made the interior flexible, changeable, a far cry from the stately – and static –rooms of the Louvre. (DeRoo 2006: 167)

The Piano-Rogers design was the winning entry in an international architecture competition in the early 1970s that had attracted more than 600 entrants. Their plans fulfilled the competition's brief to create a multifunctional arts centre, library and research institute, with large, uninterrupted spaces for exhibitions and displays that showcased the work of its four founding departments: the plastic arts section, incorporating the Musée National d'Art Moderne (MNAM) and Centre National d'Art Contemporain (CNAC); a public reference library (Bibliothèque publique d'information, Bpi); a research centre for industrial design (Centre de Création Industrielle, CCI); and a department for cultural development focused on acoustical, audio-visual, and performing arts (L'Institut de recherche et coordination acoustique/musique, IRCAM). The building's design was also symbolic of the demands for transparency, openness, accessibility, democracy and inclusion that had been articulated by many of the political and cultural activists directly involved in the 1968 protests (DeRoo 2006: 169). So, from conception to completion, the Pompidou's beginnings always marked it out as a highly political project just as much as one concerned with innovations in the arts and architecture.

The institution's inaugural events season opened with the exhibition *Paris-New York* (1977). Curated by the Centre's first director, Pontus Hultén, it summarised the history of significant artistic exchanges between France and the USA since the turn of the 20th century – incorporating literary, musical, cinematic and architectural reference points as well as documentation about key movements in modern and contemporary visual arts to accompany the featured "masterpieces," from Cubism and Surrealism through to Pop and Minimalism (Ferrier and Le Pichon 1989: 731). The fact that this exhibition did not feature a single work by an artist of francophone African descent, nor any African-Americans already prominent in the art scenes of these two cultural capitals over the period in focus, and only one black diasporan – Wifredo Lam (1902-1982), the Cuban-born abstractionist who had lived and studied in Paris during the late 1930s – gives some indication that the dramatic visual changes heralded by the Pompidou's architecture did not trigger similarly immediate, transformative and corrective impacts on the way the art institution and its inaugural director-curator chose to continue representing the modern and contemporary art canon as an almost exclusively white, male preserve.[90]

Behind the accepted rhetoric of avant-gardism, internationalism and inclusion that the Pompidou has espoused in the four decades since Hultén's inaugural exhibition, its

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[90] The 13-page press release (in French) and list of featured artists for the exhibition *Paris-New York* (1st June 1977 - 19 September 1977) are available online via the Pompidou's CNAC digitized archive: https://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/resource/c4rk8Er/rj79bE6 [accessed December 2015].

internal structures have largely reproduced programming and exhibiting decisions and practices that remain stubbornly resistant to significant and sustained change. To date, there have only been two occasions when the institution has staged international exhibitions where a substantial proportion of the contributing contemporary artists were from nations within the Global South – specifically, the 'mega-show' *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) and the African showcase *Africa Remix: L'art contemporain d'un continent* (2005). At the time when I visited the Pompidou to undertake fieldwork for this project in November 2014 the institution was commemorating 25 years since it had hosted what was promoted in 1989 as "the first exhibition really to take a global overview" of contemporary art in the 20th century,[91] and approaching a decade since Simon Njami's extensive continental survey of African contemporary art had toured there following its launch at the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf in July 2014.

Despite the Pompidou's recent programme of commemorative events declaring *Magiciens de la Terre* a "legendary" exhibition that had sparked a "progressive transformation" in the way artistic globalization was represented in Western museums and galleries (Cohen-Solal 2014: 353), my reflections on its immediate and longer-term impacts are less celebratory because of the way the archives and associated art-historical discourse about the exhibition have subsequently revealed how the othering of Africa and the wider Global South underpinned aspects of its conceptualisation and presentation. A brief critique of *Magiciens de la Terre* is outlined below to expose some of the most problematic binaries that materialised in 1989 before going on to draw contrasts with *Africa Remix* (2005) and the most recent curatorial projects concerning African artists' work at the Pompidou observed first-hand during walk-though reviews of the permanent collection on display in 2014.

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[91] *Magiciens de la Terre* (18 May – 14 August 1989), Communiqué de presse, January 1989 (p. 3). The full text of the English translation reads: "'Magiciens de la Terre' is the first exhibition really to take a global overview, taking into account revisions in the way in which traditions and developments have occurred throughout the 20th century, and believing that the time has come to look again at the categories, as well as the geographical and cultural boundaries, which have divided and prejudiced opinions on the relations between different cultures in the world." CNAC digitized archive: https://www.centrepompidou.fr/media/document/12/95/1295983deb4ee5df99f92ab974855fe0/normal.pdf [accessed November 2014].

6.3   *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989)

Curated by Jean-Hubert Martin[92], and presented as a two-site exhibition at the Pompidou and the cultural centre Grande Halle de la Villette in the 19th *arrondissement* of north-east Paris, *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) is acknowledged by admirers and critics alike as the first significant survey of international contemporary practice staged in the West that was truly global in its scope (see, for example, O'Neill 2007: 214, Murphy 2013: 2, Steeds 2013a: 24-5). The exhibition featured work by 100 contributors – described by the curator as 50 "artists from the artistic centres" located in the West, and 50 "artists who do not belong to these centres but to the 'peripheries,'" collectively termed "non-Western" (Martin 2013: 218). Seeking to avoid many of the controversies and accusations of neo-colonialist thinking that had circulated around MOMA's international exhibition in New York earlier that decade – *"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (1984-1985) – Martin deliberately juxtaposed works by artists and sculptors from his two designated groupings throughout both art spaces in an attempt to openly contest and destabilize dominant Western perspectives on what constituted progressive contemporary practice, challenge prevailing myths and stereotypes associated with the terms 'primitive art' and 'Primitivism', and give equal prominence to all the featured artists in the showcase purely on the basis of aesthetics without resorting to the types of anthropological and ethnographic categorisations that tend to emerge in exhibition narratives to differentiate artists from the Global South from their Western counterparts. In a curatorial interview given to the art historian Benjamin Buchloh in 1989, Martin outlined his critical thinking and decision-making methodology as follows:

> What is especially important to recognise is that this will be the first truly international exhibition of worldwide contemporary art. But I don't pretend in any way that it will be a complete survey of the planet. Rather, it is a sampling that I have chosen according to more or less accurate, yet somewhat random criteria. I cannot select objects in the manner of ethnographers, who choose them according to their importance and function inside a culture, even though such objects may 'mean' or 'communicate' very little – or nothing at all – to us. Inevitably there is an aesthetic judgement at work in the selections for my exhibition and that includes all the inevitable arbitrariness that aesthetic selection entails. (Jean-Hubert Martin, interviewed by Buchloh 2013 [1989]: 235)

[92] At the time of the exhibition its French curator Jean-Hubert Martin was also director of the Pompidou's MNAM (Musée National d'Art Moderne).

Although the 50/50 balance between Western and "non-Western" artists demonstrated a clear intention to exhibit and stimulate debate about global artistic equalities and equivalences, other aspects of Martin's stated approach led some prominent cultural commentators to conclude that *Magiciens de la Terre* was not as radically different and corrective in raising issues about the politics of globalisation and postcolonialism via the arts as it purported to be (see, for example, Araeen 1989). It is questionable whether improvements in the overall number of artists invited from the Global South to Paris to display existing work, or create newly commissioned pieces *in situ*, did anything to fundamentally shift the Western-centric underpinnings of the project, as Martin openly admits in this curatorial statement published a few years before the show opened to the public:

> The exhibition will be open and receptive towards other civilisations, but the selection will be made from a Western standpoint. Rather than trying to deny this, it is better to make use of the artistic experience gained in this century, where so many possibilities have been explored… It does not aim to be timeless and definitive – quite the reverse: it is wholly a reflection and a product of its time. (Martin 2013 [1986]: 221)

Archival documents, photographs and other primary sources, along with secondary literature published in the decades since *Magiciens de la Terre* was shown, spotlight various tensions and contradictions that arose from this "Western standpoint." Firstly, in terms of selection, the curatorial team were criticised for applying different criteria to identify their preferred Western and non-Western artists.[93] In particular, Jean-Hubert Martin and André Magnin (his appointee with specific responsibilities for sourcing African artworks) both expressed a problematic predisposition towards African artists who had not received any formal fine art training, and in their view had an "authenticity" and resilience towards (what Martin referred to as) the "imposition of Western codes of behaviour upon the Third World [which had] destroyed or at least contaminated everything" (Martin 2013 [1986]: 217-219). In contrast, Western artists were invited on the basis of being adjudged "the most committed to the avant-garde" (Martin 2013 [1986] : 218). With specific reference to the African art selection, art historian Maureen Murphy critiques this differentialist approach as a form of othering when she observes:

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[93] The main members of the curatorial team responsible for selecting work by artists from the Global South (with their continental and regional research specialisms shown in brackets) were: Jean-Hubert Martin (Asia); André Magnin (Africa); Aline Luque (the Americas); Mark Francis (Pacific region). Further information about the fieldwork undertaken by these curators features in Lucy Steed's essay *'Magiciens de la Terre' and the Development of Transnational Project-Based Curating* (Steeds 2013a: 50-60).

Jean-Hubert Martin was happier choosing objects coming from the popular and the religious spheres, preferring the idea of otherness and difference so dear to the West, keen to conserve an 'elsewhere', and a share of regenerative otherness. It is worth noting that his bedside reading in Africa was Michel Leiris's *L'Afrique fantôme*, written in the early 1930s. (Murphy 2013: 4)[94]

Beyond selection issues, othering was also evident in the spatial arrangement of the artworks. The Pompidou's floorplan for *Magiciens de la Terre*, for example, signifies aspects of Self/Other binarism in the way that several of the display areas closest to the exhibition's entrance, as well as the prime positions along the longest gallery walls, were occupied by established European and USA-based contemporary artists, while artwork by their African, Asian, South American and Australasian counterparts appeared in more marginal locations. Most notably, the privileged positions at the main entrance featured a performance installation and billboard poster art by two artists from the USA, James Lee Byars and Barbara Kruger (respectively), while the 51-piece tapestry hanging, *Poesie con il Sufi Berang* (1989), designed by Italian artist Alghiero Boetti dominated the longest continuous length of wall space in the north-west section of the exhibition (see Figure 30).[95]

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[94] Maureen Murphy's reference to *L'Afrique Fantôme* (1934) is significant because the book holds a similar controversial status within French literary criticism to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) in the English cultural context. The French author and amateur ethnographer Michel Leiris (1901-1990) was a prominent public intellectual who wrote it as a partially autobiographical and partially fictionalised poetic account of his travels in West Africa during the 1930s (including diary entries and anthropological field notes written throughout his participation in the Dakar-Djibouti expeditions of 1931-33). Although *L'Afrique Fantôme* became a best-seller over several decades it contained a plethora of racialized fantasies depicting Africans as 'primitive', childlike, libidinous, wild and mysterious, and also documented Leiris' use of exploitative colonialist power-privileges to acquire substantial collections of sculptures, masks and other cultural objects for exhibition in France. In later life, Leiris gifted the artworks and archival materials from his controversially sourced African collections to selected Parisian museums and galleries, including a major donation to the Pompidou in 1984. Although contemporary critics of *L'Afrique Fantôme* acknowledge Leiris' subjectivities about race documented in the 1930s as typical for French elites of that era, the text remains contentious and paradoxical because, on the one hand it is seen by some as an anti-colonial valorisation of African cultural differences, whilst for others it is an unquestionably racist exoticisation of Africans as the ultimate Other which has negatively influenced mainstream perspectives on Africa and Africans throughout the Francophonie for many generations (cf. Torgovnick 1990: 105-118, Hand 1995: 174-193).

[95] Digitized PDF of CNAC Georges Pompidou archive document DP-1995036, p. 32: www.centrepompidou.fr/media/imgcoll/Collection/DOC/M5050/M5050_A/M5050_ARCV001_DP-1995036.pdf.

Plan de l'exposition **Magiciens de la terre**
au Centre Georges Pompidou

suite de l'exposition à La Grande Halle La Villette
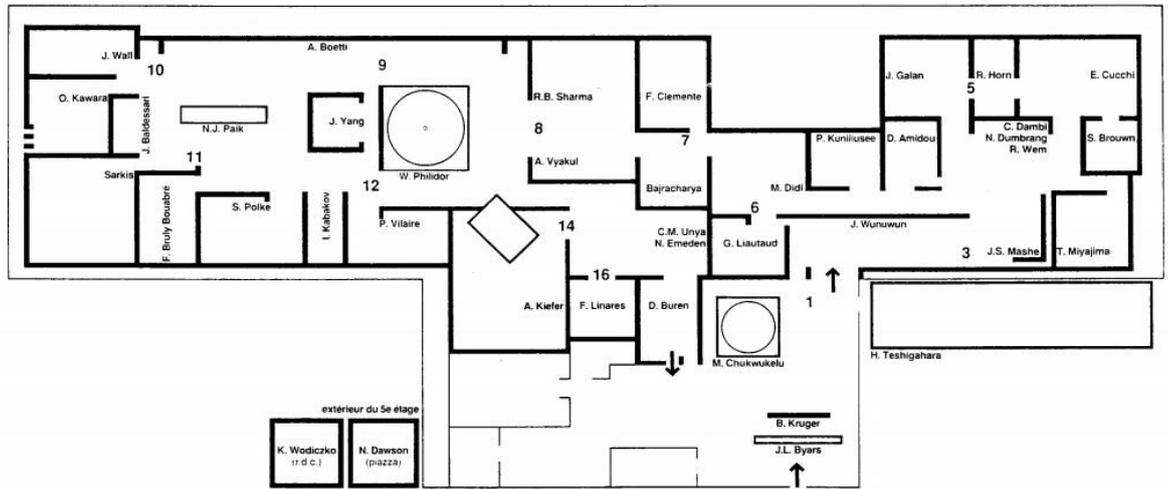
Figure 30: Floorplan of *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) displayed on Level 5 of the Pompidou. Source: CNAC Georges Pompidou, *Les etapes d'un projet* (Archive document DP-1995036), p. 32.

Similarly, photographs and documentary films showing the pioneering Western/non-Western artistic pairings illustrate that the close physical proximity in which new works were created and installed did not preclude curatorial subjectivities and the relative agency and power of already established, high-profile artists impacting on how and to whom particularly prominent spaces were assigned. At the Grande Halle de la Villette, for example, one of the largest areas of wall space at the rear of the hall – offering spectacular sight lines from many angles and approaches – was allocated to British artist Richard Long for a newly commissioned piece, *Red Earth Circle* (1989). This huge, visually imposing work was installed next to a more compact floor painting, *Yam Dreaming* (1989) by the Australian artists Francis Jupurrula Kelly, Franck Bronson Jakamarra Nelson, Paddy Jupurrula Nelson, Neville Japangardi Poulson, Paddy Japaljarri Sims, Paddy Japaljarri Stewart and Towser Jakamarra Walker.[96] Archived photographs of this assemblage show that Long's work completely dominates the space (see Figure 31), so much so that its

[96] The other artworks installed nearby in the floor spaces to the right and left of *Yam Dreaming* (as visitors approached from the exhibition's entrance) were: *Temple vaudou de la famille Tokoudagba è Abomey Toxosou, dieu de l'eau* (1989) by Cyprien Tokoudagba (positioned on the left); *Aire de perception au seuil de l'imaginaire* (1989) by Jean-Pierre Bertrand (top right); *Maison* (1989) by Esther Mahlangu (bottom right). A wide-angled photograph from the Pompidou's archive showing a bird's eye view of all these artworks *in situ* was reprinted in the book *Making Art Global (Part 2); 'Magiciens de la Terre' 1989* (see Figure 84, in Steeds 2013b: 187).

impact was famously noted in an *Artforum* review by the art historian Jean Fisher using the following elaborate mix of ecclesiastical, corporeal and cosmological metaphors:

> The artist's vertical ring dominated the perspective of La Villette like the rose window of Notre-Dame, a giant 'solar anus' that oversaw everything including the horizontal Yuendumu earth painting below it, rendering all the lateral exhibits on the floor as so many side chapels. Far from reflecting a dialogue between the two, the relationship replicated the juxtaposition of the colonised and the coloniser, between the West's manipulative relation to the earth and others' bodily association with it, and between Western non-primitive aestheticisation of the signs of others' cosmogonies and the 'meaning effect' produced by their own work. The predominance given to Long's work betrayed the exhibition's rhetoric of equality. Just as the Christian symbolism of the installation at La Villette betrayed the ritual and religious difference of other cultures and their historical struggle for survival.
> (Fisher 2013 [1989]: 255)

Figure 31: Exhibition view of *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) at Grande Halle de La Villette, Paris showing the artworks *Red Earth Circle* (1989) and *Yam Dreaming* (1989), Photograph: Deidi von Schaewen. Artworks © the artists. Source: Afterall –http://afterall.org/

The floorplan for La Villette also spotlights other problems with this spatial arrangement because of the way the group of artists responsible for *Yam Dreaming* were assigned the collective label and catalogue entry "*Communauté Yuendumu*" ["Yuendumu community"]

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instead of listing their personal names (see Figure 31).[97] For a curator who had openly claimed "[t]he artists will be presented as individuals in their own right" (Martin 2013 [1986] : 216), and "[n]o work of art is anonymous: an artist (or artists) is always identifiable" (Martin 2013 [1986]: 219), the omission of these artists' names differentiated them from the way all the other artists were described in print. When considered within the wider context of centuries of systematic colonial omission of black and brown artists' names from historical records – and placed alongside an incongruous, ill-judged titular use of the word "magicians" that associated the artists with trickery and sorcery – this provides further indication that othering practices were embedded within the descriptive language and cartography of *Magiciens de la Terre*.

Another aspect of spatialized inequality is noticeable in the exhibition's two-site structure, which affected the level of international exposure and attention different artists received at the time. Although the Grande Halle de la Villette is an important arts venue in Paris – designed by the award-winning French architect Bernard Tschumi in the early 1980s as part of a 125-acre urban redevelopment project that transformed a former slaughterhouse site in the north-east of the capital into a vast culture park comprising museums, a music conservatory, concert halls and other amenities[98] – the building is located towards the outskirts of the city near the north-east section of the Périphérique. Being situated in the comparatively less wealthy district of the 19th arrondissement in contrast to Beaubourg (in the 4th arro.) has meant that it is a leisure destination primarily frequented by locals and other Parisians much more-so than international visitors.[99] Consequently, the attendance figures for *Magiciens de la Terre* at La Villette were estimated to be lower than the numbers who viewed the Pompidou display, and also resulted in less than 300,000 visitors to the showcase overall (Cohen-Solal 2014: 346). The absence of socio-demographic data about the ethnicity of visitors attending *Magiciens de la Terre* – mainly

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[97] This omission of the Australian artists' personal names was corrected in the revised commemorative catalogue for the exhibition, *Magiciens de la terre: retour sur une exposition légendaire* (see, Cohen-Solal and Martin 2014: 210).
[98] See architectural plans, project information and images for Parc de la Villette (1982-1998) on the website for Bernard Tschumi Architects at http://www.tschumi.com/projects/3/ [accessed January 2016].
[99] Property price comparisons on the website for the Fédération Nationale de l'Immobilier (FNAIM) show the 4th arrondissement to be one of the most expensive areas of the city in contrast to the 19th, which is generally one of the least expensive – with average prices in Euros per square metre in these districts at c. € 10,000 / m² compared to c. 6000 / m², respectively, and the city-wide average approximately € 8,400 / m² at 2016 prices (Source: http://www.fnaim.fr/). Similarly, socio-economic statistics published in 2012 by the government agency DRIHL looking at comparative levels of social housing in different Parisian districts showed proportions at 36.4% in the 19th (the highest in the Île-de-France region) compared to 9% in the 4th arrondissement. Source: Direction Régionale et Interdépartementale de l'Hébergement et du Logement (DRIHL) de Paris, 2012 [Online] http://www.drihl.ile-de-france.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/ [accessed January 2016].

because, by law, France's 'colour-blind' approach to race relations precludes the collation of official statistics detailing a person's ethnic background – makes it difficult to accurately research and compare what the ethnic diversity of the audiences across the two sites might have been like. However, anecdotal impressions of the 19th arrondissement – which, visually at least, has been an ethnically diverse suburb of Paris for many decades – suggest that Parisians from the African and Antillean diasporas were more likely to have attended the showcase at La Villette in greater numbers than at the Pompidou, thus further reinforcing centre-periphery contrasts relating to the ethnicity, social class and nationality of the exhibition's visiting audiences.

In view of these wide-ranging socio-political and spatial issues I applaud Jean-Hubert Martin's decision to feature contributions from prominent postcolonial cultural theorists as an integral aspect of the official event programme and published documentation accompanying *Magiciens de la Terre*, because they have enabled important counter-narratives and alternative perspectives on the global art in focus to come to the fore and influence subsequent discourse about the exhibition's legacies. In particular, Gayatri Spivak's paper presented at the two-day colloquium organised to coincide with the exhibition (3-4 June, 1989) noted significant gender and class inequalities inherent within the display – mirroring the realities of global geopolitics – when she remarked on the comparatively poor representation of women artists and the absence of subaltern perspectives as exhibiting "porous presences" (Spivak 2013 [1989]: 266). Also, Rasheed Araeen's contributions – both as an artist-curator showcasing his work at La Villette, and as a speaker at the colloquium – foregrounded the inherent tensions and complexities many diasporic artists (like himself) embody as neither (or *simultaneously*) Western/non-Western.[100] As a scholar with Pakistani and British heritage he was ideally placed – in terms of his corporeality and the multicultural themes prominent in his artwork – to challenge the binary constructions of Self/Other, centres/peripheries, and avant-

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[100] The Pakistani-British conceptual artist-curator and writer Rasheed Araeen presented the following five artworks (4 paintings and a mixed-media sculpture) as part of his installation for *Magiciens de la Terre* in the mezzanine area of the Grande Halle de La Villette: *Look Mama…Macho!* (1983-86); *Sonay Ke Chirya* (Golden Bird) (1986); *Black Painting* (1987); *Green Painting* (1985-86); *Sheesh Mahal* (Glass House) (1988-89). Photographs of these works *in situ* were reprinted in the 25-year commemorative catalogue, *Magiciens de la terre: retour sur une exposition légendaire* (Cohen-Solal and Martin 2014: 310-311). Rasheed Araeen's involvement is notable because, as founder of the international art journals *Black Phoenix* (1978-79) and its successor *Third Text* (first established in 1987), he has consistently challenged and sought to revise the established art history canon with regard to the exclusion and absence of modern and contemporary artists from the Global South, and black diasporans in the West, from the world's normatively white art establishment. For further details about Araeen's arts activism and a summary of key publications, see the *Companion to Contemporary Black British Culture* (Donnell 2001: 14) and *Shades of Black* (see, for example, Hall 2005: 6-7).

garde/folk-traditional remediated via *Magiciens de la Terre*. While Araeen's exhibition review for *Third Text* praised many individual works in the exhibition, he deliberately used the term "grand spectacle" in an ambiguous way to convey how his delight about its welcomed scale had been simultaneously tainted by the curatorial decontextualisation of the exhibits, which he felt had left the door open to some visitors' fascination for the exotic to continue to "dazzle the (dominant) eye" (Araeen 1989: 4-5). His final assessment was that the ongoing presumption of the aforementioned binaries, combined with the curator's inability to present a coherent and consistent conceptual underpinning that justified them, had ultimately rendered the exhibition a failure, concluding that:

> By this failure it has defeated its own stated objective to provide a visible framework which would break the distinctions and allow a dialogue among the diversity of contemporary art from all over the world. (Araeen 1989: 14)

Twenty-five years on, these important aesthetic, curatorial and socio-political issues are still being actively debated by scholars, museum and gallery practitioners and wider publics to determine the positive and negative aspects of the exhibition's legacy (see, for example, Steeds 2013a, Bouhours et al. 2014). Although the passage of time has not altered the fact that those positioned outside the Pompidou tend to apply a more interrogative analytical approach than the past and present curators recently invited to lead the commemorative programme in Paris, *Magiciens de la terre: retour sur une exposition légendaire* (Cohen-Solal and Martin 2014), the combined body of research and retrospective commentary published from within and without the Pompidou does enable researchers like me, who did not see the original exhibition first-hand, to draw some tentative conclusions about the exhibition's outcomes and relevance at this present moment.

Firstly, one of the most successful changes to take place in the wake of *Magiciens de la Terre* was that the major institutions comprising the West's elitist art establishment were provoked to be more outward-looking in their canonical designations and exhibiting of international contemporary art excellence. The proliferation of international art biennials and triennials staged outside Europe and North America in diverse venues across emerging art world cities of the Global South – including *Dak'Art*, the *Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain* first established in Dakar (Senegal) in the early 1990s, and *Rencontres de Bamako* [Bamako Encounters] launched in Mali in 1994 – serve as tangible evidence that artistic "centres" institutionally sited in Europe and the USA are gradually changing and also shifting their locations. Through a combination of multiplication, deterritorialisation (in the virtual realm via new media technologies, as well as

geographically) and metamorphosis, these global art festivals have transferred to alternative spaces and places around the world that were historically perceived as "peripheries" prior to *Magiciens de la Terre*.

Secondly, there is still considerable progress that needs to be made – not only in terms of devising innovative and experimental curatorial approaches, but importantly also making necessary revisions and inclusions to the way modern and contemporary art histories are documented. Within the Western museum and gallery context this requires changes in personnel and the diversification of professional staff teams as well as institutional policy changes to ensure that aesthetic and curatorial practices are better informed by increasingly cross-cultural and diasporic experiences that are embodied as well as researched.

If these types of changes are taken into account this might help the staffing of curatorial teams for international art exhibitions to become more diverse and dissuade Western art institutions like the Pompidou from treating contemporary artists, arts audiences and art markets located in the Global South as though they were neo-colonial 'new frontiers' for the 21st century. A further positive consequence would be that any future invitations to artists and arts scholars from Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America to present work and curate exhibitions in Western art spaces would be approaches co-constructed as equal and reciprocal partnerships, with all the prospective contributors fully committed to co-curating, global research dialogues, and collaborative decision-making practices as the only logical course of action a progressive international art institution could possibly take.

The next sections of this chapter move forward chronologically to discuss the Pompidou's hosting of the touring exhibition *Africa Remix* (2005) and its more recent in-house curatorial project *Multiple Modernities* (2013-2015) to consider the extent to which each initiative evidences positive steps towards the amelioration of othering within the institution's exhibiting practices – not only in relation to the research, selection and arrangement of art objects for display in the galleries, but also in terms of the individuals tasked with realising and communicating these changes for the benefit of visiting audiences and wider publics.

Plan de l'exposition **Magiciens de la terre**
à La Grande Halle La villette

suite de l'exposition au Centre Georges Pompidou

Figure 32: Floorplan of *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) at Grande Halle de la Villette, Paris. Source: CNAC Georges Pompidou, *Les etapes d'un projet* (Archive document DP-1995036), p. 31.

6.4 *Africa Remix* (2005)

Simon Njami – a curator, writer and co-founder of the influential arts journal *Revue Noire* – was *commissaire général* for the international touring exhibition *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (2004-7), hosted by the Pompidou in 2005. Following its successful launch at the Museum Kunstpalast in Düsseldorf (24 July – 7 November 2004), and a short run at the Hayward Gallery in London (10 February – 17 April 2005), a revised and expanded version comprising c. 200 works by 87 contemporary artists was presented in Paris as *Africa Remix: L'art contemporain d'un continent* (25 May – 8 August 2005) covering c.2200 square metres of the Pompidou's 6th floor.[101]

Similarly to the earlier stages of the tour, the Paris exhibition developed as a collaborative curatorial partnership between Njami (a Swiss-born curator and academic with Cameroonian heritage) and the host institution's in-house international art specialist – which for the Pompidou at that time was Marie-Laure Bernadac. Interestingly, Jean-Hubert Martin had also been part of the team responsible for the Düsseldorf launch in his capacity as director of the Museum Kunstpalast from 2000 to 2006 (see Figure 33). [102]

Figure 33: Members of the curatorial team for *Africa Remix* (2004-7)*.*

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[101] After the Pompidou the touring exhibition was staged at the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (27 May – 31 August 2006), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (14 October 2006 - 14 January 2007) and Johannesburg Art Gallery, South Africa (24 June - 30 September 2007).

[102] The curatorial team for *Africa Remix* comprised (from left to right): Simon Njami, *commissaire general;* Marie-Laure Bernadac, contemporary art curator at the Pompidou; Jean-Hubert Martin, director, Museum Kunstpalast, Düsseldorf; Roger Malbert, curator, Hayward Gallery, London; Alfred Pacquement, director of the Pompidou; David Elliott, director, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo. Source: Universes in Universe [Online] : http://universes-in-universe.de/specials/africa-remix/e-curators.htm.

Given Martin's direct involvement in the project it would be easy to assume that *Magiciens de la Terre* served as the template for the way *Africa Remix* was shaped and presented. However, it is evident from Simon Njami's curatorial statements about the project's conceptual framework that it developed as both a corrective response and an innovation that posed a direct challenge to other major international events featuring African art histories and heritage at that time – particularly the survey exhibition *Africa: the Art of a Continent* (1995) curated by Tom Phillips RA for the Royal Academy in London a decade earlier, and the contemporary arts festival *Documenta XI* (2002) curated by Okwui Enwezor in Kassel, Germany.

Echoes of Phillips' 1995 exhibition were deliberately audible in the title for Njami's touring project, but with the significant insertions of "remix" and "contemporary" to actively position the latter's featured artists and their works as representative of a more dynamic, forward-thinking, diasporic and unbounded definition of African art in the 21st century. The Royal Academy exhibition had been criticised by some cultural commentators for taking a retrograde step back towards totalising Africa as some kind of static, homogenous entity (see, for example, Appiah 1997: 48, Edwards 1999: 298-299, Golding 2009: 38). In contrast, the main concern about *Documenta XI* was disappointment over the small number of continental African artists (compared to those from Europe and North America) invited to showcase their work at Germany's most prestigious international arts festival, especially given that expectations in favour of more balanced global representation had been running very high as a result of Nigerian-American Okwui Enwezor's appointment as its first artistic director of African descent since *Documenta* was founded in 1955 – prompting the American art critic Thomas McEvilley to remark, "early reports that this would be the first *Documenta* in which the majority of artists came from outside Europe and the US are not quite accurate" (McEvilley 2002).[103]

Through *Africa Remix,* Simon Njami attempted to improve on all the above by presenting a "richly diversified exhibition" reflective of "the lively artistic scene of Africa and of African communities outside the continent" via a thematic assemblage of works by living artists

[103] Statistics from *Documenta*'s survey of artists' birthplaces and places of work for the period 1955-2012 (grouped by continent) indicate that out of 117 artists featured in *Documenta XI* (2002), 93 of the known birthplaces were grouped as follows: Africa = 16; Asia = 10; Western Europe = 36; Eastern Europe = no data provided; North America = 23; South America = 7; Australia = 1. In contrast, less than 5 African artists presented in each of the ten preceding festivals since 1955. Recorded birthplaces for the two most recent festivals showed 10 African artists out of a total of 119 for *Documenta XII* (2007), followed by 9 out of 194 for *Documenta XIII* (2012). Source: *Documenta Künstler: Statistische Untersuchung nach Herkunft und Wirkungsstätte* (2015) [Online] http://documentaarchiv.stadt-kassel.de/miniwebs/documentaarchiv/22081/index.html [accessed January 2016].

produced in the 10 years prior to the project's launch (Njami and Martin 2004). He also made significant counter-references to the approaches to curating international survey shows *Magiciens de la Terre* had foregrounded, reflecting in later writing conflicted feelings over the undoubted acceleration of opportunities provided for contemporary African artists to exhibit work in the West, contrasted with the continuing othering and ventriloquism of African artists' creativity and decision-making so evident in the practices of Martin's team of (exclusively) white curators. Njami wrote:

> Even though Martin would inadvertently plunge African art into turmoil, it has to be said that, if it was not for the audacity of his project, several years might have passed before the complexity of the African subject was endogenously taken into account. Yet whatever its true qualities may have been, Martin's exhibition was a reflection on 'otherness' in which the African subject had no say. There was not a single non-European in the team of curators brought together to represent 'all the art in the world' (Njami 2011: 199)

In contrast, the featured artworks in *Africa Remix* were an eclectic mix of paintings, drawings, sculptures, video and film installations, photography, music, textiles, literature, computer graphics and multi-media designs representing diverse modes of artistic expression by artists from all regions of the continent and the global African diasporas. The 87 contributors – who self-identified as "African artists" by place of birth, long-term residence, ancestry, diasporic association, etc. – visualised and voiced their rejection of past colonial definitions and limitations that had hitherto restricted the term exclusively to artists south of the Sahara. Njami's more inclusive approach opened up opportunities to showcase the multicultural, multi-faith and multilingual breadth and depth of Africa within his selection – including Maghrebi artists, Islamic calligraphists from north and east Africa, artists from Madagascar and the Indian Ocean islands, southern Africans with European and Asian ancestry, and so on (Njami 2005: 17).

Njami's exhibition narrative enabled the featured works to be assembled into three thematic groupings, or "chapters"): "Identity and history", "Body and soul", "City and land." Through these sections – described as a framework to "attempt to understand which forces are at work within contemporary African art," as opposed to a more rigid classificatory structure (Njami 2005: 24) – the curatorial team and the artists posed and addressed questions seldom asked at that time about the way the art of the present links to colonial and pre-colonial pasts, and also provides a catalyst for envisioning the future without using the Western contemporary art canon as the primary frame of reference. Njami was particularly keen to expand the debate about defining "African art" by foregrounding African-centric art histories and scholarship so often marginalised by the

Western art institutions and publishers of art history texts. This included compiling narrative summaries about the major art movements that emerged on the continent, fine art schools, arts journals and magazines, and biographies of key individuals pertinent to the shaping of his artistic selection. For example, details about the work of fine art organisations and collectives – such as *École de Poto-Poto* (est. 1951, Brazavillle) and Zaria Art Society (est. 1958, Zaria, Nigeria), the African diaspora publishing house *Présence Africaine* (est. 1947, Paris)[104], and the major international festivals on the continent *Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres* (Dakar, 1966) and FESTAC (Lagos, 1977) – along with the back catalogues of periodicals from *Transition* (est. 1961, Kampala) to *Glendora Review* (est. 1995, Lagos), and biographies of notable political leaders influential in the promotion of contemporary African arts such as Léopold Sédar Senghor (first president of Senegal, 1960-80) and Kwame Nkrumah (first president of Ghana, 1957-66), all featured in the exhibition's context room and reading space, in addition to being summarised as an A-Z listing for the exhibition catalogue (see the "Africa Remix Sampler," in Njami and Bernadac 2005: 241-283).

Having travelled to Paris in the summer of 2005 specifically to view this exhibition I recall feeling challenged by the visual diversity and conceptual complexity of the showcase. A major strength of Njami's curatorship was that he did not relegate all the critical elements of his exhibition solely to what the curator and academic Clémentine Deliss refers to as the "experience of the eye" and "retinal mode of appreciation" (Deliss 1992: 44). Instead, he eschewed the conventions of formalism to present his selection as an anthology of works – each one serving as the visual stimulus for exploring a range of socio-economic, political and cultural transformations on the African continent in recent decades.

The "Identity and History" section featured a range of artistic responses to the changing state of contemporary international relations – especially with regard to development politics, trans-national migration issues and cross-cultural dialogues between African nations and the West. Central to the chapter was the way individual artists presented their personal perspectives on the notion of "African identity" – with several opting to focus on aspects of performativity, while others parodied the stereotypes inherent within Western myths about African otherness. Among the most notable works was Yinka Shonibare's mixed-media installation *The Victorian Philanthropist's Parlour* (1996-7) – featuring

[104] *Présence Africaine* was first established as a literary journal by the essayist and publisher Alioune Diop, and later expanded into a publishing house and political movement supported by (amongst others) the celebrated writer-politicians Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor. The organisation's founding principles from the late-1940s are summarised by V. Y. Mudimbe as a "manifesto and a program" through which the "dignity of otherness" and the voices of a "silenced Africa" could be brought to the centre of French power and culture (Mudimbe 1992: xvii-xviii).

furnishings conventionally found in 19th century, British middle-class domestic interiors re-upholstered with patterned Dutch wax fabrics to illustrate the hybridity and porosity of cultural identities. A series of self-portraits by the Cameroonian installationist Samuel Fosso also featured prominently in this section – with the photograph *"Le chef qui a vendu l'Afrique aux colons"* ["The chief who sold Africa to the colonizers"] (1997) becoming a promotional image for the exhibition as a whole because of the way Fosso's portraiture satirized historical stereotypes and contemporary racisms about political leadership in Africa (see Figure 34).

Many of the artists featured in the "Body and Soul" section drew on a combination of religious sources, daily lived experiences, and traditions to reflect on the roots of contemporaneity. From the use of faith symbols and flag iconography in Abdoulaye Konaté's textile installation *"L'Initiation"* (2004), to metalwork sculptures made from recycled materials in *"Les 9 Notables"* (1992-2004) by Cameroonian artist Joseph Francis Sumegné, and body art photography by the Kenyan-German artist Ingrid Mwangi in her series *"Static Drift"* (2001), this selection of works provided very intimate and poignant explorations of human existence at different life stages through creative visual representations of people's life histories, memories and dreams. In a similar way to other aspects of the exhibition Njami's selection conveyed life's complexities and paradoxes as a way of (re-)emphasising underlying themes about the heterogeneity and mutability of people's identities over time and in space (see "Corps et esprit," in Njami and Bernadac 2005: 135-175).
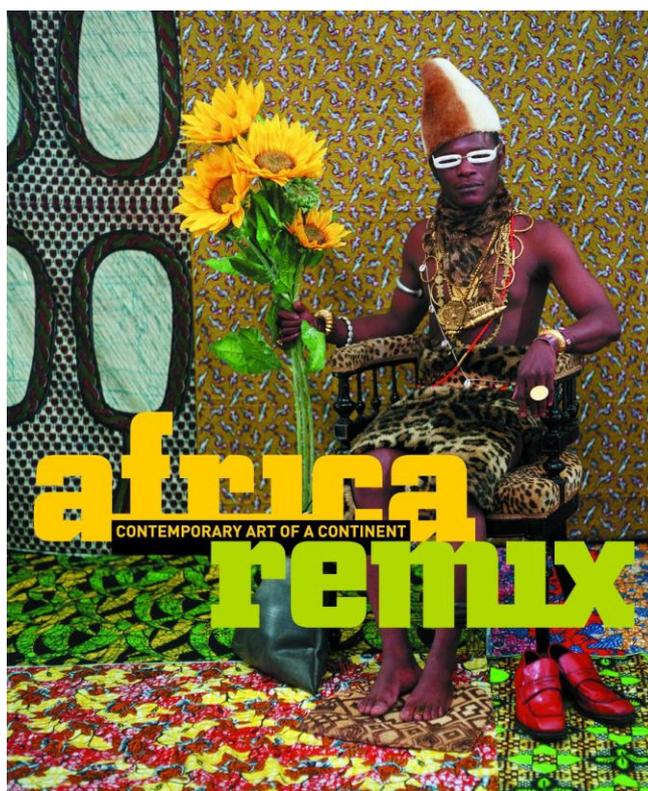
Figure 34: *"Le chef"* (1997) by Samuel Fosso – photographic installation used as a promotional image for the exhibition *Africa Remix: Contemporary Art of a Continent* (2004-7). Original photo credit: Philippe Migeat. Image © Samuel Fosso, courtesy JM Patras/Paris

The architectural models of two futuristic cityscapes by Congolese sculptor Bodys Isek Kingelez, based on utopian imaginings of Sète in southern France and Kinshasa in the DRC during the 3rd millennium – "*Sète en 3009*" (2000) and "*Projet pour le Kinshasa du troisième millénaire*" (1997), respectively – were prominent features of the "City and Land" section, along with a wide range of photographic installations and portraiture (by, amongst others, Otobong Nkanga from Nigeria, Zwelethu Mthethwa from South Africa, and Pascale Marthine Tayou from Cameroon) capturing the impacts of increasing industrialisation and urban growth in formerly rural localities and communities (see "Ville et terre," in Njami and Bernadac 2005: 176-227).

When taken as a whole, my only criticism of the project whilst viewing it *in situ* was an observation that only a quarter of the featured artists were women (specifically, 22 out of 87). Even though this compared favourably to ratios achieved in many similarly-sized contemporary art surveys of the 1990s and 2000s – where the proportion of women artists was regularly less than 15% – it was still very disappointing that a 21st century contemporary art mega-show marketed as a celebration of inclusion and diversity had not fully engaged with issues of gender equality in the arts intersected with race and class.

Early published reviews of *Africa Remix* while it was still on tour were largely favourable or neutral, with a few negative outliers. One of the most extreme was written by the British art critic Brian Sewell who declared the whole project derivative of Western contemporary practices, described several of the contributing artists as "feeble", "shallow-minded," and "illiterate, " and also used the language of colonialist othering to articulate a preference for what he termed art rooted in the "native tradition of Africa" (Sewell 2005). His concluding comments exposed an inherent Self/Other binarism within his critique when he remarked:

> [I]n following the West they mimic it in witless parody, or ape in modern materials and terms what little they know of a genuine African past, or embark on tasks that can only be completed with the obsessive industry of the deranged. Had we in the West not swamped the continent with our colonial ambitions, our Christianity, our medicine, our commercial and industrial greed, had we left Africa to be still the Dark Continent and work out its own purposes, I have no doubt that an Emil Torday of today could have bought new ethnic objects as beautiful as those he acquired for the British Museum a century ago. (Sewell 2005)

Sewell's views – which I interpret as racist remarks, because of his comments on African artists 'aping' Westerners, and his references to "witless parody" and "Dark Continent" – reiterated and reignited old debates about artistic '(in-)authenticity,' anthropological distinctions between art and artefact, as well as questions about the extent of the negative impacts of colonialism on progression and diversity in the arts worldwide. However, for the most part, the quality and global scope of the exhibition (attracting international audiences and reviewers from beyond the Western fine art establishment) meant that the reviews focussing on its strengths far outweighed this type of response. Other prominent art historians and cultural commentators welcomed the scale and ambition of the exhibition, and praised the coherence of its conceptual premise, summing up *Africa Remix* as "an impressive, captivating exhibition" (Gore 2006: 177) and "a stunning and exceedingly diverse array of contemporary materials from Africa and its diaspora" (Harney 2007: 125). Elizabeth Harney's critique was particularly complimentary about the project's contribution to reframing the global contemporary art canon, describing its impact as "a volley in the battle over the canon's parameters, participating as it does in many of the conversations of spatial positioning, contemporaneity, voice and visibility" (Harney 2007: 126).

More than a decade on from viewing the presentation at the Pompidou in 2005, my memories and reflections on *Africa Remix* remain positive because this touring exhibition is still the *only* large-scale showcase of African contemporary art the institution has ever

hosted. In hindsight, it is clear that its collaborative curatorial structure did provide some very useful examples of good practice on ways to effectively challenge aspects of othering – not least through the project's more inclusive and diasporic articulation of contemporary African creativity, and the rejection of any reductive attempts to cram an encyclopaedic-style survey of the African continent's recent artistic outputs into a single room. However, hosting one exemplary thematic exhibition does not indicate that the Pompidou as an institution has completely eradicated the othering of Africa and 'deracialized' its policies, pedagogies, and practices.

In the next section, the legacy of *Africa Remix* will be assessed through an assessment of the extent to which its innovative curatorial approaches are still evident in the Pompidou's most recent exhibitions featuring works by African artists, and have provided useful benchmarks against which to measure and implement further curatorial improvements to mitigate the othering of Africa.

6.5   Pluralising the art canon: *Multiple Modernities, 1905-1970*

The opportunity to return to the Pompidou in November 2014 to review its exhibitions first-hand was important for deepening my understanding and updating my experience of the institution's changing approaches to curating modern and contemporary artworks drawn from around the world. Physically walking through the public galleries added greater visual intensity to the process of researching the Pompidou's past exhibitions and investigating the history of its permanent collections than could be achieved from a distance using archival documents, photographs and floorplans to imagine what past displays might have been like, or taking virtual tours through the galleries to engage with artworks online via digitised images, audio files and film clips.

At the time of my fieldwork a large number of works from the MNAM's permanent collections had been re-hung to create *Modernités plurielles de 1905 à 1970* [Multiple Modernities, 1905-1970] (23 October 2013 - 26 January 2015). This display comprised more than 1000 works by 400 artists from 47 countries, brought together by lead curator Catherine Grenier (then Co-director of the MNAM/CCI) as part of an extensive curatorial research project exploring globalisation and its impacts on contemporary visual arts.[105]

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[105] The Pompidou's Research and Globalisation Programme *"Recherche et Mondialisation"* was developed and launched by Catherine Grenier in 2010 as part of the institution's long-term commitment to open up to diverse forms of artistic expression through in-depth research about art histories around the world. The programme was developed in partnership with the academic arts consortium *Labex "CAP": Création Art Patrimoine* [Laboratory of Excellence Creation, Arts and

The publicity about *Multiple Modernities* promoted the project as a major transition in the institution's approach to researching, revising and (re-)displaying the history of its permanent collections. The curatorial team applied an experimental thematic framework, specifically designed to break with the convention of showcasing a linear, Western-centric chronological sequence of 'master works' deemed illustrative of avant-gardism or excellence in relation to key 20th century art movements. Instead, the assemblage of a more diverse array of artworks set within a global context created what Catherine Grenier defined as a "manifesto exhibition" of the multiple influences on modern art (Grenier et al. 2013: 6). As the exhibition's title announced, the aim was to reveal the rhizomatic nature of the way artistic ideas and practices have circulated and flowed around the world for as long as people have travelled and communicated internationally. The reconceptualization process was not only meant to incorporate work by previously unknown or marginalised artists positioned outside the established modern art canon, but was also an attempt to challenge and globalise the canonical structures themselves – moving away from a singular Western art history timeline to embrace a broader spectrum of socio-political and geographical considerations. This was described by curator Catherine Grenier as an "enriched overview" of the "extraordinary diversity of art forms in the 20th century" (Grenier et al. 2013), and considered more broadly by art historians as institutionally self-reflective practice – which, as Claire Bishop also suggests in relation to the wider pursuit of this type of re-hang in other fine art museums in Europe (and specifically referencing recent exhibitions at Ljubljana's Moderna Galerija and the Muzej sodobne umetnosti Metelkova [Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova]), is also a "future-oriented approach" which "is not modernism's forward march of progress, never glancing back, but a bringing into consciousness that which modernity has suppressed" (Bishop 2013: 49).

Structurally, three of the Pompidou's predecessor exhibitions were cited as influential to the way the MNAM's holdings were re-hung: *The Big Bang: Creation and Destruction in 20th Century Art* (15 June 2005 – 3 April 2006) – a display of 850 works from the early and late decades of the 20th century paired up to illustrate the sub-themes of destruction, construction/deconstruction, archaism, sex, war, subversion, melancholy, and re-enchantment; *Le Mouvement des Images* (5 April 2006 – 29 January 2007) – a selection of 200 paintings, sculptures and installations illustrating aspects of the foundational components of film-making and cinematography (specifically, frame, roll, projection,

Heritage] and involves working with scholars from University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and other major heritage institutions in France (including the Louvre and the Musée du Quai Branly). For further details about the programme, see https://www.centrepompidou.fr/en/Collections/Research and http://labexcap.fr/ [accessed January 2016].

storytelling and editing); and *Elles@centrepompidou* (27 May 2009 - 21 February 2011) – a showcase of 500 modern and contemporary artworks by 200 women artists featured in the MNAM's collections, curated by Camille Morineau and arranged into seven thematic sections that ranged from "Pioneers" of modernism and "Wordworks" on artistic narrative through to explorations of gender politics in "The Activist Body" and "Free Fire." Each of these major re-hangs provided examples of alternative ways to present the permanent holdings and stimulate fresh debates about the Pompidou's ongoing commitment to de-centralisation, more inclusive canon formation, and broader representation of art's global dimensions.

A significant factor affecting the curatorial team's ability to present plural perspectives on artistic modernism was access to the Pompidou's extensive collection of archival documents and printed sources about international art histories available via the Kandinsky Library. Drawing on a similar technique successfully used by Simon Njami for *Africa Remix* (2004-7), Catherine Grenier gave prominence to the institution's documentary resources by using the front covers of international art magazines and journals to create a wall mosaic at the entrance to the Level 5 galleries – appropriately titled "*Covering the World"* (Room 1). The selection included pioneering publications focused on African art and visual cultures from the wider African diasporas – most notably the first issues of *Tropiques* (est. 1941, Fort-de-France, Martinique), *Présence Africaine* (est. 1947, Paris) and the literary journal *Black Orpheus* (est. 1957, Ibadan, Nigeria) – displayed alongside more widely-known European periodicals such as *Bauhaus* (est. 1926, Dessau, Germany) and *CoBrA* (published c. 1948-51 in Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam). Not only was this striking arrangement of covers a visual representation of the way international writing about art throughout the 1900s had informed the plurality of the exhibition's historical narrative, but it also served to signify to visiting audiences that the gallery space itself was one where contemporary cross-cultural dialogues and international debates about plural modernities were actively encouraged (see Figure 35).

Out of a total of 40 rooms approximately one third featured content that directly addressed African influences on artistic modernism. These included sections controversially labelled "Primitivisms" (Room 2) and "Totemism" (Room 31) mainly showing European artists' use of techniques from the Global South that were historically (and sometimes derogatively) referred to as "tribal", "naive" "totemic", or "fetish"; sections naming key individuals in the development of the Pompidou's collections, such as the Afro-Cuban artist "Wifredo Lam" (Room 32) who had lived in Paris for most of his life, and the French writer and ethnographer Michel Leiris whose collections of African and

African-inspired artworks gifted to the Pompidou in 1984 featured in *"Leiris: L'Homme Intégral"* (Rooms 8 and 9); geographically themed sections, "Africa in Photographs" (Room 29) and "Modern Africa(s)" (Room 36); and sections positioning Africa-related content within a broader appraisal of "International Futurism" (Rooms 5 and 6), "International Surrealism" (Room 22) and "International Abstractions" (Rooms 38 and 39).

Figure 35: Exhibition view of Multiple Modernities (2013-15) showing the mosaic of front covers from art magazines and journals on the wall of Room 1 behind the sculpture Homage to César Vallejo (c.1955) by Argentinian artist Alicia Penalba. Photo: Carol Dixon

Beyond these aforementioned themes, several of the remaining rooms were illustrative of the syncretism and hybridity that has always featured in 20th century modern art movements and practices around the world – partly as a result of the voluntary exchange of ideas and techniques, but also due to unequal and exploitative artistic appropriations during the colonial era. The section titled *"L'Almanach du Blaue Reiter Croisements"* (Room 3) was particularly notable for its referencing of the juxtaposition techniques that were so prominent in the exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989). The *"Croisements"* ["Crossings" or "Crossovers"] that occurred when artists travelled in search of inspiration at the turn of the 20th century – or, in some cases, because they experienced forced migration and exile – were given prominence in this section, and also expressed via quotes from Russian émigré Wassily Kandinsky's editorials for the modern art publication *Der Blaue Reiter* [The Blue Rider] that he co-founded in Munich in 1911 with the German avant-gardist Franz Marc. Some of Kandinsky's comments on the universality of art written more than a century ago, as well as his visualisation statements about the almanac's layout and curation of Blue

Rider Group museum exhibitions in Germany during the 1910s, evidenced that the juxtaposition of paintings by European modernists alongside sculptures from Asia and Africa was not a new museographic phenomenon, but rather a practice that emerged because influential modernists like him saw art as culturally entangled, geographically boundless, and ahistorical.[106] The photograph of Room 3's international art selection reveals how these important cultural crossovers and dynamic entanglements were referenced visually within *Multiple Modernities* (see Figure 36), alongside the following Kandinsky quotations printed directly onto the gallery walls:

> *"L'oeuvre tout entière, celle que l'on nomme art, ne connait ni peuple ni frontière, mais seulement l'humanité"* ["The whole oeuvre that we call art knows neither race nor border, but only humanity"]
>
> (Wassily Kandinsky, 1911)

> *"Nous mettrons une figurine égyptienne à côté d'un petit Zeh, une œuvre chinoise face à une de Rousseau, une image populaire à côté d'un Picasso et beaucoup de choses du même genre!"* ["We will put Egyptian work next to a small Zeh, a Chinese work beside a Rousseau, a folk print beside a Picasso and the like!]
>
> (Wassily Kandinsky, 1911)[107]

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[106] For a summary of definitional discussions about 20th century artistic "modernism" – drawing on the work of Susan Stanford Friedman, who describes it as a process of "accelerated societal change brought about by a combination of new technologies, knowledge revolutions, state formations, and expanding intercultural contacts" (Friedman, cited by Latham and Rogers 2015: 3) and Sean Latham's use of the literary metaphor "strand entwining cable" to indicate a coming together of diverse aesthetic practices (Latham and Rogers 2015: 7) – see the introduction to *Modernism: Evolution of an Idea* (Latham and Rogers 2015: 1-16).

[107] These statements by Wassily Kandinsky featured in correspondence with Franz Marc during June 1911 in which he discussed artwork proposed for inclusion in the almanac *Der Blauer Reiter*. The quotations were reprinted on the gallery walls in Room 3 of the Pompidou exhibition *Multiple Modernities* (2013-15) (see also, Lampe 2014: 52).

Figure 36: Exhibition view of Room 3, "*L'Almanach du Blaue Reiter Croisements*," showing anonymous sculptures from Africa and the Caribbean positioned alongside European paintings as part of *Multiple Modernities* (2013-15). Photo: Carol Dixon

Perhaps as a way of illustrating that many early modernists envisioned their aspirations for global equality and harmony through their art – and imagined a world where people from different nations could be brought closer to each other through shared, universal artistic values – one of the most powerful images presented near the entrance, and also used as a promotional image for the exhibition as a whole, was the large-scale painting *Les quatre races* [The Four Races] (1928) by the French painter Amédée Ozenfant, shown in Room 1 (Figure 37). Although art historians contextualise this work as Ozenfant's response to the traumatic events of the 1st World War, and an expression of his hopes for a more peaceful and harmonious world (Grenier 2014: 31), it also provides a useful example of how an image can transcend the specificities of an artist's original motivations and locality to symbolise much broader historical, geographical and socio-political dimensions within an entire exhibition, and provoke complex questions about the multiple meanings of artistic modernism and identity.

Figure 37: *Les quatre races* [The Four Races] (1928) by Amédée Ozenfant. Oil on canvas, 332 x 500 cm, displayed in the exhibition *Multiple Modernities* (2013-15). Photo: Carol Dixon

Towards the end of the display, the Africa-specific section – "Modern Africa(s)" (Room 36) – contained an eclectic selection that ranged from the brightly coloured figurative painting *"Marché en A. E. F"* [Market in French Equatorial Africa] (1958) by Nicolas Ondongo of the École Poto-Poto, to 1960s black-and-white portraits by Malian photographer Malick Sidibé, and life-sized sculptures by Nigerian artist Aniedi Okon Akpan assembled on a raised central platform (see Figure 38). Because this anthology focused primarily on African items in the Pompidou's own collections rather than high-profile international loans from other major institutions, works by some of the earliest and most celebrated African modernists – such as the Nigerian artists Aina Onabolu (1882-1963) and Ben Enwonwu (1917-1994), South Africa's Ernest Mancoba (1904-2002) and Gerard Sekoto (1913-1993) and Ethiopia's Skunder Boghossian (1937-2003), who all studied, worked and exhibited artworks in Paris – did not feature in this limited continental selection. Instead, artists who were primarily prominent in francophone African and diasporic cultural movements of the 20th century – particularly Négritude[108] – were foregrounded.

[108] Négritude was an anti-colonial, black consciousness movement and ideology, established in the 1930s by a group of francophone African intellectuals, artists and political activists based in Paris. Its exponents sought to respond to anti-black prejudice, racial discrimination and the legacies of enslavement and imperialism by promoting principles of global equality, international solidarity, the right to cultural and political self-determination, respect for African heritage, positive expressions of blackness via the arts, and opposition to the assimilation of French cultural values. The movement was founded by the Martinican writer and politician Aimé Césaire, Senegalese academic and politician Léopold Sédar Senghor, and the French-Guyanese poet Léon-Gontran

This meant, for example, that works by *pro*-Négritude artists like Nicolas Ondongo and Marcel Gotène from Congo-Brazzaville were placed with works by artists who rejected and opposed the highly contested aspects of Négritude that promoted an "authentic Africanity" as though there was an identifiably African way of being in the world (Wilder 2005: 250). The Senegalese painter Iba N'Diaye was one of the featured artists who rejected the valorisation of 'self-taught,' untutored practice in favour of pursuing formal fine art training, and openly challenged the 'back to the roots' ideology of Senghorian Négritude because of the way he felt it limited African artists' freedom to draw creative inspiration from all forms, genres and histories of art. Although the exhibition's catalogue essay on *African Modernities* written to accompany this selection listed and critiqued many of the key artistic movements and fine art schools that emerged across the continent during the 1900s (Coudre 2014), hardly any of this contextual information on cultural politics was detailed in the gallery next to the artworks, resulting in the selection appearing quite arbitrary and its underlying historical and political significance left largely unexplained to visiting audiences.

In terms of the geographic spread, a problematic aspect of the Modern Africa(s) selection was that Room 36 only featured work by sub-Saharan African modernists – thus reinforcing the convention of not including artists from the Maghreb region (such as the Algerian modernist Baya Mahieddine (aka Fatima Haddad, 1931-1998)) – and north-east African artists (such as the internationally renowned Sudanese calligraphist and abstract artist Ibrahim El Salahi (b. 1930), and the Egyptian impressionist painter Mohammed Naghi Bey (1888-1956)) in its continental anthology. As a direct consequence of this, works by artists from northern and north-east African countries in the MNAM collections were displayed elsewhere (e.g. *Bride of the Nile* (1929) by Egyptian sculptor Mahmoud Mokhtar appeared in the exhibition's Art Deco area) and also collectively discussed in the catalogue as representative of "Modernities in the Middle East" (Fanny Drugeon, in Grenier 2014: 186-189). Gender representation issues were also not given consideration in this section of the display – and not discussed in the catalogue essay on *African Modernities* (Coudre 2014) – leaving an impression that black and brown women's contributions to artistic modernism on the continent (shown, for example, in the work of the aforementioned Algerian modernist Baya, and also through the inclusion of an untitled

Damas when all were studying in France and contributing to the journal *L'Étudiant Noir* (est. 1935, Paris). The ideology of Négritude spread throughout the francophone African diasporas to unite many anti-colonial campaigners on the continent, in the Americas and across Europe. For a critical overview about the movement, as well as opposing views about the ideology, see *"Négritude's Birth: 'What is Africa to Me?'"* in Chapter 1 of Elizabeth Harney's book *In Senghor's Shadow* (Harney 2004: 21-23).

Ndebele-inspired abstract painting from the 1990s by South Africa's Esther Mahlangu displayed in the section on "International Abstractions" (Rooms 38 and 39)) were still considered too marginal to be incorporated and intersected with the issues of race at the heart of the Pompidou's pluralist ambitions for *Multiple Modernities.*

Figure 38: Exhibition view of *Multiple Modernities* (2013-15) –
Room 36, *Afrique(s) Moderne(s)*. Photo: Carol Dixon

Despite the omissions and inconsistencies noted above, the various modernities presented in the exhibition did evidence – albeit temporarily – a transformation of the Pompidou's permanent galleries into Third Space. Spatially, the re-hang illustrated what geographer Edward Soja refers to as "an-Other way to approach the micro-macro, local-global, agency-structure oppositions, drawing selectively from both spheres" (Soja 1996: 21). Within the 'exhibition-scape' of *Multiple Modernities,* the "macro" was symbolised by major modern art movements such as Cubism and Surrealism positioned alongside lesser-known "micro" movements such as *Art Brut* [or Outsider Art], and all were given equal status throughout the display as well as in the exhibition's interpretation literature as vehicles for exploring modernisms in the plural as global phenomena. Similarly, recognising the capacity of artists to exchange ideas, develop hybrid techniques and establish shared practices over time, across space and in contrasting social contexts repeatedly exposed the notion of Self and Other as a flawed and dated construction.

Catherine Grenier's apposite use of the term *"passeurs"* ["go-betweens"] to describe the activities of several artists, intellectuals, and magazine editors whose travels and

communications throughout the decades in focus supported and facilitated global artistic syncretism was an important aspect of '*thirding*' the Pompidou (Grenier 2014: 27) – replacing the polarised Self/Other discourse with the type of "both/and also logic" advocated by Soja that enables a gallery space to transform into what he describes as "a place of critical exchange where the geographical imagination can be expanded to encompass a multiplicity of perspectives" (Soja 1996: 5).[109] However, even as Wifredo Lam was being celebrated as an influential diasporan *passeur* who "propagated the modern spirit throughout the world" (Grenier et al. 2013: 7) – and more recently was the subject of a major solo retrospective at the Pompidou (*Wifredo Lam*, 30 September 2015 - 15 February 2016) – many more pioneering male and female artists of African descent whose portfolios also deserved to be featured and historicised, were either left out altogether, or marginalised. All the recognition Lam received was (and remains) warranted, but it is noticeable that being active in the same high-profile Parisian artistic circles as Pablo Picasso and André Breton during the inter-war period was the key factor used by the Pompidou to differentiate him from other African diasporans of his generation. It is questionable that a spotlight on only one or two black artists per era, movement or genre should be the most that is ever accommodated in these institutional exhibitions in the West at any time, as though greater numbers that could facilitate more nuanced analysis and appraisal of different artists' aesthetic achievements beyond a focus on their perpetually minoritzed positioning might somehow be deemed excessive.

In light of the above, any future phases of the Pompidou's research and globalisation programme should consider prioritising the acquisition and display of more works by African and diasporan artists that are illustrative of the key role of the "go-between." Two personal recommendations of individuals (amongst several others) whose oeuvres warrant as much attention and prominence as was given to Lam, and should ideally be the focus of their own solo exhibitions at the Pompidou in years to come because of their pioneering contributions to artistic modernism in France as well as internationally, are the aforementioned South African abstractionist Ernest Mancoba and the Algerian artist Baya Mahieddine (aka. Fatima Haddad).

Mancoba was the only black artist involved in the influential CoBrA (Copenhagen, Brussels, Amsterdam) Group of abstractionists from 1948 to 1951 – having first travelled

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[109] Other geographers writing about "third space" multiplicities in this way also include (among others) Paul Routledge – who advocates using academic spaces as "sites of resistance" and for active engagements in "scholar-activism" (see, respectively, Routledge 1996: 401-3, Routledge and Derickson 2015: 391-3) – and also Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose writing about negotiating differences within the context of public art projects, and using those artworks to "to rethink the categories through which we usually understand social diversity" (Massey and Rose 2003: 18).

to Paris in the 1930s to study at the École des Arts Décoratifs, then remaining in Europe and eventually becoming a French citizen in the 1960s. The quality of his work meant he was able to achieve significant international recognition for his vibrant and expressive compositions even in the face of extreme racial discrimination and human rights abuses experienced under apartheid as well as racism encountered throughout his exile in Europe (see, for example, Miles 2003, Obrist 2010). His work *Painting 1965* (1965) was purchased by the Pompidou in 1976 and featured in the section of the *Multiple Modernities* exhibition on "International Abstractions" (Rooms 38 and 39).

Figure 39: *Untitled* (1966), by Baya Mahieddine. Gouache on paper, 100 x 150 cm. Photo credit: Yves Chenot. Source [online] : https://www.centrepompidou.fr

Baya Mahieddine's portfolio and artistic techniques also deserve more critical attention and re-appraisal than received to date, particularly to counter and revise the gendered exoticisation and derogatory categorisation of her paintings by Western art critics writing in the 1940s-1960s as "naïve" and "primitive" (Antle 2006: 10-11). Her life experiences as one of the first African women to exhibit artworks at prestigious galleries in Paris in the 1940s, and achieve international recognition as a surrealist, should act as the catalyst for re-igniting much needed discussions at the Pompidou, and beyond, about strategies for

challenging gender inequalities within the field of modern and contemporary international visual arts (see Figure 39).[110]

6.6   Conclusion

The periodic re-hanging of the Pompidou's permanent collections has acted as a trigger for re-evaluating the institution's core work, not least because of the way participation in this process has encouraged staff to look afresh at its acquisitions history and exhibiting practices, address significant gaps, update interpretation narratives and stimulate discussion about future collection developments. However, for an institution as prominent as the Pompidou it is vital that its in-house curators consult as widely as possible with counterparts from countries in the Global South to ensure that their interpretations of art histories and cultural politics pertaining to other regions of the world are as informed as possible by contrasting experiences.

The training and continuous professional development for French curators of fine art must include and be influenced by dialogues with people who have witnessed and participated in artistic movements, events and discourses from centres beyond Beaubourg, and outside the West altogether – particularly with regard to issues of gender, race and social class.

When Tanzanian artist and scholar Everlyn Nicodemus wrote about the ending of an era when Western curators, art critics, collectors and dealers routinely and fictively categorised African art as authentically un-modern, she mentioned that the 1980s marked a major turning point and noted:

> The warped western dealing with contemporary African art culminated in the 1980s with some big exhibitions and collections, blazoning abroad sign-paintings and folkloric artefacts as genuine cultural expressions, while suppressing the existence of modern, professionally trained artists. It came close to an ideological warfare against modern African art as such. (Nicodemus 1995: 35)

Although Nicodemus did not mention *Magiciens de la Terre* by name, it is evident from her comment about sign-painting – which was Chéri Samba's early occupation in Kinshasa – that this was one of the pivotal exhibitions she was referring to, along with the subsequent commercial activities of the wealthy French-Italian private collector Jean Pigozzi whose

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[110] The featured composition, *Untitled* (1966) by Baya (aka. Fatima Haddad), was purchased for the Pompidou's permanent collections in 2003 (CNAP Inventory ref: FNAC 88212 , AM 2013-DEP 51). Her characteristic style of painting features broad brush strokes and a vivid colour palette to create works that combine figuration and abstraction. Photo: Yves Chenot. Source: Pompidou [online] *« Dossiers pédagogiques : Modernités plurielles, 1905 à 1970. D'une rive à l'autre: Maghreb, Moyen-Orient, Afrique »* https://www.centrepompidou.fr [accessed November 2015].

extensive post-exhibition purchases led to the establishment of the Contemporary African Art Collection (CAAC) in the 1990s. She correctly identifies this period as one in which "ideological warfare" was waged against African artists because, despite mega-shows like *Africa Remix* and recent re-hangs like *Multiple Modernities* evidencing that several key battles to challenge African exclusions from the modern and contemporary art canon have successfully been fought, the war against more subtle forms of African othering is still ongoing.

The international pluralism articulated and visualised in art galleries and at major biennials through the work of the aforementioned curators Simon Njami, Okwui Enwezor and Catherine Grenier demonstrates that artistic modernism throughout the 20th century and its post-modern aftershocks occurred in multiple localities – accelerated by the activities of *passeurs* who were not only from the West, but also from the Global South. Several African and diasporan artists and intellectuals were highly influential "go-betweens" who travelled around the world exchanging ideas, engaging in creative dialogues, and stimulating new hybrid artistic practices, even if the West has only recently begun to acknowledge their roles. This constant movement of people and ideas is one of the main reasons why international exhibition projects should be pursued as transnational and cross-cultural partnerships and collectives – involving artists, curators, academics, archivists, and other museum and gallery professionals from several nations. By not only relying on the strengths of in-house scholars and existing collections, these international teams are better able to research, source, interpret, and present art for diverse audiences in ways that reject binarism and accept reciprocal networking as the norm.

More diverse curatorial teams would preclude Western institutions from only reading black African and diasporan artists as somehow exclusively concerned with political art that addresses resistance and resilience against racism. The Pompidou's curatorial turn towards pluralism when exhibiting modern and contemporary artworks is indicative of the "new pluralism" that the literary arts scholars Sean Latham and Gayle Rogers have observed across the wider arts and culture sectors, noting that "feminist, ethnic, media and political modernisms cohere within or alongside a growing interest in works that are not evidently experimental, resistant or difficult" (Latham and Rogers 2015: 14). This level of nuance opens up greater opportunities for black artists to be free to represent and be conduits for exploring intersected identity signifiers beyond race, covering all aspects of life pertaining to the universal human condition.

Having traced the Pompidou's transition from an inaugural focus on the history of Euro-American avant-gardism – and promoting Paris over New York as the preeminent centre for modern and contemporary art – to one that is now embracing art's global pluralities, it is evident that the institution has moved closer towards achieving its founding ambition to create an open, accessible, democratic and inclusive centre of artistic excellence for national and international audiences alike. However, only when there is a drive to incorporate more solo retrospectives for artists from the Global South – as well as black and brown diasporan artists in the West – can the institution be celebrated as demonstrably committed to inclusion, equalities and diversity as an ongoing aspect of its work. Counteracting othering and tackling exclusion at the Pompidou, as elsewhere, is not simply about achieving statistically representative 'quotas' of black and brown artists per exhibition over the course of each season, but is more fundamentally about recognising and showcasing the diversity *within* diversity. In particular, African and diasporan artists – like all artists – draw on a range of topics, techniques and media to create artworks that are not only concerned with issues of racial identity and political aesthetics, but an array of real, imagined, figurative, abstract or combined subjects, styles and forms.

Lastly, with regard to gender, even as 50 of the 400 artists represented in *Multiple Modernities* were women this was still a disproportionately poor ratio of 7:1 in favour of male modernists that left women of African descent further marginalised within already narrow margins. It is no longer acceptable for an institution the size of the Pompidou, with a permanent collection of more than 100,000 artworks and gallery areas totalling c.18,000 m^2, to devote less than 1/8th of its floor space to exhibiting work by women, and also not shine a spotlight on more black and brown women artists of African descent within major group shows or regularly scheduled solo retrospectives over the course of an annual programme.[111] This current twenty-first century period of post-modernity necessitates that black and brown women's art histories be mainstreamed within French cultural life, throughout *La Francophonie*, and worldwide: from North African modernist Baya to South African abstractionist Esther Mahlangu covering the length and breadth of the continent over several generations; and from US-born sculptor Barbara Chase-Riboud to Parisian photographer and video installationist Zineb Sedira as representatives of the diverse

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[111] The Pompidou's annual report of its activities in 2014 lists a total of 101,744 modern and contemporary artworks within its permanent collections, of which 1,426 items were on display over the course of the year. The building has 12,210 m^2 of floor space for its national museum collections and 5,900 m^2 for temporary exhibitions. Source: *Le Centre Pompidou en 2014 bilan d'activité*, p. 198-199 [Online] http://mediation.centrepompidou.fr/documentation/bilandactivite2014/ [accessed February 2016].

African diasporas who see France and the West as home. These artists, and more, deserve to be foregrounded to achieve the same level of recognition as the male avant-gardists who are so regularly showcased and name-checked by the Pompidou. In doing so there should not be any need in the future for an African artist to re-visit the themes in Chéri Samba's triptych, *"Quel avenir pour notre art?"* (1997), and reiterate unresolved questions about the absence and marginalisation of women's artistic achievements within so-called international exhibition spaces promoted as inclusive, progressive and committed to pluralising the modern and contemporary fine art canon.

Chapter 7: "Tate for all"? Discussing diversity and internationalism

Prelude: *Between the Two My Heart is Balanced* (1991) by Lubaina Himid

Throughout the completion of my fieldwork at Tate's London-based galleries a number of modern and contemporary works by African and African diasporan artists were reviewed to gauge the extent and significance of these holdings as resources through which to consider the othering of Africa and its diasporas within Western exhibiting contexts. Online searches, archive-based research and gallery tours identified c. 100 relevant works from Tate's permanent collection, from which I selected one to initiate this critique of the institution's acquisition, interpretation and display histories to date – namely, the painting *Between the Two My Heart is Balanced* (1991) by Tanzanian-born British contemporary artist Lubaina Himid, acquired by Tate in 1995 (see Figure 40).

Figure 40: *Between the Two My Heart is Balanced (1991)* by Lubaina Himid. Acrylic paint on canvas, 122 x 152 cm. Tate Collection ref. T06947. Image: © Lubaina Himid

This large-scale painting of two women seated in a boat, separated by a stack of documents, is part of a series of 12 artworks (comprising ten other paintings, a drawing and an installation). Each one combines figurative and abstract representations of black female protagonists, centrally placed within settings that offer a visual challenge to

Western artistic conventions of white corporeality as the "mythical norm" (Lorde 2007 [1984]: 116). The alternative imaging of black women within this particular work also questions and destabilises assumptions of elite, white, heterosexual masculinity as normative identity characteristics for the spectatorial gaze (see, for example, Berger 1972: 49, West 1999: 75), and thus provides what historian Norbert Finzsch describes as "a non-normative view in which the racialized and sexualized Other is able to return the gaze" (Finzsch 2008: para. 32).[112]

Although created in the late-20th century, the title of Himid's painting is taken from a 19th century etching of a boat scene by the French artist James Tissot (1836-1902) – "*Entre les deux mon coeur balance" ("How Happy I Could be with Either"),* c. 1877 (Figure 41) – later reproduced in oils on canvas as the painting *Portsmouth Dockyard* (c. 1877), and bequeathed to Tate in 1941 (Tate Collection ref. N05302). In the contemporary work, one woman is dressed in a check-patterned gown facing to the right, with her left hand raised as if looking out to sea, while her red-dressed co-navigator looks forward and appears to meet the gaze of viewers positioned in front of the canvas. The latter figure, shown on the right, can also be seen handling bright blue circular objects, with a trail of similarly-sized items suspended behind her, although it is unclear what these items represent. In a similar way, Tissot's *Porstmouth Dockyard* (c. 1877) also features two women in a boat, but both are white and separated by a soldier dressed in full Highland regalia.

Figure 41: « *Entre les deux… »* (c.1877) by Tissot. Source: http://www.jamestissot.org.

The fact that James Tissot and Lubaina Himid are both artists who originally came to Britain as migrants enabled their paintings to be selected as promotional artworks for Tate Britain's exhibition *Migrations: Journeys into British Art* (31 January – 12 August 2012) – a major showcase exploring ways that migration has shaped the course of British art history over the past 500 years. Consequently, the afore-mentioned works were paired together and prominently displayed on all the posters and banners designed to market the event throughout 2012 (see Figure 42).

Figure 42: Promotional poster for the exhibition *Migrations: Journeys into British Art* (Tate Britain, 2012) featuring paintings by James Tissot and Lubaina Himid. © Tate Britain

During a curatorial interview conducted with Lubaina Himid in 2014 we discussed the pairing up of these works and she recalled having first been inspired by Tissot during visits to Tate as a teenager – remarking on the uncomplicated accessibility of his visual storytelling, and Tate's function as a place of exchange for the coming together of his pictorial narratives and her personal interpretations of them. In response to questions about how she had felt seeing her work presented alongside Tissot's in the publicity for *Migrations* she provided the following thoughts and context about the artistic coupling:

> Yes, I was absolutely delighted. In some ways, that was the best thing that ever happened... However many years before that, in the early '90s when I was having these discussions in my head with the Tate – not in the room with the Tate – I wanted to make a piece that talked about the invisibility of black people within that collection. And a way to talk to museums is to talk about what museums have, not what they haven't got... So I'm talking to the museums about what they have in their collections – the paintings – and an artist whom as a teenager I was deeply in love with was Tissot... I just loved the way that the fabric was painted; I loved the women; I loved the languorous, slightly cheap nature of the paintings. They are, kind of, a bit commercial and a little bit glamorous but I love the world that was

evoked… And so I made a 'copy' of that painting, and it was a conversation with Tate. And, lo and behold, how extraordinary, they bought it! They didn't buy it for very much money, but they bought it nonetheless. So that conversation began in earnest, and it has been on and off the walls quite a lot over those years – usually in what Sir Nicholas Serota would call "the perambulatory spaces," but actually what the rest of us would call the corridor.[113]

Later in the interview Lubaina Himid confirmed that the tiny blue objects on her painting were fragments from maps that one of the women was periodically taking from the central stack, tearing up and casting overboard as if to symbolise the destruction of the types of cartographic documents that have historically privileged the geographical mobility and political agency of white European male elites around the world. Destroying this tower of maps and travel journals represents the removal of what Paul Carter has described as an accumulation of "self-reinforcing illusions" and "mythic imaginings" presented by explorers and imperialists as heroic 'voyages of discovery' and 'civilising missions' (see, for example, Carter 2010 [1987]: xv and xxi). As Lubaina Himid saw it:

> The only way that I could see to undo history was to rip up the evidence. If you rip up the map, then none of this happens. But these two women have different ways. And that's the trouble of all this, with those two women in the boat, we were trying to do the same things, but we had two completely different ways of going about it.[114]

As with Tissot's painting – where he appears to illustrate a conflicted situation between two women vying for the attentions of a soldier – Himid has also created a scenario involving visible differences (perhaps tensions) between the ways the two women in her boat have chosen to navigate their journeys: on the one hand, to leave the cartographic evidence of male-dominated histories intact and look beyond towards a more positive future in the distance; or, in contrast, to systematically destroy these symbols of the past and let the evidence disintegrate in the boat's wake as part of the process of moving forward in the here and now without any historical baggage in tow.

Significantly, while Tissot's work was exhibited in *Migrations* as part of a section on *"Dialogues between Britain, France and America"* (Chambers 2012: 41), Himid's painting was not included in the gallery space at all, and neither were any of her other works from Tate's permanent collection.[115]

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[113] Lubaina Himid (Professor of Art History, University of Central Lancashire) interviewed by Carol Dixon, 11 November 2014, transcript p. 32.
[114] *Ibid*, p. 35.
[115] In addition to the painting *Between the Two my Heart is Balanced* (1991), Tate currently hold three other works by Lubaina Himid: *The Carrot Piece* (1985), purchased in 2014 (Tate ref. T14192); *Ankledeep* (1991), presented by the artist in 2009 (Tate ref. T12885); and *Carpet* (1992),

Her feelings about this paradoxical situation were expressed as follows:

> I was very unhappy to be outside the story of *Migrations*; very unhappy to be outside the catalogue of *Migrations*; and slightly triumphant – I'm sure against several people's better judgement – to be the poster girl for it! But I suspect what happened was that the marketing team, as ever, thought that that was a 'better image' – in inverted commas – than the one that was probably the preferred marketing image of the curators, which is *"Go West Young Man!"*[116]

In the catalogue essay that discusses the concluding section of the *Migrations* exhibition as a representation of "New Diasporic Voices," curator Paul Goodwin mentions Lubaina Himid in reference to a number of artists involved in the UK's Black Art Movement during the 1980s who formed an "all-female corpus through which to articulate the specific experiences of black women" (Goodwin 2012: 92). However, his gallery display was limited to a few rooms presenting a multi-media assemblage of work by the artists Francis Alys, Rasheed Araeen, Sonia Boyce, Mona Hatoum, Steve McQueen, Rosalind Nashashibi, Keith Piper, Donald Rodney, Zineb Sedira and the Black Audio Film Collective. Although Lubaina Himid gave several potential justifications to explain why her work was absent from this exhibition, her response did suggest she had nevertheless perceived it as form of exclusion – especially as this experience built on cumulatively from her also being left out of an earlier major exposition on Black Atlantic art histories to which Goodwin also contributed as a consultant advisor for Tate Liverpool (*Afro-Modern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic*, 29 January – 25 April 2010):

> Clearly in the thinking of Paul Goodwin I do not belong inside the thinking about black art. Paul Goodwin does not put me inside it. It is always outside, or not there.[117]

When the artist's personal testimony is aligned with the artistic symbolism and social modalities of *Between the Two my Heart is Balanced* (1991) Lubaina Himid and her artwork achieve even greater importance within this study because of the way black women are now situated as central to the present-day dismantling of historical white male

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also presented by the artist in 2009 (Tate ref. T12886). Source: Tate Art and Artists database [Online] http://www.tate.org.uk/art/ [accessed February 2016].

[116] Lubaina Himid, *op. cit.* Transcript, p. 34. The artwork "*Go West Young Man*" (1987) by Keith Piper comprises 14 black and white photomontage panels (gelatin silver print on paper) with text mounted onto board. Dimensions (for each panel) 840 x 560 mm. The title panel features an 18th century plan of the Brookes slave ship built in Liverpool in the 1780s, which illustrates how hundreds of enslaved Africans were enchained and transported on board during the era of the Transatlantic Slave Trade. The work was purchased by the Tate in 2008 and displayed as part of the section on "New Diasporic Voices" in the exhibition *Migrations: Journeys into British Art* (Tate Britain, London, 2012). Tate collection ref. T12575. An image of the panel and further information about the artwork can be viewed online at http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/piper-go-west-young-man-t12575 [accessed March 2016]. See also the listing of Tate case study 'optics' in Appendix 2.

[117] *Ibid,* p. 33-34.

privileges established over the course of Britain's imperial past, the de-centring of conventional art-historical narratives so as to increase the featuring of black British lived experiences as artistic subject-matter, and the posing of questions to Tate about the still disproportionately small-scale inclusion of works by black British women within the nation's most important modern and contemporary fine art collection.

Several observations about the impact of othering on African and diasporan artists in the West can be extrapolated from Lubaina Himid's interview responses regarding relegation of her work to peripheral perambulatory (or "corridor") spaces, the paradox of being afforded promotional poster art status without the associated prominence that comes from curatorial inclusion within major themed exhibitions and published catalogues, and (ultimately) the lack of artistic canonisation that can result from such exclusionary practices.

7.1   Introduction

In this section, issues raised in the prelude will now be considered in greater detail through reviews of other black diasporan artists' acquisition and display histories within Tate's British art collection. The chapter will address structural transformations undertaken to establish and expand the institution's international holdings, and also evaluate selected exhibitions, events and curatorial staffing changes that signify particularly pivotal shifts in the approach to cross-cultural programming for global audiences.

Tate Gallery was originally founded in 1897 as the National Gallery of British Art at Millbank in London – taking its name from the wealthy sugar merchant Sir Henry Tate, who paid for the gallery's construction and early collection development from a personal fortune made in the sugar refining industry. More than a century later the continuing expansion of this collection led to a major re-organisation to establish two London-based exhibition spaces – one at the original Millbank site (re-named as Tate Britain in 2000), and the other at Bankside (named Tate Modern, and opened in 2000) – plus additional galleries outside the capital in Liverpool (established in 1988) and St Ives (established in 1993).

Today Tate holds a permanent collection of c. 70,000 artworks by more than 3,000 artists, and its four sites are considered the most important UK venues for showcasing the history of British painting and sculpture since the 1500s, as well as modern and contemporary

international visual art from the early 20ᵗʰ century to the present day. Its status as a long-established, state-funded art institution that has accumulated an extensive archive also makes it a viable research space through which to examine changing collecting and exhibiting practices since the colonial period, and consider how these activities have contributed to the shaping of national and international debates about the pursuit and achievement of excellence in fine art across different genres, media and time periods.

Architecturally, the original building for Tate Gallery at Millbank was designed in a classical and palatial style to symbolise tradition and authority, and instantly confer establishment status on the institution. Having been constructed on a site where one of the largest prisons in Europe once stood – the old Millbank Penitentiary (1812-1893) – this made it all the more important for architect Sidney R. J. Smith to incorporate monumental, temple-like design features that signified Tate's function as a place for higher learning and cultural refinement, and also aligned with late-19ᵗʰ century thinking in the West about the educational role of museums and galleries as "appropriate agencies for culturing 'the public'"(Macdonald 2003: 2). For some, the stepped entrance, columned façade and high-ceilinged galleries have always provided a welcoming setting where visitors feel free to view the fine art collection and admire the surrounding architecture with a positive sense of well-being. As Carol Duncan has observed for Euro-American art museums more broadly, such publics associate this type of gallery space with feelings of comfort, belonging and cultural ownership because:

> The museum setting is not only itself a structure; it also constructs its *dramatis personae*. These are, ideally, individuals who are perfectly predisposed socially, psychologically and culturally to enact the museum ritual. (Duncan 1995: 13)

However, for others, the same temple-like features can also transmit an imposing "aura of exclusivity" that creates a sense of discomfort and uncomfortable feelings of being out of place (Duncan 1995: 59). Furthermore, building design isn't the only factor that can impact on a visitor's sense of belonging within fine art museums. The artworks, the curators' interpretation narratives and the display techniques all contribute to the overall milieu in which audiences can feel welcome or unwelcome, represented or not, and included or excluded to varying degrees.

Like many of the major fine art spaces in Western Europe Tate's holdings remain strongly focussed on paintings and sculptures produced by white, male European artists, and so the majority of figurative artworks acquired in the period from its inauguration through to the late-20ᵗʰ century depict subjects and settings that are visually reflective of these artists'

ethnic and cultural backgrounds over successive generations. In consequence, the institution's gallery displays and art-historical narratives presented across all four sites – and evidenced for the longest time at Tate Britain – historicise and spatialize white, male aesthetic subjectivities as the norm. This privileging of white European male artistic production is not confined solely to the artworks, but extends across all aspects of Tate's sphere of influence – i.e. all elements of its "circuit of culture" as regards cultural regulation, representation, identity and consumption issues (Du Gay et al. 1997: 3). With regard to the latter, Tate's visiting audiences encounter collections, exhibitions and curatorial practices that, more often than not, reflect and reproduce this historically gendered and racialized cultural bias, and thus contribute to the dominance of particular "male gaze regimes" that marginalise, pacify and render everyone else's spectatorial perspective as *non*-normative (Finzsch 2008: para. 46). As E. Ann Kaplan observes, specifically in relation to Euro-American cinematic art histories, this type of spectatorship can cast an "objectifying gaze" that "refuses mutual gazing, mutual subject-to-subject recognition," and closely resembles the imperialist gaze in the way it also "refuses to acknowledge its own power and privilege" (Kaplan 1997: 79).

Since the late-20th century there have been attempts at Tate and other Western fine art museums to challenge these hegemonic viewing perspectives and facilitate spaces and situations where artists, curators and audiences alike can create an "oppositional gaze" that is resistant of established power hierarchies and actively "politicises 'looking' relations" (hooks 1992: 116). However, as some of the following archival research reveals, Tate's transformation from an elitist, patriarchal and imperialist institution into a more inclusive, progressive and pluralist one where such resistances can flourish has been a slow and incomplete process.

The publications and archive of professional papers about Tate's longest-serving director, John Rothenstein – who is remembered as an important innovator during his period of office from 1938 to 1964 – identify a 1914 report of the Committee of the Trustees of the National Gallery (under the chairmanship of Lord Curzon) as the first time when recommendations were made to expand the national collection of "modern foreign painting" so as to rival those found in other European countries at that time (Rothenstein 1947: 13). The subsequent appointment of Edwin Fagg as the institution's first international art history lecturer that same year – and significant bequests and donations of modern French, Italian and Flemish painting and sculpture from 1916 onwards by (among others) Sir Hugh Lane and Sir Joseph Duveen – helped to steer Tate towards building up a sizeable 'non-British' modern art collection. However, the geographical

scope of that early international expansion only extended as far as Europe and North America.

Further major institutional changes to expand and diversify Tate's holdings as well as its display spaces did not take place until several years after World War 1, with the construction of a new wing of nine galleries at Millbank in 1926. By this time the modernist movements of Primitivism, Fauvism, and Surrealism were gaining momentum in Paris and Berlin, but had yet to make much impact on the London art scene – a period in British art history that Rothenstein derides for being "unregenerate days."[118] It took a further decade for the conservatism of the British art establishment to begin its latent move towards acceptance of increasing abstraction – aided by the publication of the influential text *Art Now* (Read 1933), and the high-profile exhibition *"Negro Art"* (1935) curated by Michael E. Sadler at Adams Gallery in London, which both helped to broaden mainstream perspectives about modern art and expand the definition of "foreign" painting and sculpture to include work by black and brown artists from Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas.[119]

Rothenstein's innovations in the decades after World War 2 were conducted at a pace that angered some of the more conservative and highly influential groups at Tate – including members of the Royal Society of Sculptors, who openly berated him for gallery re-arrangements that (in their view) had "filled the Sculpture Hall with foreigners" (Spalding, 1998: 75). This transitional period is documented by John Rothenstein in a series of professional papers from the 1960s in which he reflects:

> The Trustees of the Tate Gallery – of which I was appointed Director in 1938 – an extremely enlightened body of men, could hardly have been more circumspect in their policy and not only to avant-garde art. Their circumspection was inspired by deference to academic and popular opinion. For instance, Sickert and Steer – the two most illustrious members of their generation – were sixty-two by the time their first works were bought by Tate.[120]

[118] See the 25-page typescript titled "Reflections on the Transformation of the Art World" [c. May 1968], by John Rothenstein TGA 8726/2/63 (p.2).

[119] The catalogue of the 1935 exhibition *"Negro Art"* (Adams Gallery, London, January 19th-February 16th 1935) states that the show was curated by Michael E. Sadler in collaboration with members of the Art Sub-committee at the Colonial Office. Of the c.60 items displayed, works were grouped into three categories described as follows: (i) "A selection of negro works such as usually seen under museum conditions as ethnographic specimens chosen as pure works of art"; (ii) "Paintings and sculpture by living negro artists"; (iii) "Paintings by contemporary English artists some of whose works have been inspired by an interest in negro life or art". Tate archive document reference TGA 956/8/1/1.

[120] See Tate archive document TGA 967/2/4 "Typescript lecture on British art in the twentieth century" [c.1966-1967] by John Rothenstein (p. 8).

In the transcript of a 1964 radio broadcast for the BBC he also recalls how his efforts to innovate and diversify the collections and exhibitions – particularly in the period following the cultural privations and lengthy gallery closures during World War 2 – were enabled and accelerated by the helpful convergence of several socio-economic and cultural factors: the formation of the Arts Council in 1946; the availability of an official purchase grant; and the "extraordinary reversal of tastes" in favour of more radical and avant-garde art in the immediate post-war period. All these changes enabled Rothenstein to set aside rooms at Millbank for use by the Arts Council to exhibit more innovative works by foreign painters – including Picasso and Van Gogh, but importantly also artists from beyond Europe.[121] The director considered this first post-war decade as one of the most positive periods of collection enrichment in the institution's history and concluded:

> The war had a transforming effect on the entire art world. Not only was the influence of the old 'Establishment' eroded until it ceased to exist, but a new public and new critical attitudes came into being – attitudes which before long were the exact opposite of those which had previously prevailed.[122]

Despite the above, John Rothenstein's papers and publications also reveal that this more liberal and progressive European art world of the late-1940s still maintained a limited understanding and (in his words) "confused awareness" about the wealth of art history and artistic excellence on the African continent, as well as throughout the Global South more broadly. Writing in 1947 he assesses the situation as follows:

> In the past, European art had been subject periodically to stylistic revivals and phases of expression upon which the arts of other continents have had an obvious influence. Such sources of inspiration, whether discovered in the past or imported from exotic regions, had usually been slowly assimilated, but the quantity of knowledge which photography and simpler facilities for travel now brought to hand resulted in somewhat confused awareness of the wealth of primitive or remote cultures which had not previously been thought of as possible models. With this plunder before them, so much of what seemed to be in accord with a view of art which stressed the value of form and colour largely for their own sake, many artists suffered from a tendency to thoughtless audacities in their exploitation of the styles of ancient Crete and Egypt, Byzantium and of negro Africa. (Rothenstein 1947: 8)

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[121] See the transcript of the BBC radio broadcast "Goodbye to the Tate" by Sir John Rothenstein [Transmission: October 4th 1964; Recording: September 29th 1964) Tape No. TLO 48711. Tate archive reference TGA 967/2/1 (p. 8) in the Rothenstein file TGA 967.2.1-967.2.4, 1964-[1969].
[122] Source: Transcript "Reflections on the Transformation of the Art World" [c. May 1968], by John Rothenstein TGA 8726/2/63 (p. 8).

Although Rothenstein's use of terms such as "primitive or remote cultures," "exotic regions" and "negro Africa" was very much in keeping with what was accepted at that time, what he recounts about the nature of mainstream artistic discourse from that immediate post-war period is an overall lack of understanding and inability in the West to accurately evaluate art from other continents without recourse to crude racialized stereotypes. We now know that these attitudes continued in the decades that followed in the form of the "Art vs. Artefact Debate," where references to "naïve," "primitive" and unschooled/self-taught "craftsmanship" became the prevailing vocabulary used to devalue and de-legitimize African fine art traditions (Clifford 1988: 224). An associated tendency towards essentialising and fixing African art as *un*-modern – and regularly situating it in binary opposition to European avant-gardism – also persisted in the West for several decades more and only began to be effectively challenged and countered in the 1980s and 1990s through the combined articulation and practice of what became known as "New Internationalism" by post-modern artists, collectives of arts activists and postcolonial cultural theorists (see, for example, Fisher 1994, Mercer 2005, Petersen 2012).

An exploration of ways that Tate responded to – and also helped to shape – the globally pluralist and diasporic subjectivities associated with New Internationalism in the visual arts follows in the next section, commencing with a review of the Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) symposium on *"A New Internationalism"* hosted by Tate Gallery at Millbank in 1994.

7.2 Towards a 'new' internationalism?

The symposium *A New Internationalism* (1994) – convened by the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) during its inaugural year, and hosted at Tate Gallery in London on 27 and 28 April 1994 – was a major gathering of artists, curators, art critics and academics that came together to consider issues of globalism and globalisation in relation to modern and contemporary art history and practice up to that date.

For some, the notion of a 'new' internationalism in the visual arts during the late-20th century represented the dawn of a new era of socially engaged and globally networked artistic practices, actively concerned with art's role in transnational struggles to achieve equality and justice for all (see, for example, Fisher 1994, Bourriaud 2002, Philipsen 2013). However, for others it was negatively characterised as a form of relational aesthetics that merely presented an "illusion of cultural diversity and 'timely' internationalist ambition," when its aspirations were essentially just the latest

manifestation of "neo-colonial" Western attitudes wrapped up in "rhetoric about the need to protect the interests of the disadvantaged and the downtrodden" (Mulholland 2004: para. 7). More recent critiques of New Internationalism also expose how it was adopted by some UK museums and galleries in the 1990s as "a stand-in for 'diversity'" in the absence of any fundamental structural changes to staffing, programming, audience diversification, or further engagement with black British artists (see, for example, Chambers 2015: 59).

Over the course of the two-day event in 1994 key figures in the visual arts from all continents discussed their respective definitions of New Internationalism, the tensions and challenges this process of change presented to different communities and institutions around the world, as well as aspirations for the future of art in the approaching 21st century. There was an expectation that the 1990s would be a pivotal decade when previously unacknowledged or marginalised voices were able to re-distribute decision-making powers away from established hegemonic elites in the West, and thus achieve alternative, more pluralist and hybrid ways of thinking and working. As South African artist and curator Gavin Jantjes put it at the time:

> What most post-modernist writers and critics have seemed comfortable with is a concept of the international centered in the old hegemonic frame of modernism, which has too often ventriloquized the voices of others from an exclusive position that has offered no space for ideas and critiques from distant corners of the globe. And yet post-modernity anticipates a new internationalism which engages the unacknowledged voices and images of a world community in an expanded dialogue about contemporary visual arts.
> (Preface by Gavin Jantjes, in Fisher 1994: vii)

With specific regard to curatorship and exhibitions, commentary about shifting cores and peripheries, and the uncoupling of Self/Other binaries in favour of more cultural syncretism featured in many of the symposium papers (see, for example, Maharaj 1994, Mosquera 1994b, Nicodemus 1994). However, as the Cuban curator and art historian Gerardo Mosquera noted with caution, major structural change was still very much seen as work in progress – not least because Western museums and galleries continued to operate according to "a Lampedusan strategy of changing so that everything remains the same" (Mosquera 1994b: 135).

As Mosquera further explained:

> The centres are not satisfied with sending their own art to the periphery. They also bring back art of their choosing from the periphery. After re-packaging it, they send it back again – taking charge of exhibiting the peripheries in the peripheries. This is what is known as the international and intercultural circulation of art. A phenomenon of *inverted curating*: the countries which host the art of other cultures are at the same time curating the shows; it is almost never the other way round, and it is regarded as the most natural thing to happen. The world is practically divided between curating cultures and curated cultures. (Mosquera 1994a, b: 135)

The symposium's titular reference to *"A New Internationalism"* was therefore seen by several contributors as anachronistic because the issues in focus had already been debated and struggled over for decades – particularly outside the West. It fell to an African scholar to set out the long history of counter-hegemonic perspectives articulated and evidenced throughout the Global South since artistic modernity was falsely constructed as an exclusively Western phenomenon – with Tanzanian artist and historian Everlyn Nicodemus evoking the early portraiture and landscapes of Nigerian painter Aina Onabolu (1882-1963) as a challenge to the West's presentation of Euro-American art at the turn of the 20th century as the only valid manifestation of modernism (Nicodemus 1994: 95-96). Nicodemus also used the metaphor of a "petrifying mirror" to describe how the West has tended to respond to many African artists (not just early modern pioneers) throughout the 20th century, arguing:

> A petrifying mirror has been held in front of modern African artists, their western reception. Still today, we cannot identify ourselves among all the deadlocked stereotypes projected in that mirror. It is true that multiculturalism, which I understand as immigrant and minority experiences urging a postmodern rethinking in the West, has cracked the mirror in many facets. ... In one fragment of the cracked mirror, I see 'Otherness' reversed into ethnic essentialism such as 'Black Art', and in another I notice a defensiveness promoting difference and diversity as a tactic by the white establishment to master minority mutinies. Where, then, is the change of mind which could be trusted, when behind the multicultural smokescreens the arrogance and the closed doors remain? (Nicodemus 1994: 99-100)

Nicodemus skilfully extends the mirror metaphor to imagine its shattered pieces as a representation of African artists breaking free from the restrictions and stereotyped otherness imposed by Western art institutions and the objectifying occidental gaze. However, in relation to African diasporans, her references to essentialism and establishment smokescreens as inevitable outcomes reflected in the mirror's broken fragments leave out several alternative and more positive after-effects. For example, the

Black Art Movement of the 1980s and 1990s in the UK involved a range of aesthetic and political activities pursued by various organisations and collectives agitating for change through their creativity and their innovative exhibiting practices – most prominently the Blk Art Group, Black Audio Film Collective, and Autograph ABP (see entries in Donnell 2001). Strategic, transnational alliances with other groups of black African and diasporan artists also generated Black Atlantic, Afro-Asian and Pan-African artistic dialogues and networks, further contesting Nicodemus' assertion that 'Black Art' necessarily constituted ethnic essentialism. For many of the arts activists of that era their blackness was defined in terms of shared political ideologies and unified struggles against all forms of oppression, not ethnic identity – as expressed, for example, in Rasheed Araeen's writing on black consciousness in which he argued that the racist legacies of enslavement and colonialism "subjected all non-white peoples throughout the world" (Araeen 2005: 23).

When considering the 1994 Iniva symposium's specific impacts on the othering of Africa and its diasporas at Tate, it is important to reflect on both its immediate and longer-term effects throughout the institution. For example, in the same year when re-definitions of internationalism were being debated in London, Tate Liverpool hosted a controversial survey exhibition – *Africa Explores: Twentieth Century African Art* (1994) – originally curated by Susan Vogel for the New York Center for African Art in 1991, and which toured to the UK in a slightly reduced but largely unrevised form. Similarly to the reception of earlier Western showcases of African art – such as "*Primitivism" in 20th Century Art* (1984) at the MOMA in New York – Vogel's exhibition was criticised for attempting to reduce the artistic outputs of an entire continent over the course of a century into one display that presented a somewhat ill-defined categorisation of African art according to five "strains" of artistic production: originally listed as "Traditional, New Functional, Urban, International, and Extinct art" (Vogel 1991: 9-12), but re-named for the Liverpool exhibition as "Art of the Past and Present" (Morris 2002: 193). This imported exhibition was then followed-up in Liverpool by an in-house curatorial project – *VITAL: Three Contemporary African Artists* (Tate Liverpool, 13 September – 10 December 1995) – which was curated by Judith Nesbitt and Lewis Biggs, and timed to coincide with the nation-wide *Africa '95* festival taking place in several UK cities. *VITAL*'s core theme was an exploration of states of trance in visual art, interpreted by Beninese sculptor and painter Cyprien Tokoudagba (1939-2012) and two Moroccan artists – the painter Farid Belkahia (1934-2014) and the photographer Touhami Ennadre (b. 1953). In London, Tate also commissioned the internationally renowned sociologist and cultural studies scholar Paul Gilroy to guest-curate a display for the Goodison Room at Millbank – *Picturing Blackness in*

British Art, 1700s-1990s (28 November 1995-10 March, 1996) – for which he selected and critiqued different representations of blackness in British art spanning three centuries, from portraiture by Sir Joshua Reynolds and Dante Gabriel Rossetti through to contemporary artworks by Sonia Boyce and Lubaina Himid (see Paul Gilroy (1996), cited in Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013: 51-52). These three contrasting exhibitions, all staged within two years of the symposium, suggest that Tate was pursuing an experimental approach to its interpretation of internationalism in the 1990s which also had the unfortunate effect of communicating to its established publics a state of indecision and confusion about appropriate, strategic and creative ways forward.

In hindsight: *Africa Explores* proved to be exactly the type of Western curatorial ventriloquism that Gavin Jantjes, Jean Fisher, Gordon Bennett and other contributors to the 1994 symposium had flagged as problematic (see respective comments in Fisher 1994: vii, xi-xii and 125); *VITAL* featured a confused mix of narratives that made spurious associations between the psychological and cultural complexities of trance, "the primitive dimension" and African art (Abdelwahab Meddeb, in Nesbitt 1995: 8); and even though *Picturing Blackness* was applauded for its intellectually rigorous and nuanced narrative about the black image in British portraiture, its full potential to influence the institution and its audiences in the way Paul Gilroy had envisaged was hindered by the decision to display his selection in the Goodison Room – a relatively small and peripheral space off the main Duveen Sculpture Galleries that made what was already a temporary showcase also appear marginal to – and annexed from – the organisation's central displays, spatially privileged as its core work.[123]

One decade on from the symposium Tate was operating in a vastly different socio-economic and political climate to that of 1994 – with governance of national museums and galleries overseen by Labour's Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) from 1997 to 2010, in contrast to the Conservative's Department for National Heritage (DNH) earlier in the 1990s. In a post-millennial period characterised by Public Service Agreement targets (PSAs), all arts and culture institutions in receipt of public funds were under greater scrutiny to increase and diversify audiences (particularly in terms of social class, ethnicity and improving access for people with disabilities) as a way of demonstrating their 'value' to society as a whole and justifying the continuation of the free admission

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[123] In the essay written by Paul Gilroy to accompany his display, *Picturing Blackness in British Art, 1700s-1990s* (Tate Gallery, 1995-6), he wrote: "The changing perception of blackness and Britishness presented in this display is not a minority issue. It is not something of significance primarily only to those who have previously been excluded and ignored. It is an essential ingredient in the development of a sense of nationality free of 'racial' division. This is an urgent goal for us all." (Paul Gilroy (1996), in Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013: 51)

policy for national collections. As a consequence of this changed context Tate's contractual funding agreements with government, its planning documents and its associated diversity strategies all featured statements about increasing visitor statistics for under-represented audiences – re-defined as "priority groups."[124] As issues of accessibility, diversity and promotion of Tate as "about and for everyone" became more important to the organisation's financial security, its perspectives on inclusion, anti-racism and internationalism achieved more coherence and consistency – most tangibly seen through the appointment of Dr Mike Phillips as the first Curator of Cross-Cultural Programmes in 2005, the establishment of several new acquisition committees to increase the representation of artists from Africa, the Middle East, and Central and South America in Tate's international collection, and a transition away from group surveys towards exhibiting more solo retrospectives and thematic shows featuring artists from the Global South.[125] The relative strengths and weaknesses of these approaches as regards the amelioration of othering for African and diasporan artists are evaluated in the next section – looking at the extent of changes to staffing, governance and funding structures, as well as curatorial and exhibition-based practices.

7.3   The post-Modern era of cross-cultural programming

The opening of Tate Modern at Bankside in London on 12 May 2000 was one of the most tangible signals Tate had positively embraced the New Internationalism hotly debated during the 1994 Iniva symposium, and which was also being articulated and addressed via other Western fine art institutions at that time. However, this physical division in the capital of Tate's collection and exhibitions into separate, dedicated spaces for its international and British art strands exposed new tensions and challenges concerning how the institution might respond to different aspects of othering experienced by continental

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[124] The specific indicators within the DCMS Public Service Agreement targets for museums and galleries between 2003-2006 were: To increase attendance from under-represented groups in arts events by 3%, and participation by 2%; and to increase adult visitors from socio-economic groups C2, D and E to DCMS-sponsored national museums and galleries by 8%. The terms "under-represented" and "priority groups" were defined by DCMS as people with a physical or mental disability, people from minority ethnic groups, and those in lower socio-economic groups. Source: Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Annual Report 2006 [Online] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272294/6828.pdf [accessed March 2016].
[125] The statement "Diversity is about and for everyone" initially featured as part of the organisation's 2006 Diversity Strategy [*"Diversity: Tate for All"*: http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/4437], and also appears in the revised version, "*Tate for All: Diversity Action Plan to 2015*" (2013) [PDF: http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/30715] available from the Tate website at http://www.tate.org.uk/about/working-at-tate/diversity-at-tate [accessed March 2016].

African and black diasporan artists. Similarly to the way Tate Liverpool had experimented with different curatorial innovations in the late 1980s to distinguish it from the first Tate Gallery and establish itself as the "Tate of the North," Tate Modern also sought to pursue a different path. However, at the Millbank site – the institution's historic core, re-named as Tate Britain at the turn of the new millennium – it would take much more than re-branding and an architectural makeover to 'de-colonise' many of its elitist characteristics and hierarchical practices established over a century earlier.

The Cross-Cultural programming role was envisioned by Sir Nicholas Serota (Director of Tate, 1988-present) and senior members of the management team as a way of unifying the educational and curatorial aspects of the institution's work, and also one that would catalyse more inclusive approaches to researching and presenting art histories and practices informed by broader socio-political and cultural geographies of migration, diaspora and (national) identity. As such, the post that was incorporated into the institutional organogram in the mid-2000s did not conform to a typical diversity policy management portfolio, but instead was positioned within the staffing structure at the level of a senior curator which left substantial scope for the appointee to be creatively experimental in their conceptualisation and curation of thematic displays and exhibitions, as well as their shaping of the institution's strategic plans.

When Mike Phillips joined the organisation, he brought with him an already established high public profile as a writer, historian and curator, with extensive expertise as an advisor on cultural policy and heritage agendas in the UK – having previously worked on major literary and curatorial commissions for (among others) the Museum of London, the British Library and the Royal Festival Hall, and in his capacity as a Trustee for the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Heritage Lottery Fund. During his two years at Tate Britain he curated several innovative displays, including: *Seeing Africa* (July-October 2006); *East-West: Objects between Cultures* (September 2006 – February 2007); and *1807: Blake, Slavery and the Radical Mind* (April-October 2007). He also developed and facilitated public events, talks and symposia on issues of diversity and inclusion in the arts, and convened important consultation forums to enable staff at Tate to engage in regular dialogues with artists, academics, senior arts policy-makers and other important culture sector practitioners drawn from Britain's African and Asian diasporas.[126] Most

126 The Cross-Cultural Network Group (CCNG) was a regular forum established at Tate Britain by Mike Phillips in 2006 that helped to facilitate this dialogical process, and which continued as part of the *Tate Encounters* research programme. External participants included artists, curators, poets, policy-makers and academics, as well as professional trainees involved in widening participation programmes. For further information, see the document "*Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual*

importantly, however, Mike Phillips' notable and numerous intellectual contributions were vital to Tate's longer-term strategic progression on issues of diversity and included the publication of think pieces, briefings and research papers that fed into the AHRC-funded collaborative programme *Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual Cultures* (2005) – jointly developed by London Southbank University, Tate Britain and University of the Arts, London (UAL). In all these endeavours Mike Phillips actively demonstrated his long-held view that, "It is not the people who need to be inclusive, it is the ideas" (Walsh and Phillips 2007).

In an influential paper that set out the broader political context to Tate's policy position on diversity during the mid-'noughties', Mike Phillips wrote about an emerging "change of attitudes" and a "new consciousness" that strategic changes such as his appointment and the development of the *Tate Encounters* project had helped to catalyse from 2005 onwards.[127] At that time he felt some of the key questions the institution needed to prioritise and address were: "[W]hat kind of contact zone does Tate Britain represent in relation to the fact and recognition of cultural difference?"; and, "How does Tate Britain recognise and respond to issues of migration, diasporas and identity contained within its historical collection?"[128]

From my own discussions with Mike Phillips during an interview recorded in April 2014, I came away with a strong sense that his achievements in relation to the above-mentioned questions and challenges also needed to be considered alongside the unquantifiable but none-the-less highly significant impacts his *corporeal* presence had on that organisation as the first British curator of African-Caribbean descent to hold a high-profile decision-making position at Tate. The face-to-face conversation with him reminded me that he had negotiated many normatively white institutional spaces, networks and structures as a black Briton, whose perspectives on Western othering in relation to Africa, its diasporas, and other places and people negatively impacted by the racialisation of culture came with

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Cultures Research Programme 2007-9, Aims and Methodology Report 1" at
http://www2.tate.org.uk/tate-encounters/tate_encounters_programme.pdf , p. 18 [accessed March 2016].
[127] See *"The View From 2005: Developing the Tate Encounters Proposal"* (2007) by Mike Phillips, available online from the micro-site Tate Encounters [E]dition 1 as a PDF document at http://www2.tate.org.uk/tate-encounters/edition-1/the_view_from_2005.pdf , pp. 1-9 [accessed March 2016].
[128] *Ibid*, p. 8.

a wealth of alternative insights and lived experiences drawn from his differenced ontology of being in the art world.[129]

For example, during a section of our conversation about the preparatory work in UK museums and galleries that had taken place in the years leading up to 2007 to commemorate the bi-centenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, Mike shared his experiences of curating the display *"1807: Blake, Slavery and the Radical Mind"* (Tate Britain, 30 April – 21 October 2007) and recalled:

> [T]he time I realised that I had some influence or some importance was during the commemoration of the abolition of the Slave Trade. It was interesting looking at that and seeing what had been done, and what had not been done, because there was a great deal of talk about how the various galleries would do this and that. Except, in fact, very little – practically nothing – had been arranged … I had a room, and I made things happen, and that was good. But what really struck me was that it was just strange the extent to which people knew they had to do something, they talked about something they had to do, but nobody could actually do it … So when you talked about something that involved race and slaves, and such like, there was a terror because people knew that there was one way of dealing with it – which was to get someone like Sonia Boyce.[130]

As we discussed this situation in more detail it became clear that this unofficial, yet recurring, behaviour Mike Phillips had witnessed from behind the scenes at Tate was also something whose effects I too had observed from the outside, and had considered a form of othering closely associated with the sort of expectations placed on minoritized individuals to carry the so-called "burden of representation" for an assumed unitary community of black people (see, for example, Mercer 1990: 62, Hall 1996: 165, Tolia-Kelly and Morris 2004: 153, Dyer 2007: 12). The way this practice operated at Tate involved inviting prominent contemporary British artists of African descent to explain the

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[129] I am referring here to the way in which minoritized black people who experience racism, social exclusion and other forms of discrimination accumulate insights and perspectives about living in the West that differ from people in the majority white population who do not encounter these problems. Some scholars discuss this in relation to broader questions about "Black ontology" or "Black being in the world" concerned with issues of identity and identification, establishing a sense of place and belonging as a black diasporan in the West, considerations about 'being-for-self' in contrast to being in relation to others, and processes of flux and (re-)formation (see, for example, Owusu 1999: 298, Mudimbe-Boyi 2012: 17).

[130] Mike Phillips (former Curator of Cross-Cultural Programmes, Tate Britain) interviewed by Carol Dixon, 10 April 2014, transcript, p. 5-6. It is possible that artist and academic Sonia Boyce MBE (RA) is specifically mentioned here because she is one of the few high-profile black British artists to have had several pieces of work purchased and showcased over several decades via Tate's British Art Collection. She has also written extensively and presented papers, performance installations and exhibitions about how issues of race, racialized identity and racism inform her artistic practice, contributing regularly to national conferences and symposia (including Tate-based events) addressing these subjects (see, for example, Diawara and Boyce 1992, Boyce, Bailey, and Baucom 2005).

relationships between histories and legacies of British imperialism, politics of blackness and politics of display in ways that extended far beyond descriptions of any specific artworks they had produced which addressed these themes – almost as if the artists were responsible for communicating an institutional art-historical perspective on Tate's behalf. Regarding the latter, these high-profile black artists' unofficial positions as 'stand in' spokespeople and mediators between the institution and the wider public discussing sensitivities about race and racism sometimes had the unfortunate consequence of making the organisation appear detached or disengaged from such issues, with the artists left to carry the weight of responsibility for informing audiences about these important aspects of history. What defines this institutional behaviour towards black artists as a form of othering has been observed and articulated by (among others) Kobena Mercer – who has written extensively about "practices of delegation and substitution such that, at the point of reception, the black artist is expected to speak for the black communities as if she or he were its political 'representative'" (Mercer 1990: 65) – and, more recently, by Nigerian art historian and curator Olu Oguibe, who has observed how any diasporan perceived as a "non-Western artist" is "required to represent not himself as a creative individual but *his* culture, defined by the fiction of a supposed origin *elsewhere*" (Oguibe 2004: 20). [131]

While citing several artists whom he felt had been put in this position by Tate over the years – not only Sonia Boyce, but also Hew Locke, Chris Ofili and Yinka Shonibare – Mike Phillips specifically commended the way Chris Ofili had refused to take on this role, reflecting:

> I remember, in my time it was Chris Ofili. The funny thing is, though, Chris Ofili represented something different. He did not do what so many of the others have done. He did his *own* thing. And you could say what you liked, but he refused patronage and he refused direction…. That was really quite impressive of him. Anyway, so you've got those two things: one, they [i.e. Tate curators] have huge difficulties engaging with themes; and, secondly, normal practice is to find somebody to do it. So that in every other way the curators are making the running, but when it comes to race and issues of that kind it is the artist that makes the running and the curator gives up. [132]

If you insert Mike Phillips' name in place of Chris Ofili's as someone who "refused patronage," this goes some way towards explaining how he too resisted becoming the 'face' of diversity at Tate, and helped steer the organisation towards greater collective

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[131] Olu Oguibe made this point with specific reference to the black French artist William Adjété Wilson, suggesting its applicability to other diasporan artists. The emphasis indicated in italics within the quote is Oguibe's own.
[132] *Ibid*, p. 7.

acknowledgement of "diversity for and about everyone" in its official policy

documentation – even if not always in its everyday practices.[133]

The many positive outputs Mike Phillips achieved in his time as a Tate curator, and also

later as a consultant and advisor, were confirmed by the academic and curator Professor

Paul Goodwin (Chair of Black Art and Design, University of the Arts London) – who

became his successor in the cross-cultural role in 2007. During an interview with me in

October 2014, Paul Goodwin spoke favourably about the open, autonomous and self-

generating aspect of the brief he had inherited, reflecting on both Mike Phillips' initial

interpretation and his own re-interpretation of what being Curator of Cross-Cultural

Programmes at Tate entailed:

> What made me distinguish it from other museums' diversity posts is that it was
> about the intellectual agenda at the Tate… and that is why someone of the calibre
> of Mike Phillips was brought in, and then also someone of my background was
> brought in. So, it was not seen to be about delivering programmes just to draw in
> more black audiences… It was more about setting an agenda, an intellectual
> agenda about art, diversity, etc. Mike, I think, did two things: he opened up this
> gap, this space, this blurred space between curatorial and education, because he
> actually curated exhibitions – which was unheard of for education staff at that
> point; …he did a very important series called Black British Art, which was about
> being involved with the artists. And I think he invited Stuart Hall for a really
> important talk, and Mark Sealy, and people like that. So, you know, for the first
> time he put in a politicised black perspective at the Tate.[134]

While it has been formally acknowledged by the institution that Mike Phillips was an

important influence on Tate's progression towards diversity being seen as core to all areas

of its work (see, for example, Dewdney, Dibosa, and Walsh 2013: x), I would argue that he

and his successor Paul Goodwin were *both* pivotal actants in helping to shape Tate's focus

on internationalism, and also to ensuring that the dynamics of migration, diaspora and

globalisation became central to its revisions of canonical narratives about modern and

contemporary art. Through their respective work on cross-cultural programming, both

helped to show how and why these foci should not be assumed as 'either/or' substitutes

for one another, but rather priorities of equal importance – with overlaps and interstices,

but also each with their own distinctive elements. The discourses about cultural plurality,

hybridity and syncretism between Africa, other areas of the Global South and the West –

and also in relation to Africans and diasporans *within* the West – that Mike Phillips had

explored so innovatively through the display *Seeing Africa* (Tate Britain, 2006) –

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[133] See the Tate's strategic policy document, *"Diversity: Tate for All"* (2006) – [online PDF] http://www.tate.org.uk/download/file/fid/4437 [accessed March 2016].
[134] Paul Goodwin (Chair of Black Art and Design, University of the Arts, London) interviewed by Carol Dixon, 29 October 2014, transcript p. 5-6.

continued to feature in later projects across other Tate sites, including: *Afro Modern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic* (Tate Liverpool, 2010), for which Paul Goodwin was a curatorial advisor;135 *Contested Terrains* (Tate Modern Project Space, 2011);136 *Thin Black Line[s]* (Tate Britain, 2011-12); and the afore-mentioned *Migrations: Journeys into British Art* (Tate Britain, 2012). While it is not possible within this study to document in detail how each of these curatorial projects helped to challenge and counteract the presence of othering at Tate, the next section will review and critique the latter two displays as examples of institutional practice strongly influenced by Paul Goodwin and Lubaina Himid, both of whom I had opportunities to interview to specifically discuss their respective insights as black curators on the experience of ameliorating othering.

7.4   Art histories informed by migrations, diasporas and globalisation

Migrations: Journeys into British Art (Tate Britain, 2012) was curated to explore how immigration has shaped the history of art in Britain over the past 500 years. Drawing on selected works from the Tate Collection dating from the 16th century to the present day, the exhibition traced the movement of artists, the circulation of artistic ideas and techniques, and the shifting demographics of the UK population over time and space. Its loosely chronological sequence and narrative was presented via nine galleries: Portraiture and New Genres; Italy, Neoclassicism and the Royal Academy; Dialogues between Britain, France and America; Jewish Artists and Jewish Art; Refugees from Nazi Europe; Artists in Pursuit of an International Language; The Dematerialised Object; New Diasporic Voices; and The Moving Image.

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135 Tate's *Afro Modern* exhibition (Tate Liverpool, 29 January – 25 April 2010) was curated by Tanya Barson and inspired by Paul Gilroy's book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993).The exhibition examined the hybridity of cultures spanning the Atlantic throughout the continents of Africa, North and South America, and Europe. Its selected artworks were presented via seven chronologically themed rooms/chapters, each addressing different aspects of Afro-Modernism: 1. Black Atlantic Avant-Gardes; 2. Maya Deren - Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti; 3. Black Orpheus; 4. Dissident Identities; 5. Reconstructing the Middle Passage; 6. Exhibiting Bodies; 7. From Post-Modern to Post-Black. For further details, see the online press release at http://www.tate.org.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/afro-modern-journeys-through-black-atlantic [accessed March 2016].
136 The exhibition *Contested Terrains* (Tate Modern Project Space, 29 July – 16 October 2011) presented works by four artists with links to the African continent that have each examined the histories, ideologies and economic impacts of European imperialism in Africa within their contemporary arts practice. The artists in focus, and their specific continental connections (shown in brackets), were: Kader Attia (Algeria), Sammy Baloji (DR Congo), Michael MacGarry (South Africa) and Adolphus Opara (Nigeria). For further details, see the Tate website at http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/project-space-contested-terrains [accessed March 2016].

Such a broad temporal and thematic scope required innovative interpretation devices to support flexible navigation through the selection of works. One technique involved extending an invitation to three famous guest visitors to each document their self-directed routes through (and perspectives on) the exhibition as individuals with experiences of transnational migration as part of their personal or extended family history, namely: playwright and novelist Bonnie Greer, poet (and former Children's Laureate) Michael Rosen, and barrister Shami Chakrabarti (former director of the human rights organisation Liberty). These "personal journeys" were then mapped out as annotated trails on the exhibition floorplan to illustrate the potential for all visitors to create their own unique visitor experiences (see Figure 43).
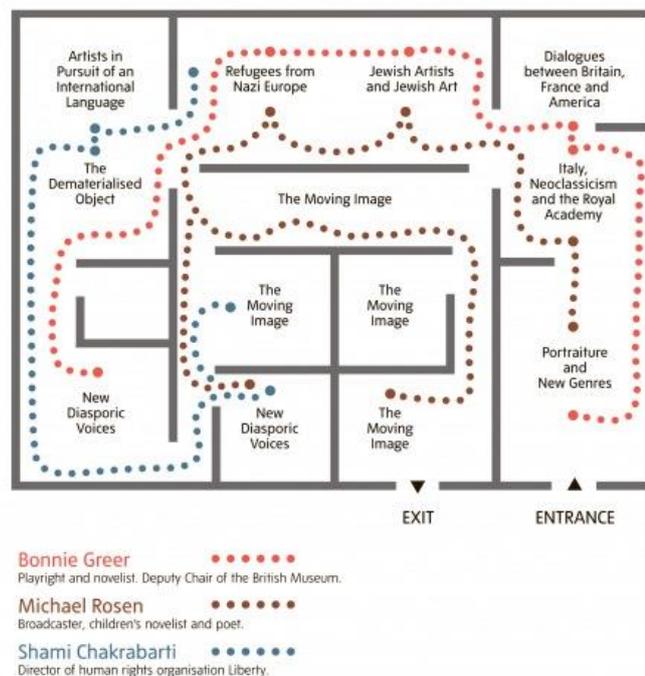
Figure 43: *Migrations* exhibition floorplan showing three guest visitors' journeys.

Although a team of 14 curators, artists and advisors were involved in the exhibition's production and interpretation – led by Lizzie Carey-Thomas (former curator of contemporary British art at Tate Britain) – Paul Goodwin's work on the "New Diasporic Voices" section is of particular significance within this study because of his focus on British artists of African and Asian descent whose art portfolios in the late-20th century explored themes such as the politics of diaspora and displacement, multiculturalism, and race and

identity within the context of British imperial history and its postcolonial aftermaths. Notable works in this part of the exhibition included: the installation of 14 photomontage panels *"Go West Young Man"* (1987), by Keith Piper (see Appendix 2); the mixed-media artwork "*Bismullah*" (1988) by Rasheed Araeen – a 3 x 3 grid of photographic images and calligraphy referencing various aspects of religious symbolism used within Islam and Christianity; and the documentary film *Handsworth Songs* (1986) by Black Audio Film Collective, showing aspects of the lived experiences of Britain's African Caribbean communities in Birmingham at the height of the urban riots in the 1980s (Goodwin 2012: 92 and illus. 95-96).

During my interview with Paul Goodwin recorded on 28 October 2014, I asked him to outline any ways that his work for *Migrations* had departed from earlier approaches used at Tate to explore issues of migration, diaspora and identity. His response suggested that he saw his contributions as part of a continuum which developed from important foundational work former colleagues in the learning and the curatorial teams had pursued – giving particular credit to Mike Phillips and Felicity Allen (former Head of Learning, Tate Britain), but also mentioning ways his academic background as an urban theorist interested in the dynamics of transnationalism, globalisation and diasporas had helped to extend their good practice:

> I guess I wanted to move slightly beyond the discourse of "black British art", and I wanted to engage the discourse of globalisation. That is what I think I brought to the role. I wanted to put the whole black experience within the broader context of transnationalism, internationalism, diasporas and globalisation. I have always felt that that is an important part of one of the things black British artists have engaged with, or brought to international art – the theme of diasporas. And the diasporan theme is all about travel: about here and there; and about displacement. And in a way my section in *Migrations* was all about that – and I called it "New Diasporic Voices" on purpose because the initial working title for that section that they wanted me to use was "Interrogating Black Art", but I did not want to use that. And I included in that section Rasheed Araeen, Keith Piper, and several others, and that was a really diverse range of voices.[137]

Paul Goodwin's reflections revealed just how transformative exhibiting practices in the period from 2005 through to the launch of *Migrations* in 2012 had been at Tate Britain – particularly as staff sought to engage with issues of diversity and inclusive programming over a longer art-historical timescale spanning several centuries, rather than concentrate on the most recent changes in the postcolonial era.

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[137] Paul Goodwin, *op. cit.* Interview transcript, p. 7.

Contrasting the two London galleries' approaches and outputs at that time, Goodwin said:

> The only major diversity initiatives within Tate occur at Tate Britain – not at Tate Modern…Tate Modern is somehow presented as a temple of modernism, but diversity is an irrelevance there. Whereas Tate Britain – because it is British art – there is seen to be some kind of need to address this, which I think is interesting.[138]

This insight into the various institutional tensions and ambiguities concerning cultural diversity and internationalism at Tate aligns with broader contextual commentary by the artist-curator and art history scholar Eddie Chambers. In a recent article about these themes – framed specifically in relation to the work of Iniva (Institute of International Visual Arts) and the changes brought about after its Rivington Place HQ and exhibition space opened in London in 2007 – he noted:

> A raced space that presented itself and sought to function as an international space was always likely to be found wanting, particularly when it found itself competing with structurally more secure galleries that were likewise seeking to function as international spaces. (Chambers 2015: 58)

As one of those "structurally more secure galleries," Tate's adoption of the internationalist agenda as a foundation for launching Tate Modern at the start of the 2000s appeared to preclude any acknowledgement that it simultaneously functioned as a "raced space" – necessarily interrogating the realities of racism and exclusion embedded in the histories, institutions, art markets and information networks for modern and contemporary art worldwide. My re-use of the term "raced space" in this context recognises *every* public museum or gallery in the West as raced – irrespective of whether people positioned outside established and perceived visitor norms for fine art institutions actually use those spaces or not.[139] So, while Tate Britain was in the process of reappraising its history and representing itself as a raced space throughout that decade, and beyond – significantly assisted by the interventions of Mike Phillips and Paul Goodwin during their respective periods as holders of the cross-cultural programming brief, and then later as external consultants – Tate Modern appeared to be divorced from these agendas.

Although the types of concurrent developments taking place at Tate Modern over this period did indicate a commitment to increase the acquisition and exhibition of artworks by artists from the Global South, the majority of these activities were largely pursued as

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[138] *Ibid,* p. 9.

[139] A prevailing perspective within Western discourses on diversity in the arts is to recognise a space as *raced* only at the point of entry by people from a minoritized ethnic group, thus privileging those from mainstream white user communities as somehow racially 'neutral.' As observed by a number of scholars who have researched the spatialization of white privilege within art institutions and other cultural contexts, this constitutes a false neutrality that serves to make invisible historically asymmetric power relations, and reinforces inequalities between the way different ethnic groups perceive and use (or do not use) cultural spaces (see, for example, Bourdieu, Darbel, and Schnapper 1991, Hall 1997, Blackwood and Purcell 2014).

short-term, project-based initiatives with fixed time and rigid cost limitations placed on what could be effectively achieved. Therefore, very little emphasis was placed on embedding and promoting this work as part of longer-term institutional strategies for tackling structural racisms and inequalities in the international visual art world. With specific regard to the African continent, a two-year international partnership initiative was launched at Tate Modern on 24 November 2012 – titled, "*Across the Board*" (2012-2014) and sponsored by Guaranty Trust Bank Plc as the main corporate partner. Its priorities included an increase in the number of acquisitions from all regions of the continent, and the development of new strategic collaborations between artists, curators and scholars based in London and three selected West African cities: Accra (Ghana), Douala (Cameroon), and Lagos (Nigeria). As part of the programme's remit, an African Acquisitions Committee was established in 2012 to purchase art by African artists for Tate's international collection, and a new temporary curatorial position was funded. Curator Elvira Dyangani Ose was appointed on a fixed-term contract to lead on programming a range of exhibitions, events and collaborative outputs over the two year period that covered the following issues and themes: definitional and diasporic discourses on 'African art'; engaging audiences in narratives about art making, knowledge production, the role of art in public space and the public sphere, institution building, and the changing status of contemporary African art as a field of cultural production; facilitating dialogues about the changing politics of representation; and collaborative work on interdisciplinary artistic practices. Among the programme's most prominent impacts in London were: a solo retrospective about the work of Sudanese painter Ibrahim El-Salahi – titled, *Ibrahim El-Salahi: A Visionary Modernist* (Tate Modern, 3 July – 22 September 2013); and the acquisition (specifically in the form of a long-term loan) and display of a large-scale, 12-room installation by Beninese conceptual artist Meschac Gaba – titled, *Museum of Contemporary African Art, 1997-2002* (Tate Modern, 3 July – 22 September 2013).[140]

Only the passage of time will determine whether the fixed-term activities pursued via *Across the Board*, and largely paid for via corporate sponsors, will ultimately lead to longer-term, sustainably embedded collaborations to research and regularly showcase the work of more modern and contemporary African artists at Tate Modern, and at its sister galleries outside London. However, as long as Tate continues to create an impression that

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[140] Meschac Gaba's 12-room installation – *Museum of Contemporary African Art, 1997–2002* (Tate Collection Ref. LO3225-36) – was gifted by the artist on a long-term loan. The funds to support its acquisition and display at Tate Modern in 2013 were provided via the Acquisitions Fund for African Art, sponsored by Guaranty Trust Bank Plc. For further details, see Tate's online exhibition summary at http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/meschac-gaba-museum-contemporary-african-art [accessed March 2016].

it prefers the 'quick fix' offered by short-term, externally funded projects and temporary curatorial appointments instead of (or in addition to) the allocation of more time and core funding towards implementing structural changes, then its adoption of internationalism (or even "New Internationalism") will only ever be equated with a somewhat 'touristic' appreciation of art from Africa and the rest of the Global South above anything that comes closer to presenting plural international art histories and equitable canonisation of fine art achievements sourced worldwide.

Similarly to the chapter on remixing narratives at the Pompidou in Paris, the final section of this analysis of curatorial and exhibiting practices at Tate's London galleries considers how issues of gender intersect with and impact on the othering of Africa and its diasporas. Some strategies for the amelioration of othering will be critiqued specifically in relation to Lubaina Himid and Paul Goodwin's co-curation of the display *Thin Black Line(s)* (Tate Britain, 2011-2012), which retrospectively showcased the work of selected black British women contemporary artists from the 1980s.

7.5 *Thin Black Line(s)*: connecting issues of gender at the margins and the centre

In concluding with a focus on African and diasporan women artists' representation within Tate's exhibitions and permanent collection of modern and contemporary art, this chapter comes full circle to return to the work of artist-curator and academic Lubaina Himid. This analysis of Himid's artistic and curatorial practice places a spotlight on the context, content and legacies of *Thin Black Line(s)* (Tate Britain, 22 August 2011 – 23 April 2012) – a display she co-curated with Paul Goodwin (former Curator of Cross-Cultural Programmes at Tate Britain, 2007-2010), who had continued working for Tate as a curator of contemporary art after the cross-cultural post had been formally written out of the staffing structure.

Paul Goodwin and Lubaina Himid first discussed his idea for a display about black women's contributions to contemporary British art in the 1980s when they met in Liverpool in 2010 at an event to mark the launch of Tate's *Afro Modern* exhibition. The proposal she developed led to the selection and display of key works by seven British women artists of African and Asian descent who had come to prominence in Britain during that decade and whose contemporary pieces (along with those of four other artists) had featured in three earlier all-women exhibitions she had curated for venues across the capital, specifically: *Five Black Women: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* (The Africa

Centre Gallery, Covent Garden, 1983); *Black Women Time Now* (Battersea Arts Centre, 1983-1984); and *The Thin Black Line* (Institute for Contemporary Art (ICA), 1985).

The initial discussions that catalysed the curatorial partnership at Tate Britain were recalled by Lubaina Himid during her interview with me three years later – marking a significant shift towards greater visibility and inclusion for black women artists at the centre of the British art establishment, and a personal achievement that went some way towards redressing her being left out of the aforementioned Tate exhibitions that had covered aspects of the Black Art Movement in the UK:

> Paul Goodwin asked me if I could write a proposal for a show in one room about black women artists. And I put something together and I went to a meeting that Chris Stephens was at and I talked about the research and ideas behind the proposal: which was that, although some of us were already in the collection – Sonia Boyce, Veronica Ryan, and myself – there were other artists who were in national collections who were not represented in this show. I wanted to show that black women were at the centre of all sorts of activities at that time, and that the exhibition, *The Thin Black Line*, and the other two exhibitions – *Five Black Women at The Africa Centre* and *Black Women Time Now*[141] – were important exhibitions, although quite small, that told the story of what was happening at the time. And I felt that it was very important to find out what was happening to these women now.[142]

The one-room display opened at Tate Britain in the summer of 2011 and was conceptualised as a "reframing" of images and other artistic representations of black women's life experiences by Lubaina Himid and the six other British artists: Sutapa Biswas, Sonia Boyce, Claudette Johnson, Ingrid Pollard, Veronica Ryan and Maud Sulter (Himid 2011: 6). Importantly, the display provided a space for reflecting on the aesthetic and political radicalism of all these women, whose arts activism openly challenged the "collective invisibility" and marginalisation of British women of African and Asian descent – not only within the context of British contemporary art, but also in relation to the (primarily Euro-American) Feminist Art Movement (Himid 2011: 6 and 10). In addition, the display served a rhizomatic function of connecting these individual artists to wider art-political groupings and organisations active in Britain during that period – collectively referred to as the Black Art Movement – and the associated histories, political events and diasporic experiences that shaped their artistic practice.

Among the artworks presented on the two longest walls of the gallery were: the photographic portrait *Polyhymnia* (1989) by Maud Sulter; a triptych of larger-than-life-

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[141] *Five Black Women* was an exhibition shown at The Africa Centre in London during 1983 that featured work by Sonia Boyce, Claudette Johnson, Lubaina Himid, Houria Niati and Veronica Ryan. *Black Women Time Now* was displayed at Battersea Arts Centre between 1984-1985.
[142] Lubaina Himid, *op. cit.* Interview transcript, pp. 7-8.

sized pastel-based portraits of black women by Claudette Johnson – titled, *Trilogy: Woman in Blue; Woman in Black; Woman in Red* (1982-86); photography from the series *Pastoral Interlude* (1988) by Ingrid Pollard; a large, Kali-inspired painting, *Housewives with Steak Knives* (1985), and mixed-media collage, *The Pied Piper of Hamlyn – Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is* (1987) by Sutapa Biswas; and the pastel drawing *"Rice n Peas"* (1982) by Sonia Boyce. At opposite ends of the room were Boyce's harrowing charcoal drawing *"Mr close-friend-of-the-family pays a visit whilst everyone else is out"* (1985), contrasted with two life-sized, sculptural cut-outs from Lubaina Himid's satirical installation *"The Carrot Piece"* (1985). More centrally placed within the room were: the floor sculpture *Relics in the Pillow of Dreams* (1985) by Veronica Ryan; a television monitor playing a looped show-reel of film footage – titled, *Images and Conversations from the 1980s* (2011) – compiled and edited by Susan Walsh; and two large table vitrines full of archival documents and news cuttings about the past exhibitions staged in the 1980s sourced from Lubaina Himid's Making Histories Visible project archive at the University of Central Lancashire (see Figures 44 and 45).

As the photographs taken inside the gallery illustrate, the assemblage conformed to the spatial and textual conventions regularly used at Millbank for the "Focus Displays" of items from the permanent British art collection – with the interpretation literature limited to a 200-word overview documenting the history and context to the selection on the main information panel, and minimal labelling for each of the artworks (normally up to a maximum of 16).[143] Significantly, however, unlike the majority of Focus Displays curated using Tate's permanent holdings, only one of the featured exhibits – the afore-mentioned sculpture by Veronica Ryan[144] – was already part of Tate's British Art Collection at that time. All the others were either on loan from the artists, from regional galleries, or from the Arts Council England collection for the duration of the display.

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[143] Tate Britain's Focus Displays are described as special, single-room, temporary displays that "take a look at an artist, theme or period of British art, using works from the Tate collection." For further information, see the Tate website at http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/display/thin-black-lines [accessed March 2016].

[144] The plaster and bronze floor sculpture, *Relics in the Pillow of Dreams* (1985) by Veronica Ryan, was acquired by Tate in 1992 (presented by Charles Saatchi) – Tate collection ref. T06530. An image and further details about the artwork can be viewed online at http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/ryan-relics-in-the-pillow-of-dreams-t06530 [accessed April 2016].

Figure 44: Exhibition view of *Thin Black Lines(s)* (2011) at Tate Britain.
Source: Making Histories Visible Project

That all bar one of these items had to be sourced externally in order to showcase black women's contributions to the nation's contemporary arts heritage evidenced a dearth of acquisitions created by women of African and Asian descent in the permanent collection, and also exemplified how ground-breaking the project was in making these artists more visible and widely accessible to mainstream art audiences. This re-staging of work that was previously only shown in smaller-scale, local and regional arts venues challenged the establishment practice of othering by exclusion and marginalisation, and represented both the geographical and socio-political movement of black artists' work "from the margins to the centre" of British contemporary fine art (Himid 2011: 6). This transitional process didn't happen by chance, nor as a result of Tate's usual methods and networks for sourcing and promoting the work of emerging British artists, but rather occurred as an act of correctively anti-racist, anti-sexist curatorship by Lubaina Himid and Paul Goodwin. Without the latter's 'insider' status as a Tate employee at the time when his idea for an all-women group show was first mooted in 2010, *Thin Black Line(s)* might never have happened at Tate Britain at all.

Figure 45: "The Carrot Piece" (1985) by Lubaina Himid on display at Tate Britain
Source: Making Histories Visible Project

As the project was progressing towards its gallery design and layout phase in 2011 – with all the associated rules and regulations about how to assemble a Focus Display – Lubaina Himid later recounted in interview just how important it had been for her to "follow the rules within an inch of their lives."[145] This ultimately led to her creating a drawing in the form of topological art map of London – titled, *"Moments and Connections"* (2011), and similar in layout to Harry Beck's iconic network map of the London Underground – to illustrate how the featured black women artists, and others from the founding exhibitions in the 1980s, were connected to each other, to specific arts venues, and to wider events and collectives distributed throughout the capital (see Figure 46). In this way the essence of the 7000-word essay she had originally drafted to contextualise her selection could be presented – in summary – without losing the substantive content about the wider network aligned to the seven featured artists. The edited show-reel of film footage from past exhibitions in the 1980s, as well as the table vitrines, also helped to add further contextual depth to the display while still conforming to Tate's prescribed layout parameters.

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[145] Lubaina Himid, *op. cit.* Interview transcript, p. 11.

Figure 46: "*Thin Black Line(s): Moments and Connections*" (2011) by Lubaina Himid,
on display at Tate Britain. Photo: Carol Dixon

Thinking beyond the physical assemblage, both curators envisioned *Thin Black Line(s)* to
be a dialogical space of multiple conversations about the importance of black women self-
imaging their own lived experiences, instead of being stereotyped and ventriloquized by
others, whereby: the artists conversed with one another through their artworks –
carefully positioned to "dialogically interanimate each other" (Bakhtin 1981: 354); the
artists and curators were in dialogue with Tate as the host institution; and the producers
of the display communicated with visiting audiences. Having discussed my own reactions
to viewing the selection and feeling – perhaps for the first time in a national museum or
gallery in the UK – a sense that many aspects of my lived experiences, cultural heritage and
identity as a black British woman were being accurately reflected through the creativity of
a collective of other black women in a prominent central space, Lubaina expanded with
further details on future conversations and outcomes she hoped would result from *Thin
Black Line(s)*:

It wasn't a conversation about *"I belong, I am here or why am I not in here? Why have you not been collecting properly?"* or any of that. It really was supposed to look as if it belonged, and so that was then moved to one side. So it was more a case of, *"Let's park that."* The experience that you had was what I wanted, because I was trying to recapture what I was trying to do in 1980-something, which was to make ourselves visible, and to see ourselves – and that's what this place *[i.e.. the Making Histories Visible project archive]* is about as well.[146]

One of the most tangible and sustainable outcomes that occurred as a direct result of showing previously overlooked and marginalised work at the centre of the art establishment was an increase in fine art acquisitions by black British contemporary artists – not only in relation to the 1980s, but also more recent work by artists from Britain's African and Asian diasporas. As Paul Goodwin explained in his curatorial interview, the momentum generated by both *Migrations* and *Thin Black Line(s)* served to spotlight participants in the Black Art Movement, whose prior exclusion from the Tate Collection became too obvious to be ignored:

> Now, once you look at the collection, one of the things I'm really happy about is that since *Migrations* and *Thin Black Line(s)* the number of black artists' artworks collected by Tate has increased. A number of acquisitions came out of *Thin Black Line(s).* For example: Chila Burman is now in the Tate Collection; Ingrid Pollard, I believe, is also in the Tate Collection; and Sutapa Biswas, etc. – and so that really expanded.[147]

7.6   Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to investigate the extent to which Tate as a major international art institution has progressively improved its curatorial and exhibiting practices so as to ameliorate histories of othering, specifically in relation to continental African artists and black British diasporans of African descent. A number of changes were observed and critiqued to illustrate how strategic decisions, diversity policies, curatorial appointments, collection developments and programming choices have impacted Tate's exhibition and display outcomes. Identifying some of the key catalysts for the institution's changed practices has allowed me to track the extent to which approaches for eradicating various manifestations of othering have been effective over time and space within its two London galleries, specifically shining a spotlight on the interventions of African and diasporan artists, curators and academics who have contributed to effect positive changes at Tate.

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[146] Lubaina Himid, *op. cit.* Interview transcript, p. 15. The interview was recorded in the reading room for the Making Histories Visible project archive, based at the University of Central Lancashire in Preston.
[147] Paul Goodwin, *op. cit.* Interview transcript, p. 11.

This has formed an important element of the analysis, especially because mainstream discourse about organisational change often privileges the director's role and the collective decision-making of trustees operating at the highest echelons of the institutional hierarchy.

Having taken the symposium *"A New Internationalism"* (1994) as a key point of departure, I have examined the relative success of strategies used to ameliorate othering at Tate Britain and Tate Modern. At Tate Britain, interventions by Paul Gilroy in the 1990s, Mike Phillips in the 2000s, and Paul Goodwin in the 2010s did much to transform and improve the way issues of diversity and inclusion were effectively embedded within the institution's exhibiting practices – eschewing ahistorical and Eurocentric approaches. The cumulative positive impacts of their work have not only been evidenced in the content of curatorial narratives, but also in the way displays have been spatially arranged. For example, over the course of those three decades, Tate Britain transformed from having one area – the Goodison Room – that was used to focus on the black presence in British art, to the entire British art collection being used to reflect on the influences of migration, diasporas and issues of identity over centuries. Paul Goodwin discussed these spatial dynamics in his 2014 interview as follows:

> [T]here has been a history within Tate that black exhibitions were set separately. So, for example, there was a space where Mike's exhibitions took place that had black artists' work in it which was called the Goodison Room. This was just off the main Duveen Galleries and that room was kind of dubbed, 'The Black Room'…. We really were keen that the exhibition [*Migrations: Journeys into British Art* (2012)] would take place within the main part of the Gallery. That was definitely something that came up in the discussions.[148]

Despite the Goodison Room being inscribed with its unofficial label as 'The Black Room' – effectively marking it as a site of Otherness – the creative resistances and syncretism featured in displays such as *Picturing Blackness in British Art, 1700s-1990s* (1995-1996) by Paul Gilroy and *Seeing Africa* (2006) by Mike Phillips helped to transform it into a gallery space where inclusive ideas could be shaped into aesthetically pleasing and informative displays, with nationally visible reach and significance to mainstream audiences. Subsequent displays – such as *Migrations*, *Thin Black Line(s)* and, more recently, *Artist and Empire: Facing Britain's Imperial Past* (Tate Britain, 25 November 2015 – 10 April 2016) – have further acknowledged and presented Britain's diverse, multicultural and diasporic heritage as integral to national narratives and discourses on the visual arts, and Paul Goodwin and Lubaina Himid's work has been pivotal in bringing about these changes.

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[148] *Ibid*, p. 14-15.

At Tate Modern, progress towards ameliorating othering has been more piecemeal. This is partly because attempts to acquire more artworks by continental African artists and host exhibitions of modern and contemporary African art have largely been funded via short-term corporate sponsorship – as evidenced via the programme *Across the Board (*2012-2014). However, beyond issues of finance, Tate Modern's enduring ideological separation of internationalism from issues of diversity that pertain to the historic and systemic presence of racism throughout the global art world prevents it from fully addressing othering. Despite further opportunities to revisit and expand on conversations initiated when Iniva's symposium *"A New Internationalism"* was hosted at Tate Gallery in 1994 – such as its more recent conference *After Post-Colonialism: Transnationalism or Essentialism?* (Tate Modern, 8 May 2010) – Tate Modern continues to practice internationalism according to behaviours observed by Eddie Chambers, who notes:

> '[I]nternationalism' exists as a godsend, for its ability to suggest 'diversity' while leaving intact pre-existing art world hierarchies of employment and curatorial programming. Artists from beyond the UK, over the course of the past two decades or more, have grown increasingly attractive to British curators and gallery directors keen to demonstrate 'diversity' within their gallery programmes but not particularly minded to work with Black British artists, who might in earlier times have represented and benefitted from such gestures. (Chambers 2015: 15).

Chapter 8: Strategies for ameliorating othering

Prelude: A comment on equality in the arts, by Eddie Chambers

> "I am not an advocate of special pleading. I am not an advocate of special spaces. What I am looking for is equal access."

> – Eddie Chambers[149]

8.1 Introduction

The statement on equal access, quoted above, was made by art historian Eddie Chambers in response to interview questions about counteracting the long-standing inequalities experienced by black British artists and other creative professionals of African descent within the UK arts and culture sector. Although expressed as a personal response to the types of discrimination he has encountered since launching his career as an artist-curator in the 1980s, and also as a reflection on the perversities of UK art politics spanning a much longer period, his words are emblematic of the overall stance being taken in this thesis to examine how the impacts and legacies of otherness negatively conferred on individuals with African heritage, on cultural objects with African provenance, and on the African continent itself since the era of European colonial expansion, might be ameliorated and eradicated from contemporary museum and gallery practices in the West.

Insights like these gleaned from the curators' interviews, combined with research findings from the featured case studies, and observations made throughout my career as an educator in the UK culture sector, have been collated in this chapter to examine how Self/Other binaries have been constructed, reformulated and counteracted over time as well as in different national contexts – from the earliest manifestations categorising European cultural achievements as the "brain of the Earth's body" and everything else as "prologue" and "etymologically, 'thrown-behind'" (Preziosi and Lamoureux 2006: 65), through to more recent examples of structural apparatuses, policies and practices that continue to difference and de-normalise Africa within 21st century exhibition settings (see, for example, Thomas 2010: 5, 2013: 18-19).

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[149] Eddie Chambers (Associate Professor, History of Art, at the University of Texas at Austin, USA) interviewed by Carol Dixon, 2 July 2014, transcript, p. 29.

While the nature and extent of these differentiations varies from institution to institution, as well as trans-nationally throughout the West, the cumulative impacts of the othering of Africa have resulted in stereotyped representations and discriminatory practices still influencing the way museum and gallery collections and exhibitions are assembled, documented by academic scholars, animated through curatorial narratives and interpreted by visiting audiences today.

Although a number of different strategies are presented here as approaches for challenging, contesting and ameliorating othering – some directly related to past curatorial projects, and others concerned with longer-term reforms to institutional policies, workforce and governance structures, programming practices and audience engagement techniques – it is important to stress, however, that none should be seen as mutually exclusive, nor interpreted as offering a simple, quick-fix, step-by-step toolkit of best practice from which others can self-select their choice of preferred options. Each of the sections that follow feature successful projects drawn from the exhibition portfolios of museum directors, curators and other creative professionals interviewed over the course of this investigation, as well as selected published case studies documenting path-breaking international partnerships between museums and galleries in the West, and scholars from cultural institutions in Africa and the wider Global South. All have the potential to be considered as a suite of progressive changes that evidence long-term commitments towards embedding equality of access, respect for difference, anti-racism, efforts to 'decolonise' collections, and other forms of socially inclusive museum practice at the level of the individual, institution-wide, nationally, and also internationally. In addition, as Ivan Karp notes (below), researching and appraising these museographic approaches can also inform broader societal discourses about equalities, diversity and inclusion:

> The way we understand otherness is through our conventions, even if in the process of understanding it we misunderstand it. At the same time someone is being made different and exotic, they're being made the same, and museums are repositories of images, organized in characteristic ways that tell us something about the nature of diversity in the societies in which we find them.
> (Karp and Wilson 1996: 262)

8.2 Innovative and experimental curatorial techniques

Four of the ten curators interviewed during this doctoral project outlined strategies for ameliorating othering that featured the application of innovative curatorial techniques – with Clémentine Deliss, Bernard Müller, Lubaina Himid and Michael McMillan all sharing examples of experimental practice from their own portfolios of work involving creative collaborations with artists, with international networks of scholars, and also with diverse publics.

Clémentine Deliss discussed models for curating international exhibitions that combined historical artefacts and contemporary artworks – rejecting prevalent assumptions in the West that a hierarchical orthodoxy for effective curating exists in favour of advocating experimental approaches underpinned by ambitions to 'decolonise' museums. As a former director of the Weltkulturen Museum [Museum of World Cultures] in Frankfurt, Deliss spotlighted recent work completed in collaboration with the Senegalese artist-curator and activist El Hadji Sy and a collective of international scholars from Senegal, Germany, France and the USA to curate the exhibition *El Hadji Sy: Painting, Performance, Politics* (Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt: 5 March – 18 October, 2015).[150] This project was not only ground-breaking in terms of its content – as one of the first major solo retrospectives in a Western museum for a 60-year-old artist who has worked all his life on the African continent – but also because of the curatorial techniques applied to the creative assemblage of archival documents, ethnographic artefacts, contemporary artworks from the oeuvre of El Hadji Sy and recently commissioned installation pieces. An important preparatory phase of the curatorial process was to invite El Hadji Sy to complete a long-term research residency at the museum for several months prior to the exhibition's launch in order to review and select exhibits from the museum's extensive collection of c. 70,000 ethnographic objects, interrogate the archives, and also facilitate consultation workshops

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[150] The exhibition *El Hadji Sy: Painting, Performance, Politics* (Weltkulturen Museum, 2015) was presented in 13 rooms – each one designed to reference and reflect on artistic and political dialogues operating between Africa and Europe at a variety of scales: initially as institution-based conversations between the artist, the curators and museum audiences; as spatial and temporal interactions between archives and objects collected during the colonial era and newly commissioned contemporary artworks on display in the galleries; and as international cultural exchanges between Dakar and Frankfurt, Senegal and Germany, and Africa and Europe. The catalogue of the exhibition includes interviews with El Hadji Sy in conversation with art historians Julia Grosse and Hans Belting, as well as scholarship about the artist's portfolio of work, his activism as co-founder (along with Issa Samb) of the interdisciplinary artists' collective *Laboratoire AGIT'ART*, and his interventions within the Senegalese culture sector to develop and articulate alternative, post-Négritude and post-modernist aesthetics to those espoused by Léopold Sédar Senghor. For further details, see the catalogue essays by Clémentine Deliss, Mamadou Diouf, Yvette Mutumba, Philippe Pirotte and Manon Schwich (Deliss and Mutumba 2015).

for artists, scholars and members of the public through which ideas for the exhibition's proposed content and arrangement were explored in discursive ways. The El Hadji Sy retrospective demonstrated the successful (re-)positioning of the Weltkulturen Museum as a 'post-ethnographic' 21st century space, confident about showcasing its growing collection of contemporary artworks alongside its more conventional holdings.

Figure 47: Photograph outside the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt, Germany.
Photo: Carol Dixon (2015)

Figure 48: Wooden figures (acquired 1926-1964), displayed in the Weltkulturen Museum collection displayed with *Ascendance végétale* (2013) by El Hadji Sy. Photo: Carol Dixon (2015)

This innovative practice – involving transnational and cross-cultural conversations with art historians, curators, political scientists, and members of the general public – is reflective of the wider museological turn towards more inclusive and poly-vocal approaches to exhibiting internationally sourced collections in the West, which began in earnest in the late-1980s and continues to inform current curatorial practices. When recalling past projects and exhibitions curated over the course of that period Clémentine Deliss cited experimental research as fundamental to the process of 'emancipating' ethnographic collections, and freeing curators working in Western institutions from established, polarised models of exhibiting practice:

For me curating was experimental research in the museum and gallery space. I had just curated an important exhibition called "*Lotte or The Transformation of the Object*". It looked at the critical discourse of the object – objects that had 'shadow lives' in museums and on marketplaces. And in that exhibition I purposely had no labels what-so-ever. It was an 'anti-primitivism' show, and I could never have done it in London. I could only do it in the Styrian Autumn in Austria, in Vienna, because there was a discourse there which recognised the experimentation of curating… I think the polarity between an ethnographic contextualisation of an exhibition and an art exhibition – in terms of power and spotlighting – I think it is a false polarity… because so much has to happen in between. There isn't just one model of an exhibition, there are thousands of models. [151]

With specific reference to El Hadji Sy's research residency at the Weltkulturen Museum, Deliss also remarked on the positive, emancipatory influence of working with external scholars and creative professionals to contribute alternative insights and perspectives on the curatorial process, adding:

I believe that with a sick museum the *only* way that you can heal it is through external input… The *re*-mediation has to happen through people who are not part of the orthodoxy of museum anthropology. And the more I see this material, the more I see this working. I am convinced that it is a serious problem if ethnographic discourse attempts to contain the world's historical art objects – and by that I don't mean to say that they are art, I just mean to say that they are the heritage of the world and they cannot be determined by antiquated ethnographic museology. [152]

This trans-national sharing of different research approaches and perspectives replicated and expanded the collaborative practice El Hadji Sy had demonstrated decades earlier when drafting the first anthology about Senegalese contemporary art, co-written with German education scholar and art patron Friedrich Axt (Axt and Sy 1989). Their publication served as an important scholarly response and antidote to much of the inaccurate colonial-era documentation about African art and cultural objects written (primarily) by European colonialists, tourists and amateur anthropologists – whose frequently dilettantish outputs were noted in earlier research by Clémentine Deliss to have "encouraged a particular projection of African art as isolated, untutored and expressionist rather than deeply intellectual, agitational and in dialogue with several cultural partners, including artists working in other parts of Africa, Europe and the USA"

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[151] Clémentine Deliss 2014, interview transcript p. 9. *Lotte or The Transformation of the Object* (Grazer Kunstverein, Graz, Austria and the Academy of Fine Art in Vienna, 1990) featured contemporary artworks by Lubaina Himid, Mike Kelley, Jeff Koons, Haim Steinbach and Rosemarie Trockel juxtaposed with cultural artefacts from Africa, Europe and North America. The assemblage critiqued the changing relationship of ethnographic objects to contemporary art, exploring issues of transfiguration, transposition and re-mediation for exhibits displayed in museum and gallery settings, as well as changing power relations between artists and cultural institutions in the wider art world marketplace. A detailed description of the exhibition features in the book chapter *"Free fall-freeze frame: Africa, exhibitions, artists"* (Deliss 1996: 196-199).
[152] Clémentine Deliss 2014, interview transcript p. 10.

(Deliss 1995: 15). It is not surprising, therefore, that the process of co-curating the 2015 exhibition drew on El Hadji Sy and Clémentine Deliss' long-standing commitments towards collaborative, dialogical and multi-referential artistic production and creative curating to help introduce new and hybrid ways of thinking and working with international collections at the Weltkulturen Museum. As an institution dating back to the early 19th century – originally founded in 1817 as part of the Senckenberg Natural History Society, and later established in Frankfurt as a public museum in 1877 – the Weltkulturen Museum has necessarily gone through several metamorphoses, as well as name-changes, to reflect the major socio-political and post-colonial shifts in anthropological discourse, ethnographic research on world cultures, and post-modern re-conceptualisations of museums as spaces for diverse, cross-cultural communications between increasingly globalised communities of people. The afore-mentioned comment about healing a "sick museum," therefore, not only applies to the specificities of the Weltkulturen Museum, but is applicable to the wider transformation of colonially sourced ethnographic collections housed in the West (formerly designated as 'encyclopaedic' or 'universal') into contemporary "World Museums" (see, for example, Shelton 2001, Macdonald 2016: 10-11).

Figure 49: Exhibition view of El Hadji Sy artworks by El Hadji Sy displayed with four stools from Papua New Guinea in the Weltkulturen Museum collection. Photo: Carol Dixon (11.06.2015). Walls: *Portrait du Président* (2012), acrylic and tar on butcher's paper, 190 x 200 cm. Floor: *Le Puits* (2014), acrylic and tar on jute sacking, 245 x 280 cm.
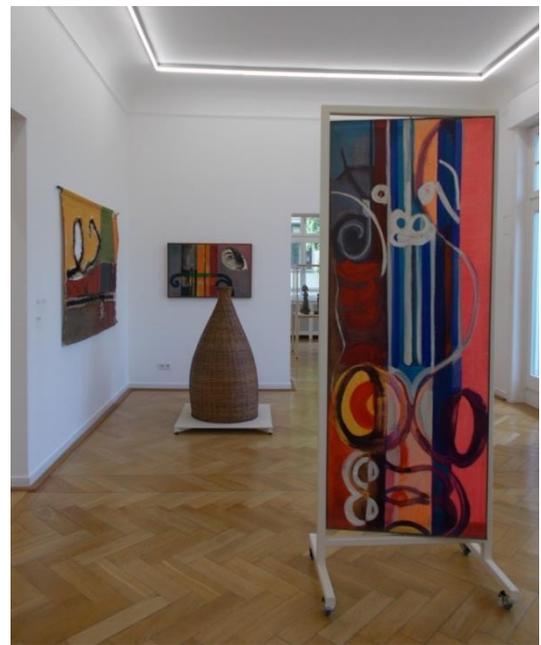
Figure 50: Exhibition view of an art assemblage featured in the *El Hadji Sy* retrospective. Photo: Carol Dixon (11.06.2015). Foreground: Fragments de visage (2010) by El Hadji Sy. Mirror, acrylic on canvas, wood. 200 x 75 cm. Wall paintings: Untitled (1994); *Déclinaison du songe* (diptych) (2004) by El Hadji Sy.

While Clémentine Deliss concentrated on discussing innovative ways of working with contemporary conceptual artists to co-curate museum and gallery exhibitions, in Bernard Müller's curatorial interview he reflected on his participation in broader, multi-disciplinary collaborations – most notably in relation to a research initiative he founded called "Broken Memory," co-ordinated via the Paris-based *École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* [School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences] (EHESS) between 2003 and 2013. Through the establishment of an international network of anthropologists, historians, writers and curators the Broken Memory project supported the production of new exhibitions, art installations and publications that combined museum-based collection research, visual, literary and performing arts practice, and academic scholarship questioning the history and politics of acquisition and issues of restitution for cultural objects identified as colonial 'booty' or 'spoils of war.'

Bernard Müller's collaboration with artist Yinka Shonibare MBE and curator Germain Viatte to display the aforementioned contemporary installation *"Jardin d'Amour"* (2007) at the Musée du Quai Branly exemplified the type of transdisciplinary research and exhibiting practice espoused and developed by academics and creative practitioners involved in the Broken Memory project.153 However, despite the success of *Jardin d'Amour*, Bernard Müller was unable to get approval to pursue further research and exhibitions aligned to the aims of Broken Memory via the Musée du Quai Branly because the museum's president, Stéphane Martin, was cautious of the emotions and sensitivities surrounding French colonial history that might be stirred up. Recalling past conversations, he said:

> I was trying to organise something at the Quai Branly – and it did not work, as you can imagine, but I tried! ...[Germain Viatte said] *'Having spoken to the Président, what is the point? It will activate certain emotions that we will not be able to manage. So, let's postpone it!'* ... And that is a reference word in Stéphane Martin's speeches – always to say, *'We are not a museum of emotions'.* You can find this quotation. Put it in Google and you will find, very regularly, that this sentence will come back: *'We are not a museum of emotions, we are a museum of cultures.'*154

153 Further details about the Broken Memory project and its related publications are listed online at http://www.brokenmemory.net/index.html. Bernard Müller continues to examine relationships between art, ethnology, museums, memory and performance through new projects and publications accessible online via the CURIO project website http://curioweb.org/ [accessed June 2016].

154 Bernard Müller 2014, interview transcript, p. 13

In concluding his comments, Bernard Müller expanded on his support for collaborative curating to advocate for the de-professionalization and de-institutionalisation of exhibiting practices – stating that "museums should be places open to initiatives that can come from people who are not professionals within the museum domain … creating ideas in a democratic and participatory way, and not just using museums as a space for showing what is going on elsewhere."[155] The important distinction here between the creative contributions of those from outside the museum domain and the institutionalised conventions of curatorial 'insiders' – who, as Odile Paulus has documented in relation to France, were (and, I would argue, remain) a body of professionals educated in similar elite schools and universities (Paulus 2003: 61) – is a greater readiness to apply alternative, non-traditionalist practices. I concur with Bernard Müller's viewpoint and, like him, also consider the prevalence of institutional orthodoxy a manifestation of wider national tendencies towards assimilationism and secularism – using museums and other cultural institutions to construct and reinforce a singularised notion of what it means to be French, as he explains:

> Institutionally, it is accepted that there are obviously different ways to do different things and ways to pray, for example. But people will question, *'Is it French, or not?'* … Frenchness, as produced by the history of these institutions… And the state was built on a negation of these differences, even before the colonial issue. During colonisation, with new people coming from the colonies – and afterwards, as immigrants – people were just being treated as the Bretons and the Corsican people were treated… in my research, in the exhibitions, I try to give an answer to that problem and to open spaces where, at least, discussion can begin. This is the idea of the *Jardin d'Amour*, of other work I've done at Quai Branly, and also of my research more generally as an anthropologist.[156]

The irony, therefore, of any claim that the Musée du Quai Branly sees itself as a "museum of cultures" – expressed in the plural, and formally articulated in the institution's official strap line *"Là où dialoguent les cultures"* ["Where cultures converse"] – is not lost on anyone who, like me, has attempted to investigate just how far this state-funded national museum, like similar holders of colonially sourced collections in the West seeking to redefine themselves as "World Museums," opens itself up to appointing a more visibly diverse workforce and governing body, pluralisation of its curatorial narratives to feature more peer-to-peer content by scholars from the Global South on an equal footing with research by in-house curators, and outreach to attract more ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse national and international audiences.

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[155] Bernard Müller 2014, interview transcript, p. 16.
[156] *Ibid*, p. 7.

An important caveat in relation to any suggested increase in curatorial alliances with contacts and collaborators from outside the mainstream museum sector – whether in relation to France, the UK, or elsewhere in the West – concerns the way that institutions formally acknowledge and remunerate the creative ideas, research knowledge, experiential insights and feedback provided by artists, external scholars and diverse publics. These approaches, often grouped using the popular umbrella term "co-production of knowledge,"[157] were discussed at length during my interviews with Lubaina Himid and Michael McMillan – both artist-curators still actively involved in developing their own creative projects and international exhibition portfolios alongside their academic research and teaching commitments in the UK.

Lubaina Himid's commentary emphasised the need for museums to make these various external creative inputs more prominent and more tangibly embedded – including the maintenance of accurate records about external consultations for inclusion in summative reports, published catalogues, and ultimately within institutional archives. Irrespective of whether she was talking generally about the need to see more publications featuring work by black British artists, discussing the importance of pursuing long-term, national and international research via the Making Histories Visible project, interpreting her own artworks (such as the painting *"Between the two my heart is balanced"* (1991)), or recalling past exhibitions – from *The Thin Black Line* (1985) at the ICA through to *Thin Black Line(s)* (2011/12) at Tate Britain – advocating greater visibility and permanence for African diasporan histories in Western museum collections, exhibitions and archives was a recurring theme. The thematic linkages between all these points were summed up in the following comment by Lubaina Himid as we sat together in the reading room for the

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[157] "Co-production of knowledge" refers to the types of collaborative, partnership-based research and project development undertaken by organisations and individuals from different sectors and communities, often seen as a way of empowering historically marginalised and voiceless groups. While co-design, co-production and knowledge exchange models are currently very popular across many areas of academic research and international practice relating to the arts and cultural heritage, there is still a susceptibility to exploitation – especially if significant material differences exist between participating organisations. For example, differences in capacity to invest sufficient personnel and preparation time into developing and sustaining partnership-working over an extended period can sometimes result in a skewing of the power relations. This is also the case if structural and financial inequalities exist at a national level (between, say, state-funded cultural institutions and small voluntary organisations), and also transnationally – especially regarding access to relevant information and communication technologies, published research resources, guidance for protecting the intellectual property rights of respective partners, and the ability to harness reliable research funding to be in a position to work effectively in an international arts context. For further details and references to literature about the benefits as well as the potential problems and limitations of co-production models see, for example, the AHRC report: *Towards co-production in research with communities* (Durose et al. 2015) [online] http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/project-reports-and-reviews/connected-communities/towards-co-production-in-research-with-communities/ [accessed June 2016].

Making Histories Visible project looking through her exhibition catalogue for *Thin Black Line(s)* (Himid 2011):

> I was trying to recapture what I was trying to do in 1980-something, which was to make ourselves visible, and to see ourselves – and that's what this place, or all this space is about as well.[158]

Equally innovative and experimental curation was also discussed during Michael McMillan's interview, who outlined the genesis of his internationally acclaimed installation project, *"The Front Room"* (McMillan 2009b). The project – originally conceptualised during a writing residency at High Wycombe Museum in 1997 – involved members of the general public being invited to a series of Caribbean elders' workshops to reflect on their wartime experiences and subsequent migration to Britain in the period from the 1940s through to the 1970s. Initially titled *"The Black Chair: Revisiting the West Indian Front Room,"* the oral histories and group workshop discussions were recorded in a carefully curated space filled with furniture and other household items from the post-war era, and smaller cultural artefacts (from kitchen utensils through to vinyl records) for participants to handle. Through the use of storytelling, performance poetry and object-handling activities the elders utilised the assembled artefacts and audio-visual archival materials as triggers for recalling and recounting their personal memories of migration and settlement. Selections of popular songs from the decades in focus were also played in the space to assist elders with their reminiscences.

The subsequent reinstallation of the project in museums and performing arts venues across England – specifically in Berkshire (Slough Museum), Greater Manchester (Stretford Design Museum), and London (firstly at The Albany, Deptford, in 2003 and then at the Geffrye Museum, Hackney, in 2005/6) – allowed the recorded content from the preceding creative consultations to be integrated into future assemblages in the form of sound clips, typed transcript extracts used as captions, and other interpretation devices. Reflecting on the success of the exhibition some years later, Michael McMillan wrote:

> More than 35,000 visitors of different ages, genders and social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds visited The West Indian Front Room, an exhibition and installation that I curated at the Geffrye Museum in east London in 2005-06. They experienced moments of embarrassment, recognition and identification, as well as the expression of working-class respectability in the home. The front room resonated emotionally on an inter-generational level beyond simply the black British domestic homes but with other migrant diasporas, from Lagos to Peckham, Dublin to Kilburn, Delhi to Southall, Nicosia to Wood Green, Tel Aviv to Golders Green. (McMillan 2009a)

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[158] Lubaina Himid 2014, interview transcript, p. 15.

By the time the project completed its run in east London – titled, *"The West Indian Front Room: Memories and Impressions of Black British Homes"* (Geffrye Museum, 18 October 2005 - 19 February 2006), Michael McMillan chose to curtail the use of subtitles, strap lines and prefixes indicating an original focus on Britain's settled Caribbean diaspora communities in the UK, and instead extended the project's spatial and temporal scope to incorporate how audiences from a wider range of geographic, ethnic, religious and linguistic cultural communities responded to the concept of "*The Front Room,*" using the setting of each immersive installation in venues across continental Europe, North America and the circum-Caribbean region as the catalyst for evoking people's personal experiences and perspectives on migration and multiculturalism.[159]

Figure 51: The West Indian Front Room at the Geffrye Museum, London (2005). Photo: John A Neligan/Geffrye Museum. Source: Iniva – http://www.iniva.org.

[159] During his 2014 curatorial interview Michael McMillan specifically discussed international commissions received from venues in The Netherlands – where he curated the exhibition *Van Huis Uit: The Living Room of Migrants in the Netherlands* at Imagine IC (Imagine Identity and Culture) in Amsterdam (2007-08), and then toured this project nation-wide. He also discussed an outdoor version of the installation arising from a month-long research residency at the Instituto Buena Bista (IBB) Center for Contemporary Art in Curaçao, titled *"A Living Room Surrounded by Salt"* (2008-09). Photographs and reviews of these installations are available online via Iniva's documentary website for The Front Room project http://www.iniva.net/frontroom/flash/tfr.html and also the IBB Curaçao artist's residency page http://institutobuenabista.com/2009/michael-mcmillan/ [accessed September 2014].

For nearly two decades, *The Front Room* has developed progressively into an example of creatively collaborative curatorship from which valuable lessons can be learned concerning strategies for ameliorating othering – primarily because of the way Michael McMillan has incorporated perspectives from a diverse pool of consultees, oral history interviewees and museum and gallery audiences to help "unpack the private, interior worlds" of trans-national migrants – addressing changing attitudes towards (and symbolic representations of) cultural identity, social status, faith and religious beliefs, issues of taste and the significance of habitus.[160] By reconceptualising and transforming his original project on Caribbean diaspora histories, memories and material cultures into an international touring exhibition always featuring a significant proportion of locally-sourced exhibition content contributed by the diverse publics living in the communities close to each host venue for the installation, the participatory techniques developed via *The Front Room* have enabled Michael McMillan to position this project as an effective initiative for dissolving traditional boundaries between exhibition producers and consumers – opening up more democratic and inclusive opportunities for curating exhibitions and producing poly-vocal interpretation narratives jointly compiled by curatorial staff and visiting audiences.

Caroline Bressey's research on the diversification of historical narratives in museums, galleries and other heritage sites also provides a useful example of ways that innovative and experimental curating can be used to ameliorate the types of othering that occurs in the West due to an absence of historical images, documentation and artefacts about the lived experiences of people of African descent – particularly the omissions, exclusions and erasures resulting from centuries of enslavement and colonialism (Bressey 2012). In a case study based on work she completed at the Museum of London Docklands in 2007 – specifically involving the re-display of a permanent exhibition about "London Sugar and Slavery" (a gallery update that was scheduled to coincide with the bicentenary commemorations of the 1807 Act of Parliament to abolish the British Slave Trade) – Bressey proposed a fundamental re-think about ways to re-interpret, revise and refresh the themed content to better reflect the interests and expectations of increasingly diverse and international audiences. Rather than simply replace out-dated text captions with more contemporary labelling of artefacts and artworks, her approach involved commissioning a new portrait of the black abolitionist campaigner Robert Wedderburn (1762-1835) (for whom no period portraits or illustrations of his likeness existed). The new artwork was based on a contemporary artist's imaginings of what the abolitionist might have looked

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[160] Michael McMillan 2014, interview transcript, p. 2.

like, using a modern-day actor of African Caribbean descent as the sitter for a newly-commissioned portrait. The 'reconstructed' photographic collage – *"Portrait of Lloyd Gordon as Robert Wedderburn"* (2007) by Paul Howard – was designed to be in keeping with the size and style of the existing 19th century portraits of white historical figures already on display, as a way of overcoming a noted visual absence of black anti-slavery campaigners in the gallery space. From Bressey's perspective, this intervention resolved an omission and imbalance of images symbolising the role of black abolitionists in British-based campaigns against the Transatlantic Slave Trade and, more importantly, enabled the exhibition's visitors to "read against, along and between the grains of curatorial narratives for themselves" (Bressey 2012: 101).

8.3   Workforce diversification

Given the under-representation of people of African descent employed in museums and galleries in Britain and France – especially among the professional staff in leadership positions within the largest cultural institutions in London and Paris – issues of workforce diversification are an ever-present consideration when discussing the amelioration of othering.

Sonya Dyer's highly influential report on the state of diversity within the UK's arts and culture workforce, published by the Manifesto Club (Dyer 2007),[161] identified several ways in which this lack of representation of different ethnic, religious, disabled and socio-economic groups was holding back progression across all areas of service delivery as well as outreach to prospective future audiences throughout the population at large. In particular, Dyer's research highlighted a continuing reliance on largely tokenistic, entry-level positive action traineeships and diversity schemes throughout the 1990s and 2000s that gave an impression structural inequalities were being addressed while in reality underlying 'disqualifying practices' preventing people from minoritized and disadvantaged groups entering, remaining within and being successful at every level of the culture sector workforce stayed rigidly intact. Writing specifically about the limitations of Arts Council England's *Decibel* initiative for BME artists and arts organisations (2003-

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[161] The Manifesto Club is a membership-based organisation that runs projects, campaigns and events relating to issues of freedom. Co-ordinated via offices in London, its international membership of journalists, educators, rights activists, artists and other creative professionals from a wide range of employment sectors regularly publish think pieces, scholarly reports, briefings and other documentation in support of free speech, freedom of expression, free association and against the regulation of public space. Although concerned with political and cultural issues operating at local, regional, national and global levels, the organisation is not aligned with any political parties based in the UK, or elsewhere in the world. For further information, see the website: http://www.manifestoclub.com/ [accessed June 2016].

2008),[162] the Inspire Fellowship programme (2005-ongoing) designed to place early-career curators and arts administrators in national museums and galleries, and the *Diversify* museum-based traineeships jointly funded via the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and Museums Association (1998-2009), Dyer revealed that, although these initiatives allowed institutions to achieve short-term statistical targets by (in her words) "bumping up the 'brown quota,'" ultimately they reinforced marginalisation for many of the individuals concerned, often because BME participants were steered towards taking up diversity-specific posts to simply "represent their ethnicity" and be assigned to outreach activities that connected them "almost exclusively with other non-white practitioners, instead of the wider network of powerbrokers in the mainstream art world" (Dyer 2007: 18). By way of suggesting possible resolutions to these ongoing problems, Dyer wrote:

> Inequality cannot be solved overnight by workforce targets. It requires society to have a longer term commitment to equality, and an aspiration that people of whatever background should have the best education and opportunities to pursue the arts. The use of these official schemes to 'promote difference' is not helping black and minority ethnic people enter the mainstream as equals, but instead is keeping them at the margins. (Dyer 2007: 9)

More recent statistics on the UK's creative sector show BME representation at 11% for 2013-2014 compared to a national figure of 14% (Easton 2015: 8). However, given the high proportion of jobs for this employment sector concentrated in London and the South East of England – where a much higher percentage of workers from Britain's African and Asian diasporas reside – the Creative Industries Federation argue that the distribution should actually be closer to 17.8% to match the regional demographics. In addition, the breakdown of statistical data for ethnic diversity in museums, galleries, libraries and

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[162] Decibel was established by Arts Council England in 2003 as a national funding stream to support and encourage greater diversity within the arts and culture sector. Initially the programme focussed on funding visual, literary and performing arts festivals, exhibition platforms and showcase events designed to introduce arts industry decision-makers, other stakeholders and audiences to a greater number of emerging artists described as coming from "a diverse background" – with the programme's first evaluation report specifically mentioning the prioritisation of cultural diversity resulting from post-war immigration and artists with BME backgrounds linked to the African, Asian and Caribbean diasporas in Britain (Arts Council England 2005: 2). Bi-annual performing arts festivals and visual arts awards continued to take place via Decibel funding streams until the programme closed in March 2008. Since that time Arts Council England has funded some arts showcases billed as "Decibel legacy" events, but the strategic focus since publication of the diversity report *"Equality, Diversity and the Creative Case"* (Arts Council England 2015) has been the integration of diversity and equalities priorities within mainstream national schemes, such as *Grants for the Arts (Open Application Funding Programme)*. For further information, see also http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/grants-arts [accessed May 2016].

archives shows a decline from an already low base of 9% BME workforce representation in 2011 to 8% in 2014 (Easton 2015: 12).[163]

So, despite the varying degrees to which high-profile cultural organisations in the UK, like Tate, have been periodically and partially successful in ameliorating othering from their exhibition spaces and collection management practices, sustainable and progressive improvements across entire institutions remains an incomplete and ongoing challenge – not least because senior managers, curators, museum educators and other professionals of African and Asian descent are still worryingly under-represented among staff with full-time, permanent employment contracts.[164] Workforce diversity statistics compiled by the National Museums Directors' Council (NMDC) as part of a survey of selected national museums undertaken in association with the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage (Barrow, Prescod, and Qureshi 2005), as well as more recent data collated nationally by Arts Council England, have indicated that Tate's aggregated data on BME representation amongst its staff and board of trustees is consistently below national averages at less than 9% over the past decade, and is reflective of similarly low percentages for other national museums and galleries in England (Arts Council England 2015: 8-13).[165]

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[163] The aggregated tables of statistics on diversity in UK museums, galleries, libraries and archives featured in the Creative Industries Federation report were sourced via the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) Creative Industries Group, and published in June 2015. The author uses the acronym "BAME" (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) throughout the text (see the Addendum, in Easton 2015: 45-48).

[164] Workforce diversity data for a selection of eight national museums in England (collated in 2005/6 by the NMDC for the Mayor's Commission on African and Asian Heritage) showed that 65 Tate staff out of a total of 738 (8.8%) were black and minority ethnic (BME). Three out of a total of 54 (5.5%) staff in Tate's Education and Interpretation team were BME, but no staff members from a BME background held any of the 44 senior managerial posts (i.e. those reporting directly to the Director of Tate) or the 54 curatorial positions at that time. BME representation on the Board was 1 out of 12 (8.33%). Comparatively, the British Museum reported 169 BME staff out of a total of 915 (18.47%), with 4 BME staff out of 40 (10%) in the Education and Interpretation team, and 5 out of 92 curators from a BME background (5.43%). No senior managers, and 4 out of the 22 members of the Board of Trustees (18.18%) at the British Museum were from a BME background. Source: *National Museums Directors' Conference Cultural Diversity Final Report and Recommendations* (NMDC, 2006) [online] www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/cultural_diversity_final_report.pdf [accessed March 2016].

[165] In addition to the NMDC report (*op. cit.* 2006: 8-9), more recent statistics published by Arts Council England for 2013/14 indicate the BME workforce in ACE's Major Partner Museums represented 2.3% of the total across England (and has remained relatively static at below 3% for the previous five years), compared to a figure of 14% for the BME workforce in England as a whole (taken from the 2013/14 Annual Population Survey Data for England). BME representation as board-level trustees for Major Partner Museums was 1% in both 2013/14 and 2014/15, while BME staff employed in managerial positions was reported as 1.1% in 2013/14 and 2.7% in 2014/15 (Arts Council England 2015: 8-13).

Beyond issues of BME recruitment and retention in managerial and administrative positions, Sonya Dyer's 2007 report also looked into the way funding structures for the arts in the UK have contributed to a perpetual and adverse focus on youth, novelty and presentism when assessing creative contributions by artists from African and Asian diaspora communities. The problematic and de-normalising outcomes for BME artists evidenced since the 1980s led Dyer to remark that "constantly presenting artists from black and minority ethnic backgrounds as 'new' and in need of racially specific schemes is a way of preventing these artists from developing their practices, expanding their networks and creating new audiences for their work" (Dyer 2007: 8).

For black artists and other creative professionals – particularly highly experienced individuals whose careers were established at the height of the Black Art Movement in the 1980s – the realisation that they might still be reliant on funding from the so-called 'diversity pot' several decades into the 21st century has been a difficult situation to experience and attempt to counteract. Reflecting empathetically on this in her report, Dyer (also an artist) wrote:

> [I]t seems to me that thinking about ethnicity and race has not moved on from those times. Black arts exhibitions in the 1980s were often seen as a temporary response to racism, which many hoped would become defunct as a more equitable climate developed. (Dyer 2007: 7)

Similar sentiments were expressed by Eddie Chambers during his curatorial interview in 2014 when he discussed how British artists of African, Asian and Caribbean descent have been "heavily quarantined" by the de-normalising policies and funding practices of Arts Council England.[166] Drawing on his own past experiences working as an artist-curator in Britain from the late-1980s through to the launch of *Decibel* in 2003, Chambers said:

> **Eddie Chambers:** So, when *Decibel* happened, they [i.e. Arts Council England] had money sloshing around for this, that and the other. I refused to take a penny of it, because I don't want to be resourced through that kind of 'ethnic minority pot' … I feel very, very strongly about this, and I feel more strongly about it the older I get. If two babies are born in two different houses in Wolverhampton in the 1960s, or in the mid-1950s, or whatever – [and] one household gives birth to a baby of Caribbean parentage; the other of white parentage – I refuse to accept that those two children should not have exactly the same life chances and opportunities, and access to monies 20, 30, 40 or even 50 years later, because otherwise you are talking about a deeply dysfunctional society!

> **Carol Dixon:** A deeply dysfunctional, deeply divided society. Yes, absolutely!

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[166] Eddie Chambers 2014, interview transcript, p. 18.

> **Eddie Chambers:** ... I am 53; I don't want to go to any kind of BME funding pot. Do you know what I mean? Unless a white person is going to it for the same reasons, I am not going to it. I am not an advocate of special pleading. I am not an advocate of special spaces. What I am looking for is equal access. [167]

Chambers' commentary on the repetitively perverse and dysfunctional aspects of the UK arts and culture sector – often only made visible when institutional spaces and structures normalised as white are negotiated and challenged by black creative professionals – serves to illustrate that the amelioration of othering, and its eradication from museum and gallery practices, cannot be effectively realised if workforce diversity strategies are only targeted at the individuals experiencing the discriminatory barriers and negative impacts of being positioned beyond a raced, classed and gendered "mythical norm" (Lorde 2007 [1984]: 116).

It is difficult to give a comparative perspective on the state of workforce diversity within France's museums and galleries, or across the country's cultural and creative industries as a whole. This is primarily because, unlike in the UK, French laws – particularly legislation on civil liberties, data protection and anti-discrimination passed between 1972 and 1990 enforcing (so-called) 'colour-blind' approaches to equality and diversity as a feature of public policy – preclude the collection and storage of census or other data on the ethnic and racial identities of citizens (see, for example, Bleich 2001, 2003: 7-8).[168]

Despite adoption of subsequent European Union employment directives, anti-discrimination protocols of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (1995), and the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) – collectively centralising respect for diversity as a core aim of public cultural policies throughout the European Union and among UN member states – the collection of ethnicity statistics remains a sensitive and taboo issue in France. Establishment of the independent equal opportunities authority *La HALDE* (*La haute autorité de lutte contre les discriminations et pour l'égalité*) [High Authority for Action against Discrimination and for Equality] 2004-2011, its successor body *Le Défenseur des*

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[167] Eddie Chambers 2014, interview transcript, p. 29.

[168] The term 'colour-blind' is used here to refer to recruitment and employment policies and other institutional structures that have the appearance of neutrality but, in practice, function to disadvantage and prejudice certain individuals – usually on account of their gender, ethnic origin, physical appearance, age, religious beliefs, disability, sexual orientation and/or other identity characteristics. For a more detailed critique of how 'colour-blind' integrationist principles operate within the French legislative and cultural policy context, see also publications by the French social scientists Didier and Éric Fassin (for example, Fassin 2001, Fassin and Fassin 2006) and related historical analysis by Gérard Noiriel and Trica Keaton (for example, Noiriel 2006, 2009, Keaton 2010).

droits, and further laws against discrimination, hate speech and xenophobia passed in the 2000s and 2010s have not prevented racism, social exclusion and unequal access to employment opportunities for French citizens of African, Antillean, Middle Eastern and Asian heritage continuing to be significant factors impacting on diversity across all sectors of employment[169] – not least within the elite cultural institutions and creative industries based in Paris that employ c. 8.8% of the French workforce overall.[170]

High profile cultural commentators, entrepreneurs in the creative industries, and other observers who have written about France's contemporary cultural landscape have documented key concerns about the ongoing lack of diversity among senior managers and creative professionals employed in France's major cultural institutions – noting, in particular, the ongoing, un-tapped creative and entrepreneurial potential of citizens of colour who reside in the Parisian suburbs beyond the "geographical and psychological boundaries of the Péripherique,"[171] as the following statement from the *World Cities Culture Report* (2015) illustrates:

> Paris is hugely diverse, a genuinely global city, with hundreds of different nationalities. The opportunity for new ideas and connections, not just inside the city but beyond national borders, is massive. Its citizens of foreign ancestry can connect Paris to the world, but many of them are entrepreneurs too, ready to create social and economic value. But at present, many believe this resource is being overlooked, through fear or indifference. (Camors and Soulard 2015: 135)

Prominent diversity champions in France have also remarked on the many tensions and paradoxes of the nation's elitist yet publicly subsidized culture sector and the ongoing under-representation of minoritized citizens' contributions to cultural life and society at large that have African, Antillean, Asian or Middle Eastern heritage. The words of Majid El Jarroudi from the afore-mentioned World Cities report are apposite here, and make the

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[169] For example: a national survey of perceptions of discrimination by French jobseekers, published by *Le Défenseur des droits* in 2013 – and featuring feedback from 1506 jobseekers (aged 18+), of which 502 resided in urban areas designated as *"Zone Urbaine Sensible"*["Sensitive Urban Zones"] (ZUS) – found that 48% of the ZUS jobseekers perceived they had experienced employment-related discrimination, compared to 23% of the 1004 jobseekers representing the French provinces as a whole. Within the ZUS sample: 71% perceived discrimination based on having a country of origin other than France, 70% for having a "foreign-sounding name," and 66% because of their skin colour. In addition, 13% of the ZUS-based jobseekers felt they had experienced discrimination on the grounds of their religious background, compared to 6% from the sample representing France as a whole (Fourquet and Gomant 2013: 12-18).
[170] Source: World Cities Culture Forum website summary about Paris (extracted from the World Cities Report of 2015) [online] http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/cities/paris [accessed June 2016].
[171] The comments about the geographical and psychological boundaries of the Boulevard Périphérique in Paris feature in a statement by Rémi Babinet (President and Creative Director of BETC Advertising Agency, Paris), (Camors and Soulard 2015: 135).

case for greater recognition and change in Paris as a catalyst for progression across the country as a whole:

> The culture that is subsidized in Paris remains an elitist culture in many ways. It is a culture that does not look in the eyes of a population in need of recognition. There is a need for a recognition of immigrants by integrating their culture in the common heritage and by valorising the history of immigration in France and its contribution to present Parisian society. [172]

The observations of the Paris-based curators interviewed for this study add further insights to this section of the discussion about the need for workforce diversification, and also emphasise why and how France's publicly funded museums and galleries should be at the forefront of recognising, redefining and visualising those inclusive narratives about "common heritage." In particular, Françoise Vergès described projects developed in France and also on the island of Réunion which convey the importance of having diverse perspectives on the curation of exhibitions and associated public education programmes. This pluralist practice was not only seen as crucial at the exhibition planning and production stages, but also for audiencing to avoid the convention of pitching curatorial narratives at established (and often quite exclusive) visitor groups. Central to her approach was the need to link the histories, provenance and geographical trajectories of colonially-sourced cultural objects within museum collections to major contemporary geopolitical and socio-cultural debates about tackling global poverty, counteracting present-day forms of enslavement, bondage and human trafficking, addressing trans-national environmental protection issues, and other world affairs. She felt it was important for exhibition producers in the West to be emancipated from an over-emphasis on physical cultural objects – which she described as "the European fetishisation of the object"[173] – and instead align object research and display narratives with more intangible heritage.

The first project Françoise Vergès mentioned was a commission from Okwui Enwezor to devise an exhibition for the 2012 Paris Triennale – which she titled, "*The Slave in the Louvre: An Invisible Humanity*." Her conceptual approach was similar to that of artist-curator Fred Wilson, known internationally for his ground-breaking work uncovering hidden histories of enslavement and other important African-American lived experiences via the archives and collections of mainstream museums in the USA (see, for example, Karp and Wilson 1996, Corrin 2011). Outlining the underlying framework and context to her work at the Louvre, Françoise Vergès said:

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[172] Statement by Majid El Jarroudi, Founder of the Agency for Entrepreneurial Diversity (Paris), quoted in the *World Cities Culture Report 2015* (*op. cit.,* p. 28).
[173] Françoise Vergès 2014, interview transcript, p. 20.

My thing was that the collections in the Louvre opened in 1791, and then closed in 1848. ... 1791 was the abolition of slavery in San Domingue; and 1848 was the final abolition in the French colonies... When I was saying that to the curators in the Louvre, the two dates did not ring a bell for them. So I said, these are two very important dates outside of art history for a lot of people in the world. So, let's go and look in the Louvre and find where the slaves are in-between these two dates, represented or not... because this is also the time of the huge wealth being built ... And they [i.e. the curators at the Louvre] said, *"Yes, but you're not going to find a lot."* I said that's OK... what we will see is how slavery contaminated the arts... because, in fact, colonial slavery entered into the social and cultural life of Europe by changing its way of consuming, and its ways of representing themselves.

When pressed about how she was able to successfully steer in-house staff at the Louvre towards a deeper awareness, appreciation and understanding of the socio-economic and geopolitical trade histories embedded in the art collection – and importantly, counteract the othering of Africa and Africans that had occurred by erasure, omission, marginalisation and mis-representation over several centuries – Françoise Vergès explained:

I wanted to show a connected history with cotton taken by the British and the Portuguese in India, brought to Europe, exchanged to the African slave traders against captives, and the captives were sent to the colonies, and the ships brought back sugar. So it was not just a triangle like that – the Atlantic Triangle – it was also these East/West trade routes. So, how the European economy rested on free trade with the East in terms of tea and cotton, mostly a lot of textiles, and the slave colonies ... So, that was a way of talking about *The Slave in the Louvre*... It was also a way of looking at how Africans were in European imaginary: over there [pointing left]; and over there [pointing right]; but not there [pointing centrally]...they were invisible. And it was a way of revealing this invisibility and showing that it was necessary to make it invisible. You could not consume sugar, and you could not have a pot of sugar, and beside that a story about slaves being beaten, and tortured, and maimed. Also, it was about how they constructed a consumer society that had to have nothing to do with the production, which echoes our contemporary world of course. So, it was a way of discussing consumer mentality, and also the ways in which sugar was associated with femininity, sweetness and love. [174]

Similarly, her project "*Tropicomania: La Vie Sociale des Plantes*" (2012) (also discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis) highlighted the importance of contextualising and aligning art-historical and ethnographic collection research with contemporary debates about global trade, the economy and a nation's scientific and cultural heritage. In this case, the methodology involved a triangulation of archival research, visual analysis of fine art paintings and botanical illustrations, and both historical and contemporary investigations into France's global trade relations and agri-business connections to curate a display

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[174] Françoise Vergès 2014, interview transcript, p. 9.

covering the many changing political, commercial, scientific and cultural relationships linking pineapples, bananas, tobacco and rubber tree plants to a diverse global network of people and places from the17th century through to the present. Speaking, for example, about how contemporary commercial and cultural narratives about the pineapple were connected to French colonialism and enslavement histories, Françoise Vergès said:

> I worked on a project called *Tropicomania* with the Galerie Bétonsalon. We picked up the pineapple and followed the itinerary of the pineapple in colonial times, and also today. Historically, when the pineapple was first presented to Louis XIV he was absolutely mesmerised by it. The only fruit that is painted in the cabinet of Marie Antoinette at Versailles is the pineapple. Do you know why? Because the pineapple has a crown. So this kind of appropriation – and then, connected with today, the multinational corporation Dole and the pineapples in the Philippines, and the total exploitation by the US multinationals… So, all these connections and these associations that are made by Europe with fruits, or plants, or products…they become gendered, or they become associated with power, or poverty, or whatever. European culture is absolutely contaminated by the moment of colonialism, of slavery, and post-slavery.[175]

Towards the end of her interview Françoise Vergès discussed a project she developed in Réunion, in collaboration with the writer and academic Jean-Claude Carpanin Marimoutou, and consultees from the island's diverse communities – titled, "*Maison des civilisations et de l'unité réunionnaise*" (MCUR) (2002-2009). The project advocated the creation of a museum of intangible cultural heritage, also described as *"un musée postcolonial vivant du temps present"* ["a postcolonial museum for the living present"] and aligned to the concept of a "Museum without Objects" (see, for example, Vergès 2008, 2009). The pedagogic emphasis of the MCUR concerned constructing curatorial narratives around the oral histories of Réunionese community elders – known colloquially as *"Des Zarboutan Nout Kiltur"* ["Pillars of the Culture"].[176] The proposed gallery displays were designed to represent, give prominence to, and animate histories passed down from generation to generation via storytelling, music, poetry and other creative hybridisations of artistic performance and vernacular cultural knowledge, as Françoise Vergès explained:

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[175] Françoise Vergès 2014, interview transcript, p.10-11.

[176] *Maison des civilizations et de l'unité réunionnaise* [House of Civilisation and Réunionese Unity] was developed as an intergenerational museum design and construction project to celebrate the diverse languages and hybrid cultural traditions of the Réunionese population. Despite several years of planning and development (c. 2002-2009) the MCUR project was ultimately cancelled in 2010 as a result of a change in regional governance of the island from the Communist Party (*Parti Communiste Réunionnais* (PCR)) to the Union for a Popular Movement (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire* (UMP)) and the election of UMP politician Didier Robert as President of the Regional Council of Réunion. In consequence, the proposed cultural centre to house the MCUR's multi-media exhibitions and performance spaces for hosting events about the island's history and heritage was never built. For further information see articles written by Françoise Vergès and Carpanin Marimoutou, published via the online journal *Témoignages* (see, for example, Vergès and Marimoutou 2006, 2008, Vergès 2009) .

Our ancestors invented the Creole languages. We invented a cuisine; ways of being; ways of singing; ways of connecting; ways of looking at the world; ways of honouring the dead, and their gods. Humanity is our wealth – and to show that, it could not just go through objects. We were not saying that there would be *no* objects, but we would start *without* the fetishisation of the object. Because if the objects were not there, then what else would we do? ... our objective was to give voices to the anonymous rather than showing authentic objects. We need to tell our own stories... and through the stories we can evoke landscape, the lives of people, joy and suffering.[177]

What this commentary on all the afore-mentioned projects revealed was that without the willingness and ability to apply an alternative critical gaze on past collecting practices, and embrace broader cultural geographies within the curatorial process – particularly through collaborations that draw on the scholarship of academics, curators, artists and other creative professionals with lived or diasporic connections to nations of the Global South – then more plural, international narratives about the artworks and objects featured in museums and galleries in the West were unlikely to feature prominently in exhibitions.

One can only imagine the added value that having a more diverse workforce of in-house curators could do to improve museum and gallery practices in France, and in Europe more broadly. The current situation of only inviting scholars and creative professionals with the type of international expertise and lived understanding of diaspora histories held by Françoise Vergès (who is French of Réunionese heritage) to work as guest curators, directors and commissioned artists on temporary projects and installations is unlikely to bring about and embed long-term, sustainable and progressive changes.

8.4   International dialogues

Although Françoise Vergès' curatorial initiatives might not be defined as "experimental" in the same way as the projects featuring contemporary conceptual art discussed in the opening section of this chapter, her portfolio does foreground alternative, creative methodologies for ameliorating othering that question some of the foundational principles of Western museology. In particular, the idea of centralising intangible cultural heritage and vernacular knowledge instead of a focus on collections of physical objects – as demonstrated in her plans for the MCUR (2002-2009) in Réunion – is an innovation that challenges European curatorial orthodoxy. To propose a "Museum without Objects" is essentially another way of stating that relationships and dialogues between people, experienced over time and pursued transnationally, are ultimately what matter most within contemporary curating. This, therefore, leads on to considerations about *whose*

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[177] Françoise Vergès 2014, interview transcript, p. 21.

histories far more than which objects should be represented, as well as how opportunities for self-representation and poly-vocality can be given as much prominence in exhibition spaces as is conventionally granted to a curator (or curatorial team) representing the singularised authoritative voice of an institution.

Since 2005 the British Museum's long-term international partnership-working and skills-sharing initiatives with artists and curators in national museums in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania – developed as part of the *Africa Programme* (2005-ongoing)[178] – have helped to increase opportunities for African self-representation via many aspects of its curatorial and exhibiting practices. However, the challenge has always been to prevent dialogical, 'co-produced' interpretation literature from being dominated by elite constructions of heritage, primarily based on a limited range of narrative voices that are not representative of a wider constituency. This has sometimes been the case in the past when histories about nobles, royals and other dignitaries from long-established African dynasties were prioritised above a broader focus on the lived experiences of less privileged groups.

Linked with this are concerns about the continuing hegemony of the West, and the potential for skewed power relations between prospective European and African museum and gallery partners. The results of these inequalities can be both financial and material in terms of differences in access to sustainable research funding streams, the availability of relevant archival records, and links to a wider support network of ICT-based and other research resources provided via higher education institutions and learned societies. Artist Kenji Yoshida was particularly mindful of these issues in 2008 when he reviewed the British Museum's changing approach to ethnographic exhibitions from the 1990s through to the late 2000s and summarised:

> This movement towards self-representation is welcome, and should be promoted further. However, it should be noted that self-representation does not settle the question of 'Who has the right to represent a culture which is not their own?'
>
> … After all, we cannot free ourselves from the issues of the power and politics of representation as long as we are engaged in an exhibition.
> (Yoshida 2008: 166-167)

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[178] The *Africa Programme* was established in 2005 as a skills-sharing initiative between the British Museum and national and independent museums in Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Initial UK funding between 2005 and 2010 was provided via the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, with additional programme support in Africa funded by the Ford Foundation (for work in West Africa since 2007) and the Getty Foundation (for work in East Africa since 2009). Further details are available online at
http://www.britishmuseum.org/about_us/skills-sharing/africa_programme.aspx

Similarly, Tate's involvement in the international contemporary art partnership programme *Across the Board* (2012-2014) (previously discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis) also signalled an important step forward in providing a structure for progressive, trans-continental dialogues between artists and curators in Europe and Africa. However, as most of the strategic planning and event programming was co-ordinated and hosted in London – with Tate Modern functioning as the lead institution – it is difficult to describe the positive outcomes and benefits as evenly and equitably felt across the rest of the contributing organisations and communities of arts and culture practitioners based in Douala (Cameroon), Accra (Ghana), and Lagos (Nigeria).

For genuinely non-hierarchical, peer-to-peer dialogues and co-produced curatorial initiatives to be sustained on an equal footing with museum partners in Africa, then several important processes need to be set in train in the West. Firstly, discussions about colonially-sourced cultural objects held in museum collections across Western Europe and North America that are the subject of restitution claims by official representatives of nations in the Global South where prospective partner institutions are located – whether issued via a government (as in the case of Nigeria's requests to the British Museum, Berlin's Ethnological Museum and other organisations for the return of collections of 'Benin Bronzes') ,[179] or via the lobbying activities of an independent campaign organisation, such as AFROMET (Association For the Return of the Magdala Ethiopian Treasures)[180] – should be factored into initial dialogues as part of broader ethical and political protocols (or agreed terms of reference) aligned to creative and cultural proposals. In this way, potentially sensitive or contested issues of restitution can become part of a wider dialogue about decolonising museums that (physically as well as metaphorically) clears a space for open public debates about alternative ways to animate

[179] Nigeria's National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) is responsible for raising awareness and lobbying European governments, ethnographic museums and other relevant organisations for the restitution of pre-19th century artworks and cultural artefacts that were initially appropriated by British Empire armed forces during the 1897 Benin Punitive Expedition, and later acquired by museums and private collectors based (predominantly) in the UK, Germany, France, Austria and the USA. More information about the British Museum's colonial acquisition of artworks from the ancient Kingdom of Benin features in Chapter 4 of this thesis, and wider discussions about international issues of restitution and repatriation for colonially sourced cultural objects in the 21st century feature in scholarly publications by (among others) Kwame Anthony Appiah (see, for example, Appiah 2006: 115-135), Emily Duthie (2011) and Paul Wood (2012).
[180] AFROMET (Association For the Return of the Magdala Ethiopian Treasures) is a campaigning organisation that was established in Addis Ababa in 1999 to lobby the UK government about matters concerning the identification and repatriation of Ethiopian artworks and artefacts brought to the UK as 'spoils' of Sir Robert Napier's 19th century punitive expedition – also known as the British Invasion of Abyssinia, 1867-1868. To date, several gold crowns and other ornamental treasures have been returned to their country of origin. For further information, see AFROMET's website at http://www.afromet.info/ [accessed June 2016].

exhibition spaces. These alternative approaches could prioritise contemporary, postcolonial relationships between people (in the living present), and the production of creative, multi-media and performance-based installations instead of centralising collections of inanimate objects. In an era when new and improved audio-visual and digital technologies are adding dynamism and interactivity to previously static, object-focused displays – and the increasing international standardisation of protocols for the transportation and exhibition of artworks and other important artefacts on loan around the world is de-legitimizing prior custodianship claims made by some Western museums and galleries to justify their retention of controversially appropriated cultural treasures – a progressive future is one in which all partners' key concerns are respected and tabled for discussion. As Kwame Anthony Appiah has noted in relation to debates about Nigeria's claims on the Benin Bronzes, these complex issues of restitution and repatriation are sometimes very powerfully aligned within the imagination to a constructed sense of collective national identity which, although socially constructed and imagined, nevertheless trigger real emotional responses:

> Some of the heirs to the kingdom of Benin, the people of Southwest Nigeria, want the bronze their ancestors cast, shaped, handled, wondered at – if we will not let them touch – that very thing. The connection people feel to cultural objects that are symbolically theirs, because they were produced from within a world of meaning created by their ancestors – the connection to art through identity is powerful. It should be acknowledged… We can respond to art that is not ours; indeed, we can fully respond to "our" art if we move beyond thinking of it as ours and start to respond to it as art. But equally important is the human connection… The connection through a local identity is as imaginary as the connection through humanity. The Nigerian's link to the Benin bronze, like mine, is a connection made in the imagination; but to say this isn't to pronounce either of them unreal. They are amongst the realest connections that we have. (Appiah 2006: 134-135)

Beyond restitution issues, some commitment towards retrospective re-cataloguing and re-interpretation of historical records should be factored into proposals to co-curate and collaborate on international initiatives. This way, the incorporation of more explicit acknowledgements about the colonial and imperialist origins of ethnographic and 'World Museum' collections in the West can be foregrounded. Such an approach supports the creation of internationally pluralist exhibition narratives (particularly in relation to museums that were established in Western Europe in the wake of 19th century colonial expositions and World's Fairs), articulated by a diversity of curators, scholars and creative professionals forming the partnership. Up-front, poly-vocal expressions of shared heritage of this kind can serve to challenge and contest institutionalised othering within museum practices.

Lastly, the research knowledge, curatorial expertise and cultural insights arising from internationally dialogical creative processes should always be fairly attributed to all the contributing participants or partner organisations – irrespective of where they are based around the world – so that scholars from the Global South, as well as other contributing publics from outside the West are not assumed to be adjunctive or marginal voices within cross-cultural initiatives primarily funded via European or USA-based cultural institutions and corporate sponsors. This is particularly important in relation to the future acknowledgement of contributing authors/artists and their assertion of intellectual property rights over any publications or other formal outputs arising from a collaborative creative process.

Ultimately, then, without addressing and seeking to resolve these important issues of restitution, revision, and respectful recognition as part of an international dialogue on museum and gallery practices (both in terms of the historical links between nations, and their contemporary international relationships today) then the foundations of any proposed future curatorial collaborations are unlikely to be equitable, or free from othering.

8.5   Conclusion

In the process of discussing the amelioration of othering from Western museum and gallery practices it has been interesting to observe how some institutions, as well as strategic authorities representing a wider constituency of museum professionals, have tended to pursue a limited range of approaches that have subsequently only resulted in short-term, piece-meal successes. In many cases this is because changes have been implemented at the level of the individual as opposed to more structural interventions – which, unfortunately, has only served to problematize and de-normalize blackness instead of addressing the underlying causes of discrimination. In the past, conventional strategies have centred on three main contexts: firstly, curatorial innovations involving invitations to creative professionals from continental Africa or the wider diasporas to 'guest curate' temporary exhibitions and special projects; secondly, recruitment-based initiatives to diversify the museum and gallery workforce and the governing bodies of cultural institutions; and, thirdly, development initiatives involving international dialogues between curators and other museum practitioners based in Euro-American institutions and their counterparts from Africa and the wider Global South. It is precisely because these interventions have tended to be pursued as temporary, short-term, sporadic or one-off initiatives – regularly paid for via special, externally sourced funding streams,

promoted as targeted, entry-level workforce diversity schemes, or framed around predetermined (and, at times, paternalistic) aims and objectives that were not consulted on utilising representative expertise from the marginalised communities, diasporas, or regions of the world in focus – that any initial improvements have not been sustained over the longer term.

The insights drawn from the work of the museologists, cultural geographers and other scholars cited throughout this chapter – from Ivan Karp and Fred Wilson in the 1990s, to Caroline Bressey and Sonya Dyer in the 2000s, and, most recently, from the first-hand testimonies of curators interviewed throughout this research project – have collectively demonstrated that the broader application, transferability and sustainability of experimental curatorial techniques, multi-level workforce diversification, and internationally pluralist dialogues about the future of museums and galleries can only be realised when the strategic focus and creativity is centred on dismantling structural inequalities within institutions, 'decolonising' museum spaces to remove Self/Other binarism from collections and narratives, and pluralising dialogues about the international art canon and the world's shared heritage that are fully inclusive of the Global South. It is only when people choose to abandon the representation of difference as a singular 'Other' in favour of exploring 'others' as pluralities – a decision that also necessitates incorporating selfhood within that plurality to simultaneously remove any mythical constructions of a singular, hegemonic Western 'Self' – that there is a chance of eradicating othering.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Prelude: The "wrongly real" legacies of colonialist othering

> The weird, raggedly inaccurate, infantile maps of the old explorers, in school, were more fearful than comic. The wrongly real outlines were perhaps more terrifying than their blank confession "Terra Incognita." If what they knew was so inaccurate, how accurate was what they did not? Not Atlantis and all that, or leviathans and sea serpents, but a world without edges, a flat world without edges, giving us two unappeasable concepts – Terra Incognita and Space. Savages have no such edges, no urgency about topography. Short on such ego, they do not try to contain a detailed world whole in their heads, except as a metaphor, except as the word "world."

Extract from *Isla Incognita* (1973) by Derek Walcott

When St. Lucian poet, playwright and Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott wrote these words in his 1973 essay, *Isla Incognita* (Walcott 2005 [1973]: 51-52), his reflections on the early practices of European mapmakers and naturalists – those who attempted to represent the coastlines of the Americas in two-dimensional form, 'Latinising' many features of the Caribbean landscape according to Western taxonomies – were penned as critical poetics on the inaccuracies and arrogance of colonial cartography. His references to the "guessing wrist of the old mapmaker," the "prejudices of anthropologists," and the "arrogance of an Old World botanist naming this planet," summed up problematic ideological perspectives, geographies and narratives that European expansionists offered up with hubris as the start of the 'official' histories and historiographies of the Caribbean region (see Walcott 2005 [1973]: 52, 54 and 56). These phrases were contrasted throughout with Walcott's repetitive use of the plural possessive pronoun to reflect on what he termed "our landscapes," "our weather," "our poets," "our artists," "our literature," "our learning," and so on. This emphasised an acute, collectively-felt awareness of the inherent tensions, contradictions and discordances between other people's approximated reductions of the region's intricate environments and diverse communities – that he (and fellow islanders) had grown up observing and understanding, through lived experiences, and had developed a sense of belonging to over entire lifetimes. Unlike the late-18th and 19th-century European scientists' pictorial representations of tropical island features – only momentarily sighted from off-shore positions, or sketched in haste during temporary expeditions 'into the field' – the writer's cognisance of the Caribbean region was formed over decades of direct, multi-sensory, immersive interaction, and a carefully curated understanding about people being integral to the natural and cultural dynamics of his beloved Windward isles.

Like the provocative mix of geographical, *ironically* colonialist and identity-related descriptors used in the opening quotation – exemplified in his acerbic assessment that "savages have no such edges, no urgency about topography" – the conclusion to Walcott's essay features a similarly poignant mix of pleas and provocations by the poet. He petitions his readers to reconsider all that we *think* we know about the places and peoples of the Caribbean region by accompanying him on a walk. The invitation to pursue this journey, with him as an expert guide, offers an opportunity to experience alternative, unfixed encounters with the Caribbean's coastal coves and communities (through metaphor as well as movement). This is articulated as affective/emotional narrative running contrary to the othering of the colonialist gaze. Instead of advocating a continued focus on imitative representations, reproduced by a succession of Western explorers, Walcott envisions that his escorted tour will enable readers to reject 'Old World' histories, pseudo-scientific classifications, inauthentic maps and the associated legacies arising from the "wrong or casual naming of things" (Walcott 2005 [1973]: 57) – including the hegemonic representation of certain people *as* things, deemed abject, uncomplicated, 'savage,' and, thus, entirely "knowable" (see, also, Ahmed 2000b: 51, Bhabha 2004: 101, McKittrick 2007: 102). He also invites his fellow journey-makers to move (and *be* moved) towards more holistic ways of seeing, reading, experiencing and understanding the subtleties of this region's landscapes, lives and literatures.

Mindful of the linguistic paradoxes of colonial geography – in which descriptive classifications from the so-called 'Enlightenment era' and the 'Old World' were mapped onto existing places to produce 'New World' topographies, and thus falsely attempt to 'illuminate' already known, inhabited areas by incongruously inscribing the words *"terra incognita"* – Walcott concludes:

> It has taken me over thirty years, and my race hundreds, to feel the fibres spread from the splayed toes and grip this earth, the arms knot into boles and put out leaves…The noise my leaves make is my language…It is a fresh sound. Let me not be ashamed to write like this, because it supports this thesis, that our only true apprehensions are through metaphor, that the old botanical names, the old processes cannot work for us. Let's walk. (Walcott 2005 [1973]: 57)

Although these poetic perspectives are fully acknowledged as partial and situated, this powerfully voiced positionality from a black St Lucian scholar rightly blurs, unsettles and destabilises the long-established hierarchies of a colonial past that *still* circulate to render local, vernacular knowledge as only ever particular, while Western representational

cartographies from the "Scientific Revolution" onwards are constructed as universal (see Chapter 2 ("Of Myths and Maps") in Livingstone 1992: 33).[181]

9.1   Introduction

Inclusion of the aforementioned opening and closing extracts from *Isla Incognita* as a prelude to this chapter serves several functions. Firstly, the themes addressed about the inaccuracies and arrogance of early cartographic and taxonomic practices by colonial mapmakers and botanists correspond very closely to the historical and geographical themes covered in my earlier chapters about the (often violent) imposition of racialized Self/Other hierarchies of humanity, and inferiorisation of black lives in the 'New World' to categorise and reproduce blackness and diaspora spaces as perpetually 'exotic,' impulsively 'primitive,' "readily knowable," and so stereotyped for people to be expected to conform to a set of "preordained scripts… [*we*] (as individuals) played little or no part in drafting," however, must continuously struggle to evade or challenge (see, respectively, McKittrick 2006: xv, 2007: 102, Walcott 2007: 233, and also Chapter 1 of this thesis).

Secondly, Derek Walcott's poetics about the intricate (and sometimes imperceptibly subtle) diversity of Caribbean landscapes, the triadically entangled, transatlantic histories and geographies of hybridized populations, and the writer's self-awareness of his corporealised and artistically projected identity as a diasporan with ancestral connections to Africa, Europe and the Americas, all align closely with my own perspectives on the embodied, expressive and nomadic identities that I negotiate as a diasporan of African-Caribbean descent in the UK *also* seeking to challenge and counter-narrate the impacts and legacies of Western Europe's historically hegemonic relationships to/with areas of the Global South (see the Introduction to this thesis, and also Chapters 1 to 3).

Thirdly, Walcott's essay was written in the early 1970s: its date of creation corresponding with the start of my formal education and first primary school trips to museums and galleries as a child; and its date of publication in the West more than three decades later occurring during the same year that I made a major career-turn away from working in the formal education sector as a teacher, and then a project manager in HEIs, to become a regional development manager supporting and promoting informal learning opportunities via museums and galleries in London, from 2005 onwards.[182] Therefore, the temporal and geographical trajectories of this text – from initial drafting in the Caribbean, to formal

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[181] See, also, Stuart Hall's comments on the binary of "Particularism vs. Universalism" in the concluding chapter of the book *Un/settled Multiculturalism* (Hall 2000: 225).
[182] See also the footnote on p. 6 of the Introduction to this thesis.

publication in the West – serve as a parallel timeframe and foundational context for the development of my early awareness of a *differenced* sense of Britishness connected to the Caribbean, and a *minoritized* career in the world of museums and heritage – always intellectually attuned to, but socially excluded from, the full range of creative and cultural opportunities the sector has to offer.

Like Walcott, Western Europe's dehumanising taxonomies, reductive categorizations, and inferiorisation of the populations, places of significance, and aspects of cultural heritage that constitute the global African diasporas (including Africans *in* Europe, as well as on the African continent, in the Americas, and elsewhere) simply do not work (and have never worked) for me. Aligning myself with the sentiments expressed in the plural in *Isla Incognita*, I go further to echo the line that it "cannot work for us" (Walcott 2005 [1973]: 57) – meaning *any* one of us that forms part of our shared, global humanity.

So, in utilising the last words of Walcott's essay, "Let's walk," this introduction is my parallel invitation to readers of my doctoral thesis to also '*walk'* with me (physically, virtually and metaphorically) as I re-trace the palimpsests of my prior journeys through museal spaces, galleries, archives and exhibitions in London and Paris to re-examine the histories, geographies and legacies of the othering of Africa as an immersive, nomadic and dialogical review and evaluation process. The invitation to walk together also implies that we converse over the course of re-appraising curators' interpretation narratives, artists' creative outputs, institutional display spaces, and other reviewers' critical perspectives on museum and gallery exhibitions.

Although this serves as the closing section of my doctoral thesis, importantly it also signifies the opening up of new and further opportunities to think *differently* about our individual and collective relationships to museal spaces, and their curated assemblages. This is very similar to the way geographers such as Paul Carter have used research of historical maps to encourage and enable us to "think our relationship to place differently" (Carter 2009: 13). Carter's work also considers how outline representations of a 'wrongly real' colonial past can signify that:

> The line is always the trace of earlier lines. However perfectly it copies what went before, the very act of retracing it represents a new departure. To think the line differently is not only to read — and draw — maps and plans in a new way. It is to think differently about history. To materialize the act of representation is to appreciate that the performances of everyday life can themselves produce historical change. (Carter 2009: 9)

Taking a perambulatory approach – or, traversing cultural spaces in ways that Gillian Rose and Divya Tolia-Kelly describe as engagement with visuality/materiality "beyond the ocular" (Rose and Tolia-Kelly 2012: 3) – is also in keeping with broader feminist approaches to geography that advocate "strategic mobility" as a mechanism for examining the politics of culture from a range of positionalities and perspectives (Rose 1993: 13, and, more generally, see also Penrose et al. 1992, McDowell 1997) – including, very significantly in this case, *subversive* aesthetic mutability, contestation, and strategic "counter-normalisation" of established grammars of difference and representation (Tolia-Kelly and Morris 2004: 157).

9.2   Reflections on the research process

My research has focused on a series of metamorphoses, where the architecture, content and purpose of museums and galleries has transitioned from being primarily concerned with collection, classification and exhibition of objects – with their displays serving a cultural enrichment and connoisseurship role for elite audiences – towards the provision of popular leisure and entertainment services and experiences for a more diverse multitude of publics. At the heart of this examination of the othering of Africa and its diasporas within such changeable settings in the West was a determination to address three overarching questions:

1. To what extent are artworks and artefacts created by African and African diaspora artists exhibited in alterity to Western European art in British and French museums and galleries?
2. How have othering processes in relation to Africa and its diasporas changed over time?
3. What strategies might be employed to ameliorate othering processes and practices?

As each question pertained to manifestations of Self/Other binaries as a pairing up of complex, paradoxical and unstable phenomena – produced, reformulated and discursively remediated over time and space – an important starting point for addressing these issues was to identify cultural institutions in the West whose foundational narratives, collection histories, display spaces, and exhibition portfolios were sufficiently well-established and archived to encompass the historical and geographical scope and transnational dynamics of this enquiry.

The Introduction and Chapter 1 of this thesis set out why four particular institutions in the UK and France were selected as research sites, specifically: the British Museum; the Musée du Quai Branly; Tate's London galleries; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris. The collections of ethnography and fine art acquisitions from Africa stored and displayed within these institutions were critiqued as exhibits and objects situated within two important cultural capitals inextricably linked to past imperialist expansionism by British and French colonial powers throughout the African continent. This made museal spaces in London and Paris pivotal to this examination of transitions in practices that othered Africa, and also framed people connected to the African diasporas as "the Self's shadow" (*op. cit.*, 1988, p. 280). This examination involved looking back to the colonial past, surveying curatorship and creativity within the postcolonial *present,* from diverse perspectives, and projecting forwards to consider multiple possibilities of a future without (or, at least, less stymied by) the damaging impacts of Self/Other binarism.

The physical structures of the selected research sites exemplified ways in which othering and its amelioration have manifested as part of the changing architectural design and construction of museums – with the British Museum's Bloomsbury building, and the wing of the Palais du Louvre housing the MQB's prefiguration galleries representing two of the longest-established museal sites with practices spanning three centuries. Equally, the fine art collections and display spaces at Tate's London galleries and the Pompidou in Paris were situated as important sites for examining modern and post-modern fine art exhibitions in relation to the othering of Africa. Moreover, these art galleries facilitated investigations of the globally transitional mid-20th century decolonial period, as well as considerations about strategies for eradicating contemporary othering practices over the most recent postcolonial decades of the late-20th and early-21st centuries.

The *Methodology* chapter and the introductory sections for the four case studies (Chapter 3 and Chapters 4 to 7, respectively) featured specific information about how all these institutions have continuously used building (re)design and (re)branding to reconceptualise their *raisons d'être*, pedagogical purposes and political aesthetics. This included a review of recent interior renovations and re-hangs in the early 2000s that enabled the sites with collections of ethnography to telegraph attempts at moving away from replicating the disciplining atmosphere of classically designed, Greek revivalist architecture – previously signifying museums as 'temples of learning' – towards producing more transparent, glass-built façades and expansive white-walled interiors. In the case of the British Museum, the Bloomsbury building's millennial modernisation led to the construction and inauguration of the interior Great Court and Sainsbury Wing in

December 2000 (see Chapter 4). Around the same time, the MQB's *préfiguration* galleries also opened as a permanent display within the Louvre's *Pavillon des Sessions* in April of that year – paving the way for the development of a new, *post*-Millennium site designed by Jean Nouvel, and inaugurated by Jacques Chirac along the Seine's quai Branly, just six years later (see Chapter 5, section 5.2).

While the physical structures and interior design features used at these sites can all be described as contemporary architectural innovations, the case study research of collections of ethnography at the British Museum and the MQB did reveal some deeply problematic and disturbing Self/Other binary continuities linked to the re-housing and re-display of these (respectively) 'refreshed' and 'new' African galleries. Most notably, concerns were spotlighted about the relative positioning of African holdings, contrasted with what are generally considered to be (at least in terms of visitor footfall) the museums' main attractions. For example, the British Museum's African Galleries went into a quite remote, windowless, subterranean basement of the Sainsbury Wing (see Figure 52). For the MQB, its *Pavillon des Sessions* prefiguration at the Louvre was 'entombed' in the furthest, most peripheral, lower-ground-floor area in the south-west annex, situating the African, Asian, American and Oceanic objects (some might say unintentionally, but others argue deliberately, *by design*) physically, geographically and culturally 'distant' from the Louvre's 'heart' – the room housing Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* [*La Gioconda*] (see Price 2007: 63-64, Ford 2010a: 640; and Figures 16-18 in Chapter 5 of this thesis)*. Later, the *Afrique* "contact zone" that opened at the main MQB site in 2006 was presented in a poorly-illuminated permanent collections area of Jean Nouvel's intricate – but troublingly designed, and problematically conceptualised – museum building (see Figures 6-8, and 52).

Everything about the latter's amorphously constructed settings, and colour palette selections within this *Afrique* zone, were designed to symbolise (in the architect's words) a "strange," "dark," "haunted" and "ambiguous" forest under-canopy (Jean Nouvel, in Copans 2006: 40-48 mins.).[183] However, the conceptualisation and designs were more aptly described by Nouvel's critics as the dimly-lit "jungle fever," "jungle whimsy," and "exoticizing vision" of a fantasist (see, respectively, Harding 2007: 32, Wajid 2007: para. 2, Strand 2013: 40).

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[183] See also the architect's online commentary about the MQB project [French and English translations], *"Quai Branly Museum, Paris, France, 1999-2006: Presence-Absence or Selective Dematerialisation"* (2006) Source: http://www.jeannouvel.com [accessed November 2015].

These historical and cultural continuities with the colonialist treatment of anything African as marginal to, less than, or far from the centrality of the West *as* Self have all the hallmarks of the othering of the African collections as products of the "Dark Continent" (see, in particular, Elliott 2007: 32, Lebovics 2007: 10, Demissie 2010: 81) – thus also re-casting continental Africa and its diasporas as (in Spivakian terms) "the Self's shadow" (*op. cit.*, 1988, p. 280; and see also p. 11 in the Introduction to this thesis).
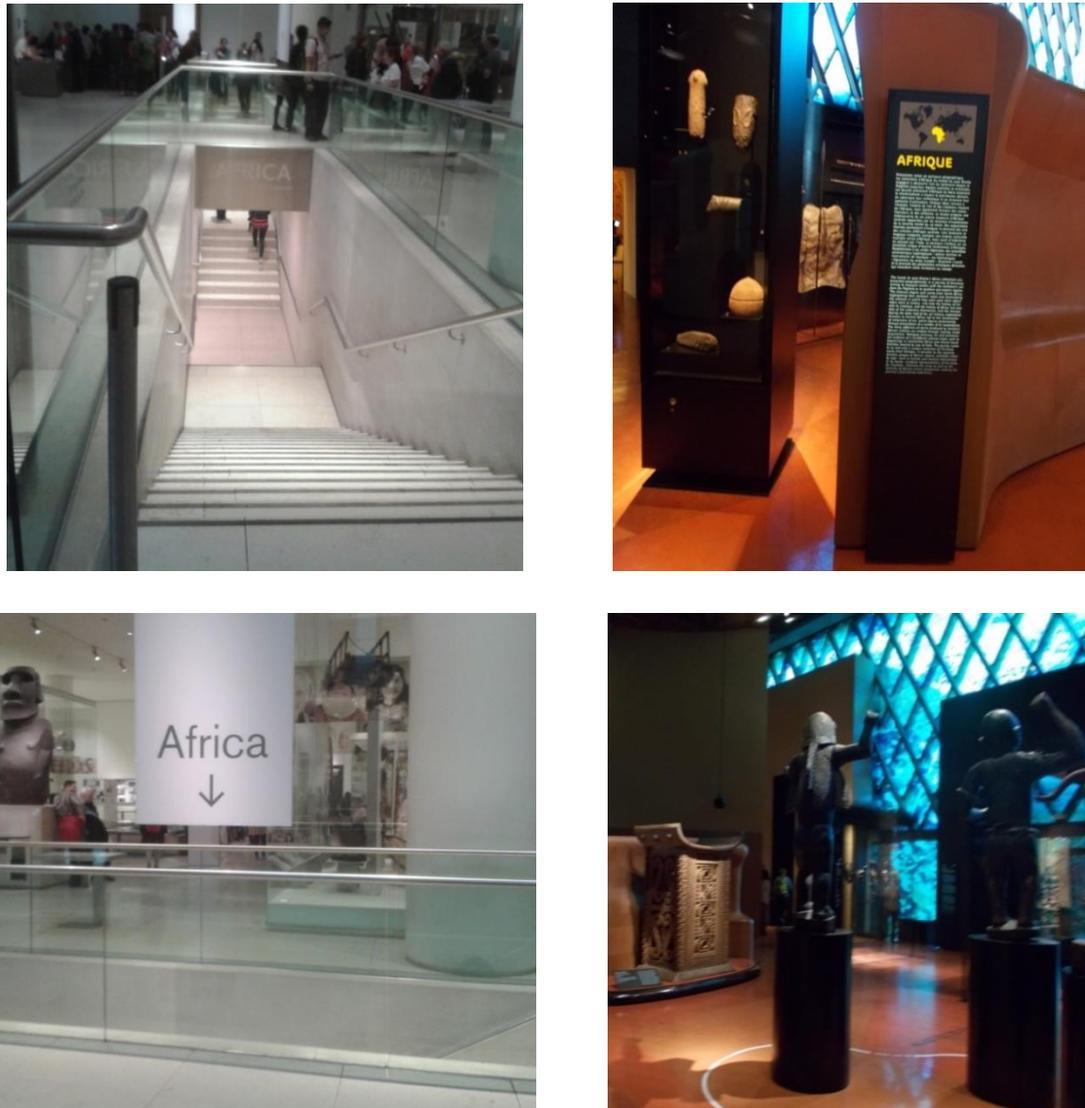
Figure 52: Signage and entrances leading to the Africa sections at the British Museum (shown on the left) and the Musée du Quai Branly (pictured on the right). Photos: Carol Dixon

Aside from architectural metamorphoses, related changes in institutional ethos, arts education pedagogy and strategic policy developments for the four institutions also signalled some conceptual and operational transformations. Scholars of art history and museology, from (among others) Mieke Bal in the 1990s to Claire Bishop in the 2010s have sought to define these various transitions in institutional mission and make-up

within a broader context of post-modern, cultural and curatorial discourses that distinguish 'old' from 'new' museums positioned astride the late-20th century 'turn' towards "new museology" (see Vergo 1989: 3-4, Bal 1996: 153, Bishop 2012: 241-2; and Chapter 4 of this thesis). This 'turn' was (and remains) closely associated with 'decolonial' perspectives on plural modernities (see, also, Bishop 2013: 43, Grenier 2014: 25-27; and Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis). Turning towards the 'new' was also discussed via the curatorial practices of Paul Goodwin at Tate, and Catherine Grenier at the Pompidou within their respective contributions to the presentations of *Afro-Modern: Journeys through the Black Atlantic* (Tate Liverpool, 2010), *Migrations* (Tate Britain, 2012), and *Multiple Modernities, 1905-1970* (Pompidou, 2013-15) (see, respectively, Barson and Gorschlüter 2010, Goodwin 2012, Grenier 2014; and also Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis).

In Claire Bishop's recent essay about these "new museums" and their "radical museology" across Europe in the 2010s, Bishop writes:

> [T]hese museums draw upon the widest range of artifacts to situate art's relationship to particular histories with universal relevance. They do not speak in the name of the one percent, but attempt to represent the interests and histories of those constituencies that are (or have been) marginalized, side-lined and oppressed. (Bishop 2013: 6)

Importantly, however, the case study research documented in this thesis has gone much further to debate and foreground the spatialization of "*third space*" cultural geographies, dynamics and trajectories in museums and galleries with reference to the work of geographers and spatial theorists (see, for example, Bonnett 1992, Soja 1996, Routledge 1996, Rose 2002, Massey 2005; and Chapter 6 of this thesis) foregrounded just as much as scholars of the history of orientalism, postcolonial cultural politics and contemporary cultural theory (see Said 1978, Said 1993, Hall 1997, Bhabha 2004; and Chapters 1, 2 [Section 2.2], 6 and 7 of this thesis). In this way, the exhibition analysis featured throughout Chapters 6 and 7 has shown that it is simply too reductive to keep over-emphasising the old, blunt dualities of 'old' and 'new' (or the prefixes 'pre-' and 'post-') for critiquing complex aesthetic, ideological and globalized shifts in museology and museum practices. This is also a very important consideration in relation to the contemporary treatment and re-definition of collections of ethnography, historically 'ethnographic' or 'encyclopaedic' museal spaces, and the re-branded 'World Museum' collections located in Western European capital cities (see the concluding sections of Chapters 4 and 5).

Postcolonial cultural theorists, curators and art critics of African descent who have historicised the display of African and diasporan artists' works in the West since the era of

post-World War 2 decolonisation have attested over several decades that curatorial practices have been slowly improving, albeit with many of the highest-profile museums and galleries starting from a *very* low base (see, for example, Enwezor 2003, Enwezor and Okeke-Agulu 2009, Njami 2011). However, some prominent publications by Nigerian-American curator and academic Okwui Enwezor within this body of scholarship have also explained why *significant* progress has remained incomplete over this entire period owing to the ongoing imbrication and entanglement of colonialist ideologies and exclusively elitist practices embedded within the operational infrastructures, "institutionalized power" regimes and "systems of legitimation" of Western organisations (see, in particular, Enwezor 2003: 74). What also remains unchanged is the continuing marginalisation of African and diasporan artists, even within the most innovative, post-modern, 21st century spaces for international contemporary fine art displays and performances, which also seek to facilitate democratic, cross-cultural dialogues. Factors such as skin colour, other phenotype characteristics, issues of gender, sexuality, corporeality and disability, class and socio-economic status, place of birth and educational background continue to influence whether, how and how often certain artists' works get showcased, purchased, 'canonised' and promoted by institutions like the Pompidou and Tate Modern.

As specifically discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, progressions in conceptual and operational practices are neither achieved, nor purposefully evaluated, simply by setting and modifying statistical quotas, targets and ratios to assess what are considered 'proportionate' or sufficiently representative for the numbers and range of works by black artists displayed in cultural venues – or, indeed, the number of exhibitions conceptualised by black curators. Similarly, other concept-driven creative and strategic developments cannot be meaningfully assessed by simply working out the percentages of BME/BAME staff and contractors recruited or commissioned to work in museums and galleries over a specific period of time in relation to national workforce averages, or by aggregating and assessing the various diversity 'profiles' of publics attending exhibitions and programmed events as consumers of a suite of cultural offers. In any case, such statistics – especially when collected in isolation of any other action on diversity – often only serve in the UK as aspirational, voluntary targets to be (dis)missed without sanction (see Bishop 2006: 180, Dyer 2007: 9-11); and, in France, are openly denounced as running contrary to the legislation and the principles of *laïcité* that present the Republic as indivisibly democratic, egalitarian, secular and 'colour-blind' – and, therefore, disallowed by law (see, for example, Stovall 2006: 211, Keaton 2010: 108).

What might be seen as genuine and significant progression involves mainstream institutions acknowledging and embracing the differences, nuances and pluralities *within* diversity, and considering this as a way to broaden the scope and quality of conceptual and pedagogic practices. Equally, recognising and accepting that there are barriers to inclusion embedded within the fabric of operational infrastructures, policies *and* practices is the first step in developing strategies to remove and prevent normalised forms of marginalisation coupled with the unjust *status quo* of hegemonic elites set apart from (what appear to be) ever-expanding peripheries.

Particular constructions of blackness in the West as *perpetually* marginal, 'new,' urban, masculine/masculinist and youth-oriented – as well as the biased interpretation of African and diasporan artists' works and life experiences as only ever of interest to mainstream publics if linked to the politics of identity and resistance – means that, at best, inequalities and disparities throughout the culture sectors of Western Europe are envisaged and treated as 'fringe' or 'special' issues of sporadic, minor concern to those publics considered majority audiences. At worst, diversity issues for the arts and heritage are regularly framed as inconveniences that disturb the comfort, security, opportunities and privileges that can (and do) accrue to elites precisely because they construct, modify and police barriers to keep out whomever is deemed Other – positioning that otherness as always existing *beyond* whichever borderlines best serve the purpose of delimiting the exclusive, hegemonic core.

Consequently, discourses about the othering of Africa only stand a chance of achieving sector-wide attention during cyclical conference discussions and symposia debates about art and the politics of identity, largely attended by already informed individuals. Regrettably still (and more often than not), these issues and forums seldom garner mainstream publicity, popular attention or active focus outside the "heavily quarantined" and compartmentalised diversity 'window-dressing' that carries labels such as Black History Season, LGBTQ History Month, Disability Awareness Week, International Women's Day, and so on.[184]

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[184] My use of the phrase "heavily quarantined" is taken directly from the interview with Eddie Chambers (*op. cit,* 2014, transcript, p. 18). It is repeated and emphasised again here because the notion and practice of 'quarantining culture' (yet *another* form of othering) aptly signifies that there are socio-spatial aspects to ethnically categorised policy-making, funding, cultural programming and exhibiting practices. It also deliberately alludes to the historical racisms within falsely constructed 19th- and 20th-century "civilising mission" narratives, articulated by European elites to promote the health, strength and hygiene of white colonial settlers in the former British colonies – often enacted and enforced through the maintenance of public facilities and services reserved exclusively for white people, and kept separate from and better resourced than any differentiated

It isn't, of course, *always* problematic to continuously package 'window displays' for cultural diversity in the arts in this de-normalising way. But, when more diverse publics are promised (and come to expect) that there will – at some point – be more strength and depth *beyond* and *behind* the window displays – over the thresholds, and embedded deep within the interior infrastructure, collections, archives, programme schedules, displays and performance spaces – then the superficial gloss of that perpetually '*festivalised*' and hyper-celebratory diversity 'bunting' begins to wear thin, come apart at the edges, lose its lustre, and dissolve into vacuous nothingness.

It is for these types of reasons, and because of situations like this, that the physical presence of black or brown people in Western museums and galleries – just like many colonial-era depictions of black corporeality in works of fine art in Western Europe – still symbolise "bodies that matter" for predominantly more negatively *'raced'* reasons than progressively positive ones. This applies irrespective of whether one is an artist, curator, educator, art enthusiast or *any* attending member of the Western museum and gallery sectors' visiting publics.[185]

9.2.1 Questioning alterity

With particular regard to the first research question about the extent of othering that positions Africa asymmetrically Other in relation to the West, the research discussed in all four case studies can be brought back to Derek Walcott's commentary on the "wrongly real" line-drawings of colonial cartography. It can also be placed firmly alongside Paul Carter's researched observations of colonialist geographies that define Self/Other

and designated on racist grounds as only suitable for black and brown publics (see earlier references in Chapters 3 and 4, re. McClintock 1995). Anne McClintock's aforementioned research of colonial archives discussed in relation to the British Museum case study documents these discussions about hygiene and colonial racisms in the British context (*op. cit.*, 1995, pp. 209-11). However, similar discussions that unpack "the old colonial rhetoric of the 'civilizing mission'" within the French imperialist context, and the mid-20th century, post-World War 2 domestic metropolitan context of the Hexagon, also feature in Chapter 2 of Kristin Ross's book *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (see, in particular, Ross 1995: 114).

[185] Inclusion of the term "bodies that matter" within this context is in reference to – but is not an uncritical acceptance of – Judith Butler's writing on gender, sexualities and performativity theory (see, for example, Butler 1990, 1993). In Butler's work, she specifically writes about societal attitudes steering (white) women towards the performance of constructed femininities that may not necessarily equate with how they see themselves or their biological identities – describing gender as a "free-floating" signifier or "artifice" (Butler 1990: 10). However, what I am questioning – with particular regard to the lived experiences of black African and diasporan people in the West – is why cultural policies, institutional structures, and everyday practices remain so resistant to the positive recognition and valuing of difference within equalities, along the lines of a Deleuzian philosophy of difference that is not framed within the context of representation, and focuses on difference as a multiplicity of non-hierarchical relations (see Deleuze and Patton 2004, Deleuze and Guattari 2004).

representations as "an artifact of linear thinking" and " a binary abstraction that corresponds to nothing in nature" (Carter 2009: 8-9).

My evidencing of these conclusions within the context of museum-related cultural geographies found that the design and display of plural narratives – articulating and demonstrating *multiple* artistic and cultural modernities – was considered and demonstrated as a progressive and effective way to resist, contest and ameliorate the construction of such binaries, linked together by false notions of a singularised linear artistic modernity (Hall 1992: 276).

In the conclusions to Chapters 4 and 5, I evidenced several ways that such false binaries and linear "West and the Rest" materialisations of difference have been – and could continue in the future to be – ameliorated within the context of poly-vocal exhibiting practices. For the Africa sections of these ethnographic collections, advocacy was expressed that these areas could become more open spaces for decolonial dialogues by (among others) Ruth Phillips and Chris Spring (writing and speaking in reference to the British Museum), and also Bernard Müller, Clémentine Deliss and Françoise Vergès (in commentaries pertaining to the Musée du Quai Branly, and international collections of ethnography more broadly). Ultimately, there were many convergences in thinking that these gallery spaces could become more politicised arenas where difficult knowledge about the colonial appropriation of art objects could be openly examined and discussed in a spirit of *truly* international, collaborative curatorial practice and democratic dialogue.

However, at the British Museum, the vocabulary of museal discourse still needs to move away from the language of 'holdings,' 'property,' 'protective custodianship' and 'cultural ownership' and be framed to focus on more corrective and hybridised curatorship featuring digital/virtual, multi-media and performance-based practices, alongside more collaborative conceptual and strategic planning with external partners involved much earlier in the project development process. More decolonial dialogues and active collaborations to address transnational restitution claims that consider the physical return of objects whose place in the Museum's collections is open to contestation and challenge would also signify a progressive step towards positive, purposeful, transnational dialogue (see, in particular, Chapter 4, section 4.5 of this thesis).

For the Musée du Quai Branly, similar evidencing of progressive co-curatorship to reconfigure permanent collections in the *Afrique* zone, and not just in the temporary exhibition spaces, was presented. Contemporary expectations – voiced by cultural commentators and other publics concerning previously untold and deliberately hidden

narratives about European colonialism, and its ongoing geo-political impacts throughout the African continent and global diasporas – were also discussed, with particular reference to successful initiatives such as Bernard Müller's Broken Memory project (see this thesis, Chapter 8, section 8.2). Along with this, the analysis and critique of the experimental pedagogies espoused by Senegalese artist-curator El Hadji Sy, working trans-continentally in dialogue with German-based curators Clémentine Deliss and Yvette Mutumba, provided further insights about effective ways to develop *genuinely* collaborative creative residencies, archive-based research and co-produced arts education workshops to realise new exhibitions. In this case, the collaborative approach resulted in the successful production of new site-specific contemporary artworks, and archive-related historical and political performance art, integrated with nuanced public engagement programmes, symposia and exhibitions that achieved many positive, pro-social outcomes and impacts in Frankfurt, Dakar and internationally (see, in particular, thesis Chapter 5, section 5.3, and also Chapter 8).

The evidencing of issues of alterity arising from Research Question 1 were also examined in Chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis in relation to modern and contemporary fine art collections, assemblages and temporary exhibitions at the Pompidou and Tate. As above, transitions from mythical Self/Other binarism linked by a fictitiously singularised timeline of Western modernism towards more diverse, hybridised and plural modernities came to the fore. However, key differences concerned foregrounding the role of individual artists as opposed to whole groups and movements of change-makers at the Pompidou – particularly the uncovering of hidden narratives about pioneering "go-betweens" [or, "*passeurs*"] from Africa and the African diasporas operating within the fluid and dynamic context of dialogical transnationalism. The notion of the "go between" as having existed for centuries, not just in recent postcolonial decades – from early African modernists such as Aina Onabolu, Ernest Mancoba, Baya Mahieddine and Esther Mahlangu, to diasporans with portfolios as diverse as the Cuban surrealist artist Wifredo Lam and French-Algerian photography and video installationist Zineb Sedira – completely destabilise *any* notion that long-standing false binaries of Self and Other privileging the West have any firm or bounded spatio-temporal foundations. However, simply stating this does little to alter the realities of the discrimination, inequalities and exclusions that still continue to operate as though these normalised polarities of Western selfhood and African otherness represent actual and absolute truths.

While it would have been possible to replicate and document similar approaches at Tate to feature in Chapter 7, and identify individual artistic *passeurs* influencing advancements in

contemporary visual art excellence in Britain – not least the 1998 recipient of the prestigious Turner Prize, Chris Ofili , or the contemporary collagist, pastel artist and Royal Academician Sonia Boyce MBE (RA) – it was the curatorial *passeurs* who combined curatorship with arts activism and art-historical research pursued *against* the grain of documentary archival narratives that I chose to foreground as key actants negotiating, challenging and dissolving boundaries in relation to the 'raced' spaces of Western museums and galleries, elite fine art colleges, major arts publishing houses, and the Euro-American academy more broadly. Therefore, the diasporic and cross-cultural insights of interviewees Eddie Chambers, Mike Phillips, Paul Goodwin and Lubaina Himid became the foundation of my narrative identifying and critiquing the changing nature of othering at Tate.

Importantly, the discussions and visual analysis relating to Lubaina Himid's co-curation of *Thin Black Line(s)* (2011-12) at Tate Britain, working with Paul Goodwin, became *central* to my critical examinations of the intersectionally raced/classed/gendered marginalisation and silencing of black and brown women within Western exhibiting practices and policy-making procedures. The scope of the critique encompassed the stereotyped representations of black women's bodies in works of art, through to the continuing lack of faciality and vocality for women of colour within Western European cultural institutions, national government-level strategic decision-making structures, and international forums – and detailed yet more evidence of gendered Self/Other binarism in the world of contemporary fine art. This was illustrated across all four case study institutions, and specifically highlighted in the thesis chapter sections 4.4, 5.2, 6.5, and 7.5, as well as Chapter 8.

Initially, my critique of the historical and present-day treatment of archival images featuring images of African women within collections of ethnography revealed an othering of black female corporeality: from the objectified use of an un-named, semi-naked Kuba woman's image from Hungarian anthropologist Emil Torday's photograph collection as a pot label, (still, to this date) on display in the British Museum's African Galleries (see Figure 12 and thesis Chapter 4); through to the contradictory, (un)veiled 'concealment/exposure' of Saartjie Baartman's caricatured 19th century image positioned behind a theatrically draped velvet curtain as part of the MQB exhibition "*Human Zoos [Zoos Humains]: L'Invention du Sauvage*" (2011-12) (see thesis Chapter 5).[186]

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[186] I took the decision not to show 19th century caricatured images of Saartjie Baartman in this doctoral thesis for reasons previously discussed in relation to Western museums as repositories of racist imagery presented via the white colonialist gaze as "grotesque," and black *counter*-narratives

Secondly, gendered acts of othering were further exemplified and amplified from a more personal, embodied perspective through the visceral experience of being physically pushed out of the way by a man sketching in the British Museum, who chose to assert what he undoubtedly perceived to be an entitlement to project his spectator's gaze and physically claim (through an aggressive, unwelcome act of direct contact) all the space within his line of sight across the wood-carving section of the Africa Galleries. This was done without recourse to any dialogical negotiation with me over our equal and shared rights of public access to that museal space (and everyone's entitlement to some safe, un-encroachable personal space), nor considered with any sense of courtesy or respect for me as a fellow member of the British Museum's visiting publics.

My decision to examine and interrogate the affective/emotional aspects of these museum-based exhibition reviews and archival research tasks has provoked me to question whether it is (or will *ever* be) possible for black women with African heritage to be 'free' to walk within Western museum spaces without the *still* all-too-real risk of encountering various physical, psychological and emotional barriers and traumas to restrict or deny what should be inalienable rights to public access. This applies if the mobility sought relates to (accidental or intentional) *flânerie,* academic research, leisure pursuits, informal creative learning and teaching, or *any* other audience capacity of our/their choosing.

For positive change to happen, the recognition that ongoing conversations and negotiations concerning diverse, affective/emotional responses to exhibitions must remain ever-present for as long as the museum and gallery sector in Western Europe continues to *choose* (despite rhetoric to suggest otherwise) to ignore, delimit, devalue, or exclude altogether the contributions of African and diasporan sector professionals and

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and contemporary re-imaginings that seek to "restabilis[e] the black female self" (see Henderson 2010a: 7; and Chapter 1 in this thesis). The specific image from the MQB exhibition referred to above (as well as in Chapters 1 and 5) is reproduced in the exhibition catalogue for "*Human Zoos: L'invention du sauvage"* (2011) and also critiqued in earlier publications by Pascal Blanchard (see Blanchard, Bancel, and Lemaire 2006, Blanchard et al. 2008, Blanchard, Boetsch, and Jacomijn Snoep 2011). For lengthier, contextualised historical analysis about images of Saartjie Baartman, written by Pascal Blanchard and Gilles Boëtsch, see the essay, *"The Hottentot Venus: Birth of a 'Freak' (1815)"* – on which much of the curatorial narrative featured in the MQB's exhibition was based (Blanchard et al. 2008: 62-72). For alternative historical research and visual analysis of archival images about Saartjie Baartman's life history, as well as artistic re-imaginings to *counter-*narrate and challenge the racism and grotesquery of those 19th century paintings and illustrations – re-imagined via poetry, contemporary visual art and black feminist/womanist critical discourse – see also the work of (among others) African-American poet Elizabeth Alexander, Jamaican-American conceptual artist Renée Cox, and scholars of art history and black visual cultures pertaining to the global African diasporas Kianga K. Ford, Charmaine Nelson, Shirley Anne Tate and Michelle Wallace (see, for example, Alexander 2004, Willis 2010, Nelson 2010, Ford 2010b, Wallace 2010, Tate 2015). Elizabeth Alexander's poignant poem, "*The Venus Hottentot*" (1990) is available online via the Poetry Foundation: www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/52111 [accessed August 2016].

diverse black publics across every area of creativity, curation, collection development and management, arts administration, education, strategic planning and governance.

9.2.2 Changes over time and space

When addressing Research Question 2 about changes in othering practices over time and space, it was necessary to feature a wide range of exhibition reviews and exemplifications of past and present museographic practices that compare and deconstruct successful, as well as less-than-successful, approaches to dialogical, co-produced knowledge. This was also done to compare and contrast different ways curators and institutions have attempted to question, challenge, blur and dissolve traditional boundaries between artists and audiences, creators and consumers of art, experts and amateur enthusiasts, insiders and outsiders, etc. In the case of the Musée du Quai Branly, an example of successful co-curation that was cited in Chapter 5 was the commissioned temporary installation project *Jardin d'Amour, par Yinka Shonbare MBE* (2007) – created by the conceptual artist and installationist Yinka Shonibare MBE (RA), and co-curated with Germain Viatte and Bernard Müller. This was contrasted with the less-than-successful in-house presentation of *« L'Atlantique Noir » de Nancy Cunard: Negro Anthology, 1931-1934* (2014) curated by Sarah Frioux-Salgas – an archive-related temporary display lacking the required diversity of expertise and multivocal perspectives about diasporic histories or the politics of racism, and also (importantly) lacking the necessary sensitivities towards changing socio-political and cultural complexities of Black Atlantic discourses considered over a lengthier timespan than the 1930s. Consequently, the Musée du Quai Branly's in-house team of curators chose instead to present what can only be described as a classic 'white saviour narrative' about the wealthy British socialite and philanthropist Nancy Cunard.[187]

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[187] The term "white saviour narrative" refers to the way in which a number of books, plays, films and documentary narratives authored in the West have been shown to convey bias when addressing and critiquing issues of race and racism (particularly fictionalised historical dramas, cinematic narratives and documentaries covering international development issues). These narratives regularly feature a benevolent white protagonist to articulate, respond to and resolve issues of racial injustice, violence or inequality, as though only a white person from the West is endowed with the qualities of leadership and 'heroism' considered necessary to successfully mediate tensions and conflicts between ethnic groups. The "white saviour" is often characterised as good, truthful, morally pure, and so on – centrally positioned to be considered worthy of respect from fellow white people, and (additionally, but framed differently) to receive praise, gratitude or loyalty from black or brown people. The latter are almost always comparatively positioned as passive, servile or helplessly victimised in their struggles against racial discrimination, anti-black prejudice, poverty and other socio-economic factors as if their own weakness was the cause of their plight. In many Hollywood films and USA-produced documentaries relating to continental Africa, African nations and African people also serve as what writer Teju Cole describes as the "backdrop for white fantasies of conquest and heroism." For a broader discussion of this term, featured alongside historical and contemporary references to Western films, documentaries, international

Cunard was not only valorised as a pioneering editor-in-chief of "*Negro Anthology*" (1934) – for which her editorship was, indeed, pioneering at that time – but she was also more troublingly cast as *the* primary, intellectual interlocutor (who might also be described as a 'ventriloquist') for discussing the expressive cultural outputs of black African and diasporan artists, and interpreting historical issues of race and racism in the early 20th century for the benefit of the MQB's (still) predominantly white, Western European visiting publics (see thesis Chapter 5, section 5.2.5).

This problematic MQB exhibition came complete with an impressive – but only positioned as auxiliary – support cast of 'absent-present' black bodies, ranging from: the dancing, singing but silent Josephine Baker; a poetic yet parergonally positioned collective of Harlem Renaissance writers, from Claude McKay to Langston Hughes; a plethora of artworks by un-named Malian "Bamana" and Ivorian "Senoufo" sculptors, only assigned the ventriloquist voices of exclusively white Euro-American art scholars to speak in their place; and a small number of cinematic and jazz-age pioneers, from African-American actors Paul Robeson and Eslanda Goode Robeson, to the jazz virtuoso Louis Armstrong and Martinican clarinettist Alexandre Stellio (leader of the *biguine* band, *l'Orchestre Antillais de Stellio*). Despite the presence of extensive archives documenting many of these artists' political campaign activities and thoughts on anti-racism, equalities and other socio-political issues from that era (available, and publicly accessible, in *many* other institutions – including the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, the Center for Black Music Research, Chicago, and the London Metropolitan Archives, UK), these African diasporans were not quoted in their own words. Instead, their agency, creativity and vocality as arts activists and intellectuals (not simply entertainers) was completely over-shadowed by an exhibition narrative that elevated the documentary contributions of the white Euro-American avant-gardist contributors to *Negro Anthology* (1934). Access to archival sources written by white elites were privileged above accessible, but (granted) more widely dispersed, collections of primary sources featuring the first-person testimonies of African, African-American and Antillean actants.

The exhibition, therefore, elevated the already prominent voices of Cunard and her closest white friends, including: the British film-maker Kenneth Macpherson, director of the silent film *Borderlines* (1930) – which Paul and Eslanda Robeson starred in, and which played on

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development aid/charity campaigns and social media postings, see Teju Cole's essay "The White Savior Industrial Complex" (Cole 2016: 340-349).

a loop in the exhibition; the Belgian writer on jazz music Robert Goffin; and music composer and writer George Antheil from the USA.[188]

Application of African diasporan and critical feminist perspectives from the field of cultural geography has helped to reveal just how the privileging of whiteness and the masculinist gaze has become so entrenched within Western museography. Long after the centuries of struggles for emancipation, human and civil rights and independence, and the gradual political, socio-economic and administrative dismantling of European colonialism took place throughout Africa, the Caribbean region, and across other areas of the Global South – many European and North American museums *still* retain an ambiance of normalised whiteness, where cultural diversity in the 21st century is confined to a narrow spectrum of articulations and responses – often only ranging from 'tolerance' to 'celebration,' with little else outside these limited and limiting parameters. This conveys the false impression that differences are capable of being bounded (and some might say, 'quarantined' or 'ghettoised') within a paternalistic and racialized framework of charitable benevolence towards socially excluded and non-privileged 'subaltern' identities – constructed as black or brown, female, disabled, LGBTQ, state-school educated, and/or 'class' categorised as C2DE socio-economic groups.[189]

As Katherine McKittrick observes, this troubling context of asymmetric, Self/Other binary thinking remains difficult to see beyond, challenge and de-normalise, noting that:

> The hierarchy of human normalcy is a dilemma, furthermore, because it is difficult to think outside of what appears to be a normal human story: we are bound to it, anchored to a familiar plot that "should not be taken as an index of [...] justness." (McKittrick 2006: 127)

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[188] See, respectively, the essays *"A Negro Film Union – Why Not?"* by Kenneth Macpherson (reprinted in Cunard and Ford 2002 [1934]: 205-7); *"The Best Negro Jazz Orchestras"* by Robert Goffin, and *"The Negro on the Spiral"* by George Antheil (*Ibid*, pp. 181-5 and 214-9).
Although the original titles of these essays have been referenced according to their original English translations in Nancy Cunard's *"Negro Anthology"* (1934) (which was also published in French), it is important to note that all three texts feature terminology and cultural attitudes throughout that are today (and have been for many decades) considered dated, derogatory, racially stereotyped and offensive.
[189] See earlier references to the term "heavily quarantined" within Eddie Chamber's curatorial interview transcript (*op. cit.* 2014, p. 18), also discussed in the fn. on p. 241 of this chapter). Scholars who have referred to the "ghettoization" of blackness in the arts and provocatively troubled the notion of 'aesthetic/artistic ghettos' within contemporary visual arts, cinematic practices and museums include (among others) Michael Eric Dyson, Gen Doy and Bridget Cooks (see Dyson 1994: 156, Doy 2000: 12-13, Cooks 2011: 97).

9.2.3 Ameliorating othering

Regarding the final research question of this thesis concerning strategies for ameliorating othering, I, like other people of African descent working within this field of the arts, museums and heritage, have never accepted or desired an adjunctive "shadow life" – one that was initially prescribed as Other; has been continuously reproduced through various, museumised representations of imperialism; and today is regularly reconstituted within the context of spatialized racisms to position me in the margins and peripheral spaces of Western cultural institutions. As I concluded in the closing section of Chapter 8, Eddie Chambers' statement on everyone's right to equal access is also my view of an effective way to ameliorate Self/Other binarism. Any attempt at designating 'special spaces' within the culture sector has seldom worked, and essentially only contributes to the further normalisation of museums and galleries as 'white spaces' – simply with diversity as an 'add-on'. So I, too, am not an advocate of the type of special pleading for ring-fenced BME/BAME funding pots, festivals and projects – which, paradoxically, regularly serve to further curtail and *de*-normalise access to the full range of opportunities for minoritized people to achieve our full potential in the West.

Instead, I assert my right to equal access to every area and arena of the arts and culture, and wider creative industries. I am also happy to compete on equal terms to secure employment contracts *genuinely* appointed according to merit, full and fair access to arts funding streams, participation within *non*-discriminatory structures of governance and regulation, the chance to pursue creative learning opportunities, and to contribute to debates about truly international (as opposed to Western-centric) canons of artistic excellence without my voice being ventriloquized by anyone. Where elitism, discrimination and other barriers to inclusion exist, I advocate the pursuit of acts of "subversive dehierarchisation," radicalism and multi-vocal collaborative practices – as documented in research and realised through creative practice by, respectively, Claire Bishop (see Bishop 2006: 183, 2012: 188, 2013: 55-62) and artist-curator Fred Wilson (see Karp and Wilson 1996, Corrin 2011, Labode 2012). These views are also advocated by the art historians, curators and other museum professionals interviewed and cited throughout this doctoral research process – particularly in relation to the portfolios of work by Clémentine Deliss, Françoise Vergès and Lubaina Himid (see Table 1 in Chapter 3 of this thesis, and also Appendix 1). This advocacy has also been documented by me throughout the writing of this thesis and actively demonstrated through my ongoing professional practice as an educator, project manager and arts activist committed to making corrective, 'decolonial' and anti-racist interventions through creative teaching and

learning pedagogies (see, for example, Dixon 2011, 2012; and also the Introduction to this thesis, fn. p. 6). Anything less would signify acquiescence to the "wrongly real" constructions of othering that render me reified and tokenised as Other within an elaborate act of wilful exclusion.

9.3   Contributions to knowledge

Pursuing this project has enabled me to critically examine and articulate observations about the othering of Africa and its diasporas within Western museum practices from a seldom heard perspective in the academy as a black feminist geographer, also with a long-established career as an education practitioner and a strategic development manager in the UK culture sector.

My background, diasporic life experiences, a career portfolio in museums and heritage, as well as links to professional networks in the UK and abroad, have given me unique access to a diverse range of internationally renowned scholars and practitioners involved in collection development, exhibition and event planning and curatorship world-wide. Their collective expertise has also facilitated and accelerated opportunities for me to consider and analyse complex and varied issues and transitions relating to the othering of Africa and its amelioration as diasporic and international discourses.

Throughout this research process I have consciously eschewed the application of a traditionally ('masculinist') ocularcentric gaze, but have also chosen not to assume a fully oppositional position either. Instead, I have chosen to occupy an alternative, *non*-binary and *non*-adjunctive position from which to immerse myself in the analysis of museal spaces, histories and geographies of museum practice – including past and present exhibition developments informed by my personal experiences of being othered as an African diasporan and feminist scholar living and working in Western Europe.

9.3.1   Serving multiple audiences

As this doctoral project was pursued as an interdisciplinary study, the resulting thesis was always intended to serve a number of different audiences and purposes within and beyond the discipline of geography. In particular, the nature of this examination into othering – and the devising of a research process that specifically sought out and critiqued strategies for ameliorating racialized Self/Other binarism within Western museum practices – meant that many of the outcomes and findings were necessarily geared towards making recommendations, and signposting examples of good practice, to inform

the future work of directors, curators, educators, archivists and other practitioners currently involved in the programming of exhibitions, the facilitation of public access to collections, and the provision of cultural events.

Having read a selection of texts from other academic disciplines that made use of innovative writing techniques using detailed footnotes for drafting meta-narratives that could sit alongside the substantive text (see, for example, Mol 2003),[190] the thesis was deliberately written in a format that enabled a continuous dialogue to ensue between the scholarly voices of academic geographers, museologists and other theorists, and the practitioner voices of museum and gallery professionals featured throughout the study, and for all these multiple perspectives to be presented through a set of layered (and sometimes intersected) contextualising narratives. The drafting of these parallel and tandem texts in this way simultaneously served the conventional audiences for a doctoral thesis – i.e. those interested in examining the theories underpinning the observed and researched geographies, histories and politics of the cultural institutions in focus – and *also* spoke to much broader constituencies of museum and gallery professionals directly involved in exhibition design and development, collection interpretation, programming, marketing and audience outreach.

The use of detailed footnotes was also seen as a useful way of foregrounding additional conversations about issues of race and racism in Western museums – particularly when seeking to emphasise the (still persistently marginalised, and often denigrated) perspectives of cultural commentators, artists and scholar-activists from Africa and the African diasporas involved in ongoing restitution campaigns calling for the return of art objects controversially acquired by European collectors, dealers, explorers and administrators during the colonial era to their sites of origin within the African continent and the wider Global South – sites of origin that are today located in independent nation states, many now with very long-established, national repositories and cultural institutions in which to house and display these contested collections of artworks. In view of the above, the thesis is one that also contributes to important scholar-activist discourses about anti-racism in museums and galleries, and the impetus to 'decolonise' collecting and exhibiting practices.

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[190] In Annemarie Mol's book *The Body Multiple* (2003) her detailed ethnographic research – featuring interviews with doctors and nurses involved in the treatment of atherosclerosis, as well as observations of medical procedures and patient consultations – is written up within the main body of her chapters, and then other explanatory academic narratives and theoretical details are documented in the footnotes.

9.3.2 Contributions to academic knowledge

The research underpinning this doctoral thesis was perceived, pursued and documented as a 'struggle'. This conceptualisation and presentation of the research process relates directly to my transposition of theoretical discourses espoused by cultural geographer Don Mitchell into museal settings, situations and spaces in a way that he has described (more generally) as examining a "struggled-over set of social relations… shot through with structures of power, structures of dominance and subordination" (Mitchell 2000: xv). Through this type of investigation into the relational power dynamics and historically hierarchical structures of museums and galleries there was an attempt to exemplify how and why cultural geography served as an appropriate academic discipline and framework through which to interrogate and intervene in the social and cultural-political struggles experienced and observed in the West.

The object collections, archival materials and exhibiting practices that have been researched and analysed in order to draw conclusions about the nature and extent of othering in Western museal contexts constitute an observable historical record of policies, collecting and display practices and publications available in the form of artistic, curatorial and written outputs by artists, curators, art historians and other scholars. And because these outputs were created and assembled by a 'mosaic' of actants with differing levels of agency to produce, curate, interpret and interact with art objects and archives within museums and galleries, these varied and interconnected combinations of people and objects have generated an interesting mix of what some geographers have termed "power geometries" (see, for example, Massey 1993: 61-63) – but which Jane Bennett also refers to as "throbbing confederations" of human and nonhuman elements (Bennett 2010: 23) – that combine to make cultural geography an ideal subject discipline through which to interrogate these spatial and cultural-political power dynamics (see also Massey 2005: 100, Sassen 2007: 3, Winkler 2012: 89).

My investigative approach is also characterised as a struggle because of the need to raise awareness that there is never just one way of interpreting the historical record of exhibiting practices in the West, but rather multiple ways of tracing paths through the accumulated archival documents, collections of artworks and printed resources brought together in museums and galleries from which narratives are constructed about cultures perceived and interpreted as different and distinctive.

Rather than seeking to "render invisible" the biases that exist within cultural geographic theorizing, this thesis has concentrated on making highly visible and prominent the reality

that such biases – regularly accepted as norms – function to skew ways of seeing in exhibition spaces in favour of maintaining and reproducing the *status quo* and the dominant viewing and gazing perspectives of elite, white men (see, in particular, writing on the "male gaze" in Berger 1972: 47, as well as feminist perspectives on the "masculinist" gaze in Rose 1993: 10).

When geographers have sought to address questions about the role of the cultural industries in the West that have had the greatest impact on establishing and governing the foundations and 'norms' defined as cultural taste and canonical excellence the focus has often tended to be placed on mass media and popular culture outlets such as television, the film industry, newspapers and online social media platforms. In contrast, museums and galleries are seldom recognised as being at the forefront and cutting edge of defining what constitutes cultural tastes in our contemporary societies. Yet, it is these very institutions that endure to serve as the most long-established spaces constituting what Sharon Zukin and others have described as the "critical infrastructure" of culture and cultural production (see, for example, Zukin 1991: 215, Mitchell 2000: xviii, Horowitz 2011: 107).

Geographers have tended to examine issues of race and racism as a purely academic exercise, as though one might somehow be able to remain distanced and detached from the realities of living in a racialized and 'raced' society in the West. As an African-descended black British woman it is neither possible – nor even desirable – to (pretend to) do that. Moreover, I would go further to argue that the geographers who feel they can take (and justify) such a stance are the very people whose research perspectives have dominated the field of cultural geography to its detriment for far too long.

My raced positionality in relation to the "power geometries," structures and forces that shape the lives of those who live within and research the West situate me as a scholar who is – of necessity – forced to read *against the grain* of the collective body of (predominantly elite, white, and masculinist) knowledge that constitutes the discipline of human geography within the Euro-American academy. For this reason I continuously draw on the prior scholarship of postcolonial cultural theorists positioned *beyond* the field of human geography – such as Stuart Hall, Edward Said, and Kobena Mercer – who also operate as 'outsiders' to interrogate the social, political and historical geographies of race and racism from diverse and diasporic perspectives (see, for example, Hall 1992, Said 1993, Mercer 1994).

However, this type of research can't just be (and wasn't) about an unquestioning and uncritical adherence to the perspectives of Stuart Hall and the aforementioned other postcolonial scholars, because their masculinities also create a separation in our respective lived experiences that encourage me to also seek out the ideas and perspectives of fellow black feminist scholars – such as, for example, bell hooks, Avtar Brah and Carol E. Henderson – alongside which to align my own ideas and critical reflections for use as the foundation for developing and progressing new scholarship in this field (see, for example, hooks 1992, Brah 1996, Henderson 2010a). Therefore, while my outsider status is *primarily* because of my blackness, it is also intersected by issues of gender, social class and diasporic identity as someone whose very existence as a black African-Caribbean woman in Britain, the Euro-American academy, and the wider West is perpetually minoritized, and persistently problematized by stereotyped racist-sexist assumptions (see, in particular, Brah 1996). This, therefore, makes it impossible to theorize into abstraction the very real and all-consuming impacts of marginalisation, exclusion, racism and erasure within British and French institutions, the museums, galleries and learned institutes throughout continental Europe more broadly, and the hegemonic 'project' that is the West.

While this thesis draws on, and seeks to make a contribution to, academic knowledge in various fields – including cultural geographies of representation, spaces of display, and historical geographies of Empire – it does so from the paradoxical position of someone who is simultaneously inside and outside these spaces (cf. Gillian Rose's discussion of the politics of paradoxical space in her feminist account of the limitations of geographical knowledge (Rose 1993)).

9.3.3 Future implications of the research

The progressive resolutions and strategic pedagogies summarised in this concluding chapter, as well as the findings detailed throughout the case studies and Chapter 8, are not simply concerned with how many people from diverse backgrounds are recruited to entry-level positions of employment in museums and galleries, largely to 'window dress' historically elitist, exclusive and otherwise normatively white spaces – because this strategy has already been shown to be insultingly tokenistic, limiting, and wholly unsuccessful for all concerned. Sustainable progression is about changing the ethos, mission and structures *within* cultural institutions so that more pro-social and holistic models of inclusion become embedded to problematize discriminatory practices. Moreover, as the curatorial interviewees Michael McMillan, Bernard Müller, and Françoise

Vergès have all demonstrated so successfully through their own practice and scholarship, it is also about bringing conventional 'outsiders' in, and 'insiders' out to dissolve traditional notions of what (or, indeed, *where*) a museal space should be – ultimately abandoning the insider/outsider binary altogether, and drawing freely from the dynamic processes of cultural "bricolage," "creolization" and "respect for the vernacular" (see, in particular, Vergès 2015: 41; and see also Müller 2007, McMillan 2009b, and Chapter 8 of this thesis). These strategies are foregrounded in preference to the still commonly adopted approach and expectation that assumes the *very* few minoritized individuals who actually do get into the sector at any level should try – often with little support, tangible resources or decision-making power – to effect significant mainstream change from what are typically subaltern positions and isolated localities within largely unreconstructed and disempowering organisations.[191]

One of the easiest and most immediate ways to accelerate future progress is to open up Western museums and galleries to more external partnership-working and international consortia-based practices focused on co-production of exhibitions, globally and '*glocally*' dialogical events, collection development innovations, and public consultation and engagement initiatives. These approaches will transform the sector's institutions from 'raced spaces' normalized as 'white spaces' in every aspect of service delivery and audiencing, into plural and 'decolonised' spaces that place respect for difference and co-existence within non-hierarchical, and poly-vocal settings at the core of their policies, strategic objectives and public outreach.

Audience diversity, just like diverse staffing to fulfil creative and administrative roles within an organisation, does not simply begin and end with measurement, quota setting and quantitative analysis of how many – and how frequently – 'minorities' cross what remain quite unwelcoming thresholds to either gaze at collections and exhibitions, or offer

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[191] A "social model" of inclusion is one that recognises the presence of environmental and social barriers to access, participation and equality of opportunities within society, and seeks to ameliorate disempowering structures and exclusionary practices by identifying and implementing improvements to institutional infrastructures as opposed to problematizing individuals most directly affected by discrimination. Social model approaches were first championed by organisations actively involved in disability rights and equalities campaigning, and later became established in the UK cultural sector at the time when organisations were responding to legislative changes brought about via the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. Much of the early scholarship published about these approaches has concentrated heavily on the "social model of disability"(see, for example, Oliver 1990, Lang 2006, Oliver and Barnes 2012) . However, the broader and modified application of the social model to address issues of racial discrimination, gender and LGBTQ inequalities, and exclusions on the grounds of social class, faith, place of birth or other related identity characteristics are now being researched and documented with reference to a combination of "social," "affirmative" and "holistic approaches" to inclusion (see, for example, Nightingale and Mahal 2012: 34-36).

feedback after an event; especially when the cultural offers and public programmes are *still* mainly curated *by* elites, *for* elites. Progression involves normalising multivocality in decision-making about what is displayed, creating more ethnically and socially diverse curatorial and educational teams – including artists, scholars, arts activists, and practitioners from a wide variety of under-represented backgrounds – to advise on research sources, approaches and outputs, and (should individuals choose to) *also* speak directly to issues of difference, internationalism and diaspora from informed perspectives about the negative and traumatic consequences of marginalisation. This also requires more diverse interpretation and administration staff to consult with publics, to embrace alternative contributions to marketing and outreach to access, include and retain a multiplicity of audiences, and evaluate service delivery via a wider pool of consultees to continuously improve on practice.

In calling into question our present spaces and structures as exclusively 'raced,' and racialized *as* white, artists, curators and educators need to counter-narrate the false binarism of Self and Other embedded in the history of the West. This is necessary because the long-established history of creative cultural contributions by people of African descent – especially black women from the continent and its global African diasporas – has been denied, erased and/or de-normalised as a result of what Katherine McKittrick lists as "regimes of colonialism, racism-sexism, transatlantic slavery, European intellectual systems, patriarchy, white femininity, and white feminism" (McKittrick 2006: 133).

My hope for the future of this research is that it will play a part in reconceptualising the meaning of success, excellence and progression – not only in relation to Western museographic practices, but also with regard to reconceptualising what excellence and progression *through* inclusion mean in relation to academic and wider public discourses about international art histories, museologies and cultural geographies. At some point, the academy and the international art world (*all* of us) have to resist and challenge the most dominant conventions of envisioning excellence and high achievement within an exclusionary framework of Western elitisms – especially the normalisation of whiteness and masculinities. This is vital for genuine forward-momentum towards a world where dynamic cultural multiplicities and their hybridites are valued – something that Paul Carter terms valuing the "plenitude of other bodies in motion, and the traces these leave" (Carter 2009: 6).

A year-long research study conducted by the Museums Association in the UK during 2015/16 – published in the report "*Valuing Diversity: The Case for Inclusive Museums*"

(Turtle and Bajwa 2016) – confirms my afore-mentioned perspectives, in that its findings from interviews conducted with more than 80 sector practitioners from diverse backgrounds in the UK raised the following three top-level findings. Firstly, "unconscious bias" was *still* significantly influencing decisions concerning programming, interpretation and representation in museum and gallery spaces. Secondly, the regular, day-to-day experience of "micro-inequalities" within organisations was continuing to create emotional and psychological challenges for people from diverse backgrounds. Thirdly, staff from under-represented groups reported the experience of continuously needing to articulate and demonstrate how they had achieved their positions on merit, "deal with prejudice" and "constantly explain issues of identity and cultural heritage to colleagues" on a daily basis within environments that were felt to be quite defensively reactive to diversity instead of positively change-focused and supportive of its benefits to institutions overall (*Ibid*, p. 13-15).

Responding to the findings of the study, the director of the Museums Association said:

> This hard-hitting report outlines the lack of diversity in the sector at all levels. We need decisive, meaningful action now from funders and sector bodies if we are to make a real difference on these issues for future generations. The time for talking is over. (Sharon Heal, quoted by Turtle and Bajwa 2016: 2)

The time for talking is indeed over. Swift and concrete action is required. But the pathways and networks leading towards progressive change start far beyond the thresholds of museum and gallery institutions. This is because the vast majority of knowledge, expertise and experience required to effect *meaningful* change still resides outside these mainstream institutions precisely because of the continuing legacies of exclusion, racism and discrimination I and many of my fellow participants in this research process have attested. Just as Derek Walcott invited his readers to walk, I invite every reader of this thesis to accompany me in the process of seeking out and applying alternative, more diverse and inclusive ways to make a difference *through* the embrace of difference, and I look forward to your company on this journey towards that better future for all of us. Let's walk.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Photographs of the ten curatorial interviewees

Pascal Blanchard – Historian and Director of ACHAC (*Association pour la connaissance de l'histoire de l'Afrique contemporaine*). Image © FXG (agence de presse GHM), 2011. www.fxgpariscaraibe.com

Eddie Chambers – Associate Professor of Art History, University of Texas at Austin. Image source: The Daily Texan, www.dailytexanonline.com

Clémentine Deliss – Curator and former Director of the Weltkulturen Museum, Frankfurt (2010-2015). Image © University of Sydney, 2014. Source: http://sydney.edu.au

Paul Goodwin – Chair of Black Art & Design, University of the Arts London. Image source: University of the Arts, London, http://newsevents.arts.ac.uk/

Lubaina Himid – Professor of Contemporary Art, UCLAN. Image Source: University of Central Lancashire, www.uclan.ac.uk

Michael McMillan – Independent Curator & Lecturer, University of the Arts London. Image Source: Wasafiri Magazine, www.wasafiri.org

Bernard Müller – Anthropologist, at l'IRIS (*École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales*). Image source: EHESS, http://ehess.academia.edu

Mike Phillips – Writer and former Curator of Cross-Cultural Programmes at Tate Britain. Source: The British Blacklist, www.thebritishblacklist.com

Chris Spring – Curator of the African Galleries, British Museum. Image source: www.chrisspring.co.uk

Françoise Vergès – Professor of Political Science and Chair – Global South(s), Collège d'Études Mondiales, Paris. Image source: www.college-etudesmondiales.org

Appendix 2: Selected research 'optics' featured in the four case study investigations

A sample of optics from the British Museum's African collections and archives

Item title/ Thumbnail image & Catalogue reference	Description	Images/ Figures
Black and white photo showing scars incised on a woman's stomach, Kuba people, Democratic Republic of Congo. Photograph: E. Torday (c. 1908) Ref: Af,CA61	This photograph was one of a series taken in the "Kuba Provinces" (a region of what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo) by Hungarian anthropologist Emil Torday (1875-1931), c. 1908. The image shows "cicatrices" incised on an un-named woman's stomach and was photographed during colonial expeditions 1900-1909. The image is currently displayed as part of an interpretation label in the Pottery section of the African Galleries.	Figure 12
Flat ivory bracelet/armlet/rattle [n.d.] Catalogue ref: Af,SLMisc.591	One of 29 items of African and diasporic import bequeathed to the British Museum in 1753 as part of Sir Hans Sloane's founding collection of "miscellanies." The exact date of creation, place of origin, or artist's details are unknown. Sloane's manuscripts only indicate connections to "Guinea."	Figure 13
Otobo (Hippo) Masquerade (1995) by Sokari Douglas Camp Ref: Af1996,08.3	This metalwork sculpture by the Nigerian-British contemporary artist Sokari Douglas Camp was purchased by the British Museum in 1996. The artwork is on permanent display in the 'Masquerade' section of the African Galleries.	Figure 14
Benin plaque (16th C.) Catalogue ref: Af1898,0115.2 	Leaded brass plaque, dated c. 16th century, displayed as part of the 'Brass casting' section in the African Galleries. This item was acquired in 1898 and was one of several plaques examined in the walk-through review prior to pursuing in-depth archive-based research about the 1897 'Punitive Expeditions' in Benin by British military forces The archival research prompted follow-up examination of transnational restitution claims and international 'decolonisation' campaigns relating to the controversial and contested collection of 'Benin Bronzes' (see Chapter 4 of this thesis). This item featured in two departmental / Museum of Mankind themed exhibitions in the 1970s and 1990s and, more recently, was shown in the *Africa '05* programme display *"Views from Africa"* (2005).	Images available via the British Museum's online gallery
Helmet Mask, Sierra Leone (early 20th C.) (Ref: Af1938,1004.13) 	This carved wooden helmet mask in the in form of a human face, stained black, with a tortoise carving on the crown was acquired in 1938. A black-dyed raffia fringe is attached to the base. The mask is thought to represent conceptions of idealised womanhood and features in ceremonial displays within some Sande communities. This mask is on display in the African Galleries and formed part of the themed exhibition *Sowei Mask: Spirit of Sierra Leone* (2013) curated by Paul Basu (Univ. College London).	Images available via the British Museum's online gallery

Selected optics from the Musée du Quai Branly's collections and exhibitions

Item title/ Thumbnail image & Catalogue reference	Description	Images/ Figures
Trône du roi Ghézo [King Ghezo's Throne], Benin, 19th C. MQB catalogue ref: Ref: 71.1895.16.8	19th century wood and metal ceremonial throne seized during the violent colonial siege of Dahomey (today's southern Benin), 1892-1894, led by French army general Alfred Dodds. Issues of othering are raised via the interpretation featured on display labels and in the catalogue, which downplay international concerns and campaigns about the restitution of such objects, considered looted colonial 'spoils of war,' 'booty' and 'conflict treasures,' etc.	Figure 6
Mendé mask, Sierra Leone c. late-19th C. Dimensions: 41.5 x 25 x 23.5 cm MQB catalogue ref: 71.1948.8.3 D	This wooden Mendé mask featured in the MQB's temporary display *Bois Sacré* [Sacred Wood] (2014), curated by Aurélien Gaborit (Head of the Africa collections). Concerns were noted about the object description and lighting, which conveyed the mask's usage as suspiciously "mysterious," and "secret" to produce a colonialist 'Dark Continent' narrative.	Figure 7
"Guillermo Antonio Farini and his Earthmen, London" (1884). 19th century b&w studio image. Photographer: *anon.* MQB poster ref: PP0199866	This 19th century group portrait appeared on posters, catalogue covers and other promotional material for the exhibition *"Human Zoos"* (2011-12), and was originally taken to promote the Royal Aquarium colonial exhibition in London in 1884. The original image is from the Pittt Rivers Museum archive (Oxford, UK). Issues of othering pertain to the contemporary remediation of this photo within the 21st century exhibiting context of the MQB.	Figure 10
"L'Atlantique noir" de Nancy Cunard: Negro Anthology, 1931-34 (2014) MQB filmed trailer [*bande-annonce de l'exposition*] (14 April 2014) : www.youtube.com	This exhibition was curated using Nancy Cunard's editorship of "*Negro Anthology*" (1934) as the primary source from the MQB museum archives. An exhibition review and photo tour undertaken in April 2014 provided an assemblage of 'optics' through which to consider and critique the MQB's curation of international and diasporic 'Black Atlantic' discourses as a 'white saviour narrative' via this archive-based display (see thesis Chapters 5 and 9). A full-text copy of the unpublished photo essay/ Power-Point presentation drafted in response to this exhibition is available (c/o the author, Carol Dixon, on request).	Images available via the MQB web pages, press release & filmed display trailer
The River (2010) by Charles Sandison (© ADAGP, Paris/ MQB archive image ref: 15-538265) Artist's website: www.sandison.fi MQB website : www.quaibranly.fr/ en/public-areas/ the-river/	This multi-media, digital installation by British artist Charles Sandison generates sequences of words from a database of 16,597 names representing all the global communities and regions mentioned in the MQB's collection documentation. In 2010, this "linguistic 'hydrological cycle'" was projected onto the walkway of the MQB's interior spiral path to create an immersive "Ramp installation." Issues of othering were considered in relation to the selected commissioning of certain artists to 'animate' this space, in contrast to all past MQB temporary displays.	Figure 8 and Figure 24

Selected optics from the Pompidou's collections, past displays and exhibitions

Item title/ Thumbnail image & Catalogue reference	Description	Images/ Figures
Dogon sculpture collection displayed within the exhibition *Multiple Modernities* (2013-15) Ref: AM1984-642	This series of artworks – including sculptures acquired by the writer and anthropologist Michel Leiris during his participation in the Dakar-Djibouti ethnographic expeditions of 1931-33 – form part of an extensive collection of African art donated to the Pompidou by Louise and Michel Leiris in 1984.	Figure 9
Le Chef (1997) by Samuel Fosso (b. 1962) Pompidou art inventory ref. AM 2004-110	The photo installation "*Le chef (qui a vendu l'Afrique aux colons)*" (1997) by Cameroonian conceptual artist Samuel Fosso featured in the exhibition *Africa Remix* (2005) curated by Simon Njami. The artist's use of self-portraiture addresses themes concerning colonial exploitation of the African continent, historical and contemporary geo-politics, transnational trade relations and issues of ethics and morality in political leadership.	Figure 34 See also the *Réunion des Musées nationaux* (NMN) site www.photo. rmn.fr
Magiciens de la Terre (1989) Exhibition Floorplan at the Pompidou Ref: DP-1995036 (p. 32). Archive box file: BVCTOF MNAM 16	The floorplan and photographic archive for this exhibition were analysed to examine issues of othering in relation to the curatorial selection of artworks, the number of African artists' featured in the exhibition and the relative spatial arrangement of artworks within the gallery and its sister site at Grande Halle de la Villette.	Figure 30
"*Afrique(s) Moderne(s)*" (Room 36) within the display *Multiple Modernities* (2013-15) Inventory refs: 73.2012.0.6D to -14D (Akpan); 75.15564.3 (Ondongo); AM2006-766 to -769 (Sidibé)	The exhibition's assemblage on "African Modernities" featured a selection of mid-to-late 20th century artworks produced by (among others) the Nigerian sculptor Aniedi Okon Akpan – whose figural pieces formed the central assemblage in Room 36 – surrounded by wall paintings by Nicolas Ondongo from Congo-Brazzaville, figurative works by the Senegalese modernist Iba N'Diaye, and images by the internationally renowned Malian photographer Malick Sidibé.	Figure 38 See also the *Réunion des Musées nationaux* (NMN) site www.photo. rmn.fr
Marche de soutien à la campagne sur le SIDA (1988) by Chéri Samba Inventory ref : AM1990-36	This pop art painting (translated as "March in support of the campaign on AIDS") was purchased by the Pompidou in 1990, following the Congolese artist's inclusion in the Pompidou's exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989). The original acrylic on canvas measures 200 x 135 cm. Significantly, none of Samba's featured paintings were actually displayed on site at the Pompidou in 1989, but six were presented instead on the Mezzanine level of the exhibition's 2nd location at La Villette in east Paris – conveying to some that many of the 14 featured African artists had been spatially marginalised as a deliberate consequence of being othered by the exhibition's curatorial team, led by Jean-Hubert Martin (see thesis Chapter 6).	Images available via the Pompidou website & the *Réunion des Musées nationaux* (NMN) site www.photo. rmn.fr

Selected optics from the Tate's collections, past displays and exhibitions

Item title/ Thumbnail image & Catalogue reference	Description	Images/ Figures
"Religious Procession, Addis Ababa" (1932), by Mohammed Naghi Bey (1888-1956) Tate collection ref: N04823	This impressionist style painting is one of the earliest by an African modernist held in the Tate collection. Less than 100 out of >73,000 total holdings are works by African artists. The oil painting was acquired by Tate in 1936 via art dealer Lord Alfred C. Bossom, when the Egyptian artist was in Paris working for Egypt's diplomatic service.	Restricted rights. No digital images available on the Tate website
Johanaan (1936) by Ronald Moody (1900-1984). Ref: T06591	This carved elm wood sculpture by Jamaican-British artist Ronald Moody features in Tate Britain's collection (Dimensions: 1550 x 725 x 388 mm). It is one of the earliest works by a black diasporan artist on permanent display. Although Ronald Moody became internationally famous in the 1930s, and was prominent in the London-based Caribbean Artists Movement (CAM), 1966-72, the 3 sculptures by him acquired by Tate were bought in the 1990s.	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk
Portrait of a Man (1954), by Aina Onabolu (1882-1963)	This watercolour by Nigerian artist Aina Onabolu was purchased by Tate in 2013, with all costs covered via the Acquisitions Fund for African Art and Guaranty Trust Bank plc. The painting is significant because Onabolu is considered to be one of the earliest modernists from West Africa – producing easel-based works using modern art techniques from as early as 1906. Onabolu studied fine art in Paris and London in the 1920s before returning to Lagos to teach and produce portraits. For further details on Onabolu, see Jean Fisher's article on Tate, "*The Other Story*" (Fisher 2009).	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk
Ibaye (1950) by Wifredo Lam (1902-1982). Ref: N06073	This abstract painting by the Cuban artist Wifredo Lam, purchased by Tate in 1952, features in the themed galleries at Tate Modern and is one of the earliest surrealist works by a black Caribbean artist acquired for the permanent collection. The painting is displayed in the themed gallery "Surrealism and Beyond" alongside works by the European artists Pablo Picasso, Jean Arp and Salvador Dali, and the American sculptor Dorothea Tanning.	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk
From Tarzan to Rambo (1987) by Sonia Boyce (b. 1962) Tate ref: T05021	This mixed-media collage by British artist Sonia Boyce is sub-titled "*English Born 'Native' Considers her Relationship to the Constructed/Self Image and her Roots in Reconstruction.*" Through photographic self-portraits, and stills of the fictional Hollywood film characters Tarzan and Rambo, Sonia Boyce's work questions the relationship between 'self-image', images of the archetypal cinematic white male 'hero', and wider stereotyped representations. Tate purchased this artwork in 1987.	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk

Item title/ Thumbnail image & Catalogue reference	Description	Images/ Figures
"Go West, Young Man" (1987) by Keith Piper Tate ref: T12575	This contemporary installation comprises 14 black and white photomontage panels (dimensions for each panel 840 x 560 mm), purchased by Tate for the British Art Collection in 2008. Piper's inclusion of images of enslavement within this piece – such as the 18th century plan of the Brookes Slave Ship – make it a powerful optic for critiquing artistic counter-narrations about othering by black contemporary visual artists.	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk
"The Destruction of the National Front" (1980) by Eddie Chambers (T13887)	This artwork comprising four screen prints on paper and on card depicts the Union Flag in the shape of a disintegrating swastika (display dimensions 827 x 2392 mm). It was purchased by Tate for the British Art Collection in 2013. In addition to critiquing the subject-matter, the artwork also served as a catalyst for launching discussions about anti-racist art with Eddie Chambers during the recorded curator's interview.	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk
"No Woman, No Cry" (1998) by Chris Ofili (b. 1968) Tate ref: T07502	"No Woman, No Cry" (1998) by Chris Ofili was purchased by Tate in 1999, in the wake of the artist being awarded the prestigious 1998 Turner Prize. The subject-matter pertains to a mother's grief conveyed during extensive media coverage about the racist murder of black British teenager Stephen Lawrence in London in 1993, the subsequent court trials, and the public inquiry into institutionalised racism in the Metropolitan Police Service and the British criminal justice system (Stephen Lawrence Inquiry/ Macpherson Report, 1998/9).	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk
"Between the Two My Heart is Balanced" (1991), by Lubaina Himid (b. 1954) Tate Ref: T06947	This large figurative painting (122 x 152 cm), created by Lubaina Himid in acrylics on canvas, was acquired via the Patrons of New Art (Special Purchase Fund) through the Tate Gallery Foundation in 1995. It is one of three artworks by the artist-curator and art historian in the British Art Collection, and was discussed in the prelude to the Tate case study (see Chapter 7 of this thesis).	Figure 40
"The Museum of Contemporary African Art (1997-2002),*"* by Meschac Gaba Tate refs: L03225 – L03236	The 12-room installation by Beninese artist Meschac Gaba (b. 1962) was displayed at Tate Modern in 2013, and gifted as a long-term loan by the artist in the same year with all costs covered by the Acquisitions Fund for African Art and Guaranty Trust Bank plc. The high-profile exhibition and acquisition were key outcomes of Tate's participation in the collaborative African Art programme *"Across the Board"* (2012-14), developed to support and promote established and emerging artists, curators and other creative professionals based in West Africa.	Images via Tate online at tate.org.uk. See also, Artribune [online] at Artribune. com. (09/2013)

Appendix 3: Information sheet for curators (English and French translations)

RESEARCHER'S DETAILS:

Principal investigator: Carol Dixon / **Research institution**: University of Sheffield

Education and employment history: Carol Dixon is a postgraduate research student at the University of Sheffield, currently completing a PhD in the Department of Geography. She is a qualified teacher with a BA (Honours) in Geography, and an MA (with Distinction) in Cultural Studies. In addition to her doctoral research she works as an education consultant for the Windrush Foundation in London, currently supporting the development of exhibition and publication projects about Caribbean diaspora histories, cultures and heritage – see, for example, *Making Freedom (2013-2014)* at http://makingfreedom.co.uk.

Carol has over 20 years of experience designing and managing education projects for schools, museums and arts venues in the UK, and has delivered a number of successful heritage education initiatives for organisations such as the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), Arts Council England, the Royal Geographical Society and Talawa Theatre Company. She is also a member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM).

Contact details: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/phd/pg/dixon_carol

INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESEARCH PROJECT:

Project title: The 'othering' of Africa and its diasporas in Western museum practices.

Project overview: This research project examines changes in the way African artworks and artefacts have been exhibited in Western European museums and galleries, with a particular focus on curatorship and display techniques observed in British and French cultural institutions.

Drawing on aspects of art history, museology and cultural geography the project addresses questions concerning:

- The extent to which artworks and artefacts from continental Africa have been exhibited in alterity to those from Western Europe, within British and French museums and galleries.

- The imagined *limits* of 'Africa', 'Europe', 'the West'/'*non*-West' and the tensions that arise from being positioned inside and outside these boundaries – particularly in relation to the experiences of contemporary African and African diaspora artists.
- How exhibiting practices in relation to Africa and its wider diasporas have changed over time.
- Strategies for ameliorating 'othering' processes and practices in Western museums and galleries.

PROPOSED INTERVIEW DISCUSSION TOPICS AND THEMES:

1. Consideration of some of the key factors that contribute to the success of museum and gallery exhibitions for diverse, international and cross-cultural audiences.
2. Discussion about whether exhibiting art from the African continent in alterity to Western European art is an historic phenomenon, or something that is still observable in current curatorial practices.
3. Thoughts on the contrasting experiences of African and African diaspora artists exhibiting their work in Western Europe.
4. Perspectives on what you consider to be successful curatorial practices in relation to exhibiting contemporary African art, and works by African diaspora artists (nationally and internationally).
5. Strategies you might recommend/advocate to help museums and galleries in the West ameliorate 'othering' processes and practices.

FRENCH TRANSLATION : Fiche d'information pour les conservateurs

INFORMATIONS SUR LA CHERCHEUSE :

Chercheuse principale : Carol Dixon / **Centre de recherche** : Université de Sheffield

Éducation et parcours professionnel : Carol Dixon est une étudiante de troisième cycle en train de terminer un doctorat à la faculté de géographie de l'université de Sheffield. Elle est professeure qualifiée titulaire d'une Licence en géographie (avec mention) et d'une Maîtrise (avec mention très bien) en études culturelles. En plus des recherches qu'elle mène dans le cadre de sa thèse, elle travaille comme consultante en éducation à la Windrush Foundation de Londres, et accompagne actuellement le développement de projets d'exposition et de publication sur les histoires, les cultures et le patrimoine de la diaspora caribéenne : voir par exemple *Making Freedom (2013-2014)* à l'adresse http://makingfreedom.co.uk.

Carol a plus de 20 ans d'expérience de la conception et de la gestion de projets pédagogiques pour les écoles, les musées et les centres artistiques au Royaume-Uni, et a mené à bien plusieurs initiatives pédagogiques sur le patrimoine pour des organisations comme le Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), Arts Council England, la Royal Geographical Society et la Talawa Theatre Company. Elle est aussi membre de l'International Council of Museums [Conseil international des musées] (ICOM).

Coordonnées : http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/geography/phd/pg/dixon_carol

INFORMATIONS SUR LE PROJET DE RECHERCHE :

Titre du projet : l'altérisation de l'Afrique et de ses diasporas dans les pratiques des musées occidentaux.

Vue d'ensemble du projet : Ce projet de recherche explore les changements dans la manière dont les œuvres d'art et objets africains ont été présentés dans les musées et galeries d'Europe occidentale, et plus particulièrement à l'égard de la gestion, de la mise en valeur et des techniques d'exposition observées dans les institutions culturelles du Royaume-Uni et de France.

S'inspirant de certains aspects de l'histoire de l'art, de la muséologie et de la géographique culturelle, ce projet explore les questions suivantes :

- La mesure dans laquelle les œuvres d'art et objets en provenance d'Afrique continentale ont été exposés dans les musées et galeries britanniques et français dans un esprit d'altérité par rapport à ceux originaires d'Europe occidentale.
- Les *limites* imaginées de « l'Afrique », « l'Europe », « l'Occident/le non-Occident » et les tensions résultant d'un positionnement à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de ces frontières, particulièrement en ce qui concerne les expériences des artistes africains et de la diaspora africaine contemporains.
- L'évolution des pratiques d'exposition relatives à l'Afrique et à ses diasporas plus vastes.
- Les stratégies d'amélioration des processus et pratiques « d'altérisation » dans les musées et galeries occidentaux.

SUJETS ET THÈMES DE DISCUSSION PROPOSÉS POUR L'INTERVIEW :

1. La prise en considération de certains des facteurs clés qui contribuent au succès des expositions des musées et galeries auprès de publics divers, internationaux et transculturels.

2. Une discussion pour déterminer si l'exposition des œuvres d'art provenant du continent africain dans un esprit d'altérité par rapport à l'art d'Europe occidentale est un phénomène historique, ou s'il est toujours vivace dans les pratiques de gestion et de mise en valeur actuelles.

3. Des réflexions sur les expériences contrastées des artistes africains et de la diaspora africaine exposant leurs œuvres en Europe occidentale.

4. Des perspectives sur ce que vous considérez être de bonnes pratiques de gestion et de mise en valeur dans le domaine de l'exposition d'art africain contemporain, et des œuvres d'artistes de la diaspora africaine (sur le plan national et international).

5. Les stratégies que vous recommanderiez ou conseilleriez pour aider les musées et galeries occidentales à améliorer les processus et stratégies « d'altérisation ».

Appendix 4: Consent form / Formulaire de consentement (English and French)

The University Of Sheffield.

Participant Consent Form: Curators' Interviews

Title of Research Project: **The 'othering' of Africa and its diasporas in Western museum practices.**

Name of Researcher: **Carol Ann Dixon**

Participant Identification Number for this project: **Please initialise the box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet, email and web page overview explaining the above research project, and I have had an opportunity to ask questions about the project.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. *(Contact details for the lead researcher, Carol Dixon: Tel. +44 (0)7513 963 453; Email c.dixon@sheffield.ac.uk)*

3. I understand that my responses will <u>not</u> be anonymised and, therefore, I will be identifiable in the report or any publications that result from the research.

4. I give permission for my name to be linked with the research materials, and to be acknowledged by name in the report or any publications (including conference presentations) that result from the research.

5. I agree for the data collected from me to be used in future research.

6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

_____   _____   _____
Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_CAROL DIXON_____   _____   _____
Lead Researcher   Date   Signature
To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Number of copies: 2

This project was approved by the University of Sheffield's Research Ethics Panel on 05 September 2013.

The completed participant's consent form and any other information arising from discussions about the project will be treated as confidential, handled in accordance with the University of Sheffield's Research Ethics Policy (available online at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy), and only used within the context of this particular research project.

Both signatories should receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix 4 (continued)

The University Of Sheffield.

Formulaire de consentement des participants : interviews avec les conservateurs

Titre du projet de recherche : **l'altérisation de l'Afrique et de ses diasporas dans les pratiques des musées occidentaux.**

Nom de la chercheuse : **Carol Ann Dixon**

Numéro d'identification du participant pour ce projet :
Veuillez mettre vos initiales dans la case

☐ 1. Je confirme avec lu et compris la fiche d'information, l'email et la description générale en ligne décrivant le projet de recherche ci-dessus, et avoir eu la chance de poser des questions à cet égard.

☐ 2. Je comprends que ma participation est volontaire et que je suis libre d'y mettre fin à tout moment, sans donner de raison et sans conséquence négative. En plus de cela, si je désire ne pas répondre à une ou plusieurs questions, j'ai le droit de refuser de le faire. *(Coordonnées de la chercheuse principale, Carol Dixon : Tél : +44 (0)7513 963 453 ; Email c.dixon@sheffield.ac.uk)*

☐ 3. Je comprends que mes réponses <u>ne</u> seront <u>pas</u> anonymes, et que je pourrai donc être identifié dans le rapport ou toute publication découlant de la recherche.

☐ 4. J'accepte que mon nom soit mis associé aux documents de recherche, et qu'il soit cité dans le rapport ou toute publication (y compris les présentations de conférence) découlant de la recherche.

☐ 5. J'accepte que les données que j'aurai partagées soient utilisées lors de recherches futures.

☐ 6. J'accepte de participer au projet de recherche ci-dessus.

_____   _____   _____
Nom du participant   Date   Signature

__CAROL DIXON___   _____   _____
Chercheuse principale   Date   Signature
À signer et dater en présence du participant

Nombre d'exemplaires : 2
Ce projet a été approuvé par le panel d'éthique de la recherche de l'université de Sheffield le 5 septembre 2013.

Le formulaire de consentement du participant rempli, et toute autre information ressortant des discussions relatives au projet, seront considérés comme confidentiels et traités conformément à la politique d'éthique de la recherche de l'université de Sheffield (disponible en ligne sur : www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy), et uniquement utilisés dans le contexte de ce projet de recherche particulier.

Les deux signataires devraient recevoir un exemplaire du formulaire de consentement daté et signé. Un exemplaire du formulaire de consentement daté et signé doit être placé dans le dossier principal du projet (sur place), qui doit être conservé dans un endroit sûr.

Appendix 5: Tabulated overview of key issues raised by the 10 interviewees

The transcripts, summary reports and audio recordings for the curatorial interviews identified a range of themes and issues relevant to the research project and its overarching research questions. Underpinning all the conversations was an interest in exploring factors that might contribute to the achievement of successful anti-racist and inclusive exhibiting practices in Western museums and galleries for the benefit of cultural producers (i.e. curators, artists, museum directors, educators, etc.), and also current and prospective future audiences, and scholars interested in what, how, when, why and for whom exhibitions and displays are assembled. The most relevant points were tabulated to illustrate at-a-glance alignment with the project's core research questions:

Appendix 5a: Tabulated issues relevant to Research Question 1

RQ1: To what extent are artworks and artefacts created by African and African diaspora artists exhibited in alterity to Western European art in British and French museums and galleries?

- How the terms 'African', 'European', 'Western' and 'non-Western' being deployed?
- What are the imagined limits of 'Africa' and 'the West', and the issues/tensions that arise at these boundaries/borders?
- What contrasts can be drawn between British and French museum practices?

CURATOR	BLANCHARD	CHAMBERS	DELISS	GOODWIN	HIMID	McMILLAN	MULLER	PHILLIPS	SPRING	VERGES
ISSUES RAISED RE. RESEARCH QUESTION 1	MQB	Tate	MQB & White-chapel	Tate	Tate ICA	Geffrye	MQB	Tate	British Museum	MQB & Louvre
	France	UK	France & UK	UK	UK	UK	France	UK	UK	France
The role of the curator as *"auteur"* – pursuing agendas and visions distinct from/beyond their institution(s)	✓		✓	Partially		✓	✓		Partially	✓
Relative presence / absence and inclusion/exclusion of African (& diaspora) artists within the global fine art canon		✓		✓	✓			✓		
Cultural insiders vs. outsiders within museums and galleries			✓	✓	✓		✓			
Tensions and conflicts re. representations of colonial history & Africa	✓		✓				✓		✓	✓
Discussions about whether Western museums and galleries are *"white* institutions"?		✓			✓					
Legislation – re. the impact of national laws for the UK and French museum sectors							✓		✓	✓

Appendix 5b: Tabulated issues relevant to Research Question 2

RQ2: How have othering processes in relation to Africa and its diasporas changed over time?

- To what extent can othering be construed as 'racist' within 21st century British and French museum practices?
- How do binary 'Self/Other' constructions differ in ethnographic museum displays and contemporary art exhibitions in Britain and France?
- In what ways do the experiences of African diaspora artists and continental African artists differ in the West?

CURATOR	BLANCHARD	CHAMBERS	DELISS	GOODWIN	HIMID	McMILLAN	MULLER	PHILLIPS	SPRING	VERGES
ISSUES RAISED RE. RESEARCH QUESTION 2	MQB	Tate	MQB & White-chapel	Tate	Tate ICA	Geffrye	MQB	Tate	British Museum	MQB & Louvre
	France	UK	France & UK	UK	UK	UK	France	UK	UK	France
Marginalisation of black women artists & LGBTQ – as marginal *within* the margins		✓			✓				✓	✓
Commentary about demands on individuals to represent an entire 'race'/ethnic group (or the African continent)		✓		✓	✓			✓		
'Race' politics: 'colourism', black identities & questions about (in-)authenticity	✓						✓			✓
Identity politics and the subject of blackness in African and Diaspora art – incl. issues of invisibility, de-normalisation, etc.		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Endurance of references to the "exotic"," primitive," & Africa as Other	✓		✓				✓		✓	✓
The persistence of tokenism to mask power imbalances & the lack of diversity		✓					✓	✓		✓
Blockbusters and group survey shows – their limits and possibilities	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓

Appendix 5 (continued)

Appendix 5c: Tabulated issues relevant to Research Question 3

RQ3: What strategies might be employed to ameliorate othering processes and practices?

CURATOR	BLANCHARD	CHAMBERS	DELISS	GOODWIN	HIMID	McMILLAN	MULLER	PHILLIPS	SPRING	VERGES
ISSUES RAISED RE. RESEARCH QUESTION 3	MQB	Tate	MQB & White-chapel	Tate	Tate ICA	Geffrye	MQB	Tate	British Museum	MQB & Louvre
	France	UK	France & UK	UK	UK	UK	France	UK	UK	France
Proposal of tangible strategies for ameliorating and eliminating 'othering'			✓		✓	✓	✓			✓
Acquisition and collection development concerns highlighted & solutions proposed			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	
Lack of workforce diversity mentioned as a concern to be redressed		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Dedicated curatorial posts proposed specialising in "African arts" or "Diaspora arts"								✓	✓	
Archiving, preserving &'memorialising' African and Diaspora art histories in the West		✓			✓	✓	✓			✓
Interpretation literature: panels, labels, web sites, catalogues, press releases, events, etc.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Financing the arts and the politics of funding		✓			✓					✓
Antidotes, counter-narratives and counter-geographies to conventional practices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of innovative museographic techniques and "tactics" to transform spaces	✓		✓			✓	✓			✓
Enthusiasm for pan-European, 'Eurafrican'/African-European and wider transnational alliances & collaborations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Audience issues – visitor numbers, diversification and engagement, etc.	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		

Coda

"I thought if I wrote a book, I would have to examine the quality in the human spirit that continues to rise despite the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

Rise out of physical pain and the psychological cruelties... Rise and be prepared to move on and ever on."

Maya Angelou[192]

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[192] This concluding extract from Maya Angelou's autobiographical text *A Song flung up to Heaven* (2002) features in the final section of the book *The collected autobiographies of Maya Angelou* (2004: 1166).