



OPENING AT ZAC, JUNE 6 @ 19:00  
**RESIGNIFICATIONS**

St Bénédicte de Palerme, 2014 © Omar Victor Diop

**VENUE:**

**ZAC – ZISA ZONA ARTI CONTEMPORANEE**

Via Paolo Gili 4, Palermo

JUNE 7- SEPTEMBER 30, 2018

*"My color does not disfigure my honor or my wit."* –  
Alfonso Alvares

*ReSignifications links classical and popular representations of African bodies in European art, culture and history. It moderates and subverts artistic conventions by using the works of contemporary artists from Africa, Europe, North and South America and the Caribbean to engage in dialogue with the broad historical array of ornamental representations of African bodies. The artists in this exhibition speak against the background of the connected histories of Europe and Africa, and the African Diasporas. Starting from the ubiquitous model of decorative art known as the "Blackamoor," ReSignifications confronts the representation of African bodies in various forms of service—as domestic servants, courtiers, soldiers, priests, and others—with audacious presentations of such bodies as protagonists of histories and cultures. The exhibition across three venues combines styles across time and place to reframe and refract the history of representing African and African diasporic bodies. The unusual juxtaposition of these works gives the exhibition its texture and flavor, thereby underscoring the words of Giambattista Marino (1569-1625): "Nera sì, ma se' bella." ("Black yes, but so beautiful").*

~ Awam Amkpa

## RESIGNIFICATIONS: THE BLACK MEDITERRANEAN



**JUNE 6-9, 2018 | PALERMO | ITALY**

## RESIGNIFICATIONS: THE BLACK MEDITERRANEAN

<http://tisch.nyu.edu/photo/events/conferences/resignifications-the-black-mediterranean>

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**PALERMO**  
2018  
CAPITALE ITALIANA  
DELLA CULTURA



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# Statement from the Organizing Committee

## **ReSignifications: The Black Mediterranean** Palermo (Italy), 6-9 June 2018

New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, NYU Florence: La Pietra Dialogues, the NYU Institute of African American Affairs, Harvard University's Hutchins Center for African & African American Research and the University of Palermo are pleased to present **ReSignifications: The Black Mediterranean**. This conference, held in Palermo, joins a series of international conversations, including *Black Portraits*, breaking new ground in the fields of African and African Diasporic art, literature, cultural theory, history, and political practice. Scholars, writers, artists, and cultural activists from around the world gather in the heart of the Mediterranean to reason together about issues of representation, migration, diaspora, slave-trade, border, mobility, citizenship, and human rights. Discussions from a variety of approaches address the historically and contemporary ways in which black voices have been silenced and black bodies have been ambiguously imagined in Western-dominated global culture. We will investigate why these questions are relevant to what is happening today in the Mediterranean, a crucial site of the African diaspora since the classic era.

Sicily lies at the center of the Mediterranean, where Africa and Europe encounter. Historically considered part of either one of the two continents, depending on the domination of the moment, the island has always functioned as a bridge. Its capital city Palermo, world-renowned for its diverse artistic and cultural heritage, is today one of the major ports of refuge for the countless migrants who arrive in Europe in flocks from the African shores. Designated Italy's 2018 Capital City of Culture, on June 6-9 Palermo will become a resonant chamber of the million visual, oral, written, performed stories of the African diaspora.

At the backdrop to the conference are the exhibitions **ReSignifications: European Blackmoors, Africana Readings** and **Wole Soyinka: Antiquities Across Times and Place**. Collateral events of the MANIFESTA European Biennial of Contemporary Art, the exhibits will display the works of an array of international artists and the African art collection of Nigerian Nobel Prize for Literature Wole Soyinka. Alessandra Di Maio writes that "the arrival in Italy of migrants from Africa, while sparking controversy and igniting a heated debate on migration to the EU, has urged Italians to reconsider their historical connections with the African continent and assess new cultural relationships. Among the first communities who crossed the Mediterranean and found a new home in Italy are Nigerians. This conference will also tell the choral story of how Africa and Italy have always been united by a common sea and a shared experience of migration."

The sea divides and unites its voices, while the coasts share ancient and new stories: that of Black Athena; of the Moors once conquerors and later con-

quered; of Black Saints, Madonnas, and Prophets; and of the young migrants who criss-cross the waters searching for freedoms in adverse conditions reminiscent of the Atlantic slave trade. Whether belonging to history, myth, legend, or the news, those who embody these voices have more often than not been silenced and represented in the West as subaltern – servants, Blackamoors, nameless numbers, slaves. Contemporary visual, performing and literary artists show us the other side of the story: traditionally signified objects, black bodies resurge as signifying subjects with their own names, histories, places, voices, narratives.

Palermo, once the Muslim capital of the Emirate of Sicily, later worshipping St. Benedict the Moor as a patron saint, is today one of the major ports of refuge for the countless migrants who arrive in Europe in flocks from the African shores. Whether they stay or move on to other destinations, they contribute to the island's rich and diverse artistic, literary, historical patrimony. This has led us to choose it as a resonant chamber of the million visual, oral, written stories of the African diaspora. The Black Mediterranean disperses, claims back, re-signifies history through the arts, by interpreting ancient roots and manifesting new, composite, syncretic, contemporary identities.

We all look forward to continuing the conversation in Palermo.

**Awam Amkpa**

*Associate Professor Tisch/Drama/SCA/Africana Studies, New York University*

**Manthia Diawara**

*Director, The Institute of African American Affairs, New York University*

**Alessandra Di Maio**

*Associate Professor of English Literature and Postcolonial Studies, University of Palermo*

**Henry Louis Gates, Jr.**

*Director, Hutchins Center for African and African American Research, Harvard University*

**Ellyn Toscano**

*Executive Director, New York University Florence*

**Deborah Willis**

*Chair, Department of Photography & Imaging, Tisch/SCA, New York University*

## Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our very special thanks to The Mayor of the City of Palermo Leoluca Orlando, The City of Palermo 2018 Capital of Culture, The City of Palermo Assessore alla Cultura Andrea Cusumano, Università degli Studi di Palermo, the Office of the Provost, New York University, the Office of the Dean of Tisch School of the Arts, New York University Department of Photography & Imaging, NYU Florence: La Pietra Dialogues, the NYU Institute of African American Affairs, the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research - Harvard University, GNV Grandi Navi Veloci, ZAC Zona Arti Contemporanee - Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa, Associazione per la conservazione delle tradizioni popolari - Museo internazionale delle marionette Antonio Pasqualino, AISCLI Associazione italiana di studi sulle culture e letterature di lingua inglese, Fondazione Sant'Elia, Fondazione Ignazio Buttitta, and Regione Siciliana.

Additionally, we express much gratitude to the following people for their advice and assistance in making this program book and conference possible: Liz Andrews, Mario Badagliacca, Francesca Baldry, Kalia Brooks Nelson, Ignazio Buttitta, Edgar Castillo, Dennis Clark, Elisabetta Clementi, Davis & Co., Omar Victor Diop, Alessia Di Stefano, Maria Fasino, Katy Fleming, Vera Grant, Allyson Green, Niki Kekos, Magnin-A Gallery, Francesca Mancino, Patricia McKelvin, Marija Mihajlovich, Linda Mills, Nancy Morrison, Pamela Newkirk, Mary Notari, Marina Orsini, Gabriella Palermo, Stefano Pasolini, Rosario Perricone, Antonio Ticali, Augusta Troccoli, Abby Wolf, and Paulette Young.

<b>Day At A Glance</b>	
<b>WEDNESDAY 6 JUNE</b>	
<b>Palazzo Chiaramonte Steri - University of Palermo, Piazza Marina</b>	
<b>4:00PM - 7:00PM</b>	<b>REGISTRATION</b>
<b>5:45PM - 6:00PM</b>	Saluti di Benvenuto: Rector's Welcome
<b>6:00PM - 6:15PM</b>	Saluti di Benvenuto: Italian Authorities Welcome
<b>6:15PM - 6:30PM</b>	Saluti di Benvenuto: Organizing Committee
<b>6:30PM - 7:30PM</b>	Plenary Session: Conversations with Wole Soyinka
<b>7:30PM - 9:30PM</b>	<b>PERFORMANCE</b> - Alfie Nze's "A Dance in Palermo's Forest" Reception <b>OPENING</b> - <i>Wole Soyinka: Antiquities Across Times and Place</i> by curator Awam Ampka

<b>THURSDAY 7 JUNE</b>		
	<b>Museo delle Marionette</b>	<b>Palazzo Sant'Elia</b>
<b>8:00AM - 5:00PM</b>	<b>REGISTRATION</b>	
<b>8:30AM - 9:00AM</b>	<b>COFFEE/TEA</b>	
<b>LOCATION:</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>
<b>9:00AM - 10:30AM</b>	<b>Panel 1</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<i>Black Italia 2.0</i>	
<b>Panelists</b>	Invernomuto, Angelica Pesarini, Adama Sanneh, Theophilus Marboah, Mackda Ghebremariam Tesfau'	
<b>Moderator</b>	Alessandra Di Maio	
<b>10:45AM - 12:15PM</b>	<b>Panel 2</b>	<b>Panel 3</b>
<b>Title</b>	<i>Fluid Archives</i>	<i>The Challenges of Second Generation African Italian Women</i>
<b>Panelists</b>	Pap Khouma, Salah Methnani, Shelleen Greene, Janine Gaëlle Dieudji	Igiaba Scego, Isoke Aikpitanyi, Cristina Ali Farah, Djarah Khan, Ada Ugo Abara, Veronica Fernandes
<b>Moderator</b>	Maurizio Calbi	Lidia Curti
<b>12:15PM - 1:15PM</b>	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>	
<b>1:30PM - 3:00PM</b>	<b>Panel 4</b>	<b>Panel 5</b>
<b>Title</b>	<i>Tastemakers Africa</i>	<i>Intersections: Africa, Asia, Europe</i>
<b>Panelists</b>	Jidenna Mobbisson, Joshua Kissi, Mahaneela Choudry-Reid, Trevor Stuurman	Henry John Drewal, Ella Shohat, Gunja SenGupta, Jordan Rogers, Françoise Lionnet
<b>Moderator</b>	Cherae Robinson	Anna Arabindan-Kesson
<b>3:15PM - 4:45PM</b>	<b>Panel 6</b>	<b>Panel 7</b>
<b>Title</b>	<i>Music: Reimagining Sounds</i>	<i>Ghostships &amp; Other Narratives</i>
<b>Panelists</b>	Robert G. O'Meally, Nouri Gana, Matthew Morrison, Imani Uzuri	Moire Hille, Ayesha Hameed, Anna Arabindan-Kesson, Ayasha Guerin, Lori A De Lucia
<b>Moderator</b>	Kathryn Lachman	Patricia McKelvin
<b>5:00PM - 6:30PM</b>	<b>Panel 8</b>	<b>Panel 9</b>
<b>Title</b>	<i>The Migration Experience</i>	<i>Home and Other Stories</i>
<b>Panelists</b>	Giulia de Spuches, Maaza Mengiste, Lorenzo Rinelli, Agatha Palma	Debora Spini, Simanique Moody, Robert Stam, Luis Rincon Alba, Kajahl Benes
<b>Moderator</b>	Carmen Concilio	Pamela Newkirk
<b>7:00PM - 9:00PM</b>	<b>ZAC - ZISA ZONA ARTI CONTEMPORANEE</b> <b>OPENING</b> <i>ReSignifications: European Blackamoors, Africana Readings</i> by Awam Ampka and Ellyn Toscano	

FRIDAY 8 JUNE		
	Museo delle Marionette	Palazzo Sant'Elia
8:00AM - 1:45PM	REGISTRATION	
8:30AM - 9:00AM	COFFEE/TEA	
LOCATION:	A	B
9:00AM - 10:30AM	Panel 10	Panel 11
Title	<i>Africa/ Italia</i>	<i>Visualizing Travel</i>
Panelists	Giuseppe Grimaldi, Katherine Manthorne, Mahnaz Yousefzadeh, Nicola Cloete & Donato Somma	Sarah K. Khan, Heike Raphael-Hernandez, Liz Andrews, Lidia Curti
Moderator	Luigi Cazzato	Bhakti Shringarpure
10:45AM - 12:15PM	Panel 12	Panel 13
Title	<i>Moors, Blackamoors and Blackface</i>	<i>Identities</i>
Panelists	Eileen Ryan, Ramatu Musa, Angelita Reyes, Carlton Wilkinson, Robert Holmes, Mônica Cardim	Fabio La Mantia, Anna Tedesco, Virginia Monteforte, Lorgia Garcia-Pena & Medhin Paolos
Moderator	Shelleen Greene	Kathryn Lachman
12:30PM - 2:00PM	Panel 14	Panel 15
Title	<i>Framing Art, Artists and Fashion</i>	<i>Memory, Memorials and History</i>
Panelists	Justin Randolph Thompson, Sonya Clark, Enrica Picarelli, Alexander Newman & Rachel Newman, Shani Jamila	Vera Grant, Omari Ra, Sylvie Fortin, Belinda Zhawi, Cecilio M. Cooper
Moderator	Kalia Brooks Nelson	Paulette Young
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM	Boat boarding - Reception Boat departure	

SATURDAY 9 JUNE	
	GNV Atlas
9:00AM - 10:30AM	Panel 16
Title	<i>The Black Mediterranean</i>
Panelists	Paul Gilroy, Iain Chambers, Mauro Pala
Moderator	Ella Shohat
10:45AM - 12:15PM	Panel 17
Title	<i>Burning It</i>
Panelists	Angela Caponnetto, Dagmawi Yimer, Bhakti Shringarpure, Timothy Raeymaekers
Moderator	Nouri Gana

# PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY 6 JUNE | DAY 1

## REGISTRATION

4:00 – 7:00PM | PALAZZO STERI - Chiesa Sant'Antonio Abate

## SALUTI DI BENVENUTO

5:45 – 6:30PM | PALAZZO STERI - Sala delle Capriate

### **Rector's Welcome**

### **Italian Authorities Welcome**

**Awam Ampka** (Associate Professor Tisch/Drama/SCA/Africana Studies, New York University)

**Alessandra Di Maio** (Associate Professor of English Literature and Postcolonial Studies, University of Palermo)

**Deb Willis** (Chair, Department of Photography & Imaging, Tisch/SCA, New York University)

**Ellyn Toscano** (Executive Director, New York University Florence)

## PLENARY SESSION

6:30 – 7:30PM | PALAZZO STERI - Sala delle Capriate

### **Conversations with Wole Soyinka**

## PERFORMANCE, RECEPTION & EXHIBITION OPENING

7:30 – 9:30PM | PALAZZO STERI

Alfie Nze's "A Dance in Palermo's Forest"

*Wole Soyinka: Antiquities Across Times and Place* by curator Awam Ampka

## THURSDAY 7 JUNE | DAY 2

### REGISTRATION

8:00AM – 5:00PM | MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

### SESSION 1

9:00 – 10:30AM

#### MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

##### **Panel 1: Black Italia 2.0**

**Moderator:** Alessandra Di Maio

##### **Panelists:**

###### INVERNOMUTO – Visual Artists

MALÙ – The Stereotype of the Black Venus in Italy is a video-essay commissioned for the exhibition Nero su Bianco (Black on White) at American Academy in Rome, curated by Lyle Ashton Harris, Peter Benson Miller and Robert Storr. This film examines the construction of the image of the black female body in Italian society, from the colonial age to modern times, exposing detrimental stereotypes that date back to the XIX century. The European fascination with Saartjie Baartman (the so-called “Hottentot Venus”), the unearthing of photographs of Abyssinian women commissioned by the Istituto Luce, Italian Mondo movies of the 60s and 70s, advertising campaigns of the 80s, and in more recent times, in the media frenzy surrounding the scandal of Berlusconi and Ruby Rubacuori, are all phenomena associated with this layered history.

###### Angelica Pesarini – NYU Florence

“The White Race is at Risk”. Race, Gender and Nation in Contemporary Italian Political Discourse

The shooting occurred in Macerata in February 2018, followed a month later by the murder of Idy Diene in Florence, marking the tail-end of a vitriolic electoral campaign in which anti-Black racism and immigration were strategically used, with the complicity of the media, by both right- and left-wing parties in order to score votes. In the year marking the eightieth anniversary of the racial laws, this paper will examine three specific case studies highlighting explicit connections between the contemporary Italian political discourse on identity and fascist principles of biological racism and eugenics. Within this context, the appropriation and exploitation of women's bodies appears to function as the symbolic bridge connecting the ideology of blood to the Nation and able to (re)define and defend the “real Italian” from dangerous external contamination.

###### Adama Sanneh – Moleskine Foundation

Can Creativity Change the World?

The Moleskine Foundation is a non-profit organization that believes that quality education is key to producing positive change in society and driving our collective future. Focusing on communities affected by cultural and social deprivation, the Foundation is committed to providing youth with unconventional educational tools and experiences that help foster critical thinking, creativity and life-long learning. To achieve this, the Foundation works at the intersection of three focus areas: innovative education, art and culture for social transformation, advocacy

and cross-cultural sensitization. With a special focus on Africa and its diaspora, the Foundation works closely with local organizations to fund, support and co-create a wide range of distinctive initiatives. Together with our partners and grantees, it strives to catalyze systemic change through an open, participatory and cross-sectorial approach. The Co-Founder and COO Adama Sanneh will present the new strategy of the Foundation and its main initiatives with a specific focus on the role that creativity and art can play in social transformation.

###### Theophilus Marboah – University of Pavia

Echoes and Agreements

All images are related to other images. Rhymes that create visual conversations that unfold concealed meanings.

Echi e Accordi (Echoes and Agreements) – an experimental work started on Instagram and Facebook – brings together, in the form of diptychs, images hailing from the Black diaspora (photographs of artworks and from archives) and photographs of European art.

Each diptych creates an inter/intra-dialogue that stimulates new interpretations in reading Black images.

###### Mackda Ghebremariam Tesfau' – University of Padua

“It has been said it was not racism”: Italy after Macerata and Florence

The postcolonial literature on Italy has shown how processes of racialization have been constitutive of the “becoming a nation” of the country. Still, narratives such as “Italians good people”, the “Mediterranean métissage” and the “emigrants land” work to obscure the structural dimension of racism. After the racist attacks in Macerata and Florence, mainstream politics and media tended to depict the events in terms of “migration” and “security”. Discourses on the so-called “refugee crisis” and the precarious reception system have been repeatedly used to conceal racism and race. Moreover, racism seems to be recognized only when acted by far-right individuals, thus relegating it to an anachronistic past and withholding its institutional and every-day dimension. The presentation aims to analyze the public responses to Macerata and Florence – including politicians' statements as well as activists' demonstrations - in order to bring out some of the distinctive features of the Italian “racism without racists”.

### PARALLEL SESSION 2

10:45AM – 12:15PM

#### MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

##### **Panel 2: Fluid Archives**

**Moderator:** Maurizio Calbi

##### **Panelists:**

###### Pap Khouma - Journalist, Writer

Homeless

Rediscovering roots. He left Italy, first of all to escape the rampant consumerism of the Western world and secondly because he no longer felt comfortable in his own country, where he was considered a foreigner. The police stopped him continually and always doubted his personal details that he gave them. He is black, under thirty, Italian name and surname and is an Italian citizen. He is well educated, handsome, very tall, broad shouldered, bright eyed and with a perfect Milanese accent, a person who undoubtedly has to hide something fishy... The young,

black Italian looks around for help, he is in full view of the people, his countrymen. The village square is crowded but nobody takes his side, not even the people who a moment before were clapping and waving their Italian flags to the beat of his drum.

**Salah Methnani – Writer, Reporter and Film Maker**  
**One Way Ticket**

Travelling around the world is becoming more and more difficult for thousands of people who dreamed of a chance to move from the south to the wealthy countries of the North. When a person decides to go around and visit different countries and meet with other cultures he used to buy a round trip ticket. Things have changed since a big wall was built to prevent those people from reaching the So-Called European Paradise. Many of them started the voyage risking their lives in order to break the Wall. A lot of them lost their way while crossing the Mediterranean Sea. Their dreams were betrayed. The Mare Nostrum became in the last years a big open Cemetery for youth escaping from war, poverty and dictatorship. They left their countries aware of the fact that they may never come back home, and decided to get a “One way ticket”...

**Shelleen Greene – UCLA**  
**The Place and Time of Italian Postcolonialism: Experimental Film and the Migrant Condition**

This presentation examines the use of experimental film to articulate an Italian postcolonial migrant condition. I argue the films of Nico Angiuli (*Tre Titoli: An ensemble film*, 2015), Kevin Jerome Everson (*Rhinoceros*, 2013), and Isaac Julien (*Western Union: small boats*, 2007) deploy architectural sites to construct the dischronic temporalities of Italian postcolonialism and migrancy. In *Tre Titoli*, rural landscapes are collapsed with the city of Cierignola's Duomo Tonti, interchanging the Italian and African residents by way of passage through antique ruins and neoclassical architecture. *Western Union: small boats* was partially filmed in the Palazzo Gangi, the palace in which Visconti filmed the ballroom sequence of his revisionist history of the unification, *The Leopard* (1962). Finally, *Rhinoceros* was filmed at the Villa la Pietra in Florence. The use of the Villa la Pietra as mise en scene directs us to the presence of black Africans in early modern Europe.

**Janine Gaëlle Dieudji – Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden**  
**Contemporary Art in Africa: Building and Sharing a Common Heritage**

The recent frenetic excitement around African contemporary art reflects, among other things, a cultural revolution within the old continent, with the will of the actors to be themselves bearers and makers of a history and a common heritage, rich in its diversity. From Marrakech to Cotonou, via Cape Town, Accra, Lubumbashi and Bandjoun, private cultural institutions flourish and demonstrate creativity and innovation to face the challenges, with the key words: Education, awareness and integration. On the one hand, to position Culture as a true mean of development outside of political, geographical and social constraints, on the other hand the affirmation of the necessity of contemporary art in our societies. The conference will be an opportunity to explore and analyse the contemporary art scene in Africa, including the status of the artist, structures and audiences, and the importance of art as an instrument of awakening and social integration.

**PALAZZO SANT'ELIA**

**Panel 3: The Challenges of Second Generation African Italian Women**

**Moderator:** Lidia Curti – University of Naples, 'Orientale'

**Panelists:**

Igiaba Scego – Writer, International Center for Humanities and Social Change University of Venice Ca' Foscari

**In between, AfroItalian identity**

Being Italian, being Black, living between identities and dreams.

Isoke Aikpitanyi – Activist, Associazione vittime ed ex vittime della tratta  
**The Girls of Benin City**

My book “Girls from Benin city” tells my story as a victim of sex trafficking. I had not yet turned 20 when I arrived in Europe to find work. I found myself in Italy, forced to prostituiarmi. I had no way out. When I rebelled, I was almost killed by traffickers. My story also relates to those of many other young Nigerians who like me ended in hell. The book has obtained awards. It was presented on TV, on the radio, in social media. Feeling stronger because of its popularity, I could start social activities, including “The House of Isoke”, supported economically with the copyrights of the book, which has sold 50 thousand copies in English.

Cristina Ali Farah – Writer

**Resignifying Antigone**

Presenting an excerpt of a rewriting of Sophocle's Antigone, which is both the result of personal research on political translations of the tragedy and workshops that saw the participation of professional actors, theatre students and musicians of different cultural backgrounds in Palermo. By inscribing Antigone's struggle in a city like Palermo, which is today a major port of refuge for African migrants, I'll investigate her representative value in its artistically and culturally diverse surroundings. Crucial in Sophocle's Antigone is the conflict between the protagonist, who stays true to the laws of the gods and her personal morality, and Creon, who believes in the superiority of the laws of the state and public morality. Today, values such as empathy, justice, morality are pivotal to undermining the public discourse in the Western countries on issues such as citizenship, migration and human rights. Resignifying Antigone is an attempt to articulate and renew the law she introduced.

Djarah Akan – Writer, Singer, Blogger

**La Negra – The Black Negro Girl**

In this reading, I try to talk about my experience of being a Black woman in a White male society. The history of the Black people in America is deeply different from the Story of Black people in Italy but in both places being Black, negro and girl always get unsolved question about race, gender and class.

Ada Ugo Abara – CONGI, G2 Activist

**What It's Like to be a Second-Generation Italian**

This talk is about the emergence of the second generation in Italy. It draws in-depth on the attitude of young African-Italians, concentrating on issues of citizenship and belonging. Second generation subjects continues to be marginalised in the contemporary immigration debate in Italy.

Veronica Fernandes – TV Journalist

What's it like being black in Italy?

This paper is about the black representation in Italian Media (newspaper/television)

### PARALLEL SESSION 3

1:30 – 3:00PM

MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

**Panel 4: *Tastemakers Africa***

**Moderator:** Cherae Robinson

#### **Panelists:**

Jidenna Mobbisson

Joshua Kissi

Mahaneela Choudry-Reid

Trevor Stuurman

PALAZZO SANT'ELIA

**Panel 5: *Intersections: Africa, Asia, Europe***

**Moderator:** Anna Arabindan-Kesson – Princeton University

#### **Panelists:**

Henry John Drewal – University of Wisconsin-Madison

**BLACKsmiths of Morocco**

In the winter and spring of 2017 I interviewed, filmed, photographed, and worked with blacksmiths in Morocco, all of whom trace their roots to sub-Saharan Africa and are known as “people of the desert.” This intraAfrican diaspora brought distinctive elements to the complex mix of cultures (Amazigh [Berber], Arab, Jewish) in Morocco. Many blacksmiths are Sufi followers of mystical branches of Islam. Because of their extraordinary, so-called “magical” gifts as transformers, blacksmiths provoke attitudes of fear, awe, and reverence, not unlike those among Mande-speaking peoples of Mali and other Afro-Moroccans known as Gnawa who use iron cymbals (qraqeb) in their healing ceremonies to evoke spirits into possession. With portraits of several blacksmiths and film clips of their masterful forging skills, this presentation explores how Moroccan blacksmiths are seen/regarded by others, their Sufi faith and relation to spirits called jinn, and how their work expresses and reflects their lives and histories.

Ella Shohat – New York University

**De-Orientalizing the Figure of the Blackamoor**

A hybrid of the African Black and the Muslim Moor, the Blackamoor figure condenses representations often conceptualized in isolation within the compartmentalized cartographies of the various regions. Scrutiny of the Blackamoor sheds light on forgotten discursive continuities as well as

on historical connectivities across continents and oceans, in this case, those operating along the winding Mediterranean shores of Europe, Africa, and Asia. The Blackamoor can be examined critically, as a stereotypical imaging of the racialized and gendered Black body. Here, I will pose a different set of questions: Can the putatively reassuring and domesticated Blackamoor also be viewed as a visual manifestation of an ongoing European anxiety about its “others?” Might this image of Blackamoor docility testify indirectly to a doubly repressed fear toward the neighboring continents of Africa and Asia? Could the apparent civility of the ornamental Blackamoor mask anxieties about racial mixing, cultural syncretism, and intellectual influence?

Gunja SenGupta – Brooklyn College & Graduate Center, City University of New York

**African Americans, the ‘Greek Slave’ and the ‘Libyan Sibyl’: ReSignifying the Mediterranean in Transatlantic Abolitionism**

Two iconic sculptures of enslaved women – one “white,” and the other ostensibly “African,” – injected the Mediterranean into 19th century transatlantic debates over slavery. Originally conceived in Florence against the backdrop of the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire, Hiram Powell’s “The Greek Slave” evoked for Victorian audiences, the spectacle of a helpless nude woman, exposed to the “licentious gaze of a wealthy Eastern barbarian.” By contrast, Rome-based William Story’s artwork, the “Libyan Sibyl,” reportedly inspired by Harriet Beecher Stowe’s portrait of Sojourner Truth, amalgamated European imaginaries of Africa and the “Orient.” Through the prism of these works, disparate, yet celebrated by critics in the same breath as vindicating American genius in the “grand art of sculpture,” interracial abolitionists wrote the Mediterranean variously – whether as a source of African American identity, or a framework for comparative slavery – into their struggles against the racial logic of African slavery in the Americas.

Jordan Rogers – University of Miami

**Between Manipulated Memories and Dreamed Realities: The Poetics of Gender and Nation in African Cinema**

Ousmane Sembène’s *La Noire de...* (1966), Robert Van Lierop’s *A Luta Continua* (1973), and Flora Gomes’ *Nha Fala* (2002) all feature strong female characters and/or protagonists at different points in Africa’s turbulent relationship with western Europe during the mid-to-late twentieth century. While these directors represent different countries and language traditions, each one successfully unsettles assumptions that the place of the African woman is somewhere other than at the forefront of movements for self-determination. Though men in African diasporic cinema have historically dominated the field’s cultural output, as the selected films suggest, women have consistently participated in the fight to create African nations and narratives. Drawing from black feminist and post-colonial theories, this paper will compare and analyze African female film protagonists, in order to meditate on the ways in which women have engaged in post-independence nation-building efforts, and the extent to which their efforts have been successfully portrayed in film.

Francoise Lionnet – Harvard University

**Islands of Labor. Photographing The Black Docker**

Mauritian photographer Jano Couacaud has documented the physical labor of dock workers in the capital city of Port Louis just before automation transformed the way raw sugar was loaded onto cargo ships for transport to European refineries and their markets. He records the embodied experiences and crushingly repetitive labor of “free” black men whose activity continued to mirror that of their slave ancestors. The book is a visual analogue of Sembène’s *Le Docker noir* or Claude McKay’s *Banjo*, narratives that take place in the Mediterranean port of Marseilles. Following Sarah Lewis’s argument that in a democracy, to be “an engaged citizen requires grappling with pictures, and knowing their historical contexts,” I argue that Couacaud’s photographs

force us to see the dockers' contributions to postcolonial nation-building thus to hold the Republic responsible for those whose status as full citizens continues to be in jeopardy, due to racial and ethnic prejudice.

#### PARALLEL SESSION 4

3:15 – 4:45PM

#### MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

##### **Panel 6: Music: Reimagining Sounds**

**Moderator:** Kathryn Lachman – University of Massachusetts Amherst

##### **Panelists:**

Robert G. O'Meally – Columbia University

##### **Connecting Black Lines and Dots: Jelly Roll, Duke, & Miles as Afro-Mediterranean Music-Makers**

My paper emphasizes African and African imaginary elements in the musical continuum often simplistically exceptionalized as "American jazz." I'll focus on three recordings by major composers of the US jazz tradition: Jelly Roll Morton's presentation of the "Spanish Tinge" (much more North and sub-Saharan African and Caribbean as well as Mediterranean than Morton realized), which he said defined jazz; part of Miles Davis's Sketches of Spain called "Saeta," his version of a "black Spanish" public song; and Duke Ellington's and Billy Strayhorn's "Such Sweet Thunder" (their portraits of Othello the Moor and other African characters in Shakespeare wherein the composers explore African dimensions in the plays as they evoke Africa in music). In 1966, when Ellington played the Cote d'Azur festival, along with "Such Sweet Thunder" he played "Circus Turn-Around Blues." What is the relation of his Afro-Shakespearean works to this hymn to circus travel—with its own Afro-Eurasian ellipses?

Nouri Gana – UCLA

##### **Rap Recap: Irregular Migration and the Predicament of Hope**

This talk focuses on Tunisian rap music and the tragic sociocultural and geopolitical phenomenon of irregular migration across the Mediterranean sea. While the temptations of the "other shore" cannot be overstressed in a world that is gone irremediably global, at least technically or techno-culturally, the limitations placed on the movement of peoples across geographical locations beggars the imagination. This paradox of globalization is nowhere else felt more intensely than in the Mediterranean sea, which has become at once a line of flight and a graveyard for countless human lives and seasons of migration to the North. The talk will discuss especially how Tunisian rap music engaged with the phenomenon of irregular migration in a revolutionary context in which young people kept, after the ouster of Ben Ali, raising the threshold of the possible and doable by calling, for instance, not only for the liberation of Palestine, a common cause among Arab peoples, but also for the liberation of Lampedusa from Italians, a common cause among irregular migrants, or so it seems.

Matthew Morrison – New York University

##### **Intellectual (Public) Property, Mama Lou's "Ta Ra Ra Boom de Ay," and Black-sound as Public Domain in Nineteenth Century American and British Popular Music**

This paper explores the growth of popular entertainment in the US and UK at the end of the nineteenth century through the genealogy of the popular tune, "Ta Ra Ra Boom De Ay," and the eventual decision that this work belonged to the "public domain." The song originated in a St. Louis sporting house in the late nineteenth century by famed African American entertainer, Ma Ma Lou, and serves as an example of how the sounds and performance practices of black musicians moved from regional to commercial popularity without afforded rights and royalties. Ma Ma Lou's song sets the stage for how Tin Pan Alley musicians, along with mechanical and music performing rights organizations, continued to use Black-sound as the basis of popular music, shaping the sounds of records, radio, film, and other emerging technologies of global popular entertainment through copyright laws and the racialization of Intellectual (Performance) Property.

Imani Uzuri – Independent Artist and Scholar

##### **Fieldwork: Songs of Sanctuary for the Black Madonna**

FIELDWORK: SONGS OF SANCTUARY FOR THE BLACK MADONNA is centered around Imani Uzuri's research and travel toward composing a forthcoming contemporary chamber orchestral work inspired by the iconic Black Madonna. These holy Marian figures, depicted with dark skin, are currently worshipped within the Catholic and Orthodox Marian pantheon but can be traced back to pre-Christian pagan images specifically the sculpture of Isis (Auset) suckling Horus (Heru). They are also embraced, celebrated and worshipped by Muslim, Hindu, Roma and other communities, including African Diasporic communities from Brazil to Haiti, in rituals and processions around the world. Uzuri's recent international sojourns to various altars, shrines and monasteries in Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Prague, France, Spain, Portugal and Switzerland will provide the theoretical framework for this paper and will bring to light songs, prayers and images of these ancient Black Madonnas that center Black femininity as divine through the lens of sacredness and sexuality.

#### PALAZZO SANT'ELIA

##### **Panel 7: Ghostships & Other Narratives**

**Moderator:** Patricia McKelvin – New York University

##### **Panelists:**

Moire Hille – Academy of Fine Arts Vienna / University of Toronto, OISE

##### **Ghost Ship – Ghostly Aesthetics, Border Regimes and Politics of Place**

In my Paper I follow Ghost Ships, ghostly aesthetics and their haunting appearances since the 18th century, their becoming phenomenon during the time of Transatlantic Slave Trade and their continuities in today's border regimes in the Mediterranean Sea. I will focus on the recent use of the term Ghost Ship in public media for so-called refugee boats, and discuss strategies of visibility, representation and inclusion culture that go with it. I will examine what is visually but also material banned, locked and kept in the sphere of the ghostly and opaque, and will argue that the Mediterranean Sea as a place is systematically banned from our perception, a process which I refer to as ghosting. As counter strategy, I also inquire the potential of the Submarine Ghost Ship as a visual-political strategy beyond visibility and representation discourses, and its incommensurability as visual-political potentiality.

Ayesha Hameed – Goldsmiths University of London

### Black Atlantis: Retrograde Futurism

This lecture performance is composed of notes on a film to be made and an essay to be written. On April 29, 2006, a twenty-foot boat was spotted off the south-eastern coast of Barbados. On board, eleven bodies were found by the coastguards, preserved and desiccated by the sun and salt water. The ghost ship was adrift for four months on the Atlantic Ocean. It set sail on Christmas day in Praia in the Cape Verde Islands, full of migrants from Senegal, Guinea Bissau, and Gambia, en route to the Canary Islands. Each of these men paid £890 for their place on the boat. Four months later the boat was found on the coast of Barbados. This is an inadequate telling of this story that draws on the materials and tools at hand to make sense of the complicity of weather, ocean currents and state violence in the journey of this ship.

Anna Arabindan-Kesson – Princeton University

### The Migrant's Time

Replayed across our screens, the subject of migration is constructed through a language of crisis while women, men and children die in ever-increasing numbers. To reframe this language we need to understand the geopolitics of mobility and statelessness they figure as emerging from a longer history of crossings between Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. Drawing on the work of a range of artists – from Robert S Duncanson to Isaac Julien to Maya Ramsey – my paper explores the interconnected histories of the Black Mediterranean and the Black Atlantic embedded in these contemporary crossings. Tracing how these artists reframe Italy as a center of historical and contemporary circuits of movement, I explore the multiple experiences and shared challenges encapsulated by Ranajit Guha's term 'the migrant's time.' In doing so I want to articulate the critical possibilities this term offers for unsettling conceptions of nationhood, belonging and empathy.

Ayasha Guerin – New York University

### The Black Beach and the Sea

This project builds off my presentation at Black Portraits: IV, which drew from the writings of Edouard Glissant to develop a framework of archipelagic thinking. Derek Walcott's assertion that the "Sea is History" is another example of black art to have re-conceptualized the record of time in relation to water- it similarly challenged the coherence of territorial perspectives and encourages the accountability of a world in nuanced relation. Christina Sharpe's "In the Wake" reminds us of the long residence time of the atoms of people thrown overboard during middle passages, still out there in the ocean today. I draw on these works to frame "aquapelagos" as important space for continuing to think through themes of identity, colonial linkages and temporal entanglements. I explore how "the Sea," has served an important cognitive space, a point and platform of observation, a haunted place, a place of contemplation, connection, and care.

Lori A De Lucia – UCLA

### Between Borno and Palermo: The Price of Being an Enslaved African in Early Modern Sicily

In sixteenth century Palermo, West Africans fought in the military, were baptized in Catholic churches, lived as free men and women, and even achieved sainthood. In my presentation I will examine the sixteenth century records of one ship of enslaved people being brought from Tripoli to Palermo. Focusing on the moors and black Africans on this ship, I will analyze how early concepts of race and gender impacted the living conditions and sales of these individuals. Secondly, I will explore how this document points to the larger trans-Saharan trade networks that connected Palermo to the kingdom of Borno. With its unique connection to this kingdom, early modern Palermo will be situated as a port city integral to the conversation on the development of a black Mediterranean that spanned across the Sahara.

PARALLEL SESSION 5

5:00 – 6:30PM

MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

### Panel 8: The Migration Experience

Moderator: Carmen Concilio – University of Turin, Italy

Panelists:

Giulia De Spuches – University of Palermo

### The Black Mediterranean: from Eight Representational Objects to Eight Geographical Narratives

When does Europe lose its "human form"? This is when the map is established as the model of Modernity that puts the other technical and narrative dispositifs "off the scene". This work aims to bring out these "off-scene" by resignifying representations through 8 narratives. It is a variable geography of distance marked by shipwrecks with a spectator, doors as thresholds and, despite everything, porous borders that asks how to inhabit the diaspora. In the space of this distance, marked by the two shores, the Black Mediterranean is the new archive that tells how Italy is not, and never was, white. It seems to us that, following Du Bois's considerations, the stakes today are the same as those of the 20th century: how much depth the color-line has!

Maaza Mengiste – Queens College, City University of New York

### In Predatory Light

Maaza Mengiste will be reading from her forthcoming novel, *The Shadow King*, set during Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1935. The book is inspired by photographs depicting civilians and soldiers during the war.

Lorenzo Rinelli – Temple University

### Foreignness, Forensics, and Entanglement in the Black Mediterranean

In an attempt to make sense of precarious African migrant lives and deaths that do not find articulation within the dominant forensic and evidentiary practices, this paper reads life stories (and necrobiographies) of African presence in Italy. We follow the stories of Nike Favor Adekune, a young Nigerian woman sexually trafficked in Palermo whose body was found in the Misilmeri countryside in December 2011 and of Dagmawi Yimer and his documentary film, *Like a Man on Earth* (Segre & Yimer 2008) which provide a broader necrography and forensics of life and death. Read together, Nike's and Dag's life/death stories serve as amateur forensic vehicles that reveal and recalls Italian colonialism in Libya, Eritrea and Ethiopia in the past while highlighting the precarious presence of Africans in Italy today and the forms of life, death, and livelihoods that emerge in these zones of entanglement.

Agatha Palma – UCLA

### Mapping the Racial City: Migrants, Southerners, and the Mediterranean Imaginary in Palermo, Sicily

What does it mean to occupy urban space in the Mediterranean while Black? Sicily is popularly imagined as a liminal zone where Europe meets Africa – the gateway to Europe for migrants, or the very end of Europe for Europeans. In this paper, I explore the interrelatedness between migrant and local precarity in Mediterranean Europe, and the anti-Blackness in a place long considered the "Africa" of Europe. This paper traces the quotidian lives of African migrants,

Afro-Italians, and locals in Palermo, Sicily. I map my participants' daily interactions with the city, paying particular attention to imaginations of urban space. I follow my participants as they navigate the city, as racialized or lower-class insiders/outsideers. I explore how they inhabit and create meaning out of urban space, and how that maps on to larger geographic imaginaries and racial topographies.

PALAZZO SANT'ELIA

**Panel 9: Home and Other Stories**

**Moderator:** Pamela Newkirk – New York University

**Panelists:**

Debora Spini – NYU Florence

**Where is Home?**

Send them back home, aiutiamoli a casa loro, ils arrivent chez nous – references to “home” are central in the discourse of ethnocentric populism, reinforcing the perception of the invasion of Europe. The underlying assumption is that membership in a political community depends by an eternal, non-negotiable connection to a community of nation and territory – a “home”, which as such is defined by a series of “natural” hierarchies.

My paper argues that xenophobic populism reveals the unresolved contradictions of modern democratic citizenship and of its self-understanding as a political space defined by individual and universal rights. Moving from a definition of populism as the distorted image of democracy, it analyses how crucial the reference to a sacred bond among (male) brothers still is for modern democratic communities, making it hard to imagine grounds and strategies for a genuinely inclusive democratic political space where every person could feel at “home”.

Simanique Moody – Leiden University

**Examining Language Contact, Identity, and Belonging in Two African Diaspora Communities in the Netherlands**

This paper examines language, identity, and belonging in Sierra Leonean and Somali communities in the Netherlands. For many in these communities, much of their lived experience has been characterized by time and space: moving from one place to another, waiting for prolonged periods, and being permanently “temporary” in some cases. These diasporic communities, connected by a shared sense of disconnectedness, find themselves in ever-changing linguistic and cultural contact zones (Pratt 1991). In this permanent temporariness, language plays an essential role in the process of articulating and renegotiating their identity at different points along their life journey and thus functions as one of the most important markers of identity for African diaspora communities in Europe. Using in-depth ethnographic and sociolinguistic observation, this paper analyzes how certain African diaspora communities construct and negotiate various aspects of their identity in the face of ongoing societal changes.

Robert Stam – New York University

**Brazil, Portugal, the Favela and the Mediatic Spectrum**

The favelas of Rio de Janeiro have become famous around the world largely due to the celebrated films – going back to Black Orpheus and continuing up through City of God – that have treated the subject. This lecture-video presentation will give a vivid sense of the history of black Rio ever since the abolition of slavery as represented across the mediatic spectrum – not only through feature films but also through documentaries, music videos, web series, cable TV

satire, activist websites, and so forth. The talk will relativize and contextualize the misleading impression conveyed by films such as Elite Squad and City of God of favelas as the sites merely of relentless violence to reveal the favelas as loci of creativity, activism, and resistance.

Luis Rincon Alba – New York University

Through performances, images, objects, music, and rituals from the Caribbean this panel opens up a dialogue between two scholars from this region (Cuba and Colombia) and the ways these cultural phenomena the intimacies, raptures, continuities that allow them to subvert predominant narratives about the relation between the Americas and Europe. This subversion allows their academic research and artistic practices to encounter perform a reconsideration of Atlantic popular culture, carnivals, festivities, masks, blackface practices, cultural circulation and contentions, saints/ancestors, embodied memory, surrogacy/forgetfulness, exorcism/executions/dismemberment, living mementos. In this panel each participant proposes a “troubling” object/performance that incorporates all this aspects in order to explore the modes through which they incorporate living memories and subversive epistemologies.

Kajahl Benes - New York Academy of Art

**Obscure Origins**

Working in the medium of oil on canvas Kajahl resurrects subjects that are lying dormant in historical archives. Kajahl's portraits combine iconography from African, Asian, European, and Pre-Columbian traditions. The fusion of these symbols results in the creation of enigmatic artworks that foreground the forgotten past and reanimate minor artifacts of history into transformative assemblages. Without a need for chronological consistency or narrative support, Much like Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, who gave life to a humanoid from non living matter, Kajahl seamlessly sews parts together from the fringe of art history into new transformative identities.

**EXHIBITION OPENING**

7:00 – 9:00PM | ZAC – ZISA ZONA ARTI CONTEMPORANEE

**ReSignifications: European Blackamoors, Africana Readings** by Awam Amkpa and Ellyn Toscano

FRIDAY 8 JUNE | DAY 3

REGISTRATION

8:00AM – 12:00PM | MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

PARALLEL SESSION 6

9:00 – 10:30AM

MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE

**Panel 10: Africa/Italia**

**Moderator:** Luigi Cazzato – University of Bari “Aldo Moro”

**Panelists:**

Giuseppe Grimaldi – University of Milano Bicocca

**The Black Mediterranean and the Citizens/Refugees Convivence?**

The paper offers an ethnographic perspective to work the national paradigm in the wake of the Black Mediterranean. I focus on Milanese of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins (the so called second generations) changing identification patterns. Specifically, I investigate their everyday cohabitation with refugees from the Horn of Africa since the outbreak of the “refugees emergency” in Italy. The citizens/refugees convivence, I argue, rather than representing the clue of an ethnic based continuity, reveals the contours of the Black Mediterranean. On the one hand it allows to consider the differential categories reproducing the Italian national paradigm and its structural otherness out of legal categories. On the other hand, it allows to work the new set of practices producing emerging Afro-European subjectivities. The Black Mediterranean may configure as a vantage point in the analysis of emerging social patterns re-signifying hegemonic national categories.

Katherine Manthorne – Graduate Center, City University of NY

**Sicily, Sugar, Slaves: Medieval to Modern**

Syracuse’s Porta degli Zuccheri (Gate of Sugar Workers) reminds us that Sicily was a thriving if unrecognized medieval center for sugar production. It provided a model for colonizers who after 1500 transported the cultivation of sugar and enslaved Africans to the Americas. When the US Civil War ended slavery, Louisiana Sugar Plantation Association recruited poor Sicilians to cross the Atlantic to work sugarcane alongside freed blacks. From Mediterranean culture that included North Africa, Sicilians were identified with blacks and lynched alongside them. Putting into dialogue sugar production in medieval Palermo and nineteenth-century New Orleans, this paper utilizes pictorial evidence – prints and photographs – to document the inter-related African/Sicilian diasporas. Pushing Sicily to the center of discussion, I argue that conditions of plantation life and involuntary migration are as critical as social constructs of whiteness and blackness in the Black Mediterranean’s sugar trade.

Mahnaz Yousefzadeh – New York University

**Saved by the Medusa: Medici Saracen from Bargello to Met Breuer**

This paper will present the question of survival and transfiguration within the archives and across Italian and American institutions, of Buratto, a wooden statue of a black Moorish man holding a Medusa shield held in Bargello Museum. The figure was used as a theatrical prop in the wedding of Tuscan Grand Duke Francesco I in 1579, and is currently in NYC as part of Like

Life: Sculpture, Color and Body exhibition at the Met Breuer. 1) The enigmatic transformation of the Moorish figure from a legless prop with a turban in 16th-century to a helmeted Persean figure holding a Medusa shield; 2) The logic of the inclusion, categorization, and thus the survival of abject statue in Italian institutions; 3) Phenomenology of my encounter with the Moorish figure, who appeared in words uttered by an “Ethiopian Knight” describing the injuries he may have suffered as a target during a 1579 Joust.

Nicola Cloete & Donato Somma

**I neri bianchi: “The White Blacks” and the Reach of the European Racial Imagination**

The almost 90,000 Italian prisoners of war in South Africa during the Second World War extended the Mediterranean encounter from their capture in North Africa to South Africa. They disrupted and subverted already well-established racial categories in the colony. We trace that disruption in the memory and imagination of South Africans inter-generationally, presenting a counterpoint to more common narratives of hegemonic power by recounting the subjection of European citizens to racialized lives in Africa. The experience of political and optic blackness overlaid already complex Italian regional and class categorizations making these POWs a unique study in late 20th century racial experience. We offer a discursive and aesthetic analysis of the documentary *Cattivi Italiani in Sud Africa (Moni)* as well as theorise fictional and testimonial accounts of the POW imaginary. The paper rests on memory and narrative studies to consider the encounter between Africans and Europeans and the experience of Blackness.

PALAZZO SANT’ELIA

**Panel 11: Visualizing Travel**

**Moderator:** Bhakti Shringarpure

**Panelists:**

Sarah K. Khan – New York University

**To Sow and To Sew: Siddi Women Farmers (and Quilters) in Uttara Kannada, Karnataka, India**

Siddi women farmers (Indians of African descent) are invisible. The shape and contour of their layered lives are little known, and less valued within and outside South Asia. I present a view into the farming and day-labor lives of Siddi women farmers, who are also quilters in southern India–Portuguese enslaved Africans, and brought them to Goa. Over time, they fled to the Western Ghats. Today Siddi women farmers work within a larger global farming context. They endure the on-going Indian agrarian crisis while confronting tribal, caste, religious, and color discrimination. Sowing their lands and sewing their quilts, the women deserve recognition and support for their multiple contributions to a life of farming and labor. I focus on three Siddi women farmers from three villages–Mainalli, Kendalgi, and Gunjavati in Uttara Kannada, the Indian state of Karnataka.

Heike Raphael-Hernandez

**Visualizing Protest: African Diasporic Art and Contemporary Mediterranean Crossings**

During recent years, growing attention has been paid to issues of transnational migration in public debates among people across the entire political spectrum. The changes that are taking

place at fundamental levels in an increasingly multiethnic and multiracial United States as well as in most European countries have engendered heated debates in the highest political echelons as well as in exchanges between ordinary citizens about questions of who has the right to stay, who should be regarded as a mere temporary guest, who is (un)welcome as a traveler, and who should not even be granted such transitional status of a traveler. We are particularly interested in the role visual cultures play in the ways African diasporic subjects dream or fantasize diasporic connection and belonging. Our work today comes as the result of a joint two-year research fellowship granted by the American Council of Learned Societies.

**Lidia Curti – University of Naples, ‘Orientale’  
The Ethics and Aesthetics of Diversity**

Within diasporic writings, I give attention to an uncommon and less well-known literature written in Italian by women immigrants, or of migrant descent. This literature of migration contributes to the knowledge of the Italian colonial past, a forgotten chapter in our culture, and offers a rupture in the vision of a homogeneous, white Italy, more European than Mediterranean. They transmit the voice of multidimensional marginalized subjects where instances of gender and ethnic identity, alongside differences of class and generation, intersect. The geographies outlined in these works find a correspondence in visual and video art; their texts, contexts, fabrics construct a link that goes from history to autobiography and imagination. Here the meeting of ethics and aesthetics results in a search for an emergent citizenship, contaminated, de-territorialized, contested, crossed by the traces of different histories and cultures.

**Liz Andrews - George Mason University and LACMA  
An Electoral Body: #Obama Twitter Images on Election Day 2008**

Twitter was a new technology in 2008, when the USA elected Barack Obama 44th President. The Obama campaign successfully reached many young people and early adopters of technology through Twitter. In this paper, I look at Tweets with the hashtag #Obama and posted on November 4, 2008. Obama's name was everywhere: in person, online, and on Twitter, hashtagged by supporters and detractors alike. I focus on twelve Tweets with images that depict the man who would become the first #POTUS and first black man to hold the office. I examine the images for their messages and larger meanings in the context of the nation and election. The text of the Tweets serves as captions, often conveying a strong sentiment. Through election day Tweets, I provide a glimpse into a historic global moment that unfolded in images on newspaper, magazines, televisions, computers and smart phones.

PARALLEL SESSION 7  
10:45AM – 12:15PM

MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE  
**Panel 12: Moors, Blackamoors and Blackface**

**Moderator:** Shelleen Greene

**Panelists:**

**Eileen Ryan – Temple University  
Blackness in Italy: Race and Belonging in the Risorgimento**

In 1848, a formerly enslaved black man died while fighting alongside Garibaldi in Rome. The life of Andrés Aguiar—or Andrea “il moro”, as he was popularly known—has not been forgotten;

after all, there is a stairway named in his honor in the Roman neighborhood of Trastevere. But his story, like those of so many coded as non-white in the Italian peninsula, remains at the margins of popular memory. By centering on Aguiar, my paper explores what it meant to be black and born into slavery in nineteenth century Italy. What can he tell us about race and the construction of italianità in the movement for national unification? In my larger project, I am intent on highlighting black stories in key moments of Italian history to provide a longer historical context for the existence and experiences of black bodies in modern Italy.

**Ramatu Musa – Luzern University  
The Blackamoor Brooch**

Beginning in the 1920s, elite European jewelers such as Nardi, Cartier, and Verdura designed luxury brooches featuring Blackamoor imagery for a clientele that included royalty, society mavens, movie stars, and industrialists. For example, Palermo native Fulco Santostefano della Cerda (1898 – 1978), Duke of Verdura, specially designed two embracing pairs of bejeweled Blackamoor brooches for a prominent American socialite. This ornamental use of the Blackamoor figure in high-priced jewelry has a more complex history that goes beyond its sartorial glint. With its charcoal complexion, physiognomy, and pseudo-Oriental turban, the Blackamoor is a conflation of the Arab, the Black African, and the Muslim. The coded visual language seen in opulent Blackamoor brooches references past and continuous histories of race-based exploitation, appropriation, and marginalization.

**Angelita Reyes – Arizona State University  
From Harlequin's Domino Mask to the Masque of Blackface: Representation, Performativity, and “Demasking” Blackface**

While there is the “inherent nobility” of Harlequin who originally performed in the Commedia dell'arte of the 16th century, that theatrical image transfigured into the ignoble representation and performativity of racialized blackface or the off-stage and on-stage black minstrel figure. Through the intersections of 19th century slave trading routes that influenced Mediterranean cultures, Renaissance portraiture, colonialism, and the visible legacies of slavery and racism, blackface results in contempt and disparagement of the black body. This research critiques blackface performativity visualized by gender-specific historical characters within the “oceans” of the African Diaspora. I discuss from a set of interdisciplinary theoretical approaches, ways in which blackface assumes implicit racialized bias that inevitably impacts sites of global cultural and population migrations. Subsequently, I investigate ways in which we can “demask” the visual antics and implicit social cognition of demeaning blackface performativity in order to advance human dignity and the integrity of social transformation.

**Carlton Wilkinson – Wilkinson Arts  
The Blackamoor, Black Jockey, and the Scarecrow**

This presentation makes comparisons with various iconographies in traditional cultures, such as, the Blackamoor statues in Florence, Italy to the Black Jockey figures that “adorn” the front yards of southern homes in the United States. What is the function of these types of symbols, which could be addressed alongside the Scarecrow figure that sits in the middle of American cornfields? Are they symbols of protection from outside forces and/or items of empowerment, i.e., protection and privilege? Or are they merely greeting symbols that represent the ideology of its caregiver/owner? It is my goal to dissect the meanings of these and other iconography from ancient to modern day cultures.

**Robert Holmes – New York University Africa House Advisory Board  
Naked in the Palace**

The paper is an analytical interpretation of a photograph by Lyle Ashton Harris, “Untitled, Blackamoor Study #7” (2015), in which a frontally naked Black man stands at the top of a balustrade

of a grand palazzo in the presence of a magnificent female Blackamoor bust whose theoretical gaze rests upon him. The paper discusses the manner in which this audacious presence of a current day Black male figure in this context relates to the former perception of Black people in Italy and Europe and the manner in which that perception may affect the present issue of Black immigration into European countries.

**Mônica Cardim – Photographer**

### **Blackness and Whiteness: Black Bodies in Racial Concepts**

The proposal “Blackness and Whiteness: black bodies in racial concepts” aims to present some results of my theoretical and practical studies on the relationship between identity and power in ethnographic portraits of Afrodescendant people produced by European photographers in nineteenth century Brazil. In this article we will discuss aspects that characterize, visually and theoretically, the concepts of Blackness and Whiteness in twenty-one century Brazil, from an afrodiasporic approach on the hierarchical racialization of humanity, consolidated in the nineteenth century. It is the theoretical production in dialogue with the creation of a photographic essay on the possibilities of representation that materialize what it is to be black or white in contemporary Brazilian society. For this we start from the theoretical assumption that the photographic picture can be both a resource of domination, associated with the idea of differentiation, as well as resistance, identity construction or insertion into social groups.

**PALAZZO SANT’ELIA**

### **Panel 13: Identities**

**Moderator:** Kathryn Lachman – University of Massachusetts Amherst

#### **Panelists:**

**Fabio La Mantia – University of Enna “Kore”**

### **The Metamorphosis of Myth. Rituals and Sincretism in the Work of Wole Soyinka and Ola Rotimi**

The aim of this paper is to compare two Nigerian dramatic rewritings: Wole Soyinka’s *Bacchae of Euripides: A Communion Rite from Euripides’ Bacchae* and Ola Rotimi’s *The Gods Are Not To Blame* from Sophocles’ *Oedipus King*. This analysis which identifies the similarities and the inconsistencies between the ancient Greek myths and gods and the Yoruba cosmogony and rituals, will focus on the idea of drama as an ideal medium for social and political expression within a postcolonial space (Wetmore, McDonald, Van Weyenberg). The two dramatic texts, indeed, deconstruct the respective classical prototypes, transcending the most obvious philosophical (the inexhaustible search for identity, Nietzsche), religious (the inevitability of τύχη, the divine possession that generates devastation) and psychoanalytic exegesis (the Oedipus complex, the theme of madness), in order to dispel or at least weaken the white mythology of colonial superiority through the black mythology of the colonized. The result is a syncretic theatre.

**Anna Tedesco – University of Palermo**

### **Staging Othello at the Opera in 19th century**

In September 2015, the Metropolitan Opera House decided to break a long-lived tradition: to cast a white tenor for the title role in Verdi’s *Otello* and turn him into a black man through the make-up. In the USA, where blackface had a sad, long history, this decision arose discussion in the newspapers and social networks. The question if Opera was more conservative than Theater or Cinema was also asked. In fact, it was a good occasion to reconsider the relation

between Opera theater, its public and American society. But what happened at the Opera in 19th-Century Europe? How was the character of Othello acted and staged? How was the blackness of Othello represented and perceived by 19th-Century Opera-goers? And was Rossini’s *Othello* (1816) staged as Verdi’s (1887)?

I will discuss the images and reviews related to the first stagings of both operas and reflect on what this tell us about contemporary Italy.

**Virginia Monteforte – University of Malta**

### **Rima Project: Searching for an Indeterminate Definition**

‘Rima’ is a Maltese word with a double meaning. It refers to the rhyme in a poem, but also the wave made by a boat on the surface of the sea. It is a word that implies, always-already, a movement, a connection, a return. The word was chosen as the name for an anthropological and artistic project – later to also become an association – set up in Malta a few years ago, with the aim of exploring, through various languages and modes of collaboration, the process of displacement, and the many discourses which produce migration and migrants. In this presentation I will delve into some of its past and ongoing initiatives (workshops, performances, film festivals, publications and exhibitions) involved on the ground in the deconstruction of a preconceived imaginary about migration and exile, by stressing in particular the search for various practices of resistance put into practice by the subjects.

**Lorgia Garcia-Pena & Medhin Paolos – Harvard University**

### **Mind the Gap: Immigrant Stories and Archival Justice**

Mind the Gap is concerned with how race, immigration, sex and gender intersect in the production of citizens in this new millennium and how in turn, these citizens make sense of these labels through transnational networks (political, familial, social) in order to assert belonging to particular communities. Some of the questions Mind the Gap asks and answers are: What are the socio-political implications of a person who self-identifies or is labeled as an immigrant and as a racialized minority (black, Latino/a, Asian, Arab)? What kind of nexus, experiences and histories are summoned redefined and re-articulated in this particular identitarian duality? And how do these experiences and sociopolitical links play out on a transnational platform? Mind The Gap sets out to answer these questions through a transnational investigation that links two racialized immigrant communities (Italy, the Dominican Republic, Mexico and U.S.), thus challenging the geopolitical boundaries that persistently produce race and immigration as local and mutually exclusive experiences.

**PARALLEL SESSION 8**

**12:30 – 2:00PM**

**MUSEO DELLE MARIONETTE**

### **Panel 14: Framing Art, Artists and Fashion**

**Moderator:** Kalia Brooks Nelson – New York University

#### **Panelists:**

**Justin Randolph Thompson – NYU Florence**

### **Re-Tribalized Context: A Global Village with Localized Ghettos**

Throughout his career Marshall McLuhan spoke of the “re-tribalisation” of society united in a “Global Village” created by the interconnectivity of new media. This paper draws upon 10 years

of interviews with African Diasporic artists as a means for examining cultural classification and the employment of race as a contextual carrier in the legibility of Art. Drawing upon the media theories of Marshall McLuhan restructured to critically examine the presumed uniformity of Blackness as a trans-national medium, I intend to employ ideas of “re-tribalisation” and the isolation of the “Global Village” to deconstruct the flattening annihilation of the capacity of art by African and African Diasporic peoples to deliver a range of content as diverse as its creators.

**Sonya Clark – Amherst College**

**Text(ures): Black Hair as Music, Text, and Index in the Artwork of Sonya Clark**  
From musical timbre to encoded glyph, this presentation offers new ways Black hair as a material, substance, and symbol re-signifies identity in a variety of multisensorial art projects. The research will include a variety of sculptures in which human hair is used as synecdoche for the African presence, power, and agency. There will be a discussion of “Sounding the Ancestors”, a musical recording of jazz violinist, Regina Carter, playing anthems on bows re-haired with a dreadlock to mark the timbre of DNA. Examples will show how hair texture becomes a text itself. The audience will be presented with a newly developed glyph created from the curl pattern of African hair as a key to decode the Roman alphabet.

**Enrica Picarelli – Independent Researcher**

**A Counter-Aesthetic of the “Migration Crisis”: the Afrosartorialists**

In 2016 the Nigerian designer Walé Oyéjidé showcased his fashion brand Ikiré Jones at the Pitti Uomo exhibition in Florence with asylum seekers from West Africa walking the catwalk in an attempt to show migrants as a “resource”. Oyéjidé created a counter-aesthetic of the black body in movement that brings issue of surface, presentation, visibility, and transparency to bear on how we image the African diaspora. I explore the creative youngpreneurs, or Afrosartorialists of the “New Africa” movement, examining how they engage with personal experiences of multiple belonging, dislocation, and self-affirmation in light of the current migration crisis. I will examine their use of photosharing platforms to mobilise style (a term that interprets dress preferences through the individuality of the wearer) and address issues regarding cultural clash/exchange and self-expression. My case studies are the queer Sierra Leonean, UK-based stylist Ibrahim Kamara and the Nigeria-Italian textile designer Diana Ejaita, founder of the fashion brand WearYourMask.

**Alexander Newman – San Francisco Art Institute**

**Rachel Newman – Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art**

**In Rapture: Reconciling History Through Photographic Portraiture**

The work of In Rapture, centers on photographic portraiture of people of color, created with an awareness of photographic visual strategies used in maintaining colonial modes of power. These modes, which center on the body, reify race as a biological or scientific reality thus erasing the complexities of a lived existence. We consider the parallels between the placement of people of color as inviable subjects for depicting divinity within the Western art historical canon, and how the “divinity” of pastoral settings in photography has historically been a space devoid of non-ethnographic representations of people of color. The images in “Melanogenesis”, a part of our “Divinities” series, draw inspiration in terms of framing, subject positioning and lighting, from renaissance paintings. We use this visual style of imaging the divine; the golden halos, the reflection of these tones in the natural setting; to create a queer, afro-futurist recreation of renaissance Christian iconography.

**Shani Jamila – Artist**

**All Around The World The Same Song**

I would like to engage the audience in a discussion about the work I’m exhibiting in the ReSig-

nifications exhibition for the European Nomadic Biennial MANIFESTA 12. By creating surrealistic figurative collages, which also incorporate elements of nature, I aim to catalyze conversations about how syncretic (collective and individual) identities are formed in a globalizing world.

**PALAZZO SANT’ELIA**

**Panel 15: Memory, Memorials and History**

**Moderator:** Paulette Young – Cultural Anthropologist, Independent Scholar

**Panelists:**

**Vera Grant – Harvard University**

**Visual Haptics: Posters, Medals, and Photographs circa World War I**

This paper interrogates the meaning of race and representation in the amplified atmosphere of war and its aftermath. It illuminates the impact of various visual propaganda strategies upon national reconciliations after World War I. I consider of a series of racialized propaganda posters and racist medallic productions –along with countering strategies of resistance, restaging and the reclaiming of humanity within the European theater of war. The United States military regime sought to control perceptions of African Americans in Europe, and these attempts brushed up against a gamut of European national black belongings and shifting colonial policies in the metropole. Intensified tactical approaches may be found in the production of specific visual cultural objects. Simultaneously, black soldiers, both African American and African, resisted the impact of the distribution of racialized and racist propaganda by employing counter strategies of mimicry and parody.

**Omari Ra - Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts**

**Visual Memory: Reading Pan-Africanism**

Commutative or memorial portraits are sometimes the most challenging of all public representations. Maya Lin’s Viet Nam memorial was dubbed a “Black rock of shame” With almost 200 years of emancipation from enslavement Jamaicans still struggles with notions of black identity and representations. Almost all public memorial or commemorative statues or painting have met with violent oppositions, from Edna Manley’s statue of Paul Bogle (1965) to Raymond Watson’s (2017) Marcus Garvey”. Perhaps it is no wonder why Eretria choose a pair of sandals to commemorate its independence. Commemoration and Memorial portraitures are very important to a people, especially where that people is challenged by vestiges of erosive colonial strictures. This paper looks at the black commemorative and memorial portraits in Jamaica from a Pan African stand points. It questions hegemonic control of history, geopolitics and iconographies, the necessary contexts for realistic self-imaging.

**Sylvie Fortin – Independent Curator and Scholar**

**Missing Member: Transplant Surgery, Hospitality and Art**

With their posthumous ‘Miracle of the Black Leg’, Saints Cosmas and Damian are often credited with the invention of transplant surgery. Originating in Italy in the 13th Century, depictions of these (twin, Syrian, 3rd-century Christian martyrs) saints’ intervention–saving a white male patient by transplanting a deceased black man’s leg–spread across Europe, the Americas and beyond. My experimental, hospitality-inflected reading of the artworks and their two depicted moments/processes/spaces–amputation and transplant–will connect the ‘Miracle of the Black Leg’ to the phantom limb and the religious relic while tracing the contemporary legacy of its extractive intersection of race, class, religion and value.

Belinda Zhawi – BORN: FREE

**Sound Portrait of a Freedom Warrior: Memorialising Winnie Madikizela-Mandela**

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela passed away on 02/04/2018 at the age of 81. She was a widely known as an activist who brought Mandela's plight to the rest of the world. This paper would aim to celebrate the life of Winnie Mandela outside the narrative of her role as just a wife.

This paper would aim to explore and highlight other aspects of this figure's life in a way that acknowledges her as individual. The presentation would be 20 minutes long & all poetry used would be new writing in response to Winnie Mandela's past speeches & interviews. It will incorporate archived texts from interviews, marches and documentaries to examine her journey through motherhood, activism & disownment.

Cecilio M. Cooper – Northwestern University

**The Miracle of the Black Leg: Blackness, Amputation, and Production of Medical Knowledge**

"Where can we get flesh to fill in where we cut away the rotted leg?" queries one twin saint to another. Saints Cosmas and Damian amputated an Ethiopian's limb and transplanted it onto a Roman church official to replace his cancerous appendage. The siblings are venerated as santi medici or patron saints of medicine, surgery, and pharmacy for performing this miraculous surgery. Cosimo Medici, the patriarch of the Medici dynasty, was Cosmas' namesake. He commissioned the Florentine Fra Angelico to paint a scene of their martyrdom and the Miracle of the Black Leg (1439-1442). Sequentially presenting scenes of saints' lives, Matteo di Pacino's predella panels from Rinuccini Chapel in Florence are believed to be the earliest visual depictions of the MoBL (1370-75). The MoBL not only anticipates medical advancements through the lens of miraculous healings but also exemplifies how European somatic integrity is visualized as constituted through African corporeal loss.

SATURDAY 9 JUNE | DAY 4

GNV ATLAS

9:00 – 10:30AM

**Panel 16: The Black Mediterranean**

**Moderator:** Ella Shohat – New York University

**Panelists:**

Paul Gilroy – King's College London  
Humanism at Sea

Iain Chambers – University of Naples, "Orientale"

**Fluid archives: Thinking with the Diver**

This year is the fiftieth anniversary of the discovery of the Tomb of the Diver amongst the ruins of the Greek colony at Paestum. Drawing on a project presently being developed by Gabriel Zuchtriegel (the Director of the Paestum Museum) and the spatial historian, poet and artist Paul Carter to celebrate the event, I will follow the arc of this dark male figure to sound the archives of the Afro-Asian-European matrix of the Mediterranean. Insisting, via the return of this past, on the critical honesty of the anachronism that cuts up sequential chronology for another historical and geographical assemblage, I will seek to propose the resonances of colonialism, migration and creolisation that echo across the troughs of time proposing diverse configurations of past, present and potential futures.

Mauro Pala – University of Cagliari

**Edward Said's Mediterranean: A Sea of Change**

Said's scholarly and journalistic work changed the overall perception of the Mediterranean because, for the first time in Western academia, it questioned the historical and cultural relationship between Europe, Northern Africa (Egypt in particular), and the Middle East, dismissing the previous Orientalist vision of the Mediterranean as an ahistorical and Idyllic cradle of world civilization. This contribution analyses how Said saturates the Mediterranean with methodological questions as to the production of images, commonplaces and discourses which prompted the Western public opinion to support recurrent warfare and increasingly divisive politics in the area. It will also stress, however, how he presented evidence of fresh movements which anticipated the Arabic Spring revolutions with momentous changes in gender relationships and performative modes of representations, examples of the various Mediterranean cultures into new forms of cooperative being-in-the world.

10:45AM – 12:15PM

**Panel 17: Burning It**

**Moderator:** Nouri Gana – UCLA

## Panelists:

### Angela Caponnetto – Rainews24 – RAI TV

#### Migrant News: History Telling of an Italian Reporter

How can a TV journalist tell migratory flows without falling into repetition and rhetoric? How can she give correct information? For several years I have reported migratory flows through Italy for RAInews24, the all-news channel of RAI, Italy's largest state-run TV network. The first time I reported a large landing of migrants was in 2002, when about a thousand Kurds arrived in Italy. Thousands of strangers have landed in southern Italy since those days, filmed by international cameras. We journalists were asked to cover the stories of people who became numbers in our reports. It's been very uncomfortable. So in the last 5 years, I have tried to report a story in evolution, sometimes in involution but still in movement. Being at the landings and merely counting numbers was no longer possible. That kind of narrative was dangerous for those who left and for those who see these people arrive.

### Dagmawi Yimer – Film maker, Archives of Migrants Memory (AMM)

#### Asmat – Names

In 2013 after the 3<sup>rd</sup> October shipwreck, for the first time, the victims were identified. one of the few occasions in which the survivors furnished the names of 368 girls and boys that drowned near the island of Lampedusa.

For years these names, and their load of flesh and blood, have left their birthplaces, going far from home, composing something like a written message, a message which has reached the threshold of the Western world. These names have defied manmade boundaries and laws, have disturbed and challenged African and European governments.

The film's images give space to these names without bodies. They are meaningful names although it might be difficult for us to grasp their meaning.

It is necessary for us to count them all, name each and every one to make us aware of how many names lost their bodies on one single day, in the Mediterranean Sea.

### Bhakti Shringarpure – University of Connecticut

#### Foregrounding Fragments: Warscapes Anthology Focuses on Migrations across the Mediterranean

Warscapes magazine was founded as an online initiative and has recently debuted its first work in print titled Mediterranean. The title subverts and defies traditional framings of the vast material, political and cultural discourses that the term evokes. Through the intimacy and immediacy of fiction, poetry, photography and reportage, the volume *Mediterranean* explores turbulent journeys and experiences of migrants and refugees with a particular focus on East Africa. Through the visual and the textual, Mediterranean emphasizes an aesthetic of fragmentedness, dislocation and rupture, and foregrounds the difficulty of complete, linear narratives when it comes to the experience of migration. Designed as a pedagogical tool and research tool, it also provides an in-depth starter syllabus to encourage informed conversations and discussions about the subject.

### Timothy Raeymaekers – University of Zurich

#### Permeating Territories: The Mediterranean Threshold and Black African Transformations

If we accept that the Mediterranean is increasingly becoming a middle passage –representing not only a liquid territorial border, but an actual rupture point that generates an alternative spatio-temporality– then what kind of transformation shall we think this passage is producing? The material presented here builds on 5 years of research among im-migrant African communities in North and South Italy. As a geographer engaging with the relationship between politics,

space and identity, I deal with the question of what kinds of –cultural and other– frictions the increasingly diffuse government of African im-migrant rights is producing at the heart of the postcolonial nation-state, with a special focus on the territorial effects of the so-called 'refugee crisis'. Adopting an explicitly marginal perspective, I explore the expanding grey zone this crisis is producing, and within which the rights of non-citizens are actively mediated through the threshold of, often conflicting, political institutions.

## BIOS

### Djarah Akan - Writer, Singer, Blogger

In the 1980s my mother arrived in Italy just by mistake. Her flight was going to the UK where some friends and parents lived. The flight transited in Italy but once she got off the plane she lost her passport so, from that moment on, she couldn't move anywhere without documents. She decided to stay in Italy as an illegal immigrant. Twenty-five years later, my life and everything I am is the direct result of that one and only missed flight to the United Kingdom.

### Ubah Cristina Ali Farah – Writer

Ubah Cristina Ali Farah was born in Verona, Italy, of a Somali father and an Italian mother. She grew up in Mogadishu but fled at the outbreak of the civil war at the age of eighteen. She is a poet, novelist, playwright and oral performer.

### Liz Andrews – George Mason University and LACMA

Liz Andrews is an artist, scholar, and arts administrator. Her academic work is focused on art, media, music, visual culture, and struggles for representation. She is also Executive Administrator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) where she works closely with the Director.

### Anna Arabindan-Kesson – Princeton University

Anna Arabindan-Kesson is an assistant professor of Black Diasporic art at Princeton University. Her research focuses on the intersections of race, empire, and transatlantic visual culture and her first book, under contract with Duke University Press is called *Black Bodies White Gold: Art, Cotton and Commerce in the Atlantic World*.

### Kajahl Benes – New York Academy of Art

Kajahl Benes was born and raised in Santa Cruz, CA. He received a BFA from San Francisco State University and spent his final year studying at the Accademia di Belle Arti Firenze, Italy. In the spring of 2012 he received his MFA from Hunter College in New York City.

### Kalia Brooks Nelson – New York University

Kalia Brooks is a New York-based independent curator and writer. Brooks is currently an adjunct professor in the Department of Photography and Imaging at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She has published widely on contemporary art.

### Angela Caponnetto – Rainews24 - RAI TV

Angela Caponnetto was born in Palermo. She moved to Rome, becoming a reporter for RAI, the Italian National Television. She works for the all-news network Rainews24. She has been one of the national main voices reporting on migratory flows from Africa through the Mediterranean to Italy.

### Monica Cardim – Photographer

Mônica Cardim is Photographer and PhD student in Arts from the Esthetic and Art History Inter Units Program of the University of São Paulo. From an interdisciplinary approach she researches the representation of black people in photographic portraits of German Alberto Henschel produced in nineteenth-century Brazil.

### Luigi Cazzato – University of Bari “Aldo Moro”

Luigi Cazzato was born in Lecce (Italy); B.A. (University of Pisa, Italy), M.A (University of Leicester, England), Ph.D. (University of Bari, Italy). He is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Bari “Aldo Moro” (Italy) and AISCLI vice-chair.

### Iain Michael Chambers – University of Naples, “Orientale”

Iain Chambers teaches Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Mediterranean at the University of Naples, ‘Orientale’. He is the author of several books including recently *Mediterranean Crossings. The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (2008), *Mediterraneo blues. Musiche, melancolia postcolonial pensieri marittimi* (2012) and *Postcolonial Interruptions. Unauthorised Modernities* (2017).

### Sonya Clark – Amherst College

Sonya Clark uses materials such as human hair to address race, culture, and history. She is a Distinguished Visiting Artist-in-Residence at Amherst College. Prior, she chaired the Material Studies Department at Virginia Commonwealth University for twelve years. Her work has been exhibited in over 350 museums and galleries internationally.

### Carmen Concilio - University of Turin

Carmen Concilio is Associate Professor of English and Postcolonial Literature at the University of Turin. Her research fields include British Modernism, Postcolonial and Environmental Studies. She is President of the Italian Association of Postcolonial Studies and coordinator of the Aiscli Summer School.

### Cecilio M. Cooper – Northwestern University

Cecilio M. Cooper is a PhD Candidate in African American Studies at Northwestern University, with a Graduate Certificate in Critical Theory. Using legal possession and spiritual possession as interlaced analytics, their dissertation examines how the constitution of territory during the Age of Discovery occasions black dispossession in the Atlantic World.

### Lidia Curti – University of Naples, ‘Orientale’

Lidia Curti, honorary professor at the University of Naples “L’Orientale”, is a cultural critic and a feminist. Among her books are *Female stories, female bodies* (1998), *La voce dell’altra* (2006), *The postcolonial question* (with I. Chambers, 1996). She is presently working on women’s diasporic writings in Italy and in the Mediterranean.

### Lori De Lucia – UCLA

Lori De Lucia is a doctoral candidate in the History Department at UCLA. Her research looks at early modern slave trades in the Mediterranean, with a focus on enslaved West Africans in Sicily. She has also taught the Hausa language and created multimedia language curriculum for Boston and Harvard University.

### Giulia De Spuches – University of Palermo

Giulia de Spuches is Professor of Geography at the University of Palermo, Italy. Her research

interests include the concept of diaspora in the Mediterranean Area (among others: “Diaspora”, in *Mediterranean Lexicon*; “La città cosmopolita. Altre narrazioni”) and she is currently completing a book on Cultural Geography and the LGBT movements.

### Janine Gaelle Dieudji – Museum of African Contemporary Art Al Maaden

Janine Dieudji is the Exhibitions Director of MACAAL. She has gained a broad range of experience in arts and culture over the years. She’s vice-president of Black History Month Florence. Cultural activist, she co-curated shows such as “Black Value” and Barthélémy Togo’s show “Il Viaggio Immaginario”.

### Henry John Drewal – University of Wisconsin-Madison

Henry John Drewal is the Evjue-Bascom Professor of Art History and Afro-American Studies at UW-Madison. His published works include: *Introspectives: Contemporary Art by Americans and Brazilians of African Descent*; *Yoruba: Nine Centuries of African Art and Thought*; and *Beads, Body, and Soul: Art and Light in the Yoruba Universe*.

### Veronica Fernandez - Rai News 24

Veronica Fernandez is a Multimedia Journalist.

### Sylvie Fortin – Independent Curator and Scholar

Sylvie Fortin, an independent curator, critic, and editor based in Montréal and New York, was Executive/Artistic Director of La Biennale de Montréal (2013-2017) following her tenure as Editor-in-Chief of ART PAPERS (2004- 2012) and Curator of the 5th Québec City Biennial (2010). She is currently researching the currencies of hospitality.

### Nouri Gana – UCLA

Nouri Gana is Professor of Comparative Literature & Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He is currently completing a book manuscript on the politics of melancholia in the Arab world and another on the history of cultural dissent in colonial and postcolonial Tunisia.

### Lorgia García Peña - Harvard University

Dr. Lorgia García-Peña is the Roy Clouse Associate Professor of Latinx Studies at Harvard University and the co-founder of Freedom University. She is engaged in a transnational interdisciplinary public humanities project with filmmaker Medhin Paolos. The project—Mind the Gap—proposes a new way to examine history from the personal stories of immigrant subjects in context.

### Mackda Ghebremariam Tesfau’ – University of Padua

Mackda Ghebremariam Tesfau’ is a doctoral candidate in Social Sciences at Padua University. She graduated in Political Philosophy with a thesis on Marx’s perspectives on colonialism. Her current research, “Perché non te li porti a casa tua”, focuses on alternative refugees reception practices between anti-racist activism and humanitarian mobilization.

### Paul Gilroy – King’s College London

Paul Gilroy teaches literature at King’s College London.

### Vera Grant – Harvard University

Vera Ingrid Grant is the founding director of the Ethelbert Cooper Gallery of African & African American Art at the Hutchins Center, Harvard University. Grant was executive director of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University (2008-2012); and Associate Director of African and African American Studies, Stanford University (2001-2007).

### Shelleen Greene – UCLA

Dr. Shelleen Greene is an associate professor of Cinema and Media Studies in the Department of Film, Television and Digital Media at UCLA. Her research interests include Italian cinema, Black European studies, postcolonial studies, and digital feminist studies.

### Giuseppe Grimaldi – University of Milano Bicocca

Giuseppe Grimaldi has a PhD in anthropology (University of Milano Bicocca). He works on the relation between mobility, space and cultural identity. In his doctoral dissertation he focused on the impact of long-term migrations between Italy and the Horn of Africa on Italians of Ethiopian and Eritrean origins patterns of identification.

### Ayasha Guerin – New York University

Ayasha Guerin is a PhD candidate in NYU's American Studies. Her art and writing concern themes of public and private space, ecology, community, and security. Her dissertation "Making Zone A: Making Zone A: Nature, Race and Resilience on NYC's Most Vulnerable Shores" is a socio-ecological study of resilience in NYC waterfront communities.

### Ayesha Hameed – Goldsmiths University of London

Ayesha Hameed's moving image, performance and written work explore contemporary borders and migration, and visual cultures of the Black Atlantic. She is currently the Programme Leader for the MA in Contemporary Art Theory in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University of London.

### Moira Hille – Academy of Fine Arts Vienna / University of Toronto, OISE

PhD-in-Practice doctoral candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna; currently 'Marietta-Blau Stipendium' Fellowship, School for Graduate Studies at the University of Toronto / OISE; since 2012 University Assistant and Lecturer, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Institute for Art Theory and Cultural Studies.

### Robert Holmes – New York University Africa House Advisory Board

Robert E Holmes is the former executive VP of the Sony Pictures Entertainment Music Group. He holds a BA from NYU, and JD from NYU's School of Law. He has an art collection which contains over 800 pieces focusing largely on African American and contemporary African art. He sits on the Advisory Board of NYU's Africa House.

### INVERNOMUTO – Visual Artists

Simone Bertuzzi (b. 1983) and Simone Trabucchi (b. 1982) have been collaborating as Invernomuto since 2003. Throughout their work, oral cultures and minor histories are laid open, their vernacular forms examined. Bertuzzi and Trabucchi have developed individual lines of research into sound through the outlets Palm Wine and STILL, respectively.

### Aikpitanyi Isoke – Associazione vittime ed ex vittime della tratta

I was born in Nigeria. My family was large and poor, that's why could not complete the sweat. I tried to improve to quality of my family life going to work in Europe. I have been writing books and hosting victims of trafficking. I've helped more than 300.

### Shani Jamila – Artist

Shani Jamila is a Brooklyn based artist and cultural worker. Her travels to nearly fifty countries deeply inform her photography and collage practice. She has exhibited, lectured and performed at institutions including Harvard, the Brooklyn Museum and TED. Shani regularly hosts live conversations about art, global engagement and social change.

### Sarah K. Khan – New York University

Sarah K. Khan creates multimedia content on food culture, women, and migrants. She has researched among Bedouins in Palestine, Indian women farmers, immigrants in Queens NY, and cooks in Fez. Khan has degrees in Middle Eastern history (BA), public health (MPH), nutrition (MS), and plant sciences/traditional ecological knowledge systems (PhD).

### Pap Khouma - Journalist, Writer

Pap Khouma is a Senegalese and Italian citizen. Enrolled in the National Order of Journalists, he published with Baldini & Castoldi *Io venditore di elefanti*, a book since then continuously adopted in Italian schools, translated in the US as *I Was an Elephant Salesman; Nonno Dio e gli spiriti danzanti* (a novel); and *Noi italiani neri* (an inquiry collection).

### Kathryn Lachman – University of Massachusetts Amherst

Kathryn Lachman is Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at UMass Amherst. Her publications include *Borrowed Forms: The Music and Ethics of Transnational Fiction* and *Feasting on Words: Maryse Condé, Cannibalism and the Caribbean Text*. From South Africa, she holds the Ph.D. from Princeton, and the M.A. and B.A. from Yale.

### Fabio La Mantia – University of Enna "Kore"

Fabio La Mantia is a researcher in Comparative Literature and Literary Criticism at the Faculty of Classic, Linguistic and Education Studies at "Kore" University of Enna. Among his publications: *Il golfo della transizione: Wole Soyinka riscrive le Baccanti di Euripide* (CLUEB, Bologna 2004) and *Leadership e Citizenship nei drammi storici di Ola Rotimi* (CLUEB, Bologna 2008).

### Françoise Lionnet – Harvard University

Professor of French, Comparative Literature, African and African American Studies, and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Harvard, Françoise Lionnet is the author, most recently, of *Le su et l'incertain: Cosmopolitiques créoles de l'océan Indien*, and editor of the forthcoming *Select-ed Poetry and Prose of Evariste Parny*.

### Katherine Manthorne – Graduate Center, City University of NY

Katherine Manthorne is Professor of Art History, Graduate Center, City University of New York, with a Ph.D. from Columbia University. She focuses on hemispheric dimensions of American art, especially landscape. This paper derives from her current book project *Sweet Fortunes: Slavery, Sugar, & Art Patronage in the Americas*.

### Theophilus Marboah – University of Pavia

Theophilus Marboah is a second-generation Italian of Ghanaian origin. He is currently pursuing his medical degree at the University of Pavia. Beside his medical education, Theophilus has cultivated a profound interest in the global Black experiences, with a particular focus on contemporary African and Afro-diasporic art.

### Patricia Mckelvin – New York University

A native New Yorker, graduate of LaGuardia High School of the Arts and Performing Arts, and former award winning signed recording artist, Patricia is a lover of all things artistic. Prior

to joining New York University she held a range of management positions from corporate to not-for-profit, and she worked for a family-owned realty and construction corporation that specialized in building and restoration projects in underserved communities throughout Harlem and the Bronx. Currently in the BA/MA Program at New York University, Patricia is pursuing a Masters in Human Resource Management. Her current interests lie in the psychology of the workplace and workplace dynamics

#### **Maaza Mengiste – Queens College, City University of New York**

Maaza Mengiste is the author of *Beneath the Lion's Gaze*, selected by the Guardian as one of the 10 best contemporary African books. She is a Fulbright Scholar and a recipient of a 2018 National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. Her second novel, *The Shadow King*, is forthcoming.

#### **Salah Methnani – Writer, Reporter and Film Maker**

Born in Tunisia in 1963. Graduated in 1987, in Foreign Languages and Literatures. Author of *Immigrato*, co-written with Mario Fortunato. In 2011, he covered “the Arab Springs” for Rainews24 reporting from Tunis, Cairo, Lybia and Syria. In 2012, Methnani was awarded the prestigious international prize for war correspondents “Maria Grazia Cutuli”

#### **Virginia Monteforte – University of Malta**

Virginia Monteforte is a social anthropologist and a photographer. Her work deals with social memory, politics, material culture, migration and literature in the Mediterranean. She is a part-time lecturer at the University of Malta and co-founder of Rima ([www.rimaproject.org](http://www.rimaproject.org)), a project dealing with displacement and exile, created in Malta in 2014.

#### **Simanique Moody – Leiden University**

Dr. Simanique Moody is a lecturer of Linguistics and International Studies at Leiden University. Her research examines language contact, variation, and change in communities of African descent in North America and Europe. Her other scholarly interests include language, culture, and identity in the African diaspora.

#### **Matthew Morrison – New York University**

Matthew D. Morrison, a native of Charlotte, North Carolina, is an Assistant Professor in the Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Matthew is a 2018-2019 fellow at the Hutchins Center for African and African American research at Harvard University.

#### **Ramatu Musa – Luzern University**

Ramatu Musa is a Ph.D. Candidate at Universität Luzern in Switzerland. Her research focus is on the semiotic significance of the Black body in global contexts. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Jerusalem, a Callaloo Creative Writing Fellow in Oxford, and a Freelance Journalist in Sierra Leone, England, and Italy.

#### **Pamela Newkirk – New York University**

Pamela Newkirk is a multifaceted scholar, journalist and NYU professor whose articles on African American art and culture have appeared in numerous publications including The New York Times, The Guardian and The Washington Post and ARTnews. Her book, *Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga* won the NAACP Image Award.

#### **Alexander Newman – San Francisco Art Institute**

Alexander Newman is a photographer, writer and archivist, who has recently completed his BFA

at the San Francisco Art Institute. His work explores diasporic and queer identities through photographic portraiture.

#### **Rachel Grace Newman – Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts, National Gallery of Art**

Rachel Grace Newman received her PhD in Art History from Stanford University in 2016. She was recently awarded the 2018-2020 A.W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts at the National Art Gallery in Washington, D.C..

#### **Robert O'Meally – Columbia University**

Robert G. O'Meally is the Zora Neale Hurston Professor at Columbia University. New books by the award-winning author of studies of Billie Holiday, Ralph Ellison, and Romare Bearden include *The Romare Bearden Reader* (edited for Duke, 2018) and *Antagonistic Cooperation: Collage, Jazz, and American Fiction* (Columbia, 2019).

#### **Mauro Pala – University of Cagliari**

Mauro Pala is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Cagliari (Italy). In 2010, as Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer, he was Visiting Professor for the PhD Program in Literature at the University of Notre Dame (USA). He has published extensively on European Romanticism, Critical theory, Cultural studies and Postcolonial studies.

#### **Agatha Palma – UCLA**

Agatha E. Palma is an artist, a PhD candidate in anthropology at UCLA, and a Fulbright scholar conducting research in Palermo, Sicily. Interested in the politics of urban space/racialized geography and its relationship with class struggle, she wrote her MA on street poetry and graffiti art in post-revolutionary Tunisia.

#### **Medhin Paolos – Harvard University**

Medhin Paolos is a filmmaker (*Asmarina*), photographer, musician and social justice advocate fighting for the rights of immigrants and LGTQ people in Europe. She co-founded the Milano chapter of Rete G2, a national organization promoting the rights of descendants of immigrants in Italy who are denied citizenship under Italian bloodline citizenship legislation. She is working on a digital archive project recovering and preserving stories of immigrants and their descendants.

#### **Angelica Pesarini – NYU-Florence**

Angelica Pesarini (Ph.D.) is a Lecturer in Social and Cultural Analysis at NYU-Florence where she teaches “Black Italia”, a course entirely dedicated to the investigation of race, identity and citizenship in colonial and postcolonial Italy. Pesarini's current work focuses on racial performativity and colourism.

#### **Enrica Picarelli – Independent Researcher**

Enrica Picarelli is an Independent Researcher and blogger. She holds a Ph.D. in Cultural and Postcolonial Studies of the Anglophone World at University of Naples, “L'Orientale” (Italy) and has been “Michael Ballhaus fellow” at Leuphana University. In 2015 she launched the blog Afro-sartorialism, focusing on African design and fashion and digital aesthetics.

#### **Omari Ra – Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts**

Born in Kingston Jamaica. Education, Edna Manley college, UMass Dartmouth U.S.A., University West Indies Jamaica. Exhibit widely, and published *A Brief History of Western Art: The Caribbean Frontier*

### Timothy Raeymaekers – University of Zurich

Timothy Raeymaekers, permanent research fellow and lecturer at the Geography Institute of the University of Zürich, holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Ghent. Timothy's main research involves the relationship between displacement, boundaries, and political violence. His regional focus lays on Central Africa and the Mediterranean.

### Heike Raphael-Hernandez – University of Würzburg, Germany

Heike Raphael-Hernandez: Professor of American Studies at the University of Würzburg, Germany. Her recent publications are *Migrating the Black Body: The African Diaspora and Visual Culture* (with Leigh Raiford, 2017) and a special issue (with Pia Wiegink) for the journal *Atlantic Studies* about "German Entanglements in Transatlantic Slavery" 14.4. (2017).

### Angelita Reyes – Arizona State University

Dr. Angelita Reyes is a Professor in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. A cultural studies scholar, she teaches about and continues to study and explore new intersectional and comparative dynamics of the African Diaspora. Her forthcoming book is entitled, *Watersheds and Memory-telling at the Home Place*.

### Luis Rincon Alba – New York University

Luis Rincón Alba is a Colombian artist and scholar living in NYC. He is a doctoral candidate in the Performance Studies Department at NYU. His interests focus on the political and epistemological elements present in festivities, paying close attention to the cultural and artistic products from the Caribbean that are related to Carnival.

### Lorenzo Rinelli – Temple University

Faculty of Political Science for the Temple University in Rome, Lorenzo Rinelli's academic interests include urban border studies, migration theory, postcolonial theory and aesthetics in world politics. His monograph entitled *African Migrants and Europe: Managing the Ultimate Frontier* has been published in 2016 by Routledge for the African Politics and International Relation Series.

### Jordan Rogers – University of Miami

Jordan Rogers is a doctoral candidate in Literary, Cultural, and Linguistic Studies at the University of Miami. He previously attended Yale University, double-majoring in African-American Studies and French Literature. Rogers researches black diasporic literature; his interests include black queer/feminist theory, media studies, and (auto-)ethnography across the Afro-rhyme language traditions.

### Eileen Ryan – Temple University

I am an Assistant Professor in the History Department at Temple University. My first book, *Religion as Resistance* (OUP 2018) examined Catholic and Muslim identities in Italian Libya. My new book project examines the history of blackness in modern Italy.

### Adama Sanneh – Moleskin Foundation

Adama is the Co-Founder and COO of the Moleskin Foundation, committed to promoting, advocating and developing initiatives showcasing the role that art and culture can play in social change and economic development. He graduated in Public Management (MPM) from Bocconi University and obtained a MBA from the University of Geneva.

### Igiaba Scego - Writer, journalist, International Center for Humanities and Social Change Venice Ca' Foscari

Igiaba Scego is a writer and a researcher of the International center for humanities and social change. Among her books: *Roma Negata*, *Pecore Nere*, the novels *Oltre Babilonia* and *Adua*, recently published in English in the United States.

### Gunja SenGupta – Brooklyn College & Graduate Center, City University of New York

Historian Gunja SenGupta is the author, mostly recently, of *From Slavery to Poverty: The Racial Origins of Welfare in New York, 1840-1918*. Her current projects, funded by Mellon, Whiting, Wolfe, and Tow fellowships, include one on 19th-century United States and slavery/abolition in the Indian Ocean.

### Ella Shohat – New York University

Ella Shohat is a Professor of Cultural Studies at New York University. Shohat has served on editorial boards of such journals as *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*; and *Social Text*. She received fellowships including Rockefeller; Fulbright research/lectureship; and the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University, where she also taught at The School of Criticism and Theory.

### Bhakti Shringarpure – University of Connecticut

Bhakti Shringarpure is Assistant Professor of English at University of Connecticut (Storrs) and editor-in-chief of *Warscapes* magazine. Her recent publications include the edited anthologies *Literary Sudans: An Anthology of Literature from Sudan and South Sudan* (Africa World Press) and *Imagine Africa: Volume 3* (Archipelago Press).

### Donato Somma and Nicola Cloete – Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand

Dr Nicola Cloete heads History of Art & Heritage at the University of the Witwatersrand, researching memory politics in representations of slavery in post-Apartheid South Africa. Dr Donato Somma is senior lecturer in Music at the same institution, researching the persistence of opera in Africa and Italian POWs in South Africa.

### Debora Spini – NYU Florence

Debora Spini teaches at NYU Florence. Her research focuses on Religion and Politics, monotheism and violence, and the rise of xenophobic populism with a focus on gender. Spini published essays and book chapters in English and Italian on public spaces, crisis of the modern self, secularisation and post secularisation.

### Robert Stam – New York University

Robert Stam is University Professor at NYU. The author of some seventeen books on film, cultural theory, and comparative race and postcolonial studies, among them *Unthinking Eurocentrism* (with Ella Shohat) and *Tropical Multiculturalism*. With work translated into 15 languages, he has taught in Tunisia, Brazil, France, Germany, and Abu Dhabi.

### Anna Tedesco – University of Palermo

Anna Tedesco (Ph.D. University of Bologna, Italy, 1998) is Associate Professor at the University of Palermo, Italy, where she teaches History of Opera. She also teaches and supervises doctoral theses for the Ph.D. program at University "Sapienza" (Rome). In 2009, she was a Visiting Professor at the Universidad Complutense (Madrid).

### Justin Randolph Thompson – NYU Florence

Justin Randolph Thompson is a new media artist, organizer and educator living between Italy and the US since 1999. Thompson is Co-Founder and Director of Black History Month Florence, Founder and Director of Friskin' the Whiskers, a grant for young jazz musicians and teaches at NYU Florence, SACI and SRISA.

### Ada Ugo Abara

Ada Ugo Abara is a second generation (Afro-Italian) activist.

### Imani Uzuri – Independent Artist and Scholar

Imani Uzuri is an award-winning vocalist, composer and conceptual artist. Raised in rural North Carolina, she creates interdisciplinary works and compositions. She recently received her M.A. in African American Studies from Columbia University. Uzuri is currently composing a forthcoming contemporary chamber orchestral work celebrating the iconography of the Black Madonna.

### Carlton Wilkinson – Wilkinson Arts

Carlton Wilkinson is an art photographer, educator, art collector and curator. In 1994, he received the Tennessee Artist Fellowship, which is the state's highest honor for an artist. Wilkinson photography is represented internationally. He has taught college-level photography for over 30 years. Wilkinson is broker/curator for his business, Wilkinson Arts.

### Dagmawi Yimer – Archives of Migrants Memory (AMM)

Born and grew up in Addis Abeba- Ethiopia, he has lived in Italy since 2006. In 2007, he co-authored the film *Il deserto e il mare* along with 5 other migrants. Subsequently he was co-director for the 2008 documentary film *Come un uomo sulla terra*. Asmat- names and UC San Diego lectureship in 2015.

### Paulette Young – Cultural Anthropologist, Independent Scholar

Paulette Young is a Cultural Anthropologist, Historian and Curator who works in NYC. She is a consultant and advisor in the visual and performing arts for a diverse range of cultural and educational institutions. Paulette is Director of the Young Robertson Gallery of African Diaspora fine art, textiles and photography.

### Mahnaz Yousefzadeh – New York University

Mahnaz Yousefzadeh is professor of Global Liberal Studies at New York University. She recently published *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* (2018), and "Subhat al-Akhbar," *I Tatti Studies* (Spring 2018) situating the Mediterranean in a global network. She teaches a seminar on the Mediterranean in NYC and Abu Dhabi.

### Belinda Zhawi – BORN::FREE

BELINDA ZHAWI is a Zimbabwean-born poet living in London. She co-founded and hosts the bi-monthly literary social, BORN::FREE LDN and was the Institute of Contemporary Arts' Associate Poet from Autumn 2016/2017. Belinda's currently working on her debut chapbook, forthcoming in 2018 with ignitionpress.

## ORGANIZERS

### Awam Ampka – New York University

Awam Ampka is a dramatist, documentary filmmaker, curator and scholar of theatre and film. He is Associate Professor of Drama at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts and Associate Professor in Africana Studies Social and Cultural Analysis in NYU's College of Arts and Sciences.

### Alessandra Di Maio – University of Palermo

Alessandra Di Maio teaches English and African Literature and Postcolonial Studies at the University of Palermo, Italy. She divides her time between Italy and the US, where she taught at several academic institutions (UCLA, CUNY Brooklyn College, Columbia, Smith College). She obtained a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and an Italian Doctorate in Literary and Social Sciences from the Universities of Pavia and Bari in Italy. Her area of specialization includes black, diasporic, migratory, and gender studies, with a particular attention to the formation of transnational cultural black identities. She is currently completing a manuscript on the Black Mediterranean, a formulation she coined several years ago on which she has extensively published and lectured. She has been the recipient of a Fulbright scholarship, a Mellon postdoctoral fellowship, and a MacArthur Research and Writing Grant. Among her publications are the volumes *Tutuola at the University*, *The Italian Voice of a Yoruba Ancestor* (2000), the collection *An African Renaissance* (2006), and *Wor(l)ds in Progress. A Study of Contemporary Migrant Writings* (2008). She has translated into Italian several authors, including Nigerian Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, with whom she has conceived the poetry anthology *Migrazioni/Migrations. An Afro-Italian Night of the Poets* (2016).

### Henry Louis Gates, Jr. - Harvard University

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., is the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor and Director of the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research at Harvard University. Emmy Award-winning filmmaker, literary scholar, journalist, cultural critic, and institution builder, Professor Gates has authored or co-authored twenty-one books and created fifteen documentary films, including *Wonders of the African World*, *African American Lives*, *Faces of America*, *Black in Latin America*, and *Finding Your Roots*, his groundbreaking genealogy series now in its third season on PBS. His six-part PBS documentary series, *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (2013), which he wrote, executive produced, and hosted, earned the Emmy Award for Outstanding Historical Program—Long Form, as well as the Peabody Award, Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Award, and NAACP Image Award. Having written for such leading publications as *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, and *Time*, Professor Gates now serves as chairman of *TheRoot.com*, a daily online magazine he co-founded in 2008, while overseeing the Oxford African American Studies Center, the first comprehensive scholarly online resource in the field. He has also received grant funding to develop a *Finding Your Roots* curriculum to teach students science through genetics and genealogy. In 2012, *The Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Reader*, a collection of his writings edited by Abby Wolf, was published. His next film is the four-hour documentary series, *And Still I Rise: Black America since MLK*, airing on PBS in April 2016; a companion book, which he co-authored with Kevin M. Burke, was published by Ecco/HarperCollins in 2015.

The recipient of fifty-five honorary degrees and numerous prizes, Professor Gates was a member of the first class awarded "genius grants" by the MacArthur Foundation in 1981, and in 1998, he became the first African American scholar to be awarded the National Humanities Medal. He was named to *Time's* 25 Most Influential Americans list in 1997, to *Ebony's* Power 150 list in 2009, and to *Ebony's* Power 100 list in 2010 and 2012. He earned his B.A. in English Language and Literature, *summa cum laude*, from Yale University in 1973, and his M.A. and Ph.D. in English Literature from Clare College at the University of Cambridge in 1979. Professor Gates has directed the W. E. B. Institute for African and African American Research—now the Hutchins Center—since arriving at Harvard in 1991, and during his first fifteen years on campus, he chaired the Department of Afro-American Studies as it expanded into the Department of African and African American Studies with a full-fledged doctoral program. He also is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters and serves on a wide array of boards, including the New York Public Library, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Aspen Institute, Jazz at Lincoln Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Library of America, and the Brookings Institution.

## Manthia Diawara – New York University

A native of Mali, Professor Diawara received his education in France and later traveled to the United States for his university studies. He has taught at the University of California at Santa Barbara and the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *We Won't Budge: An African Exile in the World* (Basic Civitas Books, 2003), *Black-American Cinema: Aesthetics and Spectatorship* (ed. Routledge, 1993), *African Cinema: Politics and Culture* (Indiana University Press, 1992), and *In Search of Africa* (Harvard University Press, 1998). He has published widely on the topic of film and literature of the Black Diaspora. Professor Diawara also collaborated with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o in making the documentary *Sembene Ousmane: The Making of the African Cinema*, and directed the German-produced documentary *Rouch in Reverse*.

## Ellyn Toscano – NYU Florence

Ellyn Toscano is Executive Director of New York University Florence, a campus of NYU serving nearly 1000 students a year. She directs Villa La Pietra, a 15th century villa and historic garden that houses a collection of six thousand objects dating from the Etruscans to the 20th century, the founder of La Pietra Dialogues, a year-long series of conferences and talks and the founder and producer of The Season, a summer festival that assembles artists, writers, musicians and public intellectuals to produce new works or reinterpretations of classics in the Villa's expansive Renaissance revival gardens. Toscano co-organized the renowned Black Portraiture II conference at NYU Florence, one of the most important gatherings of scholars, public figures, and artists to ever assemble in Italy to offer comparative perspectives on the historical and contemporary role played by photography, art, film, literature, and music in referencing the image of the black body in the West. She also produced the corresponding exhibition 'Resignifications', held at three locations in the City of Florence, showcasing contemporary works by artists from around the world. Before arriving at New York University Florence, Ms. Toscano served as Chief of Staff and Counsel to Congressman Jose Serrano of New York, was his chief policy advisor on legislative, political and media concerns and directed his work on the Appropriations Committee. Ms. Toscano also served as counsel to the New York State Assembly Committee on Education for 9 years. She has served on the boards of several prominent arts and cultural institutions including the Bronx Museum of the Arts and the Brooklyn Academy of Music (as the representative of the Brooklyn Borough President). In Italy, she serves on the board of the Museo Marino Marini in Florence, and as an Italian Advisory Council member of the Civitella Ranieri Foundation. A lawyer by training, Ms. Toscano earned an LLM in International Law from New York University School of Law.

## Deborah Willis, Chair, Department of Photography & Imaging, Tisch/SCA, New York University

Deborah Willis, Ph.D, is University Professor and Chair of the Department of Photography & Imaging at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University and has an affiliated appointment with the College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Social & Cultural Analysis, Africana Studies, where she teaches courses on Photography & Imaging, iconicity, and cultural histories visualizing the black body, women, and gender. Her research examines photography's multifaceted histories, visual culture, the photographic history of Slavery and Emancipation; contemporary women photographers and beauty. She received the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Fellowship and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. Willis is the author of *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present*; and co-author of *The Black Female Body A Photographic History*; *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery*; and *Michelle Obama: The First Lady in Photographs* (both titles a NAACP Image Award Winner). Professor Willis's curated exhibitions include: "In Pursuit of Beauty" at Express Newark; "Let Your Motto Be Resistance: African American Portraits" at the International Center of Photography and "Reframing Beauty: Intimate Moments" at Indiana University. Since 2006 she has co-organized thematic conferences exploring imaging the black body in the West such as the conference titled Black Portraiture[s]. She has appeared and consulted on media projects including documentary films such as *Through A Lens Darkly* and *Question Bridge: Black Males*, a transmedia project, which received the ICP Infinity Award 2015, and *American Photography*, PBS Documentary.

## PARTICIPANTS

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**Palazzo Chiaramonte Steri**  
 Piazza Marina 59  
**ZAC – ZISA ZONA ARTI**  
**CONTEMPORANEE**  
 Via Paolo Gili 4  
**Museo Internazionale delle**  
**Marionette Antonio**  
**Pasqualino**  
 Piazza Antonio Pasqualino 5  
**Palazzo Sant'Elia**  
 Via Maqueda 81

**Wole Soyinka: Antiquities Across Times and Place**

EXHIBITION VENUE:  
 Palazzo Chiaramonte Steri  
 Piazza Marina 59, Palermo

“What does it mean when artists collect art?” **Wole Soyinka: Antiquities Across Times and Place** presents Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka’s personal collection along with a series of “collectors confession’s” showing his purpose behind collecting. Soyinka has used many of these works as literary devices and stimuli in many of his writings. These contemporary interpretations of African art motifs challenge notions of authorship, dating and authenticity to stress ancestral memories and their modern day incarnations as modes of being and becoming in the world. Just as he is in conversation with his art, curator Awam Amkpa chose contemporary works that would be in conversation with Soyinka’s collection and literary works. Featured in this exhibition are: Olu Amoda, Peju Alatise, Moyo Okediji, Chris Abani, Tunde Kalani, and Peter Badejo.



**PALERMO**  
 2018  
 CAPITALE ITALIANA  
 DELLA CULTURA



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