

# LIBYA NEWS & FACTS



Press review over Libya, Direct Democracy and Mommar Gaddafi's action  
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Luc MICHEL :

## "VISIONARY AFRICA": DIALOGUE OF THE CULTURES AND COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN AND AFRICAN UNIONS !

### Culture placed at the heart of Afro-European dialogue!

The Europe-Africa Summit to be held in Sirte/Tripoli next November 29, 2010 marks the **centrality of Libya** both **politically as a driving force of the African Union** - which Moammar Gaddafi was the main initiator - and **Geopolitically as a bridge between the EU and the African Union**. The central role played by the dialogue of cultures is also the answer given by Libya to the thesis of the "dash of civilizations."

**2010 and 2011 mark the 50th anniversary of the independence of 22 African countries.** To commemorate this anniversary and to mark the occasion of the **third EU-Africa summit**, the European Commission and the Palais des Beaux Arts of Brussels (Centre of fine Arts), in collaboration with the African Union, will launch a **multi-disciplinary and itinerant cultural project: "VISIONARY AFRICA: ART AT WORK"**. This initiative is the extension and the development in Africa of the festival **"VISIONARY AFRICA"** currently being held in Brussels.

*Photo : Luc MICHEL also on the Cultural Front.  
Exhibition Visionary Africa in Brussels, before Tripoli and Syrta ...*

This project is focused on the importance of culture and creativity as development tools and is directly in line with *the Brussels Declaration*. It includes an itinerant urban exhibition of contemporary African artistic practices, artists' residencies and workshops.

The exhibition will be presented in three African cities on the fringes of important institutional and cultural events. **It starts off in Syrte (Libya) as a preview on 29th November at the same time as the Europe-Africa Summit.**

A lengthy presentation of this central file in the relations between European and African Unions is developed in this issue of LIBYA NEWS & FACTS (# 2151).

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**"VISIONARY AFRICA":**  
**DIALOGUE OF THE CULTURES AND**  
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*Culture placed at the heart of Afro-European*  
*dialogue!*

**"VISIONARY AFRICA" (in Africa)**  
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**ITINERANT MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROJECT IN THE**  
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**Research Center over Direct Democracy) /**

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## **VISIONARY AFRICA (in Africa) "Art at Work" : ITINERANT MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROJECT IN THE AFRICAN CAPITALS SYRTE/TRIPOLI – ADDIS ABABA – OUAGADOUGOU**

### **Urban Exhibition of Contemporary African Artistic Practices – Artists' residencies – Workshops**

The exhibition will be staged **within the framework of the European Union-Africa summit in Syrte/Tripoli (Libya, 29th November 2010)**. It will then begin to travel between different African capitals at the start of 2011, beginning with Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), followed by Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). It will feature 30 reproductions of works of art created by contemporary African artists, born from the works presented in the exhibitions of the "Visionary Africa" festival in the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels to the 26th September 2010. The idea for this project was put forward during the international colloquium "Culture and Creation: Factors in Development", organised by the European Commission in April 2009.

**Since the end of the 1990s, the European Union has been progressively more committed to strengthening dialogue and building more specific and special relations with Africa.** The first EU-Africa summit was held in Cairo in April 2000. It defined a framework of political and global dialogue and laid down an action plan in the areas of African integration in the global economy, democratisation, health development, education, the environment and safety.

The second summit took place in Lisbon in 2007. This summit further strengthened the partnership and brought the EU-Africa dialogue to higher political level. The Treaty of Lisbon signed at this summit placed the emphasis, for the first time, on culture and creation, by according it a central role in all European political fields

that include regional policy and foreign affairs and development. Culture must therefore find a place “at the heart” of development policies. At Lisbon, the frequency of the summits was also determined. From now on, they will take place every three years. The next one will be held on Syrte/Tripoli, Libya, on November 29th 2010.

The theory was quickly put into practice. The European Commission has increased its efforts to show that culture is a factor of human development, social cohesion and employment. It was thus in April 2009, **the colloquium “Culture and Creation: Factors in Development”** was organised. It brought together around 800 participants: political men (of whom 46 were ministers of African countries), artists and civil society representatives coming from different countries of the EU, but also from the 65 ACP countries (Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific). On that occasion, the EU insisted on the importance of addressing a large public, as culture is not “a plaything for the pretentious elite” but an integral part of development, “a sphere in which society explains its relationship with the world and plans its future ... in a certain way, a mental binding of social cohesion.” In conclusion, the UE stressed the importance of **launching an exhibition in connection with African cultural heritage as well as an itinerant photography exhibition, on the occasion of the third EU-Africa summit in Syrte/Tripoli, an itinerant exhibition relating to African art practices.**

Commissioner Piebalgs co-chaired a high-level round table on the subject of “Culture and Development” as part of the United Nations summit on Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Culture is increasingly recognised as a fundamental dimension in building development and in constructive relations between people. The European Union-Africa partnership has also identified cultural cooperation as one of the priority actions to consolidate this important dialogue between the two continents. One of these actions which form part of the campaign launched by the African Union for the period 2010 to 2012 “African Cultural Renaissance” and supported by the European Commission is precisely the creation and geographical staging of the itinerant exhibition of African artistic practices “Visionary Africa: Art at Work”.

## **“Visionary Africa: Art at Work”, urban and itinerant project in Africa**

The exhibition will be presented in three African cities on the fringes of important institutional and cultural events. **It starts off in Syrte (Lybia) as a preview on 29th November at the same time as the Europe-Africa Summit.**

It will then be staged, in a wooden pavilion designed by the architect David Adjaye, in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), seat of the African Union, from 10th to 31st January 2011, dates corresponding with the festival of Timkat. The exhibition can be seen from the 19th of February to the 13th of March in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso and one of the focal points of celebration of African culture, with, notably, the pan-African cinema and television festival FESPACO (financed in part for some years by the EU). The exhibition will last three weeks in each city. A large attendance is

therefore guaranteed.

The aim of this new exhibition is to show, through the work of African artists, a snapshot of the transformations that have taken place on the African continent during the last half-century, as well as put into perspective its future development. The exhibition will be staged in a pavilion designed by David Adjaye and divided into three sections: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. It will feature thirty reproductions of works of contemporary African artists coming from different regions of the continent. Each section will keep its autonomy, yet the three “space/time” modules will permanently harmonise and interact. Seen from this perspective, **the exhibition dovetails perfectly with the philosophy of the “Visionary Africa” festival and represents its natural extension.**

The fourth space in the pavilion will be dedicated to video-projected moving arts. Every evening, the public will be invited to share the performances of the African artists (musicians, choreographers, film-makers, and comedians) involved in African cultural development. These videos were filmed for the most part during the event “48 hours in Brussels”, which was also a part of the “Visionary Africa” festival.

It is from this perspective and in 2009 that the Directorate-General for Development gave a mandate to the Palais des Beaux Arts (Centre of Fine Arts) in Brussels, which consisted in emphasising and strengthening relations between the cultural centres and museums of Europe and Africa. This ambitious project began with the foundation of a “Visionary Africa” festival. Inaugurated on the 30th of May, it will conclude on the 26th of September. The festival will continue in itinerant form in all the major African capitals around the exhibition of African art practices “Art at Work”.

This **vast platform for African culture** brought together an eclectic programme adapted for all areas of the public, uniting exhibitions, debates, concerts, film screenings, performances and shows.

Two exhibitions dedicated to the African culture of yesterday and today make up the strong point of the “Visionary Africa” festival. **“GEO-Graphics”, conceived and designed by the architect David Adjaye, with the assistance of the Royal Museum of Central Africa in Tervuren, means to redraw the cultural map of Africa and instigate a visual and narrative dialogue with contemporary art.**

For its part, **the exhibition “A Useful Dream. African Photography from 1960 to 2010”**, conceived by Simon Njami, celebrates 50 years of African photography and presents some 200 negatives created by contemporary African artist (living or deceased). It also signals the departure point of the elaboration of a long-term vision of the relationship between African art and culture, and its development.

The thinking initiated in Brussels by “Visionary Africa” will thus be extended on the African continent thanks to the itinerant exhibition “Art at Work”.

**The third EU-Africa summit at Tripoli/Syrte will start off the essential extension of “Visionary Africa” in Africa. The moment chosen is opportune, for in 2010-2011, 22 African countries will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of their independence, an independence closely linked to profound changes in political, economic, social and cultural life.**

Apart from this, it is also the moment when the African Union rediscovers the importance of culture as a factor of development, by **launching the campaign “African Cultural Renaissance”.**

## The organisers of the “Art at Work” project

### 1) David Adjaye

Artistic Director of the “GEO-Graphics” exhibition

Joint Organiser of the “Art at Work” project and designer of the itinerant pavilion

Of Ghanaian origin, David Adjaye was born in 1966 in Dar es Salaam, in Tanzania, where his father was Ambassador to Ghana. At the age of 14, he moved to London, where he still lives. In 1993, he completed a degree in architecture by the Royal College of Art. After work placements in the offices of architects David Chipperfield and Eduardo Souto de Moura, he founded his own offices, Adjaye Architects, in 1994. He rose rapidly. The professionals and specialists welcomed his vision and artistic sensibility, his ingenious use of materials and his talent for sculpting and emphasising light. Versatile and winner of several prestigious competitions, David Adjaye excelled in architectural projects, design exhibitions, temporary pavilions and private residences in Great Britain and the United States of America. Artists of global renown called on his talent. So, he worked together with Dane Olafur Eliasson for the light installation “Your Black Horizon” at the Venice Biennial Festival in 2005. In 2002, he designed the staging and lighting for the Chris Ofili’s exhibition of paintings “The Upper Room”, now on display in the Tate Britain.

According to David Adjaye, “architecture must make the world a better place.” The way it influences and shapes daily life is at the centre of his thinking and his work. He also attaches great importance to the public and cultural character of architecture. His design of arts centres and large public buildings, recently built in London, Oslo and Denver, bear witness to the interest he shows in the needs of the community as well as the integration of architecture in the existing local environment. Practising his profession extends into major broadcasting and communication work. David Adjaye regularly develops his theories on the BBC, in the “Dreamspaces” programmes. In June 2005, he presented the television programme “Building Africa: Architecture of a Continent”. Aware that he is a role model for future generations of architects, he is involved in teaching, giving classes at the University of Princeton and at the Royal College of Art. Today, David Adjaye leads an Anglo-American team in charge of the building of the Museum of Afro-American History and Culture in Washington, whose objective is to celebrate the contribution of Afro-Americans to American culture. It is scheduled to open in 2015.

In parallel to his work as an architect, David Adjaye has been researching the urban transformations of the African continent for some years. At the end of his travels in all the countries of the continent, some 53, he has gathered together an impressive collection of photographs reflecting the great diversity of the African continent and the dramatic speed of urban growth. The display of these photographs is a high point of the “GEO-Graphics” exhibition.

### 2) Simon Njami

Organiser of the exhibition “A Useful Dream”

Joint Organiser of the “Art at Work” exhibition

Born in 1962 in Lausanne (Switzerland) to Cameroonian parents, Simon Njami is an author, critic and exhibitions organiser. After studying law and the arts, he began his professional career in Paris

as a journalist, a writer, and then as a visual arts consultant at the French Association of Artistic Initiatives. In 1991, he cofounded with Jean-Loup Pivin and Pascal Martin Saint Léon the excellent cultural journal *Revue Noire* (of which he was also editor-in-chief), which rapidly asserted itself as a reference work for contemporary African art. In 1997, the three colleagues set up the exhibition “African Suites” in Paris. An enthusiastic public discovered the installations, photographs and sculptures of totally unknown artists. Its success was considerable. The *Revue Noire* disappeared in 1999, but Simon Njami carried on his activities as an organiser of exhibitions and has 20 under his belt. In 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007, he was the general organiser and artistic director of the African Festivals of Photography at Bamako, the only international event dedicated to contemporary African photography and its diaspora. In 2007, he designed the African pavilion “Check List Luanda Pop” of the 52nd International Art Biennial in Venice.

A prolific writer, Simon Njami is notably the author of *Cercueil et Cie* (Coffin and Co., Lieu Commun, 1985), *Les enfants de la Cité* (The Children of the City, Gallimard Jeunesse, 1987), *Les Clandestins* (The Stowaways, Gallimard Jeunesse, 1989), *African Gigolo* (Seghers, 1989), *La Peur* (Fear, Serpent à Plumes, 1990) and *James Baldwin ou le devoir de la violence* (James Baldwin or the Duty of Violence, Seghers, 1991). He also co-edited a number of works including *Anthologie de la photographie africaine* (An Anthology of African Photography, 1999) and *Anthologie de l’art africain au XXème siècle* (An Anthology of 20th Century African Art, 2002).

One of his principal struggles is to make contemporary African artists visible throughout the world and above all, on the African continent – a struggle that is slowly beginning to bear fruit. One example? His ambitious project “Africa Remix” of which he was general organiser, and which was able to be presented in Düsseldorf, London, Paris, Tokyo and also in Johannesburg, between 2005 and 2007. The heart of the exhibition, we discovered plastic responses of the African artists to the questions they had in common and which were articulated around three themes: history/identity, body/soul and town/earth.

Given his impressive background, **the choice of Simon Njami as the organiser of the exhibition “A Useful Dream. African Photography from 1960 to 2010” was an obvious one.** Simon Njami gives exclusive voice to those artists of the African continent, living or deceased, some of whom have managed to make a name for themselves and have become known globally. We only have to cite Mohammed Dib (who died in 2003), Cornélius Yao Augustt Azaglo (who died in 2000) Malick Sidibé, Sammy Baloji, Dorris Haron Kasco or Aïda Mulunech. In 200 superb images, most of them in black and white, these great photographers surveyed the evolution of the African continent during the last 50 years.

## The Pavilion structure of David Adjaye

The showcase of the “Art at Work” exhibition designed by David Adjaye is all together an elegant, spacious and ergonomic pavilion. The concept comes from “low technology” and is characterised by its ability to be easily assembled and dismantled. A lightweight structure created from panels of wood and surmounted by a roof inspired by a pergola and given rhythm by large openings allowing light to flood in. The pavilion, perfectly integrated into the African landscape, will function in natural light. A detachable canvas cover



is always on hand in case of rain. To facilitate fluid movement, the pavilion is fitted with several entrances. Superbly proportioned, the volume is organised into four spaces. Three of them will house the new "Art at Work" exhibition, bringing together 30 photographic reproductions coming out of the "GEO-Graphics" exhibition (David Adjaye's undertakings), and the exhibition "A Useful Dream" (the negatives, selected by the two organisers, David Adjaye and Simon Njami, will be unveiled at the press conference). The display is expressed according to three spaces/times (Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow), separate yet linked by permanent dialogue. The decision to present the reproductions of the photographs instead of the originals is a choice on the part of the organisers, as this formula better accompanies the light structure of the pavilion and its ephemeral character. Given that it is without an electricity supply, the exhibition will only be available to view during the day.

In the evening, **the video projections created during the event "48 Hours in Brussels"** will take over. This event, planned at the time of the "Visionary Africa" festival, has given a means of expression to a whole range of African artists engaged in strengthening African civil society through the medium of art. Invited by the Palais des Beaux Arts in the summer, they were able to visit the festival's exhibitions. In their performances, they witnessed the plural identity of African culture incorporating the plastic and living arts. Among the artists, for example, are Pitcho Womba Konga, Rokia Traoré, Angélique Kidjo, Didier Awadi, Papa Wemba and Venancio Mbande, the film-makers Hawa Essuman and Raoul Peck, the choreographer Germaine Acogny, the comedian Dieudonné Kabongo and the dancer Serge Aimé Coulibaly. It will be the excerpts of their concerts or shows in Brussels that the public of Tripoli/Syria, Addis Ababa and Ouagadougou will be able to admire. The section bringing together the living arts is thus an extra opportunity of enabling the "Visionary Africa" festival to travel. The debate continues...

## Workshops

### What are the main issues of contemporary art in Africa?

The aim of setting up the workshops is once more to pursue the debate initiated in Brussels.

#### What are the main issues of contemporary art in Africa?

#### How can art influence the development of Africa's countries?

During the "Visionary Africa" festival, this aspect of the debate was touched on in the Atlas Room. Images, texts and graphics concretely showed the artistic practises and the cultural institutions of Africa before and during the colonial period, as well as after independence.

On one wall, a time line revealed the principal documents of African cultural policy at a national and international level (UNESCO, African Union). On the opposite wall was displayed the richness of African culture throughout the centuries. In the two African cities welcoming the "Art at Work" exhibition, visitors will be presented with a booklet containing the documents displayed in the Atlas Room. The main issue is to bring reflection to bear on the soil. The moderators of the workshops, Simon Njami and David Adjaye, will meet people and will have the chance to discuss with the stakeholders – people involved in culture – and to take stock of how the propositions and promises of the different institutions are being put into practice. Each workshop will gather new knowledge useful for future reflection. This project is intended for development in

several African countries in such a way that it covers all areas of the continent. The climax will be the publication of an exhaustive document, precious tool for the future.

## Artists' residencies

Their goal is to support a vision of African artists connecting with others on the continent, and to support the creation of works of contemporary African art. A famous contemporary artist coming from another African country will be welcomed in each of the African cities participating for a period of three weeks. The fruits of their labour and of their interpretation of the city in this period will remain and will enrich the artistic heritage of the city.

## The concept:

### 1) Visionary Africa: a work in progress

– by Simon Njami

The goal of this traveling exhibition is to convey, through the work of Africa's artists, the transformations the Continent has undergone in the past fifty years, and to put on show some of the ways in which its next fifty years have been imagined. In lockstep with the structure designed especially for this traveling project, the show is divided into three conceptual spaces: then, now, tomorrow. Although these are treated as autonomous entities, the show will be constructed in such a way to allow for a constant dialogue between these three space/time capsules.

The structure's open and innovative design, and the contemporary artworks on view, represent tomorrow, photography and video are central to this section. The then that planted the seeds for the emergence of this new era is for the most part illustrated by photography, a medium that was crucial in the formation of an independent African identity. Now is represented by David Adjaye's photographic survey of Africa's capitals.

The public enter the exhibition through the now, which gives onto the two separate but conceptually interconnected spaces. The opening now has a documentary character, and intentionally so: it provides the audience with the interpretive keys to the play of references, or points and counterpoints, that flow through the show, and which weave Africa's past, present, and future into an imaginative world. The spaces, finally, will not be explicitly characterized as such; these titles exist only conceptually, like backbones of the interior circulation.

### 2) Presentation of the structure

– by David Adjaye

The structure is organised as a labyrinth with three gallery spaces and has been designed to house reproduced images of Contemporary work and Photography. It is conceived as a 'low-tech' adequate to public spaces in African capitals. Structurally it is a portal frame made from a standard timber frame with the lower parts (which vary in height from space to space) covered in 18mm WPB plywood on both sides to mount/ display the reproductions. The reproductions will be printed onto paper and mounted directly onto the walls.

The upper part of the pavilion exposes the structure to provide light into the spaces. The pavilion is open to the sky; vertical timbers support the timber ceiling joists which span the width of each section – the direction of the joists vary from section to section.



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*La vision de la Libye comme un pont entre la Grande-Europe et l'Union africaine, que nous avons été les premiers à développer dès le début des années 90, est aujourd'hui largement acceptée et adoptée par les grands acteurs des Unions africaine et européenne. On notera sur ce logo officiel, adoptée par la Commission européenne de Bruxelles pour le projet culturel de coopération entre l'UE et l'Union Africaine « Visionary Africa », les dimensions eurasiatiques de la carte de la Grande-Europe incluant la Russie.*

*The vision of Libya as a bridge between Greater Europe and the African Union, that we were the first to develop in the early 90s, is now widely accepted and adopted by the great actors of the African and European Unions. Note on this official logo adopted by the Brussels European Commission for the cultural project of cooperation between the EU and the African Union "Visionary Africa", the Eurasian dimensions of the map of Greater Europe including Russia.*



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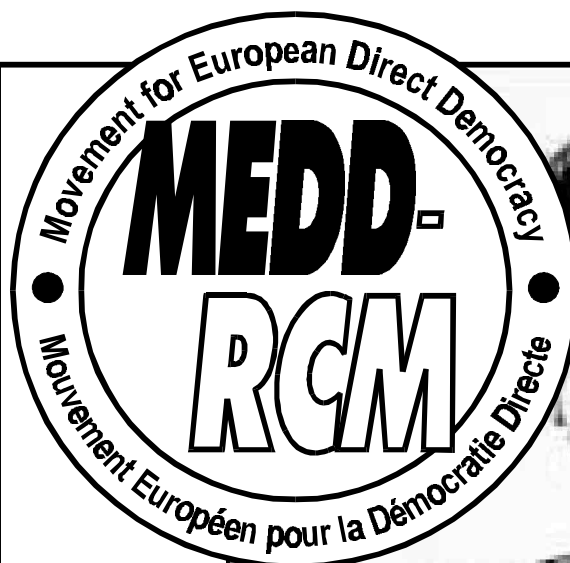
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