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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
PROGRAMME

Black In/Visibilities Contested

Apolo de Carvalho,
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Diego Candido,
Otávio Raposo,
Pedro Varela,
Raquel Lima and
Raquel Matias (eds.)



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Contemporary In/Visibilities and Pseudo/Visibilities: the black woman's portrait in the Bemposta chapel in Lisbon

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In the chapel of the Bemposta palace in Lisbon, the altarpiece shows one of the most important collective portrait of the Portuguese art history, painted by the Italian artist Giuseppe Trono in 1791-1792 (Raggi, Degortes 2018). In this painting, the image of a Black woman occupies a crucial place within the global composition. She is in front of the queen of Portugal, Mary I, and she stays in the middle of a commoners' group.

Until few years ago, the painting was little known and deeply misunderstood. Thus, after a brief historical contextualization of this artwork, the paper aims to reflect about the 19th and 20th centuries' interpretations and the contemporary (re)interpretations of the black woman's representation. The goal is to compare the lack of historical and cultural studies - that could transform invisibility into visibility - and the rich production of pseudo/visibilities both in the past (e.g. the watercolor by Felix Doumet) and in the present (e.g. the historical romance on the queen Mary I just published in Portugal by Isabel Stilwell). The 'ghost' of luso-tropicalism or the exoticism's temptations are always ready to (re)emerge.

The main question is how to bring to the light the complexity of this image as a whole: as an artwork painted in a colonial and slaver Portugal, as contemporary heritage, and as 'plural image' useful to decolonize the memory of the past and to contribute to rethink the social representations of Afro Europeans, in particular in the current Portuguese society.

The Transformative Impact of Activist Artists in Europe: Three Decolonial Interventions by Yinka Shonibare CBE

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The 19th century was seen as the 'Golden Age' for museum development in Europe, with many institutions established at the height of occidental expansion throughout the Global South. Traditional descriptions characterised these cultural venues as 'people's palaces,' 'encyclopaedic institutions' and 'world museums,' thus creating an impression they were founded on principles of democracy and enlightenment. However, the sector's growth at this time also coincided with the widespread circulation of racist Western ideologies about hierarchies of humankind, as well as the dominance of an elite, white and male imperialist gaze. Consequently, a significant challenge for current directors, curators, educators and other museum professionals developing 21st century collections, international exhibitions and inclusive visitor services is to eradicate the long-established and enduring biases embedded within Western museographic practices.

Some of the most positively transformative, anti-racist and decolonial interventions observed throughout Europe in recent decades have involved commissioning artists and scholars of African descent to undertake research residencies and art-political projects. Their contributions have helped to reinterpret colonially-sourced holdings, pluralise exhibition narratives and repurpose galleries as spaces for decolonial dialogues. This paper will present case studies of three successful creative initiatives by British-Nigerian contemporary visual artist Yinka Shonibare CBE: (1) "Jardin d'amour" ["Garden of Love"] (2007) - an exhibition of three thematic tableaux presented at the Musée du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac, Paris (2) "Planets in My Head"