

litafrika: Artistic Encounters

by Zukiswa Wanner

Eight scenes from contemporary African literatures: curator Zukiswa Wanner stages encounters between current novels and performance, music or visual art. Across national and linguistic borders, the exhibition sheds light on a generation of writers who are well connected and internationally active

*

“**T**he exhibition comprises some of the most gifted contemporary authors,

musicians, actors and visual artists of my generation from English, French and Portuguese-speaking Africa. The countries represented in this exhibition make only 25% of my Africa’s nations but as a pan-Africanist, I choose to disregard the borders and prefer to focus on how our stories, sounds, expressions and art that you will see here resonate across the world’s second largest continent.”

Zukiswa Wanner responds to the first part of the exhibition series “litafrika” (2022-2024) with eight prose texts. As a continuation of “Poetries of a Continent” (2022), she puts the emphasis on novels instead of poems, focal points instead of abundance – and above all on the diverse stories of younger authors instead of the postcolonial classics: what topics do contemporary literary figures deal with today? How do artists stage the selected passages?

For “Artistic Encounters”, partnerships have been created that transfer literature into music, performance and visual art and at the same time deepen the dialogue between language regions through text translations. The exhibition is designed to be shown on the

African continent as well.

“Some, you will have heard of. Others, I hope you will be thrilled to learn of in this exhibition.”

Ishmael Beah (Sierra Leone): Radiance of Tomorrow (2014)

x Shaffik Manzi (Rwanda): visual artist

Virgília Ferrão (Mozambique): Our Spells (2022)

x Ana Pinheiro (São Tomé and Príncipe): actress

Abubakar Adam Ibrahim (Nigeria): Season of Crimson Blossoms (2015)

x Maimouna Jallow (Gambia): actress

Angela Makholwa (South Africa): Critical But Stable (2021)

x Michael Soi (Kenya): visual artist

Jennifer Nansubuga Makumbi (Uganda): The First Woman (2020)

x Ntombephi Ntobela (South Africa): visual artist

Yara Nakahanda Monteiro (Angola): Loose Ties (2018)

x Zubz the Last Letter (Zambia): musician

Fiston Mwanza Mujila (DR Congo): Tram 83 (2014)

x Prudence Katomeni (Zimbabwe): musician

Ondjaki (Angola): Transparent City (2012)

x Seeretse (Botswana): musician

Zukiswa Wanner (Zambia) is a writer and literary mediator; she lives in South Africa and Kenya. Wanner has published short stories, novels, and children’s books and was on the

“Africa39” list in 2014; in 2020, she received the Goethe Medal for her services to international cultural exchange.

Strauhof and the Litar Foundation are dedicating the exhibition trilogy “litafrica” (2022-2024) to literatures from the African continent. The first exhibition “Poetries of a Continent”, based on the anthology “Afrika im Gedicht” (Zurich 2015) by the Swiss literary mediator Al Imfeld, stages a selection of exemplary poems in English, French, Portuguese and Arabic from postcolonial classics to the current slam and spoken word scene. The exhibition was curated by Christa Baumberger and Rémi Jaccard. Zukiswa Wanner wrote the concept for “Artistic Encounters” after visiting “Poetries of a Continent”. The third part (2024) of the project is still in development.

Pro Helvetia supports “litafrica” over its entire duration in the “To-gather” programme. This funding vehicle enables new intercontinental collaborations and the establishment of long-term networks. The aim is to make the exchange between cultures more equal and sustainable as well as to test new forms of collaboration.

Brazilian journal Periferias, who first collaborated with the curator during lockdown as a partner for Afrolit Sans Frontieres and have gone on to do more collaborations, generously agreed to partner up and have these texts published online.

In this publication are excerpts that the authors and the curator selected from the novels that were interpreted by the other eight non-literary artists. While they are by no means a summary of the eight novels selected for the project, they give a glimpse of the literary style of each author as well as a tease on elements of the rest of the book. The texts are put in alphabetical order of author and in order of the language of first publication. Where a text was first published in Portuguese, the French and English follow while also paying homage to the too-oft uncelebrated translators. Sandra Tamele (Mozambique) and Renee Edwige Dro (Ivory Coast) translated the texts that didn’t have translations from English to Portuguese and French respectively.

Translations into Spanish were generously provided by Unila's Translation Laboratory – Foz

do Iguaçu, Brazil.

Enjoy.
