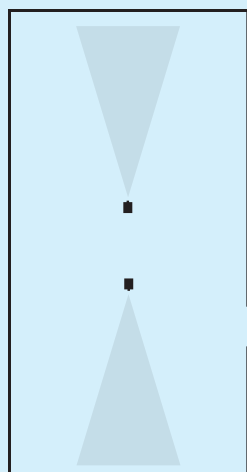
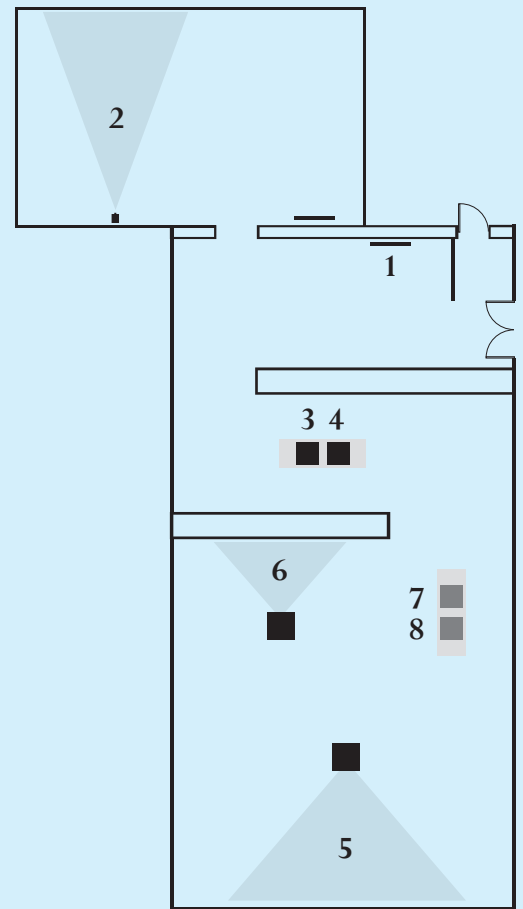


EXHIBITION AND HISTORIES OF FICCTIONS  
CURATED BY Lucy Steeds and Nkule Mabaso  
RUNNING FROM 20 July to 18 August 2017

- Part 1  
George Hoellering, *Shapes and Forms*, 1950, 20 min 1  
Elizabeth Price, *User Group Disco*, 2009, 15 min 2

UPPER GALLERY  
Uriel Orlow  
*The Crown Against Mafavuke*, 2016  
2-channel video, 30'50"



- Part 2  
Fatou Kandé Senghor, *Giving Birth*, 2015, 30 min 3  
Philip Haas, *Stones and Flies: Richard Long in the Sahara*, 1988, 38 min 4
- Part 3  
The Otolith Group, *In the Year of the Quiet Sun*, 2013, 34 min 5  
William Klein, *The Pan-African Festival of Algiers*, 1969, 1hr 52 min 6  
William Greaves, *The First World Festival of Negro Arts*, 1966, 40 min 7  
Irina Venzher and Leonid Makhnatch, *Ритмы Африки [African Rhythms]*, 1966, 52 min 8

## ‘EXHIBITION HISTORIES AND AFROFICTIONS’

Eight films are brought together by ‘Exhibition Histories and Afrofictions’ at the Michaelis Galleries. Together they invite reflection on how different public contexts have shaped, or sought to shape, understandings of African art historically and around the world. They further give pause to consider what cultural practice in the present and future might learn from these histories, or how we might challenge them. Particular artistic, cultural, anthropological, documentary and museological practices are brought to the fore – with colonialism, decolonization, postcolonialism and globalisation as inescapable themes, whether explicitly addressed or strongly implicated. Films dating back to the 1950s, 60s and 80s are historical anchors for the show but these are cast adrift by more recent works that re-envisage the histories and futures at stake.

Part 1 of the show starts out with an early film attempting an experimental take on museological and exhibitionary practices in Europe relating to cultural objects pillaged from Africa and Oceania. George Hoellering’s *Shapes and Forms* aims to offer a nondidactic approach to work assembled for a temporary exhibition at London’s Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1949, which carried the striking title ‘40,000 Years of Modern Art’ – although the unity promised here is betrayed by its subtitle, ‘A Comparison of the Primitive and Modern’. Paired with this historical contribution is Elizabeth Price’s *User Group Disco* (2009) subtitled *The Hall of Sculptures*, which names a room in her fantasy *New Ruined Institute*. This recent work maintains a somewhat Surrealist filtering of the traditional museum, while projecting it into an uncertain future.

Part 2 of the exhibition looks askance at the Parisian exhibition of 1989 that problematically proclaimed itself ‘the first worldwide exhibition of contemporary art’: ‘Magiciens de la Terre’ [‘Magicians of the Earth’]. Two films are paired that convey the working practices of two contributors to ‘Magiciens’. One shows land-artist Richard Long, from England but at work in the Sahara, as filmed by Philip Haas in 1988; and the other presents sculptor Seni Camara, from Senegal, in dialogue with filmmaker Fatou Kandé Senghor in 2015. The troubling European notion of art being created by a lone pioneering hero – largely perpetuated by the 1989 exhibition – is here exposed (unacknowledged, by Haas) and subverted (implicitly, by Kandé Senghor).

Part 3 of the exhibition juxtaposes a historical trio of documentaries concerning two distinct cultural festivals of the 1960s, in Dakar and Algiers respectively, while contextualising these with a recent essay-film by The Otolith Group, which reconsiders the same era, and its visualisation, with a focus on Ghanaian independence from British colonial rule. We might ask who is addressing whom in the cultural objects and activities represented in these films – and who is addressing whom in *these filmic narrations of* these cultural objects and activities. It seems important, for instance, that the William Greaves film from 1966 is commissioned and funded by the United States Information Agency – for circulation in Africa, while banned in the US – and that the Soviet film of the same festival is reportage for the USSR. The US-Algerian film from 1969, by contrast, seeks to speak to revolutionary struggles around the world, as did the event that it documents.

And the Otolith Group addresses some of this complex history to us, their globally dispersed contemporaries in the present.

‘Exhibition Histories and Afrofictions’ is co-curated by Nkule Mabaso, of the Michaels Galleries, with Lucy Steeds, who is Senior Research Fellow in Art Theory and Exhibition Histories at Afterall Art Research Centre, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Through books in its *Exhibition Histories* series, Afterall investigates critical public moments for contemporary art, and how these have changed the way art is made, experienced and discussed. This exhibition at the Michaelis Galleries develops from this research context, while initiating new lines of enquiry.