

Re:assemblages Symposium (Lagos, 4–5 Nov 25)

Alliance Française de Lagos, Lagos, Nigeria, Nov 4–05, 2025

Deadline: Aug 15, 2025

Provocation: What does it mean to think with African and Afro-diasporic art archives as living, contested, and future-shaping spaces?

The 20th century can be read as a formative ecotonal space—an unsettled, generative borderland where networks fractured and reformed, collaborations ignited, and tensions gave way to new modes of relation. Within this compressed terrain, distinct ecologies of African and Afro-diasporic thought and practice took shape, producing postcolonial libraries, and archives that carried with them emergent aesthetic and epistemic registers—unfinished, insurgent, and alive with possibility.

Marking the inaugural symposium of the Re:assemblages programme, this two-day gathering brings together the African Arts Libraries (AAL) Lab and Affiliates Network, archivists, curators, scholars, artists, librarians, and wider audiences to contemplate how postcolonial African and Afro-diasporic art archives and libraries act as ecotonal sites, their everyday lives, and futures.

The Re:assemblages Symposium invites inquiry into the ecologies of African and Afro-diasporic art libraries and archives energised by the radical potential of The Short Century, a temporal arc spanning 1945 to 1994 that centers Africa in postwar decolonisation, new diasporic formations, and the modernist movement of the 20th century. The symposium asks:

- What forms of care, friction, and futurity emerge in the gaps, silences, and transitional zones of the postcolonial archive and library?
- How might we read these spaces not as sealed enclosures, but as ecotonal formations?
- How can we cultivate publishing ecologies within them that disrupt extractive knowledge regimes and nurture situated ways of learning?

Symposium Themes and Provocations

The symposium is framed by the conceptual currents of Re:assemblages 2025–26—Ecotones, Annotations, The Living Archive, and The Short Century, each offering methods to inhabit postcolonial art archives and libraries, their gaps, inventories, silences, and thresholds.

Ecotones are transitional zones—spaces between distinct ecosystems, knowledge systems, and epistemologies. Deriving from the Greek tonos (tension) and eco (home), Ecotones asks:

- What does it mean to inhabit the boundary, the in-between?
- What knowledge is generated at points of contact, friction, and leakage?
- How can archives, spaces shaped by colonial histories, diasporic flows, and post-independence reimaginings be read as ecotones?
- How might ecotonal approaches help surface marginalized voices, and foster new reading ecologies, and ecotonal practices of publishing?

Annotations takes as its point of departure the marginalia, footnotes, redactions, and fragments that often surround, rather than centre, dominant historical narratives. Here, annotation is not merely a supplement, but a method. Influenced by the speculative rigour of Saidiya Hartman's critical fabulation and John Keene's poetic logic, this theme embraces annotation as a radical archival gesture: a way of writing beside, between, or against the grain. Initially conceived to activate the archives of pan-African festivals FESMAN, Zaire '74, PANAFA, FESTAC '77, Annotations draws on various frames to ask:

- How can annotation operate as a feminist, intertextual, and multisensory method?
- What does it mean to annotate across silences, across generations, across space?
- How can annotation serve as an act of resistance, a tool of memory, and a speculative strategy for working across archives—especially those that are fragile, informal, or deliberately incomplete?

The Living Archive challenges static, institutional models by emphasizing process, activation, and embodied memory. Here, the archive is not simply a place of preservation and linear histories, but a site of performance, encounter, and transformation. Artists and cultural workers draw from and contribute to archives in ways that are iterative, unstable, and alive. The Living Archive draws on artistic-led methods to ask:

- How have artists inhabited museum collections, libraries, and archives?
- What new languages and forms emerge when archives are accessed through gesture, voice, kinship, or editorial experimentation?
- What gestures and practices are required to keep an archive alive?

(The Short Century: Symposium contributions under this theme will be presented by US based fellows of The Short Century Intensive, a research fellowship hosted by G.A.S. Foundation and Yinka Shonibare Foundation, with support from the Terra Foundation for American Art.)

Submission Guidelines

We welcome proposals responding to the themes, Ecotones, The Living Archive, and Annotations, especially those that go beyond traditional academic formats. Contributions may take the form of talks and panels, performances or readings, listening sessions or screenings, workshops or roundtables, or collaborative, and intermedia presentations.

Please submit the following materials via the Application Form (<https://forms.zohopublic.eu/yinkashonibarefoundation/form/CallForPapersReassemblagesSymposium202526/formperma/lxSHtFlylwPAXokwh8jGllglobYZUCY2EVFpg9rH3yY>) by 15 August 2025:

- Abstract (300–500 words): Include a clear title. Indicate the theme you are responding to (Ecotones, The Living Archive, or Annotations). Outline the form and content of your contribution.
- Supporting Material (3-5 items): Relevant images, video/audio samples, or links connected to your abstract. Please include captions and brief descriptions.
- Biography (max. 250 words)
- Website (and or links to professional work)
- Curriculum Vitae - PDF, 3 pages maximum.

Selected participants will be notified in the first week of September. Selection will be made by our Advisory Committee, with preliminary shortlisting conducted by the Planning Committee.

Contact and FAQs

For questions and inquiries, please contact: library@guestartistspace.com.

We will offer travel and accommodation grants for five Africa-based participants. While we cannot cover travel and accommodation for other contributors, we will provide invitation letters to assist with funding and visa applications.

The symposium is scheduled to coincide with Lagos Art Week and ART X Lagos, a city-wide platform for contemporary art from Lagos and beyond, encompassing exhibition openings, art fairs, public programmes, and related cultural events.

About

Re:assemblages is a roaming body and multi-year programme designed to foster experimentation and collaboration within African art libraries. In 2025–26, its second chapter opens with a provocation: What does it mean to think with African and Afro-diasporic art archives as living, contested, and future-shaping spaces? The programme forges vital connections between artists, publishers, and research institutions in Africa, while responding to the urgent need for a global forum to advance dialogue around archives that remain under-resourced, dispersed, and shaped by enduring colonial legacies that continue to determine their access, preservation, and visibility.

The programme is curated by Naima Hassan and coordinated by Samantha Russell, with contributions from Maryam Kazeem, Ann Marie Peña, and Jonn Gale, and funding from the Terra Foundation of American Art.

For further details, view the concept note [here](https://www.yinkashonibarefoundation.com/Portals/0/Reassemblages%202025-26%20Programme%20Concept.pdf) (<https://www.yinkashonibarefoundation.com/Portals/0/Reassemblages%202025-26%20Programme%20Concept.pdf>). Previous outcomes of the 2024 edition can be found [here](https://www.guestartistspace.com/Reassemblages) (<https://www.guestartistspace.com/Reassemblages>).

Organised by Guest Artists Space Foundation & Yinka Shonibare Foundation.

Advisory Committee

Dr. Beatrix Gassmann de Sousa, Natasha Ginwala, Dr. Rangoato Hlasane, Patrick Mudekereza, Serubiri Moses, and Dr. Oluwatoyin Zainab Sogbesan.

Planning Committee

Moni Aisida, Jonn Gale, Naima Hassan, Belinda Holden, Maryam Kazeem, Siti Osman, Samantha Russell, and Ann Marie Peña.

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Reference:

CFP: Re:assemblages Symposium (Lagos, 4-5 Nov 25). In: ArtHist.net, Jul 11, 2025 (accessed Feb 4, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/50345>>.