Temporalities, Space, and Aesthetic Critique (Nairobi, 14-15 Sep 26)

The Heritage Centre for Humanities, Strathmore University, Nairobi, Sep 14–15, 2026

Vera-Simone Schulz

Temporalities, Space, and Aesthetic Critique

A Joint Workshop of the Heritage Centre for Humanities, Strathmore University and Leuphana University

Location: Strathmore University Nairobi
The Heritage Centre for Humanities, Gate B

Concept and organization: Lydia Waithira Muthuma (Strathmore University), Fredrick Mbogo (Technical University of Kenya) and Vera-Simone Schulz (Leuphana University / KHI Florenz)

Urban hubs such as Nairobi are spaces of transition and constant transformation. They incorporate layers of history, of human, and non-human encounters. They are highly political spaces, but they also entail the subjectivities, psychological landscapes and emotions of their planners, builders, and inhabitants, from ambitions, hopes, and dreams, to anxieties, delusions or despairs. They raise issues of belonging, but also the question about different narratives regarding a city, its city quarters, squares, streets, buildings, and monuments, the question of architecture and storytelling. They point to broader questions such as the interconnectedness of urban hubs, issues of infrastructures, and the built environment, at micro, meso, and macro scales. And they raise the topic of the biography of a city, but also of an individual building, as well as the question of the embeddedness of built structures into the wider urban as well as social fabric. This two-day workshop will address issues related to temporalities, space, and aesthetic critique from the perspectives of histories of art and architecture, contemporary art, and theater studies. It will address the stratigraphies of urban spaces with case studies from across East Africa and the Horn of Africa, entangling issues related to architecture and the built environment with questions regarding processes of image-making, visual and material culture, as well as the performing arts. It will discuss colonial and postcolonial histories, questions of heritage, including contested heritage, and urban spaces and it will pay particular attention to notions of time, addressing not only the past and present, but also potential futures of the built environment across the Horn of Africa, East Africa and beyond.

PROGRAM

Monday, September 14, 2026

10:00 Lydia Waithira Muthuma, Fredrick Mbogo and Vera-Simone Schulz: Welcome and Opening

Remarks

Session I

Vera-Simone Schulz: Temporalities and Aesthetics of the Built Environment: A Research Initiative at the Crossroads of Architecture, Art History, and the Arts

Kevin Murungi and Luca Tenreira: Nyumbani / Nyumbayani

11:30 – 12:00 Coffee break

12:00 – 13:00 Session II

Fredrick Mbogo: Building Spectacles: Shifty Identities at The Kenya National Theatre

Lydia Waithira Muthuma: Public Art: The Subliminal Dialogue in the City

13:00 – 13:45 Lunch break

13:45 – 15:00 Session III

Emmaus Kimani: From Arts to Cultural Heritage

Salim Busuru: MORAAN

Plenary Discussion

Tuesday, September 15, 2026

3pm
An Urban Walk and Critical Discussion of the Temporalities and Aesthetics of Architecture and the Built Environment in Nairobi's Central Business District

Meeting Place: The Nation Centre, Kimathi St, Nairobi

The workshop is part of the VolkswagenStiftung project "Epistemologies of Conviviality: Temporalities and Aesthetics of the Built Environment across the Horn of Africa and Beyond."

This is an in-person only event. Participation of any program point is free and open to the public.

Reference:
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