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## Introduction

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# Introduction

Anna Seiderer and Elvan Zabunyan

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

In collaboration with : Elisabeth Spettel [contributor], French Institute Alliance Française (FI AF), États-Unis.

- 1 This dossier of the journal *Esclavages & post-esclavages/Slaveries & Post-Slaveries* is devoted to artistic practices for which the history and memory of slavery and the Atlantic slave trade constitute aesthetic and political resources for exploring expressions of violence, oppression, exclusion and discrimination. The artistic forms studied in the dossier are part of history and consequently vary according to the periods, places and materials in which they take shape, and through which they take shape. Since the early 1960s, and depending on the different cultural and historical parameters of the Americas, Africa and Europe, artists have been creating in a context of struggles for civil rights, emancipation and decolonisation. This context is one that has seen major transformations in the arts. Avant-garde visual, literary, cinematographic and musical structures are redefining earlier paradigms. Conceived, deliberately, in a way that ignores distinctions between different forms of creativity, these productions are at the heart of a renewed historiography that combines memories of slavery, archives and artistic works.
- 2 As this introduction is being written, the world has just lost Toni Morrison, one of its greatest literary and intellectual figures, thanks to whom a new and different history of slavery was written. As Angela Davis pointed out in her tribute on the *Democracy Now!* television show, Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) was a turning point in our understanding of the irreversible break made by the slave system (Zabunyan 2019).

“Language can never ‘pin down’ slavery, genocide, war. Nor should it yearn for the arrogance to be able to do so. Its force, its felicity is in its reach toward the ineffable.”

- 3 said the writer in her Nobel prize acceptance speech at Stockholm in 1993.<sup>1</sup> Her analysis of what is at stake in language gives it an emancipatory function; it is a means of expression that is both political and poetic. This ‘ineffable’ becomes the heart of artistic and literary creations that are committed to unveiling what, between silences, emptinesses and fragments, resists time, violence and dispersion. Although it is a dramatic consequence of the Atlantic slave trade, it will be altered by contemporary arts into forms that federate memories, that reveal narratives, that summon forgotten or hidden events. From a recollection of each of the stages of its dispersion, artists will produce visual, textual, sound and spatial narratives that will become essential pieces for the writing and understanding of history. In recounting the genesis of *Beloved*, Toni Morrison evoked her need to read the established story from a different perspective:

“It is in the interstices of recorded history that I frequently find the ‘nothing’ or the ‘not enough’ or the ‘indistinct’ or ‘incomplete’ or ‘discredited’ or ‘buried’ information important to me.” (Morrison 2019: 280)

- 4 In the introduction to his masterful study *Bound to Appear. Art, Slavery, and the Site of Blackness in Multicultural America*, Huey Copeland also emphasizes the importance of *Beloved* in his rewriting of the history of art in relation to slavery:<sup>2</sup>

“*Beloved* was not, of course, the first novel to recast this history, but its inimitable conjunctions—of collective memory and historical fact, modernist lyricism and subjective fragmentation, gothic horror and cool structural analysis—have made it a central touchstone for subsequent revisitations of slavery.” (Copeland 2013: 3)

- 5 As Copeland reminds us, Toni Morrison’s composition of the character of Sethe was inspired by the figure of Margaret Garner, an enslaved woman who, in an attempted escape in 1856, preferred to kill her youngest daughter rather than let her experience the immense suffering of servitude. This event, recorded as an anecdotal news item, is unearthed by the writer and, by bringing back the spirit of the dead girl in her story, produces the necessary disjunction between faith and hope, between reality and fiction. The question of ghosts is omnipresent in contemporary artistic and literary productions since millions of African men and women died during the crossing and millions of women, men and children perished on the plantations during the centuries in which the ferocious institution ravaged human lives. But the ghost is not only an immaterial being produced by spiritual, ritual or religious beliefs. The ghost is the figure that comes to haunt places and to underline with even greater intensity the need to revisit history and its empty spaces. For Toni Morrison, writing *Beloved* was the creation of a memorial landmark since there is no place of recollection dedicated to the memory of ‘those who made the journey and those who did not’<sup>3</sup> (Morrison 1989: 4). A practice such as that which David Hammons (b. 1943) developed with his body prints in the early 1970s or with his use of nappy hair as sculptural material, participates in the creation of this ghostly absence that becomes presence through the force of evocation. Similarly, in his 1992 installation *Black Star Line*, Hammons evokes the shipping company created by Marcus Garvey in the 1920s, with its utopia of a return to the original continent. This ‘matter of absence’, which Patrick Chamoiseau (b. 1953) chose as the title of his philosophical work, is also described as the constant re-creation produced by a trans-generational memory of slavery. Quoting Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1977) or Aimé Césaire and Marcus Garvey, Patrick Chamoiseau questions this ‘lost and fantasised Africa’. He writes: ‘This loss would constitute the meaning of their gaze, the flow of their dreams, and the immobilisation of their lives in America’s Creole lands.’ For him, ‘when memory only serves to immobilise itself, forgetting ceases to structure

the present, to feed the breath of what is possible. The healthiest memory sees only the future, and opens only to becoming.’ (Chamoiseau 2016: 154; we translate).

- 6 From the 1960s onwards, it was this future that was given special attention at a time when, in keeping with the strengthening of political awareness opposing repressive regimes, liberation and decolonisation movements were emerging. Artistic production clearly directed its perspectives in such a way as to establish links between the past and the present, based on a history of slavery, mobilised as a political tool. Artists and intellectuals participating in the Black Power and Black Art Movement in the United States and in the Caribbean Artists Movement which was developing between Great Britain and the British West Indies, constantly remind us that freedom depends on how the memory of violence and oppression can be transfigured by the emancipatory powers of the imagination. This imagination is founded on the writings and speeches of thinkers and activists like Frantz Fanon and Malcolm X. Such thinkers helped to open up the problematics of history by bringing together the continents that were at the heart of the slave trade and by analysing the circulation of ideas and forces in the Americas and Africa. Understanding the history of slavery requires an apprenticeship in genealogy. On January 24 1965, Malcolm X gave a speech at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem entitled ‘On Afro-American History’, in which he recounted the experience of being uprooted and the urgent need to piece together the bits of the past the better to understand the present, to analyse it and to prepare for the future. The speech recalled the African origins of those who survived slavery. It mentions Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana. It insists on how important it is to know the refinements of African civilizations before those who were deported were stripped of their knowledge in order to be dehumanised and transformed into useful properties in the globalised plantation economy:

“When we came here as slaves, we were civilized, we had culture, we had knowledge of science. They don’t take a slave who’s dumb—a dumb slave is not good; you have to know how to do something to be a profitable slave. [...] You were a master of woodcraft, metalwork, and all of these other skills; and it was this that they needed. They didn’t need just someone with muscle to do work—they needed someone with skill.” (Malcolm X 1967: 40)

- 7 The self-esteem which Malcolm X talks about here, rightly recalling material history that is in keeping with the notion of dignity, is widely conveyed by a painter like Charles White (1918–1979). From the 1930s on, through his art, he helped to reinforce this positive image of Black culture. In 1970, his series of posters *Wanted* recalled the revolt of the maroons, the runaway slaves. On poster number 14, two portraits in his characteristic graphic style are depicted in ovals: on the left is the portrait of a child, on the right that of an adult. The date ‘1619’ floats above the child whilst ‘19??’ echoes it above the adult.<sup>4</sup> This chronological abbreviation recalls the date on which the first enslaved Africans arrived in the American colonies, but leaves the date of their liberation undetermined. 1970 is a turning point then. At the same time as new artistic forms were displacing traditional paradigms, a whole iconography of resistance was also being created by photography, with members of the Black Panther Party as the most celebrated subjects for pictures. The aesthetics work in both visual and militant terms, and in a frontal way support the propaganda-like character that was appropriate in the context of the repressive policies directed against African-Americans. Malcolm X’s book opens with the reproduction of a brass plaque depicting the king, Oba, and his followers. These ornamental plates are believed to have appeared

in the fifteenth century but the history of the kingdom goes back to the fourteenth century (Igbofe 2007: 41–53; Plankensteiner 2010: 22–8).

- 8 A central concern for many artists is to connect the history of African descent to a period that precedes the establishment of the triangular trade, or that points to a cultural genealogy that is not yet one of dehumanisation. But this journey to the ‘mother country’ requires a willingness to reflect on what this displacement has produced in creative approaches, which are set primarily in Western contexts. Most of the African masks that are used by artists as historical references have been seen in the museums of major American and European cities and, when they are inserted into artists’ creations, it is also the story of colonial instrumentalisation by the museum institution that is being told. The work carried out in 1992 by Fred Wilson (b. 1954) at the Maryland Historical Society Museum in Baltimore was an important step in this direction. The artist created *Mining the Museum*, a ground-breaking installation *in progress*, which for the first time confronted the collection assembled by a museum of history and society with the interpretation that a contemporary artist can make of this collection in a project that shows up the past of racism and offers a didactic approach to an interpretation of history marked by slavery. By juxtaposing objects from the collection, for example seventeenth- and eighteenth-century items each of which, in its own way, represents a social, political and economic reality, in this case silver tableware next to slave chains, and by naming this installation *Metalwork, 1793–1880*, Fred Wilson gives expression to a space-time continuum during which the most horrendous institution of torture could coexist, paradoxically, with a façade of refinement.<sup>5</sup>
- 9 These temporal and spatial confrontations are also possible because the contemporary art that has been developing since the 1960s has initiated a virulent institutional critique with the museum as one of its primary targets and pointing the finger at the racial and sexual discrimination suffered by some artists. In the mid-1970s, Faith Ringgold (b. 1930), with her fellow artists, demonstrated in front of New York museums to demand better representation of all segments of art society, which was largely dominated by white males. References to the history of slavery are recurrent throughout her work, notably through the representation of emblematic figures such as Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman.<sup>6</sup> These heroes and heroines are at the origins of a history of the revolt against slavery and depicting them as saving symbols and eternal effigies is a way of confirming the primacy of a collective memory that is no longer shackled by the weight of alienation. During this pivotal period of the 1970s when political action was rubbing shoulders with artistic creation, African-American, Caribbean and black artists in Great Britain were constructing their identity by making their voices resound in unison, recalling common, collective and united origins.
- 10 In 1970, the Jamaican journal *Savacou*, produced, among others, by the poet Edward Kamau Brathwaite, chose slavery as the theme for its first issue.<sup>7</sup> The story is told through the prism of the San Domingo Revolution and C. L. R. James’s book, *The Black Jacobins*, was chosen as the main case study (James 1938). Toussaint Louverture and Frederick Douglass are the two personalities most frequently represented by artists when it comes to affirming the pride of victory over slavery.<sup>8</sup> The story of the Middle Passage is also an inspiration for many works. In 1977 the *Black Odyssey* series by Romare Bearden (1911–1988) created a double perspective by mingling mythological stories with those of Africans. Toni Morrison did the same, in the same year with her

*The Song of Solomon* whilst in 1990 Derek Walcott (1930–2017), with his epic poem *Omeros*, brought the imaginary qualities of the Caribbean to meet Homer's Aegean.<sup>9</sup> These tos and fros made possible by the imagination and by creation can be found in the most radical works that choose poetry and the power of images to recall the chronological disorder that accompanies any attempt to erase the past. *Sankofa* (1993) by filmmaker Haile Gerima (b. 1946) creates a flashback between the present and a return to the plantations, a journey through time that Octavia E. Butler (1947–2006) also proposes in her novel *Kindred* (1979). Artists slip into the interstices of history to create new narrative forms with images, installations and sounds. The perpetuation of archives and stories requires their reactivation in contemporary modes, for which historicity is at one and the same time a transmission, a repetition and a return. Renée Green (b. 1959) borrowed the title of one of the chapters of Harriet Jacobs's autobiography 'Loophole of Retreat' for one of her installations (*Sites of Genealogy: Loophole of Retreat*) in 1990. By choosing literally to occupy the attic of the PS1 Museum in Queens, New York, she recreated the conditions in which Jacobs spent seven years of her life, hidden in a cramped attic. Renée Green evokes a perpetual renewal of history where each beginning is a new beginning.<sup>10</sup>

- 11 Poetry and allegory accompany the critical function of contemporary art when it comes to confronting the ferocity of the totalitarian regime represented by slavery and the slave trade, but artistic practices of a more sociological nature are also emerging among artists of the new generation. In his autobiography, the activist Assata Shakur, imprisoned as early as 1973 as a result of her militant actions for the black cause, recalls that prison in the United States is a legal way of perpetuating slavery by forcing the most disadvantaged communities to work practically for free (Shakur 2001 [1987]: 65). Cameron Rowland (b. 1988) refers to the seminal essay 'Bonded Life, Technologies of Racial Finance from Slave Insurance to Philanthrocapital' by Zenia Kish and Justin Leroy (2015). In his artistic practice, this essay allows him to explore the economic and political links between the conditions of contemporary prison labour and the history of exploitation specific to slavery. The artist builds on this historical continuity of capitalism by creating installations in which he exhibits objects made by prisoners or the contracts of a contemporary insurance company already active at the time of slavery. Such companies provided slave owners with life insurance for their 'property'.  
<sup>11</sup> "Thought draws the imaginary of the past: a knowledge becoming," states Édouard Glissant at the beginning of *Poetics of Relation* (Glissant 1997: 1). Supported by conceptual art and by the artists from the 1960s and 1970s who were involved in social and political demands, works like those of Cameron Rowland's function as a transmission between a past and a present that are bound together by a historiography, a possible 'knowledge in the making'.
- 12 This continuity of designs sealed by future history contrasts with academic research which can be seen, on the contrary, as a work of discernment, making it possible to distinguish the specificities and transformations of different systems of oppression and domination. The ambition of this dossier is to show how artists work in the cavities of this history, updated and reinterpreted by sensitive forms. These are mutually nourished and artistic movements in the United States and in South Africa intersect in a common destiny marked by racial segregation and the *apartheid* system.<sup>12</sup>
- 13 In South Africa, the 1960s saw a radicalisation of the apartheid regime and the emergence of new forms of resistance that went from non-violent protest to armed

struggle (Enwezor & Bester 2013: 170-225). On 21 March 1960 the violent police repression of the peaceful demonstration against the pass laws, restricting the mobility of populations categorized as 'black' and coloured, is considered the decisive event in this shift.<sup>13</sup> In protest at the Sharpeville massacre, Albert Luthuli, followed by thousands of other South Africans, burned his pass. The establishment of this passport for internal use, intended to segregate and control the movement of marginalised populations within the territory, dates back to 1760 when slaves in the Cape were forced to move from urban areas to agrarian zones (Savage 1986). The purpose of issuing these identity documents was to control the movements of enslaved people, who were not yet subject to the racial categories forged a few centuries later under the apartheid regime.<sup>14</sup> The history of slavery and the slave trade in the south of the African continent over several centuries cannot be understood as a matrix that predetermined the establishment of racial segregation from 1948 to 1991.<sup>15</sup> It nevertheless constitutes a decisive lever in the political, economic and social struggles that began in the 1960s.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In response to the Sharpeville Massacre, Albert Luthuli and Martin Luther King Jr. issued a call to action against apartheid. This was one of the most important gestures of solidarity between the struggle against the apartheid regime in South Africa and the civil rights movements in the United States. This struggle also manifested itself in the artistic forms and practices developed in this political context. Art historian Colin Richards analyses this 1960s shift of paradigm in South African photography, which renewed the debate on artistic and documentary practices and values. In particular, he observed this shift in the work of Ernest Cole, who, according to the author, "underscores with special intensity the passage from liberal humanism to the more radical, critical humanism encountered, for example, in the writings of Frantz Fanon and later Steve Biko and also mediated by developments in racial politics in 1960s America" (Richards 2013: 238-9). Richards analyses the emergence of an artistic language that is in keeping with the political and ethical issues of the 1960s and, in his view, constitutes a re-conceptualisation of the notion and values of humanism. The critical humanism he analyses in the artistic practices of this period, which is linked to the Black Consciousness movement founded by Bantu Stephen Biko in 1968, draws on the Black Power ideology of Black Americans as well as on the experience of the Pan-African Congress and African nationalisms (Fauvelle 2013 [2006]: 422). This new humanism, theorised by Njabulo S. Ndebele, marks a new relationship between the intimate and the public spheres that artists renegotiate in their struggles against the apartheid regime.<sup>17</sup> The photographs analysed by Richards, like the one that Cole looked at, break with the spectacular representations of the regime, paradoxically consolidating the segregationist thinking that asserts that identities are based on predetermined groups. The critical humanism that artists adopt no longer seeks to represent exceptional events but rather to give expression to the singular manifestations of individuals fighting for freedom.

<sup>15</sup> Whilst this struggle for freedom, in the form of the fight against racial segregation, is pitting blacks against whites in the United States and in South Africa, it also manifests itself in more diffuse and ambivalent ways in many other countries on the African continent. In writing *The Dance of the Forest*, Akinwande Oluwole Soyinka warned against the political recuperation of independence. The opulence of the festivities celebrating independence can be in proportion to the violence it may mask (Soyinka 1964). In this play, with humour and lucidity, the author draws a complex picture of the



political situation inherited by the newly independent states of Africa, linking their future to a long and sinuous history that he manifests through the frame-inside-the-frame setting of his characters. This theatrical process allows Soyinka to construct a dystopian image of independence with its spectacular festivities marked by bitterness and vileness. The playwright thus reminds us that the utopias proclaimed by the independent states are in fact part of a history that the political speeches of the new rulers cannot simply set aside. There are three main protagonists in the play. The sculptor Demoké is racked with remorse for having murdered his young assistant out of jealousy and turns out to have been a vile and cowardly court poet eight centuries earlier. The prostitute Rola/Madame Tortoise was a cruel queen. And finally, the corrupt figure of Adenebi, the Council's orator, in his past life was a court historian of Mata Kharibu whose scandals of slavery he tried to conceal, along with other ignominies. Nearly a decade later, Soyinka recounted his imprisonment, without being charge, at the hands of the Gowon government as it tried to put an end to his struggle against the Biafran War:

"Three men entered with heavy manacles and chains the like of which I had seen only in museums of the slave-trade." (Soyinka 1972)

- 16 The astonishment with which Soyinka describes how he was shackled, and how his stuttering prison guard was embarrassed, contrasts with the practices of torture he describes elsewhere, comparing them with those of the Gestapo. The astonishment and uneasiness are all the more disturbing because they seem to belong to a bygone era, perfectly distinct from contemporary preoccupations which, in the case of Nigeria, were then focused on the Biafran war of secession which caused the deaths of nearly two million people. Yet it is precisely this rhetoric, implicitly justifying the repression or denial of independent states, that Soyinka condemned as early as 1960 in *The Dance of the Forest*. The tragic past, long perceived as a burden for these new states, became a major political issue a few years later, in the case of Benin, when President Nicéphore Soglo came to power. The creation of *Ouidah 92*, a festival of *Vodun* (voodoo) arts and culture revived the past of the slave trade by emphasising the revitalisation of the country's religious heritage, which had been condemned during the Marxist-Leninist regime of President Matthieu Kérékou.<sup>18</sup> In this context, Beninese artists were commissioned to produce works which were then placed in heritage sites such as along the Slave Route, set up under the aegis of Unesco in 1994 in the former sacred forest of *Kpassézume*, or in the former court building of Ouidah (Seiderer 2009). The artists, often coming from families of craftsmen who originally made paintings, bas-reliefs or appliques for kings or *Vodun* altars, produced sculptures, installations and paintings which depicted slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.<sup>19</sup> This wave of artistic production in 1992, promoted by the Beninese state with financial support from France, was in keeping with the political ambivalence of the time. Like monuments and sites established as heritage assets, these works make the era of the slave trade 'the founding age of a cultural heritage' (Ciarcia 2008: 5-9) in which the *Vodun* religion emerges as a privileged resource. Although culturalism remains a fertile rhetoric, the aesthetic and political registers continue to become more diverse, echoing the epistemological and ethical debates seen in academic research.<sup>20</sup> Here, we might single out the pared down and timeless aesthetics of the *Marrons* series (2010) by Fabrice Monteiro (born in 1972),<sup>21</sup> the visual, sound and olfactory installation of *La Bouche du roi* (2005) by Romuald Hazoumé (b. 1962) or the performances and installations of Pélagie Gbaguidi (b. 1965).<sup>22</sup> Monteiro's re-enactment of chained bodies staged with the



inhabitants of Ouidah, the realisation of the technical plan of the *Brooks* by Hazoumé, using *kpayo* cans for contraband petrol, and the dislocated images of Gbaguidi's irreconcilable history are all ways of rewriting this tragic past. For the first, this past is subsumed under a timeless aesthetic; for the second, it is anchored in the paradoxes and ambivalences of Benin's present-day economic and political reality; for the third, this past is dislocated and irreconcilable. Monteiro's photographs make sense within a global reflection that the writer Thiong'o Nom wa Ngugi, in 'The Legacy of Slavery' (2017) identifies with the endemic violence of capitalism. *La Bouche du roi*, like the works of Soyinka, can be seen as a micro-history, the consequences of which are scrutinized and denounced in the light of the daily life of citizens. Finally, Gbaguidi's dismembered aesthetics materialise and bring up to date the infernal disintegration that this past orchestrates.

- 17 This thematic dossier is a continuation of reflection first initiated at the sixth edition of the 'Atlantic Encounters' held at the Bordeaux musée d'Aquitaine in May 2017. Its contributions seek to put the artistic works into context in order to offer a cross-referenced, comparative and global reflection on contemporary artistic productions and their relationships to the history and memory of the slave trade and slavery. They shed light on different aesthetic languages used in the processes of rewriting the history of the slave trade and of slavery by focusing on objects, gestures and forms that make sense through their historical, geographical and artistic contexts, and in these contexts.
- 18 As in the examples mentioned above, the authors highlight the different dynamics that are running through contemporary artistic creations and show how the practices engaged by artists call upon historical research to reinvest layers of time and to propose singular and contemporary re-readings. Words are a vital resource in these processes. They are worked on in narrative structures such as the neo-stories of slaves studied by Valérie Croisille in Athena Park's *Avenue of Palms* (2013), or by the sensitive word play that suggests the muffled silences of trauma, as described by Myriam Moïse in the poetic texts of Lorna Goodison and NourbeSe Philip, and finally by words that render visible aesthetic gestures to be found along forbidden paths and at the margins of established narratives. Fabienne Kanor puts these gestures into practice in her essay in order to grasp the paradoxical and critical nature of the work in her various literary proposals. The visual compositions of Rosana Paulino (b. 1967) and Tiago Sant'Ana (b. 1990), studied by Kimberley Cleveland, expose the transmission of oblivion orchestrated by society in Brazil. The breastfeeding bodies of Brazilian artists are a counterpoint to the breathless bodies to be seen in North American film and television productions, whose overexposure Maureen Lepers denounces. Between the lines, between the images and between the narratives that flow from them, the perspectives that radiate from these articles are committed to showing how important it is to look at the history of slavery and the slave trade from a situated point of view. It is a matter of generating fertile theoretical, political and poetic entanglements so that this 'practice of history through the arts', which is the title of this dossier, can be at the heart of present-day preoccupations that will shed light on future research.

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## NOTES

1. Available online : <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1993/morrison/lecture/> [last accessed May 2020].
2. Huey Copeland's writing consists mainly of remarkable research on a social and cultural history of art based on case studies of the works of Renée Green, Glenn Ligon, Lorna Simpson and Fred Wilson.
3. Toni Morrison's article is also quoted by Huey Copeland in his introduction (Copeland 2013: 3).
4. See the reproduction of this work by Charles White on the website of the Museum of Modern Art: [www.moma.org/collection/works/67978](http://www.moma.org/collection/works/67978) [all links in this article are valid in March 2020].
5. For a contemporary reception of the exhibition, see the conversation with Fred Wilson where the work mentioned is also presented: [www.bmoreart.com/2017/05/how-mining-the-museum-changed-the-art-world.html](http://www.bmoreart.com/2017/05/how-mining-the-museum-changed-the-art-world.html). For a rich analysis of Fred Wilson's installation, see also González 2008.
6. See illustrations of the works mentioned here at [www.culturetype.com/2019/03/10/the-armory-show-a-mini-survey-of-faith-ringgolds-legendary-practice-is-on-display-at-aca-galleries/](http://www.culturetype.com/2019/03/10/the-armory-show-a-mini-survey-of-faith-ringgolds-legendary-practice-is-on-display-at-aca-galleries/).
7. For a presentation of *Savacou* magazine, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGdzoeG4Vh8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGdzoeG4Vh8).
8. See in particular the series painted by Jacob Lawrence between 1936 and 1938, *The Life of Toussaint Louverture*. Haitian artists have also largely represented Toussaint Louverture or the history of Haitian independence. See in particular Gervais Emmanuel Ducasse, *Toussaint Louverture au Fort de Joux*, 1979 (oil on isorel): [www.magcentre.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BD\\_18.-Gervais-Emmanuel-Ducasse-Toussaint-Louverture.jpg](http://www.magcentre.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/BD_18.-Gervais-Emmanuel-Ducasse-Toussaint-Louverture.jpg), or Édouard Duval-Carrié, *Mémoire sans histoire*, 2009 (mixed techniques on aluminum, six-part polyptych): [mofa.fsu.edu/mofa-presents-decolonizing-refinement-contemporary-pursuits-in-the-art-of-edouard-duval-carrie/](http://mofa.fsu.edu/mofa-presents-decolonizing-refinement-contemporary-pursuits-in-the-art-of-edouard-duval-carrie/). For some in-depth research on Frederick Douglass's portraits and photographs, see Bernier & Lawson 2017.

9. For some reproductions of Romare Bearden's work, *Black Odyssey*, see the link to the exhibition [www.columbia.edu/cu/wallach/exhibitions/Romare-Bearden.html](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/wallach/exhibitions/Romare-Bearden.html). See also Huggins 1977 (the year Romare Bearden produced his series).

10. See Green 2009. On this notion of recommencement, see the installation *Begin Again Begin Again* first made by Renée Green at the Schindler House (MAK Center) in Los Angeles in January 2015: [makcenter.org/programming/begin-again-2](http://makcenter.org/programming/begin-again-2). See also the development of these notions in her book: Green 2014. 'The Loophole of Retreat' is chapter XXI of Jacobs 1973 [1861].

11. See in particular Cameron Rowland's exhibition at Artists Space, New York, in 2016: [artistspace.org/exhibitions/cameron-rowland](http://artistspace.org/exhibitions/cameron-rowland).

12. "Like the post-Civil War United States, where the failure of Reconstruction (1865-1877) meant the loss of civil rights for Blacks, the institutionalization of segregation arose first out of opposition and then out of reconciliation among Whites, at the expense of a formerly servile and colonized Black population." (Fauvelle 2013 [2006]: 404).

13. "[...] the police deliberately opened fire on an unarmed crowd that had gathered peacefully at Sharpeville on 21 March 1960 to protest against the pass laws [the most humiliating symbol of control] [...] the South African Police failed to give the crowd an order to disperse before they began firing and [...] continued to fire upon the fleeing crowd, resulting in hundreds of people being shot in the back. As a result of the excessive force used, 69 people were killed and more than 300 injured." (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Cape Town, The Commission, 1998, Vol. 3, p. 537).

14. We refer here to the argument developed by Susan Newton-King in the conference entitled 'Slavery, Race and Citizenship: The Ambiguous Status of Freed Slaves at the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' and taken up again during the winter school 'Arts and Anthropology: Heritage-making, Uses and Museumification of the Past', organized in July 2019 in partnership with University of the Western Cape and the Centre for the Less Good Idea in Cape Town and Johannesburg. The author distinguishes between two historiographical currents developed in South Africa in the 1980s, opposing *Afrikaner*-speaking researchers to English-speaking ones (of which she is a member). She emphasizes that her research has helped to qualify these theses. The latter thesis argued that racial categories have always determined the status of freed slaves in Cape Town, while the others were able to show that racial prejudice did exist, but that it was not yet the central element in South African society at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Where the United States are concerned, Achille Mbembe points out that 'the invention of the Negro' dates back to the seventeenth century: "Deep class divisions exist within the colonate. They also set the colonate against the mass of slaves. Moreover, the latter form a multiracial class. It was between 1630 and 1680 that the bifurcation took place. The plantation company was really born at this time." (Mbembe 2015 [2013]: 37).

15. François-Xavier Fauvelle considers that the regime set up in 1948 was in some respects a reversal of logic: "whereas the preservation of racial order had been subordinated in the first half of the century to the imperative of maintaining the unity of the nation, which placed limits on the will to segregation (this was a legacy of the Anglo-Boer War and reconciliation), the ideologues of the second half of the century

were prepared to sacrifice territorial integrity and relations between groups to racial order.” (Fauvelle 2006: 404).

16. In a study of the Slave Lodge, the historian Anthony Holiday identifies the rapid rehabilitation of the site as a symptomatic denial of South African society: “The most striking proof of this is the fact that, after it had at last been emptied of slaves in 1811, the building was almost immediately transformed into the seat of law-giving at the Cape, housing the Cape Supreme Court between 1815 and 1914 and serving, between 1827 and 1844, as home, first to the Advisory Council and subsequently the Legislative Council which met in the record room on the upper floor. If this extraordinary transition aroused no public outcry, if legislators and learned judges were content to situate the ancient edifices of Roman-Dutch law in such a setting, it must surely have been because they had so thoroughly absorbed the concepts associated with slavery and its degradations into their own lives and modes of judgement that the significance of what they were doing in choosing to work in such a place altogether escaped them.” (Holiday 2013: 10).

17. On the spectacular aspect, see Ndebele 1991: 43.

18. The *Ouidah 92* festival was held for the first time in February 1993.

19. The works of Simonet Biokou, the Dakpogan brothers and Cyprien Tokoudagba are amongst the best known.

20. Mention may be made here of the exhibition *Temps modernes. La mémoire de l'esclavage et l'art contemporain* presented at the Galerie Vallois and at UNESCO's Paris headquarters in 2015.

21. See [fabricemonteiro.viewbook.com/marrons](http://fabricemonteiro.viewbook.com/marrons).

22. Amongst his works, mention may be made of his contribution to the project *Black Athena Reloaded 2: A trial of the Code Noir*, part of ‘The Parliament of Things’ at the *Documenta 14* or his installations entitled *The Missing Link. Decolonisation Education by Mrs Smiling Stone* (2017).

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