



Festival newsletter no. 3 (22 September 2016)

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE FIRST WEEK OF THE FESTIVAL

15.9.: 500 ATTEND THE OPENING DAY

The festival was opened by **Patrice** and **Mallence Bart-Williams** (patrons) and their film **THE RISING OF THE SON**, which was shot in Sierra Leone. **Beti Ellerson** (USA) introduced the festival "Sisters in African Cinema" theme to guests. FilmInitiativ presented the first festival guests: **Judy Kibinge** (Kenya), **Leyla Bouzid** (Tunisia), **Françoise Ellong** (Cameroon), **Nasib Farah** (Somalia/Denmark), **Teddy Goitom** (Egypt/Sweden), **Mantegaftot Sileshi Siyoum** (Ethiopia), plus **Nancy Mac Granaky-Quaye**, **Eli Abeke** and **Anna M'barek** from Germany. Singers Nicole Hadfield and Meli Wharton from the band **SISTERS** were a big hit with the audience at Filmforum in Museum Ludwig, where the cinema hall was just as jam-packed for their performance as it was for the subsequent opening film **À PEINE J'OUVRE LES YEUX** from Tunisia. One guest wrote: "This was my first time at the African Film Festival and I really loved it... In my opinion, it (was) a total success, a really nice atmosphere... Finally a festival that doesn't stick to all the usual rules (introducing all the sponsors, letting them speak, etc.)... The opening film was also a great choice."

16.9. / 17.9.: IN-DEPTH DISCUSSIONS WITH INTERNATIONAL GUESTS

On Friday (16.9.), the documentary **WARRIORS FROM THE NORTH** about young Somalis who return from Denmark to East Africa to train as suicide bombers left a lasting impression on the audience. As Somali director **Nasib Farah** explained, he was only able to shoot the film because he personally knew some of the protagonists and to a certain extent their environment. On Saturday, guests were left impressed by **Teddy Goitom's** documentary series **AFRIPEDIA** about innovative art projects in Ghana, South Africa, Ivory Coast and Senegal, and they then stayed on to take part in the lengthy discussion with director **Françoise Ellong** from Cameroon about her feature film **W.A.K.A.** and its subject matter: violence against women.

18.9.: SELF-ASSURED FEMALE DIRECTORS FROM AFRICA

Sunday was all about the festival's theme: Firstly, **Beti Ellerson** opened a discussion on her documentary **SISTERS OF THE SCREEN – WOMEN IN AFRICAN CINEMA** that looks at the contribution that women have made to African filmmaking in the first three decades since independence in the majority of African countries (around 1960). Congolese director **Monique Mbeka Phoba** also took part in the discussion. The two of them then continued the discussion on the podium with three other guests. **Judy Kibinge** (Kenya) presented her documentary film network, **Leyla Bouzid** discussed the common communication barriers between those from Arabic North Africa and those from the rest of the continent, while **Françoise Ellong**, as the youngest member of the group, touched upon how commonplace social media communication has become for her generation even in West Africa, and its widespread use in funding campaigns for films. Tunisian director **Mohamed Ben Attia** arrived for the close-to-sold-out preview of his feature film **HEDI** on Sunday evening before it hits cinemas throughout the country. His film won several awards at the Berlinale at the start of the year.

19.9.: AFRICA 2006: COOL, CREATIVE & VISIONARY

Guests arrived at Cologne Public Library on Monday evening for the opening of the **AFRICA – WAY MORE THAN YOU THINK** exhibition, which aims to shatter common clichés and stereotypes about Africa. The main event room was bursting at the seams and the audience – including several dozen young Black Germans – sat or stood in the lobby, taking in the full programme. **Eli Abeke** from the German-African Centre in Bonn explained that the exhibition came about due to the fact that one still frequently hears these misconceptions about Africa. He said that many even fail to comprehend that Africa is not one country, but in fact a continent with 54 countries and hundreds of languages and cultures, a rich history, and that it is not riddled with poverty and suffering. There is – as the exhibition shows – much more to Africa than that, with not only schools, but famous universities, scholars, writers and Nobel Prize winners. Writer and FilmInitiativ employee **Esther Donkor** read an excerpt from her book **Wurzelbehandlung - Deutschland, Ghana und ich** (“Root Treatment – Germany, Ghana and I”) and explained that the title of the autobiographical story refers to her first trip back to her Ghanaian father’s homeland, and how it – just like a trip to the dentist’s – was associated with trepidation and pain, but in the end also with feelings of relief and liberation. As the selected passages from the book showed, it was not only her image of Africa that changed while she was there, but also her attitude towards the consumption and thoughtlessness that often shapes German society. **Teddy Goitom** also wowed the audience at the library with another episode from his **AFRIPEDIA** series, this time about artists, filmmakers and visual artists in Kenya. These perspective-changing events were ideally complemented by experimental jazz band **Ó – THE BANZOI SYNDICATE** from Leipzig, who supported Congolese singer and flautist **Vincent Bababouilasbo**. He explained how his lyrics are a nod to black German poet May Ayim, as well as intellectuals and activists, such as Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon und Malcolm X.

To close the event, guests moved over to the library’s Lernwelt (“learning world”) section on the third floor to check out the exhibition and to stand in lines in front of the video monitors where all five episodes of the AFRIPEDIA series can be watched with German subtitles until the end of the exhibition on 29 October.

20.9.: THE REVOLUTION IN BURKINA FASO

FilmInitiativ invited **Etienne Minoungou**, director of the Récréatâles theatre festival in Ouagadougou, to join them for a discussion on the film **UNE RÉVOLUTION AFRICAINE** about the ten days preceding the fall of Burkina Faso’s long-term dictator, Blaise Compaoré, in October 2014. He began by requesting that guests observe a minute’s silence out of respect for those who lost their lives fighting for democracy in his country, and then optimistically stressed that the Burkinabe people would never again – despite the many everyday problems in the desperately poor country in the Sahel – take their newly gained freedom lightly. Evidence of this was provided when the masses were mobilised in September 2015 to thwart an attempted counterrevolutionary military coup within a week, and to push through with the first democratic elections in the country’s history in November 2015.

21.9.: A HOMAGE TO (WEST) AFRICAN ACTORS

The film discussion with **Maimouna Ndiaye**, the multi-award-winning main actor of feature film **L’OEIL DU CYCLON** from Burkina Faso soon became a homage to actors in West Africa. The guest who had flown in from Ouagadougou explained that there are few opportunities to train as a professional actor, and that theatre, film and television actors are rarely able to make a living from their work and must therefore – as she herself had to do – have other jobs on the side. This afforded her and her co-actors an even more rapturous reception from the audience for their performances in the screened film.