

ANNOTATIONS CURATORIAL STATEMENT

Re:assemblages

Re:assemblages is a roaming body and programme initiated by [G.A.S. Foundation](#) in Lagos that explores the Picton Collection and Archive as a site of exchange. It will foster new publishing actions on African art through artistic interventions, residencies, experimental printing, and convenings in collaboration with a Peer Circle of members from the African Art Libraries (AAL) Lab. The new network will bring together a constellation of African arts libraries, artists, publishers, and international partners holding African art collections. Building on the archaeological concept of the assemblage, *Re:assemblages* activates the Picton Collection and Archive, with emphasis on its rare constellation of African published journals, magazines, and manuscripts, to pose new critical questions focused on the preservation and creative potential of African art libraries.

In 2024, *Re:assemblages* opens with the project Annotations. In this first chapter, Naima Hassan, interim archivist of the Picton Collection and Archive and writer Maryam Kazeem curate a publishing-oriented programme focused on pan-African cultural festival archives (FESMAN, PANAF, Zaire 74, FESTAC '77). Each festival revealed “competing visions of global Blackness and Africanity pertaining to ideologies of race, citizenship, and revolutionary struggle¹.” Each nation also had a different procedure for how the events were to be documented and archived. In light of this, Annotations asks, if archives are determined by an inventory of traces, what do the interweaving narratives of FESMAN, PANAF, Zaire 74 to FESTAC'77 reveal? Aiming to amplify the interwoven histories of the festivals, *Re:assemblages* will be expressed in varied publications, residencies, and public programmes over an 18-month period.

Annotations

Annotations addresses the complex archives of pan-African festivals as repositories of pedagogical encounters that should not remain static but rather activated through social, transdisciplinary, and cross-cultural collaborations.

Influenced by African-American writer and poet John Keene, the programme takes its name from the author's avant-garde first novel, Annotations, in which Keene writes, “the longer one spends in libraries, the more one understands the power of an annotation, what a single footnote can reveal or bury. Better to do it yourself than allow it to be done to you.” Through the condition of annotations, whereby citational practices and their interminable nature challenge and encourage alternative historiographies, the project

¹ Andrew Apter, “FESTAC 77: A Black World's Fair.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, August 2021.



departs from the situated locale of Lagos as a focal point to explore the archival afterlives of FESTAC'77, its divergent infrastructures and political ideals.

The transversal programme tests the potential of annotations and their capacity for challenging epistemological production and assembly, whereby we become active readers of pan-African festival archives. Annotations undertakes how speculative archival practices, which Sameer Farooq refers to as “archiving against the archive²”, complicate and reveal new possibilities for the collective memory keeping and engagement of pan-Africanism within the continent and the diaspora. In consideration of the archives of the twentieth century festivals and their relationship to imperial rule, post-colonial desires, and potential futures, by assuming a “resemblage” of pan-African festivals rather than a linear view, we aim to explore alternative taxonomies and inventive record-keeping practices, which critique hegemonic library classification systems and vocabulary³, through their reenactment and reproduction.



Through a social practice residency, public programme, and publication, Annotations explodes the capacity of the annotation as minutia and marginalia through a collaborative and subjective approach to knowledge production. Each element of the programme considers alternative practices for archival investigation and co-production through collective engagement. The Lagos-based residency will support artists to make interventions within the context of FESTAC'77 archives and sites through collaboration and public participation. Through the dynamic condition of annotations, the resulting publication will activate a participatory and variegated approach to collective archival engagement.

In continuation of Chimurenga's jazz-like approach to the re-creation of the FESTAC'77 archive and their homonymous publication, alongside Marilyn Nance's Last Day in Lagos, Annotations further investigates the relationship between the archives of these festivals as source and as subject, and how contemporary activations of these events underscore a dynamic between history and collective memory, in which the act of collective memory keeping creates a path towards reckoning with archival absence. Through the practice of creating multifarious marginalia to the pan-African festivals archives, Annotations also contemplates these alternative taxonomies and record keeping practices among pan-African library networks within the continent and the diaspora. With a beginning in Lagos, the programme will create an opening for satellite residency programmes in other African cities which house the archives of these twentieth century festivals (Dakar, Algiers, Kinshasa).

² Sameer Farooq, *Speculative Archives: An Index*, 2014

³ Drabinski, Emily, “Queering the Catalogue, Queer Theory and the Politics of Correction.” *The Library Quarterly: Information, Community, Policy*, vol. 83, no. 2, 2013, pp. 94–111.

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Publication

Annotations in Four Acts is a publication by co-authors Naima Hassan, Maryam Kazeem, Billy Fowo and designer Rose Nordin. The publication tests the potential of circulatory working models and invites multiple guests to contribute work-in-progress ideas, testimonies, visual, sonic and textual research. Continuing the thematic priority of Annotations, the publication will reflect on multiple ways in which the concept of the annotation can be mobilized as a pedagogical tool to connect the archives of four major pan-African Festivals.



This structure plays with “publishing acts: experimenting with publishing in terms of material, spatiality, and its publics,” an offering from Maryam Kazeem’s speculative collective writing activity FESTAC 2077 informed by Rebekka Kiesewetter’s “From Exclusion to Autonomy: Publishing as a Spatializing Act.” Expanding the notion of publishing beyond the material realm, the publication will be launched with a Study Day held at G.A.S. Foundation in November 2024, and draws on Christian Nyampeta’s concept of the scriptorium, a gathering place for writing and translation, as conceptualised in *École du soir* (2019-).

Residency

On the occasion of the Annotations residency, G.A.S. Foundation calls for applications from libraries, publishers, and institutions interested in forming the first cohort of the African Arts Libraries (AAL) Lab. African Art Libraries Lab will bring together a constellation of African arts libraries and publishers in Lagos, Dakar, Marrakesh, Cairo, Nairobi, Cape Town, Limbe, and beyond to engage critical questions on publishing practices, libraries, and archives in Africa. Museums and institutions in Europe and North America will be invited to participate in collective experimentation with AAL members to encourage new ways of networking, preserving, and activating African and Afro-diasporic library collections in multi-locational sites.

The social practice residency will support artistic interventions within the context of existing FESTAC '77 archives, using annotative and citational practices as a guiding framework. In consideration of historical FESTAC'77 sites such as the National Theatre, The Centre for Black and African Culture and Civilization (CBAAC), Festac Town, the residency will engage a wider public in the act of citation and annotation making of FESTAC'77 as both event and archive.

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Research Associates Programme: Timeline, Twentieth Century Pan African Festivals



Annotations shapes the thematic focus for the June-July 2024 research programme hosted at G.A.S. Foundation. Aiming to pilot a pedagogical economy around the twentieth century Pan-African festivals, a digital timeline and archival resource will be developed by the Annotations Research Associates with the guidance of guest tutors Archival Consciousness. The intention is not to create a survey of the festivals; indeed, much work has taken place to excavate the archives of Dakar '66, Algiers '69; Kinshasa '74 and Lagos '77. Instead, the timeline aims to collect, trace, and reassemble visual, material and sonic traces of the festivals held in African public libraries and collections. Moving beyond the question of what remains, the timeline will serve as an open-source digital document visualising the echoes and reverberations of festival programmes, performances and artworks and accounts by festival organizers, artists and witnesses reflected in African literature, print media and archives. Illustrating forms of solidarity and the illusions of utopianism that marked the era of African decolonization, the timeline aims to connect geographies siloed in the present and introduces new possibilities for African institutional collaboration.

The [Research Associates programme](#) will feature a tandem cohort of students and graduates from Spelman College (U.S.A.) and Lagos. With a collaborative research design, the digital timeline will be assembled by students, and supervised by guest tutors Archival Consciousness (Mariana Lanari and Remco van Bladel).

Re:assemblages Symposium 2025

In 2025, G.A.S. Foundation Lagos will host a two-day interdisciplinary conference featuring African Arts Libraries Lab members, global scholars, publishers, practitioners, cultural institutions, and universities to engage in dialogue, roundtables and presentations themed on new directions in restitution through the lens of often-neglected African and Afro-diasporic archival publications and library collections. The first call for papers and presentations will be shared with AAL Lab members and The AAL Lab Network. The harvest of year-long project Annotations will result in a 2025 symposium panel hosted its curators and members of the AAL Lab.



Curators

Naima Hassan is a researcher and curator based in Berlin. Since 2022, she has led the development of the Picton Archive at G.A.S. Foundation (Lagos) as Associate Archivist and Curator. Her practice moves between the visual, sonic and textual, to inform transnational and situated actions on African archive collections. With a background working with international foundations and cultural institutions, her current engagements include the HKW in Berlin, Nieuwe Instituut's Indian Ocean Working Group and TheMuseumsLab's 2024 Steering Committee. Hassan holds an education spanning the University of Oxford, BIEA in Nairobi and Goldsmiths, University of London. She is the co-founder of the platform SITAAD, and between 2023-24 is a Liberal Arts Engagement Hub Fellow at the University of Minnesota.



Maryam Kazeem is a writer, and the founder of iranti press, a publishing project based in Lagos, which convenes FESTAC 2077: A Speculative Writing Exercise. She has a BA in African Studies from Northwestern University and an MSc in Gender from the London School of Economics and Political Science. She completed her MFA in Creative Writing at the California Institute of the Arts as a Truman Capote Fellow where she also taught courses in Black cultural and performance studies as a Teaching Fellow for the School of Critical Studies. Her creative work makes connections between abstraction, archival research, and the materiality of language and has appeared in platforms including Criterion, Literary Hub, Catapult, Another Gaze, Apogee, and Joyland amongst others. Her writing has been nominated for The Best of the Net, and in 2021, she was the winner of the Goethe-Institut + Huza Press Writing Gender Residency in Kigali, Rwanda.