

"Afrocity-The Role of Woman in African Cities"

Rossila Goussanou in conversation with Sename Koffi Agbodjinou and Michelle Christensen

Rossila Goussanou's research into memorial sites dedicated to the transatlantic slave trade, particularly those in Benin, examines collective responses to historical trauma, processes of rewriting history, and the characteristics of collective and symbolic spaces. She also explores how history is represented and questions the limits of concepts such as "heritage" and "monumentalization" in African contexts, particularly in relation to vernacular practices of preserving and expressing the past.

This conversation with Sename Koffi Agbodjinou and Michelle Christensen took place in December 2021 as part of the seminar Exchanges and Entanglements at the Berlin University of the Arts (UdK).

Michelle Christensen - Hi Rosilla, "Afrocity, urbanités enchantées" took place at the Loire Gallery of the School of Architecture in Nante between July 15 and October 2, 2021. The objective of the exhibition was to highlight these women who participate in African feminism and intensify the actions initiated by many other women, artists, urbanists, activists, etc. This convergence of voices, conditions, and circles brings out a bewildering set of actresses, bending here and there to logics of non-conformity and disobedience, sometimes evoking the question of citizenship and responsibility. I appreciated very much the project also that you did with the Afrocity and the gender perspectives on Urbanism and space. And I wondered if perhaps you could tell us a bit about that? Maybe we can consider how we can also take the gender perspective into consideration within the project of Maison Gbégbé on which we will be working in the next month? Maybe there are some of your reflections or findings. We can learn from and take with us into our further discussion?

Rosilla Goussanou- In the exhibition of the Afrocity project, we tried to work with Women from different countries in Africa about what roles Women could have in planning the cities on the African continent, and how we can integrate women's work inside this exhibition. The challenge of Afrocity is to try to fight some stereotypical ideas that people can have about the role of African Women in the context of Urban development in Africa. To do that we traveled with a group of students from the architecture and scenography department of the Nante Architecture University. We want to show the different roles of women in African life, and also investigate and examine the place they occupy in different spaces, like the private- and the public space. The women we worked with are the representatives of new developments, and their activities are presented in the exhibition.

Sename Koffi Agnodjinou - I think the interesting point of this specific project is to show that from a historical perspective, women have done a lot for those cities and their role is not something that appears somewhere or is honored whenever you think about the Africans cities. I find the profile of Rossila for this what I would call plasticity in the way to see the memories and

heritage. And this effort to create scenography for invisibility, you know, this is not something you can quickly come up with, so yes, I'm very glad to see projects like this happening.