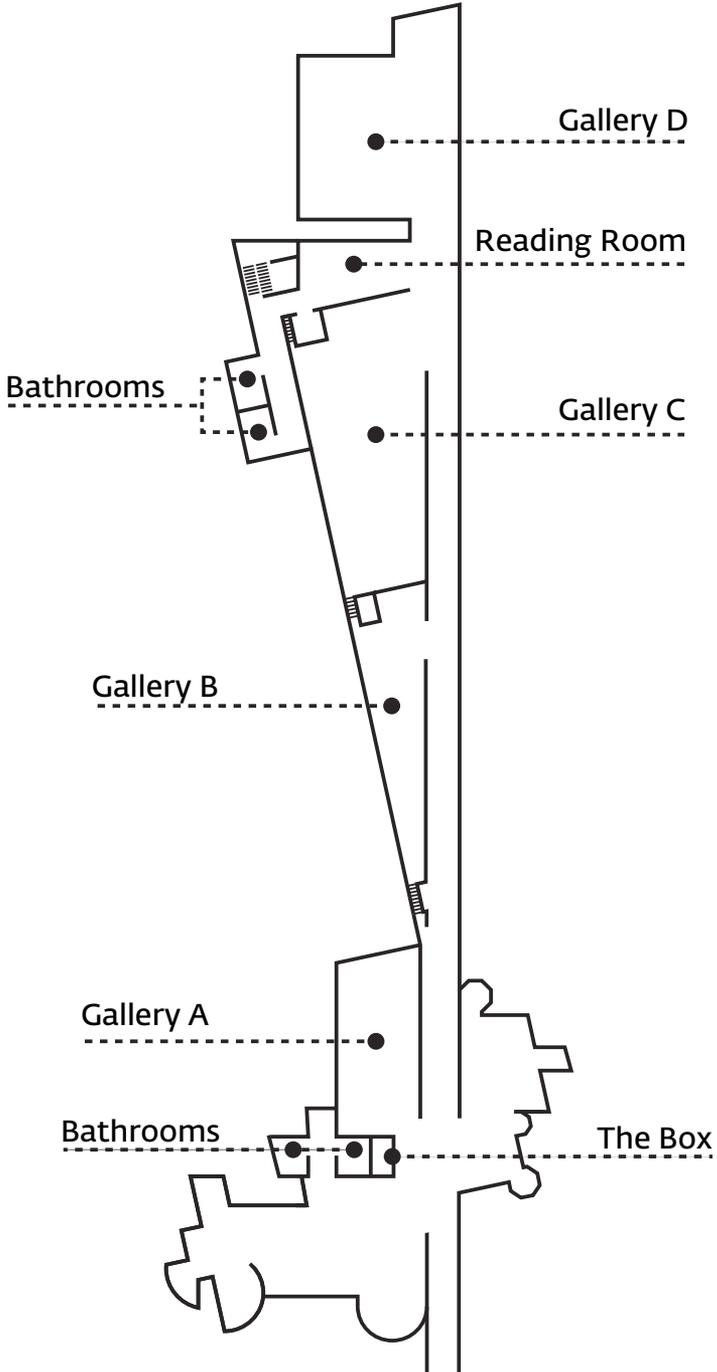


Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema

ON VIEW FEB 3–APR 28, 2024



Gallery Map



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What Is the Learning Guide?

The learning guide is an educational resource intended to share information and inspire engagement with the exhibitions at the Wexner Center for the Arts. It accompanies the exhibition *Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema*, which explores the legacy of Sarah Maldoror, a filmmaker who devoted her life to the struggle for Black liberation in Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

This guide focuses on key themes in each gallery. It considers them through analysis of featured films paired with contemporary artworks and prompts for thinking or discussion. The guide also includes a glossary of key terms—highlighted in **bold** throughout the text—and activities to extend the experience beyond the galleries. The learning guide can be paired with the exhibition’s newspaper publication for deeper engagement. In addition, a series of related programs accompany the exhibition, some of which can be found on the back cover. Check out the Wexner Center’s website, www.wexarts.org, to learn more.



The Box

The Box is the Wexner Center's dedicated exhibition space for experimental short films. These films are often creatively supported by the Film/Video Studio, an on-site postproduction film-editing space. The Box is located in an intimate gallery across from the Wexner Center Store in the lower lobby. Check out the featured film on view during the *Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema* exhibition below!

Mónica de Miranda, *Path to the Stars* (2022)

ON VIEW JAN 2–APR 30

Mónica de Miranda's video *Path to the Stars* revisits the legacy of anti-colonial resistance in Angola, inviting the audience on a journey through time. The odyssey encompasses Africa's revolutionary history, the complex and uncertain present, and a future in tune with nature. The title of the work comes from a 1953 poem by Agostinho Neto, a freedom fighter and the former president of Angola.

Viewers follow the path of a heroine as she navigates down Angola's Kwanza River over the course of a single day, from sunrise to sunset. She confronts various avatars of her past—and of Angola's struggle for independence from Portugal—along the way.

LEARN EVEN MORE ABOUT THE BOX FILM

Open the camera app on your phone and take a picture of the QR code to visit the *Path to the Stars* event page on wexarts.org.





Exhibition Summary

*Sarah Maldoror: **Tricontinental** Cinema* is the first museum exhibition dedicated to the pioneering French filmmaker Sarah Maldoror. Spanning the 1960s through 2009, Maldoror's films center around anti-colonial and anti-racist movements in Africa, France, and the Caribbean. Maldoror held close personal ties to the groups, places, and people featured in her works. She used the camera as a tool to support revolutionary movements that she deeply believed in.

This exhibition is a survey of Maldoror's life as a filmmaker and **activist**. Her story is told through excerpts of her films and archival materials, such as original screenplays, letters, news clippings, **political posters**, and photographs. The exhibition pairs these primary source materials with the work of contemporary visual artists. The inclusion of their art gives further context to the influential people and the social, political, and artistic movements that Maldoror engaged with during her life. Several of these artists, such as the Colombian painter Ana Mercedes Hoyos and the **Surrealist** painter and sculptor Wifredo Lam, were Maldoror's peers and are featured in her films. Others like Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, Soñ Gweha, and Maya Mihindou, created works directly inspired by Maldoror. Finally, the exhibition places sculptures by artists Kapwani Kiwanga and Chloé Quenum in dialogue with Maldoror's films, which embody her interest in changing the lens through which we view **colonialism**.

Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema was first shown at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2021 and 2022. Organized chronologically, the exhibition explores key episodes in Maldoror's life, pairing excerpts from her films with works by contemporary artists whom she has inspired. The story begins in the 1950s in Paris, where Maldoror first encountered the **Négritude** movement. The exhibition goes on to consider Maldoror's first films, the revolutionary African trilogy of the late 1960s and early 1970s, including her critically acclaimed feature-length film *Sambizanga* (1972). Following her return to Paris in the 1970s, we see Maldoror examine the complexities of life after African **decolonization**, while also training her focus on anti-racist and immigrants' rights movements in France. The exhibition concludes, not with an ending, but rather with a conversation inspired by Maldoror's dedication to negotiating beauty and violence in everyday life.



Who Was Sarah Maldoror?

Sarah, often described as the “mother of African **cinema**,” told the stories of everyday revolutionaries.

Sarah renamed herself Maldoror and began her artistic life in the 1950s in Paris.

Sarah cofounded Paris’s first Black theater troupe, **Les Griots**, which defied the roles available to Black actors in mainstream theater.

Sarah studied filmmaking in Moscow, Russia, in the early 1960s, where she became immersed in the techniques of **Soviet cinema**.

Sarah contributed to the Négritude movement through her films, particularly in her reframing of African stories told by African people.

Sarah married Mário de Andrade, an Angolan activist whose revolutionary ideals she shared.

Sarah was the mother of two daughters, Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados.

Sarah drew inspiration from art and frequently visited museums.

Sarah did not consider herself a writer first and foremost, but rather a visual storyteller.

Sarah made biographical documentary films of influential artists and writers.

Sarah saw cinema as a weapon in the struggle for African independence and Black liberation.

Sarah believed that films were political and could inspire ordinary people to take action.

We call Sarah a visionary for her focus on the power of Black women and everyday revolutionaries through technically beautiful films.

We celebrate Sarah's determination to bring African stories to audiences across the world.





Gallery A: The Language of Emancipation

INQUIRE...

Where does the language of emancipation come from?

Sarah Maldoror's story as we know it begins in Paris in the 1950s. She was deeply influenced by the **avant-garde** art movements happening at the time and developed a network of fellow artists, writers, and intellectuals. One movement in particular, Négritude, had a strong impact on Maldoror.

Most of the countries in Africa were colonized in the late 1800s by European powers, in particular France, Great Britain, Portugal, and Germany. For Maldoror and many other Black intellectuals in Paris at this time, reframing Black culture meant returning to the roots of the Black African experience, despite being surrounded by the European colonial context and even speaking and writing

in the colonial language. Their use of the colonizing language, French in this case, to reclaim African culture sought to reject the racism found in Europe. The works in this gallery tell the story of that period and provide insight into Maldoror's intellectual beginnings as an artist and African revolutionary.

For Maldoror and her peers, the answer to the question *"Where does the language of emancipation come from?"* was often found in poetry. They coined the term Négritude as a reclaiming of Blackness, a feeling of pride in being of African and African diasporic heritage. Maldoror made two biographical



films about poet Aimé Césaire, one of the key contributors to Négritude, poetically pairing his personal interviews about the African **diaspora** with the crashing waves of his birthplace, the Caribbean island of Martinique.



CONTEMPLATE...

How might the other artworks in this gallery explore identity through a poetic lens? What language might we use to describe them? What stories do they tell through their imagery?

For example, Melvin Edwards's sculpture *Homage to the Poet Léon-Gontran Damas* (1978–81) was created for the home of another influential Négritude poet. How do the metal shapes convey the passage of time or a transition between locations?



Gallery B: Everyday Revolutionaries

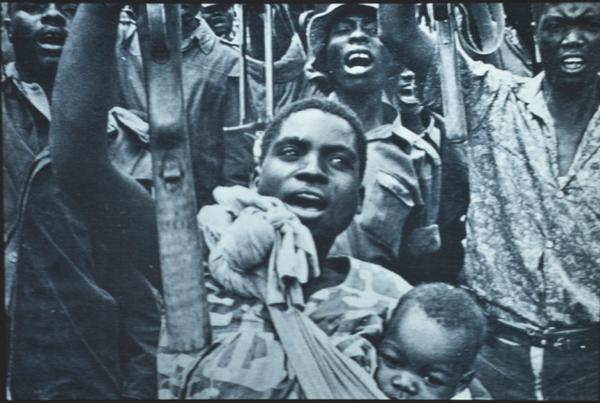
CONSIDER...

Who makes revolutions?

When we picture a revolutionary, the image is often of a heroic leader on the frontlines of a political or social movement. These figures, generally men, might be leading large groups of individuals, armed for battle with weapons and words in hand. Although Maldoror's circle included men who fit this description, such as Amílcar Cabral, her films often cast ordinary people as revolutionary protagonists. Her stories emphasize that the sweeping change of revolution affects entire communities, felt equally in public spaces as well as homes.

Sarah Maldoror was interested in telling the stories of those impacted by revolutions, especially women. The films of her African trilogy, *Monangambee* (1969), *Sambizanga* (1972), and the now lost *Des fusils pour Banta* (Guns for Banta, 1970), feature female protagonists whose lives were directly affected by the revolution. Maldoror's first film, the short *Monangambee*,

depicts an Angolan woman whose partner is tortured due to a misunderstanding when she visits him in a Portuguese controlled prison. In *Sambizanga*, we follow a young mother, Maria, on her search for her partner, Domingos, who has been arrested by Portuguese colonial police for his role in the Angolan War of Independence. Maria walks long distances with her baby on her back, determined to bring back her partner



despite misleading interactions with police. Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc's *Préface à des fusils pour Banta* (*Foreword to Guns for Banta*, 2011) reconstructs Maldoror's lost film, which was confiscated by the government of Algeria at the time of its production because it focused on a female resistance fighter.



IMAGINE A REVOLUTIONARY...

What do they look like? What are they doing? Why do you think this image came to mind for you?



Gallery C: Decolonizing Culture

ENVISION...

How might we embody liberation? What is necessary to sustain ourselves? How is revolutionary work lived?

By the late 1970s, Sarah Maldoror had returned from Africa to France. She had witnessed a political transformation in Africa, where many countries gained national independence from their colonizers through **liberation movements**. Yet the question of Black liberation remained. Now that freedom had been won, what sort of society would take colonialism's place? This question is explored in Maldoror's trilogy of films made in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde in the aftermath of their struggles for independence. These films highlight the new governments' effort to foster a **postcolonial culture** that combined African traditions with the rebellious spirit of revolution.

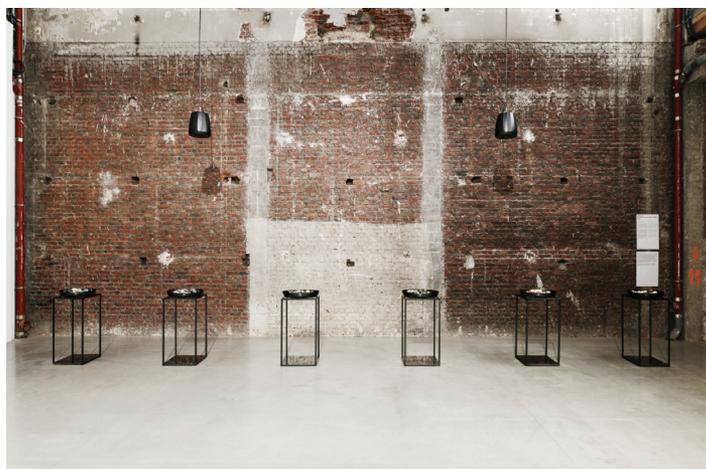
At the same time, Maldoror turned her attention back to Paris in her 1981 film *Un dessert pour Constance* (Dessert for Constance). The film tells the story of two African migrants in need of money to send a sick friend back to his home in Africa. So what do they do? They become experts in French cuisine and win a TV cooking-show contest. The film cleverly reappropriates the prized culinary traditions in France to demonstrate solidarity among members of the African diaspora. It flips the colonial narrative on its head.



Soñ Gweha's multimedia installation *Des safous pour les Bayam-Sellam* (2021) also examines the dynamics of postcolonial cultural exchange between France and Africa through food. The sculpture features bowls of ceramic replicas of safous, which are purple African plums that are sold in markets in Paris. For Gweha, this transaction echoes the experience of women street vendors in Cameroon, called Bayam-Sellam—a slang name for women who buy food in villages to resell in urban markets. In the 1970s, Gweha's grandmother engaged in Bayam-Sellam work to raise money for revolutionary fighters during the struggle for Cameroonian independence.

THINK ABOUT...

What might it mean to decolonize culture today?





Gallery D: Beauty amid Violence

REFLECT...

What is the work of artists in a revolution?

The works in this gallery bring together the important themes of Sarah Maldoror's life. She was an artist who created films to inspire social justice. Kapwani Kiwanga's monumental sculpture *Maya-Bantu* (2019) and the paintings of Ana Mercedes Hoyos continue the dialogue around these themes. Their striking appearance draws us in, where we become immersed in a discussion of the complexities of decolonization.

What do you see when you look closer?

The gold metallic paint used for Hoyos's *Oro Negro* (Black Gold) paintings draws us in with its seductive richness. The series title references a colloquial term Europeans used to call enslaved Africans, who were treated as commodities for sale. The routes of the transatlantic slave trade are mapped on Hoyos's painting *Comercio Triangular* (Triangular Trade, 2007), which is presented nearby. The objects rendered in gold, including eighteenth-century manacles, reference colonial violence and consider how one might process the legacy of slavery.

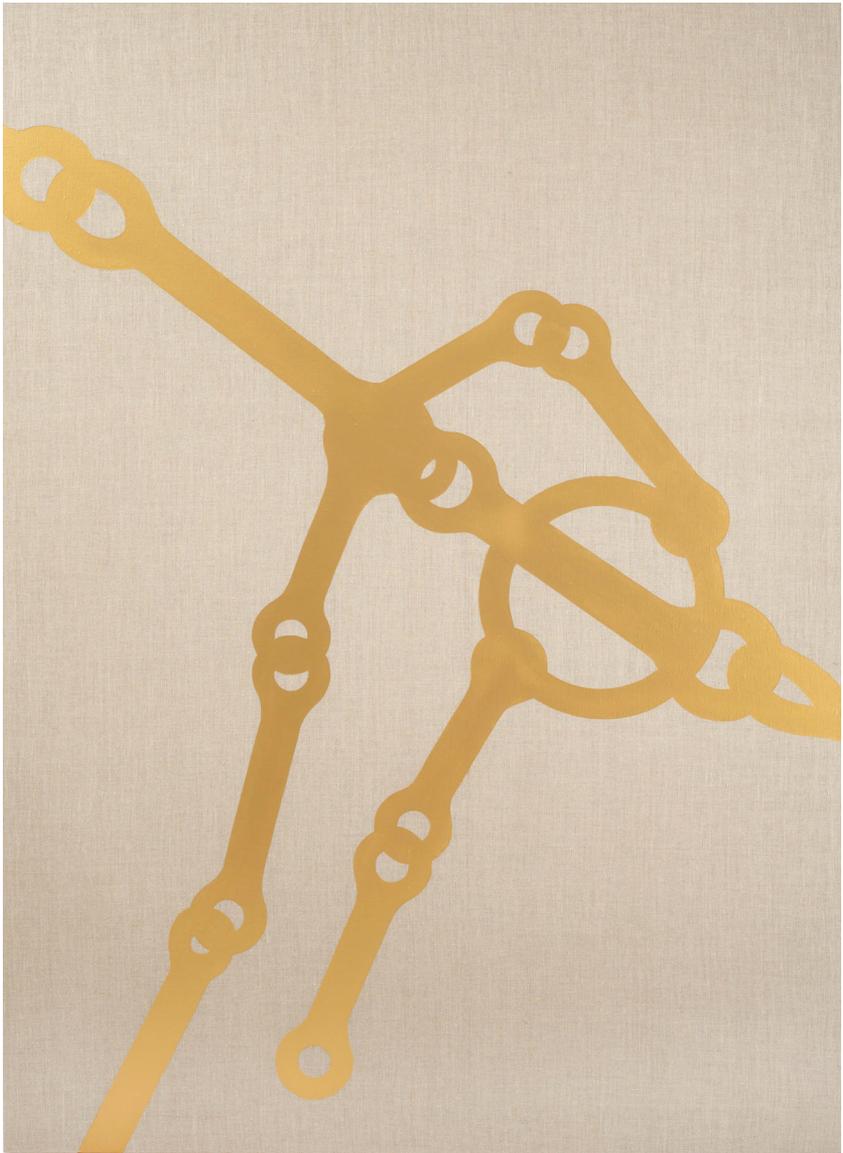


The **sisal fiber** of *Maya-Bantu* is alluring in its texture and volume. It begs us to come closer and think about where we have seen it before. Commonly used as a building material, sisal was a Mexican imported cash crop harvested by Bantu laborers on plantations in Tanzania.

Maldoror understood the persuasive power of the visual image. She was often criticized for making beautiful films. She pictured Africa in vibrant jewel tones and focused her lens on sweeping landscapes. Though she told tragic, painful stories, such as the torture of resistance fighters in *Monangambee* and *Sambizanga*, the imagery of her films was one of **collectivity** and support—of communities coming together to enact social change.

DISCUSS...

How might it be a revolutionary act to pursue beauty in spite of violence?



LEARN EVEN MORE ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Open the camera app on your phone and take a picture of the QR code to visit the exhibition event page on wexarts.org, where you'll find additional content including interviews and On Pause workshops.



Guided Activities

Take a Seat: Visit the Reading Room, located between Gallery C and D (see the map on the inside front cover for reference). Get comfortable and stay for a while. Browse the bookshelf, and reach for something that calls to you.

Journal: In a notebook or a notes app, try one of the following.

- **Write an *I am* Poem**

In the beginning of this learning guide, you were introduced to Sarah Maldoror through a poem. Write a poem where each line begins with *I am*... Fill in the rest of the line with details that you believe best define you and your story.

I am...

- **Think About Your Name**

Sarah Maldoror renamed herself. Her name was inspired by Isidore Ducasse's poetic novel, *Les Chants de Maldoror* (*The Songs of Maldoror*, 1869). Consider the significance of your own name. How has it shaped your identity? Would you change your name? Why or why not?

- **Archive Your Day-to-Day**

The primary focus of Sarah Maldoror's films was the lives of everyday revolutionaries. Think about ways you document your day-to-day life. What values do you hold closely? What is your daily routine? What items do you regularly keep with you?

Document your day-to-day by keeping paper items like receipts, wrappers, and photos, as well as natural items like leaves and flowers, etc. Use these materials to collage in your journal. Write three things you did that may connect to the items you collected.

Supplies: collage materials, scissors, glue sticks

- **Write a Cento Poem**

A cento poem is a poem made up of lines from other poems, titles, lyrics, or prose. Browse the bookshelf in the Reading Room, look for lines you want to work with from various books, and write them down. Arrange the lines you have collected into a cento poem. Refine the poem with your own words or adjustments.

Glossary

activist: A person who advocates for social or political change in laws, policies, or other issues.

avant-garde: French for “vanguard” or “advance guard,” avant-garde is a term that refers to experimental and innovative ways of thinking and creating. It can refer to a group of people imagining and working in groundbreaking ways—like the avant-garde theater group Les Griots—or describe the style of the cultural objects that they created, for example, an avant-garde art movement.

cinema: A time-based artform made of moving images captured on film or digital formats. Individual works are often called movies, films, or motion pictures. A cinema can also refer to the location, typically a movie theater, where films are shown, or the movies created by a nation, such as **Soviet cinema**.

collectivity: The actions of a group of people with various skill sets who come together to support and innovate in the name of the same mission or belief.

colonialism: The process of foreigners settling or taking control of a territory or people to use for their own purposes. Colonization often involves the use of force against the people native to the area to gain and keep control.

decolonization: The process of undoing colonial control of a region or people. This can involve liberating an occupied territory and peoples or the healing and recovery of colonized peoples to establish their own self-determination.

diaspora: A culturally similar group of people displaced or separated from their place of origin and now living in different communities.

Les Griots: The first Black theater troupe in France, founded in 1956 by Timité Bassori, Toto Bissainthe, Ababacar Samb Makharam, and Sarah Maldoror. The troupe was a collective of artists and writers who sought to promote African and Afro-Caribbean representation in European theater arts. The word griot refers to a West African storyteller, oral historian, musician, or poet.

liberation movement: A social movement where people cooperate to organize protests, rebellions, and other demonstrations with the goal of gaining independence, rights, and freedoms from another country.

Négritude: A form of thought and literary theory developed in France by the African and Afro-Caribbean diaspora living in Paris in the 1930s. Négritude emphasized and asserted the value of African cultures fractured by years of colonialism and enslavement by encouraging individuals to return to their roots.

political poster: Posters that are used to educate a targeted audience about a political campaign, idea, or social movement.

postcolonial culture: Refers to art, literature, and other forms of cultural expression by people from countries formerly colonized by Western powers. It often wrestles with the social, political, and economic consequences of decolonization, with a particular focus on issues of independence and social marginalization.

sisal fiber: A strong natural fiber that comes from the leaves of the *Agave sisalana* plant, native to Mexico. Sisal can be used for thread, rope, and paper.

Soviet cinema: Films made in Russia (the former Soviet Union) in the early- to mid-twentieth century. Soviet films conveyed a political agenda and were often developed as state propaganda. Filmmakers used the storytelling capability of images, including dramatic close-ups, dynamic framing, and the juxtaposition of unrelated images, called montage, to encourage viewers to form strong emotional connections to a story.

Surrealism and Surrealists: An artistic movement, beginning in 1920s Paris, France, that sought to tap into the unconscious minds of artists to reveal human nature through imaginative, dreamlike imagery. Artists who produced work in this style across various media, including painting, sculpture, film, and writing, called themselves Surrealists. Famous Surrealists include Salvador Dalí, André Breton, Joan Miró, Man Ray, and René Magritte, among many others.

Tricontinentalism: Refers to the political global resistance movement that emerged out of the first Tricontinental Conference (1966) held in Havana, Cuba. Tricontinentalism encouraged culturally distinct continents (Africa, Asia, Latin America) to join forces against the shared threat of colonialism, racism, and imperialism. This broader political movement reached its height between the 1960s and 70s, amid decolonial liberation in countries like Algeria, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Vietnam, and more.

CAPTIONS

COVER: Sarah Maldoror. Image courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados. Photo: Bildjanst H. Nicolaisen.

P. IV: Sarah Maldoror on the set of the film *Des fusils pour Banta* (Guns for Banta), Guinea-Bissau, 1970. Image courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados. Photo: Christine Lipinska.

P. 2: Mónica de Miranda, *Path to the Stars*, 2022. HD video; 34 mins. Courtesy of Mónica de Miranda.

P. 4: Installation view of *Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema* at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2022. Courtesy of Palais de Tokyo. Photo: Aurélien Mole.

P. 6: Sarah Maldoror reading the newspaper *l'Humanité*, Le Moulin d'Andé, France, 1975. Image courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados. Photo: Gérald Bloncourt.

P. 7: Portrait of Sarah Maldoror, Republic of Guinea, Bijagos archipelago, on the set of the film *Des fusils pour Banta*, 1970. Courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados. Photo: Suzanne Lipinska.

P. 8, P. 11: Melvin Edwards, *Homage to the Poet Léon-Gontran Damas*, 1978–1981. Steel in five parts, dimensions variable. Courtesy of Alexander Gray Associates, New York; Stephen Friedman Gallery, London. Copyright 2024 Melvin Edwards/Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

P. 10: Sarah Maldoror, *Aimé Césaire—un homme une terre* (Aimé Césaire—A Man a Land), 1977 (still). 16mm film, sound; 57 mins. Image courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados.

P. 12, P. 15: Sarah Maldoror, *Sambizanga*, 1972 (still). Restored color film; 102 mins. Image courtesy of Janus Films.

P. 14: Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, *Préface à des fusils pour Banta* (Foreword to Guns for Banta), 2011. Synchronized slide projection, sound; 28 mins. Courtesy of the artist. Collection of Fonds régional d'art contemporain Occitanie Montpellier. Photo: Kristel Raesaar.

P. 16, P. 19: Soñ Gweha, *Des safous pour les Bayam-Sellam* (Safous for the Bayam-Sellam), 2021. Ceramic, Dibond, aluminum, sound, steel bases, approx. 39³/₈ x 19¹/₁₆ x 19¹/₁₆ in. each. Installation view, *Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2022. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Aurélien Molle.

P. 18: Sarah Maldoror, *Un dessert pour Constance* (A dessert for Constance), 1981 (still). 16mm film, sound; 61 mins. Image courtesy of Annouchka de Andrade and Henda Ducados.

P. 20: Ana Mercedes Hoyos, *Sin Título*, 2010. Acrylic on linen, approx. 78³/₄ x 59 in. Courtesy of the estate of Ana Mercedes Hoyos and Galería Nueveochenta.

P. 22: Kapwani Kiwanga, *Maya-Bantu*, 2021. Sisal fiber, steel, 15 ft. 1¹/₈ in. x 23 ft. 5¹/₂ in. x 11 ft. 1⁷/₈ in. Courtesy of Kapwani Kiwanga and Goodman Gallery. Copyright 2024 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

P. 23: Ana Mercedes Hoyos, *Sin Título*, 2010. Acrylic on linen, approx. 78³/₄ x 59 in. Courtesy of the estate of Ana Mercedes Hoyos and Galería Nueveochenta.

BACK COVER, TOP: Audience members participate in a postprogram discussion in the Wexner Center's Film/Video Theater. Photo: Katie Gentry. BOTTOM: Art Ensemble of Chicago. Photo: Ben Houdijk.

Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental Cinema

Organized by Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and the Wexner Center for the Arts. The exhibition is curated by Palais de Tokyo Curator François Piron and CAPC Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux Chief Curator Cédric Fauq and originally presented at Palais de Tokyo from November 25, 2021, to March 13, 2022. The Wexner Center presentation of the exhibition is coordinated by Associate Curator of Exhibitions Daniel Marcus with Head of Exhibitions Kelly Kivland.

Author Note

Texts were collaboratively written by the Department of Learning & Public Practice in collaboration with the Exhibitions curatorial team. Contributors include Dionne Custer Edwards, Dareen Hussein, Kelly Kivland, Jennifer Lange, Daniel Marcus, Rebecca Richardson, and Sarah Robison.

Colophon

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Related Events

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SPECIAL EVENT Exhibition Opening Celebration

FRI, FEB 2 | 6–11 PM

Featuring a talk with curators François Piron and Cédric Fauq, Maldoror's daughter Annouchka de Andrade, and moderator Yasmina Price

TALKS AND MORE

Annouchka de Andrade and Beti Ellerson

Sarah Maldoror: A Life Explored

THU, MAR 28 | 5 PM

PERFORMING ARTS

MUSIC Art Ensemble of Chicago

SAT, FEB 3 | 8 PM

Nathalie Joachim

SAT, APR 13 | 8 PM

Counterpoints: School of Music Performances

SUN, APR 21 | 3 PM



FILM/VIDEO

FILM HISTORY 101 *Sambizanga*

SUN, FEB 4 | 1 PM

TUE, FEB 13 | 12:30 PM

TUE, APR 2 | 3 PM

MON, APR 15 | 12:30 PM

Black God, White Devil

MON, MAR 18 | 12:30 PM

FRI, MAR 29 | 4 PM

CONTEMPORARY SCREEN *Quartiers Lointains: Metamorphosis*

FRI, FEB 9 | 7 PM

Mambar Pierrette

FRI, FEB 23 | 7 PM

SAT, FEB 24 | 1 PM

CINÉSERIES *The Pan-African Festival of Algiers*

WED, FEB 21 | 7 PM

A Laying on of Hands

TUE, MAR 19 | 7 PM

CINEMA REVIVAL: A FESTIVAL OF RESTORATION *Ceddo*

WED, FEB 28 | 4 PM

Senegalese Newsreels 1966–76

THU, FEB 29 | 4:30 PM

Yam daabo

THU, FEB 29 | 7 PM

Xala

MON, MAR 4 | 4 PM

THREE FILMS BY MED HONDO *Soleil O (O, Sun)*

THU, MAR 7 | 7 PM

Sarraounia

THU, MAR 21 | 7 PM

West Indies

WED, MAR 27 | 7 PM