

Spring 2024 Exhibition Opening Conversation

Conversation on February 2, 2024, between Annouchka de Andrade, François Piron, and Cédric Fauq, who discuss the first museum exhibition dedicated to Sarah Maldoror (1929–2020), a trailblazing French filmmaker hailed as the “mother of African cinema.”

This transcription is provided as a record of the live conversation, for educational use. [Read more about the Wexner Center for the Arts' Mission, Vision, and Values.](#)

Transcript

Gaëtane Verna (00:00:45):

Bonsoir, hello, and welcome to the Wexner Center for the Arts. It is wonderful to see so many of our community here this evening. Tonight's conversation will be centered around our newest exhibition, *Sarah Maldoror Tricontinental Cinema*, which is organized by Palais de Tokyo Paris, and the Wexner Center for the Arts. This exhibition, like all that we do at the center, would not be possible without the dedicated efforts of our team at the Wex. I would like to thank them all from the bottom of my heart for all their work and passion for this show. As a director, when you meet guest curators and artists and musicians who take you aside and tell you that the staff is amazing, that the staff is caring, and that they felt welcome in your house, what else can I ask for? So, please give them a huge round of applause because it's amazing what they've all done.

As I hope many of you are usual attendants to our exhibitions, when you will discover the work of Sarah Maldoror, you will see also how the spaces of the galleries have been magically transformed. So this magic is hard work, but it is so beautiful. So, as you discover the work of Maldoror, see how the exhibition spaces have been transformed. It's simply incredible. So again, a huge thanks to the entire staff. As you will see throughout the season, all of our departments have collaborated to present an expanded version and vision, and they've worked together collaboratively to expand our understanding of the work of Sarah Maldoror. She's often referenced as a filmmaker, but she was that, and so much more. I sincerely hope that our collective work across disciplines will confirm that understanding.

(00:02:54):

This exhibition is the first large-scale presentation dedicated to Maldoror, a groundbreaking filmmaker who devoted her life and five-decade career to anti-racist, anti-colonial, and feminist activism. *Tricontinental Cinema* highlights Maldoror's involvement with political and artistic movements across Africa, the Caribbean, and Metropolitan France. As Ohio State's multidisciplinary contemporary art center, we are excited for you to experience the full scope of Maldoror's work through an immersive presentation that spans film as well as contemporary visual art, musical performances, and, of course, programs much like this conversation.

This evening's talk is organized by the center's Learning & Public Practice department. Learning & Public Practice programs are made possible by the American Electric Power Foundation, CoverMyMeds, Huntington, the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, and the Big Lots Foundation. We thank them for their immense support. I encourage you to visit the galleries after this and stay for our dance party later on to continue to discover the work of the incomparable Sarah Maldoror. This exhibition has benefited from the generous assistance and support of Annouchka de Andrade and the friends of Sarah Maldoror and Mário de Andrade. I also want to acknowledge the dedicated work of the curators François Piron and Cédric Fauq in collaboration with Kelly Kivland and Daniel Marcus of the Wex.

(00:04:43):

I would be remiss in not celebrating the work of the artists featured alongside Maldoror's work, and I thank them for their trust and deep engagement with this project: Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, André Acquart, Melvin Edwards, Soñ Gweha, Ana Mercedes Hoyos, Kapwani Kiwanga, Wifredo Lam, Chris Marker, Maya Mihindou, Chloé Quenum and Maud Salter. And I want to acknowledge the fact that Maya and Soñ are here with us. So, thank you both. Please raise your... Get up and so everybody can see you. They have traveled from far and wide to be with us, and we really deeply thank you for spending their time with us.

So this magnificent exhibition is made possible by Etant donnés Contemporary Art, a program of Villa Albertine, with additional support provided by Galería Nueveochenta. Our exhibition work would not be possible without the support of our seasoned sponsors and our trustees, Bill and Sheila Lambert, Carol and David Aronowitz, the Crane Family Foundation, Mike and Paige Crane. And we're grateful that all of our galleries are always free for everyone to enjoy and see the work. And we want to thank American Electric Power Foundation, Mary and Robert Kidder, Bill and Sheila Lambert, Adam Flatto, CoverMyMeds, and PNC Foundation. Now, after all of this, please allow me to welcome our Associate Curator of Exhibitions, Daniel Marcus, who will introduce tonight's speakers. Thank you very much.

Daniel Marcus (00:06:53):

Hi. Really nice to see such a great crowd for this. Gaëtane, thanks for the warm welcome and thanks for all your support of this amazing exhibition. It's my great pleasure to introduce tonight's speakers, all of whom have traveled long distances to be here with us this evening.

Sarah Maldoror is a remarkable project and a labor of love for those involved with its making. Not quite a retrospective, it honors a filmmaker who committed her life to the cause of Black liberation and who pursued that cause to its most urgent and intimate sites of struggle. Inspired by the poetic revolt of the Négritude poets, heralds of a global Black culture, Maldoror charted a singular path through the African independence movements of the 1960s and 1970s, offering her camera as a witness to the end of European colonialism, an achievement her films attribute not to the great names of history, but to the heroic sacrifice of ordinary unsung people. A restless traveler, she gathered around her an entire cosmos of Black thought—spanning Africa, Europe, and the Americas—Yet her films never reduced the diaspora to a common denominator. For

Maldoror, there was never one Négritude and never one horizon of liberation, but always multiple and many.

As the first museum exhibition devoted to Maldoror's work, *Tricontinental Cinema* celebrates her legacy in an appropriately unorthodox way. The show places her films in dialogue with works by an array of contemporary artists, including the two who stood up just a minute ago, and also with artists who were her contemporaries, allowing for a freedom of interaction and association inspired by Maldoror's anti-hierarchical ethos. Spanning continents and artistic disciplines, it is a boundary-defying exhibition in the most literal sense and a testament to the vision and resources of both the Palais de Tokyo and the Wexner Center, which is its only US venue. We're honored to have worked with tonight's guest speakers to bring Maldoror's work to Columbus. It has been a wonderful journey and now a delight to share with you all.

(00:09:11):

So, let me introduce our panelists, whose complete bios can be found on the event web page. Annouchka de Andrade is the daughter of Sarah Maldoror and a film professional in her own right. Until recently, she was artistic director of the International Film Festival of Amiens. Together with her sister, Henda Ducados, she has developed a project to preserve and share their parents' work. François Piron is a curator at Palais de Tokyo in Paris, where he cocurated *Sarah Maldoror Tricontinental Cinema* with Cédric Fauq, who was also a curator at the Palais at the time. And in case this is lost in my remarks, they're both here, they will both be seated there very shortly. In September 2021, Cédric took a new position as Chief Curator at CAPC Musée d'art Contemporain de Bordeaux, hence this conversation is also for François and Cédric, I hope a lovely, but certainly a reunion.

Moderating tonight's discussion is Yasmina Price, a New-York-based writer and film programmer currently completing her PhD at Yale University. Her work focuses on anti-colonial cinema from the Global South and the work of visual artists across the African continent and diaspora, with a particular interest in the experimental work of women filmmakers, and I think I can safely say a focus and quite an intimate relationship with Maldoror and her archives. Please join me in welcoming these speakers to the stage, and thank you.

Yasmina Price (00:11:05):

Thank you for that incredibly warm welcome. So Sarah Maldoror was all at once entirely singular, an exceptional artist, cinematic poet, and cultural militant, while also being deeply committed to the collective and working with others, motivated by an uncommon generosity, gathering around herself an immense tapestry of friends, collaborators, and comrades in a shared struggle against all forms of domination, constraints, and hierarchies. Maldoror was a visionary who saw beyond the borders and walls of a world shaped by empire and colonization. She walked towards a pluralistic horizon of liberation. Maldoror is, in one way, no longer with us, but as we just heard, thanks to the tireless dedication and care of her daughters Annouchka and Henda, she's in other ways more alive than ever, recognized for the magnitude of her contributions to emancipatory cultural production, to the inheritance of Black art, to revolutionary cinema, and to poetics as a way of being in the world. I am truly, deeply honored to invite Annouchka,

her daughter, to open our conversation with the poetry that was so essential to her mother and the music that animated so much of her work.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:12:29):

Thank you very much. I'm really very happy to be here with you, too. And well, the pleasure is for me just to be able to share a little bit of my mother's work and life here. And so, we have put some music at the beginning for you to start because we think that this is something very important in her life, in her behavior. And I would like her to be remembered as a poet more than a militant cinema filmmaker. And poetry was very important in her life, and it was not just a coincidence. She has chosen her name... She was born Sara Ducados, and she chose to be named Sara Maldoror, which is coming from a poem, "Les Champs de Maldoror." It says also how much surrealism was important in her life. And also, of course, there is a strong connection with slavery in the fact that she chose her own name, and also the fact that her life companion was Mário de Andrade, who was a poet. So there is no coincidence, poetry was something coming from the bottom of her heart, and it was all her life. That's why we welcomed you with music, and, in particular, with a song that was made music on the poem by my father.

Yasmina Price (00:14:28):

And in a larger way, there was poetry at the core, but there was also just her immense love of literature and in particular, the connection to the Présence Africaine bookstore.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:14:39):

Yes. When she arrived in Paris, she was on her phone coming from the south of France, and when she arrived in the mid '50s, she decided to create her identity with poets, with writers that she met in this particular bookshop and publisher house. And so, she had a very important relation with some of the poets, one more than the others, Mário De Andrade, of course. She had two children with him. But that was all her life—always going to Présence Africaine, and also other bookshops... François Maspero had one also, La Joie de Lire. That was really part of her identity.

Yasmina Price (00:15:36):

And this was also around the time that she transitioned from theater work into filmmaking, right?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:15:42):

Exactly. And when she started working in cinema, it was a decision she made for her sense of responsibility. She became a filmmaker because that was the best way, the most powerful way to talk about her history and to share it, first of all, in Africa, and from all the world. So this idea was absolutely a way of behavior; that's why she chose her field or the subject. And this idea of urgency also was something very important in all her work and fighting against injustice.

Yasmina Price (00:16:34):

And in the first film that she worked on was one that's very familiar to anyone who knows something about revolutionary, militant filmmaking, and that was—

Annouchka de Andrade (00:16:46):

The Battle of Algiers by Gilles Pontecorvo.

Yasmina Price (00:16:50):

Which is also, of course, a node of Pan-Africanism, which, I believe, was also crucial to her connection with Mário.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:16:58):

Exactly. My father was a leader, a political leader. He was one of the founder and the first president of the MPLA, the Movement for the Liberation of Angola. So he was really involved, far more than involved, in politics. And when they decided to live together, Sarah also embraces her fight, and that's why she made so many movies about Angolan struggle in Guinea-Bissau. And my father was also very close to Amílcar Cabral, François Nour, Richard White. So, he was always writing books. And all his fights also, of course, impacted the choices of Sarah. And it was also important to take in mind that she tried to keep going with her profession, making movies, in a context very difficult because we were in the 60s and 70s, and so, as for a Black woman, that was not such easy. She was supporting also my father who was never at home, always fighting. And he was researched and tracked by police, but not only the political Portuguese police, but, of course, Interpol with all the police. So he was changing identity, changing name each time. Sometimes he disappeared for months. So we never know.

And Sarah had to deal with that and raise her children. So she was really a powerful woman. And I think this is also important to have it in mind, that you have her movies, you have also all her connection, all the persons... She was moving around and she was really friends with Angela Davis, and she wanted to make a movie on her, she wanted to work with her also on a movie on Mumia Abu-Jamal, for example.

Yasmina Price (00:19:17):

And can you tell us a little bit about what she'd planned for that film?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:19:20):

Well, I was really surprised when I was preparing this talk last week. I went back on the archive, and so, I was reading this project and I was surprised to discover that it was supposed to be a 90-minute film. So this is really something important, so she has been working a lot. And when I read the papers, I discovered the page about music because each time when she was preparing a film, she had an idea of the light environment of the movie... which kind of sensitivity she wanted to do with the images, but also with the music. And for example, for this project, she wanted to put music by Paul Robson, Cassandra Wilson, Hugh Masekela. But also, she prepared the soundtrack, she wanted

to have birds, wind, rain, races, all these kind of songs. So she was really preparing, and you can imagine, now you have an idea how beautiful the film could have been with just reading, having an idea of the music she wanted and the songs around them.

Yasmina Price (00:20:49):

And with that, we really get a sense of just the amount of care and rigor and research and preparation and poetic imagination that went into planning her films. And I know that my impression of that gorgeous photograph of her outside of the exhibit, it really gives a sense of this iconic, monumental figure. But she was also someone who was your mother, who was a totality of a person, and it would be wonderful if you could give us a little bit of insights into her—

Annouchka de Andrade (00:21:18):

Yeah, I will say that she was unpredictable, very enthusiastic, and never afraid of anything. It has been a very hard life. She has made 45 movies until the end, but she has written and prepared, like we talk about the project of Mumia Abu-Jamal, 48 projects that she was not able to go through. So, it's a whole life of work, and she never gave up. She said, "Okay, you go down, but the most important thing is to go forward and keep going with your dreams, and nothing, no one can stop you." So this is a message for the students who are here, please keep going forward.

Yasmina Price (00:22:25):

Honestly, at this point, I think that Sarah Maldoror herself planned this exhibit. But I will ask Cédric and François, if you could tell us a little bit about what your point of introduction to Sarah Maldoror was, and what catalyzed the Palais de Tokyo genesis of this exhibition.

François Piron (00:22:44):

I start? Maybe you don't mind if I give you a little bit of behind the scene in this. It is 2020 and Cédric and I are just starting to work for this same institution in Paris—this art center, the Palais de Tokyo—And we are working from our living rooms. We are confined, like Cédric is in the UK, I'm in Paris, and we do webinar meetings to figure out what to do in this situation. And I can't remember now who said what, who mentioned first the passing of Sarah Maldoror the same month, April 2020, and we immediately thought, this is really someone we should pay a tribute to, we should do an event. And we were not close to Sarah Maldoror, we didn't know her personally, we had no connections. We just heard that there would be an event online with Annouchka and Henda, organized by Daniella Shreir, and you were there as well, Yasmina.

And so, we waited for that even to see your face. And I mean, you really sounded so sympathetic. We decided like, "Okay, we get in touch with Annouchka," and that's how it started. The fact to how it became an exhibition... We had a lack of knowledge for Sarah Maldoror. I mean, I basically saw that she had made probably three or four films that who I knew the names, but I didn't see them all. And when we discovered that we were not speaking about four or five films, but 45, and when we also discovered that

Annouchka had an entire archive at home—partly classified, partly still in boxes—suddenly we really figured out there is something urgent probably to do. And an exhibition—it's because we are curators and we are working in an art center—that's the form we are working with.

And I think that, because she never received the recognition from the cinema world in Paris, never had a retrospective organized in Paris, we thought, yeah, maybe we drag her into another world that can be more welcoming, the world of contemporary art, and we can unfold the narrative, like not only her films, but also her life through the documents, the films, and we can try to bring her to the present.

Yasmina Price (00:26:14):

And there is almost a sort of poetic irony there, because many of Maldoror's films were works of memory. It was to make sure that Black history was being stored, but not only Black history—that people like Louise Michel, the anarchists, were being recognized—a variety of artists. And I wonder for you, Annouchka, how it was to have both of them come to you with this intention to memorialize your mother. How did that collaboration work? Were you ready? Were the boxes really partially organized?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:26:42):

No, the boxes were not organized. And so, when they first contact me, I was really surprised. And I said, "Wow, who are they? Why this?" Because the thing is that for her last 15 years when she was alive, nobody cared about her. I mean, there was no show, no screening, nothing. So they appeared and I said, "We have to meet." And Sarah, she was very connected to museums, that was... Her first place was bookshops, the second place was museums. We had to go during our childhood to a museum every Sunday, we had no choice. And so, to have a proposal from two curators, I mean, I thought it was a very echo. And so, I had to say yes, and I knew the Palais de Tokyo and said, "Okay, let's try to do it." And this was a very, on my part, enjoyable journey. And I was trying to give them more archive because I was opening boxes, "But there is this, this and that." And at one point, François said, "Okay, stop. We have enough. Let's try to do with what we have," but I wanted more. And he will never handle it, so... But the thing, is I have to thank them because it was a great proposal, we did a great job, I think with what we had and more of that, that now we are traveling. This is wonderful.

François Piron (00:28:35):

If I may add a short footnote to what you just said about the lack of recognition, you're completely right, she was completely ignored except from a couple of artists. And we first heard about Sarah Maldoror through artists such as Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, who is an artist who worked with Sarah around 2008 and did work that is in the exhibition, worked with her archive, and circulated her name in the field of contemporary art, maybe more than in the cinema, actually.

Yasmina Price (00:29:17):

That's really fascinating. But I would be curious, with this abundance of materials that you received, what curatorial method did you employ? How did you begin to sort through them?

Cédric Fauq (00:29:33):

Yeah, it was a lot. I mean, it was not partly classified. It was a mess.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:29:37):

It's not anymore.

Cédric Fauq (00:29:42):

It's no longer a mess. But yeah, it was like we didn't expect that array of material. And it was like, at the same time, the library was the collection of vinyls. It was paperworks which contained a lot of different things, not only correspondences, but also lots of projects that had not been produced, lots of vinyls as well, many different things, tapes, too. And maybe at some point, we were a bit overwhelmed, initially. And then we sat down and started to think about how could we approach all of this? So the first question was, "Okay, how do we make an exhibition about a filmmaker without... I mean, how?" That's the first question, because we didn't want to show all of the movies at once. That was the first challenge. So that's how we first started to think, "Okay, maybe we can show excerpts and how do we do that? How do we choose them?"

And we had this idea, working with this idea of a landscape of films, that was something that appeared at some point, given the space that we had at Palais de Tokyo, which is very different from the space of the Wexner. And so, to create this landscape of films, we used wooden panels. And then, suddenly we had this idea of, "Okay, so we would have the films projected on one side, and then on the other side we would go talk about backgrounds of the movies with archival material or artworks, poetry, et cetera, et cetera." And so, that's how the exhibition was functioning at Palais de Tokyo, and that's how we managed to limit ourselves in terms of the content that we would give to the audience. And sometimes it was very much the archive of Sarah Maldoror, but sometimes we also included archives from other places, of other people. For instance, one of the movies focused on Aimé Césaire. We decided to show a quote of Suzanne Césaire, for instance. So trying also to bring the work somewhere else. And then there were also the invitations to the other artists that gave another layer to the exhibition.

Yasmina Price (00:32:23):

What you were describing in terms of having all of these extra filmic materials, that also really sounds, Annouchka, like what you've shared about Maldoror's process in terms of putting her films together. Could you tell us a little bit about that, about all the things that she would gather before making something?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:32:40):

She was working a lot, and she made research of the political context, or about the artist if it's a movie on the artist, and she was working at the same time of what she wanted to

do, or maybe it was adaptation from a novel, but also the music was very important, as I said already, and also art. And that was something very interesting to see how paintings, sculpture was involved in her creative processes. And for example, while she was preparing a movie and she had the crew, she'd say to the cinematographer, "Okay, the ambience of my movie is this kind... I want to..." For example, if she didn't want to have a lot of light, so he had to go with her and see all Rembrandt. If she wanted to make a movie in the Caribbean, there is a lot of light and, of course, she hated sunset because this is very, she said, a big cliché. So she said, "So no, no, no, no, if you are talking about island and to have a sunset, no, no," so no cliché. But the light is very particular. So she said, "We have to go to London and look at all Turner," for example.

So that was her way of preparing things, and very important. And I would like to share with you something about an unedited project, which called *Slave Route*, who was supposed to be a series of six movies about slavery in different countries. It was supposed to be one episode in Brazil, another one in Italy, another one in Cuba and Martinique. And just to resume what I have said, but with her words, I will give you an idea of the introduction of this movie, who was supposed to taking part in different islands and different parts of the world. So, the history of slavery. So, I will read it.

"The film opens over the mountain heights with a walking man... Moves to road." Read it to me, you will read it much better. And when she was talking about the walking man, she was referring to Giacometti's *Walking Man*. So, just have him in your mind.

Yasmina Price (00:35:58):

"The film opens over mountain heights where a man is walking, moving towards African sculptures from the islands in Brazil. He scans the horizon. Cross glances from sculptures and movement to boats where the great conquerors look through long-sighted eyes at these vast territories to be conquered without paying any attention to the men on the move. The connection between the islands, the sea, from Jamaica to Haiti, a child responds with an instrument. As it sounds, men and women stop and turn towards the ocean. The waves rise, roll, and break against King Christophe's Citadelle." I mean, it reads more like poetry than a script.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:36:38):

But this is a script. But she was a poet, I told you. But just mixing Giacometti, mixing African sculpture. And this person, it was supposed to be painting. I mean, she already had the film, and I know that now you have an idea of the film... you read it and you see what she wanted to be, how she wanted to explain. And I think this idea of having this sculpture is so beautiful, so maybe we should make this film.

Yasmina Price (00:37:16):

And that so beautifully illustrates what you were pointing to in terms of her Pan-Africanism, and also her ability to make these linkages of political struggle, of inheritance, of domination, but making them via aesthetics, via sculpture, via music, via these different art forms. And as you briefly alluded to earlier, Cédric and François, you included other contemporary artists, or rather contemporary artists in the show as well,

as we know two of them are here with us. So it'd be really interesting to hear a little bit about how you chose the artist who would be, I suppose, a sort of bridge between Maldoror as a past, even though she's timeless, and the present.

François Piron (00:38:01):

Sure. I mean, there are, I would say, two categories: There are at first the contemporaries of Sarah, which are in the show, people who lived during the same period, people who sometimes she knew and she filmed. I mean, she dedicated a great deal of films on her contemporaries, the writers, the artists, the poets of Négritude. This is Aimé, she made five films with him, Édouard Glissant, and Léon-Gontran Damas. They are all in the exhibition, but also Wifredo Lam, for instance, the Cuban painter. So that was the reason to also complete the history because there are always missing parts. For instance, we know that when she was staging theater in the 50s, the first play by her company, Les Griots, was a play by Jean-Paul Sartre. And they asked Wifredo Lam to design the poster, but we never found it.

So this is also the kind of archive, the kind of missing archive that we are trying to evoke and to complete with the presence of these artworks. There are also some resonance, like extensions of her own story. The presence of Melvin Edwards, for instance, in the show is because of his relationship, his friendship with Damas, who is one of the few French-speaking poets who came to the US in the 1960s and bridged the history between the French Négritude and the 1960s Black arts movement and was very close with Jayne Cortez, the companion of Melvin, and Melvin dedicated a piece to Damas. So this is a way to circulate and to help Sarah also navigate into a larger history.

Cédric Fauq (00:40:34):

And then, maybe the other category of artists are artists who didn't know Sarah, who are more contemporary artists, I would say. Obviously François mentioned Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc who... He's the one who brought Sarah Maldoror into the field of contemporary art, and the project that he did was very much to focus on one of the movies that is currently lost. They still hope to find it at some point, but he focused on that, her first feature film. And with interviews, with the photographs by Suzanne Lipinska, and the script, he basically made that work that is in the exhibition that is trying to fill in the gaps of history, you could say.

And I think that's, then, what we tried to create—some kind of expanded family, expanded constellation with the exhibition and not necessarily with artists who knew Sarah Maldoror. And I think that was one of the very engaging and powerful thing that happened... We were in the process of researching the archive, of watching the movies more and more, and at the same time, we were discussing with artists and trying to understand who could be interested in her. Maya Mihindou, for instance, was an interesting surprise because we started to look into her work and we realized that she had made a cover for a magazine called *The Funambulist*. And in the cover there was an array of portraits, and the portrait of Sarah Maldoror was one of those portraits. And then we started the conversation and we were basically feeding Maya with the archives that we were researching. And that gave the result. The outcome was a text that is in the

journal first, a series of drawings, and then the mural at Palais de Tokyo, and now the mural... another mural here at the Wexner.

And then Soñ, as well, used the archive of Sarah in a very interesting way. She specifically focused on the vinyls, and so the sound that you have above the sculptural parts of the installation is a mix of different sounds, some of which are actual tunes that Soñ found in the collection of vinyls of Sarah, for instance. And so, it was all of these kind of connections and parallels and affinities that were created with the show. And Kapwani Kiwanga is an interesting also example because, although you might not see the connection first, Kapwani was trained as a filmmaker first, and there is always work in the way she plays and manipulates materials and interest for the history of those materials. And that's also why we decided to work with her. So yeah, it's those different ways of approaching or extending the methodologies that Sarah was using in her work, basically.

Yasmina Price (00:44:02):

And you can really tell the way that your curation reflected just the incredible expansiveness of her work because she's really incredibly difficult to categorize. You could just as easily put her in a group with someone like Suzanne Césaire and Beatriz Nascimento as Black feminist, you could put her in a group with Chris Marker as artists and filmmakers in the '60s and '70s who were responding to those upheavals. She just lives on and on and on. And I wonder, now that we have this exhibition beyond these walls, especially for you, Annouchka, is there something in particular that you would really point people to as, I don't know, something you are particularly attached to, or feels particularly unmissable in the show?

Annouchka de Andrade (00:44:19):

I think this exhibition is an opportunity to discover the poetic way she was able to connect between art and politics. And I think this is something that you can feel when you will go through the exhibition and the dialogue, which was always important that you have in her film, but also between art, painting, sculpture, poetry, her way of putting the person she made in dialogue. So I think that's something I would like you to live with, this idea that... Don't stay in one line, thank you.

Yasmina Price (00:45:52):

And that was the movement of her life, she never stayed in place. She both never stopped, but she also never stayed in one place, she was constantly moving. And in some ways it also feels like the perfect tribute to her that it would be a form of honoring and remembering her that is mobile, but it's also not necessarily usual for shows to travel like this. And I wonder how the transition from the Palais de Tokyo to the Wexner Center worked, I mean, other than obviously she was the one directing it.

François Piron (00:46:24):

It's true, unexpectedly the show traveled quite a lot over the past two years. Before here, it went to Lisbon, and we also settled a version in Luanda in Angola last year. It is true

that shows don't travel so much, they're expensive, it's an adventure. And we were not completely prepared because, as you understood, this show specifically was a process of learning. We really were unboxing the material and learning about Sarah and sharing this with the artists and really elaborating the show along the way. So that is not the way to prepare a show to travel, actually.

But unexpectedly, it has raised a lot of interest. And in the case of the Wexner, I found it like a beautiful story also of friendship. And in the first place, it is the former curator at large, Bill Horrigan, here who picked up the exhibition because it had this connection with Chris Marker. Chris Marker has worked here at the Wexner quite extensively in the 1990s, produced several installations and exhibitions here of his work, some of them are still stored in the basement. And that was one of the first reasons, then many other reasons added. And we felt extremely welcome here and very much at ease to realize this very expanded version, actually, of the show, this is the larger version to date of the exhibition. And yeah, it's a pride.

Yasmina Price (00:48:30):

You used a word that, I think, is really crucial to Maldoror's life and work, which is learning and education. And there's obviously a clip of the Léon G. Damas film that has this wonderful scene with these high-school girls. I wonder if you could speak a little bit about that scene and just the place of education in her poetics of life and her cinema.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:48:50):

Well, that was very important. And she cared about children and young people, and that was something that was not a question. And you may see in different films how much children are here and involved. Even in the fight in *Sambizanga*, they are here and the mother is going with... her child with her. And that was also a way how she behaved. We, as daughters, we had to go with her. And so, she was taking us to different places, to film festivals, or to political meetings. So you can imagine when we were teenagers, we said, "Okay," at one point, "We are not anymore traveling with you," because we wanted to be like the others. And so, we were just, "That's enough." Then we went back later as adults, but that education was something very crucial. And during her last talk she had, before she passed... it was in the museum at the Reina Sofía in Madrid, and she talked only about children, and she said to the public, "You should bring your children to cinema before they go to school."

Cédric Fauq (00:50:31):

Maybe just because that excerpt you're mentioning is, I mean, one we selected for a reason obviously, but we see and we actually hear Sarah's voice while she's holding the camera ask... Wait, what's the word? Teenagers in the streets of Martinique, is it? Cayenne in Guiana. Who do they know as poets? What poets do they know? And they give a few answers, like Victor Hugo.

Yasmina Price (00:51:12):

Only French poets.

Cédric Fauq (00:51:13):

Yeah, exactly, no one from the Caribbeans. And yeah, I guess that gives a foundation as to why the work of Sarah Maldoror is important as well.

Yasmina Price (00:51:25):

Because it was this constant work of remembrance, because when you look at her filmography, it could almost be called a bibliography instead, because there's the films that you, Annouchka, have called the portrait films, and I wonder if you could share a little bit about those ones.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:51:43):

The portrait was a person important, but also important in different way, not because they were well-known. And I think the most important thing is her sense of responsibility. And for example, talking about the movement of Négritude, everybody knew and knows about Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor, but Damas, who was part of this trio, because they were three to create this movement was and is not well-known, not enough. So Sarah said, "Okay, I will do a movie on him." And she loved doing that movie. And so, she did it as she made a portrait of Césaire. The first one she made was in 1977 for French public television. At that time, nobody cared about Césaire, and he was not on TV, and it was difficult for her to do it. But this idea is coming from—when I talk about identity, when she was in *Présence Africaine* when she's, I think, attending the first Congress of writers and artists in 1956—she made a statement to herself that now all her life will be also to tell about Black history, to have these authors, artists be recognized, and to share this history.

I mean, this sense of urgency and responsibility was part of her choices. And anyway, she liked to make portraits. She told me, "I, like you know, you have small time, you have to tell something." And you will see in the movie, she's not going to tell you, "Yes, this author was born in this city at this time," and things like that. Not at all. She was trying to tell something fundamental about the portraiture, and she did it using her way of expressing himself. So that's why in Damas, you have a lot of jazz music. You have the rivers, the Maroni and La Seine, which was a way of talking... I mean the river for me, it's also poetry. I mean, she found a way of talking about poetry to give you the desire, she was able to create a desire for you to read more about Damas or when it was a portrait about a painter, then you say, "Okay, I want to see the painting in real." And that's what she did.

And we did not mention earlier also one of the artists who is here, Ana Mercedes Hoyos, a Colombian painter, and she did it also because she liked her painting, but she liked also why Ana Mercedes was making this kind of painting also, which resonate in Sarah's also preoccupation, who's talking about Black history, talking about slavery. And she did not care about just doing only things about Blackness. She made this film on this Colombian artist, she made one on a Mexican artist, Vlady. She made a movie about a Russian writer, Victor Serge. I mean, she was really open-minded, and everything was interesting her.

Yasmina Price (00:56:00):

Thank you. I think it would also be interesting to hear from the curators about the title of the show, why *Sarah Maldoror: Tricontinental*?

Cédric Fauq (00:56:12):

I think that the geographies of Sarah Maldoror are something that appeared to us as very crucial in the way she worked. And I mean, it's making that connection with the Tricontinental movement as well. So, it's also centering at the same time the idea of a struggle for liberation against oppression as well. So, I guess it's in a way infusing this idea of multiple geographies and, at the same time, anchoring it into a political agenda, for sure.

Yasmina Price (00:56:54):

This, again, the through line through all of this is just her astounding generosity and her openness and her consistent devotion to always sharing as much as possible. And in that spirit, we'll be opening up the conversation for questions both from the audience and also questions which can be texted to the hotline. And if you could just kindly wait for the mic before asking your question.

Audience 1 (00:57:33):

I've noticed that the translation has not included the word *Négritude* when it's being spoken, and I'm wondering if it's possible for you all to explain or elaborate so that everyone can really get the gist of the texture that you're offering here.

François Piron (00:57:58):

Start with a definition of *Négritude*.

Annouchka de Andrade (00:58:08):

Okay. It was a movement that was at first created by the two sisters, *sœurs Nardal*, in the 30s years, 1930s. And then Aimé Césaire, Senghor, and Damas, the three poets, they were poets and also political activists, the three of them. Césaire and Damas were French deputy and Senghor became after the first President of Senegal. And so, we have this political dimension in that movement, but it was also to replace the Black history, the fact that... It was also a joke talking about... as you are Black talking about your Blackness, but I think it was more than, at the same time a political movement, political statement, and also a poetic way of saying that we are here and we are sharing our humanity also.

Yasmina Price (00:59:31):

And where there was also such a profound consonance between Maldoror's work and *Négritude* was also just the reevaluation of Black cultures, which from the Eurocentric

colonialist perspective had been cast as primitive, as backwards or appropriated, stolen... Picasso. But with *Négritude*, it was about really locating a kind of conjunction of Black being just as a way of everyday life and cultures, long stores of knowledge which had not been acknowledged or remembered. And she was sort of a cinematic, poetic incarnation of that as well.

Audience 2 (01:00:16):

Yeah. I have a question about could we also say that she's really into socialism... has been a link between all the movies, as you said, she realized portraits of Victor Serge, of Vlady, and this part was also something very important, right? Because she is a poet, but there were also this moment of history where internationalism were really something important. And yeah, I would like to know how she was talking about this, or what part was it for Sarah?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:01:05):

What is your question exactly? Socialism. But socialism was like a dream that we could all live better together, but it's more like the Marxist idea of building a better world and more inclusive. But we did not mention that she was trained in cinema in Moscow, and she went in the Soviet Union, and as a Black woman, she arrived in early '60s in Moscow and when she was talking about this experience, and she said, "I discovered real racism." So then, there was a disconnection between a country who was a very strong and important socialism country, but the reality was absolutely not socialist at all. But she kept with this idea of Marxist because she was very optimistic and maybe she was much more socialist or Marxist in a way than the member of the Communist Party, because she was applying her way of living, the way of sharing everything she had... did not care if she was not gathering anything. And so, her life was a life of a real Marxist person.

Jess Xiao Long (01:02:48):

Hi. We actually got a Wex Hotline question. So someone asked, how were Sarah's movies received in Africa or in the Caribbean? Are those movies venerated or buried? And will the show travel there?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:03:05):

We would like, we have this dream together to go to West Indies, but for now, nobody answered so maybe we will be able to do that. As François mentioned, we have tried to do something in Angola, and it was very important for my sister and I to be there and to present Sarah's work and also our father, Mário de Andrade. But her movie, one of her movies, *Sambizanga*, the most well-known movie, has been showed in Angola, and the restored copy has been shown there. And there has been a film festival in Cape Verde two or three months ago, and my sister went there and she presented *Sambizanga* also in Cape Verde. So, there is an interest, for sure, in Africa, and we would like to do more. And I would like to go to the next Biennale in Dakar. So, there are desire to do more and to go there so we are just waiting for more opportunities, and things takes time. But she

has presented her movies in Africa. There is two major film festivals, one in Carthage in Tunisia, the other one in Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. She has been invited there, but she was not able to be in competition in Ouagadougou, they said, "But you are not African," so this is another problem.

Audience 3 (01:05:04):

Thank you for opening this part of history, very interesting. I was wondering, did Sarah have any connection or interface with the North American Black culture or Black history, and was she able to influence the American Blacks here in this country?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:05:24):

I don't know if she had influence, but I heard, and I have met some directors who said that they were influenced by Sarah, but there is something very important to know is that she was very welcomed in the United States. She came very often to this country, and she loved it. She decided to come after Sambizanga... don't know in which year she arrived here for the first time, she just decided to come just after Vietnam War... so she didn't want to come during the war, she waited at the end of this important war. And then, she came very often. She was invited in different film festivals, Black Film Festival, or Black Woman Film Festival. And she loved it. And the city she was feeling really at home was New York.

And that's why, again, we are so proud to be here because she would have loved it. I mean, she had a real strong relation with United States, and she wanted to make a movie here, which was a very huge project, and she was in contact with Jonathan Demme and so he helped her, but he could not find the funding, but it was supposed to be a coproduction.

François Piron (01:07:10):

I just want to add that we produced a publication, it's a free publication that you can find at the entrance of the exhibition and inside this publication you will find some extracts, excerpts of the American reception of Maldoror's work, including a magazine that was published in the mid 70s called *Women and Film*. And they dedicated an entire issue to Sarah Maldoror, I think it's 1975. And a text by cultural thinker, philosopher, bell hooks, who also was able to attend a screening of *Sambizanga* here in probably New York, and wrote about it.

Yasmina Price (01:08:05):

And another point of connection that's relevant to tomorrow night is the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

Annouchka de Andrade (01:08:10):

Yes, they made the music for her first movie, *Monangambé*. And she was in love with jazz music, so she was very connected to this expressive music. And I also wanted to add another thing about her relation with United States is that her movie *Sambizanga*

was shot in the 70s, and the negative went red, so we were trying to have back her right, but also to restore this important movie, and it has been done. And I am very thankful to Martin Scorsese, who himself decided to restore this film. And it took us years to go through, it was a real strong journey. But now this film exists, thanks to his will, his foundation, The Film Heritage, and also to the Cineteca di Bologna, who did wonderful work and now the film is restored and it starts here.

Jess Xiao Long (01:09:31):

All right, we have time for one more question. Coming.

Audience 4 (01:09:38):

You're good. Thank you. Thank you so much for bringing this program. I did want to mention that in the mid and late 1970s, Washington DC used to... Do you remember Damar went there and did some work at Howard, but there was a gentleman named Tony Gittins that founded the Black Film Institute, and that's where I saw *Sambizanga* back then. So, it was received quite well in the US, at least that part of the US.

The question I have, Annouchka, is can you say something, or did your mother say very much about her experience with Pontecorvo, and how did that influence her? Did she influence him? Because, if you know, after that he went on to make *Burn!* about a Caribbean island and a rebellion there that very much sort of mirrored what we see in some of her other films. But I'm just wondering what was the correspondence between them artistically?

Annouchka de Andrade (01:10:49):

I don't know. What I know that we arrived in Algeria in 1965 and very soon Pontecorvo shot the movie in Alger. So he was looking for a crew, and it was also a coproduction with Algeria. And so they met, and Sarah was always learning, I mean, all her life, each time, if she had an opportunity to learn more or to work with recognized filmmaker, she did it. So the only thing I remember her saying that she enjoyed working on *Pontecorvo* movie, and she was looking at everything, paid attention. And if you look at her on the images of Sarah on stage, she's always like that, "I have to take everything she can." And she was in charge of recruiting the woman in the casbah. And I heard, or I read that Pontecorvo said that it was much more easier for a woman because most of the crew from Italia was men, and if it was Sarah going and talking to the old ladies and saying, "Yes, come we are in Algeria, yes, come and be part of the film," it was much easier for everyone that a woman go and ask them to be part of the movie. So she enjoyed it, but I don't know how much she could have influenced him, that I can't tell.

Yasmina Price (01:12:43):

Thank you for your questions. And Annouchka is going to introduce a very important person or reintroduce who will have the last word.

Annouchka de Andrade (01:12:52):

Okay. This already finished? I would spend more time with you. Well, so we will end this conversation, and so I thought we could not leave without bringing back to Sarah because we are all here for her. And so, I wanted to offer you, I mean, for me, it's a gift to have her voice, to listen to her, and then it'll be, I hope, the best conclusion of this conversation. And of course, it'll be an opportunity for you to feel who she was, listening to her words, but also for me sharing my mother with you, it's a way of making all that pain I have because I lost her, and I would like to thank you because sharing her through this exhibition, through this talk, it's also something to make the pain lighter. So thank you very much.

Video Audio:

[foreign language 01:15:22].

Daniel Marcus (01:16:11):

Hello, please join me in thanking Sarah and in thanking our guests and come and enjoy the rest of the opening and the dance party. Cheers.