

Call for Papers

African Music in the 21st Century – An Iconic Turn?

An International Symposium Celebrating the 21st Anniversary of the African Music Archives
Mainz (AMA)

To be held at: Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany. June 13th – 16th 2012

Convenors: Hauke Dorsch, Matthias Krings

Since the advent of the 21st century and the proliferation of digital media a shift in the consumption and marketing of music in a number of African countries occurred: Videos gained an increasing importance. Today, Video-CDs and DVDs are widely sold in African cities, bars and restaurants show music clips and music casting shows on TV, music videos are available online through sites like youtube, but also via homepages and blogs devoted to artists, genres, and (at least ideally) music of the entire continent.

Due to this online availability and easy circulation of discs the visual aspects of music, especially dance styles, clothing fashions, coiffure spread more easily and rapidly than ever before between different African countries and between African and its Diaspora. For example, migrants stay up to date with regards to musical and fashion trends in their respective countries of origin thanks to these videos. Prior to the mediatisation of African music through visual technologies, dance styles could only be transmitted through the presence of human bodies. Due to the proliferation of videos African dance and music travel trans-nationally on South-South and South-North axes at an accelerated speed.

So far, the pictorial turn (Mitchell) or iconic turn (Boehm) in Cultural Studies informed only few studies on African music. Consequently, the change following the digitisation and video-isation of the production and dissemination of African music is still under-researched. Taking music videos as its vantage point, this symposium will look at visual aspects of the performance and analysis of music more generally.

We invite young researchers and established scholars to present papers on the different ways music in Africa (and beyond) is interpreted, illustrated, translated or extended in its meaning by visual representations. These may refer to the analysis of individual videos, the comparison of a number of videos, or genres, changing trends of video aesthetics, the convergence of visual and aesthetic trends from elsewhere – in Africa and beyond (i.e. MTV, Bollywood, etc.). Furthermore, papers on the transformation (or even emergence) of music industries in Africa due to the impact of the visual are welcome. How are music videos produced on the ground? Who are the agents of the iconic turn in African music? How does music television support the iconic turn in African music? Finally, we invite papers on other aspects of the visual in music, performance (i.e. looking at costumes, stage shows, stage lighting, etc.), on festivals and of course dance.

The symposium will celebrate the African Music Archives' 21st anniversary. The AMA hosts Germany's largest collection of recordings of African popular music. It includes roughly 10.000 recordings, from shellac records of the 1950s, to vinyl discs and singles from the 1960s to the 1990s, to music cassettes of the 1980s and 90s, to recent CDs, VideoCDs and DVDs.

The symposium will be hosted by the African Music Archives, Department of Anthropology and African Studies, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz.

Please submit your proposal no later than Sept., 15th 2011 and your full paper no later than May, 23rd 2012 to Hauke Dorsch dorschh@uni-mainz.de.