

## **Ten Tips on how not to become an african artist**

by Hassan Musa  
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### **Ten Tips on how not to become an african artist**

#### **1 – Don't trust historians !**

History didn't start in prehistoric times. History has always been around. There never was a new blank page that historians turn over to mark the Break. There never was a Break with a past manufactured from the illusions of the present. The Avant-Garde always ends up by becoming a rearguard for the ranks that follow them.

#### **2 – Don't believe everything they tell you about History !**

History (just like Art, women, religions and statistics) interests men only to the extent that they can draw out markers from it that they can use to occupy the infinity of time and space, shutting out others. Colonial and neo-colonial Europe insists on imposing its own History on us, as if it were the History of Everything, and that means that we are kept in its excluded party.

#### **3 – Stop thinking that you are « Other » just because that's what others see !**

You are what you think you are, because as things are being « Other » means being excluded, just because your ancestors had a history that was different from the Official History, the would be Total History. These days, having a « different » history means not having one at all, especially when Official History is that of the masters.

#### **4 – No need to rewrite History, they've already done it for you !**

This will just make you even more of an outsider, someone who's only worth a « subhistory » or « counter-history » !

What should you do ? Grab this ready-made history just like the Italians in the fourteenth century took over antiquity in the name of the Renaissance and just like the socialist thinkers in the nineteenth century took over the Christian heritage in the name of humanism. Of course you'll have to be clever to take over late 20th century humanism weakened by contemporary « exclusivism ». If humanism is to have a fresh chance, you'll need to find allies who will give up charity in favour of justice and who agree that we need to be partners if we are all to survive. You'll have to be even more clever to find these allies.

#### **5 – Stop looking at the ground to find your roots every time the issue of identity comes up !**

You're a person, not a vegetable !

You're standing on the macadam of Babel and you can speak all its tongues !

#### **6 – Cross the border whenever you're near it !**

You won't be more of a foreigner on the other side that you were on « you » side. Don't bother trying to get a visa – they'll never give you one ! Knock down the doors, make false papers, bribe the custom men... That's another « african » art that Europeans don't know : the art of survival.

Who knows, maybe one day you'll be able to cross the border between the outsiders and those who belong.

**7 – Don't bite the charitable hand that feeds you. Eat it !**

It will only give you crumbs in any case. Charity has become a multinational business with the aim of making exclusion part of the New International Order.

**8 – Don't lose yourself in black (or any other colour) moods !**

And don't trust people of colour (that's to say, any people who focus just on the colour of their skin or other people's skin).

It's very hard to see a « black soul » in a dark room, especially if it isn't there ! Nobody knows exactly what colour the Africans's « black soul » is ! (Not even black Africans themselves !) Souls don't really have a colour : they take the colour that is given to them.

**9 – Don't trust any maps you have'nt drawn yourself !**

Your route may not be marked on them.

Maps are drawn to mark out lands that has already been conquered for investors, tourists and the Forces of the Nations United against you. So, learn to explore your surroundings and draw you maps later !

**10 – Don't be afraid to ask stupid questions !**

They might turn out to be existential questions, like

- Who invented « Africans » ?
- Could Mickael Jackson turn black again if he wanted to ?
- What's the identity of the african identity ?
- Who made Mowgli wear pants in the film of « The Jungle Book » ?
- What's the reason for the current interest in contemporay African Art ?
- What is the life expectancy of a work of art ?
- Why are you still reading these questions ?

By Hassan MUSA – 03/08/1995

Translated by Patricia Jenner