



*fragments
of
dakar*

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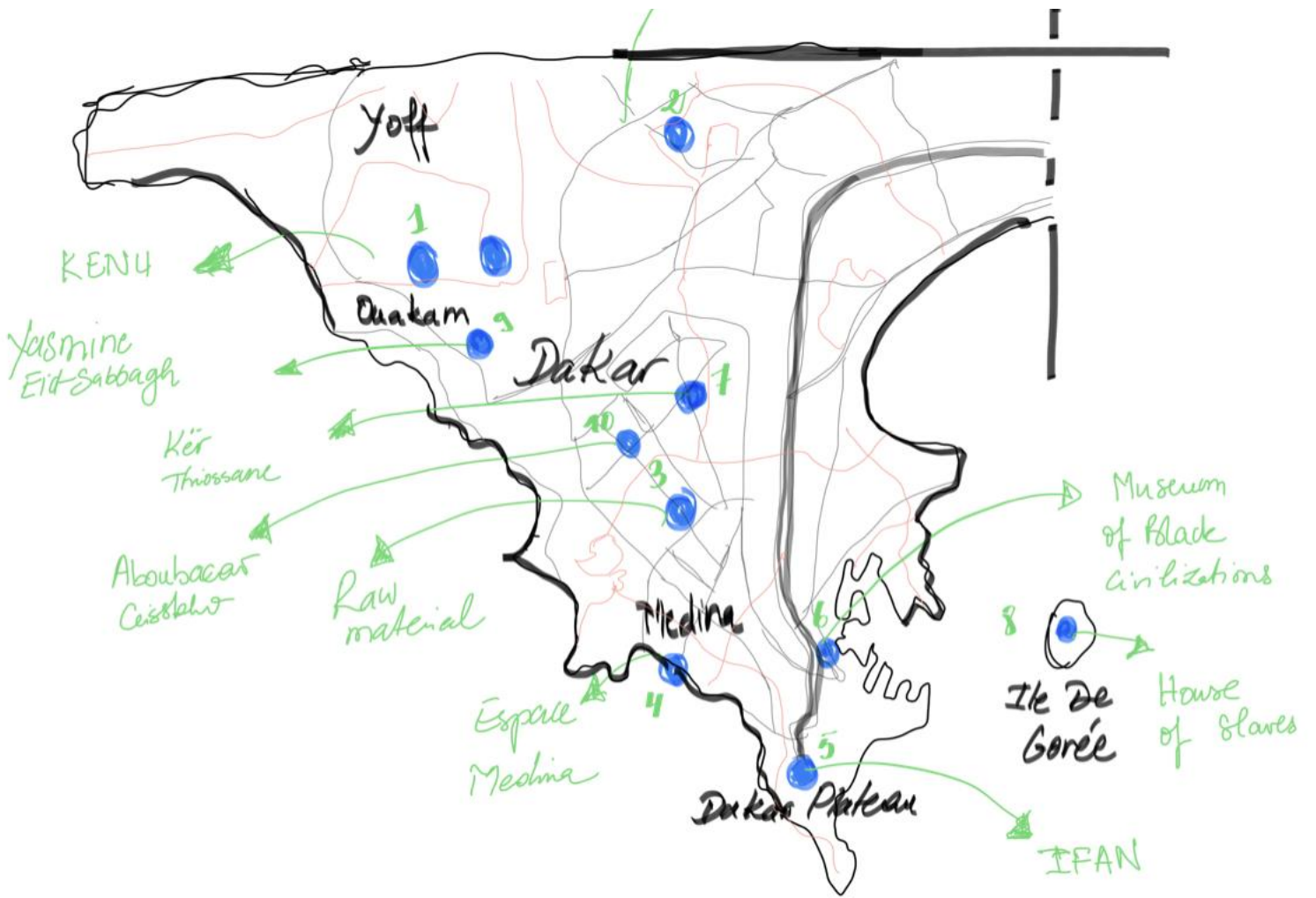


preface

Orbitals Senegal is the 4th iteration of Mophradat's Orbitals, an 8-day programme designed to foster South x South connections between artists and curators that bypasses Europe as a site of encounter. Our entry point into Dakar was a unique one: we were able to discover it via its artists and cultural landscape meeting with various practitioners, art collectives, and institutions and participating in several workshops and activities around the city. We're extremely thankful to the Mophradat team (particularly Krystel Khoury and Felipe Steinberg) as well as immeasurably to Jihan El Tahri (who curated the programme) for such an enriching experience of Dakar. The pace of the trip was relentless in order to accommodate as many aspects of Dakar's scene as possible. We have come out of this intense encounter with many reflections, questions, lessons, and friendships some of which we hope to dedicate the space to in this zine.

We are beyond grateful all the entities and singular practitioners we were privileged to visit for their generosity, attention, and hospitality: Kenu Lab'Oratoire, Village des Arts, IFAN Museum of African Art, RAW Material Company, Espace Medina, Ker Thiossane, Museum of Black of Civilisations, Le Loft Dakar, as well as Yasmin Eid-Sabbagh and Aboubacar Cissokoho. We acknowledge that our time with each was but a glimpse into the totality of the work, life, and dynamics that reside within each space and ask the reader to temper the perspectives and reflections we have shared in this zine with this knowledge. As the zine title alludes to, we have shaped our approach to be "fragmentary" in nature in order to stay faithful to this context and malleable enough to accommodate our various personal reflections on these encounters. Naturally, as 4 different curators and artists, we have all gravitated towards writing about different spaces and aspects of the trip, therefore not all organisations we visited will be included here. We have chosen to keep our reflections distinct but anonymous to reflect the deeply collective and entangled nature of our experiences and the making of the zine. We have organised our encounters against the geography of the city, journeying across multiple spatialities and have added multisensory elements such as sketches, pictures, and music to animate the uncaptured spaces in between. We hope you enjoy the ride!

– Leena, Salma, Mu Salah, Mo Amin



1.KENU is an arts and cultural space in the territory of Ouakam opened in 2020, by artist Alibeta, who has gathered around him a collective made up of several structures. Rooted in the arts, culture and oral tradition, KENU's mission is to explore the imaginaries, social practices and traditional knowledge of Ouakam society and to work on popular imagination (research and production of content) to propose actions, co-create alternatives, participate in concert with local players, in solving everyday community problems.

2.Village des Arts was developed at the request of the artist community in 1998 and is now managed by the Senegalese Ministry of Culture. It takes up four hectares for the gallery, workshops, cafe, bronze foundry, open spaces, as well as the living quarters of the Village's 50 artist residents and visiting artists, their workshops, and galleries. Apart from the promotion of arts and culture, this synergy also aims at encouraging a sense of community and mutual support among the group of artists while they create a coherent cultural and artistic programme. The aim is to unite the big family of artists in a context of reflection and focusing on the issue of art.

3.RAW Material Company is a center for art, knowledge and society. It is an initiative involved with curatorial practice, artistic education, residencies, knowledge production, and archiving of theory and criticism on art. It works to foster appreciation and growth of artistic and intellectual creativity in Africa. The programme is trans-disciplinary and is equally informed by literature, film, architecture, politics, fashion, cuisine and diaspora.

4.Painter, installationist, sculptor, stylist, Cheikha's practice combines mastery of the fibrous texture and sculptural form, especially with new uses of fabrics that have become urban, such as jeans. He transfigures forms and finds improbable harmonies of colors. His work is embedded in Baye Fall philosophy and spirituality, branch group of the Mouride, part of the Islamic Sufi movement in Senegal.

5.The Musée Théodore Monod d'art africain (IFAN) was built between 1931 and 1932 to house the Palais de l'administrateur de la circonscription de Dakar, before being assigned to the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (which became the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN/CAD) in 1966). Its primary mission is to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Senegal and Africa with the periodic organization of research seminars, workshops, conferences, workshops, study days, temporary exhibitions and festivals. (RuePlace 18, Dakar).

6.The Museum of Black Civilizations is a place for encounters and dialogue between the world's cultures and civilizations. Its dynamism depends on its capacity for renewal, including its exhibitions and the diversity of its collections. (Corner Autoroute prolongée and Place de la Gare).

7.Kër Thiossane is a venue for research, residence, creation and training dedicated to social and artistic innovation. It encourages the integration of multimedia in traditional artistic and creative practices, and seeks to support the multi-disciplinarity. It is a multimedia and cultural space for artistic and citizenship imagination, focuses its activities on research into art and new technologies and what they imply in our societies.

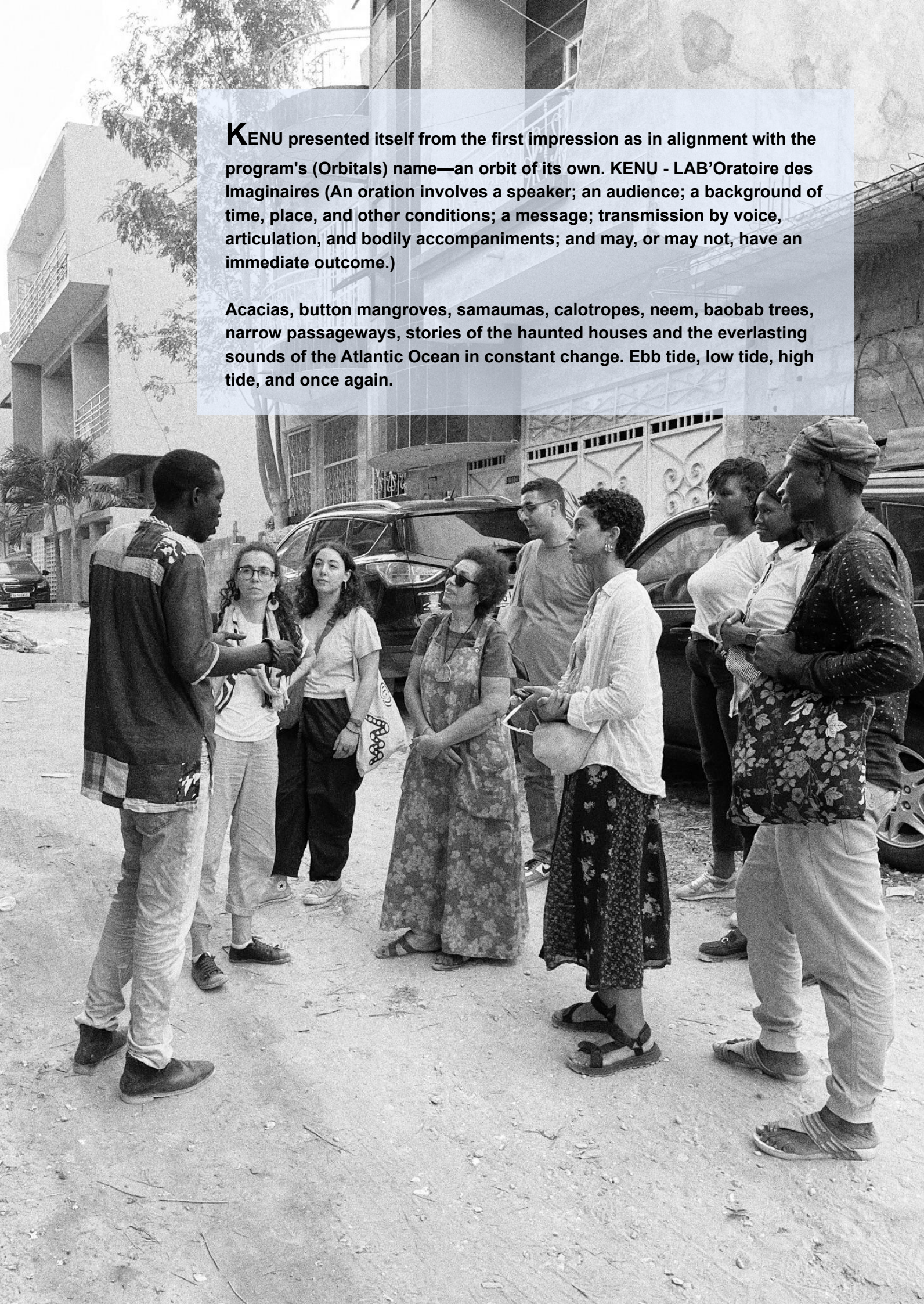
8.The House of Slaves (Maison des Esclaves) and its symbolic "Door of No Return" is a museum and memorial to the victims of the Atlantic slave trade on Gorée Island, 3 km off the coast of the city of Dakar. The structure built in 1776 as a holding center and opened in 1962 as a museum, memorializes the final exit point of the enslaved African people.

9.Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh has a background in photography. In her practice She combines research, conversational, image and (meta)archival practices to reflect on the agency of photographs and notions of collectivity and power. One of her long-term projects explores the impossibilities of representation, through a negotiation process around a potential digital archive assembled in collaboration with inhabitants of Burj al-Shamali, a Palestinian refugee camp near Tyr, Lebanon.

10. Aboubacar Demba Cissokho is a Senegalese journalist and critic specialised in "arts and culture". He has worked since 2001 at the Senegalese Press Agency (APS), in Dakar where he resides. Since June 2015, he has been running the blog Le Grenier de Kibili, where he publishes chronicles, notebooks, analyses and reviews on arts, culture, history, memory and heritage

KENU LAB'ORATOIRE DES IMAGINAIRES





KENU presented itself from the first impression as in alignment with the program's (Orbitals) name—an orbit of its own. KENU - LAB'Oratoire des Imaginaires (An oration involves a speaker; an audience; a background of time, place, and other conditions; a message; transmission by voice, articulation, and bodily accompaniments; and may, or may not, have an immediate outcome.)

Acacias, button mangroves, samaumas, calotropes, neem, baobab trees, narrow passageways, stories of the haunted houses and the everlasting sounds of the Atlantic Ocean in constant change. Ebb tide, low tide, high tide, and once again.

Kenu in Wolof means pillar, the idea of its genesis serves a profound quest to reconsider and question the idea of culture and society at the heart of Ouakam - a Lebu village that is deeply rooted in the spirituality of the Lebu community, surrounded by a lively mercantile life. Kenu's practice revolves around fields of music, art, theater, photography, fashion design, writing, while upholding orality as a main focus with an aim of transmission to the younger generation.

Kenu provides a space for communal learning, emphasizing the importance of trust and shared connections. Their authenticity shines through as they actively build a genuine community where individuals truly know one another. The significance of belief in each other, shared values, and spirituality forms the bedrock of their work, highlighting the crucial role of understanding and trusting the intentions and character of each individual.

We got the chance to experience commonality and friendship through a hospitable and welcoming discussion, sitting together around a *ceebu jën*. We ate this traditional dish in the communal way, where Aicha did us the honor by unveiling some secrets of its making. Listing the variations in the dish from one region to another and the role of the mother as the pillar that ensures that everyone has eaten their fill, she shared with us part of her research into ancestral recipes, which she presented in the form of a large shared meal.

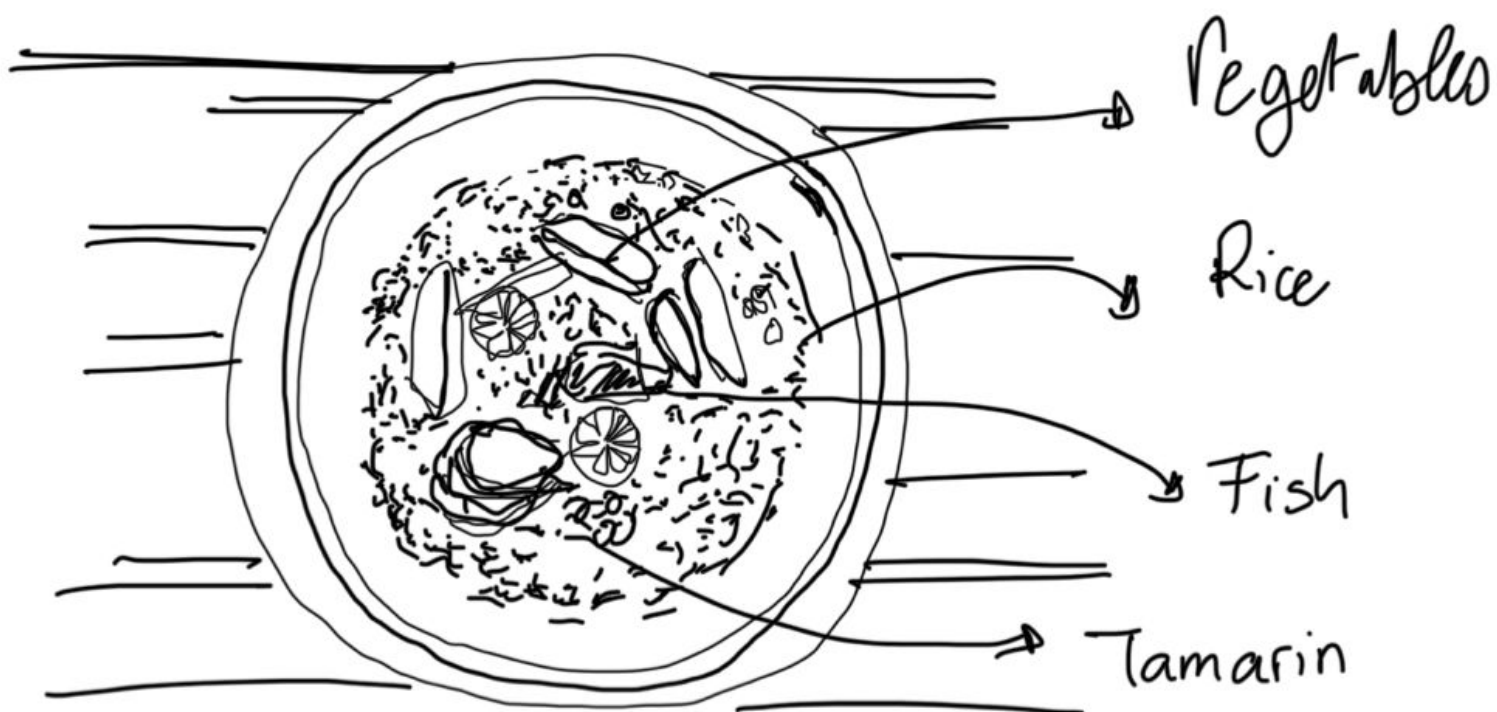
Followed by a tour of the neighbourhood, where we took it turns to guide each other through the market with our eyes closed, impregnated by the sounds and smells around us, guided by the voice of our partners. At intervals, we had refreshment stops with *beignets* and *bissap*, until we reached the heart of the Ouakam area where we saw their sacred site, a large barren expanse which exuded spirituality and remains a space for connecting to the beyond.

We navigated our way around the area using anchor points linked to the different imaginary worlds that inhabit the area, rather than the orientation signs, which had a completely Western urban logic compared to their landmark system. It's a neighborhood that lives and thrives as an open community.





Alibeta
MIIM REEW



Cebu jén



Bamby Na Bamby
LOUTAKH



As we wandered for the first time through Ouakam, following a profound encounter with the members of the KENU cultural space, our discussions delved into defining the boundaries of their practice, and their relationship with the local populace, situating themselves within the region's multifaceted modern and historical contexts. Even now, I find myself unable to fully grasp the placement of those swift and occasionally hurried thoughts and observations that primarily stem from ongoing preoccupations that have accompanied me for quite some time. Here, I aim to succinctly distill two fundamental points that resonated with me personally during that visit:


Firstly, through the discussions that took place among us during our time in KENU, the overall scheme for their direct practices seemed striking and approached the ideal in my perception. These endeavors are firmly rooted in the fundamental requisites of the locale and operate predominantly in a pragmatic vein, furnishing technical or artistic knowledge to the inhabitants of the surrounding area. Through this openness to the area, ideas crystallize and evolve from the practical and concrete to the theoretical and principled, fostering a more efficacious discourse. In this vein, I sought to contemplate that mode of operation that affords greater scope for individualization, grounded in mutual trust that is foundational and transparent to both neighboring individuals and those primarily targeted by the KENU team's efforts in Ouakam. This reflection extends to the foundational and profound concepts underpinning artistic practice itself, it was then that I was struck by an essential point that would reverberate within me throughout the remainder of our journey there, a consideration of how the idealized concept of values is established as a universal and transcendent construct within the discourse of artistic practices. While these peripheral points appear self-evident and legitimate, springing directly from artistic practice as a fundamental technical knowledge and from the issues and challenges arising from direct engagement with the reality of that context, which enables them to achieve the accumulation thereof, perhaps.

Secondly, I perceive one of the most significant experiences during our journey to be the tour undertaken in Ouakam alongside some KENU team members, where the situation appeared deeply disconcerting to me, from the perspective of an outside cultural observer, in a place characterized by a profound degree of class and social exclusivity. It also seemed deeply intertwined with the discussions we had with the team members early on; where I initially felt that the tour or any cultural practices would necessarily dwell in a realm lower than the actual engagement with this place, as the actual demarcations between public and private spaces became blurred, rendering the streets and narrow alleys intensely intimate realms for their inhabitants, and cultural and aesthetic practices also become intertwined amidst ordinary daily actions and gestures, simplifying the process of aestheticizing these relationships far beyond what reality would dictate. Here, I specifically contemplate the position of strangers as entirely distinctive and individual entities amidst this overlapping and intricated context, where all initial impressions appeared profoundly fascinating - reflecting on that general state of communal solidarity among the residents, which may seem ideal amid complete coexistence and mutual acceptance. However, what truly concerns me and remained a constant personal consideration was that anxious distance, specifically the precaution against succumbing to the trap of aesthetic intrusion, and the politics of fascination as well.

By fascination in this context and similar contexts, I mean the process that functions as a cognitive lever shaping objects to fit or function within the cognitive framework of standardized subjects, in a sense, subjects operate predefined paths of accumulation within a specific cognitive domain, achieving it to a certain extent and within certain periods, in this context, subjects perpetually aspire towards further accumulation, and one characteristic of this accumulation is necessarily the prior knowledge of inexperience with many elements in this world. Consequently, what elicits fascination for me is not the revelation of the mundane facets of things; it is not what confers meaning and evokes awe in the Heideggerian sense. Rather, it is the placement of the self at the center of that ordinariness, affirming the accumulation capable of adjudicating the value or quality of things traversing through that accumulation. It is the act of situating things within the context of that accumulation and experience, that fundamentally forms a sort of self-reflection, which seems profoundly concerning in this unknown context, which persisted with me throughout the rest of the journey.







The relationship between art collectives and community can be a contentious one. In my experience, it is often one that is mediated by arts institutions - meaning it's short-lived and top-down - or which acts as a rite-of-passage or springboard towards eventual integration within the institution proper. If collectives survive long enough to make the latter shift, they leverage their history of community-work both as currency within institutional circles and to sanitise the institution's image, their definition of "community" becoming increasingly amorphous and loose over time. Such is my frustration with the uses and abuses of "community" across the arts lately.

Meeting Kenu was a pivotal moment of the trip as it spoke directly to these frustrations. For me, Kenu model one way to invert this formula. Deeply rooted in the physicality and spirituality of the Lebu community within Ouakam, the group possess a strong sense of identity and purpose. Based out of a house in the heart of Ouakam, on a residential street surrounded by baobab trees and narrow, meandering dirt roads, Kenu is not separate from the community they serve but embedded within the same locale.

Community is not a secondary consideration but the very fabric of Kenu. Within Kenu's cosmology, art is a cultural force, a community's practice of self-understanding, and a spiritual expression that animates the relations within a community, exceeding the forms of exchange (e.g. viewer/buyer and artist) within and without the art world. Kenu are driven by the question: how can culture and art serve our society? In response they aim to return the means of creating and enjoying art back to the local community, cultivating local talents and cultural life, producing local knowledge(s), and imagining an alternative ecosystem to making and sharing music, fashion, photography.

The intimacy of long-term friendships and connections within the collective (some up to 15 years!) is what anchors them and helps their work escape the trap of visibility so rampant in this work. For Kenu, sustainability is less a question of strategies and tactics to secure or extend the life of the group, but a collective devotion to fostering a certain kind of spirit within the space that can live on no matter the evolution of the collective's specific makeup. It is a spirit that encourages openness to the relations that configure it, fostering stronger personal than professional relationships, envisioining a space for each's desires within the work, and maintaining the space for humanity and connection above all.

During our discussions, I was struck that Kenu did not refer to their curatorial work as such but preferred to call it "social organising" reflecting the public dimensions of their practice. An interesting tension emerged here, between the curatorial as project of aesthetic regulation and relationship to power versus a relation endeavouring to connect life to art and vice versa. Between a project that aims to offer a definitive interpretation of aesthetics and one that opens it up to its wildest possibilities. In all respects, Kenu has left an enduring impression on me and has ignited questions and models that I will carry with me for a long time.

VILLAGE DES

ARTS

VILLAGE

DES


ARTS



I believe that the visit we made to the VILLAGE DES ARTS was significant for me in terms of addressing two prevalent paradigms the art production. Besides the evident impact of the vestiges of colonial imagination in shaping the place, the primary distinction for me lies in the mode of patronage the state extends to a particular genre of art. This distinction does not hinge on a specific degree of bias or direct guidance, but rather on a specific horizon and imagination in art production, operating in a defined space with clear frameworks in which artists engage. However, all of this is embedded within a specific discourse, comprising numerous studios where a multitude of artists work, predominantly in painting and sculpture, embodies one of the directions undertaken by the national liberation state. Yet, what is intriguing at this juncture is its continued amalgamation of two contradicting discourses post the era of national liberation states - the issue here does not revolve around the quality or worth of the works produced in the place. Instead, as part of the marketing strategy of the place, and I believe similar places in many other countries as well, adopting a global discourse on art. This discourse pertains to the contemporary pertinence of the produced works and their capacity to attain high levels of competitiveness with their global counterparts. In contrast to this open and global discourse, there exists the other, original discourse for which such locales were established. This discourse has a national and internal dimension, tied to the state's nurturing of the arts as a fundamental part of its aspiration to represent itself as an independent entity with a distinctive and differentiated character from any other place in the world.







Places like "Village des Arts," an artists' residency and exhibition space, interested me even before I visited it. I have a particular interest in studio practices and the various ways artists and curators organize themselves. Reflecting on the connections between the North and east Africa due to our shared historical colonial past and different forms of production, I wondered about the filigrees that could bind us. Examining our respective political contexts, similarities emerge, especially in terms of European funding, which still influences local production and our respective contexts.

What particularly intrigued me was observing the way people organize themselves in terms of autonomy and self-organization. Meeting Idriss Dialo shed light on the genesis and persistence of a village born out of creative forces and the need for a place that gathers energy and strength around local production. As we explored small niches, each with a few square meters studio, cleverly arranged, practices varied between painting and sculpture. This was the former space that was inhabited by the group of Chinese who were commissioned to construct the stadium.

The original Village des Arts was initially a simple squat initiated in 1977 in Dakar by El Hadji Sy in an abandoned military camp. Freshly graduated students of the fine art school joined despite the scarcity of commodities but they inhabited the space and organized collectively under the aegis of a "Chef du village". It accommodated painters, drawers, photographers, and sculptors from the second post-colonial generation of Senegalese artists.

The current Village des arts was founded in 1998, after the need and demand of the artists from the state to provide them this space. It was and still a hub for research and experimentation, symbolising a counter-culture in contrast to the official Cité des Arts, government-subsidized and representative of the "École de Dakar."

It was born post-independence and has not only survived but persisted in openness. I believe that this typology of this space is essential and certainly emerged after a period of struggle, revolt, and a quest for freedom as much as we are still seeking the same things. Offering a space where creative practices can flourish serves as one of the primary pillars supporting the blossoming of the cultural scene. Furthermore, being situated in a creative environment and surrounded by like-minded individuals generates an energy that has the potential to multiply and expand.

There is a palpable and essential need for creation that has manifested itself clearly and necessarily. I think this need should be replicated, as should the opening up of this public space. Refinement and expansion of human-managed spaces would be valuable across the global South.

**IFAN
MUSEUM
OF
AFRICAN
ART**

UNIVERSITE DE DAKAR
IFAN
MUSEE DE DAKAR

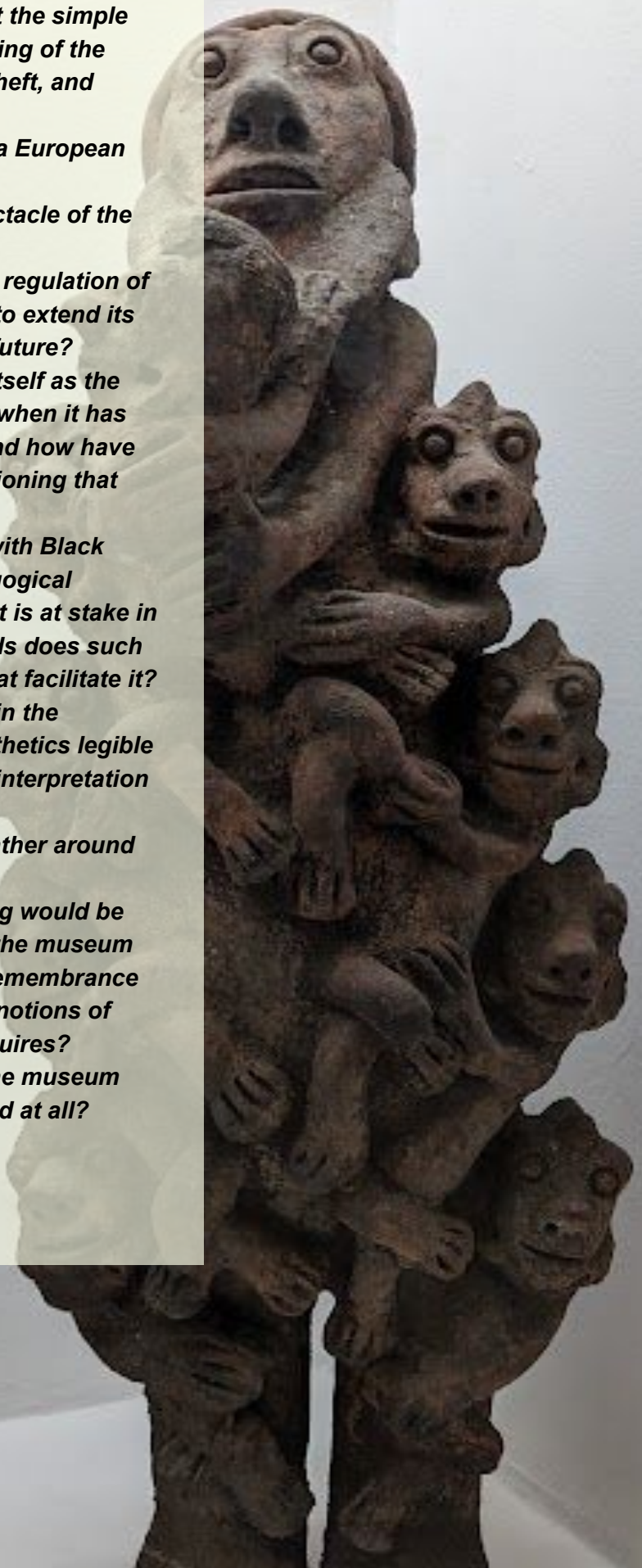




We were lucky to meet with El Hadji Malick Ndiyae, the current director of IFAN which houses valuable classical African Art collections from across Francophone Africa.. As Malick described it, the current curatorial and research focus of the museum is one of making connections between temporalities, revisiting the past to reignite connection to heritage and culture in the present and future. Within this work, there is a particular interest in transmission and translation of the life of objects and the embodied knowledge(s) they hold into a wider space accessible to the Senegalese public and that establishes a place for the museum in public memory. To this end, the museum is in dialogue and collaboration with contemporary artists who are invited to reactivate the museum's collections seasonally through workshops, residencies, and temporary exhibitions.

Malick presented an impressive survey of the museum's work and history and the conversation touched on various interesting topics surrounding restitution, legacies of colonisation, strategically utilising foreign funding, and the importance of South-South museum connections within the African continent. In spite of the contradictions raised by this discussion, Malick maintained an optimism and trust in the role of the museum in activating Black heritage and securing Black futures as museological discourses and relations to former colonial powers begin to shift. Every word he uttered felt perfectly placed, the presentation of the museum rehearsed and polished, the museological possibilities seemingly endless! IFAN museum seems to tread a pragmatic, strategic line that although admirable, left me with some stubborn questions that remain unsatisfied:

- *Is restitution an event or a process? Is it the simple return of a physical object or a dismantling of the material historical legacies of erasure, theft, and violence?*
- *Can the Black museum ever move past a European anthropological capitalist structure?*
- *Can the Black museum counter the spectacle of the object that exists for our amusement?*
- *Does the museum's monopoly over and regulation of access to a history or archive continue to extend its colonial functions into the present and future?*
- *Why should the museum now reinvent itself as the site of exchange and sharing of culture when it has historically played the opposite role? And how have museums escaped the necessary questioning that comes with such a shift?*
- *What is the line between collaborating with Black artists and shifting the museum's pedagogical responsibilities onto Black artists? What is at stake in this pedagogical work and what demands does such an education make of the institutions that facilitate it?*
- *Is reactivating classical African Art within the continent an attempt to make Black aesthetics legible and communicable, to offer a definitive interpretation of Black aesthetics? And to whom?*
- *Can memory be gathered and can we gather around institutions and institutionalisation?*
- *What modes of transmission and sharing would be possible without the museum? OR can the museum endure the splitting/transmutations of remembrance and the breakage of temporal capitalist notions of holding that true sharing of memory requires?*
- *What remains incommunicable within the museum and what perhaps ought not to be shared at all?*





Orchestra Baobab
NIJAAY



Leopold Sedar Senghor's
Museum



Habib Koité & Bamada
MASSAKÉ

A large, stylized tree sculpture made of dark wood or metal, standing in a museum atrium. The tree has a thick trunk and many branches, some of which are illuminated from within. The background is a curved wall with a grid pattern and a skylight. The floor is polished and reflects the tree. There are informational displays and screens on the lower level.

MUSEUM OF BLACK CIVILISATIONS

Les Lignes de Continuité



The Museum of Black Civilisations (MoBC) is Dakar's national museum dedicated to representing the civilisations, histories, and contemporary cultures of Black people globally. An impressive building with a wide range of permanent and temporary exhibitions split across 4 sprawling floors. MoBC was one of the most contradictory and paradoxical spaces I encountered during this trip. I highly enjoyed the first two floors covering prehistoric Africa, ancient and modern African history which included stunning displays of African masks, sculptures, and tombs, as well as contemporary (Pan-)African histories. However, signage was missing from much of the collections on display and the spatial and temporal breadth of the permanent exhibitions often worked against itself, diluting important specificities and forging historical connections a priori.

For instance, upon first entering the MoBC I encountered a large collection of portraits of famous black figures displayed vertically on the left titled *Les Lignes de Continuité* (The Lines of Continuity). As I walked closer, I realised that the lines may not be so continuous. One grouping contained the radical Guinean politician Carmen Pereira against the tyrannical Haile Selassie, while another grouped together the basketball legend Michael B. Jordan and George Floyd, with Senegal's president Macky Sall (currently facing charges of corruption and a constitutional coup) sitting at the very top.

If this display was attempting to draw lines of black solidarity and unity across time and space, there was no unifying logic to the choices made and no ideological throughline to hold the connections in place. A simplistic, skin-deep gesture towards the notion of Blackness is all that could be gleaned, one that verges on racist for its flattening of all differences in political traditions or orientations between Black leaders. The inclusion of Sall within this continuum places him within a Pan-African imaginary and is perhaps a desire for a borrowed political legitimacy that eludes him at present.

While this display felt like a missed opportunity to engage in questions of Black solidarities past and present, it at least emitted an air of celebration and pride in histories of anti-colonial struggle and the wealth of Black talent the world over. Other permanent exhibitions were not so generous.

The first floor contained a small but memorable exhibition: *La Galerie De L'Incivisime* (The Gallery of Incivility) which sought to document cases of “public disobedience” in the general population so that society’s “deviant posture comes into the open” in the “fight for our humanity and as an outcry against our failings.” A section titled, *Vandalism et destruction des équipements publics* (Vandalism and destruction of public equipment), displayed photos of destroyed buses, tyres set on fire on the open road, damage done to the parliamentary chamber, turned over chairs and tables at nondescript locations, and a video of children protesting at a school. Where labels and signage were missing from the vast sections of classical African Art in the rest of the museum, here they were everywhere and detailed.

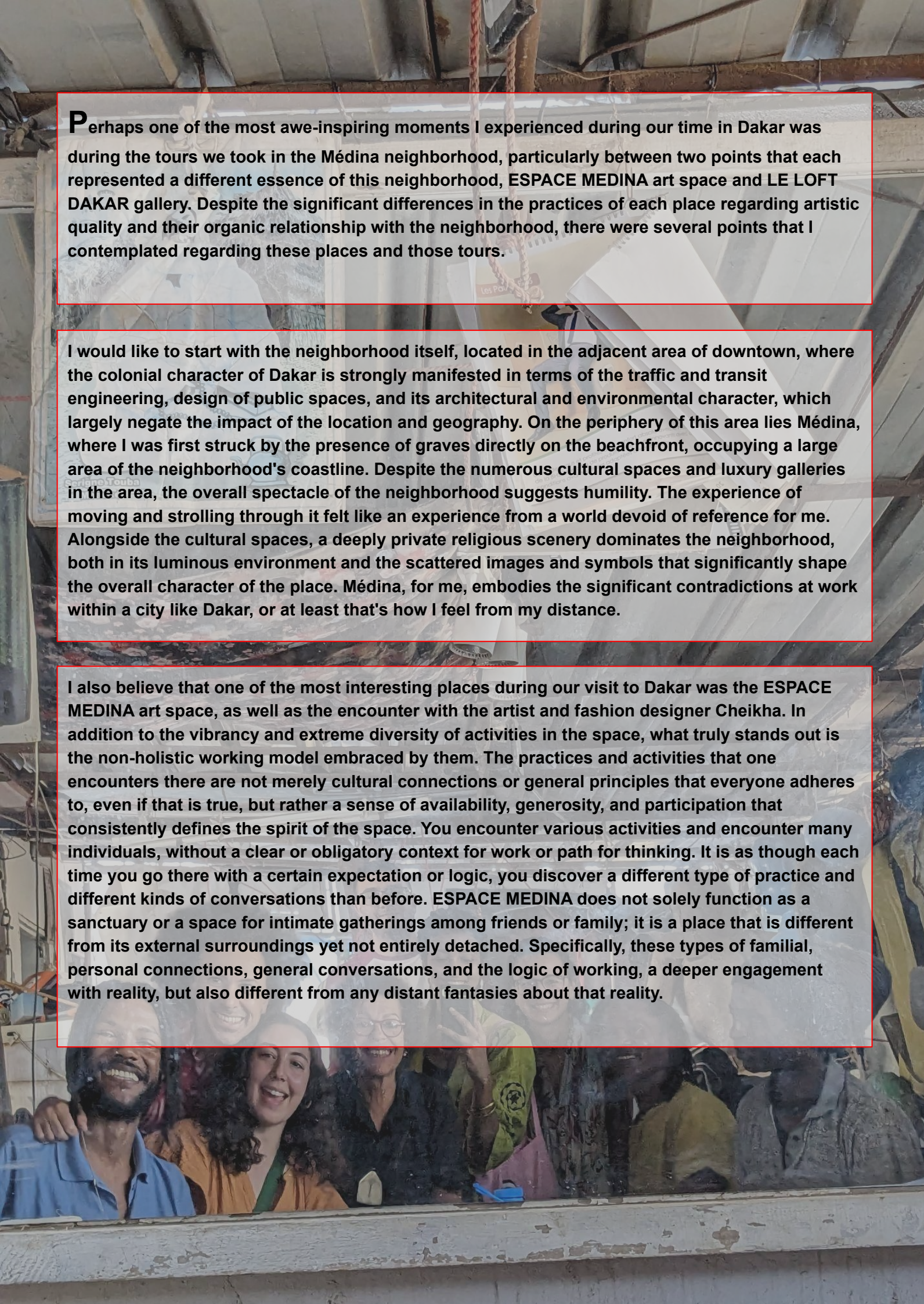
This is how the exhibition chose to commemorate the protests of May 2023 without ever explicitly referring to them or contextualising them as such. This sat against several other sections that document other forms of “incivility” including congestion caused by street vendors and carelessness of road users. The wider population is painted as being unruly, discordant, wayward, too free with their whims, too liberal with destruction, and in need of the state’s disciplining powers. The state levies an infantilising diagnosis on its people as an active threat to themselves and to progress if not restrained and kept in check structurally and politically. The failures of the state and the crisis of modernity are swiftly laundered by an appeal to an abstract morality that disconnects political reality from political causes. In the light of current protests against the unconstitutional extension of Sall’s presidency, this exhibition appears even more pernicious.

The two exhibitions I’ve discussed encapsulate for me the entire logic of “the public museum,” one that exists to further the state’s ideal representation of itself as progressive, rational, the protector of the country’s past and present, and the most important horizon in its future. Propaganda here is not hidden, but the very content of several exhibitions. And perhaps herein lies the biggest achievement of the museum: to reveal so clearly the state’s permanent hand/voice in it, to shatter the neutrality of the museum and broadcast its constructed narratives, its narrow imaginations, its crises, evangelisms, its contradictions, and omissions. To lay bare the state’s self-serving regimes of memorialisation at play. And to make it easier to altogether move away from the “museum” as the keeper of and impartial authority on historical memory, culture, and heritage.



ESPACE MEDINA ESPACE MEDINA ESPACE MEDINA



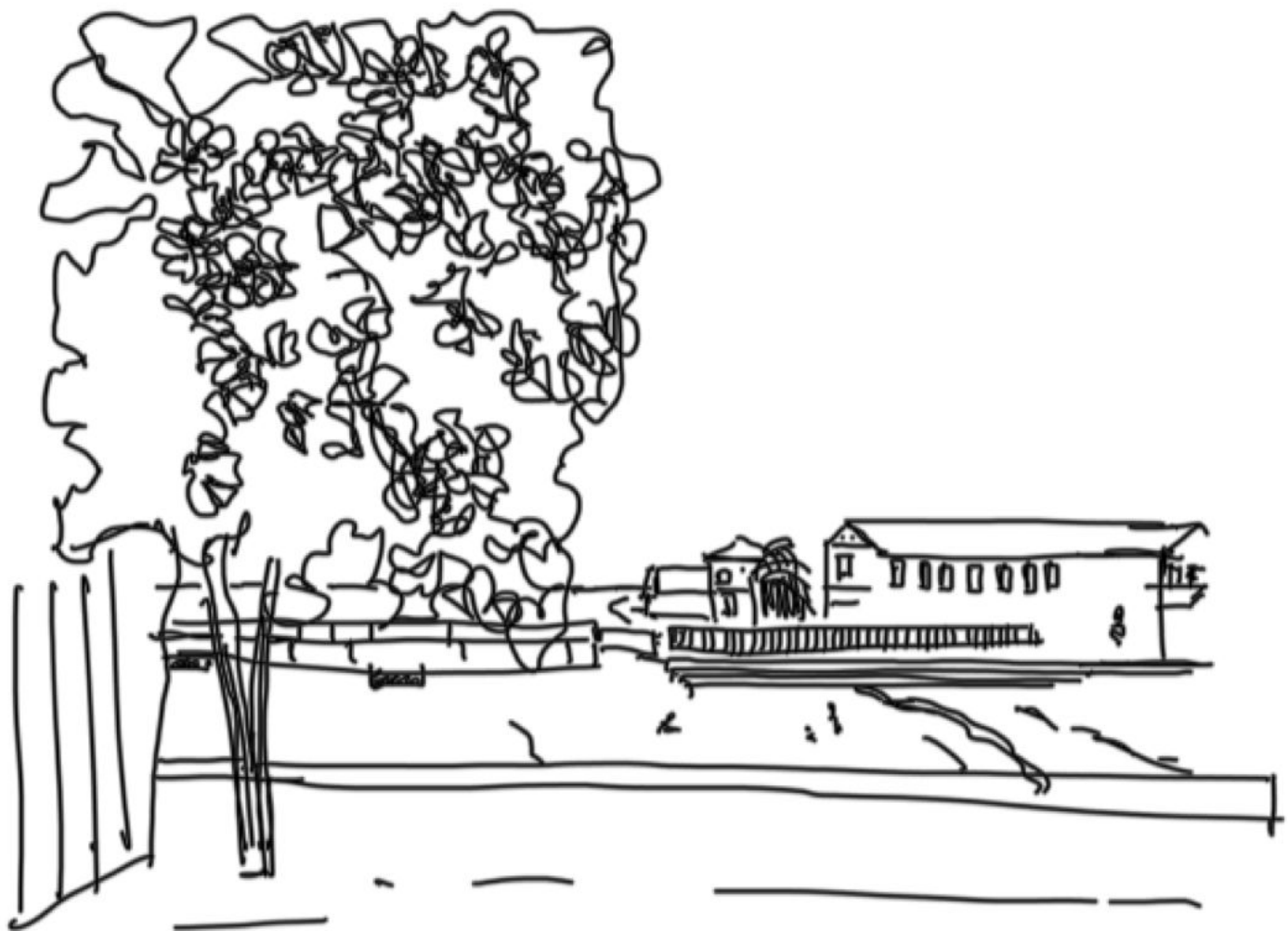


Perhaps one of the most awe-inspiring moments I experienced during our time in Dakar was during the tours we took in the Médina neighborhood, particularly between two points that each represented a different essence of this neighborhood, ESPACE MEDINA art space and LE LOFT DAKAR gallery. Despite the significant differences in the practices of each place regarding artistic quality and their organic relationship with the neighborhood, there were several points that I contemplated regarding these places and those tours.

I would like to start with the neighborhood itself, located in the adjacent area of downtown, where the colonial character of Dakar is strongly manifested in terms of the traffic and transit engineering, design of public spaces, and its architectural and environmental character, which largely negate the impact of the location and geography. On the periphery of this area lies Médina, where I was first struck by the presence of graves directly on the beachfront, occupying a large area of the neighborhood's coastline. Despite the numerous cultural spaces and luxury galleries in the area, the overall spectacle of the neighborhood suggests humility. The experience of moving and strolling through it felt like an experience from a world devoid of reference for me. Alongside the cultural spaces, a deeply private religious scenery dominates the neighborhood, both in its luminous environment and the scattered images and symbols that significantly shape the overall character of the place. Médina, for me, embodies the significant contradictions at work within a city like Dakar, or at least that's how I feel from my distance.

I also believe that one of the most interesting places during our visit to Dakar was the ESPACE MEDINA art space, as well as the encounter with the artist and fashion designer Cheikha. In addition to the vibrancy and extreme diversity of activities in the space, what truly stands out is the non-holistic working model embraced by them. The practices and activities that one encounters there are not merely cultural connections or general principles that everyone adheres to, even if that is true, but rather a sense of availability, generosity, and participation that consistently defines the spirit of the space. You encounter various activities and encounter many individuals, without a clear or obligatory context for work or path for thinking. It is as though each time you go there with a certain expectation or logic, you discover a different type of practice and different kinds of conversations than before. ESPACE MEDINA does not solely function as a sanctuary or a space for intimate gatherings among friends or family; it is a place that is different from its external surroundings yet not entirely detached. Specifically, these types of familial, personal connections, general conversations, and the logic of working, a deeper engagement with reality, but also different from any distant fantasies about that reality.





Ablaye Cissoko
SIRA

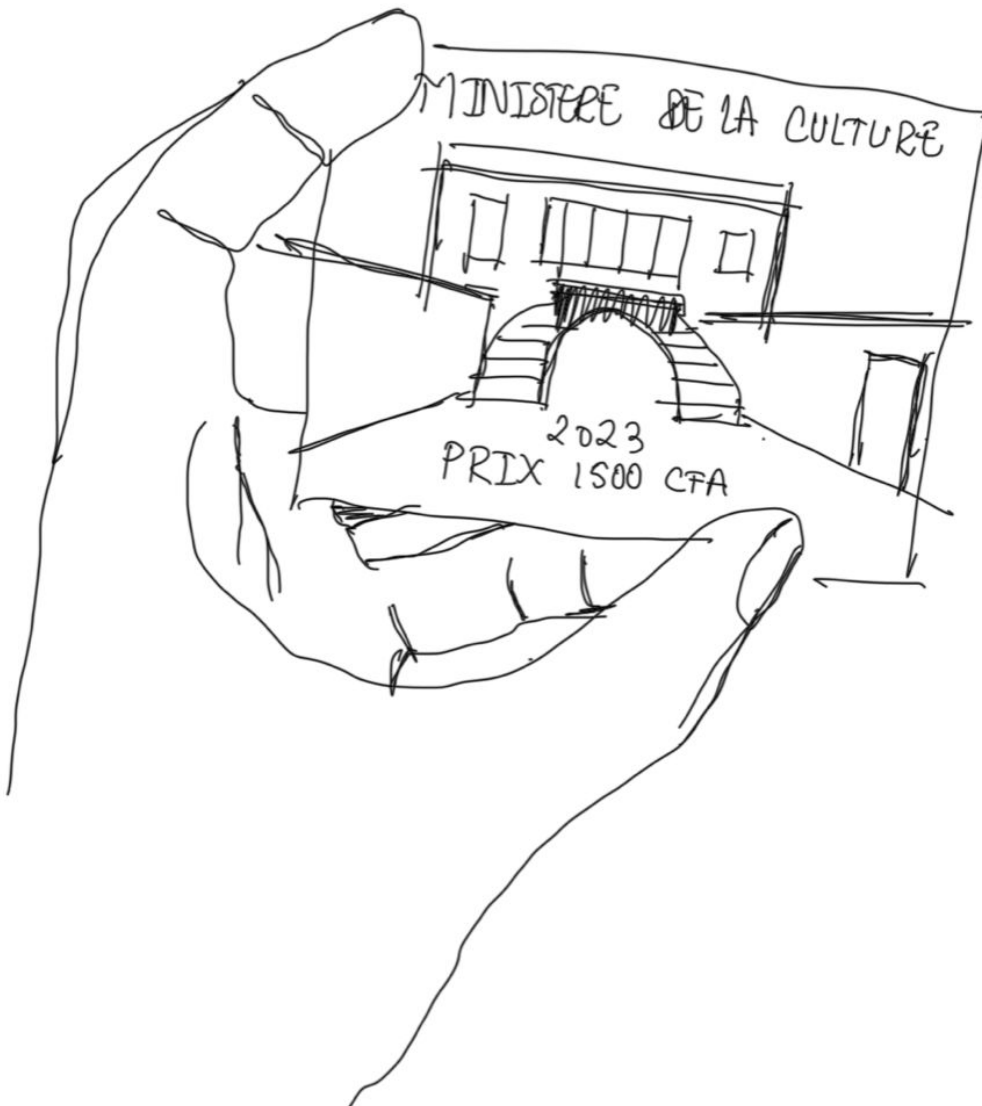


Gorée Island

House of
enslaved
people



Ismaël Lô
TAJABONE





Le Loft Dakar



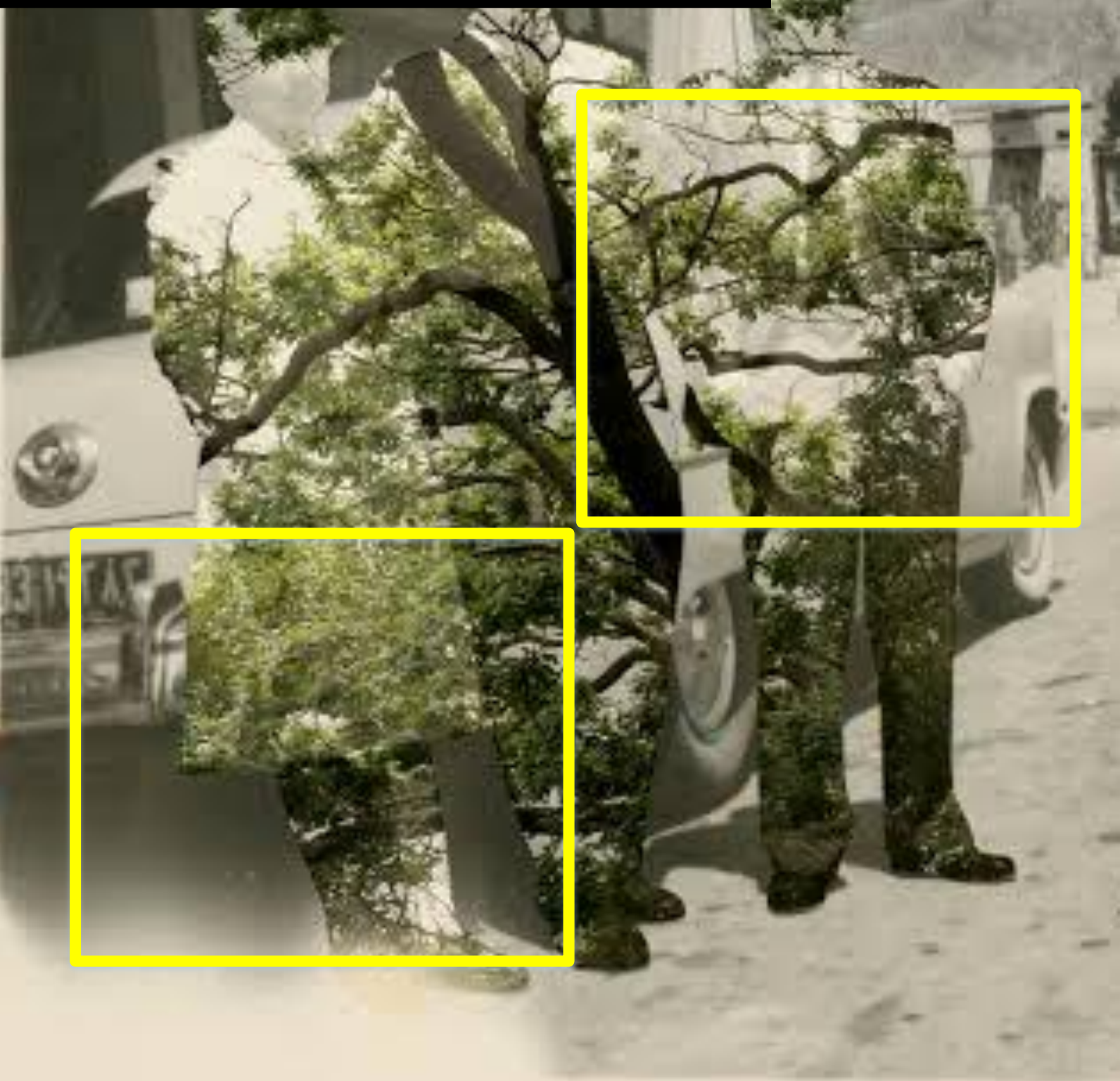
Le Loft Dakar, located in the Medina district and overlooking Soubédioune Bay, is the studio of photographer Antoine Tempé. It's become a notable spot in Dakar for its role in facilitating cultural exchanges and discussions within the arts community. The studio hosts a variety of events, including roundtable discussions, performances, artist installations, and video projections, often focusing on postcolonial themes and the local context of the Medina district. This space has attracted a diverse group of cultural figures from Dakar and beyond, making it a significant venue for artistic dialogue in the city. During our visit to Le Loft Dakar, we engaged with a diverse group of individuals, including artists, local community members, and the director of Le Loft Antoine Tempé, as well as Senegalese-Mauritanian artist and curator Hamedine Kane. Our visit coincided with the preparation for a solo exhibition featuring the works of Pape Diop at Le Loft. These interactions led to deep and critical discussions about the role of art in society, concepts of agency, the rhetoric surrounding madness, and the strategic focus on centralizing decentralized artistic productions and its shortcomings. The experience at Le Loft Dakar was profound, leaving a lasting impression on us. It sparked a series of thoughtful conversations and reflections, both on a personal and collective level, about the impact and significance of art in our lives and in the broader societal context.





Soulaymane Faye
NITKI

Yasmine Eid-Sabbagh



Our last visit took us to the studio of Yasmine Eid Sabbagh, a photographer whose approach transcends the conventional use of photography as a mere production medium. Instead, she employs it as a powerful tool within her artistic practice, rooted in the exploration of archive images.

She provided us with a glimpse into a complex and layered narrative involving family photographs, historical documentation, and the “involuntary archives” she witnesses. During a significant period in the Western Sahara conflict (1975-1991), the narrative unfolds as a compelling exploration of the archive as both an act of resistance and a repository of collective memory. The concept of “involuntary archives” was born of the need to preserve intentionally the memories despite adversarial circumstances. The deliberate burial of the bodies of Moroccans, combined with the creation of piles of photographs, appears to be a poignant form of resistance. *483 fotografie dal museo Sahrawi della guerra* that were carefully kept in ammunition boxes within the tents in refugee camps, emerged and were studied and sorted out, through a logic born of the moment, discussion and the surrounding energy.

The dissemination method was undeniably delicate, encapsulated within the confines of a book that beckons careful and intentional consultation. Unraveling the personal and profoundly human dimensions embedded within each photograph.

Dissemination is key in Yasmine’ approach to her work on Burj Al Shamali Palestinian refugee camp that she started on 2001. The work reflects a deeply rooted commitment to engaging with personal stories within the archive and considering photography as a tool for conversing. Through her encounters and discussions with individuals like Hasna al Kharoubi, Sabbagh shed the light into the intricate roles these individuals play in preserving the memoir of the community and collecting photographs within the context of the Borj Al Shamali. It’s one of the few archives named after a place and not an individual. The creation of a digital repository of photographs further underlines Sabbagh’s commitment to preserving and disseminating historical memories by the unveiling it and hiding it. Through the digitization process, the layers of intervention become apparent, reflecting the evolving nature of these images and their significance over time.

This digital archive serves as a platform for ongoing dialogue and engagement with the past as a memoir, reminder and a dynamic form, allowing for reflection on the complexities of history within the context of Burj Al Shamali and beyond.



**Aboubacar Demba
Cissokho**



Poster of 'The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun' (1999), directed by Djibril Diop Mambéty.

The focus on narrating African stories from their cultural, historical, and social perspectives became a defining feature of Senegalese cinema. Securing funding remains a significant challenge for cinema productions, particularly with the impact of the World Bank and IMF in the '80s, which influenced cultural and educational budgets. Despite these obstacles, the evolution of Senegalese cinema continued, with filmmakers adding to its rich legacy. The significant influence of cinema prompted Léopold Sedar Senghor's intentional political interest in creating a cultural platform for the Global South. The diverse political perspectives, including the influences of the Western and socialist blocs, added depth to the narrative. Economic difficulties in the '80s and structural adjustment plans posed challenges to cinema production due to reduced funding. Nonetheless, the early 2000s saw revitalization efforts, including law renegotiation and the establishment of the FOPICA fund in 2014, introducing new possibilities for the Senegalese film industry. Viewing excerpts of "La petite vendeuse de soleil" at the end of the discussion served as an apt metaphor for Senegalese cinema. This glimpse into the historical and cultural context offers a comprehensive overview, balancing the narrative between triumphs and challenges.

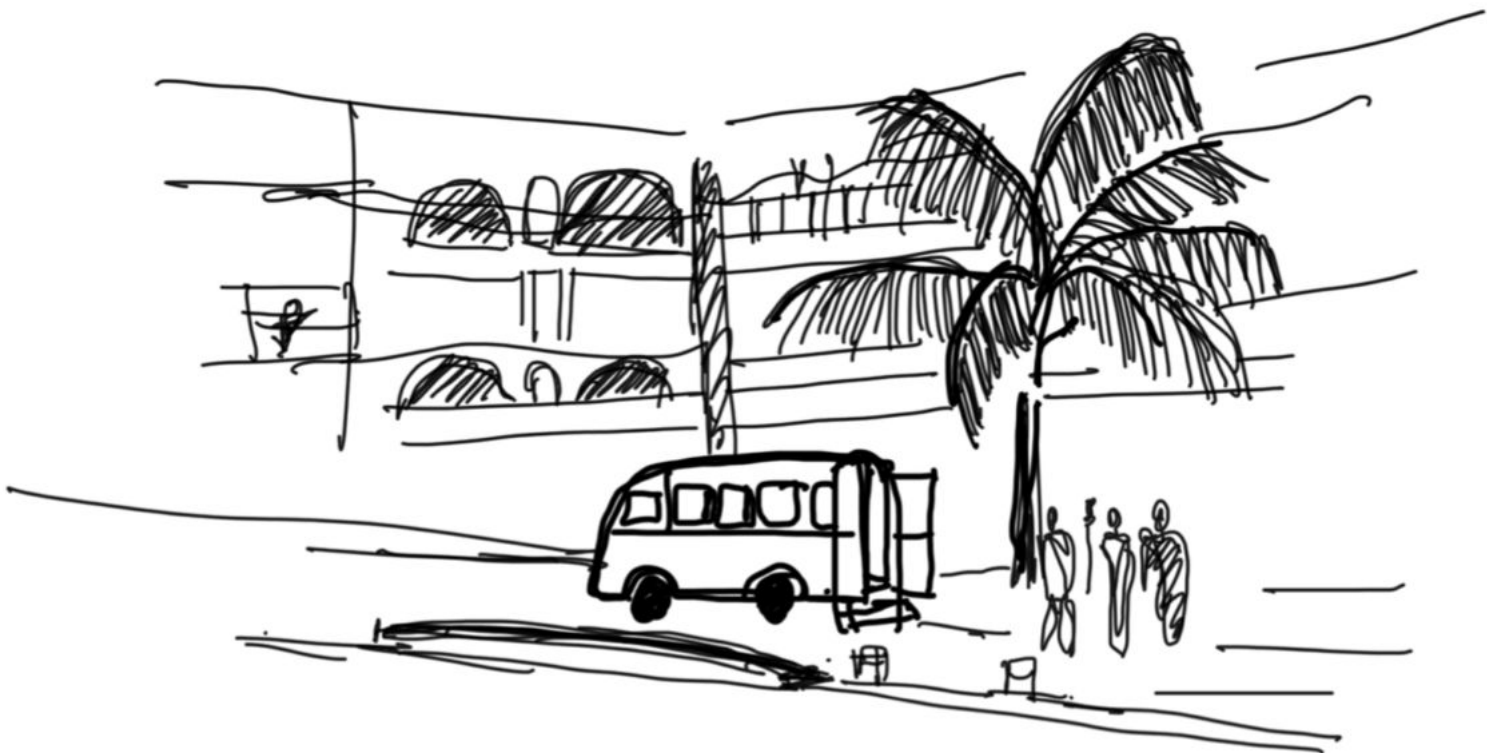
Cissokho is a Senegalese journalist and critic specialized in "arts and culture." He has been working since 2001 at the Senegalese Press Agency (APS) in Dakar, where he resides. Since June 2015, he has managed the blog Le Grenier de Kibili, publishing chronicles, notebooks, analyses, and reviews on arts, culture, history, memory, and heritage.

On Wednesday morning, the 6th of December 2023, we were fortunate to engage in a profound discussion and screening session with Aboubacar Demba Cissokho in Dakar. He stands as a living archive of Senegalese cinema and, more importantly, provided us with insights into the dynamics of the Senegalese cultural scene, illustrating its complexities and the factors that influence it. We had the opportunity to experience the varied perspectives of Jihane Al Tahri, who enriched us with her interventions that span diverse contexts. The exploration of Senegalese cinema is portrayed through the journeys of various generations of filmmakers, beginning in the early '60s. Ousmane Sembene laid the groundwork for subsequent filmmakers, including Jibril Diop Mambety in the late '60s and thereafter. Sembene is recognized as one of the pioneering filmmakers to specialize in documentaries, countering the portrayal of Africa by European filmmakers.



Still from 'The Little Girl Who Sold the Sun' (1999), directed by Djibril Diop Mambéty.





Omar Pené & le Super
Diamono
GAINDE



contributors' *bios*

Leena Habiballa is a Sudanese artist, cultural worker, and researcher based in London with an interest in African visual/material cultures and community filmmaking/exhibition models. She explores these themes through art/film criticism, her own filmmaking practice, as well as research and curation.

Muhammad Amin is an Egyptian researcher, film programmer, and cultural activist, currently based in Alexandria. He researches and writes about cinema, ethnic music, contemporary cultural and urban practices, and motion picture critique, and curates film programs, seminars, and multidisciplinary educational programs and workshops.

Muhammad Salah is a Sudanese curator, photographer, and filmmaker based in Berlin. He uses photography as a tool to examine light, the progression of time, and the concept of authorship, while continuously questioning the nature of photography and the essence of a photograph.

Salma Kossemtini is a Tunisian curator and cultural producer based in Tunis. She engages with curatorial practice and mediation in public spaces in Tunisia and in Germany. She initiated L'atelier Selma Feriani Gallery as a research space for accompaniment and experimentation. Her curatorial approach emphasizes practice-based experiences with an interest in various archival forms.



**WE'D LIKE TO EXTEND
OUR DEEPEST
GRATITUDE TO:
JIHAN EL TAHRI,
KRYSTEL KHOURY,
FELIPE STEINBERG, THE
ENTIRE MOPHRADAT
TEAM, ALIBETA, BAMBY,
AICHA SANKA, AMINATA
IBAANKU, JAH GAL
DOULSY, CHEIKHA,
KHALIL, IDRIS DIALLO,
FATIMA BINTOU
RASSOUL, DELPHINE
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CISSOKHO, YASMINE
EID-SABBAGH, CHIARA
FIOGNE, ORCHESTRA
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DIOP, ANTOINE TEMPÉ,
HAMEDINE KANE, PAPE
DIOP, EL HADJI MALICK
NDIYAE, ISABELLE
NDIYAE, KEMBOURY
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ANDRÉ DIOP**

