



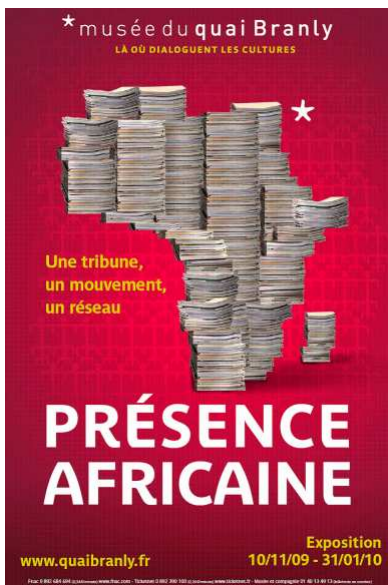
PRESENCE AFRICAINE

A forum, a movement, a network

11/10/09 – 01/31/10

Exhibition Portfolio
East Mezzanine

Exhibition curator: Sarah Frioux-Salgas
Exhibition design: Gaëlle Seltzer



The musée du quai Branly presents the exhibition *Présence Africaine, a forum, a movement, a network*, recounting the creation and first 20 years of existence of this luminary literary and cultural journal founded by the Senegalese intellectual Alioune Diop in 1947, and that became a publishing house in 1949. “Présence Africaine” was an important tool for diffusion that allowed black intellectuals and writers to claim their cultural and historic identities that the colonial context denied or “exoticized”.

This exhibition presents a number of works and archival documents, photographs and object. Audio and audiovisual recordings also occupy an important place: period documents, citations, excerpts of poems, and interviews specially done for this exhibition punctuate the visit. It focuses on showing the emergence and influence of a movement, of a forum for thought and vindications of the black world at a time when a major part of the west had a deformed and even deprecatory vision of it.

The “Présence Africaine” exhibition has been made possible by support from the **Total Foundation**.

* A FORUM, A MOVEMENT, A NETWORK

In its inaugural text “*Niam n’goura*¹ or the ‘raison d’être’ of *Présence Africaine*”, the journal set forth its objectives:

To publish Africanist studies on black culture and civilization, to publish “African texts”, and to critique “works of art or thought concerning the black world”.

In the first issues, its founder, Alioune Diop, surrounded himself with all the figures interested by the black world: **ethnologists, anthropologists** (Marcel Griaule, Georges Balandier, Théodore Monod, Michel Leiris, Paul Rivet), **writers, philosophers** (Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Jean-Paul Sartre, André Gide, Albert Camus, Richard Wright), but also **gallery-owners and art critics** (Charles Ratton, William Fagg) Even if, in 1947, Alioune Diop wrote, “this review is not beholden to any philosophical or political ideology,” in 1955, he clearly redefined its objectives: **“All articles will be published on the conditions that they are in good taste, that they concern Africa, that they neither betray our antiracist and anti-colonialist will, nor our solidarity with colonized peoples.”**

¹ Toucouleur proverb meaning “Eat so that you may live”.



ALIOUNE DIOP and AIMÉ CÉSaire
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To show the historic importance of *Présence Africaine* the exhibition explores and analyzes **its role as a catalyst during the first 20 years of its existence**. Indeed, it was during this period that the journal was organized to provide a venue for everyone interested and concerned in the “black worlds”, by **establishing a publishing house (1949)**, producing the film *Statues also Die* by **Alain Resnais and Chris Marker (1953)**, creating a **cultural association (1956)**, organizing **two Congresses of Black Writers and Artists (1956 and 1959)**, and actively participating in the preparation of the “**First Festival of Negro Arts**” of Dakar (1966). This primordial period in the history of currents of ideas linked to “black worlds” reveals that in the colonial context, the cultural and political claims were quickly inseparable. Such a project required a permanent political, literary, and intellectual contextualization: a chronology will be integrated into the exhibition visit.

The journal, bookstore, and publishing house still exist today.

* THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition is divided into four sections, introduced by an anthropo-zoomorphic Dogon mask, symbol of the journal.

1 - “The Black Atlantic”: from Pan-Africanism to négritude

The journal *Présence Africaine* is heir to an international “black press” that existed in France in the 1920s-30s, but also to movements of ideas that grew out of exchanges between blacks from African, America, and Europe, and constituted a transnational black culture.

Archival documents, for the most part unpublished present Parisian cultural, political, and intellectual life of the period, linked to the “**black vogue**”, by exploring 4 large themes:

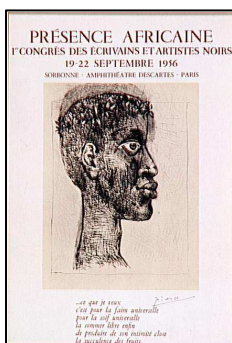
- the influences of **Black Americans and intellectuals from Haiti**;
- **Paulette Nardal and her literary salon**;
- **militants for the equality of rights against colonialism and against segregation**;
- **négritude**.



Dogon anthropo-zoomorphic mask

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2 - The journal and publishing house of *Présence Africaine*: a project, commitments



This sequence exposes the **project and commitments of *Présence Africaine*** (publication of all the great texts of **Aimé Césaire**, of the famous work of **Cheik Anta Diop** “**Negro nations and cultures**”, etc.) and explains how the founder, **Alioune Diop**, **succeeding in bringing together all the actors of black diasporas**.

The creation of the journal and the editorial commitments – from the inventory of black cultures to anticolonialism – will be presented through exceptional hand-written documents by **Jean-Paul Sartre** and **André Breton**, original photos by **Alfred Métraux**, and great movements and figures from the history of black culture – such as the **Black Panthers** and **Malcolm X**.

3 - 1956-1959: black intellectuals’ debate. The congress of black artists and writers (Paris Sorbonne, 1956 and Rome, 1959)

Organized by *Présence Africaine* in 1956 and 1959, the two congresses of black artists and writers were initiated by Alioune Diop, who attempted to apply developed principals to practice in his editorial commitments, thus offering a forum to intellectuals and writers of the black diaspora.

The objectives of these congresses, which took place amidst colonization, the Cold War, Apartheid, and racial segregation in the United States, were to **create the common inventory of black cultures, reflect on the situation of Blacks in the world, and to prepare the African independences to come.**

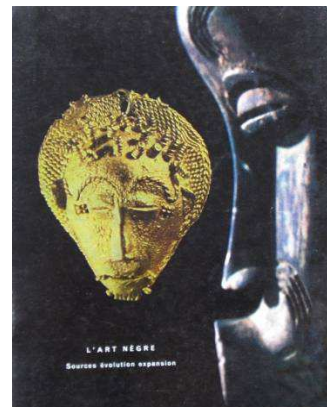
Original posters created by Picasso for these congresses, photographs and unpublished audio recordings provide information on the content of the debates that animated the black literary and intellectual from 1950-1960.

4 - Dakar 1966: The arts of Africa in Africa

In initiating and in participating actively in the organization of the 1st World Festival of negro arts, *Présence Africaine* continued its work of valorization of the richness and diversity of artistic practices of Africans, but also the diaspora.

This festival, first great cultural event organized in Africa by a young independent African state, represented the period of strong political involvement for Léopold Sédar Senghor, President of the young republic of Senegal.

A video installation provides a sense of the richness of the living arts during the festival; **original posters and programs from the period** present the multiple events organized during this festival; and a part of the **objects exhibited during the exhibitions on the “negro art”** are also presented.



*** CURATION**

Sarah Frioux-Salgas did her studies in African History in Paris 1 (research on the slave trade and slavery in the Caribbean).

She was the exhibition assistant at the Museum of the Art and History of Judaism (“Marc Chagall: Hadassah”, 2002, “Tim: a being of his time”, 2003).

Since 2003, she has been the **head of the archives and documentation of collections at the library of the musée du quai Branly.**

She collaborated with Edouard Glissant in May 2007 for the day of “Memory of Slavery and Abolition”, and contributed to the catalog of the exhibition “Strangers in the time of colonial exhibition” (National Center on the History of Immigration, 2008).

*** PRACTICAL INFORMATION: WWW.QUAIBRANLY.FR**

Upon the opening of the exhibition, publication of a **special issue of the journal GRADHIVA**, entitled **The African Exhibition. The black conditions: a genealogy of debates.** (Articles by Pap Ndiaye, Anthony Mangeon, Bernard Gainot, Julien Hage, Romuald Fonkoua, Marc-Vincent Howlett, Eloi Ficquet, Lorraine Gallimardet. Editorials by Georges Balandier, René Depestre, Daniel Maximin).

Supported by **TOTAL**
FOUNDATION

Présence Africaine: a forum, a movement, a network is presents on the East Mezzanine at the same time as the exhibition *Artists of Abomey: Dialogue on an African Kingdom.*

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