

on the ground and pairs the pebble's movement with a large echo. Through sound, the tiny pebble acts as a reverberation of the enormous earthquake.

**How have these ideas translated to the sound in your own films?**

In the most recent work I made, a cell and composited animation, *Lake Valley* (2016), collages fragments from 19th-century children's books illustrations, cutting up the different surfaces and re-upholstering them into this suburban landscape in the present. A pot of boiling water is actually a composite of an illustration of woman's hair

and waves, which composited together reads as pasta in water. Similarly, in sound, I took extracted the foley from children's films and spliced foley that was once used to express one kind of movement, to now describe a different set of movements.

**So it serves as a formal morphology? What was once a woman's hair becomes water in a pot.**

What was once the sound of someone spitting, when layered on top of itself and given a new tempo, becomes the sound of the boiling water. The references imbedded in each sound, as in

each image, together create a heterotopic landscape.

**Why is it important to you to use a ready-made that you then modulate and shift, rather than to invite someone in to compose a soundscape for you?**

Putting together sounds and images with alternate histories and depths and then feeling all of these volumes has been a necessary process for me in learning, and I'd be excited to work on a cinematic score, if I could find a framework for it. ☺

## FUTURA 89+ Hans Ulrich Obrist & Simon Castets

### interview ELISABETH SUTHERLAND

*With the collaboration  
of Katherine Dionysius*



THE FUTURA 89+ SERIES  
FEATURES INTERVIEWS  
WITH ARTISTS, WRITERS,  
ACTIVISTS, ARCHITECTS,  
FILMMAKERS, SCIENTISTS AND  
ENTREPRENEURS WHO WERE  
BORN IN OR AFTER 1989.

**You've said that you're interested in performance and performative objects in a sub-Saharan context. What do you see as the characteristics—social, cultural, political, environmental or otherwise—of a sub-Saharan context?**

My experience is limited to Ghana, and so I can only really speak for the people I've met from my life and work there. I'm interested in exploring—that's where the motivation lies—and so "sub-Saharan" is purely a geographical descriptor. There is a tendency, especially in the West but on the continent also, to generalize the characteristics and cultures of the peoples in this area. For me, it's more interesting to think about extreme localization: how people in diverse (or, for that matter, very specific) contexts within that locale experience life in an increasingly glo-

balized and interconnected world, how they hold onto and celebrate their differences. That being said, I think there is an incredible vibe that characterizes African creatives—an improvisatory, multi-adaptable spirit; psychic, intellectual, heady, fun; a spirit that is alive, steady, in constant flux, in constant negotiation with Self and Other, the past and present, the world as is and the world as it will be.

**Your 2015 work *Sui Generis*, which we included in the 89plus exhibition "Filter Bubble" at LUMA Westbau in Zurich, was created in response to the #accrafloods hashtag that had emerged earlier that year after more than two hundred people died as a result of a flood-related incident. What are your feelings towards social media activism?**

# REGULARS

I think social media is a useful tool, but people forget about the echo chamber: you're friends with people you know, probably of a similar background and beliefs as you, and so it's easy to forget about the reflecting back at you of your own views, goals and ways of looking at and seeing the world. People hide behind a hashtag and feel like they're contributing to a movement, taking a stand. I think it's sometimes hard for people to translate online activism into real results in the physical world. We often forget, especially as young people, to be careful that our decisions and stances online translate into real space. That's a question to revisit: digital, physical, virtual—what qualifies as real?

***Sui Generis* is a video work that features choreographed performance and text. Could you talk a little about the performance and how you use movement and the body in your work?**

In Ghana, we have a very strong oral tradition and culture—our history is held not in books or scrolls, but in the bodies and the tongues of women and men, grandmothers and okyeame. So there is a very strong performance culture and performative element to

our histories, both on a grander historical scale and on the level of daily personal narrative, but more to the point, there is this idea that history as narrative is ingrained into our bodies. We have very codified movements, not only in dance—*ad-owa*, *kete*, *kpanlogo*—but also in physical expressions that are not ritual but perfunctory, standardized expressions of disgust, excitement, sadness. So far, progressively, part of each work I make is exploring aspects of this movement culture, establishing this idea of the body as vessel, as historical and cultural text.

**Do you have a preference for live performance or recorded performance? Do you think anything is lost in the documentation of the live event or, on the con-**

**trary, that the video format can imbue the work with more meaning?**

I think that they are two different formats and two different ways of responding. I started working with recordings in part because of the demand nowadays for documentation, but for me, there is always a problem with recordings. Videos can be a stunning visual experience, but I still find them flatter, less sensory than performance. It's also the fact that people take photo and video of everything nowadays, and there's this question about human presence—being there for your life instead of compulsively chronicling these carefully choreographed moments. I'd like to find a way to use it as a layer as opposed to an object in itself, like in projection as opposed to on screens. It's an aesthetic and ideological question I hope to address for myself in my explorations of video as a format.

**What role do books play for you in the digital age?**

Books are my first love. They return me to a grounded place, somewhere tactile and solid.

**You have a background in theatre, but more recently you have started to experiment with video and sculpture. Across your projects, you play the role of researcher, writer, storyteller, director, performer, videographer, editor. Do you favor certain roles over others? Do you like to have creative control over all aspects of a work, or would you outsource certain tasks given the opportunity?**

I like to get my hands dirty. I like to know how things work. I'm very biased towards the writing, directing and design side of the work, but I'm also open to working with people, especially if they can make life easier. Making work is very intimate for

89plus is a long-term international, multi-platform research project co-founded and co-curated by Simon Castets and Hans Ulrich Obrist, investigating the generation of innovators born in or after 1989 through conferences, books, periodicals, residencies and exhibitions. 89plus.com / Instagram: @89plus





**Elisabeth Etua Sutherland** is the founder and artistic director of the Accra Theatre Workshop.

showing how not to behave shows how to behave. He has sons, and friends, and this wife who occupies a secondary role. Sometimes she's called Aso, and other times Okonore Yaa. Who is she? Why does she stay with him and his troublesome ways? Where does she get the strength? What is her story? Where did she come from? Many versions of her exist across the folkloric tradition, but there is no consistent sense of who she is or might be, as opposed to other stock characters like the wily leopard or the wise tortoise. It's been a minor obsession for several years, and this work came about in a big way because I wanted to give her voice, a home in my body, her own narrative space.

**Tell us about how you are developing this story into an experimental multimedia landscape using augmented reality and mixed reality.**

I'm developing an idea for exploring the "digital residue" of a live performance, the things that are leftover after the physical body leaves the performance space. In addition to an interactive video installation, I'm working on an augmented reality app that uses live stream video from your smartphone's

**In Ghana, we have a very strong oral tradition—our history is in the bodies and the tongues of women and men.**

me—there is a lot of trust required in the process—so it's important that whoever gets involved is interested and invested, and commits. But I'm always interested to collaborate with like-minded people.

**The work you're developing at your 89plus residency at the Google Cultural Institute in Paris is a digital per-**

**formance that crafts the origin story of Aso, the wife of Anansi, a famous Akan (spider) trickster in African folklore. What drew you to this folktale?**

Anansi as a figure is at the center of Ghanaian mythology and one of our strongest surviving oral traditions. He is not the best role model, but then, that is a trickster: a character that by

camera, and is triggered by physical image targets on top of which 3D scans of objects from the performance appear. This allows me to layer these "leftover" renderings of the live work in virtual space. It also allows the audience/user to interact in real time with a video overlaid on their surroundings and, hopefully, some elements in the video installation as well.

**So many people have such a limited view of what theatre is and what it could be, and I wanted to change that.**

Your work seems to be increasingly concerned with interactivity. How does the role of the audience change between the traditional recorded performance and this new context of a multimedia storytelling landscape?

It's a more active role for the audience. It takes away some of that flattening you experience with video, and the audience has a totally different, more immersive experience. It's possible to give also more options to the viewer: they can walk around and experience different angles, dif-

ferent stimuli; it's not so much of a forced perspective. It's more multi-sensorial, and in that way, it communicates more closely something akin to a body-to-body transmission of narrative. You can decide a bit more where to look, what to take away. It's more democratic.

**You've said that you're interested in the way**

**culture can shape identity and development, and in the impact that "active cultural curation" can potentially have on individual and national attitudes. Can you expand on this?**

In my country, there isn't the sense that there's much effort on the part of the government to carve out a sense of identity, which I think gives a lot of purpose and direction to a people. It's hard to know what you want if you don't know who you are—individually, of course, but even more so collectively. We're like a herd of lost sheep.

All images courtesy of the artist  
Photo credits: Oualid Khelifi (previous page);  
Desire Clarke (this page)



This is also where I think the habit of generalizing the African experience is potentially harmful: an endless homogenizing often relates to a loss of texture and clarity in the discourse about us, and following that, in the directions we take as nations, as communities, and as individuals. In terms of narrative, extreme localization is important, decentralization is important, and they must be accomplished in a very precise, very deliberate way by people local to those contexts.

**Tell us about the Interstice Project. What is your role in the project, and what are your motivations in bringing it to life?**

The Interstice Project is a very personal mission born out of a desire to create physical space and technical support for the creative processes of artists working digitally, myself included. It's almost impossible to have a truly in-depth research and development process for digital performance pieces because of practical things like electricity and access to equipment, so I wanted to simplify that process and make my findings open source for artists working on the continent who have similar issues. The plan is to model portable structures after my current studio, an upcycled shipping container, which will be equipped and deployed as mobile digital art stations across the continent. I plan to start hardcore fundraising in 2017.

**What motivated you to co-found the Accra Theatre Workshop (ATW) in 2013? Who are your co-founders? What kind of projects do you do there?**

There was a need for the platform, for that kind of organization making a different kind of work. So many people, not just Ghanaians, have such a limited view of what theatre is and what it could be, and I wanted to change

that. We tend to be a bit experimental, especially compared to the sort of stuff you'd typically see in Accra when we started three years ago. I think the scene has expanded a lot since then, even if things are still a bit traditional. I met Emelia Asiedu, my co-founder & co-conspirator, in a kind of serendipitous fashion, through a mutual friend, and we just clicked. It felt right, and we made it happen.

**Tell us about the "Story Marathon" you produced at ATW in 2014-15.**

It was an experiment, to try a full day storytelling event over twelve hours, with invited groups and external performers. It was exhausting, but it was a great experience. There's something magical about live storytelling in that setting—a garden at the Nubuke Foundation. I'd like to try it again in the future, in a format that's a bit more self-contained and carefully curated.

**What's your plan for the next 10 years?**

Don't get bored. ☺

## VISUALIZE Alessio Ascari on THE INEVITABLE FLOW



AS DECLARED BY THE  
MAGAZINE'S NAME AND  
SYMBOLIZED BY ITS EYE-  
SHAPED LOGO, KALEIDOSCOPE  
IS ALL ABOUT "WAYS OF  
SEEING" AND DECODING OUR  
TIMES THROUGH THE  
POLITICAL ACT OF VISION.

"Globalization is a barbarity." One could impulsively attribute such an ardent statement to an outspoken far-left progressive theorist like Naomi Klein, whose 1999 book *No Logo* was the bible of the so-called "anti-globalization movement." To be fair, Klein was always keen to stress that the label was incorrect, as the movement was inherently internationalist, and what it opposed was rather a "ruthless strain" of global corporate capitalism.

But while the backlash against globalization at the start of the 21st century took the form of left-leaning collective protest, from the Seattle riots to Occupy Wall Street, what defines the current political landscape is a new variety of anti-globalization, embracing a populist, reactionary defense of national sovereignty.