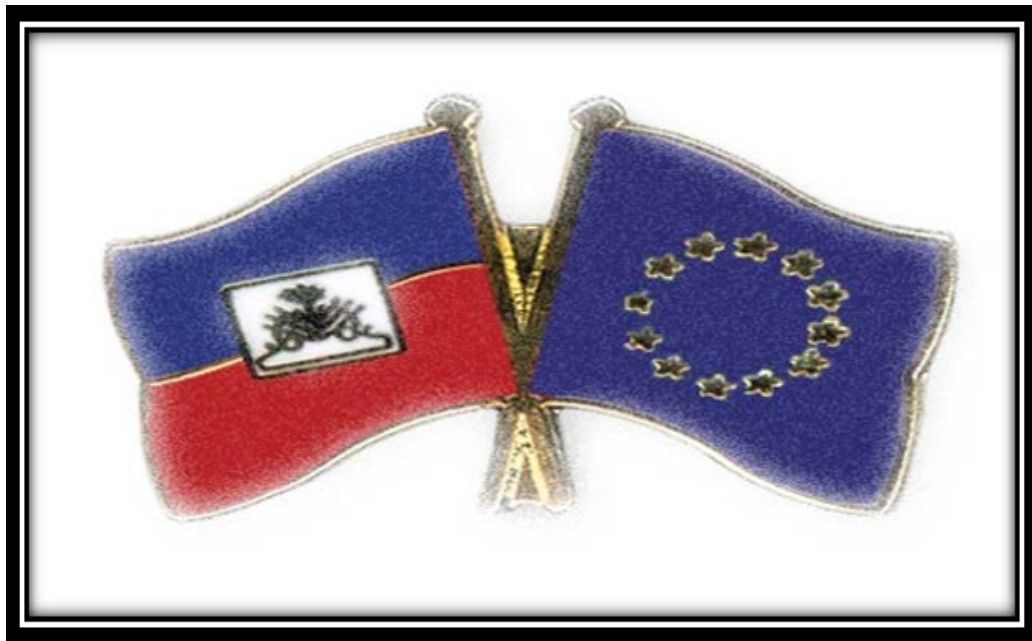


Konesans: New Perspectives on Haitian Studies in Europe



Armstrong Building – Room 1.06

**School of History, Classics and
Archaeology
Newcastle University**

Thursday 4 – Friday 5 April 2019

The workshop brings together experts in Haitian Studies to reflect on the dramatic growth of the field over the past thirty years. The project aims to bring together European-based scholars, volunteers, curators and artists in order to think of Haiti in a global context.

Website: <https://conferences.ncl.ac.uk/konesans/>

Organisers: Dr. Vanessa Mongey (School of History) and Dr. Hannah Durkin (School of English)

Contact: konesansnetwork@gmail.com

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The event is free and open to the public.

Thursday 4 April

09:15 Introduction

Hannah Durkin and Vanessa Mongey

9:30 – 10:40 Panel 1: Geographies

Nadine Baggioni, *Haiti: un espace subalterne au cœur de la mondialisation*

Tabitha McIntosh, *Mapping the Kingdom of Haiti in Europe: digital possibilities and perspectives*

Wendy Asquith and Leah Gordon, *Geographies of Port-au-Prince*

10:40 – 10:50 Coffee break

10:50 – 12:00 Panel 2: Haiti & the World

Florian Kappeler, *Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in the German-speaking World*

Jack Webb, *Haiti in the British Imagination*

Ulrike Mühlischlegel, *Haiti and the Multilingual Caribbean: Archives, Data, Sources*

12:00 – 13:00 Keynote

Kate Hodgson, *Songé St Domingo or Forget Haiti: Trans- imperial connections, national legacies*

13:00 – 14:30 Lunch break

14:30 – 15:50 Panel 3: Gender

Fiona de Hoog Cius, *Female Complicity in Child Slavery*

Raphael Hoermann, *Gendered Representations of Haitian Revolutionary Heroism in Black Atlantic Culture*

Nicole Willson, *Unmaking the Tricolore: Catherine Flon, Material Testimony and Occluded Narratives of Female-Led Resistance in the Haitian Revolution*

16:00 – 17:00 Keynote

Anja Bandau, *French Popular Theater of the 1790s and the Transatlantic Representation of the Haitian Revolution*

Friday 5 April

9:15 – 10:30 Panel 4: Representations

Christian Høgsbjerg, *The Haitian Revolution – A 'Bourgeois Revolution'?*

Jonas Ross Kjærgård, *European Interventions in the Transatlantic Print Culture of the Haitian Revolution: Dubroca and Rainsford*

Rachel Douglas, *Moving Images of Haiti: Beyond Disaster Narratives*

10:30 – 10:40 Coffee break

10:40 – 11:50 Panel 5: The 21st century

Andrea Steinke, *Assemblages of Intervention: Aid Workers in Haiti*

Antony Stewart, *Blan Andeyo: Being Haiti's Advocate in a Far-away Land*

John Cussans, *Vodou 2.0: Countering Popular Misconceptions of Vodou for the 21st Century*

12:00 – 13:00 Keynote

Leah Gordon, *Haitian Art: Multiple Ideologies Between the Altar, the Museum and the Market Place*

Nadine Baggioni (professeure agrégée d'Histoire et Géographie, Aix-en-Provence), *Haïti: un espace subalterne au cœur de la mondialisation*

Le phénomène de la mondialisation peut être analysé à partir du cas paradigmatique d'Haïti. Depuis 1492 Saint-Domingue/Haïti a été traversé par tous les flux – humains, matériels et immatériels – et constamment vidé de son capital. Il a contribué à l'enrichissement des espaces qui l'ont dominé : car, si la mondialisation peut se définir comme une accélération des flux à échelle mondiale, elle se caractérise aussi par une spécialisation et une hiérarchisation des espaces. Ordinairement enseignée du point de vue des espaces gagnants et colonisateurs, ce changement de perspective permet non seulement de comprendre un autre point de vue, mais le processus même. Nous analyserons l'histoire d'Haïti, cœur de la mondialisation selon notre analyse, depuis l'époque coloniale jusqu'à aujourd'hui, avec trois moments clés. Au XVI^e siècle, la rencontre des deux mondes met Hispaniola en première ligne des transformations et des prédatons des conquérants. Au XVIII^e siècle, Saint-Domingue devient la perle des Antilles, modèle d'île à sucre et d'asservissement des « nègres », aboutissant à la troisième révolution atlantique dont la radicalité rebat les cartes idéologiques et politiques dans l'espace américain. Haïti aujourd'hui est apparemment le pays en dehors. Mais, parcouru par tous les flux, il se vide de son capital (humain, naturel) au profit d'autres espaces par les migrations, la dépendance alimentaire ou le poids des ONG. Notre communication s'appuie sur un diaporama composé pour moitié d'images et pour moitié de cartes dynamiques présentant phénomènes et circulations à différentes échelles (régionale, atlantique, mondiale).

Tabitha McIntosh (Birkbeck, University of London), *Mapping the Kingdom of Haiti in Europe: Digital Possibilities and Perspectives*

Unrecognised by any nation on earth and at risk of reinvasion by Restoration France on the one hand, and war with Pétion's Haitian Republic on the other, the Kingdom of Haiti (1811-1820) conducted an informal but extensive Atlantic diplomacy through multilateral trade and the distribution of printed matter. After the collapse of the regime, the Kingdom's printed text continued its Atlantic circulation, this time as looted, traded, collected and then archived matter. I have built a database that records the presence, cataloguing data, provenance and material condition (as available) of 364 physical texts printed in the Kingdom between 1811 and 1820 and now held in institutions around the globe. My presentation would model the capacity of this database to map clusters and density of European contact with the Kingdom, to question received narratives about the centrality of the UK and USA in that trading network, and to raise new questions about trade and collector networks

Wendy Asquith (University of Nottingham) & Leah Gordon (Artist & Curator), *Geographies of Port-au-Prince*

Port-au-Prince is a city with rich social and cultural histories, yet these places, moments and narratives of Haiti's capital city are often covered by layers of discourse that map the city as a site of poverty, of overcrowding – and particularly since the 2010 earthquake – of disaster. In the post-earthquake era, many new and valuable projects have emerged that seek to give a local voice and insight into the ways in which the city has been profoundly reshaped by that event. The Geographies of Port-au-Prince project aims to document and virtually construct a different vision of the city of Port-au-Prince. It is inspired by the growing body of work that seeks to offer new narratives about Haiti. We would like to present our ideas for a project that seeks to gather a selection of individuals' memories associated with particular landmarks, spaces and routes through the city, which will then be mapped virtually on an open-access web platform. Initially, our emphasis will be on using the methods of oral history and filmmaking to gather memories from those who have lived in Port-au-Prince. Alongside this content, we also see possibilities for working with partners and experts, both local and international, to include other archival and newly produced image, audio and text content. We do not seek to create a definitive history of Port-au-Prince, but rather a rich assemblage of stories, memories and recollections that will contribute to the long-standing work of local historians – such as Georges Corvington – and thereby encourage new understandings of the city.

Florian Kappeler (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen), *Repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in the German-speaking World*

Although the German reception is a most significant example of the repercussions of the Haitian Revolution in Europe, it is almost unknown today. However, particularly in the late 18th and early 19th century there was a broad discussion on the successful liberation of the Haitians from slavery and colonial rule. At that time, the Haitian Revolution was regarded as a turning point in the history of colonialism and challenged ideologies such as racism and eurocentrism. My paper will outline such reverberations of the Haitian Revolution in the German-speaking world until the mid-19th century that have been understudied up to now. Its main focus will be on history books and historical novels that created persistent narratives of the Haitian Revolution. Firstly, the abolition of slavery in Haiti was seen as a destructive force at first, while it became part of a narrative of modernization of capitalist and colonial rule later on – a narrative that was also used for the purpose of opening up new sales markets in Haiti. Secondly, a narrative of the revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture as an extraordinary character bridged the gap between racist ideologies and the undeniable agency of non-white people in the Haitian Revolution. Thirdly, the Haitian Revolution was seen as an imitation of the French Revolution until the 1820s, when it was depicted as an indigenous revolution with a specific character or even as a revolutionary avant-garde.

Jack Webb (University of Manchester), *Haiti in the British Imagination*

Haiti became independent in 1804 following a protracted and complicated revolution in which the enslaved and free people of colour twice abolished slavery and defeated the imperial armies of France, Britain and Spain. Upon independence, these revolutionaries constructed a nation state, which would be the first in the world to be governed over by people of African descent. Throughout the nineteenth century, the British Empire expanded and consolidated to dominate much of the globe. This paper explores how the British represented Haiti in its Age of Empire. More specifically, it will examine two cases of diplomatic disputes between Haitian officials and representatives of the British Empire based around the Caribbean. The first conflict rested on the question of British traders smuggling coffee out of Haiti (1902). The second relates to a naturalisation act (1907) in which a number of British-Jamaican subjects became Haitian against their will. What becomes clear in an analysis of the discourse of these disputes is the importance of the Victorian and Edwardian notion of ‘respectability’. In the first instance, the claims of Haitians were relegated due to the perception that they did not have the appropriate respectability to represent a state. In the second, a portion of the British population were made Haitian on the perceived basis that they were not respectable. The notion of respectability was thus central in the strategy of denigration taken up by representatives of the British Empire against Haiti and, indeed, Haitians.

Ulrike Mühlshlegel (Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut, Berlin), *Haiti and the Multilingual Caribbean: Archives, Data, Sources*

Two main characteristics of the Caribbean, which also have a significant impact on research, are its multilingualism and its geographical extension. The Caribbean is ideally suitable for digital libraries which compile documents from a wide geographical area, or, as is the case on the island of Hispaniola, bring together collections that are divided by national and language barriers on a much smaller geographical space. At the same time, digital libraries offer new access opportunities for research and provide libraries and archives with solutions for the archiving of stocks which are in danger of deteriorating. The paper aims to present Caribbean libraries, archives and databases that offer services to researchers, with a special focus on those that contain relevant resources for Haitian Studies worldwide.

Fiona de Hoog Cius (Sheffield Hallam University), *Female Complicity in Child Slavery*

This paper discusses my Ph.D. research in gender studies/modern slavery studies in which I carried out a gender analysis of Haiti with the aim to understand women's involvement in the trafficking of children. The problem of child domestic slavery (*restavèk*) is of a significant scale, and its existence can be explained by the social structures and gender dynamics of Haitian society in its context of extreme economic poverty and lack of infrastructure. Falling among the responsibilities of women, children's lives can only be reflections of adult society, embodying the consequences of extreme gender disparities and female oppression. My research thus looks at the roles of women in *restavèk* children's lives as mothers, traffickers and slaveholders and I attempt to contextualise their choices and actions in the environment in which they exist. Ultimately, as with much of the world, women tend to be victims of symbolic violence to a much greater degree than men and men are seemingly responsible for much of the violence, most evidently in terms of gender-based violence, inflicted onto women. However, my gender analysis does not simply place the blame on male behaviours to elucidate the disparities in Haitian society, but rather looks at the marginalisation of Haitian masculinities and male struggles for control and power stemming from an oppressive patriarchal system which victimises men as well as women and children – albeit in very different ways. This paper therefore follows a journey of research which started with the enslavement of children at the hands of women and ended with an understanding of male disempowerment.

Raphael Hoermann (University of Central Lancashire), *Gendered Representations of Haitian Revolutionary Heroism in Black Atlantic Culture*

Configurations of Haitian revolutionary heroism have been constitutive for Black Atlantic thought and culture. In the nineteenth and twentieth century, most of these configurations have been very male-centred patriarchal. This applies for instance to William Wells Brown's mid-nineteenth century sketches of Toussaint Louverture and to Frederick Douglass' patriarchal configuration of revolutionary Haiti, brimming with "Negro manhood, Negro bravery." For Douglass in his 1893 "Lecture on Hayti" such black virility forms the basis for further liberation of the Atlantic World. Some twentieth-century histories of the Haitian Revolution, such as C.L.R. James' seminal intervention *The Black Jacobins* (1938/64), completely write women out of the revolution's history. Even Jacob Lawrence's much-praised Toussaint Louverture Series (1938) of paintings focuses on Toussaint and assigns a marginal role to women in the revolution. However, as I will sketch out in this paper, from the second half of the twentieth-century these male, patriarchal configurations of Haitian revolutionary heroism have been increasingly challenged by feminist writers and artists. Given the constraints of this short paper, I will focus on two examples. Drawing on archival material, I will inquire how Lorraine Hansberry in her fragmentary "Toussaint" drama questions his sexually exploitative behaviour. Contrasting it with Lawrence's series, I will inquire how Lubaina Himid in her watercolour series *Days in the Life Toussaint L'Ouverture* (1986/7) highlights overlooked forms of female Black Atlantic heroism in the Haitian Revolution.

Nicole Willson (University of Kent), *Unmaking the Tricolore: Catherine Flon, Material Testimony and Ocluded Narratives of Female-Led Resistance in the Haitian Revolution*

In the written history of the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) the experiences of women have been largely superseded by accounts of iconic *gwo nèg* 'big men' (C. L. R. James's *The Black Jacobins* is the most notable example). Elsewhere, their stories have been subjected to silence and mythologization. This is partly owing to the fact that the colonialist archive privileges written texts over other modes of articulation and expression that enabled rich Afro-Creole cultures to thrive in the archive of slavery. These expressive modes are what Transatlantic scholar Danielle Skeeahan calls the 'extra-discursive or material texts' that bear vital traces of enslaved and free women's agency. As yet, there remains no definitive scholarly account about the myriad ways in which women engaged with the revolutionary experience and articulated their own narratives of resistance. However, as Marlene Daut argues, 'we must continue to try to uncover' the "real lives" of black women during the Revolution [...] even if doing so means to approach the topic in unconventional ways'. This paper asks how we might attempt to re-assemble unarticulated narratives from disparate sources, looking closely at the mythologised figure of Catherine Flon, who purportedly sewed together the first Haitian flag at the Congress of Arcahaie on 18 May 1803 after Dessalines symbolically severed the white centre panel from the French Tricolore. It also examines how artists, activists and community groups in present-day Haiti aim to preserve such figures for posterity.

Christian Høgsbjerg (University of Brighton), *The Haitian Revolution - A 'Bourgeois Revolution'*

This paper will explore the contested concept of 'bourgeois revolution' and discuss its possible applicability to the Haitian Revolution of 1791-1804 – which despite being one of the great world-historical revolutions in the epoch of 'bourgeois-democratic revolution' has always been marginalised rather than centred in discussions of the concept. Building on the classic Marxist work on the Haitian Revolution, *The Black Jacobins* by C.L.R. James, in particular this paper will focus on the contradictory role played by the revolutionary leader Toussaint Louverture during the Haitian Revolution, and examine why he has sometimes been seen as a 'black Robespierre'. In the process the paper will not only examine the complexity of the class forces and leadership involved in the Haitian Revolution but also touch on some of the recent wider scholarly debates around the relationship between slavery and capitalism. The aim of the paper overall will be to hopefully help open up a wider discussion around the development of capitalism in pre and post-revolutionary Haiti. While certainly not attempting to make any definitive claims about this very complicated question, this paper will tentatively discuss how and when it can be said that Haiti emerged as an independent centre of capital accumulation – and explore what role the Haitian Revolution and in particular the leadership of the black rebel insurgent army played in this process.

Jonas Ross Kjærgård (Aarhus University), *European Interventions in the Transatlantic Print Culture of the Haitian Revolution: Dubroca and Rainsford*

The Haitian revolution (1791-1804) caused a major rupture in the colonial world and it was the object of much writing and debate in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century U.S. and Europe. According to the recent work of Marlene Daut (*Tropics of Haiti*, 2015), a "transatlantic print culture of the Haitian revolution" developed in these years and its different international contributors came to share a set of standard tropes that merged with a "pseudoscientific theory of racial difference". In my talk, I will discuss Daut's methodology and its relation to the "silencing thesis" of Michel-Rolph Trouillot. Based on a French (Dubroca: *La vie de Toussaint-Louverture*, 1802) and an Irish (Rainsford: *An Historical Account of the Black Empire of Hayti*, 1805) example of early nineteenth century historiography, I ask whether Daut underemphasizes the importance of national differences in the transatlantic writings about the Haitian revolution. The talk ends by asking whether a re-evaluation of the role of the nation-state in this transatlantic material gives cause to reconsider how a pseudo-scientific theory of race develops within the global narratives of the Haitian revolution.

Rachel Douglas (University of Glasgow), *Moving Images of Haiti: Beyond Disaster Narratives*

This paper explores representations of Haiti in recent Haitian literature and visual culture. It examines how these Haitian-origin self-representations differ from external images of the place and its culture as an exceptionally bad, scary place where terrible things happen. I also look at how literature and history written by writers from elsewhere in the Caribbean including C. L. R. James, Kamau Brathwaite and Édouard Glissant among others centre around Haiti and its revolution as a success story. This paper responds to Gina Athena Ulysse's urgent post-earthquake calls for new narratives of Haiti and for Caribbean/Haitian *rasanblaj*: to make an assembly, regrouping, gathering, ceremony, protest. This paper uncovers a process of making *rasanblaj* running throughout recent Haitian literature and film, including graphic novels, which combine text, image and headlines from Haitian news stories. The many different versions of Haitian and Haitian-centred work will also be read through the prism of the *rasanblaj* process and its multiple layers

Panel 5: The 21st Century, Chair: Dr. Fionnghuala Sweeney, Newcastle University

Andrea Steinke (Freie Universität Berlin), *Assemblages of Intervention: Aid Workers in Haiti*

In 2016, more than 663,000 people worked for the United Nations (UN), the International Red Cross, and the major international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) on an international assignment in countries of humanitarian and development intervention (Aid Worker Security Database 2017). Those “mobile professionals” (Fechter and Walsh 2010) inhabiting “aidland” (Mosse 2011), constituting a transnational elite network of privileged work migrants, are often driven by a common set of values, a particular perspective on modernity (Stirrat 2000) and share similar backgrounds, education and trajectories (Goetze 2017). Studies on the aid system in Haiti – a case in point considering the use of Haiti as a laboratory for intervention (Müller and Steinke 2018) – rarely focus on the ones steering the interventions as significant factors of analysis. Especially anthropologists often share time, space, social background and a certain historicity with them. However, little ethnographic attention is given to the interveners, in terms of a “community of practice” (Autesserre 2014) as much as on their individual characteristics (Sending 2017) and how both factors influence the course of intervention. The proposed paper will take those international intervention professional at the heart of the analysis, and unravel their intimate relationalities to anthropologists. It is based on ethnographic analysis of the aid sector in post-earthquake Haiti between 2011 and 2018 and proposes a more thorough engagement with intervention professionals as subjects of analysis to allow deeper insights into the dynamics of the “assemblages of intervention” (Doucet 2016) affecting the fate of Haiti.

Antony Stewart (Independent Scholar), *Blan Andeyo: Being Haiti's Advocate in a Far-away Land*

Sometimes, Haiti feels all-too-far away, beyond the mountains, or under the water. We know Haiti well, of course, at least we try to, but the conversations we have, within activist and teaching circles, all-too-often orbit around a concept of Haiti that is attached to its irritating but popular representation; that of emblematic backwardness, and of distance (but we are the distant ones). How then, were we drawn to Haiti? What compelled us to try and lessen the distance between us and this nation? There is an emotional as well as an academic connection to our work on Haiti; it influences who we are, what we do, and what we talk about when we talk about our work. This reflective paper examines this space between the discursive and the practical, the scholar and the activist, from the perspective of a historian of Haiti and an advocate for Haitian reform, and considers the particular challenges studying Haiti from a European home. It draws upon both my personal experiences of academic activism as a British PhD student and as chair of the UK-based Haiti Support Group, as well as on the history, geography and politics of academic efforts to educate Europe about Haiti over the past two hundred years. From the scholar-politicians of late-nineteenth century Haiti such as Antènor Firmin, to Alfred Métraux and the practical anthropologists of the 1940s, this paper looks at the past and present of Haiti and Europe's progressive reform efforts in the hope to inspire the future.

John Cussans (Artist, Writer and Independent Researcher), *Vodou 2.0: Countering Popular Misconceptions of Vodou for the 21st Century*

Despite decades of reasoned and sensitive scholarly work, Haitian Vodou remains one of the world's most misunderstood and maligned religions. Popular representations of Vodou outside Haiti still tell us far more about the fantasies, racial stereotypes and occult clichés residually embedded in the cultures of colonial societies than they do about the religion they superficially refer to. With the development of globally connected computer networks over the last three decades, and the availability of increasingly affordable digital recording technologies, practitioners of Haitian Vodou now have the capacity to bypass the stereotype-enforcing channels of the mainstream media and to present a fuller and truer account of their religion, grounded in the lived-experience of its practitioners and the cultural ecology of the country in which it is vitally embedded. Taking examples from Math Jerome's 'Vodou Connection' YouTube channel, the recent *Pòtoprens: The Urban Artists of Port-au-Prince* exhibition curated by Leah Gordon and Edouard Duval-Carrié, and BrandTrade's *Vodu Nuvo* marketing project, this presentation aims to begin a conversation about how Vodou practitioners within Haiti and their colleagues in other countries can work together on projects designed to bring a richer understanding of Haitian Vodou to a global public, one that is corrective of the damage done by two centuries of religious persecution, popular misrepresentation and cultural defamation. What opportunities do social media platforms offer us for the realisation of such projects?

Keynotes

Thursday 4th April 12:00 – 13:00

Kate Hodgson (University College Cork), *Songé St Domingo or Forget Haiti: Trans-imperial Connections, National Legacies*

The litany ‘Songé St. Domingo’, spoken by a congregation of slaves in Trinidad in 1805, was a promise to the enslaved and a warning to slave owners throughout the Atlantic world. Hundreds of thousands of Africans and their descendants had just forged their own nation at the heart of the Caribbean. The Atlantic world was irrevocably changed, yet the promise of the enslaved to remember was countered by powerful injunctions to forget. Profits and legacies of transatlantic slavery continued to shape the global economy. The Haitian revolution was ‘silenced’ (Trouillot) and ‘disavowed’ (Fischer). The previous existence of colonial Saint-Domingue was obscured as the last colonists collected their pensions and compensation. ‘Forget Haiti’ (Miller) gradually became the default. This paper examines the afterlives of Saint-Domingue from a transatlantic perspective that seeks out connections across oceans, empires and national boundaries, from the enslaved in Trinidad to entrepreneurs in post-empire France. Ultimately, it aims to start setting the compensation records at the heart of the national ‘Legacies of British Slave Ownership’ project in transnational dialogue with the compensation paid to former Saint-Domingue colonists earlier in the 1830s. The ‘Legacies’ project has identified individuals and institutions in Britain and Ireland that benefitted from slavery in the British colonies. But the rich profits of slavery spread far beyond national borders. Taking my starting point in Saint-Domingue, the only French Caribbean colony never fully overtaken by the British, I aim to foreground how profits from slave trading and slave ownership enriched far wider transnational and trans-colonial networks of families and individuals than previously imagined.

Thursday 4th April 16:00 – 17:00

Anja Bandau (Leibniz Universität Hannover), *French Popular Theater of the 1790s and the Transatlantic Representation of the Haitian Revolution*

This contribution discusses the modes of representing the Haitian Revolution through French popular theater in the 1790s (Charles Pigault-Lebrun’s *Le Blanc et le noir*, 1795/96 and Beraud’s and Rosny’s *Adonis, ou le bon nègre*, 1798). Being one of the most popular genres at the time, the plays are written and performed simultaneously to the events that come to be designated as Haitian Revolution (1792-1804) and comment partial events and current discussions in the metropolis as well as in the colonial society in Saint Domingue. In the course of the talk I will argue that the texts and what we know about the modes of their performance are exemplary for the way news, imagery and modes of representation circulate between different textual genres and different transatlantic, colonial spheres. How the (melo)dramatic mode negotiates the registers of the spectacular, the sublime and the sentimental will be central to my inquiry. A further line of thought is that tropes created in enlightenment texts in the middle of the 18th century (1769) provide ways of representing the slave revolution of Saint Domingue at the end of the 18th century and beyond. Though concentrating on the French metropolis, this analysis draws on transnational and trans-colonial research on these representations of colonial and racial revolution that are vital to discuss main textual strategies to discursively negotiate the revolutionary racialized Other.

Friday 5th April 12:00 – 13:00

Leah Gordon (Artist & Curator), *Haitian Art: Multiple Ideologies Between the Altar, The Museum and the Market Place*

Gordon will discuss the possibilities and problematics of exhibiting Haitian art from her experience of co-curating 'Kafou: Haiti, Art & Vodou' at Nottingham Contemporary; as a member of the curatorial team for 'In Extremis' at the Fowler Museum, UCLA, Los Angeles; as one of the directors of the 'Ghetto Biennale' held in Port-au-Prince; as the adjunct curator for the Haitian Pavilion, 'Death & Fertility', at the 54th Venice Biennale and most recently as the co-curator of PÒTOPRENS: The Urban Artists of Port-au-Prince held at Pioneer Works, NYC and due to move to MOCA, North Miami.

Leah Gordon explores the multifarious links between Vodou and art, and multiple lineages from the Vodou altar to current contemporary practice. Gordon will discuss the use of image and artefact within Vodou and the appropriation of secular art for sacred spaces in contemporary Haiti. Gordon will explore the liminal space that contemporary artists currently inhabit maintaining their ancestral histories and cultural antecedents, whilst trying to negotiate a contemporary art market which still has a conflicted relationship toward ethnographic and ritual objects. Gordon will discuss various mechanisms to de-Other the work, including negotiating viewer expectations through programming, the muddling of art and artefact and draw parallels between Haitian art and contemporary art practice.



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