

UNITED STATES OF AFRICA

September 21 – December 31 2011

In reference to the notorious Congo Conference that took place in Berlin from November 1884 to February 1885 under the spearhead of the first German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, Berlin based Senegalese artist Mansour Ciss Kanakassy created an art laboratory in 2002 called ***Laboratoire de Déberlinisation*** (laboratory of deberlinization). The laboratory is a conceptual framework for artistic action to unpack the exploitation and mercantile ideologies applied on Africa in the late nineteenth century known as the Scramble for Africa. It works collaboratively by reaching out to diverse professional backgrounds and artistic practices.

The Congo Conference was convened to discuss economic dominance and partition of the African territories among European powers. It is widely recognized that the partitions and borders drawn then, followed by a ruthless colonial rule, are – among other things – at the root of contemporary crisis and disruptions that undermine economical and political progress in Africa.

Aware of the insurmountable obstacles that would indefinitely postpone the advent of a single currency and a unified space for mobility and exchange, Mansour Ciss Kanakassy and other contemporary African artists such as Pascale Marthine Tayou have substituted themselves to the states to achieve the seemingly impossible. They do not need endless committees, high level meetings, majority votes and they like to create a symbolic land to assert their political stand.

The Afro, an imaginary single currency for Africa, is the artistic response to bankrupt policies of the post independence era. It is a conceptual work using multiple practices such as installation, print, performance and public lecture. The exhibition is accompanied by a newspaper with texts by Simon Njami and Koyo Kouoh as well as an interview of the artist by David Cadasse.

Mansour Ciss Kanakassy

Born in Dakar in 1957, Ciss studied sculpture at Institut National des Arts in Dakar from 1973 to 1977. He has exhibited widely in Africa and Europe in group and solo shows at the Dakar Biennale, Musée National du Mali, Bamako, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst, Berlin, and Museum der Weltkulturen, Frankfurt am Main among other venues. His works are in the collections of Museum der Weltkulturen in Frankfurt am Main, the National Collection of Senegal and the Central Bank of West African States. He is the recipient of the Léopold Sedar Senghor award for artistic excellence. He lives and works in Berlin.

Education

In collaboration with University Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar (UCAD) and Institut Supérieur des Arts et des Cultures (ISAC) the lecture program „**United States of Africa**“: **utopia or reality**, will take place from October to December 2011. Lecturers are **Mamadou Lamine Diallo**, economist and former project leader of United States of Africa at the African Union, historians **Prof. Abdoulaye Bathily** and **Dr Ibrahima Wone**, author and social critic **Safietou Ly Sow** and rapper **Didier Awadi**.