

Amant

Manthia Diawara

Towards the New Baroque of Voices

[English Guide]

November 20, 2021 – January 30, 2022



Towards a New Baroque of Voices, 2021 (Island of Gorée)

Amant

Curatorial Text

The works of filmmaker, critic, and professor Manthia Diawara (Bamako, Mali, 1953) are marked by a personal, deep understanding of Black African and African American history and culture. Diawara follows a tradition of ethnographic cinema in order to subvert it. He turns the former object of study (the Black African) into the questioning subject. As an active voice in his films, he takes up the position of someone who admits not knowing, who asks questions, and who looks for explanations to get to the heart of things.

Towards the New Baroque of Voices (2021) is anchored in the voice and thought of Martinican philosopher and poet Édouard Glissant (1928-2011), a close friend and recurring film subject of Diawara. This new video installation brings together recordings from the last four decades with writers, artists, poets, politicians, and thinkers from various places and eras. The original footage, some of which previously unseen, features writers, actors, activists, and philosophers, such as: Maryse Condé, Fatou Diome, Danny Glover, David Hammons, Sembène Ousmane, Jean Rouch, Wole Soyinka, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, and Aminata Traoré.

Glissant's poetics of relation and the right to keep one's own thoughts and personality in opacity, permeate the installation and bring the poet's legacy into the present. The installation works as a space in which to meditate and understand the evolution of social, political, and philosophical theories on both a personal and intimate level.

The adjoining documentation room showcases a bibliography of Diawara's topics and intellectual universe, as well as two past films directly related to the people and themes portrayed in the main film: *Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation* (2010) and *Negritude: A Dialogue Between Soyinka and Senghor* (2015).

Towards the New Baroque of Voices is a coproduction between the 34th São Paulo Biennial and Amant.

Amant

About the artist

Born in Mali's capital Bamako in 1953, Manthia Diawara spent his youth in Guinea until 1964, when his family was expelled from the country. He went to study literature in France and subsequently moved to the United States, where he completed his Ph.D. at Indiana University in 1985.

Manthia Diawara is a distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and Film at New York University. His essays on art, cinema and politics have appeared in *Artforum*, *Libération*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Mediapart*, and *The New York Times*. He is the author of two acclaimed memoirs: *In Search of Africa* (Harvard University Press, 2000) and *We Won't Budge: An African in the World* (Basic Books, 2008). Diawara's recent films include: *Édouard Glissant, One World in Relation* (2010), *Negritude: A Dialogue between Soyinka and Senghor* (2016), *Opera of the World* (2017), and *Towards the New Baroque of Voices* (2021).

Works included in the exhibition

306 Maujer

Édouard Glissant: One World in Relation, 2010

English and French with English subtitles
48 mins.

In 2009, Manthia Diawara accompanied Édouard Glissant on the *Queen Mary 2* on a transatlantic journey from Southampton, United Kingdom, to Brooklyn, New York. Over the course of multiple interviews conducted during the trip as well as in the Antilles, where Glissant was born, both authors discuss the fundamental ideas of the poet's work.

Édouard Glissant's thought is rooted in the concept of creolization, informed by the Creole languages and traditions of the Antilles. The term describes a world in which cultures meet and collide, thereby generating new cultural universes. For Glissant, this enriching and ongoing exchange takes place in *mondialité* (worldliness), the polar opposite of globalism's uniformity, standardization, and multinational liberalism. Glissant's ideas promote an archipelago-like world without fixed identities, similar to the Caribbean, where the only constants are change, fragility, and instability.

Amant

Negritude: A Dialogue Between Soyinka and Senghor, 2015

English and French with English subtitles

59 mins.

In this film, Manthia Diawara creates an imagined dialogue between the politician Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906-2001), one of the founders of the concept of *Negritude*, and writer and Nobel Prize winner Wole Soyinka.

The film is divided into a series of chapters examining the impact of *Negritude* on the social and cultural history of Africa, on colonial and postcolonial ideas, as well as on the independence movements of the 1950s and 1960s.

Through the edited dialogues, Diawara presents *Negritude* as a global phenomenon that has shaped contemporary artistic, political, and social reality from multiculturalism and nationalism in Africa, to religious intolerance and xenophobic immigration policies in Europe. Although the term *Negritude* is controversial and has been interpreted in different ways, Diawara traces its origins emphasizing its ongoing relevance as well as its potential for future generations.



Installation view at Amant.