

are created through the surplus experience of an event.⁶ Perhaps their conclusions are relevant to 'King Kong' and to wider, yet underexplored cultural spaces in early apartheid South Africa.

This critique aside, it is important to note that the story of the play itself is quite dramatic on its own. Fleming's book offers frank accounts of many of the controversies surrounding the possibly well-meaning but undoubtedly paternalistic attitude of the producers towards their Black colleagues — a view he summarises at one point as: 'seeking to harness the "natural" talent of African players with European technique and discipline' (94). There are fascinating connections, for example in the role of Adam Glaser who worked at the Empire Exhibition and who had previously worked with the controversial folklorist Hugh Tracey, a figure who is currently subject to much reflective scrutiny from a new generation of scholars thinking about epistemic stubbornness of race and paternalism in African cultural production.⁷ Whereas other scholars with a more restitutive approach might amplify the contributions of intellectuals and artists such as the composer Todd Matshikiza rather than seek to position the reader neutrally, Fleming remains objective.

In various places, the book suggests that the King Kong musical's success can be read as an indicator of multiracial futures in Black South Africa. There are other stories that might have been told, of course, including a more differentiated account of Black meaning-making and aesthetics, that Fleming does not explore. Yet there is much to be said for the book's dogged focus on the King Kong production and its context: Fleming provides detail not seen in such a way about culture, about the creating of art under apartheid, and about the historical context in which artists work and through which we must make sense of their work. That is itself a significant accomplishment.

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Remixing a Cultural Festival

FESTAC '77: The 2nd World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture Decomposed, An-Arranged and Reproduced by Chimurenga; Misdirections in Music by Ntone Edjabe

Edited by Chimurenga with Ntone Edjabe, Graeme Arendse, Ziphozenkosi Dayile, Duduetsang Lamola, Stacy Hardy, Bongani Kona, Ben Verghese, Moses März, Akin Adesokan, Mamadou Diallo, Dominique Malaquais, Terry Ayugi, Andrea Meeson, and Eva Munyiri. Cape Town: Chimurenga; London: Afterall Books, in association with Asia Art Archive, the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, and RAW Material Company, 2019. Pp. 445. \$32.09, paperback (ISBN: 9781846382123).

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⁶*Ibid.*, 60.

⁷See, for example: G. Felber, 'Tracing tribe: Hugh Tracey and the cultural politics of retribalisation', *SAMUS: South African Music Studies*, 30–1:1 (2010), 31–43; L. Gimenez Amoros, *Tracing the Mbira Sound Archive in Zimbabwe* (London, 2018).

Originally scheduled for 1970, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture (FESTAC '77) was held in Lagos and Kaduna, Nigeria in January and February 1977, and brought together performers, activists, and attendees from dozens of nations from around the world. With an estimated 12,000 participants, FESTAC '77 became the largest, most controversial, and most extravagant of the festivals that were held during West and North Africa's 'festival decade'. Despite the interruptions to democracy and the tragic rupture created by the Nigerian Civil War from 1967 to 1970, two military coups, and numerous infrastructural problems, Nigeria's vast oil wealth made everything seem possible. Its currency was strong, its potential seemed boundless, and FESTAC '77 was an opportunity to project and reinvent this postcolonial nation on the world scene. The delays, excesses, charges of corruption, and disruptions during the multiyear planning process did not derail its eventual successes in centering Blackness, for and by Africans and people of African descent. FESTAC '77 featured a colloquium with daily sessions on 'Black Civilization and Education', a regatta on the Lagos lagoon, and a grand durbar in Kano. And as one participant wrote: 'the atmosphere at FESTAC '77 and in Lagos was intoxicating' (182). Chimurenga's collection of primary and secondary sources — including art, photographs, posters, pamphlets, collages, speeches, quotes, new and old articles by participants and scholars, newspaper clippings, sheet music, and an assortment of memorabilia — reflects this heady mix.

The successes and failures of FESTAC '77 left a distinct cultural and infrastructural imprint on Lagos and the wider world of Africa and the African diaspora. While there is a valuable set of archival materials held at the Centre for Black Arts and Civilization (CBAAC) in Lagos, few other easily accessible archives or sites that maintain this legacy exist. Scholarly attention to its significance has also not grappled adequately with the legacy of the history or public memory of this event that once imagined an African global past and future in particular ways from the vantage point of Nigeria, the African continent's most populous nation. Chimurenga is a South Africa-based collective founded by Ntone Edjabe, a Cameroonian DJ.¹ 'Chimurenga' is a Shona word used to signify resistance, struggle, and more recently, a style of Zimbabwean music. While it is not an academic text, this publication is the result of an enormous amount of research, interviews, and events and conferences with artists, writers, and scholars, some of whom participated in the festival in 1977. Part of Chimurenga's work involves pushing at intellectual boundaries, with the stated goal of intervening in knowledge production, archiving practices, and ultimately 'seek[ing] to re-imagine the library'.² Part new writing, part historical reflection, and part memorabilia, Chimurenga's *FESTAC '77* has material mostly in English, but also includes texts in Portuguese, French, German, and occasionally Arabic. It is also not a conventional archive, and it strategically resists a consistent linear structure. This dizzying array of sources is clustered around new essays from Akin Adesokan, Alice Aterianus-Owanga, Semeneh Ayalew, Harmony Holiday, Emmanuel Idum, Dominique Malaquais, Michael McMillan, Hassan Musa, Ugochukwu-Smooth C. Nzewi, Hermano Penna, Molefe Po, Moses Serubiri, and Cedric Vincent. As such, it offers sources and historical contexts for debates that have been foregrounded again, after the global unrest and racial reckoning of the summer of 2020. Most prominently featured here are source materials for debating Black identity and culture globally. This includes defining what we mean when we invoke 'Africa', its diaspora, and debates around the restitution of African objects held in Western museums.

How was Blackness, Africa, and the African diaspora imagined, 'remapped', re-centered, and represented in independent West Africa in the wake of pan-Africanism, Négritude, decolonization, and the challenges of nation building? The acronym by which we know the 1977 festival elides

¹See *The Chimurenga Chronic: Now-Now, a Pan African Gazette*, <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/>; N. Mabuse, 'Chimurenga: Africa's answer to the New Yorker', CNN, 4 June 2012, <https://www.cnn.com/2012/06/04/world/africa/ntone-edjabe-chimurenga/index.html>; N. Edjabe and U.-S. C. Nzewi, 'The FESTAC '77 mixtape'. | *MoMA Magazine*, 9 Dec. 2020, <https://www.moma.org/magazine/articles/471>.

²About the Chimurenga library', *The Chimurenga Chronic*, <https://chimurengachronic.co.za/about-the-chimurenga-library/>.

controversies explored in the collection. Even the name reveals a concession made by organizers after debates about race and belonging in Africa. By naming it the *Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture*, its name summarized a dispute over the notion of a singular Black essence linked to geography south of the Sahara. This debate — covered in the volume — was especially pointed, as FESTAC '77 followed in the wake of Leopold Senghor's 1966 Dakar festival; one that foregrounded a notion of 'Négritude' ultimately rejected by FESTAC's organizers. Wole Soyinka, the well-known Nigerian playwright-poet-activist, in reflecting on the festival in 2008 pointed to this and other dilemmas that plagued the planning of the festival (192–8).³ And as Andrew Apter has written, studying the festival is an opportunity to consider how Black people, in a postcolonial context fueled by petrodollars, negotiated the tensions between their historical and modern identities.⁴

'Britain should return its "Booty" for FESTAC' reads one of the many headlines reproduced throughout this collection (47). The organizing committee's choice of the Iy'Oba Idia of Benin mask as the emblem of FESTAC '77 was a risk for the planning committee. As important a symbol as it was, one original was housed in the British Museum, and their authorities decided in 1976 not to release it to Nigeria. Instead, festival goers and planners had to make do with reproductions that became ubiquitous in books, pamphlets, and souvenirs. Newspaper clippings play a particularly important role, as they are records of the public narratives that played out leading up to, during, and even after the festival. A standout section here focuses on Fela Anikulapo-Kuti's struggles with the Nigerian military government, his creation of a counter space to FESTAC via his Kalakuta Republic, and its eventual sacking by an 'unknown soldier', and even a photograph of his mother, the famed activist Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti, just before her death.⁵

There is no specific entry point into this collection. One could start at the beginning and find a questionnaire distributed by the department of mass communications at the University of Lagos. Their plan, in 92 questions, was to study the participants' responses to this 'unique gathering' of the Black and African peoples. As the beginning of the collection, it functions as an interesting gateway to draw the reader into range of possibilities experienced by the average participant. However, this coffee table-sized book is not disordered or random. Instead, the material tends to cluster around specific themes: from debates around the emblematic *iy'oba* Benin pendant, the Arab question, different experiences of Blackness around the globe, to the role of women, war, and decolonization in South Africa. There is no heavy-handed editorializing, and readers can take the initiative to design their engagement with the material. It ends with a series of credits, a short history of the process of building the collection, and acknowledgments, which is where the academic scholar can find the relevant identifying information about the material in the book. However, without a table of contents, and citations tied to specific page numbers, it could be challenging for scholars to rely only on the material reproduced here. The photographs are beautifully reproduced in color and black and white, but the lack of consistent captions and page numbers is a missed opportunity for more information. 'The hum of Black people speaking a host of different languages, and understanding each other nonetheless, created a soundtrack that was its own music', wrote one participant (n.p.). Unsurprisingly, the editors suggest the collection be read with their 'FESTAC at 45' mixtape in the background. While setting this audio and textual stage, they also pose a provocative question: 'Can a past that the present has not yet caught up with be summoned to haunt the present as an alternative?'⁶ This query should elicit responses from historians. But how does this collection allow historians to answer in terms of the histories of Africa, or of the twentieth century, cultural history, or even the history of race, culture, festivals, and nationhood in Africa and the African

³Soyinka's essay entitled 'Festac agonistes' features in the volume.

⁴A. Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (Chicago, 2005).

⁵*Ibid.*, for more background.

⁶'FESTAC AT 45: FESTAC '77, A Mixtape by Chimurenga', *The Chimurenga Chronic*, 29 July 2020, <https://chimurenga-chronic.co.za/festac-77-a-mixtape-by-chimurenga/>.

diaspora? For the academic historian, architectural and art historian, the collection thus has the potential to function as a rich and varied archive of a remarkable time in the overlapping histories of Nigeria, Africa, and the global African diaspora. This collection offers historians the opportunity to think in interdisciplinary ways when asking questions about the past, and to interrogate how African-descended people responded when given the rare opportunity to craft their understandings of themselves together. Historians will have to do some extra legwork, however, if they want to track down the sources for the images, texts, newspaper clippings, and interviews the collection includes.

Cultural, literary, and film festivals — including Abeokuta's Aké Arts and Books Festival, Cape Coast's PANAFEST, and Ouagadougou's Pan African Film and TV Festival (FESPACO) — are enjoying a resurgence in West Africa. As such, this collection has appeared at a critical moment, and joins other recent texts in reflecting on the legacy of this festival. While CBAAC published a list of their colloquium papers in 1986, several new texts engage with the architectural, cultural, and visual legacies of FESTAC '77. Central in this collection are Soyinka's 'Festac Agonistes', Nzewi's 'Mapping Pan-African Artistic Modernism at FESTAC '77', and Malaquais and Vincent's 'Three takes and a mask'.⁷ New books, such as Łukasz Stanek's *Architecture in Global Socialism*, devote attention to the intersection of the architecture, global socialism, petrodollars, and FESTAC in Nigeria.⁸ Andrew Apter's 'Festac 77: A Black World's Fair' provides historical context for the festival, and includes an extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources.⁹ Published in 2022, Marilyn Nance's *Last Day in Lagos* (edited by Oluremi C. Onabanjo) reproduces her iconic photographs of the festival, and includes new essays.¹⁰

Ultimately, the book is a visual and textual feast for both the casual and academic reader. The material evokes another time, recreating in great detail the late 1970s in Nigeria. Oil money changed the landscape of Lagos with new roads, buildings, and infrastructure. Some of these buildings like the National Theatre, Eko Hotel, and FESTAC Village were built specifically for the festival. Many of these structures appear in the photographs, clippings, and collages that are found throughout the book. The protagonists are plentiful, prominent, and even unexpected; and the words, music, and sometimes even identity cards of the participants have been reproduced here. In sum, it presents an important opportunity: a ready-made, accessible, and portable archive containing sources for future conversation and research.

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⁷In the volume, see: W. Soyinka, 'Festac agonistes'; U.-S. C. Nzewi, 'Mapping pan-African artistic modernism at FESTAC '77', 150–1; D. Malaquais and C. Vincent, 'Three takes and a mask', 53–6.

⁸Ł. Stanek, *Architecture in Global Socialism: Eastern Europe, West Africa, and the Middle East in the Cold War* (Princeton, 2020).

⁹A. Apter, 'Festac 77: a Black World's Fair', in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (Oxford, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277734.013.798>.

¹⁰O. C. Onabanjo (ed.), *Marilyn Nance: Last Day in Lagos* (Johannesburg, 2022).