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## Art contre/against Apartheid at Lunds Konsthall: an Entangled History of Art and Solidarity from Paris to Pretoria

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### Cover Page Footnote

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# *Art contre/against Apartheid* at Lunds Konsthall: an Entangled History of Art and Solidarity from Paris to Pretoria

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## Abstract

This article concerns the international touring exhibition *Art contre/against Apartheid* originating in France and which reached Lunds konsthall, Sweden in 1984 and was to tour the world for ten years. The aim with this exhibition was to raise awareness of the apartheid regime, cause international protest and ultimately remove the repressive political system. Using *histoire croisée* as a method this article investigates the different interests and stakeholders in the exhibition at Lunds konsthall, including the critique of the exhibition as resting on white supremacy. The purpose of the article is to locate the different intersections regarding international art, international politics and local history manifested through this exhibition.

## Résumé

Cet article examine l'exposition internationale itinérante *Art contre/against Apartheid* qui, partie de France, fut présentée à la Konsthall de Lund (Suède) en 1984, et devait ensuite faire le tour du monde pendant dix ans. Le but de cette exposition était de sensibiliser le public au régime de l'apartheid, de provoquer des protestations internationales et finalement de supprimer ce système politique répressif. En utilisant la méthode de l'histoire croisée, cet article étudie les différents intérêts et acteurs de l'exposition de Lund, y compris la critique que l'exposition reposait sur la suprématie blanche. Ce faisant, l'article cherche à identifier les différentes intersections où art international, politique internationale et histoire locale se croisèrent lors de cet événement.

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“... [the art works] range across the scale of human emotion, from anger to zeal to love and sorrow. Such works demand the viewer’s attention, they challenge our beliefs and values, they remind us of past errors but they also speak of hope for the future.”

—Nelson Mandela<sup>1</sup>

In 1984 the international touring exhibition *Art contre/against Apartheid* reached Lunds konsthall, Sweden, making its second stop on a ten-year long world tour (Fig. 1).<sup>2</sup> The aim of the exhibition, funded by the UN through the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid (UNSCAA), was to raise awareness about the South-African apartheid regime, to cause international protest and ultimately help remove a repressive political system. It was a campaign of international solidarity delivered through a vehicle of high-end art objects by circa eighty internationally renowned artists.

It all started with the French artist and political activist Ernest Pignon-Ernest (b. 1942) who teamed up with the Spanish artist Antonio Saura (1930–1998). Pignon-Ernest was active against the French war in Algeria, and Saura participated in the Anti-Francoist movement. They wanted to rally support for the oppressed people of South Africa and pulled together a wide network of artists mostly in Europe and the US. In the observation above, made soon after the exhibition had reached its destination and objective of a free South Africa, Nelson Mandela confirmed the narrative of hope that Pignon-Ernest and Saura had created. However, the project was questioned already at its launch in 1983, and continues to be so. Not long after, the UN funded an alternative exhibition with the title *Artists against Apartheid: Works for Freedom*, disseminated in 1986.<sup>3</sup>

One argument against Pignon-Ernest and Saura’s concept was the high number of white, western,



Figure 1. Poster for *Art contre/against Apartheid*, Lunds Konsthall 1984.

and mostly male artists. Only two South Africans were included, the artist Gavin Jantjes (b. 1948) who had left South Africa for a life in Europe, and the writer André Brink (1935–2015), who worked as a professor of literature at Capetown University. Another issue was that the very idea of an object-based museum to commemorate history including traumatic experiences, belongs to a western realm.<sup>4</sup> One writer argued that the exhibition was never wanted in South Africa in the first place, describing it at the time as propaganda, and that the art was not sufficiently progressive.<sup>5</sup>

Whilst the critique of *Art contre/against Apartheid* is integral to its history, it does not reflect the complexities at stake. For example, the exhibition raised different questions and actions depending on where

<sup>1</sup> Cited from Amareswar Galla, “First Voice in Heritage Conservation”, *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 03 (2008): 10–25, footnote no. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Antonio Saura and Ernest Pignon-Ernest, *Art contre/against apartheid: les artistes du monde contre l’apartheid: artists of the world against Apartheid*. (Paris: Les artistes du monde, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> “Artists against Apartheid. Works for Freedom”, *Ikon Creativity and Change*, special issue no 5–6, (1986).

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Katya García-Antón Liv Brissach, *Actions of Art and Solidarity* (exhibition catalogue, Kunstnerens Hus Oslo, 2021); for an overview of the South African debate see e.g. Charlise Petersen, *Visual Trauma: Representations of African Bodies in the 1983 Centre Apartheid exhibition*, (MA diss., University of Western Cape, 2018); for the western ideology behind the concept Galla, “First Voice in Heritage Conservation”, 10–25.

<sup>5</sup> A reference to an article by John MacLennan in the South African newspaper Sunday Weekend, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1996, in Petersen, *Visual Trauma*, 9.

in the world it was exhibited.<sup>6</sup> The aim of this article is to analyse how micro and macro perspectives intersect regarding art, personal interests, a local art gallery and the anti-apartheid movement. This in turn will contribute to the history of exhibitions in the name of solidarity and instrumentalizing art beyond showing art for its own sake.

## Entanglements

In the method *Historie Croisées* or entangled points of view, developed by the social historians Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, part of the method is to capture the multiperspectivity of history beyond compare and contrast analyses.<sup>7</sup> In terms of *Art contre/against Apartheid* the *Historie Croisées* method allows for an investigation of the ambition of the project without falling into a comparison of the pros and cons of its purpose and results, instead focusing on the different intersecting interests. The object of study in this article is the exhibition as it was presented in the catalogue. This contained essays and examples of art works, but also the idea of solidarity as it was manifested in the project including both the exhibition concept, and its dissemination. Throughout this article the concept of ‘interest’ is referred to, which here is defined as those agents that are key components in entanglements from organisations, galleries, to individual people, down to specific art works.

Benedict and Zimmerman stress the importance of situating the researchers’ perspectives for the entanglements to make sense. From the way in which this exhibition has been dealt with in the past, there seem to be different reasons to address its history and even find the exhibition in the first place. When the curators Kristine Khouri and Rashā Saltī revisited *Art contre/against Apartheid* in 2018, it was driven by their interest in the phenomenon of

solidarity movements in art exhibitions between early 1970s to 1980s.<sup>8</sup> Another line of enquiry has been to address the western perspective inherent in the ideas for the exhibition, through for example a close reading of Derrida’s essay in the catalogue, or the bodies represented in the art works.<sup>9</sup> In my case the exhibition was one of many hiding in the archives of Swedish institutions of modern and contemporary art, discovered whilst searching for a wider pattern of international art in Swedish post-war art history. In the project *Exhibiting in a European Periphery?*, as described in another article of this issue of *Artl@s Bulletin*, we charted all non-Swedish exhibitions through a quantitative method at eight art museums and galleries. This project resulted in a survey capturing the heterogeneous nature of international art exhibitions in Sweden.<sup>10</sup> Amongst the 668 exhibitions studied, most have passed under the radar of scholars. Some of these seem like curiosities from today’s perspective, some confirm the historical position of Sweden as a neutral location in world politics, and some are typical large-scale exhibitions with the ambition to make a mark and change attitudes, such as *Art contre/against Apartheid*.

## Organising *Art contre/against Apartheid*

One starting point to begin unpacking the entanglements is to address how *Art contre/against Apartheid* came about. The exhibition emerged from the work and social engagement of the French Fluxus and situationist artist Ernest Pignon-Ernest. Throughout his working life as an artist, he has strived to create social awareness and political change by finding new spaces for his art. For example: using the street as a canvas, engaging in question such as workers’

<sup>6</sup> In for example Japan the exhibition was instrumental in raising awareness of apartheid nationally and had a local effect, see “Maeda Rei: Interview by Kristine Khouri”, in *Past Disquiet: Artists, International Solidarity, and Museums-in-Exile*, edited by Kristine Khouri and Rashā Saltī (Warsaw: Museum of Modern Art, 2018), 345–355.

<sup>7</sup> Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity”, *History and Theory*, 45, no. 1 (February 2006): 30–50; Silke Neunsinger, “Cross-over! Om komparationer, transferlanalyser, histoire croisée och den metodologiska nationalismens problem”, *Historisk*, no.1 (2010): 3–24.

<sup>8</sup> Kristine Khouri is a researcher and writer focusing on the history of arts circulation, archival practices and dissemination in particular regarding the Arab world. Rashā Saltī is a researcher, writer, producer and curator of art and film.

<sup>9</sup> Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon, “No Names Apart: The Separation of Word and History in Derrida’s ‘Le Dernier Mot du Racisme’”, *Critical Inquiry*, 13, no. 1, (Autumn 1986): 140.

<sup>10</sup> Katarina MacLeod, Marta Edling, and Pella Myrstener “Exhibiting Art in a European Periphery? International Art in Sweden During the Cold War”, *Artl@s Bulletin* vol. 11, 2 (Fall 2022): tba; The project *Exhibiting in a European Periphery? International Art in Sweden during the Cold War* was funded by the Swedish Research Council, 2018–2021.

rights, immigrants' needs, and peace and democracy movements.<sup>11</sup> In an interview he declared that his anti-apartheid activism was ignited by an event in 1974 in his hometown Nice in France. To protest against Nice becoming a twin city with Cape Town, South Africa, he plastered posters of a black African family behind barbed wire along the route that the mayor of Cape Town was due to take during the celebrations in Nice. The idea of a large manifestation against apartheid was born out of this event and presented by Pignon-Ernest to the United Nations. The UN and UNSCAA had been very effective in mobilising international sports people and teams to boycott engagement with the apartheid regime in South Africa but had struggled to rally artists and the wider art community in the same way. It was felt that the arts had not yet listened.<sup>12</sup> According to Pignon-Ernest he had teamed up with Saura and together they created the concept of the *Art contre/against Apartheid* including that it would tour the world until change occurred in South Africa. It ended up touring for ten years through circa forty-one countries.<sup>13</sup> The UN welcomed the initiative.<sup>14</sup>

Artists united to alert the world about the acute nature of the systematic oppression with the aim to help bring down the apartheid regime. Ten writers, all men of international acclaim, contributed texts for the catalogue. Through this global manifestation all contributors intended to put pressure on the apartheid regime and the plan was to eventually donate all the collected art works to a specially purposed museum to be built in a future, non-racist and democratic South Africa. The organisers had a strong belief in the power of such a museum, with Derrida declaring that “the only place for apartheid is in the

archives”.<sup>15</sup> He went on to declare that the atrocity, and its human suffering can only be a thing to store for future memory in order to never be repeated. The museum was never built, but the collection of art works from the exhibition were later donated to the Mayibuye Archives, University of Western Cape. The exhibition contained artworks from artists across the world, and a notable feature was that the majority of the artists donated key pieces. Some of these art works addressed the atrocities directly, others participated with what Derrida described as a silent gaze.<sup>16</sup> Another viewpoint is that some of the works have no relevance whatsoever to the cause of apartheid but were included because of the perceived importance of the participating artists. Some were already international stars, such as the Americans Claes Oldenburg (b. 1929), Robert Rauschenberg (1925–2008), Sol LeWitt (1928–2007), or Saura himself.<sup>17</sup> In an interview Pignon-Ernest describes the dilemma he started to face as more artists donated works than they had capacity to ship around the world and he had to turn down his friends.<sup>18</sup>

There is no doubt of the level of ambition in this project: not only in its aim to stop apartheid, but also regarding the nature of the artworks. Some of them were large in scale and heavy, demanding substantial logistical effort to ship between many countries and several continents. Some of the artworks were graphic prints but a large majority were oil or acrylic on canvas. The Italian artist Tina Maselli (1924–2005) and Swedish Olle Kåks (1941–2003) sent paintings circa two meters wide. Of even greater sizes were German Wolf Vostells (1932–1998) triptych measuring 2.4 × 5.4 metres or Brazilian Mario Grubers (1927–2011) painting *White Periscope* measuring 3 × 3 metres. The French Arman (1928–2005) sent a bronze sculpture most likely heavy and Polish Magdalena Abakanowicz (1930–2017) a textile sculpture of 65 × 65 cm

<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of the political engagement of Pignon-Ernest, see e.g. Jacopo Galimberti, “Places of Memory and Locus. Ernest Pignon-Ernest” in *France and the Visual Arts since 1945: Remapping European Postwar and Contemporary Art*, ed. Catherine Dossin, (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 235–252.

<sup>12</sup> Håkan Thörn, *Solidaritetsens betydelse: kampen mot apartheid i Sydafrika och framväxten av det globala civilsamhället*(Atlas, 2010), 235–252.

<sup>13</sup> The full list of venues is not yet retrieved, for its touring in the Nordic countries, see Line Ellegaard, “Exhibiting (in) Solidarity: ‘Art contre/against Apartheid’ touring Sweden, Finland and Denmark in 1983–84” presentation of forthcoming PhD, University of Copenhagen, at conference *Art Exhibitions as Intersections in Post War Europe*, (Stockholm, 11–12<sup>th</sup> of May 2022)

<sup>14</sup> Salti, “Ernst Pignon-Ernest interview”, 337–343; See e.g. a note in the exhibition information on: *Face to Face – Cara a Cara : Roberto Diago – Ernest Pignon-Ernest*, Sept. 11 to Oct. 10. <http://brownstonefoundation.org/face-to-face-cara-a-cara-roberto-diago-ernest-pignon-ernest-sept-11-to-oct-10/> (access 220323).

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Le dernier mot du racism/Racism’s Last Word”, in *Art contre/against apartheid*, 11–12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>17</sup> Compare the presentation at Guggenheim and MOMA website under the entry Antonia Saura: <https://www.moma.org/artists/5181>, <https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/artist/antonio-saura>.

<sup>18</sup> Rashā Salti, “Ernst Pignon-Ernest interview by Rashā Salti”, in *Past Disquiet*, 337–343.



**Figure 2.** Installation shot of *Art contre/against Apartheid* from Lunds Konsthall 1984

height, likely to be sensitive to transport, and exhibited inside a large wooden cage (Fig. 2).<sup>19</sup> To make the required impact the exhibition could not be a marginal affair, instead it claimed floor and wall space. The art was impressive in its scope, it contained political themes and involved an impressive production in transport and insurance.<sup>20</sup> According to an article in the *New York Times* the exhibition toured to amongst other places Denmark, Germany, Finland, Greece, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Italy, Japan, Martinique, The Netherlands, Spain, Tunisia, UK, and the US.<sup>21</sup> However, it seems that the tour itinerary was not locked down from the beginning but

<sup>19</sup> A list of artists and artworks exhibited at the exhibition is in the folder *Korrespondans, underlag och informationsmaterial gällande utställningen del 2*, Stadsarkivet, Lund, for an installation view see Kaj Schuler, "Internationell utställning mot apartheid", *Svenska Dagbladet*, February 10, 1984.

<sup>20</sup> See the insurance lists and transport information in *Korrespondans, underlag och informationsmaterial gällande utställningen del 1 & 2*, Stadsarkivet, Lund.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Lewis, "Exhibit of Art Against Apartheid Opens at U.N.", *The New York Times*, November 5, 1987.

was extended with more venues as the apartheid regime remained in place in South Africa. Forging a macro perspective of world politics and a micro perspective of local interests and opportunities was at the very core of this project.

## Lunds Konsthall and International Art

The exhibition was inaugurated at the Fondation Nationale des Arts Graphiques et Plastiques, in the autumn of 1983, preceded by a smaller poster exhibition in March that year, at Galerie Maeght in Paris, with fifteen participants. The next stop was in Lund, in February 1984.

The project manager, Chantal Nonnet, described the venue of Lunds konsthall as a bit of a surprise: "I did not know where Lund was [...] but found a wonderful art gallery and a very interested audience."<sup>22</sup> Yet, for the audience in Lund this exhibition was probably no surprise at all. Not only were they accustomed to international exhibitions with ideological underpinnings, the anti-apartheid cause had enjoyed a significant presence in Lund since the 1960s.<sup>23</sup> A couple of weeks into the exhibition the gallery director Marianne Nanne-Bråhammar wrote in a letter to Bonnet that it was a great success and they had already received over 17,550 visitors.<sup>24</sup> The public program alongside the exhibition was ambitious with events every week ranging from lectures and music concerts to debates on the situation in South Africa.<sup>25</sup> The visitor numbers confirm the engagement of the local audience. The findings from an archival search in turn confirm that the gallery audience had been acclimatised over at least

<sup>22</sup> *Svenska dagbladet*, February 7, 1984.

<sup>23</sup> For reviews on the exhibition see e.g. Karl-Erik Eliason, "Muerte al apartheid", *Hel-singborgs Dagblad*, February 9, 1984; Hans Johansson, "Spjut mot apartheid: världens konstnärer demonstrerar", *Arbetet* February 5, 1984. for an overview of the Swedish anti-apartheid movement see also Jonas Sjölander, *Ingen enkelriktad väg till frihet: rörelserna och berättelserna om kampen mot apartheid*. (Båstad: Hammarlin bokförlag), 2014.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Marianne Bråhammar to Chantal Bonnet, March 12, 1984, in the folder *Korrespondans, underlag och informationsmaterial gällande utställningen del 1*.

<sup>25</sup> On the debate held at the gallery regarding increased sanctions against Swedish companies dealing with South Africa, Mats Nygren, "Alfa Laval utnyttjar raslagarna i Sydafrika", *Arbetet*, February 26, 1984; on an evening at the gallery about protest and solidarity with the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Eva Tiwe, "Aron sonson till en legend – fortsätter kampen", *Arbetet*, February 22, 1984. For the program, see document "Aktiviteter under utställningen 'Konst mot apartheid'", in *Korrespondans, underlag och informationsmaterial gällande utställningen del 1*.

two and a half decades to art exhibitions with political or ideological underpinnings.

The gallery had created its own history of a micro perspective, such as individual exhibitions, and a macro perspective, such as world politics. In the archives of Lunds konsthall from its inauguration in 1957 towards the end of the cold war period there are numerous examples of international exhibitions that instrumentalise art for other goals than simply showing it.

The first example is art and cultural diplomacy, a field of increasing interest in Nordic art history. Studies shows how art was used to build bridges between the west and the communist bloc in the East, with Sweden a rare neutral location in which such collaborations could take place. In the most cited case, the fight over abstraction, the CIA got involved.<sup>26</sup> Cultural diplomacy however was in no way isolated to just occurring bilaterally between the US and USSR. It permeated public art galleries and museums for modern and contemporary art across the Nordics.<sup>27</sup> The programming at Lunds konsthall is a great example of the full range of exhibitions which can be described as cultural diplomacy. This in turn has been defined as communicating political ideas and beliefs through cultural interchange occurring in both formal and informal relationships and across national borders.<sup>28</sup> At Lunds konsthall there was a steady stream of exhibitions from Eastern Europe. Again, the gallery program is tangled up between macro and micro perspectives. Eje Högestätt, its director between 1957 and 1967, had a personal network amongst polish artists built together with

his wife, Apolonia Byrska Högestätt, a Polish, Jewish refugee residing in Sweden. In one of his catalogues Högestätt describes how they travelled to Poland every year, meeting artists and understanding the cultural life in Eastern Europe. One such artist, with whom he collaborated throughout his career as a gallery director, was the Polish artist Magdalena Abakanowicz, who also contributed to *Art contre/against Apartheid*.<sup>29</sup> Another example is the one man show with the polish artist Zbigniew Makowski (1930–2019) at Lunds Konsthall in 1965.

Another aspect of cultural diplomacy is the steady stream of official collaborations which took place at this gallery. Amongst the exhibitions with an overt diplomatic intention were *Art from Cuba*, 1968 and 1975, funded by the Cuban state and sanctioned by Fidel Castro with the aim to create understanding and interest for the nation of Cuba through its arts.<sup>30</sup> Yet another type of exhibition, that could also be said to have served a cultural diplomatic purpose, were organised by artists' organisations showcasing art from a country but not formally sanctioned at state level. One such example is the touring exhibition *Polsk grafik och bokkonst (Polish graphic art and book illustrations)*, at Lunds konsthall in 1960.<sup>31</sup>

The second example in the programming can be described as an interest for so called world art. For the art historian Hans Belting this is a western invention for western museums: “*World art* is an old idea complementary to modernism, designating the art of the “others” because, or although, it was mostly to be found in Western museums”.<sup>32</sup> Marianne Nanne-Bråhammar, the gallery director at Lunds Konsthall between 1969–1990, seems to have harboured an ambition to bring the world to Lund. This was to both expand what kind of art was exhibited and to create understanding and

<sup>26</sup> Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War. The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: New Press, 2000); Greg Barnhisel, *Cold War Modernists. Art, Literature & American Cultural Diplomacy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Louis Menand, *The Free World, Art and Thought in the Cold, War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2021); Conference “Art Exhibitions as intersections in Post War Europe”, Stockholm 11–12 may 2022, organized by Katarina Wadstein MacLeod, Marta Edling and Pella Myrstener.

<sup>27</sup> Myroslava Halushka, *Trojan Horses on the Cold War. Art Exhibitions as an Instrument of Cultural Diplomacy, 1945–1985* (Mphil Thesis, University of Oxford, 2015); Louis Clerc, Nikolas Glover and Paul Jordan: *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries. Representing the Periphery*, (Leiden: Brill 2015); Maija Koskinen, “The Kunsthalle Helsinki as an Artistic Battlefield of the Cold War from the late 1940s to the 1960s”, in *Localizing the Contemporary: The Kunsthalle Bern Model*, ed. Peter Schneemann, (Geneva: JRP Ringier, 2018).

<sup>28</sup> Jessica C. E. Gienow-Hecht and Mark C. Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, (Oxford & New York: Berghahn Books, 2010); Giles Scott-Smith, Simo Mikkonen & Jari Parkkinen (eds.), *Entangled East and West. Cultural Diplomacy and Artistic Interaction During the Cold War* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Eje Högestätt, *Magdalena Abakanowicz: textil skulptur: textile environment: Södertälje konsthall 1-30 mars 1970* (Konsthallen: Södertälje, 1970); Eje Högestätt, *Abakanowicz: organic structures: Malmö konsthall 26.2 - 11.4 1977* (Malmö: Malmö konsthall, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> *Konst från Cuba 9-29 febr 1976.*, (Stockholm: Kulturhuset; 1976), the exhibition was at Lunds konsthall in 1975.

<sup>31</sup> Lunds Konsthall, *Moderna gobelänger och aktuell grafik från Polen 15/1-5/2 1967* (Lund: Lunds konsthall, 1967).

<sup>32</sup> Hans Belting, Andrea Buddensieg, and Peter Weibel (eds.), *The Global Contemporary and the Rise of New Art Worlds, exhib. The Global Contemporary, Art Worlds after 1989, ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Sept. 17, 2011–Feb. 5, 2012*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2013) 178–185.



empathy for different ways of life. To realise this ambition Nanne-Bråhammar collaborated with Kerstin Cruikshank, a commercial gallerist and connoisseur of middle east culture and folk art based in Gothenburg. In 1969 they curated two exhibitions of “world art” which were shown simultaneously: craft by Bedouin women from Iraq, *Beduinvävnader* (*Bedouin Tapestries*); and Glasmålningar av Abou Soubhi al Tinnaoui (*Glass painting by the Syrian artist Abou Soubhi al Tinnaoui*).<sup>33</sup> A few years later, in 1973 they mounted the exhibition *Kvinnorna i Uzdin, naivister från Jugoslavien* (*Women Artists from Uzdin, Naivists from Yugoslavia*). It presented folk art made by an all women collective from the rural village Uzdin in what was then Yugoslavia.<sup>34</sup>

The third strand of international exhibitions in the programming of Lunds Konsthall were those that aimed to show art in order to stand up for the oppressed. In 1971 two exhibitions were arranged to show solidarity with people in poverty or who had suffered from colonial oppression. One was organised by a Non-Governmental Organisation, *Svalorna*, showing and selling craft works by Indian people living in poverty. All revenues went to the NGO and the art gallery was used as a platform for manifesting the need for solidarity and help. The exhibition *The Sami People (Samer)*, 1971 was produced by the curators of Lunds konsthall in collaboration with Sami artists and organisations. It was a manifestation of the Indigenous peoples’ art and craft, but also of their ways of living. The exhibition catalogue addressed colonisation but was also critiqued for not being explicit enough in its stance towards oppression of the Sami by the majority Swedish society.<sup>35</sup> Another example is *Grønlandsk kunst idag*, produced in Århus, Denmark which showed the art and crafts of the Inuit people of Greenland.<sup>36</sup> Once again the purpose was to

demonstrate a people whose art had survived the suppression of colonialization. And once again, the exhibition was criticized as marginalising the complexity of that same group. What is most striking in this context is the presence of these exhibitions in their time and the deafening silence surrounding them in subsequent writing on exhibition history of the period.

*Art contre/against Apartheid* was one of the largest exhibitions in the history of Lunds Konsthall and several converging interests were at play including a national debate in Sweden on racism and apartheid. In her review of the exhibition Lisbet Larsson, who later became professor of literature at Gothenburg University, takes a particular look at Derrida’s essay for the catalogue. In his text Derrida describes the racist system of South Africa as the worst, and hopes it is the last. Derrida addressed the need for Europeans to unite against the oppression on another continent, it was after all people of European decent that upheld the racist structures.<sup>37</sup> Larsson points out that his way of writing racist structures is isolated to South Africa, and in doing so Derrida presented such structures as a problem very much “over there” and not occurring in Europe. Larsson asks what might happen if we try to see how racist attitudes lurk everywhere, even in Sweden, and not isolate them to the apartheid regime’s extreme form of systematized and legalized oppression.<sup>38</sup>

In its own national, cultural memory Sweden had a particular relationship with the anti-apartheid movement.<sup>39</sup> In the early 1950s the journalist Herbert Tingsten, later the Chief Editor for the daily broadsheet *Dagens Nyheter*, reported on the racial oppression and segregation from South Africa. The writer Per Wästerberg reported on the segregation he encountered on his many trips and longstanding

<sup>33</sup> *Beduinvävnader från Eufrat och Tigris*, exh. cat., Marianne Nanne-Bråhammar, *Beduinvävnader från Eufrat och Tigris* (Lund: Lunds konsthall, catalogue, 1969); *Glasmålningar av Abou Soubhu al Tinnaoui*, (Lund: Lunds konsthall, catalogue 1969),

<sup>34</sup> The listed artists are: Maria Balan, Florika Chet, Sofia Doclean, Anuica Dolama, Sodia Ionesco, Anuika Maran, Matoria Motorojescu, Ana Oncu, Florika Puia, Steluta Taran

<sup>35</sup> Katarina Wadstein MacLeod, “Curating Contrasts: Retrieving Solidarity from the Archives”, in *Curating the Contemporary in Art Museumsm*, eds. Kristian Handberg and Malene Vest Hansen (New York: Routledge in print 2022).

<sup>36</sup> One reviewer described the objects on display as magnificent but taken out of context yet another colonial assault, Mailis Stensman, “Grönland – ofullständigt”, *Arbetet*, December 2, 1974.

<sup>37</sup> Derrida, “Racism’s Last Word”, 11-35, For a critique on the contradictions in Derrida’s essay vis-à-vis an understanding of the manifestations of apartheid, see e.g. Majero Bouman, “Racism’s Specters: Inheriting the Unthought Future”, *Mosaic: a Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*; *Winnipeg* Vol. 40, Iss. 2 (June 2007): 261–277; or José Endoencá Martins, “Apartheid and Writing: White Supremacist Logic and the Racially Damaging Injuries It Causes, From Derrida’s and Gate’s Perspectives”, *International Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 5(1), June 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Lisbeth Larsson, “Världsmuseum mot apartheid”, *Expressen*, February 15, 1984.

<sup>39</sup> Tor Sellström, *Sweden and national liberation in Southern Africa Vol. 1 Formation of a popular opinion (1950–1970)*, Nordic Africa Institute (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1999); Tor Sellström, *Sweden and national liberation in Southern Africa Vol. 2 Solidarity and assistance 1970–1994*, (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2002).

relationship with the people and country of South Africa.<sup>40</sup> In a 1974 study from the Government agency the Nordic Africa institute, located in Uppsala, the economic relationships between South African and Swedish companies were exposed.<sup>41</sup> Some of the countries where the exhibition had toured had strong anti-apartheid movements, like in Sweden. Other countries, like France, UK and the US had at different times vetoed sanctions against South Africa at the UN security council. One reason was the perceived Marxist lineage of the African National Congress (ANC). In his history of anti-apartheid solidarity movements, the sociologist Håkan Thörn points out that in the early 1980s, in Sweden, ISAK (Isolera Sydafrikakommittén) had over 800,000 members (or approximately 10% of the population).<sup>42</sup> When *Artists contre/against Apartheid* came to Lund it came to a place which engaged strongly with art as a way to understand the world. Furthermore, it arrived in a country with a long-established anti-apartheid movement.

## A Collection of Solidarity

Yet another entanglement is to be found in this particular manifestation of solidarity, that is to construct art collections for future museums in imagined future democratic societies. The concept of solidarity and its historical specificity is summarized and theorized by the human geographer David Featherstone as “a relation forged through political struggle which seeks to challenge forms of oppression.”<sup>43</sup> The problem with solidarity is that it is associated with the political left but is not exclusively owned by the left. The hesitation to join the fight was the ANC’s communist alliances, preventing for example right leaning liberals to join forces against apartheid.<sup>44</sup> Featherstone identifies five perspectives of solidarity that are at work at any given time. The first is described as

a transformative relationship and finding ways to intervene. For example, translating solidarity from the history of unions and workers’ rights into exhibitions is not obvious but still informs the instrumentalization of the artworks that took place. The second aspect is that the solidarity efforts are established from outside or below, often by marginal or repressed groups. In this case the exhibition supported the cause from outside of South Africa, but also from outside the experience of racial oppression and not really representing marginalised experience, yet lending voice to make the repression visible. The third aspect is its transnational character, typically creating networks across nation states for a common cause. The fourth that the solidarity is constructed from uneven power relations. In other words, the location where geographic solidarity is constructed may impact its chances to be heard.<sup>45</sup> Lastly, solidarity is defined by being inventive in producing new ways of configuring political relations and spaces.<sup>46</sup>

A touring, international exhibition such as *Art contre/against apartheid* is a good example of how solidarity is forged across place, power and different interests. However, it was the last in a decade of solidarity exhibitions on the international art scene and predated by *International Art Exhibition for Palestine* on view in Beirut in 1978, and *Art pour le Peuple du Nicaragua* (Art for the people of Nicaragua), presented at Palais du Tokyo, Paris in 1981. Both of which were collections destined for museums in Palestine and Nicaragua respectively, in times of peace and democracy, and built from the donations of supporting artists.<sup>47</sup>

In order to understand the different solidarity exhibitions that were organised during the decade Khouri and Salti suggest revisiting the blueprint for solidarity exhibitions: *Museo de la Solidaridad* (Museum of Solidarity) led by the Brazilian art critic Mário Pedrosa, then living in exile in Chile.

<sup>40</sup> Per Wästberg, *På svarta listan*. (Stockholm: Wahlström & Widstrand, 1960).

<sup>41</sup> Se Sellström, *Sweden and national liberation in Southern Africa 1999, 2002*.

<sup>42</sup> Håkan Thörn, *Solidaritetsens betydelse: kampen mot apartheid i Sydafrika och framväxten av det globala civilsamhället*. (Atlas, 2010), 34–62

<sup>43</sup> David Featherstone, *Solidarity: hidden histories and geographies of internationalism*, (London: Zed, 2012), 5.

<sup>44</sup> Thörn, *Solidaritetsens betydelse*, 31.

<sup>45</sup> Featherstone, *Solidarity*, 30.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–39.

<sup>47</sup> see e.g. Élodie Lebeau, “Le Musée international de la Résistance Salvador Allende en France (1975–1991): l’Odyssée d’une collection d’art contemporain en exil”, (master thesis, l’Université de Toulouse, 2016); and Lebeau, “When Solidarity Became Art: The Museo Internacional de la Resistencia Salvador Allende (1975–90)”, in Khouri & Salti, *Past Disquiet*, 317–333.

Pedrosa's idea, which came out of the Chilean and pro-Allende art movement in the early 1970s, was to gain international support by encouraging artists to donate artworks for a collection celebrating a free and democratic Chile. Pedrosa set up a committee with members from South America and Europe, all active on the international art scene. It was successful, with artists from across Europe, South America and the US donating their work to the cause. But it was a short-lived success: all was lost in the Coup d'état in 1973. The artworks and the archive never resurfaced.<sup>48</sup> Two years later the museum re-constituted itself under the name the Museo Internacional de la Resistencia Salvador Allende (International Museum of Resistance Salvador Allende – MIRSA), with headquarters in Paris. The latter constellation managed to secure a new donation of 1,100 artworks to be donated to Chile, once democracy was re-established and in 1991 the art was finally shipped to Chile.<sup>49</sup>

Just like MIRSA the *Art contre/against apartheid* collection was built on a network of activism and solidarity, employing art as a means to foster revolution. These solidarity exhibitions were fighting for justice, the participants held a belief in a permanent collection and the power and impact such commemoration would have. Moreover, some of the artists participated in several of the solidarity exhibitions such as Pignon-Ernest who took part already in the pro-Allende movement and had donated works to the Chilean collection at the *Museo de la Solidaridad*.<sup>50</sup> However, there are further layers to the entanglements. In 1978 the Swedish section of the Chilean committee organized an exhibition at Moderna Museet in Stockholm, with 55 artists donating ca. 80 artworks to the Chilean cause. Björn Springfelt, then curator at the museum, testifies to the magnitude of this effort. This group of international artists contributed what was in Springfelt's view the most ambitious works they had at the time. The exhibition toured twenty

venues in Sweden, and according to this source, attracted large audiences.<sup>51</sup>

*Museo de Solidaridad* was involved with the art and politics of its time in more ways than one. It took a clear stance for Allende's socialism, but also for socialist structures in the artworld and for the art itself to premier mass-produced prints. It was an international trend for artists on the left, also on national levels. In the first issue of the Swedish Marxist cultural journal *Clarté* in 1968, a group of artists wrote a manifesto against bourgeois art. They held a hard line against any art that was not affordable for the average worker or could be mass reproduced.<sup>52</sup> The first manifestations of the *Museo de Solidaridad* held a similar stance: art had to stand against capitalist structures and the art market. As suggested by the curator and sociologist María Berríos:

The Museo of Solidaridad was born as a museum against museums, an anti-museum: the basic notions of the proposed museum were an assault on existing museums, especially the prestigious and admired institutions of the metropolis; it questioned their geo-political monopoly by calling out the absolute incompatibility of their social function and the principles of the artworks (and artists) in their care.<sup>53</sup>

Whilst *Art contre/against Apartheid* came out of a shared solidarity in fighting an oppressive regime, the artworks donated were the opposite. The whole point was for the artworks to be of such quality that they in themselves would drum up an international interest.<sup>54</sup>

In the ten years that passed between initiating *Museo de Solidaridad* and the *Art contre Apartheid* the art world had changed and so had the template for which kind of art best fostered revolution. For

<sup>48</sup> Lebeau, *Past Disquiet*, 308

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 315

<sup>50</sup> Carla Macchiavello Cornejo, "Weaving Forms of Resistance: The Museo de la Solidaridad and The Museo Internacional de la Resistencia Salvador Allende", *Arts*, no. 1, (January 2020).

<sup>51</sup> Charlotte Bydler, (red.), *Sweden in solidarity, museums in exile: the International Resistance Museum in Solidarity with Salvador Allende and the International Art Exhibition for Palestine* (Samtidshistoriska institutet: Södertörns högskola, Huddinge, 2022), 39.

<sup>52</sup> Håkan Nyberg, Channa Bankier, Alf Linder and Hanna Henschen, "Borgerlig bildkonst", *Clarté*, no. 1 (1968), 26–30.

<sup>53</sup> María Berríos, "Struggle as Culture: The Museum of Solidarity, 1971–73", *Afterall*, 44, no. 1, (2017), 132–143.

<sup>54</sup> One Swedish critic argues how the quality of the art help facilitate the political and urgent message of the exhibition, Jan Teghammer, "Bilder för ett brefirat Sydafrika", *Skånska Dagbladet*, February 11, 1984.

the anti-apartheid exhibition artists donated works ranging from collages, ripped posters, printed works, large scale paintings, bronze sculptures and textile work. Derrida expresses a firm belief in the power of painting, and the universal power of art “. . . pictorial idioms will be crossing but they will be attempting to speak the other’s language without renouncing their own.”<sup>55</sup> Several artists donated pieces characteristic for their art, and a key factor, just as in the Stockholm exhibition, was that these were important pieces for the artists themselves. The artworks donated dated from the 1960s to the early 1980s, ranging in style, tone and expression. Arman’s *New York Concerto*, 1982, violas cast in brass, is a typical piece but with little obvious connection to the larger theme of anti-apartheid solidarity. Other art works dealt directly with the racism and oppression of South Africa, like Robert Rauschenberg’s collage *No title* made from black and white photographs of famous South African basketball players and labourers imprinted with the words ‘World artists against apartheid’ in graffiti style writing. Other examples are the oil painting by Mozambican artist Valente Ngwenya Malangatana (1936–2011) measuring 1.23 metres by 1.02 metres. The canvas is crowded with figures painted in red wearing tortured expressions, chained, clawed and animalesque. Other pieces were fit for the theme but painted for another cause, like the Italian Leonardo Cremoni’s (1925–2010) painting *Torture* from 1961.

## Paris To Pretoria

This leads us to the question of where between Paris and Pretoria did this exhibition make its biggest impact? In her analysis of the *Histoire Croisée* method, the historian Silke Neusinger emphasises how the changing of an original phenomenon becomes visible in the intersections of different interests.<sup>56</sup> The effects of *Art contre/against Apartheid* changed over and again in an interplay between micro- and macro-perspectives, from the participating

artists to global trade. In Sweden the exhibition seems to have tapped into the ongoing support for a free South Africa, as pressure was already in place not to trade or consume South African products. In Japan it helped to initiate a national discussion on the merits of reducing trade with South Africa.<sup>57</sup> Derrida foresaw the fluctuating nature of this solidarity project, that its effects must be indirect and that it was precisely Europe’s position of power that enabled the exhibition to have any effect at all. These were the merits of what he understood to be an inherent quality of the artworks: they communicated in a universal language, which attracted attention to the larger cause. Featherstone shows how for some thinkers the power was in the place from which solidarity is spoken. Once donated to South Africa and installed in the parliament building in the administrative capital Pretoria, the *Artists contre/against Apartheid* collection caused a debate.

In her contribution to the counter project *Artists against apartheid* the writer and curator Lucy Lippard considered the double standard in criticizing artists manifesting solidarity through exhibitions, even if she was deeply critical of the glaring omission of African and women artists in Pignon-Ernest and Saura’s project. “When irresponsible critics call responsible artists irresponsible, who’s a dupe and who’s an opportunist? . . .”<sup>58</sup> Let’s not be duped, she wrote, to think that art alone will change the world. But if everyone contributes across all the professional sectors of society, things will start to change. The UN committee chairman wrote in the catalogue introduction to *Artists against apartheid*, the alternative solidarity exhibition to *Artists contre/against Apartheid*, that cultural action against apartheid is invaluable, and that the works in this second exhibition serve to educate international public opinion and refute the whitewashed protests against a racist South Africa.<sup>59</sup> He referred to the whitewashing

<sup>55</sup> Derrida, “Racism’s Last Word”, 19.

<sup>56</sup> Neusinger, “Cross-over!”, 17.

<sup>57</sup> For an analysis of the anti-apartheid movements in Japan see, Anna Konieczna and Rob Skinner, “Introduction”, 1-4, and Kumiko Makino, “Afro-Asian Solidarity and the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Japan”, 265–287, in *A global history of anti-apartheid: forward to freedom in South Africa*, eds. Anna Konieczna and Rob Skinner (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

<sup>58</sup> Lucy Lippard, “Not So Far From South Africa: Visual Art Against Apartheid”, 172.

<sup>59</sup> Major-General Joseph N. Garba, “A statement of Support”, *Ikon*, 2.

of the first exhibition and that this time around the exhibition and publication showed art and poems by mostly South Africans and black Americans. The racism and anti-apartheid system was in this case dealt with by those directly exposed to it and exhibited in areas not usually targeted by high end exhibitions such as Harlem, Jamaica and The Bronx in New York. Its aim was to raise awareness of the apartheid system in South Africa and by doing so, also raise awareness of the situation for African Americans in the U.S.

*Artists contre/against Apartheid* follows the logic of what Stuart Hall has described as the West and the Rest. The rest are “over there and speak amongst themselves”. The West is “everywhere and heard when spoken.” It also adheres to the logic pointed out by Dipesh Chakrabaty in *Provincializing Europe*, of the ambiguity of critical thinking: “One of the larger points of PE [Provincializing Europe] is that critical thought both fights prejudice and carries prejudice at the same time.”<sup>60</sup> One of the reasons behind this, he argues, is that critical thinking is intrinsically linked, again, to geographical place. This exhibition reproduced an intellectual discourse from Paris, despite the addition of some artists from African countries and other non-western continents. It was an exhibition with artists from across the world on a global tour but was not a voice for South African artists.

In a film produced by the Mayibuye Archives the curator Gordon Metz and the head of archives discuss the effects of the exhibition. The archivist Hamilton Budaza regrets there is no space to allow the works to be seen by the public, that the artworks still speak of its history, despite their sometime abstract nature. The curator on the other hand, who also took part in hanging the collection in the first place, as it arrived at the Pretoria parliament building, is more sceptical regarding the impact it had in South Africa. This exhibition, he argues, had more effect outside of South Africa than inside. It lacked representational value for a people largely

deprived of art education.<sup>61</sup> The purpose of the exhibition was to no longer have a purpose. When Derrida suggested that the only place for apartheid was in the archives, it was most likely not what he had in mind for the actual artworks to be packed up in crates and archived as a well-meaning but out-of-date European project.

Pignon-Ernest and Saura pulled together a powerful manifestation of artists that came from Brazil, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Nigeria, Mozambique, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, the UK and Yugoslavia. But whilst there were at least one or two artists from each country, the majority came from France, and were based in Paris. A dozen came from US and of those most from New York (such as Robert Rauschenberg, Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and Roy Lichtenstein). Interestingly, a quarter of the artists had exhibited previously at Lunds Konsthall, such as Paris based Arman, Eduardo Arroyo, Christian Boltanski, Lourdes Castro, Erró, Allen Ginsberg, Jiri Kolar, Julie Le Parc, Roberto Matta, Achille Perrilli, Antonia Saura and Pierre Soulages, and Abakanowic from Poland.

In essence this was a Parisian exhibition, which was part of the problem, according to the Mayibuye Archives curator. He confirms that it was an applaudable achievement, but had very little to do with the people of South Africa. It has been met with criticism, Derrida’s text has been picked apart, and the exhibition is packed away in crates. Yet, it did create ripples in the many places it was exhibited during the touring years. The U.S. based counter project *Artists against Apartheid: Works for Freedom*, was a clear statement against the elitism of the *Artists contre/against Apartheid* exhibition but it seems that it was the elitism that managed to get the attention of art galleries and audiences in the many countries where it toured.

The *Artists contre/against Apartheid* project raises questions around the use of art in times of crisis. After all this was a highly politicised exhibition with

<sup>60</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference*, (Princeton, N. J.: New ed., Princeton University Press, 2008), 14.

<sup>61</sup> Paige Sweet, *A Future Museum Against Apartheid*, film 17 minutes, produced by Mayibuye Archives, 2018.

blockbuster names such as Oldenburg, Rauschenberg, Saura and Arman that toured the world for ten years. It is an exhibition that tested the limits of solidarity and whether it is meaningful to raise your voice for matters beyond your own experience. These are questions without any simple answers. But by locating the different entangled interests that are generated by this exhibition I have demonstrated how international art, international politics, and local history are intertwined. The exhibition

was not particularly wanted in South Africa, where it never made much difference. However, it made a difference for a world-wide audience, in different ways depending on where it landed: France, Sweden, Japan and beyond. The artists sent what they saw as their most emblematic work, an example of how they volunteered their art to be politicized for the cause. Furthermore, it leads to a history of contemporary art where the public art gallery willingly lent itself as a platform for ideological debate.