

little

black

book

key
— : Speaker's Name
/// : Personal Thoughts / Work of Art
||||| : TITLE OF THE PANEL / EVENT

Theophilus Imani

Brevi Appunti

29/05/2015

"We have the power to create new images of blackness" (Cit. McCray)

"Never allow yourself to be the only person of colour in a position of power" (Cit. McCray)

"People of Afr. can descent subject of art, rather than object of art" (Cit. Awam)

Robert. Holmes

Blackmoors → name given to us by others

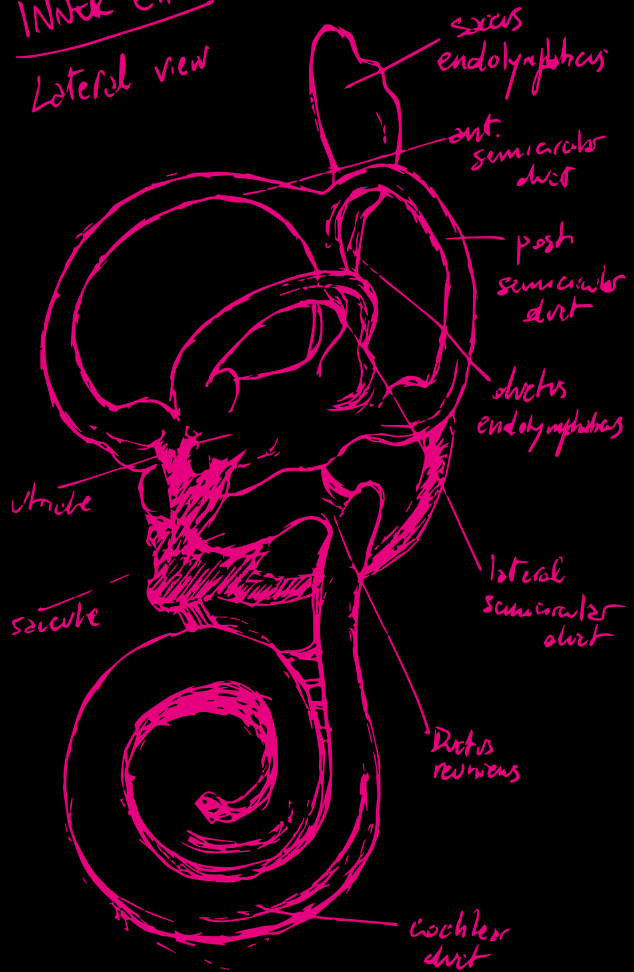
↓

redundant name

→ namelessness concept attached to them

INNER EAR

Lateral view



Françoise Vergès

- Pacific Ocean & Indian Ocean, too, were cemeteries for Africans.
- Post-colonialism is not there in Africa, but here in Europe.
- How do we represent the Black body? Racialized...?
- Forgetfulness of colonial history.
- Europe has forgotten its colonial past. (Forgetfulness explained by Freud.)
- In 1800's slave & Black were synonyms.
- Absence of the Black body in history.
- Black bodies in art, before abolition of slavery in France, always looked at White people in the painting never at the viewer.

Gunja Sengupta

William A. Attaway,
Tale of the Blackamoor, 1936

Ella Shohat
James King

BLACK ITALIA

Italy is a crucial site of the African diaspora. (cit. Alessandra Di Maio)
It has always been, since the Roman Empire.

see: Baldassare Longhena,
Monument to Doge Giovanni Pesaro, 1669

The Black body is crystallized.

Pictures

- 1 Alessandra Ragionieri,
Permanent Travelers
- 2 Angele Etoundi Essamba,
Dans l'autre Regard 23
- 3 Alessandra Capodacqua
- 4 Zanele Muholi,
ZaVa XXXXII, Amsterdam

Tanya Sheehan

see: Michael Ray Charles

Jan Marrah

- Andrea Mantegna, *Adoration of the Magi*. In Western art, Black presence is predominantly masculine.
- Edgar Degas, *Miss Lala* → Black lady born in Poland.

Monica Miller

Her research focuses on Afro-diasporic communities in countries that “don’t have” a colonial past: Sweden.

Kate Lowe

Between 1440–1650 Lisbon was the European city with the largest population of Africans. Some Africans were enslaved, but slavery existed even before their arrival: there were White people enslaved. In Lisbon, there were also free Black people. Interracial marriages were legal.

see: Mickalene Thomas

From Carrie Mae Weems' short film:
"I will always mean what I say"

So far, [Asia] Leeds's presentation is the one I've enjoyed the most. It centers around the politics of travelling as a Black woman (who is privileged to holding an American passport).

What is Black cinema?
When the creative voice is Black.
Genuine voices, our stories.

- 1 Russel Watson, *Head Case Akin*
- 2 Awol Erizku, *Girl with a pigeon*
- 3 Mario Macilau

Ernest Wilson

“Start writing things down” otherwise history will be reshaped. ■ “If we don’t write our autobiographies people will write our autobiographies for us.” ■ “What’s the narrative you will tell your great-grandchildren?” ■

Alexandra Mitchell

Caribbean Memory Project

Archive: paving the way for those who are not born.

Black Portraits[s] II

Nana Adusei – Poku

see: • Romare Bearden
• howdoyousayyaminafrican?,
No Humans Involved

BLACK BODY PANEL

Joel Dreyfuss, Haitian journalist

Courtney J. Martin

Vanley Burke, *Boy with flag*, 1970–1979

Bongani Madondo
A.P.A. Busia

Too Black for a Black College

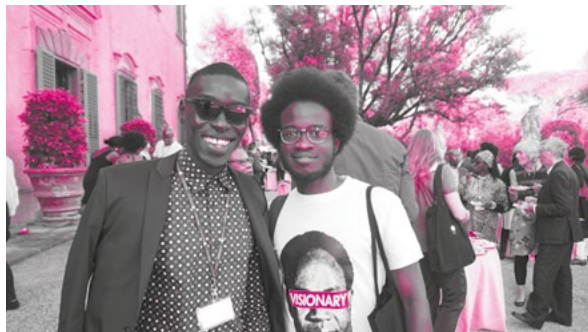
Of Africa, May 25, 1971

*Drum & Spear Press,
We are an African People*

Julius Lester

Juanita Hall

Griffith (“Griff”) Davis



Omar Victor Diop, Florence 2015.

Black Portraits[s] II

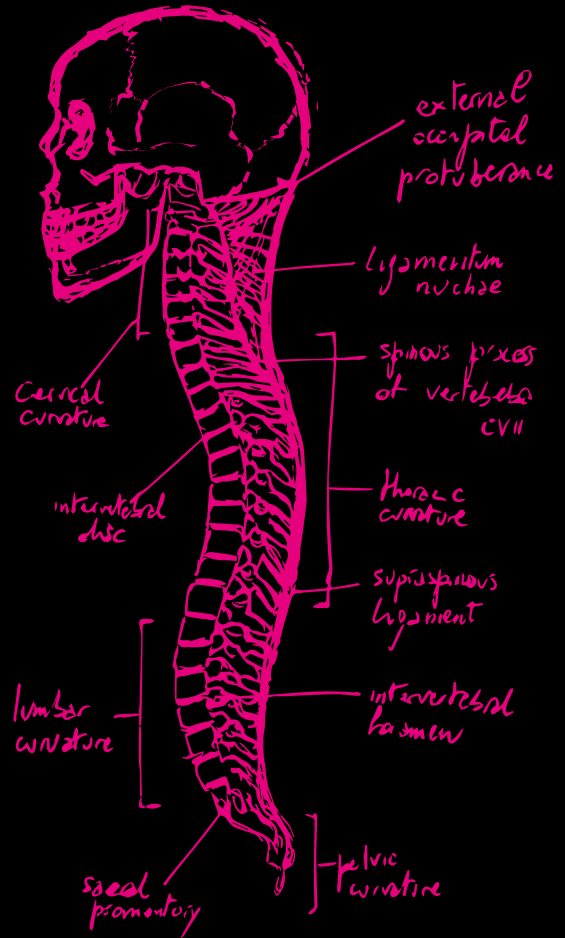
RE-CREATING HISTORIES Artist' Speak

Kiluanji Henda, *Chinese-Connection*

Omar Victor Diop

- To shed light on African figures who shaped different regions in the world (*Project Diaspora*).
- The project speaks to all, Europeans included. Although in the beginning he didn't conceive it for them, it was for those who could “relate”.
- see: Albert Badin

Elizabeth Colomba



9 Sept 2015

Edgar Morin

- Not migrants, not refugees but FUGITIVES → they flee from wars, wretchedness, poverty, hunger.
- Let's not forget that Europeans emigrated to the Americas.
- Let's not forget that France, Italy and Spain are multicultural (→ enrichment). These countries are diverse.

“European perception on fugitives has to change. They are not just foreigners, BUT human beings who have experienced migration. This is important in order to comprehend the human aspect of the issue.” ■

“We need to open our mind, not just our doors.” ■

Tariq Ramadan*

- Reception without distinction of colour, religion etc..
- Right to be welcomed in dignity, legality and humanity. Duty dictated by our consciousness.
- IT IS A SHAME that it took a photo of a child [Alan Kurdi] to awake European consciousness.
- Arab countries are the first to be blamed.
- The Arab world has not built South-South relations. Arab countries more tied to Western countries' capitals (efficient and brave critique of the betrayal of politics).

- We need to contemplate the Quran DYNAMICALLY.

(reading it in evolutionary terms

NO literalist readings

NO crystallized readings)



They create situations of stagnation and therefore of death.

Edgar Morin

- Monotheism → Monolithism



Appropriation of absolute truth

- Islam & Christianity share UNIVERSALISM.

Any race, any people, can be part of the two religions. This is not the case for Judaism. Islam & Christianity are more alike, have more points in common.

- Historically, Christianity has been more fanatic than Islam.

- New discoveries lead to a new ignorance. An ignorance that we are aware of.

- Pascal knew that religion could not be explained by rationality.

- There are different types of faith, faith in God, in friendship, in love etc.. The latter two, unlike the former, are NOT dogmatic faiths BUT a wager.

Tariq Ramadan*

EVERY MEANS IS TWOFOLD

Dogmatism → Denial of diversity

Determine what is immutable and what is not → So profound faith + active reason





What do we see beyond time and what is rooted in it?

- Then translate everything into finality, and safeguard what is immutable, e.g. DIGNITY.

Let's remember that human beings are an END NOT A MEANS.

- If we victimize ourselves, we cannot become subjects of our history.

Mystery : Morin = Spirituality : Ramadan
What Morin calls Mystery, Ramadan calls it Spirituality.

- Migration fluxes are caused by the global market that centers profit rather than human beings.

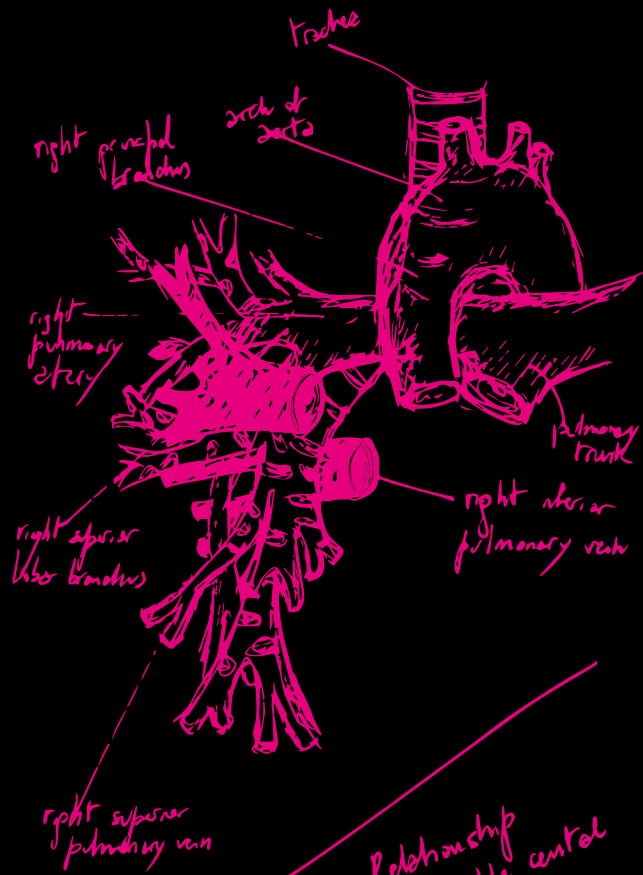
- God is inner peace.

- You cannot build peace in the outer world if you don't have inner peace within yourself.

- In the 13th century, Islam lost its philosophical, imaginative touch, preferring its juridical aspect. Islam needs to reconnect to the imaginary
→ We need a cultural revolution.

- Do not reduce human beings to the sum of their acts. (We are bigger, and better than our wrongdoings and mistakes.)

*Theophilus Imani attended the lectures of Tariq Ramadan in 2015 and 2016, prior to the surfacing of sexual assault allegations against him in 2017, at the height of the #MeToo movement. The choice to include mentions of work by Ramadan in **little black book** is not an action in support nor of absolution of him or his actions. It is instead an honoring of the work of Theophilus, in an effort to remain authentic and honest through collaborations in an ethical and transparent way. As the aftermath of the #MeToo movement continues to affect the changing world around us, we root ourselves in reclaiming the power of femmes. We stand in support with the women and victims who accuse him. And we continue to always believe women.



Relationship
between the central
airways & the
pulmonary
veins

12 Sept 2015

Wole Soyinka

- In Africa, theatre, as a practical space, exists everywhere. Theatre exists where it happens (in the streets, in schoolrooms, etc.).

- Every space becomes theatrical space, especially for the video-theatre, video-drama (Nollywood, etc.).



It's replacing
theatre in Africa.



It encapsulates the
theatre into the
video.

- Spontaneous folk opera of African theatre has been replaced by Nollywood, Ghollywood, Hillywood, etc..

- Transformation of British theatre coincided with decolonization on the African continent.



Africa was rediscovering herself during that period.

In that period, British theatre – bored with its own tradition – took inspiration from the former colonies (e.g.: Calypso from West Indies).

see: • Joan Littlewood

- Soyinka's Nobel acceptance speech

- You cannot always present reality on stage (e.g.: Boko Haram → Wole thought of analysing on stage the abduction of the girls, but it would have diminished the humanity involved in the assault. At times you feel that your art is impotent.) → artist role & reality.

Antony and Cleopatra. Wole Soyinka's favourite Shakespeare's play (at this moment; he might change his mind tomorrow).

- Economic capabilities (and dearth of good actors) are contributing to the death of live theatre in Africa.
- To romanticize the process of identity → Negritude
- To be pragmatic in the process of liberation → Tigritude
- Césaire's Negritude took on an ideological approach, it diminished the emphasis on Blackness, and focused more on the ideology.
- Abandoning your culture is like losing your hand (young generation of Africans in Europe).
If it happens, the parents are to blame → the battle is at home.

DO NOT RHAPSODIZE BLACKNESS BUT
RATHER A PRACTICAL APPROACH



Wole Soyinka, Pordenone 2012.

AFRICA IN THE WORLD'S FUTURE

Romano Prodi

- Europe doesn't present itself to Africa as a whole. Each European state presents itself to the Continent as a single entity.
- Europe looks to the East, it has never looked to the South. Europe "has noticed" Africa only after the arrival of migrants. (*I disagree with him.*)

Wole Soyinka

- The landing spot is the beginning
→ people may be born in a place, but then they leave (migrants). When they arrive at the most convenient spot (e.g.: Italy), they head elsewhere (they spread out)
[→ the concept of the landing spot as the beginning returns].

• Internal displacement (internally displaced people as a result of civil war) of 2 million Nigerians from the North-Eastern part of Nigeria. Despite this displacement, there hasn't been a global policy.

- The chickens are coming home to roost (→ arrival of migrants in Europe)
CYNICAL ATTITUDE (*in the words of Soyinka*), *but I would say pragmatic*
→ the phenomenon has become so humongous that only HUMANITARIAN instinct is left.

In Africa there is a sub-humanism wave created by the fundamentalist groups (not even anti-humanism BUT SUB-HUMANISM).

- “Obama is one of the most successful refugees that the world has ever known.” (Soyinka)
- African corruption sustained by imported corruption (Chinese companies that invest in Africa are corrupted to the core).

Romano Prodi

- Africa can become the protagonist of the world ONLY IF it has a continental policy BUT to date African policy is fragmentary.

→ Prodi DOESN'T want to define Africa's growth as “Renaissance”.

27 April 2016

Teju Cole

“Darkness is not empty.
It is information at rest.”

Tariq Ramadan*

- 1) source
- 2) content
- 3) objective

ISLAMOPHOBIA

1) Over the course of 70 years, Europe has changed: Muslim citizens, nation-states, globalization etc. → changes that have led to the creation of new identity movements in order to protect itself from globalization, from citizens who have different historical memories, different skin colour, etc..

So, Islamophobia is a direct result of these movements formed during these changes. These historical transformations have fueled fear, including Islamophobia. Islamophobia has a political and ideological source. Political and economic interest in creating the enemy. Stigmatization of Islam in order to create the enemy.

It is not fear, because they know how Islam works. They create the enemy because they are aware of the fact that the population is changing as “people from the [Global] South” begin to be part of the Western world.

2) Islamophobia = anti-muslim racism.

Your Islamic faith is not accepted, regardless of who you are, what you do. Questions about the veil are not necessarily Islamophobic questions. → Islam is not the problem, its interpretation is.

3) Division → objective of Islamophobia
↓
organized and structural racism

Islamophobia objective is to create victims. So, in order to fight it, we should not victimize ourselves.

- 1) Microaggression
 - 2) Institutionalized
 - 3) State
- types of racisms

2) You are denied a job because, say, you wear the hijab.

- Anti-racist organizations bring society closer to the values it preaches to defend.

- Being a Muslim is demanding, it involves a jihad, an effort, not to hide our identity, jihad of resistance in accepting ourselves (jihad of knowledge).

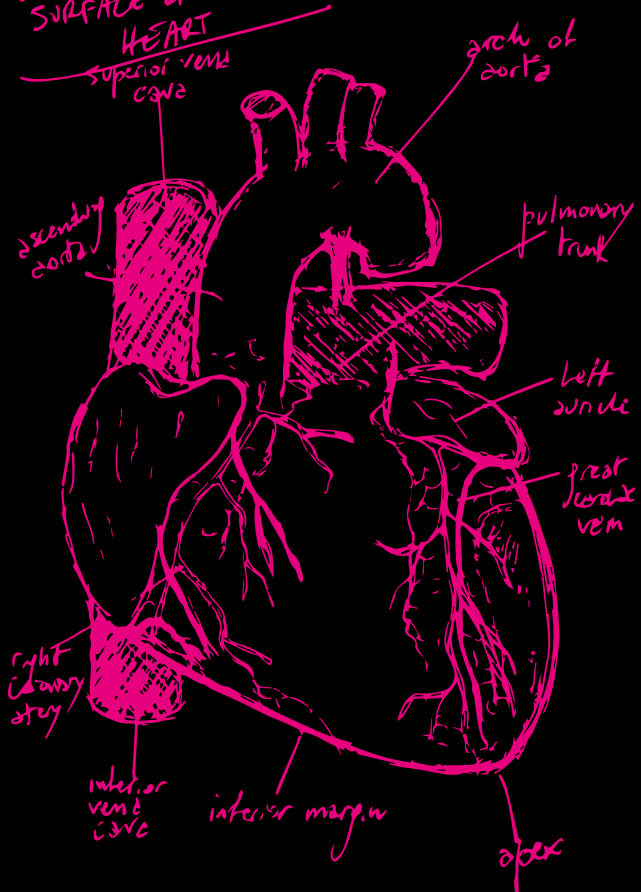
- Jihad of openness → coming out of our shell in order to get in touch with people who think differently than us but are ready to take part in a dialogue.

- Jihad of communication → all Muslims should be involved in the dialogue regardless of gender, race, class, etc..

- Jihad of participation* → NO need for an Islamic party, BUT active participation as a citizen. Know yourself, meet others and act together.

*Participation → widespread in every field (intellectual, artistic, etc.)
→ intentional dynamism at social level.

Anterior SURFACE of the HEART



Camilla Hawthorne

- Unexpressed Whiteness continues to form inclusive and exclusive structures.
- Race is not fixed (S.Hall).
- In Italy, the word racism has evaporated. But it continues to stay in the air. (*I'm reminded of Teju Cole's words: "[racism] like misogyny, it is atmospheric."*).

read: Stuart Hall, *Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race*, 1986

Camilla Hawthorne

There isn't a single racism, BUT RACISMS (Stuart Hall) that depend on "historical & geographical specificities," which in turn have shaped the Black experience in each European country.

Michelle Wright → "The need for definitions of Blackness that do not exclude, isolate or stigmatise."

Holocaust → importation of colonial technology in Europe (Aimé Césaire).

Immigration / Integration paradigm

- Blacks in Europe are destined to always be immigrants and to never be citizens.
- The oversaturated presence of Black people is blamed for racism. In reality, the "phantoms" of racism have never abandoned the Italian context (see: [Cesare] Lombroso).

Prof. Polato

Knowledge data vs awareness data.



When we talk about classics (for example, French literary classics), we immediately think of a White author (White male). But when we conduct a research, we find out that the authors have non-White origins (e.g. Dumas).

Camilla Hawthorne

see: Mary Seacole

read: Peter Freyer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain*

RACISM – SEXISM – CLASS



Black women: TRIPLE OPPRESSION

Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism*

DIASPORA

- teleology of return ([James] Clifford)
- roots / routes
- constant process of becoming (S. Hall)

J. Nassy Brown,
Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool



Diasporic resources, circulated among the diaspora, remixed in order to craft different forms of politics. The most recent (diasporic resources) are digital media.

On the Internet and the Black diaspora, see: Anna Everett.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche



“Beauty is political, it is a cultural invention.” ■ “This skin colour [black] is just glorious.” ■ “America forces identity on you, you don’t have a choice.” ■

“Theory flattens experience.”
Chimamanda is more interested in the texture of women’s lives than the theoretical aspect of it.

The twoness of knowing two languages. Igbo is the language of home, warmth, but at the same time some things are difficult to express in Igbo because they sound vulgar (example: the word for vagina in Igbo) (*a similar example can be found in Twi*).

10 Sept 2017

Yaa Gyasi

“History is storytelling.” ■ “Always write with a sense of responsibility in order to honour people.” ■ “History doesn’t repeat but it rhymes.” (M. Twain) ■ “Writing, extension of my love for reading.” ■



Yaa Gyasi, Mantua 2015.

Festivaletteratura

30 Sept 2017

Christiane Taubira

- People are becoming depoliticized, and this occurs at the expense of the Left.
- Do citizens' rights make human rights fragile or vice versa? There's a perception that one million people (immigrants) represent a threat.
- The right of asylum has existed since the 16th century. It started as a concept, an ecclesiastical value and then became a secular value.
- Technical progress is meaningless if it doesn't serve the ambitions of each person.

read: Walter Benjamin,
Experience and Poverty

We are poor in common experiences.

Angela Davis



Top: Christiane Taubira, Ferrara 2017.
Bottom: Angela Davis, Ferrara 2017.

Internazionale Festival

We can't predict the outcome of our struggle. Referencing S. Hall, Davis reminds us that "there are no guarantees".

"In the year 2017, we are certainly not at the point that we thought we would be." ■ "[It's] a good thing that the struggle continues, that it moves from one generation to the next." ■

"Continue to insist on challenging individualism." ■

Individualism destroys individuality and collective spirit nurtures individuality.



(Collective spirit) a sort of kinship that allow us to cross borders & time.

- Abolition democracy → abolition of old institution & creation of new ones → never done in the US that's why RACISM still at the core of US society.

- Prison industrial complex = evidence of structural racism.

- Europe is reaping the fruits of its history. Routes of migration are the reverse of the slave trade routes.

- State Violence – Intimate Violence.



There is an interconnection between these two violences.

- This is an era where women are on the rise all over the world.

- Feminism as a methodology that can be used regardless of someone's gender.

All the struggles are interconnected.

Davis puts the accent on the importance of SELF-CARE, against the backdrop of traumas and struggles a person might experience.

Somewhere's father.

- All the struggles are interconnected.

- Davis mette l'accento sul

SELF-CARE, sulla spinta

del trauma e dello struggle che
una persona può vivere.

little black book

In diaspora space, many Black people live in intellectual isolation. The absence of a language to articulate our lives aggravates the feeling. This experience, that I live as a diasporic subject born and raised in Italy, is the context that gave form to the little zine in your hands. It gathers the notes I took during my escapes, the encounters where I found consolation in the thinking of Black writers, scholars, and artists. The meetings always took place far from home. And each place I travelled to, I carried a pen, a notebook, and

a camera. Sometimes, keeping the rendezvous meant to neglect my university duty. But I always believed that good medical practice was not limited to scientific and medical knowledge. This little black book is a recollection of the encounters. The notes, an extension of my memories... written words that regain resonance in reading, and become the beginning, or the crossroad, of thoughts.

Theophilus Imani

Index of Dates, Titles, and Locations

28/05/2015 – 31/05/2015

“Black Portraits[s] II: Imaging the Black Body and Re-Staging Histories,” Florence.

09/09/2015

“Per una libera circolazione delle idee,”

Edgar Morin and Tariq Ramadan in conversation, moderated by Riccardo Mazzeo. Festivaletteratura, Mantua.

12/09/2015

“Sul palcoscenico del destino. La scrittura in scena,” Wole Soyinka in conversation with Peter Florence. Festivaletteratura, Mantua.

12/09/2015

“L’Africa come futuro del mondo,” Wole Soyinka and Romano Prodi in conversation; moderated by Carlo Annese. Festivaletteratura, Mantua.

27/04/2016

Opening reception of Teju Cole’s exhibition “Punto d’ombra” (“Blind Spot”), Forma Meravigli, Milan.

03/06/2016

“European Muslims, Representation and Reality,” Tariq Ramadan and Peter Gomez in conversation; moderated by Hamza Piccardo. Milan.

29/10/2016

“Sprigionando pensieri: Un dibattito su cultura, identità e razzismo,” Bologna.

13/12/2016

“Perspectives on Black Europe: New Media and the Practices of Diaspora,” Camilla Hawthorne. Padua.

06/09/2017

“La principessa del mondo letterario,” Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie in conversation with Michela Murgia. Festivaletteratura, Mantua.

10/09/2017

“Epoëa africana,” Yaa Gyasi in conversation with Gaia Manzini. Festivaletteratura, Mantua.

30/09/2017

“Ricomincio da sinistra,” Guillaume Duval, Paul Magnette and Christiane Taubira in conversation; moderated by Jacopo Zanchini. Internazionale Festival, Ferrara.

30/09/2017: “Stati Uniti – È ancora un sogno,” Angela Davis in conversation with Ida Dominijanni. Internazionale Festival, Ferrara.

Colophon

beibi boi's series

4 of 4

Thank you

Adriana, Anna, Caterina and Myriam

Theophilus Imani

theo.imani@gmail.com | @theoimani

Scanned sketches

Theophilus Imani is referencing Jean-Michel Basquiat's series, "Anatomy," 1982. Both artists based their drawings on the medical text book, "Gray's Anatomy."

Design

Caterina Ragg

Editing and Art Direction

Homie House Press

Publishing

Homie House Press
in HHPHQ Milano Lab

adrianastories.com
@homiehousepress
homiehousepress@gmail.com

Printing

Offset Black and Silver
Tipografia Mistero
Milano, Italy

All Rights Reserved
©2020 Theophilus Imani
©2020 Homie House Press



INSTAGRAM/TIPOGRAFIAMISTERO
TIPOGRAFIAMISTERO@GMAIL.COM

We got dreams.

homie
house
press

beibi boi's