

Festival Panafricain de Cinéma
et de Télévision de Ouagadougou (FESPACO)

Comité de Coordination du colloque
du Cinquantenaire du FESPACO



*Confronting our memory and shaping the future of a Pan-African cinema in its
essence, economy and diversity.*

Introduction to FESPACO Fifty-Anniversary Symposium

FESPACO was founded in 1969 in Ouagadougou, capital city of Upper Volta, which became Burkina Faso in 1984. Formerly the capital of the Mossi Empire, Ouagadougou has been transformed over centuries into a cosmopolitan megalopolis, whose current dynamism and creativity make its charm and notoriety. Ouagadougou is the ultimate repository of the Memory of African Cinema. As such, it is the only city in the world with a Filmmakers' Square where each edition of the festival is punctuated by a ceremony held in memory of filmmakers who passed away. The ceremony brings together film professionals and festival-goers from all over the world. At this square is the Filmmakers' Avenue, starting with statue of famous Senegalese Director, Sembene Ousmane.

The film festival held in this city has embodied and continues to embody a dream: that of passionate women and men driven by the lack of images and stories which Africans from the Continent and the Diaspora can identify with, while forging self-awareness. Passion, cultural, political, and historical claim, pan-African character, commitment and faith, desire and aspiration, determination, all contributed to building, shaping, nurturing and developing FESPACO. It was carried by a whole people endowed with an innate sense of hospitality and which succeeded in giving rise to an audience will to travel and discover stories and narratives; a people whose availability, enthusiasm, fidelity, helped FESPACO take root and grow. It is this belief in the ability of Cinema to explore the world and the society, to participate in the building of humanity in its diversity that helped FESPACO stand up against all odds. How can we keep up with this vision and aspiration, and give this festival a new lifespan, beyond the next fifty years?

FESPACO's ambition has always been and remains to provide a space for the confrontation of imaginations and talents, a space for sharing and building not only a memory, but also a present and a future. The key feature of the festival is that it has succeeded in establishing a fusion relationship between the Ouagadougou, pan-African and global cinema audiences and the film and audiovisual professional community. That audience has always been able to release fervour, breath, friendliness, goodness, respectful familiarity and unalterable expectation that anyone attending FESPACO for the first time could but notice and be marked by. Beyond the emotional intensity it creates, many expect FESPACO to cure all the ills that undermine African cinemas and hinder their development. The diverse symposiums, conferences, round tables and professional workshops organized by FESPACO since its inception have undoubtedly contributed to advancing theoretical reflection and to updating strategic solutions for the development of cinemas from Africa and the Diaspora. It is the 50th anniversary of this festival -which is much more than a festival- that we mean to celebrate today in the most memorable way. The symposium is one of the cornerstones of this celebration. It should aim at providing a framework to look back over fifty years of progress and formulate visions, desires and objectives for the near and distant future. Indeed, FESPACO has been the screen on which has been projected for 50 years Africa's history, marked not only by the ups and downs of colonialism, the failure of the new post-independence ruling classes, neo-colonialism, economic and political imperialism, the assassination of resistance fighters, but also by struggles for independence, pan-Africanist experiments, liberation movements and independence acquired with weapons. The festival also served as a screen for Afro-pessimism, the resignation of intellectuals, disillusionment and disenchantment, disasters induced by measures dictated by the Bretton Woods institutions, the unacceptable deterioration in the terms of trade, the looting of African mining resources, wars waged by external actors, the tragedy of migration to the West, and land grabbing, violent extremism, religious radicalism, but also the birth of the African Union, non-violent practices, the anti-imperialist struggle, the fall of apartheid, the non-aligned movement, the revolt of peoples and the wind of democracy, the fight against corruption, the release of Nelson Mandela, Afro-futurism, the desire and fight for Africa's renaissance.

This Fiftieth Anniversary Symposium is therefore an invitation to reflect on all these issues, to contribute to the shaping and transformation of the Continent's greatest cultural event. To this end, reflections will focus on four axes in a retrospective-prospective continuum:

- Once upon a time was FESPACO
- Confronting our memory
- Shaping the future and sustaining FESPACO
- New economic bases

Mains themes of FESPACO symposium

1 / Once upon a time was FESPACO...

What is this flame that FESPACO was able to ignite, this spirit that it has imprinted, this energy and this momentum that it has infused into pan-African Cinema? How did it feed aesthetic research and image production? How was it able to trigger and maintain interest and critical look upon African and Diaspora cinemas? If the Festival had not existed, what would have changed in Africa's cinematographic destiny? What are the foundations laid by FESPACO that have enabled the emergence and consolidation of a collective consciousness and the capitalization of an African and Diaspora cinematographic memory that is open to the world, and that draw their strength from the imaginary cultural and societal singularities of Africa and its Diasporas?

2 / Workshop 1: Confronting our memory

Would it be true to say that FESPACO has been the witness of an evolution of African cinemas that started with the values of duty, commitment, responsibility, combat and collective credo; cinemas of the affirmation of individual freedom of creation, intimacy and self-reflection, the pleasure of telling, the claim of an entertainment cinema? Or beyond appearances and divergences, have their rather been continuities, extensions, hybridizations, commuting, crossings, crossbreeding? How to capitalize on a collective film experience and build a living, vibrant and accessible culture for the greatest number of people? Archives, film library, preservation of the heritage and its circulation.

3/ Workshop 2: Shaping the future and sustaining FESPACO

How can new economic bases be created for the film and audiovisual industries from Africa and its Diasporas? What role can FESPACO play in the advent of a new dynamic trend in the creation of plural images and narratives for the development of an African and Afro-descendant being rich of his history and oriented towards his own reinvention? How will FESPACO succeed in reflecting intensely the new cinematographic languages that are being invented before our eyes? How can the festival be the place where young filmmakers from the continent and the Diaspora find an expression, exhibition and experimentation?

4/ workshop 3: New economic bases

How can the financial autonomy of the festival be seriously envisioned? How to strengthen the pan-African status of the festival by involving new State, institutional and private actors in its organization, policy and funding, so as to consolidate a continental instrument for the exhibition and defense of African and Diaspora film and audiovisual expressions? Who are the new players in the environment of production, distribution, exhibition and distribution of audiovisual pieces? How to get young African businessmen - bright, cosmopolitan and proud of their Africanness - interested in the film industry?

The pioneers of African Cinema and of the Pan-African Film Festival of Ouagadougou, and the new inheriting generations, are strongly involved and needed for this Symposium. All film professionals, artists and creators coming to FESPACO are of course invited to take an active part in this gathering. Intellectuals, faculties, researchers, critics, journalists, mediators and cultural activists are also actors of this Symposium, through their respective disciplines ranging from history, art history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology to semiotics, linguistics, musicology, economics or political science, because Cinema must be fed itself beyond its own borders. The Symposium is of course open to all festival-goers to make it a unique framework for sharing, exchanging, mutual listening, reflecting, and building a common future.

FESPACO Fifty Year Anniversary Symposium Programme

Monday, February 25th

8h30 Arrival of Participants

9h-10h

Symposium Opening Ceremonies

Address of:

Ardiouma SOMA, General Delegate of FESPACO

Cheick Oumar SISSOKO, Secretary General of FEPACI

Youma FALL, Director of Cultural Diversity & Development, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)

Abdoul Karim SANGO, Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism of Burkina Faso.

10h: Start of Symposium work

Introduction

Gaston KABORE, Symposium Coordinator

1st Line of symposium: Once upon a time, was FESPACO...

10h15-13h

1st Plenary Session

What is this flame that FESPACO was able to ignite, this spirit that it has imprinted, this energy and this momentum that it has infused into African cinematography and this of her diasporas ?

10h15-12h

The Floor given to the First Witnesses

(Time Limit is 10 minutes per Speaker)

12h-13h

Discussion with the audience.

13h-14h30: Lunch Break

14h30-16h

2nd Plenary Session

How has FESPACO contributed to meeting the need for representation of the peoples of Africa and the Diasporas while helping shape the citizen filmmaker's image in their eyes?

Two Generations of Inheritors Speak

(Time Limit is 5 minutes per Speaker)

16h-18h30

3rd Plenary Session

What are the foundations laid by FESPACO that have enabled the emergence and consolidation of a collective consciousness and the capitalization of an African and Diaspora cinematographic memory that is open to the world, and that draw their strength from the imaginary cultural and societal singularities of Africa and its Diasporas?

Three Intellectual Activists Question History.

(Time Limit is 30 minutes per Speaker)

Tuesday, February 26th

8:30 am: Arrival and installation of participants at the different workshops venues

9h-13h

Three workshops to be held simultaneously:

Workshop 1: Confronting our Memory

Workshop 2: Shaping the Future and sustaining FESPACO

Workshop 3: New Economic Bases

13h-14h30: Lunch Break

14h30-16h30

Workshops Report

16h30-18h30

Plenary Session

What role can FESPACO play in the advent of a new dynamic trend in the creation of plural images and narratives for the development of an African and Afro-descendant being rich of his history and oriented towards his own reinvention?

Two thinkers suggest metaphors for the future.

(Time Limit is 30 minutes per Speaker)