

EMERGING VOICES

RECOGNISING
TALENT IN
FICTION,
FILM AND ART



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Emerging Voices 2015

Today we celebrate the voices of tomorrow.

OppenheimerFunds and the *Financial Times* would like to congratulate the 2015 Emerging Voices Awards winners and say thank you to all the writers, filmmakers and artists in emerging markets who continue to inspire us every day.

Art, Cristina Planas
Fiction, Chigozie Obioma
Film, Yuhang Ho

For more information about the Emerging Voices Awards, visit emergingvoicesawards.com and join the conversation with #EmergingVoices.



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FINANCIAL
TIMES



'THESE AWARDS FULFILLED ALL THE HOPES WE HAD WHEN WE STARTED'

Why a set of awards for artists, film-makers and writers from emerging market countries? When Justin Leverenz, director of emerging market equities at OppenheimerFunds, approached the Financial Times with the idea, we were intrigued.

The FT has long been following the rise to prominence of those countries challenging the financial, strategic and political dominance of the hitherto wealthy world. What did their artists have to teach us? This would be a chance to find out.

It would be disingenuous not to point out that there were financial motivations too. OppenheimerFunds is active in these markets. There would be substantial prizes for the winning artists, but there would be advertising revenues for the FT too. (As always, FT editors and writers have produced this magazine without any commercial interference.)

There were some immediate problems. Would the awards be too big to handle? And what exactly did we mean by “emerging markets” (a term the FT itself has called “imprecise”)?

To manage the possible logistical difficulties, we decided in this first year to divide the regions up, looking at art from Latin America and the Caribbean, short films from Asia-Pacific, and novels, published in or translated into English, from Africa and the Middle East. We received 872 entries.

As to how to define emerging market countries, we decided on those that had a gross national income per capita of \$12,746 or less, according to the World Bank's Atlas method of calculation.

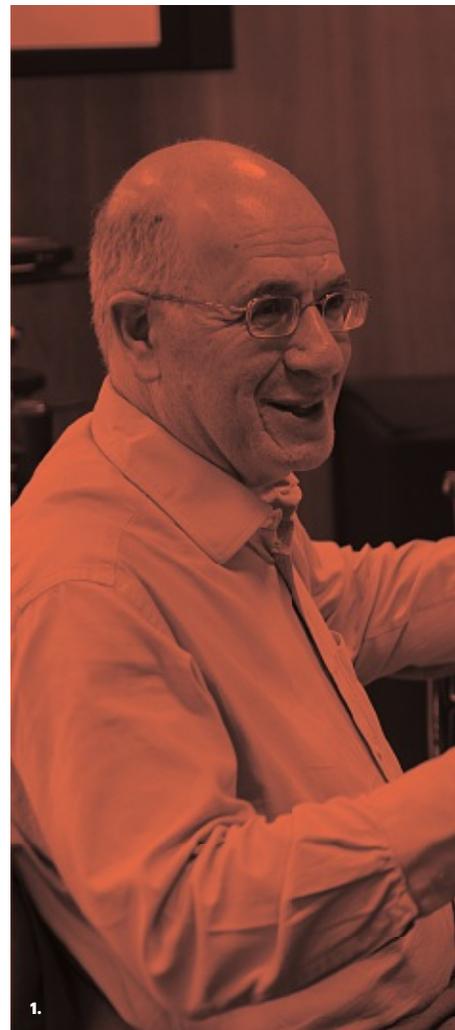
There was some criticism that this was an arbitrary way to select artists to take part and that asking for submissions just from these countries was patronising. But many more people, including judges like Mira Nair, director of films such as *Salaam Bombay!* and *Mississippi Masala*, felt passionately that the awards would give recognition to artists who deserved it. What is more, the awards would bring their work to a far bigger audience than they might otherwise have reached.

What is said in the judging room stays in the judging room. So there will be no revealing here of who said what. (The other distinguished judges are profiled on pages 56-58.) But when the rest of the judges in the fiction award watched

Elif Shafak and Alaa Al Aswany, celebrated novelists from Turkey and Egypt respectively, debating the nature of literature, we knew we were privileged to be present.

In the art category, the judges were most impressed by Lima-based Cristina Planas, whose work took in environmental, political and religious themes. The two runners-up, Fabiola Menchelli Tejada, who lives in Mexico City, and Pablo Mora Ortega, born in Medellín, Colombia, submitted strikingly different works. Menchelli Tejada's photographs showed the interaction of light and shadow. Ortega's installation, sculptures and video showed what he called “the pain and injustice caused by the dysfunctionality and negligence of the Colombian justice system”.

The judges in the film category were entranced by the longlist of 10 short films — so much so that they insisted on having a shortlist of four rather than the three they had been asked for. The winning film was *Trespassed*, by the Malaysian director Yuhang Ho, about a young girl who, to her mother's distress, appears possessed when her father goes missing. The runners-up were *Kush*, by Indian director, Shubhashish Bhutiani, about a teacher protecting a Sikh pupil who was returning from a trip after the assassination of Indira Gandhi;



1.



2.

RESULTS

FICTION

Winner

Chigozie Obioma
The Fishermen — Nigeria

Runners-up

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor
Dust — Kenya

Scholastique Mukasonga

Our Lady of the Nile — Rwanda

FILM

Winner

Yuhang Ho
Trespassed — Malaysia

Runners-up

Shubhashish Bhutiani
Kush — India

Mont Tesprateep

Endless, Nameless — Thailand

Han Ting

The Sea — China

ART

Winner

Cristina Planas
Vultures, Table of Negotiations, Mass Grave, Coloured Christ — Peru

Runners-up

Fabiola Menchelli Tejeda
Balancing Light, Archway, Curved, Section Cut — Mexico

Pablo Mora Ortega

Cabinet, Folios, Abandonment, Records — Colombia

The FT/OppenheimerFunds **Emerging Voices awards** recognise the most inventive and creative fiction writers, film-makers and artists from emerging market countries in Africa and the Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean respectively.



3.

1.
Michael Skapinker,
Justin Leverenz
and Alaa Al
Aswany discuss
their lists

2.
The FT's Lorien
Kite, right, listens
to Alaa Al Aswany

3.
Turkish writer Elif
Shafak

The fiction judges were equally excited by the quality of the work on the longlist. After extensive debate, Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*, a story of the trials and adventures of four Nigerian brothers, emerged as the winner. The runners-up were Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor's *Dust* — set amid Kenya's 2007 electoral turmoil — Scholastique Mukasonga's *Our Lady of the Nile*, which takes place in a Rwandan girls' boarding school on the eve of the country's genocide.

We have learnt a huge amount from the staging of these initial awards. There are some things we plan to do differently next year — for example, we will ask all the artists to provide statements giving us greater context for their work. We will also re-examine how we divide up the art, film and fiction categories.

But in almost every way, these awards fulfilled all the hopes we had for them when we started. We hope FT readers will enjoy them as much as the judges did.

Michael Skapinker,
Chair of judges and FT associate editor

Endless, Nameless, directed by Mont Tesprateep, about the lives of Thai conscripts and, more widely, the class divisions within Thai society; and *The Sea*, by the Chinese director Han Ting, about an art teacher who goes to work at a remote school at the end of his life.

While each of the four films comes from a different country, the judges asked us to make clear this was not deliberate — these were the best four entries.

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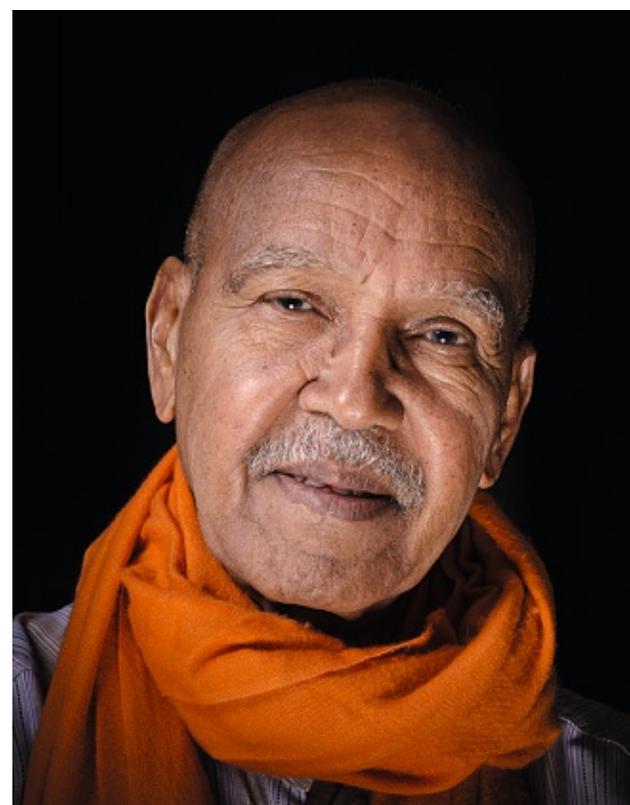
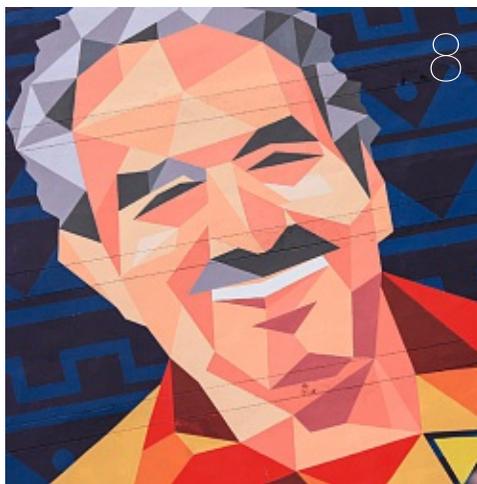
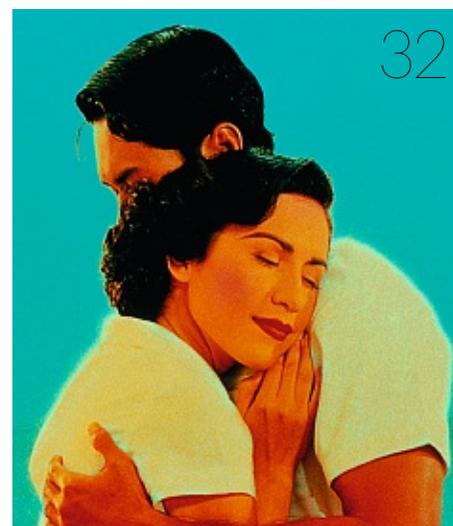
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RUNNERS-UP

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INTRODUCTION

ACROSS FRONTIERS

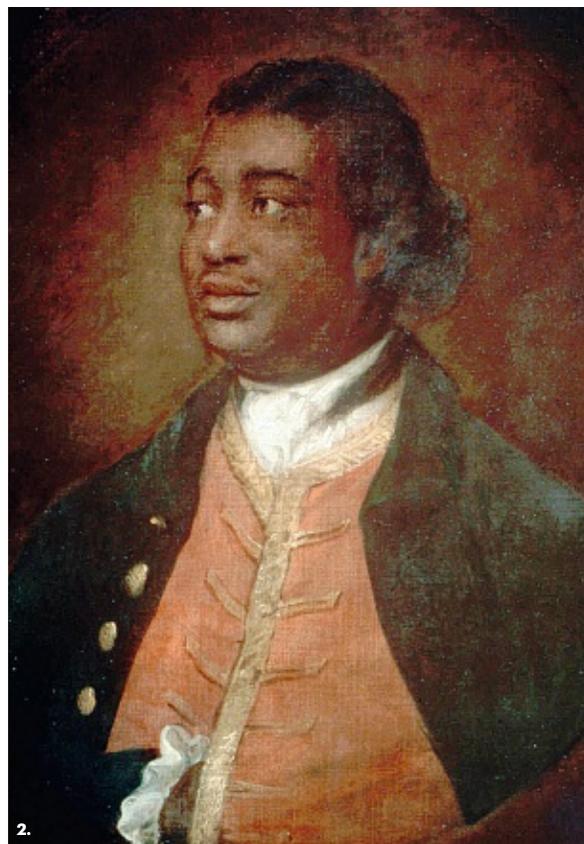
GLOBAL ART REQUIRES A SHIFT IN OUR PERCEPTIONS

BY MAYA JAGGI

Writers from Africa were bestsellers in Europe more than 200 years ago. One picaresque autobiography of a child captured into slavery in west Africa, who, as a free man, travelled the world as a shipping clerk and navigator, lent a powerful voice to the Abolitionist cause. Published in London in 1789, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* went through nine editions (one American) in Equiano's lifetime and 10 posthumously, including translations into Dutch and German.

Readers in England devoured just as eagerly *Letters of the Late Ignatius Sancho*. Sancho was a fashionable Westminster grocer and philanthropist who had the misfortune to be born on a transatlantic slave ship. A writer of poetry, prose and music, he counted among his society friends David Garrick, the Shakespearean actor, and Laurence Sterne, author of *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, bankers and artists (he sat for a portrait by Thomas Gainsborough). Collected in 1782, two years after his death, and reprinted five times, Sancho's correspondence brought him posthumous acclaim — and substantial royalties for his widow.

Though admired by European contemporaries, the writings of Equiano and Sancho were largely forgotten until



1. A mural in Bogotá, Colombia, in memory of Gabriel García Márquez

2. Ignatius Sancho, as portrayed by Thomas Gainsborough (1768)

the 1960s, when they furnished proof that a trailblazing generation of writers — including Chinua Achebe and Ayi Kwei Armah in English and Ousmane Sembène in French — had feted forebears. Two more decades passed before the 1986 Nobel literature prize for Wole Soyinka of Nigeria was mistakenly hailed in some quarters as the arrival of African literature on the world stage.

Those 18th-century bestsellers are a reminder that the arts of the global south have rich, though not always remembered, histories. (This amnesiac tendency had a further corrective in the 1990s in Margaret Busby's 1,000-page anthology of women's words and writings, *Daughters of Africa*.) They also reveal how uncomfortably art sits under national flags. Both Sancho — born off the Guinean coast and baptised in Cartagena, before becoming London's first Afro-British voter — and Equiano epitomised

THE ARTS OF THE SOUTH
HAVE RICH, IF OFTEN
FORGOTTEN, HISTORIES

INTRODUCTION

a cosmopolitan modernity in an era of globalisation. Amid its violent ruptures, Derek Walcott, the St Lucian poet, wrote: “I had no nation now but the imagination.”

The same goes for many writers, artists and film-makers today. When asked to name their influences, some may nod to national icons, but most bow to an eclectic pantheon — as did generations before them. The Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez hired and fired William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway among his literary mentors. The film-makers Ousmane Sembène of Senegal and Satyajit Ray of India were nourished by the 1940s Italian neorealism of Vittorio De Sica’s *Bicycle Thieves* — just as Martin Scorsese has placed Ray and the Japanese auteur Akira Kurosawa, alongside Ingmar Bergman and Federico Fellini, among his “four greats”. These influences cross art forms as well as national frontiers. Günter Grass, the late German Nobel laureate, told me in 2010 that Kurosawa’s 1950 film *Rashomon* was one inspiration behind his Nazi-era novel, *The Tin Drum* (1959).

An expectation that art should express nationhood can even act as a straitjacket. Frank Bowling, the Guyanese-born artist who won the silver medal to David Hockney’s gold at London’s Royal College of Art in 1962, uses a vibrant palette in his abstract work, sometimes touched by memory and history. His early “Map Paintings”, revealing the contours of an enlarged South America through layers of colour, reimagined a decolonised world, around the time that Jasper Johns and other US artists were deploying maps and flags to question US power.

But the hostility Bowling met as a Caribbean-born painter daring to venture into abstraction sent him to the psychoanalyst’s couch. As he told me in 2007: “People had a locked-in view of what I should be doing as an artist; that my role was to represent a certain viewpoint.” His huge map canvases languished in storage for three decades until they emerged to cause a stir at the 2003 Venice Biennale.

Bowling’s rising reputation (his “Poured Paintings” were shown at Tate Britain in London two years ago) is part of a wider movement shaking the art world. Along with a proliferation of biennales, there has been an acquisition drive to fill glaring gaps in the collections of western art institutions such as the Tate, the Pompidou Centre in Paris and New York’s Museum of Modern Art.

This dawning reappraisal of generations

of artists from the global south, or its diasporas, is also calling into question what one international art curator at Tate Modern, Kerry Greenberg, recognises as western art history’s “linear narrative of modernism”. Tate Modern’s leading show this autumn, “The World Goes Pop”, is one fruit of this broadening vision.

Yet the country in which artists work may still throw up nets that ensnare their talent and prevent its reaching an international audience, which is often the key to earning a living. With the exception of South Africa, writers across sub-Saharan



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TO EXPECT ARTISTS TO EXPRESS NATIONHOOD CAN BE A STRAITJACKET

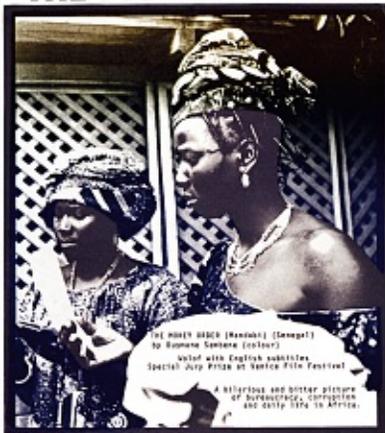
Africa contend with a dearth of local publishers and lamentable distribution. Short of self-publishing, the path into print often lies abroad.

While Arabic publishing is more established, in Lebanon, Egypt or Morocco, the chances of being translated, particularly into English, are still slim, because their publishing scenes in these countries are

1. Frank Bowling
2. Alaa Al Aswany
3. *The Money-Order*, directed by Ousmane Sembène
4. Chinua Achebe
5. Ousmane Sembène



THE MONEY-ORDER



3.

well established. Other hurdles range from arcane censorship rules to rampant book piracy. As even the bestselling Egyptian novelist Alaa Al Aswany, author of *The Yacoubian Building*, said in 2008: “It’s almost impossible to make your living as a writer in Egypt; I earn from my books which are published abroad.”

For artists across Latin America, the sophisticated art infrastructure of Brazil and Mexico contrasts with meagre conditions in Bolivia and Ecuador. Colombia, with a fast developing art scene, has strong art schools and legions of talented graduates but few

films in Cambodia), technology is opening doors for writers and artists — at least by a few degrees. Across Africa, online journals such as Kwani?, Chimurenga, Saraba and Jalada are vaulting geographical and economic barriers to give writers direct access to readers.

For artists, the internet has become essential for promoting their work and linking to far-flung art scenes. Yet the goal for most writers remains to be published in print — not least to receive royalties. María Paz Gaviria, director of Bogotá’s international art fair, ArtBO, cautions that,



4.



PHOTOS: AFP; JOHN D. KISCH/SEPARATE CINEMA ARCHIVE; RAINER BINDER/ULLSTEIN BILD/GETTY IMAGES; DAVID LEVINE, KEYSTONE PRESS AGENCY/EVYNE



5.

places for them to show. This “institutional deficit” has been offset by the talent and energy of artists and curators. Nor is there any certainty that booming economies will invest public funds in the arts. That takes political will.

Sembène told me two years before his death, that in Senegal in the 1960s, he distributed his internationally lauded features in 35mm cans by bicycle, since “Africa is my audience; the west and the rest are markets”.

Just as digital cameras have transformed access to film-making and distribution (sparkling, for instance, a boom in short

in contrast to the internet’s revolutionary impact on the music industry, “the art market is still driven by validation from curators, museums, galleries and art fairs”.

While technology may be helping to level the playing field, an engagement with arts around the globe calls for a fundamental shift in perception. Like the 18th-century readers who hung on the words of free Africans, or the viewers who rediscovered Bowling’s abstract painting, the enriching encounter can turn some of our deepest assumptions on their head. It means new ways of seeing not just the rest of the world, but also ourselves. ■

AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST



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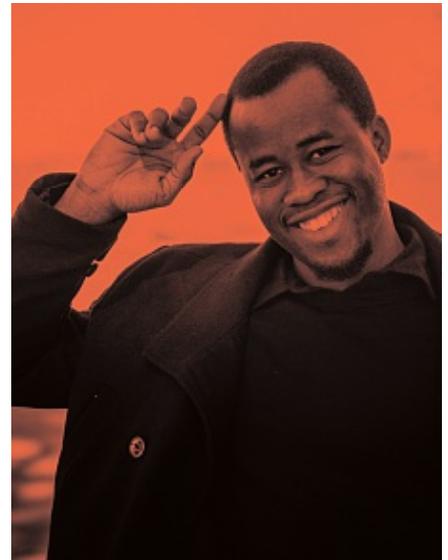


PHOTO: GIACOMO PIROZZI/PANOS

A community school in the Central African Republic

THE WINNER

Chigozie Obioma Nigeria ▼



MYTHS AND REALITY COLLIDE IN NIGERIA

BY LORIEN KITE

Few debut novels generated more excitement this year than Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*. Published to critical acclaim on both sides of the Atlantic, the winner of the inaugural Emerging Voices prize for African and Middle Eastern fiction has also reached the later stages of four other literary awards, Britain's Man Booker shortlist included, and even prompted the *New York Times* to hail its 28-year-old Nigerian author as the heir to Chinua Achebe.

When I meet him on the fringes of the Edinburgh International Book Festival in August, the softly spoken Obioma plays down comparisons between *The Fishermen* and Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958). "The truth is this: I see myself first as an Igbo man," he says, referring to the Nigerian ethnic group. "Achebe was the first who really attempted to tell our story to the world, and it is nearly impossible not to have been influenced by that."

But the Nigerian novel that looms largest for Obioma is Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), a journey into the land of the dead that draws deeply on a well of folk-tale and legend.

“That mythic dimension is what I’m most interested in — the way he blends the supernatural world seamlessly with the human reality.”

The Fishermen is the story of four brothers who, taking advantage of their disciplinarian father’s absence, defy his warnings and fish in the Omi-Ala, a once-sacred river now shunned as a place of danger and pollution. They encounter a madman, Abulu, and learn of his prophecy that the eldest, Ikenna, will die at the hands of one of the others. The idea planted, trust breaks down and the boys are pulled inexorably apart.

Obioma explains how the novel was inspired by a telephone conversation with his father in 2009. Living abroad and nostalgic for home, he was told of the increasing closeness of his elder brothers, who had been bitter rivals for a period during adolescence. “I started thinking about what could have happened if they had continued on that path,” he says. “So I decided to tell a story about a family whose unity is destroyed by an external force.”

Nowhere is the mythic quality of *The Fishermen* felt more than in its signature device: the vivid images, often drawn from the natural world, through which its narrator recalls his childhood. “Father was an eagle,” runs one. “The mighty bird that planted his nest high above the rest of his peers, hovering and watching over his young eagles, the way a king guards his throne.”

Yet this is also a novel rooted in a specific time and place. The brothers play *Mortal Kombat*; they are swept up in the optimism of MKO Abiola’s 1993 presidential campaign; later, they marvel around crowded television screens at the progress of Nigeria’s footballers at the Atlanta Olympics. And in the margins of the narrative, details offered almost in passing — a body found by the river, a thief burnt in the market — create an impression of social breakdown that seems to invite a realist reading of the boys’ response to Abulu’s curse.

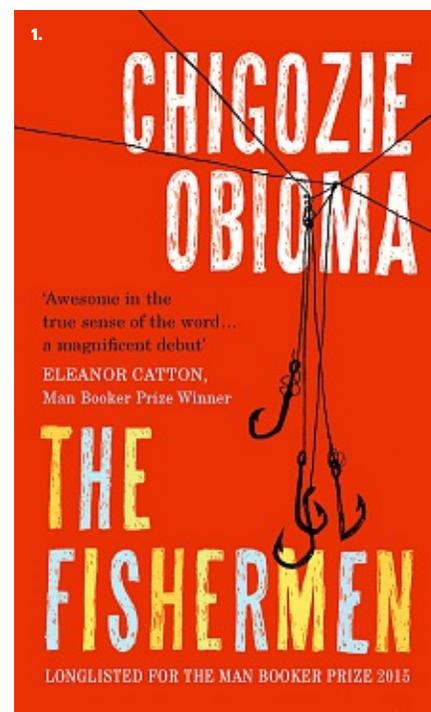
The author describes his book on the inside cover as a “wake-up call to a dwindling nation” and accepts it will be taken as a commentary on Nigerian history. “We’re one of the richest countries by earnings in the world, but in all the years we’ve been amassing all of this wealth from the oil, we’ve made nothing out of it.”

The problem for him lies in the very foundation of the country. “The idea did not belong to the people. It was an external force that came, just like the madman’s prophecy, and said: ‘Be this way.’”

Obioma will inevitably be considered alongside other talented Nigerian novelists to have emerged since the success of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple*

‘WE’RE A RICH COUNTRY BY EARNINGS, BUT WE’VE MADE NOTHING OUT OF IT’

1. The UK edition of the Emerging Voices winning novel
2. Fishing in Abuja’s Jabi Lake



Hibiscus in 2003 — Helon Habila, A Igoni Barrett, Teju Cole and Chinelo Okparanta to name a few — but, as he emphasises, he is a writer who has pursued a singular course.

Born in 1986 in Akure, south-west Nigeria, he describes his middle-class childhood home as like the family compound in the fictionalised Akure, where the events of *The Fishermen* unfold. The boys’ father, he says, “is probably 60 per cent my dad”.

In 2007, after studying economics in Nigeria, Obioma enrolled on a course in literature at Cyprus International University on the Turkish side of Nicosia. “It was an interesting experience for me,” he says. “I learnt the language, I got a degree, I wrote *The Fisherman* there.”

Resident in the US since 2012, Obioma graduated with a masters in creative writing from the University of Michigan then took up a teaching role in Nebraska, which started in August. But if there is justice in the criticism that such programmes impose a slick uniformity on the variegated material of fiction, it is clear that Obioma’s own students will not be encouraged to suppress their individual voices in pursuit of some pared-back, minimalist ideal. “I love to read sentences and be wowed by them,” he says. “So why is everyone writing according to the dictum ‘less is more?’”

Not quite everyone, on the evidence of *The Fishermen* — and if the judges of this award are any guide, the case against less has been well made. ■



PHOTO: IRENE BECKER/GETTY IMAGES

RUNNERS-UP

BY ANDRE RHODEN-PAUL

"I was afraid we were going to explode — and we did," says Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor, remembering the Kenyan crisis in December 2007 when Mwai Kibaki, the then-president, declared himself the winner in presidential elections, ignoring allegations of electoral fraud. Ethnic violence erupted between tribes with different political allegiances. In just a few weeks, more than 1,000 people were killed and thousands more displaced.

Owuor's first novel, *Dust*, was written in response. In the book, engineer turned gang leader Odidi is killed in a gunfight with police in Nairobi. His father, Nyipir, and sister, Ajany, take his body home to the northern Kenyan drylands for burial.

But then his mother, Akai, vanishes. A mysterious Englishman, the son of a British colonial officer, turns up seeking information about his missing father. Revelations of infidelity and violence

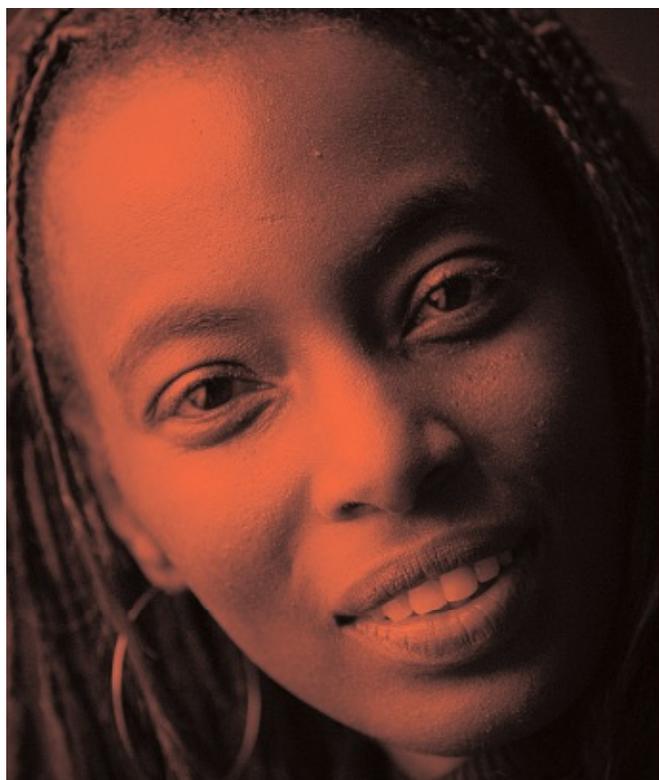
emerge as their story unfolds against the backdrop of Kenya's political history, from British colonial rule to 2007.

"The violence the family explores is very much personal and real," says Owuor, 47, whose characters, she says, were formed in the 2007 turmoil. "It was the face of grief and bewilderment. It's from that experience the characters' voices, faces and eyes emerged. It would turn into an incredible journey."

In 2003, Owuor won the Caine prize for African Writing for her short story *Weight of Whispers*, about a Rwandan aristocrat fleeing the 1994 genocide to Europe, who then becomes trapped in Kenya.

"I feel lucky my work has been profiled internationally and engaged with," she says. "People are now looking in all sorts of places. The African literature scene is in an exciting state, and a place of growth and possibility."

Yvonne Adhiambo Owuor
Dust — Kenya ▼



Scholastique Mukasonga
Our Lady of the Nile — Rwanda ▲

Our Lady of The Nile, set in a Catholic girls boarding school in 1970s Rwanda, is a microcosm of the social and racial tension between Hutus and Tutsis that exploded in the country with genocide in 1994. It is the first novel by Scholastique Mukasonga, who lost 27 relatives in the killings.

Mukasonga says much fiction written about that period gives the impression that the violence and turmoil were unexpected. "Instead, it was the result of a long course of hate, persecution and humiliation [of Tutsis] by Hutu governments from 1959 to 1994," she says.

Born in 1956, Mukasonga left for France before the violence erupted, but she sees her literary mission to "preserve the memory of the Tutsi genocide against the denial that still exists and the tendency to forget".

Her previous books, including *The Barefoot Woman*, were autobiographical, drawing on her childhood memories of life

in Rwanda. Mukasonga says her first fictional work has had a "cathartic function", and made it possible to express ideas and themes that she could not tackle in an autobiography.

The author, who lives in Normandy, received the Prix Renaudot award for *Our Lady of The Nile*, which was written in 2012.

"In France, French-language African literature has a good readership. African authors definitely have a place in international literature."

Our Lady of The Nile, written in French, has been translated into German, Italian, Danish, Arabic, Polish and English, and has sold more than 100,000 copies worldwide. "Genocide concerns all humanity. So I had an interest and duty to write in a language that was likely to be translated.

"One day my books will be released in Rwandan. The words of my mother tongue, which sprinkle my books."

TRANSLATION

MULTILINGUAL
MASTERYPUBLISHING'S
UNSUNG
HEROES AT
WORK

BY ANDREW JACK

For John Cullen, his first few paragraphs are the most important and the most difficult. Just like the writers whose work he translates, he agonises over finding the right words. “I sit in my little office reading aloud to myself,” he says. “The first page has about 20 drafts. You have to see the spirit of the original author and to reproduce it. Particularly with a first-person narrative, it becomes very important to find the right voice. Once I hear that, or delude myself into thinking I have, I can go forward.”

Cullen translated into English from French the Algerian writer Kamel Daoud’s *The Meursault Investigation*, one of the African novels on the longlist of the FT/OppenheimerFunds Emerging Voices fiction award. His creative efforts illustrate a growing debate about the importance of translation and whether its practitioners deserve more recognition for bringing fiction from a broader range of cultures to a wider international readership.

One long-standing frustration by his peers is the limited demand for foreign writing in English. Christopher MacLehose, the veteran head of MacLehose Press, the publishing house that has given a platform to many writers from other languages, says the situation deteriorated in the latter third of the last century.

“When I first came into publishing, there was André Deutsch, Fredric Warburg, Ernest Hecht, Manya Harari, George Weidenfeld — a generation of multilingual

people who came to England bringing the assumption that books that had to be translated were no different,” he says. “You simply published the best you could find and if you had to translate them, you just got on with it.”

By the 1970s, those visionaries had mostly retired, while the commercial pressures of large publishers had intensified. “In a big group, decisions are easily influenced by people in the accounts department who say translations are expensive.”

Alexandra Büchler, the founder of Literature Across Frontiers, a network designed to encourage cultural exchange, says the fact that the UK does not keep official statistics on translations is telling. Her research shows between 1990 and 2012, just 4 per cent of literary works published in the UK were translations, compared with 12 per cent in Germany, 16 per cent in France, 20 per cent in Italy and a third in Poland.

“The paradox is that Britain is a multicultural and multilingual society but it is also insular,” she says. “There is a view that there is excellent writing and variety in English and translation is expensive.”

Yet many claim the supply of, appetite for and value placed on translations is resurgent.

“Even in the past five years, there has been a noticeable difference,” says Daniel Hahn, who translates from Spanish, French and Portuguese. “One thing that helped was Scandinavian crime novels, which sold in colossal numbers. They demonstrated that translations are not off-putting. Foreign writers are much more visible today and there are lots of events on translation at book festivals now.”

More widespread travel and Britain’s openness to global trends may have played a role. Büchler points to interest in regions in the headlines, such as with the Arabic-speaking world and specialist publishers such as Alma Books and And Other Stories have emerged.

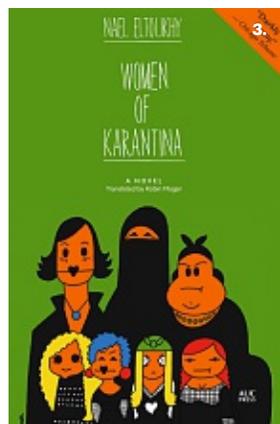




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1. Alexandra Büchler
2. Filling the shelves at the Tunis book fair
3. An English translation of *Women of Karantina*
4. Grigory Chkhartishvili

PHOTOS: HAMIDEDDINE BOUALI/DEMOTIX/CORBIS;
DMITRY KOSTYUKOV/NY TIMES/REDUXE/VEVINE

A shift in the style of translation towards fluency and accessibility may also have helped. Specialists talk of a “domestication” of translations into an English that provides a smooth read rather than reproducing the quirks of the original. “There is a noticeable trend to try sounding like the living language as spoken,” says Cullen.

Grigory Chkhartishvili — who writes under the pen name Boris Akunin — author of the best-selling Fandorin historical detective series, stresses the importance of good translation. He says his first career, as a translator from Japanese into Russian, was partly inspired by reading different versions of Jerome K Jerome’s *Three Men in a Boat*. “The first time I read it as a kid, I couldn’t understand why it was supposed to be so funny. I didn’t even smile,” he recalls. “Then I read another version and I laughed like crazy.

“Good translation is all about the right words, the right paradoxes inside the phrase,” he says. “You are like a magician: you see something others don’t see. If you do everything right, it’s like replanting a flower. Fiction is not about ideas, thoughts and plot. It’s about the music, the style, humour. All sorts of literary, cultural and historical allusions get lost because of a different cultural background. A really excellent translator knows how to compensate. He has to produce the same effect on the reader as in the original language.”

Robin Moger, who translated *Women of Karantina*, by Egyptian writer Nael Eltokhy, argues that there has been a particularly distinguishable shift in translations from Arabic, which was long dominated by a small group of university specialists.

“It was very academic, carried out by people on the mature side of middle age, who came from a place where literature is not read but consumed in academic circles as teaching aids,” he says. “I got a review from one who didn’t like the fact that the book reads fluently. But you are translating many other things apart from the work or the syntax. You are trying to relate enjoyment, tone and voice.”

Certainly Eltokhy, who himself translates from Hebrew into Arabic, is delighted with Moger’s version. “It’s excellent. It keeps the random Egyptian spirit, the irrational way of thinking. He found an equivalent for every term including the jokes I thought would be impossible to translate.”

That raises a question: if translators are increasingly recognised for their contribution in the success of a novel,

should they receive a greater proportion of credit? Some prizes, such as the Man Booker International Prize, explicitly judge translation skills and are splitting the reward between author and translator.

“I like the idea of an equal split,” says Hahn. “I can’t pretend I have put in as much time as the author, but my job is to do exactly the same as the original except for all the words. You have to create this entirely different language with the effect of the original.” ■

OWN WORDS: MELANIE MAUTHNER

Four years ago, Melanie Mauthner stumbled across the writings of Scholastique Mukasonga, (shortlisted for the Emerging Voices fiction award, see page 15), in a library, where a collection of short stories in the original French was tucked away in the “community languages” section. Mauthner became an advocate for the author, seeking an independent British publisher willing to translate her work in English.

Her efforts were in vain, but Jill Schoolman, head of Archipelago Books in New York, which specialises in foreign fiction, independently acquired Mukasonga’s *Our Lady of the Nile* after discussions with Gallimard, the original French publisher. Mauthner was picked to prepare the English translation, which came out two years later.

“I have always read a lot translated from other languages,” says Mauthner, who studied French and Spanish at university and became a sociology lecturer before turning to translation. “People don’t realise that apart from grappling with the grammar, you are stepping into a whole different culture. The reader shouldn’t feel it’s a translation, just that they are being taken somewhere else.”

She says her preparations include reading other writers she finds inspiring, including Hilary Mantel. “She is someone who transgresses a lot. That makes her an exciting writer and makes you think you could do this too.

“Often it’s not the original language that makes translation difficult, but trying to work out what it will sound like in English,” she says. “It’s primarily about music — trying to make the music of English echo the music of the original.”





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THE ARAB WORLD

SOCIETIES UNDER SCRUTINY

UPHEAVAL PROMPTS A SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

BY HEBA SALEH

As the Arab world grapples with unrest across many of its countries, the Arab novel, a form that has undergone something of a revival in recent years, has found inspiration in the region's political cataclysms. A powerful style of fiction has emerged that probes subjects relating to freedom, violence, identity, religion and the failure of elites.

"Novels are trying to analyse their societies and present answers to why these things are happening," says Sayed Mahmoud, editor of *al-Qahira*, an Egyptian literary newspaper. "The political crises of the past five years have left people with a hunger to understand, but they don't trust politics, whereas literature is starting to offer up answers."

He points out that the revival of the novel has been helped by new literary awards, such as the International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF), known more popularly as the Arabic Booker, introduced in 2007 by the Abu Dhabi tourism and cultural authority. Prizes, he says, have energised the literary scene, not only by providing recognition, both financial and critical, to authors, but also by drawing the attention of the media and readers across borders to the books selected for consideration by juries.

Recent critically acclaimed novels dealing with the woeful realities of their societies include Khaled Khalifa's *There Are No Knives in the Kitchens of This City*, which traces the degrading and destructive impact of Syria's dictatorship on the lives of a family from Aleppo.

Kuwaiti author Saud Alsanousi won the IPAF award in 2013 for *The Bamboo Stalk*,



which explores identity in his home country through the prism of the large Asian immigrant community, focusing on the story of a mixed-race young man, son of a Kuwaiti father and Filipina mother.

Egyptian author Nael Eltouky's *Women of Karantina* is an award-winning novel in its home country and is now available in English. Longlisted for the FT/OppenheimerFunds Emerging Voices award, it is an innovative fantasy set in the city of Alexandria in the future, and portrays the lives and adventures of three generations of a crime dynasty.

Peopled with believable characters doing unbelievable things, and written with a light, satirical touch with references to popular culture, it is a story of relentless casual violence, starting from the moment early on when the young protagonists, Injy and Ali,

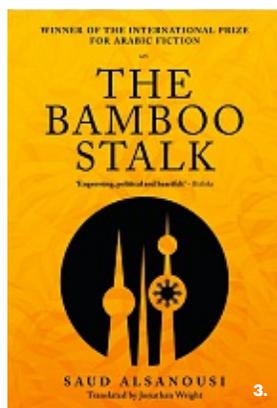
push a man under a train in Cairo. They are forced to flee to Alexandria where they start their inexorable rise as local crime bosses.

Eltouky's eschews all the conventional references to Alexandria's cosmopolitan past and its position by the sea, focusing instead on its underbelly and a thuggish cast of drug dealers, prostitutes and criminals. Men and women alike vie for control of the underworld and in the process become local heroes celebrated in an unofficial and subversive oral history of a city that venerates those who challenge authority.

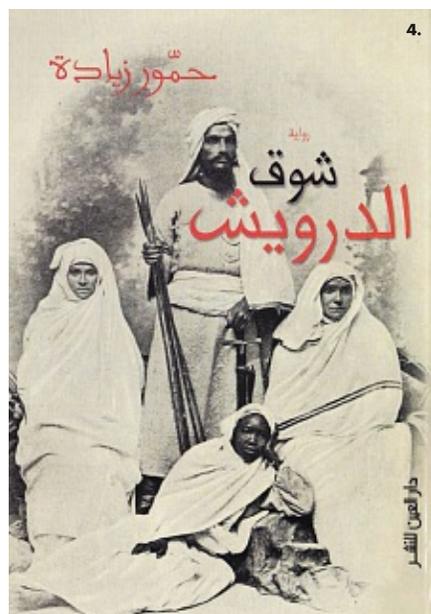
Despite humour and even moments of slapstick, Eltouky presents a bleak vision of a doomed and dysfunctional society. The novel is an example of history written from the margins of society and an attempt to probe the shape of the future, argues *al-Qahira's* Mahmoud. He considers its



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A PUBLISHER'S PERSPECTIVE

A plethora of literary awards have transformed the landscape for Arab novels. They include the International Prize for Arabic Fiction, offered by Abu Dhabi; the Katara Prize, funded by Qatar; and in Egypt, the Sawiris Cultural Award, backed by the eponymous business family.

"The awards have led to a situation where authors are, you could say, jostling [for recognition]," says Fatma al-Boudi, who heads Al Ain, an Egyptian publishing house that has produced five novels shortlisted for the IPAF at various times.

Al-Boudi says, however, that competition for prizes is leading to an oversupply of novels that are of a low standard, even if the number of good books is also increasing. "As a reader, I still can't find enough novels to satiate my hunger for books," she says.

Her company publishes some 30 or more novels a year, alongside an almost equal number of non-fiction works. Print runs, however, are tiny. At 1,000 copies, they are a dismal sign of the incongruously small market for literature in an Arab world of some 400m people.

Al-Boudi says Hammour Ziada's *Longing of the Dervish*, which Al Ain published, is on its eighth edition, meaning only about 8,000 copies of the much-praised book have been produced. It is difficult, she says, to garner accurate readership statistics, because novels are pirated and made freely available on the internet or in cheap editions sold on news-stands in Arab capitals.

"We print 1,000 copies and when that runs out we print another 1,000," she says. "We have no other way of gauging readership rates."

relevant issues, not least in Sudan itself, a country that has witnessed much political violence in the name of religion.

Followers of the Mahdi kill, rape and enslave in the name of God, but they had come initially as saviours to free their people from injustices perpetrated by Turkish and British colonisers. Some of the most moving parts focus on Hassan al-Grifawi, whom we first meet as a young Sufi bristling at the mistreatment of his people by the Turks and abandoning a much-loved wife to follow the Mahdi in his holy war.

Years later as his doubts about the violence committed under the banner of religion overcome his faith, he asks: "Some day — the time has not yet come — those of us who survive will ask themselves how they escaped all this faith, and they will wonder how they did not die under the debris of all the shattered certainty which has crashed down on us."

Another recent Lebanese novel, Jabbour Douaihy's *The American Neighbourhood*, set in the Sunni Muslim city of Tripoli, traces the lives of three generations of the Azzams, a patrician family descended from a nationalist independence hero, and its servants. In the neglected, poor area where Intisar, the cleaner, lives with her family, local notables only appear at election time.

A religious association recruits the restless young hovering on the verge of criminality to join al-Qaeda in Iraq; Ismail, Intisar's son, goes with them. Abdel Karim Azzam locks himself up in his home in the wealthy district listening to opera and longing for the ballerina he loved in Paris, but he becomes a refuge for Intisar and her son. The Tripoli portrayed in this compact, 160-page novel, with its alienated elite, desperate young looking for utopian solutions and rudderless society, is almost a microcosm for the entire Arab world. ■



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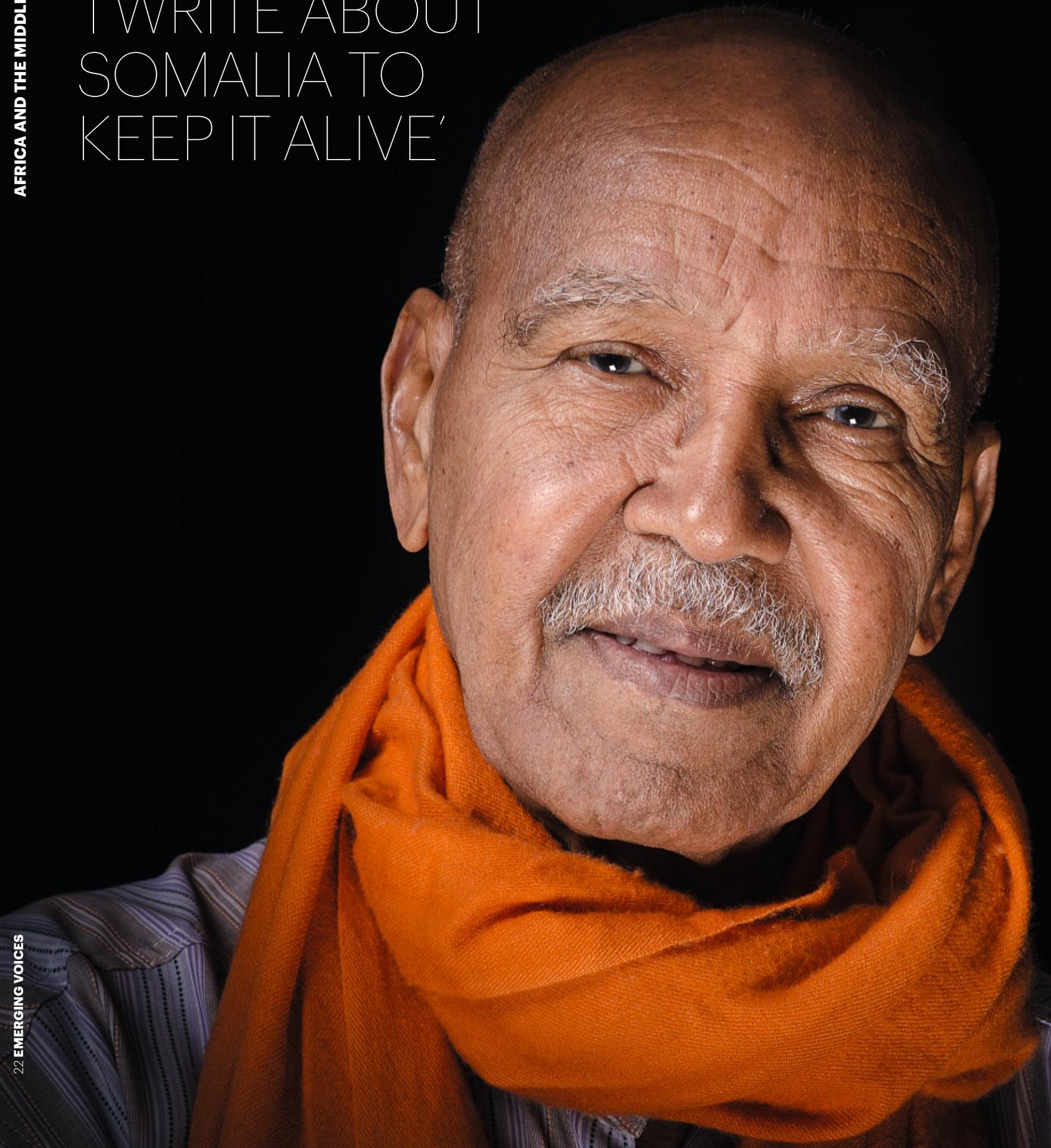
relentless casual violence and power-hungry heroes to echo the "nightmarish moment" that followed the dashing of grand hopes raised by the 2011 revolution in Egypt.

Hammour Ziada's *Longing of the Dervish*, shortlisted for this year's IPAF and set in 19th-century Sudan during the collapse of the theocratic state of the Mahdi, the Muslim messiah, also presents a poignant history from the eyes of marginalised people. In a complex series of flashbacks, it follows Bakheet Mandil, a slave, and his love for Theodora, a young Greek woman who comes to the country "to serve God" as a teacher with a group of religious missionaries, only to become enslaved by a follower of the Mahdi. When her master kills her for trying to escape, Bakheet sets out to avenge her by hunting down all those who took part in her murder.

Neither starry-eyed nor cynical, Ziada constructs, in exquisitely lyrical language, the story of Bakheet's love for the white woman who finds solace in his company but cannot imagine marrying a slave. A rich and sensitive novel, *Longing of the Dervish*, reflects on tolerance, prejudice and freedom in ways that transcend its historic setting. In an Arab world where hatred and religious violence are everyday news, these remain

NURUDDIN FARAH

'I WRITE ABOUT
SOMALIA TO
KEEP IT ALIVE'



THE AUTHOR ON DEATH AND CORRUPTION IN HIS HOMELAND

BY KATRINA MANSON

The first time someone attempted to ban Nuruddin Farah from writing he was nine years old. It happened again, twice, when he was 18 and 28. Then at 31, he was threatened with 30 years in jail over his written words, and later with death.

But the epic chronicler of Somalia, now 69 and working on his 13th novel, has never allowed himself to be cowed.

"I believe in the rightness of what I'm doing, and in the wrongness of being stopped," says Farah, who was kidnapped on his first visit to Somalia in 1996, after more than three decades abroad. He believes hit squads were sent to kill him on two separate occasions when he was living in exile. "There must be a reason why my life has been spared: it is to write."

Farah has devoted that life of writing to capturing Somalia, by turn his beloved homeland and a place that appals him.

"I write about it to keep it alive," he explains, in a long conversation down the line from his home in Cape Town. Although he has not lived in Somalia for decades, he returns regularly. "I live Somalia, I eat it, smell the death of it, the dust, daily," he says.

It is a tortured relationship. In his works, Farah repeatedly takes up the fate and feelings of the vulnerable. A sometime enemy of the state — with which he is obsessed — he reserves special opprobrium not only for Somalia's politics but also for elements of its culture, especially how it treats women. "Somali society is dictatorial," he says of the country he has described as "the neurosis from which I write".

Born in the western Somali town of Baidoa in 1945, the country then combined traditional nomadic living with the modern influence of glamorous Italian colonialists based in the capital, Mogadishu. His father worked as a translator, and was transferred to Ethiopia's Somali-speaking Ogaden region, where the literate young Farah experienced preferential treatment first-hand. He was sent to school; his immediate younger sister was not: "She became a servant."

"We had the delicacies of life on a plate," says Farah of the unearned privileges that were meted out to Somali men. "My mother was a minor poet. If she had not delivered 10 children and raised them, she might have become a great poet. Our clothes would be washed and ironed by women; we were given the best parts of the food, the meat; women ate the leftovers; the list is endless. And yet in a country like Somalia the ruin is caused by men. As a generic male I am part of the problem. I've written about it so very often."

Farah and his brothers left for Mogadishu in 1963. In 1966, he left to study in India, returning three years later, only to leave again for the UK, again to study, in 1974.

His first novel, *From a Crooked Rib*, written in 1968, criticised that culture he remembered from his early life, in which women were "sold like cattle". It adopted a female perspective to tell the story of a teenage nomad who flees her family to avoid forced marriage but encounters brutal male control at every turn.

After independence, Somalia began to come apart under socialist dictator Siad

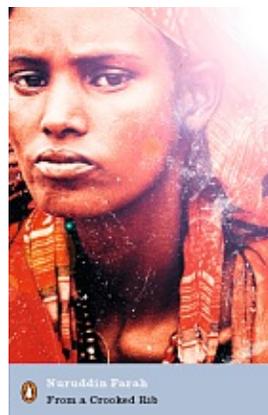
'DEATH IN SOMALIA SELDOM BOTHERS TO ANNOUNCE ITS ARRIVAL'

Barre, who came to power in 1969 and ruled for 22 years. While the socialist regime banned allusions to "cousin" in favour of "comrade" — an attempt to overturn the importance of clan links that had become central to life in Somalia — it also became increasingly dogmatic and dictatorial.

Initially Farah was supportive, becoming the first author to write a story in the Somali script newly ordained by Siad Barre in 1972.

It was the first time in centuries of oral and written traditions that the Somali language had gained a single alphabet of its own. Farah's 1973 tale was serialised in a local newspaper until it was banned for being lewd and pointing to social and political hypocrisies that he argued would eventually lay waste to the country. "I was turned into a non-person; my name was no longer publishable," he tells me.

Farah's continued criticism of the regime from abroad, such as his 1976 book *A Naked Needle*, in which he satirised misogynists, earned him his death sentence. Uncowed, over the next few years he unleashed a



Farah's first novel describes women during his early years in Somalia as 'sold like cattle'

trilogy dedicated to the pervasive and paranoid security state that developed under the Siad Barre dictatorship.

By 1991, Barre was deposed, but clan warfare, famine and warlords quickly destroyed the country. In the mid-2000s, as civil war raged, jihadis, later allied to al-Qaeda, took over much of Somalia, including the capital. Although they were pushed out of Mogadishu in 2011, they still control much of the countryside and launch regular suicide attacks on the capital.

Farah's books chart all this horror.

In his most recent novel, *Hiding in Plain Sight*, the apparent hero of the book is blown up before the opening chapter, in a breakneck prologue. "Death in Somalia seldom bothers to announce its arrival," says a line early on. "In fact, death calls with the arrogance of a guest confident of receiving a warm welcome at any time."

Instead Farah yearns for his country's "cosmopolitan" past, when a multitude of ethnic and cultural influences flourished. "My theory is, the greatest casualty of the civil war is that the idea of cosmopolitanism is the one that has died," he says, adding that most people today belong to "the 13th-century mentality". "What destroyed Somalia is this clan business."

Farah argues that in a country otherwise united by the same language and ethnic make-up, clan has become "a trump card" where political representation is allocated according to the "4.5 system", which divvies up influential and often lucrative roles according to four key clans and a multitude of smaller ones that fall under the "point five".

"You are dealing with something absolutely non-functional, inoperational. Mogadishu is now a clan family enclave — a den of corruption," he says. "We are bigger than the 4.5 — it is concretising discrimination and privileging second-rate loudmouths who wouldn't be able to get a job in any office in anywhere in the world."

His lead characters have long been bold and articulate intellectuals — regularly women — who lay out Farah's anguish at the failings of his country. His prodigious output, and this effort to give voice to the voiceless in a land few write about and still fewer understand, has regularly seen him touted as a Nobel literature prize contender.

His next novel will explore Somalis contending with right-wing politics and attitudes as immigrants to Norway, his latest work in a life-long effort to explain Somalia, "a country that is inexplicable". ■



Nigeria's literary renaissance has so far failed to trickle down to the bulk of the population

NIGERIA

A NEW CHAPTER

WRITERS ARE GAINING INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION

BY TOLU OGUNLESI

When I started writing in the early 2000s, there were very few other young Nigerians being

published internationally — Chimamanda Adichie, Helon Habila, Chris Abani and Sefi Atta,” recalls Chika Unigwe, the Nigerian novelist. “Farafina was one of the few local publishers dedicated to quality fiction, and you could count the number of literary events on the fingers of one hand.”

A little over a decade later, much has changed. Publishers such as Cassava Republic and Parrésia are at the centre of a thriving literary scene. Book festivals, once restricted to Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital, are springing up in Abeokuta (the Ake Book and Arts Festival) and the oil industry hub of Port Harcourt (the Garden City Literary Festival) — the city notorious a decade ago for kidnappings of expatriate oil workers. In April, Port Harcourt ended its year-long stint as Unesco’s World Book Capital.

Well-paying literary awards have followed. The Nigeria Prize for Literature, which rotates annually between fiction, poetry, drama and children’s literature, and is awarded annually by Nigeria LNG, the liquefied natural gas company. The winner receives \$100,000 in cash, making it one of the richest book prizes in the world. In 2013, the Nigerian arm of Etisalat, the United Arab Emirates-based mobile phone company, launched a pan-African first book prize. The biennial Wole Soyinka prize, named after Nigeria’s only Nobel laureate, awards \$20,000 to its winner. And this year, the FT/OppenheimerFunds Emerging



‘THE INTERNET HAS OPENED THE DOOR TO HITHERTO SHUT SPACES’

Voices competition for African and Middle Eastern fiction joins the list.

“Nigeria’s literary scene has burgeoned into this splendid, vibrant space,” says Unigwe.

The literary renaissance coincided with Nigeria’s return to democracy from 1999 after 16 years of military dictatorships. The newly elected civilian government introduced economic reforms, the most significant of which was breaking the monopoly of the state-run telecoms company by auctioning mobile phone licences to private companies. The reforms, combined with rising oil prices, generated growth and led to increased sponsorship budgets for banks, breweries and mobile

A street vendor in Lagos — formal bookshops are scarce in the city

phone companies, some of which pays for the proliferation of writing workshops, literary awards and festivals.

But much prosperity has failed to trickle down to the bulk of the population, more than half of whom live below poverty and literacy lines. Most Nigerian newspapers sell fewer than 40,000 copies a day to a population of 173m, and publishers consider a book that shifts 5,000 copies to be a bestseller.

Commercial success for writers and publishers can be a curse — attracting the attention of pirates, who are estimated to control 90 per cent of the book, music and film publishing industries in Nigeria.

The pirates are inventive, printing copies in the same countries as the originals — China, India, Singapore, Malaysia and Dubai. They are also nimble when it comes to distribution. Novelist Eghosa Imasuen, chief operating officer of Kachifo, one of Nigeria’s leading independent publishers, says pirated

copies of a recent release (a much-awaited memoir by former president Olusegun Obasanjo) were already circulating in Nigeria as the consignment of the originals languished at the ports in Lagos, awaiting clearance through customs.

On the streets of Lagos and elsewhere the pirates tap into an efficient network of open-air book markets and street vendors. Formal bookshops — on which publishers are dependent — are few and far between. Published books even sometimes carry the contact details of their authors so that readers can arrange personal deliveries.

But the digital economy looks set to shake up the country's literary scene. As Elnathan John, satirist, blogger and short story writer, explains, the internet “has opened the door to hitherto shut spaces”.

Online penetration rates are rising fast in Nigeria, mostly on mobile phones, which in 2011 overtook desktop computers as the most common means by which Nigerians access the internet. Today, more than half of the 146m active mobile phone lines in Nigeria are connected to the internet. With the accompanying revolution in online payment systems, authors and publishers are turning to online marketplaces — book-only websites such as Iqra and Sunshine, and Amazon-type platforms such as Jumia and Konga — for their books.

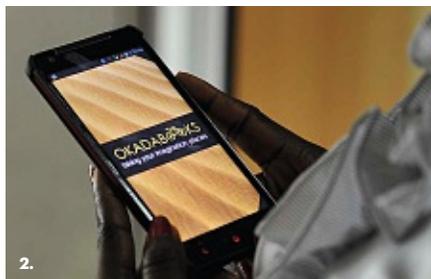
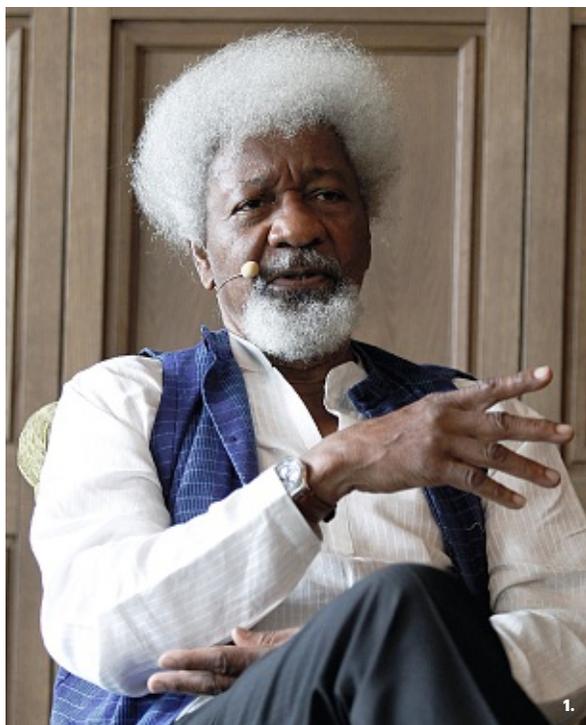
Okadabooks, named after the daredevil motorcycle taxis that criss-cross the jammed streets of Lagos, was founded in 2013 by engineer and writer Okechukwu Ofili. It offers Nigerian books as mobile phone downloads, with payment by Etisalat recharge card, among other methods.

The push to launch Okadabooks came from the frustration Ofili felt dealing with a now defunct Lagos bookshop that he says was stalling on paying the thousands of dollars it owed him for books sold. Okadabooks now has 49,000 users, who have downloaded more than 500,000 books.

Most books on the site sell for around \$1 per download; those by popular authors such as Chimamanda Adichie for up to \$4. “People say Nigerians don't read — we're proving that Nigerians read,” Ofili says.

For a country that leapfrogged landlines to mobile telecoms, and where most people carry more than one phone, the service makes good business sense. Nevertheless, publishers and writers say the limitations of the domestic publishing industry are going to be around for a long time to come.

For now, foreign publication remains the defining dream for home-based Nigerian



1. Wole Soyinka at a cultural event in Berlin in 2012

2. Okadabooks, which now has 49,000 users

fiction writers. A book deal from a leading publisher in Europe offers everything Nigeria does not: regular royalty payments, attendance at leading book festivals and prestigious fellowships. Successful Nigerian writers who are read abroad owe that to being published abroad. Because Nigerian audiences tend to look abroad to validate their literary reading choices, publication and acclaim at home is guaranteed.

One unintended consequence of this obsession with western attention is that Nigerian writers feel at the mercy of publishers and audiences with limited appetites for African fiction. “It feels like there's only one space for the black person at the dinner table, and the whole idea is like an audition to replace that black person at the table,” says Elnathan John, twice shortlisted for the UK's Caine Prize for African Writing. “The expectation is that you're coming to upstage other people, when in fact you just want to write.”

But conversely, this discomfiture with western domination pushing writers may

be good for the local scene. After her debut novel, *The Secret Lives of Baba Segi's Wives*, was published to critical acclaim in the UK in 2010, Lola Shoneyin did not see why all the interesting conversations she was having in European book festivals could not be taking place at home.

“I asked myself, why am I talking to all these people [abroad] when the people I really want to be talking to are my people,” she says. Which is how the annual Ake Book and Arts Festival was born, in Abeokuta, home town of Wole Soyinka, Africa's first Nobel laureate in literature, to bring together emerging and well-known African writers from around the world. ■

BRIGHT STARS

A Igoni Barrett (Lagos). Barrett's debut novel, *Blackass*, was published this year by Chatto & Windus, and was longlisted for the FT/OppenheimerFunds Emerging Voices award. He has previously published two short-story collections, *From Caves of Rotten Teeth* (2005) and *Love is Power, Or Something Like That* (2013). Last year he was named in the UK's Hay Festival's Africa39 as one of the 39 best African writers under 40.

Elnathan John (Abuja). A short-story writer, satirist, blogger and columnist, shortlisted twice — in 2013 and 2015 — for the Caine Prize for African Writing. His first novel will be published in Nigeria in 2015 by Cassava Republic Press, and in the UK and US in 2016.

Ayobami Adebayo (Ile-Ife). He is a 2014 graduate of the creative writing masters course at the University of East Anglia. His debut novel, *Stay With Me*, was shortlisted for the Kwani? Manuscript Project Prize in 2013 and will be published this year by Kwani? Books.

Ukamaka Olisakwe (Aba). A novelist, short-story writer and columnist whose debut novel, *Eyes of a Goddess*, was published in 2012. She was in last year's Hay Festival Africa39. Her short story *This is How I Remember It* appears in the *Africa39: New Writing from Africa South of the Sahara* anthology.

Rotimi Babatunde (Ibadan). His plays have been performed in Sweden, the UK and the US, and his short story *Bombay's Republic* won the 2012 Caine Prize. He is currently working on his first novel.

Tolu Ogunlesi

COLUMN

WHEN LITERARY
CREDOS COLLIDECAN AFRICA
FIND ITS VOICE
IN A WESTERN
ART FORM?

BY NOO SARO-WIWA



Sub-Saharan novelists write about societies straddling many worlds, from high-tech to medieval

Every month, someone somewhere is awarded a literary prize. Cue the celebrations and commiserations. Some observers will applaud the results, while others will question the judges' sanity.

There is something about arts prizes that particularly exercises book lovers. We all know art is subjective — one reader's page-turner is another reader's sleeping aid — and

when money and prestige are attached to such discretionary judgments, we are flummoxed when the “wrong” horse wins.

This angst is amplified in the world of African literature, where there is concern that the most prestigious prizes are awarded by western organisations and that this, coupled with the dominance of the west in publishing and readership, skews African writing. African literature bends and adjusts to the tastes and expectations of non-Africans.

Many disagree. The author Taiye Selasi believes writers enjoy far more agency than is led to believe. Zimbabwean writer Tendai Huchu shares the sentiment, saying he writes about whatever matters to him.

Unless one can read the mind of every writer, literary agent and publishing house, no one is in a position to assess the situation accurately. I believe most African novelists

PERHAPS AESTHETIC
DIFFERENCES ARE MORE
ABOUT PERSONAL TASTE

write from their heart. I am suspicious of the assumption that westerners demand “misery narratives”. Although such readers certainly exist (one online reviewer was disappointed that Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*, the Emerging Voices award winner, depicted an urban, middle-class family rather than “real” Nigerians), many non-African readers simply want a good yarn that doesn't necessarily involve characters fetching water in a village or communing with spirits in the forest.

But this doesn't worry the African author who wants to write from the heart, who knows that literature from the so-called “emerging” world occupies an exciting space. Sub-Saharan novelists are fortunate to be able to write about societies which straddle so many worlds, from the high-tech to the medieval. Young writers in particular

have rich, real-life material to draw on, unlike some of their western counterparts who, having lived in relatively frictionless environments, must grasp for intrigue or fantasy — and avoid big political themes.

This lack of political engagement among western authors is something the writer Aminatta Forna laments in a recent essay. She cites the US poet and former human rights activist Carolyn Forché as someone whose poetry (influenced by her experiences in war-torn places) was met with opposition from her US contemporaries, who objected to the political bent of her work. By Forché's reckoning, concerns about aesthetics take priority over subject matter in American literature. Meanwhile, Booker-winner Ben Okri suggests African writers tend to suffer the reverse: fixating on subject matter at the expense of aesthetics at the behest of their publishing “gatekeepers” in the west.

In any discussion about African writing and western influence, it is hard to unpick the boundaries between agency and imitation. The line between compromise and independence is a tightrope for any writer — it takes another pair of eyes to inject clarity, coherence and viability to a manuscript. The author has to decide whether to accept or reject advice from an editor who has their own (usually western) cultural biases and ideas about how to unfold a narrative. Art is subject to rules and formulas, yet those can be broken when done judiciously. Does obeying a rule mean one is following the “colonialist's” aesthetics? Can African literature enjoy a distinct aesthetic in an art form that is European in origin?

Time will tell. Now that a few African-run publishers are beginning to publish and distribute books (such as Jennifer Makumbi's *Kintu*, published by Kwani? in Kenya), it will be fascinating to see whether the same aesthetic disagreements and issues of “gatekeeping” persist in African publishing. Perhaps some of the aesthetic differences attributed to cultural heritage are more a matter of individual taste.

The FT and OppenheimerFunds are the latest western organisations to judge African literature. Though many bemoan this situation, I am glad the craft is getting support, especially when African literature is not a funding priority among our homegrown philanthropists. In a world glutted with anti-literary distractions and terabytes of self-published books, awards allow stories from Africa to grab the spotlight momentarily and inspire future writers on the continent. ■



ASIA-PACIFIC

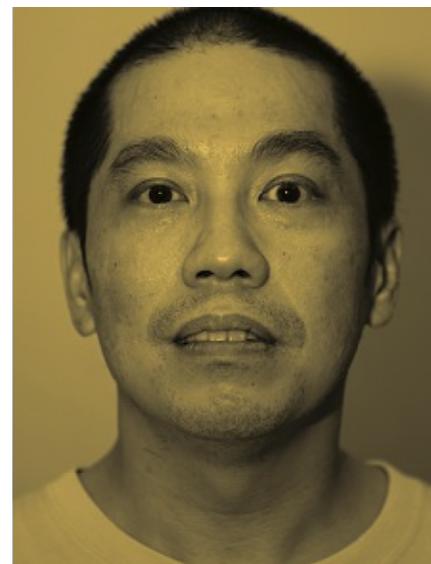




PHOTO: REUTERS

THE WINNER

Yuhang Ho *Trespassed* — Malaysia ▼



MIXING SOCIAL TRUTHS AND FAMILY LIFE WITH MYSTERY

BY NIGEL ANDREWS

A degree in engineering from Iowa State University. A love of western movies and William Faulkner novels. A passion for the music of Schubert and Debussy. What kind of Malaysian film-maker is this?

Simple answer: he is Yuhang Ho, fast emerging as the country's most gifted screen artist. Longer answer: he is a writer-director who has enhanced his Asian birthright, and his insight into social truths and family life in his native country, with influences richly gathered from Europe and the US.

Yuhang's short film *Trespassed* persuaded an international jury it was the best submission of more than 100 entries for the Emerging Voices prize. It is a truth-based story in black and white with the power of a dream.

The film is about a mentally troubled young girl obsessed, even "possessed", by the spirit of a mysteriously missing father. Her caring mother tries desperately to protect her from destruction or self-destruction in a story evolving, hypnotically, towards tragedy.

A matinee show at a Mumbai cinema



“It’s based a little on my sister,” Yuhang says. “She is no longer with us. She was sick for a long time. My mother looked after her until she died.”

Was that a mental or physical illness? “It was both,” he says. The doctor could not say what was wrong. She was born that way and it must have been mental at first. Then it affected her physical abilities.”

Though Yuhang describes *Trespassed* as a short, a “sketch” rather than a painting, he says that does not make the film less rich or meaningful.

“In short films I can really work on the shadings. I can try to do things that would be more difficult in long films. I would love to work more with black and white, for instance, but it’s difficult to get distributors to accept features that are not in colour.”

Even with colour films, his style is poetically, distinctively sombre. Both his recent full-length films, *Rain Dogs* and *At the End of Daybreak*, are tragedy-tinged family dramas.

“Most times, when I start to write a story, I find I’m working on a family relationship. I always seem to come back to that, even when I try to get away.”

Within the family drama framework he is a magical mood mixer, able to imply larger worlds through intimate, even claustrophobic ones.

He has had — he has chosen — good teachers. The film-makers he loves are those who combine mystery with psychological insight, from Hollywood’s



‘WHEN I WRITE, I ALWAYS SEEM TO COME BACK TO FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS’

Jacques Tourneur (*Cat People*, *Night of the Demon*) to France’s Robert Bresson. And though he grew up in Malaysia understanding only basic English — “I never finished a novel in English; I couldn’t even get through *The Famous Five*” — he fell in love in America with William Faulkner.

“It totally clicked with me. I know people say he’s difficult. But he deals a lot with families in books like *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying*. I was totally captivated by his world.” (Yuhang even named one of his own short films *As I Lay Dying*.)

Back home after attending university in the US, Yuhang wanted “to do something in the arts”. Though, growing up, his first love had been music — “I learned the piano and once tried to form a jazz band” — he found work, through a friend, making commercials for Malaysian television and cinema.

Then, “I realised if I was going to shoot my own features and shorts I had to write something.”

The film industry proved unexpectedly welcoming. “It has been easy, in recent

1. and 2.
Scenes from *Trespassed*, a ‘sketch’, according to its director, but no less rich for that

years, to get films funded. A lot of money has been pumped in by investors.”

Yuhang’s work does not get wide distribution — “My last film played in maybe three to five screens” — but its budgets do not require it. *Trespassed*, like most of his films, boasts small costs and frugal production values.

“It’s in black and white, with a very simple plot. It’s a story about a curse. In a way it’s like *Night of the Demon* [his favourite Tourneur film] crossed with *L’Argent* [his favourite late Robert Bresson film from 1983, about the curse of a counterfeit money note passing from stranger to stranger]. A single thing is set in motion, then a lot of things happen along the way.”

If you can combine Faulkner, Tourneur and Bresson in one short film — or their influences — and bring it in at minuscule cost to prize-winning calibre, it looks as if you might have a movie career made.

“Made in Malaysia” in the case of Yuhang has come to signify an Asian and world cinema voice no longer emerging but fully emerged. ■

RUNNERS-UP

BY ANDRE RHODEN-PAUL

Shubhashish Bhutiani

Kush — India ▼



Shubhashish Bhutiani's short film, *Kush*, is based on real-life events. It is set in 1984, and tells the story of a teacher who struggles to protect her 10-year-old Sikh pupil from mobs as they travel home from a field trip, immediately after the assassination of Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

The bodyguards were aggrieved by Gandhi's order to send the army to storm the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Her assassination led to a wave of anti-Sikh riots across the country that left nearly 3,000 dead and many more displaced.

Bhutiani says his own teacher told him the story of how he

protected the Sikh boy. But it was not until 2012, when six people were killed in a shooting by Michael Page, a white supremacist, at a Sikh temple in Wisconsin in the US that Bhutiani decided to make his teacher's story into a film. The work was his graduation project at New York's School of Visual Arts.

"The story felt unique yet universal. There is communal violence all over the world and this story spoke about a little spot of hope in a tragic situation," he says. "It was difficult getting funding, but with help of grants, I managed to put the film together."

Kush was shot over five days at Sanjay Gandhi national park in Mumbai. "I was fortunate to work with a generous cast and crew who believed in the film."

Bhutiani, then 22, entered the film in the Venice film festival in 2013, where it won the Orizzonti prize for best short film. It was also longlisted for an Academy Award in 2014 for best live action short film.

"None of us expected this recognition. We just set out to make this story that we all felt had something to say," he says.

Han Ting's extraordinarily affecting film *The Sea* (2014) is the story of Mr Chen, an ailing elderly man who leaves city life in Beijing to live out his days in a remote town in Sichuan province in south-west China.

While teaching at a primary school he encourages a boy with a talent for drawing. The boy longs to see the sea, and with Mr Chen's help, he grows up to be a celebrated artist. "[The film] is about love, life and responsibility," Ting says.

The film-maker 26, made the short after shooting a documentary in 2013 that followed the lives of three elderly people who had no family to support them.

Han Ting

The Sea — China ▼



"I was shocked by the situation they were confronted with. They were isolated. When I had a chance to make a short, I decided to write a story about a desperate elderly person."

She filmed *The Sea* in the town of Daocheng Yading, in the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Garzê in western China. High in the eastern Hengduan mountains, the remote location posed a significant challenge for the director and her crew. "When we first got there, we found it hard to breathe. Some of my colleagues even needed oxygen. It took some time to get used to."

Han Ting is cautiously optimistic about the future of the Chinese film industry. "On one hand, we have a big film market — film-makers now have more chances to make films," she says.

But censorship still concerns her. "For example, policemen cannot be portrayed negatively in films — they must be righteous and noble.

"When I face this kind of problem I have to change the character, otherwise I might not be able to release the film."

Mont Tesprateep

Endless, Nameless — Thailand ▼



Mont Tesprateep's *Endless, Nameless* (2014) is the story of a group of Thai army conscripts gardening and carrying out routine chores at the house of a high-ranking officer on a military base. The film is semi-autobiographical, based on the director's memories of conscripts working in his childhood home for his father, an officer in the Thai army.

"A group would serve us for two years, before another replaced them," says Mont Tesprateep, 36, who lived at the house in north-east Thailand from the age of nine. "I noticed these privates had a very distinctive character. They were

like entertainers. They planted trees and roses. Some sneaked out. I've heard many stories about runaway privates being captured and punished."

In Thailand, all men turning 21 must participate in a military draft lottery. Mont Tesprateep says those from more privileged backgrounds serve in the higher ranks, but he says he is conscious of the difference between his own upbringing and the limited opportunities of the young privates he remembers from childhood.

After graduating in fine art from London's Chelsea College of Arts in 2011, Mont Tesprateep started making the film in 2013,

using hand-processed Super 8 film. "Its rawness is such an unexpected detail," he says.

Audiences for *Endless, Nameless*, which was funded by the Bangkok Art & Culture Centre and the Thai ministry of culture, find their own themes, the film-maker says.

"I've seen various interpretations, depending on the screening areas. [Audiences] might change their view about Thai culture after watching."

He hopes the Thai film industry will grow to value critical expression but remains concerned that independent film-makers face censorship.

THAILAND

WEERASETHAKUL'S
WAKING DREAMS

DARK, POLITICAL
THEMES LURK
BENEATH A
MAGICAL REALM

BY NIGEL ANDREWS

“When you believe in something, it is no longer fiction,” says Apichatpong Weerasethakul, the Thai film-maker.

I believed him when he said it. Any artist is persuasive when talking to you on a Cannes terrace, with head backlit, halo-like, by the Mediterranean sun. But what followed in that interview seemed like fiction, even fantasy. The next day, Weerasethakul won the 2010 Golden Palm for the film we had been talking about — the first Thai feature to do so.

Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives was an unlikely choice by the jury, even though the director is regarded as the most imaginative, even visionary, in Southeast Asia.

The film's six tales hop between times and dimensions, from fact to folklore. A scene about a dying man based on the director's father moves to a fairytale princess romancing a catfish by a waterfall. They are linked mainly by the quasi-mystical theme central to all Weerasethakul's work: the belief that “everything connects”. Time, space, race, creed, nationality and other notional dividers have no power to separate humanity in an ultimate or ideal reality.

Weerasethakul is a film-maker of modern-day Thailand who honours the art, history and magic of the country's past. From the ancient riches of Siamese fables to the popular films he grew up with — B-adventure and horror films — and on to the real and enduring dramas: the political conflicts that have long divided his country while also defining it.

He grew up aware of these divides. Born in Bangkok, he spent his childhood in remote north-east Thailand, near the Laos border. The region is dense with contradictions: it is the home of the rebel red-shirt movements, but has been scarred by communism's costly incursions. It is also an area where poverty's harsh reality mixes with folklore and superstition.

“Before Siam became Thailand,” he says, “the country had many communities, tribes, and the north-east has more the influence of Laos and Cambodia.” (The region's southern border is less than 100 miles from Angkor Wat, the largest religious monument in the world). “It's a very animistic society, more Hindu. More about sorcery, witchcraft, enchantment.”

Weerasethakul loves that otherworldliness, embracing the macabre, the mystical, the magical — even when expressed in populist storytelling. Unexpectedly for an artist thought to be far out on an avant-garde limb, he answers a question about favourite cinema with Steven Spielberg's *E.T.* and *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. “When I was growing up, [Spielberg's] films were a turning point. Cinema culture came alive again, for me and many friends. It was later that I discovered experimental and independent cinema.”

Popular Thai cinema, in the director's boyhood, was a kind of Bollywood-east, or Bollywood-lite. These were action adventures, love stories, ghost stories, even eastern Westerns. The biggest Thai hit of recent decades before Weerasethakul was *Tears of the Black Tiger* (2000). A colourful, rumbustious spoof of mid-20th century Thai cinema, a blend of Western and romance, the film became a global success. Its director, Wisit Sasanatieng, says it owed its charm and power to innocence.

“Most Thai directors, including me, never went to film school,” he says. They weren't concerned with grammar or rules. That's why Thai cinema has no standard style.”

Weerasethakul, meanwhile, did attend film school, graduating with a masters degree in film-making from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. But in his way

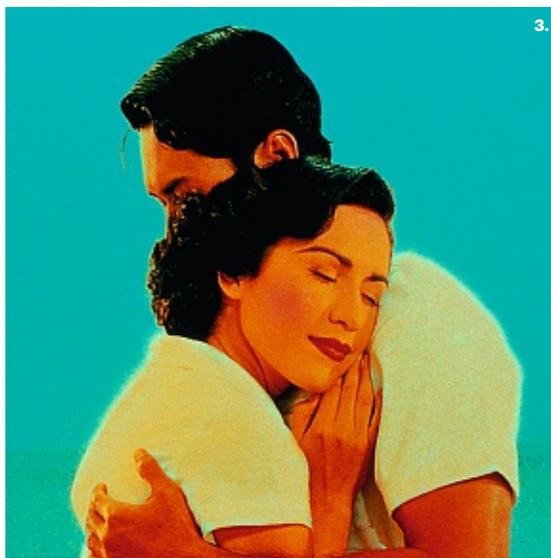




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1. Scene from *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2010)

2. Weerasethakul on set

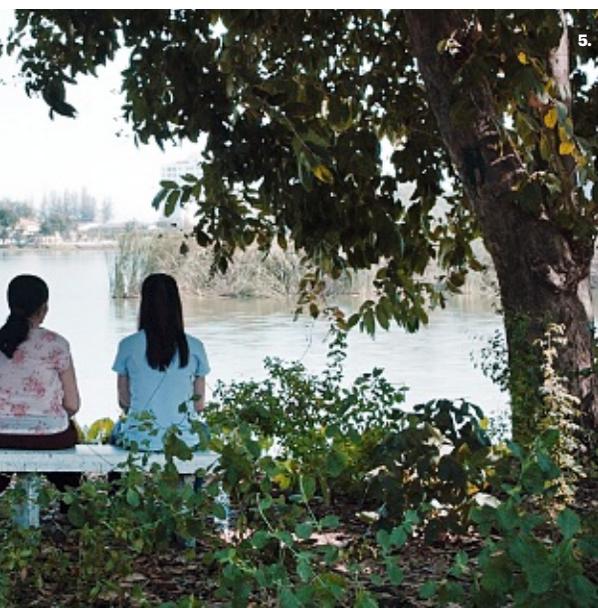
3. Sasanatieng's *Tears of the Black Tiger* (2000)

4. Scene from *Primitive* (2009)

5. Scene from *Cemetery of Splendour* (2015)



4.



5.

he is as militant an innocent as Sasanatieng; maybe more so. He goes beyond remixing popular Thai films. In some films he takes rule-breaking further, a style some call the New Primitivism.

His 2006 film, *Syndromes and a Century*, has a fragmented, episodic, quasi-autobiographical plot and is set in a hospital. Doctors are seen kissing, drinking — being “un-doctorly”. Monks are un-monk-like, as they play guitar, throw frisbees, and even in one scene admit to having gay feelings. Because Weerasethakul refused to make cuts, the film has never been shown in Thailand.

“Censorship can be bad,” he says. “The government bans books, movies. Even abroad if you say something bad against the government you can be put in jail.”

Yet Weerasethakul's works include *The Adventure of Iron Pussy* (2003), a co-directed commercial hit with a gay storyline. The censors happily gave the film the green light. Transsexual spy comedy? No problem. It is only when themes of gender and sexuality stray into the serious that the hackles of authority rise.

“Thailand is supposed to be very open about gayness,” says the director, gay himself. “And in the media they are presented as flamboyant, comical characters. But practically and legally, the west is far more open. In Thailand, when you actually try to live together, it becomes impossible.”

Being gay is part of Weerasethakul's rainbow vision for a whole existence. “For me the word ‘queer’ means ‘anything is possible’”, he explains. That vision is central to his cinema. He is the Thai that binds.

As an artist he combines diverse, incongruous, even adversarial elements. His most acclaimed film before *Uncle Boonmee* was *Tropical Malady* (2004). The first Thai feature shown in the Cannes competition, where it won the Jury prize, it is a work of two halves, surreally juxtaposed: a gay village romance followed by a dreamlike jungle fantasy (even the credit titles show in the middle of the film).

Cemetery of Splendour (2015), Weerasethakul's latest film, has a plot straight out of a sci-fi film. Hospitalised soldiers suffering from a sleeping sickness are treated with pulsing fluorescent tubes that stand by their beds changing colour (note the rainbow theme again).

What are people waiting for in this film? Weerasethakul was asked at Cannes. “They are waiting to wake up,” he answered. He implies that Thailand's sleeping state is the response of a nation to military autocracy. But sleep is accompanied by dreams, which may point to the better world you want.

Politics is rarely far away in the solipsistic universe of Weerasethakul's cinema.

“So many people in this area want to forget the past. They want to forget the killing, the raping, the wars. You cannot forget. You must not forget. I think of film as a diary. I make films because I want to re-encounter and re-experience the past. Cinema is remembering. It is a time machine. I want to explore the innards of that time machine.” ■

INDIA

BEYOND THE BLOCKBUSTER

BOLLYWOOD STUDIOS ARE EXPLORING EDGIER THEMES

BY JAMES CRABTREE

Basharat Peer never seemed like the type to make a Bollywood blockbuster. A cerebral author and journalist based in New Delhi, he grew up in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, a troubled region just across the border from Pakistan and home to a long-running insurgency. In 2010 he published *Curfewed Night*, a wrenching family memoir about the brutal conflicts of his homeland.

But then one morning a few years later, he received an unexpected message: how would he like to write a film script based on a Shakespeare play and set in Kashmir? “I got this email from a famous film-maker, who said he’d read my book and liked it,” Peer recalls. “He’d already made a Shakespeare adaptation and wanted to do another one, either *King Lear* or *Hamlet*. So I thought about it. ‘Something is rotten in the state of Denmark’: now that really works in Kashmir.”

The result was *Haider*, a spin on Shakespeare’s most famous play, in which a young man returns home looking for answers about the disappearance of his father during Kashmir’s peak years of conflict in the 1990s. It had understandably dark themes and almost no well-known actors, in contrast to the star-driven efforts that make up most of Bollywood’s output. Nonetheless, it found critical acclaim following its release last year, both for its screenplay, which Peer co-wrote, and its controversial subject matter.

The real surprise, however, was neither its strong performances nor glowing reviews, but the box office. *Haider* went on to gross more than Rs900m (\$14m),



not far off the Rs1bn mark at which a movie in India is considered to be a true blockbuster, and at a level generally reserved only for mainstream genre films with a big-name cast.

Even those who have never watched a Bollywood film have a fair idea of what they entail: a handsome couple fall in love; they face seemingly insurmountable obstacles to being together; some hours and many song-and-dance numbers later, those obstacles are overcome, with a final celebratory musical routine to close.

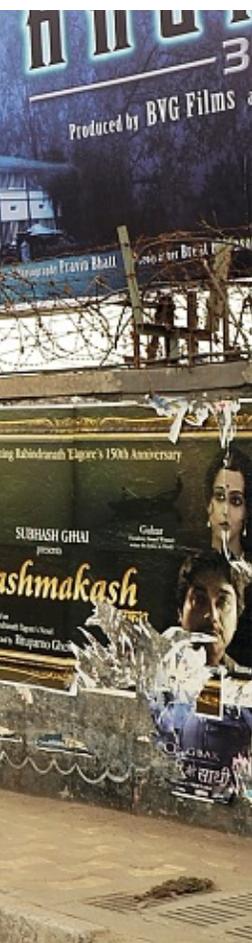
Yet *Haider*’s success was an example of a new development in India’s film industry, in which many Bollywood film-makers are deviating from their industry’s traditional menu, ignoring established stars and trite formulas in favour of riskier themes more

‘THE PERCEPTION IS, ONLY FAMILY FILMS DO WELL BUT THAT IS NO LONGER TRUE’

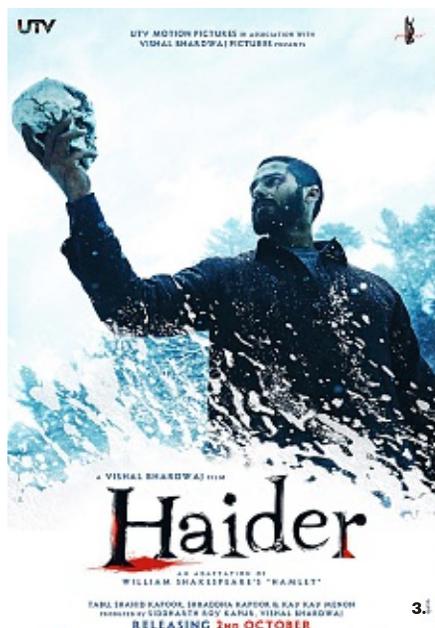
suited to younger, urban film-goers — and are being rewarded at the box office.

Many different types of film fall into this broad trend. Some remain recognisably Bollywood in their approach but are marked out by strong female lead characters and unconventional takes on romance, such as last year’s hit comedy *Queen*, in which a jilted bride heads off to Europe to take her honeymoon alone.

Others are simply small-budget films that find a larger audience, either by word of mouth or by picking up on buzz abroad —



1. Old-school Bollywood posters in Mumbai
2. Irrfan Khan in *The Lunchbox*
3. Hamlet comes to Kashmir with *Haider*



like *Masaan*, a coming-of-age story set in Varanasi, the spiritual capital of Hinduism, which this year won two awards at Cannes. *The Lunchbox* from 2013 — a bittersweet drama starring Irrfan Khan as a government bureaucrat near retirement who strikes up an accidental friendship with a younger woman — is another film that chimed with domestic and foreign audiences.

“There has been quite a big change, starting gradually but crystallising over the last few years,” says Gautam Pemmaraju, an independent film-maker

based in Mumbai. “We’ve seen a far greater number of both independent and larger production houses diversifying their repertoire into edgy films, so to say. It has meant a sea change in the kinds of films that are being made.”

The rise of less orthodox Bollywood films is explained in part by the changing economics of Indian cinema, in particular the rise of multiplexes over the past decade. Old-style Indian films were made to appeal to children and grandparents alike, on the assumption they would be watched on family outings to the one, single-screen cinema in any Indian town or village.

But as hundreds of larger cinemas opened in cities, a new market appeared. “As people built more screens, they discovered there were multiple layers to the audiences,” says Jehil Thakkar, head of media and entertainment at KPMG, the business advisory firm, in India. “A set of movies began succeeding which earlier audiences really wouldn’t have gone to see.”

Rather than the whimsical fantasy of traditional Bollywood, these films touched on more contemporary themes. *Vicky Donor*, released in 2012, focused on sperm donation, a typically taboo subject. Others dealt with disability, divorce, religious extremism, spousal abuse or the malign role of India’s voracious media. This in turn opened a window for films that did not rely on established stars, in particular the trio of actors named Khan — Aamir Khan, Salman

Khan and Shah Rukh Khan — who have been Bollywood’s “big three” action heroes for more than a decade.

“The film themes that worked in the past had to be for the big single screen, meaning lots of remakes, or brash films with plenty of star power,” says Jyoti Deshpande, chief executive of Eros, India’s largest domestic film studio by revenue. “The general perception is still that only family films do well, but that is not the case any more.”

Bollywood has become increasingly professional too. Once its films were made mostly by small independent production houses and funded haphazardly. Today the arrival of global film studios such as Viacom and Fox — alongside larger local players like Eros — have brought new discipline. India now has something akin to a Hollywood-style studio system, in which a smaller number of big producers churn out ever more films each year, allowing room for more diverse offerings.

“The studios are trying to spread their bets,” Thakkar explains. They are backing a range of more contemporary, smaller-budget films to balance out their main star vehicles, in the hope that one or two will find an audience. Distributors will even negotiate with cinemas, offering them films with big stars only if they also show some of the riskier ones, potentially winning a far wider audience. “There are many more of these types of films now, so more of them fail — and if they tank, they really tank. But those that do well do really well,” he says.

All of this is not to say Bollywood’s more traditional films are in decline — quite the opposite in fact. As the industry grows, the audience for big-budget action films and old-fashioned romances is growing with it. Last year was a particularly good one for such offerings, with each of the three Khans celebrating at least one huge hit.

Even so, many in Bollywood notice a generational change. Just as urban India’s film tastes are changing, so are those of its film-makers, having discovered that a market exists for cinema that challenges boundaries and pushes against conventions. “There is a changing sensibility,” says Peer, who is working on another script.

“One of the stories of globalisation is that younger film-makers in Mumbai will be using a VPN [virtual private network] to watch a Polish film-maker or a German film-maker, so the door has been opened to [foreign] film-making here. I think it’s going to stay open.” ■

INDONESIA

IN THE SHADOW
OF THE PASTFILM-MAKERS
ARE STRIVING
TO EXPLAIN
HISTORY

BY AVANTIKA CHILKOTI

Indonesia's dark history was brought to world attention in 2012 with the release of *The Act of Killing*. In the documentary, by US director Joshua Oppenheimer, death squad leaders behind the country's anti-communist purges of the 1960s re-enact their crimes.

Among the most memorable sequences in the film, which was nominated for an Oscar in 2014, is a moment when one of the killers, Anwar Congo, stands on a rooftop in Medan, in the North Sumatra province, where he murdered many of his victims, spitting, writhing, blinking the tears from his eyes.

As the credits roll, it becomes clear why no Indonesian could tell this story: many of the crew remain anonymous. "If they put their name on this, in addition to the physical danger... and the legal reprisals they might face, they might never be able to work in Indonesia again," says Oppenheimer, who has made a sequel from the perspective of the victims, *The Look of Silence*.

There is undoubtedly some danger for any Indonesian digging up this shrouded and painful episode in the country's history — particularly from vengeful individuals unhappy with the portrayal of their past.

Even Oppenheimer says that he could visit Indonesia following the release of his films, but he is not sure he would "make it

out alive". Nevertheless, local film-makers do address difficult topics. Nia Dinata's features, though often fictional, tackle controversial feminist themes. Often through allegory, Garin Nugroho's films deal with tough socio-political issues, from Indonesia's street children to tensions between the government and the population in the West Papua province.

Sidi Saleh, who directed *Maryam*, a film about religion and autism awarded best short film at last year's Venice film festival, reiterates the fear of reprisals: "If they want to track [the Indonesian crew] down, it's easy." But there are other factors that stop the local industry producing films that trigger international debate.

Film-makers must submit their work to the country's censorship board, which has faced rebuke from the international film community and non-governmental organisations such as Human Rights Watch, for stifling debate about sensitive historical events and contentious religious subjects.

"It is very, very tight censorship — not like in the west," Saleh explains. He says there is also self-censorship in the industry, where film-makers avoid controversial topics to avoid upsetting the regulator.

Among the watchdog's most high-profile decisions was last year's ban on *Noah*, starring Russell Crowe. The Hollywood-made biblical epic threatened to cause controversy in the Muslim-majority country.

In fact, Indonesia has a long — if poorly documented — cinematic history. The country's Dutch colonial rulers used film to teach audiences back home about the faraway archipelago.

Cinema was later used as propaganda, both during Japanese occupation in the second world war and by Indonesia's first



presidents, Sukarno and Suharto, who ran the country with an iron fist between 1945 and 1998.

In recent years, however, independent cinema has blossomed, thanks to the advent of democracy, radical changes to freedom of expression and new technology that has cut the cost of film-making. Box office revenues have soared, reaching Rp2.96tn (\$214m) last year, up from Rp1.08tn five years earlier, according to IHS Technology, a research company. This growth is expected to continue in a country with a population of 250m and a growing middle class.

Yet local film-makers have produced few ground-breaking documentaries. One reason is scarcity of funding, with no support from the government, film-makers say. They can apply for grants from overseas institutions, but these are mostly open to those with experience or strong connections in the international industry.

Saleh, for example, says he largely finances his films himself, with support from producer Amalia Trisnasari, who also works as a cinematographer to raise funds. "If Indonesia wants to produce films that are good quality, you need to fund the right person to do it, but the problem now is that a lot of the right people don't get supported," Saleh says. "They're not really good at presentation."

With budgets tight, many Indonesian film-makers are forced to produce features that will succeed commercially. That means catering to the largely young audiences that flock to multiplex cinemas in the country's shopping malls, looking for low-grade horror and romantic comedies.

"They are quite predictably comic, not particularly high-quality films that teenagers and young adults enjoy," says Ben Murtagh, senior lecturer in Indonesian and Malay at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. "In Indonesia there is going to be less risk-taking because you don't have the cash to take risks with."



2.

There are also very few established film schools. And Bambang Supriadi, lecturer at the Jakarta Institute of Arts, says the state must do more to recognise and regulate the courses that do exist.

Local film-makers complain the government hampers their work with not just strict censorship but also a complicated licensing process for shooting in public — which can involve the same corruption and extortion that has dogged development more widely in the country.

“It’s just time-consuming mainly — it’s not something you could do with a phone call as you could in the US or London,” explains Deborah Gabinetti, director at the Bali Film Center and founder of the Bali International Film Festival.

Even once a film is made there are further hurdles as local productions compete to be shown on a small number of screens. Indonesia has just 3.8 screens per million people, according to IHS, compared with 126.5 in Iceland, which has the highest ratio. One chain, Cinema 21, dominates the sector.

Commercial screening remains out of reach even for well-known film-makers, such as Shalahuddin Siregar, the award-winning director of *The Land Beneath the Fog*, a documentary about a small mountain village on the island of Java. “We never had a chance to have a cinema release because it is very expensive and because of the monopoly of Cinema 21,” he explains.

Yet Charlotte Jones, cinema analyst at IHS, says competition for screen slots will soon become easier as Lippo Group, a property developer, has announced plans to build 1,000 new screens in the next five years.

But *The Act of Killing* has helped draw attention to Indonesian cinema and new



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

1. Anwar Congo, right, in *The Act of Killing*
2. A scene from *The Act of Killing*
3. 4. and 5. Scenes from *Maryam*
6. Sidi Saleh receives his award at the 2014 Venice film festival

talent is emerging, with young people experimenting with film-making as mobile technology becomes cheaper and more accessible. “There’s more confidence,” says Gabinetti. “Getting that recognition from abroad has helped them to believe in themselves.” ■

RISING STARS

Joko Anwar, a former film critic, is among the best-known film-makers in Indonesia. Among his most celebrated works is *Kala*, a noir thriller about an investigation into the death of five men burnt alive by a mob in an unnamed republic. “He has some avid fans,” says Eric Sasono, a film critic. “But sometimes for the general audience his approach is too high taste.”

Nia Dinata is an award-winning feminist film-maker whose works include some of the biggest hits at the Indonesian box office in recent years. One example is *Arisan!*, a light comedy drama co-written with Joko Anwar. The film, which includes a gay kiss, was an unlikely hit in the world’s largest Muslim-majority country, with more than 600,000 viewers.

Garin Nugroho has produced several works with a strong socio-political message, both in the highly repressive years when Suharto was in power and more recently. Among his best-known works is *Leaf on a Pillow*, which looks at the lives of street kids in the Indonesian city of Jogjakarta, and *Love on a Slice of Bread*, his debut feature about a couple travelling across the island of Java.

MYANMAR

CINEMA FROM
THE EYE OF
THE STORMDOCUMENTARY
IS THRIVING IN
SPITE OF STATE
CENSORSHIP

BY FRANCIS WADE

On the morning of May 2 2008 Cyclone Nargis ravaged Myanmar's southern delta. Winds of more than 135mph barreled over the low-lying land, wrenching up trees and sparing only the hardiest of concrete structures.

Despite the devastation — about 140,000 people were killed and more than 3m left destitute — news was slow to reach the rest of the world. The military junta sealed off the region, banning journalists from entering, and rejected offers of foreign aid.

The small number of on-the-ground dispatches were dismissed by the junta. The state-run New Light of Myanmar newspaper decried the “fabricated” reports of the devastation. But in defiance, small teams of local video journalists left Yangon, the country's largest city, for the delta soon after the winds had settled. They travelled by bus individually or in pairs to avoid detection. Using small, hand-held cameras, they filmed discreetly — one eye on the interviewees and the horrors they recounted, another watching out for plain-clothed agents of the state who lurked in the ruins, feeding observations into Myanmar's vast, haphazard intelligence database.

Among the first to enter the delta was Thaidhhi, now one of the country's best-

established documentary film-makers. “First we arrived in Bogale, and the town was deserted — a lot of buildings had collapsed and most of the villages near Bogale were totally gone,” he recalls. “There were thousands of villagers wandering around trying to find their lost family. When I looked at these people's faces they were all the same: without any emotion.”

He was 25 and enrolled at Yangon Film School, a German-funded outfit that the junta had allowed as a small concession to local journalists. The government knew, or at least thought it did, that technical film-making skills posed little threat when the censorship it imposed was so suffocating. That calculation misfired. “It was perfect timing for us,” Thaidhhi says. “All the equipment was in our hands.”

But for four years after his trip, the film that Thaidhhi made — slow-panning shots across landscapes upended by the winds, farmers picking through the skeletal remains of villages whose rubble only partially obscured the bloated bodies — remained a secret among friends.

A few international festivals screened the film, careful to ensure the names of its producers were not revealed. Only in 2012, at the Wathann film festival in Yangon, was he finally able to show the film in its home country and at the festival he founded. The screening signalled a further shift towards tentative acceptance by the authorities of independent film-making.

That year was a watershed for Myanmar. In April's by-elections, Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy gained its first parliamentary seats. Coming on the back of national elections in late 2010, the party's ascent was considered a statement of intent from the democratic reformists in



power. It was this clique of power-holders whom, years before, had been spurred into action as the economy buckled under the weight of economic mismanagement and western sanctions imposed in the mid 1990s, and public disquiet grew. Overseen by Than Shwe, the former dictator, they planned and engineered a transition aimed at returning Myanmar to the international stage and rebuilding business and diplomatic relations with the west.

The subsequent early years of Thein Sein's presidency from 2011 — the country's first experiment with pseudo-parliamentary democracy since the coup of 1962 — brought dramatic changes to the fortunes of Thaidhhi and his colleagues.



1.
Lamin Oo's *This Land is Our Land*

2. and 3.
The aftermath of cyclone Nargis in 2008. Myanmar's film-makers and journalists were banned from covering the disaster

4.
Thaiddhi

The abolition in August 2012 of the censor board, which had been tasked with scrutinising all published and broadcast material for signs of dissension, meant that documentaries — once the sole domain of the propaganda arm of the junta — could be shot openly.

Of his years spent working undercover, Thaiddhi is sparing with the detail: "Most of the time we were not allowed to shoot on the street but as locals we could always find a way to make it happen."

Before 2012, independent video journalists, if discovered, faced decades-long prison sentences. Even owning a video camera without a licence was an offence, let alone angling it into the face of someone in uniform. But today, the Wathann film festival is a regular fixture, along with several others that screen documentaries.

Journalists have even felt confident enough to take their cameras to document the fallout from the military's attacks on ethnic minorities. Thaiddhi's job has become easier. "Now we can shoot on the street and work more openly," he says.

But more recently a shadow has fallen. Despite pledges to the contrary, the government holds more than 150 political prisoners, including journalists, in jail, while nearly 450 activists await trial.

Censorship may have been scaled back, but in its place the court system — which

shows clear signs of remaining captured by powerful state interests — has become the chief arbiter over what is safe and not safe ground for journalists.

The apparent backslide has given some pause to film-makers. Lamin Oo, co-founder of Tagu Films, a production house based in Yangon, has capitalised on the freedoms — his 2014 film with Tagu, *This Land is Our Land*, documents the struggles of a village in central Myanmar that in 2010 had land confiscated by the state.

But risks are still inherent. Par Gyi, a freelance reporter, was arrested by the army while covering the conflict in eastern Myanmar last year, and was killed in custody. The army claimed he had tried to escape with an officer's gun and was shot. His body was buried before any independent investigation could be carried out.

"There have been quite a few setbacks and we have to make the government accountable. We haven't been able to do that yet," says Lamin Oo. The lack of clarity over the legal boundaries for film-makers compounds the uncertainty, he adds.

The state of the broader film industry in Myanmar is mixed. Feature films suffer from a lack of funding, and the effects of this are evident. Sometimes shot and edited in the space of a week, many films lack finesse, and cinemas instead tend to show imported movies. From a pre-second world war golden era, when the quality of Myanmar's big-screen output led the region, this side of the industry has stuttered.

But in its place, documentary film has begun to flourish. Audiences, which knew the medium as a vehicle for the junta are becoming more receptive to the work of film-makers such as Thaiddhi and the Tagu team, who despite scant government funding still produce work that displays

clear technical and storytelling skills.

Annual film festivals provide them with a platform that until recently had been absent.

"The audience has the sense that the only — or the main — agenda of these new documentary films is to tell the truth," says Lamin Oo. Both he and Thaiddhi take a similar approach to subject matter: social issues explored through the eyes of the men and women experiencing them, as much for artistic flair as for practical reasons.

Thaiddhi recently completed a series of short films on inter-faith relations. Lamin Oo is exploring gay, lesbian and transgender issues in a film about the love between two men. Both are fraught subjects in Myanmar, where escalating tension between Buddhists and Muslims has fuelled conflict over the past three years, and where homosexuality remains stigmatised. The approach offers a more intimate study of the subjects and sidesteps perceptions that the documentary is making a political statement.

For Thaiddhi, this distinction is crucial. The work he produces is not outwardly political, because it does not need to be. "Simply showing ordinary people's lives can be a very effective way to help our society to reflect on itself," he says.

Myanmar's stop-start emergence from isolationist rule makes for circumstances in which identities are reclaimed, and newly assertive forces are battling for ownership of the country's future.

The seeming banality of the everyday takes on a beguiling quality, and from it compelling characters emerge. There is a clear rationale that drives Thaiddhi and Lamin Oo's approach: conveying the nuanced stories of this transformation may shield film-makers from the ire of those still resistant to the idea of change, and in turn allow them the freedom to roam. ■

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CA





PHOTOS: THOMAS DORN/LAIF/CAMERA PRESS

The so-called Beco de Batman (Batman's Alley) in São Paulo, Brazil

THE WINNER

Cristina Planas Peru



SAINTS AND SINNERS FROM PERU'S PAST AND PRESENT

BY NAOMI MAPSTONE

Cristina Planas is often accused of “impertinence” in her native Peru. The Lima-based sculptor has an unerring instinct for what will discomfort her audience and, “like a monkey offered a banana, I can’t help reaching for it,” she says.

Unlike artists who court controversy, however, Planas is patently troubled by the gallery closures, the charges of blasphemy and the catholic masses for her soul. “People say this to me [that notoriety sells], but to me this is fatal,” she says, hitting the word as if she is dying inside. “I live in Latin America — here they close all the doors on you.”

The first whiff of controversy came early in her career, with her depiction of Abimael Guzmán, the architect of Peru’s bloody Maoist-inspired uprising of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Guzmán is reviled for his “revolution” in which 70,000 people died.

Planas’s sculpture, *The Wawa*, depicted Guzmán in his striped prison garb dancing on corpses, and provoked protest rallies and government threats to prosecute her as an apologist for terrorism. “What I wanted to say was that a country that forgets is a country that will repeat its errors,” she says.



1.



2.

“Many people felt — still feel — I had been very impertinent. Who wastes time doing a portrait of him when no one wants to think of him? We are still a wounded nation. It costs us greatly to examine these things — we don’t want to remember, we want to hide from them.”

After an eight-year hiatus, during which she married and had three children, Planas returned in 2008 with two shows: “Lima”, which won best artwork at the city’s biennale, and “Migration of the Saints”, which was censured by the authorities that year.

“I had been thinking about how this age of terrorism had left us abandoned. So many people fled for our neighbouring countries or the US or Spain, and I wondered, ‘When you leave so much behind, what do you take?’” she recalls. “Peruvians have a very fervent relationship with their saints; they take them with them.”

Planas reinterpreted four of Lima’s beloved saints, stripping them of their habits and cassocks, and making them appear as ordinary people. The show attracted the attention of an ultra-conservative Catholic group, which protested at her “sacrilege” until the authorities closed the gallery.

A child of both the Amazonian jungle and Peru’s dusty desert capital, Planas is possibly the artist the country needs if it is to come to terms with its violent history and its racial and socioeconomic divides. Her questioning — of God, religion, terrorism, inequality or impending apocalypse — gets under Peruvians’ skin but also speaks to a much wider audience.

“I don’t believe in an art that is decorative or complacent. I work in things that bother me,” she says. “I am always looking for answers, and I don’t find them. I look in the church and I only find things that bother me. Possibly that’s why my works don’t sell.”

Planas spent her early years in the remote Amazon city of Iquitos. When the family moved to Lima several years later, it was a shock for Planas. “In Iquitos, there’s a happiness — everything is possible, the people are very free,” she recalls. “When we came to Lima I was sent to a Catholic boarding school with nuns — German nuns! I thought they were giants.”

Planas’s mother, a devout Catholic and theologian, looms large in her life and work. She was the subject of her first acclaimed sculpture — a life-size figure with a cloud of wild hair, caught in full song. The sculpture now stands in a corner of her living room in the bohemian quarter of Lima.

The room, and many of its contents, are enormous. There is a tree growing into the roof, adorned with the head of a black vulture. A piece of driftwood rests on a table stacked with faux gold bars — a protest at the toll Peru’s illegal gold, wood and narcotics trades are taking on the Amazon rainforest. The vulture’s head is a nod to Planas’s *Gallinazos*, a flock of black vultures’ heads, which rested atop deadened palm trees in Lima’s only nature reserve during the COP20 UN climate change talks in 2014.

“I had been feeling hopeful about the new pope and I wondered what animal should accompany him. Should he be rising up on

1.
From Cristina Planas’s ‘Lima’ show

2.
Santa Rosa from ‘Migration of the Saints’ on the road

a lion or a tiger or a dragon? Then I thought, a vulture — it eats garbage and all that is putrid, and this pope wants to clean the church.

“No one wants to see [the vultures] but I will revindicate them. We will start to see the value of things that had no value and become a society with better values.”

Understandably, Planas was dubious when a Colombian priest, Gilberto Jaramillo Mejia, called her in 2013 to say he was interested in one of her re-interpreted saints, *El Señor de Los Milagros*, a potent figure for Limeños, who parade in their hundreds of thousands behind his figure every October. “He said, ‘Cristina, I am interested in your black Christ,’ and I thought, ‘What for — to burn him?’,” she says, laughing.

It turned out that the Colombian government had given the padre the prison, nicknamed “the Cathedral”, that had housed fabled narco-trafficker Pablo Escobar, to establish a place of memory to the victims of narco-trafficking.

And so Planas’s Christ, impaled with and surrounded by golden guns, made his own migration to the countryside surrounding Medellín, where Escobar had a God-like status. There, the priest presided over a ceremony to strip the Christ of his guns.

“Look at how a work of art — so difficult in Lima, where it signified the nakedness of God — can be converted into a work that signifies brutality for Colombians.

“This was an armed Christ. And in the moment they disarmed him, it was incredibly powerful,” she says. ■

RUNNERS-UP

After studying and working in Australia and the US, Fabiola Menchelli Tejeda had only been back in her native Mexico City for two years when she won a prize at the city's prestigious Biennale of Photography. Last year's winning abstract compositions look more like sculptures than the careful juxtaposition of paper and light.

But expanding the boundaries of photography is Menchelli Tejeda's passion "and there is fertile ground to explore", she says. In her latest show she is exhibiting works developed on canvas without a camera, using the iron structures of Mexico City's imposing Museo Universitario del Chopo as the negative and letting the sun's ultraviolet rays capture the images.

That exhibition, which opened last month, is called, fittingly, "Appearances Deceive". Menchelli Tejeda enjoys, as she puts it, "confounding perceptions" — including the

idea that photographs can be reproduced an infinite number of times. While finishing her masters degree in Boston in the US, she made a series of giant coloured Polaroid prints, their pictorial quality emphasised by the way she let the developing chemicals dribble in rivulets at the bottom of the image. Taken using one of only a handful of giant Polaroid cameras in the world, each is unique.

Her approach is to use "the language of abstraction to make images which seem to present a tangible visible reality but are, in fact, never quite there, except in the eye of the camera and the mind of the maker".

Menchelli Tejeda grew up with art: her mother was an architect and painter "and I took lots of art classes". She bought her first camera at 16 and photography was a hobby, until a trip to Australia led to a degree in visual digital arts at Melbourne's Victoria University.

Jude Webber

Fabiola Menchelli Tejeda Mexico



Pablo Mora Ortega Colombia

"That's when he became a file," says Pablo Mora Ortega, describing the day in 2002 when his property lawyer father was shot and killed in Medellín, Colombia's second-largest city, on his way to a meeting. He says most murder cases are never solved and his father's murder remains a mystery. "There was never an investigation and we still don't know what happened."

In the years that followed, Ortega, 39, explored his grief through art. He wanted to find a creative use for stacks of case files left in his father's office, to make a statement about injustice. His second exhibition, "October 22", named after the date on which his father was killed, was held at Galería de la Oficina in Medellín in 2014.

One of the works on show was "Cabinet", a compelling installation featuring a desk brimming with case files — a comment, says Ortega, on the bureaucracy of justice. "They

are just getting forgotten there; nobody is working on them any more." "Abandonment" is a video installation capturing vapour that leaks from files as they are burnt by intense light — "a poetic way of seeing how the history kept in the files is disappearing".

Ortega's installations are about more than his personal story and that of his father. Many people were killed or vanished during Colombia's turbulent period in 2002, when president Álvaro Uribe ordered the military to disband militias and drug traffickers. "It's about all the people who are struggling to find answers about why their loved ones are missing or were killed."

Ortega is optimistic about Colombia's art scene, with young artists tackling themes such as environmental damage. "They are telling the world how the land in Colombia is being destroyed by mining," he says.

Andre Rhoden-Paul



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Nowadays, sculptors do much of their preparation digitally. They scan their subjects, and then use software to shape into a 3-D rendered image. A model is printed using a 3-D printer before they begin sculpting by hand. Not having to waste expensive stone or other materials during the process of trial and error can make a huge difference for artists with limited resources.

Online Gallery Openings

Technology has enabled people to experience art like never before. Sites like seditionart.com lets collectors purchase

limited-edition digital artworks through their online gallery, which features some of the world's best contemporary artists. In addition to helping aspiring artists from around the globe find their audience, it also opens a door for artists to be exposed to new ideas and inspirations.

Immediate Access to a Wider Audience

After growing tired of the constraints in the print medium, Loic Gouzer began creating videos to promote his auctions on Instagram. Through this social network, he was able to develop his own voice and following which attracted more collectors to his shows and became a desired platform for artists to be featured.

Art is continually evolving. And it's vital that artists have the right tools to push art in exciting new directions. Whether it's reshaping the way art is made or providing different ways to mix media, technology is a valuable tool for any artist.

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To create a sculpture, a 3-D printer applies multiple layers of polymer resin.



BRAZIL

MEETING
THE POWER
COLLECTORSAT HOME WITH
A CONFIDENT
GENERATION
OF BUYERS

BY VINCENT BEVINS

Pedro Barbosa thoroughly enjoys his morning routine. In a sweater and jeans, surrounded by paintings, sculpture, installations and leafy tropical plants, he pores over old art books and magazines at home in the affluent, hip Pinheiros neighbourhood in São Paulo.

Today, he is immersing himself in the literature of a particular moment in history, when 1980s punk rock sensibility met German conceptual art, inspiring early radical gestures towards gay liberation, and experiments in art media. His purpose is not leisurely or academic, however — Barbosa is researching art works he may consider buying, once he fully understands and appreciates them.

“I read, I listen and I take notes of everything,” he says, removing headphones playing a 1980s *Tellus* audio magazine and searching for a recording in his archive by Joseph Beuys, the German performance and conceptual artist. “I bring together everything that interests me or is related to my collection... this isn’t just an accumulation of works. It has meaning.”

It has been nine years since Barbosa left bond trading to dedicate his life to art. His wife continues to work at JPMorgan, allowing him to concentrate on the family’s collection. A crucial moment in Brazil’s history also helped him to move on.

“Well, ‘Lula’ paid off Brazil’s external debt,





1. Sculpture by Edgard de Souza in the Martins' collection

2. Heitor and Fernanda Martins

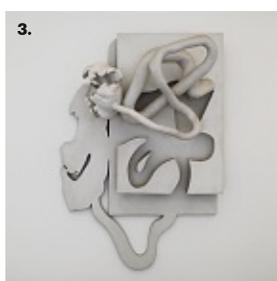
3. Sculpture by Franz Kracjberg

4. Installation by Matthew Barney at Inhotim

5. Galeria Adriana Varejao pavilion at Inhotim

Though today Brazil's wealthy can afford as much art as European or New York buyers, collectors prefer to treat art as a higher calling rather than an investment, frowning upon speculative buying. They value the history of Brazilian and Latin American art, but also battle import taxes and bureaucracy to add North American and European works to their homes, offices, storage and exhibition spaces.

The best known among this group is Bernardo Paz, a larger-than-life figure



BRAZIL'S WEALTHY TREAT ART AS A HIGHER CALLING

and that's what I was trading in New York, so I left," he says, referring to former President Luiz Inácio da Silva who served from 2003 to 2011, and under whom Brazil's economy powered ahead.

Barbosa puts his headphones back on, switching to Beuys' recording of *Ja Ja Ja Nee Nee Nee*. He spent his youth in 1980s São Paulo's punk and No Wave clubs, and has a taste for the world's cooler audio and video pieces — “dematerialised” works, as he puts it. In that sense, he is idiosyncratic compared with Brazil's other powerful figures in the art world.

But the new generation of collectors, who arrived on the global scene over the past two decades, have much in common. They took advantage of a tradition of sophisticated and unique art production and institutions, but within a country that only established economic stability in the mid-90s.

and former mining magnate who has transformed a vast tract of land in the middle of the landlocked state of Minas Gerais into the Centro de Arte Contemporânea Inhotim. In this sprawling outdoor collection and exhibition space, Brazilian and foreign works nestle against the lush greenery.

Paz, who aims to slowly transform Inhotim into a complex of artist-designed hotels, convention centres, theatres and villas, rejects the term “collector”. Instead, he says, Inhotim has a social mission.

“Brazil continues to pass through a moment of cultural evolution, and Inhotim can exist to signify a seed for the future that can be replicated around the world.”

Local schoolchildren and art experts from around the world travel to see works such as Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica's “Cosmococas”, and Matthew Barney's “From Mud, a Blade”, which engages critically with the relationship between mining and nature that made Inhotim possible in the first place.

Paz, like almost everyone in Brazil, recognises that the moment of economic euphoria, which started around the time

Barbosa left his job in New York, has ended recently as the economy has plunged into crisis. But that is just part of the transformation, he says.

“We live in a country of highs and lows, a country that went through a period of euphoria in which many people made money, giving a boost to the art market. But I don’t think that’s what Brazil truly is. Today we’re going through one more crisis, that for those of us who are a bit older has already become a habit from time to time,” says Paz.

“The market has suffered some consequences.”

After decades acquiring and commissioning works by artists such as Tunga, Olafur Eliasson and Chris Burden, Paz says his goal is now no longer only to purchase works, but to “construct them alongside great artists, bringing them here, and showing them the magic of this place, and giving them to opportunity to become eternal in an Inhotim Pavilhão”.

The same spirit is evident in a very different setting: the 10th floor of a glass building in São Paulo’s Itaim Bibi business district. Even though the works are marked, as in a museum, it is unlikely that many of the financiers and investors who walk these halls know they are in one of South America’s great collections.

But José Olympio Pereira, president and chief executive of Credit Suisse Brazil, knows exactly what they mean to him. He turns to 33 drawings mounted as one piece on the wall, “Project for the Construction of a Sky” by Carmela Gross, and explains the work.

“Fundamentally, here she seeks to assign parameters to something which is totally incapable of fitting within parameters. So in this way she takes the sky and the clouds and tries to create a formal description of something which is totally fluid,” he says, grinning. “I really like that.”

Pereira and his wife Andrea have hundreds of works spread throughout three homes and the Credit Suisse Rio and São Paulo branches. He took an early interest in works from the concrete and neo-concrete movements — both strong in Brazil — before moving on to contemporary masters such as Tunga and Cildo Meireles. The couple were early investors in Beatriz Milhazes’ work, now one of the most expensive artists on the contemporary Brazilian market.

They prefer to collect “in-depth”, he says. “Typically there are the artists that really interest us, and we prefer to have many works by them rather than having one from one artist and another from another.”



SOMETIMES WE BUY AND THE ART TAKES MONTHS TO ARRIVE. NO PROBLEM'

Work by Miguel Rio Branco in the Martins' collection

More than 90 per cent of the collection is by Brazilian artists. “We think it is important to value the historical baggage we have here... We also have privileged access to the works of artists here,” he says, while pointing out that the market works differently from North America and Europe.

“I view our collection as a store of value. We’re not extremely worried [about whether] the work is likely to increase in value quickly, or double in value, but I know that money is there if I need it tomorrow,” he says. “Speculation exists all around the world... But that’s not exactly our phenomenon here. Our market isn’t quite large enough. It happens from time to time, but it’s nothing compared with [developed country markets] abroad.”

One change in the past decade has made it easier for Brazilians to buy foreign works. Art fairs such as SP-Arte were granted a special and small exemption from high import fees and bureaucratic hurdles.

“There is a window,” says Fernanda Feitosa, director of SP-Arte. “The fair has been a very important element for transformation as a result. Foreign galleries come, and more and more interchange is taking place.”

About 40 per cent of the galleries participating at SP-Arte are now foreign. Fernanda and her husband, Heitor Martins, a director at McKinsey & Company and president of the São Paulo Museum of Art, import frequently, but never from too far away. Their collection is purely Latin American, and all from the post-war era.

“Importing is not so simple in Brazil,” says Heitor Martins. “It requires a little bit of patience.”

Fernanda adds: “Yes, you need patience. But it’s not impossible. And we’re never in too much of a hurry. We’re not the type that buy something and want it tomorrow. Sometimes we buy and it may take two, three, four months to arrive. No problem.”

At their home in the wealthy neighbourhood of Morumbi, the couple step around their pool and into a large pavilion. On one side is a collection of Brazilian photographs, and on the other is a set of large installations.

Brazil is unique in Latin America, Fernanda explains, as her husband pulls out his phone, searching for a photo. “In many ways, Brazil is more similar to European countries in that it has a strong institutional tradition which goes back a long way. Art looks back towards its past as much it looks abroad... today, there is a generation of Brazilian artists inspired by the last. This is rare in developing countries.”

“The Academy of Belas Artes was founded early [in 1826], then there was the impressionist movement at the end of the 19th century, the São Paulo Modern Art week starting in 1922. The [São Paulo] Bienal began in 1951. There was the rediscovery of abstractism. Here, there has been constant evolution.”

Martins, meanwhile, has found the photo of a boy putting a work of art together, dressed in shorts and sandals on a sunny day.

“We mounted this with our son,” he says, and points to a series of magnets that start on the ground and extend upwards to a point on the concrete wall. It is a work by the legendary Brazilian artist Tunga.

The couple say they plan to continue expanding their collection. Do they ever sell?

“Sometimes,” says Feitosa. “But generally so that we can buy more pieces.” ■

HAITI

VOODOO VISIONS
IN NEW YORKCOLLECTORS
ENTRANCED
BY FLAGS FOR
RITUALS

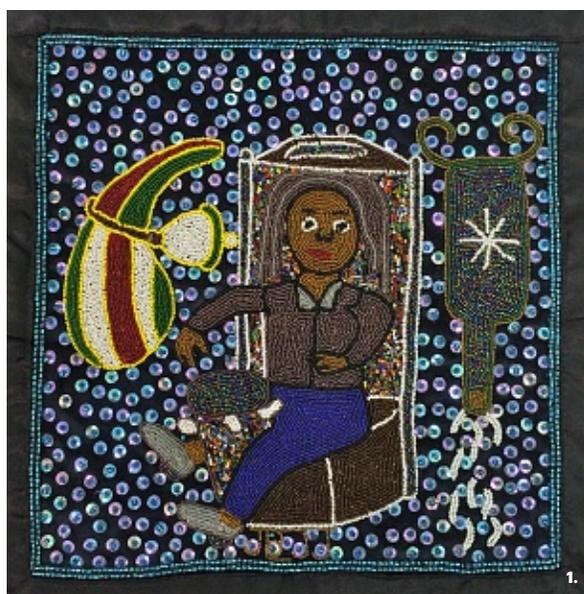
BY ANDRES SCHIPANI

To many in the Europe-centric art world, the names Marassa Jumeaux, Erzulie Freda, Grans Bwa mean nothing. For Jean-Baptiste Jean-Joseph these sacred voodoo spirits mean everything, both professionally and spiritually. The Haitian artist has turned these religious icons emblazoned on flags into internationally recognised works of art.

The textiles threaded with beads and sequins were originally designed to enhance voodoo religious experiences, to facilitate the *houngan*, or priest, to summon the spirits. A major religion in Haiti, voodoo in the Caribbean region is a blend of West African animism, introduced by slaves snatched from places such as Benin and Togo, and Christianity.

Just as Catholicism has served as inspiration and means of expression for artists for centuries — think of the masters of the Italian Renaissance — voodoo has spilled over into art. The most recognised Haitian artists, Hector Hyppolite and Andre Pierre, were voodoo priests before becoming instrumental in the Haitian art movement.

Following the death of Antoine Oleyant, a voodoo priest and flag maker, in 1992, Jean-Joseph, who sports long dreadlocks and produces from an artists' village in the town of Croix-des-Bouquets on the outskirts of Haiti's capital, became the



'I IMMEDIATELY OBEYED
THE MESSAGE... AND MY
ARTISTIC CAREER BEGAN'

most renowned contemporary voodoo flag maker in the country.

His career began with a mystic vision, he says. In 1991, at the time of the military coup that toppled former Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Jean-Joseph's dead mother and Erzulie Dantor, a female voodoo divinity, warned him in a dream that "there would be no jobs in the country due to a problem that would arise".

Surviving in one of the world's poorest countries is hard, so they told him to paint portraits to be self-sufficient.

"I immediately obeyed the message, which initiated me in the art and voodoo worlds, and my artistic career began," he says. His first work was a representation of Erzulie Dantor, honouring "the vision I had in my dream."



1, 2, and 3.
Voodoo flags
from Haitian
Jean-Baptiste
Jean-Joseph

PHOTOS: GALERIE D'ART NADER, HAITI

Fast-forward a quarter of a century and Jean-Joseph has since trained dozens of flag-makers and employs 13 people. His flags sell for between \$150 and \$7,500 and he was recently commissioned to make seven by a US client.

"Voodoo flags are, essentially, targeted by collectors," explains Georges Nader, Haiti's best-known art collector and a member of the family behind the Nader Haitian gallery in New York.

The works are a rare novelty because such flags became available for sale only about 30 years ago. "Before, they were only designated for voodoo practitioners," Nader adds.

Interest has risen among international art collectors. In December 2013, Jean-Joseph showed his flags at the Fondation Cartier in Paris — and with considerable success.

"At first, I exhibited three flags. I was then asked to add two more. The audience was so impressed that they purchased all the flags, even though it was not supposed to be a selling exhibit." ■

ARGENTINA

ROCK-STAR STATUS FOR THE VERY FEW

BUENOS AIRES STRUGGLES TO SUPPORT ITS ARTISTIC TALENT

BY BENEDICT MANDER

Thousands of Argentines gathered on a futuristic footbridge in July this year, clutching smartphones and holding mirrors up to an azure sky. Clouds of multicoloured petals rained down to the docks of Buenos Aires from a helicopter overhead. Inside, artist Marta Minujín surveyed her work from on high.

With rock-star status in Argentina (she compares herself to Madonna) Minujín had no problem getting the citizens of Buenos Aires to participate in one of her “happenings”. They downloaded an app that would identify their “soul mate”, who could be found on the bridge by a matching design showing on their smartphone.

Perhaps it was appropriate that Minujín, now 72, remained so distant from the crowd. As a young artist she left Argentina to seek success on the international art scene, as the country’s biggest artists do to this day. Buenos Aires remains too limited for its most ambitious talent.

“I don’t feel I belong here,” says Minujín from behind aviator sunglasses, her black clothes contrasting with almost fluorescent blonde hair. She complains that she is mobbed when she goes out and must even organise her dentist appointments abroad.

Nevertheless, a vibrant and youthful art scene has thrived in Buenos Aires, despite its isolation from the cities where the art world is concentrated, such as London and New

York — where Minujín, who befriended the late Andy Warhol, feels more at home — and the economic crises that periodically batter Argentines. Rather, these obstacles have fostered a refreshing degree of innovation and pragmatism. Graffiti art, for example, has transformed the city.

The problem is that the market for the fine arts in Buenos Aires, which depends on a small group of collectors, is not big enough to support the legions of aspiring young artists produced by the city known as the Paris of the South.

In the absence of strong state-backed institutions and funding to support and nurture artistic talent, those who want to make their living as artists must rely on a commercial gallery scene that is fiercely competitive. Their only other option is to move abroad.

‘WE’RE A MISERABLE LOT. WE DO NOT VALUE ARGENTINE THINGS’

“There are many fewer galleries than the amount of young artists able to join them. Even so, they keep producing a huge amount,” says Adriana Rosenberg, the director of Fundación Proa, a private arts institute with one of the city’s most visited exhibition spaces in the colourful but run-down district of La Boca, which she says is attracting aspiring artists in droves.

Eduardo Basualdo, who at 37 belongs to a younger generation of artists that has broken into the international scene, says that without affiliation to a gallery, there is little chance of success. But the lack of formal training for up-and-coming artists, many of whom study under established peers rather than at art schools, does at least allow them greater freedom. “Elsewhere, aspiring artists have to mortgage their



homes to study, and are bound to a system. Here artists are more daring but also have shorter careers. Once they hit 30, they may have to do something else in order to pay the rent,” he says.

For those who make it, international recognition is essential. “The successful artists of my generation are all on the international scene,” says Basualdo, explaining that if he does 10 shows in a year, only a couple will likely be in Argentina.

Orly Benzacar, who runs the Ruth Benzacar gallery, laments that the Buenos Aires art market is controlled by a small group of “capricious” collectors.

“Great art is produced here, the challenge is how to generate a bigger market,” says Benzacar, who invented a successful, if only partial, antidote to the lack of institutional support. More than a decade ago she set up the Zero Curriculum programme, a competition for young artists whose prize — a solo exhibition for the winner — is one of the most coveted in the country.



1.
Diarios by
Guillermo
Kuitca, Biennale
di Venezia 2007

2.
Marta Minujín
with 'Babel
Tower' (2011)

3.
'Untitled' (2013)
by Guillermo
Kuitca

4.
'Encyclopédie
II' (2010) by
Guillermo Kuitca

5.
'Untitled' (2011)
by Guillermo
Kuitca

While Argentine artists have made great strides on the international scene over the past two decades, important museums and galleries have started to set up Latin American departments. This creates a “dangerous” niche that artists want to escape from, says Guillermo Kuitca, one of Argentina’s best-known artists internationally.

Ultimately, attempts to categorise Argentine art are futile, says Kuitca, describing the scene as too “diverse and chaotic” to be pigeon-holed. “It’s very difficult to come up with a cliché about the Buenos Aires art scene,” he says. ■

ARGENTINE ARTISTS ON THE WORLD STAGE

Argentina’s geographical isolation has not prevented its artists from becoming famous abroad. The outrageous public persona of **Marta Minujín**, her provocative performance and conceptual art — from a Parthenon made of books banned by Argentina’s military dictatorship to her symbolic repayment of the country’s foreign debt to Andy Warhol with ears of corn — makes her one of the most headline-grabbing of Buenos Aires’ artists.

At the other end of the scale is the softly-spoken abstract painter, **Guillermo Kuitca**. Kuitca has become one of Argentina’s most renowned artists internationally, with his work characterised by his fascination for theatrical imagery, maps and architectural plans. He also runs a training programme that has become a vital platform for the country’s most outstanding young artists, such as **Jazmín López**.

Other established artists include **Jorge Macchi**, who works across a wide range of mediums, with an abiding interest in music. A giant of the Buenos Aires art scene from an older generation, and who remains influential, is **León Ferrari**, who died in 2013. His iconoclastic work — such as Jesus Christ crucified on a falling US fighter jet — led to his exile during the years of the dictatorship. He won a number of international prizes, including the Leone d’Oro at the 2007 Venice Biennale.

Eduardo Costantini, who established the city’s best-known private museum, the Latin American Art Museum of Buenos Aires (Malba), offers a reason for Argentina’s lack of collectors.

“We’re a miserable lot,” says Costantini, one of the country’s most prominent art collectors. “There is a lack of self-esteem here. We tend not to value things that are Argentine. Instead, we have always looked beyond our borders,” he adds, conceding that there is an incipient market for less valuable artworks under \$500,000, evidenced by the growing success of the city’s biggest art fair, arteBA.

Nevertheless, there is greater interest abroad in Argentine art, in which the Malba has played an important role — even if this has also made collecting more complicated.

“These days we have to compete with all the big international museums,” Costantini says, explaining that galleries such as the Tate in London watch closely what the Malba buys.

MEXICO

A NEW ENERGY
FROM THE
METROPOLISALTERNATIVE
GALLERIES ARE
CHALLENGING
STEREOTYPES

BY JUDE WEBBER
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANA HOP

It is an unusual place for a gallery — a small, glass-fronted view on to a hectic artery in Mexico City, where pedestrian passers-by are rare and the throb of traffic is constant.

But Yautepec, set up by Chicago-born Brett Schultz and his Mexican wife Daniela Elbahara in 2008, is one of the city's leading spaces for up-and-coming contemporary art, in a metropolis that stands out as a magnet for new talent.

The gallery is only part of the picture. Schultz is leading efforts to draw the world's attention to the artists exhibiting in project spaces popping up across Mexico City. He founded the Material Art Fair, a two-year-old fringe festival held in February, concurrently with Mexico's well-established Zona Maco fair. The upstart event, which the magazine *Artforum* described as "a true, low-rent alternative to Maco — small, energetic, friendly and unpredictable", is attracting international visitors. This year, 85 per cent of galleries exhibiting were from overseas.

"It's a very interesting time for Mexico City," says Schultz, who has lived in the capital for eight years. He is sitting in a cramped office above the gallery floor, with books on a shelf, art works on the floor and giant rolls of bubble wrap threatening to invade what little space is left.

From glorifying the Mexican revolution

Brett Schultz says Mexican art now has "a voice connected to what is going on elsewhere"





in the 1920s and 1930s, Mexican art went through a “rupture”, with nationalistic and social themes in the 1950s, before the pendulum swung back to Mexican themes and influences from home-grown folk art in the 1980s. Since the 1990s, Mexican art has been “a voice connected to what is going on elsewhere”, says Schultz.

The millennial generation has imprinted a new dynamism on the scene, he says. “There’s been a shift — the rise of project spaces, a lot run by artists and curators who don’t necessarily have the same agenda as commercial galleries, that exist more for the purpose of exhibiting artists who perhaps don’t get a shot elsewhere or are pushing something new that’s potentially not commercially viable.

“These are spaces that have really taken over the scene lately. Material began in tandem with the rise of the artist-run project space scene here, because we felt there was great stuff going on that didn’t have visibility.”

Schultz knows the scene well: Yauhtepec was more of an alternative space than a commercial gallery when it opened in part of a taco restaurant lent by a friend’s family.

Vibrant, project spaces — such as Lulu, a tiny room behind an unmarked door in a bustling neighbourhood, or the even more off-the-beaten-track Biquini Wax, with the feel of a squat — “exist for a small group of cognoscenti” who know where to find them, in part because they show their own work there, he says. But the Material Art Fair, he adds, is a way to help commercially minded artists to sell, and non-commercial galleries to sustain their programmes.

The fair’s customers are Mexico’s young professionals, who have the disposable income to start a collection. Pieces sell for between \$500 and \$15,000, “but most rarely exceed the \$3,000-\$5,000 range”, Schultz notes. “It’s interesting to start at that level where your investment makes a difference in someone’s life. Every sale matters a lot for us as a gallery, and a lot for the artists, because it’s what allows them to keep producing.”

“Zona Maco has helped immensely to put Mexico City on the international radar,” Schultz says. The Material Art Fair is moving to a new, bigger location for next year’s edition, and expects an even bigger attendance.

Mexico has well established contemporary artists, such as Gabriel Orozco, who is considered a master of the small but profound gesture. At ease in a



variety of disciplines, with his blurring of object and environment, he put the country’s art scene on the map in the 1990s.

Another star is Luis Felipe Ortega, who represented Mexico at this year’s Venice Biennale. But Schultz criticises what he sees as a “very strong concentration of power and visibility in just a few commercial galleries. As a result, they are typically what one thinks of when one thinks of Mexican contemporary art. That’s now changing.”

Mexico’s capital — a dynamic, demanding, rewarding metropolis — has emerged as an attractive and affordable place for a new generation of artists to set up studios, as well as a launch pad to get noticed. But it is a tough process. Very few commercial galleries are willing to bet on contemporary artists, and contemporary art from Mexico still has a lot to prove.

One of the things it is up against is an ingrained expectation from what Schultz calls the “global curatorial regime” for pieces to “look” Mexican — a trend he slams as “a totally colonialist, backward way of thinking”.

A new generation of artists is breaking with the trend of a “clichéd Mexican identity” of the past two decades and infusing pieces with only a subtle Mexican-

ness, if any at all — “more subconscious than conscious”, Schultz says. One example is Tomás Díaz Cedeño, who recently showed his “Wetworks” exhibition at Yauhtepec.

“In a certain way [his work] is Mexican because he’s coming from the experience of growing up in Mexico City, feeling the impact of 70 years of rapid development. You feel the acrid smog, cars crashing at intersections because street lights aren’t working. You feel the impact of development everywhere here — it’s chaotic but exciting.”

Díaz Cedeño explores the relationship between technical materials, such as the cement used by dentists, and the body. The imposing, barely pink, screen-like sculptural pieces in “Wetworks” incorporate plastic mesh, stainless steel and paint, and are nearly identical from afar, but close up, the fragility of their materials is revealed. ■

INDEPENDENT SPACES MAKE THEIR MARK

There may be plenty of contemporary art galleries in Mexico City today, but that was not always the case. **Kurimanzutto** was a trailblazer, starting in 1999 with pop-up exhibitions when owners José Kuri and Mónica Manzutto exhibited without premises. Their first show, “Market Economy”, for their friend Gabriel Orozco, the Mexican contemporary art pioneer, was on a market stall. They now represent more than 30 artists, among them prominent Mexican names such as Damián Ortega, Dr Lakra and Carlos Amoraes.

Located in a beautiful, sprawling house on a quiet street, **Marso** is a fixture on the scene, and offers artist residencies. It was founded and is run by Sofía Mariscal, and its roster includes Luis Felipe Ortega, Mexico’s Venice Biennale representative, Virginia Colwell, the US artist, and Korean-American Jong Oh.

The **Jumex Museum** is a temple to contemporary art, created by Eugenio López Alonso, heir to Grupo Jumex, the privately owned juice company. He has built up one of Latin America’s biggest contemporary art collections, with some 2,700 works, said to be worth a total of \$80m. It is also a great place to catch exhibitions by international artists such as Cy Twombly as well as Mexican talent.

Tomás Díaz Cedeño’s ‘From the Texture to the Result’ show in 2014 at La Compañía de Acción Cultural, Mexico City

OPTIMISM ABOVE ALL IS VITAL FOR CREATIVITY

ARTISTS CAN THRIVE DESPITE THE ODDS

BY JAN DALLEY



The relationship between art and nationality is never a simple one. As Maya Jaggi points out in her introduction (*Across Frontiers*, page 8), art doesn't sit easily under national flags. As a judge of the Emerging Voices awards, my mind has been buzzing with questions about the relationship between art and national economies. Specifically, the question of whether it's more difficult to make art in emerging countries. Whether wealth is necessary to trigger great artistic creativity. And whether the deep needs of creativity are as readily satisfied in emerging nations as in developed countries.

Let's get rid of a few clichés first. The example that always pops up is that of the European Renaissance. No Medici bankers, no Michelangelo: ergo, money makes art happen. And, that's true, in crude terms. The difference in that era was the status of the artist as craftsman for hire; the vast majority of western art before our modern era was made to commission.

That is not how we think of artists today, or how they think of themselves. So even if commissioned projects are an important part of our art scene, we're talking about something different when we discuss creativity and the ability to make art.

And yes, much art production today



Ai Weiwei has faced censorship and repression in China. The artist's work continues to attract international acclaim

is fuelled by a rampant market for contemporary art, which can make superstars of youngsters just out of art school and has given birth to the phenomenon of the artist who may be richer than their patrons. But those are very few.

So that's also not what we're really talking about, if we're investigating the roots of creativity. Looking back instead to the birth of what we loosely term contemporary art — that is, art made in the western world after the second world war, whose tenets gained international significance and were in turn informed by artistic traditions from elsewhere — we can trace other relationships between economics and creativity.

To help me think about this I conducted an informal survey, mostly among artist friends (and helped by the odd glass of wine) from various parts of the world, emerging and established. What, I asked them, are the fundamentals that artists

need, whether those artists are from Samarkand, Santiago or Somalia? A list of three things emerged: space, time and each other. When those three coincide, it seems, something remarkable can happen.

Of this trio, the first two cost money. Especially space. The problem in many great cities now is that young artists can't afford to live in them. So think back to this: in the early 1970s, the artist Gordon Matta-Clark, part of the now legendary downtown New York scene, cut up buildings. Yes, whole buildings, abandoned properties bought at auction for \$50-\$100. Such was the state of the city's decline.

Yet one of the most significant motors of the New York scene of those days was the fact that so many painters, musicians, dancers, sculptors, writers and others could congregate there. They had space, time and each other.

Artists have always flourished in places in which well-heeled people don't want to live: for the Impressionists, it was the Left Bank in Paris; in the US, artists are now rapidly recolonising parts of Detroit. If the space comes cheaply, the time requirement looks after itself. As for the "each other" element of the recipe, that looks after itself, too. Creative people relish each other's company and are adept at finding it.

If they can. Surely freedom, and the ability to move to be with other inspirational people, is part of the list of essentials? One Chinese artist I spoke to, and one Turkish woman performer, live in vibrant, artistic scenes in which they and their peers continually negotiate restrictions that would seem appalling to outsiders. Yet those restrictions didn't rate highly as a barrier for them. It has just been part of the air they breathe.

There seems to be a fourth ingredient, one I'm going to try to define based on what the artists told me. It echoes powerfully with emerging economies — something like hopefulness, or the self-confidence that comes from a sense of future.

Creativity, we know from many sources, arises from social friction. As emerging countries grow, explore their identity and re-define themselves, such frictions are inevitable. They may be painful, but they are often an essential part of the rich mix in which art grows. In an atmosphere of hopefulness artists can bring prosperity and growth to their countries as much as vice versa. That's why such countries — all countries — should cherish the artists in their midst. ■

THE JUDGES

Alaa Al Aswany trained as a dentist and still runs his own dental practice in Cairo.

His debut novel *The Yacoubian Building* (2002) — named after his Cairo workplace of many years — was longlisted for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary award in 2006 and has sold more than 1m copies worldwide. It was the bestselling novel in the Arab world for more than five years.

Al Aswany's *Chicago* was named by *Newsday*, the US newspaper, as the best translated novel of 2006. His work has been translated into more than 30 languages and published in more than 100 countries. He speaks Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

Among his international awards are the Bashrahil award for the Arabic novel, the Kafavis award from Greece and Italy's Grinzane Cavour prize.

Alaa Al Aswany
Author
Fiction



Stephen Amidon
Author and film critic
Film

Stephen Amidon, who is based in the US, has written seven novels, including *Human Capital* (2004), which was adapted into an award-winning film by Paolo Virzì.

For 12 years from 1987 Amidon lived in London, where he wrote for many publications and served as a film critic on the *Financial Times*. He was a member of the jury at the 2013 Torino Film Festival and is working on the screenplay for Virzì's next film.

On the films he watched while judging Emerging Voices, he says: "Young film-makers tend to be homogenous, to try to be like other film-makers and to follow a formula. But in each of these films, I heard a distinct creative voice. That most of these film-makers are very young and in their early careers, I find quite remarkable."

Iwona Blazwick
Director, Whitechapel Gallery
Art

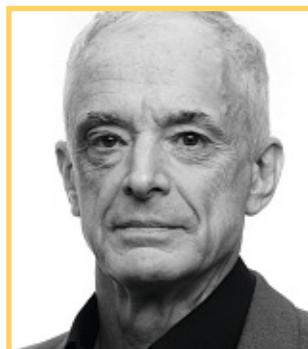


Nigel Andrews appears regularly on BBC radio and has twice been named Critic of the Year at the British Press awards. He is a graduate of Cambridge University and a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts.

Of the entrants to the Emerging Voices prize, he says: "You need not just a creative spirit to be a film-maker, but also an entrepreneurial spirit. You need to know how to get your films into theatres — and that remains a challenge."

"So the more competitions, showcases and prizes, festivals and endowments we have, the better for young film-makers."

Nigel Andrews
Film critic, *Financial Times*
Film



Kwame Anthony Appiah
Professor of philosophy and law, New York University
Fiction

Kwame Anthony Appiah grew up in Ghana and was educated at Cambridge University, where he gained undergraduate and doctoral degrees in philosophy.

He has written widely on philosophy of mind and language, ethics and political philosophy and the philosophy of art, of culture and of the social sciences. Another interest is literary studies, in particular African and African-American literature.

From 2008 to 2011, Appiah was chairman of the board of the American Philosophical Association.

Between 2009 and 2012, he was president of the PEN American Center, and in 2016 he will be president of the Modern Language Association.

Iwona Blazwick took over as director of east London's Whitechapel Gallery in 2001 after four years working at the city's Tate Modern gallery, where she co-curated the inaugural collection displays and Turbine Hall projects.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Blazwick was director of exhibitions at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts, and has worked as an independent curator in Europe and Japan. Her services to art

were recognised with an OBE in 2007.

Blazwick has served on juries for numerous arts awards, including the Turner Prize in the UK and the Venice Biennale Golden Lion award.

On judging Emerging Voices, she says: "Latin American artists are globally resonant, they reflect global challenges, but they are still very much characteristic of a particular regional history and language."

Jan Dalley joined the Financial Times in 1999 as literary editor. Previously, she was literary editor of the Independent on Sunday for eight years, and before becoming a journalist she worked in publishing.

Among the literary prizes that Dalley has judged are the Man Booker prize, the Whitbread Book awards, the Hawthornden prize and the Encore prize.

Of the entrants to Emerging Voices, she says: "They have a particular mixture of interests in the contemporary world and a wider vision of the natural world.

"It is always dangerous to guess the intentions of an artist, but I think there is a consciousness of geopolitics, the state of the planet, consumerism, pollution — the evil effects of civilisation."

Jan Dalley
Arts editor, Financial Times
Art



Teresita Fernández
Artist
Art



Teresita Fernández, who grew up in Miami, is best known for her prominent public sculptures and her unconventional use of materials.

Her experimental, large-scale works are often inspired by landscape and natural phenomena as well as history and culture.

She is a 2005 MacArthur Foundation fellow and the recipient of awards including a Guggenheim fellowship, a National Endowment for the

Arts artist's grant and a Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial award.

Appointed by US president Barack Obama, Fernández served between 2011 and 2014 on the US Commission of Fine Arts, a panel that advises the president, Congress and government agencies on design and aesthetics.

Fernández's works are included in prominent collections and have been exhibited nationally and internationally.



Lorien Kite
Books editor, Financial Times
Fiction

Lorien Kite has been in his role at the Financial Times since 2011, overseeing the FT Weekend review section, reporting on developments in the literary world and interviewing writers such as Kazuo Ishiguro, Richard Flanagan and Hilary Mantel. He also served on the jury panel of the 2014 Samuel Johnson prize for non-fiction.

Kite joined the FT in 2000 after a period in publishing and has also worked as an editor on the FT's comment and analysis pages.

Of the entrants to Emerging Voices, he says: "The range of subject matter and styles on display were striking. I was left with a sense of authors grappling with history, embedded in particular experience and yet universal in their concerns."

In addition to being director of emerging market equities at OppenheimerFunds, Justin Leverenz is portfolio manager of the Oppenheimer Developing Markets fund and Oppenheimer Emerging Markets Innovators fund.

Leverenz lived and worked in China for more than a decade, and his interest in emerging markets extends well beyond investing. That interest led him to establish the Emerging Voices awards to recognise exceptional talent in literature, film and visual arts in emerging market countries.

On judging the awards, Leverenz says: "I set out to give artists the opportunity for a global platform. What struck me were the diversity of the entries and the extraordinary talent of the judges."

Justin Leverenz
Director of emerging markets equities, OppenheimerFunds
Art/Fiction



Samira Makhmalbaf
Film-maker
Film

At 17, Samira Makhmalbaf directed her first feature film, *The Apple* (1998), which was invited to be shown at more than 100 film festivals over two years and screened in more than 30 countries.

In 1999, Makhmalbaf made her second film, *Blackboards*, in Kurdistan. It was selected to compete in the official section of the 2000 Cannes Film Festival, at which it received the Jury Prize. *Blackboards* also received international awards, including the Federico Fellini Honour award and the François Truffaut award.

A third feature by Makhmalbaf, *At Five in the Afternoon* (2003), was selected for the competition section of the Cannes Film Festival in 2003, resulting in another Jury Prize for the director.

THE JUDGES

Nadifa Mohamed was born in Hargeisa in Somaliland in 1981, moving temporarily to London with her family in 1986. This move became permanent after civil war broke out in Somalia in the early 1990s. She studied history and politics at the University of Oxford.

Mohamed's first novel, *Black Mamba Boy* (2010), was longlisted for the Orange prize, shortlisted for the Guardian First Book award, the John Llewellyn Rhys prize, the Dylan Thomas prize and the PEN Open Book award, and won the Betty Trask prize.

Her second novel, *The Orchard of Lost Souls*, was published in 2013.

In 2013, Mohamed was selected as one of Granta's Best of Young British Novelists. She lives in London and is working on her third novel.

Nadifa Mohamed

Author
Fiction ▼



Elif Shafak, who writes in both English and Turkish, has published 13 books, nine of which are novels, including *The Bastard of Istanbul*, *The Forty Rules of Love* and a non-fiction memoir, *Black Milk*.

Her books have been translated into more than 40 languages. Her latest novel, *The Architect's Apprentice*, was published in the UK by Penguin in 2014.

Shafak blends western and eastern traditions of



Mira Nair
Film director
Film ▲

Mira Nair's debut feature, *Salaam Bombay!*, received more than 25 international awards as well as an Academy Award nomination for best foreign language film in 1989 and the Caméra d'Or award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1988.

Her second film, *Mississippi Masala* (1991), won several awards at the Venice Film Festival.

She is currently directing Disney's *Queen of Katwe*, based on the true story of the Ugandan chess prodigy, Phiona Mutesi.

Nair set up the annual film-makers' laboratories, Maisha, in Uganda, to train young directors.

In 1988, she used the profits from *Salaam Bombay!* to create Salaam Baalak Trust, which works with street children in India.

Rithy Panh, who is from Cambodia, graduated from the Institute for Advanced Cinematographic Studies in Paris, and since 1989 has worked on more than 20 films, both documentaries and fiction.

The Missing Picture won the Un Certain Regard selection at the Cannes Film Festival in 2013 and was nominated for an Academy Award for best foreign language film in 2014. He has produced films such as *Red Wedding* by Guillaume Suon and *Lida Chan*, which won IDFA Best Mid-Length Documentary in 2012.

In 2008, Panh founded the Cambodia Film Commission in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts. In 2010, he set up the Cambodia International Film Festival.

Rithy Panh
Film-maker
Film ▼



storytelling, bringing out the voices of women, minorities, subcultures and immigrants.

Her works draw on different cultures and cities, and reflect a strong interest in history, philosophy, mysticism, intercultural dialogue and gender.

Shafak is a political scientist and commentator, and sat on the judging panel for the 2013 Independent Foreign Fiction Prize.

Elif Shafak
Author
Fiction ▼



The Chilean Jorge Tacla studied at the Escuela de Bellas Artes, Universidad de Chile, in Santiago before moving to New York in 1981.

Tacla's paintings have been included in recent exhibitions such as "Tales of Two Cities: New York & Beijing" in 2014 at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, Connecticut, and the Emergency Pavilion at the 2013 Venice Biennale.

He has completed several permanent installations, including a mural at Santiago's Museum of Memory and Human Rights. He completed a residency at the Rockefeller Foundation in Bellagio, Italy, in 2013. Notable awards include the New York Foundation for the Arts in 1988 and 1992, and a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship in 1988.

Jorge Tacla
Artist
Art ▼





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