

## Concept of the exhibition series „von dort bis hier“

**Exhibition team:** Yvette Mutumba, Dorina Hecht, Regine Wosnitza, Dawit Shanko

Since its foundation, the initiative LISTROS has worked for a change of perspective on topics related to the African continent. Therefore the initiative's core project, GALLERY LISTROS, chooses an issue-oriented emphasis. Up to now, the gallery has worked with mainly non-African artists in Germany, who deal with Africa-related topics, raising the important question: "How can art by using different strategies reflect social reality?"

The extended concept of the gallery now integrates artists of the African diaspora in Germany. Cooperating with art historians Dorina Hecht and Yvette Mutumba GALLERY LISTROS invites these artists to put an autobiographical focus on their art and examine their personal experiences and development within two cultures.

The exhibition series intends to use these autobiographic presentations and reflections in order to create space for communication and interaction, giving the visitor the chance to develop new perspectives and points of view.

Each person's biography is a formative part of their existence. Every individual interaction and experience as well as the surrounding cultural and social circumstances define the personality and their world view. Artists in particular draw a lot of their creative ideas from their own experiences. They do reflect their lives and deal with both their own as well as foreign societies and cultures whereupon contours between the known and the strange tend to become less focused in times of growing globalization. Transcultural migrating, i.e. acting and living in several cultures is increasingly becoming a matter of course.

The exhibition series „von dort bis hier“ at GALLERY LISTROS in Berlin provides a stage for artists who were born in Africa and have eventually made Germany their new home. In this series, which lasts for more than a year, 11 artists of African heritage present their own analyses of their biographies. On the one hand artists, who have been living in Germany for decades are presented such as El Loko, Mansour Ciss, Manuela Sambo, David Amaechi Dibiah and Ivor Sias,. On the other hand, artists like Christophe Ndabananiye, Engdaget Legesse, Dalila Dalléas Bouzar and Yassine Balbzioui, who have recently migrated to Germany, will also participate. By presenting Afro-German artist Ransome Stanley, the aspect of second generation migrant artists, who have African roots and grew up in Germany, will be included as well.

Despite their different countries of origin, the artists have their connections to Germany as a common basis. It is either their new home country or just a stopover in their journey through life. And while being strongly influenced by their current German surroundings, it is these circumstances of living in a foreign culture that can lead to an intense confrontation with images and concepts of their African home countries. Due to their roots in different African countries and cultures, they form a part of the complex African diaspora. For some of the artists, their external perspective as well as their being marginalized within German society opens up space for investigations and explorations shaped by their replacement, or even their displacement.

Life as a part of a diaspora often leads to confrontation with one's own self-definition as well as certain expectations from the outside world: They are supposed to represent and reflect their own situation. This creates an ambivalent position intensified by the fact that many artists rediscover the relations to their own roots while being here. Therefore, this situation can lead to a confrontation with one's heritage that couldn't have developed without the physical distance.

The artists participating in the exhibition series exhibit these topics in their art. But they neither refer to subjects of African cultures all the time nor do they comment on socio-political issues on the African continent. In fact, "von dort bis hier" shows in a subtle way, how the personal journey between different cultures characterizes the artist's work.

Thus, the main issue of the exhibition series is about what constitutes the respective artists, with their individual background as guideline. Space is given to their world views, their heritage and their current country of residence and their reflection of these three aspects in their art.

How does their imagery develop in the environment they live in? What do they bring along? How do they broach the issue of heritage and residence within their works? To what extent do cultural influences mix?

The artists exhibit successively, either alone or in self-chosen groups. The exhibitions take place from January 2012 to April 2013. At the same time, the series forms a kind of preliminary stage to an all-embracing project on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the African Union in 2013. In cooperation with partners from politics, education and culture and within a thematic year, GALLERY LISTROS will then present contemporary art from African countries in Berlin.