

For Immediate Release

## Architecture of Independence: African Modernism *January 29–April 16, 2016*

*Chicago, January 20, 2016*—The Graham Foundation is pleased to announce the first U.S. presentation of *Architecture of Independence: African Modernism*, opening January 29, 2016. This exhibition explores the complex history and legacy of modernist architecture in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1960s and 1970s. Featuring nearly 80 buildings in commissioned photographs by Iwan Baan and Alexia Webster, as well as archival material, *Architecture of Independence* imparts a new perspective on the intersection of architecture and nation-building in Ghana, Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Zambia and investigates some of the most compelling yet under-studied examples of 1960s and 1970s architecture worldwide.

When many countries in sub-Saharan Africa gained their independence in the 1960s, experimental architecture became a primary means by which many young nations expressed their new identities and signaled a departure from their colonial pasts. Often the product of large state-sponsored initiatives, the ambitious designs of new parliament buildings, stadiums, universities, central banks, convention centers, and other major public buildings and housing projects mirrored the forward-looking spirit driving their construction and declared the new nation-states' presence on the global stage.

While numerous local designers, planners, and builders participated in this period of building, only a few local architects were commissioned for these projects until the later half of the 1970s. These include Senegalese architects Cheikh N'Gom and Pierre Goudiaby Atepa, who designed the Central Bank of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (1975–90) in Dakar. In most cases, however, the architects came from countries such as Poland, Yugoslavia, Scandinavia, Israel, and even the former colonial powers.

Displayed on the first- and second-floor galleries of the Graham Foundation's historic Madlener House in Chicago, *Architecture of Independence* includes over 700 photographs as well as archival materials, such as historical photos, newspaper clippings, postcards, videos, architectural plans, and sketches, that narrate the historical and societal dimensions of five selected buildings, one from each country. Photographs by Iwan Baan and Alexia Webster document the buildings in their contemporary urban contexts and show how they have been appropriated, lived in, converted, and at times abandoned.

This exhibition is based on the book project *African Modernism: Architecture of Independence* by architect Manuel Herz in cooperation with the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, Germany.

## PARTICIPANT BIOS

**Manuel Herz** is an architect based in Basel, Switzerland. His recent projects include the Synagogue and Jewish Community Center in Mainz, Germany and housing projects in Cologne and France. He has taught at the ETH Zürich and Harvard University's Graduate School of Design and is currently professor of urban and landscape studies at the University of Basel. Manuel's research focuses on the relationship between migration, architecture, and nation-building and the spaces of refugee camps. His books include *Nairobi: Migration Shaping the City* (with Shadi Rahbaran and supported by a Graham Foundation grant; Lars Müller Publishers, 2014) and *From Camp to City: Refugee Camps of the Western Sahara* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2013).

**Iwan Baan** is a Dutch photographer known for portraying the human life and interactions that take place within buildings. He has collaborated with many of the world's leading architectural firms, including OMA, Herzog & De Meuron, and Toyo Ito, and is currently one of the most published photographers in the field of architecture. In 2010, he won the Julius Shulman Photography Award. Among his published books is *Brasilia-Chandigarh: Living with Modernity* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2010).

**Alexia Webster** is a South African freelance photographer who has traveled widely throughout the African continent as a documentary photographer. Her work has been published in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, and *Le Monde*, among others. She is the recipient of the Artraker Prize for Art in Conflict (2013), grants from the Prince Claus Fund (2013) and the Ithuba Arts Fund (2013), and the Frank Arisman Scholarship (2007) at the International Center of Photography in New York City where she completed the program in Documentary Photography and Photojournalism.

## PUBLICATION

*African Modernism: The Architecture of Independence*  
Park Books, Zürich, 2015 / U.S. \$79.00  
Paperback, 9 1/2 x 13 in.

This 700-page, fully-illustrated book features over 100 buildings with descriptive texts, photographs, site plans, selected floor plans and sections as well as a timeline illustrating the political, demographic, and economic developments of each country. *African Modernism* also includes essays by Manuel Herz, Hannah Le Roux, Léo Noyer-Duplaix, Zvi Efrat, Till Förster, and Ingrid Schröder. Copies of the book are available for purchase at the Graham Foundation Bookshop.

## RELATED EVENTS

**Friday, January 29, 6-8:30PM**

**Opening Reception & Talk by curator Manuel Herz**

**Thursday, March 3, 6PM**

**“Reflections on the ‘Architecture of Independence’”**

**A talk by architectural scholar Nnamdi Elleh**

**Nnamdi Elleh** is associate professor of architecture, history and theory at DAAP, University of Cincinnati. He was trained as an architect and received his PhD in art history from Northwestern University. He was a Fulbright Teaching-Research Scholar at the University of Cape Town, where he studied post-apartheid nationalist inspired architecture in South Africa. His research focuses on modern and contemporary architecture as diverse, multi-centered, regional, and localized experiences in different parts of the world. Elleh’s selected books include *African Architecture, Evolution and Transformation* (McGraw Hill, 1996); *Architecture and Power in Africa* (Praeger, 2001); and *Reading the Architecture of the Underprivileged Classes: A Perspective on the Protests and Upeavals in Our Cities* (Ashgate, 2014).

**Tuesday, March 8, 6PM**

**“Listening There, Scenes from Ghana”**

**A talk by designer and scholar Mabel O. Wilson & architect Peter Tolkin**

**Mabel O. Wilson** is an award-winning designer and scholar. She received a doctorate in American Studies from NYU and an MArch from Columbia’s Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation. As the Nancy and George E. Rupp Professor at Columbia University’s GSAPP, she directs the program for Advanced Architectural Research, co-directs the Global Africa Lab, and is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Research in African American Studies in GSAS. Her collaborative design practices (KW: a and Studio &) have worked on speculative and built projects. Wilson’s scholarly research investigates space and cultural memory in black America, race and visual culture, and new technologies and the social production of space. Her essays have appeared in numerous journals and books on critical geography, cultural memory, visual culture, and architecture. Wilson’s recent book, *Negro Building – Black Americans and the World of Fairs and Museums*, studies how the spaces of world’s fairs, emancipation expositions, and grassroots public museums became sites to imagine Afro-modernity.

**Peter Tolkin** is the founding principal of Peter Tolkin Architecture. Influenced by his formal education with renowned American artists Allan Sekula and Lewis Baltz and subsequent work as a documentary photographer, his practice speaks to the social and cultural context of a project. With a natural curiosity in the contingencies that impact the conditions of contemporary culture, Tolkin’s seminal explorations as an artist provided the conceptual kernel for an architectural practice that interprets contextual narratives. He received a BA in Art and Art History from the University of California, Santa Cruz, a MFA in Photography from the California Institute of the Arts, and a MArch from Columbia University. Tolkin continues to practice photography as a complement to his architectural work.

**Thursday, March 17, 6PM**

**A screening of “Afronauts” (2014) & conversation between director Frances Bodomo and film scholar Jacqueline Stewart**

**Frances Bodomo** is a Ghanaian filmmaker who grew up in Ghana, Norway, California, and Hong Kong before moving to New York City to study film at Columbia University (BA) and the Tisch

School of the Arts (MFA). Her first short film, *Boneshaker* (starring Oscar-nominee Quvenzhané Wallis), premiered at the 2013 Sundance Film Festival and played at over 20 film festivals. Her second short, *Afronauts*, premiered at Sundance 2014 and went onto play at the Berlinale and New Directors/New Films. Based on a true story, *Afronauts* is about the short-lived Zambian space program, led by nationalist/activist Edward Makuka Nkoloso, and its attempts to join the space race in the late 1960s. Her ultimate goal is to make conceptually strong films that bring African images to the forefront.

**Jacqueline Stewart** is professor in the Department of Cinema and Media Studies at the University of Chicago. Her research and teaching explore African American film history; moving image archiving and preservation; and “orphan” media histories (including nontheatrical, amateur, and activist film and video). Stewart is the author of *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (University of California Press, 2005), and her essays have appeared in journals including *Critical Inquiry*, *Film Quarterly*, *Film History*, and *The Moving Image*. She directs the South Side Home Movie Project and is co-curator of the L.A. Rebellion Preservation Project at the UCLA Film and Television Archive. She also currently serves as curator of Black Cinema House, a neighborhood-based film exhibition venue run by Theaster Gates’ Rebuild Foundation. Stewart earned her AM and PhD in English from the University of Chicago

**Wednesday, March 23, 6PM**

**“Tropic Antics”**

**A talk by architect, academic, and novelist Lesley Lokko**

**Lesley Lokko** is head of the Postgraduate School of Architecture at the University of Johannesburg and the author of nine best-selling novels. She received her BSc(Arch) and MArch from the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London, and her PhD in architecture from the University of London. She has taught at schools of architecture in the US, the UK, as well as South Africa, where she was Visiting African Scholar at the University of Cape Town. She is the editor of *White Papers, Black Marks: Race, Culture, Architecture* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000) and has been an on-going contributor to discourses around identity, ‘race’, African urbanism and the speculative nature of African architectural space for almost twenty years.

**Thursday, March 31, 6PM**

**“Education, Independence, Development, and Modernity: Africa’s New School Buildings of the 1950s and 1960s”**

**A talk by architectural historian and researcher Ola Uduku**

**Ola Uduku** is reader in architecture and Dean International for Africa at Edinburgh University’s School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture (ESALA). She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge. Her research interests include the history of educational architecture in Africa and contemporary issues surrounding social infrastructure provision for minority communities in cities in the ‘West’ and ‘South’. She is also involved in research into environmental analysis and measurement tools and ‘apps’ for educational and third sector uses. Uduku was a founding member of ArchiAfrika, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving architectural education and the knowledge of contemporary architectural history in Africa. Her recent publications include *Beyond Gated Communities, Designing Schools for Quality* (Routledge, 2010), among others.

Additional events will be announced throughout the run of the show. For more information about upcoming events, visit: [www.grahamfoundation.org/public\\_events](http://www.grahamfoundation.org/public_events)

## ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts makes project-based grants to individuals and organizations, and produces programming designed to foster the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society.

## THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion, designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. Gardner (1901–02) and renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000 square-foot historic home now houses galleries, a bookstore, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-lending library of grantee publications, and a ballroom where the foundation hosts a robust schedule of public programs.

## BOOKSHOP

The Graham Foundation's bookshop, designed by Ania Jaworska, offers a selection of new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, art, and design, many of which have been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation.

## GALLERY HOURS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission to the galleries and bookshop are free and open to the public Wednesday through Saturday, 11AM–6PM. Group tours are available by request.

## ACCESSIBILITY

The second floor galleries and third floor ballroom where events are held are only accessible by stairs. The first floor galleries and bookshop are accessible via outdoor lift. Please call ahead to make arrangements.

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**MEDIA CONTACT:** Mia Khimm, [mkhimm@grahamfoundation.org](mailto:mkhimm@grahamfoundation.org), 312-787-4071

High-resolution digital images are available on the press section of our website; email Mia Khimm at [mkhimm@grahamfoundation.org](mailto:mkhimm@grahamfoundation.org) for the press login or additional information. Press tours welcome by appointment.



Images (top) Jean Francois Lamoureux and Jean-Louis Marin, FIDAK - Foire Internationale de Dakar, 1974, Dakar, Senegal. Photo © Iwan Baan; (bottom left) Rinaldo Olivieri, La Pyramide, 1973, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Photo © Iwan Baan; (bottom right) James Cubitt, School of Engineering at KNUST (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology), 1956, Kumasi, Ghana. Photo © Alexia Webster.



Images (top) Heinz Fenchel and Thomas Leiterdorf, Hotel Ivoire, 1962–70, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Photo © Iwan Baan; (bottom) Karl Henrik Nostvik, Kenyatta International Conference Centre, 1966–73, Nairobi, Kenya. Photo © Iwan Baan.