

Guest Artists  
Space  
Foundation  
*Re:assemblages*  
Concept



Deconstructed covers 1963-1968  
G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive, African Notes Journals

G. A.

S. GUEST. ARTISTS.  
SPACE.  
FOUNDATION

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This developing conceptual note is exclusively shared with institutions and contributors with whom Guest Artists Space (G.A.S.) Foundation and Yinka Shonibare Foundation (Y.S.F.) express interest working with for the inaugural research programme and activation of the G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive held at G.A.S. Foundation, Lagos.

Towards a finalised concept, input and feedback is welcome.

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## ABOUT THE HOSTS

### *Yinka Shonibare Foundation (Y.S.F.)*

Y.S.F. was established in 2019 as a UK registered charity by the eminent British-Nigerian Artist Yinka Shonibare CBE RA, whose international multi-disciplinary practice explores colonialism and post-colonialism within the context of globalisation. The Yinka Shonibare Foundation vision is implemented through supporting and facilitating residencies, education and professional development programmes in the UK and Nigeria, in association with sister organisation Guest Artists Space Foundation.

### *Guest Artists Space (G.A.S.) Foundation*

G.A.S. Foundation is a Nigerian non-profit founded in 2019 that facilitates international cultural exchange through residencies and collaboration. The Foundation's residency program in Nigeria is a unique initiative designed to foster critical and engaging practices in various creative fields, including agriculture, contemporary art, design, architecture, and ecology. The foundation's overarching ambition is to provide a space for research, experimentation, sharing, education, and the development of innovative ideas.

The residencies are open to artists, researchers, curators, and designers not only from Nigeria and West Africa but also from around the world. The foundation aims to create a diverse and vibrant community of creative minds, bringing together individuals with different perspectives and backgrounds to enrich the cultural exchange and collaborative atmosphere.



G.A.S. Lagos building exterior, 2023. Photographer: Andrew Esiebo

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## Guest Artists Space (G.A.S.) Foundation (cont.)

The residency program offers two dedicated centres, with a primary centre located in Lagos. They serve as hubs for cultural exchange, providing a conducive environment for local and international artists to immerse themselves in the dynamic Nigerian art scene and the opportunity to interact with and learn from each other.



G.A.S. Farm House located on the Ecology Green Farm in Ikise, Ijebu

## G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive

In 2022, G.A.S. received a significant library and archive collection from John Picton, Emeritus Professor of African Art at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London and Sue Picton, former museum ethnographer at Nigerian Museum Service.

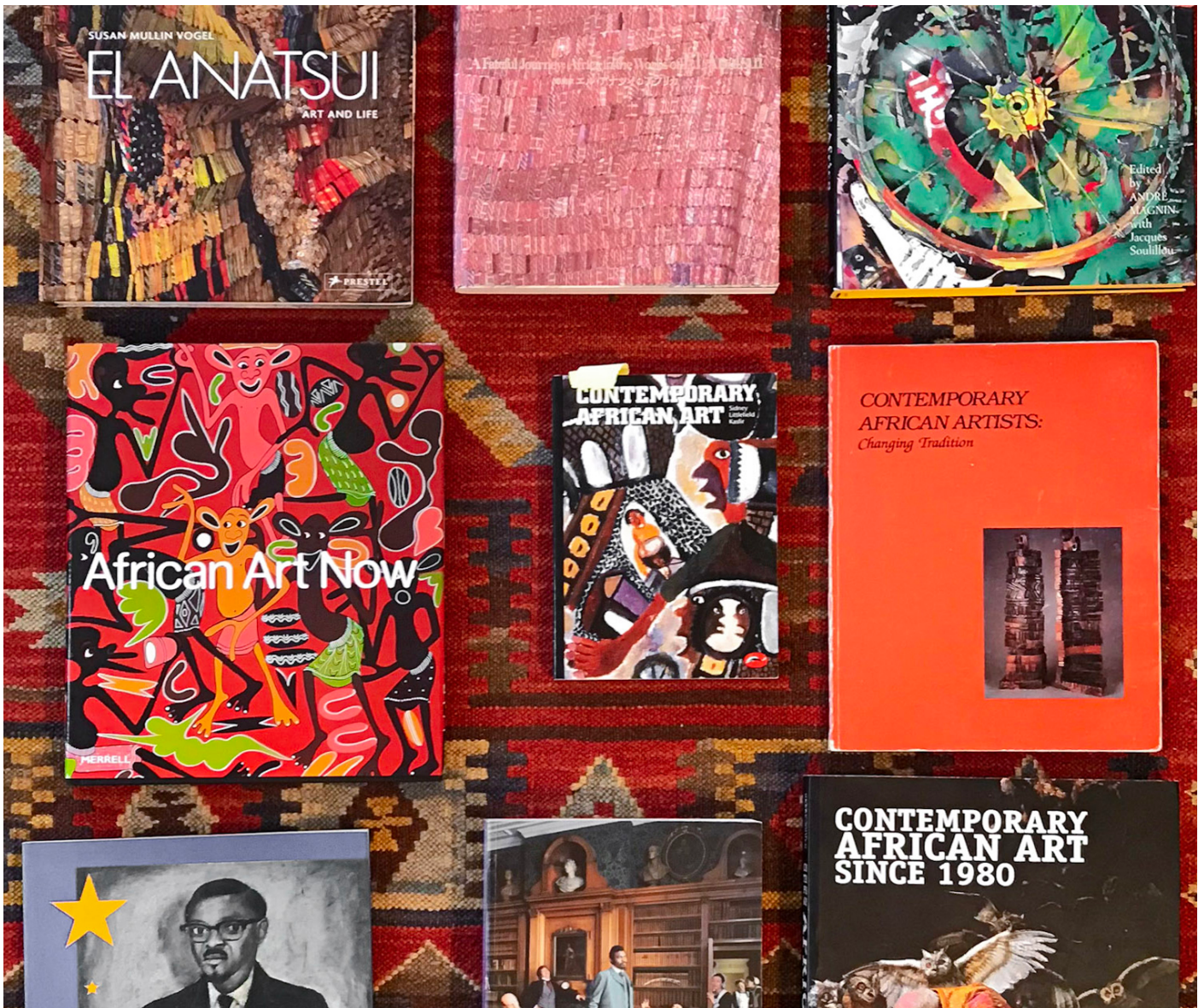
The eponymous collection encompasses nearly 1500 titles in contemporary art, architecture, sculpture, visual art, history, art history, anthropology, archaeology, and photography. The arts and design of Sub-Saharan Africa, publications dealing with history and archaeology (including Saharan rock art); as well as African American and Black British arts, and more. The final volumes of the collection were installed in October 2023 and is currently accessible to G.A.S. Foundation residency artists and visitors.

This invaluable gift, which makes up the bulk of the G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive Collection, is currently being catalogued on an accessible cloud platform. This platform enables searchable library catalogue information and collection management, helping to facilitate the establishment of a Library membership scheme for artists and researchers in Lagos and beyond. This collection is part of the wider G.A.S. Library which continues to welcome arts and culture book and periodical donations.

## G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive (cont.)

"The most useful single resource (in the collection) is African Arts, a quarterly journal produced originally by the UCLA African Studies Department, beginning in about 1968. This charts the development of African art studies to its present condition which includes the archaeological past as well as the contemporary present, the inheritance of forms of sculpture, masquerade, textiles, etc., from the more recent past, and the African presence in Europe and the Americas. I would like to think that as a group of scholars from all parts of the world, we have worked positively towards the decolonisation of the study of African art well away from its beginnings within misbegotten ideas of "primitivism" etc."

- Professor John Picton from [John and Sue Picton on the History and Legacy of their Incomparable Archive](#), G.A.S. Foundation (2023)



G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive, G.A.S. Foundation Lagos, 2022

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## CONCEPT

Re:assemblages (2024-25) is a support structure and programme initiated by G.A.S. Foundation that explores the G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive as a site of rhizomatic exchange. Through a series of activations, the programme aims to foster discursive dialogues and actions on African art publications.

In 2012, instrumental symposium Condition Report: Symposium on Building Art Institutions in Africa was held in Dakar to address the changing role of art institutions and initiatives in Africa in a decade that witnessed the emergence of a various independent art spaces. 12 years on, Re:assemblages poses new critical questions focused on the creative potential of libraries sustained by art institutions in the African continent.

The polysemous concept of the assemblage has evolved from archaeological groupings of contemporaneous artefacts to encompassing both the human and non-human, and as a way of thinking about the social world. In the film 'Reassemblage' (1982) Trinh T. Minh-ha introduces a radical repositioning of the assemblage as a cinematic device, exploring African female subjectivity through a chorus of abrupt jump cuts, repetitive voice-overs and close-ups.

Exploring the concept of assemblage at a period where a growing number of artifacts are returning to the Africa continent, the programme aims to explore how African art libraries can develop shared frameworks for discursive dialogues and artistic research on restitution. Re:assemblages will travel across multiple geographies in the form of a satellite book club, publishing residencies, a print studio, and the African Art Libraries Lab (AAL Lab). The programme aims to strengthen connections between artists, publishers and art initiatives with library collections in Africa, and hopes to enable cross-disciplinary dialogue with museums, institutions, and universities holding African and Afro-diasporic art and cultural heritage collections. The thematic programme will be developed by G.A.S. Foundation and Y.S.F. in association with international and regional partners. It will include:

**Annotations**, a six-month project co-curated by Naima Hassan and Maryam Kazeem that will investigate rare materials within the G.A.S. Library and Picton Archive and related collections to uncover the interwoven histories between FESMAN, Panafest, Zaire 74, and FESTAC'77. Through collaborations between various institutions and public audiences, Annotations will deliver a research programme, residencies, and activations at G.A.S. Foundation and selected partner locations.

**African Art Libraries Lab (AAL Lab)** will bring together a constellation of African arts libraries and publishers in Lagos, Dakar, Marrakesh, Cairo, Nairobi, Cape Town, Limbe, and beyond to engage critical questions on publishing practices, libraries, and archives in Africa. Museums and institutions in the Europe and North America will be invited to participate in collective experimentation with AAL members to encourage new ways of networking, preserving, and activating African and Afro-diasporic library collections in multilocational sites.

**Satellite Book Club** will foster new readership of rare magazines, journals, and manuscripts published in the period described by the Okwui Enwezor as the 'Short Century' (1945-1994). Representing a momentous period in Africa's history, the Short Century will act as a conceptual trigger for explorations themed around artistic, archival, and literary publications anchored by independence struggles, and movements including Négritude, Pan-Africanism, and Afro-Surrealism.

**Satellite Book Club (cont.)** The practice of literary activism, defined as the work of building African-based and focused infrastructure to support literary and cultural production will inform the development of a shared methodology participating members of the AAL Lab. A curated selection of the Picton Archive will be harvested in AAL Lab participating member locations in Africa, Europe, and North America.

**G.A.S. Print** will support the development of micro-publication projects initiated during *Re:assemblages*. It will host publishers, writers and bookmakers and will offer workshops, courses, and collaboration possibilities.

**Re:assemblages Symposium** hosted by G.A.S. Foundation Lagos in 2025 featuring the AAL Lab's first cohort of participating libraries, publishers, and institutions to engage in interdisciplinary dialogues themed on new directions in restitution through the lens of often-neglected African archival publications and library collections.



G.A.S. Library 1<sup>st</sup> floor study area, G.A.S. Foundation Lagos, 2024