

BACK TO BENIN CITY

Some of the non-Europeans artifacts that dwell in European museums have been collected at the time of colonial conquest and spoils of war. The Edo Bronzes of Nigeria, looted during the sack of Benin City in 1897 are particularly emblematic as they are disseminated throughout Europe in public and private collections.

Since their independence, African countries have requested their restitution and this debate has become even more pregnant today. Even if various issues arise within these claims, they invite us to rethink the uses of these artifacts. Through a historical performance around these objects, a group of young Parisians study and mediate this question with the visitors in various museums.

In addition, an exchange with Nigerians on their perceptions will contribute to reconsider new ways of sharing this common Heritage.



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ALTER NATIVES
PRÉSENTS

**A PROJECT
SUPPORTED BY
THE CONTACT
ZONE GROUP,
OF YOUNG
RESOLUTE
PARISIANS**

BACK
TO

BENIN city

2018

WORKSHOPS,
GROUNDWORK
FOR PERFORMANCES,
VISITS TO MUSEUMS,
TRIPS IN EUROPE,
LECTURE AND DEBATES,
EXCHANGES WITH YOUNG
AFRICANS AND EUROPEANS



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THE BENIN BRONZE

King Oba and his court has ruled over the Benin Kingdom and its Edo-speaking people since 1300. From the 15th century on, the kingdom traded with the Europeans.

In January 1897, James Phillips, a British officer, led an expedition to Benin City to sign a protectorate treaty in order to strengthen the commercial export. After being denied access to the Oba kingdom, he nonetheless attempted to reach Benin City and was slaughtered on his way back. Great Britain reacted immediately by organizing a « punitive expedition » to seize Benin City.

On this occasion, they confiscated the royal treasury, a booty of about 4000 artifacts, consisting mainly of bronze plaques and sculptures, carved ivory.

For Westerners the Benin bronzes quickly became the reference of African Art and they are found in diverse museums in London, Oxford, Leiden, Cologne, Vienna, Hamburg, Dresde, Geneva and Paris.

HOW CAN WE SHARE
THIS COMMON
HERITAGE DESPITE
ITS PAINFUL HISTORY?

THE STAKES AROUND THIS PROJECT

The issue around these restitution claims is complex. Beyond the legal and economic aspect, it is a moral debate that questions the common histories of this heritage, the colonial histories of each country and their relationship with the descending population that have migrated since.

How can we share this common heritage despite its painful history ?

This subject allows to set up a real Contact Zone in order to restore a public debate putting young participant at the heart of the process. While they claim this history for themselves, they become more confident and participate in a collective production, acquire new skills, travel and meet new people while becoming mediators of these questions.



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YOUNG BENEFICIARIES

A group of young Parisians, between 15 and 21 years old, from different high schools and origins, will benefit from this project. The first ten participants conceived the stage device since September 2017 and passed it on to the new participants joining the adventure in mai 2018.

ACTIVITIES FROM MAY TO DECEMBER 2018

- upstream research work around the selected objects
 - theater and performance workshops
 - lectures and debates as feed for thought
 - an exchange with young Nigerians
 - four trips to Europe to present these performances in various museums and two representations in France
 - short-films around these experiences
 - a blog to exchange this data
- www.anatives.wix.com/backtobenincity

THE PLACE OF MEETINGS

The various workshops are located in each of the participants' home cities and take place outside of school time. The partnerships with these cities allow a regular venue in local areas, the schedule of which is fixed with the participants.