

## The Journey of the Hyena

Jackie Karuti presents, *The Journey of the Hyena*; a film program that compliments her studio practice while in residence at the Rijksakademie.

“This is a modest selection but one that offers an authentic understanding of cinema most notably from Francophone Africa. While the continent is the point of departure for the films, it is imperative not to categorise them merely as African films because their reach and focus is aimed at catapulting us out of this reductive framing.

Throughout the films a shared disappointment of shattered dreams while grappling with Africa’s colonial past & local traditions lingers. Most of the characters share a longing desire to escape or leave for a better place but it’s not the voyage that’s important, it’s the freedom. Mambéty for example experimented with form by departing from the linear and narrative style of filmmaking attributed to filmmakers like Sembène in order to pursue his artistic freedom over the mere recording of facts.

Another recurring theme is the symbolic portrayal of animals & artifacts through animism, ritual and how they are equally revered and subjected to torture. The films however move away from the ethno-fiction gaze of Jean Rouch and the typical racist & colonial films such as *Africa Addio, 1966*, *Born free, 1966* & *Out of Africa, 1985* that cast wild animals as pets for white settlers & the landscape as their playground while positioning Africans as savages. Looking at animals as is the case with zoo’s & well-meaning wildlife conservation projects is therefore used as a method to construct an image whereby these cumulative glances are understood as gathering evidence related to past crimes or ongoing violence.

Additional films relating to colonial violence featuring scenes where animals are referenced, killed, hunted or chased for sport include *Sans Soleil* by Chris Marker, *Concerning Violence* by Göran Olsson and *Chocolat* by Claire Denis. I would also add *Tropical Malady* by Apichatpong Weerasethakul as a bonus. The film begins with soldiers posing with a dead body while striking a safari-type hunting photo. Here the idea of the animal, beast or monster takes on a surreal form and transports us into a folkloric supernatural journey.

Lastly, Sembène famously proposed cinema as a night school (école du soir). This approach has been embraced by other artists engaged in decolonial practices who have gone on to convene projects enriching this call. This program therefore serves as a way to think with and alongside others and a site for imagination that operates outside of the classroom and outside of time.”