

Christianity from Ghana to the rest of the world reflects wider global processes, it is also shaped by the social and spiritual dynamics of Asante.

Overall, the book's contributions derive from its close engagement with social relations on the ground. By understanding the historical trajectories of Asante social practice, and by generalizing from her observations, interviews and impressions, Lauterbach draws on many years of fieldwork to offer an understanding of Christianity and pastorship that challenges preconceived ideas and offers new and original insights and suggestions for future research. The ability to offer such insights relies on the author's commitment to the society and the people she has studied, and, by extension, on her willingness to learn from the people she describes, to take them seriously, and to accept their view of the world.

Offering a fresh and elegantly understated engagement with would-be and successful Asante pastors, Lauterbach's book will appeal not only to scholars and students of Africa and African Christianity but also to those interested in global or extra-European Christianity. Affirming the value of studying African societies from the ground up, this book is required reading for scholars interested in the day-to-day lives, ambitions and experiences of African Christians.

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doi:10.1017/S0001972018000542

Iolanda Pensa *et al.*, *Public Art in Africa: art and urban transformation in Douala*. Geneva: Mētis Presses (pb €38 – 978 2 94 0563 16 6). 2017, 240 pp.

'La Passerelle de Bessengué' is a wooden footbridge in the Bessengué Akwa settlement, one of the poorest neighbourhoods of coastal Douala, Cameroon. It was among the first public artworks realized under the auspices of the triennial Salon Urbain de Douala (SUD), which is run by doual'art, an association established in 1991 to support public art in the city. 'La Passerelle', designed by Cameroonian artist Alioum Moussa, offers an apt shortcut to introduce SUD, and the work of public art in Douala. As such, it conveys the significance of *Public Art in Africa*, a book dedicated to expanding the audience of the SUD project well beyond Douala.

In the text (and in the associated travelling exhibition titled 'Making Douala 2007–2017'), the bridge is categorized as a 'proximity artwork' – an architectural or infrastructural installation with a purpose specifically relevant to those living in the given area. At first sight, this category is the clearest indication of the ways in which doual'art's founders, curators and artists conceptualize the link between public art and urban transformation. By connecting Bessengué Akwa to one of the busiest roads of the city, 'La Passerelle' has enabled people to commute to and from the settlement and has made possible the provision of much-needed public services. As a result – unintended but unsurprising – it has carved out a piece of public space in a neighbourhood where none existed before (p. 27): a square that now hosts street vendors and art installations, couples on dates and children at play.

While these changes doubtless qualify as urban transformation at the neighbourhood level, when placed in the archive of public art that this book offers, further layers of the work of 'La Passerelle' are revealed. From the original conception of a footbridge to the discussion of local identity and conflict prompted by the reconciliatory symbolism of the proposed handrails that form a colourful

pattern of figures holding hands (p. 100), the people of Bessengué were actively involved in the creative process as inhabitants, curators, audiences and artists – all at the same time. The write-ups of over sixty-five individual artworks in the second and larger part of the print book suggest that the degree and nature of popular participation have varied across the different projects. Yet, as lead editor Iolanda Pensa claims, the range of SUD's interventions have '[allowed] the city to turn its gaze to specific locations: to itself' (p. 20). Indeed, by relating people to art, to their city, and to each other as members of a community enlivening its neighbourhoods, artworks such as 'La Passerelle' have facilitated the appearance of the public.

Accordingly, *Public Art in Africa's* forte is in conveying the insight that, despite the absence of an explicit urban transformation element in the concept of 'monumental' and 'passageway installations' – the other two categories of public artworks used by the editors – most interventions inaugurated during the SUD triennials have tangibly, if variably, contributed to changes in the urban fabric in ways that go beyond the material and infrastructural. The so-called '*Textes émotionnelles*' in the first quarter of the book merit attention not least because they bring together a medley of writings by artists, curators, scholars, funders and decision makers involved in SUD and offer a vivid indication of what is at stake in creating public art in Douala. Through these texts, one can grasp the key role of the creative infrastructure built by doual'art, and the workings of what co-founder Marilyn Douala Bell refers to as a cycle between art in proximity to everyday life and the highly experimental artworks showcased in gallery spaces (p. 10). According to these contributors' accounts, doual'art has shown how 'art could change a space' (p. 68), and has inched closer to making 'art for all' in an African city (p. 34). However, while they are evocative, the testimonials stop short of rethinking 'urban transformation' in light of the transformative potential of the public art they celebrate.

It is in the theoretical essays, included only in the digital version available with the book, that the authors pose a number of successful challenges to some of the conventional conceptions of public art from the perspective of African cities. For instance, Fiona Siegenthaler and Dunja Herzog's discussion of the multiple publics of Cameroonian artists' 'Exit Tour', Rike Sitas' call for considering the creation of public-facing art as knowledge production, and Joanna Grabski and Kimberly Kay Ascher's reading of graffiti art in Dakar all question the validity of the public/private binary in the context of the African city. It is also here that the book expands the scope of discussion from Douala to the whole of Africa, and offers valuable studies of public art in Dakar, Luanda and Johannesburg. Reasserting the commitment to broadening the audience of public art in Africa, the digital version is complete with a glossary specifically intended for publication on Wikipedia.

Given the broad array of the digital material, it is a pity that the application for accessing the e-book is so cumbersome to use. In contrast, the print book is a pleasure to look through; the photo-documentation of the artworks and the series of maps showing their appearance (and sometimes disappearance) are beautiful and informative. Those interested in public art, African cities, urban aesthetics, questions of co-production, and the politics and sociology of art should certainly accept the editors' express invitation and engage with the abundant material that *Public Art in Africa* offers.

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doi:10.1017/S0001972018000554