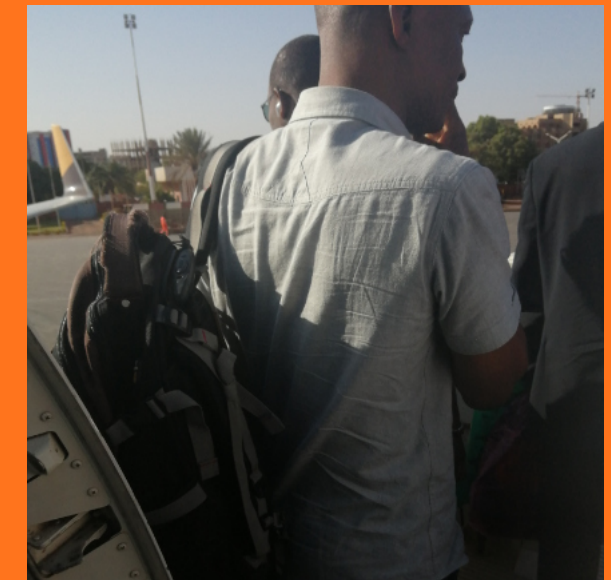


Thursday 23 February 2023 Flying to Burkina Faso

Today is the day I'm leaving for the FESPACO Film Festival in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. It has been quite a journey to get to this point. I was really uncertain about going, mostly because of the news about terrorism and the UK gov website essentially says - do not go! I had to contact a few people who live in Ouagadougou and who work for embassies to get the real story. Essentially everyone on the ground said it was fine. I did check with the BFI and ICO and other bodies and no one was sending a delegation I could join. So I got myself special journalism insurance, as nowhere else would cover me, and I arranged to stay with a friend of a friend of my dad. Later down the line I learned that Tatenda Jamera (Maona Art) and Carmen Thompson (Freelance Programmer) would be coming too which was a nice surprise. I'm flying from Joburg to Lomé, Togo then on to Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.



OUAGADOUGOU,
BURKINA FASO



I've been wanting to go to FESPACO for years, so I thought despite the possible dangers, I should just go for it. It is curious how the media and UK gov is heavily influencing people not to go. I assume it is because there is no UK embassy in BF, also if they say don't go, then if one was to get kidnapped then the UK gov doesn't have to pay out? It is a shame though for BF tourism, and attendance at the festival.

Friday 24 February 2023 Meeting the Family

I'm staying in the home of my 'Uncle' Ouedraogo Mahama and his wife Lynn and son Alex. They have been so welcoming to me and it is so lovely to stay in a family home. They have loaned me their driver Souleman for the duration, which is an unexpected bonus! After a rocky arrival with VISA problems, sim cards, cash and misdirection, I am ready to go! I'm immediately put to work on my French with the driver, and safe to say it is coming back slowly. My first impressions of Ouaga are that

it is dusty, hot, bustling and actually feels safe.



Saturday 25 February 2023 FESPACO Opening Ceremony

Listen [here](#) to Opening Ceremony

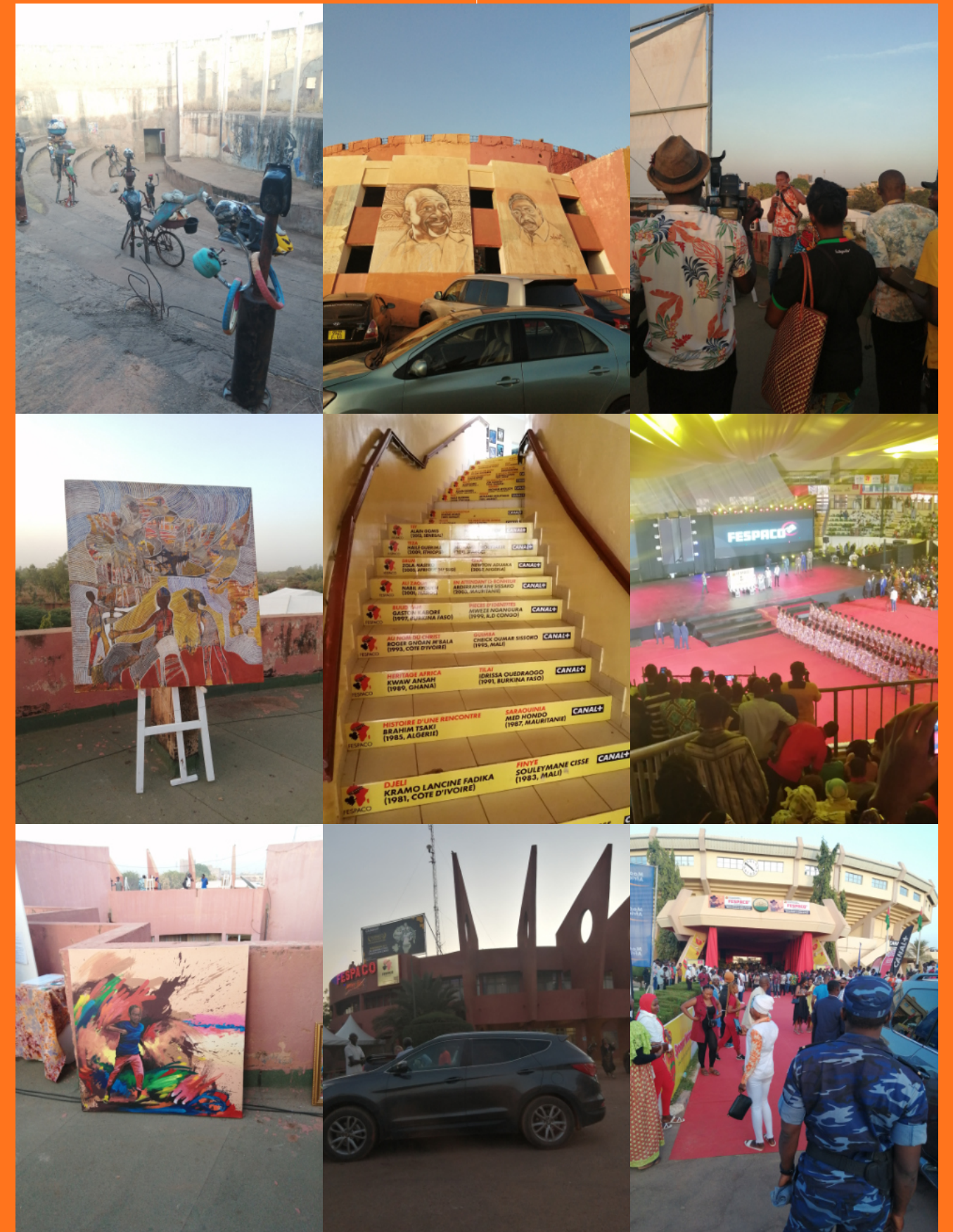
OK, straight in! It has been a busy day, collecting my pass, attending an art exhibition on the roof of FESPACO HQ, looking at the local market and the statues of the great filmmakers of the past and present, and then the phenomenal opening ceremony. I'm absolutely obsessed with the giant clapperboard opening the festival!

For the scale of this festival, it is bizarre to think how unknown it is in the UK and Europe. I think this is one of the biggest festivals I've ever been to. There are important people here including heads of states, and it isn't just a film festival, there is so much extra activity and conferences. There is a carnival type set up at HQ, there is a whole trade situation going on, people are selling food, clothes and products. There are multiple parties each night, and lots of different outdoor set ups. Art feels really important

here, and there are several exhibitions going on. Likewise, the amount of statues and physical recognition of notable people is beautiful. All in all, it's making for a tremendously rich experience.

Why is FESPACO not recognised as one of the most significant film festivals alongside Sundance or Cannes?





Sunday 26 February 2023 First Day in Cine Neerwaya

It's day two of the festival, and it's my first trip to Cine Neerwaya, a cinema I absolutely love here - definitely my favourite space. There is a place to get food, drinks, and even some African print and clothes. This festival is so incredibly social! Every night we can party, talk and rub shoulders with the oldest and newest of African filmmakers.

I'm definitely using all my social beans here and I'm finding it so nourishing to be able to talk freely and easily about African cinema, without having to justify it. Not that all the conversations here are about film, it feels like a space to connect and make friends. I'm absolutely in my element.

I am having an odd moment where I keep introducing myself as either Mosa or Musa and not knowing which one to go for. Typically, when in the UK I am Mosa and in SA I am Musa. But in this space, I am unsure which

version of me I am being. Part of me wonders if I should just choose my preference and make sure everyone calls me by that name? But the other part of me thinks, what does it matter what people call me? My African and European 'sides' don't often feel present in the same space. So being in FESPACO is a confronting experience. But not an unwelcome one. If I think about it, I actually have many names given to me by many types of people in my life. I have been named Mumuse by my little sisters, so now my immediate South African family calls me that. I am often called Mose in the UK by anyone who becomes close enough with me to feel able to shorten my name - which I love. And of course some of my more scouse friends call me Mo. Perhaps I am allowed to have many names, perhaps those names are reflections of the different parts of myself.

I had a great conversation about this in FESPACO one night with Alaine Sembène, Ousmane Sembène's son, who is also of

'mixed heritage', but has the additional factor that his dad was such an iconic narrator of African culture. But Alaine spent his whole life living outside of the continent and has to try and find ways of feeling connected to his father and his heritage. He advised me to feel comfortable being wherever I am.



Walking into Cine Neerwaya, in the area that Sankara built. I had a wave of emotion. I queued to get my bag checked with security, everyone around me is greeting each other. I see faces from the party last night, my greeting french is comfortable in my mouth. I feel a part of this environment. The cinema is beautiful. The canal Olympia the night before was very slick. But this felt Burkina. The seats were comfortable it has African print on the walls, it feels patchwork, local, homely. The cast and crew of Xale gave a proud introduction. I couldn't help but compare it to Bologna. I'm even sat in the same seat I would in cinema Arlechunno or Jolly. It feels like a special place full of fully appreciative people. Film no. 2 here we go!







Monday 27 February 2023 Meeting Gaston Kaboré

I went to the early morning classics screening at Cine Burkina to see Aboubakar present *Wend Kuuni*. I was so excited to see this film again as it was my entry point into African heritage film. The film (with its French subtitles this time) was just as excellent, but I was sad to see that Gaston Kaboré wasn't in the screening as I'd heard he might be around. However after the

screening I went for lunch, and who should be sat at the next table but the man himself! I introduced myself and we had a great conversation about archives and his films. Might just be a highlight of my career!

*As mentioned before, I first saw *Wend Kunni* in *Il Cinema Ritrovato* in 2019. Up until that point I'd been attending the festival to soak up the international early films, but mostly focusing on European and*

American cinema. Watching this film was a profound experience for me. It was the first time I had seen an African retrospective that didn't seem centred around pain. I had an assumption that all films were going to have to be about war, AIDS, colonisation, starvation etc. Because this is the kind of imagery we get of Africa in the UK. Whereas this film delicately dealt with a local village receiving and accepting a mysterious mute young boy found abandoned. It is a film clearly loaded with symbolism and meaning, but ultimately the experience I had watching it was one of peace. I left the cinema and immediately gathered with the other (very few) Black people in attendance. I'd seen something that told me that I could bring myself, my heritage and my curiosity into my film practice.

Tuesday 28 February 2023 Archives Conference

During the festival there were 'heritage workshops' for African

archivists. Represented were archivists from Mali, Benin, Niger, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Togo, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, Morocco, France, Belgium, Canada and Bolivia. I attended what I could, but the French was hard going, so a follow up report was gratefully received as I could translate it. The report concluded that archives have importance beyond the arts, and can be better utilised for historical memory, learning, governance and policy purposes. The archivists' actions "meets the fundamental needs of society" (Mr. Babou BATORO).

Key interesting points I learned:

NETWORKING: There is a want to set up an association of African archivists and have better training and sharing between different nations.

PRESERVATION: The best solution for prevention of further deterioration of archives is the prevention of infections as well as the stabilisation of relative

humidity and the temperature in the storage and preservation rooms. Analog is also a preferred medium of conservation.

DIGITISATION: The Moroccan film library has a good digitisation facility and wants to support other archives in their digitisation.

RESTITUTION: Regarding the return of cinematographic and audio-visual works African, preserved and held by Western archives, it appears that it is extremely difficult to talk about the return of these works because a lot of the time, unlike looted works of art, these filmic works are generally the product by Western authors. The solution would be to aim for partnership in order to be able either request these works when needed or to have copies of these works. There are discussions taking place between the claimant countries and France. The complexity of returning archives lies in the fact that the works are recent and that they are not in the public domain, and therefore are always subject to the principles of moral and patrimonial

rights of intellectual ownership. However, it is possible to achieve this through physical donations and restored digital versions.

It was a shame there was a lack of translation available during the events as I feel like more archives on the continent would have benefitted from this conference. I did send my translated version back to the SA National Archive for them to read. In the report there were mentions of the use of archive such as in exhibitions, but I keep reflecting on my role as a curator and how we can bring finance and support back to the archive through presentation of work.

What access points to archives are there for curators to learn about content available to screen?

It's also about the connections one can bring, and being a middle person between African archives who want people to use their material, and programmers, festival and cinemas who want a wider range of work to display.



Wednesday 1 March 2023 Diaspora Conference

I attended another conference within the festival which was led by the formidable [Janaína Oliveira](#). A space for diaspora programmers and filmmakers to converse about our diaspora experiences and inclusion at FESPACO.

Interestingly, this was one of the few festival events that didn't have 100% French language. The language of the festival is certainly a challenge, the films are all French subtitled, and there are limited English translations. The non French speaking Jury of the festival have a much bigger problem to deal with! I found this intriguing at the start of the festival and tiring by the end. I don't want to put my hand up and ask for English translation of film introductions and director Q&As, as British colonial guilt kicked in. However, by the end I was ready to argue English isn't just for the English, and as a South African, I found it hard work. I suppose this is because of the French and

francophone funders. But it did beg the question :

is FESPACO a Pan-African Festival if it is mono-lingual?

Relating this to the diaspora conversation, there was a question posed -



"we want to be here [FESPACO], but do you want us here?"

An interesting provocation that I discussed in the evenings with new friends. Angolan filmmaker [Ery Claver](#) (director of [Our Lady of the Chinese Shop](#)) and I debated this one night, as it could be said that diaspora can take up space with wealth, privilege and access to resources, and often lack direct knowledge of the continent. But we went on to discuss how we cannot invalidate anyone's experiences, no matter their connection to the continent, White Africans included.

Saturday 4 March 2023 Closing Ceremony

And before we know it the festival is over! The closing ceremony was a feast for the eyes, with both the Burkina Faso & Mali presidents in attendance. The announcements of the awards were really exciting, and some really well deserved winners in that list. A fitting send off and a great final party that night. I'm sad to go but cannot wait until FESPACO 2025 - and now back into the cold and heading off to Paris, France.

