

NEWS



Sonsbeek biennale festival kicks-off after one year delay



NETHERLANDS

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By Rédaction Africanews and Sasha Gankin

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The famous Sonsbeek biennale event on contemporary art in the historical city of Arnhem, Netherlands, has begun one year later than expected due to the pandemic.

One of the features is this labyrinth by Justine Gagah from Cameroon open to everyone at all times.

The day of the abolition of slavery in the Dutch West Indies was included into the programming by a determined multinational team of curators led by Cameroonian Bonaventure Ndikung, who is regarded as a politically astute curator.

“We wanted also look into the history of labour, to look into the colonial enterprise, to look at the enslavement of people, the people who have been abducted from the African continent, and taken to a so called “new world”, forced to work to enrich others. When you look at Arnhem where Sonsbek is happening you see a lot of reverberations of the history of enslavement. The house behind me the Schloss Zipendaal is one of these places a castle built on a slave labour” he said.

Panamanian Antonio Jose Guzman living in Dakar conducted a complex street show inspired by the colonial plantations of Indigo in the Caribbean.

Other features include a picture by South African photographer Buhlebezwe Siwani which was taken on a beach in the Netherlands.

It is a reflection on dealing with a new space, it comes after the artist moved from South Africa to the Netherlands – South Africa was colonised by Dutch settlers in 17th century.

“The idea of locating yourself in a new land and you're a foreign body. But it's also about the body being colonised but the colonised body colonises the colonial space” she said.

40 artists displayed their works, and another 200 will perform throughout the next three years of this double edition's unique programming named Conjugation.

Hadassa Ngamba of Lugumbashi, DRC, kicked off the series with a performance that was a reflection on her country's mining resources.

"There is a theory in my country - they say that the minerals will bring us milk and honey

which never happened - it was the promise of multinationals **but instead we got debts and huge debts*** she stressed.

"I paint with my hair because I was inspired by an African tradition of the Himba women of Namibia

for me painting with my hair is a way to conquer the spirits, the space..." she further said.

The artists of the SONSBECK event will continue their journey until 2024

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