

## Call for Papers

An international Conference on

### **Nollywood and Beyond: Transnational Dimensions of the African Video Industry**

Conveners: Matthias Krings (Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany) and Onookome Okome (University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada)

To be held at:  
Johannes Gutenberg University,  
Mainz, Germany

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As popular culture, Nollywood has held the attention of scholars and cinema enthusiasts in recent years. And as a cinema industry, critics and scholars have compared it to the major cinema industries in the world. Described as the fastest growing cinema industry today, Nollywood produces more than 1000 full length video features every year, outstripping the production regimes in Hollywood and Bollywood. Once regarded by local critics as a mere flash in the pan, Nollywood has grown from strength to strength and has indeed proven the cultural and cinema enthusiasts wrong. "Foreign mole," to use a phrase from Emmanuel Obiechina, is taking a curious interest also. Critics are still grappling with the very idea that Nollywood is as popular in Nigeria as it is in other parts of the continent of Africa. Close to the heart of members of its internally differentiated audience, Nollywood has been able to read into the soul of this audience, providing recognizable street narratives that speak to the very need and aspiration of this audience. And coming out of a social and cultural history that is only being defined by the critics and scholars of Nollywood, this cinema industry has been able to re-define some of the intractable problems that have dogged the practice and scholarship of African cinema since the 1960s. It has circumvented the work of the distribution cartel that foreign companies established in Africa in the 1960s and in their place has created an alternative that is commercially effective and it has mobilized resources for production from within rather than from outside, making it possible to produce a distinct field of cultural discourses without let or hindrance from the outside.

Perhaps the most spectacular invention of Nollywood as an African visual practice is the mobilization of a block spectatorship that is not only national and transnational but also diasporic. In one documentary film after the other, this point has been made repeatedly. In *This is Nollywood*, for instance, workers in the industry who were interviewed point to the popularity of Nollywood film, the link to some pan-African agenda and to a transnational and diasporic spectatorship that is expanding and vigorously engaged with the world of Nollywood films. This conference seeks to trouble these notions and their linkages to Nollywood. More specifically, the conference seeks to ask and attempts to provide answers to questions around the transnationality and the transnational spectatorship of Nollywood video films. It will deal with the audience and the culture that Nollywood produces for Africa and the world. As part of the broad frame of interrogation, the conference would attempt to provide answers to questions that the local successes of Nollywood have brought to the discursive arena of African cinema as a whole. For example, is there a need to re-think the theory of African cinema in the light of the popularity of Nollywood on the continent? What is pan-African about and in Nollywood? What are the linkages to other emerging African video industries, and how does the infrastructure of Nollywood's transnational circulation look like? How is Nollywood consumed in European and North American film festivals; how on television screens beyond Nigeria? The conveners of this conference invite paper proposals in these and in any other areas of video studies in Africa.

Please, submit your proposal to Prof. Matthias Krings ([krings@uni-mainz.de](mailto:krings@uni-mainz.de)) and Prof. Onookome Okome ([ookome@ualberta.ca](mailto:ookome@ualberta.ca)) no later than November 15, and full paper no later than February 20, 2009.