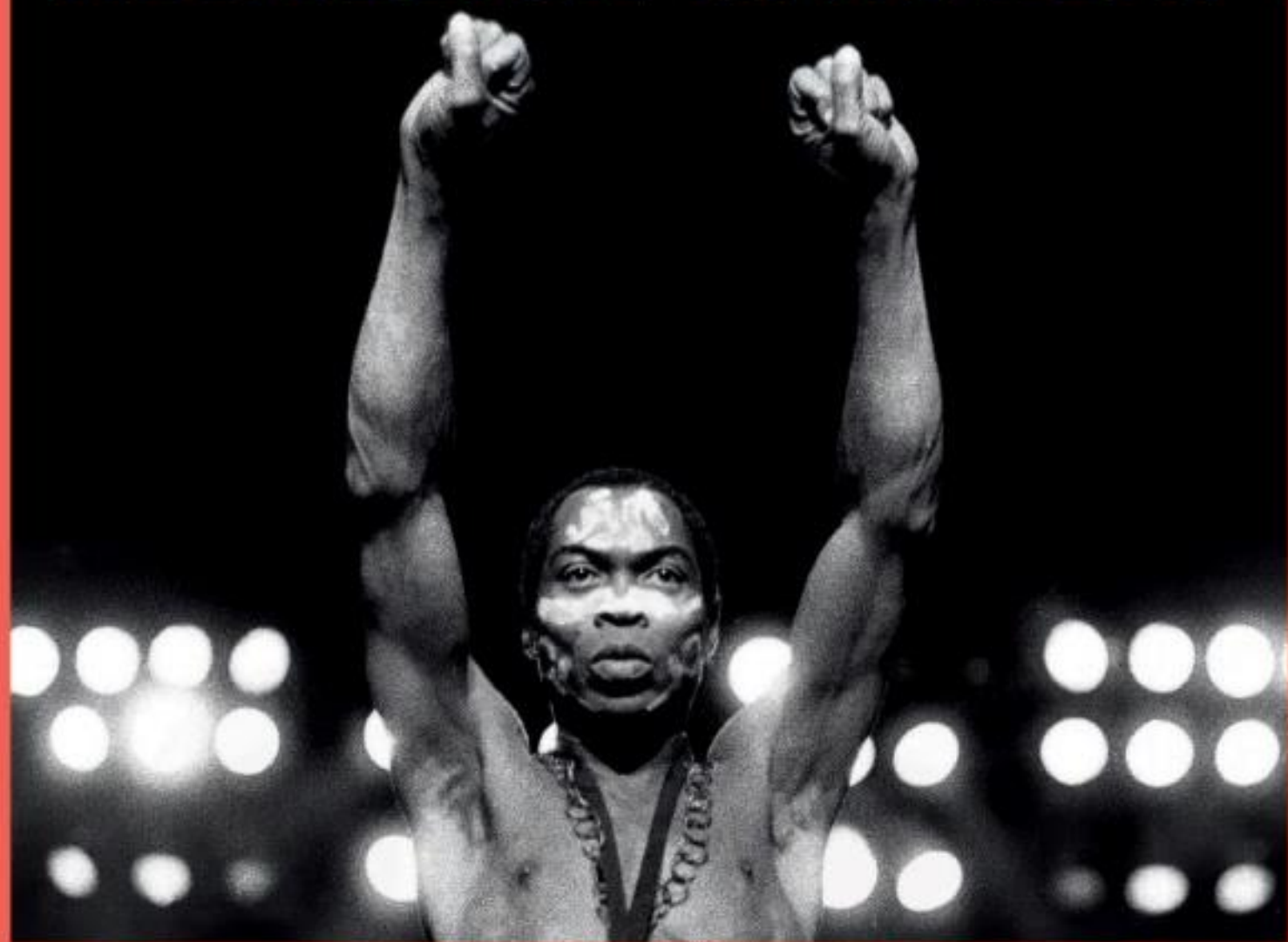


FELA ANIKULAPO KUTI RÉBELLION AFROBEAT



20 OCTOBRE 2022 - 11 JUIN 2023

EXPOSITION



PHILHARMONIE
DE PARIS
MUSÉE DE LA MUSIQUE



INITIAL CONCEPT AND SET DESIGN PRINCIPLES

‘Music is the weapon of the future’: Fela Kuti’s famous words continue to resonate today and offer a fitting slogan for his work’s place in posterity.

After his beginnings in Nigeria and London, **Fela Kuti became a global figure in the mid-1970s** and toured internationally until his death in 1997. His legacy is omnipresent throughout the world, both musically and politically.

The musical style he created and named Afrobeat mixes **Yoruba rhythms**, free jazz, soul and jazz funk. The **Koola Lobitos**, his first jazz band, also owed much to West African highlife and gave pride of place to brass and percussion. With his groups Africa 70, then Egypt 80, Fela surrounded himself with a growing number of musicians and gave birth to more and more complex instrumental constructions.

Throughout his career, Fela turned his lifestyle into **a political manifesto**. His stand against elite corruption and neo-colonialism continues to inspire struggles in Nigeria and beyond.



Leading the Band, 1979
Howard T Cash represented by Ken Barboza Agency

EXHIBITION CURATORS

Alexandre Girard-Muscagorry is curator of non-Western musical and cultural heritage at the Musée de la musique. His research as an art historian focuses on the intersection between art and politics in Sub-Saharan Africa in the colonial and post-colonial context.

Mabinuori Kayode Idowu (ID) met Fela Kuti in 1974. Co-founder of the Young African Pioneers and co-editor of *YAP News*, he was heavily involved in organizing the musician’s concerts, recordings and partnerships until the mid-1980s. He has written several books on Fela, including *Fela: Why Blackman Carry Shit* (1997), translated into French, Italian and Japanese, and *Fela: Phenomenon & Legacy* (2013).

Mathilde Thibault-Starzyk earned her degree in art history and museology at the École du Louvre and has worked on several Musée de la musique exhibitions, notably as production manager for *Barbara* (2018) and associate curator for *Charlie Chaplin, one-man band* (2019-2020).

MUSICAL ADVISOR

Sodi Marciszewer is an artistic director, sound engineer and mixer. He has collaborated on the last six Fela albums, produced most of Femi Kuti’s albums and the first album of Mádé Kuti. His eclecticism and musical curiosity have led him to work with IAM, Rachid Taha, Chinese Man, El Gusto Orchestra, Keziah Jones, Les Têtes Raides, Mano Negra...

THE EXHIBITION BIAS

The exhibition closely blends Fela's energy and musical creativity with his political thinking, in a itinerary that gives a central place to the city of **Lagos** and **the Shrine** - nerve centre of Fela's music in Lagos.

Fela's costumes from Nigeria are presented for the first time, as well as numerous **photographs** and **unpublished archives** that offer an insight into the Lagos universe of the "Black President".

The show has been conceived with **the support of the family** but also with many actors of Fela's life ; Mabinuori Kayode Idowu (ID), who was his right-hand man for many years, and Sodi Marciszewer, who accompanied Fela on his last albums.



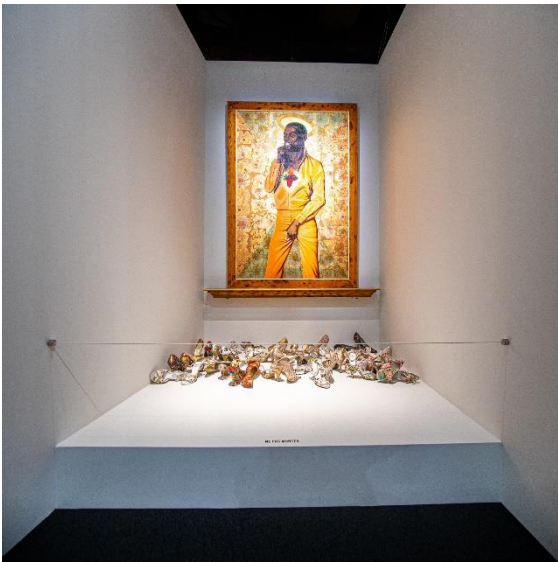
Fela carried by his supporters at the launch of the "Movement of People" (MOP) in November 1978
Jacqueline Grandchamp-Thiam collection

A SOUND EXPERIENCE IN 3 TIMES

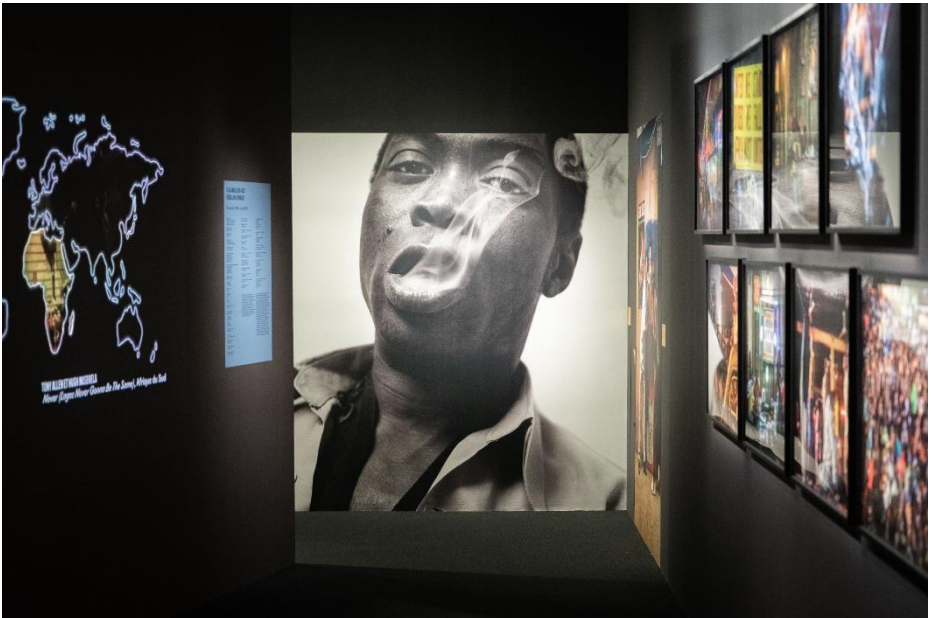
- At **the roots of Afrobeat**, the visitor discovers the sound of Lagos in the 1960s - **Highlife** - played in the city's nightclubs and the heritage of jazz discovered in London and then in the United States : an entrance to the exhibition marked by musical telescoping that recalls the sonic energy and vibrations of a city in full expansion.
- **The Shrine**, in the heart of the exhibition, is **an immersive environment**. The most famous moments of Fela's career are experienced collectively, with a live listening allowing to appreciate the Afrobeat, this energetic and catchy music to the point of trance, composed of long pieces of several tens of minutes and juxtaposing successive instrumental layers.
- **Experiencing a Fela concert** : the exhibition allows you to relive one of the most beautiful performances of the artist and his band **Africa 70** at the **Berlin Jazz Festival** in 1978.

KEY TOURING INFORMATION

360 physical and digital pieces
400 square meters (can be adjusted)
Available on tour from July 2023



© Maxime Guthfreund



SCENOGRAPHY PROJECT

Georgiana Savuta-Idier has created an enveloping course, just like the repetitive rhythm of Afrobeat. The **spatial composition** translates into the concentric deployment of Fela's different trajectories - familial, musical and political, around a **central point** which is **the Shrine**.

- Walls playing on the contrast between a "museum front" and a "raw back", with a visible framework, allowing the integration of works, documents and emblematic slogans of Fela
- **Bright colours**, inspired by Fela's favourite tones, which make the visit more dynamic
- A guided tour but leaving a lot of freedom to the visitor with the 3 live music areas



Revelers at one of the Femi Kuti's "Sunday Jump" show of Femi Kuti at the New Afrika Shrine, in Ikeja area of Lagos, 2007
Andrew Esiebo

CIRCUIT OF THE EXHIBITION

1 / LAGOS BABY

2 / KALAKUTA REPUBLIC

3 / AFRICA SHRINE

4 / WHO NO KNOW GO KNOW

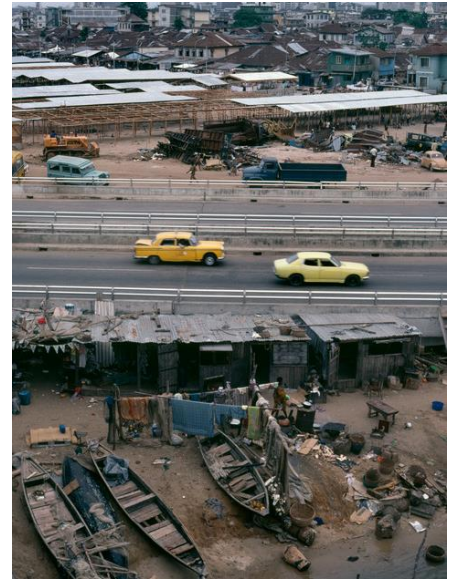
5 / ABAMI EDA



1 / Lagos Baby - The roots of Afrobeat

Fela's history is closely linked to that of Lagos, the megalopolis in which he settled in 1963. He opened his own club there, which he called the "Afrika Shrine", and founded **the Kalakuta Republic**, an alternative community that he declared independent of Nigerian law. The location of these two strongholds increasingly shifted to the working class areas in the north of the city, such as Mushin and Ikeja.

This first section approach the **importance of Lagos** in the **musical** and **political genesis of Afrobeat**. A visual landscape, based on multiple archival images, will immerse visitors in the heart of the city's effervescence, of which Fela would become one of the most vivid chroniclers.



Three tables associated with three themes tracing the musical influences of Fela

Highlife : In the 1950s, a style that came from Ghana, made the Nigerian high society dance. Fela started out in the band of the star of the time, **Victor Olaiya**.

Jazz and black power, the turn of the 70s
Following his trip to the United States in 1969, during which he discovered the Black Panther Party through **Sandra Izsadore**, Fela's political consciousness is awakened and he laid the musical foundations for what would become Afrobeat.

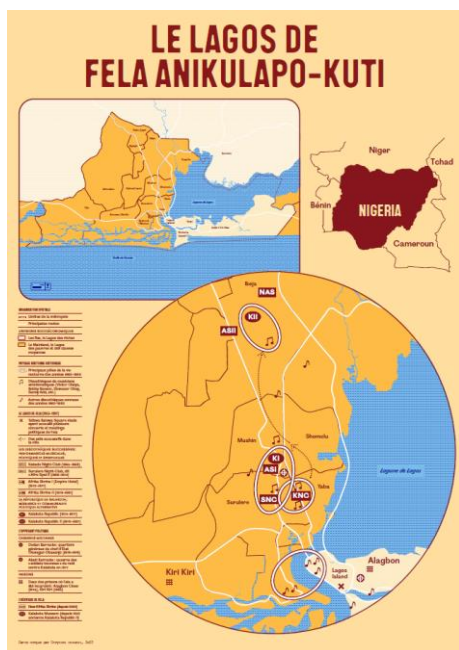
Koola Lobitos : In 1958, he left to study trumpet, piano and composition in London



where he discovered the jazz of Miles Davis, Charlie Parker and John Coltrane.

After his return to Lagos in 1963, he founded his band : **Fela Ransome-Kuti** and his **Koola Lobitos**.

My lady frustration, 1969 : Fela combines his musical influences of jazz and highlife with the influence of Yoruba rhythms. He introduces the melodic and rhythmic lines one after the other and plays on a complex polyrhythm supported by **Henri Kofi** on congas and **Tony Allen** on drums.



A large map reveals Fela's Lagos and the location of the **key places in his life**. This cartography allows to navigate the complex world of Lagos, showing Fela's roots in the popular districts of the city.



2 / KALAKUTA REPUBLIC

This section offers a journey through the history of **Fela's political struggles** and a dive into the intimacy of the Kalakuta Republic.

From the beginning of the 1970s, Fela's speeches and songs became increasingly political. In concert, he displayed raised fists, inspired by the **American Black Power** salute. He now asserted his pride in being black and his desire to put an end to colonial degradation. Songs like *Why Black Man Dey Suffer* (1970) or *Black Man's Cry* (1971) affirm the pride of being black and to end the colonial degradation. With *Zombie* (1976), title condemning the violence of the army, Fela becomes the target of the successive Nigerian governments.

In 1975, Fela turned his lifestyle into a manifesto. He renamed his house the **'Republic of Kalakuta'**, which he conceived as a place of autonomous living, free from Nigerian laws, and **a refuge** for both black intellectuals and disadvantaged people.

A large graphic composition was made from leaflets that Fela published in the Nigerian press to communicate about his political and musical activities ; he denounced economic and political problems in Nigeria and the world, and also communicated about his concerts. **Fela very strongly thought his visual identity as an extension of his musical struggles.**



Meeting of the MOP in Abeokuta in 1978



Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti en 1968

A long family tradition of musical activism, especially by his mother, **Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti**. In the 1940s, she mounted a struggle in Abeokuta by **unifying the forces of women against the local authorities** : their demands were made in particular through song. She then participated in many congresses around the world and worked to unify African struggles to assert women's rights.



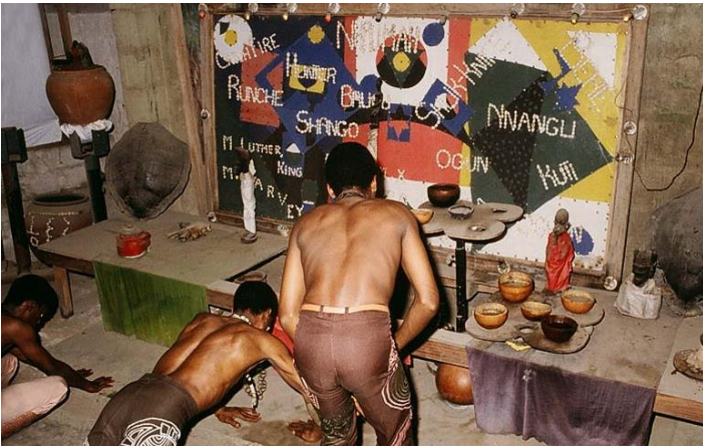
1976 foundation of the « Young African Pioneers »
1978 foundation of the « Movement of the People »

Fela Kuti **gathered the youth around him** at a time when it was forbidden to practice politics freely, with the objective of spreading economic and cultural awareness throughout the country in a dictatorial regime. **Photos** and **clippings** help to embody these events, including the fire, which served as the breeding ground for Fela's greatest hits.

3 / AFRIKA SHRINE



From 1973, Fela had **his own club**, which he renamed the '**Afrika Shrine**'. Fela performed there several times a week, his concerts could last well into the night. The songs, sometimes thirty minutes long, alternated with **yabbis** - political diatribes in which Fela mocked the powers that be and castigated the neo-colonial failings of society. The Shrine attracts both the poor youth of Lagos and the foreign public who come to attend shows between **political meeting** and **spiritual communion**.



In the heart of the exhibition, **an audiovisual immersion** in an evening at the Shrine allows us to experience the triple dimension of Afrobeat : musical, political – through an acerbic criticism of the Nigerian policy - and spiritual ; Fela paid tribute to his ancestors, pan-Africanists but also family members.

Giving Praise to the Ancestors

Howard T Cash represented by Ken Barboza Agency

FELA'S DRESSING ROOM

An exceptional display of some **twenty of Fela's costumes** allows visitors to admire the fineness of the embroidery inspired by Yorubas patterns, the inventiveness of the materials and the extraordinary palette of these costumes.



THE QUEENS

In 1983, the photographer **Bernard Matussièr** made a portrait gallery of dancers, singers and women of Fela Kuti: the Queens. An important work of biographical research made it possible to restore their identity to each of these women



4 / « Who no know go know »

From the mid-1970s, the echo of **Fela's music** and his political commitment **spread beyond the borders of Nigeria** and attracted the attention of European managers and producers. The growing financial needs of his organization led him to tour Europe in the 1980s and to sign agreements with several French, English and American record companies. With an extensively reorganized and expanded group, which he named **Egypt 80**, Fela explored a more **symphonic musical vein** through compositions that gained in density and structure at the expense of polyrhythm.

Around a projection of Fela's concert at the **Berlin Jazz Festival** in **1978**, his first big concert in Europe, the space will explore the complex reception of Fela in Europe in the years 1980-1990



Fela at the Festival de Jazz de Berlin en 1978

5 / Abami Eda - Afrobeat after Fela



On **2 April 1997**, **Fela Anikulapo-Kuti died** at the age of fifty-nine. Although he had always denied the existence of the disease, it was AIDS that took his life. Tens of thousands of people gathered at Tafawa Balewa Square in Lagos to pay their last respects to Fela, dressed for the occasion in one of his shimmering suits, with a last joint of cannabis between their fingers.

"F-E-L-A, For Ever Lives Africa", Seun Kuti proclaimed at the funeral. Twenty-five years later, the fervour remains intact, in Nigeria as elsewhere in the world. In Lagos, his image, words and music still haunt the city, especially around the **New Afrika Shrine**, the club created in **2000** by the family. The venue is one of the main meeting points for the new scene in Nigeria, Brazil, Japan, the UK and France that continues to **reinvent Afrobeat**.





Fela at the Shrine en 1977 © Jean-Jacques Mandel

EXHIBITION TOURING FEE

All prices exclude taxes

Exhibition touring fee for three months : **80 000, 00 €**

This includes the following :

- Original concept and content development – designed for a 800 square meters modular space
- Curatorial, set design and designer resale rights
- All artwork rights cleared for the content*
- Sound and audiovisual supervision by Philharmonie staff**
- The exhibition kit : Artworks, material and packing list, technical files and requirements, set design floorplans and a promotion kit (5 images free of rights for press and communication).

** This does not include music rights, which has to be dealt by the Venue according to local laws.*

*** This does not include travel and accommodation expenses of the technicians (travel, hotel and per diem) – to be paid in addition to the fee.*

CONTACTS

Jade BOUCHEMIT, Deputy Director of the Musée de la musique

jbouchemit@cite-musique.fr

+33 (1) 44 84 46 29

Victoire GUÉNA, Head of Exhibitions department

vguena@cite-musique.fr

+33 (1) 44 84 45 57

Suzon HAURAY, Project Coordinator on touring exhibitions

shauray@cite-musique.fr

+33 (1) 80 49 52 32



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