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Author(s) Siegenthaler, Fiona

Author(s) at UniBasel [Siegenthaler, Fiona](#) ;

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Commonly, contemporary African art is understood as art made by artists in Africa and the African diaspora in the post-independence era. However, there are about as many understandings of contemporary African art as there are curators, scholars and artists working in that field. All three terms of this "wide-reaching noncategory [sic]" (Firstenberg 2003: 40) are problematic in themselves: What exactly is 'contemporary', what makes art 'African', and when are we talking about art and not any other kind of creative expression? Western scholars and curators have made numerous attempts at defining contemporary African art in the 1990s and early 2000s and proposed a range of categories and genres. They triggered heated debates and controversies especially on the foundations of postcolonial critique. Recent trends indicate a far more relaxed engagement with definitions and identity ascriptions. The global presence and entanglement of Africa and its contemporary artists have become a widely acknowledged fact that still requires and provokes critical reflection but finds itself beyond the pressure of self-justification.

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