

The Contribution of Technical Centres to the Development of Media Arts in Africa: A case study of the Audiovisual Professional Training Centre of Ekounou (Yaounde).

INTRODUCTION

In central Africa, the APTC also called CRTV Audiovisual Training Centre plays an important role in the development of Media arts which can be defined as an art that is produced incorporating media objects as a key component and which encompass narrative, documentaries, digital products, videos, and all installation art that uses media to generate and display art. By means of the scientific and technical knowledge that is given to its learners, the APTC contributes towards both the transfer of technologies between the North and the South and the development of Media arts in central Africa as a whole and in Cameroon in particular.



MEDIA ARTS IN CAMEROON: SOME HISTORICAL LANDMARKS

* Before 1960; Introduction of media arts in Cameroon and European's domination:

- Predominance of writing (written press) and sound (radio) in the field of media.
- Appearance of cinema which was used by Europeans in their strategies of cultural hegemony during colonial times.
- European supremacy in the field of making and diffusing Media arts in Cameroon.

* From 1960 to 1990, Experimental period:

- Relative independence of Media arts from the European's domination.
- Creation of first schools for media practitioners
- Creation of the Cameroonian national TV (CTV) and involvement of Cameroonians in audiovisual Media arts practices.
- Replacement of the European's domination by the state control on the Media arts productions.

* Since 1990: Emancipation and maturity period:

- Introduction of CIT in Media arts making (computerization of cinematography and music industries).
- Proliferation of communication structures and individuals involved in Media arts practices.
- Multiplication of Media arts productions in the domain of music and film making which are the main fields in which media arts are now achieved in Cameroon.

WHAT'S APTC?

* The APTC is an international high technical school located in Yaounde, the political capital of Cameroon. Created in 1983 by the Cameroonian government and the German cooperation, that centre is involved in the training of audiovisual professionals in the mastery of Media arts practices. As a matter of fact, the APTC aims at training media practitioners in the areas of image set-up, film direction, production, montage and sound engineering. It thus enables Africans in general and Cameroonians in particular to master leading-edge technology in the domain of media art. Most of the technicians of CRTV, the state corporation in the domain of audiovisual communication in Cameroon, are trained by the APTC.

From time to time, the centre proceeds to some refresher workshops for those of the technicians who are already recruited by CRTV.

* Besides, some other learners of the APTC are employed as technicians in some private audio-visual media that proliferated in Cameroon since the liberalization of the audio-visual landscape in 2000. In 2006, the number of people trained by the APTC since 1983 was estimated at 443.

* If many of those learners are Cameroonians, we should mention that some of them are nationals from Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Togo, Haïti, Rwanda and Burundi.

THE APTC AND THE MATURATION OF MEDIA ARTS IN CAMEROON

* Diversification of media arts professions in Cameroon:

Before the creation of the APTC, media arts were mainly displayed through writing and sound. The creation of the APTC in 1983 changed the Media arts environment by introducing a new element which is image. As a matter of fact, it's with the creation of the APTC that the audio-visual methods integrate into Media arts practices in Cameroon. In 1985, two years after the opening of the APTC, the Cameroonian national TV (CTV) was born. The first technicians enrolled by the CTV were trained at the APTC.

* Qualitative improvement of the Media arts:

As in any other artistic activity, the master of the technical materials and procedures is fundamental in the Media arts. Media arts practitioners need to familiarise themselves with those technical materials which enable them to give an aesthetic value to their realisations. By ensuring the technical training of its learners, the APTC thus contributes to a qualitative improvement in the making of media arts.

* Quantitative evolution in the domain of media arts:

APTC contributes to the spread of Media arts in Cameroon. Its creation gave way to the growth of Media arts practitioners. The quantitative improvement of the Media arts is more visible after the liberalisation of the audio-visual sector. Many private producers trained by the APTC are now making their own films. In the same perspective, APTC and CRTV are both involved in the design and production of short and medium-sized films. All this contributes to the increase of Media arts productions in Cameroon.

Francis Arsène FOGUE KUATE

Phd Candidate/Department of History, University of Ngaoundere (Cameroon)
Assistant Research at the Research Support Centre/Laboratory of Social Sciences
Email: farfogue@yahoo.fr