

Media Information

April 1, 2025

UPDATE: May 12, 2025

BMW Art Car as catalyst: Mehretu and BMW launch film project in Africa.

+++ Workshops for artists in Lagos, Dakar, Tangier, Nairobi, and Cape Town +++ BMW Group establishes African Film and Media Arts Collective (AFMAC) for filmmakers with BMW Art Car artist Julie Mehretu and film writer/producer Mehret Mandefro +++ For the first time in the fifty-year history of the BMW Art Car Collection, an ambitious cultural program complements an Art Car project +++ Six new film productions as an anthology of contemporary film from Africa +++ Final exhibition in 2026 at the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa +++

Munich. "I wondered how I could make the Art Car a symbol and vocal archive for the immense artistic creativity of the African continent," says Julie Mehretu, describing her ambition for designing the 20th BMW Art Car of the iconic collection. The American abstract painter, born in Ethiopia in 1970, first presented her artistically designed BMW M Hybrid V8 to the public at the Centre Pompidou in Paris in May 2024. After its race deployment in Le Mans a month later, this year marks the next chapter of the project in cooperation with the BMW Group: the African Film and Media Arts Collective (AFMAC).

The idea for the pan-African artist network was developed by Julie Mehretu together with her longtime friend, Mehret Mandefro, an Emmy-nominated film producer—also born in Ethiopia and living in the USA—and co-founder of the Realness Institute for the training of African filmmakers in conversation with artist Paul Pfeiffer and architectural historian Lawrence Chua. Under the guidance of a group of African and international artists, including French-Senegalese filmmaker and 2024 Berlinale winner Mati Diop, American poet Robin Coste Lewis, and Kenyan performance artist Jim Chuchu, workshops will be held in Lagos, Dakar, Tangier, Nairobi, and Cape Town for around 50 artists. AFMAC will connect with local host cultural institutions on site and workshop participants will be selected through open calls with the partners. The kickoff will take place from April 15–19 in Lagos with the cultural non-profit organization "Angels & Muse".

"BMW is working for the first time in the 50-year history of the BMW Art Car Collection with an artist to develop the idea far beyond the car as a pure art object. This collaboration is particularly close to my heart. It expands BMW's long-term global commitment in the film sector with an outstanding initiative that stands for exchange, creativity, and cultural diversity—values that we, as a company, also

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embody," says Ilka Horstmeier, member of the Board of Management of BMW AG, Human Resources, and Real Estate.

Each workshop results in a new film production. Once completed, the films will form an anthology of contemporary African filmmaking, which will complement exhibitions of Mehretu's 20th BMW Art Car. In 2026, the anthology will debut in a major exhibition dedicated to AFMAC along with the 20th Art Car at Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town. The former Executive Director Koyo Kouoh (1967-2025) played a key role championing the project before her sudden and untimely death. The BMW Group has been a partner of the museum for many years, contributing its extensive network of cultural professionals and charitable institutions in Africa to establish AFMAC on a long-term and sustainable basis.

International collaboration and access to African film history

Social engagement and engaging with peers in collectives have always shaped Mehretu's work. In 2004, she founded the artist residency Denniston Hill in North New York with Pfeiffer and Chua. Meant as a place for exchange, reflection, and retreat, artists of various disciplines and backgrounds further develop their practice there. Workshop methods conceived at Denniston Hill form the foundation for AFMAC's workshops, where artists from various African countries and the global diaspora come together to engage with questions of cultural, political, and historical identity. The forms of experimentation that a translocal collective enables, how cultural and political heritage can be negotiated, and the role different media play in the attribution of identity forms are examined.

Using archival material of African film and media works, participants are given the opportunity to develop their own creative approaches and create new forms of media art. Accordingly, a key component of the workshops is the screening of hard-to-access African films to expand historical and cultural perspectives. The goal is to create sustainable infrastructures that last beyond the workshops and strengthen the artistic community in Africa. A central point of approach is the provision of an online film archive that African artists can continuously work with in the future.

Artist talks and public presentations of AFMAC will also take place outside of Africa in 2025 and 2026. An event calendar and further detailed information, including photo and film material, are available at www.afmac.institute, a digital platform documenting the project and archive for African cinema, created by New York-based creative agency Pacific.

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African Film and Media Arts Collective – stations

April 15–19, 2025: Lagos, Nigeria, in partnership with Angels & Muse

Lead artist: Coco Fusco

July 2025: Tangier, Morocco, in partnership with Cinematheque de Tanger

Lead artist: Zeresenay Berhane Mehari

September 2025: Dakar, Senegal, in partnership with Fanta Sy and Raw Material Company

Lead artist: Mati Diop

October 2025: Nairobi, Kenya, community partner to be determined

Lead artists: Jim Chuchu and Wanuri Kahiu

December 2025: Cape Town, South Africa, in partnership with Realness Institute

Lead artist: The Otolith Group

Biographies of the founders and lead artists

Julie Mehretu is a world-renowned American artist, born in Addis Ababa in 1970. Mehretu's practice in painting, drawing and printmaking engage the viewer in a dynamic visual articulation of contemporary experience. Notable accolades include The MacArthur Award, The US Department of State Medal of Arts Award, and in 2025, was awarded the rank of Officer of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Ministry of Culture. Her work has been exhibited widely at museums, biennials and galleries around the globe. Mehretu is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, The National Academy of Design and the National Academy of Sciences in Ethiopia. She sits on the board of the Whitney Museum of American Art, is a trustee and alumna of the American Academy in Berlin, a Global Council Member at Zeitz MOCAA, and is co-founder and board member of Denniston Hill. Mehretu lives and works in New York City.

Mehret Mandefro is an Emmy-nominated producer, writer, and serial entrepreneur born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Her body of work explores hidden truths and spans documentary and fiction, film and television, art and science. She co-founded the multi-media production company Truth Aid Media and founded the research enterprise Truth Aid Impact, A51 Pictures in Ethiopia as well as the Realness Institute in South Africa. She was formerly Executive Producer of Kana Television in Ethiopia and is a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Science.

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Jim Chuchu is a singer, songwriter, music producer, director, photographer, and visual artist. He helped establish the Nest Collective, a multidisciplinary art space and artists' collective in Nairobi. His first short film "Homecoming" was featured at various film festivals from Durban to Locarno. Chuchu's photography series "Pagans" was highlighted at Dak'Art 2014, the 11th edition of Africa's longest running biennial of contemporary art.

Robin Coste Lewis born in 1964 in Compton, California is the author of "Voyage of the Sable Venus" (2015), the winner of National Book Award for Poetry. The former poet laureate of Los Angeles, Lewis holds a PhD in Poetry and Visual Studies from the University of Southern California, an MFA in poetry from New York University, an MTS in Sanskrit and comparative religious literature from the Divinity School at Harvard University, and a BA from Hampshire College in post-colonial literature and creative writing. Her work has appeared in various journals and anthologies, including The New Yorker, The New York Times, The Paris Review, Transition, and The Massachusetts Review. Lewis has taught at Hampshire College, Hunter College, Wheaton College, and the NYU Low-Residency MFA in Paris. She is currently writer in residence at the University of Southern California.

Mati Diop, is a French-Senegalese filmmaker born in Paris in 1982. With her first feature film "Atlantics" (2019), winner of the Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival followed by "Dahomey" (2024) awarded by The Golden Bear of Berlinale, (both short listed at the Oscars), she has established herself as one of the leading figures of international auteur cinema and a new wave in African and diasporic cinema.

Coco Fusco born in 1960 in New York City is a video and performance artist. With her multidisciplinary practice, Fusco explores the ways that intercultural dynamics affect the construction of the self and ideas about cultural otherness. Her work is in the collections of major museums worldwide and she received numerous awards.

Wanuri Kahiu is an award-winning filmmaker, speaker, and science fiction writer. Her film "Rafiki" was the first Kenyan film to screen at Cannes, earning global recognition. Named one of TIME's 100 Next in 2019, she is a cultural leader for the World Economic Forum and an advocate for freedom of expression. Through AFROBUBBLEGUM, Kahiu champions fun, fierce and frivolous African art. She directed "Washington Black" for Hulu/20th Century Fox, Netflix's "Look Both Ways", and is set to direct Disney's "Once on This Island".

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Zeresenay Berhane Mehari, born 1974, is an Ethiopian filmmaker and co-founder of A51 Pictures. He is notable as the director of critically acclaimed films "Difret" (Sundance and Berlinale Panorama Audience Award) and "Sweetness in the Belly". Apart from cinema, he was the co-founder and Head of Original Content for Kana Television, the largest free-to-air, private satellite entertainment TV channel in Ethiopia.

The Otolith Group was founded in London in 2002 by curators and artists Anjalika Sagar, born 1968, and Kodwo Eshun, born 1967 both in London. Their research-based work spans across moving image, audio, performance and installations and engages with post-human discourses building intergenerational and cross-cultural platforms.

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Teatro alla Scala BMW Classics Jenny Holzer BMW Art Guide by Independent Collectors

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Further information: www.bmwgroup.com/culture and www.bmwgroup.com/overviewInstagram: [@BMWGroupCulture](https://www.instagram.com/BMWGroupCulture)

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The BMW Group

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