



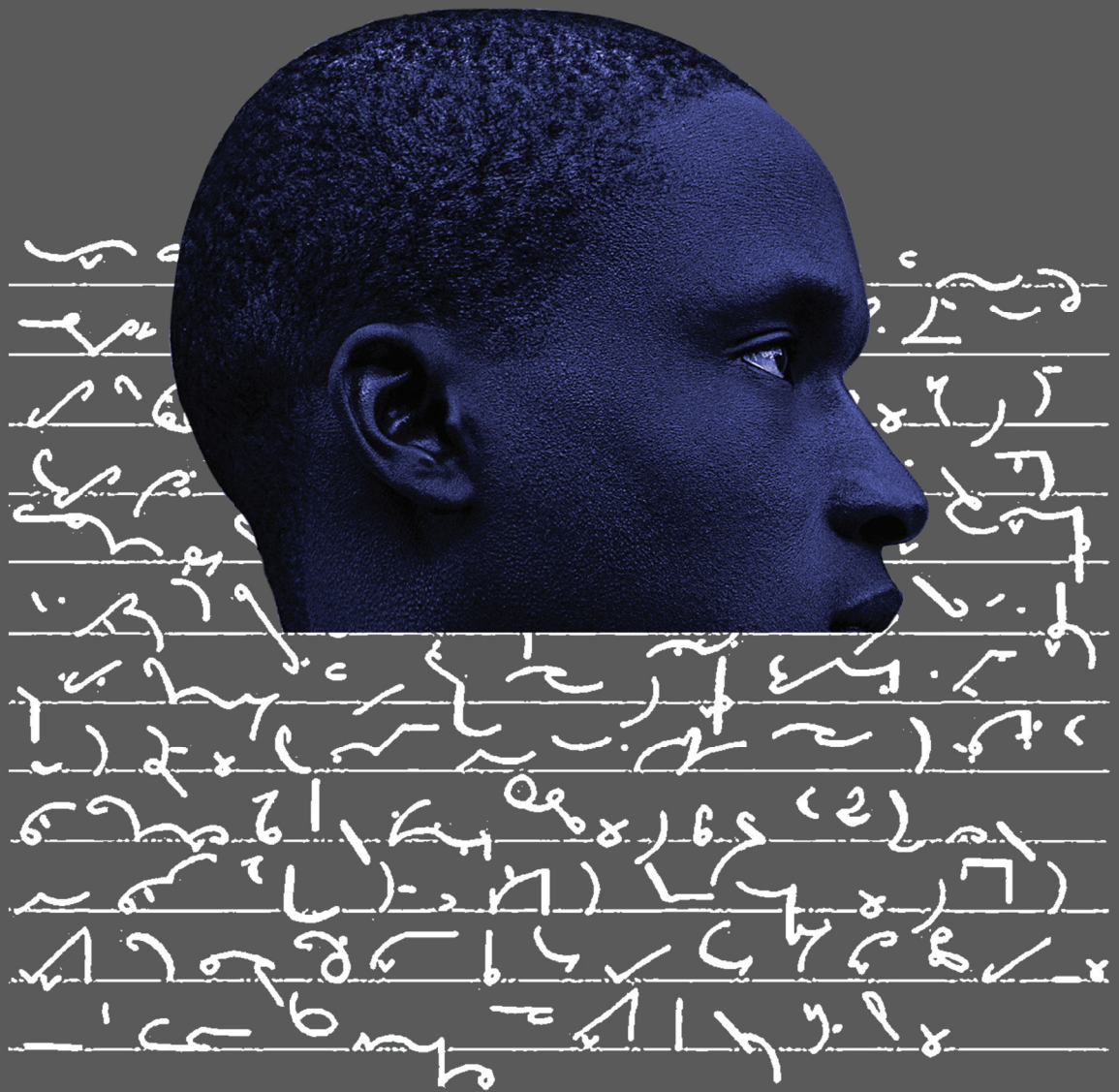
African
Futures
Institute

Accra

A large, stylized graphic featuring a white outline of the letter 'U'. Inside the 'U', the profile of a woman's face is shown in a dark, textured, almost black color. The woman's profile is facing right, with her mouth slightly open. The text 'Speaking History' is overlaid on the woman's face.

Speaking
History

Speaking History



Fifty-eight years ago, in a series of lectures delivered at the University of Sussex, the British historian Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper stated emphatically, *'Perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach. But at present there is none, only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is largely darkness, like the history of pre-European, pre-Columbian American. And darkness is not a subject for history.'* Underpinning his dismissal of the entire “non-European world” is the belief that writing is superior to speech; that written histories are more valuable than oral.

The AFI's first major academic project, *Speaking History*, is a multi-faceted initiative that interrogates and overthrows this outdated, Eurocentric and racist assumption. This initiative will take several different forms, from a documentary series to longer-term partnerships, conferences and workshops, details of which will follow over the next four months on our social media platforms and website.

Remembering Accra is a series of six 45-minute mini-documentaries featuring the architectural historian and former mayor of Accra, **Nat Nuno Amarteifio**. A veritable ‘walking encyclopaedia’, as he is often described, there are few who know Accra in the way he does — historically, politically, culturally, economically and socially.

Speaking History



Over the course of the next six months, we will broadcast six 45-minute mini-documentaries, available in both film and podcast format. From conversations about the beginnings of Accra's expansion, the role of market matriarchs in the city's retail landscape, the changing nature of 'home' and the influence of architectural ideas from the Diaspora, these oral history sessions will be conducted by Prof Lesley Lokko and the Ghanaian architect Ruth-Anne Richardson.

The newly-formed *African Architectural and Urban History Network* (AFRAUHN) aims to promote, support, develop and disseminate high-quality research and teaching about the architectural and urban history of the African continent and the African Diaspora. It offers a shared platform that aims to promote, support, develop and disseminate high-quality research about the architectural and urban history of the African continent and the African diaspora – including also studying the links to cultural practices, socio-economic conditions, material traditions, building techniques, environmental factors, gender/identity politics. It aims to support existing and emerging African architectural and urban research by gradually creating a broad network of academics and practitioners in the field, and by providing information resources to help the development of doctoral students



and early-career researchers, as well as by encouraging the exploration of newly emerging and transdisciplinary/interdisciplinary fields. AFRAUHN has been launched as an open, inclusive and comprehensive research and teaching network for architects, scholars and students located in Africa and in the wider diaspora. Its inaugural conference, both online and in person, will be held at the AFI in April 2022. AFRAUHN's founding members are **Professor Nnamdi Elleh** (Wits, Johannesburg); **Professor Murray Fraser** (Bartlett, London); **Professor Lesley Lokko** (AFI); **Professor Ikem Stanley Okoye** (University of Delaware) and **Professor Ola Uduku** (University of Liverpool).

Our first academic programme, a year-long course, *Architectural Writing, Journalism and Criticism*, will begin in August 2022. Disseminating ideas about the built and natural environments is a critical part of a robust architectural and urban culture, but how does one go about becoming an architectural writer, thinker, or critic? This course is open to architects, graduate-level students, journalists and aspiring writers and critics.

We are interested in provoking new ideas and scholarship about the relationship between writing,

Speaking
History

speaking and performance. We will draw on the rich, complex, and creative history of African and Diasporic oral traditions, using contemporary and avant-garde media to craft new avenues and means of expression. The course will formally be announced in December 2021 with details of course fees, teaching programme, tutors and guest professors, application process and all relevant deadlines. At the end of the course, a brand-new prize has been developed in partnership with the US-based Places Journal that gives the winning participant the opportunity to work exclusively with its editors to develop an extended essay for publication.

In collaboration with the Institute for African Studies at SOAS (University of London) and the University of Ghana, we are delighted to take part in a week-long conference and workshop on the relationship between African architecture and Africa's international relations. While buildings are often associated with domestic politics — as expressions of power or identity — they can also play an important role in international relationships. Architecture can be used to project a country's image



abroad — through airports, which are the first sights that visitors get; televised sports stadia in international events; and in embassy buildings which act as state proxies in foreign capitals. Many African capital cities seem full of buildings that have been erected by foreign powers — during the colonial period or gifted as part of soft power or development projects — which can make the continent appear particularly susceptible to architectural influences from the outside. But the influence works both ways, with high-profile African architects, styles and techniques impacting the ways architecture works around the world. The multi-institutional research project, *African State Architecture*, is headed by Professor Julia Gallagher (SOAS, University of London). The Accra workshop, organised between Professor Gallagher, Dr Irene Appeaning-Addo (IAS, University of Ghana) and Dr Daniel Mulugeta (University of Birmingham), will look at the role of architecture in Africa’s international relationships.

Architectures of the South: Bruising, Wounding, Healing, Remembering, Returning, and Repairing is an exhibition and workshop conceived by Dr Huda Tayob (UCT, South Africa) and Dr Catalina Mejia Moreno (University of the Arts, London). ‘Drawing on Ananya Roy, we are interested in how material, visual, sonic or textual pieces which turn and return to traces of “bruising”, “wounding”, “healing” “remembering”, “returning” and

“repairing” might enable us to comprehend entangled relationships between bodies, the built environment and wider ecologies. Bruising and wounding of bodies (whether human or otherwise) and land are the visual and physical surfacing of violence and trauma, or manifestations of inflicted harm. While the immediate impact might be highly visible, the longer term effect of trauma is no less significant, even if at times less visible. We argue that to critically and ethically engage with the South in architecture and spatial practice, we need to engage with the epistemic and methodological foundations of how we understand spatial discourse of the South in the first place as viewed through a racialised, classed and gendered bodies.

We ask how a return to these terms (bruising, wounding, healing, remembering, returning and repairing) through the body in space, might enable us to draw out relational spatial histories and practices. We engage with how these terms and acts might speak not only of enduring colonial and neo-colonial violence, dispossession and extraction, but also of acts of resistance, or movements against the unliveable as essential to repair and healing, reparation, and spaces of imagining liveable lives. This exhibition and workshop hopes to further creative methodologies of critique, and collectively share and generate ways of looking, talking and thinking about the built environment, architectures, land and violence in non-extractive ways.’