

## Cinema Black and white

A new fund and an incentive scheme will help redress the racial imbalance in South African film financing

In the South African film industry, where access to big capital is key, black filmmakers and black-owned production companies lag behind their white counterparts. The National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF), the institution mandated to develop and promote film, estimates that just 10% of South African films are made by black filmmakers.

It is against this background that the NFVF and government-owned Industrial Development Corporation launched

the Emerging Black Filmmakers Fund in July. The fund, designed to stimulate industry growth and transformation, will support new black directors and production companies. Each year, six projects will be selected for their viability and produced. Each project will receive R5m (\$470,000).

"More funding means more films," says writer and producer Lodi Matsetela. She has strong feelings on the viability criteria, however: "We should have started

with the premise that our films should resonate with the people, not that they make profit." Her business partner Vincent Moloi, while welcoming the fund, says the help should not come with prescriptions that stifle creative voices.

Many in the industry are debating the best way forward. Producer Bongivi Selane argues for sustainable models rather than temporary boosts. Filmmaker David Kau says that new projects need innovative strategies. "As long as we think cinema is the only way for films to make money, the industry will never be viable," he says.

As part of its goal to create 100 black industrialists in the next three years the Department of Trade and Industry is also helping filmmakers. Its South African Emerging Black Filmmakers Incentive launched in September offers qualifying productions rebates of up to 50% for the first R6m spent on goods, services and facilities from South African companies.

Veteran filmmaker Ramadan Suleman celebrates initiatives designed to address past injustices, but points out that concerted efforts to build audiences have been missing for years. "Selling culture is like selling Coca Cola," he says. "It took years to teach us what the brand represents and to crave it." ●

Katarina Hedrén in Johannesburg



NFVF

Scottnes Smith's *Hear Me Move*, billed as the first South Africa dance movie, shooting in Jo'burg

### ► BOOK REVIEW

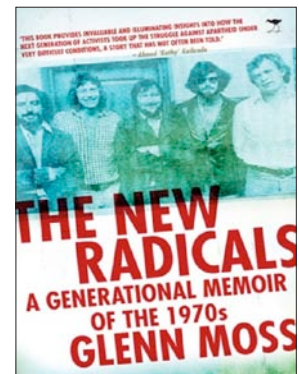
## The New Radicals: A Generational Memoir of the 1970s

Glenn Moss Jacana Media

This is an important book in the lexicography of South Africa's struggle for liberation – not only from the apartheid system but also from the dictates of nationalism and class division. The latter constraints, Moss points out, are easily concealed by a more comfortable liberal reaction to racism. What was 'new' about the student radicals of the 1970s was that they challenged the prevailing notion of protest and opposition, replacing

multiracialism with a broader non-racialism. They argued that an intellectual and working-class alliance could more effectively bring change. While exploring socialist texts from Europe and Latin America, the South African Left sought to question both nationalist arguments and Marxist orthodoxy, where its application in the local context might mean the replacement of one repressive state apparatus by another. This is perhaps why some in the exiled

African National Congress (ANC) viewed these activists – many of whom were banned, jailed or killed – with some suspicion, despite their perceiving themselves as part of the ANC's non-racial Congress Alliance. The lessons for today are not lost: although Moss concentrates on the early 1970s and the structures built up by this group from its campaigns to release political prisoners and promote worker organisation, a deeper



interrogation of opposition politics today might reveal a throwback to nationalist politics on the one hand and pro-market liberalism on the other – neither of which have thus far served South Africa's poor. ●



CHESTER HIGGINS, JR./THE NEW YORK TIMES-REDUX-REA

## INTERVIEW

# Andrew Dosunmu

Filmmaker

## Universal but specific

The director talks to *The Africa Report* about the importance of images and silence in telling his stories

**N**igerian-born and New York City-based filmmaker and photographer Andrew Dosunmu says that cinema has taken a turn for the worse in the past decade. Excessive amounts of dialogue have killed otherwise perfect stories. “Things are often very over-reaching,” he says. “I really try to embrace the visual aspect of it because that transcends. People that don’t come from that culture or don’t understand that language don’t have to feel like they’re missing the translation, and that’s the kind of film I want to make.”

His 2013 film *Mother of George* – the story of a Nigerian-American woman who reluctantly becomes pregnant by her brother-in-law because her husband suffers from infertility – relies on visual devices. Long, silent scenes take in looks between characters,

hand gestures and details of clothes. In some cases, the language spoken is not translated into English but the story remains potent for non-Nigerian audiences. “So much can be hidden behind dialogue,” says Dosunmu. “Being a photographer, that’s one of the benefits. That’s my strength.”

Dosunmu started his career as a fashion photographer, a skill which translates into his films, which are imbued with the rich colours of African fabrics. In April and May, he had a 10-year photography retrospective in New York. His film *Restless City*, which was released in 2011, is a raw, unsentimental story of Senegalese immigrants in New York.

Narratives about struggling immigrants and the beleaguered couple in *Mother of George* are “universal and specific,” says Dosunmu. “It’s very important that we have our own voice as filmmakers. What’s our story? What’s the style of films we make?”

Dosunmu says he admires Nollywood filmmakers for that very reason. “They have a voice. They have their own particular style. Like our literature, it’s universal but it’s specific. As a filmmaker, that’s what it’s about: how do I create that universal subject from our perspective and specifically with our voice? That’s what I’m in search of, what influences me, the way stories are told orally and how does one transcend that into a visual medium?”

Dosunmu is working on a film about the musician Fela Kuti. “He was such an incredible character. He lived nine lives,” Dosunmu says. The film will portray “the spirit of the man” rather than present his life as a biopic. “I would love the finance to come from Nigeria. I think it’s really important that we start being a part of our own stories, beyond being in front of the camera actually directing, producing and financing it.” ● **Rose Skelton**

## EXHIBITIONS

### JAK KATARIKAWÉ

1 Sept – 1 Dec

NAIROBI | KENYA

In an exhibition curated by Alan Donovan of *African Heritage*, the Nairobi Gallery displays storytelling paintings by Ugandan artist Jak Katarikawe. [museums.or.ke](http://museums.or.ke)

### NOUCHI CITY

26 Sept – 15 Nov

ABIDJAN | CÔTE-D’IVOIRE

Galerie Cécile Fakhoury hosts new work by the young Ivorian artist Aboudia, based on Nouchi slang words used in Abidjan. [cecilefakhoury.com](http://cecilefakhoury.com)



COURTESY GALERIE C. FAKHOURY

### TRAYVON

30 Sept – 11 Nov

CAIRO | EGYPT

With the collective title *Trayvon*, Egyptian painter and sculptor Mona Marzouk’s latest works at the Gypsum Gallery refer to the controversial shooting of Trayvon Martin in Florida in February 2012. [gypsumgallery.com](http://gypsumgallery.com)

### THE EMERGENCE OF MAN

23 Oct – 4 Dec

CAPE TOWN | SOUTH AFRICA

This solo exhibition at the Christopher Moller Art Gallery by South African artist André Stead encompasses new stainless steel and plexiglass installations. [christophermollerart.co.za](http://christophermollerart.co.za)