

THE ARCHIVE IS ALIVE

28 MAY 2026
TERVUREN, BELGIUM

S+T+ARTS

AFROPEAN
INTELLIGENCE



Funded by
the European Union

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INTRODUCTION

What does it mean for an archive to be alive? Not a repository of the past, sealed and static – but a system that breathes, transforms, and produces new knowledge through the people, communities, and technologies that engage with it?

This symposium takes that question as its starting point. Hosted at the Africa Museum in Tervuren, it brings together artists, researchers, and cultural organizations involved in two European initiatives: S+T+ARTS Afropean Intelligence and S+T+ARTS Buen TEK – projects that have, over the past 18 months, fostered collaboration between Africa, South America, and Europe.

Both projects are rooted in a conviction that innovation does not begin with technology alone. Afropean Intelligence asks what artificial intelligence looks like when developed from and for African communities. Buen TEK explores how artistic and technological practices in South America can engage with ecological knowledge, territorial practices, and indigenous worldviews. Together, they demonstrate that archives of local knowledge – when activated through art, technology, and collective practice – become tools for social justice, ecological resilience, and more inclusive forms of innovation.

The program brings these practices into dialogue through presentations by participating artists and researchers, followed by roundtable discussions with cultural actors from Africa and Europe, alongside policymakers, technologists, and scholars. These conversations will ask what can be learned from these collaborations, what challenges they have surfaced, and how they might point toward more sustainable and context-sensitive forms of knowledge-making.

This activity is part of the S+T+ARTS Afropean Intelligence program, organized by GLUON (BE - coordinator), Chroniques (FR), Africa Museum (BE), Ars Electronica (AT), and co-funded by the European Union, under the STARTS – Science, Technology and Arts initiative of DG CNECT (GA no. LC- 03568052).

PROGRAM

9:30 - 10:00 Registration and coffee

10:00-10:15 **Welcome** by Peter Burian (Policy Officer DG Connect, European Commission), Bart Ouvry (Director General AfricaMuseum) and Christophe De Jaeger (Director GLUON)

10:15-10:45 Opening keynote

10:45-12:00 **Panel discussion — *Rethinking Datasets: From Indigenous Archives to Artificial Intelligence***

Contemporary AI systems rely heavily on datasets that extract and standardise knowledge. Many indigenous knowledge systems, however, operate differently — through relational, embodied and iterative forms of memory, where knowledge is not simply stored but performed, carried and continuously reinterpreted.

This panel brings together artistic research projects that engage with these tensions. Rather than asking how ancestral knowledge can be translated into data, they explore how such knowledge systems can question and reimagine the underlying logic of datasets and AI models.

With Mahoutondji Kinmagbo (artist, Benin), Khanya Mthethwa (artist, South Africa), Peace Olatunji (artist, Nigeria) and Mélisa Kayowa (artist, DRC). Moderated by Patrick Mudekereza (DRC/Belgium).

12:00-12:30 **Lecture-performance — *Decoding Egwu* by Emmanuel Ndefo (Nigeria) & Dan Xu (China)**

Many forms of cultural knowledge are transmitted through dance, ritual and social practice rather than written sources. This lecture-performance explores how artists engage with embodied knowledge and experiment with strategies to document, translate or activate such practices through artistic and technological means.

12:30-13:15 Lunch break

13:15-14:15 **Debate — *What have we learned? Critical Reflections from the S+T+ARTS Afropean Intelligence Programme***

What happens when artists, researchers and local communities in Africa and Europe think together about artificial intelligence — not as users of a ready-made technology, but as co-shapers of it? This session looks back on eighteen months of S+T+ARTS Afropean Intelligence: what the programme made possible, where it met its limits, and what unexpected opportunities it opened up.

Participants share their experiences around building cross-sectoral infrastructures for collaboration in Africa, the challenges of transnational partnership, technological sovereignty, and the question of how arts-driven research can contribute to imagining new futures.

With Jean Kamba (Krithika Art Projects, DRC), Kasper Jordaens (creative technologist/artist, Belgium), Alexandre Saunier (artist/researcher, France), Prisca Tankwey (Académie des Beaux-Arts, DRC), Oscar Ekponimo (Gallery of Code, Nigeria), Lodi Matsela (Photo Market Workshop, South Africa), Ahmed Nagy (B'Sarya, Egypt), Aymen Gharbi (Interference, Tunisia). Moderated by Injonge Karangwa (KU Leuven).

14:15-15:30 **Panel discussion — *Artists as catalysts of community-led archives***

How do you collaborate with a community in a way that does not extract its knowledge, but strengthens and returns it? This session brings together the practices of artists who shape new archives through participation, co-creation and storytelling — archives rooted in local values, governed by the people they concern, and that do not preserve the past but actively co-shape the present.

With Tamer Elshabrawy (artist, Egypt), Evans Akanyijuka (artist, Uganda), Pierre Christophe Gam (artist, France), Chipso Mapondera (artist, Zimbabwe). Moderated by Ayoko Mensah (Assistant Curator of the “Postcolonial?” exhibition at the House of European History, Belgium).

15:30-15:45 **Coffee break**

PROGRAM

15:45-16:15 **Artist presentations – *Rethinking technology through ecology, territory and community***

16:15-17:15 **Debate – *Creative Alliances: How can Europe build reciprocal and equitable cultural partnerships?***

Building on the experiences of the day, this session asks how European cultural and innovation policy can structurally contribute to more reciprocal and sustainable global partnerships. Can the knowledge generated through initiatives like S+T+ARTS Afropean Intelligence and S+T+ARTS Buen TEK offer value beyond European borders? And how do we move away from a vision of cultural exchange that risks reproducing western logics toward one where innovation genuinely flows in both directions?

With contributions from the academic, cultural and policy field, this debate explores what conditions – institutional, financial, and political – are needed to make truly reciprocal partnerships possible.

With Robert Kieft (Program manager EUNIC), Bart Ouvry (General Director AfricaMuseum), Vanessa Hännenschlager (Head of EU project Ars Electronica), Arjon Dunnewind (Director IMPAKT), Maciej Krzysztofowicz (JRC Policy Lab). Moderated by Christophe De Jaeger (Director GLUON).

17:15-17:35 **Closing words by Ayoko Mensah, Injonge Karangwa and Patrick Mudekereza**

17:35-19:00 **Reception and networking**

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

WHEN Thursday 28 May 2026

TIME From 10:00 to 19:00

VENUE AfricaMuseum, Leuvensesteenweg, Tervuren, Belgium

Visitors are advised to come via public transport.

From Brussels

- Take the train to Brussels-Central.
- Take metro line 1, direction Stockel, and get off at Montgomery station.
- Change to tram 44 at Montgomery station and ride to Tervuren station.

The museum is located opposite Tervuren station.

From Leuven - Limbourg – Liège

- Take the train to Leuven
- Take bus R80 until the tram 44 stop (Station)
- The museum can be found across the tram stop.

From Brussels National Airport

- Take bus De Lijn 71
- Alight at Tervuren Oppemstraat.
- Walk 10 minutes to the museum.

TICKETS Free, but registration mandatory

LANGUAGE English (French translation available)

ABOUT

+ ABOUT S+T+ARTS

S+T+ARTS is an initiative of the European Commission (DG CNECT) to foster alliances between science, technology and the arts, in order to cultivate technological innovation centered on human needs and values. Since its inception, STARTS has grown into a dynamic ecosystem of more than 150 institutions accross Europe, jointly fostering transdisciplinary collaboration between art, science and technology. Oer the past decade it has supported hundreds of residencies, large-scale collaborations, and international projects that demonstrate the transformative power of embedding creativity and critical reflection at the core of European research and innovation.

Recognizing the potential for a broader impact, the STARTS program issued new calls to extend its reach beyond Europe – giving rise to projects such as *Afropean Intelligence* and *Buen-TEK*, which bring the STARTS ethos to Africa and South America respectively, weaving together local knowledge systems, artistic practices, and critical perspectives on technology to imagine more inclusive and situated futures. → www.starts.eu

+ AFROPEAN INTELLIGENCE

Afropean Intelligence mobilises art as a space for research and reinvention of technologies. It critically explores artificial intelligence through Afro-European perspectives, supporting practices that intersect ancestral knowledge, local cultures and digital tools to challenge dominant narratives and propose situated alternatives. Within this framework, the project accompanied 9 artists in residence and developed spaces for reflection and dialogue, contributing to the emergence of new forms of collaboration between artists, researchers and cultural practitioners from Africa and Europe. → www.starts.eu/afropean-intelligence/

+ BUEN TEK

Bringing together ancestral knowledge systems and contemporary technological and artistic practices, Buen-TEK reflects on how culturally grounded innovation can respond to today's socio-environmental challenges. Rooted in the principles of Buen Vivir and Lo-TEK, and shaped through 18 months of collaboration across South America and Europe, including 10 artistic residencies, community workshops, and material experimentation, it foregrounds grassroots and community-led ways of doing, ecological awareness, and context-sensitive approaches to science and technology. By fostering dialogue across disciplines and geographies, it invites alternative models of collaboration beyond extractive frameworks, embracing reciprocity, adaptability, and collective care as conditions for more just and resilient futures. → www.starts.eu/what-we-do/buen-tek/